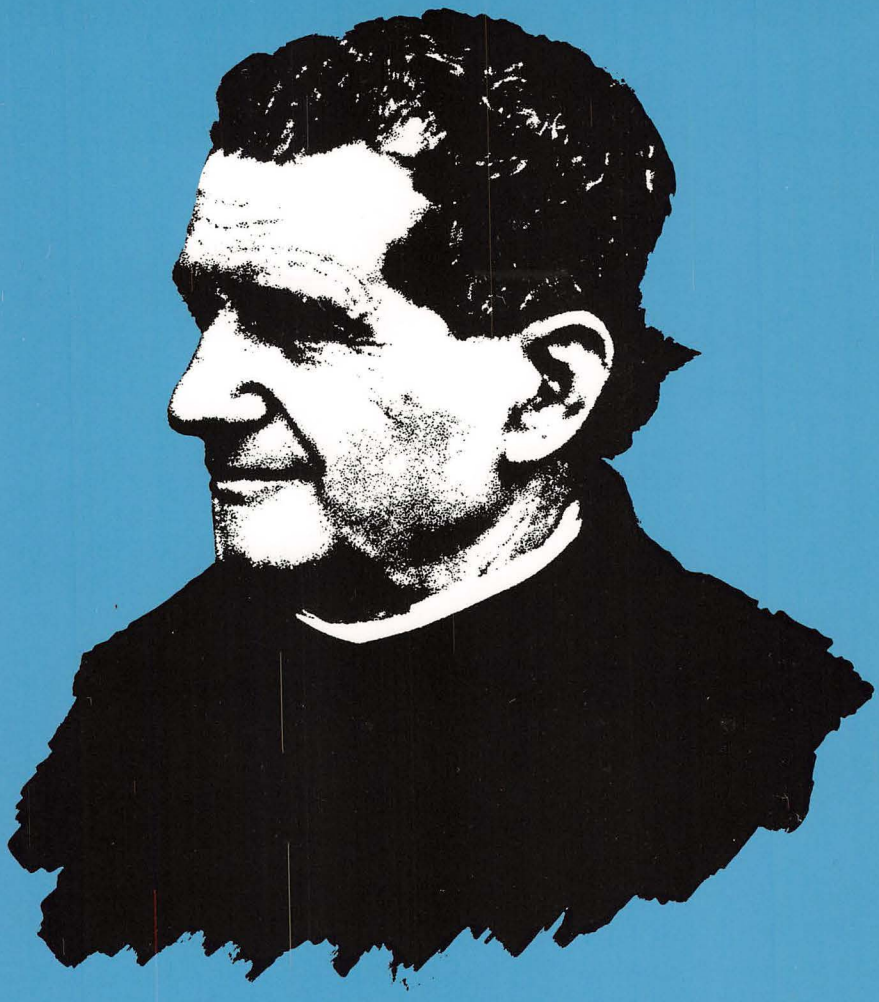


VOLUME XIX - 1888-1938

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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THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

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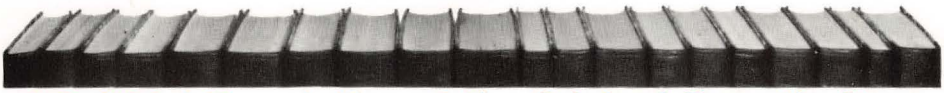
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THE

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 XIX
1888–1938

SALESIANA PUBLISHERS
New Rochelle, New York
2003

IMPRIMI POTEST: Very Rev. Patrick Angelucci, S.D.B.
Provincial
New Rochelle, NY
25 March 2003
Solemnity of the Annunciation

Copyright © 2003 by the Salesian Society, Inc.
Library of Congress Catalog Number 65-3104 rev.
ISBN 0-89944-019-3

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Manufactured in the United States of America
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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 MY PARENTS:

DELFINA ANTONUTTI AND PAOLO ZULIANI.

THEY HELPED ME DISCOVER GOD'S PLAN IN MY LIFE.

THEY BLESSED ME WHEN, AS A CHILD, I LEFT

BEAUTIFUL FRIULI IN 1938 FOR PIEDMONT;

THEY BLESSED ME WHEN AS A YOUNG MAN I LEFT ITALY

IN 1949 FOR THE USA;

THEY HELPED ME LOVE AND FOLLOW DON BOSCO

AS A SALESIAN PRIEST.

FOREVER GRATEFUL

FR. VINCENT VINICIO ALDO ZULIANI, S.D.B.

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INTRODUCTION

Volume XIX of the Biographical Memoirs does not deal directly with the sayings and deeds of Don Bosco, but rather, with the sayings and deeds of several people on and about Don Bosco.

The sworn statements on Don Bosco's heroic virtues are awe-inspiring. The identical detailed information on how the beatification and canonization of Don Bosco came about, as well the celebrations connected with both, is not only interesting, but, most of all, is edifying and uplifting. The message conveyed by the entire volume is to the point:

WE NEED NOT BASK IN THE SUNSHINE
OF DON BOSCO'S GLORY
BUT, RATHER, MOVE ON
ALONG THE TRAIL BLAZED BY DON BOSCO'S
ENTERPRISING SPIRIT.

The speeches found in this volume and delivered, on several occasions by so many people on behalf of Don Bosco, could be 'literally' translated, as someone would have expected, to give them their original flavor. This is the reason for this (as someone might say) 'welcome' departure.

A translator is often called upon to divide words, to combine them, to drop some of them or to rearrange them, only to make sure that the original meaning is adhered to. Many of the Italian speeches of this volume are characterized by having one main clause with an unending series of dependent clauses that obscure the very meaning they try to convey.

I have done my best to cut some of these unending dependent clauses and reduce them to something more understandable and simple. I have to confess that this task has not been easy and I have not been always successful. I beg to be forgiven!

All languages follow different rules. This is the reason why there cannot be word-for-word translations, except in rare cases. I have been confronted with situations where I had to make a decision on how to use different words and different sentences to convey the original meaning desired by the speaker. I hope to have been successful. However, people more knowledgeable than I am, when called upon to compare the English version vs. the Italian text, will find some lacunae. Also for this, I'd like to be forgiven. The basic meaning has been kept!

But all in all, the reader of this volume will come to know how much Don Bosco was admired, praised, venerated and prayed to, by so many people, the world over. May the tributes given to Don Bosco become an inspiration for all of us to follow his footsteps and 'forge ahead . . . always at the vanguard of progress!'

Sincere thanks to Mrs. Jo Ann Donahue for her computer work, to Fr. Francisco Javier Aracil, SDB, editor and head of Salesiana Publishers of New Rochelle, N.Y.

Fr. Vincent Vinicio Aldo Zuliani, SDB

Preface

This volume is more for posterity than for my contemporaries, most of whom more or less, witnessed a great many of the events herein narrated, or were adequately informed about them by the press. The events related to Don Bosco's Cause of Beatification, the festivities connected with it, the triumph of his Canonization, are still vivid recollections in the minds and hearts of us all. Even the circumstances, which distinguished the celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of his death are fairly well known. Yet it was thought both fitting and advisable that the main events and more outstanding features that, for half a century, contributed to enhance Don Bosco's glory, be incorporated in a volume for those who are to come after us.

We still love to call our Hero by that simple name—Don Bosco—just as we used to, and just as we heard him called everywhere. In those days, that name told us so many things that the sound of it still recalls to our minds today and rekindles in our hearts an infinite number of tender sentiments. It is only natural that in the course of time, as these memories slowly fade away, together with the men who cherish them, the luminous figure of the canonized Saint, whose heavenly patronage is invoked, and whose deeds, now consecrated in history, are universally admired, will irrevocably take the place of the familiar image of a beloved Father.

Yet, already now that the cult of St. John Bosco is not inferior either by extension or intensity to the cult granted to other outstanding Saints throughout the Church, we have every reason to believe that in time his devotion will grow and spread, instead of dwindling down or fading away. The reason is that this devotion is deeply rooted in people's hearts and minds. We should also add that the Saint himself is the one who, contributes directly to its growth, as he generously responds and intercedes on behalf of the faithful who invoke him. As a matter of fact, from all parts of the world reports of numerous and truly exceptional graces granted because of his powerful intercession are continually coming in. God, Who entrusted a worldwide mission to Don Bosco and Who visibly helped him while he labored to fulfill it, still continues to support the works that he founded and bequeathed to his spiritual sons.

Don Bosco already occupies a conspicuous place in history, too. We may be sure that, as the passage of time makes it easier for us to evaluate the important role he played within the Church and Society, most people will appreciate more fully the great stature of his multifaceted personality,

and gauge the proper value of his religious and civil activity. This is confirmed by the fact that year after year, publications on Don Bosco have increased so rapidly that there is no indication that they will slow down or come to a halt in the near future. Actually, this is only the beginning; for it was quite recently that people began to pay serious attention to all the many aspects of his life and activity. Posterity alone will tell!

What may turn out to be a surprise to many is the fact that, in comparison with other causes of beatification and canonization, Don Bosco's cause lasted so long. These causes are very complex matters, as they rely on complicated mechanisms. Their regular and continued rhythm hinges on an infinite number of interior and exterior ingredients. The more complex the life lived by the Servant of God, the more complications will eventually show up. The cause of Don Bosco was not the cause of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus, for example, who lived her short life within the restricted cloister of nuns; nor was it in any way like that of Mother Cabrini, whose life, although quite full of activity, yet bore the signs of an ordinary pattern. In his long career, not only did Don Bosco embrace the whole world with his personal activity, either directly or indirectly, but he also had contacts with an infinite number of people for widely diversified reasons, in an era of radical transformations, both political and social. This obliged him to take stands unknown in the past and act as a trailblazer on paths previously untrodden. In any cause, these widely varied elements would constitute a tangled skein of events to be unraveled, evaluated and judged. Even more so this occurs when a steadfast opposition obstructs the proceedings, as unfortunately happened in Don Bosco's case. *Haud ignota loquor* [I speak of no unknown things].

Yet Divine Providence ordained matters in such a way that, at the opportune time, a Pope would put an end to all procrastination attempts, since he had known Don Bosco personally, and had felt great admiration for him.

In a period of seventeen years, Pius XI approved the cult of 17 beatified persons, and in 42 beatification ceremonies he elevated more than 496 Servants of God to the honor of the altar. He also conferred the supreme glory on 34 Saints in 17 canonization ceremonies. An exceptional number, indeed!

Yet there can be no doubt that the cause of beatification and canonization for Don Bosco was the most arduous of them all. But the Pope never lost sight of it; indeed, he seemed to take a saintly passionate interest in all that transpired. This does not mean that he interfered in any way that

would upset the normal running of the procedures by attempting to accelerate its rhythm, for this would not have been compatible with the meticulous care usually devoted to such very delicate matters. But he did intervene when it was a question of overcoming obstacles that would only lead to superfluous procrastination, or was merely a question of renewing the intensity of the proceedings. In all probability, the cause would still be floundering now, were it not for the interest of the last of the four Popes under whose reign the proceedings developed: Pius XI!

Now that we have come to the end of these Biographical Memoirs, we want to intone a hymn of heartfelt thanksgiving to Divine Providence, also on behalf of him who laid their foundations, and who made available such a rich documentation on the works of this providential Saint, and in a way made it possible for all the evidence to be collated in good time and to be recorded, once for all, in nineteen volumes.

The spiritual sons of our Saintly Father, eager to have an intimate knowledge of his life, and to have their hearts attuned to his spirit, will come to drink, from these memoirs as from a generous and flowing source. To this same source shall ever come all those who, in the future, may wish to speak or write about him, and who do not want to give an incorrect idea of the spirit that constantly guided and supported him in his activities and sufferings.

We are convinced that there will be others, who will write books of greater literary merit about Don Bosco. We, however, did not aim at achieving this objective. Indeed, if we may be allowed to voice a modest personal wish, we would hope that no one would ever give way to the temptation of trying to build some kind of literature around St. John Bosco. Not that Don Bosco's heroic virtues and bold undertakings might not offer to a well-prepared writer an immense artistic inspiration; but we are too well aware of what this means.

It is a wonderful thing to be able to contemplate Don Bosco just as he really is, just as his life story reveals him to us, without trying to embellish him further with artificial trappings!

Last year, someone wrote: "St. John Bosco appears to us like one of the finest specimens of human nature ever to have been transfigured by grace. At times he seems so close to us, yet at the same time he makes us aware, very gently, how far he outdistances us."[1]

Turin, January 17, 1939

[1] P. Brou in *Etudes*, October 5, 1938, pp. 122-23.

Chapter 1

(Epicedia) Funeral Eulogies

Don Bosco's posthumous glory began the day of his death [*in die obitus*] or we might now say on the day of his birth [*in die natali*] for when the Saints are born to the glorious life of Heaven they attain an earthly glory, which is dazzling, as well as, boundless in space and time.

The last chapters of the previous volume showed us how Don Bosco's death immediately opened up the road to triumph. The present volume has as its specific goal that of measuring, in all its height, Don Bosco's luminous ascent to this triumph and to single out, by fastening to the screen of history, its most salient moments, the ones vibrant with splendor.

We shall begin with the funeral services that followed his interment. Never before, had so many unanimous eulogies been proclaimed in so many parts of the world over the grave of a simple priest, as they were over the grave of Don Bosco. From Piedmont to Calabria, from Sardinia to Sicily, even to the tiny island of Pantelleria that lies isolated in the Mediterranean; in the cities of Trent, Gorizia, Triest, and throughout the Istrian peninsula; in Jerusalem and in Quebec; in the republics of South America, nowhere was a place to be found which did not bewail the tragic loss.

From a thousand different places all over the globe there came a unanimous chant of praise for his virtue, charity and zeal. Two themes were insistently repeated in all these funeral orations: the feeling that Don Bosco seemed closer now than ever before because of his greater power of intercession before God, and the anticipated certainty that the Church would elevate him one day to the glory of the Altar. Hence, there was a prevailing belief that if expiatory prayers were offered up for him, it was solely because this was an ecclesiastical routine procedure, and because the deceased himself would have wanted it that way. However, it was believed that he really did not need them. One orator expressed this thought very brilliantly when he said that no one who had lived in such intimate and loving union with God during his mortal life could be ever separated, even for a single moment, from Him in the hereafter.[1]

We would like to add that it was in these circumstances that anyone could have seen what the Association of Cooperators meant, and how

[1] Father Perotti, Pastor of Moncrivello (*Salesian Bulletin*, August, 1888)

valuable it was. Except for those localities where there were Salesian houses, which were responsible for inspiring the local Cooperators, it was the Cooperators everywhere who sponsored and organized funeral services with great solemnity, attended by vast crowds, and usually accompanied by a public eulogy of the deceased. In all this activity, the Cooperators displayed a valiant *esprit de corps* that obviously was no mere outward display, but a genuine manifestation of the vitality of that pious association which had been so dearly loved and championed by Don Bosco. Facing such a display, one could not help but admire the current of devoted affection that had been established between the beneficent Apostle of Youth and the army of his benefactors.

In a fast-moving, necessarily brief and limited survey, we shall only linger on localities where something of true significance emerged regarding the figure of Don Bosco: the man and the Saint. Moreover, we shall give preference to those people who had known Don Bosco, had talked with him, or had some specific contact with him, since the others would be unable to help us enhance our knowledge of the Servant of God with any personal information. We shall proceed in an orderly fashion, following a zigzag geographical line that can be traced from Turin all the way to Valparaiso (Chile).

EVENTS THAT OCCURRED IN THE THREE GREAT CHURCHES BUILT BY DON BOSCO HIMSELF

Among the churches built by Don Bosco, three were larger, and more monumental in appearance than the others: namely, the two churches in Turin dedicated respectively to Mary Help of Christians and to St. John the Evangelist, and the Sacred Heart Church in Rome.

The funeral ceremonies had a special character all their own in these churches, and this inspired the orators to examine more intimately the personality and achievements of the deceased.

St. John's Church was chosen for the week after the funeral service. Bishop John Cagliero was to have delivered the funeral eulogy, but as he was prevented by a slight indisposition, Father John Bonetti took his place. Without actually delivering a funeral eulogy properly so called, he spoke to the congregation as he used to speak at the conferences of Salesian Cooperators, since this talk coincided with the yearly conference of the Cooperators for the feast of St. Francis of Sales. He could not have chosen a better theme, and he was well prepared to deliver it in a fitting manner.

He applied to Don Bosco the words St. Paul' applied to himself, in his epistle to the Christians of Corinth: "*I became all things to all men, that I might save all*" [*Omnibus omnia factus ut omnes facerem salvos*].[2] The significance of this application lies in the fact that the whole of Don Bosco's personality is defined by those brief words: a man who became all things to all men, in order that he might save them. Great, providential lives are all alike. Even though multifaceted, their activity is channeled entirely in one single direction. Only in such a way is the strength of a man spent well and beneficially, for otherwise it would fritter away in too many different directions.

Don Bosco wanted to save souls. He lived united to his apostolic objective and aspired to nothing else. He heeded nothing else, no matter what might have occurred or with whom he might come into contact, and no matter what he might have undertaken. All his thoughts, words and actions were concentrated on that one objective. It was here that one must look to find the synthesis of all his extraordinary, and widely diversified working strength.

Two Month's Mind funeral services were held in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. The first was attended by the Cooperators, the second by the past pupils of the Oratory, as a sad tribute of veneration and gratitude.

The Superiors had already given some thought to the question of who would be the best qualified to speak of Don Bosco on the first of these most solemn occasions. They had already considered it in the days that elapsed between his death and his burial. On February 4th, Father Michael Rua, Bishop John Cagliero, Fathers Celestine Durando and John Bonetti called on Cardinal Alimonda who had only just returned home from a health resort, and asked for his advice about who Don Bosco's successor might be. Then Bishop John Cagliero, on behalf of the Superior Chapter, asked the Cardinal to graciously deliver the funeral eulogy on Don Bosco's Month's Mind Mass.

At first, His Eminence tried to get out of it saying that he would suffer too much, or rather, that he would not be able to speak at length because he would become emotional. It was suggested that his speech could be printed and published for that date, so that the congregation might read it without listening to it; or he could delegate someone else to read it aloud. At any rate, the Congregation would be very proud to treasure such a valuable document from one who had felt such great esteem and love for its founder.

[2] 1 Cor 9:22.

In his goodness of heart, the Cardinal promised that he would dictate a funeral oration. But what had appeared impossible because of the recentness of the death and the anguish connected with it, became possible later on due to the healing impact provided by time. He poured his great and noble heart into the effort, as well as his great talent.[3] He began his speech quite abruptly, in the following manner:

"I know that never again will I be able to look upon my friend, that never again will I be able to see your benefactor, O ye poor! Nor shall I look on your Father, ye priests! His dear countenance has disappeared from before my eyes; the shroud of death has enveloped him. Perhaps God will extend a loving attention to his mortal remains. The earth will be benign to him, and offer itself as a pillow to his weary head. Let us hope that this be so, my children; let us hope that his blessed remains may be like an incorruptible flower.

"Yet, whatever may occur, the grave has taken from us our friend, our benefactor, our father. No longer do I see before me the priest, John Bosco, as I so often saw him in this beloved spot.

"Yet God did not give us a heart solely to cry. He gave us a heart, a mind, an imagination to replace tears with tender comfort; He gave us a miraculous ability to bounce back, the ability to recreate within our mind, our imagination and affection the images of those people who are with us no more, so that we might vest them and color them as though they were once again living people to behold with our eyes.

"Therefore, I intend to see once more my friend, my benefactor, my Father; I intend to look again on John Bosco, and greet him. For without this vision, I would feel too sad and desolate in this world.

"I must confess to you that I shall now look upon him with great reverence. I could not say clearly why, but by taking him from us, by concealing him from us, death seems to have surrounded him with something like a halo. Therefore, shall I look on him with greater respect than before, though always with the same tender affection, and with the same loving heart.

"Hearken unto me, dear children. I want to see Don Bosco among you all, but not confined within these walls. From this place, I feel the need

[3] Father Agostino of Montefeltro who was preaching in the cathedral during Lent, made the announcement from the pulpit on February 29th: "The Month's Mind funeral service for your beloved Don Bosco will be celebrated tomorrow in the church of Mary Help of Christians, and Cardinal Archbishop will deliver the eulogy of this great Man of Charity. It is therefore quite superfluous for me to preach tomorrow and I believe that you would all be glad if I join you to listen to all that this Apostle did, and seek inspiration from his example."

to see him as he looks at places beyond here, as he projects his gaze far and wide, as he projects his gaze to where you may happen to be, as he personally visits with you wherever you may be found, as he works with you, as he talks with you where he has already seen you, and he stretches his hand towards you, where he has gathered so many of his children."

To quote a phrase uttered by Pius XI after a speech delivered by Cardinal Pacelli on St. Vincent de Paul, the orator showed that Don Bosco had given a touch of divinity to his century, because he had turned towards God all of the inclinations, needs and undertakings of his time.

The 19th century was the era of pedagogy; yet its pedagogy was only animated by a natural affection, which was limited and weak, or was a pedagogy, which was regulated by science, which is full of prejudices. Don Bosco added to natural affection the Religious element as its guide, and to science he added charity.

The 19th century was the century of work and workers. But the working classes were led astray by scientific principles hostile to religion; they took the wrong direction and paved the way for a social revolution. But Don Bosco's trade students discovered nobility in work by following the path of goodness found in Christian living. They grew up to be honest men who loved law and order. That's the way Don Bosco gave a touch of divinity to the workers' profession.

The 19th century was the century of associations: the world was flooded with associations that accelerated the rhythm of social evolution. Yet it was a blind, feverish process, both disruptive and threatening. Don Bosco gave birth to three Salesian Associations: the Congregation of the Salesians, the Congregation of the Sisters, and the Association of the Cooperators. Faithful to fundamental, eternal principles, these Associations were able to wield a beneficial influence over the more active spheres of Civil Society.

With the kind of pedagogy, Don Bosco exercised such an influence on the boys that he 'stole their hearts.' He transformed the boys' spirits and had them pursue virtue. He enlightened the boys' minds and had them pursue knowledge. Religion gave strength to nature and charity provided science with improvement. That's how Don Bosco gave a touch of Divinity to the pedagogy of the century. That's the way Don Bosco gave a touch of Divinity to the work of the Associations.

The 19th century was a century of colonial undertakings. A wide difference separates the men who were sent out to barbaric uncivilized countries by worldly powers, and the Salesian missionaries. The lay people

who brought civilization chose safe localities; when among the savage tribes they exchanged merchandise, and bartered goods, which provided material comforts for the savages. But they did nothing to liberate them from their native vices, for they sought only to exploit their resources. The Missionaries of Don Bosco braved dangers, and carried the cross with them as the badge of civilization, enduring every kind of privation in order to save souls. This is the way by which Don Bosco gave a touch of Divinity to the work of civilizing savage peoples."

The virtue that animated Don Bosco was charity, and charity endures all things, believes in all possibilities to do good, hopes for everything from Heaven, and bears with anything.

This was the backbone of the Cardinal's stirring oration.[4] There are two statements in that eulogy, which carry the value of an authentic personal testimony. The first concerns Don Bosco's most characteristic virtue—his unfaltering serenity. "Many a time I was astonished," the Cardinal said, "when I thought about Don Bosco's moral fiber: how he was always serene, even-tempered in good times and bad as well; he was always unruffled. I was amazed to perceive the degree of perfection he had reached (a hard thing to reach, indeed); yet I was not really surprised, after all, because I knew the source such perfection came from. He was never upset even when he was living in the world because he had flung himself entirely into the arms of God."[5]

The other statement was in reference to another remarkable aspect of Don Bosco's life: his attitude toward the Pope. This is what His Eminence proclaimed: "The Pope was always uppermost in his thoughts; he loved him like the apple of his eye. He was a joy and a treasure to Pius IX who so often blessed him at the Vatican: he was a joy to Leo XIII who renewed his apostolic blessing on him. In everything that he did, and in all that he wrote, Don Bosco endeavored, with great steadfastness, to behave as his love for the Vicar of Jesus Christ demanded. Don Bosco lay on his bed, a prey to the fatal disease that killed him, at the end of last year. He was surrounded by an anxious group of his sons and by friends and well-wishers who were giving him their heartfelt sympathy. I felt an impulse of warm affection, and almost a duty to call on him. I was about to go to Rome, but I could not leave without seeing him, without his greeting, without hearing the expression of his desires. I visited him at his bedside twice. On the last

[4] *John Bosco and His Century,* Turin, Salesian Printing Works, 1888. As we shall see later, a Spanish translation of this book was printed in Buenos Aires.

[5] Op. cit., p. 81.

occasion, December 26th, I found him panting, exhausted. Yet he pressed my hand, and with a feeble voice in which his whole soul seemed to vibrate, he begged me to assure Leo XIII: *that he had always loved and obeyed him like a son, and that the whole of his Congregation was at the service of the Holy See.* With those words Don Bosco disclosed his will and testament to me. But why should I use the verb 'disclosed'? All his public and private life is known to have been for the entire world, his will and testament for the Pope to hear."[6]

A few days later, Don Bosco's first sons gathered in that very same church, around his bier. Who could express more fitting words than one of their own number? It was Canon Ballesio, the Pastor of Montcalieri, who addressed those fitting words. Rarely has any speech prepared for some special occasion been more ideally attuned to its listeners. From the infinite horizon envisaged by the speech, the visual outlook was now narrowed to the focal point of the Oratory. Yet what a magical, almost cinematographic, series of flashbacks it was. It represented one of the most original and most delightful speeches ever delivered in connection with Don Bosco. The orator portrayed his family life among his boys: in the confessional, in the classroom, in the dining room, in the workshops, at recreation and on walks.[7] At a certain time, the orator repeated a question four times: "Who was Don Bosco for us?" He then answered his own query, showing that Don Bosco was for his sons a man of God and a religious man, a master and a guide, leading young people to what is good, out of love for them; an utterly unselfish man; and a man of great intelligence and genius. The first answer contains this statement: "My! How many victims did he not wrest from the clutches of vice with religious amiability, and how many did he not restore back to a life of honor and virtue! For many of us he acted like the angel announcing our ecclesiastical vocation. Hundreds of laborers emerged from Don Bosco's Oratory, to go and work in the mystical vineyard of the Gospel, in an era of violent anti-religious revolt, when the good ones were discouraged and the wicked were boldly triumphant. I could say that Don Bosco possessed an instinctive love of the Saints, for the Church, and for the Pope. That is the way Don Bosco trained his boys to cherish such noble sentiments, and they confessed their faith boldly, holding their heads up high."[8]

[6] Op. cit., p. 48.

[7] *Vita intima di Don Giovanni Bosco nel suo primo oratoria di Torino* [*Intimate life of Don John Bosco in the first Oratory in Turin*], Turin, Sal. Printing Works, 1888. French translation, Lille, Salesian Printing Works, 1889.

[8] Op. cit., p. 20.

Bishop Manacorda delivered the funeral eulogy at the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. He was then Bishop of Fossano and he had displayed towards Don Bosco what almost amounted to a cult. The main message of his eulogy was that, with the help of divine grace, Don Bosco prepared himself to carry out the designs of Divine Providence, and with the power of his charity he revealed himself as the great benefactor of the Christian people.[9] Here we have a page which is worth keeping.[10] "Just as his mind could penetrate and his heart, with the power of his charity, could draw and bring about an irresistible attraction, so his eye could have an influence on both the powers of the mind and heart. With one measured, calm, completely serene glance, he could easily take hold of the thoughts of other people's minds. And whenever he wished, with the same power, to be understood, nothing else was needed for an understanding but that glance. At times a mere inflection of his voice, a phrase, a smile, followed by his steady look, was equivalent to a question, to an answer, to an invitation, to an entire speech. One might have said that for Don Bosco, the spoken word was little less than something extra. He hardly seemed to need the spoken word to be able to communicate with others. All his senses and limbs seemed admirably coordinated, and subjected to his reasoning ability. Truly was his body the servant of his soul, and his life hidden in God appeared displayed in his thoughts and heart. Don Bosco was all thought and love. Our beloved Don Bosco did not show either surprise or haste or impetuous impulse; everything about him was unfaltering calmness; his behavior was always an even one; his concerns found an answer with perfect ease. He was able to cast his troubles unto the Lord, and in Him he found his support, convinced that God never allows the just to forever flounder."[11]

This eulogy had an unexpected success. After it was printed, it happened to be brought to the attention of Leo XIII. Now it so happened that the Bishop was attending a public audience, and as the bishop tried to conceal himself by standing far away from the Pope, so as not to attract attention. The Pope noticed him, and had him come closer and told him that he had read his eulogy and that he liked it, and that he shared the opinion he had expressed in his eulogy, namely, that Don Bosco would one day be raised to the glory of the Saints.

[9] Rome, Befani, 1888.

[10] Page 20.

[11] The learned Latin scholar, Father Angelini, a Jesuit, composed four polished Latin inscriptions for the occasion (see Appendix Document 1).

FUNERAL SERVICES HELD IN OTHER ITALIAN CHURCHES

Many towns and villages all over Italy celebrated the solemn funeral services for Don Bosco's soul during the Month's Mind Mass. The *Bulletin* listed all these localities in two long reports. But the listing, which began in May 1888 and continued to January 1889, was far from complete. Let us now review some of the more significant reports among the many referred to us.

Father Piano, another former pupil from the heroic days of the Oratory, and now Pastor in the church of the Great Mother of God in Turin, gave a eulogy in the stately church built by Cardinal delle Lanze,[12] at San Benigno Canavese. Father Piano first attended the Oratory in 1854. "At that time there were about a hundred of us boys. Don Bosco had to provide food for us, and even clothing for many of us."

After graduating from high school, Father Piano entered the Chieri Seminary, eighteen years after Don Bosco's seminary days. But, he affirmed, "The memory of Don Bosco was still alive." On one of his frequent visits to the Servant of God, something happened which at this time inspired the theme of his eulogy.

He had been ushered into Don Bosco's room just as two French ladies were taking leave of him, after an audience. Don Bosco had handed to both of them a picture of Mary Help of Christians.

With the easy familiarity habitual to all of Don Bosco's boys when in his presence, Father Piano had asked if he, too, might have a picture. In fact, he had even picked one up from the desk, and had handed it to Don Bosco with the request that he write something on it. Don Bosco did so, and this is what he wrote: "*Esto mitis et patiens et Dominus Iesus dabit tibi velle et posse. Cor tuum sit constanter super parvulos et egenos.*"[13] The orator then went on to speak of Don Bosco's gentle humility and patience, and of his love for poor children.

In speaking about his humility, he told his listeners that not very long before he had heard a holy and learned Piedmontese Bishop exclaim: "Don Bosco must be very humble indeed, because all his undertakings are so abundantly blessed!" Father Piano attributed his magnificent calmness and his poise, even under the most distressful circumstances, to his humility. In this regard Father Piano added: "In 1885, when Don Bosco, with the

[12] This speech was not printed, but it is in our files.

[13] Be meek, and patient and Our Lord Jesus will enable you to accomplish whatever you wish. May your heart be always set on children, and on people who are in need.

generous assistance of a benefactor, Chevalier Cotta, was building the second part of the house which was to connect the first house with the Church of St. Francis of Assisi, we heard a terrific noise, around three o'clock in the afternoon. What could it be? All the ceilings in the new part of the building had collapsed. All of us boys were terrified, but we were even more upset at the thought that this would have grieved our beloved Father. But we were thoroughly mistaken.

"As soon as Don Bosco got back home, we clustered around him to give him the terrible news. Do you think he changed expression? Not at all. He merely turned his gaze heavenward, and said: 'Thank God. Thanks to thee, my God, that the damage done is only material.' Then, turning to us, he said: 'If you behave, God will help us rebuild it all over again.' And so it happened."

As he was speaking of how Don Bosco loved youth, Fr. Piano made the following digression: "At this point I would like to voice a wish of my own. Whenever I see a picture of Don Bosco, I grieve because I do not see him surrounded by boys. 'How can this be?' I ask myself. 'Don't they say that he was a Father to thousands and thousands of boys? Did he not live his whole life in their midst? Were not the boys dearer to his heart than anything else? Was not this the mission that God entrusted to him, and did he not fulfill it completely? Then why portray a father without his children?' Did you ever see him, either on the staircase, in the playground, or in the street, without being accompanied by a crowd of boys? Just as they always represent the Venerable Joseph Benedict Cottolengo among the poor, Don Bosco ought to be represented among the boys, so that everyone would come to realize what the whole purpose of his life was. I cannot picture him otherwise."

The diocese of Casale Monferrato felt a very special obligation to pay tribute to Don Bosco's memory out of its devout and grateful esteem. It was in that diocese that Don Bosco had opened his first school outside Turin, namely, the School of Mirabello. Later he had transferred it to Borgo San Martino in the same area, and there he had reaped a rich harvest of vocations for the priesthood, besides providing the right atmosphere for studies. Many diocesan priests were proud to have had their schooling in Don Bosco's schools.

The most impressive of the funeral services was held in the main town of the area, where the lovely church of St. Philip seemed best suited for the occasion. The pastor of Rosignano, Msgr. Bonelli, who had known Don

Bosco very well,[14] was the orator. He delivered his sermon simply and quietly, just as Don Bosco himself had done twice from the same pulpit.

He described Don Bosco's work in the light of the special mission given him by God, Who had also given him the talents he needed for it.[15] The Catholic newspaper[16] which reported on the ceremony and the eulogy concluded by saying: "A parchment was interred with Don Bosco's remains in his coffin, and on it was written: *Bones bathed in tears, rest now in peace, until the day dawns when the blast of angelic trumpets shall summon you forth!* Now I do not believe that his bones will wait for the trumpet before rising from the grave. If our emotions do not blur our mind, we are truly confident that the Church will rearrange all those bones by the altar of Mary Help of Christians, and that Don Bosco's name will be inscribed in the list of Saints."

Canon Cherubin described Don Bosco as an Angel of Divine Providence and as the greatest personality of his time,[17] while delivering his eulogy in the Salesian church of the school at Mogliano Veneto. "Humble and generous, he never failed to meet with the designs of Divine Providence; he was rather its undisputed witness, its faithful ambassador, its very active minister, as near to being an angel as any man can be. All alone, without any human aid, he ventured into a boundless territory where the harvest was inexhaustible. Bold as a hero, and ready for a sacrifice like a martyr, he totally abandoned himself to Divine Providence."

"*Save Youth, and through Youth save the world,*" that was Don Bosco's main thought. This was the theme of a eulogy developed by Father Anthony Rampazzo in the Carmelite church.[18]

Bishop Rossi of Sarzana read out a noble eulogy in the collegiate church of La Spezia. Don Bosco, the educator of the poor children of the people, had triumphed over arrogant, humanitarian philosophy and over its empty pedagogy, glorifying the pedagogical wisdom and virtue of the Church.[19] Developing his theme further, the Bishop used such enlightening strokes of his pen that not only now, but also in the future, they will be read with delight, and the people will always enjoy them. Such was his apostrophe to the meadows of Valdocco.[20] "O meadows of Valdocco,

[14] See *Biographical Memoirs,* Vol. VII, p. 107.
[15] Casale, John Pane, publisher, 1888.
[16] *Gazzetta di Casale,* March 10, 1888.
[17] Turin, published by the Salesians, 1888.
[18] Padua, published by the Seminary, 1888.
[19] Sampierdarena, published by the Salesians, 1888.
[20] Page 22.

formerly lonely and deserted, but now full of buildings, where thousands of modest, hard-working, pious boys live. Formerly you were mute and silent, but now you are resounding with the humming activity of workshops, joined by the chant of God's praises. How could I speak of you, O meadows, without singing the praises of the man who immortalized you by linking his name with them? Did I not visit you in my time? Have I myself not felt my heart filled with saintly thoughts, as I prayed under the dome of Mary Help of Christians, who points out, from afar, and protects with her solemn and powerful shadow the charitable miracles wrought by Don Bosco? Have I myself not witnessed how mocking smiles faded away on the lips of the rationalists and unbelievers, forced to admit their defeat, and to acknowledge that charity triumphs over science, that the restoring balsam for social ills can come from the altar more than from academies?

"O meadows, the man who made you famous is no longer with us. But you, O meadows, will remain as a proof and a manifestation of his spirit, and those who want to help the poor children of the working classes will come to you, O meadows, to seek from you the inspiration needed for saintly and courageous endeavors, to implore the heroism of sacrifice and love of obscurity, once they shall have experienced the fullness of achievement."

Another very important statement is the following:[21]

"In stealing his earthly image from our gaze, Death has cast a new light on his glorious, eventful life, and tore asunder the last veils which prevented us from fully knowing him. While he was alive, much of his work remained hidden, as though smothered under the glory of his name. But now it is revealed in its entirety: a flourishing Institution existing in its own right, and, animated by the spirit he had given it. It will not only prosper, but will expand the objective of his mission, with new forms of charity, as the times call for, enhancing the glory and merit of its Founder."

With another remark he brought out an evaluation of Don Bosco's role in the world:[22] "I personally firmly think, or rather I am sure, that the appearance of Don Bosco in the latter part of our century stands as a ray of light, as a benign gesture of a merciful God. In the thick darkness created by a false philosophic doctrine regarding the true principles of mass education, God indicated the path to be followed in order to heal the diseases that now afflict Society, and thus ward off even greater evils which now

[21] Page 33.
[22] Page 37.

threaten it. This path consists in nothing else than in teaching people the catechism, with a spirit of loving and devoted kindness. The teaching of catechism, embellished by the holy inventiveness of songs, festivities, meetings, and of pious harmony, will envelope the child as with a climate of holiness and lead him to love religion. The child will associate with it the tenderest memories, which, in turn, will leave within the heart of the child some faith impressions, which will never be erased."

The Bishop ended his eulogy with a brilliant thought:[23] "I am not an artist," he said, "but if I were, and if I were commissioned to raise a monument to this great priest, for the benefit of posterity, this is the way that I would represent him. On top, I would place the cross; I would place the cross as the symbol of sacrifice; on the right, Mary Help of Christians, who, after Jesus, gave Don Bosco his greatest support; to his left, St. Francis of Sales, whose gentleness he imitated, and for whom he named his Congregation. Then, at the foot of the cross, I would depict the great man himself, clutching the sacred trunk of the cross with his right hand, while with his left, he beckons to the boys, to join him beneath the shade of the sacred tree, where they would acquire new life. At the foot of the monument, I would depict young Garelli, intent on carving on the memorial marble slabs these words that are engraved on all hearts: *To Don Bosco, with gratitude. The Church and the Nation.*"

Bishop Giusti, who had been so cordial a host to Don Bosco at his episcopal residence in Arezzo, willingly went to Florence to take the place of the Archbishop, who was sick, for a pontifical ceremony. The renowned writer, Father Mauro Ricci, Father General of the Pious Schools, wrote five beautiful epigraphs for the occasion.[24] The titular Bishop of Oropo, Bishop Velluti Zatti, of the ducal family of San Clemente, who was a devoted Florentine admirer of Don Bosco, delivered a eulogy vibrant with feeling, and expanded on the life and works of the Servant of God.[25]

In the church of St. Florence, where Don Bosco had twice held meetings for the Cooperators, a commemorative service was only a natural thing to do. This is where the orator saw the revealing signs of Don Bosco's sanctity:[26] "When I look at the great figure of Don Bosco and his undertakings, I recognize the sweet, noble features of saintliness: a stupendous fabric of

[23] Page 39.
[24] App. Doc. 2.
[25] Turin, Salesian Publishing works, 1888.
[26] Page 27.

strength, interwoven with meekness, prudence, simplicity, courage, timidity; a blending of glory and humiliations; the protection of friends; the implacable hostility of his adversaries; the total absence of funds and the amount of riches so easily accumulated in order that he might do good. This is exactly what reminds me about the lives of the Saints." In speaking of his educational activity, the orator said:[27] "He loved boys with the warmth, intensity, and spirit of sacrifice typical of Christian love. In the art of educating them he was incomparable: he was equally against either doing too much or doing nothing at all, just as his heavenly patron saint. He guided them along that middle road which alone can lead to virtue. He was broad-minded; he had a big heart, and he hated the pedantic approach that would regulate life like a compass, or like clockwork."

Don Bosco's anniversary Mass was celebrated in St. Philip's church in Catania. The eulogist was Fr. Piccollo, and his theme was "Don Bosco's effective love for Youth."[28]

Fr. Piccollo sent a copy of his printed eulogy to the former school superintendent, Mr. Rho, who was his cousin. This was the same Rho who had created so many difficulties for Don Bosco in 1879. The old civil servant was grateful for the gift, and as he thanked him, he also made a remark of historic significance, and a personal statement.[29]

He regretted that no mention was made in the eulogy of Fr. Anthony Cinzano, who was a fellow villager, and had been one of Don Bosco's first teachers. He then went on: "Father Cinzano, who was the pastor and Vicar Forain of Castelnuovo, was always devoted to the study of literature, and very well versed in Latin literature. He had a complete collection of the classics and, what is more, he read them, he studied them, despite his advanced years. I remember that he would boast that Don Bosco had been one of his pupils with some other boys of his parish; he had taught them during the fall vacations, when he himself was only a cleric. I first met Don Bosco in 1840, in the parish rectory of Castelnuovo; he was with Father Febbraro, the late pastor of Orbassano, Fr. Allora, and several others with whom I always kept a friendly relationship."

Mr. Rho used this reference to state that his friendship with Don Bosco never stopped, not even during or after such events. If this was made possible, it was due to Don Bosco, whose charity never waned in the face of bitter opposition, and once any conflict ended, he never gave any further thought to it.

[27] Page 40.
[28] Turin, Salesian Publishing Works, 1889.
[29] Pecetto, May 4, 1889.

Mr. Rho ended his letter with these words: "May God grant that the flaming Christian charity that inspired the late Don Bosco may live in his followers, in order to honor and glorify their Founder. This is the sincere hope of an old friend, a friend of that man to whom our entire country, and the whole Christian world owes eternal gratitude."

FUNERAL SERVICES HELD IN HONOR OF DON BOSCO IN FRANCE AND SPAIN

Grief over the death of Don Bosco was widespread in Spain, and even more widely spread in France. This is confirmed by a great number of letters. Many funeral services were held in both countries, even in places where there were no Salesian schools.

When the Bishop of Nice came to know about Don Bosco's death, he exclaimed: "What a loss! What grief for his sons, and for us all!"

There were many memories of him in **Nice.**

He had often gone to Nice, and every year around the month of February or March, the Cooperators and friends would ask when Don Bosco was going to return. They were waiting for him impatiently; they greeted him with joy upon his arrival. Now, alas, they would never again have the "joy of seeing his dear, mild, revered countenance which recalled the features of His Divine Master. Never again would they hasten to ask for encouragement or spiritual help which seemed to come out of him spontaneously like rays of light." These words brought tears to the eyes of all people who heard Msgr. Fabre, the Vicar General, read out the funeral eulogy in the chapel of Don Bosco's Patronage, in the presence of the Bishop. With rousing words, he magnified the importance of the Patronage, the qualities of the Man, and the efficiency of his heirs.[30]

Three times did he pay personal tribute to Don Bosco's memory in the course of his speech. Once, he referred to his humility: "Humility reigned supreme in him. One could not even look at him without being profoundly impressed." Then, he referred to his admirable self-control: "Everyone must have noticed Don Bosco's inner serenity and tranquility which permeated his demeanor, and were clearly evidenced by his speech, his attitude, his whole appearance. Who would ever have suspected that a man of such evident serenity was actually overwhelmed by so many problems? To me, this is the seal of a truly elect spirit, living in an intimate union with God, and therefore above the anxieties of daily existence." He also referred

[30] Nice, printing works of *Patronage of St. Pierre,* 1888.

to Don Bosco's demeanor when giving audiences: "Who ever detected the slightest traces of impatience, or the merest hint of haste, in his many daily audiences? He was equally gracious to young and old. He listened to whatever people chose to tell him, never seeming to be aware that a crowd was waiting outside in the antechamber. When people saw how he paid attention to everybody and allowed people to confide freely their problems to him, they could only think that he had nothing else to do than concentrate on what the person he happened to be with at the moment had to tell him. This is typical of a disciplined mind, and it was for this reason that people loved him."

Paris paid tribute to Don Bosco in the noble church of La Madeleine. Don Bosco's own church of St. Joseph, in **Marseille**, could not have rendered a more affectionate, or a more triumphant, homage to his memory.

As for Spain, we shall limit our survey of services honoring Don Bosco to only a few localities.

The saintly Bishop of **Malaga**, Bishop Spinola, who later became a cardinal, delivered a vibrant eulogy on Don Bosco in our school at Utrera. Unfortunately, we were unable to get hold of a printed copy of the eulogy, though it was published.

Besides a solemn funeral service in the **Belem** church, which Don Bosco had once sanctified with his presence, he was honored as well at an important academic assembly in **Barcelona**. An elegant printed monograph commemorated the event.[31]

This assembly was sponsored by the members of that Catholic Association in which Don Bosco had been enrolled as honorary member in 1886. At the end of the assembly meeting, Bishop Catalá spoke of Don Bosco, saying that in him he perceived the *glory of Mankind*, mainly because he had sacrificed his whole life on its behalf. In him, too, he perceived the *glory of priests*, for with his words, with his writings, and with his actions, he had manifestly shown that he was full of the spirit of Christ. He also perceived in him the *glory of the Church* and *of the religious Orders*, for he had been endowed with their spirit and virtue to a most sublime degree. "My sons, we have honored the memory of a great man today," the prelate concluded. "Tomorrow, we shall raise a church to honor a great Saint."

In the University of **Madrid**, there was a scientific commemorative ceremony at which the parliamentary deputy, Lastres, a famous jurist who

[31] *Souvenir of the solemn funeral service organized by the Catholic Association of Barcelona in commemoration of its revered member, the Rev. Don John Bosco*, Barcelona-Sarrià, Salesian Printing Works, 1888.

had had dealings with Don Bosco, read out a speech. He had contacted Don Bosco when he was sponsoring new legislation on prisons that would have proven to be a social benefit to the nation, and he had hoped to entrust to the Salesians the direction of a correctional school for boys. He had always felt sincere veneration for the Servant of God afterward, even though they had not been able to work out any agreement. He took the lead of his talk from the above-mentioned events[32] and explained how and why he had not come to an agreement with Don Bosco. We have already described these circumstances in Volume XVII.

The speaker took this occasion to extol the educational system of the Salesians, as he had seen it practiced in Turin, and at Sarria. Among other things, he said: "Any boy who attends a Salesian Festive Oratory, a night school, or lives in one of his boarding schools, will look upon the priest as an affectionate father who is full of the spirit of abnegation. He will not experience anything that can mortify or embitter him, or anything which may appear like repression or violence. In such an atmosphere, almost without his knowledge, the pupil draws a great benefit from his education."

In the opinion of the speaker, this miracle was achieved because of the two great powers of love and faith. He ended his speech with these words: "To the believing Catholic, Don Bosco was a soul elected by Heaven, a Saint, just like the people of Turin said as his coffin was carried past them. Those who do not share such a belief will be unable to deny that he was an eminent philanthropist, endowed with an extraordinary spirit of abnegation. Both to the former and the latter, and I hope to this university today, and to the whole of Spain tomorrow, Don Bosco will always be an extraordinary man, whose indefatigable existence, so rich in inestimable services rendered to his fellowman, gives him a full right to immortality."

FUNERAL SERVICES HELD IN SOUTH AMERICA, IN HONOR OF DON BOSCO

Only in **Brazil** were the Salesians informed rapidly and with certainty of Don Bosco's death. The confreres in **Uruguay, Argentina** and **Chile** lived for another month with the illusory conviction that his health was improving, because this is what they had been told in a letter mailed from Turin early in January 1888, and received in South America at the end of that month.

It was true that Bishops and other people who read newspapers sent their condolences immediately to the Superiors in the different Houses, but for the reasons explained in the last volume, the Salesians, who had not

[32] *Don Bosco, and Charity in Prisons.* Madrid, printed by Hernandez, 1888.

had any official communication, were placidly convinced that the news was only an echo of wild rumors that had been circulated several times in the past. At last, in early March, letters from Turin brought confirmation of the terrible calamity.

In **Brazil**, since the Salesians were equally as skeptical, it was the Archbishop of Rio de Janeiro who sought a telegram from Bishop John Cagliero on February 8th. From the telegram the Salesians learned what had really happened.[33] When he first heard about the death, the Bishop had already written to Niteroi a letter which was meant to be a letter of condolences first, but also a letter of congratulations, for he believed that Don Bosco was already enjoying happiness among the blessed.[34]

He did not stop at this. We know what kind of ardent affection he had for Don Bosco, and so, later on, the Bishop went to the Salesian House to officiate at the funeral service and give a eulogy which lasted two and a quarter hours. His natural ability to speak reached the great heights of eloquence at times, under the spur of his affection and his grief, and several times he wept and moved his listeners to tears. As though spellbound, the congregation sat listening up to the very end, without showing any trace of impatience or boredom. Taking as his theme *omnibus omnia* [all things to all people], he elaborated on the way Don Bosco had been able to cope with the new pressing needs and demands of his century.

In **Montevideo**, the capital of Uruguay, Bishop Yeregui spared no effort to provide a fitting tribute to Don Bosco in his cathedral. A letter he wrote to Father Rua, when the news of Don Bosco's death was confirmed, reveals his own great esteem for the Servant of God.[35]

The Archbishop of **Buenos Aires**, who had never forgotten the days he had spent in Italy with Don Bosco, did not find it in his heart to bemourn his death, for he, too, imagined him already enthroned in Heaven, where he would be a powerful patron to his sons and his Congregation. He told the Salesians they could count on him for anything that would render homage to his memory,[36] but the Salesians, who persisted in their illusion, did nothing until March, 1888. Then, in the church of St. Charles, Canon De Casas said that he had been delighted to have an opportunity, "to shake the hand of that visible angel, of that paragon of purity, who, thanks to his

[33] Bishop Lacerda's telegram to Bishop John Cagliero: *News on Bosco.* Bishop. Reply: *Bosco dead.* Cagliero.

[34] See App. Doc. 3.

[35] Doc. 4. The original text appeared in the Spanish *Bulletin* May, 1888.

[36] Letter to the Provincial, February 8th, published together with the *Funeral Eulogy* (Buenos Aires-Almagro, Pius IX School, printing shop, 1888).

holiness, had captivated all hearts." The Canon roused the congregation with an inspired commemoration of Don Bosco's charity.

Perhaps there will come a day when people will find it hard to believe the wave of affection for Don Bosco that pervaded the whole of Chile in those days. The population of Chile had already given proof of it in the welcome given, the previous year, to Bishop John Cagliero. Touched by the news about the welcome given to the Bishop, Don Bosco had written the following, in the last letter addressed to Father Jara: "My poor sons will have to make up for their scarcity of number with their prodigious efforts, if we are to repay our debt of gratitude to Chile, and then only in part."

There was no big town where commemorative funeral services were not held, or where no eminent sacred orator delivered a eulogy. In **Talca**, where a Salesian house had recently been opened, Fr. Joseph Barrios, the founder of a religious institution helping young people of Chile, and who himself had only recently been cured from his sickness after he had prayed to Don Bosco, eulogized the Servant of God before the congregation on April 26th. One local newspaper wrote that "he sounded like a saint extolling another saint."[37]

But funeral services in the capital surpassed all others in solemnity. No one recalled anything like it in Valparaiso. Father Raymond Jara gave evidence of his great and exceptional eloquence.[38] Once a guest at the Oratory, he had preached in Rome during the festivities related to the consecration of the Sacred Heart Church. "How wonderful a thing, to have known this venerable priest!" he exclaimed as he began his talk. Then, in an inspired tone, he went on: "Ah! Don Bosco, Don Bosco, why have you betrayed me in Turin, and in Rome? Why was your speech so fervent, why were your eyes so radiant, your hands so warm, when, all the time, your life was slowly waning? Why did you comfort me, telling me that we would always remain friends, while in secret you were already preparing to depart from this earth? Why did you urge me to return home, help your sons, and talk of your institutions, if you already knew that the first words I uttered would be to speak of them, while at the same time I was shedding tears on your grave? Why did you not tell me that your farewell embrace was for good, for all eternity, that the blessing you gave me would be the last here on earth?"

[37] *El Conservador*, April 27th.

[38] The speech was published, following the Spanish translation of Alimonda's eulogy (Buenos Aires-Almagro, Salesian Printing Works, 1888).

As he briefly reviewed Don Bosco's life events, he described him as the greatest hero of charity that the 19th century had ever seen. Toward the end,[39] as he described in a very colorful way his first meeting with Don Bosco, he said: "Oh! How happy I was that evening of March 3, 1887, when I first stood in the presence of that exceptional man. Never will I forget it. I still seem to see him . . . sitting in his chair, bowed down under the burden of his infirmity, his hands clasped over his breast, his glance so tender, his smile so ineffably sweet, and his voice, ah! his voice . . . I could not describe it, I only know that other men do not talk that way. He spoke slowly and very softly; his words fell like rain that restores the earth, and like a heartening flame. He could hardly raise his hands to bless me, as they were weary from giving alms to the poor, from drying the tears of the afflicted. . . ."

Then, with soft voice, he spoke of the last moments of the dying priest, and touched briefly on his triumphant funeral procession. Finally, he addressed Don Bosco's sons, especially those who were in South America, and he encouraged them to follow the trail blazed so courageously by their Father, in their mission of Christian education for the children of the working classes.

This brief survey of the more immediate repercussions of Don Bosco's death the world over is sufficient to show what immense esteem everyone had towards this great, and holy Servant of God. Within the Church his name was already appearing as a tribute. At the Eucharistic Congress held at Antwerp in August, 1890, there was one speaker who to anyone who might have chanced to say that in the 19th century it was no longer possible for priests to perform miracles, as they had done in former times, this simple answer should be given: "*Remember Don Bosco.*"

[39] Page 72. The words quoted above from Don Bosco's letter appear on p. 99, as Father Jara repeated them.

Chapter 2

How the Ordinary Process for Don Bosco's Beatification and Canonization Began

Barely had Don Bosco's mortal remains been laid to rest in the crypt of Valsalice, when, twenty-four hours later, the Superior Chapter met at the Oratory, with Father Michael Rua presiding, to discuss if they should soon promote the cause of beatification and canonization of the Servant of God. During his lifetime, Don Bosco had been widely renowned as a saint, and this renown was growing more and more compatible with the widely-spread conviction that undoubtedly, and without delay, the Church would elevate him to the honors of the altar. In fact, not only had eminent prelates expressed such an opinion, but they had gone so far as to urge the Superiors of the Congregation to expedite all necessary steps for the not too distant day when such a process would begin. Spurred on by such an insistence, Father John Bonetti, the Spiritual Director, now put the matter before the Chapter, and read out two decrees issued by Pope Urban VIII regarding the procedure that should be followed whenever anybody dies in the odor of sanctity.

He did this in order that they all might be fully acquainted with the decrees, and thus avoid any action contrary to the dispositions contained in them and abide by them.

It was agreed that they would comply with the prescriptions, so that whenever it might be pleasing to God to glorify their holy founder on earth, there would be no obstacle or impediment to hinder the development of such a cause. The most urgent precautionary measure was to avoid any act that might tend to foster the cult of the Servant of God.

The day following this Chapter meeting, Father Michael Rua informed the Chapter that Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar of His Holiness, and Protector of the Salesians, had advised him to take immediate preparatory steps with the Archbishop of Turin, so that the preliminary phases of the process might begin. In a circular letter addressed to all the Directors, and dated that same day, February 8th, Father Michael Rua issued instructions that funeral services were to be held for the repose of Don Bosco's soul in all the Houses only once, on the anniversary of his death. This did not deter him from adding the remark referring to the anniversary celebrations: "until

such time when the Church shall pronounce its infallible sentence, and declare him Venerable, as we hope it will."

When Father Rua visited Rome on the 9th of that same month, Cardinal Parocchi had him call on Bishop Caprara, Promoter of the Faith with the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and ask him for exact clarifications on how he should best set up the cause.

When pointing out Don Bosco to a friend of his in 1887, this prelate had remarked: "There is a man whose cause will be started some day, and I shall have to play the role of Devil's Advocate." When he said this, he was probably not in the least aware that this prophecy soon would come true. He was genuinely interested in giving Father Michael Rua detailed instructions about everything, offering himself for any need he might have later on. The norms which were provided helped Father Michael Rua immensely. He could not have found more expert guidance in this matter, which was completely new to him. The prelate insisted on the necessity of gathering as much data as possible about the miracles and graces that had been obtained after the death of the Servant of God, and on providing for them all the best documentation possible.[1] The Cardinal then recommended very earnestly that as soon as possible all that pertained to Don Bosco's life be written. As he left the audience, the Cardinal's last words were: "I warmly recommend Don Bosco's Cause."

When he got back to Turin, Father Michael Rua reported to the Chapter all that he had been told in Rome, and, at Father Celestine Durando's suggestion, the task of compiling and editing a summary account of events related to Don Bosco's life and his virtues was entrusted to Father John Bonetti, assisted by Father Joachim Berto. Anyone who had important information to give was urged to communicate it to them. To render their task easier, it was decided that a circular letter was to be sent to all Salesian Houses, requesting that all Salesians should report on anything related to Don Bosco's life which they might have witnessed. At the same time, it was decided that an announcement should be published in the *Bulletin,* asking anyone who was in possession of autographs by Don Bosco, to send them to Turin in either the original, or certified copy.

Instead of sending a circular letter in this sense to the Salesians, Father Michael Rua, in his first letter to the confreres as Rector Major, warmly recommended that they commit to paper, and then address to the Mother House, any account of specific events in the life of Don Bosco with which

[1] Letter from Father Michael Rua to Father John Bonetti, Rome, February 20, 1888.

they happened to be familiar, anything that dealt with the theological, cardinal or moral virtues, anything that had to do with supernatural gifts, his prophecies or visions or the cures he wrought, and similar things. He also cautioned the Salesians that, were they to report anything, they would probably be required to confirm their report later under oath, and that they should therefore be as painstakingly accurate and as truthful as they could.[2]

In the meantime, hardly a day passed by without some report reaching Turin of some grace or exceptional cure obtained through prayers addressed to Don Bosco's intercession, or through touching something that had belonged to him. The worldwide popular vote that acclaimed the holiness of this Servant of God was remarkable, and infinite were the solicitations made also by very important people that there be no delay in starting the cause of his Beatification. Faced with such an overwhelming series of events, Father Michael Rua felt that he really had to take action.

A cause of Beatification has two distinct phases, which are carried out on two successive periods of time. The first of these is carried out by the diocese in which the Servant of God spent his life; it's a preparatory step for the second phase, which is carried out in Rome before the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The initial part of the first phase is known as the **ordinary**, **diocesan**, or **Informative Process**; the second part of the first phase calls for a new Process, known as the **Apostolic Process**. The basic difference between these two is that the former begins and unfolds at the order and under the authority of the diocesan Ordinary, while the Holy See orders the latter. Now since the bishop is the ordinary judge in his diocese, the application asking for the introduction of the cause must be addressed to him, and it is he who must decide, first of all, if there is adequate and substantial justification for such a cause. According to the directives addressed to the Bishops on March 12, 1631, by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on the order of Pope Urban XIII, the favorable verdict of the bishop should be motivated principally by the fact that the Servant of God has a reputation of holiness, especially when such a reputation is substantiated by miracles.

The first step, then, was to submit a petition to the Archbishop of Turin, asking him to order that a diocesan process commence. According to canon law, any faithful, any religious institute, chapter, diocese or community, may file such a petition. Although the Archbishop had the power to decide independently of others, Father Michael Rua did feel, nevertheless, that it

[2] Turin, March 19, 1888.

would make it easier for a decision on his petition if he were to obtain the support of the Diocesan Ordinaries of Piedmont and Liguria who had a more direct knowledge of Don Bosco.

For this reason, Father Michael Rua wrote a standard letter to all of them on July 16, 1889, asking them to express their opinion on the matter, either to him, or to the Archbishop himself. He enclosed a copy of the petition he intended to submit to Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda at an opportune time. He declared that he was prepared to incorporate in such petition an amendment or additional remark that the Bishops might suggest. Then Father Michael Rua concluded: "I trust that, in your affectionate recollections of our late lamented Don Bosco, and in consideration of the beneficial influence that his zeal and charity had in your Diocese, as well as in your earnest desire to promote the glory of God, and the edification of the faithful, you will cooperate in honoring this Servant, and be generous in giving me your advice and support, for which I extend in advance my heartfelt thanks."

In the same letter, Father Michael Rua mentioned several cures which, humanly speaking, were indicated as possible miracles. On August 16th, a month later, he informed the Bishops about several more reliable cures, retaining the right of also mentioning other cures for the judges to be appointed for the eventual Diocesan Process, so that they might be assembled according to legal prescription; as evidence helpful to the cause, when it was time to be introduced in Rome.

We do not know the content of all the replies Father Rua received. Among those in our possession, several expressed opinions well worthy of note.

Bishop Magnasco, the Archbishop of Genoa, wrote (on July 25th): "His memory is a genuine source of glory for the Church in these tragic times." Bishop Salvay, the Bishop of Alessandria, wrote (on August 11th): "I am an old friend of this eminent contemporary of mine, who several times honored me with welcome visits, and I always admired his great virtue and impressive works of charity and zeal, which for so many years, caused the world to proclaim him a great Servant of God, or, rather, a Saint; therefore, I cannot but praise most warmly the course of action planned by the Salesians, who are fortunate indeed to have such a Father, and join wholeheartedly, my own humble prayers to theirs, that Your Eminence may grant them the grace they are about to implore, should you so deem advisable for the glory of God, as an ornament for the Catholic Church and for the glorification of Father John Bosco, if, as we hope, this so pleases

God." Bishop Riccardi of Novara wrote on August 15th: "The singularly providential origins of the Institutions founded by Don Bosco, and their subsequent rapid growth, first in Turin and Piedmont, and then throughout Italy, Europe and elsewhere; the truly Catholic spirit of charity that inspired Don Bosco, and which he was able to transmit so marvelously to all his collaborators; the life of constant sacrifice that he lived and all other remarkable virtues of which he gave manifest proof; all of this offers a very valid reason to single out conclusively the outstanding degree of the virtues of that elect soul which was Don Bosco. This fully justifies the reputation of holiness he had during his lifetime and at the time of his death, and which did not only continue, but has further increased since the time of his death. For this reason I feel that those features of complete faith in God and of burning charity toward one's neighbor that we admire in the great saints who were outstanding in their heroic charity and apostolic zeal, were more splendidly evident in Don Bosco. It can truly be said that he did an extraordinary amount of good, and he did it the way of the saints, as it appears from their lives."

Bishop Rosaz, the saintly Bishop of Susa, wrote on August 22nd: "I feel that the reputation of holiness universally enjoyed by Don Bosco is beyond all dispute. . . . I believe that Don Bosco was one of those privileged souls who are summoned by God to withstand the new forms and the new manifestations of evil, and I believe that he responded marvelously to the mission assigned to him by God, to deal with his neighbor and in a particular manner with young people, whom he directed to God with his zeal and holy industry. Don Bosco's beatification (and 'May God not delay this beatification'), will shed a glorious light on a great model for all educators to follow, according to the demands of the times, and on a great protector for all the clergy and all people as well."

Encouraged by such introductory commendations, Father Michael Rua submitted his petition to the Archbishop on the second anniversary of Don Bosco's death. It was not formulated as a personal application. During the first week in September, the fifth General Chapter had met at Valsalice. Before the assembly broke up, all the members approved and signed a petition that had been drawn up by order of Father Michael Rua. This was the same petition that, as we have mentioned, had been sent to the sub-Alpine and Ligurian Bishops. Since none of the prelates to whom it was sent found anything in it that required changes, Father Michael Rua sent it to the Archbishop on January 31, 1890, with an additional letter, from which we quote the following passages:

"Today is the second anniversary of the death of the Servant of God, Don Bosco, and in obedience to the advice of a number of eminent persons, I feel that now is the time that I submit the enclosed petition to Your Eminence, as the wish of Superiors Major of the Congregation of St. Francis of Sales.

"A humble request is herein addressed to Your Eminence, that you formally open the Diocesan Process on the life and virtues of the above-mentioned Servant of God, and on the miraculous cures which were obtained from God through his intercession, after his death.

"Some time ago, Your Eminence told me that you intended to speak about this very process at a forthcoming convention of Bishops. I would be happy if, at such a meeting, the arguments adduced in this petition were examined, so that whatever the ruling may be, we would be in a position to inform the living and posterity that this momentous decision was made according to the norms of Christian prudence.

"I enclose here two copies of reports of cures which, to our human understanding, seem miraculous. These reports were drawn up by Bishop Basil Leto, after he himself had heard the testimony of eyewitnesses. He signed them, and had them certified by your archdiocesan Curia."

These two miraculous cures to which Fr. Michael Rua refers were already described in the next to the last chapter of Volume XVIII, and concerned Mrs. Dellavalle and Mrs. Piovano.

The petition formulated by the Chapter stated that all the conditions required by the Holy See had been met, so that everything might proceed as requested. It also mentioned certain urgent reasons why a speedy action was of the essence.

Turin, September 6, 1889

Your Eminence:

The undersigned priests of the Salesian Congregation, now meeting in General Chapter at Valsalice, in conformity with their Constitutions, take this propitious opportunity to address a humble petition to your Eminence, to ask if you would avail yourself of the faculties granted to Ordinaries by the Apostolic See, to formally open the Diocesan Process on the reputation and holiness, on the virtues and miracles, of the Servant of God, Fr. John Bosco, who died in this city on January 31, 1888, and is buried here. This

petition is filed in order that the cause of his Beatification may be introduced in Rome.

As we ask Your Eminence to open the process formally, we base our petition on the following considerations to which, in your wisdom, Your Eminence will attribute whatever importance you feel they might warrant, in the Lord.

1. Throughout his lifetime, the Rev. John Bosco gave evidence of a great virtue, such as Pope Urban VIII had requested in a circular letter of March 12, 1631, addressed by the Sacred Congregation of Rites to Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, so that an Ordinary may proceed with the formal opening of a Diocesan Process. (See *Lamb, De. serv. Dei Beatif.* Vol. II, Chapter 43, No. 10.) Thousands of persons who knew Don Bosco and were familiar with him, confirm in faith the existence of this eminent virtue, which is corroborated by many of his important charitable and religious foundations, so useful to the Church, which were originated and developed by him in very difficult times, with a truly apostolic zeal. Among the many foundations and undertakings, we wish to mention the foundation of the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales; the foreign Missions that have spread to the farthest corners of the earth; the more than one hundred schools, the Hospices and Oratories for the Christian education of boys and girls; the thousands of priests given to the Church, especially in Piedmont, at a time when there was great scarcity of priests; the great number of writings that he compiled and published in defense of the Catholic faith; the many chapels and magnificent churches that he built from their very foundations and consecrated to the divine cult. Over and above these things, there are many more acts, of both public and private nature, that are well known to Your Eminence.
2. The above-mentioned Servant of God was abundantly endowed with supernatural gifts which he revealed on many occasions, such as the prediction of public events which humanly speaking could not have been foreseen and which came true with all the circumstances he had foreseen. He also revealed these supernatural powers in his ability to read the conscience of others, to reveal their secrets, and in curing the sick nearby or far away, only by blessing them.

3. He enjoyed among the people a general reputation of holiness during his lifetime because of his great virtues, his grand works of zeal and charity, and his extraordinary charisms. This renown for sanctity did not terminate with his death, but grew, instead, even more after it. This is confirmed by the great number of people who appeal to his intercession before God, and by the frequent visits of the faithful to his tomb, where we are now gathered together.
4. Many people who were struck by serious calamities or suffered from very serious illness or were declared incurable, have been healed or received great relief instantly or in a short period of time when they recommended themselves to his intercession after the death of the Servant of God. These are the ones who beg that their testimony be juridically received.
5. In the text: *De Servorum Dei beatificatione et Beatorum Canonizatione*, Pope Benedict XIV stressed several times that in circumstances similar to those described above, it is wise to open formally the Diocesan Process *dum testes de visu supersunt*; [while eyewitnesses are still alive] and specifically, in the General Decree, dated April 23, 1741, on the occasion of the Cause of the Venerable Servant of God, Francis Caracciolo (now St. Francis) the Pope deplored the fact that, as a result of culpable negligence, the Ordinary Process had been deferred until no more *testes de visu* [eyewitnesses] survived (Vol. III, Chapter 3, Nos. 24 and 25). Now, in the case of the Rev. John Bosco, there is an obvious danger that the number of eyewitnesses may decrease; since he died at the ripe age of 73 years, only a few of his friends and acquaintances from his early years are alive today, and within a short time, they, too, will pass away or be prevented by their advanced age from making their personal appearance before a court, to make a legal deposition.
6. There may be some doubts and uncertainties in evaluating some of the acts and pronouncements attributed to him, owing to the Servant of God's multiple and grandiose works, caused also by the difficult times during which he lived, and on account of the questions and contradictions he encountered. If such acts and pronouncements could be investigated while the people who witnessed them or took part in them were still alive, it

would be far easier to ascertain and illustrate the whole truth, and this would facilitate immensely the work of the judges appointed for any eventful Apostolic Process.

7. A period of ten years must elapse before the Act of an Ordinary Process may be opened, unless there is an apostolic dispensation to that effect, and before the cause of Beatification may begin in Rome. After this, the Bishops must address their postulatory letters to the Pope; the writings attributed to the Servant of God must be subjected to investigation and review. The search and review of Don Bosco's works might require a long period of time, mainly because Don Bosco wrote very much and many of his manuscripts are not yet edited and many are the works which have been already published. Because of all of the above steps, it would seem convenient that the Diocesan Process begin as soon as possible. This, however, depends on the free initiative of the Ordinary. If this were to be done, the remaining time, after its presentation in Rome, would be used for the other necessary steps.
8. The Diocesan Process for a number of Servants of God, who, within our own limited memory, died in the odor of sanctity, was formally opened only a little while after their death; this applies, among others, to the Ven. John Vianney, the Cure of Ars, Father Bernard Clausi, and Father Lodovico of Casoria.

We hope that Your Eminence will give our petition your benevolent consideration. This hope is strengthened by the knowledge that the Bishops of Piedmont and Liguria, who had occasion to become personally acquainted with the eminent virtues and great works of the Servant of God share our own opinion and our own hope, as Your Eminence may ascertain from the letters submitted here.

We pray that God may enlighten you on the action you should take and, in the meantime, we reverently kiss your sacred ring and are honored, as always, to be with great esteem,

Your humble, obedient sons in Jesus Christ
(49 signatures follow)

On February 8, 1890, the Cardinal wrote, saying that he had read the petition and wished to assure the Salesians that he would give it proper

consideration, and that he would reserve to himself the right to send out whatever dispositions were necessary.

Even though he was fully entitled to take care of everything by himself, however he thought it better not to act on this alone. This course of action was dictated by his own humility.

The Salesian Superiors did not hide the danger that possibly some Bishops might feel that the time had not yet come for the process to be opened formally and therefore they would pass a negative verdict. This would have created difficulties and the need for repeated recourses.

A propitious opportunity to consult the Bishops presented itself three months later, when all the Bishops of the Diocesan areas of Turin and Vercelli met with the Cardinal for some important business. Twenty was the number of Bishops assembled at the archepiscopal residence.

When questioned during a general assembly meeting on the 8th day of the month, the Bishops said unanimously that the Diocesan Process should, in their opinion, be formally opened. In fact, a few of them, Bishops Manacorda and Richelmy among others, spoke out in great praise of Don Bosco. From that time on, the Cardinal resolved to accept the petition of the Salesians and take immediate action.

While this was happening in Turin, the two men who were to play leading roles in the early days of the Process were both absent from home, and for more than a month. Father Michael Rua was then in Belgium to lay the cornerstone of the house of Liege, which had been accepted by Don Bosco two months before his death. He had already visited the houses of France and London before he got to Liege. Father John Bonetti had just completed the tour of Sicily, and was in Central Italy at that time. Both Fr. Rua and Fr. Bonetti got back to Turin immediately before the feast of Mary Help of Christians, which was celebrated on June 3rd in 1890. But they did not waste any time.

While thousands of faithful souls crowded the Shrine, both inside and out, saying prayers and addressing petitions to Don Bosco's Madonna, the Salesians and the Curia were expediting the preliminary steps, both on the eve of the feast, and on the feast day itself.

The first of these preliminary steps was to appoint a Postulator, whose task it was to promote the acts of the cause, provide for all necessary expenses, submit a list of witnesses to be examined and a list of all the documents that had a bearing on the case, edit the drafting of the Articles on which witnesses were to be examined, and then forward the same to

the Promoter of the Faith. The task of being Postulator by right belonged to Fr. Michael Rua, who was to be the Actor of the cause; but when an Actor is unable to fulfill the obligations of such a role, he is allowed to appoint a representative. So Fr. Michael Rua empowered Fr. John Bonetti to take his place, and authorized him to appoint an assistant Postulator for any other Curia, should this prove necessary.

As soon as he received this authorization, Father Bonetti went to work on the 3rd of the month, to expedite the second preliminary step, which was to submit to the Archbishop a formal petition for the beginning of the Informative Process. His Eminence granted the petition, and in a Rescript constituted the Tribunal that same day, scheduling the first hearing for the following day. This was the third preliminary step.

The tribunal was formed as follows:

Canon Bartholomew Roetti, Vicar General, delegate judge.

Canon Stanislaus Gazzelli, assistant judge,

Canon Aloysius Nasi, assistant judge.

Canon Michael Sorasio, Promoter of the Faith.

Rev. Mauro Rocchietti, Registrar.

Mr. Peter Aghemo, Bailiff.

Since two *testes instrumentarii* [two instrumental witnesses] were also required to confirm the validity of the acts with their signatures, Bishop Forchieri and the Rev. Diverio were appointed.

Fully cognizant of the solemnity and importance of it all, Father Michael Rua made an official announcement to the Congregation three days later, and ordered special, daily prayers to implore the guidance of Heaven. He also recommended that the Congregation support these general prayers with a scrupulously virtuous behavior. "We should show to everybody that we are not unworthy disciples of a Master for whom the Church has seen fit to open the Cause of Beatification so soon," he wrote.

The Cardinal presided at the first hearing. After the *Veni Creator* had been sung to invoke the Holy Spirit, the petition of the Postulator was read out, and the decree by which the Ordinary accepted it, and for which the judges were appointed. Then the ritual oath was taken. First of all, the Cardinal took it *tacto pectore,* then the judge delegate, the two assistant judges, the Promoter of the Faith, the Registrar and the Bailiff.

They swore not only to perform their different duties faithfully and diligently, but also to keep secret the questions put to the witnesses, and

the depositions made. Anyone who violated this oath would incur automatically the penalty of excommunication reserved to the Pope. The binding oath of secrecy would hold them until the findings of the Process were made public; this would not be until all the witnesses had been questioned.

Everyone then signed the oath he had taken. The minutes were read out, and the chancellor handed the documents to the Registrar, who issued a formal receipt for them.

Before the Cardinal adjourned the hearing, he said a few words, stressing the importance of the matter in which they were engaged; and in speaking of the oath that they would do their duty with the greatest diligence, he recommended that they all pray that, through the intercession of the blessed Virgin, things might proceed to the greater glory of God and the advantage of Holy Church.

The second hearing was scheduled for June 27th, and again the Cardinal presided. Father Bonetti submitted the Articles to the Court.

The Articles consist in a concise summary of the life, virtues, acts, and miracles of the Servant of God, all of them being listed in short, numbered paragraphs; these paragraphs are not compiled in any definitive or final way, but merely provide material for investigation.

The Articles constitute the fundamental premises for the causes, and must be proven true by testimony. There are pre-established rules for the order of their compilation: life and works, theological virtues, cardinal virtues, moral virtues (poverty, humility, chastity), heroic virtues in general, supernatural powers, fame of holiness during lifetime, holy death, funeral, burial, fame as a saint after death, miracles occurring after death. In Don Bosco's case, the number of articles submitted was 807. Furthermore, the Postulator submitted a preliminary list of witnesses for questioning, and reserved his right to call others, if necessary. Lastly, he pronounced what is known as the *iuramentum calumniae,* that is to say, he swore not only to say what was true, but also that he would not use any deceitful or fraudulent device, nor try to corrupt the judges.

With this hearing, the Diocesan Process was finally fixed.

Chapter 3

From the Ordinary Process Held in Turin to the Roman Decree That Declared Don Bosco Venerable

The main purpose of an Ordinary Process is to ascertain what pertains to the renown of holiness, to the virtues in general, and to the miracles of a Servant of God. The Tribunal, constituted as we have already described, began its work on July 23, 1890, by swearing in the witnesses summoned by the Postulator and by other appointed official members. They all took an oath that they would tell the truth and maintain secrecy about the questions put to them, as well as the answers they gave, under the pain of perjury, and of excommunication that was reserved particularly to the Pope.

As required, the people called to give testimony had either lived with the Servant of God, or had witnessed his virtues with their own eyes, or had heard eyewitnesses talk about them. First and foremost among them were Bishop Bertagna, Bishop Cagliero and the two Servants of God, Father Michael Rua and the Father Murialdo. Other persons were summoned during the course of the process, so that, at the final count, 32 witnesses had been questioned, and 13 co-witnesses, that is, those who had been summoned to testify on special matters together with an official witness.

When the questioning of Bishop Bertagna was completed, the judges suspended the hearings because it was now vacation time, and additionally because they had other commitments. Then, as winter approached, Canon Gazzelli became sick, Canon Nasi fell down and fractured a leg, while Canon Roetti was appointed Superior of Cottolengo's Little House and no longer had time to devote to the Process. So, on the advice of Bishop Caprara and the consent of Canon Sorasio who was the Public Prosecutor, the Cardinal wrote to the Sacred Congregation of Rites between January and February 1891, to ask the Secretary of that Congregation to petition the Holy Father to grant some special faculties, in order to ensure the smooth development of the hearings. One such faculty was that of the appointment of some judges who were neither high dignitaries nor doctors of law; and also the appointment of a greater number of judges, so that, should any of them be prevented from attending, he could be replaced immediately by someone else. This would make it possible to hold more frequent hearings.

Bishop Caprara undertook to speak to the Pope in person about it on February 16th, but quite contrary to the general expectations, the Pope felt that he ought not grant such a request. Even though he did not disapprove the fact that the Process went on so fast, yet he felt that he shouldn't grant that authorization because the cause was introduced much too soon after the death of the Servant of God. He also felt that the Holy See should not enter the picture so soon. He said that this could be done later, if necessary. This did not mean that the faculties were denied, but merely that they were delayed. In the meantime, the Bishop suggested what was needed to be done so that the hearings might proceed: the judges first appointed would relinquish their mandate and the Cardinal would appoint others who were doctors of law, as the ecclesiastical rules prescribed.

This was done, and hearings were resumed on April 9th. The adjunct judge, Gazzelli, now became delegate judge in place of Roetti, who yielded place to Canon Molinari, while Canon Ramello filled Nasti's place. As the third judge, Canon Pechenino was appointed.

But now the hearings suffered two serious setbacks with the death of Cardinal Alimonda and the death of the Postulator, Father John Bonetti; they died in May and June of that same year—1891—respectively. Gazelli was elected Capitular Vicar, with the authority of Ordinary. Immediately, he gave orders that the hearings were to continue. At the first hearing at which he presided, he appointed Molinari as the new delegate judge (this was June 22nd), and Father Michael Rua appointed Father Dominic Belmonte, the Prefect General of the Pious Society, to take Father John Bonneti's place.

Things went on this way for two years until Molinari's death, and Gazzelli and Ramello resigned. On November 9, 1893, the new Archbishop, David of the Conti Riccardi family, appointed Canon Morozzo della Rocco as delegate judge, with the Rev. Alasia as adjunct judge.

The questioning of witnesses was resumed, and proved to be long, and laborious. The many, complicated vicissitudes of Don Bosco's life, and his many contacts with people, required a lengthy and careful investigation. It is therefore not surprising if the Process lasted seven years, and did not end until April 1, 1897, in the presence of Bishop Riccardi at the Salesian Oratory.

In commemorating this period of seven years, Father Michael Rua wrote in a circular letter dated August 8, 1907: "The judges gave proof of great ability in coordinating the testimony of so many witnesses, and it is

interesting to note that, instead of growing weary of their difficult, protracted task, they seemed only to wax more enthusiastic every day."

The Diocesan Tribunal held 562 hearings, and the depositions filled 5178 legal-sized pages bound in 22 volumes. The depositions of Fathers Michael Rua and Joachim Berto filled the greater part of them; the testimony of Fr. Michael Rua was necessarily lengthy because of his long and intimate association with Don Bosco. The testimony of Father Berto was also lengthy because he was called to testify regarding the supernatural events, which were disputed so many times, and regarding the controversy with Archbishop Gastaldi.

All these collected documents were then carefully copied and authenticated, placed in a wooden box, sealed and handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites for examination. This Congregation was then to decide whether or not the ordinary Informative Process had been conducted properly before proposing to the Holy Father the introduction of the cause and the opening of the Apostolic Process.

But no examination of a cause may begin before a Cardinal has been appointed to examine it and report on the findings to the Congregations that are called upon to discuss the Cause. This Cardinal is called **Ponens**, that is, the person who reports on the cause. His nomination is reserved to the Pope. For the Cause of Don Bosco, Leo XIII appointed as **Ponens** Cardinal Parocchi.

Then a Postulator, who was to be a permanent resident of Rome, was needed. For this task, the name of Father Caesar Cagliero, Procurator General of the Pious Society, was proposed, and was accepted by the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Father Dominic Belmonte's title was changed to that of Vice-Postulator.

The General Promoter of the Faith plays a very important role in this Congregation. In everyday language he is known as the Devil's Advocate, as though he actually takes the role of the Devil himself in trying to disprove the saintliness of a Servant of God. His task is to raise objections against any and all testimony indicating the existence of virtues, or fame of holiness. His role is the equivalent to that of the King's Public Prosecutor in criminal trials. The title usually given is really quite inappropriate, for his action is just the opposite, since his task is to bring up all the difficulties and objections known as *animadversiones,* in order that they may be solved beyond any possible shadow of doubt by the Postulator. Finally, an advocate is needed to assume the defense of the case, with the assistance of a Procurator, who is to work with him.

Before the documents that had been sent from Turin could begin to be examined in Rome, all the published or unpublished writings attributed to the Servant of God had to be searched for and examined: this included tracts, pamphlets, sermons, poems, and letters, regardless of whether these had been written by him personally or by others via his dictation, as well as any works that had been published by his direct order. It would have only been a waste of time if proceedings had continued and then it had been discovered that some of the writings contained thoughts conflicting with pure doctrine in regard to either faith or morals. It had been arranged that the work of research would be done in various centers, but in the end, it was all concentrated in one place, where the Servant of God had lived, in order to accelerate things. After the death of Bishop Riccardi in 1898, his successor, Bishop Augustine Richelmy, issued an order on October 25th, acting on instructions given him by the Holy See, whereby "in the name of holy obedience, and under pain of the usual censure" the faithful of the Archdiocese were to submit any writings coming under the above heading that they might have in their possession. These papers were to be handed either to His Lordship or to the Rector Major of the Salesians, or to the pastor of the individual concerned. Moreover, if anyone knew of any papers that had been written by Don Bosco and were now treasured by some private household, or in some archive or library, they were to duly inform the Archbishop or their pastor about it. As Superior General of the Pious Society, Father Michael Rua also instructed all the Salesians to send him immediately any letter, or other written document penned by the Servant of God, that they might have in their possession. He gave these instructions in a circular letter.

A deadline of two months had been set for compliance with this order, but the requisition of documents continued for approximately two more years before it was decided that, in order not to delay excessively the beginning of the Cause, all documents that had been collected up to that time and verified were to be sent to Rome, so that the Congregation of Rites might proceed forthwith in the examination. Printed works and manuscripts were then subdivided into nine categories: 1. Historic and scientific works (6); 2. Catechetical and polemical writings (19); 3. Biographical writings (17); 4. Lives of Saints (8); 5. Lives of the Popes, from St. Peter to St. Melchiades inclusively (20); 6. Marian (9); 7. Ascetical (8); 8. Lighter reading matter (5); Several manuscripts dealing with the above subjects (17).

A second collection of documents sent to the Congregation contained a great number of his writings of lesser importance: private letters, various

circular letters, documents addressed to the Holy See or to Cardinals, pamphlets written in defense of Salesian schools, the house Rules with appendix dealing with the Preventive System, various contracts involving different people, negotiations for or projects about the openings of Salesian Houses, short poems, sermons, summarized or sketchy notes for sermons delivered, topics of and leads on sermons heard. Copies of his personal correspondence alone filled 1420 pages of protocol paper. As Archivist for the Congregation, Father Joachim Berto made copies of these and other documents. Then Cardinal Richelmy sent out all this material (in the meantime he had been elevated to this high rank), for the so-called *processiculus diligentiarum.*

This is the title given to a juridical investigation made in order to verify whether or not every precaution has been taken in the collating of the writings, while the copies are checked to see if they are faithful to the original. The Archbishop who had been appointed for this task by the Holy See with the title of Apostolic Delegate Judge, appointed an under-delegate with the approval of Rome, on June 5, 1900, and a special Tribunal was constituted. As the seat designated for the hearings His Eminence chose the Salesian Oratory, where 18 hearings took place from June 10, 1900, to January 30, 1901. A certified copy of each meeting was sent after every hearing to the Congregation of Rites.

During the proceedings, both the Postulator and the Assistant Postulator died. Father John Marenco, the new Procurator General, replaced the Postulator; the Assistant Postulator was replaced by the new Prefect General, Father Philip Rinaldi.

At this point, that is, at the end of the Informative Process when eyewitnesses are still alive, it is necessary to expedite the Apostolic Process *ne pereant in causa probationes,* that is, so that their testimony might not be lost either through death or for other reasons. Consequently, the Postulator, Father John Marenco, filed a petition immediately, asking for a prompt issuance of the so-called *litterae remissoriales.* With these letters, the Pope orders that the cause be introduced by the Congregation of Rites, which then opens its investigation, in order to go on with further processes *auctoritate apostolica.* But four things are necessary before the Pope issues or endorses such an order: to complete the examination of all writings, in Rome; to complete the process *de non cultu* carried out by the Ordinary; to prepare the *Positio*; to collect the *litterae postulatoriae.*

We shall first describe the last of these proceedings. In order to obtain the *Remissiory Letters,* the petition of the *Actors of the Cause* must be accompanied by other petitions made by eminent persons, such as Cardinals, Bishops,

lay princes, Superiors of religious orders, Canonical Chapters, Pious Societies, etc. This is done in the form of letters, which are known as *Postulatory Letters*; they are addressed to the *Pope,* and are submitted by the Postulator. In these letters an earnest appeal is made that the Holy Father condescend to grant the petition of these faithful, by signing with his own hand, and as soon as possible, the commitment, i.e. the order that the Cause begin. Attached to these letters are the reasons given for submitting such a petition. After soliciting such letters far and wide, the Postulator received 341 of them during the two-year period 1902–1903; 23 of them were from Cardinals. After they had been submitted to the Holy Father, they were returned to the Postulator by the Congregation of Rites so that he might choose sixty of the more important among them and have them printed, before he handed them over to the Procurator of the Cause.

Such letters are not only printed, but form an integral part of the *Positio,* which is drawn up by the Advocate for the defense. This document also consists of two other very important parts: the *Summarium* and the *Informatio.* Morani, the Advocate, asked the Procurator to choose extracts from the depositions of witnesses in the Acts of the Ordinary Process, and have them printed and divided into different categories, according to whether they concerned theological, cardinal or moral virtues, religious vows, the reputation of holiness during the lifetime of the Servant of God, and after his death, the funeral and burial, the graces and miracles attributed to his intercession. This constitutes the so-called *Summarium,* and Latin comments are entered in the margins, indicating statements made by witnesses. While the Procurator was attending to this, the Advocate compiled his *Informatio,* which consisted of two parts: one being a comprehensive description of Don Bosco's life, the other an exposition of how he had been virtuous to the degree of heroism, which created his renown as a saint.

A third preliminary step demands that the Tribunal called for by the Ordinary ascertain whether or not the decree of Urban VIII had been properly obeyed. This decree prohibits giving any ecclesiastical veneration to a Servant of God who died in the odor of sanctity. This process is carried out by the Curia in whose territory the Servant of God's tomb is located, for it is mainly around the tomb that such cults originate. Besides the tomb, the Tribunal checks the room where the Servant of God died, and any other place where one might suspect the existence of traces of such a cult. Legal evidence is required to confirm the report of the findings, and this calls for four witnesses, two of whom are official appointees. The notary records the results of the investigation undertaken in the minutes of the process, and

a signed, sealed copy of the minutes is then sent to Rome. The investigation did not take very long, and everything was completed by June 4, 1904.

The examination of all of Don Bosco's writings required a good deal of time. This was the fourth preliminary step. It's the task of the Cardinal **Ponens** to entrust this examination to censors who are theologians and belong to the Congregation of Rites. It was Cardinal Parocchi who took care of this, but Cardinal Parocchi died in 1903; and the successor of Leo XIII appointed Cardinal Tripepi as **Ponens**. It was to him that the findings of the censors were submitted. A considerable group of documents concerned the controversy between Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi.

Upon receiving the report of the Promoter of the Faith, Bishop Verde, Pius X issued instructions that, in view of the peculiar nature of these documents, they were to be examined apart from the others. From the standpoint of theological censorship, these documents, like all the others, were above reproach, but because of the things they concerned and the dignity of the people they involved, it was felt that they should be subjected to a very careful examination, in view of anything that might reflect on the proceedings on Don Bosco's virtues.

A special secret examination was undertaken to facilitate a more reliable and fully impartial evaluation of the conduct of the Servant of God throughout this protracted, difficult and distressing disagreement. A Consultant was then called upon to render a *votum pro veritate,* and he submitted an eloquent report in which the good reasons of truth and justice were clearly defined. The report ended with the conscientious statement that the careful examination of the whole disagreement had failed to produce any element which might constitute a serious impediment to *ad ulteriora* [subsequent proceedings], or obstruct in any way the regular discussion of Don Bosco's heroic virtues. Whereupon, the writings were approved with a decree issued on August 22, 1906.

In the meantime, the Promoter of the Faith had continued with his own task, which was to extract from all the assembled material relating to the Cause elements on which to base his *animadversiones,* or objections to the legality of evidence produced, or against Don Bosco's virtues, and his reputation of holiness. These objections were then printed, as also were the refutations by which the Advocate resolved them so that there could no longer be either doubt or uncertainty. Then the Information [*Informatio*], the Summary [*Summarium*], the Objections [*Animadversiones*] and Relative Answers were bound together in a single volume, copies of which were

given, as it is prescribed, to the Cardinal **Ponens**, the Cardinal Prefect, all the Cardinals and Prelates who were officers of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the Secretary, the Promoter and the Vice-Promoter of the Faith. This had to be done forty-five days before the date scheduled for the discussion.

Finally, after many more formalities which need not be described here, on July 23, 1907, the Cardinal **Ponens**, Vives y Tuto, who had been appointed **Ponens** when Cardinal Tripepi died, raised before the Ordinary Congregation, the issue whether or not the Commissions, that is, the mandate that the Cause should be introduced, should be signed.

The Cardinals and Consultants listened to the Cardinal's report, and cast their favorable vote, but subordinated it to the approval of His Holiness. The next day the Holy Father, Pius X, signed the Commission's verdict.

This papal signature presents a peculiar feature: it has the word *Placet* followed by the Pope's Christian name received at Baptism. In this instance it read: *Placet, Josephus*. Once this was done, the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, Bishop Panici, wrote out the decree that was made public by posting it on the church doors, and by publication in the Bulletin of *Acta Apostolicae Sedis.*

Here is the translated text:

God, the Maker and Supreme Lord of the human family, just as in times gone by, so also in our times, provides with care for the ills of the Christian Society by coming to its assistance with suitable help and remedies made evident by chosen people, outstanding because of their brilliant and operative virtues and who seem to succeed in having all people share their vital, life-giving spirit, and their flaming ardor.

In the century just past, one of these men sent by Divine Providence was Father John Bosco, who defended and enriched God's Church. He followed the footsteps of Saint Joseph Calasanzius, St. Vincent de Paul, and St. John Baptiste de la Salle, and others of equal virtue and stature by making himself all to all, that all might be saved. Together with the Pious Society that he founded, along with other institutions which he also founded, he devoted his whole life to the task of leading men to their eternal salvation, and especially to the task of educating and instructing young people in their religion and in the field of studies and/or the arts.

The Servant of God was born August 16, 1815, in Murialdo, close to Castelnuovo d'Asti. He was the son of honest, pious parents, Francis Bosco and Margaret Occhiena. He lost his father at the tender age of three, and grew up under the loving, watchful care of his widowed mother, who gave

all her children a luminous example of devotion to work, honesty and virtue. While living at home and with much love, this pious child worked in the fields to earn his keep.

He gave proof of his talent and of his extraordinary memory at the age of ten, when he first began to study under the guidance of Father Calosso, the chaplain of his town, who gave him hospitality and considered him a pleasant student. When his teacher died some time later, John did not relinquish his studies completely, but did go back to his work in the field as a peasant and as a shepherd for some time, until his pious mother agreed to further his earnest desire to study. She sent him everyday to Castelnuovo, some ten kilometers away from home, where he regularly attended classes in the municipal public school, and at the same time he learned the first rudiments of Latin from his pastor.

Later he moved to Chieri; he went through five years of high school from which he graduated with distinction, besides getting a good reputation and winning as well several prizes. At the same time, he did all he could to encourage the good boys in his class to persevere along the path of virtue, while he tried to lead the more wayward pupils back to the right path. In order to accomplish this, John invited all the boys at set hours on certain days to meet for what he called the Cheerfulness Club. At these gatherings he entertained the boys with innocent games suitable for their age, alternating games with prayers. Among other fruits of this youthful activity we can count the conversion of a young Jew to the Catholic Faith, to the joy of his companions.

The choice of this way of life and of these occupations can only be construed as a preparation for a nobler calling. In his uncertainty as to the way of life he ought to choose, the Servant of God turned for advice to the pastor of Castelnuovo, the Rev. Cinzano, and more particularly to the Rev. Joseph Cafasso, now Saint, whose advice and example he followed thereafter.

In 1834, at the age of twenty, he received his clerical cassock. This happened in the church dedicated to St. Michael the Archangel, in Castelnuovo, and on the feast of St. Michael the Archangel, September 29th. On that occasion, he wrote down several pious resolutions which he read in front of the picture of the Virgin Mary, with a firm will to be faithful to them.

With the help of Saint Joseph Cafasso, he then enrolled in the Archdiocesan Seminary of Chieri, and remained there for six years to study philosophy and theology. He won a special prize every year. He also studied

Ecclesiastical History, Greek, Hebrew, French, and other subjects. He was overjoyed when, together with a few devout companions, among whom Louis Comollo was particularly commendable, he was allowed by his Superiors to receive Holy Communion several times a week, although at that time this was entirely unusual. During his stay at the Chieri Seminary, he continued among the dayboys and boarders of Chieri the apostolic work first started at Murialdo and Castelnuovo.

After he had received the Orders of Sub-Diaconate and Diaconate, only a few days before he was ordained a priest, he drew up and committed to paper new, and more detailed resolutions for his future life. After his ordination, he celebrated his first Mass in Turin, in the church of St. Francis of Assisi; his second Mass, in the church of Our Lady of Consolation; the third and fourth Masses in Chieri, and on the feast of Corpus Christi he celebrated his solemn Mass at Castelnuovo, with a great participation of people. On his way home that evening, he passed by the very spot where he once had a presentiment of his apostolic work among children, and he gave thanks to God, using Psalm 112: *Laudate, pueri Dominum* [Praise the Lord, ye children].

Margaret, his pious mother, welcomed her son John, now a priest, with maternal joy and affection and exhorted him to meditate on and imitate Jesus Who suffered so much for our sake. For herself, she only asked him to pray for her, and to remember her always when he said Mass.

He went to Turin in the summer of 1841, and on the advice of Saint Joseph Cafasso, attended courses in Moral Theology and Sacred Eloquence for three years, while he devoted his priestly ministry to prisons and hospitals. He then began to gather together some boys and homeless children, in churches, oratories, or elsewhere, on feast days, in order to give them some sort of education. He met with many difficulties and obstacles, but with the help of God he overcame them, and finally he took refuge in a house located in the borough of Valdocco, near Turin, as though he had at last reached the harbor.

When this house, or shed to describe it more accurately, was transformed within one single week to something fairly decent, the Servant of God obtained the necessary authorization to solemnly bless it, and he dedicated it to Almighty God in honor of St. Francis de Sales, on Sunday, April 12, 1846. The Archbishop of Turin, Louis Fransoni, granted a number of privileges to the Oratory and to its Rector, while King Charles Albert took it under his protection.

Later, he opened two more oratories, dedicating one to St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the other to the Guardian Angel. These were attended by over five hundred boys. He also opened day, night, and Sunday schools for the benefit of young apprentices. When the number of pupils continued to increase uninterruptedly, he selected a few boys from among them, and gave them special courses so that they, in their turn, could teach their companions in his Oratories and schools.

In April 1847 he was so moved by the abject poverty and destitution of some of the boys that he welcomed them, with open arms, to the little house he had rented next door to the Oratory to provide living quarters for himself and his mother, who helped him get what was needed to feed and educate the young guests. This humble dwelling was the cradle of the Home of St. Francis of Sales, which housed thirty boys in 1851, and four hundred boys in 1860, when the premises had been enlarged, while in 1870 the total reached eight hundred.

At first, Don Bosco found employment for the boys in the workshops of the city, so that they could learn, or pursue their various crafts. He would often visit these workshops, to inquire how they were behaving themselves, and about the progress they were making in their work. Later, in his desire to better protect their morals, and their faith, he opened workshops at the Oratory, in 1865. Whenever he saw that some of the boys were distinguishing themselves among their companions for greater talent and virtue and seemed fit, he would introduce them to the study of Letters and Sciences. He himself taught them until he found some priests willing to help him from among the professors of the Diocesan Seminary, when it was closed and the Archbishop of Turin, Louis Fransoni, had been sent into exile.

The history of the Oratory and Hospice up to 1870 was proud to record as their products several priests who later held positions in the archdiocese and were of great service, not only to the Turin Archdiocese, but to other Dioceses of the Piedmont Region as well.

In educating boys, John Bosco always bore in mind the divine maxim: *Initium sapientiae timor Domini* [The Fear of God is the beginning of wisdom]. He therefore educated them with a method of loving vigilance and preventive charity. At the same time, he never allowed them to be idle, even for a single moment, but kept them occupied in suitable innocent games. It was with this thought in mind that he introduced the subjects of gymnastics and music into their school curriculum.

In order that the Institution he had founded for the benefit of Youth might not disappear as time went on, but might become a permanent

institution, the Servant of God founded the Salesian Society in 1859 in Turin, after consulting with men of great wisdom, notably with St. Joseph Cafasso. The Roman Pontiff, Pius IX, personally and verbally supported this project. By unanimous decision of the Chapter Members, Don Bosco was designated as its Director, with the title of Rector Major. The Society grew and prospered more and more, day after day, and in 1864 it was praised, and commended by the Apostolic See, which approved and confirmed it with a decree on March 1, 1869.

In the meantime, a pious priest, Dominic Pestarino, in his native village, Mornese, in the diocese of Acqui, had founded a Congregation for women, called the Daughters of Mary. Subsequently, the title of Help of Christians was added to Mary's name. At Father Pestarino's request, John Bosco adopted it as his own, and appointed a Salesian as its Director in 1872, when the original founder died. Thus, the religious community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was considered a second order of the Salesian Society, to which a Third Order, the Pious Union of Cooperators for men and women, was soon added. This was approved by the Apostolic See on May 9, 1876, and endowed with privileges and indulgences.

Then came the *Salesian Bulletin,* and the popular historical and liturgical publications, the *Catholic Readings,* that were also used in schools, to promote and increase with sound doctrine the spirit of unity and charity among the Salesian Confreres, and to ward off the snares and errors of evil people and of heretics.

Lastly, we should recall: *the Missions* spread out and flourishing in different parts of Europe and of the American Continent; *the Association, popularly known as the Association of the Sons of Mary,* meant to cultivate adult vocations for priestly and religious life in over fifty Houses; *the many handsomely decorated churches built in several regions,* foremost among them being the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin and the Church of the Sacred Heart at Castro Pretorio in Rome, which was built at the request of Pope Leo XIII and consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, together with a vast boarding school which provides different academic fields of study and technical education for the young.

The Servant of God was spared neither financial straits nor contradictions, but, with the help of God, he overcame everything with a submissive spirit, with extraordinary patience and fortitude. Don Bosco, hard hit by such troubles and weakened by tremendous weariness, on December 20, 1887, was stricken by a disease that lasted nearly forty days. Growing steadily worse, yet comforted by the Sacraments of Holy Church, Don

Bosco still gave suitable and helpful advice to anyone who went to see him. He exhorted his closest collaborators, Father Michael Rua and Bishop John Cagliero, to inform the other Salesians about his last recommendations. As he was dying, he warmly recommended his own soul, and his Congregation, to the Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda. He was privileged to receive the blessing of the Archbishop of Paris, Cardinal Richard, who was on his way back to his diocese from Rome, and who obliged by imparting his blessing. This he did on condition that, in his turn, Don Bosco might bless him and his whole diocese.

Almost every day during his illness he received the Divine Eucharist with devotion. He received it for the last time on the feast of St. Francis of Sales. He kept on repeating: *Fiat voluntas tua. . . . In manus tuas, Domine . . . Maria, Mater gratiae . . . Diligite inimicos vestros. . . . Quaerite regnum Dei . . . Alter Alterius onera portate. Exemplum bonorum operum* [Your will be done. . . . Into your hands, O Lord . . . Mary, Mother of Grace . . . Love Your enemies. . . . Seek God's kingdom. . . . Carry one another's burden. . . . the example of good deeds]. Early in the morning on January 31, 1888, as he heard the bells ring out, he hailed the blessed Virgin and cried out, "*Long Live Mary!*" A little while later, at around five A.M., in the presence of all of the Superiors and of the members representing the entire Congregation, teary-eyed and with many prayers on their lips, Don Bosco passed away. Their beloved founder and master, John Bosco, had fallen asleep in the Lord.

As soon as word of his death spread, the whole city was plunged into sorrow and mourning. A vast crowd of people from Turin and visitors to the city hastened to see Don Bosco's body vested in priestly robes, as it lay for public viewing in the church of St. Francis of Sales, where solemn rites for the dead were celebrated. His remains were then transported to the Missionary school at Valsalice that had only recently been opened, where they were received with great solemnity and given honorable burial.

Meanwhile, the fame of the Servant of God's holiness that had already been acknowledged during his lifetime increased so extensively after his death that an Ordinary Process was initiated, and later transferred to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. When everything was ready and his writings had been examined, nothing remained to obstruct further proceedings, which were requested by the Rev. John Baptist Marenco, the Procurator and Postulator General of the Salesian Congregation. On the basis of the Postulatory Letters received from several Cardinals of the holy Church,

from a number of Bishops, from Cathedral Chapters, and from Superiors of Religious Orders, His Eminence Cardinal Joseph Calasanzius Vives y Tuto, the **Ponens** or Relator of the Cause, submitted the following question for debate to the Ordinary Congregation of Sacred Rites in the Vatican, on the day specified hereunder: *Should the Commission's verdict to introduce the Cause be signed under the circumstances and for the reasons submitted?* The report was then read aloud by the Cardinal **Ponens** in person, after which the Rev. Alexander Verde, Promoter of the Faith, delivered his verbal declaration, and read a written statement. Then, after careful examination, the Cardinals and other Reverend Officers of the Sacred Congregation of Rites decided that they should formulate an affirmative answer, namely, that if it so pleases His Holiness, the Commission's verdict should be signed.

July 23, 1907

Whereupon, the Cardinal here undersigned, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, reported on the above to the Holy Father, Pius X, and His Holiness ratified the verdict of the Sacred Congregation, and deigned to set his signature to the Commission's verdict of Introduction of the Cause of the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, priest, and Founder of the Pious Salesian Society, on the 28th day of this same month and year.

Seraphinus, Cardinal Cretoni
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

Diomedus Panici
Archbishop of Laodicea
Secretary of the S.C. of Rites

With this decree the Cause was introduced; i.e., the Holy See had sanctioned the proceedings all the way to his canonization. By virtue of this decree, no further action in connection with the Cause might be undertaken by any ecclesiastical authority without authorization from the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Once the cause was introduced, the Servant of God was entitled to the appellation of *Venerable,* which still does not authorize any public cult.[1] Don Bosco's successor, interpreting the general

[1] A Decree issued by the Congregation of Rites on August 26,1913, and included in the Code of Canon Law, has now established that this appellation be conferred on Servants of God only after the heroicity of the virtues has been duly confirmed, and acknowledged.

feeling, intoned a jubilant hymn as soon as he received the official communication of the decree. On August 6th, he wrote to all his beloved sons in the Congregation as follows:

"*Don Bosco is now Venerable!* This is the good news we have been waiting for and have longed for. It has finally gone through the telegraph wires and has reached us the evening of July 24th just past. This is the joyous announcement that has been reprinted in newspapers of all languages, and has gladdened the hearts of all Don Bosco's countless friends and admirers. I am sure that our missionaries have already heard the echo of this happy event, even though they are far away in the immense, desert wastelands of America.

"Nevertheless, I did not want to make any official announcement to you before having the opportunity to read with my own eyes the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and imprint a grateful kiss on that signature with which the Supreme Pontiff, Pius X, agreed to confirm the favorable vote. It was our good Procurator General, Father John Marenco, who played such an important part in conducting the proceedings up to their triumphant conclusion, who recently gave me this ineffable consolation when he called on me and personally delivered the precious document.

"*Don Bosco is Venerable!* When I had the sad duty to inform with trembling hand the Salesian Congregation that Don Bosco had died, I wrote that that was the saddest news I had ever given, or would have to give, in my whole life. Now, the news that Don Bosco is Venerable is the sweetest, most cherished announcement that I could possibly give you before I, too, go to my grave. As I think of it, a joyous hymn of thanksgiving bursts from my heart. If for many years we witnessed our beloved Father overwhelmed by the weight of unspeakable suffering, sacrifices and persecutions, how consoling it is to see the Catholic Church engaged in his glorification before the whole world. If we ever had had any doubts about our Pious Society being the work of God, now our spirit can be at peace, since, in its ineffable wisdom, the Church has declared our Founder, Venerable. How grateful we should be to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius X, who graciously proposed the Cause of Don Bosco to the examination of the Sacred Congregation, far sooner than is usually done, even when people die in the odor of sanctity!

"When the **Ponens** of Don Bosco's Cause, Cardinal Vives y Tuto, congratulated the Pious Salesian Society on Don Bosco's Venerability, he spoke of him in such a way that we wept for joy, and realized how Divine Providence had blessed us by allowing us to be his sons. We are continually

receiving letters of congratulations from all parts of the world, written by illustrious people who share the joy of the Salesian family. May God and Mary Help of Christians be glorified for everything, and may everything enhance the glory of Don Bosco. May the words of the Gospel come true: *qui se humiliat, exaltabitur* [he who humbles himself, shall be exalted]."

