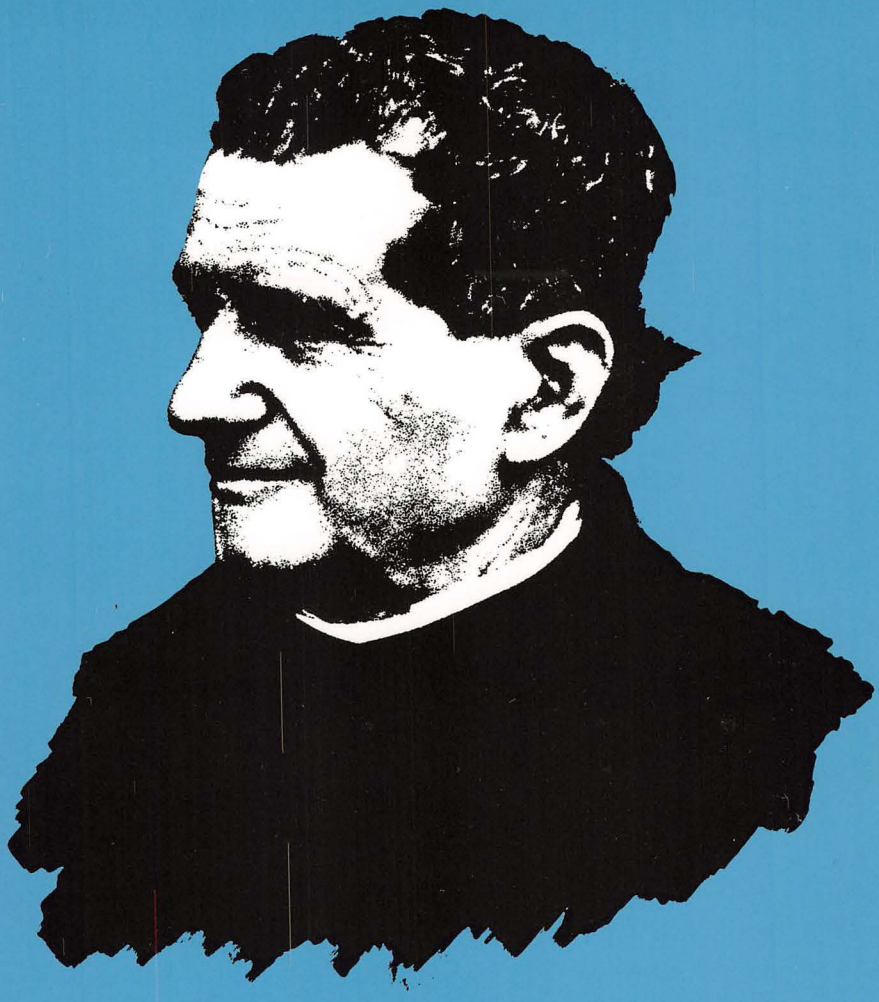
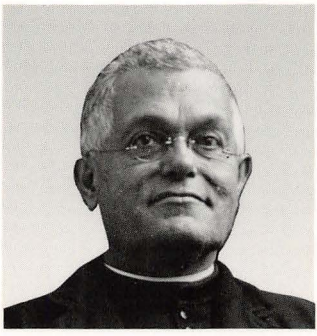


VOLUME X - 1871-1874

THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

of Saint John Bosco



Father Angelo Amadei

FATHER ANGELO AMADEI (1868-1945) succeeded Father Lemoyne in 1908 as the editor of the Salesian Bulletin and at the same time became his invaluable assistant in the work of research and compilation for **The Biographical Memoirs.**

At Father Lemoyne's death in 1916, Father Amadei interrupted other literary activities and undertook the continuation of the work on **The Biographical Memoirs.** After supervising the publication of Volume IX, he wrote and published Volume X covering the years 1871-1874, a period characterized as perhaps the most active and the most interesting in the life of Saint John Bosco.

He was relieved of further responsibility for **The Biographical Memoirs** so that he could resume his earlier studies and research, and devote his full attention to work on the life of Father Michael Rua, the first successor of St. John Bosco.

Il Servo di Dio Michele Rua, a three-volume work of patient and dedicated scholarship, was his major achievement. His last important work was a new edition of Father Lemoyne's two-volume life of Don Bosco. He died in Turin on January 16, 1945 at the age of 76.

The Salesian Society

1987

Membership	17,644
Countries	92
Provinces	77
Houses	1,572
Bishops	63
Archbishops	19
Cardinals	5

The Daughters Of Mary Help Of Christians

1987

Membership	17,202
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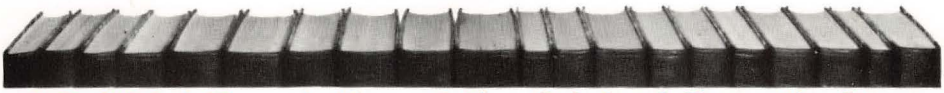
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THE

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco

by

REV. ANGELO AMADEI, S.D.B.

AN AMERICAN EDITION
TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN

REV. DIEGO BORGATELLO, S.D.B.
Editor-in-chief

Volume X
1871—1874

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TO

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(1904—1962)

TO WHOSE

WISDOM, FORESIGHT, AND NOBLE SALESIAN HEART

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OF

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OF

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IS

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MOTHER ERSILIA CANTA

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Whose Protection, Guidance and Love

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The Living Monument of Don Bosco

The Congregation of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians

Salesian Sisters of Saint John Bosco

Editor's Preface to the First Nine Volumes

SAINT John Bosco, the central figure of this vastly extensive biography, was a towering person in the affairs of both Church and State during the critical 19th century in Italy. He was the founder of two very active religious congregations during a time when orders were being suppressed; he was a trusted and key liaison between the Papacy and the emerging Italian nation of the Risorgimento; above all, in troubled times, he was the saintly Christian educator who successfully wedded modern pedagogy to Christ's law and Christ's love for the poor young, and thereby deserved the proud title of *Apostle of youth.*

He is known familiarly throughout the world simply as Don Bosco.[1] His now famous system of education, which he called the *Preventive System,* was based on reason, religion and kindness, and indicated by its descriptive name that, also in education, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. He always sought to place pupils in the moral impossibility of committing sin, the moral disorder from which all evils flow.

To ensure the continuation of his educational mission in behalf of youth he founded two worldwide religious congregations, the Society of St. Francis de Sales (Salesian Society) and the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters), which today number more than 40,000 members conducting 2,800 educational institutions throughout the world.

To help in the difficult art of educating the young, Don Bosco planned to expound his method of education in a book, but, absorbed as he was in the task of firmly establishing his two religious congregations and in unceasing other labors, he had to content himself with a simple outline of his ideas in a golden little treatise entitled *The Preventive System in the Education of Youth.*

[1] *Don* is an abbreviation of the Latin *dominus,* master. It is used in Italy as a title for priests: it stands for *Father.*

Fortunately, *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco* are ample compensation for a book which, if written, might have given us only theories. These memoirs, a monumental work in nineteen volumes, until recently reserved exclusively to Salesians and published only in the original Italian, are now available, unabridged, in this American edition not only to his spiritual children, devotees and admirers, but also to all who are interested in education.

In these volumes Don Bosco is shown in action: not *theorizing* but *educating*. What he said and did in countless circumstances was faithfully recorded by several of his spiritual sons, chief among them Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne. From the day he first met Don Bosco in 1864 to his own death in 1916, Father Lemoyne spent his life recording words and deeds of Don Bosco, gathering documents, interviewing witnesses, and arranging raw material for the present nineteen volumes of the life of Don Bosco, eight of which he himself authored besides readying another volume for the press before his death.

In the compilation of *The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco*, Father Lemoyne's primary sources were the *Memorie dell'Oratorio dal 1835 al 1855* (Memoirs of the Oratory from 1835 to 1855) written by Don Bosco himself, the diaries and chronicles of various Salesians who daily recorded what Don Bosco said or did, numerous letters of the Saint, the *Cinque lustri di Storia dell'Oratorio di S. Francesco di Sales* (The History of the First Twenty-Five Years of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales) written by Father John Bonetti, S.D.B., and personally checked by Don Bosco, the proceedings of the diocesan process of beatification and other unimpeachable contemporary documents and testimonies. Above all, Father Lemoyne, intelligent, conscientious, and well-informed, not only used reliable sources, but was himself an eye-witness. He recorded what he personally saw and heard from Don Bosco. This enabled him to write a true history even though not according to modern critical methods.[2] He concerned himself

[2] True history in the sense that what he narrates is substantially true, though his method of presentation, his chronology, and his treatment of sources could stand improvement. The episodes and incidents he reports did not necessarily take place *exactly* as described.

principally with presenting chronologically his vast selected material, and therefore his narrative is somewhat fragmentary and may lack scientific method. It is nevertheless true history, even Volume I which deals mainly with Don Bosco's youth and the training he received from Mamma Margaret, his mother.[3] When gifted writers and scholars of the future will produce a critical biography of Don Bosco, *The Biographical Memoirs* will still not be surpassed because Father Lemoyne lived at Don Bosco's side, wrote what he saw and heard, and eminently succeeded in giving us a living portrait of Don Bosco.

In editing the translation of *The Biographical Memoirs*, accuracy and readability were the goals we set. This was not easy, and occasionally, as regards the latter, we may have fallen short of the mark. Nineteenth-century Italian does not readily lend itself to an agile version that strives to be an accurate translation and not a paraphrase.

We have departed from the original in only one minor point: the lengthy titles or series of subtitles in each chapter. Father Lemoyne's method of chronological sequence in his narration necessarily made the content of each chapter fragmentary. As it was not possible, under these circumstances, to give them a meaningful title and the volumes were not indexed, Father Lemoyne prefaced each chapter with many subtitles. In some volumes such subtitles fill a whole page. Since we have indexed each volume and subtitles become unnecessary, we selected in each chapter the most outstanding episode and gave it a title. Finally, although we did not aim at publishing a critical edition, we researched and—in most cases—were able to enrich the text by adding in brackets first names, dates, and scriptural sources, as well as numerous, helpful footnotes.

May the reading of these *Memoirs* portraying the life of a man whom Pope Pius XI called "a giant of sanctity" inspire his

[3] Cf. Francis Desramaut, S.D.B., *Les Memorie I de Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, Étude, d'un ouvrage fondamental sur la jeunesse de saint Jean Bosco*, Lyon, 1962, pp. 411ff.

spiritual children, to whom this work is primarily directed, and all men and women of good will to walk their own path of life in a spirit of service to God and man.

Fr. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B.
Editor-in-chief

New Rochelle, N.Y.
June 5, 1965

124th Anniversary of Don Bosco's Ordination

NOTE

As with Volumes VI, VII, VIII and IX we have omitted material from the original text that is of little interest to American readers and of no direct consequence to these biographical memoirs. Such omissions will always be pointed out in the footnotes, except when they concern *Letture Cattoliche* [Catholic Readings] in which case dots will be used.

Fr. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B.
Editor-in-chief

New Rochelle, N.Y.
July 16, 1977

Acknowledgments

For the publication of *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco* we owe a debt of gratitude to the Reverends August Bosio, S.D.B. and John J. Malloy, S.D.B., Provincials emeriti of the Salesians in the eastern United States and sponsors of this project, and to the Very Reverend Salvatore Isgro, S.D.B., their successor in office.

As regards this volume, we wish to express special thanks to Rev. Paul Aronica, S.D.B., Provincial Director of Education, New Rochelle, N.Y., for his editorial assistance. We are also grateful to those who have helped in one way or another, in particular the Reverends David J. DeBurgh, S.D.B. and Peter Lappin, S.D.B., well-known writers, and Mr. Joseph Isola of the Paulist Press in New York City. We also wish to acknowledge our indebtedness to the Ufficio Stampa of the Salesian Generalate, Rome, for its *Dizionario Biografico dei Salesiani,* a valuable source of many footnotes in this volume. Finally we wish to pay tribute to the late Rev. Henry Sarnowski, S.D.B., Secretary of our Editorial Board, for his valuable and generous help during the past fifteen years. May he rest in peace with Saint John Bosco whom he so loved on earth.

Fr. Diego Borgatello, S.D.B.
Editor-in-chief

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SALESIAN GLOSSARY

(For the General Reading Public)

ARTISANS: trade school students.

ASSISTANCE: Salesian method of supervision of boys and students, friendly and informal in manner, stressing the prevention of disorders rather than the punishment of offenders.

ASSISTANT: a Salesian engaged in supervising boys.

CLERIC: a member of the Salesian Society training for the priesthood.

COADJUTOR: a lay member of the Salesian Society.

COMPANION OF YOUTH, THE: a prayer book composed by St. John Bosco for the use of boys, originally entitled *Il Giovane Provveduto.*

COOPERATOR: one who contributes in any manner to the development of Salesian work.

EXERCISE FOR A HAPPY DEATH: a monthly practice of piety that promotes spiritual recollection and fervor by meditation on one's eventual death. It stresses the reception of the sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion as if for the last time.

FESTIVE ORATORY: a Salesian work which offers boys and young men organized recreational, educational, and religious activities, mostly on Sundays and festive days.

The Festive Oratory was St. John Bosco's first work and, for a good many years, his only one. He called it "oratory," that is, a place of prayer, because its primary purpose was to teach boys to go to church and pray. "Its objectives were the practice of religion and virtue, the boys' moral education, and, consequently, the salvation of their souls; recreation, entertainment, singing, and schooling, which followed in due time, were only the means." (*The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco,* Vol. II, p. 71. *See also* Vol. III, pp. 67f)

GOOD NIGHT: a short talk immediately after night prayers, given by the Director or someone in his stead. It consists of advice, exhortations, or occasional remarks.

ORATORY: *see* Festive Oratory, Oratory of St. Francis de Sales.

ORATORY, THE: abbreviated form of "The Oratory of St. Francis de Sales." (*See below*)

ORATORY OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES, THE: the *first* festive oratory and the *first* boarding school for boys founded by St. John Bosco in a district of Turin known as Valdocco; the motherhouse of the Salesian Congregation.

On a rainy night of May 1847 a hungry youngster, drenched from head to foot, knocked at Don Bosco's door. Don Bosco's mother fed him and prepared a place for him to sleep. (*See The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco,* Vol. III, pp. 141ff) Thus, side by side with the festive oratory there began a hospice that eventually grew into a large boarding school and became the motherhouse of the Salesian Congregation.

PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: the Salesian method of education and discipline, based on reason and religion. It stresses vigilance, guidance, and sympathetic understanding in the training of the young.

VALDOCCO: a district of Turin.

The name is probably a contraction of the Latin *vallis occisorum,* the valley of the slain—i.e., some soldiers of the Theban Legion who were martyred under Emperor Maximian. The Salesian motherhouse stands on the site of their martyrdom. (*See The Biographical Memoirs of St. John Bosco,* Vol. II, pp. 233ff, 268)

Author's Preface

AT long last here is Volume X, so eagerly awaited. Our dear Father Lemoyne went to his eternal reward on September 14, 1916, while Volume IX was on the press. Since we were even then helping him in his monumental task, it was only natural that we should see that volume through publication in 1917.

"Why," many will ask, "was *this* volume published after Volume XIX?" We shall give a thorough answer after outlining its contents. Volume X spans four years—perhaps the most laborious and interesting—of Don Bosco's life, during which he unremittingly and diligently strove to realize four important goals: improving relations between Italy and the Vatican immediately after Italy's seizure of Rome, the unqualified canonical approval of the Salesian Society, the founding of a second religious family [the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians], and planning a third family [the Salesian Cooperators] so as to widen his field of apostolate.

We have divided this volume into ten chapters, following a chronological sequence in some and a topical sequence in the rest, describing therein all that Don Bosco did to realize these goals in that four-year period.

Chapter 1 is a collection of memoirs portraying his moral character, his unceasingly intimate union with God, and his ardent desire to promote God's glory by saving souls.

Chapter 2 covers 1871, a year of godly initiative to further his undertakings.

Chapter 3 describes the illness which struck him while at Varazze, from which he recovered only thanks to God and to the prayers and sacrifices of his sons, benefactors and admirers.

Chapter 4 tells of his activities in 1872, notwithstanding his still poor health.

Chapter 5 illustrates the formidable task he undertook to alleviate the quite lamentable conditions of the Church in Italy at that time and his role in the appointment of bishops to its more than

one hundred vacant sees and the restoration of diocesan revenues. Formidable indeed was this task, without a doubt inspired by God.

Chapter 6 relates the beginnings of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, for whose leadership Our Lord chose Blessed Mary Mazzarello,[1] whose only ambition was to follow and inculcate the program outlined by Don Bosco. "Woe to us," she would often say, "if we do not become saints like our holy father Don Bosco."

Chapter 7, which proved quite an undertaking to us too, describes Don Bosco's long, patient work for the definitive establishment of the Salesian Society through the approval of its constitutions.

Chapter 8 is an interesting treasury of documents depicting Don Bosco's spirit, goodness and matchless charity, and of norms and counsels to pupils, to Salesians, and especially to directors. Its sources are the annual conferences [of St. Francis de Sales], the conferences [of directors and prefects] in the fall, and the annual spiritual retreats. Finally, it is also a treasury of Don Bosco's circular letters to his Salesians.

Chapter 9 describes several grave difficulties and disappointments facing him in 1873-74.

Chapter 10 covers 1874 and highlights his concern for the future of the Salesian Society. He gives solicitous attention to the faithful observance of the new, definitively approved constitutions, to expanding his apostolate in mission lands, to fostering vocations, and to worldwide recruiting of generous cooperators who, though living at home, would embody his spirit to the advantage of the Church and civil society.

Obviously, this volume is highly engrossing, since it also contains over three hundred and fifty letters and other writings of Don Bosco.

I will now explain why the publication of this volume was so long delayed. On February 7, 1888, a week after Don Bosco's death, our revered Father Rua read to the members of the Superior Chapter the decrees of Pope Urban VIII concerning procedures to be followed at the death of persons who were held in

[1]Now St. Mary Mazzarello. She was canonized by Pope Pius XII on June 24, 1951. For biographical information *see* Vol. IX, pp. 289-94. [Editor]

a repute of sanctity. The following day he announced that [Lucido] Cardinal Parocchi, our protector, had suggested that he ask the archbishop of Turin, [Cajetan] Cardinal Alimonda, to petition the Holy See to allow preliminary proceedings for the cause of Don Bosco's beatification without delay, waiving prescriptions to the contrary. Such steps were promptly taken, but difficulties were immediately and insistently raised to such an extent that the publication of *The Biographical Memoirs* was suspended in 1917-18 precisely because the difficulties which had been raised referred to the four years covered in this volume.

By God's grace all objections were thoroughly refuted and removed, and in the process the heroic virtues of our holy founder shone ever more brightly. Triumph came on June 2, 1929, when Don Bosco was raised to the honor of the altars.

All obstacles to resuming publication of these memoirs having now been removed, Volume XI came out in 1930. By this time we had been given the task of gathering biographical information and writing the life story of Don Bosco's first successor. The plentiful material sent to us by confreres, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Salesian cooperators kept us from publishing the first volume before 1931; Volumes II and III and a compendium followed in 1933 and 1934. Preparing a new edition of Father Lemoyne's two-volume biography of Don Bosco also kept us busy for another year, so that only in 1936 were we able to resume work on Volume X. Hence its tardy publication.

As to the question of why this is such a bulky volume, our beloved Father Lemoyne, to whom the Salesians will always be deeply grateful, diligently gathered sayings, episodes, letters, writings, documents and assorted memoirs concerning Don Bosco. After they were arranged in chronological order, they filled forty-five large tomes of page proofs.

"Here," he said, "are the spirit, heart and educational system of Don Bosco."

Since only Volumes XIII and XIV [of these page proofs], besides the second part of Volume XII and a few pages of Volumes XLII and XLIII, contained material referring to this quadrennium, we did not expect to end up with a bulky volume, but we could not avoid it.

May God bless our patient effort and kindle an ever greater affection for our most revered father and founder in the hearts of our confreres, along with a firm resolve to live his spirit with fidelity.

THE
BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS
OF
SAINT JOHN BOSCO

CHAPTER 1

Da Mihi Animas, Cetera Tolle—1871-1874

POPE Pius XI personally knew our holy founder. He beatified and canonized him and extended his cult to the whole Church. On March 19, 1929, in approving the miracles presented for Don Bosco's beatification, he made this solemn declaration:

The bull of canonization of St. Thomas Aquinas states that, in the absence of other miracles, each article of his *Summa* was a miracle in itself. In our day too we could say that every year, every moment, of Don Bosco's life was a miracle—indeed a series of miracles. Think of that forsaken Becchi hamlet where this poor lad tended his father's herd, of the tiny beginnings of his mission, and then of the more crucial and worrisome problems at Valdocco. . . . Think of the great enterprises which he started truly from nothing . . . look at the wonderful development of his undertakings, at the three great Salesian families—the Society of St. Francis de Sales, the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and the admirable legion of cooperators. . . . Think of all this and your astonishment cannot be less than that of witnessing a most extraordinary miracle.

At the sight of such an abundant harvest of good, a question arises: How could it all come about? There can only be one answer—the grace of God, the hand of the Almighty. But whence did this great servant of God draw the inexhaustible energy demanded by so many undertakings? He himself constantly revealed this secret in the slogan which so often recurs in Salesian undertakings, his own motto: *Da mihi animas, cetera tolle* (Give me souls, away with the rest). This was his inmost secret—the strength and ardor of his charity, of his genuine love for souls, stemming from his love for Our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose mind, heart, and precious blood he saw those very same souls. No sacrifice or enterprise was too formidable for him in order to win souls who were so intensely loved.[1]

[1]Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20-21, 1929. [Author]

This volume, spanning the years 1871-1874 of Don Bosco's life, amply documents this solemn declaration of Pope Pius XI, to whom we shall ever be most devotedly grateful. We shall see our beloved father serenely and trustingly pursuing his mission with prudence and with wisdom bestowed from on high, notwithstanding frightening difficulties and most bitter opposition. We shall also see him founding a new congregation for the education of girls, shaping the Salesian Society to canonical requirements, and sketching plans for the Association of Salesian Cooperators so as to widen his field of apostolate in both civilized and uncivilized lands for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

1. A Faithful and Prudent Servant

Throughout his lifetime Don Bosco wholeheartedly pursued no other goal than that set for him by God as his singular mission [the salvation of poor and abandoned boys].[2]

Prudent as a serpent and simple as a dove, this most faithful servant of God carried out his divinely appointed mission in the most appropriate way, adapting his program of action—all hustle and bustle, publicity and growth—to the needs of his time in a Christlike manner.

He immediately showed himself to be a creative genius determined to accomplish colossal tasks. Until 1860—that is, until he had his own priests—he sought to keep secret the program outlined to him by the Most High. Only then did he reveal what he intended to do, what he had to do. Repeatedly also he stated that the work he had begun in obedience to God's will would spread to such an extent that, though his predictions in regard to its future might sound extravagant to others, they would in fact fall far too short of the mark for him.

The first intimations of this apostolate and, still more, some hints of its future development raised misgivings even in people who sincerely admired him, so much so that two good well-intentioned priests even tried to consign him to a local mental hospi-

[2]We are omitting an excerpt from a speech delivered by Caesar Balbo on February 12, 1911. [Editor]

tal.[3] Blessed Cafasso[4] himself, who thought him inspired by God and said so openly, when asked what he thought of "that poor priest who has gone insane," replied, "It's a mystery! I too can't understand certain things, but, knowing that saints are not to be judged from a human standpoint, I am content to admire what they do!"

Whatever was puzzling about him stemmed from his manner of acting which some people found unusual. A faithful imitator of Our Lord, who revealed only the external aspects of His divine mission through the Gospels and did not permit anything to be written about His private life except routine matters, Don Bosco too went about like any other ordinary good priest, constantly keeping his own inner life hidden.

Whether partaking of the humble Oratory fare or of the sumptuous meals of the wealthy on whom he hopefully called for financial assistance or to offer due thanks, he was frugal without ever making other people uncomfortable by a show of austerity. Constantly even-tempered, he was cheerful and smiling, indifferent to both praise and blame, especially if coming from the press which persistently focused on him. He was so outspoken, bold, and sure of himself with prominent people, civil authorities and crowds as to seem at times almost foolhardy; by contrast, he was ordinarily reserved, almost timid and thoughtful beyond words with his own spiritual sons.

Serene and fearless when facing most rigid and strenuous opposition or when confronted with lack of means and other deprivations, he was compassionate in the extreme to anyone in suffering. He felt the grief of others as keenly as his own. He would weep at the bedside of a dying seminarian or at the news of a pupil's death; he would become alarmed and worried if he witnessed or learned of any infraction of the rules or if he was informed of the disgraceful conduct of anyone. When he heard of scandal-givers or blasphemers, he became very serious indeed because of the horror and heartbreak he felt.

Cautious and prudent in conducting business, he was fatherly

[3]*See* Vol. II, pp. 323ff. [Editor]

[4]Now St. Joseph Cafasso. He was canonized by Pope Pius XII in 1947. For further information *see* the Indexes of preceding volumes. [Editor]

with his Salesians, sharing with them—and sometimes even with his pupils—confidential matters, justifying himself with the words: "I have no secrets from my sons!"

He firmly and tenaciously upheld his congregation and the rights of its members because what he did directly or through his sons was God-inspired, but he always overlooked and forgave personal offenses.

He spent so many hours hearing confessions, receiving callers, and attending to his voluminous mail that one would think he had no time at all for prayer; still he incessantly prayed so that his intimate union with God shone through at every moment.

Regardless of the task at hand, even if extremely grave, he was always so calm and undisturbed as to seem totally unconcerned because, having already solved his problem through prayer, he could handle it with dexterity and admirable wisdom. Briefly, being always united with God, he refused no toil and patiently bore discomforts while carefully concealing his extraordinary mortifications.

At first sight, some of his actions and words might have been open to misinterpretation even by those accustomed to observe many extraordinary things in him. Severed from their context and viewed independently from his singular mission, these actions or words were not and could not be properly understood. In the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification] Father Francis Cerruti declared:

> My conviction that Don Bosco had something special about him which singularly marked him off from others was also shared by many of my companions who knew him. Our common opinion was that Don Bosco was a saint. I will not deny that at times, seeing him wholly absorbed with material concerns or doing things which suggested too much reliance on human prudence or hearing him give vent to bitter complaints which did not sound quite prudent or in keeping with charity and resignation, I had my doubts, but they were short-lived. I soon realized that my misgivings were a misunderstanding on my part, and that those shortcomings stemmed at worst from those frailties to which even saints are not totally immune. I once more became convinced of his sanctity. To this day I firmly and deeply believe that Don Bosco was a saint.[5]

[5]We are omitting an article in Civiltà Cattolica (1909, Vol. III, p. 529) eulogizing St. Anselm of Aosta whose traits the author of this volume also ascribed to Don Bosco. [Editor]

2. All for Souls

Giving ceaseless glory to God by zealously saving souls is the sum total of what Don Bosco did and ardently sought to do. God and souls were the only loves of his entire life.

One day in his last years, on being reverently approached by a young priest in Rome, he asked him, "Do you love Don Bosco?"

"Certainly, and very much," came the answer as the priest bowed to kiss his hand.

"Do you know how you can prove your love for Don Bosco? By wholeheartedly loving the Salesians!"

"I will!"

"But to love the Salesians, you must have great love for souls!"

That young priest was Father Raymond Angelo Jara, the future bishop of San Carlos d'Ancud and of La Serena [Chile].

In order to do good to all, he neglected no opportunity to say a kindly word or discreetly give a salutary admonition. Senator Michelangelo Castelletti, who had succeeded Count [Louis] Cibrario as the king's first secretary for the Order of Sts. Maurice and Lazarus, once called on Don Bosco for a favor, promising in return full support in his undertakings. Don Bosco was glad to oblige and they became fast friends, though ideologically far apart. Accepting one of many invitations, Don Bosco eventually called on the senator on the day of the First Communion of one of his daughters—his favorite because of her extraordinary innocence and goodness. Don Bosco spent a few hours with the family and did not fail to say some salutary word to the little girl.

"Would you like this beautiful day to come back again?" he asked.

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, ask Daddy to let you receive Communion again. Then you will be able to pray for Daddy and Mommy, and the Lord will comfort them and keep you good. Isn't that true, Senator?"

"Quite true! I am in full accord."

Running to her father, the child hugged and kissed him, while his eyes filled with tears of joy.

On another occasion, in a town outside the province of Turin, Don Bosco came to learn of the questionable conduct of one of the bishop's closest assistants. Without delay he called on that priest and spoke at length to him about the great caution which is

needed in admitting clerics to Holy Orders, especially in cases of moral weakness, since the inevitable scandal would disgrace the priesthood. Studiously refraining from sounding personal, but convinced that his listener would take the hint, he went on to say that such failings soon become common knowledge, to the detriment of the clergy.

Nearly every day he would address an exhortation inspired by the liturgy or other sources to his Salesians or pupils, but for each he also had some kind personal word. Often, just before vesting for Mass, he would call a pupil who happened to be in the sacristy and whisper, "What grace would you like me to ask for you from Jesus during Holy Mass?"

In the playground too he would whisper advice to this or that pupil. Besides the examples already published in the preceding volumes,[1] Father Lemoyne gathered the following:

"Are you afraid that Jesus is angry with you? Trust yourself to the Blessed Virgin. She will plead for you."

"Paradise is not for the lazy. *Regnum coelorum vim patitur, et violenti rapiunt illud* [The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away—Matt. 11, 12]."

"Are you being tossed about by some storm? Call on Mary, the star of the sea."

"Can you think of God's judgment without trembling? Are you perhaps holier than St. Jerome? Yet he too trembled."

"Do not rely too much on your own strength; even St. Peter fell."

"Let us get together and break the devil's horns."

"Do you want to become a good boy and feel happy? Turn your thoughts to God, the source of all."

"Pray, pray well, and you will certainly be saved."

"With your help I want to make you happy in this world and in the next."

"With your help I want to make a St. Aloysius out of you."

"He who perseveres until the end shall be saved. *Praemium inchoantibus promittitur, perseverantibus dabitur* [The prize is promised to those who start, but it is given only to those who persevere]."

To his Salesians and postulants he often repeated: "While on

[1] *See* Vol. VI, pp. 230-237, 445; Vol. VII, p. 180. [Editor]

earth let us constantly work to save our own souls and many others as well. We shall rest in heaven."

Endowed as he was with such charisms as reading the inmost recesses of the heart, it was only natural that the most opportune exhortations and admonitions, arousing compunction or inciting to perfection, should come to his lips while hearing confessions. Such was his faith in the efficacy of this sacrament that he spoke of it continually, insistently recommending holy and firm resolutions so as to avoid easy and disastrous relapses into sin.

In the Apostolic Process for Don Bosco's beatification Father Michael Rua testified:

> If he was to give the "Good Night"[2] to the pupils of a Salesian school on two consecutive nights, one of them would be on confession, and if he could address them only once, unfailingly he would say something about it too. . . .
>
> He strove to gain his penitents' complete trust in order to urge them to frequent the sacraments and thus enable them to mend their ways and become virtuous. . . .
>
> He was kind but did not shrink from impressing upon his penitents the hideousness of their sins. He also saw through those who came to his confessional with ulterior motives and nicely sent them off to some other confessor. This could be surmised by their immediate withdrawal from his confessional.

"Sooner than make a sacrilegious confession and Communion," he used to say, "change your confessor every time you go to confession!"

In 1887, during the spiritual retreat for Salesian postulants at Valsalice,[3] we heard him say: "Don Bosco is old and can no longer hear confessions regularly. Father Rua is taking his place and he is very much like Don Bosco. So, go to Father Rua; but if you feel otherwise, go to some other confessor.

"Try this, for example. You know that at night Sandro *(the old doorkeeper)* locks the front door but leaves the key in the lock. Well, get up about midnight, slip down to his lodge and very quietly unlock the door. Then go up to the Capuchin monastery

[2]*See* Salesian Glossary. [Editor]
[3]A Salesian college on the hills in the outskirts of Turin. [Editor]

where they are saying Matins at that hour. Knock loudly two or even three times and tell them that you want to go to confession. Make a good confession and then come back to bed."

All the while he kept smiling very amiably. But, of course, he fully stressed the importance of having a regular confessor. Once, in Rome, he called on [Constantine] Cardinal Patrizi. During the conversation, the latter told him: "For some time now I have been concerned about a matter I would like to discuss with you, but first let us pray for the Lord to enlighten us."

"You can tell me right now," Don Bosco interjected, "and I'll give you my opinion."

"No, I'd rather not rush this matter."

A few days later, Don Bosco called again on the cardinal.

"My worry," the prelate told him, "is that here in Rome we quite frequently have charismatic priests and religious, but hardly ever any nuns, though there are so many of them. Very many are as pious and holy as we could wish, but they are very ordinary. How do you explain that? What's the cause and what's the remedy?"

"It's quite simple," Don Bosco replied. "In very many convents here in Rome nuns have their own confessor and, occasionally, even a spiritual director of their own choosing. What needs to be done is to enforce what is a general rule everywhere else, namely, have a regular confessor for all the nuns, appointed by the superior, an extraordinary confessor every six months, and another for the yearly spiritual retreat. Forbid the nuns from going to confession to anyone they choose, and extraordinary sanctity and supernatural gifts will again flourish among them."

"Right," the cardinal remarked after a few moments' reflection, "but attempting such a reform would stir up a hornets' nest and perhaps be fruitless."

"Yet I am sure this is the cause," Don Bosco insisted.

Nevertheless, his fatherly discretion was exquisite. "While exhorting us to be frugal," Father Rua went on, "he did not want his pupils—the younger ones especially—to subject themselves to rigorous fasts and self-denials, for he was well aware that such ideas could even be devil-inspired at times. Should a pupil or youngster ask permission for a protracted fast or other severe

penance, such as sleeping on the bare ground, he would usually suggest that he rather curb his eyes, tongue or will, or perform a work of mercy; at the very most, he would allow him to skip breakfast or the mid-afternoon snack."

In admonishing or counseling in confession, he was very brief and always very much to the point. Having heard of his saintliness, the Poor Claires of Alassio—good, holy nuns who in their humble, hidden life desired nothing other than to grow in love of God—felt the desire to confess to him at least once. Informed of their wish during one of his visits to that city, Don Bosco kindly agreed on condition that their self-accusation should not exceed three minutes. The nuns promised to comply and the bishop of Albenga gave permission. Even cloistered souls have scruples and spiritual troubles; yet, when Don Bosco told his first penitent her three minutes were up, the nun immediately obeyed. A couple tried to object, but they were promptly silenced. It is obvious that on this occasion too, Don Bosco read their hearts and put them at peace, for all experienced a most holy satisfaction and inner joy.

On one of Don Bosco's trips to Rome during those years, the Pope asked him: "Do you hear confessions in Rome too?"

"I will do so with Your Holiness' permission."

"Then hear my confession," replied the Pope, kneeling and making his confession. He did so on other occasions as well, as we learned from Father Joachim Berto, to whom Don Bosco confided these incidents a few years later while he was referring to the divine institution of this sacrament and the fact that the Pope himself received it like any other Christian.

Among the material gathered by Father Lemoyne concerning 1871, there is an impressive proof of Don Bosco's resolute charity in hearing the confession of a twenty-year-old medical student, an orphan and former pupil of his at Lanzo, who died on September 16, 1869, as we gather from the Turin municipal records of that year, File No. 2566. Since this most interesting incident has never before been told, we simply cannot omit it.

Toward the end of August 1869, this youth—Caesar Bardi—who was living with a guardian in Corso Ponte Mosca No. 6, not far from the parish Church of Sts. Simon and Jude, fell critically ill, but no one bothered to call a priest, for fear of unfavorable

comments from irreligious fellow tenants. The pastor, however, had heard of the youth's critical condition and had twice attempted, though unsuccessfully, to see him. Fortunately, a good woman, a fruit-vendor at the nearby outdoor market, heard in the local pharmacy of the sick youth's condition and hastened to the Oratory to inform Don Bosco that a pupil of his was dying and was being kept from receiving the Last Sacraments.

Don Bosco at once went to the address. The servant who opened the door immediately recognized him, having seen him many times at Lanzo, and, knowing the reason of his visit, gave him to understand that the matter posed some problems. Ushering him in, he summoned his master. After some deliberate delay, the latter received Don Bosco and icily inquired about the reason for his visit.

"I came to see the patient."

"He is asleep now. It wouldn't do to wake him up."

"Then I'll wait."

Obviously the answer was not well received, but, convinced that he had to be firm, Don Bosco stood his ground. The guardian excused himself, allegedly to check up on the boy, and Don Bosco was left alone for over an hour. At last the lady of the house came forward to tell Don Bosco that the patient was still asleep and that the doctors had forbidden further visitors, lest the slightest excitement seriously affect the patient.

Don Bosco then decided to make his position quite clear. "Listen," he replied, "Caesar was a pupil of mine at Lanzo. We were quite close and knew each other very well. We have a very important matter to discuss and it won't take long. I know he wants me, and so I will not leave without first seeing him."

"This is too much!"

"Not at all! I am sure that Caesar wants to see me, and I'll wait. If you try to stop me, I may even seek legal recourse."

"Would you dare to be so brash?"

"I don't care to be, but you must realize that your refusal in this matter will become known. The news that Don Bosco was kept from seeing a dying pupil of his will not be very flattering for your family."

"But it's the doctor who forbade visitors!"

"You told me that already. If you cannot or will not take me to Caesar, I will find him myself!"

"Very well then, to avoid unpleasantness I will go and see if he is awake."

Having conferred with her husband, and influenced also by their good servant who instilled some fear of God into them, she returned and led Don Bosco to the patient's bedside, begging that he not tire the young man.

Once the youth saw Don Bosco, he sat up and, flinging his arms about him, repeatedly kissed him, exclaiming: "Oh, Don Bosco, thanks for coming. I was waiting for you. I want to make my confession."

"Please leave the room for a moment," Don Bosco told the bystanders.

It was a most moving scene. After his confession, radiant with joy, the young man insisted on having a picture of Our Lady placed on the wall before him and he kept gazing at it lovingly.

When Don Bosco left the house, he was treated very courteously and was even offered vermouth, which he accepted as though nothing unpleasant had occurred. Upon leaving, he made them promise that they would let him see the young man again. The latter died serenely two or three weeks later, although his relatives neglected to have him receive Holy Viaticum or the Anointing of the Sick.

3. Constantly Favored by God

Our holy founder's life reveals such a broad and incessant practice of charity that "what was said of another of God's champions[1]—'God gave him largeness of heart as the sand that is on the shore' [3 Kgs. 4, 29]—might have been written for him." So declared Pius XI in proclaiming the heroic nature of Don Bosco's virtues.

"To be entitled to special favors from God," wrote St. John Chrysostom, "one must seek souls, which are so dear to God, work for their spiritual welfare, and provide for their salvation."

[1]King Solomon. [Editor]

St. Gregory the Great remarked, "In God's sight no sacrifice rates as high as zeal for souls."

Not surprisingly, therefore, God, who habitually endows His faithful servants with special gifts, bestowed charisms also on Don Bosco to enable him to carry out a wider, more fruitful apostolate. Almost invariably he could see things from afar, read one's innermost secrets as though clearly printed on the page of a book, and clearly see the future as well.

On September 18, 1870, fifteen-year-old Joseph Gamba of San Damiano d'Asti entered the Oratory. In time he was ordained a priest, became vicar general of his own native diocese, then bishop of Biella and Novara, and presently is our own beloved and revered archbishop of Turin and a cardinal. He was at the Oratory for just one year, but what follows "remained firmly imprinted on his mind" according to the testimony of Father Joseph Angrisani, his secretary:

Don Bosco—the cardinal narrated—had been absent for many days. *(This probably occurred in August when he spent two weeks at the St. Ignatius' Retreat House*[2] *and nine or ten days at Nizza Monferrato.)* The first evening after his arrival he gave us the usual "Good Night." He was greeted by a long round of applause, and it took him some time to reach the stand. When he finally mounted it, a deeply moving silence fell over all. "I have been away a long time, haven't I," he smilingly remarked, "but what else could I do? You eat so much bread that Don Bosco has to run out to find money to pay for it. But during my absence, I came back twice."

We looked at one another with eyes wide open in astonishment and pricked up our ears.

"I truly did!" he went on. "On one of these visits, I came into the church during High Mass and noticed that one of you was missing. . . . Tomorrow that boy will pack and go home because Don Bosco does not want such boys. Bear it well in mind, my sons. Even from afar Don Bosco always sees you!"

Now we felt more moved than surprised. As he stepped down from the stand, we crowded around him, clamoring, "Who is it? Who is it?"

"I won't tell you," he gravely replied. "The one concerned will know tomorrow."

[2]*See* Vol. II, pp. 96f. [Editor]

The next day we found out that one of our schoolmates had gone home.

Even from afar Don Bosco always sees you.[3]

Almost routinely he could also penetrate the innermost recesses of the heart.

Another pupil, with the same name and surname, Joseph Gamba of Buttigliera d'Asti, who later became a Salesian priest and provincial in Uruguay, entered the Oratory in the summer of 1872. On his very first confession to Don Bosco, the latter asked, "Will you have full confidence in me?"

"Yes, Father!"

"Well, then, I will question you, and you must answer truthfully."

"Yes, Father!"

"You did this, didn't you?"

"Yes, Father!"

"You didn't do that, did you?"

"No, Father!"

All his questions perfectly matched what the youngster had or had not done, so that the confession which the lad had begun in a state of mental confusion, and with the fear of unwittingly leaving something out, ended with the certainty of having revealed everything and with a most enviable peace of mind which henceforth was never disturbed. Realizing that Don Bosco had read his heart like an open book, Gamba not only never changed confessors during his stay at the Oratory—for he was sure that he could never find a better one—but he also tried not to commit any faults because he did not cherish the thought of Don Bosco telling him about them.

Reading so many similar incidents in these biographical memoirs, Father Louis Nai[4] felt impelled to write about an experience

[3]Cf. *Il Cardinale Giuseppe Gamba* by Giuseppe Angrisani, Marietti, 1930, p. 16. [Author]

[4]Louis Nai (1855-1932) completed his secondary schooling at the Oratory under Don Bosco's guidance. In 1872 he took his first vows as a Salesian and was ordained a priest in 1877. From 1887 to 1892 he directed the Salesian school at San Benigno Canavese. At the expiration of his term of office in 1892, he was appointed provincial of the Salesian houses of Palestine until 1906, when he was named provincial in Chile. He held that office until 1925, when he officially visited the Salesian houses of some republics of South America on behalf of the Superior General. That mission completed, he returned to headquarters in Turin where, revered by all, he filled the office of director until his death in 1932. [Editor]

of his own from Santiago, Chile, addressing it to Father Julius Barberis:[5]

One evening in 1872—I believe it was the last day of the students' spiritual retreat—Don Bosco was hearing confessions behind the main altar. I was one of the last penitents. When I was through with my confession, Don Bosco said these precise words to me: "At this moment your whole future is wide open to me!" He then went on to tell me what he saw. I recall experiencing then and there a heavenly joy. Now I can swear under oath that everything Don Bosco told me did come true.

Related to this incident, which Father Nai repeatedly narrated to everyone and which we published in the *Bollettino Salesiano*,[6] we received other details from Father John Baptist Lemoyne, obviously confided to him by Father Nai:

The pupil Louis N. . . after making his confession one evening to Don Bosco, was told by him: "At this moment your future is wide open to me. I see a bear and a lion attacking you. They symbolize the trials which you will be exposed to: moral struggles and calumnies. But I can also see your good will! Do not be upset. Keep going." The youth later confirmed under oath that he had indeed encountered these trials and overcome them. In regard to calumny, a companion threatened to accuse him falsely to Don Bosco and indeed carried out his threat. Hearing of this, Nai hastened to Don Bosco to defend himself, but Don Bosco forestalled him, saying "Don't you trust me? Have no fear! I know you well!"

On another occasion, after Nai had finished his confession, Don Bosco asked him, "Would you like to make a deal with me?"

"What kind?"

"Figure it out. I'll tell you about it some other time."

The boy waited anxiously for the day of his weekly confession in order to have the riddle explained. When it finally came, he immediately asked Don Bosco, "What's the deal?"

"Go to Father Rua!" Don Bosco replied.

[5]Julius Barberis (1847-1927) entered the Oratory in 1861, made his first vows in 1865, and was ordained a priest in 1870. In 1873 he earned his degree in theology at the University of Turin. The following year he was appointed novice master—the first to hold this office in the Salesian Society. After twenty-five years in this position, he was appointed provincial and in 1910 was finally elected Catechist General or spiritual director of the whole Salesian Society. He died in that office in 1927. [Editor]

[6]*Bollettino Salesiano*, November, 1918, p. 219. [Author]

More curious than ever, the lad complied. "Don Bosco sent me to you," he told Father Rua.

"What for?"

"About some deal he wants to make with me."

Father Rua stopped to think a moment. "Oh yes," he replied. "Come tomorrow to the conference in the Church of St. Francis de Sales."[7]

The conference was for Salesians. He attended and began to understand.

When he was a Salesian priest and was prefect at San Benigno Canavese, he once asked Don Bosco in the presence of Father Charles Viglietti,[8] "What particularly prompted you to tell me that you wanted to make a deal with me when I was a young student?"

"While I was hearing confessions—Don Bosco replied—I often saw little tongues of fire detach themselves from the candles on the altar of Mary, Help of Christians, and, after moving in circles, flutter over the heads of some boys. One of those tongues of fire settled over you."

For him those flames were obvious signs that those boys were to join the Salesian Society. This happened many times, as he himself confided to us in 1885.

Bernard Vacchina entered the Oratory in 1873 and later became a priest and zealous missionary in Patagonia.[9] From the very beginning he too found out that Don Bosco could read into consciences. Though he had made a general confession before entering the Oratory, he repeated it to Father Cagliero and decided to do likewise with Don Bosco. "What is your name?" the latter asked.

"Vacchina."

[7]The first church built by Don Bosco at the Oratory. *See* the Index of Volume IV. [Editor]

[8]Charles Viglietti (1864-1915) donned the clerical habit at Don Bosco's hands in 1882, took his vows as a Salesian in 1883, and was ordained a priest in 1886. He was Don Bosco's personal secretary during the latter's last years. In 1896 he was sent to Bologna to open a Salesian school. There he built a magnificent shrine to the Sacred Heart. In 1904 he was appointed director at Savona. In 1906 he was transferred in the same capacity to Varazze where he remained in office until 1912 when he returned to the Oratory where a painful illness ended his life in 1915. [Editor]

[9]Bernard Vacchina (1859-1935) donned the clerical habit in 1876 and took his vows in 1877. In 1879 he was assigned to Uruguay and later became secretary of the internuncio in Buenos Aires where he was ordained a priest in 1882. In 1887 he was appointed provicar apostolic of Central Patagonia. After nearly thirty years of missionary work, he retired to St. John the Evangelist School in Buenos Aires, where he continued his priestly ministry until his death in 1935. [Editor]

"Good! If you had not come yourself, I would have sent for you."

After this exchange, the boy began to make a detailed confession. Occasionally Don Bosco would interrupt, saying, "Enough of that!" When the lad was through, Don Bosco asked, "Anything else?"

"No, Father, I've told you everything."

"What about this?" Don Bosco went on, reminding him of something quite unconnected to the many things he had confessed. Astonished and deeply moved, the lad broke into tears, exclaiming, "It's true," and he kept crying for quite a while.

Another zealous missionary, Father Maggiorino Borgatello,[10] left us an interesting account of his first meeting with Don Bosco. The lad entered the Salesian school of Varazze in 1873 with no intention whatever of becoming a priest, still less a religious, and particularly a Salesian, because he had misgivings about Don Bosco and his work. Shortly after his arrival at the school, he was not too happy to hear that Don Bosco was coming for a visit. His report follows:

I was looking forward to seeing Don Bosco, but at the same time I felt uneasy about being seen by him. When he arrived, all the pupils ran elatedly to him, vying with one another to kiss his hand[11] while he smiled and greeted them most amiably. I, too, approached him from the rear, unseen, and kissed his hand just to be able to say afterward that I too had done that. He pretended not to see me by turning his head away from me, but he gripped one of my fingers and held it tightly, together with the fingers of some ten or more other boys, so that I was obliged to

[10]Maggiorino Borgatello (1857-1929) first met Don Bosco at the age of 16 and liked him so much that he decided to bind himself to him for life. He took his vows as a Salesian in 1877 and was ordained a priest in 1880. In late 1888, after recovering from a severe illness through Don Bosco's intercession, he volunteered for the missions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego where he spent twenty-five years. In 1893 he started a museum of Indian artifacts and natural history in Punta Arenas. It is still extant and boasts a priceless collection. In 1925, on the occasion of the golden jubilee of the Salesian Missions, he published a history of the apostolic endeavors of the Salesian missionaries in those far-off lands. In 1928 he authored a grammar and glossary of the Alakaluf Indians and in 1930 a biography of another intrepid missionary, Monsignor Joseph Fagnano. He spent his last years as assistant pastor in the Basilica of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin, where he died on December 20, 1929. [Editor]

[11]The customary mark of respect given to priests in Italy because at their ordination their hands are anointed with holy oil. [Editor]

follow him through the long corridor. As he went along, he gradually let go of the other boys so that by the time he reached the wide staircase, there were only two of us with him: John Bielli, a close friend and classmate of mine, now a priest, and myself. After chatting a while with Bielli, Don Bosco dismissed him. He then turned to me. Until now he had not looked at me at all, seemingly on purpose. Immediately I thought to myself: *Ah, now I'm in for it. How will I do?* Don Bosco gave me a piercing look that shook my every fiber. Unable to sustain his scrutiny, I lowered my eyes in embarrassment and awe. I realized, and am still convinced, that he was seeing into my very soul, not only what I was then, but what I might become, with God's grace and his help. Never in my life had I experienced anything of this sort. Very amiably he asked my name, what I planned to do in the future, whether I liked the school, and so on. He ended by saying, "Remember, I want to be your friend!" Dismissing me, he added, "Tomorrow I'll be hearing confessions in the sacristy. Come and see me. We shall have a nice talk, and you will be happy."

It is easier to imagine than to describe my feelings after this encounter. I was glad to have made his acquaintance. Then and there I felt that I loved him, and all my misgivings instantly disappeared. I made my confession to him the following day and, just as he had promised, I was deeply satisfied. He himself laid bare the state of my conscience so precisely but ever so gently that I was astonished and confused, wondering what was more admirable in him—his saintliness in reading into my soul, or his kindness and tact in telling me what he saw. I wept with sheer joy at having found such a dear friend and father, and ever after my love for him increased with no abatement. Whenever I could I went to confession to him and was always highly satisfied. At times he gave me advice which had nothing to do with my confession, but after a few moments' reflection I would realize that he was right. Only one who could read into the inmost recesses of a conscience could have spoken as he did. He also predicted several things to me which were fulfilled to the letter.

These remarkable incidents were known to all at the Oratory, so much so that several whose consciences were perhaps not quite tranquil, and those who feared he might advise them to become priests, shied away from his confessional. Apropos of this, on July 8, 1873 he gave the following "Good Night":

[Some of you say:] "I don't want to go to confession to Don Bosco

because he tells me to become a priest and stay with him." The truth is that only to those who I know for certain have been called by God do I say that they should tranquilly persevere in this intention. As for remaining here, I would be displeased if some of you had this in mind. Besides, it is quite fair that I too should confide in those who confide in me and tell them whatever I think is best for their spiritual welfare. Furthermore, what's wrong with suggesting to any of you to stay here with the assurance of food and clothing, a higher education, exemption from military service, and so on? I must also add that some come to me to make a general confession, but then expect *me* to tell them their sins. Now, let's get this straight: it's you who are supposed to tell me your sins, not the other way around. If I were to make my confession to you, you could tell on me because you are not bound by the seal of confession. *(A general round of laughter.)*

It's true that I started all this by telling the boys their sins, but this has tired me so much that I cannot do it anymore now. Therefore, each one must tell the sins he remembers. If the confessor wants to know more, he will have to ask for himself.

It is a fact, though, that during these days I was able to see the present, past and future of boys making their confession to me. I could have written what was in store for them. So clearly could I see their future that I could have written it with no fear of error. Those of you who confided in me these past few days can be sure that the advice I gave was right.

Let me close by asking you to do one thing: when you go to confession, put into practice your good resolutions. By the results you'll know whether you have made a good confession. "By their fruits you will know them" [Matt. 7, 16].

In 1864 also, at the close of the boys' retreat, Don Bosco had lamented that some boys had not benefited by it at all.

"During the retreat," Don Bosco stated, "I could see the boys' sins as plainly as if they were written before my eyes, so much so that when some who wanted to make a general confession began telling me their sins, I knew they actually were getting things wrong. The insight I had was a singular gift of God. 'Can you still see our sins?' some ask me. The answer is no. These boys did not come to me then, and now it's too late!" Thus testified Father Joachim Berto.

Don Bosco also predicted many vocations, some of which,

everyone agrees, would have seemed unthinkable.

One day he met a young man who had no idea of becoming a priest. "You are among the chosen," he told him. "The Lord wants you. If only you root out certain habits, you will make a good priest." In 1872 this same person donned the cassock and entered the seminary. Being rather indolent, however, he returned to his family in 1876, planning to doff the cassock. Though his father advised against it, he began to study French with the intention of becoming a merchant. Some time later, he went to confession to Father Pellico, S.J. "Persevere in your vocation," the Jesuit told him. "You have been called to the priesthood. Follow Don Bosco's advice and I will attend your first Mass." He did persevere, but only half-heartedly, not responding to God's grace. Years later, he settled down in earnest, however, and finally was ordained. "Don Bosco was right," he exclaimed, overjoyed. "The Lord indeed was calling me, and now I am happy!" Declared Father Lemoyne in writing: "This was confided to us by a diocesan official."

In 1871 a Genoese lady and her two daughters accompanied a cousin of theirs to the convent of the Nuns of the Perpetual Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament in Monza. On the way, they stopped in Turin to receive Don Bosco's blessing. He amiably welcomed them and during the conversation in a non-committal tone said a few prophetic things which were later thoroughly fulfilled. Turning to the younger daughter, he said: "She will follow her cousin!" Indeed, some two years later the young girl entered that very convent, even though at the time Don Bosco had spoken to her she had quite different plans. Then, addressing the elder daughter, Don Bosco added, "But she will cause you a lot of worry." This, too, came true. Because of her indecisiveness, it took the girl a long time to find her place in life. Later, a series of physical and moral drawbacks gravely worried her family, especially her mother, who later told this incident to Father Rua. A written statement signed by the girls' mother is kept in our archives.

Father [Joachim] Berto took note of the following incident:

Yesterday morning, June 6, 1873, a tall young man called on Don

Bosco. When he was ushered into his room, he broke into a rambling chatter. After listening for a while, Don Bosco interrupted him, saying, "You want to become a priest, don't you?"

"Yes. I just didn't know how to broach the subject. But my mother is against it."

He went away satisfied, promising to write to Don Bosco, who suggested that he start by being a missionary in his own village at his job as a customs officer.

It was usual for Don Bosco to read into the human heart. Several times in 1872, upon meeting one of the clerics who later became a distinguished Salesian priest, he would tell him: "You did this! You thought that! You have been worried by such and such a doubt. You made such and such a plan. . . ."

"You are trying to guess," the cleric would reply in embarrassment.

"No, I am sure."

"Someone must have told you!"

"No one told me a thing!"

"How could you know?"

"It's enough that I know."

"But how?"

"I can't tell you."

"Suppose I deny it?"

"Say what you like, but I am not mistaken."

Then he would confidently go into the details of whatever he had said.

"And indeed he was right," this confrere and superior declared to Father Lemoyne. "What he told me was perfectly true!" This cleric had not disclosed his thoughts to anyone, and nobody could have known what he had done.

Many other striking things occurred during those years, both within the Oratory and out: predictions which came true in every detail, and recoveries and other wonders which we cannot pass over.

In June 1872, a pupil—Anthony Bruno of Rubiana—was in the infirmary. Unable to take nourishment for a whole week, he was drained of all strength. His illness was a puzzle to his doctor. Visiting the boy late one evening, Don Bosco blessed him and told

him that he was to get up the following morning, although the boy protested that he could not do so, since he could hardly rise to his feet. "You will get up tomorrow," Don Bosco insisted, "and you will even take a walk beyond the city limits." The boy obediently arose the next day and went out for a walk as far as the treasury, which was located at a considerable distance beyond the ancient city walls. He was none the worse for it. In fact, he suddenly felt better, regained his strength and appetite, and within a short time had fully recovered. When he went to thank Don Bosco, the latter acted as though it were nothing at all, and urged that he see him in any physical or spiritual need.

Anthony Bruno had two brothers who lived at home with their widowed mother. Father Joachim Berto,[12] who likewise hailed from Rubiana, left us this deposition about them:

One of them decided to seek his fortune in France and passed through Turin to see his younger brother. The latter took him to Don Bosco who tried his best to dissuade him from his plan, but the young man would not take Don Bosco's advice. Less than a month later news came of his death. The other brother had more docilely remained at home with his mother, but in 1872 he was drafted. Since the widowed mother would now be alone, Anthony would be forced to leave the Oratory, where he had stayed for some time and to which he was strongly attached, in order to help his mother. In his deep concern for this turn of events he sought Don Bosco's advice. The latter put his mind at rest by telling him that his brother would not be accepted into the army; he also exhorted him to pray to St. Joseph and to the Blessed Virgin, the Help of Christians. He did so most willingly. Humanly speaking, there was no hope whatever that his brother would be exempted from military service. Notified to report for his physical to Susa, the young man started out on foot from his village with fellow draftees the night before, but on the way his eye inexplicably began to swell very badly, so that at his physical he was immediately declared unfit, to the astonishment of all his companions. Elated with joy, he returned home with his companions; on

[12]Father Joachim Berto (1847-1914) entered the Oratory in 1862, joined the Salesian Society in 1865, and was ordained a priest in 1871. While Berto was still a clerical student, Don Bosco made him his secretary—a post he retained for the next twenty years, during which he accompanied Don Bosco on his most important trips to Rome and Florence. While acting as Don Bosco's secretary Father Berto also carefully recorded and documented important details concerning Don Bosco and the Salesian Society and authored several devotional and ascetical pamphlets. He died at the Oratory on February 21, 1914. [Editor]

the way the swelling disappeared and his eye again became perfectly normal.

"This," Father Berto declared, "was repeatedly confirmed to me by his brother, who is now a zealous lay Salesian in Paysandú, Uruguay."

In 1892 the Salesian brother Felix Gavarino disclosed the following to Father Secundus Marchisio:

About the middle of March 1874, I became afflicted with an atrocious toothache and an inflammation of the throat and tongue. That morning I stayed in bed until about eight and then went to church for Mass. Our good father Don Bosco, who was just vesting, saw me and beckoned me to approach. It hurt me to speak and so with gestures I made him understand my trouble. He told me to kneel and blessed me. Wondrously and instantly my pain vanished. Two years later the same illness returned. Calling me to his room, Don Bosco stated, "I will now give you a blessing to last you your whole lifetime." In all truth, I have never again had trouble with my throat.

Thus testified Father Marchisio during the Informative Process.

Our dear brother—Marcellus Rossi—of Rosignano (Alessandria) who became a Salesian in 1871 fell seriously ill at Alassio in 1873. Informed of it, Don Bosco sent him his blessing. Rossi recovered so swiftly that Father Bodrato[13] referred to him as "a living miracle." One day in 1874, while he was supervising apprentice bookbinders at the Oratory, he suffered several oral hemorrhages and lost a large quantity of blood. The hemorrhages continued for the next six days, making him most critically ill.

At the beginning of that year, Don Bosco had told the whole Oratory community that five of them would die within that year. In fact, some had already passed away. Don Bosco paid Rossi a visit and blessed him. Suspecting that he might be one of the five, the brother begged him to say plainly, without hesitation, if he

[13]Francis Bodrato (1823-1880) came to Don Bosco as a widower in 1864 and made his first vows as a Salesian in 1865. Ordained a priest in 1869, he held various offices at Alassio, Borgo San Martino, and the Oratory. In 1876 he led the second group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina, and two years later Don Bosco appointed him provincial. He died at Buenos Aires on August 4, 1880. [Editor]

was really one of them because he felt he could die tranquilly. "Don't worry," Don Bosco gently replied, "you still have to help me save many souls." He recovered and was appointed the Oratory's doorkeeper, a duty he fulfilled for more than forty-eight years, while he also carried on a veritable apostolate that was the admiration of all.

That same year, the cleric Moses Veronesi fell seriously—and nearly hopelessly—ill. Writing to Don Bosco, who was then in Liguria, Father Rua asked him for a blessing for the sick cleric. "I shall send him a blessing," Don Bosco exclaimed, "but no passport [for heaven]." Veronesi recovered completely. Reminiscing with Don Bosco about this recovery on a later occasion, he was told, "You will live past 72." Father Veronesi died February 3, 1930, at the age of 79. Probably, while making this prediction, Don Bosco was thinking that he himself would only live to be 72.

The reputation that he could obtain heavenly favors through his blessing and prayers was by now widespread. In Sampierdarena a poor woman had a son who was paralyzed. Hearing that Don Bosco was at St. Vincent de Paul Hospice, she hastened to bring her child for his blessing. Finding others already there asking to see Don Bosco, she waited patiently for a long time, but upon learning that Don Bosco shortly had to leave, she cried out in desperation. Coming to her, Don Bosco blessed her son and told him to make the Sign of the Cross with his paralyzed right arm. The boy was instantly healed! Father Lemoyne was informed of this by a Mr. Bruzzo of Genoa—an eighty-year-old gentleman who came to know of this incident through a niece who had witnessed the miracle.

Father Joseph Ronchail wrote to Father Rua, "While at Alassio (after his sickness at Varazze), Don Bosco was asked by a Mr. Louis Preve to come to his house and bless his wife because for some months she had been unable to go out even for a short walk. Our beloved Don Bosco obliged, and I accompanied him. There, after some small talk about family affairs, he exhorted the sick woman and her family to be devoted to the Blessed Virgin and then gave her his blessing. Two days ago, Mr. Preve came to our school and told me joyfully: 'Please let Don Bosco know that, after receiving his blessing, my wife felt much better and has now

recovered completely. This morning in fact (a market day) she went out for a walk with my eldest son.' "

On March 19, 1891 a Miss Josephine Monguzzi, of St. Eustorgius parish in Milan, later the principal of a girls' school in Varese, sent a sworn deposition to Father Rua. In her report she declared that for about twelve years she had been suffering from constant, atrocious headaches, the result of a two-month-long cerebral congestion. After fruitless efforts to regain her health, one day in May 1872—while she was in Milan, a guest of her sister, the principal of Istituto dell'Immacolata—she took the advice of a pious priest and called on Don Bosco, who happened to be in the city at that time, to ask for a special blessing. He willingly obliged, but not without first exhorting her to have fervent faith in the power of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Giving her a medal of Mary, Help of Christians and of St. Joseph, he told her to kiss it every night before going to bed, and to say a *Pater, Ave* and *Gloria* until the feast of the Assumption, firmly believing that she would recover. This indeed happened then and there! She was still in Don Bosco's room when her headache totally disappeared.

In that same letter to Father Rua she declared that she had been free of headaches for some twenty years and could devote her full time to her office of principal of St. Joseph's Institute at Varese Lombardo. She herself wrote and signed her deposition, which was confirmed by Father Benigno Zini, pastor of Biumo Inferiore, near Varese.

Many people appealed to Don Bosco by letter and found relief. About 1872, Silvio Giannichini of Pascoso, Lucca, spent two years on military duty at Piacenza. During that time he was hospitalized several times for tonsillitis and once for diphtheria, during which he almost died. Good medical care saved him. His doctor, however, seeing him hospitalized repeatedly for the same illness, insisted on surgery. Quite worried, the patient wrote to his father, asking him to consult their family doctor. The latter's reply was to go ahead with the operation, which he considered quite safe. The soldier received his father's answer together with a letter from his brother who was a priest. The latter—the soldier wrote—"sympathizing with my plight, advised me to write to Don Bosco for his blessing and his intercession with the Blessed

Virgin. I complied, with the result that I recovered completely and kept quite well during the remainder of my military service. Some fifty years have passed since then, and only once did I ever have a slight sore throat, and that was when I went home on furlough, probably due to the change of climate. I repeat and reaffirm that I have never again suffered from a sore throat and that I attribute my recovery to Don Bosco's blessing." His declaration was dated August 31, 1920.

Don Bosco was looked upon by all as a great servant of God, a saint. In 1872 a certain Mary Sopetti of Mathi, Turin, became the victim of a demoniacal obsession. Archbishop Gastaldi, on being informed of this, suggested that she go to Don Bosco for a blessing. The poor woman came to Turin on November 30, and at about 9:30 she walked into Don Bosco's waiting room, where she glumly sat in silence for a full hour. When finally her turn came to see Don Bosco, she moved toward his door but seemed to be pushed back with every step she took by some invisible hand. She broke into wild and angry screams. "No, no!" she shouted, her head shaking and her body quivering all over. At last she managed to enter Don Bosco's room, and bystanders strenuously forced her to her knees. Meanwhile Father Berto, wondering whether this was a genuine demoniacal obsession, asked Don Bosco in a whisper if he should fetch a surplice and stole. He had barely asked the question when the poor woman desperately screamed, "No, no!" Don Bosco prayed over her but she shut him off by clapping her hands over her ears. Then she went into a series of unbelievable contortions as if she were suffocating. At last, doubled up, she flung herself to the floor, hiding her face and screaming, "No, no! Devil, devil!" Finally, as though choked by the evil spirit, she broke into grunts and meows. It took incredible strength to make her kiss a blessed medal, but as soon as Don Bosco blessed her, she immediately calmed down and disclosed that for the past three years, unless she went twice monthly to her pastor for a blessing, she felt that she was choking. "The mere presence of a priest, even if I do not see him," she declared, "is enough to madden me. I can't pray. When somebody dies, even if I don't know that person, I feel like choking. The torments I am now enduring in your presence and as a result of your blessing are

more severe than when I am in the presence of other priests. I experience the same torments when I go to confession. If I don't break out into wild screams and gestures—involuntary though they are—I feel as if I were choking."

She looked quite tranquil as she left Don Bosco's room. He had assured her that on his way to Lanzo he would stop at Mathi to see her or at least inquire about her condition. He urged her to kiss the medal of Mary, Help of Christians often and to recite the Hail Mary, comforting her with the thought that through these vexations Our Lord was offering her a chance of great merits. Now and then that poor woman came back to the Oratory for Don Bosco's blessing, and by January 2, 1883 she was almost completely free of her grave tribulations. Outwardly, at least, she no longer experienced repugnance or difficulty in Don Bosco's presence or when receiving his blessing. This was stated by Father [Joachim] Berto, a witness to these incidents.

Such was the esteem and, indeed, the veneration in which Don Bosco was held at the Vatican that Pius IX entrusted to him a seemingly endless investigation. A good woman whom some priests believed to be charismatic because of her writings, which seemed to be genuine revelations, had been persuaded to go to Rome. The Pope sent her to Cardinal Patrizi, instructing him to have her examined by Don Bosco, who was then in Rome. After reading the woman's writings, Don Bosco talked with her and remained convinced that they contained nothing to suggest a divine revelation. Upon receiving Don Bosco's report, Pius IX was pleased. "Don Bosco is the man for these things," he exclaimed. "Whoever comes under his scrutiny is soundly probed and seen in his true colors."

That poor woman may possibly have been under some illusion, but she was neither proud nor insincere. Finally, she begged Don Bosco to help her return to her home in peace, for after spending six months in Rome calling on various ecclesiastics, she was almost penniless. Don Bosco got her what she needed from the cardinal vicar. After her return home, she very gratefully wrote several times to Don Bosco, thanking him again and again.

Declared Father Rua during the Apostolic Process:

> Pius IX, of saintly memory, esteemed Don Bosco very highly. Orally

and in writing, he often consulted him on different matters pertaining to the government of the Church during those very difficult times and sought his advice [as we shall later see] even about future events affecting the Church. Once, when a couple called on the Pope with their mute eight-year-old son for his blessing, the Pope, knowing that Don Bosco was then in Rome, said to them, "Go to Don Bosco! Through His servant the Lord will grant your request." Thus he showed that he regarded Don Bosco as a man endowed with a prophetic spirit and other charisms.

4. At Don Bosco's School

Holy enthusiasm and the heartfelt desire for a virtuous and saintly life will blossom in any school where God's constant presence is felt as an enlightening, engaging influence. Grim, rigid and ice-cold virtue repels, whereas virtue which is cheerful and happy, because of its innate goodness, will charm and win over youthful souls. Such was Don Bosco's school. In the Apostolic Process [for Don Bosco's beatification] Father Rua testified:

> Everything helped Don Bosco lift his mind to God and holiness. Plants, flowers, fruits, birds, animals, and discoveries—past, present and future—led him more and more to admire God's wisdom, power and loving providence. So spontaneously did he express these sentiments that it was obvious they sprang from a mind and heart constantly immersed in contemplating God and His attributes.

Unceasingly and intimately united to God, Don Bosco felt it was natural to keep also his pupils' hearts and minds attuned to God. He constantly spoke of God, our duties toward Him, and our eternal destiny. These were the truths he wanted to be impressed on his pupils, especially through regular catechism classes. "That was why," Father Bonetti stated, "he ordered that all Salesian schools teach the entire diocesan catechism every year. He attached great importance to its study. At his direction, particularly solemn examinations were to be held twice a year [in religion] and no excellence award in any subject was to be given to any candidate, no matter how brilliant, who did not first acquit himself laudably in this subject. At other times too he proposed

and offered special prizes to students who knew their catechism by heart from beginning to end. The better to assure himself that this subject was not neglected, he often asked teachers to show him the weekly or monthly grades given to each pupil for his knowledge of the catechism.

"Some years before he died," Father Bonetti continued, "he directed that, besides the weekly catechism periods, an additional half-hour of religious instruction be given in church on Sundays and holy days, as was the custom in well-organized parishes."

"When I was with him at Alassio," testified Father Leonard Murialdo,[1] "we spoke for some time with a boy whose name I don't recall. In jest, Don Bosco suggested that I return there some day to give this lad a spiritual retreat—the kind which leaves the mind indelibly imprinted with the maxim *Quod aeternum non est, nihil est* [What is not everlasting is worth nothing]. As he spoke, his very mien and tone revealed the depth of his feeling."

Father [John] Garino, the first catechist at Alassio, recalled how Don Bosco had given him a message for the director of this school: "Tell Father Cerruti that he must not fail to give the boys one or two sermons a year about the presence of God."

In his "Good Nights" he stressed devotion to Our Blessed Mother as the most powerful means to keep oneself in God's grace. "It might be said," Father Rua declared, "that he could not address his pupils without exhorting them to be devoted to Her, especially to obtain Her aid in preserving their innocence. He never failed to suggest nosegays[2] in Her honor during the novenas preceding Her principal feast days and throughout the month of May." We found a collection of such nosegays, worded as if they had been dictated by Our Lady herself. Father Lemoyne assured us that they "were gathered from Don Bosco's lips or written by him." We reproduce them here verbatim, in a certain order, numbering them for a reason we shall reveal later.[3] These

[1]Leonard Murialdo, born in Turin of wealthy parents in 1828, became the priest of the poor, like Don Bosco. In 1873 he founded the Pious Society of St. Joseph to look after poor youth. He was also quite active in awakening Catholics to their rights and duties as citizens. His last efforts were to further a movement for Christian democracy in Italy. He died in 1900 and was proclaimed a saint by Pope Paul VI on May 3, 1970. [Editor]

[2]Virtuous acts, to be performed in honor of Our Lord, the Blessed Virgin or some saint, that comprised a type of spiritual bouquet symbolic of one's devotion. [Editor]

[3]*See* Appendix 1. [Editor]

and other nosegays, properly numbered, can be framed and displayed next to a little box containing numbered slips of paper—as was once the custom in our schools—so that during novenas and throughout May pupils can pick one and put into practice, as a personal suggestion, the nosegay which has that number.

Don Bosco also used to recall the edifying examples of more virtuous boys who had lived at the Oratory, particularly Dominic Savio,[4] especially when heavenly favors were being obtained through his intercession. He published a variety of them in the Appendix of several issues of *Letture Cattoliche* and in the new editions of Savio's biography.[5]

Don Bosco's school—like Don Bosco himself—had a physiognomy, a form, a program all its own.

"His method of education" remarked Father John Semeria,[6] "embodied the sternest morality in a most attractive dress. Such was the method of St. Francis de Sales and of St. Philip Neri, based upon respect for youths' better instincts, and firm, vigorous correction of their worst."

"Chastity," our holy founder used to state unequivocally, "must be the outstanding trait of our Society, just as poverty and obedience are respectively the hallmarks of the Franciscans and of the Jesuits."

Chastity was his favorite virtue. In the Informative Process Bishop John Cagliero testified as follows:

> The moral virtues, particularly chastity, so adorned and sanctified his exterior life that he seemed not only a saint, but an angel. His modesty, candor and purity were truly angelic. . . .
>
> I recall that once, when consulted by a noble family about a marriage annulment based on the husband's desertion barely two weeks after the wedding, he felt that he had to ask whether or not the marriage had been consummated. However, he could not bring himself to do so and entrusted the matter to me.
>
> All agree that he was outstanding in keeping the angelic virtue.

We were amazed—Father Rua declared during the Informative

[4]*See* the Indexes of Volumes V and VI. [Editor]

[5]We are omitting the description of two such favors. [Editor]

[6]John Semeria (1867-1931) was a zealous Barnabite priest, renowned writer and lecturer, and father to war orphans. [Editor]

Process—to see his reserve with women. Countess Callori, among others, pointed out to me that Don Bosco never raised his eyes to her face, to her great edification. Equally reserved was he with those who devoutly asked him to make the Sign of the Cross with his thumb on their foreheads or place his hand on their heads. He always declined with the excuse that his priestly blessing was quite as good. If he sometimes showed near annoyance, it was when some indiscreet woman would grasp his hand and put it on her ailing eyes or head. With his pupils, he was equally careful to avoid anything even remotely unseemly; the same caution he would impress on his priests and clerics.

Father Rua makes another important observation. When questioned during the Apostolic Process as to whether or not he believed that Don Bosco had had to overcome temptations against purity, he replied with equal frankness:

> I believe he must have been tempted against this virtue from the few things he said when recommending that we be temperate in drinking and abstain from exciting beverages. But I believe too that, thanks to his self-control in avoiding sinful occasions and keeping himself always busy at work for God's glory and the welfare of souls, his temptations must have been quite rare and easily overcome to his great spiritual advantage. All the more am I convinced of this by the constant self-denial he exercised in curbing his passions. When recommending to his sons the mortification of the senses, a matter in which he was the first to set the example, he would often quote St. Paul's words: "I chastise my body and bring it into subjection." [1 Cor. 9, 27] He did not openly practice prolonged fasts, the wearing of hair shirts, scourging and similar austerities, but he did ceaselessly mortify his senses . . . following in this the example of St. Francis de Sales, whom he had chosen as the model and patron of his undertakings.

Bishop [James] Costamagna[7] wrote: "Once when I was about to leave to preach a spiritual retreat at one of our schools, Don Bosco called me and said, 'Tell those dear sons of mine that al-

[7]James Costamagna entered the Oratory in 1858 at the age of twelve, became a Salesian in 1867, and was ordained in 1868. He led the third group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina in 1877, opened the first Salesian house in Talca, Chile, in 1887, and was consecrated bishop and appointed First Vicar Apostolic of Mendez and Gualaquiza, Ecuador, in 1895. He died in 1874 after much suffering, as Don Bosco had foretold. [Editor]

though I have heard many sermons and read a great number of good books throughout my long life, I have forgotten most of all I heard or read. Yet I have never been able to forget a nasty word which a bad companion told me when I was six or seven. The devil saw to it that it should never escape me. Therefore, tell those boys: "Woe to one who teaches bad words to others. Woe to the scandal-giver!" ' "

Scandal-mongers so horrified him that he repeatedly stated, "Were it not a sin, I would choke them with my own hands."

He tirelessly strove to instill love of chastity in all. During the Informative Process Father Julius Barberis declared:

> Don Bosco so loved chastity that he was not content merely with his own perfect practice of this virtue and suggesting means for his Salesians to keep themselves chaste; he was anxious, too, that the boys Divine Providence had entrusted to him should preserve this beautiful virtue unsullied. His main concern was to safeguard them from danger, and for this he shortened vacations, was extraordinarily cautious in appointing assistants and teachers, and kept dormitories and all remote areas locked throughout the day. He wanted broad unobstructed playgrounds that would keep all the boys always in view, and he forbade them to enter any dormitories but their own. They were not to go to their superiors' bedrooms, though they were allowed in the offices of those who had one, such as the director or the prefect. He would not let assistants leave the boys unattended. At night they were to keep the curtains of their cubicle partly drawn, the better to supervise. More importantly, he suggested enough precautions to his boys so that, if they carried them out, they would certainly keep themselves chaste. Above all, he urged the frequent reception of the sacraments and devotion to Our Lady.
>
> Because of the nature of his work, he had to take in lads who had occasionally become victims of human passions. But he also took such stringent precautions to keep them from harming others that hardly ever were there serious complaints in this regard. In addition, he kept a careful eye on these lads, and on realizing that any of them needed closer supervision, he warned the other superiors to be likewise on guard. Furthermore, he would instruct a boy he could trust to be always with them, becoming their friends and striving to get them to receive the sacraments. Thanks to such precautions, we are not surprised that extraordinary conversions took place and grave disorders were averted.

Nor are we to wonder that singular, even extraordinary happenings should take place among the Oratory boys! At the school of such a saint as Don Bosco, lilies blossomed, and young angels were fashioned, whom God sometimes used to transmit messages to His most faithful servant.

One day in 1871, as many boys who knew that Don Bosco would soon be going to Rome were crowding about him in the playground, one stood up on tiptoe and whispered distinctly into his ear: "Say this and this to the Pope!" When recreation was over, Don Bosco went up to his room and sent for that boy. Upon being asked to repeat what he had said but moments before, the youngster replied, "I didn't tell you anything!" Don Bosco went to Rome and forgot about the boy's message, but on his return to the Oratory the same lad came up to him and said, "Don Bosco, you were to give the Pope this message! Please *do* tell him." Don Bosco again sent for him for questioning, and again the boy's reply was, "I didn't tell you anything! I really didn't!" He said it with such candor that Don Bosco did not insist, convinced that the Lord had spoken to him both times through that boy. When he went to Rome again, he gave the Pope the message. We do not know this boy's identity; we only know that he later became a Salesian, a priest and a missionary.

On another occasion, Don Bosco was preoccupied about a very important matter and undecided on what course to follow. While he was saying Mass, suddenly, at the Elevation, in a flash he saw the course of action that would seemingly solve his problem. At ease once more, he thanked God. After Mass, his altar boy approached him and said, "Do what came to your mind at the Elevation."

Amazed, Don Bosco went up to his room and sent for the youngster, but he was in for another surprise, for, upon being questioned, the latter replied that he could not even remember having spoken to him after Mass.

Other exceptional incidents proved the saintliness of many Oratory boys. One day, while escorting a visiting priest to the altar of Mary, Help of Christians, Don Bosco saw a lad suspended in mid-air, rapt in adoration before the tabernacle at the rear of the

main altar.[8] Somewhat disconcerted by their arrival, the lad floated like a feather down to Don Bosco's feet and asked for pardon on his knees.

"Don't worry," Don Bosco told him. "Just go and join your companions." Then, turning to the priest, he calmly remarked, "One would assign such things to the Middle Ages, yet they happen today."

Once, on entering the church through the main entrance at a time when it was empty, he saw one of his pupils high aloft, facing the large painting [of Mary, Help of Christians] above the main altar. Duplicating the feat of St. Joseph of Copertino, he had leapt into the air in an outburst of love to kiss Mary's image.

Don Bosco himself spoke of these occurrences on several occasions. Present at one such occasion in Alassio was Father Louis Rocca[9] who in turn told Father Lemoyne about it.

Monsignor Andrew Scotton[10] heard him tell an equally astounding story that probably took place after 1874.

One morning a twelve- or thirteen-year-old lad, without leave, walked up to Don Bosco's room and, bursting in, with an air of authority told him, "Write!"

Don Bosco, quite used to this innocent boy's numerous charisms, took up his pen and, at the lad's dictation, wrote down the names and surnames of boys—mostly from Emilia[11]—who had been enrolled at the Oratory through a trick of the Freemasons for the purpose of corrupting their schoolmates and eventually enticing them to join their secret society. All these boys carried membership cards. The lad revealed all he knew in the minutest detail, and for this reason the investigation that followed was child's play. In no time the cabal was completely clear to Don Bosco.

[8]The tabernacle of the main altar had two doors, one in front and one at the rear. [Editor]

[9]Louis Rocca (1853-1909) entered the Oratory in August 1868, donned the clerical habit the following year, and took his vows as a Salesian in 1874. Ordained a priest in 1875, he was stationed in Alassio for twenty years, first as a teacher, then as a prefect, and lastly as a director. In 1895 he was elected economer general and held this office until his death in 1909. [Editor]

[10]A pastor and renowned preacher. [Editor]

[11]A region of northern Italy. [Editor]

Before dismissing his heaven-sent messenger, Don Bosco wanted to know how he had discovered the plot. Overcoming his reluctance, the lad replied that for the past several days Our Lord had shown him, as in a mirror, all he had told Don Bosco, adding that after Holy Communion that very morning Our Lord had severely chided him for failing to tell Don Bosco. For those who wish to know, *Miles Christi*[12] heard this story from Don Bosco himself.[13]

He used to reveal these happenings confidentially and conclude by saying, "Don Bosco is just a plain, ordinary priest, but he has many saintly boys who draw God's blessings and men's good will upon him."

5. A Singular Gift

Both Scripture and the lives of saints demonstrate that God also uses dreams to guide His servants. Don Bosco was singularly favored with this charism from his childhood, when the mission was first revealed to him, and then throughout his whole life, when he was shown the path to follow, the expansion of his apostolate, and the most effective means for its success.

By fatherly and consistently heroic care he sought to guide the young on their spiritual way by instilling into them God's love and hatred of sin. In return the Lord opened to him singular vistas whose simple description gave his words wondrous effectiveness. At other times, God clearly showed him the precise spiritual state of his boys, pointing out how he might best draw them to the worthy reception of the sacraments, true devotion to Our Lady, love of purity, and a constant awareness of being prepared for a sudden death. Besides prompting him to stress particular norms of life to his spiritual sons, God from time to time also showed him the course to follow in certain circumstances. We may well say that even when asleep, Don Bosco never left his spiritual sons and remained united with God.

We have already gathered and collated over one hundred and forty reports of these singular visions, twelve of which pertain to the years we are now describing. Some of these twelve are firm summons to prepare for a saintly death, predictions of death, and surprisingly clear revelations of consciences; others are lucid and

[12]Probably a diocesan publication. [Editor]

[13]Cf. *La Riscossa*, Breganze (Vicenza), August 17, 1907. [Author]

striking catechetical illustrations. There is also one vision of the Salesians' first mission field; other dreams concern public events.

Before reporting these dreams, we wish to state that all but three are a summary of Don Bosco's narrations which often went beyond one hour. Occasionally there may be inaccuracies, but we hold them dear because they help us realize how and to what extent our holy founder was favored by God, and they acquaint us with many valuable teachings. We shall present them in chronological order, starting with a precious letter from Don Bosco himself.

1. A Visit to the Salesian School at Lanzo

Turin, February 11, 1871

Dearly beloved sons:

Though I usually stay at the Oratory at this time of year, I would like to come and spend the last days of the carnival season with you, my dear sons in Jesus Christ. Your affection, so often demonstrated, and your letters have led me to this decision. However, a far more important reason is the visit I paid to you a few days ago without you or your superiors being aware of it.

It is a frightful and a very sad story. When I got to the church square, I saw a horrible monster; it had huge, blazing eyes, a thick short snout, a large mouth, a sharply pointed chin, doglike ears and two horns, much like those of a big ram. It was playing with a few of its own kind.

"Beast of hell, what are you doing here?" I asked in terror.

"I'm playing because I have nothing else to do."

"I'd like to believe that! Have you decided to leave my boys alone?"

"Why should I bother with them? I have marvelous substitutes there, a choice group of pupils who have volunteered to work faithfully for me."

"I don't believe you, you base liar! We have so many practices of piety: spiritual reading, meditation, confession. . . ."

He laughed mockingly and motioned me to follow him into the sacristy where Father Director was hearing confessions. "As you see, some boys don't like me," he remarked, "but even here many serve my interests by making promises and breaking them. They keep confessing the same sins, and that just delights me!"

Then he took me to a dormitory and pointed out several lads who had no intention at all of going to Mass. He singled out one. "This fellow," he said, "came pretty close to death and made God a thousand promises. Now he is far worse than before!"

He then took me to other areas of the house and showed me things I could never have believed. I won't mention them now, but I'll tell you in person. After we returned to the church square where the other monsters had stayed, I asked him, "What's the best help these boys give you?"

"Their talk. That's the main thing. Every word is a seed which bears astounding fruit."

"Who are your worst enemies?"

"Boys who go to Communion."

"What hurts you most?"

"Devotion to Mary and. . . ." But here he stopped, unwilling to continue.

"And what else?"

In an emotional outburst, he successively took on the appearance of a dog, a cat, a bear, and a wolf. Almost simultaneously, he now had three horns, now five, now ten, with three, five or seven heads. I was shaking like a leaf while the monster was trying to slink away. Determined to get to the bottom of the matter, I commanded him, "I demand that you tell me what thing you fear most here. I order you in the name of God, our Creator and Master, whom we both must obey."

As I spoke, all the monsters writhed and kept assuming frightful shapes I hope never to see again. Then, amid horrible shrieks, they screamed, "What hurts most and we fear most is carrying out resolutions made in confession!"

With frightful, deafening shrieks, the monsters vanished like lightning, and I found myself sitting at my desk. The rest I will tell you in person and explain it all to you.

God bless us.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

2. A Funereal Banner

At the beginning of November 1871 Don Bosco announced that one of the Oratory pupils would die before the end of that [school] year. When asked how he could make such a prediction, he replied:

In a dream I saw a banner fluttering in the wind and borne, I believe, by angels, though I can't be sure. One side of the banner showed a skeleton holding a scythe; the other bore a boy's name and below it "1871-

72," signifying that he would die before the end of this [school] year.

This was narrated by Father [John Baptist] Lemoyne. Father [Julius] Barberis too jotted down the following predictions of death made by Don Bosco in those years [1871-1874], pointing out that in his visit to the dormitories he was accompanied by Our Lady:

In 1871 the Blessed Virgin led Don Bosco on an inspection tour of the dormitories to single out a boy who would soon die, so that he might prepare him for that fateful step.

Such visits to the dormitories were frequent. At times a placard at the head of each bed marked the spiritual condition of the sleeper; occasionally youngsters bore the name of a predominant vice branded on their foreheads; once Don Bosco saw a sword hanging by a very fragile thread over the head of a boy who tossed about in anguish as if prey to a nightmare; at other times he saw devils surround certain boys, or perhaps one single devil awaiting [God's] permission to kill a youngster.

Obviously these notes by Father Barberis refer to several dreams which Don Bosco had during those years. The death of a boy—Eugene Lecchi from Felizzano—fulfilled the above-mentioned prediction of November 1871.

3. The Devil in the Playground

During his illness at Varazze (December 1871 - January 1872) Don Bosco had several dreams about the Oratory pupils. We know this also from several letters of our confrere, Brother Peter Enria[1] who was constantly at his side, and of Father John Baptist Francesia, director.[2]

[1]Peter Enria, born in 1841, entered the Oratory in 1854. He later became a lay Salesian and nursed Don Bosco during several illnesses, including his last. He died in 1898. [Editor]

[2]John Baptist Francesia (1838-1930) began attending the Valdocco Festive Oratory when about twelve; two years later he became a resident student. In 1859 he was one of the sixteen pupils who joined Don Bosco in forming the Salesian Society. (*See* Vol. VI, pp. 181f) He was also the first Salesian to earn academic degrees at the University of Turin. Ordained a priest in 1862, he soon filled critical administrative positions, distinguishing himself by his fatherly kindness. He was a prolific writer and a distinguished Latin and Italian scholar. His last forty years were spent at the Oratory, where he died on January 17, 1930. For further details *see* the Index of Volume VI. [Editor]

One night after his return to the Oratory at the beginning of March—we do not know the exact date—Don Bosco narrated one of these dreams to his pupils. They had already got an inkling of it and were anxious to hear it from his very lips. A few days later, on March 4 [1872], he returned to it and added other details.

Father [Joachim] Berto wrote a summary of it. Luckily, however, we have come into possession of a very interesting, more detailed account, evidently written about that time, but we do not know its author. We report it verbatim. A few details may appear somewhat obscure, but its substance highlights this document's singular importance.

Don Bosco's Account to the Oratory Students and Artisans of a Dream He Had during His Illness at Varazze

After I told some people that I had had a dream, others kept asking me about it both in person and by mail. Hence, I will tell you about it, but just for the sake of speaking, because dreams come when one is asleep, and we are not to overrate them.

Throughout my illness you were always in my mind. Always, day and night, I talked about you, because my heart was constantly with you. Even when asleep, therefore, I dreamed about you and the Oratory. I paid you several visits, and consequently I can talk about your concerns even more knowingly perhaps than you can yourselves. Of course, I did not come bodily or you would have seen me.

One night, no sooner had I fallen asleep than I immediately found myself in your midst. I came out of our old church [of St. Francis de Sales] and immediately spotted an individual in the corner of the playground adjacent to the portico leading to the visitors' lounge. This man was holding a writing tablet which listed all your names. He looked at me and immediately jotted something down. Then he moved successively to the corner near the old classrooms and to the bottom of the staircase leading up to my room, and in no time roamed through the whole playground checking things and taking notes.

Curious to know who he was and what he was writing, I tailed him, but he moved so fast I soon had to trot to keep up with him. He also went through the artisans' playground, checking and taking notes with astonishing speed. Anxious to find out what he was writing, I drew closer. Each line bore the name of a boy, beside which he would jot

down something. While he gazed off here and there, I quickly flipped some pages and saw that some names had on the opposite page pictures of animals symbolizing the sins of those boys. Opposite one boy's name was the picture of a swine, with the inscription: *Comparatus est iumentis insipientibus, et similis factus est illis* [He has been compared to senseless beasts, and made like to them—Ps. 48, 21]. Other names were marked on the facing page with a forked tongue and the legend: *Sussurrones, detractores . . . digni sunt morte; et non solum qui ea faciunt sed etiam qui consentiunt facientibus* [Whisperers, detractors . . . are worthy of death; and not only they that do such things, but they also that consent to them that do them—Rom. 1, 30. 32]. I saw also pictures of donkey ears, symbolizing evil talk, with the words: *Corrumpunt bonos mores colloquia prava* [Evil companionships corrupt good morals —1 Cor. 15, 33]. Others had an owl or some other animal beside their names. I turned the pages very quickly and noticed that some names had not been written in ink and so were hardly legible.

At this point I took a close look at that individual and noticed that he had two reddish long ears. His face was as red as fire and his eyes seemed to flash with blood-red fiery sparks. *Now I know who you are,* I said to myself. Then he walked around the playground two or three more times, checking and taking notes. While he was busy with that, the bell rang for church. I headed toward it and immediately he followed me, stationing himself near the door, watching you as you passed through. He too went inside then and stood just in front of the altar rail gate, to keep an eye on you throughout the whole Mass. I didn't want to miss anything and so, noticing that the sanctuary door was slightly ajar, I stood there watching him. Father Cibrario[3] was celebrating Mass. At the Elevation the boys recited the versicle "Blessed and praised every moment be the Most Holy and Divine Sacrament." At that precise moment I heard a resounding roar, as if the church were caving in. Both the stranger and his writing tablet vanished in smoke, leaving but a handful of ashes.

I thanked God for having thus overcome and driven the demon out of His house. I also realized that attending Holy Mass destroys all devilish gains and that the moment of the Elevation is especially terrible for him.

After Mass I walked out, convinced that I had gotten rid of that indi-

[3]Nicholas Cibrario was a priest when he made his first vows as a Salesian in 1867. In 1873 he became a member of the Oratory house chapter, but shortly afterward he was appointed director of the Salesian houses successively in Bordighera, Ventimiglia, and Vallecrosia. At Vallecrosia, particularly, he labored very zealously for many years and was greatly admired for his personal piety. He died on December 10, 1917. [Editor]

vidual, but, instead, there he was just outside the door, huddled up, leaning with his back against the corner of the church. He wore a tattered red cap through which two long horns protruded from his head. "Ah, you are still here, you hideous beast!" I shouted. My cries startled poor Enria who was standing nearby, half-dozing. At that same moment I awoke.

This is my dream, and even though it was nothing more than a dream, I still learned something which had never before dawned on me. It is this: the devil, not content with keeping a record of the evil he sees being done because the Lord would not believe him on judgment day, uses the very words of Holy Scripture and of God's commandments to condemn [the guilty ones]. Thus he inflicts also the sentence.

Many of you might like to know whether I saw something about you in that tablet and whether your names were clearly legible. I can't talk about that now, but I will tell those who are interested privately.

I saw many other things in this dream. At times that individual hurled angry words at me and at someone who was with me, but since it would take too long, I'll tell you about it a little at a time.

Details of Don Bosco's Dream at Varazze during His Illness[4]

I have many things to tell you about the past and present, but since so many of you keep asking me about that dream, I'll go into some detail, but briefly, lest it take too long.

I was asked whether I saw anything else after the writing tablet turned into ashes. Yes, as soon as it vanished with that ugly rascal, a cloud of sorts arose, and in its midst was a flag or banner bearing the inscription, "Grace Obtained!" I saw other things too which I did not want to tell you, lest you become swell-headed, but since you are all so good and virtuous (don't take me seriously), I'll let you in on the secret. I saw that during my absence you kept yourselves in God's grace. I can assure you that you have obtained many spiritual favors, including my recovery, for which you prayed so much. But this is not all. While I and someone else kept tailing that hideous monster, watching his every move, I was able to see that all your names were written in that tablet. Some pages had only two or three names followed by these dates: 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, and 1876. Each date was followed by these words: ***Requiem aeternam*** [Eternal rest]. On another page I again saw those words but no names. I

[4]Don Bosco gave his description at the "Good Night" on March 4 [1872] to the [Oratory] students and artisans. [Author]

saw only as far as 1876, and counted *Requiem aeternam* twenty-two times, six referring exclusively to 1872.

In trying to understand this, because you know that dreams must be interpreted, I came to the conclusion that by 1876 we shall have to sing *Requiem aeternam* twenty-two times. I was hesitant about this interpretation. All of you being so healthy and strong, it seemed odd that so many should die by that year, and yet I could draw no other conclusion. Let us hope that what follows, i.e., *Et lux perpetua luceat eis* [And let perpetual light shine upon them], may also come true, and that we may be able to say that such light indeed shines before our eyes.

Now I do not wish, nor is it proper, to disclose how many had the *Requiem aeternam* beside their names or who they were. Let us leave this among God's inscrutable secrets. Let us just strive to keep in God's grace so that, when our day comes, we may tranquilly present ourselves to Our Divine Judge.

Life is God's gift. By keeping us alive, He is constantly bestowing a gift on us. On my part, since I regained my health through your prayers —even though I was not too keen about recovering—I shall always strive to spend it in God's service and for your spiritual welfare, so that some day we may all enjoy God, who showers us so lavishly with benefits in this vale of tears.

Patient research into scholastic and administrative records of the Oratory and into the obituary kept by Father Rua revealed that indeed there were twenty-two deaths—six in 1872, seven in 1873, four in 1874, and five in 1875.

Father [Joachim] Berto also made notes of this dream, but at a later date, and as could be expected, some inaccuracies crept in. Basing himself upon these notes, he stated during the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification] that Don Bosco had predicted six deaths for 1872 and twenty-one during the next three years. He ended his testimony by stating, "Having seen with my own eyes that the prediction for 1872 was perfectly fulfilled, I did not bother to verify the others. I thought it a waste of time, because, as it usually happened, the other twenty-one would surely die at the predicted time, as in fact, as far as I can remember, they did."

In our account we excluded those who died outside the Oratory, such as Cavazzoli at Lanzo, and others at Borgo San Martino, at St. John's Hospital [in Turin], or at home. If we were to

include them, the total number might even surpass that given by Father Berto. We refrain from publicizing their names because, as will be seen, we think it better not to say who some of them were.

4. Ten of Us Have Not Made a Good Spiritual Retreat

From the 3rd to the 7th of July the Oratory pupils made a spiritual retreat preached by Father Lemoyne and Father Corsi. After praying to God to know how fruitfully the retreat had been made, Don Bosco had this dream which he later narrated to the community:

I seemed to be in a playground far larger than ours at the Oratory, totally surrounded by houses, trees and thickets. Scattered throughout trees and thickets were nests full of fledglings about to fly off to other places. While I was delightedly listening to their chirping, a little nightingale dropped in front of me. *Oh,* I exclaimed, *you fell! Your wings can't hold you yet and I'll catch you!* I stepped forward and reached out to pick it up. As I caught hold of its wings, the little bird shook itself free and flew to the center of the playground. *Poor little thing,* I thought to myself, *your efforts are vain. You won't be able to get away because I'll run after you and catch you.* And so I did, but again the bird fooled me the same way and flew off quite a distance. *Oh, so you want to match wits with me,* I said. *Well, we will see who is the winner!* I went after it a third time, but as though it purposely was trying to make a fool of me, it slipped out of my hands as soon as I caught hold of it and flew far off.

I was following its course, astonished at its daring, when suddenly a large hawk swooped upon it and, clutching it in its hooked talons, carried it off as prey. I shivered to see it. Bewailing the foolishness of the incautious little bird, I kept following it with my eyes. *I wanted to save you,* I said to myself, *but you would not let me take hold of you. You even tricked me three times in a row, and now you are paying for your stubbornness.* Turning toward me, the nightingale feebly chirped three times, "There are ten of us . . . ten of us. . . ." Startled, I woke up and naturally thought of the dream and of those mysterious words, but I could not make head or tail of them.

The following night the dream returned. I seemed to be in the same

playground, fenced in by the same houses, trees and thickets. The same hawk with its grim expression and bloodshot eyes was near me. Blasting it for its cruelty to that poor little bird, I threatened it with my fist. It flew away in fright, dropping a note at my feet. Uneasily I picked it up and read the names of ten boys here present. I quickly grasped the full meaning. These were the boys who had no regard at all for the spiritual retreat, who had not set their consciences straight, and who, rather than return to God through Don Bosco, had preferred to yield to the devil.

I knelt down and thanked Mary, Help of Christians for so graciously and singularly showing me those boys who had strayed from my side, and I promised Her that I would never cease to do my utmost to reclaim those lost sheep.

This report was by Father Berto and edited by Father Lemoyne. Father Berto presented it also during the Informative Process for the cause of our beloved father's beatification and canonization with this remark: "I recall that Don Bosco saw to it that those boys should be privately warned, and that one of them, who refused to change his conduct, was dismissed from the Oratory."

5. *Back to School after the Summer Vacation*

The following occurred and was narrated at the start of the school year, 1872-1873, by Father Evasius Rabagliati,[1] then a cleric at the Oratory:

I seemed to see what happens every year at this time. Summer vaca-

[1]Evasius Rabagliati (1855-1929) became a Salesian in 1875. During the following year he joined the second missionary expedition to Argentina and began his apostolate among the Italian immigrants of Buenos Aires. Ordained a priest in 1877, he first accompanied Bishop James Costamagna to Patagonia, and then from 1880 to 1886 he directed the Salesian school of San Nicolás de los Arroyos. In 1886 he crossed the Andes to his new assignment at Conception, Chile, where he remained until 1890 when Father Rua sent him to Bogotá, Colombia, to open a trade school. After completing this assignment, he interested himself in the local leper colonies and greatly improved their services. In 1896 he became provincial of the newly established Colombian province and governed it until 1910 when, for reasons of health, he had to retire. Sent back to Chile for a well-deserved rest, he continued to work indefatigably in the priestly ministry and in seeking funds for the Colombian lepers. He died in Santiago, Chile, on May 2, 1920. His death was signally recognized by the Colombian government which declared a day of mourning in his honor. [Editor]

tion was over and the boys were coming back in groups to the Oratory. I happened to meet one of them as I was leaving for town on business. Since he did not greet me, I looked at him a moment and then called him by name.

"Well, son, how was your vacation?"

"Fine!" he replied.

"Did you keep the good resolutions you made and told me about before you left?"

"No, I didn't, because it was too hard. Here they are in this little box along with your recommendations." He held a box under his arm.

"Why didn't you keep your word? You reneged on me and on the Lord! Too bad! At least do your best to put your conscience in order right away."

"Oh, there is plenty of time for that!" he said and walked away.

I called him back again. "Why are you acting this way? If you do as I say, you'll be glad."

"Ugh!" he exclaimed and, shrugging his shoulders, went off. I sadly followed him with my eyes and said to myself, *Unfortunate lad! You have ruined yourself. You don't even see the grave you have dug for yourself.* Just then I heard the loud boom of a cannon. In terror, I woke up and found myself sitting up in bed.

For some time I brooded over this dream, unable to set my mind at rest. Then I fell asleep again and dreamed that I was crossing the playground on my way toward the main entrance. When I got there I met two morticians.

"Whom are you looking for?" I asked in great surprise.

"The dead boy!" they answered.

"What are you talking about? There is no dead boy here. You have come to the wrong place."

"Not at all! Isn't this Don Bosco's Oratory?"

"Yes!"

"Well, we were told that one of your boys is dead and that we are to take his body away."

What's going on? I wondered. *I know nothing about it.* Meanwhile I was looking about for someone to talk to, but the playground was deserted. *Why is no one here?* I asked myself. *Where are all my boys? After all, it is daytime!* Still dumbfounded, I accompanied the two morticians to the portico and there saw a coffin. One side bore the boy's name and the date 1872; on the other were these dreadful words: *Vitia eius cum pulvere dormient* [His vices shall sleep with him in the dust—Cf. Job 20, 11].

The morticians wanted to remove the body, but I would not let them. "I will never allow a pupil of mine to be taken from me without talking to him a last time before he goes." So saying, I went all around the cof-

fin trying to pry it open, but I could not do so. I did not give up however and stood my ground, arguing with the morticians who were now becoming angry. One of them got so enraged that he dealt the coffin a mighty blow, bashing in its cover. The noise woke me up. Sad and mournful, I remained awake until morning. The first thing I did was to ask whether that lad was already back at the Oratory. Only when I was assured that he was playing with the rest of the boys did my sorrow abate a little.

This hapless pupil, apparently an artisan, was precisely the same youth to whom Father Louis Piscetta[2]—a student at the Oratory in 1872-73—specifically referred during the Informative Process, as follows:

One evening in 1873 Don Bosco spoke to all the students and artisans at the "Good Night" and predicted, in my hearing, that a boy would die and that his death would serve as an example not to be followed. A month later, C-- O--, fifteen, died, although at the time of the prediction he seemed perfectly healthy. When he fell ill, several priests approached him and earnestly begged him to set his conscience in order, but he obstinately refused under various pretexts. He lost his hearing and speech, and although he did somewhat regain these faculties shortly before dying, he still would not agree to go to confession and passed away without receiving the Last Sacraments. James Ceva was present at his death, and Charles Fontana and Michael Vigna witnessed his obstinate refusal.

Doubtless, Don Bosco did all he could to prepare the boy for that great step, but unfortunately he had to leave the Oratory for a few days. The hapless lad, who had been quite well, suddenly fell ill. Father Cagliero[3] was notified and very tactfully tried to direct his thoughts to his soul, but the youth, barely fifteen, kept

[2]Father Piscetta became a Salesian at the age of sixteen in 1874. Ordained a priest in 1880, he earned his doctorate in theology and taught successively for nearly forty years church history, canon law and moral theology in the Turin diocesan seminary. His work *Theologiae Moralis Elementa* ran through several reprints and editions. From 1892 to 1907 he directed the Salesian Studentate of Philosophy at Valsalice (Turin), and in 1907 he became a member of the Superior Chapter of the Salesian Society. He died in 1925. [Editor]

[3]John Cagliero (1838-1926) entered the Oratory in 1851. (*See* Vol. IV, pp. 200ff) He was ordained a priest in 1862 and led the first group of Salesian missionaries to Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego in 1875 (*see* Vol. XI, pp. 348f). He became the first Salesian bishop in 1884 and a cardinal in 1915. He died at Rome in 1926. In June 1964, his remains were brought back to Argentina and solemnly laid to rest in the cathedral of Viedma. For further details *see* the Indexes of Volumes IV, V, VI, and XI. [Editor]

rejecting the urgency, claiming that he did not feel ready and wanted to be left alone. Father Cagliero visited him again and amiably engaged in small talk with him, but when he sought to question the boy about his personal life, the latter, sensing what this would lead to, fell silent after a few answers and turned his back to him. Father Cagliero went around to the other side of the bed, but again the boy turned his back without a word. This happened several times. He died without receiving the sacraments on the same day that Don Bosco was returning to the Oratory. He left a frightful impression on all the pupils which lasted a long time!

6. *Patagonia—The First Salesian Mission Field*

The following dream made Don Bosco decide on his missionary apostolate in Patagonia. He first narrated it in March 1876 to Pius IX. Later he told it privately to a few Salesians. The first to be so honored was Father Francis Bodrato on July 30 of that year. That very evening, Father Bodrato repeated it to Father Julius Barberis at Lanzo, where the latter had gone to spend a few days of vacation with a group of clerical novices.

Three days later, Father Barberis was back in Turin at the Oratory. While conversing with Don Bosco in the library, the latter told him the dream as they paced back and forth. Father Barberis did not disclose that he had already heard it, not only because he was delighted to hear it again from Don Bosco's own lips, but also because, in retelling his dreams, Don Bosco would add new and interesting details.

Father Lemoyne, too, heard it from Don Bosco himself, and he and Father Barberis wrote it down. Father Lemoyne stated that Don Bosco confided to them that they were the very first ones to whom he had narrated this kind of vision *in detail.* We report it almost to the letter:

I seemed to be in a wild region I had never before seen, an immense untilled plain, unbroken by hills or mountains, except at the farthest end, where I could see the outline of jagged mountains. Throngs of naked, dark-skinned, fierce-looking, long-haired men of exceptional

height and build swarmed all over this plain. Their only garments were hides strung across their shoulders. Their weapons were long spears and slings.

These throngs, scattered about, presented varied sights to the spectator: some men were hunting, others were carrying bloodied chunks of meat at spear point, still others were fighting among themselves or with European soldiers. I shuddered at the sight of corpses lying all over the ground. Just then many people came into sight at the far edge of the plain. Their clothing and demeanor told me they were missionaries of various orders who had come to preach the Christian faith to these barbarians. I stared intently at them but could recognize no one. They strode directly to those savages, but the latter immediately overwhelmed them with fiendish fury and hatred, killing them, ripping them apart, hacking them into pieces, and brandishing chunks of their flesh on the barbs of their long spears. Now and then, fighting broke out again among the savages or against neighboring tribes.

After witnessing this horrible bloodshed, I said to myself: *How can one convert so brutal a people?* Then I saw a small band of other missionaries, led by a number of young boys, advance cheerfully toward those savages.

I feared for them, thinking, *They are walking to their death.* I went to meet them; they were clerics and priests. When I looked closely at them, I recognized them as our own Salesians. I personally knew only those in front, but I could see that the others too were Salesians.

How can this be? I exclaimed. I did not want them to advance any further because I feared that soon their fate would be that of the former missionaries. I was about to force them back when I saw that the barbarians seemed pleased by their arrival. Lowering their spears, they warmly welcomed them. In utter amazement I said to myself: *Let's see how things will turn out!* I saw that our missionaries mingled with them and taught them, and they docilely listened and learned quickly. They readily accepted the missionaries' admonitions and put them into practice.

As I stood watching, I noticed that the missionaries were reciting the rosary as they advanced, and that the savages, closing in from all sides, made way for them and joined in the prayers.

After a while, our Salesians moved into the center of the throng and knelt. Encircling them, the barbarians also knelt, laying their weapons at the missionaries' feet. Then a missionary intoned: *Praise Mary, Ye Faithful Tongues,* and, as with one voice, the song swelled in such unison and power that I awoke, partly frightened.

I had this same dream four or five years ago, and it sharply impressed

me because I took it as a heavenly sign. Though I did not thoroughly grasp its specific meaning, I understood that it referred to the foreign missions, which even at that time were one of my most fervent aspirations.

Thus the dream dated back to about 1872. At first Don Bosco believed that it referred to the tribes of Ethiopia, later to the regions around Hong Kong, and finally to the aborigines of Australia and of the [East] Indies. It was only in 1874, when, as we shall see, he received most pressing requests to send Salesians to Argentina, that he clearly understood that the natives he had seen in his dream lived in Patagonia, an immense region then almost entirely unknown.

7. *A Solemn Warning*

At the "Good Night" on May 31, 1873, Don Bosco gave his pupils a serious warning, which, he said, was "the result of his humble prayers" and came from the Lord:

Throughout the whole month of May—he said—particularly during the novena of Mary, Help of Christians, I constantly offered Masses and prayers to Our Lord and the Blessed Virgin imploring them to let me know what, most of all, drags souls into hell. I do not say now that the Lord did or did not enlighten me. I only say that almost every night I dreamed that this is due to the lack of firm resolves in confessions. I seemed to see boys leaving church after confession, their heads sprouting two horns.

What causes this? I asked myself. *Ah, this is due to feeble resolutions.* That's why so many go frequently to confession but never mend their ways and keep confessing the same sins over and over again. There are some (I am only conjecturing, not going on anything heard in confession, because of the seal) who at the start of the school year were doing rather poorly in studies and are still doing no better; there are others who griped and are still griping. I thought it best to let you know this, because it is the result of my humble prayers and because it does come from the Lord.

Publicly he gave no other details, but undoubtedly he took ad-

vantage of this dream to encourage and admonish. What little he did say and the way he said it constituted a grave warning, such as should frequently be given to our boys.

8-9. Singular Illustrations on Behalf of the Church and Nations

Sincerely anxious to help all, he received singular illustrations to point out the course he should take in alleviating the evils which afflicted the Church and civil society.

The prophetic dream he had had in 1870[1] is not the only example of its kind. On July 14, 1873, while searching for some papers on Don Bosco's desk, Father Berto found a sheet dated May 24 - June 24, 1873. Later, Don Bosco gave it to him to transcribe along with another document which a messenger delivered to Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria, king of Hungary and Bohemia, on Don Bosco's behalf.

These last two dreams belong to our narrative, and we shall recount them along with the first, although this has already been published. All three come from a copy made by Father Berto and patiently edited by Don Bosco himself, who also added marginal notes.[2]

This precious document is one of several copies of the "Three Prophecies" which Don Bosco had Father Berto transcribe in 1874 to oblige some devout persons. How had they come to hear of it?

Naturally, to carry out the Lord's directives, Don Bosco had to disclose the three prophecies to those who he thought should be told. In 1870 he revealed the substance of the first vision[3] to Pius IX in a private audience on February 12.[4] He had with him the manuscript but did not dare submit it, and he limited himself to reading an excerpt, which he had transcribed, concerning the Pope himself. We shall identify this excerpt by marking it off

[1] *See* Vol. IX, pp. 373ff. [Editor]

[2] Later, Father Berto inserted into the manuscript a memorandum—*Esordio delle cose più necessarie per la Chiesa* [Foreword to What the Church Needs Most]—which Don Bosco sent through Cardinal Bartolini to Leo XIII at the beginning of his pontificate. [Author]

[3] *See* Vol. IX, pp. 373ff. [Editor]

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 396. [Editor]

with asterisks. At his last audience with Pius IX that year, Don Bosco spoke again of future political events so plainly and in such detail that the latter stopped him in grief and dismay.[5] But after the seizure of Rome, recalling his conversations with Don Bosco, Pius IX sent word to him through a cardinal—who we firmly believe was Joseph Berardi—that he was to speak out "clearly and explicitly, leaving nothing out."[6] Don Bosco, who until then had not inserted into the manuscript the passage he had read to the Pope, added it to the transcript which he had Father Berto make, and sent it to the Pope through the same cardinal. Pius IX kept it among his papers together with the covering letter addressed to the cardinal.

The letter was anonymous. Why? Solely to remain incognito at all costs. But in it he clearly stated that the document "comes from a person who has on other occasions proved that he has been endowed with supernatural gifts" and that there were "other things which cannot be entrusted to writing, but may be said in person with all the secrecy the subject demands. . . . Should anything seem obscure, I will try to make it clearer. . . . You may freely use this document, but I do ask you not to mention my name in any way, for reasons that you will readily appreciate."[7]

Don Bosco also enjoined absolute secrecy on his secretary in regard to this matter. Father Berto jealously saved the original of the second prophecy and the excerpt from the first in an envelope on which he wrote: "Original of an excerpt from a prophecy completing the one sent[8] to the Holy Father on February 12, 1870, which hinted at the above. . . . This excerpt was later inserted in other transcripts made to oblige some devout persons. The original is not here because it was returned to Don Bosco after the first transcript was made from it. He destroyed it himself and pledged me to absolute secrecy on the matter. Until his death I never transgressed his order, despite the insistence and indiscretion of a devout person."[9]

Was that really so? . . . In a letter to Father Rua dated March

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 401. [Editor]
[6] *Ibid.* [Editor]
[7] *Ibid.* [Editor]
[8] Not *sent*, but *communicated*. [Author]
[9] Father Rua. [Author]

8, 1874, whose original is in our possession, Father Berto wrote from Rome: *"Res secundae. Orate. Deus est nobis propitius* [Matters are favorable. Pray. God is good to us]. I believe he [Don Bosco] will continue to keep the [manuscript of the] prophecy, etc. Carefully scrutinize the passage: 'Before two full moons shall have shone in the month of flowers, the rainbow of peace, etc.'[10] Amazingly, this year the month of flowers [May] has two full moons, respectively on the first and on the last day of the month. On this basis, many are beginning to open their hearts to hope. *Fiat* [Let it be so]."

What shall we make of this? Was Father Berto perhaps hinting at the two other prophecies? Anyway, during his stay at Rome with Don Bosco, he made several transcripts of the three prophecies, and Don Bosco, as we shall indicate, saw to their delivery to cardinals and prelates, always concealing the fact that they originated from him. Here is the precious document, containing:

1. The prophecy of 1870, generously annotated by Don Bosco and followed by numerous clarifications which he also edited;
2. The prophecy of 1873, with autographed marginal notes, followed by a comment (which he likewise edited) on the person giving those revelations;
3. The letter to the emperor of Austria followed by a postscript also edited by our holy founder.

First Prophecy[1]

God alone is almighty, all-knowing, all-seeing. God has neither past nor future; everything is present to Him, everything at a single point of time. Nothing eludes God. No person, no place is distant from Him. In His infinite mercy and for His glory He alone can unveil the future to man.

On the vigil of the Epiphany of this year, 1870, all material things in my room disappeared, and I found myself contemplating supernatural matters. It was only a matter of an instant, but I saw a great deal. Although what I witnessed was sensibly present, I find it extremely difficult to communicate it to others intelligibly, as one may realize by what follows. This is the Word of God in human parlance:

"War will come from the south, peace from the north.

[10]*See* Vol. IX, p. 376. [Editor]

[1]Revealed to Pius IX on February 12, 1870. (*See* Vol. IX, p. 377) Italics within parentheses indicate Don Bosco's marginal notes. [Editor]

"The laws of France no longer recognize the Creator. The Creator will reveal Himself by visiting her three times with the scourge of His wrath. The first time He will destroy her pride by defeat, pillage, and destruction of crops, cattle, and men. On His second visit the great whore of Babylon, which the faithful grievingly call Europe's brothel, shall lose her leader and fall prey to chaos.

"Paris! Paris! Instead of fortifying yourself with the Lord's name, you surround yourself with houses of ill repute. You yourself shall destroy them; your idol, the Pantheon, will be razed to the ground, so that it may truthfully be said that 'iniquity has lied to itself.' [Ps. 26, 12] Your enemies will plunge you into anguish, famine, terror, and the contempt of nations. But woe unto you if you do not recognize the hand which smites you! I want to punish your immorality, your desertion, your contempt for My law, says the Lord.

"On My third visit, you shall fall under the foreign yoke. From afar your enemies will see your palaces in flames, your home in ruins, soaked in the blood of your heroes who are no more.

"But behold, a great warrior from the north appears, a banner in his right hand, his arm bearing this inscription: 'Irresistible is the hand of the Lord.' At that moment the Venerable Old Man of Rome went forward to meet him, wielding a flaming torch. The banner then grew larger and its blackness became white as snow; in its center stood out the name of the Almighty in golden letters.

"The warrior *(Don Carlos and the Pope)* and his followers bowed profoundly to the Venerable Old Man and joined hands with him.[2]

* "Now the voice of Heaven is addressed to the Shepherd of Shepherds. *(To Pius IX.)* You are in solemn conference with your co-workers *(the Vatican Council)*, but the enemy of good never stands idle. He cunningly plots and sets all his wiles against you. He will sow discord among your helpers and will rear enemies among My sons. *(The grave frustrations* [suffered by Pius IX] *during the Vatican Council.)* The powers of the world shall vomit fire. They would love to smother My words in the throats of the guardians of My law, but they shall not succeed. *(This has already been attempted and will still be attempted, especially in Prussia.)* They shall do much harm, but only to themselves. Hurry! If knots cannot be untied, sever them. Do not halt in the face of difficulties, but go forth until the hydra of error has been beheaded *(through the proclamation of the dogma of papal infallibility)*. At this blow earth and hell shall tremble, but the world will be saved and the faithful shall exult. Gather around you only two co-workers, yet wherev-

[2]What follows between asterisks is the excerpt of the vision that Don Bosco read to Pius IX on February 12, 1870. [Editor]

er you go, carry on the task entrusted to you and bring it to completion *(the Vatican Council).* Days go by swiftly and your years are reaching their appointed number, but the great Queen shall always assist you, and, as in the past, She shall always be *magnum et singulare in Ecclesia praesidium* [the powerful, prodigious defense of the Church].*[3]

"But you, O Italy, land of blessings, who has plunged you into desolation? Not your enemies, but your own friends. Do you not hear your children begging for the bread of faith, unable to find one to break it for them? What shall I do? I shall strike the shepherds and scatter the sheep so that those who sit upon the chair of Moses may seek better pastures and their flock may gently listen and be fed. *(A seeming allusion to inadequate religious instruction.)*

"But My hand shall be heavy upon both flock and shepherds. Famine, plague, and war shall cause mothers to mourn the blood of their sons and husbands shed on foreign soil. *(A seeming allusion to this year's famine. Pestilence and war shall follow.)*

"What shall befall you, ungrateful, effeminate, proud Rome? You have reached a point when you seek and admire nought in your sovereign but luxury, forgetting that both your glory and his lies on Golgotha. Now he is old, frail, defenseless, and dispossessed. *(Present condition of Pius IX.)* Nevertheless, though captive, his words cause the whole world to tremble.

"O Rome! Four times shall I come to you! The first time I shall smite your regions and its people. The second time I shall bring slaughter and destruction to your very gates. Should not that make you open your eyes? A third time shall I come, and I will demolish your defenses and defenders. *(The present state of Rome.)* At My Father's command, terror, dismay, and desolation will reign.

"My wise followers flee *(many live away from Rome, many are obliged to disperse),* but My law is still trod underfoot. Therefore, I shall come a fourth time. Woe to you if My law again shall go unheeded. There shall be defections among both learned and ignorant. *(This has happened and is still happening.)* Your blood and that of your children shall wipe out your transgressions. *(A seeming allusion to some future disaster.)*

"War, plague, and famine are the scourges to smite human pride and malice. *(This summarizes the above-mentioned punishments.)* Where are your magnificent villas and palaces, you people of wealth? *(We shall see!)* They have become the litter of squares and streets!

"And you priests, why are you not prostrate between the vestibule and the altar, weeping and praying that the scourge may cease? Why do you

[3]End of the excerpt. [Editor]

not take up the shield of faith and preach My Word from the rooftops, in the houses, streets, and squares, and even in inaccessible places? Do you not know that this is the terrible two-edged sword which smites My enemies and placates the wrath of God and man?

"These things shall inexorably come to pass, all in succession.

"Things follow too slowly upon each other, but the great Queen of Heaven is at hand; the Lord's power is Hers. Like mist She shall scatter Her enemies. She shall vest the Venerable Old Man with all his former garments.

"There shall yet come a violent hurricane. Iniquity is at an end, sin shall cease, and before two full moons shall have shone in the month of flowers, the rainbow of peace shall appear on the earth.

"The great Minister shall see the Bride of his King clothed in glory.

"Throughout the world a sun so bright shall shine as was never seen since the flames of the Cenacle until today, nor shall it be seen again until the end of time."

Clarifications

"War will come from the south. . . ." From France, which declared war on Prussia.

". . . peace from the north." From the north of Spain where the present war began. Furthermore, Don Carlos resided in Vienna, which is north of Italy.

"The Pantheon will be razed to the ground!" Contemporary newspapers reported that it was damaged by several bombs. But what concerns France has not yet fully taken place.

"But, behold, a great warrior from the north appears. . . ." Don Carlos from northern Spain.[4]

"The Venerable Old Man of Rome went forward to meet him, wielding a flaming torch." Faith in God which guides and upholds the great warrior in his undertakings.

"The banner then grew larger and its blackness became white as snow. . . ." The massacre ceased. Blackness—symbol of death or persecution, such as the *Kulturkampf.*

". . . in its center stood out the name of the Almighty in golden letters." According to press reports, Don Carlos' banner bears on one side a picture of the Heart of Jesus and on the reverse that of the Immaculate Conception.

[4]Later on, Father Berto (so it seems) added a question mark and these words: "No. Emperor William [I] of Prussia." [Author]

". . . wherever you go. . . ." Seemingly an allusion to the Pope's exile. See the second prophecy.

". . . war shall cause mothers to mourn the blood of their sons . . . shed on foreign soil."[5] This has still to come.

". . . I shall come a fourth time." This visit to Rome has still to take place.

"There shall yet come a violent hurricane." See the next prophecy where the hurricane is fully described.

". . . before two full moons shall have shone in the month of flowers. . . ." This year, 1874, the month of May has two full moons, one on the 1st and the other on the 31st.

". . . the rainbow of peace. . . ." A hope which seemingly is rising in Spain today, March 1, 1874.

"Throughout the world a sun so bright shall shine. . . ." Triumph and growth of Christianity.

". . . his (the warrior's) arm bearing this inscription, 'Irresistible is the hand of the Lord!' " Newspapers say that Don Carlos apparently began his exploits without weapons, money or victuals, and only with fourteen men. Yet today, April 1, 1874, he has an army over 100,000 strong. There is no report as yet that he has lost a single battle.

Second Prophecy[1]
(May 24 - June 24, 1873)

It was a dark night *(error)*, and men could no longer find their way back to their own countries. Suddenly a most brilliant light *(faith in God and in His power)* shone in the sky, illuminating their way as at high noon. At that moment from the Vatican came forth, as in procession, a multitude of men and women, young children, monks, nuns, and priests, and at their head was the Pope. *(It seems to allude to the suppression of monasteries and schools run by religious and to the Pope's exile.)*

But a furious storm then broke out, somewhat dimming that light, as if light and darkness were locked in battle. *(Perhaps this means a battle between truth and error, or else a bloody war.)* Meanwhile the long procession reached a small square littered with dead and wounded, many of whom cried for help.

The ranks of the procession thinned considerably. After a two-

[5]Here too there is a penciled addition: "Dogali." [Author] At Dogali, a small locality about thirteen miles from Massaua, Eritrea, five hundred Italian soldiers were ambushed and massacred in 1887. [Editor]

[1]This prophecy too was published in Volume IX, pp. 377f. Italics within parentheses indicate Don Bosco's marginal notes. [Editor]

hundred-day march, all realized that they were no longer in Rome. In dismay they swarmed about the Pontiff to protect him and minister to him in his needs.

At that moment two angels appeared, bearing a banner which they presented to the Supreme Pontiff, saying: "Take the banner of Her who battles and routs the most powerful armies on earth. Your enemies have vanished; with tears and sighs your children plead for your return."

One side of the banner bore the inscription: *Regina sine labe concepta* [Queen conceived without sin], and the other side read: *Auxilium Christianorum* [Help of Christians].

The Pontiff accepted the banner gladly, but he became very distressed to see how few were his followers.

But the two angels went on: "Go now, comfort your children. Write to your brothers scattered throughout the world that men must reform their lives. This cannot be achieved unless the bread of the Divine Word is broken among the peoples. Teach children their catechism and preach detachment from earthly things. The time has come," the two angels concluded, "when the poor will evangelize the world. Priests shall be sought among those who wield the hoe, the spade, and the hammer, as David prophesied: 'God lifted the poor man from the fields to place him on the throne of the princes of His people.' "

On hearing this, the Pontiff moved on, and the ranks began to swell. Upon reaching the Holy City, the Pontiff wept at the sight of its desolate citizens, for many of them were no longer. He then entered St. Peter's and intoned the *Te Deum*, to which a chorus of angels responded, singing: *Gloria in excelsis Deo et in terra pax hominibus bonae voluntatis* [Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth to men of good will].

When the song was over, all darkness vanished and a blazing sun shone. The population had declined greatly in the cities and in the countryside; the land was mangled as if by a hurricane and hailstorm, and people sought each other, deeply moved, and saying: *Est Deus in Israel* [There is God in Israel].

From the start of the exile until the intoning of the *Te Deum*, the sun rose two hundred times. All the events described covered a period of four hundred days.

Note

The person reporting these things is the same who unerringly predicted what happened to France a year before it took place. These predictions were widely known and were fulfilled day by day, as if a script were being followed.

According to this same person, France, Spain, Austria and a German power would be the instruments of Divine Providence in preventing the collapse of civil society and restoring peace to the Church which for so long and in so many ways has been fought against. These events would start in the spring of 1874 and would be completed within a year and a few months, unless new iniquities should be perpetrated against God's will.

Third Prophecy

Thus says the Lord to the emperor of Austria: "Be of good cheer and look after My faithful servants and yourself. My wrath is now spilling over all the nations because they want to make people forget My laws, glorifying those who defile them and oppressing My faithful adherents. Will you be the rod of My power? Will you carry out My inscrutable designs and become a benefactor of the world? Rely on the Northern Powers, but not on Prussia. Enter into relations with Russia, but form no alliance. Join forces with Catholic France; after France, you shall have Spain. All together, become one in will and action.[1]

"Observe absolute secrecy with the enemies of My holy name. Prudence and vigor will make you and your allies invincible. Do not believe the lies of whoever tells you otherwise. Abhor the enemies of the Cross. Put your hope and trust in Me. I make armies victorious. I am the Savior of nations and sovereigns. Amen. Amen."

Note: This letter was sent to the emperor of Austria in July 1873 through a trusted person who delivered it to him in person. He read it attentively and sent his hearty thanks to the sender, saying that he would avail himself of it.[2]

Qui legit, intelligat! The marginal notes and the clarifications and comments in the text and footnotes make additional remarks superfluous, except for one observation which we think is highly interesting.

The first prophecy has these words for the Pope: "Wherever you go. . . ." It was, indeed, generally taken for granted that the Pope would leave Rome. He did not, however, and this was due precisely to this message from Don Bosco: "Let the sentry, the

[1]Here Father Berto added this note: "This prophecy fitted the political situation in Europe that year. Later, things changed, both in regard to France and to Prussia." [Author]

[2]Here he [Don Bosco] added the name of the trusted person—Countess Lutzow, an admirer of his. On June 14 of that year she had sent him a 2,000 lire donation in thanks for her husband's recovery through the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians. [Author]

angel of Israel, remain at his post and guard God's stronghold and His holy ark."[3] The solemn tone of these words clearly reveals their source.

Nor did the Pope ever forget them! While even Catholics continued to believe that his departure from Rome was imminent, Don Bosco, to the astonishment of all, hastened to defend the rights of the Church and of the Supreme Pontiff so effectively that the latter was able to appoint bishops for more than a hundred vacant Italian dioceses without governmental interference. At the same time, with the Holy Father's approval, he began negotiations [with the government] concerning the bishops' revenues. He did this on two trips he made to Rome in 1871. Then, as soon as he began convalescing from the serious illness that struck him at Varazze, he wrote to Premier [John] Lanza on February 12 and April 8 [1872], expressing his pleasure at the reverent and warm welcome that the new bishops were receiving in the various dioceses. He also informed the Holy Father of this. The latter replied in his own hand on May 1, confiding his full trust in God's goodness and the enduring protection He had promised to His Church.

We believe that at this time too these confidential exchanges between Don Bosco and Pius IX strengthened the Pope in his resolve not to leave Rome.[4]

And so, the sentry of Israel remained at his post, guarding God's rock. On his part, until the end of his days, Don Bosco kept hoping and working zealously for a reconciliation of Italy and the Church. "We are both of the same age," he wrote to a fellow priest. "When we were born, Europe was settling down to peace after long years of war. May we dare hope to see peace in the world and the Church's triumph before the end of our lives? We could then sing our *Nunc dimittis*. However, may God's will be done in all things. The triumph of the Church is certain; if we

[3]*See* Vol. IX, p. 444. [Editor]

[4]We are omitting an article from *Civiltà Cattolica* (1902, Vol. III, p. 286) about an audience which Bishop Gaspard Mermillod of Geneva—later a cardinal—had with Pius IX. After thanking the bishop for conveying to him on behalf of prominent Catholics the reasons why he should leave Rome, the Pope added: "I concede that their arguments are good . . . but I have one good reason that is overriding. . . . God is my witness that I do not feel inspired to leave Rome. . . . This is the only reason that holds me back." [Editor]

do not see it here below, we shall witness it, I hope, from heaven."

He did indeed see it from heaven [in 1929] when the Lateran Treaty was signed. [As Pius XI declared] it gave "God back to Italy, and Italy back to God." The signing took place just a month before Pius XI's proclamation of the acceptance of the miracles which had been submitted for Don Bosco's beatification.

In pointing out the "charming, admirable and striking coincidence," the Pope characterized Don Bosco as a "great, faithful and truly clear-sighted servant of the Church and of the Holy See. . . ." Such indeed he always was! Pius XI then went on to state that he had learned "from Don Bosco himself" how much "a solution of this deplorable dissension was truly uppermost in his thoughts and desires . . . a solution that would, above all, guarantee the honor of God and of the Church, and the welfare of souls."[5]

10. A Visit to the Dormitories

At the "Good Night" on November 11, 1873, Don Bosco narrated a dream he had had on November 8 and 10. We give it in Father Berto's version:

I dreamed that I was visiting the dormitories. You were all sitting up in bed. Suddenly a stranger appeared and, taking the lamp from me, said: "Come and let me show you something!"

