

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA

STUDI - 5

Storia e identità salesiana in Africa e Madagascar



a cura di
Stanisław Zimniak

LAS - ROMA

A don Jacques Ntamitalizo (1942-1995):

il primo Africano che partecipò al 21° Capitolo generale (1977-1978) durante il quale pronunciò il significativo discorso, passato alla storia salesiana, con il nome “grido d’appello” per l’Africa.

To Fr Jacques Ntamitalizo (1942-1995):

the first African who took part in the 21st General Chapter (1977-1978) during which he gave the remarkable address which passed into Salesian history with the name “the cry of appeal” for Africa.

Au Père Jacques Ntamitalizo (1942-1995):

le premier Africain qui prit part au 21^{ème} Chapitre Général (1977-1978) au cours duquel il prononça le fameux discours qui est passé dans l’histoire salésienne sous le nom “le cri d’appel” pour l’Afrique.

ASSOCIAZIONE CULTORI STORIA SALESIANA – ROMA

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STORIA E IDENTITÀ SALESIANA IN AFRICA E MADAGASCAR

Questioni di conservazione del patrimonio culturale

a cura di

Stanisław Zimniak

Atti del 1° Seminario Internazionale di Storia dell'Opera Salesiana
per Africa e Madagascar
Nairobi, 11-14 ottobre 2011

LAS - Roma

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Piazza dell'Ateneo Salesiano, 1 – 00139 Roma

ISBN 978-88-213-0840-6

Stampa: Tipografia ABILGRAPH srl
Via Pietro Ottoboni, 11 – Roma
Finito di stampare nel mese di luglio 2012

PHASES OF THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE FMA INSTITUTE

Piera Cavaglià*

In the historiography, Marrou distinguishes *a past lived* by the persons and *a past relived* by those who study it, because history is reconstructed, necessarily interpreted in the search for the meaning of facts and of their connections¹.

Over more than one century of life, the FMA not only have found and gathered the sources, but have narrated their own history, have tried to interpret it, organize it and hand it down.

History is the constant search for meanings and, as such, is never definitive; in fact, the persons dedicated to it change, the cultural paradigms and the perspectives by which facts are studied change, new sources that open new horizons of research are discovered, and therefore, certain convictions which seemed to be consolidated, are now questioned.

In our Institute, the historiography along decades, registers an evident evolution both in the contents as in the planning.

We can see some significant phases.

1. Oral tradition

The transmission of the historical memory and of the spirituality of the Founders has been carried out *at length* mostly in the oral form. The “memory of the origins” is deeply rooted in the very existence of the Institute. Some scholars even speak of “oral archives”, to indicate the “tradition” of oral testimonials for historical documentation².

The *lived experience* – says Pietro Braido – is certainly a source, even a document of history. It is, however, not easy to de-codify it. We could allow ourselves to be misled by the inevitable partiality, or to stop at details and generalize them³.

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¹ Cf Henri-Irénée MARROU, *La conoscenza storica*. Bologna, Il Mulino 1962, p. 35.

² Cf Bruno DELMAS (a cura di), *Vocabulaire des archives. Archivistique et Diplomatique contemporaines*. Paris, Afnor 1986, alla voce *Archives orales*. However, the author affirms that “archives orales/oral history are incorrect terms to indicate the oral tradition of fact or events.

³ Cf Pietro BRAIDO, *Tra i “documenti” della storia: l’esperienza vissuta*, in RSS 1 (1982) 80.

Also for the transmission of the Salesian educative method the same dynamic was followed. For many years, the Novice Mistress would transmit to the young women in formation, the educative patrimony of the Institute, by narrating what the FMA did in the oratories, in the schools, in the missions and highlighting the modalities they applied as they carried out their various activities.

For the history of the origins, particular prominence was given to Don Bosco, to his action, his gifts and grandiose, providential enterprises; and with him, Don Domenico Pestarino, who someone would call the “co-founder” of the Institute. About Sister Maria Domenica Mazzarello, – in later years – episodes were narrated, highlighting above all some virtues: humility, obedience, faithfulness to Don Bosco, art of government, love for the young girls, firmness and severity in calling to observance.

A minimal part of written sources were available, and besides, there was not even the awareness of having them⁴.

There is scarcity of documentation on the experience of the foundation and of the first FMA communities, simply because by those who lived it, all was considered too normal, lacking exceptionality. A Sister, questioned on the subject by the biographer of Saint Mary D. Mazzarello, answered frankly:

“At that time, all of them were so, so fervent, there was such a fervour that cannot be imagined; no one could foresee what the Institute will come to be, and therefore no one thought of writing down what now there is need to know”⁵.

At the beginning of the first house, the care of the Archive was generally entrusted to the Salesian director, and, as it was desired, also the first history of the Institute.

From a letter of Don Cagliero to Don Rua, written from Nice on 11th January 1879, we come to know that in the Institute, at that time, the documents were preserved by the Salesian Director, and therefore there was no proper archive:

“Enclosed, I send the autograph of the Bishop of Acqui concerning the faculty he intends to grant to the Salesians in his Diocese and in our Houses. The relative copy was posted to the Director of Mornese and of Nizza. This must be kept in the archive. I however tell you, that no one was ever able to find anything in this archive, which, if it exists and where it is no one knows”⁶.

⁴ The letters of Maria Domenica were not known until after the introduction of the process of beatification (1911) cf María Esther POSADA – Anna COSTA – Piera CAVAGLIÀ (a cura di), *La sapienza della vita. Lettere di Maria Domenica Mazzarello*. Torino, SEI 1994. Likewise other sources gathered later: cf Piera CAVAGLIÀ – Anna COSTA (a cura di), *Orme di vita, tracce di futuro. Fonti e testimonianze sulla prima comunità delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice (1870-1881)*. Roma, LAS 1996.

⁵ Ferdinando MACCONO, *Santa Maria D. Mazzarello. Confondatrice e prima Superiora generale delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*. Vol. I. Torino, Istituto FMA 1960, p. 316.

⁶ ASC A4380418: *lettera aut.*

We must recognize that the Institute of the FMA did not have much historiographic fortune, neither at the beginnings, or when efforts were made for the writing of the “Cronistoria”⁷. Either the work was not done with the rigor of documentation, or the primacy was given to the *edifying* aspects, perhaps leaving data and significant historical facts in the background, in the shadow.

During the first years of the foundation, more than the commitment to hand down a history, there is the will to hand down to the new generations “the good spirit” expressed in the simple, joyful and zealous faithfulness of the first FMA. It was necessary to make the true spirit of the Institute resplendent in the lived experience, more than in written documents or in theoretical elaborations.