This reference to Cardinal Vives y Tuto requires an explanation. Only a few hours after the audience of Cardinal Cretoni with the Pope, His Eminence had called in person at the House of the Sacred Heart to extend his cordial congratulations to the Salesians, and told the Provincial, Father Conelli: "I did not come here solely to congratulate the Congregation, but also to pray in the temple that Don Bosco built for the Sacred Heart, so that I may commend my soul to him, as my patron in Heaven. I am very glad that I was obliged to make a profound study of Don Bosco's life, because it helped me realize how great a Saint he was. When we see a Congregation that does truly good work (as your Congregation does), we may safely say: 'A Saint was undoubtedly its very root and foundation.' But I myself touched all this with my own hands, since I recently had to study the life of your Founder, Don Bosco. What Heavenly charisms he had! One might easily say that God revealed to him the future of his Congregation, of his sons and his pupils in what seemed almost like a continuous cinematographic projection! And what treasures of virtue did he possess, besides his Heavenly charisms! He loved Our Lady with a love that equals the love of the greatest saints; his devotion to the Passion of Our Lord nearly suffocated him; he possessed all the religious virtues to perfection. And as an infallible mark of sanctity, he was extraordinary even in ordinary things, so that nothing would transpire in his everyday life.

"You see, I have made an extensive study of Don Bosco's life, and more and more do I realize how providential a figure he was. Last Monday, I was still working at one-thirty in the morning, to prepare for the hearing on Tuesday. Eight Cardinals attended the hearing, which was very favorable. Believe me, it is already a prodigious thing that, after a life so full of contacts with all kinds of people, the Cause of his Beatification should have been introduced only nineteen years after his death. The whole world is moved by this decree, and it will surely procure extraordinary graces for everybody, according to each person's state of life. For my part, I have chosen Don Bosco as my very special patron." This was the gist of the Cardinal's conversation.[2]

[2] Fr. Conelli's letter to Fr. Rua, Rome, July 25, 1907.

The decree of July 24, 1907, removed all signs of mourning from Don Bosco's tomb, loosened the tongues of all people in order to magnify Don Bosco's natural and supernatural greatness, and urged them to follow his example. Even Heaven seemed to want to ratify that decree.

Sister Joan Lenci, a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, had been confined to her bed with an intestinal tumor for almost two years. The doctors no longer held out any hopes for her recovery. But Sister Joan put her trust in the intercession of the Servant of God, and began a novena in his honor. The novena ended July 23, 1907, exactly the day when it was a question of introducing Don Bosco's Cause before the Congregation of Rites.

That morning, the poor nun was unable to endure any longer the agonizing pain from which she suffered, so she put a relic of Don Bosco on her chest. She then dozed off for a while, and when she reopened her eyes, she saw the Servant of God standing beside her bed. He beckoned, as if bidding her rise, and then he disappeared. The nun got out of bed. She was completely cured. That very day she went to the Shrine of Mary Help of Christians, and the next day to Valsalice, as a pilgrim. As we are writing this incident, Sister Joan lives in the Salesian Religious community of Foglizzo.

The enthusiasm aroused by the decree found expression in many fervent demonstrations, especially where the Salesians happened to have Houses. No one recalled any similar rejoicing the whole world over, nor such solemn thanksgiving services for any other Venerable.

At the Valdocco Oratory, the celebration was set for January 30, 1908, the eve of the twentieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death. The city of Turin was represented by its foremost citizens.

With permission from the Holy See, the Archbishop of Pisa, Cardinal Maffi, addressed the congregation to express, with noble eloquence, the sentiments of the city that was proud to claim Don Bosco as its own. He chose as his theme the scriptural text: *Ut palma florebit,* pointing out that the flowering of Don Bosco's life and undertakings was just like the flowering of the palm tree.

There was something he felt he ought to stress for his own sake, as well as for all others'. Amazed at the gigantic development of Don Bosco's undertakings, many people, too many people in fact, look only at the external aspect of Don Bosco's works and fail to delve into the reason for their inner vitality. "Too often do we stop and look at some rosy face, without giving a thought to the heart which must beat in order to give the cheek its color," he said. "We may admire the petal as it unfolds, the orange

as it assumes a golden blush, but we do not think about the pale, hidden roots that, with motherly anxiety, wrest life for the plant from the soil. The reason for and the power of the development of the Salesian undertakings must be seen in connection with the growth and throbbing of Don Bosco's soul. The palm grew into leaves because pure and abundant was the sap which flooded it from within. The secret of his creations, his conquests, was to be found in his charity and in his virtue. I will not enter here into the mystery of grace, nor into the economy of its manifestations, but I must draw the following conclusion: the religious and charitable undertakings founded by Don Bosco stemmed from that holiness which, with greatest care, he cultivated above all else, within his soul."

This eminent speaker, who had seen Don Bosco in his normal sphere of action in October 1883, described as follows what he had seen: "After he had talked with me and blessed me, I saw him seated on a plain chair in a corner of the church of Mary Help of Christians, surrounded by children. He listened to them; he talked with them, and then sent them to receive Jesus. I saw how he loved them and how he was loved in return. He was all for all, in order to give God to all and all to God. It then seemed quite natural to me that in that place, heroic, apostolic souls would be formed quite spontaneously and that workers would come from it who praised God while working and that boys would be found who defended their innocence jealously in workshops and in the classrooms. Priests would be formed who could live as religious monks and diocesan priests, pupils, and teachers, writers, and printers, men of letters who published Latin and Italian *Classics,* men competent in writing popular literature with the *Catholic Readings,* musicians, and architects, and Missionaries ready to depart for faraway places, ever ready to go wherever charity might call them. I am not surprised at all when I see these forms, these manmade creations: such the plant, such its fruits!"

Then, as the speaker looked into the future, toward the brightness of the day already heralded by the dawn, he foresaw for the city of Turin the rapture of a triumphant return that words could never describe, and at which tears of joy would be shed, not only in Salesian Houses, but the whole world over. It all came true, just as he had predicted.

Chapter 4

From the Apostolic Processes to the Decree on the Heroicity of Don Bosco's Virtues

There are two processes conducted, by the Apostolic Authority at the Episcopal Curiae. The first process deals mainly with the virtues of a Servant of God, and consists of two phases. During the first phase, which is called *inchoative,* only the testimony of old or sick people is heard, and it is therefore also known as a process *ne pereant probationes* [lest there be no proofs]. When all these witnesses have been heard, all the documents pertaining to this phase are kept at the Curia until instructions are received from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, authorizing the Curia to proceed with the second phase, which is called *continuativa.* During this second phase, witnesses of any age or condition are questioned and all the documents that the Postulator may choose to submit are accepted. When this second phase is over, copies are made of everything. The findings of the first and second phases are collated and are sent to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. But the *continuativa* phase cannot start before another apostolic process *super fama sanctitatis in genere* [on the general reputation of holiness] has taken place, to ascertain the origins, range and perseverance of such reputation. Copies of the findings are made for use during the Roman discussions on the question of the general reputation of holiness.

These things are easy to speak about, but they involve time-consuming, meticulous procedures, which sometimes produce surprises. Here we cannot do anything more than give a very brief summary of these apostolic processes, touching only upon the highlights.

At the request of the Postulator, the *Litterae Remissiorales* [Remissory Letters] were sent from Rome to the Archbishop of Turin on April 4, 1908, in order that the Archbishop might proceed with the *inchoative* process, but not before Rome had completed its examination of the ordinary process *de non cultu.* This examination ended with the approval of the Rota division of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on June 23rd and with the ratification by the Holy Father on July 8th. Once all the secondary formalities had been completed, a formal application for execution of the *Litterae Remissiorales* [Remissory Letters] was submitted on May 21, 1909, to the Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Richelmy, by the Assistant Postulator, Father Rinaldi.

His Eminence formed a tribunal three days later, and scheduled its first hearing for the 28th of that month. Regular hearings were then held without any significant interruptions. Twelve witnesses were called. As a rule, the *inchoative* process does not last more than two years, but in our specific case it was necessary to ask for an extension, in order that other witnesses be heard. The Sacred Congregation authorized this extension on January 13, 1911. Meanwhile, Father John Marenco had been appointed Bishop of Massa Carrara, so he was obliged to relinquish the offices of Procurator and Postulator to Father Dante Munerati.

The hearings continued for a few more months, after which the Turin Tribunal prepared for its hearings on the general reputation of holiness. This process was relatively short, and on January 9, 1913, it could be forwarded to Rome, where the Sacred Congregation of Rites opened it and undertook its review on the 17th of that same month.

The **Ponens**, Cardinal Vives y Tuto, died the following year, and by order of Pius X, the vacant position was filled by Cardinal Ferrata who did not live more than a year longer. Benedict XV appointed Cardinal Vico as **Ponens** and His Eminence conducted the hearings up to the final approval, and to the ratification of the *inchoative* process on July 13 and 14, 1915.

At the request advanced by the Postulator, the Sacred Congregation then granted the *Litterae Remissioriales* [Remissory Letters], so that the *continuativa* phase of the apostolic process might begin. Due to necessary formalities, the first hearing was not held until February 12, 1916. Nineteen witnesses were summoned and questioned in little more than a year, and the apostolic process on Don Bosco's virtues in particular were now over. While the acts of the process were being transcribed, the Tribunal proceeded with its canonical identification of Don Bosco's mortal remains, in conformity with ecclesiastic laws.

The ceremony was carried out from October 13 to October 15, 1917, at which time the members of the Tribunal went to Valsalice several times, and met there with two expert physicians, Peynetti and Velasco, and a few officers from the Municipal Health Department. The report made by the first physician provides us with the details, which are set forth next.

After the coffin was removed from the vault, the outer, wooden coffin[1] was opened, and it was found that the second coffin inside had suffered damage from humidity, even though it had been hermetically closed, and

[1] This coffin was in good condition because it had replaced the former coffin opened in 1904, as described a few lines ahead.

the seals were still intact. They removed the lid, and the third zinc coffin became visible. This third coffin had suffered considerable damage and had been partially destroyed, because of something that had occurred thirteen years previously. With the consent of the civil authorities and in the presence of Cardinal Richelmy, Don Bosco's body had been exhumed in secret in 1904, to ascertain the condition of the coffin and its contents, as well as to gratify the pious wishes of the Members attending the Tenth General Chapter of the Society, then in session at Valsalice. They were all anxious to look once again at the mortal remains of their beloved Father. At that time, one of the municipal physicians had seen fit to pour an excessive quantity of mercury chloride inside the third coffin, and the corrosive action of the chemical had eaten into the metal.

When the zinc lid was removed, "instead of the customary cadaverous stench, we noticed a singular odor that was not in the least disagreeable," Paynetti wrote. "I might even say that it was definitely like a pleasant perfume." The corpse appeared mummified. The head was covered entirely by almost blackened skin, and was turned slightly to the left. The hair was well-preserved. The eyes beneath the closed lids were gone, but the eyebrows and eyelashes were still there. Inside the open mouth, we saw shrunken gums, in which three upper and five lower teeth were still embedded. The soft parts were all dried up, but the tongue could not be seen. The nose was well-preserved, but its tip was somehow turned to the left; the outer ears seemed intact, and so was the neck, although we could glimpse the protruding larynx, covered by teguments. The arms were straight on both sides of the body, with blackened skin on the hands. The fingers were well- preserved, the fingernails still in place. The body and the upper and lower limbs were covered by the vestments: chasuble, alb, cassock, socks, and shoes, all still in good condition, but stained by the corrosive chemical.

This process of identification began on Saturday, October 13th; it was suspended on Sunday, October 14th, and completed on Monday, October 15th. The coffins were closed, sealed once more, and put back into the vault, to await a more solemn identification. A special report on all that had transpired was then drawn up.

When the above-mentioned transcription was completed, all the paperwork was sent to Rome on November 26, 1918. This completed the task of the ecclesiastical judges of the Turin Tribunal.

We believe that what we wrote about the Turin Tribunal in Chapter 2 was sufficient to give some idea of its constitution. We did not think it necessary to keep our readers informed on all the subsequent changes that

took place. But we must not omit to say that although some of the members of the Tribunal had to be replaced by others, yet its diligent action never stopped, and it was actually praised in a letter written by the Rector Major, Father Paul Albera, on February 22, 1918, to all the Salesians: "I would be neglecting a very sacred duty were I not to pay a well-merited tribute and extend a cordial vote of thanks, on behalf of our entire Congregation, to the Reverend Members of the ecclesiastical Tribunal, who, for so many years, have shouldered incredible sacrifices to conduct these lengthy, intricate processes to a successful conclusion. No reward could ever compensate the Tribunal as it deserves."

The Sacred Congregation of Rites opened its examination of the acts on December 6, 1918, and the revision of these acts did not end until July 1st of the following year, 1919. Then the examination of the validity of the ordinary and apostolic processes began. On June 8, 1920, the Cardinals and Consultants of the Sacred Congregation met to pronounce their judgment; they listened to the report of the Cardinal **Ponens**, and cast a favorable vote. The next day, His Holiness ratified their decision, and approved the relative Rescript.

At this point, a sudden obstacle brought the proceedings to an abrupt halt. The real role of the Devil's Advocate, if we may use the expression, throughout the Cause of Don Bosco was played by Canon Colomiatti, the prosecuting advocate for the archdiocesan Curia of Turin.

Deeply attached to Archbishop Gastaldi's memory and his conviction that throughout their whole controversy only Don Bosco had been at fault, he found no peace in his eagerness to see his thesis triumph, and made every conceivable effort to steer the Cause into a blind alley. The additional examination of Don Bosco's writings in connection with the relationship between the Archbishop and Don Bosco did not have, as we know, any impact on the Canon. But the examination found its climactic moment in the magnificent vindication provided by the resulting verdict, as we also know. While the Turin Curia was preparing the apostolic process, Canon Colomiatti, driven by his conviction, submitted to the Congregation of Rites a package of negative depositions regarding the writings about which there was now no further doubt, and also regarding the life of the Servant of God. Additionally, he even went to Rome to support his depositions with an oral confirmation, and to produce new ones.

The Congregation sent everything to Cardinal Richelmy, with the following instructions from the secretary: "From the contents of these

depositions, it becomes obvious how essential it is that the Tribunal investigating the virtues of Venerable Don Bosco evaluate, as well, the importance of the facts alleged by the Rev. Canon Colomiatti. Your Eminence would therefore be well-advised to hand over these documents to the ecclesiastical Tribunal in order that: a) they may be subjected to a careful investigation, wherein any witnesses who may be in a position to cast new light on the facts should be duly questioned, and witnesses who have already testified should be recalled, if necessary; b) the Tribunal should conduct an inquiry regarding the persons from whom Rev. Colomiatti learned the facts alleged. If they are still alive, official summons should be issued to them; if they are dead, then inquiry should be made to ascertain who they were, what they were like, whether they had any rancor against the Venerable Don Bosco and, if so, for what reason. Together with the above-mentioned material there are certified copies of several documents that I found here in the Secretariat. As is self-evident, the findings of these investigations, which have to be carried out, should be collected and transcribed for use at a separate short process. Once this short process is completed, no one will be free from the bond of secrecy, as its results should be handed over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, together with the results of the Apostolic Process on the herocity of virtues.

Empowered by the mandate from the Archbishop, the Turin Tribunal opened a scrupulous investigation. The outcome could not have been more favorable to the Cause. Nevertheless, when the findings of the Turin inquiry were examined in Rome, a few doubts still remained, and required clarification. So the Sacred Congregation of Rites ordered a new investigation on October 16, 1921, for the benefit of the Cardinals who were to cast their vote on the validity of the above-mentioned process. The necessary material was prepared, and the complicated details were discussed during several sessions, until, at last, on July 4, 1922, the Cardinals and Consultants met for a detailed briefing. The result was that the Turin hearings were pronounced valid, since the rules of procedure prescribed by the code of Canon Law and the instructions issued by the Sacred Congregation of Rites to the Bench had been scrupulously obeyed. It was therefore possible to proceed *ad ulteriora,* that is, to the discussion on Don Bosco's merit.

This meant that the last phase of the Cause was now at hand, and the three major Congregations, distinguished by the names *anti-preparatory, preparatory,* and *general,* were now imminent.

We use the term 'imminent' loosely, because lengthy preparations still lay ahead. We should explain that before these Congregations hold sessions, a threefold study is necessary. Since the object of these studies is casting a vote on the virtues after mature discussions, the Advocate of the Cause must first of all prepare and have printed a summary of all the depositions made during the various processes, listing under different headings everything that is necessary to prove 1) the validity and importance of the testimonial statements made to shed light on the life and deeds of the Servant of God, and to demonstrate how he exercised to a heroic degree, both collectively and individually, all the theological, cardinal, and other virtues; 2) the legitimacy and consistency of the reputation of sanctity, based on the heroicity of all virtues, and further enhanced by the graces and miracles obtained through the intercession of the Servant of God.

As a preface to all this work, the Advocate submits both general and detailed information regarding the juridical evidence, and also regarding all the virtues. The General Promoter of the Faith then lists his objections against the validity of the proofs, and against all the virtues. In a second instance, the Advocate answers his objections, removing all difficulties so that there may be no further doubt.

While these examinations were in progress, the Pope chosen by Divine Providence to experience the joy of elevating Don Bosco to the glory of the altars had ascended to St. Peter's throne in February 1922. We use the word *joy* because, when still a young priest, Pius XI had known and understood the Servant of God,[2] and had felt the greatest esteem for his virtues and admiration for his undertakings. Later, it became evident that, in his innermost heart, he had longed to crown him with the glorious splendor of the Blessed and the halo of the Saints. On June 25, 1922, he had already told us how he felt about Don Bosco. On that day, he granted an audience to the Superiors and pupils of the Salesian House of the Sacred Heart, who had gone to the Vatican to pay him homage. This is the fatherly speech he addressed to them:

"O dear among the dearest sons of Jesus Christ, dear particularly to Us just as the children were dear to Him, Our Divine Model, dear indeed because you are the seeds and hopes for the future. We are among the 'ancient' friends—I use the word 'ancient' in reference to myself, not in reference to you, who have not yet any knowledge of 'antiquity'—We are, and We say it with deep satisfaction, among the 'ancient' personal friends of the Venerable Don Bosco.

[2] See Volume XVI, pp. 252ff.

"We have seen your glorious Father and Benefactor, We have seen him with Our own eyes. We were close, like heart to heart, and We had an exchange of ideas, of thoughts and considerations, an exchange neither too short nor ordinary. We have seen this great giant and champion of Christian education. We have observed him in the modest little position that he took among his own, a position from which he ruled; and his rule was as wide as the world, and the wider, the more beneficial. This is why We are enthusiastic admirers of Don Bosco's undertakings. We are happy to have known him and to have been able to help him, thanks to Divine Grace, with Our modest contribution towards his undertakings. We have seen his undertakings in Italy, in Galicia, in Poland, undertakings which stretched from the Carpathian Mountains to the Baltic. We have seen the sons of this great man devote themselves, heart and soul, to his so vast, so holy, so beneficent an undertaking.

"It is therefore a great comfort to Us to be with you today, once again, after the time appropriately recalled by your young spokesman, when We had the pleasure of seeing confirmed your scholastic progress, and awarded with Our own hands the coveted awards to the more deserving among you.

"Our heart is wide open for you; it greets you and congratulates you; it is happy to see you again. Our heart embraces you all with a great blessing, as it has been requested through your spokesman. This is a blessing that embraces all of you who are here today, as well as others whom you represent and who wish to be represented by you; it embraces all of you, past pupils, and members of the Association who represent the fully ripened fruit, the flower, in full bloom, of Don Bosco's Institute; and all of you, boarders, and the day boys of the Sacred Heart School, and especially you war-orphans who, because of your misfortune, are particularly dear to Our own heart which, with this blessing, wishes to make a compensation for your misfortune; all of you brave young scouts, and all of you who kindly graced this assembly with vocal and instrumental concerts: this is a blessing which embraces you all. But first and foremost, it embraces the men who, with dedicated affection, devote their lives to your education, and who, in the name of Jesus, and of His Servant, the Venerable Don John Bosco, try to help form your young life based on the principles of Christian education. This is the way by which they give you a gift and a treasure of such value that not even an entire life will be long enough to allow you to fully appreciate it, although you will become increasingly aware, day after day, hour after hour, of its inestimable and immense value.

"We cannot look at you without looking at the great scene which rises and is displayed behind you, the scene of thousands, of hundreds of thousands, which have become millions of boys and grown men of the most varied social conditions and positions in life, who have drawn from the springs of Venerable Don Bosco the treasures of a Christian education. This magnificent scene is the greatest, most glorious monument We could ever raise for him, compared to which, any material monument raised in his honor would only be a small and insignificant thing.

"In this wide perspective, it is good to feel excited by another solemn feast celebrated in Turin today, in honor of a glorious son who is the honor of the Salesian Society, Cardinal John Cagliero. We thank God for having allowed Us to convey the contribution of Our particular appreciation and paternal affection to this generous champion of the Salesian cause, which, because of what he did and the generosity with which he did it, was truly a missionary work, a work of Christian and civil regeneration of an entire section of the world.

"From afar We are happy to see at Cardinal Cagliero's side the worthy Father John Baptist Francesia, who, despite his modesty, is another genuine and solid glory of Don Bosco's religious family.

"We are particularly pleased to extend Our blessings to all you Salesians and your pupils, whether you are here with us in this joyous moment, or far away. May the spirit of God descend upon you and dwell within you; may He bestow on you all of His graces and favors. May the spirit of God seal within you students the inestimable treasure of the Christian education that you now receive, or have previously received, under the guidance of Don Bosco's sons. May this treasure remain with you, ripen in you, and bear ever more abundantly the fruits of which it is an inexhaustible source. May this divine blessing accompany you wherever you go for the rest of your life, which, no matter if you are young or old, still lies ahead of you, waiting to be explored. May this blessing sanctify all of your feelings and especially your commitment and your resolution to keep inviolate the benefits you receive from your Christian education, and spread out these benefits with the example of a generous, courageous loyalty to Jesus Christ, and to His holy Faith, for this was the privilege which the Venerable Don Bosco has given you: a sublime and most eloquent example of His holy Church, and the Holy See.

"We, Ourselves, had occasion to read and see that in his heart, as We had the chance to realize he considered as the greatest, above all types of glory, the glory to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, of His Church, and of His Vicar!"

That very year, when Father Albera died, Father Philip Rinaldi succeeded him as Rector Major of the Society. Father Stephen Trione took Father Rinaldi's place as Vice-Postulator. Then, early in 1924, the Postulator, too, was changed, since Father Munerati was appointed Bishop of Volterra, and the new Procurator, Father Francis Tomasetti, succeeded him as Postulator and steered the course of the Cause to its triumphant landing at the harbor.

The studies we mentioned early on were protracted until late in 1925, when at last the *Positio* was ready. This comprised the *Informatio, Summarium, Animadversiones, Responsio,* and all the votes of the theologians who had examined the writings. It was printed and bound in one enormous volume that contained over a thousand pages. Copies were given to about fifty people—Cardinals, theologian Consultants, and Consultant Prelates at the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Then, forty-five days after the copies had been distributed, all the above-mentioned people met for the *anti-preparatory* Congregation, where they were to deliberate whether or not Don Bosco had practiced the theological, the cardinal, and the other virtues to a heroic degree.

On June 30,1925, the session took place [as usual] in the residence of the Cardinal **Ponens**. As a rule, the proceedings of this *anti-preparatory* Congregation go ahead, even when some of the objections raised are not fully settled. Besides, at times, the Consultants even submit new objections. Subsequently, all the unsolved difficulties are properly arranged by the General Promoter of the Faith who, at that time, was Bishop Salotti. These difficulties are printed, without any reference to those who raised them. They are handed to the Advocate that he might study them, provide answers for them, create another *Positio,* send it out to be printed, present copies thereof to the Cardinals and Consultants at least one month before the date scheduled for the *Preparatory* Congregation.

The *Preparatory Congregation More Solito* met on July 30, 1926, in the Hall called the Hall of the Congregations, in the Vatican. Everyone who took part in it re-examined the Cause anew and read aloud his own vote or his opinion. The Consultants then withdrew from the hall, leaving only the Cardinals and the Officers of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The Cardinal **Ponens** read his report on the virtues of Don Bosco, and on the

difficulties that had been solved and those that were not. It was up to the Cardinals to deliberate whether the proceedings should continue, or whether another *Preparatory Congregation* should be convened for a more elaborate examination of the remaining difficulties. In Don Bosco's Cause, the Cardinals decided that a second *Preparatory Congregation* was necessary for a better examination of his heroic virtues, and for a definite elimination of some of the objections submitted.[3] So an *alia nova positio* with *aliae novae animadversions* were introduced by the General Promoter of the Faith, and an *alia nova responsio* by the Advocate, for a further study to be made by the Cardinals and Consultants. At last, during the second Preparatory Congregation set for December 18, 1926, the Cardinals voted in favor of continuing the Cause.

This cleared the way for the final discussion to be carried out during the general Congregation, in the presence of the Pope and with the intervention of the Cardinals and Consultants. For this a *novissima positio* with *novissimae animadversions* and *responsio* were required. This solemn assembly took place on February 8, 1927. When the discussion was over, the final decision was to be made only by the Pope, since the Cardinals and Consultants had only a consultative vote. Pius XI, once he received the unanimously favorable vote of the Cardinals, took a few days to reflect on it and pray. After that, he announced his decision, and gave orders that the decree on Don Bosco's heroic virtues should be published on the 20th of the month, which fell on Sexagesima Sunday.

This announcement was made, in the usual form, in the presence of the Holy Father and his Court. The ceremony assumed an unusual solemnity. An immense throng crowded the majestic Hall of the Consistory in the Apostolic Palace. The Superiors of the Pious Society and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were present, as well as a huge number of Salesians, Sisters, delegates of Cooperators and past pupils, diocesan delegates from Turin and Asti, many people of differing rank, and also transient visitors to Rome.

When the Pope took his seat on his throne, the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, Bishop Mariani, approached the steps of the throne, received the consent of the Holy Father, and read out the Decree. Here is its translation:

[3] Among other things, a request had been filed for further proof of Don Bosco's life of prayer, and of his powers, as well as for further clarification on the subject of the widely publicized pamphlets (See Vol. XV, pp. 186ff.). Regarding the first two requests, we have a significant letter from Father Philip Rinaldi in our files (*Appendix, Document 8*); regarding a third request, a letter from Canon Sorasio (*Appendix, Document 9*), one from Father Turchi (*Appendix, Document 10*), and Don Bosco's own letter to the Cardinal Prefect of the Council, already printed in the above-mentioned volume, carried weight.

It would be very difficult to express with words, or to assess the services, that the Venerable Servant of God, Don John Bosco, has rendered to religion and to every facet of human civilization, how much honor he has provided for the Catholic Church, how many and what kinds of outstanding actions and examples of virtue he has bequeathed to future generations.

The Venerable Don John Bosco proved himself a worthy minister and imitator of Him Who said of Himself: *I have come to bring fire to earth, and how I wish it were blazing already* (Luke 12:49). If we compare the financial difficulties that plagued the Servant of God unceasingly and the opposition which he constantly endured, with the grandeur of his undertakings and the benefits procured for the human race, we will have to admire in him not only the priest burning with apostolic zeal, but also the one sent by God to help especially the young in their particular needs, and we can not help but recall the words of our Divine Master: *The kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. . . . This indeed is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown up, it is larger than any shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and shelter in its branches.* (Matt 13:31-32).

John Bosco was born in the borough of Murialdo, near Castelnuovo d'Asti; his parents were not wealthy, but were respected for their honesty, and they lived by their work in the fields. His father died when he was still a small child, and he was carefully brought up in the principles of the Christian faith by his widowed mother.

Right from the beginning of his life and during his childhood, he appeared to be destined for greater and wonderful things, for he revealed such a remarkable abundance of spiritual and physical talents that it seemed certain that he would have been magnificently successful in whatever direction he might have turned his life. From his early adolescence he began to feel an urge to consecrate his life entirely to the glory of God. But he did not have the means to pursue the necessary studies. Gifted with an intuitive mind and with a quick memory, he easily won the benevolence of benefactors who eased his way towards his studies. He went through high school with honors, and entered the Diocesan Seminary of Chieri, where he applied himself to the study of Philosophy and Theology. He was admitted to Sacred Orders and after his ordination he was appointed assistant pastor. As a curate, he displayed his ability to act, plus such zeal that in a very short time he gathered abundant fruits. But Don Bosco's spirit was upset by the sight of an almost general lack of concern for the Christian education of the young

in those days. Very eager to respond to this lack of concern for youth, Don Bosco devoted most of his compassionate spirit and his constant work to those children who had no one to take care of them. He resolved to assist them, instruct them and protect them in every possible way. To make sure that these boys might not be subsequently deprived of suitable training and religious guidance, he thought it best to create a religious family to be entirely dedicated to this goal.

He felt that this project should be carried out with all possible diligence and without any delay. For this reason, he decided to devote all the talents with which God had endowed him to achieve this sublime goal for the glory of His Divine Name and the salvation of souls. This is indeed a singularly religious and pious undertaking, which would by itself be enough to reveal the nature of this eminent priest and the holiness of his life. Such an undertaking entails tremendous efforts, hardships, travels, and a whole lifetime of ceaseless activity. Despite the lack of means and the demands that beset the nascent Society, despite the difficulties and the opposition which arose from all sides, nevertheless the Venerable Servant of God succeeded in providing what was required, by calling upon the charity of others. Don Bosco never lost heart in spite of numerous crushing financial burdens. The Pious Society that he had founded needed so many things, without which he would have been unable to endure, still less to grow, and very often he had no resources at all. What did he then do? He simply made known the serious financial obligations of his Society to rich people, to obtain from them their generous help, but without using any pressure tactics.

All the talents and devices suited to form the best of teachers, whether inborn or acquired through experience, were marvelously united in the Venerable Servant of God. His soft words reached the hearts of his youngsters and pupils, whom he welcomed with paternal benevolence, whom he entertained with pleasant talks, while he trained them in virtue and piety. He was like a very loving Father who welcomes each of his children with equal affection, who takes particular care of everyone, who wins over the affection of all, binding them to himself with the sweet bond of love.

Everything about him was gentleness, and it was evident that no base desire ever took root in him. The words he used had an effectiveness which was practically incomprehensible, almost divine, and such as to banish darkness from the world, move hearts and inspire them to follow and hold on to the evangelical counsels. He wrote and published numerous books to instruct the mind and encourage the spirit to embrace piety. This was

the way that the Venerable Don Bosco followed, showing that he was a worthy priest of God whose tongue poured forth knowledge in order to instruct the ignorant and rouse the lukewarm.

Never for a moment did he neglect this most holy commitment of his to expand and consolidate the Society he had founded. He even established a second Society, which he called the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, which would take care of girls. He placed both these Societies under the patronage of St. Francis of Sales, whom he had chosen for his own patron saint, being in a special way a devotee of his.

Not only did he shoulder heavy burdens so that he might ensure the stability and growth of these two families, but he bravely endured great hardships and patiently tolerated continued persecution from a source from which he might rightly have expected to receive staunch support. In addition to this, he devoted his mind and energy to the welfare of uncivilized, savage peoples dispersed in remote, almost uninhabitable, parts of the world, so that they, too, might enjoy the same benefits as everyone else.

Guided as he was by the wisdom, which *reaches mightily from end to end, and orders all things sweetly* (Wis 8:1), he lived to see all the tasks he had undertaken, not to accumulate riches, but solely for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, crowned with success to the amazement of all, even of those who would have liked to ignore or belittle the virtue of the man who had accomplished them. In this way, the name of this priest, John Bosco, became so renowned that there is today hardly any place in the world where it is not known and revered.

After his holy death at the age of seventy-three, on the last day of January, 1888, this great man's reputation for sanctity had become even more splendid than before, and barely four years after his death his elevation to the honor of the Altar was taken into consideration. For this reason, the Ecclesiastical Curia of Turin correctly instituted the processes, in accordance with the norms of Canon Law, to investigate his life and works. As a preliminary step, the verdicts of the tribunals were issued as strictly prescribed by our laws, and then the formal examination of his virtues began. The inquiry was carried out, scrupulously following that praiseworthy severity which provided greater reliability and authoritativeness to all the most serious judgments reached.

The Anti-Preparatory Congregation took place the last day of July 1925, at the residence of His Eminence Cardinal Anthony Vico, Relator of the Cause. This was followed by two Preparatory Congregations, during which all the single and various Relator votes issued by the judges were

very accurately discussed. At last, on February 8th, the whole Sacred Congregation of Rites met in the presence of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI, and the above-mentioned Cardinal submitted the following question for deliberation: *Whether there was evidence of the heroic practice of the theological virtues, Faith, Hope, and Charity toward God and his neighbor; of the Cardinal Virtues of Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance, and thereto related virtues, in the life of the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, in the events and circumstances submitted.* All the eminent Cardinals and Most Reverend Consultants answered in the affirmative. The Holy Father received their affirmative vote with a joyful heart; however, he decided to delay the issue of a decretal pronouncement, and urged the assembly to emphasize the solemnity of the occasion and to add fervent prayers, in order to receive more abundant light from Heaven.

He then chose this day, Sexagesima Sunday, to make his own deliberations public. After the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he summoned His Eminence Cardinal Anthony Vico, Bishop of Porto and Santa Rufina, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and **Ponens** of the Cause, together with Bishop Salotti, General Promoter of the Faith, and the Secretary here undersigned. Then the Pope took his place on the papal throne, and in their presence he solemnly decreed that it was evident that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity toward God and one's neighbor, just as the Cardinal virtues of Prudence, Fortitude, and Temperance and related virtues were practiced to a heroic degree by the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, both in themselves and in their effects. He ordered that the decree should be published and be included in the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, on February 20,1927.

After the reading of the decree, Father Tomasetti stepped forward to express his humble, heartfelt thanks to the Holy Father. The Rector Major, Father Rinaldi, should have been the one to do this, but he had been forced to remain in Turin because he was stricken with influenza. Father Tomasetti was accompanied by the Advocate, Bishop Della Cioppa, by the Procurator of the Cause, Commendatore Melandri, and by the Postulation Secretary. He delivered the following address to the Pope:

"Most Holy Father:

"The solemn and authentic declaration pronounced just now, in the name of Your Holiness, in regard to the heroicity of the virtues of our Father and Founder, the Venerable Don John Bosco, has transformed into certainty the intimate conviction that was

always cherished by the sons who were formed by him and who had grown up with him since they lived at his side like a family, and also by a greater number of those sons of his who, during the forty years that have elapsed since his death, have joined his spiritual family and have been entrusted by his successors to continue and expand his educational work all over the world.

"The decree pronounced today is the most significant favor Your Holiness could have granted us, and for this reason our gratitude bursts forth from our hearts with more ardent flames of filial love for your Person, and with deeper attachment and devotion to the immortal chair of St. Peter.

"I wish I had Don Bosco's outward demeanor, his smile, his eloquence, and above all his heart, to express our gratitude less unworthily, for throughout his whole life he was the living incarnation of gratitude. At this moment, I wish I had all the gratitude that Don Bosco cherished in his heart for the Holy Pontiffs Pius IX and Leo XIII, and for everyone who cooperated with him in his undertakings, so as to show forth to some degree, the deep, everlasting gratitude we now feel, and shall always cherish, for your Holiness, because with this decree, our Father and Founder is presented to us also as a model to follow.

"We, his sons and disciples, were thoroughly convinced of his exemplary qualities and virtues by daily living together with him. But who was there to assure us that our conviction was not merely the fruit of our great affection for him? Who was there to tell us with certainty that the novel, boldly modern systems that he bequeathed to us in his educational apostolate for youth and the practice of the evangelical perfection, were truly paths we should follow with a clear conscience?

"This certainty was not guaranteed by the heartening blossoming of our Festive Oratories, of our Hospices, Schools and Missions; it was not guaranteed even by the almost unanimous opinion of eminent Princes of the Church, prelates, and Bishops; it was not guaranteed by the endorsement, at first tacit, but later outspoken, of civil authorities; or by the praise of outstanding personalities in almost every nation of the earth. . . . This certainty could only have been guaranteed by Your Holiness, and you did it for us today.

"Don Bosco, the industrious, solicitous and magnificent educator to sanctity, as evidenced by his children (like Dominic Savio, Father Michael Rua, Cardinal John Cagliero, Father Paul Albera, Father Andrew Beltrami, Father Augustus Czartorysky, Mother Mary Mazzarello, to name a few), has been proclaimed by today's decree a Christian hero. This means that the Supreme Authority has presented him as a model to be imitated by all those who are already called, or will be called, to join the ranks of the modern educators of youth, and who now constitute a society, committed to and equipped with all the weapons suited for today's times and needed to pursue the call to sanctity, in order to regenerate and sanctify in turn and at the same time the younger generations.

"The inner life lived by Don Bosco, the Educator, before it was handed down to the system which he bequeathed to his sons, shall in the future stand as the norm to be followed for the implementation of his program to regenerate and sanctify youth, both in large and small civilized centers, as well as among the savage tribes where the divine seed of Redemption may be grafted onto small, tender, virgin plants, with greater confidence in good results.

"Most Holy Father, this is the mission on which we shall henceforth concentrate all our efforts, in order that we, with greater ease, may successfully follow our one true Master, Guide, Model, Our Lord and Savior Jesus: To imitate Don Bosco in such a way as to reproduce within us his uninterrupted union with God, his inexhaustible charity toward his neighbor, his prudence, his unshakable fortitude, his kindness that reassures and gladdens every heart, his immaculate purity which leads to abhor sin to the highest degree and to yearn incessantly for heavenly things.

"This is what our Father aimed at, and what he has written in his last will and testament letter to us: 'Your first Rector is dead. But our real Superior, Jesus Christ, will not die. He will always remain our Master, our Guide, and our Model!'

"With this resolution to constantly imitate our Father, Don Bosco, so that we, too, may successfully come to put on Jesus Christ for the day of glory, and with the confident expectation that another Decree may approve the miracles submitted for the Beatification of our Venerable Founder, once again we sing out to you, most, Blessed Father, a hymn of thanksgiving, which bursts forth from the hearts of the Salesians, of the Daughters of Mary Help

of Christians, of their pupils everywhere, together with our past pupils, both men and women, in every corner of the globe, and of all the men and women Cooperators who work with us in the undertakings bequeathed to us by Don Bosco, and who are all here with us in spirit to receive your Apostolic Blessing, and to rekindle within us our good resolution to sanctify our souls."

Visibly overjoyed, the Holy Father responded with a speech of his own in which he sang the praises of the Venerable Don Bosco:

"Beloved children, in moments already divinely preordained by God, the Lord calls forth men to sweep through the firmament of history much like the great meteors hurtling through the substellar skies. We may divide such men into two categories, just as we divide these great meteors, which, at times, are wondrously beautiful, and at times are terrifying. There are some men who cause terror wherever they pass; more than perform good deeds, they arouse wonder, fear, and though their trail is blazed by tokens of undeniable greatness and rapid visions of an almost inconceivable audacity, yet they also leave a trail of ruins and victims in their wake.

"At times, God summons men who are like rods and scourges with which they punish nations and kings, just as the great Corsican said in reference to himself. Yet there are other men, too, who come to heal the wounds, to rekindle charity, to rebuild on ruins. These men are no less great; in fact, they are greater because they are great in performing good deeds; they are great in their love for mankind; they are great in the good they perform on behalf of their fellowmen, in their response to their needs. These men arouse sincere admiration, an admiration full of gratitude, of a welcoming acceptance and blessings, just as the Savior of mankind, the God–Man who went around blessing all and being blessed by all. These are the men whose names are and will always be in benediction.

"The Venerable Don Bosco belongs exactly to this magnificent category of men chosen among all human beings, to these colossal people called on to create a beneficent grandeur. If the scrupulous analysis of his virtues, which has been carried out in the preceding long and repetitious debates, is followed by a synthesis which gathers together all the scattered lines, then you can easily reconstruct his splendid, magnificent likeness.

"Beloved children, he is a figure on whom Divine Providence has bestowed its costliest gifts: a magnificent figure of a man that We always appreciated and whom We now appreciate even more as We look at him more intently. This doubles and magnifies the joy of this hour, as We remember him.

"We have seen this figure, closely, and not for a brief moment, nor was Ours a passing conversation. He was a magnificent figure, and his immeasurable and unfathomable humility could not disguise it. He was a magnificent figure, and although he mingled with other men and moved about the house as though he were its humblest boarder, the last of the invited guests (he, who had organized everything), everyone recognized at first glance, as soon as they approached him, his outstanding, enthralling personality. He was a complete figure; he was one of those souls who, no matter what path they might have chosen, they would have left inevitably a lasting mark for themselves, so magnificently equipped was he for life.

"He was endowed with strength, mental vigor, a warm heart, with a strong hand, with outstanding power to think, to love, to work; with thoughts which were full of light, grandiose, deep, and certainly not ordinary thoughts, but rather superior by far to any ordinary thought; he had the mental agility and intuitiveness proper of those geniuses (and this is generally not well-known or noticed) who could be categorized as real geniuses; he was a genius who easily could have had success as a scholar, as a thinker, or as a writer.

"I do not know whether he ever confided to others something he told me; perhaps he was encouraged to confide in me because we both had a similar familiarity with books, but he told me that he had, at first, experienced a desire to follow the path of books, the path of great discernment. Some marks of this path have survived, just like scattered limbs, like scattered elements, which, so to speak, show that from an preconceived plan he would have soared to the composition of a grand scientific body, a grand scientific production. You can detect these marks in the volumes he wrote, in his pamphlets, in his great willingness to spread popular literature. It is here that you can detect the outstanding and elevated brilliance of his thinking, which laid out for him the steps of that

great work with which he would first of all fill up his life and then the entire world. It is there that you can find that first invitation, that first tendency, that first display of his powerful talent: the tasks of spreading printed material through print shops and bookstores were the works he loved the most. This We have seen also with Our own eyes. This We have heard from his lips. This was what he was most proud of. He himself said to Us: 'Don Bosco (he always spoke of himself in the third person) always intends to be in the vanguard of progress in these things.' So we talked about publications, and of print shops.

"The golden key to the wonderful, infinitely precious mystery of his great, fertile, active life, to his invincible capacity for work, to his indomitable endurance under a daily strain which never slackened, hour after hour, from morning until night, whenever such a strain was necessary (and it often was), lay in his heart, in the intensity and generosity of his feelings.

"The magnificent words: *Dedit ei Dominus latitudinem cordis quasi arenam quae est in litore maris* [God gave to Solomon largeness of heart as the sand that is on the seashore (3 Kings 4:29)] could very well apply to him; in fact, they seem as though they had been written for him, as well as for other great heroes of charity and of charitable deeds. Now, forty years after his death look at his works! They are scattered all over the world, on all shores, even *sicut arena quae est in litore maris* [as the sand on the seashore].

"We might conjure up a wonderful vision by only thinking of the seventy Provinces, the more than one thousand Houses, which means thousands and thousands more of churches, chapels, oratories, schools, and boarding schools attended by thousands, hundred of thousands, many hundred thousands souls who are thus led to God, thousands of young souls who find safe shelter in homes where they partake of the generous banquet of learning and of a basic Christian education.

"Here are the sons of the Pious Society; here are the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians—here are the professed religious, the novices, and the aspirants—here are the sixteen thousand—and perhaps even more than that at the moment in which we are speaking—workers of this huge and magnificent undertaking.

"Over a thousand of these pious workers, men and women, are active on the firing line, in direct contact with the enemy, in faraway Missions where they are conquering new provinces for God. This was the greatest honor that Rome reserved for its warriors of old! The Salesians have given to the Episcopate almost twenty Bishops who are established in regular Dioceses, as well as in others, located in faraway Missions.

"It is even more comforting to reflect on the fact that all this magnificent and miraculous expansion can be traced directly back to him who continues to govern everything, not as a Father who is far away, but as the ever-present Founder who remains active through the eternal vitality of his teachings, in his system of education, and above all, in the example he gave!

"His examples! Beloved children, these are the most useful items, if not the only useful items, of today's great feast.

"For it is true that not to everyone is it granted to enjoy so marvelous, so abundant, a flow of divine gifts like a tremendous amount of resources of thought, of love, of labor; not to everyone is there given the same amount of grace; not to everyone is conferred the grace to follow clearly lit pathways, and yet how open are his examples to be imitated by everyone, as it has been opportunely pointed out—in that life so active, so recollected, so operative and so much involved in prayer!

"This, as a matter of fact, was one of his more beautiful features: he was always present for everything; he was involved in a multitude of works, always pressured by problems, always engaged in checking on requests and in consultations, and yet his spirit was always elsewhere: always on high, where the weather was always clear, where calmness reigned supreme, and he was always in control. This is the way by which in Don Bosco's work was indeed effective as prayer. This is the way Don Bosco carried out the great principle of Christian life: *qui laborat, orat* [he who works, prays].

"This was, and should always remain, the great glory of his sons and daughters! What great merit there was in that life, forgetful of itself, only to dedicate itself to the little ones, to the most humble of the human species, and to the least attractive aspects, if we may so describe them, of human miseries!

"Beloved children, even looking at that wonderful set of activities, yes, even then, our weakness should not be led to find some act of self- justification. It is true that not everyone is able to imitate such a perfection, such an effectiveness in what is being done, because, let's face it, even speaking from a sincere and Christian perspective, it is not true that to achieve, it is enough to want to achieve—but rather it is true that we do not have enough willingness to achieve. At any rate, by looking at Don Bosco and his undertakings, we can all think about and reach this conclusion: while it is true that we cannot achieve what we would want to achieve, yet we can all decide to attain what we really can attain.

"Beloved children, how much would all souls, all individuals, all families and society benefit, if all were really able to achieve what can be achieved, and be really willing to do what can be done; if every person were honestly to do whatever little good he can do for himself and for others, within the modest limits of one's possibilities!

"May the example of this great Servant of God inspire everyone to follow that way, even though we may find ourselves at a great distance from his way, which he blazed for us with his good works and with so much light, with so many outstanding examples of Christian edification.

"It is with this vision so far and so close that We take a great and affectionate part in this festivity and in the joy shown by all Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Our thoughts go out everywhere, especially to the churches and territories for which today has a special meaning and which gives them the right to rejoice and be glad. We think of the happiness of Turin; of the happiness of Asti. We think—and how could We not think—of the joy that reigns everywhere, in all parts of the world, since, literally, there is no place where all the sons and daughters, the Houses of Don Bosco, ever lively, always vitally flourishing, do not continue to expand along the pathways traced out by Don Bosco's hand, and always do try to imitate him stalwartly and effectively."

The Apostolic Blessing brought the ceremony to a close. As the Pope descended from the throne and made a rapid exit with his retinue, the whole assembly broke into a jubilant applause, enthusiastically and with deep emotion. This deep emotion and enthusiasm spread rapidly to every Salesian

House, where a solemn *Te Deum* of thanksgiving was intoned fondly and solemnly, together with the ardent participation of friends of the Society.

In the March issue of the Turin *Diocesan Review,* the Archbishop, Cardinal Gamba, who had been a pupil of the Oratory, warmly expressed his own joy and the joy of the Archdiocese, since the glory of Don Bosco was also the glory of Turin.

"It is easier for us than it is for others, to appreciate his steadfast moral rectitude, his immaculately scrupulous conscience which never faltered, nor was overcome," he wrote. "Don Bosco, towering over great men and political figures that seemed immortal, walked like a conqueror through the events of the stormy days he lived in."

That day marked the end of thirty-seven years of processes, both ordinary and apostolic, during which the assertions of Don Bosco's saintliness had been examined, as the decree stated, with that praiseworthy severity which ensured greater trustworthiness and authoritativeness.

Chapter 5

The Miracles for Don Bosco's Beatification

With the decree on the heroicity of Don Bosco's virtues, the work of man towards the attainment of Don Bosco's beatification had ended and the work of God had just begun. A sanction from above was needed to seal with irrefutable proofs the judgment issued by the Church. The proofs were the miracles wrought by the Lord through the intercession of His Servant. Naturally, these miracles had to have been obtained after his death, and solely through his intercession.

The number of miracles required are not the same for every Cause. Before a Servant of God may be declared Blessed, **two miracles** are necessary, if the witnesses cross-examined during the processes on his virtues had known him personally, or had received reliable information from people who did; **three miracles** are necessary, if the witnesses questioned during the Ordinary Process had known the Servant of God personally, and if the witnesses questioned during the Apostolic Process gathered their information from reliable sources; **four miracles** are required if the depositions made during the Ordinary and Apostolic Processes were based only on tradition and documentation. Because of the brief period of time which had elapsed since Don Bosco's death, only two miracles were necessary. Among the many assumed miracles two were selected, because they seemed to present fewer difficulties to the speedy carrying out of the processes.

Before we enter into details on these two miracles, we shall first describe briefly the routine procedure by which miracles are canonically recognized by the Church. The proceedings call for three phases. First of all, there is an Apostolic Process in the Diocese where the miracle occurred; almost invariably, the miracle is a recovery from a serious illness. When the General Promoter of the Faith has received the relevant data from the Postulator, he submits them to a medical expert for examination. This specialist is to provide a professional explanation of the disease, its symptoms, its development, its medical diagnosis and prognosis. He then draws up a questionnaire to be submitted to the witnesses and to the attending doctors, in order that everything be stated with the utmost clarity and precision possible at the process.

Apostolic Authority constitutes the Diocesan Tribunal in the same way that we described for the Apostolic Process on the heroic virtues; however, two particular features distinguish it. One of these special features is that a medical expert is now a member of the Tribunal, and he is in charge of conducting the pertinent cross-examination of the witnesses; he also suggests the most suitable way to obtain the most trustworthy answers regarding the symptoms of the disease. Additionally, after the witnesses have been cross-examined, two other medical experts, already sworn in to perform their duties faithfully, proceed with a thorough medical examination of the person said to have been cured miraculously from sickness, to verify his or her general health, and to ascertain whether the recovery is perfect, or if there are any signs of a possible relapse.

When the process is completed, a certified copy of the proceedings is sent to Rome, with all the legal formalities which are to guarantee that there is no suspicion of tampering with the results. The second phase of the proceedings then begins in Rome.

The Chancellery of the Congregation of Rites opens the dossier and takes out a certified copy, which is then used to study its validity, i.e., to ascertain whether the witnesses were lawfully and properly cross-examined, and then whether the documents were submitted in accordance with the law and declared authentic. Then, after a Decree of Validity has been issued, the Advocate for the Cause sets up his position on each of the miracles; he has all the depositions of the witnesses and all documents at hand in print. A copy of all this printed material, which is called a *Summarium,* is given to two appointed medical experts who take an oath that they will pronounce their judgment according to their knowledge of medicine, and the dictates of their conscience. For each miracle a Cardinal **Ponens** is appointed in agreement with the General Promoter of the Faith, who, whenever possible, appoints specialists in the particular disease for which a miraculous cure is alleged. Each of the two medical experts then examines the dossier independently, and draws up his own report, without consulting with his colleague, for they do not even know the identity of the other. If both their legal-medical reports reject the possibility of a miracle, the matter ends there. If, however, one of the two proclaims a miracle, while the other challenges the assertion, the matter may be discussed during the *Ante-Preparatory* Congregation. [But to proceed to the *Preparatory* Congregation, two other experts must be nominated.] If both medical experts agree that the cure was miraculous, a third expert is called upon, and the *Preparatory* Congregation may proceed, but only when the third expert holds the same opinion

as the other two experts. All three specialists are bound by a threefold obligation: to base their judgment on proofs scientifically certain, to attest whether or not the cure was genuine and perfect, and to prove whether or not it could be explained in the light of natural laws.

The second phase is now completed, and, as our readers will have understood by now, we come to the third phase, in which again the three Congregations known as *Anti-Preparatory, Preparatory,* and *General* enter into action. We shall deal with them later.

In the Cause of Don Bosco, the Postulator who, at first, was Father Dante Munerati, and later on, Father Francis Tomasetti, did not wait for the end of the Apostolic Process on Don Bosco's virtues, but filed a petition that the Remissory Letters be sent to the Ordinaries who were rightly in charge, so as to begin the two Apostolic Processes on the miracles. One of these processes took place in Turin, from 1924 to1926; the other in Piacenza in 1925 and in 1926.

A Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, Sister Provina Negro, became ill at the convent of Giaveno, her place of residence. She was thirty years old. The first symptoms of her sickness were: loss of appetite, extreme tiredness, pains at the pit of her stomach, with burning sensations in her throat and esophagus whenever she tried to swallow. Later she began to retch, and there were traces of a blackish blood in the food she vomited. Unexpectedly, she felt an intense and continuous pain in her heart. Now and then, she felt as though a sharp blade pierced her heart. Later on, an inability to retain any nourishment was added and her epigastrium became swollen. Digital compression provoked agonizing stabbing pains from the epigastric region to the back. Whenever she slept, an acute pain, as if a stiletto point had pierced her abdomen, would jolt her awake at brief intervals. Dr. Crolle of Giaveno and Dr. Forni of Turin both diagnosed the symptoms of a ventricular or circular ulcer in her stomach. Eventually, the Sister remained in Turin permanently, as the illness demanded.

Her condition grew worse day by day. Two Sisters went to visit her on Sunday, July 29, 1906, and told her about the miraculous graces that people attributed to the intercession of Don Bosco and urged her to put her faith in him. When she was alone, she remembered how trustingly she had had recourse to Don Bosco during her novitiate, and so, proceeding from one thought to another, she felt moved to invoke his assistance now. On her night table there was a picture of the Servant of God, cut from a copy of the *Salesian Bulletin.* With difficulty, the suffering Sister stretched out her hand and took the picture. Then she held it for some moments in front

of her eyes and repeated: "Don Bosco, you see the state I am in! Our Mother General told me that she wants to find me cured when she returns from Nice. But I have grown worse. By myself I am unable to obey her instructions. If you wish me to be obedient, you must cure me."

She then promised Don Bosco that if she recovered, she would be more zealous in her observance of the Rules.

After she had prayed, she rolled the picture into a small pellet, with the intention of swallowing it. The doctor had forbidden her to swallow anything, but with faith she put it on her tongue and swallowed it. The clock sounded seven-thirty P.M., and at that very moment all her pain disappeared, and she no longer felt any weight on her stomach or abdomen; she found that she could even move her limbs quite easily. She then thought that she would try to get up, and found that she was able to do so, repeatedly and without difficulty. She did not leave her room, however.

Next morning, she rose at the same time as the other Sisters, but remained in her room until someone came to give her permission to go to the chapel. Since none of her Sisters showed up, she herself went in search of the infirmarian, who immediately ordered her back to bed, for she was unable to believe her eyes. The young nun obeyed, and waited patiently for the visit by the doctor, who not only permitted her to get out of bed, but also even told her to eat. A few days later Sister Provina was able to rejoin the other nuns and follow the regular observance of community life.

The Tribunal constituted in Turin by Cardinal Gamba was obliged by the seriousness of the process to apply twice for an extension beyond the period stipulated by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Besides the Sister who had thus been miraculously cured, fourteen other witnesses were questioned, i.e., the two physicians who had attended her, two Salesian priests, and ten Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. Doctors Sympa and Peynetti were present at the process as official medical experts. In reality, the Code of Canon Law prescribes only one medical expert for such proceedings, but the Turin Tribunal had requested the presence of Dr. Sympa, from Rome, the official medical expert for the Congregation of Rites, when it became evident that reliable technical guidance was needed in the development of its proceedings.

The final medical examination was performed by Dr. Sura, a surgeon and radiologist, and by the surgeon, Dr. Rocca, neither of whom found any sign of gastric lesion nor the faintest symptom of any pathological predispositions.

The other miracle took place at Castel San Giovanni, in the area of Piacenza. By order of Dr. Minoia, a twenty-three year old girl, Teresa Callegari, was hospitalized for influenzal pneumonia, in November 1918. She recovered from pneumonia, but during her convalescence, she started to suffer from severe pains in her left knee, which began to swell, with subsequent discharge of articulation fluid and ankylosis. She had a persistent fever of 38 degrees Centigrade. The inflammation spread to the right knee and then to the joints of the feet and the arms, and her disease was diagnosed as contagious polyarthritis.

The poor girl was completely immobilized, and for six months she endured atrocious pains. The disease of her joints was further aggravated by other serious complications: gastric endoenteritis, bladder disturbances with inability to discharge urine, constipation, and subsequent violent hemorrhaging which weakened her even more. Persistent pains in the sacro- lumbar region spread to the thighs, so that she was able only to lie flat on her back. A swelling, almost as large as a walnut, appeared on the lower part of her spine, at the third lumbar vertebra.

By the end of 1919, her general condition improved slightly, though the polyarthritic condition was now chronic, with total ankylosis of the left knee and spinal cord.

The acute pains that had tormented her returned with greater intensity in January of the following year, though Dr. Minotti's treatment did bring her some relief during the summer. By October, however, her condition went from bad to worse; she had greater difficulty in eating, she was vomiting, she had stomach spasms. This was further complicated in January, 1921, by a severe bronchial inflammation with secretions, chronic enterocolitis that resisted any treatment, and a marasmic condition by which she could not partake of any nourishment.

The physicians who were treating her declared her condition to be practically hopeless.

This was the condition of her health when a friend of hers suggested that she make a novena to Don Bosco; the Sister who nursed her also begged her to think about it. Full of renewed hope, Teresa mentioned it to the chaplain, Father Zanelli, who advised her to begin the novena at once. She obeyed, but there was no improvement. The poor girl was convinced that she would never be cured, so she implored Don Bosco to help her, at least, to die a holy death.

In July, Father Zanelli urged her to begin a second novena with complete confidence. On July 16th, which was the eighth day of the novena,

Teresa felt so ill that the nursing staff believed her end was at hand. At four o'clock in the morning of the 17th, after a sleepless night, she happened to glance in the direction of her night table and saw a priest coming toward her. He was of medium height, and his arms were crossed. His hair was black and curly; his eyes, too, were black. He put a hand on her forehead, and resting the other hand on the night table, asked her how she felt. As her only reply was a cry of anguish, he said imperatively: "Get up!" When she apologized, saying that it was impossible, he repeated in Piedmontese dialect: "*Bugia le gambe!*" [Move your legs!]. Teresa could not understand that dialect, but when she did catch the word 'legs' she guessed that he had meant to say "Move your legs." She tried at once to obey him and found to her amazement that she could move both legs quite easily and without feeling any pain. She was even able to bend her knees. She cried out to the Sister, saying that she was cured. The Sister thought she was deranged, and came running to her. "Slow down," Teresa warned her, "lest you bump into Don Bosco!"

Don Bosco smiled as she said this. She had never seen a picture of Don Bosco, but because she had been praying to him for so long a time, she had no doubt whatsoever that he was the priest standing before her. Just then Don Bosco raised both his hands, holding the palms turned outwards toward her, and, moving backward, with a smile, he disappeared. He had disappeared almost as into a fog.

All of this happened to Teresa when she was fully awake; she was not dreaming. During the apparition her eyesight became somewhat weak and blurred, but it gradually cleared up to the point that she was able to distinguish everything quite clearly.

She flung aside her bedclothes, and sprang out of bed. She crossed the floor in four swift strides and going to see a friend in the nearby room, she gave her the joyful news. Then she moved toward nuns who were coming to see her. They were amazed. The other patients could not believe their eyes, and crowded around her, to touch her and convince themselves that what they saw was real. There was absolutely nothing wrong with her. The following day, this was confirmed by a thorough medical examination by Dr. Miotti.

This physician attended the Apostolic Process in Piacenza, as the medical expert for the Ecclesiastical Tribunal which had been constituted by Bishop Menzani, in accordance with the faculty and instructions received from Rome. Sixteen other witnesses besides Teresa appeared at the process. Here again, to complete the judiciary examination, it became necessary to

prolong the juridical proceedings. Some of the witnesses were unable to appear in Piacenza. The deposition of one of them was received in Rome by the General Promoter of the Faith, while the Archbishops of Turin and Milan were authorized to question the others, instituting restricted processes in order to do so. The local doctors Ghisolfi and Fermi were appointed as medical experts for the last detailed examination, and both submitted corresponding reports which excluded any intervention by science or by nature, as well as all indications of a possible relapse in the future.

The dossiers of these two processes were sent to Rome, and were opened with due judicial formality, partly on June 18, 1926, and partly on July 2nd, for discussion as to their validity. On February 28, 1927, during the ordinary session of the Congregation of Rites, the General Promoter of the Faith presented a number of difficulties, to which the Advocate replied at the session held on March 3rd. The Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation cast their vote in favor of the validity of both processes on March 22nd of the same year, and the following day Pius XI ratified their judgment.

Then the examination of the two miracles began. The Attorney submitted a report on the case during the session of April 29th, adding among other things, the reports of the medical experts appointed by the Sacred Congregation: Doctors Feliciani and Gentile in the case of Sister Provina Negro, and Doctors Sympa and Chiays in the case of Teresa Calligari. Bishop Salotti presented the first objections on December 18th, and Bishop Della Chioppa answered them at the same session.

These preliminary sessions were followed by the three Congregations. The *Anti-Preparatory* one took place on January 24, 1928, in the palace of the Cardinal **Ponens**. The Advocate, as usual, one month earlier had handed to the Cardinals and Consultors the *Position* containing the printed *Information, Summary,* the *official reports* of the medical experts, and the objections presented by the General Promoter of the Faith, and the answers given thereto. The vote was favorable, and so it was possible to continue the proceedings.

On April 7th, and on July 18, 1928, two ordinary discussions, in two sessions, took place prior to the *Preparatory Congregation*; new difficulties were submitted and new answers given. The Congregation, however, asked for other medical opinions by two specialists, one for each miracle. Dr. Persichetti released his opinion on the Turin miracle, Dr. Stampa on the Piacenza miracle.

An extraordinary thing happened in Rome during the course of these investigations: there was another healing obtained through the intercession of Don Bosco.

An Augustinian nun, Sister Mary Joseph Massimi, of the convent of Santa Lucia in Selci, was about to die with a duodenal ulcer. Her confessor gave her a relic of Don Bosco and advised her to make a novena to him. The nun's condition, instead of improving, grew only worse during the novena, and clearly the last natural resources were fading away. Yet her faith was unshaken, to the point that as soon as she finished the first novena, she began a second one. Her ailment became worse than ever! Death seemed imminent. On the fifth day of the second novena, which was May 15th, Don Bosco appeared to her in a dream. He said: "I am here to tell you about the grace of your recovery. Be patient. Suffer a little while longer. The grace will come on Sunday." There were still four days until Sunday.

On the 18th, (Friday) she had another dream. This time Don Bosco brought her the black habit that the nuns of her order usually wore on holy days. He again repeated his promise. On Saturday afternoon everything seemed to indicate that it had been nothing more than a pious illusion. But the following day, when her confessor came to administer Extreme Unction to her, what an unexpected change!

Her whole body shook from head to foot, and in that instant she felt as though she had been called back from death to new life. Ten days later, she felt so good that she was able to write a detailed account of all that had happened. This incident caused a considerable stir, and even the Congregation of Rites was impressed by it. Apparently, the miracle even caught the attention of the Holy Father.[1]

The *Preparatory* Congregation began under favorable auspices, although we should not think that the Cardinals of the Congregation of Rites, who gathered on December 11, 1928, at the Vatican, had been in any way influenced to cast a favorable vote by the memory of the above-mentioned event.

After this extensive investigation, it seemed that the General Congregation, too, was going to proceed smoothly. Nevertheless, Bishop Salotti presented some final difficulties during two regular sessions, held on January 6 and 30, 1929, respectively. Bishop Della Cioppa easily disposed of them, so that, on March 5th, the Cardinals and Consultants cast a favorable consultative vote in the presence of the Holy Father. The Holy Father, who

[1] Father Tomasetti's letters to Father Gusmano, Secretary of the Superior Chapter, Rome, June 5 and 27, 1928.

has the right to deliberate, took some time to reflect on the matter and to implore light from Heaven. Finally, after the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice of the Mass on March 19th, the Pope summoned Cardinal Laurenti, the Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Verde, who had become **Ponens** of the cause at the death of Cardinal Vico, Bishop Salotti, the Promoter General of the Faith, and Bishop Mariani, the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, and with them, he entered another stately hall, sat on the throne, and issued the decree that there was evidence of two miracles, and ordered the publication of the relative Decree. This Decree was read aloud that same morning in the Consistory Hall of the Apostolic Palace. The solemn ceremony was carried out in the presence of the Pope and his court.

Many representatives of the Salesian Houses and of the Houses of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, a considerable number of past pupils and distinguished personages, both ladies and gentlemen, were admitted, with special entrance tickets. The Secretary, a Monsignor, approached the steps of the throne, and with the permission of the Holy Father, read out the following Decree:

"With what great liberality has almighty God blessed his servant John Bosco, and also the Pious Society which he founded for the welfare and assistance of his people, is clearly made manifest by the extraordinary gifts with which he was richly endowed, by the outstanding undertakings which he initiated, by their development, by the new houses of his Pious Society, opened and consolidated in so many regions, even in the most distant regions of the world, in spite of the almost total lack of necessary means. The basis for all this growth is the fact that the Servant of God, born to a poor family and blessed with so many extraordinary talents as a little child, initiated and brought to completion so many and so various works, especially related to education of youth, that could not have been actually continued, had it not been for a great amassing of means and authoritative prestige. He worked indefatigably to overcome every obstacle, to win over any opposition, to captivate with his gentleness the minds and hearts of his adversaries, and proved himself to be a man of noble sentiment, moved and supported only by his burning desire to save souls. That is the way by which he endeavored to form his newly founded Pious Society, and he worked successfully to develop it and expand it in so many parts of Europe, and he transplanted it, even in the remote parts of the American Continent. Today, his children have gone even further into countries of the Far East, where they evangelize with commendable apostolic perseverance.

"Despite his own dire financial difficulties, this Venerable Servant of God loved to practice generous charity, and never turned away unassisted, anyone who went to him in need.

"Quite often, when requested, he would reveal even the secrets of people's consciences. He predicted future events. He was happy to restore peace to troubled souls. He cured people from their physical infirmities, and was delighted by constantly doing good to all. Moved by this most holy desire, he founded an institute of sacred virgins, whom he called Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, an institute that has also today spread far and wide, and allows the Church to reap noble and salutary fruits.

"He passed on, beloved by both God and men. He always kept and showed a burning desire to do good. He left behind a memory of himself, which is cherished by all kinds of people. Directly after his death, the fame of his miracles spread far and wide, especially the fame of two of these miraculous healings chosen by the diligent participants of this Cause. An Apostolic Process was instituted on them and they were presented to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, so that a verdict on their authenticity might be passed.

"The first of these miraculous healings concerns Sister Provina Negro, who had a peptic ulcer of the stomach which caused her the most atrocious pains. When the patient was informed of the malignant nature of her disease, and came to know that it was hardly possible that she would be cured, even though she were to undergo lengthy treatments, she resolved to try to invoke the divine assistance. After imploring the intercession of Venerable John Bosco, and having swallowed a relic of his with great faith, she found herself completely free of her infirmity and perfectly cured. Everyone, especially the doctors, declared her recovery a miracle.

"The second miraculous healing concerns Teresa Callagari, who suffered from several internal diseases, which, resisted all kinds of remedies and had led her to a marasmic condition. The doctors declared that she would soon die. The diagnosis made by those outstanding doctors was not wrong, because she was afflicted by a very serious organic disease from which she was suffering, a disease that was the cause of various anatomic internal injuries. This was also confirmed with sworn depositions by three specialists called on for this purpose by the Sacred Congregation of Rites. In such a predicament, Teresa Callegari invoked the intercession of Venerable John Bosco, and was instantly cured, not only of one but also of all her serious diseases. She instantly recognized and proclaimed the miracle of her recovery.

"The Apostolic Process on these two miracles was instituted. The miracles were carefully debated and they were declared authentic. The *Anti-Preparatory* Congregation was held with the Most Reverend Cardinal Anthony Vico, of happy memory, the Relator of the Cause, on January 24, 1928. On December 11th of the same year, the *Preparatory* Congregation convened in the Vatican Palace. On the 5th of the current month of March, the General Congregation was held in the presence of the Holy Father, Pope Pius XI. His Eminence Cardinal Alexander Verde, Relator of the Cause, presented the question: whether there were miracles, and what kind of miracles, for the case and purpose at hand. All those who were present, both the Most Reverend Cardinals and the Father-Consultors, in their respective order gave their answer. Once this was done, the Holy Father reserved for himself the right to express his judgment, showing however, clear signs of his inner joy. Meanwhile, he exhorted everyone to pray for a greater clarification from Heaven in a matter of such great importance.

"Once he had determined to render public his decretal sentence, the Pope designated the feast of St. Joseph, Patron of the Universal Church and particularly venerated by the Venerable John Bosco, as the day to do this, and after he had devotedly celebrated the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, he called upon the Most Reverend Cardinals, Camillus Laurenti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Alexander Verde, **Ponens** Promoter of the Cause, together with Bishop Charles Salotti, Promoter General of the Faith and the undersigned secretary, and in their presence he moved to another stately hall; he sat on the throne and solemnly declared that it was evident that Sister Provina Negro was instantly and perfectly cured of her peptic ulcer of the stomach, and that likewise, Teresa Callegari was instantaneously and perfectly cured of her acute post infective polyarthritis and other lesions which had led her to a marasmic condition.

"Then the Pope ordered that the present decree be made public, and that it be included in the Records of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. March 19, 1929."

After the Decree was read, Father Tomasetti, the Salesian Procurator and Postulator of the Cause, accompanied by the Advocate and Promoter General of the Cause, gave thanks to the Holy Father, with a speech which touched upon a recent and important event.

In the air there were still echoes of the jubilation which had flooded Italy on an historic day that had put a happy ending to the protracted and agonizing controversy that had existed between the Italian Government and the Holy See. Sharply aware of this opportunity, Father Tomasetti recalled

this memorable date. The Pope in the allocution delivered immediately afterward drew inspiration from Father Tomasetti's words, to illustrate Don Bosco's own thoughts on the subject of ***Conciliation.***

Father Tomasetti spoke as follows:

Most Holy Father:

Today my soul rejoices as I extend sincere, fervent thanks to Your Holiness, on behalf of our Most Reverend Rector Major and the whole Salesian family, for having thought worthy to issue the Decree which approved the two miracles submitted for the beatification of the Venerable John Bosco, Founder of the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales, of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and of the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators.

This Decree fills with joy the hearts of the sons of the Servant of God, "a mighty champion of Christian education" as Your Holiness was pleased to call him on another solemn occasion. But the Salesians are not surprised by this. All of them, and, particularly those who were fortunate enough to live for a time close to him, are well aware that his life was so interwoven with miraculous things that one might have rightly said that around Don Bosco the supernatural had become natural. So much so that, as we read in one of our Father's letters, written during his second trip to Rome in 1867, "he had directed to God special prayers that he might not allow any extraordinary thing to happen, which might cause people to talk about him . . . 'Poor Don Bosco'."

As he had done throughout his lifetime, he continued to assist his children and his friends with loving, wonderful inspirations after his death, and to bless the faithful who trustingly invoked him, with innumerable miracles and graces.

Our joy becomes even greater when we reflect on the marvelous ways of Divine Providence, and realize how Your Holiness issued this long-awaited Decree which announces our Venerable Father's forthcoming Beatification, immediately after the splendid and historic event of the solution of the Roman Question. The Roman Question had been a source of anguish, of hope, and of, why not say it, of torment, for so many pious souls, and the Venerable Don Bosco had given to it a considerable amount of cooperative endeavor, as well as all of his attention and priestly zeal. For it, he acted as a successful and esteemed mediator in critical and very painful and

delicate moments, and helped ease the tension between the government of his day and the Holy See. For this mediation to prove successful, Don Bosco himself strove, and exhorted others to strive, towards ever-greater heights, "to reach better points of view," to reach the peaks and summits where the vision becomes—and these are your most recent words—great and sublime.

To the question raised by your glorious predecessor, Pius IX, Don Bosco answered: "My politics are the politics of your Holiness; the politics of the *Pater Noster* (Our Father)."

In the *Pater Noster,* we implore everyday that the Kingdom of our Heavenly Father may come on earth, '*Adveniat regnum tuum*' and that it may be expanded and become more glorious, more powerful. This is what matters most.

I trust that Your Holiness will appreciate the recollection of this event, not known to all, which expresses the similarity of the lofty outlook and superior sentiments of our Venerable Father to the exalted ideals which have always guided and directed so successfully Your Holiness, in overcoming the tremendous obstacles which prevented the successful outcome of this great endeavor. The hour of God struck, and it was not ignored. A great accomplishment was finally achieved for the benefit of the whole world: it gave Italy back to God, and God back to Italy. It restored a peace that healed the consciences of so many good souls, the whole world over.

Oh! How much will our Venerable Father rejoice for the completed solution of the Roman Question and for the great benefits which will be drawn from it, since far and above 'every kind of glory' he had placed that of being a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, of His Church and of His Vicar."[2]

All the spiritual children of Don Bosco and the hundreds of thousands, the millions, of boys and grown men of all social classes, of every conceivable walk of life, who have found at the springs of our Venerable Father the treasures of a Christian education, as Your Holiness had expressed in the above-mentioned talk. . . . Oh, how much they rejoice, both for the solution of the Roman Question and for the happy coincidence of the present decree.

[2] Words of the Holy Father in his talk to the boys of the Hospice of the Sacred Heart in Rome on June 25, 1922.

Once again, also on behalf of all the past pupils of the Salesian family, with the enthusiasm produced by this hour so long awaited and longed for, I renew our most sincere and heartfelt thanks to Your Holiness, while we take pride in our commitment and determination to keep inviolate all the benefits of a Christian education, to spread its benefits with the example of a generous and inspired fidelity to Jesus Christ, and his Vicar on earth.

When Father Tomasetti ended his talk, His Holiness hinted that he, too, wished to speak. The audience became attentive. For a few moments, filled with of emotion, the Pope seemed to recall and arrange in silence the thoughts going through his mind; then with a calm and vibrant voice, which at times was quivering, he spoke as follows:

"Most beloved children, it is the voice, the great voice of miracles, and the voice of God *qui facit mirabilia magna solus!* [Who alone performs great miracles] it is the voice of God which descends on the tomb which we can call glorious—and how glorious!—of His faithful servant, to render more grandiose and more shining the splendor of His Glory. It is truly admirable—to say what first comes to Our mind and heart—to see with what tact, and I should say with what elegance, Divine Goodness knows how to join things and have them meet and prepare for later events.

"As a matter of fact, the Decree approving the miracles of the Venerable John Bosco, who was deeply devoted to St. Joseph, was proclaimed on the feast of this glorious Patriarch. Now, by joyous coincidence, this feast is at last a feast to be enjoyed by all, in one and the same way, and in one and the same spirit, with a perfect union of minds and hearts. We believe that it was St. Joseph who wished in some way to be in charge of contributing to the reward to be given to this great, to this very great, Servant of Mary, his most chaste Spouse, towards whom the Venerable John Bosco always had shown such deep homage of piety and devotion under the special title of Mary Help of Christians, a title now inseparably linked with his own name and with his undertakings and all their innumerable ramifications, the wide world over.

"No less touching, delicate, and significant, is the other coincidence, which has been so considerately remembered. In the wake of an event for which the whole world today rejoices, and shall

continue to rejoice for some time to come, and joins Us to give thanks to God for it, there comes the proclamation of the miracles of Don Bosco, of this faithful and wise Servant of Christ's Church and of this Holy Roman See. Indeed, as We Ourselves heard him say with his very own lips, the solution to this deplorable dispute was always uppermost in his mind and in his heart, but in a manner suited to so wise and faithful a Servant, meaning that he did not desire any kind of solution whatsoever, as so many people had imagined, interfering with and confusing the issues, but a solution such as would first of all protect the honor of God, the prestige of the Church, and the welfare of souls.

"We said that We heard this from his own lips, and also in this We recognize another wonderful disposition of God, another of God's most delicate arrangements. Forty-six years have gone by, and it seems like yesterday, rather than today, it seems like We are seeing him now just as We saw him then and heard him then, when We passed some days in his company, living under the same roof, sitting at the same dinner table, and having several times the occasion and good fortune to be able to meet at length, not withstanding the indescribable amount of his pressing work. For this was one of his most striking features: his absolute calmness, his control of time, that enabled him to attend to everyone who turned to him with such tranquility, as though he had nothing else to do. This was one of his striking traits, and not the least one, which We had the occasion to admire in him. To this we should add the gift of prophecy. However (His Holiness said this with a smile), he was unable to predict what has happened today! Who could have predicted at that time that, after so many years, in the wake of such a magnificent event, which We have just hailed with such jubilation, We would have had another solemn encounter? He, Don Bosco, resplendent in the radiance of the miracles, and Ourselves, at the moment of proclaiming solemnly and with the authority provided by the Decrees of the Church, these same miracles, the splendor of which now emits light on his tomb, in preparation for the supreme glory of the altars?

"These miracles that you have heard proclaimed, these miracles which are so very evident to all who know him—and who does not know him the world over?—are nothing more than a sample of the miracles, which in every way, are brightly evident in Don

Bosco's figure. Countless indeed are the miracles, which both during his lifetime and after his death, along with the marvelous continuation of his work, God, our Lord, wanted to work through the intercession of His faithful Servant. The miracles which have been chosen from among many others for a scrupulous investigation and in very severe judicial proceedings are, as We said, nothing more than a sample, which had, necessarily, to be confirmed juridically. They are evident and very beautiful, yet there are many others, in a great number and no less beautiful and resplendent, while quite a few among them stand out for their divine elegance, so magnificent is the evidence provided by circumstances and events!

"But there are many other wonderful traits in the Venerable John Bosco. Those who have read, or who in the future will read, some of the many *Lives* that have been published in reference to the Servant of God (there are an infinite number of them, published in different languages) must have realized how much there was in him that was miraculous, and how true it was that, as it has been rightly pointed out, the supernatural had become natural: 'extraordinary had become almost ordinary.' Beloved children, the fact is that these extraordinary gifts and deeds were like so many shining stars in a sky already serene and resplendent, which were added only to confer greater consolation to a life, which, in itself, was nothing but a miracle, a miracle of activity, a miracle of undertakings.

"In the Bull of Canonization for St. Thomas Aquinas, a felicitous expression says that, had there been no other miracle, every article of his remarkable *Summa Theologica* would have constituted a genuine miracle by itself. We, too, can say that every year of Don Bosco's life, every undertaking of his mortal life, and every moment of his posthumous life, the perpetuation of his undertakings in his sons, the Salesians, and his Daughters, the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, We can really say that this constitutes, like so many miracles, an unbroken sequence of miracles.

"When We consider the rural solitude of the Becchi hamlet where the poor boy led his father's small flock to pasture, his initial lowly assignment at the Little Hospital of St. Philomena and then the other more revealing and significant tasks at Valdocco (for those who were able to understand), when We consider how this poor, humble priest who, out of nothing, began enterprises like the

Shrine of Mary Help of Christians which he started with only fifty cents in his pocket, and then We look around only to see before Us a continuous blossoming of works, the three branches of his family—the Salesians, properly so called, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesian Cooperators, this wonderful legion which he used to call his '*longa manus*' [long arm]—We then perceive that what We have once heard from his very lips has actually been fulfilled. 'Don Bosco has long arms when he needs them,' he said, and indeed it can be said that his arms, his hands, have grown long to the point of encompassing the whole world, and have it seeded with truly wonderful Houses and Institutions.

"What We are about to reflect on now is only the fruit of events which occurred at least twenty years ago. One may then wonder what has happened during the last twenty years, when everything has seen an increase which could easily be labeled as awesome, were it not so glorious and comforting! At any rate, when We think about these hundreds of churches and chapels, which twenty years ago already numbered three hundred; when We think about those hundreds of thousands of pupils, and surely about more than a million past pupils educated in Don Bosco's various schools where the highest kind of instruction is provided, and in the technical and professional schools where training is produced, then We cannot help but be amazed and awestruck, as though We were facing the continuous sight of a miracle, one of the most extraordinary miracles during these past twenty years, that is, from the day from which Our recollections stem up to our present time, how many more sons of Don Bosco, how many more Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, how many more Salesian Cooperators have been added to the previous ones? Already at that time they numbered hundreds of thousands. How many are there today? We believe that this is the loveliest, most poetic statistical data, the most pleasing numerical poem one could ever imagine.

"And not to overlook the recollection of one of Don Bosco's most remarkable traits, when We consider that We are dealing with a man who seemed always to have so many things to do, so many things to control and attend to in person, without time to dedicate himself to studies properly so-called, with so many undertakings in his hands and needing personal care and direction, one can not help but ask: how did he manage to write so many books, how

could so many books come from his pen? For he wrote, and printed at least seventy books and pamphlets for popular consumption, and some of them were extraordinarily successful. His *History of Italy* has already had between thirty and forty editions. Twenty years ago, his *Sacred History* had already reached its seventieth or seventy-seventh edition; his prayer books, the *Companion of Youth* and *Christian Maiden*, had already perhaps as many as 600 editions; twenty years ago, his popular publication, *Catholics Readings,* had a circulation of ten million copies, while the *Salesian Bulletin,* now published in so many different languages, had a monthly circulation of 300,000 copies, according to a report issued several years ago, and this has increased considerably at the present time. These are indeed wonderful things, and We may rightly say that they are miraculous.

"Truly, one can only wonder and ask: How could all this be accomplished? We must perforce realize that it was all done because of the special intervention of God's Grace: *manus Dei facit haec omnia!* [The hand of God did all this]. Where did the great Servant of God find the strength to accomplish so much? There is a secret, and he, himself, revealed it continuously, perhaps without realizing it. This secret is hidden in a phrase that he had often used and which he took as the motto of his entire life: *Da mihi animas, coetera tolle* [Lord, give me souls, and take away the rest]. Herein lies the secret of his great heart, of his strength, of his flaming charity for children in most need whom he loved the most, whom he first began to help, and whom he continues to assist even now: *Da mihi animas!* Yes, Don Bosco loved souls because he loved Our Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore he looked at them from the viewpoint of the thought, of the Heart and Blood of the Redeemer. That was why no undertaking was ever impossible for him; no treasure looked too precious not to contribute it to the salvation of souls, even if it had been only one soul. This is a very opportune thought, rightly formed and directed by the Divine Mind. As a matter of fact, it is the love for souls that must regenerate the world, and therefore this great *amator animarum* [lover of souls], with the radiance of his miracles and the effectiveness of his works commands the attention, the admiration, and the imitation of the whole world. Although not everyone may aspire—how could it be possible?—to such a prodigious activity on behalf of souls, miracles may still be wrought in every conceivable way with a great love, by a great endeavor,

by a great commitment in all circumstances and in any situation. How many people would be able to accomplish extraordinary things if only they, too, felt within their hearts this same love for souls which does not stop when self-denial and sacrifice are requested, and which performs genuine miracles, like the miracles of patience, of self-sacrifice, and of abnegation performed by a mother through the great and tender love she has for her child.

"Though not everyone can aspire to achieve as much, who would refuse to work, each according to his ability, in his field, when we see so many souls, especially the souls of the young, exposed to dangers and ready to fall victims of temptations and occasions of sin? How many souls are drawn towards ruin by the lure of vanity, by an unbridled sensuality, or lust for pleasure! That is why it is imperative that everyone should cooperate in the apostolate to which We summon unceasingly all those who have a heart and Christian disposition. Everyone should enlist in the ranks of the Catholic Action, which We sponsor wholeheartedly, and which is open to so many developments. There is room for everybody in its ranks; for the mighty and the lowly, for men and for women, for young and old alike, and everyone can cooperate to attain the goal of a universal, hierarchical apostolate, which is exactly the purpose and soul of Catholic Action.

"And in addition, one more thought, which together with the one on the precious value of love of souls, the love of Jesus, the value of His Most Precious Blood shed for souls, is given to us by Don Bosco in this symbolic glorification of his.

"How beautiful, how comforting, how stimulating, is the thought of God's sovereign fidelity to His Servants! This is the truth; this is the most beautiful and most sublime light, which surrounds Don Bosco today. This humble, faithful Servant who was a mere mortal (as he spoke, the Pope seemed to be deeply moved), a humble Servant of God who spared no effort so that he might serve God generously, he was a poor man in the eyes of the world. Yet, lo and behold! God has opened the heavens, and His voice resounds unto the remotest corners of the earth, with the strength and splendor of his miracles. Today, before our eyes, He lifts the stone which covers the glorious tomb and calls forth His faithful Servant to a truly glorious resurrection. He does so precisely during these days when

we prepare for our solemn commemoration of His Divine Resurrection.

"Yes, *fidelis Deus in Sanctis suis* [God is faithful in His saints]. Let us remember this, especially when God asks us to perform some task, make some sacrifice, some act of self-abnegation for His greater glory and the welfare of souls. We must respond with generosity, because as in the event which we celebrate, we will come to realize what the Divine King has said: *Qui confitebitur me coram hominibus, confitebor et ego eum coram Patre meo* [He who acknowledges me before men, him will I acknowledge before my Father]. With his life, with all his undertakings, and with the lives and the undertakings of his sons who have multiplied all over the earth, the Venerable John Bosco may truly say: 'I have acknowledged the Lord, and I do acknowledge the Lord my God, and He acknowledges me, and He proclaims me glorious before His heavenly Father, and before the world.'

"Now, beloved children, it only remains for Us to extend Our Apostolic Blessing to you all, in the spirit of what I have just said: first of all, We impart it to the sons of Don Bosco, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesian Cooperators, all Salesian Houses and missions everywhere in the world, to the entire vast, industrious, and fertile complex of their holy undertakings, and then to everyone here present, and to all the things and all the people that everyone of you carries in his thoughts and hearts."

This touching allocution lasted forty minutes, during which hardly anybody in the audience made a sound. Once the blessing was imparted, everyone broke out in a prolonged and enthusiastic applause, as the Pope retired to his chambers, after greeting the Cardinals and the other persons present.

The noble words of the Vicar of Jesus Christ had echoed widely and drew crowds of people from all sides to the tomb of Valsalice, a tomb which was about to be converted into an altar. There was a noticeable flow of visitors, of both high and lowly social status. Here we shall recall only a few among the more eminent people who had come to pay their homage within the first three days, after the publication of the Decree.

The Crown Prince, Humbert of Savoy, went early in the morning of March 20th. He first knelt for a time in prayer at the tomb and then attended Mass with devotion in the chapel above the tomb.

The Archbishop, Cardinal Gamba, went to the tomb that same evening. After kneeling for some time in prayer, he exclaimed: "Don Bosco is unique in attaining, so soon, the glory of the Blessed. He is widely venerated all over the world!" He then wrote in the Visitors' Book: "May the forthcoming Beatification of the Servant of God, Don John Bosco, the greatest Apostle of the 19th century, ensure that the peace of Christ reign throughout Christ's kingdom all over the world, as a result of the recent Conciliation between the Church and the Italian government, even as the Holy Father Pius IX, had hoped it might, at the commencement of his glorious reign."

The following day, young men from City Hall brought a magnificent wreath of flowers, with a streamer on which were the words CITY OF TURIN; this was done by order of the Mayor who, a little later, sent two representatives with a note that read: "As Mayor of Turin, and as a Catholic, I render a devout tribute to Blessed Don Bosco, our great and incomparable fellow citizen, and apostle of faith, hope, charity, and of Italianism all over the world."—T. di Revel. He had already sent the following moving telegram to Cardinal Gasparri: "The city of Turin witnessed Don Bosco's sublime apostolate, and warmly endorses the incomparable work done by him and his successors, deeming the elevation to the altars of this great fellow citizen a signal honor. Would Your Eminence place at the feet of the Holy Father our jubilant tribute of gratitude, and devotion."

In the afternoon of March 22nd, His Excellency Belluzzi, the Secretary of State for National Education, visited the tomb of the future Blessed Don Bosco. He was welcomed by the pupils, the Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, and the Prefect General of Salesian Schools, Father Bartholomew Fascie. For a while he lingered, absorbed in thought, by the tomb, and later wrote sincere good wishes for "Don Bosco's glorious school" in the Visitors' Book. He then addressed the pupils from the terrace, exhorting them all to become useful instruments in performing good deeds.

The April issue of the *Diocesan Review* carried the Archbishop's lengthy and warm letter, which announced to the people of Turin the forthcoming Beatification of Don Bosco. "Don Bosco was so glorious a figure," His Eminence wrote, "that he does not make illustrious only a city or a nation, but the whole world. I am sure

that no Beatified Servant of God will ever have received such a great or world-wide tribute as the one which will be rendered to Blessed Don Bosco." Two months later, events were to fully justify these words.

Chapter 6

The "Tuto" Decree

The Church does not really make Saints in a hurry. Not even the approval of miracles allows a smooth and easy course towards Beatification. As a matter of fact, after this step another General Congregation, known as *Tuto,* is required. In a speech delivered after the proclamation of the *Tuto* for the beatification of the Venerable Pignatelli, and the Venerable Catherine Laboure,[1] Pope Pius XI gave a detailed explanation of the reasons for this final phase of canonical procedure. This is what he said:

"What does the word *Tuto* mean? It is a short Latin word meaning 'out of danger,' 'without danger,' i.e., with certainty. *Tuto* is equivalent to 'safety beyond all danger.' To understand what kind of danger we are dealing with, it is enough to read the answer given by the Decree to the question raised, that is, whether, after the investigation and the approval of the miracles, recognized as such, whether, after going through the complex procedure presupposed before such approvals are issued (local and ordinary processes, apostolic process, etc.), it would be possible to proceed without any danger to further phases needed for the beatification and canonization of a person, without danger that things less true and less good would show up, without danger for truth and goodness. The reason for all this is that the Church is indefatigable in its research and investigations. In these Causes, the important thing is that everything said about a Servant of God be true, and that everything true is also good, eminently and heroically good. Some people may think that the Church is excessive in its concern about exactness if, after such painstaking research, it still wants certainty, namely, the *Tuto* Decree, before making its final pronouncement. But where truth and goodness are concerned, nothing less than this is needed; nothing less than this is needed for an investigation which reaches the throne of God, in order to marvel at the exquisite fruits of Redemption, and to draw shining examples to be proposed to all for imitation. To achieve all this, nothing less than a relentless quest for absolute certainty is required. The Church wants certainty, and it does possess it, not only as far as an officially acknowledged holiness, but also as far as other areas, which, however, are not very different, for it still is dealing with sanctity. The Church has the privilege, the

[1] *L'Osservatore Romano,* March 15, 1933.

secret of certainty, for she is the trusted guardian of *Truth, and Goodness. Truth and Goodness!* Only these two words correspond fully to the essence and perfection of human intelligence and human will, and they are, therefore, the most interesting and the most important of all words.

"As to *Truth,* it is quite evident to everyone who *is born at the school of celestial things, [alla scuola delle celesti cose]* as the Poet would say, to all the devout children of the Church, it is quite evident that the Church is the infallible guardian of *Revealed Truth,* for *Revealed Truth* was entrusted to the Church in order that she might guard it, teach it, and interpret it. *Docete omnes gentes. . . . Ecce ego vobiscum sum usque ad consummationem saeculi* [Teach all nations. . . . Behold I am with you till the end of time]. The Holy Spirit who proceeds from me, *ille vos docebit omnia* [He will teach you all things] and you shall teach men *servare omnia quaecumque mandavi vobis* [to keep all that I have commanded you]. The Divine Master, that is, hands over to His Church the Divine Revelation, not simply a part of it, but the entire body of Divine Revelation, with the promise of a perpetual assistance that would almost be called Doubly Divine. The Revelation of the Divine Redeemer Who speaks, and the Revelation of the Divine Paraclete Who is promised.

"But even beyond the world of Revelation, even within the realm of natural truths, certitude is so much needed in reference to these truths which relate to God: the soul, the origin, nature, and destiny of Man, his relationship with his fellowmen, with the world around him, with his Maker. Even in this field does the Church offer certitude: *Docete omnes gentes. . . . Vobiscum sum. . . . Docebit vos omnia* [Teach all nations. . . . I am with you. . . . He will teach you everything]. Here the Holy Church, the Teacher of Revealed Truth, becomes the wise, trustworthy guardian of natural truths, and even in the realm of natural truths, the Church sheds light, its *Tuto.* Thus Revelation holds out its hand to poor human intelligence, which became lost in its groping pilgrimages in search of truth. What a great and providential boon this is!

"In regard to *Goodness,* how great is the lack of certitude even in daily life, in a daily-lived experience! Where can we find what is good? Where is justice? Where does it begin? And where does it end? How often have cruel acts of injustice not been perpetrated in the name of Justice? How often was not Goodness sacrificed in the name of Goodness? The Church alone has always given an answer to those who sought enlightenment, as well as to those who did not, and sent out its shepherds, its priests, to do

it; only the Church had proclaimed to everyone: *Up to here, Justice! Beyond this point, injustice. Up to this point, it's all right. Beyond this point, it's not all right.* The Church alone, at all times and under any circumstance, teaches us to call things by their rightful names. The last admonition proclaimed to Bishops at their consecration is this: *Your lips shall not call evil what is good, nor shall they call good what is evil.*

"Even this inestimable certitude, concerning truth and goodness, the certitude of our intellect, and our will, is the fruit, and an infinitely precious one, of our Redemption." This is what the Pope said.

The purpose of the last *General Congregation* then, is to determine whether or not one may proceed with complete certitude and beyond any possible doubt towards Beatification. This is the path by which we reached what had to be done with Don Bosco's case.

The Procurator, Father Melandri, presented a petition to the Holy Father in order that after the joyful result of the long investigations, he might consider it proper to complete the work done by issuing a Decree that it was safe to proceed with the solemn Beatification of the Servant of God. This petition, the text of the Decree approving the heroicity of his virtues, the authenticity of the two miracles, and the well-founded opinion reported by Bishop Salotti, the General Promoter of the Faith, all were assembled in a printed volume and constituted the *Positio* for the Congregation of the *Tuto.*

A particular circumstance was properly pointed out by Bishop Salotti who had put aside his role of censor, and assumed that of an admirer. Don Bosco's Beatification in 1929 was going to coincide with the golden jubilee of the Pope's priestly ordination. Referring to this happy coincidence, the Promoter of the Faith said that he was sure he interpreted the feelings of the Holy Father when he said that the concurrence of these two events would be very agreeable to His Holiness. Some time later the Pope himself made it quite clearly known that Bishop Salotti was not far from the truth in what he thought and said. The Cardinals and Consultants of the Sacred Congregation of Rites met for the last time in the presence of the Pope on April 9, 1929, and they cast a favorable vote, namely, that it was quite [safe] *Tuto* to proceed with the solemn Beatification of Don Bosco. Again the Pope delayed his own definitive judgment until a later date, because he first wished to seek heavenly light. He finally set the date for the ceremony, which was scheduled for the 21st of April, 1929. The *Tuto* Decree was read aloud in public with the same formality that we already described

in connection with the Decree on Don Bosco's heroicity of virtues and miracles. The following is a faithful translation of the Decree.

"The Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, performed many great and wonderful things to promote the glory of God, and to provide for the eternal salvation of mankind. As a man sent by God to carry out this dual mission, he began by taking care of young people whom he instructed in the commandments and in the duties of religion; and to whom he gave a moral education. He showed concern that they be given civil instruction, making every effort to enable as many of them as possible to avail themselves of the great treasures of Redemption. His desire to gain for God a great number of souls was limitless. He spared no effort to reach and influence with his ardent apostolic zeal all kinds of people. His spirit could have faltered under the burden of a lack of human resources, by the great amount of opposition that came even from people holding responsible positions, under the weight of problems inherent in the nature of things, under the weight of obstacles of every description. Yet never for one moment did John abandon his wearisome and saintly undertakings. With the help of God, he brought to a successful conclusion all that he had undertaken, and acquired for himself an immortal fame worthy of the highest praise. He also wrote and published many books, which were eminently helpful in revitalizing devotion among the masses, and in strengthening Christian principles and precepts. These books even today are held in great esteem. Now, if we compare the lack of human resources that he continuously had to face, with the greatness of his accomplishments and with the immense amount of benefits provided by them for all kinds of people, we might be inclined to see in him a kind of miracle, almost a new miracle. I say 'miracle' because Divine generosity, almost vying with John's unshakable trust and unselfishness, seemed to increase his strength, multiply his talents, and render his labor wondrously fruitful.

"It is even more astonishing to see that a man of this kind, who was continuously engaged in bold ventures and frequently exposed to many dangers, would live in the midst of boys, deal with all kinds of people, and never for a single moment waver in the practice of Christian virtues, up to the point of reaching the heights of heroicity, as it has been acknowledged and defined after a scrupulous judicial investigation, by the Decree, solemnly promulgated on February 20, 1927.

"Many miracles occurred after the death of this Venerable Servant of God, and as the nature of the Cause required, two among these miracles were juridically discussed and examined with the usual rigor, and were

acknowledged as miracles with the Decree of March 19th last. There was only one more thing to be discussed, namely, whether or not one could safely proceed with the solemn Beatification of the Venerable John Bosco. This was done by the final General Congregation, which met in the presence of His Holiness, Pius XI. Cardinal Alexander Verde, Relator of the Cause, proposed the following question:

Whether, following the approval of the virtues and of the two miracles, it was permissible to proceed with complete certitude to the Beatification of the Venerable John Bosco.

"All the Most Reverend Cardinals and Fathers Consultors who could be present, following the prescribed ritual procedure, cast a favorable vote, His Holiness manifested his joy for that vote but thought it better to postpone the publication of that Decree to another day, so that he could, in the meantime, implore God's heavenly light. When the Pope decided to make known his deliberation, he chose today's date, the third Sunday after Easter. After celebrating with fervor the holy sacrifice of the Mass, the Pope summoned the Most Reverend Cardinals Camillus Laurenti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Alexander Verde, **Ponens** of the Cause, together with Rev. P. Charles Salotti, Promoter General of the Faith, and myself, the undersigned secretary. He entered the hall. He sat on the Pontifical throne and in their presence he declared with a solemn Decree that it *was safe to proceed to the Solemn Beatification of the Venerable John Bosco.* The Pope then ordered that the present Decree be made known publicly and be included in the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of the Rites, and that Apostolic Letters be sent out in *forma brevis* for the solemn Beatification ceremony that was soon to take place in the Vatican Basilica. April 21, 1929."

Immediately after the reading of the Decree, the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, Bishop Mariani, read a second Decree which acknowledged the martyrdom of Venerable Cosma of Carboniano, who laid down his life for his faith on November 5, 1707.

When there is more than one Decree, the Congregation of Rites appoints the one who should thank the Holy Father with a special address. In this instance, Bishop Der-Abrahamian was chosen, and he spoke on behalf of the Armenian hierarchy, of the Armenian clergy, and of the Armenian people. Naturally, he also expressed his thanks on behalf of the Salesians for the Beatification of their Founder. He said: "There are still echoes of your sovereign voice with which, at a recent ceremony approving the miracles of the above-mentioned Servant of God, Your Holiness rendered a well-deserved

tribute to this singular, saintly educator of youth and of souls. I shall therefore refrain from speaking about him again. All I wish to quote is a personal recollection of my own and it is this: the gentle figure of that man of God still lives in me, as well as the profound impression he made on me, when I had the privilege of kissing his hallowed hand, and of receiving his paternal blessing. That impression has never been cancelled from my mind."

The Holy Father was the last to speak, and he wove the praises of the Martyr and the Confessor into a magnificent pattern.

"Most beloved children, you have heard, and together with Us, you have welcomed with devotion, jubilation, and with a deep feeling for what is holy, the two Decrees that were just read: the first to proclaim the martyrdom of Cosma of Carboniano, the glory of Armenia; the second to confirm that, with a clear conscience, we may proceed with the solemn Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, the priest John Bosco, who is the glory of Italy—and something infinitely greater—the glory of the whole Catholic Church.

"There is so much that is splendid, sublime, and edifying, so much that is great and holy in these two Decrees that We are sincerely tempted to let them speak for themselves, in their own incomparable significance. Yet even greater events call for some comment, a comment that would respond to the duty to add something to them so that a greater spiritual benefit may be derived from them. At this point We feel the need to yield to the need of Our Heart, namely of Our own deep, warm, and personal appreciation of the two themes of these Decrees. We shall therefore utter that word, and We know well, also respond to your expectation, and it will be only one shining word, within the richness and variety of things. The word is on Divine Fidelity and on the incomparable wisdom of that great Mother and Teacher which is the Church; it is a word of admiration and of adoration for all those gradations of infinite goodness and, We were about to say, nuances of infinite elegance, with which Divine Providence adorns all things that are, already of themselves, infinitely precious.

"We used the words 'Divine Fidelity.' This is the concept which comes to our mind when we listen (as we did during the reading of the Decree, and in the speech of its warmly eloquent interpreter in whom we are happy to salute almost the whole Armenia with us today), when we listen to the life story of the Servant of God, Cosma of Carboniano, which goes back to such a distant a date of his birth in 1658, and to the not too distant date of his death, 1707. Beloved children, centuries separate us from him, yet,

even though we are ages apart, Divine Goodness, Divine Fidelity, have not forgotten the faithful, generous, Servant, who was heroic up to his death.

"We might almost say that Divine Goodness and Fidelity itself took pains to go and open once again his glorious tomb that seemed almost forgotten, to bend down, as though to summon his bones to new life and proclaim their glory for men to see, *coram Ecclesia,* calling the venerable martyr to the splendor of the highest honors. This is God's way of action; this is the way of acting of His Divine Will. It may seem to us, at times, that God does not think of us, or as some soul fallen into the depths of sadness might say, that God does not care anymore. But it is precisely at moments such as these that God reveals, in ways even more evident, the constant care He has for His own beings. *Fidelis Deus,* this is the word proclaimed loud and clear to us by his glorious tomb. Beloved children, we will always be in the wrong, inevitably so, in any kind of situation, when our faith in God falters. This is exactly what a saintly priest, a humble Servant of God, told Us at the beginning of Our priesthood, and he was fifty years old. 'Remember, what we lack most is trust in God's faithfulness, as it really is, that is, without limits or measure.'

"Most beloved children, We leave you with the recollection that comes to Us from the tomb of a martyr, and with the recollection of the words of a good and humble Servant of God, We leave you this recollection which is not only a precious lesson which often reaches us in the bitter circumstances of life, in the darkness of the present and the darkness of the future, but which also becomes in moments such as these a great consolation and a great comfort. We must also add that it is exactly this immense and inexhaustible trust which reached the heights of a continuous moral miracle, this kind of trust that the Venerable John Bosco one day bequeathed to his children, and now, we can rightly say, to the whole world. It is enough to compare the humble beginnings of his work with the splendor it offers us today; it is enough to consider the innumerable difficulties of all kinds, both material and moral, created by his enemies, and at times, even by his friends, and the infinite number of obstacles he had to overcome, and then turn our attention to the magnificence and elegance and beauty of the triumph accorded him all over the world when he was still alive, and then we will understand just how much confidence in God and trust in His fidelity can accomplish, when a soul is able to say sincerely: *scio cui credidi* [I know whom I have trusted].

"This is the impression, which is still alive in Our mind today, and which We formed in the days of Our youth, from the acquaintance which

by grace and disposition of Divine Goodness, We were privileged to have had with the Venerable Servant of God. At that time, and forever afterward, he seemed to Us to be invincible and unconquerable, mainly because he stood firm and solid in his absolute and complete trust in Divine Fidelity.

"We mentioned the incomparable wisdom of the Church, our great Teacher and Mother, because it is the Church, which as a gentle mother comes to express her gratitude to a son who glorified her; it is the Church, which comes to place a glorious wreath of martyrdom on the tomb of Cosma of Carboniano; it is the Church, the great teacher which presents him to all, so that we may admire him, and all may imitate him. The honor given and the gesture performed by the Church are great, but truly and wisely so, only in proportion to merit. The Church is wise when, in the case of martyrs, she looks no further: *Dixi martyrem, satis est.* No further miracle is needed once the martyrdom is established, for this act of our human frailty, supported by Divine grace, is sufficient. In her glorious wisdom the Church is satisfied by this moderate demand while, in the case of other saintly heroes, as we have just been informed in connection with Don Bosco, she probes scrupulously, not only in her quest for truth, but also for the proofs of truth which is being debated, investigated, and proven, not just with any sort of certitude, but with a full juridical certitude, a complete certitude even as far as the proofs. However, in the case of martyrdom, it is enough that the fact of martyrdom be established, for, in her wisdom, the Church knows how great and extraordinary a thing martyrdom is. With words that were indeed worthy of a genius, it was once said that human weakness, nay, human greatness, could not and will not perform any more magnificent gesture than to vest a humble human being with the purple raiment of his own blood, and so act as a witness, as a defender and as a champion of truth and justice; of that truth and of that justice which judges and measures everything, and has the martyr stand as its own defender, its own further proof. This is the magnificent spectacle offered to us by this humble Armenian priest.

"Some people may think that the Church falls short of its wisdom, when it proposes for imitation such greatness and magnificence. For how can such great and heroic actions be held up for general imitation? Yet the church knows that, at needed moments, such examples can raise up heroes, a whole multitude of heroes, and a genuine multitude of chosen souls. These words may sound contradictory, yet they are in perfect harmony with that reality which is one of the most splendid and historic proofs of the holiness of the Church.

"In her wisdom, Holy Church points to another kind of imitation when it proposes the martyrs as models to be imitated by the faithful. For martyrdom does not consist solely in the shedding of blood, but it can also be bloodless. Infinite is the number of bloodless martyrdoms, at all levels of society and the most diverse situations of history. Here we might quote the sublime words of an ancient Saint and Doctor of the Church who said that *celebrationes martyrum sunt exhortationes martyriorum* [the celebrations in honor of martyrs are exhortations for martyrdom]. There are some souls, some Christian people, who, inspired by the examples of martyrs, voluntarily consecrate themselves to the precious bloodless martyrdom needed to keep one's chastity inviolate. There is a bloodless martyrdom embraced by so many souls who, even when everything is offered to them and everything lies in their hands, leave everything, renounce everything, only to embrace the privations of poverty. There is the bloodless martyrdom of so many willing people who, fully aware of their rights and of their dignity, renounce their freedom to submit themselves entirely, at great cost, to obedience, even when obedience comes enveloped by the darkness of advice not widely known and not fully understood. Infinite is the number of bloodless forms of martyrdom endured quietly in humble households and Christian family circles. How many souls have endured genuine martyrdom to preserve their purity and the honor of the family, rather than purchase comforts at the exorbitant price of one's integrity. How many souls have engaged in truly bloody fights where real blood was represented by privations and tears! How many have been the bloodless martyrdoms only to remain pure, chaste, worthy of the name of manhood, and Christians, in the midst of so much base depravity, only to remain honest amid the unbridled lust of riches, to remain humble with sincere Christian humility of mind and heart in the midst of unrestrained arrogance, ambition for power and injustice! The Church really expects a heroic martyrdom from every one of its children, for really, who is able to escape such bloodless martyrdom? Wherever there are duties to be performed, wherever there are difficulties and obstacles obstructing the fulfillment of our duties, that is exactly where the bloodless martyrdom has to be entered into by souls who are concerned about worthily safeguarding the glory of God and of His Church.

"In closing We wish to speak of the very delicate, very elegant, designs and dispositions of Divine Providence. This humble martyr, so glorious after so many difficulties and contradictions provided by man, times, and things, now, so to speak, takes front stage in history: he comes from an initial disunity to a unity which is desired, sought for, and effectively found

in the unity of the Catholic Church, a unity confirmed by blood. He comes to tell us all of these things exactly at a moment in which throughout the Catholic Church there is such a great concern and zeal, far superior to any praise for, the attainment of unity. And furthermore, this old acquaintanceship of Ours and (We could say) friendship with Don Bosco, even though We were at the beginning of Our priesthood and he was about to reach its sunset, this priestly friendship of Ours which makes him come alive in Our heart with all the joy, cheerfulness, edification provided by his memory, has been re-kindled exactly during these days and these hours. It is now that this figure, the great Servant of God, appears on the horizon, not only of this country but of the entire world; it is now exactly when particular and solemnly important events have been recorded in the history of the Holy See and of the Church and of this country. We must remember, with our knowledge of facts, that Don Bosco was one of the first, eminent, and respected men who deplored the systematic tampering with the rights of the Church and of the Holy See, who lamented that those who governed the country were following pathways which were practically impossible to walk on without trampling upon the most Sacred Rights of the Church.