I followed him as he went from bed to bed and kept raising the lamp so that I could see each boy's face. I looked carefully and saw each boy's sins written on his forehead. The stranger advised me to take notes, but, thinking I'd remember, I moved along a bit further, ignoring his advice. Soon, though, realizing that I had been overconfident, I retraced my steps and jotted everything in my notebook.

While going down the long aisle, my guide turned to a corner where, to my great joy, we saw a large number of boys whose faces and foreheads were as white and clean as snow. A little further, however, the stranger marked out one boy whose face was marred with black spots; as we went on, I saw many others in the same condition. I noted every-

[5]Cf. *L'Osservatore Romano*, March 20-21, 1929. [Author]

thing, saying to myself, *This way, I can warn them.* At last, as we reached the end of the dormitory, I heard a loud noise coming from a corner, followed by an awesome singing of the *Miserere.*

"Who died?" I asked my guide.

"The one with the black spots."

"Impossible! Just last night he was alive!"

Taking a calendar, he pointed to December 5, 1873. "This boy shall die before New Year's Day," he said. He then turned his back to me. I turned about too and awoke in bed.

This was just a dream, but similar dreams have already come true on other occasions. Dream or no dream, let us heed Our Lord's warnings to be ever ready.

When he was through speaking, pupils, clerics and priests crowded about him, anxious to know what he had seen on their foreheads. A large number, some of them clerics, did not go to bed until they had talked privately with him. Father Berto made the following entry in his notes:

As I was going with him to his room, he told me that the lamp used during his visit to the dormitories was the one he had in his room. Later, as we were pacing up and down, he added, "How little it takes to shake up the boys. No sermon could do as much. Yes, I must keep telling them these things."

"They will surely do a lot of good," I remarked. "You'll have quite a crowd for confessions tomorrow."

I also heard one boy say, "I don't want to ask him now [what he saw on my forehead] because I wouldn't have the courage to go to confession tomorrow. . . ." The next morning, however, he did go to confession.

Commenting on the boys with spotted faces, he remarked, "One already asked me to tell him [what I saw]. I mentioned two or three things and he stopped me, saying: 'Enough! You know too much!' "

The next morning I saw that he too was going to confession. On December 4 the boy with the spotted face was still playing with his friends, but at five that afternoon he fell sick with the flu and was taken to the infirmary. During the night he made his confession and received the Last Sacraments; by morning the end seemed near. His parents came and took him to St. John's Hospital, where at 11 that evening, December 5, he passed into eternity.

Don Bosco was then in Lanzo. When he returned to the Oratory on the following day, Saturday, December 6, the dead boy's aunt tearfully gave him the sad news. It spread instantly, causing general consternation.

"Unbelievable!" cried his schoolmates. "Just two days ago he was with us on our weekly walk."[1]

At the "Good Night" Don Bosco comforted them and told them that their schoolmate had made a general confession even before falling ill. Father Berto, who had taken the names of all who questioned Don Bosco immediately after he had told his dream, including the one who had shied from asking him but had gone to confession the following morning and the one who was to die, made the following statement during the Informative Process:

> On the evening of December 7, 1873, I accompanied Don Bosco to his room and then asked him to tell me confidentially how he was able to read the boys' consciences, especially their sins. "Well," he replied with his usual kindliness, "nearly every night I dream that boys come to me for their general confession and tell me all their sins. The next morning, when they do really come for confession, all I need do is tell them their sins."
>
> "Write down these things," I said. "They are very helpful!"
>
> "By no means! Such things are to be used only by one actively engaged in the priestly ministry. . . ."

We might add: "And only when this priest is one favored by God with such charisms!" He narrated a similar dream—a visit to dormitories, the singing of the *Miserere* and an imminent death—also to the boys at Lanzo on a visit to them that month.

In 1870, fifteen-year-old Julius Cavazzoli of Fabbrico, in the diocese of Guastalla (Emilia), was admitted to the Oratory on the recommendation of the pastor of Campagnola. Shortly afterward he transferred to the Salesian school at Lanzo, but he returned to the Oratory in 1871. Toward the end of 1873 he fell ill and was again sent to Lanzo in the hope that the climate would hasten his

[1] In Italy, at this time, Thursdays were a mid-week school holiday and the Oratory boys went out for a walk in the city outskirts. [Editor]

recovery. He was there when Don Bosco told the above-mentioned dream which deeply impressed the pupils. Charles Baratta, who had arrived in Lanzo only a few days before, recalled its every detail many years later to the director, Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who had taken no notes of it until then. On this occasion, he jotted down the dream as follows:

It seemed to Don Bosco that a mysterious youth took him into one of the dormitories while all the boys were asleep, and, holding a candle up to the boys' faces, made them known to Don Bosco. The first ones had clear foreheads, whereas others' foreheads were marked by either one or two black lines symbolizing (venial sins). Other boys' faces were either shrouded in fog or shadows or completely blackened by mortal sins. Don Bosco took pencil and paper and jotted down their names and appearance. Hardly had he reached the end of the dormitory when, from an opposite corner where all the boys were unmarred in their looks, he suddenly heard the chant of the *Miserere*.

"Why the *Miserere*?" he asked his mysterious guide.

"So and so died on such and such a day!" was the reply.

"But how can that be? He was alive only a little while ago!"

"In God's sight the future is like the present."

Don Bosco concluded that this death would happen within a month, but though he did not disclose the name, he exhorted all to be ready. However, the boys kept saying that Don Bosco had revealed the boy's name to the director. Fifteen days later, Cavazzoli fell ill and died. . . .

We heard the same story from Father John Gresino, a pupil at Lanzo since 1872. He gave us a thorough account, asserting that Don Bosco had confided to the director the name of the youth who was to die.

This eighteen-year-old young man (born in January 1855) died fifteen days later. Parish records state that he received "the sacrament of Penance, Holy Viaticum and the papal blessing" but was unwilling to die. The director showed him that he was fortunate to be able to die well prepared. Would such be the case later?

"Well," the youth replied, "in that case I want to die, but how does one go about dying?"

Short prayers for a happy death were suggested to him, and he repeated them devoutly: "Jesus, Mary and Joseph, I give you my

heart and my soul. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, assist me in my last agony. (The death rattle was audible.) Jesus, Mary and Joseph, may I breathe forth my soul in peace with you. . . ." He died serenely on December 21, at 10:30.

Father Gresino also recalled Don Bosco saying that he had had that dream the night before, nor should this be surprising, since he himself used to say that nearly every night he dreamed of his boys making their confession to him. His boundless fatherly love well deserved that Our Lord should reveal to him also imminent deaths so that he might prepare those concerned for that great step. . . .

11. God's Power and Mercy

At the "Good Night" on November 29, 1873, after returning to the Oratory from a visit to the Salesian schools at Sampierdarena, Varazze and Alassio, Don Bosco narrated another dream. Father Berto jotted it down and then wrote out this detailed description:

These past few days, while I was away, I had a very frightening dream. I went to bed one evening, thinking about the stranger who—as I told you a few nights ago—had taken me in a dream through the dormitories and with a lamp had shown me the boys' sins on their foreheads. While I was wondering whether he was a human like us or a spirit in human form, I fell asleep and immediately seemed to be carried back to the Oratory. To my surprise, it was no longer here in Valdocco, but at the entrance of a valley long and wide, hemmed in between two lovely hills.

I was with you, but you were all silent and tense. Suddenly the sun broke out, shining so strongly that we were forced to lower our heads. We remained in that position for some time until the blinding light dimmed almost to absolute darkness, making it difficult for us to see or recognize even those closest to us.

The sudden change was very frightening. As I tried to figure out what to do, a greenish light flashed at one corner of the valley and, streaming across it, formed a graceful rainbow between the two hills. The darkness receded, and from the rainbow—very similar to a rainbow after a heavy

rainfall or the aurora borealis—multi-colored beams of light streamed into the valley.

While we were all intent on admiring and enjoying this charming spectacle, I noticed a phenomenon even more astounding at the far end of the valley—a gigantic electric globe hanging in midair, darting blinding flashes in all directions so that no one could look at it without the risk of falling to the ground in a daze. The globe kept floating down toward us, illuminating the valley more brilliantly than ten of our suns could have done at full noon. As it drew nearer and nearer, the boys, blinded by its glare, dropped face to the ground, as if struck by lightning.

At first I too was terrified, but then, getting hold of myself, I forced my eyes to gaze boldly upon the globe, following its movement until it stopped some three hundred meters above our heads. Then I decided that I must see what sort of phenomenon this was.

I scanned it thoroughly and, distant though it was, I could see that its summit had the shape of a large sphere and bore a huge inscription: "The Almighty." The whole globe was ringed by several tiers of balconies, crowded with joyful, jubilant people: men and women, young and old, dressed in sparkling, indescribably beautiful garments of many colors. Their warm smiles and friendliness seemed to invite us to share their joy and triumph.

From the center of this heavenly globe countless shafts of light radiated, flashing so blindingly that any boys looking at them were stunned, staggered a moment, and then fell face down to the ground. I too, unable to endure such brilliance any longer, exclaimed, "Oh Lord, I beg You, either let this divine sight vanish or let me die, for I can no longer withstand such extraordinary beauty!" Then I felt faint, and I too dropped to the ground, with the cry, "Let us invoke God's mercy!"

Coming to myself again, I stood up moments later and decided to tour the valley and see what had happened to the boys. To my great surprise and wonder, I saw that all were prostrate and motionless in prayer. In order to find out whether they were dead or alive, I prodded several with my foot, asking, "What's the matter? Are you alive or dead?" All gave me the same answer: "I am imploring God's mercy."

Then, to my deep sorrow, I came upon several, their faces as black as coal, who kept gazing defiantly upon the globe, almost as if challenging God. I went up and called them by name, but they gave no sign of life. Paralyzed by the rays of light darting from the globe because of their obstinate refusal to fall prostrate and implore God's mercy with their companions, they had become as cold as ice. What grieved me even more was that they were so numerous.

Just then an abnormally huge, indescribably horrid monster rose up at the far end of the valley. Never had I seen anything as frightening as that! It strode toward us. I told all the boys to stand up, and they too were terrorized by the horrible sight. Gasping in anguish, I searched frantically for some Salesian to help me get the boys up the nearest hill for safety, but I could find no one.

Meanwhile the monster kept getting closer and closer. When it was about to overtake us, the brilliant globe, which until then had hovered over our heads, quickly dropped almost to the ground, shielding us from the monster, and at that moment a voice thundered through the valley, "Nulla est conventio Christi cum Belial." [2 Cor. 6, 15] No treaty is possible between Christ and Belial, between the children of light and the children of darkness, that is, between the good and the bad whom Holy Scripture calls the children of Belial.

At these words I awoke in a cold sweat. Although it was only midnight, I could not fall asleep again or feel warm the rest of the night. I was amply consoled at having seen almost all our boys humbly seek God's mercy and faithfully respond to His favors, but I must admit my profound grief at the goodly number of proud, hard-hearted lads who rejected God's loving invitation and drew His chastisements upon themselves.

I already summoned a few of these boys last night and others today so that they may soon make their peace with God and stop abusing His mercy and scandalizing their companions. There can be no alliance between God's children and the devil's followers. *Nulla est conventio Christi cum Belial.* This is their last warning.

As you see, my dear boys, what I have told you is but a dream like all the others. Still, let us thank God for using this means to show us our spiritual condition. How generously He enlightens and favors those who humbly implore His help and assistance in material and spiritual need. *Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam* [God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble—1 Pet. 5:6].

According to Father Berto, Don Bosco did not further elaborate on the details of the dream, but we can easily grasp the message. As long as we are in this valley of tears, God permits periods of light and darkness in our spiritual life, just as day alternates with night. Those who withstand the darkness and apparent abandonment humbly and trustingly, soon see light return more brilliant than ever with a new magnificent rainbow. And if they faithfully and most humbly keep their thoughts centered on

God, they come to understand ever more clearly their own nothingness in face of God's sublime majesty and the ineffable beauty of the reward He has prepared for us. Furthermore, they shall always feel that they must remain prostrate before Him and implore His infinite mercy.

Those instead who, full of themselves, neglect their spiritual life and are concerned only with earthly matters soon lose God's grace and repeatedly fall prey to the infernal monster who, like a roaring lion, endlessly roams about seeking to wrest souls from God.

Those who are habitually united with God remain unshaken even when subjected to the most harrowing trials because God is their shield. They can count on His help here below while ensuring heaven for themselves. Humility, then, is the path to heaven. Humility and greatness go hand in hand, St. Augustine said, because the humble man is united with God. Humility does not consist in shabbiness of dress, speech or demeanor, but in lying prostrate—mind, heart and soul totally centered on God—with full awareness of one's nothingness, in an endless plea for His mercy.

Don Bosco constantly fought against all error and sin, but he thought so highly of God's mercy that he openly proclaimed his hope that even Voltaire had obtained God's pardon in his last moments. This indicates how horrible seemed to him the fate of those who died unreconciled with God.

12. A Prediction of Death

The following episode is told by Father Berto; we transcribe it from the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification]:

At the "Good Night" on Tuesday, November 17, 1874, Don Bosco told the students that confessions would be heard the next day in preparation for the Exercise for a Happy Death, scheduled for Thursday. As usual, he urged us to make it well, saying: "I neither am nor wish to be a prophet, but I can tell you that one of us who is present will not be here to make it again. But I will not say who it is." As happened on similar occasions, on stepping down from the stand, he was instantly sur-

rounded by the boys who were eager to know if it was their turn to die. His brief words drew a crowd of boys to his confessional both in the morning and on the evening of the following day, as well as on Thursday morning. They told me themselves that they all wanted to make a general confession.

Since I nearly always witnessed such examples of piety, I can state that such predictions did our boys more good than ten spiritual retreats. And this was the only reason that prompted Don Bosco to foretell events, especially in public. He always urged us to keep these predictions to ourselves and not to write to outsiders about them.

The better to assure myself that his predictions were not just a pious trick on his part for our boys' spiritual benefit, two days later—Thursday evening, November 19, 1874—while speaking familiarly with him in his room, I confidentially asked how he could so boldly predict the death of so many boys at a time when they were healthy and strong. In particular, I singled out his prediction, just two days before, that most certainly one boy would die before the next Exercise for a Happy Death. Rather reluctantly, he answered: "I seemed to see all our boys walking toward a meadow, each on a path marked only for him. Some paths were very long, with signposts indicating the year 1874, 1875 and so on; others were not quite as long, and still others were much shorter. A few paths were very short and ended abruptly, marking the end of the boy's life. There were also extremely short paths that were strewn with snares. I saw one boy standing on the spot where his path ended. The barely legible signpost was inscribed '1875.' This boy will not have a chance for another Exercise for a Happy Death, since he will die in 1874; possibly he may barely see the dawn of 1875, but he cannot make this pious exercise."

As far as I recall—Father Berto continued—the prediction was fulfilled completely. I must add that we were so used to seeing these predictions verified that we would all have been astonished had any of them not come true. It would have been the exception to the rule.

We have no other details about this dream. As regards each of Don Bosco's predictions coming perfectly true, Father Lemoyne commented in writing:

Sometime between 1872 and 1874, he announced that a youth would die by the end of the year, and the year closed with no death. However, there was a very sick young man who would not hear of receiving the sacraments. Everyone had tried to persuade him to do so, but in vain.

Prayers were being offered for his conversion in the city's religious houses. He finally died in January after making his confession to Don Bosco and receiving the sacraments.

The Oratory boys were quick to remind Don Bosco that his prediction had not come true, although they did not really know what had happened. "Would you have me let him die without the sacraments?" Don Bosco retorted. "Was I to allow such scandal in our house?"

Thus there was a prediction, a postponement of death and a conversion. The young man was twenty-four, apparently a tool of Freemasons who had sent him there for their own ends, according to Father Evasius Rabagliati, an eye-witness.

These few incidents show us how highly we are to rate Don Bosco's dreams. May God graciously grant us enough time to publish them all. They document our beloved father's holiness in a way proper to him and they are a perennial source of episodes, exhortations and admonitions of real educational value not only for us Salesians, but for all priests.

6. Humble in the Midst of Glory

Once excavations began for the foundations of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, an amazing contest started between Don Bosco and Our Lady. Our saintly father busily sent out flyers, holy pictures and medals of Mary, Help of Christians, to encourage limitless trust in Her power and goodness, while, on Her part, Our Lady granted all sorts of favors to Her most faithful servant, who remained ever humble despite such distinction. During the Apostolic Process [for Don Bosco's beatification] Father Michael Rua remarked:

If anyone marveled at his vast undertakings, he would quickly interrupt, saying: "All glory and success are due to God and Mary, Help of Christians!" When people called to tell him that his blessing or prayers had been singularly effective, he would urge them to thank God, the Blessed Virgin or the saint to whom they had prayed. Then, to belittle himself, he would narrate some incident where his prayers had apparently failed. He particularly liked to tell how several people from Volvera

(a village midway between Piossasco and None, near Turin) had asked him to pray for the recovery of a person dear to them, for a good harvest or for some court settlement and who, later, had returned to say "The person I recommended to you has died!" or "I can't make a big donation because hail ruined my crops!" or "That lawsuit is still pending!" By telling such incidents, he gave people to understand that they were to trust not in him, but in the maternal kindness of Mary, Help of Christians and in the intercession of the saints.

Occasionally he spoke of extraordinary favors which people had received after appealing to him either personally or by letter, but he always did so in order to give increasing glory to God or to Mary, Help of Christians, and to instill even greater faith in prayer. He urged all to have a lively faith, to which he often attributed the favors received, saying that it was the faith of the devout which won the favors they sought.

To honor Mary, Help of Christians he published several issues of *Letture Cattoliche* [Catholic Readings], among them the May issue of 1875, entitled: *Mary, Help of Christians—A Report on Favors Obtained During the First Seven Years Since the Dedication of Her Church.* This 320-page issue, prefaced by a brief historical outline of the devotion to Mary, Help of Christians and the building of the church, described one hundred and ten favors received through Her intercession. About twenty of them pertain to the years 1871-1874, and we shall recount a few in chronological order.[1] Remarkably, none of them alludes directly to Don Bosco; a few simply mention "a priest" giving his blessing or "the director" of the Oratory. We still have several original reports edited by Don Bosco himself, always with this single viewpoint in mind.

Great is God's goodness—he wrote in his own hand as a foreword to one of them—when He grants some outstanding favor to us. Equally great must our gratitude be to acknowledge it, make it known, and even publicize it so that it may redound to His greater glory. It is imperative to do so nowadays because by these extraordinary favors God wishes to glorify His august Mother under Her title of Help of Christians.

No one should excuse himself from this duty of gratitude to his heavenly Benefactress. We can tell others of the favor received or promote

[1]One of them is already fully reported in Volume IX, pp. 306f. [Editor]

devotion to our heavenly Mother in some other way. Thus we will encourage others to appeal to Mary in their needs and make it easier for ourselves to obtain new, more outstanding favors.

Be faithful—he earnestly went on—to whatever you have promised: prayers, self-denials, confession and Communion, or works of charity. "An unfaithful and foolish promise displeases God," says the Holy Spirit. [Eccles. 5:3] Several times the failure to keep a promise prevented the granting of the favor itself, or at times even revoked it.[2]

Favors were obtained particularly during the month of May, and even more so during the novena and on the feast of Mary, Help of Christians, when Don Bosco would spend almost the whole day in the sacristy surrounded by many pilgrims. He promised to oblige all who sought his prayers, but he would often add, "Favors are obtained not so much through my prayers as through the faith and the works of mercy of those who request them." But nothing could shake the belief of the faithful that it was he himself who obtained such favors from God and the Madonna!

Three conditions he always imposed:

1. That the grace might be also spiritually beneficial. Replying to a certain Angela Piccardo, he wrote on the back of a holy picture of Mary, Help of Christians: "O Mary, obtain health for Your daughter, if it will not prove harmful to her soul."[3]

Toward the end of 1874, a young Salesian cleric suffering from a painful eye ailment wrote for Don Bosco's blessing. The latter had someone reply thus: "God wants you to be: 1. More faithful in serving Him; 2. More detached from earthly things; 3. More obedient. Without these conditions any blessing of mine would be useless."

We do not know whether that young man recovered, but shortly afterward he left the Salesians, perhaps without having understood Don Bosco's advice.

2. That one should fully trust in Our Lady's power and goodness because such extraordinary graces demanded firm faith. To a good priest who had asked prayers for a fellow priest, Don

[2]We are omitting the description of several favors received through the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians. For similar wondrous cures *see* the Index of Volume IX under "Cures." [Editor]

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Bosco replied that he would pray, but he also urged the writer to pray.[4] "It is faith that works wonders," he explained.

3. That, whenever possible, an offering be made for Salesian works and, in some cases, for other charitable causes.

On this point, where others would have hesitated for fear of criticism, he was unbelievably outspoken. On many an occasion he would bluntly refer to a donation as an indispensable condition. He clearly acted as the representative of the Almighty, who at his request would grant desired favors.

"Give what you can," he would say. "Make a donation according to your means. God sees your sincerity, love and sacrifice, and He will grant what you need."

In extreme cases, when, so to speak, an extraordinary favor had to be wrested, as, for example, when a rich man was hopelessly ill, dying or far advanced in years, he would set the sum at ten to forty thousand lire. A favorite saying of his was that God never lets Himself be outdone in generosity! From some he would exact only a simple promise; from others he would insist that the donation be made then and there, explaining, "God did not say: '*Promise* and it will be given to you,' but '*Give* and it shall be given to you.' We must therefore obligate God by advancing a good deed. To tell God, 'If You do this, I shall do that,' is an uncalled-for distrust of God. We do not dictate to God. One who puts himself entirely in God's hands will certainly be heard."

Toward the end of 1874, a Mr. Conte, who owned a farm at Sestri Ponente, came to ask his advice about investing 60,000 lire for the exclusive right to build and sell Hofman-patented furnaces throughout Liguria. Don Bosco thought it over, prayed a while, and then replied, "Yes, sign the contract. You will make a fortune, provided that you supply all the lime needed for a new wing of our school at Sampierdarena!"

Mr. Conte agreed. The cornerstone of the new wing was laid on February 14, 1875, and he punctually lived up to his promise. Furthermore, with ecclesiastical permission he sent carloads of sand—at times as many as twenty—on Sundays and holy days. And when, later on, he fell victim to a type of persecution mania, Don Bosco wrote to assure him in God's name that nothing un-

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

toward would ever happen to him. He put Don Bosco's letter in his wallet, always kept it in a pocket over his heart, and became a millionaire. His son, Father Louis Carmelo Conte, a lawyer of the Roman Rota, disclosed this fact, and it was confirmed by Father Paul Albera, director of the Salesian school in Sampierdarena.

To Teresa Martinengo of Savona, who begged that he join her in a novena to Mary, Help of Christians for the recovery of her young son who was incurably ill, Don Bosco briefly replied: "Keep praying, have faith, and do some deeds of mercy."[5]

Occasionally, knowing that a favor was not to be granted, he made no promise. When he did promise and the petitioner did not make himself undeserving, the grace was granted.

On other occasions, if someone left and rejected his conditions and later, recognizing that it would be to his advantage, returned to say that he would comply, he would promptly answer, "I can no longer guarantee the favor you could have obtained yesterday. It's too late now!"

It was God Himself who acted in this way to induce possible wealthy donors not to procrastinate. We shall mention interesting details.

Due to the amazing growth of the works God had entrusted to him—a growth he himself fearlessly promoted—Don Bosco was always in grave financial straits. Far from hiding this fact, he publicized it to solicit help from public and private charity. He was convinced that by spurring the wealthy to implement the Gospel teaching, "Give in alms what you can spare" [cf. Lk. 11, 41], he would help them as well as his underprivileged boys.

In such instances Mary, Help of Christians assisted him in a striking way. Father John Baptist Lemoyne declared:

> There must have been some understanding between Our Lady and Don Bosco. One may well believe that She often appeared to him to tell him what to do and how to do it. Among other things, we wish to say that when he found himself in a serious financial bind, he would say, "I know we are getting a substantial sum of money, but I do not know where it is coming from—east, west or north."

[5]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Sometimes he sent someone to the post office exclusively to see whether the money he was expecting had arrived in the mail. Either it actually had, or it would arrive shortly afterward. Who could have given him this information?[6]

7. A Just Man

Don Bosco let slip no chance to urge his spiritual sons to show their increasing gratitude to Mary, Help of Christians by the exemplary practice of poverty. To encourage a praiseworthy love and practice of this virtue, he used to tell them in moving terms how even the poorest of the poor felt bound to make some offering in order to show their gratitude for favors received. He himself, fully aware of the extent of their sacrifice, was admirably discreet with the poor. One day, returning to the Oratory from town, he noticed a woman by the entrance. She was holding a one-year-old baby boy in her arms, pale, emaciated, covered with scabs, and looking more like a corpse than a child.

"Is this your son?" he asked the woman.

"Yes, Father."

"How long has he been sick?"

"From birth!"

"Have you taken him to a doctor?"

"Yes, Father, but he told me nothing can be done."

"Would you like him to be well?"

"Oh, how I would! My poor baby!" She kissed him, but the child made no response.

"Have you prayed to Our Lady?"

"Yes, but nothing happened."

"Do you go to the sacraments?"

"Sometimes."

"Do you believe that the Madonna can cure your son?"

"Yes, but I do not deserve such a favor."

"If She were to cure him, what would you do for Her?"

"I would give Her whatever is dearest to me."

[6]We are omitting a flowery thanksgiving to Mary, Help of Christians by Father Lemoyne for Her assistance to Don Bosco and to his spiritual sons. [Editor]

"Would you like me to give him the blessing of Mary, Help of Christians?"

"Oh, yes, please!"

"As soon as you can, go to confession and Communion and for nine days say three times a *Pater,* an *Ave,* and a *Gloria* in honor of Mary, Help of Christians. Ask your husband to join you in prayer and Our Lady will make your child well." Then he blessed the little one.

Fifteen days later, a Sunday, the sacristy of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians was crowded with people seeking to speak to Don Bosco after he had finished hearing confessions. Among them was a woman carrying a baby boy, kicking, eyes sparkling, and very much alive. Elbowing her way through the crowd, she got to Don Bosco. "Look at my boy," she exclaimed, radiant with joy.

"What can I do for you, my good woman?" Don Bosco asked.

"Don't you see how well he is?" she continued.

"May the Lord keep him so. But can I do anything for you?"

He had forgotten the child he had blessed just two weeks before when it seemed to be dying. The woman refreshed his memory and told him that by the third or fourth day of the novena the child had suddenly recovered. "Now," she continued, "I came to meet my obligation." From a box she took a gold necklace, a pair of earrings, and a ring, and she handed them to Don Bosco.

"Is this your offering?" he asked.

"Yes, Father. I promised Our Lady that I would give Her what I cherish most. Please accept them."

"Have you no other possessions?"

"Nothing, Father, except what my husband earns working at the foundry."

"Does he know that you are donating this jewelry to Our Lady?"

"Yes, he knows and has gladly agreed."

"Have you any savings for emergencies?"

"What can we save on a three-lire-a-day salary?"

"What will you do in an emergency or sickness?"

"I am not worried. God will provide."

"You could count on this jewelry in an emergency. You could sell or pawn it."

"The Lord knows that we are poor, but I must do what I have promised."

"Well," Don Bosco said, deeply moved, "let us do this. Our Lady does not ask such a great sacrifice from you, but since it is only proper that you give some tangible proof of your gratitude, I will accept this ring. Keep the necklace and earrings."

"No, no!" cried the woman. "I promised all, and I want to give all to Her!"

"No, do as I tell you. That is enough."

"But will Our Lady be pleased? I do not want to break my promise. I am afraid She may punish me."

"I assure you, Our Lady is quite pleased with you."

"How do you know?"

"Take my word for it. In turn, I will use the value of the necklace and earrings in Mary's honor and in your name."

"May I honestly do this?"

"Yes, you may."

The good woman paused, undecided, but then said, "So be it. Do what you think is best, but I am still willing to give you all my jewelry." Don Bosco was firm in his refusal and the woman returned home quite happy—an admirable model of gratitude and faith!

Father Lemoyne recorded another moving incident, as yet unpublished:

> One morning, a poor man after an overnight walk [of some thirty-five miles] from Alba went to confession and Communion in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians and then called on Don Bosco to fulfill a vow. Some time before, he had been critically ill and given up as hopeless by his doctor. Aware of his desperate condition, he had promised to give all he had to Our Lady and had instantly recovered.
>
> Don Bosco listened, observing and noticing his shabby clothes and wondering what alms he could afford. The man took a little packet from his pocket, unwrapped it and formally handed a lira to Don Bosco.
>
> "It is all I have," he said.
>
> "Indeed?"
>
> "Yes!"
>
> "Do you have a little vineyard at home?"
>
> "No, nothing at all."
>
> "What kind of work do you do?"

"Manual labor. I live from hand to mouth."

"How will you go back home?"

"The same way I came—on foot."

"You must be exhausted!"

"A little. It's a long way."

"Have you eaten this morning?"

"No, because I wanted to go to Communion. I ate some bread before midnight."

"Have you any food with you?"

"None."

"Then please be my guest and stay overnight. You can return home tomorrow if you wish."

"I can't accept!"

"Why not?"

"It wouldn't do to bring one lira and make you spend three or four! That's no way to fulfill a vow."

"Listen, give your offering to Our Lady, and let me offer you hospitality."

"I can't accept because I know that Our Lady and you have but one and the same purse."

"I can promise you that the Madonna will not take it amiss if you agree to be my guest."

"I am not convinced, and I do not wish to bother you in any way."

"How will you manage to get home?"

"I'll start walking. When I get hungry, I'll beg for food; when I'm tired, I'll rest by the wayside; at night some farmer will let me sleep in his hayloft. Just now I must fulfill my vow to the letter. Good-bye and pray for me." And with those words, he left abruptly.

Loving poverty as he did, and being most considerate toward the poor, Don Bosco genuinely grieved at the sight of extravagant luxury in homes he visited in search of financial help.[1] Throughout his life he displayed full trust in Divine Providence. Declared Father Rua at the Informative Process:

If he was left a legacy—lands or houses—he pressed me to sell them as quickly as possible and pay his debts without delay, thus forestalling

[1]We are omitting an episode about a marchioness which has been narrated in Volume IX, p. 142. We only add that the marchioness was eighty-four years old, she lived at 13 Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, Turin, and the incident took place on September 19, 1871. [Editor]

the danger of anyone becoming attached to it. Now and then he would tell us, "Let us rid ourselves of these temporal possessions so that we may give ourselves more fully to God's work. As long as we entrust ourselves to Divine Providence, we shall not want for what is necessary and our Society will prosper ever more. If we begin to hoard things, Divine Providence will abandon us." It happened at times that I deferred the sale of inherited property because I could not get an equitable price. Don Bosco would then hound me, urging that I sell rather than wait for a better deal at a future date. Occasionally, he even beat me to the punch and sold it himself.

Following the example of St. Cajetan, he ardently wished that we should live from hand to mouth with nothing to bank upon, and that any money coming in should be promptly turned over to creditors. If he learned of money being put aside, he would quickly insist upon its being used as necessity demanded. He used to say that our congregation would flourish as long as it kept itself in complete poverty.

Likewise, when a pupil admitted in confession that he had broken the house rule by keeping money for himself, he considered the fault an insult to Divine Providence and would demand that he hand the money over to Father Prefect without delay. If the youngster refused and kept confessing the same fault, he would threaten to withhold absolution.

"Love poverty," he constantly warned, "if you want our congregation to stay financially solvent."

Therefore, while "chastity must be the outstanding trait of our Society" along with a full, prompt, humble, and cheerful obedience in our family life, it was the beloved practice of poverty which Don Bosco made "his fundamental recommendation to all the Salesians." It is obvious, of course, that Don Bosco wished us to be exemplary in the practice of each religious vow!

We are never to forget that, by God's grace, our Society arose spontaneously and almost unconsciously from the admiration and gratitude which our holy founder evoked among his pupils. This is the way nearly all the early Salesian vocations blossomed. Let one example suffice.

In 1873 a bright, serious-minded Latin II student was one of many boys crowding around Don Bosco in the porticoes during recreation time. Noticing that the lad looked somewhat troubled and anxious to speak to him, Don Bosco asked him, "Do you want to tell me something?"

"Yes, Father."

"What is it?"

"It's private."

Drawing Don Bosco aside, the youngster whispered: "I would like to give you something you will like."

"What is it?"

"Myself!" he exclaimed, standing almost on tiptoe and stretching out his arms. "I want to give you myself," he added gravely, "so that from now on you may do whatever you want with me and keep me always with you!"

"You could not have given me a finer present," Don Bosco replied. "I accept it not for myself, but for the Lord, to whom I offer and consecrate you."

This dear boy was Francis Piccollo from Pecetto, Turin, who became a Salesian priest and later was appointed novice master, director and provincial.

As we shall see, the love which his sons felt for Don Bosco was matched by the esteem, respect and wonder which all sorts of people, even from abroad, felt for him because of his extraordinary virtues and apostolate. It was during these years that Princess Maria Vittoria of Savoy-Carignano greeted a young Oratory pupil, who was being introduced to her, with the words: "How lucky you are to live with a saint!"

Declared Bishop John Cagliero in the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification]: "This opinion of Don Bosco's saintliness was deeply rooted in all sorts of people—noblemen, clergymen and laymen. Far from declining, it waxed stronger every year because of the fame of his lofty virtues and the extraordinary gifts with which God had endowed him. . . ."[2]

If we want to be worthy of him, let us vie with his humility, friendliness and other personal virtues, and let us strive to carry out as perfectly as possible the following recommendations of his which were most dear to his heart:

1. Thanks to Divine Providence, our congregation faces a happy future, and its glory will last as long as our rules are observed.

2. The purpose of our Society is our own sanctification and the

[2]We are omitting similar declarations from two former Oratory pupils. [Editor]

salvation of souls through works of mercy.

3. I urge upon you the Christian education of youth, priestly vocations, foreign missions, and above all the care of poor, homeless boys.

4. My sons, I suggest neither penance nor any other austerity, but work, work, work!

5. Work and temperance will make our Society flourish.

CHAPTER 2

Forging Ever Ahead—1871

AT the beginning of 1871, our Society had five houses: the motherhouse in Turin, a junior seminary at Borgo San Martino, and boarding schools at Lanzo, Cherasco and Alassio. The house at Trofarello[1] was still used as a summer home, and the recently vacated seminary at Mirabello[2] was looked after by caretakers.

Our members numbered seventy-seven: thirty perpetually professed, and forty-seven with triennial vows. With the addition of sixty-nine novices, total membership was boosted to one hundred forty-six: twenty-seven priests, sixty-nine clerics, thirty-four coadjutors,[3] and sixteen postulants not as yet invested with the clerical garb.

We have been unable to trace the *strenna*[4] Don Bosco gave that year, but we do have a letter of his to Father John Bonetti, director of the Borgo San Martino junior seminary, to whom he had entrusted some work connected with his *Church History*. This letter—undated but obviously written at the very beginning of 1871 while the Prussians were besieging Paris, which capitulated on January 28—was delivered by a cleric little suited to our Society because of his habit of inflicting physical punishment. In fact he left shortly afterward. In this letter Don Bosco refers briefly to the *strenna* and shows his fatherly goodness in looking forward to

[1]It had been donated to the Salesian Society by Father Matthew Franco, a devoted benefactor. [Editor]

[2]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 413, 426. [Editor]

[3]Lay Salesians. [Editor]

[4]A New Year's gift customary in Italy. From the very beginning of the Oratory (*see* Vol. III, p. 433) Don Bosco had started the custom of giving a "spiritual" *strenna* or gift to his boys and co-workers on the last day of the year. It took the form of a motto or slogan to be practiced throughout the year then about to dawn. This custom is still kept by Don Bosco's successors. [Editor]

treating the junior seminarians to a trip to Turin on the forthcoming feast of Mary, Help of Christians:

[No date]

Dear Father Bonetti:

I shall send Pellegrini, who will do well, I think, just as he did here with the Latin III pupils. He used to be rather quick to strike, but now he seems to have gotten a good hold on himself.

Don't let the *strenna* alarm you, but let us not harbor illusions: God has called us to a better world. It is up to you, my sons, to show yourselves worthy, even more virtuous followers of your father.

Arrange to get here for the feast of St. Francis de Sales and we shall talk over a number of things. The conference is scheduled for Monday, [January] 30.[5]

As regards the *Church History* I'll write separately.

You can reassure our dear boys that their trip here for the feast of Mary, Help of Christians is certain enough. Their contribution to the festivities reads as follows: May 23, evening—Musical Selections by the Junior Seminarians of Borgo San Martino.

I don't foresee problems with food and transportation. We shall provide lodging. After all, if the Prussians can sleep on bare ground around Paris at twelve degrees below zero,[6] we can surely manage with tents or lean-tos and straw mattresses. At any rate, God willing, we'll do our best to have a solemn celebration and a wonderful time.

We can already travel by train at half fare, but I hope I can get an even better deal.

May God bless us all and keep us on the path to heaven. Amen.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. [John] Bosco

P.S. You'll find useful bits of information about the Popes of the first three centuries in Volume I of Mansi's *Acta Conciliorum.*

As had been customary since 1865, the annual conference was held on January 30, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, and was attended by all the Oratory confreres and the directors of the other houses. On that occasion two members took triennial vows. Afterward, the directors reported on the state of their respective

[5]This was the annual conference of St. Francis de Sales. *See* Vol. V, pp. 7f, Vol. VI, pp. 176ff, and the Indexes of Volumes VIII, IX and XI under "Conferences." [Editor]

[6]About 15° Fahrenheit. [Editor]

houses. Commenting on developments and improvements, Don Bosco congratulated the directors for their tireless efforts and then went on to recommend thrift, a return to the original purpose of school dramatics,[7] trust in Divine Providence, our protector in such difficult times, and obedience.

Seeing Don Bosco's constant interest in the welfare and growth of each house encouraged all the confreres to outdo themselves. In chronological order we shall present here instances of his fatherly care.

1. In Turin

In 1870 Don Bosco had purchased a fair-sized piece of land behind the Oratory. While the square[1] facing the shrine of Mary, Help of Christians and the building along Via Cottolengo were nearing completion, he renewed an application[2] to the city building commission for permission to incorporate this piece of land to the Oratory with a wall and use it for agricultural training. On receiving permission, he had his contractor, Charles Buzzetti,[3] do the job.

Since Don Bosco's application had mentioned his intention of training some of his pupils in horticulture, the mayor thought that he might ask him to take over the direction of an agricultural school about to be opened in Turin.

On February 27, 1869, Chevalier Charles Alphonsus Bonafous, the former head of a leading commercial firm in Piedmont, had died in Lyons, bequeathing substantial holdings to the city of Turin to set up a large agricultural school for poor abandoned boys. An *ad hoc* committee appointed by the city council drew up basic statutes which were examined and adopted in 1870; finally, in March 1871, the government recognized the proposed agricul-

[7] *See* Ch. 8, No. 9. [Editor]

[1] *See* Vol. IX, pp. 114, 414. [Editor]

[2] Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

[3] Charles Buzzetti had attended Don Bosco's festive oratory with his two brothers Joseph and Joshua in its very beginnings when it was still a "wandering oratory." (*See* Vol. V, p. 298. *See also* the Index of Volume II under "Festive Oratory.") To him Don Bosco had entrusted the construction of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. *See* Vol. VII, p. 279. [Editor]

tural school as a legal moral body. At this point, the city council turned to Don Bosco, whom they all admired for his successful training of so many poor boys. Several committee members, headed by Commendatore Ernest Riccardi of Netro, called on him, and after some discussion on how to go about reforming youngsters, they finally made their proposal.

When some good needed to be done, Don Bosco did not back out lest it would remain undone through his fault, and so he immediately replied that he would be not at all averse to accepting such a worthy assignment. "But," he added, "I must have a free hand in its internal administration and direction. Without that I cannot accept responsibility for the boys' proper education and conduct."

Commendatore Riccardi and the other committee members agreed, and when Don Bosco asked what funds would be allotted for the school's upkeep, they put the sum at 70,000 lire a year.

"Very well. Give me the 70,000 lire, and I will see to the proper running of the school. As for other administrative matters, I neither wish nor intend to be involved. That will be your concern."

"How many boys can you annually care for with that sum?"

"Two hundred and eighty!"

"Impossible! How can you ever manage?"

"Leave that to me."

"How will you feed and house them?"

Don Bosco explained how the Oratory boys were cared for regarding food, work, study, recreation, and character formation. Full of admiration, the committee extolled him as an ideal educator and concluded that his program was by far the most advantageous and economical.

"It's a deal," they concluded. "We shall so inform the city council, and they will approve it at their next meeting. No one could possibly object to such an advantageous agreement."

"Don't be so sure of that," Don Bosco replied. "You gentlemen may believe that the matter is settled, but I certainly do not."

"Oh, come now, the contract will be signed and sealed in a few days. Who would turn down a guarantee to provide for such a

large number of boys? No one else would attempt it with only 70,000 lire."

"So you may believe, but you will see that I am right. Even if I offered to provide for five hundred boys for the same sum, my proposal would be rejected."

"Why?"

"Simply because a great many people are looking for a piece of this project, and 70,000 lire is not a large enough sum for each to make a little profit."

The men laughed, muttering a thousand denials and thoroughly convinced that the matter was settled. Little did they realize that Don Bosco had spoken the truth. At the council meeting the leaders did praise Don Bosco, but then decided that they could not accept his offer since, they said, his close ties with the Jesuits and the Pope clearly showed that he was opposed to their liberal views.

Of course, the real reason for their refusal was what Don Bosco had said. When the school opened in June 1872 with seventy boys the entire administration was in the hands of laymen, and very soon it ran into a financial crisis. Don Bosco was immediately contacted again for new negotiations, but he declined, convinced that it would be a waste of time since the matter was bound to end up as it did before. In addition, the regulations approved on July 19, 1871 regarding the religious education of those boys stated that they were to be brought up "in such practices of piety as were considered necessary," but were to attend Mass only on Sundays, while the "non-Catholic pupils" were to receive religious training "from ministers of their own faith."

At that time liberals and, possibly, some anticlericals ran City Hall. Don Bosco had gone there several times to recommend a well-known Catholic for a vacancy, but he was never even given an interview. Finally he insisted on talking to Commendatore Riccardi himself but was told that he was in conference.

"Then I will wait until he is finished," Don Bosco replied.

Informed of Don Bosco's insistence, Riccardi came out.

"What do you want?" he asked, somewhat annoyed.

Don Bosco tersely stated his business. "There's nothing more involved than that," he concluded, "but I wanted to speak to you personally."

"Well," Riccardi answered, "let me tell you quite frankly that I cannot grant your request. Look at the council membership. Their policy, don't you see, is that City Hall jobs are open only to their supporters."

Meanwhile other work was underway at the Oratory. On February 2, Don Bosco contracted with Charles Buzzetti to build the choir, both lateral sacristies of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, and adjacent porticoes. In the proposed choir area there stood a mulberry tree that shaded the old Oratory gate where young Felix Reviglio had sought refuge in its branches.[4] Father [Angelo] Savio[5] waited until Don Bosco would be away for a few days and had it felled, knowing how sad he would be to see it go. In fact, when he came back and saw the old tree gone, he stood silently tearful for a few moments as though he had lost a friend. How many cherished memories must have passed through his mind!

Work began at once, and soon the walls of the two sacristies began to rise, doubling their length. The sacristies were separated by an oval-shaped choir whose cornice was supported by pillars. The choir connected with the church through an arch in the apse where the painting of Mary, Help of Christians hung until 1891, when the first repairs and initial decorations were undertaken by Father Rua in fulfillment of a vow.

On September 11, 1912 Joseph Freilino, a former Oratory pupil and the chancellor of the Justice Department in Pavia, gave us a written account of an incident which occurred in 1870-71. It confirms Don Bosco's charism of seeing constantly all that was happening at the Oratory—a reward for his burning desire to prevent evil:[6]

I was in secondary school at the Oratory from 1868 to 1873 [wrote Freilino]. Like others, I was easily swayed by companions and so I did

[4]*See* Vol. III, pp. 239-243. [Editor]

[5]Angelo Savio (1835-1893) entered the Oratory in 1850 and was among those who on December 18, 1859 decided to band together with Don Bosco. (*See* Vol. VI, pp. 181f) At that meeting he was elected Economer General of the Salesian Society, a post to which he was re-elected in 1869 and 1873. He left that office in 1875 to take over the construction program of the Salesian Society. In 1885 he left for South America and opened Salesian houses in various republics. He died in Guaransa (Ecuador) on January 17, 1893. In the dream "The Wheel of Eternity," Don Bosco saw him in far distant regions. *See* Vol. VI, pp. 540, 549. [Editor]

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

not always follow Don Bosco's fatherly advice, though I often did go to him for confession.

What I say confirms the general belief of those days, namely, that Don Bosco always kept his sons in view even if he was not bodily present himself, and he would keep them from doing wrong, at times in a physical way.

In 1870-71, the Oratory band, sporting yellow uniforms, played at the wine fair during the carnival season. In those days, the building facing Via Cottolengo was being lengthened to adjoin a private house which extended some twelve feet toward the side of the church where the main entrance now stands. The yard between the building and the church was enclosed by two wooden fences.

On the last Saturday of the carnival season, two or three other boys—Boeri, Cirio and Camagna (or some surname like that)—and I decided to slip out of the Oratory during evening confessions to go to the carnival. (I was only a boy and thought nothing of the consequences.) We agreed to sneak out through this yard. We got through the first fence easily enough because a board was missing. My friends cleared the second fence, but somehow I couldn't make it, even though it was an easy feat. I don't know how, but as I was standing almost in the middle of the yard in front of a cellar window, rocks began falling about me, breaking into pieces as they struck the pavement, but I was not hit. My friends were telling me to hurry, but in my fright I kept saying that I could not get over the fence and that rocks were flying at me. I still don't know if they heard stones falling because the matter was never brought up, but they climbed back into the yard, and we gave up the attempt.

Later, taking a serious view of the matter, I felt—and still do—that there was something extraordinary about it, especially in the light of what happened later. No one knew of our plan, no one saw us go through the fence, and none of us (I am quite certain) told Don Bosco about it in confession. Yet, the next day, on our way to Mass, I saw Don Bosco crossing the day boys' courtyard with some pupils and I went up to him. Whispering into my ear, as was his custom, he asked me in a fatherly way if I had gone out after all. I replied that I had not, and he let me go.

Another similar occurrence confirmed my conviction that Don Bosco watched constantly and personally over his sons (it would be ridiculous to imagine that he watched only over me), and that he kept them visibly before his eyes. I had planned to sneak out of the church during evening confessions with some other companions for no specific purpose. I don't

recall why, but we did not do it. And yet, the following morning, Don Bosco asked me whether I had gone out.

During my five-year stay at the Oratory I was twice tempted to sneak out for the fun of it, and both times Don Bosco knew about it. How? Under the circumstances, I can only think that he saw me, even though he was not physically present, and protected me.

On Ash Wednesday, Don Bosco went to Varazze to discuss accepting the direction of that school. The following Monday, Lenten catechism classes, conducted by priests, clerics and some older pupils, began at the Oratory. They were held Monday through Friday until Holy Week for a very large number of neighborhood boys. The same procedure was followed at the St. Aloysius and the St. Joseph festive oratories.

That year [1871], the Valdocco festive oratory took on new life[7] in the Church of St. Francis de Sales, which had been cleared of all storage.[8] By 1870 Don Bosco had entrusted its services to Father Julius Barberis who had been ordained on December 17 of that year. He said Holy Mass there, preached, and supervised the boys, assisted by other Salesians. The play area, some three hundred feet by fifty-five feet, was also provided with athletic equipment. The festive oratory was reached through the square to the left of the church at the far end of the playground and Oratory.

On December 8, 1870, Pius IX, seeing the Church "persecuted and oppressed everywhere by her enemies" to the extent of encouraging the godless to believe "that the gates of hell were about to prevail against her," heeded the petitions of the world episcopate and declared St. Joseph patron of the Catholic Church, "entrusting himself and all the faithful to his most powerful protection." He also raised the liturgical rank of the feast which was to be solemnly observed on March 19. At Don Bosco's directive, from 1871 onward, St. Joseph's feast was celebrated in all Salesian houses as a holy day.

At this time too, Don Bosco decided to start work on the

[7]As regards its temporary decline *see* Vol. VI, p. 85. [Editor]

[8]After the opening of the new Church of Mary, Help of Christians, the Church of St. Francis de Sales had been temporarily converted to several other uses. *See* Vol. IX, p. 350. [Editor]

Church of St. John the Evangelist and on a boarding school for poor boys to be annexed to it along Viale del Re.[9]

To this effect he sent a circular dated October 12, 1870. Another, written by the vicar general of the Turin archdiocese for the archbishop and dated October 13, 1870, was mailed some time after the prelate's death, which occurred on October 16 of that year.[10]

His many difficulties in completing this project showed his heroic fortitude. The land had been purchased for a high price,[11] but the artistic Romanesque plan of his architect, Count Arborio Mella, required the addition of another parcel of land belonging to a man named Morglia, who refused to sell regardless of price.

Don Bosco was then advised to appeal to the king, on the basis of a law of June 25, 1865, to have his project declared necessary to the public good. Thus Morglia's strip of land could be legally expropriated.[12]

We shall see how long and vexing his efforts were during these years to buy that small parcel of land. When the matter was finally settled, new problems arose when Archbishop Gastaldi, in order to raise funds for St. Secundus Church, publicly announced his intention to make it a monument to Pius IX. In view of that, he stopped Don Bosco from referring to the Church of St. John the Evangelist as a monument to that Pontiff. The dispute got as far as the Holy See, and "I myself"—so testified Canon John Baptist Anfossi in the Informative Process—"was asked to prepare a memorandum for Cardinal Antonelli. In it I pointed out how much earlier Don Bosco had planned to build a church as a monument to Pius IX, and how I had myself pledged to donate the main door which was to bear in bronze Pius IX's achievements."

In addition, another burden had been placed on Don Bosco. In 1867, property owners in Borgo San Secondo formed a committee to erect a public church near the Porta Nuova railroad station. The city authorities approved one of several designs submit-

[9]Now named Corso Vittorio Emanuele II. [Editor]

[10]This paragraph is a condensation. We are omitting two letters of Don Bosco respectively to Countess Callori and to Commendatore Dupraz along with a copy of his circular. [Editor]

[11]*See* Vol. IX, p. 445. [Editor]

[12]We are omitting all the legal details. [Editor]

ted and granted a building permit on January 2, 1868. They also donated needed land and authorized a 30,000 lire subsidy toward the construction of the church on condition that a 100,000 lire deposit be made as a guarantee. Finding a fund-raiser was no easy task, and the matter was halted until 1871, when the need for a parish church in Borgo San Secondo was so urgent that the committee and prominent laymen and priests begged Don Bosco to take over the project, convinced that he alone could see it through. In fact, Monsignor [Joseph] Zappata, the vicar capitular, called him and frankly said that he considered him morally bound to accept the task, lest the project collapse and through his default many people be unable to meet their religious obligations. Trusting in Divine Providence, Don Bosco agreed. Father Anthony Nicco, the administrator of St. Charles parish, within whose limits the new church was to be erected, joined Don Bosco and the pastor of La Crocetta in asking the mayor to cut the red tape delaying the start of the construction. The municipal authorities cooperated fully and showed their trust in Don Bosco by waiving the 100,000 lire deposit. His name, they said, was the best guarantee.[13]

2. At Lanzo

On February 11 [1871] Don Bosco wrote to Father Lemoyne:

Dear Father:

God willing, I shall be at Lanzo Monday morning. Read the [enclosed] letter to the boys. I shall explain everything later. I will see you soon.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

In the letter he told his "dearly beloved sons" that he had invisibly paid them a visit in the company of a horrible monster.[1]

His visit was unforgettable. His forewarning, followed up by a

[13]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]*See* pp. 35f. [Editor]

detailed account of the dream, aroused most generous resolves in the pupils' hearts.

Meanwhile, it became imperative to resume work on the new wing, since the long bitter winter had damaged the entire edifice, particularly where it was connected to the old building. On his return to Turin, Don Bosco appealed for financial help to Blaise Foeri, a kind gentleman who lived at Lanzo.[2] A few days later he again wrote to Father Lemoyne:

April 27, 1871

Dear Father:

I could not write you these last few days. My advice now is that you had better make haste slowly. To get anywhere we must reach the root of the problem. Once the boys decide to live their faith, things begin to improve at once. What a pity that good parents are sometimes so little heeded by their children. But what can we do? One person can disgrace everyone! Yet even for the troublemakers things may improve. Pray and do not fear. God will do the rest. This is the course to follow. May God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Father Lemoyne has left no notes on this letter, which he filed as the 18th from Don Bosco. From this and from the 19th letter,[3] to which reference was already made in Volume IX,[4] we clearly see that Father Lemoyne was concerned about some boy's conduct and that Don Bosco advised him to pray and be patient, sure of eventual improvement.

But now an interesting detail showing our founder's humility comes up. On October 2, 1870, he had seen to the admission of his young grandnephew Joseph, the son of Francis, to the Salesian school at the regular rate. When the boy did not do well in his studies, he brought him to the Oratory in 1873, and finally sent him back home. Many years later, he frankly told Father Lemoyne, "I sent my grandnephew to your school because I was

[2]We are omitting this letter. [Editor]

[3]Don Bosco's note, identified as No. 19 by Father Lemoyne, read: "Please come immediately. Your son cannot remain here any longer. You will be told the reason in person." [Author]

[4]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 443f. [Editor]

sure that, as a good friend of mine, you would take care of him. I was hoping that he would do well and so felt at ease. When I saw his examination scores, I was sadly disappointed and thought, *Didn't it ever dawn on that director that the little fellow was my grandnephew, and that I had purposely entrusted the boy to him? Why did he neglect him? Why didn't every teacher do all he could to help the lad get at least passing marks? Why did they show me such little consideration?* In this frame of mind, I decided then and there to board him near Bra with a priest, a friend of mine who I felt would take the boy's success to heart. Suddenly, however, I took hold of myself and said: *Do you see what affection for your relatives is driving you to? And you preach detachment? If your grandnephew failed, must you believe that the director and the other teachers neglected their duty? Think no such thoughts! Let Divine Providence guide events!* I would like to have had my own relative, one bearing my own name, join our Congregation, but if this is not to be, perhaps it is not God's will. So I now put my mind at rest and let things go their way quietly, like water following its course."

However, the Lord willed that three of Joseph's sisters should join the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. One of them—Eulalia—became Assistant Mother General.

3. At Borgo San Martino

The transfer of the junior seminary to Borgo San Martino so nettled Mirabello's citizens that some of them "succeeded in having a tax levied on our movable goods. Furthermore [on December 31, 1870] they had the entire school impounded for auction unless the tax amounting to two thousand and twenty-five lire was paid within ten days."

Some difficulties were also raised by the provincial superintendent of schools because of possible legal violations in transferring the seminary to a new locality, but a prompt explanation satisfied the authorities, at least for the moment.[1] Nevertheless, Don

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Bosco felt that he should pay a visit to Borgo San Martino and so informed the director. He went there during the first week of Lent, on his return from Varazze.

Delighted by the happy news, Father Bonetti set about preparing his pupils for a fitting welcome by telling them and explaining for several evenings in a row a dream which Don Bosco had had in 1860 and had described to the Oratory pupils.[2] It dealt with a triple tier of tables arranged in an amphitheater. At the lowest, seated in grief and filth and feeding on garbage, were boys in the state of mortal sin; the middle tier, bathed in clear light, was occupied by lads who had regained God's grace by a good confession, and theirs was an exquisite meal served on rich dinnerware. Lastly, the topmost tables were reserved for boys who had retained their baptismal innocence. The choicest foods, an indescribable joy, enchanting beauty and dazzling splendor outshining the sun were their lot. "There were then two hundred and twelve boys at the Oratory," Father Bonetti remarked, "but Don Bosco saw only twelve seated at the innocents' table."

Pointing out the excellence and beauty of souls who retain their innocence, he exhorted his pupils to keep themselves pure in heart and body at all cost. He urged that they take advantage of Don Bosco's visit and of his talks to form and keep this holy resolution. His fervent, thoughtful recommendations bore good fruit. Don Bosco was given a moving welcome. On March 2 he received the triennial vows of a Salesian. Back in Turin, he wrote to the director thanking God for the happiness that those boys had given him.[3]

He returned to Borgo San Martino in August, again notifying Father Bonetti beforehand. His visit, from August 1 to August 3, was a blessing for the house.[4]

In one of these train trips to Borgo San Martino an amusing incident occurred. Traveling in the same compartment with Don Bosco were two men who began to talk about him—one enthusiastically praising him to the sky, the other harshly criticizing his undertakings. They were hotly upholding their views until one of

[2]*See* Vol. VI, pp. 410f. [Editor]

[3]We are omitting Don Bosco's short note to Father Bonetti and also a digression about unsuccessful attempts to sell the former junior seminary at Mirabello to meet construction expenses for a new wing at the Salesian school in Lanzo. [Editor]

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

them noticed Don Bosco in the far corner. Hoping to end the dispute, he said, "Here is a priest. Let him decide the matter. We'll abide by whatever he says."

"Fine," the other replied.

"Forgive us, Father," the first said, "if we drag you into our discussion, but in this case a priest should really be the judge. Where are you from, Father?"

"Turin."

"Do you belong to the diocese?"

"Yes. I live in the city of Turin."

"Do you know Don Bosco?"

"Very much so!"

"Well, please tell us quite impartially which of us is right."

"Well," Don Bosco answered, "you, sir, have really overpraised him. Don Bosco is not an angel, because angels do not live on earth but in heaven. You, instead," he went on, turning to the other, "have been overcritical. Don Bosco is certainly not the villain you think."

"So, what is the right viewpoint?"

"Don Bosco is an ordinary priest who may well make mistakes, but in doing good—little though it be—his only aim is to help his fellow man."

By this time the train reached Borgo San Martino. As Don Bosco alighted, a group of priests and clerics ran up to him, greeting him joyously: "Don Bosco! Don Bosco!"

The man who had spoken ill of him was very embarrassed. He hurriedly got off the train to apologize to Don Bosco, who gently told him, "Never mind! Still, when you want to criticize someone, make sure that he is not present."

4. Withdrawal from Cherasco

[In 1869] at the request of the town authorities and with the Holy See's permission, Don Bosco had opened a boarding school at Cherasco in a monastery formerly belonging to the Somaschi,[1] but from the very beginning this new foundation caused serious troubles for him.

[1]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 315, 347. [Editor]

An unhealthy climate and uncomfortable accommodations, partly owing to foot-dragging on the part of the town council, prompted Don Bosco to write to the mayor on September 7, 1870, warning him that unless steps were taken, as agreed, to remedy situations, he would have to withdraw. He also informed him that he was meanwhile making no efforts to have his teachers certified. A town council meeting on March 9, 1871 proved inconclusive, and two days later Don Bosco notified the mayor that he was terminating his services at the end of that school year. The matter went to court, and on October 17, 1871 Don Bosco was enjoined to continue running the school. He appealed the verdict on December 12, 1871, but the controversy went on for several more years until October 1877, when a compromise was finally reached.[2]

5. A New Salesian School at Varazze

Toward the end of 1870, Father Paul Bonora, the pastor of St. Ambrose and vicar forane of Varazze, wrote to Don Bosco and asked him to take over the management of a handsome resident school then being built in the upper part of town.[1] He had the agreement of the mayor, Mr. Anthony Mombello, and the approval of Bishop John Baptist Cerruti of Savona. The widespread satisfaction and praise generated by the opening of a Salesian school at Alassio that same year had prompted this invitation to Don Bosco.

In a holy desire to keep extending his sons' field of work, he welcomed the proposal, all the more so because, as we have already remarked, he foresaw withdrawing from Cherasco. He therefore invited the vicar forane to visit the Oratory, and negotiations began by mail, asking him to draft a list of basic conditions as soon as possible. In the meantime, Attorney Bartholomew Fazio, the borough school deputy, in consultation with Father Bonora, anticipated that wish and drew up a sketch which

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]*See* Vol. IX, p. 456. [Editor]

he handed over to the vicar, who in turn confidentially forwarded it to Don Bosco. The latter studied it and then sent a draft of his own to the vicar, who passed it on to the city council. The council approved it in general, but suggested a meeting with Don Bosco who promptly traveled to Varazze with his administrator, Father Savio, on Ash Wednesday, February 22.[2] Father Bonora met them at the station and insisted that they be his guests.

After several discussions on details of the stipulation, the mayor assured Don Bosco that an agreement would be reached without difficulty. While inspecting the building, Father Savio commented on the lack of space for a chapel, but the mayor assured him that a large room on the ground floor was being set aside for that purpose.

The new building was on a site previously owned by a nearby Capuchin monastery. These religious had granted permission for erecting the school, but since the mayor planned to use their public church for the day students' Sunday services and thus run a sort of festive oratory, Don Bosco made a quick trip to Genoa to see the Capuchin provincial. The latter was out. Returning to Varazze, Don Bosco called on the local superior who gave him to understand that the Capuchin community would not favor the plan. Don Bosco therefore frankly informed the mayor that he would do nothing to embarrass those religious.

We do not know whether Don Bosco was hosted, as usual, during his brief stay at Genoa by Canon Canale or by Father Caprile, the pastor of St. Luke's, but we do know that he called on Marchioness Julie Centurione among others to thank her for her invitation of December 28, 1870.[3] This good lady became one of his dedicated benefactresses.

Among his callers we must mention Joseph Prefumo, the president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society in the parish of the *Diecimila Crocifissi* [Ten Thousand Crucified], and Dominic Varetti, a member. Enthused by the good being done in Turin on behalf of poor boys, they invited him to open a school in Genoa for the same purpose. He pointed out to them the need of first

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]*See* Vol. IX, p. 456. [Editor]

finding funds and a suitable site. Those good laymen promised to work on that. Praising their zeal, he encouraged them and assured them of his sincere collaboration.

A month later, on March 23, the Varazze city council unanimously decided to open the school under Don Bosco's direction. Canon Dominic Mombello, the mayor's brother, promptly informed Don Bosco of their decision.[4]

Proceedings for implementation went very smoothly. On April 6, the vice-prefect of the province of Savona ratified the decision of the Varazze city council, and the mayor immediately sent official confirmation of this[5] to Don Bosco on April 7, 1871, giving more significant details to be incorporated in the contract which would be drawn up by Attorney John Maurice.

As soon as the contract was ready, Don Bosco received a copy with an invitation to attend the board of aldermen's meeting in order "to be of one mind about the aforesaid contract, prior to submitting same to the city council for deliberation."

Don Bosco made corrections, deletions and observations which for the most part were incorporated in the final draft, but we do not know if he returned to Varazze.[6] The definitive contract was sent to him on July 22, 1871.

In due course Don Bosco signed and returned one copy to the mayor. Having thus bound himself to open a boarding school at Varazze for the forthcoming school year, on July 29 he formally notified the mayor of Cherasco that he was withdrawing from that school because of its unhealthy location. Immediately he transferred the whole staff to Varazze, thus originating the belief among us that the Cherasco school had been transferred to Varazze.

The painstaking negotiations to open a new school at Varazze had not gone unnoticed in Genoa, where, as we have already seen, there was a great desire that Don Bosco should open a hostel for poor boys. Thus Divine Providence was already setting the scene for a new school to be opened there that year.

[4]We are omitting his letter. [Editor]
[5]We are omitting his letter. [Editor]
[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

6. Third Centenary of the Victory at Lepanto

The third centenary of the victory at Lepanto (1571-1871) was solemnly celebrated in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians.[1]

Full of interesting details, the program[2] was posted in all churches. It was also published on the cover of the May issue of *Letture Cattoliche* and on leaflets widely spread throughout the city.

On the afternoon of May 21 many Turin vocalists joined the Oratory choirboys in the little Church of St. Francis de Sales for a final rehearsal of the *Saepe dum Christi,* a magnificent composition of Father John Cagliero that was stunningly rendered on the feast day itself.[3]

At Don Bosco's wish, the festivities were most devout in church and most joyful outdoors. The splendor of the sacred services was truly moving. Outdoors, too, everything proceeded in a most orderly way, thanks to painstaking measures adopted by the superiors under Father Rua's chairmanship to ensure the visitors' free access to all playgrounds without prejudice to discipline and order.

The church services were well attended, particularly on the feast itself, May 24. Thousands received Holy Communion, and Masses were said at every altar from early morning on.

At noon fifteen hundred guests—priests, benefactors, friends, confreres and Salesian pupils from all the houses—were generously fed by Divine Providence in nine different dining rooms.

That day too Our Lady clearly manifested Her predilection for Her most devoted servant. What follows was narrated by Father Lemoyne, who also was at the Oratory:

A certain Mrs. Mary Rogattino, leading her blind child by the hand, was ushered into Don Bosco's room, where many people were already

[1]We are omitting an article of *Unità Cattolica*, May 14, 1871, on this celebration. [Editor]

[2]*See* Appendix 2. We are omitting details about a bazaar, souvenirs and a brass band concert. We are also omitting a letter of Don Bosco to Marchioness Uguccioni advising her about some matters and inviting her to the celebrations. [Editor]

[3]We are omitting the pertinent invitation sent to distinguished guests and other details about a bazaar. [Editor]

waiting. Emboldened by grief, she fell to her knees, crying, "My heart is broken! God gave me a son in answer to many prayers, and now He deprives him of sight. For two years I have seen him writhe under surgery, and the doctors have now told me openly that he has no chance and that I must resign myself to God's will. Lord! I have tried, but I cannot! This sacrifice is too much! I cannot believe that God would allow such a disaster to strike an innocent child. . . . I am this world's unhappiest woman!"

Her sobs choked her. Don Bosco let her give free vent to grief for a while and then most tactfully suggested words of comfort and Christian resignation. "Have you prayed to Our Lady, asking Her to cure this dear little angel?" he asked. "Perhaps God has permitted this misfortune to test you in order to bestow His mercy upon your child and glorify the Blessed Virgin. Ask Mary, Help of Christians to help you and firmly believe that She can easily do what surgeons cannot. Did not St. Bernard say that all favors pass through Mary's hands? Turn to Her then in a novena and offer some sacrifice. I assure you that God will heal your child if it will help his soul and yours."

Don Bosco was about to dismiss her, but she held her ground. "I will not leave until you have blessed my child," she persisted. "A friend of mine assured me that when she was sick she crawled here, and from the moment that you blessed her she began to improve. Why can't the same thing happen to my child? If St. Peter's shadow alone could straighten the cripple and restore sight to the blind, why shouldn't I hope as much from the blessing of another minister of God?"

Don Bosco looked at her for a moment, astonished by such insistent faith.

"You are mistaken," he answered. "Put no such trust in my blessing but in God through the powerful intercession of Mary, Help of Christians! I am only a feeble instrument of His hands!"

But the good woman kept insisting, so much so that Don Bosco told the child to kneel, blessed him, gave him a medal of Mary, Help of Christians, and sent him off, exhorting the mother to have faith. She departed, practically convinced that she had obtained the coveted grace. Nor was she mistaken, for when she again called on Don Bosco, her son was perfectly healed.

"Well," Don Bosco told her, "the best way for you to show your gratitude to Mary, Help of Christians is to bring up this divinely favored child as a good Christian. Teach him the holy fear of God and reverence for the Church and her ministers. Should God call your child to serve Him more closely, do not hinder his vocation, but consecrate him to God!"

On the following Sunday, May 28, the feast of Pentecost, the faithful again flocked to the services. Then, on June 1, the young noblemen who had manned the various stands at the Oratory bazaar gathered at the Oratory to present Don Bosco officially with the net proceeds, nearly 4,000 lire.[4]

That same year the Blessed Virgin granted Don Bosco another outstanding favor to benefit the whole Church—a decision to found a second religious family to care for girls. To this end She had already prepared a cornerstone in the person of a humble peasant girl of Mornese, Blessed Mary Mazzarello,[5] who was already sanctifying herself under the guidance of a Salesian priest, Father Dominic Pestarino, of revered memory.

In the sixth chapter of this volume we shall describe this good priest's apostolate, especially among young girls, through the Sodality of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate from whose ranks came the first sisters of the new congregation, filially devoted to Don Bosco. We shall also show Don Bosco's painstaking efforts for their religious formation and the heroic virtues of Mary Mazzarello, the unanimously chosen first superior, and, later, Mother General.

7. Florence and Rome

Don Bosco was very anxious to open a house in Rome. An offer for the Church of San Giovanni della Pigna[1] had failed to materialize, and nothing had come of negotiations for the Church of the Holy Shroud.[2] He was now informed that the Salesians would be asked to take over a school at Palombara, in the diocese of Sabina, near Rome.

Bishop Emilian Manacorda [of Fossano],[3] who took the trouble of looking after Don Bosco's interests with the Holy See, wrote to Father Rua on April 30 to let him know that he had obtained an awaited favor, adding the following news:

Next week I go to Palombara to choose a residence for Don Bosco's priests. The local pastors are quite pleased and so is the mayor. As soon

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[5]Now Saint Mary Mazzarello. [Editor]
[1]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 393, 395, 405, 420f. [Editor]
[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 192, 223, 238, 255, 301, 368. [Editor]
[3]*See* Vol. V, p. 77. [Editor]

as I get back to Rome, I shall write to Don Bosco in detail. The school will of course open in October, but it would be advisable to go there a few months sooner. Show Don Bosco whatever pertains to the new house and recommend me to his prayers and those of the whole Oratory.

The Holy Father blesses Don Bosco and all his sons, and I beg for your kind blessing.

Yours in Jesus Christ,
Emilian Manacorda

But matters turned out otherwise. On May 10 he wrote to Don Bosco:

As we were about to close formal and definitive negotiations for the school at Palombara, the devil (he alone) wrecked our plans. The state school inspector ended all negotiations with priests and proposed other teachers, and the municipal council went along with his decision. Rome is feeling the wind of change. [Hopefully] whatever has been agreed upon will [eventually] be carried out; if not, we shall have to bide our time. . . .

What follows fully reveals how extraordinarily good-hearted the bishop was:

Pray for me, and kindly have special prayers offered for a lady who is horribly tormented. It is no business of mine, but at the foot of the altar I have already repeatedly offered my life to Jesus in exchange for her deliverance from her most wretched condition. Wholeheartedly I state again that I would gladly die if I could thereby save that soul. And you, Don Bosco, call on Our Lady, now that Her feast is approaching, and we shall obtain this grace.

On June 1, he again expressed his belief that the Palombara negotiations would turn out well and that it was inadvisable for the time being to accept the Church of the Holy Shroud. Confident that the Oratory would like to join in the solemn celebration of the Pope's jubilee, he asked Don Bosco to have someone compose a few poems in honor of Pius IX.[4] "The Holy Father is

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

in excellent health," he wrote, "and at Palombara all await the day when everything will be as before with the former mayor in office. As regards the [Church of the Holy] Shroud, I believe its rector has already written to you. The time is not right. Even discussing the matter would be considered an outrage. So just forget it for the time being. . . ."

Why such a warning? To avoid what would have been labeled an act of servility to the Italian government. This was the opinion of many ecclesiastics because this church, though in Rome, had ties with the House of Savoy, and the Salesian Society had its motherhouse in Turin! Significantly, on April 2 of that same year, *Unità Cattolica* announced in these terms the publication of a booklet printed at the Oratory:

> A pastor of Como has published a pamphlet entitled *The Two Roses of Paradise*, a tale dedicated to the Princess of Piedmont. It was printed in Turin by the Oratory Press. We have merely read its untimely title and dedication. It would have been far better to write about the crown of thorns afflicting our Holy Father and weep with him. *Melius est ire ad domum luctus quam ad domum convivii* [It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting—Eccles. 7, 3]. It is better to go to the Vatican than to the Quirinal.

Don Bosco had decided to go to Rome [on June 25] immediately after the feast of St. John the Baptist to pay his respects to the Holy Father on the occasion of his pontifical jubilee. His plans called for a stopover at Florence where—as we shall narrate in Chapter 5—he intended to meet Minister Lanza in an attempt to improve the Church's sad condition. His appointment with the minister, however, was scheduled earlier than he had anticipated, and so he had to set off from Turin on June 22.[5] He met Lanza in Florence and then went on immediately to Rome, where, after other talks with Lanza and with Pius IX, he finally achieved his intent—the Holy See's decision to fill vacant dioceses, particularly in Italy, because after the seizure of Rome no consistories had been held for this purpose. This was a matter of "worldwide interest," as Don Bosco expressed himself in writing to Father Rua

[5]We are omitting a short letter to this effect to Marquis Uguccioni. [Editor]

and orally on the feast of St. John the Baptist [his name day] in 1872. This matter was indeed so important that, at the Pope's own request, he assiduously helped also in selecting many episcopal candidates. [Here is his letter to Father Rua:]

July 1, 1871

Dear Father Rua:

I have had two audiences with the Holy Father and all went well. I am leaving for Florence this evening, where I'll remain for a couple of days to collect a little money, if possible.

Tell Father Savio to push the construction of the Church of St. John the Evangelist. I think we can hold St. Aloysius' feast on the 16th of this month.

Remember me to our dear boys, and tell them that I am impatiently looking forward to seeing them. I hope to be with them on Tuesday [July 4]. I have a lot of things to tell them. I also wish to thank them for their prayers. I always personally recommend them to God during Holy Mass. Now there is a matter coming up of worldwide interest. Its successful outcome depends on prayer and war against sin. So take heart.

From Florence I'll let you know the time of my arrival, but tell one and all to abstain from celebrations. They wouldn't be proper in these distressing times.

My regards to Goffi and Father Berto. May God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Do what you must to have Ambrose Sala exempted from military service. Go and see whether a girl named Avalle, whom I recommended to the Holy Family Institute at St. Donatus, has been accepted. I promised to pay four hundred lire upon her admission. Write to me at Florence about it, since I need to know. She is a protégée of Commendatore Bona.

8. Gratitude Day

Don Bosco did not want any celebration on his return, but to make up for it his name day was celebrated with enthusiasm, probably on the following Sunday. A hymn, composed by Father Lemoyne and set to print, mentioned his journey to Rome and his

prediction that Pius IX's pontificate would not only match but surpass the length of St. Peter's,[1] but does not give the date on which his name day was solemnly observed. The hymn had this dedication: "To Fr. John Bosco, from the Boys of the Oratory of St. Francis Sales on His Name Day after His Return from Rome." The print shop apprentices, in turn, presented him with what they called "a modest sample of their expertise in floral patterns"—another poem by Father Lemoyne, bearing this dedication: "It is little compared to your merits, but nothing compared to our love."

As always, it was a heart-warming and moving demonstration with many compositions in prose and verse overflowing with holy resolutions to advance steadfastly in virtue.[2]

The alumni too, who in previous years had begun to attend the occasion in order to express their gratitude,[3] read out an address[4] signed by forty-five of them. They were led by Father James Bellìa. In thanking them, Don Bosco mentioned the splendid celebrations held in Rome for the Pope's jubilee, adding that the following year he would give them much more consoling news.

Devotion to the Eucharist, frequent Communion and spontaneous visits to the Blessed Sacrament during recreation were educational aids Don Bosco never ceased to stress in the simplest and most convincing manner. So effective were his words that whenever he was seen entering the church to visit the Blessed Sacrament, boys would interrupt their games in a crowd and hasten after him. Such devout scenes were particularly noticeable during the Forty Hours devotion celebrated that year from the 13th to the 15th of July.

As the school year was now drawing to a close, Father Rua, faithfully carrying out Don Bosco's every counsel and wish, asked all the directors to give a report of their individual houses on these items:

1. Number of pupils at the beginning and at the end of the year.
2. Number of pupils paying monthly fees.

[1] *See* Vol. IX, pp. 243, 248. [Editor]
[2] This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3] *See* Vol. IX, p. 428. [Editor]
[4] Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

3. Number, names and duties of confreres.
4. Total and individual expenditures of confreres.
5. Total ordinary income and disbursements.
6. Total extraordinary income and disbursements.
7. Whether personnel changes were needed.

The report was due at the end of the school year so that needed or opportune deliberations could be taken at the forthcoming spiritual retreats.

In those years—as we gather from the Salesian Directory—Father Rua was the prefect of the Salesian Society and of the motherhouse as well, and monthly staff meetings were held under his chairmanship to see about correcting or preventing irregularities or taking decisions.[5]

9. At St. Ignatius and Nizza Monferrato

On August 6 [1871], together with his confessor, Father Felix Golzio, rector of the Convitto Ecclesiastico,[1] Don Bosco went up to St. Ignatius' Shrine[2] above Lanzo, where the first retreat for laymen was about to begin. Before leaving Turin, however, he drafted a request to the Varazze superintendent of schools for permission to open a school in that town. Father Rua mailed it on August 8 along with pertinent information about the staff.[3]

Don Bosco remained at St. Ignatius' for two weeks, hearing the confessions of most of the retreatants, who saw in him not merely an excellent spiritual director, but an exceptionally pious and learned priest. In the norms and advice he gave for Christian living, especially to those seeking higher perfection, he seemed another St. Philip Neri.[4]

Even there, our good father spent his free time at his desk, answering personal and business letters. Learning that Mr. Prefumo and Mr. Varetti had found a suitable building for the projected

[5]We are omitting a résumé of meetings held in 1871 for the artisans' staff. [Editor]

[1]An ecclesiastical college specializing in pastoral theology. It was here that Don Bosco started his work for boys while attending courses immediately after his ordination. *See* Vol. II, pp. 31ff, 54-61. [Editor]

[2]*Ibid.*, pp. 96f, 112f. [Editor]

[3]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

[4]We are omitting the retreat resolutions of one of the retreatants. [Editor]

boys' hostel in Genoa, he drew up a program and asked one of the retreatants, Mr. Bartholomew Joseph Guanti, to recopy it in good penmanship for him. This gentleman later became a priest, and ten years after Don Bosco's death, while stationed in Buttigliera d'Asti as chaplain, he reminisced about that retreat as follows:[5]

I made my spiritual retreat at St. Ignatius' Shrine over Lanzo on August 9-20, 1871 and was given a room next to Don Bosco's. . . .

On the second day—if I remember correctly—he asked me to make a neatly written copy of the regulations he was drawing up for the proposed hostel at Marassi, near Genoa.

I gladly undertook the task, but, unable to decipher his corrections, I often had to ask for explanations. The saintly man obliged several times, but then, seeing that my frequent knocking at his door interrupted his hearing of confessions, he said, "Listen, consulting me so often makes both of us lose time. From now on, if you can't read my writing, just say, 'Mary, Help of Christians, pray for us,' and you'll have no trouble." To my astonishment, that invocation made everything clear, and I managed to finish the job without any difficulty. . . .[6]

Since the feast of the Assumption was approaching, his thoughts turned to his distinguished benefactress, Marchioness Mary Fassati. Unable to call on her or send a gift for her name day, he wrote,[7] promising to offer Holy Mass on that day for her intention as a token of his heartfelt gratitude for her help in obtaining exemption from military service for several clerics of his.

On August 20 he returned to the Oratory. He was still at lunch when two bishops from abroad who were on their way to Rome called to pay their respects. When they were ushered into the dining room he immediately arose and went to meet them. Warmly greeting them, he invited them to sit down and eat, and he offered one of them his own place. That prelate, however, would not hear of it, and they sat down at his right and left. Before leaving, both knelt and asked for his blessing. He demurred but finally obliged. Father Dominic Milanesio, who witnessed this incident with other confreres, is our source.

[5]We shall omit minor details. [Editor]

[6]At this point we are omitting a thank-you letter of Don Bosco for a donation received for the new sacristy of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. [Editor]

[7]We are omitting his letter and other short notes to Fr. Lemoyne and Fr. Rua. [Editor]

That same day, Stephen Ali,[8] one of the Algerians at the Oratory, returned home, having been summoned by Archbishop Lavigerie. He had been one of the first boys from Africa and had become an excellent Christian. At a very touching farewell, this fine lad promised that he would never forget Don Bosco who had been a father to him, assuring him that in his far distant land he would always remember and bless the place where he had become a child of God.

The following day Don Bosco went to Nizza Monferrato to pursue the important matter that the Holy Father had entrusted to him.[9]

Countess Gabriella Corsi of Bosnasco, née Pelletta of Cossombrato, had often invited him to her villa where he could work even while relaxing. He finally accepted and sent word that he would stay four days. The countess was so delighted to see him again that she immediately insisted he stay for at least a week.

"If I stay here, who will find food for my boys?" Don Bosco asked.

"Divine Providence will see to it," the countess retorted.

"Yes, but Providence also says: 'Help yourself, and I will help you!' I must do my share and find some kindly people. . . ."

"How much do you need to feed your boys for these three extra days?"

"Three thousand lire."

"I will give them to you if you will stay."

"In that case, I accept."

The countess gladly handed Don Bosco the sum, and he immediately sent it to Turin.

On August 24 he wrote to Father Rua to inform him, among other things, that he had invited Mr. Varetti of Genoa to come to Nizza.[10] The latter promptly went there and told Don Bosco that the house chosen for the hostel was Senator Cataldi's villa at Marassi, a few kilometers east of Genoa's city limits. The site was very pleasant, healthy and quiet, and the rent was a mere five hundred lire which had already been paid. Don Bosco remarked

[8]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 348f, 369. [Editor]
[9]*See* pp. 101f. [Editor]
[10]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

that a private villa far from downtown was hardly suited to an arts and trades school, but he was nevertheless glad to get it started, feeling certain that more suitable premises could be found later with the aid of the St. Vincent de Paul Society.[11]

On August 28, Father Francesia went to Nizza for instructions about opening the school at Varazze. Father Cerruti also went to tell Don Bosco that many families in Alassio were eager to see a lycée added to the local Salesian school. Since the municipal authorities promised full moral support but no financial backing, Don Bosco hesitated to take on such an expensive enterprise which would require certified teachers and substantial outlays for a physics laboratory and other equipment. However, after closely studying the matter, he decided that he would ask the parents of the local graduates to pay, as a temporary measure, a percentage of the cost they would have to bear for boarding their sons in Savona or Genoa.

Then in the presence of his benefactress, he smilingly remarked to Father Cerruti, "Remember that the Alassio lycée was decided on here at Nizza, in the villa of Countess Gabriella Corsi!"

The pupils' parents accepted his proposal. Three families promised to pay fifteen hundred lire each, two others pledged three hundred lire apiece, and one offered two hundred lire for a period of three years.

The work Don Bosco accomplished in those few days—which he called days of relaxation and diversion—was quite substantial and even demanding, particularly those first days when he was carrying out the important task of selecting candidates for vacant dioceses. Though his feet and legs had given him some trouble, he left Nizza blessing God.

Back in Turin, he answered letters which had arrived during his absence. One, sent by Father Oggero, the pastor of the former Carthusian monastery of Rivarolo Ligure and a truly fine shepherd, reached him at Nizza. He had heard of the promised opening of a Salesian hostel at Marassi and was very anxious to talk to Don Bosco about the many poor lads of neighboring Sampierdarena. He invited him to be his guest at the monastery for a few

[11]We are omitting a short letter of Don Bosco to Father Rua giving him some news and entrusting to him the printing of a circular. [Editor]

days and to discuss the matter at leisure. Don Bosco accepted gladly and promised to pray and visit him:

Turin, August 30, 1871

Dear friend in the Lord:

May God be blessed in all things! He alone can buoy us up in the midst of the terrible troubles which now morally oppress all mankind. Let us pray. On my part I shall also have prayers offered at the altar of Mary, Help of Christians for your intentions.

Since I must go to Genoa in the autumn, I gladly accept your gracious invitation to spend a few days at the monastery where you are the worthy pastor.

May God bless and help you fulfill your noble desires. Pray for me and my poor boys.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

10. Liguria, Florence and Rome

At the beginning of September Don Bosco went to Genoa to look over the villa at Marassi and to seek benefactors for that foundation. We have no evidence that he went to the monastery [of Rivarolo], but he did meet many laymen and priests.

On the way [to Marassi] he met Father Joseph Capecci, the Augustinian pastor of Our Lady of Consolation Church in the section of town called San Vincenzo. Don Bosco mentioned the hostel he was about to open at Marassi and recommended it to him since his parish near [the town gate called] Porta Pila was not far from the hostel. This good religious told him that it would be desirable and even necessary to also open a school or at least a festive oratory in Alessandria where, in his frequent visits, he saw swarms of boys idling in the streets. Fortunately, the girls of the town were looked after by several orders of nuns. Don Bosco encouraged him to hope that this need would be met in due course. How amazed and overjoyed the zealous religious was when a Salesian oratory opened in Alessandria the very same year he was appointed bishop of that city. Two years later, on April 30, 1899,

at the inauguration of the adjoining school, he was delighted by the sight of some four hundred boys receiving Holy Communion. Later, at table, he recalled with deep emotion his encounter with Don Bosco twenty-eight years before.

Don Bosco tried to speak with Marquis Ignatius Pallavicini, but since the latter was away, he informed him in writing of the forthcoming opening of a hostel at Marassi, warmly recommending it to his generosity. The marquis replied on October 9, pledging an annual donation of a thousand lire.[1]

On September 6, Don Bosco went to Sestri Ponente to visit Baroness Louise Cataldi, a future important benefactress of his. From there he wrote as follows to Father Rua:

Villa Cataldi, Sestri Ponente, September 6, 1871

Dear Father Rua:

God willing, I shall be in Turin tomorrow morning at 11:20. I think that we should dine at Aunt Felicita's and have a little rejoicing to prepare for Our Lady's feast day. We shall also have the opportunity to discuss some matters.

If the prospectus for Varazze is ready, send some three hundred copies to the mayor or to the pastor immediately. Then send one with a covering letter to each of the dioceses of Savona, Genoa and Sarzana. May God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

The covering letter urged the pastors to send boys inclined to the priesthood to the Salesian schools of Marassi or Varazze.[2]

On September 7, Father Rua and Don Bosco dined at Aunt Felicita's. This pious young woman named Felicita Orselli lived with Teresa and Frances Fusero, two other devout ladies with whom she shared interests. From the modest profits of a small store Felicita Orselli had managed to take out a life annuity in favor of Don Bosco and was overjoyed whenever she could prepare a meal for him; he would go to her home only to give his un-

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

divided attention to urgent work that he could not do at the Oratory.

On September 8, the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, awards for excellence in studies and conduct were given at the Oratory to the best students and, for the first time, also to artisans taking French and regularly attending elementary school classes. Immediately afterward, Don Bosco set out for Lanzo with the directors for their annual spiritual retreat scheduled to start on September 11. However, he had to leave at once for Florence at the urgent summons of Minister Lanza. From Florence he went on to Rome for the grave matter that was of "worldwide interest."

He stayed there only three days, enough for his purpose. On September 15 he was back in Florence. While there he got word from the Capuchin Fathers of Varazze about lively discontent in that town caused by a rumor that he intended to take over the Capuchin church for the benefit of the Salesian day students.[3] To dispel their fears, he sent their superior the following letter which is on file in our archives:

Florence, September 15, 1871

Dear Reverend Father:

Be assured that Don Bosco will never cause the Capuchins any difficulty. I have always done and still do all I can for them by sending them postulants and offering them my hospitality. From the start of the troubles[4] until now, I have always had several Capuchins as dear, welcome guests.

I have never asked anyone to negotiate about the Capuchin church in Varazze. Your informer must have misunderstood what he heard, or perhaps some self-appointed delegate took it upon himself to handle matters which never entered my mind.

When we had to reply to the city council, who had suggested we use your church for our day students, I went to Genoa myself to sound out your provincial on this matter, but he was out of town. Therefore I returned to Varazze and spoke at length with Father Christopher and Father Guardian. Since they did not favor the plan, I personally called on the mayor to tell him that I had no intention of using your church. I added that I would provide for the boarders by turning a large room

[3]*See* p. 95. [Editor]

[4]The suppression of monastic orders and the confiscation of their property. *See* Vol. VIII, pp. 184f. [Editor]

into a chapel and that it was up to the city council to find some other place for the day students. I did all this myself without consulting or delegating anyone.

Times are difficult. Let us strive to help rather than hinder one another.

You did the right thing in writing to me because you thus learned how things really stand. Now you will know what to do and what to tell others. I recommend great caution in accepting at face value what is attributed to me. If you hear such things, you will do me a favor to let me know about them. They will certainly serve as my norm in avoiding statements or decisions that not only hurt charity but often hinder what pertains to God's glory, for which we both work. May God bless us all. Pray for me.

Yours sincerely,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. I am momentarily in Florence, but tomorrow I'll be back in Turin.

In actual fact, while the boarders used a hall for a chapel, the day boys went to the chapel of Our Lady of the Assumption, quite near the school.

11. Return to Turin

Upon his return to the Oratory Don Bosco immediately went up to Lanzo where two spiritual retreats were scheduled from the 18th to the 23rd and from the 25th to the 30th of September respectively.

Back in Turin, he again left for Becchi[1] to celebrate the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and also to find time to line up his many projects and rest a little, since he was utterly exhausted. This we gather from letters[2] to Thomas Uguccioni, a benefactor whom he had been unable to see in Florence, and to Countess Callori.

He rested by working peacefully in a quiet, solitary environ-

[1]Becchi, Don Bosco's birthplace, was situated on the outskirts of Morialdo, one of five hamlets which made up the town of Castelnuovo, fifteen miles from Turin. *See* Vol. I, p. 20. [Editor]

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

ment, far from the many people who daily sought to see him.

In mid-October, Father Francesia took charge of the new school of Varazze in the face of an unhappy coolness on the part of the townsfolk.

On October 26 several well-known professors and men of letters met at the Oratory to discuss which authors were to be published in the monthly issues of *Italian Classics for the Young*.[3] These cordial meetings dated from 1869, when the publication first began.

That same day Father Albera and two clerics left for the new house at Marassi. When they called on Don Bosco to say goodbye to him, ask for a kind word and receive his blessing, he exclaimed: "So, you are going to Genoa to open a home for destitute boys!"

"Yes, but we have no means," one of the three remarked.

"Don't worry about anything. The Holy Father sends you his blessing. Trust fully in the Lord and He will provide. You will be met at the station by someone who will take you to your lodging. There you will open your mission."

Father Albera, the Oratory extern prefect,[4] had put a little money aside for initial needs. When Don Bosco asked whether he needed anything, he replied, "No, Don Bosco, thank you. I already have five hundred lire."

"My dear Father," Don Bosco retorted, "you don't need that much money. Isn't Divine Providence in Genoa as well? Have no fear! Divine Providence will look after you. Don't worry!"

And taking a few lire out of his drawer—just enough for the trip—he handed them to him in exchange for the five hundred!

That same day, Don Bosco fully rewrote his circular letter for the opening of a lycée at Alassio.

Father Albera set out with his two companions, all their possessions in one traveling bag. Arriving at Genoa, they were met by several members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society from the parish of the *Diecimila Crocifissi* [Ten Thousand Crucified], led by their president, Joseph Prefumo, and by Dominic Varetti.

[3]A type of juvenile "Book of the Month Club." *See* Vol. IX, pp. 51, 195ff, 391f. [Editor]

[4]The extern prefect helped the director in matters of public relations, admissions, expulsions and bookkeeping. [Editor]

These insisted that they first take some refreshment, and then they brought them to Marassi to Senator Joseph Cataldi's villa, which had been rented as their residence.

The first few days were very hard for these sons of Don Bosco. They lacked everything and spent more than one night sleeping on wooden chairs because they had no beds. God was putting them to the test before showering His blessings on them.

In fact, as news spread through the town that a hostel was opening where needy boys could receive a Christian education and learn a trade or craft, generous benefactors came to their help. Even kindly peasants of the neighborhood vied with each other to provide them with necessities. Mr. Prefumo especially proved a good father to the youngsters and often visited them, particularly on the eve of solemn feasts, bringing gifts for them.

12. A Long, Edifying Contention

In 1870 friction developed between the Oratory and Bishop Thomas Ghilardi of Mondovì because of a transaction involving the purchase and resale of a printing press. Though conducted with edifying charity on both sides, the contention lasted until 1871.

In June 1868, during the octave of the consecration of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians,[1] Bishop Ghilardi had asked our confrere, Chevalier Frederick Oreglia, the manager of the Oratory printshop, to buy a press for him.[2]

Some days earlier (June 3), at a bargain price of 8,500 lire, Chevalier Oreglia had paid Dominic Fissore cash for a press for the Oratory.[3] Several people, learning of the transaction, immediately offered him a higher price for the press, going as high as 18,000 lire, to be paid by installments. Oreglia [disregarding the highest bidders] ceded it to the bishop for 15,000 lire, the lowest bid.

Two years later, in 1870, the bishop came to know of the dif-

[1]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 124-140. Bishop Ghilardi enhanced the solemnity of the festivities with his active participation. [Editor]

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[3]*See* Vol. IX, p. 147. [Editor]

ference between his and Oreglia's payment for the press, and took a trip to Turin to discuss the matter with Don Bosco. Since Don Bosco was absent and Chevalier Oreglia had already left our Society to become a Jesuit,[4] he spoke to Father Rua. On August 24, 1870, Father Rua replied in these terms:

After considering the matter, our dear Don Bosco has instructed me to tell you that he does not think it right or fair for the Oratory to suffer financial loss in the sale of a press to you and the printing of your publications. Knowing that this press was for sale, Chevalier Oreglia bought it at his own risk; then he quietly told of the sale only to a few people. In return, he received three bids: one for 15,000 lire, another for 16,000, and a third for 18,000. Disregarding the others, he accepted the first—your own—as a grateful gesture to a bishop so well-deserving of the Church and so kindly disposed toward us. Chevalier Oreglia notified Don Bosco about it this very year in Rome. Don Bosco respectfully acquaints Your Excellency with these facts and will gladly accept your observations.

The bishop replied on September 1, as follows:

Both Don Bosco and I feel the same in this matter; we both want what is just and fair. I think we can solve our problem by asking others for an equitable solution. I shall send my own side of the story to Chevalier Oreglia for verification. Once we agree on the facts, we shall submit the matter to two or three theologians of our mutual choice and shall unquestioningly accept their decision. I am sure that Don Bosco will agree, since I believe this is the most rational way to settle the matter for the peace of both our consciences. I have already begun a statement of facts and shall send it to Rome as soon as I can, since I am anxious to remove this thorn from my side.

I would also like Don Bosco to be informed of an error which Chevalier Oreglia in Rome already knows about—namely, an overpayment on my part of a thousand lire. Invoices show that I paid 16,000 lire instead of 15,000. Therefore my printing bill should not exceed 5,000 lire, unless I am mistaken. Your latest statement sets my debt at 6,500 lire.

The bishop had a charge account with the Oratory printshop but for some years now he had fallen into arrears. Hence one

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 335-338. [Editor]

should not be surprised that the bishop was not explicitly told that the thousand lire had already been credited to his account.[5]

The bishop and Don Bosco continued negotiations for a just settlement. Don Bosco stated clearly that Chevalier Oreglia had acted on behalf of the Oratory and had given him some 6,000 lire profit on the resale of the press, adding that this sum would be available for a settlement if so required. In writing to Father Rua, the bishop stressed the part played by Oreglia and urged him to verify this point again, so that the consultant theologians—Father Stanislaus Eula for the bishop and Father Felix Golzio for Don Bosco—might bear it in mind when handing down a definitive judgment.

The matter of who owed what was also complicated by the fact that the bishop's accounts with the Oratory printshop had not been audited since 1865. This task was entrusted to Father Rua. His report showed that the bishop owed 5,553 lire and 96 centesimi. The itemized statement was sent to the bishop with a copy of the contract "stipulated between Don Bosco and Dominic Fissore on June 3, 1868" in proof that Oreglia had acted as the agent for Don Bosco and not for the bishop, as the latter was claiming.

At long last, thanks to a gracious gesture on the part of Chevalier Oreglia—an offer of 3,000 lire to the bishop—and the latter's payment of the balance he owed Don Bosco, the long contention ended.[6]

13. Writer and Publisher

Before closing this chapter, we must say something about Don Bosco as a writer and publisher, his thoughtful charity in trying to help people who sought his assistance, and his deep gratitude to his benefactors. Lastly, we shall briefly describe deaths which occurred during that year at the Oratory.

While at Becchi, he began compiling a collection of interesting incidents in the life of Pius IX, which he published under that title

[5]We are omitting other details of this controversy that went on for nearly two years. [Editor]

[6]The last three paragraphs are a condensation. [Editor]

in *Letture Cattoliche.*[1] Writing and spreading wholesome books in popular style for young people and the masses was a constant occupation of his.

Toward the end of 1870 he offered subscribers of *Letture Cattoliche* a new edition of his *Church History* which, two years later, Father John Bonetti definitively revised and published. Furthermore, Don Bosco never abandoned his idea of publishing, in conjunction with competent persons, a more extensive church history[2] that would spotlight the Popes' apostolic labors. This we gather from the following letter to a priest whose identity is unknown to us:

October 20, 1871

Dear Reverend Father:

Here is an outline of the church history I intend to compile with the help of qualified people.

Part I: *Ancient History,* covering the first six centuries up to Mohammed's flight [from Mecca] in 622. This part should be subdivided into two periods: from the descent of the Holy Spirit up to 312, and from that date to 622.

Part II: *Middle Ages*, from 622 to 1517. Here too there should be two periods, from 622 to the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and from then to 1517.

Part III: *Modern History*, from 1517 to the death of Pius VI [in 1799], and from that date until the present time.

This is my initial plan, subject to change depending on suggestions and observations.

At the end of each period, I would like you to compile a chapter entitled "Religious Events in Piedmont."

Viriliter age in Domino (Act manfully in the Lord).

Devotedly yours,
Fr. John Bosco

The *Letture Cattoliche* issues published in 1871 were as follows:

January. *St. Joseph's Vicissitudes*, a sacred drama by Fr. Lucian Secco.

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]*See* Vol. V, pp. 381ff. [Editor]

February. *A Cross Made More Bearable*, a story by Fr. Cajetan Blandini.

March. *A Soldier's Homecoming* by Fr. Celestine Faggiani.

April. *Papal Infallibility Explained to the People* by Fr. Secondus Franco, S.J.

May. *The Blessed Virgin's Apparition at La Salette and Other Wondrous Events Compiled from Other Publications* by Fr. John Bosco.

June. *A Lover of the Sacred Heart of Jesus*, recollections by Fr. A. M. Pagnone, Barnabite.

July. *Life of St. Jerome Miani* by Fr. Peter Bazetti.

August. *The Crown of Virginity. Why the Diodati Translation of the Bible Is Forbidden* by Fr. Louis Bruno.

September. *The Young Catholic Girl*, reflections and readings for Catholic girls by S.D.N.Z.

October. *Devotion to the Guardian Angel*, reflections and anecdotes by Fr. Vincent G. Berchialla.

November-December. *Interesting Incidents in the Life of Pius IX.*[3]

14. All Things to All

Don Bosco's all-embracing love was so well known and appreciated that everyone regarded him as a friend and a father. Examples of such men include Baronet Rudolph Ricci requesting a Mass to obtain God's help in examinations, Attorney Charles Canton—a benefactor and departmental head of the Finance Ministry in Florence—asking Don Bosco to put him in touch with some good family in Rome where he was soon to be transferred, Attorney Comaschi of Milan requesting a note of introduction to Louis Giacosa, a lawyer, and many others. Similarly, when [in 1871] the Communards held sway in Paris, shooting the archbishop and burning down part of the city, Don Bosco had special prayers offered at the Oratory for the restoration of peace in that capital and so informed Mother Eudocia of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, who had written to say how terribly worried she

[3]We are omitting a review of the May issue and Father Amadei's comments on the August issue. [Editor]

was for the fate of their motherhouse. The good nuns were visibly protected by God. When Don Bosco received the heartening news along with a grateful donation, he immediately requested more detailed information.[1]

The veneration in which he was held everywhere was matched by the trust with which city and government officials sought his help in housing destitute boys. Appeals came from all sides and he took the youngsters in with open arms! As every misfortune moved him, so too every donation deeply aroused him to a gratitude which he never failed to manifest in every possible way. The dearest, most appreciated gift he would offer to outstanding benefactors was to say a Mass for their intentions on solemn feasts and on family anniversaries and to have the Oratory boys offer their Holy Communions and special prayers.[2]

15. Beloved Pupils

From March to December 1871 nine deaths occurred at the Oratory. Seven pupils died between March and June; a novice died in November and another pupil passed away in December. This last death had been predicted by Don Bosco. By God's grace, all had led exemplary lives and died a holy death, as Father Rua acknowledged in the Oratory obituary. Here are their edifying biographies in capsule form:

Joseph Baggini of Torre de' Conti, 12, died on March 15, 1871. He was a very lively, virtuous boy with great potential for good. God took him after a brief illness, perhaps to keep him from danger. He received the Last Sacraments and all the comforts of our religion.

John Broggi of Treviglio died on March 22 at the age of 18. His progress in learning and piety was steady. Frequent reception of the sacraments increased his fervor. During his last months, he applied to the Society of St. Francis de Sales and was accepted as an aspirant. Never complaining, he was friendly to all, but intimate only with a few. He predicted his death three days beforehand while apparently still in good health. His death from asthma came fairly suddenly, but he was able to receive the Anointing of the Sick. Fortunately he had gone to Communion the previous day.

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Sebastian Astigiani of Monticelli died on April 2 at the age of 23. Firmly determined to advance in virtue and learning, he compensated for his mediocre intelligence by greater diligence and managed to keep pace with the others. Fully resigned to God's will in his brief illness, he died a holy death, comforted by the Last Sacraments.

Louis Trono of Mortara, 13, died on May 12. Innocence of life marked him as a true follower of St. Aloysius. He loved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and received often. Before and after Communion he looked like an angel. Obedient, affectionate and sincere, he won everybody's heart. The Lord called him to join the blessed who accompany the Immaculate Lamb singing a hymn they alone can chant.

Augustus Said, one of the young Algerians sent to the Oratory by Archbishop Lavigerie, died on May 30. Meek and quiet, he probably never annoyed anyone. Though only a recent convert, he loved Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and often asked to receive Him during his long illness. Obedient, pious and studious, he longed to go as a missionary to his fellow countrymen. Called to his heavenly reward, he will pray unceasingly for the conversion of his fellow Algerians.

Joseph Penati of Treviglio died on June 18 at the age of 17. Of scant intelligence and poor health, he was slow in studies but remarkable in piety, obedience and helpfulness toward his companions. He fully trusted his spiritual director and fervently desired to consecrate himself to God, but poor health kept him from being accepted into the Salesian Society.

Michael Franzero of Turin died on June 18 at the age of 11. He had transferred from the Hospice of Charity to the Oratory with other companions. His conduct was excellent. Though his life was ordinary, his death was singular and enviable. On his last morning, though he had already received the Last Sacraments, he insisted on repeating his confession amid profuse tears of sorrow. He died in fullness of joy an hour later, claiming that angels and the Blessed Virgin were coming to meet him.

Father Rua jotted down the following additional details about this youngster's holy death:

During his stay at the Oratory, Michael Franzero's conduct was that of any good boy. His grades were always satisfactory. On or about June 7, 1871, one of the superiors, noticing how pale he looked, asked him if he was sick. He replied that he felt poorly but not too ill. Since his pulse seemed to indicate a slight fever, the same superior had him taken to the infirmary. Through ten days of illness he was quite patient. When

asked how he felt, he always replied that he felt better. He particularly liked to hear spiritual things or words of encouragement. On June 16 he asked for and fervently received the Last Sacraments, though he did not think he was seriously ill. During the night of June 17-18 he became worse. With his usual patience, he kept repeating short invocations whispered to him, but from time to time he would turn to his attendant and say, "Please get me Father so-and-so," meaning the priest who had had him sent to the infirmary. Upon being told that it was late and that the priest needed his rest, he would quiet down for a while, only to renew his request shortly afterward. Finally the priest was sent for in the early hours of the morning. "I would like to make my confession," the boy gravely told him.

"You made it only a few days ago," the priest replied. "You need not repeat it."

"But I want to," the boy insisted.

The priest obliged, and during his confession Michael broke into copious tears and loud exclamations: "Will God forgive me? Will He really?"

"Yes, He will; be tranquil," the priest comforted him. "Put your trust in God who loves you very much." But the priest barely managed to calm him down. He too felt deeply moved, as did the bystanders. Since Michael had received Holy Viaticum only two days before, it was not considered necessary for him to receive it again just then, since his condition did not seem to have worsened.

The priest left to attend to some urgent duties, promising to ask his companions to pray for him, and suggesting that he too speak a little with Our Lord in his heart.

At about 7:30 while Michael's companions were in church praying for him to Mary, Help of Christians, he began to gaze steadily at the infirmary ceiling and then broke into happy laughter. "What's the matter?" he was asked. "Can't you see who's coming to me?" he replied. "Look at the angels—so many and so beautiful!" Beaming with joy, he kept turning left and right as if greeting the newcomers, though he alone could see them. Again he looked up to the ceiling, saying, "Oh, even Our Lady is coming to see me. She is going to take me with Her. How happy I am!" Then he became silent. Still smiling, and with his eyes gazing upward, his pure soul joined the choir of angels escorting the Virgin Mary, as we have good reason to believe. It was June 8, the third Sunday of the month. Michael was but eleven.

The priest referred to was Father Rua himself who in his humility omitted yet another detail which we came to know through

Father Bartholomew Molinari, a confrere of ours, who witnessed Franzero's death. He told us that Father Rua was also present, and that as soon as the pious boy breathed his last, Father Rua, deeply moved, raised his eyes to heaven, exclaiming, "I think I saw his soul fly heavenward like a dove!"

Joseph Abrami, born in Brescia August 19, 1855, died on November 19, 1871 at the age of 16. Having proved his virtue, he asked to join the Salesian Society so as to offer his youth and whole life to God. Our Heavenly Father was pleased with this offer and rewarded his ardent desires by calling him to enjoy the reward of his willingness to leave parents, relatives and friends for His sake. Strengthened by the Last Sacraments, and mourned by companions and superiors, he died on November 19, 1871 at the age of 16. Let us pray for the repose of his soul if he has not yet entered heaven.

Eugene Lecchi of Felizzano died on December 18 at the age of 15. Rather reserved in speech, he was good, respectful toward superiors, and affable with his companions. He diligently fulfilled his religious duties and was devout and reverent in church. He was also an excellent student. Though he skipped grades he still managed to rank among the top students in his class. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage within two days.

From these brief profiles how can we fail to see the admirable and exemplary type of life that boys lived while in close contact with Don Bosco?

CHAPTER 3

Recovery from a Serious Illness—1871-1872

DON Bosco had planned to visit his new schools at Marassi, Varazze and Alassio at the start of the 1871-72 school year, but when Turin's newly appointed archbishop scheduled his official entry into the archdiocese for the same time, he decided to wait until the ceremony was over. When he did go, he first went to Genoa and then to Varazze. There suddenly he fell seriously ill. The news, spreading rapidly, caused dismay among his sons and friends.

We have gathered and assembled abundant documentation of those tragic days. From first to last, the reports firmly prove Don Bosco's virtue, holiness and trust in God. Likewise they show his sons' anguish and their heartfelt prayers to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, Help of Christians for their dear father's swift and complete recovery.

Were we to cite each of our sources we would never end, but we do think it proper and dutiful to peruse them unhurriedly and thoroughly, without fear of turning our narration into a detailed diary. We aim to impress the reader with Don Bosco's sufferings in those fifty days of anguish, fear and hope, the widespread anxiety caused by his illness, and the efforts of his sons and admirers to support him and obtain his recovery from God.

The principals in our narrative are Father John Baptist Francesia, director of the Varazze school and one of Don Bosco's dearest and most loved spiritual sons, Peter Enria, his trusted, patient, solicitous nurse, and Joseph Buzzetti, one of the first boys to attend Don Bosco's catechism classes at St. Francis of Assisi and to cast his lot with him. To Buzzetti Enria sent daily bulletins on Don Bosco's illness.

1. A Grave Illness

In the autumn of 1871 as Archbishop Gastaldi made ready to assume his duties as head of the archdiocese of Turin to the chagrin of local anticlericals, the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, which had made him its target as soon as his appointment was announced, wrote on October 27, 1871: "The Vatican chose him most meticulously in the hope that he may become a second Fransoni."[1] The article then went on to urge the city authorities to boycott the reception ceremony. In fact, in response to the official announcement of the archbishop's arrival date by the vicar capitular, Monsignor [Joseph] Zappata, Mayor Felix Rignon replied that "in view of new policies governing Church and State relations the board of aldermen considered it inopportune to be represented at the ceremonies."

Archbishop Gastaldi was again rebuffed by the king's neglect to even acknowledge the letter announcing his forthcoming entry into the archdiocese. The prefect of the Turin province was the only one to receive the news favorably as we gather from this letter of Don Bosco:

[October 1871]

Most Reverend and dear Archbishop:

I have spent two days here in Passerano at the Radicatis, where I talked at length with another guest, Attorney Bonino, the vice-prefect of Turin. He spoke favorably of your letter to the prefect and his reply, and he expressed a genuine wish that your entrance into the diocese be a solemn one.

"We shall have to see what the local civil authorities will do," I remarked.

[1]Louis Fransoni (1789-1862) became bishop of Fossano in 1821 and apostolic administrator of the archdiocese of Turin in 1831. Named archbishop a year later, he zealously promoted ecclesiastical discipline and studies. In 1848 anticlerical factions forced him out of his see. He returned two years later and staunchly opposed the law abolishing church tribunals. In reprisal he was jailed and fined. Released soon afterward, he was again imprisoned for having refused Holy Viaticum to an unrepentant cabinet minister who had been mainly responsible for the enactment of the Siccardi law. Finally, in 1850 he was exiled to Lyons, where he died on March 26, 1862. Throughout his tenure of office, he unflinchingly supported Don Bosco. *See* the Indexes of Volumes II, III, IV, V, and VII under "Fransoni." [Editor]

"You can be sure that they will rise fully to the occasion," he replied.

I shall give you more details in person. If you are still undecided about a provicar, I suggest Father [John Baptist] Bertagna. He is prayerful, scholarly, capable and well-to-do. He may accept. Make what you wish of this suggestion. It's just a thought that crossed my mind. I beg your blessing.

Gratefully and devotedly yours,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Please do care for your health. The harvest is plentiful, and you will find laborers.

Archbishop Gastaldi chose to enter the archdiocese officially on Sunday, November 26. From Porta Nuova he made his way privately to St. Philip Neri's where priests, confraternities, religious associations, and dignitaries were assembled to escort him processionally to the cathedral. Suddenly it was rumored that a riot was imminent. At the moment Don Bosco was standing near the prelate. "What shall we do?" he asked.

"Something is wrong," the archbishop replied.

In fact, Father [Joseph] Ambrogio, a [notorious] apostate priest,[2] was in the crowd, trying to stir up trouble.[3] At this point, Chevalier Bignami, chief of police, went up to him and, gripping his shoulders, warned, "If you don't shut your mouth, I'll have you tied up like a salami." Sensing trouble, the archbishop entered his carriage and was driven off to the cathedral.

"Where is the archbishop? Where did he go?" people asked. Gradually, as the hostile crowd dispersed, the clergy and the confraternities set out processionally for the cathedral, where the archbishop awaited them.

Don Bosco joined the procession with great effort because of a severe pain in his shoulders and a strained heartbeat—the first touches of the illness that was to fell him.

Having entered the cathedral processionally, the archbishop mounted the pulpit and delivered a homily, repeating almost ver-

[2]*See* Vol. VII, p. 320. [Editor[

[3]In 1866, to minimize the harm done by this apostate, Don Bosco published a small pamphlet entitled: *Who Is Father Ambrogio? A Dialogue Between a Barber and a Theologian.* It was spread far and wide. [Author]

batim what he had had published in *Unità Cattolica* on October 4. His appointment, he said, had been an unexpected act of Divine Providence, free of all human choice. The Holy Spirit alone had set him at the head of the Turin diocese. So heavily did he stress this, that all in the know could not help remarking, as Canon [Michael] Sorasio himself told us later, "Things look bad for Don Bosco, bad indeed!"

Some days later, on December 2, Don Bosco left for Genoa, spending the next day, the first Sunday of Advent, at Marassi, where he met with several members of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and with Father Albera, director of the new school, concerning its needs.

On December 4 he went on to Varazze. [A few days before] he had written to a Mrs. Susanna Prato of Albisola Marina to say that he would be visiting her and would appreciate it if she would tell no one of his coming. This lady, a subscriber to *Letture Cattoliche* since 1853, regularly received some forty copies of each issue for free distribution. Although she did not then know Don Bosco personally, she was so thrilled that she could hardly wait. The courtesy was well deserved, because her life had been one long series of charitable works.[4]

On the morning of December 6, Don Bosco, accompanied by Father Francesia, went to say Mass at Invrea in the castle of Marchioness Julie Centurione. He then returned to Varazze and in the afternoon took the train for Albisola. Words cannot describe the joy of the charitable seventy-year-old Susanna, who always declared that that day had been the most delightful of her life.

Don Bosco spoke at length with her because she knew many important persons on the western Riviera and in Genoa. Having influence with political and judicial authorities at the local, provincial and regional levels, she could be a great help to his new school at Varazze in several ways.

On reaching the railroad station, Don Bosco found that his train had already left. "If you plan to take the next one," some employees suggested, "you had better go to Mrs. Susanna Pra-

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

to's. Other priests do. You can wait there at ease until it's time to leave."

Don Bosco followed their advice and took the next train to Varazze. A strong damp wind was blowing, and the round trip tired him. So badly did his shoulder pain him that, on stepping off the train, he suffered a stroke of sorts and had to be helped home in the arms of those who had met him at the station. Once in his room, they immediately slit his cassock at the side and put him to bed. It was about seven in the evening. Dr. John Baptist Carattini, hurriedly summoned, diagnosed the illness as rather serious but—as Father Francesia wrote[5]—"he managed to dissemble." He was aware that a gush of blood was threatening the heart and that the danger had to be averted at all costs. As we stood there, trying to guess the nature of the illness from the doctor's looks, the latter took Don Bosco's pulse, listened to the heartbeat and called for various things, apparently fearing to reveal his findings. Finally, in a non-committal tone, he asked Don Bosco, "Would you mind some blood-letting? It's seldom done nowadays—and I go along with that—but in your case. . . ."

"I am in your hands," Don Bosco answered with a smile. "Do as you think best."

Yet the doctor still hesitated, so crucial seemed the decision. At midnight, he decided to bleed Don Bosco, who immediately experienced relief as the pressure on his heart seemed to abate. Nevertheless, knowing the gravity of Don Bosco's condition, the doctor stayed at his side and within two hours bled him again. "Thank you, doctor," Don Bosco said. "That will do." At four in the morning the doctor left, only to return at daybreak.

That day, December 7, Don Bosco was expected in Turin. A telegram came in his stead: "December 7, 1871. Father's return delayed; rheumatism aggravated, blood-letting done; nothing alarming. Bosso."[6]

In Varazze too the news spread immediately, to the dismay of all his friends. At a session on November 27, the municipal council had agreed to solemnize the opening of the [Salesian] school

[5]Cf. *Bollettino Salesiano*, September 1899, p. 244. [Author]

[6]We have no clue to the identity of the signer, but the original telegram in our archives is signed "Bosso." [Author]

with a testimonial dinner which was most likely to take place at Don Bosco's visit. Of course, it had to be cancelled.

On December 8 his condition worsened. The mayor and the pastor of St. Ambrose Church came to see him, and he asked their prayers for his soul's salvation. Obviously he was in severe pain, but he made no complaint. To those who sympathized, saying "You must hurt badly," he would reply, "No, I'm just lazy and like to rest in bed. Those who take care of me are the ones who are suffering. The Lord endured so much for us; if we suffer a bit for Him, we shall receive a heavenly reward. Jesus suffered unto death on a hard cross. Why shouldn't I, a sinner, suffer something?"

During those days his holiness was visibly matched by his sons' love. From the very first night the cleric Peter Guidazio[7] never left his side. After teaching more than seven hours during the day, he taught an evening class from eight to nine for some one hundred adults, yet he felt it a privilege to nurse Don Bosco. Later he wrote from Randazzo:

> God knows my grief that first night! Don Bosco was in pain and, unable to move, would ask me to help him shift his position, sit up in bed, or do something for him. I was alone, timid, uncertain, and very cold. The first night finally went by. I shall always remember how Don Bosco abruptly ordered me to bed and forbade me to teach that day. Knowing I would upset school routine, I took up my usual tasks after Holy Mass and kept teaching until nine at night, when I went back to Don Bosco's room. I kept watch by him for eight nights while carrying out my regular duties during the day. In the morning Don Bosco always ordered me to bed, and when I returned at night, he asked whether I had slept during the day. Not to upset him, I said that I had. I did doze, however, between classes. I felt my strength draining away, especially after three or four nights, under the strain of work and sleeplessness, and I even feared that I might suddenly collapse. But I was ready to die if it would only benefit Don Bosco.

[7]Peter Guidazio (1841-1902) entered the Oratory in 1862 at the age of twenty-two. Two years later, Don Bosco opened the Lanzo school and sent him there to teach. He stayed six years and showed himself to be a good teacher. Ordained in 1874, he was appointed prefect of studies at the Oratory. Later, he successively held important offices and greatly contributed to the spread of Salesian schools in Sicily, where he died in 1902. [Editor]

During the day others took turns nursing him. Among them was the cleric John Turco of Montafia d'Asti who had entered the Oratory in 1852 with the intention of becoming a priest and later had to leave for family reasons. Still, he persevered in his vocation and returned to the Oratory in 1871. After donning the cassock, he was sent to Varazze to teach mathematics and natural history. He was so warm-hearted and solicitous that Don Bosco used to call him his skillful therapist.

Don Bosco's illness was by no means slight. In the first few days there was grave fear for his life. Hence his friends, first in Varazze and then in Turin, questioned whether he was in good hands, particularly since Dr. Carattini was new at Varazze. Therefore, Father Francesia asked for a consultation with Dr. Joseph Fissore of the University of Turin, a friend and admirer of Don Bosco, who, at Father Rua's request, promptly obliged. After an examination, he conferred with Dr. Carattini at length. Our deeply worried confreres drew a long sigh of relief when he stated, "Let Don Bosco feel confident with Dr. Carattini. He deserves his full trust." Dr. Carattini grew very fond of Don Bosco, and for twenty-five years he provided medical care for the staff and pupils.

As soon as Mrs. Susanna Saettone heard of Don Bosco's illness, she visited him several times, despite the rigid cold, always to assure him that she and others were praying for his precious health. This good lady's visits in those dark days cheered the Salesians as well, and they began to look on her as a mother. She in turn kindly called them her sons. It was fortunate that she did show such esteem and regard for the Salesians, for, seeing her call on Don Bosco so often, the people of Varazze came to realize that he was a rare and unique person, a saint indeed. The cold diffidence they had first shown to the Salesians vanished completely; they became friendly and never stopped showing their cordial friendship.

Nor did Don Bosco forget the generous souls who kept sending their offerings to help his "little rascals" in those days. Knowing how they would appreciate hearing from him, he sent word on the fourth day of his sickness to his "good mamma," Countess Cal-

lori, through Father Francesia, who signed himself "Your most devoted servant and grandson."

One of those who kept insisting on daily bulletins of his condition was Countess Gabriella Corsi who offered to pay for all expenses. Hence many telegrams were sent to her directly. In turn, she promptly forwarded them to the Oratory. The first telegram read: "Varazze, December 12, 1871. [Dr.] Fissore very encouraging. Tranquil night. Rheumatism improved. Illness running its course. Please forward. Francesia."

That same morning, Father [Francis] Cuffia, prefect of the school, sent this first bulletin to the directors of the other Salesian houses:

> Our revered Don Bosco wants all our directors to have a complete report on his illness. He also asks them to have prayers offered to God through the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians for his recovery in order that he may continue to work for the good of the Congregation and of the youths entrusted to him by Divine Providence.
>
> As you already know, he was overcome by a severe attack of rheumatism here at Varazze on December 6. Fortunately the worst is over. All that is left is a skin eruption. Doctor Fissore, who expressly came from Turin to see him, found him in good shape and has assured us that he is out of danger. However, a full recovery will take quite some time.
>
> While wishing our directors to know this, our dear Don Bosco recommends prudence, lest the confreres and boys be unduly alarmed. They are only to request prayers for his speedy recovery. Hence, to eliminate all anxiety, Don Bosco asks that a health bulletin be sent to the directors several times a week, and daily if necessary.

Father Cuffia gave this additional information to Father Rua: "Don Bosco spent a somewhat restless night. No new developments. The sickness has evolved into a skin rash which causes no worry. Every five hours or so he has a slight fever." In another letter that day, he told Father Rua: "It is 4 P.M. and Don Bosco has rallied a bit from the exhaustion that has overcome him since one o'clock this morning. There is nothing to fear, but, to be truthful, I am apprehensive at seeing him so depressed. Say nothing of this because Don Bosco does not wish it to be known. I will

always tell you what I feel, see and think. Have prayers said for him. To us and to many youngsters he is both father and angel."

The following day, the directors were again assured that Don Bosco's condition was not alarming:

> Our beloved father continues to improve. His rheumatism has almost disappeared and his fever has abated considerably. The skin rash is still there. We are ever more convinced that his recovery, protracted and somewhat long drawn out, will present no danger. Don Bosco sends greetings to you and to all the boys, and he strongly recommends himself to your prayers. If anything new occurs, you will be informed.

2. Serious Anxiety

At the request of Don Bosco, Brother Peter Enria arrived at Varazze on December 12 with Father Angelo Savio, economer general, and Father Paul Albera, director at Marassi. This good brother has never forgotten how privileged he felt to nurse Don Bosco through this long, serious illness.[1]

On arriving, he hurried to Don Bosco's bedside and was joyfully welcomed. How deeply grieved he felt, however, to see Don Bosco in bed and unable to move one arm. He had believed the illness was slight, but he now realized that Don Bosco's condition had worsened, as he was afflicted with a third attack of miliary fever, which caused reddish-white blisters, the size of a millet grain, to break out all over his body.

From the next day on, nursing duties were shared between the cleric Guidazio and Brother Enria, the latter taking the day shift to two in the morning, and the former from two to six. This schedule held for about a month. At certain hours of the day others came to relieve Enria for a while.

The course of the illness did not seem distressing. In fact, early on the morning of December 13, Father Cuffia sent a telegram to Countess Corsi: "Recovery steadily proceeding. Further telegrams unneeded." The Oratory was immensely relieved by the message, but that same day Enria wrote to Joseph Buzzetti:

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

"Wednesday, the day after my arrival, Don Bosco had a very bad time. A high temperature racked him for more than twenty hours."

Father Francesia personally sent Father Rua these confidential details:

This morning I sent you a cheering bulletin, but regretfully I cannot continue to do so. Right after I sent it, our dear Don Bosco's temperature rose sharply and distressed him the whole day; it has not yet abated. In addition he had an exhausting attack of vomiting. We have been anxious all day, whereas we had expected the very opposite. I hope he will be able to get some rest tonight. He recommends himself to your prayers. They have already been partly answered because the pain in his arm has abated considerably. In fact, today he decided to use it and shake it out of its laziness, as he jokingly says.

This evening we sat silently around his bed for a long time, not having the courage to speak while he lay there in pain. Let us hope that our own suffering, which we also offer to God for our father's speedy recovery, will have its effect. Our boys here are praying hard. Loving him ardently even before knowing him, they gave him a rousing welcome on his arrival. Now they are very sad to think that he fell ill here at Varazze. They would love to visit him, but prudence dictates otherwise. We have not dared to remove the welcome posters we put up for his arrival because he is already suffering so much. On the door of his room a poster reads: "Long live Don Bosco!" Was this a greeting or a fear of what might happen?

Yesterday's arrival of Father Savio, Father Albera, Father Ricchini and Brother Enria was very touching. We looked at one another emotionally and silently. Don Bosco too was deeply affected. Father Savio said that people at the Oratory doubt [the gravity of] Don Bosco's illness. Would that it were only a doubt!

This morning I had hoped to go to Nizza and help Father Cagliero because Don Bosco seemed so much better, but this evening he told me to forget about it. Poor Father Cagliero!

I express my own feelings, fears and observations without intending to cause alarm for the future. His illness will certainly be a long one, but not dangerous, according to Dr. Fissore, and we must accept that. Meanwhile we must try to hasten the day of his return to console his children.

Don Bosco is anxious to have that box of myrrh which you bought.

Have it brought up or sent up as soon as possible. He also has asked me to tell you that the above details are for yourself alone.

On December 14, Enria wrote to Buzzetti:[2]

Today, Thursday, he rested better and the fever gave him a little respite. Right now (11:30 P.M.) as I write this, he has become more tired and restless. His sense of taste is once more normal. Even when feverish, he is never delirious. He suffers with enviable calm, neither complaining nor moaning. He is always in good spirits and cheers us. We are the sad ones. He thinks only of his beloved sons and often speaks of Father Rua and the others. He asks for prayers. He would also like word of Father Rua's mother, so please send me news. . . .

The good woman who had taken Mamma Margaret's place at the Oratory in 1856 was then seriously ill.

Encouraging telegrams kept coming from Varazze, but on December 16, the opening of the Christmas novena, Father Francesia wired Father Rua: "Fourth [miliary] outbreak. Let us pray. Consultation of Dr. Fissore with another doctor requested."[3] The next morning a letter that Father Francesia had mailed before sending the telegram reached Father Rua:

Yesterday—he wrote—things took a turn for the worse. Don Bosco ran a temperature all day until eight o'clock. The doctor does not seem to anticipate a crisis, either now or later, but he does not rule out that one can come. I am frightened by hearing about several people who had the same illness in Savona two or three years ago. . . . Today, all danger seems past; if this continues, we can be sure of having Don Bosco up and about by Christmas, but tomorrow, when you read this, I should not be surprised if you were to receive a telegram telling of a restless night and more miliary outbreaks.

Don Bosco asks Father Berto to search for the manuscript of the little dictionary for his *Church History*. He fears that he left it at the Oratory.

I wrote to Rome and Florence about Don Bosco, and we have a job keeping everyone informed. I wish that I had a hundred hands to deal with all the mail and not give the impression of being careless. Don

[2]We point out that in some letters, especially those of Enria, misspellings and grammatical errors were corrected without, however, altering the meaning of the words. [Author]

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Bosco needs our attention too. We must spend much time at his bedside. . . .

Don Bosco was quite impressed by Father Golzio's[4] kindness, and were it not for the distance, he would ask him to come for a visit.

We do not know what Father Golzio did at the time of our father's illness. The fact is that the news of his illness had spread, causing grave fears and spurring people to offer fervent prayers to the Lord for him.

Enria, too, confirmed that his illness was not as slight as might be believed:

Don Bosco's illness has finally been diagnosed correctly. It is not a touch of miliary fever, but the real thing. Miliary vesicles are now erupting throughout his skin for the fourth time. Continual fever and extreme sweating are draining his strength.

Today, December 16, he has been quite restful. The fever left him only toward evening, but returned at about seven and racked him until two in the morning, when he fell asleep. The rheumatism in his arm has almost disappeared and he can move it again. Now he can raise himself in bed; formerly he could not. . . .

The same day, on a separate sheet, Father Francesia begged Father Lazzero to urge the St. Joseph's Sodality to offer prayers and Holy Communions. In turn, Buzzetti replied to Enria:

Dear Peter,

Thank you sincerely for your favor in keeping me informed about our dear Don Bosco's health. I enclose stamps so you can daily send me genuine news and not a fictitious report, as some do. Father Lazzero is at Nizza Monferrato with Father Cagliero, and so I gave your letter to Father Rua. It proved effective. This morning everyone received the sacraments. I hope that our prayers and those of the retreatants and benefactors will move Our Lord to have compassion on us and, if it be to our advantage, preserve our father for us for years to come. I am convinced that the Lord is punishing us by keeping our dear Don Bosco sick for some time because we do not appreciate him as much as he deserves. So

[4]Fr. Felix Golzio had formerly been an assistant to Father Louis Guala, founder of the Convitto Ecclesiastico in Turin, and to Father Cafasso, his successor. After the latter's death, Father Golzio became rector of the Convitto and Don Bosco's confessor. [Editor]

let us pray and promise sincerely [to love him more], so that God may soon give him back to us in good health.

Father Rua's mother is better. This morning she attended Mass. . . .

3. Prayers and Self-Immolation

Father Rua at once sent Enria's note to Father Lazzero at Nizza Monferrato with the message, "You see that things seem to be taking a bad turn. Dr. Fissore will go to Varazze next Tuesday. May God grant that he bring us good news. . . ." He also sent copies of Father Francesia's telegram to all the directors, urging personal and community prayers. The sad news inspired generous sacrifices.

At this time (we do not know the precise date, because, to offset any alarm, no news was sent to the Oratory or any other house) Don Bosco, realizing his critical condition, made his confession to Father [Paul] Monbello, the pastor of St. Ambrose, who had often visited him. Enria wrote:

> Father Francesia brought him Holy Viaticum the following day. I haven't the heart to write about it. At dawn Don Bosco told me, "Please get altar cloths and set up a neat little altar for the Blessed Sacrament." As I did so, he prayed like a saint preparing to receive Jesus worthily into his heart. The tinkling bell aroused him, and when Father Francesia brought the Blessed Sacrament into the room, he painfully tried to sit up. Burning with desire to receive Jesus, he no longer seemed of this world, his countenance radiant, serene like that of a seraph adoring the Blessed Sacrament. Kneeling at his bedside, I suddenly realized that this might be his last Communion, and so acute was my grief that I again offered my life to God in exchange for his, my spiritual father. The rest of that day he spent in thanksgiving.

Aware of the seriousness of his condition and wishing not to encumber the Salesian Society with legal problems, Don Bosco calmly and gently asked Father Francesia one evening to send for a notary. Father Francesia broke down and slipped away into a corner. There the matter ended.

Fever, skin eruptions and abundant perspiration sorely tried him, but, as Enria declared, "He never complained. His only worry was for us who feared to lose him. 'God provides for the

birds of the air,' he kept saying, 'and He will look after the Oratory children too.' He always managed to comfort his visitors."

"Immorality, loss of faith and materialism which strive to worm themselves into the hearts of youth are this world's plagues," he would lament. "To stem these evils, we must reach out to young people, win their friendship and give them a genuinely religious education. We must foster vocations and form good, holy priests and religious who will dedicate themselves to young people's education. Within a few years, I promise you, things will change for better and religion will win out. . . . But to attain this, we must stay with Christ's Vicar. Then will youth again love virtue, faith and truth."

Enria soon noticed that Don Bosco loved to recall the early days of the Oratory, and he often reminded him of them:

"Do you remember how your mother used to chide you whenever you took in more boys?" I would ask him. 'You always bring in more boys,' she would say, 'but how can we feed and dress them? We have nothing and winter is setting in!'

"I slept a few nights myself on a bed of leaves with only a light blanket over me. And when we were in bed, you and your mother mended our pants and jackets, because they were all we had. . . ."