During the first years one lived with authenticity and simplicity a stirring, enthusiastic ideal, fruit of a call that demanded a kind of community-religious life fully dedicated to the educative mission. No one ever thought that “something” of the origins had to be preserved and handed down in writing.

2. The first drafts of “history” (1887-1897)

In our Institute we cannot speak of “missed memory”⁸. In fact, it does not run the danger, as in some old religious Orders, of having to discern between legend and reality for whatever refers to the foundation.

Of the time of its origins – that for the FMA was short if compared to the origins of the Salesian Congregation – there is a *scarce documentation*, insufficient for understanding and writing the history.

How to explain the gaps, the historical blanks of the origins?

Differently from Don Bosco, who left a quantity of books and the *Memoirs of the Oratory*, relatively to the origins of the FMA Institute, the documented collection for the historiography is belated. This can be justified, taking into account the different cultural formation of the first Sisters in comparison with that of the Salesians, and the different mentality more oriented to practice than to study.

Not to be neglected is the multiplicity of tasks that were entrusted to some FMA more competent than others and, at the beginning of the Institute, the scantiness of personnel prepared for the management of the works, and for tea-

⁷ For Don Bosco it was not so. In 1858 the cleric Bonetti started to record important events in notebooks. Three years later, on the initiative of Don Rua, a “commission” was created to gather all that Don Bosco did and said. In 1871 in Valdocco (meeting of the Council, 21 January 1871) it was officially decided to gather memories about Don Bosco and that on the third Sunday of every month they should meet to correct possible inaccuracies. (cf *Conferenze del Capitolo della Casa di Valdocco*, in José Manuel PRELLEZO [a cura di], *Valdocco nell'Ottocento tra ideale e reale. Documenti e testimonianze*. [= ISS – Fonti, Serie seconda, 3]. Roma, LAS 1993, pp. 167-168; cf pure pp. 196-197 [21 febbraio 1875]).

⁸ Cf Graziella CURTI, *Le Congregazioni religiose femminili: una testimonianza*, in “Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia” 33 (1998) 151.

ching in the schools. Moreover, especially during the brief period of government of Maria Domenica Mazzarello (9 years, from 1872 to 1881), there was the awareness of being a single Salesian Family, and therefore, the need for the Institute's own documentation was not felt.

During the *First General Chapter (1884)* the necessity was seen, as well as the convenience, of writing the history of the Houses that it may serve afterwards for the editing of the history of the Institute. The text is thus formulated:

"The convenience was seen to gather the particularities of each House, foundations, monuments, etc. . . so as to insert everything in the Chronicle (*Cronistoria*) of the Congregation (this Chronicle will be entrusted to some capable, skilful Salesian writer)"⁹.

In the *Second General Chapter (1886)* it was established to write a chronicle or monograph in every House, and to entrust this task to the Superior or to another Sister.

Then, to specify the tasks of the Second General Councilor, called "Second Assistant", we read:

"She will take care that each Provincial or Superior will have the monograph of their respective Houses and Schools"¹⁰.

Following this deliberation, the writing of a first, though incomplete *Chronicle* of the origins, was started. *Sister Rosalia Pestarino*, niece of the first Director of the FMA and one of the first teachers in Mornese, was entrusted with the task to gather or transcribe the facts relative to the foundation. The manuscript is titled: *Chronicle of the new Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians – Mornese 1872*¹¹. The first two pages summarize the foundation of the Institute. Following there are 20 pages (1872-1881) with various inaccuracies regarding names of persons and of historical facts. In almost every page there are corrections and observations handwritten by Sr. Rosalia and by Mother Clelia Genghini. On the frontispiece is written: *Annulled*. This copy must have served for the editing of a more complete, better and more accurate one, in the form of a large register¹². In it, the narration of facts, especially those relative to the House of Mornese and Nizza, goes from 1872 to 1898.

⁹ Cf 12a adunanza (cf Giselda CAPETTI [a cura di], *Cronistoria. L'eredità di madre Mazzarello passa nelle mani di madre Daghero [1881-1884]*. Vol. IV. Roma, Istituto FMA 1978, p. 373). Years later – perhaps when they began to gather material for the type-written Chronicle – Mother Clelia annotated the text "which is still to be found".

¹⁰ *Deliberazioni del Secondo Capitolo Generale delle Figlie di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice tenuto in Nizza Monferrato nell'agosto del 1886*. S. Benigno Canavese, Tip. Salesiana 1886, art. 89.

¹¹ Consisting of 164 pp. In the frontispiece is written: "This was written 15 years after the foundation of the Institute by Sr. Rosalia Pestarino an eye-witness of what she wrote. Deo Gratias". From this addition we can be certain of the date of composition, 1887.

¹² Don Bosco had wished that year by year the chronicle should be copied into a "big book" and sent to the Centre. (MB XII, 69).

The first pages are a more extended re-elaboration than those written by Sr. Rosalia Pestarino. There follow in succession different handwritings. Recognizable is the one of Mother Emilia Mosca who writes from 6-9-1893 to 4-9-1896, then Sr. Rosalia continues to the end. Also this text is full of corrections and integrations by the hand of Sister Clelia Genghini. There are in fact many imprecisions and gaps.

This “chronicle” was not written day by day, but at a distance of time. It can be detected by the use of verbs in the past time, by imprecisions and inexactness with which facts are reported. Perhaps this elegant copy of the Chronicle was prepared for the 25th anniversary of foundation of the Institute (1897).

In the *Third General Chapter* (1892) the necessity was again seen to entrust the task to a person who could write a true and proper history of the Institute. It was then deliberated what follows, indicating also some criteria for editing:

“It is also established to have a historian of the Congregation who will take care to gather the correct dates, the difficulties, the supports received, the documents relative to the civil and ecclesiastic authorities, trying to give reason for the facts, and connect the things that refer to them. Such historian could be the same member of the Salesian Congregation, or another one appointed for the task by the Major Superior”¹³.

Unfortunately, the concrete implementation of the normative adopted, was never fulfilled.

3. The *Cronistoria* written by Mother Emilia Mosca (1897-1900)

The celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Institute awakened in the Institute a greater awareness concerning the “memory” of the origins. Therefore, the drawing up of the first *Cronistoria* was entrusted to Mother Emilia Mosca, General Councilor for school and education, by everyone called “Mother Assistant”.

The original title of her work: *Origin of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians founded by Don Bosco in the year 1872*¹⁴, was corrected and substituted afterward.