"Don Bosco was among the first men who appealed to both God and man, so that a possible remedy be found for so many troubles, so that a possible solution be found in order that the sun of justice might again shine and provide serenity for human spirits. Divine Providence leads him, proposes him, to the fullness of sacred honors, exactly in these hours and in the wake of the events that he himself forecast. Don Bosco's Beatification shall be the first that We will joyously proclaim before the world after these events. There is nothing that we can do but give thanks, and wonder. What is there for us to fear, what is there that we may not venture to hope and trust, with certainty that we will be graciously heard, when we find ourselves face to face with the Lord Who is so faithful a Master, and with a Divine Providence so exquisitely and delicately generous?

"It is with these sentiments that We impart to all of you Our Apostolic Blessing, in response as well to your filial request that has been directed to Us. We impart it to each and every one of you here present today, and to all whom you represent: We impart it, in particular, to Don Bosco's immense family, to all his sons and daughters, their Houses and schools scattered all over the world, so that, through them, Our blessing may be conveyed throughout the world.

"We also impart a sincere, paternal, and affectionate blessing to the beloved country of Armenia, to all our beloved Armenian sons and daughters, wherever the bloody storm of war may have driven them. Together with this tender, fatherly, and pastoral blessing goes Our hope that, one day, We may see all of them liberated and comforted after so many tribulations, sacrifices and bloodshed, and (as the Venerable Martyr leads us to hope) that the dissidents may return to the fold so that the day may come, as predicted, that the hope and prophecy of the Divine Shepherd be fulfilled, that there will be one flock, one shepherd. We bless first the Venerable Hierarchy, the Bishops, and priests, together with their flocks, wherever they may be now. Our blessing is one full of fatherly pride and admiration suited to the great and wonderful events that are being recalled today, as we honor the memory of the holy martyr, St. Gaumida."

The Apostolic Blessing brought the ceremony to an end, and also closed the Cause of Don Bosco's Beatification.

Chapter 7

The Solemn Identification of Don Bosco's Body

Don Bosco's mortal remains had by now become a Sacred relic. However, the Church, which venerates the relics of Saints, does not allow any act of cult to be directed to them until it has been properly ascertained whether a given body, and every single part thereof, truly belongs to the person to whom they are attributed. For this reason the Church prescribes that a solemn canonical identification of the body be carried out. The identification of Don Bosco's body began on May 16, 1929, at the Salesian House of Valsalice, where the tomb had been kept for more than forty years.

Everything was properly arranged as demanded by the sacred canons. In answer to a petition presented by the Postulator of the Cause, Father Tomasetti, the Sacred Congregation of Rites had issued a Decree dated April 27th, granting to Cardinal Gamba, Archbishop of Turin, all the necessary faculties to proceed and perform the identification of the body, either personally or by delegating a priest endowed with ecclesiastic dignity. The Postulator came from Rome to deliver the text of the Decree, accompanied by Bishop Salotti, the Promoter of the Faith, whose duty it was to impart the necessary instructions, and supervise the proceedings to make sure that everything was done in the manner prescribed. His Eminence chose to carry out the assigned task personally, with the assistance of two Canons, Desecondi and Maritano, who were, respectively, Assistant Promoter of the Faith, and Chancellor in the Apostolic Process.

All the above-mentioned people, together with the three physicians and two witnesses, gathered in the Aula Magna of the school the evening of May 16th. Here, the Promoter of the Faith asked first of all the Cardinal and the two Canons to take an oath that they would perform scrupulously the task assigned to them. Then the physicians appointed as anatomic experts, Peynetti, Rocca and Filippello, took a similar oath before the Cardinal. The Promoter of the Faith then called forward two Salesian priests, Fathers Secundus Manione and Melchior Marocco, who were to state, under oath, whether, when and how Don Bosco's mortal remains had ever been moved from the place where they had been laid to rest in 1888, and if, after having been eventually removed, they were put back into their original place. Their testimony, based on their direct and personal knowledge of the circumstances,

aimed at excluding any doubt as to the identity of that very corpse they were dealing with. As instrumental witnesses whose task it was to attest to the formal regularity of the proceedings, the Economer General of the Salesian Society, Father Fidel Giraudi, and another Salesian, Father Albert De Agostini, swore that they would perform their task conscientiously. Then, at last, with the consent of the Promoter of the Faith, two Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, designated as assistant helpers, were to take an oath that they would assist conscientiously in the examination and recomposition of the venerated remains. After these preliminary formalities, which were duly recorded in the minutes, His Eminence and the Promoter of the Faith left the hall with all the other above-mentioned people and proceeded to the crypt where Don Bosco was buried.

A number of authorities, and some invited guests, were already waiting there. The tall, distinguished figure of the Mayor of Turin, Count Thaon di Revel, towered over all the others. Next to him there were several people, such as the representatives of the clergy, the Federal Secretary of the Court Magistrates and civic departments, as well as a large group of doctors. The Superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians formed a group apart from the others. The Major Superiors of the Salesian Society, led by Father Philip Rinaldi, the Rector Major, were lined up on either side of the tomb. A number of Salesians, with the college students of the Valsalice School and students from other Salesian schools, were assembled in the courtyard. Although the event had not been publicized, word had somehow gotten around, and a considerable number of people had managed to enter.

By the time the Cardinal and his following appeared, Bishop Salotti had already removed the monumental stone that adorned Don Bosco's vault, so that it took only a few minutes to break the wall behind it and to reveal the coffin placed therein. In the most religious silence and with an emotion shared by all, the coffin was gently and swiftly removed from the vault and placed on a wooden table where everyone could see it. Following the example of the Rector Major, the Cardinal, the Mayor and the other eminent personalities among those present, stepped forward to kiss the coffin with reverence and affectionate admiration.

Six Salesian priests, each wearing a surplice, lifted the beloved burden on their shoulders, and took it into a chamber that had been decorated in advance with drapery, flowers, and branches of evergreens. They were led by a long line of clerics, who recited the psalms taken from the office of holy Confessors, and carried lighted candles in their hands. They were followed in procession by distinguished personages, with a many people

lined up along the sides and showing a devout attitude. On the rear wall of the hall there hung the picture of a smiling Don Bosco, reproduced from a painting by Rollini. In the center of the hall there was a wide table and the coffin was placed on it. Once the authorities and invited guests gathered in the hall, the doors were locked and the processes began.

Meanwhile, there were some moving and touching scenes outside the hall. Just as in the Roman Catacombs, where pilgrims pause next to the open vaults in which the first martyrs were laid to rest, without being dismayed by the sight of their remains, but rather experiencing feelings of compassion towards them, likewise here the crowd stopped and gazed at the empty vault, which, like a mother's womb, had kept the mortal remains of Don Bosco for forty-five years. They were all absorbed in their loving thoughts. In the crowd there were mothers who gently laid down their ailing offspring inside the vault, hoping that Don Bosco would obtain the grace of recovery for them. A little blind boy called out: "Don Bosco, let me see!" The bricks and plaster heaped at the foot of the wall where it had been demolished were reverently taken. One little boy grasped the edge of the empty tomb and climbed into it, stretched himself out at full length, and cried: "Now, I'm like Don Bosco." Other children imitated him, eager in their turn, to "be like Don Bosco." More groups of school children arrived from Turin, to pray by the hallowed tomb of this great friend of Youth.

Many of the people outside envied the good fortune of the privileged few that had gained access to the hall where Don Bosco's body was to be identified, and with the hope that they, too, might soon be able to see the venerated remains of the Saint at close range, they crowded eagerly around the windows. But they were victims of delusion, because they did not know that the process would last a long time.

Before the coffin was opened, Bishop Salotti who was an eloquent orator with a fiery temperament, and who was a staunch admirer of Don Bosco, gave a short, affectionate speech which began thus: "Yesterday evening, it was my privilege to be received by the Holy Father who told me: 'Go to Turin willingly, and assure Cardinal Gamba that We are gratified by the solemn services he has held in Don Bosco's city in honor of Our Priestly Jubilee. Tell the Salesian family that We share in their joy, and that their joy is Our own.' " After making this announcement he added that he felt deeply moved now that he was soon to see opened the coffin that contained the mortal remains of the man who had left the marks of his footprints on modern society and who had fascinated his own generation

and those generations to follow, immortalizing his name for all future centuries. "If we wish to evaluate correctly the full meaning of his undertakings and the difficulties he encountered, we have to go back to the days when he first began his work for the good of all, and understand the mentality of his contemporaries," he said. "There were even some Prelates who were terrified when they looked at the undertakings of this poor priest from the Asti area. And then there were also outstanding persons like the Marquis of Cavour, father and champion of Italian Unity, who did not hesitate to show their real concerns: the little urchins who were marshaled and assisted by Don Bosco were described as a pack of jailbirds, who reputedly were destined to create for a tomorrow feared to be imminent, a movement which would have a touch of the subversive and would cause much trouble. Instead, Don Bosco was intent on turning those rascals, as he really did, into good Italian citizens and good workers. And it was through them that new furrows were ploughed in the life of your own Piedmont, and the whole of Italy; it was through them that men were formed who climbed the lofty ladder of ecclesiastical dignity, of the army, of diplomacy, of politics, of the courts. Even you yourself, Your Eminence, would have been drawn into his orbit, had you not had to look after that good angel, your mother!" The speaker then went on to say that the identification of the corpse was a rite that had to be approached with great faith. "We do not know yet in what condition the corpse may be found," he cautioned, "but whatever it is that we find—bones, or merely ashes—it will represent a Man of God who lived by the Gospel, and who directed towards virtue every human event." Finally, as General Promoter of the Faith, he warned all present that, under penalty of excommunication, nothing was to be touched, removed, or tampered with in any way.

After his speech *elaboratis verbis et magna cum cordis emotione* [with eloquent words and heartfelt emotion] (as the minutes pointed out) he had the Canon Clerk read out the reports of the identification, and re-internment, carried out respectively the 13th–15th of October, 1917. After this, the screws were removed from the first coffin and the lid was raised to reveal the second coffin, bound with knotted ribbon and protected by seals. His Eminence checked the seals on the coffin of 1917 to make sure that they were those of his predecessor, Cardinal Richelmy; then he broke them. At that moment, everybody in the room stepped closer to look at the corpse, which was about to become visible to their gaze.

When the second coffin lid was removed, lo and behold, what was left of the great Don Bosco! The general feeling was a painful one. The corpse

did not offer anything exceptional. The ravages of time and chemical ingredients had destroyed it. Silently and deeply moved, all looked at the remains of the glorious Servant of God, trying to reconstruct with their memory his amiable and beloved features. Then the Archbishop and the other authorities left the room, accompanied by Father Rinaldi and the other Salesian Superiors, making room for the doctors to carry out their duties.

The crowd, however, now forced its way into the room, and delayed the work of the doctors. Salesian clerics halted the people and directed an orderly entrance into the hall. Hundreds of people, distinguished as well as ordinary folks, young and old, healthy and sick, filed past the remains, crying out, praying and touching the coffin with their hands. Two women who had been miraculously cured were in tears, and seemed like two mysterious beings come from a world far away to bear witness to the sanctity which at one time had been alive in those wasted limbs.

When the flow of people subsided, the coffins were closed again and carried into another hall near the school chapel where the doctors were at last able to commence their work. But since it was already late, it was decided to postpone the beginning of their work to the following day. Before they left the room, they made sure that no one could possibly gain access from outside. Then the Chancellor sealed the door with the archepiscopal seals, in the presence of the Assistant Promoter of the Faith and the instrumental witnesses.

From now on we shall skip similar formalities, prescribed by the Sacred Canons so as to prevent any possibility of violation. Next morning, from the early hours, the road that runs from the River Po to the Salice River and borders it all the way to the school, gradually filled with people—groups of ordinary people, mostly workers going up, driven by the desire to see Don Bosco. It was touching to see that they had brought along their breakfast which they ate on the way, since they had risen early to make time to have the consolation of seeing Don Bosco. As the day went on, the crowd increased: laymen, priests, men and women crowded the big courtyard of the school, and patiently waited their turn. The Superiors had been able to have the seals removed early, in order that they might grant access to the place where Don Bosco lay, for they did not want to disappoint so many people. Yet at one o'clock they were obliged to clear the room and prohibit access to anyone except the doctors and the ecclesiastical authorities, so that the process of identification of the body might begin.

The steady flow of pilgrims continued throughout the day, and started anew, and even increased, the following day. Again the faithful were permitted to look at Don Bosco's hallowed remains for only a few hours. The vast majority had to be satisfied with a visit to the tomb where Don Bosco's body had been laid, and the chapel of the Pieta that was located above it. On the 18th of March a public announcement was carried by all the newspapers: "The General Headquarters of the Salesians is touched by the general manifestation of affection which has been shown to the mortal remains of Don Bosco by so many people, and gratefully express their thanks to everyone. However, regretfully they announce that, for the present time, further visits are to be suspended. It will be duly announced later on when the faithful will be allowed, once again, to satisfy their pious desire."

This announcement, however, did not stop the tide of people from Turin or the visitors from other parts, who filled the courtyard, spread out under the porticoes, and prayed next to the empty tomb. Groups of school children came from all the schools of the town; great amounts of flowers were brought, to the point of turning that place into a garden.

The doctors had three duties to perform: first of all, they had to remove all the clothing that covered the body; then they had to proceed to examine whatever was made evident and finally to make arrangements for the preservation of the skeleton. On the whole, they were satisfied that, apart from the inevitable natural ravages of time, the corpse showed no signs of any rupture or tampering of any kind. This was the first matter they had to ascertain. Here is a brief description of the work accomplished.

The whole body was clothed in priestly vestments; the feet were kept in shoes, which were worn out and open at the top since the stitching was rotten. The biretta lay next to the head; on his chest there was a wooden crucifix with an oxidized metal figure of Christ, and a small scapular of Mary Help of Christians. There was also another scapular of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

The doctors first removed the surrounding remains and the various decomposing fragments, and carefully deposited them in glass urns with lids; then with great care they removed the alb, the collar, the cassock, and whatever was left, which were also put inside larger glass urns. Later on, the soft parts *ex carnibus and ex ossibus* [from flesh and bones] were placed into three small glass urns. All these parts would later on be used as proper material for relics. For this reason, Father Giraudi, the Economer General, had already prepared thousands of small reliquiaries to contain the relics. The Doctors by now had brought to light the isolated body, which was

raised up and freed from those pieces of clothing which had been attached to the back; it was placed on a surgical table set up next to the casket. The venerated remains of Don Bosco were thus displayed in the following state.

The skeleton was anatomically complete; the bones were dry, solid, still in their natural place; the joints were still connected by ligaments and by soft parts still intact; the skin teguments of the head were dried up through the process of mummification and covered completely the bones of the skull and face; the shape of the face was well-preserved because it was still properly joined to the jaw. All hair was visible and almost all was black. Much of the thorax was mummified, so that the ribs and the backbone formed a compact whole, while in the hollow areas they found the dried fragments of internal organs. The soft parts of the back and of the loins were also well- preserved, as were those parts which joined and held together the bones of the pelvis—you could also see the two femurs attached to them, amply wrapped in mummified muscles. Even the skeletal frame of legs and feet were also well-preserved in its attachment to the remainder of the body, despite the absence of soft parts. The doctors concluded one of their reports with a declaration and an observation as follows: "The undersigned physicians declare that on the whole, the mortal remains of the Venerable Don Bosco are well-preserved and, for the satisfaction of the faithful and devotees and admirers of this great Apostle of Youth and of the People, we wish to add that among the various organs, the tongue is amazing well-preserved."

Don Bosco's tongue! It was only natural that people would find some significance in its excellent preservation, destined to glorify the gift of that speech which, throughout his entire life, had been so powerful an instrument in doing good—from the pulpit, in the confessional, between the four walls of his humble room, in his travels, and in the playground of the Valdocco Oratory during the first decades of his apostolic labors among children. Don Bosco's tongue had spoken only to give praise to God, to provide his fellow human beings with teachings. The words formed by that tongue provided light to the mind, peace to troubled hearts, mystical exaltation to the spirit, an invitation to conversion, a spur to perseverance, a soothing power for the ailments of life and for the eternal salvation of countless souls.

On behalf of the Salesian Superiors, the Postulator of the Cause, Father Francis Tomasetti, expressed the desire that the doctors should inquire into what procedure would be best to preserve the precious remains of Don Bosco. In their eagerness to respond to such a desire, the physicians, with

the consent of the Promoter of the Faith, sent for Dr. George Canuto, a professor at Turin University, who took the ritual oath, and went to work.

With the help of other physicians, the professor wrapped the skeleton tightly in a winding sheet impregnated up to the point of saturation with an aromatic colloidal preparation. This preservation process lasted quite some time, and was carried out in such a way that the trunk, pelvis and thighs might remain all in one piece. The remaining pieces which were attached, were protected with a solution and an alcoholic varnish, either of shellac resin or of benzoic rubber. This is a mixture which if well-prepared, assures the lasting preservation of a body.

Some parts of the body were removed to become relics, some of which were to go to Rome, as tradition demanded, while others were to be handed to the Salesian Superiors. The former would be placed in sumptuous reliquaries, to be presented to the Holy Father, the Cardinals, and the Sacred Congregation after the Beatification ceremony; the latter, entrusted to Father Philip Rinaldi, would also be put into reliquaries, and later distributed among the Salesians, the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Archbishops, Bishops, public churches, private chapels, and eminent benefactors of the Salesian Society. Foremost among the relics that Bishop Salotti entrusted to Father Philip Rinaldi were the tongue, and the right lung, which alone was preserved. One hundred and twenty-eight grams of dried cerebral matter that the doctors had removed from the skull through the wide occipital opening, were also given to Father Philip Rinaldi, who, after the Beatification, divided the matter up in a number of small glass phials, that were then encased in small precious reliquaries, for distribution to the Provincial Superiors of the Salesian Society and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

Repeated announcements in the press, reminding people that access to the hallowed remains would be suspended temporarily, had a contrary effect. Apparently, people did not believe it, or they hoped to by-pass the regulations, for they came in a steady flow and in increasing numbers, from morning till night. The Salesians had to find some means by which they could respond satisfactorily to these people, who would not resign themselves to the idea of going away, dissatisfied. So the Salesians had recourse to an expedient, and that was to allow them to have religious objects and the garments of sick people who had pinned their hope of recovery on Don Bosco, touch Don Bosco's head.

When the operations described above were completed, the physicians prepared the body for clothing. The garments were to settle directly on the

skeleton, which was put on a crimson velvet couch, a gift from the Boggio family, fringed with gold and secured by special orthopedic fixtures.

It was now May 23rd, and in view of the fact that the process of clothing the body would take some time, it was decided to delay action for some days, until the feast of Mary Help of Christians was over.

That year, a crowd of visitors far larger than usual attended the celebrations at Valdocco, and consequently there was an exceptional excess of visitors at Valsalice. On the eve of the feast of Mary Help of Christians, six priests and two nuns were on duty from eight o'clock in the morning until one o'clock in the afternoon, for the sole purpose of receiving the rosaries, medals, crucifixes, and pieces of clothing handed to them by the faithful, so that they might touch the body of Don Bosco with them, and then hand them back.

Shortly after one o'clock, the Superiors and the pupils of Valsalice were allowed to see the mortal remains of Don Bosco. How eagerly they kissed his hand, and his head! Something sacred was astir in that hall which invited people to be recollected and led them to meditate. The chamber was lavishly decorated with flowers, which filled the air with a gentle fragrance; a number of bouquets were strewn all around the hallowed remains.

This visit made by those people we just mentioned became the source of a rumor, which circulated, namely that Don Bosco's remains, or more simply "Don Bosco," could be seen. Word spread rapidly to the neighboring countryside, and peasants hurried from their farmhouses in a steady flow. Word also reached the city and long lines of motor cars sent the crowd scattering as they entered the playground or parked down the street.

By evening, the crush was so immense that the local police had to intervene to take control and direct traffic. The Salesian Superiors were so impressed by this sincere, fervent enthusiasm that they decided to meet the general desires of the faithful, and thus a long procession began to wind past the body. In that dense mingling of people from all walks of life, pious events did occur which brought people to tears.

The stream of visitors never abated for a single moment, from early morning until late at night, on the feast of Mary Help of Christians. The total number of visitors was estimated to be approximately twenty thousand.

The Economer General, Father Fidelis Giraudi, who was in charge of all that was happening at Valsalice, did not find it in his heart to turn away, dissatisfied, the vast crowd who came so eagerly to pay tribute to Don Bosco's remains. Consequently, he arranged for a police detail to maintain order, and with the consent of the canonical guardians, reopened the doors

of the room where Don Bosco lay, and which now seemed transformed into a garden of fragrant flowers.

In God's good time, the corpse was clothed anew with the vestments worn by a priest when he officiates at the altar. The body was placed on a large cushion of sumptuous velvet, embroidered by the Sisters. The black silk socks on the feet had been knitted by the young war orphans entrusted to the Sisters; the doctors had prohibited any use of wool in order to remove the danger of moths. The trade schools of Valdocco had supplied the shoes and cassock. The Superiors of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians donated the beautiful amice, which was adorned by a cross in the center, surrounded by embroidered symbols. A surplice of genuine Brussels lace was a token of the deep veneration that the niece of Archbishop Gastaldi, Countess Maze de la Roche, had always felt for Don Bosco. The chasuble, with a matching stole and maniple, was an exquisite gift from the Supreme Pontiff, Benedict XV, to the Rector Major, Father Paul Albera, Don Bosco's second successor, on the occasion of his golden priestly jubilee in 1918. The veil for the chalice, which formed part of the set with the chasuble, was used in making the second pillow to support Don Bosco's head.

Don Bosco's remains, thus vested, were placed inside a large receptacle made entirely from pure crystal, that was later put inside another container of gilded wood, an exquisite piece of work created by the Salesian trade school of San Benigno Canavese. The mask, which was attached to the head, had been fashioned by Cellini, the sculptor who created the monument to Don Bosco in the Piazza-Maria-Ausiliatrice in Turin, and Charles Cussetti had painted it.

Those who saw it felt that they were viewing once again, the gentle features of the beloved Father, who looked as though he were sleeping peacefully, with hands crossed on his breast. The hands were also the work of the sculptor, Cellini.

The following days, many more people than before kept going to Valsalice. That road, to man's memory, never was trod by so many people and for such a long time, persistently moving to see Don Bosco.

Around the receptacle, people were praying. For brief moments many placed rosaries or holy pictures on the crystal panels that enclosed the body. Several sick people dragged themselves to Valsalice and were allowed to linger a little longer than others at the side of the container where, full of hope, they invoked Don Bosco.

Orderly groups and groups of students from educational and charitable institutions filed past the remains of Don Bosco. One day a gallant company

of Black Shirts appeared, to place a magnificent wreath of flowers on the crystal container. One by one they filed past, bending to kiss the smooth crystal and taking away with them, as cherished souvenirs, field flowers they had found here and there in odd corners. Many contingents of "*Piccole Italiane*"[little Italian girls] and "*Balilla*" boys came as well. All this public veneration was a bit premature; but no one had foreseen it. Now that it had begun, no one could stop it, and so the Promoter of the Faith pretended not to notice.

Meanwhile, as the date scheduled for Don Bosco's Beatification drew nearer, foreign pilgrims on their way to Rome stopped in Turin between trains, and, when possible, they went to Valdocco. In the playgrounds, one heard greetings in different languages. Many ventured as far as Valsalice.

Salesians from the different countries of both the Old and the New World, and from foreign missions, were leaving for Rome daily. Most of them were Provincial Superiors or delegates of Provinces who were coming to Italy to attend the General Chapter of the Salesian Society, scheduled for the month of July at Valsalice. They were joined on their way to the Eternal City by groups of boys who were en route to represent their companions from hundreds and hundreds of schools and oratories. The Motherhouse of Turin alone sent 250 boarders and 125 Oratory boys.

Foremost among the Salesians who visited Rome were the Prefects Apostolic and Vicars Apostolic, and resident Bishops of Italy, America and India. The Salesian Cardinal, August Hlond, Archbishop of Gniezno and Poznan, and Primate of Poland, took an airplane directly from his See to the airport outside Rome. Never before had any Prince of the Church undertaken such a flight!

His Roman friends gave a hearty welcome to Father Philip Rinaldi, the third successor of Don Bosco as Rector Major. Worldwide attention centered more closely on Rome, where the press devoted a good deal of consideration to the forthcoming Beatification, regarded as an event of universal importance.

As we leave the faithful pilgrims directing their steps to Valsalice and continuing uninterruptedly their devotion until the triumphant moment of Don Bosco's body's transference, we will direct our steps towards the capital of the Catholic world, to see for ourselves all the remarkable things that happened prior to, during, and after, the glorious event of Don Bosco's Beatification.

Chapter 8

Don Bosco's Beatification in Rome

In September 1927, at the audience granted to Bishop Henry Mourao, Salesian Bishop of Campos, Brazil, the Holy Father Pius XI told him that he would be very happy if Don Bosco's Beatification were to coincide with his own priestly jubilee.[1] Divine Providence so ordained that the Pope's Jubilee year would be gladdened by two great events. The first of these was precisely the Beatification of Don Bosco, and the second was the Reconciliation of Italy, as a nation, with the Holy See. There was a close link connecting these.[2] The former, however, was itself a truly historic occurence for both Italy and the world. What seemed barely possible on the eve of the event, was transformed into a luminous reality on June 2, 1929. But let us deal with them in an orderly and coherent manner.

EVENTS PRIOR TO DON BOSCO'S BEATIFICATION

Intensive preparations were underway in Turin, where everyone foresaw that the event would be exceptionally grand. But we shall speak of what happened in Turin in our next chapter. Here, however, we will mention only what was associated with the Roman celebration. It was anticipated in the Turin area that Cooperators, friends, and past pupils from Piedmont would be going to Rome. For this reason, a committee was appointed to help pilgrims with travel plans and accommodations, and to arrange special leaves of absence for workers. The committee also had impressed a special badge for the pilgrims to wear on their chests, to help them recognize one another immediately whenever they met. As early as March 13th, Humbert Renda, the Royal School Superintendent of Piedmont, sent a circular letter to all the autonomous municipalities, principals of secondary schools of all categories and degrees, royal school inspectors, and local directors of education, to inform them officially of the forthcoming elevation of the Venerable Don Bosco to the honor of the Altar. In view of his great contribution to the field of education, the Superintendent ordered that a public commemorative celebration should be held of this friend and teacher

[1] Letter from the Bishop to Father Philip Rinaldi, Campos, January 26, 1929.

[2] Special edition on "*Don Bosco and the Conciliation*" published by the Salesians in Rome, June 2, 1929. It contained a significant article by Marquis Philip Crispolti, Senator of the Realm (Appendix, Document 11).

of children, in all schools prior to the Easter holidays. Such a commemoration was to be enacted by the class teachers in elementary schools, and by the professor of Literature in the secondary schools; in teachers' training schools by the professor of Philosophy. The Superintendent took a further step. He authorized a week's vacation for the period of the Roman celebrations, so as to make it easier for all the teachers under his jurisdiction to go to Rome. As the time for the Beatification ceremony drew nearer, Cardinal Gamba, the Archbishop of Turin, addressed the following letter to the clergy in his archdiocese: "Not only does the great Salesian family, whose Founder is now to be elevated to the honor of the Altar, hail this august event in jubilation, but the whole of Piedmont does as well; I might even say that it is hailed by the entire Catholic world, for the heroic virtues, the sanctity, and great merits of this illustrious Turin priest are known everywhere." He issued instructions that at noontime on Sunday, June 2nd, the bells of all parish churches were to ring forth festively, to inform the faithful that Don Bosco's Beatification was now an accomplished fact, while during that same afternoon, after advanced notice to the faithful, a *Te Deum* was to be sung in all parish churches. The following Sunday, the church bells were to ring as for a feast once more, to hail the solemn transference of Don Bosco's mortal remains.

Cardinal Gamba was a former pupil of the Valdocco Oratory, and he had affectionate memories of Don Bosco, of whom he always spoke with genuine and warm enthusiasm. Had he not hastened to join the coffin bearers, and helped them support their burden with his own two hands at the time when the bier of Don Bosco was carried from its original vault to the balcony above? The Saint, who had noticed the young man's excellent qualities, would have liked to have him become one of his Salesians, but when he realized that the youth could not leave his widowed mother all alone in the world, Don Bosco made an attempt to alter his plan to enter the archdiocesan Seminary. All he recommended was that, when the time came that he no longer had to look after his mother, he should return to the Oratory where he would welcome him eagerly. But when the young man's mother died at last, her son was already Bishop of Biella. He, too, went to Rome, naturally.

For three days, trains carried thousands of pilgrims headed for Rome. The two worldwide families of the one to be Beatified were sending their representatives from every nation. One family had its Bishops, priests, and pupils. The other family had its Sisters and their pupils. The diocesan

Directors of the Pious Union of Cooperators also had organized pilgrimages for their members. The Hospice of the Sacred Heart became akin to a haven, since all the new arrivals were to go there, as to a meeting place, and as an orientation center. Father Simonetti, the Provincial, and Father Colombo, the house Director, had foreseen in good time what an extraordinary flow of visitors there would be. Therefore, they had made the necessary arrangements to respond, to whatever the circumstances would demand. They had set up a committee of past pupils who diligently managed to guarantee suitable lodgings, to handle correspondence, and to expedite matters of all kinds. The committee was permanently on duty, to respond to all inquiries.

Solemn receptions welcomed diocesan pilgrimages from different parts of Italy and national groups from abroad. Particularly heartwarming were the cordial receptions provided for the Salesian Houses and Oratories. There were thirty-two houses represented, and five of them were accompanied by their own band of musicians. Their arrival was hailed with fraternal manifestations of joy by the pupils living in the House, who became even more enthusiastic when 250 boys arrived in Rome from the Turin Oratory which had been Don Bosco's original Oratory, and now had become the headquarters of Don Bosco's undertakings. Many Roman households, to whom a simple request was made, deemed it an honor to extend their hospitality to prelates and other important people. Italian, French, British, Polish, Spanish and American pilgrims mingled in the playground and strolled beneath the porticoes of the Hospice of the Sacred Heart, all united by brotherly love in the name of Don Bosco.

On the eve of the Beatification ceremony, the Holy Father honored the pilgrims from Piedmont by receiving them at a special audience. The first vespers of the feast had almost arrived. Some three thousand fellow countrymen from Don Bosco's native region climbed the stairs of the Vatican during the afternoon of July 1st, lined up along the first gallery, and crowded into the Ducal and Borgia halls, as well as into the Hall of Blessings. The Episcopate was represented by Pinardi, the Auxiliary Bishop of Turin, and by four Ordinaries: Spandre of Asti, Filipello of Ivrea, Rossi of Susa, and Travaini of Cuneo and Fossano. Next, there were also some three hundred priests, a number of Piedmontese aristocrats, and finally a vast crowd of ordinary people.

The Holy Father descended from his chambers, accompanied by Cardinal Gamba, and as he moved along through the crowd he held out his hand to be kissed, amidst shouts of applause, acclamation and songs. When

he reached the Hall of Blessings where all the pilgrims had gathered, he took his seat on the throne. The Cardinal Archbishop delivered a short speech, expressing his filial devotion and his good wishes for the Pope's Jubilee. Speaking from the heart, the Cardinal voiced the general feelings of love and esteem for the Holy Father that were shared by all the pilgrims from Turin and Piedmont, who had come to Rome, not only to honor the Venerable Don Bosco, elevated to the honor of the Altar, but also to demonstrate their deep devotion to the Pope, and to extend to him their sincere good wishes for the fiftieth anniversary of his priestly ordination, after having prayed for him during their Jubilee visit to the Vatican Basilica.

The Holy Father then replied:

"We extend the welcome of a paternal heart to all Our beloved children—to Our dear priests of God, to Our venerable Brothers in the Episcopate, to His Eminence, the Cardinal, and to all of you who have come from Our beloved Piedmont, strong and faithful to the Holy religion of its ancestors, faithful to an eminently strong Christian life. We welcome you, who come to Us filled with pious sentiments.

"Your spokesman, the Cardinal, has embellished his speech with his pastoral affection; but We saw, with Our own eyes what your sentiments were when We passed among you, moving as for a review which, rapid though it was, enabled Us to make Our personal acquaintance with all of you. We heard your sentiments expressed by your enthusiastic acclamations and applause, and now We extend to you, once again, Our paternal welcome.

"This pilgrimage appears particularly pious for two reasons. First of all, it is pious because it is filled with that true and religious piety inspired by the Faith of your and Our Don Bosco whom We have come to know, by the grace of God, with whom We have lived for some days—and now he grants Us the grace to elevate him to the honor of the Altar. The Piedmontese pilgrims have come to deposit before this newly erected altar the first fruits of the whole wide world, for wherever Don Bosco is known, so are his works.

"Another pious reason has brought you here: the piety of your souls, a kind of piety which is most important, because over and above all else we must save souls, and our own soul, first of all; if we save our own soul, We may be able to save the souls of others, for no man can give what he does not have.

"The beloved pilgrims have also come here to avail themselves of the riches offered them by the Jubilee; they have come to the very source, to the heart of their ancient Mother. We are well aware of the spirit with which this is being done, and with what a great devotion! We thank you all, and with you We thank the people who organized your pilgrimage, the priests who, after preparing you for this pilgrimage, have also accompanied you, with your Archbishop, the Cardinal, at the head of the pilgrimage, to give a genuinely edifying example of pious devotion. We also know that in your Jubilee devotions, you have not forgotten to pray for Us, and We shall therefore pray for you in return.

"To all this you have added yet another act of piety: an act of filial piety toward your common Father Who, in these days, has grown older by one year, and Who is now celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of his priesthood. You wished to take part in Our Jubilee, and We are grateful to you for it.

"Great is our paternal joy as We see you all here before Us, and just as We welcome you with a full heart, so shall We pray for you, and with these sentiments We now impart our Apostolic Blessing to all of you who have come all the way from the city of Turin to Susa, from the valleys to the peaks of your native Alps. We pray that the blessing of God descends on each and everyone of you, on your Cardinal, on your Bishops, on your priests who work on your behalf and who are comforted by your response. We bless you for the success of those organizations and initiatives we know prosper so well in your midst, your disciplined spirit, and your obedience. May this blessing descend, also, on those whom you represent, and who are spiritually present, even though physically absent; may it descend on all your holy resolutions, on the apostolate of prayer, on the apostolate of good works and of a faithful and worthy Christian conduct, and on the apostolate of good example. We invoke the blessing of God likewise on your financial matters, on your native region, cities and villages and on Our beloved Piedmont in general; and may this blessing remain always with you."

After his Apostolic Blessing and the distribution of a Jubilee medal to all the pilgrims, the Holy Father left the hall, greeted by a renewed applause and enthusiastic acclamations.

At the same hour, on the eve of the feast, the festivities of the Beatification were anticipated in another form, in the Tiburtina district, on the other side of Rome. The Josephine Fathers, who have their motherhouse there, mindful of the relationship that existed between their founder, the theologian Father Murialdo, and Don Bosco, the Founder of the Salesians, rendered Don Bosco a special tribute. There was a distinguished gathering of people, among whom were two Cardinals, the Salesian Hlond, and Sincereo, of Piedmont, as well as several Italian and foreign Bishops, the Rector Major of the Salesians, Father Philip Rinaldi, the whole General Council of the Josephine Fathers, the Ambassadors to the Holy See from Brazil and Nicaragua, Senator Borselli, Knight of the Collar of the Annunciation, three Army generals, and many other outstanding personages. They all had come to listen to an address commemorating Don Bosco and delivered by Countess Amalia Cappello, the wife of the above-mentioned Nicaraguan diplomat. The speaker was a very cultured lady, well-known in Roman circles. She easily and properly responded to the mandate assigned to her and to the expectations of her distinguished audience. This gesture of sincere, affectionate fraternal solidarity on the part of the Josephine Fathers warranted a special mention in these Memoirs.

DON BOSCO'S BEATIFICATION

At last there came the dawn of June 2nd. Already, from the early hours of the morning, streams of people wended their way toward St. Peter's Square, to make sure that they would find a place in the vast interior of the Basilica. They were all guided by a single-minded desire to witness Don Bosco's exaltation. As they climbed the steps and entered the vestibule, they looked up at a banner that was draped over the main entrance. It depicted Don Bosco, carried in triumph by a number of his jubilant pupils, as we have already described in these *Biographical Memoirs.* The Father of Youth was shown sitting in an armchair, with the Piedmontese countryside stretched in the background. Those who understood Latin read the couplet which had the following meaning: *Jubilant, and inspired by their single-minded love, youths carry on their shoulders the priest, John Bosco, and festively acclaim him.*[3]

Inside the immense Basilica, the crowd grew bigger minute by minute, and two hours before the scheduled hour for the commencement of the

[3] *Sustollunt humeris festo clamore Ioannem Ludentes iuvenes, quos alit unus amor.*

ceremony, the reserved areas were already crowded to their limits. The diplomatic corps and civil authorities, together with other dignitaries, filled the grandstands on either side of the apse. Located in other stands were the members of the sovereign Order of Malta, Don Bosco's relatives, and the Superiors of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Areas on either side of the church had been roped off, to accommodate the Salesian pupils, boys and girls, members of the general pilgrimages, and persons holding special tickets. Seats were set apart for a great number of Archbishops and Bishops, among whom there were twelve Salesian prelates. Wide draperies, with pictorial representations of the two miracles that had been approved for Don Bosco's Beatification,[4] hung from two balconies to the right and left of the great arch, beneath the cupola which crowns the area between the Confession and the apse. At the far end of the majestic apse, high above the Altar of the Chair, in the very center of the resplendent golden crown of angels known as the Bernini's Gloria, a veil hid from the anxious glances of the throng something which was evidently to be disclosed at an opportune moment.

Expectations intensified more and more as the time for the ceremony grew near, and the crowd was barely able to control its impatience. Far atop the grandstands where the group of Salesian Major Superiors were seated, a venerable old man, the only survivor from the early days of the Oratory, Father John Baptist Francesia, while waiting, recalled a similar occasion, though not as grand, and in that recollection one of his exuberant predictions came up, a prediction which was now about to come true. On a far distant day in 1867, Father Francesia was to accompany Don Bosco to attend a beatification ceremony in St. Peter's. As he passed on this news to the Salesians at home in the Turin Oratory, in advance of what he was about to do, he had written: "I'm to go and see something which, perhaps, our great nephews will be able to witness being done to someone well-known to us all. Although I would very much like to see this for myself, I do not begrudge posterity this consolation. They will have the celebration for this person, but we have him here in person now. For them events will be past history; for us it will be history in the making, namely his actions and works." God instead granted this incredible consolation to him, as

[4] Both paintings had a caption underneath. The first read: "*Domina Teresia Callegari laborans polyarthrite acuta infectiva, cui graves alii morbidi accesserunt, opem famuli Dei Ioannis Bosco. Institutoris Piae Societatis Salesianae, fidentor invocat; illico et plene convalescit.*" The second read: "*Soror Provina Negro invocato patrocinio Venerabilis famuli Dei Ioannis Bosco, fundatoris Piae Societatis Salesianae, ab ulcere rotundo stomachi illico ac perfecte sanatur.*"

well. This is yet another sign of the general belief that Don Bosco was a saint, a belief shared by everyone who had lived in his company for a number of years, and who had witnessed daily what he had said and had done.

When the clock struck ten, after the recitation of the None Hours, the Canons of the Vatican Chapter, led by His Eminence, the Archpriest Cardinal Merry del Val, moved in procession from the Julia Chapel, to take their places in their choir stalls in the apse, on the Epistle side of the altar, while the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, Laurenti, the Prefect, Vannutelli, Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte, Frunwirt, Scapinelli di Leguino, Sincero, Cerretti, Hlond, Ehrle, and Verde, took their seats on the Gospel side. The beloved figure of the amiable Cardinal Gamba was easily distinguishable in the brilliant array of purple vestments, manifesting unconcealed happiness. Prelates, Officers, and Consultors of the same Congregation, and members of the Postulation, were seated in other grandstands.

When everyone was seated, Father Tomasetti, the Postulator of the Cause, together with the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites, Bishop Mariani, approached the Cardinal Prefect and handed His Eminence the Apostolic Brief of the Beatification, requesting him to order its publication. His Eminence bade him address his request to the Cardinal Archpriest, so that he might give his permission for the papal document to be read in his basilica. Once this faculty was granted, a Canon of the Vatican, Barnabei, mounted a small podium which had been built in the sanctuary for this purpose, and read aloud the Brief. In this Brief, following a rapid summary of Don Bosco's life, works, heroic virtues, and miracles, the Supreme Pontiff declared that his name was now to be registered among the Blessed. The following is the translation of the Brief:

Wonderful is God in His Saints, who during their lives on this earth, endeavor to promote the glory of the Lord and the eternal salvation of Mankind; to them *the God of Israel will give power and strength* (Ps 57:36) so that, fearing neither the obstacles of this world nor the presence of hostile enemies, they may attain the holy goals they had sought, as has happily happened to the pious founder of the Salesians, Father John Bosco.

The son of pious parents, he was born on August 16, 1815, in a small, rural village near Castelnuovo d'Asti, and reborn the next day at the sacred font. He was still a little child when his father died, and his early years at home were difficult ones. His mother, who possessed outstanding virtues, and who might well be presented as an exemplar for the education she gave her children, taught her little son Christian doctrine. Already, at a tender

age, John Bosco distinguished himself among the other children by his piety, the purity of his behavior and the gentleness of his character. Although a mere child, he was gifted with a keen intelligence and a remarkable memory; this enabled him to repeat, with astonishing fidelity, all that he had heard from the pastor or from other preachers, to people of his own age. Anticipating what he was to do later on, he gathered around himself those youngsters on Feast days. He used games to entertain them and was eager to teach them their Catholic religion and how to pray to God and Our Lady.

After he had received some basic instruction from the local chaplain, he attended the public school of Castelnuovo, ten kilometers away from his home, and later on, the public school of Chieri where he proved to be a model pupil, even though for many years John Bosco was obliged to work as a peasant in the fields, as a laborer, and even as a domestic servant, due to the necessities of life.

At the age of seventeen, he donned the clerical cassock and entered the archdiocesan Seminary of Chieri, with the help and advice of Saint Cafasso, for whom he always felt great veneration and affection. In the same seminary, he pursued the philosophical and theological studies with success, and later when he was already a priest, he applied himself once again and for more than three years, to the study of moral theology and sacred eloquence in the 'Convitto Ecclesiastico' of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin. At last, in 1841, he was ordained a priest in Turin on the eve of the feast of the Holy Trinity, and with deep piety he privately celebrated his first Mass in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi. It was not until the following feast of Corpus Christi that he celebrated, with edifying devotion, a solemn High Mass in the church of his native Castelnuovo, in the presence of people who had come from his town and were deeply moved.

This young priest, who displayed a burning zeal for the welfare of souls and great charity, worked as assistant to the pastor at Castelnuovo for a period of five months. But the Spirit of God which moved within him, providentially called him to cultivate a wider portion of God's Vineyard. He enrolled at the Convitto Ecclesiastico of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin, under the direction and guidance of Saint Cafasso, and zealously began to direct his priestly ministry towards people in prison and people sick in the hospitals. He began to hear confessions, to the great benefit of souls. In everything that he said or did; he was constantly guided by his single-minded purpose, the salvation of souls. He was following St. Francis de

Sales whom he had chosen as his exemplar, when with admirable gentleness and patience, he strove to lead all repentant sinners back to God. He neglected nothing that might have furthered these two holy aspirations. He studied German, and soon acquired sufficient knowledge of that language to be able to hear the confessions of German soldiers. He had acquired many and varied kinds of culture, in order to meet the needs of the common people, especially of folks without any education, and he applied himself with particular commitment to the study of apologetics and history.

Ever since this period, he was deeply attracted to remedying the condition of children and young boys who grew up in the streets, far from God, without any Christian education, entirely off the path of truth and justice. Starting with the feast of the Immaculate Conception of 1841, for three years Don Bosco gathered boys around him in the church of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin, by using attractive activities and much patience. This is how the first Oratory began, which the Servant of God called the Salesian Oratory out of humility and devotion to St. Francis de Sales.

Very soon, obstacles of all kinds sprang up about him, which attempting to thwart the excellent work he had just begun. But the finger of God was in that work. That first Oratory moved from its original base to the church of St. Martin, then to that of St. Peter in Chains, and later to a house known simply as Moretta's house, until at last it found a shelter, in April 1846, in a building in the borough of Valdocco, which at that time was only a suburb of Turin. Here, with the constant and manifest assistance of God and of the Blessed Virgin, Don Bosco accomplished wonderful things. The Archbishop of Turin, Louis Fransoni, endowed with timely faculties, the Oratory, which continued to be dedicated to St. Francis of Sales, and King Charles Albert took it under his protection.

Soon, more Oratories of the same kind were opened; the second, which was dedicated to St. Aloysius, was founded in 1847; two years later, a third Oratory was dedicated to the Guardian Angel. A few more years passed, and then a fourth Oratory was begun, and dedicated to St. Joseph. For all these Oratories the Servant of God conceived and applied a new system for the education of children and young men. This new system was derived from St. Philip Neri, and he now called it the *preventive system.*

In 1847, with the cooperation of his pious and strong-minded mother, whom he had brought to Turin with him so that she might assist him in his work, he founded in his own house, next to the Oratory the first Hospice for young people who had been abandoned and were homeless, and who needed a particular Christian education. From the holy, fertile seed of this

first Hospice sprang all the later, innumerable schools and homes that are now under the direction of the Salesian priests and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. The Servant of God, as a matter of fact, advised by many people, especially by St. Joseph Cafasso, and convinced by the very voice of our predecessor Pius IX, first founded the Society of the Priests of St. Francis of Sales and later on also the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. These Congregations were established to prevent the demise of the work that he had initiated on behalf of youth.

The Society of Priests of St. Francis of Sales was initiated in 1858, and grew day after day. It was *praised and commended* in 1864 by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, in the name of the Apostolic See. The Servant of God was appointed for life as its General Superior, or Rector Major. He drew up Rules and Constitutions that were well-suited to the times, and in 1874, five years after the Pious Society had been generally confirmed, the Rules were approved by the above-mentioned Sacred Roman Congregation.

In 1872, the Servant of God founded a second religious Congregation: the Congregation of the Daughters or Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, who, bound by the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, look after the education of girls in the Salesian style.

John Bosco endured much suffering but courageously and readily he faced the most difficult undertakings, and patiently bore with troubles and ingratitude, in order to consolidate and expand these two Congregations for priests and nuns.

But this was not enough for him. Constantly aiming at saving souls, and indefatigable in his efforts to carry the torch of Christian truth and the benefits of Christian civilization to uneducated peoples scattered throughout the world, even up to inhospitable regions, Don Bosco also sent Missionaries to the remotest frontiers of South America. In order to provide Missionaries for these lands, he opened a Seminary, commonly called the Seminary of Valsalice, where the Missionaries would be prepared and instructed.

Finally, to complete our survey of all the many foundations of this Servant of God, we must recall the institution of the Pious Union of the Salesian Cooperators, who help, in many different ways, the Salesian undertakings, and the work of Mary Help of Christians, created to provide ecclesiastical vocations, and the churches that he built with alms collected from all sides. Among these churches, the Parish Basilica of the Sacred Heart, in the district of Castro Pretorio in this holy city of ours, and the

Shrine of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, deserve a special mention. All of these undertakings, which were planned by the Servant of God, not for financial gain or to receive human accolades, but only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, were successfully carried out.

With admirable steadfastness, he cared for all the works that he had undertaken until the time of his death. He gave a luminous example of every virtue, of pure faith and Christian fortitude, of devotion to God and to the Blessed Virgin. He provided an example of staunch allegiance in calamitous times to the Roman Pontiff and the Apostolic See. Imbued with the spirit of humility, he thought little of himself. He never asked anything for himself, since he loved poverty. With an ever ready and indefatigable spirit he sought the salvation of souls and carried out, with much prudence and fore thought, on behalf of the Church, the most difficult and complex tasks. He shunned the comforts of life and bequeathed, not only to his pupils but also to all Christians, examples worthy of imitation, to the point that they were rightly considered, even when he was alive, the examples of a Saint. On January 31, 1888, he piously fell asleep in Our Lord. The mortal remains of this Venerable Servant of God were first displayed in the room where he breathed his last. Then they were clothed with priestly vestments, and exhibited in the church of St. Francis of Sales, where the solemn funeral rites were held and attended, with great devotion, by over a hundred thousand people: Turin citizens, Piedmontese Bishops, Canons, Pastors who had come from a distance, and a great number of Seminarians from many places, even from French and Swiss dioceses.[5]

The Servant of God was laid to rest peacefully in the Missionary Seminary of Valsalice, where the tomb is still visited by a constant stream of pilgrims, drawn by the fame of the supernatural powers with which God endowed him during his lifetime, and by the reputation of holiness which surrounded his name.

Not only has this reputation of holiness never decreased, it has actually grown so luminous, day after day, that the cause of his Beatification was introduced with the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Our predecessor of happy memory, Pius X, signed with the Decree, published July 24, 1907, the Commission for its Introduction. The proofs of the heroic virtues of the Servant of God having been juridically collected and examined as our Rite

[5] Here the account is somewhat confused. His remains were exposed to public view in the church of St. Francis, but the funeral service was held in the church of Mary Help of Christians. Moreover, the hundred thousand people, Turin citizens, and the others mentioned, attended his funeral procession, and not the funeral service in the church.

prescribes, We defined with a solemn Decree promulgated on February 20, 1927, the above-mentioned heroicity of the virtues of the Venerable Servant of God John Bosco. Then the miracles allegedly wrought by God through the intercession of His Servant were discussed; everything was investigated with great care, and two of the many miracles attributed to his intercession after his death were declared real and evident. With another Decree published on March 19th of this current year, 1929, We declared with Our supreme Authority, the truth thereof.

After the public pronouncements confirming the heroicity of his virtues and the authenticity of his miracles, there remained but one more thing to be discussed, that is, whether or not the Venerable Servant of God could be listed with certitude among the Blessed. Such a question was proposed by Our beloved son, Alexander Verde, Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church, before the General Congregation that assembled in Our presence on April 9th of the current year, and all those present, both Cardinals and Consultors of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, replied unanimously in the affirmative.

Since this matter was of such great importance, We delayed Our own judgment until We had had more time to pray and implore heavenly light from God. We did this with great fervor, and finally, on the third Sunday after Easter, after the celebration of the Divine Sacrifice, in the presence of Our Beloved sons, Cardinal Laurenti, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Alexander, Cardinal Verde, the **Ponens** for the Cause, as well as Our other beloved son Angelo Mariani, Promoter of the Faith, We declared by Our authority that it was to proceed with certitude towards the Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, Don John Bosco.

In view of this, and in fulfillment of the hopes of the whole Society of the Priests of St. Francis of Sales and of the Sisters of the Congregation of Mary Help of Christians, of all the Salesian Cooperators, and the pupils of Salesian schools, in virtue of the Apostolic Authority and in accordance with the present letters, We grant the faculty of henceforth calling 'Blessed' the Venerable Servant of God John Bosco, a diocesan priest from Turin, and that his body and his relics may now be exhibited publicly for veneration by the faithful, though they may not be carried in solemn procession. His pictures may also be adorned by a halo. Furthermore, by this same Apostolic Authority, We hereby authorize the yearly recitation of the Office, and the celebration of the Mass *de Communi Confessorum non Pontificum* in his honor with prayers approved by Us, in conformity with the regulations of the Missal, and the Roman Breviary.

The recitation of the Office, and the celebration of the Mass above-mentioned is hereby authorized by Us only for the Archdiocese of Turin, where the Servant of God was born and where he died, and for those chapels and churches located in every part of the world that are attended by the Society of the Priests of St. Francis of Sales, and by the Congregation of the Sisters or Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. As far as the Office, it shall be recited by all those faithful who are obliged to recite the Canonical hours. In regard to the Mass, all priests, both secular and regular, may celebrate it whenever they gather in churches where the feast of the Blessed is celebrated.

Lastly, We grant authorization to celebrate the solemn Beatification of the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, in the above churches, on days to be determined within a year by the competent Authorities, *servatis servandis*, commencing from the date of the solemn celebration in the Patriarchal Basilica of the Vatican; notwithstanding the Apostolic Constitutions, Ordinances, and Decrees of *non cultu*, and all other dispositions.

Issued in Rome, at St. Peter's, under the seal of the Fisherman's Ring, this second day of June, in the year 1929, the eighth year of Our pontificate.

P. Cardinal Gasparri
Secretary of State

A solemn moment followed the end of the reading of the Decree. All stood and directed their gaze to the *Hallowed Gloria by Bernini.* At a given signal, the veil that covered it fell, to reveal the newly Blessed One, surrounded by a thousand lights. Countless were the lights shining throughout the apse. A magnificent reliquary sparkled on the altar. At the sight of Don Bosco, radiant in glory, the huge crowd could no longer restrain its emotions, and burst into a loud applause, sounding like thunder beneath the gigantic dome-shaped vaults.

When the unrestrained roar subsided, the continuous ringing of the huge, silver-throated bells of St. Peter's could be heard from outside. The festive pealing of bells spread rapidly from church to church, to inform the whole Holy City that Don Bosco had been elevated to the honors of the Blessed. On the 8th of the month, *l'Osservatore Romano* wrote: "Rarely has the Vatican Basilica echoed with such explosive and enthusiastic joy as that which burst spontaneously from all hearts at the sight of the new portrait, a pale image of the jubilation of the Angels and of the just who now gather around Blessed Don Bosco in a celestial glory, a glory to which there is no end."

Meanwhile, the celebrant had intoned the hymn of thanksgiving: *Te Deum laudamus!* A unanimous outburst of faith, of joy, was released by thousands of hearts as a response to his words: *Te Dominum confitemur!* The hour of triumph had struck after so lengthy and so harrowing trials! Lo and behold! That same Don Bosco who had at times been misunderstood, thwarted, opposed, who was constantly confronted with problems of every description, that same Don Bosco was now radiant in a blaze of shining lights and acclaimed with a hosanna that seemed to surpass all boundaries of space and time.

At the end of the Ambrosian hymn, the deacon intoned for the very first time the words *Ora pro nobis, Beate Ioannes*; the officiating celebrant, Bishop Valbonesi, chanted the *Oremus,* and then incensed the relic and the picture. Then he donned the sacred vestments and began the Pontifical Mass, celebrated with that solemnity that is always admired in the Basilica of the Prince of Apostles. The choir of the Julia Chapel, conducted by Maestro Boezi, provided the music during the Mass. According to tradition, the holy pictures and the lives of the Blessed were distributed generously. When the Liturgical service ended past midday, streams of people poured out of the exits, filled the vestibule, and formed one gigantic river of humanity which flowed, like a torrent, through the one spacious exit into the square. As a swollen river cascading down the wide steps, the crowds flooded the square, and in a short time they were swaying like the sea tossed by the wind.

An immense banner fluttered, in the breeze, above the crowd, in the center of St. Peter's façade. The pilgrims who had entered the Basilica in the morning had failed to see the reason for it being there, since at that time it had been concealed by a huge drape, which was removed as soon as the priest intoned the *Te Deum.* Who could refrain from looking up at the radiant painting, despite the fact that, all were in a hurry to get to their lodgings? This is what the painting revealed: Don Bosco, with a radiant halo, was ascending up to heaven! Three angels, with their wings spread wide, were seen emerging from the clouds around him, as though to accompany him, jubilantly, on his celestial journey. At the bottom, on either side of the banner, two churches were visible—the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, and that of Mary Help of Christians in Turin, and a sprig of roses was about to fall on them. The hexameter, translated from the Latin, reads: *As you enter this temple, venerate Don John (Bosco) whom Pius XI now reigning in the Holy City has admitted ritually to the list of the Blessed. Pray for him, so that he may defend Youth from the Stygian*

enemy, and protect the Italian people whom he brought back to Christ, to whom they render due honor as to the immortal king.[6] The words *reddita Christo,* or brought back to Christ, were an allusion to the *Conciliation,* thanks to which, as the Pope had stated publicly, God was given back to Italy, and Italy back to God.

On June 2nd, a larger crowd than ever before gathered at the school of Valsalice. Among others, a great gathering of past pupils had assembled there at the hour scheduled for the Beatification ceremony; they had been unable to go to Rome for the solemn rites, either because they had been prevented from doing so by business, or because they lacked money for the journey. They attended a religious service, and for the first time, they prayed to their great teacher, as to a Saint in heaven, invoking his intercession. It was the hour during which the heavens of Turin, and that of all the Archdiocese were echoing with the joyous symphony of pealing bells which proclaimed that the Church had a new Blessed, Blessed Don Bosco.

There is a tradition that when there is a Beatification, in the afternoon hours, the Pope descends from his chamber to the Basilica of St. Peter's to venerate the new Blessed. Therefore, at four o'clock, only those persons who held a special admission ticket were allowed to enter the Basilica. The Chamberlain had had sixty thousand of these special tickets printed, but they were all distributed during the previous days, and sadly, too many, people, especially Romans, were left disappointed. The number of people was countless, so much so that the gates had to be closed, barring access to the immense sea of humanity that was actually entitled to enter. Protests were vehement, and they reached the ears of the Chamberlain himself. He personally went down to the Basilica of St. Peter's, to see if there was any way by which access might be granted to the immense crowd standing outside. A more rational distribution of seats made it possible to open the doors once more, and admit a new avalanche of humanity into the Basilica.

By five o'clock in the afternoon, the interior of the Basilica resembled that found only on great occasions. Not a single corner was vacant, and only the area in the center of the church where the Pope was to pass, had been kept free by a sturdy fence, and by the Palatine Guards. Every Italian dialect, and nearly all the languages of Europe, could be heard in the babel of voices.

[6] *Ingrediens templum Bosco venerare Ioannem. Quem, Pius undecimus sancta regnator in urbe Rite Beatorum fastis adscripsit et ipsum Exora, ut Stygio tueatur ab hoste iuventam, Protegat Italicam gentem, quae reddita Christo Huic immortali Regi det munia laudis.*

A sudden stir at the entrance told the crowd that the Pope was about to enter, and instantly an impressive hush fell, while all heads turned in the direction of the door.

A magnificent procession began to make its entrance slowly; it finished with twenty-four Cardinals. The Pope, seated on the gestatorial chair as though on a throne, could be seen coming through the main entrance, his hand raised in the act of imparting a blessing. Silver trumpets from the gallery above sounded Silveri's majestic papal march, filling the Basilica with a mystical spirit of recollection. This lasted only for a moment, however, for the crowd, swept by a wave of enthusiasm, burst into frenzied shouts, acclaiming the Pope of the *Conciliation,* the Pope who had glorified Don Bosco. White handkerchiefs fluttered in salute above the sea of faces as Pius XI advanced, his hand raised with a great gesture of blessing in all directions. The Pope's face, majestic and fatherly, displayed deep emotion.

When he noticed a poster raised over the heads of a cluster of boys and the words written on it "Mother House of Don Bosco, Turin," the Pope ordered a sudden stop and repeatedly blessed the boys; everyone was much moved. He was surrounded by this wild applause up to the apse, and the acclamation became even louder as the choir of the Julia Chapel chanted the first notes of *Tu es Petrus.*

The Holy Father descended from the gestatorial chair, and knelt beside the faldstool as the Blessed Sacrament was being exposed. He then rose, advanced and took the thurible which the Cardinal Archpriest handed to him, and incensed the Sacred Host; then he returned to his former place.

The choir now chanted *Iste Confessor,* which was followed by the prayer proper for Don Bosco, and the *Tantum ergo.* After the second incensation, Bishop Correa, a Salesian of Cuyuba, Brazil, imparted the triple Eucharistic blessing. It is the privilege of St. Peter's Chapter to perform this Liturgical service both morning and evening, but at the request of Father Francis Tomasetti, the Chapter agreed that a Salesian Prelate should officiate at the evening ceremony.

When the Blessed Sacrament had been placed back into the tabernacle, Fathers Philip Rinaldi and Francis Tomasetti approached the Holy Father, to whom they offered an exquisite reliquary containing a fragment of Don Bosco's bones.[7] Together with the reliquary, the Rector Major and the

[7] This reliquary was a work sculptured by Prof. Galli. The upper part of the reliquary reproduced the monument in honor of Don Bosco found in the Piazza Maria Ausiliatrice in Turin. It was made of embossed silver, decorated with gilded metal, and it stood 47 centimeters high. The group was supported by a double base. The base

Procurator General offered him *ex more* a bouquet of artificial flowers, some holy pictures, and the *Lives of Don Bosco.* As the Holy Father graciously accepted their gifts, he exchanged a few words with them, and they introduced to him Count Thaon di Revel, Mayor of Turin, and Count Rebaudengo, Senator of the realm, and President General of Salesian Cooperators. His Holiness moved them all as he gave them his apostolic blessing.

At the same time, according to formal custom, holy pictures and *Lives of Don Bosco* were distributed to the Cardinals, Archbishops, Bishops, and Prelates who were present, and to members of the Diplomatic Corps, the aristocracy, and other invited guests. There were three types of *Lives* prescribed for the occasion.

A detailed *Life* in an elegantly bound edition was presented to important guests; a second, sort of *Life,* more limited, was given to those who were present; there was a third kind of *Life* containing major information, for the general public. Bishop Salotti, the Promoter of the Faith, had written the first and the most important of these *Lives.* Another life of Don Bosco had been written in French by a Salesian priest, Father Auffray, for the occasion. It was highly recommended, and is still widely read today.

The Pope now returned to the gestatorial chair, which was carried through the Basilica. He was greeted by renewed and vigorous applause, while the silver trumpets played the traditional marches once more. The people who filled the portico gave him a rousing ovation as soon as he appeared on the threshold of the Basilica, and their shouts were echoed by the bigger crowd gathered on the steps outside.

At the sight of the throng, the Pope stood up; he solemnly raised his right hand and blessed the faithful inside and outside the Basilica. When he came to the Bernini staircase, he stepped down from the gestatorial chair, greeted the Cardinals, and went back to his chambers.

As soon as the crowd left the Basilica of St. Peter's and joined the thousands who filled every access to the immense square, attention was

on the first level was square-shaped and on it were plates of embossed silver reproducing the Turin Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and the Roman Basilica of the Sacred Heart. On either side, there were two groups, one of boys with a Salesian, the other a group of girls with a Sister of Mary Help of Christians. The base on the second level had plates reproducing the Coat of Arms of Pius XI and the Coat of Arms of the Salesian Society surrounded by Heads of Seraphim and garlands of Lilies (symbol of purity), Roses (symbol of chastity) and branches of oak tree (symbol of fortitude). The whole thing had the shape of an unfinished pyramid. The monument also reproduced the house where Don Bosco was born, and the scene mentioned in Don Bosco's first dream. There were Seraphim with thuribles added to the decorations, and also an inscription commemorating Don Bosco's Beatification. On the front face of the reliquary was a small, oval cavity containing the case with the relic.

focused on the agile actions of the renowned "Sampietrini," as the attendants in St. Peter's Basilica were affectionately known. Three hundred and fifty of them now appeared scattered across the façade, and on the dome. It was getting dark, and those extremely nimble men, overcoming difficulties never imagined by the spectators, kept themselves ready to illumine the entire Basilica.

This operation is performed in two separate phases. First of all, five thousand lamps light the straight, architectonic lines of the facade, the sides of the dome, and the colonnades, tracing a distinct, architectural profile of the massive building. Michelangelo's cupola looks as though it were about to leave the earth and soar high into the heavens; later, at a given signal at a quarter to nine P.M., the Sampietrini, standing ready at their assigned places, each light a torch, whose flame is concealed by an iron case, and as the bell strikes exactly nine P.M., the Head of the Sampietrini's atop the Basilica's dome, lights his torch; immediately after, the Sampietrini's, with amazing rapidity, expose all the torches. In less than ten minutes the whole basilica is ablaze with four hundred flickering torchlights, making the huge structure glow in a vibrating golden haze. The cupola changes aspect and resembles a gigantic, incandescent triple crown, flowing into a royal mantle, star-spangled with flames, in glittering splendor. From the Piazza and from all the elevated sections of the city, pilgrims and citizens enjoyed watching enthusiastically the magnificent sight, far into the night. These glorious days could not have ended on a more exquisitely Roman note. *O Roma Felix!* [O happy Rome!]

St. Peter's Basilica is not usually illuminated this way at a Beatification. This is reserved only for canonizations. But the Salesians had been eager to request this illumination in honor of their beloved Father and Founder, and the Holy Father was so kind as to agree gladly. This change might have created an embarrassing situation. That year, June 2nd fell on the first Sunday of the month. This is the day set aside to celebrate the Commemoration of the Italian Constitution. It is always distinguished, in Rome by a magnificent display of fireworks, called Girandola, from the Pincio terrace; Romans love it very much.

Father Francis Tomasetti hastily informed the Governor of the city, Prince Boncompagni, who immediately gave orders that the popular tradition was to be postponed until the following Sunday. His command was greeted by a unanimous approval. Signs of the Times!

At any rate, Don Bosco's Beatification had met with a most genuine endorsement, not only by the working classes, but also by the aristocrats and in government circles as well.[8]

When all the celebrations were completed, even at the Vatican people were saying that never before had a Beatification witnessed such splendor. Even the Holy Father expressed amazement over what he had seen in St. Peter's Basilica. The Pope foresaw what was going to happen and so he did not descend to the Basilica and enter by the small entrance door at the Blessed Sacrament Chapel. Rather, he decided to enter in the most solemn way possible: through the portico.[9] *La Civilita Cattolica* summed up its own impressions with the following words: "The honors of the altar, decreed by Pius XI for the Founder of the Pious Society, gave rise to impressive demonstrations of faith which, because of the great number of pilgrims who came to Rome from all parts of Italy and from all countries of the world, and due to the general, fervent enthusiasm, have never before been matched, except by the celebrations related to the canonization of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus."[10]

EVENTS THAT HAPPENED AFTER DON BOSCO'S BEATIFICATION

The Holy Father made known his own impression the following morning, both to Father Philip Rinaldi and to the members of the Salesian Superior Chapter, at a special audience. They had gone to see the Pope to thank him for three things: for the special benevolence shown by him towards the Salesian Society, for his fatherly participation in every phase of the Cause, and for the great significance he had wanted to give to the celebrations. His Holiness was pleased to notice how the ceremony had been carried out, remarking that rarely before had they had to face the embarrassing problem of having insufficient room available, in spite of the fact that the Basilica was so huge. He added that the vast crowd of people, who acclaimed Don Bosco and the Pope, had abundantly shown how close in spirit they felt to Don Bosco's name, his person, and his apostolate. He said that he was deeply touched by these manifestations of faith and jubilation, and added that he had been told that during the Beatification ceremonies, several newborn infants had been brought to the font in St. Peter's Basilica for baptism

[8] Father Tomasetti's letter to Father Rinaldi. Rome, May 22, 1929.
[9] Father Tomasetti's letter to Father Rinaldi, June 11, 1929.
[10] Issue of July 6, 1929, p. 75.

and were given the name of the newly Blessed. He also said that he was particularly gratified by the orderliness and precision with which the various phases of the ritual had been carried out, notwithstanding the great number of participants. He also had words of praise for the civil authorities who had done an excellent job in keeping order as the people entered the Basilica, and insuring that everyone enjoyed the superb spectacle of the illuminations without any incidents. The Pope's concluding words were: "Don Bosco's Beatification will always be memorable in the annals of the Church, and of the Salesian Society." Then Father Philip Rinaldi offered His Holiness the commemorative medal coined in gold, silver, and bronze; the front carried the picture of Don Bosco, and the back, the scene of Don Bosco's first dream.

The Postulators of other Congregations, especially the Jesuits, were struck by what the Pope himself had commended—namely the orderly proceedings, despite the great movement of people, and wanted to know how the Salesians had managed to do it. The truth of the matter is that despite careful preparations and keen vigilance, a considerable number of admission tickets had disappeared. This was discovered at the last minute, and, if it had not been for the excellent organization, this would certainly have created a great deal of trouble. Instead, not only was there no disorder, but it was possible to conceal the matter, so that only the people responsible for the organization were aware of it.

The crowning point of the celebration was the afternoon audience of July 29, 1929, that the press described as "wonderful." Twelve thousand people filled the courtyard of St. Damasus. The papal throne was mounted on a very large podium at the far end of the courtyard, and in front of it there was a barrier which allowed a few yards of free space. The rest of the courtyard was occupied by three sizable groups. The center was taken by the boys coming from the various schools of Italy and foreign countries. The left side was filled with girls from the schools of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. The right side was reserved for the Cooperators.

Cardinal Peter Gasparri, the Secretary of State, and also Protector of the Salesian Congregation, took his place next to the papal throne, together with their Eminences Hlond, and Vidal y Barraquer, the Archbishop of Tarragona. There were also thirty Bishops on the podium, together with Father Philip Rinaldi, the members of the Salesian Superior Chapter, Father John Baptist Francesia, and the Senator, Count Rebaudengo. The unoccupied space in front was filled by Salesians and special delegations.

The excitement of so many young people charged the air with something akin to electricity, and it whetted everybody's impatient expectation. Suddenly, a thunderous, unending roar of applause hailed the appearance of the Pope. The Noble Guards preceded him and the Prelates and the Gentlemen of his noble Antechamber surrounded him. The Pope smiled, waving his hand in response to the tumultuous greeting. He looked delighted to see all the jubilant young people, and then he took his seat on the throne.

In the meantime, a small incident occurred which we would like to report. Several Salesian schools had brought along their bands, and as they entered the Courtyard, their trumpets blared. This caused a problem for the Director of the Palantine band, which was expected to strike up the Pontifical hymn as soon as the Pope appeared. A few minutes before the entrance of the Holy Father, the Salesian Superiors had successfully silenced their bands. But there was a sudden hitch, after all. Just as the Pope appeared, and the Palantine band director was about to give his musicians the downbeat, another band, which had arrived late, struck up a march as it entered the Courtyard.

The band director, whose hand was already raised and holding his baton up in the air, lost his patience and exploded. On his way to the throne, the Pope noticed it, and turning to the band director whispered "Bear with them, Maestro; this is a Festive Oratory."

When the roar of the crowd and the last notes of the hymn had died down, the *Schola Cantorum* from the Sacred Heart Hospice, conducted by the choirmaster, Father Antolisei, sang the *Acclamationes* in honor of the Pope, according to the ancient Liturgy. This was followed by *Oremus pro Pontifice,* intoned by the Salesian Seminarians from the International Theological Institute of Turin. Two hundred of them had journeyed to Rome. Finally, all the boys burst into a Salesian hymn, which had never before been sung with such vigor. The Pope listened to it and was obviously pleased.

When the singing ceased, the Rector Major walked up to the throne, to read the following address.

"Most Blessed Father:

"The entire Salesian Family is full of joy and exultation, close to their Founding Father, raised to the honors of the Altar and whose relics have been venerated by you, Most Holy Father.

"Many are the delegations of Salesians, Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, of past pupils, of Cooperators, and of admirers of Blessed Don Bosco, who have come to enjoy this august, unforgettable feast, and together with

me, they now enjoy the good fortune to stand before Your Holiness, and affirm once again, unanimously, the filial bonds of affection that link them to your August Person.

"They have come here from all sides, even from distant, inhospitable missionary territories, drawn here by the tender love they have cherished for our Blessed Father, since their early youth. I feel that it is proper for me to single out the presence of a few of the very first sons who were eyewitnesses, since you yourself, Your Holiness, 'in a vision which was not short, in a conversation which was not momentary,' had a keen insight to the fascination our Blessed had used to create his first apostles and send them forth to conquer souls. These venerable senior members of the Salesian Family who have seen with their eyes and almost touched with their own hands Don Bosco's sanctity are here with us today to applaud the official proclamation of his paternal sanctity which, has always been the inspiring flame of their apostolate.

"As Your Holiness so accurately described it, this affection for our Father 'continues to make sure that he is not just a far-away Father, but still is the Director of everything, an Author ever present and ever active, with the perennial vitality of his norms, of his methods and above all with his example.'

"Most Blessed Father, if for more than 42 years we have gone ahead with the assurance, confirmed by events, that Don Bosco continued to be our Director, our Author, the Father of the Salesians, we will still go ahead even more, since now, Your Holiness, with the sovereign act of your apostolic power, you have presented him to us crowned with the halo of the Blessed, as a model and as the protector of our spiritual life and of our educative mission.

"For our part, with the help of Heaven, we shall do our best not to be unworthy of him. 'With his calmness always ruling and always reigning supreme, with the work which for him had become effective prayer,' Our Blessed Don Bosco will make sure that ever with us the magnificent building up of the Christian education of youth, started by and founded on benevolent and patient charity, will still go on, the way it should. Only such divine charity can educate, that is, construct in the souls of the young, the inalienable heritage of the Holy Church, namely the supernatural virtues that create holiness here on earth, before it shines eternal in the splendor of God's Saints. *Caritas aedificat!*

"This resolution, this prayer to Blessed Don Bosco, Most Blessed Father, sums up all our gratitude, our heartfelt thanks, for your paternal

benevolence towards us, the least of your sons. Of this benevolence of yours we have shining proofs in the moving allocutions delivered on Blessed John Bosco, and in this solemn Beatification, intended to be united, as a precious gem, to the festivities of your golden priestly jubilee.

"This day, which is so dear to the heart of Your Holiness, is dear also to each of Don Bosco's sons, who strive to commemorate it worthily with their prayers, their charity, and with their actions. The numerous representatives of the Salesian Family here present at the feet of Your Holiness prove it, and through me they want to raise to your august throne their sincere good wishes and hopes that God may keep you *Ad multos annos* [for many years], for the well-being of the Church.

"In conclusion, each of us here today makes his own the feelings of self- surrender, devotion, reverence, and filial love that Blessed Don Bosco cherished for the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and each will retain an indelible remembrance of this pleasant hour, as well as of the ineffable goodness of Your Holiness from whom all now await still one more very special blessing, for themselves, for the boys entrusted to their care, for the good works they still plan to do, and for all the people who have asked to be recommended for a special blessing from you, Holy Father.

"Holy Father, bless us all, once more, and consider us always as your most humble sons, very much devoted to your Sacred Person, and always ready to obey your orders or your wishes."

The Pope sat absorbed in meditation for a moment, then said: "Praise be Jesus Christ!" to which everyone present in the Courtyard responded: "Now and forever!" Whereupon the Pope began his address:

"This Courtyard of St. Damasus can rightly be called famous throughout the world. It has witnessed many a touching, solemn, and glorious hour, even if We only count the few hours which Divine Providence allowed Us to enjoy here, especially during the Holy Year, and on some other occasions. Yet rarely did it occur to Us to see and contemplate what We see and contemplate today: such a great crowd, such a diverse crowd of chosen sons of the Pope and of the Church, such a glory and such a joy stemming from real charity, such a burst of filial piety, so many demonstrations of faith, of true love for the Church, for the Vicar of Christ, the Father of all souls, the Common Father of all the Faithful. All this is happening because of a name, a name that is already illustrious and glorious throughout the world, because of the name of Father John Bosco; all this is happening

because of a name, joined to a glory, which is no longer only an earthly, a world-wide glory, but a heavenly and eternal glory; the name of Blessed John Bosco. (Applause)

"You certainly know, and almost all those who are present here should know, with what sort of participation, both of heart and spirit, We share your joy and your jubilation. The reason is, (as We have said many a time, always with great comfort to Ourselves), that We not only are among the great number of his admirers, but by God's grace, We were also personally acquainted with him; We were among the great number of those who received tokens of his benevolence, and even of his fatherly friendship, a friendship such as could exist between a glorious veteran of the priesthood and of the Catholic apostolate, and a young priest who was really young at that time, but has now grown old, as you well know, for you came here to comfort him with your demonstrations of filial devotion (enthusiastic applause).

"We are grateful to you, beloved children, for We know that you have participated in Our priestly jubilee, not only with your applause, which is always welcome, but in a far more important way, with your prayers, for which We are particularly grateful. As We reminisce on things long past, We are especially gratified to see gathered around Us the veterans among the pupils of Don Bosco, the workers of those first hours which were always the most difficult, the most fraught with problems, when it was a question of plowing new furrows, of wresting the first fruits from a soil which had not yet been explored and, of starting its cultivation. Honor to you, veteran soldiers of the Salesian Congregation, to you, early companions of Blessed John Bosco!

"Welcome to you all who have come here from all parts of the world, to bring greater glory and splendor, to enhance the first celebrations in honor of your, rather, our glorious Blessed Don Bosco. By the grace of God, We were able to elevate him to the honor of the Altar, as a sign for all people to see. You came here from all parts of the world to pay him homage, a homage that is rarely so universal at a Beatification, as We saw being paid to him in the splendor of St. Peter's Basilica, in the Vatican. Not only were We delighted to elevate him to the honors of the Altar, and to see him enhanced by your presence, but We have to say that you also sweetened and intensified Our awareness of that universal fatherhood which Divine Providence wanted in its Divine goodness and in its inscrutable designs to be provided for Our poor heart. Never as in these moments,

when We see around us so many souls richly endowed with Christian charity such as yours, when We see souls come from all the parts of the world, never as in these moments have We experienced so vividly this awareness of Our role as Father of all the faithful, of all the great Catholic family. You represent this family so fruitfully, in such a wonderful way and so worthily, that merely your presence here would render a very eloquent testimony to the merits of Blessed John Bosco, and to the fertility, the inestimable value, of his undertakings.

"When We think that you, Salesian priests and sisters, boys, girls, past pupils, Cooperators, Bishops, Prelates and Cardinals who are gathered here, only represent, and in a limited measure, all the many, many others whom We can visualize thronging behind you, above you, and all around you, like in a mighty, apocalyptic vision, Our heart is enraptured with admiration and exaltation. How many are Don Bosco's sons, and how many those others who now collaborate in his undertakings? Even if I were to count them, now, I know that they would number thousands and thousands: some seven or eight thousand Salesians, some eight or nine thousand good Sisters of Mary Help of Christians! And how many Salesian pupils are there? We shall answer this last question only by repeating the answer the Rector Major gave Us when We asked him to give Us an estimate of the present total of Salesian pupils. He replied modestly that he had no idea, and was therefore unable to give Us a number. What a wonderful example of modesty, and yet let Us say what a proud statement, too, (a hearty applause), for what the good priest really meant to say was that there are so many of them that not even the Salesians themselves have any idea just how many there are!

"Beloved sons, We congratulate all of you: no matter what assignment you hold, what office or rank you have, however humble it may be, in this mighty family, in this mighty army, in this powerful concordance of goodness and truth. When We think about the value of an individual's Christian education, a Christian education as envisaged by Don Bosco—deeply, completely, exquisitely Christian and Catholic—when We think about this treasure multiplied by people who can multiply so abundantly, We experience a truly joyous exultation and gratitude to God Who knows how to create such works and keep them alive in this world, in this wretched world, where the attacks of evil against all that is good, against Christian truth, go on relentlessly.

"Beloved children, We congratulate each and every one of you, together with the whole Salesian Family. In this retrospection, in this comforting

acknowledgment of a past so fertile in goodness, We find solid assurance of an even more resplendent future, richer than before in the spiritual treasures: in the treasures of God's glory, in the treasures of the consolidation and the extension of Christ's Kingdom, in the treasures of salvation and sanctification of souls, in the treasures of honor and glory for the Holy Church, the bride of Jesus Christ. Beloved children, We could not voice a more paternally affectionate wish than this, at this hour when your work is brightened by responses so beautiful, so admirable, so gloriously filled with divine light by God's infinite Mercy, when We were allowed to raise to the honor of the Altar Our Don Bosco, and to lift up a fold of that golden veil that conceals the splendor of Heaven from mortal eyes. That veil was lifted in an attempt to reveal on earth, in an even visible manner, just a little of that immense glory with which Don Bosco is now surrounded in Heaven, as a just and fitting reward for his immense merits.

"Heavenly glory must be imitated by earthly glory, and you came here to make sure that this reproduction would come about through the expression of that worldwide veneration that led hundreds of thousands of souls everywhere to pray with you to Blessed Don Bosco. Yet you must understand that the genuine glory of Don Bosco in this world lies in your hands; it depends on you. The words that We utter are not Our own, but they are the words of God: *Gloria patris filii sapientes* [Wise children are the glory of their Father]. Your Father will be glorified with the finest glory that humanly speaking can be given to him, if you will be the wise sons of such a Father, if you will be able to know, as you do now, and as hopefully you will be able to understand in the future and even in a better way, Don Bosco's spirit, the spirit of his work; if you will be able to continue his work with his spirit, ever and ever better, just as he desired, without measuring the amount of work needed, without measuring the amount of dedication needed, but instead, without measuring the amount of unselfishness demanded of him as a person, as far as it contributed to the good of souls. We feel We almost see him as We say all this. We still remember what he used to say is a glorious ideal to live up to: anyone who doesn't know how to work is not a Salesian. We Ourselves still recall the beautiful words that he uttered to Us as he was looking to the future with the intuitiveness of a genius—when we congratulated him on having seen so many marvelous things in his houses, in his workshops, in his classrooms, and mind you, it was not a question of stressing what was good in itself, but only the structure within which the good could emerge, a structure which he followed with the certitude produced by successful inspiration.

As you well know, when obliged to speak about himself he always did so in the third person, and when We thus congratulated him, he answered: 'Whenever the mighty cause of goodness is involved, Don Bosco wishes to be at the vanguard of progress, at all times.'

"These words, which We have heard from your Father's lips, We think best to leave for you as a souvenir, as a fruit, as a plan of work, as the most beautiful and practical conclusion of this magnificent hour that you have provided for Us. When it's a question of doing good, a question of searching for truth, for the honor of God, of the Church, of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, when it's a question of the salvation of souls, always forge ahead, in the vanguard of progress! This will be your watchword, and it should always spur you on to advance courageously along the pathways opened up before you by the words, the exhortations and the examples, and now by the intercession of Blessed John Bosco.

"It is within this magnificent vision of the past, and this foreseen future that We impart Our Apostolic Blessing to you. We impart all those blessings that you have come to ask of your Father at such a beautiful moment; all the blessings that your excellent spokesman requested on your behalf for each individual spiritual family; all the blessings which, at this moment, We impart gladly to each and everyone of you, both young and old, and to all people and all the things dear to your hearts: people, institutions, undertakings, aspirations, houses, schools, missions, all that you hold dear in your minds, and in your hearts, and want to be blessed. May Our fatherly blessing descend on all these things and remain forever."

Once he finished speaking, the Holy Father rose to his feet, to impart the blessing. The vast assembly, almost ecstatic, could barely check its emotion; yet it recollected itself in an attitude of pious devotion; but at the words *maneat semper* [and remain forever] everyone erupted into an enthusiastic outburst of applause that reached the sky. With his retinue, the Pope advanced to the edge of the platform, and walked along it, waving his hand repeatedly as a gesture of greeting, while the shouts of the younger spectators increased in volume. This outburst of joy did not abate until the Pope had retired to his chambers. "This could be described as the pilgrimage of all pilgrimages!" *l'Osservatore Romano* wrote on June 5th: "What a magnificent sight!"

Two days later, a much smaller audience, also worthy of attention, was granted to the two hundred seminarians mentioned above, and the two hundred and fifty pupils from the Mother House of Valdocco. The seminarians, standing in line in the Clementina Hall, intoned *Oremus pro Pontifice* as

soon as His Holiness entered. As he walked, the Pope held out his hand to be kissed. Then he passed into the Consistory Hall where the pupils were assembled. He greeted them, too, and was gratified by a gift of several artistically bound books on the various methods used in the Salesian technical-professional schools. Among them there was a book entitled "*I soggiorni Del Beato Don Bosco a Roma*" ["*The Sojourn of Blessed Don Bosco in Rome*"] by the Director of the Oratory, Father Rotolo.

As soon as the Pope sat on the throne, one of the boys read aloud the following speech in a high-pitched and clear voice:

"Most Blessed Father:

"With hearts overflowing with holy enthusiasm, two hundred and fifty of us have come to Rome, to represent worthily all of the seven hundred pupils of the Mother House of the Salesians and of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin, the earliest foundation of our beloved Father, Blessed John Bosco. Next to the deep gratitude and devotion with which our hearts are full today, we place at the feet of Your Holiness the enthusiasm that we have long fostered in our hearts, while following, with affectionate anxiety, the different phases of the Apostolic Process for Don Bosco's Cause, especially those phases that were completed, at last, by the solemn and gracious utterance of Your Holiness.

"Most Blessed Father, we are happy to render this tribute to you here in the astounding majesty of the Vatican palaces, after having enjoyed the inestimable honor of being present last Sunday in St. Peter's Basilica. As you passed us by in St. Peter's Basilica, with all the intense power of our young hearts, we strove to send the sincere homage of our faith, of our filial obedience and of our great love soaring up to Jesus Whom you, Your Holiness, represent here on earth.

"We left the Turin Oratory with the echoes of pleasing and poetic memories ringing in our ears, as we recalled the fact that some forty-six years ago you, too, Most Blessed Father, spent some days at the same Oratory. We know that you deem yourself fortunate to have had the opportunity to converse familiarly with our newly blessed Father and Founder, and that you still retain warm and tender recollections of it. How many tender recollections are associated with the name of Don Bosco, the faithful servant of the Supreme Pontiff, of the Roman See, the Apostle of devotion to the Pope! The Oratory, which, within a few days, is going to welcome the return of its Founder in glory, repeats for all to hear the miraculous events it has witnessed from its earliest beginnings.

"As early as 1847, over five hundred boys gathered around Don Bosco, and shouted enthusiastically: *Long live the Pope!* Thus they dashed the hopes of a handful of evil-minded sectarians. With this gesture they showed all the reverence forever due to the dignity of the Pope. In 1849, at the invitation of Don Bosco, the Oratory boys deemed themselves honored to show their veneration for the Head of the Church and made a collection, which amounted to 33 lire, and thus they deprived themselves of necessities. The money was given to the Peter's Pence collection, to alleviate the dire poverty of Pius IX, who was then living in exile at Gaeta. The money reached the Pope, together with the warm sentiments of devotion of the Oratory boys. Beset as he was by so much grief, the Pope was deeply touched by the affectionate, concrete offering of the Oratory boys, and together with his thanks he sent each of his young helpers rosary beads, as a gift. As we have come to understand by reading his life story, Don Bosco always encouraged such actions, in order to instill more effectively a feeling of love and devotion towards the Pope in the generation of boys who were the object of his personal care from 1841 to 1888.

"The teachings that Don Bosco bequeathed to and were practiced by the Salesians are still handed down to us at the Mother House of Valdocco, through our Superiors and teachers. We are willing to respond to them dutifully, and to prove that we are worthy successors of all the boys who creditably attended the Oratory before our time.

"Here in your presence, Most Blessed Father, we now declare, on behalf of all our companions, our deep love, our unswerving attachment to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. But on this occasion we are not satisfied by only expressing this commitment of ours We want first of all to express to Your Holiness our heartfelt thanks; these are the thanks of thousands and thousands of Don Bosco's young sons now scattered all around the world, thanks which expresses their deep gratitude to Your Holiness for having elevated him to the honors of the Altar. Thank you! It is only right that these thanks should be uttered by the Oratory boys of Turin, who alone will have the good fortune, nine days from now, to be the closest of all to Don Bosco.

"Most Blessed Father, we thank you, as well, for your paternal goodness in granting us this audience, which we will never forget. Thank you!

"With these feelings in our hearts, it is a precious privilege to kneel down now to receive the blessing that Your Holiness will affectionately impart to us. We are sure that it will call down upon us, upon all our companions at the Mother House, and upon all the pupils of other Salesian schools, an abundant shower of heavenly graces, which will enable us to

persevere enthusiastically in doing good to all and to be steadfast in that faith that will help us to be always sons of Don Bosco, whom we now hail among the Blessed.

"Your Holiness:

"Kindly extend this blessing to our dear parents, to our beloved Superiors, and especially to our Father Director who has accompanied us here; bless our studies and our work. May this blessing be abundant for each of us individually, and for all persons that are dear to us; may it endure throughout our whole lifetime. May it be rich in grace, tender in the paternal love that Jesus felt for children, and that Your Holiness, imitating the Divine Model, feels and demonstrates so wondrously."

Once the boy finished his reading, the Pope addressed these paternal, gracious words to all who had gathered therein.

"Beloved sons of Don Bosco, and our sons!

"We have gratefully appreciated your singing and your applause because they reveal your deep filial love for Our Person. But most of all, We find your presence very pleasant. You did not want to leave the Eternal City without seeing your Father once again; I assure you that your Father, too, wished very much to see his dear and good children again before they left.

"We are very happy to see you here again, because We see Don Bosco once more, not only in the majestic picture which We saw sparklingly radiant in St. Peter's Basilica, amid the mighty setting of souls and of prayers on that day of your and our Don Bosco's glorification, but also on the occasion when We addressed the great Salesian Family assembled in the courtyard of St. Damasus. But We now see him once again in you who are his chosen ones.

"We see him once again in you, who are the theology students of today and the priests of tomorrow; We see him in you who are the spiritual representatives of the Salesian family—that immense army made up of Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, of pupils, of Cooperators; We see him once again in you, future priests, the hopes of many souls who await anxiously from your lips the word of truth, the Divine word of the gospel.

"We see him once again in you, dear young folks and children beloved of Our predecessors, and who are also dear to Us, just as you were to Don Bosco who loved the souls of children as Our Lord Jesus Christ did. You certainly know that the souls of the littlest ones are those Our Lord Jesus Christ loved the most—and We assure you that you are such also for us—you, O Most Dear Children of the Mother House, you who are the buds of the first plants cultivated by Don Bosco with such a solicitous care.

Before We bless you all, We wish to say only a few words to both groups, which will fall on fertile soil, and you will help them bear fruit, as your Father, Blessed Don Bosco, has taught you.

"A word to you, theology students and sons of Don Bosco, Salesian students of theology. You are theology students; therefore, do study theology with diligence. Theology is the science of God, towards Whom you must lead many souls. Salesian theology students, this is the word that I direct to you: work always, but never neglect prayer, meditation, and the spirit of piety. Without these means, no one can work successfully for the glory of God. No matter how perfectly contrived, how shining, or how powerful a machine is, it cannot function without a driving force to supply the essential impetus which enables the machine to run smoothly; prayer and meditation must supply this for you; herein lies the secret that will assist you, so that your work may bear fruits of holiness.

"Remember that fruits produced with much commotion, but without the right intention and God's grace, are not fruits that please God. Therefore, do love theology, and make sure it leads you to live lives of sincere piety; pray to the Lord that He may help you direct your study of theology toward such sentiments. Then you will share Our own ideal. Do love theology, and make sure that your study of theology has a wide, deep, efficacious, ascetical aspiration. May your theology be based on and inspired by an ascetic aspiration; may your study of ascetic theology be theologically inspired.

"Now an even more tender and paternal word for you, dear boys. We would like to say that while We had the joy and satisfaction of glorifying Don Bosco, of elevating him to the honor of the Altars, it is now your task to glorify him and pay fitting honor to him here on earth. The Pope has thought about the heavenly glory of Don Bosco; now the sons of Don Bosco must provide for his temporal honor: *Honor patris, filius sapiens* [a wise son is the glory of his Father]. But your wisdom must be made evident by your spirit, by what you say, and by what you do, by every act of your Christian life, and by your social relationships, by your virtuous conduct, by your exemplary conversations, and in all the circumstances of your life. Then truly will you be wise sons, and your Father will be glorified both in you and by you.

"We wish to add one more word. All of you must be profoundly aware of who you are: *Filii sanctorum sumus* [we are sons of saints] says the Sacred Writer, and these words describe exactly the sons of the Church, the sons of the great Catholic family. We would like you, the Salesian army,

to be ever aware of these words, since reflection on the Father's saintliness renders saintly and nobly proud the hearts of the sons.

"You have heard these words in the climate of joy and of splendor that surrounded the glorification of Don Bosco, and We hope that Our words will help to have them more deeply etched in your hearts.

"You are the sons of a Saint; therefore it is your duty to prove yourselves worthy of so great an honor, at all times. Beloved children, this will help you direct your thoughts, your desires, and your aspirations toward the sublime, toward all that is true and good; if you do this, your Blessed Father will be pleased with you, and everywhere people will recognize you for what you are, and they will say that Blessed Don Bosco is glorified in the wisdom of his sons.

"We now impart Our Apostolic Blessing on all your intentions, so that it may help you attain these noble goals of yours; We impart the Apostolic Blessing which is to be extended to all of your intentions; We impart it to the Salesians, their pupils, the past pupils, your schools, and the Missions, and everything that you may carry with you now, or that may have in your thoughts."

Everybody knelt to receive the blessing of the Pope, and applause broke out anew as he left the Hall, followed by the eager, enthusiastic gaze of those brave youths.

The Salesian Superiors were seriously thinking about emphasizing the Roman celebrations with an enterprise that might serve for future generations as a lasting memorial of the glorious event. They had already been working on a project that now served this purpose ideally. During a period of twenty years, a new borough of Rome had been established. It was located between Tor Pignattara and Via Appia Nuova, and had a steadily growing population. Already in 1920, the Salesians had bought a piece of land in the neighborhood of Via Tusculana, measuring 35,000 square meters, with the intention of building spacious workshops and a professional training school for some three hundred boarders, with the addition of other buildings for a Festive Oratory and an after-work center. Additionally, there were plans to build a stately church, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians and large enough to accommodate at least six thousand persons, in order to provide for the spiritual needs of the growing population. A Salesian architect, Julius Valotti, had already prepared the plans in April 1928, and on May 12th of the following year, the plans were submitted to the Holy Father on his name day, with the understanding that the Salesians wished to name the school after him, as a devout homage to honor his forthcoming priestly

jubilee. The Pope was touched by this filial gesture, and seemed very interested in the plan. He carefully examined the layout of the school, and he stopped and looked at the project of the church with delight, but since the Salesians had planned to build the church only later, the Pope urged them to start right away. Thus, as soon as the beatification of Don Bosco became certain and seemed imminent, the Salesian Superiors decided that even though work on the first wing of the school had not been completed, they would include the cornerstone ceremony for the new church in their program of festivities for the august event, and would consider the entire project as a tribute to the Pope who was to beatify Don Bosco.

When Father Fidelis Giraudi submitted the plans, the Pope voiced yet one more wish: he said that the church ought to be bigger, for by now it seemed quite certain (and this was subsequently confirmed by statistics) that the population would grow considerably in that area. To encourage the project, he even offered a million lire, nor did he limit his munificent assistance to this contribution alone, since he offered another sum, equal in amount, to be paid in installments later.

The sacred rite was performed with solemnity during the afternoon of June 4th, while the Salesians of the Sacred Heart Basilica were commencing the great triduum, is traditionally celebrated in the Eternal City in honor of those recently beatified. A clear blue Roman sky enhanced the hauntingly beautiful ceremony, which was rendered more impressive than usual, by a magnificent display: five Cardinals: Pompili, Hlond, Cerreti, Lauri and Gamba, several Bishops, many civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and a huge international crowd made up of priests, Religious, Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, Cooperators, and past pupils, in considerable numbers, from various Salesian schools: almost entirely occupied the vast area about the scaffolding supporting the travertine block marking where the new church was to be built. After a march played by the band, Father Philip Rinaldi explained to the gathering the reasons why Salesians were rendering such homage to the Pope now happily reigning. When he had finished speaking, the Vicar of His Holiness, Cardinal Pompili, blessed the block of stone, which was then lowered into the vast excavation in the ground, after the first shovel of lime had been poured over it.

A leaden box, containing a parchment and some medals, had been placed inside the hollow cavity of the stone. The parchment contained the declaration: *During the reign of Pius XI, in the year of his priestly golden jubilee, while Victor Emanuel III reigned as King of Italy, and Benito Mussolini was Duce of the Italians in the 7th year of the Fascist Era, in*

the year in which JOHN BOSCO, Father and Legislator of the Salesians, was inscribed among the Blessed; the Rector Major of the Salesian Society, Father Philip Rinaldi, in order to perpetuate the memory of such a glorious event, in this new borough of Rome, ordered under the auspices and the name this very Pontiff, the commencement of the Church, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians, and of the great professional school of artisans, Cardinal Vicar, Basil Pompili, according to the proper rite, blessed this cornerstone, on June 4, 1929.

The officiating Cardinal said a few words at the end of the ceremony, and then the guests toured the area already built. The buildings covered an area seven times as large as the entire Hospice of the Sacred Heart.

We mentioned the triduum at the Church of the Sacred Heart; that was the first solemn tribute of veneration rendered to Don Bosco after his Beatification. Two prelates: Bishops Salotti and Olivares, as well as Cardinal Gamba, sang Don Bosco's praises. A number of priests, both secular and regular, came to the Sacred Heart Church to celebrate the Mass of the Blessed. A steady flow of visitors continued uninterruptedly from morning until night. The services were magnificent, the church ablaze with light and crowded with faithful. Outdoor displays, such as resplendent illuminations at night, concerts by various Salesian bands, and songs and hymns sung by the boys, delighted the throngs who hastened to share the happiness of Don Bosco's sons.

The triduum was followed by the feast of the Sacred Heart, which was celebrated immediately after the triduum ended. It seemed as if the Sacred Heart of Jesus wished to honor the man who had done so much and suffered so much for His glory, as already has been described in Don Bosco's *Biographic Memoirs.* Still another outstanding event coincided with this solemn occasion. At eleven o'clock in the morning of June 7th, the Lateran Pact of February 11th was ratified by both parties at the Vatican. It was to become effective the instant that the clocks struck noon. We are happy to think that the Sacred Heart of our Redeemer, Who is Lord over all hearts and over all human events, must have presided at this historic ceremony which fulfilled one of Don Bosco's most cherished hopes—the Conciliation between the Holy See and the Italian state.

The solemnity of the Sacred Heart did not abruptly end the tide of Roman faithful eager to venerate Don Bosco in the church that he himself had built. A characteristic feature was noted during the course of the triduum and in the following days: the frequent reception of the sacraments. Confessions were heard in every corner of the church, and at

practically every hour of the day, and Communions were administered almost without interruption. This is a distinguishing feature conspicuous at the celebrations held everywhere, in Italy and abroad. Certainly, nothing would have been more appropriate to honor Don Bosco and more perfectly conformable with the spirit of his apostolate, exercised always with a view to promote that practice, one we would call, Sacramental.

We have not yet said anything about the musical performances. It would be unforgivable were we to overlook them, for music did so much to enhance the joy of the occasion, and music does play such an important role in all Salesian festivities. With the cooperation of some of the finest singers from other Roman churches, the *Schola Cantorum* of the Hospice of the Sacred Heart was far superior to all the other choirs and was directed by a Salesian, Father Antolisei. This worthy musician also directed some of his own compositions. Musical connoisseurs praised his Mass for eight voices very highly, when it was performed on the first day of the triduum. They admired its beautiful, melodic inspiration, the superb technique, which was akin to the style of Palestrina, and the rich variety of musical effects obtained. Seventy soprano and contralto voices and eighty tenor and bass voices from the *Schola Cantorum* of the Turin Oratory joined with Father Antolisei's singers in a moving, fraternal performance conducted by our own Maestro Dogliani, on the 5th of the month.

Two hundred and sixty singers sang the *Missa Brevis* for four voices by Palestrina. Everyone who had the good fortune to be present at the performance was entranced by the majestic, sweeping, harmony of the chords. But the finest Mass of all was sung on the third day: this was Palestrina's *Missa Assumpta est* for six voices. It was composed for sopranos, contraltos, tenors, and basses. In this composition, Palestrina's polyphonic tonal pattern borders on the miraculous; the ear is astonished, yet enchanted every moment, by fresh inspired themes of new beauty. The conductor used the choral group to reveal clearly and distinctly the most secret and sparkling wonders of that masterpiece.

Compositions by Meluzzi, Antolisei, Dogliani, and other well-known composers were performed at morning and evening services during the triduum. The choir also sang Antolisei's *Te Deum* for four voices on the last day of the triduum.

On the evening of the 7th, the pilgrims who had come to Rome for Don Bosco's Beatification began to wend their way home. We shall soon meet with them again in Turin.

Chapter 9

The Translation of Don Bosco's Body

At this point, any poet of an ancient era would have invoked his Muse as follows: "Sing to me, O Divine One, of the hero's return, of the vast crowds that made way for him, of the mighty army that escorted him, and of the captain who led his march." But now the epic trumpet yields its place to the pen of a chronicle writer.

The custom of transferring the bodies of Saints from one place to another, in procession, and with great religious solemnity, is as old as the Church. We need only recall the solemn translation of the remains of the bones of Bishop St. Ignatius, who died a martyr's death in Rome, to his native town of Antioch. Moroni's well-known *Dizionario di erudizione storico–ecclesiastica* [*Dictionary of Ecclesiastical–Historical Erudition*] under the heading *TRANSLATION OF THE RELICS OF THE SAINTS*, and under other headings as well, describes in detail some extraordinary processions that have accompanied such translations at different times, and the eager and religious participation of the masses. How many translations of Saints' bodies does the Roman Martyrology record as events of the utmost importance! There have always been two things that have enhanced the splendor of the celebrations of these rites: veneration for the Servants of God, and the miracles wrought at their tombs. The Church encourages this pious custom for reasons that were expressed very specifically in a sacred announcement made by Cardinal Odescalchi, the Vicar of Pope Gregory XVI, on August 4, 1838, at the time of the translation of the Roman martyr, St. Bonosa, and to which announcement the above-mentioned author refers. These reasons are: to render honor to God by exalting His Saints, to reawaken in the minds of the faithful the virtues of the Saints, to rekindle in all people the desire to imitate their examples and to inspire confidence in their intercession.

In the case of Don Bosco, all these reasons acted very powerfully and desired effects were obtained. Many of the things which occurred during the first few months of 1929, were only advance indications of the extraordinary participation of the people of Turin, in the ceremony of translation. Yet what actually took place surpassed by far all expectations. Fortunately, the preparations were not to prove inadequate to the actual requirements of the event.

GENERAL PREPARATIONS

First of all, the date for the solemn event had to be communicated on time, and the basic guidelines of the program had to be made public. The Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, did this by means of a circular letter dated April 4th and sent to all the Diocesan Directors, Decurions, and Supporters of the Pious Union of the Cooperators. He told them that he "was now able to announce that the event which had been awaited for so many years, and had been hastened by the hopes and prayers of so many souls" was now to take place. He instructed the addressees to extend an invitation to all members of the Pious Union, asking them to go to Rome on June 2nd, and to be in Turin on the 9th. Then he described what was to take place in Rome. In reference to Turin, he announced the translation of Don Bosco's mortal remains from Valsalice to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, a preparatory triduum in the same Basilica, and the ceremony of the laying of the cornerstone for a new Missionary House.

The second matter to be arranged in Turin, more than had been required in Rome, was an adequate organization. Rome is able to absorb crowds, since people tend to find their way around that city on their own, and are able to satisfy their basic needs. The immense size of St. Peter's Basilica and Square afford the opportunity to all to find a place, either inside the Church or outside it. But in a provincial city, even though it is as large as Turin, everything must be arranged, if enormous crowds of visitors are not to mill about in hopeless confusion, and mass events are to take place without any disorder. Father Philip Rinaldi had at his disposal the very man to handle such a job, a man endowed with great foresight, energy, and a cool head, all features needed to handle gigantic movements of people! This man was Father Peter Ricaldone, the Prefect General. He was put in charge of the preparations and supervision of their execution. He is the one from whom all the instructions for everything originated, as we will shortly describe.

The first thing Father did was to appoint two committees: an Honorary one, and an organizational committee. The Crown Prince of Italy graciously consented to become chairman of the Honorary Committee for men, and was assisted by seven other Princes of the House of Savoy and by the Cardinal Archbishop; there were seventy-six honorary members, namely people bearing well-known names among the nobility, ecclesiastics, and civil dignitaries, officials of high rank, Senators, Members of Parliament, famous men of letters, scientists, industrialists, and financiers.

Five Princesses of the House of Savoy graced the Honorary Committee for women and acted as chairladies, together, with one hundred and fifty associate ladies of the aristocracy, and the Bourgeoisie. With this arrangement, the best among the citizens viewed the great event not simply as passive spectators, but with an awareness that they were playing an active role in it. So many names, as a matter of fact, did not indicate a kind of purely passive participation, but willingness to cooperate, with their authority, and their influence and even with personal action.

While these acceptances were collected, the general Organizational Committee was hard at work under the direction of Father Peter Ricaldone. This organizational committee was made up of Salesians, and it was subdivided into six subcommittees, to which the following tasks were respectively assigned: 1. Pilgrimages, lodgings, transportation. 2. Exhumation, recomposition, veneration of the mortal remains of Don Bosco. 3. Religious services. 4. Translation of the body. 5. Publicity, press. 6. Radio broadcasts, information, photos, cinematographic coverage.

Sections of resident past-pupils of the Oratory were at the service of the six subcommittees, to help arrange for the welcoming of and the accommodations for their Italian and foreign colleagues. They also handled correspondence with the presidents representing past pupils in every country. Since the Diocesan Council of Turin had scheduled the regional convention for all Catholic Youth for June 9th, the services rendered by the past pupils of the Oratory proved very helpful in making the necessary arrangements for this.

Every subcommittee had its own chairman. The Prefect General was the immediate head of the fourth subcommittee, which was assigned to the coordination of the procession accompanying the solemn translation. The close cooperation between the various subcommittees was so successful that no one, either in Rome or Turin, could have asked for anything better. We have already reported enough about Rome. We have also reported sufficiently on the task entrusted to the second subcommittee, so we will now turn our attention to all the rest.

SPECIAL PREPARATIONS

One of the major preoccupations was related to the pilgrimages, which, as it was announced, would be many. Where were lodgings to be found for so many people, and how were they to be cared for? The first subcommittee, whose chairman was Father Anthony Candela, a Counsellor General, was

inspired to contact the Piedmontese Chapter of the Fascist Camp organization, which responded to the request with the utmost willingness. This Fascist organization took direct charge of the entire mass movement, and this ensured unity of direction.

With this endorsement, and with the assistance of the Mayor, Count Rhaon di Revel, the Fascist organization found accommodations in school gymnasiums for all the youth coming from Salesian schools; it then set up an immense parking facility in the Stadium, where there was plenty of room, plus security for every kind of vehicle at a modest fee: motorcars, trucks, motorcycles, buses, coaches, carts, etc. The Fascist organization also set up three pavilions where cold food and drinks were served to all comers. Then it searched for and made a list of rooms available in private houses and hotels that would be available from June 8th to 13th. Father Anthony Candela took personal care to find suitable accommodations for the Italian and foreign Bishops, in parish rectories, religious houses, or private households. The people of Turin rose to the occasion with an admirable civic spirit. All the available space that the Salesian Houses in Turin could muster was reserved for the Cardinals, Bishops, Provincial Superiors, and delegates who were accompanying the latter to attend the forthcoming General Chapter of the Pious Society.