Don Bosco would smile and remark, "How hard my mother worked! Such a saintly woman! But Providence never failed us!"[1]

On Sunday, December 17, in spite of a racking fever, he spent a peaceful night and slept until morning. At 10:30 a slight fever returned. Anxiety and hope kept alternating and arousing an ever more intense interest in his illness.[2]

Meanwhile, news that Don Bosco had suffered another skin eruption, his fourth, stirred up a contest of love and faith in all Salesian houses. On December 18, Father Bonetti, director of Borgo San Martino's junior seminary, wrote to Father Rua:

Dear Father,

Your telegram dismayed us. Please send a substitute confessor[3] within

[1]Don Bosco always had the greatest veneration for his mother and repeatedly called her a saint. When she died and the Oratory boys wept bitterly at her loss, he comforted them, saying, "We have lost our mother, but I am sure that she will help us from heaven. She was a saint!" [Author]

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[3]At this time directors were also the ordinary confessors. [Editor]

a day or so and let me fly to Don Bosco's bedside! I again read the letter he sent me last December 26. After telling me he would soon send me the *strenna*, he added, "It will be my testament." You remember that I told you of this and that you became concerned and approved my plan to have the boys offer their daily Communion and prayers for his health. At mid-January this year, Don Bosco, noting our anxiety, wrote to me in these terms: "We must not harbor illusions. God wants us in a better world than this. It is up to the sons to show themselves worthy of their father and even better." It is clear that he forewarned us of his departure a year in advance. My dear Father Rua, I know your grief, but I know not how to console you. May the Child Jesus and Mary, our good Mother and our hope, comfort us in these trying hours. Please do send me a confessor. . . ."

Hastening to express his grief upon learning that Don Bosco had "suffered a turn for the worse," Father Pestarino wrote:

Yesterday evening I called a meeting of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and told them the sad news. They all promised to pray their utmost and arranged for a triduum of prayer in the parish church in honor of Mary, Help of Christians, at their expense. They also resolved to receive Holy Communion and as far as possible to make a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Surrounded by grief, I had one consolation—one of them asked if she might offer her life to God in exchange for Don Bosco's. Others too declared themselves ready to die to save Don Bosco's life. They will offer their lives during Holy Communion. I heartily approved their request and, deeply moved, adjourned the meeting. I must admit that their example inspired me to do the same during Holy Mass.

Who cannot see Mary Mazzarello, ahead of all others, declare herself ready to offer her life for Don Bosco?

Let us hope—Father Pestarino went on—that the Lord will accept our prayers and the voluntary self-sacrifice of these souls. This morning (December 18) I summoned the men and the boys of the parish and urged them to pray and receive Holy Communion. I told the girls and women of St. Theresa's Sodality the same thing. I celebrated High Mass at Our Lady's altar and closed with Benediction and a strong exhortation to all the people to pray for Don Bosco.

He ended his letter by saying that he had also written to neighboring priests to enlist their aid for prayers in their parishes.[4]

In other places too, especially in Piedmont, private and public prayers were offered for Don Bosco's recovery. Foremost in these demonstrations of veneration and love was Bishop Eugene Galletti of Alba. On hearing the sad news, he was so shocked that he fell to his knees and tearfully exclaimed, "Lord, if you seek a victim, here I am, but please spare Don Bosco!" He then wrote Don Bosco a most moving letter, and after commending his vital and providential mission, he added: "I have prayed and have asked others to pray for you. I have offered my own life to the Lord, that He may spare you for the sake of so many poor boys and the Church's good." He stated the same to Father John Cagliero: "My life is worth little or nothing. Don Bosco's is not only precious, but most useful to the welfare of the Church! Compared to his, my life has utterly no value. He is a saint, and saints, we know, are in this world for good reasons."[5]

All at the Oratory vied with each other in their filial devotion to Don Bosco. Several pupils knelt at the altar of Mary, Help of Christians, imploring Her to take them then and there to heaven and spare Don Bosco. Among these was Louis Gamarra of Lombriasco who informed Enria of the offer they had made of their lives. Enria read the letter to Don Bosco who tearfully sighed, "How good they are! How much they love poor Don Bosco!" He told Enria to thank them and urge them to continue their prayers so pleasing to God.

In reference to Louis Gamarra, Enria made the following statement in the Informative Process: "God seems to have granted his prayer, for he died in my arms just a few years later (November 10, 1878), scarcely one year after his ordination."

Father Pestarino, too, departed from this earth barely two years after his generous offer of sacrifice, and Bishop Galletti "began to be troubled by various ailments, suffered a stroke, and finally died [October 5, 1879] at the still hearty age of sixty-three." Don Bosco, instead, "despite his sixty-four years, endless

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[5]Cf. Summary of the *Informative Process*, p. 859. [Author]

work and heavy preoccupations," kept going "in good health."[6]

4. Widespread Concern

Such generosity resulted from Don Bosco's unequaled goodness. Illness notwithstanding, his concern centered on his spiritual sons. On December 19 [1872] Enria wrote to Father Lazzero:[1]

With all his troubles, he keeps light-hearted and, on seeing our gloom, always thinks of a joke to cheer us up.

Prelates and pastors everywhere write to express their deep sympathy, send a blessing, and assure him of prayers that his life, so precious to the Church and souls, may be preserved. He knows that at the Oratory prayers and Communions have been and are being offered for him, and he is deeply grateful, attributing his improvement to them.

In heart and mind—even when asleep—he is always at the Oratory. The other night he dreamt that he was driving the devil from it. It is now four in the morning, and our good father is restless, unable to sleep, and just about beginning to doze off. From a few rambling words I gather that his mind is busy with great plans for the future of our Congregation. . . .

Dr. Fissore arrived on December 20 with Countess Corsi and her daughter. After examining Don Bosco, he assured us that he would soon be convalescing. This visit did him a lot of good.[2]

Before leaving, Countess Corsi said that she wished to make his room in Turin more comfortable by carpeting the cold tile floor which probably caused his headaches. Don Bosco, who could not tolerate carpets, or even a bedside rug, countered, "My good lady, I would gratefully accept a thick layer of two-lire bills. They would surely rid me of the headaches probably awaiting me at the Oratory."

[6]Cf. *Bollettino Salesiano*, November 1879. [Author]

[1]Joseph Lazzero (1837-1910) entered the Oratory in 1857. In 1859 he was one of the first young clerics to join Don Bosco in forming the Salesian Society. (*See* Vol. VI, pp. 181f.) He made his triennial vows in 1862 and was ordained a priest three years later. In 1870 he made his perpetual profession. In 1874 Don Bosco appointed him to the Superior Chapter and later entrusted him with important tasks. Stricken in 1897, he retired and died after a long illness at Mathi (Turin) on March 7, 1910. [Editor]

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Regretfully the visit of the doctor and the countess was too short and their departure depressed Don Bosco. A relapse followed, and on December 22, feeling very low, he secretly jotted down a testament. His condition remained unstable and took a turn for the worse on the night of December 23 with miliary outbreaks, heavy perspiration and an exhausting fever. Enria kept the Oratory duly posted on all developments.[3]

5. Slight Improvement

Despite his own mother's grave illness, Father Rua decided to go to Varazze during the Christmas holidays, not later than the feast of St. John the Evangelist [December 27]. Enria's letters were regularly passed on to him, and every evening at the "Good Night," either personally or through another priest, he shared the news with the pupils, "urging them to keep praying and striving to become better as long as God chose to chastize the shepherd for the sins of his sheep," as Buzzetti declared.

Christmas at the Oratory was a sad but very devout occasion. Though grieved by Don Bosco's absence from the Midnight Mass, Salesians and pupils vied with one another in praying most fervently for his recovery.[1]

Father Rua left for Varazze after arranging for a second and more fervent novena to Mary, Help of Christians. Overjoyed at his visit, Don Bosco told Enria, "I am glad, really glad, that Father Rua came to see me." During that visit they held several lengthy conversations in private.[2]

As soon as Father Cagliero returned to the Oratory, where a second novena for Don Bosco had begun, he immediately took it upon himself to invite the several religious communities of Turin which he served to join in special prayers for Don Bosco. On December 27 he wrote to Enria:

Dear Enria,

Give my heartfelt greetings to our dear father and tell him that I am

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[1]We are omitting an exchange of letters between Brother Buzzetti and Enria concerning Don Bosco's precarious condition. [Editor]

[2]We are omitting letters between Enria, Brother Buzzetti and Father Lazzero concerning prayers offered for Don Bosco's recovery and his deep gratitude. [Editor]

keeping alive the flame of charity and prayer in all the religious communities in town.

I called on Archbishop Gastaldi who is very concerned about Don Bosco's health and prays much for him. If danger arises, let me know and I shall come immediately.

I often see Countess Corsi, our "grandmother," and do my best to console her. To lessen her grief I am forced to conceal my own.

It was at this time that Archbishop Gastaldi, seeing the apostolic work of the Salesian Society, seems to have thought of turning it into a diocesan congregation.

"How many of you are firmly committed to your Society?" he asked Father Cagliero.

"All the directors."

"And the others?"

"Over a hundred and fifty are faithful to their vows and will remain so."

"What if Don Bosco dies?"

"We shall look for a successor!"

"Good, but let us hope that God will spare him!"

Father Cagliero, sensing the hope of the archbishop that, should Don Bosco die at that time, the Salesians would turn to him for direction, said nothing more. On leaving the archbishop's residence, he met Canon [Francis] Marengo and told him of his conversation. The canon, who knew the archbishop's mind, was touched and gratified.

"Bless you!" he exclaimed. "Your answer forestalled any harm to your Congregation!"

Don Bosco's condition continued to improve. "Today," Enria wrote on the evening of December 27, "he is well again. His skin peels off in flakes some five or six centimeters wide. It is such a joy to see him sitting up in bed, eating bland food, and talking spiritedly with Father Rua about the Oratory. His nephew, Louis Bosco, has been here for nearly a week."

"See how bad I am," Don Bosco jokingly told Enria one day—"so bad that I have to shed my old skin! Let's hope the new one will be tough enough to withstand the gales and thunderstorms now lashing the world. I am confident that God will guarantee the success of His work. Be convinced, my dear Enria, that all our physical and mental powers, all our efforts, hurts and humilia-

tions, should have but this goal—God's glory. When we strive for our own glory, all our work is utterly worthless. Woe to the man who expects worldly praise. The world is a bad paymaster and most ungrateful." After pausing briefly, he went on: "Don Bosco is but a humble peasant child whom our merciful God raised to the priesthood through no merit of his. But see how good the Lord is! He availed Himself of an ordinary priest to perform wonders. All has been done and will be done for the greater glory of God and His Church!"

6. High Hopes

High hopes followed anxious days. The mail brought the Oratory boys' New Year's greetings, and Don Bosco thanked them through Enria who sent them daily bulletins on Don Bosco's steady improvement. His benefactors vied with each other to send him anything to help him, and the Oratory provided everything else. Don Bosco acknowledged their solicitude.[1]

Father Rua left Varazze on December 28, and after a brief stopover at Genoa-Marassi, he arrived at the Oratory on the following day. A letter from Father Francesia, dated December 29, reassured him that Don Bosco's recovery was slowly continuing. The novena was obviously effective. On his part Enria carefully kept the Oratory posted on Don Bosco's condition.

On New Year's eve Don Bosco insisted on giving the yearly *strenna* to the confreres of the house who gathered around his bed. He explained and inculcated the practice of two scriptural texts: *Praebe te ipsum exemplum bonorum operum* [Show yourself in all things an example of good works—Tit. 2, 7] and *Obedite praepositis vestris et subiacete eis; ipsi enim pervigilant quasi pro animabus vestris reddituri* [Obey your superiors and be subject to them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of your souls—Heb. 13, 17]. Obedience is the key to good example.[2] Father [Francis] Cuffia dutifully sent a summary of Don Bosco's talk to Father Rua.[3]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]For more details about this strenna, *see* Ch. 8, No. 6. [Author]
[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

7. The Pope's Blessing

On January 3, 1872 small blisters broke out over all Don Bosco's body, bringing him discomfort and causing apprehension, though the doctor was quite optimistic. A cordial visit by Father Dominic Pestarino on January 2 and by the bishop of Savona on the following day helped to lift his spirits. Father Francesia and Enria sent news respectively to Father Rua and Joseph Buzzetti. A postscript to another letter from Father Francesia to Father Rua, dated January 5, again raised hopes. It read: "Yesterday Cardinal Antonelli telegraphed the Holy Father's blessing to Don Bosco. Our father was delighted. He assured us that he had not had so serene and restful a night as that following the Holy Father's blessing. I shall save this telegram and in due time have it properly framed."[1]

When Father Francesia [later] read him the telegram, Father Rua was truly delighted. "The Pope," he exclaimed, "has graciously remembered the least of his sons! Thanks and more thanks! May God reward him for the happiness he has caused! The blessing of Christ's Vicar brings joy to the heart and peace to the soul!" Then, to memorialize the happy event, he asked Father Francesia to have the telegram handsomely framed. "Don Bosco himself—Enria wrote—declares that his recovery is due to the prayers said for him and to the Pope's blessing."[2]

Late in the evening of January 6 a delegation of twelve men arrived from Mornese with gifts and greetings from the whole village. After Mass the next morning, they went to see Don Bosco and stood around his bed with their gifts of fruit, butter, honey, eggs and wine at their feet.[3]

"It was truly a moving sight!" Enria told us. "Our good father was touched by this demonstration of love and gratitude. We thought of the good shepherds bearing gifts to the Child Jesus in Bethlehem's cave."

Don Bosco too recalled the feast of the Epiphany which had just gone by, and, thanking the men of Mornese, asked, "Would

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

you mind joining me in offering these gifts to the Infant Jesus, that He help us become saints? I ask your forgiveness"—he went on smilingly—"if I cannot entertain you longer as I did at Mornese. God bless you. Pray for me. I shall pray for you and your families, so that one day we may all form one happy family in heaven. . . . Now I feel tired, but I hope that I can have a word with each of you before you return home."

They left the room deeply moved and edified by his patient resignation. That same day Father Francesia wrote to Father Rua:

> Since the Holy Father's blessing, things have kept getting better. So far he has had not the faintest sign of fever or any of the grim symptoms of new outbreaks of the skin. He hopes to get up soon, probably during the week. We can hardly wait for that day! How we long for it! This is now his third day of convalescence. Let's keep praying and hoping. . . .

On January 7 Don Bosco asked Father Francesia to send news and his thanks to Countess Callori:

> A slight relapse set in during the last few days—Father Francesia wrote—but now, after the Holy Father's blessing, we have seen a marked improvement. The doctor has already allowed him to sit up in bed. . . . Thank God, I hope we may now believe that Don Bosco is really and truly convalescing. I dare not say it out loud. Once before I did at Don Bosco's explicit request, only to face disappointing setbacks. Now let us hope and trust in God.
>
> Don Bosco thanks you for the thousand-lire bill you sent for the Oratory, which is floating in debt. But this is not the least of his concerns. When the day of his return to Turin draws nearer, I shall be happy to inform you. To give this letter true value, Don Bosco will add a few words in his own hand, so I shall not even dare add my signature. . . .

Here Father Francesia handed the pen to Don Bosco who added these few lines:

> Varazze, January 7, 1872
>
> My good Mamma,
>
> *Deo gratias!* May God reward your kind anxiety in my regard and your generous help to the Oratory in these last few days.

God bless you, my good Mamma, and may He grant every favor to you, to the count, and to your whole family. Continue to pray for this bad child so that he may become good, always a most affectionate and devoted son to you.

Fr. John Bosco[4]

8. On the Way to Recovery

Father Francesia finally sent the following good news to Father Rua to pass it on to the Oratory community:

Varazze, January 9, 1872—2 P.M.

Dear Father Rua:

I take it on myself to satisfy your desire for news of Don Bosco because I no longer trust anyone else, Father Rua included.

Yesterday Don Bosco felt really well. Only toward evening did he feel tired with a slight headache, but he knew why. The delegation from Mornese was still there. They were quite discreet, but they did have a thousand things to tell him before leaving. Besides, Don Bosco felt strong and was glad to talk to them. . . . Anyway, he spent a restful night and felt well again this morning, although still a little tired.

He was told of your prayers first by Father Durando in a letter and then personally by Father Cagliero who arrived here yesterday at 8:30. As always Don Bosco was quite pleased. Now let us hope that the improvement will continue. If we shall have mild spring days like today during the week, he may be able to get up by Saturday or Sunday. . . .

Countess Callori must probably be beside herself with joy because yesterday he wrote her a note in his own hand. She is really lucky. It is the second letter he has written from his bed.

I might never stop writing today, but I'm running out of paper. I hope I can confirm this good news in a later letter.

Love me in the Lord. I am

Yours affectionately,
Father Francesia[1]

[4]We are omitting details about prayers and Masses being offered at the Oratory at the boys' request for Don Bosco's full recovery. [Editor]

[1]We are omitting two letters of Enria: one to Brother Buzzetti about Don Bosco's patience, resignation and gratitude, and another to the Oratory artisans. [Editor]

The news kept getting better. On January 11 Father Cagliero wrote to Father Rua from Varazze: "Don Bosco keeps improving. He no longer suffers hot and cold spells as he did the other day. . . . By Sunday he will be allowed to get up and walk about the room. If the improvement keeps up, we shall soon sing a *Te Deum*."

The joy which everyone felt at this good news was indescribable.[2]

At last on January 14, Don Bosco got out of bed. "Don Bosco was on his feet today for over two hours," Father Francesia wrote to Father Rua. "At first he felt weak, but gradually his strength returned. Our boys were most happy. After many *vivas* they ran up to his room and we couldn't hold them back anymore. Smiling joyfully, he greeted them sitting up in an armchair. We cried for joy. May the Lord be praised for all He has already granted us. . . ."

Enria sent more details to Brother Joseph Buzzetti:

> Don Bosco is doing fine. He slept well during the night between Saturday and Sunday. At 6 A.M. on Sunday, Father Francesia gave him Holy Communion. . . . At eleven o'clock he insisted on getting dressed. Fearing a collapse, since he had been in bed for six weeks, we made him sit down, wrapped him in warm clothing and gave him lunch. Then, helped by three of us, he walked around the room four or five times. He stayed out of bed until five in the evening. During this time all the pupils quietly filed into his room to kiss his hand. All the time he had been ill they had not seen him. In order to save his strength Don Bosco did not speak, but his joy made him feel perfectly cured. The last group to visit him was composed of the forty pupils—day and resident—of the cleric Francis Borgatello. They gave him a pretty box of candy and a little money. The love and joy with which they presented their little gifts was heartwarming. Our good father was delighted, and after thanking them, he gave each a piece of candy. He was truly happy and very bright.
>
> At five he went back to bed, slept peacefully from six to seven, and then again from ten till dawn. . . .

The pupils were aware of Don Bosco's affection for them. He had often asked the director to give them his greetings and several

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

times had asked for the music teacher so that he could point out certain flaws in the boys' singing. One day, feeling worse than usual, he heard a boy crying beneath his window. "Please go down and see what's wrong with that poor boy," he told Enria. The lad was homesick; his mother had paid him a visit and had just left. Some friendly words and candy cheered him up. Don Bosco was so sensitive that he could not bear to see a child suffer. If he learned that a boy had been ill-treated, he would reprimand the offender severely. On the occasion of a school holiday, he recommended to the prefect that he give the boys a special treat at dinner.[3]

As Enria explained to Don Bosco, Buzzetti was not visiting him because, aside from considerations of distance and expense, he did not want to arouse envy among the confreres or start a rush to Varazze. Too many were anxious to visit Don Bosco. Anyway, since it was proper that the coadjutor brothers should have a chance to show their filial love, Brother Joseph Rossi was chosen to represent them, to Don Bosco's great joy.[4]

On January 21, Father Francesia wrote to Father Rua:

> Don Bosco is doing fine. We hope that by next week he will be able to say Mass in the chapel. He reads his mail and last night he was determined to hear the confessions of a group of boys. The doctor is not keen on letting him leave at the end of the month. With prayer, we can safely hope that by February 2 we'll be able to set out for Turin. I desire that more than you. . . .

The directors of Borgo San Martino and Lanzo had not yet visited him. Father Bonetti had been kept away by business but hoped to go. Meanwhile Don Bosco sent word to Father Lemoyne that he wanted to see him, "because without him he could not feel well."

"Mind," Don Bosco told Father Cuffia, "Father Lemoyne will receive the letter this Saturday [January 20]. On Sunday, after

[3]We are omitting a letter of Enria to Brother Joseph Buzzetti expressing Don Bosco's wish to see him, and two letters of Father Francesia to Countess Callori and to Father Rua respectively, confirming Don Bosco's steady improvement. [Editor]

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. We are omitting letters from Enria and Brother Rossi to Brother Buzzetti and Father Rua respectively. [Editor]

evening services, he will leave immediately for Turin and stay the night there. On Monday he will hop the first train and get to Varazze at 2:30. Have someone meet him at the station to help him with his bags."

"No," Father Cuffia objected. "Upon arriving at Sampierdarena Father Lemoyne will go to Genoa to see his mother and won't get here till Tuesday."

"You don't know Father Lemoyne," Don Bosco retorted.

So certain was Don Bosco that he had dinner ready to be sent up to his room at three o'clock. But Father Cuffia, still incredulous, sent nobody to the station.

Father Lemoyne arrived on Monday and, luggage in hand, walked into Don Bosco's room at the hour Don Bosco had said, having done exactly as the saint had predicted.

"Did anyone meet you at the station?" Don Bosco asked.

"I saw nobody."

"Didn't you go to Genoa to see your mother?"

"Do you think I would delay, knowing that you were anxiously waiting for me? Forgive my saying so, but I still have a little heart and brain left."

"What did you think when you heard of my illness? Were you afraid I might die?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Do you recall the dream of the Ten Hills?[5] You reached the eighth hill. As I see it, each hill symbolizes ten years, so your lifespan will extend over the seventies. Furthermore, in the dream you were bent over and toothless, and you are not so now."

"But here everyone feared I might die. On one particularly bad evening, I wisely asked Father Francesia to send for a notary to draw up my will, but he burst into tears and ran off."

He then told him that Father Cuffia had been certain he would not come directly to Varazze. At three that afternoon, as he had arranged, he dined in his room with Fathers Lemoyne, Francesia, and Cuffia and the station-master. He had never felt so well since his illness began. That day he was out of bed from ten in the morning until nine at night.

[5]*See* Vol. VII, pp. 467-471. [Editor]

"Today is the first day I really feel like eating," he remarked during the meal. "The other days I ate only to keep up my strength."

It was hoped that he might return to Turin for the last Sunday of the carnival season. On January 24 he walked down one floor and paced up and down the clerics' dining room. Toward evening, knowing how much he loved music, the organist of St. Ambrose Church and several members of a symphony orchestra gave a concert in his room in the presence of several guests. The faultless rendition enthralled Don Bosco who applauded generously and thanked them.[6]

"If earthly music is so enchanting," he said, "what must heaven's music be like! May yours be the fortune of joining the great heavenly orchestra one day and may we enjoy those sweet melodies through eternity. I thank each of you (he named them one by one) from the bottom of my heart for having so generously honored poor Don Bosco and for having afforded him so much pleasure! I also thank all the good people who with their prayers obtained my full recovery. I thank the pastor, the mayor and all the citizens of Varazze for the thoughtfulness and charity they have shown me. . . ."

The following evening from nine to ten o'clock he spoke to all the confreres about the gratitude we owe to our benefactors.

On January 26 he visited the chapel and then walked for about an hour in the playground with Father Bonetti, director of the Borgo San Martino junior seminary, who had finally come to visit him on behalf of his entire school.

On January 27 Father Bonetti wrote to Father Rua:

> At last I managed to pay my long-desired visit to our dearly cherished Don Bosco. I found him quite well and was privileged to accompany him to the chapel and to the playground, where he strolled for the first time since his unfortunate illness. We must now organize a fitting thanksgiving to God.
>
> He asked me to tell you that on Monday [January 29] he will go to Alassio and will stay there until next week. If necessary, you can reach him there.

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

How is your mother? Give her Don Bosco's regards.[7]

P.S. Give my greetings to Father Francis Provera. His name day is next Monday.[8]

With the grace of God, Don Bosco felt better and better as the days went by. On Sunday, the 28th, the Salesian school of Varazze celebrated the feast of St. Francis de Sales.

For the first time—Enria wrote—Don Bosco said the Community Mass, but another priest distributed Holy Communion.

We had a wonderful celebration. At dinner Don Bosco hosted the pastor and two canons, the mayor and Mr. Prefumo, who came especially from Genoa, another gentleman and the doctor.

Nearly all the boys went to Holy Communion. The second Mass was a High Mass. The playgrounds echoed with *vivas* to Don Bosco and everyone was overjoyed at being able to thank God for his recovery. After dinner, the pupils entertained Don Bosco with music and song, prose and poetry.

9. Full Convalescence

On January 30 Don Bosco set out for Alassio. He had a pleasant trip and received a rousing welcome from superiors and pupils. Father Francesia kept the Oratory informed of Don Bosco's departure from Varazze:

He will return here on Monday [February 5] and after a day or two will continue on to Turin. I'll let you know the day and hour. . . . We have decided to place this inscription above his bed: "In this bedroom our dear father Don Bosco preached by his sufferings for fifty long anxious days. He is out of danger, but not yet quite well. . . ."[1]

[7]Father Rua's mother recovered and kept working for the Oratory boys for another five years, her edifying life coming to an end on June 21, 1876. Joanna Magone died at the Oratory on January 20, 1872. Father Rua's obituary carries this entry about her: "She was privileged to be Michael Magone's mother. (*See* Indexes of Volumes VI and VII—Editor) After his death she gave herself entirely to God's service. Allowed to end her days at the Oratory where her son had led a saintly life, she showed her gratitude by working tirelessly. She always attended early Mass, loved prayer and feared sin. After an illness of seven days she received the Last Rites and died fully resigned, invoking Jesus, Mary, and Joseph and praying to her son Michael to take her with him to heaven." [Author]

[8]We are omitting a note of Father Francesia voicing misgivings about Don Bosco's trip to Alassio. [Editor]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Meanwhile at the Oratory the rejoicing at his imminent return was reaching fever pitch, but Father Rua prudently insisted that Don Bosco stay a little longer in Liguria because of Turin's extremely cold weather.[2]

Letters from the Salesian houses where superiors and pupils constantly prayed for him had been and were his great comfort. Though all longed for his return, they were still glad that he would convalesce a little longer. Countess Callori too had prevailed upon Father Francesia to persuade him to take this precaution, but Don Bosco had already left for Alassio. Upon being told of her anxiety, Don Bosco dutifully informed her on February 9 [1872] of his delayed return to Turin.[3]

That same day he wrote very warmly to Father Rua, informing him definitely of the day of his return and of his wishes concerning a reception:

Alassio, February 9, 1872

Dearest Father Rua:

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us! It is time, dear Father Rua, that I tell you something definite to share with our beloved confreres and boys. Thanks to so many prayers, I now feel strong enough to start working again, though with some restraint. God willing, I'll be back in Turin next Thursday [February 15, the second day of Lent]. Really, I long to get back. My body is here, but my heart, my thoughts and even my words are always with you at the Oratory. This is a frailty, but I can't help it.

I shall arrive at 12:20 in the afternoon. It is my wish that there be no reception with cheers, music and hand-kissing because my present condition might make it harmful. I shall enter the church through the main portal to offer my thanks to Her to whom I owe my recovery. Then, if I can, I will say a few words to the boys; otherwise, I shall postpone this and go straight to the dining room.

When you tell our dear sons this news, please say that I thank them all most heartily for their prayers. I thank all who wrote to me, especially those who offered up their life to God in exchange for mine. I know who they are and I shall not forget them. When I am with them again, I hope that I can say a lot of things which I cannot say now.

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

May God bless you all and grant you constant good health and the precious gift of perseverance in doing good. Our confreres here at Alassio wish to be remembered to you. Continue to pray for me.

Most affectionately yours, in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Let me know if it is very cold there, and whether or not you plan to celebrate the feast of St. Francis de Sales on Sunday the 18th.

On February 10 he left Alassio after a warm send-off from the pastor, Father [Francis] Della Valle, prominent citizens and pupils. He stopped off at Albenga, where Bishop Anacleto Siboni warmly greeted him and hosted him at dinner, and toward evening he returned to Varazze. The following day, Sunday, was filled with solemn church services and joyful celebrations. He found time, however, to write to the director of the junior seminary at Borgo San Martino:

Varazze, February 11, 1872

Dear Father Bonetti:

God willing, we shall set off for Turin on Thursday, the 15th. You might take the first train or, better still, the one arriving at Alessandria around 9:30. That's when our train will pull in. It would have been too expensive to reserve a whole compartment for ourselves. Buy a second-class ticket to Turin. We shall do the same.

If you can't delay your return to Borgo San Martino until Monday, we shall hold our annual conference on Friday evening.

Don't forget to bring with you all the money you can spare. Our creditors are pressing us on all sides, and I am returning to Turin penniless.

At any rate, I hope we shall have a wonderful time together. May God bless you and yours and keep you all steadfast on the road to heaven. Amen.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

10. Return to the Oratory

Matchless and indescribable was the joy aroused by the announcement that Don Bosco was returning with the one who had

regularly kept them informed during the course of his illness. In his facetious way, Father Joseph Bologna[1] wrote to Enria, addressing him as "Illustrious Baron Enria":

We are most impatient to see you. True, we are awaiting Don Bosco, but we are also waiting for you. Villaris[2] keeps running up to the belfry with his field-glasses watching for your departure in order to start his bell ringing.

When you get here we shall slaughter our finest pig—our very last! The others have already met their end at the hand of the executioner. Cagna[3] has already baptized several bottles and Gastini[4] has prepared his rhymes.

On Tuesday [the last day of the carnival season] we shall have the breaking of the piñatas, and our brass band will be in full uniform but, alas, without its general.[5]

Buzzetti wants you to bring something for April Fools' Day to present to Merlo, our artist, who will paint our twelve tambourines for the new polka that we will play at your arrival. The upholsterer is at work on two magnificent armchairs: one for Don Bosco and the other at his right for Enria. . . .

I will close with baskets of greetings from all. If something new turns up, Buzzetti wants to know it as soon as possible. . . .

On February 12 Enria sent his last bulletin from Varazze: "Today Don Bosco went to Savona to dine with the bishop. He was back by four. Our departure has now been set for Thursday, February 15, at 5:30 A.M. At Sampierdarena we shall board the express train due to arrive in Turin at 11:30 A.M. . . ."

Meanwhile Father Provera was sending the directors of the various houses the *Program of the Festivities on the Occasion of Don Bosco's Return*:

[1]Father Joseph Bologna (1847-1907) entered the Oratory in 1863, joined the Salesian Society in 1868, and was ordained a priest in 1872. In 1878 Don Bosco sent him to Marseilles to open the St. Leo Festive Oratory, which he directed until 1892, when he was appointed provincial of the houses of southern France. In 1898 he was named provincial of northern France and Belgium. He died at the Oratory on January 4, 1907. [Editor]

[2]The Oratory bell ringer. [Author]

[3]The cellarman. [Author]

[4]Charles Gastini was one of the Oratory pioneers. He entered it in 1848 at the age of eleven at Don Bosco's invitation. (*See* Vol. III, pp. 243ff.) He became deeply attached to him, and with his comical talents he delighted the Oratory boys for many years. [Editor]

[5]Enria, one of the first twelve boys to form the first Oratory band in 1855 at the age of fourteen, later became its bandmaster. [Editor]

Thursday, February 15—Arrival of Don Bosco
Friday, February 16—Annual Conference
Saturday, February 17—Entertainment
Sunday, February 18—First Sunday of Lent, Feast of St. Francis de Sales

On February 14, Father Albera came from Marassi to Varazze in order to accompany Don Bosco to Turin. Thanks to the station-master, a second-class compartment had been reserved. All Don Bosco's confreres and friends wanted him to travel first-class, but he had replied that second-class was luxury enough and that he would really prefer third-class himself.

We do not have all the letters which Don Bosco wrote at this time to his kindest benefactors to thank them for their prayers and solicitude during his illness, but we do have one which he wrote from Varazze to the very devout and generous Countess Uguccioni the evening before he left for Turin:

Varazze, February 14, 1872

My dear Mamma:

Before setting out for Turin, I want to write to my good mother to thank her for her prayers and to let her know where I am. God willing, I shall be in Turin tomorrow.

I am not yet fully recovered, but, with some moderation, I can attend to a little more urgent business. Things have been going along without me now for two and a half months.

I trust this letter finds you, Thomas and the rest of the family in good health. May God grant you all a long, happy life and perseverance in virtue.

If possible, please give my regards to Marchioness Nerli and Countess Digny. Pray for me.

Yours gratefully,
Fr. John Bosco

On February 15, those leaving were torn by conflicting emotions: the joy of soon being with their friends in Turin and the regret of leaving other friends in Varazze. The pastor, the mayor, town officials and several priests and laymen came to wish Don Bosco a pleasant journey. He thanked them and again asked for

their prayers, assuring them that he would particularly pray for them to Mary, Help of Christians. The pupils, lined up as Don Bosco smilingly passed between their ranks, said good-bye to him with reciprocal emotion and sadness. A crowd awaited him at the station, and to all he said: "God bless you! I shall recommend all of you to Our Lord and to Mary, Help of Christians!"

The station-master personally helped him aboard and kissed his hand. In gratitude for his courtesy, Don Bosco asked him to convey his regards to his family and to the station personnel.

Traveling with him were Father Francesia, Father Albera, Enria and the cleric Turco. At Alessandria they were joined by Father Bonetti who, as Father Francesia had been doing, kept telling him funny anecdotes to ease his deep emotion. The doctor had advised them to do so lest the excitement prove harmful to his heart.

Arriving at Porta Nuova they found Countess Corsi's carriage waiting for him. Father Francesia and Enria sat with him while the others took another coach sent by the Oratory. In the square facing the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, there stood no brass band or reception committee, in deference to his request. He immediately entered the church through the main portal, followed by the superiors. Pupils, friends and many benefactors were waiting for him inside. As soon as he set foot in the sanctuary, Brother Buzzetti intoned the psalm *Laudate, pueri, Dominum.* Kneeling at the altar of Mary, Help of Christians, surrounded by the superiors, he prayed at great length, his countenance aglow with holy love.

He arose and, walking to the altar rail, gazed silently and most delightedly for a few moments at his beloved children. A wave of emotion swept through all. Deeply moved himself, he thanked them for all they had done to have his life spared, and he exhorted them to keep praying for him and to thank Mary, Help of Christians for all Her favors to the Oratory. . . . Then he fell silent. He tried to say something else but was too moved. . . . He waved and withdrew.

As soon as he started to speak, the pupils lowered their heads to conceal their tears at the sound of his long-awaited but feeble voice. Not one could bear to raise his eyes to look at him in those moments.

The superiors also were silent as they escorted him through the playground. To break the spell, he turned to Father Rua and Father Bonetti and smilingly remarked in Piedmontese, "I'm hungry. Aren't you going to give me something to eat?"

Quite overcome, Enria had stayed back in the sanctuary, but Buzzetti took him by the arm and brought him to the dining room.

"Why the tears?" Don Bosco asked on noting the redness in his eyes.

"I am overjoyed," sobbed Enria. Don Bosco was moved.

As emotions ebbed away, the festivities began as planned, filling all with joy. The annual conference for the Oratory Salesians and the directors of the other houses was held on February 16. Don Bosco again briefly expressed his thanks to his sons. Then each director delivered a short report on his house, with Father Pestarino offering a gratifying report on the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.

The following day saw solemn church services in thanksgiving to Mary, Help of Christians for Don Bosco's recovery. Canon [John Baptist] Anfossi has left us this account:

> Archbishop Gastaldi joined in the church services and gave Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Afterward he was invited to partake of some refreshments while things were set up in the porticoes for an assembly in his and Don Bosco's honor. I was there and saw the archbishop hurry downstairs so fast that Don Bosco could hardly keep up. Lusty *vivas* and the strains of the band greeted him as he came through the portico. When he was invited to sit by Don Bosco and other priests who had come to celebrate his recovery, he pointedly ignored the invitation and strode to his coach without even acknowledging Don Bosco's parting words. I approached Don Bosco and said, "Don Bosco, I don't like the way he left. This day of rejoicing has ended on a sour note. What happened?"
>
> "What can we do?" was the reply. "The archbishop wants to head our Congregation. That is too much. However, we shall see. . . ."

A family celebration followed. As Don Bosco sat on the dais, the boys sang the anthem *Don Bosco Is Safe and Sound*, set to music by Father Cagliero and scored for the brass band by Maestro De Vecchi. Then a pupil, Stephen Trione, offered Don Bosco a silver chalice, bought with the boys' savings. The presentation

was accompanied by the declamation of a poem composed that morning by Father Lemoyne.

Countless lads had prepared poems, letters and addresses in Italian, Latin and Piedmontese, but naturally they could not read them all. As was customary on Don Bosco's name day, there was a scramble to reach him, and only the nimblest and boldest managed to recite the little pieces they had prepared. The rest had to be satisfied with kissing his hand and handing him their little compositions. It was love triumphant! Unfortunately no copy of the poem *Don Bosco Is Safe and Sound* written by Father Francesia and scored by De Vecchi has reached us.

As we shall see, the Holy Father also congratulated Don Bosco on his recovery. With God's blessing he now resumed his apostolate on behalf of youth, of the Church and of his country!

CHAPTER 4

Back to Work—1872

AT the beginning of 1872, the Salesian Society had thirty-three perpetually professed members and seventy in triennial vows. The former group consisted of twenty-six priests, three clerics and four coadjutors; the latter had eight priests, forty-five clerics and seventeen coadjutors. There were also eighty-six postulants: a priest, thirty-three clerics, twenty-nine coadjutors, and twenty-three secondary school students. This made a grand total of one hundred and eighty-nine—thirty-five priests, eighty-one clerics, fifty coadjutors and twenty-three young students.

In the Appendix of the Salesian Directory, after the previously mentioned obituary of the cleric Abrami,[1] Don Bosco added these comments:

2. In 1871 our Society opened two new houses: St. Vincent's Hospice in Genoa and a resident and day school at Varazze. Other foundations are planned for 1872.

3. Our Society is growing fast. Let us strive to deserve God's favors by fulfilling our duties exactly.

4. All are especially to foster and practice obedience to superiors and mutual charity.

1. Convalescence

Once he returned to the Oratory, Don Bosco resumed his usual tasks, disregarding the pleas of confreres and friends to take things easy during his convalescence. In fact, the after-effects of his illness lingered for several months. In turn, headaches, tooth-

[1] *See* p. 121. [Editor]

aches, eye afflictions, mild miliary eruptions, and fever outbreaks triggering copious sweating throughout the night often deprived him of sleep. Furthermore, his legs again became swollen, causing him serious inconvenience and forcing him to use elastic stockings for the rest of his life.

Nevertheless, he was always prompt to hear confessions in the morning, and during the afternoon he could never be prevailed upon to nap in bed. If sleep overcame him, he would doze on a chair for fifteen minutes or a half hour at most, and then he would resume work. Likewise, he refused special food at table, as Father Rua testified at the Apostolic Process:

> He consented to take only a little vermouth before dinner at the doctor's orders to counteract fever outbreaks which frequently plagued him after his serious illness at Varazze in 1871-72. He did take a little wine with his meals, but it was always generously watered. After his illness, every month a good lady [Duchess Laval Montmorency] sent him a case of choice wine to restore his strength, but he never drank it all, sharing it with the others at table. There were always full bottles left over at the end of each month—so many in fact that, for a number of years after his death, they graced the table on special occasions.

For some three months he resigned himself to saying Mass privately on a small altar in his waiting room with only a few persons, outsiders included, in devout attendance. After Mass the altar was stored inside a closet of the same room.

On February 23, 1872, a few days after his return from Varazze, Amelia Josephine Crosa received Holy Communion from his hand and, after Mass, a copy of his booklet *Interesting Episodes in the Life of Pius IX*, on which he had himself written: "The world is a deceiver. Only God is a fair paymaster." It was a saying he often uttered to enkindle the love of God in devout souls.

Grateful to all who had prayed for his recovery, he felt ever more eager to consecrate his new lease on life to God's glory and the welfare of souls. To the cleric Angelo Rigoli, a former Oratory pupil, he sent a medal and a holy picture of St. Joseph bearing a facsimile of Pius IX's signature beneath the words: *Ite ad Joseph*, and he added these few lines:

Dear Rigoli,

Thank you for the prayers you offered for my recovery. Now pray that I may save my soul. I am sending you the medal you wanted and a holy picture of St. Joseph. Is Belfanti[1] with you? What is he doing? Is he signing up many subscribers to *Letture Cattoliche*? Give my regards to your superiors for me.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco[2]

As we have already stated, the conduct of the Oratory pupils during Don Bosco's illness was exemplary and devout, thanks also to the constant vigilance of their superiors. In February [1872] a meeting was held for the artisans' staff. The following interesting report—the only one made of all the meetings held in 1872—comes from Father [Joseph] Lazzero:

The meeting was chaired by the Very Reverend Father Michael Rua, Prefect. The following recommendations were made:

1. Great care should be used to make recreation periods beneficial to both pupils and assistants. The latter must stay with the boys and share their games and talk, always in a friendly and kind manner. Some insolent boy may publicly poke fun at or insult an assistant. In that case, it is wiser not to reprimand the boy then and there or to walk away. The culprit should be called aside later and made aware of his fault and rudeness. Repeated admonitions will definitely cool a youngster's impulsiveness and will get him to improve his conduct.

2. All should aim at making themselves both loved and feared by the boys. This can be easily done. When youngsters see an assistant genuinely concerned about their welfare, they cannot help but love him. So also, when they see that he keeps a tight rein on them and calls them to task if they kick over the traces, they cannot help feeling a certain fear of him, a reverential fear which they should have for superiors.

One thing that assistants must very carefully avoid is lowering themselves to the boys' level in speech and actions, and especially in games. They should join in all activities, but at the same time they shoud keep their place and show by their demeanor that they are educators. This very recommendation was made last year but it bears repeating.

[1]A former pupil. [Author]

[2]We are omitting Father Rua's reply to routine yearly surveys of charitable institutions and of public and private schools. [Editor]

3. It has been asked whether boys should always be told why they were given poor grades. The answer is yes if a boy asks respectfully and privately and shows that he intends to mend his ways. Reasons should not be given if one asks arrogantly or publicly. A teacher should reply seriously, "I shall tell you later!" Or he may say, "Go to the prefect of studies and he will tell you." As long as a teacher feels he can handle the problem, he should do so. On realizing that a situation is beyond him, he had best consult his superior, who can then step in with greater effectiveness.

4. One is not to become disheartened by hurts, even grave ones, from boys. We sometimes have boys who have already been in all sorts of mischief. A hapless assistant can be at his wit's end trying to understand why he has to put up with such individuals. We cannot blame the teacher. Still, superiors should not react hastily, since they might cause their best benefactors to withdraw their help, and all would then suffer. This is not to say that nothing will be done. It is a question of biding one's time; eventually everything will be set right.[3]

2. Our Lady's Bank

Divine Providence singularly helped Don Bosco through people who by thrift and work had saved for their retirement and had no heirs. Distrustful of banks, stocks or private loans in the wake of sad tales of fraudulent bankruptcies which had flung even wealthy people into misery, they turned to Don Bosco for advice on how to invest their savings.

"Deposit them with the poor," he would tell them, "and Our Lady will be your surety. Take your money to Our Lady's bank and you will reap generous dividends." Thus several people secured tranquility for themselves by offering to God and to Mary, Help of Christians what they would have had to relinquish at their death.[1]

[3]We are omitting the mention of a legacy by Countess Callori for an anniversary Mass for one of her sons, the funding of a scholarship in the Salesian school of Alassio for aspirants to the priesthood, a request by Don Bosco to a benefactor for financial aid, the signing of a contract for the installation of a huge clock in one of the bell-towers of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, and a circular to raise funds for that purpose. [Editor]

[1]This sentence is a condensation. We are omitting a letter of Don Bosco to the bishop of Acqui to enlist his aid in obtaining a cleric's exemption from military service, another letter of his to Marchioness Uguccioni offering Easter greetings, and a new item in *Unità Cattolica* about the conversion of a family of Lutherans to Catholicism in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. [Editor]

On May 14, the first day of the novena of Mary, Help of Christians, Don Bosco resumed saying Mass in Her church for the first time since his return from Varazze. In the sacristy he met a poor old woman, stone-deaf, who begged for his blessing. He obliged, and she instantly regained her hearing. She wept for joy, and, having nothing to offer Our Lady then and there, she removed her earrings and handed them to Don Bosco, promising to return with a more valuable gift.

A few weeks earlier, another woman had come to him, leading a six- or seven-year-old boy by the hand, since he could not walk by himself. Don Bosco blessed him. The following day, the boy was able to walk with the greatest ease. His mother returned to thank Our Lady for the singular favor.

Since the feast of Mary, Help of Christians coincided with Ember Friday of Pentecost, Don Bosco, in agreement with the chancery, petitioned the Holy See for permission to anticipate the feast by one day.[2] The petition was graciously granted.

Work in the church itself, including decorations, had been completed, and appurtenances for the apse and new sacristy had been set in place. Volume IX[3] mentioned the side altars with paintings of their titulars, except for the one in the right transept which was first dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and then in 1891 to St. Francis de Sales. Opposite, in the left transept, stood St. Ann's altar, which was dedicated in 1891 to Sts. Solutor, Adventor and Octavius, since it stood on the exact site of their martyrdom.[4] The Sacred Heart chapel was completed in 1872, and Don Bosco described it in a booklet entitled *Mary, Help of Christians*.[5]

St. Joseph's painting was not as yet ready. As we shall see later, it was solemnly unveiled in 1874 when work in the interior of the church was completed.

[2]We are omitting the text of the petition. [Editor]

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 109f. [Editor]

[4]Don Bosco explicitly stated that when the Blessed Virgin asked him to build the Church of Mary, Help of Christians in the meadows of Valdocco, the "Valley of the Slain" (*see* Vol. II, p. 234), She pointed out the site where the three soldiers had been martyred. This site lay in the left transept in the inner part of St. Ann's chapel, later dedicated to the Holy Martyrs and more recently to St. Mary Mazzarello. Since the floor has been substantially raised in the restoration of the church, the exact spot of the martyrdom now lies in the basement directly in front of the stairs leading into it. Across from it, to the left, is a side chapel commemorating the apparition. [Author]

[5]We are omitting this description. [Editor]

Abbot Maximilian Bardessono preached the novena of Mary, Help of Christians.[6] In the last few days of the festivities our pupils at Lanzo, Borgo San Martino and Alassio joined in the sacred services. On May 23, Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli preached and Abbot Bardessone delivered the homily. The Oratory choir flawlessly sang Father Cagliero's composition *Sancta Maria, Succurre Miseris.*[7] Attendance was so great that the church could not hold the crowd, and so Don Bosco decided to have an encore on the following Sunday, May 26. *Unità Cattolica* publicized the event.

A moving incident took place on May 24, the feast of Mary, Help of Christians, a day of supreme joy, music and song. On this occasion the pupils were allowed to spend their little savings on playthings or souvenirs. All had money because those who were well provided had generously shared with those in need. One of these good-hearted pupils was Secundus Amerio, a Latin V student. He had shared his funds with needy schoolmates and was happily about to enjoy himself and perhaps buy a little souvenir for his mother. As he walked up to one of the booths, he noticed a mournful, almost tearful classmate who was trying to hide as though in shame.

"What's the matter, Dominic? Why are you sad?" Amerio asked.

"I haven't a cent. My mom is poor and my dad is dead. How can I be happy?"

Amerio forgot about the gift and books he wanted to buy. Taking his six lire—all he had—he thrust three into Dominic's hand, saying, "Send these to your mother. The rest we'll enjoy together."

They stayed together the entire day. Amerio was then sixteen, and though still in secondary school, he had already applied for membership in the Salesian Society. Six years later he was ordained a priest, and in 1882 he departed this earth for heaven.[8]

Don Bosco's friends, benefactors, admirers and former pupils were always glad to see him, especially when he celebrated his

[6]We are omitting details about a little bazaar held in the Oratory playground on May 19. [Editor]

[7]*See* Vol. IX, p. 128. [Editor]

[8]We are omitting two thank-you notes of Don Bosco to benefactors. [Editor]

name day. This year Father Rua sent them the following invitation:

Turin, June 21, 1872

Dear Friend:

On Monday, June 24, we shall celebrate the feast of St. John the Baptist, the patron of our beloved director and father, Don Bosco. His sons are eager to express their gratitude to him through song and music, prose and poetry and a few gifts. To enhance the celebration, they ask that you kindly honor the occasion with your presence. The program will start at 7 P.M. on both Sunday and Monday.

Devotedly yours,
Father Michael Rua, *Prefect*

As always, this celebration was a warm, cordial testimonial of gratitude spurring the participants to holy pursuits and leaving cherished remembrances in the minds of all. Father Joseph Bertello read a poem of his which had been set to music, and then there followed vocal and instrumental selections, promises of lasting gratitude, heartfelt demonstrations of filial affection, frank declarations of lifelong fidelity to Don Bosco's teachings, promises of daily prayers for God's abundant blessings, and insistent requests that he pray for them.

Toward the middle of June of that year, as we shall narrate in Chapter 5, a lurid newspaper had attempted to smear Don Bosco's reputation through a disgusting serial story which prompted Abbot Maximilian Bardessono, preacher of the novena of Mary, Help of Christians, to take up Don Bosco's defense with a short biography. His former pupils too could not help referring to the Masonic attempt in the devoted address[9] they presented to him, signed by forty-five of them and accompanied by an offering "in token of their gratitude and esteem."

At the close of the celebration on the evening of June 24, Don Bosco movingly addressed the 1,500 people present, recalling that on the same dear occasion the previous year, he had assured them that 1872 would bring some most encouraging news. He then proceeded to list the events. First, thanks to Our Lady, bishops

[9]Omitted in this edition along with similar addresses from pupils and staff. [Editor]

had been appointed to many vacant dioceses and were all in possession of their respective sees. Second, thanks again to Mary, Help of Christians, he had recovered from a nearly fatal illness. And third, Pius IX, after surprisingly reigning longer than all his predecessors, including St. Peter himself, still continued to enjoy good health. He ended by saying that in the forthcoming school year, 1872-73, they would have to prepare for either tears or smiles.

As for the smiles, the Oratory choir and brass band had already had theirs that year immediately after the feast of Mary, Help of Christians when, in token of his affection and admiration for Don Bosco and his work, Bishop Ghilardi had invited them to Mondovì[10] for the solemn closing of the grand festival he had sponsored to honor St. Pius V, pope of Lepanto's victory, pride of Piedmont and of the Dominican Order, and bishop of Mondovì from March 27, 1560 to May 6, 1566. That year marked the third centenary of his death (May 1, 1572) and the second centenary of his beatification (April 27, 1672).

The festivities, held in May, opened with a novena in the cathedral and closed on May 26 and 27 with pontifical Masses by Archbishop [Stephen] Oreglia of Santo Stefano, papal nuncio to Portugal, Bishop [Anthony] Colli of Alessandria and Bishop [Emilian] Manacorda of Fossano. Elaborate illuminations, fireworks and concerts enhanced the outdoor rejoicing.

The Oratory choirboys and musicians, a hundred or so, acquitted themselves splendidly with their devout demeanor in church, reception of the sacraments, and musical program. Their cheerfulness, a characteristic Oratory trait, left a most gratifying impression.

They lodged in the seminary. One evening, as they were playing while the rector and his staff looked on, Gastini, in a disguise that concealed his identity even from our boys, leaped into their midst and began to sing an aria from a comic opera. His voice gave him away, and the boys instantly burst into laughter. The rector and

[10]We are omitting a digression about the resolution of a lengthy dispute that had arisen between the bishop of Mondovì and Don Bosco concerning the sale of a printing press. *See* pp. 113-115. [Editor]

staff, however, taking him for an intruding fool, were about to have him thrown out, when Enria,[11] hiding behind the boys, chimed in with a falsetto voice. Even more shocked, the good fathers could only exclaim, "Unbelievable! A woman! What nerve!" Of course everyone burst into laughter. Those walls had never resounded with such fun! Better still, Gastini made the rounds, hat in hand, and collected a hundred lire for Don Bosco.

However, Don Bosco had his problems. The school superintendent of the Alessandria province kept pestering the director of the Salesian junior seminary in Borgo San Martino for certification of his teachers. Therefore, Don Bosco wrote to Father Bonetti, advising him to produce the various written waivers that had been granted to the school because it was a seminary. A substantial number of pupils in fact, who had prayed so much for his recovery, aspired to the priesthood. Don Bosco wrote:

Turin, April 23, 1872

Dear Fr. Bonetti,

I suggest that you contact Commendatore Rho personally. Show him the documents of our exemptions and let him talk to the school superintendent. I'll do what I can here.

I am enclosing three chapters of my *Bible History*. Please return them as soon as your eagle eye has checked them and your masterful hand has set things straight.

Tell all the priests, clerics and boys that I appreciate the way each one carries out his duties, and their kindness toward me. May God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Father Bonetti exhorted the pupils to receive Holy Communion to obtain God's help. In another letter Don Bosco assured him that their school problems were solved for the present. With this

[11]Peter Enria entered the Oratory in 1854 at the age of thirteen. He was first assigned to learn a trade and three years later was transferred to the procurator's office. For many years he was the *factotum* of the house. In 1878 he became a lay Salesian. Very dear to Don Bosco, he nursed him during his last illness. [Editor]

letter he enclosed a second batch of pages of his *Bible History* for proofreading:

Turin, May 8, 1872

Dear Fr. Bonetti,

The storm has blown away. Tell your boys that the favor we sought through their Holy Communion has been granted. A thousand demons struck at our junior seminary, but Our Lady routed them all. *Deo gratias.* I enclose three more chapters of my *Bible History* along with your notes. God bless us all!

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Meanwhile, the school superintendent of the province of Turin —a former priest named Rota—had inspected our grammar school at Lanzo and sent a very discrediting report to the regional authorities. Remonstrances and threats to close the school followed.

Circumstances forced Don Bosco to write to Senator Victor Zoppi, prefect of the province, on June 5, 1872, giving his side of the teacher-certification problem, and stating their zeal, the pupils' proficiency, and the complete satisfaction of Lanzo's municipal authorities. In conclusion, he respectfully requested a formal inspection by the regional superintendent. The prefect promptly obliged. A committee headed by Superintendent Garelli inspected the school and returned a very favorable report. Paul Boselli, the future Minister of Public Education, also visited our Lanzo school some time later and explicitly declared that it could stand as a model to the public schools.

3. The College of Valsalice

At this time Don Bosco conceived a daring and very advantageous plan—a regional seminary that could have been the forerunner of those which would spring up during the pontificate of Pope Pius X. Because of ever dwindling priestly and religious vocations and the government's insistence on certification of all

teachers in church schools, he thought of a way to solve this grave difficulty. His plan was to open in or around Turin an interdiocesan seminary for five or six hundred students from Piedmont, Liguria and even Lombardy. Upon ordination the students would return to their respective dioceses. The bishops were to share the finances, either directly or through generous benefactors, so that even underprivileged candidates could realize their vocation. What better way to meet the shortage of certified teachers? Doubtless, excellent lay and clerical professors with academic degrees in philosophy, theology and canon law would come to this new seminary whose curriculum would extend from the third year of secondary schooling to philosophy and theology. The bishops of Piedmont, Liguria and Lombardy enthusiastically endorsed the project. Most elated over it were the archbishops of Genoa and Vercelli and the bishop of Novara. All, however, set one condition—that Don Bosco be its director.

On his return from Varazze, Don Bosco called on Archbishop Gastaldi to discuss the plan. At first the prelate seemed to go along with it, but soon he let it be known that he did not favor having Don Bosco run this seminary. It was to be totally under his control, particularly as regards curriculum and spiritual formation. When the other bishops were told of this, they withdrew their support, and this remarkable project collapsed.

Archbishop Gastaldi had something else in mind for Don Bosco—a resident school, recently located on the road to Valsalice, or as it was then called "Val Salici" or "Valsalici."[1]

In June 1863 the *Gazzetta Ufficiale* had published a decree of Minister Amari closing down St. Primitivus School of the renowned Christian Brothers in Turin. The people were so grieved that within a month an "Association of Turinese Priests" was founded "for the sole purpose of promoting the welfare of Church and State through a truly Christian education of youth." In October of that year, a resident school was opened on the old road to Valsalice in a building owned for years by the Christian Brothers and was named "Collegio Valsalice." The founders of the Association of Turinese Priests numbered seven—the minimum number set by law—and seven they remained, notwithstanding efforts to

[1]The name was soon changed to "Valsalice." [Editor]

increase their number, until 1868, when a few withdrew and the association threatened to collapse, had not Father Michelotti and Father Francis Barone, two leading founders, exerted themselves to revitalize it and even to expand it by broadening its activities. Beyond the resident school, they drew other plans to benefit young people and adults, such as "day courses, night and Sunday classes, religious lectures, catechetical instructions, parish missions, classes for rural folk, scholarships. . . ." Such expansion naturally opened the way to increase the association's membership by inviting laymen "not only from Turin but from the entire province and even from all of Piedmont and Italy." The expansion was needed to stem the tide of immorality and impiety threatening both civil society and the Church. This was the point of a memorandum which Father Barone sent to Archbishop Riccardi of Turin in March 1869.

This plan never went through, but it at least kept afloat "Collegio Valsalice" for three more years, after which dwindling enrollment and increasing debts made its operation impossible. After the installation of Archbishop Gastaldi, Father Barone, a classmate of his, promptly brought the gravity of the situation to his attention, confident that he would persuade his fellow bishops in Piedmont to join the board of directors of the Association of Turinese Priests, strive to increase its membership and put it on a solid, lasting basis.

Feelers had been sent out to the archbishop even before his installation, and the response had been that his first concern was his own seminary. Still, yielding to pressure, he agreed to study the report of the crisis of 1869 and the current precarious financial condition of the Valsalice school. He was so engaged when Don Bosco called on him to discuss his plan for an inter-diocesan seminary, and then and there the archbishop thought of salvaging Collegio Valsalice by entrusting it to Don Bosco.

As we have said, Archbishop Gastaldi at first seemed to favor Don Bosco's plan but then, dismissing the subject, went on to tell him of the deplorable condition of the Valsalice school, stressing the urgency of saving the reputation of the Turinese clergy and asking that he assume its administration.

Don Bosco pointed out that this was outside the scope of the

Salesian Society, which had been established for the sons of the poor, but the archbishop insisted so forcefully, almost to the point of ordering him, that Don Bosco nodded in agreement, saying that he would consult his councilors and later inform him of their response.

The archbishop immediately reported this conversation to Father Barone, advising that he call on Don Bosco and urge him not to turn down his archbishop's request. Father Barone complied and on bended knee tearfully begged Don Bosco to accept, since only he could give the Valsalice school its former prestige.

Don Bosco called a council meeting, and its members unanimously rejected the proposal, declaring that the education of wealthy boys was outside our sphere of activity. When Don Bosco informed the archbishop of this, the latter repeated his request and almost peremptorily demanded that Don Bosco oblige. Once more Don Bosco convoked his councilors, explaining that he had practically been ordered to comply and that he thought it best not to antagonize the new archbishop. In conclusion he urged them to reconsider their decision. In good-natured compliance they all cast a favorable vote.

This happened in March. Shortly afterward Don Bosco went to Lanzo, and while there he spoke to the director about the Valsalice school, asking his opinion.

"Refuse!" Father Lemoyne answered.

"Are you against it too? Each and every one of you has rejected the proposal."

"Then you should be pleased," rejoined Father Lemoyne. "It shows that we mind your teachings. Haven't you told us again and again that accepting schools for wealthy boys would mark the beginning of our Congregation's downfall, and that we should always work only with the children of the poor?"

"Quite true, but I am forced to accept this school because the archbishop has ordered me to."

"In that case, I don't know what to say. Do as you think best and we shall willingly go along. But if you should require my vote, I would never say yes."

Other confreres too had told Don Bosco the same thing. Meanwhile, as an enticement, the archbishop had asked for and ob-

tained a special papal blessing for the Salesian Congregation. The Collegio Valsalice was formally accepted in April [1872] and the contract was signed in June. The previous administration carted away the more valuable furniture and demanded a high price for the rest. Once he took this fateful step, Don Bosco drafted a program and submitted it for the archbishop's approval. Then, on July 3, *Unità Cattolica* publicized the transfer of the school to the Salesian Congregation.[2]

This was indeed a genuine sacrifice for Don Bosco, and he spared no effort to revitalize the school. On October 3 the regional school superintendent announced that the board of education had approved the reopening of Collegio Valsalice. Immediately a smear campaign started. The very ones who had implored Don Bosco to save the clergy's honor now began to speak disparagingly of the Salesians, fearing that their success would cast aspersions on the previous administration. Don Bosco was accused of rashness in thinking himself qualified to undertake the education of young men of patrician families, and his Salesians were characterized as not quite well-bred. These and other belittling allegations scared off possible applicants. During the first few years, enrollment dropped to twenty, while the rent alone amounted to 7,000 lire annually. Yet Father Francis Dalmazzo, the director, worked so well that the number of students gradually rose to about one hundred. Later, Don Bosco purchased the building for 120,000 lire and in 1887 turned it into a seminary for foreign missions. Thus the Lord saw to it that, some months later, Don Bosco's body could be laid to rest there. And there it remained until Don Bosco's beatification in 1929.

4. The Churches of St. John the Evangelist and St. Secundus

As we have said,[1] since Mr. Morglia refused to sell a strip of land for the construction of the Church of St. John the Evangelist, Don Bosco was forced to seek legal means to have his project

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]*See* p. 88. [Editor]

declared a public need and have that land expropriated. On April 16, 1872, therefore, he petitioned the king and supplied a detailed description of his building project along with blueprints and other pertinent information.[2]

Meanwhile, he was not neglecting the Church of St. Secundus.[3] On March 27, 1872 he asked the mayor for a permit to take possession of the land set aside for this project and to fence off the area for work to begin immediately. His requests were granted. At the same time he won a reduction in freight charges for construction material. Soon, however, a serious difficulty arose. Don Bosco's plans called for the construction of a festive oratory adjacent to the church; this was so essential to the project in his mind that he would not build without it. However, the city authorities refused to go along with his plans. The result was that he suspended construction.[4]

5. From Marassi to Sampierdarena

The Oratory students' annual spiritual retreat, preached by Father Lemoyne and Father Corsi, took place from July 2 to July 6 and ran concurrently with the Forty Hours' devotions being held in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. By granting a cure, Our Lady Herself provided the candles for the occasion. Shortly before, a priest suffering from severe lung trouble had called on Don Bosco for relief.

"Look," Don Bosco told him, "I'll give you the blessing of Mary, Help of Christians, and if you recover, you will provide candles for our forthcoming Forty Hours' devotions."

The priest agreed, and on July 1 he returned to fulfill his pledge. His persistent cough had disappeared.

On July 6, Don Bosco, not yet fully recovered, went to Alassio. Something curious occurred on the way. On February 10 of that

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. Unbelievably, it took nearly two years to have Don Bosco's building project declared a public need, and three more years for the expropriation of the land. [Editor]

[3]*See* pp. 88f. [Editor]

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. Eventually work was resumed in 1875 and the church was consecrated in 1882. [Editor]

year a debate had been held in the Sala Tiberina in Rome concerning St. Peter's stay in the Eternal City, a fact denied by Protestants and upheld by Catholics.[1]

During the train trip—precisely, between Savona and Albenga —a friendly young lawyer heatedly discussed the matter in favor of the Protestants.

"Sir," Don Bosco courteously interrupted him after a while, "you say that you are knowledgeable in this matter, but I fully disagree with you. Will you state your objections or shall I give you my reasons?"

The lawyer presented his objections and Don Bosco rebutted them, clearly proving that St. Peter had indeed journeyed to Rome.[2] Frankly conceding defeat, the lawyer asked his name.

"I'm the sexton of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin!" Don Bosco [jokingly] replied.

At this, a woman who had attentively followed the conversation immediately exclaimed, "You are Don Bosco!" He nodded in acknowledgement, and she went on, "I have already visited your church!" The lawyer in turn, delighted at this encounter, smilingly remarked, "I studied your *History of Italy* and I know about your *Church History* and *Bible History* too!"

The trip fatigued Don Bosco, so that, at Alassio, Enria had to spend several nights at his bedside. During his stopover Don Bosco was informed that at Sampierdarena, where he intended to transfer the hospice he had opened at Marassi, everything was ready for the purchase of St. Cajetan's Church and the adjacent monastery. On July 16 he went to Genoa.[3]

Both buildings cost over 36,000 lire in cash. Baroness Cataldi, the sister-in-law of Senator Joseph Cataldi, who had leased his Marassi villa to us, personally knowing the great amount of good being done at that hospice, generously donated the money, and, in turn, Archbishop Magnasco of Genoa pledged 4,000 lire more for immediate expenses. Apprised of this, on July 16 Don Bosco went to Genoa to sign the contract, thank the archbishop and his other benefactors, and inspect the new premises. The stately church was

[1]We are omitting press reports about this debate. [Editor]
[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]We are omitting details leading to the purchase of the church and monastery. [Editor]

in deplorable condition. "Unbelievable!" he exclaimed. "How senseless to work so hard to build new churches and neglect maintaining those already in existence."

During his brief stay in Genoa he made and received several visits. Among his callers was Canon [Francis] Ampugnani, then residing at Marassi, who had been instrumental in purchasing the Salesian school at Alassio.[4] He tried to apologize for his initial failure to hand it over to Don Bosco, as they had privately agreed when he consented to act as Don Bosco's front in the transaction, but Don Bosco changed the subject.

"What are you doing now?" he asked.

"Nothing! Just resting!"

"Resting while you are young and healthy?"

"I did a lot of work in America."

"Don't you know a priest rests in heaven? We shall have to render God a strict account of the work we failed to do and the time we wasted."

The canon was so stunned by these words that he could hardly find his way out, and on the following day he returned to volunteer his services as a priest, organist or music teacher to Father Albera, director of the hospice. "Don Bosco told me some frightful things," he explained.

Don Bosco also met with the superior general of the Minim Hermits of St. Francis of Paula, a scholarly man and pastor of a local church.

"Father, you must have a great deal to do as superior general," he greeted him respectfully.

"Little or nothing! We have only a few members, you know!"

"How many novices have you?"

"None!"

"And students?"

"None!"

"Then why don't you get busy and prevent the dissolution of your worthy Order whose mission has not yet been fully accomplished? Many glorious prophecies about your Order still await fulfillment."

"We can't find vocations!"

[4]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 439ff. [Editor]

"If you can't find them in Italy, go to France, to Spain, to America, to Australia, but get someone to join you in perpetuating your illustrious Order. Yours is a very great responsibility, and you have a grave account to give to God! Think of what your sainted founder, St. Francis of Paula, had to suffer to establish the Order! Would you let so many prayers, toils and hopes go to waste?"

He spoke so solemnly, so authoritatively, and so vibrantly that the good superior general felt crushed and promised to do his utmost. Don Bosco's love for all religious orders cannot be adequately described.[5]

6. At St. Ignatius' Shrine and Nizza Monferrato

On the evening of August 4 Don Bosco paid a quick visit to Mornese to preside at the first religious profession of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. He then returned to the Oratory, and on August 6 went up to St. Ignatius' Shrine where, although quite busy with priestly ministrations, he still found time to look after the Oratory's needs and answer his mail.[1]

On August 17 he was back in Turin after a brief stopover at Mathi. Two days later he again went to Nizza Monferrato, where Countess Corsi, whom he deservedly called "Mamma," had pressed him to spend a few days in her cool summer home. He obliged and continued to do so for a number of years in order to enjoy some much needed rest and work undisturbed.[2]

His several trips to Nizza Monferrato gave Count Caesar Balbo[3] a chance to admire even more his singular virtues, particularly his ability to judge character at first sight. Marquis Philip Crispolti narrated the following incident:

One day, a boy reduced almost to idiocy by misery was brought to

[5]We are omitting a circular to solicit funds for the new foundation and other unimportant details. [Editor]

[1]We are omitting short notes to Fr. Berto, Fr. Rua, and Fr. Lemoyne and a letter to a benefactor. [Editor]

[2]We are omitting a short business letter to Fr. Rua. [Editor]

[3]Caesar Balbo was a nephew of the better known Caesar Balbo (1789-1853) who in 1848 formed the first constitutional government in Piedmont. [Editor]

Don Bosco in the hope that he would be accepted at the Oratory. Don Bosco patted him on the head and asked him some questions. The incoherent replies revealed the lad's inability to understand. "But you can play, can't you?" Don Bosco encouraged him. The boy's eyes lit up. Then, as though striking a sensational bargain, Don Bosco exclaimed, "This is just the boy I need," and he took him in. Several years later a Salesian priest called at Count Balbo's residence and introduced himself to the butler. The count did not recognize the name but received him and was favorably impressed by his fine bearing, easy manners and keen intelligence. "You do not recognize me," the priest said after a while. "I am the boy who under sad circumstances met Don Bosco in your house at Nizza."

In short, Don Bosco had correctly understood that poor boy and had succeeded in making of him the director of a very important boarding school.[4]

7. In the Fall

Now and then slight miliary eruptions still troubled Don Bosco. Realizing that he had not fully recovered, both doctors and Salesians insisted that he take some rest. Yielding to their advice, [on or about September 9] he went to Vignale as a guest of Countess Callori to whom he had written about it a few days before. There he was looked after most solicitously.[1]

On his way back to Turin, he stopped briefly at Borgo San Martino, where good Father Bonetti was in the thick of a polemic with *Il Casalese*, a local newspaper which had published a derogatory review about a play—*St. Eustache*—staged by the junior seminarians. The paper had labeled such entertainment for youngsters absurd because it portrayed a Christian father allowing his children to be martyred rather than have them apostatize. Father Bonetti ably refuted the charges, and on September 5, 1872 legally forced the paper to publish his criticism. At about the same time *Unità Cattolica* ran articles highly recommending

[4]We are omitting details about the successful result of the final state exams of the Oratory students and the closing of the school year. [Editor]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Don Bosco's schools in Alassio, Lanzo, Varazze, and Borgo San Martino.[2]

From September 16 to September 28 Don Bosco preached two spiritual retreats at Lanzo; he then went to Bricherasio to visit a benefactor. On October 4 he was back in Turin. The following day he headed for Becchi for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Before leaving, however, he wrote to Countess Uguccioni to reassure her about his health and seek her help for the three new schools he was opening. He also asked her to direct pupils to Valsalice. On the morning of October 11 he moved on to Costigliole di Saluzzo to visit Count Giriodi. From there he wrote to Father Rua, urging him to take a few days' rest at Countess Corsi's home in Nizza Monferrato.[3] Father Rua replied that he could not because of Father Provera's very poor health.[4] Writing again, Don Bosco asked him to make the necessary changes of personnel for the forthcoming school year, and urged him to take good care of Father Provera. He also informed him that he would be in Mondovì from October 15 to October 18 as a guest of Professor Thomas Vallauri[5] of the University of Turin, a dear friend of his. Actually, he was delayed for two days.[6]

While in Mondovì he went with Professor Vallauri to Chiusa di Pesio, where he met a biographer of Bodoni[7] who wished to hear Vallauri's opinion about his book. He read it to him, in fact, in Don Bosco's presence, eliciting Vallauri's glowing praise. The biographer frankly invited his two listeners to point out any flaws.

"Well," Don Bosco replied, "I'd like to make an observation, though, really, Dr. Vallauri is far more qualified to do so. I am no man of letters, but, since you insist, I'll say this: Would it not be better at the end to dwell on Bodoni's death?"

Both Vallauri and the biographer thought that the objection

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[4]Father Francis Provera was a member of the Superior Chapter. In 1861 Don Bosco had told him, "Brace yourself for a good deal of suffering." *See* Vol. VI, pp. 623ff. [Editor]

[5]Thomas Vallauri (1805-1897) was a renowned lexicographer and a prominent man of letters. [Editor]

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[7]Giambattista Bodoni (1740-1813), an Italian printer, designed the type that was later named after him. [Editor]

was valid. "I think also," continued Don Bosco, "that you spend too much time on other people in Bodoni's life and omit details of his own. For instance, why not say that he went to Turin, received the Last Sacraments and died there? And one word which you use —and he pronounced it—does not sound Italian to me."

The writer paid close attention and jotted down the observations, while Vallauri shot up and bolted out of the room.

When Don Bosco later asked him why, he replied, "I couldn't stand those observations of yours!"

"Well," his wife interjected, "you should learn from that writer to listen to others' opinions."

"Professor," Don Bosco concluded, "you know that compared to you I am but a novice, and you should have made those observations."

Bad weather prevented Don Bosco from returning to Turin on Sunday, October 20. Considerately he wrote to Baron Charles Ricci who expected him at the Oratory that day, and promised to visit him at his summer home the following Monday, weather permitting.[8] During that visit, while he was conversing with the baroness, she steered the subject to [Don Bosco's mysterious dog] "Grigio."[9] The group was quite interested, but Don Bosco dismissed the subject.

"Let's forget it," he said. "I have not seen him for some time now!"

It could not have been more than two years, since he had publicly stated in 1870: "That dog has been an important part of my life! It sounds ridiculous to call him an angel, yet it is no ordinary dog because I saw him again just two days ago!"

Before returning to Turin, he arranged to have Father Berto visit the baron's summer home and say a Mass for the household. Recalling her conversation with Don Bosco to Father Berto, the baroness remarked, "It's amazing how Don Bosco can talk about such extraordinary things so simply! One would think they had happened to others, not to himself!"

Baron Feliciano Ricci added that thieves had broken into his house one night and stolen all his money except for three thou-

[8]We are omitting his short letter. [Editor]
[9]*See* Vol. IV, pp. 496-502: Vol. VII, pp. 84f. [Editor]

sand lire, the sum he had earlier loaned to Don Bosco and had been repaid a few days before the burglary.

On his way back to Turin, Don Bosco stopped at Fossano to visit the [gravely ill] countess of Camburzano who later recovered and lived twenty more years, ever generously helping Salesian projects.

At this time some Turinese printers decided to unite and petition the government to close down all printshops operated by charitable institutions, alleging that competition was unfair and their operation contrary to the public good. Learning of this harmful plan, Don Bosco sent a memorandum to the chairman of the association in rebuttal to the allegations. By coincidence, with no previous accord with Don Bosco, Joseph Sandrone, a former Oratory pupil then employed at the government printing office, staunchly supported Don Bosco's arguments, so that the assembly, notwithstanding resistance, withdrew its opposition to the Oratory printshop.[10]

8. Other Recollections

Meanwhile Don Bosco zealously continued his apostolate of the press and published *Letture Cattoliche* and a new edition of his *Church History* which was very favorably reviewed in the April 25, 1872 issue of *Unità Cattolica*.[1]

Before the year ended, Don Bosco visited the schools at Lanzo and Sampierdarena, informing Father Lemoyne of his visit with this memo:

Turin, November 24, 1872

Dear Father Lemoyne:

I hope to be with you at Lanzo next Wednesday. If possible, drop me a line about any boys who need a little dressing down. It will come in handy when I meet them.

Cordial greetings to you and all our boys.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

[10]This paragraph is a condensation. At this point we are omitting several items of minimal importance to our readers. [Editor]

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

He arrived in Lanzo on the evening of November 29. Shortly before supper, while all the pupils joyfully pressed about him, they witnessed a most singular phenomenon lasting until midnight —a shower of shooting stars, such as had never been seen in Piedmont. Father Denza[2] claimed that 33,400 shooting stars were counted in six and a half hours by four observatories! Some pupils were frightened, but one bright lad dispelled their fears by shouting, "The angels are firing Roman candles to celebrate Don Bosco's visit." All burst into a shout of *vivas* to Don Bosco.

The first week in December he went to Sampierdarena, where the hospice had been moved from Marassi on November 11. He was quite pleased to see how well it was doing, though the church and the adjacent monastery—particularly roofs, floors, doors and windows—were in very bad condition. Of course, most urgent temporary repairs were under way. The monastery had two upper floors, six rooms in a row on each floor opening on a fairly wide corridor with windows overlooking a recently abandoned cemetery. There was a shortage of house furniture and the kitchen was too small. There was no playground, and the forty and more pupils had to play as best they could in the small square fronting the church. In rainy weather the only sheltered place available was a passageway barely a few meters wide and as long as the church, leading to the monastery staircase.

Yet despite these drawbacks, cheerfulness was the general rule. At times even food was lacking. On such occasions Father Albera would tearfully seek alms in town rather than be forced to dismiss the boys. They would meanwhile gather around the altar and pray for their daily bread, and the Lord always provided. In due time regular services were held not only on Sundays and holy days but on weekdays as well to the joy of the population. Father Lemoyne left us these reminiscences:

> How often, as a young boy, I used to pass in front of St. Cajetan's Church and ask my father, "Don't they ever open this church?" Then he would tell me its history. I learned how, during Napoleon's reign, the classic paintings in the church had been removed to the sacristy of St. Siro, another church which had been wrested from the Theatine Fathers.

[2]Francis Denza (1834-1894), a Barnabite, enjoyed European fame as a great meteorologist. He directed the Vatican observatory from 1890 until his death. [Editor]

He also told me about "the bell of Divine Providence" which rang at mealtime to invite the faithful to bring food to the monks, and how the latter had never lacked for anything, though they had nothing of their own.

I was most anxious to see the inside of St. Cajetan's Church, but I could never do so because only one Mass was said on Sunday and that at a very early hour. Who could have known then that a new religious Congregation would buy the church and open it to the public and that I myself, a member, would enter it many a time and say Mass there? How good the Lord is!

Don Bosco was pleased to see things off to a good start and suggested that the more urgent repairs be confidently undertaken. The restoration was completed in 1875. A memorial tablet under the choir loft reads as follows:

Joannes Bosco Sacerdos
Salesianae Pater Legifer
Hoc Templum Et Adjacens Coenobium
Aere Collatitio
Emit Ac Instauravit[3]

On December 9, he gave this "Good Night" to the Oratory boys:

Last week I visited our new school at Sampierdarena near Genoa. I was amazed to learn that although there are twenty thousand people in the town, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament is very rarely given because of poor attendance. As you know, at least twelve people should be present. Let's hope that things will improve. Now, on Sundays and holy days, we regularly say Mass with a homily at five and at mid-morning, and we also hold afternoon services, and the church is always full.

I saw Father Albera teaching catechism to some forty boys who knew nothing about religion. Their number has now increased and they are eager to learn.

That same evening he congratulated the Oratory boys [for their

[3]In 1872 Father John Bosco, father and founder of the Salesian Congregation, bought and restored this church and the adjacent monastery with contributions from the faithful. [Editor]

self-restraint] in a humorous situation. Father Berto is our source:

> On Saturday, December 7, 1872, the vigil of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Don Bosco was hearing confessions in his room. It was so jammed with boys that when one was through, he could hardly elbow his way out. A young boy called Prato, I believe, a Latin I student, had a problem when he stood up after his confession. After trying in vain to squeeze through the crowd, he firmly propped his feet against the bottom part of the kneeler and lunged forward. Within seconds he found himself squeezed on all sides. As he struggled to free himself, his suspenders snapped and he nearly lost his pants. Holding them up, he finally managed to get through the crowd. Don Bosco, who couldn't help seeing the whole thing, later admitted that he found it very difficult to keep serious. To his surprise and edification none of the boys even smiled. Therefore he congratulated them when he narrated this incident at the "Good Night" on Monday, December 9.

In these years too the Oratory could boast of many boys of outstanding virtue. Their demeanor in church, their manner of praying and their devotion at Holy Communion so edified people that often some who had strayed from the Church were led back to the sacraments.[4]

Meanwhile, ever tightening financial straits gave Don Bosco the idea of trying a novel fund-raising scheme. Later, it looked like an inspiration from above.

One evening, he told his pupils at the "Good Night": "I have an idea which will benefit you. Pray. If it succeeds, I will tell you about it."

His idea was to print a limited number of tickets and offer them at ten lire each to benefactors toward a single prize—a painting of Our Lady of Foligno. He consulted Father Rua, Father Sala and Father Provera.

"Oh no!" they exclaimed. "People are fed up with lotteries. They're worn out!"

"But we need money! Have you any suggestions?"

"How much will you sell the tickets for?" one of them asked. "Fifty centesimi?"

"Or a lira?" another asked.

[4]We are omitting a letter to a benefactor for financial assistance in ransoming a cleric from military service. [Editor]

"That seems too much," the first one objected.

"I'll sell them for ten lire," Don Bosco replied.

"Ten?" they all gasped.

"Nobody, but nobody, will buy them!" Father Provera remarked, nervously rotating his biretta.

Though they all opposed the idea, Don Bosco stood firm. "At a lower price," he argued, "it would look like a regular lottery, and we would be taxed. We badly need food and clothing, and we can't wait."[5]

And thus he kept moving forward, as if everything depended on him, on a ceaseless search for financial help from anywhere. At the same time he trusted fully in Divine Providence, as if he knew for certain that God would ultimately provide!

[5]We are omitting a notice to the boys' parents about a raise in the monthly board and tuition fees due to the increased cost of living. [Editor]

CHAPTER 5

An Important Mission—1871-1874

THE following account of Don Bosco's relentless efforts from 1871 to 1874 to heal the breach between the new kingdom of Italy and the Church truly redounds to his glory and puts him in a singularly attractive light. It is so unusual for an ordinary priest to undertake single-handedly, with bold fearlessness, the mediation of the "Roman Question" that we are convinced he involved himself through divine inspiration rather than through personal initiative.

His boundless love embraced all people and races. His own country, of course, he genuinely loved, but as God's minister he also most deeply and effectively revered and loved the Church and the Pope. We are convinced that he was truly guided by God. It might be objected that, having finished the lengthy, painstaking negotiations, he remarked that he would never again undertake such a task, but we may attribute this to his customary humility. He said much the same thing in 1884 when, after ten exhausting years, the Salesian Society obtained the privileges usually granted to definitively approved religious orders. "Had I anticipated the heartaches, toils, difficulties and hostilities that are inevitable in founding a religious congregation, I might not have had the courage to attempt it."

1. WHAT AN AGE!

As Pius IX's silver jubilee approached, the Italian Catholic Youth Association sent worldwide invitations to the solemn event. Bishops likewise issued pastoral letters so as to arouse enthusiastic demonstrations of love and fidelity to the Vicar of Christ and to promote pilgrimages to Rome.

Pius IX's own personality heightened the general feeling. Elected Pope after a brief forty-eight hour conclave, he promptly granted amnesty to rebels, reformed laws, promoted popular measures, and fostered the arts and sciences. Furthermore, he signed concordats with eight nations, filled episcopal vacancies, erected new dioceses, named St. Joseph universal patron of the Catholic Church, and paid sublime honors to the Mother of God by proclaiming the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Finally, he promulgated the "Syllabus"[1] and convoked the First Vatican Ecumenical Council.[2]

Fittingly, therefore, the whole world stood in admiration as the great event drew nigh. Uniquely, Pius IX was the first of the two hundred and fifty-five Popes to equal the years of St. Peter's reign.

Don Bosco too was very happy and directed that the event be solemnly celebrated in all Salesian houses, as we see in this familiar note to the director of the junior seminary at Borgo San Martino:

Turin, June 13, 1871

Dear Father Bonetti,

Friday [the 16th] is to be observed most solemnly. In the morning, general Communion for the Pope. At dinner, an extra course. All day, no school. In the evening, a suitable sermon and Benediction, and, if possible, an illumination.

Cordial greetings to you and all the confreres and boys. I shall pray for all of you in my Mass, and I ask that you remember me too.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. On that day, if advisable, recall Cattaneo or send him here.

This postscript concerned forgiving a pupil as a tribute to the Pope. At the Oratory too he wanted this joyful occasion to be celebrated with solemn church services as in the greater feasts of the year, with a display of flags, illumination and fireworks. Father

[1] A list of eighty errors accompanying his encyclical *Quanta Cura* issued in 1864. This is not the "Syllabus" of St. Pius X issued in 1907 condemning sixty-five heretical propositions of Modernism. [Editor]

[2] This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

John Cagliero, at Don Bosco's request, obtained the required permit for fireworks.

In those trying times the anticlerical press widely publicized the government's directive to local authorities to safeguard the freedom of Catholics in their religious demonstrations, but little or nothing was actually done to implement that order. In many places people were forbidden to put lights on their houses, priests were cautioned to keep their sermons in low key, and anyone soliciting signatures for congratulatory letters to the Pope was summarily hauled into court and had papers and signatures smeared.

In Bologna the police threatened to arrest leading citizens; in Padua, some fifty armed men crashed a crowded church, shouted the preacher down and violently ejected the faithful; in St. John's Church in Parma they caused a riot, screaming, "Down with the Pope! Death to Catholics! Long live the revolution!" A bomb exploded in the cathedral of Florence. Thugs assaulted priests in the streets. A hissing rabble screamed insults at the well-liked Archbishop Limberti, rushing his carriage and residence. Fortunately the people rose to his defense. In Turin, too, stones were hurled for hours at the homes of Marquis [Dominic] Fassati and General Adolph Campana.

Of course, the government dared not forbid pilgrimages to Rome, but it did block reduced fares and it poured units of carabinieri, police and cavalry into the city. Ruffians were hired to harass pilgrims as they arrived at the Termini railroad station, and wherever they went in the city insults were hurled against them and the Pope. At the Church of the Gesù, armed gangs rushed pilgrim groups flocking to the services. Outside the major basilicas—even at the entrance of the Vatican—women were taunted with catcalls, threats and obscenities. On one occasion, some thugs pounced upon a group of unarmed young Catholics with hatchets and handguns. Under flimsy pretexts private residences were invaded and windows shattered. The gangs always went scot-free, while in the wake of disturbances the innocent were jailed "for their own safety." If they complained, there always was a pat answer: "You started it."[3]

[3]*See Civiltà Cattolica,* Vol. III, July 3, 1871: *The Pontifical Jubilee of Pius IX.* [Author]

Yet, in spite of the harassment, silent groups of pilgrims kept visiting the holy places and the Vatican, where papal audiences were granted uninterruptedly for twelve days. On June 21, the anniversary of his coronation, Pius IX addressed groups representing nearly a hundred Italian cities and towns, in these terms, at times with tears:

> From all over the Catholic world priceless tokens of affection have come to me and thanks have been offered to God for having spared His humble, worthless vicar. More priceless still are the tokens which come from this noble group of Italians, for I am Italian myself. In recent years this word has been evilly abused. When I blessed Italy from the Quirinal Palace, which they say is now no longer mine, my words were twisted to say I was blessing the revolution. . . . No, I was blessing Italy, and I do so again because of the good that is being done in it out of supernatural love and because of what Italian Catholics have suffered and still suffer. . . .
>
> Every region of Italy has given wonderful proofs of its affection for me, but pardon me if first I single out Turin, for from Turin came the first insults and evils that later spread throughout Italy. However, from that source of evil have sprung also heartwarming proofs of piety and love. There, the devoted faithful who observed my anniversary were honored by having their windows shattered. . . .

During those days too, a hundred young ladies, mostly from Piedmont, and fifteen other groups from various countries were solemnly received by the Holy Father. The leader of the Piedmontese group read an address and offered 10,000 lire. The Holy Father's response was so moving that very many of them could not hold back their tears. Later, on leaving the Vatican, they too were subjected to catcalls and insults.[4]

2. Episcopal Appointments

Though no one would ever dream, much less attempt amid such turmoil to better the Church's condition in Italy, Don Bosco sensed that the time had indeed come to appoint bishops to the many vacant sees.

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

How to go about it? He decided to turn directly to the Pope, since, in times of such unrest, none of his advisors could see the possibility of appointing bishops to the one hundred and more vacant sees of Italy without jeopardizing the Holy See's rights. Meanwhile, an ever increasing religious apathy kept causing inestimable harm to the faithful, to church discipline, and to priestly and religious vocations. Many prelates, seeing this as a temporary crisis, were absolutely determined that there should be no softening of the Church's rigid stance or even a semblance of it. Though such a position was needed and justifiable in order to withstand the malignity of the Church's enemies, Don Bosco did not favor it. After praying and studying how to remedy at least some part of so many evils, he set out to do something about it single-handedly, just as he had done in 1867.[1] He drew up a memorandum in which, after describing the sorry conditions of so many dioceses, he clearly stated that he did not believe that the present situation would change soon. Therefore, with the Holy Father's consent, he was willing to explore the government's intentions entirely on his own, in no way involving the Holy See. The memorandum was delivered to the Holy Father through a most trusted messenger. Pius IX, no doubt recalling the prophecy of January 5, 1870[2] and guessing the identity of its author, not only approved Don Bosco's plan but ordered him to carry it out. Promptly Don Bosco contacted the Italian government which, even though secure in the knowledge that no outside power was then threatening to stop its ultimate conquest of Italy, still feared some foreboding on its horizon. France, for one, felt still bound by the September 14 convention between Napoleon and Italy which guaranteed papal independence, and Austria, like other powers, did not look kindly on the seizure of Rome.[3] True, the Italian government had promulgated the Law of Guarantees to palliate the true state of things, but when outrages against the sovereign dignity of Pius IX, on the occasion of his jubilee, went unpunished, the mask fell. Pilgrims, many of them belonging to noble families, spread the news all over the world, and repercussions could be expected.

[1]*See* Vol. VIII, pp. 237-40, 259f, 279f, 329f. [Editor]
[2]*See* pp. 51-55. [Editor]
[3]We are omitting details. [Editor]

Don Bosco felt that it was time to bring the following considerations to the attention of the Italian government:

1. The need to ease worldwide indignation of Catholics and dispel their apprehensions.

2. The need to show unmistakably that the Law of Guarantees was no dead letter and that the government took seriously the Pope's absolute freedom in exercising his spiritual authority.

3. Recognition of the Supreme Pontiff's prerogative to appoint and assign bishops, while it was only to the government's self-interest not to create difficulties and to grant appointees their temporalities.

John Lanza, Premier and Minister of the Interior, in his anxiety to show to Italy and other nations that conciliation with the Holy See was achievable, promptly promised to study the proposals. On his part, Don Bosco had decided that he would go to Rome and congratulate the Holy Father on his papal jubilee while stopping over in Florence to see Lanza. On June 20 he received a commitment from Lanza to meet him on the evening of the 22nd. Don Bosco left Turin on the morning of the 21st, arrived in Florence at 7:35 P.M. and immediately called on the minister.

Lanza, who had known Don Bosco for some time, was glad that he was coming. In his contacts with him in 1865,[4] he had been impressed by a humorous remark made by Don Bosco which he often liked to pass on to his colleagues: "I once asked Don Bosco how he managed to keep providing for so many boys without funds. His answer was that he huffed and puffed[5] along like a steam engine. I said that we, too, kept going the same way, and he was happy that I had compared him to the kingdom of Italy!"

On being told that Don Bosco was in the waiting room, Lanza went out and invited him into his office. Pausing in the center of the room, Don Bosco said, "Your Excellency, thank you for giving me this audience. I assume you know why I am here. I desire the good of both Church and State, but I believe Your Excellency also realizes that I am a dyed-in-the-wool Catholic."

[4]*See* Vol. VIII, pp. 44ff, 95, 237f. [Editor]

[5]A pun on the Piedmontese word "puff," a colloquialism for "running into debt." [Editor]

"Oh, we know that Don Bosco is more Catholic than the Pope himself!" Lanza gently retorted.

They discussed the appointment of bishops to vacant sees, the Franco-Italian convention, and recent Roman events. "Had we not stepped in," Lanza exclaimed, "the whole city would have burned down!"

"Not really," Don Bosco frankly retorted. "I too know Rome, and I can assure you there was not the slightest danger of that. Now, however, we must try to correct the picture which certain happenings have given to the entire Catholic world."

"For example?"

"The Law of Guarantees must not be a farce. Bishops should be freely chosen by the Pope and enjoy the government's cooperation as regards their revenues, thus safeguarding the Church's dignity and rights. Besides, politics are to be kept out of this matter."

The minister seemed to agree, even appearing willing to accept Don Bosco's views, and he assured him that he would not personally oppose them. Don Bosco urged that he persuade his colleagues to drop any plans to suppress several dioceses lest such an odious measure further endanger negotiations. He then offered to mediate personally with the Holy See once the government decided to seek an accord.

Just then the minister was summoned to an emergency cabinet meeting with the king, and Don Bosco was left alone in the minister's office for over an hour. On his return, Lanza informed him that the cabinet had no objection to the appointment of bishops, but first wanted to discuss territorial limits of certain dioceses, some very small. Without hesitation Don Bosco replied that never —but never—would he negotiate such matters; further, if he were forced to do so, he would even withdraw his mediation over the appointment of bishops, because, he said, he was not an extraordinary ambassador and would not presume to advise the Holy Father. His only interest in the appointment of bishops was the spiritual well-being of the people. He added that such intrigue would discredit the government by exposing its disregard for laws and treaties, and that if the cabinet persisted in its plan, he would withdraw completely from all negotiations.

The minister asked him to wait and returned to the cabinet meeting. It was finally decided to drop the idea of suppressing certain dioceses and rather to open negotiations through Don Bosco for appointments to vacant sees. However, within a few days, complications arose.

The foregoing took place on June 22. Three days later, in Florence, King Victor Emmanuel II signed a decree requiring the royal *exequatur* or *placet* respectively for the implementation of any bull, decree, brief, rescript or provision of the Holy See or of the bishops that would concern the disposal of ecclesiastical property or the conferral of benefices, except for the city of Rome and its suburban sees.

This decree totally negated that of March 18, 1871 which pledged government restraint from interfering with the practice of any and all religions.

Don Bosco had foreseen serious difficulties, but not this last decree. However, he determined to keep out of all entanglements and compromises, forging discreetly ahead, satisfied for the time being with obtaining even the bare minimum for the Church's interests.[6]

Finally Lanza asked: "Shall we now leave for Rome?"

Don Bosco agreed, and they set out for the railroad station, the minister and his colleagues by coach, Don Bosco on foot.

Among his papers Don Bosco had a letter from a certain Father Dominic Berti, who wrote, "Please see what you can do for the safety of the historic house of St. Frances of Rome belonging to her religious daughters, the Oblates of Tor de' Specchi. Try to save it from the greedy confiscation commission without having to go through the courts."

In Rome Don Bosco's host was Count [John] Vimercati, who lived near St. Peter-in-Chains, the present residence of the Canons Regular of the Lateran.

The decree of June 25 required bishops to submit all papal bulls to the government for approval, but Don Bosco suggested [to Lanza] that newly-elected bishops merely notify the authorities of their appointment. Unfortunately, Lanza was not free to act on his own in this matter. Several intransigent colleagues

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

firmly believed that their opposition to the granting of temporalities would preclude episcopal appointments. Still, he promised support, trusting that Don Bosco might be able to persuade the Pope to make concessions.

"Look, Don Bosco," he finally exclaimed, "Catholics think I'm against them, but that's not true at all!"

Don Bosco struck while the iron was hot. "Then do me a favor!"

"What is it?"

"Please spare the convents of the Oblates of Tor de' Specchi, of the Sisters of Charity at Bocca della Verità, and [of the Religious of the Sacred Heart] at Trinità dei Monti."

His reasons were that the Oblates could assert their rights through the courts, the Sisters of Charity worked in hospitals, and the Religious of the Sacred Heart were French nationals. Lanza thought a moment, made notes, and assured him that these convents would not be confiscated. He kept his promise.

These consultations were all top secret, but the Pope had already been told of Don Bosco's arrival. On June 27, Countess Matilda de Romelley of Belgium was received by the Holy Father. "Have you seen Italy's treasure?" Pius IX asked her.

She replied that she did not know about it but would visit St. Peter's Treasury in the next few days.

"But it is Italy's treasure that you should see," the Pope insisted. "Come tomorrow and you will see it. . . . The treasure is our Don Bosco!"

On June 28, eve of the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, Don Bosco went to the Vatican, where he was scheduled for a private audience with the Holy Father. This was an open sign of the latter's benevolence and special interest, considering the enormous demands on his time by frequent public and private audiences for hosts of pilgrims.

As Don Bosco was ushered into the papal chamber, Pius IX amiably looked at him and exclaimed, "Don Bosco, we have lost St. Michael's Hospice."[7]

This vast charitable institute on the banks of the Tiber was particularly dear to the Pope because, as its director and administra-

[7]*See* Vol. V, pp. 543, 549ff; Vol. VIII, p. 303. [Editor]

tor in former years, he had infused new life into the place, paid off its debts and raised the standards of the vocational department. Among other things, to encourage the boys in their work, he had generously allowed them a share of the profits—an innovation which Don Bosco later introduced at the Oratory. Thus, at graduation every pupil received a tidy sum of money.

3. Retrospect

Let us backtrack a bit. In referring to St. Michael's Hospice the Pope wanted to remind Don Bosco not only of his efforts to revitalize it, but also of the results of his inspection.[1] During his last visit to Rome in January and February 1870, Don Bosco had not been as enthusiastically received as in previous years.

In 1867, when people feared a rebellious attack on Rome, he had clearly stated: "The Italians will not enter. It is easier for the cobblestones of Rome to rise and fight one another than for the revolution to succeed at this time."[2] However, he was referring only to the invasion attempts of that year. Quite different were his perspectives for the years to follow. In October of that year, in an apology to Countess Callori for the delayed publication of *Il Cattolico Provveduto,*[3] he said, "Rest assured, it will be off the press before the unification of Italy, and this will be soon."[4] From then on, he gave no further assurances for the status quo in Rome but dropped discreet hints about its possible seizure [by Italy]. This was not to the liking of people who obstinately believed it could not happen, trusting in the veto and military intervention of other powers and even deluding themselves into expecting a heavenly intervention. Consequently they did not welcome his warnings and, stubbornly clinging to their own views, began to have misgivings about him. On his part, Don Bosco, realizing that he was an unwelcome prophet, evaded direct answers to certain questions and kept out of sight as much as he could.

[1] *See* Vol. VIII, p. 303. [Editor]
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 249. [Editor]
[3] A prayerbook for adults. *See* Vol. VII, pp. 473f. [Editor]
[4] The book was on sale on or about May 1868. *See* Vol. IX, pp. 116f. [Editor]

Things had changed. Not long before, several friends and confidants of his, anxious to know the fate of Rome, of Pius IX and of papal temporal power, had asked his opinion, and he had told them plainly that Pius IX would celebrate his [silver] jubilee [as Pope] and would surpass St. Peter in the length of his pontificate. Now, whenever he was sounded out on political matters, he gave evasive replies, though he did declare that Napoleon would withdraw the French garrison and the Italians would seize Rome. The news spread and gave rise to false inferences. Moreover, some curial prelates did not favor him and with disdain belittled rumors of singular favors obtained through his blessing and his reputation as a miracle-worker; others regarded such things as unbecoming in Rome. There were also some others who had not forgotten his inspection of St. Michael's Hospice and its aftermath and tried again to have him summoned before the Congregation of the Holy Office, perhaps to reopen the case against his booklet *St. Peter's Centenary*[5] which some people had wanted placed on the Index of Forbidden Books in 1867.[6]

We now resume our narration of Don Bosco's audience with Pius IX. After referring to St. Michael's Hospice, the Pope dropped the subject and smilingly invited him to be seated. He then proceeded to question him on the thorny task he had undertaken.

Don Bosco briefed him thoroughly on his conferences with Minister Lanza, the latter's friendly intentions, his promise to prevent the confiscation of several convents, his support of steps toward the appintment of bishops, and his hope that the Holy See too would make some concessions. He also informed the Pope of his proposal to Lanza that the Italian government be content with merely being notified by the bishops of their appointments, and of the rejection of this proposal by the cabinet majority. He concluded by saying that there was little to hope for, but that, no matter what the outcome of the negotiations, he had conducted them strictly on his own, without compromising the Holy Father in the least.

The Pope approved of his procedure and then, in deep grief,

[5]*See* the Index of Volume VIII. [Editor]
[6]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

went on to speak of the pitiful state of so many vacant sees. "I am determined not to yield!" he exclaimed. "They want to enslave the Church. . . . Still, we must provide for the salvation of souls, and so we shall have to do without revenues."

"Holy Father, that is the very thing I wanted to suggest!" Don Bosco said.

"Fine! Try to continue the negotiations; try to ease this painful situation. And now, my dear Don Bosco, what can I do for you?"

From a memorandum of his we learn that Don Bosco presented Pius IX with an album commemorating his papal silver jubilee with greetings and signatures of all the Salesians and pupils of Lanzo, Borgo San Martino, Cherasco, Alassio, the Valdocco Oratory and the St. Aloysius, Guardian Angel and St. Joseph festive oratories in Turin. Then, as usual, he requested spiritual favors for benefactors and pupils, informed the Pope of his decision to build the churches of St. John the Evangelist and St. Secundus in Turin, and acquainted him with his plans to open a school at Varazze and another at Trecate. Finally, in view of many requests for foundations in Italy, Switzerland, Algeria, Egypt and even India and California, he asked Pius IX's advice on priorities.

At that audience he also spoke of the good work being done for girls by several convents in Turin, and he asked the Holy Father's approval of his own plans to found an institute that would perform the same apostolic mission among girls as the Salesians were doing among boys. He would think it over, Pius IX replied, and would let him know his opinion in a later audience. As we know, he finally approved of Don Bosco's plan.

4. What of the Future?

Toward the end of the audience, the Pope reiterated his intention to fill the vacant sees at any cost, but to do so secretly, in order to forestall any new attempt of the government to stop him. Eventually, at the right time, he would publicize what he had done as an accomplished fact. This would show that his spiritual authority was not to be curbed.

To bring Don Bosco up to date on his plans, he called a meeting of several prelates. They felt that various individuals who knew the Italian clergy well should, privately or in consultation, draw up a list of knowledgeable, prudent, exemplary priests for each vacant see and send the lists secretly to the Holy See.

"I fear this plan may cause undue delays," Don Bosco commented. "Would it not be better to select suitable candidates and let the Holy Father appoint them as he sees fit?"

The Pope agreed. When he was again alone with Don Bosco, he told him decisively, after a few moments of reflection, "I want you to make a list for your region. Send it to me and I shall approve it."

Don Bosco then went on to express his regret that a suggestion of his concerning teachers in Rome under the papal government had been disregarded. Back in 1867 several prelates had been shocked to learn that Don Bosco was sending his priests and clerics to the Royal University of Turin for degrees in literature, philosophy and mathematics. He had given them his reasons and had even urged that they do the same so that they would have certified teachers and be able to keep their schools open. Now [in 1871] the Italian government agreed to certify all teachers of the former papal regime upon request. The offer was under discussion. Some prelates, convinced that the new government was short-lived, refused to accept the offer despite Don Bosco's insistence that the new government was firmly entrenched and that it would be wiser to accept its offer and keep young people from being further hurt.

The Pope soon agreed with Don Bosco, but the Cardinal Secretary of State and other prelates rejected his idea as a formal recognition of the new regime. Since the state's offer of certification was limited to a year and no request was received, all the teachers of the former papal government lost their license—which was precisely what the anticlericals wanted. On June 30 Minister Lanza and most of his colleagues moved to Rome, and on July 2 King Victor Emmanuel II made his solemn entrance into the city.

Don Bosco again conferred with Lanza, stating clearly that the Pope would make no humiliating concessions and so it would be wise not to hinder his exercise of spiritual authority. In turn

Lanza launched into his views on the matter, but Don Bosco, exhausted by overwork and lack of a secretary, fell asleep. Lanza let him doze, and when he awoke they both had a good laugh and resumed their discussion. However, Don Bosco soon realized that the government was using delaying tactics.

As he was leaving, the Masonic Grandmaster, Buscaglione, was ushered in.

"Do you know who that priest is?" Lanza asked him.

"I saw a priest but didn't look at him!"

"It was Don Bosco."

"Don Bosco? Oh, I've known him for some time!"

Lanza then told him that he had fallen asleep right there.

In one of the above-mentioned interviews in Florence or Rome, Lanza inquired about the Valdocco Oratory and suggested that Don Bosco open a reformatory for juveniles in a monastery or religious house.

"But that would mean putting out the monks or nuns," Don Bosco remarked.

"You could easily arrange that with the Holy See!"

"Why can't you give up some barracks for that purpose?"

Lanza laughed, saying that he truly deserved to be made a chevalier, but Don Bosco replied: "Thank you, I already have enough crosses. Besides, with a cross on my chest, I would no longer be poor Don Bosco nor would I dare beg for my boys any longer!"

Back in Turin, he immediately began endeavoring to fulfill the grave, difficult task the Pope had assigned him. He met with trustworthy and knowledgeable persons, both personally and through correspondence, to gather detailed, precise information on possible candidates. Knowing that this was not enough, and anxious not to arouse suspicion in wrong quarters by unusual trips, Don Bosco told Countess Gabriella Corsi of his mission, and on August 11, 1871 he arranged to stay at her villa, known as the "casino" near Nizza Monferrato, for a few days toward the end of August in order to confer with several priests.[1]

Some days later, on August 18, he notifed her that he would ar-

[1]We are omitting his letter which is mostly to thank her for her constant financial help. No mention is made of his mission. [Editor]

rive on the 21st and tactfully suggested how she should handle visitors, since, wherever he went, his presence was hard to keep a secret.[2]

He arrived at Nizza on the 21st. During the following days distinguished priests, previously contacted, came in from Piedmont, Lombardy, Liguria, and even Sardinia and more distant regions. On one day alone he received as many as eighteen vicars general and capitular.

With patient attention to this important task, he left no stone unturned to urge others to petition the Holy See to fill the vacant sees. We have a letter of his to Canon [Peter] De Gaudenzi at Vercelli:

Turin, September 4, 1871

Dear Canon:

Just now it would be most helpful if you could persuade the vicar general to petition the Holy Father to appoint a bishop for Vercelli. This could be done either personally, or in collegiality with the cathedral chapter. Political implications can be avoided by stressing only the welfare of souls. The petition should be sent without delay to Cardinal Antonelli along with a request for his support. If pastors or rectors [of public churches] wish to add their signatures, so much the better. I cannot call on you, nor can I say anything more in writing, but all this is extremely important and urgent.

God bless us all. Please pray for me.

Your affectionate friend,
Fr. John Bosco

After a short trip to Varazze, Genoa and Sestri Ponente, Don Bosco returned to Turin and on September 8 presided at the prize-awarding assembly of the Oratory students. He then went to Lanzo with the Superior Chapter to confer on Society matters before the start of the annual spiritual retreat on September 11. Meantime the prefect of the province of Turin received this confidential telegram [from the Minister of the Interior]: "If Don Bosco is in Turin, send for him and have him meet me as soon as possible in Florence to discuss a matter known to him. Reply requested. G. Lanza."

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Victor Zoppi, the prefect, new in the office and not acquainted with Don Bosco, quickly sent a messenger to the Oratory with an apology for not coming himself. Actually he did not know where Valdocco was, and he was astonished that the Minister of the Interior should apparently have highly confidential dealings with a priest some people considered hostile to the new Italian kingdom.

Don Bosco got the letter at Lanzo and returned at once to Turin with Father Cerruti, the director at Alassio, to call on the prefect. When he was in the office, he asked Zoppi what he wanted to see him about.

"The matter is confidential," the prefect answered, handing him the telegram. "I have no idea and don't care to know!"

With a touch of flattery, Don Bosco briefed him on the matter, confident that his gesture of trust would win him the prefect's support when Lanza would certainly consult him regarding episcopal appointees for Piedmont. Quite pleased, the prefect introduced Don Bosco to his wife. He told her the same thing, and she too felt honored by his gracious trust and joined in her husband's praise of his undertaking.

As he was leaving the building, an incident occurred which Father Cerruti reported at the Informative Process for Don Bosco's beatification and canonization:

> Don Bosco's humility was no less evident when he was praised; he kept calm, as though totally unconcerned. Sometimes, however, he was moved, and I even saw him cry. I recall that in September 1871, when I accompanied him on a call to the prefect of Turin, who (instructed by Premier Lanza) had invited him to discuss episcopal appointments, the doorkeeper's wife approached him as he was coming down the stairs and asked for his blessing. He obliged. "Dear God," she exclaimed, "it's like seeing the Lord Himself!" Don Bosco reddened and with tears replied, "Pray for me and my poor soul!"

On their way to the Oratory, he remarked to Father Cerruti, "Do you know what that was all about? Premier Lanza had the prefect of Turin ask me to meet him in Florence to discuss the appointment of bishops to the vacant sees."

Knowing nothing of such plans, Father Cerruti exclaimed, "It's about time they thought of it!"

"Oh, this has been going on for several months and it has kept me quite busy, even to the extent of writing letters. Right now the government is amenable for political reasons. Pius IX has explicitly ordered me to handle the negotiations and to compile a list of qualified candidates."

We cannot conclude whether Don Bosco's interview with Zoppi took place on the evening of September 9 or the morning of September 10, but it is a fact that Don Bosco immediately informed the Salesian directors that the retreat was postponed for a week. He then returned to Lanzo and briefed the members of the Superior Chapter on his new task, voicing some regret that the retreat had been postponed and that his health was precarious. "Truthfully," he said, "I feel rather tired, but the Church's welfare comes ahead of even our Congregation's. I'll leave tonight at seven and be in Florence tomorrow. Perhaps I'll have to go on to Rome as well."

He changed his plans to go to Rome after the second spiritual retreat, thinking that he should go earlier since he also had to go to Florence. He also left word to tell inquirers that he had been summoned to Rome "to assist someone very ill," meaning the kingdom of Italy!

On September 11 he conferred with Lanza in Florence and then telegraphed Father Rua: "Continuing journey. Return later. Shall write. All fine. Bosco."

In Rome, he hastened to give the Holy Father his list of episcopal candidates. The Pope went over it carefully, and such was his trust in Don Bosco that he endorsed it in full. He then asked to which dioceses they should be appointed, and Don Bosco named eighteen. Again the Pope approved. Thus testified Monsignor [Emilian] Manacorda. Among the eighteen was Monsignor Joseph Sciandra, cathedral archdeacon and seminary rector at Mondovì and vicar capitular of the Susa diocese. He was appointed to the see of Acqui.

"How about Genoa?" the Pope sked.

Taking out two sheaves of papers, Don Bosco handed one to the Holy Father. "This concerns Monsignor [Salvator] Magnasco," he said, "who is widely praised for his zeal, but is opposed by many who have written against him as approving the current

situation in Italy and being too loyal to Pope and Church."

He then handed him the other folder, saying, "This regards so-and-so *(he mentioned the name)* whom many, including government officials, consider worthy of the miter and who is very popular in Genoa. . . . But I was also informed that he may be a registered Freemason. . . ."

Taken in by false reports, some Vatican officials favored the second candidate. At this point, Pius IX called his secretary. "Please ask Cardinal Antonelli to come down."

Returning, the secretary reported that the cardinal was in urgent conference.

"Go back and ask him to come down for just a few minutes," the Pope insisted.

Cardinal Antonelli replied that he could not. The Pope wanted him to hear Don Bosco's opinion because his information of this candidate's intrigues had been obtained from government sources. Don Bosco had even managed to get copies of letters that this candidate had written to government officials soliciting their support. Since Cardinal Antonelli was not available, the Pope called in a prelate and had him take this memo: "Monsignor Magnasco, archbishop of Genoa." When the matter came up of replacing Bishop Colli of Alessandria because of poor health resulting from serious problems, Monsignor Manacorda kept telling Don Bosco, "Have him promoted to the see of Turin, and we'll save him!" However, Don Bosco had chosen Bishop Gastaldi of Saluzzo for Turin, and because of his affection and gratitude for the bishop's unfailing help, he would not change his mind. Also a strong man was needed for Turin, and he asked the Pope to appoint Gastaldi. Pius IX, gladly recalling Gastaldi's stand in defense of papal infallibility during the Vatican Council,[3] and perhaps also looking forward to having him at the Vatican, was reluctant, but Don Bosco insisted so much that the Pope finally yielded. "You really want him, and so I give him to you! Tell him from me that I now make him archbishop of Turin, only to make him somewhat more in a couple of years." This was a clear allusion to his elevation to the college of cardinals.

[3]*See* Vol. IX, p. 404. [Editor]

Don Bosco hurriedly telegraphed Gastaldi: "Excellency, I have the honor to announce your coming appointment as archbishop of Turin." Gastaldi was so overjoyed with the message that he cried aloud to his secretary: "Chiuso, Chiuso, we're going to Turin!"

The Pope then asked Don Bosco to call on the Minister of the Interior—unofficially and totally on his own—to learn the government's present intentions. Don Bosco got an appointment to meet with Lanza and others.

"What would the government do if the Pope appointed new bishops?" Don Bosco asked.

"He can't," one answered. "We won't allow it."

"Your Excellency," Don Bosco retorted, "the Law of Guarantees recognizes his right. It is part and parcel of his spiritual jurisdiction."

"If he does appoint bishops, we'll hold back their revenues by not granting the *exequatur.*"

"Why not abide by the Law of Guarantees and work out some procedure acceptable to the Church?" Don Bosco insisted.

There followed, then, a long, polite discussion, but in spite of Don Bosco's convincing arguments, it was to no avail. The ministers were at a loss to find some way to drag on negotiations that had started with their consent. Truthfully, they wanted to show a conciliatory attitude, but they had to reckon with the secret societies.

Don Bosco then produced the list of the newly appointed bishops. The ministers objected to Gastaldi as archbishop of Turin, alleging his unacceptability to the royal court, but Don Bosco rallied to his defense, pointing out his excellent intellectual qualities, his degree in theology from the Royal University of Turin, and his long work in England on behalf of Italian immigrants.

As regards Monsignor Magnasco, the minister informed Don Bosco that they had the word of Genoa's authorities rating him hopelessly papist. . . .

They wanted to doctor the list to suit their ends and still believed they could wreck the Pope's plans by denying the *exequatur* and revenues, but Don Bosco quickly disabused them by quoting the Pope's decision, "I shall change nothing!" He himself held his ground. After completing his mission to the satisfaction and ad-

miration of all, he notified Father Rua that he was soon returning:

Rome, September 13, 1871

Dear Father Rua,

God willing, I shall arrive in Turin Saturday [the 16th] at 11 A.M. Ask Aunt Felicity to prepare soup for us. Afterward I shall rest a little either at her house or at the Oratory.

Find out: 1. The approximate total of the flour tax for all our houses. 2. The total of boys in our schools who have been recommended by government authorities this year and in past years, as well as the number of boys whose fathers are government employees.

Everything went on perfectly, but let us keep praying. Have everything ready by Monday. God bless you all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Newspapers soon divulged Don Bosco's role in these episcopal appointments. *Il Fanfulla,* for example, carried this item on October 16:

The consistory will take place on October 27. In his address to the cardinals Pius IX will deplore the persecution carried out against the Church and the faithful in the Holy City. He will likewise condemn sacrilegious attacks against cloistered convents and religious women. As of yesterday, fifty-nine vacant sees have been filled.[4] As regards northern dioceses, the proposals of Don Bosco of Turin, expressly summoned to Rome for this purpose, were accepted.

As a result of his last conferences with Don Bosco, Minister Lanza felt quite favorably disposed toward him, and on October 9, 1871, in reply to a request, he granted the Oratory a 2,000 lire subsidy.[5]

[As we have seen] Don Bosco's clear-headed diplomacy safeguarded papal independence and provided for the welfare of many souls. Furthermore, as subsequent events showed, he established a

[4]Actually only forty-one bishops were appointed in Italy and two in foreign mission territories. [Author]

[5]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

personal rapport with Lanza. After patiently achieving his mission, he called on the Pope before returning to Turin.

"Well, my dear Don Bosco," Pius IX greeted him, "you have often asked and obtained titles of honor and high positions for others. How about yourself?"

"Holy Father, just continue your kindness to poor Don Bosco!"

"That you have most surely! What else?"

"Nothing more!"

On September 15, Don Bosco arrived in Turin and was met by Father Rua at Porta Nuova. Together they went to the home of the above-mentioned benefactress for lunch.

Meanwhile Bishop Gastaldi had been informed that Don Bosco would be at the Oratory that afternoon. Hastening to Turin, he got to the Oratory before Don Bosco. Priests and clerics warmly welcomed their superior's good friend and the boys enthusiastically applauded him, remembering how often he had solemnly celebrated Mass in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. Seeing Father Lemoyne, the bishop embraced him, and together they went up to the small terrace flanking the Church of St. Francis de Sales. There the bishop restlessly and impatiently waited for Don Bosco.

When Don Bosco finally arrived, the boys rushed over to him and slowed down his pace.

"He will never get here," the bishop kept muttering. Unable to stand the strain, he cupped his hands before his mouth and shouted full force, "Don Bosco! Don Bosco! Hurry!"

Don Bosco looked up and, seeing him, hurried toward him. The bishop rushed to meet Don Bosco and, grasping his arm, led him up to his room where they were closeted for some time. Toward the end of their conversation Don Bosco gave him the Pope's message. "Now archbishop, in a couple of years somewhat more!"

"Let us leave that to Providence," Gastaldi responded.

That evening Don Bosco told the community that Bishop Gastaldi had been appointed archbishop of Turin and invited all to rejoice because the prelate had always been so well disposed toward the Oratory and Don Bosco.

The next day, Sunday, Don Bosco spent long hours hearing the boys' confessions, as all were eager to confide in him. Then on Monday, September 18, he went up to Lanzo for the first spiritual retreat.

The confreres were eagerly writing to ask him about the true state of the negotiations for the episcopal appointments. He met a barrage of questions.

"Don Bosco, you drew up the list, but will anything happen? Will the Pope be able to install the bishops? Will the government accept them? Will the bishops have to ask the government's permission? Will they have to recognize the government by asking for the *exequatur*?"

"You surely can make things difficult!" Don Bosco replied. "Did Our Lord ask anybody's permission before sending His apostles out to preach? All He said was 'Go!' and they went."

He made them understand that the Pope's rights and authority had been safeguarded and that, by appealing to the Law of Guarantees, he had pledged the government not to interfere. What really mattered was that the vacant dioceses should have their shepherds. Whether or not the government would give them their revenues was secondary. Don Bosco thus succeeded in making it clear that the Church was independent of the State.

This viewpoint was further elucidated by Pius IX in an allocution on October 27, when he repeated almost verbatim what Don Bosco had said at Lanzo: namely that, in virtue of his God-given authority, without regard or permission of men, he was appointing new bishops.

Don Bosco also said quite candidly, "The Pope told me: 'Draw up a list and give it to me!' "

And what he did was well done. Then he ended humbly: "I wonder whether in the future any Salesian will ever find himself in a position of having full freedom to select so many bishops, as happened this year. . . ."

Listening in silence, the confreres were surprised that he left the sentence incomplete by not adding "to me" and could not help admiring his humility.

Don Bosco later confided to Father Cerruti all the toil and frustrations he had encountered. "I did it to obey the Pope for the

good of the Church! But I feel a lot more at ease among my sons!" He then repeated what he usually suggested to others when they became depressed by difficulties or opposition. "The main thing is not to get upset and to preserve charity! Let us overcome evil with good. Then let us keep cheerful and united with God."

5. Appointments for Over a Hundred Vacant Sees

In the meantime, anticipating the Holy See's official announcement, newspapers broke the news of Bishop Gastaldi's promotion. On October 4, *Unità Cattolica* ran an article—obviously by a subscriber—hailing the new archbishop and mutilating the facts of the 1867 episcopal appointments by totally ignoring Don Bosco's role. Evidently it was no oversight! It was the first flash of the harrowing unforeseen storm soon to break upon Don Bosco's head. The article read:

Turin's New Archbishop

On September 23, Bishop Lawrence Gastaldi was duly informed by Rome of his transfer from the diocese of Saluzzo to the archdiocese of Turin. The news is most gratifying to the people of Turin. Our archdiocese is no longer vacant. Thanks to the Holy Father, we now have a pious, devout, most zealous shepherd who embodies the finest virtues of his immediate predecessors—he is firm and determined like Archbishop Fransoni, gentle and amiable like Archbishop Riccardi.

Since we shall soon be paying Archbishop Gastaldi our homage and unreservedly carry out his revered directives, we hasten to show how magnificent a gift Pius IX grants to his beloved city of Turin.

Born in Turin on March 18, 1815, Lawrence Gastaldi was a canon of St. Lawrence Church and a collegiate theologian of our university. Inspired by fervent zeal for God's glory, he forsook comforts and honors to preach the Gospel in England.[1] With singular talent, he soon learned English and for several years preached the Catholic faith to many Anglicans whose bitterness ceased once they came to know him. While in England he studied the present state of Protestantism in depth, its in-

[1]After his ordination, Gastaldi joined the Institute of Charity founded in 1828 by Antonio Rosmini and was sent to England. [Editor]

timate bonds to revolutionary movements, and the current trends and moral evils of our society.

Intensely fond of his country. Bishop Gastaldi never forgot his native Piedmont and kept himself alert to whatever might endanger its faith. He loudly protested any insult to the Church, and we proudly published his signed articles, the last appearing in *Unità Cattolica* on July 4, 1865, issue 153.

At that time Xavier Vegezzi's[2] mission in Rome for the appointment of bishops to vacant sees had failed. Later, on June 28 [1865] we sponsored a declaration of thanks to Pius IX for his solicitude toward so many of the faithful and a serious protest against those ministers who had sabotaged negotiations by practically forcing the Roman Pontiff to betray his obligations. Canon Lawrence Gastaldi was one of the first to support our declaration and protest. On June 3 he wrote to us as follows:

"I fully approve and praise *Unità Cattolica*'s proposal of an open letter from Italian Catholics to the Holy Father. To this end I enclose a 20-lire contribution. Canon Lawrence Gastaldi, *Collegiate Theologian of the University of Turin.*"

Twelve thick volumes of signatures (now in the Vatican Library) and more than 355,000 lire were presented to the Holy Father—a proof of divine blessing on the project.[3]

This serious protest very effectively prompted Premier Bettino Ricasoli to resume negotiations. The Holy See readily obliged, and in a very short time an agreement was reached.

Obviously Canon Gastaldi had ruined his chances of being among possible episcopal appointees because these had to be approved by the government, and it would naturally blacklist anyone who had bravely shown his love and devotion to Pius IX by being among the first to protest the breaking down of negotiations. But whether the government was unaware of Canon Gastaldi's stand or had forgotten it, the canon was appointed bishop of Saluzzo on March 17, 1867.

His admirable zeal for the Church's welfare soon gained him respectful filial affection. Today, Saluzzo's sad loss is Turin's happy gain. Certainly, when *Unità Cattolica* published Canon Gastaldi's protest on July 4, no one could foresee that he would become archbishop of Turin in 1871.

[2]Xavier Vegezzi (1805-1888), a Turinese lawyer and deputy of the first Subalpine Parliament, became Finance Minister in 1860. In 1865 he conducted negotiations with James Cardinal Antonelli for the appointment of bishops to vacant sees. They failed because of the condition that appointees swear allegiance to the king. [Editor]

[3]Cf. *Giornale di Roma*, December 9, 1865. [Author]

More than ever this proves that bishops do not owe their election to men but to the Holy Spirit, who chooses them to govern the Church founded by Jesus Christ. Men, events, and happenings are merely means that Divine Providence is wont to use in place of miracles. Ultimately, it is the Holy Spirit who chooses the candidate through the Roman Pontiff and crowns his work.

Don Bosco read the article and got the message without personal distress.

On October 27, at an informal consistory for the new bishops, Pius IX manifested his heartfelt grief in these words of the Psalmist: "I can see how violence and discord fill the city; day and night they stalk together along the city walls. Sorrow and misery live inside. . . ." [Ps. 55:9-10] He then went on:

We solemnly declare before the whole Church that we totally repudiate the Law of Guarantees. We have already made this abundantly clear in our encyclical of last May 15. We openly affirm that, in the exercise of this gravest duty of our apostolic ministry, we act in virtue of the power bestowed on us by Jesus Christ, Prince of pastors and Bishop of souls, through the most blessed Peter, from whom, as our predecessor St. Innocent said, "stem the episcopate itself and all its authority."

After bestowing the rochet on the fifteen bishops present, he concluded:

My beloved brothers, your presence deeply consoles me, though my joy is tempered by sadness. As Our Lord once sent His apostles, so I now send you to the disconsolate dioceses of Italy so long bereaved of shepherds. It hurts me to say it, but perhaps "I am sending you forth like sheep in the midst of wolves." [Matt. 10:16] I know not whether you will be allowed to have your ecclesiastical residences or whether you will receive a living, but do not fear. Despite all they have done to me, charity always provided for my needs. So will it be with you.

Once the news got out that the Pope had decided to go ahead with his episcopal appointments, the perplexed government said nothing, blocked from interfering by the Law of Guarantees and fearing lest it expose the struggle of the Masons against the Church.

On November 27 [1871] the Italian parliament held its opening session in the Montecitorio Palace. That same month, trusting in Providence, the Pope proclaimed the appointment of fourteen more Italian bishops, among them Bishop Emilian Manacorda, a close friend of Don Bosco, who was assigned to Fossano. At a third consistory, on December 2, eighteen more bishops were formally appointed.[4]

The Cardinal Secretary of State then informed the new bishops that the Pope wished them to take possession of their dioceses as soon as possible, without in any way asking for the royal *exequatur*. After merely informing the government of their appointment, they were to start exercising their ministry, even if the government held up their revenues.

Official government statistics of May 26, 1872 revealed that from October 27, 1871 one hundred and seven bishops had been appointed. Ninety-one "notified [the government] of their appointment by letter" and received an acknowledgment; fourteen "gave no notice whatever"; only two obtained the royal *exequatur* when, through a third party, they notified the government and sent along a summary of the papal bull. The rest took up residence in their seminaries or in private homes, living on papal subsidies although even these were cut in half by government taxes.

On February 23, 1872 Pius IX, comforted by the welcome given to the bishops by the faithful and by the fact that the Church, though impoverished, was finally free of government interference in appointing bishops, exhorted the new group of bishops to rejoice not so much for the love of their flocks but for the privilege of being able to suffer in Christ's name.[5]

6. The Problem of Temporalities

Meanwhile anticlerical activity was making itself ever more evident in Rome. Between March and August 1871, twenty-four convents and monasteries were confiscated under the pretext that they were needed for schools, government offices, barracks, warehouses, courts of justice, stables, and even stud farms. Such was

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[5]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

the lot of the Holy Cross Convent. By June 1872 thirty of the largest religious institutes in Rome were requisitioned; even the convent of the Oblates of St. Frances of Rome at Tor de' Specchi was turned into a municipal school.

Don Bosco was grieved by these developments and longed to remedy the evil. In November 1871 he wrote to Countess Callori: "I suppose you already know that Monsignor Manacorda has been appointed to Fossano to the city's joy. I think he will do well. But no bishop has yet been given the keys of his residence or revenues. Poor men! Where will they live? What about their sustenance, furniture, clothes, etc.? Yet the Holy Father wants them at their sees as soon as possible. We must pray."

Ever alert to better the Church's condition he sent this letter to Minister Lanza while still convalescing in Varazze after his grave illness:

Varazze, February 11, 1872

Your Excellency:

I should have given you a clearer idea of the revenues due to the recently appointed bishops some time ago, but a severe illness kept me from doing so. Please bear with me.

When I had the honor of talking to you on November 8, 1871 I understood that the government fully agreed to let the Pope choose his bishops freely and that there would be no problem for their temporalities. I informed the Holy Father of this, and two days later, when I expressed his thanks to Your Excellency, you kindly confirmed the above-mentioned agreement.

Now I am asked—and must give an answer—whether matters were correctly understood and, if they were, whether something has arisen to alter the situation. Will you kindly inform me? You would free me from serious embarrassment and make the government's real intentions known.

I think I should tell you that the faithful were everywhere quite pleased with the recent appointments of bishops and that popular rejoicing in each diocese was very enthusiastic. On all sides, people praised the government in most flattering terms for having left the Pope and bishops free to exercise their ministry. But when they saw that their bishops had to settle for living quarters in the diocesan seminary or elsewhere, public opinion reacted and took an abrupt turn.

I am sure that were Your Excellency to hear past and present com-

ment in this regard, you would take effective measures to remove all obstacles. Seemingly you could eliminate them without detriment to either party.

I write in full confidence and assure you that though as a Catholic priest I am devoted to the head of the Church, I have always maintained my loyalty to the government and have constantly offered all my poor possessions, my strength and life to its people.

If you feel I can be of any use to the government or to the Church, please let me know. God bless you.

Yours sincerely,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. After February 13 I shall be in Turin.

Lanza does not seem to have replied, but it is a fact that Don Bosco wrote again on May 20, three months later, proposing that, in order to obtain the *exequatur*, the Holy See send the government an official list of newly appointed bishops indicating date of appointment and diocese of assignment.[1]

He still kept in touch with the Pope, sending news of the joyous welcome given the new bishops and of his own recovery. Apparently he also informed him of his current attempts [with Lanza] for a satisfactory solution to the problem of temporalities. The Holy Father replied with this warm letter in his own hand:

Rome, May 1, 1872
26th Year of Our Pontificate

Beloved Son,

Greetings and Apostolic Benediction.

With pleasure we learned from your letter of April 8 that the bishops appointed to the vacant Italian dioceses received a warm welcome and that your city shows an increase of love for the Church. We were also pleased to learn of your recovery and trust that God will long keep you in good health.

As for your endeavors regarding the temporalities, we praise your fervent zeal, but, seeing the state of things, it is better to pray that God will change the hearts of men. Since He promised the Church perpetual protection, He cannot fail us.

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Confident in His powerful assistance, we most willingly impart to you, your assistants and boys our apostolic benediction in token of our fatherly affection.

Pope Pius IX

The new bishops' plight was sorry indeed. Although comforted by the cordial welcome given to them, the Pope grieved for their painful straits. Still he did not want them to request the government's *exequatur* under any circumstance. Limiting themselves to only informing the government of their appointment, they were to start exercising their sacred ministry without further ado, even if the government demanded formal submission of the papal bull of appointment and a request for the *exequatur*.

This tug-of-war went on for some time. Regretfully, here and there a bishop, acting on his own in disregard of directives, submitted to the government's demands and, of course, was admonished by the Holy See. It was a thorny matter and both parties longed to reach an agreement. Unfortunately, neither was willing to do anything that might be interpreted as an act of submission.

Don Bosco on his part did what the Pope had suggested: "[In these matters] it is better to pray that God change the hearts of men." However, he still trusted the motto, "God helps those who help themselves," and so he continued to do all he could.[2]

7. Back in Rome

Addressing the college of cardinals on June 17, 1872, Pius IX again expressed his delight in having filled so many vacant sees in Italy. However, the need to reach a compromise with the Italian government on the *exequatur* was becoming ever more acute. Don Bosco felt that he should renew his attempts, but the after-effects of his grave illness and pressing work kept him from taking any action for the rest of that year. In early 1873, however, he decided to go to Rome for a threefold purpose: to sell lottery tickets on

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

behalf of the Oratory, to seek definitive approval of the constitutions of the Salesian Society, and to confer again with the premier regarding episcopal revenues.[1]

In token of his affection he called on Archbishop Gastaldi on February 17, doubtless to assure him that he would do all he could on his behalf. The next morning he left with Father [Joachim] Berto. They expected to be joined by Father Franco, S.J., who was going to Bologna for a Lenten mission, but somehow he was not to be found at the station. They finally met him at Alessandria when changing trains. The trip to Piacenza was enjoyable, as they conversed on a variety of subjects and the situation of the Church in Italy.[2]

We have many letters of Father Berto to Father Rua and the Oratory boys about this trip, as well as several notes he had jotted down after the journey. They are too lengthy and a bit tiresome because of many trivial details that bear more on the writer than on Don Bosco. Since Father Rua digested the most interesting episodes into two circulars, we shall try to present a substantial and faithful summary.