In fact, on the cover, another writing by another hand appears: *2nd Copy-Chronicle of the Institute “Daughters of Mary Help of Christians” written by the Rev. Mother Assistant Sister Emilia Mosca*¹⁵.

It was a second version of the one done by Sister Rosalia Pestarino, who, in pencil, wrote under the title “This Chronicle is written after the one written by me, Sr. P. Rosalia”.

¹³ *Deliberazioni dei Capitoli Generali delle Figlie di Maria SS. Ausiliatrice tenuti in Nizza Monferrato nel 1884, 1886 e 1892*. Torino, Tip. Salesiana 1894, art. 256. At that time the historian of the Salesian Congregation was Don Lemoyne who was compiling the *Memorie Biografiche* of Don Bosco.

¹⁴ Cf AGFMA 051 – Reg. 1.

¹⁵ Cf AGFMA 051 – Reg. 2.

The narration begins with the year 1872 and ends in 1900 proceeding according to an annual periodization. From some letters of Mother Emilia Mosca we come to know that it was written around the years 1897-98. To Sister Chiarina Giustiniani, Superior of the Pre-Province of the Spanish Houses, she wrote on 2nd February 1898:

“I must do a work and I need all the monographs of the Houses of the Congregation; you would then do me a great favour if you could send me a copy of each one of the Houses of Spain; there would be need for them to be sent with promptness”.

To Sister Orsolina Rinaldi, missionary and then Visiting Superior in Mexico, she wrote:

“I need these monographs in order to compile the Chronicle of the Congregation; it is a long work added to the much that I already have day by day” [s.d.].

Mother Emilia Mosca, perhaps urged by Mother General or by some Salesian superior, began gathering and writing around the first months of 1898. Her work continued until a few weeks before her death (2nd October 1900). The text, however, edited at a distance of years, contains inaccuracies and imprecisions. Don Maccono and Sister Maddalena Moretti who used it, tried to correct and to complete it.

Various are the sources of the narration. Besides drawing from her direct experience of the origins and from the accounts of the first FMA, the writer often cites the *Salesian Bulletin*¹⁶ and the monograph of the single Houses, above all the one of Nizza.

Mother E. Mosca reports some significant personal testimonials which afterward were merged in the *Cronistoria*¹⁷.

These manuscript texts of the *Cronistoria* written by Sister Rosalia Pestarino and Madre E. Mosca are late, overdue, and therefore full of gaps, incomplete. However they preserve the value of first documentation on the origins and on the initial development of the Institute.

4. A new historical awareness (first decades of the XX Century)

The historiography, at the beginning of the XX Century, enters a new phase. Many factors and significant events favour in the FMA an increased historical sensibility:

* the juridical autonomy of the Institute of the FMA (1906) with the consequent erection of the Provinces and the elaboration of the Regulations-Manual

¹⁶ Cf *ibid.*, pp. 74, 85, 89, 106, 129, 143.

¹⁷ Cf Giselda CAPETTI [a cura di], *Cronistoria. L'Istituto a Mornese e la prima espansione 1872-1879*. Vol. II. Roma, Istituto FMA 1976, p. 292 e cf p. 102.

(1908). Here the gathering of the material for the archive of the Institute is undertaken, since the separation from the Salesian Congregation urged the FMA toward a greater organizational effort and a more qualified formation of the personnel;

* the processes of canonization of Don Bosco (Decree of Venerability 1907) and of Maria Domenica Mazzarello (beginning of the Process: 23-6-1911), demanded a continuous task of documentation and therefore of research of the sources and of the testimonials, so as to be able to reconstruct a sure biographic procedure and the documented genesis of the foundation of the two Congregations;

* The election – in 1913 – of the new Secretary General of the Institute in the person of Mother Clelia Genghini. She understood immediately the necessity to gather the “memoirs” of the Institute and to arrange them in order in a chronological form. She carried out this project starting from the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Institute (1922)¹⁸;

* the continuation of the publication of the *Biographical Memoirs* of Don Bosco that engaged Don Lemoyne, Don Amadei and Don Ceria in the research of the documentary material also relative to our Institute. Several volumes of the Biographical Memoirs contain, in fact, noteworthy references to our Institute. For the FMA this meant the first publication of an initial history of the Institute as it was interlaced with the life of Don Bosco.

These events contributed to strengthen the awareness of the importance of writing the history, of gathering the testimonials, of organizing them in a complete and faithful manner.

4.1. *The elaboration of the typewritten Cronistoria (1913-1942)*

The editing of what was titled “*Chronological News*” is the result of a complex elaboration that lasted several decades.

In an old memoir [s.d.] preserved in the AGFMA (general FMA Archives) is remembered the wish of Mother Caterina Daghero and of her Councillors to have, an even simple, but complete Cronistoria of the Institute. In this text are indicated, among others, some criteria for its elaboration, and the finality of the undertaking is specified.

“Make use of all the possible written or oral testimonials and of all the scattered, disorderly, incomplete and at times illegible documents, which could from time

¹⁸ It should be remembered that in Valdocco, right from 1883, Don Bosco had chosen as secretary the one who would become the first historian of the Congregation, Don Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. He immediately began to gather the monumental collection of the *Documenti* to write the history of Don Bosco and the Oratory. (cf i 45), bundles of drafts which were the precious source used by the writers of the MB. (cf ASC A050-A094: *Documenti per scrivere la storia di D. Giovanni Bosco, dell’Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales e della Congregazione Salesiana*).

to time be available, so as to derive from them a narration as much as possible detailed, so as to give evidence to the beautiful simplicity and the robust primitive virtue, and still more the direction, the support, the paternal and maternal vigour of the two most splendid and brilliant figures: Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello”¹⁹.

Mother Clelia Genghini fulfils therefore a notable and so far unsurpassed work of elaboration of facts of the origins and of the life of the first communities. She obviously makes use of the already existing material, but she *interprets it* making the history of the Institute begin from the first phases of the life of Don Bosco. She therefore wants to highlight the remote past and, in a certain sense, offers reflections that could enter into a “Theology of history”, as it can be gathered from the title of the first chapter: *How Divine Providence prepares the Founder of the Institute (1828-1862)*²⁰.

The editor of the *Cronistoria* observes how Providence would enlarge the heart of little John Bosco that he may be oriented also to the education of the girls. The historical development of the Institute is, in fact, considered from the point of view of the One who sows the seed or weaves a magnificent cloth, by making use of different threads, all guided by the same wise hand. The *Cronistoria* is not only a detailed exposition of facts, but also an interpretative reading of them. Through the facts, the chronicler intends to gather and highlight what builds and edifies a spirit.

