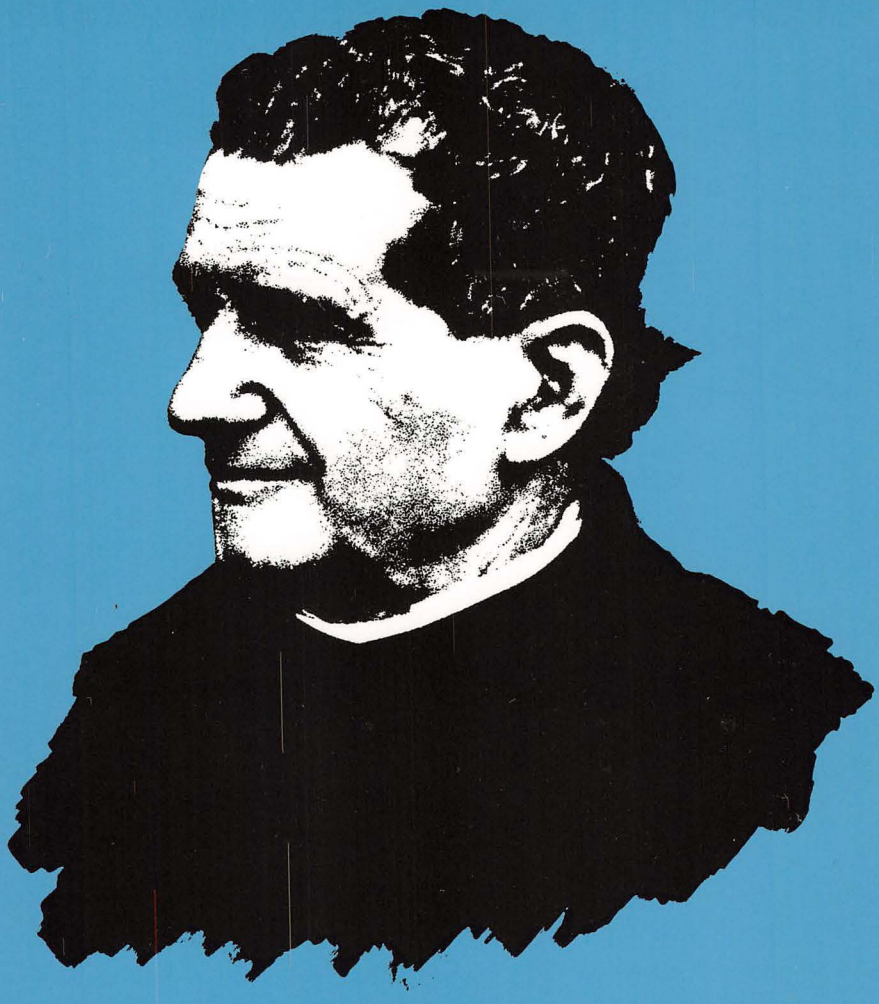


VOLUME XVII - 1884-1885

THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

of Saint John Bosco



FATHER EUGENIO CERIA

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

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

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THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO

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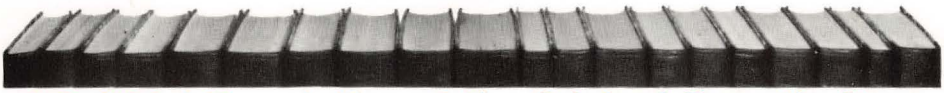
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THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS OF ST. JOHN BOSCO



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THE

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

The
Biographical Memoirs
of
Saint John Bosco

by

Rev. Eugenio Ceria, S.D.B.

AN AMERICAN EDITION
TRANSLATED
FROM THE ORIGINAL ITALIAN

Volume XVII

1884-1885

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FIRST EDITION

Dedicated

WITH PROFOUND GRATITUDE

TO

THE LATE, LAMENTED, AND HIGHLY ESTEEMED

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

(1904–1962)

TO WHOSE

WISDOM, FORESIGHT, AND NOBLE SALESIAN HEART

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

OF

THE BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIRS

OF

SAINT JOHN BOSCO

IS

A LASTING MONUMENT

This Volume is Dedicated

to the Salesian Coadjutor Brothers,
Living and deceased,
Whom I was fortunate to live with
Or to know ever since 1949
When I first came to this country.
It is specially dedicated to
My friends:

Bro. Mario Audero (R.I.P.)
Bro. Aldo Roman (R.I.P.)
Bro. Bruno Busatto
Bro. John Cauda
and
Bro. Oscar Andrejasic (R.I.P.).

This is only a small token
Of gratitude for what the
Brothers have done
On behalf of the Salesian Province
Of New Rochelle, New York:
For the good they have done,
For the sacrifices they have made,
For the unselfish dedication they have shown.
I warmly celebrate the Salesian Coadjutor
Brother's love for Don Bosco
And his undertaking in the
United States of America

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

Introduction

It was Hilaire Belloc who once wrote that a translator is a traitor: *traduttore = traditore.*

I am the translator, or rather the "second-hand" translator, of the present volume of Don Bosco's Biographical Memoirs.

The term "second-hand" simply indicates that this volume, much like the other nineteen of them, had been "commercially" translated some thirty years ago. But the translator did not have a good knowledge of the Church and theological terminology and no knowledge of Canon Law, Scripture and especially, Salesian terminology. My task was that of retranslating, retouching and correcting what had already been translated. This proved perhaps more challenging than having to produce a brand new translation. This also explains why the reading of this volume (much like the reading of the previous volumes) is not as easy as one would expect it to be. My apologies! I am a translator, but not a traitor! I believe that no one will ever accuse me of having misinterpreted or misrepresented Don Bosco's thoughts as he expressed them.

Don Bosco's message, sayings and deeds will be easily grasped and understood and hopefully, they will be an inspiration to all the readers. Whatever is found in the Italian edition of this volume is also found here; nothing was omitted! We thought it best to leave the decision to omit or not to omit the reading of any part of this volume to the reader.

My sincere thanks to all those who in any way have helped me carry out this difficult and tedious work. Special thanks go to Fr. Francis Xavier Aracil, S.D.B., the editor, and to Jo Ann Donahue, the computer typist.

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

Preface

(1884-1885)

This two-year period (l884-1885) in the life of St. John Bosco was rich in events. It included visits to France and one to Rome, the attainment of privileges, the participation in the National Exhibit of Turin, the reorganization of the Oratory, the appointment of the vicar, the consecration of the first Salesian bishop, the first Salesian Foundations in Paris and Barcelona, the entrance of the Salesians into Brazil and many other varied events – all more or less within the usual framework of things which, nevertheless, assume particular importance because they concern Don Bosco and took shape either at his initiative or under his direction. At the same time, the decline in his health became sadly more evident. Don Bosco had never been entirely free from some kind of physical discomfort, but when his body became bent under the burden of infirmity, it was painfully obvious to everyone who saw him that he was not well.

From this time onward, the most prominent thought in his mind was to consolidate the work already started in his Congregation, and he took many steps to accomplish this. In agreement with the Holy See, he appointed Father Michael Rua vicar general with the right to succeed him after his death, thus assuring the continuance of the government of the whole Congregation. He also put the final touches on his missions in South America and obtained the appointments from Rome of prefect and vicar apostolic for Father John Cagliero and Father Joseph Fagnano, to whom the missions were entrusted. He labored to reorganize the mother house so it would serve as a model for other houses, and gave a regular structure to the running of the novitiate and the procedure to follow when admitting postulants. As far as the Pious Union of the Cooperators, there was not only an increase in membership, but also a greater cohesion and strength. In short, Don Bosco enabled the Salesians to form a homogeneous, compact body within the Church and civil society, a body that was strongly built and capable of further development even when he would no longer be there.

Meanwhile, word of his holiness was spreading all over the world. The general conviction that he was a great miracle worker and an ambassador from Heaven was increasingly confirmed by graces obtained

through his prayers, the fulfillment of his predictions, miraculous recoveries that took place in his presence, or when people invoked his blessing. Therefore, people came to see him or wrote to him from the remotest parts of Europe and the American continent to beg for the help of his enlightened wisdom or the support of his prayers. It wasn't just the ordinary person who was drawn toward him. High dignitaries of the Church and laymen in responsible positions, both Italian and foreigners alike, went to call on him at the Oratory or during his travels in order to meet him, ask for his advice, and receive his blessing. This continued despite the venomous insinuations and forthright slander written against him in sectarian newspapers. His heroic virtue and the facts of his great accomplishments could not be eclipsed by these attacks; to the contrary, every attempt to malign him failed *telum imbelle sine ictu* (as a powerless javelin thrown without a hit).

The wise Pope Leo XIII gave this man of God greater and greater evidence of his esteem as he came to know him better. One day in a group of prelates, he began talking about Don Bosco and asked those around what they thought of him. Opinion was divided. At length, the Pope asked, "Could any man do what Don Bosco does with only his own natural strength?" After listing all that Don Bosco had accomplished, the Pope went on. "No, he could not. Therefore there must be something supernatural to inspire him, and this could only be God or the Spirit of Darkness. But from the nature of his works, one can easily discern what it is that moves him – *ex fructibus eorum cognoscetis eos* (you shall know them by their fruits)."

The dream about his missions continued in 1885. The panoramic picture of the future Salesian missions was outlined and extended before the clairvoyant vision of Don Bosco. His lightning-swift visionary journey in 1883 took him from Cartagena to Punta Arenas, and made him see the territories of South America that would summon his sons. Then, between January and February 1885, Don Bosco had a vague intuition of new ways to communicate by air, and foresaw the triumphs expected for the flights from Brazil down to Tierra del Fuego, while in July he felt he was flying over the area that Divine Providence had in store for the Salesians in Asia, Africa and Australia. Such extension of the Salesian activity could not have been imagined at that time even in one's wildest dreams considering the limited human possibilities. Later on Don Bosco was to have other revelations, and before his life came to an end, he had defined and outlined a missionary program that was to

be expanded by several of his Salesian generations.

The reference to these particular dreams urges us to say something in general regarding the dreams of Don Bosco. These visions, which he called dreams, accompanied the saint from the first dawn of reason until the twilight of his years. But we should make a careful distinction between ordinary dreams and the dreams of Don Bosco.

The loose meaning applied to the word "dreams" causes confusion among widely different phenomena. To distinguish them properly, we should say that when referring to those of Don Bosco, the general term "dreams" is further defined as "dreams that were not dreams," "dreams that were nothing else but dreams," and "revelation dreams."

Certain dreams should be considered visions and nothing else, because they happened when he was not asleep. This, for example, applies to the prophetic revelation he had at the bedside of the dying young John Cagliero and to his vision in 1870 concerning the future of Italy, France, Rome and Paris. The apparitions of Louis Colle, which he usually described as distractions, belong in the same category. Then again, he would sometimes relate the story of actual dreams to his close collaborators, and we will find several of them in this and in the following volumes. Strictly speaking, we should not have given such dreams any consideration in this biography, but since Don Bosco himself had related them and we are happy to know anything there is to know about him, we have included them in these memoirs, though we do not attribute any greater significance to them than the saint did himself. Notwithstanding, they do offer a certain psychological interest.

The more characteristic category of Don Bosco's dreams consists of those that contained revealing elements he could never have attained solely by his own mental powers. In such revelations, Don Bosco reviewed the past, saw the present and foresaw the future. Usually, these revelations appeared to him in a symbolic form, though he would quite often have a glimpse of the physical truth, as he did when he read into the secrets of someone's conscience or saw the details of far away places unknown to him unfold before his very eyes.

Here arises the question of the origin of such dreams. It is theologically established that with the permission of God, both good and bad angels wield power over matter. There is therefore nothing to prevent them from influencing the brain "to stimulate a given brain cell whose function is connected with the origin of a certain sentiment, a certain idea or thought," thus creating within our mind the impression with which to

enlighten or tempt us. Furthermore God can at all times "create a reality for us in our sleep in the form of a dream or in the form of a vision during our waking hours." This, in fact, would seem to be the manner selected by Divine Providence in guiding Don Bosco along his path.

In the Bible we also see how God at times spoke to his servants in dreams and conjured up before them the image of certain things. To Aaron and Miriam, his sister, God said that He would appear before other prophets and speak to them in dreams. To Abimelech, King of Jerara, God revealed in a dream the fate awaiting him for having stolen Sarah. Laban was warned in a dream not to speak abusively of Jacob. In the book of Joel, while referring to the abundance of grace to be showered upon Christians, it is said that there will be prophecies, dreams and visions. God spoke to Solomon in a dream, filling him with heavenly wisdom. Later, on several occasions, the angel revealed the will of God to St. Joseph in dreams, just as the Wise Men were warned in a dream that they should not go back to see Herod.

Cardinal Bona quotes three reasons why the stillness of the night is more suitable for the reception of certain impressions sent to us by Heaven in the form of visions that are described as imaginary. During sleep, the soul is less distracted by a variety of thoughts; furthermore, since we are more passive, we are more receptive to things and less prone to question them. Finally in the silence of our senses, impressions are retained more easily by the imagination.

It has been historically proven that certain elect souls were thus favored by imaginary visions while asleep. How many times have we not come across dreams as a supernatural element in admonishing, comforting, inspiring and spurring people from the renowned Passio of St. Perpetua in 203 to the histories of a number of founders of religious orders and the lives of famous converts? One saint who greatly resembled our own saint in his life was St. Ascarius, the great Apostle of the North of the 9th century. St. Ascarius as a boy had received extraordinary illustrations on the nature of the mission Heaven had assigned to him.

We also have to bear in mind that the revelations from God in dreams are, as a rule, rare and usually not easily interpreted, veiled in symbols and unintelligible signs. Therefore, interpreters are needed and they must be endowed with holy discernment if they are to trace the secret meaning of these dreams with certainty. No one could interpret the two dreams of Joseph the Jew, and their meanings only acquired substance when many years later events occurred to explain them. But this was not the case

when Joseph explained the meaning of the dreams that came to the Pharaoh of Egypt of the seven lean cows and again of the seven fat cows, the seven beautiful and ripe ears of corn and seven ears of corn withered and meager. The same applies to the interpretation given by Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar's dreams about the gigantic statue and the mighty tree. Don Bosco's dreams were usually symbolic, but the difficulty in understanding them was removed during the course of the dream itself by the words of people who acted as his guide or the explanation he saw written or was given orally.

The discernment of the spirit is no less essential in distinguishing between a divine dream and a diabolic illusion or trick of the imagination. St. Joseph Cafasso undoubtedly possessed this divine perception. Now, when Don Bosco repeatedly consulted him during his confession, he was always told to put his mind at ease and tell those dreams because they were doing some good. They truly did because they instilled a fervent piety and a horror of sin in his young listeners. Then, too, by seeing that what was revealed to him in those dreams corresponded to true facts and that his predictions of deaths and other contingencies that could not have been foretold by human knowledge alone always came true, we have a tangible evidence that he was not merely adrift in the uncharted seas of a dream world. The manner he adopted when telling people about his dreams also spoke well for their supernatural value. The Saint told these dreams with sincere humility, deftly striving to eliminate any suspicion in the minds of his listeners that might lead them to believe that he had merits or exceptional privileges. It was therefore with well-founded reason that during the apostolic process of beatification and canonization, Blessed Michael Rua described these dreams as visions. He even declared that he felt that Don Bosco had regarded it as his duty to divulge his dreams for the spiritual advantage of souls, being moved to do this by a supernatural impulse.

If we are to better understand these dreams, we should consider the fact that they all contain a logical development in keeping with their purpose that is not usually found in ordinary dreams. The ordinary dream is more or less a confusing string of recollections run together haphazardly like notes on a keyboard in our slumbering imagination. How much of absurdity there is in such a sequence of images? That is why people maintain that any attempt to discover meaning in such confusion is just as trying as to trace a musical theme in the nightly scampering of mice inside a piano. But in the dreams of Don Bosco, one always discerns a serious

theme that represents the basic structure of the entire action of the dream. Such an action, both simple and complex, progresses methodically without anything banal or incongruous as is generally the case in fantasies, which go back and forth, up and down in the imagination of anyone asleep. If at times some strange phenomena appear, Don Bosco always points them out as such, asks for their cause and is given a satisfactory explanation. We are therefore out of the realm of a pure and simple dream, properly so called.

There are certain dreams which when told by him appeared to be just dreams and nothing more, but to those who had time to wait, they must certainly have seemed to conceal announcements of future events. The following is a valid example for all of them.

Once (we know not in what year), Don Bosco dreamed that he was in St. Peter's, within the giant niche under the cornice to the right of the central aisle, directly above the bronze statue of the Prince of the Apostles and the mosaic medallion of Pius IX. He had no idea how he had gotten up there and could not find peace. He looked around to find out how to get down, but he saw nothing. He called out and shouted, but received no answer. At last, overcome by anguish, he woke up. Now some people listening to this dream might not have perceived any element of prophecy in it and might have said it was the kind of thing that occurs to people who dream with their eyes open. But this is not so, for when these pages come to the attention of our readers, the magnificent statue of Don Bosco by Canonica will be smiling down on them from precisely that same niche dreamed by Don Bosco in St. Peter's Basilica.

In conclusion, it might be pleasing to know just what Don Bosco thought about his dreams. In order to know this, we must not pay much attention to the things he said in public, but rather to his manner of acting and expressing himself in private. His audience was made up only of the boys, the confreres of the Oratory and at times only the Superiors who made up the chapter. In public, he only referred to the dreams, never saying anything that might lead his listeners to interpret them as supernatural revelations. In fact whenever he related any such dreams, he employed a witty form of speech, which he hoped would strip any such idea from the minds of his listeners. Yet he himself set great value to what he saw. Thus, for example, whenever he spoke or wrote to Count and Countess Colle about the apparitions of their deceased son, he never used the word dream, but described everything without any specific qualifications.

A remark by Father John Baptist Lemoyne in this connection is well

worthy of note. On January 5, 1886, as he discussed the dream about the recovery of the cleric Olive with Don Bosco (we shall deal with it in Volume XVIII), the secretary of the Chapter referred to Don Bosco's dreams as visions, and the Saint agreed with him. Then Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote in his notebook: "Until approximately 1880 whenever he told us of his dreams, Don Bosco never used this word visions, but during the last years of his life when talking with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, he did agree with the use of this word (although he never used it himself first), since he was the one who knew his beloved Father so well, but then only in their confidential talks."

Even nowadays, though considerable time has elapsed since the living voice and presence of the Saint enhanced the effect of his narratives, we still read about Don Bosco's dreams with great advantage to ourselves, and when they are told to the boys, they arouse lively interest and have a beneficial influence on them. It may occur that sooner or later, they might not seem very important to strangers, since there is a natural prejudice which leads to lump all dreams together in one bundle and to regard them more or less as the wanderings of a lively imagination. But in our own circles where we often hear them mentioned and the mind is therefore accustomed to thinking of them as mysterious revelations, they will continue to run their course and form a perpetual stream of Salesian tradition stretching back to our earliest origins.

This was one of the principal reasons that urged us to collect and insert every gesture, saying and written document of our great founder in these Biographical Memoirs. We should not be surprised if some things appear to be trifling and unworthy of the honor of standing alongside events befitting poetry and history to people outside our family circle. The greater public does not set much value to details *de minimis*, but to us, there are so many precious elements which all help to consolidate our tradition. In order to achieve our purpose, it is indispensable that future generations discover in our pages the living figure of our father with his distinctive features, his domestic habits and personal ways of thinking, talking and behaving, so that he may through the pages continue to exercise as much as possible that original, beneficial formative impact that he gave to his disciples, while no deviating misunderstanding should ever appear. This final danger will be all the more readily averted if we have a certain source to which we can refer, and when we refer back to this source, it may be legitimate to repeat: *"Inspice et fac secundum exemplar* (Look and act according to the exemplar set before you)."