At their arrival in Piacenza, Father Franco took Don Bosco by coach to Borgo della Morte, where several Jesuits lived privately, and Don Bosco remained with them until night, enjoying their warm hospitality. Dinner conversation turned to the dismal political and religious situation in Italy, the general opinion being that no improvement was to be expected and that darker clouds were in the offing. Don Bosco did not share their views.

"Don't you think," he said, "that the Church has won a signal victory in breaking loose from treaties which governments interpreted as license to appoint bishops and even pastors? The Church is freer now. Concordats which hampered her freedom particularly in appointing bishops have been shoved aside, and now the Pope can make decisions without regard to proposals or approvals. As for bishops having to reside in their seminaries because of government refusal of recognition, that is an evil only insofar as it deprives them of lawful revenues, but some good has come of it, since bishops now have closer contact with their sem-

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

inarians. Previously there was hardly any rapport, much less confidence between them."

At 7:30 that evening Don Bosco and Father Berto boarded a train for Parma, where they were guests of the Christian Brothers at Borgo delle Colonne. The next morning Don Bosco celebrated Community Mass and gave a brief, delightful homily. He lunched at the seminary and on request entertained the faculty and pupils with interesting episodes of the Oratory's beginnings.[3] He spent the evening of February 19 and most of the next day with Bishop [Dominic] Villa who was in very poor health. "He was so comforted by Don Bosco's presence," wrote Father Berto, "that yesterday he pressed him to stay most of the day, and we postponed our departure."

Don Bosco spent another night at Parma. The next day, February 20, he and the bishop went across town to see "Old Parma," possibly with a view to opening a school there.[4] He also called on Marquis Pallavicino, who, in Father Berto's report, "sent for him several times. Many priests came to see him. Had we remained there any longer, crowds would soon have been besieging him as they do in Turin."

The same morning he celebrated Mass at the Ursuline convent. Then, after mid-morning lunch at the seminary, he went to the station and rejoined Father Franco for the trip to Bologna, where he was the guest of the pastor of St. Martin's Church until February 22.

"On our arrival," Father Berto wrote, "the archbishop, [Charles] Cardinal Morichini, [jestingly] sent word to Don Bosco that he would be suspended from all faculties if he did not come to see him at once! Of course, we obliged! We had dinner with him the next day. Afterward he personally took us on a detailed tour of his residence and seminary, treating us most graciously. . . ."

At mid-morning on February 22, Don Bosco left for Florence, where he was hosted by Marchioness Nervi until the 24th, when he resumed his journey to Rome, arriving at sunset. Monsignor

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[4]At the time, at the suggestion of the charitable Marchioness Zambeccari, the opening of a boys' home was under consideration. [Author]

Manacorda had a coach waiting which took him and Father Berto to the home of Mr. Stephen Colonna, a Vatican employee.[5] The next day, after Mass [in Mr. Colonna's private chapel] Don Bosco called on Cardinal [Joseph] Berardi, his firm admirer and champion who was ready to use his influence with the Pope for any favors Don Bosco might seek from the Holy See.

Don Bosco set to work at once. The Pope again authorized him to resume previous negotiations with the government; he was to act entirely on his own and stand firm by the Law of Guarantees.

The crux of the problem was still: How were the bishops to make formal request for temporalities without appearing to recognize the new kingdom of Italy? Many Vatican diplomats were opposed to this—so much so that, were it in their power, they would never tolerate negotiations. It took courage to attack this knotty problem!

8. A Precious Memorandum

[Before going to Rome] Don Bosco prudently consulted competent people on this matter, with the added hope of enlisting their support should they discuss this problem with others. Father Sebastian Sanguinetti, S.J., one of the experts, drafted a memorandum to be given to Don Bosco before leaving Turin or on reaching Rome. It dealt with two problems: political elections in which deputies of the clerical party were not then to participate,[1] and a formal request for the royal *exequatur.*

Here is [a condensation of] the second part of this memorandum:

If the presentation of the papal bull is in any way interpreted as a recognition, even implicit, of the present political situation and specifically of the Law of Guarantees, such a step is not to be even considered. The problem however can be approached from a different angle. The *exequatur* is openly an unjust, tyrannical imposition, but, being not *intrinsically evil,* it has been *tolerated* in some concordats. It is equally evident that a bishop, by sole right of his papal appointment, has full spiri-

[5]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[1]We omit this part because of its scant interest to our readers. [Editor]

tual and temporal power; hence it is unjust to impose other conditions upon him. Since, however, he is also a citizen, it would seem that he may submit even to an odious and unjust law which does not force him to do anything intrinsically evil; such is the case in mortgages or legacies that concern an *individual*, not the Holy See. By submitting a papal bull to the royal *exequatur*, the bishop would thus be acting as a citizen and complying with an unjust law in order to gain *possession of* all his rights. If the government still refuses the *exequatur* to any episcopal appointee despite his compliance, the Law of Guarantees would very clearly stand out as a sham.

9. The First "Modus Vivendi"

Don Bosco set immediately to work. Like others, Cardinal Antonelli opposed all compromise and would tolerate no attempt in that direction, but, knowing that Pius IX had given Don Bosco full, though unofficial, powers, he did not interfere, being content to keep informed on this holy but thorny project.

Don Bosco went to him on February 26. He was instantly admitted, and they were closeted for two hours. "The main topic," Father Berto wrote, "was episcopal revenues and how they could be obtained from the government without prejudice to the Holy See's rights." Happy with Don Bosco's visit, the cardinal discussed other important matters too and invited him to call again soon. On the way home, Don Bosco confided to Father Berto, "Cardinal Antonelli has great trust in me. He tells me even the most secret things."

At Don Bosco's request, Pius IX reserved an audience for him on June 27 at 6:15 P.M. At his arrival at the Vatican several prelates delightedly gathered about him. At 6:30 he was taken to the Pope's chamber where he remained for an hour and a half. Before leaving, Don Bosco sought a word of advice and a blessing for his boys. "I most willingly bless them all," replied the Holy Father, "but what else can I tell them except to persevere in virtue? 'A young man according to his way, even when he is old, will not depart from it.' Now excuse me a moment till I get a medal for each of your boys. You will get the biggest."

It was dark when Don Bosco and Father Berto left the Vatican.

"We achieved a lot," Don Bosco confided to Father Berto on their way home. "I was well prepared in what to say and ask, and the Pope liked that. He even said to me, 'We get a lot more done this way!' "

Among other things, the Pope granted the title of monsignor to Father Masnini, secretary of the bishop of Casale, and to Father [John Baptist] Appendini, Don Bosco's seminary professor, now the pastor at Villastellone.

Don Bosco also told Father Berto that he had offered Pius IX a thousand *marenghi*[1] on behalf of Marquis Fassati and other devout persons and that he had easily obtained titles of honor for Mr. Occelletti, Professor Lanfranchi, Attorney Alessio and Marcello Arnaldi, "whereas the Pope usually showed annoyance when others requested similar favors." He arrived home quite tired but happy at the Holy Father's benevolence.

Don Bosco made another important call at Palazzo Braschi.[2] Then, on March 4, Premier Lanza sent an urgent message to meet him that day at his office at 2 P.M. On his arrival, the ushers greeted him courteously and immediately notified Lanza, who, urgently engaged at the moment, had Don Bosco and Father Berto ushered to a private waiting room. At about 3 P.M., Lanza conferred for an hour with Don Bosco, trying to find a solution. Finally, he had the Ministers of War and of Justice and their secretaries join them in conference. For the next two hours Don Bosco was bombarded with questions, while he kept alert for a chance to insert arguments in the Church's favor. He left the conference in good spirits, but flushed and perspiring. "I'm exhausted," he told Father Berto. "My head feels like a balloon!"

He went down the stairs leaning on his arm and remarking with a smile, "Had anyone been there, he would have told me, 'Don Bosco, leave those scoundrels alone!' There I was like a stray chick, surrounded by six rogues bent on confusing me with specious arguments. I pity Lanza! But they liked my approach: no arguments, but a plain exposition of their faulty reasoning and of its inevitable sad consequences."

[1] A *marengo* was a 20-franc gold coin minted by Napoleon to commemorate his victory over Austrian and Russian forces at Marengo, a village near Alessandria, on June 14, 1800. This coin was used in Italy throughout the nineteenth century. [Editor]

[2] A majestic palace designed by the famous architect Cosimo Morelli and built in 1791 by Duke Luigi Braschi, the nephew of Pope Pius VI. [Editor]

On the evening of March 6, he conferred again with Cardinal Antonelli for over two hours. He also met once more with Lanza, but we do not know the exact dates since Father Berto, busy at selling lottery tickets, could not accompany Don Bosco everywhere. On March 12, however, Father Berto wrote to Father Lemoyne at Lanzo: "Minister Lanza seems kindly disposed toward the bishops. Don Bosco's visit also influenced him to oppose the suppression of generalates. In fact, he seems determined to resign rather than permit it to happen. Let us pray."[3]

Many ecclesiastics, however, still disapproved of Don Bosco's efforts. They believed that, being Piedmontese, he was mostly out to put the new government in a good light and obtain concessions for it. Instead, he had succeeded in convincing the government to work toward a settlement. In a private memo of his he listed four *modi vivendi* put forward by the Italian government toward a settlement. They proved unacceptable to the Vatican, but still were a step toward further negotiations.[4]

In his circulars to the Salesian directors, Father Rua did not explicitly refer to Don Bosco's role in the negotiations but clearly alluded to it in the closing remarks of his first circular, urging special prayers for God's help in Don Bosco's holy undertaking:

> As his privileged sons—he wrote—our task is to pray for his health, so that, thanks to our prayers, he may obtain all he seeks both for us and for so many souls who depend entirely on his charity. . . .
>
> Perhaps we shall have the joy of seeing our dear Don Bosco again next week. In the meantime he wants us to keep St. Joseph's feast with solemnity. Let me stress that especially now he needs our prayers and Communions.

Father Rua's two circulars are not dated, but the context makes it clear that the first one was mailed the first week of March, the second early in the third week of that month. From the latter, we draw this excerpt:

> Some persons, seeking Don Bosco's views on the present and future condition of the Church, were told not to expect any change for the bet-

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

ter throughout 1873 and no peace for the Church until the end of 1878. He had already given this answer in 1847. We shall wait and see.

It was the common belief in Rome in 1873 that the Church would triumph again in that year. From the Pope to the least of the faithful, everyone lulled himself into this vain hope. Don Bosco merely smiled. On his recent visit to Archbishop Lamberti in Florence, the latter had told him, "Eight years ago, in this very room, you told me that the Italians would take Rome, and I refused to believe it. Tell me now, when shall we be free again?"

"Your Excellency, we are at the mercy of outlaws. It will be some time before we are free, but not too long."

At this point, the archbishop called in his secretary. "Do you recall," he asked, "that Don Bosco told us many years ago that Rome would be seized? Record now that today, February 23, 1873, Don Bosco said it won't be too long before we shall be free, but that enemy troops will be here until the end of 1875."

Twice he was asked the same question in Rome, and twice he gave the same answer.

On March 10, while visiting Canon Ghiselini, he met Countess Malvasia, the bishop of Neocaesaria, and a papal captain who had been a prisoner of war in Alessandria. When the talk got around to the current condition of Rome, he declared again, "Things will not start to improve until 1875 and will not get back to normal until 1878 or later."

Another evening he was at the home of Mrs. [Rose] Mercurelli in Piazza Santa Chiara. The Superior General of the Dominicans was also a guest and, sitting by Don Bosco for a while, discussed the deplorable situation of the Church.

"Let's hope it will all end soon," he concluded. "The predictions are very clear: this will be the year of triumph!"

"Not at all," Don Bosco replied. "We are only fooling ourselves if we believe that Don Carlos will become king of Spain and the count of Chambord king of France, and that both will join forces and reinstate the Pope. Humanly speaking, such a hope is baseless. If God so willed, it could happen instantly, but, barring that, no improvement will come at all until 1875, and things will not return to normal till early 1878 or even later. . . ."

He reiterated the same thought to the Oblates at Tor de' Specchi, to the Canons Regular at St. Peter's-in-Chains, and on other occasions. Hearing these blunt predictions, the superior general of the Dominicans exclaimed: "God spare us! If we have to go through two or three more years of this, we shall be flayed alive. We shall all be exiled!"

While returning to Turin, Don Bosco made a stopover in Modena at Count [Ferdinand] Tarabini's. The count and countess and their two sons, who had served in the papal army, after deploring the troubled times, remarked, "Well, this year will mark the triumph of the Church and of Pius IX."

"Not so," Don Bosco interjected. "There will be no change."

"But everyone says so," they insisted. "You surely know that some time ago a Turinese priest predicted that three years after Rome's seizure an angel would again crown the Pope."

"Fairy tales!" the younger son exclaimed.

"Don't you believe in prophecies?" another member of the family asked Don Bosco.

"It's one thing to believe in prophecies but quite another to set the time of their fulfillment," he replied.

"What is your basis for saying things will not improve until 1875?"

"Since 1848 I have been saying we cannot expect any improvement until 1875. It may be just an idea or opinion of mine, but things will not get better until 1875, and normalcy will not be reestablished until 1878. As regards the restoration of the old order, I wonder whether it's even desirable. Personally, I do not wish it. See how badly religion fared in Tuscany. The Church became subject to the government. No one could be ordained and no pastor appointed without its permission. The Church was a slave of the State."

Asked how Rome could be freed, he replied, "I believe God will use a devout king whose first endeavor will be to restore the Pope's rights."

We must bear in mind that these conversations took place before he had that vision (May 24—June 24, 1873)[5] about the re-

[5]*See* pp. 55-57.

establishment of peace in Europe, concerning which he had written to Emperor Franz Joseph I of Austria. After that manifestation he started saying that God used certain communications to offer suggestions and directives: however, if these were not followed, the situation would remain unchanged.

Don Bosco left Rome on March 22, intending to stop over at Florence, Modena, Bologna, and probably Milan. On the train he remarked to Father Berto, "Do you know why people respect and trust me? Because I talk plainly. Then, too, God has given me a certain something which convinces people that I am no fool. They understand what I want."

He certainly possessed the gift of convincing people. No honest adversary or enemy dealt with him without becoming his friend, protector or benefactor or at least ceasing to fight him. Those who had dealings with him—cabinet ministers and people of importance included—would say, "If only all priests were like him, things would be much better!"

In Bologna he had dinner with Count Sassatelli. "The newspapers say that you were called to Rome for consultation on episcopal appointments," the count remarked. "Is that true?"

"Look," Don Bosco answered, "the Holy Father has regard for Don Bosco not so much for his learning or virtue, but because he speaks frankly and calls a spade a spade. One side demands too much, the other is unyielding."

The count also said that some Milanese newspaper had referred to him as the "Little Pope of Piedmont."

On March 29 or 30 Don Bosco was back in Turin.

10. Resumption of Negotiations

By this time the Italian government had decided to close all religious houses in Rome and the province—311 monasteries with 4,326 male religious and 165 convents with 3,825 nuns, according to government statistics of November 1872.

On June 2 [1873] a protest signed by eighty-two superiors general was delivered to King Victor Emmanuel II, to the premier and to the president of the Chamber of Deputies. On June 15, the

superiors general were received by Pius IX. Addressing them, he remarked:

> Satan alone could have inspired this cruel assault on innocent people who pray, study and enhance the Church in the peace and solitude of the cloister.
>
> It is Satan who prompts his followers to deprive this Holy See of its firm supports and the faithful of their pastors in order to uproot their faith and, were it possible, utterly destroy it.
>
> Still, two comforting thoughts come to mind. The first is that souls dear to God must be tested by tribulation. . . . Purified by suffering, the Church will emerge stronger. . . . My other source of comfort and hope is the spirit of fervent prayer prevailing everywhere. Wherever Jesus Christ is known on earth, people are praying for their suffering Church. This is a harbinger of forthcoming mercy. . . .

On June 25, *Gazzetta Ufficiale* published the decree of suppression which sent so many poor religious begging from door to door. The institutions Don Bosco had recommended to Lanza were spared, though several had to appeal to the courts.[1]

On July 9 the Lanza cabinet fell and a new one was formed under Premier Mark Minghetti. Don Bosco promptly brought him up to date on the negotiations underway with the previous cabinet. While awaiting a reply, he informed Cardinal Antonelli that, with his permission, he would reopen negotiations, and the cardinal agreed on August 6, 1873 in these terms:

> To avoid all misunderstanding, let me set clear limits beyond which you may not hold out any promise of cooperation or acquiescence by the Holy See. Let me state too that, on request, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation will readily release the names of episcopal appointees, the dates of their appointments and the dioceses to which they have been assigned, along with a notice that the bull of appointment was sent to each.

However, the government still was not satisfied. To avoid a breach of negotiations Don Bosco earnestly proposed that each cathedral chapter, chancery or other competent authority present

[1] *See* pp. 190f. [Editor]

either the bull of appointment or a summary of it, but Cardinal Antonelli stood firmly against this suggestion. Unshaken, Don Bosco decided to confer with the Minister of Justice and Religion, Paul Vigliani, well known for his desire to remove difficulties. In a note dated October 12, 1873 he briefed him thoroughly on the state of negotiations and drew his attention to the second of the four *modi vivendi* proposed by the previous cabinet, seemingly the most acceptable to both parties, by which the cathedral chapter or the chancery or equivalent authority was required to give the government a summary of the bull of appointment, along with a declaration that nothing had been added to the routine wording of such documents. Don Bosco concluded by offering his own unofficial mediation.[2]

The minister replied promptly and most courteously:

October 15, 1873

Very Reverend Father:

. . . No one is more anxious than the premier and I to find a way to end or at least ameliorate the sorry conditions of the Italian episcopate. However, both sides must show good-will and Christian forbearance if a satisfactory settlement is to be reached. I beg you, as a good priest and citizen, to try to persuade the Holy See to make it possible for our ministers to carry out the law, and I in turn will go to all lengths to facilitate the granting of the *exequatur*. You probably know that the *exequatur* has been very easily granted to the bishops of Alessandria, Saluzzo and Aosta. Why cannot the new bishops send at least a summary of the bull of their appointment through their cathedral chapter or the local mayor or anyone else without loss of dignity? I really see nothing in this to offend our holy religion.

I confide my views to you, trusting that you will support me in doing what is right.

Devotedly yours,
Vigliani

The proposal that the bull of appointment be displayed in the sacristy or at the cathedral doors, or that a summary be made

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

available to the government, gradually proved acceptable also to the Holy See.[3]

11. Back to Rome Again

Considering this state of affairs and needing to return to Rome to speed up the definitive approval of the Salesian Constitutions, Don Bosco hurried to wind up unfinished business and leave shortly after Christmas. Father Berto again accompanied him:

We left the Oratory on December 29, 1873 at 5:15 A.M. and reached Florence toward 6 P.M. . . . The devout Uguccioni family offered us warm hospitality. . . . The next morning we left for Rome at about 8:15 A.M. and got there around 7 P.M., welcomed by Mr. [Alexander] Sigismondi and Msgr. Masnini, former secretary of the bishop of Casale. Mr. Sigismondi took us by carriage to his home where we were comfortably lodged.

The next day, the last of the year, toward 4 P.M. we called on Minister Vigliani. Don Bosco was immediately ushered in and conferred with him for an hour. Afterward the minister himself most courteously escorted him to the door. . . .

We then took a carriage to Cardinal Antonelli's. The audience lasted an hour and a half. Later, we paid our respects to Cardinal Berardi and returned to the Sigismondis.[1]

Obviously Don Bosco lost no time in resuming negotiations for the episcopal revenues. That very day [December 31] he wrote to Archbishop Gastaldi, who probably would have preferred to go his own way in that matter:

Rome, December 31, 1873

Your Excellency:

Today I talked at great length with X, who seems to be kindly disposed. Commenting on the initial steps you two have taken, he said, "I expect him to ask not for the *exequatur* but for the temporalities." The other high authority,[2] however, won't hear of this. Play for time, and I'll

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[1]These are excerpts from Father Berto's diary. [Editor]

[2]Cardinal Antonelli. [Author]

write again in a few days. We are working on a basic compact that may be acceptable to both parties.

If I hear of any trustworthy person leaving Rome for Turin, I shall write in detail.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. John Bosco

On the evening of January 1, Father Berto again accompanied Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli for another conference on episcopal temporalities. By now the government had left the solution of their differences with the Church to Don Bosco who enjoyed the full trust of the Pope and of several cardinals. According to Father Berto, Don Bosco freely commuted every day between the Pope and Minister Vigliani.[3]

That very evening Don Bosco again conferred with the minister for over an hour and a half, emerging thoroughly exhausted.

As we came from the building—Father Berto wrote—he said, "I am exhausted. Toward the end of our conference I told the minister: 'Sir, I'm not used to such dealings. I am really done for!'

" 'So am I,' was the answer.

"I also told him that I had anticipated my trip to Rome so as to deal with this matter before the opening of the parliament since he might not be able to see me, but he replied, 'For you, Don Bosco, I would put everything aside. Come whenever you like.' Now and then he would praise me, and I would say, 'Don't praise me, or I'll quickly ask you for a favor.'

" 'Please do.'

" 'Very well! Please grant the pastor of Incisa Belbo Inferiore his temporality.'

" 'Certainly,' he answered. The decree was mailed without delay."

No sooner did the pastor receive it than he telegraphed Don Bosco in Turin. Father Rua forwarded the message to Don Bosco with a postscript: "The pastor at Incisa wants you to know you need not bother about the *exequatur*; Minister Vigliani has already sent it to him." So quickly had the decree in fact arrived that not even Father Rua suspected that Don Bosco had obtained it!

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

On January 5, Don Bosco had another audience with the Pope to draw up a compromise between the formula proposed by the government and that preferred by the Holy See.[4]

A compromise—already being followed by some—was finally worked out enabling the bishops to request their revenues without violating their conscience. Don Bosco jotted it down as follows:

Without personal involvement, let the bishop exhibit in the cathedral sacristy, or elsewhere, the bull of appointment sent to him and to his chapter. Let him also have someone, together with a notary public, make authentic copies, to be sent to the Minister of Justice by the local mayor, the prefect of the province or the attorney general who shall ask the bishop either personally or by delegate if he intends to apply for his revenue by that act. The bishop may reply affirmatively and say that he is doing so in order to facilitate the free exercise of his pastoral mission. The simple process of following these directives has already obtained and will obtain from the Minister of Justice the concession of temporalities to every bishop and legal recognition of episcopal status and authority.

On January 6, Don Bosco wrote to Minister Vigliani and conferred again with Cardinal Antonelli. He later remarked to Father Berto, "They want to discuss matters with me as though I knew everything—past, present and future. . . . As for the formula of temporalities, the Pope told Cardinal Antonelli, 'Don Bosco did such a masterful job that no cardinal could have done better. He exhausted all possibilities. He did a superb job!' "

12. A Cry of Alarm!

On January 8, 1873 *Gazzetta di Torino* ran this dispatch in its column "Lettere Romane" [News from Rome]:

Your notable fellow citizen, Don Bosco, is now in Rome, with free access to the Vatican. He is very well liked by the Pope, but he no longer arouses the enthusiasm of his first visit. His star is on the wane.

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

He has ready access to the government too. I don't know what he's doing, but it certainly seems important!

On the afternoon of January 9 Mother Galeffi, superioress of the Oblates of St. Frances, had a coach bring Don Bosco to Piazza Tor de' Specchi to see a poor sick man—the father of ten boys—who had been ailing for two years. After a few cheering inspiring words, Don Bosco blessed him and told him to trust and pray, assuring him that he and the Oratory boys would also pray for him and that he would gradually recover. He stressed, however, that his recovery was to be the result of much prayer. Finally, he promised to see him again, assuring him that though now, despite all efforts, he could not stand even for a single moment, by then he would be on his feet.

Father Berto's diary gives us additional news:

After leaving the sick man, we called on Mother Galeffi, who sent for the lawyer handling their case with the government. Don Bosco listened very carefully as the latter briefed him thoroughly on the matter. Then, to the lawyer's surprise, Don Bosco gave him some expert pointers on how to handle the case to see it through to a successful conclusion. Foreseeing the chance of an unfavorable turn of the case or an undue delay, he advised him to write to a government official in Florence, a man named Cutica, who had the last say in these matters. "We are good friends," Don Bosco told him. "Even if we suffer a setback, he will help us by either suggesting a compromise or telling us how to gain an ultimate victory. Then we shall have to insure the houses and property of Tor de' Specchi in such a way that the government may have no further pretext [to take them over]." "Rest assured," said the lawyer, "that your advice will be carried out faithfully."

Meanwhile, negotiations for the bishops' revenues seemed to be taking a favorable turn, and an agreement was in the offing. On January 10, *Unità Cattolica* editorialized as follows:

After witnessing the warm welcome of the faithful for their bishops and the good done by the prelates, the mayors seem inclined to push for reconciling law with justice. . . . In fact some mayors have already sent certified copies of résumés of the bull of appointment of their bishops to the Minister of Justice, and he will promptly send the *exequatur*.

Archbishop Gastaldi had probably prompted this editorial. On January 11, Don Bosco wrote to him:

Rome, January 11, 1874

Your Excellency:

I hurry to inform you that negotiations regarding the matter you know of are progressing nicely. Vigliani and his cabinet have already accepted the Holy See's formula. During the coming week it will be sent to the Council of State, and it is hoped that it will gain approval. Then, barring the devil's work, it will be effective immediately.

Vigliani told me repeatedly that he would be satisfied if you post the bull addressed to the faithful and state that you are so doing to obtain your temporalities. A similar case concerning the posting of bulls addressed to the clergy was discussed [at the Vatican] but the Holy Father did not approve of it. Please bide your time until next week. Then I'll let you know what is happening, and if our plan should fail, I shall consult Cardinal Antonelli about posting the bull addressed to the clergy in the sacristy. So far, [the Holy See] has not permitted any action which may imply that the bishops are directly applying for or accepting an *exequatur.*

Please remember me in your prayers.

Yours most respectfully,
Fr. John Bosco

But where the devil cannot insert his head, he thrusts his tail! Those few lines in *Gazzetta di Torino* made an unfavorable impression on high government circles, prompting its mouthpiece, *Il Fanfulla*, to state on January 11:

These past few days rumors of alleged efforts for conciliation between Church and State have been rampant. There has even been talk of a mission undertaken by a distinguished Piedmontese prelate that is said to be progressing very well indeed. . . .

As for these rumors, we are quite confident in asserting that any dealing with Vatican officials involves neither the Italian Government nor the Holy See.

In truth, direct conciliation was not the point at issue, but a step toward it. The following day, Monday, January 12, *La Li-*

bertà, a Roman evening daily, stated quite bluntly that the "distinguished Piedmontese prelate" was Don Bosco:

Yesterday evening, *Il Fanfulla* reported rumors of an attempted conciliation between State and Church as being now in progress. Such attempts are to be credited to Don Bosco, a devout, respected Piedmontese priest who has been conferring with many officials for some time. He is said to have been entrusted with this task by prelates of northern Italy, but well-informed Church and State circles give no importance to his efforts. Both sides know that it is useless to attempt a premature solution to a problem. It may well be some while before the time is ripe.

These statements of *Il Fanfulla* and *La Libertà* were followed on January 13 by a vicious, totally unfounded article in *Gazzetta d'Italia* that reveals the hostility of those days:

Vatican News—Rome, January 11 [1873]. [Today] Don Bosco had a two-hour secret audience with the Pope in the latter's private quarters. We have no leads on this mystifying meeting of the Supreme Pontiff with the Turin miracle-worker. Knowing that Don Bosco has in the past been summoned to give the Holy Father prophecies, we may hope that he has managed to reconcile two generally irreconcilable roles, namely, prophet and courtier. . . .

Did he please our suspicious, irritable Pontiff? Who knows? Don Bosco himself must have had his doubts when he got an unexpected invitation from the commissioner[1] of the Holy Roman Inquisition to drop in for a brief visit. At one time such an invitation made one a candidate for torture and the stake. Even a prophet would pale at such a dire fate! If anyone was released from the clutches of the Holy Office, he emerged with his hair turned white! We fortunately no longer witness such kindly treatment, and the good Dominican Father Leo Sallua could not find it in his heart to burn anybody, neither one of those Jesuits whom he so cordially detests, nor the eminent author, [Camillus] Cardinal Tarquini, whose book on concordats, says our good canonist De Angelis, reeks of hersey.

The Holy Office commissioner warned Don Bosco that such was his case. A heretical prophet is surely an unusual and frightening phenomenon. . . . But despite its gravity, the case is not desperate. Father Sallua most gently informed Don Bosco that his book on St. Peter,

[1] A second-rank official, always a Dominican. [Editor]

Prince of the Apostles,[2] deserved as forthright a condemnation as the works of Gioberti and Rosmini, but that the Inquisition's supreme tribunal would spare him this bitter blow because of his virtue and his unusual reputation of sanctity. Accordingly the author had to withdraw and correct his book without delay or be forced to see it put on the Index and himself excommunicated, thus coming too close for comfort to the tribunal.

Doubtless, the commissioner's talk with Don Bosco will give him excellent publicity, since everyone will be anxious to read his book before it is pulled out of circulation and ripped apart by the fearful talons of that grim tribunal. Everyone will want to read those pages which might well have kindled the flames of a heretic's stake. . . . Public interest will ride high because the author is regarded as a miracle-worker and the infallible Pontiff's own prophet. How strange that he passes from the Pope's quarters to those of the Holy Office! How wide a range of emotions on a single day! Yet it is a fact that triumphant heroes were once crowned on one summit of the Capitoline Hill while on another summit of the same hill stood the Tarpeian Rock.[3] The Holy Office is the Vatican's Tarpeian Rock.

It was all, of course, a vicious lie! True, Don Bosco had called on the commissioner of the Holy Office on January 9, and as Father Berto wrote: "The Dominican received Don Bosco most cordially." He called a second time, but Father Sallua was away. Don Bosco later remarked: "I don't know how *Gazzetta d'Italia* found out about my visit to Father Sallua, since I went at night. The report about the visit is true, but the rest is false. I called on him but spoke only to his assistant."[4]

13. Press Uproar

Meanwhile the press kept printing rubbish. On January 13, *L'Italie*, a French daily printed in Rome, denied that Don Bosco

[2]As regards the trouble this booklet caused Don Bosco, *see* the Index of Volume VIII under "St. Peter's Centenary." *See also* Vol. IX, pp. 205f. [Editor]

[3]A cliff or rock used in Roman times for hurling convicted criminals to their deaths. [Editor]

[4]We are omitting the description of visits Don Bosco made to benefactors and friendly prelates. [Editor]

was working toward conciliation [between the Vatican and Italy].[1] *Il Secolo* of Milan, however, viewed the matter very differently in different dispatches dated January 13 and 14 respectively.

Rome, January 13. Don Bosco has been here for several days, seemingly conferring with cardinals, high-ranking prelates, and politicians he considers influential with cabinet ministers.

Nobody knows the terms of his proposed accord because nothing has been leaked out yet, but clearly he is going about it with zeal.

If our information is correct, he has been well received and has obtained a pledge of support from that insignificant neo-Catholic group in the parliament who are headed quite hilariously by Honorable Emil Broglio.

Meanwhile the semi-official press keeps insisting that the government is convinced the time is not ripe for negotiations between Church and State, and attaches no importance at all to this matter. Yet, the likes of Minghetti, Finali and company, all dyed-in-the-wool doctrinairians, look most favorably upon Don Bosco's efforts. Any acceptable proposal from the Vatican would be viewed by them as an astounding success.

The matter is very grave, and friends of liberty must watch lest the enemy penetrate the structure which our whole country erected with so much sacrifice, and, once inside, tear it down, piece by piece. Water and fire don't mix; neither can Vatican tenets and those of liberty. . . .

The second article, dated January 14, was less caustic, but manifestly pessimistic and untruthful about Don Bosco's acceptance at the Vatican.

Rome, January 14. Don Bosco's ridiculous attempts, made by mandate of a fairly !arge number of our so-called politicians to bring about reconciliation between the Holy See and the government, have miscarried. All sensible people knew that this would happen from the very start, but common sense no longer seems a needed prerequisite for politicians. One can understand how Don Bosco's fervent and sincere desire for a reconciliation made it seem feasible to him, but the fact is that it was nothing more than a fantastic pipe dream of a few individuals. Besides, since a number of Piedmontese bishops had given him this honorable trust, he naturally tried to carry it out with the diligence his conscience dictated. . . .

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

I believe that [at present] even an Italian general [symbolizing Italy, the usurper] would be better received in the Vatican than poor Don Bosco! He was told that his efforts were hurting the true interests of the Church because she cannot stoop to negotiate with those who have scorned and pillaged her and threaten to do worse; no conciliation can be attempted unless former conditions are restored. Such gall! Not even a conqueror so rashly dictates to a defeated foe! And yet, the vanquished actually lays down the law to the victor.

Don Bosco's trip was also meant to explore all possible means of obtaining the *exequatur* for newly appointed bishops. . . . Indeed, he pressed his influence on both the government and the Holy See in an attempt to bring their demands to a compromise.

The press continued its ridiculous reports which we shall not dignify with rebuttals. The uproar neither frightened nor stopped Don Bosco.

On January 15, accompanied by Father Berto, he called on the Minister of Justice for an hour and a half, and then walked over to the Vatican to see Cardinal Antonelli and confer with him for over an hour. Upon leaving, he remarked to his companion, "We'll have to climb these stairs plenty of times yet!"[2]

On their way home, Father Berto asked if the archbishop of Turin had already received his temporalities, and Don Bosco replied: "He'll be one of the first to get them!"

After dinner that evening Don Bosco spoke of his mission in Rome and showed how the press was way off target. They talked about him for lack of anything better, he said. He then confided to Mr. and Mrs. Sigismondi, "Now that we are alone, let me tell you why I saw the cabinet ministers and Cardinal Antonelli. It concerns the temporalities for the [newly appointed] bishops. We must now pray. Our boys in Turin have been doing that. We have reached an accord. Barring the devil's interference, instructions will be sent to the bishops on Monday." Jokingly he added, "See how important I am becoming!"[3]

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[3]We are omitting other details and several newspaper articles on the proposed conciliation between Italy and the Vatican. [Editor]

14. Agreement in Sight

A *modus vivendi* acceptable to both State and Church seemed likely and Don Bosco hastened to inform Archbishop Gastaldi of this:

Rome, January 16, 1874

Your Excellency,

With warm pleasure I give you the news that an accord has been reached through compromise. A notarized copy will be sent to you on Monday [the 19th] along with a form letter to be filled out and forwarded to the Minister of Justice. If you have any questions, write to me immediately. The very first copy will be sent to you.

If I find someone leaving for Turin, I'll send more news.

I have been asked to beg Your Excellency to pray and have others pray that God will keep Satan from wrecking things.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. John Bosco

As stated, on January 19, Cardinal Antonelli, acting for the Consistorial Congregation, sent Archbishop Gastaldi official notice of his appointment as archbishop of Turin and instructed that he apply for the *exequatur* by forwarding the same notice to the Minister of Justice personally "and not through a third party" so as to avoid publicity. But Archbishop Gastaldi entrusted that task to the attorney general, a close friend to whom he had already confided the news he had received from Don Bosco. In no time it became public knowledge, and the anticlerical press spread its sarcastic, hostile comments.[1]

Father Berto jotted down these notes:

January 19. Some people told Don Bosco that Minister Vigliani had said, "I'd spend a whole day talking with Don Bosco."

At dinner Don Bosco remarked, "I am working on something and hope to succeed. It's about preventing the holding of a dance at the Coliseum."

On my return from my visit with Cardinal Berardi I met Don Bosco in Via Sistina. He was walking with a grenadier. "He is one of our first

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Oratory pupils," Don Bosco told me. "His name is Viano. He learned I was in Rome and has been trying to reach me these past three days. He finally spotted me this morning. He is a lieutenant and expects a promotion soon."

Don Bosco also told us how he had converted a Freemason whose son is now in one of our schools. He also confided to us that it was his policy never to answer hostile newspaper articles.

This evening he went to the Vatican. On the way he met Monsignor Simeoni of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, who asked him to accept a foreign mission. On arriving at the Vatican, Don Bosco learned that Cardinal Antonelli was ill.

15. The Devil's Tail

On January 20, Don Bosco returned to the Vatican with Father Berto to fetch some papers and that afternoon conferred for half an hour with Minister Vigliani after handing him a bull from Cardinal Antonelli.

After we left—Father Berto wrote—Don Bosco told me that Vigliani was upset with the archbishop of Turin. Don Bosco had written to him to stop negotiating with the Attorney General since the matter was about to be settled by the Minister of Justice and the Vatican. In turn, the archbishop wrote to the Attorney General and to Cardinal Antonelli to say that a compromise was in the making. This prompted Vigliani to tell Don Bosco: "Write to the archbishop and tell him for me that he is being imprudent." To all appearances, if negotiations on the temporalities went up in smoke, it would be partly due to Archbishop Gastaldi's imprudence.

On January 24, after a two-hour conference with Minister Vigliani, Don Bosco returned home and wrote to Archbishop Gastaldi, as follows:

Rome, January 24, 1874

Your Excellency:

Everything seemed settled but not anymore. Minister Vigliani was angered by a letter from the Attorney General informing him that Your Excellency said that an accord had been reached on the temporalities.

At the same time he got a letter asking him to forward the declaration of the Consistorial Congregation to the Ministry of Justice because everything had been settled. Vigliani added that questions were being raised and that a newspaper had published every detail. Today the Council of State was upset by all this and new proposals will be made tomorrow.

All have asked that I earnestly recommend that you maintain the strictest secrecy in this affair. If you must, write only to Cardinal Antonelli or to Minister Vigliani. Several deputies have already called on the minister to demand explanations about what has been leaked to the press. In short, the devil is really at work!

Once an accord is reached, you will be told either by me or by Cardinal Antonelli.

The Holy Father urges that we pray not so much for the temporalities, but rather that difficulties will be removed from the exercise of the bishops' pastoral ministry.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. John Bosco[1]

On January 26, Cardinal Antonelli told Don Bosco in confidence that he was deeply annoyed by Gastaldi's disregard of instructions he had received to forward the statement of his appointment to the see of Turin.

That same evening Don Bosco pointed out that the primary goal of his trip to Rome was the approval of the Salesian Constitutions, and he remarked, "I am glad the newspapers are talking about an alleged conciliation. This way no one will know the real reason for my being here. I'm happy to go home with our constitutions approved."

On January 30, evidently to counterbalance adverse press comments about Don Bosco's activities, *L'Osservatore Romano* reviewed very favorably several books printed by the Oratory Press.[2]

This praise of Don Bosco's zeal to spread wholesome literature caused a certain Monsignor Nardi, auditor of the Holy Rota for Austria and editor of *Voce della Verità*, to bristle. On February

[1]We are omitting details about Don Bosco's social visit to two former officials of the papal government. [Editor]

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

1, he published a scathing irresponsible article[3] against Don Bosco entitled "The Conciliators," taking him to task for coming to Rome to counsel the Supreme Pontiff!

The Vatican was highly displeased. Pius IX personally reprimanded the prelate and ordered him to make some amends for his insult to Don Bosco. Monsignor Nardi satisfied his conscience by merely publishing on February 6 a few lines of praise about an Oratory Press publication, but, as we shall see later, he kept returning to the attack.[4]

Meanwhile, replying to Don Bosco's letter of January 24, Archbishop Gastaldi offered this self-defense:

> As regards the temporalities, I never said a word until I received Cardinal Antonelli's letters and the statement of Patriarch Antici. Only then did I say anything, though I forbade coverage in *Unità Cattolica.* Without delay I sent the patriarch's statement to the Attorney General to be forwarded to the Minister of Justice with a letter similar to that I had already sent to him after being promoted to the see of Turin. As yet I have received no answer. As for myself, I do not mind residing where I am, as long as my pastoral ministry is not hindered. . . .[5]

On February 8, Don Bosco and some friends were received by the Pope. Toward evening, one of them, Chevalier Charles Occelletti, still deeply moved by his audience with the Pope, called on Don Bosco before leaving for Turin. Don Bosco gave him the following letter for Archbishop Gastaldi:

[February 8, 1874]

Your Excellency:

Through Chevalier Occelletti I send you news which could not otherwise be entrusted to paper.

After matters had been settled and the Minister of Justice had personally drawn up a formula which was sent to you after the Holy See had approved it, there seemed nothing more to fear. However, I was hastily summoned and heard a lot of criticism of the archbishop of Turin because he had publicized the fact. I was told that deputies threatened to

[3]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

[4]We are omitting some digressions from the main topic. [Editor]

[5]We are omitting repetitious pro and con press reports about Don Bosco's mediation. [Editor]

raise questions in the Chamber and that the Council of State was now undecided on what to do.

All this, however, was but a pretext to mask the true facts. Just the day before, a strong letter against conciliation and the appointment of bishops had come from Bismarck. For the moment the matter has been shelved. I hope to write again before the week's end.

Remember me in your prayers. Please destroy this letter. . . .

Very devotedly yours,
Fr. John Bosco

16. Total Opposition

Adverse publicity and Bismarck's intervention made secrecy so absolutely necessary that Don Bosco himself, as we gather from Father Berto's diary, said nothing, even to his confidants. Meanwhile negotiations continued amid the clamor of the clerical, anticlerical and Masonic press.[1]

On February 11, Don Bosco again called on Minister Vigliani. Wrote Father Berto:

While they were in conference, Deputies Ricotti, Mamiani and Crispi came to see the minister. They waited fifteen minutes, but when Vigliani sent them word that he was busy, they left.

As we went out, Don Bosco said to me: "Vigliani asked me, 'Are you up-to-date about what is happening?'

" 'No, sir.'

" 'Take a look at this paper (it was *La Voce della Verità*) and tell me if it is worth our while to negotiate with these people.' "

Don Bosco conferred with him for nearly an hour. On being asked whether he read the newspapers, he answered, "None."

"Do you mean you don't subscribe to any, not even *Unità Cattolica*, your local paper?"

"Correct!"

"I am glad to know it because everything they wrote seems to have been personally suggested by you."[2]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[2]We are omitting an article by Monsignor Nardi lamenting the alleged disregard of papal instructions as regards the *exequatur* on the part of some bishops, and some other items of minor importance. [Editor]

On February 16, Father Berto added this to his diary:

Among other things, Don Bosco told me: "The press notwithstanding, we have achieved something. Vigliani told me that pastors could take possession of their benefices and that a compromise has been reached for episcopal revenues; instructions on procedures will be sent to them."

The Pope told Don Bosco, "You did all that was humanly possible. A whole team of theologians could not have done more. I regret that some papers treated you so unfairly, but put up with it."

Meanwhile rumor had it that Don Bosco had come to Rome also to obtain approval of the Salesian Society's rule. On February 21, *Il Popolo Romano* ran this news item:

A committee of cardinals has been appointed to examine Don Bosco's request to open in Rome, under the Holy See's patronage, a boarding school similar to that of the Carissimi. The idea faces much opposition, especially from Jesuits and French religious. Pius IX is said to favor Don Bosco; not so the cardinals, except Berardi and one other.

The same day *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan further misrepresented the matter of the *exequatur*.[3]

[At the Sigismondi home where he was residing] Don Bosco, after supper, would often dwell on interesting topics. The following excerpts are from Father Berto's diary:

Among other things, when questioned about the present turmoil and the [future] triumph of the Church, Don Bosco would answer, "Nothing will happen until 1875, but there will be a slight glimmer of hope shortly before that date. However, matters will not be righted until 1878, and even later, if obstacles intervene against God's will."

Asked about the interpretation of the prophecy that the rainbow of peace would appear on earth before two full moons should have risen in the month of flowers,[4] he replied: "We must first find out when there will be two full moons in the month of May." Immediately Mr. Sigismondi got a calendar, and both he and I found that this year will indeed have two *full moons* in May. . . .

On March 1, after calling on Cardinal Antonelli, as we returned

[3]We are omitting this article and other trivia. [Editor]

[4]*See* p. 54. [Editor]

home, Don Bosco told me that the cardinal had donated five hundred francs for our boys and that he knows all about the press reports.

"Then Your Eminence knows the interpretation given to the current negotiations for the bishops' temporalities," Don Bosco remarked.

"Yes, I do. Do you think we should say something about it?"

"I wonder! Whatever we say will be twisted!"

Cardinal Antonelli knows that Monsignor Nardi is to be blamed for distorted reports in *La Voce della Verità* and in *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan.

Don Bosco often remarked, "These Catholic papers do more harm than the whole anti-Catholic press. Their misrepresentations keep heaping blame on the Holy See. The instructions sent to the bishops were exactly those dictated to me by the Holy Father himself, nothing more, nothing less."

Father Berto reports in his diary that on the evening of March 5 (as on other occasions) he and Don Bosco took a walk toward the Pincio Hill. Along the way Don Bosco spoke about prophecies.

Among other things he said, "The emperor of Austria personally received the letter I sent him in July 1873. He read it secretly and sent his thanks, adding that he would make use of the information." . . .

When I asked how he managed to know about future things he laughed the matter off, but when I pressed him he gravely replied, "You mustn't insist on such matters."

On March 6, he and Father [John] Bertazzi, a missionary, called on the secretary of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, and then on Monsignor Peirano who told him that Cardinal Antonelli "had revoked the Pope's instructions to Don Bosco for forwarding to the bishops, even though the Holy Father himself had dictated such instructions."

Evidently negotiations were tapering off on both ends.

After supper on March 7—Father Berto's diary continues—we strolled in Piazza Mignanelli, talking about Archbishop Gastaldi. We recalled that Pius IX had charged Don Bosco to tell Gastaldi of his appointment as archbishop of Turin, and of another promotion in a couple of years.[5]

[5]*See* p. 200. [Editor]

Don Bosco had relayed the message, eliciting this reply from the archbishop, "Let's leave it to Divine Providence."

"A consistory for the elevation of new cardinals is about to be held," I remarked. "Will Gastaldi be one of them?"

"Far from it," Don Bosco replied. "When I see him, I'll tell him, 'New cardinals have been created, but I dared not recommend you while you keep fighting my Congregation tooth and nail. Besides, my recommendation would fall on deaf ears.' "

As we have seen, Don Bosco kept total silence on the matter of the bishops' temporalities. On March 14, he wrote to Archbishop Gastaldi and again suggested a compromise of which we have no original:

Rome, March 14, 1874

Your Excellency:

Doubtless, you must now be vexed by all that has been said and suggested for smoothing out the difficulties mentioned in the enclosed sheet. Its outline may be adopted, as it was already suggested on another occasion by the Minister of Justice. Seemingly that is all [the bishop of] Susa did. Prudence will suggest your own course of action. I hope that I may soon tell you all I know personally.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. John Bosco

Meanwhile Bismarck, adamantly opposing any settlement, kept up his protest.

17. Total Failure

Unfortunately all this came to naught, mainly because of the press' lack of restraint, including Catholic papers. To a point everything had been going well, but when *La Voce della Verità* and later *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan accused Don Bosco of championing conciliation, it became very difficult for him to continue his good offices. Bismarck, who had just opened his own bitter warfare against the Catholic Church, immediately blocked such attempts in blistering letters to Minister Vigliani.

One day Don Bosco, as usual, called on the minister, only to find him quite upset. "We are in stormy waters," he confided to Don Bosco. "You insisted that revenues be granted to the archbishop of Turin, and most imprudently he wrote to several high officials. It became a public matter, even abroad. Bismarck wrote to tell me that he is astonished to see such concessions while Italy and Prussia are well on the way to reach agreements on common interests. I'm in a fine mess!"

Don Bosco asked Vigliani for a few hours to think things over and returned that same evening. After a long conference they agreed on a course of action demanding the greatest circumspection. However, time passed before negotiations could be resumed.

Finally, an accord seemed imminent. Don Bosco awaited a final word from Vigliani in one of the rooms adjoining the chamber of deputies. Several deputies, among them [Francis] Crispi, learning of Don Bosco's presence, sought him out and crowded about him curiously, anxious to discover, as Don Bosco said later, what kind of creature he was! Crispi thought this a good occasion to ingratiate himself with the royal family by prevailing on Don Bosco to obtain the Pope's permission for Mass to be celebrated in the Quirinal Palace as a favor to Princess Margaret. Don Bosco replied that he found it presumptuous to ask the Pope to revoke an interdict.

"But you know how to get around all sorts of difficulties," Crispi insisted. "Can't you find some solution to this problem?"

"Yes, one," Don Bosco retorted.

"Tell us!" several deputies exclaimed.

"Gentlemen, I dare not suggest it!"

"Speak up, speak up! Do you think we haven't the bravado to go to Mass?"

"That's not the reason!"

"What, then?"

"Look, I speak frankly and call things by their name. I hesitate to offend you all."

"Have no fear. We are outspoken too and appreciate honesty."

"Very well, then, I'll speak frankly. If you want Holy Mass in the Quirinal Palace, you'll first have to vacate it!"

They looked at one another in amazement. "That was a bombshell," they remarked. "You surely spoke openly!"

"I would never have said it," Don Bosco went on, "if you had not forced me to. But is there any other way?"

"You're right!" they concluded.

Meanwhile Minister Vigliani had joined the group, but he was soon called out by an usher. The Prussian ambassador's secretary had just brought a very urgent dispatch. Vigliani returned in moments. "Gentlemen," he told Don Bosco and the group, "negotiations for the temporalities have fallen through. Bismarck has just telegraphed to say that there is to be no truce in the war against the Pope."

The telegram expressed Bismarck's astonishment that the Italian government should come to terms with a priest while he himself was making every effort to sustain Italy. Emperor William I, he added, was highly indignant, and reprisals would follow unless negotiations with the Vatican were definitively ended.

"What can we do?" Vigliani pleaded. "We are in Prussia's hands."

Il Fischietto, a humorous tabloid of Turin, carried a cartoon: Vigliani hanging open-mouthed on Don Bosco's words; Bismarck kicking open the door to seize Vigliani; Don Bosco trying to restore calm by raising his right hand while sprinkling holy water over Bismarck with his left.

Thus those painful negotiations ended. Don Bosco's efforts, however, were not in vain. Several bishops had in fact obtained their revenues, and others did get them later. More importantly, all vacant sees had been filled.[1] But what pains, humiliations, derision and insults he had had to bear for the apparent failure!

"I have toiled and hurt so much," he once exclaimed, "that never again will I undertake such a task! I'll stick to my boys. . . ."

Meanwhile newspapers were announcing the approval of the Society of St. Francis de Sales. On April 10, *La Riforma* stated:

> Yesterday evening, the well-known Father Bosco was received by Pius IX who accepted his rules for a big new monastic institute to replace suppressed orders. A commission of cardinals approved this new institute and the Pope ratified it.

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Other papers carried the same news with favorable or hostile comments.[2] Two days later, on Sunday, April 12, *La Capitale* [an anticlerical paper] mistakenly announced Don Bosco's departure and again mockingly referred to his efforts for a conciliation between Italy and the Vatican. However, Don Bosco was still in Rome. That day, *La Voce della Verità*, taking its cue from *La Nazione*, declared that rumors about Vatican involvement in the negotiations were just "tall stories." The article ended with derogatory remarks about Don Bosco's efforts. On April 14, *Il Fischietto* of Turin, believing that Don Bosco had already returned, welcomed him with mocking comments about his efforts toward a conciliation, and viciously styled him a miracle-worker when it came to wresting money from pious simpletons![3]

At 8:50 in the morning of April 14, Don Bosco and Father Berto left for Florence. That night they were hosted by Marquis Uguccioni and family. After supper, the marquis brought out a copy of *La Gazzetta d'Italia* which spoke very warmly of Don Bosco. The following day he said Mass in the family's private chapel, and he later called on the editor of *Le Journal de Florence* who had consistently supported his efforts. In all truth, had the Catholic press been solidly behind his efforts, his patient toil would have met better success.[4]

When Monsignor Nardi later called on him at the Oratory, Don Bosco bluntly told him, "You did a real hatchet job on me!"

The monsignor tried to justify himself by saying that, far from being a personal attack, his articles were merely a defense of principles, but Don Bosco made it clear to him that certain statements and disclosures had been inspired by sheer personal pride and thus were totally inexcusable.

One day, Father Henry Massara, the editor of *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan, also called on Don Bosco while the latter was hearing confessions. Father Sala took him on a tour of several workshops. Afterward, as they proceeded to the Church [of Mary, Help of Christians], they spotted Don Bosco in a crowd of boys and went up to him.

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

"This is Father Massara, editor of *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan," Father Sala told Don Bosco. With a smile Don Bosco shielded his eyes from the sun with his hand and, looking at his guest straight in the eye, exclaimed, "Massara! Yes, I remember how nicely your paper treated me!" Father Massara was taken aback.

"You know how it is," he barely managed to stammer. "I didn't like it, either. I did not write that article. Monsignor Nardi did, and we just published it!"

"I understand," Don Bosco replied. "You newsmen see things your own way, while others judge otherwise. But let's forget it. When did you arrive in Turin?" And he graciously steered the conversation to more pleasant matters.

Don Bosco never kept silent when he felt it his duty to speak out.[5]

While the press kept spouting nonsense about him even after his return to Turin, he still enjoyed in Rome the esteem of those who had dealt with him, and his repute for holiness was ever greater at the Vatican. On March 14, 1888, shortly after Don Bosco's death, Professor John Lorini sent this declaration to Father Rua:

> One evening in April 1874, I had a confidential meeting with Cardinal Antonelli, and in the course of the conversation we talked about Lombard and Piedmontese prelates. Naturally, we spoke also of Don Bosco —that great yet humble priest whom the whole world even then extolled —and recalled his wondrous undertakings and enormous contribution to the welfare of mankind. At a certain point I ventured to ask, "Your Eminence, why haven't you yet made that holy man a cardinal?"
>
> Smilingly Antonelli replied softly, "My friend, we have already written him several times and would be happy to have him with us in consistory, but he won't hear of it."
>
> On April 27 of that year, on my return home to Tortona, I chanced to meet Don Bosco humbly sitting in a corner of the waiting room of the Alessandria railroad station. I hastened to greet him respectfully. Afterward, I mentioned my conversation with Cardinal Antonelli and the great desire in Rome to have him as a cardinal.

[5]We are omitting an article of *La Gazzetta del Popolo* of Turin (April 17, 1874) rehashing the matter of conciliation between Italy and the Vatican, and another article of *Il Cittadino* of Genoa (April 14, 1874) stating that Don Bosco's real mission in Rome was the Holy See's approval of his Congregation. [Editor]

"Dear professor," Don Bosco replied in his pleasant, half-serious, half-teasing way, "what would I amount to as a cardinal? Nothing at all! Now, at least, as a simple priest I can still do some good."

He pressed my hand affectionately, thanking me for my interest in him. Shortly afterward he got into his train and vanished in a cloud of dust and smoke, leaving me his blessing. I can never forget that moment, his words, and that last smile of his.

18. Conclusion

Even among the liberals the esteem Don Bosco enjoyed could hardly have been greater. Throughout the rest of that year [1874] he continued to do his best to obtain the temporalities for various bishops, and his efforts were effective. That summer he warmly pleaded with Minister Vigliani for Bishop De Gaudenzi of Vigevano and Bishop Villa of Parma, eliciting this reply from the minister himself:

Rome, September 9, 1874

Reverend and dear Don Bosco:

Some days ago we received a request for the *exequatur* from the bishop of Pavia.[1] I was delighted by his gesture of respect for the law. Why do not the bishops of Vigevano and Parma, whom you recommend, follow his example? Are not civil and church laws equal for all, or is the conscience of the bishop of Pavia different from that of his brethren in Christ? Surely not! Exhort them to follow this praiseworthy example. The government will do its duty by granting the *exequatur* to anyone who has not proven himself wholly undeserving of it. This is the sad case, I regret to say, of the bishop of Mantua,[2] who has recently been sentenced to jail for his many acts of defiance and worse things. Much as it pains me to send a bishop to prison like a common criminal, I must maintain and enforce the laws of the land. Bishop Rota will be the disaster of the diocese of Mantua, and he will eventually be forced to leave unless he eases his hostility to the government and its laws.

I cannot reprieve Attorney Bertinelli as you recommend, since his of-

[1]Bishop Lucido Maria Parocchi, later cardinal, vicar of Leo XIII, and chancellor of the Holy Roman Church. [Author]

[2]Peter Rota, bishop of Guastalla and then of Mantua, later became titular archbishop of Thebes and canon of St. Peter's. His cause of beatification and canonization is in progress. [Author]

fense is far too serious and his sentence far too light; furthermore he is still at large. If he gives himself up, docilely goes to prison and serves a fair part of his sentence, we shall consider condoning the rest. I am amazed that a thief who has stolen so much money from the religious whose trust he enjoyed should find so many intercessors among the Roman prelates and even manage to scrounge for the good offices of our excellent Don Bosco!

You know my desire to improve relations between Church and State, and to what extent I was ready to go within the limits of the law, even to the point of respecting certain vetoes and fears which I myself felt were unreasonable before both God and man. Unfortunately I was badly repaid, and now, because of the inexplicable resistance of the higher clergy, I find I must be firm and avoid all semblance of weakness and, worse yet, timid subjection. If all priests were prudent and sensible like you, who are a virtuous priest and a good citizen, we would soon be heartened by an improvement in Church and State relations. So, try to make some prudent propaganda and perform the miracle which some people find it impossible to achieve.

May God continue to bless your many charitable undertakings and preserve you for the good of Church and State.

Yours devotedly,
Vigliani

Although negotiations had broken down, Vigliani still struggled for a solution. The matter was discussed in the parliament in May 1875, but was opposed by the anticlerical party.[3]

On March 18, 1876 the Minghetti cabinet fell and was succeeded on the 25th by that of Depretis. Minister Mancini, Vigliani's successor, hastened to make more stringent regulations for granting the *exequatur*.

What was to be done? The harassed bishops were willing to endure personal discomfort but could not ignore the vast spiritual harm risked by their entire flock. They appealed therefore to the Holy See for new instructions. On November 29, 1876, they were notified that in view of the new, very special circumstances, they could formally request the *exequatur* from the government.

Thus ended this thorny matter.[4]

[3]We are omitting the hostile comments of an anticlerical paper. [Editor]
[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

CHAPTER 6

The Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians

THE years 1871-74 covered in this volume are the most interesting of Don Bosco's life. They were the years when he not only achieved the definitive approval of the Salesian Society but also began to establish a sound basis for his second religious congregation which was to benefit female youth throughout the world.

It is only fitting therefore that we dwell a while on the origins of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians so as to understand better the Lord's designs as He guided every step of His most faithful servant.

1. The Lord's Designs

In 1837, during his second year of philosophy in the Chieri seminary, Don Bosco felt a stronger desire for the apostolate which he had seen distinctly outlined in dreams that centered on Jesus and Mary. That year, God created two souls who were to become most valuable helpmates to this new father and teacher of youth: Mary Mazzarello and Michael Rua. Mary was born in the Mazzarello hamlet near Mornese, in Monferrato,[1] on May 9, a likely gift of the Blessed Virgin in the month consecrated to Her; Michael was born in Turin, not far from the Valdocco[2] meadows on June 9, conceivably a gift of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Mary's humble birth seemed to accentuate her singular character. Her fellow villagers admired her radiant traits and charm as she grew up lively and receptive, upright and resolute, devout and

[1] A most fertile, hilly district of Piedmont in northern Italy, renowned for its vineyards. It was also Don Bosco's native district. [Editor]

[2] A section of Turin where Don Bosco began his work. For the origin of this name *see* Vol. II, pp. 234f. [Editor]

fervent, gradually deepening her knowledge of heavenly things and of right and wrong, such as rarely occurs at such a tender age. Early she began to practice self-denial in food and drink, avoided vain apparel, curbed her pride, listened effectively to the Word of God, and attended catechism classes so diligently as to surpass all the other children. She prepared for her First Communion by firmly resolving to avoid evil and do good. From that day on, her love for Jesus grew so intense that she soon felt the need of receiving the Holy Eucharist daily; then, at fifteen, of her own free will, she offered God her virginity till death.

Later she moved to a farmhouse known as Valponasca, which her parents rented from Marquis Doria, on the hill facing the Mazzarello hamlet. The walk to church took her almost an hour along the road, and at least a half hour along a trail. It was quite edifying to see this lowly country girl get to church every morning in time for Mass and Holy Communion. Neither fatigue (she was a hard worker) nor inclement weather could keep her away. To make sure of waking up on time, she occasionally slept on the bare ground or girded herself uncomfortably. On awakening, if the weather was good, she invited one of her sisters to go along; if not, she set out alone, anxious to get to the church before anyone else and give Jesus the first morning greeting. This was the only reason she always left home so early. When she happened to find the church closed, as was often the case, she would kneel on the steps like Dominic Savio, adoring and praying until the door was opened. Several times she got to the church by two or two-thirty in the morning, and after praying at great length, she would sit down to rest a little, as simple and humble as a dove. . . . After Mass and Communion she would return home and promptly and zestfully tackle her chores.

She would have loved to spend more time in church during the day, but distance made that impossible; if, however, she ever had to go back to the village for any reason, she never failed to drop into church, fervently praying for quite a while before the tabernacle! Throughout the day her heart and mind would dwell on the Blessed Sacrament and she would often lovingly gaze in the direction of the church. She did this unfailingly at the evening hour when many devout souls, drawn by the zeal of their deeply pious pastor, Father Dominic Pestarino, would gather in the church for

a short meditation or spiritual reading followed by the rosary and Benediction. At that hour, as the candles glowed on the altar, their light would shine through the stained glass windows and, because of the location, be seen even from the Valponasca farmhouse. That sight would draw Mary from the family circle to the window to gaze upon that brilliance, and with her eyes riveted to the church, she would pray most fervently as if she were kneeling there. Her family soon noticed this. Drawn by her example, her father and mother, along with her three brothers and three sisters —all younger than she—joined her in prayer.

In those days there were no girls' schools in the villages of Piedmont. Eager for virtue through a deeper knowledge of her religion and her duties, Mary privately learned to read and meditate on such books as *The Practice of Loving Jesus Christ, The Eternal Maxims* by St. Alphonsus, and *The Spiritual Diary*, drawing from them inspiration and practical ways to live in union with God.

Hers was a beautiful soul, known as such to others, partly because of the singular remarks that came so spontaneously to her lips when she ordinarily greeted acquaintances. Accustomed to early morning walks to the church under the starry sky, she would remark, "Look! So many stars and so brilliant! One day they will lie beneath our feet and we shall soar over them!"

So wondrously did the Lord mold the first mother superior of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians that we may aptly apply to her these words of Holy Scripture: "I have raised her up to justice," that she may in turn educate other young girls to uprightness and piety, "and I will direct all her ways." [Cf. Is. 45, 13]

In those days the deeply pious and unforgettable Father Dominic Pestarino had begun his fruitful apostolate at Mornese, his birthplace. While a seminarian in Genoa, he had struck up a close friendship with both Canon [Cajetan] Alimonda—future cardinal and archbishop of Turin—and the servant of God, Father Joseph Frassinetti. After ordination, he returned to Mornese. At that time hardly anyone went to Communion on weekdays, but, thanks to his ardent zeal, within the span of but a few years the majority of his parishioners, men and women, gradually began to receive daily. Bishop [Modesto] Contratto of Acqui was so im-

pressed that, on a pastoral visit, he exclaimed, "Mornese is the garden of my diocese!"

On her part, Mary Mazzarello was—and everyone knew it—its loveliest flower. However, even though she shared Don Bosco's hopes, she would not have been able then and there to assume leadership of a large group of girls who aspired to a formal religious life, nor could she have instantly absorbed Don Bosco's spirit if she had not always devoted herself to those same ideals. On this score too the Lord prepared her in a surprising way. A booklet by Father Frassinetti, *Rule of the Pious Union of the New Ursulines, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, under the Patronage of St. Ursula and St. Angela Merici*, gives us some insights.

In Mornese, around 1850, Angelina Maccagno, a very devout girl of eighteen, decided to give herself wholly to God without entering a religious order. She revealed this to her cousin who readily seconded her plan. She then told Father Pestarino, her spiritual director, who after mature reflection gave his approval. In agreement with him, she drafted a rule for the guidance of the few girls who had already rallied about her and of those who might later decide to join. At that time Angelina knew nothing of The Company of St. Ursula, founded by St. Angela Merici and approved by Paul III in 1544, but she might have read a book by a noble lady entitled *Callings Open to Maidens: Celibacy, Motives for Choosing It and Means for Its Holy Observance While Remaining in the World.*[3] It was a free translation from the French with the addition of a discourse by the [then] Blessed Alphonsus Liguori.[4] In that discourse drawn from his *Treasury of Sermon Material,*[5] St. Alphonsus, among other interesting things, remarks:

> Holiness does not consist mainly in living in a convent or spending the whole day in church, but in praying, receiving Communion whenever possible, obeying and helping out with the house chores, avoiding worldly amusements, and patiently bearing fatigue and contempt. Were you

[3]*Dei diversi stati che le donzelle possono abbracciare, e principalmente del celibato, dei motivi di appigliarvisi e del modo di vivervi santamente anche in mezzo alla società, scritti da una nobile donzella.* Traduzione libera dal francese coll'aggiunta di un discorso del Beato Alfonso de' Liguori, Genova, Tipografia Ponthenier, 1835. [Author]

[4]He was canonized in 1839 by Pope Gregory XVI. [Editor]

[5]*Selva di materie predicabili.* [Author]

to enter a convent, what do you think you would do? Spend your time in church or in your cell, and then eat and play? True, some time is set apart for prayer, Mass and Communion, but the rest of the time will be employed in housework. This is particularly the lot of lay sisters; since they do not have to recite the Divine Office, they do most of the work. Everyone praises convent life and overlooks the fact that pious spinsters would find it much easier to dedicate themselves to prayer and to the pursuit of sanctity by practicing poverty in their homes than by entering a convent. If only you knew, as I do, the many lay sisters who regret having entered a convent, especially a large one, where they barely have time to say their rosary!

What better advice for devout maidens who cannot leave their families or are not well schooled, but would like to become nuns?

As it was, Angelina Maccagno wrote her rule in 1851 and Father Pestarino forwarded it to Father Frassinetti for corrections, alterations or additions. The good priest, distracted by other tasks and even doubtful about the likelihood of success for such a project, put the rule off to a more convenient time and ended up losing the manuscript. After waiting over a year, Father Pestarino sent him another copy and again asked him to look it over, but Father Frassinetti kept delaying for two more years. Finally, in 1855, after consulting competent people, he compiled a rule, faithfully following the outline sent him, "neither adding nor changing anything substantially."[6]

After receiving this rule, Angelina Maccagno gathered her five companions—among them Mary Mazzarello, eighteen—and on Sunday, December 9, 1855, they officially started the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.[7] When Bishop Modesto Contratto of Acqui came to Mornese two years later for the solemn closing of Mary's month, "he assembled these maidens in the church, presided at a sort of religious profession on their part and bestowed on each of them a medal of Mary Im-

[6]Cf. *Regola della Pia Unione delle Nuove Orsoline, Figlie di Santa Maria Immacolata sotto la protezione di S. Angela Merici.* Genova, Tipografia della Gioventù, 1867, p. 7. [Author]

[7]Another sodality based on the same rule was started in Genoa in August 1856. There too a number of copies were printed "in order that this sodality might become more known and widespread." In fact, it spread "in Liguria, Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia, Romagna, Tuscany and probably in other parts of Italy as well . . . within a very short time and on a scale which seemed portentous." Cf. *Regola della Pia Unione delle Nuove Orsoline*, p. 11. [Author]

maculate, as required by the rule" which he had graciously approved that month.[8]

Mary was the youngest and most fervent of all the sodality members. The wise and devout Father Pestarino would have liked her to direct the new institution, but the Lord who had great designs for her wanted her to be like Himself in adversity. He therefore permitted that her nomination should prove unacceptable to some villagers, perhaps because she was just a simple peasant girl. The leadership of the sodality was consequently given to the very devout young lady who had initiated it. This we gather from the first brief but interesting biography of Mary Mazzarello published in the *Bollettino Salesiano* immediately after her death.[9] What follows is from this source:

> Ignoring the rebuff, Mary Mazzarello continued to work for the success of the new congregation, and she did her utmost to promote it by her exemplary observance of the rules. Such was her desire to conform her own will to that of her superior that, at the price of many a sacrifice, she chose to subject herself even in such things as the purchase of a dress, apron, handkerchief and other trivial items.

We might say that from 1857 on—perhaps as early as 1855—she led the life of a religious. The sodality regulations in fact declare: "This sodality is made up of maidens who wish to become saints not only by perfectly obeying God's laws, but also by practicing the evangelical counsels . . . [maidens] who strive to avoid even deliberate venial sin, to observe perpetual chastity, to obey unreservedly their spiritual director in matters of conscience and their superioress in what pertains to this rule, to practice the virtue of poverty by being detached from worldly possessions and

[8]Until 1857, the Sodality of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate founded at Mornese was believed to be "a brand new one." The belief persisted for another two years, until it was discovered, generally speaking, that in substance and detail it was the same as the famous "Company of St. Ursula" founded by St. Angela Merici at Brescia, and first approved on August 8, 1536 by Monsignor Lawrence Mario, vicar general of Francis Cardinal Cornaro, bishop of that diocese. Further approval was granted by Pope Paul III on June 9, 1544 after the foundress' death. St. Charles Borromeo thought so highly of this congregation that he wished to see it established throughout his vast archdiocese. In fact, it spread not only through Italy but through the whole of Christendom, thus making it quite clear that the Sodality of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate could not truthfully be called a new institution but rather a revitalized one. Cf. *Regola della Pia Unione delle Nuove Orsoline Figlie di Santa Maria Immacolata*, etc., pp. 9-10. [Author]

[9]September, October, December 1881 and March, June 1882. [Author]

using them for God's glory and the welfare of their fellow beings."[10]

Specific duties of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate included "works of mercy, zeal for the glory of God and the welfare of souls, the education of underprivileged girls, exhorting them to receive the sacraments frequently and attend catechism lessons. The members were also expected to teach catechism and to strive to instill love of piety and spiritual things in the more mature girls"[11]—the very same duties, we might say, that Don Bosco had assigned to the Salesians and would later assign to the Daughters [of Mary, Help of Christians].

Here are other incidents which more clearly show that it was truly the Lord who prepared His devout, strong handmaid to become the first superioress of Don Bosco's second religious family. Since she lived at a considerable distance from the village and spent the day in farm work, she could not give herself as fully as she wished to the apostolate outlined by the sodality regulations. God, who draws good even from evil, soon removed every obstacle. In 1858, a theft at the Valponasca hamlet prompted Mary's father to move into the village proper. Two years later, a typhus epidemic broke out. At Father Pestarino's advice, Mary nursed her sick relatives as zealously as a "Sister of Charity" until she herself finally fell ill and nearly died. From then on she was no longer strong enough for farm work. She was twenty-three, and feeling more eager than ever to devote herself fully to the welfare of girls, she mulled over the thought of learning dressmaking and then gathering the village girls to teach them not only the trade but the practice of Christian virtues.

An unusual occurrence—we may consider it preternatural because it is beyond human explanation—perhaps led her to this step. One day, while passing through Borgo Alto—where one day a new cluster of buildings would forever draw the gaze of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians—she saw a huge edifice and many young girls playing about. She stood entranced. She thought she was dreaming, yet she was fully awake, standing on her own feet in the open air in daylight. She gazed and gazed, ever more astonished, and at last exclaimed, "What is this? This

[10]Cf. *La monaca in casa*, pp. 162f. [Author]
[11]*Ibid.*, pp. 164f. [Author]

building was not here before! I never saw it! What can it mean?" She confided this incident to Father Pestarino, but the latter gave no credence to it and even forbade her to think about it, although it was indeed a singular premonition.

Anxious to help girls more than by only teaching them dressmaking, she spoke with Petronilla Mazzarello, a friend of hers. Then, with their parents' and Father Pestarino's consent, both decided to learn dressmaking, and spent six months at this task. Their decision was a surprise to the whole village. Afterward, they opened shops and began to teach a few girls. As a starter, Mary gave them this program: "See to it that every stitch becomes an act of love for God!"

This was in 1861-62. From then on, the designs of Providence kept becoming clearer. When her father died, Petronilla renewed her pledge to work with Mary Mazzarello. Apparently, the two young women seemed to be branching off from their sodality's goals or, rather, expanding them. They first set up shop in the house of Teresa Pampuro, another Daughter of Mary Immaculate. Then, like Don Bosco's wandering Oratory, they moved to several other places, finally settling in the Maccagno house. Soon [crowded for space] they rented one room and then another and took in two young orphan girls, then two more, thus starting a small home for needy children. This was not enough! Shortly afterward, with the consent of the owner, Father Pestarino allowed Mary to turn an adjacent small yard into a festive oratory.

Where did she get the idea? We cannot but see in Father Pestarino another providential man. He, too, even before meeting Don Bosco, deeply felt a particular calling to work for the young.[12] Even before the death of his father—a prosperous farmer—he secretly wished that he could have the piece of land which formed part of his father's estate on the crest of Borgo Alto. When his father died, he still kept his wish to himself, but, luckily, that parcel of land did indeed fall to him. In his personal memoirs he wrote:

> For many years I had considered that, should the Lord wish that particular piece of land to become my own, I would build a ten- or twelve-room house with a chapel for the village children. I hoped to assemble

[12]*See* Vol. VII, p. 174. [Editor]

them especially on Sundays and holy days, entertain them with wholesome games, and then take them to the chapel for instruction in their duties to God, parents and superiors.

He was already imbued with the Salesian spirit. Can we reasonably not assume that he encouraged Mary Mazzarello to consecrate herself to that very apostolate on behalf of young girls?

In 1862 he met Don Bosco on the train while riding from Acqui to Alessandria and conversed intimately with him about the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and their good work. Don Bosco in turn plainly told him that, in response to pressing requests from prelates and bishops, he had for some time considered starting a religious congregation to help girls as his Salesians were helping boys. Though he could have done so, he said no more. At any rate, it was a fruitful conversation which led to an invitation to Father Pestarino to visit the Valdocco Oratory.

Undoubtedly Don Bosco could have said a lot more because the Lord had repeatedly shown him in dreams and visions his mission, the way, and the time to accomplish it. We believe that from the very first dream,[13] which repeated itself time and again,[14] with endless flocks of lambs and sheep, he was shown that girls too were entrusted to his charity. Don Bosco always exercised a humble caution concerning dreams and even more so when talking about them. He was indeed reticent about anything that might smack of self-praise. In narrating some dreams, however, he let slip details that showed he knew his mission was to reach out to girls as well as boys. True, as a young farmhand at the Moglia farm, while looking after little George and the boys of neighboring Moncucco, he kept refusing to have anything to do with girls.[15] However, in harmony with this eminently proper conduct, such was his ardent charity that he would not have presumed to shirk any responsibility which God would show him as needed for the salvation of other souls. In fact, in a dream of 1862, he told Marchioness Barolo: "Didn't Our Lord come into this world to redeem both boys *and* girls? . . . Then I must take care that His Blood be not uselessly shed for either group."[16] The

[13]*See* Vol. I, pp. 95f. [Editor]
[14]*Ibid.*, pp. 182f, 229, 285, 315f. [Editor]
[15]*Ibid.*, p. 149. [Editor]
[16]*See* Vol. VII, pp. 128f. [Editor]

following year when Caroline Provera [of Mirabello] decided to become a nun and joined the congregation of The Faithful Companions of Jesus, he told her, "Wait a little while and Don Bosco will have nuns just as he now has Salesian clerics and priests."[17]

Father Pestarino hastened to visit the Oratory and was so impressed by Don Bosco's zeal and charity that he became his fast friend and joined the Salesian Society. He would have stayed at the Oratory with him immediately but Don Bosco, in view of Father Pestarino's good work in his village, had him return there. On that occasion he gave him two medals, and, on another, a note not for Angela Maccagno or Teresa Pampuro, but for Mary and Petronilla Mazzarello. The note read, "Prayer is fine, but do your utmost to help the young; do all you can to prevent even one single venial sin."

Prayer and work already characterized the little workshop and home. The fledgling institution still lacked a chapel of its own, but, since it was near the parish church, every heart was an altar, thanks to Mary Mazzarello's example and constant exhortations. On entering the shop, each girl would say, "Good morning! Praised be Jesus Christ!" Then she would make the Sign of the Cross and, facing Our Lady's picture, would say the Hail Mary and the invocation "Mother of my Jesus, Mother of love, I offer You my heart!" At the stroke of each hour, one of the girls would lead in reciting the Hail Mary. Often Mary Mazzarello would add, "One hour less in this world, one hour closer to heaven!"

As we have already noted, thanks to her zeal the tiny courtyard was in effect turning into a small festive oratory where the girls gladly flocked "to relax and amuse themselves—so the formal decree opening her cause of beatification tells us—with time appointed for prayer and spiritual reading, church services, and reverent reception of the sacraments in the parish church or at St. Sylvester's, a rural chapel just outside the village."

In winter the girls lingered a few moments after services in the little courtyard to plan for the following Sunday, but during the rest of the year they returned to St. Sylvester's, where they resumed games, singing and other diversions until dark. Then, before dismissing them, Mary would suggest an act of self-denial or other good deed and would urge them to spend the week in a

[17] *Ibid.*, pp. 175f. [Editor]

spiritually fruitful manner. It was obvious that she was absorbing and practicing ever more what Don Bosco had been instilling into his Salesians; the same she would instill into the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.

That little festive oratory did indeed a lot of good. [The *Bollettino Salesiano* thus described it in its October 1881 issue:]

> Within a short time, the village girls attended church services more devoutly and received the sacraments more frequently. They became more obedient and docile, spent more evenings at home, and shunned worldly amusements, especially dances and those questionable social contacts which many young women acknowledge to have been the beginning of their moral downfall. So visible was their improvement that some parents entrusted their young girls to the Daughters (as they were respectfully called) so that they might teach them sewing and religion and thus train them for a truly Christian life.
>
> This was the starting point of a religious community of sorts made up of four Daughters of Mary Immaculate and a few girls. Founded on humility and poverty, with no other support than trust in God's goodness, this community would grow into a religious congregation. If young Mary Mazzarello was able to make such progress in Christian perfection and zeal for souls as a laywoman, what would she not achieve when the Lord, rewarding her fidelity to His grace, would open a new path before her, giving her access to an even larger field of work?

In 1864 Don Bosco made his last autumn excursion with his young scamps.[18] Thanks to special railroad fares, his boys boarded a train at Villanova d'Asti and traveled to Genoa and Pegli. On the return trip, they got off at Serravalle Scrivia and then hiked to Mornese to oblige Father Pestarino, who had so repeatedly insisted that they visit him.

Mary Mazzarello tried to see as much of Don Bosco as she could and inwardly rejoiced as he spoke to the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. During the five days that he stayed at Mornese, she listened with the Oratory boys as the good father gave them the "Good Night," and she kept repeating: "Don Bosco is a saint, a real saint! I know it!"

Don Bosco himself was moved by the villagers' festive reception and kindness. He wrote to Marchioness Fassati on October

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 445-61. [Editor]

9: "I am at Mornese, diocese of Acqui, a village which resembles a community of souls consecrated to God in piety, charity and zeal. At my Mass this morning, about a thousand people received Communion." There were other auspicious events, such as laying the cornerstones of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians [in Turin] on April 27, 1865[19] and of a large building, destined to become a Salesian house, at Mornese on June 13 of that same year, on the crest of Borgo Alto.

At the same time, the Sodality of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate was steering a new course. As we have said, some ladies had begun to live together, while others—among them, Angela Maccagno, foundress of the sodality—preferred to live at home with their families.[20] After seeking Don Bosco's advice, Father Pestarino tried to satisfy both groups by giving the former a better home which he owned near the parish church. This group retained its original name, "Daughters of Mary Immaculate," and their residence too was called "House of Mary Immaculate"; the other group, instead, took the name "New Ursulines," having discovered that the sodality they had founded at Mornese differed in no way from the St. Ursula's sodalities founded by St. Angela Merici.[21]

Meanwhile, the new school was rising on the crest of Borgo Alto thanks to the volunteer labor of the whole village and the contribution of building materials. In December 1867, Don Bosco celebrated the first Holy Mass in the newly completed chapel, "invoking," as is stated on a tablet, "God's blessing upon the new building and the people of Mornese."

On this occasion Don Bosco stayed four days at Mornese preaching in the parish church, visiting the sick and receiving many visitors. He also privately addressed the little group residing in the "House of Mary Immaculate"—the training center for women who would be the first to join the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.

[19]*See* Vol. VIII, p. 57. [Editor]

[20]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 293f. [Editor]

[21]It was in this sodality that the first superioress of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians was wondrously molded. Don Bosco himself saw God's hand in this, and in gratitude to the saintly foundress of The Company of St. Ursula, he directed that the first festive oratory, opened in Turin in 1876 by the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, be dedicated to St. Angela Merici. [Author]

Devotion to Our Lady under the title of "Help of Christians" had already spread through Piedmont for many years through sodalities of the same name linked to the archconfraternity in Munich. Here and there pictures of Our Lady under this title were being painted and displayed.

Mary Mazzarello too used to invoke the Blessed Virgin as the Help of Christians. When she was barely six, a chapel had been dedicated to Mary, Help of Christians some five hundred feet from the house of her birth. Who knows how many times the devout child—alone or with her mother—must have brought wild flowers to Her feet together with the flowers of her virginal heart!

When the family moved to Mornese, she found another picture of Mary, Help of Christians on the wall of a house directly opposite her own. Every Saturday a lamp was lit beneath it, and from May till autumn the neighborhood women would gather before it every Sunday evening to recite the rosary and chant the litany. Doubtless, Mary Mazzarello must have read and devoutly chanted the invocation "Help of Christians" countless times.

Thus, while supplying Don Bosco with money to build Her church in Valdocco through all sorts of temporal and spiritual favors, Our Lady was also molding the woman whom Don Bosco would appoint as superioress of the new religious congregation which had been years in the founding. At the same time the house which would soon receive the new congregation's first members was also being readied. The main part of it could have been made habitable in a very short time, but progress was deliberately slowed because some priests thought it inopportune to have an elementary and secondary school for boys aspiring to the priesthood in Mornese to the detriment of the Acqui diocesan junior seminary. Bishop Contratto, the founder, had died, and the diocese had been vacant for quite some time. Nevertheless, Don Bosco did not feel that he should wait for the appointment of a new bishop with whom to confer and reach a friendly agreement.

2. Toward the Goal

The Lord had made His plans clearly known, and the time had come for Don Bosco to start forming his second religious family

for a broad apostolate on behalf of girls. There was also a pressing need to find and train postulants and finish the building which would be used as a residence for the new community.

In March 1869, with these thoughts in mind, Don Bosco wrote out and sent to Mary and Petronilla Mazzarello a daily program and a few rules which he thought could start them and their charges on a more regular routine. Then, in May 1870 both he and Father [James] Costamagna went to Mornese for the first Mass of Father Joseph Pestarino—Father Dominic's nephew—and stayed there three days. Don Bosco took the occasion to rest a bit, but, accustomed to shun idleness, he certainly looked into the community life of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate to see if they had fruitfully carried out his recommendations.

Unfortunately, neither the original nor a copy of Don Bosco's recommendations is extant. Who knows how often the Daughters must have handled them and how often Mary Mazzarello must have read them to her companions! Fortunately, we can form a fairly good idea of the letter from the recollections of Mother Petronilla, who unfalteringly used to summarize it as follows:

> The day's program called for attendance at the early parish Mass with private prayer for a half hour or forty-five minutes. Community meals and recreation were to follow at set times, with spiritual reading in the afternoon, and the rosary and sacred hymns toward evening while work went on. Later, they were usually to join the villagers in the parish church for night prayers and close the day by reciting at their bedside seven Hail Marys in honor of Our Lady of Sorrows.
>
> The regulations contained the following suggestions: strive to be ever aware of God's presence; frequently use short invocations, be gentle, patient and amiable; carefully supervise the girls, keep them occupied, train them to a life of simple, sincere and spontaneous piety.

Such was the simple, charming spirit which Don Bosco wished to instill into these young maidens. After his visit, they certainly felt ever more eager to practice his exhortations.

In 1871, Father Pestarino went to the Oratory for the feast of St. Francis de Sales, and on the evening of January 30 he took part at the annual conference of directors. He, too, "was . . . invited to give a report," as we read in the minutes of that conference. It was the general belief that Don Bosco had let him stay at

Mornese so as to continue his former apostolate there, but no one had any idea that Don Bosco would use him especially to establish his second religious family. The minutes record that Father Pestarino, "after briefly showing how he tried to do good especially during the carnival season, went on to speak of the school then under construction, holding out the hope that it would soon be completed."

But the private talk which he had with Don Bosco on that occasion must have been a long one because a month later, on February 28, he remarked to his nephew, Father Joseph: "When I went to Turin, it had been definitely decided to open a large boarding school. Don Bosco's ideas are vast, and from what I gathered, more construction is in the offing. What we most need is a road, and we are doing something about it . . . but who would imagine. . . ." Just what did Don Bosco and Father Pestarino talk about? Evidently the school under construction was to perform a vital apostolate, but did Don Bosco then tell him in so many words that the new building was destined for the new institute? If so, he must have said it in absolute secrecy, as is hinted at by the words "who would imagine" and by what we are now about to say.

To carry out Don Bosco's plans, it was highly desirable to purchase a house belonging to a Mr. Carante, which was quite close to the Doria Castle, the last building in that part of the village. A two-story home, it had seven or eight rooms and an unfinished section that could easily be made habitable. In between was a small garden sloping down toward the new school. One-third of the land belonged to Father Pestarino, the rest to Mr. Carante. Since the purchase became necessary, Don Bosco decided to buy the whole property and asked Father Pestarino to handle the matter. It all went through smoothly and quickly.

On March 31, Father Pestarino informed Don Bosco that he had legally purchased the property in his name and "that the whole village, and particularly the mayor, had received the news most gladly." Thanks to unexpected and surprising donations, the cost had been fully covered, and if Don Bosco cared to, he suggested that he might send a book as a token of gratitude to the notary, Mr. Traverso, and to the surveyor, Mr. Contino, who had donated their services. On his part—Father Pestarino added—he

would show his appreciation with a few bottles of choice wine. The house would be ready at the end of June, but the current rent was already to be paid to Don Bosco. Would Don Bosco in the meantime send someone to look over the unfinished part and see what could be done? In turn, he would do his best and pray.

Don Bosco, too, was praying in those days for enlightenment. Since 1869 it had been the practice to start Our Lady's month in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians on April 24 and solemnly close it on May 24, the feast day itself. This year, before starting the Marian devotions, Don Bosco summoned Fathers Rua, Cagliero, Savio, Ghivarello, Durando and Albera to a chapter meeting for a very important reason.

> Many people—he told them—have repeatedly begged me to do for girls the little good which, by God's grace, we are now doing for boys. Were I to follow my own inclinations, I would not go into this type of apostolate, but since the requests have been insistent and come from very worthy persons, I fear to thwart God's plans by not giving this matter serious consideration. Hence I put it to you and urge you to ponder it before the Lord, weighing the pros and cons, so as to reach a decision that will redound to God's greater glory and the good of souls. All this month, therefore, let our community and private prayers be directed to obtain God's needed enlightenment in this important matter.

The chapter members withdrew deeply impressed. Toward the end of April Don Bosco went to Mornese to see the new property and visit the Daughters of Mary Immaculate to whom he undoubtedly gave a talk that proved spiritually fruitful.

The life led by that small community could not have been more edifying. What follows is a description by Felicina Mazzarello, Mary's sister, who also joined the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians:

> When Mary Mazzarello attained her deepest desire to get a few good girls together and live with them in an effort to serve the Lord better, her joy was supreme. Generously she left parents, brothers and sisters regardless of tears and heartaches.
>
> In this untried way of life she proved her heroic courage. In her new home she found the true poverty of Jesus Christ. Many times the little community lacked food, even flour for "polenta," and often, when they

did have it, there was no wood to light a fire, so that she and a couple of Daughters would have to go pick firewood in groves belonging to her parents, acquaintances or the township. They would tie up a few bundles and, packing them on their shoulders, like St. Frances of Rome, would return home to prepare supper. When the "polenta" was ready, she took it out to the courtyard and, putting the board on which it lay steaming on the bare ground, called her companions to their lordly repast. They had neither plates nor cutlery, only appetite. When they had nothing to go with the "polenta," my sister seasoned the meal with delightful, edifying remarks. Indeed, her talk seemed to give such spice to their humble repast that it became tastier than the choicest dish. They were poor, but rich in that joy which rose from the grace of God and their desire to emulate Jesus and the Most Holy Virgin in the house of Nazareth.[1]

During Don Bosco's visit to Mornese, the Blessed Virgin gave Her most devoted servant a sign of Her special love. We report this truly singular incident exactly as it was recorded by Father Lemoyne in the presence of witnesses who signed it:

[In the fall of 1870] the five-day-old son of a certain Jerome Bianchi suffered an arm fracture while he was being dressed. The arm swelled and festered at the elbow. At first the doctors hesitated to operate, hoping that nature might help the bone fragments work their way out, though the arm would be crippled, but when it got worse, fearing that gangrene would set in, they decided to amputate. They did not operate, however, because the child's mother preferred to have the baby die than live without an arm. For six months the child cried in pain.

Don Bosco arrived in Mornese at the end of April. The mother brought her child to him for his blessing, and after generously donating her wedding jewelry, she begged him to name the date of her child's recovery. "Since you are so generous to the Madonna," Don Bosco smilingly replied, "I am sure that your prayers will be heard and that your son will be cured at the end of May. Meanwhile, pray."

The child's grave condition lasted until the very morning of May 31, which marked the formal closing of the Marian devotions. That morning the whole family, except the child's mother and her father-in-law, attended High Mass. As the noon bells rang out, the child suddenly became fidgety, turned from side to side, and with his bad arm, which he had never moved before, tried to pull away the veil covering the cradle.

[1] *Bollettino Salesiano*, December 1881. [Author]

Jerome's father ran to call his daughter-in-law. When she quickly arrived, she was amazed to see the child's arm completely healed with no trace of sores. The bone was fully sound and whole.

The child lived two more years in perfect health, displaying an intelligence beyond his age. His mother called him "Our Lady's son." He died of flux or intestinal inflammation.

Both Jerome Bianchi and his son, Father Joseph Bianchi, declared themselves ready to testify under oath to the truthfulness of this account.

At the close of Mary's month, Don Bosco again summoned the chapter members and, beginning with Father Rua, asked them individually to give their opinion. All agreed it was very proper that they provide Christian education for girls, as they had already done for boys.

"Well, then," Don Bosco stated, "we can now be assured that God wants us to look after girls as well as boys. And as a practical suggestion, I propose that the building which Father Pestarino is erecting in Mornese be designated for this purpose."

Toward the middle of June he informed Father Pestarino of this, as we gather from two signed notes of this good Salesian, of which we report here the lengthier, more detailed one:

About mid-June of 1871, the esteemed Father John Bosco of Turin conferred privately with Father Dominic Pestarino of Mornese at the Valdocco Oratory about his desire to provide for the Christian education of girls of the working class. Don Bosco pointed out that Mornese was the best place for this work because of its healthy climate and especially because of its strong religious environment. For some years now, the Sodalities of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and of the New Ursulines had flourished there, and it would be easy to choose some of the ladies who might be inclined to live a community life withdrawn from the world. Since they already felt comfortable with rules and exercises of piety, they could form the nucleus of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. Their spirit, example and teaching would benefit both older and younger girls [at Mornese] and—with but minor changes suited to the difference in sex—they too could promote the Christian education of countless poor girls elsewhere, just as Don Bosco was doing through his oratories and boarding schools. After expressing his views, Don Bosco asked Father Pestarino to speak his mind frankly concerning this plan.

Without hesitation Father Pestarino answered, "If Don Bosco is willing to direct this institute, I'll cooperate to the best of my ability."

"Good," Don Bosco replied. "That's enough for now. Let us pray, think and reflect. With the Lord's help, I hope that our plans will redound to the greater glory of God."

After more remarks concerning choosing members and drawing up basic rules, Father Pestarino left Don Bosco's room for a moment.

It must be noted that for some four or five years, Mary and Petronilla Mazzarello, both Daughters of Mary Immaculate, had already been living a formal community life and earning their keep with their work. They had Don Bosco's permission but did not know of his plans concerning them. Gradually, other young women and girls joined them: Teresa Pampuro, Catherine Mazzarello, Felicina Mazzarello, Joan Ferrettino, Rosina Mazzarello Baroni, Mary Grosso, and Corinna Arrigotti. . . .

This is the testimony of Father Pestarino. Although firmly convinced that Don Bosco was being guided by God, Father Pestarino kept seeing insurmountable obstacles in this undertaking. True, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate were pious and virtuous, but were they inclined to become nuns? They were happy with their own way of life, and none of them had ever told him of a wish to become a nun. In fact, far from encouraging them to do so, he had constantly exhorted them to stay as they were so as to benefit the village. These doubts seriously troubled him, but most of all he worried about the villagers' reaction to these plans. Still, sustained by Don Bosco, who assured him that this was God's will, he began to carry it out regardless of the ill will which might arise in the village and elsewhere.

"How can I find out which Daughters have a vocation?" he asked Don Bosco.

"Look for those who obey even in the smallest detail, do not fret when corrected, and practice self-denial."

We do not know just when Don Bosco told Father Pestarino that the new religious institute, which he had decided to found, was to be housed in the school under construction on Borgo Alto. It is certain, however, that Father Pestarino was quite concerned. On his return the Daughters of Mary Immaculate were surprised not to see their director beaming with holy joy, as was the case whenever he came back from visiting Don Bosco. "On similar oc-

casions—Sister Petronilla Mazzarello recalled—he looked heavenly, but now he seemed worried, perturbed, and grieved. We were so concerned that we dared to ask why. 'Great changes are afoot,' he replied after some hesitation. 'Don Bosco wants to put girls instead of boys into our new school. Isn't that something?' We were so far from thinking of what he would say next that we stood speechless. We never even thought that they would talk about us or that one day we would be nuns! But we did realize that such a change would upset the whole village and would cause Father Pestarino a lot of trouble."

In June Don Bosco went to Rome. We shall now quote from the *Bollettino Salesiano*, March 1882:

> In a private audience with Pius IX, of glorious memory, Don Bosco spoke of his plan to found a congregation of nuns and requested his advice. "I shall think it over," the Pope replied. "I'll give you my opinion in another audience."
>
> A few days later, Don Bosco again called on the Holy Father, who immediately told him, "I have thought about your plan. It seems to redound to God's glory and the good of souls. In my opinion the sisters' main goal should be to do for girls what the Salesians are now doing for boys. As regards structure, let them be guided by you and your successors, just as the Sisters of Charity are guided by the Vincentians. Write out their constitutions in this context and try them out. The rest will come later."

Don Bosco hastened to inform Father Pestarino of the Pope's approval and sent him a draft of rules for the postulants of the new congregation, which would be called "Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians."

When Father Cerruti, the director at Alassio, heard of this, he asked Don Bosco: "Do you want to found a congregation of sisters?"

"The revolution used women to do great harm," Don Bosco replied. "We shall use them to do much good."

He added that they would be known as Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, because he wanted the new institute to be yet another monument of eternal gratitude for the singular graces obtained from this loving Mother.

Evidently the Lord had clearly revealed the glorious future of the new family to Don Bosco. He himself felt that he and others had to pray, and that he had to do his utmost to prevent ever more diligently any offense against God in order to obtain His assistance in fulfilling this great mission.

3. The Constitutions

What were the first constitutions of the future sisters? It is worthwhile to be thoroughly acquainted with them.

The first printed *Rules or Constitutions of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians* were those published by the Oratory Press in 1878. Luckily, we have an authentic copy of the original submitted to the bishop of Acqui for approval at the end of 1875 or the beginning of 1876, as well as six other handwritten copies of singular importance.

The first, in the writing of Father Pestarino, entitled *Constitutions and Regulations of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, Under the Protection of . . .* was soon changed to *Constitutions and Regulations of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate and Help of Christians . . .* in order to appease the group of the New Ursulines who wanted to retain the character of their original sodality. The second copy differs from the first only in minor variations by Father Pestarino and Don Bosco and antecedes the first professions. The third copy probably dates from the time of the first religious professions and is clearly entitled *Constitutions and Regulations of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.* The fourth copy, based on the third, has plentiful corrections made by Don Bosco in 1875 before presenting it to the bishop of Acqui. The fifth copy is only a transcription of the fourth in Father Rua's hand, with a few additions of his own retained also in the sixth copy with new corrections by Don Bosco. The sixth one was the copy used for printing in 1878.[1]

These details should suffice to show Don Bosco's serious efforts to produce a definitive copy of the *Constitutions of the Daughters*

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

of Mary, Help of Christians. But how did the first draft come about?

During his two years at the Rifugio,[2] Don Bosco had come to know both the rules of the Sisters of St. Joseph, and those of the Sisters of St. Anne, founded in 1834 by the very devout Marchioness Julie Falletti, née Colbert, of Barolo. The latter rules were definitively drafted in 1845, when Don Bosco was spiritual director of St. Philomena's Hospital, founded by that noble lady. It is quite plausible that Don Bosco helped out not only with the definitive draft of those rules (which were approved by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on March 8, 1846 and confirmed by Pope Gregory XVI on April 3 of that same year) but also in correcting the galleys, since these rules, entitled *Constitutions and Regulations of the Institute of the Sisters of St. Anne*, were published in Turin by the Botta Press, printers to the archbishop. Don Bosco doubtless consulted also the rules of other congregations, since several copies of these are still extant in our archives. However, he based himself principally on the first part of the *Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Anne*, containing basic regulations. Selecting appropriate passages from them and from the Salesian Constitutions, he coordinated them into fifteen chapters or titles, as they were called in the *Constitutions of the Sisters of St. Anne.*[3] The first article of the first draft brilliantly reveals Don Bosco's spirit. It reads: "The purpose of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians is to strive toward one's personal perfection and to cooperate toward the spiritual welfare of one's neighbor, especially by imparting a moral, religious education to girls of the working class."

The first printed edition differs only slightly in the wording: "The purpose of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians is to strive toward one's own personal perfection, and to cooperate toward the spiritual welfare of one's neighbor, especially by imparting a Christian education to girls of the working class."

This was indeed the goal of Don Bosco's apostolate. In truth, he never tired of telling his Salesians, "The purpose of our Soci-

[2]An institution for wayward girls where Don Bosco had been a chaplain. *See* Vol. II, pp. 184f. [Editor]

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

ety is our own sanctification and the salvation of souls through the works of mercy."[4]

After patiently and thoroughly editing the last draft, Don Bosco asked Father Pestarino to have it copied in a good hand. The latter availed himself of one of the Daughters as copyist and dictated it to her. Thus the first exemplar of the constitutions of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians came into being. On the title page, under the title, Father Pestarino added the date "May 24, 1871" as a perpetual remembrance of the unanimous consent of the Salesian Superior Chapter to the foundation of the new institute, after a month of prayer to Mary, Help of Christians. Under this date he added this note: "January 29, 1872. Formation of the Chapter."[5]

In giving Father Pestarino the edited constitutions, Don Bosco told him to show them also to the New Ursulines. As we have already mentioned, they immediately felt somewhat upset. We shall later see that they too joined in the first election for a superioress, but noting that their former companions were gradually forming a new congregation which would soon considerably grow under Don Bosco's guidance, they too decided to promote the growth of their sodality by carrying out Father Joseph Frassinetti's directives, spelled out in his revision of their first regulations. The revised regulations envisaged ecclesiastical local superiors and a general superior along with local sister superiors and a mother general. In their view, Don Bosco and his successors were to be their ecclesiastical superiors general.[6]

Don Bosco graciously declined the offer but kept the manuscript. They did not change their minds. In 1873, the rule which Bishop Gentile had already approved was carefully revised and printed in Acqui under the title *Rule of the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate Under the Patronage of St. Ursula and St. Angela Merici. . . .* It had been approved by Bishop Joseph Sciandra of Acqui "for the purpose"—he wrote—"of spurring our zealous pastors to establish this pious union in their parishes, assuring them that wherever it is in operation it bears abundant, most consoling fruit."

[4]We are omitting a detailed account of the parts that were drawn from the Salesian Constitutions or from those of the Sisters of St. Anne. [Editor]

[5]We are omitting other details of interest only to historians. [Editor]

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

4. The First Mother Superior

As stated above, the postulants had had their constitutions since 1871. On the feast of the Epiphany, 1872, several Mornese villagers went to Varazze to see Don Bosco who was then just recovering from a serious illness.[1] Father Pestarino had preceded them. One day, when he was alone with Don Bosco, the latter asked him about Mornese, the spirit reigning among the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and whether any of those who had lived in community for some years seemed qualified to enter the new congregation. Father Pestarino's answer—as his memoirs state—was that he could personally guarantee that a few would be "ready to obey and make any sacrifice for the good of their own souls and the souls of other girls and women."

Then—Don Bosco went on—we can carry out the plans we discussed last summer in Turin. Upon arriving at Mornese, if you think it opportune, call those few together and have them choose the superior and the chapter members, according to the regulations.[2] In fact, summon all the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, even those who live at home, and ask them to pray, to be brave and do all for the glory of God and of the Blessed Virgin. I shall pray for God's blessings on them and on this new congregation.

Zealous Father Pestarino agreed. No choice had been made for a religious habit. Don Bosco wanted it similar to the garb of pious middle-class women, light brown in color with a small cape over the dress and a thin black velvet trim on the sleeves. For church and for walking they were to wear a sky-blue veil.[3] Father Pestarino had brought along a sample sewn by Mary Mazzarello, and showed it to Don Bosco.

"Really, someone should put it on," Don Bosco remarked after a brief look.

"Who?" Father Pestarino asked.

"You put it on," Don Bosco said to Enria. "Then we'll see what a fine figure you cut!"

Enria complied while Don Bosco broke into laughter, remark-

[1] *See* pp. 142f. [Editor]
[2] *See* p. 259. [Editor]
[3] This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

ing, "You really look good!" He liked the cut but preferred a darker color. He then went on to talk about the new congregation and its needs. "They also covered many other topics," Enria recalled, but, due to their poverty, the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians had to wait several years for their present religious habit.

Father Pestarino returned to Mornese and carried out Don Bosco's suggestions. On January 29, 1872, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, twenty-seven Daughters of Mary Immaculate gathered together. Father Pestarino briefed them on Don Bosco's ideas, and after reciting the *Veni, Creator* before the crucifix that stood on a table between two lighted candles, he invited them to go on electing a superior. On the first ballot Mary Mazzarello received 21 of 27 votes. Immediately, the pious, humble maiden begged to be excused. She thanked her companions for their trust but told them that she did not feel up to the task. All pressed her to accept, but she kept declaring that she would never consent unless forced to do so by obedience. Father Pestarino made it clear that he would not take sides without first consulting Don Bosco. At this, Mary Mazzarello suddenly felt inspired to suggest humbly that the best possible solution would be to leave the choice of a superior to Don Bosco himself. Her companions agreed if she would accept the office of first assistant with the title of mother vicar. Next, they voted for a second assistant, and Petronilla Mazzarello received 19 votes.

After Mary and Petronilla had left the room (we do not know why) the voting continued with the following results: novice mistress, Felicina Mazzarello, Mary's sister; economer, Joan Ferrettino; mother vicar for the Daughters of Mary Immaculate living at home with their families, Angelina Maccagno, a teacher.

All this we get from Father Pestarino's notes which he used in his report on *The Beginnings of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians* at the annual conference of St. Francis de Sales held at the Oratory after Don Bosco's return from Varazze. To it he added the following postscript: "In February [1873] Don Bosco returned from Varazze to convalesce from his illness and listened with pleasure to the above report at the annual conference of the directors and Salesians."

We do not know whether Don Bosco at this time went to Mornese where he was anxiously awaited, but we think he must have, for Father Pestarino had a lively hymn set to music by Father [James] Costamagna, then teaching at Lanzo, for this occasion. We think we have further proof of this visit in the following notes which Father Pestarino himself jotted on a page of the first draft of the constitutions:

> What advice or counsel did Don Bosco leave? That we need people who readily obey rather than command because there are enough of us giving orders—people who can take corrections and admonitions with a smile rather than a grudge. What does esteem and veneration for superiors mean? [In revering them] when they do our will and yield to our whims, or when they seek our spiritual good and try to teach us regularity, Christian mortification, and genuine love—a love not shown by flattery but by sacrifice in every way, in concern for us, praying for us, advising us and dedicating their lives and selves for our welfare?
>
> What should this new congregation practice and make a prior concern? Its main endeavor should be that all members become familiar with the rules and carry them out; that all practice self-sacrifice and mortification, learn to obey rather than command, and keep united with their superiors who have the welfare of the congregation at heart and who are knowledgeable about community life and religious institutes, whereas the members know little or nothing of it. If you notice anything you feel is a drawback, the superiors will give it careful consideration just as they do for whatever is necessary for the smooth running of things and the carrying out of the rules. Let there be a spirit of submission and of unity with a superior even in trivial matters. At times a superior may err in the way [she carries out her duties]; we, in turn, may be lacking in respect and obedience to her, we may seek to twist the rules to suit ourselves, or we may give more attention to little things than to important ones.

By their nature and by the opening words "[The congregation's] main endeavor should be that all members become familiar with the rules and carry them out," these exhortations pertain to the time when the first postulants were being trained.

As it is, the first step had now been taken and time was pressing to find a suitable dwelling for the little group of postulants. The Carante house would serve some purpose, but it was too

small. Still, how could they move into the new building without arousing the villagers' discontent?

Providence again stepped in. The rectory was too far gone for repairing, and a temporary residence for the pastor was badly needed. The municipal council discussed the matter on May 8 of that year, and the minutes reflect its decision to demolish the old rectory and build a new one. An alderman asked Father Pestarino (a board member) to rent his own home to the municipality and retain residence. Father Pestarino objected that it was being used by the Daughters of Mary Immaculate in their efforts to benefit the villagers. The alderman insisted, however, saying that the Daughters could be moved into the new empty building in Borgo Alto then nearing completion. Father Pestarino saw in this suggestion the hand of Divine Providence and agreed to hand over the keys of his house to the municipal authorities on May 25.

When did the Daughters actually move into the new building? Discarding various dates which the first Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians tried to recall from memory, we believe that the move took place on either the vigil or the feast of Mary, Help of Christians.

Since most of the finished rooms of the new building were already occupied by Father Pestarino and his household, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate settled as best they could in some rooms of the main floor and in the Carante house. It took them little time to transport a few pieces of worn furniture and the brood of silkworms which they had been raising to sell, although they doubted that they would get any more cocoons. The Lord rewarded their promptness, however, for they managed to gather some 243 pounds of silkworms, which considerably helped them to meet expenses.

As Father Joseph Pestarino told us and later wrote down, the Daughters were never permanently or exclusively settled in the Carante house. They moved into the new building gradually, so that they seem to have been finally settled by the beginning of the next year.

Naturally, the move did not at first cause any surprise, but when it soon became known that these girls and others who were joining them were setting up, or rather had already established, a

new religious congregation, lamentations and complaints came in a flood. Only their general reverence for Don Bosco kept people from openly voicing their indignation to Father Pestarino.

But who can tell how deeply moved Mary Mazzarello must have been to set foot on the very spot where she had seen, long before it came to pass, a building full of girls? Though still in civilian garb, she and her companions showed such zeal to follow the way of life Don Bosco had outlined for them that, more than novices, they could truthfully be called genuine nuns, and most fervent ones at that!

They had hardly set foot inside their home—Sister Felicina Mazzarello wrote—than the rumor spread that they would not last long. Humanly speaking, their poverty made this a reasonable expectation, but Mary Mazzarello, undaunted and undismayed by these initial difficulties, set her mind and heart firmly on God, looking only to Him for timely help.

She continued her hard-working, self-sacrificing life. She spent the entire day piling up stones in the unfinished building. And how zealously she persevered in her grueling task, inspiring her fellow sisters by word and example! Washday too helped my sister and her worthy companions to exercise virtue. The Roverno River was some distance from the village. On washday, she never held back, but, taking a piece of bread or a few slices of "polenta," she would trek to the river with others and stay with them until the work was done. On these days they looked neither sad nor discouraged, for in truth those were the days they loved best. By her cheerful example this beloved sister knew how to flavor even the hardest sacrifices with sweetness and delight, inspiring in all of us a desire for greater suffering.

On returning home weary and soaked, she forgot herself and anxiously saw to it that her sisters would change into dry clothes and take something warm. In short, she was a gentle mother, always placing her daughters' comfort before her own.[4]

In such poverty and holiness, the first Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians prepared themselves for receiving their religious habit and taking their first vows.

[4]*See Bollettino Salesiano*, December 1881. [Author]

5. First Clothing Day and Profession

After making arrangements with the newly appointed Bishop [Joseph] Sciandra of Acqui for the much-awaited ceremony, Don Bosco set July 31 through August 8 as the dates for a preparatory spiritual retreat to be preached by Canon Raymond Olivieri of the Acqui cathedral and Father Mark Mallarini, vicar forane of Canelli. He promised to be present for the retreat closing.

"Tell those good Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians—he wrote to the bishop—that I shall come and together we shall sign the great promise of living and dying for the Lord under the protection and in the holy name of Mary, Help of Christians!"

After formally entering his diocese on the feast of the Epiphany of this year, the bishop fell ill [some months later] after the Corpus Christi procession. Since he had as yet no temporalities and he needed rest in a bracing climate, he had gladly accepted the offer of staying for some days in the new house of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. His quarters were set up in two rooms on the second floor, where Father Pestarino had taken up residence after giving his house near the church to the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. The bishop was happy that he could assist at the regular beginning of the new institute.

During the retreat he celebrated Mass daily for the little community, and at the beginning of August he accepted Don Bosco's request to preside at the first clothing ceremony and the final professions. Don Bosco saw this invitation not only as an act of deference toward the bishop of the diocese, but also as a good reason for not keeping his promise to attend the ceremony. There were other reasons too: he was fatigued after his journey in Liguria, his health was unstable, and a young Salesian, John Baptist Camisassa, was seriously ill at the Oratory and died on August 3. Furthermore, he would soon have to attend the spiritual retreat at St. Ignatius' Shrine, as was his custom. Hence, after thanking the bishop for accepting his invitation to preside, Don Bosco also clearly stated that he would not be going to Mornese after all.

The Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians and Father Pestarino would not hear of it and begged the bishop to press Don Bosco to come. The bishop in turn sent his secretary, Father

Francis Berta, to the Oratory to persuade Don Bosco to make this sacrifice.

As Father Berta told Father Lemoyne, Don Bosco yielded immediately, and late on the evening of August 4 he reached Mornese with Father Berta by coach. Knowing that Don Bosco had recently suffered an attack of pleurisy and could not take the cool evening air, the secretary wrapped a cloak as best he could about Don Bosco's shoulders. At their arrival at Borgo Alto, the bishop received Don Bosco with open arms, and on hearing that he could not stay more than a day, he then and there agreed with him to have the solemn ceremony the following day, consecrated to Our Lady of the Snow, and to let the retreat run on to August 8.

That evening Don Bosco spoke to the sisters who were to take vows, exhorting them to live like true nuns and to edify always by their deameanor in church and everywhere, assuring them that their conduct alone would do great good to anyone who saw them. "Let your manner be neither hasty nor slow," he said. "Let your bearing be modest and recollected, serene and unaffected. Keep your eyes lowered, but not your head. Let your whole appearance speak of you as persons consecrated to God. . . ."

The good father rose to his feet, and since they were in a long room, he walked through, saying, "This is how you must walk!" All were moved by his admirable charity. He also urged moderation in speaking and laughing. "Laugh and joke by all means," he told them, "but with restraint, and not too noisily."

At nine the following morning they went to the chapel where Bishop Sciandra blessed the habits of fifteen young women, which they donned amid general emotion. Eleven also made their triennial vows, among them Mary Mazzarello.

As the novices began reading the formula of the vows together, Don Bosco, who stood by, asked them to read it one at a time, and so they did. The professed and novices received respectively a crucifix and a medal of Mary, Help of Christians, which they wore about their necks from then on.

One girl had asked for the religious habit, but, at Don Bosco's advice, her request was denied. She preferred her own devotions to those of the community, and when Don Bosco was told, he directed that she be asked to wait because she probably would not

persevere. In fact, not much later she went back to her family.

After the ceremony Don Bosco delivered a short address, in which he said, among other things:

I can see you are pained to have all persecute you and turn their backs on you. You are not to wonder; I am surprised they do not do even worse. The father of St. Francis of Assisi hurt his holy son a great deal more than this. . . . In time you will become holy and do much good to many other souls if you remain humble. Among the small plants mentioned in Holy Scripture is the nard. In the Little Office of Our Lady you read: *Nardus mea dedit odorem suavitatis*—My nard gave forth its fragrance. [Cant. 1, 11] Do you know whence the fragrance comes? The nard emits its perfume only when it is well minced. . . . Do not feel hurt, my dear daughters, if now the world mistreats you. Take courage and be glad, for this is the only way in which you can do something in your new mission. The world is full of snares. You cannot take a step without running into some danger, but if you live in accordance with your new state, you will be untouched and be able to do great things for your own souls and for those of your neighbors.

The villagers soon benefited by the new sisters' good example and came to admire them.

Don Bosco also reminded them that from then on they would simply be called "Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians." Indescribable was the joy—the holy delight, we should say—which flooded the hearts of the new sisters. All day the house resounded with hymns to the Blessed Virgin. Here we can appropriately quote Father Pestarino's evaluation of Sister Mary Mazzarello. We draw from notes he made of the first Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians who donned the habit and took their vows, thus giving a formal beginning to their congregation. The manuscript is no longer extant, but we have its contents in the December 1881 issue of the *Bollettino Salesiano*:

Mary Mazzarello consistently showed a fine spirit and a heart disposed to piety. She frequently received the sacraments and was deeply devoted to the Virgin Mary. She willingly joined the new congregation and was always one of the most fervent in doing good and in obeying her superiors. She was open, fervent, and extremely good-hearted. Very receptive to the advice and admonition of her superiors, she readily accorded them humble submission and respect. Her will and judgment

were always in agreement with theirs; so closely was she united to them that she stated she was ready to sacrifice her life and her all in order to obey them and to promote what was good. As vicar, she warmly proposed and upheld what seemed to her reasonable, but she was ever ready to humble herself and beg her companions to let her know when she was wrong.

Before leaving that same evening for St. Ignatius' Shrine, Don Bosco asked Father Pestarino for very detailed information about his beloved new community and urged him to limit himself to their spiritual direction only, leaving the sisters freedom of action in all else. He was to be only their counselor and protector. He approved that Sister Mary Mazzarello should continue as superior under the title of "vicar," and that the other chapter members elected in January should remain in office likewise. Sister Mary Mazzarello begged that he soon appoint someone to take her place, pleading her unfitness for the task, but Don Bosco answered, "Don't worry, the Lord will provide!"[1]

His hasty departure saddened the sisters, although he had told them that they were not to grieve because, God willing, he would return, and that, even while away from them, he would not forget them. The spiritual retreat continued most devoutly until the closing ceremony on August 8. Bishop Sciandra had the minutes written up and signed.[2]

6. Rapid Growth

Meanwhile, Mary, Help of Christians kept showering all sorts of favors on the new congregation. The sisters' life style, the angelic fervor on their faces, and their abject poverty could not but please God.

That year they took in a few girls who were anxious to receive a good upbringing. Eager to instill the genuine spirit of religious life into his spiritual daughters, Don Bosco called on the mother general of the Sisters of St. Anne in Turin in January 1873 and asked if she would temporarily send two of her nuns to Mornese

[1]We are omitting a digression about the healing of a man suffering from sciatica. [Editor]

[2]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

to instruct his spiritual daughters in the duties of their vocation.

Mother Mary Dominici graciously obliged in order to show her gratitude for Don Bosco's many favors to the Sisters of St. Anne in their early days. During Lent she herself and Sister Frances Garelli (her secretary and second general assistant) spent a few days at Mornese, and after their return to Turin for the Easter holidays, she sent her secretary back with Sister Angela Alloa.[1]

The Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, especially Mary Mazzarello, were very happy about this, for they were anxious to advance in perfection. "There was a genuine holy competition—declared Father John Cagliero—between the good Sisters of St. Anne and Mary Mazzarello—the former in admiring the virtues and holiness of Sister Mazzarello, and the latter in never ceasing to praise the goodness and holy guidance of her instructors." Don Bosco could not have found a better solution.

As time drew near for the bishop of Acqui to revisit Mornese as he had promised, Don Bosco went there himself at the beginning of July in order to be sure that the bishop's quarters would be properly prepared in the Carante house. So impressed was he by the sisters' fervor of life that in a short note to Father Rua he exclaimed, "It is quite cool here, but there is a very strong flame of love for God."[2] A meaningful and unforgettable statement!

Don Bosco returned to Mornese with Father Cagliero the following month to pay his respects to the bishop and to encourage the sisters making their spiritual retreat which was scheduled to close on August 5 with the investiture of several postulants and the religious professions of a few novices. When he met the bishop, he bowed to kiss his ring, but the latter promptly embraced him. Present at the retreat were eleven sisters, three novices preparing to make their vows, nine postulants who were to receive the sacred habit, and ten women who had been admitted at Don Bosco's request. Joyously welcomed by all, he said a few kind words to them, so gratified was he to see the Sisters of St. Anne.

Again he was not able to stay for the close of the retreat because of important business in Turin, but he took stock of everything and told them that the bishop would give the closing ser-

[1]We are omitting an excerpt from the *Annals and Chronicles of the Sisters of St. Anne* recording the above facts. [Editor]

[2]This sentence is an excerpt from that note. [Editor]

mon. "Don't let yourselves be disheartened by difficulties," he said in his final exhortation. "To avoid being trapped, make use of these four means: keep your constitutions, pray with faith, love one another, and be humble."

During this visit Sister Mary Mazzarello introduced to Don Bosco Teresina Mazzarello, just fifteen, a Mornese girl of frail health who sought to become a sister. Don Bosco gazed at her, asked a few questions for detailed information, and then exclaimed, "Let her take the veil. Should she die soon, she will go higher up in heaven!"

On August 4 he returned to Turin with Father Cagliero. On August 5, the anniversary of the first investiture and first professions, the ceremony was renewed. Again Bishop Sciandra had a record kept from which we report the following excerpt:

> On August 5 [1873], at the close of the spiritual retreat preached by Very Reverend Monsignor Andrew Scotton and Father Louis Portaluri, S.J., the novices, Rose Mazzarello, Mary Grosso, and Corinna Arrigotti, took triennial vows. The following donned the religious habit: Virginia Magone, Mary Bodrato, Teresa Mazzarello, Carlotta Pestarino, Mary Gastaldi, Angela Deambrogio, Emily Mosca, Angela Peretto and Enrichetta Sorbone.
>
> His Excellency, Bishop Joseph Sciandra of Acqui, who again honored this house by selecting it for his summer vacation, gladly performed the solemn ceremony, after celebrating Holy Mass on the morning of that same day and administering Holy Communion. He received the triennial vows of the sisters and conferred the habit upon the postulants.

From another contemporary report we gather the following:

> The ceremony began at 9 A.M. . . . *Veni, sponsa Christi*, was intoned from the choirloft to the accompaniment of the harmonium, voices and instrument blending in heavenly harmony. The brides . . . dressed in their habit . . . resembled three angels. They advanced slowly, eyes downcast, composed and devout, lips open in a smile that revealed the peace and joy which filled their hearts on that unforgettable day. All eyes were upon them. . . . When they came to the altar rail, Bishop Joseph Sciandra (who had opened the ceremony by giving the holy habit to the postulants) faced them, holding three crucifixes in his hand, the same as those that we wear around our necks, a visible sign of our profession, and putting them about their necks, he pronounced these

words: "My dear daughters, take this image of your beloved Jesus, the symbol of our redemption. May it be of sweet comfort to you in the adversities you will encounter along the path of life." He then took three wreaths of red and white roses, and said: "Behold, my dear sisters, the crowns which your beloved spouse Jesus has prepared for you." With a trembling hand and emotion he placed the wreaths on their heads, thus enhancing the sisters' gracefulness. The ceremony then ended with a short sermon by the bishop on the Gospel episode concerning Mary and Martha. He stressed their choice of Mary's part. Our Lord's brides wore their crowns for the rest of the day, amid intermittent echoes of *Praised be Jesus, Praised be Mary,* and *Long live the brides*, clear expressions of the exultation of the entire community. . . .

After night prayers, Mother Mary Mazzarello and the newly professed sisters stayed in the chapel, prostrate at the foot of the altar. Mother Vicar then removed the wreaths they had so desired and would have preferred never to take off, and offered them to Mary, Help of Christians, asking that She present them personally to Jesus, and in exchange adorn their hearts with all virtues befitting Christ's true brides, preparing a crown of imperishable heavenly roses to be placed on each of their heads by Jesus Himself, when it should please Him to summon them to the eternal nuptials of heaven![3] Meanwhile, Don Bosco mailed a prospectus of the Mornese boarding school throughout the diocese of Acqui with a covering letter.[4]

During the summer vacation the two Sisters of St. Anne felt they had accomplished their mission and left Mornese accompanied by the gratitude of the sisters and of Don Bosco who so highly esteemed them.[5] On their departure Sister Mary Mazzarello again pleaded for the election of a superior, but Don Bosco willed that she continue in her office. However, lest she be left on her own, he sent to Mornese Mrs. Mary Blengini, a Turinese widow who had been under the spiritual direction of Blessed [Joseph] Cafasso.[6] She was to offer suitable advice and suggestions. This pious lady stayed just two or three months at Mor-

[3]We are omitting a decree of Bishop Sciandra granting permission for church services in the sisters' chapel and an article in *Unità Cattolica* concerning the successful examination held at the sisters' school which the bishop presided over. [Editor]

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[5]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[6]Blessed Joseph Cafasso was proclaimed a saint by Pope Pius XII in 1947. [Editor]

nese, carrying out her task although she did not approve of, among other things, the extreme poverty of the place. She left Mornese toward the end of 1873 with no intent ever to return, informing Don Bosco of this. He preferred that she stay a little longer, since he himself had to remain at some length in Rome. [Early in 1874] he sent this note to Father Rua from Rome: "If Mrs. Blengini has not returned to Mornese, tell her not to worry; slowly things will work out right. I have already written her of this, and my letter awaits her there."

On January 29 Sister Mary Poggio, one of the first professed sisters, who had constantly done all she could to help her sisters and ease their pains, was called to eternity, and Mary Mazzarello, in her deep humility, begged them to elect a superior, since she felt she was unfit for such grave duty.

Don Bosco wanted Mrs. Blengini to stay with the sisters until the election of a superior, which he had in mind to hold as soon as possible. In the meantime, reluctant to leave the sisters to themselves, he did what the first draft of the constitutions prescribed: namely that the superior general of the Salesian Society, from whom the new congregation depended, could "be represented by a priest delegated by him." He sent Father John Cagliero to act in his stead, without giving him the title or office of director general, since the new congregation had but one house at Mornese.

Father Cagliero went to Mornese during Lent to preach the short retreat which was customary in Salesian houses, and Father Pestarino took this occasion to introduce him to the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians as "Don Bosco's own vicar." On his part, the future director general of the new congregation was deeply impressed by the life style of those holy women.

Meanwhile, preparing for Don Bosco's convocation of the directors' annual conference, after his return from Rome, Father Pestarino jotted down the main items of the report which he gave in full in the second half of April. It is a precious document because it gives us a clear picture of the perfection attained by the members of the new congregation, their fervor, and the esteem in which the village held them. We report it verbatim, in its original simplicity:

The convent of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, at Mor-

nese has thirteen professed sisters. There were fourteen, but one has passed to the bliss of heaven, as we have reason to hope. There are also eight novices, eight postulants and seventeen boarders, for all of whom I bless and praise the Lord.

It is a real joy to see in all the sisters and novices the Lord's true spirit, shown in their ceaseless endeavor to abide by the holy exhortations which the great Pius IX sent them through Don Bosco, their superior general. They observe uniformity in dress, food, rest, work, permissions, and care not to seek exceptions. Not many weeks ago, Sister Vicar asked me whether she should serve coffee and milk [at breakfast] since some postulants had been used to it and sometimes felt its lack. She thought it would not be wrong to serve at least a little hot milk to everyone. I agreed, and during a conference I suggested it, explaining how I was in favor of it and how the thought had occurred to me several times. On hearing this, first the teaching sisters and then all the rest suggested that we wait a while because they felt quite well. They said they had good appetites, so that not a crumb was left over at breakfast. They also declared that it would be better to continue serving "polenta" and boiled chestnuts since this was fare they all liked and found nourishing. I said little in reply but told Sister Vicar to wait so as to have a better chance to observe what course to follow.

Most manifest and gratifying is the genuine spirit of unity, charity, and holy joy reigning among them at recreation, when they relax in sisterly togetherness. Though they are together at all other times, they enjoy being together also at recreation.

Their piety, recollection, devout sacramental life, recitation of the Divine Office and prayers edify me. The funeral of Sister Mary Poggio was most moving. Many villagers wept, and young men told me that they had really been deeply impressed by the sisters' composure and unaffected modesty. In fact, the village girls were all for attending the sisters' school!

Detachment from the world, parents and relatives, and even from themselves as far as is humanly possible, is noticeable in all of them.

They are so regular and diligent in their duties that I have never heard the slightest complaint from any of them. Rather, their anxiety is for the well-being of the house.

I must add that the teachers give excellent example, even the lay teacher of French and mathematics. She is exemplary, humble, respectful toward all and deeply religious. She seems set on joining the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, openly declaring that had she wanted to become a nun in other convents where she served, she would have cast

off the idea, but that, having come here with no such intention, her inclination grew to stay and become a sister.

Aside from the one recent illness and death, all are in good health. Nor are there complaints about the boarders, who are obedient and respectful. Several are growing in piety and are inclined to join the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. I must repeat my satisfaction and contentment. It is a comfort to see them so respectful and cheerful, so eager to hear my counsels. Even the young, when they know the director is around, do not want to go to bed until he has said a few words to them.

It is obvious that these results stem from the blessing of the Lord, the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the superior [general]. Their only wish is a visit from their superior.

The single unpleasant factor is finances. The boarders are few and so we are in debt; hence they live very frugally, although their food is wholesome. Seemingly their debts outdo their credits. Let us hope in the Lord. He will help us in this through Don Bosco and Father Rua . . . and the other Salesian schools with which we are in close contact, thanks to the debts we have incurred [for their help . . .].

7. No Roses Without Thorns!

The feast of the Ascension had a new joyful solemnity. Father Cagliero had insisted with Sister Mazzarello that the girls learn Gregorian Chant and polyphony. On that day the new school choir sang the Mass of the Holy Childhood, composed by Father Cagliero himself, so exquisitely that Father Pestarino was deeply moved. In his homily he could not help mentioning the rapid growth of the congregation, praising the sisters and girls for the diligence they showed in their respective duties. *Flores apparuerunt in terra nostra* [Flowers have appeared in our land—Cant. 2, 12], he exclaimed, and he applied the quotation to the sisters, saying that they would be "the flowers of his immortal crown. . . ." Then his voice broke into sobs and he knelt at the foot of the altar.

Early the following morning he was in church for confessions and Holy Communion. Later he went to the school, said Mass for the sisters and the girls, and then read a short meditation from Don Bosco's booklet *Mary's Month*, as he usually did on solemn

feasts. The meditation concerned death, and with deep feeling he read this passage: "Death may overtake me in my sleep, at work, on the street or elsewhere. Illness or accidents have taken many lives and could take mine too. It could happen a year from now, or even a month, a week, a day, an hour, and perhaps just as soon as I finish reading this meditation. . . ." Abruptly he was overcome by a sudden rush of tears! On regaining his composure, he blessed the bystanders with a relic and then resumed his usual occupations. Toward eleven o'clock, while talking with [Bartholomew] Scavini, a Salesian brother, and [Michael] Vigna, who were there setting up school furniture, he suffered a cerebral stroke and collapsed in their arms. Despite the care lavished on him by his brother, a doctor, and by the village physician, his soul flew to heaven about three in the afternoon. He was fifty-seven years old.

What consternation and grief for the whole convent! Let us quote from the obituary published by Don Bosco at the end of the Salesian Directory, 1875:

This worthy minister of the Lord was born of parents rich in worldly goods, but even richer in the holy fear of the Lord. He wished to found an institution which, after his death, would remind his beloved fellow villagers of his love for them. In agreement with the local authorities and with Don Bosco's consent he laid the foundations of a building for the villagers' use—the future convent of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.

Having already sold most of his estate to support his many charitable undertakings, he had to appeal to others, especially to the Salesian Congregation, when he started the new building. Thus he saw his wish fulfilled. Fired with priestly zeal, he consecrated his every effort and what little life the Lord still granted him to the new congregation. . . . Born wealthy, he became poor for the love of God. The Lord, who rewards virtue and not wealth, certainly rewarded him with eternal glory.

We too should learn not to overrate wealth and comforts; rather, we should love poverty and work for God's glory. In his sermons and informal talks, Father Pestarino often repeated Our Lord's exhortation, "Give alms from what you have." [Luke 11, 41] If you possess riches, use them to make everlasting friends. Blessed is he because the Savior's other words were also fulfilled in him: "Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of heaven." [Matt. 5, 3]

This good priest was highly esteemed and revered. Sister Marietta Sorbone, a Daughter of Mary, Help of Christians who had entered the convent just days before his death, stated that her eyes were so swollen that she felt them popping out of their sockets, so red with inflammation that they could bear no light at all, and she had to remain closeted in a dark room. "On the day Father Pestarino died," she wrote, "Mother Mary Mazzarello took my hand, saying: 'Let us go to Father Pestarino. He will make you well.' She led me to his corpse. With tears and prayers, she passed the dead priest's hand over my eyes. Instantly the swelling subsided and then disappeared. For the rest of the day she bade me keep a cloth stained with his blood over my eyes. By the following morning I was cured."

The next day, Don Bosco sent Father Francis Bodrato, a former village schoolmaster and a friend of Father Pestarino, to Mornese to make the funeral arrangements. On the 17th Father Cagliero, Father Lazzero and Charles Gastini arrived for the funeral high Mass.

Father Pestarino was buried on the 18th, attended by the whole village, and many priests and people of neighboring villages. A week later, death's angel again visited the convent, taking one of the pupils, Emily Chiara, a niece of Mrs. Blengini.