The time span embraced by the present *Cronistoria* goes from the boyhood of Don Bosco (1828) to his death (1888).

The drawing up of the *Cronistoria* took place between 1922 and 1942. Mother Clelia, in fact, in September 1942²¹, submitted to the Salesian Archive a typewritten copy in three volumes. The narration of the facts ended with 1879.

When Mother Clelia died (31 January 1956), the *Cronistoria* included 3 typewritten volumes plus a part *in fieri* which narrated the facts up to 24 August 1884. The text was taken up again and continued by the archivist Sister Giselda Capetti who completed the IV volume and compiled entirely the V volume during the 1970s.

4.2. *Writers*

We are before a work accomplished by many hands. For the first volume Mother Clelia had, as valid collaborator, Sister Maddalena Moretti, teacher of pedagogy at Nizza Monferrato up to 1924. But, with all probability there were other collaborators, as we can draw from the following source. In 1948 Sister Francesca Gamba, who entered in Nizza on 1st September 1884, shortly before

¹⁹ The passage is reported by Sister Giselda Capetti in *Cronistoria*.... II, p. 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I p. 13.

²¹ Cf *ibid.*, p. 11.

her death expressed her regret for not having been able to review and put order in “the memoirs of the first years of the life of the Institute”²².

There must have been various persons involved, directly or indirectly, in the compiling and in the revision of the text. The *Cronistoria* in its editing by Sister Giselda Capetti is the fruit of a long, patient, accurate work, accomplished by many persons. Unfortunately, having been edited at a distance of years, it presents omissions and gaps not easily filled in.

4.3. Importance of the “collective memory”

The *Cronistoria* acquires a particular relevance for the Institute if we consider it as representative of its own origins and of its spirituality.

The text reflects the first and official “collective memory” of the Institute. The FMA, questioned by Mother Clelia and by Don Ferdinando Maccono who worked during the same period, narrated the facts integrating them with their experience and with that of their own communities. Those who remembered were single persons but, in reality, this can also speak of the “memory” of the communities who expressed their charismatic and historical self-understanding. Different from history understood as re-construction of the past also through sources external to the Institution, the collective memory is the product of the interaction of the members of a group who deepen the links with their own past and express them with a strong emotive tension. Their “memory” is not so much the sum of what they remember, or their common denominator, but a dynamic togetherness of significant representations for the life of the group, concerning the past experienced as though it were still present, active and involving.

The “memory” is therefore considered as the place where the synthesis of past experience is produced. It is a sedimentation of remembrances that ensures in retrospective the vital nuclei of an identity²³.

The FMA who contributed to the editing of the *Cronistoria* had, perhaps, a lesser knowledge of the past than the succeeding generations, but had a stronger sense of belonging to the Institute and of the continuity with a past which was re-lived in them and was the foundation of their charismatic identity.

4.4. The sources employed

In the *Cronistoria*, sources of origin and of diversified value converge. This documentation is often overlapping as for historical period, so that the narra-

²² Cf Michelina SECCO, *Suor Francesca Gamba*, in ID., *Facciamo memoria. Cenni biografici delle FMA defunte nel 1948*. Roma, Istituto FMA 1997, pp. 155-169.

²³ Cf Paolo JEDLOWSKI, *Per una sociologia della memoria*, in “Rassegna italiana di sociologia” 30 (1989) 103. The theme of the memory is emerging today as one of the keynotes of sociological reflection.

tion line is not always easily documented. Sources of narrative and documentary type are clearly recognizable. To the first belong the narrations of surviving Sisters, of lay people and priests who lived in Mornese. Among the most significant we find those of Sister Rosalia Pestarino, Sister Enrichetta Sorbone and other FMA; Don Giuseppe Pestarino (brother of Sr. Rosalia), Don Giuseppe Campi (Salesian from Mornese, direct testimony of the vicissitudes of the origins). Often however, the writer incorporates the information derived from the sources in her own reflection, so that it is not always possible to single out the original material from the literary genre used, in order to reconstruct the narration of facts.

Mother Clelia draws also from the rich documentation gathered by Don Maccono who in those years was elaborating the biography of Maria D. Mazzarello and was following her cause of beatification; from Don Lemoyne, Don Amadei and Don Ceria who were compiling the volumes of the *Biographical Memoirs*.

The documentary sources are heterogeneous but authentic and reliable: official documents (ex. Transcript of the Foundation), decrees of diocesan approval, data relative to the opening of Houses, letters, texts of the first Constitutions.

The Cronistoria draws also from a bibliography, not secondary to the purpose of the research: the biographical notes on Maria Mazzarello written by Lemoyne²⁴, the first true and proper biographies (1906 Francesia and 1913 Maccono), the *Biographical Memoirs*, the Epistolary of Don Bosco, the *Salesian Bulletin* (from this Bulletin there are about 80 citations).

4.5. *Value and limits*

The work of the Secretary General of the Institute and of her collaborators represents a historical phase of great importance, actually unique in its kind, for intentionality, documentary effort and vastness of researches. We will always need to refer to this work in order to know the vicissitudes of the origins as they have been handed down to us in that historical period and with those interpretative paradigms.

The edifying purpose, however, often prevails over the historiographic. The finality with which it was written was to gather all the possible remembrances concerning the beginnings of the Institute highlighting the signs that reveal the action of Providence and the intervention of Mary Help of Christians. The principal intent is not merely to “reconstruct the past”, but to “vivify, revive a spirit”²⁵.

²⁴ Passages reprinted in 1996: cf Giovanni Battista LEMOYNE, *Suor Maria Mazzarello*, in Alois KOTHGASSER – Giovanni Battista LEMOYNE – Alberto CAVIGLIA, *Maria Domenica Mazzarello. Profezia di una vita*. Roma, Istituto FMA 1996, pp. 77-110.

²⁵ Giselda CAPELLI (a cura di), *Cronistoria [dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice]*. Vol. I. Roma, Istituto FMA 1974, p. 9. The work is in 5 volumes published between 1974 and 1978.

In order to understand the Cronistoria in its literary genre there is the need, therefore, to enter into the logic of the text, placing ourselves in harmony with the mentality of the writer by using the suitable interpretative keys. There is need to distinguish between the life and the development of the first community of the FMA and its narration. Similar process takes place in the hagiography: it is necessary to distinguish between the Saint as such in himself, and the idealization of the Saint²⁶.