Father Peter Ricaldone had prepared a price list for room and board in the hotels of the city, and he had it sent, together with forms, to the leaders of the different pilgrimages, asking them to complete the form. He also provided exact, detailed information which was useful to eliminate, or at least decrease as much as possible, unforeseen difficulties.

All this accumulated data was helpful to the General Direction of Railways, in coordinating train schedules. A fare discount of fifty percent had been granted, even to pilgrims traveling individually. The Director of the Railways Department worked with great zeal; to make sure that every station in Turin could cope adequately with a rapid, continuous train service, and by facilitating train arrivals and departures. Temporary platforms were built, and new lines were opened to carry extra trains. The National Transportation Association issued orders that for a five-day period, no consignments of certain goods were to be accepted for Turin. Even the municipal Trolley Car Company and a private railway company also took very opportune steps to this end.

The Salesians expected substantial support from the city newspapers, with which the fifth subcommittee was concerned. Father Peter Ricaldone

took advantage of a suitable occasion to arrange a meeting of press correspondents at the Oratory. We were about to inaugurate the new buildings destined for Periodicals. Nothing could have been more natural than to invite the Turin press to a reception. Many journalists attended, so Father Peter Ricaldone was able to acquaint them with the plans of the celebrations, and introduce them to the members of the fifth subcommittee, who gave them all the information they needed. Continuing in this direction the fifth subcommittee was able to communicate with the most important daily newspapers, both Italian and foreign, and enable the journalists to keep the public informed in detail of the greatness and saintliness of Don Bosco, with interesting accounts of all the celebrations staged in his honor.

Under the direction of the Catechist General, Father Tirone, the third subcommittee also had much to do. The influx of foreign priests and the presence of so many Bishops required altars, vestments, and sacred vessels in great quantity. Thousands of faithful would wish to go to Holy Communion, and so extraordinary arrangements had to be made for an expeditious and easy administration of the Sacraments. There was to be a sequence of wondrous ceremonies in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians during the triduum, and their success depended on a fitting preparation. Among other things, a musical program was arranged, so rich and varied that in order to carry it out properly, repeated and concentrated rehearsals were indispensable.

As far as vestments, the most important were those to be used at Pontifical celebrations. Some forty religious, involving Sisters, novices, and postulants of the Congregation of Mary Help of Christians, had been working for a period of two years on these vestments. These were to be a magnificent homage to the Blessed Founder: there were six copes, a chasuble, four dalmatics, three stoles, three maniples, a humeral veil, a veil for the chalice, and another for the ciborium, two bourses for the corporals, a canopy and an ante-pendium.

The magnificently embroidered designs on rich cloth revealed a technical workmanship of artistry beyond all praise. The excellent designs and their workmanship vied with each other. Every minute detail was done with painstaking care. Certain little flowers, certain small leaves, certain spiral rings, required a full day's work, and patient attention. Some of these diminutive details on a cope numbered in the hundreds. Some twenty kilos of gold thread had gone into the making of these vestments. This certainly is a worthy monument to remind posterity about the filial devotion the Salesian Sisters had towards their wonderful Father.

The third committee was also in charge of the decorations of the church, and worked so hard at it that, when everything was done, devoted habitués of the Basilica were unable to recognize it.

The gigantic canvas representing Don Bosco in his glory, which had been displayed in St. Peter's, now dominated the main altar, on either side of which hung the great canvases depicting two miracles. These three paintings had been sent to Turin from Rome.

The sixth subcommittee made all the arrangements for a sound P.A. System that would relay to the public filling the playgrounds of the Oratory, the square in front of the church, and the length of Corso Regina Margherita, the music performed, the psalms sung, the sermons delivered, and the prayers offered inside the Basilica. This was something quite new at religious events, and later it was copied elsewhere. The same subcommittee also procured equipment for photographic documentation, and cinematographic reproduction of the more significant highlights of the translation.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE PROCESSION

The biggest task of all was entrusted to the fourth subcommittee, which was to make arrangements for the procession that would accompany the mortal remains of Blessed Don Bosco from Valsalice to Valdocco. To draw a majestic plan was not going to be enough to respond to what was universally expected. The execution of that grand plan had to be made possible and absolutely certain. Father Peter Ricaldone devoted much of his personal attention to these plans, and appointed as his assistants men well-qualified to supervise the work.

First of all, he began to study at length the route for the procession, and sought the approval of local authorities. Then he moved to working out the way the procession had to be controlled. He held several rehearsals with groups of boys from the Oratory, to help him ascertain how many people should march abreast, and determine the pace at which the procession should march. These repeated rehearsals proved all the more essential as word kept coming in that additional people wanted to take part in the procession. The initial estimate of sixty thousand people later increased to one hundred thousand, and still proved short of what happened. Father Peter Ricaldone had made a list of eighteen different groups, each group to be led by a Salesian priest possessed of genuine qualifications for leadership.

Once he had made an estimate of the number of people that would form each group, Father Peter Ricaldone instructed his assistants to marshal two

hundred volunteers from among the past pupils, fathers of families associated with, and the boys of, the Festive Oratories. Professionals, students, and blue-collar workers alike, all offered their services eagerly, and sacrificed many hours of their leisure time to attend meetings. They were called 'regulators' and the group leaders set them into different squadrons, in numbers proportionate to the estimated total that would form the unit to which they were assigned. Some well-known priests offered their services to the Cardinals and Bishops, and some members of the aristocracy promised to supervise the protocol necessary for visitors of high rank.

Now that the overall plan had been drawn up, Father Peter Ricaldone chose the places along the route where the different groups were to join the procession on the way out to Valsalice and on the return. A printed booklet gave a detailed outline of the final order of march, and provided instructions to ensure calm, plus an orderly execution of the different movements that were to be made. Father Peter Ricaldone also described what was to occur along the procession. He drew up a timetable for the assembly of different groups; he indicated places that were to be sealed off, or cleared of traffic, and the different hours at which this was to be done. He specified the number of policemen he would need at different stations along the route in order to control the crowd or to facilitate the groups' linking up with the procession. Topographic charts were added to the pamphlet, and they indicated the itinerary of the procession and the various concentration points before and after the translation of Don Bosco's remains. Badges, armbands, identity cards, free passes, special tickets—Father Peter Ricaldone had anticipated everything, and saw to it that it was made ready, and distributed at the opportune time.

He did not forget to make arrangements for the necessary medical assistance. At the Fascist Camp Organization Headquarters, a group of Health officers met. They examined the situation, and made preparations to set up twenty-one First Aid Stations. Besides a supply of the basic medical equipment, each station had to be manned by a doctor, a nurse, and militia of the Health Department. Additionally, the Militia mobilized three one hundred men battalions of Black Shirts who were to work under orders of the officers of the Medical units.

To reassure the authorities, Father Peter Ricaldone presented for approval the projected movement plans, and they all praised them unstintingly. The Crown Prince, who had promised to attend the grand demonstration, likewise asked to see the scheduled plans, and expressed great admiration for the perfection with which everything had been prearranged.

The fifth subcommittee had announced a competition for a hymn to be sung during the procession. It chose the lyrics written by Father Secundus Rastello. They were put to music by Father Michael Gregorio. The two Salesians had been genuinely successful, for both the lyrics and the music had a popular flavor ideally attuned to the occasion.[1] The fifth subcommittee also approved for publication a handsome *Itinerary for a sightseeing trip by trolley car*, and a brief *Guide to the City of Turin*, prefaced by Don Bosco's picture, and a biographic sketch of his life.

Father Peter Ricaldone also approved plans for a display of fireworks that had been suggested by the Battagliotti business firm, to grace the evening of the feast.

The press brought news of all these preparations to the public's attention and created high expectations in the city. Ecclesiastical and civil authorities were unanimous in agreement on all points, for both were eager to render a triumphal tribute to Don Bosco. Religious and patriotic associations vied with one another in offering contributions. Princes and Princesses of the House of Savoy joined the populace, going to Valsalice to bow before the casket that contained the mortal remains of the humble Turinese priest.

Immediately after the festivities in Rome, excitement had spread from Valsalice and Valdocco to every district of the city, and on the eve of June 9th, the whole city of Turin was a-throb for its beloved Don Bosco.

JUNE 9, 1929

June 9, 1929, was an historic date for Turin. Already in the early hours of the morning, the city was literally invaded. People clogged the streets. At brief intervals the railway stations were filled with pilgrims. Special trains and trains with extra cars started to roll into Turin at five o'clock in the morning, discharging delegations of visitors, some accompanied by bands, and frequently carrying flags. Tables had been set up under temporary sheds, with special employees, in the two main railroad stations of Porta Nuova and Porta Susa, to provide extra help, and to stamp tickets. Railway personnel headquarters claimed that over fifty thousand passengers had passed through the two stations by noontime.

In the meantime, Valsalice was preparing to say the last goodbye to the sacred remains that it had guarded, with so much veneration and love, for a period of forty-one years. During the night of June 8th, the mortal

[1] *Il Momento* (an Italian Newspaper) reported on it very beautifully (see App. Doc. 14).

remains had been removed from the Hall where we left them, some time ago; they had been dressed in sacred vestments, surrounded with flowers and brought to the House chapel, where they were never left alone.

Standing in front of the glass casket, Father Philip Rinaldi said a few words, recalling how the body had left the church of Mary Help of Christians in 1888, while many people wept, yet rightly foresaw the jubilation that would welcome it one day, on its return to the Basilica. The Salesians of the House took turns as they kept watch by the body all through the night. In the morning, Father Philip Rinaldi celebrated Blessed Don Bosco's Mass, attended by the Superiors, the young seminarians, and the high school pupils, all surrounded by a good number of past pupils. Later, the Salesian Cardinal, His Eminence Hlond, held a Solemn Pontifical Service. The general public was granted access to this solemn Mass, after which the Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Ascalesi, paid tribute to Don Bosco's glorious remains. In a gracious gesture of devotion, he stopped to gather up some roses which were scattered around the glass casket, and distributed them to the people who were standing near him, and who accepted them gratefully.

Other prelates, too, inspired by their piety went to pay devoted tribute to Don Bosco's remains; the Archbishop of Genoa was among them. Toward noon the school closed its doors to the public, as pupils from Salesian schools outside Turin began to arrive and gather in the playground. The entire Hospice of Sampierdarena was there, from the Director down to the doorkeeper. The boys entered in festive groups, led by their teachers, with waving banners, and strains of music played by bands. Father Fidelis Giraudi, who had been in charge of everything that happened at Valsalice, ever since the final procedures of identification of the body, now invited everyone to a luncheon which was honored by the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Hlond, several Salesian Bishops, and the Danish author, Jorgensen, who recently had published a biography of Don Bosco. During the repast, every cheer, every round of applause, ended with the enthusiastic acclamation of Don Bosco's name. Surely no other salute would have been more appropriate to honor the man who, throughout his life, had charmed all youngsters, than all this youthful merriment.

By one o'clock the streets of the city teemed with people. Sections of the eighteen different groups which were to march in the procession began to make their way toward their respective meeting stations, while the rest of the crowd milled about, looking for some vantage point where they could stand and watch the procession.

By two-thirty P.M. all the groups were ready. The moment came to begin one of the most religious manifestations ever staged in Turin, and perhaps a ceremony that only rarely occurred elsewhere. At this junction we cannot go any further in our account, without first pausing to give you an idea of the way the groups were set up and gradually joined in this procession.

THE PROCESSION IN ITS PREPARATION STAGES

The road that extends from Valsalice to the river Po was the obligatory route to be followed by the procession. The river Po had to be crossed at once by the Umberto Bridge, which is encountered by those who come down from Valsalice. Beyond the Umberto Bridge, the itinerary leading all the way to Valdocco had to be planned in order to allow the eighteen groups to line up easily one after the other. The itinerary could not have been better mapped out than it actually was. From the point of departure to the arrival point there were two focal sites, Piazza Vittorio Veneto and Piazza Castello respectively; both of these, we could say, were central locations, the first in view of the vast multitude assembled, and the second because of the kinds of the groups waiting to join the procession at Piazza Vittorio. There were eight groups suitably situated and lined up in such a way as to be able to move without getting in one another's way. The following was their arrangement:

1st Group: The band of the Salesian House of San Benigno; The Oratories of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from Turin; the Children of Mary; The Orphans from Sassi; the Gymnastics Teams from the Oratory boarding schools of Turin; The Uniformed Members of the Association "Maria Mazzarello"; the Sisters' Past Pupils.

2nd Group: The Band from the Salesian Oratory of Monterosa; the Salesian Boys of the Oratories of Turin: Crocetta, Monterosa, St. Paul's; the Band from the Salesian Oratory of St. Paul; Valsalice-Martinetto; St. Aloysius Gonzaga, and St. Francis of Sales; Delegations of the rural schools of Piedmont.

3rd Group: The "Excelsior" musical Group; The National Association of the 'Piccole Italiane'; the Band from the FIAT Workers' Recreational Club; the National Association of Giovani Italiane.

4th Group: The Band from the "Lancia's" Sports Club; the National Association of the 'Balilla'; the Band from the Bonafous School; the 'Avanguardisti'.

5th Group: The 'Pietro Micca' Band; the Sodalities and the boarding schools of the Sisters; Educational Institutes of Turin; the Band from the Young Apprentice School; the Turin Boys' Institutions, and Schools; the Delegations from Turin Middle Schools; the Institute of Our Lady of Consolation; Technical schools of St. Charles.

6th Group: The Band from the Salesian "Martinetto" School; the Delegations from the Salesian schools of Turin: Martinetto, St. John's, the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales.

7th Group: The Band from Agliè; Piedmontese schools, and Oratories of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians (following in alphabetical order of the towns they came from); the Band from the Missionary Institute of Foglizzo.

8th Group: The Band from the Salesian Oratory of Asti; the Salesian schools, and the Salesian Oratories of Piedmont (following in alphabetical order of the towns they came from); Band from the Salesian school of Novara.

On the left side of the Po River, the Via Diaz and Corso Cairoli are located between Piazza Vittorio and the Umberto Bridge, and here the following groups waited to join in the procession.

9th Group: The Band from the Oratory of Fossano; the Union of Catholic Girls; the Union of Catholic Women; the Band from the Oratory of Saluggia; the Catholic Youth Association; the Union of Catholic Men; the "G. Agnesi" University Club; the "Cesare Balbo" University Club; the Diocesan Council; the "Don Bosco" Band.

10th Group: The Band from the Missionary School of Ivrea; Delegations of Salesian Cooperators, and Dames of Mary Help of Christians; Delegations of Past Pupils of Don Bosco, of the Salesian Cooperators, of Past Pupils from Cottolengo Institute, Brothers of the Christian Schools, and from the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul; a delegation from Crevaria and of Our Lady of Providence.

11th Group: The Band from the Salesian School of Milan; Delegations from Italian, and foreign Schools of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (following the alphabetical order of the places they came from); the Band from the Salesian School of Parma; Delegations from Salesian schools from Italy and abroad (in alphabetical order of the places they came from).

In the ninth group, consisting of "Catholic Action" Associations, the delegation of Young Catholic Men from Piedmont was conspicuous. That morning these Associations had held a Congress, attended by the two Cardinals, Gamba and Maffi, at the Victor Emanuel Theater. The President, Jevolino, who had come purposely from Naples for the occasion, had delivered a speech on the theme: *Don Bosco, the Educator,* and had ended it with these words: "We propose now to civil Authorities and ask that the life story of this great man be included in the scholastic curricula, as a subject for a simple, yet extensive study; and we voice unanimously our burning desire to see this gigantic beacon of light which, from Turin, casts its vital rays of faith, Christian action, and charity all over the world, be designated in the near future as one of the protectors of Italian Youth, so that all of us may call ourselves devout sons of Don Bosco." These youths marched as one compact body in the procession, forming a single immense formation of approximately twelve thousand men.

The 12th and 13th Groups that had been singled out for the honor of escorting the casket were formed at Valsalice. One isolated group—the 18th—which was to bring up the rear, and march behind the two groups ahead of it on the near bank of the river, stood waiting on the outskirts of the Valentino Park, where it joins Corso Vittorio Emanuele and the Po, to the left of anyone walking toward the town from the direction of the Umberto Bridge.

12th Group: The Band from the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales; the boarders of the House of Valsalice; the religious Congregations of nuns; the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, with their General Council.

13th Group: The Processional Cross; the Salesian seminarians and seminarians of other Congregations; the Diocesan seminarians from Giaveno, Chieri, Turin; the Salesian Priests; the Salesian Bishops and Archbishops; His Eminence, the Archbishop of Turin.

18th Group: A Band (from Group 14)

a) *Delegations*: the Regional Fascist Squadrons of Turin; the National Association of Retired Servicemen; the Association of Volunteers who had fought in France; the King's Bombardiers; the National Association of Infantrymen; the

National Association of Grenadiers; the National Association of Alpine Troops; the National Association of 'Bersaglieri'; the Piedmontese Association of Italian Artillerymen; the National Association of Mountain Artillerymen; the National Association of Engineering Corps; the Directors of the Association of Naval Veterans; the Cavalry Association (Regional Chapter of Piedmont).

b) *The Delegations of Civil Associations*: the "St. Cecilia" Band of past pupils; the National Fascist Confederation: Industry, Commerce, Farmers, Overland Transport Workers; Delegations: Fascist Industrial Union, Famija Turineisa, Union of Handicraft Workers; the Hikers' Association; the Association of Venetian Provinces; the Association for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Various pilgrim groups.

Four large contingents were to join the procession at both ends of Piazza Castello, i.e., the 16th and 17th Groups were to join it outside the Madama Palace, the 14th and 15th Groups in front of the Cathedral.

14th Group: The "Cardinal Cagliero" Band from the Festive Oratory of St. Francis of Sales; the Religious Congregations; the Provincials and Superior Generals; Diocesan priests; Church Rectors; Canons of Collegiate, and Metropolitan churches.

15th Group: (Inside the Cathedral) Prelates; Bishops; Archbishops; Cardinals. They were to be escorted by the Knights of the Order of Malta and of the Holy Sepulcher (in uniform).

16th Group: (At the entrance of the Madama Palace): the Civil and Military Authorities; the Consular Corps; (to the right of the Madama Palace): the Honorary Committee; the Mayors of the Piedmontese municipal districts in which the Salesians had Houses.

17th Group: The Military Band from the Turin Garrison; Delegations: the National Association of Relatives of Military Personnel fallen in war and of Fascists who had fallen in action, the National Association of Disabled Service Men, "The Blue Ribbon" Institute, Professors and Students of Turin University, Professors and Students of the "Sacred Heart" University of Milan, the Institutes of higher learning, the Association of Women

Teachers in elementary and secondary schools, the "Don Bosco" Teachers Association.

The group leaders and their adjutants had been so diligent in mustering their respective groups, and in seeing that they reached the point of assembly assigned to them in good time, that everything was in perfect order at the hour designated, and everything proceeded smoothly, like clockwork, from start to finish. Father Peter Ricaldone seemed to be everywhere, all the time, throughout the long procession (which was long both as far as distance covered and its duration), and he always appeared in the nick of time wherever there were signs of possible disorder in the ranks, for it would have been a genuine miracle had there been no signs of a separation in that endless procession.

From the description given above it is obvious that instrumental music and young people were the dominant features all along the line of marchers; the strains of the different bands and the singing followed each other from beginning to end all during the continuous, marvelous march.

THE PROCESSION GETS UNDERWAY

First of all, let us take a look at Piazza Vittorio, from whence the procession was to set out.

The balconies of the buildings were decorated with drapery, tapestry, and garlands, and curious spectators stood crowded one against the other to watch the procession being organized. Long lines of people poured uninterruptedly into the open square from Via Po and side streets. As soon as they reached the square, they immediately went to the station assigned to them, to form the first eight groups which were to lead the procession. There was great enthusiasm in the throng and no confusion of any sort. Under the porticoes and behind cordons of police, militiamen, and municipal guards, two immense crowds occupied both sides of the square, eager to see the hallowed casket borne past.

Down the full length of the broad Via Po, flanked by grand porticoes and magnificent buildings, the eye could glimpse only multicolored drapes adorning every window and balcony, and observe the dense flood of humanity filling both sides of the porticoes, barely confined to the sidewalks. Nevertheless, the police details there to maintain order did not seem to have undue difficulty in keeping the street clear, at least most of it. The mounting excitement did not prevent the retention of discipline. This is a

special trait of the Piedmontese, and on this occasion, the religious quality of the ceremony perhaps had much to do with it.

At the appointed time, Father Peter Ricaldone gave the signal for the first group to move forward, followed, one after the other, by the remaining seven groups. The procession was almost automatically formed; over fifty thousand persons were taking part.

First came a platoon of municipal guards riding bicycles; they were followed by a graceful company of young page girls, wearing pink-sky blue, and white-red uniforms; they carried small banners and tall lilies. These were the pupils of the Festive Oratories of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. When the head of the procession entered the Via Po, it marked the beginning of a superlative parade which was to last more than three hours. The marchers walked twelve abreast, at an even pace, always different and yet always uniform.

Piazza Vittorio seemed to have become a huge reservoir that discharged an uninterrupted river of humanity. Despite the number of bands, the music did not clash; each band was separated from the next by several thousand marchers. The words "*Don Bosco is returning*" [*Don Bosco ritorna*] were echoed in a hundred different keys which varied according to the age and lungpower of the singers, passing by in their separate groups. The people were highly impressed by the delegations from different parts of Italy and foreign countries. There were young girls who symbolized the regions of Italy; there were others carrying banners with the emblems of foreign countries in which there were Salesian Houses. There were hundreds of youths who wore wide ribbons across their chests and over one shoulder, with the names of localities where the Salesians had schools or Festive oratories. To summarize, the different features paraded uninterruptedly before the watchful eyes of the vast multitude of spectators. Were we to report them all, a hundred pages would not be enough to describe only some of the details.

When the eighth group, the last in line, at the far end of Piazza Vittorio, by the river, had lined up twelve abreast, and had begun to move behind the group ahead, lo and behold! The ninth group appeared right behind it, followed in turn by the tenth and eleventh groups, and by the three groups which were stationed in Via Diazand along Corso Cairoli. These three groups had over twelve thousand people, led by a very lengthy and radiant line of Catholic girls wearing white dresses and veils. We shall now let this opening segment of the procession wend its way down Via Po, cross Via Castello, march along Via XX Settembre, and turn into Corso Regina

Margherita in the direction of Mary Help of Christians, while we go to meet the second section which was to come from Valsalice.

At two P.M., in the House chapel there were twelve Salesian Bishops, plus the members of the Superior Chapter. Once the crystal casket was raised and handed over to the priests of the house who were to carry it, the Bishops, clad in copes and miters, and the Superiors followed in procession, down to the ground floor in front of the vault where Don Bosco's remains had lain at rest for forty years. When the casket appeared, the pupils and past pupils who crowded the terraces shouted "*Viva Don Bosco!*" [Long live Don Bosco!] in such a way as to fill the whole valley. Then the voices subsided amid a deep, reverential, expectant silence, and the casket was placed inside a wooden case, all gilded, where it was to remain while on display for the veneration of the faithful in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.[2]

All this was done in the presence of Cardinal Gamba. When the lid was put back on the wooden case, then the casket was placed on a specially built vehicle which the Lancia Company had donated. It was the chassis of an automobile, covered with a magnificent, dark red drapery, fringed with gilt cord. It had six great rings on either side, while its rear terminated with a transversal brass bar. All around the casket there were flowerbeds of roses and evergreens, which emphasized a spirit of joy. An unseen driver guided the vehicle, which was pushed by hand on either side, and from the rear. In this manner, the casket would be seen in all its splendor, and on high, as it passed through the surging sea of humanity waiting to view it.

The descent from Valsalice was truly a triumph. As soon as the casket left the school of Valsalice, the twelfth group, followed by the thirteenth, was about to set foot on the Umberto Bridge. The bier came last of all in

[2] The wooden case had been made by the pupils of San Benigno Canavase following the design drawn by the Salesian architect, Valotti: four winged angels, standing at the four corners of the frame separating the wooden case from the base, holding high a garland with symbolic fruits. At the corner of the sides, over the frame which crowns the casket, stood the Coat of Arms of Pius XI, to the right, and the Coat of Arms of the Salesians, to the left. Both Coats of Arms were bound by ribbons where the above-mentioned garlands begin. Four crystal panels close up the wider and smaller sides seen in its entirety, clothed the way already described. The casket had a moveable lid of a convex shape, carved and entirely decorated with metal chips, with sockets at the four corners, and constrained on top by two ribbons and a cordon. The base, separated from the base of the casket and with a wide straight molding, carried on both sides the small Coat of Arms of the Salesians and of the Sisters, with rich small garland of ivy all around them, as a symbol of the gratitude felt by the past pupils, both girls and boys. On both sides of the molding, there were luxuriant floral designs, interspersed with medallions with the heads of Seraphic Angels. In the panels there were palms, roses, lilies, and borders of olive and oak trees, symbolizing the glory, charity, purity, goodness, and fortitude of the Blessed one. Large acanthus leaves decorated the edges of the molding closed at the bottom by a spiraled ribbon. The base was supported by powerful lion paws, symbolizing the solidity of Don Bosco's undertakings.

the procession. Before it, mitred Salesians, clad in magnificent vestments, marched, His Eminence Cardinal Hlond closing their ranks, in impressive sacred purple attire. He was followed by the Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, and the members of the Superior Chapter, with Count Rebaudengo and the attorney Masera, who were, respectively, the International Presidents of the Cooperators and the Past Pupils Association. A group of young pageboys brought a delightful note of festive color to the picturesque sight.

The bier was pushed by Presidents of the "Don Bosco" Teachers' Associations, organized in all the principal cities of Italy, and by the Presidents of the Past Pupils Association. Thirty Carabinieri, in gala uniform, marched on either side. The popular figure of Cardinal Gamba was visible immediately behind the bier; he was surrounded by a number of prelates, canons, and pastors, who in their turn, were followed by a magnificent group of Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, dignitaries of the Holy Military Orders of St. John of Jerusalem and of Malta, and by the Knights of the Order of St. Sylvester. Almost unnoticed, the last surviving relatives of Don Bosco walked with this group, and the procession closed with the Salesian Provincials from all over the world.

His advanced age, the length of the procession, and the heat of the season should have counseled the Cardinal Archbishop not to undertake such a hardship, and yet the Archbishop answered: "It is not up to Don Bosco to come to meet me, but it is up to me to meet Don Bosco." So the venerable seventy-year-old Cardinal marched almost four kilometers under a blazing sun, moved by a sense of sublimely heroic piety, and deep understanding of the spirit of the people.

What a contrast there was to be between the abundance of that summer sunshine and the downpour of rain which drenched the crowds who flocked to Rome and to Turin in April, 1934, to take part in the celebrations for Don Bosco's canonization! Yet *per ignem o per aquam* [under a blazing sun or pouring rain alike] the glory of Don Bosco, beatified and canonized, captivated and delighted the crowds who seemed unruffled by, and totally indifferent to, adverse weather conditions.

Accompanied by the magnificent procession described above, Don Bosco's mortal remains were now moving toward the expectant city. To both left and right, all along the route, crowds of people stood on the balconies of villas, at the windows of their houses, and on the slopes of hills. Much lower down, where the road widened, two very dense throngs lined both sides of the route.

And then there were flowers strewn over the ground, and other flowers, which rained down on the marchers from above. The bands continued to

play the song *Don Bosco is returning,* which thousands and thousands of voices took up with jubilation. As the bier was carried along, the crowds were held in check by the Bersaglieri, civic guards and Carabinieri, but they continued shouting, with the utmost enthusiasm: *Viva Don Bosco!* [Long live Don Bosco!]

When the scarlet bier appeared at the far end of the Corso Fiume, beyond the Crimean Memorial, the vast crowd waiting aside the Umberto Bridge and along Corso Vittorio Emanuele, surged forward impetuously to the point of creating fright, and so reinforcements of militia had to be called upon to prevent the people from breaking through the restraining cordons. The invocation "*Don Bosco! Don Bosco!*" could be heard everywhere, but when the casket had passed the bridge, and was on its way toward the city, the people knelt to render the first homage of the Turin population to the now Blessed priest.

The duration of the procession had been calculated with astonishing accuracy, and its progress proceeded so exactly, that the vanguard of the two groups coming from Valsalice appeared right on schedule to fall in line behind the rear guard of the three groups filing out of Via Diaz and Corso Cairoli. As the bier and its escort came into view from the direction of the Po, the immense, diverse eighteenth group moved forward, as compact as a Roman legion, from the direction of the Valentino Park, to become the last deployment of the most colorful, musical, melodious procession that had ever marched through the broad streets of the Piedmontese capital.

Thunderous outbursts of applause, and deafening Hurrahs hailed the casket as it advanced. Mothers lifted up their little ones towards the bier. The teeming crowd which had moved from the far side of the Piazza Vittorio to fill the void left by the eight groups who had joined the march, now became uncontrolled, and pushed, shoved, and shouted, as agitated as a stormy sea. Many people who were nearest to the casket knelt. The excitement and uproar spread to the Via Po, as the bier came abreast of the first houses on the far side of the square, and joyous cries mingled with singing and the strains of music, while a fragrant shower of flowers fell on the casket at every step, weaving underfoot, a multicolored carpet of petals and leaves. The little white hands of children waved happily from balconies, while the hands of their elders could be seen, clasped in the act of prayer. Soon the repeated refrain of *Don Bosco is returning,* was picked up by the spectators, who from down below or from on top were singing it, together with the groups making up the procession. The festive pealing of bells, and music joined to music, increased the jubilation. Joy and emotions and enthusiasm were evident everywhere.

It was nearly six o'clock when the bier turned from Via Po into the vast, renowned Piazza Castello. In this square the people of Turin had always gathered at the more solemn, or more radiant, moments of their city's history. The casket now came to a halt in front of Palazzo Madama, standing majestic, almost exactly in the center of the square. This was to give time to the 16th and 17th groups to take their places in the line of procession. These groups included the authorities and outstanding delegations. The crowds of spectators stood behind military barriers. The buildings had their balconies and windows decorated with multicolored drapes. Groups of eager people could be seen perched aloft on improvised stands on the rooftops. Everywhere the voices of male and female choirs and musical marches resounded all around and echoed from afar, creating a blend of mixed and indistinct sounds, which filled the air and stirred the spirit. The official representatives of civil authority, the political, and academic worlds, and the army, now fell into line behind Cardinal Gamba and the standard of the city of Turin with an Honor Guard, which led the way.

The bier passed in front of the Government Palace, crossed the open space before the Royal Palace, to continue in the direction of the Cathedral Square. Two Princes of the Church, as well as four Cardinals, Maffi of Pisa, Ascalesi of Naples, Nasalli-Rocca of Bologna, and Vidal y Barraquer of Tarragona, followed by some sixty Archbishops and Bishops, a number of abbots, canons, and pastors, and countless secular and regular priests, came down the steps of the Cathedral to meet the casket and escort it on its way to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. The stands that had been set up in front of the Cathedral were filled with spectators singing acclamations. The bier then moved off, with its chosen retinue.

To the right of the entrance to Via XX Settembre, a new wing of the Royal Palace overlooks the street, and here, by the express wish of Prince Umberto of Savoy, eight immense, magnificent tapestries were now displayed at the windows for the first time. The Prince was standing on the central balcony, and with him were Princess Yolanda, the Dukes of Genoa and Udine, the Duke and Duchess of Pistoia, the Duke of Bergamo, and Princess Maria Adelaide. For a few moments, the casket halted in view of their Highnesses, and the Crown Prince knelt down in reverent devotion.

Meanwhile, the metallic sound of aircraft high above the marchers mingled with the immense and deafening thunder of the hymn that was now sung by countless lusty voices, and played by innumerable instruments with no sign of stopping in the Piazza del Duomo, and along Via XX Settembre, and Corso Regina Margherita.

What a magnificent sight to behold did the Corso offer! This was the home of the ordinary people. Earlier it had been the upper elements of society that took precedence, but now, for a distance of one thousand and two hundred meters, by some forty meters wide, there was a teeming throng of common folk to welcome the bier. Here, too, buildings flanking the route were decorated handsomely, and knots of spectators stood grouped, like to bunches of grapes, at windows and on the rooftops. Where the Corso Regina Margherita crosses the vast marketplace of Porto Palazzo, the crowd had occupied not only what little empty space there was, but also many had even climbed up to the roofs of the market booths, and sat on them. There could have been a real disaster if at any point people had broken down the barriers set up by the police as restraining devices.

The almost cinematographic variety of the precession enchanted the imagination of the crowd, and was the cause of explosive demonstrations of enthusiasm, typical of mass gatherings. The applause became even more intense when the clergy appeared.

When the people noticed from a distance the golden glint of the bier, a tremor seemed to have passed through them all, generating enthusiastic shouts and warm applause. The entire Corso, its houses and vast square, were filled with the refrain of the hymn *Don Bosco is returning* as a festive and easy expression of a general feeling. There were waves of mystical fervor, which grew and grew in height and volume, at every stop of the casket.

Between Corso Regina Margherita and Corso Valdocco there is an immense, open space, popularly known as the Rondó. It was now quite filled with a dense crowd, consisting mainly of women. Above their heads, other spectators could be seen, perched half-way up lamp posts, or standing, jammed one against the other, on automobiles, trucks, and improvised grandstands. At the entrance to the Corso, several huge touring buses provided uncomfortable "hospitality" to anyone able to climb onto their roofs.

Every group of the endless procession was singing that hymn, the notes and words of which were picked up and repeated by the crowd. No wonder then that the simple little tune of *Don Bosco ritorna – fra i giovani ancor* [Don Bosco is returning once again among the boys] was to be heard for a long time to come, hummed or whistled through the streets of Turin.

Thanks to the perfect coordination that Father Peter Ricaldone had planned, prepared and properly maintained, the lengthy marching column was able to execute all its evolutions without hindrance or delay. Father

Ricaldone appeared to have winged feet, so swiftly did he appear wherever there seemed to be any need of energetic intervention. The threat of possible chaos was strongest toward the end of the route, when each individual group reached its destination and found itself, without any guide or control, detached from the order of the procession in what was, relatively, a very limited space! Yet this threat had been taken into account in advance, and arrangements had been made to cope with it. As the individual group leaders marched down Via Cottolengo, into the square and inside the Church of Mary Help of Christians, they all knew with mathematical precision exactly at what point they were to call a halt, and guide their followers. Thanks to the measures taken in advance, and the competence of the group leaders, the final lap of the march, which would otherwise have been the most crucial, was as well-ordered, and as calmly precise as any parade of a well-trained army.

HAPPENINGS WITHIN THE CHURCH OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

Not even St. Peter's Basilica would have been adequate for the occasion, and that evening the Church of Mary Help of Christians was so fully filled as to resemble a nutshell.

But we must say that at that hour, the most solemn hour of the entire day, a sense of spiritual intensity had taken possession of the crowd praying outside, in the square, along the road and the adjacent Corso, to the point that the whole area around the church seemed to have become part of the Church itself. It looked just as though the aisles of Mary Help of Christians had miraculously widened in size, to accommodate many thousands of people.

As the casket moved at a slow, solemn pace, from the far end of the square toward the church, designated persons left the ranks of the marchers to take their assigned places inside the church. Outside the sanctuary and to the left of the altar rail stood the white Knights of the Holy Sepulcher and the red Knights of Malta. On the opposite side of the altar were the attendants of the Princes of Savoy and the Ladies of the Palace, all of them dressed in black and seated in special chairs. In the adjoining pews was a distinguished group of Generals in glittering uniforms; the pews on the opposite side of the church were occupied by civil authorities, Fascist officials, and other dignitaries. The Bishops, with mitre and crozier, and wearing magnificent copes, minor Prelates clad in beautiful chasubles,

Canons with their cappa magna, pastors with their mozzettas, all occupied the center space in an orderly fashion at the orders of the incomparable Master of Ceremonies, Father Vismara. Every corner of the church was filled with nuns dressed in a variety of habits or Religious clothed in varying outfits, while a flock of seminarians in their surplices filled the aisle. The more eminent Cooperators took their seats in the lateral grandstands.

Outside, as well as inside the church, the crowd reverently made way, now and then, for some Cardinal on his way to the sanctuary.

The interior of the church presented a magnificent picture, when the Prince of Piedmont, followed by Princes and Princesses of the Royal Family, (whom we have already met at the Royal Palace), made an appearance from the Sacristy. Munificent chairs had been arranged for him and his party inside the sanctuary, *in cornu evangelii* [on the Gospel side] of the altar, while the Cardinals sat *in cornu epistolae* [on the Epistle side]. In the center of the sanctuary there was a platform covered with red damask on which Don Bosco's casket was to be placed.

Now, at last, the radiant bier appeared in the great central door. When the thunderous applause had, in an instant, died away, one could hear only the festive sound of pealing bells from outside. Then, a trumpet blast greeted the arrival of the casket, followed by the joyous, swelling strains of the organ, and by an outburst of a hearty cheers, as the bier moved deliberately up the aisle, swaying like a ship over that sea of heads. The casket was carried on the shoulders of vigorous past-pupils, and as it passed by, people first bowed and then fastened their eyes on the figure of the Blessed, whose profile could be seen clearly through the crystal panes. The bier moved on up the aisle. It reached the altar rail and was lifted up to the sanctuary, then gently lowered on the base made ready for it. The church was bathed in lights. A fairy tale fantasy of candles shed fiery radiance on the damask and velvet vestments. Two large floodlights, concealed behind the altar rail, shed pools of light on the figure of the Blessed, which looked as though adorned with brilliant gems. Meanwhile, from the choir loft, a mighty choir was heard singing *Iste Confessor,* the liturgical hymn for Confessors, and composed by Father Pagella.

The Cardinal Archbishop approached the altar where the Blessed Sacrament had been exposed and after the *Tantum ergo,* he imparted the Eucharistic Benediction inside the church. Cardinals Vidal y Barraquer and Hlond did the same at two altars, one erected in the square outside the church, the other in the Rondo, for the benefit of the vast multitude kneeling

as far as the eye could see. Finally, inside the church, the Princes and Authorities kissed the casket with devotion and then left the church by the side door leading to the playground.

It was already dark when the ceremony ended. Twelve thousand electric light bulbs, carried by five hundred circuits subdivided in four sectors, provided magical illumination of the cupola and the façade of the church. The statue of Our Lady reigned supreme over a radiant glory of crosses, and multicolored stars. The illuminations extended beyond the square to Corso Regina Margherita. Don Bosco's monument was so brilliantly lit by floodlights hidden in the encircling flowerbeds, that it looked as though it were made luminous by the sun. The strains of Don Bosco's hymn could be heard everywhere. The hubbub sweeping the city went on until late into the night.

The city was picturesquely lit with lamps and small lanterns everywhere, from the Royal Palace to the humblest window in low income neighborhoods. These seemed to extend a parting greeting to the throngs of pilgrims who were roaming through the streets, and hastening to arrange their return home. In the brief span of three hours, from ten P.M. until one A.M., twenty-four trains, seventeen of which were special trains, puffed their way out of Turin.

Townspeople, and many visitors who were in no hurry to leave, went to the Stadium to enjoy the display of fireworks, which was honored by the presence of the Royal Princes and a number of public officials, standing on a platform. One of the fireworks reproduced the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, with the figure of Don Bosco visible in the open doorway in the act of protecting Youth. It was applauded enthusiastically.

THE TRIDUUM

Demonstrations of affection and devotion for Don Bosco did not end when the lights illuminating the city were turned off the night of June 9, 1929. Rather, with great intensity they continued during the triduum celebrated in his honor. Nor did the steady stream of visitors at Valdocco decrease. Pilgrims and other faithful visitors filled the church, the square, and the playground of the Oratory, from four in the morning until eleven o'clock at night, and milled unceasingly around the bier placed in the center of the church. During the hours of greater congestion, a double file of athletic youths were detailed to form a cordon for the uninterrupted procession, and priests and clerics did their best to direct it in an orderly fashion, asking

people not to tarry any longer than was absolutely necessary. Several priests were detailed to respond to the pious requests of the faithful, as they took the personal objects which were handed to them, and with them, they touched the crystal casket and handed them back.

Many people were not content to merely venerate the relics of Don Bosco, but wished to receive the Sacraments as well. Confessions were heard everywhere, in every corner of the church, and Communions were distributed uninterruptedly. Every morning thousands and thousands of hosts were consumed.

And what shall we say about the church services? The presence of the Roman Cardinals conferred great solemnity to them, since one Cardinal or another pontificated every day, both at the Solemn High Mass and at Benediction, with all the pomp and ceremony due to his rank. After Vespers, three Cardinals delivered orations in praise of Don Bosco. On the first day of the triduum, Cardinal Hlond recalled the celebrations in Rome; he mentioned the magnificent procession in Turin, and he singled out the moving demonstration that was renewed every day around the bier. As he looked for reasons to justify all of this, he found them all summed up in the kindly holiness of Don Bosco, who had been sent by Divine Providence to be the Apostle of the supernatural in the world of the 19th century, so opposed and so indifferent and hostile to whatever was supernatural. If secularism has been disposed of here and there during the present 20th century, the Cardinal said, that was due to Don Bosco and his sons. On the second day of the triduum, Cardinal Nasalli-Rocca exalted the good work performed by Don Bosco, thanks to the gifts that God had given him and which he had lavished on Youth, on Society in general, on his native country, Italy, and on the entire world. Cardinal Gamba moved an immense congregation with his stirring eloquence on the last day. Once a pupil of Blessed Don Bosco and now Bishop of the Archdiocese, he let the surge of his affections and recollections have free rein, as he portrayed Don Bosco as a priest of God, and as a conqueror of souls. For a full hour, his listeners hung, rapt, on every word he said, never wearying of listening to him. Five loud speakers located in the playground, in the square, and along Viale Regina Margherita, broadcast outside what was carried inside the church. On the first and third days of the triduum, the radio transmitted the music played in the church. Each day ended with sparkling light works.

Everyone agreed that the music performed was worthy of the man who, already in the early years of his Institute, had stressed the great importance

of music in the education and the formation of youth. At the very beginning of his work, Don Bosco relied on his own talents and those of his co-workers, who from the point of view of art were not capable of any great achievements. But there came a time when among his sons, musical maestros and composers appeared. Just as in Rome, so also in Turin, the Salesians affirmed or confirmed their artistic maturity as they created musical compositions which won high praises from musical connoisseurs. Foremost among Salesian composers were Fathers Antolisei, Pagella, De Bonis, Hlond (the Cardinal's brother), and Dogliani, the Coadjutor Brother. They sang the *Magnificat,* written by Father De Bonis, a brilliant composition in its inspiration and its richly varied musical theme, which confirmed that priest's excellent talent as a composer. Antolisei's *Missa in honorem Beati Ionannis Bosco* for eight voices, and Pagella's *Missa Solemnis XIX,* also dedicated to the new Blessed Founder,[3] were likewise greatly admired. The composer of the second Mass had the happy inspiration to use for his Gloria the theme of a little Christmas song that had been written, lyrics and music, by Don Bosco himself in the early days of the Oratory: *Ah! Si canti in suon di Giubilo* [Ah! Let there be singing with jubilation]. In the Church of Mary Help of Christians, the majority of the choir was made up of the choirs of two Salesian schools—one with 85 tenor and bass voices from the International Institute of Theology, "La Crocetta," where Father Grosso was choirmaster; the other with 125 soprano and contralto voices trained at the Oratory by Brother Dogliani. The musical performances, as a whole, appeared beyond any and all praise for the freshness of the voices and their mastery, for their harmony and pliability in following directions. Rarely did one hear such exquisite musical perfection, and the series of performances in Turin could not have honored, in a more eloquent manner, the zealous champion of sacred music, Don Bosco.

VARIOUS MANIFESTATIONS RELATED TO BLESSED DON BOSCO'S FESTIVITIES

There was a series of events which were all, more or less, related to the recent main event described in this chapter, both during and after the triduum. One such manifestation was a visit made by the Cardinals, the Bishops, and Missionaries to the Fiat establishment, the biggest automobile plant in Italy, on the morning of June 10th.

[3] Maestro Tebaldini commented on these two Salesian Masses with greater competence. Unfortunately his reviews were not published, but we should not allow them to be lost. (App. Doc. 13).

The owner of the Fiat, Senator Agnelli, was present with the local authorities, to welcome their Eminences with fitting honors. Father Peter Ricaldone introduced the visitors, and remarked that they represented the entire world. As a matter of fact, together with the Italian and the foreign Prelates, there were resident Bishops, Vicars Apostolic and Prefects Apostolic, and Superiors of Missions from different parts of Africa, Asia, and America. Senator Agnelli welcomed the visitors, and said their presence at his plant reminded him of the great man who had been feted in Turin.

"It is indeed a great honor for me to welcome your Eminences, the Prelates and Missionaries here, to our Fiat plant," he said. "My heartfelt welcome to all of you is all the more dear to me inasmuch as I still remember having known Don Bosco in person, and his radiant image is forever speaking to my spirit. The followers and disciples of Don Bosco, of this great Piedmontese, particularly venerated and honored today by Turin, will feel here at our plant the pulsating rhythm of a life that would have delighted Blessed Don Bosco, a sublime hero of Christian charity, a staunch apostle of human work, an extraordinary champion of vigorous activity, a discoverer of secret resources, and an indefatigable founder of workshops, and factories. The workers of the Fiat plant feel honored if heroic Missionaries belonging to Salesian Houses which, now, literally, cover the whole surface of the earth, would carry with them to the land of their apostolate, amid faraway people of alien origin, the memory of a renewed Italy, the vivid recollection and vision of this temple of Labor of ours."

The visit lasted several hours and left in everyone concerned a deep, and lasting admiration.

Becchi, the humble hamlet where Don Bosco had first seen the light of day, was not forgotten. Many pilgrims made a change in their travel arrangements before returning home and visited Becchi. Cardinal Ascalesi went there, with two hundred pilgrims from the South, and Endrici, Bishop of Trent, accompanied him. When the latter was asked if he would list all his titles beneath his signature in the Visitors' Book, he exclaimed: "My titles? What are they, compared with the greatness attained by the humble peasant boy who was born in this poor dwelling?" The pilgrimages continued daily for several weeks. From the humble objects that had surrounded Don Bosco in his infancy, a mysterious voice seemed to rise as a summons to pursue goodness, virtue, and fruitful labor. On June 16th, a touching ceremony drew a crowd of people from the surrounding countryside, as a

number of important visitors from Turin and Alessandria attended the inauguration of a bronze memorial which the "Don Bosco" Teachers Union had erected atop that hallowed hill.

A more important, lasting moment brought the festivities in Turin to a fitting close: there was a monument which was not only to commemorate, but actually continue, Don Bosco's apostolic work in Turin, just as in Rome. With a magnificent gesture, Senator Count Rebaudengo, the President of the Salesian Cooperators, donated funds for the foundation of a new Institute where master craftsmen were to be trained for the Salesian missions. The building was to be in Turin, in the Barriera Di Milano. During the afternoon of the 13th, the cornerstone was blessed with great solemnity in the presence of the principal civil and ecclesiastical authorities of the city. Since this new, sparkling jewel in Don Bosco's crown concerned the Missions, a genuine Missionary, Father Vincent Cimatti, the Director of the Salesian Mission in Japan, sketched out the activities which the new foundation would make available, especially in the Far East. Then Father Philip Rinaldi expressed his gratitude, on behalf of the Salesian Society, for the Count's generous, inspired donation. The Count, as modest as he was generous, refrained from making any speech. The Sacred Ceremony was performed by the Archbishop, who at its end, addressed the gathering. He praised the gesture of the donor highly, and even more clearly indicated the good fruits Don Bosco's sons would now be able to bring forth and spread throughout the world, by means of the craft masters trained in that foundation.

The Missions had always been uppermost in Don Bosco's thoughts, so nothing could have been more fitting than a lasting Missionary Institute, to commemorate for all time his Beatification. In this respect, another tribute which rendered public, official recognition to the activity as a Missionary of one of his most distinguished sons, was incorporated harmoniously in the glorification of the great Founder. Thanks to his noble effort Cardinal Cagliero had fully personified the Salesian Apostolate in the Missions; it was Mussolini's idea to call the attention of His Majesty to the merits of the illustrious Missionary, so that the Colonial Order of the Star of Italy might be awarded to him. This honor now came at a most propitious moment. This honor is greatly coveted by all Italians who have brought distinction abroad to the name of their native country.

Immediately after the celebrations in Rome and Turin, there was an abundance of celebrations all over the world. As soon as it was known that his Mass and his Office had been officially approved, many Bishops in Europe

and America applied to the Holy See, so as to obtain faculties to celebrate Don Bosco's Mass in their own Dioceses. The *Salesian Bulletin* published brief reports on these worldwide demonstrations in many of its issues.

REMARKS

On June 9, 1929, a magnificent event had taken place in Turin. It was a sublime glorification which would never be erased from the memory of those people fortunate to have had the chance to take part in it, or who had, at least, watched it as spectators. A great artist, the sculptor Edward Rubino, expressed himself eloquently while talking to a journalist on the evening of the translation of Don Bosco's body: "Today we saw how the masses can write a poem and build a monument to this blessed man whom they revere. But I, who feel so proud to say that, I, who as a boy, worked on the temple raised by Don Bosco, I shall never forget this afternoon."[4]

There is another document, perhaps without parallel in the annals of any big city, which confirms for posterity the exceptional quality of these historic celebrations. In an official communiqué to the press, issued the day after this great event, the Mayor of Turin, Count Thaon di Revel, said that he was both happy and proud to tell the city of Turin how grateful and appreciative he was for the good order and discipline with which, even with the overwhelming enthusiasm and emotion felt by all in paying reverent tribute to Blessed Don Bosco, the people had taken part in the solemn translation of his mortal remains. What has been said here about the Turinese people must be applied also to the many thousands of out-of-town visitors who had come for the occasion. After spending the hallowed day mingling with the people of the city, they departed during the evening hours, or during the night, almost unobserved, and without creating the smallest incident. The principal merit for this magnificent order and discipline was not due to any great turnout by the police force, for there had been none, but to the perfect and detailed organization that, from morning until night, had devoted the same careful attention to the requirements of huge contingents of people as it had to those of the individual pilgrim.

For the sake of history, something should be said about the attitude of the newspapers, regardless of their political affiliations. As Senator Marquis Philip Crispoliti[5] pointed out, the press coverage of the celebrations was extensive and flattering to a degree that would have been quite inconceivable some years earlier. Even newspapers which had often ignored, or

[4] *La Gazzetta del Popolo,* June 10th.

[5] *L'Italia,* Milan, June 14th.

attacked, and even mocked Don Bosco during his lifetime, had now been no less expansive than their fellow newspapers. By the grace of God, the advent of Fascism had put an end to the godless and blatantly anti-religious political climate of former times, and the press had fallen in line with the new directives.

The sixty-one Bishops who had taken part in the triumph rendered to Don Bosco took back to their respective dioceses such pleasant memories that they hastened to write letters of grateful and affectionate admiration to Father Philip Rinaldi. At the end of the triduum, Cardinal Gamba wrote a detailed report of the honors rendered to Don Bosco by the city of Turin for the benefit of the Holy Father, and underscored in it the overwhelmingly religious spirit of the manifestation. The Pope had his Secretary of State, Cardinal Gasparri, write a beautiful letter in reply. In this letter, among other things, he wrote: "The Holy Father could not be other than profoundly moved by the devout, enthusiastic attitude of the people, by the festive house decorations, by the full-scale attendance by the authorities, by the magnificent, orderly procession, and particularly, by the great number of people attending the religious services and receiving the holy Sacraments, for these things are all public demonstrations of faith and of piety, which cannot but deeply move the heart of the Holy Father."

The prophecy published by Renan in his *Study of Religious History* comes to our mind in the aftermath of this spectacular triumph. Renan wrote: "Saints will continue to be canonized in Rome, but none of them will ever be canonized by the people." The celebrations following Don Bosco's Beatification overwhelmingly contradict the oracle-like words of the pseudo-scientist. In elevating Don Bosco to the honors of the Altar, Rome did nothing more than set an official seal of approval on a widespread, popular cult which, in deference to Church discipline, had been held in check. But once Rome had spoken, it became evident that, had we still been living in the times when Christians were wont to burn incense and address prayers publicly to people who died in the odor of sanctity, few popular canonizations would have been as rapid, or as universal, as that of Don Bosco.

Chapter 10

Echoes of the Beatification in the Words of the Holy Father, Pius XI

During the years that lapsed between Don Bosco's beatification and canonization, the Holy Father, Pius XI, spoke of Don Bosco on several occasions, and in different ways. The words uttered by this great Pontiff unquestionably redound to the glory of the Servant of God, and so it will be useful to collate in this chapter the most significant of these pronouncements.

A most flourishing Salesian school offered the Pope the first solemn occasion to speak on Don Bosco, on October 18, 1929. The year 1929 had been a year of pilgrimages, since the Pope was celebrating his priestly golden jubilee. On October 18th, the pupils and Superiors of the Frascati School went as a body to render a tribute to him. Father Francis Tomasetti, the Procurator General, had arranged an audience for them. It was he who introduced them to the Pope. His Holiness then addressed them in a fatherly manner, telling them how pleased he was to be surrounded by the pupils of Blessed Don Bosco, and to see for himself the excellent results of the Salesian education they were receiving. He handed to the leaders of the pilgrimage medals commemorative of his jubilee for all pilgrims, saying that these medals were particularly suited to them because they had on one side the picture of Blessed Don Bosco.

Until that time, he had distributed medals with his own picture on one side and that of St. Teresa of the Child Jesus on the other. But from this moment on, he also distributed, and quite often, the newly coined medal with the likeness of Don Bosco on it. This is how this came about. During a public audience granted to pilgrims a few weeks after Don Bosco's Beatification, the Pope was distributing medals of St. Teresa to some Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. "I would be glad to give you medals of Don Bosco, if I had any," he said. When the Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, heard of this, he told the Economer General to have one hundred thousand medals struck with the likeness of Don Bosco on one side and that of the Pope on the other, to be offered to the Holy Father. From that time on, the Pope distributed the medals as the occasions warranted.

On November 2, 1929, a rather unusual group of pilgrims were received by the Pope in an audience. They were 200 bank employees from the After-Work Recreation Association of the National Credit Bank. After addressing them, the Pope had this medal distributed to them. Remarking how timely it was, because Don Bosco had been "a great worker, as he was engaged in a work which provided extraordinary benefits, a work well thought out, that had been the source of great rewards and merits, not only before God, but also before mankind."

Even more unusual was the audience granted on Nov. 6, 1929, to 350 Alpine Guides who were in Rome for their national convention. At the end of an affectionate speech, the Pope, who had been an enthusiastic mountaineer himself, remarked that he was glad to give each of them a small souvenir, as well as his Apostolic Blessing. He said that this souvenir had his own fatherly likeness on one side, to remind his beloved sons of their visit to him, and the likeness of Don Bosco on the other. "My wish that you keep this little souvenir is not casual in any way," he told them, "for Don Bosco was a spiritual mountain guide who led millions of youths to high levels of Christian virtue, to the sanctification of work, and to a holy way of life. May he watch over you, too, and protect you in moments of arduous trials; may he help you climb the loftiest spiritual peaks as successfully as you now climb your mountain heights."

One of his references to Don Bosco took a more solemn significance than the others, inasmuch as it was uttered during a consistorial allocution. At the secret Consistory of December 16, 1929, when six new Cardinals were appointed, the Pope spoke of the events which had led so many Catholics to visit Rome during his jubilee year, and uttered the following words which we have translated from Latin: "Nor do We intend to overlook the fact that many of those people came to Rome when We decreed the honor of beatification to men who were outstanding in their sanctity of life, among whom We are particularly happy to mention Blessed John Bosco, who personally, and through his vast family of followers, all dedicated to the service of the Church, has devoted himself, as no one else before him, to the Christian education of youth."

We must also mention the papal encyclicals among the more solemn pontifical documents. One such encyclical concerning spiritual retreats—*Mens Nostra*—published on December 20, 1929, exhorted the secular clergy to make spiritual retreats and quoted as an example, one given by the Rev. Cafasso. This reference led him to express a few, but quite eloquent, words

on Don Bosco. "This is the way the most zealous priests felt, this is what they always practiced and this is what was taught by those who distinguished themselves in the direction of souls and in the formation of the clergy. To quote just one example of such zealous priests, we will remember Blessed Joseph Cafasso, whom we have recently raised to the honor of the Altar. He is one who used the Spiritual Retreat to sanctify himself and his brother priests, and it was at the end of these retreats that, guided by a surely divine, supernatural intuition, he could point out to one of his penitents, a young priest, the path Divine Providence assigned to him, and so led him to become Blessed John Bosco. No praise is as good as that name."

Three days later, in another encyclical, *Quinquagesimo ante,* with which Pius XI ended his golden priestly jubilee, he reviewed the reasons for which he felt a great deal of comfort during the celebrations of this priestly golden jubilee. Among these reasons he was pleased to recall, with warm words, Don Bosco's beatification. This is the passage which we are referring to: "How can we describe the comfort that filled Our heart when, after We had listed John Bosco among the Blessed, We publicly venerated him in the Vatican Basilica? In our tender memories of bygone years when, at the dawn of Our priesthood, We enjoyed the wise conversation of this great man, We marveled at the Mercy of God—truly wonderful in His Saints—for having withstood for so long and in so providential a way through His Blessed Servant, the attacks of evil and sectarian men who endeavored to undermine the Christian religion, and to humble the supreme authority of the Roman Pontiff by means of base accusations and abuse. When still a child, Don Bosco used to gather around himself boys of his own age, to pray with them and to teach them the rudiments of Catholic doctrine. Later, when he became a priest, he devoted all his thoughts and efforts to the salvation of youth, which, more than all others, was exposed to the deceit of evil men. He called upon them and asked them to join him, thus keeping them away from dangers; he taught them the commandments of the Gospel, and trained them to be upright in their behavior. He joined forces with others, to widen his sphere of action, and was so successful that he procured for the Church a new, compact legion of soldiers of Christ; he founded schools and workshops in which, both here and abroad, he instructed boys on how to learn, and on how to acquire a trade. Last of all, he sent many missionaries to extend the Kingdom of Christ among pagans. When We were reminiscing on all these things during that visit to St. Peter's Basilica, We did not think solely of how the Lord upholds and fortifies His Church,

especially in times of great hardship, but also of how, by the special providence of the Creator of all things, the first Servant of His to whom We decreed heavenly honors, after concluding the long-awaited, and long-desired concordat of Peace with the Kingdom of Italy, was John Bosco, who deplored so intensely the violations of the sacred rights of the Apostolic See and who, on several occasions, endeavored to bring about the restoration of those rights, and achieve the amicable settlement of the tragic conflict that wrested Italy from Our paternal embrace."

Pius XI issued yet a third encyclical on the last day of the year, just before 1929 expired. This is, perhaps, one of the greatest encyclicals of his entire Pontificate. We refer to the *Divini illius,* on the Christian education of youth. A day earlier, he had addressed a hundred pupils and past pupils of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who had gone to Rome from Turin; and, it seems, he had referred to the topic of the imminent encyclical for, as he handed out the usual commemorative medals, he remarked that this medal was particularly suited to them, inasmuch as it showed all that can be accomplished by means of a sincerely Christian education. He also pointed out that the benefits of this education could be summed up in two short words which he at that time recommended to them earnestly: *Christian education.* We believe that he made a similar reference in a speech to the pupils of the Pontifical Institute "St. Appollinaire" on February 16, 1930, for as he handed the customary medals to their Principal for distribution to the boys, he said: "This medal will serve as a constant reminder of this wonderful audience, and will guide your thoughts to the radiant apostle of Christian education of youth, whose conversations We enjoyed; for We had both the good fortune to know him in person, and to elevate him to the honor of the Altar."

The Holy Father had another opportunity to praise Don Bosco on March 12th, when he addressed the Friends of the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. He had been speaking to them of corporal charity which gives to the poor, and of spiritual charity which dispenses truth, and he ended his speech with these words: "We now wish to give a medal, as a souvenir of this audience, to everyone here present," and so saying, he handed the medals to the President of the Honorary Committee. "On one side you see Our likeness, on the other that of Blessed Don Bosco who is a radiant example of this twofold charity. As a matter of fact, while he provided generously in his admirable houses for children and for poor and homeless boys, he never neglected to devote his energy to the all-important task of enlightening the minds of men, spreading the word of truth, and

encouraging the development of such holy works. The Friends of the Catholic University can learn much more from such a model, and We earnestly hope that they will."

On April 13th, still in reference to Don Bosco, the Pope spoke in a patriotic and social vein. A Salesian Bishop and Missionary, Bishop Ernest Coppo, accompanied 200 pilgrims who had been born in the Apulia region, but who were now residents of the United States of America, to visit the Pope on their return to Italy to visit their native country. The Pope told them: "We shall give you a medal as a souvenir of your mother country. On this medal you will see the likeness of Don Bosco, who was not only a great Christian educator, but also a glorious son of Italy, his country, and a sincere friend of the working classes everywhere in the world. Therefore, as We bless your work and your efforts, We are happy to give you this souvenir with the sincere hope that the picture of Don Bosco will always remind you of your duty to sanctify your work and your whole way of life."

In 1930, Don Bosco's undertakings in Rome celebrated their fiftieth anniversary. It was in 1880, that Leo XIII had entrusted to Don Bosco the task of building the church of the Sacred Heart. The celebrations began on Sunday, May 11th, and ended on the 18th. May 11th was also the vigil of the feast of St. Achilles, the Holy Father's patron saint. So on that day the Salesians rendered a solemn tribute to the Pope. Pupils of the Salesians and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and Salesian Cooperators were received in an audience; some 15,000 persons crowded the Court of St. Damasus. In the presence of the Pope, Father Peter Ricaldone, who was acting on behalf of Father Philip Rinaldi who had to remain in Turin for health reasons, read out the following address:

"Blessed Father:

"When Blessed Don Bosco opened his Hospice in Rome some fifty years ago, he saw the fulfillment of a long cherished desire, for he had wanted for so many years to see his Society located near the Pope, and for this reason: he felt that under the surveillance of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, it would be more abundantly blessed and sanctified. His Holiness Leo XIII made this desire come true by entrusting to Don Bosco the construction of a national shrine consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This enhanced Don Bosco's joy, because he now had an opportunity to glorify the Sacred Heart, while rendering a solemn testimony of his obedience to the Supreme Pontiff. Overwhelmed with troubles, he traveled throughout Italy, France,

and Spain, anxiously appealing to the faithful to help him create an immense place of devotion to the Sacred Heart within the capital of the Christian world.

"The task was accomplished on time, so that Don Bosco, whose strength was waning fast, was comforted by being able to attend the consecration of the church. This enabled him, as he himself said, to fulfill two goals: to render thanks to his true father and sovereign benefactor, the angelic Pope Pius IX, and to receive the blessing of God's Vicar on earth, before appearing before God's Judgment Seat.

"Holy Father, the Salesians, together with their pupils, past pupils and Cooperators, are gathered before your throne today to bear witness to the abundance of Heavenly blessings which have been bestowed on the Society of Blessed John Bosco in the Eternal City, mainly because of the benevolent assistance of the Pope.

"Next to the Sacred Heart Church, which is involved in so many parish activities, stands the Hospice, which gives shelter to four hundred boys and a large contingent of seminarians who have come from different countries to pursue their ecclesiastical studies in the Eternal City. Thanks to the blessing and the assistance of the Holy Father, Pius X, the sons of Blessed John Bosco were able to build another church, with a day school and a Festive Oratory, in the new district of Testaccio. Additionally, in the same area, the ancient church of St. Saba, with a parish and a Festive Oratory, was also entrusted to the Salesians. Pius X also made a gift to them of the lovely church of St. John of the Pigna, where our Procurator General resides. Later, we opened the Mandrione's agricultural training school on the outskirts of the city, for some hundred pupils.

"The other religious family of Blessed Don Bosco likewise experienced the beneficial influence of living in close proximity to the chair of St. Peter. As a matter of fact, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians have nine houses, which display a great number of various activities on behalf of hundreds, or rather, thousands of girls.

"At this time, the great professional schools, built in this city by the Salesian Congregation with the paternal inheritance of a Salesian confrere, have made fantastic progress. They were dedicated to the name of Your Holiness, convinced that this closeness to the Pope would continue the multiplication of Divine Blessings on all the works established in Rome, and extend that benefit to all of Don Bosco's other Houses, everywhere

in the world. At the same time, a magnificent temple, consecrated to the Heavenly Help of Christians, is now being built at the side of the Professional School.

"It was only proper that a lasting monument should be raised to commemorate the Pope, who in proclaiming our Founder Blessed and in stressing his virtues on so many occasions, with his august voice has conferred the greatest blessing of all on Don Bosco's undertakings, and has given to each one of us the assurance that by following Blessed Don Bosco's footsteps, we are truly walking rightly along the road of his apostolate.

"In presenting to Your Holiness, as a humble homage, the already mentioned professional schools, which after two years of intensive work have been to a great extent completed, we renew, in the name of Don Bosco, our faithful and filial attachment to the Pope, and most particularly to the august person of Your Holiness.

"Holy Father, bless our good intentions, and please accept our sincerest wishes for your name day. In all our houses here in Rome, and everywhere else in the world, fervent prayers will be said tomorrow, that God may keep you, and grant prosperity and comfort to Your Holiness for the well being of the Church, and the glory of the Roman Pontificate."

At the end of the reading, the Pope delivered a very affectionate speech. After saying that just as the Father was appreciative of the homage rendered by his children, so would the children be equally appreciative of the praise rendered to them by the Father for the affectionate welcome expressed through excellent concerts, songs and magnificent choir renditions, the Pope added:

"It is enough to have heard, as We have just now, from your, or rather Our, dear Father Peter Ricaldone, the sober, the sincere, and historic report on fifty years of Salesian activity in Rome, to enable Us to understand why all Don Bosco's spiritual family—the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, their pupils, their past pupils, and the Cooperators—has a good reason to celebrate this jubilee of their beloved Don Bosco's undertakings with well-justified, heartening contentment, and with a thrill of "non-mendacious" joy, just as, you, dear children, have rightly sung.

"The qualifications of the report just read to us by the worthy Father Ricaldone, namely; the qualifications of 'sober, sincere, and historic,' were not by chance, inasmuch as he, in his honest listing of the undertakings and activities, did not include one single word or allusion to the work, to the

weariness, to the sacrifice and self-denial that these undertakings and activities could have cost and certainly did cost.

"We have Our own special fond reasons for sharing in the sacred and heartfelt joy provided by the fiftieth anniversary of the Salesian undertakings in Rome, and Our reasons stem from the precious memories of bygone days.

"For it was during the first year of Our priesthood that the Salesian undertakings in Rome, which began with the magnificent church of the Sacred Heart, first began to rise and take shape.

"It was also during the early days of our priesthood that, by the goodness of Divine Providence, We made the personal acquaintance of Blessed Don Bosco, in whose company We spent some days of joy and consolation that can be properly evaluated only by the one who had that divinely fortunate experience.

"At that time, Blessed Don Bosco was nearing the twilight of his arduous life, and he already had a foretaste of the joy of the eternal reward that awaited him in Heaven.

"There is also another reason why We share so wholeheartedly the happiness common to all of you. After fifty years of active life which are recalled vividly to Our mind by your presence, most beloved children, that same ineffable goodness which has ordered all things so wisely, has granted us to proclaim and decree the honors of the Altar for Blessed Don Bosco.

"Now, from the post to which Divine Providence has called Us, We turn our eyes towards that immense harvest of good which, beginning from Rome, now extends throughout the whole Catholic world.

"We therefore cannot help but direct our thoughts to all the thousands of Don Bosco's sons and daughters who live here and there, scattered among the different nations, who are concerned about furthering the works pointed toward a Christian way of living successfully and productively.

"When We think about the hundreds of thousands of young souls all over the world who found their way to the Salesians; when We picture with our imagination this infinite array of Youth, recruited from all classes, whom Don Bosco, with his example, with his faith, and with the apostolic charity of his sons, still continues to educate, to guide along the path of Christian living, to show the nobility of labor and the material and moral rewards which they may rightly draw from it, and of which life has such a great need; when We think about the endless, infinite vision of all these people, of all the good done, We cannot help but thank Don Bosco and his

sons for all the good work that they have done and are still doing, also on behalf of Our glorious predecessor, and on behalf of that God who deigned to call on Us to become His Vicar.

"The thought of an even greater future full of wondrous accomplishments makes our heart smile and our spirit rejoice. It certainly cannot fail to come true in light of such a resplendent past, and a present so rich in assurances.

"Most beloved children, We are grateful to you for having wished to link our own humble name with that of your venerated Don Bosco. We are grateful to you for having connected that which you rightly consider your own jubilee to that of the Pope, thus taking an active part in events that concern Us personally, and for honoring Us on Our name day.

"We are particularly grateful to you for having wished to join the name of the Pope with the new Professional School that, at the side of the church of Mary Help of Christians, will be a center of multiform, beneficial and Christian activities.

"We look on this new school as one of the fairest undertakings that Divine Providence was pleased to begin during our Jubilee year, and so we pray with a full heart to God, that He may bless this new school generously, together with all the other Salesian undertakings which glorify God, and bring salvation to mankind.

"As we think of all these wondrous, mighty endeavors, We are happy to repeat a phrase which many people have heard expressed by us: 'Always more, and always better.'

"Yet, as We now stand here to address Don Bosco's sons and daughters, We prefer to quote another remark that We heard your Blessed Founder utter. When, in that first year of our priesthood, We congratulated Don Bosco for the wonderful work he had begun, for the classrooms, for the workshops so well-equipped with the most advanced and modern tools of the machine shops, our dear Blessed Don Bosco answered Us with the smiling, kindly manner and keenness that were familiar to everyone who knew him: 'Ah! In such things Don Bosco always wants to be in the vanguard of progress!'

"The Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians should always be, and should always aspire to be, 'in the vanguard of Progress.' With this sure and consoling foresight, We impart our blessing to you, dear children, to you who have come to request it from your Father in his house which is your house, too, We extend this blessing not only to everyone who is present here, but also to the others whom you so worthily represent. How many might they be? There certainly must be an immense host in the world,

countless in number, as countless as the sands of the seashore, everywhere. The heart of Blessed Don Bosco was as immense as all the sands of the seashores.

"With this worldwide vision of your houses, of your works, of your apostolate, of your labor, and above all of you, the Salesians among whom We give the place of honor to those who fight in the firing line of Faith—that is, the Missionary Priests, Brothers, and Sisters—we are about to impart our Apostolic Blessing, and full of hope, beg the Lord to bestow on all of you the generous favors of Blessed Don Bosco, and his powerful intercession."

The Pope made his own the words that Don Bosco had uttered about being always in *the vanguard of Progress,* when he inaugurated a new telephone power plant in Vatican City on November 19,1930. This plant was a gift from the New York Telephone and Telegraph Corporation. As he thanked the donors for their noble desire to give him something worthy of the headquarters of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, he said that their intention had added an extra something to the princely gift, to its elegance, its usefulness, and perfection. He then went on: "This gift is in harmony with Our way of thinking which was also the way of thinking of a very great man, Blessed Don Bosco, who once was proud to say to the one who later became the successor of St. Peter, that he always wanted to be in the *vanguard of progress.* This was one of Don Bosco's great merits, and We often quote these very words, whenever, with the same thought in Our mind, We wish to add something simple, but inspired by a worthwhile purpose, to our small, yet great city."

Everyone knows that Don Bosco cultivated a great number of priestly vocations for the Church, but we should also remember that he himself was a model of scrupulous preparation for the priest's way of life, and for priestly ministry. This is exactly what Pius XI singled out during an audience he had granted to the seminarians of the Major and Minor Pontifical Seminaries of Rome. Before blessing them, he told them that he had delightful souvenirs for them, to commemorate this memorable moment. These souvenirs were the small medals which he was simultaneously handing to the Cardinal Vicar, to be distributed among the seminarians in the name of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Those medals carried the likeness of the Pope, which would have been for all the seminarians, the *tender image of the father* [*la dolce imagine paterna*] as the poet puts it. Those medals also carried the loving likeness of Don Bosco. He was depicted in

the act of taking care of boys in their early adolescence, in the way in which he alone was capable, and by which he led them all to God.

Then the Pope went on:

"And your youthfulness, which is directed toward God along a way so high and with such sublime aspirations, finds in Blessed Don Bosco your model, as you prepare for the priesthood, and also your model of life and priestly ministry. In fact, Don Bosco cultivated priestly vocations in such a manner that whatever he did in this regard is felt also today; rather it is felt today more than ever before. We had occasion to observe him closely, and we were edified both by what he did in terms of preparation for the priesthood, and by what he did in his priestly ministry. We were allowed to see things that not even all his sons had the good fortune to see. His priestly preparation in holiness, in virtue, and in piety was obvious to all, for it constituted the whole of his life. Every moment of his life was a continuous act of charitable immolation, a constant act of prayerful recollection. This is the most striking feature revealed from his conversation. He was a man alert to everything that happened around him. People came to see him from all sides, from European countries, from China, Africa, and India. This person had one problem, that one had another. Yet, in the twinkling of an eye, as if it required only an instant, he listened to everything, he grasped the significance of everything, and had an answer for everything, yet always with an air of sublime recollection. One would have said that he paid no heed to anything that was said around him; one would have said that his thoughts were entirely elsewhere, which, indeed, was true. He *was* elsewhere. He was spiritually united with God, yet there he stood, giving an answer to everybody. He always had ready the right word to say to others, and to himself, in such a way as to cause wonderment. At first, there was a feeling of surprise, and then of wonder. Don Bosco did not restrict this life of holiness, of recollection, of continued prayer, to the long hours of the night; he made it an integral part of all the unceasing, relentless tasks that were his in his waking hours. Yet many failed to notice his intellectual preparation, his scientific preparation, his preparation for studies, and very many people do not have the slightest idea of all that Don Bosco did, nor of all that was devoted to studying. He had studied a lot, and he continued to study for so long a time, and to plunge into the most extensive areas of study. One day he told us something he had never confided to anyone—but he thought he should confide it to someone who was involved with books and the library: he had in mind a

vast plan of studies, and also a vast plan for work, in the field of ecclesiastical historiography. He then added: 'But I realized that God had called me to follow another path; perhaps I did not have the right equipment of mind, of intellect, of memory.' He therefore decided to devote himself to a life of charity, to the works of charity, committing himself to lavishing on others all the treasures, all the wealth of learning that he had accumulated for himself. This explains why he was able to pen all the wonderful books that he wrote, especially for young readers. These books were not scientifically lofty, yet they were suited to every kind of mind, so that they would be likely to attain the goals that the great Apostle had in mind."

The Pope glorified Don Bosco once again, and in an extraordinary way, on July 9, 1933, when the Decree on the heroicity of the virtues of Dominic Savio was read out in his presence. It would be impossible to single out the individual portions of his speech that contain words of praise of Don Bosco. On the other hand, the glorification of the disciple shed so much praise on the master that the whole address may justifiably be included in its entirety in this chapter. Since the Pope made frequent references both directly and indirectly, to the address that had previously been delivered by the Rector Major, Father Peter Ricaldone, we are reproducing his address, too, in its entirely. The following is Father Ricaldone's address:

"Most Blessed Father:

"Prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, the Salesian family is happy to proffer the most fervent thanks to God and to His Vicar, for the grace that has been granted with the promulgation of the Decree, and which acknowledges that the Servant of God has practiced his virtues to a heroic degree. Dominic Savio was a pupil of Blessed Don Bosco at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin.

"When we consider that Dominic Savio attained this degree of perfection at a tender age in the school of our Blessed Father and teacher, when we see the wonderful results provided by the educational system which Don Bosco inaugurated in a holy manner, and has bequeathed as a legacy to his sons, when we see these results resplendent with mighty and vibrant light in the person of this young man who is the finest fruit and the most solemn sanction of that educational method, then we are indeed comforted and encouraged in the daily round of our modest educational work.

"Those means which were used by Don Bosco to direct an educational work, to develop the supernatural life in a boy and in an adolescent, as a Christian educator should, and as Your Holiness has so wisely clarified and explained in the Encyclical *Divini Illius,* all those means are sufficiently

capable not only of producing sure fruits of ordinary goodness, but also of helping young souls climb to the highest heights of Christian sanctity. It is true that in this case this process was rendered easier by the rare, heavenly gifts with which the man, who was to be known later as the 19th century Apostle of Youth, was endowed. Yet it was no less true that he blazed a trail, which will always lead to the same goal, provided that people perseveringly stay the course and have the same spirit. But we recognize the bright features of the Father's likeness in this young disciple from another perspective.

"Blessed Don Bosco lived in close spiritual union with God, and his life was one of apostolic zeal and total self-sacrifice. We are deeply moved and edified to find now in young Dominic that same constant habit of prayer and diligence in trying to keep his classmates, and not only them, away from evil, and to encourage them to pursue virtue. Dominic Savio had an indomitable spirit of generosity in enduring vexations, hardships, even ill-treatment, if only he could thereby promote the glory of God, wage war on sin, and keep scandal at bay! The program for living that is summed up in the words: *Prayer, Action, Sacrifice* which Your Holiness never wearies of repeating to all the laymen who volunteer their services on behalf of the Ecclesiastical hierarchy, marvelously sums up the spirit of this short, yet so fruitful, a life.

"We have always treasured our good fortune for having known, and appreciated since our early adolescence, the virtues and the example of Dominic Savio. We were told about them by men who had been his teachers in school, or his companions during the years he lived at the Oratory. All of them declared that he was a living model of the greatest virtues. But today our jubilation is complete, because our admiration for him has now been sanctioned by the august decree of Your Holiness.

"Most Blessed Father, may I have the honor of conveying to you the devoted thanks of all the Salesians, at this solemn moment which is sacred to us all, for this wonderful grace, and may I assure you that we shall endeavor to imitate more earnestly than ever before, this glorious model of fidelity, by following in the footsteps of our Blessed Founder, with the comforting certainty that, by so doing, we shall surely progress in the direction indicated to us by the hand of Christ's Vicar.

"With these heartfelt feelings I kneel before you and implore your Apostolic Blessing on all the Salesians, their pupils, the Cooperators, the past pupils, and the family of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians."

With keen attention, the Pope followed all that Fr. Peter Ricaldone said. He recollected himself for a moment and then he uttered the following address:

"Don Bosco, that great figure, is coming back among us, dear children; yes, he is coming back and he is almost coming here to accompany and personally introduce and hand to us his little, or rather his great, pupil, the Venerable Dominic Savio. It seems as though We are again seeing the great Servant of God, just as We saw him, exactly as We saw him, surrounded by his pupils and co-workers. This is one of the favors that We consider great, among all the favors granted to us by the goodness of God.

"Wonderful indeed in the designs of God, in designs set up by Divine Providence, wonderful indeed is the return of Don Bosco among us, as he introduces this fruit, among the first fruits, among the most beautiful fruits, he introduces this most beautiful fruit, and we could say, the most exquisite fruit, of his educative work, of his apostolic work; for his entire life and all his work was always an apostolate. The spirit of the apostolate permeated his whole existence. It had been imbibed with that determination which was succinctly and fully summed up in those words, in that word which was his password, inherited so faithfully later on by his faithful sons: *da mihi animas, coetera tolle.*

"His return among us is indeed providential when we think about the conditions in which we find today's youth, and we could say all the world, when we think about all the dangers and all the evil devices used to ensnare the purity of youth, when we think about the turmoil their life is entangled in and about the excessive emphasis on the cult of the body, of physical strength, when we think about the cult of worldly development, of material and physical fitness, as they say, when we think of education, we could say, to violence, to the rejection of respect for everyone and everything, and, mind you, all this is said by those who are guided solely by considerations linked with a purely human pedagogy. When We therefore think about these conditions in which young people live today, about these dangers that beset them at every turn, when We think about this deplorable apostolate (if We may apply such a term here), the apostolate of corruption carried out so actively and with such a terrible and evil-oriented readiness by means of the press, of a press easily adapting itself to any situation and to all age levels, when We think about this display, which is continuous, universal, almost unavoidable for those who live with it, when We think about this display of things which are not only unedifying, but which are

really provocative and inciting to evil, when We think that even the most beautiful and genial discoveries of science, which should be used only in the apostolate of the good, in the spread of truth and goodness, are actually abused, when We think about all these things and about the degree they have already reached in our present day, *then* we certainly have good reason to give thanks to God and to Divine Providence which calls forth and reveals in a luminous radiance, the edifying figure of this pious, holy youth. We have a very good reason to be deeply and in a special way grateful to God, for the holiness, for the perfection of Christian life, found in this youth who did not enjoy any of the powerful advantages which might have facilitated the accomplishment of great things. He was poor, a humble son of poor and unpretentious folks, of very modest parents. He was rich solely in Christian aspirations of a Christian life, lived in the most humble of conditions, in the exercise of a most average life, in the fulfillment of the normal duties of commonplace life. This is the boy who did not spend his early years in a garden especially protected, as the Decree already stated, but he lived his early years in the world, and then in that place which Divine Providence had assigned to him, in the midst of those young people who were gathered, formed and reformed and sanctified by Don Bosco. These young people, however, were a mixture of good boys and bad, of good elements and elements not so good. That was the secret of Don Bosco, who at times chose to deal with elements not so good, to the great astonishment of those who did not share his own great faith in God, nor his belief in the fundamental goodness of God's creatures. It was Don Bosco's secret to deal with everyone, to broaden the horizons of his activity, to stretch out his hand and reach out to everyone, only in order to draw good from evil, as God does with His hand.

"But returning to the new Venerable, this is what We easily notice first. This adolescent's life which would end at the age of 15—this life which was called the life of a spiritual giant, at only 15—this life was inspired by the example of Don Bosco at whose school he rapidly matured. At the age of 15 he had already reached a true and genuine perfection in his Christian way of life; he possessed all the qualities, which We now need to hold up as an example to contemporary Youth, for his was indeed a perfect Christian life. And the perfection of his Christian life was complete, as it was comprised essentially—if we wish to sum up its basic features—of purity, of piety, of the Apostolate, of Spirit and of apostolic activity.

"His spotless, angelic purity, inspired by the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the source of inspiration for all levels of purity, was protected with utmost

vigilance. First of all, this purity was protected by the vigilance of his parents, and later by the vigilance of the Blessed Servant of God and his co-workers; this purity was shielded, always shielded, as though instinctively, with a continuous aspiration towards being pure, with a continuous and most noble need to be pure, to the point that anything which might have appeared to endanger even remotely the sincerity of his purity, would awaken in his little, or rather his great soul, all the capacities to be attentive and to act as faithful guardians of purity. Purity is the first condition, the premise required to have other Divine gifts, to have the gift of the finest vocations. Purity is the love of Mary; purity is the love of God; purity is the love of her Divine son, of the Divine Redeemer; purity is the perfume that opens the heart of God and which turns out to be most appreciated. Purity deserves a splendid banner, unsoiled, to be raised high for all young people to see.

"We almost might believe that this fine little Servant of God made his own the words attributed by Divine Wisdom to the soul in quest of purity: *And as I knew that I could not otherwise be continent and pure, except God gave it, I went to the Lord, and besought Him for this treasure.* This is why the purity of the Venerable Dominic Savio was always assisted by a great spirit of piety, for in him piety acted as the guardian of his purity. His piety was made up of prayer, of devotion to the Blessed Virgin, of devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, of a sublime understanding, uniting all the ingredients of purity to go hand-in-hand with his piety. With his prayer of the spirit went another form of prayer, the prayer which we might describe as the prayer of the flesh, the special prayer of the flesh, the prayer of the body, as it was so well described, the prayer of the body renewed by the spirit. And this prayer is the practice of Christian penance which, as though instinctively, is aware of the possible complicity of the body, of the flesh, of all that might offend purity, of the dangers laid for purity; and it runs for shelter almost by instinct, by the same instinct by which the lamb preserves itself from the onslaught of the wolf, against the power of an enemy.

"The whole life of Dominic Savio was a life of prayer and of penance; though this form of penance was not the one carried to the harsh extremes documented in the history of the Saints, yet it was a genuine penance, nonetheless. It was, in fact, a kind of penance of a most instructive kind, beneficial to everyone, especially to youth, for his form of penance is accessible to all. Substantially, this penance consisted in the exercise of continuous vigilance, in the exercise of self-control, in the exercise of the

superiority of the spirit over matter, the controlling power of the nobler parts of man over his less noble parts. In a word, it consists in asserting the authoritative power of the soul, the power of that which is called to command over what is called to obey. The spirit of penance is most precious, since it is the one which by itself can ward off so many dangers, and by itself exercises nobly and efficaciously the best energies of soul and spirit. Additionally, it teaches the body, it teaches the less noble part of man what it needs to do, what contribution it should make, not to render the attainment of virtue difficult, but to render its exercise and activity easier and more meritorious.

"Besides all this, considered as a supernaturally natural preparation, Dominic Savio's life was animated by an apostolic spirit which lasted his entire life—the life of this little and great Christian. We purposely said that it was a supernaturally natural preparation because, in fact and in essence, this is the natural tendency of what is good: to spread out, to expand, to have its benefits shared as widely as possible, especially where the need is more visible and where its absence is more visible. This tendency was most evident in this dear young man.

"He was a little, yet a great apostle on all occasions. He was very attentive in capitalizing on these occasions, in creating them, in responding apostolically to them, from a formal teaching of catechism and Christian practices up to a cordial participation in the amusements proper to youth, and only with the goal of bringing everywhere a touch of goodness, an invitation to goodness.

"Herein lies his true, providential message for our own day and age. This is what We constantly have proclaimed and insisted upon, for our youth to hear. And our youth have responded to our appeal with noble enthusiasm in all countries of the world; we are delighted to point this out with a very deep sense of gratitude to God and men. This is the dear youth, which is responding to our appeal to be part of the Catholic Action movement, which wants to be and should be nothing other than the proper participation of the laity in the hierarchical apostolate.

"In order to be such, in order to be able to follow this way of life, our young people require a deeper and a more conscious, more thorough formation as concerns Christian life, Christian conscience, the spirit of piety, as concerns their participation in the devotion of the church, that is, a continuous act of prayer and union with God. This response is so vast and so precious in its richness, that it truly fills our heart with the deepest gratitude and opens our spirit to the most beautiful hopes—not only ours and those

of the Church, of our Holy Religion, but, out of fortunate necessity, also the hopes, the sure promises for the family, for society, for the whole of mankind.

"It is true. We have constantly called on these good young people to rally under the glorious banner of prayer, action, and sacrifice, for it is with prayer and with sacrifice that we prepare ourselves for action; it is with prayer, inspired by piety, with sacrifice which is interior and personal first of all, with a sacrifice which is always rooted in a spirit of penance, in Christian mortification; this is the way, this is the only way, by which we can prepare ourselves for successful action in this apostolate. And this action cannot be carried out by relying on purely human devices, however high and generous, but only by relying on the Divine Help which it absolutely needs, and which cannot be obtained otherwise. That is why we have to go back once again to the figure of the great Servant of God, to Blessed Don Bosco, the teacher of young Dominic Savio. We have to go back to that great figure just as we have seen him so closely and not for a fleeting moment—we have to go back to Don Bosco in exactly the way his little pupil has represented him with his own life and in the events of his short existence: a continuous consuming zeal to work apostolically, to exercise a missionary activity, truly missionary even within the four walls of a single room, truly missionary activity among the children and young boys, among the adolescents who surrounded him continually; a spirit of zeal, of diligent action, yet with all this zeal, a truly remarkable spirit of recollection, of serenity, of calmness, a calmness not related to mere silence, but a calmness which was the habitual companion of the true spirit of union with God, to the point that it was possible to see through it a continuous attention to something which was perceived and entertained by his soul: the presence of God, a union with God. Exactly in this way. In addition to all this, Dominic had an heroic spirit of mortification, of genuine penance—which, even in its most intense meaning, was abundantly satisfied by his life constantly dedicated to doing good to others, and always unmindful of personal advantages, always heedless to taking the slightest amount of rest—it was abundantly satisfied by the fact that his life was entirely a true life of penance, not merely of mortification, but of genuine penance, an apostolic penance.

"We have found some of these things in our personal recollections, but We have found even more of them in the most lovable inspirations provided by the short, yet most noble, life of the Venerable Servant of God, Dominic Savio. These features, these examples, these great descriptions are always

the basic, essential bounds of the life marked out with gigantic strokes by the hand of God. Fundamentally, what are these elements? They are the elements of Christian life, of a Christian life not lived in any which way, as so many people decide to do, but with generous fidelity to principle, with delicate concern and with a far from negligent attitude. It is truly an unworthy attitude to serve the Lord, who is so good, to serve the Redeemer who is so generous, in a negligent fashion. As We recently had occasion to remark during an audience granted to a handful of devoted pilgrims, Christian life should not be lived in an intermittent or fragmentary compliance with the precepts, the teachings, and the examples of our divine Redeemer and Master, and of His better disciples, like the disciple whom we look at today with admiration. Instead, Christian life should be lived with a spirit of noble exactness. This is Christian life, and it is already much if We describe it as such, for the word expresses infinite riches. Yet today, many people live a Christian life which bears no signs of being truly Christian; it is void of really diligent concern and generosity such as responding to the examples, teachings and wishes of our Divine master. How needed are these examples of a precise Christian way of life! How needed today are Christian lives which are both diligent and generous, just as the heart of God, the Heart of our Redeemer, want them to be. Such a reflection as this is all the more appropriate in the providential, magnificent and encouraging passage of the Holy Year of Our Redemption we are now in. The wonderful event that we celebrate and commemorate so gratefully, after nineteen centuries, should be such as to produce in us good fruits. It should do this by nourishing our true Christian way of living, which is the end result of our Divine Redemption. This Christian way of living was handed to us by the arms of the Son of God, stretched out on the cross.

"The world knew nothing of such a life; the world knew only the life lived by pagans, with all its errors and horrors. As soon as this Christian life commenced, it flowered instantly, miraculously, with heavenly beauty, with celestial splendor; it flowered right from its earliest years in the children whom our Divine Redeemer caressed and embraced, and it spread to the Tarcisiuses of all ages, up to this new Venerable Servant of God.

"This is the gift, the great gift, the full gift of Redemption. Redemption is always the same, yet it is manifested by the different degrees of perfection to which the hand of God is able to take it, for this is the divine perfection, however unattainable in its fullness, this is the perfection which is proposed to us. And such perfection is the Christian life shown by a humble faithful person, even by the least of the faithful, in the most modest

degree, just as the Christian life is exemplified by outstanding, magnificent, gigantic figures as the ones mentioned in biographies of the saints of all ages. This is the Christian life; this is that immense treasure which We bear as a gift within us from the moment of our Baptism. It is at Baptism, at that blessed hour of our Baptism, that we began to live this life and we continue carrying it within us, in our bodies, in our souls. There is an appeal, a continuous one, an incessant one, which comes from within. We should take advantage of so precious a gift; we should not let it lie inactive and neglected, and leave it unprotected, thus showing our incompetence. We should instead take advantage of this magnificent treasure with steadfast determination; we should take advantage of this treasure that we possess in generous measure and which is found exactly in that blood which our Divine Redeemer has paid as a price: namely, the price paid with His Blood, with His Life, and with His Cross.

"We now wish, first of all, to join our joy to the joy of Don Bosco's family, or rather the joy of the families of the Blessed Don Bosco, so worthily and abundantly represented here today, and which are so plentifully and worthily represented all over the world. Only yesterday, We read something about the recent efforts of the Salesian Apostolate in regions heretofore inaccessible and not yet entered into.[1] We extend our congratulations to both of your religious families, and to all those who share in their work and assist them, either by prayer or by material contributions."

There were echoes of Don Bosco's beatification in speeches made by the Pope on two important occasions. The first of these was an audience granted on October 2, 1933, to 150 Dutch Cooperators. They had gone to Rome to gain the indulgence of the Holy Year proclaimed in commemoration of the 19th anniversary of our Redemption. On their journey they had visited Turin and the birthplace of Don Bosco. The Pope expressed pleasure over the visit of his dear children from the small country of Holland, which had, nevertheless, so distinguished itself by zealous apostolic work in the Missions, and in the ranks of Catholic Action. He then added in a kindly tone: "Your visit to us is all the more welcome because you come to us in the name of Blessed Don Bosco, a name dear to all Catholics, just as are his providential works; a name especially dear to Us because Divine Providence has placed Don Bosco among those whom We had the good fortune to know and whose benevolence we have shared. And

[1] His Holiness was probably referring to an article that had appeared in the July issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* (p. 215) entitled "The new Mission in Saharanpur."

also because Divine Providence has chosen Us to raise him to the first honors of the altar, and We hope to do even more than this, with the help of God." He then rapidly sketched the program of the Salesian Cooperator, "Which is to cooperate with Jesus Christ in His work of Redemption, in His work of saving souls, exactly according to the program of Don Bosco, whose motto was: *Da mihi animas.*" He further explained the meaning of the motto. "The words *Da mihi animas, coetera tolle* with which the Founder of the Salesians summed up his resolve to guide souls to a life of grace, are the same as those with which our Savior summed up His entire mission of Redemption, through which souls were to attain to a fuller measure of life. This wonderful and faithful correspondence of Don Bosco's programs with the program of the Redeemer, should inspire all his sons to labor zealously and enthusiastically, so that they might fulfill this program in themselves, and then extend it to others, for this is the main objective of this Holy Year."

The second occasion was an audience granted by the Holy Father to the pupils of the Salesian school of Frascati, on October 27th, when they went to Rome to gain the jubilee indulgence. "You have a very special claim on Us," the Pope told them, "for you come in the name of Don Bosco, who was particularly dear to Us even before the world called him Blessed. When We hear his name, We do not think of him only as a great Servant of God whom We, by a singular fortune, or rather by the grace of God, raised to the first honors of the Altar, and whom We hope and expect to raise to higher honors, but also we think of him as an old acquaintance, We were about to say, as a fatherly friend, when during the first years of Our priesthood, We spent some time in his company. So you may imagine how happy We are to see you and greet you. There is yet another reason why you are so dear to Us. You came to celebrate this extraordinary Jubilee which We proclaimed for the entire world, in commemoration of this nineteenth anniversary of our Redemption. As Don Bosco's pupils, you should make a particular reflection. The treasure which you receive every-day comes to you directly from the cross, and it is the treasure of a Christian education. The sum total of the fruits of Christ's Redemption is to be found within a Christian way of life, which way the world had lost. It was reinvented by Jesus Christ, who brought it to us from heaven, and gave it to us in His name. You should remember that you possess the full wealth of this way of life, even to the point of luxury. Remember that every tiny fragment of this life given to you every day is a drop of the Precious Blood of Our Lord."

The Holy Father was obviously pleased on both of these occasions, to refer to Don Bosco's forthcoming and hoped-for canonization. Divine Providence had destined this Pope, who had beatified Don Bosco, to joyfully reach another goal, as we shall describe next.

Chapter 11

The Cause Is Resumed

The Triumph of the Beatification, the worldwide celebrations that followed it, the extraordinary spiritual benefits drawn from them, the steady increase of devotion to Don Bosco, and the exceptional growth of prodigious events obtained through his intercession, all helped to encourage an application for the resumption of Don Bosco's 'Cause'. The word 'Cause' is the one officially used to describe the reopening of the 'Cause' of one who has been beatified, prior to his canonization, and the subsequent permanent and universal cult.

The word *canonization* stems from the word *canon,* a Greek word that etymologically stands for 'rule'. It has been used with several different connotations in the Church, such as the '*Catalogue or list of inspired books,*' and from the 12th century on, also the '*Catalogue or list of Saints.*' By the solemn act of canonization, the Pope declares that those already beatified now reign in eternal glory, and he therefore orders that the universal church render to them the cult of veneration. This order falls within the perimeters of the infallible teaching of the Roman Pontiff, since he defines and issues an order as Head of the universal Church, and by virtue of the power given to him by Jesus Christ whose Vicar he is. In a word, we are dealing with a definition *ex cathedra* [from the chair of Peter].

The Postulator, Father Francis Tomasetti, did not waste any time. He rightly interpreted and complied with the wishes of the Rector Major and the Salesian Superiors. As a matter of fact, he filed a petition with the Sacred Congregation of Rites early in 1930, asking for the resumption of the Cause, and that it be discussed in one of the forthcoming, ordinary sessions of that Congregation. His wish was graciously heard and favorably responded to, as it is evidenced by a formal answer issued on February 10, 1930, by the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

What was needed was a number of postulatory letters from persons in authority, in support of the petition that had to be presented to the Holy Father, so that he might sign the decree ordering the resumption of the Cause. In a short time, he got together more letters than he actually needed, but out of the many letters he had collected he submitted only twelve, those

he considered most important. These letters were from the Cardinals Gasparri, Hlond, Schuster, and Capotosti from the Salesian Archbishop, Guerra, from two Salesian Bishops, Olivares and Emanuel, from a theologian named Benna who was a Capitular Vicar of Turin, from the Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi, from Reverend Mother Vaschetti, the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and from Count Rebaudengo, who wrote his letter in the name of all the Salesian Cooperators. There was also a letter from Masera, the attorney who represented the International Federation of Don Bosco's past-pupils. Bishop Della Coppa and the Commendatore Melandri, who were respectively the Advocate and the Procurator of the Cause, together with the Postulator, Father Francis Tomasetti, submitted the petition, with relative documents, to the Holy Father through the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

The Sacred Congregation examined the petition and added documents at its ordinary session on June 17th, to ascertain whether or not the recommendation should be proposed to have the Pope sign the commission, or mandate, which was requested. The Cardinals cast a vote in favor of such a recommendation. The Holy Father endorsed their decision, and the next day a decree to that effect was issued, a decree showing a great respect for the Salesian Society. This decree emphasized the more outstanding highlights of Don Bosco's beatification, and described the Pope's solemn entrance into St. Peter's Basilica on the afternoon of June 2, 1929, with the enthusiastic welcome given him by the congregation *cum florentissimis institutis amatissimi Patris legiferi Beati Joannis Bosco* [with the very flourishing institutions of the most Beloved Father and lawgiver Blessed John Bosco]. The editor of the text, still feeling the impact of that recollection, exclaimed *Mirabile spectaculum Ecclesiae militanti et triumphanti gratum et iucundum*! [A wonderful spectacle, a joyful and a pleasant one both for the triumphant and militant Church]. The decree was signed by the Prefect, Cardinal Laurenti, and the Secretary, Bishop Carinci.

In order that a Cause may be resumed, two miracles must be submitted and examined. In Don Bosco's Cause, the Postulator submitted data relating to two cases of miraculous recovery which had occurred in Rimini and Innsbruck. Upon receipt of the letters, the Curiae in both these dioceses instituted the processes regarding the two miracles, and sent their reports to Rome in October 1931 when the work had been completed. Immediately, the Postulator filed a petition with the **Ponens**, or **Relator**, Cardinal

Verde, asking him to invite the Sacred Congregation of Rites to pass judgment on their validity. After the documents had been examined, and the above-mentioned Cardinal had made his report, the Committee issued an affirmative vote on April 12, 1932, which was approved and ratified a week later by the Holy Father, Pius XI. This was followed by an investigation and by the opinions of medical experts appointed by the Sacred Congregation, to express their legal and medical judgment on the facts. In turn, the Promoter of the Faith, Bishop Natucci, drew up a twofold series of objections against the supernatural character of both cases based on the findings of the investigation and the medical reports.

The Advocate for the Cause answered these objections in detail. Then the summaries of the legal processes, with the relative documents, the medical reports of the experts, the objections advanced by the Promoter of the Faith, and the answers given by the Advocate, formed the *Positio,* which was printed. It was then distributed to the Cardinals, Officers, and Consultants of the Congregation of Rites on July 12, 1932, in anticipation of the work to be done by three Congregations, of which we already have spoken in connection with Don Bosco's beatification.

Before going any further, we should give a brief account of the second miraculous cure. Rudolf Hirch, of Innsbruck, had graduated in medicine and specialized in the treatment and cure of people affected with tuberculosis. He himself had been affected by this disease. At first he seemed to have recovered, thanks to careful, protracted treatment. Thereupon, he resumed his work for a period of a year, more or less, up to the end of 1928, when he suffered a relapse and the consumptive pulmonary process became more acute. On May 13, 1929, he felt so drained of strength that he was forced to enter a sanatorium. Every remedy used, including the pneumothorax failed completely. The radioscopy revealed a large cavity of tuberculous origin in his lung. At this time, a Salesian Seminarian who today is a priest, Father Joseph Divina, urged this young man's mother-in-law to begin a novena to Don Bosco. She began it on May 15th and ended it on May 24th, the feast of Mary Help of Christians. The patient, his own immediate family circle, his wife's relatives, and the Salesians of the school of Treviglio, took part in this novena. During the last few days of the novena, the sick man held a relic of Don Bosco (a drop of his blood on a piece of cotton wool) against his chest, above the diseased lung. Shortly after, the doctors attending him were astonished by the findings of a radioscopic examination, and on the 24th their amazement was boundless. Despite his long confinement to bed, they saw that the patient was able

to get up without difficulty, and drive by car to the clinic. At the clinic, the radiologists could not find any trace of the cavity in the lung, and the other symptoms had likewise disappeared. Examination of his phlegm, which had hitherto been positive, was now negative, and remained negative thereafter. His general condition of health improved rapidly. Eminent specialists in Innsbruck and Vienna, who were acquainted with his case, could not believe their eyes when they saw the sudden change in him. In October 1929, Dr. Hirch resumed his former work, without suffering any physical disturbance, even during periods of excessive overwork. After a period of three years, the doctors confirmed his total and definitive recovery.

One of the specialists who had been appointed to give his medical opinion on the miracle, raised objections against it. However, during the Anti-Preparatory Congregation held by the Consultants, and presided over by the Cardinal **Ponens**, the objections were refuted, and the Congregation cast a unanimously favorable vote. Everyone thought that there would now be no further delay in the normal procedure of the Cause, especially since a famous specialist of pulmonary disease, Prof. Micheli of Turin, had demonstrated the inconsistency, not to say the downright stupidity. of the objections raised, as soon as he was given a confidential report on them. Nevertheless, in matters such as these, even the slightest shade of a doubt as to the authenticity of a miracle is usually sufficient to rule it out completely. Because of this, the Pope, informed by Father Francis Tomasetti, advised that it would be better to submit another miracle. So it was decided to present the miraculous cure that had taken place in Turin in the month of May, 1931, by the bier where the mortal remains of Don Bosco rested. The lady who had been miraculously cured lived in the diocese of Bergamo. Therefore, only that Curia was competent to conduct the customary process. This caused a delay, since it took nearly nine months to go through; then a second *anti-preparatory* Congregation was necessary.

The three Congregations—the *Anti-Preparatory,* the *Preparatory,* and the *General*—are always held on a Tuesday, though this does not mean that such Congregations meet every Tuesday of the year. Since there are always several Causes in progress, at the beginning of the year, after due consultation with the individual Postulators, the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Rites publishes a chronological list of all the Congregations due to take place, from the autumn to the summer vacation of the following year. If any Congregation concludes with a negative vote, and thus has to be repeated, the Postulation concerned loses its turn. But, in the event that some other Postulation is not fully prepared by the time its

turn is due, the Postulation that has lost its turn may take its place. This occurred in the case of Don Bosco, and accelerated the rhythm of the cycle of Congregations that had to investigate his miracles. A second *Positio* was prepared, and on May 9, 1933, the second *Anti-Preparatory* Congregation was held. Several new objections advanced in connection with the earlier miracle submitted—that of Rimini—were clarified, after which the Consultants discussed the miracle which had been submitted in substitution for the one of Innsbruck, and a favorable vote was cast in regard to both. On July 25th, a little more than two months later, the *Positio* was ready, and so the *Preparatory* Congregation could be held in the Vatican, with the intervention of Cardinals, Officials and Consultors. Their conclusive vote was affirmative. Father Tomasetti had the *Novissima Positio* prepared with the utmost care, and submitted it for the final discussion, but the Assistant Promoter of the Faith was unable to submit his *Approval* for printing with equal rapidity. Nevertheless, since the Holy Father was anxious to dispense with any further delay, the *General* Congregation met in his presence on November 14th, prior to the end of the year. The outcome of it was that, after praying to God for enlightenment, the Holy Father gave orders to prepare the Decree of approval, and set as the date, Sunday, the 19th of November, for the official proclamation.

As a rule, ceremonies of this type are carried out in three phases. First of all, the Secretary of the Congregation of Rites reads out the decree in the presence of the Pope seated on his throne; then the person best qualified in the Order, Congregation, or Diocese to which the Servant of God in question belonged, reads a brief address to the Pope; then His Holiness delivers an address.

The Decree was read out that Sunday morning in the Hall of the Consistory, which was crowded with spectators. Naturally, both the Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, Cardinal Laurenti, and the **Ponens** of the Cause, Cardinal Verde, were present. Along with the Italian Prelates, Castro, the South American Archbishop of Costa Rica, and Lamy, French Bishop of Meaux, were prominent. The Rector Major of the Salesians, Father Peter Ricaldone, sat with the members of his Chapter in a seat of honor, next to the Postulator and the Advocates for the Cause. At the bidding of the Master of Ceremonies, Bishop Carinci approached the papal throne, and at the invitation extended by the Prefect of Ceremonies and after the permission was granted by the Holy Father, he read out the Decree, which began with the words of the Gospel for that 24th Sunday after Pentecost. This is the Italian translation:

"The words of today's Gospel remind us of, and invite us to meditate on, the words used by Jesus Christ, the Divine Founder of the Church, when he foresaw the future growth of the Church: *The Kingdom of Heaven is like a grain of mustard seed. . . . This is the smallest of all the seeds; but when it grows . . . it becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in its branches.* (Matt 13:31-32). This humble quality has always characterized the early beginnings of all those works which come from God. The more wonderful the development ordained by Divine Providence, the more outstanding is the humble aspect of their beginning. This is the thought which spontaneously comes to our mind, every time we start thinking about where and how the magnificent educational undertaking of Blessed Don Bosco came into existence. We are caught up in wonderment when we see how rapidly this undertaking expanded; how it flourished and prospered in all parts of the world.

"You would have seen a humble, poorly dressed priest, still young in years, with an open and cheerful countenance. You would have seen him entertaining with games and amusements, in an almost deserted meadow on the outskirts of Turin, the children of working classes, who had been abandoned in the streets. You would have seen him gather these youngsters in a kind of miserable shelter, and teach religion with sweet and persuasive words and then draw them to piety with an amazing technique.

"Previously he had been driven out of other districts. He had been already persecuted in various ways. He was poor and despised by so many—but God had destined him to achieve marvelous things. And Don Bosco, roaming like a pilgrim, without a roof, finally found a miserable shelter for his children, in that suburban area of Turin, then called Valdocco.

"The divine fire of charity was burning within his heart and he was about to translate into concrete reality the wondrous work God had destined for him. Today, everyone is aware of the benefits which have accrued from his work, and of how the two religious families that he has founded have developed. Yet the mind is hardly able to conceive, and words are inadequate to describe, the tremendous and tiring work of this great Apostle, his spiritual strength, and his ever-enduring patience when confronted with difficulties of all kinds.

"He was born, the son of humble parents, at Castelnuovo d'Asti on August 16, 1815, and he died in Turin on January 31, 1888.

"Among other holy men, who had been called upon by God at a stormy time, when all nations were affected by revolutions and were spellbound

by the enticements of a new age, at a time when the Church was greatly persecuted, Blessed Don Bosco truly stood up *ut gigas ad currendum viam* [as a trailblazing giant].