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Chapter 1

NEW YEAR'S DAY VISITS, LECTURES, AND DON BOSCO'S SICKNESS

Don Bosco's sons conveyed their good wishes couched in tender and affectionate words to their beloved father either in person or by letter at Christmas time and New Year's. He attached great importance to these filial manifestations, which did much to strengthen the ties in his spiritual family. He never neglected either in person or in writing, according to the occasion or to what was most convenient, to inform the individual Salesians how he treasured the words they had themselves said or written. Wishing to convey his appreciation in a more solemn manner than usual, Don Bosco addressed an affectionate circular letter to all of them in 1884. He recalled the general demonstration of affectionate devotion to him, urged them to do their best in attempting to reach the goals they had set for themselves when they embraced the Salesian way of life, and held up to them the Salesian rule as the sole means by which they could most surely succeed in this attempt:

Turin, January 6, 1884

Dear and beloved children:

Every time I am given the chance to hear any word of respect or affection from you, my dear children, I experience great joy. But the affectionate expressions conveyed to me by you either in person or by letter with your good wishes for Christmas and for New Year's logically call for a special word of thanks from me as an answer to your filial expression of love.

I will, therefore, say that I am pleased with you and with the eagerness by which you face up to all sorts of work, even shouldering immense burdens in order to further the greater glory of God in our houses and in the midst of the boys who are entrusted to us day after day by Divine Providence, so that we may guide

them along the path of virtue, honor and in the direction of Heaven. You have thanked me for what I have done for you in so many ways and you have offered to work with me courageously, sharing my burdens and the honor and glory here on earth in order to attain the great reward God has in store for us in Heaven. You have also told me that you desire nothing else but to know what I consider good for you, declaring you would unhesitatingly give heed to it and put it into practice. I treasure such precious words and reply to them simply like a father, by saying that I am grateful to you from the bottom of my heart, and if you will help me to save your soul, you would be doing to me the greatest pleasure on earth.

You are well aware, beloved children, that I have accepted you into the Congregation and have constantly done everything possible for your own good in order to ensure you of eternal salvation. Therefore, if you will but help me in this great task, you will be doing what my paternal heart is asking of you. You can easily guess what you have to do in order to succeed in this mighty project. Keep our rules, the rules that Holy Mother Church condescended to approve for our guidance and the welfare of our souls, for the spiritual and temporal welfare of our beloved pupils. We have read and studied these rules, and now they represent the object of our promises and vows that consecrates us to Our Lord. I, therefore, implore you with my whole soul never to allow any word of regret, or worse yet, of sorrow ever to escape from you for having thus consecrated yourselves to Our Lord. This would represent an act of the direst ingratitude. Everything we have, both in the spiritual and temporal order, belongs to God. Therefore, when we consecrate ourselves to Him at our religious profession, we only offer to God that which He Himself has, so to speak, loaned to us, but it remains absolutely His property.

If we fail in our observance of our vows, we are committing a theft before God, and wrest from Him that which we ourselves have offered Him and have placed in His holy hands, only to trample it underfoot and profane it.

Some of you may well say that it is hard to observe the rules. Observance of the rules will be hard for anyone who observes them reluctantly or is therein neglectful. But to those who are diligent, who are solicitous for the welfare of their souls, such

observance becomes an easy yoke, as Our Divine Savior said, and a light burden only: *Jugum meum suave est onus meum leve* [My yoke is easy and my burden light].

Then, too, my dear children, do we then expect to go to Paradise in a riding carriage? We became religious to suffer, to store up merits for ourselves in the hereafter and not only to enjoy ourselves. We consecrated ourselves to God to obey, not to give orders. We did this to practice charity toward our neighbor solely for the love of God, in order that we might not become attached to His creatures. We did not intend to live a life of ease, but to be poor with Jesus Christ and to suffer here on earth with Jesus Christ, in order to become worthy of His glory in Heaven.

Take heart therefore, oh dear and beloved children! We have put our hands to the plough; let us be steadfast! Let no one among us look back to yearn after the deceitful and false world. Let us move onward! It will be hard. It will take effort, hunger, thirst, and perhaps even death. We shall always reply, "If we are delighted in view of the grandeur of our reward, we must also be undismayed in the face of the hardships we have to sustain in order to deserve it. *Si delectat magnitudo praemiorum, non deterreat certamen laborum."*

I think there is yet another thing I ought to say. Our confreres write to me from everywhere and I would be delighted to give each an individual answer. But since that is not possible, I shall try to send out these circular letters more frequently, for while they enable me to bare my heart to you all, they also serve as a guide to those who, for saintly reasons, live far away from us and are unable to listen to the living voice of their father, who loves them so dearly in Jesus Christ.

May the grace of Our Lord and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary be with us always, to help us persevere in God's divine service until the end of our life.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Mutatis mutandis [changing what must be changed], Don Bosco sent the same circular letter to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco no longer talked to the boys of the Oratory after evening prayers; however, their superiors talked to them about him continuously. Yet he continued to dedicate himself to the confessional, which he never neglected, after his return from Paris. In January before allowing a student, Vivaldi from Rocca Forte, to begin his confession, he categorically said to him, "Try to make a good confession, because this will be the last time you make your confession to me."

The boy fretted at length over these words, since he was afraid that either he would soon die or be kicked out of school. But neither supposition was justified. Ever since that day, it always happened that the young man was unable to make his confession to the saint, either because Don Bosco was not in his confessional or the boy was in some other school.

Bishop De Gaudenzi, bishop of Vigevano was a friend of long standing. When he was the canon pastor of the Vercelli Cathedral, he had helped Don Bosco in his many needs, habitually treating him with the utmost cordial familiarity. Once he became bishop, he continued in his friendship, gladly lending to Don Bosco the support of his authority and always holding him in great esteem. The closer they came to know him, the more esteem everyone who had any contact with him felt for him. Now as an answer to Don Bosco's good wishes for the New Year's Day, the bishop enclosed an offering in a cordial letter[1]:

> Thank you for warmly remembering this poor wretch. May Our Lord keep you long for the benefit of many souls, for the splendor of the Church and as a proof of what a priest endowed with the spirit of God may be worth. I do not dare to ask you to come and see me again. I will only say that Don Bosco is always present in my mind.

The benefactors of both genders did not let the New Year pass without writing to Don Bosco and sending him some gifts. We still have a few of his thank-you letters. One is addressed to Mrs. Magliano, whose name we have encountered several times:[2]

> Turin, January 1, '84
>
> Dear Mrs. Magliano:
>
> I do not know whether you will soon be coming to Turin or not. That is why I want to hasten to assure you that we began to

[1] (Vigevano, January 9, 1884).

[2] See vol. XV, page 376.

say prayers for you at the beginning of the New Year and shall continue saying them until January of next year. I will have a special memento for you during my Holy Mass every morning.

We are constantly praying for your good health and holiness. This is only to give you a small token of our gratitude for your charity toward us in the past and also in our present need.

God bless you and the Holy Virgin Mary protect you. May we ask you in turn to pray for our entire family, especially for this poor fellow who will always be in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Another letter is addressed to Countess Sclopis:[3]

Turin, January 2, 1884

Dear Countess:

I am asking the Holy Virgin, the Help of Christians ,to reward you on my behalf. Thank you for your charity. With my orphans I pray fervently for you because of your gracious charity towards us.

I hope to have the honor of paying my respects to you and of thanking you soon, in person.

Please, pray for this poor fellow who will always remain gratefully in Jesus Christ,

Your much-obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

A third letter was addressed to a lady cooperator of Lyons, Mrs. Quisard, who was doing all she could in her zeal to assist the saint while urging him to found a Salesian house in her native city[4].

Some illustrious visitors honored the Oratory during the first two months of 1884. The archbishop of Lyons, Cardinal Caverot, who had been somewhat cool toward Don Bosco the previous year, now stopped over in Turin on his way to Rome to see him. He arrived on January 1st at a time in the afternoon when the boys were listening to Don Bosco's sermon in

[3] See vol. XIII, page 646-647.
[4] Appendix (document 1 A, B, C).

church after the singing of Vespers. Don Bosco welcomed him with the utmost respect and cordiality, and asked him to attend the ceremony for the New Year. This ceremony was fairly long on account of the music. Nevertheless, His Eminence remained until the Benediction. He admired the conduct of the boys and complimented the servant of God for it. "People say that Don Bosco performs miracles," he said, "but I can safely say to the Holy Father that I have witnessed a great miracle with my own eyes. That was to see so large a number of boys all recollected and silent during a ceremony which was unduly long for young people of their age."

He would have liked to see the workshops, which were not open since it was a holiday at the Oratory, but he promised to come back and complete his tour at some other time. He remained for a while with the boys and their superiors, who instantly gathered around him. When he showed signs that he was about to leave, they all knelt down and he blessed them.[5]

During the following month of February 1884, three French bishops called on the servant of God. The evening of the 10th, the bishops of Grenoble and Viviers, Bishops Fava and Bonnet, arrived together. It was a Sunday and the whole community was in church. Don Bosco welcomed the two prelates with his usual cordiality and they talked with him at length. Later they said that they wanted to see the boys. It was then only a few minutes before benediction and Bishop Fava imparted it pontifically while his colleagues attended the ceremony in the sanctuary. As they emerged from the church, the band and a rousing applause greeted them. Bishop Fava addressed the boys. After thanking and congratulating the musicians, he went on to say: "A few years ago, I, too, conducted a band of musicians. But they were of a different color. They were the poor boys from Zanzibar. My heart rejoices as a missionary at the thought that many of you, following the footsteps of those who have gone before you, will one day go among savages or renegade Christians to bring to them the sweet and beneficial light of the Gospel. Unfortunately, have not our own Catholic countries now become missionary territory in a sense? Every day, ignorance of religion and the spirit of indifference take greater strides, even hatred of religion, which is nourished by ignorance and fanned by evil passions. May the Lord be thanked a thousand times for that which He graciously raised here under the virgin mantle of His Mother, creating a group of zealous and well-informed workers, both lay-

[5] Cardinal Caverot had been one of the prelates of whom Don Bosco had included a biographic sketch in the Loveliest Flower of the Apostolic College (Appendix, document 2).

men and priests, who in due course will go to the aid of the Church and restore respect, knowledge, love and observance of our holy religion in people's minds."

His words were greeted by an enthusiastic applause, and then everyone escorted the two honorable prelates to the main door.

The morning of February 24, 1884, Bishop Soubiranne, the bishop of Belley, called on Don Bosco. After he had said Mass at the altar of Mary Help of Christians, he went up to Don Bosco's room, for he had come to see him. He found him somewhat failing in health, to the point that for the last few days he had only celebrated Mass and at a later hour than usual in the little chapel next to his room. The bishop had a long talk with him and then asked to visit the workshops. But again, it was Sunday and the workshops looked empty, like a body without a soul! But he would not forego a visit to the printing shop, where he admired the spacious premises and the precautions taken against the possibilities of accidents,[6] the sanitary precautions and the machinery. As he took his leave, he said he also wished to come back again when he would have an opportunity to see the boys at work.[7] In the previous volume, we have already written about the first visit made to the Oratory by the new archbishop on January 15th of that same year. He kindly came a second time that very month and spent an entire day with Don Bosco and the Salesians. A few days prior to this visit on the 24th, he had gone to Valsalice, where the feast of St. Francis of Sales was held earlier. In January, it was the custom in that school for young noblemen to greet the student as a "prince" who upon terminating his studies had distinguished himself with a record over and above his companions in the field of study and good conduct to honor him with an academic entertainment. His picture was also taken to be hung in the big hall of the school. That year a boy named Bonifacio Di Donato, the son of a distinguished family from Fossano, had merited this honor. Among other people present on this occasion together with Cardinal Cajean Alimonda was Bishop Manacorda, who was the bishop of the young man's diocese. Don Bosco was prevented by his health from attending the ceremony. The young man was extolled in verse, prose and song, and even in the speeches made by the two prelates. Later Bonifacio

[6] In those days there were no special laws protecting young workers. But Don Bosco had seen to it that the belt pulleys setting the machinery in motion were placed beneath the floor level, and that there were metal railings all around the belt pulleys on a higher level and standing around the individual machines, commencing on the ground level to offer some protection.

[7] See Salesian Bulletin (January and February [French editions] 1884).

entered the Society of Jesus.

The anticipated date for celebrating the patron saint's feast day at Valsalice had been scheduled so as not to interfere with its celebration at the Oratory, where the cardinal was also expected. The cardinal was gracious enough to remain there until late evening. The February issue of the *Bulletin* read as follows:

> Don Bosco and a number of his early pupils seem to have rejuvenated. They felt that those blessed by-gone days had come back, and that they again had the joy of being honored by the presence of Archbishop Louis Fransoni, who was as loving toward the boys at the Oratory and toward youth in general as he was courageous and intrepid in his duty against the enemies of God and of religion. That illustrious prelate and hero of the Church, that glorious victim of his pastoral office who loved us so dearly and who even in his long exile never ceased to help us and protect us, must certainly have smiled down on us from Heaven on that day, rejoicing to see his worthy successor who, like himself is a son of Genoa, follow in his own former footsteps and act as a father to an Institute which first began and saw its early development under his own benevolent wing was guided by his advice and warmed by his affection.

This was the first time that the feast of St. Francis of Sales had been celebrated in the presence of the archbishop who was a cardinal as well, and this was stressed in the circular invitation letter written by Father Bonetti and signed by Don Bosco. For this reason, a large number of people attended, even though it was a weekday. His Eminence pontificated both morning and afternoon. The picture of the holy patron saint, painted by Rollini, was hung at the altar of St. Peter, making its first appearance in the church.

Since Don Bosco regarded this feast day as one of the best in the history of the Oratory, he invited some forty benefactors to lunch as a fitting company for the Archbishop. Mr. Carlo Rocca, a colonel of the reserves, acted as prior of the feast. The great joy of Don Bosco and his sons was expressed at the end of the repast by an enthusiastic hymn, with words written by Father Lemoyne and music composed by Dogliani, for the entertainment of His Eminence.[8] Several toasts were made and Don Bosco

[8] Appendix (document 3).

was the last to rise to his feet. He praised the archbishop, the priests and laymen who were present. He declared that they were all well deserving of the gratitude of all the Salesian houses, and said that they all loved His Eminence and were firmly attached to the Holy Father Leo XIII, and fully prepared even to lay down their lives for the Catholic faith. He thanked His Eminence for his kindness toward the Salesians and the boys entrusted to them and proposed that all the guests at table give a cheer for him and for the Pope. Then in a jocular tone, he invited everyone to dine with him in June of 1891 when he would be celebrating his golden priestly jubilee. His Eminence replied on behalf of everyone else to this way-ahead-of-time invitation, saying that they all accepted it and would do their utmost to be present, but he also exhorted Don Bosco to be there, too, since he was to take on the leading role. Gastini brought the joyous gathering to a close on a humorous note. In relating how as an orphaned and abandoned ten-year-old boy, he had been taken in by Don Bosco and had been restored to an honorable life in the world, he made such a muddle of Latin, Italian, and Piedmontese poetic verse in praise of the cardinal, that, with his own style, he caused great hilarity among the guests.

The pro-vicar Bishop Gazzelli of Rossana was to have been archdeacon at the benediction, as he had been during the solemn Mass. But shortly before it was time to don the sacred vestments, he went to ask Don Bosco to take his place because His Eminence wanted to have him at his side. Although barely able to climb the altar steps, Don Bosco readily consented. Thus everyone witnessed the perfect harmony reigning between Don Bosco and the head of the diocese.

The archbishop later attended a theatrical performance. A play in three acts entitled *Antonio*, written by a Salesian Father Bongiovanni, was being presented. It told the story of a wastrel youth. The theme and treatment of the subject was of the sort that Don Bosco always wished to see staged for the entertainment of the pupils of his schools, without worrying about the audience which came from outside.

As people came out of the theater, the playground was ablaze with light. All along the railings of the first floor balcony ran a poster of small colored lamps that read: "Long live St. Francis of Sales." Three lines of lamps blazed from the floor above with the words *"Long Live His Eminence – Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda – Our Dearly Beloved Archbishop"*.

As the cardinal took his leave, he said, "Every minute of this day has been a joy and a triumph to me." We might add that for Don Bosco it had

been an indescribable comfort. [9]

The meeting of cooperators had been postponed until February 19th, and was held at the Church of St. John the Evangelist by Father John Cagliero. Don Bosco did not go there because of his health condition. The cardinal presided and also wished to address the meeting, delivering a highly important talk in which he publicly justified his affection for the Salesian Congregation and explained how it was nourished by the spirit of the Gospel, namely by the spirit of Jesus Christ.[10]

These meetings of cooperators were held in several parts of Italy, but we will only refer to the meeting held in Padua that was due in great part to the zeal of Countess Bonmartini.[11] The meeting took place on January 20th in the Church of St. Francis. The youthful choir from the School of Este performed some fine music. Father Peter Pozzan, who had been sent there especially by Don Bosco, addressed the meeting. The bishop of Padua, Bishop Callegari, honored the pious gathering with his presence and delivered some very apt and proper words that described Don Bosco as a man of God and a man of Divine Providence. But he spoke mainly of the cooperators themselves. "They do not exist solely for the houses of Don Bosco," he said, "but for the welfare of the universal Church, and especially for the welfare of the respective dioceses, since they are just so many arms working on behalf of the bishops and the pastors." He then took up the objection that was occasionally raised. "The houses of Don Bosco are so warmly recommended to us, some people say, 'but have we not other works that need to be initiated and supported?'"

The bishop replied that by helping Don Bosco's houses, one was helping the entire Church, for Don Bosco did not limit his activity to Turin alone, but aimed at helping the whole of youth and at restoring Christianity in society. Then the bishop urged both the clergy and the lay population to join the Salesian cooperators, saying that he regarded the growth of the association in his diocese as a blessing from Heaven.

After hearing a report on this talk, Don Bosco was so delighted that in talking with Father Lemoyne about the cooperators on February 16th, he voiced his satisfaction. "I reflected at great length on how to found the Salesian cooperators," he told him. "Their real, essential purpose is not that of helping the Salesians, but of helping the Church, the bishops and the pastors in their works of charity under the overall direction of the

[9] See *Bulletin* (February 1884).

[10] Appendix (document 4).

[11] See vol. XV, page 557.

Salesians, in works such as catechism instruction, the education of poor children and so on. Their assistance to the Salesians is nothing more than assistance to one of the many good works done within the Catholic Church. It is true that we address appeals to them to help our own needs, but the cooperators are instruments in the hands of the bishops. The only person who, so far, has thoroughly understood this, is the bishop of Padua, who said quite explicitly that there should be no jealousy concerning the Salesian cooperators because they belong to the diocese and that every pastor should be a cooperator like his parishioners. Lady cooperators were later added to the association of the cooperators because that was what Pius IX wanted."

In the afternoon of January 31st, Don Bosco went to San Benigno to celebrate the Feast of St. Francis of Sales with the novices. He was wearied by confessions and audiences and, in addition to his fatigue, his physical discomforts that had been troubling him considerably during the previous weeks made him look exhausted as he set out. In his good-night talk, Father Barberis spoke about it, since he was sadly impressed by it and declared that it seemed to him that the time had now come to promise something exceptionally great to Our Lord, so that Don Bosco's precious life might be prolonged. It then happened that once again what had occurred during his illness at Varazze in 1872 was repeated. Immediately after his words, several clerics said they were ready to offer their own lives in exchange for that of Don Bosco. But the one who among others attracted the attention of everyone was a twenty-four-year-old cleric named Louis Gamerro, who was tall of stature, florid of complexion and aglow with health, to the point that in two years he had never suffered the slightest physical inconvenience. With a forcefulness that astounded all those who had heard him, he said he was praying that God allow him to die instead of Don Bosco.

Everyone thought, so it seemed, that the offering made by this young man had been acceptable to the Lord. During the night, Louis Gamerro dreamed that he would die. Without mentioning the dream the next morning, he told his companions jubilantly, "It is now my turn!"

Shortly afterward, when the new places were assigned at table in the dining room, he said with the utmost certainty to the superior in charge, "It is useless for you to assign a place for me. I shall not be there to occupy it."

He began to feel sick the following day. His illness grew manifestly worse to the point that on the third day, he made his confession and received Holy Viaticum. Since he seemed to rally a little after that, Father

Julius Barberis sought to encourage him by holding out the prospect of his recovery, so that he could become a missionary, as he knew he was eager to be. But Gamerro only listened to him in silence, and after waiting until he had gone away, said to the orderly, "No, no. I shall die tonight."

A companion, to whom he had told the dream, began to believe in it. When Father Bianchi came in to see him, he said, "Since you hold that you are going to die, recommend your soul to Our Lady and ask her to help you escape quickly from Purgatory."