5. The literature of hagiographic type

Generally, the historiography of the Institute in the first half of the XX Century is characterized mainly by the hagiographic literature and the rather anecdotic knowledge of the Founders, of the Superiors of the General Council and of some FMA who died in concept of holiness²⁷. In reality, during this period (first decades of the XX Century), which coincides with the years of the Process of canonization of Maria Mazzarello and with the beginning of the other Processes promoted by the Institute (Cf. Maddalena Morano, Laura Vicuña, Sister Teresa Valsé...) a new type of biographies is elaborated, which is enriched by the contribution of the testimonials presented at the Process.

Moreover, though the editorial work of the authors of the Biographical Memoirs does not reach the scientific historical level, notwithstanding such work includes a first attempt to organize the oral information and the written sources of the Institute of the FMA. The one who wrote on Don Bosco could not ignore the history of the feminine Congregation of which, in the first decade of the Century, the dependence from the same Founder had been ascertained.

Don Lemoyne, having been the director both at Mornese and at Nizza until 1883 knew the genesis and the development of the Institute, and this favoured the credibility of his work as "honest testimony and convinced admirer"²⁸.

According to the interpretation of Morand Wirth, we recognize furthermore that the first narration "orderly and systematic" of the Salesian work is due to Don Eugenio Ceria who, between 1941 and 1951 published four volumes of the *Annals of the Salesian Society*²⁹. In them also the history of the FMA Institute converged sustained on a first hand documentation drawn from the Archives, both of the Salesian Congregation and the one of the FMA.

²⁶ Cf Réginald GREGOIRE, *Agiografia: tra storia, filosofia, teologia*, in G. D. GORDINI (a cura di), *Santità e agiografia. Atti dell'VIII Congresso di Terni*. (= Ricerche, Studi e Documenti, 24). Genova, Marietti 1991, pp. 15-24.

²⁷ In 1921-1922 the publication began of the *Notiziario* of the Institute to pass on news relative to all the communities. The aim of the communications was to strengthen "the spirit" and the sense of belonging to the Institute.

²⁸ Cf Morand WIRTH, *Da don Bosco ai nostri giorni. Tra storia e nuove sfide (1815-2000)*. (= Studi di spiritualità, 11). Roma, LAS 2000, p. 17.

²⁹ Cf *ibid.*, p. 18.

Between the years 1920 and 1959 Don Ferdinando Maccono, Sister Giuseppina Mainetti, Sister Giselda Capetti and other FMA, publish *many biographies* with the intention to offer models of life to the Sisters.

As we had already mentioned concerning the *Cronistoria*, also for these writings the purpose was mainly to “edify” and not much to describe a history with methodological precision and rigorousness.

However, as remembered by Paul Wynants, scholar and researcher in the ambit of the history of the educative feminine Congregations (Belgium, France, Netherlands), this “edifying production” can offer useful aspects to the one who wants to know the reality of the Institute at least at two levels: “it may happen that it contains the publication *in extenso* (extended, complete) of documents otherwise inaccessible or lost”³⁰.

In our Institute this can apply, for instance to the *Cronistoria*, or to some biographies, as the one of Emilia Mosca written by Sister Giuseppina Mainetti³¹, or the one of Mother Eulalia Bosco³². Also the first biography of Maria D. Mazzarello by Lemoyne contains two precious testimonials (of Don Domenico Pestarino and of the sister of Maria Domenica, Sister Felicita Mazzarello) that at present are no longer traceable in the original writing.

Moreover, the hagiographic writings are also a source of history for “the selection of facts and of the enterprises, for the prominence given to the various episodes”. All this reveals to us the sensibility and the mentality of those who have compiled them; it gives us a glimpse of the models of behavior offered by them to the readers, a style of religious and community life according to the time. Wynants concludes: “Even if they can appear outdated and cumbersome, let us be careful not to macerate these yellowed works”³³.

6. The turning point of the II Vatican Council (years ‘60-’70)

The II Vatican Council had noteworthy resonances also on the historiographic research of the Institute. While the Salesians, with Don Pietro Stella in Turin and Don Francis Desramaut in Lyon, were starting critical studies on Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, the Institute of the FMA, guided by Mother Angela Vespa and by Mother Ersilia Canta, commit themselves in a new way to the “return to the sources” and to the “spirit of the origins” as guarantee of a valid renewal and updating. It was to the advantage of the Church that every religious Institute would deepen its own spiritual patrimony in order to

³⁰ Paul WYNANTS, *Per la storia di un’istituzione insegnante religiosa: orientamenti di ricerca, fonti e metodi (XIX-XX secolo)*, in RSS 15 (1996) 10.

³¹ Cf Giuseppina MAINETTI, *Una educatrice nella luce di San Giovanni Bosco. Suor E. Mosca di San Martino*. Torino, LICE – R. Berruti 1952.

³² Cf ID., *Madre Eulalia Bosco, pronipote del Santo. Memorie biografiche*. Colle Don Bosco (Asti), Istituto Salesiano Arti Grafiche 1952.

³³ P. WYNANTS, *Per la storia...*, p. 10.

assume with new awareness its specificity and its apostolic vitality. For this purpose, there was need to faithfully interpret and observe “the spirit and the proper finalities of the Founders, as well as the healthy traditions” as characteristic elements of the patrimony of each Institute³⁴.

The “return to the sources” required therefore a more accurate revisiting of the spirituality of the Institute and a deeper knowledge of its history. It was a commitment of the formators to place the FMA in a more direct contact with the Salesian literature, and above all an efficacious stimulus of the Superiors who, by their words and their circular letters, contributed to revive in the Institute the interest for the Salesian spirituality and for its sources.

In the Institute of the FMA, the sensibility for the history and the historiographic reflection emerge, and are affirmed within the teaching of the Salesian Spirituality, and hence in a wide interpretative frame of reference.

Here we can see the difference in the way of proceeding of the Salesians. They initiate with scientific contributions of those who had a recognized historical competence, besides a specific academic activity: Don Francis Desramaut (1962) and Don Pietro Stella (1969).

Moreover, the studies of the Salesians on Don Bosco and on the history of the Congregation were planned and programmed since 1971-72 in the General Chapter, and afterward fulfilled by cultural Institutions characterized by an explicit historical approach and competence: The Centro Studi Don Bosco (Don Bosco Studies Centre) founded in 1973, and the Salesian Historical Institute (1982).

The Institute of the FMA follows a different course: it helps to slowly mature a historical sensibility aimed at the renewed interest in the charism and at the renewal at present, in the post-Council phase.