"He was renowned for his holiness; he was glorified by God with wondrous miracles after his death, and so he was listed among the Beatified by His Holiness, Pius XI, on June 2, 1929. The following year, the Cause for his Canonization was resumed, and two miraculous cures were investigated during the course of the Apostolic Process in Rimini and Innsbruck. In April of last year, their validity was acknowledged by a Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The debate on these two miracles continued in the *Anti-Preparatory* Congregation held on July 16, 1932, in the presence of His Eminence Cardinal Verde, the **Ponens**, or **Relator** of the Cause. The alleged miracle of Innsbruck was set aside, while another miracle, which had occurred at Bergamo, became the object of an Apostolic Process. This year, in February, its authenticity was confirmed by an Apostolic Decree. The merits of this miracle were discussed during the *Anti-Preparatory* Congregation, over which the Cardinal **Ponens** presided. Since a few aspects of the first miracle mentioned above required further clarification, a supplementary process was added to the initial one.

"The first cure happened in Rimini. During the month of October 1930, Anna Maccolini was stricken by an attack of bronchial-pneumonia, which lasted until February of the following year. Around the middle of December 1930, her condition was further aggravated by an attack of phlebitis in the left leg and thigh; the phlebitis then affected the entire joint to the point that it appeared twice its normal size, rendering all movement impossible. Phlebitis is a serious disease even in young people, but it becomes doubly serious in older folk, because of the danger of gangrene caused by arteriosclerosis. For this reason, the two attending physicians, who unanimously agreed in their diagnosis, issued a prognosis which held out scant hope for the patient's recovery, in view of her advanced age (she was 78 years old at that time), and the complications of her influenza attack. Any professor who teaches medicine will maintain that instantaneous recovery from phlebitis is quite impossible. Yet one night toward the end of that year, Anna, who had already invoked Blessed Don Bosco during a triduum, put a relic of his on her infected limb; instantaneously she recovered completely from her phlebitis. She regained full freedom of speech and full flexibility, while the joint was no longer swollen or painful. Not only the attending physicians, but also the physical specialists who examined Anna ten months later, and again even more recently—no more than six months

ago—confirmed her total recovery. Three experts who were chosen and appointed by this Sacred Congregation, agreed unanimously with both the diagnosis and prognosis of her attending physicians, and acknowledged the miracle.

"The second miracle was no less remarkable. Catherine Pilanga, née Lanfranchi, suffered from arthritic diathesis. The arthritis had particularly affected her knees and feet, causing organic lesions. The form of arthritis was so serious that if it did not endanger the patient's life, it still rendered impossible the use of her limbs. Since no treatment undergone by the patient from the year 1903 on had proven useful, she made two pilgrimages to Lourdes. But when the Blessed Virgin withheld the grace of recovery again on her second pilgrimage in May 1931, prior to leaving Lourdes, she uttered this prayer to the Heavenly Mother: 'Since I have not been cured here, grant me at least that, due to my devotion to Blessed Don Bosco, he may obtain the grace of recovery for me when I am in Turin.' It is obvious then that she had invoked Don Bosco, that she had faith in the general intercession of the Blessed Virgin. Returning home from France, and still in her customary grave condition, she stopped in Turin, and went to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. Helped by her sister and by the coachman, she got alighted from the coach. She entered the Church; she sat down right in front of the bier which contains the body of Blessed Don Bosco and she prayed. A little while later she succeeded in kneeling down, and she remained in this position for twenty minutes. Then she rose and went to the altar of the Blessed Virgin; once more she knelt. Then, coming to her senses, she recognized that she was cured. Without the help of anyone, while all who had seen her unable to walk were overwhelmed by amazement, she moved, she walked, she went up and down the stairs, and she climbed to the coach seat, without any difficulty at all. Her recovery was permanent, as it has been confirmed by three specialists. Those doctors who had attended her, and everyone who witnessed her remarkable recovery, declared that it was a miracle. So did the specialists appointed by this Sacred Congregation.

"These two miraculous recoveries were discussed once again during the *Preparatory* Congregation, held in the presence of the Cardinals on July 25th last, and once more on the 14th of this month, during the *General* Congregation in the presence of His Holiness, Pius XI. During this Congregation, Cardinal Alexander Verde, the **Ponens**, or **Relator** of the Cause, submitted the following query: whether there is evidence that miracles were wrought after Don Bosco's Beatification and what kind of miracles

are brought up for the case at hand. The Cardinals, Officers, Prelates, and Consultants cast their individual votes, but the Holy Father, after listening to them attentively, felt it opportune that he should wait a while before formulating his own judgment, so that he might seek light from God.

"He set as the date for the pronouncement of his judgment this 19th day of November, the 24th Sunday after Pentecost. He summoned the Cardinals, Camillus Laurenti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and Alexander Verde, the **Ponens** or **Relator** of the Cause, and also the Rev. Salvatore Natucci, the General Promoter of the Faith, and the Secretary here undersigned, in whose presence he declared that the two miracles wrought by God, with intercession of Blessed John Bosco, had been verified, namely: complete, instantaneous recovery from acute phlebitis in the left leg of Anna Maccolini, and the complete recovery of Catherine Pilengo, née Lanfranchi, from a serious, chronic arthritic condition affecting the knees and feet.

"He then ordered the promulgation and entry of this Decree in the records of the Sacred Congregation of Rites."

November 19, 1933

Alfonso Carinci
Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites

C. Cardinal Laurenti
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Once the Decree had been read out, Father Peter Ricaldone approached the papal throne. On either side of him were the Postulator, Father Francis Tomasetti, the Advocate, Bishop Della Cioppa, and Melandri, the Procurator. Then he addressed the following, dutifully filial speech to the Pope:

"Most Blessed Father:

The reading of the Decree that approves the two miracles presented for the canonization of our Founder, Blessed Don Bosco, makes our hearts overflow with gratitude and comfort. Our hearts overflow first of all with gratitude toward Your Holiness; by the seal of your Apostolic Authority, you have quickened the pace of the Cause, you have assured us, once again, of divine intervention in the glorification of our Blessed Father, and Founder. Our hearts overflow with comfort, because we, his sons, already anticipate the jubilation of that great day when the Church, by the magisterium of Christ's Vicar, will glorify our Father, and crown him with the halo of the Saints.

"Today, however, as I render thanks to God and Your Holiness for this singular grace, I can hear in my own voice the vibrant heartbeat of the two religious families founded by Don Bosco. (May I still be allowed to call him by this name which sums up for us so many and so dear memories?) I heard the heartbeat of these two families which originated from him and which inherit his spirit and his trust for the future. We originated from our Beloved Father at the cost of long and indescribable sacrifices. We inherited his spirit that we pledge to keep in its integrity and fervor; we inherited his trust which for reasons connected with heaven grows stronger day after day and which impels us to work with indefatigable energy for the glory of God and the good of souls in the field assigned to us by the Gospel's Master.

"Even the growing number of workers joining our ranks, ready to renew and expand the two spiritual families of Blessed Don Bosco, certainly reassures us that his great ideal, namely the Christian education of youth in conformity with the teachings of the Church and the directives of its visible Head, will continue to be realized, and even in a better way, for years to come.

"May our Blessed Father obtain for us the grace to reap in an increasingly abundant way the fruits of Redemption, whose nineteen hundredth anniversary has been solemnized throughout the world with this extraordinary Jubilee directive of Your Holiness.

"With these thoughts in his heart, the humble Successor of Blessed Don Bosco now kneels at the feet of Your Holiness, to render a tribute of thanks, and to implore the grace of your Apostolic Blessing for the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, our pupils and past pupils, and for the great family of the Salesian Cooperators."

Father Ricaldone kissed the Pope's foot and left together with his companions. It was then the turn of His Holiness to speak. He had evidently meditated deeply on what he was going to say. There were some moments when, as he recalled events that happened more than fifty years before and earlier, which had been deeply fixed in his mind, he seemed about to give way to emotion. But he kept his self-control with a resolute act of will power, and his voice remained calm and solemn.

"This is the third time that Don Bosco, (and, We, too, shall call him Don Bosco to refresh tender recollections) gives Us an

invitation, or rather has us face the fortunate duty, of speaking about him: We remember something dear to Us, and I should say also dear to him, We remember that personal encounter of long ago, that friendly opportunity which Divine Providence had given Us to meet with Don Bosco, even though not for a lengthy—yet neither a fleeting—moment.

"What is there to say, what is there to add, to all that has already been said, after all that the Decree and the words proclaimed after it, have recalled to Our mind about the Servant of God? What more is there to say in addition to all that the many biographies, lives, and publications of greater or lesser length have said about him, for the benefit of all those who wish to know, and even for the benefit of those who do not wish to know, since the miracles related to him get the attention of even the most careless individuals?

"And yet We feel the sweet temptation to make a rapid review of everything that has been seen, said, or heard until now. For all of this constitutes a magnificent synthesis which, in view of the life and works of Don Bosco, embraces an infinite horizon.

"First of all, We would like to offer a personal synthesis: We not only may say, but We are obliged to say, that this extraordinary man of God in the natural order, is also a chosen child in the supernatural order. As a matter of fact, God is the creator of the natural world, and also of the universe which extends beyond nature. We may say that this extraordinary figure, radiant with such a great splendor and one constituted with so many values, we may say that this generous goodness, that this great genius, this luminous, perspicacious, vigorous, vivacious intelligence, we may say that even if he had restricted himself to studies and science, he would have left a deep impression, as he actually did somehow in this field.

"The following could be another kind of summary: this man who never had time for pursuits other than his unceasing activity, his constant labor among little children, adolescents, young men and old men, this man was able, nevertheless, to write extensively. He produced more than seventy publications and written material, some of which was printed and reprinted in an extraordinary number of editions during his own lifetime. In fact, as many as a million copies have been printed of some of them.

"In addition to his exceptional, amazing, superior intelligence, he had a heart of gold. A manly, paternal heart, and yet at the same time, a heart which beat with the tenderness of a mother's heart, especially for little ones, for the poorest and least among the poor and the youngest children. Besides having this kind of heart, he also had gigantic, untamed, staunch will power, but how it was regulated by the huge number of foundations and by the extraordinary amount of work he had to undertake!

"His intelligence and will power were accompanied by a body, a physique, which, partly thanks to nature and partly thanks to the hardships of poverty with which he was acquainted from his early years, but also and even more, thanks to his iron will power and discipline, thanks to his genuine, voluntary penance, Don Bosco was able to show an endurance in work which was really amazing and which We do not hesitate to call miraculous. We need only cast a fleeting glance at all that Don Bosco accomplished to realize how excellently he carried out everything. When he wrote something, and We saw him busily engaged in writing, it seemed as though he had nothing else to do. He wrote page after page; he wrote pamphlets and countless letters, all of which were so many spiritual treasures. It looked as though he had no other occupation, no other obligation, than to speak, to listen to everybody, and to respond to everybody. It seemed as though he had a great deal of free time, because he thought he had a duty to mingle with the boys who were the most unfortunate and who needed his care. He would tell short stories to them; he would play with them, as though no other task or occupation demanded his precious presence, as though he did not have to do all that he actually did in such a marvelous way. It's amazing then to grasp how he was able to find time to carry on all that he did and to comprehend how and when he could take some rest or enjoy a bit of quiet, things which were for him as for everyone, absolutely necessary.

"But this personal summary, or better still this series of personal summaries, which is already so wonderful and so magnificent, this review almost vanishes, but only to reappear as the cause related to its effects, when it is considered with an accurate account of the work carried out by Don Bosco. This is so, especially when it is seen at a distance of many years, namely from the pastures

of Becchi, from the humble beginnings at St. Philomena's, to Valdocco, to the flourishing expansion of today. A general and comprehensive look reveals that the number of the sons and daughters of the Blessed Don Bosco, the Salesians and the Daughters Mary Help of Christians, amounts to approximately 19,000! One might say: a regular army! An army all at the fore, on the first line of combat, all intent to carry out a vast and productive work. It is a fact that Don Bosco's characteristic, the characteristic that he bequeathed to his followers as his religious inheritance, is work, and anyone who is not a worker, will never look comfortable in the ranks of the Salesians or of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Work is the mark and the identity card of this providentially created army. There are other facts to prove it: 1800 Houses, 80 provinces, or '*ispettorie,*' as the Salesians call them. Thousands and thousands of chapels, churches, Hospices and schools. It would be rather difficult to list them all. The number of pupils runs into the hundreds of thousands. The past pupils number runs into millions. There are more than a million members in the Third Order branch of his great family, the family of the Cooperators, which is his Long Arm as Don Bosco used to call it. We ourselves have heard him describe the Cooperators in this way when, with the humble satisfaction proper of someone who wants to point out the importance of others, Blessed Don Bosco remarked that, thanks to so many Cooperators, Don Bosco—he always referred to himself in the third person, whenever he was obliged to talk about himself—had arms that were long enough to reach everything. Yet, in spite of these figures, it is still difficult to sum up, even only approximately, all the good that was accomplished by Don Bosco, and all that he is still accomplishing today. Perhaps it would be enough to mention the sixteen missions, actual and true missions, plus the addition of twice as many subsidiary missionary outposts, where Don Bosco's sons and daughters labor assiduously for the conversion of unbelievers.

"An immense, an extraordinary, amount of good was done by Don Bosco and his sons! It is enough to think about the zeal exhibited in the field of a multifaceted education: civil, professional, commercial, agricultural, yet always the same kind of education, always with the same traits considering the fact that this

education is a Christian education, an education totally, deeply, exquisitely Christian.

"This is a most beautiful synthesis, even though expressed succinctly and at such a great distance in time, which has been brought to Our mind by the undertakings, as vast as the world itself—and by the figure of Blessed Don Bosco, who returns to our midst once again in these happy moments.

"One might rightly raise the question: what was the secret behind this miraculous accomplishment, this extraordinary development, this immense effort, and this magnificent success? Don Bosco himself gave us the answer that we seek, and he himself handed to us the key to understand this wonderful mystery. He had given it to us and it is found in his never-ending elevation of his mind to God, or rather in his constant prayer before God. As a matter of fact, he carried on an unceasing and intimate conversation with God, and rarely have the words: *qui laborat, orat* (he who works prays) been fulfilled so excellently as they were in Don Bosco. He accurately identified work and prayer and he has given us proof of it when he constantly referred to the invocation: *Da mihi animas coetera tolle* (give me souls take the rest away). Souls, always, always the quest for souls, and always the love for souls.

"How timely is this thought, this personal prayer of the blessed Servant of God, during this wonderful, edifying, holy, and fruitful Holy Year of our Redemption! Don Bosco, as a matter of fact, had studied and meditated, he had meditated well and constantly, on the mystery and work of our Redemption, in order to carry out his stupendous yet wearisome work. We might say rather that this alone explains it: he had received a specific mandate from God, a particular mission, namely, to continue the work of Redemption, to expand and distribute more widely and in greater abundance the precious fruits of our Redemption. This is how the greatness of his activity shines forth: think of all the souls that he called to share in the Redemption of Jesus Christ during his lifetime; think of those souls which have been called to share in Christ's Redemption by his *Longa Manus,* his Sons and his Cooperators. They did this either by bringing them for the first time to a real and true spiritual resurrection or by bringing lost or forgotten souls back to the path of salvation. In all things and everywhere, the main concern was the spreading of the fruits of Redemption.

"Blessed Don Bosco therefore meditated deeply on the mystery of Redemption. Today, more than ever, the following is that renewed and opportune call which We have wished to make and hoped to be heeded during this Holy Year: the thought of all the souls which have been redeemed, the thought of the whole human race saved by Jesus Christ, these We should be once again urged to remember with grateful attention as the grandiose work, whose inestimable fruits we share, the work of Redemption and the author of Redemption, Jesus Christ.

"*Da mihi animas, cetera tolle!* And what does the Redeemer say to us? What does He say to those souls who willingly follow this path? The first word uttered from the cross on which our Redemption was consummated in the Blood and Death of the Son of God is the same word uttered by Jesus as a prelude to His divine work: *Quid prodest homini, si mundum universum lucretur, animae vero suae detrimentum patiatur* (What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul)? This already indicates the inestimable and transcendental value of the soul, the incomparable value of souls. This is the true word, this is that divine lesson which our dying Redeemer gave to us as His will and testament from the cross, and He wrote it in His own Blood. In that supreme hour the Lord told us: look! This is the complete value of all souls, and therefore the value of each and every single soul. He did not think that by shedding His Blood, by laying down His Life, He was paying too great a price for our souls, a price of such divine, infinite, inestimable value. Nothing else do We want to add, except to invite you to abide by this great word, to live on with this great love of souls just as Blessed Don Bosco who was a marvelous instrument of Redemption for so many souls, and who lived in close communion with this word, with this love, that was our Divine Redeemer's."

After expressing this final thought, the Pope blessed those present and their intentions; he blessed the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, all the people who assisted them in their wonderful activities and he blessed all that the people present had in their thoughts and hearts and wished to have blessed, besides themselves.

After imparting the blessing, the Holy Father graciously accepted from the Postulator a copy of the Decree, which had been read

aloud earlier. Then he stepped down from his throne, reverently greeted by the Cardinals, Prelates, and Religious present, and retired to his chambers. As he did so, inside the hall and outside in the corridors, the public commented on all that they had seen and heard.

The essential conditions required by the Cause had been fulfilled, and now only a few formalities remained. We shall speak of them in the next chapter. Since the extraordinary date was fast approaching preparations for the festivities, were begun. These were expected to be magnificent, especially in Rome and Turin. Maximum attention was given to the careful organization of the pilgrimages, which when they were made known, began to come in large numbers and from all over the world.

Since the press would focus much attention on the future Saint, the Rector Major, ever since the course of the Cause seemed to go on so successfully, had shown the foresight to eliminate the dangerous possibility that the great figure of Don Bosco might be reduced to the proportions of being only the Founder of the Salesian Society and of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and nothing more. Far from this! The Church itself had officially recognized the universal nature of his mission, extended to every area and in every sort of climate. Don Bosco's Apostolate had displayed tremendous power. And so on June 26th Father Peter Ricaldone issued an admonition to the diocesan Directors, and Decurions of the Cooperators gathered at Valdocco: *Let's keep the figure of Don Bosco exactly as Our Lord has given him to us.* The September issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* gave this rallying cry much publicity. Many newspapers, among them *La Tribuna* (on October 11th), quoted that watchword, adding comments of their own. With every passing day the fervor of the expectations increased in intensity.

Chapter 12

The "Tuto" and the Consistories

All that has been described thus far involved endless investigations. How much research, how many sacrifices, what great expense, in order to attain not merely the truth, but an absolute certainty of truth from all perspectives! One might have thought that everything was over, once the two miracles were approved. Instead, the Cardinals and Consultors had to meet and to cast their vote as to whether or not, after the approval of the miracles, one could justifiably and safely (*tuto*) proceed to the solemn canonization. In the event of a favorable decision, a *Tuto* Decree, analogous to the one issued at the time of the Beatification, would be promulgated.

This meant that a brief *Positio* had to be written and printed; it had to contain four things: a petition addressed to the Pope, which would contain the praises of the Blessed, the *Tuto* Decree for his Beatification, the Decree regarding the miracles investigated for his Canonization, and a detailed, analytical opinion formulated by the General Promoter of the Faith. The reason for this *Positio* was to enlighten clearly and definitively the minds of those called on to vote. In his detailed presentation, the *Devil's Advocate* referred to the multitude of people who were awaiting eagerly Don Bosco's canonization, and he also expressed his own personal opinion on the subject: "This likewise is the wish of the Promoter of the Faith who, in his great admiration for the extraordinary stature of this man, is glad to have played a part in his Cause, and he does not consider it merely feasible, but extraordinarily advisable, that so distinguished a worker for Christ, who endured many and so great tribulations for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, be numbered in the list (Canon) of the Saints."

The *Tuto* Congregation met on November 28,1933, in the presence of the Pope. All those with the right to vote did so in favor of canonization. Then the Pope authorized the writing of the Decree, and set as the date for its public reading December 3rd, which was the first Sunday in Advent and the feast of St. Francis Xavier.

There is a reason for mentioning this second circumstance. On the feast of this great son of St. Ignatius, three of his Confreres were to form a glorious company together with Blessed Don Bosco. These Jesuits were the Venerable Servants of God, Roque Gonzalez de Santa Cruz, Alfonso

Rodriguez, and John del Castillo, who laid down their lives for the faith in Paraguay. Their martyrdom would be solemnly proclaimed that day.

The formalities of the ceremony were no different from those already described in the previous chapters. After he had read out the Decree relating to the three Jesuit Martyrs, the Secretary read the *Tuto* Decree for Don Bosco, of which a translation follows:

"The seeds sown everywhere during the eighteenth century and destined to destroy Christian Society, had reached maturity and produced poisonous fruits during the nineteenth century. The Church, especially in Italy, felt overwhelmed by the many storms created by the wickedness of the times and by the malice of men. But the Divine Mercy summoned at this same time brave champions to uphold God's Church, to ward off its total destruction, and to save the precious heritage which the Apostles had bequeathed to our people—the true faith of Christ.

"As a matter of fact, in those disastrous years men of the most shining sanctity emerged among us, and because of their prodigious activity, no enemy attack was able to dismantle the walls of Israel.

"Foremost among them for the nobility of his heart and the greatness of his undertakings was Blessed John Bosco, who in the midst of the terrible times, stood as a turning point in the past century, and pointed out to people the path to salvation. For *God raised him up to justice, and directed all his ways* even as the Lord says in Isaiah (55:13). By the power of the Holy Spirit, Blessed John Bosco appears to us a model of the priest foreshadowed after God's heart, as an incomparable educator of youth, as a Founder of new religious families, and as an Apostle of our holy faith.

"John was of a humble birth, and first saw the light of day in a country farmhouse near Castelnuovo d'Asti; he was born to poor, but virtuous Christian parents, Francis and Margaret Occhiena, on August 16, 1815. When barely two years old he lost his father, and was brought up piously by his wise and holy mother. He possessed an excellent character from his childhood. He was likewise endowed with keen intelligence and an extraordinarily keen memory, so that, when he went to school, he learned in an instant all that he was taught by his teachers, and he was, without any contest, the first of the class as he excelled by his quick comprehension and the intuitiveness of his mind.

"He endured two years of dire poverty. This helped him grow stronger in order to meet arduous future challenges. He entered the Chieri Seminary with his mother's consent, and with the recommendation of Blessed Joseph

Cafasso. He studied there, with great success, for a period of six years, and at last he was ordained a priest in Turin, on June 5, 1841.

"A few months later he entered the Convitto Ecclesiastico of St. Francis of Assisi, where, under the direction of the above-mentioned Blessed Joseph Cafasso, he performed all kinds of priestly duties in hospitals, prisons, the confessional box and the pulpit, with great benefit to souls.

"This practical experience as a priest helped him to be well-formed and also made him acutely aware of the growing vocation, which as a boy he had first conceived in his heart through divine inspiration. This was the vocation to guide youth, abandoned youth in particular, along the path of Christian virtue. With his great perspicacity, he realized how essential a thing this was, if society was to be saved from the disaster that threatened it. In carrying out his design, his noble impulse led him to such successful lengths that beyond any doubt, among the Christian educators of his time, Don Bosco is number one. Neither hardship nor persecution ever held him back from pursuing this extraordinary mission, so great was his charity towards young people at risk, so firm was his resolution to lead youth to Christ. Whenever he met with children abandoned in the streets, he attracted them with his affable manner, with his great charity and gentleness, and with the spirit of St. Francis of Sales and St. Philip Neri, he won their affection. He kept them happy with games so that they sought him out everywhere and regarded him as a tenderly affectionate father. But together with this divine spirit of charity, he possessed a supernatural spirit of discernment, which attained its utmost perfection in the system of education with which he outlined sure and brilliant guidelines for a pedagogy which is among the best and most trustworthy.

"The very name *Oratory,* which he gave to his foundation, reveals the solid basis on which he built up the whole edifice of his educational system: namely, he built it on Christian doctrine and on piety, without which all attempts to rescue youths from the snares of evil passions and to elevate them to noble ideals would inevitably prove useless. In this respect, he used so much gentleness that the boys came to absorb and love almost spontaneously the spirit of piety, not out of a feeling of constraint, but out of genuine sincerity. Once he had won their love, he had no further difficulty in guiding them along the path of virtue. His basic principle was that children could be corrected more readily with preventive than with repressive measures. Although this system of education may be more difficult, it is far more effective in training youths to acquire good habits. We need only look at the facts in order to gauge how much he accomplished by

following this system. There were young men who, guided by this system, reached the highest peaks of Christian life, and even the heroicity of virtue. Today, Salesian Oratories which have multiplied prodigiously, despite untold obstacles, and even during his own lifetime, are spread out everywhere in the world, and countless is the number of souls that have been led to the feet of Jesus Christ.

"Encouraged by Blessed Joseph Cafasso, and by Pope Pius IX of saintly memory, Don Bosco founded the *Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales,* and the *Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians* some time later, so as to assure the continued existence of the Oratories, and make adequate provision for a more effective education of youth.

"At the present day, these two religious families have a total number of approximately one thousand five hundred Houses with nearly twenty thousand members scattered across the world. The number of boys and girls being formed academically and professionally runs into thousands upon thousands. His spiritual sons and daughters also dedicate their energy generously to the care of the sick and of lepers, and some of them have contracted this dreadful disease, to die as victims of their own charity, as worthy sons and daughters of their great Father.

"We must not forget to mention the Union of the Cooperators, an Association of the faithful, most of them lay people who are animated with the spirit of the Salesian Society, and who, much like the Salesians, are ready to engage themselves in all forms of charitable activity, and have as their goal to give able assistance to pastors, to Bishops, and even to the Pope himself, as the circumstances may require. This Association was approved by Pius IX, and it is a remarkable forerunner of today's Catholic Action; during the lifetime of Blessed John, the Association had as many as eighty thousand members.

"His flaming zeal for souls did not allow Don Bosco to be restricted within the boundaries of Catholic countries, and so, widening the horizons of his charity, he sent Missionaries from his religious family to conquer less civilized peoples for Christ.

"The first expedition of Missionaries, led by John Cagliero, of glorious and happy memory, moved on to evangelize the remotest parts of South America, only to be followed by many other Salesians who courageously carry Christianity to the infidels, in different parts of the world.

"It would be difficult to enumerate all the wonderful things that he accomplished, and the many sufferings that he endured for the sake of the Church, also in the defense of the rights of the Roman Pontiff. We can apply

unhesitatingly to Blessed John the words that refer to Solomon: *And God gave to him wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart as the sand that is on the seashore* (3 Kings 4:29). God gave him wisdom: for, having renounced all worldly things, he aspired solely to enhancing the glory of God and assuring the salvation of souls. His motto was: *Give me souls and take away the rest!*

"He cultivated humility to the highest degree; his spirit of prayer was extraordinary, and his mind lived in constant union with God, even though he might have seemed to be distracted by an infinite number of different tasks.

"He had a great devotion to Mary Most Holy and the Help of Christians, and experienced ineffable joy when he succeeded in erecting in her honor, the famous Turin church where the Virgin Help of Christians towers atop the cupola as sovereign Mother and Queen of the whole Salesian House of Valdocco.

"He died a holy death in the Lord on January 31, 1888, in Turin. Since then, the reputation of his sanctity has increased day by day. The Diocesan Ordinary instituted the Apostolic Processes; Pius X of happy memory introduced the cause of his Beatification in 1907, and on June 2, 1929, he was solemnly Beatified in St. Peter's Basilica, and acclaimed by the universal Church.

"When his cause was resumed the following year, the processes to examine the cures, which seemed to have to be attributed to divine miracles, were instituted. A Decree issued on November 19,1929, approved two miracles wrought by God, through the intercession of Blessed John.

"One doubt still remained, and that is whether or not one might proceed safely and with certitude, with his solemn canonization, once the Holy See had approved the two miracles and authorized his public cult. Cardinal Alexander Verde, the **Ponens** or **Relator** of the Cause, proposed that doubt at the General Assembly of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, in the presence of the Holy Father, on November 28,1933. All those who were present, the Cardinals, Officers, prelates and the Fathers Consultors gave a unanimous favorable vote. The Holy Father gladly accepted that verdict. However, he delayed his final approval for December 3, 1933, the first Sunday of Advent and also the Feast of Saint Francis Xavier, the heavenly patron of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. And so, the Pope offered the celebration of the Sacrifice of the Mass, summoned the Cardinals, Camillo Laurenti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of

Rites, Alexander Verde, the **Ponens** or **Relator** of the Cause, Father Salvatore Natucci, General Promoter of the Faith, and myself, the Secretary of the undersigned, and declared that Blessed John Bosco could quite safely be canonized. He then ordered that this Decree be promulgated and reported in the Acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

The 3rd day of December, in the year of Our Lord 1933"

A. Carinci — C. Cardinal Laurenti
Secretary — Prefect of the Holy Congregation of Rites

At this time, Father Peter Ricaldone was very happy that Father Ledochowsky, the General of the Society of Jesus, had been called upon to convey the gratitude of the two societies to the Pope. The Jesuit Father General approached the papal throne, accompanied by Father Peter Ricaldone, by the Postulators, and by Advocates for both Causes, and read out this address:

"Most Blessed Father:

I am deeply moved to speak in the presence of Your Holiness on this most august occasion when, by the gracious design of Divine Providence, the humble successor of St. Ignatius has been granted the great honor and the great consolation of conveying to Your Holiness the heartfelt gratitude of the great, twofold and vast families of Blessed John Bosco for the Decree which already assured the supreme honors of canonization to their wonderful Father and Founder. But his sons and daughters are not the only ones who today rejoice over his imminent glorification. In fact, they are joined by all the pupils and past pupils of Salesian Schools, by all the souls that have benefited through their apostolic labors, by all their friends and Cooperators. One may safely say that the whole world shares and will share their joy, for we are dealing with one of those truly providential men who set apart an epoch in the history of the Church and of Mankind. He is one of those men whom God, in His Mercy, raises from time to time, yet with that wise frugality which causes them to be all the more appreciated, inasmuch as they are so rare. He is one of those men of whom it can truthfully be said that: *in omnem terram exivit sonus eorum et in fines orbis terrae verba eorum* (their sound resounded all over the earth and their words reached the far ends of the world).

"The consolation that I feel for my close participation in the joy of the great Salesian family which, with its zealous activity, its Missions, and apostolic activities of all kinds and in all fields, occupies one of the foremost places of honor in the vineyard of the Lord; the consolation that I feel is enhanced by the thought of the steadfast, sincere friendship that the future Saint has always shown and luminously so toward the Society of Jesus and its members. Recalling the great veneration he always had and always promoted toward the Saints of our Society, especially toward St. Aloysius Gonzaga and St. Francis Xavier, a friendship and devotion that he has passed on to his sons who, today more than before perhaps, avail themselves of every opportunity to attest their affection for us and to help us. May I recall, very particularly and with deep gratitude, all that the Salesians, and especially their Rector Major, have done for us in the recent tribulations endured by our Society in Spain, and the cordial efforts they have made to comfort our priests and brothers who sought refuge in Piedmont.

"Next to the great and most renowned Blessed John Bosco three humble sons of St. Ignatius are presented to us. They are barely known to the rest of the world, but they have acquired great popularity in a territory they once evangelized and irrigated with their blood. These humble Jesuits are great in the eyes of God because of their sacrifice, which St. Ambrose proclaimed to be equivalent to the most beautiful panegyric: *Dixi martyrem, praedicavi satis* (I called him a martyr, there is no more need for a sermon.) All three of them, and especially their leader, Venerable Father Roque Gonzales, were among the first founders of the famous 'reductions' that made famous the 'joyous Christianity' of Paraguay, so eloquently described by Ludovico Anthony Muratori. Their glorification, already evidenced by today's Decree, stirs up and justifiably so, the holy enthusiasm of the prosperous Republics of South America which share the vast stage on which the heroism of our three venerable brothers was displayed: the shores of Rio de la Plata, namely Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. All these Catholic nations, headed by their governments and their Bishops, just as they have earnestly implored, so now enthusiastically forecast the joy of being able to hail them as the first Blessed Martyrs of those regions. This applies very particularly to the Ven. Father Roque Gonzalez, who

was a native son of Asuncion, Paraguay, and a secular priest before he became a religious in our Society. He joined the Society of Jesus to get away from the honors of higher ecclesiastical appointments. Later he became the Apostle of the tribes that lived along the banks of the Rio de la Plata, among whom he found the coveted palm of martyrdom. Therefore, in the fullest meaning of the word, he is a citizen of South America; and when he is elevated to the honor of the Altars, he will be the first crimson native flower ever to have blossomed there and to be plucked from that soil, just as St. Rose is the first and most beautiful virginal flower.

"The palms of martyrs could not be absent from such an extraordinary, solemn Holy Year, for those palms of martyrdom serve as the crown of the Divine martyr who died on Golgotha. With full heart, and in humble joy and gratitude, the family of St. Ignatius heartily thanks, first of all, the giver of all goods, and then Your Holiness, for the immense favor granted that these palms of martyrs, intertwined with the marvelous flowers of the new Saints and Blessed of the Jubilee Year, should be chosen from the modest garden of the Society of Jesus.

"Most Blessed Father:

At the beginning of the New Liturgical Year, which already invites people to approach the crib of Our Redeemer, on this day dedicated to the memory of the great patron Saint of all Missions, Blessed Don Bosco helps us hear his motto, his cry of sorrow, his cry of love: *Da mihi animas!* And the three Venerable Martyrs of South America show us the extent to which we must love the souls redeemed by the blood of God made Man. Here at the feet of Your Holiness, while we express our humble thanks for the joy you have given us today, we also renew our resolve to work with all our strength for the peaceful conquest of the entire world for the Kingdom of God under the leadership of His Vicar on Earth, a resolve which is best perfected with the spirit of Don Bosco and of St. Ignatius.

"Most Blessed Father, please strengthen these resolves of ours with your Apostolic Blessing, which I now implore for our two religious families, for the nations which are proud in the Lord of these new heroes, for everyone who is present here, and for all those who stand united with us in mind and heart."

By mentioning the Jesuits who had sought refuge in Piedmont, Father Ledochowski referred to something that deserves to be explained here. In 1932, the revolutionary government of Spain had banished with an unjust law the Jesuits from that Republic. Father Peter Ricaldone, mindful of what Don Bosco had done under similar circumstances, offered the novices and scholastics of the Society any Salesian House in Italy which they might prefer. He had also given instructions to the Salesian Spanish Provincials to give all possible assistance to the victims of the persecution. The first offer was declined, because the young members of the Society had already found a safe refuge at Bollengo (Piedmont) in the district of Ivrea. But at the start, they lacked many essentials necessary to get adjusted. Father Peter Ricaldone instructed all the Salesian Houses in that area to supply them with whatever they needed. Since he knew how uncomfortable people in exile are, he arranged for them relaxing outings to the Missionary Institutes of Ivrea and Cumiana, and on these outings no fraternal effort was spared to give them a proper welcome and to make them feel at home.

The Holy Father now spoke in reply to the address of Father Ledochowski, and drew valuable teachings from the three martyrs and from the life of Don Bosco for all the faithful to heed and follow during the Jubilee year of the Redemption.

> "Beloved children, you have heard the Decrees that were read out to us; you have been attentive to the beautiful, pious and fraternal explanation that has been provided for them; you have seen how, once again, the great and beloved figure of Blessed Don Bosco has returned among us to accompany and render due homage to the Martyrs of the divine Redeemer. Martyrdom is the supreme honor, as it is also the most precious fruit of redemption, of that Redeemer *a quo omne martyrium sumpsit exordium* (from whom martyrdom had its beginning) as the Church says so beautifully and solemnly. Since divine liberality has already allowed Us to speak and dwell on other occasions on Blessed Don Bosco, We shall now pause to admire these great Martyrs who join so becomingly the triumphant pageant that commemorated the nineteen hundredth anniversary of the divine Redemption, and of our divine Redeemer. However, We shall not neglect to make some references to Don Bosco, as you will see.
>
> "It is fitting, and apropos of the new Martyrs, that opportunity is now being offered to us to raise some questions: what are we,

not only to admire but actually imitate, in them? This is really part of the highly educative economy of the Church, namely never to present to the veneration of the Faithful such exalted figures without seeking to encourage people to imitate them. *Ut imitari non pigeat, quos celebrare delectat* (lest we regretfully omit to imitate those whom we honor with delightful celebrations).

"What else can we do first but pay a tribute of admiration to these heroes of the faith, heroes to the point of shedding their blood and dying? And yet this admiration, which is a must for everyone, immediately brings a signal advantage to our souls for everyone. This advantage relates to the very great honor granted to us to admire actions which, as it has been so eloquently pointed out, constitute the most illustrious, magnificent and shining testimony that may be provided for human nature, for us poor mortals, to render to the Truth Who judges all men, and all things, Who reigns over all and outlives everything; it is the greatest, most worthy testimony of all, the testimony of one's blood. A genius once expressed this in a genial way: this is the greatest gesture that man can ever perform.

"In the presence of such a gesture, of such greatness, it is already a special benefit if we are allowed merely to pause and contemplate such a vision. For how could a soul, even though it is endowed with natural talents, yet remote from all that is supernatural, how could a soul fail to be rekindled by a feeling of admiration, and with it by a feeling of appreciation, for such great acts, and with this feeling of appreciation, who knows? also by an initial desire to make some effort, some attempt, to reach those very heights? This alone would mean a tremendous profit as far as the education of souls.

"However, how many benefits, and what kind of benefits, could be drawn from the very exaltation of such sublime heroisms, even when they are simply more admired than imitated? For we have to realize even with a small amount of reflection, that we do have sublime examples of fidelity, of patience, of heroism, motivated to endure immense sacrifices. There may be situations and moments in one's life when the fulfillment of a duty, the renunciation of the chance to make a dishonest gain, even to enjoy a legitimate pleasure, may involve sacrifices. It is exactly in these circumstances

that these great spirits admonish us and show us which path we should follow and what law we should keep, when we are confronted by weaknesses and vacillation, when we are confronted by so many stressful struggles between what we should do and what we are tempted to do. These heroes, who have given their blood and their lives in order to overcome all obstacles with Christian fortitude, repeat to each and everyone of us: *Nondum usque ad sanguinem restitistis* (you have not persevered up to the point of shedding your blood): they ask what is demanded of you, in comparison to what was demanded of us? And there are so many people who have given their blood and their lives in order to be faithful to God, and not to lose the fruits of Redemption!

"And since all this can be very practical, the Martyrs ask us, for example, what kind of a sacrifice is requested, by a Catholic life, by the honor of one's name, by our Christian dignity, from poor girls, from young women, if they are called to forsake a fashion which offends God, which offends the name of Christian, which offends Christian dignity itself? What is this 'forsaking' when compared with the enormous sacrifices some make to be faithful to God? Compared with these heroic sacrifices, what is the sacrifice required by human duty and Christian duty to abandon a dishonest enterprise or a dishonest easy gain which nobody will discover, but which will never escape God's eye? What kind of a sacrifice is requested from a young life, from a young man, who is aware of the dignity of his status as a Christian, when he is called upon to challenge courageously human respect (and this should not be so difficult after all) or to forego certain shows, parties, and dances offensive to both human dignity and to Christian honor? Here you have a second group of Martyrs, lesser martyrs who should draw strength from the first group, the real martyrs, and look up to them for spiritual guidance and for that inspiration which no one should reject.

"However, magnificent examples of martyrdom can be found in certain ways of life, in certain parts of life. How often do the beautiful words of St. Augustine come true: 'Virginity is not honorable because there have been men and women martyrs who were virgins, but because it is virginity itself that creates martyrs.' *Non ideo honorabilis virginitas, quia etiam in virginibus martyrium reperitur, sed quia facit ipsa martyres.* Magnificent words, for here you

have a life, a life which practices virtue, a life which is raised and nourished by this virtue, and this is a life which resembles in no small way a long martyrdom. Here you have a sublime life, fashioned after the one brought down to earth by the Lord of Angels and shown by his example; here you have a life that renounces all the things which a worldly life covets so greedily. This leads Us to think that very often these virtues were born from admiration for the Holy Martyrs, precisely as Saint Augustine said when speaking of the different kinds of martyrdoms. The celebrations in honor of martyrs are an exhortation to martyrdom. *Exhortationes sunt martyriorum.*

"With the same wonder with which We render tribute to Martyrs who shed their blood, We regard as genuine martyrdoms all the others, so many and so admirable to behold, frequently unknown and buried within the confining walls of a religious house, found at the foot of an altar and entirely hidden, found in a most innocent life of penance and of total self sacrifice, in a most ardent desire to keep one's fidelity to God, even at the cost of shedding one's blood and meeting with death. The world does not know, and will never know, these martyrdoms endured by so many souls who live oblivious to self, who are genuine, innocent victims, who desire only to ward off the severity of divine Justice from the world (and how often do they ward it off!) especially in these tragic and wicked times, and who wish to divert this same severity down upon themselves. How many good and true Christian parents of large families exist today, parents who are faithful to their duties as married couples, as relatives, as blue collar workers, as Christian workers, Christian servants, exist today even at the cost of unspeakable difficulties and privations, even at the cost of continuously fighting against the harsh uncertainties of the moment. These are the genuine martyrs of Christian life!

"Again, besides all these drastic situations, which often disclose real tragedy linked with genuine martyrdom, how many other more serene lives also exist, lives which are carried on, at least in outward appearance, without any difficulty, and yet they are full of obstacles dealt with so nobly and in such a Christian way! Infinite is the number of lives that are spent in the fulfillment of humble duties lacking any particular harshness, yet exacting duties, duties

loaded with responsibility, and forever carried out, every day and all days, and in the same old way. And all this is done by people whose lives are steeped in monotony, who carry out duties which do not even contain those buoyant aspects, those motivations and stimuli which quite often make carrying out duties much easier. They discharge a monotonous, methodical kind of work, a work which never changes, which demands prescribed care and attention, exactness and punctuality, without any moral rewards. These are the other kinds of martyrdoms, more modest, less exaggerated, than the great martyrdoms, but nevertheless they are martyrdoms. And there are so many of them! And the martyrs who have shed their blood also repeat to these martyrs the encouraging refrain: *Nondum usque ad sanguinem restitistis* (You have not yet endured a martyrdom of blood).

"There is yet another reflection I want to make. When we glorify these new Martyrs, we admire and honor them because they have reached their own Mount Calvary, not as dark as the Calvary of the King of Martyrs, and yet it is from that Calvary that their Calvary receives light. We also think that to reach their Calvary they prepared themselves, not simply with journeys, but continually with that patience, perseverance, and fortitude which were demanded by the martyrdom of their daily life. May we quote an example: the Saintly Bishop Fructuosus of Tarragona was led to his martyrdom after an entire day of torture and torments. One of his guards, seeing how exhausted, how broken he was, and that he was tormented by a raging thirst after a severe loss of blood, offered him a goblet of water. The Bishop thanked him but declined it, saying, 'I cannot drink because today is a fast day, and it is not yet sunset.' The great Christian writer, Alexander Manzoni, made a perceptive comment: 'Who could fail to understand that it was precisely this reverent and scrupulous respect for the Divine Law that had prepared the Martyr for his supreme sacrifice?'

"Even Blessed Don Bosco finds his proper place in this magnificent picture and context. His is a life which We were privileged to observe and admire at close range, a life which was indeed a true, genuine martyrdom. His was a life of colossal work, which impressed everyone who saw the Servant of God. His was a life

> of unfaltering, inexhaustible patience, of true and genuine charity, to the point of always keeping something of himself, of his mind, of his heart, for the last comer, no matter the hour in which he arrived and no matter the work Don Bosco had previously done. His life was a continuous martyrdom, and it was evidenced by the privations endured, by his frail condition, which seemed to be caused by constant fasting. This is why Blessed Don Bosco is thoroughly at home in the company of these heroes of Christian fortitude professed even unto martyrdom.
>
> "Honor to the martyrs and Don Bosco who belong to these two religious families rightly jubilant today, and more than ever exultant as they remember them."

The Holy Father then congratulated both religious families for having produced such heroes, such examples of virtue for the world to see, for redeemed mankind to imitate, such heroes which Redemption alone could have produced. They were exemplars and champions also of humanity, which is never more esteemed than when it is honored by such exemplars who have emerged from of its ranks and who compensate so wondrously for other creatures, for other men, who indeed bear the name of 'men' but do nothing to honor mankind, who instead merely foment their lower passions, flout virtue, God, truth, and all that is good, who scorn all that may and does constitute the honor of the human race. The Pope then congratulated the whole Church and the whole world, for a glory such as this is not the privileged, exclusive property of one single nation, but is a product of the human race in general, and therefore it belongs to the whole of mankind. He then gave the blessing, which had been requested, first to the countries now overjoyed at the radiant glories of sanctity and martyrdom which had been recognized, and then to everyone who had participated at the celebration of these holy events.

There remained now only a second formality, namely the Consistories, which happen to be three: one of them secret, the second public, and the third semi-public. They did not deal only with Don Bosco, but also with Blessed Pompilius Mary Pirrotti Scolopio of the Poor Clerics of the Christian schools, Blessed Mary Michael of the Most Blessed Sacrament (she had founded the Handmaidens of the Blessed Sacrament, and of Charity), and Blessed Louise de Marillac, the Co-foundress of the Society of the Daughters of Charity.

The first two Consistories took place on December 21st. The first, the secret Consistory, was attended only by Cardinals. The Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites read an account of the lives, virtues, and miracles of the Beatified Servants of God, and a report on the development of the Acts of the four Causes carried out by the Sacred Congregation, and concluded with the *Tuto* decrees. He then expressed the hope that the Pope would solemnly ratify the unanimous vote in favor of their canonization. His Holiness then asked each individual Cardinal to give his opinion. The Cardinals present were Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte, Lega, Sbarretti, Sincero, Peter Gasparri, Bisleti, Ascalesi, Locatelli, Mori, Capotosti, Lauri, Lépicier, Segura y Saenz, Pacelli, Marchetti-Selvaggiani, Rossi, Serafini, Dolci, Fumasoni-Biondi, Laurenti, Ehrle, and Verde. In order of seniority the twenty-two Cardinals expressed their individual opinions, first of all on the canonization of Don Bosco, and then individually on the other three. Once the voting was over, the Holy Father congratulated them on the favorable outcome, and set the date, January 15, 1934, for the semi-public Consistory.

After the secret Consistory, he gave orders that the public Consistory was to begin. The doors of the Consistory Hall were opened, and the Prelates and other people requested *ad hoc* entered. The Postulators and official representatives from the Italian, French, and Spanish Embassies also were present. Four Consistorial advocates pleaded the individual Causes, the first being the Advocate, Guasco, on behalf of Don Bosco. After these perorations, all of which ended with a plea to the Pope, asking him to enter the above-mentioned Beatified Servants of God in the Book of Saints, Bishop Anthony Bacci, the Secretary of Briefs *ad Principes,* replied on behalf of His Holiness, with a classic speech in Latin. He said that the holy Father was pleased to grant the petitions but in a matter of such importance involving his infallible magisterium, he wished that not only the Cardinals, but all Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops who were then in Rome, be called upon, according to custom, to express their opinion on January 15th, while he, in the meantime, and everyone should pray to the Holy Spirit to bestow upon the Pope the abundance of his light.[1]

The Assessor of the Consistorial Congregation issued a formal invitation to all Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops and Ordinary Abbots living within one hundred kilometers of Rome to come to the Holy City, in order to cast their vote, if their pastoral commitments so permitted. On the appointed day, all forty such Prelates were admitted to the semi-public Consistory, together with the Cardinals. This time, Cardinal Fossati, the Archbishop

[1] App. Doc. 14.

of Turin, was also present. The Holy Father delivered a brief allocution in Latin, which summed up the proceedings of the four Causes, and invited his listeners to express their opinion. Everyone present had already been acquainted with the virtues and miracles of the holy Servants of God, both by the perorations of the Consistorial Advocates, by the abridged lives of the Servants of God and by reports on their Causes which had been distributed to them in advance.

The Cardinal Dean was the first to speak, and he gave his opinion on the four Servants of God. Then came the turns of the Patriarch of Constantinople and the two Latin Patriarchs of Alexandria and Antioch. Next were the Archbishops and Bishop Assistants to the Papal Throne. Following all the Archbishops and Bishops present, the others pronounced the ritual formula: *Placet iuxta votum a me scriptum et subscriptum* (I approve with my vote and signature), and handed the papers to the Prelate Chamberlains. The Abbots of Monte Cassino and Subiaco thereupon read out their votes. When the voting was finished, His Holiness expressed his satisfaction for the unanimous decision in favor of the four canonizations, and warmly recommended that all continue their prayers to God in connection with this important matter. He then set the dates for the canonization ceremonies, establishing Easter Sunday, April 1st, as the date for Don Bosco's canonization. The Cause of Don Bosco, which had lasted 44 years, was to be considered definitively concluded. It had been carried out under four different Popes: Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XI. Five Archbishops of Turin had taken part in it: Cardinal Alimonda, Archbishop Riccardi, Cardinals Richelmy, Gamba, and Fossati. Six different Cardinals had held the office of **Ponens** or **Relator**: Parocchi, Tripepi, Vives y Tuto, Ferrata, Vico, and Verde. The Postulators, all of them Salesians, had been six in all: Fathers Bonetti and Belmonte for the Turin ecclesiastical Tribunal; Fathers Caesar Cagliero, Marenco, Munerati, and Tomasetti for the Apostolic Process in Rome. During those years, four Rector Majors had succeeded the Servant of God as Superiors of the Salesian Society: Fathers Rua, Albera, Rinaldi and Ricaldone. Only the supreme, crowning event, the solemn ceremony of his Canonization, was still to come.

The ceremony of Canonization on Easter Sunday, which is *solemnitas solemnitatum,* the most solemn of all Christian feast days, was completely untraditional, but the Pope so desired it and reconfirmed his intention when people tried, respectfully, to dissuade him from it. The Pope thought it best to end the extraordinary Holy Year that he had proclaimed and which commemorated the nineteenth anniversary of the

Redemption, with the glorification of this great Apostle. His reason for doing this is evidenced by certain words uttered during his speech on Don Bosco's miracles, when he said that "Don Bosco received a special mandate from God, a specific mission which was to continue the work of Redemption, to extend it, and to widely and abundantly share (with others) the precious fruits of Redemption."

The news reached Valdocco on the morning of January 15th, and spread instantaneously, creating great excitement everywhere. As soon as the official confirmation was received, the Rector Major summoned his Council and gave orders for a press release to the local newspapers, and for an announcement to be sent to all the major Salesian centers throughout the world. Next, he called on the Mayor of Turin, to bring him the official announcement. The Mayor was delighted by his visit, and expressed joy on behalf of the people of Turin, so full of devotion and admiration for their Saint.

Father Peter Ricaldone sent a special message to the Cooperators, saying among other things, "We are emotionally overwhelmed when we think that eighty-eight years ago, on Easter Sunday, April 1846, poor Don Bosco was singing Alleluia with his little urchins beneath the humble roof of the Pinardi shed. He will celebrate the forthcoming solemnity of Easter in the greatest temple of Christianity, and he will be raised by the Church to the highest honors of the Altar. Never will we be able to thank enough the Holy Father, Pius XI, for this magnificent and ineffably gracious gesture." In March, he felt obliged to write to the Cooperators once again, inviting all of them to take part in the festivities in Rome, and subsequently, in those which would follow in Turin. "All of us should enjoy the unforgettable days of his canonization," he wrote, "by being present either physically or at least in spirit. But all of us should be united in tender and fraternal affection. For these will be days, not only of rejoicing, but also days rich in blessings for all of us."

Cardinal Fossati, the Archbishop of Turin, announced the forthcoming event to his diocesan flock in his Lenten pastoral letter. He recalled the different features of Don Bosco's timely instructions and exhortations, and then told his people that he would be going to Rome with a pilgrimage from Turin, to assist at the canonization ceremony. He also added that he was firmly convinced that the celebrations in Turin in honor of St. John Bosco would renew the magnificent triumphs of 1929.

The newspapers began to predict that the canonization of Don Bosco would be the greatest triumph ever witnessed for a son of Italy elevated to the glory of the Altar.

Chapter 13

The Canonization

During the festivities for Don Bosco's Canonization, the Holy Father, Pius XI, gave the Oratory of Valdocco a beautiful picture. At the bottom of that picture he wrote a quotation from the Scriptures which he applied to the Saint: *Dedit ei Dominus latitudinem cordis quasi arenam, quae est in litore mari.* By this he meant to say that God had given Don Bosco a great heart, a heart which generously shared love in a manner as abundant as the sand on the seashore. It was precisely this boundless charity of his that had been sustained and inspired by his ardent faith, which assured him an "unparalleled triumph" at his canonization, and found "in the Easter Alleluia a magnificent background and a most beautiful and becoming setting."[1] It is our intention now to describe the main features of the historic event in a manner neither redundant nor meager.

PILGRIMS AND DELEGATIONS

Committees worked early and hard both in Rome and in Turin, just as they had done previously at Don Bosco's Beatification. A new development which made everybody happy was the fact that the King and Queen of Italy condescended to act as sponsors for all the festivities. At this time, the main problem confronting the committees centered on the pilgrimages. They were expected to come even from America and many other countries. Many Italians and foreign visitors were going to Rome for the Holy Year, in addition to the usual crowds of tourists, and would also attend the ceremony on April 1st. We shall restrict our account solely to the Salesian pilgrimages.

Of these, there were three different categories: Pilgrimages from Salesian schools, pilgrimages of Cooperators and past pupils, and popular large-scale pilgrimages.

Naturally, most of the pilgrimages of all categories were from Italy. The nine Italian Provinces of the Salesian Society organized school pilgrimages. The delegation from the Roman Province was the largest, totaling approximately 2,000 pupils. Next came the Sicilian Province with 1200

[1] The words in Italics are those taken from the *l'Osservatore Romano,* April 23, 1934.

pupils. Twenty-five such groups came from abroad: Austria, Bavaria, Belgium, England, France, Germany, Holland, Hungary, Poland, Spain, and also from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Central America, Egypt, India, and Palestine. All together, there were about 600 pupils from abroad. The Salesian Prefect Apostolic, Bishop Mathias, arrived from Assam with one native seminarian and four pupils dressed in their native attire.

The pilgrimages of the Cooperators and past pupils were divided into three groups: Italians, Europeans, and non-Europeans. The Italian Provinces organized nine pilgrimages of approximately 4,000 people. The European Provinces separately formed their own pilgrimage: 8,000 people. Five pilgrimages, with a total of over 1,100 persons, came from South America and Asia.

Among the popular large-scale pilgrimages, twenty-seven came from Italy with a total of 5,000 persons; five came from Spain, and numbered 1,200. Other such groups were from France (2,800), Germany (700), and Great Britain (500), while smaller groups came from European countries for a total of 5,000. Some 2,000 pilgrims came from Asia, Africa, and South America 600 of them came from Argentina.

The foreign pilgrimages each were escorted by a Director with several Assistants. Every pilgrim had a printed guidebook containing the itinerary, the program, and useful information. The Argentine Pilgrims set sail from Buenos Aires aboard the Italian ship *Neptunia,* which arrived in Naples with a white flag bearing Don Bosco's name written in huge capital letters on it and flying beside the Italian national flag on the mainmast. The Salesian Prelate, Archbishop Mederlet of Madras, arrived from India aboard the French ship *Chantilly,* accompanied by 504 pilgrims, all dressed in picturesque native costume. There were also four Bishops and forty priests, nearly all of them Indians, traveling with this group.

As far as the delegations which came from far and near, we shall name only the most important among them. De Estrada, Argentina's Ambassador, received instructions from his government to officially represent his country at the ceremony. The Brazilian Ambassador, Magalhaes de Alzevedo, received identical instructions from Brazil. But the most important of all delegations was the one sent to represent the King of Italy. It was headed by his son, Humbert of Savoy, the Crown Prince. This was the first time since 1870 that any member of the House of Savoy attended a ceremony in Saint Peter's in an official capacity. The Saint of the Conciliation deserved such an honor. The Prince himself informed Father Peter Ricaldone with the following telegram: "*With heart full of deep emotion and*

sincere joy, I shall attend tomorrow's solemn Canonization of Blessed Don John Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Order, in the Vatican Basilica, as representative of His Majesty the King. On this festive occasion, I am happy to convey these sentiments to you, the worthy Director of this great Order, whose widespread and charitable work in Africa and faraway America I have had the opportunity to know and appreciate. My sincerest best wishes for continued future success and glorious development of your Order. Humbert of Savoy." The Holy See made arrangements for the proper ceremonial with which to welcome His Highness.

CELEBRATIONS IN SAINT PETER'S

Rarely, and perhaps never before, had Saint Peter's Basilica witnessed a joyous Easter so new, so fresh, and so unexpected as the Easter of 1934. That year, Easter brought to a close the nineteen hundredth jubilee celebrations of our Redemption, and at the same time it celebrated the sainthood of an Apostle who had made the benefits of redemption accessible to an infinite number of souls.

In the early light of dawn, a cosmopolitan throng wound its way toward Saint Peter's from all parts of the Eternal City. Access was granted at six A.M. by the files of soldiers who had mounted guard outside the entrances to the Church, in order to restrain the impatience of the crowd, and facilitate the checking of tickets. Yet by seven forty-five A.M. 60,000 persons had entered the Basilica and filled it to capacity. At least 100,000 others would have to remain outside. It was like the greatest show on earth! People of both sexes, of all ages and classes, priests, seminarians, religious, nuns, students, professional people, blue collar workers, smartly dressed ladies and ladies of the working class, extraordinarily varied in appearance, in apparel, and language, stood shoulder to shoulder under the arches of the Basilica and in the largest square of the world. However, they were all united, sharing the heartbeat of Don Bosco and of Pius XI.

Outside the Basilica, the fast growing, throng divided its attention between the balcony from which the Pope usually imparts his Apostolic Blessing, and the picture of the Saint resplendent in glory. It had been anticipated that many thousands of people, unable to enter, would be obliged to stand in the piazza. For this reason, it had been decided to set up an altar to the right of the steps which lead to the Church, so that Masses could be celebrated in the open as well. At a short interval, one after the other, two newly ordained Salesian priests, whom the Cardinal Vicar had

consecrated only the day before, celebrated Masses. Another measure had been taken in view of the vast throng expected. A strong fence had been built, stretching from one side of Bernini's colonnade to the other, dividing the square into two sections. Admission was granted to those who were in possession of "tickets for the square" in the section between the fence and the steps leading up to the Basilica, a section which had been kept free. The Pope had given his consent to this 'consolation' ticket, in view of the immense number of people who would be unable to obtain regular admission tickets to the interior of Saint Peter's, so as to offer some measure of satisfaction to as many thousands of the faithful as possible.

At eight A.M., hundreds of chandeliers that decorated the arches and were hanging from the vaults and around the altar of the Confession, were lit and gave the interior of the Basilica a fascinating touch. In the apse, at the far end of the Church, was Bernini's 'Gloria,' where the picture of the Blessed had hung, at the beatification ceremony. There, the representation of the Holy Trinity was now resplendent in a blaze of light, since it is the Holy Trinity to whom the principal honor and glory are due on the days when canonization ceremonies are being held. The papal throne was beneath the throne of Saint Peter's. Long tiers of seats awaited the arrival of the Cardinals, Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bishops, and high-ranking Prelates on both sides of the apse, extending as far as the altar of the Confession. Six beautiful silver candelabra, embossed by Cellini, adorned the altar, which was otherwise decorated with sober magnificence. On the altar steps, on the Gospel side, the Paschal Candle burned from a superb marble candleholder. On the opposite side, the ritual gifts donated by the Postulation, were laid out on a table. Canvasses depicting the two miracles, already described, hung from the galleries of St. Veronica and St. Helen.

The stands were erected all along the gigantic walls. To the right and left of the presbyteral apse, were the boxes for Kings and Princes; then came the boxes for the Pope's relatives, for the Diplomatic Corps, for the Order of Malta, for the relatives of the Saint, for the Postulation of the Cause, for the Aristocracy and Patriarchs, for special representatives and delegations.

In the two arms of the transept, space had been reserved for pupils of Salesian schools, and pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; ample space had also been reserved for the Cooperators and past pupils who were no less than twenty thousand, all in all.

Those boys gradually adjusted to the place which was extraordinarily solemn, but they grew impatient because of the prolonged waiting time,

and so they began to sing *Don Bosco is returning* and other Salesian hymns. Out of solicitous regard for the traditions of the sacred Basilica, its custodians tried to put a stop to such unprecedented and novel behavior, but when they realized that their efforts were of no avail with that lively group of singers, that gave up and let them have their way. Really, that was an Easter *Alleluia* much in harmony with the occasion, for it was the *Alleluia* of Youth, heralding the imminent glorification of the Great Father of Youth in the ancient Basilica.

All the box seats had been filled at the moment of the illumination already mentioned. Seated in the box seats assigned to Princes and Sovereigns were the Crown Prince of Denmark, Christian Fredrick, Princess Anne of Battenberg, with two escort ladies, the Archduchess Immaculata of Austria, Prince Fredrick Christian of Saxony with his consort and son; the Archduke Hubert with his consort, accompanied by the Salm Princes; Prince Albrecht of Bavaria and his escort, accompanied by Princess Julia of Ottingen-Wallenstein and Countess Gwendoline of Preysing with her two sons; Prince John George of Saxony, Princess Stephanie of Belgium, Prince Pedro of Orleans-Braganza with his consort, his son, Prince Pedro and a Chamberlain; the Archduchess Agnes of Hapsburg-Lorraine, Prince Alfonso of Bourbon of the Asturias and his consort, Prince Frederick Leopold of Prussia with two members of his retinue. This last prince was a convert. He had gone to Rome to attend Don Bosco's canonization, and only the day before had he converted to Catholicism and renounced the Protestant faith; he received his first Communion that same Easter Sunday morning.

A few minutes after eight o'clock, the King and Queen of Siam made their entrance, with three Royal princes and four members of their retinue. Count Caccia had accompanied them in two Vatican automobiles to the chambers of the Maggiordomo, so that they might enjoy the view of the papal processional pageant until it was about to enter the Basilica. They were escorted by a Cadre of Swiss Guard of Honor to the box seats reserved for them. Although they were not Christians, these sovereigns of Siam knew and respected the Salesian Missionaries in their kingdom, and were anxious to render honor to their Holy Founder by attending his canonization.

At the same moment, the Prince of Piedmont was welcomed at the foot of the Braschi staircase. His arrival was announced by three trumpet blasts. He arrived by automobile, preceded by a dispatch rider and followed by four more automobiles, with members of his civil and military household. Humbert of Savoy wore the gala uniform of a general of the Italian Army,

with the Collar of the Annunciation, and the decorations of the Supreme Order of Christ. He got out of his car, and saluted the banner of the Palatine Guard, which was rendering military honors. Bishop Nardone, the Secretary of the Congregation of Protocol, and Prince Massimo, Postmaster General to the Vatican,[2] greeted him. They were accompanied by Count De Vecchi, Italian Ambassador to the Holy See, followed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Palatine Guard. The Prince reviewed the honor guard as the band played the Royal March. As he came to the entrance at the foot of the staircase, he shook hands with people who were introduced to him, and then entered Saint Peter's, escorted by the Swiss Guard, preceded by a Swiss Sergeant-Major, four carriers of the Pope's Bussola and two carriers of the Pope's gestatorial chair. As he entered the Basilica, the Administrator of the Basilica, Archbishop Pelizzo, assisted by the Vatican-Chapter Master of Ceremonies, offered him holy water. His Highness himself passed through the sacristy, and knelt for a brief moment in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament exposed in the Choir Chapel. He then entered the central nave and moved towards the grandstand only a few steps away from the papal throne. As soon as the people recognized the representative of the King of Italy, they burst into an enthusiastic applause to which the Prince responded with a smile and a wave of the hand. When the Prince reached the altar of the Confession, the boys gave him a thunderous applause. From the box seats of the Italian delegations, the right hands were lifted in a Fascist salute. The apse echoed with the acclamations of the Ambassadors and of the people of Rome. The Prince, extremely polite and courteous, turned to the left and right in grateful acknowledgement until he reached his own box; then he knelt down very devotedly in prayer and bent his head over his clasped hands.

While the arrivals of kings, princes, and the sons of Victor Emanuel III provided a pleasant relief to the long wait, the procession that preceded the papal retinue was already advancing into the Basilica. Let us now pause, to describe the incomparable procession.

THE PROCESSSION AND THE PAPAL RETINUE

In his paternal solicitude, Pius XI wished to arrange some satisfaction for the people who had not yet been able to gain admission to the Basilica. For this reason, he gave orders that contrary to custom the procession would

[2] This was a title reserved for the family of Prince Massimo at the time when coach traveling was the ordinary way of traveling. It was the Postmaster General's task to make sure that the Pope had all that was needed for transportation at any stage of his journey.

take a longer route from the Bronze Door of the Vatican, passing through the square to the center of the stairway, and then on and up to the Entrance of the Basilica of Saint Peter's. How many innovations at Don Bosco's Canonization! Besides this, another novelty was introduced. The Vanguard of the papal retinue is always formed by the representatives of religious Orders who march slowly, holding lighted torches. At Don Bosco's Canonization, they walked through the square, moved into the Basilica as far as the Confession altar, then turned around and moved again, only to line up to the right and left of the route and stand as a Guard of Honor to the Pope who was passing through. They then moved on as if they were forming some kind of rear guard. The Religious representatives were: from the Friars of Penance, from the Capuchins, from the Mercedarians, from the Minimi Conventuals, Friars Minor of St. Francis, from the Augustinians, calced Carmelites, Servites of Mary, Dominicans, from the Benedictine Monks of Mount Olivet, Cistercians, Monte Cassino and Camaldoli, from the Canons Regular of the Lateran and of the Most Holy Savior. Additionally, as an exception kindly authorized by the Holy Father himself, there were five hundred Salesians who represented different Salesian Provinces and Missions.

After the Religious clergy there came the Diocesan clergy: students of the Roman Seminary, members of the College of Pastors, Canons and Benefactors of collegiate churches, the Beneficiaries of the minor and patriarchal Basilicas, who walked behind historically famous crosses, with their respective Church choirs singing *Ave Maria Stella* all along the route and the *Regina Caeli Laetare* as they entered the Basilica. The procession began to enter into the Basilica, long before the Pope ever left his private chambers.

The procession ended with the Officers of the Roman Vicariate, headed by the Prelate Vice-Regent, the Consultors, the Officers and Prelates of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Immediately behind them came the banner of Don Bosco, which was hailed instantly by a thunderous outburst of applause and loud shouts of *Long Live Don Bosco!* As soon as it came into view, the applause and the shouting grew, spread through the square and lasted until the banner disappeared inside the Basilica. According to an ancient custom, this banner was borne by members of the Confraternity of St. Michael in Borgo, and was escorted by a guard of honor formed by the Rector Major, his Council, the Procurator General, the Postulator of the Cause, Father Francis Tomasetti, representatives of the Turin Clergy, of the Chieri Seminary, and of the parish of Castelnuovo d'Asti. There were also

six Salesian Provincials holding large lighted torches. The front of the banner represented Don Bosco "in the clouds" and kneeling before Mary Help of Christians, in the act of invoking her protection over the Valdocco Oratory which was painted in the lower section of the banner; on the back, Don Bosco was depicted as standing with clasped hands, against a background of light and blue colors with the profiles of Saint Peter's and the Apostolic Palace. As was written later, Don Bosco seemed to have been presented by the Church for the world to see, as a model of perfection, of sanctity, of devotion to the Roman Pontiff, of trust in God, and of filial devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

While outside and inside the Basilica, the crowd was enthralled for 45 minutes by that fantastic pageant, the Pope left his private chambers at eight-thirty. He was accompanied by the noble lay and ecclesiastical members of his antechamber and was preceded by the Swiss Guard. He went first to the Vestments Hall, where all the Cardinals had gathered. Here the Holy Father put on the sacred vestments (white stole, white papal mantle embroidered with gold, the precious miter), and then passed into the Sistine Chapel, with all the Cardinals. Thereupon, he began the sacred rite. Once the incense had been administered and the *Ave Maris Stella* intoned, he took the smallest of three candles offered to him by Cardinal Laurenti, stepped onto the gestatorial chair, and was borne behind the Papal Guard through the Royal Hall to the Bronze Door.

The platoon of the Noble Guards, which had been detailed as Guard of Honor at the papal altar during the ceremony, now marched into Saint Peter's Square, so that all felt that the papal retinue was about to follow. The crowd became silent and attentive. The first ones to make their appearance were the sergeants of the Swiss Guard, followed by the chair bearers. Then came the Chamberlains of Honor, the extraordinary Secret and honorary Chamberlains of Cloak and Dagger, the Collegiate Procurators, the Confessor to the papal household, the Apostolic Preacher, the ordinary pontifical General Procurators who were carrying the triple crowns and the papal miters, the secret clergy, the Public Advocate, the Consistorial Advocates, the Chamberlains of both ecclesiastical secrets and honors, the Chaplain singers, the votive members of the Papal Signature, the clerics of the Apostolic Chamber, the Auditors of the Sacred Roman Rota with the Steward of the Sacred Palaces. Next there came the Secret Chaplains who were carrying the customary precious tiara and the customary miter of the Pontiff, the Dean of the Tribunal of the Signature, swinging the thurible, the

Prelate Auditor of the Sacred Roman Rota wearing the vestments of Sub-deacon with a papal cross, and walking in the midst of the seven voting acolytes of the Signature who were carrying candlesticks with lighted candles; next to the Prelate Auditor there were two Master Ostiarians with *Virga rubrea,* two apostolic sub-deacons between a Greek Deacon and a Greek Sub-Deacon; then came the Penitentiaries of the Basilica wearing white chasubles and behind two clerics who bore long staffs decorated with laurel leaves. These were followed by mitered Abbots, Abbots *nullius,* Bishops, Archbishops, and Patriarchs in white cope and miter. In all, there were eighty-three of them, and fifteen were Salesians. Lastly there came twenty-two Cardinals wearing dalmatics, chasubles or copes according to whether they belonged to the Order of Deacons, Priests, or Bishops. Finally, at last, the Pope appeared!

Borne high in the gestatorial chair, beneath a wide canopy and flanked by gently waving feathered fans, he looked like a radiant white vision from Heaven. He was greeted by an outcry, expressing in various languages: *Long live the Pope!* The sound of the applause was so thunderous that it nearly drowned out the ringing of the bells and the marches played by the military bands. The Pope advanced slowly, his hand lifted in blessing and with a smile on his lips. With his left hand, covered by silken drapery, the Pope was carrying a lighted candle, while his right was raised rhythmically in a sweeping, continued gesture of benediction, which seemed to embrace the entire universe.

On either side of his gestatorial chair there were important figures of the Pontifical Court. At the four corners of the chair marched the Swiss Guards with the helmet, breastplate, and sabers representing the four Swiss Cantons; then there came another numerous contingent of pontifical dignitaries. The procession ended with a cadre of Palatine guards.

The Pope climbed the steps, bathed in warm sunlight, while countless voices of his children never stopped expressing their affection for him. Another throng impatiently awaited him inside the Basilica, a crowd made up of the general public, authorities and young people. As the Pope appeared on the threshold of the Basilica the sounds of trumpets were heard, to be picked up and broadcast by loudspeakers all over the square. This was yet another innovation, although it was lesser in importance to another exceptional introduction for that day and age, namely the radio broadcast of the entire ceremony. This enabled anyone, in any part of the world, to follow the entire ceremony, if he so wished.

Don Bosco's Banner already had been enthusiastically acclaimed inside the church with an approval which became frenzied when his beloved picture was shown to the restless crowd of boys gathered in the transept. Yet, as soon as the Pope made his entrance into the Basilica, the first sweet, triumphant notes of Longi's March became audible, and the whole huge building seemed to tremble at the roar of sixty thousand voices crying: *Long live the Pope!* Visibly touched, the Pope continued, responding to the acclamations with a sweeping gesture of benediction, done with a majestic yet fatherly touch. When the first thunderous enthusiasm had subsided a little, the melodious strains of the silver trumpets held sway over the immense throng, and filled the soul with a feeling of recollection. How many eyes were wet with tears! How profoundly felt was the supernatural greatness of the Vicar of Jesus Christ! Now all attention was riveted on him, and all eyes strained to follow his every gesture with religious intentness.

First of all, the papal procession paused at the chapel of the Blessed Sacrament where the Holy Father alighted from the gestatorial chair to kneel in adoration, after which the procession continued on its way. The Pope did not descend again until he came to the papal altar; here he genuflected by the faldstool and prayed for some minutes at the Apostle's tomb. Then he made his way to his throne to receive the ritual act of *obedience* from the Cardinals who kissed his hand; after them came the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops who kissed the cross on the stole which rested on his knee. Last of all came the Abbots, who kissed his foot. Meanwhile the choir sang Perosi's *Dignare me.* Their Eminences Fumasoni-Biondi, the Prefect of Propaganda, and Fossati, the Archbishop of Turin, assisted His Holiness as Cardinal Deacons. After these preliminaries the ceremony of Canonization began.

THE SOLEMN DEFINITION

Following the act of obedience, a Master of Ceremonies escorted Cardinal Laurenti, the Procurator of the Cause of Canonization, together with John Guasco, the Consistorial Advocate, to the papal throne. The Advocate knelt, and in the name of the Cardinal Procurator, asked the Pope to graciously inscribe the name of Blessed Don Bosco in the calendar of Saints. Bishop Bacci, the Secretary of Briefs *ad Principes,* answered such a petition, which was made *instanter,* in the name of the Pope: "Whereas, at the present day the palm of victory is often awarded to people who have

accomplished little or nothing that is worthy of glorification, but are acclaimed in admiration in spite of it, this solemn celebration of a champion of Christianity brings in itself both a solemn admonition and an example. For the merits of Christian sanctity surpasses so immensely the fleeting glory of the world, as immensely as heaven surpasses in beauty the Earth, and the joys of Eternal happiness surpass the miserable pleasures of this mortal life. It is therefore the earnest desire of the Holy Father that these solemn ceremonies which enhance and beautify the splendor of this Jubilee Year and multiply its animating effects, should induce each and all of us, not only to have a higher and a more adequate concept of holiness, but above all also to lead us to take the straight and arduous path which leads to saintliness. This, undoubtedly, will be achieved by the canonization of John Bosco who is the glory of Italy and of the universal Church. John Bosco did not only strive with all his strength, and by gigantic strides to reach the highest level of evangelical perfection, but he also brought so many children to reach Jesus Christ, especially through the Christian Education of Youth. Therefore, His Holiness, even though he is eager to receive the urgent petition you have so persistently submitted to him and is eager to satisfy the earnest desires and supplications coming from the vast religious family of Blessed Don Bosco, nevertheless, he wishes that, in accordance with the ancient custom of the Apostolic See, we now address all our prayers to the Heavenly Court for the success of this definition." Then the Cardinal returned to his seat while the Pope knelt down by the faldstool in front of the throne, and the choir intoned the Litany of the Saints, with the whole congregation on its knees alternating the responses.

The Holy Father took his place on the throne once again when the Litany ended. Afterward, the Cardinal Procurator followed the same ceremonial rite, and through the Consistorial Advocate, reviewed the request, but with more insistent *instantius.* The Secretary of Briefs *ad Principes* replied in the name of the Pope: "There is no doubt that the prayers and the supplications addressed to the Heavenly Court have been most effective, and there is no cause to fear that what we all desire be not conformable with the wishes of the Angels and Saints; indeed God Himself wishes to give this glorious model of holiness to the Church Militant. Nevertheless, although there is no cause to doubt that Blessed John Bosco now enjoys the supreme happiness which, with the assistance of divine grace, he merited through his holy works, nonetheless, the Holy Father wishes me to say that before he utters the infallible pronouncement we should all

implore guidance from Heaven, so that this act may be performed with the most scrupulous care." The Cardinal and the Advocate then stepped back, and the Pope removed his miter, and returned to the faldstool. The assisting Cardinal who stood to his left, called on everyone to pray, saying "*Orate.*" A brief prayer ensued while everyone knelt. Then the assisting Cardinal who stood on the right hand of the Pope, said "*Levate*" [stand], and all rose to their feet again. While two attendant Bishops held the ritual and the candle, the Holy Father now intoned the *Veni Creator.*

At the end of the hymn, the Cardinal Procurator and the Advocate again advanced to the throne, to repeat the petition for the third time, and now with the greatest insistence [*instantissime*]. As before, the Secretary of Briefs *ad Principes* answered them: "In the majestic splendor of this assembly which reflects the majesty of the heavenly Court and echoes with divine harmony, Lo and Behold! We are about to witness an event, which shall redound immeasurably to the glory of God and the welfare of souls. The Vicar of Jesus Christ shall, without delay, pronounce the long-awaited, infallible word. Let us hail it on our knees, and in gratitude implore for ourselves and for the Church Militant the heavenly graces which will today be showered upon us more abundantly than ever before, by the hand of the Blessed One who now contemplates the Beatific Vision."[3]

To the honor of the Holy and Indivisible Trinity, to the exaltation of the Catholic faith, and the increment of Christian religion, by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the Blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, and Our own authority, and after mature deliberation, and reiterated entreaty for divine aid, after listening to the opinions of our venerable brethren, the Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church, the Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops residing in the City of Rome, We decree and define Blessed John Bosco a Saint, and we include him among the number of the Saints, establishing that the universal Church shall honor his memory devoutly as that of a Saint Confessor who was not a Pope, every year on his birthday, that is today on January 31st. In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.[4]

A moment of silence, charged with indescribable emotion, followed the words. Then, all at once, the wholehearted approval of the multitude found expression in a mighty thunder of acclamation, accompanied by the frenzied clapping of hands. Nothing seemed able to restrain that general

[3] The Latin of the three answers is found in the Appendix (Doc. 15).

[4] See App. Doc. 16.

outburst of joy. Amid the tumult, the powerful harmony of young voices made itself distinctly audible, soaring higher and higher until it seemed to pierce the vaults of the Basilica. The immense crowd outside gave back a thunderous echo. The bells of Saint Peter's and the bells of the three hundred churches of Rome pealed festively, to inform the Eternal City that Don Bosco had been canonized. Two carrier pigeons spread their wings, and took off, on a flight to convey the message of the Rector Major to the Mother house in Turin: "Vatican City, April 1st, 10:15 A.M. The Vicar of Christ has just proclaimed Don Bosco a Saint. May He bless Turin, Italy, the World. Rev. Peter Ricaldone."

When the tumultuous enthusiasm had abated, even among the boys who were the last to regain their composure, the Consistorial Advocate thanked the Holy Father in the name of the Cardinal Procurator, and requested issuance of the Apostolic Letters. The Holy Father replied in person with the word: *Decernimus* [We so order]. Whereupon the Advocate turned to the Apostolic Notaries present and asked them to draw up the instrument of the Act of Canonization. The Protonotary answered: *Conficiemus* [We shall draw it up]; then turning to the immediate circle of people gathered around the Pope on his throne, he called upon them to be witnesses with the words: *Vobis testibus.* After this, the Pope intoned the *Te Deum* in a high, sonorous voice, and with a youthful verve that revealed the inner delight of his mind.

Under the baton of the great composer, Perosi, the choir continued the hymn of thanksgiving, in a new, magnificent composition written by the conductor, for eight voices and two choirs. The responses were chanted alternately by the crowd in the apse, and by the throng in the vast body of the church. Outside, in the square, the crowds felt themselves indissolubly linked with the people inside, thanks to the efficient action of the loudspeakers. Up on the high balcony, bathed in sunlight, was Crida's canvas that depicted the new Saint in glory: Don Bosco was seen borne by Angels above the clouds, to the feet of the Risen Jesus. The Savior's right hand was lifted in a welcoming gesture to His good and faithful Servant, inviting him to enter and enjoy the delights of Heaven, after the invitation: *euge, serve bone et fidelis.*

The artist had conceived a skillful composition, which reflected the unforgettable celebration of the day: Easter, Our Redemption and the glorification of the Saint.

Countless souls basked in the triumph of Don Bosco at that moment, all the way from Rome to Tierra del Fuego.

At the end of the *Te Deum,* the name of the new Saint was uttered for the first time in the invocation, *Ora pro nobis, Sancte Joannes* which was intoned by the Cardinal Deacon, and immediately after, it was echoed by the Pope in his *Oremus*: "O God, you appointed your Holy Confessor John a father and teacher for the young and willed that he should found in your Church flourishing new communities under the protection of the Virgin Mary, grant we beseech you, that enkindled by the same fire of love we may seek souls and serve you alone." The ceremony of Don Bosco's canonization was over. The papal Pontifical Mass then began with that unique solemnity which is found in Saint Peter's Basilica. The clock on the façade of St. Peter's struck eleven A.M.

THE POPE'S MASS AND HOMILY

The Pope stepped down from the throne and moved over to a smaller throne on the Epistle side of the altar, blessing the congregation as he did so. There he intoned *Tierce.* The pupils of the Benedictines of St. Anselm, who were to sing the variable parts of the Mass,[5] continued chanting the Psalmody, while His Holiness donned special stockings and sandals, and made his preparation, as all priests do. He was assisted by Cardinal Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte, the Dean of the Sacred College; their Eminences Fumasoni-Biondi and Fossati were ready to act as Deacon and Sub-Deacon.

After *Tierce,* seven Prelates acting as Acolytes moved away from the throne, holding lighted candles; they were followed by other Prelates who were to serve Mass at the altar. In the meantime, the Pope put on the sacred vestments, with the help of Cardinal Verde who was to assist during the Mass. He then approached the altar to begin the holy sacrifice, accompanied by the above-named Cardinals preceded by an acolyte with the *Thurible,* the Greek Deacon and Sub-Deacon, and followed by the Bishops assisting at the Throne. We should note that in all the great Basilicas of Rome, the papal altar is built in such a way that whenever the Pope celebrates Mass he does not turn his back on the congregation, but instead stands facing it.

After the Penance Rite and the incensation, the Pope returned to the larger throne, followed by the same retinue, in order to read the *Introit* while the choirs of the Sistine and Pontifical chapels sang the *Kyrie* from the *Missa Redemptionis* for eight voices and two choirs, a recent composition of Perosi, and inspired by the extraordinary event. The Holy Father

[5] The Mass of St. John Bosco was composed by Fr. Ubaldi.

listened to the chanting of the Epistle, and next that of the Gospel, first in Latin, then in Greek. This is done to demonstrate the intimate union of the Latin and Greek Church. After the Gospel the Pope sat down, and read his homily in Latin.[6]

"Venerable Brethren, Beloved Children:

Twofold is the happiness which fills Our Heart, and which is felt today by the universal Church on this Easter Sunday of the Jubilee year; for as we celebrate today with solemnity the victory of Jesus Christ over death and the powers of Hell, it is also granted to us to end, to crown, this Holy Year which has witnessed so many triumphs of popular Faith and Piety, with the solemn Canonization of Blessed Don Bosco, whom We ourselves included, a few years ago, among the Blessed, and Who, as We still recall with great joy, has comforted, and encouraged Us in our studies in the distant years of Our youth, when We admired him deeply for the great works he had accomplished and for his eminent virtues. Today, We are about to try to portray the figure of this great Saint and Apostle of Youth with much trepidation. However, We cannot help but delineate those features which, in Our eyes, appear as the characteristic features of his marvelous life.

"He was wholeheartedly dedicated to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. But He never faltered in the face of the distrust shown to him by others. Rather, with daring ideas and modern means, he strove to accomplish those original designs which, despite their apparent boldness, he knew to be in conformity to the will of God, enlightened as he was by divine inspiration. He tried to win the confidence of the countless groups of neglected boys whom he saw roaming the streets of Turin, abandoned to their own devices and lacking all guidance. He sought to gain the affection, to influence their souls, with his fatherly, persuasive words. He seasoned the joy of innocent games with religious instruction, with an elementary education, and he taught the boys how to approach the Sacraments in order to help them become good Christians and honest citizens. This was the beginning of the Festive Oratories which he founded, not only in Turin, but in every neighboring city and town wherever he opened providential Houses which do so much good for Youth now, just as they have done in the past.

[6] For Latin text see App. Doc. 17.

"He wished to give these young people a sure and honest means to create positions for themselves in life. For this reason, he opened professional technical schools for the children of the working classes and academic schools for young people of the upper classes, where they were welcomed, educated and given the chance to pursue the path of learning by the use of a vast and sure teaching method. The whole secret of the extraordinary, marvelous and abundant success of Don Bosco's educational system is this: he carried out the principles which are inspired by the Gospel and which have always been recommended by the Catholic Church, and which We, too, have traced out and insisted upon on so many occasions. He tried to train his boys to become good citizens, good Christians—perfect citizens, worthy sons of their native land, and perfect Christians who would one day be worthy of the glorious citizenship in the heavenly Kingdom. According to St. John Bosco, education was not to be a purely physical education, but mainly a spiritual one: it was not to be confined to the mere development of muscular strength through gymnastics, nor to the strengthening of bodily power through sound physical exercise, but chiefly and above all, education was to aim at exercising and strengthening the spirit by disciplining its disorderly impulses, by energizing Man's better tendencies, by channeling all things toward the ideals of Virtue, of Honesty, of Charity. His was a Holistic education which encompassed the whole man, aiming at teaching human sciences and human disciplines, but never overlooking the supernatural and divine virtues.

"The Saint did not only try to accomplish such an arduous and delicate task by using every possible means during the course of his mortal existence, but he also entrusted it, as a sacred legacy, to the vast religious family that he had founded, to which he also entrusted the task of bringing the light of the Gospel and the benefits of Christian Civilization to so many people who are still lying in the shadows of ignorance and error.

"Faced with difficulties of all kinds, faced with derision and scorn by so many people, he raised his luminous eyes heavenward, and exclaimed: 'My Brothers, this is the work of God! This is His Will! Therefore Our Lord is obliged to give us all the help we need.'

"The events which ensued confirmed the truth of his words so irrefutably that the scorn was transformed into worldwide wonder and admiration.

"Venerable Brothers and Most beloved Children, We have sketched out for you the characteristic lines of the marvelous life of this Hero of Sanctity. We now exhort all of you to be inspired to imitate enthusiastically his virtues. In such a manner, We trust that all of us will be able to attain those virtues of the spirit which Jesus Christ made accessible to us through His Redemption. It is through Redemption that all mankind, united as one family, will be able to raise with Us the paschal canticle: We beseech you, O Jesus, eternal joy of our souls, to free from the death of sin those whom you have brought back to life. Amen!"

This homily was followed by the Papal Blessing, which granted a plenary indulgence to everyone present in the church. However, the *Confiteor* had to be said first. The ministering Cardinal Deacon chanted the *Confiteor,* and in it he included the name of the Saint twice, after the names of the Apostles Peter and Paul: *Confiteor . . . Sancto Joanni and precor . . . Sanctum Joannem.* The Pope then intoned the *Credo* on a sure, confident note that seemed to vibrate with the intensity of his emotion. Perosi's *Credo* enchanted all the vast assembly.

The curiosity of those close enough to witness them was now stirred by two very original ceremonies. Before the wine and water were poured into the cruets, a Prelate tasted both; he also swallowed two hosts after he had touched the paten with one of them and the inner rim of the chalice with the other. This was an ancient rite, a relic in the papal liturgy from evil times when such prudence had been a necessary precaution against sacrilegious attacks.

Next there was the ceremony of the offertory procession of gifts. At the Offertory, Cardinals Pignatelli, Hlond and Dolci approached the steps of the papal altar, where they were met by Fr. Peter Ricaldone, Fr. Tomasetti and representatives of the Metropolitan Chapter from Turin, the representatives of the Chieri Seminary and of the Castelnuovo Parish, together with those in charge of bringing up the ritual gifts.

The Offertory gifts were the following: five huge candles made out of virgin wax and decorated with the Pope's coat of arms; two large loaves of bread, two small flasks of wine and water; two gilded birdcages, one with two turtle doves, the other with two pigeons. There was also a third silvery

birdcage with some charming small birds. In procession, all those mentioned above approached the throne, while the chapel choir sang the very beautiful *Oremus pro Pontifice nostro Pio* by Perosi. The gifts were presented to the Pope through the hands of the three Cardinals. Naturally, all of the above gifts were symbolic. The seven candles stood for the Saints, the true lights of the Sanctuary, who illuminate the world with the radiant splendor of their virtues. The loaves of bread recalled the Eucharist, the wine the warmth of Charity; the water brought to mind the tribulations which affect the life of the just; the different kinds of birds expressed the different requirements of holiness: the turtle doves stood for purity of heart, the pigeons, fidelity to God; the birds signified detachment from the goods of the earth and reliance on the wings of heavenly hopes.

After the offertory procession, the gift bearers went back to the altar, while the papal retinue accompanied the Pope once again for the resumption of the Mass. At the *Preface,* the two younger Cardinals of the Order of Priests, their Eminences Serafini and Dolci, with candles in their hands, ascended the steps of the altar and remained at the side of the Pope up to the *Pater Noster.* The Cardinals' presence symbolized the Angels who appeared at the Lord's tomb to announce the Glorious Resurrection.

Then came to sublime moment of the Consecration. As the choir concluded the singing of the Sanctus, the curt order 'Attention' was given to the platoon of the Noble Guard lined up at the side of the altar, and to the other military detachments scattered in the church; shrill bugle notes could be heard from the square where the same order had been given to the Vatican and the Italian troops on duty there. Both inside the church and outside as well, the unparalleled beauty of Silveri's *Largo,* played on silver trumpets, was broadcast over the loudspeakers. As the Pope bent down to utter the sacramental words, the Noble Guards fell to their knees. It was a moment of indescribable beauty: the immense throng knelt, rapt in one thought of adoring and silent faith. The silence was so absolute that the spirit felt almost overcome by it. Every eye was directed to the altar; the officiating and assistant clergy were united in their prayers with the Pope. Twice did the Vicar of Christ bow over the altar to consecrate first the bread, then the wine. After each act of consecration, he raised up the Host and then the chalice, turning to right and left to hold them for the adoration of the faithful. Silence held the crowd in thrall until the *Agnus Dei* when the Pope moved away from the altar.

There was no answering *Amen* to the *Per omnia* prior to the *Pater*; rather, the Pope chanted the Sunday prayer immediately, as prescribed by

papal Easter liturgy. After the *Agnus Dei* he returned to the throne and knelt down to await the *Communion,* absorbed in prayer. The ministering Cardinal Deacon, who had remained on the *predella,* gave the consecrated Host to the ministering Prelate Sub-Deacon; the Host had been on the paten secured by the "asterisk," a small star-shaped clasp. The Sub-Deacon went in procession toward the throne, and stood awaiting the Cardinal bearing the Chalice. The Holy Father knelt in deep adoration before the Sacrament, then stood and gave himself Communion, by partaking of both the sacred species, but only a portion of the Host, and a small portion of the Wine through a small gold cannula tube. After a few moments of recollection, he administered the other portion of the Host to the Cardinal Deacon and the Prelate Sub-Deacon, who then returned to the altar, bearing the paten and chalice. At the altar, the former drank some of the remaining Wine through the cannula, while the latter drank what remained directly from the chalice. Meanwhile the choir of the Sistine Chapel finished singing the heavenly *Agnus Dei* by Perosi.

After the Ablution, for which the Assisting Cardinal Bishops held the water dish, the Pope approached the altar for the last time, followed by his retinue, to finish the Mass with the final prayers and blessing. While he was making his own after Mass thanksgiving, three Canons of Saint Peter's Basilica exposed for the veneration of the faithful the sacred relics of the Passion that are treasured there, holding them between lighted candles on the balcony of St. Veronica. The relics of the Passion are: a piece of the iron lance which pierced the side of Jesus just after His death, a remarkable piece of the true cross and some of Veronica's veil. When the silvery tinkling of two bells from the gallery indicated that the exposition was over, the Pope moved to perform the last of all the sublime ceremonies of that day; this was the Papal Blessing, imparted from the outside balcony of Saint Peter's.

THE POPE'S BLESSING "URBI ET ORBI"

There is an ancient tradition which calls for the Pope to impart from the exterior balcony of Saint Peter's the blessing *urbi et orbi* [for Rome and for the world] on Easter Sunday and on a few other very special occasions. It had been suspended after 1870. But Pius XI, on the day in which he had been elected Pope, almost foreseeing the conciliation which took place seven years later, wanted to impart his first blessing from that same balcony, instead of doing it from within the Basilica, as his last three predecessors had done. He did this on Easter Sunday, 1934.

At the end of the Mass, the Pope placed the triple crown on his head and stepped into the gestatorial chair. But before the chair-bearers lifted the chair on their shoulders, the Archpriest of the basilica, Cardinal Pacelli, approached the Holy Father and handed him a silken purse edged with gold which contained a sum of money equivalent to twenty-five Julians,[7] *pro Missa bene cantata,* so he said. This was the traditional alms given for a solemn papal Mass.

The procession now moved toward the exit. First came the Cardinals, flanked by the Swiss Guards, just as they had been when they entered. Around the gestatorial chair there were the noble members of his antechamber and the Master of Ceremonies. The crowd directed its attention to the central nave and renewed its demonstration of love and loyalty to the Vicar of Jesus Christ with an enthusiasm which bordered on giddiness.

The Pope was so moved by it that he bade the chair-bearers turn the gestatorial chair around when he reached the threshold leading into the vestibule, to look once more at the magnificent spectacle and to greet everyone. The echo of their acclamations followed him as he returned to his chambers.

Immediately the crowds moved out of the Basilica. The streams of people exiting the church filled the area which the soldiers had kept free on the steps for that purpose. As soon as the silver trumpets were stilled, the Crown Prince of Italy left the Basilica for the Apostolic Palace, to await the blessing, but before he did so, he had begged Father Peter Ricaldone to hold for him the cage with the little birds. The royal family of Siam, too, was ushered into one of the halls of the Vatican, with their retinue. The other princes, the members of the diplomatic corps, and the authorities as well, also had their reserved meeting places. Sadly, a downpour of rain had driven away the radiant morning sunshine. Yet the crowd did not budge. They did not have to wait very long. As soon as the glass doors leading to the balcony opened up, the air was rent by a formidable, interminable ovation which burst like a storm. The clock of Saint Peter's was striking one-thirty P.M., when the Pope, preceded by the processional cross, appeared in his gestatorial chair, still in his pontifical robes and triple crown. He was surrounded by the Cardinals. The gestatorial chair with the canopy on top was flanked by snow-white feather fans. Those who did not have

[7] The Julian was a golden coin first minted by Pope Julius II (1503–13). Its worth was equivalent to 56 centesimi.

the good fortune to witness this scene will never be able to imagine the wave of enthusiasm which swept that enormous crowd, nor imagine the applause, the shouts of acclamation and the tears, which greeted the Holy Father's appearance.

The gestatorial chair was placed on a platform in the vault of the arcade so that the Pope could be seen by all. He raised both hands in a paternal gesture of greeting. The Master of Ceremonies motioned to the crowd asking for silence, and the crowd obliged and became recollected as though it were inside the church. The Holy Father's solemn voice, as he uttered the words of absolution and the blessing formula, was carried by loudspeakers to the furthest bounds of the immense square. That blessing was extended far and wide to reach all the faithful children of Mother Church, scattered all over the world. At once, a shout arose that seemed to rend the clouds. For a bit longer the Pope lingered; he smiled, he waved his hand and greeted the crowd. Finally the vision disappeared! The great bell of Saint Peter's filled the humid air with its thunderous and joyous peal, while hundreds of festive bells responded from all the churches of Rome.

Everything was over, but Don Bosco is a Saint! The endless flood of humanity began to move. It parted and faded away. From the sacristy arcade, one after another emerged the automobiles carrying Royal Heads, Princes, Cardinals and other authorities. Father Peter Ricaldone had the silver cage delivered to the Prince's car, and the melodious little creatures dwelling within would henceforth carry the echo of Don Bosco's canonization into the Royal Palace.

That night, the other Basilicas of Rome and all the churches were ablaze with lights; only St. Peter's remained dark; the bad weather had prevented the lighting of the torches. The spectacular illumination was postponed until the following day. We have already described this event on the occasion of the beatification of Don Bosco.

At the Oratory of Valdocco, the Superior, pupils, Cooperators and past pupils had gathered in the theatre, in the Church of St. Francis, or were scattered in the playgrounds. They all had followed the entire ceremony over the loudspeaker system. The same happened in every one of the Salesian Houses. The flight of the carrier pigeons must have been hazardous because of the terrible atmospheric conditions. Only one pigeon reached its destination at four o'clock on April 2nd; its claws were caked with mud. The other was discovered later in the countryside around Lucca; it was

wounded in one wing by rifle shot. The person said to have found it discovered the little tube which contained the message, and forwarded it to the Director of the Oratory, as indicated on the address.[8] Someone took accurate note of the precise moment in which the Pope had pronounced the words *Sanctorum catalogo adscribimus,* and later informed the Rector Major of it in a letter dated May 14th: "I have followed the canonization of Don Bosco by radio and I was moved. The idea came to me that I should take note of the exact moment in which the Holy Father pronounced the formula of canonization. It was precisely 10:06 A.M. when he finished the proclamation." The writer was the renowned Director of the Ximenian Observatory of Florence, Father Guy Alfani of the Pious Schools.

FATHER PETER RICALDONE ADDRESSES ALL THE SALESIANS

Before that triumphant day was over, Father Peter Ricaldone had already prepared the address he wished to direct to all the Salesians. He realized perfectly well that the bulletins carried by the press were not going to be sufficient to satisfy what the hearts of all Salesians wanted to hear. He knew, therefore, that it would be a harbinger of great joy to hear an intimate word from Don Bosco's successor.

Easter, 1934:

O dies felix memoranda fastis!

O Blessed day! O day of supreme glory! Of ineffable joy!

Don Bosco is a Saint!

The Holy Father, Pius XI, has proclaimed it from Peter's infallible chair. The whole of the Christian world has rejoiced with an enthusiastic outburst of veneration. The annals of the Church, the annals of the Salesian Society, have marked that glorious day with golden letters. Foretold and almost foretasted by the Saint's contemporaries, the joy of this day will be the object of envy for all posterity.

Gaudeamus omnes in Domino, diem festum celebrantes sub honore Sancti Joannis [let us all rejoice in the Lord, and celebrate the canonization of our beloved Father, Don Bosco].

Our Jubilation could not be more justified or holier than it is.

[8] The pigeon that arrived at its destination was of the Bricoux variety and its number was 65,299. In 1933, it was set to flight at five o'clock, from Priverno (Naples), and reached Turin that same evening. In our case, the two pigeons were set to flight shortly before midday, but night had overtaken them before they reached their destination. It is a known fact that pigeons do not fly during the night hours. They had been forced to look for shelter and this explains their interrupted flight.

As our hearts beat with joy on seeing the sanctity of our Father solemnly recognized by the Church, as our eyes contemplate the beloved figure of the Saint who, from among the ranks of other holy men summoned by God, stands out as a giant set to go his way *qui inter suscitatos sanctissimos viros vere surrexit sicut gigas ad currendam viam,* may our spirits, soaring along the ways of the firmament, reach the heavenly Jerusalem where, in a sea of light, St. John Bosco shines radiantly like the sun, *sicut sol . . . in perpetuas aeternitates,* for all eternity. There, where each star is sharply distinct from all other stars, *omnis stella . . . a stella differt in claritate,* we will be able to capture the main features of his sanctity, appreciate its fruits, and wonder at the extraordinary reward bestowed on him by God.

Truly, the essence of sanctity cannot be other than that which was established by the Saint of Saints, that is, love of God, and love of one's neighbor: two loves which, intertwined, form only one love. All pillars of Christian perfection, from the most ordinary to the most heroic, are based on these two fundamental precepts. However, every Saint lives by this twofold commandment as though it were only the commandment to love, according to the individual mission received from God. In the case of St. John Bosco *Diliges Dominum Deum tuum* [Love your God] and *Diliges proximum tuum* [Love your neighbor] were translated into this formula: work for the glory of God, for the well-being of souls. And work he did for this glory, for this well-being, with a life that was full of faith and zeal.

Faith, which is the foundation of all sanctity, was undoubtedly a lamp unto his steps, as the psalmist puts it. In the light of his faith, his spirit was rapt in the contemplation of revealed Truths; his will was always directed towards ways attuned to the Divine Will. Therefore, whether he spoke, wrote, or worked, his spirit never wavered between God and his ego, between Heaven and Earth, between the eternal and the temporal, between duty and pleasure, but it immediately sped toward God, Father and absolute Lord of all. Whence he drew the exact rule as to how he should conduct himself in everything that was infected by relativity and earthiness. I mean to say that he never looked for himself in anything; he never looked for his comfort, his satisfaction, his self-interest, but he gave all his time, energy and efforts to serving the Lord in the best way possible, working in the fields assigned to him by Divine Providence.

Don Bosco's specific sphere of activity was the salvation of Youth through a thorough Christian education. He certainly ministered to the needs of any

soul with whom he had either direct contact or through the involvement of his sons. But his apostolic heart was concerned mainly with the souls of the young. God alone knows how many and what kind of sacrifices he made looking for young people most in need of his priestly care or putting them up in a safe place, far from all kinds of dangers to their virtue, or sacrifices made surrounding himself with reliable and numerous collaborators who would help him to carry out such great and providential work. He sacrificed everything, his sleep, nourishment, health, and comfortable way of life solely because of a supreme desire to assure the welfare of Youth in every way.

Those features, which appear to be the ordinary aspects of Don Bosco's sanctity, such as his habitual communion with God, his unwavering composure, no matter what might happen, his boundless fatherliness, his industrious spirit which never cried 'enough,' all of those features stemmed from his ardent charity, which, nourished by his fervent faith, led him to put before all other considerations God, and the interests of God.

Such genuine, extraordinary holiness could not fail to bear but similar fruits. And here a second consideration should be brought to our attention. When good will and divine grace blend in a Christian soul, then virtuous deeds naturally ensue. And if the Christian is also a Saint, a man, that is, who directs his conformity with divine help up to the point of heroism, then there ensues almost a competition between God who gives help and the creature who acts upon it, and the outcome is the birth of all sorts of the most wonderful activities which produce good and lasting benefits for the Church to enjoy.

The first fruit of Don Bosco's holiness was Don Bosco himself. By this I mean that he was the personification of all the remarkable virtues widely pointed out by eyewitnesses and confirmed by historical documents. "Don Bosco looks like Our Lord." That is what innocent boys were saying as though moved by supernatural intuition. And this is what was confirmed by the observations of grown men. And if our filial affection does not blind us, we would be inclined even to say that at every stage of his life, Don Bosco attained the fullest degree of perfection possible to human frailty, and commensurate with his years and his tasks.

The other fruit of Don Bosco's sanctity is the extension of himself which we all see, that is, the sum total of undertakings which still live on in his spirit. Though he began with nothing, Don Bosco left behind him a series of achievements which, animated by his life-giving spirit, are destined to grow and to multiply like all living things, adapting themselves

to the nature of the times, to the condition of the places, and to the character of the people dealt with. Anyone who has the slightest knowledge of Don Bosco's works is aware of the productive power of his sanctity.

Thirdly, what are the rewards produced by Don Bosco's sanctity? Of course, we are not going to say that Virtue is a reward unto itself and that the greater the Virtue, the greater the contentment enjoyed by the one who puts it into practice. This is a true and well-known fact; it has been proclaimed even by the followers of a pagan school of philosophy, though they were not the only ones to proclaim it. The witness provided by a good conscience is the source of that inner contentment which abundantly makes up for all the sufferings generated by the adversity and by the malice of men. Don Bosco enjoyed this reward for his sanctity. He, too, experienced the joy of the Apostles who *ibant gaudentes* [they walked on with joy] when *digni habiti sunt pro nominee Jesu contumeliam pati* [they were considered worthy to suffer insult for the name of Jesus]. Sanctity turns suffering into a test of love, and for the one who loves, suffering is joy.

This is a great reward for sanctity, not only because its effect is immediate, but because it contributes greatly to increase the merit of a far greater reward, the merit of the supreme reward which God reserves in Heaven for his elect. The whole life of a Saint is spent in storing up treasure for Heaven. If not even one cup of cool water given for the love of God to one who is thirsty shall go unrewarded, who can measure the eternal reward given to a life such as that of Don Bosco, who spent his in total, pure self-sacrifice amid the fiery flames of charity? Certainly it did not surprise anyone when, at the moment of Don Bosco's death, souls dear to God were allowed to see Him enter into his glory, in an unparalleled triumph, although at that time they did not know that he had passed away.

God, Who rewards all things justly, does even more than this in rewarding sanctity. The Saints who have done so much and have suffered so much for his passing glory here on earth are crowned by God with a special glorious halo, which brings upon them the veneration of and the imitation by mankind. The cult paid to Saints elevates them, these heroes of God, to the highest and most radiant throne on the sacred altar of God's Temple. Piety bends its knee before them and eloquence sings their praises. Don Bosco, that humble and poor Don Bosco, that Don Bosco overwhelmed with troubles, behold that Don Bosco who now is glorified by the whole world, due to God's Munificence and the mediation of His Church.

I would like all of us to reflect well on one thing. To magnify the sanctity of Don Bosco in all its features, in all his fruits, in all his rewards,

is a need of our heart before being a debt of gratitude. However, we must not stop here, and we should ask ourselves instead: where was the secret of his so high a sanctity? I have no hesitation whatsoever to say that we must look for this secret in his steadfast response to God's Grace. From his childhood, Don Bosco was extraordinarily sensitive to supernatural influences which led him to prayer, to the Sacraments, which made him abhor sin and try to help his neighbor both spiritually and materially. As a student he renounced the things of the world and devoted himself entirely to aspirations which certainly were not inspired by his flesh and blood. Throughout all the many, widely varying events of his priestly ministry, and in all the many undertakings done at the service of the Church and of souls, his gaze was always fixed on high, directed to the Father of Lights and the Giver of All Perfect Gifts, always intent on obeying inspirations from above. He was always alert, fearful lest he neglect even the smallest grace bestowed on him by God.

This is the point which should get all our attention as we contemplate the glorified sanctity of Don Bosco. We received an incommensurable grace when we were called to live a Christian life, and we know that this grace is linked, irrevocably, with an infinite sequence of other graces. However, all these graces are subject to the measure with which we faithfully respond to them. Let us not allow God's Grace to be neglected. Making that resolution will be the most precious fruit produced by such a great feast.

Chapter 14

Events That Occurred in Rome After the Canonization

During the three days following Don Bosco's Easter celebration, three events were added which helped to enhance even further the glory of the new Saint: the honors received at Capitol Hill, an unusual papal audience, and a lasting tribute of gratitude paid to the Pope. In the meantime, in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart the traditional triduum, which is ordinarily celebrated immediately after a canonization in the Holy City, was in progress with typical Roman grandeur.

THE HONORS PAID TO DON BOSCO AT THE CAPITOL HILL

The Capitol Hill, steeped in historic memories of triumphant warriors and the crowning of poets, had never witnessed the glorification of a Saint. The reason for this was very obvious. Prior to the year 1870, the Pope, even though he was also the civil ruler of Rome, did not find it necessary to render new Saints additional honors different from those already rendered to them in the foremost temple of Christianity. After the year 1870, such an omission was even more understandable and it resulted from the conflict which split the two powers in the capital of the Catholic world. No Governor of Rome would conceive the idea of rendering a civil homage to any Saint, no matter whether or not the Saint happened to be Italian or even a great Italian. But *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur cum illis* [times change and we change with them]. After February 11, 1929, Italy had become a different Italy. The country had recaptured its spiritual unity, the true soul of its political unity, and it had recaptured it in a way most befitting an all-Catholic nation. In such a rejuvenated atmosphere nothing could have been more natural for the State than to recognize the honor bestowed on Italy by the worldwide glorification of a Saint like Don Bosco. Particularly so, since it was well-known how Don Bosco, in those most difficult times, had used his wisdom, when very actively he was involved in the conciliation proceedings, a conciliation which was to create a new climate for the entire country. The Head of the Italian Government had been the first to realize how opportune it was, not only not to be absent, but also to actually participate in such festivity with all the décor befitting a Fascist Regime. This is the reason why Mussolini, to one who had suggested the

use of the Augusteum to honor Don Bosco, answered that the Capitol was the only place where Don Bosco should be honored, adding that he himself would attend the Ceremony.