Gamerro answered, "I shall be with Her this evening. She Herself told me." He remained serene and happy until his dying moment at two o'clock in the afternoon.

In the dream, he had also seen that his mother would have come to visit him, but that it was going to be too late, for she would have found him already dead. This, too, came true to the letter. She had not been able to leave immediately upon getting the news that his condition had grown worse, and she did not arrive until two hours after his death.

Word of what had happened circulated in Turin. A foolishly comic journal published a caricature depicting the cleric hanging from a tree, with Don Bosco kneeling in front of him. Poor wretches, with no faith and no love!

Now what about Don Bosco's health? His health was going from bad to worse. At first, in his extreme exhaustion, even the act of talking caused an excruciating pain in his stomach. He also had a touch of bronchitis, which caused him to cough up blood. The night of February 10th, Don Bosco drenched a washcloth with his blood. The swelling in his legs that had pained him for years had now reached also in his thighs. On the 12th, Dr. Albertotti ordered him to remain in bed. In consultation that same evening, Dr. Albertotti and Dr. Fissore found symptoms of extreme weakness: his heartbeats were barely perceptible. In his anxiety, Cardinal Alimonda had sent for news about his condition twice a day.

During the night of the 13th, Don Bosco had a dream that he reported to someone when he woke up. He had dreamed that he was in a house where he met both St. Peter and St. Paul. They were wearing tunics which came down below their knees and Oriental headdresses. They both smiled at Don Bosco. When he asked them if they had some mission to assign to him or something they wanted to tell him, they did not answer, but instead they began talking about the Oratory and the boys. Just then a friend of Don Bosco who was very well known among the Salesians (though later, Don Bosco did not remember who he was) appeared on the scene.

"Just look at these two," Don Bosco said to the newcomer, and his friend looked at them.

"What do I see? Is it possible?" the other exclaimed. "Saints Peter and Paul, here?"

Don Bosco then repeated his previous question, but the two Apostles continued talking evasively of other matters, although they were most affable.

All of a sudden, St. Peter asked: "What about the life of St. Peter?"

Likewise St. Paul asked: "What about the life of St. Paul?"

"True," Don Bosco admitted with a humble apology. He had, in fact, planned to chronicle their two lives, but he had then forgotten all about it.

"If you do not do it soon, you'll have no more time," St. Paul warned him.

Meanwhile, St. Peter had removed his headgear and his head was bald with two tufts of hair at the temples. He had the appearance of a healthy, handsome old man. He withdrew a little and set himself in the act of praying.

Don Bosco tried to follow him, but St. Paul said, "Let him pray."

Don Bosco replied, "I would like to see in front of what kind of thing he is kneeling."

He went over to him and saw he was kneeling in front of something that looked like an altar, but it was not. He asked St. Paul, "But are there no candlesticks?"

"There is no need of them, where the sun is eternally shining," the Apostle answered.

"I cannot even see the altar. But, after all, there is no altar, right?"

"Mount Calvary is the altar for everybody."

Then St. Peter began to pray in a high, melodic voice although he was not singing: "Glory be to God the Father, the Creator, to God the Son and Redeemer, and glory be to God the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier. Glory and honor to God alone forever and ever. Praise to you, oh Mary. Heaven and earth proclaim you Queen. Mary...Mary...Mary..."

He pronounced this name, pausing between one exclamation and the next with such profound affection and a crescendo of emotion that words could not describe it, and one could only shed tears of tenderness.

As St. Peter rose to his feet again, St. Paul went to kneel at the same spot, and with a firm voice he also began to pray: "Oh, the depth of divine mysteries! Great God, Your secrets are inaccessible to mortals. Only in Heaven will they comprehend their depth and majesty, for it is accessible only to those endowed with heavenly understanding. Oh! God, one and

three, to You let there be given honor, homage and thanks from every corner of the universe. May your name, O Mary, be praised and blessed by all. In Heaven they sing your Glory, and here on earth may you be forever our help, our comfort and our salvation. *Regina Sanctorum omnium, alleluia, alleluia* [Queen of all Saints, alleluia, alleluia]."

At the end of his report on his dream, Don Bosco said, "By the way the words were uttered, this prayer made an impression so profound on me that I began to weep and woke up. Afterward, an indescribable comfort lingered on in my soul."

Who can say what caused the fantastic vision? It may have been his fever or perhaps his habit of celebrating Mass at the altar of St. Peter. But such a dream also reveals the nature of the thoughts and sentiments that habitually filled his heart.

Accustomed as he was to a life of relentless activity, the bed quilts represented an unendurable burden to him and his brain could not concentrate on any serious reflections or any kind of reading. When he talked, a certain disconnection was evident in his ideas and when he got up several hours a day to write letters, he frequently left out words. He was deeply moved when he was informed of Gamerro's death the night of the 13th, and of the circumstances that had led up to it. After sitting silent for a while, he finally said with a smile, "Look, there! That is an injustice! It should have been my turn to go and rest after so many years of hardships and toil. Instead people who have not even begun to work are going to rest! It should have been my turn, not his!"

His great serenity of spirit is made evident by his correspondence. On the 14th, he wrote to Mlle. Louvet, "My chest is a little tired." He had written to Count Colle, "My health has not been too good these last few days." He wrote him again on the 20th, "My health is somewhat shaken-up and I am still a prisoner in my room." Nevertheless, his desire to rest in Our Lord was heard on his lips every now and then. At times when people were reporting to him on financial matters, he would exclaim, "If things go on like this, I certainly shall never reach the celebration of my golden Mass. My successor will have to attend to these financial matters."

Yet the critical stage of his sickness seemed to be over. He went out for a walk with Father Lemoyne during the afternoon of the 14th. They walked in the direction of the Milan railway tracks, and Don Bosco halted a moment as they passed in front of the Church of Mary Help of Christians. He raised his eyes to look at it for a moment, and said, "Once upon a time, there was a field here where beans and potatoes were grow-

ing. Now, the church and the Oratory stand here. Here, precisely where the shrine stands I saw the Madonna in a dream and she stood still, looked all around her and said, *'Hic domus mea, hinc gloria mea'* [Here is my house, from here, my glory]."

Don Bosco had a violent fever attack on the 15th, which lasted from eleven o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock in the evening, yet he did not go to bed. He passed entire nights sleepless. Ever since 1872, his profuse nocturnal perspirations had obliged him to linger an hour in his room upon getting up in the morning, so as not to halt the perspiration abruptly, and allow him time to change his flannel shirt. Now he was worse then ever before.

He confessed to Father John Baptist Lemoyne on the 17th that the swelling in his legs had climbed to the pit of his stomach where he had a round swelling the size of an egg. Dr. Albertotti warned the Salesians to be on the alert because Don Bosco could die from one minute to the next. They should therefore keep watch over him during the night, for it could well happen that one tragic morning they would find him dead.

The thought of an imminent end was pessimistically occupying his mind so much that he drafted a circular letter on the 18th which his successor was to send to the Salesian cooperators in the event of his death. He then told Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "I can see before me the progress that our Congregation will make in the future. From South America, it will spread to the North, and then it will extend to Austria, Hungary and Russia,[12] then to India, Ceylon, and China. Within a space of a hundred years from now, what a wonderful development we would be able to see for the Salesians if we were still alive! The ancient orders – Dominicans, Franciscans and others – were destined by Divine Providence to be the pillars of the Church. Whereas our own Congregation was founded to meet the current needs of the Church, and it will spread with incredible rapidity all over the world. Yet only two or three bad Salesians would be enough to lead astray all the others. If we remain faithful to the ordinary Christian virtues, what a magnificent future God has in store for us!"

A change came about in the ecclesiastical Rome during the latter part of February to which Don Bosco could not be indifferent. Cardinal

[12] As to Russia, we read in the minutes of a meeting of the Superior Chapter (February 28th): "Father Rua reported that during the last few days, two applications for houses have been received: one from St. Petersburg which called for a Salesian priest and our nuns, the other for a Salesian house in Odessa."

Monaco La Valletta was appointed grand penitentiary of the Holy Church and Leo XIII chose Cardinal Parocchi as his replacement in the Vicariate, who had formerly been so loathed by the liberals while he was bishop of Pavia that when he later became archbishop of Bologna, he had been unable to obtain the royal exequatur from the government for five years.[13] A man of great talent, extensive culture and outstanding merit, Cardinal Parocchi should have remained under the bushel basket mainly because of the malevolence of sectarian people. The high office to which the Pope had now assigned him enabled him to render outstanding services to the Church. Don Bosco wrote a few words of congratulations to him immediately, and His Eminence replied with a simple call card and a few formal words. But on March 14th, after he had taken over his new office, he wrote a letter saying: "Your Reverence will realize how welcome to me your kind congratulations were in view of the esteem and affection I profess for you. I am most grateful and ask you to remember me in your fervent prayers and have the whole Salesian Congregation remember me, too, in theirs. I shall be truly happy to do whatever I can for this Congregation, according to the faculties and power granted to me."

Don Bosco took walks with great difficulty with Father John Baptist Lemoyne on February 21st, 22nd and 23rd. However, his mind did not provide him any rest. He was continually engaged in the project of resuming the paper work already done and steps taken again and again in less propitious circumstances, since they seemed to have a greater likelihood of success, namely, the granting of privileges. The idea of another journey to France to raise the funds he needed for all his multiple needs was growing more and more. But we will discuss both projects separately later on.

We must confess right away that the latter decision on Don Bosco's part to make a trip to France alarmed the superiors, and he was not entirely without some apprehension himself. Nevertheless, Father Dalmazzo wrote from Rome saying that the work on the Sacred Heart Church had been suspended due to lack of money. Besides that, the Oratory and other houses were in very great need. In short, the Superior Chapter was at that time facing the enormous cumulative debt of 1,126.00 lire.

Marseille was insisting on Don Bosco's annual visit there because the house urgently required money. In a letter to Father Guiol, the pastor, Don Bosco did say that his eyesight and his health would most probably prevent him from undertaking the journey, and meanwhile, with his cus-

[13] See vol. XIV, page 72 and following.

tomary joviality, he instructed him to pay the debts. But the pastor replied that this would be far more easily achieved if Don Bosco were there himself. He promised that he would protect him from the overwhelming crowds, as had happened on other occasions, by keeping him hidden away in the recently inaugurated novitiate outside the city where only a few people would go to see him[14]. This insistence, too, helped him to make up his mind about the trip.

When he finally announced this hazardous intention, Father John Cagliero objected with respectful determination, and told him that his life was more precious than any other thing in the world and preferable to any treasure. Cardinal Alimonda was of an identical opinion and endeavored to prevent his departure. When he was informed that Don Bosco wished to call on him before setting out, he answered, "It would be a mortal sin to have Don Bosco come this far. He is too tired and has too many business transactions on hand. Tell my good Father John that I will be at the Oratory within an hour."

At the Oratory, Don Bosco explained the reasons that forced him to undertake the journey. His Eminence contented himself with having Don Bosco promise that should he feel worse upon arriving at Alassio, he would turn back.

During this conversation, the cardinal confided to Don Bosco that he had asked the Pope to let him have an auxiliary bishop, as the Holy Father had promised he would, when he had been assigned to Turin.

"Whom do you have in mind?" Don Bosco asked.

"Several, and Canon Pulciano first and foremost."

"Good! Who were the others?"

"I also gave thought to Canon Richelmy."

"Good! They are both excellent priests."

"But Don Bosco, who do you think might turn out to be a good auxiliary bishop who would be able to help me? Please let me have your opinion."

"Certainly one is not always able to get the best in this world, and one has to make do with what is merely good. But if you really want what is the best, then you might choose Canon Bertagna, the vicar general of Asti."

The cardinal said nothing further and changed the subject, but as soon as he returned home to his residence, he telegraphed Rome, asking the Pope if he could have Canon Bertagna as his auxiliary bishop. It was a most fortunate choice as everyone knows, besides being satisfactory

[14] Minutes (January 11, 1884).

reparation for the unjust damage done to him.[15]

During a chapter meeting that evening, the saint inaugurated the session by thanking the Divine Providence for the kindness and affection with which Cardinal Alimonda treated both Don Bosco and his Congregation. "His Eminence is opening a new era for us in this diocese." He then dealt with several different matters.

Before bringing the meeting to a close, he made the official announcement that he was leaving for France on March 1st. "While I am away, the Chapter should meet at least once a month," he went on. "I am giving full power of attorney to Father Michael Rua to preside over such meetings. Let the members continue to love one another. We need charity to do better the things that we have to do. Let the boys earnestly pray for me while I am away for two reasons: so that my health can stand up under the discomforts of the journey, and because I need a lot of money. Let the older boys and the younger ones know about it. Poor Don Bosco is not undertaking this journey on his own behalf, but to provide for the Oratory and to pay his debts. Tell the Salesians about it in talks and urge them to save as much as they can in expenses. And once again blessed be the Lord for the kindness shown to us by the cardinal. Father Michael Rua should call on him now and then."

All this took place on February 28th. On the morning of the 29th, Dr. Albertotti examined him and not finding him well enough, did all he could to dissuade him from his plan. "It will be a miracle if you get as far as Nice without dying," he told him.

"If I do not come back! Patience!" Don Bosco answered. "It only means that I have to put things in order before I set out. But go I must."

"Be very careful," the doctor urged his secretary as soon as he got outside the room. "I would not be surprised if Don Bosco were to die without anyone of you noticing it. You should not kid yourselves!"

The saint did just as he had told the doctor. During the afternoon, he sent for a notary and a witness and dictated his own will and testament as though he were setting out for eternity itself. Then, he sent for Father Michael Rua and Father John Cagliero, and pointing to the notary deed on the table, said, "Here is my testament. I have appointed both of you my heirs. If I should not come back, as the doctor fears I may not, you will

[15] A singular coincidence! Monsignor Bertagna was proclaimed during the Consistory of March 24th. The 25th was the first anniversary of Bishop Gastaldi's death, but since it was the Feast of the Annunciation, the death tolling of the bells was ordered for the evening of the 23rd and the solemn requiem for the morning of the 24th. Furthermore on the 25th, His Eminence Ferrieri had an apoplectic stroke.

already know how things stand."

Since Don Bosco had nothing further to say, Father Michael Rua left the room, probably with a heavy heart, although he kept himself outwardly under control, as he always did. The saint made a sign to Father John Cagliero that he was to remain. After a moment of silence, the affectionate son asked, "So you really mean to travel in your condition?"

"How do you expect me to do otherwise?" he answered. "Don't you see that we do not have the money to keep on going? If I were not to go, I would not know where to run in order to feed our boys. I can only hope to find help in France."

"Ah!" Father John Cagliero answered, weeping like a child, "we have been going on by dint of miracles. We shall see this, too! Then go and we shall pray!"

"Then I am going to leave for France. The testament has been written and everything is in order. I am handing this box over to you. Look after it, and let it be my last souvenir to you."

Believing that he was sufficiently well informed of its contents, Father John Cagliero took it and put it into his pocket without opening it. He opened it only six months later when, against all medical prediction and general expectations, the saint returned home. He then saw that inside the box there was the gold ring that had formerly belonged to the saint's father. He treasured this handsome souvenir for the rest of his life.

Chapter 2

THROUGH LIGURIA TO FRANCE AND AGAIN THROUGH LIGURIA ON THE RETURN JOURNEY

This time, Don Bosco's departure for France left a profound feeling of sadness in the hearts of those he left behind, a feeling that was in no way alleviated by his habitual joviality. It was a truly heartrending sight to see him leave the Oratory so run down and travel the world over to beg for alms. From that moment on it became like a password throughout the entire house: pray and have people pray! During the last ten years of Don Bosco's life, a group of youngsters had always met during the snack break in his antechamber to say a few prayers for their benefactor and father before a small altar where there was a statuette of the Madonna. After his departure, this pious custom was continued with even greater fervor.

Father Julius Barberis and Father Angelo Savio accompanied him as far as Alassio. The superiors of this school, who were awaiting him at the station, found him very cheerful, although headaches and stomachaches had troubled him all the way. At the entrance hall of the school, the pupils greeted him with a song that Father Baratta had set to music. In order to allow everyone to kiss his hand, he spent at least a quarter of an hour walking through the youthful crowd, but he retired early to rest, asking for a bell to keep beside his bed. He told Father Barberis that should he hear the bell ring, he should come quickly.

He slept fairly peacefully. In fact, he had one of his usual dreams, which he later related to Father Francis Cerruti. He thought that he was in the square at the beginning of Viale San Massimo, and was walking in the direction of the Defilippi building. There was a large group of people standing around, as if they were waiting for somebody. When Don Bosco went up to them, they gathered around him and said, "We were waiting for you, Don Bosco."

"And what do you want from me?"

"We want you to come with us."

"Then let us go," the saint answered. "It's so easy to please you."

They led him to the area that, at that time, was occupied by the

foundry. It was at the ground floor underneath his rooms, which had formerly formed part of the meadow where the Feasts of the Oratory had begun. Don Bosco went through a door with them, but instead of entering into the foundry, he found himself inside a beautiful church.

"Now you have to preach a sermon to us, Don Bosco," they said.

"But I am not ready for it."

"That does not matter. Say whatever comes into your head."

"Well then, we will preach!"

He got into the pulpit and began to talk against immorality. He described the universal deluge and the destruction of Sodom, developing his theme with such chronological order and subdivision of events that he could recall them fully upon waking up.

After his sermon, the people then said, "Now you have to celebrate holy Mass."

"I find no difficulty in doing that, so let us celebrate. Amen!"

He went into the sacristy, but everything was missing. It took him a long time before he could locate the Missal. Then, he could not find the chalice and the chasuble, and there were no hosts or cruets. He looked around for them and, at last, he found everything. He donned his vestments and went toward the altar. At this point in the Mass, a few people approached the altar to receive Communion. He moved the Missal, but found no key for the tabernacle. He scanned the altar anxiously, but did not see it. No one went to get it, so he descended the predella himself, took off the chasuble and his alb, and went looking for someone to help him find the missing key.

From the church, he passed into the premises where the nuns were then living, but did not see a living soul. Then, he heard Father Notario laugh. He entered the room and saw Father Notario talking and laughing with a young boy.

"He knows he is needed in church and that the key to the tabernacle is missing," Don Bosco said to himself before he entered the room, "yet he is in there laughing!"

He went inside, asked where the key was and returned to the altar once he had it.

As he walked through the house of the sisters, he did not see a single nun. When he reached the altar, he continued the Mass up to the end. His dream went on all night long.

The following day, Sunday, he said Mass without mishap; but later, after he had granted an audience to two or three people, he felt like passing

out, and so he had to suspend all other activities. He had to be helped back to his room. A meeting of the cooperators had been scheduled in the school chapel, but he was advised not to give a speech. The director, Father Francis Cerruti, spoke in his stead, but Don Bosco was present in the sanctuary. Father Nicholas Cibrario from Vallecrosia was also there, and so was Father Joseph Ronchail from Nice Maritime. In reporting this event, the April Bulletin took the opportunity to urge the readers to pray for Don Bosco, who had been growing weaker and weaker for some time now.

"There is no cause for alarm at the present time," Father Bonetti wrote, "but a learned Turin doctor examined him before he left Turin and said that we should not create illusions as far as his life and in view of all the hardships already endured, one can look upon Don Bosco already as a man a hundred years old, although he is not yet seventy."

Hoping to distract him a little, Father Cerruti persuaded him to go out for a walk. He took him to bless a young man named Airoldi who suffered from mental illness. Due to his mental state, the young man was uncontrollably rude to Don Bosco. Although Don Bosco didn't seem offended, the director apologized for the unfortunate young man's unbecoming words and behavior.

"Oh, bless you! That is nothing," the saint replied. "Would you like to know what happened to me some years ago in Turin?"

"Please tell me about it."

Don Bosco relayed a story about a sick man he once visited.

One day a lady called on him and implored him to go and see someone who was about to die. The dying man held a high position in the Freemasonic circles and had resolutely sent away all priests who approached his bedside. It was only with great difficulty that he allowed Don Bosco to see him.