At this line, a fundamental merit must be attributed to Sister Lina Dalcerci (1902-1998), professor of pedagogy and scholastic Councilor in the Institute of Pedagogy and Religious Sciences of Turin; she, thanks to her competence, spiritual depth and passionate love for the Institute, through her writings and her teaching (“*Salesian Traditions*” and “*The Preventive System*”), incremented the desire for a more aware return to the Salesian sources³⁵.

The contributions of Sister Dalcerci have the merit of having incremented in the young FMA students of the “*Pedagogico*”, the aptitude to research during a delicate phase of the journey of the Institute. What was being started in the academic ambit had a wider repercussion afterward as the FMA in their turn would, as it actually happened, form the new generations of candidates to the Institute.

After Sister Lina Dalcerci, the systematic teaching of the spirituality of the FMA was continued by Sister Maria Esther Posada, professor of spiritual theo-

³⁴ Cf *Perfectae caritatis*, n. 2.

³⁵ Cf per es. *Rinnovamento e ritorno alle fonti*. (= Quaderni delle FMA, 16). Torino, Tip. privata FMA 1968 e Lina DALCERRI, *Tradizioni salesiane. Spirito di famiglia*. Roma, Scuola tip. privata FMA 1973. Cf pure Piera CAVAGLIA, *Lina Dalcerci: una sintesi vitale di scienza e spiritualità*, in “*Rivista di Scienze dell’Educazione*” 37 (1999) 229-258.

logy, who, since 1971, at the Faculty of Sciences of Education, taught an academic course on *“Introduction to the Sources of the Salesian Spirituality”* with the aim of leading the young FMA to the reading and deepening of the sources of the Institute³⁶.

An immediate result of such teaching was the elaboration of some Master Degree theses guided by the same Sister Posada and which were discussed during the centenary year of the Institute (1972). For these spiritual-historical researches, the students were admitted to the consultation of the Archives of the Salesian Congregation, of the FMA Institute, of the Dioceses of Acqui and Turin, as well as the archives of the Municipalities of Mornese, Nizza Monferrato and Turin. It was thus possible to come in contact with the inedited letters of Maria D. Mazzarello and with the Cronistoria of the Institute in the typewritten text, besides other significant documentary sources.

During the years immediately following (1974-‘76), the Superior General, Mother Ersilia Canta, encouraged the publication of what concerned the Co-foundress and the first community of Mornese. The text of the Cronistoria was revised and published by Sister Giselda Capetti “in answer to a common and enthused waiting”, as Mother Canta wrote in the presentation of the first volume³⁷.

At that same time, the three small volumes *Onwards in the Course of a Century*, edited by Sister Capetti, were printed; they present in a synthetic form the phases of history. Interesting is the perspective in which the historical development of the Institute is narrated in such a way that always allows to “glimpse the touch of Mary’s hand that guided the Institute since its first winding, and accompanied it from hour to hour with the predilection of a Mother and the power of a Queen”³⁸.

In 1975 finally came to light the edition of the Letters of S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello, by Sister María Esther Posada³⁹. By an ample introduction of biographical and spiritual-historical character, the curator leads the reader to the understanding of the only autographic documents of the Saint supplied with historical notes.

For many years this “precious capital” circulated in the hands of the FMA to nourish in them the knowledge of the Institute and the faithfulness to the charism of the Founders. Those pages, “emanating the freshness of the primitive spirit”, fa-

³⁶ Mother Ersilia Canta said – as I was told by Sister Maria Esther Posada – that this was the start of what the Institute wanted, that is the possibility of deepening the charism and spirituality of the Institute.

³⁷ *Cronistoria...*, I, p. 5.

³⁸ Giselda CAPETTI, *Il cammino dell’Istituto nel corso di un secolo*. Vol. I. Roma, Istituto FMA 1972, p. 9. This publication which integrates the three volumes of Sister G. Capetti, was taken up again in 2007: cf Maria Pia BIANCO, *Il cammino dell’Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice nei solchi della storia*. Roma, Istituto FMA 2007 e 2010, 2 voll.

³⁹ Cf *Lettere di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello. Confondatrice dell’Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*. Milano, Editrice Ancora 1975.

voured that return to the sources, so desired by the II Vatican Council and strongly repeated by the Superior Generals who guided the Institute in those years.

7. The present phase

In these last decades, we are living a phase of the history of the Institute in many aspects inedited. The Course of Spirituality of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, deliberated by the XVI GC (1975) and instituted in 1976 at the Faculty of Sciences of Education "Auxilium" in Turin, is to be considered one of the privileged "places" where a new way to draw near the charism of the Institute and to deepen its historical, theological and pedagogical dimensions is matured and expressed.

The historical area, in the context of the history of the Christian spirituality and especially the one of the IX Century, has the objective to draw closer to the sources useful for knowing the figure of the Founder, of the Co-foundress, and the fundamental lines that guided the foundation, the expansion and the consolidation of the Institute during more than a century.

Also in the ambit of the various teachings, of the exercises, of the seminars and of the theses presented at the Faculty of Sciences of Education "Auxilium", various aspects of the history of the Institute are deepened each time; some of these contributions led to publications of articles and of volumes.

As for the historical-critical dimension, we must point out that much is still to be accomplished concerning the research of the sources that will allow us to deepen the historical phases of the Institute, the development of the works, the spirituality, the educative method, the missionary experience, etc., and to interpret their evolution, the insertion in the various cultural contexts and the social resonance.

The present time, with its new cultural paradigms stimulates ever more the Institute to qualify the method of work and to search accurately the sources in the various archives of the Institute and of outside ones.

In this ambit, ways of exploration and of documented and stimulating approaches are opened.

To a phase in which the theological-spiritual dimension of history was prevalent, a new phase is taking over; in this phase the work is done with a more critical perspective, founded on reliable and accurately tested and interpreted documents.

With the foundation of the Salesian Historical Institute (ISS 1982) and of the Association of the experts of Salesian history (ACSA 1996), also the Institute of the FMA has a new opportunity of qualifying ever more the historical method in view of further research and publications on the work accomplished in time by the FMA or on its sources.

Since the foundation of the two centres of research, the collaboration between the Salesians and FMA was never lacking. Sister Cecilia Romero in 1983

followed the critical edition of the first Constitutions of the Institute⁴⁰, besides the one of some dreams of Don Bosco.