Don Bosco wrote to Bishop Sciandra:

Turin, May 22, 1874

Your Excellency:

The unexpected loss of our poor Father Pestarino has truly upset me. I immediately sent Father Bodrato to Mornese because it is his native village and he knows all the business affairs of our dear deceased friend. I am now considering leaving Father Joseph Cagliero there; at present he is spiritual director of our school in Varazze. He is fully commendable as to morals and learning and is a gifted preacher, but I would first like to hear your own prayerful opinion.

It is understood that the convent at Mornese is always open to you if ever you care to go to the country for a while. Indeed, I beg you to continue using that benevolent and fatherly authority which has been yours up to now toward this house. I hope to go there before long. Please remember us all in your prayers.

Devotedly yours,
Fr. John Bosco

On May 23, the new director, Father Joseph Cagliero, a cousin of Father John, arrived from Varazze. But the painful trials ordained by the inscrutable designs of Divine Providence were not yet over. On June 5, the first music teacher, Sister Corinna Arrigotti, beloved and admired by all for her goodness and singular virtues, passed away. Her death was also caused by the many sufferings she had to endure in order to overcome the opposition she had encountered in following her vocation.

8. An Unforgettable Visit

In the midst of these many trials, determined to set the new congregation on a formal basis, Don Bosco paid a visit to Mornese with Father John Cagliero toward the middle of June. Grief filled the house [because of the recent deaths] and grief was the tone of the inscription set over the main entrance: "Come, Father! Your daughters await your coming like the sun after a terrible storm."

Don Bosco was moved and with lowered eyes whispered to those near him, "Does this house have any reason left for joy?"

Despite the grief, his welcome could not have been more respectful and cordial, as a sister, a postulant, and then one of the youngest girls greeted him in turn on behalf of each group of the community.[1]

Don Bosco warmly thanked them, saying that he had indeed come to comfort them and attend the Month's Mind Mass for the lamented Father Pestarino. He also informed them that he would give a series of talks to candidates for the habit or for the vows and would also formally set up a superior chapter since some sisters would soon have to go to other places to fill the many requests for kindergartens, schools and oratories for girls of working families.

Thirteen postulants received their habit from Don Bosco's hands and nine novices made their vows. Among the latter, two were to be great assets to the congregation: Sister Emily Mosca, a well-educated and exemplary young woman who would be assis-

[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

tant general to the congregation for twenty-five years, and Sister Enrichetta Sorbone, of Rosignano Monferrato, who entered the convent at Mornese in 1872, was elected assistant in 1880, and vicar general in 1881, an office which, God willing, she has now [1939] held for fifty-eight years.

On June 15 Don Bosco attended the Month's Mind Mass for Father Pestarino and then assembled the sisters for the election of their superior. A crucifix was placed between two lighted candles in the meeting room and, one by one, the sisters approached Don Bosco and whispered to him the name of their choice. To the joy of all Mary Mazzarello was the unanimous choice!

They proceeded then to elect the other chapter members with the following results: vicar, Sister Petronilla Mazzarello; economer, Sister Joan Ferrettino; assistant, Sister Felicina Mazzarello, Mary's sister; novice mistress, Sister Mary Grosso.

With his characteristic smile, Don Bosco closed the meeting by saying, "I congratulate you on having been of one mind in selecting your mother superior. I could not have been more pleased."

He also agreed that they should call her "Mother," as they had begun to do after Mrs. Blengini's departure, and he added that they might so call also the other superiors. The ceremony ended with the singing of the *Te Deum*.

That afternoon Don Bosco held another meeting with the newly-elected superiors, encouraging them not to be dismayed by recent losses but to see them as God-sent trials and a source of future blessings. He expressed his satisfaction with the whole community's zeal for sanctity and gave them the following advice:

> I exhort you to favor as much as you can the inclinations of novices and sisters when assigning them duties. At times one may think it virtuous to make a sister go against her natural tendencies with some task or other, but this practice harms both sisters and congregation. Try to teach them to mortify themselves and spiritualize these tendencies by directing them to the glory to God.

He also repeated that he could not personally look after the needs of their community because it would greatly expand, so he appointed Father John Cagliero to represent him.

We think it proper to report here two specific statements made

by Bishop [John] Cagliero during the Informative Process for Don Bosco's beatification and canonization:

Don Bosco always firmly maintained that boys were the special object of his mission and only reluctantly did he concern himself with the spiritual direction of women. This delicate reserve he carried to its extreme, and he would not assume direct leadership of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, which he had founded. He always appointed one of his priests to direct them in spiritual and material matters.

He kept this policy even in his later years, never dealing familiarly with a girl, unless she was a little child, and even then I can state that he did not linger with her, but after a few words of advice, he would bless her together with her parents.

9. Filial Devotion

The circumstances we have recorded marked Don Bosco's foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians. They are quite extraordinary and show that God guided him in this providential undertaking. He was astonished himself to see its expansion. "I recall," Canon John [Baptist] Anfossi testified, "Don Bosco's surprise at the rapid growth of this congregation, which, as he stated, was doubtless not his own doing, but a special intervention of Providence."[1]

Don Bosco's visit brought joy to all. A few days later, the mother superior, sisters, novices, postulants and pupils expressed in writing their heartfelt gratitude on the occasion of his name day. Their letters were accompanied by some handiwork from the sisters.[2]

With this comfort, the Lord prepared new afflictions for the community; in August the new director, Father Joseph Cagliero, fell gravely ill. Don Bosco sent a note to Father Rua from St. Ignatius' Shrine:

[1]We are omitting a letter of Don Bosco to a benefactress telling her of the fervor at Mornese and of the sisters' needs. [Editor]

[2]This sentence is a condensation. We are also omitting a circular of Don Bosco to pious ladies who used to make their spiritual retreat with the sisters at Mornese, informing them that from then on they would make it apart from the sisters. [Editor]

August 8, 1874

Dear Father Rua,

Please send someone to help Father Cagliero, and if possible the [Oratory] infirmarian too.

Hasten the mail about the spiritual retreat for women and teachers. We need to pray and to pray hard.

God bless us all. Good-bye until Friday, God willing.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Some days later the mayor of Mornese received the following request from the brigadier of the carabinieri of the township of Castelletto d'Orba, province of Alessandria:

Castelletto d'Orba, August 12, 1874

Please send this department information on your village's convent and girls' school directed by Don Bosco of Turin. At whose expense was it built, and how long has this Institute been operating? Does it have a staff doctor and has any school inspector ever visited the school, as is customary with similar institutions?

Ciro Stamari, *Brigadier*

Undoubtedly this inquiry had been prompted by the news that a number of ladies were to meet in the convent of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, where the director lay seriously ill, and where, during the course of the year, four deaths had occurred. The mayor gave a prompt reassuring reply, we presume, because the matter ended there.

The ladies' retreat, preached by Father John Cagliero and Father [Mark] Mallarini, vicar forane of Canelli, was held most edifyingly from August 22 to August 29.

On September 5 [1874] Father Joseph Cagliero died at the youthful age of 27. Loving peace and quiet as he did, he felt that he had found his heaven on earth at Mornese, far from worldly din. His sickness, endured with full resignation, lasted over a month. He received such excellent medical care that he complained, "With such lavish attention what happens to the poverty befitting a priest?" On a visit his father asked that he return home

with him, but the reply was, "I could receive no better care anywhere else. Not even a prince could be treated better!"

His unexpected death brought endless grief to our members. Deeply saddened, Don Bosco wrote to the priest's brother, Caesar, then a young cleric, as follows:

Turin, September 8, 1874

Dear Caesar:

I readily grasp your consternation and that of your parents over the untimely death of your brother Joseph. I can understand it because of the grief we all feel at the Oratory and in the houses. This is a test to which God wishes to subject us. It has pleased Him, and so it came to pass. Will it or not, we must adore the Lord's decrees.

But this holy death, the reward of a holy life, should comfort us. Tell your father that his son Joseph is now his patron in heaven, and that within a short time he will see him again, in far better condition than he was in this earthly life.

I shall pray for you and your parents. In turn, pray for me. I hope to be in Lanzo next week. Best wishes to all of you.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Meanwhile he promptly arranged for Father John Cagliero, a cousin of the deceased, to go to Mornese temporarily. Shortly afterward he sent Father James Costamagna, outstanding in zeal for the rules, who quickly came to admire the singular virtues of Mary Mazzarello.

Indeed, anyone who knew her closely reached the same conclusion. We report here Father Lemoyne's observations exactly as he jotted them down:

Mary Mazzarello's virtues and activities led one to think highly of her. She had a fiery nature tempered by sweetness and charity. She had acquired great self-control and had learned to live constantly aware of God's presence. She was careful to the extreme not to fail in either word or deed. Outstanding was her common sense, sanctified by a supernatural love for souls. She would tolerate no singularity in the practices of piety, displaying mature judgment, clear-sightedness, quickness of decision, and strength of will-power. Frank and outspoken in expressing and holding to her opinions, she was equally submissive to Father Pes-

tarino's decisions. She was sensitive but impartial to all. Her manner was unworried and lively, but under control; her bearing was at once unaffected and dignified.

She was not well educated because Mornese had no school for girls. She could read, but not write.[3] However, she had an excellent memory and keen intelligence. Surprisingly she could calculate on her fingers faster than others could on paper.

As a child she had always excelled in knowledge of the catechism and in remembering her pastor's catechetical instructions. If asked, she could answer promptly. She paid strict attention to the Gospel explanations and the Sunday instructions, remembering them distinctly. Her favorite readings were the spiritual works of St. Alphonsus and of Father [Joseph] Frassinetti. . . .[4]

She was a very keen, level-headed and discerning peasant girl, yet very humble. The March 1882 issue of the *Bollettino Salesiano* had this to say about her: "Like a resplendent lamp, she cast the light of her good works upon all. Primarily she was most diligent in seeing to the observance of the rules and to preventing the slightest abuses from entering in, comparing them to holes in a boat which gradually let it fill with water and endanger the lives of those in it."

Bishop Costamagna was spiritual director at Mornese for three years. He had the highest regard for the exemplary life of that convent, exclaiming, "Truly that was a holy house. At its helm stood a saint, Sister Mary Mazzarello. Who can worthily sing her praise?"

Among the saintly traits of this chosen servant of God, Pope Pius XI, in the decree of her heroic virtues, singled out her humility:

> Humility was verily the characteristic trait of the Venerable Mary Mazzarello, and a profound humility at that! She never lost sight of her humble birth, state of life and undistinguished work. Her humility was such that we wonder what God could find, so to speak, in a humble soul —a truly deeply humble soul—to entice Him and lead Him to perform lofty miracles through so lowly a channel.

[3]She quickly learned how to write from Emily Mosca. Her handwritten letters in our possession prove her intelligence. [Author]

[4]Joseph Frassinetti (1804-1868) founded the Congregation of the Sons of Mary Immaculate for the formation of holy priests. He was the pastor of St. Sabina Church in Genoa and wrote several ascetical works. His cause of beatification was introduced in 1939. [Editor]

This frail, simple, poor peasant girl, who had hardly had an elementary education, soon manifested a singular, distinguished talent—that of leadership. It was a rich talent indeed! And she had it to such a degree that St. John Bosco, the famous Don Bosco, an expert appraiser of men and a master in the art of government, saw it without delay and put it to good use. The wisdom and effectiveness of that choice were proven both in the firm, sound foundation of the new Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and in its rapid, surprising growth and development.[5]

From the day she vowed herself to Mary, Help of Christians, she strove after sanctity by taking Don Bosco as a model and carrying out his wishes.

"Let us live," she often repeated, "in the presence of God and of Don Bosco. . . . This is what Don Bosco wishes! He speaks to us in God's name and this is what we must do.'

Indeed, this was the secret of the Institute's wondrous development: fidelity to the guidelines and advice of its holy founder in all things!

The year 1874 marked the opening of the first house at Borgo San Martino and the entrance into the Institute of the postulant Catherine Daghero of Cumiana. Having heard of Don Bosco's new religious family from her cousin, Father Joseph Daghero, a Salesian, she overcame her serious doubts and dedicated herself to that family with such exemplarity and generosity that in 1881 she was elected to succeed Mary Mazzarello. She wisely ruled the congregation for forty-three years.

In Don Bosco's lifetime, three of his grandnieces also entered the congregation: Rosina, Clementina, and Eulalie, daughters of Francis and Angela Bosco. The first two passed on to their eternal reward in their youth in 1892, while Eulalie was for many years local superior, provincial, economer and councilor of the Superior Chapter.

At Mary Mazzarello's death, the Institute had 26 houses, 139 sisters, and 50 novices. At Don Bosco's death it had 50 houses, 390 sisters and 99 novices, and at Father Rua's death it had 294 houses, 2,666 sisters, and 255 novices. Presently (December 31, 1938) it has 799 houses, 8,244 sisters and 738 novices!

[5]Cf. Decree *Postquam Deus*, May 3, 1936. [Author]

More than a hundred Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians are still alive who knew the holy founder and retain the most cherished memories of him.

10. Fond Recollections

Since Don Bosco extended his anxious care to the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, it is only fitting, if not dutiful, to climax this part of his memoirs with a few simple but meaningful anecdotes that will be both interesting and helpful to our future members.

Don Bosco considered a [religious] vocation to be a singular gift, and he used to tell his nuns:

"Sister, this is a great grace from Mary, Help of Christians, and you are therefore deeply indebted to so good a Mother."

"Observe the constitutions even in small matters. Do good! Do everything well! Pray devoutly, and carry out each menial duty well in the kitchen or in the workshop."

"Consider every item of the rule as a memento of me. Keep working without expecting an earthly reward. God's reward will be immensely superior to your merits!"

"Work, work, and yours will be a handsome wage at the end of your life."

He always had a kind word for all, especially for those assigned to the humblest tasks. To some who worked in the kitchen of the Salesian school at Borgo San Martino and had asked him for a memento, he said, "Complain of neither cold nor heat. It's not wrong to say occasionally 'How hot it is!' or 'How cold it is!' as long as it is not in a tone of complaint. This is my memento for you."

Another time he exclaimed, "Let me teach you holy pride. Yes, holy pride! Each of you is to say, 'I want to be the best of all,' but don't believe that you are so. With all good will, say, 'I will never lower myself by committing sin. I want to die working!' Do you understand? Let each of you strive to be the best of all by avoiding every deliberate fault and by being happy to die while working for God's glory!"

"Are you all happy?" he would say on other occasions. "I recommend holiness, health, knowledge and cheerfulness! Become so many St. Theresas, all of you. Remember that the devil fears cheerful people; he will try to discourage you because of all you have to do."

Addressing sisters in a workshop, he cheered them by saying: "While darning the socks of our young rascals, say to yourselves, 'These little feet will jump all about heaven!' While washing dishes and doing all sorts of chores, you'll save many a soul!"

Naturally, we all have to suffer something in this world, no matter what our state of life, but if we are true Christians and want to deserve eternal happiness, we must imitate Jesus Christ also in suffering. On this score, Don Bosco often said: "We must all carry our cross as Jesus did, and ours is made of the afflictions we encounter in this life! I know that some of you suffer a great deal, but remember that our earthly thorns will turn into heavenly roses."

He taught and admonished them with singular grace: "Take care of little things! Look at a sack of rice! As long as the sack is in good condition, it will stand upright, but if it has a small hole, it will lose its grains little by little, and the hole will increase until the sack at last falls over. . . . So with us. If we are not careful in small things, we fall into bigger sins little by little."

One day a sister in the kitchen moved a pot and happened to stain her white bodice with broth. Don Bosco noticed it and remarked that those few drops had spoiled her dress. "The same can be said of the soul," he remarked. "Even one little stain can keep it from heaven."

In a Salesian school on the occasion of a special holiday, the sisters had one day bought a basket of luscious apples and placed them on the window sill of the pantry. Suddenly they disappeared. Seeing Don Bosco, the superior asked him, "Father, do you know what the boys did this morning? We had gotten some very nice apples for the guests' dinner and the boys stole them all!"

"It's not their fault," he calmly replied. "The fault is yours. Tell the prefect that Don Bosco wants an iron grating over that window without delay! Remember never to put boys in the oc-

casion of doing something wrong. That is what Don Bosco's preventive system means."

At all times he was a good father and a model teacher!

He admired poverty, but wanted every necessary care given to those in need. A very frail sister wished to return home for health reasons. After urging the community to work for the Lord with zeal, love and generosity, and to pray with faith and fervor, Don Bosco went on, "The Lord has never let us want for what we needed in health or sickness. If the doctor says that your diet must have chicken, then the congregation will provide chicken. Help me keep things going!"

Nevertheless, he always tried to avoid exceptions. One morning, after a lengthy spell of confessions, he was offered a cold drink. "Don Bosco is not thirsty," he said with a smile, "and if he were, cold water would suffice!"

Another time he was offered a cup of coffee with a whipped egg yolk. He accepted it and began putting sugar into it.

"Father," the sister simply remarked, "I already put sugar in it!"

"Don't you know that Don Bosco must copy the sweetness of St. Francis de Sales?" he smilingly replied.

One morning at Lanzo he had breakfast with the director, but only Don Bosco's cup had egg yolk whipped into it. He offered his cup to the director. "Take this one," he said, "because Don Bosco must set a good example. Besides, I don't need it." The director would not take it, forcing it back upon Don Bosco. Don Bosco took it, obeying like a child.

Bishop James Costamagna narrated another incident even more charming:

Toward the end of 1874, the first offshoot of the motherhouse at Mornese was transplanted in the Salesian school of Borgo San Martino. Some months later, Don Bosco went for a visit. Sister Felicita Mazzarello (sister of the superior general) promptly went to him, rather upset. "Don Bosco, what shall we do?" she asked.

"What's wrong?" asked Don Bosco.

"The director insists that we serve two courses at dinner. He claims that if we do not eat a little more, we shall not last long here because

there is so much to do. But at our house in Mornese only one course is served and everyone is happy and content. What are we to do—listen to the director or do as we did at the motherhouse?"

"This is a grave matter," Don Bosco answered with mock seriousness. "We must think it over well before giving a definite answer. Of course, the director is to be obeyed; on the other hand, the customs of Mornese also demand respect. I too am puzzled. Anyway, before I decide, let me see today's two courses."

They brought them to him at once because it was almost dinner time. Don Bosco emptied both plates into one and gave it to the sister. "This should rid you all of fears," he said. "The two courses are now one. Neither the director nor the motherhouse will have reason to be hurt."[1]

There would be no end to all the little instances which the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians who knew Don Bosco still recall. Certain that they will be published in some little volume to perpetuate their memory, we limit ourselves to mentioning only a few other noteworthy recommendations.

Don Bosco graciously reminded and urged the sisters to give his regards to their parents when writing home: "In your letters, tell your parents that Don Bosco prays for them, and always give them my regards. Our Lady blesses those families who have given their daughters to this congregation. . . . When you write to your parents, tell them that Don Bosco sends them his regards and that all those who have Salesians or Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians [in their families] will be saved up to the third and fourth generation."

He also declared, "If the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians are faithful to their vocation, you will see what wondrous results Mary, Help of Christians will achieve through them!"

But along with the promise of very abundant blessings, he also spoke of the frightful woes which they would encounter if they strayed from the path marked out for them. Cardinal John Cagliero heard him say this:

As long as the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary, Help of Chris-

[1]Cf. G. Costamagna, *Lettere confidenziali ai Direttori delle Case Salesiane del Vicariato sul Pacifico*, Santiago, Escuela Tipografica Salesiana, 1901, pp. 283f. [Author]

tians dedicate themselves to prayer and work and practice temperance and poverty, the two congregations will do much good. But if by some mischance they become lax and shy from work to seek life's comforts, they will have run their course; they will slip into decline and fall apart.[2]

It is superfluous to add anything to this. The reader will understand the warning of our holy founder in all its beauty and gravity. . . .

[2]In Don Bosco's own *Memoirs from 1841 to 1886*, the basic recommendation to all Salesians is this:

"Love poverty if you wish to keep the finances of the congregation in good shape.

"See to it that no one can find reason to say: 'This furniture is far from poor. These meals, these clothes, this room do not befit a poor person.' Anyone who gives a reasonable motive for such remarks brings disaster upon our congregation, which is always to glory in its vow of poverty."

At the end of this precious manuscript, eyeing the future, he explicitly added: "When comforts and ease will rise among us, then our pious Society will have run its course."

CHAPTER 7

Definitive Establishment of the Salesian Society—1871-1874

DON Bosco used to say that our Society really began in 1841. In 1874 he wrote:

> This Society is now thirty-three years old. It was born and bred in stormy times and places, when all religious principles and authority, especially that of the Supreme Pontiff, became targets for destruction. In fact, all religious orders and congregations of men and women were being disbanded, all collegiate chapters suppressed, and all the real estate and property of seminaries and episcopal residences confiscated. One might say that religious and priestly vocations were non-existent in those years. . . . In 1852 our Society was approved by Archbishop [Louis] Fransoni. Finally, in 1858, Pope Pius IX, a man who deeply probed into methods of Christian education, drafted our Society's basic rules.

It is clear that Don Bosco saw the Salesian Society's origins in the immediate, cordial cooperation of laymen and priests in his apostolate for youth. They were soon followed by his own pupils who, prompted by heartfelt gratitude, generously resolved to stay always with him and consecrate their whole life to God.

But let us not forget the pains and toil it cost him to give his Society a formal religious basis and the many hardships he had to endure even after obtaining the Holy See's definitive approval. He put it succinctly: "Had I anticipated the heartaches, toil, opposition and frustration that one must go through to found a religious society, I might not have had the courage to attempt it."

1. The First Rules

Though the Salesian Society was born with no forethought, as we have recalled, Don Bosco decided to cast it into a form com-

patible with the times, a congregation of exemplary priests and laymen who would be linked by simple promises. However, Pope Pius IX, whom Don Bosco called his "co-founder," pointed out that if this institution was to keep united in spirit and action, it would have to become a regular congregation; its rules might be easy, but it would have to have the bond of religious vows. It could even be called simply a society. He urged Don Bosco to revise his rules accordingly,[1] and Don Bosco complied. At another audience he submitted the revised constitutions to the Holy Father.[2]

We cannot say just what the revisions were. Volume V of these *Biographical Memoirs* has a version entitled: *First Constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, Submitted by Don Bosco to Pius IX in 1858.*[3] Undoubtedly this is the oldest copy extant, but there may have been an earlier one. On his return to Turin, Don Bosco read and reread the copy he had submitted to the Pope; again and again he diligently went over it, so much so that we have been able to collate more than a dozen different versions, all handwritten, all preceding the first Latin copy which was printed at the Oratory in 1867.

In his work Don Bosco relied also on the rules of other ancient and modern religious congregations, such as the Congregation of the Charity Schools (The Cavanis Institute), the Rosminians and the Oblates of Mary.[4]

The oldest version extant is that published in Volume V of these *Biographical Memoirs*. It is in the hand of the cleric Charles Ghivarello and contains many revisions and additions of Don Bosco who, on Pius IX's advice, immediately dropped the word "Congregation" for "Society." Another version, also written by the cleric Ghivarello, is a clean copy of the foregoing and has further amendments and additions of Don Bosco, plus subsequent ones by Father Rua. It also contains three additional chapters, entitled respectively *Habit*, *Externs*, and *Formula of Profession.* Another copy, later than that sent to Archbishop Fransoni in Lyons in 1860, has additional revisions and a new

[1] *See* Vol. V, p. 561. [Editor]
[2] *Ibid.*, pp. 596f, 608f. [Editor]
[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 635-645. [Editor]
[4] This paragraph and the next three are condensations. [Editor]

chapter concerning the election of the Rector Major.

A further version is that sent to Rome in 1864 which earned the *Decretum Laudis*[5] along with thirteen observations which required modifications and additions to the rules. Two other versions, likewise in Italian, followed the *Decretum Laudis*. The first, in Don Bosco's hand, has several revisions, including some by Father Rua, and a complete rewriting of the chapter on the election of the Rector Major; the second is simply a clean copy of the former.

Finally we have three other handwritten versions in Latin. The first has many amendments by Father Francis Cerruti, and a few by Don Bosco, with Father Cerruti's complete translation of the chapter *De Rectoris Maioris Electione*; the second copy, edited for its Latin by Professor Vincent Lanfranchi and examined by Don Bosco, incorporates all of Father Cerruti's amendments; the third is a clean transcript of the second, and is almost identical to the first version printed by the Oratory Press in 1867.

2. Ever Forward!

Immediately after the granting of the *Decretum Laudis* difficulties arose in regards to ordinations.

"Until then," Don Bosco declared, "our members were ordained by bishops according to the sacred canons. Upon request, bishops gladly released the ordained priest to our houses, in return for the several clerics who went from our houses to the diocesan seminary. Things changed after the granting of the *Decretum Laudis*, in virtue of which doubts arose about the candidate's ordination for the Salesian Society or for the bishop. He could be ordained neither for our Society because it could not issue dimissorial letters, nor for the bishop because the ordinand belonged to a religious society. . . ."

What was to be done? One solution remained: to petition the Holy See for a definitive approval of our Society. In fact, in 1869, after five long years "of uncertainties and difficulties," Don Bosco, bearing commendatory letters from twenty-four bishops and a Latin copy of the constitutions published in 1867, filed his

[5]*See* Vol. VII, pp. 425f. [Editor]

petition and obtained the definitive approval of the Salesian Society, but not of the constitutions. That was postponed. Still, as the Decree of March 1, 1869 stated, the Holy Father, "kindly acceding to the petition of Father John Bosco, granted him, for ten years, the faculty of issuing dimissorial letters for tonsure and both minor and major orders to those students who had been admitted or would be admitted to any house of the aforesaid Congregation, prior to their fourteenth year, and who in due time joined or would join the aforesaid Congregation."

Certainly this was a very outstanding favor. But what about the students who had entered or would enter our houses after their fourteenth year? . . . This caused and intensified the problems in view of the ever increasing number of members. To overcome those problems, and especially to forestall them, Don Bosco appealed to the Holy See through the good offices of Monsignor Manacorda, the future bishop of Fossano, who, knowing the ease with which Joseph Cardinal Berardi could reach and influence the Pope, used to entrust all his petitions to him. After all, it was Cardinal Berardi, "that great and well-deserving prelate," who had "formally advised Don Bosco to petition for the definitive approval of his Society."

In 1871 Don Bosco sought authorization to issue dimissorial letters for several members of our Society who had entered our houses after their fourteenth year. Pius IX consented by exception and asked Cardinal Berardi to so inform Don Bosco. The latter went to Rome shortly afterward for Pius IX's silver jubilee of pontificate and had several talks with the cardinal on the present and future condition of the Church in Italy. In July of that year he again applied for advance authorization to grant dimissorial letters for ten more candidates who had entered or would enter the Salesian Society. The cardinal gave him to understand that he had obtained this faculty only with difficulty.[1]

Meanwhile Catholics in Rome hoped to see the papal state soon restored. Don Bosco, who kept sending confidential messages to the Holy Father in those years, usually saw to it that Cardinal Berardi was kept informed.

Thanks to the faculty to grant dimissorial letters for a limited

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

number of members who had entered our Society after their fourteenth year, all obstacles seemed momentarily overcome.

On returning from Varazze, Don Bosco entrusted all matters of ordinations to Father John Cagliero, catechist, who continued to benefit by the kindness of Monsignor Manacorda, even after the latter left Rome for Fossano. At first, making minor errors in sending necessary documents and in drafting the dimissorial letters, he was graciously corrected by Monsignor Manacorda. In turn, he cheerfully and gratefully received these corrections.[2]

This friendly interchange between prelates and various confreres of ours began to fade in the case of Archbishop Gastaldi, who until then had been most friendly. During his tenure as bishop of Saluzzo he was most amiable to all our confreres, but on becoming archbishop of Turin he immediately changed into quite another person.

The first to notice this was Father James Costamagna when he conducted a spiritual retreat for the pupils of La Generala[3] during Easter of 1872. At the closing of the retreat, Archbishop Gastaldi celebrated Mass and administered confirmation. After the ceremony, Father Costamagna greeted him with the same easy cordiality he used when the archbishop had been first a canon and then bishop of Saluzzo. Amiably he asked about his health, his sister and niece, and many other things, in the presence of the chaplain, the director and others. The archbishop stood stone-faced and just stared with serious dignity. Father Costamagna was shocked and kept his peace.

Some moments later, the archbishop asked him almost reproachfully, "Who are you?"

"I am Father Costamagna, who used to play and sing at Lanzo when Your Excellency used to visit us so graciously."

The archbishop said not another word, contenting himself with a haughty stare, as if to say, "Remember who I am, and keep your distance," and then began to converse with others.

Father Cagliero, too, experienced this change in the archbishop. He often acted as Don Bosco's messenger to him, and one day, while waiting to be introduced, he was told by the attendant that His Excellency would receive him as Father Cagliero, not as

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[3]A boys' reformatory in the outskirts of Turin. *See* Vol. V, pp. 140-146. [Editor]

a Salesian. "There is no Father Cagliero who is not a Salesian!" he quickly retorted, loudly enough to be heard by the bystanders. He excused himself and left.

What had happened? Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin was no longer the friend and confidant of the Salesians, but their immediate ecclesiastical superior who had begun to cherish the idea of keeping the Salesian Society under his full personal jurisdiction.

On several occasions, when Don Bosco let him know how anxious he was to open negotiations for the Holy See's definitive approval of the Salesian constitutions, the archbishop never failed to mention the conditions under which it could be obtained. Still, deeply admiring our holy founder and intimately convinced, as he often declared, that God's hand was clearly evident in the Salesian Congregation, he assured Don Bosco that he would gladly help him as in the past, though he was adamant in his intention of keeping the Salesian Congregation practically under his full control.

3. First Steps

It was imperative that Don Bosco act, and so he wrote to Cardinal Berardi, his friend, beseeching that he confer with the Holy Father and find out whether he considered it opportune to initiate regular proceedings toward obtaining a definitive approval [of the Salesian constitutions].

On receiving an encouraging reply,[1] Don Bosco immediately set about revising the 1867 version of the constitutions which he had sent to Rome in 1869, when he had first petitioned the Holy See for their definitive approval. Suggesting no further change, Monsignor Stanislaus Svegliati, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, insisted on full adherence to the thirteen observations sent to him in 1864,[2] and Don Bosco complied. It was hard work, and it was not final.[3]

[1]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]
[2]*See* Vol. VII, p. 425. [Editor]
[3]We are omitting all the complicated details of this revision. [Editor]

4. Unforeseen Difficulties

While Don Bosco, dreaming of his goal, kept at his task assiduously, the archbishop refused to yield. At first he assured Don Bosco in a very courteous letter that he was always ready to help him "succeed in obtaining full approval of the Vicar of Christ," but then he went on to ask him that he send the chancery documents proving the validity of dimissorial letters granted to those Salesians who had allegedly entered the Oratory before their fourteenth year. He also requested Don Bosco to make sure that all ordinands would present themselves for "an examination in at least two entire treatises of theology . . . to vary for every ordination," though it was a general rule that dimissorial letters exempted religious from such examinations. Here is his letter:

Turin Seminary, October 24, 1872

Very Reverend and dear Father,

You know through long experience how deeply attached I am to the Congregation you founded. I saw it grow like the grain of mustard seed, and I never failed to support it whenever I could, since I considered it—and still do—an undertaking inspired by God. You are also aware of my protection of your Congregation while I was bishop of Saluzzo, so as to obtain the Holy See's assistance and approval. Now that Divine Providence has elevated me to the archepiscopal see of Turin, I will very gladly continue my assistance, so that it may obtain the Holy Father's full approval. Nevertheless, even in promoting what is good, I must not in any way fail in my duty. Mindful of the fact that good must be done in the right way, I can only follow set rules, even at the risk of doing violence to my heart's inclinations.

The decree of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of March 9, 1869 authorizes you to issue dimissorial letters only to those youths who entered the Oratory prior to their fourteenth year. It is therefore absolutely necessary that pertinent documentation be submitted to my chancery. Moreover, both the Council of Trent, Session 23, Chapter 12, and the Roman Pontifical prescribe that "religious should not be ordained without the bishop's diligent scrutiny."

In view of this, please instruct all members of your Congregation who wish to receive tonsure and the minor or major orders to report to me personally, at least forty days before ordination, with a certificate, signed by you or your deputy, containing the following information:

name and surname of the student, father's name, birthplace, diocese of birth or to which he may now belong under any title, exact age, year of entrance into the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales which you founded, number of years spent in the study of Latin, literature and theology and where such studies were pursued, and likewise the year and day on which he took or renewed triennial vows. Furthermore, each student shall report for an examination in at least two entire treatises of theology which will always differ according to each ordination and will deal with the order they are about to receive. . . .

I could demand that your pupils attend lectures at my seminary, as specified in the instruction of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of March 3, 1869, but I trust that the result of their examinations will give such evidence of diligence and knowledge of theology as to make the observance of that prescription unnecessary.

Wishing you all prosperity and God's blessing in your holy undertaking, I remain in great esteem,

Devotedly yours in Christ,
✠ Lawrence, *Archbishop*

Don Bosco's reply must have overflowed with anguish, but, convinced that he was only doing his duty, the archbishop replied the same day in kind but firm words:

Turin Seminary, November 9, 1872

Very Reverend and dear Father,

I am deeply distressed that you feel so grieved as to be unable to find rest or relief. Surely you desire nothing less than to do God's will. He who seeks nothing but this is never perturbed, no matter what happens to the business he has at hand, but he serenely watches events, eager only to wipe away any offense of God of which he may himself be guilty.

You wish to see your Congregation firmly established. Your wish will be fulfilled, for the Lord has clearly indicated that such is His will, but in order to reach this excellent goal, one must avail himself of suitable means and not have recourse to those which would only obtain an opposite effect. The good name, continuity and growth of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, founded by you, depend first and foremost on a good novitiate in which the members are trained in every virtue, just as jewels are fashioned by the craftsman with chisel, hammer and file. If there is no such novitiate, or if it does not resemble, at least to a great extent, that of the Society of Jesus, your Congregation will lack

stability. This is the gist of what I shall say to the Holy See when the occasion will demand it. Presently your Congregation lacks this novitiate. With very few exceptions, its members were not trained by the founder, save in a minimal manner; and all too often complaints are made that many of these members lack virtue, especially humility, which all the faithful expect to see in a religious worthy of this name.

I deeply regret to add that, in my opinion, such complaints seem quite justified. A good religious is one who cannot be fashioned except through lengthy and most careful training. This calls for a good novitiate, which I do not think the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales has as yet. I shall therefore be unable to support the Holy See's approval of this Congregation, except under the express understanding that such a novitiate be established.

Furthermore, while acknowledging that religious orders should rightly be exempt from episcopal authority in all they need for their existence and prosperity, I am nevertheless averse to unnecessary exemptions, particularly when they are harmful. Such, in my opinion, is the exemption that would prevent bishops from carefully examining ordinands, though the Council of Trent and the Roman Pontifical expressly order bishops to do so. Unfortunately, little by little, abuses gained a foothold in this matter and now force themselves as privileges, but the sad experience of the many religious, now disbanded, who lack the necessary doctrine and virtue required of good ministers of the Church clearly shows that things were conducted haphazardly in this matter up to now and that it is high time that we adhere scrupulously to the prescriptions of the wise fathers of the Council of Trent.

Please understand that it is my intention to build, not to demolish, to cooperate in what is good, not to obstruct. Therefore be of good cheer and persevere light-heartedly in doing what you feel called to do by the Lord. In the face of complaints do not be perturbed, but rather examine them to see if they are justified and strive to correct what needs correcting. If you meet with difficulties or humiliations, do not feel resentful, at least externally, or permit any of your Congregation to feel that way either, but let all of you be convinced that the most effective way to win and triumph is to be patient, to pray and to humble yourselves before God and men. Thus acted the sainted founders of religious orders, and this has to be done too by those who intend to follow them in similar foundations.

I felt I must write this in reply to your last letter. God bless you, your Congregation and all your undertakings.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop*

The archbishop's explicit declaration not to favor the definitive approval of the constitutions until a good novitiate had been regularly established presented Don Bosco with many problems. He had to contend with obstacles on the part of the government too. "We have a novitiate," he declared, "but the present laws and the place in which we live do not allow us to have a separate building used exclusively for this purpose." The novitiate year, which we called "testing period," was spent in a part of the motherhouse at Valdocco. During this period, whenever necessary, the novices were used to teach catechism, supervise pupils, conduct day or evening class, and prepare boys for Confirmation, Communion, and serving Mass.

Two weeks later, after mature deliberation, Don Bosco sent this reply to the archbishop:

Turin, November 23, 1872

Your Excellency:

I thank you most heartily for the letter which you kindly deigned to write. It did not mitigate my grief, but it did at least reveal some reasons for your attitude in recent times in regard to my poor self and all the members of the Society of St. Francis de Sales. You have reduced the complaints to two: the lack of a good novitiate and the lack of religious spirit in our members. These two points call for clarification both for me and for Your Excellency, so please bear with what I am about to say.

Before the Holy See approved this Congregation, I had lengthy talks with Monsignor Svegliati and Cardinal Quaglia, and finally with the Holy Father. One evening Pius IX had me explain at great length the reasons why, in my opinion, I considered this new Congregation to be willed by God. I gave him all the answers he wanted. He then asked whether such a Congregation could possibly survive in this day and age among people who want to suppress such institutions. "How could you have a house of studies and a novitiate?" he asked. I told him what I had said to you only a few months earlier, namely that I did not intend to found a religious order for penitents or converts who needed moral reform. My intent is to gather boys and adults of long-proven morality for eventual admission to our Congregation.

"How can you succeed in that?" interrupted the Holy Father.

"I have succeeded so far," I replied, "and I hope to continue as regards the postulants we admit to our Society."

We draw our applicants from boys educated and trained in our houses —country boys who have usually been selected and recommended by

their pastors because of their good moral qualities. Two-thirds of them eventually return to their homes. Those we keep are trained in studies and piety for a period of four to seven years, and even after such a lengthy preparation only a few are admitted to the novitiate. For example, this year one hundred and twenty boys completed their rhetoric course in our houses; of these, one hundred and ten entered the clerical state, but only twenty remained in our Congregation, the rest being directed to their ordinaries.

Once admitted to the novitiate, our postulants have to spend two years here in Turin, with daily spiritual reading, meditation, visits to the Blessed Sacrament, examination of conscience, and a brief nightly talk delivered by me, rarely by others. This applies to all postulants alike. Twice a week there is a conference expressly directed to the postulants, and once a week there is a conference for all members of the Society.

Learning of this, the Holy Father felt quite satisfied. "God bless you, my son," he said. "Keep up what you are doing, and your Congregation will attain its goal. Should you encounter difficulties, let me know and we shall find a way to overcome them."

As a result of this the decree of approval was issued and you have seen it. On our part, we have carried on what was stated above.

From what I have said I think you will readily see that though we do not have a novitiate in name, we have one in fact.

You add that, save for very rare exceptions, no members of the Salesian Congregation seem to have the necessary virtues and that they are especially deficient in humility. Humbly and respectfully I ask you to point out such members to me by name, and I assure you that they will be severely admonished, and only once. This is something that must be brought to light—something that has been unknown to me until now and unknown to Your Excellency until April of this year. Until that time you saw, heard, read and, we might say, ran everything of importance in this house. Up to that time, both in public and in private, in speaking and in writing, you always declared that this house was an ark of safety for youths, a place where they could learn genuine piety and other fine things. On this score I would like to say more things which I do not wish to entrust to writing but which I hope to say in person, whenever you can give me a hearing.

I thank you for your benevolent words. They are my only comfort.

Most gratefully yours in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

After drafting this reply, one night, while pacing up and down in his room with Father Berto, he asked, "Have you seen the let-

ter that I am sending the archbishop?"

"Yes, Father."

"Just think! It was I who had him appointed bishop of Saluzzo and then archbishop of Turin. I did all I could with the Holy See, and especially with the Italian government which in no way would accept him. And now see how he treats me! What letters he writes! Everything was fine when he was bishop of Saluzzo. Then he changed completely. He is surrounded by counselors like Father Soldati who are hostile to us. How mutable are men! But this too will pass. We are well liked in Rome. . . ."

Father Berto offered some comfort, but Don Bosco went on: "It would not matter at all were he an enemy of mine trying to thwart me, but it hurts because he is my friend." He then quoted this passage from Scripture: *Si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi, sustinuissem utique . . . tu vero, homo unanimis, dux meus et notus meus. . . .*" [If an enemy had reviled me, I could have borne it . . . but you, my other self, my companion and my bosom friend—Ps. 54, 13-14].

Certainly no one could have thought that Archbishop Gastaldi would turn out this way. It is equally evident that he did not intend to oppose or thwart Don Bosco, but thought it his duty to act as he did.

Some days later, in fact, he invited Don Bosco to become a member of the Academy of Church History he was planning to found, and Don Bosco humbly accepted, suggesting that all members be well known for their unlimited veneration and attachment to the Holy See. Indeed, in 1874 he did become a charter member, but he did not receive the appropriate diploma until after the archbishop's death—a compliment and an insult.[1]

At the beginning of December, the archbishop sent a Christmas pastoral letter with various directives. The first, which aimed at preventing disorders, forbade under automatic church penalties the celebration of the customary three Midnight Masses in any church where doors were left open for anyone to go in or out. It also forbade all instrumental music. Don Bosco, who had obtained this privilege for his houses from the Holy See in 1862, first for seven years and then in perpetuity, so informed the arch-

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

bishop and also asked whether he would ordain a cleric during the forthcoming ember days.[2] Courteously but curtly the latter replied:

Turin Seminary, December 19, 1872

Dear Reverend Father:

I readily allow you to use the faculty of administering Holy Communion during the Christmas Midnight Mass in your Oratory in Turin and in other places of the archdiocese, provided that doors be closed to the general public. I do not allow, however, the celebration of three Masses even with closed doors because I dislike any action contrary to what the Church has ordained *ab immemorabili*, namely that there be one Mass during the night, one at dawn, and a third later in the day. I would like your new religious Congregation to observe this ancient custom faithfully.

As regards the cleric Bruna, please have him report to me tomorrow between 9 and 10 A.M.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
✠ Lawrence, *Archbishop*

Urgently needing an answer about ordination, Don Bosco wrote again on December 20 before receiving his reply.

In turn, the following day, the archbishop, after reconsidering the matter of celebrating three Masses during Christmas night, replied that he would allow the three Masses in all Salesian houses as long as the church doors were closed during their celebration. Promptly Don Bosco informed the confreres, benefactors and friends of this concession.[3]

Meanwhile the new version of the constitutions along with a brief outline of the current state of the Salesian Society had already been typeset for Don Bosco to submit them to the Holy Father with his petition for their definitive approval. As agreed upon in several conversations, Don Bosco sent the archbishop a copy of the galley proofs along with the most cordial good wishes of all the Salesians and pupils for the forthcoming Christmas holidays:

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Turin, December 23, 1872

Your Excellency:

At your gracious suggestion I am sending you galley proofs of the *Brevis Notitia*[4] which I intend to print and send to all members of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars along with a copy of the constitutions. Galley proofs of the latter will be mailed to you, although you have already seen them. If you wish me to print your letter of commendation in the *Brevis Notitia* for easier reading, please have it sent to me. You may find some typographical errors in the enclosed galleys, but they will be diligently corrected.

All members of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, together with the boys entrusted to their care, unanimously wish you a Merry Christmas and implore God to grant you constant good health.

Most gratefully yours,
Fr. John Bosco

The archbishop had not yet drafted his letter of commendation and did not think it should be included in the short history of the Salesian Society.

This *Brevis Notitia* was a reprint of the *Notitia Brevis Societatis Sancti Francisci Salesii et Nonnulla Decreta ad Eamdem Spectantia* [Brief History of the Society of St. Francis de Sales with Pertinent Decrees], published in 1868 and already submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.[5] It was updated to bring it in line with the growth of the Society and contained the following declaration:

Lastly, our most benevolent archbishop, eager to add another to the many important tokens of his favor he has granted us, praised the Salesian Society in lofty terms, and in a decree of December 25, 1872 he conceded parochial rights to the motherhouse and the adjacent Church of Mary, Help of Christians, at the same time confirming and increasing the privileges granted by his predecessors.

And now our archbishop and all the bishops of the ecclesiastical province of Turin, together with very many others, appeal for the definitive approval of the Salesian Society.

[4]A brief history of the Salesian Society. [Editor]
[5]*See* Vol. IX, p. 170. [Editor]

The archbishop read the proofs and returned them, frankly informing Don Bosco that he was determined to keep the Salesian Society under his jurisdiction and that his letter of commendation had been drafted in this sense. With these words he presented a copy to him. Don Bosco was astonished to find in it, after lavish praises, four conditions that gave definite guidelines to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, but he did not lose heart.

Steadfast in his intention, the archbishop drew up a new plan. Confident of persuading other bishops to join him, he wrote a confidential note to each bishop in Piedmont and to those who had a Salesian house in their dioceses, stating the conditions they were to keep in mind in drafting their commendatory letters, should these be requested of them, for the approval of the constitutions of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

Bishop [Joseph] De Gaudenzi of Vigevano told Don Bosco of this, frankly stating that he did not share the archbishop's opinion. In turn, Don Bosco asked him to send him a copy of the letter. Meanwhile he wrote to Monsignor Emilian Manacorda, informing him of developments and telling him that he would arrive in Rome between February 12 and 15.[6]

The bishop of Vigevano did send Don Bosco a copy of Archbishop Gastaldi's letter, and we report it here:

Turin, January 11, 1873

Your Excellency:

The Very Reverend Father John Bosco of my diocese, wishing to obtain the Holy See's definitive approval of his Congregation, has asked me to support his petition to the Holy Father with a letter of recommendation. I obliged with the following observations:

1. In my opinion, no members of the aforesaid Congregation should be admitted to Holy Orders before pronouncing perpetual vows. Otherwise, since they can leave the Congregation after ordination and be without a patrimony, many may be tempted to join and make their triennial vows solely to complete their clerical studies at no expense and be ordained. Then, at the expiration of their vows, they might return home and offer their services to any bishop willing to accept them.

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

2. The norms controlling the novitiate should be such as to guarantee the formation of religious well rooted in virtue, as is done in the Society of Jesus.

3. Members of the Congregation who are to receive minor or major orders should submit to the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, Session 23, Chapter 12. The *Pontificale Episcoporum De Ordinibus Conferendis* gives the same prescriptions. These ordinands, therefore, should not claim to be ordained unless they are first examined by the bishop or his delegate.

The bishop should also have the right to visit the churches and oratories of the Congregation to ascertain whether they conform in everything to church laws and whether the obligations attached to pious legacies are fulfilled.

I am acquainting you with these things in the hope that, should you be asked for a similar recommendation, you may see fit to state these same conditions. In my opinion, they are indispensable if harmony is to be maintained between the houses of this Congregation and their respective bishops once, as I hope, the approval will come through.

Yours devotedly,
✣Lawrence, *Archbishop*

In the face of this opposition, Don Bosco was almost determined to suspend all efforts for a definitive approval. He therefore wrote to Monsignor Manacorda for his and for Cardinal Berardi's advice.[7]

They replied that he was to forge ahead fearlessly. Still, he prudently suspended the printing of the new constitutions until the return of the archbishop, with whom he wanted to have another talk. Meanwhile he wrote to the bishops of Casale, Albenga, Genoa and Savona, and to the archbishop of Genoa, who had Salesian houses in their dioceses, as well as to his dear friend, Bishop De Gaudenzi of Vigevano, requesting a letter of commendation that he could enclose with a petition that he was about to submit to the Holy See for the definitive approval.

When Archbishop Gastaldi returned, Don Bosco wrote to Father Chiuso [his secretary]:

[7]We are omitting this letter which repeats the aforesaid. [Editor]

February 17, 1873

Dear Father,

Kindly tell the archbishop that I am leaving for Rome tomorrow morning and that if there is anything I can do for him there, to get it ready.

He would greatly oblige me if he would allow me a brief audience this afternoon or evening.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

When Don Bosco was received, he immediately told the archbishop that he would gladly be of service to him in Rome. The archbishop gave him a copy of the letter of commendation he had already sent to the Holy See for the approval of the Salesian Society.

Don Bosco read it and was deeply alarmed to see that it contained more conditions than the previous letter of recommendation did.

In fact, after repeating the [laudatory] statements he had made [about the Salesian Congregation] while bishop of Saluzzo,[8] he went on to say that he wished the approval of the Salesian Congregation to be subject to six explicit conditions, of which the last was truly incredible:

1. The founder was to submit the definitive draft of the constitutions.
2. These constitutions were to specify clearly how the novitiate should be run.
3. No member of the Society was to be admitted to Holy Orders before taking perpetual vows.
4. Candidates for Holy Orders were to be first examined by the ordaining bishop, in conformity with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent.
5. The bishop should have the right to inspect all the churches and chapels to ascertain whether the sacred canons and other church prescriptions were observed in all of them, and the obligations of pious legacies were scrupulously fulfilled.
6. The new Congregation should be exempt from episcopal ju-

[8] *See* Vol. VIII, p. 383. [Editor]

risdiction only to the extent necessary for its existence, but no more; for the rest, episcopal rights and duties were to remain perpetually in force.

Don Bosco was so shocked that he gave the archbishop to understand that he might abandon any idea of submitting his petition for approval. He then left for Rome where, after stopovers at Parma, Piacenza, Bologna and Florence, he came to know that Archbishop Gastaldi had sent the following personal letter to Cardinal Caterini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council:

Turin Seminary, February 19, 1873

Your Eminence:

The Very Reverend John Bosco of Castelnuovo in my diocese, founder of a congregation of priests which already has obtained a temporary approval from the Holy See, has asked me to support his petition for the definitive approval of his Congregation. He intends to submit this to the Holy Father. I consented and gave my letter of commendation, of which I enclose an original with my signature. In it I express what I deem essential for the good of the Congregation and the preservation of peaceful relations with the clergy of the dioceses where this Congregation may expand.

The founder of this Congregation regarded these conditions as unacceptable and told me that he would therefore leave things as they are for the time being and submit no petition. Since the intention of the aforesaid founder was known in Rome, and inquiries will probably be made as to why he changed his mind, I am sending you my commendation for your perusal and judgment.

I am convinced that in this Congregation:

1. A regular novitiate is necessary; otherwise it will be impossible to train men capable of keeping this Congregation in existence or in a flourishing state.

2. Philosophical and theological studies must be much more serious and sound than they have been hitherto.

3. No member should be admitted to Holy Orders before making simple perpetual vows, from which the superior may dispense in the name of the Supreme Pontiff. If they were admitted, as they now are, to Holy Orders after taking only triennial vows, it is obvious that many could enter this Congregation with no intention of remaining there, but solely in order to become priests at no expense. Then, at the end of their three-year term, which may expire immediately upon ordination, they

could leave and oblige bishops to accept them as they are, without having been trained by them and perhaps holding opinions widely different from those of the diocesan clergy.

I am therefore of the opinion that things should be left as they are for the time being, allowing Don Bosco to issue dimissorial letters to members who entered his Oratory prior to their fourteenth year, but it would be wise to stipulate that only those who have taken perpetual vows should be admitted to sacred orders.

Most respectfully yours,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop*

But the Lord was with His servant who, living in constant union with Him, accepted both roses and thorns with equal serenity!

5. Presentation of the Petition

Don Bosco's arrival in Rome, Father Berto wrote, instantly revived the enthusiasm of 1867 when Father Francesia had accompanied him.[1]

"The Pope, cardinals and other prelates—Father Berto continues—are very interested in seeing our Congregation quickly expand and meet the needs of society."

In fact everyone encouraged Don Bosco to proceed with the approval of his constitutions. The Holy Father himself, in their first meeting on February 27, which lasted an hour and a quarter, urged him to push forward undaunted.

"If it depended only on him," Don Bosco told Father Berto later, "all would be promptly settled."

In the meantime Father Rua was urged to speed the mailing of the new constitutions, then at the Oratory Press.

The one who generously helped him draft the petition to the Holy Father and prepare pertinent documents was Archbishop Vitelleschi himself, secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

[1] *See* Vol. VIII, pp. 258-308. [Editor]

Though Don Bosco was in Rome, the Latin petition was dated "Turin, March 1, 1873." It read as follows:

Turin, March 1, 1873

Most Holy Father:

The Salesian Society which you founded, directed and strengthened with your help and counsel now implores new favors of your great goodness. The constant practice of the constitutions of this Society over a period of some thirty years, the great difficulties and dangers it has overcome, and its wondrous growth are all so many indications of God's hand, as the bishops have recognized in their letters of recommendation.

Two things above all are now desired to complete the work: the definitive approval of the constitutions and the full authorization to issue dimissorial letters. They are the two favors I implore most humbly and prayerfully.

In order that the current state of the Congregation may be ascertained at a glance, the following enclosures are submitted:

1. A brief history or collection of documents regarding this Congregation.
2. Several copies of the last edition of the constitutions.
3. A few explanations of several slight modifications which experience has shown to be very useful for the growth and consolidation of the Congregation.

In your goodness and benevolence please add whatever you find lacking.

All the members of this Congregation, proud to be your sons, while placing this matter confidently in God's hands, fervently and personally implore God to complete His work and inspire you to do whatever He may judge best.

Meanwhile, prostrate at the feet of Your Holiness, happier than all, I remain,

Your most humble son,
Fr. John Bosco, *Rector Major*[2]

In his petition Don Bosco made no reference to new commendations, but he soon received those he had requested and promptly passed them on to Archbishop Vitelleschi.

The first, which came from the bishops of Casale and of Savona, were fully favorable and unconditional. The letter from

[2]We are omitting details about the items listed under No. 3 of the petition. [Editor]

Bishop De Gaudenzi of Vigevano could not have been more extensive or cordial. Likewise, the one from Bishop Siboni of Albenga was most favorable. Only the archbishop of Genoa leaned toward the views of Archbishop Gastaldi, though acknowledging the beneficial results of the Salesian Hospice at Sampierdarena.[3]

While in Rome, Don Bosco begged Monsignor Manacorda to add a brief recommendation of his own. This prelate, having no time for it because of his manifold duties, drafted a letter as he was returning to Rome from a trip to Assisi. He then made a good copy immediately and had it sent to Don Bosco on March 11. Without delay Don Bosco passed it on to Archbishop Vitelleschi, with a reminder that there would be no others.

The prelate submitted all recommendations to the Holy Father, who, after glancing at the names of the writers, picked that of Bishop Manacorda and handed it to him, saying, "Read it!" He listened attentively and was so delighted that he felt he did not need to look at the others. "So, let us make Don Bosco happy," he exclaimed.

Noteworthy was Bishop Manacorda's reference to the novitiate. After mentioning the various beneficial undertakings of the Salesian Congregation, he added:

> These and other fruits are owed to this excellent institute in which the members are trained during the novitiate by the rector with daily conferences and practices of piety while diligently pursuing their studies for the common good. We have said "novitiate," to which we add "less obvious than others," but a true novitiate such as is befitting and is demanded by the good of the institute and of souls. It is obvious that running a novitiate openly and glaringly under the eyes of those who would destroy monastic orders would only be jeopardizing its very existence. . . . Furthermore, the fact that at least a hundred pupils every year manifest a priestly vocation and considerably add to the numbers of young men who form the Church's hope in the seminaries of Piedmont proves that Salesians are excellently trained in the novitiate. The pupils who enter the seminaries are to be admired not only for their number, but especially for their piety and formation.

These letters of commendation made an excellent impression.

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Although the observations expressed by Archbishop Gastaldi also verbally still raised some doubts, it was promptly decided to turn the constitutions over to a consultor for his examination so that he might pass his verdict on them. "Our constitutions are now under scrutiny, and we hope for a successful outcome," Father Berto wrote to Father Lemoyne on March 12. In side notes he added the following details. On a visit to Monsignor Fratejacci, the talk turned to the negotiations for the definitive approval of the constitutions of our Society. "I believe that the archbishop of Turin will do a lot for you," the monsignor remarked.

"Far from it!" Don Bosco replied.

"Why not? It was you who proposed him as bishop of Saluzzo, and then as archbishop of Turin!"

"Ah, Monsignor, I too can say like Coriolanus' mother, 'Had I not had a son, I would not now be a slave!' Had I not made him a bishop, I would now be having less trouble."

"I never knew that he was opposed to religious congregations," the monsignor added.

"True, they are not all faultless, but what is needed is reformation, not destruction."

"He ought to be admonished," the monsignor went on.

"He has been, and by the Holy Father himself. He was suspending priests right and left for trivial matters and continues to do the same in Turin. See, he forces us to submit for censorship arithmetic textbooks, almanacs and similar publications. He keeps them for a long time and we have to wait and wait."

"I am really surprised, but I did notice during the [Ecumenical] Council that he wore a cassock somewhat longer than usual on the Council's session days and that made me wonder a little. There is always the danger that this sort of person may turn to Jansenism. I am sorry for you! I recall what you told me about the bishops you had proposed. 'He is the holiest of all the bishops,' you remarked about Bishop Galletti. 'And this is the most learned,' you said of Bishop Gastaldi. Poor Don Bosco! I really sympathize with you."

In truth, the path ahead still loomed long and steep, rocky and thorny. He left Rome on March 22, arriving at the Oratory on March 30. There Father Cagliero told him what happened when, during his absence, he called on Archbishop Gastaldi to arrange

for ordinations. After a short, friendly talk, the archbishop remarked: "By the way, the seminary rector, Father Soldati, tells me that a priest of yours came to the seminary and with his boisterous talk hurt the feelings of the superiors and scandalized the seminarians."

"Forgive me, Your Excellency," exclaimed Father Cagliero. "I did not know about this, but I do know that we sent Father Bologna who has a loud voice and always talks loudly even at the Oratory. He comes from a mountain village and has never lost the habit of shouting."

"Well, admonish him anyway, because it is unseemly."

"I certainly will, Your Excellency, rest assured. Still, I do not see why Father Soldati, a schoolmate of mine, should run immediately to Your Excellency on such trivial matters. He could have told me about it, and we would have remedied the situation."

That did it! The archbishop flung the list of candidates for Holy Orders which he held in his hand to the floor and burst into a string of invectives lasting over an hour.

When he finished his tirade, Father Cagliero picked up the papers in silence, bowed, and withdrew with lowered head. From that day on he found that he had to assume a cold manner which displeased the archbishop, who really esteemed him highly.

Don Bosco, too, found him inclined to overreact in other matters. One day he had hardly been ushered into the archbishop's office when the latter who was writing exclaimed, "Don Bosco, I have a very serious matter at hand."

"I believe that everything the archbishop does is serious," Don Bosco retorted.

"But this is exceptionally so! I am about to sign a document concerning a canon!"

"A promotion?"

"Far from it! This is a suspension *a divinis*!"

"Please, do think it over very carefully. . . ."

"The matter is a grave one, and the information I have received is very precise."

"May I ask who this canon is?"

"So and so."

"Of Chieri?"

"Yes, of Chieri."

"Your Excellency, bear in mind that he has an excellent reputation. The whole of Chieri knows and loves him. It would be a scandal! Ecclesiastical authority would lose in prestige!"

"And yet, this has to be done," the archbishop resolutely stated.

And suspend him he did. The matter concerned a chapel. The canon was rather stubborn. When the suspension arrived, he was beside himself, for he had expected nothing like it. He immediately called on Don Bosco, begging that he accept him in one of his houses and shield him from disgrace. Don Bosco sent him to Alassio, not without incurring the archbishop's displeasure.

6. New Stumbling Blocks

All who knew Archbishop Gastaldi detected two personalities in him: a public one, inflexible and authoritarian, and the private one, generous, amiable, gentle-hearted. Such was his love and zeal for souls and the splendor of priestly virtue that once he even knelt before an unfortunate priest, who had left his vocation and for some time lived with a woman, and begged him to return to the right path, promising to provide for his living and the woman's hapless family. Unfortunately his repeated efforts to save that soul were unsuccessful.

The fame that Don Bosco enjoyed, the authority he naturally exercised in all Salesian houses, and the special confidence the Pope had in him—all seemed so many diminutions of episcopal authority to the archbishop. Firmly resolved to stand up for his rights, he continually overreacted in making decisions. God permitted this to happen so that Don Bosco might constantly advance by leaps and bounds along the path to perfection and ever better structure our Society.

One day he asked the archbishop for a [written] statement that he was not holding ordinations on *Sitientes*[1] Saturday, so that he could send deacons Louis Lasagna and John Baptist Baccino, two of his future missionaries, to another diocese for ordination as priests. The archbishop's reply was in his own hand, unsigned, and was delivered by his secretary. It read as follows:

[1]The Saturday before Passion Sunday in the old liturgy. [Editor]

Whenever any member of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales reports to the chancery of Turin for promotion to Sacred Orders or to obtain the required authorization to be ordained in another diocese, he must submit a certificate from the superior of the aforesaid Congregation or his representative, specifying the surname, name and age of the candidate, his birthplace and diocese. Moreover, the superior or his representative must testify:

1. That the candidate entered the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales before his fourteenth year.
2. That he has made his triennial vows and they are still in force.
3. That he has successfully passed his examination.
4. The reason he did not report on the day when the archbishop was holding ordinations.

Such certificates are to be submitted for the two deacons Louis Lasagna and John Baccino.

[This reply was accompanied by the following note:]

Turin Seminary, April 10, 1873

Very Reverend Don Bosco:

His Excellency has instructed me to inform you that he can issue no declaration unless you certify that the two above-mentioned ordinands successfully passed in this chancery the examination required for the order they expect to receive on the forthcoming Holy Saturday.

Yours devotedly,
T. Chiuso, *Secretary*

The archbishop could not demand this theology examination because the Council of Trent reserved the right to the ordaining bishop. But since the attempt to have members of our Congregation ordained in other dioceses on days when the archbishop himself was not ordaining seemed a trick to him—whereas it was truly an urgent need of our Society—he was informed that the two deacons would report for examination. However, fully determined to block the whole matter, he declared that the application was to be submitted forty days in advance! It was impossible, and so he was again asked to declare that he would not be holding ordinations on Holy Saturday, but he would neither admit the deacons to examination nor accede to the request.

Soon after, he again demanded that the ordinands report to

him forty days in advance in order to be questioned in regard to their surname, name, birthplace, locality where they had pursued their studies prior to entering the Congregation, number of years of their membership, whether they had taken triennial or perpetual vows and when, their motives for entering the Congregation, whether or not they were happy, the reason why they had left the diocese, and so on. Such was truly a detailed examination into the internal affairs of the Congregation, as if it were a simple diocesan institution!

Such procedures caused some ordinands to worry and hesitate and led others to abandon their vocation. Still, for the sake of peace, it was thought wiser to comply with the demands, even though they violated church discipline.

The archbishop relentlessly complained that Don Bosco cultivated vocations for himself, not for the diocese. One day, when speaking of the dire need of vocations with several people in the Convitto Ecclesiastico, he shook his head, exclaiming, "I know a place where youths are trained for every other purpose than that of helping the diocese!"

Everyone grasped the allusion. Hearing this, Father Ascanio Savio, who taught moral theology, produced a list of priests attending the Convitto and pointed out that only four of them had not been educated in Don Bosco's Oratory.

"You always come out with something new!" the archbishop commented.

"You too, Your Excellency!" Father Savio smilingly retorted.

That same month, the archbishop again wrote to Cardinal Bizzarri, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, listing a long series of complaints and demands in order to block the definitive approval of our constitutions, which, as he knew, were then being examined:

Turin Seminary, April 20, 1873

Your Eminence:

I consider it my grave duty to inform Your Eminence and, through you, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of the state of affairs existing in the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, founded by the Very Reverend John Baptist Bosco, a priest of my diocese. In the matter of this Congregation, I would very much like to learn from Your

Eminence whether it is to be considered as approved by the Holy See and therefore entitled to enjoy the privileges and rights of regulars, or as simply enjoying the *benevolence* of the Holy See. In the latter case such privileges as might have been granted would be temporary concessions *ad experimentum*, not to be equated with privileges granted to regulars.

This Congregation was founded with the consent of Archbishop Louis Fransoni of Turin; it continued with the consent of his successor, Archbishop Alexander Riccardi, and it now has my consent because I wish it to prosper and carry on with all my heart for the Christian education and training of youth. Nevertheless I have not yet approved its rules, nor was such approval requested of me or of any of my predecessors. In fact, I do not feel I could approve the rules as they stand now and as they have been printed this year by the aforesaid Congregation, because they are very deficient in the matter of a good novitiate, without which this Congregation will never have good religious generally, and consequently will never enjoy a future guarantee of solidity and prosperity.

In my opinion, Don Bosco is very much in error in this matter of a novitiate. I would think that all those who intend to take vows in a congregation should be trained specifically for two years in humility and self-abnegation, and that in order to attain full self-indifference, which is the substantial characteristic of a religious, they should apply themselves to special ascetical exercises, as is usually done in religious orders, especially in the Society of Jesus. Don Bosco seems to think that if he admits to vows only those who attended his schools as children and have been carefully observed every day for some seven or eight years, and have always been found to be modest, pious, chaste, docile and mortified, this is enough to declare them qualified to take vows. In my opinion this is a mistake, because the knowledge gained of these boys over such a long period may well show them to be excellent Christians, but it does not guarantee that they have been formed to that spirit of sacrifice, constancy in abnegation and self-indifference, without which they will never persevere as religious. Many members of the Society of Jesus have attended its colleges as boys for seven, eight and nine years, but they are not exempt even from one single day of novitiate.

Because of the lack of a proper novitiate, some Salesians who had taken their perpetual vows and seemed most determined to persevere have already left the Congregation. When I sought the reason, they replied that, not having had a proper novitiate, they had been unable to develop an adequate religious spirit in themselves.

Furthermore this Congregation, with no intent to do so, considerably upsets the ecclesiastical discipline of this diocese, and I fear that it will do the same wherever it may establish itself. Why? Because its superior

has the faculty to admit youths to ordination if they entered his schools prior to their fourteenth year and have already made triennial vows, even if they do not have a patrimony. If the ordinands were to renew vows and remain in the Congregation after their triennial vows have expired, everything would be fine. But it happens only too often that some youths, unable to afford the seminary fees, enter this Congregation, study gratuitously and are ordained under the title of common board; then at the expiration of their triennial vows, they leave the Congregation and report to their bishops for incardination. Meanwhile they lack a patrimony and the training they received is questionable. Was it on a par with the education imparted in the diocese? I wouldn't be so concerned if at least it had been Don Bosco himself who had examined them and had also taught them himself. But no, it was someone else who did not have Don Bosco's mind, eye or spirit. When I was at Saluzzo, a person of my diocese was ordained in this Congregation, and a very short time afterward he was expelled for his intemperate drinking, which is still a problem for him. I therefore think that the faculty of admitting to ordination youths bound only by triennial vows offers an all too easy way of pursuing one's studies to young men who have no intention at all of becoming religious, but who look to the religious life as a means of livelihood. By joining Don Bosco's Congregation, they find a way to be ordained without spending a cent, and once their triennial vows expire, they report to their bishop, seeking both a position and a livelihood. In deference to their priestly status, the bishop must perforce provide for them even though he may have rejected them when they first applied to assume the clerical state.

The problem worsens because of another faculty which Don Bosco claims to have, namely that of presenting for Holy Orders youths who entered his Congregation after their fourteenth and even after their twentieth year. Some clerics who were dismissed from the seminary go to Don Bosco and he takes them in without their bishop's explicit consent. Then he sends them to teach in one of his schools in some distant diocese, such as Varazze in the Savona diocese, or Alassio in the Albenga diocese. While teaching, these young men study theology and in due course are presented by Don Bosco to the local bishop who ordains them with no further inquiry. Finally, when their triennial vows expire, the young men return home as priests, while their ordinary has had nothing at all to say in the matter. Indeed he may have dismissed them as unsuitable.

Lastly this Congregation cannot have priests properly trained in philosophy and sacred subjects because most of them pursue these studies as clerics while teaching Latin or other subjects. Furthermore, though

the Holy See has ordered all the theology students of this Congregation who resided in Turin to attend lectures in the archdiocesan seminary, a way was found to dispense them from this prescription. So, in conclusion, I would suggest:

1. That the rules of this Congregation be examined by the archbishop of Turin for his approval. Should he deny it, he should state his reasons for doing so to the bishops of Casale, Savona, Albenga and to the archbishop of Genoa, where Don Bosco has houses, in order that an agreement may be reached among them.

2. That Don Bosco be stopped from presenting any ordinand unless he entered his schools prior to at least his sixteenth year and never left them.

3. That he likewise be not allowed to present for ordination to subdeacon anyone who, besides fulfilling the requirements listed under No. 2, has not yet made his perpetual vows in the Congregation, these vows being dispensable by the Supreme Pontiff.

4. That all theology students be required to attend classes for at least four years in the seminary of the town in which their house is situated, and that consequently no theology student be assigned to places where there are no seminaries.

5. That prior to their ordination, all ordinands presented by Don Bosco be bound to report to the bishop of that diocese, proving with proper documentation that they entered the schools of the Salesian Congregation prior to the age of sixteen and never left them, and that they made their perpetual vows (if they are to receive major orders) and have attended courses at the seminary. Then, they should be diligently examined by the bishop in compliance with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent, Session 23, Chapter 12.

After submitting all these observations to the wisdom of the Sacred Congregation, and primarily to Your Eminence, I will conclude by saying that I am sorely afraid that unless prompt steps are taken, this Congregation, because it lacks appropriate discipline, sound theological formation and hence well-trained members, will be unable to survive, and will at most live on until its founder dies. Then it will collapse, dashing the hopes of its many well-wishers who have made great sacrifices to help its establishment.

I think I can count myself among them because, having seen it rise and grow under my own eyes, I have supported it with my ministry as priest, professor and bishop, as well as with my money. I have always encouraged the founder, sustaining him with praise and approval, and overlooking the Congregation's shortcomings so as not to dishearten him. In addition, I did not have jurisdiction in the matter then. Because

of our sorry times I thought I could close an eye to the defects in view of the immediate good results it produced, hoping that Divine Providence would supply needed remedies. But now that this Congregation is part of my diocese, I feel bound to examine things as they really are. I notice that, notwithstanding its development, it is still far from having the desired solidity, and I think it is my strict duty to manifest this state of affairs to this Sacred Congregation, which is the instrument that God will certainly use to rectify whatever is needed to make it sound and durable.

Most respectfully yours,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop of Turin*

We need not refute certain assertions of Archbishop Gastaldi because the reader will realize, as the narration progresses, that they are exaggerated and untrue. It is enough to cite the example of a resident of his diocese who was ordained a priest when he was bishop of Saluzzo. This priest never belonged to the Salesian Congregation but was ordained by Bishop Gastaldi, with the required patrimony, against Don Bosco's advice.

As to his assertion that there was absolutely no novitiate, it should be stressed that the novitiate was made in those days in the best way possible. For in the early years of the Congregation aspirants to the Society were accustomed to work on behalf of boys by sharing their life in the study hall, dormitory, church, playground and on walks, by enduring every sacrifice, and by teaching in day or evening schools, while they kept up with their own studies. It was not possible to do otherwise in those days. As to practices of piety, we may say that they lasted from dawn to dusk. Bishop Ghilardi of Mondovì knew of the life being led in the Oratory. Father Durando, while staying with the bishop during his spiritual retreat before ordination, was several times asked to walk with him. "But what about my retreat?" he objected respectfully. "What retreat?" answered the bishop. "You people at the Oratory are always on retreat every day the year long!" In short, even in this Don Bosco expressed his belief that it is better to do good today as best we can than wait until tomorrow in the hope of doing it better. "The best," he used to say, "is the enemy of the good."

The archbishop was worried by the thought that Don Bosco might receive full authorization to issue dimissorial letters, and hence he proposed that he issue them exclusively for those who had entered Salesian houses prior to not their fourteenth but their sixteenth year, with no further extension.

Another thing that nettled him was to see clerics leave the archdiocesan seminary and enter Salesian houses. Some left because they felt the call to the religious life; others did so because of the somewhat eccentric behavior of the rector, Father Soldati.

At this time, two clerics, Borel, or Borelli, and Angelo Rocca had left the seminary. Don Bosco had accepted the former for a few days' spiritual retreat to decide on his vocation. The following week, in fact, he left the clerical state and returned to his family. The other wanted to become a Salesian and Don Bosco sent him to Lanzo to see whether he liked our way of life. The archbishop learned of it and immediately had his secretary notify Don Bosco that if those two clerics should ever ask to be ordained he would never give his consent, and that he awaited a reply.[2]

Just what the reply was we do not know, but it certainly did not succeed in soothing the archbishop, for he then had his secretary issue the following explicit declaration:

Turin, May 7, 1873

Very Reverend Father:

His Excellency the archbishop wishes me to express his deepest regrets that he will not admit to ordination any members of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales until you assure him that the young men Borel and Rocca are no longer in any house of your Congregation, and promise that you will no longer receive these or any other seminarians of our diocese without the chancery's written consent.

Yours devotedly,
T. Chiuso, *Secretary*

In the Informative Process for Don Bosco's beatification Bishop Bertagna declared: "Don Bosco overlooked personal offenses

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

and most generously forgot them, but when opposed in his plans for founding his Congregation, he did not always display the same readiness to forget, nor did he pass it over in silence." Naturally he could not sometimes help but discuss these matters with pious, learned priests from whom he sought advice. "Yet he was so reserved," Father Rua testified, "that he would speak of these matters only with those who had to know. Several of my confreres and I, who were always at his side, very rarely heard him mention such things, because he would speak of them only to those who had to help him in handling the unpleasant business, such as secretaries and copyists."

But this letter of the archbishop so alarmed him that before replying he went to Borgo San Martino for a three-day spiritual retreat. Then he stated his case as if he were standing before God's judgment seat. He wrote:

Borgo San Martino, May 14, 1873

Your Excellency:

The letters you sent me through your secretary, Father Chiuso, the last especially, have given me much food for thought. To avoid a hasty reply, I came here to Borgo San Martino to spend three days in spiritual retreat, after which I now candidly manifest my reaction as though I were present at God's judgment seat.

You sent me word that you will not admit to ordination any of our clerics unless the cleric Borelli, who left two weeks ago, and the cleric Rocca have been dismissed from our houses. Furthermore, you request my formal promise that no one who has ever belonged to the diocesan clergy of Turin shall ever be admitted to any house of our Congregation.

Since you give me no reasons, I believe I can make a few observations.

If these clerics have been expelled from the seminary, what does it matter if they seek refuge in some religious house to reflect upon their destiny or to prepare for an examination or to learn a trade that will enable them to earn a living? Should they be ostracized and forced into a bitter fate because they have lost their vocation?

I think it would be wiser to help them find some place where they have a chance to better themselves. This is what the bishops with whom we are in contact have done and are doing. One might perhaps say that these clerics should seek permission, thus solving all difficulties, but the reply might be that forcing them to ask for permission puts a heavy bur-

den upon them and on the congregation or house to which they seek admission. Besides, since this condition was not included in our Congregation's approval, its superior is not authorized to insert it, all the more so since this permission has been requested several times and as often denied. I feel you should rather realize that if these former seminarians are told that they may not be received in any religious house by your order, and must be driven from it, you would be making enemies of their friends or relatives, especially since some of these clerics may have already started a course of study or be learning a trade.

Such a statement, which I do not consider I am authorized to make, would erect a wall between the Salesian Congregation and the clergy of this diocese to whose welfare it is especially dedicated and for which it has been laboring for over thirty years. Should any ecclesiastical prescription concerning such instances exist—I know of none—I will promptly and unconditionally submit.

As for clerics who ask for Orders, I say that you must deny them ordination if you find them unworthy. If they are worthy, would you perhaps reject them in reprisal, or for reasons unrelated to them personally, and thus deprive the Congregation, the Church, and your own diocese of priests whom we so badly need?

I would think that this Congregation, which has unselfishly worked for this diocese and since 1848 has supplied no less than two-thirds of its clergy, does deserve some consideration, particularly because any cleric or priest who comes to the Oratory does nothing more than change his place of residence, and he still continues to work in and for the archdiocese of Turin. It is a fact that in the three instances when you refused to ordain our clerics, you simply reduced the number of priests working in this diocese.

Furthermore, I would remind Your Excellency that you and I have people about us who are insidiously trying to wrest information from us so that they can tell the world that the archbishop has severed relations even with poor Don Bosco. In this connection, you are aware that but a few days ago I made sacrifices, by no means insignificant, to prevent the publication of certain derogatory articles.

I would also inform you that certain documents pilfered from government files are circulating around Turin through a certain person's initiative. They prove that if Canon Gastaldi was made bishop of Saluzzo, it was at Don Bosco's suggestion, and that if the bishop of Saluzzo became archbishop of Turin, it was also at Don Bosco's suggestion. They even bear evidence of the difficulties that had to be overcome to achieve this. There is also a record of the reasons why I championed you: among others, the valuable help you gave our house and Congregation.

People are aware of how much we could do for one another if we mutually agreed, and evil-intentioned persons would greatly rejoice to see our friendship break up.

Now you might ask: What does Don Bosco want? Total submission to, total agreement with my ecclesiastical superior. I ask nothing more than what the Holy Father repeatedly told me on several occasions, and what Your Excellency too said as bishop of Saluzzo: namely, that in these trying times of ours a new congregation needs every possible leeway compatible with the ordinary's authority, and that in the face of difficulties it should be helped by advice and action as far as possible.

I have written this letter with the sole desire of saying what might serve as a guide to both of us and promote God's glory. Nevertheless, should any uncalled-for word have escaped me, I humbly beg pardon and remain with deep veneration,

Your must humble servant,
Fr. John Bosco

But the archbishop held his ground and demanded that a statement be issued specifying that no former seminarians of the archdiocese of Turin would any longer be admitted as clerics to the Congregation without the chancery's consent, and he urged Canon Marengo to try to persuade Don Bosco. Don Bosco yielded, as follows:

[Turin] May 29, 1873

The undersigned, ever eager to gratify the wishes of His Excellency, the archbishop of Turin, willingly declares:

1. That he will never admit as clerics into Salesian houses any former seminarians of the Turin archdiocese, unless these youths have already been received into the houses of this Congregation prior to their fourteenth year, in conformity with the papal decree of March 1, 1869, or unless they seek admittance in order to learn a trade or craft.
2. That such has been the rule hitherto, and that no exception whatsoever shall be made without the chancery's permission or consent.
3. In the belief that this faithfully interprets His Excellency's wishes, this statement is made with the reservations and limits prescribed by the sacred canons to safeguard the freedom of religious vocations.

4. If further clarification is required, it will be supplied most promptly at a mere word from His Excellency, whose counsels shall always be treasured by the undersigned.

Fr. John Bosco
Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

The reservations mentioned in No. 3 were not agreeable to the archbishop; he rejected the statement and in every possible way continued to look for means and ways to obstruct the approval of the constitutions, again pressing the bishops of his ecclesiastical province to support the conditions he had listed in his letter of recommendation. [Bishop Formica of Cuneo, however, managed to excuse himself from such a task.][3]

Although all these obstacles were seemingly prompted by the archbishop's sense of duty, they were obviously dictatorial and overbearing, acting as so many piercing thorns in Don Bosco's side.

That year the thirty-third edition of *The Companion of Youth*[4] appeared in print, with some "important additions," among which *Unità Cattolica*[5] cited "the arguments touched on in fifteen chapters regarding the foundations of the Catholic faith in the form of dialogue by the learned and pious author." Naturally, all these additions were sent to the chancery for approval, and the archbishop wanted to examine them himself. It happened that one addition contained a poem by St. Alphonse. Immediately the archbishop struck out a stanza, citing it as heretical. The protest that those verses were by a doctor of the Church availed nothing. "Monsignor Gastaldi is an archbishop, whereas St. Alphonse was only a bishop!" the secretary told Don Bosco.

It was only natural that Don Bosco, although normally serene and unperturbed even in the midst of the gravest trials, should feel hurt and should occasionally voice that hurt. Our Lord too, when driving the money-lenders from the temple they had profaned, uttered severe words against them.

[3]We are omitting his reply to Archbishop Gastaldi. [Editor]

[4]A boys' prayerbook compiled by Don Bosco and first published in 1847 under the title of *Il Giovane Provveduto*. *See* Vol. III, pp. 6-18. [Editor]

[5]*See* issue of August 7, 1873. [Author]

On June 9, shortly before the hour for Benediction,[6] Father Berto was in the library with Don Bosco and remarked, "It seems incredible that the archbishop who was so attached to the Oratory has not set foot in it now for a year. How easily benefactors are forgotten when they are no longer needed! I wonder if Mrs. Mazè[7] knows about this."

"Of course she does!" Don Bosco replied. "When she visits him, she asks for even the most trivial news of the Oratory. You see, it is as Scripture says: *Filios enutrivi et exaltavi, ipsi autem spreverunt me* [Sons have I raised and reared, but they have disowned me—Is. 1, 2]."

Chimed in Father Berto, *"Cognovit bos possessorem et asinus praesepe Domini sui, Israel autem me non cognovit!* 'The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib, but Israel has not known me—Is. 1, 3]."

Father Berto then asked Don Bosco when Confirmation would be administered.

"We will have to wait until we have found a *modus vivendi* with the archbishop. It is ridiculous to say, as some do, 'If it is God's will, things will fall into place without much ado.' But I must find a way to make people understand what this will of God is now. Meanwhile we keep going; with time everything will be achieved."

So optimistic was his tone that one would think he knew the future and was sure of the glorious outcome of his enterprise. So stated Father Berto. He also added that on July 2, when "talking with Don Bosco in his room, before retiring for the night," they again spoke "of the strange behavior of the archbishop toward us." At once Don Bosco became calm, and like one who moves fearlessly forward because he knows what is ahead, he exclaimed, "This too will pass! This conflict first gave me pain because I did not know the reason for such behavior. Now that the Pope has taught me how to act, no matter what the archbishop does, I will hold my peace. He keeps posted on all we do and uses this information against us. Don Bosco riles his nerves. He is doing his utmost to block our path, but we shall keep our calm and never

[6]At that time and for many years thereafter, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was a daily practice of piety at the Oratory and in the other houses. [Editor]

[7]Countess Lorenzina Mazè de la Roche was the niece of Archbishop Gastaldi. [Editor]

strike out against him. Should he get to the point of entering our church to order us about, we shall say, 'You are welcome to preach or offer Mass, but as for anything else, go about your business.' "

As usual, the Lord strengthened him and showed him how this conflict would end. We clearly repeat again that in treating Don Bosco as he did, Archbishop Gastaldi neither intended wronging him nor believed that he was; he thought that he was dutifully acting in defense of his own episcopal rights and authority. This was his utmost concern. Many times Don Bosco saw him under this aspect in the following dream:

It seemed Don Bosco was hurrying to town on some urgent business, although it was raining heavily. As he passed the episcopal residence, he met Archbishop Gastaldi who appeared in his finest pontifical robes, miter and all, and he too was going into the muddy streets under a pouring rain.

Don Bosco approached him and urged him to go into the house before his garments got soaked, but the archbishop gave him an indignant stare and without a word went on his way. Don Bosco followed, reiterating his plea that he listen. "Mind your own business!" the archbishop replied, but no sooner had he said this than he slipped, fell to the ground, and was covered with mud.

Don Bosco helped him to his feet, insisting that he return home, but the archbishop replied: "Go your own way, I shall go mine," and paid him no heed. Tearfully, Don Bosco kept following him at a distance, repeatedly begging him not to proceed further along that path. The archbishop fell a second and a third time, becoming more and more soiled. He rose to his feet but only with difficulty. He fell a fourth time, but could not rise. His precious vestments were so bemired that his entire body was coated with mud. He struggled uselessly to get to his feet, but finally succumbed.

Don Bosco had this dream "as soon as he experienced differences with his archbishop," and spoke of it to only a few confreres, among whom was Father Bonora. This was only in 1884, a year after the archbishop's death.

In the galley proofs of Father Lemoyne's volumes, we find two versions of this dream. The first is that which we have reported; the second seems to be Father Bonora's account, as follows:

It was raining heavily, and I had to go into town on urgent business. As I got near the archbishop's residence I saw a strange sight: the archbishop was coming out pompously dressed in his episcopal robes. I ran to his side and said, "Your Excellency, you are not going out in this terrible weather, are you? The streets are deserted. Listen to me and go back."

"It is not your business to advise me," he replied brusquely and brushed me aside. "I'll mind my business and you mind yours."

After only a few steps he slipped and fell in the mud, thoroughly soiling his robes. Five times I begged him to think of his dignity and go back home, but in vain. Neither prayers nor pleas availed. He obstinately kept walking and fell a second, a third, a fourth and a fifth time. When he got to his feet the last time he was unrecognizable; his whole person was one body of mud. Then he fell again and rose no more.[8]

7. Final Observations

May 13, 1873 was Pius IX's eighty-first birthday. Don Bosco sent the revered Pontiff an album signed by all his Salesians and pupils. With it he included a modest offering of a hundred lire and a letter assuring the Pope of their devoted prayers and loyalty, most respectfully imploring that he definitively approve the constitutions and grant all the spiritual favors he should deem advisable.[1]

The Holy Father was impressed by this twofold homage of devotion and filial affection; undoubtedly, he did bring pressure to bear on the matter of the constitutions so as to please his most affectionate son.

Unfortunately, however, news came that the consultor (Father Bianchi, O.P.) had given a rather unfavorable report on the constitutions recently submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Don Bosco came to know this through Archbishop Salvator Vitelleschi who, in a letter of May 19, 1873, helpfully promised to send a summary of Father Bianchi's thirty-eight observations for his study and opinion. In fact, on July 26 he sent it to Don Bosco, reduced to twenty-eight observations

[8]We have reported this dream so that the reader may understand better that the endless aggravations Archbishop Gastaldi caused Don Bosco stemmed from his habitual authoritarian ways. [Author]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

which dealt mainly with policies set up for new religious congregations, suggesting that they be willingly accepted. That very day Archbishop Gastaldi again wrote to the cardinal prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to ascertain whether our Society enjoyed the privileges of regulars and was therefore exempt from episcopal jurisdiction.[2]

On August 18, Cardinal Bizzarri had the following rescript sent to him:

[Rome] August 8, 1873

After examining Your Excellency's doubts regarding the Congregation of Father John Bosco, namely "whether the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, founded and directed by Father John Bosco, is directly subject to the Holy See and exempt from episcopal jurisdiction," this Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, after due consideration, informs you that the aforesaid Congregation of St. Francis de Sales is only an institute with simple vows and that such institutes are not exempt from episcopal jurisdiction, except as regards their constitutions when these have been approved by the Holy See and as regards special privileges obtained from the same.

Although the constitutions of the aforesaid Congregation are now under examination, prior to being submitted to the Holy See's approval, we nevertheless must inform you that Father John Bosco has obtained several special privileges from His Holiness regarding dimissorial letters for a certain group of his pupils, and that recently, in an audience on August 8, he obtained a similar privilege for six additional pupils.

A. Trombello, *Under-Secretary*

Archbishop Gastaldi's opposition, perhaps shared by other bishops, certainly made it very difficult for Don Bosco to be at ease, as Cardinal Berardi observed in a letter to him:

Rome, August 12, 1873

Dear Father John:

As I mentioned in my last letter to you, I am enclosing the rescript which grants you the privilege you requested for six other pupils. I cannot keep it secret that the opposition of several ordinaries has made it quite difficult to obtain this favor. Fortunately we succeeded, thank

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

God. When you come, we can better discuss things in person.

Hoping to see you within a few days, I again beg a remembrance in your prayers.

Yours devotedly,
G. Card. Berardi

Archbishop Gastaldi's determined opposition to the approval of our constitutions was known to Bishop De Gaudenzi of Vigevano, a close friend of Don Bosco. Thanking him for a letter of encouragement and an offering, Don Bosco told him that he was trying to find a way of overcoming the obstacles facing bishops who had to provide teachers for their junior seminaries, and he added that he would enjoy having a talk with him.[3] We do not know whether this conversation ever took place, but the good bishop felt that he had to take up Don Bosco's cause. In an effort to enlist influential people, he even wrote directly to Archbishop Gastaldi and quite frankly stated complaints he had heard in regard to his manner of acting, humbly pleading that he change his ways.

The archbishop was infuriated and from Genoa wrote an indignant reply. Bishop De Gaudenzi hastened to pass it on to Don Bosco for his information.[4] Archbishop Gastaldi's letter reads:

Genoa, August 3, 1873

Your Excellency:

Your last letter is but another thorn, nothing less than another thorn added to the many that already pierce me. All the harder, sharper and more painful is it because it purports to come from one who says he loves and respects me.

Your letter was prompted by utterly false reports. Regretfully I wonder how the bishop of Vigevano could take them as true and voice them in a letter to the ecclesiastical superior of those individuals who gave him such worthless, distorted information.

Has the archbishop of Vigevano forgotten hierarchical protocol which requires that priests speaking ill of their bishop are to be presumed in the wrong, and that, even were their complaints basically sound, their action should be taken to denote a sad lack of virtue? Saints never spoke

[3] We are omitting Don Bosco's letter. [Editor]
[4] We are omitting the bishop's short note covering this letter. [Editor]

ill of their superiors, never stirred scandals concerning them.

I cannot guess the purpose of your letter, but if it meant to help, you should have foreseen that it would more aptly achieve the opposite effect. To clarify the matter you allude to, and to remedy it—if this is at all possible when dealing with people who refuse to rid themselves of fixations even when asked to do so by their archbishop through a metropolitan canon—then what is needed is not letters, but long, friendly conferences.

I wish such a conference with Your Excellency, trusting that you will see my reasons and manage to make them understood by the one person who more than ever needs such an understanding.

Meanwhile, though it grievously pains me, I feel bound in strict duty to continue acting as I have so far done to maintain church discipline. I patiently await the day when God in His wisdom and justice will clearly reveal all the rights and wrongs: *et tunc laus erit unicuique a Deo* [and then everyone will have his praise from God].

Yours devotedly,
✠ Lawrence, *Archbishop*

The canon mentioned in the letter was Canon Francis Marengo. It was his task to recommend that Don Bosco declare he would no longer accept former diocesan seminarians without the chancery's consent.

The bishop of Vigevano, in return, sent a soothing letter to Archbishop Gastaldi, expressing his willingness to confer with him at any time but still defending Don Bosco's respectful conduct toward his ordinary.

Don Bosco was saddened by his archbishop's letter, which reached him at St. Ignatius' Shrine where he was hearing confessions of a special group of retreatants. From there he sent the following reply:

St. Ignatius' [Shrine], August 12, 1873

Your Excellency:

The bishop of Vigevano has informed me of a letter he wrote concerning me and of your reply to him. If it had not been directed to a bishop, I would have said that it had been written in jest. On the contrary, it was deadly serious.

I deeply regret that you have thorns, but I cannot accept the inference that they were inflicted by Don Bosco. I have always tried to lessen your

pains, and I know the sacrifices this cost me. My intentions have always been good. I have never asked for more than that you tell me what it is about me that displeases you. I have never succeeded in finding anything specific. You refer to the mediation of a cathedral canon. I think I agreed to do what was asked of me. You wanted me to declare that I would not accept your seminarians without permission. This I did. You mentioned Borelli, who was in our houses only long enough to make a spiritual retreat, after which he left without his clerical habit. There was talk of Rocca, and we agreed that to dismiss him abruptly would only feed gossip to maligners, and so we are waiting till the end of the school year. Father Marengo agreed to this decision. The school year ends on September 4, after which that cleric will return home. In your place I would have permitted him to stay where he is now, not only to give Don Bosco one cleric in return for the several he sends to the diocesan seminary every year, but also to make it generally known that, when a cleric puts aside his vocation, he is not abandoned by his superior but is assisted by him in all possible ways. Anyway, he will go home at the end of the school year, unless he obtains the permission for which, he tells me, he has made several applications.

As for the other things you say in your letter, I can state that though I may have done things in my life for which I shall have to render an account to God, I am not aware that I ever did anything against Your Excellency. I believe that what I have said and done both publicly and privately is proof enough of what I say. For the past sixteen months I have pleaded with you to tell me what you hold against poor Don Bosco, and so far I have heard nothing more than a few vague inferences. If there is anything I do not know, please tell me, and even now I will humbly beg your pardon. But let us not cast thorns upon thorns against each other. I know that you have at heart the greater glory of God, and so do I. So why can we not live in harmony? Please tell me what you want from me.

I constantly pray and ask others to pray for the preservation of your health.

Your humble servant,
Fr. John Bosco

During his free time at St. Ignatius' Shrine, Don Bosco also wrote a *Brief History of the Congregation* which he planned to publish and distribute in Rome to all those who might be able to help him achieve his purpose more easily. He also made appropriate comments on the latest *Observations* from Rome, assigning

Father Berto to rewrite the whole thing in his neat hand.[5]

While Don Bosco concentrated on preparing whatever he would need in Rome to hasten the constitutions' approval, Archbishop Gastaldi kept raising difficulties.

On August 22, [1873] Father Cagliero presented Subdeacon Dominic Milanesio of Settimo Torinese for ordination scheduled for September. All the requisite papers had already been submitted with letters dated October 24, 1872 when he had been ordained a subdeacon in the spring. To his surprise, Father Cagliero received a declaration from the archbishop:

> In his Bull of 1568, Pope Pius V forbade ordinations *titulo paupertatis* or *mensae communis* [under the title of poverty or of common board] to candidates not perpetually professed in a religious order.
>
> In view of this, the archbishop of Turin feels he may not ordain candidates lacking personal or ecclesiastical patrimony, unless it can be certified that they have taken perpetual vows as religious before a priest who has and can show a papal rescript authorizing him to accept such vows.

This meant a total ignoring of the decrees of the Holy See, dated July 23, 1864 and March 1, 1869, which approved the Salesian Congregation and appointed Don Bosco as its Superior General for his lifetime with the faculty of issuing dimissorial letters for minor and major orders to Salesian clerics who had entered any of his houses prior to their fourteenth year. It also disregarded special indults that Don Bosco had obtained in advance which authorized him to issue dimissorial letters to others who had entered Salesian houses after their fourteenth year.

In September a seminarian from St. Julia's parish sought admission into the Salesian Congregation, but he was unable to get either the consent or the prohibition of the archbishop, as his pastor declared in a letter[6] to Don Bosco. However, the cleric Angelo Rocca did finally join the Salesian Society. After perpetual vows, he was ordained a priest in 1876, and the following year he was sent to direct the new house at La Spezia.

A safe voyage in such stormy seas could be plotted only by ob-

[5]We are omitting his short letter to Father Berto on this score. [Editor]
[6]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

taining the definitive approval of the constitutions. Don Bosco decided to go to Rome before the end of the year, and in the meantime he worked on a revision of the constitutions for submission to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Moreover, seeking ever more abundant heavenly blessings for the Salesian Society, on November 15, 1873, at the start of the new school year, he sent a circular "On Discipline" to all the houses. After stressing the importance of observing the overall rules of the Congregation and those pertaining to each individual office, he drew up a program for directors, prefects, catechists, teachers and assistants, warmly urging all members "to keep the director informed of whatever may contribute to good and prevent offense to God."[7]

8. Resumption of Negotiations

Don Bosco arrived in Rome on the evening of December 30, 1873, accompanied by Father Berto. The latter, noticing particular needs here and there during these journeys, would urge him to provide for them, but he would reply, "In the few years of life that still remain for me I have no other interest than to settle once and for all the affairs of our Congregation. Nothing else interests me any longer." This goal became his dominant preoccupation.

On arriving in Rome, he sought an audience with Archbishop Vitelleschi, and the next day he wrote him a letter and called on both Cardinal Antonelli and Cardinal Berardi. In the following days, although deeply involved in negotiations concerning the bishops' temporalities, he did not neglect the approval of the constitutions. He met with the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and had an audience with the Holy Father on the vigil of the Epiphany. The audience forced him to cancel a visit with Monsignor Dell'Aquila.[1]

During his papal audience, after describing the current status of the Salesian Society and his desire to see it regularly established, he presented Pius IX with several modest offerings from devout

[7] *See* Chapter 8, No. 13-3. [Author]
[1] This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

persons and with some new publications, particularly Father Celestine Durando's new Latin dictionary which had been printed at the Oratory. Finally, he implored special favors for several benefactors and a plenary indulgence for all his pupils and the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians.

His joy throughout his long talk with the Holy Father was equaled by his yearning to see the Salesian Congregation definitively established through the approval of its constitutions. This is apparent in his letters, whether handwritten or dictated—all signed by him—which he sent to the directors. These letters reflect his fervent desire to see his sons advance in virtue and the trust he placed in their prayers; his fatherly concern shines through them to a moving degree.

That evening he wrote letters to the Salesians and boys at Lanzo and at the Oratory:

Rome, January 5, 1874

Dearest Father Lemoyne and you beloved sons at Lanzo:

My first words from Rome to our houses are addressed to you, my dearly beloved sons at Lanzo. I choose you because I know your affection for me is great, as you have always shown me every time I came to see you. When I can speak to you personally, I will tell you many more things, but now I will begin with something directly concerning your own good. At eleven this morning I had an audience with the Holy Father. I found him amiable, generous and gracious in his concern for our needs. He talked at length about our Congregation, our priests, clerics and boys, and particularly about Lanzo, which I had mentioned to him on a previous occasion. Then, wishing to give you a token of his particular regard, he asked me to tell you that he was sending you his holy apostolic blessing with a plenary indulgence on the day when you go to confession and Communion.

I thanked him for you and assured him that, besides receiving Communion to gain this plenary indulgence, you would each receive a second time for his intentions.

"Then I grant a plenary indulgence also for that Communion!" he quickly replied.

Now, my dear children, admire the kindness of Christ's Vicar, as well as the goodness of Our Lord who gives us so many effective ways to assure our eternal salvation.

Meanwhile, my friends, did you begin the new school year well? Are

you all in good health? Are you all determined to better yourselves, to become holy, to be always my consolation? I can hear your "Yes, yes" coming straight from your hearts.

Your sincere promise now prompts a word of advice that will prove very beneficial to you. It is the same as that already given to you by your director: "If you want to be happy in this world and forever in a blessed eternity, strive to avoid scandal and go often to Holy Communion."

And you, dear Father Lemoyne who so love your pupils, as I well know, make sure that you explain this counsel in a clear and matter-of-fact way. You will thus be doing them a great favor and will deeply comfort me.

Just now I badly need your prayers. While assuring you of my own special remembrance during Holy Mass, I ask you to receive Holy Communion for my intention when you can.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us. Special regards to Father Lemoyne. Please exhort all, especially the priests, to pray earnestly for the success of the many serious matters which I have at hand. Give the enclosed letter to Father Costamagna and keep its contents just between the two of you for the moment.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Rome, January 5, 1874, 11 P.M.

Dearest Father Rua and all dearly beloved sons at the Oratory,

It is but a short while since I left you, my beloved sons, but I have many things to say and write. I shall talk to you about them at length when I am back in Turin, but let me say a thing or two in this letter.

First, I want to say that you are very dear to me and that wherever I am I never cease praying for your spiritual and temporal welfare.

My trip was excellent, and I am staying in a home where I could not possibly find more affection, even if I were with my own parents.

At 11 o'clock this morning Father Berto and I had an audience with the Holy Father, who most willingly took time to discuss our Congregation—its priests, clerics, students, and artisans. He also spoke to us about Hong Kong and many other matters.

I then showed him the dedication in Father Durando's dictionary, and he was delighted. I explained the purpose of this dictionary and brought to his attention that its author was a member of the Oratory and that it had been typeset, printed and bound there. He listened to all this very amiably.

He then read Father Durando's dedication word by word, remarking, "This is a task worthy of a priest. I am quite pleased. May God bless him, as I do." So saying, he took his pen and wrote the words which can be seen at the bottom of the dedication, and then signed his name.

He was also glad to give us other favors, among them his papal blessing with a plenary indulgence on the day when you will go to confession and Holy Communion.

I need your help very badly; I need your prayers for the successful outcome of many serious matters which I now have in hand. Offer up a Holy Communion for me, and I shall pray for you too. Soon I shall write to you again. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us, deliver us from sin and help us to persevere in virtue.

Dear Father Rua, so far I have received no news or letters from Turin. Is it cold there? Have you had snow? Is anyone sick? What about the matters of St. Blaise and of Vicino?

Dear Father Provera, I have asked the Holy Father for a special blessing for you. Have faith, and let us hope in the goodness of God. Love me in Jesus and Mary.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

The following day he wrote to the Salesians at Borgo San Martino and Turin-Valsalice giving them substantially the same news and asking for their prayers. Doubtless he wrote also to the Salesians and boys at Alassio, Varazze and Sampierdarena, but we have no trace of those letters.[2]

That day he also wrote to the bishop of Vigevano concerning a certain delicate matter:

Rome, January 6, 1874

Your Excellency,

It was a very good idea to write to me about the disagreeable Zinasco affair. The minister listened to it all and then made a copy of your letter. Since it contained nothing compromising, I let him do it, only pointing out its confidentiality.

If the devil does not interfere, I'll write to you again within the next few days about something very important. Pray and have other good souls pray for the successful outcome of this business.

Yesterday I talked at great length with the Holy Father, who is in ex-

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

cellent health. He sends you his apostolic blessing and asked me to so inform you. Both he and Cardinal Antonelli are acquainted with the Zinasco affair. I ask your blessing.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

As we have already said,[3] it was amazing how much Don Bosco got done during this stay in Rome for the Italian bishops' temporalities, but even more intense was the task facing him for the definitive establishment of the Salesian Society.

To form some idea of it, it would be sufficient to list all the visits to cardinals and prelates that he considered necessary or proper.

On January 3 he spoke with Archbishop Vitelleschi and again had a long interview with him on the evening of the Epiphany; the day before, he had had a long meeting with Cardinal Berardi. He declared that he was happy to have been able to reach a perfect understanding with the Holy Father, with the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and with his dear friend Cardinal Berardi. Indeed, after the Holy Father, it was Cardinal Berardi and Archbishop Vitelleschi who constantly helped him reach his goal.

On January 8 he called on Constantine Cardinal Patrizi, after he learned from the Pope that the cardinal vicar would probably be a member of the special committee that was to meet for the approval of the constitutions. The Pope personally informed him that the archbishop of Turin was against their approval. The cardinal warmly welcomed Don Bosco and told him frankly and plainly that he too could not get along with Archbishop Gastaldi.

On January 9 he went to the Holy Office to ask the commissioner, Monsignor Sallua, O.P., to put in a good word with his fellow Dominican, Father Bianchi, the consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars who had made thirty-eight "observations" [about the constitutions]. The monsignor, a Piedmontese from the diocese of Mondovì who knew Don Bosco's work, received him and treated him most cordially.

Meanwhile, Archbishop Vitelleschi gave him the welcome news

[3]*See* Chapter 5. [Editor]

that the Holy Father had already decided to appoint to the special committee the Cardinal Vicar, Cardinal Berardi, and one of the twelve cardinals created at the consistory of December 22, 1873—possibly Cardinal Tarquini, S.J., or Cardinal Oreglia di Santo Stefano.

Don Bosco also hastened to call on Stephen Cardinal Oreglia, the brother of Chevalier Frederick Oreglia, who for some years had been a member of our Society,[4] and two days later he went to the Altemps Palace in Piazza Navona for a talk with Cardinal Monaco La Valletta. The latter—grave, dignified and yet humble and warm-hearted—gave him a friendly welcome and amiably conversed with him for an hour and a half. Besides other favors, he granted him two rescripts at no cost for a private chapel on behalf of two ladies, Mrs. Vicino and Mrs. Ghiglini. Don Bosco was so thrilled when he returned home that, unable to hide his joy, he told Father Berto, "Home visits are really so necessary. At times a greeting or a sign of respect is enough to win over a person! This was true of Cardinal Monaco La Valletta, who was never very enthusiastic about us!"

On January 14 Stephen Colonna, an official in the Vatican shipping department, invited Don Bosco to dine with several other prelates, among whom was the newly created Alexander Cardinal Franchi. Don Bosco spoke very little during the meal, but toward the end, when asked to say something about the Oratory and the difficulties he had had to overcome, he narrated how he had suffered through twelve house searches. He did it with such engaging charm and ease that he won everybody's heart. When dinner was over, Cardinal Franchi drew him aside and talked confidentially with him for an hour and a half, until the arrival of Cardinal Martinelli who, before leaving, saluted him most cordially.

On January 16 he summoned up his courage and called on Cardinal Bizzarri, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The prelate, although severe and almost scrupulous, received him graciously and counseled him on so many points that Don Bosco felt he had won his support.

On January 23 he paid his respects to Camillus Cardinal Tar-

[4] *See* Vol. IX, pp. 335f. [Editor]

quini, S.J., for whom he had a message from Father Secundus Franco, S.J. He too was completely favorable to him. Unfortunately, this new cardinal who was rumored to be a member of the special committee fell ill a few days later and died on the morning of February 15. Meanwhile Don Bosco entrusted the printing of his revised constitutions to the press of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith. In his revision—as he later declared—he had incorporated "most of the twenty-eight 'Observations' " that had been communicated to him, had toned down a few, and had left untouched some articles "solely to rescue his Congregation from the shipwreck threatened by the severity of the civil laws." This he had done in conformity with the advice and suggestions he had recently received.[5]

9. The Consultation

On February 3 Archbishop Vitelleschi informed Don Bosco that the special committee had been appointed and consisted of: Constantine Cardinal Patrizi, who was Pius IX's vicar general, prefect of the Congregation of Rites and dean of the college of cardinals; Antonine Cardinal De Luca, prefect of the Congregation of the Index; Joseph Cardinal Bizzarri, prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars; and Thomas Cardinal Martinelli, newly created cardinal, who was later appointed pro-prefect of the Congregation of Studies, then prefect of the Congregation of Rites, and finally prefect of the Congregation of the Index—four princes of the Church, highly eminent in every regard.

In view of this and believing that the committee would meet very soon, Don Bosco on February 5, "after praying during Holy Mass for enlightenment from the Holy Spirit, and after asking a special blessing from the Supreme Pontiff," sent a circular to his "dear Salesian sons on a most critical matter: *How To Keep and Promote Morality among the Boys Entrusted to Us by Divine Providence.*"

Every religious congregation has its own traits, and Don Bosco

[5]We are omitting details about each of the "Observations." [Editor]

was in the habit of saying that our Society must be seen by all as outstanding in the splendor of the angelic virtue.

"We are now facing the most important moment of our Congregation," he wrote. "Therefore, help me by praying, and by faithfully observing our rules. . . . May our efforts be crowned by success for God's greater glory and the welfare of our own souls and those of our pupils, who will ever be the glory of the Salesian Society."

It was now imperative to prepare the *Positio* or *Consultatio*, that is, all the documentation to be presented to the committee of cardinals. This task was entrusted to Attorney Charles Menghini, a summist of the Sacred Congregation, who soon realized the advisability and necessity of meeting with our founder. On February 17, Archbishop Vitelleschi gave Don Bosco a letter of introduction to the lawyer who immediately treated him with outstanding cordiality and confidence. In fact, on February 21 he showed him several letters written by the archbishop of Turin to Cardinal Bizzarri. Among these were the letters of July 26, 1873—in which he had asked whether the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales was directly subject to the Holy See and immune from episcopal jurisdiction—and of January 9, 1874. The latter, even graver in tone, had been written while Don Bosco was already in Rome. In this letter, while avowing that he admired "the extraordinary qualities and virtues" of Don Bosco and rejoiced that he should succeed "in giving stable existence to a body of ecclesiastics primarily dedicated to so important a mission as the education of youth," Archbishop Gastaldi again insisted on the necessity of imposing a regular novitiate "of two years' duration" on the new Congregation, because while Don Bosco "has a special gift for training young boys . . . he does not seem to possess this talent in training young clerics, or at least is not sufficiently assisted in this by the members to whom he has entrusted their supervision."

Here is the letter:

Turin, January 9, 1874

Your Eminence:

A few months ago Your Eminence informed me that the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars was examining the rules of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, founded in Turin by Father John

Bosco. From your letter I gathered that this Congregation's approval by the Holy See was quite imminent.

I admire Don Bosco's extraordinary qualities and virtues; I rejoice over the good he has done and keeps doing on behalf of youth; I am glad that he is succeeding in giving stable form to a body of ecclesiastics primarily dedicated to so important a mission as the education of youth; but I deem it my solemn duty to acquaint the aforesaid Sacred Congregation, over which Your Eminence worthily presides, with the need that a novitiate of two years' duration be made mandatory in the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, so that the young clerics may be trained not to *command*—as occurs now all too frequently through their being appointed teachers in the schools of the Congregation—but to *obey*, as in the traditional novitiates of other religious congregations, especially of the Society of Jesus. Don Bosco has a special gift for training young boys, but he does not seem to possess this talent in training young clerics, or at least he is not sufficiently assisted in this by the members to whom he has entrusted their supervision. Several most deplorable incidents bear witness to this.

As of now, seven clerics trained in Don Bosco's school were appointed teachers or monitors in this city's home for deaf-mutes, and the administration, headed by a layman known for piety, deep attachment to the Church and reverence for the clergy, was not satisfied with any of them because they lacked humility and docility.

The same complaint is heard in other institutions and seminaries of clerics who did their liturgical, philosophical or theological studies in the aforesaid Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. When I was bishop of Saluzzo, I allowed one of my clerics to pursue all his studies in this Congregation, and I relied on Don Bosco's testimony of moral conduct and vocation. A month after ordination he was found to be an alcoholic, and unhappily he is so today, so much so that he cannot be given work because, besides being intemperate, he is also ignorant and rude.

Another priest just now also is a source of great embarrassment to me. He received his clerical training in the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales from 1862 until 1867. In 1868 the Turin chancery, relying on testimonials of moral conduct supplied by the Congregation's superiors, admitted him to the priesthood. Two years later he was assigned as an assistant to a parish of this diocese, where he conducted himself so immorally that thirty-nine accusations have been alleged against him. Fearing legal proceedings, he left the country. Since his crimes were such as to call for extradition, the civil authorities may still track him down and return him to Turin. In that case I shall have a scandal on my hands whose enormous repercussions to the detriment of the clergy and

of religion I cannot gauge.

Father [Frederick] Oreglia, S.J., who for years belonged to this Congregation, and who last year was stationed at the Roman College, can explain in detail the kind of novitiate which exists in this Congregation.

I therefore implore Your Eminence, and through you the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, to impose the aforesaid novitiate upon the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. I would think that, considering the extremely difficult and delicate position in which we of the archdiocese of Turin and the other sub-Alpine dioceses find ourselves, the Holy See should allow the archbishop of Turin and the bishops in whose dioceses there are ordinands of this Congregation to voice their opinion as regards their promotion to Holy Orders so that none of its members may be admitted without the positive and explicit consent of the diocesan bishop. At present, ways are found to have them ordained elsewhere without my knowledge. Nor would I deem it inappropriate if the archbishop and other bishops were granted the faculty of examining the members of this Congregation before admitting them to perpetual vows.

I have now done my duty in conscience, and I declare myself prepared to respect any decision reached by the Sacred Congregation.

Your most obedient and humble servant,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop of Turin*

Don Bosco was upset on reading the first letter, and even more so after reading the second. He had Father Berto copy them, and he discussed them with Cardinal Berardi who, we believe, advised him to refute the [second] letter directly. How? He decided to act through a former pupil of his, and it was from him indeed that he got a decisive refutation for the cardinals' committee. The refutation [in the form of a letter to Don Bosco] was anonymous, but it had probably been copied by Father John Baptist Anfossi,[1] one of the accused in that letter. We say "copied"[2] by Father Anfossi because we have the original by Don Bosco himself in our archives.

[1]John Baptist Anfossi, an orphan, entered the Oratory at the age of thirteen in December 1853. (*See* Vol. IV, pp. 467f) He became a Salesian in 1862 and was ordained a priest in 1864. Later on he joined the diocesan clergy but remained always devoted to Don Bosco. [Editor]

[2]We can hold it as certain that it was copied by Father John Anfossi. In 1877, seeing that troubles were being heaped on Don Bosco's Congregation through the archbishop's meticulous directives, he drew up an extended memorandum refuting in greater detail the archbishop's letter of January 9, 1874. [Author]

Turin, February 15, 1874

Very Reverend Don Bosco:

While you are anxiously striving in Rome to obtain [from the government] our archbishop's revenues, he reciprocates in quite another fashion. As I already told you last year, he used the pretext of learning from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars whether the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales was exempt from the ordinary's jurisdiction, in order to ask for the reasons why you had applied for such a privilege. The [alleged] scandals and rebellion of Oratory members, added to his fear that they might have even incurred ecclesiastical censures, prompted him to fulfill this duty of conscience (truly very delicate!) and write that letter. This openly contradicts what he has said to me a thousand times, namely that the Oratory priests and clerics should be proposed as a model to all who love virtue.

Now, knowing that your Congregation's definitive approval is being debated in Rome, he is endeavoring *motu proprio*, at no one's request, to smear it in the blackest infamy. I do not know the exact date of this specific document, but it was sent to Rome just after your departure for that capital, that is, in early January of this year.

Looking upon the members of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars as mere children ignorant of the rudiments of Latin, he even proposes the conditions which they should impose, and in trying to justify what he says, he blasts the course of studies followed in your houses (the only man in this world who has dared as much) and complains that your sons lack humility and morals. Trying to corroborate his statement, he declares that seven of your clerics were in a deaf-mute home where everyone complained of their pride and insubordination. He also cites the case of Father Chiapale of Saluzzo, saying that he learned only drinking, ignorance and arrogance at the Oratory. He also mentions another pupil of yours who became an assistant pastor after leaving the Oratory and is now on trial for immoral conduct. Hence, he says, woe to the diocese of Turin and the other sub-Alpine dioceses if your Congregation is approved or at least does not have certain conditions slapped upon it.

I know you, the Oratory and the facts to which he refers. Having lived in your house for six years, I am very indignant because it all amounts to nothing but malicious spite. The people he refers to were either clerics or priests of the diocesan seminary, so the responsibility is his and no one else's. Chiapale did study at the Oratory and was known for his excellent conduct and alert intelligence. He is a musician, plays both piano and organ, and is a very fine preacher. I came to know him quite well

because he was a classmate of mine. But it was not possible to know whether any of us were given to drinking because pupils were not served wine, and the priests received a limited quantity. Even so, if you will forgive my saying so, that wine could sooner be called water tinged with wine than wine tinged with water. I also know that Chiapale was never a member of your Congregation because he told me so himself several times.

I say these things so that you may avail yourself of this knowledge to your own advantage, but I must confess that I do not understand the reason for such conduct [on the part of the archbishop]. I have asked several people what possible reason he could have to alternately praise and condemn the Oratory. Some feel that perhaps, since it was Don Bosco who raised him from the dust, gave him work and made a name for him by publishing his books and doing everything he could to procure for him the position he now holds, he cannot help praising him. Others say—and the archbishop himself told me—that he fears that Don Bosco's priests may outdo his own, all the more so since his own seminarians want to leave and go with Don Bosco where they are better treated. In short, he is afraid of having a diocese within a diocese to his own detriment. But if he continues to create new obstacles every day, I do not know how it will all end. Believe me always to be,

Your most affectionate son,
N. N.

While Attorney Menghini was completing the set of documents to be included in the *Positio*, Don Bosco submitted the galley proofs of his *Brief History of the Congregation.* The lawyer found it quite interesting, but too long to be inserted in the *Positio*, and therefore he advised him to abridge it and to include more specific details. With ease Don Bosco set about this chore, and with the lawyer's help he drafted a concise, thorough synthesis of the state of the Salesian Society, its relations with the Holy See and bishops, its constitutions, its standing in civil society, and its level of development. This task, added to his other concerns, took up so much of his time that on the morning of February 26, having to deliver those pages to the printers, he was unable to celebrate Mass.[3]

In the synthesis [of the *Brief History of the Congregation*]

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

which was incorporated in the *Positio*, we read the following solemn declaration in capital letters: "The fundamental purpose of the Salesian Congregation . . . from its very beginnings has constantly been: TO UPHOLD AND DEFEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE SUPREME HEAD OF THE CHURCH BEFORE THE LESS AFFLUENT CLASS OF SOCIETY, PARTICULARLY BEFORE ENDANGERED YOUTH." (*See* Rules, Chapters I and VI.)

On February 27, having a copy of Archbishop Gastaldi's letter of January 9, 1874 and its refutation, he called on Cardinal Berardi, who assured him that he would pass it on to the committee members and see to it that it finally reached Archbishop Vitelleschi. From him too Don Bosco received the best possible support. Accustomed in his frequent meetings with the archbishop—Father Berto took notes during twenty such meetings—to ask if there was anything which might still block approval, he was repeatedly told, "Do not worry! Wouldn't I tell you if there were? Don't worry! Everything passes through my hands." And he also heard him protest, "Archbishop Gastaldi's letters and the conditions he would like to impose mean nothing at all."

On March 4 the new edition of the constitutions came off the press and Father Berto brought copies to Archbishop Vitelleschi and Attorney Menghini. On March 7 the constitutions and the *Positio* were submitted to the cardinals' committee.[4] Don Bosco himself personally presented or mailed his *Brief History of the Congregation* to each member of the committee. Finally, on March 11 he was informed that the committee of cardinals would meet on the 24th, the day of each month which we dedicate to Mary, Help of Christians.

On March 16, elated with joy and emotion, he sent another circular to all his houses to give the precious news to the Salesians and pupils alike and invite them to "be one heart and soul in imploring the Holy Spirit to enlighten the cardinals" who were to give their opinion on a matter "which is of the greatest importance to our present and future welfare."

In sending a copy of the circular to Father Rua, he added a covering letter in which he expressed his hopes of attaining his

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

goal on March 24 and of returning to the Oratory toward the end of the month. He also gave him several tasks, including the sending of a telegram of good wishes to Cardinal Berardi on the occasion of his name day. He also sent similar notes to Father Bonetti at Borgo San Martino and to Father Lemoyne at Lanzo, alerting them that he might want them to meet him at Alessandria and go on with him to Turin.[5]

10. An Interval

As we can see from letters in our archives, throughout his stay in Rome Don Bosco did not forget his Salesians and pupils and his new Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, nor other people worthy of remembrance. Who knows how many letters he wrote and sent to many places? The few we have will suffice to make us realize how dearly he kept everybody in his mind and heart.

Many of these letters were addressed to Father Rua, to other Salesians and to benefactors to inform them of special spiritual favors obtained for them from the Holy Father.[1]

The progress of his pupils was particularly dear to his heart. Here is a precious document which reveals him as educator, father, and saint:

Rome, January 20, 1874

Dear Father Lazzero and my dear artisans,

Although I have already written to all my beloved sons at the Oratory, I still feel I should make you happy and gratify my own wishes by writing a special note to you artisans because you are the apple of my eye and because I have asked a special blessing for you from the Holy Father.

I don't have to tell you how dear you are to me, for I've proved that already. Nor do I have to be told that you feel the same way about me because you have always shown it. On what is our mutual affection based? Money? Not mine, because I spend it all for you. Certainly not yours, because—with no offense—you have none.

So, then, my affection is based on my desire to save your souls that

[5]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

have all been redeemed by the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ. You love me because I try to guide you on the path to eternal salvation. The welfare of our souls therefore forms the basis of our affection.

But, my dear sons, do we really behave so as to save our souls, or are we more likely to lose them? If Our Divine Savior were to summon us at this moment, would we all be prepared? Good resolutions made but never carried out, scandal given and not remedied, conversations leading others to sin—all these are things for which we fear being punished. But while Jesus Christ could justly reproach us for this, I am sure that many of you would appear before Him with a clear conscience, and this greatly consoles me.

At any rate, my good friends, take heart, for I shall never stop praying for you, working for you, and thinking of you. All I ask is your good will. Act out the words of St. Paul which I now adapt for you: "Exhort the boys to be frugal; let them never forget that all must die, and that, after death, all must appear before the judgment seat of Jesus. One who does not suffer here on earth with Jesus Christ shall not be crowned in glory with Him in heaven. Avoid sin as your worst enemy. Flee from the source of sin—foul conversations which are your moral ruin. Give one another good example in word and deed. Father Lazzero will tell you the rest.

Meanwhile, dear sons, I ask for the charity of your prayers. Let the most fervent members of St. Joseph's Sodality offer up a Holy Communion for my intention.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us to help us persevere in virtue until death. Amen.

Your affectionate friend,
Fr. John Bosco[2]

During February two things happened at the Oratory which better revealed heaven's special protection. Late one night at the beginning of the month, in preparation for the feast of St. Joseph,[3] hearing a strange rumble near the vegetable garden, Father Rua and Buzzetti hurried to see what had happened. A portion of the top of the cesspool had fallen in. Noting a black patch on the ground, Buzzetti held Father Rua back, and none too soon, because the rest of the top on which they had been standing only an instant before sank into the nearly ten-foot hole which was full to

[2]We are omitting several other business letters to Father Rua. [Editor]
[3]The month started on February 18 and ended with the feast day on March 19. [Editor]

the brim. Everyone attributed the escape of Father Rua and Buzzetti from a potentially fatal fall to a special grace from St. Joseph.

Another even more singular thing happened on St. Joseph's feast day. At 9:30 the bells were ringing for solemn High Mass when suddenly the huge clapper of the biggest bell broke off and, crashing through the terrace floor by the belfry, rebounded and landed in the playground where the boys were at recreation. The cleric Anacletus Ghione, who was playing directly underneath the belfry, noticed the sudden silence and, looking up, saw the clapper falling. "Get away, get away!" he yelled, and ran.

Almost every feast day, although it was off limits, some boys used to sit on the terrace for a bit of sun while eating breakfast—a bread roll. That morning particularly, the boys were engrossed in their games. Only seconds before the clapper came to rest on the ground, a group of older boys had stood talking on that very spot. One youngster, not knowing why, said to the others, "Let's move from here. Something might fall on our heads."

At the sudden crash Father Lazzero, who was also in the playground, turned in fear and saw the cleric Ghione bending to pick up the clapper and hoist it onto his shoulder. Father Ghivarello, also present, testified that the clapper's enormous weight had the impact of a cannonball as it hurtled through the air.

When Don Bosco was informed of what had happened he wrote to Father Rua, thanking God that the damage had only been material. He also gave him directives about certain things to be done, and he enclosed the following letter for the deacon John Turco whose father had recently died:[4]

Rome, March 1, 1874

Dear John Turco,

Father Rua wrote to me about your father's death. I felt deeply sorry because he was very dear to me. May God grant him a place in heaven. I have prayed and have asked others to pray for him and will continue to do so.

I was glad to know that you were at his bedside. It may have increased your sorrow, but your presence probably was his best comfort. I

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

hope his soul has fled to heaven where he will wait for you and me. May it be God's will that we shall join him in that everlasting Kingdom.

Now, if you have business matters to look after, talk with Father Rua who has full powers.

When I get back we'll discuss other things and strive to do things in such a way as to please God, and, if we can, also men.

My dear John, pray for me. Right now I need prayers very badly. Remember me to our friends. May God bless us all and keep us all on the path of eternal salvation.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco[5]

Particular letters from Don Bosco were the pupils' delight, and the cleric John Cinzano, eager for a special note to his students similar to the one that Father Lazzero had received for the artisans, strongly suggested that their conduct be a hundred percent exemplary for two weeks. He told Don Bosco of it and received the following reply:

Rome, March 7, 1874

My dear Cinzano and pupils,

Your proposal that your boys pledge two weeks of faultless conduct for my sake was an excellent one. The idea was laudable and the outcome beyond all praise. You say nothing about yourself, but in telling me that they all deserved an *optime* for two weeks, I gather that this includes you too. Am I right?

I thank you and all your students for this present. I shall show my gratitude when I get home. A glass of the finest wine to each will be a sign of my delight.

Soon I will be back with you, about whom I think and worry, the masters of my heart, and, as St. Paul says, my joy and my crown wherever I go.

I know that you have prayed for me, and I thank you for it; later I shall tell you what your prayers obtained.

But, my dear sons, things are moving faster and faster. Just now I ask you to redouble your fervor and prayers and keep up your good conduct. I can do little for you, but God will prepare for you a rich reward.

I shall pray for you too and bless you with all my heart. Please offer up a Holy Communion for me and say a *Pater* and an *Ave* to St.

[5]We are omitting a few other short notes to Salesians and boys. [Editor]

Joseph. May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always. Amen.

And you, my dear Cinzano, act manfully so that you may be happily crowned, and keep up your good example. Reprove, entreat, and rebuke with all patience and teaching. Set your hopes in the Lord and He will give you determination and strength. Try to see the Viancinos and remember me to them. Wish them the best of everything in my name. Farewell in the Lord.

Fr. John Bosco

Throughout the rest of March he also wrote to benefactors, thanking them or informing them of special favors and benedictions obtained for them from the Holy Father.[6]

11. Success

Let us return to our narrative. In March Don Bosco had another audience with the Holy Father, of which we have only a memorandum [about papal blessings for benefactors, rosaries and other matters]. Having insistently been asked to set up new foundations, even in mission areas, he wrote for the Holy Father's consent.[1]

Meanwhile a new difficulty had arisen, probably because of the consultor, Father Bianchi, who rejected the chapter *De Externis*, even as an appendix. Immediately Don Bosco had the constitutions reprinted without that chapter and with slight corrections and additions. In fact, Attorney Menghini confided to Father Berto that Father Bianchi had called on Cardinal Bizzarri to set him against our Congregation. Always alert to ward off difficulties, Don Bosco begged Monsignor Sallua to speak to Father Bianchi, and the monsignor graciously obliged.[2]

That same day [March 17, 1874] Don Bosco was advised to state briefly his reasons for insisting on the definitive approval of the constitutions, so as to banish doubts and overcome obstacles. He complied the following day and sent the following reasons to

[6]We are omitting these short notes. [Editor]
[1]We are omitting Don Bosco's letter. [Editor]
[2]We are omitting his notification to Don Bosco. [Editor]

the cardinals' committee, to Cardinal Berardi, to Archbishop Vitelleschi, and to the Holy Father:

Considerations That Prompt Father John Bosco Humbly To Implore the Definitive Approval of the Constitutions of the Salesian Society

1. This Congregation was definitively approved by a decree of March 1, 1869. Its constitutions have been tested for thirty-three years, during which articles were modified, added or removed as experience dictated for the smooth running of the Congregation.

2. There are commendatory letters of forty-four bishops requesting this same favor. Considering the manner, times and means by which this Congregation was founded and the spiritual benefits that have resulted through the Lord's mercy, the bishops see the hand of God in this undertaking.

3. If good results were obtained through the practice of the rules, more abundant fruits may be reasonably expected as a result of the Holy See's observations now incorporated into the constitutions.

4. Sixteen houses in several dioceses require stable, clearly defined relations with their respective ordinaries, as the ordinaries themselves keep demanding.

5. Salesians now number some three hundred, their pupils nearly seven thousand. Negotiations nearing completion for the opening of houses in America, Africa and China necessarily call for rules eliminating the hesitancy which worries the members for fear of possible changes in the rules themselves.

6. There is a need for a handbook for the practical application of the constitutions in moral and mundane affairs—a most necessary work that Father John Bosco anxiously desires to accomplish before his death.

7. Should the need arise to modify an article of the constitutions, it can be done when the triennial report is sent to the Holy See concerning the moral, religious and material state of the Congregation, or during the general chapters which are held every three years. During these chapters, articles may be modified and others added, though they will not be binding until the Holy See approves them. *See Regulae*, Ch. 6, No. 2 and Ch. 7, No. 6.

8. We have a lively desire that this giant step, most important for any religious congregation, be taken by the pious, scholarly, thoughtful and most eminent cardinals whom the Holy Father has kindly chosen to give their enlightened opinion on this matter.

9. Finally [we make this appeal] so that our saintly, wonderful Pontiff, who in loving fatherliness has both spiritually and materially deigned to bless, protect and approve this Congregation, may also be the one to give its constitutions definitive approval for the greater glory of God and of the Catholic faith, for the welfare of souls, and for the honor of the Salesian Society.

Untiring in tactful efforts to achieve his purpose, Don Bosco, during the next few days, paid several visits to each member of the special committee to offer his respects.

He talked for three hours with Cardinal Martinelli, who until then had had a poor opinion of him, and left the prelate astonished at the ease with which he solved all difficulties.

He offered two pictures of Our Lady to Cardinal Bizzarri, but the prelate refused them. He then showed him a copy of the circular he had sent to Salesian houses to order special prayers for the cardinals' committee, but when the cardinal came to those lines, he exclaimed, "For heaven's sake, I hope this is not a bribe!"

"No," Don Bosco replied, "just a token of gratitude."

"I can't even accept that," the cardinal retorted. Then he went on to say that nothing stood in the way of a definitive approval because the Holy Father had told him to put aside scruples and be generous.

The cardinal vicar kept him for about an hour and a half. The first thing he said was that even before reading the *Positio*, he was convinced that this new Congregation was God's work. He then referred to several statements by Archbishop Gastaldi, but Don Bosco explained his position so clearly that the cardinal exclaimed, "Well, at the most we shall make a few observations, nothing more." At this point, Don Bosco mentioned his visit the evening before with Cardinal Bizzarri, and the cardinal vicar had a good laugh. He then cordially asked for prayers and assured him of his hearty appreciation.

Cardinal De Luca, too, gave him a warm welcome, and when Don Bosco finally asked for advice for which he would be most grateful, he took Don Bosco's hand and, looking at him gravely for a few minutes, exclaimed, "Beware of Turin's archbishop."

"Your Eminence," Don Bosco replied, "do not doubt that I

treasure your advice, but let us drop the subject."

In these visits he always left little gifts for everyone, including the cardinals' relatives and domestic staffs. Such was his habit.

One evening while strolling along a lonely street with Father Berto, he was approached by a beggar who asked for alms. Since he had no money on him, he turned to Father Berto, but he didn't have any either. Unfortunately, it could not be helped.

As they continued their walk, Father Berto pointed out that the number of beggars was so large that if he were to give money to all, he would need a large sum. Don Bosco replied: "Haven't you ever heard: 'Give and it shall be given to you'?"

He would have liked to help the poor of the whole world, and his charity was matched by his gratitude toward all who helped him. He had sent the prefect of the province of Turin an unusual gift from Rome, and the following reply came in:

Turin, January 7, 1874

Dear Father,

I am very grateful to you for your thoughtfulness, but please excuse me if, in keeping with my policy of never accepting gifts from anybody, I ask that you let me return the hare you so generously sent me. Believe me, I am as grateful as though I had accepted it.

Yours devotedly,
Zoppi

But usually his little gifts were very welcome. To many people in Rome, together with holy pictures of Our Lady, he offered a copy of his *History of Italy*, which had been reprinted that year, or a copy of *The Companion of Youth*.

He sent several bottles of Bordeaux and Macon wine to Cardinal Berardi and to Marquis Angelo Vitelleschi, candy to Marchioness Clotilde, and a box of dried figs to Archbishop Vitelleschi.

Since he was a guest of the Sigismondis, he wrote a poem[3] for the name day of the lady of the house and had Father Berto make a copy of it. He then read it at table and offered it to her together with a picture of St. Matilde, her patron.

He also offered a copy of the "Three Prophecies" that we have

[3]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

previously reported[4] to the cardinal vicar, to Cardinal Berardi and to several others. We need not repeat that he gave these copies in strict confidence, without saying that he had written them. He merely stated that he regarded such narratives as simple inspirations or illuminations from God and that their fulfillment depended on man's good will in following the directives contained in such communications.