And so, during the afternoon of April 2nd, excitement waxed intense on the historic hill. The balconies had been draped with tapestries, as they were decorated for solemn, festive occasions. The Julius Caesar Hall, where the ceremony was to take place, was soberly hung with the colors of the city, and its ornamental plants of great value provided a joyful sight for everyone's eyes. The chairs for Mussolini and the main Fascist leaders had been arranged on one side of the Presidential table, while seats for members of the Sacred College who were to honor the occasion were placed on the other side.

At an early hour, the hall was already crowded with a variety of distinguished guests. Admission was granted only upon presentation of a personal invitation from the Governor of Rome. Among the invited guests were the President of the Senate, Federzoni, and his wife; the president of the Italian Academy, Marconi, with his wife; the Papal Nunzio to the Quirinal, Borgoncini Duca; the Minister of National Education, Ercole; the Duke of the Sea, Chief Admiral Thaon di Revel; and then the members of the Academy, the Senators, the Parliamentary Deputies, the Generals, the Mayors of Turin and Castelnuovo, Prelates and authorities from Vatican City, Bishops, and Superiors or representatives of religious or monastic Orders. This assembly of distinguished guests certainly was a wonderful spectacle to behold. Five Cardinals, arrayed in purple robes, entered from an adjoining Chamber. They were: Peter Gasparri, who wore the Collar of the Order of the Annunciation, Henry Gasparri, Fumasoni-Biondi, Fossati, and Hlond. They were joined by Prince Chigi, the Grand Master of the Order of the Knights of Malta.

The ceremony was to commence at four o'clock, and Mussolini arrived punctually on the stroke of the hour, to be met by a prolonged, enthusiastic ovation. Those who sat next to him were among others the Governor of Rome, Prince Boncompagni, our Rector Major, Father Peter Ricaldone, and the official speaker, Count De Vecchi, the Italian Ambassador to the Holy See. As soon as the applause died down, the Count rose to his feet and delivered his speech, which was listened to with great attention from beginning to end. His theme was this: "Don Bosco is an Italian Saint, and the most Italian of Saints." A whole nation claims him for its own even though his mighty spirit is present all over the world, to the point that this

Italian perfection of his has actually become *Romanitas* [Romanity]. His religious glorification has been carried out with a kind of festive celebration and solemnity absolutely new in all the nineteen centuries of the Church's existence, and Italy had taken part in it as never before. The grandeur of the divine magisterium finds its extension with the honors of Capitol Hill decreed for this Saint by the Fascist Government. His sanctity alone, with the features which distinguished it, would entitle him to receive the hospitality of this august palace, but he would still be a great Italian even without the attributes of sanctity. It is for this reason that he is a citizen of this Capitol Hill.

He then remarked, "Don Bosco does not lose, but actually gains in stature, when we look at him from the background of the land of the people he came from, and when we look at him from the perspective of his activity among the historic men of his day, not simply as a synthesis of the past, or as living within an historic period long gone, but as a prophet, as a sower, as a builder of the future." Moreover, the Count recalled the humble birth of the Saint and described with a heart still heavy with emotion the poor little house which he had had the joy to visit. Then he went on to outline Don Bosco's figure within the historic background of the Italian Risorgimento. He gave a detailed account of Don Bosco's moral constitution of the characteristic elements of his land, the Monferrato, and of the complex play of influences drawn from his times and the environment where he lived and where he displayed his multiform activities. The Orator saw in all the trials and contrasts through which Don Bosco had to blaze a trail the way of Divine Providence, which was gradually training him to undertake his wondrous mission. He also singled out with clarity his political influence in smoothing relations between Church and State during the crucial years of the Unification of Italy. "In Don Bosco's opinion," he said, "no abyss existed between Church and State, between Italy and God, which could not be filled, not even in the darkest and most difficult hour. It was with this conviction that Don Bosco kept on going, rendering service to God and the State alike, comforting Popes and Bishops, shedding light on and providing peace for the souls of the faithful, persuading men in government to be more conciliatory in their attitude, uniting for the young people he educated the two great loves, Religion and Patriotism." The speaker did not omit to single out the fact that such a spirit of conciliation has always been, and still is, the spirit of the Congregation that he had raised by God's design, so that, as Pius IX had said, "a way might be found to give unto God that

which belongs to God, and to Caesar what belongs to Caesar." "This explains the consolidation and prodigious development of this Congregation, even in the most difficult times." As he spoke about and stressed this development, De Vecchi termed it 'prodigious' and said, "Don Bosco's vital, enduring, prodigious and far-reaching miracles are the houses, the agricultural fields, the workshops, the undertakings which conquer hearts and which are continuously rejuvenated by his sons and his Cooperators in every corner of the world with a simplicity which projects the very figure of the Saint." He then reviewed briefly the empire of benevolence Don Bosco had created, and took his listeners back to the humble birthplace of the Saint, only to bring them to consider the last and recent undertaking carried out at Littoria. The enthusiastic, prolonged applause given by Mussolini was the signal for an outburst of unanimous applause by the entire audience. Mussolini treated Father Peter Ricaldone with an indescribable graciousness.

The honors rendered by the government did not end with the exaltation expressed at the Capitol Hill, but were followed by something worthy of a special mention. When His Majesty inaugurated the XXIX Legislative Session at the Montecitorio Palace on April 28th, he alluded to the Capitol Hill event in the speech of the Crown where he said: "The harmony and understanding between the civil and religious authorities have been strengthened, as the recent great celebrations have proven. The Conciliation constitutes an essential factor in Italian history." The King's solemn expressions were matched as a commentary to this by the words expressed in the Senate's response: "Harmony, spirit of unity, and justice are the precious gifts which Divine Providence has bestowed on our country: they stand as the garrison of this new, historic Era and the conciliation with the Church is their foundation. The Senate has participated with deep appreciation in the manifestations of this harmonious spiritual understanding that exists between civil and religious authorities—so clearly evidenced both in the recollected splendor of Saint Peter's, in the very presence of the august Head of Christianity, and in the Roman grandeur of Capitol Hill, in the presence of the Head of the Italian Government—for the celebration of Christian and civil glory of the most Italian of Saints. The presence of Your Majesty's representative, in the person of the Crown Prince, who guarantees with certainty the future of both the nation and the dynasty, was a moving token of this same harmony." In the light of these memories, how gigantic does the historical figure of Don Bosco stand out!

THE AUDIENCE WITH THE POPE

A papal audience, held in Saint Peter's, was yet another of the many innovations connected with Don Bosco's canonization. On April 3rd, Pius XI received in audience all the pilgrim groups which had been organized by the Salesians. The papal throne had been set up for the occasion before the altar of the *Confession,* while the central aisle served as a reception hall. Wide as it was, the central aisle was not broad enough to accommodate the thousands of pilgrims. And so several hundred pupils from the Salesian schools were lined up on either side of the central aisle. But not even this solved the problem, and two more spacious sections of the church in the two arms of the transept had to be made available. At the side of the throne and around it the following found their places: Cardinal Hlond, Father Peter Ricaldone, a dozen Salesian Bishops, Father Francis Tomasetti, the members of the Superior Chapter, the Provincials, the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians with her Council, and several Mothers Provincial, Senator Count Rebaudengo, and the Attorney, Felix Masera.

At noon the word passed through the waiting throng: "The Pope!" A moment later, lo and behold! the Holy Father appeared seated in the gestatorial chair. How much frenzied joy did the young people show! As the Pope passed, there were acclamations, outbursts of applause and hurrahs! The contingent from the Oratory in Turin had been the first to cry, "*Long live Don Bosco's Pope!*" At those words the Pope turned his head in their direction, obviously pleased. No sooner did he sit than the Rector Major addressed the following words to him:

"Most Blessed Father:

Your august voice, which from Peter's infallible throne declared Don Bosco a Saint, to an immense, jubilant crowd during the most solemn and most radiant feast of the Catholic liturgy, still echoes sweetly in our hearts.

"There are no words which can convey to Your Holiness the joy, the deep and lasting gratitude, of the Salesian Family.

"Your Holiness, here we are but an infinitesimal part of the Salesian Family. We are gathered around you to express our deepest feelings of devotion and to assure you of our warm, filial devotion.

"These are your children and they have come from all corners of the earth, even from its remotest shores, to represent hundreds of thousands, or rather millions, of hearts, that, under all skies and from all shores, sing jubilantly Hosanna's to the Pope who canonized Don Bosco.

"We already had an understanding of the sanctity and mission of Don Bosco, who was a Father to us here on earth, and whom we now invoke as our Patron in Heaven. This comprehension came to us through personal knowledge, through the traditions handed down to us, and through reading his *Biographical Memoirs.* But today, his image appears to us more sublime than ever before.

"By the singular goodness of Your Holiness, Don Bosco's canonization was carried out in a variety of ways which projected his person and his work with a light which is a source of example and benefit for the whole world. For this we feel compelled to exclaim: What a great Father have we, we humble and fortunate children of his!

"All these things of course will inspire us to deepen our knowledge of his life, to imitate him, and to follow faithfully and eagerly in his footsteps. These are the footprints which Your Holiness has with a new and radiant splendor so clearly presented to us.

"Most Blessed Father! As I humbly kneel before you, I thank you earnestly in the name of all the Salesians, of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, of their pupils, their past pupils, and in the name of all of our Cooperators, for this immense grace, and for the paternal kindness you have shown to us always and in so many different ways, and I promise you that at all times and under every circumstance, we shall persevere in our imitation of the filial, devoted, and unconditional submission to you, which our saintly Father has bequeathed to us as his heritage. As I confirm this in the name of us all, I invoke the grace of your apostolic blessing for myself and for each and for all of us."

The Schola Cantorum of the Seminary students of philosophy and theology at this time sang the *Acclamations* and *Oremus pro Pontifice* to which the Pope listened with evident satisfaction. Then he hinted that he wanted to speak. Immediately, a deep and devoted silence fell. The entire throng was able to hear distinctly all that the Vicar of Christ said, thanks to the loudspeakers. But the affection we had for him gave to his words an impact that no person could adequately express. This is how the Pope began:

"Beloved children, We see you once again in this magnificent place, but no longer in the context of the splendid, marvelous and Sacred Rites of the Canonization. We see you once again in an

atmosphere of radiant and, we might add, overwhelming joy and filial piety. As you can see, We arranged for your reception the largest, loveliest, and most stately of all the reception halls of the world. We did not think that this would be too excessive in view of all that should be done in honor of your and Our great Saint John Bosco; We did not think that it was too much to provide a reception for such a distinguished and so honorable an assembly, one also impressive as far as its number, for such a choice group of Don Bosco's sons who have come from all parts of the world, even from the most remote regions. This is extremely beautiful especially for Us, because your presence and all We have heard mentioned in the previous address makes Us feel in a vibrant way what We have only rarely felt, that is, the sense of the universal fatherhood that Divine Providence has wanted to hand on to Us. Not only do you come here from all parts of the world, but you all belong to the many and varied branches of this mighty family, or better still, these mighty families of Don Bosco, rather of St. John Bosco, whom the world will always continue calling simply 'Don Bosco' (applause). This is good, because to mention his name is like mentioning a military title, but a title in a military conflict intended to do good, one of those wars which, We could say, from time to time Divine Providence grants *to poor humanity* as though to compensate for those other wars which are not meant to do good in any way, but only to cause sorrow and to sow seeds of suffering.

"Dear children, We were mentioning the diversity and the various branches of the great Salesian Families, but We should also mention the different degrees in rank: the Priesthood, the Episcopate, the Cardinalate, which makes it wonderfully and perfectly complete.

"What is there for Us to say, dear Children, over and above that which your presence here tells Us already? For your presence is so eloquent that even in this almost tangible silence, We perceive your eager impatience for a paternal word from Us. What is there for Us to say, as We stand here once again in this magnificent temple which still retains the echo of the glorious canticles directed to your wonderful Father, when it is only yesterday that a marvelous series of events came to crown in an unparalleled way your hopes, your desires? Lest We feel remorse for having

lost such a beautiful occasion to deliver some words useful to your souls, We will say what St. John Bosco himself teaches you so eloquently with his own image, just as he is visibly accessible to all spirits, and as he speaks to all hearts.

"Your Don Bosco and our Don Bosco was canonized at a providential, at an extraordinarily appropriate moment, and brought the Holy Year of Redemption to a fitting close. Undoubtedly, this beloved Saint of yours and ours has gained immensely by the series of circumstances and events connected with his Canonization.

"There was, first of all, an encounter between the Divine Redeemer, the Divine Captain, who is the original source of all sanctity, of every apostolate, of all Good, and a faithful Servant of His, a bold warrior from His holy wars. In one way, We could say that Don Bosco has come to render to the Divine Redeemer all that he owed to him, just as We owe everything to him. Because all sanctity, every martyrdom, and all Good, begins with Him. Every bit of good that still remains in this world, even though perverted by pagan characteristics, every degree of good that remains in this civilization stems from Him, from His cross, from His heart, from the Blood of the Redeemer, through whom civilization still continues to be a Christian civilization.

"Don Bosco came to pay tribute to his Captain, his Lord, his leader; and the Divine Redeemer disposed things in such a way that He Himself should come, almost at the close of this Holy Year of Redemption, to crown the merits of His faithful Servant, to fulfill the divine promises made by Him to all those who serve Him faithfully. A wonderful encounter! How wonderful, how sublime, how perfectly suited to the setting of the Holy Year, to the setting of all that pageant of sanctity which has escorted the Redeemer everywhere during the Jubilee of our Redemption! It constitutes one of the loveliest, most delectable, and fragrant fruits of redemption, offered in homage to the very Source of all Sanctity. For this reason it is from Him that each one of us, and especially you who are linked by so many ties to this beloved Saint of ours, should learn what is the specific fruit of this Holy Year, a fruit different from all others, and distinguished for you by the glorification of

your beloved Father, your Patriarch. How appropriate is this fruit for you in this Holy Year, which one might well describe as the 'Salesian Holy Year' (thunderous applause).

"For everyone, and therefore for you, too, the first fruit is the fruit of the holy indulgences. We should not fail to reflect on this priceless treasure with deep humility and with feelings of embarrassment, because the words 'indulgence,' 'great indulgence,' 'the greatest amount of indulgence,' mean 'forgiveness,' 'a great amount of forgiveness,' 'the greatest amount of forgiveness.' Forgiveness for what? For our sins, especially for our mortal sins. Who among us can say that there is no need of forgiveness? That would be equivalent to saying that there are no sins, while the Holy Spirit says that he who states that he is without sin does not tell the truth.

"But this Holy Year of our Redemption should tell us something even more special. And indeed this Holy Year has already proclaimed it and it is something that Our Redeemer has already taught. Our Redeemer has expressly indicated the fruit of all His work of Redemption. And we cannot neglect this fruit, which is like the continuation of Redemption itself. The Lord revealed this fruit with the very words which revealed his heart—he revealed his intentions when he announced that he had to come so that all people might have life, that they might have life in abundance, always in greater abundance. *Ego veni ut vitam habeant et abundantius habeant.* It is as if He were saying to all souls: 'Receive life, receive an abundant life, and receive life ever in a more abundant way.' This life is the Christian life, for this is what Christ Our Redeemer has given to the world. This Christian life that you already possess in such abundance must be developed so that it may reach an ever-greater degree; you must fire it with the words of our Redeemer when he says that such a life should be abundant and superabundant.

"Your beloved Saint, too, tells you: 'This is the way to live a Christian life.' Just the way he himself lived it; just the way all Saints lived it. By this We do not mean only the Saints who formed part of the Lord's pageant this year, but all the Saints. What did they do to attain sanctity? Only one thing: they lived a Christian life abundantly, in an abundant measure; they lived that Christian life out of which were born those magnificent and vast branches of apostolic ministry and of good which conquer the hearts of all.

"Our Redeemer said: '*Live a Christian life, live it abundantly.*' And Don Bosco tells us today: 'That's the way a Christian life should be lived! And live it just as we have lived it and have taught you how to live.' Yet We believe that for you, his own sons, Don Bosco has something more to add, something which may explain more specifically the meaning of what We are dealing with now. We believe that he is now saying to you: 'Pay attention to what kind of guidance you should heed.'

"We feel that he is telling you that in order to advance always and in a better manner along the road that you should follow, you should keep in mind three notions linked to Christian life; we feel he is sharing with you a threefold secret.

"The first of these is to love Jesus Christ, to love Jesus Christ as our Redeemer. We might say that such a love was one of the thoughts, one of the feelings, which dominated Don Bosco's whole life. He revealed it to us in his watchword: *Da mihi animas!* This is a love which is continuously, uninterruptedly concerned with what souls are, not as seen in themselves only, but as seen in the thought, in the work, in the Blood and Death of our Redeemer. And the love of the Redeemer becomes love of Redeemed souls, which according to his way of thinking and evaluating, appears not to have been bought at too high a price, if they are bought with His Blood. This is exactly the love of the Redeemer which We have been recalling and for which We were thankful all of this year of bounteous Redemption.

"Your Father taught you another lesson. He taught you where to find the staunchest support, the greatest assistance, on which you may rely in order to put into practice that love for our Redeemer which finds expression in your love for souls, in your apostolate for souls. Among all other titles by which the Mother of God is known, Don Bosco preferred the title of Mary Help of Christians. Mary is the help of Christians; Mary is that help which he relied upon to gather together his auxiliary troops to march on toward the salvation of souls. Most beloved children, Mary Help of Christians is your legacy, one which the whole world would envy, if it did not have other means with which to appeal to her.

"With this thought We should detect yet another of those coincidences which are called opportunities, but which are instead delicate encounters, providential preparations, that Wisdom alone knows

how to arrange. The universal Motherhood of Mary is one of the most precious fruits of the Redemption. We would not have been able to celebrate the anniversary of our Redemption without recalling the last hours of the Redeemer on the Cross, without remembering that it was from the Cross, when the pangs of Death were most acute and terrible, that Our Savior gave to all of us His own Mother as our Mother: '*Behold your son, Behold your Mother.*' It is the divine Redeemer Himself who has given us Mary as our universal Mother, and in this we perceive the indissoluble link between Redemption and the Motherhood of Mary. One can say that Don Bosco must have grasped in a special way this intimate link, and he must have appreciated it for all its worth. That is why next to the Divine Savior, he wanted to place Mary, and he entrusted to Mary, under the title—which suits her the most—'*Mary Help of Christians,*' all the undertakings he was planning to carry out for the salvation of souls. You, too, need to be shown this powerful help, on which you will be able to rely, a help which is boundless in its effectiveness because it stems from Mary, our Mother Who wants nothing more than to give us her helping hand in all that we undertake for the Glory of God and the good of souls.

"But your wise and loving Father, your leader, has thought best to indicate to you yet another powerful, sure guide in the great battles, in the most glorious war for the salvation of souls, in those struggles which need to be extended to the whole world. Don Bosco has pointed out that guide to be unlimited and sincere devotion to the Church, to the Holy See, to the Vicar of Christ. This was a wonderful program to follow which lasted for many years, as he himself told Us in Our encounter, not only of the heart[1] but also an encounter of minds, under many aspects. This is a continuous program, a program necessary for all aspects of life, the clearest ones and the most radiant ones, those not made up so much of words as of deeds—to the point that the Church, the Holy See, and the Vicar of Christ filled his entire life. We know this because of the personal knowledge We had of him, because he himself confirmed it with his own words, and he expressed thoughts which, despite the great difference in our ages, he confided to Us with his sincere fatherly friendship. Divine Providence disposed things in

[1] They did not meet again, however, after the year 1883.

such a way that those expressions which were able to make him known personally would be handed over to the person whom Divine Providence itself, in its secret designs, was going to designate to have him exalted to the glory of the Altar (enthusiastic applause).

"We have made a reference to a 'Salesian Jubilee,' and we have just heard with deep joy someone around us shouting '*Long Live Don Bosco's Pope!*' (Thunderous applause, very loud acclamations of 'Long Live Don Bosco's Pope!' at which the Pope smiled and then gave a sign that he wished to continue). This is quite enough, most beloved children; this is enough to indicate that that beautiful word has been a word of joy for Us, as it is for you who are such dear children. But that word, more than a word of joy, is for you a word of warning. It simply tells us that Don Bosco, Our and your beloved Don Bosco, is telling you that no matter by which name he may be called, no matter the times in which he lived, the Pope, in the eyes of Don Bosco, the Pope was an essential part of his life, someone without whom he could not have been the man he was.

"Here you have three things which have the utmost importance, three things which will come to procure for you the benefits of the Holy Year which ends with this exaltation of St. John Bosco: A *love for Jesus Christ our Redeemer, which is a love for souls, an apostolate for souls; a fervent and steadfast devotion to Mary Help of Christians, to whose protection he had entrusted the whole organization of his undertakings; a devotion, an obedient and faithful attachment, to the Holy Church, to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the visible, living guide whom our Divine Redeemer wished to be available so that souls would never doubt about His thoughts, about the path to be taken to live in a Christian way, always in conformity with the thoughts of His heart.*

"It is with this fatherly note, with this paternal wish, that We bless each and every one of you. We want to bless all those whom you represent and you cannot but represent. For you represent all that you left behind in the places whence you came; you represent the whole great Salesian family and the family of Mary Help of Christians; you represent all the Houses wherein these two families labor, far more than they simply reside in. You represent all the apostolic activities in all their forms; you represent the other world, too: the army of Cooperators, and then another world of

souls who have already found the way to Don Bosco, or who are finding their way to him now: a spectacle as wide as the world itself, a beautiful spectacle, just as are the love of God and the love of souls, beautiful as the grace of Mary Help of Christians, a spectacle which reaches as far as the eye can see, to the boundaries of the visible world. Our blessing extends to that same remote boundary, to the furthermost edge of the vision We now see before Us.

"You will take this blessing with you, wherever your thoughts and your affections lead you. We wish to bless all that is most dear to your thoughts, to your hearts, to all that you wish to see blessed. It is needless to say that We refer not only to the spiritual families, but also to the families which bear your particular names, to your domestic families. We wish Our blessing to follow the direction of your thoughts and to reach whatever you desire. If you are thinking of souls who are in need of the paternal blessing of Christ's Vicar or who deserve one, We are happy to respond to all that you think of and fulfill your wish. As our beloved Don Bosco did, We think with particular tenderness and affection of the little ones, the children so dear to our divine Redeemer, and for whom St. John Bosco had such great fatherly concern, and We bless them because, first of all, they are precious treasures who are, all too often, forsaken, neglected, and deprived of loving care. We bless them, too, because their whole lives lie ahead of them, and so, in them, We bless the future with all the promises and hopes that it offers, and also We wish this blessing to provide them with an antidote against all threats and dangers. Nor do We want to forget those others who have already reached the other end of life, your elders, the senior citizens, your old folks, especially those among them who have labored on behalf of Don Bosco's undertakings, especially if they are ailing and sick, and therefore have greater claims to your charitable solicitude and the comfort of Our blessing.

"You will carry Our blessing with you, back to your various regions, and We pray to God that it may accompany you always, not only during the remainder of your visit to Rome, that it may be beneficial to your souls not only on your imminent journey home, but actually stay with you all your life."

The Pope then rose to his feet, and pronounced the formula for the blessing, and with a tumultuous outburst of applause the congregation thanked

him. When the Holy Father was about to mount the gestatorial chair, someone murmured to him that many people, on both sides of the *Confession,* had heard all he had said, but had been unable to catch a glimpse of him. So he gave orders that the chair was to be borne around the *Confession* to satisfy the faithful who were crowding those sections of the church. As he was carried out at a slow, stately pace, he turned to left and right with gracious majesty, his right hand lifted in blessing, while the shouts of the faithful continued unabated to acclaim him and people fluttered their handkerchiefs and waved their hands. Moved by this filial demonstration, the Pope bade the chair-bearers turn the gestatorial chair around when he reached the far end of the aisle, and standing up, he embraced with a parting blessing the whole congregation, which responded with a greater and final acclamation. One of those hours had ended, the memory of which would remain indelibly impressed, more than in memory, but in the heart of all.

A TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE TO THE POPE

In the wake of the Roman festivities, a public tribute of gratitude was owed to the great Pontiff who had so honored the Father of the Salesian Family. Besides, the meaning of this august event had to be expressed in marble for history's sake. No monument could have been more suitable for this purpose than the Salesian House of Via Tuscolana, which had already been dedicated to the name of Pius XI. On April 4th, a solemn ceremony was held there honoring the Pope in the unfinished church of Mary Help of Christians, which, as we mentioned earlier, was then being built, and a commemorative marble tablet was unveiled.

During the afternoon, four Cardinals, twenty Bishops, and many other important guests who had received invitations from the Director, Father Rotolo, on behalf of the Rector Major, gathered within the walls of the unfinished church. The entertainment began with a choral hymn, *Salve Decus Italorum,* a composition by Father Antolisei in honor of Don Bosco, and with the *Acclamations* in honor of the Pope. Then came a polyphonic chant by the same composer, to the words of Dante's verses to the *Virgin Mother.* Following this impressive introduction, the marble tablet with its Latin epigraph written by Professor Fornari was unveiled: the Argentinean Ambassador to the Holy See acted as "godfather," while the sister of the Holy Father and Countess Macchi di Cellere acted as the "godmothers." The inscription read: *On the first day of April, 1934, sacred for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Pius XI, Supreme Interpreter of divine counsels,*

inscribed in the calendar of the Saints, John Bosco, Father and Legislator of the Pious Salesian Society and of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, at the conclusion of the religious ceremonies celebrating the centennial anniversary of the human Redemption, in the presence of people who had gathered from all regions of the world. As an everlasting remembrance of this festive event, the Salesian Congregation dedicated this marble tablet to attest its joyous gratitude, in the temple built by the wish of the Pontiff himself, next to the Boys Hospice privileged to be named after him.[2]

A young machine shop apprentice then greeted the guests with a cordial welcome speech, ending by expressing the hope that in a none too distant future this church might replace the papal chapel in which, prior to 1870, the Pope had been wont to celebrate a traditional Mass on May 24th, the feast of Mary Help of Christians. The boldness of these words was hailed by rousing applause, which broke out anew as soon as Father Peter Ricaldone appeared on the platform. He was there mainly to express the gratitude of all the Salesians to the Holy Father, Pius XI, and to all those people who had cooperated with him in the exaltation of the new Saint. This was the text of his speech:

"The inscription which has just been unveiled before our eyes, indelibly etches on a marble slab the historic date of the Canonization of Our Founder and Father, St. John Bosco, as well as recording the name of the Pope, engraved with permanent characters, the Pope who exalted him to the highest honors of the Altar. It expresses now and will express forever the gratitude felt by the sons to the august Pope who glorified their Father.

"Historic indeed was that date of Don Bosco's canonization in terms of what preceded it, what accompanied it and what followed it.

"It was preceded by an intense and worldwide expectation, an expectation seasoned with admiration, gratitude and affection. The figure of Don Bosco, so lovable while alive, still retains its vitality today, as those who have known him personally think of him again. That figure also easily comes to the minds of those who never knew him; it comes with a halo of serene goodness, both intelligent and beneficent, and no one can resist its attractiveness. The fruits of his providential undertakings are such as

[2] *Kal. Apr. MCMXXXIV – quo die – Jesu Christo resurgenti sacro – Pius XI – summus Divinae Mentis interpres – humanae Redemptionis – saecularia conclusurus mysteria – gentibus ex orbe universo confluentibus – Joannem Bosco – Salesianae Piae Societatis – et Filiarum a Maria Auxiliatrice – Patrem legiferum – Sanctorum Ordinibus adserebat – ad perennandam tanti eventus memoriam – hoc in templo – ipsius Pontificis voluntate excitato – prope ephebeum eius nomine decorum – Salesianorum familia – grati ac gestientis animi documentum – D.D.*

to lead people of all walks of life to bless his multiform charity, which sowed everywhere precious seeds of goodness for the benefit of society and for the benefit of young souls in particular. In view of the gigantic tree, which grew in so short a time from the small seed mentioned in the Gospel, scholars versed in social phenomena, historians and hagiographers, all hail Don Bosco as a foreseeing forerunner who, in sifting the *vetera* [old] and *nova* [new], discarded certain forms of action and apostolate, restored others which had fallen into disuse, and created some which were entirely new. This is why the various phases of his Cause, which was as complex as his whole life had been, were followed eagerly by thousands of people with the utmost interest. How many were the prayers said and the petitions raised so that the Vicar of Christ would proclaim with his infallible voice, from the exalted throne of truth, the words that would express the inner conviction shared by innumerable ecclesiastics and laymen, wherever the Roman Church had extended its reach, that Don Bosco was a Saint.

"When the glorious hour of this proclamation struck, external and unexpected circumstances helped make that august day even more memorable than it would otherwise have been. An extraordinary, magnificent Jubilee was drawing to a close on the solemn feast of Easter, and for the entire year the world had responded, with unprecedented enthusiasm, to the invitation of the Pope. His Holiness, Pius XI himself, wished to emphasize the end of the Jubilee with some outstanding event or rite which, with the unanimous concurrence of the Catholic world, would enhance in a fitting manner the traditional ceremony. Divine Providence, which guides numerous events with its invisible hand, disposed events in such a way that the Church, the mother of all Saints, would glorify before the entire world the sanctity of one of her sons, to whom all the peoples of the earth rendered an affectionate tribute of love and veneration. It is an undeniable fact that the enhancement of Don Bosco in this extraordinary moment in History was hailed by every nation *quae sub coelo est* [under heaven] almost as if each of them saw in him a noble son of its own blood. In this way, a year of countless filial pilgrimages of the faithful to the Eternal City came to a brilliant end on that day which attracts to Rome more visitors from all parts of the world than any other throughout the year.

"The participation by sovereigns and kings, supported by national and civil consent, added much splendor to the religious and Catholic exaltation. With the gracious spirit which has always distinguished the Royal Family, His Majesty the King wished to participate in the solemn ceremony in Saint Peter's, and sent His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince Humbert of Savoy,

to represent him at the Canonization service. With truly regal gentleness, the Prince expressed to Don Bosco's humble sons, both on the eve and at the end of the Canonization, appreciative words which will remain indelibly imprinted on their hearts. It is true that Don Bosco belongs to the entire world, but Italy had the great good fortune to be the land of his birth. Had not the Holy Father referred to him as '*The glory of Italy,*' and as the '*glorious son of his native country*'?

"The Head of the government, the Man of Divine Providence who directs the destiny of Italy, the vigilant guardian of all that may enhance the honor and power of the nation, is the one who saw in Don Bosco the worthy and glorious representative of our race. Not only did he authorize an enthusiastic, solemn, authoritative and warm tribute to honor this great Italian on the heights of the Capitol Hill, but, by his personal attendance, he bettered the immense importance and significance of the ceremony, which, since the Roman sun first shed its light on that famous mount, was the first of its kind, ever to be staged there.

"We who knew Don Bosco in person, we know that this harmonious alliance between religious and patriotic sentiments was always uppermost in his thoughts, and we know that he would have rejoiced, had he had our good fortune in his day and age, to witness the radiant dawn of February 11, 1929, over his beloved country, and to know that by the signing of the Lateran Pact '*Italy was given back to God, and God was given back to Italy.*' These memorable words sum up the thoughts of the great Pontiff with whose name Don Bosco's Canonization will be linked indissolubly forever.

"The Pope who knew the Saint personally, who thoroughly probed and fully understood his spirit, has repeatedly quoted and singled out this fact as a providential feature of this important celebration. He even wrote about it, in a solemn document addressed to the whole Catholic Church a few months after the rainbow of religious peace radiantly appeared in the skies of Italy and perhaps never so splendidly since the times of Constantine (313 A.D.). I am referring to the Encyclical *Quinquagesimo ante anno* in which, after enumerating all the consolations God had bestowed on him during his priestly Golden Jubilee, he declared that by a special grace of Divine Providence, John Bosco was the first for whom he had decreed the honors of his Beatification, after the signing of the long awaited peace treaty with the Kingdom of Italy. And it was Don Bosco who on so many occasions had attempted to negotiate amicably the settlement of the very painful conflict which had wrested Italy away from the Pope's paternal embrace.

"We are indebted to Pius XI for the canonization of Don Bosco. We are indebted to him for the extraordinary recognition, which raises this Canonization to the dignity of being a symbol of an outstanding historic event. We are indebted to him because he has repeatedly delineated the exceptional personality of the Saint with an unfaltering hand. Prior to his Easter homily, the Pope publicly had sung the praises of the Servant of God on twenty-five occasions, describing his virtues and his words, and extolling his providential Mission.

"The sentiments of the Pope found radiant expression particularly in yesterday's audience. It truly was a memorable audience! It was memorable because of its setting: 'We arranged the largest and loveliest reception hall in the whole world for you,' the Pope said, and certainly Saint Peter's offered on that occasion an appearance, the likes of which have no parallel in history. It was memorable for the people who took part in it. Never before had so many young people, come from a thousand parts of the world, thronged around the stately papal monuments with such vibrant enthusiasm: 'A whirlwind of joy' were the words used by the Pope to describe the frenzied acclamations of cheers which welcomed his appearance at the entrance to the Basilica and which accompanied him up to the altar of the *Confession,* in front of which the throne was placed. Memorable because of the allocution given by the Pope, an allocution which was amiable, paternal, rich in references and personal recollections of warm exhortations, and ending with what I would call the Identity Card for all the sons of Don Bosco, great and small alike: 'To love Jesus our Redeemer, whenever charity is being shown for the salvation of souls; devotion to Mary Help of Christians; Fidelity to the Vicar of Christ.' The acclamation directed to '*Don Bosco's Pope*' was noted by the Holy Father in Saint Peter's and was cordially appreciated, as it expressed the secret source of that enthusiasm which filled the hearts of everyone who was present, and inspired the beautiful and unforgettable words uttered by Pius XI.

"The Pope's words and actions have had the following consequences: whereas before, Don Bosco's figure appeared great to our eyes, now, that figure appears gigantic beyond compare; the knowledge that the world had of him is now expanded and deepened. The solemn *Te Deum,* blended with the Easter Hallelujah in the greatest temple of Christianity, was a solemn thanksgiving to God for having given His Church one of those Saints who shed even greater radiance on her holiness, and of this holiness they themselves are powerful tools and ministers.

"Aware of how deeply obliged all of us are to the Holy Father, Pius XI, we are assembled here today with the intention of expressing to him our gratitude. The walls of the building which is now being built next to this church, and which we are dedicating to his august name, already express loudly enough the gratitude of the Salesians to this incomparable Pontiff. In the technical-professional school of Pius XI, generations of boys will follow uninterruptedly, to learn how to grow well-skilled in their work and in the practice of Salesian life, and interwoven with the praise of the Father of Youth, they will hear recalled in Benediction the name of Pius XI, whom we pray that God preserve for many a long year for the benefit of the Church and of all Mankind. That beneficial school and the majestic church, soon to be completed, which now welcomes us, will be in Rome a center, a beacon spreading the light of the devotion to Don Bosco's Madonna, Mary Help of Christians, for they will be animated by a vibrant heartbeat for the Saint of charity and for the Pope of that Saint.

"Now, however, I have come to a point where I wish I possessed the warmth of Don Bosco's own heart at least for a few moments, in order to render to the Vicar of Jesus Christ the most worthy expressions of thanks. But even though I do not possess Don Bosco's heart, I am at least fortunate enough to be in a position to make, so to speak, his voice my own. In 1876, the General Guardian of the Arcadian Academy asked the Servant of God to read a paper on the Passion of Our Lord at a meeting of the Academy which was held traditionally every year on Good Friday. Don Bosco accepted the invitation; Don Bosco's compliance was hailed by all as a most welcome favor. The meeting was held in the Altemps Palace. The speaker did not ramble through the flowery fields of literature, but read a series of learned and pious reflections on the 'Seven Words' uttered by Jesus on the Cross. At the end, he turned with great naturalness to the subject of the bond which should exist between the true believer and Peter and his successors. He invited his listeners to 'rally united around the worthy successor of the Holy Apostle, around the mighty, courageous Vicar of Jesus Christ, the great, incomparable Pius IX' (these adjectives are his). He continued with an exhortation and a protest, which I shall now quote literally, with the intention of expressing it with filial devotion on behalf of all the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, their pupils, the Cooperators, the friends, and disciples of Saint John Bosco everywhere, from Pope Pius IX to Pope Pius XI.

" 'Let us turn to him in every doubt, in every danger, for he is our anchor of salvation, our infallible oracle. Let no one ever forget that this

mighty Pontiff is the foundation, the center of all truth for the salvation of the world. Anyone who gathers with him builds all the way up to heaven, anyone who does not build with him, scatters, *qui mecum non colligit, dispergit.*' If my words could only reach the ears of this angelic Comforter at this moment, I would like to say: Most Blessed Father, listen to and graciously accept the words of a poor, yet most affectionate son of yours. We want to be sure of the road, which leads to the possession of true happiness; therefore we all gather around you who are our loving father, our infallible Master. Your words are a guide to our steps and a norm for our actions. Your thoughts, your writings, will be received with the greatest veneration, and with lively solicitude will they be spread among our families, among our relatives, and, if it be possible, throughout the world. Your joys will also be the joys of your sons, your sufferings and thorns will likewise be the sufferings and thorns shared by your sons. Just as it is a glory for a soldier who dies on the field of battle for his king, so it would be the best day of our life, that day on which we could give property and life for you, O Most Blessed Father. By dying for you we have an assured guarantee that we are dying for that God who crowns the temporary sufferings of this earth with the eternal joys of Heaven."

The applause which greeted Fr. Peter Ricaldone's filial words was quickly renewed by the boys as a salute to the Cardinals, Prelates, and Authorities who were leaving the church to take a look at the school and inspect its magnificent workshops. The festivities could not have ended on a more desirable note.

THE TRIDUUM IN HONOR OF ST. JOHN BOSCO, AND VARIOUS TRIBUTES PAID TO THE POPE

While the demonstrations were taking place, one after the other, at the Capitol Hill, at Saint Peter's Basilica and at the "Pius XI School," the first triduum ever held in honor of the new Saint was conducted with the greatest possible solemnity in the Sacred Heart Basilica in Rome. Eminent Cardinals celebrated and pontificated during the three days. Salesian Father Antolisei gave further proofs of his talent as a composer and conductor. On the first day of the triduum, he had the choirs sing his *Mass in honor of St. John Bosco* for six voices and two choirs, and on the following days Palestrina's *Missa brevis.* The Secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, Archbishop Salotti, preached the sermon on Monday evening. On Tuesday, it was the turn of His Eminence, Cardinal Hlond, who, although he was

a Pole, spoke Italian with ease. On Wednesday, the sermon was delivered by His Eminence, Cardinal Laurenti, who, as Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, was thoroughly familiar with the Cause of Don Bosco, and with the character of the Servant of God as well. People crowded into the playgrounds and under the porticos, managing to enjoy the functions and to listen to the sermons over the loudspeaker system. At night, a vast crowd of pilgrims and tourists lingered on until late. They were entertained by the illuminations and by the music played by the "Pius XI" School Band. This external display would have responded very poorly to Don Bosco's spirit, if it had not been accompanied by something more intimate and substantial. What contributed most to honor Don Bosco was the fact that crowds of people went to confession from early morning until evening, and there was a steady procession of communicants at the altar rails.

One duty still had to be fulfilled: To manifest personally to the Vicar of Christ the gratitude of the whole Salesian Family. The Rector Major, together with the other Superiors, responded to this sacred obligation on April 17th, when they knelt before His Holiness and humbly offered him the gifts traditionally presented on such occasions,

They gave him four gifts in all. The first was a painting, a reproduction by Crida of Rollini's portrait, found in Don Bosco's rooms at the Oratory. It is the most faithful likeness ever painted of Don Bosco, and depicted him exactly as we remember him in the last few years of his life.

The second gift was the *Life of St. John Bosco* by Bishop Salotti. This had been bound by Guy Colombini, head of the bookbinding department of the Professional School of the Oratory, and was an artistic jewel. It is a tradition that any book presented to the Pope had to be bound in white leather. Naturally, this leaves but little room for the artist's creative imagination, for it restricts ornamentation to simple gold tooling. But somehow Colombini managed to produce a genuine work of art, without deviating from tradition.

Three strips of golden leather edged the white leather cover on the right, left and lower edges. The two lateral strips were tooled with equally spaced horizontal gold lines, and the words *ST. JOHN BOSCO* had been stamped by hand on the strip at the bottom. The work had been done with small, straight, carefully arranged tools, so that the outcome was letters quadrangular in shape, thin, sharply defined, and well-spaced, one from another. The upper part of the border was clear. The papal coat-of-arms was impressed on the white surface. The spine was decorated with lines identical to those on the two faces of the cover, and the name of the author

was impressed at the top, the title of the book at the bottom. The inner part of the front cover of the book was even more striking: the center of the page was dominated by the figure of Pius XI in profile, reproduced as a medallion and with the following inscription in gold impressed on it.

TO HIS HOLINESS PIUS XI
POPE OF THE CANONIZATION OF
ST. JOHN BOSCO
The Salesian Family
April 1, 1934
EASTER SUNDAY

A thin gold line rimmed the edge of the rectangular white morocco leather cover, both back and front. This too had been done with small seal press, yet this was nothing compared to the polychromatic coat-of-arms and medallion which, at first glance, could easily be mistaken for miniatures; instead, they were mosaics. They were the consequence of small pieces of leather, so perfectly blended that they resembled inlay-work. The gilding of the portrait had been used only for the stole in the portrait, enriched with a dense dotted design, which made it look like filigree.

The third gift was a reliquary containing the Saint's fifth cervical vertebra. The *Blessed Angelicus School* in Milan had embossed it after a design by the Salesian Valotti, and it was encrusted with gold, silver and precious stones. It stood seventy-five centimeters high, in the form of a cross mounted on a handsome base, and topped by an almond-shaped halo with rays. The tiny case containing the relic was made of gold, studded with tiny diamonds, and was set in the middle of the cross: the four cardinal virtues were represented with their symbols at the foot of the cross. Faith and Hope were depicted kneeling on the two arms; at the top there was the Saint, represented in the act of giving Communion to two little boys. The statuettes of the virtues and of Don Bosco were so exquisitely modeled that they were genuine masterpieces in themselves.

The last gift was some samples of the large commemorative medal of the canonization, cast in gold and silver.

The Pope granted an audience to the Salesian Superiors in the small throne hall. He looked with admiration at the reliquary; it was at this time that the Pope, thinking about the quality of the relic, remarked to Father Peter Ricaldone: "Ah! Don Bosco is the one who had very strong vertebrae; his whole spine was strong, and very different from that of many other people!!!" Before he gave his blessing to the superiors, he was delighted

to let them know how happy he was over the wonderful celebrations in Rome, and with the reports of the solemn festivities in Turin, of which he had read in the *Osservatore.*

It was only proper that there should be some remembrance of Don Bosco's Easter to commemorate him in the shrine where he had been thus exalted, and such a souvenir was found in a way befitting the dignity of the Basilica. It took the form of an immense candleholder for the Easter Candle, and was never to be removed from its place beside the altar of the Confession. It stood three meters fifteen centimeters high, and had a red granite base, a shaft consisting of one single piece of African marble, one meter ninety centimeters long. The capital was of gilded bronze, embossed with the coat-of- arms of Pius XI and of Saint Peter's Basilica. This magnificent work of art will proclaim before the world the gratitude of the Salesians to the Vatican Chapter, for the great assistance given to assure the wonderful success of the unforgettable celebration. A short Latin inscription mentions the name of the donor, the date of the presentation, and the reason for the gift.

Another special initiative should not go unmentioned. The six *Salesian Bulletins,* all printed at the Oratory, vied with one another to provide for the readers the most detailed accounts of the festivities, enriching the text of these accounts with a variety of illustrations. When everything was over, all these editions, printed in Italian, French, Spanish, English, Portuguese, and Lithuanian, were reprinted on glossy paper, and bound in one dense, handsome volume, consisting of two parts. This was given first to the Holy Father, and then to many outstanding individuals of the ecclesiastical world and of the Laity. A more detailed, lively and interesting documentation of these solemn events could never have been contrived, to be treasured as a living record by prominent families and religious communities.

Chapter 15

Echoes of the Canonization in the Pronouncements of the Pope

The Holy Father, Pius XI, confided to Cardinal Segura, the former Archbishop of Toledo, how he, as a young priest, had met Don Bosco in 1883, at the Oratory. He lingered on a well-known circumstance: The Directors of various schools were approaching the Servant of God to report to him about their particular matters. This was happening exactly where he was talking to Don Bosco. And so he hinted twice that out of a sensitive feeling he wanted to withdraw from the room. But both times the Saint had bidden him remain, and added: "This will be helpful to both you and me." It was obvious that those talks were helpful to Don Bosco, but the young priest could not understand in what way they might be helpful to him. When Cardinal Ratti was elected Pope thirty-nine years later, he recalled Don Bosco immediately after the Conclave, and almost felt that he saw him standing at his side, repeating to him: "This will be helpful for me, too." As he declared later, it had been that very day that Pius XI had made up his mind to promote Don Bosco's canonization.[1]

Certainly Pius XI did give a vigorous impetus to Don Bosco's Cause, and he availed himself of many opportunities after the Beatification, just as after the Canonization, to say how happy he was for the final result. In this chapter it is our intention to assemble the Pope's more important statements during the year 1934 in reference to this matter.

The distribution of medals with the likeness of the Saint continued throughout the year. At times, the Pope merely mentioned that he wished to distribute a souvenir medal at the end of all audiences; we shall bypass such occasions. But at other times he praised Don Bosco's character, virtues, and works, although he did not always accompany the words with the gift of a medal.

[1] Cardinal Segura reported this to Father Orione who, in turn, reported it to the Salesian Father Zachary Genghini in America, on December 30, 1935. On August 3, 1938, Pius XI spoke once again of Don Bosco, to Msgr. Vincent Cimatti during a private audience, and repeated things he had already mentioned about the vocation to which Don Bosco had felt himself attracted, namely, that of being a writer and a historian, adding that he had relinquished this ambition because he believed he was insufficiently prepared for it. The Pope said that, at that time, he had answered: "I feel that Don Bosco is more than adequately prepared for this kind of work. I know a book, which shows that Don Bosco had a solid intellectual preparation for this and other kinds of works." "What type of book is this?" the Saint asked. "Your *History of Italy*," the Pope said, adding that Don Bosco, in his modesty, had deftly changed the subject. The Pope then concluded his story by saying: "Poor Don Bosco! How well he had foreseen my future!"

On April 5th, he gave a lengthy speech in German to 350 young men, all members of two German Associations. He mentioned Don Bosco twice during the speech. The first time he did so was in reference to the recent Easter ceremonies. "The solemn celebrations at the close of the Holy Year, our wonderful Roman Easter and the Canonization of Blessed Don Bosco were rendered all the lovelier and more pleasing to us by the arrival of you, our beloved sons. Divine Providence disposed that your honorable delegation should be here, to share with your common Father these memorable hours as representatives of the German Catholic Youth." The second time the Pope referred to Don Bosco at the end of the speech, while he was personally handing the souvenir medals to the leader of the group. He spoke of the current tragic plight of German Catholics and added: "These medals which bear the likeness of St. John Bosco, a glorious name, a glorious Saint, will remind you of your visit to Rome and of the greatness of this Saint, who was a genuine martyr to his own loving charity, which is the charity of the Holy Church; this man was spared no adversity, no obstacles of all kinds, and yet he remained always confident and calm, as We personally witnessed it. This was because he knew and always proclaimed that he was working for God, and he knew that God was always with him.[2]

On the 7th of the month the Pope granted an audience to a large group of Belgian pilgrims. When he noticed a contingent of Boy Scouts among them, the Pope in his general address to the whole group directed particular words to them: "During the recent Easter ceremonies, We exalted a great Saint, St. John Bosco, to the highest honors of the Altars; he was a genuine friend of Youth, and an extraordinary Scout of God who blazed trails that were often beset with great obstacles which he had to overcome, so that he might save souls."

At the same time the Pope granted audiences to three international pilgrim groups, and each time he mentioned Don Bosco's name. The first group was formed by university students, all members of the so-called *Pax Romana* Association. This is an international association of university students who are also members of Catholic Action. Their specific purpose is to promote the cause of peace in their native countries, and to lessen the hostilities which exist between nation and nation, the sad bequest of the great World War. He spoke to them in Latin, reminding them "they had come to Rome on the occasion of the supreme glorification of St. John

[2] *L'Osservatore Romano,* April 6, 1934.

Bosco, a great Saint whose apostolic zeal can not be adequately described in mere words, and who had dedicated so much of his life to students and young scholars." The second pilgrimage included a vast contingent of French Boy Scouts and young explorers, and with an additional group of Boy explorers from Belgium, Luxemburg, Holland and Switzerland. The Pope addressed them in French: "The date for your pilgrimage to Rome was well chosen since it coincided with the glorification of St. John Bosco, who was a great Scout as he explored all the paths leading to virtue, and as he overcame every test and obstacle. Dear sons and daughters, is he not a wonderful model for you, a model of Christian life, lived not only integrally but courageously?" A little later the Pope made this recommendation: "You who are full of life and of physical vitality, you who love life, should also develop your spiritual life. You should say in this regard: Never enough, but always more and always better! This is exactly the lesson taught by Don Bosco, the great Scout who blazed every trail leading to virtue." Then the Pope concluded his address: "We are happy to offer you a small souvenir of your pilgrimage, a medal of St. John Bosco. We give it to you Ourselves, and want all of you to consider it as a gift from the Father of your souls." As he said this, he handed a large package of medals to the leader of the group. Delegates from thirty different countries, representing sixty Associations of Catholic Women, all of them attending the 9th International convention of their union, made up the third pilgrimage. While teaching them how with the practice of charity they should care for the body and through it reach out to the soul, the Pope quoted the example of Don Bosco: "Herein lies the secret of the great geniuses of charity, from St. Vincent de Paul to St. Joseph Benedict Cottolengo and St. John Bosco."[3]

He also made a general reference to the new Saint when he spoke to some Spanish pilgrims that same month. The following month, he mentioned him more specifically, during an audience granted to some Polish immigrants: "We are happy to give you a small medal, with a special recommendation added to it, not only because it is given to you by your common Father, but because it bears the likeness of St. John Bosco, the same Don Bosco who is entitled to the special gratitude of Poland for the great good that his sons have done in your country." A similar remark was made in July to two hundred Viennese youngsters, for whom Mussolini had arranged a month of pleasant vacation at the Roman beaches. As he gave

[3] *L'Osservatore Romano,* April 7/8, 1934.

out the medals he said: "This medal bears the likeness of a great friend of youth, hence of a great friend of Austrian youth, too. I speak of St. John Bosco. The sons of this powerful friend of Youth, of this great Saint, have achieved great things in their work in Vienna and other parts of Austria where their schools are flourishing. That is why We recommend you, beloved children, to the special protection of this great Servant of God." As a Nuncio, Pius XI had had ample opportunity to study the work of the Salesians in Poland and Austria.[4]

An important reference to Don Bosco was made to some French pilgrims on behalf of the Pope. The story of how this occurred is an interesting one. While these pilgrims were traveling to Rome on two trains organized by the Salesians, a few devout persons had made up a collection to be given as an offering to the Pope; it amounted to sixteen thousand francs. It certainly would have been a great consolation if they could have humbly placed that amount of money at the feet of the Pope at an audience. But this was not possible. The Pope gratefully accepted the gift and instructed the Secretary of State to thank them on his behalf. On April 12th, Cardinal Pacelli wrote as follows to Bishop Flaus, the French Prelate: "I am happy to convey to you the personal thanks of His Holiness for the generous offering of the French Salesian pilgrims who visited Rome to attend the canonization of the Holy Founder. His Holiness is very grateful for their tribute, and is happy to believe that this glorification of St. John Bosco will inspire ever-greater zeal in his sons for the religious education of Youth. He also hopes that they will succeed in multiplying the number of predestined youths, like Dominic Savio, in all countries of the world."[5] Five days prior to this event, the Pope had welcomed a group of two thousand youngsters from all parts of France and reminded them that they had come to Rome "at a most solemn moment, namely at the splendor of Easter, of the Roman Easter, at the conclusion of the Holy Year, to witness the splendor of sanctity, *in splendoribus Sanctorum,* crowned by the exaltation of St. John Bosco."[6]

During the course of the year, the Pope often received groups or leaders of the Catholic Associations and nearly always gave them the souvenir medal, at times accompanying the gift with a comment, though sometimes not. Early in May, while he was distributing the medals to five hundred nuns who were in Rome attending a course of instruction on Catholic Action, he called Don Bosco "a true apostle, a model of Christian life, and

[4] *L'Osservatore Romano,* May 24th, and July 30/31, 1934.
[5] *Bulletin Salesien,* June, 1934.
[6] *L'Osservatore Romano,* April 9–10, 1934.

of Catholic Action." In July, the Pope granted an audience to three other groups like this. To the second group, which was made up of leaders of Young Italian Women, he deplored the propaganda made by Protestants in Italy, and called on the "precious cooperation" of women to help fight it, suggesting first of all the use of "trusting prayer" because he added, just as "that great Saint, Don Bosco, always said, 'God is bound to help us, especially when the issue at stake concerns Him, and not ourselves.' " The third audience was granted to young men, members of the Catholic Action Association who were attending a National Study Week in Rome. The Pope explained to them why he was giving them a traditional souvenir medal: "This is not solely because this great Saint followed the traditions of Catholic Action which can be traced back to the days of the Apostles and cooperated generously with the hierarchical apostolate of the Church, but also on account of the memory We have of Our own deep affectionate and personal knowledge of him and of Our rapport with him."[7]

Schools, boarding schools, Institutes, Seminaries, and university students heard the Pope magnify our Saint. Of these audiences we shall recall only those in which, besides handing out medals, the Pope also added some interesting remarks. Foremost among such occasions was an audience granted on May 31, 1934, to the pupils of the Salesian school "Pius XI." The Pope delivered a splendid address. This is what he said:

"We really do not know how We should start in order to thank you for so many beautiful and most heartening things given to Us. But We do feel obliged, We feel the pressing need, to express Our gratitude for them. Everything you have brought to Us has been most beautiful: your filial, festive welcome, your singing of hymns, the wondrously sweet words of Dante's *Ave Maria* which We heard a long, long time ago, although the words have remained ever present in Our mind and heart! As We look with admiration at your gifts, the product of your technical ability, We can really say that We are in your house, as We were then, just as you are now in Our house, in the house of the Father. We look at these handsome volumes into which you have wanted to record all of Our words about our dear Saint John Bosco, from the first words up to the last, the most recent ones. All of these were crowned by a dear, incomparable and holy rendition, so warm with affection, just as the one presented by your classmate to express the filial feelings which fill all of you. Yet nothing could have been more agreeable, comforting, or warming to Us than your presence here, than

[7] *L'Osservatore Romano,* July 21, 23–24, 30–31, 1934.

your loving, filial visit. This is the loveliest gift you could have given to Us; this is your gift, your Strenna to Us for Our birthday.

"This date is not without significance for Us, of course; it is a reminder of the sound of the years rolling by; it is a reminder of all the gifts showered upon Us by Divine Goodness; it is a paternal warning that the day when We must go home, as the peasants in the Po River Valley say, is fast approaching. You have chosen these two moments which are so beautiful for us, the end of May and Our birthday, to come here with your good wishes, to express to Us your gratitude, the gratitude of the whole huge, worldwide family of Don Bosco the Saint. You do well to call him Don Bosco the Saint, because the world will never be able to refer to him as Saint John Bosco, but only and always and quite simply, as Don Bosco, Don Bosco the Saint. The gratitude that you express is great, and it is genuinely spectacular, because the family which you represent here, and whose sentiments you convey to Us, is likewise great.

"All this should tell you with what feelings We have seen you pass by, like a review however rapid, and how glad We were to approach each one of you, to make a personal acquaintance of each one of you, just like Don Bosco came marvelously to know each one of his children.

"We congratulate you for your fine sentiments, because the whole world recognizes that they are the way they should be. Such was the favor with which God has distinguished the sons of Don Bosco and all those who benefit from his work, which truly has come down from Heaven to Earth, to show what miracles are.

"We feel that in expressing Our gratitude, We should be in the foremost ranks, because it was Our privilege to know Don Bosco intimately when he, too, was a wayfarer in this world, and to proclaim him a Saint later, not only with Our lips, but also with Our innermost heart, as We added this name to those of other heavenly patrons. We humbly acknowledge this to be Our privilege, and render special thanks to God because of it.

"This will tell you all how and how much we feel in tune with all of you, with the sons of Don Bosco, with all his family in every part of the world, wherever his work is displayed and still goes on, like the work of our Apostle, of that courageous soldier of Jesus Christ, of that incomparable friend of Youth, of that Savior of so many souls: *Da mihi animas.*

"We give thanks to God and to His divine Mother Who was, indeed, the Help of Don Bosco, the Saint, the divine Mother Who has entered with such a large contribution into all that has been accomplished, from the first days of Don Bosco, Saint. Look! As a matter of fact it was because of the

maternal help provided by Our Lady that Don Bosco has so well expressed his gratitude to her by building a new Church in her honor next to Us.

"Beloved sons, We give thanks to the Lord, and look with wonder at His works. It is unto Him that We must render honor and glory, that same honor and glory which the Church renders to Him unceasingly. But We should also make up our minds to imitate the things We celebrate and honor so joyously; this is what all of Us should do, and especially you. It might seem arduous at first, to try to imitate Don Bosco, whose figure seems so complex, so immense, and so gigantic when we face it, yet of all the kinds of sanctity, Don Bosco's sanctity is the easiest to be imitated. Any form of holiness can be imitated; we can even imitate the holiness of God, because 'imitation' in other fields also, such as the field of Art for example, does not mean 'to copy' or to 'reproduce exactly'; no, not at all. To imitate a thing means that we enter into a certain order of ideas, into a certain spiritual attitude; it means to make some effort to ascend in a certain direction. That's what Art does when it imitates Nature, and Dante describes Our art as "*a Dio quasi nipote*" [almost the grandchild of God], inasmuch as it is born of Nature, God's daughter.

"What We should especially try to imitate in Don Bosco's life is his heroic fidelity to duty at all times, just as it was required by the daily round of events. He was always ready to give his attention to the latest comer, to the latest appeal made to him. He was ready to devote his attention to everything, to everyone, as though every single thing, and every individual person was the only thing, the only person, he had to deal with. Now, to respond with due promptness to our duties, no matter what they are, is not only possible, it is an obligation. Therefore, doing your duty: that is the foundation of all kinds of sanctity.

"Beloved children, there is something else you should learn from the example given you by your Saint and Founder. You have a very special reason to remember the motto of your and Our beloved Don Bosco: *Da mihi animas.* Whenever he was saying this prayer, he was praying for you, and God has graciously heard his prayer, and He has given him your souls, so that he might do some good to them, according to God's spirit.

"With this, Don Bosco taught you and placed before your eyes an idea, a great idea, a great work. This idea is related to the precious value of souls to be saved; this idea is related to the imperative necessity of defending the benefits received through a Christian education, not merely in the ordinary sense of the word, but in a genuine, generous, exquisitely Christian sense which will be of inestimable benefit to you, to your family, to

Society, and to the Church. You will be outstanding sons and later, parents. You will be outstanding citizens of Society and outstanding sons of the Church, always ready to carry out your duties honorably, be they towards yourselves, towards God, towards your country, towards your fellowmen. You will be genuine Christians, and when We say that, We have said everything. In a word, you will consider Duty as an obligation which God's word has entrusted to you, and you will know that you must perform your duty before God and men. Another duty connected with grasping the value of souls is that of remembering so many other young souls who lack the spiritual treasures of the education which have been so richly given to you. This is the reason why you have a duty to do your utmost to share with others the immense gifts you have received, with your prayers, with your example, and with your missionary work so characteristic of the Salesian spirit.

"There is yet another reflection. Whence did Don Bosco draw his love for souls? It is clear. He loved them so deeply because he loved Jesus Christ. He knew that Jesus Christ would have shed His Blood even for just one of these souls. This secret is shared by all the Saints. They thought about what Jesus Christ had done, the fact that He did not consider too great a ransom to pay, this shedding of all His Most Precious Blood for the salvation of souls, even for the salvation of a single soul. *Pro animabus* is the word of God, and the Apostle remembers it and adds the stirring thought: *dilexit me et tradidit semetipsum pro me* [He loved me and handed Himself over for me].

"Beloved children, this is what Don Bosco often repeated to himself during his spiritual meditations, and during his full and most active life. This is what needs to be done by us. We should give thanks, and especially, we should imitate. This is what We know that you always wish to do, and it is for this reason that in the blessings We are now about to impart to all of you who are here and to all those whom you represent, We want to put into them also a note of gratitude. We see, as in a magnificent vision, in a very pleasing vision which your presence creates for our spirit, the entire family of Don Bosco, as wide as the world. And with this vision before Our eyes We wish that Our blessing may reach the farthest horizon. In particular do We bless all the people whom you represent: your families, your homes, your relatives, all that you consider dear in them. We bless particularly the work in which you are engaged in this journey, the work which holds primary importance; We mean the preparation for your future and for all that will be the fruit of your Christian education. When you will

be able to produce that fruit which is the apostolate of example, of a life lived in a Christian manner, then you will exemplify, not with words but with the deeds, how one gets to be a good Christian and a good citizen. That fruit will be the apostolate of your life, the apostolate of the salutary word, of that informal word which does not bear an aspect of teaching, but a word so friendly as to go directly to the heart. And then the other fruit will be the apostolate of prayer, an apostolate much easier and more powerful, a prayer for the coming of God's kingdom."

It was also possible to present to the Holy Father on June 3, 1934, one of the Roman undertakings directed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The 'Santa Cecelia' School of Testaccio had approximately five hundred boys, girls, and young women, and was divided into kindergarten, grammar school, professional school, an after-school program, oratory and associations. The Pope had words of praise for the affectionate, considerate address with which these had been announced to him. "The sentiments it expressed can be traced back to Don Bosco's own mind and heart," he said. "They are sentiments which his children have inherited from him and which now are being inculcated into so many souls, among whom happen to be also your souls, most beloved Daughters." At the end of the audience, as he listed the people whom he wished to bless, he mentioned all the Sisters and the benefactresses who took care of their spiritual welfare, honoring that Jesus Who commands that all should love and do good. Then he concluded: "It was by obedience to these commands that Don Bosco accomplished all that he has done and all that he has left that young souls might benefit from it and have the advantage of being professionally trained for life." He praised Don Bosco once again when he welcomed a group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Castelgandolfo, where they had just completed their retreat. Among the group were Salesian Sisters from India and the Americas, older nuns, sisters newly professed, and novices. The Pope remarked that their zealous group of sisters represented "fully the life of the marvelous congregation, the sweet fruit of Don Bosco's devotion, gratitude and love for the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians." The paternal eyes of His Holiness saw in these people the "living, tangible, and prolific offshoots of the mighty Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who in Don Bosco's name, waged a courageous apostolic battle in all five Continents of the world."[8]

The presence of seminary students repeatedly offered to the Pope occasions to appeal to the authority and example of Don Bosco. The Brothers

[8] *L'Osservatore Romano,* June 4–5 and August 9, 1934.

of the Christian Schools of Ireland, who are known as the Christian Brothers, presented to the Pope one hundred and sixty of their past pupils who were studying for the priesthood, or who were already priests. The Pope pointed out how precious those beautiful vocations were and made it loud and clear that they were the outcome of a Christian life learned through a Christian education, that kind of Christian life whence the great types of sanctity, the gigantic types of sanctity, stem, such as the recent kinds of sanctity displayed by Cottolengo and Don Bosco. He also added that these types of sanctity were nothing else but Christian life lived to the fullest. Then, as he was handing out medals of the new Saint, the Pope remarked that he, too, had been a great Christian Brother who had done a great amount of good in the field of Christian education.[9] He spoke at greater length about Don Bosco to some two hundred or more young men from the Major, Minor and Juridical Pontifical Seminaries of Rome. These were the Pope's reflections and teachings: "The Holy Year ended with the glorification of a great priest who was fully and sincerely aware that he was an instrument of Redemption, especially for Youth, a Youth so exposed to temptation and to danger, for a needy youth. It is quite proper then that he should be proposed as a model for all future priests. When we look at him, at first sight he might appear only as a priest who had no other aspirations than to piously and devotedly care for souls. As a matter of fact, We have seen him personally, entirely engaged in hearing confessions, in comforting souls who relied on him, in doing priestly ministry. He did this because he knew that Piety was all-important, the first essential requisite for a priest. But Don Bosco may be seen from another perspective. We have had reason to wonder whether Don Bosco might have had the genuine vocation to be a scholar. Certainly, Don Bosco had a great love of learning and a great propensity for it. One might almost say that he might have been 'seduced' to study to the point of running the risk of being victimized by study. Don Bosco planned to provide for the Church and for Italy a history, a history which might be for the Church what the work of Muratori, a holy priest himself, had been for Italy. Here you have two aspects of Saint John Bosco's personality. Young seminarians should be led by this two-fold consideration: to look at and reflect on what is most suited for them, exactly suited for them, namely piety and study. Piety should always hold the place of honor, because if study should take first place, then study becomes pretentious futility, and an alluring danger. But if you examine the person of St. John Bosco, you

[9] *L'Osservatore Romano,* April 15, 1934.

will be able to prepare yourselves for life and action, for that life which will represent a genuine source of wonder for all. Indeed, in the history of the priesthood and of the apostolate there are few who have accomplished so much and have prepared so much for the salvation of souls. *Da mihi animas* [Give me souls]; this is the motto of St. John Bosco."[10]

A few days later, the Pope spoke once again of Don Bosco's propensity for study to the members of the University of Rome and to Catholic Action Associations, both men and women members. "We would like to hand to each of you as a little souvenir some small medals which your hearts might consider enlarging," he said. "They are the medals of St. John Bosco, or Don Bosco as people will continue to call him, and they are truly suitable for you. Don Bosco was more a man of action than a man of learning, yet he was one of the greatest friends Youth had met since the beginning of time. Very great is the number of young souls who were saved either by Don Bosco or his spiritual sons. Their numbers run into millions, and they are all over the world. Now, although Don Bosco had never been a university student, at a certain point Don Bosco had thought and desired to be one. He did not lack either a lively intellectual talent or great capacity to work, so that he was not intimidated by any kind of undertaking. He had already planned to produce a great scientific work, but he himself acknowledged in Our presence that he had abandoned the idea because he had felt himself called to a more specific mission, the salvation of Youth, and also because he felt that he lacked an adequate preparation for higher studies. This is one of the characteristics of this man who was endowed with such abundant common sense. He felt that he would never make a university student. When We praised him for his prowess in printing and for the equipment used for that cultural production which was regarded with wonder in his institutions, with a sense of humility and holy simplicity, Don Bosco, speaking of himself in the third person, as he always did, said: 'In these things Don Bosco always wants to be in the vanguard of progress.' These should also be your words."[11]

Again, when speaking to blue-collar workers, the Pope pointed to Don Bosco as an example they would do well to imitate, as a protector they should invoke, as a teacher they should follow. This is what he said to the blue-collar workers of the Roman Gas Company: "You will all receive a medal bearing the likeness of Saint John Bosco who was a great friend of

[10] *L'Osservatore Romano,* June 17, 1934.
[11] *L'Osservatore Romano,* June 24, 1934.

Labor. He was a genuine friend of Labor who sanctified labor and who organized Labor Unions, but his organizations had an orientation toward deep sanctity." Again, to a thousand blue-collar workers from Legnano, the Pope said: "We wish to give each of you a medal of Saint John Bosco as a souvenir. By the grace of Divine Providence, We were permitted to proclaim Saint this great Servant of God. Saint John Bosco was a wonderful worker; We saw him in action and were fortunate enough to make his acquaintance. This wonderful organizer and educator of Labor, especially of the Labor of Young people, of professional, technical, skilled labor, is an ideal figure which suits any honest working man, and so We are happy to point him out to all of you as a wonderful model and as a great protector." Again, when speaking to Roman road maintenance workers, the Holy Father said: "We shall give each of you a small, holy medal of Saint John Bosco, and together with this gift, We will point out the splendid figure of this new Saint, a great Christian worker. May you be devotees of Don Bosco and may you invoke him as your heavenly patron, who intercedes for divine graces on your behalf." To other categories of workers, such as the Sardinian miners, the Pope just had the medal distributed without any comment.[12]

Don Bosco was singled out and pointed out also to the leaders of workers. In the audience granted to distinguished members of the Italian Association of Electro- technology who came from different regions of Italy, including Rome, Naples and Bari, the Pope referred to some new features of his encounter with the Saint in Turin. The engineers had just inspected the Vatican electro-technical plants and so the Pope said: "Your inspection of the Vatican electro-technical plants reminds Us of another visit made to another electro-technical plant, of a visit We made to a person who can really be called an up-to-date man, a man whom, by the grace of Divine Providence, We have elevated to the supreme honors of the Altar: Saint John Bosco, formerly a great man and now a Saint. We had the occasion to get to know him with certain ease and to have the good fortune to acquire a deeper knowledge of him; we considered him a first-class man, an extraordinary man from any prospective. Therefore We know that Saint John Bosco felt a specific attraction for machines, more than for any other tool; the most recent types of machinery, the most perfect electrical equipment, available in his times, many years ago. We recall that when We congratulated him for all the new equipment, for the equipment used in his paper mills, for the equipment used in the print shop and with everything

[12] *L'Osservatore Romano,* May 7–8th, 10th; June 27th, July 13th, 1934.

connected with printing and all kinds of machinery, he answered Us with a tone of pride, speaking as he always did in the third person in reference to himself: 'Don Bosco always wanted to be in the vanguard of Progress in such things.' These are the words to be remembered and to be put into practice."[13]

The same recollection received a few additional details when the Pope had an audience with the journalists of the Roman daily papers and the Rome correspondents of the most prestigious Italian newspapers. As usual, the cue was connected with the souvenir medals: "Saint Don Bosco can justifiably stand as an example, as a model for everyone to follow, because of that perfect type of humanity that he displayed. But he can likewise be singled out, and with very good reason, as a special protector of newsmen, since he had a special predilection for the press which he used in doing the good that he accomplished, especially for that good which had to do with his beloved Youth. Don Bosco was very fond of the press, and it was precisely in connection with printing machines that We Ourselves asked him how did they come to be so perfect. This beloved Saint answered, using the third person as he always did: 'In these things Don Bosco wishes to be in the vanguard of Progress, as always.' "[14]

We shall report only two more instances. The first is rather a curious one, while the second has the value of precious testimony.

The Palatine Guard of Honor had obtained a special audience with His Holiness, in order to reaffirm its filial piety and deep devotion to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. In a benevolent reply to the speech made by their Commander, His Holiness again mentioned Don Bosco. As he was distributing medals to the guards, the Pope said: "These are up-to-date medals and they bear the likeness of a great soldier: St. John Bosco, whom all the world will continue to call simply: Don Bosco. He was a great subject, an exemplary soldier of Christ, a most honored guard, a most faithful soldier for the Holy Church and for what the Heart of the Redeemer and the Heart of the Church hold dear: youth—tomorrow's future, and for whom he worked so much and in such a special manner. Don Bosco was not only a model of virtue, of perfection, and of priestly ministry, but he was also the soldier and the invincible and indefatigable worker for every undertaking directed to the good. Don Bosco will be a powerful intercessor for the members of the Palatine Guard."

[13] *L'Osservatore Romano,* May 17, 1934.
[14] *L'Osservatore Romano,* June 11–12, 1934.

While he handed out medals to the members of the Archconfraternity of Nocturnal Adoration, the Holy Father took the opportunity to single out something very important. How many people believed that Don Bosco, absorbed as he was in his work, was a man with little or no time for prayer. But the Pope did not think so. "The likeness on this medal is perfectly suited to you," he said "because this is the likeness of a man who adored, who adored continuously. We Ourselves had occasion to observe him absorbed in devout prayer both day and night, although his days were full of intense activity. Don Bosco drew from the Sacred Host all his immense zeal to educate Youth in their faith, and in their Christian way of living. Therefore, let this Saint be the protector of the members of the Confraternity of the Nocturnal Adoration. Let this be the spirit who does only good as a Christian should and as the guardian who protects your dear families."[15]

What a deep and lasting impression that visit to Don Bosco's first print shop must have made on Pius XI if, in his high office, he recalled it so fondly half a century later! Nor was the recollection merely an oft-repeated verbal reminiscence. As a matter of fact, in 1936 when the Pope wanted to reorganize the Vatican printing establishment, he entrusted to the Salesians its technical direction and administration. The Salesians who had been chosen to do this work, prior to their taking over the assignment, went to Castelgandolfo to receive the Pope's blessing. The Pope told them then that it had been entirely his own idea to send for them, and added that he had toyed with the project for a long time because he had always followed the developments of their excellent, extensive activity in this field assigned to them by their Saintly Founder, and felt deep admiration for them. The Pope told them: "With his clairvoyant insight, Don Bosco foresaw and realized fully the decisive contribution that printing and publishing would bring in our present day and age to the Christian apostolate and Christian education."

[15] *L'Osservatore Romano,* May 28–29; June 3, 1934.

Chapter 16

The Feast of Don Bosco's Canonization in Turin

In Rome, the capital of the Catholic world and the capital of Italy, it was the faithful of all nations and the citizens of the Eternal City who held celebrations in honor of St. John Bosco. But in Turin, the Saint's chosen domicile and the center of his charitable undertakings, as well as being the headquarters of his Society, the solemn, triumphal festivities organized in his honor had an additional flavor which featured intimacy and cordiality. This was to be expected in a place where everything still echoed of Don Bosco, of his zeal, of his goodness, and of his miracles, and where there were still many people who could recall having seen him and heard him speak, or who had been touched by his kindness and by his deeds of love. Thousands of tourists, both Italians and foreigners, swarmed into Turin during the three days prior to the celebrations. The majority of the pilgrims were moved by a sense of piety. However, if some had come only out of curiosity, they only had to move to the Valdocco Oratory grounds; this would have been enough to have their curiosity change to veneration. Truly, the Oratory environment seemed alive with sort of miraculous air. People from all walks of life were continuously ascending and descending the stairs which led to Don Bosco's humble rooms, all of them eager to see with their own eyes the place from which the Saint had shed so many rays of goodness.

The Italian Royal Family, the Princes of Piedmont and all the other princes and princesses of Savoy, took on once again the *high patronage* of the Turin festivities, as they had already done in Rome. They were joined now by two Knights of the Collar of the Annunciation: the 'Duke of the Sea,' Paul Thaon di Revel and the Italian Field Marshal Cajetan Giardino, as well as by Count Caesar De Vecchi, the Italian Ambassador to the Holy See, who had come as the official representatives of the Royal Government. All the Authorities and the Representative; of the lay and ecclesiastical worlds were members of a distinguished *Honorary Committee,* of which the Cardinal Archbishop was the President, having as his vice-president Augustus Iraci, the Prefect of Turin. The *Executive Committee,* which had worked in Rome under the direction of Father Berruti, the Prefect General of the Salesian Congregation, had already been at work in Turin for several

months. The experience of the 1929 Beatification Festivities had taught how many and what kind of Committees were needed if they wished to properly provide for everything. At this time, a significant contribution was provided by Salesian Patronesses, whose Honorary President was Lydia d'Aremberg, the Duchess of Pistoia, while the actual President was the Marchioness Carmen Compans de Brichanteau. It was not a question of generating enthusiasm, but of directing the manifestations in an orderly fashion. This promised to be very difficult in view of the overwhelming number of visitors from both near and far.

After careful preliminary study, the Executive Committee had already drawn up the program for the festivities. As April was drawing near, it had filed the application required by the law with the Prefect of the Province, requesting permission to hold the planned public manifestations. Then an application was made to the Mayor for permission to make free use of the municipal property on which various installations were to be erected, both in the immediate vicinity of the church of Mary Help of Christians and along the route where the procession was scheduled to pass. Another application was made for the use of parking lots for the busses and cars at the Stadium and elsewhere, for the necessary services of the police, and for medical assistance. When all permits had been received, application was made to the government for extraordinary discounts in railway fares. The Italian Ambassador to the Holy See, De Vecchi, took personal charge of this request and thanks to his mediation; a 50% discount for individual pilgrims and a 70% reduction for groups of no less than fifteen persons was granted by the President of the Cabinet of Ministers. One hundred thousand badges and fifty thousand passes or booklets were ordered, the former to be put on sale at one lire each, the latter at two lire apiece. The passes or booklets had thirty pages; twenty of them were vouchers for lunch baskets and meals at a ten percent discount rate; the remaining pages gave details of the scheduled festivities, the route of the procession, and the words of the hymn for the occasion. A great number of posters were printed, too. Each time the Committee received notification of pilgrimages, forms were sent, to be returned with detailed information useful in making arrangements for lodging, food, and the order of the procession.

The problem of finding accommodations was more acute than it had been in 1929, not only because many more ordinary pilgrims and many more distinguished Cooperators were expected, but also because the Rector Major, Father Peter Ricaldone, had sent invitations to all the Bishops of Italy, asking them to personally attend the festivities. Many foreign

Prelates, too, had announced their intention of going to Turin for the celebrations. However, the hospitality of the Turinese people was no less generous than it had been in 1929, and the pastors, the religious, the boarding schools and private houses vied with one another, offering hospitality to anyone assigned to them by the Committee.

Another problem centered on the need to provide adequate transportation facilities for the Bishops, especially because they had to travel back and forth from their lodgings several times a day. Senator Agnelli, the owner of the Fiat automobile plant, was most helpful in solving this problem, for he sent twenty new automobiles, each with its own chauffeur, to the Oratory playground for the duration of the festivities. He also gave orders that comfortable sleeping accommodations were to be made ready in the premises formerly used for the car storage at his plant, where some thousand Salesian pupils and past pupils could lodge. City Hall made available two hundred beds, and the military warehouses lent five hundred camp beds and one thousand five hundred straw mattresses with blankets. All available accommodations in hotels had been reserved two months in advance for foreign visitors.

Pilgrims were assisted in their travels and in their sojourn with facilities offered them by several companies, by the State, by private railways, and by the trolley car and bus companies. The Red Cross, Green Cross and White Cross Associations shared responsibility for First Aid services. Loud speakers were installed in the Oratory playgrounds, in the area outside the church of Mary Help of Christians, and all along Corso Regina Margherita, to enable the vast crowds of spectators to follow the sacred rites. Permission was obtained to broadcast by radio the more important church services. Expert masters of ceremonies, under the leadership of Father Eusebius Vismara, prepared themselves to direct with due dignity the ceremonies of so great a magnitude. Assisted by Professor Gribaudi and by the attorney Battu, noble gentlemen of the Royal Court agreed to supervise the protocol in the official welcome to be given to the princes and others of high rank. In short, no detail was overlooked in order that the extraordinary event might run smoothly, with order, with decorum and magnificence.

The preparatory triduum began on April 5, 1934. At dawn, the doors of the church of Mary Help of Christians were opened to the pilgrims who were already crowding the square outside the church. Inside, the church was ablaze with lights, richly decorated, and fragrant with flowers. The

painting by Crida, which as we already said, was later presented to the Holy Father on the 18th of the month, was hanging over the altar in St. Peter's Chapel, where the casket of the Saint was on view.

Very early that morning, the Crown Prince, who had left Pisa the night before, arrived quite unexpectedly and in great secrecy at the church, and went up immediately to Don Bosco's small rooms, where he attended Mass very devoutly.

He was recognized, and the news of his presence spread through the House, and reached the ears of the Superiors who hastened to pay him their respects. As he came downstairs, he crossed the playground, while the boys and the people of the town hailed him with acclamations; then he very graciously accepted a cup of coffee. It was served to him with great simplicity in the dining room of the Superior Chapter. While he drank it, he asked about the celebrations that were scheduled for the following Sunday. It was evident that he was still filled with the deep emotion he had experienced in Rome at Easter time.

For the next four days, the church was full of people. They also invaded the Oratory playgrounds, and gathered in front of the church. It was both edifying and touching to see the pious attention with which thousands of them outside the church followed over the loudspeakers the services being performed within. These conveyed to them the sounds of music and singing, and the sermons. Now and then the pilgrims crossed themselves, knelt down, or uttered the responses to the liturgical prayers; they were doing exactly what was being done by those able to kneel near the altar during the sacred ceremonies. We can hardly say enough about frequenting the sacraments! Could anyone imagine a festivity in honor of St. John Bosco without an infinite number of the faithful going to Confession and Holy Communion? The confessionals were literally besieged from dawn until dusk; hour after hour three priests administered the Blessed Sacrament almost uninterruptedly, at times by turn, at times all together.

Each of the three days of the triduum was assigned to a particular group. The first day was assigned to the Institutes and Associations for men. Assisted by eight Bishops, the Archbishop of Bologna, Cardinal Nasalli-Rocca, pontificated. The Princes of Orleans occupied special places of honor in the sanctuary. In the afternoon after Vespers, His Eminence Cardinal Hlond delivered the panegyric. Taking as a starting point the manifestations held in the Eternal City, he succinctly reviewed the multiform activity of Don Bosco all over the world.

April 6, 1934, was assigned to the clergy. The Archbishop of Naples, Cardinal Ascalesi, celebrated Pontifical Mass, while the choir of the Archepiscopal Seminary sang. Ten more Bishops joined the Bishops of the previous day. The evening sermon was delivered by the Archbishop of Milan, Cardinal Schuster, who explained how Don Bosco's multiform activity was related directly to his multiform sanctity, and defined him as a Saint great beyond description.

Saturday was assigned to Institutes and Associations for women, among whom, naturally, there were very many Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Cardinal Maurin, the Archbishop of Lyons, sang the Mass, assisted by some thirty Prelates, Archbishops, and Bishops. A large choir of young girls sang in a manner that defies all praise. It was directed by the magical baton of an elderly Salesian priest, Father Grosso, who had rehearsed them. A sermon, outstanding for the originality of details, for its depth of thought and for the eloquence of its form, was delivered by Cardinal Nassalli-Rocca in the evening.

On each of the three days there were two evening services. The second service began at eight o'clock for the convenience of working class people who came, filling the church and the surrounding area. While one Bishop preached, another imparted benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. Every evening twenty thousand tiny electric light bulbs instantaneously illuminated the façade and the cupola of the Basilica as soon as the Blessed Sacrament was exposed. Later, the Oratory band gave a concert in the square. All the while, the surging tide of devout pilgrims continued to file past the bier of Don Bosco without interruption.

We should not omit to mention a little episode which attests to the popular devotion and the delight felt for Don Bosco. An old married couple, both in their eighties, braved the discomforts of the journey from their remote Piedmontese village in order not to miss the triumph of the priest who had joined them in holy matrimony. They also called on Father Peter Ricaldone and told him that the only wedding present which the Saint, in his poverty, had been able to give them, had been an autographed copy of his *A Companion to Youth* in which he had written a dedication and a word of exhortation, telling them to read the chapter which speaks of Paradise and of the means needed to merit it.

The evening of the Vigil saw the members of Catholic Youth Organization of Turin perform a religious function worthy of mention. The members of the Youth organizations of Turin assembled for an hour of adoration in the church of St. Francis of Assisi, where Don Bosco had begun his

extraordinary Mission with the very popular story about young Garelli. The Diocesan President was present. The pious rite was an excellent spiritual preparation for the glorification of the following days.

Unfortunately, the day did not dawn serene on April 8th. It began with an irritating, fine drizzle which fell at intervals. Later it became a steady downpour which at times was positively torrential. But the piety of the crowd was not dimished by the inclement weather. At different places outside the church, Mass was celebrated without interruption, so that everyone might have the opportunity to fulfill the Sunday obligation. Even though it was raining hard, a priest approached the improvised altar in the square every half hour, and celebrated the Mass under a makeshift roof which protected him from the inclement weather. Cardinal Vidal y Barraquer, the Archbishop of Tarragona, said Mass for the boarders of the Oratory. Then the church was cleared to make room for the invited guests and different delegations.

The entire central body of the church was reserved for Archbishops and Bishops, for whom four long pews covered with damask were prepared at the far end of the church, near the altar rails. They faced each other, two by two. Behind the Bishops on the Gospel side of the altar, were pews for representatives of the Diocesan and Religious clergy, while on the Epistle side were pews for the General Council of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, for the delegations from religious Congregations of women, and for some important laity. Five special chairs faced the Archepiscopal throne in the sanctuary; these were for five of the Cardinals previously mentioned. The only one missing was His Eminence Cardinal Schuster, who had to return to Milan immediately after his sermon.

Fortunately, the heavy clouds covering the sky withheld the downpour of rain until the majestic cortege of priests coming from the Oratory passed through the churchyard and entered the Basilica shortly before the beginning of the Pontifical Mass. One hundred and twenty Prefects Apostolic, Bishops, Archbishops, and Cardinals, all wearing copes and miters, walked behind the cross-crowned staff and the altar-servers. The last in line was Cardinal Maurilio Fossati, clad in magnificent pontifical vestments, adorned with the sacred pallium. France was represented by the Cardinal of Lyons and by the Bishops of Annecy, Frejus, Langres, Lourdes, Metz, and Montpellier. Spain was represented by the Cardinal of Tarragona and the Bishop of Malaga. Poland was represented by the Cardinal Primate: Carl Hlond; Lithuania by two Prelates who had just been freed from Russian prisons;

Malta was represented by the Bishop of Gozo. South America was represented by the Bishop of Talea from Peru, the Bishop of Taija from Bolivia and the Bishop of Santos from Brazil. The Salesians who had come from India were the Prefect Apostolic of Assam, the Apostolic Administrator of Krishnagar, and the Archbishop of Madras; the Prelates of Rio Negro and Puerto Velho, and the Archbishop of Belem do Para had come from Brazil; the Bishop of Concepción had come from Ecuador; the Bishop of Punta Arenas (formerly Magellanes) from Chile; and Bishop Piani, the Apostolic Delegate from the Philippines.

All this procession of high-ranking clergy moved with impeccable good order, thanks to the careful preparations and the more unique than rare expert skill of Father Eusebius Vismara, who managed to have all the liturgical movements required by the ceremonies performed by an impressive company of Prelates with dignity, uniformity and proper training. The new Mass, composed especially for this occasion by Father De Bonis, a Salesian, was judged absolutely suited for the occasion.[1]

Cardinal Fossati preached his homily after the Gospel. He began by recalling the joy of the recent Roman Easter celebration, which the Holy Father had defined as a "*Salesian Easter.*" Then he depicted with great eloquence the magnificent figure of St. John Bosco, dwelling particularly on his characteristic aspect of Father and Teacher to the young, and he exalted his indefatigable apostolic work.

Meanwhile, outside the rain was pouring down. Despite this, the playgrounds, the square, and the avenue all were crowded with people. The picturesque—and perhaps never seen before—spectacle of umbrellas, one jammed tightly against another, formed something akin to an immense Roman *Testudo* [a tortoise shell] which hemmed in the church on all sides, as though it were a fortress about to be assaulted. It might be said that those countless open umbrellas looked like a mushroom patch, using a more suitable image.

After the hours of the Spirit there come—and rightly so—the hours of the body. Father Giraudi, the Economer General, had transformed the spacious dining room of the artisans into a stately hall where the Cardinals and Bishops partook of their repasts. The artisans' dining room ordinarily

[1] *L'Archiginnasio* (Bologna, May–June issue, 1934): "This is one of the more significant and exciting compositions of sacred music that has been produced in recent years. In it you can detect as outstanding to the highest degree those stylistic features and great original forms that we had the opportunity of singling out when we critically reviewed other compositions by the same author. It is not too much to say that, this Mass displays the total creative power of the author as well as the technical mastery of his music. We are dealing with a composition, which leaves the footprints of originality and novelty within the field of modern sacred music, and it does reveal intuitions and ideas worthy of consideration and admiration.

was used by more than three hundred people, and thus it was vast enough to accommodate comfortably all the newly-invited guests, plus all the other guests, and properly honor them on this feast day. To a great extent trained hotel waiters served at table. In spite of the noble transformation of the dining room, the distinguished guests could read the words "Dining Room of the Artisans" above the entrance door. This inferred that Don Bosco's undertakings have the miraculous ability to adapt themselves easily to any contingency.

Between the religious services, the faithful continued to file silently and steadily through the church, each eager to say a prayer beside the glass casket which contained the sacred remains of the Saint. Nor was there any break in the stream of people who visited Don Bosco's rooms. Another procession was scheduled for the afternoon, and all wondered whether or not it would take place. All the arrangements had been made. The route was established;[2] the marchers had been divided into eighteen groups, and assembly points had been assigned to each group, as well as instruction on when to join the procession and take its proper place upon arrival; the individual group leaders, too, had been appointed. Already on April 3rd, invitations had been sent out, while a special hymn had been written,[3] set to music and rehearsed. But the weather had to be taken into account. The rain continued to fall in a steady downpour, and matters were uncertain until three-fifteen, when word came that despite the deluge thousands and thousands of people, disregarding the deluge, had stood in line since early morning all along the established itinerary. Their heroic patience prevailed over any passing indecision. The loudspeakers announced that the procession would take place. An outburst of joy was heard all about the Basilica, spreading rapidly into the adjoining streets. The decision had been imposed upon all by the crowd, though it would now become a procession with umbrellas. Three hundred thousand hearts were impatient to acclaim the Saint, no matter what the cost.

It was not a procession of compact groups, as it had been in 1929. Yet, had the sun been able to pierce through the low hanging clouds, Turin would have enjoyed the spectacle presented by a longer line of Bishops

[2] *The route, which was 5,300 meters long, was the following: starting from: Church of Mary Help of Christians–Corso Regina Margherita; Corso Regina Margherita–Corner of Via Consolata; Corner of Via Consolata–Piazza Cittadella; Piazza Cittadella–Corso Oporto; Corso Oporto–Corso Re Umberto; Corso Re Umberto-Piazza Solferino; Piazza Solferino–Corner of Via Pietro Micca; Corner of Via Pietro Micca–Via XX Setembre; Via XX Settembre–Cathedral; Cathedral–Corso Margherita (Corner); Corner of Corso Regina Margherita–back to: Church of Mary Help of Christians.*

[3] The lyrics by Father Rastello, music by Father Pagella.

than the glorious old city had ever witnessed within its walls. The splendid parade of miters and other episcopal insignia was missing, but the Prelates themselves were there. Moreover, the inclement weather only seemed to emphasize the love that Turin had for its own Don Bosco. There is a story about a little child who had asked her father why so many people were standing in the rain to await Don Bosco, and the father is said to have replied: "Because everyone loves him." Could simpler words than these be found to explain the mystery of such a great event? It was true indeed that *aquae multae non potuerunt extinguere caritatem,* loosely translated as "the downpour could not stop the love for Don Bosco."

This triumphal procession underneath umbrellas lasted four hours. The eighteen individual groups followed one another with the regularity of soldiers on the march. The enthusiasm displayed by the marchers and by the crowd never waned, from beginning to end. No finer expression could have been found to display the universal, unanimous consensus about the honor due to Don Bosco than this procession. When we review its composition in detail, we see how every category of person, and how many representatives of foreign countries were there to pay tribute to a humble son of the people who, with his heroic charity, had "conquered the hearts of Modern Men, who all too often go astray, following the false appearances of good."

The procession began at 3:30 P.M., preceded by a company of municipal police on bicycles.

GROUPS I and II — Groups of little girls dressed as pages led rows of young girls from the Oratories of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. There were 2,500 of these, and, as they marched, they sang the official hymn to the strains of the Salesian Band from the House of San Benigno. Behind them marched 3,000 boys who attended the Salesian Oratories of Turin; they were accompanied by the "Michael Rua" Oratory brass band, the Band of St. Paul's' Oratory, that of the first festive Oratory of Valdocco, and the "Cardinal Cagliero" Band.

GROUPS III, IV, and V — The third group was made up of the squadrons of the Fascist 'Little Italian Girls' Organization and that of 'Young Italian Women' (Giovane Italiane) with delegations representing the Association of Fascist Women. This group was accompanied by the *Excelsior* Band and musicians of the 'Fiat' After—Work Recreation Association of Turin. The third Group was followed by the 4th, which was made up of

small boys of the National Fascist Association 'Balilla', young Fascist Vanguard Troops, (Avanguardisti) and delegations of the Association of Fascist Men, with the Bands of St. Bernardine's Parish and the Turin District Group "Gustave Doglia." The long columns of 17 Turin Institutes and Boarding Schools for girls were separated by the band of Young Apprentices, which was followed by the pupils of 15 Institutes and Boarding Schools for boys, and by a large delegation from secondary schools who made up Group V.[4]

GROUPS VI, VII and VIII — Group VI was led by the Salesian Band from the "Count Rebaudengo" Institute of Turin. It was made up of 830 boys from the Salesian schools of Turin: Sassi (for orphans only), Martinello, Rebaudengo, St. John's and Valsalice. It was followed by Group VII, led by the band of St. Julia's parish church of Turin, and it was made up of 6460 girls, pupils of the schools and oratories of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from Piedmont. Their ranks were broken by the Salesian bands from the Chieri Oratory and the Santena Festive Oratory. 3840 boys from 22 Salesian schools and oratories from Piedmont marched in the 8th Group, led by the Salesian band from the Oratory of Asti. The ranks of the marching boys were interspersed with the bands from the Salesian schools of Novara, Faenza, Trieste, and San Dona del Piave.

GROUP IX — This group represented Catholic Action Organizations: first to march was the Young Girls Association all dressed in white, a true vision of purity; behind them there came the University Students Association "Gaetana Agnesi" and the Association of Catholic Women. Their ranks were separated from those of the Associations for Men by the Salesian band from the school of Casale Monferrato. The male associations were: Young Italian Men, the University Students Associations "Caesar Balbo," while the Salesian band from the Agricultural Institute of Lombriasco led the Association of Catholic Men and the Diocesan Council: in all, a group of more than 8,000 people.

GROUP X — This group was more complex, and was led by the Salesian band from the school of Alexandria. It headed a large delegation of past pupils of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Cooperators, followed by the Salesian band from Varazze, the Ladies of Mary Help of Christians, and lady members of Third Orders. The Salesian

[4] In a circular addressed to Secondary School Principals, the Royal School Superintendent, A. Mondino, had written: "I want our Turin schools, which have a very special love for the Great Educator, to take part in the demonstration of faith, and to send delegations of their pupils and teachers, with banners, and to march in the procession."

band from Borgo San Martino marched ahead of members of the Conference of St. Vincent de Paul and some 2,000 past pupils of Don Bosco. The Salesian band from the school of Penango brought up the rear, accompanying the joyous singing of a large delegation of Salesian Cooperators and members of Third Orders.

GROUP XI — This group was led by the band of the Salesian Oratory of Milan, and consisted of delegations of schools of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, both from Italy and from abroad. The 794 young girls wore delightful uniforms. Their ranks were separated from the delegations of boys from Salesian schools in Italy and abroad by the Salesian band from Sampierdarena. The Milan schools were represented by 380 boys, while other schools were represented by a total of 560 boys who had been chosen from their companions because of their good conduct, study, and work. When the pupils from the "Pius XI" school of Rome marched past, the crowd broke into applause for the Vicar of Christ, shouting, "Long live the Pope!" at regular intervals.

GROUP XII — This was made up of foreign pilgrims representing every country of Europe: 217 pilgrims from Belgium, 1380 from France, 600 from Spain. Among other countries where Salesian Houses are located, the largest group was from Argentina. Escorting the pilgrims were bands from the Missionary Agricultural School of Cumiana and from the Salesian school of Milan.

GROUP XIII — This group was led by the band of the Rome institute Pius XI, and was made up of children of Mary and of religious Congregations of women. Behind them came the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and their General Council. The band of the St. Francis of Sales Oratory in Turin brought up the rear.

GROUP XIV — Behind the latter band, the lengthy cross—crowned staff appeared; it was followed by Group XIV, made up of lay brothers and seminarians from several religious Congregations; the students from the Diocesan Seminaries of Giaveno, Chieri, and Turin, Salesian seminarians, a number of Salesian Bishops and Archbishops wearing cope and miter beneath the shelter provided by their umbrellas. His Eminence Cardinal Fossati, the Archbishop of Turin, together with Cardinal Ascalesi and Cardinal Hlond rode in the automobiles which the *Fiat* had kindly put at their disposal. The Knights of Malta and of the Holy Sepulchre, and Knights and Commanders from similar Orders, provided a striking, decorative note to this group. Behind them came the Cardinals, the Rector Major, the members of the Superior Chapter who walked on foot, and then

the delegations of Salesians, Cooperators, and past pupils who formed a Guard of Honor around the triumphal vehicle which bore the glass casket with Don Bosco's sacred remains. The Reverend Father Louis Orione, Count Eugene Rebaudengo—the General President of Salesian Cooperators and Senator of the Realm, and Masera, the President of the past pupils, marched in this group.

GROUP XV — The crowd acclaimed the glass casket, which halted briefly in Piazza Consolata, where the XV Group was waiting to join the procession. This group consisted of representatives of different religious Orders and Congregations, Fathers Provincial, members of the Diocesan Clergy, Church Rectors, Salesian Priests and Pastors, Superiors—General of religious Congregations, Canons from collegiate churches and from the Cathedral, and a number of Prelates, Bishops and Archbishops. They stood under a modest shelter outside the Basilica.

GROUPS XVI, XVII, XVIII — The *Fiat* and a number of noble families had offered automobiles, for the convenience of the Bishops; however, many of them preferred to brave the rain on foot, under the protection of their umbrellas. The picturesque procession then continued on its way, amid even greater enthusiasm than before. Group XVIII fell into line as soon as the glass bier entered the Piazza Cittadella. It thus made room for two other groups which were stationed at Piazza Solferino. The 18th Group consisted of: the band of the 1st Legion of the Anti-Aircraft Militia of the Territorial Defense, and of representatives of local Fascist groups, the Association of Combat Volunteers, the National Association of former Service Men, Retired Officers of His Majesty's *Carabinieri,* former Service Men who had volunteered for the campaign in France prior to 1915, the National Association of Infantrymen, Grenadiers, Alpine Troops, Bersaglieri (crack Infantry Troops of Italy), Artillerymen of Piedmont, the Mountain Artillery, the Engineers' Corps, the Italian Seamen's Union, the Piedmontese Cavalrymen, the band of Public Utilities Workers of Turin, and of Civic Associations, Civil Servants, Government Employees, and National Fascist Federations: Professional, Artists, Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, and Overland Transportation. There were also representatives of the unions of Fascist Workers: Industry, Commerce, Agriculture, Handicrafts, and the National Associations for After-Work Recreational Facilities. Included in this group were several other groups of pilgrims who had failed to register their participation in time.

A steadily increasing crowd lining both sides of the wide streets hailed with frenzied acclamations the glass casket containing the body of the Saint

which was clothed in priestly vestments, as though he was about to celebrate Mass, and wearing the magnificent chasuble donated by Benedict XV. Hundreds of people, carrying the indispensable umbrella, craned their necks to catch a glimpse of the glass bier's triumphant progress from where they stood, in the high stands that had been erected in the Citadel gardens.

The glass bier moved like in a vision from Heaven, carrying with it the assurance of a blessing. It was mounted on a chassis covered with damask, and with flowers all around it. As it passed before them, men bared their heads, many people fell to their knees, disregarding the rain and the mud; women made the sign of the cross, children threw kisses, and shouted Hurrahs! "It seemed," *La Stampa* wrote, "as though Don Bosco had come back to life, as though his spirit were living on, a spirit already glorified and unforgettable."

Handfuls of flowers were thrown from windows and balconies in a steady shower, and through the window panes everyone tried to catch a glimpse of the face of the Saint as he passed, like a conquering monarch, through the city where his prodigious undertakings had first been conceived and had been miraculously developed.

GROUPS XVI and XVII — were waiting in Piazza Solferino where Count Paul Thaon di Revel, the mayor of Turin and Senator of the Realm, fell into line immediately behind the glass bier; he was smiling underneath his umbrella which protected him only in part. With him were the two deputy Mayors, and behind, there were the civil Authorities and the Consular Corps, representing sixteen different countries: Albania, Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Czechoslovakia, France, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, the principality of Monaco, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru. There were also 46 mayors who represented the municipal communities of Piedmont where there were Houses of Don Bosco's Salesian Society. The place of honor was given to the Mayor of Castelnuovo Don Bosco.

The military band of the Turin garrison separated Groups XVI and XVII, which consisted of delegations of the National Association of Relatives of Fallen War Heroes and Fallen Fascists, the National Association of War Invalids and Disabled Men, the Blue Ribbon Institute, the University of Turin, the Pontifical Faculties of Law and Theology, the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, the Institutes for Higher Studies, the Fascist School Association, the Fascist Association of University Students, the "Dante Alighieri" Association, the National Italian Association for the Transportation of the Sick to Lourdes and to 6 Italian Shrines, and the "Don Bosco" Teachers Union.

The procession now passed along Via Pietro Micca, coming from Piazza Solferino, and down Via XX Settembre, to enter the square in front of the Cathedral where it passed before the representative of the Italian Government, and their Eminences Maurin, Vidal y Barraquer, and Nassalli-Rocca, and Montanelli, the Archbishop of Vercelli.

To the right of Count De Vecchi stood Iraci, Prefect of Turin, and Andrew Gastaldi, the Federal Fascist Secretary. Cantilo, Argentina's Ambassador, Field Marshal Giardino, political, military, and civil authorities, and a number of noble ladies filled other seats.

Other Bishops, Canons, and Priests waited inside the doors of the Cathedral, and several hundreds of spectators had found places in the large grandstands erected across from the church.

Here again the glass casket halted for a moment, to allow the Cardinals and Bishops to enter their automobiles and join the procession.

The march was then resumed, passing slowly along the spacious Corso Regina Margherita, beneath the artificial illumination of the streets and the flickering radiance of lighted candles carried by the clergy. It was a spectacular sight! Two sturdy files of soldiers who had stood for several hours in the downpour were now barely able to stem the billowing surge of humanity that crowded the sidewalks behind the cordons. The farthest ranks were jammed against the walls of the buildings, and were trying by every conceivable means to climb to some high point, so that they, too, might get a glimpse of the most majestic groups in the endless procession. Many mothers held their umbrellas high over the heads of the soldiers trying to stem their forward onslaught, and children darted between the legs of their elders so as to reach the front, finding shelter beneath the short military capes of the soldiers. Invocations and acclamations arose with a delirious enthusiasm and burning faith. This was the peak of the triumph along the whole procession. It was seven-thirty when the glass bier entered the square in front of the church of Mary Help of Christians. The Basilica was radiant in a fairy-tale blaze of lights which reached Our Lady atop the cupola, bathing the statue in a flood of multi-colored light, while the bells pealed a joyous symphony of glory. From within, the notes of the organ succeeded one another to create wonderful sounds which seemed to bid Don Bosco to hurry his entrance into his church, even as the immense crowd outside tried to delay his entrance so that it might view once again his mortal remains and the magnificent spectacle.

Don Bosco's entrance into the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians marked the final triumph. The Archbishops and Bishops were gathered in

the pews assigned to them, and the whole church was full of dignitaries and clergy. The Cardinals were on their thrones and two princes of the House of Savoy were in the sanctuary with the representative of the Italian Government to welcome the glorious remains of the Saint. Prince Adalbert of Savoy-Genoa, Duke of Bergamo, had come especially from Milan to honor Don Bosco with his presence, and to render to him his affectionate tribute. Her Highness, Princess Mary-Adelaide of Savoy-Genoa, with the Prince represented the entire royal family. The Central Committee of the Lady Patronesses of the Salesian Institutes had a pew to themselves near the St. Joseph's altar.

The glass casket was placed in front of the main altar, and Cardinal Fossati retired to the sacristy to don his vestments. He then returned to the altar to impart the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. At the same time, Cardinal Hlond appeared on the balcony of the (SEI) International Publishing Company, to bless the crowd which lined Corso Regina Margherita and the Rondo.

After the singing of the *Iste Confessor* and *Tantum Ergo,* the Cardinal imparted a triple blessing from the main altar; then he moved in procession to the door of the church, to impart it once more to the immense crowd, over which a deep, religious silence fell at the warning notes of the trumpet. There was a brief moment of deep emotion, of adoration, and then came the deafening shout: "Long live Don Bosco!" Lastly, inspired by the children, the immense throng broke into an enthusiastic acclamation of their Saint and into a hymn of benediction and of thanksgiving to God.

After the Divine Praises, (Blessed be God) they sang the Saint's hymn and other hymns as well, while the majority of the throng began to leave for home. The pilgrims, anxious to follow the timetable for their departure, hastened to find their separate means of transportation with which, after long hours of travel, they would at last reach home. The vast crowd which still remained pressed forward to enter the church, and now gained access to it. Late that night, thousands of pilgrims were at last able to file past the glass bier, to imprint kisses on it, and say a prayer.

Meanwhile, their Royal Highnesses were saluted by the Rector Major, by the Authorities and the Salesian Superiors, with great respect, and sped off through the inner courtyard in their automobile, acclaimed by the boys, as they left behind them the Mother House and Don Bosco the Saint. Acclamations were renewed when the Archbishop and other Princes of Holy Church took their leave; the Ambassador, Count De Vecchi, was given a special tribute of gratitude.

That same evening, the representative of the Italian Government informed *La Stampa* of his impressions: "Today was one of the most solemn days in the whole history of Turin. The highest, glorious honors were awarded to the Saint of Turin, Don Bosco—and exactly where he worked most. This is the new Saint John who bears the same name as the Patron Saint who has protected the Faithful City of Turin throughout the ages. His body was borne through the city, hailed by the entire population with signs of the highest devotion. The inclement weather did not quench the enthusiasm of their affectionate Christian piety. In fact, it only seemed to enliven it, just as adversity always intensifies Christian religion! An entire population led the procession of the glass casket which contained Don Bosco's sacred remains; it was followed by the wonderful aristocracy of valor, of sacrifice, of patriotic ardor. The past was barely represented; few were the old people; the present also was scarcely represented; but the majority was made up of the future generations: thousands upon thousands of youngsters whom Don Bosco loved the most. And everyone invoked him loudly with one hymn which never became monotonous, because it was the living invocation expressed by all:

Don Bosco Ritorna
Fra I Giovani Ancor!
[Don Bosco now returns
Once again midst his boys!]

A French past pupil spent two nights traveling by train, took part in the celebrations and then went back to his office on Monday morning. This is the note he wrote to the Editor of the *Salesian Bulletin*: "I would have gladly given ten years of my life not to miss the enthusiastic demonstrations in honor of Don Bosco."

Chapter 17

Some Particular Celebrations in Honor of Don Bosco the Saint

After the triumphant exaltation in Turin, there were a few lesser, some even very small, celebrations in honor of Don Bosco. However, they have a certain importance and significance. Moreover, there were still a few events missing and needed to complete the full glorification of the Saint. These events were to be later connected directly or indirectly with Rome. This chapter will provide a brief account of these events.

St. John Bosco was commemorated officially by the civil authorities in Turin, as well as in Rome. The setting, the officially designated speakers and the people who participated in these commemorations beautifully responded to the demands of the occasion.