Sister Grazia Loparco – professor of History of the Church, and of the courses: Introduction to the sources of the Salesian Spirituality and History of the FMA Institute – as President of the Association of experts of Salesian History, offers her competent contribution in the preparation and in the realization of Seminars and International Conventions, also in collaboration with other religious Institutes.

Such encounters contribute – though with different methodological rigor – to activate in the FMA students the stimulus to fulfil historical researches in their own Provinces of origin.

With her historical competence and her openness to the more recent historiographic reflections, Sister Grazia has offered and continues to give a most valid contribution to the studies of the History of the FMA Institute, worked out on the basis of accurate archival researches and in confrontation with history scholars, both laymen and women.

A new awareness of the necessity for a more serious historical documentation is slowly maturing in the FMA, both at the local and central levels. This can be deducted from the following indicators which denote an emerging new sensibility and testify that there is a widespread formative process in action which, however, awaits more promising developments:

- * competence and precision with which the material is gathered, classified, inventoried and preserved in the central Archive and in the Provincial archives;
- * Commitment by which in every Province there is the effort to document the life, the mission, the works of the Institute, thanks also to the periodical courses of formation and updating of the Provincial secretaries;
- * sense of responsibility and regularity with which the various documents are compiled, the chronicle, the provincial Cronistoria, the various reports, the statistics and the general directory of the Institute;
- * faithfulness with which the *biographic notes* of the deceased Sisters are written and published. We are aware that the history of the Institute is interwoven with the history of every FMA, not only those who have carried out roles of government. These biographical profiles – which by now have filled more than 70 volumes – are a modest source, but an important one for the knowledge of the persons and of their activities in the various cultural contexts;
- * increase of the publications on the Institute, its members, its works (cf The contributions of historical, biographical, pedagogical and spiritual character in the various countries).

⁴⁰ Cf Giovanni BOSCO, *Costituzioni per l'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice (1872-1885)*. Testi critici a cura di suor Cecilia Romero. (= ISS – Fonti, Serie prima, 2). Roma, LAS 1983.

- * In particular, during these past years there has been the publication of some sources of the Institute.
- * Letters of Maria D. Mazzarello in four editions (1975-1980-1994-2004);
- * Critical edition of the first Constitutions by Sister Cecilia Romero 1983); re-printed edition of the Constitutions of 1874 (2008);
- * Sources and testimonials of the first ten years of the Institute (1870-1881: from the foundation to the death of the Co-Foundress)⁴¹;
- * Reports of the Ministerial Inspectors on some schools of the FMA⁴²;
- * Documentation relative to the juridical autonomy of the Institute⁴³.

Moreover, the knowledge of the Co-Foundress, the phase of the foundation of the Institute and its initial development, were deepened from various points of view.

- * Various contributions of historical, pedagogical and theological-spiritual of historical character on the period of the origins of the Institute and on Maria D. Mazzarello by María Esther Posada, Grazia Loparco, Piera Ruffinatto, Anita Deleidi, Ana María Fernandez, Piera Cavaglià, Mario Midali, Carlo Colli.
- * Studies mostly inedited on the rapport Mazzarello-Frassinetti⁴⁴, rapport Mazzarello-Bosco⁴⁵, the Founder and the Co-Foundress⁴⁶, the FMA Institute during the period of the war⁴⁷, the Institute in its rapport with the Jews⁴⁸, the

⁴¹ Cf P. CAVAGLIÀ – A. COSTA (a cura di), *Orme di vita...*

⁴² Cf Grazia LOPARCO, *L'attività educativa delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice in Italia attraverso le ispezioni governative (1884-1902)*, in RSS 21 (2002) 49-106.

⁴³ Cf ID., *Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice e Santa Sede. Inediti sugli antecedenti della separazione giuridica dai Salesiani (1901-1904)*, in "Rivista di Scienze dell'Educazione" 40 (2002) 243-256; ID., *Verso l'autonomia giuridica delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice dai Salesiani. "Relatio et votum" di G. M. van Rossum per il S. Ufficio (1902)*, in RSS 28 (2009) 178-210.

⁴⁴ Cf María Esther POSADA, *Storia e santità. Influsso del Teologo Giuseppe Frassinetti sulla spiritualità di S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello*. Roma, LAS 1992².

⁴⁵ Cf Anita DELEIDI, *Il rapporto tra don Bosco e madre Mazzarello nella fondazione dell'Istituto FMA (1862-1876)*, in Mario MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco fondatore della famiglia salesiana. Atti del Simposio. Roma-Salesianum (22-26 gennaio 1989)*. Roma, Editrice SDB 1989, pp. 305-321.

⁴⁶ Cf María Esther POSADA, *Alle origini di una scelta. Don Bosco fondatore di un Istituto religioso femminile*, in Roberto GIANNATELLI (a cura di), *Pensiero e prassi di don Bosco nel 1° centenario della morte (31 gennaio 1888-1988)*. (= Quaderni di Salesianum, 15). Roma, LAS 1988, pp. 151-169; ID., *Don Bosco fondatore dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*, in M. MIDALI (a cura di), *Don Bosco fondatore...*, pp. 281-303.

⁴⁷ Cf Grazia LOPARCO, *L'ora della carità per le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice a Roma*, in "Ricerche per la Storia religiosa di Roma: Chiesa, mondo cattolico e società civile durante la Resistenza" (2009) 151-197.

⁴⁸ Cf ID., *Gli ebrei e molti altri nascosti negli istituti religiosi a Roma*, in Giorgio VECCHIO (a cura di), *Le suore e la Resistenza*. Milano, Ambrosianum-In Dialogo 2010, pp.

presence of the FMA in Italy⁴⁹, the educative works of the FMA in Italy⁵⁰.

- * Historical-pedagogical researches on the first educative institutions (the school of Mornese⁵¹ and of Nizza Monferrato)⁵², on the studies of the FMA in the first 50 years of the Institute and on the presence of the FMA in Italy between 1900 and 1922⁵³.
- * Various contributions on the charism⁵⁴, on the Marian identity of the Institute⁵⁵; on the first community of the FMA⁵⁶; on the presence of the FMA in the various countries⁵⁷.

Conclusive notes that open to debate and to confrontation

- * We are ever more aware that the editing of the History of the Institute, as much as history of an educative Institution that works in the five continents

281-377; ID., *L'assistenza prestata dalle religiose di Roma agli ebrei durante la Seconda guerra mondiale*, in Luigi MEZZADRI – Maurizio TAGLIAFERRI (a cura di), *Le donne nella Chiesa e in Italia*. Atti del XIV Convegno di studio dell'Associazione Italiana dei Professori di Storia della Chiesa, Roma 12-15 settembre 2006. Cinisello Balsamo, San Paolo 2007, pp. 245-285; ID., *Gli Ebrei negli istituti religiosi a Roma (1943-1944). Dall'arrivo alla partenza*, in "Rivista della Storia della Chiesa in Italia" 58 (2004) 107-210.