On March 23, one day before the scheduled meeting in which the approval of the constitutions was to be discussed, he again called on Cardinal Martinelli. When Don Bosco took his leave, the cardinal said, "My vote will be affirmative with some observations." These concerned minor points.

Jubilantly Attorney Menghini told both Don Bosco and Father Berto that he had called on the cardinal vicar and had found him most favorable. The cardinal had said, "I did question Don Bosco about his difficulties with his archbishop and his replies were superb! Difficulties vanish before Don Bosco. Nothing is hard for him. Everything is easy; all difficulties disappear." The attorney added that Cardinal De Luca had told him he would vote *iuxta modum*, i.e., in accordance with the petition.

That same day Don Bosco again wrote to Archbishop Vitelleschi, and Father Berto gave a lira to the sacristan of the Church of San Andrea delle Fratte for two candles to be lighted the following day before the altar of Our Lady of the Miracle.

At ten o'clock on the morning of March 24, the vigil of the Annunciation, the special committee met with the cardinal vicar, and despite many variations and additions which had been made in the constitutions, the result was highly favorable. But the debate was prolonged on account of Archbishop Gastaldi's letters, especially that dated April 20, 1873.[5] At one-thirty in the afternoon the cardinals decided to meet again on the last day of the month.

Don Bosco had hoped for a favorable verdict that very day and became quite worried. The news leaked out, and on March 25 *Popolo Romano* published the following wild statement:

Yesterday a committee of cardinals, presided over by the cardinal vicar, discussed the petition of Father John Bosco of Turin, who is seek-

[4]*See* pp. 49-58. [Editor]
[5]*See* pp. 323-27. [Editor]

ing authorization to bring his Congregation to Rome and open two schools here: one by the Church of the Holy Shroud, the other at Ceccano, on the Berardi property.

It is believed that the committee rejected the petition because of the Jesuits' efforts to wipe out competition from Don Bosco.

As we have seen, this was not the only article because in those days the press was taking a keen interest in Don Bosco's strenuous efforts to help the bishops' temporalities.

On March 25, Father Berto had a Mass said at the altar of Our Lady of the Miracle in the Church of San Andrea delle Fratte, and informed the Salesian directors in Don Bosco's name that the first meeting of the cardinals on March 24 had been successful and that the second and last, hopefully favorable, was scheduled for March 31. He also asked that they continue to have prayers offered for Don Bosco's intentions.[6]

Don Bosco went immediately to Cardinal Berardi, who again expressed his pleasure at the Oratory's telegram on the occasion of his name day. After a cordial conversation, the cardinal accompanied Don Bosco to the door and told him not to worry; he was to leave everything to him, and he would arrange matters. He concluded by saying, "We know Don Bosco too well to give credence to the archbishop of Turin!"

The corrections demanded by the committee of cardinals were so many that Archbishop Vitelleschi asked for another four copies of the constitutions, and Don Bosco sent him six, with the correction of a capital N . . . suggested by Cardinal Martinelli. Perhaps this was the first letter of the word "novitiate." Don Bosco had been asked to submit a set of regulations for a novitiate because without them the committee of cardinals could not meet for a final decision.

What was to be done? Without delay, Don Bosco secured copies of the rules of other religious congregations, read and reread them, weighed carefully in his mind the advice of Archbishop Vitelleschi and other prelates, and then, on the evening of March 27, after a brief stroll in Piazza Barberini with Father Berto, returned home to work at his desk until two the next morning. He then called Father Berto, who had not gone to bed

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

either, and asked him to copy in good handwriting the pages he had written. Thus he was able to deliver them that same morning to the secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

On March 28 he went to Cardinal De Luca and showed him the anonymous letter refuting Archbishop Gastaldi's accusations.[7]

"This is a find!" the cardinal exclaimed. "Send a copy to the cardinals, myself included."

"But this is a secret."

"Not if it benefits a third party. Go on and do it!"

The anonymous letter, which we have already reported, was the refutation of the letter sent to Cardinal Bizzarri on January 9 of that same year. During the past few days, the cardinals' committee had become acquainted with Archbishop Gastaldi's even more categorical letter of April 20, 1873 to Cardinal Caterini, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Council.[8] Don Bosco too was informed of it and was advised to refute it directly. He did so and sent a signed copy on March 29 and 30 to the cardinal vicar, to Cardinal Martinelli, to Cardinal De Luca and to Archbishop Vitelleschi:

Memorandum Regarding a Letter of the Archbishop of Turin about the Salesian Congregation

It must first be pointed out that until February 10, 1873 Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin constantly declared himself to be a warm supporter and tireless co-worker of the Salesian Congregation. On that date (February 10, 1873) he warmly encouraged Father John Bosco to go to Rome, and he provided him with a commendation in Latin in which he declared that he had recognized God's hand in the rise and development of this same Congregation. He also gave it extreme praise for all the good it had done and still does, extolling its humble founder to the skies.

1. In that letter of commendation he states that the rules were never approved by his predecessors.

Answer: Among the documents submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, there is the decree of Archbishop Fransoni (March 31, 1852) in which the work of the [festive] oratories is ap-

[7] *See* pp. 348-52. [Editor]

[8] The letter to Cardinal Caterini was dated February 19, 1873. (*See* p. 315.) The letter of April 20, 1873 was addressed instead to Cardinal Bizzarri, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. [Editor]

proved, Father John Bosco is appointed superior, and all necessary, opportune faculties are granted him for their successful operation.

2. No approval of the rules was ever sought either from him or from Archbishop Riccardi.

Answer: Once an institute has been approved by any ordinary, it is debatable whether it should request the approval of every new bishop. Nevertheless, it is a fact that Father John Bosco addressed a petition to Archbishop Riccardi seeking such confirmation, and the latter replied, as Archbishop Gastaldi did later, that once an institute has been approved by the Holy See, it no longer needs any diocesan approval whatever. Then, wishing to help the stability of this institution, Archbishop Gastaldi, on his own initiative, issued a decree confirming all privileges and faculties granted by his predecessors, and adding new ones, among them parochial rights (Decree of December 25, 1872).

3. There should be a two-year novitiate, exclusively ascetic.

Answer: This was possible in other days, but not in our country at this time, because it would destroy the Salesian Congregation. Were the civil authorities to know of the existence of a novitiate, they would abolish it immediately and disperse the novices. Furthermore, this kind of a novitiate would not be suited to the Salesian constitutions, based as they are on the active life of the members and restricting them to those practices which are essential for forming and maintaining the spirit of a good priest. Moreover, such a novitiate would not be suitable for us because the novices would not be able to practice the constitutions according to the scope of our Congregation.

4. Professed members have already left the Congregation and caused hard feelings, etc.

Answer: As of now one member has left, Father Frederick Oreglia, who belonged to the Congregation as a lay religious and left in order to enter the Society of Jesus and pursue priestly studies. He is now commendably active in the sacred ministry.

5. This Congregation considerably upsets ecclesiastical discipline in the diocese.

Answer: The accusation is gratuitous. The ordinary of Turin cannot cite a single instance to substantiate his assertion.

6. All too often, members are ordained under the title of common board after taking triennial vows and then leave, etc.

Answer: Another gratuitous assertion. As of now, no one of these has left the Salesian Congregation.

7. When he was bishop of Saluzzo, one of his subjects left the Congregation as soon as he was ordained, etc.

Answer: There is not a shred of truth in this. The priest to whom he

refers in this and other letters, and whom he would like to cite as an example, never belonged to the Salesian Congregation. He was ordained by Bishop Gastaldi with regular ecclesiastical patrimony, but without a commendatory letter and contrary to Don Bosco's judgment, to whom the ordinary had sent him and in whose house he had done his studies, thanks to his charitable hospitality.

8. Clerics dismissed from the seminary and accepted into the Salesian Congregation were sent to houses in other dioceses, ordained there, and ultimately sent back to their original diocese.

Answer: No such thing has ever happened. Should it occur in the future, the ordinary always has the power to accept or reject these candidates, just as he may reject any member who has left any other religious congregation.

9. It should also be borne in mind that were the suggested conditions imposed on the Salesian Congregation, which has no material funds, it would be obliged to close its houses and suspend religious instruction because it would then have neither catechists nor teachers. Moreover, being a moral body, it would come to the attention of civil authorities and its members would immediately be disbanded, thus destroying the Congregation itself.

10. I must also note that the present archbishop has never expressed the slightest complaint or observation to the members or to the superior of the Salesian Society. Indeed, whenever he wished to point out any cleric of particular intelligence and outstanding virtue, it was always a Salesian student.

11. The statements made in the letter of April 20, 1873 have been repeated with different wording in three other secret letters of later date, addressed to the selfsame Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and containing always allusions to nebulous facts which have nothing at all to do with the members of the Salesian Society.

12. For the sake of truth and to refute that letter, I find it quite fitting to attach this memorandum to it.

Fr. John Bosco

On March 31 Father Berto returned to the Church of San Andrea delle Fratte to have two candles lit before the altar of Our Lady of the Miracle. At nine o'clock that morning, the special committee of cardinals met to discuss the approval of our constitutions and remained in session until one-thirty in the afternoon. In regard to the question of "if and how the recent constitutions of the Salesian Society should be approved," the reply was *Affir-*

mative et ad mentem [Affirmative and as explained below].

Here is the official document:

On March 24 and 31, 1874, special meetings were held by the most eminent Cardinals Patrizi, De Luca, Bizzarri and Martinelli of the Holy Roman Church. Presented with a question, they were of the opinion that the answer should be *Affirmative et ad mentem.*

Explanation

[1] The observations made by the consultor Father Bianchi in his report of May 9, 1873 . . . must be inserted in the constitutions.

[2] Citation must be made in the aforesaid constitutions of two well-known decrees of the Sacred Congregation concerning religious, *Romani Pontifices* and *Regularis Disciplinae,* of January 25, 1848.

[3] Moreover all those modifications and amendments listed by the secretary [of the Sacred Congregation] in the margin of the enclosed copy and the additional articles, mainly concerning Chapter 14, *De Novitiorum magistro eorumque regimine*, and Chapter 4, *De voto paupertatis*, listed on a separate sheet, must be incorporated in the said constitutions.

[4] In regard to the second observation made by the consultor Father Bianchi concerning the faculty of issuing dimissorial letters for Holy Orders, this privilege should be sought from the Holy Father for a period of ten years in conformity with the decree of Pope Clement VIII, March 15, 1596, *Impositis Nobis*, with the usual clauses of suspension for those priests who might leave the Salesian Congregation, until they shall have acquired an ecclesiastical patrimony. Such privilege, if conferred by His Holiness, should not be inserted in the constitutions but is to be granted in a separate rescript.

[5] A petition may be made to the Holy Father for approval of these constitutions thus amended and amplified, said approval being definitive and perpetual according to the opinion of three of the eminent Fathers, and experimental and temporary in the opinion of one.

[✠ Salvator Vitelleschi]
Archbishop of Seleucia

Obviously the cardinals' committee had worked hard, and by the favor of God and Mary, Help of Christians their opinion had been utterly favorable.

It would have been impossible to ask for more. The cardinals had first thought that the approval should be limited to an experi-

ment of ten years prior to granting the definitive approval, but then, in view of Don Bosco's reiterated, fervent supplications, the good offices of Cardinal Berardi, and the clearly favorable comments of the Holy Father, they voted for a definitive approval, three cardinals voting in favor and only one opting for the *ad decennium* solution.

Archbishop Vitelleschi then asked for a special audience with the Pope, who granted it for the afternoon of Good Friday, April 3. After listening carefully to the report and realizing that one vote was needed for a unanimous approval, he smilingly exclaimed, "Very well, I shall cast the missing vote."

The archbishop then added to the special committee's report a declaration that the Holy Father confirmed it in the audience of April 3, 1874 and ordered that the decree of the constitutions' definitive approval be issued with a ten-year indult authorizing Don Bosco to issue dimissorial letters to candidates for Orders, including the priesthood, subject to conditions and safeguards contained in the explanation accompanying the approval.[9]

At six that evening Archbishop Vitelleschi was still in audience. Later that same evening, Don Bosco called on him to learn the outcome, just as the archbishop was starting his dinner. After a few moments, he had Don Bosco ushered in and immediately exclaimed: "Don Bosco, rejoice! The constitutions of your Congregation have been definitely approved, and you can issue unconditional dimissorial letters for ten years."

Bursting with joy, our saintly founder held out a piece of candy which Mrs. Monti had given him, and with real simplicity offered it to the prelate, saying, "You deserve it!"

On Holy Saturday, Don Bosco began to pay thank-you calls on the committee members. Since the cardinal vicar had gone to St. John Lateran to confer Holy Orders, he left a copy of the "Three Prophecies" with his secretary for delivery to His Eminence. He then went to Cardinal Martinelli, and on taking leave asked for his blessing.

"Good servant of God," the cardinal exclaimed, "it is I who need your blessing!"

He also called on Cardinal Bizzarri, who was then in audience

[9]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

with the Pope. He then wrote to Father Rua:[10]

Rome, April 4, 1874

Dear Father Rua,

. . . Our constitutions have been definitively approved, with the unconditional faculty of issuing dimissorial letters. When you come to know everything, you will have to admit that it truly is the fruit of our prayers. The Holy Father granted approval yesterday evening at seven o'clock, but do not voice it around. I am now taking care of loose ends. God willing, I shall be back with my beloved sons toward the end of the coming week. Give them all my best. . . . Cardinal Berardi was very pleased with the telegram. He immediately replied with another addressed to the Superior of the Salesians in Turin. I do not know whether you have received it.

Before leaving here, I shall let you know the time of my arrival. God bless us all.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

On Easter Sunday he called on Cardinal De Luca who received him with exquisite cordiality and frankly admitted that none of the special committee members would have ever dreamed that the Pope thought so highly of him. He also confided that on several occasions the cardinal vicar had said, "I mean to wind up this business. Let us help a poor priest who sacrifices himself completely for the good of souls." In conclusion the cardinal said, "Now I have a favor to ask. Come to dinner on Wednesday, and I shall invite other friends."

Don Bosco accepted and kept all the guests in good spirits with his stories. The cardinal, too, though of a serious disposition, laughed so much that he confessed that such a thing had never happened to him before in his life.

The day was April 8. In the morning Don Bosco called on the cardinal vicar to pay his respects, and the cardinal again told him that all was due to the Pope. The Pope had told him that approval was to be granted; the Pope wanted it.

That evening he returned to the Vatican at 7:30, having been called for an audience with the Holy Father. He had to wait al-

[10]We report the most important part of his letter. [Editor]

most an hour. As soon as he entered, the Pope exclaimed, "This time it's all over!"

"Yes, Holy Father, and I am most happy about it."

"So am I!" the Pope said.

Then in his usual simple way, Don Bosco offered the Pope a copy of his *History of Italy*. Pius IX glanced through it, exclaiming three or four times, "Long live Don Bosco!" and adding at last: "I know the spirit which inspires you."

He granted him other favors, among them the faculty to assign clerics during their year of novitiate to the same tasks which the constitutions would assign them during their first period of probation, if he considered it for God's greater glory.

"But," he added, "do not assign them to the sacristy, lest they become lazy. Put them to work!"

Don Bosco then thanked him for all his help toward the definitive approval, and the Pope answered with a smile, "You are welcome, but now do not ask for anything else!"

"Still, Holy Father, there is one thing I must ask you for."

"Nothing more, nothing more!"

"Then the approval of the constitutions will avail me nothing."

"What is it that you still need?"

"A dispensation from the age requirement for the councilors of our Congregation's [Superior] Chapter. The constitutions set the minimum age at thirty-five, and as of now hardly any of my priests are that old."

"Time will remedy the scandalous situation," the Pope answered humorously, adding that for the present the status quo should be kept, and later, if a new councilor had to be dispensed from the age requirement, a request could be made to the Holy See.

The Pope discussed other dispensations and finally rang for Father Berto, who most humbly thanked him for all his kindness and asked a special blessing for his parents and all the members of the St. Aloysius, Immaculate Conception, St. Joseph, Blessed Sacrament, and Altar Boys sodalities at the Oratory.

On their way downstairs, Don Bosco was greeted by Monsignor Negrotto and Monsignor Demerod. The latter asked how matters stood.

"Very well," Don Bosco replied. "Our constitutions have been

approved. Now all we need is that you find a shed to shelter boys, and we shall come and set up house in Rome, too."

Archbishop Vitelleschi had asked Father Berto to make a handsome copy of the constitutions with the amendments stipulated by the cardinals. On April 9, they read the completed copy through together, and then he asked for another copy, since one had to be filed with the Sacred Congregation, and the other with Don Bosco. On April 11 the second copy was also completed, and the archbishop made Father Berto promise to escort Don Bosco to dinner at his house the following day, Sunday, April 12.

While Father Berto went about this task and handled other business for Don Bosco, the latter made other calls. From Cardinal Antonelli he learned that the Pope had ordered a copy of the *Positio* for himself and that the cardinal, having read it carefully, commented on it favorably to the Pope.

As soon as Cardinal Bizzarri saw Don Bosco, he asked, "Are you satisfied now?"

"Very satisfied, Your Eminence!"

"The cardinals did not do very much," the cardinal went on. "It was the Pope." As Don Bosco was thanking him, the prelate interrupted him: "No need for thanks. I was only doing my duty."

"We shall pray for you always and look on you as a father."

"A fine father I would be!" Even in conversation he was troubled by scruples, and Don Bosco felt sorry for him.

That evening he dined with the Vitelleschis and presented Marchioness Clotilde with a large box of candy for some twenty people. It was not his first dinner with the Vitelleschis, and he enjoyed the same pleasure with Cardinal Berardi, Monsignor Fratejacci, the Irish seminary, Chevalier Balbo, the marchioness of Villa Rios, Mrs. Giacinta Serafica, and others.

Archbishop Vitelleschi instructed Don Bosco to go to the chancery the following morning at eleven o'clock and pick up the decree of approval and the rescript for the dimissorial letters. Among other things, Don Bosco confided to him that during his audience with the Holy Father the latter had said, "What a blunder you made in proposing Gastaldi as archbishop of Turin! There are some serious things concerning him. You wanted it! It serves you right! Now get out of it as best you can!"

"Holy Father," Don Bosco answered, "I am unfortunately doing penance for it!"

"You know what Our Lord said to His disciples," the Pope went on. " 'If you are persecuted in one city, flee to another.' So be careful! Keep on your guard!"

Evidently the Pope, who loved him dearly, wanted to tell him to establish his residence near the Holy See, but he did not elaborate.

During his stay in Rome, Don Bosco said Mass in various churches and convents. In the streets he was often stopped and greeted by friends and former pupils. One of these, Lieutenant Viano, who had been one of the first to frequent the Oratory at its very beginnings, invited him to dinner at his house. Another approached him in the vicinity of the Church of San Andrea delle Fratte, and Don Bosco exhorted him to fulfill his Easter duty.[11]

That day (April 12) he also asked the head stenographer of the chamber of deputies, "Have you fulfilled your Easter duty?"

"I don't know what to do," he replied. "I am a reporter for liberal newspapers, and the priests won't give me absolution." Don Bosco talked with him confidentially for a while.

On April 13 he said Mass at Tor de'Specchi. Afterward he called on the Sisters of Charity at Bocca della Verità, on Archbishop Vitelleschi, on Monsignor Fratejacci who loved him dearly, and on Cardinal Berardi, while Father Berto went to pick up the copy of the approved constitutions with the relative decree and the rescript for the dimissorial letters. The decree read as follows:

His Holiness Pope Pius IX, in an audience granted to the undersigned secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on Good Friday, April 3, 1874, after carefully studying the letters of recommendation from bishops of those dioceses which have houses of the Society of St. Francis de Sales, and after observing the rich fruits reaped by the said Society in the Lord's vineyard, approved and confirmed its constitutions as written in this copy whose original is kept in the archives of this Sacred Congregation. He likewise approves and confirms them with this decree, due respect being paid to the jurisdiction of the ordinaries, as prescribed by the sacred canons and the apostolic constitutions.

[11]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

Given in Rome by the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on April 13, 1874.

✠ A. Cardinal Bizzarri, Prefect
✠ Salvator, *Archbishop of Seleucia, Secretary*

On April 3, Archbishop Vitelleschi had also informed the Holy Father of the special committee's decision to authorize Don Bosco to grant dimissorial letters *ad decennium* [for ten years] and the Holy Father had agreed. To regularize the matter, the archbishop himself wrote the application.[12] To it he added the rescript for the dimissorials:

Rescript

In an audience granted to the undersigned secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on Good Friday, April 3, 1874, His Holiness, after examining the request, benignly granted to the petitioner, the Superior General [of the Society of St. Francis de Sales], the faculty to issue dimissorial letters for a period of ten years to the members of his Congregation bound by the perpetual bond of simple vows in order that, with due regard to whatever has to be observed, they may be promoted to all the orders, including the priesthood, under the title of common board. This is granted in a manner similar to the privileges of those bound by solemn vows, according to the decree of Clement VIII of March 15, 1596, without jeopardy to what is prescribed in the Apostolic Constitutions, especially those of Benedict XIV of blessed memory entitled *Impositi* and *Nobis* concerning the ordination of religious bound by solemn vows. If some who have been ordained under the title of common board should legitimately leave the said Congregation or be dismissed from it, they shall be suspended from the exercise of the orders they have received until, having provided themselves with an adequate patrimony, they find a bishop who will benevolently receive them.

✠ A. Cardinal Bizzarri, *Prefect*
✠ Salvator, *Archbishop of Seleucia, Secretary*

Once he had the decree of approval of the constitutions in his hands, Don Bosco made it a point to inform Archbishop Gastaldi of it immediately. We shall see shortly how the news was re-

[12]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

ceived! That same day, in agreement with Cardinal Patrizi, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, he humbly filed a petition through its secretary, Monsignor Bartolini, for permission to anticipate or postpone the titular feast which fell on May 24 in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. His request was granted.[13]

Seeing that he had achieved everything successfully, he wrote to Marchioness Uguccioni to inform her that he would make a brief stopover in Florence[14] on his way back to Turin.

Before his departure, however, he received a telegram with the news that Father Provera was dying. The following morning, after celebrating Mass in the new private chapel of the Sigismondi household, before leaving for the station, he wrote to Father Rua, and, separately, to the Oratory community as follows:

Rome, April 14, 1874

Dear Father Rua:

I have received your telegram. I believe that by now our dear Father Provera is with his Creator. Though I have long been preparing myself for this bitter loss, it grieves me deeply. Our Society has lost one of its best members. It so pleased the Lord.

To Our Sons:

Today, Tuesday, April 14, after being away for three and a half months, your father, brother and friend of your soul is leaving Rome. I will spend the night and all Wednesday in Florence and hope to be with you on Thursday at eight in the morning. There is no need for music or welcome-home demonstrations. I shall go straight to the church where, please God, I shall say Holy Mass for our dear and ever beloved Father Provera.

I want to make you all happy. At the "Good Night" I'll tell you how. God bless you all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

A servant of the Uguccioni family met him at the station in Florence. He stayed in their house, and the next morning, Wednesday, April 15, he celebrated Holy Mass. That evening he

[13]We are omitting the pertinent decree. [Editor]
[14]We are omitting this letter. [Editor]

left and, traveling all night, arrived in Turin at the Porta Nuova station at 8:30 on Thursday morning.

No one was waiting for him because his letter had not yet arrived and he was expected that evening. The boys were out for their weekly walk.[15] Nevertheless, as soon as he reached the Oratory, several Salesians gathered about him. Without delay he went into the church to say Mass for the soul of Father Provera who had died on the 14th. After Mass he prayed in thanksgiving and had a cup of coffee in the sacristy, while the pupils, who had meanwhile returned home, lined up in two rows to give him a joyful welcome. He had been away over three and a half months.

It was an unforgettable demonstration that was rendered all the more solemn by a truly singular occurrence. As Don Bosco stood in the doorway of the sacristy facing the playground, he saw a gorgeous ring of light like a martyr's halo over the Oratory, especially above his own room. It was shining white, like an enchanting rainbow, its larger arc almost reaching to the sun and encompassing another arc, of identical form, but multi-colored. He saw it, but, saying nothing, turned his gaze instantly to his pupils and confreres, who ran to him shouting and enthusiastically clapping their hands, vying to be among the first to kiss his hand.

As soon as he got to his room he was asked to step out on the balcony and see the spectacle. Everyone was staring up at the sky which at that moment was perfectly clear, save for a veil encircling, like a thin cloud of smoke, the rainbow which hung in mid-air above his room. By now it had grown bigger and more luminous. As soon as Don Bosco appeared, the whole crowd shouted once more, as though with a single voice: "Long live Don Bosco! Long live Don Bosco!" and then the band began to play amid general rejoicing.

After lunch the band played again, and the white rainbow reappeared near the sun, so large now that it seemed to encompass the entire Oratory and the Church of Mary, Help of Christians.

When they asked his opinion, Don Bosco replied, "Perhaps in this sign the Lord has given us a symbol of our victory over our enemies through the unconditional approval of the Society of St.

[15]Thursdays were a mid-week school holiday. [Editor]

Francis de Sales. Or perhaps He wishes to renew our faith and comfort us with the thought that Father Provera has already been gloriously crowned in heaven."

The directors of the different houses were also present, and he held several conferences with them on the following days.

On the afternoon of April 18 he paid his respects to Archbishop Gastaldi. The archbishop neither asked nor said anything about the approval of the constitutions, being concerned exclusively with the matter of episcopal revenues. Before dismissing him, he offered to come to the Oratory the following day to celebrate the Community Mass.

Don Bosco had written to him as follows:

Rome, April 13, 1874

Your Excellency:

I have just received the decree of the definitive approval of our constitutions. It bears today's date. I want you, who have always stood by us, to be the first to receive the news. I hope to be in Turin before the end of the week to pay my respects in person and discuss other matters with you.

Most gratefully yours,
Fr. John Bosco

The archbishop read it and certainly reread it and filed it away after writing on the back of the folded sheet, at the top, these words, underlining the last five: "April 13, 1874—Don Bosco—Notification of the definitive approval of his institute, *which however is not definitive.*"

How is one to explain such an attitude? Curiously, too, on January 23 of that year 1874, he had founded the *Academia Historiae Ecclesiasticae Subalpinae* [Academy of Sub-Alpine Church History], naming Don Bosco not only a member, but one of the co-founders of the association . . . but as we have said,[16] no one in our Congregation knew anything about this honor until 1885, when Father Scolari found the pertinent diploma among the papers of the deceased secretary of the academy, Father Paul Capello, and sent to Father Rua Don Bosco's diploma, signed and sealed by the archbishop.

[16]*See* p. 309. [Editor]

Anyway, on April 19, the second Sunday after Easter, and—as Father Berto noted in his diary—"a feast day made solemn by Don Bosco's return from Rome," Archbishop Gastaldi celebrated the Community Mass and administered Holy Communion in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians. High Mass followed at 10:30. A little while later, a short man came into Don Bosco's waiting room, saying that he had a package for him. When he was ushered in, he immediately set the package on the table, saying that it was an offering for a grace received. Then, without disclosing his identity, he left. The package contained bills amounting to two thousand lire.

Dinner was attended by the members of the [Superior] Chapter and the directors, as well as invited guests, among them Chevalier Bacchialoni and Chevalier Lanfranchi. Don Bosco took this occasion to present Mr. Balocco with a knight's cross. Then he walked to the porticoes [where all the boys and Salesians were assembled]. Several pupils read welcoming compositions in poetry and prose, and the band played various musical selections. Such joy lit up all faces that when he thanked them at the end of the program, he had to make a real effort to control his emotion. Then all filed into the church, where after the singing of the *Te Deum* he gave Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. The unforgettable day ended with the performance of the play "The Martyrdom of St. Eustace."

12. The Approved Text

In his conferences with the directors, Don Bosco stressed how difficult it had been to obtain the approval of the constitutions. He had the approved text read out to them, but we have no record of what we think he said concerning the additions, eliminations and most important modifications that had been ordered by the cardinals' special committee, especially in regard to the novitiate.[1] Chapter 14, *De Novitiorum Magistro eorumque regimine*

[1]At this point the author presents a comparative study of the second edition of the constitutions printed by the Propaganda Fide press and of the text definitively approved. We are omitting this part which, in our opinion, may at present interest very few readers. [Editor]

[The Master of Novices and Their Rule], underwent corrections and additions in the following articles:

7. The Rector Major, with the consent of the other superiors, will determine in which houses novitiates should be established. But he may never establish them without the permission of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

8. The novitiate building must be separated from the rest of the house where professed members reside. It must have as many cells for the night's rest as there are novices, unless there be a large dormitory with ample space for each bed and for a cell or something similar for the novice master.

9. The novice master must be perpetually professed, at least thirty-five years old and a member for at least ten years. He is elected by the General Chapter. Should he die during his term of office, the Rector Major, with the consent of the Superior Chapter, will appoint another one who will serve until the convocation of the next General Chapter.

11. In accepting novices, all prescriptions mentioned in Articles 1 and 5 of Chapter 11 must be precisely observed.

12. During the second probation period, i.e., during the novitiate year, the novices must not take part in any of the activities proper to our institute, in order that they may strive exclusively to advance in virtue and Christian perfection according to the vocation to which they were called. Nevertheless, on Sundays and holy days they may teach catechism to children within the novitiate premises, under their master's guidance and supervision.

13. If, after a year of novitiate, the candidate has proved that in all things he will be able to promote the glory of God and the good of the Congregation and has been exemplary in carrying out his practices of piety and his other duties, the year of the second probation period may be considered completed; otherwise it may be prolonged by a few months and even for a year.

At the end of the chapter it was stated that during the third probation period, i.e., during the time of his triennial vows, the member could be assigned to any house of the Congregation, as long as he could pursue his studies there.

Moreover, Don Bosco was authorized by Pius IX to make changes in the constitutions whenever he believed it necessary or opportune for the good of souls and therefore for God's glory. In fact, in the first edition of the approved *Rules or Constitutions of*

the Society of St. Francis de Sales he added this note to Chapter 14, *The Master of Novices and Their Rule*: "Pope Pius IX benignly granted that, during their second probation period, the novices may take part in the activities of the first probation period whenever it will seem conducive to God's greater glory. This faculty was granted orally on April 8, 1874." In fact, in the first Italian edition published in 1875, Don Bosco, by virtue of this faculty, printed only seven of the seventeen articles of Chapter 14, and precisely the first three and the last four, translated as follows:

1. Any applicant must undergo three probation periods before being accepted into our Congregation. The first, which must precede the year of novitiate, is called the aspirantate, the second is the novitiate, and the third is the period of the triennial vows.
2. For the first probation period it will suffice that the applicant have spent some time in a house of the Congregation or have been a pupil in our schools, giving consistent proof of good moral character and intelligence.
3. If an adult wishes to join our Society and is admitted to the first probation period, he must first make a few days' spiritual retreat. Then, at least for a few months, he shall be employed in the various works of the Congregation in order that he may acquaint himself with and practice that way of life which he wishes to embrace.
4. After the completion of the year of novitiate, the Superior Chapter, after consulting with the novice master, may admit the novice to triennial vows. This will be the third probation period.
5. During the time of his triennial vows, the member may be assigned to any house of the Congregation, provided that he may pursue his studies there. During this time the director of the house will look after the new member as a novice master would.
6. During all these probation periods, the novice master or the director of the house should strive to recommend and kindly instill into the new members the mortification of the exterior senses and especially sobriety. But in so doing, let him be prudent, lest he physically weaken the members and make them less fit to fulfill their duties.
7. After a member has commendably completed these three probation periods and earnestly wishes to remain in the Congregation for life, the Superior Chapter may admit him to perpetual vows.[2]

[2]We are omitting details about the formula of profession. [Editor]

Many variations and additions were suggested or imposed by the cardinals' special committee, but, thanks to the solicitude and exquisite kindness of Archbishop Vitelleschi and the Holy Father's approval, the work was completed in a few days. Don Bosco expressed his gratitude toward the prelate in a letter of April 28, 1874,[3] calling him "our most distinguished benefactor."

13. More Difficulties

Don Bosco had now reached his goal in a truly remarkable way, but the opposition and difficulties that he was to encounter as Rector Major of the definitively approved Salesian Society were just starting.

At the beginning of May he sent Father Rua to present the rescript concerning dimissorials to the archbishop and to ask him to ordain the clerics Caesar Chiala and Matthew Ottonello. Father Chiuso [the archbishop's secretary] brought it to him. He wanted to keep it, but Father Rua pointed out that his instructions were to merely show it to the archbishop. Promptly the latter refused to receive him. Don Bosco therefore had to write to him as follows:

Turin, May 3, 1874

Your Excellency:

Father Rua informs me that before deciding whether to confer minor orders on my two candidates, you wish to have on hand a certified copy of the rescript concerning the faculty of issuing dimissorial letters.

In regard to this matter I received the following verbal instructions in Rome: If the archbishop of Turin (other bishops never raised any difficulties on this score) wants to see the original decree, let him see it, but do not leave it in anybody's hands. As for the constitutions, a copy may be delivered to him, if he wishes, once they are in print. But if he wishes to have an authenticated copy, it should be sent to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars to be compared with the original and authenticated.

I exhort you to cooperate with me in trying to ease our tensions; each

[3]Omitted in this edition. We are also omitting details about galley proofs of the constitutions annotated by Don Bosco. [Editor]

of us already has enough of them from other sources.

I beg you respectfully to give Father Rua an answer. Please believe that I have always striven to do well by you.

Your humble servant,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. I would have gladly called on you myself, but I had to go to Genoa on business.

Three times Father Rua returned with this letter to the archbishop's residence, but he was never received. Consequently, the ordinations were suspended and Don Bosco informed Archbishop Vitelleschi of the situation.[1] The latter replied as follows:

Rome, May 21, 1874

Dear Father John:

I have read and pondered your letter, and since you ask my opinion, I believe that the only thing to do now is to give the archbishop a certified copy of the rescript from the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars for his files, showing that you are authorized to issue dimissorial letters to the members of your institute for a period of ten years. If you take my advice, you have only to ask the secretary of the aforesaid Sacred Congregation to send a duplicate copy to the archbishop. You may think that this means bowing to the prelate's demands. Undoubtedly this is so, but I think it is his right to demand such a document. In fact, if the ordinary must accept the dimissorials from the superior of the Salesian Congregation and admit his candidates now and in the future, he must according to law have legal and canonical evidence that this privilege has been granted to the aforesaid Congregation by the Holy See. And how can he be sure without seeing and being given a certified copy of the Holy See's concession for his archives? With such documentation, no ordinary can plead ignorance of this privilege or ignore the right of the Superior General to issue dimissorial letters. I am sure that when this is done, all reasonable opposition to this matter will cease on the part of Turin's chancery. If not, the Sacred Congregation will always uphold the favors and rights granted by the Holy See.

Yours devotedly,
✠Salvator Vitelleschi, *Archbishop of Seleucia*

[1]We are omitting this letter which repeats the endless difficulties raised by the archbishop whenever Don Bosco submitted candidates for ordinations. *See* pp. 304f, 321-28. [Editor]

Obligingly, Don Bosco immediately applied for a duplicate of the rescript. Before it came, he received this uncalled-for admonition:

Turin, June 13, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

His Excellency, the archbishop, has instructed me to tell you that he has heard that you are publishing certain letters of his, and that he is astounded that this is being done without his prior consent. In writing to you or about you, His Excellency never intended that his letters be made public. He will be forced to lodge a serious complaint against you if you do not desist from this plan, unless his consent is obtained for certain specific letters.

Yours devotedly,
T. Thomas Chiuso, *Secretary*

As soon as he received a copy of the rescript, Don Bosco sent it to the archbishop with this forthright declaration:

Turin, June 17, 1874

Dearest Father Chiuso:

I have no idea who could possibly imagine that I have published or will publish letters of our archbishop. Assure him, I beg you, on my behalf that [our Congregation] strictly prohibits printing anything without ecclesiastical revision, all the more so when letters of the archbishop are concerned. Nothing of the kind was ever published.

An authenticated duplicate of our faculty to issue dimissorial letters has been made, as prescribed by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and I beg you to kindly pass it on to the archbishop or the chancery.

Whenever you see anything [that may lead to misunderstandings], please inform me so that I may explain and prevent disagreements, which have unfortunately taken place so many times already. May God grant us His grace!

Your humble servant,
Fr. John Bosco[2]

[2]On Father Chiuso's letter Don Bosco jotted this note: "Reply was sent that I never said or dreamt any such thing." [Author]

However, while having his secretary reply that he was satisfied with Don Bosco's statement and had read the rescript with pleasure, the archbishop renewed his accusations:

Turin, June 17, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

I have informed His Excellency of your letter. He was satisfied with it and was pleased to read the document from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars concerning you. Nevertheless, the archbishop was informed by a trustworthy person that certain letters of his now in your hands have already been printed or are about to be printed. Thus he again declares that he never gave you or anybody else any writings concerning you—whatever the form of such writing—with the intention that they should be either partly or totally published.

His Excellency therefore hopes that you will rigorously respect his intentions in this matter, lest he be highly displeased and lodge serious complaints against you. Please remember me in your prayers.

Yours devotedly,
T. Chiuso, *Secretary*

Don Bosco again patiently replied that there was no truth in such allegations and once more jotted this note on Father Chiuso's letter: "Replied a second time that such publication has never been thought of."[3]

Seemingly the problem had come about in the following way. After the approval of the constitutions, Bishop Galletti of Alba had a talk with Don Bosco who showed him the *Positio*, i.e., the set of documents to be examined by the cardinals' committee. Among them, as we have already said, were two letters from Archbishop Gastaldi. Bishop Galletti, who deeply revered and loved Don Bosco, was astonished by the conditions which the archbishop was placing for the constitutions' approval and saw fit to mention it to him tactfully in an attempt to calm his animosity and persuade him to take a favorable attitude. He took as his springboard the tone of certain printed letters. . . . This prudent endeavor availed nothing and only caused more trouble indirectly.

That same month the galley proofs of a poem written by Fa-

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

ther Lemoyne for Don Bosco's name day (June 24) were submitted to the archbishop. The poem presented a biblical allegory in which our holy founder, like a new Moses, climbs Mount Sion, where an angel of God, Pius IX, gives him the new law, the constitutions of the Salesian Society. The proofs were returned with this note from the archbishop himself: "It may be printed, but its exaggerations, which serve no good purpose, are disapproved."[4]

In August, through Father Rua, Don Bosco asked the archbishop to admit one of our clerics to the examination required for sacred orders scheduled for September, i.e., forty days later, and received the following reply:

Turin, August 9, 1874

Dear Father Rua:

His Excellency will expect the young candidate on Tuesday morning. He should bring with him certificates of his perpetual vows, studies, orders already received, and the diocese to which he belongs (this last drawn up by you).

Devotedly yours,
Fr. Chiuso

P.S. Many thanks for the errand done yesterday.

That same month brought yet another conflict. Wishing to please several wonderful teachers and professors, and to aid others in self-renewal, Don Bosco decided to hold a spiritual retreat for them at the Salesian school in Lanzo during the first half of September. To this effect he mailed a printed circular to those he thought would be interested, mostly former pupils. A copy reached Father Margotti, the editor of *Unità Cattolica,* who published it in the August 23 issue.[5]

The archbishop immediately admonished Don Bosco that such a spiritual retreat required his consent and that, though he was willing to grant it, he considered it his strict duty to insist that similar invitations not be published without his permission. He

[4]Father Berto forwarded this note to Attorney Charles Menghini, who, as we shall see in the last part of this book, remarked that the archbishop's censure was offensive also to the Pope. [Author]

[5]The last two sentences are a condensation. [Editor]

also asked for the preachers' names.

To end the matter at once, Don Bosco informed those few who had sent in their names that the retreat had been cancelled, and he notified the archbishop of his decision. He did not mention the names of the preachers.

The archbishop was not appeased and continued to make all sorts of inquiries, unceasingly complaining that such initiative was an act of insubordination to episcopal authority, all the more so since nearly all the elementary school teachers were priests. Don Bosco got wind of this and in the following letter begged the archbishop to let him speak for a moment "in the language of the heart" and to desist from such carping:

Turin, September 10, 1874

Your Excellency:

The care with which Your Excellency supervises our humble Congregation shows that you wish us to observe exactly its rules and all ecclesiastical prescriptions. This will certainly be to our benefit and keep us alert to our duty. For this, thanks with all our heart. Yet I hesitate to believe that certain things accord with the spirit of the Church or can be of any possible advantage to anybody.

I am not referring to several private letters of yours concerning us, nor to your repeated reprimands for my having published several letters of yours when no such thought has ever entered my mind. I refer exclusively to the letter which you sent me [through your secretary] on August 23 regarding the planned spiritual retreat to be held in our school at Lanzo, and this solely because its publication [in Unità Cattolica] was made without my knowledge or request at a time when I had already decided that such a retreat would not be feasible. This should suffice to banish any thought that I am acting in opposition to ecclesiastical authority. Among other things, your letter stated, "Such retreats may not be held save with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority." I have no idea where one can find such a prescription. I know the directives of the Council of Trent (Session V, Chapter 2) and those of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, according to which religious who have not been approved for preaching should under certain circumstances ask for permission, and, under other circumstances, for the blessing of the ordinary. I also know the prescriptions of the diocesan synod, but all of them concern public churches, in which case I would certainly have abided by them; indeed, I would not have failed to do what was simply proper.

However, this instance concerned only a few teachers who wished to gather in a boarding school and devote themselves to a week of spiritual retreat rather than to any other pursuit. It should also be borne in mind that Your Excellency has approved our priests for preaching and that, from the very beginning of the Oratory, the ecclesiastical authorities granted us permission to hold at will triduums, novenas, and spiritual retreats in the churches or chapels of our oratories. A special decree of March 1852 granted us all necessary and adequate faculties. The original decree is in your chancery; I handed it to you myself. In turn, Archbishop Riccardi confirmed all these faculties, and you yourself, in granting certain parochial rights to the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, assured me that by it you did not intend to revoke any of the concessions granted by your predecessors.

For these reasons, spiritual retreats were held several times in Turin, Moncalieri, Giaveno and Lanzo, without our ever having recourse to ecclesiastical authority. When you were but a canon, Your Excellency yourself gladly preached them on several occasions here at Valdocco and at Trofarello, and neither you nor I ever sought permission. In doing what has been our custom for so many years, I was completely convinced that I was not in conflict with canonical prescriptions or your revered orders.

Before I received your letter, several people kept amplifying the resentment you voiced to several persons, maliciously interpreting it as your desire to hinder the spiritual welfare of the faithful. Many things concerning both of us are exaggerated and misinterpreted by public opinion, or rather by those who live slandering their fellow men. Now, I beg you, let me speak for a moment in the language of the heart. I believe that before God's judgment seat, both you and I, who am much closer to it, would feel happier if, instead of aiming at what we think is best, we were to wage war against evil and promote what is good, and if we were to strive to return to those days when every idea of poor Don Bosco was, in your eyes, a project to be carried out. Let there be an end to letter writing which only increases heartaches and offers pretexts for reproach and scorn to the Church's enemies. Would it not be better if, instead of vague letters, you were to pinpoint what you want of our poor Congregation whose members spare no effort to benefit the diocese entrusted to you by Divine Providence? Would it not be better to bury once and for all the notion that some people foolishly try to attribute to Don Bosco, namely that he wants to rule in other people's domain? I have no intention of either offending or displeasing you, but if any involuntary word has hurt you, I humbly beg your forgiveness.

In this house we have always prayed and continue to pray for your

precious health. I fully trust that you recognize the humble writer of this letter to have always been and to always be,

Your most devoted servant,
Fr. John Bosco

The archbishop became even more irritated and kept saying abroad how many heartaches Don Bosco was causing him. Even writing on business to Bishop Galletti of Alba, he enclosed another sheet expressing his annoyance over the printing of his letters and the announcement of a spiritual retreat without his permission.

In reply, the kind bishop of Alba sent him a lengthy letter assuring him that the only letters of his that he had seen in print were the two that the archbishop had sent to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and had been incorporated in the *Positio*, which Don Bosco had shown to him. The bishop added that he believed they had been printed with the other documents by the said Congregation. Bishop Galletti also reminded him that Pius IX was well disposed toward Don Bosco and that, considering the times, his Congregation needed equal support from the bishops. Finally, he urged the archbishop to send for Don Bosco and tell him exactly what he expected of him and amicably listen to his arguments.[6]

Archbishop Gastaldi wrote again, enclosing Don Bosco's latest letter. In turn, Bishop Galletti replied as follows:

Alba, September 14, 1874
All for Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Most revered and dear Archbishop:

Thank you for sending me Don Bosco's letter whose somewhat stiff tone I cannot approve. For truth's sake, in due time and in the proper place, I will speak my mind frankly and clearly to him, and he, no doubt, will accept my observations in good part. At the end of his letter, he too felt that he ought to add a word of apology, but I hope that he will send you another couched in more fitting and gratifying terms.

I beg you not to lose God's charity and the patience of Jesus Christ!

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

I say no more because we are now having a spiritual retreat and I too am making it, though not as fervently as I should. I kiss your hand *in Domino* and remain,

Yours devotedly,
✠ Eugene, *Bishop*

Determined not to give in, Archbishop Gastaldi continued to spy on Don Bosco's movements, and, hearing that he had gone to Lanzo to attend our spiritual retreat, he immediately sought detailed information from Father Albert, the vicar forane. Not satisfied with his reply, he sent him a second letter:

Turin, September 17, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

Once again I ask and expect a more explicit answer [to these questions]:

[1] Are there any persons not belonging to the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales—i.e., who are not professed members, novices, pupils or servants—taking part in the spiritual retreat presently being held in the Salesian school at Lanzo?

[2] If there are, are they laymen, priests, or clerics of this archdiocese? In the latter case, I wish to have a list of these priests and clerics.

As for you, you should never have taken part in a matter which is good and proper in itself and greatly pleasing to the archbishop, but vitiated by a spirit of insubordination evident in the failure to inform the archbishop and in the irreverence shown to him when he reminded (he did naught else but remind) those responsible of their duty. So please be more careful in the future and do not cooperate in what is contrary to the hierarchical order established by God.

Please also inform me if, during the coming week, there will be persons who are not professed members, novices, pupils, or domestics. If that should be the case, I pray you to remind Don Bosco, in my name and as vicar forane, of his strict duty to apply for my permission.

If he asks, I authorize you to grant it in writing. Let me know whether or not he requests it. If not, then neither you nor any of your priests shall set foot in the school during the spiritual retreat. On my part, I shall see to it that archepiscopal authority is not impaired by

someone who should be giving others the example of reverence toward it.

Yours devotedly,
✠ Lawrence, *Archbishop*

That same day, the vicar sent him this formal statement:

Lanzo, September 17, 1874

I can assure Your Excellency that all the persons now on retreat at the school are members of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. There is no one, layman, cleric or priest, who does not belong to Don Bosco's spiritual family, save for Father Longo, the pastor at Pessinetto, as I have already informed you.

Regretting that I was led unknowingly into something displeasing to my ecclesiastical superior—to whom I willingly render homage and obedience all my life—I told Don Bosco about your letter. He was shocked by the word "insubordination" and asked me to do my best to defend him against such a charge concerning which he certainly does not want to have to contend with you.

I told him, "Assure me in writing that there are no outsiders on this retreat, and that if anyone asks to join, you will seek permission in deference to diocesan authority." He gave me the reply here enclosed:

"Assure the archbishop that I intend to obey him scrupulously, and that I wish all others to do the same. If I can only know what he wants from poor Don Bosco, I will make it my duty to do everything to his fullest satisfaction."

Hoping that I have fulfilled your wishes and trusting that Your Excellency is persuaded I have done nothing displeasing to you, I remain

Your humble servant,
Fr. Albert, *Vicar of Lanzo*

But this was not the end! Ceaselessly probing, the archbishop discovered that although Don Bosco had specifically and repeatedly assured him he had cancelled that spiritual retreat for teachers, he had printed a circular on it. Consequently Father Chiuso courteously wrote to Father Rua for a copy.[7] At the same time, in more weighty terms, he also wrote to Father Lazzero, prefect of the Oratory, for a copy of the circular sent not only to teachers,

[7]We are omitting his brief request. [Editor]

but also to all pastors of the archdiocese:

Turin, September 18, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

The Congregation of St. Francis de Sales is guilty of lack of respect and deference toward the archbishop because it did not submit to him a copy of the circular letter regarding a spiritual retreat to be held in the Salesian school at Lanzo—a circular sent also to all the pastors of the diocese even after reiterated oral and written assurances that the retreat had been cancelled. This is so serious that the archbishop finds himself in the painful necessity of safeguarding the respect due to his dignity. Therefore, in his name I warn you that if you do not send him a copy of the aforementioned circular by this evening, the cleric Ottonello shall be told not to report for ordination tomorrow morning. If no more printed copies are on hand, you may send either the manuscript or the galley proofs of same.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. T. Chiuso, *Secretary*

If the invitation had really been sent to all the pastors, a hundred copies could have been immediately located, but then and there not a single copy was to be found at the Oratory. In obedience to the archbishop a galley proof was sent with a statement that the circular had been printed quite some time before its publication in *Unità Cattolica.*

The archbishop again wrote to the vicar forane at Lanzo:

Turin, September 19, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

I have received your last letter concerning the spiritual retreat in the Salesian school at Lanzo and was deeply consoled by your holy attitude with which I am already familiar.

How happy I would be if the superior of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales could prove he is innocent of any transgression! Unfortunately, without telling me, he indiscriminately addresses a circular to teachers, most of whom are my diocesan priests, and sends it to the pastors without sending a copy to his archbishop, and this just as I am setting up three successive priests' retreats at Bra.

What can we say about such conduct? *Unità Cattolica* publicizes the

spiritual retreat announced in the circular, and only then do I come to know of it. I send word to that superior that I gladly and *willingly give him full permission* to hold the retreat, merely requesting that he send me the names of the preachers and that he notify me in advance next time. Within a few days he has someone else write to tell me that the retreat has been cancelled. Why cancel a good thing because of a warning? Was it not my strict duty to admonish him? Could I have admonished him more charitably? Isn't my authority a legacy which I am bound to preserve? Meanwhile, how could he inform the teachers that the retreat had been cancelled? He had to send out another circular. If you have a copy, please send it to me. In fact, send me whatever he printed about this ill-fated retreat.

When that same superior informed me that it had been cancelled, he could also have told me that he was going to hold two closed retreats for his own Salesians. Likewise he need not have written me a long letter full of *irreverent words*. . . . I simply do not see how a priest who is about to preach a spiritual retreat to his sons should start by failing to respect his archbishop.

As vicar forane, tell him in my name that this is not the way to draw God's blessings upon himself and his Congregation. Let him read the terrible maledictions which a consecrating bishop calls down from heaven upon anyone who dares to show a lack of respect toward the bishop he is consecrating. I know a religious institute which slighted Archbishop Fransoni. From that day the institute declined and came to naught.

I wish that superior every good, and hope he will prosper, but in duty I must demand that, while he promotes what is good on one hand, he not upset my administration on the other. On this score the competent judge is the archbishop, not the superior. If he thinks he has been wronged, let him appeal to the Pope, but let him not set himself up as a judge.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop*

Don Bosco was then still in Lanzo for the spiritual retreats which were held from September 14-19, and again from September 21-26. Father Albert, who was preaching both retreats with him, sent this clear, direct reply to the archbishop:

Lanzo, September 22, 1874

Your Excellency:

This is to inform you that I was requested by Don Bosco to join him

in preaching also the second spiritual retreat. I did not think you would have me refuse this second invitation. Truthfully, Don Bosco is anxious that I do what I can to restore harmony between him and you, and he asks that I offer you whatever satisfaction you wish. He asks in the first place that you believe him when he says that if he did send a circular to teachers, it was solely in order to do good, particularly to laymen, and that he did not think that this would displease you, since you too have given him overall permission to hold triduums, novenas, and spiritual retreats. Whenever preaching is required for these events in the future—except for his own personnel—he will gladly follow your lawful desires.

In regard to the announcement printed in *Unità Cattolica,* he begs you to believe that he had nothing to do with it. Indeed, it was done without his knowledge by someone who received the circular and thought it a good idea to give it wider publicity.

He would also have you believe that when he cancelled that retreat, he did not mean to spite you. He only thought that it was not feasible because only a few had responded to the invitation. He decided to cancel it and informed only those interested. He assured me that no circular was written for this, nor were any phrases used in cancelling it which could reflect unfavorably on Your Excellency.

As for the irreverent words to which you refer in your last letter, he humbly begs your pardon if any such words escaped him, and he implores that you interpret them solely in the sense he meant. He repeatedly told me: "Possibly I expressed myself in a way which could be misunderstood, but I never had, nor could I possibly have, any intention of offending His Excellency. I wish I could convince him that I have always had and still do have complete respect for his sacred person and his very special dignity. Please assure him of this on my behalf." Finally he kept insisting, "Write to His Excellency. Ask him to tell me clearly what he wishes from me and what I must do to win his full satisfaction. If it is at all possible, I will be delighted to give him this proof of my personal devotion to him."

I hope that Your Excellency will do me the honor of having me act as the interpreter of his wishes. With all my heart I pray that the Lord will bless your holy intentions by disposing all things according to your wishes.

Your most humble servant,
Fr. Albert, *Vicar of Lanzo*

Not even these clear assurances managed to appease Archbishop Gastaldi. Without delay he sent to the secretary of the Sacred

Congregation of Bishops and Regulars a long list of requests for clarification on how our constitutions were to be applied. First and foremost, he asked if they had really been "definitively approved by the Holy See." In all fairness we must admit that he had not yet received an authenticated copy of the decree of approval and therefore felt justified in stating that he did not know whether the constitutions had been approved. Obviously he disregarded the communication sent to him by Don Bosco on the very day of the signing of the decree:

Turin, September 23, 1874

Your Excellency,

. . . I earnestly beg you to obtain for me from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars an answer to the following questions:

1. Have the constitutions of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales. founded and ruled by Father John Bosco of the Turin diocese, been definitively approved by the Holy See?

2. Is the Congregation now classified as a religious order? Does it enjoy all its privileges, and is it therefore immediately subject to the Holy See and exempt from episcopal jurisdiction?

3. Has the bishop therefore been deprived of the right to visit the churches and houses of this Congregation?

4. Is the superior of this Congregation allowed to accept into his houses diocesan clerics either as novices so as to admit them later to vows or as teachers or assistants without prior permission and even against *the will of the bishop* who invested them with the clerical garb and maintains them in his seminaries?

5. May the above-mentioned superior lawfully receive into his Congregation clerics whom the bishop ordered to leave the clerical state because he judged them unfit for the sacred ministry? May he do so without the consent of the bishop or against the bishop's will?

If Your Excellency can get me an answer to these queries from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, you will do me a great favor because the above-mentioned superior positively states that he has the right mentioned in the last two queries. This dangerously jeopardizes the formation of our young clerics. There is no novitiate in the above-mentioned Congregation, so that when a cleric is admitted he is immediately assigned to teach. Naturally, many clerics prefer to be teachers rather than bear the daily seminary disciplines and be only pupils.

Yours devotedly,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop*

Archbishop Gastaldi had initiated proceedings against some priests and had written another letter only a short time before to Archbishop Vitelleschi, secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The latter's reply covered both letters:[8]

Rome, October 5, 1874

Your Excellency:

Because of the overload of business in the past few days, prior to today's start of vacation for the Sacred Congregation, I have not had a chance to acknowledge your letters of September 9 and 23.

As regards the queries of your second letter, I shall get you an answer from the Sacred Congregation after the holidays. Meanwhile, however, I can tell you that if the Reverend Don Bosco showed you, as I surmise he did, the Holy See's decree of April 3, 1874 approving the constitutions of his Congregation, you have a clear answer to the first of your queries. As regards the effects flowing from the definitive approval of the constitutions, I repeat that I shall have the answers in November. In the meantime you may easily form guidelines by seeing what is being done in many other congregations with simple vows here in Italy, and in considerably more congregations in France and Belgium. They have received similar approval and are to some extent similar. . . .

Yours devotedly,
✣ Salvator, *Archbishop of Seleucia*

Meanwhile, on September 21 Archbishop Gastaldi had his secretary lodge another complaint against Don Bosco for having asked a diocesan pastor to give the clerical garb to one of his young parishioners who wished to enter the Salesian Society.[9] In complete deference to his ecclesiastical superior, Don Bosco replied as follows:

Lanzo, September 27, 1874

Dear Father Chiuso:

I have received the letter in which you inform me of His Excellency's disapproval of my request to have a pastor invest one of our pupils with the clerical habit. Let me explain the circumstances.

[8]Since the first part of the letter has no bearing on the matter at hand, we omit it. [Editor]

[9]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

A charitable person was willing to donate a cassock for this pupil but wished to witness the ceremony. Hence, both the boy and his father called on me on their pastor's behalf to ask if the ceremony could be held in their own village instead of at the Oratory. On the basis of the decree of March [31] 1852,[10] granting me all needed and adequate faculties for the Oratory, I consented. When that decree was issued, I asked the vicar general, Father Ravina of blessed memory, and the provicar Canon Fissore, now archbishop of Vercelli, whether the aforesaid faculties would let me also invest young men with the clerical habit. They both said that I could, on condition that should these clerics ever wish to join the diocesan clergy, they would have to take the examinations prescribed for candidates to the clerical state and for admission to the diocese.

In virtue of this explanation I have bestowed the clerical habit personally or through others for over twenty-two years.

Thus Father Felix Reviglio was invested by Canon Ortalda, and Father Joseph Rocchietti, the pastor of St. Egidius, by the vicar forane of Castelnuovo d'Asti. And so it was with many others who in due time took the regular test, prior to being admitted to the seminary.

Please note that the decree in question does not say "We delegate" but "We grant." However, though I am convinced that I have not exceeded the concession made in regard to the above, I shall in the future scrupulously abide by whatever pleases my ecclesiastical superior.

I beg you to inform His Excellency of this reply to the letter you wrote to me in his name.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

The above explanations were of no use. In a more detailed letter, the archbishop again sent word to Don Bosco through his secretary that he no longer had the faculty of giving the clerical habit to boys intending to join the diocesan clergy, since the Oratory was no longer considered a diocesan seminary as it once had been,[11] and that this was the policy maintained in the apostolic schools of Turin. Finally, he informed him that the boy he had invested did not intend to stay in the Salesian Congregation but simply planned to get a free education and then leave.[12]

Firmly convinced that he was acting in conformity with the

[10]*See* Vol. IV, p. 527. [Editor]
[11]*See* Vol. III, pp. 428ff. [Editor]
[12]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

sacred canons and that Don Bosco, disregarding all admonitions, systematically and frequently exceeded the faculties granted him by the Holy See, Archbishop Gastaldi now appealed directly to the Pope.

From his lengthy statement of facts, we can clearly see why his way of acting put him in constant formal opposition to Don Bosco, though he "had no other purpose than to give glory to God" and "follow in the footsteps of St. Charles in governing [his] clergy and [his] entire flock":

Turin, October 4, 1874

Holy Father:

I trust that it will not displease Your Holiness if I explain my reasons for this letter.

As soon as I returned from Santa Margherita Ligure, where I wrote a long letter to you only last July 29, I immediately sent for Canon Louis Anglesio, the successor of Canon Joseph Cottolengo in the direction of the famous institution founded by the latter in Turin. As I wrote, he is a singularly saintly man whom I often seek out for advice. I earnestly begged him to examine my conduct and tell me sincerely *coram Domino* whatever he might find reprehensible, bidding him to take all the time he needed for such an examination. After a while he called on me to say that he found nothing objectionable in my conduct as archbishop; on the contrary, he could only approve all the measures I had taken for the administration of this archdiocese.

Despite this, I do not presume to claim that I am blameless. In fact, I would gladly have Your Holiness appoint a bishop, well informed of the situation, to examine my conduct and regime.

The archbishop of Vercelli would really be in a position to pass true judgment on the matter. He was born and reared in the diocese of Turin, took his degree in theology and in civil and canon law, and has been a provicar, cathedral canon, and later vicar general for several years. He is pious, prudent, alert, and accustomed to seeing things under all aspects, not just under one or two only, as most people do; he knows my clergy and the business I have at hand. Better than anyone else, he can pass proper judgment on my government of this diocese.

The bishops of Asti, Alba and Pinerolo can likewise judge the situation truthfully. The bishop of Alba was one of the first professors of theology and church history here in Turin. Having taught for thirty-two years, from 1835 until 1867, he personally knows most of the diocesan clergy, has a firm grasp of the situation, knows what is to be done and

what I am doing, and is therefore eminently qualified to judge with full knowledge of the facts. I am ready to state fully the principles that have guided me in everything I have done and in the regime I have adopted for this diocese to whatever bishop or committee of bishops Your Holiness may entrust the task.

In the meantime I can assure Your Holiness that I never had, nor have now, any other goal than to give glory to God and promote religion, and that, as far as I can, I intend to follow in the footsteps of St. Charles [Borromeo] in governing my clergy and my entire flock.

Like St. Charles, one of my most acute griefs is that I am forced to complain about a disorder caused by one who, while not guilty of malicious intent, is still rather exclusively interested in the concerns of the body he heads, thereby hindering the well-being of the diocese in which this body exists. St. Charles, after entrusting his Arona seminary to the Jesuits, was soon sorry because they were steering his best seminarians into their own Society. Therefore he removed them from its direction. By this act he did not show himself to be any less a friend to the Jesuits, but continued to protect and hold them in high esteem. The same now happens to me in regard to the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, founded and governed by Father John Bosco. Quite unintentionally this Congregation considerably keeps upsetting the regime of my own seminarians, and it may well continue to upset it if Your Holiness does not pronounce *a decisive word.* This I earnestly, humbly and fervently implore.

The Very Reverend Don Bosco has performed a most praiseworthy service in devising new methods of Christian education for youth. God generously blessed him and rightly has Your Holiness favored him. In the beginning his work was purely *diocesan* in nature, and then there was no friction, nor could there have been any, with Turin's archbishop, who in fact saw Don Bosco's house as a diocesan seminary, all the more valuable since Turin's seminary remained closed from 1848 to 1863.

But when Don Bosco's work developed beyond all expectations and spread into other dioceses, he conceived the idea of shaping it into a *regular Congregation* whose members should depend solely on its rector, *independent* of episcopal authority. When he asked my opinion I concurred, and, consequently, wrote several letters commending his Congregation to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. However, I never ceased to urge the establishment of a novitiate, during which time aspirants should not be engaged in teaching or supervising boys but should only devote themselves to the exercise of piety, mortification, and ascetical studies, such as is done in novitiates of all religious congregations. By doing otherwise, I said: 1. the members will lack the con-

stancy essential to the solidity of a congregation; 2. many boys will enter lightly, enticed by a life which conflicts but slightly with their self-love, and they will not persevere, but will eventually leave the diocesan seminary, after bringing considerable restlessness to their fellow seminarians. I also thought and hoped that all the applicants to Don Bosco's Congregation would come from the ranks of boys trained and educated in his schools, and that the diocesan seminary would not be upset in its necessary discipline.

But Don Bosco never cared to establish a novitiate like those of other congregations. Even now all his novices are busy teaching, tutoring or supervising. They work hard, it is true, but they do not have to combat self-love or dedicate themselves at length to ascetical or theological studies; rather, they are catering to a youthful urge for authority.

Furthermore, he maintains an open-door policy for any seminarian of mine who wishes to join his Congregation, even without my knowledge and against my wishes; he even admits clerics whom, after a thorough testing, I have rejected as unsuited to the priestly ministry. This breaks down the prestige of episcopal authority. I have asked him to desist from such practices. I sent a cathedral canon to make him realize the impropriety of his action. I had him admonished by the bishop of Vigevano, and recently again through Attorney Menghini, summist of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, who came to Turin from Rome last week. But it was all to no avail. He replied that the sacred canons give him the right to accept anyone into his Congregation and that, having sought advice in Rome (I do not know from whom), he was told not to hinder vocations, regardless of the fact that most of my own clerics—indeed all who enter his Congregation without my consent to spend a few years there for their own convenience—are not there because they feel called to the religious life, but either because they find Don Bosco's discipline less severe, or because they prefer to be teachers or aides in his Congregation rather than students in my seminary; sometimes, too, this happens because of financial reasons or a certain contempt for the rector of the seminary.

Consider, for example, Torrazza, a young seminarian for several years. He was admonished several times that his conduct did not befit a candidate to the priesthood. He failed to correct himself, and so last summer I told him to discard his cassock. Rather than abide by the decision of his bishop, he went to Don Bosco, who without a word to me accepted him into his house at Casale. I learned this today, quite by accident. Such action naturally encourages unruly clerics to flout both the seminary rector and the archbishop. When admonished and threatened, they say to their companions and even to their superiors, "I know where

to go if I am dismissed. Don Bosco will take me in. In spite of the archbishop you'll see me at the altar, in the confessional and in the pulpit!" This is precisely what that cleric Torrazza said openly and implicitly, and what the cleric Rocca, too, said two years ago when he left my seminary at midyear without taking leave of anybody. He, too, was immediately accepted by Don Bosco. Again, two years ago the cleric Milano, while still my seminarian, received a letter from the director of one of Don Bosco's houses, inviting him to go there as a teacher. Without saying a word to anybody, and with no certificate, he went there without telling me, and was admitted. Two years later he left because he refused to take vows, and he returned to me, demanding that I give him credit for his two years of teaching, though he took no philosophy or theology.

These are examples of what would have happened daily in my seminary had I not reacted in the way that I did and still feel to be my grave duty.

Now, may it please Your Holiness to allow me to set down a few principles I see as self-evident, and then to draw the practical conclusions that logically flow from them:

1. The Church's first, most urgent need is that every parish have pastors full of God's spirit and endowed with the necessary knowledge because nowadays even the remotest village, once isolated, is touched by the world's turmoil in a thousand different ways. It is also necessary that these pastors be assisted by an adequate number of holy, learned priests.

2. Should the pastors and assistants not meet these standards, this grave deficiency could not be adequately overcome by any number of religious, no matter how learned or saintly, because their work is necessarily restricted to specific areas. Their scattered appearance in individual parishes is like a downpour of rain which fills the ditches and floods the countryside for a short time but does not have the effect of a slow steady rain or of the dew which soaks the ground all year long, rendering it fertile and fruitful.

3. The first preoccupation of a bishop, therefore, and his first thought and desire, must be to provide each of his parishes with pastors and assistants who are learned, saintly, hard-working and ready for sacrifice.

4. To attain so sacred, vital and indispensable a goal, one must use a tried system that has been recognized by the Council of Trent as necessary, and as, indeed, almost the only fully effective one: namely the creation, maintenance, promotion and proper establishment of diocesan seminaries, the lack of which cannot be made up in any way.

5. To achieve their purpose, these seminaries must be run according to a sound discipline permeated with God's spirit; they need, too, ade-

quate financial support.

6. In this regard, the present laws have deprived the seminaries of my diocese of more than 40,000 lire per year. I cannot therefore maintain them unless the philosophy and theology students (approximately 150 in number) pay an average monthly fee of sixteen lire. Any objection to this would attack the very existence and preservation of these sacred institutions.

7. Discipline should be such as to make the seminary fully resemble a religious house and the house in which Our Lord trained His first apostles. Seminarians should be schooled in all virtues necessary to their state, so that on becoming priests they may be religious in substance, if not in all aspects of the religious life. The fine discipline presented by St. Charles in the constitutions of his seminaries has, is, and always will be in considerable contrast to human passions, which are common to all people, even young clerics.

8. A cleric who sees several religious houses open to him for continuing his studies at no cost may easily be led to leave a seminary even if he pays only sixteen lire a month. If his example is followed by several others, seminary income will lessen considerably as many others may leave if that modest fee is not lowered, and it would amount to nothing at all. In the case of an extremely poor cleric, people can always be found to come to his aid, and I personally pay half the fees of such a cleric.

9. Moreover, a cleric who dislikes seminary discipline, who must often be reprimanded, who has no taste for daily study, and who sees that he could instantly become a teacher or aide by entering Don Bosco's house, where he would no longer have the burden of daily lectures, will easily go to Don Bosco under the pretext of a vocation. He knows he does not need his archbishop's consent and can go even against his will. If others follow his example, as many most certainly will, and the archbishop has no way to stop it, it is obvious that the seminary will suffer painfully. All too often superiors will have to close an eye to infractions, lessen admonitions and corrections, and slacken discipline to the grave detriment of clerical formation, lest the seminary be forsaken by a large number of clerics who will flock to Don Bosco, not in an effort to increase their piety, fervor or activity, but to find less discipline and greater permissiveness in everything.

10. Don Bosco's houses offer yet another attraction: the possibility of being ordained *titulo mensae communis*. True, only those who are perpetually professed may be thus ordained, but by the same token those perpetual vows may be dispensed by Don Bosco. Regrettably, easy dispensations are the reason why such vows are all too frequently taken

quite lightly. My seminary has never placed an obstacle before a cleric who showed a vocation for religious life; several have become Jesuits, Capuchins or Vincentians. But the novitiate one has to undergo in these and similar orders is such that no youth will be attracted by worldly considerations. Before leaving the seminary to enter such orders as these, clerics have sought their superiors' advice, prayed at great length, studied the matter thoroughly, and finally taken a decision which their archbishop could not but approve.

However, the kind of novitiate required in Don Bosco's houses offers various earthly attractions, as I have described above. Not one of all the clerics who left my seminary to enter his houses (all without my knowledge and without testimonials) or did so after being dismissed by me with an explicit order or with a suggestion to take off the clerical habit asked for advice. No one showed any indication that he was going there with the intention of leading a more perfect life. All, without exception, made it clear that they were going for financial reasons or because they could not stand seminary discipline or because they were determined to be ordained despite the adverse judgment of their own archbishop.

Unfortunately my diocese sees much evil side by side with good. Among my priests are some who are saintly, but there are also many—I say, many, and with tears—who are completely unworthy of their priesthood from every standpoint. They are given to drink and licentiousness and completely lack God's spirit.

Increasingly year by year the number of priests has dwindled to a fourth of what it once was, and those few new priests are barely enough to meet our needs. It is therefore absolutely necessary that those few be good, and even excellent. Hence I must keep my seminary in the best possible state. This is my tireless endeavor and my daily concern.

I must not be disturbed in any phase of my administration, especially in the training of my seminarians. It is evident, instead, that Don Bosco's ways, as described above, do disturb me beyond words. Therefore—and this is the judgment which I beg of Your Holiness—I pray that you explicitly forbid the rector of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in Turin *to accept, in any one of his houses, any of my clerics as a novice, student or anything else without my written consent. Likewise, he is not to accept without my consent any cleric of mine whom I may have ordered to discard the clerical habit.* I pray that this be done as soon as possible.

Don Bosco is free to gather as many boys as he wants in his houses, educate them, choose from their number as many members for his Congregation as he wishes, and promote them to Holy Orders. In this I am ready to lend all my help. He may likewise accept as many laymen

of my diocese as he desires and make priests of them. I will joyfully give him all my support as long as I give them the examinations prescribed by the Council of Trent. But he is not to upset my seminary. He is not to receive any of my seminarians or diocesan clerics whom I have judged to be unsuited to the priesthood. If any seminarian of mine reveals a genuine vocation for the above-mentioned Congregation, he shall not be prevented from entering, but I feel it is only fair that I personally examine that vocation and pass judgment on it.

I think it pertinent to enclose for your information a true copy of a letter written to me by Don Bosco last September 10. To understand its contents, Your Holiness should know that this priest sent a printed invitation to the pastors of my diocese, inviting municipal school teachers to attend a spiritual retreat in his house at Lanzo. This invitation was sent to the pastors of my diocese and I was not consulted or even sent a copy. Bear in mind that the majority of school teachers are priests under my jurisdiction and in no way subject to Don Bosco. When I learned of this, I had my secretary send him a memo, reminding him that before sending such an invitation he ought to have sought my permission, and that I would willingly have given it with only the request that he send me the names of the preachers and that next time he inform me in advance. It must also be noted that at that time I was holding three consecutive spiritual retreats for my priests.

Don Bosco sent the enclosed letter in reply. Various passages, as my vicar general read them, were anything but reverent toward a bishop, particularly toward one's own ordinary. However, I leave the judgment to Your Holiness, to whose wisdom and authority I submit myself and all I have said and done.

Humbly kissing your sacred feet, and invoking your blessing on myself, my clergy and my diocese, I remain

Your most humble son,
✠Lawrence, *Archbishop of Turin*

The archbishop had made the following three notations on Don Bosco's letter of September 10, which he enclosed with his letter:

1. That the publication by *Unità Cattolica* of the invitation sent out to pastors, without a copy being given to the archbishop, had not been done without Don Bosco's knowledge.

2. That the sermons and retreats referred to in the letter concerned members of the Congregation and their pupils, and that no outsiders had been thereto invited.

3. That, therefore, the letter was irreverent.

The vicar general, Monsignor Zappata, who had declared the letter to be "anything but reverent in many passages," did not fail to admonish Don Bosco in writing. Don Bosco's reply, accompanied by two printed copies of the approved constitutions, was as follows:

Turin, October 11, 1874

Very Reverend Vicar General:

Your kindly comments on my letter to the archbishop have convinced me that I should have voiced my thoughts in another manner and with other words. I certainly had no intention of offending anybody, least of all my ecclesiastical superior.

Please kindly assure His Excellency that my intent was to speak with my accustomed confidence and frankness, and that I humbly beg his indulgence for any expression that may have displeased him.

I also beg you to assure him that, far from intending to annoy him, I have always tried to lessen his aggravations, several times succeeding even with considerable sacrifice.

Assure him of my wish to live in full harmony with him and all his diocesan prescriptions. I intend to observe them just as I do those of other bishops, especially those bishops in whose dioceses we have houses of our Congregation.

Tell him that of his priests who once belonged to the Salesian Congregation not one has given him cause for complaint by censurable conduct, and that I hope they never will. Indeed, some fifty are now exerting all their energy in his archdiocese.

I am convinced that in all I have said and done I have been acting within the limits given to me by the diocesan authority, and that were His Excellency to deal with this definitively approved Congregation as he does with others, he would see that we do not stray from our tasks, and that we would be happy to be warned whenever we fail in anything.

Assure him of my duty to uphold the observance of our constitutions exactly as they have been approved, and to consecrate those few days of life, which God mercifully still grants me, to countless improvements which are exceedingly difficult to make because of the nature of my institute and the times in which we live. I need what indulgence the ordinaries can grant me without jeopardy to their own authority.

Some days ago I sent a printed copy of our constitutions to Rome for comparison with the original. Though I have not yet had a reply I am enclosing a copy for you and one for His Excellency. In case of any in-

accuracy in comparison with the original, I shall hasten to inform you.

Thank you for the benefits granted to this house. I ask that you remember me in your kind prayers.

Your devoted servant,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Please forgive my scribble. I did not want to use a secretary, and my eyesight is of little help.

He mentioned his problems in a letter to Archbishop Vitelleschi, who, apologizing for the delay, replied to him on October 1: "How are you faring with your constitutions? In strictest confidence let me tell you that the archbishop has sent a list of queries or, rather, requests for explanations about the implementation of the aforesaid constitutions. He will have a reply in November, but I would think doubts are popping up where there is no call for any. Please remember me in your prayers."[13]

In view of this situation, especially the highly confidential information of Archbishop Gastaldi's list of queries concerning the practice of the constitutions—evidently the Holy Father had mentioned Archbishop Gastaldi's letter to Archbishop Vitelleschi or Cardinal Bizzarri—Don Bosco thought it wise and necessary to send the following memo on his difficulties to Cardinal Bizzarri, prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars:

Turin, October 12, 1874

Your Eminence:

The Society of St. Francis de Sales, which on many occasions benefited by your kindly influence, has always been treated most considerately by all the bishops with whom it deals. Doubts concerning implementation of certain articles of the constitutions have disturbed only the archbishop of Turin. I now detail the objects of these doubts and beg that you charitably advise me. The facts are as follows:

1. Prior to admitting any Salesian to Holy Orders, the archbishop of Turin demands that, forty days before, the candidate report to him with the following information: name, surname, birthplace, elementary and secondary school education prior to entering the Congregation, number of years he has been in it, whether he has made triennial or perpetual

[13]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

vows and when, what prompted him to enter the Congregation, whether he is satisfied with his lot, why he left his own diocese, and so on.

Such a rigorous examination of religious who have tranquilly followed their vocation for years has considerably disturbed some, causing qualms of conscience. Nevertheless, *pro bono pacis* we agreed to these demands.

2. The archbishop then sent word that he would admit none of our candidates to Holy Orders unless I gave him written assurance that I would not accept any former seminarian from his diocese. It should be remembered that in conformity with the declarations of Benedict XIV and of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in 1837 in the dispute between the bishop of Pinerolo and the Oblates (*Collectanea*, pp. 474-480) and with the declaration of 1859 (*Collectanea*, pp. 724-725), it would seem that an ordinary may not prevent clerics and priests of his diocese from entering a religious order if they feel called to it, since it is a more perfect state. Still, even in this the wishes of the archbishop were heeded, and we made this declaration with the proviso that I intended to abide by the prescriptions of the Church which safeguard the freedom of a religious vocation. This clause irritated him, so that he did not consider the statement valid.

This caused a certain coolness and discouragement among the Salesians. Seeing that they were openly opposed and refused Orders, some decided to leave the Congregation.

3. Another point at issue is the matter of spiritual retreats which we have been holding for laymen and priests for over twenty-six years. To clarify the situation, let me point out that in 1844 Archbishop Fransoni of glorious memory formally granted the faculty of holding triduums, novenas and spiritual retreats in our churches without limitations of age or category of persons. This faculty was confirmed by Archbishop Riccardi, and on several occasions the present archbishop personally preached these retreats. We had no complaints. In fact, we were always encouraged in a practice which was considered a very effective means for the spiritual welfare of the faithful, and it was done—and is being done—by all the local religious institutes.

When the archbishop learned that we intended to hold a regular spiritual retreat in our school at Lanzo at the beginning of September of this year, restricted to a select group and not for the general public, he sent word that "such retreats could not be held without permission of the ecclesiastical authority."

We obeyed and canceled the retreat. But on the 15th of that month, when the Salesians gathered in the same school for their customary annual retreat, the archbishop wrote to the vicar forane of Lanzo, instruct-

ing him to obtain from me the names and surnames of all retreatants not belonging to our Congregation and of the preachers and confessors.

The vicar forane of Lanzo, pious, learned and prudent, acted in all charity and tried to satisfy the archbishop by telling him that he himself was preaching with Don Bosco and that all the retreatants were Salesians.

The archbishop was not mollified, but wrote several other letters, asking the same things over and over again and adding other demands. Among other things he threatened to deny Orders to one of our clerics who after a two-year delay had finally been admitted. From the enclosed letters you will easily understand how upset and discouraged were the preachers, the confessors and the more than three hundred members of our houses who had assembled there peacefully for a spiritual retreat.

I now present the following doubts, and beg you to advise me accordingly.

1. Has the ordinary authority to examine minutely the vocation of professed religious who have lived for a number of years in the Congregation? (I do not refer here to theology examinations, to which our members have always submitted, and still do submit.)

2. May the archbishop forbid the superior of a religious congregation to accept clerics or priests who apply?

3. Must—or, rather, may—this superior declare that he will not accept such clerics, as requested?

4. Does the superior of a congregation, in accordance with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent (Session V, Chapter 2) and the declaration of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (*Collectanea*, pp. 257, 313, 303, 430), have the authority to gather in any of his houses or schools teachers or diocesan priests who wish to take part in moral conferences or spiritual retreats?

5. May the ordinary, during a spiritual retreat for religious, investigate either personally or through others the identity of preachers, confessors and retreatants not belonging to our Congregation?

I assure you that, whatever your answer or advice, the Salesians will treasure it as a safe norm to be followed faithfully. In offering steadfast homage to the Holy See by the exact observance of the constitutions it has approved, I also intend the Salesians to be most obliging to their ordinaries to whose assistance they have dedicated themselves.

Please bear gently with me for the trouble I am giving you and accept my deepest gratitude and respect.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

Some days later the Holy Father sent Archbishop Gastaldi's letter to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. After reading the memorandums of the archbishop and of Don Bosco, Archbishop Vitelleschi sketched a few notes in preparation for a discussion to be held by the members of the Sacred Congregation. "What a coincidence!" he exclaimed. "Five queries on one side and five on the other!"

The friendly Cardinal Berardi was also briefed about these disagreements and vexations. Toward the end of October he assured Don Bosco that he had hinted to the right persons how an end could be put to these unpleasant conflicts:

Rome, October 26, 1874

Dear Don Bosco:

My three months' stay at Ceccano for my health—which now, thank God, has sufficiently improved—kept me from meeting the professor you introduced to me and from receiving your message. I regret having missed this opportunity, but I trust that there will be other occasions to make up for it.

Though I am delighted to hear that your worthy Congregation is doing excellently in all ways, I am very sorry to learn that a subtle war of nerves is being waged against it. Most confidentially I want you to know that the prelate in question writes very often, attacking you for one reason or other, his principal complaint being that you are luring youths from his seminary and jurisdiction to the jeopardy of his archdiocese. I have already suggested to the right persons what to do in order to end these unpleasant conflicts, and I pray that the Lord will bless my initiative and second my plan. . . .

Yours devotedly,
✠ Joseph Cardinal Berardi

The following month Don Bosco sent his dear friend a concise report on the difficulties facing him, along with a memorandum on "the causes for the friction existing with the archbishop" so that he might be fully informed about the situation.

Turin, November 7, 1874

Your Eminence:

I am most grateful for your gracious letter and thank you cordially

for the information. That you may have a correct idea regarding the fear that I lure priests and clerics from their ordinary's jurisdiction, let me explain a few things.

First of all, as regards the admission of novices, I have always abided by the directives of Benedict XIV and the deliberations of the authoritative Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. The archbishop, however, relentlessly demanded a written assurance from me that I would not accept any cleric of his in our Congregation; otherwise he would no longer admit any of our clerics to ordination. *Pro bono pacis* I yielded but added: save for the Church's prescriptions safeguarding the freedom of religious vocations. He disliked this condition, and matters reverted to their former state.

Many of our students enter the diocesan seminary, but some cannot manage to get into the good graces of the youthful rector and are consequently dismissed and struck off the diocesan register despite their good qualities. These poor youths return to us to continue their studies or to learn a trade that may enable them to earn a living, but the ordinary is dead-set against allowing anyone to give them attention. Thus to leave a youth to the streets after having previously lavished much care on him seems sheer cruelty to me. Today I accepted one such youth. Before leaving the seminary, he begged the chancery for a letter of recommendation. They wrote it, but the archbishop required that he fetch it from him. Upon being queried as to his plans, the young man did his utmost to avoid a clear answer. "Tell me, or I shall not give you this testimonial," the archbishop warned him.

"In that case," the good youth replied, "I will tell you that I am going to Don Bosco."

"If that is where you are going, I shall never give it to you," the archbishop replied. "Go anywhere you want, but not to Don Bosco!" He has said the same thing to others, and even to some priests who were educated here at the Oratory.

I assure Your Eminence that we keep praying for your good health. Please bear with me, and remember me and this house in your kindly prayers.

Most gratefully yours,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Use the enclosed memorandum as you see fit. Pass it on either to Archbishop Vitelleschi or to Cardinal Bizzarri, or destroy it if you wish.

MEMORANDUM

I think it opportune to enclose a memorandum explaining the causes for the friction existing with the archbishop. In my opinion, they are due to unfounded information that some people give him. I will cite a few instances:

1. The archbishop was made to believe that Father Chiapale and Father Pignolo belonged to this Congregation. Neither has ever belonged to us.

2. Several persons worked as monitors or teachers in the deaf-mute home and gave a poor account of themselves; indeed, they behaved badly. Without passing judgment, it is a fact that none of them were ever Salesians.

3. It is alleged that many members left this Congregation and caused much trouble in the dioceses that received them. I can give every assurance that up to 1874 only one member has left our Congregation, and this is Chevalier Oreglia, now Father Frederic Oreglia. He was a lay Salesian and decided to leave in order to join the Jesuits and pursue his studies in their Order.

4. The archbishop was made to believe that I was printing or had printed certain private letters of his. He sent me several letters about this. Such a thing never even crossed my mind.

5. I sent out a simple invitation for a routine spiritual retreat and the archbishop told me that it had been a circular addressed to all pastors. Neither I nor any other person acting on my behalf ever addressed such an invitation to pastors.

6. I wrote to the archbishop trying to persuade him that this retreat, which was to be held from September 7 to September 13, had been canceled, but someone immediately reported to him that Don Bosco, flaunting his disrespect for his ecclesiastical superior, had started the said retreat at Lanzo.

7. The vicar forane of Lanzo assured him that only members of our Congregation were making the retreat, but someone instantly tried to persuade the archbishop of the contrary. Consequently the retreat was gravely upset and everybody was highly displeased.

I could go on with a long list of similar instances. Now what conclusion can be drawn from such facts?

I am disheartened at having to struggle with other grave obstacles while bearing the brunt of this state of affairs.

If you have any suggestions, please hold them until next week, because today, being quite penniless, I am setting out in search of money. I shall be away a whole week.

Difficulties piled up unceasingly. At the beginning of November, Father Francis Paglia reported to the chancery, bearing the following recommendation:

Turin, November 2, 1874

The undersigned certifies that Father Francis Paglia of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales has completed his course of moral theology at the Convitto Ecclesiastico, which he has attended more than two years.

To be able to contribute to the spiritual welfare of the faithful by hearing confessions, the undersigned recommends him to His Excellency the archbishop to be admitted to the proper examination.

Fr. John Bosco

The archbishop refused under the pretext that Father Paglia had not yet taken perpetual vows, although Don Bosco had the Holy Father's authorization to grant a dispensation.

On another occasion, Father Rua called on the archbishop and asked him to ordain a few clerics during the Advent ember days. The response was that the archbishop would not ordain any Salesian as long as former seminarians were accepted in Salesian houses.

Once more Don Bosco wrote to him:

Turin, November 10, 1874

Your Excellency,

. . . I ask you to believe me when I say that up to now no cleric expelled from the Turin seminary has ever belonged to our Congregation, either as a professed member or as a novice. At most, very few, finding themselves homeless, came for a short period, but left as soon as they could find accommodations elsewhere; others came to make a spiritual retreat prior to leaving the clerical state, as the cleric Borelli did. All were asked to get Your Excellency's consent, and when it was refused, they were denied admission.

Please be good enough to believe me when I say that if I did decide to offer temporary hospitality to those clerics, it was solely to mitigate the resentment of their families and friends who kept spewing abuse against you as one who wanted those former clerics to be forsaken by all.

With this, I humbly implore you graciously to admit our clerics to

Holy Orders. If you see fit to keep up your refusal, at least for my guidance let me know in writing your reasons for doing so.

Whatever your decision, regardless of what is said of me, I can assure you that I have always tried my best to treat my ecclesiastical superior well, as well as the diocese entrusted to him by Divine Providence. This I hope to keep doing for the rest of my life.

Your humble servant,
Fr. John Bosco

Father Rua, too, again appealed to the archbishop, declaring that Don Bosco was willing to do what the prelate asked:

Turin, November 16, 1874

Your Excellency,

I know that after the meeting I was honored to have with Your Excellency, our beloved superior, Don Bosco, sent a letter to you. As a follow-up, let me inform you that Don Bosco is fully disposed to accept no longer any former seminarian of yours without your consent. In fact, after sending you his letter, one called at the Oratory and was not accepted. Furthermore, Don Bosco is willing to have those he already accepted remove their clerical habit. Hence, if this is the only obstacle to the ordination of our clerics, Your Excellency may now admit them to Orders because from now on you will have no reason for complaint on this score.

Please allow me to kiss your hand. From all of us at the Oratory, myself in particular, expect a blessing.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. Michael Rua, *Vice-Rector*

No other way was left to avoid further difficulties but to obtain from the Holy See the faculty to present dimissorials to any bishop. To obtain this Don Bosco wrote to Cardinal Berardi:

Turin, November 18, 1874

Your Eminence:

We are still beset with difficulties because our archbishop keeps creating grave problems for me and never manifests what he has against us poor Salesians. For nearly three years now, he has refused to ordain our clerics, except for one subdeacon last September after a thousand pleas

and difficulties.

Recently I asked him to admit one of our priests to the examination that is a requisite for hearing confessions. He refused on the grounds that this priest had taken only triennial vows. I told him that this was in accordance with our constitutions. "Too bad," he replied. Meanwhile, amid a crying need of confessors, one who is qualified and willing is forced to remain idle.

I also asked him to ordain three of our clerics next Christmas. He again refused, alleging that I was accepting his clerics in our Congregation. I assured him that up to now none of his clerics had been accepted. He refused to believe me and stood firm in denying ordination.

I do not want to make matters worse. I believe that if Your Eminence could obtain for me the Holy Father's permission to have these clerics ordained by a bishop in whose diocese we have a house, I could fill a grave need of ours. This is being done by all other orders and congregations, but I hesitate because our archbishop threatens with many penalties the bishops who would lend themselves to this.

There is another way: the faculty of presenting dimissorial letters to *any bishop*. Several religious orders have obtained this faculty, and the Holy Father himself granted it to the Vincentians. However, I dare not ask. I entrust the matter to your prudence. Archbishop Vitelleschi is most favorable to us in everything, but he can only present the situation, whereas Your Eminence can discuss the matter with the Holy Father.

I hope to visit Rome this winter and to be able to pay you my respects and thank you for your goodness to us Salesians. Meanwhile we daily pray that God will grant you good health for many years to come.

Yours devotedly.
Fr. John Bosco

With the letter he enclosed a petition imploring the above-mentioned faculty of presenting dimissorial letters to any bishop.[14]

Early in December, Archbishop Gastaldi, hearing that Father Louis Guanella of the diocese of Como wished to become a Salesian, wrote to the bishop: "Let Father Guanella be warned that if he comes to this archdiocese he will never have my permission to celebrate Mass, still less to hear confessions." In view of this, the vicar general of Como sent this communication to the archpriest at Prosto:

[14]We also have in our archives the copy of another petition addressed to the Holy Father that same year for permission to request directly from pastors, rather than from ordinaries, testimonial letters for the admission of candidates to the novitiate. [Author]

The bishop orders me to inform you as follows and to ask that you notify the Very Reverend Father Louis Guanella accordingly. His Excellency the archbishop of Turin wrote to the bishop of Como that for reasons of internal government he will not grant permission to celebrate Mass, still less to hear confessions, to the administrator of the parish of Savogno who intends to go to Turin.

Father Louis Guanella should not be upset by this order of His Excellency the archbishop since the reasons do not concern him personally in any way.

Therefore, let the administrator of Savogno be of good heart and postpone any thought of forsaking his parishioners; the permission he had received to leave is herewith revoked. Rather, let him strive to evangelize the people God has entrusted to him with all zeal and energy, coupled with the necessary prudence.

Obviously the chancery of Como did not care to lose the deeply pious and zealous administrator of Savogno, the future founder of the Servants of Charity and of the Daughters of St. Mary of Divine Providence. This unexpected opposition displeased Father Guanella even more, and he wrote to Don Bosco:

Prosto di Chiavenna, December 14, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

I have just received the enclosed note and must admit that I am astonished beyond words. It could be that such a harsh order was instigated by the local police. At the moment I can think of no other explanation. You know the police surveillance I have been subjected to after publishing my booklet *Warnings*, etc. I entrust myself to you and pray that the Lord will disperse these stormy clouds and let me join you soon. I have written to Father Sala and am sending him a telegram to hold up the shipping of his belongings while I write this very day to the bishop of Como and let him know that I welcome Father Sala in my parish just in case I may be accepted in some other school of yours away from Turin. This decree of the archbishop is truly a mystery. What have I got to do with him? I would not have been under his jurisdiction. . . . Pray to the Lord that I may become resigned to it all.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. Louis Guanella

On December 24, Christmas Eve, Archbishop Gastaldi took another step. He sent Don Bosco a decree he had signed on De-

cember 17, 1874, revoking all faculties, favors and privileges granted by him and his predecessors to the Salesian Congregation.

Clearly this stepped-up, high-handed manner of acting created a serious obstacle to the development of the Salesian Society, which needed generous souls to accomplish its apostolate. Before the end of the year, therefore, Don Bosco found himself forced to acquaint the Holy Father with the difficulties which to him seemed to be "obstacles to God's greater glory":

Turin, December 30, 1874

Holy Father:

On April 3 of this year Your Holiness deigned to grant definitive approval to the Salesian Society. By this act of sovereign clemency you made it known that the Salesian Congregation and all its members were placed under the lofty protection and tutelage of the Holy See. By this approval the superior was instructed to promote exact observance of the constitutions and respect for the authority of ordinaries. He was also asked to help them as much as possible in these trying times and in this general scarcity of priests.

The bishops with whom we have had dealings have constantly declared themselves to be our protectors, and, in turn, the Salesians have unanimously and wholeheartedly collaborated with them in the ministry of preaching, catechizing, hearing confessions, saying Mass, conducting schools and so on.

Only with His Excellency the archbishop of Turin have difficulties arisen which seem to hinder the greater glory of God.

1. Besides requiring that our ordinands take theology examinations at the seminary—a request we have always honored—he wants to question them about their religious vocation. We obliged, but then he demanded a written declaration that no former seminarian of his would ever be accepted into our Congregation. We consented under the condition that the sacred canons safeguarding the freedom of religious vocations be respected. He nevertheless continued to complain that we were accepting his seminarians, whereas not one of them belongs to our Congregation.

2. For reasons unknown to us, during the past three years he has refused to ordain our clerics. He made one single exception, after causing a great deal of difficulty, during the ember days of last fall. Hence each ordination means a burden and expense for us, and, as a result, workers in the Lord's vineyard have had to remain idle because of the archbishop's refusal to ordain them.

3. The archbishop has unyieldingly refused to let any diocesan priest enter our Congregation. Examples are Father Ascanio Savio and Father John Olivero, both of them former pupils of ours. Not only that, but as far as he can, he stands in the way of those from other dioceses as well. A month ago he came to know that Father Louis Guanella, a pastor in Lombardy, had decided to join the Salesian Society. Immediately, through the bishop of Como, he had Father Guanella notified that he would never be permitted to celebrate Mass or hear confessions in the Turin archdiocese.

4. He also refuses to admit our priests to examinations for permission to hear confessions. One such case is Father Francis Paglia, who is in his eighth year of theological studies. At first the archbishop adduced that he had not attended lectures in the diocesan seminary, then that he had not undergone the yearly examinations, and finally that he, the archbishop, had no time to look into this matter. When all these excuses fell through, he gave the reason that Father Paglia was not perpetually professed and so could not be allowed to take the test. But this is in accordance with our constitutions and no other ordinary raises the slightest difficulty. Besides, has not Your Holiness decreed that in all religious orders simple temporary vows be made before the solemn perpetual vows?

5. Ordinaries who have Salesian houses within their dioceses very willingly grant all those faculties that may redound to the good of souls. So also did the ordinaries of Turin, including Archbishop Gastaldi himself. Besides this approval, they also granted many privileges, such as administering Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction, conducting funeral rites for the residents of our houses, holding triduums, novenas and spiritual retreats, imparting Benediction with the Blessed Sacrament, conducting the Forty Hours devotion, and so on. But now, by a decree of December 17, these faculties which effectively contribute to the good of souls have been revoked, as you can see from the enclosed copy of the decree and from the letters addressed to the undersigned last August and September.

6. Because of the decrease of priests stemming from the archbishop's refusal to ordain our candidates, the decrease of confessors because applicants cannot take the required test, and the revocation of ordinary faculties so useful especially to a young congregation, we could not open schools where requests were made and can hardly exercise our priestly ministry in favor of poor abandoned boys, notwithstanding many invitations.

I have mentioned these facts not to lodge accusations or complaints, but only to remove obstacles to God's greater glory. I humbly implore

Your Holiness to keep the Salesians under your fatherly protection and to advise us as you judge best for the good of souls.

Proud to pay you homage, I implore your apostolic blessing upon all the Salesians, and especially upon my poor self.

Most gratefully yours,
Fr. John Bosco

We will close our narrative with two comments. The first, by Father Rua, is recorded in the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification and canonization]: "It was evident that Don Bosco was suffering. At times I saw him weep for the grief he felt at being at variance with his superior, with whom he wanted perfect harmony as they helped each other in promoting God's greater glory. At times I even heard him exclaim: 'There is so much good to be done, and I am so hindered that I cannot do it!' "

The second comment is by Don Bosco. When some of us asked him how he could ever have suggested the promotion of Bishop Gastaldi to the archdiocese of Turin—naturally he had done it in the belief that it would be advantageous, since he knew how much the prelate loved and favored his institute—he answered humbly, "Because I put more trust in men than in God!"

And now, having followed his long, patient toil for the definitive approval of the constitutions, what can we resolve to do so as to please him most? "Let us resolve to read carefully from time to time the text approved by the Holy See so as to understand thoroughly his spirit and live according to it in an exemplary manner!"

Let us not forget his insistent recommendations:

"Abhor," he wrote to each director even before attaining his goal,[15] "as poison revisions of the constitutions. Their exact observance is better than any revision. The best is the enemy of the good."

"Let us strive," he said later in presenting the approved constitutions to his confreres, "to observe our constitutions without trying to improve or reform them. 'If the Salesians,' said our great benefactor Pius IX, 'without pretending to make their constitu-

[15]Cf. *Ricordi confidenziali ai Direttori. 1871*, Chapter 8, No. 7, "Members of the Society," Art. 4. [Editor]

tions better, take care to observe them carefully, their Society will flourish ever more and more.' "[16]

This was the constant exhortation of our most revered father until the end of his days. As late as August 16, 1884 he wrote to our dear Father Bonetti, councilor of the Superior Chapter and later catechist general, from Pinerolo: "Throughout your whole life preach this: Do not reform our rules, but observe them. Anyone seeking reform deforms his way of life. Constantly urge the exact observance of our constitutions. Remember: *Qui timet Deum nihil negligit* [He who fears God neglects nothing—Eccl. 7, 19], and *Qui spernit modica paulatim decidet* [He who spurns small things shall fall little by little—Eccl. 10, 1].

Thus our Society will faithfully pursue its goal through "the attainment of Christian perfection by its members" and "every work of spiritual charity on behalf of the young, especially of the poorer classes." Our first work of charity will always be "to gather together poor and neglected boys in order to teach them the truths of the faith, especially on Sundays and holy days. As far as possible, houses should be opened" for the needier ones, "where, through the assistance of Divine Providence, they will be provided with lodging, food and clothing. And while they will be instructed in the truths of the Catholic faith, they shall also be trained in some trade or craft." At the same time "boys who show special aptitude for study and are of good moral conduct shall be trained in piety," always giving "preference to the poorest among them, because they would not be able to pursue their studies elsewhere, provided they hold out some hope of a priestly vocation."

Let us always bear in mind that providing new priests for the Church, both in developed and undeveloped countries, was the lifelong aspiration and untiring work of our sainted founder!

[16]*See* the first Italian version of the constitutions (1875), p. xxxv. [Author]

CHAPTER 8

Teacher and Father—1871-74

ANYONE doing an in-depth study of Don Bosco's life for a thorough knowledge of his characteristic virtues will find that this chapter will give him a better grasp of the saint's singular wisdom and fatherly goodness. We report several meaningful episodes and many warm exhortations which kept springing from his heart whenever and wherever he spoke with anyone, especially when he visited a Salesian house. We include, too, an impressive list of documents that illustrate, as preceding volumes have done, his affectionate, tireless zeal as he educated boys to piety and virtue through his "Good Nights," *strenne* and "Suggestions for the Summer Vacation." They also pinpoint the wise, concentrated efforts he made from 1871 to 1874 to encourage his spiritual sons in faithful adherence to religious life.

Here he saw fit to proceed slowly, step by step, because, as the saying goes, haste makes waste, and, as he often said, the best is the enemy of the good. "If Don Bosco had stated bluntly that he intended to make religious of us," Cardinal Cagliero often declared, "none of us might have stayed at the Oratory to become Salesians." Even during the years when he labored intensely to win definitive approval of the Salesian constitutions, Don Bosco always proceeded with the utmost discretion.

This chapter shall include several items: first his "Confidential Souvenirs" sent to all Salesian directors in 1871 and again two or three times in later years in order that the same warm, sacred family life of the Oratory might be lived in all other houses; second, important summaries of the General Conferences held once a year or more often; third, numerous interesting recollections of his holy apostolate during the spiritual retreats at Lanzo as he preached, heard confessions and personally interviewed all the confreres. Finally, we close with seven simple, magnificent circular letters in which he outlined the life program of the Salesians.

We have reached a very interesting period in our sainted founder's life which will prove precious and helpful to all who are committed to his spirit, especially to those who must teach others to follow his lead.

1. INCOMPARABLE!

Always and everywhere Don Bosco was singularly kind. Toward 1871 Francis Alemanno, a young laborer from Villamiroglio (Alessandria) who had moved to Turin with his family, began coming to the Valdocco Oratory on Sundays. His father was sexton of Immaculate Conception Parish in Borgo San Donato, and the boy served daily Mass at Good Shepherd Institute. Invited to come to the Oratory, he chanced upon Don Bosco on his very first visit. It was Awards Day and Don Bosco was presiding. After church services a small lottery was held and Alemanno won a tie, which he put on at once.

"What is your name?" Don Bosco asked him.

"Francis Alemanno."

"Have you been here before?"

"No, Father!"

"Do you know anybody?"

"I know the priest who comes to say Mass every morning at Good Shepherd."

"Do you know Don Bosco?"

The youngster hesitated a moment; then he glanced up timidly and said: "You are Don Bosco!"

"But do you know me?"

"Now I do!"

"You will know me well if you let me help your soul."

"That's just what I am looking for—a friend who will take care of me."

"Well," Don Bosco concluded, "this evening you won a tie, and I will tie you with it to the Oratory so tightly that you won't ever go away."

Young Alemanno, in fact, continued to frequent the Oratory assiduously, joined the Salesian Society with perpetual vows, and died on September 5, 1885. In 1893 Father Francesia published

his biography in an issue of *Letture Cattoliche*, particularly stressing his youth.

In 1871 eleven-year-old Paul Perrona of Valperga Canavese entered the Oratory as a student. Rather shy, with no acquaintances, he always kept on the sidelines watching his companions at play. One morning after Holy Mass, as he munched his bread roll, leaning as usual against a column of the portico, he saw a priest leave the church only to be instantly surrounded by boys flocking to him from all sides. He greeted all with a smile, asking questions and having a word for each.

Who can he be? Perrona wondered.

He went up and heard him explain some sort of riddle to another new student: A + B - C—meaning in Italian: *Allegro, più Buono, meno Cattivo.*[1] The gist of it was: To be Don Bosco's friend, you must try to be cheerful and better yourself. While this was going on, young Perrona was wondering if the priest was Don Bosco, but his thoughts were cut short as Don Bosco turned to him affectionately. "Who are you, son?" he asked. "What's your name? When did you come?"

"Paul Perrona. I'm from Valperga, and I got here a couple of days ago," the boy answered promptly.

"Do you want to be Don Bosco's friend too?"

"Certainly, but I haven't met Don Bosco yet."

General laughter greeted his candid answer, as everyone whispered that Don Bosco was talking to him.

He snatched his cap off and with utmost confidence, not to say joy, answered that he would like it very much because that was just what he had in mind when he left home. His pastor, in fact, had told him about that and had sent his personal regards to Don Bosco.

"Fine!" Don Bosco continued. "I am glad to hear that. Now do you know who Don Bosco is?"

"It's you!"

"Do you know what I want from my sons?"

"That we all be A + B - C."

"Excellent!" said Don Bosco, "We shall be good friends if you do that."

[1]Cf. *Biografie dei Salesiana defunti negli anni 1885-86*, San Benigno Canavese, 1890, Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, p. 72. [Author]

He might have added more perhaps, but just then someone came up to speak with him. Before leaving with the caller, Don Bosco told the boy, "Ask your companions what to do when you want to speak to Don Bosco." He then walked off with the visitor, slowly climbing the stairs to his room, while the boy looked after him with shining eyes, already feeling warmth in his heart, as though it had been touched by a ray of sunshine after a long shower.

As soon as Don Bosco left, Perrona became aware of a boy at his side who kept him company and engaged him in conversation. Fighting his shyness, Perrona asked his new friend whether he knew how to bring him to Don Bosco. "If you like, I'll show you right away," the latter answered. With a knowing smile he brought him to the sacristy and showed him an armchair set under a huge crucifix, flanked by two long kneelers. There, he said, Don Bosco usually heard confessions and there he would be waiting for him. Perrona thanked him and from that moment prepared himself for the talk with Don Bosco he had agreed upon. The next morning, in fact—the first stroke of good luck in his entire stay at the Oratory, he used to call it—he made his confession to Don Bosco for the first time, finding in him a helper, father, and friend, essentially the one who was to lead him to God.

Francis Piccollo of Pecetto Torinese entered the Oratory at the beginning of August 1872. Don Bosco was away, and he soon made friends with Father Peter Racca, who at Don Bosco's return introduced the new arrival to him. Young Francis, quite shy, stood behind Father Racca. "Listen, son," Don Bosco said, "if you are afraid of Don Bosco, you may stay with Father Racca. It's all right!" Later, when Father Racca was assigned to Sampierdarena and Piccollo was upset at his loss and constantly in tears, Don Bosco sent word to him that if he wished to join Father Racca he would gladly let him go to Sampierdarena. Instantly the boy calmed down, saying that he was glad to remain with Don Bosco. During his second year of Latin he again felt Don Bosco's goodness and thus described the incident:

> One day my mother came to see me while I was at play after lunch and, among other things, told me she was upset because when she had

asked Father Bologna, the prefect,[2] if she could delay an overdue modest fee and pay it at vintage time, he had answered, "Unless you pay it, I shall send your son home." She broke into sobs, and I had to leave her in tears to report to my classroom. Later I was surprised to be summoned again to the visitors' lounge because my mother was still there and wanted to see me. I ran over and found my mother very cheerful, bright with victory. "I am not crying anymore, my dear," she said, "and neither must you because I went to see Don Bosco and he told me, 'Don't cry, my good woman. Tell your son that if Father Bologna puts him out the front door, he is to come back through the church. Don Bosco will never send him away!' "

The same thing happened the following year to another pupil, Eusebius Calvi of Palestro, who became a Salesian. He was anxious and hurt because his family, in straitened circumstances, could not pay his school fees, and Father Bologna, acting on Don Bosco's word, had written to say that unless they paid the modest overdue fee they should come to take their son home. Eusebius knew that only Don Bosco could put matters right and drop the debt, as he always did when he judged it proper, but he did not have the courage to go to him personally. One day Don Bosco met him, and noting his sadness at once he asked: "What's the trouble?"

"Don Bosco, my family cannot pay my bills, and Father Prefect wrote to them. . . ."

"And so?"

"I shall have to leave school. . . ."

"Are you Don Bosco's friend?"

"Oh yes!"

"Well then, we can easily set this straight. Write to your father that he is not to worry about the overdue bill and is just to send what he can in the future."

"But my father will not accept such a vague condition. He wants to pay and prefers a fixed amount."

"What has your monthly fee been so far?"

"Twelve lire!"

"Well, write that from now on he will be charged only five lire

[2]The superior in charge of administration and extraordinary disciplinary measures. [Editor]

a month, to be paid when he can."

Calvi broke into tears of joy. Don Bosco gave him a note for Father Rua that settled the matter and allowed the boy to continue his schooling. Later he became a Salesian priest. Thousands of pupils experienced similar tokens of his fatherly affection.

His charity was bountiful to all, including candidates for the Salesian Society. During a brief stay at Peveragno in the fall of 1872 he was visited by the local druggist, Angelo Lago, who was so charmed by his personality that he decided to sell his store, give the proceeds to Don Bosco, and become a Salesian. He also recommended a boy to Don Bosco for admission to the Oratory. At that time Don Bosco was short of money, and since the good druggist kept him informed of his transactions, Don Bosco gave him suitable advice that enabled him to proceed prudently and discreetly in disposing of his property.[3] Lago came to the Oratory and became a Salesian that same year; then, at Don Bosco's advice, he started his theological studies, was ordained at the age of forty-three, and became a saintly priest. Outstanding in faith and humility, he had an angelic countenance, whether saying Mass, reading the Divine Office, attending sacred services, or listening to God's Word; even outside church his demeanor bespoke his saintliness.

Assigned to Father Rua's office when the latter was successively prefect general of the Salesian Society, vicar, and finally Don Bosco's first successor, he proved to be uniquely hard-working and prudent, giving himself no relaxation and saying never a word more than necessary. He was level-headed, serene, and ever intent on his work even through many hours of the night. Despite such activity and his frail build, he ate most frugal meals. His only relaxation was a brief stroll with a confrere after dinner and supper, never omitting a visit to the Blessed Sacrament. Austere toward himself, he was forever kind and most thoughtful of others in all his dealings with them. At his death at an advanced age on March 14, 1914, all commented, "He was a saint. If Father Lago did not go straight to heaven, who ever will?"

The cleric Joseph Giulitto of Solero (Alessandria) asked to visit his parents after taking his triennial vows. Don Bosco sent him this amiable reply:

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Lanzo, September 26, 1871

Dear Giulitto:

I am allowing you a week's vacation at home provided you keep up your studies and look for some good pupils for the Oratory. Give your relatives and friends good example and come back. Remember me to your family, especially to the priest who recommended you to us.

God bless you. Pray for me.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

The cleric Joseph Ronchail,[4] a member of the house chapter at Alassio, though only in minor orders, shortly before ordination to the subdiaconate, hesitated to take that step. He confided his fears to Don Bosco, who replied by urging him to go ahead and trust in God:

Turin, March 5, 1872

Dear Ronchail:

Do not worry about the matter you mentioned. Since you defeated the devil, he is attempting a counterattack. Ignore him, and tranquilly receive holy orders, as I have already told you.

I recommend you to the Lord. Give my regards to your director, and pray for me.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Ronchail was ordained a subdeacon on March 16, a deacon in May, and a priest in September. In October he was appointed prefect of the Salesian school in Alassio.

Father John Garino,[5] catechist at Alassio, who had pronounced

[4]Joseph Ronchail (1850-1898) first met Don Bosco in 1868. (*See* Vol. IX, pp. 148ff) Convinced that the latter was inspired by God, he went to the Oratory and joined the Salesian Society. He distinguished himself as a hard worker and zealous priest. He was director of the Salesian school at Nice from 1876 to 1887 and in Paris in 1888. He also acted as provincial of northern France and Belgium until his death in 1898. [Editor]

[5]Father John Garino had entered the Oratory in 1845. Ordained a priest in 1869, he distinguished himself as a Latin and Greek scholar and a fervent religious. He died in 1908. [Editor]

his triennial vows on April 5, 1869, hesitated to take perpetual vows. Don Bosco dispelled his fears with this letter:

Turin, March 21, 1872

Dear Father Garino:

Since you have neither difficulties nor doubts about your vocation, take your perpetual vows in all tranquillity. Keep praying for me—for my physical health, but far more for my spiritual health.

Give my regards to the director and all the confreres.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

A month later Father Garino took his perpetual vows. Declared Bishop James Costamagna:[6]

If all the Salesians who lived with Don Bosco were to tell of the care he lavished on them, they would certainly fill many a large volume. Like Our Divine Redeemer, he "went about doing good" [Acts 10, 38]. He took note of our physical and moral problems and pains as though they were all his own, even when he knew that sometimes they were more imaginary than real. He always let us have whatever was not physically or morally harmful to us or to the Congregation. He was always glad to say yes whenever he could do so; he never said no directly, lest he hurt our feelings, but at the proper time he would speak frankly. He was well aware that indecision and hesitation are nerve-wracking for both superiors and subordinates.

He sought ways to relieve the burden of study and work with religious celebrations, outings, stage plays and wholesome diversions. He wanted us to take good care of our health because it belonged to the Congregation; thus we were told to avoid drafts and dampness, especially in the spring and fall, and long exposure to the sun. Nor were we to pass from hot to cold places without taking due precautions; we were not to loiter in cold areas when perspiring, nor to eat and drink to excess or insufficiently; we were not to overexert ourselves when teaching or preaching, nor do mental work immediately after meals, nor get too little sleep.

[6]James Costamagna entered the Oratory in 1858 at the age of twelve. He became a Salesian in 1867 and was ordained in 1868. He led the third group of Salesian missionaries to Argentina in 1877, opened the first Salesian house in Talca, Chile, in 1887, and was consecrated bishop and appointed First Vicar Apostolic of Mendez and Gualaguiza, Ecuador, in 1895. He died at Bernal (Argentina) on September 9, 1921. [Editor]

Seven hours of sleep, he would say, are enough for both young and old, but he gave directors an hour's leeway according to circumstances. He also bade us to avoid yielding to depression, which subtly destroys even the strongest physique, or to an exaggerated care of our health by constant dependence on medicines that would ultimately ruin it.

2. Visits to the Salesian Houses

Don Bosco was very wise in his counsel on all occasions, especially in private conversations and in his conferences to his confreres on his frequent visits to the houses. It is hard to give even a compressed view of his broad apostolate during these visits, which gradually increased his work load and made greater demands on his charity. We have already admired him as a founder, and now we will see him as a very loving, anxious father who felt he had to cheer and buoy up his sons with his presence.

Although he discouraged having outside guests present to greet him at his arrival "so as not to waste any time," because he wanted to see and examine everything and talk with superiors and pupils in private, he was always welcomed with incomparable celebration.

On arriving "he immediately asked if anyone was sick," Father Louis Piscetta declared, "and would at once visit him." His was a mother's concern for the sick, and he checked to see if they were properly cared for. He had the same regard for those in frail health and in good health. "We must be thrifty," he used to say, "but also charitable. They must be given every care in regard to food, clothing and whatever they need."

On the first evening, he would again greet the community after night prayers in simple, affectionate words. Once he started off at Lanzo as follows: "I was at our school in Borgo San Martino where we said many nice words about you which I need not repeat here. Among other things, I was asked, 'Do the Lanzo boys love you and pray for you as much as we do? Do they strive to please you as we do?' " These opening words immediately won their full attention and devotion, enabling him to effectively tell them what he had most at heart, so that they too would resolve to live in the state of grace.

Regardless of the school he was visiting, whether or not they were making the Exercise for a Happy Death or celebrating some special feast, a long line of boys would form at his confessional, since everyone wished to go to him.

After night prayers, he would gather the confreres together, except for the few more experienced clerics who had to supervise the dormitories, and in a conference on some important topic he would give everyone practical advice which is well worth recalling here.

In the few houses that we then had, most of the Salesians were young clerics who were continuing their own studies while teaching and supervising. To them he addressed the following exhortations:

You, as clerics, should teach the boys to respect superiors by your own show of respect, manner of greeting them, and trust.

Superiors should take no offense at trivial things. They should keep calm, forbear, bide their time and investigate before giving importance to faults.

Teachers should bear in mind that teaching is but another means of doing good. They are like pastors in their parishes, missionaries in the apostolate. From time to time they should stress Christian truths, our duties toward God, the sacraments, and devotion to the Blessed Virgin. In short, their teaching should be Christian, a frank and warm exhortation to their pupils to be good Christians. This is the secret of winning their love and trust. Anyone who is too shy to exhort his pupils to piety is an incompetent teacher; he will corrupt the hearts Divine Providence has entrusted to him, thus earning their contempt.

No confrere should stoop to words of contempt or disapproval of any other confrere, especially in front of pupils; a kingdom divided against itself will fall. Cover each other's shortcomings and defend one another. Never seek popularity; it will ultimately bring only disappointments.

Let no one criticize food or superiors' directives in front of the pupils, because they will quickly do likewise. Grumbling begets immorality and the ruin of souls for which we shall one day have to answer to God. Then, too, what kind of example would we be giving in obedience, charity and mortification?

Let us be punctual and dutiful in supervising in church, study hall, and playground and when our pupils move from place to place or take their weekly walk.

Let all clerics and priests be present at every church service. Priests

should say Mass either before or after Community Mass; if before, they should make their thanksgiving while the others prepare for Mass or recite their breviary. This is a very strict duty and helps the boys' behavior and prayer. No one can see to this better than a teacher. Special mention should be made of it in the monthly manifestation.

Supervision in the Study Hall. This should aim not only at maintaining silence, but especially at safeguarding morality. How is one man alone to supervise several hundred boys? Also the vice-monitors must be at their posts, and this holds for those who should be in the study hall. Our excuses will have to stand up to God's standards. Much harm can be done in the study hall if supervision is lacking.

Supervision When Filing from Place to Place. There should always be an assistant[1] at the front and one at the rear. Whether on duty or not, assistants must be the first to observe silence, lest the boys start whispering among themselves about only God knows what.

Supervision in the Dormitories. No assistant should have a cubicle large enough for him to keep his books and study in it. The dormitory is not for studying, and such practice would cause a waste of lighting. Let the rules be observed, lest morality suffer. See that silence is strictly observed, and never leave pupils alone in the dormitory.

Supervision during the Weekly Walks. Insofar as possible, pupils should walk four abreast, so that each is kept in check by the others. They are not to buy edibles or other things, since this would lead them to keep money and tempt some to steal or bargain or secretly send out objectionable letters. Never let the pupils stray from the ranks, unless they must, and then alone. Without this supervision how many sins might be committed, and foul conversations held, even with persons of the other sex! Do not let the pupils buy alcoholic beverages or smoke. Smoking irritates the insides.

On Thursdays,[2] except for those supervising the boys on their weekly walks, no one is to leave the house without the director's or prefect's permission. Those who go out are not to drop into wineshops or private homes. The director may need help and not know where to find it. Then, too, obedience must sanctify everything.

Supervision at Recreation. Keep an eye on cliques, and find a way to slip in and break them up discreetly with some excuse or other, such as giving someone an errand to do, sending another to fetch a book and so on. This applies to the clerics too. What have they to talk about so much? Most likely they will be grumbling.

[1] A Salesian engaged in supervising pupils. [Editor]
[2] A regular mid-week school holiday. [Editor]

Supervision in the Classroom. Have pupils keep their hands on the desk top; do not leave them unattended. When a teacher is through with his class, let him patiently wait for the next teacher to take over.

If all the directors had noted the admonitions of our incomparable master and father, as Father Lemoyne did, we would have a most beautiful and authentic description of Don Bosco's educational system.

Here are other memorable instructions on punishments, grumbling, and a discreet reserve required in certain instances:

Assistants are not to punish, but simply to report transgressions to the superiors. This will save them from odium and blunders. Boys who have shown disrespect to an assistant are not to be punished unless the teacher is first consulted. Transgressions outside the classroom are within the exclusive competence of the prefect, but any lack of respect to assistants must be punished severely.

If a boy is sent out of the classroom for serious misconduct, the prefect or the prefect of studies should ask the teacher to take him back and see to it that, after proper admonishment, he is readmitted.

Never criticize or berate confreres or pupils in the presence of others. Every word is to be inspired by charity. If someone must be admonished, let it be done in private.

Never tell pupils of confidential decisions made by superiors. Never talk with pupils or employees about disorders that have occurred in other schools, and do not tell pupils about disorders in other classrooms.

Never pry into the state of anyone's conscience or try to discover if one frequents the sacraments. That is the duty of a prudent catechist.[3]

When reprimanding negligent pupils, let a teacher never remark on the contrast between their receiving the sacraments and their conduct.

Keep full confidentiality with any boy who has come to you and reported a grave transgression; the community may be generally told that someone might have seen and reported the matter.

Never praise a boy in front of other confreres because such praise will be repeated and may give rise to pride or special friendships.

Although pupils are forbidden to lay hands on one another, one is not to be overly anxious when this occurs momentarily in supervised games.

Don Bosco had a kind word for everyone he met during his

[3]The superior in charge of spiritual matters. [Editor]

visits to the schools. He once gave a prefect the following advice: "Remember that pupils always consider the director to be first in the house. Always act as his representative."

He insisted that a weekly lesson on good manners be never omitted and that, upon arrival, an inventory be taken of each pupil's belongings. He likewise urged that special care be taken of younger lads as regards personal cleanliness, including the combing of their hair by some cleric or coadjutor[4] or even some good-hearted elderly woman.

He told an assistant, *"Si vis amari, esto amabilis"* [If you wish to be loved, be amiable]. A boy's first impressions are those he receives at school. Do not irritate them by punishment or ill-treatment, lest they curse priests and brothers. Some are already embittered enough against priests."

At Lanzo, meeting the study hall assistant who had to supervise two hundred pupils doing their homework in silence, he told him, "Keep your eyes wide open. Although the Lord has sent us good boys, still it is just as well that at times you be circumspect. Look, ask, provide, and take even minor transgressions seriously, for they could lead to grave disorders and an offense against God. Keep a careful eye on the books they read, always show esteem for all, and discourage no one; but do not weary of watching, observing, understanding, helping and being indulgent. Let reason rather than feeling be always your guide."

One afternoon, talking with lower elementary grade teachers, he offered the following suggestions:

> At the start of the school year try to make school pleasant by leaving aside dry rules of grammar and arithmetic. In an arithmetic class, have pupils do mental calculations, occasionally couching a problem in a little story. As for grammar, have pupils form simple sentences. Say, for example, "Tell me some attribute of God." They will reply: "Eternal." Then you will add, "Say: 'God is eternal.' " In this way they will learn to construct simple sentences. You will then go on to complex sentences, thoroughly explaining subjects, attributes and so on. Finally, make them write a short composition, a story, or a letter, examples of which you already have in some of the books. When they hand in their homework as-

[4]A lay Salesian. [Editor]

signments, read them all carefully and correct them; then dictate what they have to study and make them learn it by heart.

When he was asked how to get children's attention in a sermon so they could benefit from it, he answered: "After you have explained your topic simply and clearly, always end with an historic episode or an incident and then question them on what you have said. If no one speaks up, give the answers yourself." This is what he often did. Once, after preaching on St. Aloysius to the boys of a festive oratory, he ended up by saying, "Now, boys, you will be going home and your good parents will ask you: 'What did you do at the Oratory?'

" 'We kept the feast of St. Aloysius,' you will reply.

" 'And how?'

" 'We had confession, Communion, music, a lottery, and a stage play. And then Don Bosco came to give us a sermon.'

" 'What did he tell you?'

" 'He told us to imitate St. Aloysius by being obedient to our parents and urged us to avoid bad companions, and to continue to come to the Oratory.' "

He went on in this way and so impressed his message on their minds that many of them proudly repeated it in detail to their parents.

On his visits to our boarding schools at Lanzo, Borgo San Martino, and Cherasco, and later at Varazze, Alassio and Valsalice, he kept suggesting that notices be sent to parents who were behind in their fees. If no answer was received within a week, a second courteous note was to be mailed, inviting them to set a payment date. If this failed, they were to be told to settle overdue accounts and advance an agreed monthly, bi-monthly or quarterly fee within ten days; otherwise their boy would be sent home. But he always made allowance for reasonable exceptions, as, for example, if parents were known to have funds and would eventually meet their obligations or if boys had been sent or recommended by their pastors.

He also wanted each school to bring pressure to bear upon parents to provide their sons with suitable clothing. If family misfortunes kept parents from paying their fees, they were to be ad-

vised at the end of the school year to transfer their son to the Valdocco Oratory. Such applications, he added, were to be accompanied by the director's report on the boy's conduct and school progress.

"Do you pray for your pupils?" he would ask the directors. "Would you like me to suggest something your pupils will really appreciate? Tell a good youngster, 'I am pleased with you and I shall write and tell your parents so.' You will be surprised at the effect on good boys. Strive to give the 'Good Night' regularly yourselves."

He earnestly invited them to tell him of their needs and hopes, attentively watched over the observance of the constitutions and regulations by both confreres and pupils, and kept an eye on the financial administration. His most anxious care, however, was to lessen or eliminate friction between individuals, neither judging nor taking action against either party without first giving both of them a patient hearing and weighing each side of the problem.

The same norms he prescribed to all superiors because, as he said, this made one learn that what looked like a beam was nothing but a speck.

His reaction was the same if a disagreement arose between a subordinate and a superior. If the latter was at fault, he always found a way to safeguard the rights of the innocent without prejudice to authority.

He always insisted that extreme caution be exercised in taking grave steps, and in such instances he would himself seek advice. Bishop Cagliero testified:

> He often consulted those of us who were the older priests in the Congregation. I recall once that, having to take a grave measure against a confrere, he called me to his room and said, "My duty forces me to take this step, but, since this is a serious matter, I want your opinion."
>
> "I think," I told him, "that you should once more act as a father to him. He does not realize the gravity of his fault as we do, but, given time, he will agree, mend his ways, and become a worthy member of the Congregation."
>
> Don Bosco was satisfied. That Salesian did mend his ways and is still a great asset to our Society.

In certain cases—fortunately extremely rare—he had to take

drastic measures and transfer a confrere to a different office or place, but such was his tact that he never aroused the slightest suspicion in anyone. He safeguarded the person's good name by giving him for a time an equally honored task lest he become downhearted; thus he encouraged him to strive for God's glory and the welfare of souls. Father Francis Cerruti declared:

I shall always remember how one year at Alassio he sent me a confrere who was in serious trouble and for whom, humanly speaking, dismissal would have been a fitting punishment. In entrusting him to me, he told me plainly the nature of his offense and he informed the confrere that his new director was acquainted with his problem. But in the same breath he urged me to show him every consideration in the presence of others, so that they should never know and the confrere might have a chance to redeem himself. The latter was keenly touched by such charity and delicacy on Don Bosco's part. "I know that Don Bosco really cares for me and wants to save me," he said one day. Little by little he reformed and was saved.

3. With Everyone

When assigning even the humblest member of the Congregation, he was exquisitely kind and considerate. He never used a tone of authority, but always spoke as if asking a favor. On this score we have some noteworthy depositions.

Erminius Borio, an intelligent, strong-willed youth, was sent to teach at Borgo San Martino as soon as he donned the cassock, but he felt unhappy there. Realizing that it would be wiser to recall him, Don Bosco promptly wrote to him as follows:

Turin, January 16, 1871

My dear Borio:

So that I may have you here for some needed work, and in order that you may also more easily attend to your studies, I think it best that you return to your old cage and to your unfaltering friend, Don Bosco. Come whenever you like. Your bed is ready.

God bless you and believe me to be

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. Inform the director of my request and give him my regards. I will see you soon.

In 1872 Don Bosco's fatherliness won a precious Salesian vocation. John Baptist Tamietti, who had entered the Oratory in 1860, donned the cassock in 1863 and made his triennial vows two years later. During this period he was an excellent teacher, but when his vows expired, feeling disinclined to remain in the Congregation, he repeatedly informed Don Bosco of this fact, begging that he find him a teaching position elsewhere. Don Bosco always replied that he was to leave all care of the future to him without worry.

Around June 1871, Tamietti once more told Don Bosco frankly that the time had come for him to leave, and again he requested that he kindly find him a teaching position, as he had promised.

"So you want to leave me?" Don Bosco exclaimed, looking him straight in the eye, with tears in his own.

"You know quite well I never deceived you about this," Tamietti insisted. "I do not think I have offended you by what I said."

"Well, leave it to me!" Don Bosco replied.

Though convinced that Tamietti would not leave him, Don Bosco kept his promise, and through the good offices of Professor Lace he immediately found a teaching position for him in Valsalice College, which at this time had not yet been entrusted to our Society. Summer vacation came along and several teachers, looking for freedom and money, left our schools, causing Don Bosco anxiety about their replacement. Unexpectedly, Tamietti called on Don Bosco. "Look, Father," he said, "I had planned to leave for Valsalice, but that was when you had enough teachers. Now I know you are short. Never let it be said that I left you in the lurch when I could have helped. I shall stay on for one more year."

"Only one?" Don Bosco asked, quite moved. "I've always said that you were my friend! And now let me tell you that Valsalice will be ours next year. . . ."

Tamietti remained at the Oratory for that school year. In the spring, however, failing in health, he had to go home for a rest. From there he assured Don Bosco of his good will and his inten-

tion to stay with him forever as a Salesian. Don Bosco's reply follows:

Turin, April 25, 1872

Dear Tamietti,

Your letter pulls a thorn from my heart and enables me to do you the good I could not do until now. Fine! Now you are in Don Bosco's hands, and he knows what to do with you for God's greater glory and your own spiritual welfare. On your return we'll discuss what's to be done. Anyway:

1. I wish you to complete your literature courses.
2. Stay at home as long as your health requires, but the sooner you come back, the sooner you will be with the one who truly loves you.
3. Your sister will be provided for. Let me know if she plans to enter a convent or whether I should find her some good family. . . .

May God bless you! Give my regards to your parents and to your pastor.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

Having taken over Valsalice College at the start of the new school year, Don Bosco assigned Tamietti there as a teacher. He had renewed his triennial vows in September. Since he was not quite happy there, Don Bosco wrote this note to him:

Turin, November 18, 1872

Dear Tamietti,

I don't want to force you to remain at Valsalice. On the other hand I need to test your obedience, especially in view of your forthcoming reception of holy orders. I assign you, therefore, to Alassio, and I'll take somebody from there to replace you at Valsalice. Make the necessary arrangements with Father Dalmazzo, but try to end up your duties gracefully. May God grant you humility and the holy virtue of obedience.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

Finally he allowed him to remain at the Oratory. In 1873 Father Tamietti was ordained a priest; the following year he made

his perpetual vows, and in 1878 he was sent to open the Salesian school at Este. He died [in 1920] after rendering distinguished services to our Society as provincial of the Salesian houses in Liguria.

With his habitual charm Don Bosco won all hearts, and he was quite aware of it. For this reason one of his most frequent exhortations and admonitions was that obedience should be carried out not for his sake, but for God's. In this connection Bishop James Costamagna enthusiastically wrote:

> How masterfully Don Bosco handled holy obedience! Normally he favored our natural bent, and as far as possible he always assigned tasks to our liking. If he had to give us a very difficult and arduous duty, he would use roundabout ways to obtain our consent. He would wait to speak to us after we had received Holy Communion because that was the best moment to lay the burden of the cross upon us. He would come toward us smiling and, taking us by the hand, would say: "I have need of you. Would you do this for me? Would you have any problem in taking on this or that office? Do you feel you are sufficiently strong and well enough prepared to teach that grade or take on this supervision or the office of economer, prefect, teacher, etc., in that new Salesian house?" Or he might take this approach: "Look, I have something very, very important at hand that I do not wish to burden you with because it is difficult; yet I have no one else but you who can help me out of this difficulty. Do you feel up to it?"
>
> This was truly an admirable strategy on the part of our good father.... Truthfully, Don Bosco handled us this way when we were inexperienced boys with no idea of what a religious vow means and our only bond with him was our love and gratitude; his angelic countenance and saintly manner vividly portrayed to us Our Lord among His Apostles. (Even so, our obedience was supernatural, for we considered Don Bosco's commands as God's own.) But he kept the same strategy even later after the Salesian Congregation was established, and we gladly ran to him to have our heads chopped off symbolically and let ourselves be fixed to the cross of the holy vows. Never, but never, did he order us to do anything in the name of holy obedience (as some do too easily without sufficient reason through ignorance or passion and sometimes with no right). He would merely call us to a meeting and say without apology: "Which of you would like to do Don Bosco a favor?" "I, I," we would all answer unanimously. And no matter how heavy the demand on our obedience, we were ready to obey. Don Bosco knew very well that the shortest way to the heart is not the straight line of an absolute,

irrevocable command, but rather the roundabout way of persuasiveness, prudence, patience and holy love.