The saint complied immediately, but as soon as he entered the room and closed the door, the man blasted desperately, "Do you come as a friend or as a priest? Woe to you if you mention confession!" The sick man seized two pistols from either side of his bed and aimed them at Don Bosco's chest. "Remember it carefully: one bullet is for you, the other for me at the first word about confession. Anyway, I only have a few more days to live."

"Were you not afraid?" Father Cerruti then asked.

"I merely told him to relax because I would not mention confession without his consent. I then questioned him about his illness and his medical diagnosis. Then, I turned to the subject of history, and gradually I

began to describe to him the death of Voltaire. Finally, I wound up by saying that although a number of people considered Voltaire damned, I would not say as much, or at least I did not think that it was certain that he was damned, since I knew how infinitely merciful God is. 'What is that? You mean to say that there may still be hope for Voltaire?' the sick man interrupted after listening with keen interest to what I had been saying. 'Then please, be so kind as to hear my confession.' I prepared him and I heard his confession. As I was giving him the absolution, he burst into tears, saying that never before in his life he had ever felt such peace as at that moment. He recanted, as he was required to do. The next day, he received Holy Viaticum, but first he sent for all the boarders of his house to come to his room and publicly asked for their pardon for the scandal he had given them. He rallied after receiving Viaticum and lived another two or three months. He devoted his last days entirely to prayer, asking again for pardon and receiving the Blessed Sacrament most edifyingly.

"You ought to know that this man held a very high position among the Freemasons," Don Bosco added, "so let us give thanks to God for everything."[1]

He set out for Menton with Father Julius Barberis and Father Joseph Ronchail at nine o'clock on the 3rd. A wealthy and pious Polish family there had promised him a substantial sum of money if he would accept their hospitality. After being assured in writing that he would, the family informed as many people as possible, so that around twenty other persons went there from Nice and more from Monaco and from Cannes. About forty people in all were waiting to see the saint. But when they were informed how poor Don Bosco's health was, they were discreet and all agreed not to tire him.

Everyone made sure of what they wished to say to him before approaching him, so as to enable him to answer them only with a simple yes or no. Thus, they were all able to talk with him without aggravating his already tired condition.

When the audiences were over, someone went to ask Don Bosco to call on an old priest who was so ill that the doctors had given up all hope for his recovery. He complied immediately with the request, but found the priest practically unconscious. When asked how he was, the priest gave no sign that he understood.

[1] Summarium Super Intrductione Causae (witness Father Cerruti), page 467

The saint then said loudly into his ear, "Do you understand me?" the sick man stuttered a few unrecognizable syllables without meaning and the servant of God then asked, "Do you know Don Bosco?"

"Don Bosco! Yes, I do know him. What of it?"

"I am Don Bosco. Have you nothing to say to me?"

"What? You?" He suddenly sat up in bed and announced that he wished to get up. His sister thought he was out of his mind, but the priest insisted, "I want to get up, I tell you. You can tell the pastor he need not be bothered. I no longer need the Extreme Unction."

He did get up and spoke quite coherently. He also attended Don Bosco's Mass the following day. However, a few months later he suffered a relapse, but Don Bosco was then no longer there to help him rise from his bed. It is an irrefutable fact that on that first occasion, the doctors had relinquished all hope of getting him on his feet again.

Don Bosco spent the night at Menton with Father Joseph Ronchail. Father Julius Barberis had gone on ahead to Nice to bring the joyous news that Don Bosco would be there the next morning. Since the hour of his arrival was also known outside the house, the saint arrived to face an embarrassing situation.

The Spanish Marquis d'Avila appeared at the railway station with his coach to drive him home. But the countess of San Marzano had sent her coach as well and Baron Heraud was driving. Both of them were eager for the honor of taking Don Bosco, and no one intended to yield. Don Bosco settled the matter by climbing into the coach nearest him, which belonged to the countess and sent Father Julius Barberis, who had come to meet him, to climb into the second with Father Joseph Ronchail. "They are two fine gentlemen, you know," he said to the marquis as he entrusted them to his care.

Apart from the fact that the coach was nearest to him, Don Bosco also had another reason for giving his preference to the countess. She had visited him at the Oratory a few days before his departure and had requested an assurance from him that when he would get to Nice, he would avail himself of her carriage to ride the distance from the railway station to the Patronage of St. Peter.

This was not the first of such embarrassing rivalries in Nice, and they put his presence of mind to the test. On one occasion, a whole row of coaches of princely households had awaited him. Each of the coachmen approached him to recommend their own particular carriage and announced that his was Count or Duke So-and-So's coach. He would be

honored if you would use it, and he requests you to ride in it, etc., until all the offers were made. Don Bosco knew that he could not accept one offer without offending all the others.

"Listen," he said, "let us do it this way. I already agreed back in Turin to ride to the Patronage in the coach of the Marchioness. So let the count's coach go ahead and stand waiting outside the Patronage door. As soon as I arrive, I shall change coaches and return to the station. The duke's coach can wait here because I will not be long in coming back, and then I will ride to the Patronage again in his carriage. We can keep this up until everyone has been satisfied."

The gentlemen concerned realized how embarrassing it had been for him. They laughed at the smart solution of the predicament and were not in the least offended when he took the coach of the Marchioness.

At the Patronage, he found that a number of gentlemen had already gathered and were joining the boys in the welcome ceremony. When the guests departed, the Salesians were very distressed as they saw Don Bosco cough up blood. They all agreed to prevent anything and anyone from disturbing him. Father Joseph Ronchail, in particular, was very stubborn and inexorable and he turned away all those who had come asking to be received by Don Bosco without listening to any reasons. He then had Dr. D'Espiney examine him thoroughly. This doctor was the author of Don Bosco's well-known biography.

The doctor sent word that he was to remain in bed to await him at seven o'clock, when he carefully examined him and gave his diagnosis, which was very different from that of his Turin colleagues. An enlargement of the liver caused his exceptionally swollen belly, he said, and he maintained that the medicines prescribed for him in Turin had only made the situation worse. Together with a number of other things, he prescribed two teaspoons of liquid quinine every morning against the fever that was returning daily with brief spells.

Don Bosco immediately felt the relief of the new cure. He was able to celebrate Mass on the morning of the 6th for a congregation of over five hundred visitors. He accepted an invitation to lunch at twelve o'clock from the De Montigny family and was detained there in conversation at least for a couple of hours. As he left them, he called on a gentleman who was sick. This gentleman was a native of Bahia from Brazil and had made Don Bosco an offer of a furnished house in that city, provided he sent some Salesians there. The mistress of the house where the sick man was staying was so enchanted by the conversation of the saint, that she called

on him several times, saying that she was fully prepared to turn over the whole building to him if he would use it as a house for old priests who were no longer able to work. The servant of God was very tired when he returned home to the Patronage, yet still presided at a chapter meeting to discuss the admission to vows of a confrere and the admission to Holy Orders of several others.

As soon as word got around the town that his condition had improved, carriages with visitors showed up without interruption. Don Bosco, as usual, very graciously granted even long audiences. Some were calling on Don Bosco to bring alms, others to seek guidance in spiritual matters, and still others to report graces obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians. A number of people, who had received his blessing the previous year or had been advised by him to say certain prayers for what they wanted, now came to tell him that their prayers had been answered. Some who had written him while in Turin called on him only to thank him while others called on the saint to ask him to pray for them.

A fourteen-year-old girl had come to hand the proceeds of a lottery she had organized over to him. In 1883, the doctors had declared her a hopeless case. In that desperate state, Don Bosco had blessed her and her health had been restored. In her gratitude, she could talk of nothing but Don Bosco and went around begging alms for the Salesian houses.

The coadjutor Joseph Rossi arrived in Nice from the Oratory. He was coming from Paris and Marseille, where he had been on business for the Congregation. Father Peter Perrot also got there from La Navarre and Father Nicholas Cibrario from Vallecrosia. A letter was written by the Augustinian friar, Peter Belgrano, from Prague, and reached Don Bosco in Nice. The friar thanked Don Bosco on behalf of Empress of Austria Maria Anna for the handsomely bound copy of the Bulletin he had sent her. She had enclosed a donation of five hundred lire, asking him to pray for a very special grace.

On March 7th, Don Bosco gave an audience to fifty seminarians. They assembled in the library that served as an antechamber. After a few brief words, Don Bosco blessed them and then they filed past him to kiss his hand. Various Lenten preachers also called on him individually. People were talking everywhere about Don Bosco.

A curious thing occurred in Don Bosco's room on the 10th. A lady brought him a ten-year-old boy who was blindfolded.

"My child has been suffering terribly from eye trouble now for some time," the mother said, "and he screams the whole night through."

Don Bosco blessed him, told him to kiss a medal of Mary Help of Christians and then asked him, "What kind of pain do you have?"

"I feel no pain," the child answered.

"What do you mean, you feel no pain?" screamed the mother. "He has such an awful pain in his eyes, Father!"

"No, they no longer hurt me," the boy replied.

"Of course they still hurt him," the mother said, "he cannot stand the light and is always screaming."

"Can you see now?" Don Bosco asked after he removed the blindfold from the child's eyes.

"Yes, I can see perfectly," the boy answered.

"Can you look at the light?"

"Yes, I can," the boy said as he looked out the window.

The mother could not quiet down, and she was afraid of being called a liar. Confronted with her son's answers, she became so angry that she was on the verge of striking him.

Don Bosco was obliged to intervene. "Look here, do you want your son to be sick?"

The boy was jumping, laughing, looking around him, not knowing whether he ought to believe his mother or his own eyes because the truth of the matter was that he had recovered his eyesight completely.

That evening, Don Bosco wanted to give a talk to both the cooperators and his friends in the private chapel of the Patronage. Nearly one hundred coaches lined up on the street outside the house. Many of the visitors were from outside Nice, since this was a tourist season. The saint spoke for three quarters of an hour, telling them about the Salesian houses and explaining how essential it was that good Christians help him do good. As he descended from the pulpit, he picked up the collection personally. He collected 1,800 francs, only half the amount of the previous occasion. But one has to remember that there was a financial crisis that year and business was stagnant as the number of tourists greatly diminished. Instead of bringing in a profit, the attempt to organize a national exhibit had only created financial losses of money for speculators, exhibitors and the organizing committee.

Don Bosco's health was now excellent and several times a day, he repeated, *"Dieu soit beni en toutes les choses* [Blessed be God in all things]." He was able to visit Cannes on the 12th with Father Joseph Ronchail. A lady cooperator gathered information on them from eyewitnesses.

At Cannes, the saint was happy to celebrate Mass in the convent of the nuns of St. Thomas of Villombrosa. As soon as word got out that Don Bosco would be there, people started streaming from all parts of the city and jamming both the chapel and the courtyard. One morning a girl suffering from intestinal trouble and a swollen stomach was led to Don Bosco to receive his blessing. After he blessed her, the girl's mother asked him if she would recover.

"Yes, she will, but our Lord will exact a big sacrifice from you," the sick girl did indeed recover, but a short while later, the girl's father died.

On another occasion, some orphan girls were gathered around the saint who had blessed them, and as he turned to the mother superior, he said, "One of these girls is very sick, Reverend Mother."

This was very true, but the disease could not be seen because the girl suffered from a malignant ulcer at the bottom of her spine. The dressing on it had to be changed every day. Don Bosco went over to the girl, who was about eighteen years old, and blessed her, saying, "You will recover. Yes, you will recover, poor child." And she did, indeed, recover.

One day as he was talking with the sisters, he asked them, "What do you want me to ask of our Lord for you?"

"That all our girls grow up to be very pious," they answered.

"Could you tell us whether or not we shall ever return to the hospital?" one of the older nuns asked.

Before the suppression law had gone into effect, the nuns had directed the hospital of Cannes for a long time. Later on, it was taken over by the government and secularized.

At that question, the saint raised his eyes to Heaven. "Yes, you will, but it will take time," he replied. "I will be dead by then and so will you, you will be already dead."

He went on repeating the same words to each of the nuns individually, save one whom he passed by. Her name was Sister Valeria and she died in 1932, two years after her fellow nuns had returned to their work in their former hospital.

This nun was not present when Don Bosco had referred to the girl with the hidden ulcer. She showed up quite suddenly after the event had happened, and she said to him, "Oh, Father! We have a girl here who is very sick...."

But Don Bosco had interrupted her, saying, "I know, Sister, I know. It has been taken care of."

After he had left for Cannes, a countess called upon Don Bosco in

Nice to ask him if he could bless a little nephew of hers who suffered from painful convulsions that threatened to choke him every time he suffered an attack. Since the countess had not found Don Bosco in Nice, she sent a telegram to him in Cannes. Father Joseph Ronchail returned temporarily to Nice two days later, since Father Julius Barberis had taken his secretary position. The countess showed up again and asked, "You who were with Don Bosco, could you tell me at what time he received my telegram?"

"He received it at 4:30 in the afternoon and he immediately sent you the blessing of Mary Help of Christians and prayed for the sick child."

"Oh, how miraculous!" the countess exclaimed. "His convulsions ceased exactly at 4:30 and now the child is not only much better, but he is almost entirely cured."

She had already brought an offering on her visit there before, and now she gave an even more generous offering.

The saint now went on to Frejus with Father Joseph Ronchail and Father Julius Barberis. He dined with the bishop, who was always very benevolent toward the Salesians. No one had been informed that Don Bosco was going to Frejus; the bishop himself had only been informed of it in writing late the night before. Nevertheless, a crowd awaited him immediately after dinner outside the bishop's residence, and graciously as always, Don Bosco received people in audience until it was time for his departure.

The viscount de Villaneuve wanted Don Bosco to administer First Communion to his son. He lived near the house of La Navarre and was among the many visitors. The boy was not yet eleven years old at that time, and children were not admitted to this Sacrament until after their fourteenth birthday. The pastor was, therefore, resolutely opposed to such an exception to the rule. The bishop would likewise have withheld his permission had not the saint (who advocated early and frequent Communion) intervened.

The two vicar generals, the Lenten preacher from the cathedral and five or six other people accompanied Don Bosco to the railway station. He took his leave of Father Joseph Ronchail, who was returning to Nice, and went to Toulon with Father Julius Barberis where he was eagerly awaited by Count and Countess Colle. He spent the night in their house. During the month of February, Don Bosco asked the count for 100,000 francs so that he could buy the Bellezzia house[2], but the noble couple had not

[2] See vol. XVI, page 473

understood his letter very well and had been somewhat perturbed by it. Once they had heard his explanation, the count said with a smile, "We will give you fifty thousand francs as soon as we can."

"Why not 100,000?" the countess asked.

"Very well. Let it be 100,000," the count added. "Although, now that I think of it, I do have some bonds I could sell." He turned to his wife and said, "If you are in agreement, we could even give Don Bosco 150,000 francs."

"Certainly, certainly," the saintly woman said in approval.

"Then here it is: fifty thousand francs to buy the Bellezzia property for the Oratory, fifty thousand francs for the Sacred Heart Church in Rome, and fifty thousand francs for the missions in Patagonia."

Such generosity surpassed all expectations. Later, the count even doubled that figure for the above-mentioned acquisition.

Count and Countess Colle would never have grown tired of listening to Don Bosco whenever they had the good fortune of talking with him, nor would they have ceased asking him questions. That evening, the conversation was prolonged at great length after dinner, and they gave no sign of breaking it up. Don Bosco was practically collapsing from exhaustion by ten o'clock and conveyed to them that he was in need of rest.

They rose, but continued talking until the count finally took up the lamp and he and his wife accompanied the saint to the room that had been prepared for him. At the threshold, they had new questions that required new answers. When at last he was able to get inside the room, the count followed him to see that everything was in order. When the servant of God got to bed at last, it was almost midnight.

He left again on the 15th at 8:30 and he was in Marseille two hours later. As usual, the crowd of visitors kept close on his heels without giving him any respite. Nevertheless, everything was more orderly than the previous year, although there were frequent instances of ladies who wanted to make their confession to him. However, not knowing in what other way they could get the saint to hear their confessions, they knelt down in the middle of the room and began to mention their sins. Don Bosco was trying in vain to explain that it was not the place for hearing confessions of women and that the laws of the Church forbade it, but there was no way to stop them.

"I cannot hear your confession here!" Don Bosco kept saying.

"Then let's go to the church."

"I cannot. I do not have the time."

"Then I will go on with my confession here."

Don Bosco needed great patience. When they were done, he said to them, "Now what do we do? I am not allowed to give you the absolution here."

But the ladies were not upset at all. They were quite satisfied to have had an opportunity to bare their hearts to him and receive some good advice.

While in Marseille, he received quite a moving letter from Paris. In 1883, he had given his blessing to a little ten-year-old girl, and had made such a lasting impression of goodness on her that she had remained almost saintly fascinated by it. When she heard that he was in need, the child from that time on had saved up all the money people gave her as gifts, without spending a single coin of it for either sweets or toys, as children are wont to do. When she had accumulated one hundred francs, she sent Don Bosco a note, including a note from her mother[3] with the money.

The House of Providence for French novices was not far from Marseille and had been inaugurated in the fall of 1883. We have already mentioned the dream that Don Bosco had some three years before in which he had seen the place of the future novitiate quite distinctly[4]. Now we only have to complete that story and describe the saint's visit to the French novitiate.

A Parisian lady named Madame Pastre had heard Don Bosco preach at La Madeleine in 1883. She had pushed her way through the immense crowd to reach him and speak to him in the sacristy at any cost. She made an offering to him just as she had seen so many other ladies do and went away overjoyed. Not long after that event, her daughter fell sick and her condition worsened until she was near death. Sure enough during those anxious days on the eve of the feast of her name day, a letter arrived for her from Don Bosco. He conveyed his good wishes to her and the assurance of his prayers that her sick daughter would recover. He also said that, in the meanwhile, she should begin a novena to Mary Help of Christians and he would join his prayers to hers from Turin.

How come Don Bosco knew about the sickness of her daughter? And how did he know so surely both the name of the street and the number of the house where she lived? Impressed by this two-fold enigma, she began the novena fervently. On the third day, the girl asked if she could eat some-

[3] French version of Salesian *Bulletin* (May 1884)

[4] See vol. XV, page 37

thing, though she had taken no nourishment for several days. She asked for food a second and a third time, and then got up and began to move around. At the end of the novena, she went to church to thank our Lady.

The whole family was quite beside itself with gratitude and pondered as to how they might best express their gratitude. They heard that Don Bosco was looking for a house in the area of Marseille where he could place his novices. The lady owned a number of villas in the environs of Paris, but also two villas in the immediate vicinity of Marseille. She immediately offered one to Father Joseph Bologna and Father Paul Albera. They went to see it and found it spacious, pleasantly located and well furnished. The lady said she did not intend to remove any of the furniture in it. A legal contract of lease for a period of fifteen years was drawn up at the sum of 1,200 francs per year, but in a confidential letter, the lady/owner pledged to grant full and free use of the villa for that entire period, deferring any other decision to some future indefinite date. At that time, she was unable to get a free hand in this on account of domestic reasons.[5]

On March 17th, Don Bosco went to see that new "nursery" for the Congregation. As soon as he set foot inside the house, he was welcomed with the usual acclamations. The saint had many questions about the grounds.

He asked, "Are there pine trees here?"

"Oh, yes there are!"

"But are there a lot of them?"

"Very many indeed. All that little hillock is covered with them."

"Are there lots of paths, too?"

"Yes, and very pretty ones."

"But is there only one or are there several?"

"There are several of them."

"And is there a canal which runs behind the house?"

"There is a magnificent canal."

"But does it run all through the estate?"

"Yes, it runs all through the estate."

"Then this is really it. I do not even need to inspect it now. In fact, now I understand why no one in the dream said 'here, this house is donated to you or this house has been bought by you.' Instead they only said,

[5] See *Minutes*, Marseille Committee (November 16, 1883).

'This house is at your disposal.'"

The last general chapter had recognized the need to have a separate novitiate for France, and this had been said prior to the lady's donation. This meant that Divine Providence had not only confirmed the truth of the dream, but had also approved the decision that had been taken.

The loving father would have liked to spend some time during the afternoon with his dear children, but he could not give them more than a few minutes, for people had come to see him. The ladies on the Marseille Committee, who had decided to hold one of their meetings with Don Bosco presiding in the new house, were already strolling up and down the promenades of the villa. Don Bosco welcomed them cordially, and showed his concern not only for those who were present, but also for some who had been prevented from attending. Then, he recited the customary prayers, and he listened to the minutes of the previous meeting being read out. He also thanked the committee for their gracious words.