Near the Stura River, on the outskirts of the City of Turin, a stately building was soon to be inaugurated as a training center for Salesian lay brothers who would head the Salesian schools in missionary territories. The school had been erected thanks to the generosity of Senator, Count Eugene Rebaudengo. He did this in memory of his beloved wife, whom, a short while before, God had called to Himself to reward her for her Christian virtues. The inauguration of this important Missionary school offered an ideal opportunity to render an official civil tribute to Don Bosco. The highest authorities and leading citizens of Turin graciously accepted Father Peter Ricaldone's invitation, and assembled at the site on the afternoon of April 10, 1934. Pennants, banners and tri- colored flags waved in the breeze between the standards and coats of arms of the different countries where Don Bosco's sons were active. The distinguished guests were greeted by the joyous musical strains of a band as they took their seats on the platform reserved for them in the spacious playground. A long, wide terrace above the portico was crowded with hundreds of pupils from Salesian schools and oratories, from municipal schools and other educational institutions. Princess Mary-Adelaide of Savoy-Genoa was the last to arrive, with her escort, Count De Vecchi, the Ambassador to the Holy See. She took her place between their Eminences, Cardinals Fossati and Hlond. The hymn

"*Suonate Campane*" ["Bells ring forth"] was sung, and then a tailor's apprentice, a missionary aspirant, read a speech welcoming Her Highness, the Cardinals, the Representatives of the Italian Government, and the other authorities present. At the end of this he presented to Her Highness a beautiful basket, filled with roses and violets. The official speaker then made his appearance on the platform. He was Peter Fedele, Senator, Professor of Medieval and Modern History at the University of Rome, Secretary of State, and former Minister of National Education.

He began by praising the century-old city of Turin and the people of Piedmont. He spoke of the trials which the city of the Savoy dynasty had to confront through the centuries, of the flourishing number of saintly people sent to Turin by Divine Providence to heal the woes which tormented our land, adding that this was the predicament of the city of Turin at the beginning of the 19th century. This was the predicament of that Turin which saw and loved Fr. Cafasso, Fr. Cottolengo and Don Bosco. Then he had everyone relive one of the more meaningful encounters between Cottolengo and Don Bosco. It was Father Cottolengo who had a clear, brilliant vision of Don Bosco's work, and of the humble priest from Becchi, and on that occasion this is what Father Cottolengo, the Founder of the Little House of Divine Providence, told Don Bosco, "You should get yourself a cassock of stronger fabric, Don Bosco. Then the boys will be able to get hold of it without tearing it apart, for the time will come when there will be many who will grab hold of it." An extraordinary prophecy, indeed! "For Don Bosco's mission," the speaker went on, "was to give a Christian, civil education to the young people of Italy, and to spread the faith of Christ, and together with it the name of Italy, all over the world."

The speaker then began to examine the marvelous undertakings created by the Saint. With words filled with deep emotion, he described Don Bosco's first spiritual conquest—a poor young orphan whom he had gathered from the streets on the feast of the Immaculate Conception in 1841. Then he turned to the year 1846, when the Founder of the Salesian Society had assembled around himself more than four hundred boys and had a house of his own. Then, in 1875, when ten Salesian Missionaries were leaving for Argentina, Don Bosco said: "Who knows whether this may turn out to be like a small grain of millet, or like a mustard seed which is about to grow and be ready to do much good?" What actually happened far surpassed this prediction, for when he closed his eyes at last in 1888, the little grain of mustard seed had blossomed prodigiously and today the

branches of that huge tree which had grown from it are stretched all over the earth. "In the presence of such miraculous achievements," the speaker said, "we mortals bow our head, overawed, and perceive the Finger of God in this undertaking."

He then illustrated the charitable Italian Saint's work on behalf of Youth. "With an extraordinary lucidity and with intuition, Don Bosco realized what the great statesman who today steers our national ship of state is trying to accomplish; I mean that he understood that the fundamental problem of a nation's vitality is, substantially, a problem of education."

Following this, he repeated things which De Vecchi had mentioned before at the Capitol Hill, when he had magnified the figure of Don Bosco against the background of the Italian Risorgimento, and he went on to speak of the Saint's educational system. He recalled how during his term of office as Minister of National Education, he had included in the curriculum for Teachers' Training Schools the holy priest's educational system among other classic works of pedagogy. This system was inspired solely by practical, pedagogical and lived experience and not by written treatises on pedagogy. Don Bosco had rebelled against the intellectual pedanticism of a most sterile age, and had fought far more energetically and effectively than most modern pedagogues for the Christian freedom of Youth, and for a happier atmosphere in the school. He had a very updated notion about freedom of Youth: They should not be held in check by a rigid and austere discipline, for while this approach may force people to keep silent and display an external good behavior, it does not encourage, but rather slows down and stifles, the development of the child's spiritual faculties. "Give youngsters all the freedom they want. Let them run around, jump and be noisy to their heart's content," he wrote. "There should be no barriers between the teachers and the pupils, but only love. Do you want your pupils to love you? Then love them," Don Bosco said. This is the principle that inflames his educational system: Love!

The speaker then recalled the meeting between Pope Pius XI and Don Bosco, and made a rapid resumé of the exaltation of the Saint on Easter Sunday in Rome: "Don Bosco is the universal glory of the Church, but as the Pope said, he particularly is the glory of Italy. Fascism, which honors the God of a prayerful people, the God of Saints and of heroes, bows reverently and devotedly in front of Don Bosco who was honored triumphantly at the Capitol Hill in the presence of the Head of the Government, following his glorification in Saint Peter's Basilica. People of Turin, raise your banners and your pennants before the glass bier which contains the

mortal remains of this great Piedmontese Saint, who turned Turin into the capital of a great empire which spreads to the ends of the earth, to which Don Bosco has extended the kingdom of Christ and made known the name of Italy."

The lively attention of his audience, their repeated outbursts of applause, and the final ovation gave eloquent proof that the speaker had been able to gain the approval of his listeners. When Father Ricaldone stood up to thank the guests who had honored Don Bosco with their presence, everyone applauded as a sign of general acceptance. Then the inauguration ceremony began. Escorted by the two Cardinals and followed by the authorities, the Princess walked to the foot of the staircase and cut the symbolic ribbon. Then she toured the House, inspecting the new premises while two different bands took turns to perform a varied musical program. After the invited guests had departed, the doors were opened for the crowd which had waited outside. Visitors continued to tour the new school until nightfall.

Two days later, the Oratory celebrated its *dies natalis* [birthday], for it had been on Easter, April 12, 1846, that Don Bosco had taken possession of the humble shed lent to him by Pinardi. The anniversary was marked by four different ceremonies. The first of these was a tribute rendered to the Saint by pupils of elementary schools and by the little boys who were members of the National "Balilla" Organization. At nine o'clock in the morning more than ten thousand little boys and girls marched into Piazza Maria Ausiliatrice, led by their schoolteachers and principals, to attend Mass which a Military Bishop, Bishop Bartolomasi, celebrated in the open. The Rector Major, his Chapter, the Secretary of State Fedele with his wife, the Superintendent of Schools, and the Federal Fascist Secretary, with other authorities, were all present. Four boys from Assam, wearing picturesque native dress, stood at the foot of the altar. The Prefect Apostolic, Mathias, had accompanied them first to Rome, then to Turin. During the course of the Mass, the Bishop explained the reason for the celebration, and told them of Don Bosco's great love for children. Eight children made their first Communion. It was truly a touching sight to watch the good behavior of that vast, devout congregation of little ones. During the Mass they sang liturgical hymns and hymns in praise of Don Bosco, led by Maestro Pachner who had taught these hymns in the various schools of the city especially for this occasion. After the Mass, the authorities and the children entered the church; they filed past the altar of the Saint where they were given a pious souvenir to remember the occasion.

Immediately after this ceremony, the authorities entered the playground of Don Bosco's first festive Oratory, where another crowd, this time of boys only, and a sizeable number of Cooperators were assembled. The cornerstone of the immense new building which now stands open to the Oratory activities was about to be blessed and put into its place. Accompanied by Bishop Bartolomasi and several Salesian Prelates, Cardinal Hlond took his place on the platform, and the entertainment began with the hymn, "*Suonate, Campane*" ["Bells, ring forth"] which was sung by the whole assembly. Then came a talk, read by a boy from the Oratory. After this, the military Bishop praised Don Bosco's undertakings and his educational system. Among other things, he said: "Don Bosco's system today has been understood at last. Our national educational system should be not purely physical, military, and patriotic, but also a moral and religious educational system. I detect the vibrant spirit of Don Bosco in all the numbers of this magnificent program. And if I am an active collaborator of the Fascist Government, I have also been a cooperator of Don Bosco for many years, and I am very proud to be one." His Eminence then recited the ritual prayers for the blessing of the cornerstone. A parchment on which many people had signed their names, several medals, and some coins had been put inside a crystal phial which was then sealed and inserted into a crevice in the stone, which was lowered into position. Father Peter Ricaldone brought the ceremony to an end with a few appropriate words.

In the sixteenth volume of these *Biographic Memoirs,* we reported that in 1883, the future Pope Pius XI had visited the Oratory and had enjoyed for two days the amiable hospitality of Don Bosco. The dining room where the young Lombard priest Achille Ratti had sat at table with the Saint, was built, exactly on the spot, where the famous shed rented to Don Bosco by Pinardi, had once stood. Eighty-eight years before, it had been converted into a small chapel. Today it has been transformed into the pretty little church, which is named after its original owner.

On this day, full of memories, Father Peter Ricaldone wanted to have inaugurated a marble tablet with an inscription commemorating the historical visit. The Salesian Cardinal removed the veil from the commemorative marble tablet in the presence of the Salesian Superiors, the boarders, and a little group of chosen friends. The austere, yet paternal, features of Pope Pius XI had been carved in profile form by Fait, the sculptor, at the top of the inscription, which was read aloud by Father Fidelis Giraudi. The inscription was in a narrative form and went thus: "His Holiness Pope Pius XI, in the year 1883, as a young priest, sat here at the dining table of St.

John Bosco, and while the body received nourishment, his spirit was nourished and delighted by the words and example of the man whom, the Vicar of Christ was, one day, to his own great, personal joy, to elevate to the honor of the Altar, declaring him Blessed on June 2, 1929, and later glorifying him with the halo of the Saints on April 1, 1934, Easter Sunday."

Later, under the portico, Father Peter Ricaldone spoke from the little pulpit placed exactly where Don Bosco had given the goodnight talk so many times to all the boarders of the House. He recalled those far-off days, and explained the significance of the ceremony performed, enumerating all the benefits which had been extended to the Salesian Family by Popes Pius IX, Leo XIII, Pius X, Benedict XV, and Pius XI. He dwelt especially on the benefits rendered to the Holy Founder and on all the honors which had been showered on the Salesian Family by Don Bosco's Pope, Pius XI. He recalled the words uttered by Don Bosco as he was about to die, the words which were bequeathed to his sons as a legacy: Devotion, affection and fidelity to the Vicar of Jesus Christ. Then he read aloud a telegram he had just received as an answer to his own message sent the previous Sunday to the Pope, after Don Bosco's glorification. In this telegram Cardinal Pacelli had written on behalf of the Pope: "Received with fatherly delight the filial homage of the great Salesian Family, rightly jubilant for devout solemn festivities in honor of Saint John Bosco, Founder. The supreme Pontiff gladly sends implored blessing, joyously wishes that from the supreme exaltation of outstanding benefactor of Youth new glories may come upon the well-deserving Institute, new growth for activity at the service of Christian Family."

The tribute to the Pope was barely ended when the bells of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians again summoned the faithful to another celebration equally solemn: this was the laying of the cornerstone for the altar of St. John Bosco. The church, which in those days had been crowded to capacity with so many ecclesiastical, civil and military authorities, as well as with such a vast crowd of ordinary people, also on this occasion was filled with a variety of people, from those of the humble working class to the highest monarchs. An immense tripod, swathed in crimson velvet, with a large cube of marble in which a cross was carved on each of its sides, and hanging from its center on a chain, stood in St. Peters' chapel where the glass casket with the body of the Saint was exposed. After the choir had sung the *Magnificat,* Colli, Bishop of Parma, who had been born in the same part of Piedmont as the Saint himself, ascended the pulpit and delivered an allocution which was broadcast over the loudspeakers to the

crowd outside in the playgrounds and in the square. The speech was so ingeniously contrived and eloquently expressed that it deserves to be reported in its entirety here:

"Blessed by God, kissed by the affection of his sons and by the gratitude of Italy, of the Church and of the entire world, this stone descends now into the earth; this stone is a milestone on the high road of the empire and of the triumphs of Don Bosco. This stone is the crowning of a great past and the beginning of a greater future. This stone now grafts the altar of Don Bosco to the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians and widens its extension, just as Don Bosco always leaned on Mary Help of Christians and always widened her devotion.

"This stone descends into the depths of the earth so that what is built upon it may become even greater than it is, just as Don Bosco worked in depth, and for this reason his undertakings had a worldwide extension. This stone now descends into the earth searching for the living rock, which is Peter, which is Christ, just as the Salesian undertaking has always searched to be united with Christ and with Peter.

"Ninety years ago, on this very spot, Mary appeared to Don Bosco in a prophetic dream, and presented to him the future Basilica, saying: 'Here is my House! From here, my Glory!' Today Mary repeats the same words and tells the new Saint 'Here, also, is your house! From here, also your glory.'

"One day Don Bosco said: 'Every stone in this basilica represents a grace.' This stone, which is to be lowered into the ground today, is an entire poem of graces, a lyrical ode of gratitude and love.

"This stone sings for Don Bosco of the smile of Mary, of the love of five great Popes, of the devotion of thousands of Bishops, of the admiration of men who were leaders of nations.

"This stone sings on behalf of Don Bosco of the innocence of innumerable children, of the enthusiastic and efficacious purity of millions of youths, of the busy hum of countless workshops, of the prayers of numberless hearts, of the hopes of many families, of the comfort of so many afflicted people, of the resignation of so many lepers, of the civilization of entire peoples, of the gratitude of so many nations, of the apostolic suffering of so many Missionaries. This stone sings of the splendor of two Roman Cardinals, of the sacrifice of two martyrs, of the burgeoning of so many Saints.

"The altar and the enlarged Basilica will also sing of the increasing glory of the Saint who in our present age was the most Italian, and also

the most international, of all the Saints. It will sing of this Saint who possessed the staunch Piedmontese character, the Italian genius, and a universal heart, a heart open to all. It will sing of a Saint whose life was a miracle and a novel, in whose work the supernatural seemed natural. It will sing of a Saint who recreated in the XIX century the Fioretti of St. Francis of Assisi, and had intuitions about the future, who knew about all kinds of daring actions and knew about all kinds of prudent actions, who was a priest with Cabinet of ministers and thought of himself as an Italian at the altar of God. It will sing of a Saint who knew no other kind of politics than the politics of the *Pater Noster* [Our Father] and whose advice princes sought after eagerly. Don Bosco was as tender as a mother, yet with the invincible will of a general; he knew how to make himself loved in order to be obeyed; he educated people by using religion, he persuaded them by using reason; he taught his boys to have faith in God, to love their country, to look up to Heaven and have the earth bud forth fruits, to sing while praying, and to pray while they worked. This stone will sing of a Saint who taught them both in school and at play, in church and in the theater, who taught them with sports just as he taught them by making an examination of conscience, he accustomed them to blend the Exercise for a Happy Death in the chapel with the joyous festivities in the dining room. He founded a Society, which is at one and the same time the most cheerful, and yet the most open to make sacrifices. This stone will sing of a Saint who as the Gospel says, was simple among the simple, and yet a giant among giants; who published the first collection of our Classics and the most popular booklets with equal conviction; who wrote a *Sacred History* of the chosen people, as well as a *History of Italy* (our own land) with the same warm heart; who was an orphan who later became a father to many orphans; who was without bread and yet he gave bread to all; who was once a child who had no home, yet he gave a home to all children; who had struggled hard to find someone to teach him, but founded schools without end; who was a craftsman and trained whole generations of craftsmen; who was a Saint and, like a new edition of St. Benedict, baptized not only the ancient barbarians of the Pampas, but many new civilized barbarians living in Europe also.

"This altar, this Basilica, will keep on singing throughout the ages the glory of the Saint who was not so much a man *of* his day as a man who did much *for* his day; who understood the things which his generation needed and did not share its faults; who intuitively perceived the dangers that threatened it and forestalled the evil consequences which might have

come upon it. At the dawn of labor problems, he guarded in his schools, where students and apprentices lived together, the sacred fire of cooperation among classes. In the age of the Rights of Man, he taught the love of God, and though he felt the heartbeat of Italy's springtime and endured the anxious moments of Italy's independence, he always had faith in the supremacy of its spirit. This altar, this Basilica, will sing of the Saint who ever since the night of September 20, 1870, has cherished in his heart the hopes for the conciliation between Church and State, and from the year 1871, he initiated negotiations to achieve this end, together with John Lanza. These initial negotiations were crowned with success, thanks to the great titanic genius of a great *Duce.*

"Throughout the ages, this altar and this Basilica will sing of the greatness of this Saint 'for whom Italy could never do enough,' as Francesco Crispi once said. They will sing of this Saint of whom Pius XI declared himself to be 'an enthusiastic admirer.' They will sing of this Saint for whom our national government ordered an official Roman triumph at the Capitol Hill for the first time in history, immediately after his glorification in the Catholic Vatican.

"Let then this altar rise!

"New Salesian Apostles *tamquam Lapides Vivi superaedificabuntur* [as living stones, will be built thereon] (1 Pet 11:5).

"From this altar which for the sons of Don Bosco shall be their father's own hearth, they will draw that flame of faith and of civilization which, as ambassadors of Christ and members of perhaps the most authentic League of Nations, they will continue to bring to the ends of the earth.

"Let this new altar rise and let this lovely Basilica expand!

"Our tormented modern Society hungers more for God than for bread, has greater need of Saints than warriors; needs a greater amount of prayer sites like this, of schools of faith and sacrifice, of hospitals where souls may be healed, and has a greater need of beacons of the light of charity.

"On the day that Don Bosco was canonized, one Italian newspaper wrote, 'at the very moment in which the new Saint was proclaimed in St. Peter's, men were seen embracing one another, and bursting into tears.'

"Such an embrace and such tears are at once a symptom and an omen.

"It is the dream that Don Bosco had at Becchi, that continues to come true; there are other wild animals who change into lambs; it's Don Bosco's system of Education, it's Don Bosco's spirit crossing the boundaries of Salesian Houses and reaching out to all parts of the world, in order to renew,

in a more conspicuous style, the same conquests, the same triumphs: the conquest of virtue, the triumph of Christ.

"May God graciously grant us this, and may St. John Bosco obtain it for us!

"It is on this prayer that we lay the foundations of this altar!"

During the musical execution of Father Pagella's *Exultate Deo,* the more important guests signed their names on the parchment, which was then inserted in the glass phial in the usual way, after Father Fidelis Giraudi had read what was written on it. After the ritual blessing by Cardinal Maurilius Fossati and the first spadeful of lime, the block of marble was lowered very slowly, to wait until the pious generosity of the faithful rendered possible the execution of the building plans which included not only the memorial altar, but also the expansion and redecoration of the whole church. A *Te Deum* of thanksgiving and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament brought the festivities to their official end.

But the end of the festivities did not mean that all the manifestations organized in Turin during the month of April were finished.

A century had passed ever since John Bosco, a student at Chieri High School, had changed his domicile and lived at the "Pianta Caffé." While attending the fourth and fifth high school grades he lived at his café, enduring the hardships of life, dividing his time between his studies and the menial tasks of waiter-busboy. He waited on tables in the restaurant; he slept in a little cubbyhole beneath the stairs, and at times he went hungry. But such sacrifices did not frighten him, because he was able to go to school, buy the books he needed, and care for his basic needs. While he lived there, his schoolmates came to know of the hardships he endured. They supplied him, as best they could, from time to time with food to help eke out his meager fare, for they felt great compassion for him. A certain Joseph Blanchard, son of a lady who owned a fruit store, helped John more frequently than the others did, and with his mother's permission, gave him things to help still his hunger. That café still stands at the time of this writing and the son of Joseph Blanchard is still alive. Don Bosco showed his unceasing gratitude to him, until the end of his life.[1] Thus it seemed proper to have something to immortalize the memory of Don Bosco's lodging in a place which witnessed his heroic virtues. Mr. and Mrs. Caredda took care of the expenses, and a memorial stone was placed on the façade of that house. The Archpriest of Chieri blessed it on April 22, 1934, in the presence

[1] *Biographical Memoirs,* Vol. 1, p. 223.

of the Oratory Superiors, and Father Peter Ricaldone explained to the assembled townsfolk the meaning of the inscription. This is how it read: "In this house – in the year 1834 – compelled by the hardships of life – the student John Bosco – became a humble waiter – in the café of Joseph Pianta. Here, his schoolmate, Joseph Blanchard – who admired his virtue – felt compassion for his misery. – John Bosco, a priest, and founder of the Salesian Society – was deeply grateful to him. – In the year of his canonization – and on the one hundredth anniversary of this great act of charity – the Salesian Cooperators—and the admirers of St. John Bosco – dedicated this marble stone – as an example for the young people of Chieri. – April 22, 1934."

From Chieri, the Superiors, Salesians, and Cooperators hastened to the hamlet of Becchi, where a goodly number of mothers of priests and of clerics had gathered. The Diocesan Council of the Women of Catholic Action had accompanied them on pilgrimage to the humble house where Don Bosco was born, to commemorate the woman who first had formed the heart of the man who was destined to light up the heavens, as a radiant star of priestly holiness. In praising Mamma Margaret, the speaker said that it was proper for all Christian mothers to glorify her, because even though she herself was illiterate, she nevertheless had known her catechism by heart and taught it to her children not only by word, by also by example, thus playing a major role in the formation of a Saint. A memorial stone, with Mamma Margaret's likeness on it, had been set in the rough wall, and was unveiled and blessed by Father Peter Ricaldone.

Erminia Vanzaghi-Brunetti, a schoolteacher from Turin, climbed the rickety wooden steps attached to the wall and leading to the room where Don Bosco was born. Often they had creaked beneath his mother's feet. The schoolteacher turned around at the head of the stairs, and addressed a few appropriate words to the mothers who were standing below, as well as to other mothers who were physically far off. Her surroundings inspired her to recall, very clearly and very colorfully, a few of the scenes and conversations which the drab walls seemed to have kept the memory and to be echoing. Many of the women present were so overcome that they gave way to tears, nor were the women the only persons who wept!

In the meantime, the so-called triduums had begun. These triduums may be celebrated within a year from the date of the Saint's canonization, everywhere in the world, after a previous request by the Ordinaries to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. For several consecutive months, the various

language editions of the *Salesian Bulletin* carried reports of the more important of these triduums. One could say that there was no parish in Italy and no diocese in the Catholic World that did not have such celebrations. The popular fervor which accompanied such celebrations was simply incredible, as were the spiritual fruits drawn from them. Sermons, lectures, speeches by well-qualified people, interventions by Bishops and civil authorities, articles in newspapers and magazines, special publications, all brought about various forms of Christian renewal, with hundreds and thousands of people receiving Holy Communion. The echo of Don Bosco's name shook even the intellectual world, to the point that we saw the emergence of famous writers from various nations engaged in knowing and making known the man and his undertakings. Biographies were printed even in Bohemian and Arabic.

Milan, the capital of Lombardy, distinguished itself among all the cities in Italy. We will forego a series of isolated manifestations and single out only two very important instances.

The evening of April 25, 1934, the larger hall of the Conservatory of Milan was crowded as it had never been before, with the elite of Milan. They had come to hear Don Bosco commemorated by Charles Delcroix, the famed disabled war hero, a parliamentary deputy and President of the National Association of Disabled Servicemen. Delcroix had lost both eyes and both forearms during World War I, but he had never lost his keen intelligence and his most noble spirit. He exalted Don Bosco with a great affection that seemed to emanate from his entire being, and spoke with a persuasive eloquence which captivated an audience which included the Count of Turin, the major authorities, and several Bishops.

The fact that he was a Salesian past pupil prompted him to begin his address in a way that produced a fantastic effect. All Italy listened to his speech over the radio, and the boys and Superiors of the Oratory of Turin were moved to wild enthusiasm by it. This extraordinary document should not be overlooked or lost. Here it is:

"I am here first of all to express my gratitude!

"As a small boy, I attended the old Salesian Oratory on Via Sant'Andrea in Leghorn, and for a long time. Later, I went to the boarding school of the Immaculate Conception in Florence. This gives my words the value of a witness and the meaning of a thanksgiving.

"It was at that time that in my heart a seed was sown which was to bear fruit later on, when the gusting winds of death came and there was an unexpected darkness in my path. If I did not fall at that time, if I did

not become lost, it is because a point had remained unshaken, a footprint to follow, had remained clear within me.

"Nothing would have been able to justify and remove my sadness, if faith had not come back with the face of my childhood, when, without even understanding, I had asked for that strength that I would need in adversity. Now, if I ask myself from what depths certain voices have been able to reach me, I have the impression of hearing once again the shouts and songs of the days when we all played and prayed with the same innocence, with the same happiness. It was there, at that school, that I had learned the truths which would be forgotten but never erased in the violence of youth.

"Springtime and Youth are dangerous seasons during which the outcome of games and of life are decided. It is for this reason that the Saint, who had many avenues open to his pious work and was already to be found with prisoners and the sick, chose the young who were most in need, because they were at risk more than any others. He felt that his work was necessary, and that it would be more fruitful among children who are heirs to the future.

"At any rate, that had been his real vocation from the very beginning, and if for a time he had thought about becoming a Franciscan, it was because he loved poverty, which in any case he would have encountered among the people. As a matter of fact, the first indication of what the Salesian Oratory would be like can be seen in the gatherings which little John organized in the meadow in front of his home on Sundays, to keep his little friends entertained with all kinds of games in order to invite them to say their prayers and sing hymns; that early initiative contained all the basic principles and all the types of works now associated with his name all over the world. In that child who repeated the sermons he had heard in church and performed the stunts at the fair, we can discover the basic features and attitudes of Don Bosco.

"Really, Don Bosco remained a child at heart up to the end of his life, and knew how to be the companion of all of his pupils. This is the basic element, not to say the actual secret, which underlies Don Bosco's successful work.

"The human soul is really much simpler than the unhealthy curiosity and the tendentious fantasies that biased analysts would have us believe. The requirements of the human soul remain perennially the same, and anyone who is willing to try to understand them and to respond to them without trying to complicate and provoke them, is sure to penetrate it. Don Bosco knew this, and was able to reach the soul by following the road of

feelings and elementary needs. His system of education was so simple that he always declared not to possess one, nor did he leave any text on it, unlike many other theorists and founders of schools who never were able to touch the heart of youth.

"His activity can be summed up in these principles: entertain in order to instruct; assist in order to educate; awaken curiosity in order to get attention; respond to the needs of this life in order to keep in mind the promises of eternal life; by all means possible keep the mind serene so as to let the heart be unburdened, because first and foremost, youth must be seasoned with gladness. Don Bosco knew that to be happy is more the condition than the way to serve God. As a student in Chieri, he had founded the '*Società dell'Allegria*' [The Cheerfulness Club] for he knew that in young people, sadness is almost invariably the offspring of evil thoughts. He wanted cheerfulness to reign supreme in his school, for he knew that cheerfulness gives rest to the mind and disposes it to study; it unburdens the heart and prepares it for prayer, because it is from happiness that gratitude is born and gratitude is the beginning of love, much like hope is the substance of Faith.

"Don Bosco demonstrated that teachers should not only teach and supervise, but also should share the life of their young students, take part in their games and in their conversations, because this makes their task much easier and it does not undermine their prestige. Anyone who chances to enter one of Don Bosco's Houses at recreation time will be astonished to find that Religious and boys recreate together, and their joy is full because no one is excluded from it.

"A few days ago, while walking down a quiet street in Rome, I was thinking about Don Bosco and his work, when I was suddenly struck by the sound of merry voices. I thought I was able to recognize the noise to be heard all along the streets next to the old Oratory of St. Andrew's. I was passing near a garden hemmed in between houses, and soon I realized that it was not children perched all the way to the top of those trees, but birds, together saluting the sun as it was setting. In this, I found a suitable comparison to express the happiness of the children of the working classes in the Houses built for them by Don Bosco.

"It was precisely the boisterous merriment of his boys that brought Don Bosco so many difficulties when he tried to find a place for his first Oratory, because the noise of a feast cannot be endured by those who have no part in it. And so he was forced to move from the Convitto of St. Francis to St. Philomena's Hospital, from St. Martin's Chapel on the banks of the

Dora River to St. Peter in Chains Church, next to the cemetery, and then for a time he was forced to pitch his mystic tent in the middle of a meadow, before he found a shed at Valdocco where he could say, as in a dream: 'Here is my House; from here, my Glory.'

"Turin was celebrating Easter Sunday in 1846, and the young priest was dreaming about the glory due to God. But in his humility, he could never have imagined that on Easter in 1934, in Rome he would be raised among the Saints, and the glass casket carrying his remains would be followed by a retinue of princes and people through the same streets of the city where he walked in the midst of his boys, misunderstood by many and mocked by others.

"This was due to the fact that people considered his main idea to be a mere fixation; they even had doubts about his sanity, although he never did anything that gave grounds for their suspicion. In vain would anyone try to find one of those moments of mystic violence, one of those gestures of divine folly, that are found and are spoken of in the lives of other Saints. With Don Bosco, everything is simple and plain. Love motivated him without undue upset, and Faith enlightened him without consuming him—but his love was inexhaustible and his Faith, absolute. For this kind of faith nothing is easier than what is impossible, nothing is more natural than what is marvelous, and his whole life was a continuous series of dreams come true. He prayed in his churches and lived in his Houses before he ever built them, because he had seen them in his dreams, and he kept on seeing them, or rather, he kept on believing in them.

"He possessed and practiced to a heroic degree all the virtues, yet he never made display of it, and almost seemed to be unaware of himself. He knew that life is a serious matter, and that it also can be very great, without any need to over-emphasize it. He met with adversity, he experienced bitterness, and he endured attempts on his life, yet he never played the victim or put on the airs of a hero. When he was in danger, his protector was a nondescript gray dog that saved him; in his life everything had to remain simple and credible.

"Every age has brought forth the Saints it needed. That is why saints who were mystics were followed by saints who were warriors; contemplative and praying Saints were followed by Saints who performed penance, who had ecstasies; intellectual Saints were followed by dynamic Saints. Don Bosco was a Saint of a life lived in all its multiple and actual aspects,

in all its needs. Don Bosco is the Saint of our times, silent in his suffering, obscure in his greatness; he is the Saint of our people, staunch in his faith, serene in his works.

"Don Bosco began to build his Churches and Houses as soon as he acquired the land on which to build, because he came from a farmer's stock and knew that the harvest is in the hands of Divine Providence and what needs to be done is sowing the seed, that is, performing an act of faith. Don Bosco performed the most extraordinary things, but with simplicity; with the same unaffected manner he tended the victims of the cholera epidemic at the Lazaretto of St. Donatus and went to preach against heretics at the church in Viarigi. With the same familiarity he dealt with prisoners and spoke to the boys. He was in everything a son of the sort of people for whom war was an event much like all others, and who even today speak as though it had happened elsewhere, farther away. He is the son of that type of people who lacked everything, who owned just the piece of land to fall on and he always acted as though he had victory right in the palm of his hand. Intuitiveness, practicality, industriousness, shrewdness are Don Bosco's traits and they are the characteristic traits of our kind of people, country people. He had the peasant gusto for community festivities which used to be called 'sagre' and which provided what people needed to enjoy the things of this world and to remind them about God. Most of all, he had learned from his sort of people a respect for time, time which is sacred, which cannot be wasted without committing a sin. This is why he was able to do so much that it seems beyond belief they could be accomplished in one lifetime.

"During the process of his Canonization, the Church examined some of his miracles related to healings which had surpassed any human explanation and beyond all hope. But the living and the lasting miracles are his undertakings which have spread all over the world so rapidly and with such fruitfulness that they cannot be explained satisfactorily by saying it was due just to good luck not as the reward of virtue. The Hand of God is here. Next to the lowly shed where the Bishop was obliged to remove his miter so that he might stand upright, Don Bosco raised a temple for a multitude of faithful. Almost in the twinkling of an eye, the humble House where his first boys had found shelter became a city of learning, a city of prayer, whence his sons went forth and spread all over the world. Today his Churches number by the hundreds, his Houses by the thousands, and all of them were built by the sheer force of his will, enlightened by his faith.

The reason for this is that this Saint lives on and still wields his influence just as before, even more than before, and rarely is there found a Congregation which has kept intact the spirit and the Mission of its Founder so faithfully, and which advances with such success.

"It surely is filled with meaning and admonishment, the very fact that this miracle came about and that it is renewed daily in an age which has evolved so much that it feels ashamed of its faith, so refined as to be delighted by superstition, in an age which is afraid of everything, yet believes in nothing. Obviously there are powers unknown to us and values which have been forgotten, if a poor priest was able to create this mighty undertaking, which is not made up only of buildings, but of souls that are inspired. And it is this growth of vocations, this renewal of vocations and of acts of dedication, which make us pause.

"Our Saint invites us to meditate, not only of the times in which he lived and labored, but also of the land where he was born, because he was born in a farmhouse of Castelnuovo d'Asti, a classic land, part of that Piedmont which is sacred to modern history as the cradle of Kings, as the garrison of those weapons which had to fulfill a vow, and prove true the destinies of a united nation.

"Just as the *Rinascimento* was essentially a Tuscan phenomenon, the *Risorgimento* was essentially a Piedmontese phenomenon. Naturally, both of these movements led inevitably to Rome. At a given moment, within the confines of the ancient Sardinian kingdom, the men who were needed, the men who were destined for that undertaking, were born: the King subjected to humiliation and the victorious King, the Thinker and the Man of Action, the Politician and the Soldier—all of them were found together, in that place where the Poet had preceded them. In the same region, at the same time, but on another dimension, the figures of three priests stepped forward. Naturally these priestly figures were unknown and forgotten up to our days. Two of them are Saints, the third Blessed.

"We must stress the fact that all three were priests, because the greater Religious Orders, even when they are active in their ministry among people, are devoted solely to their faith, whereas the Mission of the Clergy is both a religious and a civil one, because at one and the same time the Clergy represents the militia within the Church, and an authority within the State. All three priests were engaged in social work, which in a way had political significance, because it contributed, very effectively, albeit indirectly, to the success of the *Risorgimento.*

"These three priests were Canon Benedict Cottolengo, the Servant of the Poor Father Joseph Cafasso, a Teacher of Priests, and Don Bosco, the Apostle of Youth.

"The first of these three priests gave shelter to the unfortunate and the derelict, and taught us that no effort should be omitted, no soul should be regarded as lost, either to this world or to Heaven. He taught us that people are to be loved, even when their bodies are covered with repugnant sores, and they are to be tended to even when they are most degraded.

"The second priest devoted himself to training the Clergy, in whose ranks certain Jansenist and Jacobin trends had appeared. At that time, false doctrines under the names of rigorism and regalism had filtered into our country from France, which threatened the truth of our faith and the discipline of the Church in that land which had always been exposed, throughout its history, to the threat of heresy, no less than to the threat of violence from invading armies. In the conflict between Church and State it was imperative that Religion should not be victimized.

"Don Bosco came last; he can be considered the pupil of Cottolengo and Cafasso and, under certain aspects, he embodied in himself their individual missions and virtues, pursuing a particular course of action, so special that we do not know whether we should admire more its religious value or its social value.

"Gioberti had clearly indicated the three most pressing needs of our time: The Ascendancy of Thought; National Autonomy; Emancipation of the Masses. The Saint devoted himself to the emancipation of the masses whose needs and sufferings were known to him. In particular, Don Bosco felt irresistibly drawn to children, for he knew that the future fruits of Faith and of the Nation must be founded on Youth. Even when he admitted academic students to his Houses, after he had admitted the young artisans, he never abandoned the masses to which, after all, the impoverished middle class of both rural and urban areas belongs. That Don Bosco's action was successful can be proven by the countless children of the working classes, who, had it not been for Don Bosco, would have remained ignorant and forgotten at a time when the State had neither the will nor the adequate means to fulfill its mission.

"Don Bosco planned to create Italians, when Italy had not yet been created. That is why, after his exaltation as a Saint, he was honored as a citizen on the sacred Hill of Rome, the Capitol.

"Yet it would be wrong to regard him just as another patriotic priest. True enough, on the eve of 1848 Don Bosco put his boys through their military drills, and ordered prayers in his Oratories so that the King might be safe, and emerge victorious. But Don Bosco was completely caught up in his mission, and he should be regarded above all as a Servant of the Church, as a Minister of God.

"He had no choice in the conflict between Church and State; yet he was one of those who did not contribute to worsen the dispute; rather, he did his best to lessen it when tension was very serious, acting as an honest intermediary between the Curia and the Government.

"The Conflict between Church and State was inevitable, because our unity had to be brought about in Rome; but it had to be endured as something necessary, and not used as a pretext for attacking that faith which to the people constituted the very foundation of the unity which was sought. Today, when time has stilled human passions and has re-established our sense of values, we must confess that the whole issue was embittered far more than it should have been on both sides, and we can also say that it was not the more talented people who spared no effort to render definitive a necessary, yet surmountable, dissent. In fact, it was surmounted as soon as the nation became aware of its strength and destiny.

"Far more than one could ever believe, Don Bosco contributed to evade what seemed irreparable, and he not only desired the Conciliation, but he predicted it with such divinely inspired foresight that everything leads us to proclaim it a prophecy.

"Ever since Dante, outstanding men have condemned the proximate establishment of the two powers, but they all have deplored conflict between them. History shows us that, even though it was divided, our country was great and powerful, and that faith was alive and sincere, as long as its religious and civil life blended in fruitful harmony. Then there rose together magnificent palaces and the majestic cathedrals which gave such splendor to our cities, which, thanks to the richness of their industries and flourishing commerce, were powerful enough to create a State and courageous enough to dream of an empire.

"When Faith is obscured and Rome becomes decadent, then our slavery and misery begin. The last three centuries were the saddest and darkest periods of our history, mainly because the Church, besieged in its truth and threatened in its structure, turned inward refraining from all those undertakings to which previously it had given thrust and means. On the other hand, the sense of the divine, equally essential for the life of individuals

and the politics of the State, was lost. Gioberti was right when he pointed out that this progressive, reciprocal estrangement between politics and religion was the first cause of our weakness and of our sickness. The protest, which took the form of a revolt against Rome, could have come only from a people that had never been conquered by the sword, and who had been subjected to the faith of Rome for too short a time. But we cannot banish from our existence that Religion which is Catholic, inasmuch as it is Roman, without at the same time denying and wounding ourselves. Therefore, the men who pretended to ignore it were no less wrong than those who tried to suppress it.

"The *Duce* has accomplished many great things. He has rescued the nation from its obscurity; he has redeemed the land from the marshes; he has founded institutions and built new cities; he has extended our dominion and rebuilt our ancient power. But to this date, his greatest accomplishment, his most superlative deed, has been the Conciliation. This is the finest accomplishment of our era, the ripe fruit of both these victories, because the Conciliation assumed in the people the conscience that the War had given back to them, and in the State, the authority which Fascism has given back to it. Thus in Rome harmony has been re-established, which will cast its radiance all over the world and is destined to revolve about the two fires which have given it power and splendor.

"Don Bosco prepared and announced this event. At the present time we cannot foresee its far-reaching consequences, but from the visible signs that we see, we believe that it marks the beginning of a new era. It was a lady from Siena who brought the Pope back to Rome; it was a countryman from the region of Asti who acted as go- between in the negotiation between the Vatican and the government of the King who once again had entered into Rome: this is a sign that our people are profoundly aware of the necessity of this peace.

"We, the people, exalt the Saints and the heroes alike, because we are aware that our power stems both from the will which accomplishes, and the faith which inspires, from the virtue which redeems, and from the genius that creates.

"Perhaps never before was the proclamation of a Saint greeted with so much joy, because never before was our conscience so serene, nor was the link between the divine and the human element in life and in History so clearly evident.

"Today, the Church, relieved of all other cares and more than ever transcending time, is solely dedicated to the mission which is hers. Today

the Nation, which has overcome all divisions and calmed all disturbances, has found peace, and confidently moves forward along its road. That is why all eyes from all sides look to Rome, for She is the dispenser of all truth, the Mistress of Life itself."

Immediately after Don Bosco's civil commemoration, a triduum, beginning on the 26th of April, 1934, took place in Milan. By order of Cardinal Schuster, eminent speakers of the Milanese Clergy, among whom there were many Bishops and Salesian priests, preached the triduum simultaneously in seventy churches. This, even as it led or led back a great crowd of men and women to the Sacraments, paved the way for a great glorification on Sunday, April 29, 1934, when a relic of the Saint was carried in procession. Even in Milan rain intruded itself into the program, yet not even the Milanese was dismayed by the weather. The magnificent procession, in which more than twenty thousand people took part, marched unperturbed through the streets of the city, while a reverent crowd stood watching all the way up to the Cathedral where the Archbishop was waiting, seated on his throne, together with the Cathedral Chapter and the authorities. The singing of the Ambrosian Hymn, the *Te Deum,* marked the end of the glorious event. Similar festivities, perhaps not as solemn, yet equal in the number of people from all walks of life participating, were observed in many more large Italian cities, and also abroad. The various editions of the *Bulletin* gave sufficient accounts of them to assist future historians of the Church, who may be called upon to relate her vicissitudes during these tormented and troubled times.

The wave of piety, of spiritual reflection and good works that had been sparked by the canonization of Don Bosco, created worldwide desire to see his cult extended throughout the universal Church. Petitions to this effect reached the Holy Father even from distant dioceses, so that a *Positio* was compiled and discussed during a regular session of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on January 14, 1935. They came to a favorable decision which found its result in the Decree dated March 25, 1936,[2] "It was a great joy for all Christians that the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Pius XI, has decreed the supreme honors of the Saints to Blessed John Bosco during the nineteenth centenary anniversary of our Holy Redemption. And immediately, not only the Salesian Society but also many dioceses, began to honor him in a special manner as the Father of Youth. Since devotion to him was increasing day by day, countless Bishops appealed to His Holiness, Pope

[2] Latin Text in App. Doc. 19.

Pius XI, and humbly and prayerfully implored him to extend the cult of such a great person, who had done so much for the Catholic Cause, to the universal Church for the sake of promoting greater fruits of sanctity among the faithful in general and among young people in particular. His Holiness consulted the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, here undersigned, and in the course of an audience granted on March 25, 1936, he graciously deigned to satisfy the wishes of many Cardinals, Archbishops, and Bishops of the Holy Roman Church with a Decree declaring that the feast of St. John Bosco, Confessor not Pope, was to be celebrated by the universal Church, *with double minor rite, according to the Office and Mass attached to the Decree, on January 31st,* the feast of St. Peter Nolasco, confessor, being transferred to January 28th."

Another event contributed to enhance Don Bosco's glory. That same day, January 14th, Cardinals and Officers of the Sacred Congregation of Rites authorized the introduction of Father Michael Rua's Cause of Beatification and Canonization. If the glory of the son redounds to the honor of the father, what can we say of the glory reflected on Don Bosco by this peerless son of his, whom he had molded and chosen as his successor, and who had striven all his life to emulate Don Bosco's virtues? If there had been any dearth of proofs to corroborate the saintliness of Don Bosco, the sanctity of Father Michael Rua would be tantamount to a thousand proofs in support of it.

Many were the ways in which Don Bosco's exaltation was perpetuated besides the numerous transitory religious and civil tributes rendered to him. Streets and schools were named after him in large capital cites, as well as in small towns and villages. Statues of him were unveiled and monumental churches were dedicated to him. The most important of these churches was built in Paris.

One monument which above all we cannot fail to mention is the monument which placed Don Bosco among the founders, both men and women, of religious orders and congregations in the Basilica of Saint Peter. There is an interesting story mentioned by Father Michael Rua in reference to this event. The first time the Saint visited Saint Peter's with Father Michael Rua was on February 26, 1858. After he had remained for a few moments in silent, almost ecstatic, contemplation of the spectacle offered by the magnificent Basilica, what struck Don Bosco most was the row of marble statues representing the founders of religious families. And behold, here we now are at the moment when he, too, is to be received into one

of these niches which were empty and awaiting an occupant. The statue of Don Bosco did so in January 1936.

This monument is a colossal marble group created by Canonica: the main figure is four meters, eighty centimeters high, without taking into account the pedestal on which it is mounted, which is one meter and seven centimeters high. Don Bosco is shown with his right arm extended in a noble gesture, pointing out the Pope's altar to two youngsters, whom he held with his left arm in a warm and fatherly embrace. The two youngsters are the present St. Dominic Savio and Venerable Zefferino Namuncura from Patagonia. The artistic concept and its expression are a consummate piece of art. Canonica was the sculptor, known worldwide, and a member of the Italian Academy of Art. In his work Canonica was not fettered by a preoccupation for a photographic likeness. He disregarded the traditional poses shown in the paintings and statues of Don Bosco. He captured and expressed in marble Don Bosco's spiritual greatness, with a creation which belongs to an art well worthy of its name. Joseph De Mori left us a description of this statue. The following are some of his reflections.[3]

"From the extensive range of pictorial representation of Don Bosco, Canonica has captured a faithful synthesis, which expresses both Don Bosco's likeness and his character. The statue speaks to us 'of the Saint's meditative spirit, of his intellectual power, of the foresight of a Saint, of an apostle, which, joined to the paternal smile of his strong mouth, perfectly suits his character, full of charity and love.' His attitude is 'eloquent, spontaneous, yet composed and austere, too.' "

The critical reviewer gives this picture of him: "With his left arm he retains under his protection two youngsters who personify his Mission, both spiritually and historically. The taller of the two, Dominic Savio, was his favorite pupil, and he is soon to follow the Saint in the honor of the Altars. The smaller boy is a young Patagonian, Zefferino Namuncura, son of the great Cachique who was converted, together with his whole tribe, by Cardinal Cagliero. Don Bosco and the Salesians adopted this youngster to indicate that Don Bosco's apostolic work for youth does not know boundaries of continents or prejudices of race. With his right hand Saint John Bosco points to Saint Peter's hallowed tomb, and it looks as though the two youngsters are hanging onto his lips to listen to that profession of fidelity to the Roman Pontiff which is the inviolate badge worn by Don Bosco and now immortalized in marble. While faithfully adhering to history, this pose does

[3] *L'Avvenire d'Italia,* January 9, 1936.

not relegate Don Bosco's statue just to its niche as a purely decorative element, but it forms an organic part of the temple, associating it with the hallowed shrine of the Vatican crypt. The marble group as a whole displays with its essential lines a harmonious symmetry, forming an almost musical chord like that of a triad in its gradual rise from the figure of the Indian boy to that of Savio and then to the figure of the Saint, all three blending most admirably in the clean-cut majesty of the Protagonist. Thus 'the *real* and the *ideal*' complement each other and satisfactorily respond to our human need, a contemporary need, and reveal to us the Saint, as in a heavenly vision."

In order to avoid the error of which, unfortunately, some have been guilty, we should understand that neither Savio nor the Indian boy represents his native land, but where Dominic Savio stands for the youth of the entire civilized world educated by Don Bosco and his disciples, Zefferino Namuncura stands for the youth being redeemed by the Missionaries of Don Bosco in lands which have not yet been warmed by the sun of Christianity and civilization. If a son of the Pampas was chosen to represent this second category, it was solely because Don Bosco sent his first Missionaries to preach the Gospel to the Indian tribes of Patagonia, then still savage tribes, as everyone knows.

The monument was inaugurated on January 31st. As a rule, these ceremonies are very simple, but on this occasion the Basilica looked as though an important and solemn function was to be celebrated. The area in front of the *Confession altar* was filled with outstanding laymen and Ecclesiastics, while ten thousand boys, standing in five separate rows, filled the rest of the central nave: they represented the schools of the city, by order of the Ministry for Education. Under the arcades at both sides there were large student groups from several Salesian schools of Rome and the *Castelli Romani,* while a mixed throng of the faithful found a place in the lateral naves. All in all, once again, as *l'Osservatore Romano* correctly observed, "it was a new affirmation of faith and devotion, which allowed everyone to relive the unforgettable Easter of 1934."

Cardinal Pacelli, the Archpriest of the Basilica, entered the church at half-past eleven a.m. Under the direction of Father Antolisei, one hundred eighty choir singers from four different Salesian schools sang a Hymn which he had a composed in honor of the Supreme Pontiff, and then Ghedini's *Acclamationes* for Pius XI. After this, the attendants of St. Peter's, the so-called 'Sampietrini,' with the consent of the Cardinal, and at a sign given by the Master of Ceremonies, removed the drape from in front of the niche. An

enthusiastic outburst of cheers from more than twenty thousand people hailed the appearance of the statue of the beloved Saint. When the lively manifestation was finished, the Procurator General, Father Tomasetti, read an address on behalf of the Rector Major who was absent, thus commemorating the event.

"Most Reverend Eminence:

At this moment, when St. John Bosco takes his place among the great Founders of religious Orders, who from time to time have come to increase the splendor of the greatest temple of Christianity and are now immortalized in marble, there are three things for which the Salesians are very happy today.

"They rejoice because the solemn task of inaugurating this monument to their beloved Father with the blessing of Heaven, was assigned to Your Eminence, whom they venerate as the Cardinal Protector of their Congregation.

"It is also a source of ineffable joy, the fact that the Holy Father has benignly consented to assign to Don Bosco such a conspicuous place in this Basilica. The eyes of the faithful spectator will turn to Don Bosco's niche, after gazing on two other statures. As a matter of fact, beneath Don Bosco's statue is the majestic statue of the Prince of the Apostles, and between this and the statue of Don Bosco we can see the radiant statue of the angelic Pope Pius IX . . . St. Peter who was made known to the people by Don Bosco with an ardent faith and an edifying candor; and Pius IX, who loved the Saint with paternal affection, and was filially loved by him in return.

"Additionally, there is a third cause for rejoicing: the fact that the sculptor, with incomparable artistic mastery, has depicted Don Bosco in a pose ideally expressing the nature of his apostolate. As he holds close with warm affection the youngsters, one representing civilized countries, and the other depicting Missionary lands, he points to the altar of the Confession and seems to encourage them to advance in that direction, saying: 'My sons, there lies salvation, because Peter is there and *ubi Petrus ibi Ecclesia* [where Peter is, there, too, is the Church]'. During times hostile to the Papacy, Don Bosco remained faithful to the Vicar of Jesus Christ, and singled him out as the Master, the Guide, and Benefactor of Mankind.

"Concerning what we have just witnessed, I cannot but add a remark. Throughout his whole life, Don Bosco cherished a great

dream: for the welfare of souls and the glory of his native country, he cherished hopes for a happy reunion between the Kingdom of Italy and the Holy Apostolic See. By the will of the Man who guides the destiny of our country, His Excellency, the Minister of State for National Education, has given orders that the young students of Rome should gather here, to represent all Italian Youth, as well as foreign Youth, and to render their homage to the Saintly Educator.

"Heartfelt thanks to His Eminence Cardinal Salotti and the distinguished representatives of all nations to the Holy See for having wanted to make this ceremony more solemn by their presence, as though to underscore the universality of Don Bosco's mission in the world.

"Special thanks, also, to the religious Congregations, which, with brotherly solidarity, have shared in the joy of the humble Salesian Congregation.

"May the blessing of Your Eminence seal the reasons we have to rejoice, and obtain from Heaven that the recollection of this solemn event may live in perpetuity in the hearts of all who are present here, and be handed down to future generations for their benefit."

His Eminence then put on his stole and blessed the statues as required by the rite. The short ceremony then ended with other beautiful hymns. But the finest hymn of all was sung by those thousands of young hearts when they saw their beloved Father exalted in his glory. The ceremony concluded so quickly that by the time the bells of Saint Peter's rang the *Angelus,* it was all finished.

We can rightly say that the niche assigned to Don Bosco by the Pope has a place of honor. No other founder has such an eminent place in Saint Peter's. Don Bosco's statue is above the statue of St. Peter and is conspicuous atop the mosaic medallion of Pius IX. Father Francis Tomasetti explained very clearly what this meant. Anyone who was alive during the last few years of Don Bosco's life would be unable to look at that statue of his without remembering the dream he'd had and which he had related to them in the days of their youth.

He dreamed of being precisely in that niche, without knowing how he had gotten there. Frightened, he looked around to seek help, but the vaults of that great temple were steeped in silence. Then he shouted, and in his anxiety, he awoke. Who knows how many times, while visiting Saint Peter's,

he had approached the bronze statue of the Holy Apostle, and following the usual procedure he had kissed its foot by bowing down so that the forehead might touch it, as a sign of his humble, submissive allegiance to the Vicar of Jesus Christ! At that time no one, least of all Don Bosco himself, could have imagined what mysterious meaning was hidden behind the veil of that strange dream.

Chapter 18

The Fiftieth Anniversary of Don Bosco's Death

The fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death was marked by a number of important celebrations. Since they were so important, we thought best to conclude this volume, which deals with the glorification of the Servant of God, with a chapter singling out the most significant and praiseworthy of these celebrations. First of all, we shall describe some of the manifestations related to the Pope who was pleased to be greeted as "Don Bosco's Pope."

Pius XI had already thought about the fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death from the beginning of the year when he dictated a personal, private letter. A Piedmontese Jesuit, Peter Boetto, had been appointed to the Sacred College in December 1935, and was about to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of his religious life. On that happy occasion the Pope wrote a letter to the Prelate. In it the Pope happily recalled that the beginning of his religious life coincided with the date in which solemn honors were rendered to the remains of Don Bosco who had died the previous day, in the capital of his own region. The Pope felt that he could see in such coincidence something of a stirring power, which had certainly given greater strength to the new religious magnanimous resolutions, which from that time on never faded away. Again, at the beginning of February, Pius XI thought about the sons of Don Bosco because of a particular circumstance, which in itself would not have brought them up to his attention, if he had not known about it and decided to take part in it, in some way. On the feast of Candlemas, as the day of Our Lady's Purification is ordinarily called it is customary for the Procurators General of religious Congregations to call together on the Holy Father, and offer him a candle. In 1938 the Best of Candles had been offered by the Sovereign Order of Malta. The Pope decided to give exactly that candle to the Salesian Society in memory, as *l'Osservatore Romano* wrote on February 11, 1938: "of the fiftieth anniversary of the happy death of their Saintly Founder with whom the Supreme Pontiff had an unforgettable personal relationship in the early years of his priesthood, a relationship exalted in the acts of the supreme magisterium which ended with the grandiose ceremonies of the beatification and canonization."

This token of such a high esteem will remain in the history of this fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death as a proof of the affection Pope Pius XI had for Don Bosco and all his undertakings. A Salesian, Father George Castellino, who was studying at the Biblical Institute of Rome, was about to defend the thesis for his doctorate in Holy Scripture. It is the custom that such defense should take place before a scholarly audience, and not only before the Examining Board. The Pope arranged for the candidate to defend his thesis at Castelgandolfo, in his presence, the morning of May 19, 1938, and a considerable number of learned scholars were invited. After the Examining Board had awarded its mark, a cum laude approval, the Holy Father pronounced a lofty address on the importance of Biblical studies. Among the reasons which made him happy and which were generated by the presence of such a scholarly audience, was the fact that the Pope had found an occasion to bring back the pleasant, beautiful and always beneficial memories of St. John Bosco, and to show once again how greatly he esteemed, appreciated, and respected the Saint's great family, and those beloved sons of his, the Salesians, and to tell them and everyone that the Pope was glad to perform with one of them an act which would crown with merits, high merits such as the merits related to Sacred Scripture.

The Pope expressed the same affectionate sentiments on several occasions, too, during public audiences, during the year 1938. On May 28, 1938, when, together with other groups, some fifty apprentices from the Salesian School "Pius XI" called on him, he made the following reference to the name by which their school was known: "We hope that this name is a good omen for you all, because besides being the name of an old man, it is also the name of a Pope, and of the Vicar of Jesus Christ. It is superfluous to tell you that We especially Bless you, and your school which is so dear to Us. But you have reminded Us about it with your affectionate words that expressed a filial, and Christian Sentiment. For you are good sons of Holy Mother Church, as well as sons of that great friend of God, that great Champion of the Faith, our beloved St. John Bosco. Don Bosco is ours and yours we could well say, because if Don Bosco is a Father to you in Christ, We can rightly say that We first were Don Bosco's friend in the Lord and that he later on has become Father, Father of the Highest Glory, of the Glory of the Saints for which God allowed US to cooperate even though only as His humble instrument."

A month later, on June 28, 1938, twenty-four newly ordained Salesian priests attended a public audience. The Pope welcomed each group present at that audience with special words. When he came to the Salesian group

he congratulated them, because they were calling on him "Under the great, glorious and promising name of St. John Bosco." Later, on August 5th, at an audience granted to the novices of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from a nearby novitiate, the Pope told them that they had "come to see the Pope under the name of Mary Help of Christians," a name particularly dear to him because it reminded him of his "great friend" Don Bosco.

Even at an audience granted to the royal Carabinieri who had been detailed as regular duty detail and honor guard at the papal summer residence, the Pope made his voice heard in praise of Don Bosco. The Pope granted that audience on October 21, 1938, a week before his departure from his summer residence. At the end of his address the Pope said: "We have thought about giving you a little souvenir of this audience, to make you understand how agreeable it has been to Us. We already gave a small medal to your Colonel, and We are going to give some to your officers. This medal suits the occasion, since it bears the likeness of good old St. Martin who, when he died, was a saintly Bishop, but he had been also a brave and noble soldier. But now We shall give you another medal, one which is also suitable to the occasion since, even though the likeness on it is not that of a military man, nevertheless, it is the likeness of a true soldier of work, a soldier of duty, the likeness of one who has become a Saint because of it: Don Bosco, and he stands for whatever is most Italian and most encouraging."

During a similar audience granted on the 25th of October 1938, the Pope repeated the same words in praise of St. John Bosco. This time, the audience was for fifty metropolitan guards who had been active on duty details, especially during the recent pilgrimages with a lot of people. They were escorted by the Deputy Chief of Police, and their officers. At the end of his speech His Holiness bade the Deputy Chief of Police approach him, and handed him a silver medal, with the likeness of St. Martin, and assigned him the task of distributing other medals with the likeness of Don Bosco to all the other guards. As he did this, he recalled the privilege granted him to elevate Don Bosco to the honor of the altars, and said: "Don Bosco can easily be called the soldier of Charity not only in Italy, but all over the world, because his Salesians bear his name and spirit and do good to all."

The most outstanding event connected with the fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death, was the dedication of an altar in his honor in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, and the ensuing expansion, and restoration of the entire church. No more becoming monument could ever have been raised

in honor of the Saintly Founder. In reference to his monumental altar, this is what Father Albert Caviglia[1] wrote: "In the history of every great Congregation of the Church there comes a day when a monument is raised to the sacred remains of the Saint who founded it, to express all his greatness, and the devotion which the whole world feels for him. We need only think of St. Francis of Assisi, of St. Dominic, of St. Ignatius, of St. Paul of the Cross. For Don Bosco, this day of glory occurred within the first fifty years after his passing to the glory of Heaven. Thanks to the Italian art, and the devotion of his sons, this sacred monument, an altar, has been done in a way that it expresses a word which is destined to be carried on for centuries to come."

The harmony of the church is not broken up by the magnificence of the monument, which is located in the right arm of the spacious transept closed in by St. Peter's altar, at which Don Bosco had habitually said Mass. Ceradini, the architect, a professor at the Albertine Academy, has created a work of art blended with religious piety. The eye of the beholder focuses immediately on the glass bier containing the relics of the Saint, placed beneath the sacred icon at a slightly elevated level above the altar. This crystal-made urn, set in a spacious vault, allows the venerated remains clothed with priestly vestments to be seen from all sides. We say that it can be seen from all sides because there is a small passage way with two domes which separates the body of the altar from the wall of the chapel, and access to it is possible through two marble doors and handsome railings of gilded bronze. Father Caviglia wrote that in this chapel "everything conspires to create an atmosphere of peaceful recollection conducive to a more intimate and trustworthy type of prayer as if one were to talk to the Saint, one on one, having him right in front of his eyes." Thus the purpose of having the hallowed remains exposed in such a way to have a proper veneration was achieved in the most natural way that one could have ever imagined.

We shall not speak of the icon because the present one is only temporary. But the altar as a whole, from the altar steps to the elevated structure, richly made of precious marble and bronze, presents a rich gamut of details designed with geniality, spread out with artistic taste and fine workmanship. There is a sanctuary paved with polychrome marble, right in front of the altar, and is sealed off by a most beautiful, marble altar rail. On either side of the altar proper, there are two marble bases, which support two big

[1] *L'Osservatore Romano,* June 3, 1938.

marble statures, of Faith, and Charity. The marble walls are handsomely decorated, and there are three stained glass windows which represent three solemn moments of the life and glory of the Saint. The lunette above the Saint shows the nine-year-old boy to whom his future Mission is entrusted in a dream. On the left, the window shows Pius IX in the Vatican, in the act of handing Don Bosco the newly approved rules of the Salesian Society. The window at the right pictures Pius XI as he proclaims Don Bosco a Saint in St. Peter's Basilica. The rapt expression on the face of all who stop in front of the altar to admire is proof enough that art has fully reached its most noble goal, which was rightly to be expected of it.

A monument of such value has to be compatible with its surroundings, that is with the entire Basilica; otherwise it would have only called to mind the Horatian image of the cloth of gorgeous purple sewn onto a threadbare garment. Consequently not only did the entire church have to be better decorated, but also enlarged, so that both in size, and appearance it might look like a real shrine of worldwide renown.

The cult of Don Bosco, quite popular and widespread together with the cult of Mary Help of Christians were already increasing the number of faithful visiting the Basilica. As it was to be expected, these cults would have drawn in the future countless numbers of people. This brought back to our memory the words that the Saint had written in his first circular letter, when, in 1864, he had launched a nationwide appeal to all Italy, asking people to help build the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. He wrote: "A Catholic feels much comfort when he happens to see a great crowd of people gathered together in the House of God. A Catholic would be profoundly grieved if the faithful who hasten to attend the sacred services were to find out that they cannot do so, because there is no room for them in the church. This is exactly what I am sadly forced to see for myself." Don Bosco's last two successors, Fathers Philip Rinaldi and Peter Ricaldone, experienced the same sadness when, on many occasions, they realized that the church was now much too small to respond in a proper manner to the piety of the faithful and foresaw that the Church would have become even more inadequate with the passing of time. Hence they resolved, boldly, to undertake the task of expanding the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

The problem to increase the capacity of a building, which is already complete in every one of its parts, is a tough one in itself. But it was made tougher by the limited amount of space available for the expansion, and by the desire not to change the inner transept exactly as Don Bosco had

accepted it from the architect Spezia, and also by the intention not to exclude from the sacred functions the seven hundred student boarders who used the Basilica every day. Yet all these difficulties were so brilliantly overcome that today not only do the alterations brought about by the expansion work, which lasted three years blend harmoniously with the remainder of the original church, but they even seem to have been a part of it from the beginning. Indeed, those who had known the church as it was formerly were astonished when they saw it again after it had been enlarged, and then could not believe that the interior they saw before them was not the one they had always known, despite all that they had read in the *Bulletin*; this is no mean tribute to the architect who had succeeded in enlarging the church without distorting the original structural configuration.

We shall try to convey some idea of how this had been done.[2] Two big sacristies, which had been built in the outer walls of the old sanctuary, were demolished; so was a choir, or apses located behind the original main altar, but invisible to the rest of the church. This operation provided space for two big side chapels, a spacious corridor, and an extension of the church, with a new sacristy. The two new side chapels opening into the immense new sanctuary with wide colonnades are big enough to accommodate all the students and artisans of the House. Above them there were two handsome tiers of choir lofts, which overlooked the sanctuary, and each of these was big enough to accommodate three hundred persons on more solemn religious functions. The corridor, which commences near the façade, runs the whole length of the church up to the sacristy, turning behind the main altar, and goes around to the other chapel. There are six beautiful altars built in the section behind the main altar, next to the sacristy. Chapels, choir lofts and balcony receive light form huge stained and storied glass windows, and a subdued light enters the sanctuary from the new dome through sixteen holes, like eyes, in the stained glass windows.

Naturally, the main altar with its large painting of Mary Help of Christians, and a magnificent tabernacle for the Holy Eucharist, constitutes the center of the shrine. Anyone who enters the hallowed precincts looks toward it instinctively, just as those who kneel in prayer do. Nineteen different kinds of marble were used for the whole of this altar and icon: all around it and in front of it there is a rich polychrome of marble, which dresses the walls from the floor to the cornices. In double order forty-eight marble

[2] For the technical description of the enlargements of the Basilica and of Don Bosco's altar, see two articles by Father Albert Caviglia, first published in *l'Osservatore Romano* on June 3rd, and again on June 7–8, 1938, and later rewritten as one single article by the author, for the August issue of the *Bulletin.*

capitals and cornices support the balconies, and divide the chapels from the corridor. All this section, which constitutes the head of the transept, offers the vision of a whole structure so rich in variety, yet so harmonious in appearance that the connoisseurs are filled with admiration, while the ordinary people remain enchanted before it.

The beauty of the interior was going to further be enhanced when the decorations would be completed in this section, in 1941 and then extended up to the end of the church, and not one inch of the surface remain unoccupied. The modest decorations completed three years after the death of Don Bosco, were all 'condemned' to disappear, save for the paintings inside the dome. These have been skillfully freed from the crusted layers which, for several reasons, had darkened the figures they represented, and are now restored to their original brilliance, allowing us to enjoy Rollini's good, artistic mastery once again. This is how the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians would receive all its due décor.

The new arrangement of the choir loft was also to contribute considerably to this new décor. The choir loft, which cluttered the entire back wall, and limited the light coming from the rose window and two other windows, was removed with an inestimable advantage for aesthetics and visibility. The organ was now placed in the open balcony on the Gospel side of the altar. Experience had taught that the acoustic effects were going to be greatly improved thereby, and reach every corner of the church.

But meanwhile the men responsible for the impressive undertaking, have reason to rejoice when they see visitors to the church give their highest approval for the work already completed, and hurriedly voice their desire to see everything completed. These men are the Rector Major, Father Peter Ricaldone, who wanted the work to be done; the Economer General Father Fidelis Giraudi, the animating power for the whole work; and the Salesian architect, Julius Valotti, who proved himself to be a faithful interpreter of the original intent, in the execution of the work. Their satisfaction was all the greater, because not only does everyone admire what they have accomplished, but likewise approves the way in which the money, donated by all kinds of contributors, has been invested. Indeed the devotees of Mary Help of Christians, and of St. John Bosco, proved no less generous in their donations than the people who helped the project of the Saint at the time when the church was first built.

In order to gauge the full merit of these men responsible for this impressive achievement, one should know of two separate problems with which they were obliged to cope, and which were rightly described as

tragic. At the very beginning when the apse was first being demolished, an unexpected discovery created panic in all those who witnessed it: the entire structure was almost standing on no support at all. When the foundations were built in 1864, the workmen came upon wooden alluvial soil, and had to build strong support pillars.[3] When with the passing of time the water drained away, the supporting wooden pillars had gradually rotted, and consequently the walls had been standing perched precariously on the edge of wide empty holes, barely supported by the edges. Nor was this the only problem. At the same time, it was found that the original material used in the building was of poor quality: the concrete, not being properly reinforced lacked the adequate cohesion and had shown dangerous cracks in the inner walls, so that the structure was gradually breaking down. To avert a catastrophe, cement was injected into every crevice of the masonry, starting from the foundations. This work lasted two years and it was done by a firm specialized in this type of work, injecting cement until all the holes were filled, and the parts of the walls which had been crumbling, were solidified. They used six thousand tons of cement.

The second disappointing news broke out when the first phase of the work was almost completed, and the date of the inauguration was approaching. Cracks were seen close to the capitals of the pillars, which supported the greater part of the weight of the newly enlarged church. This was the result of either an excessive load, or of inadequate cohesion, such as one may find quite frequently in brilliantly colored marble. It is easy to guess how upset the Economer General and the architect were! They were obliged to provide, without any delay, columns of a more compact marble and then with infinite and difficult precautionary measures substitute the first ones. This problem was rendered more acute by the need to keep it a secret, since if made public could have caused an outbreak of mistrust among the public with an un-called for alarm. In this predicament, the advice given by two engineers quite famous in the field of construction was quite helpful. Thanks to that advice and the industriousness of the men supervising the work, not only was the danger removed in a timely and effective way, but also the new marble columns further enhanced the overall beauty of the work. When everything was done, the two famous experts were asked to state their fees, but both replied that they not only felt well-satisfied, but honored, too, because they had been allowed to render a service to Don Bosco. These engineers were Professors Anthony Giberti of Turin, and Arthur Danusso of Milan.

[3] *Biographic Memoirs*, Vol. VII, p. 651.

The rhythm of work was stepped up considerably during the final weeks. The work was almost finished on that section which needed to be readied for the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death, set for June 9, 1938, which coincided with the seventieth anniversary of the church's dedication.

The faithful who daily attended the church's functions sighed with relief when they saw that the scaffolding that had encumbered the Basilica for three years was being removed little by little, and also when later they saw the barriers that had sealed off Don Bosco's chapel were removed and placed alongside the walls which had still to be decorated. They were even more relieved when the workmen began to knockdown the artificial wall behind the likewise temporary main altar: it had stretched upward from the floor to the dome, like an immense backdrop, to hide from the gaze of the public the feverish activity of the workmen in the area which extends from the present altar rails to the sacristy. This thin partition, however, could not deaden the sounds of hammering which boomed throughout the church, disturbing the prayers of the faithful, and the church's priestly ministry. At last, it seemed as though the mystic peace of former times was about to be restored to the beloved shrine.

The total evacuation of all the encumbrances did not come about until June 8, 1938; but the doors remained closed for two days, to permit the final touches to be put where needed, and to allow the reverent transfer of the Saint's mortal remains from the old glass urn to the new one. The school boarders and the dayboys who attended the Oratory were the first ones to see the newly restored Basilica when they assembled, the evening of June 8, 1938 to say their evening prayers. As they entered one after the other, they seemed to fall under the spell of the enchanting sight that met their eyes. The multicolored hues of the marble at both altars, of the surrounding walls, of the chapels, and of the balconies, gleamed in the radiant lights. The two domes which were illuminated by concealed lighting, seemed suffused with radiant light. After Father Peter Ricaldone's 'good night' talk, they all filed in orderly fashion toward the altar of Don Bosco, and passing through the corridor, they gathered quite close around the blessed relics to venerate them.

The busy coming and going of the faithful began to animate the church at dawn on June 9, 1938, while the final preparations for a very original function were in progress. Almost all the Salesian Bishops of Italy had come to Turin for the occasion. Cardinal Hlond, and the Salesian Bishop of Shillong, Assam, Bishop Ferrando, were present, too. While performing

the interesting details of the ritual, these consecrated the altars, at the same time. The consecration of the main altar was done by the Cardinal Archbishop, and the consecration of Don Bosco's altar was reserved for the Salesian Cardinal; both consecrations were extraordinarily solemn. Archbishop Guerra consecrated another lovely altar on which we have not yet reported. This altar was in the crypt, underneath the sacristy, on the same side of the church as Don Bosco's altar. It was dedicated to St. Peter. That altar, which had been built by Don Bosco as a proof of his devotion towards the Prince of Apostles, and where he usually said Mass, could not have disappeared from the Basilica! Five more altars (a sixth one, that of Blessed Cafasso, could only be blessed), were likewise consecrated by the Bishops Emanuel, Ferrando, Rotolo, Coppo, and Olivares, and were dedicated respectively to St. Joseph Cottolengo, to the Crucifixion, to the three Saintly Martyrs of the Theban legion and from Turin, to St. Pius V and the Guardian Angel. After this rite the officiating Bishops said Mass at the altar they had consecrated.

For four days, pontifical Masses and sermons by Bishops continued with the participation of huge congregations of faithful some of whom had come as pilgrims from far-away places. On the 10th of June 1938 the church was reserved solely for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who had generously, and zealously, contributed to provide the money and means for the great undertaking. The church was crowded with their young girl pupils, and the girls who attended their oratories, and it echoed with their exquisite musical performances. The 11th day of June 1938 was a day of thanksgiving to God, and the Virgin Help of Christians for the abundant graces, which had been showered on the Society for seventy years. Then, on Sunday, the 12th of June 1938, preceded by a devout vigil, the festivities came to an end. The flow of communicants who approached the altar at several altars, continued without interruption from midnight until eleven o'clock in the morning. People flooded the church and the Oratory from dawn to dusk, streaming in and out of Don Bosco's small rooms.

The procession in honor of Mary Help of Christians had been postponed until the 12th of June. This procession followed a long route: it was a devout and picturesque one and it unwound between two compact rows of spectators. How many touching manifestations of faith, and piety were seen when the statue of Our Lady was passing by! Besides the six Bishops already mentioned, the venerated statue of the Blessed Mother was preceded by the Apostolic Nuncio from Bolivia, Bishop Lunardi, by two more Salesian Bishops: Sosa, from San Miguel in Venezuela, and Munerati from

Volterra, and by the Piedmontese Bishops: Soracco of Fossano; Rosso of Cuneo; Imberti of Aosta; Grassi of Alba; Ugliengo of Susa; and Del Ponte of Acqui. Last of all walked the two Cardinals.

The Archbishop imparted the blessing with the Blessed Sacrament, to an immense throng gathered both inside, and outside the Basilica, and until late at night the crowd milled around the neighborhood. Then the lights illuminating the façade, and the larger cupola, were extinguished, and only the crown of tiny lamps remained, to form the halo of the Virgin who seemed to greet the departing throng from her lofty position, following them with her maternal eyes, as they wended their way homeward.

The celebrations of that fiftieth anniversary will likewise remain memorable in the annals of the Shrine, because they marked the beginning of a new phase: the age of pilgrimages. Pilgrims were coming from everywhere, and with an extraordinary frequency. Very often, more than a thousand pilgrims would arrive from one single locality. At times the groups were accompanied by Bishops, even by Cardinals. It became increasingly necessary to try to coordinate these collective group movements in such a way that the pilgrims might come and go again without creating embarrassing situations, and be provided with everything they might have needed for their spiritual, and material welfare, as soon as they arrived, and throughout their stay. The words *inde Gloria mea* were fulfilled on a far larger scale than Don Bosco himself could ever have imagined!

The fiftieth anniversary was also commemorated by two undertakings, which were intentionally associated with it. The first of these undertakings, was established at Becchi. A lawyer, Peter Bernardi, had lived a frugal life in Cairo, and had guarded his savings, since he wanted his money to be used for some charitable purpose after his death. To this end he named the Salesian School for Missionaries his heir. When the munificent benefactor went to his reward, Father Peter Ricaldone thought best to fulfill his intentions by deciding to open an orphanage near the humble abode of the Man who, at a very tender age had lost his father, and had been forced to go out and seek employment, and sustenance at neighboring farmhouses, who had strengthened himself at the school of suffering, of poverty, and of hardship, to the point of becoming one day the Father of orphans. Father Peter Ricaldone urged the completion of plans for a huge building, so that the cornerstone thereof might be laid shortly after the Turin festivities that we have just described. This ceremony took place on June 26, 1938. The Cardinal Archbishop, Maurilio Fossati blessed the cornerstone, and poured the first lime on it. An unusual circumstance helped make the liturgical rite

more solemn. The Fifteenth General Chapter of the Salesian Society had just begun, and so, the forty-eight Provincials, with as many delegates, attended the ceremony, in addition to the Cardinal of Turin and the Superior Chapter. The name of the orphanage did not commemorate only the distinguished benefactor who had endowed it, but also an illustrious Barnabite monk, a nephew of his, for it was going to be known as the Bernardi-Semeria school.

Strange, indeed; there is a dream of Don Bosco, which seems to have some connection with the undertaking, started at Becchi during the fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death. We spoke of this dream in the first chapter of the preceding volume. Don Bosco saw his mother standing at that spring, which gushes forth to the left of anyone following the old path that descends from Becchi to the road leading towards Buttigliera. Mamma Margaret was unable to understand why the flow of water, which had always been so limpid, suddenly looked so dirty. She then uttered the lamentation of Jeremiah: *Acquam nostram pecunia bibimus* [We drank our own water and paid for it]. Then she led her son to the top of a hill, a short distance away form the spring, whence your eyes could have stretched out and reached a vast panorama. It is here that Don Bosco and his mother talked about the amount of good which needed to be done in the lands beneath them. At that moment Don Bosco woke up. Later, as he was reporting the dream, to Father Lemoyne, and several others, Don Bosco remarked: "The spot to which my mother led me would be an ideal place for a House, because it is a central point of junction, connecting many boroughs which do not have a church." Now when Fathers Peter Ricaldone, and Fidelis Giraudi went to Becchi to choose a place where the orphanage could be built, they chose the hill Don Bosco had seen in his dream, and when they found it out, they were astonished that, quite unbeknown to them, they had selected the exact spot of which the Saint had spoken when telling people about the dream. We will add something else! Shortly before, the Sanitation Department for the Province had declared spring water, which had quenched the thirst of several generations polluted, and at Becchi the drinking water provided by the government of Monferrato was used but at a cost (*aquam nostram pecunia bibimus*).

The cornerstone of another important undertaking was laid on July 3, 1938 the year of the fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death. The *Fiat,* the biggest automobile plant of Italy, had an enviable reputation in industry, and in other spheres, as well, and it employed a great number of workers.

The Senator, John Agnelli, had founded it in Turin. When it became necessary to move the plant to another site in the neighborhood of Viale Stupinigi, the courageous industrialist decided to build a great festive Oratory, with a public church, not too far from the huge auto plant then under construction, so that the children of the employees might get a Christian education, and also a modern international, Institute of Electromechanics, for the technical formation of Salesians, to be sent to different parts of the world. The Cardinal Archbishop went to invoke the blessing of Heaven on the work about to be initiated and performed the solemn rite once again in the presence of the members of the Salesian General Chapter, and the local civil authorities. This institute was going to be built almost in front of the *La Generala,* the house of correction for wayward boys, where Don Bosco had given a demonstration of the effectiveness of his system of pedagogy.

The Salesians in every country did celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of their Founder's death, but we shall mention only one country whereto Don Bosco had always wanted to extend his apostolate: England! The fiftieth anniversary of his death coincided with that of the beginning of the Salesian activity in England. As a matter of fact the Saint had sent his sons to London barely two and a half months prior to his death. The anniversary was therefore celebrated in the British capital with a series of festivities, which ended at Shrigley, near Manchester, where the Salesians had been directing a flourishing missionary Institute for eight years. With the help of the Salesian Cooperators they had built a handsome church of majestic size and a beautiful architectural work. It had been dedicated to St. John Bosco. The Salesians felt that no occasion could have been more propitious for its inauguration than this two-fold fiftieth anniversary. And so, the church was opened for public worship with great solemnity, in July 1938. The rite was attended by some four hundred thousand pilgrims, not only from England but also from Scotland, and even from far-away Ireland. The name of Don Bosco was so much liked that his church has already become a favorite place of pilgrimages for the people, of the surrounding area, especially for members of the Catholic Action Association.

The fiftieth anniversary of Don Bosco's death ended in a most fitting way: Pius XI, "Don Bosco's Pope" beatified Mother Mary Mazzarello. Rome gave her the title of "Co-Foundress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians" which was both honorable, and well-deserved. This great honor was connected with the very important role that she played

in the foundation of a religious Congregation destined to have such a glorious future. Her merit stemmed from the fact that she became a humble tool in Don Bosco's hands in shaping the first Sisters who were expected to give the Congregation a start and that character desired by the Founder. Her merit stemmed from having placed in Don Bosco's hands all the choicest virtues, which may adorn the heart of a virgin consecrated to God. And Don Bosco directed her in her undertaking, he supported her in her sacrifices, overjoyed at seeing the treasures of grace showered upon her, for her personal sanctification and for the good directing government of her associated Sisters. In his annual letter to the Cooperators[4] Father Peter Ricaldone wrote, very aptly, that the beatification of Mary Mazzarello "was yet another luminous proof of the vast influence of the spirit of our great Father in bringing forth fruits of sanctity."

Mary Mazzarello was beatified on November 20, 1938. She was the third of three Servants of God to be beatified after Blessed Rossello and Blessed Cabrini but her beatification surpassed both of them because of the vast crowds of Romans and other visitors. It was obvious that the name of Don Bosco had much to do in providing a movement of people far superior to any expectation. On the eve of the beatification, the Pope granted a solemn audience to some five thousand people. The venerable Pontiff walked through the crowded halls of the Vatican amid enthusiastic acclamations, and addressed the crowd from his throne with his august words, which were conveyed by the loudspeakers even to the people outside the Basilica. Among other things, this is what the Pope said: "What more is there to say in addition to what these facts, these words have already said? For the event to which God is summoning us to witness, is so great that no word is adequate to express it. We mean the elevation of a faithful servant of his to those supreme honors, which call back from all parts of the world the light of St. John Bosco within which she looks so radiant. What we intend to do is only take from this event a message which we entrust to the memory of all these participants, a message for you, dear sons and daughters, to put into practice. We are all gathered together here, and tomorrow we shall gather again for a more solemn, more splendid occasion, to rejoice, and to feel proud for the exaltation, and the glory of this great Servant of God. We too feel proud of it because it is just and due. After all the Venerable Mary Mazzarello is a member of our family, and we are members of her family. In the Communion of Saints, in the union

[4] *Salesian Bulletin,* January, 1939.

of the Mystical Body of Christ, all of us, the faithful, are not only brothers and sisters, but are also members of the same Body, of the same supernatural organism, which lives the very life of God, and is thereby transfused in it. It is only natural that the sons and daughters should feel for the glory of their Mother and Father. This gives it the clue for a practical and good message: it is a right to feel proud of our Sister; we may and we should be proud of her. But in her turn, she had a far greater right, a higher and sovereign right to be able to feel proud of us, to regard us not as her unworthy children, but as her children who are faithful to the glory of the Divine Blood, which sanctified Her, and should sanctify us, too.

"As children, faithful to the great name of the Christian family, which binds us to Jesus Christ, and all the Saints, beginning with the Immaculate Virgin, we should regard it as a sacred duty to honor, and to glorify this great family of ours. May this family never have cause to be ashamed of us. May it be proud of us, of our conduct, indeed, of our Christian way of life, which stands for a holy life, as holy as the life of this great Servant of God.

"Not everyone has received the same amount of grace but everyone has been called to the same sanctity. We are called to this holiness; we all belong to a family of Saints, we are all members of a holy Body, and therefore we, too, should be holy, in the measure of grace, which God shall not deny to us, as long as he finds a faithful and generous correspondence in our conduct. As the Apostles would say, "may our whole life, all our acts, all our words be worthy of the great name we bear, of the great family to which we belong. That's the way we will honor this Servant of God in a manner expected of us, and those great words of some the greatest and the most beautiful words uttered by St. Paul, will be applicable to us: *Apostoli Gloria Christi!* [The Apostles are the Glory of Christ!] Wondrously beautiful, sublimely great words!

"This is the vocation that all the faithful have: to be part of the glory of Christ, according to the measure which God has decreed for each of us by His Grace, even as His humble Servant, Mary Mazzarello, was His Glory, and shall be forever and ever. Here we have a person who with her name, her fame, her example, circles the globe and leads it, as she proclaims the Glory of Christ Who alone can work so great a miracle as to turn such a humble woman into such a moral beauty, and such a greatness that she is elevated to the supreme honors, and the whole world is compelled to decree for her all kinds of glory. This is our paternal wish—message to you—the fruit, so to speak, of these great, solemn celebrations:

since we are children and brothers of Saints, and we, too, are Saints, may our whole life resemble their life. May it reflect something of their sublime moral stature, so that we, too, may share in the immense glory rendered to the Apostles, and that is, to be the glory of Christ."

St. Peter's Basilica was crowded to its fullest capacity for the ceremony held the next day. The presence of eleven Cardinals, and thirty-seven Bishops of whom nine were Salesians, enhanced the liturgical splendor of the occasion. The pontifical *Brief,* which proclaimed Blessed the Servant of God, described her life and gave an account of the procedure followed during the Cause. Between these two parts of the *Brief* there was a short description of the newly Blessed Servant of God: "Simple in her way of acting, frugal in her food, assiduous in the performance of her duties, and although very poor she was generous in giving; she was prudent and strong in guiding her Sisters, even though as far as the direction of the Congregation she relied entirely on St. John Bosco. She was very pious in her prayers, very diligent in keeping the integrity of her innocence and purity. She was enkindled with a very ardent love for the Holy Eucharist, as though she could see Jesus with her own eyes; nor was her veneration for the Blessed Virgin, especially under the title of Help of Christians, less warmly affectionate."

After the reading of the *Brief* the solemn rite continued in an atmosphere of devout piety, and sentiment, vibrant with youthful enthusiasm.

The Pope's homage of veneration in the afternoon drew an even larger throng, so that the vast Basilica could not accommodate everybody who wished to enter. Outstanding personalities and delegations assisted at the ceremony from reserved box seats. In the sanctuary there were forty Bishops, and eighteen Cardinals accompanied the Pope's retinue when he entered the church. The Rector Major, and the Postulator, Father Francis Tomasetti, presented the ritual gifts. As the Holy Father looked at a picture of Blessed Mary Mazzarello, he remarked that her hands expressed spirituality, and industriousness. A vertebra of hers in an exquisitely wrought reliquary, reminded the Holy Father of something he had said in reference to a similar relic of Don Bosco: "Look, Father Ricaldone, a very strong backbone." By which he meant to say that she had been endowed with a great moral rectitude, strength of character, and an energetic will.

In the following weeks two solemn triduums were celebrated in her honor, one in the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, the other in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. On both occasions famous

preachers sang her praises, woven together with recollections of Don Bosco. While similar celebrations continued all around the world, a new monumental altar was under construction in the church of Mary Help of Christians, not too far away from the altar of St. John Bosco, where the sacred mortal remains of Blessed Mary Mazzarello were to be exposed to the veneration of the faithful. These two saintly souls who had already been linked in action, will never be separated in their joint glory.

At a distance of fifty years after the death of the Founder, religious Congregations owing their existence to him can look back—I would not say—with pride, for this expressions would be too profane, but certainly with justified complacency, at the journey they have covered. Statistics attest the uninterrupted progress in their swelling ranks, the multiplication of their initiatives, and the expansion of their tents being pitched all over, beyond all boundaries, and all seas. No human power could ever have accomplished all this without the supporting Hand of the Almighty. May God Who began this great, beneficial work, and Who has guided it thus far, perfect it more and more every day, and grant that it may last until Time is engulfed by Eternity. In the meantime, *soli Deo honor et Gloria* [honor and glory to God alone].

The next time Pope Pius XI entered the Basilica of St. Peter, no longer could he impart his blessing from the elevated gestatorial chair, no longer could a jubilant multitude acclaim him. He was stretched out on his funeral couch, accompanied by funeral prayers and he was borne toward his last resting place in the mysterious shadows of the crypt beneath the Basilica, not too far from the tomb of St. Peter's. The whole world mourned his death, which occurred during the night of February 10, 1939, when the galley proofs of this volume in which he is so frequently mentioned, or where his own words are so often quoted, were undergoing corrections.

We believe that we have paid to the memory of this great Pope that debt of gratitude, which the Salesians owe to him. We have considered worthy to hand down to history what this Pope had graciously done on behalf of our Father and Founder, Don Bosco. There has never been a Pope who has publicly exalted a Servant of God and his undertakings with such love and so constantly, as Pope Pius XI did for Don Bosco for seventeen years. Ten days prior to his departure from this life, Pope Pius XI had granted an unforgettable audience to the fourth successor of Don Bosco, Father Peter Ricaldone. At the end of it, the Pope told him in his fatherly way: "You have no idea how much delight your visit has given to Us."

May his great soul rest in peace, and may the flames of gratitude in the hearts of all Salesians, endure brightly shining forever, now and in the future.

Appendix

1

INSCRIPTIONS BY FATHER ANGELINI, S.J., FOR FUNERAL SERVICES OF DON BOSCO IN ROME

On the door of the church:

IOANNI BOSCO
SACERDOTI
QUI – SINGULARI – DEI – MUNERE
AETATI – NOSTRAE – TRIBUTUS
CHRISTIANI – NOMINIS – DECUS
INGENIO – CONSILIO – LABORE – CONSTANTIA
PROVEXIT
ET – POSTERITATEM – PROSPICIENS
NOVIS – AD – VIRTUTEM – INSTRUXIT – PRAESIDIIS
SODALES – SALESIANI
AUCTORI – PARENTI – MAGISTRO
IUSTA – ET – LARCRIMAS

On the forepart of the bier:

INFLAMMATO – STUDIO
AD – ANIMORUM – LUCRA – RAPTUS
OPUS – QUOD – REGIONES – OMNES
OMNESQUE – AMPLECTATUR – AETATES
MENTE – VOLUTAT
CONSILII – SOCIOS – ET – ADMINISTROS
SIBI ADIUNGIT
SOCIETATEM
CUI – A – FRANCISCO – SALESIO – INDITUM – NOMEN
CONSTITUIT
LEGIBUS – ROM – SEDIS – AUCTORITATE – SANCITIS
SEPIT – COMMUNIT.

On the side of the bier:

MENTE – EXCUBANS
NE – QUID – DETRIMENTI– CAPIAT
ADOLESCENTIUM – INSTITUTIO
AB – EORUM – OCULIS – PRAVA – VOLUMINA
INNOCENTIAE – ET – FIDEI – LABEM – INFERENTIA
AMOLITUR – NOVA – ERRORIBUS – EXTERSA – SUBIICIT
REI – CHRISTIANAE – HISTORIAM
ITALIAE – FASTOS – DESCRIBIT
SCRIPTORES – QUI – PIETATEM – ALANT – FOVEANT
UT – OMNIUM – MANIBUS – TERANTUR
IN – LUCEM – PROFERT
IOANNES
ANIMO – CIRCUMSPICIENS
QUID – REI – PUBLICAE – CHRISTIANAE – CONDUCAT
QUID – OBSIT
COGITATIONES – ET – CURAS
IN – PUEROS – PROBE – INSTITUENDOS – CONFERT
DEI – UNIUS – SPE – FR ETUS
AMPLISSIMAS – AEDES – A – SOLO – EXCITAT
ARTIBUS – OPEROSIORIBUS – RUDIO RES – ADDICIT
INGENIO – ACRES – LITTERIS – IMBUIT
LECTISSIMOS – UT – DIVINA – OBEANT – MUNIA
SACRISQUE – INITIENTUR – COMPARAT

2

INSCRIPTIONS WRITTEN BY FATHER MAURUS RICCI, D.S.P., FOR DON BOSCO'S FUNERAL IN FLORENCE

On the main door:

For the poor, humble priest
John Bosco
Whose Christian charity
Enriched him, endowed with great heart and intellect
And Who, as an indefatigable disseminator of the name of Christ,
Ventured into the most Barbarian territories,

With Saintly daring action,
Carrying the radiance of good studies,
The beauty of useful arts,
We implore the eternal joys of Heaven,
The only reward ever desired by him
Who consoled all woes, of so many sufferings here on Earth
With his pious words and wise writings,
With his generous suffering.

Around the bier:

I

Unto himself he took as his own
The children of the starving masses,
Who were drifting toward the ignominy of prison
On the swelling tide of corruption.
With them he shared his humble board,
And cheered by the hope of faith,
He strengthened his power to comfort them in their despair.

II

Misguided craftsmen scorned the priest,
He, the priest, pitied them, and loved them.
With the eloquence of pious deeds,
And not with the sparkle of resounding words,
He refuted for all time to come
The lie, a thousand times repeated,
To besmirch the name of the Catholic priesthood.

III

With sarcastic arrogance,
The misguided foreigner mocked Italy,
And described her as the land of the dead.
But he, inspired by the memory of Golgotha,
The perpetual hearth of our love,
Revealed her so full of vitality
As to confound the repentant scoffers.

IV

Oh, Thou, great model of gentle zeal,
Francis of Sales,
And Thou, leader of an indomitable army,
Ignatius of Loyola,
And Thou, in Thy apostolic school for the sons of the people,
Joseph Calasanz,
Welcome this valiant, kindred spirit into your blessed company.

3

LETTER TO THE SALESIANS OF NICTHEROY FROM THE ARCHBISHOP OF RIO DE JANEIRO

Dearly Beloved Salesians:

Don Bosco is now in Heaven! What happiness, what good fortune for him! And what an honor for the Salesians! Now Don Bosco will help the sons he left behind and now, more than ever before, he will love them! Don Bosco is of far greater help to you from Heaven than he would be from Turin or from Rome. From Heaven he is able to see in a single moment all his dear sons scattered throughout the world; he listens to all of them; he is interested in all of them, and he can do more for them with God. What great good fortune and happiness for Don Bosco! What an honor for the Salesians to have their Father among the Saints and Angels, close to Our Blessed Mother and Jesus Christ! How Heaven must have rejoiced when this worthy priest entered it! . . . How many souls were saved by means Don Bosco and his sons! They all must have gone out to meet him and have welcomed him and clasped him in a holy embrace, such as we could not begin to imagine. . . . And what must Jesus Christ have said to him? . . . *Euge, serve bone* . . . whatever you did for my little ones, you have done for Me, and now I shall reward you. *Intra in gaudium Domini tui.* O happy Don Bosco! Happy indeed!

And so, a thousand congratulations to you, my dearest Salesians! Such congratulations are of great value, for they stem from Christian faith.

But . . . good Lord! We don't lack reasons for offering to you our wholehearted sympathy! Jesus wept at the death of Lazarus. And how could the unhappy, disconsolate Salesians not weep at the death of Don Bosco? Weep, my sons, or better, let all of us weep together, for we all were

fortunate enough to have known Don Bosco, to have partaken of the goodness of his heart, the fruits of his charity!

Let us weep then, but like Christians. Let us weep, but as men who even as they weep know that Don Bosco is in Heaven, and that he will never forget all the people whom he loved on earth and whom he has now left behind him immersed in deep sorrow.

O, Don Bosco, remember the poor Bishop of Rio de Janeiro, who was the first Bishop in South America to be visited by your sons when they were en route to Rio de la Plata, the first Brazilian Bishop to open the first House of your good sons in this Empire. Remember me, when the time will come for me to die. That will be all I ask.

My congratulations and my condolences to all of you most beloved Salesians; I assure you that I share your sorrow, your affliction, your sadness. May God bless you and console you all.

Your affectionate friend,
✠Peter, Bishop of St. Sebastian
Rio de Janeiro

Rio de Janeiro, February 6, 1888

4

LETTER ADDRESSED TO FATHER RUA BY THE BISHOP OF MONTEVIDEO

Very Reverend Father Michael Rua:

The tragic news of the death of the virtuous and venerable priest, Don John Bosco, the Founder and Rector Major of the worthy Salesian Congregation, which your Reverence was kind enough to communicate to me, filled me with great sorrow.

I am indebted to this distinguished benefactor of Christian Society for many reasons, and so as a Prelate, I have prayed humbly to the Supreme Creator in the name of my people, as soon as the telegraph informed us that he had passed on to a better life. At the same time, I begged and implored God to preserve, sustain and prosper the institutes of zeal and charity he leaves behind, so that they may continue.

Don John Bosco is not dead; his memory lives on and will live forever, because the Institutes he founded in God's Name and for His greater Glory,

with the approval of the Supreme Head of the Church, the Vicar of Jesus Christ on earth, must live on too.

Don John Bosco lives on and will always live on in the memory and in the heart of thousands of poor boys who learned the Holy teachings of their faith from his lips, from his words.

Don John Bosco lives on and will live on forever for future generations that his worthy sons must evangelize, in the many thousands of boys who suffer both from spiritual and material needs.

Don John Bosco lives on and will always live on for the Diocese of Montevideo, which was one of the first to benefit from his solicitous efforts, because graciously did he send to us his sons, who distinguished themselves and covered themselves with honor in their work in the schools and the parishes entrusted to their zeal.

Don John Bosco lives on, and will always live on, especially for me, who had the honor to know him personally and to appreciate his rare virtues. As a token of my great esteem and veneration, I have made arrangements with the pastor of the Montevideo Cathedral to have solemn funeral services for the repose of his soul and I myself will be participating in these services.

May I convey to the Salesian Congregation my fervent gratitude toward Don John Bosco's memory, as well as my sincerest condolences for his death. At the same time, I implore the Merciful God to bestow all sorts of Blessings on the Salesian Institute we have here.

May God keep you for many a year.

✠Innocence Mary
Bishop of Montevideo

Montevideo, March 9, 1888

5

FATHER BONETTI IS APPOINTED TO ACT AS POSTULATOR

Nos Sacerdos Michael Rua Rector Maior Piae Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii.

Dilecto Nobis in Christo Sacerdoti Ioanni Bonetti salutem.

Fama sanctitatis Servi Dei Sacerdotis Ioannis Bosco in dies percrebrescente aequum ac religiosum existimavimus Christifidelium votis annuere, qui Causam Beatificationis et Canonizationis praedicti Servi Dei ad maiorem Dei gloriam et Ecclesiae bonum exoptant. Quapropter Te de cuius scientia et probitate necnon in rebus gerendis dexteritate docti sumus, ad Postulatoris munus in Processibus ad dictam Causam spectantibus eligimus et nominamus, conferentes Tibi omnes facultates de iure necessarias et opportunas, ut legitime possis ac valeas agere, instare et sistere, etiam per alium Ecclesiasticum virum iuridice a Te substituendum coram Iudicibus delegandis in qualibet Ecclesiastica Curia, in Urbe et alibi, quodcumque licitum atque honestum iuramentum praestare, testes et contestes inducere et quodlibet aliud ad rem necessarium et opportunum perficere, quousque Causa ipsa, Dei gratia favente, ad exitum perducatur.

Datum Augustae Taurinorum die secunda Iunii an. 1890.

Sac. Michael Rua R.M.
Sac. Angelus Lago, a secretis

6

FATHER BONETTI'S CREDENTIALS AS POSTULATOR PRESENTED TO THE ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN

Sacerdos Ioannes Bonetti Postulator specialiter constitutus in Causa Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Sacerdotis Ioannis Bosco Fundatoris Piae Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii, quemadmodum constat ex mandato Procurationis, quod reverenter exhibet, humillime exponit Eminentiae Vestrae praefatum Dei famulum post exactam vitam in heroica exercitatione omnium Christianarum virtutum, adeo universale post obitum, qui accidit die tragesima prima mensis Januarii an. 1888, sui desiderium reliquisse et constantem sanctitatis famam, ut plures pii devotique fidelis ad eius implorandum patrocinium accurrentes, insignes gratias et prodigia a Deo obtinuerint.

Quoniam vero eadem sanctitatis fama, quin decreverit, mirum in modum aucta sit apud etiam doctos gravesque viros, qui eum dignum existimant, ut accedente Sanctae Sedis Apostolicae iudicio, Beatificationis et Canonizationis honore decoretur: idcirco ipse Causae Postulator tam proprio quam sui constituentis nomine ad maiorem Dei gloriam, qui se mirabilem in servis

suis quotidie ostendere non desinit, Eminentiam Vestram enixe exorat, ut decernere dignetur constructionem Processus auctoritate ordinaria super fama sanctitatis vitae, virtutibus et miraculis praedicti Servi Dei ad formam Decretorum generalium S.R.C. et praesertim novissimorum, quae confirmata fuere a Venerabili Servo Dei Innocentio Papa XI, ne ulteriori mora testium probationes per obitum pereant.

Sac. Ioannes Bonetti
Causae Postulator

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THE "*IURAMENTUM CALUMNIAE*" OF THE POSTULATOR

Ego sacerdos Ioannes Bonetti specialiter constitutus in Causa Beatificationis et Canonizationis Servi Dei Sacerdotis Ioannis Bosco, tam proprio quam meorum principalium nomine, tactis hisce sanctis Dei Evangeliis coram me positis, iuro et promitto me non accedere, non accessisse neque accessurum ad hanc causam et confectionem huius Processus neque ad aliquem ipsius actum odio, amore, timore, lucro sive quovis alio respectu humano, sed solum zelo honoris et gloriae Dei, qui magnificatur et laudabilis est in Sanctis suis, et hanc intentionem habere meos principales, qui me constituerunt; in quorum animam sicut et in animam propriam iuro sub omnibus clausulis in simili calumniae iuramento latius contentis et expressis. Et ita iuro: sic me Deus adiuvet, et haec sancta eius Evangelia.

Sacredos Ioannes Bonetti
Causae Postulator

8

FATHER RINALDI'S LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE CARDINAL PREFECT OF THE SACRED RITES

Most Reverend Eminence:

I am informed by our General Postulator that among the observations made in the examination of the heroicity of the virtues practiced by the Venerable Servant of God, John Bosco, our Founder, more substantial evidence had been requested as to his life of prayer and his prophetic spirit.

I have prayed for and meditated on both issues, and I feel that in support of the abundant facts submitted during the proceedings, I must confirm the many depositions on record before Your Eminence, by making two statements under a binding oath:

1. It has been objected that the Servant of God applied for dispensation from the Breviary, and obtained it. He did this when he was already in his fifties and found himself, for long periods of time, quite unable to read anything. This is what he himself told me when I was only a cleric, and I had told him that I was going to see an oculist. He looked at me as if he wished to say that the examination would avail me nothing, and then he said: "Look, I have always had weak eyesight, too, and now it is so weak that at times I am unable to read at all. Then there are other times when I can both read and write, with greater or lesser difficulty." I understood immediately that he was trying to tell me that one day I would find myself in the same predicament. And this is exactly what has happened, for I am now able to read the Breviary without any trouble, but for quite some time I could not read it at all.

May I say here, Your Eminence, that I am firmly convinced that Venerable Don Bosco was a man of God who lived in continuous communication with God by means of prayer. During the last few years of his life, he would retire to his room every afternoon between two and three o'clock, after spending his mornings listening to people of all walks of life, of every conceivable social standing, for they came from all over to ask for his advice, or implore his blessing. During that hour, the Superiors never allowed anyone to disturb him. Now from 1883 until the time of the death of the Servant of God, I was in charge of a House of formation of aspirants to the priesthood, and since Don Bosco had once told me that I could call on him any time I needed to, I broke the above-mentioned rule several times. And I did this perhaps out of indiscretion, but certainly because I was sure that at that hour I would be able to confer with him at greater ease. Not only did I call on him at that hour at the Oratory, but also at Lanzo and at San Benigno, where he would go quite often; I also called on him several times at this same hour at Mathi and in the school of St. John Evangelist in Turin, too. Whenever I did so, no matter in what House it was, I always caught him unaware, rapt in meditation, his hands clasped.

2. The second thing to which I must refer had to deal with the difficulties following the death of His Eminence, Cardinal Cagliero. It has been falsely reported and interpreted as coming from

Don Bosco that Cardinal Cagliero would not be able to be present at the resumption and closing of the Vatican Council.

It is now over forty years that I have lived in close contact with the older Salesians who informed me that when John Cagliero was appointed Bishop, Venerable Don Bosco said *he would live for many years.* We believed he would attain the age of 85, whereas he lived until the age of 88. Don Bosco also said that *he would take part in an important event at the Vatican.* But he did not specify what this *great event* would be, and it was Father Viglietti, a cleric at the time, who gave his own arbitrary interpretation to the words, and who stated both in word and in writing that Don Bosco had told Bishop Cagliero that *he would take part in the conclusion of the Vatican Council.*

It is moreover true that I myself, and many others, have always considered this interpretation of Father Viglietti as purely arbitrary and erroneous, and I have always said as much to everyone who discussed it with me. When asked by me and by other people on the matter, Cardinal Cagliero always stated that Don Bosco had never made any such prophecy to him.

Therefore Don Bosco never said, as it has been erroneously alleged because of the interpretation made by Father Viglietti, that Bishop Cagliero would take part in the *conclusion of the Vatican Council,* but merely that he would participate *in an important event at the Vatican.* Cardinal Cagliero did indeed participate in one event at the Vatican. This was the Conclave at which the Holy Father Pius XI was elected. Don Bosco, throughout his whole life, loved the Roman Pontiff, for whom he had cherished the most tender and zealous affection, but naturally he was third in line, that is, immediately after Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Blessed Virgin. And so that event in which, by the Mercy of Divine Providence, one of Don Bosco's poor boys from the Oratory was to take part, that event was considered great by Don Bosco.

I confirm this statement under oath, word by word.

Your Eminence may make whatever use of it you may see fit.

I beg you to forgive my boldness and I bow before you, as I kiss your sacred ring.

Your humble, devoted, and grateful servant,
Rev. Philip Rinaldi, Rector Major

Turin, September 29, 1926

To: His Eminence Cardinal Anthony Vico *Ponens*
or Relator in the Cause of the Ven. John Bosco Rome.

9

CANON SORASI'S LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION OF RITES

Most Reverend Eminence:

The Apostolic Process regarding Ven. John Bosco is now over, and I, as Deputy Vicar of His Eminence, our Cardinal Archbishop, will join my colleagues in drawing up the report thereon. I am already over 80 years old, and because I fear that Death may come upon me suddenly, I would like to inform your Eminence of a personal matter which might shed some light on the objections raised against the hearings. I would like my statements to be included, after my death, with the other papers relating to the proceedings.

When the disagreement between the late lamented Bishop Gastaldi, Archbishop of Turin, and Don Bosco entered a crucial phase, some pamphlets were published, which were against the Archbishop. Some people, who had no idea of the kind of man Don Bosco was, suspected that he might have been the author. Shortly after, it became known that the Fiscal Advocate for the Curia, Canon Colomiatti, had opened an investigation and was cross-examining witnesses.

At that time I was secretary to the Curia, and one day Canon Chiuso, who was the Archbishop's Secretary, his Chancellor and later his Pro-Vicar General, told me that since I was the Promoter of the Episcopal Board, I was obliged to request the Fiscal Advocate, Canon Colomiatti, to initiate proceedings against Don Bosco, as the author of the pamphlets in question.

I replied very strongly that in my opinion it was impossible that Don Bosco would have fallen so low, since I knew that he had many other things to worry about, because he had to feed all the young students and artisans who lived at the Oratory, and his other schools and missions. I also added that I did not think him capable of philosophical dissertations, such as those set forth in one of the mentioned pamphlets. I even summoned up my courage and the audacity to say to the Canon, who had been my fellow student when I studied Moral Theology, "Look here, Don Bosco has become such a mighty Colossus that he will crush all of you!"

Surprised at hearing these words, Canon Chiuso replied: "Then you know who the real author is." "No," I answered, "but I have my suspicions about one individual." Out of discretion, I did not dare to mention any name. But I suspected Father Rostagno, S.J., with whom I had once exchanged a few words when I met him on my way to the office. Despite the fact that he knew quite well who I was, I once heard him exclaim: "We'll fix your Archbishop!"

Seeing that I was speaking no more, Canon Chiuso sent me to see Canon Colomiatti, who repeated the same invitation, or command. I related what I had told Canon Chiuso, but did not go so far as to repeat what I had said about Don Bosco, the Colossus. Then, he said self-assuredly: "What if we were to condemn him?" "Then I would bow before the verdict," I said, "because I would suppose that you had such reliable, clear, and unequivocal proofs against him that you had no choice but to condemn him." At that point he picked up a large folder, containing, I believe, the depositions of the witnesses he had interrogated, and showed it to me. He said sententiously: "Do you see this? We shall not conduct the process for Don Bosco as we did for Cottolengo!"