Sometimes it did happen that some of us were quite reluctant to obey; then, rather than resort to threats or to the odious "in the name of holy obedience," he would say nothing and simply send for someone more docile and ready to do what he had bidden. Then the one who had disobeyed would stand there mortified and, approaching him with apprehension, would say: "You know, Don Bosco, I'm really ready to obey. I've thought things over, and I'm ready, as I said. Just order me to do anything!"

"Yes, some other time," Don Bosco would reply. "We shall see tomorrow." But tomorrow did not come. The poor man would anxiously report again and again, but only after putting him to the test for many days would Don Bosco treat him as he had formerly (he was always a father) by assigning some special task to him.

Such anxious consideration, inspired by heroic charity, always worked wonders, and his spirit took root in every house with wonderful results. "Already then," declared Canon John Baptist Anfossi, "several bishops whom I had the honor of meeting—among them Bishop Apollonio of Adria—remarked with wonder how Don Bosco's spirit and educational method, which had spread so rapidly through the many priests, his former pupils, had never weakened but had kept its vigor and wisdom even in younger priests."

We will now go on to report in an orderly fashion the impressive collection of documents which confirm his fatherly wisdom and kindness in guiding pupils and Salesians along the path of virtue: the program of Christian life which he set before the former, the "Good Nights" and the *strenne*, his confidential memos to directors, reports and deliberations of the annual conferences of St. Francis de Sales, his apostolate in spiritual retreats, his reflections on the religious life, and other precious memoirs—among them his circular letters, some of which have never before been published.

4. A Program of Christian Living for Pupils

From his very first years of apostolate Don Bosco liked to give pointed suggestions on summer vacation to his pupils at the Ora-

tory and later at Mirabello and Lanzo. In 1873, however, he had them printed and given to each pupil. The handy leaflet contained plain norms of Christian living—a simple, full program which any boy could set for himself. It was also open to a detailed helpful explanation by the director of each school in his "Good Nights" to the boys.

The title page read: *Tips to Boys for a Wholesome Summer Vacation.* The second page listed the following tips:

At all times avoid bad books, bad companions, and bad talk. Idleness is a most cunning enemy you must always fight. Knowledge is folly without fear of God. Go to confession and Communion as often as you can. St. Philip Neri suggested weekly reception of these sacraments.

On Sunday listen to the Word of God and attend all the other church services.

Go to Mass daily, and, if you can, serve. Also do a little spiritual reading.

Say morning and night prayers every day with devotion.

Each morning meditate briefly on some truth of faith.

On the third page, facing these recommendations, was a series of scriptural [and non-scriptural] quotations[1] suited to the mental capacity of junior high school pupils:

"Many who had practiced magical arts collected their books and burnt them publicly." [Acts 19, 19]

"With the elect you will be elect and with the perverse you will be perverted." [Ps. 17, 27]

"Evil companionships corrupt good morals." [1 Cor. 15, 33]

"Use your time well." [Sir. 4, 23][2]

"Idleness has taught much evil." [Sir. 33, 29]

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." [Ps. 110, 10]

"Pride is the beginning of all sin." [Sir. 10, 15]

"All men are vain in whom there is not the knowledge of God." [Wis. 13, 1]

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has life everlasting." [Jn. 6, 55]

[1]Since the scriptural quotations are from the Latin Vulgate, the Douay version is used when other versions substantially differ from the Latin text. [Editor]

[2]The Vulgate reads, "Fili, conserva tempus et devita a malo," whereas in Don Bosco's leaflet the Latin text is given as "Fili, conserva tempus et tempus conservabit te." [Editor]

"Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." [Lk. 11, 28]

"Without the sacrifice of the Mass we would have been destroyed by God like Sodom and Gomorrah." (Rodriguez)

"We ought as willingly to read devout and simple books as those that are high and profound." *(Imitation of Christ)*

"O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day." [Ps. 62, 1]

"May our evening prayer ascend to you, O Lord, and may Your mercy come down upon us." (Church prayer)

"Desolate it lies before me, desolate, all the land because no one takes it to heart." [Jer. 12, 11]

"In my meditation a fire shall flame out." [Ps. 38, 4]

The fourth page of the copies meant for the Oratory pupils carried an item from Father Rua: "Upon returning from vacation, each pupil must give the prefect of studies a certificate of good conduct from his pastor."

5. The "Good Nights"

Aside from the few notes taken by Father Berto, which we have duly reported here and there, we have but a few of the cherished short talks which Don Bosco used to give to his pupils after night prayers to their great spiritual advantage. Detailed scripts of these talks, filling many notebooks, began to be made after the erection of a regular novitiate, which remained at the Oratory for five years.

For such a collection we are indebted to the clerics James Gresino, Emmanuel Dompè, Caesar Peloso, and Francis Ghigliotto, and to Father Julius Barberis, the novice master.

The efficacy of speech, which Don Bosco had asked of God as a special grace[1] at his ordination, was admired by all on those occasions. Many former pupils, still living, movingly remember him.

When he stood up on a little platform or "sometimes on a bench or chair," as Professor Alexander Fabre wrote, "he first enumerated the lost-and-found articles of the day—a pencil,

[1] *See* Vol. I, p. 386. [Editor]

penknife, plaything, scarf, or cap. Then, when needed, he gave directives for the following day. These were followed by a word of advice or admonition which had been prompted by unusual events or mishaps reported in the newspapers, or by an incident in the life of the saint being honored that day or the next, and so on. He spoke always with great candor, and with utmost conviction drew a moral for daily living."

The few reminiscences which follow were jotted down by a deeply pious man, Caesar Chiala, who in 1872 at the age of thirty-five, after having been postmaster for over ten years, entered the Oratory to join the Salesian Society. Having already completed his philosophy courses, he immediately took up theological studies. He professed his vows in 1873, donned the cassock the following year, and was ordained a priest on October 4, 1874. The next two years he was catechist of the Oratory artisans, and in his last year of life he was also intern prefect.[2] Richly endowed with merit, he passed into eternity on June 28, 1876.

NOVEMBER 5. *Encouragement to New Pupils*

On his arrival a new pupil is bewildered to see so many boys whose cheerfulness only adds to his loneliness because he is a stranger. When you spot such a lad, go over to him and be pleasant. Ask him where he comes from, what grade he is in, if he knows where the study hall and dining room are, what his favorite game is, and so on. Often just one such friendly approach will cheer up the newcomer, make him a friend, and even help him decide to stay on.

NOVEMBER 7, 1872. *Dismissal of Two Boys*

Two boys have been expelled: one for foul talk, the other for a breach of discipline during the weekly walk. The first boy had been in trouble last year and obviously did not improve during the summer vacation, and so he was dismissed lest he corrupt his companions. The other was similarly punished for disregarding a house rule about depositing money [with Father Prefect] upon arrival. On the very first weekly walk, he slipped away with some companions and took them to a wineshop, returning only at suppertime.

[2]The intern prefect took the place of the director when the latter was absent, handled finances, supervised the coadjutor brothers, and, when necessary, took extraordinary disciplinary measures. The extern prefect, instead, assisted the director in matters of public relations, admissions and expulsions. [Editor]

It really seems odd that it should be so hard to keep this rule about depositing money. One boy, who was known to be in violation, denied it when questioned and denied it when searched. Finally, when his trunk was opened and the money was found, he still denied it, protesting that the money was in his trunk and not on his person. Then there are boys who give their money to outsiders. I know of two fellows who arranged to keep each other's money, so that, if caught, they could say the money was not their own. These are all ruses that are sooner or later discovered, and you should really do away with them.

Maybe it's only a matter of two *soldi* and one may shy from handing them over. The amount itself is insignificant, but the act of obeying is very important. The same applies when you find anything; hand it over even though it may be nothing more than a broken nib or a button. Regretfully, some boys are beginning to take schoolmates' books; they will end badly, like a certain former pupil who began with books and then gradually became a skilled thief, was caught red-handed, and was expelled in disgrace.

If you want to buy books, subscribe to *Letture Cattoliche* and to *Italian Classics for the Young*;[3] your subscription rates are thirty *soldi* for the former, and four lire for the latter.

NOVEMBER 10. *Cry Wolf When Necessary This Is Not Squealing, It Is Charity*

If you were on a hill and saw somebody walking in the valley along a road where a fierce wolf was hidden, you would shout a warning to that person. You must do the same, my dear boys, when you become aware of wolves in our midst—companions who use foul talk or try to entice you to evil. Alerting superiors is an act of charity toward yourselves, your companions, and even the poor wretch himself. I know you shy from this because it is considered squealing. Still, if somebody tipped you that a thief planned to break into your house, would you call him a squealer? Can the thief rightly accuse that person of being a spy? Besides, even if nobody alerts the superiors, the wolf will sooner or later betray himself and then he will have no hope of being spared his punishment or of having a chance to amend.

NOVEMBER 11. *The Good Priest*

That day several postulants had received the cassock. At the "Good Night" that same evening, Don Bosco commented as follows:

[3]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 51, 195f. [Editor]

"An important person asked me what was the essential trait of a genuinely good priest. I mentioned several, but he disagreed.

" 'No, no,' he said. 'He alone is a true priest of whom one can say, *Beati mortui qui in Domino moriuntur* [Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord—Apoc. 14, 13].'

"The priest must die to the world and its pleasures and follow Jesus Christ on the road of suffering and tribulation."

DECEMBER 20, 1872. *On the Forthcoming Christmas Festivities*

Christmas is not far off, and, as you were told, I earnestly wish you to write to your parents and benefactors.

Did you have a holiday yesterday, Thursday? *(Spontaneous shouts of Yes and No)* Well, tomorrow, Saturday, no homework should be given to those who didn't get a holiday. Instead, let them write a Christmas letter, following their teacher's outline. In your letter to benefactors, do not forget to say, "Thanks for all your kindness and care. At Christmas I shall pray that God will bless you, grant you health and prosperity in your work, and, above all, give you eternal happiness in heaven."

Rest assured, my boys, that these words always make a very fine impression on those receiving them. They think: *Here is a good-hearted boy. Not knowing what to do for me, he wishes me all the very best I could ever wish for myself.*

Let us be quite joyful during the forthcoming holidays. Have fun, but also think of the great mystery which is taking place. Let each think: *God becomes man! My soul must really be important if heaven and earth are so moved, and God becomes a child for my sake!* And we must be willing to make some little sacrifice for His sake. . . .

6. THE STRENNE

On December 31, 1871 Don Bosco was still at Varazze bedridden, though he had been without a fever for several days. That evening he gathered his Salesians about him and gave them as a *strenna*[1] "Good Example and Obedience,"[2] directing that it be

[1]A New Year's gift customary in Italy. From the very beginning of the Oratory (*see* Vol. III, p. 433) Don Bosco had started the custom of giving a "spiritual" *strenna* or gift to his boys and co-workers on the last day of the year. It took the form of a motto or slogan to be practiced throughout the year then about to dawn. This custom is still kept by Don Bosco's successors. [Editor]

[2]*See* p. 141. [Editor]

communicated to the other Salesian houses. He spoke as follows:[3]

First, I thank God for having kept me alive and then I thank all of you for solicitously looking after me night and day during my illness as loving sons. On this day during all these past years I used to speak to my boys and give then some salutary advice. Today I thought it best to summon all of you, my dear sons, and through you everyone else in our houses in Turin, Borgo San Martino, Lanzo, Alassio, and Marassi to give you my *strenna* and wish you all a Happy New Year.

I shall talk about good example. *Praebe te ipsum exemplum bonorum operum* [Show yourself in all things an example of good works—Tit. 2, 7], I say to each of you. Oh, yes, all of you are teachers; if you don't teach a specific subject you must teach morality. Never try to tell others to practice virtue or carry out a duty unless you first set the example. Our Divine Master "began to do and to teach" [Acts 1, 1]. Don't let it happen that a boy surpasses you in virtue, for you would shame your chosen state of perfection.

What is the key to good example? The rules of our Congregation, especially obedience. He who observes the rules and is obedient will be an example in everything else. Obedience, yes, but not the kind which discusses and analyzes commands given, but true obedience, which makes us cheerfully accept our orders, taking them all as something good, commanded by the Lord. It is not for the subordinate to examine orders but for the superior who shall have to render an account of everything and everybody, especially of the souls Divine Providence has entrusted to him. *Obedite praepositis vestris et subiacete eis; ipsi enim pervigilant quasi rationem pro animabus vestris reddituri* [Obey your superiors and be subject to them, for they keep watch as having to render an account of your souls—Heb. 13, 17].

While speaking of obedience to superiors, I also mean to include humble interdependence, fraternal correction, and our personal duty to accept humbly any advice given to us by a companion or even a subordinate. Let there never be criticism or grumbling among us, for one who criticizes a confrere in any way betrays him!

Obedience! This obedience to the rules and to our superiors not only makes us examples to others, prompting them to glorify Our Heavenly Father, but it gladdens our hearts and will be our only consolation at the end of life. I've always known this, but I experienced it particularly during my recent illness. My greatest comfort was the thought that, by God's grace, I had done something for His greater glory.

[3]Our source is the copy which Father Francis Cuffia, the prefect at Varazze, sent to Father Bonetti, director of the Borgo San Martino junior seminary. Father Cuffia states that he strove to jot it down verbatim. [Author]

So take heart, dear boys! Take courage, one and all, especially you here present. I really must tell you how happy I am over this house's progress. Let us thank the Lord and the Blessed Virgin and give His Holy Name glory and honor! Now, in wishing you a good night, I give you my blessing. *Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini qui fecit coelum et terram. Copiosa benedictio Dei omnipotentis descendat super nos et super opera nostra in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti.* [Our help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. May the blessing of Almighty God descend abundantly upon us and our undertakings in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.]

Before the end of 1872, he wrote a loving word to all his dear children at Lanzo—director, priests, teachers, assistants and pupils—urging unlimited trust in their director:

[Turin, December 26, 1872]
Feast of St. Stephen

To My Beloved Sons at Lanzo:

I was very happy to receive your best wishes. I thank you with all my heart and shall gratefully remember them. May God reward your kindness! Now a word to all of you.

Let Father Director never delay giving good advice and salutary admonitions when the occasion comes.

Let the priests be one in matters of their own or the boys' eternal salvation.

Let the teachers regularly examine their pupils, especially the slower ones.

Let the assistants do their best to prevent foul conversations. Priests and clerics should recall that they are "the salt of the earth . . . and the light of the world" [Matt. 5, 13-14].

Let the pupils cherish modesty and moderation.

I urge all to place unlimited trust in their director.

May God bless you all and truly enrich you with the holy fear of God.

You are my pride and joy. Let no one pierce my heart with the thorns of bad conduct. I promise to remember you throughout the coming year in my daily Mass. In return, please commend my poor soul to God's mercy lest I suffer its irreparable loss.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us always.

Affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

At the Oratory, too, he offered specific suggestions from the pulpit of the Church of St. Francis de Sales to the prefects and vice-prefects, teachers and craftsmasters, assistants, priests, clerics, all Salesians and postulants, and ended up with a most beautiful *strenna* for all. Our source is Father [Joachim] Berto:

At this time last year I was not with you. I was at death's door at Varazze. Now, thank God, I am with you again. Gazing upon the coming year, two thoughts come unwittingly to mind: that we shall have to suffer hunger and disease, and that we shall have famine and death.

Were it possible, I would give each of you a particular *strenna.* Just now I will give you one in general. First, what *strenna* should Don Bosco get? That you pray to the Lord for me so that, while I strive to save your souls, I may not neglect mine.

To the prefects and vice-prefects: Let them use authority for the spiritual and temporal welfare of their subjects.

To the teachers and craftsmasters: Let them take special care of their slower pupils.

To the assistants, priests and clerics: Let them be light-bearers and give good example to the lay members, and never allow themselves to be surpassed in piety.

To the professed and to the postulants: That they observe the Congregation's rules.

Now to all I propose St. Aloysius as their example, guide and protector, Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament as a friend to honor, and Mary, Help of Christians as a mother to invoke.

Some time ago I said that one of us would be called to eternity before the end of 1872. Some of you now ask, "Why has no one died yet?" I shall tell you why some other time. Perhaps the Lord wishes to wait and give him time to regain divine grace, while we should pray that he be well prepared.

At the close of 1873 Don Bosco was away from the Oratory, having left for Rome on December 29. We have been unable to learn what *strenna* he left or sent for the new year.

In 1874 he wrote the following letter to Father Bonetti and perhaps expressed the same thoughts to his Oratory pupils:

Turin, December 30, 1874

Dear Father Bonetti:

For yourself: See to it that all with whom you come in contact become your friends.

For the prefect: Set aside treasures for this life and for eternity.

For the teachers and assistants: "*In patientia vestra possidebitis animas vestras* [By your patience you will win your souls—Lk. 21, 19].

For the boys: Frequent Communion.

For all: Exact performance of one's duties.

May God bless you all and grant you the precious gift of perseverance in doing good. Pray for me.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

7. Confidential Directives and Clarifications to Directors

One of the earliest and most enlightening documents on the system of education adopted and recommended by Don Bosco is a memorandum which he gave to Father Rua in 1863 when he sent him to direct the first daughter house at Mirabello Monferrato. Father Rua always kept it hanging on the wall of his room after Don Bosco's death.

We have three copies of this memorandum. The first one was edited by Father Rua, while the second and third have revisions and additions by Don Bosco. All three, however, antedate 1871. The third copy is the one that Don Bosco sent to our houses at Borgo San Martino, Lanzo, Cherasco and Alassio on January 31, 1871. This copy, given to Father Rua in 1871, was transcribed four years later and, after being revised by Don Bosco, was returned to his successor with this note: "Father Rua, please read carefully and send to press." Printed copies, dated "Christmas Eve 1875," were sent out to the directors.

Shortly afterward, under the date "Feast of St. Joseph [March 19] 1876," a new edition with corrections and additions was printed and mailed to the directors.

Indeed, Don Bosco was most anxious that these directives be passed on. After careful study we reproduce here the still intact copy sent to the director of Lanzo in 1871, relegating revisions and additions incorporated in the last edition to footnotes so that even at a first glance the reader may realize the document's importance.

The 1886 edition alters the title "Confidential Directives to the

Director of the House at. . . ." to "Christmas *Strenna* or Confidential Reminders, etc. . . ." because, having been mailed on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the forty-fifth anniversary of the Oratory, it was expected to reach most of the South American houses by Christmas.

Here is this precious document, once labeled "confidential," but known to all today. Anyone seeking a full understanding of Don Bosco's mind as founder and educator should read and reread it carefully.

For Yourself

1. Let nothing upset you.

2. Avoid austerity in food. Be mortified in diligently fulfilling your duties and patiently bearing annoyances. Both for your own health and that of your subjects, take seven hours of rest at night, with a one-hour leeway for reasonable motives.

3. Celebrate Holy Mass and recite the breviary *pie, devote, attente*[1] [piously, devoutly and attentively]. This is for both you and your subjects.

4. Never omit the morning meditation and a daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament. As for the rest, carry out our rules.

5. Try to make yourself loved sooner than feared.[2] Let charity and patience be your steady guide in commanding or admonishing. Let all you do and say show that you are seeking the welfare of souls. Endure anything and everything if it is a matter of preventing sin. Concentrate your efforts on the spiritual, physical and intellectual well-being of the boys entrusted to you by Divine Providence.

6. Always raise your mind and heart to God before any important decision. When a report is made to you, listen to it completely and try to ascertain the full facts before passing judgment.[3] Often, things that at first glance seem beams are nothing but specks.

Teachers

1. See that teachers have the necessary food and clothing. Be thoughtful of their work load, and when they are sick or indisposed have someone substitute for them.

[1]". . . recite the breviary *pie, attente ac devote.*" [Author]

[2]The 1886 edition had: "Strive to make yourself loved *rather* than feared," whereas in the copy amended by Don Bosco in 1876 the wording was, "*if you want* to be feared." [Author]

[3]". . . but try to ascertain the full facts *and to hear both sides before passing judgment* . . . ." [Author]

2. Talk with them often, either individually or as a group; see if they are overworked, if they need clothes or books, if they are physically or morally worn out or have disciplinary or scholastic problems with some pupils. Do your utmost to provide for any need you discover.

3. In a special conference, urge them to quiz all pupils at random, and have them read their compositions in turn. Let them avoid particular friendships and partiality. Let them never bring anyone into their room.[4]

4. If they have to give pupils a special task or admonish them, let them use a room reserved for that purpose.

5. On the occasion of a town celebration or school feast, of a novena in honor of the Blessed Virgin or of a saint, when a mystery of our holy religion is being commemorated, let teachers make a brief announcement to that effect. This should never be omitted.

6. Take care lest teachers send pupils out of class or strike negligent or unruly boys.[5] In grave cases let them promptly report to the prefect of studies or to the director.

7. Outside the classroom, teachers should not exercise authority:[6] they should limit themselves to words of advice, warning or correction as permitted and suggested by genuine charity.

Assistants and Dormitory Monitors

1. What has been said for teachers can largely apply to assistants and dormitory monitors.

2. See that they have the time and facility for studying without jeopardizing their duties.[7]

3. Talk willingly with them about their pupils' conduct. Their most important duty is punctuality at their posts: dormitory, classroom or workshop, playground, etc.

4. If you observe that any of them are forming a particular friendship with any pupil, or that their office and moral standing are in danger, prudently assign them to other duties. If the danger persists, inform your superior immediately.

5. Call occasional meetings of all teachers, assistants, and dormitory monitors to urge them to do their utmost to prevent foul conversations

[4]". . . let them never bring *pupils or anyone else* into their rooms." [Author]

[5]"Take care lest teachers send pupils out of class. *If they are really forced to do so, let them have someone accompany the culprit to the superior. They must never strike negligent or unruly pupils for any reason at all.*" [Author]

[6]". . . should not exercise authority *over their pupils.*" [Author]

[7]*"Try to apportion duties in such a way that both they and the teachers have time and facility for their studies."* [Author]

and to eliminate books, writings, pictures and anything else which may endanger the queenly virtue of purity. Let them give sound advice and be kind-hearted toward everybody.

6. Let all take pains to ferret out pupils who are morally dangerous and insist that they be reported.

Coadjutors and Domestic Personnel

1. They are not to deal familiarly with the pupils. See that they are able to attend Mass every morning and receive the sacraments, as prescribed by our rules. Urge domestics to go to confession every two weeks or monthly.

2. Be very kind in giving orders; make it clear by word and deed that you seek their spiritual welfare. Be especially attentive lest they become too friendly with pupils or outsiders.

3. Never allow women in the dormitories or kitchen. They are not to deal with anyone in the house, unless it be by reason of charity or strict need. This article is eminently important.

4. If arguments or friction should arise among domestics, assistants, pupils or others, listen kindly to everyone, but, as a rule, give your opinion privately so that one may not hear what you say of the other.

5. A coadjutor of proven uprightness should supervise domestics in their work and moral conduct and prevent pilfering or foul talk. Let him constantly strive to keep them from running errands or becoming involved with the [pupils'] parents, relatives or outsiders.

Pupils

1. Never accept pupils who have been expelled from other schools or are otherwise known to you as immoral. If, despite due precautions, any such boy is admitted, immediately assign him a trustworthy companion, who is never to let him out of sight. Should the youngster fail against morality, he should be warned once only; on a second fall, send him home immediately.

2. Spend as much time as you can with your pupils. Try to whisper a kind word to them privately,[8] as you well know, whenever you see the need. This is the great secret of becoming the master of their heart.

3. You may ask, "What shall I say?" Say what was once said to you. For instance:

"How are you?"

[8] *"Strive to make yourself known to the pupils and to know them, spending as much time with them as possible, endeavoring to whisper some kind word in their ear."* [Author]

"Very well."

"How about your soul?"

"Not bad."

"Will you help me in an important task?"

"Yes, but what's it all about?"

"To make a good boy out of you," or "To save your soul," or "To make you the best of all."

If you are talking to an unruly boy, you might say:

"When do you want to start?"

"Start what?"

"To be my pride and joy," or "To become another St. Aloysius."

To boys who go to the sacraments rather reluctantly, say:

"When shall we take the devil by the horns?"

"How?"

"With a good confession."

"Whenever you like."

"The sooner the better."

You might also ask: "When shall we do the wash?" or "Are you in shape to help me take the devil by the horns?" or "Shall we be two good friends in spiritual matters?" These and similar approaches will do.

4. In our houses the director is the ordinary confessor; make it clear therefore that you are glad to carry out this task, but give them freedom to go to other confessors if they wish.[9] Tell them that you do not attend meetings when superiors meet to discuss the pupils' moral conduct. Be sure to dissipate even the shadow of a doubt that you might use anything you heard in confession or that you even remember it. Nor must you ever show even the slightest partiality toward anyone who prefers one confessor to another.

5. Foster and promote the Altar Boys, the St. Aloysius, the Blessed Sacrament and the Immaculate Conception sodalities. Be their promoter, but not their director.[10] Regard these sodalities as the boys' own undertakings whose supervision is entrusted to the catechist or spiritual director.[11]

[9]". . . but give them *ample* freedom to go to other confessors, if they so wish. [Author]

[10]"Recommend and promote the Altar Boys, the St. Aloysius, the Blessed Sacrament and the Immaculate Conception sodalities. *Show yourself favorable and gratified toward their members*, but be only their promoter, not their director." [Author]

[11]In the 1875 edition Article 6 followed: "As far as possible, leave odious or disciplinary measures to others." In the 1866 edition there was this other addition: "When you discover a grave transgression, summon the culprit or the suspect to your room; most charitably try to make him admit his wrongdoing and guilt; then admonish him and invite him to set his conscience at peace. In this way, by constant, kindly supervision, wonderful results and self-reform have been obtained though they first seemed impossible." [Author]

Outsiders

1. Let us gladly make ourselves available for religious services, sermons, Masses, and confessions[12] when charity and duty permit, especially for the parish we belong to. Never accept obligations that would keep you away from your house or hinder you in your duties.

2. As a courtesy,[13] priests not of the house should be invited to preach on solemn feasts or attend our musical entertainments. The same courtesy should be extended to civil authorities or to people who have done us favors or are in a position to do so.

3. Charity and courtesy to all, residents and outsiders, should be a director's outstanding traits.

4. If material interests are at stake, yield as far as you can, even at a loss, when this will forestall quarrels or disputes that may violate charity.

5. In spiritual matters, try to solve problems in a manner that may redound to God's greater glory. Commitments, pettiness, vengeful desires, pride, claims, and even prestige must be sacrificed to prevent sin.

6. In very important matters bide your time, so as to pray and consult pious, prudent persons.

Members of the Society

1. The exact observance of the rules, especially of obedience, is the basis of everything. If you want others to obey you, set the example and obey your superiors.[14] No one is fit to give orders unless he can obey.

2. Try to assign tasks fairly, without overburdening some, and see to it that everyone can carry out his duties faithfully.

3. No member of the Congregation may sign contracts, receive money, or make loans to relatives, friends or anyone else. Nor is anyone to keep money or administer property unless expressly authorized by his superior. The observance of this article will ward off the most fatal blight that afflicts religious congregations.

4. Abhor as poison any revisions of the constitutions. Their exact observance is better than any revision. The best is the enemy of the good.

5. Study, time, and experience have convinced me that gluttony, greed, and vainglory have been the ruin of flourishing congregations and

[12]"Let us willingly offer ourselves for religious services, sermons, ***Masses for the convenience of the people***, hearing confessions, etc." [Author]

[13]"As a courtesy, priests not of the house should *occasionally* be invited to preach, etc." [Author]

[14]"If you wish others to obey you, set the example by obeying *your superiors*." [Author]

esteemed religious orders. Time will also teach you how true things are even if now they may seem incredible to you.[15]

Tips in Giving Orders

1. Try never to order your subordinates to do things beyond their strength or contrary to their inclinations. Rather, do your best to favor each one's tendencies by preferably assigning tasks you know to be more to their liking.[16]

2. Never order anything that may harm one's health, deprive him of necessary rest, or conflict with other duties or orders issued by some other superior.

3. In giving orders always be kind and considerate. Let there be no threats, anger, and, least of all, force in what you say and do.

4. When you must order something hard or repugnant, use this approach: "Could you do this or that?" or "I have an important task that I don't like to burden you with because it is difficult, but there is no one else who can do it. Would you have time? Do you feel up to it? Would it interfere with your other duties?" Experience proves that such overtures at the right time are very effective.

5. Be thrifty in everything, but make sure that the sick lack for nothing.[17] Nevertheless, let all be reminded that we have made a vow of poverty and that consequently we should not seek or even desire any kind of comfort. We must love poverty and its companions. Let us therefore avoid expenses not absolutely necessary in clothing, books, furniture, travel, etc.

This is a kind of legacy I leave to the director of each house. If these recommendations are practiced I shall die in peace, knowing that God will certainly bless our Society, that it will prosper ever more and fulfill its mission—God's greater glory and the salvation of souls.[18]

How could anyone forget these sage teachings? Keeping this fatherly legacy is the only way to make his spirit thrive in our

[15]Here Article 6 was added: "Be most solicitous about promoting community life in word and deed." [Author]

[16]"*Never command what you think is beyond your subordinates' strength or when you foresee you will not be obeyed. Try to avoid any order repugnant to them; rather, do your best to favor their inclinations, preferably assigning tasks you know to be more to their liking.*" [Author]

[17]"Be thrifty in everything, but make sure that the sick *absolutely* lack for nothing." [Author]

[18]"This is a kind of legacy which I leave to the director of each house. If these recommendations are practiced, I shall die in peace, knowing that our Society *will prosper ever more before mankind, will be blessed by the Lord and fulfill its mission* which is God's glory and the salvation of souls." [Author]

houses and to live the family life which he singled out as their outstanding trait. [Here are the focal points of our father's teachings:]

. . . Try to make yourself loved sooner than feared.

. . . Always raise your mind and heart to God before any important decision.

. . . Charity and courtesy to all, residents and outsiders, should be your outstanding trait.

. . . Strive to make yourself known to the pupils and to know them, spending as much time with them as possible.

. . . Leave odious or disciplinary measures to others.

. . . Do your best to favor each one's tendencies by preferably assigning tasks you know to be more to their liking.

. . . When a report is made to you, listen to it all completely and try to ascertain the full facts and hear both sides before passing judgment.

. . . Be thrifty in everything, but make sure that the sick absolutely lack for nothing.

. . . Abhor as poison any revisions of the constitutions. The best is enemy of the good.

Such a program will help every religious community to form one heart and soul with its superior.

To clarify and complete the confidential directives, several norms, taken from various general conferences, were first gathered into a handwritten copybook as soon as they were given. Later they were grouped and finally edited personally by Father Rua as we can tell from a copy found in his record book which must have been the original from which copies were made and sent to the directors with a new edition of the confidential directives on the feast of St. Joseph [March 19] 1876.

Clarifications and Additions to
"Confidential Directives to Directors"

1. Let the superior of each house solicitously set his school on a right course and form his staff: teachers, assistants and domestic help. This applies especially now when we are short of personnel and this personnel is mostly young.

2. Let directors be most benign and considerate toward subordinates and as far as possible avoid handling unpleasant matters. Disciplinary

measures should be assigned to the prefect. Important matters concerning a confrere should be brought to the superior general's attention. Reports to parents concerning their children's conduct should usually be the director's task, but if it is neither possible nor opportune because of severe measures to be taken, let him give suitable norms of action to the prefect or someone else.

3. Directors should often reach ou to those who need help so as to encourage them in their efforts to improve themselves, discover their personal needs, and provide for them.

4. Special consideration is due to particularly deserving confreres in regard to travel and other needs, especially in time of illness.

5. Professed members, clerical and lay, should be held in highest regard in all our schools. They should be shown great trust, and even if they may be less competent than others, they should be put in charge of more delicate and confidential matters. They should be told or be made aware that a certain task is given to them rather than to others because they are professed members and are regarded as real brothers.

6. Let each director take deeply to heart the theology course and see that it be diligently conducted and never omitted.

7. Every director should periodically speak or write to the rector major about members whom they consider worthy of ordination. However, they should first discuss it with the house chapter and send in its opinion. Let him also remember to return the pertinent papers properly filled out.

8. Newly ordained priests should be given the opportunity of reviewing moral theology.

9. Directors should never fail to give two conferences a month, one concerning the rules, the other on some moral topic. If this occasionally cannot be done, a spiritual reading should be substituted. This at least should never be omitted.

10. The monthly manifestation, which should not be forgotten, should be made diligently and unhurriedly. Each director should ask confreres two questions especially:

a. Is there anything unpleasant in your duties which may hinder your vocation and do you think you have made any spiritual progress since your last manifestation?

b. Are you aware of anything to be done or prevented in order to ward off offense against God, or remove a disorder or scandal?

Generally, they come to know things which would never enter our minds and which they often think we already know or belittle. When a manifestation reveals a source of evil or disorder in regard to any member, make a note of it, and when it is that member's turn, question

him pointedly or in a roundabout way, as you think best. Thus we can forestall even grave dangers without offense and unobtrusively prevent scandal. But be very careful not to touch on matters of conscience.

11. Manifestation and confession must be kept completely separate. A manifestation must be limited to external things because we must use it when necessary; this could not be done were we to enter into matters of conscience; then we would risk trespassing upon confession.

12. In each school the director should make sure that the catechist takes special care of the clerics, helping them to fulfill their duties diligently, kindly advising them when they fail, and informing the director when he notices danger or disorder. The director should frequently ask him for a report.

13. Personally or through the catechist, the director should observe how his priests celebrate Mass, opportunely reminding them to carry out the sacred ceremonies, say Mass devoutly, and avoid both hurry and delay when saying Mass in public.

14. Priests and clerics sent to say or serve Mass outside our schools should be chosen from the most devout and knowledgeable in sacred ceremonies. If there is no one available, it is better not to accept the invitation, so as to protect the Congregation's good name and the reputation of the house.

15. Directors should take care lest teachers or confreres contract relationships with outsiders, and especially lest they visit them in their homes.

16. As few lay teachers as possible should be hired, not only because of the expense, but also because they generally have no concern for the moral aspect of education, and this is and must unalterably be the first and last goal of all our activities. When personnel can be reduced by merging courses, let this be done: e.g., in history, let all study the Middle Ages one year and modern history the next; in philosophy, logic one year and ethics the next. When a lay teacher is to be hired, the director should first ask the rector major for advice and permission.

17. Directors should present a quarterly report on the sanitary, financial, academic and, especially, moral state of their school, with information on the conduct of the members. This will help the rector major to know the members of the Congregation.

18. As regards bookkeeping, the director should post all income and cash that the prefect gives him every week; likewise, he should record all expenses, including the cash he gives the prefect each week for ordinary and special expenses, trying to group income and expenditures under headings. If he has to make a particular secret expenditure, he will enter it in a special ledger to be checked by the rector major. The director

shall use this ledger to present his personal financial account at the end of each school year and whenever the rector major shall ask for it.

19. Let no changes be made in bookkeeping procedures without first consulting the rector major.

20. As far as possible, the decrees issued by Rome in 1848 should be carried out, without worry about rules which cannot be enacted just now.

21. As regards the auditing required by those decrees, the chapter members of individual houses will exercise the office of provincial auditors, while the members of the Superior Chapter will act as general auditors. This directive is temporary.

22. Regularly the directors' term of office is for six years, as it is for members of the Superior Chapter, but the rector major may transfer them even sooner, if necessary, or reconfirm them in office if God's greater glory calls for it.

23. A goal of all directors and members of the Superior Chapter is unifying the over-all government of the Congregation. A way must be found to free the Salesian Chapter from the direction of the Oratory.[19]

P.S. In the autumn conferences of 1875 it was decided that in all our schools, except the Oratory, evening classes should experimentally be held before supper to see if they are more convenient, without however changing the time for night prayers which must be kept at nine o'clock.

A close family unity through constant, loving and fatherly vigilance, a common effort for an exemplary life, and a spirit of poverty in community life were the exhortations which constantly poured from our saintly founder's heart.

8. Special Advice and Admonitions

During spiritual retreats or on visits to the houses Don Bosco never failed privately to admonish directors by word or writing even if he thought it only a timely matter, and they in turn, as deeply devoted sons, reverently took and valued their father's words. The four following memos or notes—all in Don Bosco's hand—clearly show his fatherly frankness and concern and the humble devotion of those who have handed them down to us. They did not mind exposing their own failings and weaknesses so

[19]The formation of the Oratory house chapter took place in 1873. [Author]

as to save for posterity whatever could portray Don Bosco's saintliness, wisdom and fatherliness.

We reproduce the first and third documents completely; the second does not carry the addressee's name and we shall further omit three words to shield his identity; so also with the fourth document, dated "Eve of the Assumption, 1874." All contain advice and admonitions which may be timely and helpful to others now and in the future.

I. *To Father Lemoyne*
Spiritual Retreat—1871

1. Never omit the monthly manifestation and the two conferences: one on the rules, the other on an ascetic subject.
2. Use your time well; study your sermons well and foster a spirit of piety among your pupils.
3. Do not go out unless you have to, and then see to it that order and morality are safeguarded.

II. *To an Unidentified Confrere*

1. [Give] a sermon on the spirit of charity and fraternal unity. One God, one master, one superior, one congregation.
2. [Do not neglect] the monthly manifestation and house chapter meeting. Practice and fervently recommend down-to-earth meditation. For example: on not keeping money for private use, on expending money without the chapter's consent.
3. Never criticize what was done previously at . . . during or outside school hours. Do not boast of your accomplishments or plans of action either publicly or privately.
4. Do not become involved in unnecessary conversations, visits and encounters. Avoid familiarity with persons of the opposite sex. Someone brought to my attention your unduly long stay at . . . .
5. Respect and healthily fear the [local] clergy. Pile praise upon them and never criticize. Don't boast at the expense of others when you preach or speak.
6. Do all the good you can unobtrusively. The violet is hardly seen but its scent tells you it is there.

Think about these things and practice them. We shall talk about them in due time. Take the above from

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. Bosco

III. *To Father Bonetti*

Turin, April 17, 1873

Dear Father Bonetti:

I do not think that disorders can be avoided if the basic rules of our houses are not put into practice. Find out for yourself.

1. [Faithfully receive] the monthly manifestation, which stresses that the superior must be frank with his subjects on all matters. They in turn must open up; if they do not, they should be reminded of their obligation.
2. During the manifestation see if the confrere has improved; ascertain if he has followed your advice, and insist that he practice it.
3. Never omit the two monthly conferences: one on an ascetical topic, the other on the rules.
4. Summon your chapter and sometimes all your teachers to discuss ways and means for faulty situations.
5. Remember that the director is not to do much himself but is to see to it that each confrere does his work.
6. Read the norms I have given in writing to the directors of our houses.

I expect nothing more than the observance of these articles, and then God's grace will find ready access to your hearts. The spiritual retreat will pave the way. I shall visit you during the first half of May, and then you can tell me the results of all I have recommended. On the other hand *mundus in maligno positus est totus* [the whole world is seated in wickedness—1 Jn. 5, 19] and we cannot change it. God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

IV. *To an Unidentified Confrere*

Eve of the Assumption, 1874

Dear . . .

During this spiritual retreat I have spoken with several retreatants from our schools and jotted down what I think should be seriously examined in . . . [your house]. So call Father Prefect and go over the following with him:

1. Do not forget what I earnestly suggested when you accompanied me to . . . .
2. Both of you absent yourselves too easily to visit your pupils' families or other friends.

3. I heard serious complaints on discipline and cleanliness, personal and general. These are fundamental. Who is in charge of these things? Are the director and the prefect doing their work? Do they put this before any other outside activity?

4. Many parents complain of the administration; many boys are overly dissatisfied; others are favored too much, etc.

May God help us! Work for souls, especially your own. Amen.

Fr. John Bosco

9. Reports and Deliberations of the General and of the Fall Conferences

Our Society obtained its *decretum laudis* [decree of praise] on July 23, 1874, but the approval of its constitutions was deferred to a more opportune time.[1] However, since the constitutions stated: "Once a year, the rector [major] . . . shall convoke the chapter and the directors of individual houses to ascertain and provide for the needs of the Society, taking whatever measures will be judged opportune for the times, places and persons," this article began to be implemented with a certain solemnity in 1865, when annual general conferences were convoked on the feast of St. Francis de Sales; all directors and all Salesians residing at the Oratory were to attend.

If Don Bosco happened to be absent at that time, the patronal feast and the conference were delayed until he returned. We have some accounts of these conferences on loose sheets of paper. We cannot say with certainty who drafted them, but it is obvious that the work was done each time at Don Bosco's request. Hence we must value them highly as so many pages of the genuine history of our Society. They show us its gradual growth and our founder's zeal in promoting the observance of our constitutions.

1. In 1871 the general conference took place on January 30 and was attended by the directors of our schools at Borgo San Martino, Lanzo, Cherasco and Alassio, and by Father Pestarino and the Salesians residing at the Oratory. [The report follows:]

[1] *See* Vol. VII, p. 425. [Editor]

After the triennial profession of two confreres,[2] Don Bosco asked each director to report on the state of his school. First to speak was the director at Borgo San Martino, and he was followed by those of Lanzo, Cherasco and Alassio. With few and slight exceptions, all declared they were satisfied with the conduct of their confreres, each emphasizing his contentment and playing down his troubles. Father Pestarino, being also asked to speak about Mornese, after a brief report of his efforts at doing good especially during the last carnival days, spoke of the school construction, expressing the hope that it would soon be ready. Don Bosco then took the floor.

"Summing up all we have heard of the state of our houses," he said, "we must thank the Lord who has thus blessed us. We see that, over this year, good will, unity and love of work have increased in our Congregation. Not only do we already have an impressive number of young postulants, but many other well-intentioned young men are seeking admission to our Society.

"Since we have spoken of all the other houses, I also should say something about the Oratory, our motherhouse and headquarters, and voice my satisfaction at the considerable progress made during the past year. I see things getting more and more orderly. I am gratified, too, by noted improvement in our artisans' conduct; in past years they were really a scourge in this house because of their lack of discipline. I don't mean that they have become angels, but they have definitely improved, and several have asked to join our Congregation. I also notice a more pronounced endeavor to do good and a better sense of unity, so much needed, among our confreres.

"I have seen that in all the houses everybody works quite hard. Those who teach are also on hand to supervise in the dormitories, on weekly walks, and in the playground. They tutor, keep order in the dining room and still find time to read, study and prepare their lessons. Far from being saddened, I rejoice because the devil cannot have the upper hand where everyone is working so hard. This is true of every house, and the same can be said of the Oratory. We have many confreres here, but we also have plenty of work, not so noticeable, perhaps, but still requiring a good deal of manpower. I did not think that we were all so busy until one day when I sent for someone to transcribe two pages for me.

" 'Can you copy these two pages?' I asked.

" 'Yes,' he answered, 'but I shall have to drop such and such a thing.'

"I looked for someone else and got the same reply. I actually sent for all the confreres in the house, and no one was free. Instead of being

[2]Cleric Louis Rocca and coadjutor brother Marcellus Rossi, assisted by Fathers Lemoyne and Pestarino. [Author]

sorry, I am glad and beg Our Lord to keep sending us work. The pity is ours if we shun work or have little to do. Believe me, idleness and lack of work are the ruin of religious congregations because idleness is the root of all evil. We must therefore tremble at the mere thought that this monster may worm his way into our midst.

"Then I need each one of you to be busy making money. We have important work afoot, entailing a huge outlay of at least 200,000 lire.

" 'What?' you may ask. 'Don Bosco is always telling us to be detached from wealth and not to keep or handle money, and now he urges us to make money?'

" 'Yes,' I say, 'we must make money. We can do so most efficiently by being thrifty and by doing without unnecessary things. We must strive to save as much as we can in travel and clothing.'

"Obviously these small savings will not balance out our huge expenditures, but if we do this, Divine Providence will send us the rest. We can be quite sure of that, no matter what the amount. We need not worry because, if the goal is good, Divine Providence will send us the means. For instance, we have large-scale plans on hand and shall soon start work on laying out a square in front of our church [of Mary, Help of Christians]. It's a big project requiring a lot of money. We also have plans for the church [of St. John the Evangelist] near the Protestant church on which we hope to start construction this spring. We are building at Lanzo and repairs are in progress at Borgo San Martino and Alassio. I do not have a cent, and yet I have already set deadlines and signed contracts for cash payments because I am sure the Lord will send us the money.

"I have also noticed that, once we own real estate, Divine Providence stops helping us. As long as we have a strip of land, nothing comes in and we are forced to sell it. Thus we must banish all thought of owning real estate, because it becomes nothing but a hindrance.

"At the Oratory we cannot have the togetherness that we see in our other houses because, besides our greater number, we also have some people who do not belong to the Congregation and whom we tolerate for reasons of convenience and regard. We hope in due time to house only members of the Congregation.

"One more thing about saving. We are beginning to feel the effects of a painful scourge—the draft. Before we can put a young man to work, we must lay out a good sum of money for his education, maintenance, clothing and, now, exemption from military service.

"Another thing to consider and correct concerns dramatics. I have always allowed stage plays and shall continue to do so, but for our boys, not for outsiders. Good or bad, dramatic presentations are needed in

every school because they are a means of learning public speaking, declamation and intelligent reading. Besides, dramatics has become a must, and life without it would be unbearable. I notice, though, that now it is no longer what it should be and what it used to be. Stage plays are no longer geared to our boys' needs but aim to please adults. I therefore want it understood that our stage plays must strive to amuse and educate. There should be no scenes that may harden boys' hearts or unfavorably impress their sensibilities. Give comedies, simple ones with a moral. Let there be singing, because, besides being fun, it is also educational and in demand. Let boys declaim good poems. If you want guests, invite benefactors. They will be happy to see that everything is done to help youngsters, and this is the goal we are striving for with their help. Let us never again see on stage objectionable costumes. Let it never happen that the virtue of modesty is offended. Let the performances impart new knowledge—a tour of the Holy Land, episodes from Bible history and so on—that will help us attain our goal. Nor do I intend to have stage plays become public attractions so as to anger those who cannot gain admission without buying tickets at any price. Moreover, I have seen people in the audience dressed so immodestly that I wonder how they managed to get in. Had it not been rude, I would have immediately asked them to leave our premises. Nor can we tolerate certain words on stage, such as 'Damn this or that.' If guests are to be invited, let them be benefactors and no one else.

"I admit I ought to have said these things to the directors concerned, but I chose to say them here in order that everyone may know how things should be, and that nothing unseemly may gain acceptance.

"For the rest, let us eagerly encourage one another to work because, regardless of our growth in membership, we are still too few considering the number of requests for new houses. *Messis quidem multa, operarii autem pauci* [The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few—Lk. 10, 2]. Our Society's remarkable growth is truly a miracle, considering these evil times, the widespread turmoil and the relentless warfare directed against the faithful. In these days, when all monastic orders are being suppressed by the state, when nuns can no longer feel safe in their cloisters and monks have disappeared, we get together and, despite all our enemies, grow in numbers, open houses, and do whatever good can still be done. It is obvious that God's finger is here and that Our Lady is protecting us. Monks have been exiled and we respond by changing garb. We shall carry on in priestly robes, and should this too be forbidden, we shall use civilian garb and continue to do good. We shall even grow beards if we must, because these things cannot keep us from doing good. Freemasonry is against us *en masse*, everyone hates us and per-

secutes us, yet we are tranquil and at peace because of God's help. We have many newspapers against us; yet, despite this, our schools are ever more greatly appreciated by the people, and we always have more applications than vacancies.

"I wish to close this evening by urging obedience, the virtue that comprises all others. Believe me, if you do your superior's will in all matters, you cannot err because the Lord supports and inspires the one in command. Whoever tries to object and have the superior change his mind makes a big mistake, because experience has taught me that every time I changed my mind to follow someone else's opinion, things went wrong. I can truly say that in a religious congregation obedience is all; if that is lacking, the congregation will be a mess and go to ruin.

"Furthermore, I urge you all to obey the rules without exception, because unfortunately the time will come when such exceptions will have to be made, and I am frightened by the mere thought. I do not mean by this to say that, when necessary, one should not use appropriate means; if something is done by way of exception it must be out of sheer necessity.

"I cannot cease exhorting you to work. I myself shall spend whatever life remains to me solely for the welfare of boys. You all know I was supposed to die at fifty, but a group of boys prayed and prolonged my earthly stay.[3] I thank the Lord for this grace, and I will spend my life for the benefit of those who got it for me from God. Do likewise yourselves, because 'the harvest is indeed great, but the laborers are few' " [Luke 10, 2].

Don Bosco also spoke at great length on school dramatics, and we need not add a single syllable to clarify his clear, explicit instructions. Again, that same year, he published a four-page flier which he sent to all the houses.[4]

2. In 1872 the general conference was held on Don Bosco's return from Varazze after his long, serious illness. All the Oratory confreres attended with the directors of the various houses. We have no record of the meeting, except for a mention of it by Father Pestarino in a report he gave about the beginnings of the new Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, a report which Don Bosco "listened to with pleasure."

[3]*See* Vol. VI, p. 56; Vol. VIII, p. 96. [Editor]

[4]This was already mentioned in Volume VI of these memoirs. The complete set of regulations is in that same volume, pp. 646-648. [Editor]

3. In 1873—before the feast of St. Francis de Sales, precisely on January 12—a meeting was held "for the election of the economer and three councilors to replace those whose term of office had expired." The four incumbents—Father Savio, Father Provera, Father Durando and Father Ghivarello—were re-elected. On this occasion, Don Bosco uttered these memorable, prophetic words:

I am delighted to see that our Congregation is growing every day. Hence, the chapter we have re-elected this evening will continue to function as the chapter of this house for only a little while longer. Soon its concern will include, without distinction, each and every house.

Were it possible (he went on in a humorous vein) I would like to set up a shed in the middle of the playground for the chapter members so they could be isolated from all other mortals. But since they are still entitled to live on this earth, they may choose to reside in whatever house it may seem best. To take their place here, a local chapter will be established at the Oratory as in every house. Increasing numbers of our members make this necessary. In this I clearly see God's intervention. He it is who gives many young men the idea of joining our Society, of leaving parents, money, and hopes of honorable, lucrative and eminent positions. There are even some who donate all their possessions to the house in full acceptance of Our Divine Master's counsel to forsake father, mother, brother and sister, and to sell all one has in order to give to the poor. Again, too, the Lord protects us by inducing those who hate and persecute other religious societies to foster our work, and He even provides us with means and weapons to repulse them, so to say.

Yet, though I most dearly wish our Congregation to grow and its apostles to increase in numbers, my first and most fervent wish is that these Salesians become zealous ministers, as worthy sons of St. Francis de Sales as Jesuits are of the valiant St. Ignatius of Loyola. The whole world—particularly evil men who in a satanic hatred would like to see this holy seed die out—is astonished. Persecutions, even the most horrible blood-baths, do not dismay these brave souls. So scattered afield are they that they no longer know each other's whereabouts; yet, separation notwithstanding, they faithfully observe the rules given by their first superior as though they were still living in community. Wherever you find a Jesuit, there, I say, is a model of virtue, an exemplar of holiness. They preach, hear confessions, and proclaim the Gospel. What more? When evil men think they have done away with them, it is then that their numbers increase and the good done to souls is greater.

May it be the same with us, my sons. Think seriously of the life to which God has called you, think and pray; and when joining our Congregation, look up to these valiant sons of Christ and do likewise. Whether priest or lay religious, whatever your task, always observe your rules faithfully. You may be here at the Oratory or at Lanzo or in any of our other houses; you might end up in France, Africa or America. Still, alone or in community, always keep this Congregation's purpose in mind: the education of youth and of our neighbor in general in the arts and sciences, especially in religion. To put it briefly: the salvation of souls. Were I to say what now flashes through my mind, I might tell you of a great number of festive oratories scattered all over this earth in France, Spain, Africa, America, and many other places, where our confreres work tirelessly in the vineyard of Jesus Christ. As of now, all this is but an idea, but I feel I can speak of it already as an accomplished fact.

However, since Pope Pius IX has urged us to restrict our activities to Italy for the present because, as he says, it sorely needs our help, we shall concentrate our work here in our own country. Whatever the disposition of heaven, always remember the purpose of this Congregation which you are about to join or have already entered. Let us encourage one another and work harmoniously and tirelessly, so that we may one day join the company of the souls we have won for God and with them enjoy the beatific vision of God for all eternity.

The annual general conference [of 1873] was held on the feast of St. Francis de Sales to examine the needs of all the houses and to provide for their smooth functioning, as we gather from this brief report:

At this general meeting it was remarked that all the schools had increased their enrollment. On the whole, the houses seemed to be running well. Particular mention was made of the opening of the Valsalice College,[5] of new buildings at Lanzo and Alassio, and of moving St. Vincent's Hospice from Marassi to Sampierdarena. Don Bosco concluded by warmly exhorting all to give good example and observe the rules faithfully.

We also have a more detailed report which follows:

The conference opened with the usual invocation of the Holy Spirit.

[5]*See* pp. 166-170. [Editor]

Don Bosco sat on a dais in the center of the assembly, flanked on both sides by the directors of the various schools.

After opening the meeting, he asked Father Rua to read the names of the members of the Superior Chapter and of the Oratory house chapter. Until now the Oratory had depended on the Superior Chapter. He made it clear that from now on the Superior Chapter would concern itself with a general supervision of the houses rather than with the direction of any particular house. However, since some members of the Oratory house chapter had been appointed to the Superior Chapter and could not be replaced immediately, they would continue to serve on both chapters.

There followed the reports from the various houses, starting from that at Borgo San Martino, the oldest. Since its director was not present, not much was said except that generally things were going very well, especially in spiritual matters.

Father Lemoyne, the director at Lanzo, spoke next, stating his great satisfaction that the school was doing well both spiritually and materially, thanks to God and his brother Salesians. He ended his report by recommending his school to the prayers of all. Father Francesia then reported on his house at Varazze, admitting that in the past school year he had had to put up with very many heartaches, especially because of two staff members who had no priestly call, but he ended by saying that presently, thank God, things were going satisfactorily well. He too asked for the prayers of all.

The next speaker, Father Cerruti, the director of the house at Alassio, after noting that the school was doing well physically, intellectually and morally, added that enrollment was growing so fast that he felt he would soon be faced with lack of space. He ended his report with the usual appeal for prayers.

Father Albera, the director of St. Vincent's Hospice at Sampierdarena, then took the floor. Stressing the dire need for such a house in that city, he showed how, with God's help, a great deal of good could be accomplished, especially through religious instruction of its poorly educated inhabitants. He added that, in terms of the hospice's material needs, they did the best they could; still, because of the steadily increasing number of boys, the premises were becoming too crowded.

Father Dalmazzo, the director of the Valsalice College, then spoke, complaining that it was just the opposite in his college; the enrollment was very small—a mere twenty-two students—and the facilities were very vast. Nevertheless, though the college seemed to be sterile ground because it was not yet well known, some consoling success had already been achieved. He too concluded by asking for everybody's prayers.

Father Pestarino, the director of the Daughters of Mary, Help of

Christians, gave the last report, stating that at Mornese, too, things were progressing, though the sisters had as yet no superior. He too recommended himself to the prayers of all.

After listening to all these reports, Don Bosco spoke:

"Now what is Don Bosco going to tell us, you will ask? I have so many things to say that I would gladly keep talking until tomorrow night, if other tasks did not prevent me from so doing. Besides, I would not want to deprive you of supper. My dear sons, our Society is flourishing, but we are passing through extremely critical times, especially for food. So I urge you all not to waste anything. Be thrifty! I do not mean that we should go hungry, no, nor that our fare should be changed. I wish each one to eat according to his needs, with nothing being wasted or damaged. What I say about food applies to everything. I beg all most earnestly to avoid wastefulness in clothes, travel and everything else. In a word, thrift in all respects.

"Now, what will Don Bosco primarily stress for our Society's good? You can easily guess: the faithful observance of the rules. Yes, the faithful observance of the rules. If we faithfully observe them, we shall be pleasing to God (for none of you should fulfill his duties to please me or anyone else), and we shall induce others to follow us. *Verba movent, exempla trahunt* [Actions speak louder than words]. If, on the other hand, we do not observe our rules, if we yield to gluttony, especially in drinking, if we look distractedly about in church, particularly after Holy Communion, what are others possibly to think of our Society? You may have seen the effects of intemperance or greed in others. Once a good young man told me that he would not become a priest for private reasons he would not disclose to me. One day, as we walked together, I so pressed him that finally he yielded. 'If you really want to know,' he said, 'it's this. One day my father and I went into a café and saw there a drunken priest in shirt-sleeves. I was so disgusted by that sight that I said, *I'd sooner die than become a priest and give such scandal!*' Now do you see, my sons, what bad example can do?

"I then asked him: 'Did anybody hear what you said?' 'No one,' he replied. So I tried to change his mind. 'You are not bound to give up the priesthood just because you said you would not want to become a bad priest. Your resolution should rather help you to become a good priest.' He seemed convinced, but a few years later I heard he had died.

"My dear sons, I stand here like a captain surrounded by staff officers and a select squad ready to endure anything in order to please not me—a poor paymaster—but God. Let us therefore strive so to conduct ourselves that others may be edified. Let all be done for God's greater glory."

Several decisions were taken[6] and copies were sent to the houses. The original is in our archives.

4. That same year [1873] other meetings of directors and prefects were held at the Oratory on September 9 before the annual spiritual retreat. At that time, earnest steps were being taken for the approval of the constitutions, and consequently their exemplary observance had to be stressed while some advisable amendments had to be considered before submitting them for definitive approval.

The resolutions, edited by Father Rua and approved by Don Bosco, were sent to the houses. They concerned members of the Society submitting their writings prior to publication, how confreres were to relate to outsiders, why directors should be freed from unpleasant duties and reserve the right of informing parents of their sons' conduct, and a few detailed norms on observing the vow of poverty.[7]

5. In 1874 the annual conference was held on April 17 and 18 after Don Bosco's return from Rome and the definitive approval of the constitutions.

A memorandum in Father Lemoyne's hand gives us the highlights of what Don Bosco said in his deep gratitude to God for this formal approval—dear and holy exhortations never to be forgotten! [He stressed the following points:]

Our constitutions have been approved; from now on we go forward in a well-ordered manner.

The superior must be free to move the members about, especially for the purpose of the priestly ministry.

Let us renounce personal inclinations and strive to form one body.

Let no one refuse to obey an order even if it may be burdensome or distasteful.

Let all be both united and truly obedient to their director. Rather than interpret rules so as to dodge an order, let all interpret them so as to carry it out promptly and cheerfully.

Let all respect the Congregation not just in general, but in each individual member. God is our Father and the Congregation is our mother. Let us therefore love it, defend its good name, and never do anything

[6]These dealt with admission policies, quarterly reports, textbooks, schedules, personnel and so on. We omit them in this edition. [Editor]

[7]We are omitting the list of such decisions. [Editor]

that may dishonor it, but rather be anxious for its growth and prosperity.

Guard against love of parents. "He who loves father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me," Jesus said [Matt. 10, 37]. To us, our home, parents, and brothers should be as though non-existent. We may pray, advise, and even offer help when needed, but naught else. Jesus was subject to Mary and Joseph but kept totally free in things concerning His Heavenly Father's glory. When our parents call us home for a few days, we must reply as Jesus did in the temple at the age of twelve. That same reply should be given in similar circumstances.

Let us be steadfast in our resolutions, so that we do not commit ourselves today and change our minds tomorrow. Let us not look back, but go ahead freely and courageously. Let us observe not simply the rules but even the particular prescriptions that are issued.

After speaking of examinations, scholastic records, exemption from military service, and a formal novitiate which was to be set up little by little, Don Bosco closed his talk:

Let no one seek his own interests, but those of Jesus Christ.

Let there be frequent conferences at which either Rodriguez[8] shall be read aloud or talks shall be given by the director on the subject of the vows, the virtue of obedience, detachment from earthly things, chastity and its safekeeping, and the manner of treating relatives.

A conference is to be held each week, and a chapter meeting every two weeks.

Poor boys, spreading good books, and preaching are three vast fields for our activities.

6. In the fall other general conferences were held which resembled a general chapter. There were also meetings of prefects.

Such was Don Bosco's humility that in the general conferences the main items in the agenda were the revision of the translation of the constitutions and of the Regulations of the Salesian Association or Pious Union of Cooperators which he was already planning to found.

These other topics were discussed: economizing by using a single type of cloth for priestly garb, directors' private bookkeeping

[8]Alonso Rodriguez, S.J. (1526-1616), author of *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection.* [Editor]

and term of office, evening schedules of vocal and instrumental music, prayer style, the need of an archive for the Congregation, and other minor matters, among them an earlier date for starting the summer vacation, and opening a rest home in Chieri. A summary of the deliberations was drafted by Father Rua and sent to all the houses. The prefects' meetings discussed the keeping of poverty, uniformity of clothing, good manners, half-hour daily meditation, and the smooth running of spiritual retreats without creating a burden for the Oratory with the coming and going of retreatants on their way to and from Lanzo. Other minor items were also discussed.[9]

10. The Spiritual Retreats

At that time [Salesian] spiritual retreats began on Monday evening and ended on Saturday morning since our few priests could not possibly leave their houses on Sundays, when they were needed in the local churches. Religious professions took place on Friday so as not to delay the next morning's closing and prevent the retreatants from returning to their houses the same day. Usually, on their way to and from Lanzo, where regularly both spiritual retreats were consecutively held, they merely passed through the Oratory, coming and going the same day.

In 1871, after Don Bosco's return from Rome, the spiritual retreats were held September 18-23 and September 25-30. Father Rua and other confreres took notes of Don Bosco's sermons which, as usual, were listened to with delight and spiritual advantage.[1] On September 29 three Salesians took triennial vows, and Father Dominic Belmonte and Father Joseph Monateri took their perpetual vows.

On these retreats Don Bosco gave proof of his singular patience. Through the sexton's carelessness he had to sit through the day, while hearing confessions, on a rickety chair flanked by an old, bulky, clumsy kneeler which forced him into an extremely

[9]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[1]For these retreat notes *see* Appendix 3. [Editor]

uncomfortable position, made worse by his habit of sitting with a very modest, edifying, upright posture. When the retreat was over, he called Father John Cagliero, the spiritual director, and remarked smilingly, "Just look at this kneeler! It may serve as a model! Have a sketch made!" The matter ended with a good laugh.

In 1872 the two retreats were held September 16-21 and September 23-28. Besides being everybody's favorite confessor, Don Bosco, as always, made himself available for private talks with the retreatants, gave the cherished and timely "Good Nights," presided over the chapter meetings held to assign Salesians to the various houses and to deliberate important matters, and preached the instructions at both retreats.

As he taught and guided others, he constantly meditated on eternity, often speaking of his own death. One day, when Father Berto pointed out to him that many would find it hard to bear his loss resignedly, he replied: "Well, if I were to die, good people would mourn me a while and then all would be over, while the devil would take a holiday because he would be rid of an enemy!"

On September 18, while strolling with Father Berto, he mentioned his health, causing Father Berto to remark that it was time for Don Bosco to look after himself and rest a little.

"My life span was set at fifty," Don Bosco countered. "People prayed and keep praying for me. These additional years are an alms to me: the more generous the alms, the better is to be the use they are put to."

His prudence was shown at chapter meetings in which school staffs were set up for the following year. He wanted not only directors, but all chapter members of each house to observe the constitutions exemplarily and strive to have the confreres observe them, lest they be held accountable for the failings of others. He asserted that any religious community's decline was traceable to superiors who failed to observe the rules and let things slide just to preserve their popularity.

Occasionally he entrusted confreres with tasks seemingly above their capacity, but it was soon evident that they had met the challenge beyond all expectations. This was due, above all, to his prayers and advice. In sending the newly appointed to their stations he exhorted them to pray. "God wants action," he would

tell them, "and we must beg Him to avail Himself of us kindly for His holy undertakings!"

One day, a certain confrere, who had struggled for some time to make a project of his succeed, said to him, "At last I've succeeded! Without me the whole thing would have collapsed!" Don Bosco humbly contented himself with telling the man to give thanks to God, but that evening he confidentially told one of his intimates, "The poor man does not know that for two months Don Bosco has been praying and working for the success of his undertaking!"

In 1872 he also summoned all the directors to special meetings aimed at filling the needs of the houses. During his fatherly exhortations, he showed the advisability and need of holding weekly chapter meetings for the smooth running of a school, of frequently checking the pupils' conduct and progress with their teachers, of not reading newspapers in public, and of never discussing politics with confreres or pupils.

He personally never read newspapers, limiting himself to listening to Father Savio's digest of daily events whenever he needed to know what was going on in the Church and in the nation. Still, he did allow one good newspaper—one only—in each house, provided that it was not taken out of the faculty room.

He also spoke about letter-writing, giving those norms which, at his command, were inserted in the Appendix to the *Regulations for the Houses* in 1877. He likewise urged directors to have the confreres teach their pupils good manners by word and example.[2]

He also demonstrated how ill-mannered pupils were to be corrected. "If a youngster passes without greeting you, perhaps because he was never told to or just didn't think of it, you should be the first to greet him. That will be the best lesson. If you think you can teach a young lad manners by knocking his cap off, you clearly show that you are ill-mannered and do not know how to win a boy's heart. Then, too, aren't boys the beloved, most noble sons of the King of kings? Who, with a spark of faith and charity in his heart, would dare treat them harshly or contemptuously?"

Religious profession took place on September 20. Twenty-nine

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

members made their triennial vows; one, whose triennial vows were expiring, made his perpetual vows. The ceremony was repeated on September 27 with twelve members taking triennial vows, and three—among whom was the cleric Dominic Milanesio —their perpetual vows. The retreat ended on September 28 and all returned to their schools.

The following day, nineteen-year-old Cleric Francis Carones of Frassineto Po died in our school at Borgo San Martino. Another Salesian, twenty-six-year-old John Baptist Camisassa, had died on August 3 at the Oratory. Don Bosco highlighted their virtues in the Appendix of the *Directory of the Salesian Society* as follows:

> It has pleased our merciful God to call unto Himself two dear, virtuous confreres of ours in Jesus Christ, both perpetually professed. . . . The exemplary life that marked their stay with us, their fervent desire to work for God's greater glory, their patience and resignation especially in their last long illness, and their fervent reception of the Last Sacraments and of all spiritual comforts give us a well-founded hope that they are already resting at peace with God. Still, since He finds blemishes even among His angels, let us remember them in our private and community prayers so that any debts they may still have with Divine Justice may be wiped out and they may soon be allowed to enjoy heavenly glory.
>
> Let us try to imitate their detachment from earthly things and their priceless virtue of obedience. Let us do our utmost to observe the rules of our Congregation faithfully and thus be ready if God, in His infinite mercy, were to see fit to summon some of us this year.

In 1873 the spiritual retreats were held September 15-20 and September 22-27. During the first retreat twenty-one members took triennial vows and one took perpetual vows; during the second, ten made triennial vows and one made perpetual vows. Luckily we have a few precious summaries of Don Bosco's talks which we shall later report.

We could unearth nothing noteworthy about the spiritual retreats of 1874 held at Lanzo September 14-19 and September 21-26. At the first retreat twenty-six members took triennial vows, and seven took perpetual vows; at the second, thirteen took trien-

nial vows and eight took perpetual vows. Among the latter was Father Louis Lasagna.[3]

11. Don Bosco's Concept of the Religious Life

As we have said, we have a few summaries of Don Bosco's instructions preached during the spiritual retreats of 1873. They were summarized by Caesar Chiala (who completed his novitiate that same year although his name is not listed in the Directory). The topics were: the need of a spiritual retreat, the vows, poverty, and advantages of the religious life. Chiala also jotted down three brief outlines on the end of man, the excellence of the religious life, and the force of example.

Furthermore, he summarized four talks given by Don Bosco to the postulants in the following order: October 29, 1872—Purpose of the Salesian Society; December 2—Vow of Obedience; June 16, 1873—Chastity; September 1—Excellence of Vows. We believe our readers will be pleased to see them reported here verbatim. These summaries will illustrate, as in the preceding volumes,[1] Don Bosco's concept of the religious life and of the style in which he wished his Salesians to live it.

As an introduction to these eight outlines, we present Father Chiala's summary of one of the four instructions which Don Bosco reserved to himself during the spiritual retreat of 1875 (preached by Father Francesia and Father Rua). Father [Julius] Barberis published substantial summaries of the other three.

Introduction

The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of precious stones. There are plenty of stones on this earth, but not all of them are precious. Some are more or less precious, others appear precious, while

[3]Louis Lasagna (1850-1895) first met Don Bosco in the summer of 1862 during one of his outings with the Oratory boys. In October Louis entered the Oratory. (*See* Vol. VII, pp. 164, 166, 179f) He received the cassock in 1866, took his first vows in 1868, was ordained in 1873, and joined the second missionary expedition to South America in 1876. As director and provincial, he achieved marked success in the fields of education, social action, agriculture, priestly vocations, and church construction and renovation. Consecrated a bishop in 1893, he was entrusted with evangelizing the Indians of Mato Grosso (Brazil). He died in a train collision on November 6, 1895. [Editor]

[1]*See* Vol. IV, pp. 294ff; Vol. VI, pp. 180f, 627; Vol. VII, pp. 417f; Vol. VIII, pp. 354ff; Vol. IX, pp. 267-271. [Editor]

still others, like the [so-called] infernal stone [silver nitrate], are fatal.

The same can be said of our deeds; they can be good, not so good, bad or excellent. The excellent make heavy demands on us because through them we can gain the kingdom of heaven.

Just as, among precious stones, some are worth all the others put together, such as the so-called polar star and solitaire, so there are virtues more precious than all others, because if one acquires them, he possesses them all. These are the virtues of poverty, obedience and chastity.

Let us examine our conscience to see if we have sought and found these precious pearls, at least some valuable ones. If we should realize that some are fake or harmful, let us think how best to rid ourselves of them.

1. *Necessity of Spiritual Retreats*

What is the purpose of spiritual exercises? We constantly exercise ourselves in virtue. The saints longed to withdraw from the world and to flee into the deserts. Read the biography of the Curé of Ars. . . .

What is the purpose of military maneuvers, feints, mock sorties, retreats and attacks? Routine drills on parade grounds no longer suffice; general maneuvers are needed. From parade ground drills and tactical boot camp exercises an army progresses to full field maneuvers in order to be adept at war.

We too are soldiers. "The life of man upon earth is a warfare," says Holy Scripture. [Job 7, 1] We are in training; we familiarize ourselves with a variety of weapons and tactics. Our boot camps are our festive oratories; we hold general maneuvers when we are entrusted with running a school; and lastly we wage war against our common enemy. This war can be exterior when the world persecutes us or interior when God tests our courage. No one will be crowned unless he has competed according to the rules. [Cf. 2 Tim. 2, 5]

No one can escape battle. All must hold themselves ready for it. For some heroes the battle is lifelong; for others it comes but late in life; for still others yet it comes only at death's hour, as in the case of St. Hilarion. But all have to be battle-tested; there is no way out.

Spiritual retreats, like naval maneuvers, are simple exercises without fatal consequences in peacetime, but spelling defeat or victory in wartime.

2. *Advantages of the Religious Life*

Religious life appears to be more burdensome than life in the world, but this is not so. Observing the evangelical counsels makes it easier to

carry out God's precepts and those of the Church.

Young men loitering in a public square may at a quick glance look like privileged people, free, better off than those youngsters disciplined by a teacher, but soon enough a fight will break out among the former and they blaspheme or teach others how to steal. They fall apart morally and end up in jail. The latter, however, get a good education, have a career, lead a happy life and are a boon to society. . . .

The wheels of a cart and the wings of a bird are heavy, but neither cart nor bird can get along without them.

Ancient warriors bore heavy shields, but you know how much they counted on them.

A warship's steel hull is so massive that you wonder how the ship can possibly move, but when its strength is put to the test, you understand its value as you see gaping holes in the hulls of other ships. Then you are convinced of the need of steel plating for those vessels. It matters that we avoid small transgressions and not slip into serious ones.

Fabius Maximus avoided frontal attacks when fighting Hannibal. He won by swift sallies upon straggling units of the army. The devil follows the same strategy with religious. . . .

3. *Purpose of the Society*

The purpose of our Society is to save our own souls and the souls of others, especially of boys.

It would be a mistake to enter the Congregation in the hope of faring better as regards food, health care, education, positions of authority, fame, social contacts, and so on.[2]

Our goal is to save our souls and those of others. How noble an aim! Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into this world for no other purpose than to save what was lost. The finest gift and honor He bestowed on His dearly beloved apostles and disciples was to send them out to evangelize the world. It is noteworthy that He sent them first to Israel and later to the whole world. So, also, we are to begin with those who are nearest to us.

The best way to save our soul and that of others is to reform ourselves and set a good example. Let us do everything with the precision of Swiss watches. Let us perfectly carry out the task the Congregation has entrusted to us.

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Some lay religious may say, "The Congregation may well aim at saving souls, but this is for priests, not for us." Nowhere does the communion of saints appear so true as in a religious congregation, where anything one religious does benefits the others. Those who preach and hear confessions must eat. How would they manage without a cook? So, also, learned teachers need clothes and shoes, and how will they get along without tailors and shoemakers? The same is true of our bodies. The head is more important than the leg, the eye more than the foot, but the body needs both. If a thorn should pierce the foot, head, eyes and hands are mobilized to its aid.

Here the comparison of a watch factory is quite apropos. When all the components of a watch are precision-made, they mesh perfectly. The result is a precision watch. True, some parts are more delicate and essential than others, but remove any part at all and the watch will no longer function properly.

One whose authority or learning gives him a higher position should remember what David said at the height of his glory: "Being exalted, I have been humbled and troubled." [Ps. 87, 16] The higher one's station, the more the need to be humble. It's like a fireman's extension ladder; the higher one climbs, the tighter must be his grip, lest he get dizzy. The higher you go, the harder the fall!

4. *The Vows*

At the end of our life God will demand of us an account of how we used our possessions and whether or not we gave our surplus to the poor. If we did strip ourselves of our possessions, we can answer, "Lord, I gave them back to You long ago. They are Yours. They concern me no longer."

Once the Lord said, "If you give up the little you have for My sake, I shall give you back much more. If you give up everything, you shall be entitled to all that I have in store for you in heaven."

You know what Jesus Christ replied to Peter who told Him, "Behold, we have left all and followed You. . . ." [Matt. 19, 27] The cleaner the break we make from it all, the more certain is our reward. Be it what it may, an attachment to a person or thing or a whim chaining us to material values, let us sever the link and our fortune will be assured. Besides, in giving up earthly things we are but returning to God what He loaned to us.

A saint felt embarrassed to say "My God, I love You more than any-

thing else" because he felt that he was saying, "Lord, I love You more than a strip of land, a scrap of flesh, a bit of rot!"

5. *Excellence of Vows*

A vow is a deliberate promise made to God to do something particularly good. For instance, a sick person promises God that he will give the Church a thousand lire if he recovers. On recovery, this sum belongs to God as vowed to Him. By the vow of poverty we hand over all our possessions to God; by the vow of chastity we consecrate our body to Him; by the vow of obedience we consecrate our soul to Him, especially the will, our dominant faculty.

Is God pleased with this bond, this vow made to Him? More welcome a gift cannot be found. Jesus Himself told those who sought to be closer to Him and share His life to sell all and follow Him. For this reason he proclaimed the beatitudes. Once Jesus appeared to St. Francis of Assisi and asked him for a gift. When the saint replied that he had nothing, Our Lord told him to search in his breast. He did and found a shining gold coin. Jesus told Francis to do it twice more, and each time the latter brought out a golden coin. He then understood that those three coins symbolized the religious vows.

Is there any difference between doing a good thing and binding oneself to do it by vow? There is a vast difference! Friar Egidius, a companion of St. Francis of Assisi, used to say that he preferred to win one degree of grace as a religious than ten as a layman because a religious has a far lesser chance to lose God's grace. Putting it in another way, if one person promises you the yearly fruits of his tree and another offers you the tree itself, which of the two is offering you a greater gift?

Some equate the merit of vows to those of martyrdom itself. Through martyrdom one dispossesses himself of all and endures torment and death; through his vows one performs the same act of love by readying himself to drink the cup of this same torment in small sips. Through the vows one regains his baptismal innocence. We have an example in St. Anthony, who was carried to heaven by angels.

But if the spiritual gain is considerable, frightful is the punishment for not keeping one's vows. Holy Scripture gives an example of this in Ananias and Sapphira. A religious who was here at the Oratory asked permission to leave his monastery, giving his father's advanced age as a reason. When permission was denied, he left anyway. The day he arrived home, he got into a quarrel with his father and drove him out of the house. He then lived alone as a simple priest. Gradually he deteriorated,

gave up his faith, went to England, and there one sad day was stabbed to death. If only he had remained in his monastery!

6. *Poverty*

If we accept poverty we must also accept its companions and consequences. We must ask ourselves, "Am I poor or not?" If the answer is "yes" we cannot complain.

Someone may object: "I always have to do the most unpleasant tasks; so and so has a nicer shirt than I and is better dressed. I never have free time. If I go out for a walk, I have to escort the boys. I am always crushed with work, while others do as they please. If the food at table runs short or is unappetizing, I am always the one who has to put up with it. St. John Chrysostom tells of a very poor youth who at home had lacked everything but, on becoming a cleric, had the gall to complain about the good food he was served.

If anyone was wealthy before becoming a religious, he should remember that by so doing he became poor. Jesus Christ began by doing. In poverty He gave us most impressive lessons in His birth, life and death. He preached and practiced detachment from one's parents. How great the reward for those who make this generous sacrifice! "Blessed are the poor [in spirit], for theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven." [Matt. 5, 3] He says "*is*," not "will be." The reason is obvious. In other passages, He not only promises, but pledges His followers a hundredfold in this world and eternal life. He says "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven" because it is ours almost by right.

[Some complain that] the rice is overcooked and the wine is sour. "It's true," they say, "that at home all I had was a piece of bread, but at least I knew what I was eating. Here, instead, the soup and main dish are a mess of leftovers and the bread is sometimes as black as coal." St. Thomas of Villanova's hat lasted him forty years and St. Hilarion's robe a lifetime.

"Poor in spirit." This must also be understood to mean that our poverty is as yet imperfect. We are still far from attaining the ideal of monastic poverty and that of Jesus Christ. Thus it is fitting that we at least bear it in mind. Our gripes will then die on our lips. Let us therefore reflect on the poverty of those who truly practiced it.

For poverty's sake St. Philip Neri drank from a glass with a broken stem, treasured as a relic in Cologne. So, if a faulty or chipped glass is set at my place at table, I shall recall St. Philip's glass and say, "Let me be poor like Philip!"

7. *Chastity*

Chastity is the Christian's armor. Obedience and poverty are necessary to religious life, while chastity is its crown and adornment. St. Paul has taught us the need for this virtue. "This is the will of God," he wrote, "your sanctification." [1 Thess. 4, 3] He then went on to explain that this sanctification consists in being pure and chaste like Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Himself taught us how much God values this virtue by never tolerating even the slightest doubt in His life in this respect. When he willed to come into this world, He chose the Virgin Mary as His Mother and St. Joseph as His foster father. His favorite disciple was chosen for his purity, and to him our dying Savior entrusted His Mother while giving him to Her as a son. How many tokens of predilection did He not give to John! He let him rest his head on His breast, and lifted him into the highest spheres of contemplation. . . . What did John see surrounding Christ in heaven? A throng of virgins singing a canticle which no one else could learn.

By this virtue we become like angels and, as Jesus Christ told us, we shall be such one day. St. John Chrysostom even says that we surpass the angels because, having no bodies, they are not subject to our temptations.

There are three means of preserving this precious virtue: control of the senses, prayer and sacraments, and control of the heart.

[1] *Control of the eyes.* "I made a covenant with my eyes that I would not so much as think upon a virgin," said Job [31, 1]. What do eyes have to do with thinking? One glance is enough to arouse a thousand desires.

Control of the tongue. This applies especially to us who have to deal with boys. An unguarded word can cause immense harm to their souls.

Control of the ears. Never listen to foul talk, and endeavor to stop other people from listening.

Control of the touch. Keep your hands to yourself.

Control of the taste. "In wine is debauchery," wrote St. Paul. [Eph. 5, 18]

[2] *Prayer.* The author of the Book of Wisdom says that he understood he could never be chaste without God's help. Our efforts avail us nothing. "Unless the Lord guard the city, in vain does the guard keep vigil. [Ps. 126, 1] Our heart is like a citadel; our senses are the enemy.

Sacraments. Holy Communion is "wine springing forth virgins." [Zech. 9, 17] In the sacrament of Penance we receive advice which more particularly fits our needs. We are to tell the confessor everything that

has to do with chastity; prudently, of course, we also mention our temptations. All that bears on this subject calls for caution. In sins of impurity the matter is generally grave.

[3] *Control of the heart.* Keep it free of any inordinate affection, even for good companions. We must avoid excessive familiarity because it is very dangerous. . . . But can't one be a little freer and not so restrained? No. It is like slowly edging down a slope to pick a flower on the brink of a precipice. One might safely climb back, but the grave danger is that he may slip or become dizzy. Let us pray to St. Aloysius.

8. *Vow of Obedience*

The most important thing in our life is to do God's will. We must of course first know it, so as not to follow our own will mistakenly. Let us always bear in mind David's beautiful prayer: "Teach me to do Your will." [Ps. 142, 9] Let us make it our own.

The vow of obedience is what bolsters religious life. But this obedience must be:

[a] *Total.* We are not to do things halfway.

[b] *Cheerful.* We must not show reluctance when commanded to do something which goes against our grain. At times, knowing that a subject will sulk, a superior will not issue an order, even though his inaction may prove to be harmful to the Congregation and God's glory.

[c] *Prompt.* Once we know a superior's intent, a vocal order or ringing of a bell, we are to obey immediately. St. Aloysius would leave a word half-said as soon as he heard the bell.

[d] *Humble.* We are not to think that the superior ordered us to do something foolish or that it would have been better if he had told us to do some other thing. God assists a superior in the discharge of his duties. He may have seen things as you do and discarded the idea as inadvisable.

It is also a sign of obedience not to persist in asking or refusing. One may need something or believe that he does; thus he goes to his superior and presses his point so insistently that he gets permission. . . . This is forcing the superior's will.

The same can be said about refusing [to carry out an order]. A superior may tell one who is overtired, "Sleep until seven tomorrow." But the other wishes to get up at six in order to receive Holy Communion. Still, he obeys. He earns the merit of the Communion he wished to receive and the additional merit of obedience. The superior may tell another confrere, "Teach that subject." The latter thinks himself unqualified and declines. He fails in obedience by being so unbending.

On his deathbed, St. Francis de Sales gave this final recommendation to the Sisters of the Visitation: "Do not persist in asking or refusing." We, who regard him as our patron, must take this rule to heart.

Here are the other three notes by Father Chiala:

1. The End of Man. God gave man a heart which will always be restless until it turns to God. [The heart of man is] like the needle of the compass which always points north. Turn the compass whichever way you want, but the needle always points to the pole; the farther one goes in the opposite direction, the more the compass will show his deviation from its proper route.

2. The Excellence of the Religious Life. The Imitation of Christ says: "O sacred state of religious bondage, which makes men equal to angels, pleasing to God, terrible to the devils and commendable to all the faithful."[3] Religious life is the equivalent of martyrdom. Through the taking of vows, sins are wiped out as regards both guilt and punishment.

3. Good Example. Jesus Christ "began to do and to teach." [Acts 1, 1] You cannot teach meekness and mildness if someone who knows you can say, "Teacher, why are you so impatient and intolerant if you are not treated with all consideration? You preach mortification to others but are very far from practicing it yourself. All you worry about are your own likes and dislikes and comforts. . . ."

12. Other Precious Notes

These notes consist of four undated, handwritten summaries of talks given by Don Bosco during spiritual retreats, of another handwritten summary entitled *Retreat Topics for Preachers*, and, lastly, of a draft by Father Lemoyne [of Don Bosco's recommendations to directors].

1. *Introduction*

Purpose of military maneuvers. We too train ourselves to fight against the enemy of souls.

We must be like gardeners who can always find something to do among their plants, shrubs and flowers.

[3]Book 3, Ch. 10, No. 6. [Editor]

[Something to think about:] Our Lord's remarks about the tree which had not borne fruit for three years.

What are the fruits of our poverty, chastity and obedience?

Firm belief in the need of a self-examination.

Prayer.

Observance of the timetable.

2. *Obedience*

1. As a natural virtue.
2. As a Christian virtue.
3. As a religious and Salesian virtue.
4. God blesses the religious.
5. God consoles him in his earthly labors.
6. At the moment of death.
7. Obedience is the foundation and defense of the other virtues.
8. Obedience is the mainstay of religious orders.
9. Disobedience is their disintegration and ruin.
10. How Salesians should practice obedience.
11. The obedient religious are blessed on earth and handsomely rewarded in heaven.

P.S. Segneri[1] wrote a book on the virtue of obedience, and Rodriguez[2] wrote a treatise. See also Scaramelli,[3] St. Alphonse, De Ponte,[4] and *Magnum Theatrum vitae humanae*, Art: *Oboedientia.*

3. *Manifestation of Conscience*

It is said that Pythagoras, the ancient famous philosopher, before accepting any pupil, would ask him for a detailed account of whatever good or bad he had done in his life. After admitting him, he would still want him to be most sincere in all things, claiming that unless he knew him intimately, he could not do him the good he wished for him and felt he needed.

[1]Paul Segneri, S.J. (1624-1694) was the most famous sacred orator of the seventeenth century in Italy. [Editor]

[2]Alonso Rodriguez, S.J. (1526-1616), author of *The Practice of Christian and Religious Perfection.* [Editor]

[3]John Baptist Scaramelli, S.J. (1687-1752) was a popular preacher of parish missions and a renowned ascetical writer. [Editor]

[4]Louis De Ponte, S.J. (originally Luis de la Puente, 1554-1624) was a philosopher, theologian and ascetical writer. His cause of beatification, suspended in 1773 when the Society of Jesus was suppressed, was resumed in 1924. [Editor]

Our Divine Savior raised this maxim to evangelical virtue when He told His apostles: *Habete fiduciam*[5]—have the fullest confidence in Me. Indeed, if one is to give a confrere rules for a way of life and advice suited to his needs, then needs must first be known.

4. *The Kingdom of Heaven*

Those who seek the kingdom of heaven are like a merchant in search of precious stones.

1. Many seek riches, knowledge, honors, employment, art, crafts and so on, but these are not genuine pearls. True pearls are the Christian moral virtues, especially the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity. Then again, the pearl from which all virtues begin is Jesus Christ. Let us imitate St. Paul's example.

2. These virtues may be sought through mental and vocal prayer and through good works as the saints did.[6]

3. Religious life is a precious pearl through which we resolve to sell all and renounce everything so as to find the precious pearl of our eternal salvation.

4. Now let us examine how really precious are our pearls, i.e., our actions: our poverty, chastity, obedience, etc. Away with false pearls; let us strive to acquire good ones at any cost.

5. "Sion the city of our strength; a wall and a bulwark shall be set therein." [Is. 26, 1]

"It is difficult for a man to keep the commandments through which we enter heaven unless he follows Christ's invitation and gives up his riches." (St. Thomas Aquinas)

"The rules [of our Society] are the wings on which we fly, the wheels which carry the cart." (St. Augustine)

An outline by Don Bosco, entitled *Topics for the Preachers of Our Spiritual Retreats*, has this note by Father Rua: "Have Father Barberis send a copy to all the preachers of our spiritual retreats." Undoubtedly it was written after 1874; still, we feel it is a fitting conclusion to all we have reported.

Topics for the Preachers of Our Spiritual Retreats

1. Have patience in bearing our confreres' shortcomings. Let us warn and correct them charitably and promptly.

[5]Matt. 14, 27. [Editor]

[6]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

2. Avoid criticism and blame; let us defend and help one another materially and spiritually.

3. Never complain about orders, refusals, food, clothing, assignments, trials of life, duties.

4. Take extreme care in avoiding or preventing any word or deed which is or may appear to be scandalous.

5. No Salesian should ever harbor a grudge for offenses received, recall them in reproach or seek revenge.

6. Let bygones be bygones.

7. There should be diligence and effort on the part of all to enable all Salesians to fulfill their duties exemplarily.

During the retreats of 1873, our good Father Lemoyne took notes of some counsels given by Don Bosco on the spiritual relationship between directors and confreres, visits of the rector major, and the sacrament of Penance. His advice is worth remembering.

It is true that directors were then also regular confessors in their houses, whereas now, in view of the absolute prohibition against hearing the confessions of one's own subjects, Don Bosco's exhortations and counsels would seem no longer relevant. We must bear in mind, though, that their purpose was to make of all the Salesian schools so many families in which the director was to be "a father who could not but love and sympathize with his sons" who would in turn be as so many brothers, forming one heart and soul with their director. After the Holy See's decree of 1901, this family spirit, so cherished by Don Bosco, has unfortunately weakened here and there. To make it flourish again and keep it alive forever, a most effective means is the practice of the precious fatherly exhortations which transpire from those passages that we report in italics.[7]

1. Let no one fear to confess to the director. He is *a father, who cannot help but love and sympathize with his sons.*

2. The Rector Major is the extraordinary confessor. . . . *The spirit of the house must be transfused from the Rector Major to his directors and from them to the confreres. During his visits the Rector Major should always strive to strengthen the bonds between the members and*

[7]We shall omit the context about the director and the Rector Major being respectively the ordinary and extraordinary confessors except when it is necessary for a correct understanding of the italicized passages. [Editor]

their director. He should therefore interview everybody and dispel any misapprehensions, difficulties, and animosities which so easily arise and then hang on at length unless charity takes a hand.

3. *The directors should never punish, reprimand, or threaten the boys. With hearts full of charity, they should symbolize God's goodness. Punishments and reprimands are the prefect's job. It takes but a moment to lose a boy's trust forever. Directors should have nothing to do with the boys' conduct marks, and this should be known. They may, however, change such marks when they are not warranted by the boys' conduct, either on the strength of a manifestly sincere report or because such is the opinion of the house members.*

4. *Every day at Holy Mass, the director should remember his penitents, past, present and future, while they should never forget their confessor [director] when hearing Mass or receiving Holy Communion.*

5. Everyone will make an annual confession each year and a monthly confession on the occasion of the Exercise for a Happy Death. On entering the Salesian Society, everyone shall make a general confession.

6. Every member of the Salesian Society should diligently study all that pertains to the sacrament of Penance: the academic aspect in order to refute objections, and the practical aspect so as to be able to make a good confession. The practice of confession should be plainly taught to the boys without scholarly dissertations. To this end the *Letture Cattoliche* issue entitled *Dialogue Between a Lawyer and a Rural Pastor on the Sacrament of Penance* will be found particularly useful.[8]

7. *No one but the director shall admonish clerics and other confreres. This duty shall not be entrusted to the prefect. The director himself shall kindly advise them on their duties but always in a charitable manner.*

13. Don Bosco's Circulars

The collection of Don Bosco's circulars published in 1896 by Father Paul Albera, spiritual director of the Society, did not include the letters dated before 1876 because of a lack of coordination in the filing of documents.[1]

Two circulars have already been published in other volumes of these *Biographical Memoirs.* That on a candidate's purpose in seeking admission to the Salesian Society, dated June 9, 1867,

[8] *See* Vol. V, pp. 162f. [Editor]

[1] Cf. *Lettere Circolari di Don Bosco e di Don Rua ed altri loro scritti ai Salesiani* [Circulars and other writings of Don Bosco and Father Rua to the Salesians], Torino, Tipografia Salesiana, 1896. [Author]

Feast of Pentecost, can be found in Volume VIII,[2] and the circular on confidence in one's superior, dated Feast of the Assumption 1869, is published in Volume IX.[3] We shall present here unpublished circulars in chronological order.

When we recall that Don Bosco wrote these circulars during the years of his intense struggle for the definitive approval of the Salesian Constitutions, we can be sure, without fear of exaggeration, that those burning desires then uppermost in his spirit are so also today and will continue to be so in the future. They are:

[1] That unity of spirit and administration in the Salesian Society shine undimmed through the observance of every article of the constitutions.

[2] That everyone be thrifty in all things and save as much as possible.

[3] That each confrere scrupulously observe both the constitutions and the particular regulations touching his duties so as to foster discipline among the pupils.

[4] That good morals be constantly promoted with all suitable means among the boys entrusted to us by Divine Providence.

[5] That each house faithfully observe the recommendations it has received for smooth functioning.

[6] That efforts be made at any cost to give the Salesian Society priests who are the salt of the earth in piety and learning and the light of the world by the fine example they offer to guide souls to the good and the virtuous.

These are the topics of our sainted father's circulars and we present them to our readers.

1. *Unity of Spirit and Administration through the Observance of Every Article of the Constitutions*

(We do not know if and when this circular was sent to the houses. We print it here verbatim from Don Bosco's manuscript preserved in the archives of the Salesian Society. Father Rua's collection of Don Bosco's circulars starts with that dated "Feast of the Assumption, 1869," but does not include this. Since this letter mentions the spiritual retreat to be

[2]*See* pp. 354ff. [Editor]
[3]*See* pp. 324ff. [Editor]

held at Trofarello, we may conclude that it antedates 1869, since the yearly retreats were held at Lanzo from 1870 on. Anyway, it is a precious document entirely written by Don Bosco and hitherto unpublished. Its weighty topic will always be welcomed by Salesians for study and reflection.)

To My Beloved Sons and Confreres
of the Society of St. Francis de Sales

The month of May, which we traditionally consecrate to Mary, is about to begin, and I feel that I should use this opportunity to share my thoughts with my dear sons and confreres and bring up several things I could not mention during the conferences of St. Francis de Sales.

I am convinced that you are all firmly determined to persevere in our Society in order to do your utmost to win souls for God and save your own souls. If we are to succeed in this vast undertaking, we must first strive most zealously to practice the rules of our Society. Our constitutions avail us nothing if they remain but a dead letter in a desk drawer. If we wish our Society to advance with God's blessing, then it is indispensable that every article of the constitutions be our norm of action. Among several practical, most effective means to this end are unity of spirit and unity of administration.

By unity of spirit I mean a firm, constant determination to will what the superior believes may redound to God's greater glory and to reject what he judges adverse to it. This determination is unshaken, regardless of the obstacles that hinder our spiritual and eternal welfare. As St. Paul declares, "Charity bears with all things . . . endures all things." [1 Cor. 13, 4] This determination prompts a confrere to be prompt at his duties, not just for the sake of carrying out an order, but because he wants to promote God's glory. Hence, he promptly fulfills his spiritual duties: meditation, prayer, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, and spiritual reading at the appointed time. True, these are prescriptions of our rules, but unless we strive to observe them for a supernatural motive, they are soon forgotten.

A powerful means to preserve this spirit of unity is frequent reception of the sacraments. Let priests do their utmost to celebrate Holy Mass regularly and devoutly; those who are not priests should receive Communion as often as possible. However, the basic thing is frequent confession. Let each one observe our rules in this matter. Moreover, every confrere should realize that he absolutely needs full confidence in his superior. The irksome problem is that many try to twist certain directives of their superiors or discredit them. Hence, they relax their keeping of

the rules, hurting themselves and making their superiors uneasy; then they omit or disregard things which powerfully contribute to the welfare of souls. Let each confrere renounce his will and give up all thought of personal advantage. Let his only concern be that his response to duty may redound to God's greater glory; then let him act with assurance.

Now comes a difficulty. Practical cases arise when it may seem better to disregard an order. This is not true. It is always best to obey, never altering the spirit of the rules as interpreted by your superior. Therefore, let each of us strive to interpret, practice and recommend that the rules be kept by our confreres; let us do for our neighbor whatever the superior judges to be conducive to God's greater glory and the welfare of souls. I hold this conclusion to be the rock foundation of a religious society.

Unity of administration must go hand-in-hand with unity of spirit. A religious wills to carry out Our Savior's teaching, that is, to give up all he has or may obtain in this world in the hope of a better heavenly reward. Father, mother, brothers, sisters, home and fortune of any kind —all are given up for God's sake. But since a religious still has a soul united to a body, he needs food, clothing, and equipment. While renouncing all possessions, he tries to join a society in which he may receive the necessities of life without burdening himself with temporal administration. Now how is he to act in our Society in regard to temporal possessions? Since our rules provide for our temporal needs, let him observe the rules and his needs will be taken care of. A garment and a crust of bread must suffice for a religious. If more is needed, let him ask his superior and it will be supplied. All efforts must be directed to this goal, namely that, while we strive to procure advantage for our Society, we be not self-centered. Let each member take care that there be but one purse, just as there must be but one will. One seeking to sell, buy, barter or retain money for his own use would resemble a farmer scattering the grain while threshers pile it up. In this regard, I must beg you not to retain money under the specious excuse of using it for the Society's profit. The greatest advantage for the Society is that its rules be observed.

Let clothes, rooms and furnishings be ordinary. A religious must always be ready to leave this world and appear before his Maker with no regrets for leaving anything and with no cause for reprimand from his Judge.

(Therefore let everything be done under the guidance of humble, trustful obedience. Let nothing be concealed from the superior. Each one is to open his heart to him with full candor, as a son would do to his father.) This enables a superior to know how his sons are doing; he can provide for their needs, take steps to facilitate the observance of the

rules, and promote the whole Society's welfare.

Much more remains to be said on this score. It shall come in another letter and in special talks, particularly during the forthcoming spiritual retreat at Trofarello, if our most merciful God will keep us alive till then, as I hope, and enable all of us to meet there next September.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us! May He grant us fervor and the precious grace of persevering in our Society. Amen.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

2. *Thrift in Everything, Without Exaggeration, Saving as Much as Possible*

(This circular was sent while the definitive approval of the constitutions was in its last stage. Hence, this letter and the two which follow contain Don Bosco's three most important exhortations.)

June 4, 1873

To the Beloved Sons
of St. Francis de Sales at Valdocco

Experience, my most beloved sons, is a great teacher. If its lessons benefit individuals and families, they most certainly will be more effective in religious congregations, whose only goal should be to know the good in order to do it, and the evil in order to avoid it.

I therefore think it proper to point out some things that I observed on my recent visits to our houses. I do this for the good of the confreres and of the whole Society. My observations concern material interests, morals and discipline—the subjects of three distinct circulars.

At this particular moment our main concern must be the financial situation of our houses. The purchase, construction, repairs and furnishing of new houses have caused us heavy expenses, and the overall increase in the cost of living boosts our monthly outlays far above our income. Therefore we must most earnestly think about economizing and together study practical ways to save. I list them briefly.

1. A moratorium on construction this year, except in cases of absolute necessity. Also, only indispensable repairs are to be made, and in each case a report and a cost estimate on the work must first be submitted to the Superior Chapter.

2. No traveling is to be done unless it be for the needs of the Congregation. As far as possible, engagements, errands and obligations entailing expense or loss of time should be avoided. Those who can pay for such expenses themselves or through others should prudently do so.

3. Attention should be called to the observance of Articles 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 of Chapter IV of our constitutions.[4] Let directors explain them in a practical manner; if necessary, let them discuss them with the individuals concerned or refer the matter to the superior. These articles are the basis of religious life and by their nature lead to detachment from earthly things, from persons and from one's very self. They effectively urge a community to concentrate on doing one's personal duty for the greater interests of the Congregation.

4. Books, clothes, linen, shoes, furniture and utensils should not be purchased unless they are really needed. They should be repaired whenever it can properly be done.

5. Thrift in food can also be practiced by avoiding spoilage, buying wholesale, and cutting down on more expensive items, such as meat and wine. Practice economy in buying seasonings, and avoid the waste of food, beverages, light and firewood. Limit invitations to dinner as much as you can, and even in such cases we are never to forget that we depend on Divine Providence, since we have no income, and that a spirit of poverty must set the tone of all our houses. These things must all be taken into due consideration.

6. Keep in contact with the other houses to help each other in purchasing and allotting items which may be bought at lower prices in different localities.

By urging these measures, I do not mean to introduce too strict an economy, but only to recommend thrift where possible. It is my will that nothing be cut out which may help the physical and moral well-being of my beloved confreres and of the pupils whom Divine Providence has entrusted to us.

Hopefully I will soon write about other things that are equally important. Meanwhile, every director should read and explain what I have written here; he should also confer with his prefect, and after a few weeks he should report on what has been done and planned in order to achieve this objective.

On the whole I am quite satisfied with the moral, physical and intellectual progress I found in our houses. For this thank God, Our Maker, the Giver of all good, to whom honor and glory be accorded throughout eternity. Amen.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us and may God

[4]These articles dealt with the ownership and administration of one's own goods. [Editor]

bless and bolster all our undertakings. Pray for me who in fatherly love remains in the sacred hearts of Jesus and Mary,

Your affectionate brother and friend,
Fr. John Bosco

3. *On Discipline or the Exact Observance of All the Rules*

(This is an authentic illustration by Don Bosco on how to live according to our rules and customs, with special advice to directors, prefects, catechists, teachers, assistants, and all Salesians, so that discipline may reign in our houses, and our pupils may constantly advance in virtue, walking steadfastly along the path of their eternal salvation.

Turin, November 15, 1873

To My Beloved Sons of the House of Turin
On Discipline

At the start of this new school year, beloved sons, I had best keep my promise to speak to you on school discipline—our pupils' basis of good morals and love of study.

This is not an essay on moral or civil rules concerning discipline. I just want to explain those means which produced good results in my forty-five years' experience.[5] I hope that they will help you too as you carry out your duties.

By discipline I do not mean correction, punishment or the cane—things not to be mentioned among us—or even some special talent. By discipline I mean *a way of life which abides by the rules and customs of an institute.* As a first step, therefore, all rules must be observed by all if we are to obtain the good effects of discipline. If members of a family reap but one scatters, if in construction many build and one tears down, the family will soon be wrecked and the building will collapse into a heap of rubble. Therefore, both the members of the Congregation and the pupils whom Providence sends to us must keep their own rules if discipline is to prove effective.

Believe me, dear sons, our pupils' moral and intellectual progress or their ruin depends on this observance.

You will now ask: In practice, how can we acquire such a great treasure? There are two things to do: one general, one specific. In gener-

[5]This clearly refers to Don Bosco's dream at the age of nine or ten when he learned the method of education he was to follow and the means he was to use to succeed in his apostolate. [Author] *See* Vol. I, pp. 95f. [Editor]

al, let all observe the Congregation's rules and discipline will triumph. Specifically, let each one be familiar with the rules concerning his own office; let him observe them and have his subordinates observe them too. If the superior does not keep the rules, he cannot expect his subordinates to do what he himself neglects. "Physician, cure yourself," he would be told. [Luke 4, 23] Using practical examples, I will go through each office.

1. *The Director.* He must be familiar with the duties of members in general and of those holding particular offices. He need not do much himself. He must see to it that everyone does what is expected of him. Our houses are like gardens. The head gardener need not exert himself; he must just find, train, supervise and direct his helpers. He must be at hand to help those who need assistance in important jobs. This head gardener is the director; the tender young plants are his pupils; the helpers are the school staff who depend on their master, the director, for he is ultimately responsible for all.

The director will gain considerably if he does not leave his house except for justifiable grave reasons, and then he should not leave unless he appoints a substitute. He should in a kindly way visit or at least keep informed about the dormitories, kitchen, infirmary, classes and study hall. Let him always be a loving father, anxious to know everything in order to do good to all and harm to none.

2. *The Prefect.* The prefect, dean of discipline, must see to the observance of the timetable and also prevent, as much as he can, contacts between boarders and outsiders. He shall also see that assistants and, generally, some superiors are with the boys during playtime, and that no stops are made during the weekly walk lest pupils wander out of sight. On these walks no one is to break ranks or go to cafés or restaurants. No one should associate with outsiders or bring in books, newspapers or letters without first having them checked by the superiors.

3. *The Catechist.* Let him bear in mind that our houses' spiritual and moral growth depends on his promoting the Altar Boys and the Immaculate Conception, Blessed Sacrament and St. Aloysius sodalities. Let him see to it that all, especially coadjutors, may go to confession and Communion with ease. If a domestic needs religious instruction, let him ensure that he is well prepared for Communion and Confirmation, that he learns to serve Mass, and so on. A few days before a solemn feast, he should prepare the pupils in brief appropriate talks to celebrate that feast with maximum ceremony and dignity.

4. *Teachers.* They should be the first to enter a classroom and the last to leave. They should love all pupils equally, encouraging all and despising none. Let them feel for the less gifted, take special pains with them,

drill them often, and, if necessary, make sure that they get after-school coaching. No teacher is to forget that he is a Christian teacher. Therefore, whenever a topic under discussion or a forthcoming religious feast offers an opportunity, let him give to his pupils some wholesome maxim, advice or exhortation.

5. *The Assistants.* All who have some authority in the classrooms, dormitories, kitchen, reception room, or anywhere else in the house should be punctual at their posts. Let them observe the Society's rules, especially the rules on the practices of piety. Let them also strive most anxiously to forestall grumbling against superiors and the house management. Mostly, let them insist, recommend, and spare no efforts to prevent foul conversation.

6. All are warmly urged to keep the director informed of anything that may help to promote good and prevent sin.

One day the Lord said to a disciple: "Do this and you shall live" [Luke 10, 28], meaning: "Observe My precepts, and you will have eternal life." I say the same to you, beloved sons: strive to practice what your most loving father has set forth here. You will receive God's blessing and enjoy peace of heart, discipline will reign in our houses, and our pupils will make steady advances in virtue, walking steadfastly along the path of their eternal salvation.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with me and you, so that all of us may constantly serve and love Him in this life, and one day be joined in praising Him eternally in heaven. Amen.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

4. *Promoting and Preserving Good Morals among the Boys Kindly Entrusted to Us by Divine Providence*

(*"O, chastity, chastity, how great a virtue you are! As long as you shine in our midst, as long as we, sons of St. Francis de Sales, keep you in high regard by avoiding worldliness and practicing modesty, temperance and all that we have vowed to God, good morals will hold a high place of honor among us and, like a flaming torch, saintliness will shine in all our houses."* All comment is superfluous! *Nullum par elogium* [No praise is adequate].)

Rome, February 5, 1874

To My Salesian Sons
in the House of (. . . Turin)

I am writing from this eternal city consecrated by the blood of Sts. Peter and Paul, princes of the apostles, where I am handling matters of our Congregation. After praying during Holy Mass for heavenly enlightenment and after asking the Holy Father's special blessing, I write to you on a most important subject: *Promoting and Preserving Good Morals among the Boys Kindly Entrusted to Us by Divine Providence.* Lest I be too sketchy on this subject, I shall divide it into two sections: 1) The need of good morals among Salesians; 2) Means to spread and maintain good morals among our pupils.

It is an axiom that invariably pupils' good morals depend on those who teach, supervise and guide them. As the saying goes, no one can give what he himself has not. An empty sack yields no wheat, nor a flask of dregs good wine. Hence before setting ourselves up as teachers, it is essential that we have what we want to teach. Our Divine Master's words are clear: "You are the light of the world." This light of good example must shine before all men, so that by seeing your good works, they may be enticed to imitate you, and thus glorify Our Heavenly Father. St. Jerome says that a doctor who does not know how to heal himself should not try to heal others. One could certainly apply to him the Gospel words, "Physician, cure yourself" [Luke 4, 23] If we want to promote good morals and virtue among our pupils, let us strive to possess them ourselves, to practice them and to make them shine forth in word and action. Let us never expect our charges to practice what we ourselves neglect.

How can we expect our pupils to be exemplary and devout when they see us neglect our own practices of piety, our rising [at the appointed time], our meditation, our confession and Communion, and our celebration of Holy Mass? How can a director, teacher or assistant demand obedience when he himself irresponsibly neglects his own duties, freely leaves the premises without permission, and busies himself with matters outside his own duties? How can we expect others to be charitable, patient, and respectful if we ourselves fly into a rage, become violent and criticize superiors, food and cooks? Surely, such a one would be told, "Physician, cure yourself."

Recently a boy who was reprimanded for reading a bad book candidly remarked, "I didn't think it was wrong. I often saw my teacher reading it."

Another time, a boy was asked why he had criticized the running of the house in a letter. He replied that he had only written what he had heard his monitor say several times.

Therefore, my dear sons, if we wish to promote good morals in our houses, we must first set the example. Suggesting something good to others while we ourselves do the opposite is like trying to dispel the night darkness with an unlit lamp, like trying to drink wine from an empty vessel, or, worse, like trying to season food with poison. In each case one not only demotes good morals but really sets a bad example and causes scandal. Then we are salt that has lost its tang. "You are the salt of the earth," Christ told us. "But what if salt goes flat? How can you restore its flavor? Then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot." [Matt. 5, 13]

The press often bewails immoral acts that have ruined good morals and caused horrible scandals. It is a great evil, a calamity, and I pray that the Lord will close all our houses before any such disaster befalls them.

I do not want to hide the fact that we live in calamitous times. Today's world is just as the Savior described it [through His beloved Apostle]: "The whole world is in the power of the evil one." [1 John 5, 19] People want to see and judge everything. Over and above its perverse judgment on matters concerning God, the world often exaggerates things and very frequently maliciously invents them. But if it can luckily base its judgment on true facts, you can imagine the uproar, the clamor it makes! However, if we impartially search for the cause of these evils, we shall discover in most instances that the salt has gone flat and the light has been put out. In other words, when superiors ceased to be holy, disaster befell their subjects.

O chastity, chastity, how great a virtue you are! As long as you shine in our midst, as long as we, sons of St. Francis de Sales, keep you in high regard by avoiding worldliness and practicing modesty, temperance and all that we have vowed to God, good morals will hold a high place of honor among us and, like a flaming torch, saintliness will shine in all our houses.

God willing, I shall again be writing to you soon about certain means which I believe are effective to promote and spread good morals among our pupils.

Meanwhile, so that you may benefit from what this friend of your souls has written, I recommend the following:

1. That three conferences—better still, three practical examinations—be held, in which the do's and don'ts of the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience be read and explained. Then, let everyone apply to himself what is described in these chapters and firmly resolve to correct whatever he finds faulty in word and action as regards these vows.

2. Let us read the chapter on the practices of piety and then, kneeling

at Our Lord's feet, resolve to carry them all out exemplarily at the cost of any sacrifice. I shall join you in spirit in forming this resolution.

My beloved sons, we are living the most important moment of our Congregation. Help me with your prayers and your exact observance of the rules. God will then see to it that our efforts will be crowned with success for His greater glory, and for the good of our own souls and of the souls of our pupils, who will always be our Society's glory.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be ever with us, and may He preserve us steadfast on the road to heaven. Amen.

Affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco[6]

These are the documents we have been able to compile.

What shall we say as a close to so many memorable precious teachings? Let us practice what our sainted teacher and father keeps saying to us from heaven: "My son, forget not my teaching . . . ." [Prov. 3, 1] "Let your heart hold fast to my words; keep my commandments. . . ." [Prov. 4, 4] "On the way of wisdom I direct you, I lead you on straightforward paths. . . . Hold fast to instruction; never let her go for she is your life." [Prov. 4, 11. 13]

[6]We are omitting the circular of March 16, 1874, whose content has already been described (*see* p. 353), and two short circulars dated respectively September 27, 1874 and November 23, 1874, giving suggestions for the smooth running of the houses and for the study of theology. [Editor]

CHAPTER 9

Ever Serene

AT the beginning of 1873 the Salesian Society had one hundred and thirty-eight members (forty perpetually professed and ninety-eight with triennial vows) in addition to ninety-two postulants. Its total membership of two hundred and thirty consisted of forty-two priests, ninety-seven clerics, sixty-three coadjutor brothers and twenty-eight junior seminarians. It had eight houses: the motherhouse and Valsalice College [in Turin], boarding schools at Lanzo, Borgo San Martino, Varazze, Alassio, and Sampierdarena, and, finally, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians at Mornese. Additionally, Turin had the festive oratories of St. Francis de Sales [at Valdocco], St. Joseph in Sts. Peter and Paul's parish, St. Aloysius in St. Maximus' parish, and the Guardian Angel in St. Julia's parish.

On New Year's day a special meeting was held for the re-election of several members of the Superior Chapter; then, on the feast of St. Francis de Sales, the confreres of the motherhouse chose their own house chapter so as to leave the Superior Chapter entirely free to administer the whole Society.

The Superior Chapter consisted of Don Bosco, Father [Michael] Rua, Father [John] Cagliero, Father [Angelo] Savio, Father [Francis] Provera, Father [Celestine] Durando, and Father [Charles] Ghivarello. The Oratory Chapter had Don Bosco as director, Father Rua as vicar, Father [Francis] Provera as prefect, Father Joseph Lazzero as catechist, and Father Anthony Sala as economer; the last three were respectively assisted by Father Joseph Bologna, Father Joachim Berto and Father Francis Cuffia. Finally, the chapter also had three councillors: Father Julius Barberis, Father Joseph Bertello and Father Nicholas Cibrario.

1. Grave Financial Difficulties

The year 1873 was marked by exceptional financial problems. On January 3 Don Bosco wrote to the prefect of the province of Turin to outline the Oratory's charitable work and humbly request a government subsidy. He also called upon the support of Commendatore Vittorio Villa, the provincial councillor. On February 3 the province of Turin granted him a three hundred lire subsidy. He also appealed to the Minister of the Interior and got from him a grant of eight hundred lire. Amid these difficulties Don Bosco contracted with John Baptist Coriasco to purchase a small house near the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, which he asked Countess Callori to finance. At this time, too, he received a hundred gold francs from Paris for the Church of Mary, Help of Christians, and he promptly informed the donor, the Superior of the Institute of the Faithful Companions of Jesus, that he had received the gift.[1]

Meanwhile he also sold ten-lire tickets for a lottery whose prize was a precious painting of "The Madonna of Foligno" together with thirty other awards of a hundred lire each. This handsome painting adorned the sacristy wall, and both Father Rua and others were grieved to think that it would soon be taken away. [Joseph] Buzzetti told Don Bosco, who chuckled and replied, "Well, tell them that from now on, at dinner time, they can look at the painting!"

Thousands of circulars,[2] sent by first class mail, advertised the lottery as follows:

"The Madonna of Foligno" is the work of the renowned Raphael Sanzio of Urbino. Born in 1483, he died in 1520 at Rome, at the young age of 37. The painting shows the Blessed Virgin in a most expressive lifelike manner amid clouds and surrounded by angels. Beneath Her, St. Joseph, St. Francis of Assisi, and St. Jerome stand around a beautiful Infant Jesus who toys with His heavenly Mother's mantle. The original painting, somewhat faded, is in the Vatican Gallery. The best copy ever made is that being offered as the grand prize [of this lottery]. One art expert estimates its value at above four thousand lire.

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

Don Bosco asked the most prominent families of Milan to sell the tickets, and he also asked Father Anthony Sala, the Oratory economer, who came from Lombardy, to head a drive in the large Lombard towns. Uncertain of success, Father Sala hesitated, but Don Bosco dispelled his worries. "Be confident," he told him. "Those wealthy people will help us with their alms and we will help them by giving them a chance to practice charity."

Thus reassured, Father Sala went to Lombardy with a handwritten recommendation of Don Bosco. Don Bosco himself mailed a modest number of tickets to outstanding benefactors and prominent people. Many returned the tickets with their payment so that they could be resold and thus double the donations. Orally and in writing he expressed his gratitude to all.[3]

Selling tickets was the third purpose of Don Bosco's trip to Rome in February and March 1873 when he went to seek the approval of the constitutions and the grant of temporalities to the bishops of Italy. That was why he also stopped off at Piacenza, Parma, Bologna and Florence and prolonged his stay in Rome.[4]

We have already seen his outstanding accomplishments in Rome.[5] He had several audiences with Pius IX and obtained special favors for several benefactors.

He also spared no efforts to sell the tickets from the center he set up at the convent of the Oblates of Tor de' Specchi. Some 1,200 tickets, returned to the Oratory, were forwarded to Don Bosco in Rome. To handle them and await his delayed papal audience, he decided to postpone his departure from Rome by several days.[6]

On March 18 he was warmly received by the Holy Father in an audience of over an hour and obtained some spiritual favors for all who had contributed to the lottery for the poor Oratory boys. Before ending the audience, Pius IX summoned Father Berto and, putting a lighted candle in his hand, led both of them into an adjoining room which was full of precious objects. He

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[4]We are omitting a thank-you note to Marchioness Bianca Malvezzi. [Editor]
[5]*See* Chapter 5, pp. 183-245. [Editor]
[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

selected two for Don Bosco. Father Berto then knelt and expressed the Oratory boys' joy at being told of the Holy Father's blessing. He also mentioned that all had received Holy Communion for him with the intention that God might preserve him for years to come, and that they would continue to pray and be ready to offer their lives, if by so doing they might lessen his grief. "May the Lord always keep them in such holy sentiments," the Pope exclaimed, deeply moved.[7]

Don Bosco drew up and sent Father Rua a circular on the spiritual favors he had obtained, instructing him to have it printed and mailed to all those who had purchased or sold lottery tickets.[8] Things were going well, as we gather from Father Berto's letter to the Oratory:

> Don Bosco says that he has never been as satisfied as on this trip to Rome. Never has he accomplished so much. This is due to your prayers. It is really true that experience helps. To attend to our affairs, he left in the morning and did not get back till nine at night. Everywhere an eager crowd trailed after him, anxious for a word with him. Poor Mr. [Stephen] Colonna, our gracious host, had to put up with endless inquiries. Don Bosco gave him a watch, since he would accept nothing for his hospitality.

Michael, the Colonnas' youngest son, has told us that a few days before his birth his mother was stricken with such a grave case of peritonitis that, without Don Bosco's prayers and blessing, both he and his mother would not have survived.[9]

Father Berto continues:

> Crowds came to see him off [at the Colonnas'] and to ask for his prayers. Many were in tears when they learned that they could not bid him good-bye, almost regretting that he had ever come to Rome for such a brief stay. They followed us all the way to the railroad station.
>
> Our train coach contained six Protestant ladies from New York. As was true everywhere in Rome, Don Bosco won everyone's admiration

[7]We are omitting two thank-you notes by Don Bosco to Countess Corsi and Marchioness Callori. [Editor]

[8]We are omitting a short note to Father Rua about scholastic matters and another note to a countess. [Editor]

[9]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

by his kindness, pleasant manners and serenity. Many, moved by his virtue and friendliness, told me, "This man is a saint, a real saint! Just speaking once to him convinces you! With no funds at hand, he both houses and feeds an endless number of destitute boys. Isn't this a constant miracle?"

He also amiably made small talk with the Protestant ladies. They were somewhat shy at first, but by the time we reached Umbria around noon they were sharing their lunch with us. Throughout the rest of the journey Don Bosco acquainted them with many remarkable things about Italy. Finally toward evening, since his words would always aim at God's greater glory, no matter what the topic, he invited them to visit the Oratory during their stopover in Turin and offered them complimentary copies of books on the Catholic faith. They promised to visit him, so well disposed were they, and asked for his prayers. . . .

Keep up your prayers. We still have a sizable quantity of lottery tickets to sell, and this delays our return. Don Bosco says that this trip has greatly benefited his shaky health. Tomorrow night we expect to be in Bologna. Now we are guests of Marchioness [Louise] Nerli who anxiously looks after our comfort.

In a few days I'll be back in my poor but dear room at the Oratory and I'll be able to thank our most beloved Mother, Mary, Help of Christians.

How trustingly the Romans seek Her help! They recommend themselves to our dear boys for various favors from Her. The lowly plain of Valdocco will in its day become famous throughout the world. From afar, people will come to kiss ground trodden by the "Apostle of Piedmond," as the Romans refer to Don Bosco. Rome may pride itself on St. Philip Neri, but, by God's grace, it is our joy to have Don Bosco.

Don Bosco left Rome for Modena on March 26.[10] From there, the next day, Father Berto sent this note to the Oratory:

Keep praying. In two days we shall greet Piedmont's lovely, fertile hills and again look upon our noble, stately Turin, and, with a song in our heart, again embrace our dear ones. A telegram will give you our time of arrival. Let Enria get the band out, because our father is returning from Pius IX's eternal city in triumph!

[10]We are omitting a thank-you note by Don Bosco to a Roman benefactor and his family. [Editor]

Joseph Rossi, our coadjutor brother, who with Father Sala had been entrusted with selling lottery tickets, met them in Modena, and together all returned to Turin via Milan on March 29 or 30.

Since a substantial number of unsold tickets remained, a notice was sent to all concerned that the drawing would be postponed until April 10. They were also informed of the spiritual favors granted by the Holy Father. Shortly afterward, Don Bosco decided on a further postponement until April 20, since additional tickets had been returned without payment.[11]

Besides the donations received personally by Don Bosco and those collected by Father Albera—all earmarked for the Sampierdarena Hospice because of its extreme need—the lottery netted 63,618 lire. The drawing was set for May 1 but an unexpected grave obstacle arose.[12]

2. Unforeseen Seizure

The deadline for the sale of lottery tickets was April 20. While preparations were made for the drawing, someone informed the prefect of the province of Turin that Don Bosco had sponsored a public lottery without a permit. Immediately the police seized the ledger containing the names of some donors and sealed the painting of "The Madonna of Foligno," but they could not get hold of the main ledger which had been hidden away as soon as word got around of the Oratory's denunciation. That day Don Bosco was at Sampierdarena. On returning to the Oratory on April 30, he promptly went to the clerk in charge, only to be told that this particular case was in the hands of the royal prosecutor himself, Lawrence Eula. Helpfully the latter instructed Don Bosco on the steps to take, specifically stating that

[11]This paragraph is a condensation. We are also omitting a number of letters by Don Bosco to priests, laymen, and the royal family in reference to this lottery. [Editor]

[12]This paragraph is a condensation. At this point we are omitting a digression about a pseudo-mystic who spent a few days at the Oratory before Don Bosco's return from Rome. Don Bosco promptly invited him to leave. [Editor]

the appeal to public charity did not seem illegal to him at all. He also promised to speak on his behalf.[1]

On the evening of May 1, Don Bosco called on Thomas Villa, one of Turin's ablest lawyers. After being briefed on the case, he remarked, "Right is on our side," adding in a tone of appreciation, "I am glad you came to me. Come anytime!"

"Oh, no," Don Bosco countered. "For minor matters other lawyers will do, but when my own good name and that of my institute are at stake, as is true now, I really need a first-class lawyer."

"I am glad you called on me. Be assured that I shall be delighted to plead your case. Even if I lose, I don't mind. It's a case that appeals to me."

He did, in fact, lose the case. As Don Bosco remarked, Turin then had quite a number of freemasons, including some whom no one would ever suspect.[2]

Meanwhile word got around that Don Bosco had repeatedly told intimate friends that he hoped the Pope would soon leave Rome. Actually this was the opposite of what Don Bosco had told Pius IX.[3] Victor Zoppi himself, the prefect of the Turin province, passed the rumor on to Under-Secretary of State, Gaspar Cavallini, in an official letter to the Minister of the Interior concerning the court case against Don Bosco. [What follows is an excerpt from Zoppi's letter:]

> Undoubtedly I am not telling Your Excellency anything you do not already know regarding attempts, allegedly in progress, to persuade the Pope to leave Rome. Still, I think I must inform you that I have been assured that Don Bosco discussed this at length with a few intimate friends, expressing the hope that His Holiness would finally decide upon this step soon. I am also told that several Jesuits are presently visiting Don Bosco's institute.

The lottery case went to court and Don Bosco duly informed all concerned. Then, realizing that the litigation would be long

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]*See* pp. 57f. [Editor]

drawn out, he requested permission for at least a drawing of the thirty hundred-lire prizes. Regretfully Zoppi informed him that he could not authorize even that. Finally, on October 4, 1874, the court fined Don Bosco and confiscated the painting of "The Madonna of Foligno." Don Bosco appealed the verdict, substituted four thousand lire in cash for the painting, and proceeded to draw the winning numbers and publicize the results. On February 16, 1875 the Court of Appeals reduced the amount of the fine but confirmed the painting's confiscation, whereupon Don Bosco appealed to King Victor Emmanuel II for a remission of the sentence. The king obliged and the decree reached Don Bosco on November 11, 1875—the very day on which our first missionaries were leaving for Argentina.[4]

3. Disappearance of a Testament

Concurrently with this litigation, a matter which should have proven quite beneficial to Don Bosco actually got him into serious trouble.

On March 27 [1874] Father Felix Golzio [rector of the Convitto Ecclesiastico] died in Turin at the age of sixty-five. Don Bosco thought so highly of him that, at Father Cafasso's death, he had chosen him as his own spiritual director. Father Golzio reciprocated Don Bosco's esteem and went to confession to him. Both by word and in his will he had named his sister Eurosia Golzio, the wife of Colonel Clodoveo Monti, as his sole heir and trustee, so that the modest dividends on his savings might be used exclusively to redeem Don Bosco's clerics from military service.

On learning of her brother's critical condition, Mrs. Monti hastened from Rome to Turin, arriving after his death. The following day, Father Joseph Begliati, the administrator and vice-rector at the Convitto Ecclesiastico, asked her about funeral arrangements for her brother, since neither a will nor valuables had been found in his desk and strongbox. The lady was as-

[4]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

tonished because she knew that the box contained not only his handwritten will, but also two state bonds worth fifty lire each, a bundle of other bonds in the denomination of five hundred lire, other stocks and monies, a ledger of expenditures and monies received, documents proving a credit of fifteen thousand lire plus interest with his cousins, the ecclesiastic patrimony of the deceased and of his dead brother Father Augustine, and, finally, some family correspondence.

Father Begliati was surprised to hear this, and he assured her that a thorough search would be made to find all that was lawfully hers. He also informed her that since Don Bosco had been in Rome at the time, the priest who had assisted the rector during the last days of his life had "searched through his drawers, twice taking away bundles of papers."

The lady's dismay can be readily imagined. She thought that she should take the matter to her lawyer, but Father Botto, a venerable eighty-year-old priest who had been her advisor and confessor from her childhood, persuaded her to proceed with the utmost caution and to avoid hasty measures that would only cause a tremendous scandal. She took his advice but got nowhere. She also wrote to Don Bosco, expressing her regret that her brother's arrangements had been arbitrarily disregarded and urging him to consult Father Begliati[1] on unraveling this complicated matter. Twice she went to the Oratory to brief him on details, but he was out of town. Upon her return to Rome, therefore, she wrote him a long letter to acquaint him fully with the facts. Shortly afterward she mailed him a fifty-lire bond. Finally, on May 25, she appealed to Archbishop Gastaldi in these words:

Some days before his death and before I got back to Rome, Father Begliati assured me that among the valuables which my late brother, Father Felix, kept in a strongbox there were two separate rolls containing respectively fifteen and twenty-five gold *marenghi*.[2] The first

[1]A few days later, a stroke made Father Begliati speechless and he died shortly afterward. [Author]

[2]The *marengo*, a gold coin worth twenty francs, was minted by Napoleon I to commemorate his victory over Austrian and Russian troops on June 14, 1800 near the village of Marengo in the province of Alessandria in northern Italy. [Editor]

roll bore the title "For the Holy Father," and the second "My Offering to Pius IX." According to Father Begliati both rolls were handed over to Your Excellency.

Since I have obtained an audience with the Holy Father and wish personally to carry out the pious will of my beloved deceased as heir to both his estate and his religious sentiments toward the Holy See, I beg Your Excellency to mail me the two aforesaid packages as soon as possible.

Three days later, Father [Thomas] Chiuso [the archbishop's secretary] answered as follows:

In reply to your letter of March 25, His Excellency has instructed me to inform you that the twenty-five *marenghi* which your good brother Father Felix Golzio left for the Holy Father were sent immediately to him through *Unità Cattolica*, which listed this sum under the initials N. N. to avoid paying a state inheritance tax. The other fifteen will be sent to you by the forwarding agent Piatti, at a cost of four lire and fifty-five centesimi which will be deducted from the total. . . . Please send a receipt at your convenience.

I enclose the paper in which the *marenghi* were wrapped. It seems that they had been entrusted to Father Golzio's keeping, and so the person who gave them may show up sometime to ask for them. True, the words "Holy Father" are written on the reverse side of the paper.

After carefully perusing all the issues of *Unità Cattolica* from the day of his brother-in-law's death, Colonel Monti could find no reference to Father Golzio's offering for the Holy Father. On June 2, therefore, he wrote to Monsignor Fratejacci,[3] a friend of his who was already acquainted with the matter, lamenting Archbishop Gastaldi's intrusion into Father Golzio's testamentary arrangements.[4]

After "seeking Our Lady's counsel with three Hail Marys" Monsignor Fratejacci called on James Cardinal Antonelli to brief him on the case in detail and to learn "what action would be most convenient to safeguard the interests of that good and holy priest Don Bosco, without resorting to the courts, so as to

[3]Monsignor John Baptist Fratejacci was a member of the staff of the cardinal vicar of Rome and a great friend of Don Bosco. [Editor]

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

avoid the peril of scandalous reporting by the press." He then wrote to Father Golzio's sister, Mrs. Eurosia Monti, as follows:

Cardinal Antonelli listened attentively to everything, and, fully recognizing the lawful rights of Mrs. Eurosia Monti and of Don Bosco, and, most of all, the esteemed will of the late Father Felix Golzio, graciously suggested the following:

"The lady should write to me a brief account of this case and forward it through you. It should state:

"1. That the deceased really intended that annuities of almost one thousand lire should be paid to Don Bosco for the redemption of his clerics from military service.

"2. That these annuity bonds were really in the room of the late Father Felix of honorable memory at the time of his death.

"3. That the above bonds and all else belonging to the deceased, such as papers, money, etc., are now in the possession of Archbishop Gastaldi or his representative.

"4. That, lastly, the aforesaid archbishop has declined to hand over the above securities and papers to Mrs. Eurosia Monti, to Don Bosco and to other interested parties, regardless of repeated requests.

"After receiving this letter," the cardinal continued, "I shall send it at once with a letter of my own to the Holy See's representative in Turin, instructing him to call on the archbishop in my name and formally request a thorough explanation. I think this will be the quickest and the most direct and effective way to obtain what we want.

"I should like the lady to show deference to the archbishop's position in her letter," His Eminence added, "and to state that she has refrained from legal proceedings for that reason, without, however, saying she does not intend to have such recourse. This way my own letter can more forcefully make this point and persuade the archbishop to carry out his duty readily and willingly."