The ladies were complaining about the fact that a number of members were refusing to continue their charitable donations, and Don Bosco said, "In such circumstances, there is nothing else to do but remain calm and try to enlist others to take the places of those who have withdrawn. It is true that times are critical, yet it is of the greatest importance that we defend youth in the midst of such a great perversity in the interests of souls, society and ourselves. The "school of evil" is not only operative within society because very often, unfortunately, youngsters find the teachers of perversion even in their own homes and even in their own immediate family circle. The good results obtained at St. Leo's are encouraging. It is extremely heartening to see how exemplary the pupils are in their conduct and how healthy they are. They all have an excellent appetite, and it is a pleasure to see them eat, even though later there are also bakers bills to be paid."

Then he praised the zeal of the committee, and said that he could never forget what it had done for the Oratory of St. Leo, and assured its members that he always had a very special memento for them at the altar every morning.

He pretended to have been asked if he did the same thing for all the other committees, and he replied, "I can safely tell you that there has been repeated talk of committees elsewhere on several occasions, but good intentions do not provide bread for the upkeep of our boys, and so it is only at Marseille that we have a true committee."

Some members pointed out that only Marseille had a committee,

because a pastor like Canon Guiol only existed at Marseille. Don Bosco replied that he was delighted to recognize this and have a chance of expressing his delight. Then he went on, "Since I am unable to thank the ladies of the committee one by one, I will thank all of them together in the person of their pastor who organized the committee and who deserves so well of our work. Until God summons Don Bosco into eternity, he will remember you all very particularly before our Lord, so that He may shower His blessings upon you in this world, and receive you in Paradise at as late a date as possible."

Lastly, he spoke about St. Leo's. "The Oratory is fine," he said. "There is no building in progress at the moment, therefore, our expenses are scarcely higher than our income. But we would need money for the orphanage of St. Cyr, where poor girls are trained in agriculture. There are repairs needed and we have not paid the full cost of the roof, as yet. Father Paul Albera does not want to give me anything, so I recommend St. Cyr to the committee."

In order to support this recommendation, it was agreed at the meeting of April 24th that all that had been collected in the Marseille area would be assigned to St. Leo's while all charitable donations collected in the district of Aubagne, on the outskirts of which St. Cyr was located, would be assigned to that orphanage.

At the end of the meeting, Don Bosco invited the ladies to go to the chapel for Benediction, and afterward, he gave an audience to each of them, as they had requested, and remained thus engaged until night. It had been hoped that he would be able to sleep in that peaceful environment, but he had promised to say Mass in Marseille the next day and so he was obliged to depart.[6]

From the oral accounts and written reports of Father Julius Barberis, we come to know that the enthusiasm for the servant of God surpassed all expectations in Marseille. People of all walks of life felt honored if they could only be of service to him; notaries and lawyers offered him their services free of charge, considering themselves fortunate if he appealed to them; doctors examined him and the boys, while happy to do him a favor; verse and prose compositions were written in his praise, and top-ranking artists painted his portrait. News correspondents from France were calling the attention of good Christians in other countries to Don Bosco.

[6] A letter from Don Bosco, of which we have a copy, dated March 17th, informs us of this, although we do not know to whom it was addressed. (Appendix, document 5).

Some fiery letters from Spain were reaching him, urging him to cross the Pyrenees and in faraway Hungary, the journal Magyar Atlant of Budapest published a supplement containing the translation of Dr. D'Espiney's biography of Don Bosco.

Wherever he went, Don Bosco always received new proofs of the good news of Mary Most Holy invoked under the title of Help of Christians. The families he visited and the letters he received were continuously singing a hymn of thanksgiving to our Lady for favors she had granted during the course of the year. People told him about extraordinary cures, longed for conversions, family problems that had been solved against all hopes and spiritual and temporal graces obtained after a novena or certain simple prayers. All this moved the saint so deeply that he wept when he talked about it. Besides, he was also delighted to see how the misguided opinion that one had to turn to him in order to obtain graces was waning, and that people were beginning to realize that it was sufficient to give assistance to Salesian houses in order to receive something in return from the Holy Virgin, who looked upon the houses as Her own.

On March 22nd, he dined with Monsieur Broquier. This gentleman was a very well known lawyer in Marseille. Pius IX had entrusted lawsuits concerning the Holy See to him. At one time, he had been dominated by arrogance and there was no important celebration in the city at which he would not flaunt his success. But later, meditating on the *vanitas vanitatum* [vanity of vanities] of worldly splendors, he had radically changed his ways and now lived withdrawn even from the law courts. He had a chapel in his house and spent a good part of the day there, immersed in prayer. He also served Mass in it every morning, dressed as a Capuchin. His wife was a magnificent singer, but while Madame Broquier had never failed to show off her fine voice in public gatherings or intimate reunions in patrician circles in the past, she now hardly ever left the house, but sewed and knitted assiduously for the Oratory of St. Leo. The couple was very wealthy and gave freely to charities, substantially to Don Bosco.

The saint was expected in several places after dinner that evening, and could not decline; the Nuns of the Visitation, in particular, were expecting him. One nun in the convent was really the despair of her superiors, the chaplain and even the bishop himself. Don Bosco did not know her, nor was he aware of any of her eccentricities.

As soon as he set foot in the convent, the nuns knelt down, waiting for his blessing, and all recommended themselves to his prayers. Then, he

took this particular nun by the hand and said, "I will pray for you especially, so that our Lord grant you this and that and liberate you from this and that, so that you may act thus and thus."

The other nuns were astonished and moved, and they exchanged glances, weeping and saying, "This is a miracle!"

He then told the nun in what way she could correct her faults, and assured her superiors that she would no longer be the same as she had been. On the Feast of the Annunciation, the chaplain called on Don Bosco to tell him that the nun now spent hours and hours praying in the chapel, asked the pardon of the superiors, and conducted herself in a saintly manner for the last three days.

On the 24th, there was such an exceptional crowd of visitors that Father Julius Barberis had to stand at the entrance to Don Bosco's room and allow only six or eight people at a time in, with instructions they were to greet the saint, receive his blessing and leave. They complied with the first two instructions, but the third was another matter.

The people entering fell instantly on their knees, but once he had blessed them, they crowded around him, placing rosaries and scapulars into his hands. Then, everyone had something to tell him, some donation to offer, some blessing to be implored for a sick relative or a family problem. At one given moment, there were five priests kneeling in front of him. He had invited the novices to St. Leo's for that Monday, since he had been unable to talk to them in their novitiate, as he would have wished to do; but it was not possible for them to say a word to him.

Although he was so much besieged, he still found time for two functions. During the morning, he baptized and administered Communion to a young Negro who had been entrusted to the Oratory and the chapel was filled to capacity. Then during the afternoon, he delivered a talk to the cooperators in the presence of the bishop, who had confirmed the black boy. He spoke briefly and simply, asking his benefactors to help him pay the bills of the baker and the builders, since the boys could not continue living with neither food nor a roof over their heads.

The bishop underlined what he had said, recommending his cause eloquently and once outside, he said, "He talks like a saint talks, so great are the effectiveness and unction of his words."[7]

Every year the young boarders went on an outing to Monsieur Olive's villa, the generous cooperator already known to us. On this occasion, the

[7] French version of the Salesian Bulletin (May 1884).

father and mother waited on the superiors while their children waited on their pupils. They also organized a lottery, giving a number to everyone of the superiors and boys so that everyone won something. In this way, the Olive family made a gift of their coach to the Oratory of St. Leo. This outing occurred during Don Bosco's visit to Marseille in 1884, and an amusing incident occurred.

While the boys were playing in the gardens, a servant came running up to Madame Olive, greatly agitated.

"Madame, the pot where the soup is cooking for the boys is leaking badly and there is no way to stop it. We will have to go without soup." The mistress of the house, who had immense faith in Don Bosco, had a sudden idea. She summoned all the boys and told them, "Listen, if you want to have some soup, kneel down here and say a Pater, Ave, and Gloria to Don Bosco, so that he may resolder the soup pot."

The boys obeyed and instantly the pot stopped leaking. This is an historical event, and when Don Bosco heard it, he laughed heartily, saying, "From this day on, people will say that Don Bosco is the patron of tinsmiths."

The activities we have described in these last pages should not lead the reader to believe that Don Bosco had been miraculously restored to health. He was still so ill that Provincial Father Paul Albera, greatly concerned about his condition, agreed that he call on Dr. Combal, a professor of the Montpellier University and a very famous physician. People called on him from all parts of Europe and even Prussia. No sooner did the doctor receive the call than he immediately set out on his journey. He spent the night on the train and arrived at dawn in Marseille on the 29th.

Being a fervent Catholic, he first went to Our Lady de la Garde to perform his devotions, and then he called at St. Leo's. When he was ushered into Don Bosco's presence, he knelt down in front of him and humbly kissed his hand. Don Bosco thought he was the doctor's assistant because of his modest suit and humble manners and asked him for news of his master.

"My name is Combal!" the doctor replied. "And I consider myself fortunate if I can be of service to you in any way."

"You are the famous Dr. Combal? But why, why do you come to me like this? I do not want you to do this. Get up! How lucky I am to make your acquaintance."

The doctor rose to his feet and carefully examined Don Bosco for more than an hour. He questioned him and stopped for a while to think

without making a sound.

"Well now?" Don Bosco said.

"You have worn yourself out with excessive work," the doctor replied. "Your body is like a worn-out garment because you have always worn it on week days and holidays alike. The only way by which this garment can be preserved for a little while longer would be that of hanging it up in the cloakroom. What I mean is that the most important medicine there is for you is complete rest."

"That is the cure I cannot undergo," the servant of God replied smiling. "How can one get any rest when one has so many things on hand?"

"I understand," the doctor said, "yet what is there to be done? At least, give all the work you can to your subordinates and take as much rest as possible. I would not know what other advice I could give you. I do not see any organic disturbances, so we will have to try and do what we can about your general state of weakness."

When asked to write out a detailed diagnosis and prescribe an effective treatment, he gladly consented:

Marseille, March 25, 1884

The information given me by the Rev. Father John Bosco upon his antecedents and my own examination of him authorize me to recognize in him the existence of a diseased liver, generally and locally,

General features:

General state of weakness and anemia.

A mucous flow in the respiratory system.

A nervous excitability.

Possibility of a residue of malarial infection.

Local features:

1. Slight irritation in the bronchial mucous membrane, as a result of the reiterated flux.

2. Lastly a slight enlargement of the liver.

These features of various kinds form the basis of the main therapeutic indications and must be treated as follows:

Morning and evening immediately before every meal, a spoon of Vial wine (calcium phosphate, tamarind pulp and quinine).

Half a glass of Vals, from the Dominique springs, in wine during meals.

Keep bowels open by partaking at intervals (once a week) in the evening an hour before going to bed, a teaspoon of Vichy salts of Dr. Soulegoce in a quarter of a glass of water.

Varied diet. Meat with cooked vegetables, raw eggs, and dairy products.

Every month for a period of ten days, substitute Vals water with Bourbade water to be drunk during meals.

Avoid customary activities for some time, especially any prolonged nervous tension.

(Signed) Combal

When the saint received this diagnosis, he said to the doctor, "I do not know how to express my gratitude to you. I know you are generous, but I would like to defray your traveling expenses, at least."

"Why?" the doctor answered quickly. "I have waited to see Don Bosco for so long, and now I have seen him. My reward consists in being able to say that I have seen Don Bosco. It is not you who should be grateful to me, but I who should be grateful to you. I owe you my daughter. Do you not recall that I wrote to you last year asking you to pray for her? She had been suffering from an incurable disease for a long time. You can imagine how desperate I was! But once Your Reverence had prayed for her, she immediately began to feel an improvement and soon she was completely cured. So I owe you my daughter's recovery and I did not come here only as a physician, but also as a debtor who came to pay his debt to the Holy Virgin, Help of Christians. I beg you to accept this small offering."

He held out an envelope containing four hundred francs with such insistence that Don Bosco was obliged to accept it. As he left, he again begged Don Bosco most cordially to consider him always as his humble servant who was ready to come anywhere at any time at his summons.

Don Bosco went back to Toulon from Marseille on the 26th, to the immense joy of Count and Countess Colle, who bolted the doors of their house so that no one might disturb their conversation with him. They did not permit him to appeal to them for money.

"We will provide," they told him, "but we also want to enjoy your company."

Nevertheless, word of his arrival was known to one or two people, but spread so that at the end, it became necessary to give way and allow people to enter the house. Obviously, the servant of God, who had hoped to rest a little, was quite tired.

He left for La Navarre on the 27th, traveling together with the count and countess. The place was enchanting, with a wide semicircle of very lovely hills, clothed with evergreens surrounding a vineyard, meadows and fields. The white house gleamed in the middle of it, behind which were flower gardens and an orchard. Beyond the meadow were thousands of olive trees. There were no servants inside, and there were no houses visible for a good distance beyond the boundaries of the estate. Before the Salesians first went there, this delightful place presented a squalid appearance, but the land was renovated and expanded. The previous year, wine production reaped revenue of twelve thousand francs.[8]

And so, the house stood isolated in the midst of a delightful solitude, but when Don Bosco arrived, people were swarming in and out of the house, as they were arriving already in the early hours of the morning. Four buses from Toulon, three from Hyeres, one from Crau and more from other localities had dropped some hundred people there. A genuine pilgrimage had come from Marseille. Lordly coaches were delivering noble folks from the surrounding area, and several pastors had come with the vicar general from Frejus. Even Baron Heraud showed up with the architect Levrot from Nice.

At 10:30, the sentries gave forth the signal that Don Bosco was arriving. The crowd surged and surrounded him. He did not seem to be in any hurry, being quite calm and ready as always to make everyone happy. A number of visitors from other parts had showed up to attend the blessing of the new church, dedicated to Mary Help of Christians, which had been funded by Count Colle. After a brief rest and a little food, the servant of God began the ceremony, assisted by a number of priests, including the above-mentioned vicar general, who gladly yielded the honor of performing the Sacred rite to Don Bosco. Also in attendance were Father Guiol, Provincial Father Paul Albera and a number of pastors from the neighborhood. When the ceremony was over, Don Bosco did not want to forego a short talk.[9]

There was an intimate ceremony on the morning of the 28th when Don Bosco administered First Communion to the son and daughter of the viscount de Villeneuve. It was the feast day of St. Joseph, the patron saint of the house. Don Bosco celebrated Mass for the community and during

[8] *Minutes* (November 30, 1883).

[9] There is a recollection of that day in a letter written to a lady cooperator from Auxerre by Father Rua after Don Bosco's death. We only have a copy of it, which is perhaps somewhat incorrect in a certain passage. Nevertheless, it would be good to read it (Appendix, document 6).

the solemn High Mass, the vicar general of the diocese delivered the panegyric of the saint. That was a day of song, music and enthusiastic cheerfulness.

The saint would never again see the first agricultural school he founded, but his blessing was not unfruitful. The institute grew both materially and morally to such an extent that it astonished even the superiors and benefactors of the house. It has survived unto the present day *post tot discrimina rerum* [after a variety of events], and the traces of that last fatherly blessing are tangibly evident.

He left la Navarre after Sunday Vespers on the 30th, and an unpleasant misunderstanding offered Don Bosco an opportunity to exercise his patience. A lady was to have sent her coach for him, having promised joyously to render him this service, but due to a misunderstanding, the coach did not show up. It was, therefore, necessary to harness the horse belonging to the house to a very primitive and uncomfortable cart. Furthermore, the road was rocky and the cart bumped along, upsetting Don Bosco's stomach. He had to get off and walk for a half hour over pebbles and amid dust, and he had to confront a very strong and cold wind. They arrived at Castille castle, as he had promised the day before to visit the owners. They had been expecting him and when they saw him arrive in that condition, they immediately served him a cup of tea. When it was time for him to leave them, they offered him their own horse-drawn coach to take him the rest of the way.

During that stop, the son of the owners of the castle, who had been very ill the previous year and had gone to ask for Don Bosco's blessing, now came up to thank him because his health had improved ever since that blessing and now he was quite strong. During the conversation, everyone deplored the long-enduring drought that scorched the countryside all around.

"Please say a word to our Lord," they said, "and then our Lord will send us rain."

"Yes, yes," he answered, "I will pray for rain and say Mass tomorrow for this intention."

"Do you really believe it will rain?"

"Yes, I do. The Lord promised that wherever two or three will be gathered to implore some grace from His Heavenly Father, in His name, He would be in the midst of them. Now there are several of us here united to ask a grace from our Lord and, therefore, Jesus is in our midst."

"But we are too bad and that is why our Lord does not answer our prayers."

"We are very wicked," Don Bosco agreed, "and do not deserve that the Lord answer our prayer. But Jesus is here in our midst and He will speak for us."

"Then you really mean that it is going to rain? It is now almost a year since it rained."

"Yes, yes, it will rain. A few days ago the bishop ordered an Oremus for rain at every Mass. Our Lord will not turn a deaf ear to so many prayers. Let us try only not to prevent Jesus from being in our midst."

After this, they first talked about other matters, then after a prayer for rain and a blessing for all, Don Bosco set out for yet another castle called La Bastide, which was half an hour's ride away by coach. Here, the travelers were to spend the night with the Obert family.

At supper, the conversation again touched on the much-needed rain, and again did Don Bosco promise that it would indeed rain.

The lady of the house replied, "I would give anything if it would only rain."

After they all retired to bed, Father Julius Barberis had been enjoying his first spell of slumber when he was awakened by a loud noise. The rain was coming down heavily, and it continued to rain all night and even all the next morning. The lady gave Don Bosco five hundred francs, promising him other similar offerings if her land prospered.

A priest of Lyons was visiting and exclaimed, "You see what it means to give hospitality to saints!"

Antibes, a small town on the Riviera situated between Cannes and Nice, was only a little distance away. A wealthy family had put a villa of theirs at the disposal of Don Bosco if he would only open a house there. He visited this family on his way back to Nice on April 1st. During the visit, three eminent persons called on Don Bosco to pay their respects and to thank him for the beneficial effects of his blessing. In this connection, his traveling companion testified, "During the course of this month, I can declare with all certainty that at least one hundred people thanked Don Bosco either in person or by letter in the same manner, namely for the beneficial results of his blessing the previous year."

They traveled by train to Nice and an entire family took seats in their compartment. At the sight of two Italian priests, a member of the group began to express regret at not having had time to call on Don Bosco in Paris the year before.

When it was time for them to get off the train, one of the daughters remarked to her father as they were getting out, "I think that priest must be Don Bosco."

The father swung around abruptly and asked, "Excuse me. Are you Don Bosco?"

When he replied that he was, the entire family fell to its knees to ask for his blessing. The saint gave it to them, and the family could not forgive themselves for not having recognized him until the moment when they were obliged to leave him.

He gave a talk on the 2nd in Nice and arrived at Alassio at eight o'clock in the evening on the 3rd. Father John Cagliero and Father John Baptist Lemoyne were waiting to meet him at the station. They had preached the spiritual retreat of the boys at Alassio. On the 4th he went with them to Sampierdarena, and at the same time all the other members of the Superior Chapter except Father Celestine Durando had arrived. He had sent for them because he wanted to hold a meeting to discuss various matters concerning the Congregation. But first he found time to call on Countess Solms of Pegli, where the lady had been living for ten years. She was a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm, but was a Catholic, and brought up her daughter to be Catholic although her sons were Protestants. She was very anxious to see Don Bosco.

We will now glean some items from the minutes of the Chapter meeting. While discussing the admission of a French cleric to Holy Orders, Don Bosco had expressed the following opinion:

"When someone is unprepared to take the vows at the same time as his companions, he should be dismissed definitively. When someone is not admitted to ordination, we must say 'you no longer belong to the Congregation' and formally dismiss him."

Father John Cagliero recalled an opinion of Father Franco's; namely, that it was a very grave error to keep anyone who was not ready either for ordination or to take vows in the house.