⁴⁹ Cf Grazia LOPARCO, *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice nella società italiana (1900-1922). Percorsi e problemi di ricerca*. (= Il Prisma, 24). Roma, LAS 2002.

⁵⁰ Cf Grazia LOPARCO – Maria Teresa SPIGA (a cura di), *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice in Italia (1872-2010). Donne nell'educazione. Documentazione e saggi*. 2 Voll. Roma, LAS 2011. The research was published on the occasion of the 150th anniversary of the Unification of Italy.

⁵¹ Cf Piera CAVAGLIÀ, *La scuola di Mornese. Alle origini di una scelta per la promozione integrale della donna*, in "Rivista di Scienze dell'Educazione" 26 (1988) 151-186.

⁵² Cf ID., *Educazione e cultura per la donna. La scuola "Nostra Signora delle Grazie" di Nizza Monferrato dalle origini alla Riforma Gentile (1878-1923)*. Roma, LAS 1990.

⁵³ Cf Grazia LOPARCO, *Gli studi nell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice. Contributo sul primo cinquantennio (1872-1922) in Italia*, in Francesco MOTTO (a cura di), *Insediamenti e iniziative salesiane dopo don Bosco. Saggi di storiografia*. (= ISS – Studi, 9). Roma, LAS 1996, pp. 327-368; G. LOPARCO, *Le Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice nella società italiana (1900-1922)*...

⁵⁴ Cf AA.VV., *Corso per maestre delle novizie. Roma 1° settembre – 7 novembre 1993*. (= Orizzonti, 2.4.7). Roma, LAS 1994-1996.

⁵⁵ Cf Maria Piera MANELLO (a cura di), *Madre ed educatrice. Contributi sull'identità mariana dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*. Roma, LAS 1988; Maria DOSIO – Marie GANNON – Maria Piera MANELLO – Maria MARCHI (a cura di), *"Io ti darò la Maestra..." Il coraggio di educare alla scuola di Maria*. Atti del Convegno Mariano Internazionale promosso dalla Facoltà di Scienze dell'educazione "Auxilium" – 27-30 dicembre 2004. Roma, LAS 2005.

⁵⁶ Cf Maria KO – Piera CAVAGLIÀ – Josep COLOMER, *Da Gerusalemme a Mornese e a tutto il mondo. Meditazioni sulla prima comunità cristiana e sulla prima comunità delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice*. Roma, LAS 1996.

⁵⁷ Cf the numerous publications produced by the ACSSA.

with a specific spirituality and methodology, awaits the interdisciplinary contribution of FMA, Salesians and lay people belonging to the various contexts and with different competences.

- * It is an urgent and overriding need not only to recount a history and pass on a tradition, but above all to identify historiographic criteria that can help us to question the past and may offer us the methodologically correct approach to the events, to the persons and the institutions.
- * Identify the pertinent documentation for the researches and use it in a critical way. Today, in a fragmented cultural climate, there is ever more the urgency to respect the criterion of integration of the sources. There is the need, in fact, to adopt a global approach to the questions valuing the interconnection of the documentation and the link that ties intrinsically different types of sources (i.e. the historical source is understood in the light of other sources of spiritual, social, economic, pedagogical type...).
- * Adopt formative strategies in order to sharpen and qualify the historical sense in all the FMA in view of an adequate “*production*” and *conservation* of a documentation that be “significant” for the future research,
- * prevent historical gaps, the reduction of history to the telling of anecdotes and to the plain and simple erudition.
- * In a time of rapid changes and of ever more accelerated rhythms of life, perhaps we neglect the duty to adequately document, in a way proportionate to the cultural level that which has generally been conquered. We don’t find the time to write what is significant, but perhaps we do not always catch its function and the social importance.
- * Not secondary is the support – the paper on which we write the documentation. Are we sure of its duration? Of its “diplomatic” authenticity? Centuries ago the famous archivist of the duke of Modena, Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672-1750), wrote with acute historiographic sensibility and great realism: “In the past, people would write on parchment and on papyrus, today, instead, our notary publics use for their work a paper little different from the spider web. It will be not long before those written characters will be lost; in fact the very paper will be destroyed. As the archive is destined to perpetuate, as much as possible, public memories, it requires therefore strong paper and good ink”⁵⁸.

What would that famous archivist say of the “technology pieces of information” or of the audio-visual documentation⁵⁹? *Scripta faciunt archiva!* [The wri-

⁵⁸ Ludovico Antonio MURATORI, *Della pubblica felicità, oggetto de’ buoni principi*. Venezia, Albrizzi 1749, p. 403.

⁵⁹ For this type of documentation the criteria of authenticity have not yet been worked out. An able technician can falsify the text, the voice, the recording on the magnetic base. If a text written on paper is falsified it is possible to trace the falsification, but not so with electronic alterations of falsifications.

tings constitute the archives!]. The technology of which we dispose is today an opportunity and at the same time an uncertainty for the historiography and the preservation of the documents. The written sources, even if on yellowed papers, are the essential elements to construct that “*certainty*” on which to build the “*truth*”, they are the necessary means to establish communion of the present with the past.

* Another not easy problem to solve in a time of rapid changes is the order, arrangement of the archives, which are the privileged source of historiography, a reality not at all technical, but rather of historical competence.

For this there is need of an adequate formation in the archivist field in order not to “sin” toward history and toward posterity. It is not simply a question of good will, but of competence and of professional deontology.

The arrangement and building of the inventory of an Archive are one of the most qualifying and specific aspects of the work of the one who wants to preserve the memory of an Institution. The arrangement tends to establish the internal connections of the Archive which give the reading and interpretative keys of the documents.

In an orderly Archive is reflected the history of the Institution that has built it, not only for the information that it transmit, but because it makes it possible to understand the essential elements of that historical reality (ex. Its finalities, the rapports established, the conditionings, the way of working...).

The arrangement is the premise for the critical analysis of the sources. Obviously, for the knowledge of the history of the Institute there will be need to consult also other Archives, of the State or other civil and ecclesiastical bodies, or agencies, which have functions or competences relevant to that Institution. The history of the Institute, in fact, is interwoven with the history of the place, of the culture, of the Church, of the society in which it works.