The lady presented her case in detail, Monsignor Fratejacci delivered it to the cardinal, and the latter tactfully forwarded it to Bishop Gastaldi. On October 25, 1873 Monsignor Fratejacci wrote to Don Bosco:

After a long while, the archbishop whom you know all too well answered Cardinal Antonelli's masterful inquiry into whatever preceded, accompanied or followed the death of our highly esteemed Father Golzio. The archbishop maintained that, despite a thorough search, no will

was found from which one could juridically discover the wishes of the deceased, and so he took everything over to guard it for the heirs. As to the bundles of money, which His Eminence referred to in his letter, since they were clearly addressed, the first containing fifteen *marenghi* was handed over to Mrs. Eurosia, who wished to present them personally to the Holy Father, while the second was sent anonymously and in small installments through *Unità Cattolica* to the Holy Father. The archbishop also stated that the securities which had been found among Father Golzio's papers had already been given according to his instructions to the co-heirs. In closing, he claimed that he had done his full duty in every regard and with care for the persons concerned, and so had nothing else to do or say. In short, this was his reply to Cardinal Antonelli. But here I must not omit to tell you that the archbishop added that Mrs. Monti's numerous requests and statements had become annoying and that he regretted above all that the Holy Father himself and His Eminence should have been bothered about such a matter. Nor was this all, for the archbishop ended his letter by stating, "I am not unaware, Your Eminence, that the director or superior of a religious institute here in Turin is involved in this and is encouraging the twisted designs of those who are trying to annoy and offend the archbishop's sacred authority and office."

My dear Don Bosco, believe me when I say that the archbishop's remonstrations left the cardinal totally unimpressed, since he had already been well informed of everything. Moreover, they only enabled me to offer new, conclusive proof of the arbitrary actions and the mistaken and imprudent steps taken by that prelate which really do compromise his office, one whose honor should be better safeguarded.

The cardinal was disappointed over the outcome of his efforts [on behalf of Mrs. Eurosia Monti and you]. . . .

Although I thought that he was convinced of the contrary, he told me that [since the archbishop insisted there was no will] the case was lost and one had to concede defeat and bear it patiently in resignation to God's will who permitted this to happen. . . .

Nevertheless rumors of this controversy began to circulate, and Mrs. Eurosia Monti received an offer to sell all claims to her disputed inheritance and hand over all documents in her possession so that the charges might be pressed even further and widely publicized.

However, when Don Bosco again pleaded with her to desist from further action, "since he wished to avoid any unpleas-

antness for his ecclesiastic superior," Mrs. Monti declared: "I respect the religious sentiments of this pious priest too highly not to comply with his wishes. God alone will pronounce an irrevocable judgment."

But the anticlericals did not keep silent. The lurid tabloid *La Pulce* [The Flea], which started publication in October 1874, gave a detailed report on the problems with Father Golzio's estate in its issue of January 21, 1875, under the signature of Dominic Pagani. The publishers added this note: "Dear Mr. Pagani, you are a fine man. Your information is precious; keep sending us such morsels and *La Pulce* will thank you from the bottom of its heart."

As always, Don Bosco tried to end the clamor of the press, even at the cost of financial sacrifice, lest discredit be cast on his archbishop.

4. Ever Serene

That year our dear father faced many other serious troubles, yet maintained his habitual serenity, calmness and amiability, as well as his knack of maintaining cordial relations with all who came to him.[1]

In May 1873 weighty business forced Don Bosco to travel to Liguria, and he took the opportunity to visit several Salesian houses. On returning to Turin he found several high-handed memos from the archbishop. As we have said,[2] he withdrew to our junior seminary at Borgo San Martino for a three-day spiritual retreat [before replying to Archbishop Gastaldi]. Afterward he returned to the Oratory for the novena and feast of Mary, Help of Christians and sent out a flier outlining the program of the festivities. This solemn celebration gave him a most favorable opportunity to show his appreciation to his benefactors. On May 18, 21 and 24 he invited several to dinner as an expression of his gratitude, in order to keep the flames of charity alive in their hearts.[3]

[1] We are omitting short letters to and from Don Bosco concerning requests for prayers and thanks for spiritual favors received. [Editor]

[2] *See* pp. 329-331. [Editor]

[3] This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

The feast of May 24 was a most solemn one. The imposing Mass of Maestro De Vecchi was sung with full orchestra, and the evening services were graced by Father Cagliero's composition *Sancta Maria, succurre miseris,*[4] rendered by three distinct choirs.[5]

A very singular occurrence happened that day, and Don Bosco published the following account in *Letture Cattoliche*[6] [Catholic Readings] to honor Mary, Help of Christians, while concealing his own part in it:

On May 24, 1873, the solemn feast of Mary, Help of Christians, a young officer called on the Oratory director in utter distress and sobbingly told him of his wife who was lying at home on the brink of death after a long, harrowing illness. He begged that he do all he could to obtain her recovery from God. The director comforted him and, seeing him so well disposed to pray, knelt with him and together they entreated Mary, Help of Christians for the dying woman's recovery. Then he left.

Hardly an hour had passed when the officer dashed in, radiant with joy. He was told that just then the director was entertaining benefactors who had been invited to the celebration and that he could not see him. . . .

"Tell him my name," the officer replied. "I must tell him but one word!"

Upon being informed of the insistence, the director obliged. Deeply moved, but full of joy, the officer told him, "As soon as I left you, I ran home. Would you believe it? My wife, whom I had left half dead, had suddenly lost all pain and, feeling her strength returning, had asked for her clothes. When I arrived she came to meet me, still weak, but very much recovered."

As he went on to describe the moment's feelings, he brought out a fine gold bracelet. "This is my wedding present to my wife," he said. "We now most heartily give it to Mary, Help of Christians, to whom we attribute this unhoped-for recovery."

Some moments later, the director rejoined his benefactors and showed them the bracelet. "This is a pledge of thanks," he said, "for a grace received today through the intercession of Mary, Help of Christians, whose solemn feast we are celebrating."

[4]*See* Vol. IX, p. 128. [Editor]

[5]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[6]*See* the issue *Maria Ausiliatrice col racconto di alcune grazie* [Favors Received through the Intercession of Mary, Help of Christians], p. 167. [Author]

That day the Lord began to give him special revelations for the good of the Church and of nations. Such revelations were repeated on June 24, as we can see from the document entitled "May 24, 1873—June 24, 1873" and from his letter to the Emperor of Austria.[7]

Meanwhile financial conditions continued to be very serious. "Our poor coffers," he wrote on June 2 to Mother Galeffi, superior of the Oblates of St. Frances of Rome at Tor de' Specchi, "are completely drained. . . ."

In response to his appeal, Mother Galeffi and two other benefactresses sent him a money order on June 24. While thanking her for her help on June 29, Don Bosco advised her to insure such letters and exhorted her and her whole community to wear the medal of Mary, Help of Christians and recite daily the Hail, Holy Queen, assuring them that none of them would catch the cholera which was then raging in various places. He also told Mother Galeffi not to worry about the fate of her institute, as it would not be confiscated.[8]

Aside from a few compositions, either publicly read or handed to him, we have no other mementos of Don Bosco's name day[9] on the feast of St. John the Baptist. We do have a printed hymn for his name day, but it gives us no clue as to the year in which it was sung in his honor.

Likewise we find no reference to the remark he had made during the previous year regarding the Church's vicissitudes: "This year (1872-1873) we shall know tears and smiles." Perhaps he was alluding to the suppression of religious institutes in the Roman province empowered by a royal decree issued in Turin on June 19, 1873, as well as to the hope of a happy close to negotiations on the bishops' temporalities. He might also have been alluding to the Holy Father's poor health which had been fully restored by the prayers of the faithful.

[7]*See* pp. 55-58. [Editor]

[8]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[9]For its celebration in previous years *see* the Indexes of Volumes II through IX and Volume XI under *Name Days*. [Editor]

Since Don Bosco's financial plight was well known, Father [Joseph] Oreglia, S.J., as a token of his desire to help, received permission to send him two legacies, six hundred lire in all, as a stipend for four hundred Masses. The donors were Count Caesar Arnaud of San Salvatore and his mother the countess.

That year, too, the junior seminary at Borgo San Martino brought him annoyances because of demands made by the provincial superintendent of schools and difficulties in purchasing the building.[10]

On July 26, Monsignor Vitelleschi sent him more observations on the last version of the constitutions submitted to the Holy Father in March. The archbishop of Turin, too, kept creating difficulties. Overburdened as ever with work and worries, Don Bosco's health again began to fail. Fortunately the annual retreat at St. Ignatius' Shrine was close at hand. From there [at the beginning of August] he sent fairly good news about his health to Father Rua, while entrusting him with several tasks. He also added the following instructions:

Give the "Good Night" to our dear boys. Tell them to be cheerful and good. Here I pray for them to Our Lord, asking for each: health, knowledge and sanctity.[11]

Dear sons, next Sunday I will say a Mass at this shrine for your intentions; if you love me, offer up your Holy Communion for me. I also pray for those who are taking exams. In this regard, tell those who are still undecided about their vocation to wait for me till the 14th of this month. If they cannot, tell them to talk things over with you or to come up for the retreat at Lanzo where we shall have a good time together.

A hundred and ten truly exemplary laymen are now on retreat here. They never leave me alone; they ask to speak to me at every hour. May God keep you always healthy and in His grace. Keep smiling. Amen.

[10]We are omitting details about these matters and also about the silver jubilee of Father James Margotti as editor of *Unità Cattolica*. [Editor]

[11]*See* Vol. VI, pp. 227ff. [Editor]

Shortly afterward, he again wrote to Father Rua:

St. Ignatius' Shrine, August 10, 1873

My dear Fr. Fua,

1. As regards the exams, do what you think is best. Why not start them on the 28th of this month?

2. Let Father Gras[12] go to Valsalice, but first check with Father Dalmazzo.

3. It's hot down there, but it's not cold up here.

4. I wasn't able to learn anything about Peyron's biography. Perhaps it melted on the way.

5. I am enclosing some papers for you to process.

6. My health has improved considerably. Yesterday, though, I ran a fever for some four hours toward evening—nothing too bad, just tired.

This retreat is proceeding surprisingly well. Practice charity in all things. Act in such a way that all who deal with you may become your friends.

Best wishes to you, to dear Father Provera and to the whole community.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ
Fr. John Bosco

The school year might have ended earlier than usual, with the award assembly solemnly held on August 22, because of the Oratory's exceptional financial straits. The pupils were given a leaflet, *Tips to Boys for a Wholesome Summer Vacation,*[13] and told to return to school on October 15.[14]

During that month [August 1873] he had an audience with Archbishop Gastaldi to consider difficulties which the latter kept raising against the definitive approval of our constitutions. On September 3 Don Bosco was back at the Oratory, only to leave the next day for Racconigi to preach a panegyric in honor of Blessed Catherine Mattei; on September 5 he was at Cuneo, at Our Lady of the Elm, to visit Brother Eugene Ricci des

[12]A guest at the Oratory. [Editor]

[13]*See* pp. 438f. [Editor]

[14]We are omitting a letter of Don Bosco to a benefactress and a short encouraging note to a boy. [Editor]

Ferres, the son of Baron Feliciano and Gabriella Beraudo of Pralormo, a saintly twenty-four-year-old theology student who had been sent home for reasons of health during the fall vacation. The family doctor found him thoroughly exhausted and suffering from bronchitis. On reaching home the saintly youth had told his mother, "Mamma, you must take my superior's place. Please do as you will with me; remind me of all he told me to do (and he listed those instructions for her); mostly, make sure that I do not fail even slightly in obedience."

His sensitiveness was that of an angel—a living St. Aloysius! One day, while strolling with him in the garden, his mother noticed that he found it hard to walk. "You must be very weak today, son," she remarked.

"Well, Mamma," he replied smilingly, "if I were not a religious, I would give you my arm, I am so exhausted!"

"Do not let that stop you! You know I'm your appointed nurse!"

"Yes, Mamma, but first of all I am a religious," he replied and unsupported he forced himself to walk.

Father Jerome Raffo's biography of this well-liked young religious, published in 1875, tells of two singular visits from the "famous" Don Bosco. The first took place in 1866 when Eugene, having recovered from a serious illness in 1864, was about to leave for Paris to pursue higher studies in the renowned St. Philomena School. Here is an excerpt from his biography:

> He was set to leave at the beginning of October, but God, having already tested him through illness, wished to brace him against self-complacence and its concomitant dangers. As a result, while visiting at his cousins' for a birthday and having fun jumping across a ditch with them, he tripped and broke his leg. The injury was not serious, but it kept him in bed for several weeks with no hope of leaving [for Paris] on the appointed day. His grief was intense, and, despite his manly character, he wept—a very rare occurrence for one usually in firm control of his emotions. In addition, he was terribly bored with his prolonged idleness, for such it must have seemed to him. However, his faith shone strongly, and he gave no thought as to what others might think. When in good health, he had been in the habit of receiving Communion every week, and now that he was disabled, he did the same.

Every Sunday the Holy Eucharist entered his room and the heart of this faithful servant. . . .

When the saintly Don Bosco, well known in Italy and abroad for his great works of charity, heard of Eugene's unlucky accident, he came to see him, for he truly liked this pious youth, and that love was reciprocated. His fatherly concern for the young man, the warm welcome that the ailing youth gave him, and his happiness defy description, for God's minister was most eager to aid this soul so beloved of Jesus, and he wished to endear him to Our Lord by increasing his love and trust in Our Lady, since She alone of all creatures can help us to please Him, the Infinite Good. He drew close to Eugene's bedside, his gentle, humble and revered aspect delighting and winning all hearts, and said with a smile, "Dear son, how happy I would have been if you had broken the other leg too!"

"What are you saying, Father!" exclaimed Eugene.

"Yes," the man of God calmly continued. "If you had broken both legs you would appreciate Our Lady's power in healing you even more. Cheer up and trust in the Holy Virgin Mary. At the end of this month you will be able to set out on your journey." And indeed he did.[15]

Father Berto heard of this singular incident from Eugene's mother when in October 1872 he spent a few days at Our Lady of the Elm. He also heard the following declaration from Robert, Eugene's brother: "Don Bosco told me that he can see into the future. So clearly can he read into men's hearts that he is positive of not making a mistake. He remarked, 'Perhaps this is an intuition that the Lord has given me.'"

We have a demonstration of this in the second visit Don Bosco paid to Eugene at the beginning of September 1873:

Brother Eugene Ricci, S.J. had been staying for some weeks at his parents' villa, when Don Bosco, who had already comforted him once before when he was still a layman, as I have already narrated, paid him another visit which greatly cheered this young religious, for he loved the man of God very dearly. During this visit Eugene's mother confided to Don Bosco her fears for her son's very poor health. Probably Don Bosco gently chided her lack of hope because, after his depar-

[15]*See Vita di Eugenio Ricci della Compagnia di Gesù [Life of Eugenio Ricci of the Society of Jesus],* written by a priest of that same order. Turin, Giuseppe Speirani & Sons, 1871, pp. 13-15. [Author]

ture, she told her son: "Seemingly that holy man reproached my lack of hope for your recovery." The prudent youth looked at his mother as though he wished to assure himself that she was spiritually prepared for what he was to reveal to her. Then he candidly replied, "Don Bosco probably spoke that way because you are my mother, but when he talked to me, he did not forget that I am first and foremost a religious, and he asked me whether I would be willing to give my life to Jesus were He to ask it of me. I pondered the question in my heart and answered that I felt completely indifferent for either life or death, whichever might be God's will."

His gentle, calm appearance spoke far beyond his words.[16]

At the beginning of October his parents brought him to Turin. On November 19 he attended Holy Mass and received Holy Communion in a little room next to his own, the celebrant being Father Secundus Franco, S.J. The next morning, as his mother wrote, "he passed, as we firmly hope, from the militant Society of Jesus on earth to the triumphant Society of Jesus in heaven."

From Cuneo Don Bosco went to Nizza Monferrato, where he stayed at Countess Corsi's villa. From there he wrote to Father Sala who had gone to Rome:

Turin [sic] September 8, 1873

Dear Father Sala:

I have written to Count Berardi that I have decided to accept the project if they will let me have the premises rent-free for six years. We can make no further concession.

If this letter reaches you in Rome, try to call on Cardinal Antonelli and Archbishop Vitelleschi, in case they have errands to entrust to you. Also call on Mother Galeffi who is angry with you for not having accepted Mr. Sigismondi's hospitality, as we had agreed. Bring back some money and have a nice trip.

God bless you.

Your affectionate friend,
Fr. Bosco

P.S. A thousand good wishes to the whole Colonna family.

[16] *Ibid.*, pp. 204f. [Author]

Full of admiration for Don Bosco and most eager to entertain him as their guest, the Sigismondis were delighted to host him during the following year for three and a half months.

Don Bosco had given Father Sala a sealed package of papers with strict instructions to deliver it personally to Cardinal Antonelli. As soon as the cardinal took the package, he quickly opened it and, glancing through the contents, asked Father Sala if he could return.

"Yes," he answered. "I am going to Ceccano, where we are negotiating for a new Salesian house, but before returning to Turin, I shall call again."

"Good! Meanwhile I'll ready some papers for you to bring to Don Bosco."

And so he did. Father Sala declared that he believed those papers concerned the bishops' temporalities.

On one of his visits to the Vatican, Father Sala met the Pope who, followed by a number of prelates, was on his way to the garden for a stroll. One of them pointed out Father Sala to him, saying, "He is a Salesian!"

The Pope stopped and beckoned him to approach. "So you are with Don Bosco!" he exclaimed. "How is he?" Then, turning to his retinue, he continued: "Don Bosco, as you must know, has several boarding schools with crowds of boys pursuing studies and trades." He then went on to tell them enthusiastically how Don Bosco himself had been a tailor, carpenter, and shoemaker, and how at the Valdocco Oratory one could hear the hum of machinery, the harmony of instrumental and vocal music, the buzzing of saws, and the sound of hammers, while in other buildings regular classes were held in academic subjects. Everything, he said, was under the direction of Don Bosco who coordinated and presided over the entire operation, preached, heard confessions, fostered vocations, and kept everybody cheerful and busy at play, until at last the bell rang and each one silently went to his own place.

The venerable Pontiff most energetically kept talking of Don Bosco's apostolate, evidently recalling the days when he too had benefited youngsters as director of the Tata Giovanni[17] and St.

[17] *See* Vol. V, pp. 541f. [Editor]

Michael[18] hospices in Rome. He concluded by repeating: "And how is Don Bosco? How is he? Is he well?"

Father Sala was astonished at such esteem and affection for our father on the Pope's part.

Father [Charles] Ghivarello, the councillor of the Superior Chapter, had invited the directors of the houses to meet at the Oratory on September 9 for conferences which were to precede the annual spiritual retreats, but Don Bosco was still out of town and Father John Baptist Francesia was at Vignale. From Nizza Monferrato Don Bosco sent a note to Father Rua on September 9, informing him that he would arrive in Turin from Cuneo on Thursday, September 11, and that he would dine with the Occelletti family. He also instructed him to meet him there for dinner with the directors who had already arrived at the Oratory and to send someone to replace Father Francesia so that he too could be with them.[19]

Charles Occelletti, a Knight of St. Gregory the Great, and Pauline Occelletti, his sister, were great friends and benefactors of Don Bosco. For the past twelve years, Charles Occelletti had been conducting on his own premises a festive oratory for five hundred boys. Like Count Charles Cays, he too donned the clerical habit when he was quite past middle age, was ordained a priest on December 21, 1878, and died on January 30, 1881 at the age of sixty-nine, after having done a great amount of good for youngsters, dried the tears of the poor, and provided large quantities of flour for the Valdocco Oratory boys.

During the second week of September the Oratory and the Salesian Society suffered two grave losses. On September 9, the "servant of God, Father John Borel, model priest, father of the poor, indefatigable laborer in the Lord's vineyard, especially benefiting prisoners and inmates of the Rifugio and the Magdalenes," of which he was rector "for thirty-four years," ended his life of labor at the age of seventy-five. He was mourned by all, and especially by his [spiritual] daughters who gratefully erected a tombstone engraved with the above epitaph over the spot

[18]*Ibid.*, pp. 543f, 549ff, 577f. *See also* Vol. VIII, pp. 303f. [Editor]
[19]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

where his remains still rest. His grave is near the center of the first section of the cemetery, to the right of the entrance, precisely by the tomb of Silvio Pellico,[20] in the lot reserved to the Barolo institutions.

Our readers know how much this worthy priest of God did for Don Bosco in the early years of his apostolate, first when Don Bosco was spiritual director of St. Philomena Hospital, then when he was driven from pillar to post, and later when he managed to rent a battered shed that he converted into a chapel which he blessed "on April 13, 1846, the day after Easter."[21] So great was the support he gave the Oratory in its early years, and so grateful and appreciative was Don Bosco, that it seemed as though the Oratory had risen through the initiative of "the spiritual directors of the Penitent Sisters of St. Mary Magdalene and of the Retreat of the Holy Virgin Mary, Refuge of Sinners in Borgo Dora." In fact, the documents issued by the chancery in reference to the first Oratory chapel as well as for the new one were addressed to Father Borel.

At first sight, this short priest seemed quite unremarkable, but his quite simple, affable, modest, cheerful, unassuming and affectionate ways, joined to a grave, prudent and dignified priestly bearing, endeared him to all. Everyone loved and admired his fine prudence, wise advice, warm heart, affable ways, and untiring priestly zeal which kept him entirely detached from earthly things and totally absorbed in heavenly thoughts. Don Bosco used to say that ten good priests could not have accomplished as much as Father Borel did alone. He came to the Oratory nearly every Sunday for the afternoon instruction in

[20]Silvio Pellico (1789-1845), an Italian writer and patriot, spent most of his young manhood in Milan where, in 1820, he joined the Carbonari. Arrested by the Austrians who then ruled Lombardy, he was sentenced to twenty years of hard labor in the Spielberg at Brunn. In 1830 he was pardoned and spent the rest of his life in Turin. Up to his imprisonment Pellico had been a lukewarm Christian, but in the distress of prison life he resolved to love God and his fellow men. In 1832 he wrote *Le mie prigioni*, the memoirs of his imprisonment, which soon became the most famous book in the literature of the Risorgimento. The Christian gentleness of this book at first disappointed some Italian patriots, but it proved to be more damaging to Austria than the loss of a battle. Silvio Pellico died in Turin in 1854. [Editor]

[21]Volume II, p. 334, states that the Pinardi chapel was blessed by Don Bosco on Easter Sunday, April 12, 1846. For details about Fr. Borel's zeal and constant help to Don Bosco *see* the Indexes of Volumes II, III, IV, VII and IX. [Editor]

catechism. Like Blessed Joseph Cafasso, he was an outstanding apostle of Turin.

At his death, he did not have even enough money for his burial! Several of our own directors, then in Turin on September 9 for a conference, were his pallbearers, and the rest followed to the mortuary chapel along with the Oratory pupils, who were led by our brass band. These were the priests, clerics and boys whom, back in 1844, Don Bosco had told him he had seen in a dream.[22]

Father Borel's blessed memory will always be honored by us.

The other painful loss was that of our perpetually professed confrere, Father Peter Racca, a catechist at Sampierdarena. Due to poor health he had gone to Volvera, his native town, during the summer months, hoping to regain his strength, but he died suddenly there. Don Bosco hoped to publish a short biography, asserting that "he had been a truly admirable, zealous, energetic and exemplary priest" and "that he so ardently desired to do good that he felt deeply disappointed when he could not do all the things he believed would promote God's greater glory." Don Bosco did request and obtain edifying information about Father Racca from priests who had known him at home, but, somehow, the biography was never written. Father Racca was only thirty years old, and though he hoped to recover, he would always say, as did St. Martin of Tours, "Lord, if Your people still need me, I will not shirk the toil, but Your will be done." He died at his home during the evening of September 13, 1873.[23]

That year the annual spiritual retreats were held in Lanzo, September 15-20 and 22-27.[24] Don Bosco himself gave the instructions.[25]

5. A Thorny Legacy

In the fall of 1873 Don Bosco was made "sole heir and executor" of Count Philip Belletrutti's estate. This testamentary des-

[22]*See* Vol. II, pp. 319f. [Editor]

[23]This is a condensation of the reports Don Bosco received from Volvera about Father Racca. [Editor]

[24]*See* p. 473. [Editor]

[25]We are omitting details on various matters of little contemporary interest. [Editor]

ignation brought on a litigation that continued years after Don Bosco's death. [For a summary of the proceedings we refer our readers to Volume XI, pages 460-462.] Among the beneficiaries was Archbishop Gastaldi of Turin, to whom the count left four thousand lire for the Sacred Heart Church in Via Nizza and four thousand lire for the exemption of seminarians from military service. Another bequest of six thousand lire bore the simple instruction, "To help build St. Secundus Church," without identifying the legatee.[1]

At Count Belletrutti's death in September 1873 nobody knew that Archbishop Gastaldi intended taking on the construction of St. Secundus Church, a project which had been initiated by Don Bosco.[2] As it was, on November 21, 1874, the archbishop issued a pastoral letter announcing resumption of work on this church and expressing the hope that it would be completed by the end of 1875. As things turned out, it was consecrated on April 11, 1882 by Archbishop Celestine Fissore of Vercelli. The May 1882 issue of the *Bollettino Salesiano* [Salesian Bulletin] thus described the event:

> The occasion was attended by eleven bishops in addition to a vast crowd and a large number of priests and religious. The Apostolic College seemed to have gathered with its Divine Teacher. Sadly, the full complement had one absentee—Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi, who was said to be confined to his room because of gout.
>
> The Oratory choir very willingly provided the singing and had the distinction of being the first to make the new church resound with its melodies. Our brass band likewise contributed selections after the church services and during the church illumination till ten at night.
>
> All devout Turinese had reason to rejoice, but much more so was this true of Don Bosco and his Salesians. . . .

The article had been written by Father John Bonetti, who "for the sake of truth and history" went on to tell how this church had come to be built, "adding details that were not reported in the contemporary local newspapers either because they went un-

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]*See* pp. 88f, 171, 194. [Editor]

noticed or for reasons we need not investigate." His article ended as follows:

Of the twenty-seven thousand lire spent by Don Bosco for initial work, only twelve thousand were refunded and eventually used for the Church of St. John the Evangelist. The other fifteen thousand, along with numerous headaches, frustrations and heartaches, became his contribution to St. Secundus Church. We have authentic documents to prove our assertions. They are the basis of our account and will enable others to write the rest of the story. From the little we have said we can understand how Don Bosco—and all those who had labored for the construction of this church from 1867—had reason to rejoice when they saw it finally opened to public worship to meet a grave need of the area.

6. Other Reminiscences of 1873[1]

In October 1873 Father [Frederick] Albert,[2] the vicar at Lanzo, was notified that the Pope had appointed him bishop of Pinerolo.[3] This humble servant of God (whose cause of beatification has been introduced) announced it tearfully from the pulpit and implored his parishioners to pray that the Lord call him to Himself before a miter could be placed on his head. The announcement caused the whole parish grief. Moreover, false rumor had it that Don Bosco had pushed that promotion so as to take over the Immaculate Conception Hospice, founded by Father Albert. Apprehensively Father Lemoyne wrote to Don Bosco, as follows:

[Lanzo] October 13, 1873

My dear Father in Jesus Christ,

I feel I must acquaint you with an unpleasant, ridiculous and absurd piece of news.

Father Bertoldo imprudently blabbered that if the vicar of Lanzo

[1]We are omitting five pages of unrelated material that has little importance nowadays. [Editor]

[2]*See* Vol. III, p. 152; Vol. VII, pp. 416, 476; Vol. IX, pp. 354f; Vol. X, pp. 388-392.

[3]A small industrial town in the province of Turin. [Editor]

goes to Pinerolo as bishop, the fault is Don Bosco's. It is asserted that Don Bosco, to get the hospice, wants Father Albert removed from Lanzo because he is overshadowed by him. I am at a loss to figure out which outweighs the other, imprudence or malice.

Last night unknown vandals smashed our school windows and splattered mud all over the wall facing the church square. Might it be revenge?

Father Albert is deeply grieved by his appointment and by the ill-feeling shown to us. Last year these very same people were saying that Father Albert would never become bishop because it suited Don Bosco better to keep him at Lanzo; now they say the opposite, but their reason for wagging their tongues is always the same.

The vicar remonstrates with all against this gossip. He wept much and told me he is being crushed by becoming bishop and seeing us slandered by the townsfolk. "I love Don Bosco," he added, "and will always do my utmost for the Salesian Society. Don Bosco loves me too, I am sure of that. We know each other well. Regardless of whether Don Bosco did or did not suggest that the Pope make me bishop, I'd rather die this very moment than have my parishioners harbor such a suspicion." This he told me with tears. Church services and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament are being held in all churches and chapels of Lanzo to have the vicar stay. Everybody is most distressed. We share those feelings because we would lose our best support. These people do not understand how disastrous it is for us to lose such a pastor, such a reliable protector, such a help for our school. Patience! God's will be done.

Your affectionate son,
Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne

Don Bosco simply replied in the margin: "Let nothing upset you. God is with us. Patience; prayer."

As matters turned out, Pius IX accepted Father Albert's refusal, and a solemn *Te Deum* was sung in the parish church in thanksgiving.

We are not to be surprised that such a rumor, quite contrary to what had been noised about but a year before, should have arisen. There were people who misconstrued other dealings of his with our founder, even to the point of believing and having others believe that the new wing of the Salesian school—built by Don Bosco when he foresaw having to vacate the old monastery

—was meant for workshops for the town's poor youngsters. According to these people, Father Albert had seen in a dream a crowd of youngsters in school uniforms sporting a double row of buttons in the front—the very uniform of our own pupils. The real reason, however, was that Don Bosco, "to oblige the many applications," advisedly had erected the "vast and comfortable building with handsome porticoes in order that the pupils might enjoy pleasant recreation sheltered from the winter cold," as the 1873 school brochure stated.

Don Bosco had to cancel his planned trip to the Cuneo province because of grave and urgent matters—among them the constitutions as demanded by the Holy See's latest recommendations and the decision to resume negotiations for the bishops' temporalities, as we gather from current letters exchanged between him and Minister Vigliani. On October 14, therefore, he wrote to Father Peter Vallauri's sister at Peveragno to inform her of his change of plans and to Father Rua to say that he would return to Turin on the 18th.[4]

Doubtless, though, he got to Peveragno in the fall, probably in September, immediately after his visit to Cuneo. Canon Joseph Giubergia, rector of the [eighteenth-century] shrine of Vicoforte (Mondovì), recalls having seen him at Peveragno that year, as he writes:

> It must have been not later than September 1873, I remember, because of a violent storm that caught me and my friends and some kindergarten children as we were all returning from a visit to Don Bosco at Paschio. Even then he enjoyed the reputation of a saint. I arrived in Peveragno in the morning and called on him in the afternoon, and on this occasion, with his characteristic smile, he said to me, "You will become a priest!"
>
> The next afternoon he came to Peveragno at the invitation of a Joseph Campana, the assistant town clerk and a prominent tertiary. He alighted from the coach in front of Campana's house and leaned on a walking stick to relieve the pain in the leg that was troubling him. Later there was a reception attended by the clergy and the civil authorities. . . .
>
> "In 1875," Canon Giubergia continued, "mostly because of what

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Don Bosco had told me, I decided to take the clerical habit and enter the Turin diocesan seminary. The evening before my entrance I called on Don Bosco. Though it was two years since he had seen me, he immediately recognized me. I remember his first words most distinctly: "Giubergia, you have come to take the clerical habit."

"Yes," I replied, "but not with you. I am entering the major seminary."

"It doesn't matter," he countered; "you will become a priest."

He insisted that I be his guest and have supper with him in the superiors' dining room. Placing me beside him, he served me himself, saying: "Eat! You are young and you will have loads of work to do."

After supper I escorted him into the playground, listened to his "Good Night," and then went with him as far as the stairs leading to his room. Finally I went into the church and there gave vent to my feelings, weeping at length. The next day I entered the seminary.

As we have said, Don Bosco was working steadily at his desk in order to hasten his return to Rome to secure the approval of the Salesian constitutions and to attempt to improve the plight of the Italian bishops. In view of this, on October 29, 1873 he wrote to Mrs. Matilda Sigismondi to assure her that he would gladly accept her hospitality for a good part of his stay at Rome. During the second half of November he visited various Salesian houses, always seeking means to have his clerics exempted from military service. Grateful for the financial assistance of Countess Callori, he repeatedly thanked her with two letters from Borgo San Martino and from Sampierdarena, dated respectively November 14 and November 26. On November 29 he was back in Turin. On December 16 he wrote unsuccessfully to the Department of Railroads for free passes and equally unsuccessfully to the Defense Department for used clothing.[5]

Eight issues of *Letture Cattoliche* [Catholic Readings] came out in 1873. They were:

January-March: *Christopher Columbus and the Discovery of America* by Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne.

April: *The Martyr Paul Emil Reynaud and John Pinna, Apostolic Missionaries.*

May: *Highlights of the Life of St. Gregory VII.*

[5]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

June-July: *Serapia, An Episode of the Second Century.*
August: *How To Be Catholic in the Nineteenth Century.*
September: *Jesus Christ and His Church.*
October-November: *The Ferocious Beast Revealed to Our Youths.*
December: *The Wonders of Our Lady of Lourdes.*

The life of Christopher Columbus became quite popular and several reprints were made also in deluxe editions. Don Bosco himself had asked Father Lemoyne to undertake this task [in 1871] and had given him some directives:

Turin, April 3, 1871

My dear Fr. Lemoyne,

It is but fitting that a book about a Genoese navigator should be given to a Genoese.[6]

The life of Christopher Columbus will be published as an issue of *Letture Cattoliche.* It should have one or two hundred pages or more, as you think necessary. In the Index of the two volumes [I am sending you] you will find marginal markings: a broken line means that those parts must be reproduced verbatim; a series of dots means that condensation is in order.

Of course, you are entirely free as regards style and contents. If you find something pertinent in other sources, use it. For instance, in the book *Il Monachismo* [Monasticism] by Tullio Dandolo there is a fine chapter on Columbus' monastic life.

Work at this issue leisurely, but let the language, style and contents come up to your usual high standards:

God bless you, your pupils and your whole staff and domestic personnel. May all of you pray for me.

Yours affectionately,
Fr. John Bosco

The 1874 issue of *Il Galantuomo* [Don Bosco's National Almanac][7] contained one of many letters praising this publication. In April 1873 he reprinted *Mary's Month,*[8] about which *Uni-*

[6]Father Lemoyne was born in Genoa. [Editor]
[7]*See* Vol. IV, pp. 448f. *See also* the Indexes of Volumes IV through IX and Volume XI. [Editor]
[8]*See* Vol. V, p. 535. [Editor]

tà Cattolica wrote a favorable review. Shortly afterward *Il Giovane Provveduto*[9] [The Companion of Youth] came off the press in its thirty-third edition and was highly praised by the same paper in its August 7 issue.[10]

Another instance of Don Bosco's apostolate of the press was his decision to publish a collection of Latin Christian authors for Catholic schools to supplement his previous collection of carefully expurgated Latin classics.[11] He entrusted the publication of the first volume of the *Latin Christian Classics*[12] to Father John Tamietti, as we gather from a letter of his to Father Anthony Belasio who had written a timely booklet on how schools could contribute to a wholesome reform of civil society.[13]

Generous, high-minded and untiring, Don Bosco could have achieved top honors as "a scholar and thinker," as Pope Pius XI declared, but with unmatched amiability and humility he chose instead to make himself available to all through endless projects, as if he had nothing else to do.

In December 1873, Father John Cagliero had the distinction of being the first Salesian to earn his doctorate in theology at the Royal University of Turin. In the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification] he declared:

> Don Bosco often teased some of us, saying, "You, at least, are somebody, whereas I am a nobody. You are philosophy professors and doctors in literature or theology. Don Bosco is not even certified to teach first graders. What a fine figure I'll cut when I get to heaven with no degrees."
>
> "Never mind," we would reply. "Your merits far surpass academic titles. Your name alone is worth more than any title." Making a pun of his name which meant "wood," he would counter, "My very name is nothing but wood."

He said the same thing on another occasion to V. Garelli, the provincial superintendent of schools. The latter, unaware that Don Bosco was joking, took him seriously. "What? You are not

[9]A prayerbook for boys compiled by Don Bosco and first published in 1847. *See* Vol. III, pp. 7-18. [Editor]

[10]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[11]*See* Vol. IX, pp. 194ff. [Editor]

[12]*See* Vol. XI, p. 402. [Editor]

[13]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

a professor, you have no academic degrees, not even certification to teach in elementary schools? Is it possible that school authorities have done nothing to acknowledge your merits? I'll take it upon myself to write to the Minister of Education. You'll receive all the titles that your writings and undertakings deserve."

Quickly Don Bosco asked him not to bother because he had spoken in jest. Still, the superintendent of schools could not believe that Don Bosco had no academic titles. While showing surprise, he also admired our dear founder's humility.

What Don Bosco had most at heart was to attain his goal—definitive approval of the Salesian Society. On December 20, 1873, while getting ready for his trip to Rome, he wrote to Countess Uguccioni to thank her for her financial assistance and to assure her of the prayers of the whole Oratory community. He also promised to make a stopover in Florence in January on his way to Rome. On Christmas Eve he sent his greetings to Countess Callori. In turn, Cardinal Antonelli wrote to thank him for his prayers. Likewise Monsignor Aeneas Sbarretti, substitute of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, thanked him for his greetings and assured him of his efforts "to foster his justly anxious wishes." Obviously Don Bosco had solicited help for the definitive approval of the Salesian constitutions.[14]

Meanwhile cordial filial New Year's greetings of all the confreres and pupils of Lanzo arrived at the Oratory. On top of the page signed by all the confreres, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote: "Yearning for your blessing and a visit, all the confreres beg for a written word of wisdom as a pledge that the new year may prove to be a blessed one."

Father Louis Lasagna,[15] who was teaching the last two grades

[14]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[15]Louis Lasagna (1850-1895) first met Don Bosco in the summer of 1862 during one of the latter's outings with the Oratory boys. In October Louis entered the Oratory. (*See* Vol. VII, pp. 164, 166, 179f) He received the clerical garb in 1866, made his first vows in 1868, was ordained a priest in 1873, and joined the second missionary expedition to South America in 1876. As director and provincial he achieved marked success in the fields of education, social action, agriculture, priestly vocations, and church construction or renovation. In 1893 he was consecrated bishop and entrusted with the evangelization of the Indians of Mato Grosso (Brazil). He died in a train collision at Juiz de Fora (Brazil) on November 6, 1895. [Editor]

of the secondary school department, added a statement to the page signed by his pupils: "Holding you, our common father, as one of the dearest to our hearts, we older pupils of the Salesian school at Lanzo, unable to do so in person, send you most sincere greetings for the new year and for your life, which we endlessly pray to be long, for the sake of our eternal salvation and for the glory of our suffering Church."

Quite appropriately, Don Bosco's first letter from Rome was addressed to the director and pupils of Lanzo.

CHAPTER 10

The Vision of the Future—1874

THE Salesian Society's directory of 1874 listed forty-two perpetually professed members, one hundred and six with triennial vows, and one hundred and three postulants: in all, two hundred and fifty-one priests, clerics, coadjutors and students. Of the forty-nine priests, thirty were perpetually professed, sixteen had taken triennial vows and three were postulants. The clerics numbered one hundred and four—three perpetually professed, sixty-one with triennial vows and forty postulants. Of the sixty-two coadjutors nine were perpetually professed, twenty-eight had taken triennial vows, and twenty-five were postulants. Of the thirty-six students, one had taken triennial vows and thirty-five were postulants.

In the Appendix of the 1875 directory, our beloved founder prefaced biographical notes of some deceased confreres as follows:

The year 1874 was a memorable one for us, my beloved sons. On April 3, after granting us great favors, His Holiness Pius IX kindly approved our humble Congregation definitively. This glorious event filled us with joy, but a series of events also deeply grieved us. On the 13th of that month God called Father [Francis] Provera to Himself, and later, within but four months, Father [Dominic] Pestarino, the cleric Ghione, and Father Joseph Cagliero.

In these dear confreres we lost four evangelical laborers: all perpetually professed, all warmly attached to the Salesian Congregation, faithful observers of our constitutions, and zealous workers for the glory of God. It is not surprising that these losses have deeply hurt our Society. But God, infinitely good, who knows what is best for us, judged them already worthy of Him. We might say that they lived briefly but achieved as much as if they had lived a long life: *Brevi vivens tempore, explevit*

tempora multa. [Although his life was short, his accomplishments were many—cf. Wis. 4, 13] And with well-founded reason we believe that they, taken from us on earth, are now our intercessors in heaven.

The year 1874 was truly memorable for our Society, not only because of its formal approval, but also because of our holy founder's tireless efforts to open new houses abroad, increase the number of its confreres and cooperators everywhere, and thus broaden an apostolate for God's greater glory and the welfare of souls.

Back in 1871 Don Bosco had asked the Holy Father's opinion on responding to insistent requests for new foundations in Italy, Switzerland, India, Algeria, Egypt and California. The Pope had replied: "Just now concentrate your efforts on establishing your Congregation firmly here in Italy. When it is time to send your sons elsewhere, I shall let you know."

Immediately after the formal approval of the Salesian Society, the Holy Father urged him to widen his field of activity wherever he thought best.

1. While in Rome

During his months in Rome, Don Bosco, realizing that he had to get a foothold near the Holy See, renewed his efforts to obtain the Church of the Holy Shroud[1] where he often said Mass. The church belonged to the House of Savoy and was then being serviced by Canon Grosset Mouchet of Pinerolo, an admirer of Don Bosco. John Visone, who headed the royal palace staff, promised to use his influence with the king to have the church entrusted to the Salesians. On January 17, 1874 Don Bosco personally filed a formal application.[2]

A few days later the official informed him that he could consider the matter satisfactorily closed, but on February 27, after repeating that both the king and Minister Vigliani favored the move, he showed him an article in *Popolo Romano*. The gist of it

[1] *See* pp. 99f. *See also* Vol. IX, pp. 192, 223, 238, 301, 368f. [Editor]
[2] Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

was that a commission of cardinals had discussed the opening of a Salesian school in Rome modeled on the school in Turin and that, though the Holy Father and several cardinals favored the project, other cardinals and the French clergy opposed it. Minister Vigliani too, shaking his head, kept repeating, "Right now we are suppressing religious orders here. . . . The government would seem to contradict itself by setting up another one right here in Rome!"

"But this is not a religious order," Don Bosco countered. "It is a civil society!"

However, the project collapsed. The church had formerly belonged to the legation of the Duke of Savoy to the Holy See, and from 1870 it had become the personal property of the House of Savoy. Don Bosco no longer insisted because he realized that many would interpret this step as an endorsement of the Italian government.

Still hoping to open a house in Rome, Don Bosco turned his attention to the Church of San Giovanni della Pigna, in the area of Santa Maria sopra Minerva (the location of our liaison office with the Holy See since 1902), and discussed the matter with Constantine Cardinal Patrizi, who favored the idea. On September 28, 1874 he again brought the matter to the cardinal's attention by letter, stressing his need of a Salesian residence in Rome. In a reply of October 9, the latter pointed out that such a move was inopportune, could offer a pretext to have the property confiscated, and could gravely embarrass the present rector. Still, he assured Don Bosco of continued support.[3]

Determined to begin building the Church of St. John the Evangelist in Turin, Don Bosco obtained title to a small piece of land over the opposition of Henry Morglia, a Protestant,[4] and on February 5, 1874 he again appealed to the head of the royal palace staff to obtain a subsidy from the king. The building plans included also a school and home for the area's destitute boys, and therefore the undertaking was for the public good.[5] Since all work

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[4]*See* p. 88. [Editor]
[5]We are omitting Don Bosco's letter to this head official. [Editor]

had been suspended, this appeal too was unsuccessful.

We now present some news briefs by Father Joachim Berto on Don Bosco's stay in Rome because they give us a better grasp of our holy founder's spirit. Always alert, Don Bosco missed nothing —good or bad—that went on about him. Writes Father Berto:

One day, as I was accompanying Don Bosco along Via Montanara, he remarked, "Do you know what I was thinking of just now?"

"I have no idea!"

"I was thinking that, seeing what goes on here in Rome, one might lose his faith."

"My reaction is quite the opposite," I replied. "Seeing that our religion remains unsullied by so many failings, I become more firmly convinced of its divinity. Then, too, my faith is quite strengthened by the religious monuments that surround us everywhere."

"True," Don Bosco went on, "our religion is divine, but it is in human hands, and even here there are sons of Adam."

Perhaps Don Bosco was trying to find out if I had been shocked by knowing, seeing, and being in touch with certain human failings, rivalries, jealousy and intrigues among religious even in the Vatican itself. . . .

Ever merciful in judging, whenever he came to learn of a grave scandal or a devout person's failure, our kindly father would exclaim: "What can we expect! They too are sons of Adam!"

He always treated everyone kindly, even those who tried to cross him, without showing offense. One day, turning into Via del Tritone, he found the sidewalk blocked by a group of arrogant, contemptuous young idlers. Drawing near, he smiled, doffed his hat and bowed to them. Ashamed, they immediately yielded to him with marks of esteem and respect.

Constantly and fearlessly consecrating every moment to God's greater glory and the salvation of souls, he would often exclaim, "I need people to help me get over obstacles, not raise them. I wish they would look not at me, but at what is good and helpful to religion and souls, because I am working for the Church."

He never lost heart at any unexpected setback or failure.

Again and again—Father Berto wrote—he would call in vain on certain people, hoping for favors or to settle matters affecting the welfare

of others or of the Church. At times he would even climb four stories to ask for alms. Seeing this, I could not help remarking, "Poor Don Bosco! I wish our confreres and the Oratory boys could see how hard you work to provide for them and realize your plans for them!" "I am doing all this just to save this wretched soul of mine," he would modestly reply. "We should be ready for anything to save our souls!"

Nothing really could rob him of his habitual calm and serenity. Monsignor Manacorda once tried to make him lose his temper at a dinner attended by many guests at the home of Chevalier Stephen Colonna, head of the Vatican's shipping department. The monsignor pestered him, chided him, argued with him, derided him and did his utmost to upset him. Don Bosco smiled, jested, explained, and kept his peace so tactfully that the frustrated monsignor, who greatly revered him, nearly lost his own temper. Don Bosco had his own way of overcoming obstacles: he serenely accepted every humiliation!

God was by his servant's side. We have mentioned several favors obtained through Don Bosco's blessing. Father Berto formally testified to one during the Informative Process (for his beatification):

In 1874 I was with Don Bosco in Rome. At about 5:00 on the evening of February 16, I was walking with him toward Villa Ludovisi. As we went by the Church of the Capuchins, a gentleman coming toward us greeted Don Bosco as he passed us by. Don Bosco promptly returned the greeting. At this the man turned back to thank him, telling him that in 1867, when Don Bosco was a guest of Count [John] Vimercati near the Church of St. Peter-in-Chains, he had been brought there to receive his blessing. "At that time," he declared, "I was mentally ill, but I remember that you told me not to fear because I would recover. In fact, I have been quite well since then. I have seen you here in town several times, but out of respect I never mustered enough courage to approach you."[6]

[6]We are omitting the description of Don Bosco's visit to the Accademia dell'Arcadia, of which he was a member, and other details concerning this literary institution. [Editor]

2. Return to the Oratory

We have already described Don Bosco's return to the Oratory and the attendant festivities.[1]

While in Rome Don Bosco had had several talks with Colonel Monti and his wife Eurosia. At their request he had obtained the Pope's blessing on a crucifix that probably had belonged to Father Felix Golzio, Eurosia's brother. With that blessing, Pius IX granted special indulgences. Since time prevented him from presenting the crucifix personally, Don Bosco brought it with him to Turin, and from there he wrote to the colonel, tactfully mentioning also Archbishop Gastaldi's health. As far as they were concerned, the controversy over Father Golzio's testament was a thing of the past, though the anticlerical press zestfully kept it alive:

Turin, April 24, 1874

My dear Colonel,

Belatedly I reply to your gracious letter. I left Rome early because I wanted to see one of my dearest sons, Father Francis Provera, for the last time. I was too late, arriving shortly after his burial. It thus pleased God, and so be it. . . .

Matters concerning our Congregation were very successful. Everybody was well disposed, especially the Pope, who treated me like a most loving father.

With me now I have your crucifix enriched with all the requested indulgences. If you wish, I shall mail it; otherwise I'll deliver it personally when you return to our ancient capital.

I spoke with our archbishop. I found him most courteous, but painfully distressed. He told me that for quite a time now he has not been able to leave his residence because people now and then point at him and insult him, and so he has had to curtail his walking. His sermons, which once drew large crowds, are now pitifully attended. There is a remedy for all this, but what can one do when the patient rejects both doctors and medicines? . . .

[1] *See* pp. 375f. We are omitting a poem by Father Lemoyne giving vent to the Salesians' enthusiasm for Don Bosco's success in obtaining the definitive approval of the constitutions. [Editor]

God bless you and Mrs. Eurosia. I recommend myself to your prayers.

Devotedly yours,
Fr. John Bosco

How tactfully he dispelled all remembrance of their controversy with the archbishop!

At about this time the Oratory press commissioned a small color portrait of Father Borel and issued small prints of it. *Unità Cattolica* published an article on the portrait in its April 5 issue.[2]

On April 26, the feast of St. Joseph's patronage, the painting of the holy patriarch was finally set over his altar in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians and personally blessed by Don Bosco himself. Years later Father Francis Piccollo described the scene:

> Being near the altar, I was impressed by Don Bosco's devout rapture as he often raised his eyes to the painting and movingly recited the ritual prayers. The boys' choir too—over a hundred voices—aroused inexpressible spiritual delight when it sang *Joseph quasi arcus refulget inter nebulas gloriae et quasi flos rosarum in diebus vernis* [Joseph shines like a rainbow in the cloudy sky and like rose blossoms in springtime—cf. Sir. 50, 8]. The roses in St. Joseph's hands and those evoked by the silvery voices transported us to an enchanted garden graced by the majestic presence of Christ's foster father and scented by the fragrant virtues of the great apostle of youth who stood at the saint's feet in ecstasy.

Don Bosco had photographs of the painting made for wide distribution by the Oratory bookstore, and *Unità Cattolica* published a glowing article on this painting in its May 7 issue.[3]

Father Francis Giacomelli, Don Bosco's fellow seminarian and his confessor as well after Father Golzio's death, told us that, upon noticing that St. Joseph was dropping both red and white roses [upon the Church of Mary, Help of Christians], he asked Don Bosco, "What do these red and white roses symbolize?" Receiving no answer, he went on, "I think that the white roses

[2]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[3]For a description of this painting *see* Vol. IX, p. 110. [Editor]

symbolize the favors that please us, while the red are those which please God. What do you say?"

"Right," Don Bosco answered. "The red roses are the best!"

Another singular instance [forces us to go back two years].

In 1872 the Carlist party again took up arms in Spain and proclaimed Don Carlos [III], son of Don Juan of Bourbon d'Anjou, king of Spain under the title of Carlos VII. The latter, while going to Spain to lead the insurgents, passed through Turin, accompanied by Count Servanzi, a member of the Vatican Noble Guard, and with him called on Don Bosco. Without introducing Don Carlos, Count Servanzi directed the conversation to the Spanish uprising and asked Don Bosco what he thought of Don Carlos' chances to regain the throne.

"Well," Don Bosco replied, "if it is God's will, he will succeed; but human means alone will hardly suffice."

"Do you know this gentleman?" the count asked.

No one had told Don Bosco of his identity, but he promptly replied, "Yes. He is Don Carlos!"

Don Carlos then spoke. "It's either now or never," he exclaimed. "I have many friends, you know, and, besides, right is on my side!"

"Well, if you really hope to succeed and obtain God's blessing," Don Bosco went on, "go there with upright intentions."

After talking of other matters, Don Bosco escorted Don Carlos to the door. There he met Father Lemoyne and smilingly said to him, "Let me present Don Carlos, pretender to the Spanish throne!" Don Carlos shook hands with Father Lemoyne, and then left.

But Don Bosco did not forget the young warrior in Spain. The third Carlist war was waged first against Amadeus of Savoy, who abdicated on February 11, 1873, then against the republicans, and finally in 1874 against Alfonso XII. On April 29, 1874, Father Berto wrote, "At about 8 this morning Don Bosco was in church hearing confessions. Suddenly he stood up and seemed to find himself in the midst of a battle between the republicans and the Carlists. He heard repeated cannon fire from both sides and was about to call and ask what was happening, when the scene suddenly disappeared. . . ."

The war lasted two more years. Vanquished, Don Carlos left Spain in 1876 and died at Varese, Italy, on July 18, 1909.

On May 10 Don Bosco went to Alassio where the pupils gave him a most festive welcome.[4] The feast of Mary, Help of Christians was celebrated with the usual pomp on May 28 because Pentecost fell on the 24th.

On June 9 something astounding occurred in the sacristy, Father Berto declared. Toward 11:30 a woman walked in with a Mrs. Pittatore of Fossano and a girl on crutches. They wanted Don Bosco to bless the girl. Don Bosco prayed and asked the bystanders to do likewise. Then, after suggesting more prayers, he asked how long had the girl not been able to walk. "Four years," he was told. She could move only on crutches and had been brought to the Oratory by coach. One leg was more crippled than the other.

Don Bosco blessed her and then told her to drop her crutches and walk up and down the sacristy. To the amazement and joy of the sexton and of several people who stood by, the girl did as she was told and then left without crutches, promising to return the following day to thank the Blessed Virgin. Her crutches were hung as an "ex-voto" in the sacristy.

The feast of St. John the Baptist [Don Bosco's name day][5] was also celebrated very solemnly with the participation of the various festive oratory boys of Turin. The hymn, written by Father Lemoyne, as we have already mentioned,[6] displeased Archbishop Gastaldi, who did not forbid its publication, but disapproved of its exaggerations.[7]

Doubtless, to one unacquainted intimately with Don Bosco's life style and charisms, such praises could have seemed exaggerations, and much more so if one were really bent on finding pretexts to criticize him. The festivities solemnizing Don Bosco's name day were so grandiose that even Father Giacomelli, his con-

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[5]At his Baptism Don Bosco had been named after the Apostle John, but in 1846 the Oratory boys, believing his name to be John Baptist—a very popular saint in Turin—began to celebrate his name day on June 24, the feast day of this saint. [Editor]

[6]*See* p. 384. [Editor]

[7]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

fessor, had this to say during the Informative Process [for Don Bosco's beatification]:

When I pointed out that the boys staged far too grandiose a tribute to him on his name day, he replied, "On the contrary, I personally like such a show because it does them a lot of good by kindling respect and love for their superiors."

The feast of St. Aloysius on June 28 was also a solemn celebration. It gave Don Bosco a chance to express his gratitude through an address read by one of the boys to Chevalier John Frisetti, chairman of the festivity, who treated the boys and presided over the conferring of good conduct awards.[8]

On July 25, Don Bosco left for Sampierdarena, and he stayed there till the 27th, when he went on to Sestri Ponente to visit Baroness Cataldi. On the 28th he was in Genoa, and on the 29th he returned to Turin. This same month he mailed a prospectus and circular on the Valsalice College.[9]

In 1874 Don Bosco often visited Varazze and Alassio. At Varazze anticlericals were stirring up serious problems, and Don Bosco, though in poor health, had to go there several times for these and other reasons.[10]

Either that year or the following year Don Bosco was also in Cuneo, as Father Francis Cottrino[11] testified:

For two years, 1874 and 1875, I attended the third and fourth grade in the junior seminary of Cuneo. The system then in use featured no diversions, no singing, limited recreation, little or no ceremony in the few church services, and rare reception of the sacraments. Bishop [Andrew] Formica, of happy memory, a saintly prelate who greatly revered our father Don Bosco, invited him to visit our seminary. He came in June, accompanied by the bishop, and was received with honors usually reserved to prelates. In the chapel he offered a brief prayer and then spoke to us

[8]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[9]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

[10]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[11]Francis Cottrino (1864-1939) entered the Oratory at the age of thirteen in 1877. Four years later he took his perpetual vows in the Salesian Congregation and was ordained a priest in 1887. From 1892 to 1927 he directed several of our houses. A model of genuine Salesian spirit to his dying day, he spent his last years as spiritual director of the novices at Villa Moglia (Chieri). He died there on November 17, 1939. [Editor]

so warmly and cordially that he filled us with wonder. We had never seen anything like it. Our awe increased when, after a few pious exhortations, he told us that a bishop was treating us to refreshments and to a fine outing to a place we had never visited before. Who could describe our thrill at the idea of having a new place to visit besides our routine walk to Madonna della Ripa? But then something seemed to spoil our expectations. The sky suddenly darkened, and when Don Bosco finished his talk, there was a furious downpour. We went to the dining room and stood wide-eyed at the repast awaiting us. In no time we gobbled up everything. Meanwhile the clouds vanished and a cool breeze replaced the sultry heat. Overjoyed, we set out along Viale degli Angeli and walked all the way to the monastery of the Friars Minor Conventuals, where for the first time we venerated the mortal remains of Blessed Angelo of Chivasso. There too we most gratefully prayed for the unknown saintly priest who had brought us such fun.

When I came to the Oratory in 1877 I learned the identity of the holy priest and there met seven of my former fellow seminarians, Father [Thomas] Chiappelli among them, all highly enthused about the ever so different regime that reigned at the Oratory.

Father Cottrino told us another unpublished episode which dates back to between 1886 and 1888. His brother had to report to the local draft board for his physical, and Father Cottrino feared that he might be inducted into the army. Luckily, he happened to see Don Bosco at San Benigno and told him of his worry. Taking his hands, Don Bosco said, "Don't worry. Louis will be rejected."

"But he is quite fit!"

"He will be rejected!"

"Besides, he has no reason for deferral."

"The army will not take him."

"He is healthier than I am, and husky!"

"They won't take him!"

Louis reported for his physical and was found temporarily unfit because his chest measurements fell short of regulations by half a centimeter! The following year he again reported for examination, and again was rejected. He reported a third time, and this time Louis Bartholomew Cottrino (he had a middle name) was found fit and assigned to the reserves.

As soon as he could, he went to Borgo San Martino to tell his

brother. "How did it go?" Father Cottrino asked.

"I'm in the army, first class!"

"Impossible!" Father Cottrino interrupted. "Don Bosco told me again and again that you would not be inducted."

"Well now, listen carefully," his brother replied with a smile. "I am drafted, but I shall not go on active duty because I am in both the first and the third class."

"What do you mean?"

Wild with joy, Louis Bartholomew showed him his draft papers which stated that *Louis* Cottrino had been classified as reserve because *Bartholomew* Cottrino, being in the first category, was already in the army!

Thus we could discern a prank of Divine Providence who often plays in this world through the intercession of saints!

3. Observance of the Rules

Once the Salesian constitutions were approved, a top priority of Don Bosco was their exact observance. Hence he entrusted the visitation of all the houses to Father Rua, his vicar and the Oratory's vice-director, who was even then known as the "living rule." Father Rua kept opportune notes in a booklet on such things as slight deviations, failings, and imperfections, and, in counterbalance, things he admired and praised. He took care to speak of his observations with each director before leaving, and sent a written report on his return to Turin. His booklet of observations covers visitations from 1874 to 1876 when provinces were formally established.[1]

Another top priority of Don Bosco was to set up a regular novitiate or, rather, to order its regular functioning.

This had been Father Rua's duty up to 1874, but on November 7 of that year he passed it on to the newly-appointed novice master, Father Julius Barberis, who compiled and published a *vade mecum* for his novices. Presenting it to them on January 31, 1900, he declared: "My dear novices, last November 7 marked

[1]We are omitting Father Rua's notes. Interested readers may find them in the Italian edition of this volume, pp. 1260-1266. [Editor]

the twenty-fifth anniversary of my appointment as novice master by the will of God and our good superiors—Don Bosco in particular."

Until the novitiate was transferred to San Benigno Canavese in 1879, he strove to train his charges as best he could, even isolating them from the rest of the Oratory community so as to form them in the religious life in conformity with canon law and our Society's spirit.

4. The Foreign Missions

Few saints had such a clear, detailed vision of their future apostolate from God as our founder. The vision he had had as a young boy,[1] as well as other dreams and visions which followed him through life,[2] showed him even details of his mission, so as to guide him in its thorough fulfillment. In 1861, for instance, he saw an immense crowd of boys of very different races, features and tongues. He tried to identify them, but could recognize only a very small fraction with their superiors.

"Who are they?" he asked his guide.

"Your sons! Listen, they are talking about you and your first boys, their superiors now long dead, and the teachings you and your first sons handed down to them."[3] In fact, as other dreams clearly tell us, he saw all his pupils and ours—past, present and future! Such an event was truly miraculous.

In 1871 or 1872 he saw "an immense untilled plain, unbroken by hills or mountains, except at the farthest end where he could see the outline of jagged mountains. Throngs of nearly naked, dark-skinned, fierce-looking, long-haired men of exceptional height and build swarmed all over this plain. Their only garments were hides strung across their shoulders."[4] He was seeing Patagonia.

After this vision, his former urge for the foreign mission was

[1] *See* Vol. I, pp. 95f. [Editor]
[2] *See* the Index of each volume under "Dreams (D.B.'s)." [Editor]
[3] *See* Vol. VI, p. 544. [Editor]
[4] *See* pp. 46f. [Editor]

rekindled in his heart—as he declared in 1876—but he could not tell what race those savages belonged to:

At first I thought they were Ethiopians. This reminded me of Bishop [Daniel] Comboni's visit to the Oratory many years ago,[5] and of the apostolic works of the Missionary Sons of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, whose seminary had been founded in Verona by Bishop Comboni in 1871 to provide missionaries for his vicariate apostolic in Central Africa. But after questioning people who knew those regions and reading books on the subject, I abandoned the thought.

Then I thought of Hong Kong, and when Monsignor Raimondi, who was a missionary there, came to Turin to find recruits, I did for a time enter into negotiations with him, but they led nowhere because he wished to impose restrictions on our Congregation. In particular he wanted to stipulate that whatever our Congregation might acquire as gift or purchase should become mission property. For some time I thought that those islanders were the savages I had seen in my dream, but after some research I realized that my dream resembled neither the land nor its inhabitants. The attempted negotiations forced me to study new regions, but in vain.

Then, on a visit of Bishop Matthew Quinn of Sidney, I began to think of Australia. I asked the bishop about the aborigines and their disposition, but his description did not fit what I had seen. Yet so vividly and deeply had that dream impressed me that I could not ignore it. Past experiences had taught me that whatever I saw would come true.

Little by little, Australia gave way in my mind to the island of Mangalore, India. I read books, spoke with English missionaries who had come from those regions, and through a curious mistake of mine in certain comparisons I became convinced that my dream concerned either India or Australia. In fact I felt a renewed interest in the latter. For the next four years I talked practically of nothing but those countries. I even got to the point where Father [Joseph] Bologna and the cleric Quirino had to start studying English in earnest. It was about this time that the chemist Ferrero began to wander about the house, and then settled down permanently with his maps of Christian India. There was even talk in Rome of giving us a vicariate apostolic in that area.

At last, in 1874, the Argentine consul at Savona, Commendatore [John Baptist] Gazzolo, who had met me at Varazze and had observed our spirit, spoke about us to the archbishop of Buenos Aires and to many priests. They in turn became quite enthused about us and ex-

[5]*See* Vol. VII, p. 488. [Editor]

pressed the wish for Salesian schools in their archdiocese. In fact, the archbishop's secretary wrote to me stating that the Argentinians would be delighted to welcome us there.

At the same time a letter came from Father [Peter] Ceccarelli, pastor at San Nicolás de los Arroyos, a day's journey by boat from Buenos Aires. This priest informed me that he had heard of us from the Argentine consul and that, of his own initiative, he was quite willing to leave his parish and town to us and carry out his priestly ministry elsewhere. He told me that the city had built a boarding school and that the municipal officials were ready, at his suggestion, to give it to us, should we be willing to accept it. He added that no other negotiations had taken place. The Argentine consul at Savona favored the invitation and acted as an intermediary.

The letters astounded me. I quickly got geography books about South America and read them attentively. The text and illustrations perfectly described the natives I had seen in my dream and the region where they lived—Patagonia, that vast southern plain of the Argentine Republic! After gathering a lot more information and receiving detailed explanations, I put aside any doubts. All matched perfectly with my dream. From then on I knew precisely where I was to direct my thoughts and efforts.

Bishop Quinn had arranged to send five boys to the Oratory, where they were to be educated free of charge and then sent back to Australia to help him in his apostolate either as diocesan priests or as Salesians, as the following letter tells us:

St. Mary's College, Donnybrook-Dublin
September 24, 1874

Very Reverend Father,

Your welcomed letter of the 21st reached me today, and I shall [thoroughly] reply to it soon. I must leave Dublin today, and can write but a few lines now. I remind you of our agreement: namely, that I am to provide only for my pupils' travel expenses to Turin. We agreed that five boys will soon arrive for future service in my Australian mission, as either diocesan or Salesian priests.

They already know some Latin, Greek and mathematics. I do not know if they are ready for rhetoric.

Yours sincerely,
✣ Matthew Quinn

P.S. I am corresponding with Father Listin.

While Don Bosco was in Rome, he was also approached by Father John Bertazzi, a missionary from the United States, who for some years had been thinking of opening a boarding school and seminary at Savannah [Georgia] where boys might be prepared for theological studies. Before leaving for Rome to realize this plan, he had been instructed by Bishop Gross of Savannah to find a religious congregation willing to assist him in this endeavor, toward which he had contributed seven hundred acres of land. Father Bertazzi also envisioned a boarding school alongside the diocesan seminary to serve the townsfolk by offering a few scholarships. The boarders' substantial fees would help to support the school and seminary staffs.

"Such was my idea," Father Bertazzi declared, "but I told no one of it, even though it was quite feasible, because I did not feel that it was my task to carry it out. So I gave it little thought."

"Blessed be my boldness," he later wrote to Don Bosco, "in telling you about it, though it was not exactly boldness. As soon as I met you in Rome, I was won over by your kindness. At that time I was on my way to the Jesuits with a letter for the Father General. As fate would have it, I lost it at Foligno along with my wallet and money (a godsend). Without it, I did not dare present myself to his secretary. Instead, if you remember, I came to you for help in obtaining a passport and did not speak of any other matter except casually. When my search for the wallet proved fruitless, I wrote to you again about it, and incidentally mentioned my plans for Savannah. The Lord saw to it that this should fit in with your wishes; you asked me to see you and talk it over, and the outcome was that when I left your office I had become a son of yours."

Still trying to figure out which was the mission field that the Lord had revealed to him, Don Bosco invited Father Bertazzi to be his guest at the Oratory so that he could acquaint him with what would be expected of the Salesians at Savannah.

Father Bertazzi obliged and remained a few days. When Don Bosco returned, he presented him with a long memorandum about his plans for Savannah. He also confided to him that he would be extremely happy to become a Salesian, just as long as he could return to his diocese, at the side of a bishop whom he

deeply loved, to carry out the mission he had had so long at heart.

Good Father Bertazzi wanted to return to the United States with only two Salesians. One was to study the outlay and then go back to Turin and fully report to Don Bosco; the other was to remain in the States. As for preferences, Father Bertazzi would very much have liked Don Bosco himself to take the trip:

> I insist—he wrote—that you make this sacrifice, if at all possible. Otherwise I only know of three other people who could take your place: Father Rua, Father Cagliero, or Father Savio. . . .
>
> Father Rua's standing and his discerning prudence, learning, refined ways, and knowledge of English qualify him as the foremost candidate from every viewpoint. I personally place great trust in him, and this inclines me to be quite candid with him. Father Cagliero, a good spiritual director and theologian and a very discerning man, has the advantage of being already well known for his musical talents and would immediately win over the people; besides, he is quite qualified for the rest. Father Savio is very wise, quite gracious, and a good businessman. You can judge whether he is up to par for the rest. Father Dalmazzo too, with his experience as director at Valsalice and his polished, charming manners (so valued in the United States), could also be considered for this task. . . .

Among other things, he went on to describe "when, how and by what route" they should set off. He also outlined the religious service to be held for the missionaries' departure so aptly and in such detail that we believe that his ideas guided Don Bosco in planning the departure ceremony for his first missionaries.

Father Bertazzi reckoned that the farewell ceremony could be held at the close of Mary's month or better still on May 24, the solemn feast of Pentecost, but it was impossible to carry out his plans then and there while he was in a hurry to return to the United States. Ultimately nothing came of it. But the United States was not to be the first Salesian field of missionary activity. In his eagerness to discover where he was called, Don Bosco left no stone unturned in order to reach a final decision.

Father Dionysus Halinan, an English priest who had heard enthusiastic praises of the Salesian schools, came to visit the Oratory. With the Pope's consent to open new houses abroad, Don

Bosco asked him to send him a few boys who wished to become missionaries or Salesians so that he could train them for the priesthood. He still thought of countries within the British empire. To this end, he provided him with a letter of recommendation.

What most puzzled Don Bosco in his search for the missionary field shown him in the dream was the fact that he had seen two rivers at the mouth of an immense desert—rivers he could not find in the maps over which he patiently pored. They were the Rio Colorado and Rio Negro in Patagonia, but he discovered this only after his first conversation in Turin with John Baptist Gazzolo, the Argentine consul at Savona.[6]

This fine gentleman admired the educational system used in our schools at Varazze, Alassio and Sampierdarena and had also been fortunate enough to converse several times with Don Bosco. In 1874 he came to Turin to ask him officially to open similar schools in Argentina. We shall see how in a short time negotiations were happily concluded.[7]

5. Unremitting Opposition[1]

Meanwhile construction of the Church of St. John the Evangelist was at a standstill. Court proceedings for taking over a strip of land owned by a Mr. Morglia had been resumed on September 28, 1872 because of the latter's appeal alleging disregard of certain technicalities. The case dragged on until 1874, when Attorney Francis Gilardini, on behalf of the Council of State, wrote to Don Bosco as follows:

Rome, July 10, 1876

. . . A totally favorable verdict regarding the public need of your church in Turin has been reached as of today. . . . A pertinent statement authorizing expropriation of Mr. Morglia's land, according to the

[6]We ourselves recall having seen one of the old atlases examined by Don Bosco. The southernmost part of Argentina bore these words: ***Patagonum regio, in qua incolae sunt gigantes*** [Patagonia which is inhabited by giants]. [Author]

[7]*See* Vol. XI, pp. 129-142. [Editor]

[1]This whole section is a condensation. [Editor]

plans of Edward Arborio Mella, can now be issued. . . . There is not the slightest chance that the Ministry of Public Works may decide otherwise. . . .

The goal seemed reached, but other difficulties cropped up for three more years. Finally, on August 14, 1878, Archbishop Gastaldi blessed the cornerstone. Don Bosco, deeply moved, invoked "constant good health, a long and happy life, family peace and concord, success in undertakings, a hundredfold reward in this life as promised by Christ himself, and—more abundant yet—the reward in the life to come to all his benefactors."[2]

Equally long-drawn-out were negotiations for the sale of the former junior seminary of Mirabello. They started toward the end of 1872, but the contract was finally signed only in 1874. Providentially, this house, for us a perpetual memorial, became ours again in 1938 as a junior seminary for future missionaries.

6. Last Trip to St. Ignatius' Shrine[1]

At the beginning of August 1874 Don Bosco went up to St. Ignatius' Shrine for the annual spiritual retreat, after duly informing the superiors of the Convitto Ecclesiastico. In the meantime Archbishop Gastaldi had appointed some young priests to direct it. As soon as Don Bosco arrived, one of them walked up to him and said: "We have no more room!"

"I spoke to the superiors of the Convitto and they told me to come, assuring me that there was room," Don Bosco countered.

"I don't know what else to say, but all the rooms are taken."

"Well, in that case I'll go back to Lanzo!"

"Do whatever you think best."

Since it was clear that he was not wanted, Don Bosco turned back. On his way downstairs, he met a layman who was surprised to see him leaving and asked why. Then he immediately hurried to that priest and indignantly told him, "If there are no more rooms, I will yield mine to Don Bosco, and I'll commute to Turin

[2]Cf. *Bollettino Salesiano*, September 1878. [Author]

[1]We are omitting a series of short notes to benefactors, to Father John Bonetti, and to Bishop De Gaudenzi of Vigevano. [Editor]

for the night, but I will not have Don Bosco leave! This is a shame! There always has been and always will be room for Don Bosco!"

To forestall repercussions the priest yielded, and Don Bosco stayed so as to avoid fanning discontent and complaints. But it was the last time he went to St. Ignatius' Shrine, though he had gone there every year since 1842. The popularity and confidence he enjoyed at the shrine was the reason why he was no longer wanted. From Lanzo he wrote to Father Rua:

St. Philip School, Lanzo, August 5, 1874

Dear Father Rua:

Tell Father Francesia and Father Cerruti to let the two Cuffia brothers go. They should not be supplied with additional clothing besides what they are wearing unless they received it from their parents or relatives. Do not give them a certificate, either good or bad; take out their overdue accounts and demand payment.

See that the letters for the ladies' spiritual retreat at Mornese are mailed to the pastors around Mornese. The same should be done for the teachers' retreat and for the Valsalice College prospectus.

God bless you all. Pray always for me.

Affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

The two Cuffia brothers were the first to leave the Salesian Congregation without saying a word to their directors, Father Francesia and Father Cerruti. Don Bosco, foreseeing their desertion, instructed Father Rua to write their pastor a letter whose original is completely in Don Bosco's own hand. Father Rua used the same letter again when another priest left with ecclesiastical patrimony:

[No date]

Very Reverend Father:

As prefect of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales, I request that Your Reverence pass on to Father James Cuffia and Father Francis Cuffia some matters of interest to them. Both belonged to this Congregation and were ordained as its members.

Having now left the Salesian Congregation, it is essential that they

comply with what is generically and specifically prescribed by the Holy See, especially in the decree of approval of our Society. The decree states: "If anyone leaves this Congregation, he is automatically suspended until, having provided himself with the required ecclesiastical patrimony, he finds a bishop who will accept him into his diocese."

They have received no such communication because they left without saying a word to their superior; it would certainly have come, had they acted properly.

Confident of your assistance, I assure you of my help in any need.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. Michael Rua,
Prefect of the Salesian Congregation

We believe that in 1874 Don Bosco remained at St. Ignatius' Shrine only for the first spiritual retreat which he personally made in order to prepare himself a little for his own eternity, as we gather from what he wrote on August 8 to Countess [Louise] Viancino before returning to Turin: "Your letter reached me here at St. Ignatius' Shrine where I am making my spiritual retreat in order to prepare myself a little for my own eternity. I gravely need this preparation and heartily recommend myself to your charitable prayers. . . ."[2] The thought of death was uppermost in his mind, and, as we shall see later, that year he again made his last will and testament.

As was customary at the Oratory, his birthday was solemnly celebrated on August 15, though he had been born on the 16th.

The celebration was enhanced by the presence of Bishop August Negrotto, secret chamberlain to the Holy Father. A customary hymn in Don Bosco's honor was composed by the cleric John Cinzano. We also have a few letters and addresses that were publicly read on the evenings of August 14 and 15.[3]

We have no record, however, of anything Don Bosco said in September at the yearly retreats for Salesians in Lanzo.[4]

[2]This is only an excerpt from Don Bosco's letter. [Editor]

[3]This sentence is a condensation. We are omitting a request on behalf of the archbishop of Paris for information on the servant of God, Marie Madeleine Victoire de Bengy (1781-1858), foundress of the Faithful Companions of Jesus whose cause of beatification and canonization was being introduced. [Editor]

[4]We are omitting the resolutions taken by the cleric Joseph Giulitto on the occasion of his perpetual vows, September 18, 1874. [Editor]

On September 1, several students of our Valsalice College went to Rome with their director, Father Francis Dalmazzo, and were received by the Holy Father. Then, on September 12, 1874, Don Bosco petitioned the mayor of Turin for subsidies on behalf of students, both resident and day.[5]

7. Requests for Salesian Schools

Toward the end of 1873 and for the next twelve months, many insistent requests came from all parts of Italy. We shall mention those of which we have records: Cogoleto, Alzano Maggiore, Terruggia, Genoa, Piacenza, Crema, Carpenedolo, Mornese, Pavia, Ceva, Chiavenna and Campodolcino. None of them were accepted except that for an elementary school at Mornese.[1]

8. Argentina

Toward the end of 1874, while invitations for Salesian foundations kept pouring in from everywhere, Don Bosco received a formal request for Salesians in Argentina. He himself stated: "The first letters came during the Christmas novena, and I read them to the Superior Chapter on the evening of December 22, 1874."

In August of that year, Consul John Baptist Gazzolo had informed Archbishop Frederick Aneyros of Buenos Aires of his eagerness to have the Salesians come to Argentina and, as a start, to take over the church of the confraternity *Mater Misericordiae* [Mother of Mercy], known as the Italian church. The archbishop replied on October 10, 1874, through his secretary Monsignor Anthony Espinosa, suggesting that the consul himself make his proposal to the confraternity council.[1]

At the same time, the archbishop, knowing that a boys' boarding school was nearing completion at San Nicolás de los Arroyos through the efforts of a group of citizens headed by a devout, generous, revered octogenarian, Joseph Francis Benitez, sent Gazzo-

[5]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

lo's letter to the pastor of San Nicolás, Father Peter Ceccarelli. The latter, a close friend of the consul, was delighted and expressed his satisfaction to the consul in a letter dated October 26, 1874.[2] Then quickly he set things in motion for handing the new boarding school over to our first missionaries. His proposal was happily accepted. Full of joy, Father Ceccarelli then officially informed the consul of this decision in a most interesting letter:

San Nicolás, November 11, 1874

Your Excellency:

It is an honor to inform you that the weighty matter entrusted to me by the archbishop of Buenos Aires has been satisfactorily taken care of. To start with, I was privileged to be chosen by the Lord to acquaint our archbishop with the new Congregation of St. Francis de Sales—a very easy task because between 1867-1869, as I well remember, I had the opportunity to admire the extraordinary zeal of the excellent, incomparable Father John Baptist Bosco in Rome. Later, I was the instrument of Divine Providence in successfully initiating negotiations to have the Salesian Congregation accepted in this city, where they will be in charge of a fine boarding school, a magnificent church in the best part of the town, and whatever a community of some five to nine priests and their domestic help will need. I can also assure you that the archbishop and his vicars general are eagerly awaiting this new Congregation. Hopefully it will soon staff the new boarding school at San Nicolás and permanently administer it. The citizens' committee which had the school built is most favorable to the reverend Salesian Fathers and, as of now, regards itself as their champion. Furthermore, we have here a true man of God, Joseph F. Benitez, who is a very wealthy octogenarian, a father to the poor and a staunch Catholic. He is chairman of the aforesaid committee, president of the chapter of the St. Vincent de Paul Society and chairman of the churchwardens' council. He is very devoted to the Holy Father Pope Pius IX, to whom he sends a donation of five thousand lire or more every year. This gentleman is enthused over the Salesian Fathers and tells me that he promises to provide for their needs out of his own pocket.

I say nothing of myself because you know me and my love for my brothers in Jesus Christ, for whom I am ready to give all I have, with God's help, even my position and my very life, if necessary. How my parish will benefit from them! I know that they will bring it new life and

[2]Omitted in this edition. [Editor]

that, through their zeal, my parishioners will be renewed in spirit and praise the Lord. As Scripture says, "The people that shall be created shall praise the Lord." [Ps. 101, 19] What a joy for me to have been Providence's instrument in helping the new Salesian Congregation to sink its roots in the new world. Chosen by God to originate in my own country, born in the noble and Catholic Turin, come of age in the shadow of the Vatican, watered by the dew of virtue, and blessed by the hand of the infallible Pontiff of the Immaculate Conception, it will now be transplanted in this fair, welcoming, thriving city, to spread from here throughout the whole of South America!

You well know this distant land, with its customs, manners, climate and population. You also intimately know the humble person writing this long letter, and the influential contacts he has made. Well now, I shall do my utmost for the expansion of this blessed Congregation, which is doing so much good everywhere, but is most needed in America, where people hunger for a sound Roman Catholic education. Once it is established here at San Nicolás, it will easily spread elsewhere because the Americans, realizing its worth and God's protection on it, will love and help it materially. The bishops of Paraná, Salta and San Juan need priests to staff their seminaries. God willing, I shall suggest these priests to them and hope for their acceptance. Just now let us be satisfied with our San Nicolás.

The school is being given to the Salesian Fathers under most favorable terms; you will get them by mail this week, signed by the committee chairman and the secretary. I hope you will find them acceptable.

It is my opinion that the Very Reverend Don Bosco should possibly establish his blessed and holy Congregation in San Nicolás. Then, when our offer has been accepted, he should choose gifted young men and have them apply themselves full-time to the study of Spanish. They can stay at my home and I will familiarize them with our customs, assist them during the first weeks of teaching, and help them to gain the people's confidence and affection. Thus I will complete the task that God has given to me. This is the ardent desire and sincere hope which I would like to see fulfilled this very day. Fulfilled it shall be, for it is founded on the designs of Divine Providence which gently but firmly carries its great undertakings to their conclusion by ways hidden to human understanding, availing itself of most inadequate instruments so that Divine Power may be made more apparent.

I close now by begging you to acquaint the Very Reverend Father John Bosco, superior general, with the contents of this letter, and to do your best to have the Salesian priests willingly accept the forthcoming offer of a school in San Nicolás. Please keep me informed.

My most grateful thanks to you for your interest in our America, and please believe me when I say that I was delighted to hear our archbishop repeatedly speak, in terms of respect and love, of you and your zeal for the Catholic faith. I will not include the photographs of the archbishop and of Monsignor Espinosa because they came out quite poorly, but I will wait for better ones that are being readied. My respects to your family.

Yours devotedly,
Fr. Peter B. Ceccarelli

P.S. As I was about to seal this letter, the committee informed me that the Salesian Fathers have been accepted according to the terms I proposed. The committee also requests me to mail you the formal invitation so that you may present it to the reverend Fathers. I accept this honorable charge. You will soon have all the documents.

P. B. Ceccarelli

A few days later, on December 2, he sent all the promised documents to the consul, who seems to have been a member or to have been made an honorary member of the citizens' committee.[3] There were three documents: a report on setting up and organizing a committee sponsoring the construction of the school, the act constituting it, and finally a description of the building.

Along with the documents were two letters for Don Bosco, respectively from Father Ceccarelli and from the chairman of the committee. Father Ceccarrelli's letter could not have been more enthusiastic:

San Nicolás, November 30, 1874

Very Reverend Father:

Though you do not know me, I make bold to address myself to you. I most earnestly beg you to accept the invitation of the committee in charge of the new boarding school of this city to run this school with the same methods used by your well-deserving Congregation of St. Francis de Sales in its schools for middle-class pupils. The Argentine consul in

[3]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

Savona will tell you about my own humble person and about San Nicolás and the very favorable terms offered to you.

With pleasure I assure you that His Excellency, the archbishop of Buenos Aires, warmly welcomes your Congregation to his archdiocese and earnestly hopes that it may develop and prosper for the welfare of souls and God's greater glory, since as of this moment he intends to be its father and protector.

I say nothing of myself, except that I ardently desire to be useful to your holy and meritorious Congregation which, in my humble opinion, will expand extraordinarily in these endless plains that so badly need the saving waters of eternal life flowing from the side of our most loving Savior.

Let me offer you my humble services in anything you may need. I hope that you will accept them in the same spirit in which they are offered.

My home, friends, and indeed all I have are at the disposal of Your Reverence and the Salesian Fathers. From this very moment I love them as my dear brothers and place myself at your command.

Most respectfully and devotedly I kiss your sacred hand.

Yours obedient son in Jesus Christ,
Father Peter B. Ceccarelli

Mr. Francis J. Benitez too, chairman of the committee, thrilled at the thought of having the Salesians there soon, wrote to him on November 30, 1874, promising tickets for the voyage to Buenos Aires of the first five missionaries he hoped to welcome and a check for all other travel expenses.[4]

Consul Gazzolo forwarded all letters and documents to Don Bosco who, as we have said, publicly read them to the members of the Superior Chapter on the evening of December 22. In turn, he expressed his thanks to Monsignor Anthony Espinosa, Father Peter Ceccarelli and the committee members of San Nicolás. After complimentary remarks for Monsignor Espinosa and Consul Gazzolo, Don Bosco outlined his acceptance of their proposals in these terms:[5]

1. I am willing to send priests to Buenos Aires to establish some sort

[4]We are omitting his lengthy letter. [Editor]
[5]What follows is an excerpt from Don Bosco's letter to Monsignor Espinosa. [Editor]

of headquarters. To this end it would be very helpful to have a church for sacred services, and more especially for teaching catechism to the most neglected children. The well-deserving Consul Gazzolo has suggested the Church of Our Lady of Mercy. If no public church is available, we could make do with some hall in which to gather and care for destitute boys.

2. Later I will send enough priests, clerics and lay Salesians to San Nicolás to take care of the religious services, choir and, if necessary, teaching.

3. From these two locations Salesians could be sent wherever the ordinary thinks they are needed.

On Christmas Day 1874, Don Bosco wrote to Father Ceccarelli, clearly emphasizing that all the Salesians desired was to do priestly work, "especially on behalf of poor, abandoned youth." "Our main field of apostolate," he added, "is catechizing, teaching, preaching, and running festive oratories, homes and boarding schools." While thanking him for his truly unselfish charity and zeal, Don Bosco begged him to stay on at San Nicolás at least until the new missionaries had acquired sufficient knowledge of the language and local customs to be able to promote God's greater glory. "Who knows?" he added. "By your example, zeal and advice might you not become in practice our Salesians' de facto superior? To sum it up, I beg you even now to look upon us as your humble sons in Jesus Christ and to give us advice or directives which you judge necessary or opportune in this pious undertaking. May God bless you and grant you good health to continue your work for the welfare of souls."

Both letters were handed to Consul Gazzolo who suggested some corrections regarding names and titles. We do not know if Don Bosco made them all; seemingly he did not, since they do not appear in our archive copies. He also wrote to the committee to say that he would gladly take over the direction of the boarding school they had built for middle-class boys. However, he again stressed that the principal objective of the Salesian Congregation was to take care of poor, endangered boys, and that he hoped the Salesian Fathers would be free to run evening classes for them and to gather them on Sundays for catechetical instruction.

Thus, in no time at all it was decided to open the first houses in

Argentina, the land of the first missionary field seen by Don Bosco in a dream. There, quite soon, our missionaries would make generous sacrifices!

9. The Third Family

Having seen to the Salesian Society's definitive approval, Don Bosco quickly set about giving a formal structure to his third family which, drawn by his love for youth, had begun gathering about him from the very beginning of his apostolate.

"In 1841, as I dedicated myself to the festive oratories' apostolate"—he wrote—"several devout, zealous priests and laymen joined me in caring for a harvest which even then promised much for morally endangered boys. These co-workers or cooperators constantly supported the charitable undertakings entrusted to us by Divine Providence."

In 1845 Don Bosco obtained from Pope Gregory XVI a plenary indulgence *in articulo mortis* [at the point of death] for fifty of his more outstanding benefactors. As early as 1850 he had mulled over the idea of founding "a provisional pious union under the patronage of St. Francis de Sales," for just as he "had freed Savoy from Protestant errors by an enlightened zeal," this pious union was likewise expected to be "the nucleus of a far-flung society whose members would exert all efforts and use all lawful painstaking means" in their dedication "to those spiritual and corporal works of mercy" which seemed "most timely and effective to stem the tide of irreligion and, where possible, to wipe it out of existence."

It was Don Bosco's idea that this union, made up of laymen "lest malignant tongues label it a front for some priestly racket," was to be incorporated into the Salesian Society. Hence he included the following explicit paragraph in the first draft of the Salesian constitutions. Our source is one of the first copies written by Cleric Charles Ghivarello.[1]

[1]Charles Ghivarello (1853-1913) entered the Oratory at the age of twenty and received the clerical habit from Don Bosco the following year. He made his first formal vows in 1862 and was ordained a priest in 1864. His building expertise greatly helped Don Bosco. He filled important positions until his death in 1913. [Editor]

Externs

1. Anyone, even if he is living with his family at home, may belong to our Society.
2. The applicant will not take vows, but will strive to carry out those rules of ours which suit his age and state of life.
3. To share in the spiritual treasury of the Salesian Society, the applicant should at least promise the rector to employ both material goods and all necessary efforts in things that the superior will judge conducive to God's greater glory.
4. This promise, however, does not bind under any penalty of sin.

These same articles were also put into the Appendix of the Latin text which Don Bosco submitted for definitive approval in 1873 and in the very first edition published in Rome in 1874 by the Propaganda Fide Press.

After removing this paragraph from the constitutions at the advice of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and after obtaining their definitive approval, Don Bosco decided to set up these outside members as a separate association or, rather, third family, and briefly jotted down its general outline.

Association of St. Francis de Sales

Purpose and Means

The purpose of this association is to unite the laity and priests in undertaking whatever will be considered conducive to God's greater glory and the welfare of souls.

Their means will be zeal for God's glory and energetic charity to employ whatever may spiritually or materially contribute toward such a purpose without selfish interests or vainglory.

No branch of knowledge will be neglected if it can contribute to the association's goal.

Membership

Every good Christian may join this association as long as he is determined to work in accordance with its goal and means.

Humbly accustomed to seek advice on important matters, he disclosed his plan in 1874 to the Superior Chapter and to the directors of our schools at Lanzo. Three years later he did the

same concerning the publication of the *Bollettino Salesiano*. Not fully grasping the purpose of the Association of St. Francis de Sales and regarding it as but another confraternity or pious sodality of little if any purpose, several Salesians voiced objections.

Don Bosco smilingly listened and then exclaimed: "You have not quite grasped my idea, but you will see that this association will become the bulwark of our Society! Think about it: We shall discuss it again. . . ."

Since he had already sketched its program—which we have in manuscript form—he had it read aloud. Later he revised it, in such a way as to make it clear that he intended to give the associate members of the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales the status of regular tertiaries.

Associate Members of the Congregation of St. Francis De Sales

To the Catholic Reader

In matters of great importance, men usually band together into a society so that, through combined hard work and diligence, knowledge and expertise, they may achieve their goals with the least possible loss. Now, if the children of this world are so prudent in earthly matters—says Our Lord—should not the children of light be much more prudent in using all available means in the important matter of eternal salvation?

In this day and age a powerful means is a union of upright people. *Vis unita fortior; funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur* [Union is strength; a triple-plaited cord is hard to break]. A strong man united to another strong man certainly gains strength. A single cord is very weak indeed, but when it is entwined with two others, it can hardly be broken. Similarly, a Catholic, left to himself, can easily be overcome by the promoters of evil, but if he is encouraged and helped by others, he becomes strong, able to protect himself from spiritual harm and to promote the welfare of his fellow men and of our holy faith.

This association aims at making good Catholics singleminded in their efforts to promote their own eternal salvation and that of their fellow men according to the rules of the Society of St. Francis de Sales.

The Association of St. Francis de Sales

To ensure their eternal salvation, many good Christians and many influential persons have insistently called for a Salesian association that would offer ordinary people a norm of Christian life according to the

spirit of the [Salesian] Congregation through the observance of those rules which are compatible with their state of life.

Many people would most willingly leave this world in order to avoid its dangers to their salvation and enjoy peace of heart by living a solitary life in Jesus' love. However, not everyone is called to such a life because of age, state of life, health and calling. To satisfy this overall desire we propose the Pious Association of St. Francis de Sales whose objective is twofold:

1. To offer a means of perfection to those who for sound reasons cannot enter a religious institute.

2. To let them participate in public or private charitable and religious activities of the Salesian Congregation for God's greater glory and the welfare of souls.

These two goals may be easily attained by observing those rules of this Congregation which are compatible with their state of life.

We may add another reason, perhaps more important: the need of unity. Undeniably, men of the world join forces to further business interests, to spread bad literature, and to propagate evil doctrines among the young—and they succeed marvelously! In view of this, should Catholics stand idle, each left to his own devices, and allow their efforts to be paralyzed by evil men? God forbid! Let us all band together under the rules of the Salesian Congregation, form one heart and soul with our extern associates, and be true brothers, one for all and all for one, for better or for worse. We shall certainly achieve this lofty goal by uniting this association to the Salesian Congregation.

Purpose of This Association

The purpose of this association is to unite good Catholics in promoting the interests of our holy faith and to assure their own salvation by observing those rules of the Society of St. Francis de Sales[2] which are compatible with their state of life.

The main objectives for which all association members should strive are the following:

1. Bettering themselves spiritually through works of mercy toward their neighbor, especially toward poor, homeless boys. Bringing them up in the holy fear of God will cause juvenile delinquency to decline, civil society to reform, and countless souls to be saved.

2. Gathering poor boys, teaching them in one's own home, warning them of dangers, and directing them where they may be instructed in the

[2]The Society or Congregation of St. Francis de Sales was approved by Pope Pius IX on March 1, 1869. [Author]

faith are activities in which every association member may usefully engage himself. If one cannot do this personally, he may do so through fellow workers, relatives, friends, acquaintances and others. One may also pray for those who work or supply material means wherever they are needed.[3]

3. In these troublesome times the lack of priestly vocations is keenly felt. Every association member, therefore, will strive to help those boys —the poor especially who show signs of a vocation—by good advice and by steering them to such day or resident schools where they may receive encouragement and mostly a religious education, without which there is no true knowledge, morality or right upbringing. Without a thorough grounding in the faith it is morally impossible to obtain a genuine priestly call.

4. Every association member will do his utmost to forestall words or acts against the Roman Pontiff or his supreme authority. He shall therefore abide by church laws and foster their observance, inculcate respect for the Pope, bishops and priests, and promote catechetical instructions, novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats and attendance at sermons. In general he should take an active part in all these things and try to get others involved.

5. Since nowadays books spread a flood of irreligious, immoral teachings, Salesians shall not only earnestly try to block the distribution of bad books but shall do their utmost to spread good books, leaflets, and similar publications where they are most needed. Let each association member start doing so in his own home and among his relatives, friends and acquaintances, and then wherever it can be done.[4]

Rules for Salesian Associates

1. Anyone who is at least sixteen may join this association. Other requirements are: good moral character, faithful practice of the Catholic faith, and obedience to the Church and to the Roman Pontiff.

2. There are no external penances, but each association member must distinguish himself among other Christians by modest dress, frugal meals, unpretentious home furnishings, blameless speech, and the exact fulfillment of his duties.

3. Every year association members shall make a spiritual retreat at

[3]To this end the Congregation of St. Francis de Sales runs homes in Turin and Sampierdarena, boarding schools at Lanzo, Valsalice, Borgo San Martino, Varazze and Alassio, and oratories in the city of Turin. [Author]

[4]The Salesian Congregation actively strives to spread good books, especially through its monthly publications, *Letture Cattoliche* [Catholic Readings], and *Italian Classics for the Young*. [Editor]

home or in a church or retreat house. There is no set time for this retreat, but all members shall make a general confession; if they have already done so in the past, an annual confession will suffice.

Every month they shall make the Exercise for a Happy Death and receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist as though they were about to die. If they own any property, they shall make a will and put their family affairs in order, as though they were indeed to leave this world that very day.

4. They shall daily recite a *Pater* and an *Ave* to St. Francis de Sales for the preservation and growth of our holy Catholic faith. Those who recite the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin or the Divine Office are excused from this prayer, provided that they specify this intention when saying the Office.

5. They shall devoutedly say their morning and night prayers, and sanctify Sundays and holy days by attending Holy Mass, sermon and Benediction and strictly avoiding all servile work.

6. Every association member shall give his full name and address, place of birth, and state of life to the director of the association, who is also the rector of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin. For the greater convenience of applicants, in areas where there are Salesian houses, the directors of such houses are allowed to enroll them but must send the above-mentioned information to Turin for entry into the membership roster.

7. Every association member shall consider the Salesian Congregation as a mother, helping it by prayer and promoting its works, such as catechism classes, spiritual retreats, sermons, novenas, triduums, boys' homes, and public and private schools. They shall also give all the material and spiritual help they can afford and consider useful for God's greater glory and the welfare of souls.

8. Every day the superior of the Salesian Congregation shall have prayers said for all association members and shall let them share in all Masses, prayers, sermons and good works of the Salesians in their priestly ministry and works of charity.

The day after the feast of St. Francis de Sales, all Salesian priests shall offer Mass for deceased confreres. Those who are not priests shall receive Holy Communion and recite five mysteries of the rosary and other prayers.

9. The rector of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of the association. He is represented by the rector of the Church of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin, to whom association members may apply in case of necessity. However, in localities where there are Salesian houses, association members shall apply to the directors.

10. Should any association member fall sick, the superior shall be told at once so that he may order public prayers on his behalf. The same should be done without delay in the event of death. In the latter case, the rector shall inform all association members at once, and they shall recite five mysteries of the rosary and offer up Holy Communion for the repose of the soul of the departed member.

11. Once a year the superior shall tell the members of those who passed to a better life during that year and about undertakings for the coming year which seem more urgent for God's greater glory.

12. The principal feast days of the Society are those of St. Francis de Sales, Mary, Help of Christians and St. Joseph. Secondary feasts are those of the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, St. John the Baptist, Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, All Saints and All Souls.

13. Every association member will contribute one lira annually to defray publication, shipping costs and incidental expenses. Forgetfulness or inability to do so will not deprive the member of prayers in case of illness or death.

14. All members should strive to help one another by good example, prayers, and even temporal assistance. Those who can do so are exhorted to offer hospitality to members of the Congregation whenever necessary. Such members earn the merit of that work of mercy known as "sheltering the homeless."

15. These rules do not bind under penalty of either mortal or venial sin, save in those things which are already commanded or prohibited by the commandments of God and of the Church.

Later, some confreres and Don Bosco himself, who kept studying the structure of this association, came to the conclusion that it had best be simplified to broaden its appeal. That year Don Bosco drafted, revised and published a new outline entitled *Unione Cristiana* [Christian Association] that offered "to ordinary Christians a way of life akin to the religious life." In this new outline "the Salesian Association" was substantially "a sort of third order, as in ancient times, with this difference—that those third orders aimed at Christian perfection through pious exercises," whereas the Salesian Association's "main purpose is an active life, especially on behalf of morally endangered youth."

Following is the text published by Don Bosco:

1. *Christian Union*

Feeble forces, when united, become stronger. *Vis unita fortior;* union is strength. A single strand may be easily broken, but several such strands twined together form a strong cord which is very difficult to break. *Funiculus triplex difficile rumpitur* [A triple-plaited cord is hard to break]. That is what people of the world do in order to succeed in business enterprises. We Christians must act likewise. Like the first Christians, we must stand united as a single heart and soul in order to succeed in the important venture of achieving eternal salvation. This is the objective of the Salesian Association.

2. *Salesian Association*

The purpose of this association is to offer to people living in the world a way of life somewhat similar to the religious life so that they may at least partially enjoy that peace which is vainly sought in the world. Many would willingly withdraw into a monastery but cannot do so because of age, health, or state of life; very many others lack the opportunity or call and have no chance at all. Still, even in the midst of their usual occupations, within their own family circle, they can lead a life which is helpful to their fellow men and to themselves, almost as though they lived in a religious community. For this reason the Salesian Association may be regarded as one of the ancient third orders, with this difference: those third orders aimed at Christian perfection through pious exercises, whereas this association has as its main purpose the active life, especially on behalf of morally endangered youth.

3. *Purpose of This Association*

The same field of activity of the Salesian Congregation is open to all association members.

(a) The first duty of association members is love for morally endangered boys. Gathering them together, instructing them in the faith, warning them of dangers and directing them where they may be instructed are activities in which all association members are invited to participate with zeal. Anyone unable to take part personally may do so through relatives or friends or through prayer or material help. It is also the duty of the association to promote novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats and catechism classes, especially in areas lacking material and moral means.

(b) Since the lack of priestly vocations is keenly felt nowadays, each

association member shall take special care of those boys who manifest some sign of a vocation by their good moral and intellectual qualities. They should counsel and direct them to those day or resident schools which will assist them in following their vocation.

(c) They should strive to counteract godless literature by spreading good books, pamphlets, leaflets and printed matter of any kind in those places and among such persons as may be needed.

4. *Bylaws*

1. Anyone who is at least sixteen may join this association, provided that he intends to abide by its rules.

2. The superior of the Salesian Congregation is also the superior of this association.

3. Directors of Salesian houses are authorized to enroll members, but must send their full names and addresses to headquarters so that they may be entered in the association's register.

4. In villages or towns with no Salesian house but with at least ten associate members a leader will be appointed with the title of decurion. Ten decurions may also have a leader whose title will be prefect of the association.

The local pastor or an exemplary priest shall preferably be chosen as prefect or decurion, and he will report directly to the superior. Where there are less than ten associate members, they shall report to the director of the nearest Salesian house or directly to the superior.

5. Decurions and prefects shall maintain contact with their respective teams, but members may always consult their superior directly on matters they feel pertinent to public welfare, especially for young people.

6. At the end of each year, the superior shall advise members on priorities for the coming year and inform them of members who have died during the year, recommending prayers for their souls.

5. *Special Obligations*

1. There are no annual membership dues, but voluntary contributions to sustain the association's activities are gratefully accepted. They may be given to decurions, prefects, directors, or the superior himself.

6. *Benefits*

1. Members may gain many indulgences, a list of which will be mailed to all.

2. They shall share in Masses, indulgences, prayers, novenas, triduums, spiritual retreats, sermons, catechetical instructions and works

of mercy which Salesians perform in their priestly ministry, particularly in those Masses and prayers which are daily offered in the Church of Mary, Help of Christians in Turin to invoke heavenly blessings on them and their families.

3. On the day following the feast of St. Francis de Sales, every Salesian priest and those priests belonging to the association will offer Mass for deceased members. Lay members shall try to receive Holy Communion and say five mysteries of the rosary and other prayers for this intention.

4. When a member is ill, the superior shall be informed at once so that he can have special prayers said on his behalf. The same applies when a member dies.

7. *Religious Practices*

1. Members are not bound to perform external penances but are urged to observe modesty in dress, frugality in meals, simplicity in home furnishings, propriety in speech and exactness in performing the duties of their state of life.

2. They are urged to make a spiritual retreat for a few days each year. On the last day of each month, or on another suitable day, they shall make the Exercise for a Happy Death by receiving Penance and Communion as if it were their last day of life.

3. Lay members shall daily recite a *Pater* and an *Ave* to St. Francis de Sales for the Church's needs. Priests and lay members who daily recite the Little Office of Our Lady or the Divine Office are excused from this prayer if they specify this intention in reciting the Office.

4. Let all members receive Penance and the Holy Eucharist as often as possible.

5. For everybody's tranquillity of conscience we declare that the rules of this association do not oblige under penalty of sin save in those things that are already commanded or forbidden by God and Holy Mother Church. They should be observed because of their spiritual advantages and the purpose of this association.[5]

After passing out copies of this draft to friends, Don Bosco reedited it, changing its name to "Association for Good Works," and sent both drafts to several bishops. In 1875, after receiving letters of commendation from the bishops of Casale Monferrato,

[5]We are omitting the member's application and pledge to further the association's goals. [Editor]

Acqui, Alberna, Alessandria, Vigevano, Tortona and Genoa, he obtained special spiritual favors from the Holy See for the members, and in 1876 he successfully had the association canonically established as the "Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators."

It is also quite evident that Don Bosco wanted his third family to benefit not only the Salesian Society, but bishops in every field, particularly in educating poor, abandoned youngsters.

In Don Bosco's mind the Salesian Cooperators were to be the forerunners of Catholic Action.

10. In the Fall

After the spiritual retreats, Don Bosco decided to spend a few days with the Fassati family at their summer home at Montemagno where he had sent Father John Baptist Francesia [for a few days' rest]. During his stay, Father Francesia was asked about a boarding school for a boy and dutifully wrote to Don Bosco, who sent him the following reply:

Lanzo, 27 . . .[1]

Dear Father Francesia:

Your pen can get you anything at all from Don Bosco. I can't help granting your request except for a slight alteration: let the boy come to the Oratory rather than Varazze. There are good reasons for this, especially in your regard. Handle the whole thing; let the parents pay what they can. We shall depend on Divine Providence for the rest.

Please give my regards to the Fassati family. If you write again, tell me if they have other guests, particularly members of the De Maistre family or the duchess of Montmorency. . . .

Dear Father Francesia, love me in the Lord and pray for me.

Affectionately in the Lord,
Fr. John Bosco

[1]According to the *Epistolario di San Giovanni Bosco*, Vol. II, Letter 1224, the date of this letter is September 9, 1874. [Editor]

He wrote to him again on October 3, informing him that twice he had had to postpone his trip to Montemagno and that he was wondering if the Fassati family would still be there the following week.[2]

As in previous years, he went to Becchi for the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. Sister Eulalia Bosco, his niece, jotted down the following notes about this visit:

I recall that when I was between five and nine years old, Don Bosco used to come to Becchi every year, arriving by coach from Chieri or Buttigliera, sometimes on a Thursday, more frequently on a Saturday evening, the eve of the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. His secretary, Father Berto, or some other priest came with him.

We little girls would anxiously await uncle's arrival because he always brought us delicious pears or candy, but he would not give us his gifts until he had asked us a few catechism questions or told us to make the Sign of the Cross, about whose careful observance he was very particular.

I recall that when I was about eight years old (Eulalia was born in 1866) I went up to him while he was discussing something important—or so I think—with my father. Tugging at his cassock, I asked, "Uncle, will I become a nun?" With a stern glance my father made me understand that this was not the time to bother him, but I kept asking the question until Don Bosco replied with a loving smile, "Yes, you will become a nun, but first you must grow up a lot. . . ."

In August 1881, I went to Nizza Monferrato on retreat and there again met Don Bosco. Immediately after I greeted him, he said, "Your sister Mary wanted to become a postulant this year, but Our Lady wants to take her to heaven and expects you to take her place here." I was astonished because since I was nine I had lost any thought or inclination to become a nun. "No!" I replied immediately. "Mary must not die! Mamma has written that Mary is better, and I don't want to become a nun."

"Mary will go to heaven, and you will become a nun!" he repeated. "When the fish is in the net," he went on, "one should not let it escape." In tears I hurried home to see my sister. Unfortunately, she died three days later.

Seeing his words fulfilled, I immediately wanted to return to Nizza, but my parents objected because I was too young. A year later, however, they let me go to Turin with Sister Rosalia Pestarino to pay my respects

[2]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

to my uncle and to tell him that I had decided to go to Nizza as a postulant. My uncle, who for years had longed to see a nephew or niece as a priest or nun, raised his eyes to heaven and exclaimed happily, "Eulalia, you are my consolation."

On October 5, Don Bosco sent instructions to Father Rua about personnel. On his return to the Oratory, he visited the Fassati and Callori families, and from Vignole he wrote to Father Berto [his secretary] to join him for some business. Meanwhile he kept receiving requests from Rome for a Salesian priest to go to the Concettini or Brothers Hospitallers of the Immaculate Conception. In compliance he kept writing to Father Lemoyne at Lanzo to see if Father Joseph Scappini could possibly leave for Rome in early January and be replaced in two weeks by Father Porta.[3]

11. The Sons of Mary, Help of Christians

From the earliest years of the Oratory, and increasingly so after he opened the secondary school for the boarders,[1] several of the young men expressed an eager wish to study for the priesthood. In response, in 1873-74 Don Bosco set up a special curriculum for them which was nicknamed "school of fire" [because of the students' ardor and eagerness].[2] Several Salesians were displeased and voiced their opposition. They maintained that pushing these young men forward indiscriminately could not possibly have good results; some, they argued, were barely able to keep up with their normal studies, while the rest did not seem flexible enough to be shaped into priestly material because of their set ways.[3]

Zealously but charitably, Father Rua instantly tried to dispel such criticism, regarding it as prompted by exaggerated fears.

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. We are omitting another letter of Don Bosco to Father Lemoyne on the same subject, an encouraging note to Cleric Cinzano, and other details. [Editor]

[1]*See* Vol. V, pp. 284, 362, 496f. [Editor]

[2]*See* Vol. XI, pp. 44ff. [Editor]

[3]*Ibid.*, pp. 42f. [Editor]

While kindly encouraging and helping these young adults, he kept highlighting present and future benefits to persons who would like to see the project fail. On this score he inserted the following interesting statement into the *Informative Process* [for Don Bosco's beatification and canonization]:

From the very start, when Don Bosco opened a secondary school for residents, he saw among them adults who had been prevented by various reasons from studying for the priesthood in their younger years and were determined to set themselves to this task as soon as they could. On the whole, Don Bosco saw that they were very diligent, genuinely pious and quite willing to help younger schoolmates by supervising them and waiting on them at table. He also noticed that they had a better chance of becoming priests than the younger boys—so much so that he used to say that at least eight out of ten would succeed. For this reason, in 1873-74 he thought of separating them from the rest, not only to spare them occasional embarrassment if they lagged behind their younger classmates, but also to form their character more easily and to speed up their progress in more important subjects by dropping less important ones.

This providential initiative, which was later called "The Sons of Mary Project for Vocations to the Priesthood,"[4] was established on a firm basis within two years and, thanks to the commendation of several bishops and archbishops, received special spiritual favors from Pope Pius IX. Father John Bonetti wrote:

When the Italian parliament abrogated seminarians' exemption from military service, Don Bosco, foreseeing an ever greater scarcity of priests in the future, decided to offset this deficiency by offering priesthood-oriented courses to young adults who were either exempt from military service or had already served.

Meanwhile, Don Bosco gave himself no rest from finding financial help to exempt his clerics from military service.[5]

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 24. [Editor]
[5] This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

12. The Thought of Death

In the late fall of 1874 a very strange thing occurred at the Oratory. A young student, Louis Deppert, who later became a Salesian, was knifed. Here is his own declaration:

One evening, late in the fall of 1874, while all were at supper and all the Oratory was silent, I, Louis Deppert, was busily writing in the doorkeeper's lodge. The outside door was ajar. Suddenly it was flung open, and three young draftees, obviously drunk, strode in. I approached them and asked, "Can I help you?"

"We want to see Don Bosco," one replied.

"I'm sorry, but this is the wrong time. Come back tomorrow."

"We want to talk to him tonight," they insisted.

"I'm telling you that you cannot. He's at supper now, and anyway this is no time for calls." I moved them toward the door and tried to force them out and bolt it. They resisted, and I tried to bar their way by firmly planting my feet and stretching my arms. With a quick exchange of looks, one of them pulled out a knife and struck me in the chest. Then they rushed out.

At first, unaware that I had been knifed, I locked the door and went back to the desk. In minutes, however, I felt faint and saw that my jacket was slit and drenched with blood. I got up to seek help but my strength failed me. Luckily, [Andrew] Pelazza, who was walking in the adjacent portico, helped me to the infirmary. In the fear that my wound might be serious, perhaps even fatal, I was taken to Sts. Maurice and Lazarus Hospital. Indeed, the wound was quite serious. Had it been a little deeper, it would have been the end of me. Thanks to God and to the care of skilled surgeons, I was able to leave the hospital in two weeks. After a brief convalescence, I regained full health, continued my studies and donned the cassock that same year.

What did those fellows want? Did they really wish to see Don Bosco at that hour? What was behind it all? These were questions asked by most people at the Oratory.

So much for Father [Louis] Deppert, but might we not speculate that those three ruffians had been hired to thrust that knife into Don Bosco's heart? We think so, for this was not the last attempt on Don Bosco's life by enemies of the Church.

Meanwhile Don Bosco, ever aware of death, as we have already said, often spoke about it. For instance, in early January 1873 he

repeatedly told a priest, "My concern now is to make our Society grow as much as possible. Then I will sing the *Nunc dimittis servum Tuum, Domine* [Now, Lord, You can dismiss Your servant in peace—Luke 2, 29].

Between 1871-74 he repeatedly drafted a last will and testament. Several such wills—including two drawn up respectively in 1856, before Mamma Margaret's death, and in 1869—are in our archives.[1]

The testament of 1856 cited these directives about his funeral:

> I want my funeral to be inexpensive. The pastor of Borga Dora has promised to conduct it gratis. I deeply desire, however, that all the Oratory boys and those attending our festive oratories be invited and be given the blessed medals and small crucifixes which I have purposely set aside for this. I want no inscription on my grave, but if any should be placed, it should reflect these sentiments: "As he was dying, Father John Bosco said this to his friends, '*Homo, humus; fama, fumus; finis, cinis* [Man is clay; fame is smoke; the end is ashes].[2]

The testament listed also all the publications he had authored.[3] It concluded with the following exhortation:

Turin, July 26, 1856

Reminders to My Sons So That They May All Be Saved

My sons, if you wish to ensure your eternal salvation:

1. Willingly hear the Word of God.
2. Beware of impurity.
3. Do all you can to make good confessions.

By this will and testament I intend to abrogate any and all previous testamentary dispositions.

May the Lord's name be blessed now and forever.

Eternal rest grant unto me, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon me.

Fr. John Bosco, *Director*
Oratory of St. Francis de Sales

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[2]This is only an excerpt from Don Bosco's testament. [Editor]
[3]*See* Vol. V, pp. 472f. [Editor]

Instead of the *Requiem aeternam* we heartily offer up to God a hymn of thanksgiving for having summoned us to belong to the family of such a father!

In a second will, in 1869, he named Father Michael Rua as his sole heir, and, in the event of Father Rua's death, Father John Cagliero.[4] In 1871, while ill at Varazze, he secretly jotted down the following declarations:

Varazze, December 22, 1871

I confirm my previous will which names Father Michael Rua, present prefect of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, as sole heir and executor of my will. Not included in the estate are my family property in Castelnuovo d'Asti, which I bequeath to my two nephews, Louis and Francis, the sons of my deceased brother Joseph. Two years after my death, they must give two hundred lire to each of the children of my stepbrother Anthony who may be living at the time. Such sums are to be given with no interest whatever.

He showed and perhaps also gave this declaration to Father Rua when the latter visited him. In turn, Father Rua wrote the following memo on a separate sheet:

Confidential

Should Don Bosco's nephews not be able to give their sisters and cousins the two hundred lire they are entitled to, it is Don Bosco's intention, made known to me orally, that they be helped by the sole heir. To this end he asked the latter to find out from them if they need help.

Father Rua, *Prefect*

In 1874 he rewrote his will, making more specific and most charitable provisions for his relatives. There may have been other revisions of his testament. Then, in 1884, before leaving for France, he sent for a notary and again dictated a last will and testament, naming Father Rua and Father Cagliero as sole heirs, but we have not personally seen this document. In the confidential

[4]This sentence is a condensation. We are omitting details about his other testaments. [Editor]

note mentioned above, Father Rua added this statement: "Several times during 1887 [Don Bosco] recommended to Father Rua that he help his nephew Francis to clear up debts he had contracted when dividing the estate with his brother Louis and in some other contingency."

His concern for his family, especially under the straitened circumstances of his own life, resembled that of the greatest saints.[5]

13. At Nice

In 1874 Don Bosco was urgently requested to open a school at Nice, France. Accompanied by Father Joseph Ronchail, the prefect of the Salesian boarding school at Alassio, he went to Nice immediately after the feast of the Immaculate Conception to handle this matter personally. Without much ado he agreed to send a few Salesians there the following year.[1]

During his two-day visit, he met a Mr. Joseph Canale who had been one of the very first boys to attend his catechism classes in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin.[2] Mr. Canale, a Genoese resident, was so overjoyed that Father Ronchail says he found it very hard to part from Don Bosco. From Nice Don Bosco wrote to Father Louis Guanella, who wanted to become a Salesian:[3]

Nice, December 12, 1874

Dear Father Louis:

Your place is ready. Come whenever you wish. When you get to Turin, we shall see where we can best place you. I say this because of

[5]We are omitting a confidential remark of Don Bosco to Father Lemoyne concerning Don Bosco's grandnephew because it is repetitious. It can be found verbatim on pp. 90-91 of this volume. [Editor]

[1]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

[2]*See* Vol. II, pp. 59ff. [Editor]

[3]Father Louis Guanella (1842-1915) did become a Salesian, but he later left and founded the Congregation of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence (1872) and of the Servants of Charity (1886). His cause of beatification was introduced in 1939; he was beatified October 25, 1964. [Editor]

your own words: "If I am not accepted in your Congregation, I am determined to apply to another one."

Just try to leave your affairs settled so that there will be no need for you to have to go and care for them.

Goodbye, dear Father Louis. Have a nice trip, and may God bless us all.

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Fr. John Bosco

P.S. I shall be in Turin on Thursday.

He also sent condolences to Father Rua for the loss of his brother and advised him of his return to the Oratory on Thursday.[4]

From Nice he and Father Ronchail went to Ventimiglia where he was awaited by the zealous and saintly missionary, Father Hyacinth Bianchi. Having learned that Don Bosco had founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, he hoped to persuade Don Bosco to open a novitiate in his parish where eighteen young girls wished to become nuns. He said that he had a residence for them. Don Bosco and Father Ronchail inspected it and immediately found it utterly inadequate. Ultimately [in 1875] Father Bianchi did found the Missionary Daughters of Mary which now [1939] has several convents in Italy and abroad. After a brief stopover at Alassio and Sampierdarena Don Bosco finally returned to Turin on Christmas Eve and quickly sent greetings to Countess Uguccioni and other benefactors.[5]

14. Other Recollections

We must still narrate Don Bosco's constant endeavor to spread wholesome publications for the young and the common people. As we have already said,[1] a most ardent desire of his was to inaugurate the publication of Latin Christian classics for secondary academic schools. Accustomed as he was to extolling the value of

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]
[5]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]
[1]*See* p. 528. [Editor]

these works, he had mulled over this project for years. Professor Thomas Vallauri[2] had once criticized them in an essay, saying that the authors had been more concerned about Christian truths than about purity of language and style. When this criticism of his came to Don Bosco's attention, the latter resolved to challenge the professor. The opportunity was not slow in coming. One day Professor Vallauri called on him to discuss the printing of some of his books.

"I am pleased to meet a writer known throughout Europe," Don Bosco exclaimed. "Your writings do great honor to the Church."

"Are you serious or are you speaking tongue in cheek?" asked the professor.

After a moment of silence, Don Bosco replied, "I say only this: you hold that Latin Christian authors wrote without elegance of style. And yet, St. Jerome has been rated with Titus Livius, Lactantius with Tacitus, Justinus with. . . ."

Vallauri looked pensive, and after a moment's reflection he exclaimed: "You're right! Tell me what I should amend and I'll do it. I tell you that this is the first time that I ever bowed in judgment to another. You have been quite frank. I like priests who tell it the way it is!"

[In 1873] Father John Tamietti, catechist at Borgo San Martino, was entrusted with the publication of the first volume of this series. The following year, while in Rome, Don Bosco kept inquiring by letter about the progress of the work.[3] He believed it unfair and harmful to give a steady, exclusive diet of pagan authors totally concerned with deep-rooted superstitions and mythologies to students in secondary schools or lyceums. In counterbalance he wanted them to read Christian authors for a more rounded Christian education. Indeed there were several Christian authors who, without being overly meticulous in language and style, could well hold their ground with the best pagan authors. This he stated in a well-written Latin letter announcing the publication of *Christian Latin Authors*. Regretfully, by 1881 only four volumes had been

[2]A contemporary lexicographer, prominent writer and dear friend of Don Bosco. *See* Vol. IV, p. 442; Vol. VI, pp. 191, 596. [Editor]

[3]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

published, but those were constantly being used in our schools to the great advantage of our students. They also gave teachers a chance to offer timely wholesome suggestions to their pupils.

From Rome Don Bosco wrote also to Father John Bonetti, director at Borgo San Martino, urging him to start writing a life of Our Lord, as they had agreed, but overwork prevented the latter from carrying out this cherished task.[4] Promoting Catholic publications for the common people and the young was Don Bosco's abiding anxiety and one of the special objectives of the Salesian Society.[5]

In 1874 the sixth edition of Don Bosco's *Arithmetic and the Metric System* was published and favorably reviewed by *Unità Cattolica* on October 24 of that same year. Following are the issues of *Letture Cattoliche* published during that same year:

January. *Maximinus, a Young Boy's Meeting with a Protestant Minister at the Capitol* by Fr. John Bosco.

February. *St. Joseph, Patron of the Catholic Church* by Fr. Joseph Frassinetti.

March. *A Brief Life of St. Thomas Aquinas in the Sixth Centennial of His Death* by Fr. John Bonetti.

April. *St. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan and Doctor of the Church* [by Fr. Thomas Chiuso].

May. *Heartless William, the Convict of Poissy*, a translation from the original French.

June. *The Tail of the Great Beast.*

July-December. *The Evangelist of Wittenberg and the Protestant Reformation in Germany* by Fr. John Baptist Lemoyne.

On January 30 [1874], in a laudatory article about Don Bosco's publications, *L'Osservatore Romano*, after calling him a "miracle of charity and modesty," went on to eulogize *Maximinus*, the January issue of *Letture Cattoliche*. In turn, on February 12, *Unità Cattolica* lavishly praised *Letture Cattoliche*'s twenty-second anniversary and its wholesome booklets.[6]

The April issue—the life of St. Ambrose—was the work of Fa-

[4]This sentence is a condensation. [Editor]

[5]We are omitting a corroborative declaration by a former pupil of Don Bosco. [Editor]

[6]This paragraph is a condensation. [Editor]

ther Thomas Chiuso, Archbishop Gastaldi's secretary and a member of the Accademia Ecclesiastica Subalpina [Subalpine Ecclesiastical Academy]. When, in 1871, restoration of the ancient basilica of St. Ambrose was undertaken, a porphyry urn, sealed with a slab of the same marble, was discovered one meter below the floor of the main altar. Upon opening it in August of that same year three skeletons were found in perfect condition. The Holy See reserved to itself the authentication of these relics. After a most accurate examination, on December 7, 1873 Pius IX confirmed the verdict of the Sacred Congregation of Rites that the skeletons were those of Sts. Ambrose, Gervase and Protase.

We conclude with an incident that fully corroborates what we have already said. It is a shining proof that not only Don Bosco, but all who knew him well, clearly envisioned the marvelous future of the Salesian Society. In 1874, on the fifteenth centenary of the episcopal consecration of St. Ambrose, Archbishop Gastaldi went to Milan to honor the occasion. At dinner, in the company of many bishops and distinguished guests, he was asked, "Don Bosco is in your archdiocese. How do you rate him and his Salesians? We know he is disrupting your diocese. Frankly now, who is this Don Bosco, and what does his Congregation do?"

"The Salesians are doing fine work," he replied, "but they could do a lot more if they yielded to their archbishop. Doubtless, within a short time, Don Bosco will astonish the whole world by the vigor of his Congregation. It is still a fledgling organization, but it will soon become a giant, thriving on the spirit of many other religious congregations. While these are crushed by the persecution of the world and the devil, Don Bosco's Congregation will expand all over the world, will be sought by all nations, and will spread its branches from pole to pole. No human power will ever stop its growth."

"But, Your Excellency, do you really believe . . . ?"

"Yes, I am convinced that the Salesians are destined to replace outdated religious orders and inherit what was once theirs."

Despite these remarks the archbishop continued to oppose Don Bosco, and when the latter once asked him why, he replied: "Even the Church had to be persecuted for three centuries in order to become strong and sink deep roots."

"But, Your Excellency," Don Bosco smilingly exclaimed, "I would think you are putting yourself in none too good a company."

Thanks to God, the difficulties that Don Bosco encountered helped to strengthen the foundations of his Congregation. Let us conclude with a quote from our sainted founder: "If we want our Society to advance with God's blessing, it is indispensable that each article of the constitutions be the norm of all we do."

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

NOSEGAYS

(*See* Page 28, footnote 3)

[1] I am your Mother. Offer Me your heart often during the day.

[2] At the strike of the hour whisper, "Hail, Mary, my solace and hope!"

[3] Along with My name often invoke that of Jesus, My Son.

[4] Often, morning and night at least, kiss My medal.

[5] Greet My pictures without shyness if you see them as you walk.

[6] Get a beautiful picture of Me; often look at it and kiss it.

[7] Greet Me often with all your heart, and you shall have My love.

[8] Read some books about Me and My love for you.

[9] Write My name on your books and on your heart.

[10] Be humble, patient, prayerful, and spiritual-minded for My sake.

[11] Be readily obedient as I was at home and in the temple.

[12] For My sake, when you must, give in to the opinion of others.

[13] At prayer keep your hands clasped before your breast.

[14] By speaking of Me, try to increase the number of My devotees.

[15] Practice some mortification in My honor every Saturday.

[16] Recite My litany every Saturday to obtain the grace of a happy death.

[17] Every Saturday try to receive Holy Communion in My honor.

[18] Go to Holy Communion often, especially on My feast days.

[19] Recommend sinners to Me when you receive Holy Communion.

[20] When you receive Holy Communion, ask Me for the grace of purity and charity.

[21] Dear son, never commit a mortal sin.

[22] Resolve from this moment to prevent sin by word and example.

[23] If you really wish to please Me, recommend sinners to me.

[24] Avoid wild, irreverent companions.

[25] If you hear a blasphemy, immediately say in your heart: "Praised forever be the names of Jesus and Mary!"

[26] Do not avenge yourself when offended. Forgive for My sake.

[27] Grumbling displeases Me. Neither indulge in it nor listen to it.

[28] Bear your troubles cheerfully for My sake.

[29] When troubled and afflicted, turn to Me, your Mother.

[30] If something unpleasant must be done, say readily, "Yes, for Mary's sake."

[31] Avoid worldly amusements and choose solitude.

[32] Try to keep peace among your companions.

[33] How happy you would make Me by a weekly good confession.

[34] Fully trust your regular confessor. Don't change him needlessly.

[35] Keep your confessor's advice in mind and do as he says.

[36] During your [summer] vacation, go to confession at least every other week.

[37] Go to church regularly during your vacation so as to give a good example.

[38] Love and respect priests. I, too, loved and respected the Apostles.

[39] Be grateful and respectful to those who help you materially and spiritually.

[40] Put something aside and give to the poor for My sake.

[41] You are My garden. Grow the loveliest flowers.

[42] Strive to please My Son by practicing virtue.

[43] Let chastity, the angelic virtue, be your favorite.

[44] When tempted by impure thoughts, say at once: "Mother most pure, pray for me."

[45] Keep your glances pure.

[46] Never read objectionable books. Consult your confessor before reading a doubtful book.

[47] Be modest when dressing and undressing.

[48] Do not join in or listen to foul or worldly conversation.

[49] Speak no word, even in jest, which may cause bad thoughts.

[50] Do not associate with morally harmful people if you want Me to talk to your heart.

[51] If you wish to be a favorite of Mine, love the child Jesus.

[52] Love Me much. I want to make you a saint.

Appendix 2

TRICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION OF THE VICTORY AT LEPANTO IN 1571

(*See* Page 97, footnote 2)

Novena and Feast Day

A plenary indulgence may be gained by going to confession and Com-

munion and visiting the Church of Mary, Help of Christians during the novena and feast day.

Schedule of Religious Services

The novena will begin May 15. Masses will be celebrated daily until noon, and ample opporutnities will be given to receive the sacraments.

Daily

7 A.M.—General Communion and special devotions.

Weekdays

7 P.M.—Singing of sacred hymns, sermon, and Benediction.

Sundays

May 21, 8:30 A.M.—Administration of the sacrament of Confirmation.

10:30 A.M.—Solemn High Mass

3:30 P.M.—Vespers, Sermon, Benediction.

May 24—Solemn Feast of Mary, Help of Christians

10 A.M.—Pontifical Mass. The Oratory's 200-voice choir accompained by a select orchestra will sing a new, impressive Mass composed by Father John Cagliero.

6 P.M.—Solemn vespers, sermon, *Tantum Ergo* and Benediction.

Note

1. During Vespers, a hymn composed by Father Cagliero will be sung by a 300-voice choir with orchestra accompaniment. The hymn is a musical interpretation of the famous battle and triumph of Christianity at Lepanto through the help of Mary, Help of Christians. It will be sung by the pupils of Turin, Lanzo, Cherasco, Alassio, and Borgo San Martino with the participation of many distinguished Turin vocalists.

2. Those wishing to join the Association of Mary, Help of Christians should go to the registration desk in the sacristy.

3. Offerings by the members of the aforesaid association or by others will be used to defray construction costs of the choir and sacristy.

Other Details

The choirboys of Lanzo will sing at the evening services on May 21, those of Cherasco on May 22, and those of Borgo San Martino on May 23.[1]

[1]We are omitting other details about a bazaar, souvenirs, and brass band concert.

Appendix 3

FATHER RUA'S NOTES ABOUT THE SPIRITUAL RETREAT OF 1871

(*See* Page 470, footnote 1)

Introduction

As God called Abraham forth from his father's house, so He calls us from the world in order that we may hear His voice.

1st Instruction: Confession

Refutation of Protestant tenets about the divine institution of confession.

Confidence one should have in one's confessor.

Confessor's duties toward the penitent.

Note

The director is the ordinary confessor in our houses for the preservation of unity of spirit and the appraisal of candidates for the priesthood and the Salesian Society. The director, therefore, must seek to earn the confidence of all by not joining the other superiors to give the students conduct marks or to impose punishments. When these are called for, let him give the task to the prefect.

The extraordinary confessor is the rector major to whom one should first speak of the soul, and then of others matters when he visits the house.

2nd Instruction: Prayer

Don Bosco mentioned that our rules call for at least one hour of prayer. Three types of prayer:

(a) Vocal: community prayers and manner of saying them.

(b) Mental: meditation and manner of meditating.

(c) Mixed: short invocations during the day, especially in moments of temptation.

3rd Instruction: Mortification

He began by citing the example of Our Savior, St. John the Baptist, St. Paul and other saints to explain its necessity.

How to practice mortification of the sense of sight, in our apparel, in eating and drinking.

Remove the wood from the fire if you want it to die out.

Avoid idleness, wining and dining if you want to control the rebellion of the flesh.

Noteworthy things: gluttony ruined many religious institutes.

The notes of the other confreres pointed out:

1. The director's responsibility over the conduct of his confreres.

Every director is accountable to God for the soul of each of the confreres entrusted to him. He may run into resistance in some, but his fatherly love, charity and prayer can overcome even the most difficult characters. With the grace which rises from his office, one can turn certain confreres into good, even holy servants of God.

In exhorting everyone to fulfill his duties, he often exclaimed, "Either holy Salesians or no Salesians at all!"

2. The gratitude we owe to Mary, Help of Christians.

To our great surprise—he said—only in heaven we shall realize what the Most Holy Virgin Mary has done for us and how often she rescued us from hell. We shall thank Her throughout all eternity. If all of us, dear sons, had more faith and confidence in God and in Mary, Help of Christians, we could save thousands of souls more than we have.

3. The request, which we may call habitual, for prayers to save his soul.

Don Bosco's sermons always went to the heart because they always centered around God's goodness. His trust in God's mercy was extraordinary. He dwelt on it when preaching, hearing confessions or giving the "Good Night," especially during spiritual retreats. At the close of these retreats he regularly exhorted us to pray for the salvation of his soul.

INDEX

ABBREVIATIONS

B.S.	Blessed Sacrament
D. of M.H. of C.	Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians
D. of M.I.	Daughters of Mary Immaculate
D.B.	Don Bosco
E.H.D.	Exercise for a Happy Death
G.N.	Good Night
I.C.	Immaculate Conception
L.C.	*Letture Cattoliche*
M.H. of C.	Mary, Help of Christians
S.C.	Salesian Congregation

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