The saint then said that his trip to France had borne good fruit. "Our houses in France have once again been freed from debt. Divine Providence has come to our aid. A great many sums of money were promised us in France and many of them have been given to us. Count Colle offers us 150,000 lire to be paid this month. The engineer Levrot in Nice spent 80,000 lire out of his own pocket for our house there. At Saint-Cyr, the cost of building was over 80,000 lire, but we had a benefactor. Nevertheless, works that are not suited to our mission have been under-

taken, while the Chapter was not informed of it in advance. Nice, Marseille and la Navarre are progressing nicely and have no debts."

He then decried the obsession for building on the part of one of the directors. In order to restrain such enthusiasm in others, he said that one must always dictate two conditions: (1) permission of the Chapter, and (2) that funds were already available. Otherwise, nothing should be undertaken. He also regretted that in France, certain habits unbecoming to poverty had been introduced, such as carpets on the floors of parlors, on the pretext that the benefactors had demanded them.

The generosity of engineer Levrot calls for a certain explanation. He had placed himself at Don Bosco's service after he had obtained an outstanding grace, thanks to Don Bosco's blessing. One day, the saint had told him that it was necessary to further develop the house of Nice.

"That is easily done," the engineer answered. "All we have to do is start the work."

"That is easy to say, but what about the money? I do not know where to find it."

"You need not worry about that. Let us start working."

"And what then?"

"Then something will be done. Do you authorize me to start the work?"

"You may, if you wish, but remember that Don Bosco has no money."

The next day Mr. Levrot called on Don Bosco with his foreman. He took the drawing and sent some poles and boards to build the scaffolding. Later, material and workmen appeared. The building began immediately and within a few months, the house had expanded to include another story for dormitories and a big chapel.

When it was all done, Mr. Levrot said to the director, "Do you see these enlargements have been done without any cost?"

There had been expenses, but the generous engineer had paid it all out of his pocket.

Don Bosco remained a fairly long time at Sampierdarena to the great delight of the superiors and the pupils. The boys had completed three full days of perpetual adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, praying for Don Bosco's recovery. When an improvement in his health was detected, there were great celebrations on April 6th, which was Palm Sunday. Some French ladies had tried to see Don Bosco in Marseille, Cannes and Nice and shared the dinner. When Don Bosco was just boarding a train for

Italy, they were just getting off their own. Undismayed, they followed him to Alassio, but he had already gone when they arrived. So, their first opportunity to talk with him was at Sampierdarena. From Sampierdarena they went on to Rome ahead of him, and visited him almost everyday for a month.

While talking with his spiritual sons at Sampierdarena, Don Bosco said in reference to the retreat for boys, "It is always better to have our own Salesians preach the retreats of our boys in our houses and churches, even though they may be average orators, rather than call upon outstanding preachers who do not belong to our Congregation. Besides, the outstanding preachers from outside acquire esteem only for themselves or if they are religious, they will inspire the boys to join their own Order, and the boys will lose the esteem they have for us. So let us call on them as rarely as possible. In view of this same consideration, the Jesuits never allow anyone from any other Order than their own to preach in their churches."

Don Bosco's itinerary now took him once more to Rome. He had asked someone to write to Father Michael Rua twice while he was in France, asking his opinion on the most suitable traveling companion for him and whether he should take his secretary Father Joaquim Berto or someone else. We do not know what Father Michael Rua said, but the saint told Father John Baptist Lemoyne to remain at Sampierdarena for this purpose. In his fatherly sensitivity, he wrote a note to his former secretary:

Sampierdarena, April 6, 1884

Dearest Father Joaquim Berto:

They tell me that you are not as well as one might hope, and I am sorry. Take every care of yourself while I am away. I shall pray for you. Father John Baptist Lemoyne is accompanying me to Rome. I do not know as yet if I need any papers. If so, I shall write and let you know. I hope to be in Turin between May 12th and 15th.

I am somewhat better in health, but I am in great need of prayers.

May God bless you, ever-beloved Father Joaquim Berto. Pray for me to God during Holy Mass and believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

He went to Sestri Ponente the evening of the 7th to visit the widow Cataldi, a zealous Salesian cooperator, and he called on the wife of the mayor of Genoa, Baroness Podesta, the next evening. The baroness and other Genoese ladies, as well as ladies from the surrounding area worked in close collaboration with Marchioness Ghiglini, who encouraged them all to assist Don Bosco and his work.

During his spare time, the servant of God sought relaxation by reminiscing over old times. On the 8th, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote to Father John Bonetti:

> Our beloved father cannot talk about anything without recalling the heroic days of the Oratory. He has, therefore, asked me to inform you that Father Dominic Belmonte participated in many famous outings and recalls a great many interesting and amusing anecdotes related to that period. It would be advisable for you to arrange an interview with Father Dominic Belmonte before you put in the last touches to this portion of the history of the Oratory, either by coming to Sampierdarena yourself or by sending for Father Dominic Belmonte to call on you in Turin. Don Bosco says that it would be better if you were to decide on the first suggestion.

At last, he said goodbye to Sampierdarena on the 9th and left for Genoa with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who took the place of Father Julius Barberis. Don Bosco dined with Marchioness Ghiglini, who had a good many ladies waiting to see him. Then, he went to Rapallo to call on Count Riant, a member of the French Institute and a well- known author and wealthy nobleman. He was the one who experienced the beneficial effects of Don Bosco's blessing the previous year. The count and countess were delighted to have Don Bosco as their guest, and urged him to spend the night in their magnificent villa, and he accepted their invitation. After the preliminary exchange of courtesies, they went for a stroll in the grounds that extended from the top of a hill down to the sea. The walk lasted an hour and a half. Don Bosco was with his hosts and Father John Baptist Lemoyne was with the children.

The next day was Maundy Thursday and the children made their confession to Don Bosco and served his Mass in the private chapel of the house. The whole family observed the Easter duties. Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote: "As we left, the count shook Don Bosco's hand in a manner which was at one and the same time a significant, steadfast, affec-

tionate and positive compliment." They boarded the train and reached La Spezia around two o'clock in the afternoon. The brief respite had visibly done Don Bosco good.

He was expected to be at La Spezia on the 9th to talk to the cooperators, but the stop at Rapallo, which had been prolonged more than he had first intended, prevented him from giving the talk. In his stead, Canon David Marinozzi, the Lenten preacher, addressed the meeting. Don Bosco's presence enhanced the joys of Easter for both the Salesians and their pupils, yet he did not want to leave the house without making some kind of public address. He did this during the afternoon of the feast day, and since he felt better than usual, he spoke vivaciously and at length. Father John Baptist Lemoyne sent a long outline of his speech back to Turin and we quote it from the May issue of the Bulletin:

> I come before you, dear listeners, with a truly full heart, grateful for all that you have done and are still doing for this Salesian Oratory. If so many boys have retained their faith, have lived like good Christians and attained eternal happiness, they owe it to you. That is why I am again appealing to your charity, and now recommend to you a collection in support of undertakings that are not my own, since they belong to the Supreme Pontiff, and are extremely close to his heart. He, the Immortal Pontiff Leo XIII, is giving you a splendid example before anyone else. If there is this Oratory at La Spezia where so many boys have found the food of life, we must be grateful to him. Yes, the Holy Father is poor; he lives on alms because he has been stripped of everything. Yet this poor pontiff still finds means by which he gives monthly assistance to La Spezia, rendering himself poorer still in order to help the sons of your families and your own city. Therefore, emulate this magnificent example of generosity.
>
> You will ask, "How long must we continue to support such charitable institutions? How long? Until when?" Beloved children, for as long as there shall be souls to be saved, for as long as our poor boys shall be surrounded by temptation and deceit, for as long as they will be able to reach the gates of eternity and enter Heaven where they will be sure and safe from any ambush from the enemy.
>
> I might tell you today about the missions where our Salesians are scattered in different parts of the world, especially America.

I might tell you of their labors, their needs, and the good work they do. Instead, I will content myself with talking to you about the church and the hospice of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. In Rome, the Protestants have inaugurated schools and temples to lead Christians astray, especially the defenseless youth. Saddened by such a sight, Pope Leo XIII told Don Bosco that it was essential that a line of defense be constructed against the tide of heresy to prevent the corruption of youth and safeguard the honor of the Catholic faith. How could this be done? By building a church to be consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and a big hospice to give shelter to the boys who are at risk.

"Holy Father," I said, "I will gladly set my hand to this task, but I have no money."

"Neither have I," the Pope told me. "You must appeal to the faithful and tell them that the Holy Father recommends the Sacred Heart Church to everyone, and that the Lord will bless all those lending a hand to so beautiful an undertaking, both in a spiritual and temporal sense."

There you have it, beloved Christians. That is why I have been looking and still seek support here and elsewhere. That is why a collection will now be taken up for this purpose in this church. It is a question of paying tribute to the loving heart of our most sweet Savior. The Sacred Heart of Jesus is the source of all blessings, of all graces. All of us are in need of such graces. So by a donation in honor of the Sacred Heart, we implore the grace of which we are most in need for either our spiritual or temporal benefit, our parents, our children, our financial advantage or intellectual or moral benefit. You may be sure that you will obtain that for which you are asking, for God will not allow anyone to outdo Him in generosity, provided that what you ask of Him is not detrimental to your spiritual welfare.

Another reason to give is that your alms are solicited in the name of the Sacred Heart by the Supreme Pontiff himself, our father, the vicar of Jesus Christ. The Holy Father asks you to support two things most particularly: this Institute of the Oratory of La Spezia and the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. For his part, what is the Holy Father doing? What does he promise? He raises up his hands to Heaven, he prays for you, he blesses you and remembers you every day during his Holy Mass. His intercession

is mighty because of the authority with which he is vested and the tender love the Sacred Heart of Jesus has for him. He speaks on behalf of the blood of our Savior, so should we not listen to him? He invites us on behalf of the salvation of many immortal souls, so how can we show reluctance? He is calling on his children to help their brothers and sisters, so how can we refuse? No, you will certainly not commit this effrontery to the vicar of Jesus Christ, nor to your own condition as Catholic Christians.

Someone may perhaps say, "Where am I to find money? I do not have a big income, times are hard, and business is bad." Let me speak to you freely. If we want to respond to some whim, enjoy some entertainment or make good display of ourselves in society, then we always know where to find money. Are we to fail to find something to give to Jesus Christ when everything we have stems from Him, who can repay our gift to Him here in this world a hundredfold?

Others will say, "There are so many who beg for alms on behalf of many and various good works. There are so many of them!" Such an answer, dearly beloved, is not the answer of a Christian. You hold that you cannot help support all these pious undertakings. Now, I want to ask you confidentially, do you at least support a few of them? I believe that the people who claim there are too many undertakings do not give to any of them. Ah, remember that to perform charitable deeds is an obligation. If you do not have any money, you can at least give articles of clothing and food, or you can look for others and encourage them to give. Should you not have anything at all, there will still remain the greatest gift of all – prayer. You can pray that the Holy Father may find support and consolation in his mighty task of governing the Church. You can pray for the evangelical laborers, imploring our Lord to give them good health, strength, virtue, funds, and a response from those they are trying to save so that their mission may triumph. You may pray for the souls that have gone astray, so that they may be converted, and pray also for the just that they may persevere. This is a charitable deed that not everyone performs.

Others, in order not to give alms, may say, "I could give alms, but I must save something for my own future needs. There may be years when crops are scarce, when business is slack, when I might go bankrupt or suffer something like a mishap. So I must think for

my future and save some money." Unfortunately, that which is considered foresight is but the result of a lack of faith in Divine Providence. People save today and save tomorrow, adding last year's savings to this year's savings, and a love of money, the spirit of avarice, takes birth within their soul. Unfortunately, as one's money grows the heart grows harder toward the poor, and little by little, the Christian is dragged down to Hell by the weight of his own money. A wise Christian does not hoard money for a time that passes like a streak of lightning, and such money, after all, could be called the money of death. The wise Christian carries the money of life with him into eternity, by dint of good deeds.

St. Lawrence was the keeper of the treasures of the Roman Church. In his greed for those same riches, the pagan governor summoned the holy deacon into his presence and ordered him to hand over all the gold, silver and precious jewels that he had in his keeping. St. Lawrence promised he would comply, but asked for a respite of a few days in which he could get the treasure together. The governor agreed, feeling sure that in a few days he would clutch all that booty with his hands. But instead, Lawrence sold all the treasures and distributed the money he had accumulated to the poor. He led a multitude of these poor people to the great hall of the governor. When ushered into his presence, he asked him to go down into the hall to see how he kept his promise. When the governor set eyes on the poor people, he turned in astonishment to Lawrence, asking him why he had led all those people into his palace.

"These poor people are the treasures of the Church," the saint answered, "so I brought them to you as I had promised."

Believing that he was mocking him, the governor flew into a great rage. "I told you to bring me the gold and silver! Where have you hidden it?"

The saint replied, *"Facultates Ecclesiae, quas requiris, in caelestes thesauros manus pauperum deportaverunt* [The riches of the Church for which you crave were deposited in the vaults of Heaven through the hands of the poor]."

Yes, dearly beloved, the hands of the poor convey our alms to Heaven. To give an offering to the poor is just as to hand it to Jesus Christ. Our Divine Savior said that on Judgment Day, He will base His sentences principally upon the greater or lesser degree of mercy we have shown to the poor and shall proclaim in

the face of the entire world, "That which you have done to the least of them, you have done to Me."

Do you want to take your money with you, but not to the tomb, not to perdition, not into eternity of Hell, but instead into the eternity of Heaven? Then give alms to the poor, especially when thereby you can save their souls. Our Savior has labored and has sweated; he has lived like the poor, he has suffered and died for souls. Now, look at all the many poor boys there are in the world who are betrayed, deceived, who sink into vice and are lost for want of religious instruction! Can you stand by, looking impassively at this heartrending sight? Remember what Jesus says to the hardhearted people: "You make no effort to save souls with the means that I have given to you, therefore let your money lead you to your perdition."

So therefore, let us try to promote our true interests. Let us give to Jesus Christ, and all that we give will be repaid to us abundantly here on earth and in eternity, for the bank of our Lord knows no bankruptcy.

I have spoken to you just like to my own brothers, so please forgive me for the liberty and familiarity with which I have spoken. I am going to Rome and will take with me the offerings you will give, so that they may be used in building the church and the hospice of the Sacred Heart. I will speak of you to the Supreme Pontiff, who has such a warm place in his heart for the people of La Spezia, as you can see from this same Oratory to which he has given greater support than his possibilities would permit. I shall ask for his blessing for you, your families and your interests.

For my part, I will not fail to say a special prayer for you every morning, and you will be good enough to pray for me, too. Thus through the exercise of an operative charity and prayer, we will have well grounded hopes of one day meeting all of us in Paradise.

The audience consisted mainly of workers since the more wealthy people were at dinner at that hour. Nevertheless, the collection was fairly conspicuous. There was even a gold ring in it.

Count Alvano Bonino, the school inspector, whom Don Bosco recognized as one of his former teachers at the Turin Oratory, was among those who called on Don Bosco at La Spezia. Don Bosco had not seen

him for thirty years. Bonino congratulated Don Bosco on all the good he had done in La Spezia and told him a delightful anecdote to which he had been a witness in 1850.

A family man from Savoy had become a Protestant in Turin, out of greed for the money that would befall him due to his apostasy. He expected that both his wife and son would do the same, but he met with opposition. His wife was steadfast in her faith and kept the boy steadfast in his faith with her.

One night the boy had a dream. He dreamed that he was being dragged toward the Protestant church, and as he struggled to withstand this act of violence, a priest appeared to set him free and take him away with him. The following day, he told his mother about the dream. She was looking in every possible way to place the child safely away into some institution. Someone advised her to send him to the Valdocco Oratory under Don Bosco.

She and the boy went there on Sunday morning, and hearing that there was a church service in progress, she went into the church. Just then, Don Bosco appeared to say Mass. The school inspector, who at the time was a catechism teacher, was kneeling down beside the boy, who began shouting as soon as he saw the priest approach the altar.

"Cist lui meme, cist lui meme [That is him, that is him]!"

The child kept on shouting and the mother began to weep. The catechism teacher led them both into the sacristy where they told him about the dream and everything else.

As soon as Don Bosco had returned to the sacristy after finishing Mass and had taken off his sacred vestments, the little boy ran up to him, clasping his hands and crying, "Save me, Father!"

Don Bosco accepted the little boy from Savoy right away, and he kept him in the Oratory for several years.

What a strange thing! After fifty years the same story is still being told. Wherever one may go, one will frequently come across people who have some interesting anecdote to tell about Don Bosco.

The congratulations of the school inspector on the good work of the Salesians at La Spezia were well justified and deserved. The house really had accomplished Don Bosco's mission; namely, it had held back the triumphant advance of the Protestants in that city. The behavior of the Protestant minister, a defrocked sub-deacon who had married a former nun, had also contributed to their discredit in the eyes of the population, according to the school inspector.

In previous years, about eight hundred boys had attended the heretical schools, but there were only seventeen pupils in attendance in 1884. The Salesian schools had completely emptied them.

Very early on Easter Monday, Don Bosco set out for Rome.

Chapter 3

A MONTH IN ROME – THE SACRED HEART CHURCH AND A PAPAL AUDIENCE – A DREAM ABOUT THE PAST AND PRESENT LIFE IN THE ORATORY – THE RETURN JOURNEY THROUGH FLORENCE AND BOLOGNA

It would have been wise for Don Bosco to rest a little after the exertion of his trip to France, so as not to deplete his strength. But divine charity which *non quaerit qua sua sunt* [is never selfish], is incapable of prescribing any limits to sacrifice. His own health was a lower priority than securing fresh financial resources that might enable him to continue the work on the church and the hospice of Rome, and obtaining the granting of privileges, so that before he left this world, the organization of the pious society might be complete. He, therefore, set out again for Rome. In this chapter, we will not deal with the second objective of his journey (since it's more opportune to deal with it separately), but will deal only with the first one and with the various circumstances related to his journey to Rome, his stay and his journey back to Turin.

Beginning in 1851, Don Bosco learned through experience that lotteries were the "means most compatible with the times and best attuned to the circumstances"[1] to stimulate the public and get minor charitable contributions. Therefore, he very actively organized them. He had already decided in 1882 to organize a lottery on behalf of the Sacred Heart Church, but he did not see the backing that he had expected from Rome. He regretfully complained about it to the Superior Chapter on February 26, 1884. "This lottery has become my scourge and a constant torment," he said, "on account of the laziness of the people in charge." He felt sure that his presence in the city would get things going in such a way as to draw profit by selling 100,000 tickets.

He got back on this topic in the Chapter meeting of the 28th:

I am thinking of writing to our General Procurator as follows:

[1] See circular (January 30, 1862).

forget any project that you may have for raising money, because we can no longer provide for them. If you want money, do all you can for the lottery. Overcome obstacles; avail yourself of the support of the parliamentary deputy Sanguineti. See what you can manage, but get started. Divine Providence had been a trailblazer for us and has handed us the means: a lottery; so why should we go looking for some other solution, when we have the one given to us by Divine Providence?

There was no time to lose because within a few months, there was going to be a large-scale lottery on behalf of the Turin Exhibit. It would have been very unlikely that the government would authorize the Salesian projected lottery.

"Write to Father Francis Dalmazzo," Don Bosco instructed Father John Bonetti, "and tell him that I am no longer able to stand upright under the weight of my infirmities, yet I am obliged to go to France to raise money for our houses. Provided he can find someone who is reliable and capable to coordinate and number the prizes, he should print the catalog with all the names of the donors. He should submit it as soon as possible to the competent authorities and have the tickets printed." He was undertaking the sale of them himself, even if they were three hundred thousand, since he hoped to get rid of them in a few days.

Even in France, he had been thinking about the project of the lottery. On March 19th, he wrote to Father Francis Dalmazzo from Marseille:

Marseille, March 19, 1884

Dearest Father Dalmazzo:

If you cannot do it yourself, at least let someone write a favorable response to me. Could I take along Count Colle for the ceremony of the cornerstone of the hospice next April or during the first part of May? He would bring an offering of 50,000 francs.

Are there any obstacles in the way of the lottery, or have you some other channels to get charitable donations? These are two things of vital importance to us at the present time.

Father Anthony Sala wrote to me and said neither yes nor no. That is not enough to make money.