I signed the petition, asking him to proceed against Don Bosco, for the petition was already drawn up . . . *parcat mihi Deus!* [May God spare me!] That was the era of power and superpower, not to say anything more!

From the moment when I dared to declare myself openly as a defender of Don Bosco, I realized that I was only tolerated at the Curia. A short time later, the Archbishop told me that the parish at Aglie (under the patronage of His Royal Highness, the Duke of Genoa) was vacant, and without making any reference to what had happened, he told me that I would be well-advised to accept it. Later, he insisted again, but I told him that it would be very hard for me to leave the Diocese in which I was born. A short while went by and I was offered the parish of St. Maurice in the Diocese of Turin. I realized that I was forced to accept the offer, but while I was preparing to pass my examination, the patron, Marquis Doria, called on the Archbishop, to introduce the priest he wished to appoint to that parish!

At that time, the priests of *Corpus Domini* who knew that I was under attack, accepted me in their Congregation, and four years later the Canons at the Cathedral asked me to join them as their colleague.

As Prosecuting Advocate for the Informative Process, I may be accused because I did not call either Canon Chiuso or Canon Colomiatti as official

witnesses. But I did report the facts to the Archbishop, Bishop David Riccardi. In his brisk way he replied: "Canon Chiuso has been attended to!" (He had been stripped of his office as Canon!) "As for Canon Colomiatti, what does that fellow know about Don Bosco?" Then he said something, which I understood to mean that I was free to call other witnesses, whereupon I called three: the theologian Bongiovanni, Canon Corno, and Canon Berrone.

I did not summon Canon Colomiatti, because I knew that the Curia had been obliged to withdraw the suit it had filed against Don Bosco. Moreover, when he had made his deposition, the witness, Rev. Professor Turchi, presented a sealed envelope to the Tribunal, with the request that it be forwarded to the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation, and it was surmised that in this sealed statement he admitted he was the author of the famous pamphlets. And so the accusation that they had been authored by Don Bosco, as Canon Colomiatti had sustained so implacably, vanished.

Then quoting Canon Corno, who had been pro-secretary to Bishop Gastaldi for many years, and precisely *during the years of greater tension,* I felt I had completely fulfilled my duty.

It is neither within my power nor my competence to evaluate the weight of Canon Colomiatti's depositions, but I am in a position to testify that several distinguished people who had dealings with him *know how easily he passed judgments and verdicts, and how, once he had passed a judgment, it was impossible to get him to listen to any argument, or rebuttal of his judgment.*

I beg Your Eminence to pardon my boldness, and while I kiss your sacred ring, I deem myself honored to be, with deep veneration,

Your obedient servant,
Canon Michael Sorasio
Deputy Vicar

Turin, November 8, 1917

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FATHER TURCHI'S LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE PREFECT OF THE CONGREGATION OF RITES

Most Reverend Eminence:

In my deposition before the Reverend Judges in the hearings for the

cause of Beatification of that saintly priest who was Don John Bosco, I asked if I might present a sealed envelope to the judges, and permission was granted. This envelope was to be opened only by the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and used with the utmost secrecy. I felt I had to do this so that the Sacred Congregation might be fully convinced that Don Bosco never wrote, nor intended to write, pamphlets attacking Bishop Lawrence Gastaldi, the former Archbishop of Turin, and also to keep the names of the real authors who had written against or about Bishop Gastaldi from being made known to the public, or handed down to History.

In writing these few lines, I consider myself bound by the oath taken for my deposition. Moreover, I wish to say that I am not writing this because I feel rancor toward the memory of Bishop Gastaldi for whom I feel compassion, since he was a man who based his judgment on first impressions and must have been somewhat abnormal in his thinking. A Piedmontese Bishop who is still alive agreed with me on this, and he is a very wise, very pious and very learned man. Furthermore, I think that he was surrounded by the wrong kind of people. This becomes more and more obvious in the light of the behavior of the former secretary and advisor of Bishop Gastaldi, Canon Thomas Chiuso, who was interdicted quite recently, by a direct order of His Holiness Leo XIII, from the celebration of Mass, and also from acting as a Canon of the Metropolitan chapter as he was before, and was declared incompetent for any ecclesiastic appointment or office. This also was proven by Father Marcellino, who at that time was the pastor of the Holy Martyrs Parish here in Turin, a post which he filled until quite recently. This priest, who was an intimate associate and advisor to Bishop Gastaldi, thanks to whose friendship he first obtained the above-named parish, had fallen low in regard to morality, and when Bishop Gastaldi became convinced, at long last, that this was not only a question of gossip, but a question of deeds, he was obliged to instruct the Curia to bring him to court. But the Archbishop was so saddened when he came to know what his confidant really was, that many maintain that his sudden death, which occurred a few days later, was caused by his disappointment about Father Marcellino. Father Marcellino finally was forced to give up his parish, but he still lives in Turin, or travels around in secular garb, even sporting a moustache. It's not exactly known what kind of life he is leading now, though no one finds anything good to say about him.

At that time, everyone knew that the management of the Archdiocese left much to be desired under the episcopate of poor Bishop Gastaldi,

especially during the latter years. Everyone knew about it and still knows today. I suppose that Rome knew about it; perhaps Rome knew even more about it. I spent not a short time in Rome myself (part of 1877 and part of 1878), and I often heard people who were unable to betray the truth talk about the complaints against Bishop Gastaldi which were made by people holding high positions in the Church, and even by His Holiness, the Pope himself. Besides, the pamphlets in question contained enough material to give an idea to what point things had reached under poor Bishop Gastaldi's rule. As far as I know, no one ever contradicted or rebutted these pamphlets in public. Apart from what I came to know personally, even a Bishop of a Piedmontese diocese who lived in Turin before he was appointed a Bishop and who was in a position to know quite well persons and places, assured me not long ago that the pamphlets were read avidly, and as it was discovered later, they were telling the truth.

It is well known that poor Bishop Gastaldi was up in arms against everyone and everything: 1. *Against the Holy See,* because he refused to obey; thereby he incurred special suspensions, since he had refused to accept the verdict of the Roman Tribunals. Instead, he had sought the advice and plans of eminent magistrates, in order to react against Rome and render void its verdicts. 2. *Against some Faith Decrees:* Before he became a Bishop, Gastaldi had published some propositions which agreed with sectarian leaders. These propositions had been refuted in one of the already mentioned booklets entitled *Short Essay on the doctrines of Bishop Gastaldi,* and specifically in that section which prayer is an essay. 3. *Against the Moral theology of St. Alphonsus de' Liguori:* which he considered too lax. This opinion led him to destroy one of the finest, and, for Piedmont, most beneficially influential institutions, namely, the *Convitto Ecclesiastico,* where priests studied Moral Theology to rout Jansenist rigorism out of Piedmont. Men outstanding for their learning and sanctity, such as Fr. Guala and Father Joseph Cafasso, had founded the Convitto. And this led him to get rid of that great scholar of Moral Theology, the Rev. J.B. Bertagna, who is now the titular Bishop of Capernaum; 4. *Against religious Orders and Congregations, especially against the Jesuits:* When Bishop Gastaldi himself taught moral theology to young priests, he often turned his lessons into tirades against the Jesuits. Additionally, in one of his published works he stated that the religious life was no more perfect than the simple priesthood. Especially was he against poor Don Bosco. It would take far too long to describe in detail the extremes to which he carried his persecution against Don Bosco. Don Bosco was considered guilty for not allowing the Archbishop to destroy both him and

his Congregation; 5. *He was against sound Catholic philosophy,* for he himself defended Rosminian theories. I myself once claimed in a liberal newspaper, that in Gastaldi, the Archbishop of Turin, they had a staunch champion. 6. *He was against his own Clergy* and against the best of them, issuing countless suspensions for petty reasons. Among the victims of such suspensions was Don Bosco himself, whom he suspended from hearing confessions. Don Bosco was not aware of this, and others thought that as usual his license had been renewed for a year. But Don Bosco had been granted the faculty to hear confessions everywhere, without any territorial restrictions, by Pope Pius IX, as Don Bosco himself told me. 7. Finally, Bishop Gastaldi was up in arms *against his fellow Bishops of the area,* whom he prohibited from officiating at functions in his Diocese.[1] 8. I might even say that he was *against the Very Saints themselves,* because at that time when a certain '*Laude*' (publication on Praise) of St. Alphonsus was about to be reprinted for the thousandth edition, he would not allow this until he had inserted a variation of his own in the text. When the printer and others pointed out to him that the text was ancient, and that no one had ever found cause to object to anything in it, he replied: "St. Alphonsus was a Bishop, whereas I am an Archbishop, and that is the way I want it!" 9. He was *against the Metropolitan Chapter.* When he formed his Synod, he submitted a copy of the document to the Chapter, as requested. But at the assembly of the Clergy in the Cathedral, the Bishop had another document read to them. Then, when he went to the Ligurian Riviera for the baths, he compiled a third document, and he had it printed in 1873. I have been told that this is the absolute truth. Many questions were raised at that time, and they are raised still, concerning its validity, excluding what *was retained from the Synod of Cardinal Costa.* But who could distinguish between what belonged to Costa and what did not? A very careful examination would be needed to do so. I had heard from a reliable source that the learned moral theologian, Bishop Bertagna, during his lecture to young priests claimed that the Synod was not valid. If it is quoted by Bishop David dei Conti Riccardi, our most revered Archbishop, it is mainly because it relied upon a tacit consensus provided by the Metropolitan Chapter, as Bishop Re, the Bishop of Alba, once told me. But how can we suppose that, at an opportune time, the Chapter had not protested against it? And so, the Synod would be a Synod, and yet at the same time, no Synod at all. Later, Bishop Gastaldi

[1] At this time Bishop Emiliano Manacorda, the worthy Bishop of Fossano in the Archdiocese of Turin, was forced to apply to the Holy See, asking that he might no longer be subject to Bishop Gastaldi, his metropolitan Superior. His petition was granted.

attacked Margotti, and his *Unità Cattolica,* and harassed him so severely that Margotti turned over the ownership of the newspaper to his brother, Stephen, in order to escape from it. It is very strange that at Bishop Gastaldi's death, all the details regarding his residence, the viewing of his body, and all that was going on in the archepiscopal palace and the adjoining public chapel, as well as the details about his funeral procession, etc., were all accurately reported by a blatantly liberal newspaper, one of the very worst, and second only to *La Gazzetta del Popolo,* namely *La Gazzetta Piemontese,* from which the religious papers took their news. Moreover, Bishop Gastaldi retained liberal ideas, and this is evidenced by one of his pastoral letters.

Yet, I must admit that Bishop Gastaldi was badly served by his Curia. Once, as I happened to be in one of the offices of the Chancellery in Rome, a brilliant canonist said to me, "But how is it possible that in Turin no one can deal with the Canons?"

Anyone who wishes to know about the disorders and the evils of that time should read the various pamphlets published by Bishop Gastaldi, not excluding the *Report by the Rev. John Bosco to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of the Council,* a report which he had written very reluctantly in obedience to the Holy See. He was forced to have it printed but only as a very limited edition, and all of it printed in the dead of night and by personnel who were not connected with the Salesian Houses, save for the Director of the Sampierdarena Publishing Company of St. Vincent de Paul. This was in 1881.

The proof that those pamphlets told the truth, apart from the fact that they were considered true by everyone, is the fact that Bishop Gastaldi had the intention of filing a suit, if not against the actual authors, at least against the publishers. But when consulted, the Royal Attorney asked, "Are the facts alleged in these pamphlets true?" "Well, now . . ." the Bishop began, whereupon, either the Royal Attorney himself or some other magistrate, said, "If the facts alleged are true, be careful about filing any suit, because if you do, you will stir up a hornet's nest, and that would be much worse than to let things go." This was discussed openly, as a reliable fact, in Turin.

This means that these evils did really exist, and that they were very serious indeed. Let me speak now about the pamphlets and single out what is more important in them.

Already, prior to the year 1878, liturgical Calendars contained many things that were amusing and ridiculous. I admit that I was amused by them,

as other priests did who were my friends and even some who were more than simple priests. In Turin, I heard people complain continuously and deplore the state of affairs. I come from the same town as Don Bosco, and thus from the same town as Fr. Joseph Cafasso, and even though as a cleric I belonged to the Seminary of Turin, which was closed down and then reopened, though only for certain courses, I spent ten years with Don Bosco, that is, from the third grade of High School, as we call it today, until a few months after my priestly ordination. For this reason, I loved Don Bosco very much and it made my blood boil when I saw how Bishop Gastaldi, Chiuso, and Colomiatti (although the last did not do so until later) harassed and tormented him. Practically every day they found something new against him. Since I lived in Rome for some length of time, teaching under Bishop Crostarosa (1877–1878), I had occasion to hear the things that high dignitaries of the Church, and even those of higher rank, were saying, for I had several important friends and acquaintances. I asked someone in Turin to send me a copy of the Liturgical Calendar for 1878. When I realized that it was even more absurd than the previous issues had been, I began to look through it carefully, and all sorts of ideas flashed through my mind. It was then that the idea started coming to my mind (it was only to my mind and my head) the idea of writing a magazine with the intention, at that time only a vague intention, of printing it. And so I began to jot down my observations, humorous in nature, on the Liturgical Calendar by Bishop Gastaldi. I no longer recall if it was before I started to write or when I was already writing, but I do recall that someone, I really don't know who, must have been the author, a friend of mine, about whom I shall write shortly, I sent him a printed page (I do not remember if it was in the form of a letter or an essay.) The printed page was signed by a *Salesian Cooperator* and defended Don Bosco versus Bishop Gastaldi. This made me feel very eager to either start writing or to continue to write and to have printed what I was writing or had written. (In all truth, my memory is not very good, and I do not recall whether I had actually begun writing or not; I'd suppose the latter, that is to say, that I was eager to continue writing.) So I drafted the *Strenna for the Clergy,* that is A Review of the Liturgical Calendar of the Archdiocese of Turin for the year 1878, written by a Chaplain. That Chaplain was I and is I, the Rev. John Turchi.

As for the printed letter by the Salesian Cooperator which I just mentioned, that was written by the Rev. J. B. Anfossi, Doctor of Letters and Philosophy, and now honorary Canon at the Holy Trinity Church in Turin. (Either he told me about it himself, or I may have heard about it from

someone else, as well as from him.) He was and still is a friend of mine. He, too, had lived with Don Bosco at the same time that I did, and also had left him at the same time. He, too, had always had a deep affection for Don Bosco. When I told him what I was planning to do he kept me informed of everything that was happening in Turin. By being there on the spot, he was better able to know about it than I was, since I lived in Rome. In this way, he supplied me with fresh material for my *Strenna.*

In Rome I discovered that a Jesuit priest, Anthony Ballerini, (I believe his name is, or was, Anthony), was also writing something about Bishop Gastaldi's doctrines. So I called on him, additionally because I needed a few explanations about the miracles,[2] that is to say, about their approval, or non-approval, by the Ordinary of his Diocese. In this way we talked: I about my *Strenna* and he about his *Essay* on the above-mentioned theories. I think we said that since there was no other way to aim at him, Bishop Gastaldi had to be *exposed and the press was needed to achieve this.* Poor Bishop Gastaldi relied on the backing of laymen, among whom was a relative of his who was the Minister of the War Department, General Macè de La Roche.

When I informed Ballerini that I had been told that the Pope was thinking of removing Bishop Gastaldi from office, even though there was fear that he might go to extremes and create a huge scandal, Ballerini answered: "But he has already gone to extremes; he very definitely did go to extremes!" I may be wrong, but I believe that, already at that time, he asked me to try to get his essay published in Turin, I mean the *Little Essay,* etc. and that I agreed to satisfy him. At any rate, it was understood that he would send the manuscript to Turin and that arrangements for printing it would be made there, inasmuch as he was not eager to reveal his identity, either. Besides, I believe I remember that he also said that Bishop Gastaldi must be *belabored by the press*; there was no other way. All this talk encouraged me to print my *Strenna* and all the rest of which I shall speak shortly. Rather, on account of this and on account of all that I had heard being said in Rome by someone who must have had access to more information, I became convinced that the idea of *belaboring him by the press* had come from on high! I was told that in a previous instance concerning poor Cardinal D' Andrea, Pius IX himself said: *He must be belabored by the press.* Indeed he was assailed both *directe vel indirecte* [directly and indirectly]. With all that Father Ballerini said and did, I was

[2] It refers to miracles already acknowledged for some time in other dioceses.

encouraged and I was given confidence to stay the course. I, then, am the author of the *Strenna* and I am fully convinced that what I did was good. It was printed in Turin at the publishing company of G. Bruno & Co., in 1878.

But as to the *Strenna* or the other things published, I had had nothing to do with the printer personally. All the arrangements for the printing were made by Anfossi and another mutual friend of ours, Aloysius Fumero, who had also lived with Don Bosco at that time when Anfossi and I did. Then he too had left the Oratory and was, at the time, a typesetter in Bona's Publishing Company. He was a reliable person. There was also a certain Brunetti, another past pupil of Don Bosco, who was in the same line of work as Fumero (Brunetti is now dead). All of them, save Anfossi, negotiated with the printer. They arranged for the contract and the expenses. From the profits made on what we printed and sold (at least as far as the *Strenna* was concerned) we saved enough to donate a fair-sized sum of money to the Home (after we deducted our expenses).

The same things happened with the other pamphlets, without the printer ever knowing who had written them.

When I was back in Turin in 1878–79, Father Ballerini sent me the manuscript of his *Short Essay,* and I wrote what came before and after it, namely the Preface, the Introduction, four Appendices, and the final section, the *Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin,* the exact words used by Bishop Gastaldi when he was still a Canon and prior to his missionary work in England. Last of all, I wrote the *Warning,* which was the very last thing in the booklet.

While I was writing all of the above, I was Rector and teacher at the *Institute for the Blind* in Turin, where I remained for three and a half years. Everything leads me to believe that if I was then obliged to leave it, it was because of a maneuver of Chiuso, or by the direct action of Bishop Gastaldi. This caused me considerable grief, for I was very fond of those good and dear pupils, and it brought them much suffering, since after I left, all the Rectors were more or less secularized laymen, while a few were also immoral. In short, the Freemasons who did not want a priest to be Rector had their way. Now, to return to what I was saying: while I was writing the above, a Jesuit priest, Father Rostagno, who had been a renowned professor of canon law in Belgium (at Louvain, I believe) came to see me one day. I could not say how, but he had come to know that I had had something to do with Ballerini's *Essay,* and that I was then at work on something that would be published together with it. I took advantage of

his visit to ask for his advice, and to obtain certain clarifying details. He made several suggestions and he encouraged me, and I made use of some of the ideas that he had given to me in my own literary style. Therefore, if what I did was a sin, I had two renowned Jesuits, Father Anthony Ballerini and Father Rostagno, as my accomplices.

Father Anfossi wrote another pamphlet, of which I no longer recall the exact title; but it was drawn from a newspaper, *Il Conciliatore* I believe, of which the Rev. Theologian Lawrence Gastaldi (of the University) was Director. All I did in this was to compile *Footnotes.* Concerning another pamphlet which dealt with something that had happened in Chieri, between the late Salesian priest, Bonetti, on one hand, and Oddenino, the pastor of the Chieri Cathedral, and Bishop Gastaldi on the other, I knew nothing until it was published. I thought that Father Bonetti himself had written it, but then someone very reliable assured me that it had not been written by Father Bonetti at all, but by someone else who had no connection with the Salesian Oratory, nor did I ever find out who the author was.

After the above-listed publications, someone told me that in Rome, people were expecting others; some even complained that they had come to an end. Even Father Ballerini had other material ready to complete his Essay. I believe that Father Rostagno, as well, insisted that there should be more publications. But at that time I was too busy, looking after my beloved blind charges, and I felt that what had already been published was enough to acquaint both Turin and Rome with the situation and the people involved and the evil being done, in order that that suitable measures could be taken. I did not plan to write anything more, and thus, there was an end to it.

In my opinion, there is absolutely no doubt that these pamphlets did some good; although Bishop Gastaldi did not stop entirely, yet he did at least checked himself to a great extent. In Rome, where, as everyone was saying, there had been plans to make Gastaldi a Cardinal and appoint him to some office, people came to understand the kind of man that he was. He himself realized how wrong he had been in closing the *Convitto Ecclesiastico* for the study of Moral Theology, and he did what he could to reactivate it. At present, the *Convitto* is flourishing once again. His successor, Cardinal Alimonda, soon restored peace. I like to think that these pamphlets contributed in some small measure to the appointment of Cardinal Alimonda as Archbishop of Turin. Thanks to him, and at his urging, the proceedings began for Don Bosco's Beatification, and under his Episcopate, *things which had been considered faults in Don Bosco were judged*

meritorious and worthy of praise. Peace was restored among the ranks of the Turin Clergy, and some of them realized they had done wrong to incite Bishop Gastaldi with their advice; I really believe that when they desisted from their former practice and acted as pious gentlemen, they did so more out of conviction than out of expediency. Chiuso and Marcellino are still alive; but they are discredited. And they constitute a sorry comment on all that they persuaded Bishop Gastaldi to do. Gastaldi, unfortunately, did not know his men well enough. After so much harassment, the commendable, meritorious Salesian Congregation was treated with much affection and consideration by the great Pope Leo XIII (May God keep him for many a year!). Another excellent, holy priest who had been similarly persecuted, the theologian Rev. Bertagna, who had to go to Asti to find refuge and became Vicar General there, was called back to Turin by Cardinal Alimonda who appointed him auxiliary Bishop. Now, besides being the Rector Major of the Metropolitan Seminary, and of four other Seminaries, as well (the Royal Park in Turin, and the Seminaries of Chieri, Bra, and Giaveno), he has resumed his lectures on Moral Theology for the younger members of the Clergy. An era of peace began for the ranks of the Clergy, when Cardinal Alimonda came to Turin. The frictions, the fears, the secret accusations, and the scandals came to an end. Another positive outcome of it all was that the very wise Pope, Leo XIII, actually stated, when speaking of Bishop Gastaldi with considerable emphasis: "Either he makes his peace with Don Bosco, or he will have to be removed from office." In fact, a settlement was arranged, though it did not last for the remainder of Bishop Gastaldi's life, because, poor man! he seized on another issue which lasted until he died, while Don Bosco found himself obliged to report any further harassment he might receive from the Archbishop.

Some people cried 'scandal' in regard to the pamphlets, but those who protested were not many. It was mostly those whose plans were upset by the publication. The real scandals unforunately given by Chiuso and Marcellino soon smothered the outcry,—'unfortunately,' and we could add, providentially. At that time, one of the most angry of all was Canon Colomiatti.

Well, now he calls on the Salesians, on their Superior, Father Michael Rua, and they all repay him for his abuse and the hatred shown by him not long before, with warm respect and cordiality. Praised be God, because of it! But I believe that the Pamphlets, which did create a lot of trouble, certainly, should be given their share of merit. A number of people were heard to exclaim in reference to them: "Oh! How right that Chaplain was! If only we had listened to what he said! If we had, the Archepiscopal Curia,

the pastors, and priests and all those good nuns and sisters, and many more people would not have forfeited all those enormous sums of money which Chiuso dissipated so reprehensibly. If people had listened, there would not be so much useless weeping now."

If the Seminarians had given heed to all the things that the poor Chaplain pointed out to them in the pamphlets, they would not be involved, as they are now, in a law suit brought against them by Chiuso, who, after squandering monies entrusted to him in the amount of six hundred thousand lire-without considering anything else-is now demanding some two or three hundred thousand lire more!

Before closing, may I say something about the questionnaire connected with the cause of Don Bosco's Beatification; that is, I would like to express my own opinion in regard to it. I think that this questionnaire is so compiled that, as far as the publications about Bishop Gastaldi are concerned, Don Bosco is presented as a culprit, unless some justification can be found to excuse him. I felt very indignant at this, and suspected that there must be some former adversary of his behind it. I imagine that that section of the Questionnaire was drawn up in Turin.

After all, these pamphlets never spoke out solely in defense of Don Bosco, but also on behalf of many other people, and on behalf of *many other matters of the greatest importance.*

Now that I have come to the end of this epistle which is far too long, and written in very bad handwriting, in a very disjointed way, and with corrections to boot, I beg Your Eminence, Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, to forgive me, and to take into account all the things I have to do. At the same time I deplore and condemn in advance anything that you may find to be exaggerated or not entirely correct or fitting in what I have written. I likewise repeat that if I have said too much against the late Bishop Gastaldi, this was not because of any sentiment of rancor against him, for I pray for him, although I hope he is already in Heaven.

Lastly, may I ask Your Eminence, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, to convey to all the Reverend members of the above-mentioned Congregation my sincerest regards and respects, while, as an obedient son of Holy Church, I am honored to be,

Your humble, obedient servant
Rev. Prof. John Turchi

Archepiscopal Seminary at Bra (province of Cuneo)
October 25, 1895

11

DON BOSCO AND THE CONCILIATION

It is not without a providential significance, the fact that the beatification of Don Bosco and its solemn celebrations occurred at a time when Peace was decreed and ratified between Church and State.

As far as the event, which we consider accomplished today, everyone agrees that the basic element underlying it was the fact that Pius IX had remained in Rome after what happened on September 20, 1870. Despite the fact that many people had urged the Pope to follow the hazardous path of exile, and Pius IX himself was doubtful as to what he ought to do, it was Don Bosco who persuaded the Pope to remain. The Pope had asked for his advice, and after he had prayed for some time, this simple priest wrote his answer, which in substance and in style had all the resoluteness and the fearlessness of Saints who, despite their humility, do not hesitate to speak out forcefully, even to the supreme authority, when they feel that this is necessary. The sure conviction felt by St. Catherine of Siena flared anew within him, and this is the message Don Bosco sent to the Pope: "*The sentry, the Angel of Israel, must stand firm at his post, to defend the rock of God and the Holy Ark.*"

And, if the expression is not too bold, the Pope obeyed.

Pius IX thoroughly understood the kind of man Don Bosco was. Ever since 1858 he had known him in Rome, when Don Bosco first had gone to the Holy City to lay before him his plans for the foundation of the Salesian Society.

When Don Bosco saw that one hundred and eight episcopal Sees were vacant in Italy in 1865 as a consequence of political strife, he ventured to write to the Pope to express his hope that the damage which this caused to the welfare of souls might be rectified by negotiation between the Holy See and the Government. The Pope was pleased to hear this advice, just as he was pleased that Don Bosco spoke of the matter to the Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, John Lanza. The outcome of this was that Pius IX wrote to Victor Emanuel, asking him to send an envoy with power to negotiate, and the King wrote in reply that he consented. This led to the mission of Vegezzi, who, however, was unsuccessful because of the indiscretion of newspapers and the ensuing uproar in Parliament. The important, intricate matter was then resumed by the Minister of State Ricasoli toward the end of 1866, after the war with Austria. The subsequent Tonello mission

was successful because Ricasoli did something that no previous Cabinet Minister had done since 1848, though many were the envoys who had been sent for various reasons to negotiate with the Pope since that time. Ricasoli sent an unofficial mediator who was acceptable to the Holy See and who enjoyed Papal trust, to negotiate with the official envoy. Together with Lanza, Ricasoli shared the great merit of understanding Don Bosco's extraordinary talent for diplomacy, although he had no preparation for such a diplomatic mission. If only space would allow us to report in detail all that Don Bosco achieved on this occasion, with the Government on one hand, and with the Pope and eminent Prelates on the other, if only we were able to describe all the obstacles he encountered and the way he managed to overcome them, we would realize that when sanctity is added to the special natural talents of a person, then sanctity becomes the tool needed. The devout yet courageous frankness used in speaking is clear in Don Bosco's relationship with the Vatican, and no less so in dealing with the government in the event of September 20, 1866. The awareness of his own dignity and of his priestly duties is evident. In his dealing with both sides, what is obvious is his authority, which came from the blending of his own complete unselfishness and his ardent, yet perceptive, concern for the welfare of souls, of the Church, and of his country.

The nobility of his intentions gave Don Bosco that serenity of spirit which is so indispensable in conducting negotiations of great importance.

Thanks to Don Bosco's success, some provision was made for the vacant Dioceses. During the Consistories of March 23rd and 27, 1867, thirty-four Bishops were appointed.

This matter of episcopal appointments was complicated once again by the annexation of Rome to Italy, with all the moral, political, and judicial consequences that ensued. Between those that were already vacant and others that were newly made sixty Italian Dioceses were without shepherds. So, once again, in agreement with Pius IX, Don Bosco approached Lanza, who throughout that period was the President of the Cabinet of Ministers, to offer his services as mediator, without waiting for Lanza to call him. Lanza accepted the offer, and the Piedmontese priest journeyed to Rome again and again, to cope with the increased difficulties that now lay before him. By October 17, 1871, Don Bosco had succeeded in getting forty vacancies filled.

Was Don Bosco called in 1874 to negotiate the true and genuine conciliation, after these conciliatory experiments had provided at least a partial and limited conciliation? Did the negotiations with Vigliani, the Keeper of

the Seals in Minghetti's Cabinet, which had been instrumental in preventing the suppression of the Mother Houses of Religious Orders and of four famous Roman Monasteries, have any bearing on that same Conciliation? It is evident that Bismarck who, at the time exercised tremendous pressure on Italy to prevent this Conciliation, attributed immense importance to the negotiations conducted by Don Bosco, whose presence and activity in the capital were known to him, and caused him serious worry.

Again, in 1878, Don Bosco proved a most effective mediator between the Government and the Vatican. It was he who obtained from Crispi, the Secretary for the Interior, the assurance that freedom would be respected for the Cardinals who were to attend the Conclave at which they were to elect the successor of Pius IX, and the guarantee that their persons would be protected while they were in Rome. Thanks to this guarantee, the Sacred College decided not to hold the Conclave elsewhere, and thus the serious error of holding it abroad was averted.

Had such an error been committed, there would have been no Lateran Pact today. Therefore, Don Bosco played a wise and decisive role in every careful conciliatory detail, in each of the many elements so indispensable to the Conciliation which has, at last, been finalized. It is therefore only logical that the Roman Peace Pact, and Don Bosco's sacred triumph, be indissolubly linked as one, even as regards time.

Philip Crispolti

12

"DON BOSCO RETURNS"

The hymn "*Don Bosco Ritorna*" is inspired by one paramount thought which constitutes its whole spirit: the idea of Don Bosco's return! The refrain says:

> Don Bosco returns—once again among the boys;
> They call to you, a quiver with joy and love!

On January 31, 1888, the day of his death, Don Bosco did not abandon Valdocco; he only left it for a while. Valdocco was his first, his main House. Now after only 41 years, he was returning, summoned by thousands and thousands of boys who were to march ahead of his venerated mortal remains. They hailed him with cries of joy because of the sacred, wonder-working

halo circling his head; they hailed him with voices of love, with that gratitude and filial affection which they felt for his sons, for his work.

As the youthful crowds were descending from the slopes of Valsalice toward the bridge and the regal and spacious avenue, the sacred and triumphant road, truly worthy of so great a glorification–one's thoughts, filled with emotions, went back to that distant day of November 3, 1846, when, with a bundle containing a few notebooks, a Missal, and a breviary, and together with his mother Margaret, who was carrying a basket of bed linen, Don Bosco arrived from Castelnuovo d'Asti weary and covered with dust; he was descending the hills on foot, to go and set up house in the shed of Valdocco.

The hymn starts with this touching vision, which it contrasts with the magnificent procession of June 9th.

This is a literal translation of the hymn, which was then sung. The lyrics of the hymn now being sung by the Salesians in different countries were changed considerably.

He came down from the hills one distant day,
With only his mother at his side,
Thou hast come to this valley
Of your dreams, under a tender spell.
Today, Oh! Father, thou dost not descend
These hills alone;
An immense army of Thy sons
Are here to accompany Thee home.

Don Bosco's home today is Valdocco, just as it was then, in November 1846. Yet what a great contrast do we see! Then it was a modest hut, where, following the hubbub of the Sunday crowd of boys, solitude and silence reigned during the rest of the week. Now, all around it, you can hear the hum of a district, which is as big and as bustling as a city. Inside the immense walls of the Oratory, there is a crowd of two kinds of boys who work with their hands and their minds and enjoy the merriment of games and the harmonies of songs.

Then Valdocco was a desert
With neither life, nor joy;
It was an untilled, open plain
Where only a shed gave refuge!

Now look, O Blessed Father:
A happy nation lives
'Neath the flowing, golden mantle
Of Mary Help of Christians!
Yes, return, smiling:
The world acclaims thy work:
Now life is resplendent
Where before there were but dreams and hope.
Come back, and look around Thee: by the thousand
Thy children stand intent on their work;
The hours slip by serene,
'Mid work, and music!

As Don Bosco moves toward his House, another immense throng of boys comes streaming from the other parts of the city, where off-shoots of the mighty tree, whose roots grow deep at Valdocco, have flourished. These boys, too, are his sons, just as are all the others who, in different parts of the world, sing praising his beloved, glorious name in many different tongues:

Everywhere, dear Father, thou seest
The faithful, beloved city:
With vast cohorts of boys
Who stream from every quarter.
Beyond the mountains, and the seas
Thy image glows in splendor;
Unto the furthest boundaries
Rings the echo of Thy name!

Now at last, as Don Bosco comes in sight of Valdocco, a wondrous vision is seen at the Rondò (where Corso Regina Margerita joins Corso Valdocco and Corso Principe Eugenio); this is the vision he saw in his dream of 1845 when, as he stood at the same Rondò, he saw three noble youths (Solutor, Adventor, and Octavian) who called out to him to go into the Valdocco fields where, immediately, the wonderful apparition of Our Lady amid the hosts of the Blessed, presently portrayed in the picture which now adorns the altar in the church of Mary Help of Christians, unfolded before his eyes.

It is this same Virgin Help of Christians who, as a gilded image, from her lofty post atop the dome of the temple, calls to him and awaits him, to enfold him in the celestial splendor of her power and majesty.

Yes, Don Bosco, return
To thy beloved Valdocco:
As on that bygone day, from the Rondò
She still calls Thee, and awaits Thee!
She is the Mighty Virgin,
Of Christians Help and Mother,
Hailed, together with Thee, O Father,
By all nations, in all tongues!

(From *Il Momento*)

13

THE MASSES COMPOSED BY THE MAESTRI ANTOLISEI AND PAGELLA IN HONOR OF DON BOSCO

Judging by his method of building up vocal counterpoint, Maestro Antolisei is a faithful disciple of the Roman school of the Post-Palestrina period, of which the richly imaginative Octavian Pitoni was the leader. Thus one should say that Maestro Antolisei is a disciple of the homophonic school of counterpoint, which makes use of a broad eurythmic theme, with colorful overtones, and which blends so harmoniously with the setting of the 15th and 16th century Roman Basilicas. Let us now take a look together at his impressive composition.

The first theme of the *Kyrie* is well designed and you gladly listen to its repetition by the first bass voices; it appears short, yet incisive and haunting. The theme will be repeated several times, but now it will be reversed, now picked up by other voices both in the third *Kyrie* and the *Miserere nobis* of the *Qui tollis*, and in the *Agnus Dei.* The ternary rhythm of the *Christe* forms an effective contrast with the first and third *Kyrie,* also because the theme of the soprano and contralto voices is later repeated one third higher by the male voices, while the upper register repeats it once again with ingenious variations.

It is interesting to note that the *Kyrie* commences on the tonic note and ends on the dominant note, while the *Gloria* begins on the dominant note and ends on the tonic note. This weaves a pattern of tonal, architectural unity, which is clever and haunting in both these compositions. In the *Gloria*, the *Glorificamus Te* is well constructed and forceful, after the fashion of skilled masters of counterpoint, and the *Miserere nobis,* with the

Kyrie theme sung by the first bass, recurring at the end of the *Qui tollis,* is very pleasing, as we already noted. As the voices soar in a progression of syncopated harmony, in the *Tu solus Altissimus,* there is an upward sweep of great simplicity, which is, nevertheless, luminous in its beauty. The *Cum Sancto Spiritu,* too, is beautiful, ingenious, and very effective in the soaring and falling progressions that confer an intensely dramatic sonority to the magnificently blended voices. The final *Amen* consists of thirty bars of logical, linear, almost classical construction, which greatly distinguishes Maestro Antolisei.

In the *Credo,* which has always presented an intricate, difficult problem for every composer, Antolisei makes use frequently of a homophonic idiom choir in which soprano alternates with contralto, tenor with bass. In this, he often contrasts the limpid notes of the upper register with the darker tones of the lower, blending them at times in skillfully woven harmonic hues.

From the outset, the voices blend and alternate swiftly, in obedience to a golden rule handed down by the classical masters of polyphony for whom each theme most coresponds to a specific phase in the vocal text. The *Et Incarnatus* is subdued and hushed in commemoration of the divine mystery, yet it is adorned with several successions of harmonious chords that are incisively modern in the best sense of the word, and thrilling in their expensive richness. The heartrending cry that erupts at the *Crucifixus* is expressed and rendered very originally, and vibrates with deep feeling in a haunting, persuasive, falling progression of voices that prepare for the *Passus et sepultus est,* as the richly varied hues diminish.

The general structure of the composition progresses fluently toward its conclusion with a highly sonorous arrangement of the vocal parts, which are always controlled to attain the desired structural and emotional effects. This is made evident by the few bars of the *Et vitam venturi,* which consists of only six measures, but which is, nevertheless, very effective, and sweepingly majestic. The theme of the *Sanctus* is diaphanous, almost transparent, as it soars upward little by little in isolated fragments, intensifying its power with a striking counterpoint as it attains the upper register, in a way that resembles the Palestrinian tradition, in the *Pleni sunt coeli et terra,* etc. The theme becomes broader, more sweeping, as it swells with rich, triumphant sonority, to blend in the *Hosanna* which commences on a subdued note that later grows in vibrant ecstasy. The classic, homophonic style of the *Benedictus* plays on an ingenious theme, first in the upper register by the tenor, and then by the soprano voices. Subsequently, the *Hosanna* is resumed as

before, but in its repetition we do not discern the inspired variations, and development which distinguishes the *Kyrie.* Yet Maestro Antolisei makes up for this in his *Agnus Dei,* which, in its intricate design, is one of the most inspired and well-constructed parts of the entire Mass. Although he retains the fundamental characteristics of the composition, namely, the alternating responses by the various voices, he is not content with mere alternation, but weaves the voices together very skillfully, attaining magnificent and richly harmonic effects at times. With inspired single-mindedness of purpose, he again exploits the theme of the *Kyrie,* as we already noted; this incisive, haunting melody is so agreeable to the ear that anyone who hears it will quickly assimilate it and remember it later with wonder and deep emotion. We shall even go as far as to say that just as Maestro Pagella's *Missa sollemnis* was inspired fundamentally by an anthem in praise of Blessed Don Bosco's "*Ah! Sing out in jubilation!*" the Mass by Antolisei is based primarily on the theme of the first *Kyrie* which recurs throughout the entire composition with noble austerity, even though it is not always evident.

Beginning with a determined form that, as we already noted, is based on the alternate responses of the voices (which in this instance, are represented by four adolescent voices, and four male adult voices), the composer might have lapsed very easily into a monotonous uniformity, yet he avoids this pitfall very skillfully, thanks to the device of an almost identical response to the first part in a combination of three and even four parts. He does not give his preference to themes sung by single voices in sequence at brief intervals, one from the other, in the tradition of classic counterpoint, but to themes sung by three or four voices, which he weaves together in solidly constructed homophonic texture. In this, the Roman Salesian maestro aligns himself with those composers who, in the latter half of the 17th century, and in the capital city of the Catholic world, built genuine masterpieces of musical design that, in our opinion, were aesthetically related to all that had been created architecturally a century and a half earlier. Thanks to this, the style of this Mass by Maestro Antolisei is purely Roman, and well worthy of sincere admiration and enthusiastic acclaim.

We say this unequivocally and without any reservation!

Not every choir would be able to cope with a composition like this, nor perform it. But the composer's intimate knowledge of the voices, which he manipulates with skill and logic, without demanding excessive effort in order to obtain greater effects, enlisting the voices about his individual soloists now and then to give them support, reveal that this Mass of Maestro Antolisei deserves to be performed again, and to be made known in the

major Italian cities. The reason is that the overall structure of the noble composition reveals the masterly counterpoint of this excellent musician. He is particularly well deserving for his contribution in raising the standards of sacred music in general among the Salesians. He accomplished this by a faithful allegiance to the traditions of sacred vocal music, by a masterly knowledge of the resources of the human voice, and by the subtle, strictly aesthetic expression he gives to the meaning of the words, without betraying the stringent requirements of liturgy. These distinguishing characteristics which are typical of the past and present work of Father Raphael Antolisei, make us hope that his compositions will live long, as they truly deserve, and obtain the widest possible recognition. . . .

II

Father John Pagella, a devoted son of Blessed Don Bosco who is a distinguished figure in the realm of art, as well as a distinguished member of the Pious Salesian Society, has long been respected as one of the more prolific and imaginative Italian composers. His rich and varied musical compositions range from sacred music in general to the *Cantata* and *Oratorio,* from chamber music to compositions for organ, from choral music to symphony. A distinguished and noble artist, indeed! As the author of the opera *Job,* completed in 1903, which would have been hailed as one of the finest works in this style, had it been presented at the time when it was written, Father Pagella was certainly most eligible to be one of those whose powerful musical genius and excellent technique were enlisted to help enhance the solemn celebrations in Turin for the beatification of the Founder of the great religious Congregation of which he is a member, and which broadens and expands its beneficial influence, day after day, all over the world, in the immortal name of Blessed Don Bosco.

Contemporary sacred music has long sought a personal idiom, as the great polyphonists did in Rome and in Venice, during the 16th and 17th centuries. For the sake of religious devotion, for the sake of Art, it was imperative that vulgar profanities be expelled from the temple. Yet even when Art had affirmed and established its duty and its right to be Art as such, to be Art especially in the vicinity of Christ's own altar, it was essential that Music should have continued to be Music, in a purely practical sense, but always keeping a high artistic level. Yet how many mediocre, insignificant creations were widely accepted and supported in Italy, under the guise of liturgical music!

Maestro Pagella is one of the few eminent musicians who, in their sacred compositions, have remained faithful to the principle that to write music, you need music!

He was happily inspired when he composed his *Missa sollemnis XIX in honorem Beati Ioannis Bosco* on the theme of a short Christmas carol composed by Blessed Don Bosco himself: "*Ah! Sing out in jubilation!*" [*Ah! si canti in suon di giubilo!*]

In past ages, polyphonists excelled in the use of either complete or fragmentary Gregorian themes for their sacred compositions.

Now, Maestro Pagella has, so to speak, modernized this technical and aesthetic principle. In one section of his Mass, consisting of only four bars, he presents his chosen theme, enriched by all the resources available to modern harmony, though he uses these resources with restraint and dignity, underscoring the nature of the composition which is before everything else primarily and essentially liturgical. In the first and third *Kyrie,* in the finale of the *Gloria* and of the *Agnus Dei,* he introduces two trombones that soar high above the strains of the organ with the echo of Don Bosco's melody, thereby attaining a haunting and deeply moving effect.

We are sure that many of the people to whom this little song by Blessed Don Bosco was already familiar felt profoundly touched when they heard it again in such a novel and richly varied presentation.

Now we shall proceed with a brief, conscientious analysis of this impressive composition.

In the *Missa XIX,* the voices blend in perfect semblance of choral counterpoint, but, for the most part, the organ is independent of the choir, and attains powerful, explosive effects in a richly varied, instrumental phonic pattern of intricate detail in the overall counterpoint and individual timbre.

The basic theme is presented in its entirety for the first time at the finale of the first *Kyrie,* as we already said. It is then followed by the *Christe solo,* alternated between soprano and tenor; it soars above the rest of the choir in thematically disconnected phases which are then woven together, and intensified by the four voices of the soloists. The theme of the initial *Kyrie* is then resumed and more accentuated, being strengthened by a richly hued chromatic counterpoint, the theme of Don Bosco's Christmas carol, which returns once again in a higher key, enhanced by the full-throated sonority of the organ and the brass reinforced and reinstated in octaves. The *Gloria,* too, begins with Don Bosco's theme, on the joyous notes of *Et in terra pax!*

The harmonious melodies of the organ in *Laudamus Te* are effective and appropriate in their haunting, contemporary idiom.

If we were to go into greater detail, we might allude to the spirit that inspires these passages, both before and after the *Gloria,* but we do not want to expose ourselves to the risk of being misunderstood, so we turn our attention, instead, to the new presentation of the basic theme in its different guise, as intoned by the organ two bars prior to the commencement of *Domine Fili.* The salto of a fourth at the beginning of Don Bosco's theme is one of the many resources exploited in a masterly fashion by Maestro Pagella.

In the melodic pattern woven in octaves by the adult male and adolescent voices in the *Qui sedes* and *Quoniam,* there are several exciting highlights that are of interest to the disciples of the contemporary idiom of Music, and who endorse it in sacred music, too.

In this connection, we might say that there is a hint of the great César Franck's *Beatitudes* at this junction.

The *Cum Sancto* begins on Don Bosco's theme in a tonal fugue, which is built in a manner that some might describe as scholastic, but in our opinion it is very appropriate because, with the double pedal of the organ at the fifth of the basic tonality, and the rhythm of the full main theme sounded by the brass, it completes the majestic structure with dramatic sonority of richly hued texture. The voices are skillfully manipulated, though at times, the soprano voices especially soar to almost hazardous heights; this is permissible, however, when the composer has a large, well-trained choir at his disposal. For it enhances the richness of variation and movement in the finale of the second part of the Mass. The composer preferred a simpler pattern for the *Credo,* almost as though he wished to offer a respite after his earlier stylistic subtleties. He sets aside the theme of Don Bosco's song for the Gregorian motif, which is first introduced fragmentarily by the organ. Several monadic phrases then pass successively from the bass register to the tenor and contralto voices. As we already said, the style is simpler at this juncture; the *portamento* smooth, the modal structure of both is without affectation.

The *Et Incarnatus,* which begins with a haunting passage of the bass, alternates with the subdued, homophonic responses of the chorus. At the *Crucifixus,* the four soloists prevail, and then the choir again takes over in full sonorous strength at the *Resurrexit,* continuing till the brilliant finale of *Cuius regni non erit finis.* Here the fragmentary *Gregorian* theme of *Credo in unum Deum,* which was first introduced at the beginning by the

organ, is resumed in a progressive *crescendo* to the harmonious unison of *Et unam sanctam catholicam* and the *Confiteor unum baptisma,* to which the sweeping chords of the organ confer a severe majesty.

Now comes the finale: At the *Et vitam venturi saeculi* we hear the *Credo* theme once again, this time in its entirety, in a poignantly eloquent, sonorous exultation. The eight bars, which repeat this famous Gregorian theme, are simple but incisive, and an impressive and effective *Amen* follows them.

Yet, in our opinion, the style and structure of the *Credo* is only a parenthesis inserted by the composer in the first two parts of the Mass, for at the *Sanctus,* Pagella reverts to his former musical structure: that of the *Kyrie* and the *Gloria,* where, at the beginning, we hear the theme of Don Bosco's Christmas song once again. The organ gives the first hint of it, and initially the voices are no longer four, but eight, divided into two sections, (soloists and choir), all governed with polyphonic mastery. The melody swells with limpid beauty and overwhelming unison at the words *Pleni sunt caeli et terra.* This is followed by the *Hosanna,* formed by two different themes interwoven; these then alternate, to yield at last to a vocal *diminuendo* of great simplicity and restraint. A *melisma* on the organ is inserted here in one of the vocal parts, to weave upward through the *diminuendo* and progress by degrees until it fades into a limpid, distant chord.

The choir in an austere, homophonic, richly expressive vein softly echoes the *Benedictus,* which is intoned by the tenor and continued by the bass. Then the identical theme of the *Hosanna* is resumed in a throbbing, sonorous gamut, where the resonant bass voices become audible on a high note that is maintained, as though in support of the soprano voices that execute an airy vocalization resembling the soaring flight of a soul toward an azure sky and the infinite expanse of Eternity.

Then for the *Agnus Dei,* the composition returns to the greater simplicity which preceded it. With a tranquil progression, the alternating voices of the choir fade softly before a fifth solo, contralto voice, which continues melodically until the entreaty of the *Miserere nobis,* which, in its turn, yields, first to bass, then to soprano. At last, the masterly counterpoint design with four voices is resumed, until, on a note sustained by the choir, the little theme which links our prayerful suppliant soul to the great soul that now roams free in the infinite realm of Immortality, before the eternal throne of the Almighty, is repeated very softly by the trombones, like a wistful, solemn, yet peaceful commemoration.

Now let us sum up our overall impressions.

As a whole, there are qualities in this *Missa XIX* by Maestro Pagella which we feel should be revised again rapidly, to enable us to deal with the outstanding characteristics of the artistic temperament of this eminent composer.

We feel that whenever he embarks on a broad polyphonic venture to enrich it with brilliant hues, he enters the environment and spirit most ideally attuned to his personality and personal aesthetic goals. Hence the finest passages in the "*Mass in honor of Blessed Don Bosco*" are the *Kyrie,* the *Gloria,* and the *Agnus Dei.*

When he resorts to a simpler pattern which seeks its effective expression forms, that is, in a genuine inspiration stripped of masterly counterpoint, he finds himself hampered by the restrictions and limitations of liturgical music, which has informed the more renowned and more widely executed repertories of the past decade, even though he still pursues a noble and dignified course. Many musicians attained great fame with this repertoire, even though they never succeeded in scaling the heights of aesthetic beauty which are discernible, eloquently expressed, and rendered in the finest passages of Maestro Pagella's work, thanks to another and different technique.

There is another thing we would like to add. Certainly, the execution of Pagella's *Missa XIX* entails problems, which stem not so much from the rich polyphonic texture of the work, but from the intricate vocal design for the soprano voices. The high *A,* and the intricate musical embellishments on *E* and *I* have no parallel, not even in Palestrina's work, as far as we can recall. The Salesian choir at the Church of Mary Help of Christians has indeed been trained to cope with such vocal difficulties, but will other choirs elsewhere be able to pass so arduous a test? We doubt very much that they could.

Did Blessed John Bosco foresee that, one day, the musical phrase that took shape almost unbeknown to him in his heart and on his lips in a moment of holy, innocent joy so long ago, and led him to compose his simple little melody, "Ah! Sing out in jubilation!" [*Ah! si canti in suon di giubilo!*] when in a dream he had a glimpse of a fleeting vision of the mortal world that looked to him for its regeneration did he foresee that it would resound anew, in his honor, beneath the dome he had himself raised to Mary Help of Christians? Did Don Bosco foresee that his song would thus resound, thanks to the artistic mastery of one of his brilliant disciples, to find even deeper echo in the souls of the faithful who knelt in prayer beside

the blessed mortal remains of him who has now been elevated to the glory of the altars? No, he certainly did not!

Yet, in this hour of spiritual rapture, of superlative triumph, he must surely be listening, somewhere in the immensity of Heaven that expresses the supreme eternal glory of Almighty God, to the echo of his own voice expressed by the many voices of his sons; and surely he must look down on them with a paternal smile, to bless them and to exclaim again and again: "*Da mihi animas, coetera tolle!*"

John Tebaldini

14

ANSWER WRITTEN IN THE POPE'S NAME TO THE PERORATIONS AND SUPPLICATIONS OF THE CONSISTORIAL ADVOCATES FOR THE CAUSE OF DON BOSCO, AND THAT OF THREE OTHER SERVANTS OF GOD

Quam pro amplissimo vestro munere digne perorastis causam, ea profecto eiusmodi est, ut Summi Pontificis mentem ad assentiendum summopere commoveat. Etenim Beati caelites, de quibus agitis, quamquam instar caeli siderum alii alio splendore in Ecclesiae fastis enitent, omnes tamen ita virtutum laudibus excellunt, ita mirabilibus signis per eos a Deo patratis refulgent, ut, quantum possit ac valeat ad sanctissime conformandos animos ad resque praeclare agendas divinae Redemptionis opus luculenter inde patefiat. Id siquidem egregie praestitere Beati confessores Ioannes Bosco et Pompilius Maria Pirrotti, qui non modo ad summum sanctitatis fastigium omni nisu contenderunt, sed etiam pro sua cuiusque temporum condicione iuventutem praesertim Christianis praeceptis Christianisque moribus instituentes ad Iesu Christi regnum per se per suos amplificandum tantopere elaborarunt. Id praestiterunt itidem Beata Michaela ab Augusto Sacramento ac Beata Ludovica de Marillac, quae turbulentissimis aetatis suae temporibus, cum divinae potissimum caritatis muneribus ac solaciis indigerent homines, tam sollertem, atque impensam ad eam assequendam deducendamque in usum dederunt operam, ut nullum prorsus esset aerumnarum genus ab iisdem neglectum, quaelibet vero corporum animorumque infirmitas pro facultate relevata.

Cur igitur non exoptet Sanctitas Sua Beatos hos caelites sanctitundinis diademate decorare eosque omnibus ad intuendum ad imitandum proponere? Vult tamen, ut in re sane gravissima, quae cum intemerata catholicae religionis integritate arcte coniungitur, tradita a maioribus instituta nulla ex parte intermittantur. Quapropter necessarium autumat, antequam inviolati magisterii sui sententiam dicat, semipublicum, quod vocant, haberi Consistorium, in quo et Purpuratos Patres et eos omnes, qui aderunt, Patriarchas, Archiepiscopos et Episcopos iudicium cuiusque suum de more rogabit. Atque per me interea vos admonet universos, ut ad uberiorem sibi impetrandam superni luminis copiam Sanctum Paraclitum Spiritum adprecemini.

15

THE POPE'S ANSWER TO THE THREE PETITIONS

A INSTANTER — Dum nostra hac aetate victoriae palma, magno cum admirantium plausu, iis interdum tribuitur, qui in causa vel nullo vel fere nullo praeconio digna primas obtinent, haec sollemnia, quibus christiani herois nomen consecratur, videntur equidem non sine gravi monitu atque exemplo celebrari. Tantum enim christianae sanctitudinis laudes fluxae ac perituraе hominum gloriae antecellunt, quantum terrae praestat pulcritudine caelum, quantumque sempiternae beatitatis gaudia miseras caducae huius vitae voluptates exsuperant atque evincunt. Ut igitur per sollemnes huiusmodi caerimonias, quibus iubilaris anni cursus decoratur eiusque augentur salutares fructus non tam ad germanae sanctimoniae praestantiam satius altiusque reputandam, quam ad rectum atque arduum eius iter volenti animo ingrediendum excitentur omnes, Beatissimus Pater vehementer exoptat. Id profecto fiet per legitimam Ioannis Bosco consecrationem, a Romano Pontifice peragendam; Ioannis Bosco, dicimus, Italiae totiusque Ecclesiae decoris; Ioannis Bosco, qui non modo ad evangelicae perfectionis fastigium totis virbus citatoque gradu contendit, sed tot etiam filios—florentem praesertim aetatem christianis praeceptis christianisque moribus conformando— Iesu Christo peperit.

Quapropter quod instanter perorando postulastis quodque innumera beati huius caelitis familia fieri gestit suisque precibus maturavit, id benigne excipere communibusque votis satisfacere percupit Sanctitas Sua. Vult nihilominus ut antea, ex vetustissimo Apostolicae Sedis more, ad rem fauste feliciterque definiendam, caelestis Curiae supplicatio a nobis omnibus interponatur.

A INSTANTATIUS — Procul dubio admontae ad caelestem Aulam preces supplicationesque efficacissimae exstitere; procul dubio, quod nos cupimus omnes, angelorum itidem sanctorumque agmina exoptant; ac Deo ipsimet voluntas est novum hoc sanctitudinis ornamentum atque exemplum militanti Ecclesiae dilargiri. Verumtamen, quamquam nullus relinquitur ambigendi locus beatum Ioannem Bosco sempiterna in caelis beatitate perfrui, quam, divina aspirante gratia, per sanctissima rerum gesta promeruit, per me nihilo secius edicit Beatissimus Pater velle se, antequam inerrans edatur oraculum, Superni Spiritus lumen, ad rem religiosissime perfeciendam, sibi ab omnibus concilietur.

A INSTANTISSIME — In hac rerum hominumque maiestate, quae caelestis Aulae fulgorem refert divinosque concentus, eventum mox visuri sumus, quod in Dei gloriam communemque salutem maximopere conferet. Etenim, nulla iam interposita mora, Iesu Christi Vicarius optatissimam fallique nesciam sententiam suam laturus est. Eam prona fronte gratoque animo excipiamus; ac caelestia munera, quae hodie procul dubio e beati huius caelitis manibus uberiora profluunt, cum nobis, tum laboranti Ecclesiae conciliemus.

16

THE CANONIZATION FORMULA

Ad honorem Sanctae et individuae Trinitatis, ad exaltationem fidei catholicae et christianae Religionis augumentum, auctoritate Domini Nostri Iesu Christi, Beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ac Nostra, matura deliberatione praehabita et divina ope saepius implorata, ac de Venerabilium Fratrum nostrorum S.R.E. Cardinalium, Patrarcharum, Archiepiscoporum et Episcoporum in Urbe exsistentium consilio, Beatum Ioannem Bosco Sanctum esse decernimus et definimus, ac Sanctorum catalogo adscribimus; statuentes ab Ecclesia universali eius memoriam quolibet anno, die natali illius, nempe die XXXI Ianuarii, inter Sanctos Confessores non Pontifices pia devotione recoli debere. In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti.

17

THE HOLY FATHER'S HOMILY

Venerabilis Fratres ac dilecti Filii,

Geminata hodie perfundimur laetitia ac Nobiscum universa afficitur Ecclesia, quod victoriam ex mortis et ex inferorum potestate a Iesu Christo partam celebramus, quodque hodie Nobis licuit praeclaris viris feminisque non paucis, per huius anni sancti decursum ad sanctitudinis honores evectis, sollemnem hanc Ioannis Bosco consecrationem quasi in cumulum adiicere: Ioannis Bosco, inquimus, quem paucis abhinc annis in Beatorum numerum rettulimus, quique iuventutem Nostram—gratum adhuc subit recordatio animum—non modo adspectu suo suoque alloquio recreavit, sed per mirabilium etiam rerum gesta virtutisque praestantiam in sui admirationem rapuit. Iamvero, quamvis eius vita tot sit egregie factis referta atque illustrata, ut vex queat adumbrari paucis, cupimus tamen haec, quae praecipua Nobis videntur, admirationi imitationique vestrae proponere.

Divinae gloriae animarumque saluti procurandae omnino deditus, ex Dei esse voluntate faciendum, id, etsi temerario ausu dignum videbatur, nulla aliorum diffidentia distractus, ac vias etiam rationesque animosus ingressus, quas nova induxerat aetas, ad effectum deducere enitebatur. Itaque, cum pueros, per urbis vias vagantes, pene innumeros vidisset, a parentibus derelictos omnique cura destitutos, eos ad se paterno animo vocavit; eosque, per opportuna omne genus oblectamenta ipsorum animis potitus, et catholicae religionis praeceptis imbuit, et ad iisdem praeceptis per virtutis disciplinam perque crebriorem sacramentorum susceptionem sese conformandos allexit atque permovit. Nostis profecto quantum utilitatis iuventuti recte instituendae et a vitiorum illecebris revocandae ex huiusmodi instititus, quae ***Festiva*** *vocantur* ***Oratoria,*** *sit ortum; quae quidem* ***Oratoria*** *non modo Augustae Taurinorum condidit et in vicinioribus urbibus atque oppidis, sed ubicumque etiam, quo suam invexit religiosam familiam. Praeterea, cum frequentissimae huic adulescentium iuvenumque turbae honestum vitae genus impertire cuperet, quo iidem et sibi possent et futurae proli consulere; illa constituit domicilia, in quibus ipsi exciperentur, et ad fabriles artes addiscendas, cuique consentaneas, praepararentur. Neque iuventuti defuit litteris humanioribusque disciplinis deditae, in cuius commodum multa collegia condidit, in quibus eadem tuto itinere ad altiorem etiam, si vellet, doctrinam adipiscendam contendere et, bene morata, in spem Ecclesiae Nationisque suae succrescere posset.*

Quam ad rem animadvertendum est idcirco Ioannem Bosco, in puerorum iuvenumque animis fingendis educandisque, felicissimos edidisse fructus, quod germanam eam veri nominis educationem alacri perspicacique animo suscepit, quam catholica Ecclesia tantopere commendat, quamque Nosmet ipsi, occasione data, saepenumero commendavimus. Illam nimirum

quae evangelicis praeceptis praeclarisque Iesu Christi exemplis imbuitur tot per omnesque venas alitur; illam, qua, christiana religione virtuteque duce, ita iuveniles rediguntur ac componuntur mores, ut omnino digni evadant, quos et terrestris patria dilaudet, et caelestis tandem aliquando non periturae coronae praemio remuneretur. Illam denique, quae si corporis vires exercet, et animum potissimum—inconditos inordinatosque eius motus compescendo et ad virtutis convertendo studia—confirmat atque conroborat; quaeque, si humanas omnes disciplinas, ad praesentem vitam excolendam ornandamque opportunas, discipulis impertit, at quod est praecipuum non neglegit, Creatoris nempe ac Remuneratoris Dei doctrinam atque Ecclesiae praecepta.

At non heic consistit neve laxatur alacer eius animus, sed, superna caritate compulsus, quam condiderat religiosorum hominum ac mulierum familiam, eam, mirabili quodam modo ob divinae gratiae opem magis usque magisque increbrescentem, per universum mittit terrarum orbem, evangelii lucem christianumque cultum laturam. Quae tota tantaque incepta atque opera dum Noster instituit ac perficit, non ex humanarum rerum defectione neque ex aliorum diffidentia atque irrisu concidit animo, sed caelesti fretus auxilio, ulterius cotidie tranquilla serenaque fronte progreditur. Quodsi interdum suscepta ab se in animarum bonum consilia in difficultates se illidere videbantur, quae humana ope devinci non possent, hilaris atque erectis in caelum oculis, dicere sollemne habebat: "Dei optatum est, atque adeo ex eius voluntate faciendum; quapropter ipsimet quodammodo officio est necessaria adiumenta suppeditare." Atque ita, praeter omnium exspectationem, res ad laetum exitum adducebatur; hominumque sugillationes in communem admirationem commutabantur.

Quem igitur, venerabiles frates ac dilecti filii, christianae sanctitatis heroem, per praecipua animi sui lineamenta, venerationi vestrae proposuimus, in eum omnes, studiosae imitationis causa, intueantur. Ita enim, eo auspice eoque deprecatore, profecto fiet ut, quam Iesus Christus rettulit de mortis deque tenebrarum potestate victoriam, eam nos quoque omnes feliciter assequamur; utque, a peccatorum servitute liberati sempiternaque in caelis beatitate fruituri, paschale canticum una fide unaque voce concinamus omnes:

Ut sis perenne mentibus
Paschale, Iesu, gaudium,
A morte dira criminum
Vitae renatos libera. Amen.

18

THE CANONIZATION HYMN

Look down, Don Bosco—o'er these streets
Once filled with blasphemous throng—formerly a disdained refuge;
Whence, in anguish, thou went forth
To seek the first boys—the conquest for which thou didst yearn.

In joyous thrill, an infinite crowd
Of young hosts, gathered around Thee, at Thy heels;
'Tis the infinite flock, once seen in thy dreams
That now ardently acclaims thee, Apostle and Father!

Look down, Don Bosco—o'er these streets
Once filled with blasphemous throng—formerly a disdained refuge;
Whence, in anguish, thou went forth
To seek the first boys—the conquest for which thou didst yearn.

The heavenly Queen didst summon thee by name,
When thou wast nine years old, to guide thee by the hand
Through thicket-strewn roads, to blaze a trail with blood,
And assemble the youthful host of thy sons.

Bells, ring in joy!
Festive notes, give echo!
Triumphant, the Father beholds once again
The youthful flock seen in his dream,
As once, in the glory of Christ resurrected,
He marshals anew the wayward souls,

Calls to them, 'mid twisted paths,
Obscure in the shadow of death.
He summons them to the magic spell of Faith.
Don Bosco, Don Bosco, master of our hearts,
Give us thy hand, and lead us to Our Lord.

A tremble, we raise Thee to the altar,
And to the world we shout, with echo infinite:
"He is our Master Who guided us to the Truth;
Who rescued us from Sin, and showed us the road to Life."

Look down, Don Bosco—o'er these streets
Once filled with blasphemous throng—formerly a disdained refuge;
Whence, in anguish, thou went forth
To seek the first boys—the conquest for which thou didst yearn.

Thou camest in our midst with countenance radiant,
Framed in the tender glory of thy smile,
A blaze of splendor crowns now thy brow,
Its rays come from God up there in Heaven.

Thy own Mother gavest Thou to us, to be our mother, too,
Mother of the Christian World, the Powerful Help.
Our souls didst nourish with bread divine
To feed, and fortify, the life that languished.

Look down, Don Bosco—o'er these streets
Once filled with blasphemous throng—formerly a disdained refuge
Whence, in anguish, thou went forth
To seek the first boys—the conquest for which thou didst yearn.

Onward, Don Bosco!—Mothers await thee now,
To entrust, in confident entreaty, their sons to Thee,
That thou bless them, and sign them with Christ's cross
That thou mayest look on them, with thy shining eyes,

As thou dost pass, exultant breaks
A roar of sound, as waves in a human sea,
A shout goes up, from hearts unanimous
Heed it, oh! Saint . . . linger here with us!

Look down, Don Bosco—o'er these streets
Once filled with blasphemous throng—formerly a disdained refuge
Whence, in anguish, thou went forth
To seek the first boys—the conquest for which thou didst yearn.

19

URBIS ET ORBIS

Festum Sancti Joannis Bosco Confessoris ab universa Ecclesia cum Officio et Missa propria celebrandum decernitur.

Decretum

Universo Christiano populo summae laetitiae fuit, quod sacro recurrente decimonono saeculo a salvifica Redemptione supremos caelitum honores Beato Ioanni Bosco Summus Pontifex Pius Papa XI decreverit. Quo ex tempore non Salesiana Familia tantum, sed et quam plurimae dioeceses Eum veluti iuventutis patrem peculiari honore prosecutae sunt. Succrescente vero in dies devotione, ut uberiores sanctitatis fructus in fidelium praesertum iuvenum animis efflorescerent, innumeri sacrorum Antistites Summum Pontificem Pium Papa XI humillimis et instantibus precibus rogaverunt, ut ad universam extenderetur Ecclesiam cultus tanti viri, de re catholica optime meriti. Sanctitas porro Sua, referente infrascripto Cardinale Sacrae Rituum Congregationis Praefecto, in audientia diei 25 marti 1936 vota tot S.R.E. Cardinalium, Archiepiscoporum et Episcoporum benigne excipiens, Festum Sancti Ioannis Bosco, tamquam confessoris non pontificis, ab universa Ecclesia sub ritu duplici minori cum Officio et Missa huic decreto adiectis die 31 ianuarii celebrandum decrevit, translato ad diem 28 ianuarii Festo S. Petri Nolasci confessoris. Contrariis non obstantibus quibuscumque.

Datum Romae, ex Secretaria S. Rituum Congregationis, die 25 martii, 1936.

C. Cardinal Laurenti, Praefectus
A. Carinci, Secretarius

DOCUMENTS AND EVENTS PRIOR TO THE BEATIFICATION AND CANONIZATION OF DON BOSCO

I. TWO APPEAL LETTERS

These original letters are the property of Mrs. Benedicta Chinetto, neé Terzago, domiciled in Bianzè (Vercelli). She found them among the private papers of her uncle, Father Joseph Terzago of Bianzè, who had been a pupil at the Oratory during the last ten years of Don Bosco's life. It has not been possible to ascertain the identity of the Lady of the court, the Marchioness to whom they were addressed, nor how the letters came into the possession of the above-mentioned priest.

The lottery referred to in the first letter was the one to which Father Lemoyne alluded in Volume V, page 169 and following, of these ***Biographic Memoirs****. The crucial financial situation which obliged Don Bosco to limit the number of workers so drastically while he was building the church of Mary Help of Christians, was due to the economic upheaval caused by the transfer of the capital and the preparations for the third war of Independence (See* ***Biographic Memoirs,*** *the Italian Edition, Vol. 8, pp. 341 and 366).*

A

Dear Marchioness:

I did not ask you to buy any lottery tickets thus far, because I felt that it would be out of place, since you have already contributed so generously to alleviate our predicament. But it now occurs to me that you might be able to sell a few of the tickets to the Royal Personages who are presently among us, so I am sending you 30 tickets and recommend them warmly to your charity and to that of anyone whom you may consider properly disposed to hear about it.

There is plenty of time, as you know, and any tickets that you do not dispose of can be returned to the headquarters of the lottery.

All the funeral Masses and prayers which will be said here tomorrow will be offered up for your intentions, and for the Marquis. Please direct them in whatever way you deem best in the Lord.

May all the Saints in Paradise bestow a special blessing on you and on your esteemed family. I am honored to remain,

Very gratefully yours,
Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, November 1, 1855

B

Dear Marchioness:

Mary Help of Christians is appealing to you, Madame Marchioness; the construction on the church is progressing very well, but I now have only eight men working, instead of thirty, because of the lack of funds. This is the most favorable season for building, too.

People have made many promises and given me reasons to hope, but everything is delayed. If you intend to make a loan to Our Lady, this would be the most propitious time to do so, and I am sure that you will be paid a much higher interest rate than the legal 5%.

Please speak to the Marquis about it, and then do whatever you can for the greater glory of God.

I shall be at home on Monday from early morning until ten o'clock; then again from one o'clock until three p.m.

May God bless you and your whole family. Believe me to be,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, April 21, 1866

II. FIVE LETTERS TO BISHOP MASNINI

Bishop Santo Masnini, who had been made prelate thanks to a good word from Don Bosco, had become a close friend of the Saint while he was working as secretary to Bishop Ferré of Casale. He was born at Belgioioso (Pavia); he died at Terlizzi (Bari), where he is buried. He founded the Congregation of the Handmaidens of the Sanctuary. The first of these letters was written to him in Rome at the time of the Vatican Council.

The originals are in the possession of: (1st letter) Dr. Nullo Martini, of Fidenza; (the 2nd and 4th) the Salesians of Fidenza; (the 3rd) Rev. Celsus Ghiozzi, archpriest of Zibello (Parma); (the 5th) in the Salesian archives in Turin (File No. 1188).

A

Minor Seminary of Mirabello Monferrato

Most Dear Canon:

Just as I hoped, I have found a bit of time to write to you here at Mirabello. Please be so good as to read the letters awaiting me at the post office, and if you happen to come across some important matter, please send it to me; otherwise you can bury all of them.

Thank you for your interest on my behalf, and for the trouble you go to in offering to help the upkeep of our Houses.

Please try to promote *The Catholic Readings* and the *Italian Library.* I live and work for these books: the Holy Father blessed them and recommended that they be sold far and wide. You might discuss the matter with: Count Vitelleschi, Marquis Villarios, Countess Calderini, and the President of Tor de' Specchi.

I saw Giannino Ferré and he is in good health; he is worried about his vocation. I advised him to pray, and to behave himself. Then we may be able to help him to come to a decision.

The whole of the Minor Seminary joins me in wishing you and our Bishop the blessings of Heaven. I am, very affectionately

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

March 11, 1870

B

Oratory of St. Francis of Sales

Very Dear Bishop:

In addition to all my other troubles this year, I now have to obtain the exemption from military service for fifteen clerics. Could you help me in any way?

Anything you can do will be much appreciated. There are still a couple of month's time in which to act. See how this petitioner goes around pestering people! Please bear with me.

May God shower all His Bounty on you. Pray for this poor human being, who remains in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

October 3, 1873

P.S. Please give my humble respects to your Mamma and the family.

C

Very Dear Bishop:

Countess Bricherasio is very upset because she had imagined that the matter concerning her was already settled.

So please be so kind as to read the two letters of the Rector of Fubine, and then let me know if there is anything that needs to be done.

I have just now returned home from a round trip that took me as far as Marseille. How many things there are to tell you! I hope we will have the chance to get together and talk.

Best wishes to you, and to the Bishop. Please tell him that we always want to be his sons, and that everything we have is his without any reservation.

Pray for me, and have ready a little money full of Marengoes, or a big roll of bank notes, for our undertakings. Although bank notes are very ugly looking, I shall still welcome them as a national product.

Always in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate friend,
Rev. J. Bosco

Turin, 3-28-77

D

Dear Bishop Masnini:

On many occasions you have told me: 'If only I could be free of my present duties, I would instantly fly and join the Salesians.' So when are you coming?

Your room is waiting for you here in Turin and elsewhere, and we shall always find a place for you at table, too. Well, now? I look forward to seeing you soon.

May God bless you. Pray for this poor human being who remains always, in Jesus Christ, your brother and

Affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Vignale, October 12, 1879

P.S. I am at Vignale today, but I shall be leaving for Turin tomorrow, and will be staying there for good.

E

Very Reverend Bishop Masnini:

Marquis Del Pezzo will call on you on my behalf, to discuss something with you. Please do what you can so as to reach a favorable conclusion. This will also be sure to please Canon D'Avanzo very much.

God bless our undertakings. Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Lanzo Torinese, September 15, 1880

III. FOUR LETTERS ADDRESSED TO MSGR. SCIANDRA, BISHOP OF ACQUI

The originals are now in the archives of the Secretary of State in the Vatican, where they were sent after we had made copies of them.

A

Most Reverend Excellency:

One of the clerics studying here with the intention of joining our Congregation, Joseph Biodo, is making an appeal to you through me for a certificate which he needs to present to the military draft board, so as to

obtain an exemption from military service. The clerics of the Turin Diocese obtained this certificate from our Archbishop, or from the Bishops of their home Dioceses. He appeals to your goodness to obtain it from you.

I do not know if you have had the opportunity to read about this new law. In regard to our case, you would have to declare that N.N. belongs to the Diocese of Acqui; that he is a Catholic; that in preparation for the ecclesiastic life he is now attending the first course in Philosophy here at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin. We shall then have the Mayor of Turin confirm your statement and shall refer it to the military draft board.

How often have I thought about calling on you! But actually I could never do it! Would you not come here sometimes to honor us by your visit and celebrate Mass in the church of Mary Help of Christians? We are waiting for you and look forward eagerly to seeing you.

While we pray that God may assist you in the serious task of your holy pastoral ministry, we recommend ourselves to your charitable prayers, and implore your blessing, especially on him who in his insignificant condition is honored to remain,

Your devoted, humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, 4-5-'72

B

Most Reverend and Dear Bishop:

I was deeply saddened by the unexpected death of our good Father Pestarino. I have immediately sent Father Bodratto, because he is from the same area and is acquainted with all that pertains to the deceased. I had in mind to have Father Joseph Cagliero, who is now Spiritual Director at our school in Varazze, take his place. He is thoroughly reliable both as far as morals and learning, and is a talented preacher. But I would like to have your holy opinion first.

It is understood that our House of Mornese is always at your service, whenever you feel like enjoying a little rest in the countryside. May I also ask that you continue to extend your kindness and your paternal authority to that House, as you have done until now.

I hope to have an outing to that House before long.

We beg you remember us all in your charitable prayers; I am, very gratefully,

Your most sincere servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, 5-22-'74

C

Most Reverend Excellency:

I should have thanked you before for your recommendation on behalf of the well-known projects. But the continuous uproar has literally stolen my time. Everything is now under control, and the Holy Father was quite satisfied with everything. I am most grateful to your Excellency, and thank you with all my heart! But now I need to ask you for another favor.

The cleric, Joseph Bovoir, (*sic*) who is a schoolteacher at Mornese, has completed his studies and has joined our Congregation definitively. He is endowed with all the necessary qualifications required for ordination, so I would like to apply, or to request that he be admitted, to receive the Tonsure at the forthcoming ordination ceremonies.

He has a companion, the cleric Francis Campi. Both Father Cagliero and Father Costamagna assure me that he is sufficiently knowledgeable. His morality is of an heroic degree.

Please note that I am asking only that he receive the Tonsure with the four minor orders; you would have all the time you need to make any observation you think necessary, before admitting them to the Holy Orders.

I know that this petition comes tardily, and I would have postponed the matter until September, but the school and the town as well have an urgent need of a teacher who is also a priest, and I do not have one available. If it would be more convenient for you, choose any Sunday you like, and let me know; it would make no difference.

I would like to talk with you in person soon; I need to ask for your advice!

In the meantime, please accept my feelings of sincere gratitude, and may I ask you to give me your blessing, and believe me to be, in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, 5-11-'75

D

Most Reverend and Dear Bishop:

Don Bosco was born to try the patience of many people, but especially the patience of your Excellency. I have neglected my duty toward you because of a physical indisposition, and a number of urgent matters requiring attention.

Let me first tell you that Piccagno, the cleric, has not yet completed his triennial vows, so I do not think there is the case or reason to suspend him. Additionally, his triennial vows expire in September. At that time he will be making his retreat and after that he will be quite free to renew his vows or to return to his own Ordinary.

Since he lives at Varazze, I am unable to give you details about his conduct. But on the whole, it has been pretty satisfactory; at present however, his vocation for the priesthood does not seem to have all that is required. He is quite talented in his studies and could be successful, if he would only dedicate himself strictly to the studies that concern him. At the proper time, I shall send you a report with the marks he got in his studies, and the marks given him for his piety during his term here as a cleric, as well.

I'm always thinking about making a trip to Strevi,[3] and long for the time when I will be able to spend a few days there, because it would do a great deal of good, both to my soul and my body, but I do not know when this will be possible. Nevertheless, I am most grateful for your invitation, and sooner or later intend to take advantage of it.

I accept the cleric you mentioned, and you could send him to Sampierdarena whenever possible. There he will receive assistance from our wise and prudent Director, Father Paul Albera.

I humbly beg you to bless me and to remember me in your charitable prayers, while, with deep gratitude and esteem, I am honored to be,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

(Turin) 7-1-78

[3] The Bishop of Acqui had a villa at Strevi.

IV. A PLEASANTRY IN VERSE

Father Edward Mac Kiernan was one of the very first Irishmen who became Salesians at the Oratory. He died in 1888 in London, in the first House that was opened in that city by Don Bosco in l887, and was the pastor and Director there. He was only 27 years old. At the time when Don Bosco wrote him this delightful greeting from Rome, he was still a cleric at the Oratory.

Dear Mac Kiernan:

Dear Edward:
Do let me know
Why in writing letters
You are so slow.
May the Lord bless you
And
Show you mercy too
I always pray for you
Well, do that for me, too.

Affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Rome, 1-22-'77

V. A LETTER WRITTEN TO A LADY

An attorney named Bassetti, of Forlì, owns the original letter, which he found quite accidentally among waste papers. In his postscript, Don Bosco sends his regards to the Burlamacci family, who lived in London.

Dear Madam:

Certainly, your son is in a sad predicament. Age, learning, and wealth are all terrible snares used by the Devil to drag to a spiritual and physical ruin so many imprudent young men. In such cases, a Christian mother:

1. Should use great kindness; she should accompany her son everywhere he goes, if he allows her. Reason with him and urge him to receive the Sacraments, to listen to sermons, and to read good books. She should be patient, if he does not heed her; she should keep on doing what she has to do.

2. If she wishes, she could tell him very resolutely that if he does not mend his ways, he will only shorten his own life span, and perhaps . . .
3. She should do all she can to have her son join his relatives, or other respectable people, and keep him away from bad companions.
4. She should pray to God and to St. Monica.

I, too, insignificant as I am, shall say special prayers to Mary Help of Christians for him.

I am in great need of your spiritual and corporal charity. I have at hand an immense harvest to reap; many souls could be saved, but I do not have the material means to do it.

May God bless you and your whole family. Pray for me, too, who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, 11-11-78

P.S. My warmest regards to the Burlamacchi family, if they are still to be found there.

VI. A NOTE FROM DON BOSCO

This letter was addressed to Nice Maritime, probably to the local Director of that House. But there is no indication at the top of the letter.

Countess de St. Paulet, when she passes through Nice, wishes to talk to you about finding a domestic maid. Help her if you can, I beg you.

You will hear from her news about us. Please bear in mind that this lady is one of the most zealous members on the Ladies Committee for Navarre and St. Cyr.

I will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Turin, June 10, '80

VII. DON BOSCO'S LETTER ADDRESSED TO FATHER PAUL ALBERA

This undated letter was probably written in 1884, the year of the cholera epidemic and of the "antidote" which was widely distributed. On August 16th, Don Bosco wrote from Pinerolo to Mrs. Magliano: "Our antidote is reliable." The plague raged once again in l885, but the "antidote" was no longer distributed. On November15, 1884, he wrote to Father Paul Albera from Turin: "I am afraid that the plague will visit us again next year. But I do not feel that I can promise that it will not molest us."

The cholera did flare up again during the summer of l885. Yet on January 31st Don Bosco had said: "Last year I was able to assure you, with absolute certainty, that the medals of Mary Help of Christians that you wear would protect you, if the stipulated conditions were fulfilled. But this year I do not know whether Our Lady means to be as merciful as she was last year." (See **Biographic Memoirs,** *Vol. XVII, page 242.) The original letter is in the possession of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.*

Dear Father Albera:

This is a reliable "antidote" against cholera. Make your boys wear a medal of Mary Help of Christians around their necks, and repeat this ejaculatory prayer: "*O Maria, Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*" They must also go frequently to Communion.

Pass this "antidote" on to anyone you think should have it.

Please, forward the enclosed letter, with a little silver medal, to Mme. Prat.

We are praying, so all of you should pray for us, too.

May God keep all of us in His Holy Grace. Amen.

Your affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

VIII. AN EVALUATION OF DON BOSCO WRITTEN IN 1844

In the Salesian Archives (84–XI) there is a copy of an interesting letter written by a certain Mr. Illuminatus Allamano to the Senator, Count Mola de Larissé, who was a resident in Turin at that time and who later moved

to Carignano, the birthplace of the Missionary, Father Charles Peretto. He obtained the original on loan, and Father Berto copied it. The writer, who must have been a professor, wrote on July 29, 1844, to the Count, to suggest that he ask Don Bosco to prepare his son, Aloysius, for his examinations. The following is the most significant passage of that letter:

If it is agreeable to you, I would send to you a friend of mine, who is a priest. He comes from the same part of the country as I do (his name is Don Bosco), and he has every single requisite necessary to be an excellent priest. His virtue, learning, and immaculate way of life all vie with each other to make him beloved by the people who know him.

Such is the man I propose that you welcome to your noble household where he would take my place; I do not need to recommend him in any way, because once you meet him, I am confident that his merits will be a far more effective recommendation.

IX. DON BOSCO'S STAY AT THE ESTATE OF THE COUNTS OF CALLORI DI VIGNALE

The daughter of Count and Countess Callori, Countess Viry, wrote about Don Bosco in an unpublished work of hers. From ***Undated Pages*** *(pp. 112-13)*:

He came to spend a few days vacation every year with my mother in the country. He said Mass with angelic piety, but also took part very good-naturedly in the games of the children, and ate with us at table. Both at table and in the drawing room, he always behaved with great propriety and distinction. It takes special tact and rare intelligence to behave impeccably in an environment and in a society different from the environment and society in which one was born. Mediocrity rarely makes it and always exposes its efforts to do so.

One day, they brought him a little girl of three who did not want to say the whole of the Lord's Prayer. As soon as she reached the second half, where it says "*Give us this day our daily bread*" she stopped, and nothing could ever lead her to continue. Don Bosco did not scold her as she stood before him, stubborn, yet refusing to cry because she was very proud. All he said was this, and he said it quite simply and gently: "If you ask the Our Lord for bread, you will see that He is so kind that he will send you some chocolate and pastries, too." From that day on, the little girl always said her *Pater Noster* through to the end.

Eighteen years later, the same girl, now a young lady, asked the good priest what he thought about a young man who had been introduced as a suitor. He closed his eyes, recollected himself, and then he said very simply: "I do not know the young man personally, but I know he has a good soul." That statement was enough for me, and I really did find a noble soul in that young man who became my husband three months later. But the reverend never forgot the obstinate little girl when he met her again as a young woman, for he said with a winning, mischievous air: "Now that you have begun to say the whole *Pater Noster,* you see that Our Lord did send you chocolate and pastries, too. So you must remember the poor, to whom He sends only dry bread."

X. DON BOSCO'S PENETRATING GLANCE

This is an extract from a report written by Father Aloysius Terrone about a long conversation he had with Father Peter Fracchia at the Salesian School of Turin on November 1, 1937. The speaker is Father Fracchia, who talks of the days when he was a pupil at the Oratory.

One day, as I was on my way to speak with Don Bosco, I met Father Berto who announced my presence, saying: "Fracchia is here."—Don Bosco said loudly: "Let Fracchia come in! I'm sure he is not in sin!"[4]

He was writing, and I sat down next to him, watching him attentively to study a certain movement that he made while writing: he was turning his head slowly from left to right, to accompany and follow the movement of the pen across the page. I did not understand why he did this. I made up my mind that I would take advantage of the easy familiarity he allowed me to use toward him, and I asked him. As soon as he stopped writing, he put down his pen, and folded his hands, one on the other, against his chest, as he always did. I looked at him with a smile, and said frankly and with great simplicity:

"May I ask you a question?"

"Of course speak up, my dear Peter."

"Why did you turn your head to accompany the movement of the pen, as you were writing?"

Don Bosco smilingly answered: "This is the reason why. Do you see? Don Bosco can no longer see with this eye, and with the other eye, he sees only a little. Just a little, just a little."

[4] Words rhymed by Don Bosco: *Avanti venga Fracchia, che vuol sempre conservarsi senza macchia.*

"Do you mean to say that you can only see very little? Then how come the other day, in the playground, when I was far away from you, you looked at me with a look which was very direct and keen and penetrating like the ray of sunlight?"

"Come, come now! All of you imagine and see God knows what . . . big things, extraordinary things, where there is really nothing at all. . . ."

That was all he said, and then we began to talk about the matter for which I was there. But now to return to the topic of his glance. I was at recreation in the playground one day. As usual, I was completely absorbed in the game. At a certain point, I stopped for a while and heard very loud voices of boys talking. I turned around and I noticed at a distance Don Bosco, surrounded by a crowd of boys. There were a great many of them, as there always were whenever Don Bosco came down into the playground, and they were all talking loudly and merrily with him. Absorbed as I was in the game that I was playing, I did not feel like joining them. So as I stood in a state of uncertainty, I turned my eyes again towards the group where Don Bosco was standing. Then, all of a sudden, a brilliant ray, which came from his eyes, hit me, struck me. I really do not know how to describe it. I was at least some thirty paces away from him, and was not even in direct line with him, but at an angle. Don Bosco was literally besieged by the boys; some of them were holding his hands. I recall that scene very clearly, as though it had happened only yesterday. I say that it was a radiant ray of sunlight shining like a ruby, a diamond, something quite unconceivable, and like a flash of lightning. I was quite entranced by what I saw, and quite instinctively, without knowing what I was doing, I approached the group. As I reached him, I felt Don Bosco take my hand, although I had not even tried to push my way through to him. I was not even aware immediately that he had touched me, but he held my hand tightly, and continued his walk without saying a word to me. He did not look at me, he did not say a word to me. When his conversation was over, I took leave of him with all the others, and never said a word to anyone about what I had seen.

XI. A MIRACULOUS RECOVERY

It is still Father Fracchia who speaks:

One day we were watching a soccer game in the playground. It was a match between the students, and artisans, superiors, clerics, the shop heads, and their assistants.[5] I was not one of the players that day, but as

[5] In those days the cleric novices and the students lived at the Oratory.

a good player, or soccer fan as people say nowadays, I was deeply involved as I watched the match. I had a fellow cleric student beside me. I cannot recall exactly who he was now, but I am almost sure that it was Bonavia.[6]

While I was all caught up by the game, without anything else in mind, I heard these words in my ear, very distinctly: "Go into the sacristy, because Don Bosco is about to perform a miracle." I turned around, but saw nobody except the cleric, my companion. I forgot both the game and the playground. I tapped my companion on the shoulder and said: "Let's go into the sacristy, because Don Bosco is about to perform a miracle." Then I began to run very fast. I did not hear the footsteps of my companion following me, so I turned around, very surprised that he was not coming with me.

I reached the sacristy, or I had better say, the vestibule of the sacristy, where Don Bosco heard confessions regularly. He was surrounded by a group of ladies and gentlemen and was walking very slowly in the direction of the sacristy itself. I joined the group almost instinctively, and walked along with the others. Then, again without knowing how, I found that I was walking on Don Bosco's left, amid all the others, and we all reached the middle of the sacristy together.

All at once, we heard a loud noise behind us, and then a great outcry. A poor woman was walking toward us, leading a little girl, ten or perhaps twelve years old; the child's arm was paralyzed. As the mother reached Don Bosco and showed him the little girl, she fell at his feet, and weeping, implored him: "Don Bosco, cure my child who is now unable to move her arm; please, cure her!" With the utmost naturalness, and in a simple voice, Don Bosco turned to the girl and said to her:

"Well, well. Look now, do this. Make the sign of the cross."

"No, no!" screamed the mother, "she cannot do that. Her arm is paralyzed; she is unable to move it."

"No, my daughter," Don Bosco said, with the same calm voice as before. "Make the sign of the cross, just as I told you."

Again the poor mother tried to explain that the girl was unable to make the gesture. Again Don Bosco repeated: "This is the way!" And with his hand he motioned to the mother that she should keep quiet, while he urged the child to do as he said.

In that instant I looked at Don Bosco, and I saw that his face was transformed, that it had turned into a special color which I am quite unable

[6] This was Father Juvenal Bonavia, a very learned, holy Salesian who died at the Battersea House in London.

to describe. He looked utterly transfigured and gave his blessing to the child who made a sweeping sign of the cross as he did so, without any effort whatsoever. The mother was beside herself, filled with emotion, while the people with us stared at her dumbfounded. Don Bosco now turned to the mother, saying: "Now you'll go to the church, and say three times the *Pater, Ave,* and *Gloria* to the Blessed Sacrament, and three times the *Salve Regina* to Mary Help of Christians, in thanksgiving for the grace you have received." Then he left the sacristy immediately with all the visitors. This happened on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, during our after-breakfast recreation.

As I emerged from the sacristy, still deeply impressed by the scene which I had witnessed, I expected to hear everyone shouting about the miracle. But no one said a word, and I thought no more about it. Later, I looked at all the books about Don Bosco, to see if there was any mention of that particular incident. But I never once found any reference to it. I did read about a few other miracles similar to the one I had witnessed, but they were not the same, because all the circumstances were quite different.

The thing that is even more incredible is that I never once thought to ask my companion why he had not come with me; nor did I ever speak about the incident to him. I have even asked myself many times if I really heard that voice, and if I really did tell my companion to come with me. But the whole thing is real, and I have not forgotten one single particular of that event.

XII. DON BOSCO READS CONSCIENCES

Francis Alpi, a former pupil at St. John the Evangelist's and later infirmarian at the Oratory, and lastly, a school teacher at Pagno (Saluzzo), told Father Luchelli something which Father Luchelli immediately reported in writing to Father Paul Albera on April 20, 1916. We quote now from his letter:

Francis Alpi, a boy of 15 or 16, was accepted at the school of Alassio, through the recommendation of a good priest of the diocese of Imola, Father Nenci. Three or four days after he entered the school, he heard at the good night talk that Don Bosco would be visiting Alassio on his way to France, and that the boys who wished to make their confession to him would have an opportunity to do so. Young Alpi had never heard anyone speak about Don Bosco, and so he thought to himself: "It is better that I make my confession to him, and make a general confession, since he is

a priest coming from outside and will be staying here only a day or two and then leave. Then I will avoid the need to make a confession later to a priest of the House who will know who I am." So he made his confession to Don Bosco the next morning, without knowing who he was. He began his confession by asking the confessor to help him, and then told him all the sins he was able to remember. When he had completed his confession he did not know what else to say, so Don Bosco said: "You have forgotten to mention the sin that you committed at such and such a place and at such and such a time." He then went into the most minute details about something that Alpi had done when he was ten or eleven years old adding: "It is true that you did not actually commit the sin, as your two companions did, but you did sin in your thoughts, in your desire, and we offend God even with our thoughts and desires, you know."

When the boy heard him say this, he was so amazed that he broke into a cold sweat, and felt that he was about to faint, there at Don Bosco's feet. As soon as he finished his confession, he went in search of Father Cerruti, and frightened and in tears, said: "Who is the priest to whom I just made my confession? He must be either a devil or a saint. He told me a very secret sin which I had completely forgotten about, nor did I think it was actually a sin." Smiling, Father Cerruti explained who Don Bosco was, and sent him away, reassured.

XIII. DON BOSCO AT VELLETRI

Wherever Don Bosco went, he left behind an unforgettable impression. Until now, it was not known that he had also visited Velletri. But now, Bishop Rotolo, the Auxiliary of the Cardinal Bishop there, has obtained a reliable report of a visit that Don Bosco made to that city. We have no way to determine the date. If he went there at the time when the Salesian Houses were founded at Albano and Ariccia (1876–79), it may have occurred in 1877. But Velletri residents say it was May 1882, when the centenary of Our Lady of Grace was celebrated. Don Bosco was in Rome at that time.

He said Mass in the chapel of the Pious Venerine Schoolteachers. Mrs. Elvira Pereno was a boarder in their school at that time, and attended his Mass. She must have been deeply impressed by him, for many years later she still recalled "how Don Bosco looked as he celebrated Mass." She also remembered that the Mother Superior had told her in advance that he was coming, saying that a great saint was soon to visit them. Don Bosco also visited her own family. "We received him in our large drawing room," she

writes, "and he lingered for a while in the dining room, giving his blessing to us children. I can still see him in front of me."

The family that now lives in that apartment where Don Bosco had been welcomed, attributed to the protection of the Saint the peace of mind, the serenity, and the success enjoyed by all the children in the household.

He was a guest of Mr. Louis Francis Argenti, the maternal uncle of the above-named lady, "a very religious man." Mrs. Anna De Angelis, wife of the Colonel who was president of the Military Tribunal at Mogadisco, daughter of Mr. Argenti, and the diocesan president of the Catholic Women's Association in Somaliland, wrote to the Bishop: "I was deeply moved when I read the letter from Your Excellency; it came to me here, in my old age and in this distant part of the Empire, to rekindle one of the most precious and cherished memories of my long-ago childhood. Oh! the fatherly blessing that was given me by the Great Saint John Bosco! I recall perfectly that the Saint was my father's guest at our home when he came to Velletri, and I can recall him vividly as he gave his blessing to us children, as we knelt in front of him, almost in adoration."

Canon Vincent, Mrs. De Angelis' brother, who was a seminarian at that time, was not present; but Don Bosco thought of him, too. He left a copy of his *History of Italy* for him, and his father chose to take it to him in person and gave it to him with his own hands.

XIV. IN THE PRESENCE OF DON BOSCO

On September 2, 1911, at Praglia, the Benedictine monk, Father Gregory Campeis, gave the following description of an encounter he had with Don Bosco. It occurred most probably at St. Paul's Basilica in Rome.

I shall always remember very vividly the immense feeling of veneration I had when I first set eyes on Fr. Don Bosco (September 1883). I was profoundly impressed to the depths of my soul by his affable smile, by his composure, by his dignity seasoned with a most amiable demeanor, by his ingratiating and well-chosen word. I never experienced the feeling that I had for Don Bosco in the presence of any other important person, not even in the presence of Popes Leo XIII and Pius X, who both honored me by granting me private audiences. He made me think of sanctity personified.

XV. THE HEALING OF A MUTE

We received the following report from Varazze, September 8, 1937, from Sister Mary Hope Forte, a Sister of Our Lady of Mercy.

Twice did I have the good fortune to witness the arrival of Don Bosco at our House in Varazze. The second time he went there, in 1886, he was on his way back from Arenzano. Don Bosco was carried bodily to the school from the station. A tall, elderly man from Arenzano walked close beside him, and as he walked, he waved a white handkerchief shouting: "Don Bosco healed me yesterday! I was dumb. I went to see him; I explained with signs that I was mute, and I begged for a grace. He then said to me: 'Repeat the *Ave Maria* together with me.' And I prayed." The healed man followed Don Bosco all the way to the school.

XVI. DON BOSCO IN REIMS

We never knew that Don Bosco visited Reims. As of now, we have not been able to ascertain the date of his alleged visit in 1883. A Jesuit priest, Father Journel, wrote the following letter to Father Auffray, after he had read his book, "A Saint travels through France."

Reverend Father:

I am a Jesuit priest living in Lille (North), at 73 rue des Stations, very near the Rue d'Antin where the Salesian Sisters work so well for the glory of God. I was delighted when your interesting biographies of St. John Bosco and Father Rua were published. Now Divine Providence has graciously put into my hands your book, "*A Saint travels through France.*"

What a joy it is to skim through your edifying, picturesque descriptions!

Do you know what attracted me in particular? Item No. 3 in the Appendix, where you speak of his itinerary . . . and this is the reason for my interest.

I was sixteen, in 1883, and I was studying with the Jesuits at their school in Reims. One day (was it May 26th?) our professor of Humanities, not the sort of man to let any such opportunity pass him by, told us with an air of great mystery that the renowned Don Bosco would be stopping over in Reims between trains, to meet with Mr. Léon Harmel who was coming especially from Val du Bois to greet him. He took us (or at least, some of us) to the church of St. James, which is very near the station; that was where they had arranged their rendezvous. Thus did I have the privilege to see this extraordinary man for a few moments. His radiant sanctity attracted an enthusiastic crowd. His demeanor commanded everyone's trust and respect. It is one of the more cherished memories of my youth.

In your wide research, did you ever find any reference to this brief halt in the city of Reims? I would be very happy to know whether you did. I am now 70 years old, so I am authorized to ramble a little; but on this point my recollection is very clear.

Thanking you in advance, I am, with great esteem,

M. H. Journel, S.J.

Lille, November 19, 1937

XVII. A PREDICTION

Only a few months before he was barbarously slain by the Arabs, Father Rosin, the Director of the House of Beitgemal, sent the following report to Father Salvatore Puddu, Secretary General of the Salesian Society:

When I, the undersigned, was interned in Ankara, now the capital of Turkey, in March 1918, an Armenian Catholic priest, Father Nerses Baghdikian, who was then Armenian Patriarchal Vicar in that same city, told me that he had been a seminarian in the Armenian Seminary in Rome, and that, together with his companions, he had been granted an audience with Don Bosco at the Hospice of the Sacred Heart, I believe he said, the last time Don Bosco visited the hospice, when the Church was consecrated. At that time, our Saintly Father was already in a state of physical deterioration known to all. In order not to disturb him more that was absolutely necessary, the seminarians had to content themselves with walking past him one by one, just kissing his hand, without saying a word, without asking anything more from him. Don Bosco was sitting with his head bowed, his eyes downcast, his hands resting on his knees, but all at once, as one seminarian was kissing his hand, he suddenly uttered these words, without moving at all: "My son, get ready to enter Paradise." That cleric died within that month.

Rev. Marius Rosin

Beitgemal
December 29, 1937

XVIII. AN INTUITION AND A PROPHECY

On July 9, 1938, Sister Celestine, Mother General of the Sisters of the Holy Eucharist (Via Pirot, No. 179, Sofia, Bulgaria), wrote the following letter to Father Peter Ricaldone, the Rector Major:

Our venerated Mother Foundress of Revered Memory, Sister Mary Christina of Jesus, whose name in the world was Eurosia Alloatti, was the daughter of the late Peter Alloatti of Turin. Before she came to Salonika in Turkey to found our little convent for Bulgarian Slavs in 1888, she wished to consult St. John Bosco about her exceptional vocation. Since she was present at the meeting of the Salesian Cooperators on May 23, 1887, she went with the rest of the crowd to kiss Don Bosco's hand in the sacristy. Before she had a chance to reveal her secret wish to him, the Saint anticipated her words by saying: "Eurosia, you asked the Holy Virgin to give you a sign about your vocation; well, she is giving you her answer through me. You will come to see me for further explanations." She did not delay her going to see him again, and the Saint assured her that it was the Will of God that she should go to Salonika, to help her Missionary brother. Together, they were to found a Congregation for Bulgarian Sisters, to help Bulgarian Slavs, and he gave her much advice to follow. Before he dismissed her, he said: "You will come to see me again, before you set out for your destination but I shall be unable to give you my blessing." His prophetic words were fulfilled. Our Mother Foundress was due to depart on February 3, 1888, so she called at the Oratory to receive Don Bosco's last blessing, on February 1st. How astonished she was when she found out that the Saint had died and that his body was laid out in the church for the veneration of the faithful! She recalled immediately the prophetic words he had pronounced: "You will come to see me again, but I shall be unable to bless you." In reference to this historic event, our Venerated Foundress made her deposition under oath for the cause of Don Bosco's beatification.

XIX. AN ENCOUNTER WITH DON BOSCO ON A TRAIN

According to his confrere Richard Bona, Father Damé, a priest of the Mission, told him the following story, which he then described in a letter to Father Peter Berruti, the Prefect General of the Salesian Society (Turin, December 15, 1938):

We left the Porta Nuova station together, bound for Genoa. However, we did not know each other. The compartment we were in was rather crowded, so we did not have a chance to do more than exchange the formal courtesies used by traveling companions.

When we had passed Giovi and were at last alone, just the two of us together, the priest who, till then, had prayed constantly or had turned the

pages of a book, began to talk to me, and we embarked on a cheerful, friendly conversation. He wanted to know if I came from Turin (he had recognized me as a Priest of the Mission of St. Vincent by my habit), and whether I knew anything of Don Bosco's Institutes, what I thought of them, and what we all thought about him and his little rascals, etc. I answered that, in my opinion, Don Bosco was, undoubtedly a saintly priest, that I admired what he was doing for boys, and that with his patience, I pictured him as the Divine Savior must have been, in His preference for children and the poor. . . . Evidently, these things moved him deeply, and led him to insist even more on trying to sound out what I felt about his work. "But haven't you heard people say that he is a bother, that he is forever looking for money, that he snatches boys away from their parishes and homes?" I replied that all innovations are easy targets for criticism, even though they are good, and that perfection is to be found only in Heaven, and that Cottolengo used to exclaim, whenever he sought some comfort in the midst of adversity: "Just do good, and let people sing." Then our train steamed into the station of Sampierdarena. My traveling companion rose to his feet, and took hold of my nose very familiarly, pretending to pull it. As he did so, he said: "Always speak well of Don Bosco! If you had spoken against him I would have pulled your nose so hard that it would have stretched this far!" And he touched my chest. In the meantime, the boys who were waiting together with, perhaps, Father Paul Albera, down on the platform, recognized him and began to shout: "Don Bosco! Don Bosco!" . . . and all came rushing towards him. We parted with a cordial handshake. I do not know what kind of impression I made on him, but I must confess that the opinion I then formed of him, as a man of exceptional holiness and ability, became more and more firmly set in my mind.

XX. CONCERNING TWO MEETINGS BETWEEN DON BOSCO AND VICTOR HUGO IN THE YEAR 1883

We already wrote of these meetings at length in Volume XVI, pages 156-63. In a letter that was published in the French issue of the Bulletin *in May 1935, Madame Lesclide, wife of Victor Hugo's secretary, denied the story, but in his brief biography of St. John Bosco, published in 1938* "***Saint Jean Bosco L'entreneur des jeunes***" ("***St. John Bosco, Teacher of children***" ***Paris, La Bonne Press***), *the Assumptionist, Rev. David Lathour, makes several observations that strip her letter of all value.*

One of the reasons that led the poet to call on Don Bosco must have been the shock felt at the death of his companion, Juliette Drouet. (***Biographic Memoirs,*** *Vol. XVI, p. 157*).

Mme. Lesclide wrote: "As to the death of Juliette Drouet, who died from a cancer of the stomach which caused her great anguish, her old friend looked on her death more as a liberation than as a catastrophe." Father Lathour then writes (page 185): Mme. Lesclide writes this in her letter [October 18, 1929]. She forgets that in 1902 she wrote exactly the opposite. This is what it says in *Victor Hugo intime* (*Victor Hugo, An Intimate Portrait*), page 263: "This death made a deep impression on the poet. His loss was such that the illustrious old man sought to disguise the fact even from himself. 'The dead are not absent,' he used to say, 'they are only invisible.' But his dead mistress seemed to be calling him from beyond the tomb."

The author also finds another contradiction in her letter, in connection with the alleged impossibility of a night visit. (***Biographic Memoirs,*** *Vol. XVI, page 121*).

Mme. Lesclide wrote: "In the house of Victor Hugo, dinner was at 8 o'clock; we left the dinner table around 9:30 P.M., and his guests never departed until 11 or 11:30 P.M. This rule never varied. Now if this rule was, indeed, unvarying, it is impossible to suppose that, as it says in the words dictated by Don Bosco, that the poet called on him at 11 o'clock at night, after waiting for three hours in the antechamber." Yet in her book (page 300) Mme. Lesclide wrote: "We left table at 8 o'clock. About 9:30, the Master sat down in his big armchair and closed his eyes, and his guests took leave." Our author then comments: "This timetable fits in with the Salesian version, and one can believe that on this particular evening Victor Hugo left the dinner table earlier than usual and, unbeknown to his dinner guests, took advantage of the darkness, as Nicodemus did, to go incognito to No. 12, rue Vill-l'Evêque, where he was admitted to Don Bosco's presence after about three hours of waiting."

In 1902 the lady author seems to have had fresher memories than she had in 1929!

In a footnote, Lathour adds: "She claims that Victor Hugo was a pure deist. Now, she quotes the poet on this matter in her book, and from what she says, it is obvious that he believed in God's discretionary intervention in the universe (see pages 306-8)."

XXI. A SOUVENIR OF A FIRST COMMUNION

In the library of an old Lombard priest, now deceased, we came upon a moth-eaten copy of a First Communion Souvenir, with the date hand-written on it: April 1, 1863. It was printed by the Doyen Brothers of Turin, who had a lithographic workshop. It was a remarkably framed with angels, episcopal vestments, liturgical instruments, leafy branches, and flowers, encircling the text, which, in place of a signature, was, signed with the words "A friend of children." We know for certain that this friend of children was Don Bosco. At the top of the picture there was an altar, with a chalice and a Host. The Host was surrounded by rays of light, with the words "Bread that came from Heaven—Bread of eternal life" written inside the rays. At the bottom, in a rectangular section held by two kneeling infant angels, there was a space for the name of the communicant, the date, the church, and below, the exclamation: It was truly a heavenly day!

Here is the text:

SOUVENIR OF MY FIRST COMMUNION

Oh! Happy Day! Yes, dear children, dear boys and girls, treasure the memory of this wonderful day. As a great General once said: The most beautiful day of my life was the day I made my first Communion. Now, would you like to sample the delights of such a beautiful day for the rest of your lives? Then always bear the following things in mind:

Model of Virtue: Dominic Savio, who died a few years ago, was so good, prudent, and devout even as a little boy, that he was allowed to receive his

First Communion at the age of 7. In order to preserve the precious fruits and tender recollection of such a beautiful day, he wrote these

Souvenirs in his little prayer book: I shall go often to confession, and go to Communion whenever my confessor allows it. I shall keep all holy days holy. My friends shall be Jesus and Mary. Death rather than sin.

Read these Souvenirs often, follow them for the rest of your lives. How happy will you be! The day will come when you shall enjoy forever in Heaven the joys and delights of your First Communion.

A Friend of Children

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