God bless us all. Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

It was true that he had raised 250,000 francs in France, but he had enormous expenses. The Sacred Heart Church, which swallowed a big share of the proceeds of charitable donations, had obliged him to leave other debts unpaid and accrue others. So not only did he not retain all of that money, but it never got into his hand. Anytime he had a few thousand lire, he was obliged to send it wherever the need was the greatest. That was why the permit to organize the lottery would have represented a boon from Divine Providence.

A meeting of patrician ladies was held in the home of Countess Della Somaglia in Rome to discuss the best way to obtain the Prefect's approval for the lottery. Around the end of February, almost 1,500 objects, some of which were of great value, had been donated as prizes. Kind gentlemen and departmental heads of state offices had lent their services in the preliminary preparations.

Meanwhile, work continued on the church, and naturally debts increased as the construction progressed. The sanctuary, choir and apse were already so far ahead that they could have been opened for Liturgical services. The new Cardinal Vicar Parocchi blessed them on March 23rd, the fourth Sunday in Lent. In an article dated the 26th, a Roman correspondent of *l'Unita Cattolicá* reported that large numbers of the faithful had flocked to attend the sacred rites. "Well deserved accolades coming from everywhere are lavishly bestowed on that apostle of charity, the venerable Don Bosco who, trusting entirely in Divine Providence, courageously put his hand to this bold undertaking. It will indeed be a splendor for Rome and an immense spiritual advantage for the newly formed population that is living far removed from any church, without any facilities for Christian devotions, while being constantly exposed to Protestants, who under the protection of the very Italian Government, have pitched their tents even there."

In his sermon, His Eminence voiced his own delight for the fact that along with the building houses where once only fields had been, a beautiful church had also been constructed that would offer accommodation for the prayers of the new inhabitants. He also expressed some words of praise for Don Bosco and the Salesians, while he exhorted everybody to contribute their support in whatever measure they could for the completion of the sacred building.[2]

This is how matters stood when Don Bosco arrived in Rome on April

[2] *Voice of Truth* (No. 70, 1884).

14th. The young boarders of the Oratory gave him a festive welcome at their house. Don Bosco thanked them, promised them a special treat, and exhorted them to go to Communion for him on any Sunday they wished, assuring them that he would pray for them and their families at the same time.

The sight of these boys reminded him of the boys of Valdocco, so he had someone write them to convey his good wishes and remind them that their good deeds and works should form the canticle of their mortal life and a canticle to be deservedly sung eternally in Paradise. Meanwhile, they were to continue praying for him often to remember how fortunate they were to be chosen as the favorite sons of our Lady.[3] Father Michael Rua conveyed these good wishes to them together with the exhortations in a "good night" talk.

A week later, he turned his thoughts particularly towards the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades, and wrote to Father Stephen Febbraro, prefect of studies at the Oratory. The saint wanted every boy to individually write to him confidentially and tell him to what kind of life they felt themselves called; namely, whether it was to the ecclesiastical life or to the life of the world. Anyone aspiring to the priesthood was to let him know whether they intended to prepare themselves for the seminary or to make a clean break with the world and dedicate themselves to God in a retired life, not like the one lived by the Salesians. Everyone had to start from the principle of choosing whatever way of life seemed to them the most likely to assure their salvation.[4]

The boys compiled letters, writing either individually or in groups, to their beloved Father. On April 26th, the altar boys informed him that they would be making a "bouquet of Communions."[5] Don Bosco told Father John Baptist Lemoyne to answer them, recommending to each and everyone of them that they should be like lilies before the heart of Jesus, explaining that the lily is white (which means purity), it is fragrant (which means giving a good example), and it must be carefully tended or it will otherwise fade instantly (which means with mortification).

This represented his delightful relaxation amid all his bustling activity in connection with the privileges and the lottery. To ensure the proper

[3] Letter from Father John Baptist Lemoyne to Father Michael Rua (Rome, April 16, 1884).

[4] We do not have the text, but are fairly well acquainted with the nature of it from the notes by Father John Baptist Lemoyne. Don Bosco had already announced that the letter would be sent, as he had Father Rua write on April 10th, from La Spezia: " Don Bosco says that he is indebted to Father Febbraro for an answer, but will see to it himself in person."

[5] The reply of Father Febbraro to this letter from Don Bosco is remarkable for several reasons (Appendix, Document 7).

preparatory steps for the lottery, he summoned coadjutor Joseph Buzzetti to Rome. Father Michael Rua had just gone to Toulon to receive the 150,000 francs Count Colle had promised. It was Buzzetti who brought a share with him to Don Bosco in Rome; namely, 67,000 francs, which was immediately disbursed. All his highest hopes were now concentrated on the lottery. The many costly prizes were on display in the parish rectory. Buzzetti compiled the catalog and submitted it to the royal prefecture.

A law on lotteries in 1883 allowed an authorization to be granted only to legally established or approved foundations and certain non-approved ones to which some legal organization had lent its name. In our own specific instance, only two moral organizations could have beneficially underwritten the application: either the municipality or the Congregation of Charity, since the house that was then under construction was a charitable institution. The municipal board of aldermen was requested to lend its good offices. Unbeknownst to the Salesians, a friend of the Congregation appealed to King Humbert, who earnestly recommended the matter to the board, asking it to give the matter its favorable attention. The whole municipal staff was mostly Catholic, but some gave a jointly negative response for fear of being accused of being clerical sympathizers and because of their systematic opposition to the King. The matter was discussed orally, and no one had the courage to record it in the minutes of the board meeting. Naturally, the public knew nothing about it, since no mention was made of it in the council.[6] However, it must be stressed that the petition had only the name of Father Francis Dalmazzo and not the name of Don Bosco.

The other moral body, the Congregation of Charity, had Prince Pallavicini as its President. Don Bosco addressed a petition to him, but he received a rejection in reply.

"And yet, all of them are Catholics," Father John Baptist Lemoyne exclaimed in writing to Father Michael Rua. " From this we can tell that this house of Rome is the work of God. Perhaps once again on this occasion, the children of darkness will provide us with the support that has been denied to us by the children of light."[7]

The feeling of hostility circulating among the old Romans of the city was still prevalent against the northern Buzurri "invaders."

[6] The press did come to know about it, for La Capitale carried an infamous article on April 28th, page 7, warning the municipality against anyone sponsoring the lottery.

[7] Letter of April 28, 1884

Despite these setbacks, and although everything led to the supposition that the matter would drag on indefinitely, Don Bosco wanted the work on the lottery to continue. Even though these various hostile oppositions had not knocked down his spirit, they took their toll on his physical condition. Father John Baptist Lemoyne commented, "It does look as though the devil intends to block all his paths. Yet Don Bosco is perfectly resigned and has not yet been forced to go to bed."[8]

Three Salesians from Valdocco on their way home from hearing confessions at La Generala some time between April and May had encountered Cardinal Alimonda in Viale Stupingi. As soon as he caught sight of them, he asked, "Where is our dear Don Bosco."

When told that he was in Rome, he asked how he was and was informed that according to the latest bulletin received, he was somewhat better. "Ah! Yes, somewhat better!" His Eminence repeated. "I do not like that 'somewhat better' at all. I would like him to be perfectly well. He is old, so why do you allow him to work so hard? When children see their father advancing in years and growing weaker, they say to him, 'Take some rest, Father, and leave the work to us.'"

"We would be glad to," the Salesians answered, "but Don Bosco does not obey us."

"Then order him to obey in my name! Will he obey me?"

"We think he would be reluctant to obey. He would obey you in everything, yet in this matter, perhaps he would venture to be disobedient."

"Ah! Don Bosco does not intend to rest here on earth, but only in Heaven. So we will pray to our Lord that He preserve him for us for many a year. Let us pray that our Lord may help him so that all of us together can accomplish a great deal of good."[9]

A ray of hope began to shine on the 1st of the month in connection with the lottery. Countess Della Somaglia, a court lady of Queen Margherita, promised that she would personally ask Mayor Torlonia to underwrite the lottery with his own name, seeking authorization from the Prefect of Rome. This lady was the president of the Ladies' Committee, which had been organized to help build the hospice.

On other occasions, Don Bosco had called on a great many people when in Rome, but in 1884, the difficulty he had walking in addition to the other infirmities from which he was then suffering obliged him to

[8] Loc. Cit.

[9] Letter to Father John Baptist Lemoyne from Father Canepa (Turin, May 4, 1884).

drastically limit his social calls. On April 17th, he called on Cardinal Consolini, who had always been very benevolent toward the Salesian Congregation, and he was now delighted to see him again and most willing to help him. He was so kind as to repay his call a few days later.

On the 18th, he called on Cardinal Lodovico Jacobini, the secretary of state, who promised to do everything possible for him. On the 25th, he called on Cardinal Parocchi, vicar to His Holiness, with Father Francis Dalmazzo.

Although he made very few calls himself, he received a great many visits, both by individuals and groups. Among the individuals who called on Don Bosco were Father Carrie of the Congregation of the Holy Ghost and the superior of the Congo Mission, who bore the title of Vice-Prefect Apostolic; Bishop Gandolfi, a former bishop of Civitavecchia; a representative of the bishop of Santiago, Chile, who asked that Salesians be sent to that republic; also Bishop Kirby, the rector of the Irish Seminary, and Archbishop Dominic Jacobini, secretary to the *Propaganda Fide,* who remained to dine with Don Bosco[10]; Bishop Rota, titular bishop of Cartagena.[11] Cardinal Consolini and Cardinal Nina called on him as well. When Cardinal Buonaparte drove past the house in his coach and was unable to go upstairs because of his infirmity, he sent Don Bosco his call card.

Occasionally, a large group of young clerics would go to see him, and there was a continuous flow of pious people. He had looked forward to a little rest in Rome, for he was in great need of it. Yet, he was rarely allowed

[10] On other occasions, Don Bosco had always gone to lunch with Bishop Kirby. They had much love and veneration for Don Bosco at the Irish seminary. But he was also known and esteemed at the English seminary, so much so in fact that a fine old tradition was picked up again. In the days of St. Philip Neri, the English priests ordained in the eternal city used to ask the apostle of Rome to give his blessing to their priestly apostolate and missionary activity in England before they returned to their country. Whenever the saint encountered the seminarians on their way to school in the streets of Rome, he always granted them a blessing with the words *"Salvete, flores martyrum* [hail flowers of martyrs]." Now for some years, as soon as word got to that seminary that Don Bosco was a saint, all the newly ordained priests had hastened to call on him for the same blessing either in Rome or on their way home through Turin. Such a love of Don Bosco had sown the seeds of a vocation for the Salesian way of life during the life of the founder in many young Irish and English priests.

Rev. James Rowan, a student in that seminary, had been dismissed on account of his frail health by the Rector. It was generally believed that his days were numbered. He, therefore, went back to England, convinced that he had to forever abandon all thought of further study and the priesthood. Nevertheless, he wrote to Don Bosco before leaving Rome and received a very reassuring letter in reply. When he arrived back in his native country, he no longer had a cough and later had no further symptoms of his former sickness. He was able to resume his studies, was ordained a priest and became a zealous pastor of the Holy Martyr's Church in Manchester, where he built a magnificent church with adjoining schools and labored untiringly until the last year of his life in 1935. This much was stated publicly by his bishop at a diocesan assembly meeting, at which he so concluded his speech: "This is a miracle of Don Bosco's during his lifetime." He made the same statement in the Cathedral on Easter evening in 1934.

[11] The archepiscopal see at Cartagena had been reestablished on November 10, 1884 by Leo XIII. Bishop Rota was then transferred to the titular archepiscopal see of Thebes.

even only a few moments of relaxation between eight o'clock in the morning and seven o'clock at night. In order to assure at least an hour of respite after his dinner, it was necessary that strict instructions be imparted to the doorkeeper that someone mount sentry duty in the antechamber and that his bedroom be carefully locked. Yet under certain circumstances, one had to dispense with every precaution, because important people or distinguished benefactors were calling, bringing along also charitable donations. "No one could measure the amount of sacrifices made by Don Bosco for the Congregation," Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote.

One day, he received a visit from a young priest from Catania, Father Nicotra, a fellow student of the future Pope Benedict XV at the Capranica College. He was calling on Don Bosco on behalf of his archbishop to urge him to send some Salesians to that city. Don Bosco justified his delay on the grounds that he did not have sufficient personnel, but since the young priest insisted, he very graciously invited him to help solve the problem by becoming a Salesian himself. This son of Sicily, who was pursuing a very different path, smiled slightly.

"I see, you have greater aspirations than that," Don Bosco said. "Well, know that you will receive much honor and suffer greatly, but you will never attain what you are now dreaming of."

When his august classmate remembered him and appointed him Apostolic Nuncio in Portugal, people who were acquainted with this episode (among them, Bishop Cicognani, who was then Nuncio in Peru), hastened to assert that on this occasion Don Bosco had been mistaken, for Bishop Nicotra was now securely heading for the "purple hat."[12] But after all, that appointment as Nuncio turned out to be of great grief for the unfortunate prelate, and he was eventually called back and ended his days in obscurity.

Infirmed people called on Don Bosco as well to seek his blessing or sent personal belongings for him to bless. Quite a few Romans, too, sought an audience, but most of his visitors were French, for Frenchmen used to go in great numbers to Rome during the Easter season. They made their appearance already during the very first few days and crowded a part of the church open to the public every morning while attending his Mass. Then, they all streamed into the sacristy to talk to him, and remained with him for hours. Whenever he went back to his room, he would find the antechamber jammed with people. On

[12] This was what Bishop Cicognani said in Lima in the presence of the Salesian Father Piedmont and others. He also repeated it at the Oratory on September 5, 1934, albeit with the proper corrections.

average, these visitors gave him only modest offerings, since they were traveling themselves, but they promised to send much more once they returned home.

The piety of the French found expression in curious ways. The morning of April 22nd, a few Frenchmen brought along three amices that Don Bosco might use while saying Mass and then return them, so that they could be sent to priests in France who had requested this favor. One day, five gentlemen declared they would not observe their Easter duty unless Don Bosco heard their confession, so he had to satisfy their demands.

Madame Berk Meda came to pay her respects on the vigil of her departure for France. She gave him some money and asked for his blessing. In taking leave of her, Don Bosco asked, "Will you attend Mass tomorrow?"

"Oh, no. I cannot attend because I am leaving Rome in the evening. I shall need the morning to prepare everything for the journey."

In going over her money the next morning, she realized that she had more money left over than she needed, and she was sorry not to have given Don Bosco more of it. Overwhelmed by this thought (although it was already past the hour for his Mass), she sent for a coach and rushed to Don Bosco and luckily found him alone in his room.

As soon as he saw her, he said, "Ah! Madame Meda. I knew somebody was about to show up."

"Really? I had no intention to come back," Madame Meda said, "but I wanted to bring you a little more money before I left."

"Remember this visit of yours carefully," the saint said, "because here we are in the realm of the supernatural. At this minute, I should have been on the other side of Rome, and I would not have seen you again because I had an appointment with a cardinal after Mass. On my way out, a creditor met me on the doorstep, demanding the payment of a fairly substantial sum. I gave him all I had and you can see my empty wallet. I did not even keep one lira for the coach. I then prayed to Mary Help of Christians to send me someone to help me and I began to work. So I was expecting you, you see, and I knew that you would be coming."[13]

As if he had not enough to do already with the audiences he gave and other business matters, he always had a number of letters that required an

[13] Letter from the lady to Father Michael Rua (1891).

answer.[14] By the end of the day, his poor head was so weary that he was often incapable of formulating or connecting ideas, so he would go out for a breath of fresh air. He walked three quarters of an hour every evening, leaning on the arm of Father John Baptist Lemoyne. In those days, it was possible to walk undisturbed in that part of Rome, since there were only a few buildings and the traffic was light.

More than anything else, the Italian and French press encouraged vast crowds to go to see him. In its issue of April 22nd, for example, *La Croix* announced the arrival of two illustrious bishops in Rome and "likewise Don Bosco, the great benefactor of orphans."

Le Journal de Rome was not content with such a laconic statement, and so it published a whole interview in its issue of April 25th, thanks to correspondents who had approached Don Bosco. This interview is well worthy of being read, at least in a summarized form:

> "I had been wanting to pay my respects for some time to the eminent priest who has rendered such an outstanding service to the Catholic cause," the interviewing journalist said, "but my visit is also motivated by a tinge of curiosity, which I beg you to satisfy. I have continually wondered by what miracle you were able to found so many houses in so many different parts of the world."
>
> "Yes, I was able to do more than I had hoped for," the saint replied, "but I myself do not know how I did it. But this is how I explain it. The Church and, above all, our present generation have been consecrated by the Pope most especially to the holy Virgin. Now the holy Virgin, who knows the specific needs of our time, inspires those devoted to her to contribute alms and donations to the consolidation and maintenance of something that is of the greatest vital importance at the present day - the education of youth. You see, once my confreres wrote to me in Turin and asked for twenty thousand lire, for which they had an urgent need for the church we are building in Rome. At that time, I had no money

[14] There were a great many petitions for honorific titles. At the beginning of May, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote to Father Michael Rua: "There are people who want the title of knight, commander, order of the Italian kingdom or decorations from the Pope. Others want to be appointed monsignor or bishop; some have a nephew they want recommended for government employment or want the faculty for a chapel in their house. All these petitions have accompanying letters of recommendation from important people." Another letter of quite another nature came from his dear friend Father Mortara and provided a great comfort for him.

at all, but an idea came to me. I put the letter beside the holy water font, said a fervent prayer to the Madonna and went to bed, leaving the matter in her hands. The next morning, I received a letter from someone unknown, who, in short, said that he made a vow to our Lady that if she were to grant him a certain grace, he would give twenty thousand lire for some charitable undertaking. Now that the grace has been granted, he is putting this sum at my service for one of my undertakings.

"On another occasion when I was staying with a friend in France, I received word that one of my houses was exposed to a great risk, because they did not have seventy thousand francs. I was very worried and did not know which way to turn, so I again resorted to prayer. I was about to go to bed at about ten o'clock when someone knocked at my bedroom door. I went to open it and there stood one of my friends holding a great amount of papers in his hand. He said, 'Dear Don Bosco, I had left you a sum of money in my will for your undertakings. But today it occurred to me that it would be wiser if I were not to wait for my death to do good, so I am bringing the money to you now. Here it is - seventy thousand francs.'"

"These are true miracles indeed," the journalist said. "But although I do not want to be indiscreet, might I ask if you have performed other miracles yourself?"

"How do you expect me to answer such a question? I have never thought of doing anything else but my duty, praying and putting my trust in our Lady."

"Would you please tell me what your educational system is?"

"It is very simple: I leave the boys entirely free to do whatever they like to do. The secret lies in discovering their positive qualities and in trying to develop them. Since people are happy doing only what they know they can do, I follow this principle so that all my pupils are not only working with industriousness, but they are working with love. I have never inflicted any punishment in forty-six years and I may dare to assert that my pupils are all very fond of me."

"Your educational system really is excellent. One more thing - how did you manage to extend the activity as far as Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego?"

"Little by little, by going or, I had better say, by being sum-

moned from one place to another. One might say that my sons discovered Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Fifteen thousand natives have already been baptized. We have found favorable acceptance everywhere and are powerfully protected by the Argentine government. Very soon we shall have a vicariate apostolic in that territory, which is as big as Europe."

"It looks as though God is recapturing for the Church the ground it has lost here in Europe in faraway countries. This is very comforting! But what do you think about the position of the Church in Europe and Italy especially, and what do you foresee for the future?"

"I am not a prophet. It's you journalists who are, to a certain extent, the prophets. Therefore, one really ought to ask you what will happen. No one other than God has the knowledge of the future. Nevertheless, humanly speaking, we may well believe that the outlook for the future is serious. A Latin poet said that all efforts to climb back up a precipice are useless when one is on his way down because one will necessarily slide to the bottom. I foresee tragic times ahead for us, but I am not afraid. God will always protect His Church and our Lady, who is manifestly protecting the contemporary world, will call forth men to act as its redeemers."

An analogous incident such as the one described above relates likewise to that sojourn of Don Bosco in Rome. A creditor was hounding Father Francis Dalmazzo, insisting that he should pay a debt of five hundred lire, his promissory note term having expired. It was useless for Father Francis Dalmazzo to explain that he had not a single centesimo in his coffers. The creditor only became more insistent, raising his voice and telling him to borrow some money, because he did not intend to leave the house without his dues. Father Francis Dalmazzo begged him not to shout so loud, but it was useless. Although he knew that Don Bosco had no money (since he had taken whatever he had from him that same morning), he entered his room to ask him what he should do. The saint was then with the Migone family, who hailed from the neighborhood of Bordighera. Father Francis Dalmazzo entered the room just as the lady was handing Don Bosco an offering, and the servant of God merely passed the note over to Father Francis Dalmazzo with a smile. The pious woman was deeply moved to see how she had been used as an instrument

of Divine Providence.

There is also another curious incident. Madame de Fontenay, her cousin and her cousin's daughter were three of Don Bosco's most assiduous visitors. They called on Don Bosco every day for three weeks. On one occasion, the lady's cousin lost her purse, which contained a substantial amount of money. She mentioned her loss in the presence of Don Bosco, for it occurred to her that he might find it and if he did, she would give him the money it contained for his boys. The saint smiled, but he did not say anything.

As they left the house, they wanted to drive to St. Peter's with the same coach that had driven them to see him, but the driver refused to take them anywhere else, alleging that the horse was tired.

As they were arguing with him, another coach came along, and the driver shouted, "Do not waste time with that grumbler; I will drive you wherever you want to go." As soon as they took their seats, the lady's cousin felt something hard under her foot. She picked up the mat and she saw her purse, which had been there for twenty-four hours without anyone having noticed it. This was a remarkable coincidence, but as the ninety-year old lady wrote in April 1926: *"Nous savons ce que etaient les hasard de votre pere!* [We know what your good father's mishaps are!]"

On April 26th, a few French priests came with a carriage to escort Don Bosco to celebrate Mass in the convent of the Sisters of the Retraite, or the *Cenaculum,* as he had promised he would. He met with a number of French and Roman ladies waiting for him. At the Gospel, he addressed the congregation, saying that he did not intend to recommend his boys in Turin to their charity on that occasion, but a Roman undertaking instead - the Church of the Sacred Heart with its adjoining hospice.

"There are many boys in need and in danger, roaming the streets of Rome," he said. "They have to be rescued, if they are not to lose their souls and swell the tragic ranks of the inmates of our prisons. Many boys who come from outside of Rome cannot find shelter in the urban hospices, because they only accept boys from Rome. So they are sent to our houses in Tuscany and Piedmont. But you can readily estimate the money spent for traveling expenses and then for sending them home again, nor is there room for all of them. Therefore, a hospice here in Rome would fill a widely felt need, for here, the boys will be educated in their natural environment without the necessity of changing climate, which is sometimes harmful to their health. Nor do they have to change their habits or their

eating patterns, while an education will be provided for them according to the demands of the eternal city, their own home town, and not according to foreign customs."

Lastly, he exhorted his listeners to be generous toward the children because Jesus Christ favored them and also because the undertaking was eminently Roman. The amount of 725 lire was collected. Later, he blessed the community and left, so reads the chronicle of the old convent that has now been resurrected in Piazza Santa Priscilla: *Laissant la vraie impression que fait le passage d'un saint* [leaving behind the true impression caused by the visit of a saint].

These same priests escorted him by coach to the home of Bishop Jacobini, with whom he discussed a subsidy to be granted to his missions. He handed a recent letter received from Father Milanesio to him that dealt with his apostolic explorations in the Rio Negro valley. Finally, the courteous priests drove him home.

Toward evening, a very wealthy and fervently Catholic Polish gentleman, who spent enormous sums of money in his own country to assist youths aspiring to the priesthood in their studies, called on Don Bosco to ask him to visit his gravely ill sister. Although Don Bosco was weary, he could not say no. The whole family welcomed him on their knees as a sign of veneration usually accorded to the saints alone.

So many hardships and the additional burden of bitter disappointments aggravated Don Bosco's physical infirmities; he had liver problems and one eye was inflamed. On April 27th he had an attack of fever that lasted three days. He felt so sick one night that he had to get out of bed; and at certain hours of the day he was utterly tired to the point of exhaustion. Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote these sad lines to Father Michael Rua the first week of May:

> This morning, Don Bosco told me that he is very tired. Nevertheless, he continues to take care of matters concerning our Congregation. You can see at every moment how much he loves us and how many sacrifices and humiliations he endures on behalf of his children. He smiles when he is telling me about some past events of his life, but those who listen to him feel a heavy heart. How much has he suffered these last forty-eight years! This should be the theme for talks with everyone, great and small alike, because really no thought is given to it. Now and then, we complain because we feel the lack of this or that, and we

do not reflect on all that it cost Don Bosco to procure for us what we have.

Yet despite it all, Don Bosco made arrangements for a talk to the cooperators of Rome. Don Bosco invited them to the Church of the Noble Lady Oblates at Torre de'Specchi on May 8th. The steady downpour of rain did not prevent a distinguished congregation from attending and the Cardinal Vicar presided over the ceremony. A motet was sung and a chapter from the life of St. Francis of Sales was read out, and then Don Bosco delivered these few words from the pulpit, words that were recorded by Father John Baptist Lemoyne:

"I will first of all express my fervent thanks to His Eminence, the Cardinal Vicar, who graciously condescended to preside at this pious meeting, and who, despite the bad weather, was so kind as to come amongst us. As for you, dear cooperators, I give my respects and profound gratitude to you for having accepted my invitation with such charity. Now if you will allow me, I will give you a brief report on what the Salesians have accomplished during the last two years since I had the honor of talking to you.

"Two years ago, we faced the problem of how to increase the number of houses where boys could receive a Christian education, since their souls were facing increasing perils. Thanks to Heaven and the charity of Salesian cooperators, I am very happy to inform you that the hopes we then voiced have been crowned with success, for the number of houses has almost been doubled. Over 100,000 boys now attend our schools to learn a trade and receive nourishment for both their temporal and eternal life. After God, my thanks must go to the cooperators, who have helped me reap such an abundant harvest.

"Two years ago, I also spoke to you of the missions in Brazil, Uruguay and Patagonia, as well as the high hopes we had for the salvation of these lands. Now the missions have been firmly established and natives living in the wastelands of South America have been baptized, as many as fifteen thousand. The wise Pontiff Leo XIII has now divided Patagonia into a vicariate apostolic and a prefecture, entrusting these missions to the Salesians. By increasing the number of evangelical laborers, the number of converted pagans will also increase.

"Another thing observed two years ago was the crying need there was in Rome for a church and a hospice consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, as a monument to the memory of Pius IX. This church and hospice, which were to serve as a parish to the newly constructed quarter of the town known as Castro Pretorio, were also to provide religious and civil education at the same time for so many poor and abandoned boys who roam the streets of the city among dangers to both body and soul. I am now happy to inform you that not only has the church been started and raised to the level where the cupolas may now be constructed, but also that one portion of it, namely the choir and the sanctuary, are completed and are already in use for parish services. It is comforting to everyone, but especially to the Cardinal Vicar, to know how big a congregation attends the sacred services, while both grown-ups and boys attend the Sacraments in great number. There is a festive oratory adjoining the parish church and about two hundred boys attend Mass there. Special catechism courses are held for them in the courtyard and they happily amuse themselves under the vigilant eyes and assistance of the Salesians instead of wandering around town, exposed to the gravest dangers of godlessness and immorality.

"There are also over three hundred girls who, likewise, receive religious instruction. We are also gratified by the good attendance of boys at our school. Blessed once again by the Lord for the way in which the pious devotions in honor of the Holy Virgin Mary have begun for the month of May. Every evening, about one thousand people come to hear the sermon and join in the special devotions while another vast crowd attends a similar service in the morning, which is held regularly for the convenience of people unable to attend the service in the evening.

"Nor should I pass over in silence the fact that the temple consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus is still far from being complete and the adjoining hospice, which should accommodate at least five hundred boys, is barely initiated. To a great extent, work is still in progress on the foundations. However, work is now progressing at an accelerated pace, though for a time it had to be suspended since our funds were inferior to our good will. In order to dispense with this threat, I am planning a lottery in Rome. A great many prizes have already been donated and tickets have

been printed. All we lack is approval from the authorities, and we expect to have this within a few days. I trust that this authorization will be forthcoming, in view of the influential people taking an interest in the matter.

"I am therefore again appealing to the charity of the cooperators of Rome, and I ask them to complete an essential task in that area of the city known as Castro Pretorio. The undertaking is a Roman one, by the Romans and for the Romans. I started it, others now may continue it and see it through to its completion.

"I will end by asking you to pray for me, and by assuring you that my boys and I shall always pray for you."

As the saint descended from the pulpit, the cardinal took his place. His Eminence Cardinal Parocchi was endowed with the culture and eloquence of a born orator, and even in profane circles, he was held in high esteem. Despite the abbreviated account of his speech that has come down to us, it, nevertheless, is so important to our history that we are including it here in our narrative instead of relegating it to the end of the volume:

"I would like to speak regarding the Salesians and their founder with total freedom. I would like to be free to voice my thoughts and feelings about him, his works and his meritorious Congregation. But the presence of the man of God – the man of Divine Providence, this pearl of Italian Catholic priesthood – and the presence of some of his students prohibit me from using such freedom. It is, therefore, proper for me to be silent, for any eulogy would offend their modesty. But if I myself am silent, their works will speak for them with sufficient eloquence. His many schools scattered in Italy, France, Spain and faraway America speak of Don Bosco and his sons. The many churches built in several parts of the world within a three-year span speak of Don Bosco and his sons and celebrate their praises. The many printed books published for the religious instruction of the masses also speak for him, as do the many skillful books published, the expurgated classics which remove any danger that Italian literature might represent for young readers. So, too, will his festive oratories, his day, night and Sunday schools, where boys are taught to love God and to serve Him, while, at the same time, they are given an education befitting their status in life. The missions

that have been established in a short time in America and are prospering for the glory of the Catholic Church and civilization speak for him. If I am silent, the name of this man of Divine Providence, Don Bosco, resounds on the lips of 100,000 boys who look to him as to their father. If I am silent, his name, his Congregation and all his many students speak for him. The eminently Roman undertaking here begun and continued by him with truly Roman courage, the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and adjoining hospice that we see rising before our eyes also speak for him.

"Certainly no praise can be adequate to the greatness, to the merits or the heroism that always distinguishes the works of the incomparable Don Bosco. This city is already reaping such fine and timely fruits, thanks to the Congregation he founded and that has spread extensively. One is full of wonder just to think of it.

Dear cooperators, wonderful though these things are, there is nothing new in them, nothing which has not seen its counterpart in bygone ages. There has always been talk of missions to savage, barbaric people; there has always been talk of sermons, churches, hospices, the distribution of good books and the education of the young. All these things were done before the Salesians; they are being done now, and they will be done in the future because they form part of the very nature of the Catholic Church.

It is not on this matter that I wish to draw your attention, but rather I would ask you to feel honored by your appellative of Salesian, a name already loved because of the saint of sweetness and charity whom it calls to mind; a name that is lovelier still because of the significance it confers on your works of salt and light. I want to talk about that which constitutes your character, your physiognomy. Just as God confers to every man born into this world something that distinguishes him among all other men, so too does God confer something to every religious congregation that gives it a character, a mark of its own to distinguish it from other Congregations. The Order of St. Francis of Assisi has the specific characteristic of poverty, which the Franciscans proposed during a century dedicated entirely to arrogance and pleasure. The Order of St. Dominic has faith as its characteristic, since it came to life in a century when every heresy was virulently active - *haec est victoria quae vincit mundum fides nostra* [this is what

conquers the world, your faith]. Ignatius and his Society of Jesus have the characteristic of learning, which they had to fight against the ignorance of those who accused the Church and the advancement of Protestant doctrine, fighting for their territory inch by inch, forcing their way to areas the Protestants had already occupied, conquering souls not only with their holiness, but also with their learning. The same thing can be said of all other religious foundations, but it would take me too long to review them all here, to point out their distinguishing features.

"So you, too, oh Salesians, have a special mission that constitutes your characteristic. I, a cardinal of Holy Mother Church, coming here to preach in this shrine of truth, do not come to flatter nor dissimulate. I am, therefore, speaking quite frankly. In a parallel with the founders of the great religious orders - the Dominicans, the Franciscans and the Jesuits - Don Bosco drew inspiration from all three, taking a little from each to help construct his own Congregation that is, nevertheless, distinguishable among them all.

"Your own Congregation seems to be akin to that of St. Francis in its poverty, yet your brand of poverty is not Franciscan. It would seem to be akin to the Order of St. Dominic, though you do not have to defend the faith against overwhelming heresies, for these heresies have not grown old, but are now decrepit and enfeebled. Then your principal mission consists in the education of the young. It would seem to be akin to the order of St. Ignatius in learning because of the extensive number of books you have published for the masses, and Don Bosco is a man of great genius and extensive knowledge, learned in many things. But do not take it amiss if I say that you have not invented the philosopher's stone.

"So what is there so special about the Salesian Congregation? What is its nature, its physiognomy? If I have understood it properly, if I have perceived its true concept, if its purpose - its specific nature, its physiognomy, its essential being are not hidden from me - then its nature lies in the charity it exercises in accordance with the requirements of our day and age: nos credidimus caritati; *Deus caritas est*, and it is revealed in charity. The present age can only be won over and led to do good with love.

"The world seeks or recognizes nothing outside what is material at the present day. It knows nothing and desires to know noth-

ing of spiritual things. It turns a deaf ear to the beauty of faith, ignores the grandeur of religion, repudiates the hope of an afterlife, and even denies God Himself. Can a blind man distinguish between colors or can a deaf man appreciate the sublime harmonies of Beethoven or Rossini? Can a simpleton appreciate the beauties of art? Such is our present day and age: blind, deaf, without understanding as far as what comes from God and charity. This day and age only understands charity as a means, but not its ends or its principle. It will analyze this virtue, but cannot make up its synthesis. *'Animalis homo non percipit quae sunt spiritus Dei,'* so said St. Paul. Tell the men of this day and age that the souls that are now being lost must be saved and we have to teach those who are ignorant the essentials of religion. We have to give alms for love of God Who one day will generously reward the generous heart, but the men of this day and age do not understand.

"We, therefore, have to adapt ourselves to the days in which we live, and this is a basely material age. God reveals Himself to the pagans by means of natural laws. He reveals Himself to the Jews through the Bible, to the schismatic Greeks through the great traditions of the fathers, to Protestants through the gospel, and to this present generation through love. Nos credidimus caritati.

"Tell this day and age that you are rescuing children from the streets so that they may not be run over, so that they may not fall inside wells, that you are giving them shelter in a hospice so that they may not fritter their youth in vice and licentiousness. You are gathering them in classrooms to educate them, so that they may not become a menace to society, and that they may not go to prison. You are calling them and will look after them so that they will not gouge one another's eyes out. Then the man of this century will understand and will begin to believe. *Et nos cognovimus et credidimus caritati, quam habet Deus in nobis* [We have come to know and believe the love that God has toward us].

"Now, Don Bosco has come to Rome and he has set up his tents in the new district of Rome, a Rome not yet baptized. He has come to found a church and a hospice and he has come to the Rome of the wine shops, cafes, wide roads and straight streets, to give a glimpse of Christian love, as required by the needs of this day and age. He has come to the Rome that is as yet unbaptized, where one only hears the whistle of engines and the bells of

Protestant churches, which apart from every other consideration, are even phonically out of tune. Here where there was no church, we now behold the dome of the Church of the Sacred Heart, which extends a hand toward the church of San Lorenzo, stretching out over the railway yard sheds. The only cross visible in this unbaptized Rome is that atop the Sacred Heart Church. There are no religious institutions in this district, or if there are, they are hidden, almost as if they did not venture to show themselves in such a profane environment.

"Don Bosco says that he has begun the church at Castro Pretorio and that it is our task to continue and complete it. No, my dear Don Bosco, you started it, so I dare to say that you must finish it. I say finish it, but not complete it; namely, adorn it in its entirety, covering it with gold and paintings. We pray that God preserve Don Bosco long enough so that he may see the church finished, the building already housing five hundred boys, provided not only with their historically famous roll of bread that Divine Providence will provide for them, but a little more than that, for *non in solo pane vivit homo* [man does not live on bread alone].

"It is Don Bosco who must complete this undertaking, for nothing is denied to him with the great impact he has over those who listen to him, and he enjoys universal veneration. We need his name. His name and his prestige will enable us to collect everything that all of us together could never attain. His name by now has echoed throughout the world, and his name alone can stimulate the contributions of the whole world. This is fitting and essential. Rome is entitled to contributions toward this undertaking from all over the world, since the whole of the Catholic world will thereby benefit.

"The population of Rome is a princely population, the first population in the world, for upon it is shed some of the dignity of the Supreme Pontiff, who lives in its midst and is its bishop. The Church of Rome, firstborn and Mother of all churches, is entitled to this tribute of reverence. Good stems from her all over the world, and to her the whole world owes a debt of gratitude and must cooperate in her undertakings.

"Until recently, the people of Rome were accustomed to being ruled by a father and the habit of receiving, not giving. Today, the situation has changed and, day after day, we are

relieved of what little we still possess by the taxes levied by the new government. Nevertheless, charitable institutions in Rome are maintained as they were before, and who looks after them? The people of Rome. You have seen how magnificently our churches are adorned and who provides such treasures? The people of Rome. There are some patricians who give in alms as much as 100,000 lire at a time.

"It might therefore seem to you, lady and gentleman cooperators of Rome, that what you already do in the way of good works should suffice. It might seem unbecoming to impose any new burden on you, but I know how generous you are. The Romans will certainly not forsake Don Bosco in this undertaking, but will contribute to it with the faith and charity that is so well famous in the world. Yes, lend a hand with whatever you have and even a little more to this undertaking. You personally see what a vital need there is for a church in this new, densely populated area. You realize how necessary a hospice for many poor boys would be. You personally see the Salesians in this task that Divine Providence entrusted to them through the hands of the Supreme Pontiff. Do not fear either for yourselves or for those dear to you, for if necessary, God will perform miracles to reward your charity. Thanks to your contributions, it will be easier to assert that the present generation, dazzled by the splendor of charitable deeds, has confessed the truth of our most holy religion and become enamored of it. *Et nos cognovimus et credidimus caritati."*

The ceremony ended with a fine motet sung by the Noble Oblates and Benediction with the Most Blessed Sacrament imparted by Bishop Kirby. Upon returning home, Don Bosco immediately gave his attention to preparing himself for his audience with the Pope.

He had waited for quite some time for this audience. He had filed a written application for an audience with Bishop Macchi on April 23rd. The bearer of the letter had been told to ask the master of ceremonies when he might return for an answer, but the bishop replied that there was no need to take this trouble because he would personally be sending the audience ticket to Don Bosco in a day or two, to whom he sent his respects.

Two days went by, but no answer had arrived, yet the Sicilian priest and Lenten preacher Father Di Pietro, who had preached in Turin and was staying at the Sacred Heart on his way through Rome, instantly obtained the

audience through Bishop Macchi on April 25th. Don Bosco was nevertheless comforted when he was told by his guest that the Pope had kept him for about an hour and a half and had asked for news of Don Bosco's health and especially his eyesight, and he spoke of him very affectionately.[15]

When he saw that nothing was coming from the Vatican, he sent a message to Bishop Macchi on the 29th to find out whether the day and hour of the audience had been scheduled already. But the reply was negative and Bishop Macchi again repeated that when it was established, he would personally write to the Sacred Heart Church. Receiving a visit on May 2nd from Commendatore Sterbini, secret steward of His Holiness, Don Bosco complained about the long delay. The steward became upset and urged him to go straight to the Vatican the following evening when Bishop Martini, a friend of the saint, would be on duty in the antechamber and would certainly allow the saint to enter. But Don Bosco did not feel that such action would be becoming. The servant of God also lodged an analogous complaint with Bishop Negrotto, a canon of St. Peter's, remarking that several French ladies had arrived in the city after him and had immediately been granted an audience. "Yet I have to speak with the Pope about matters he himself entrusted to me," he said.

Somewhat astonished, the canon promised to see what he could do. But distressed as he was, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote again to Father Michael Rua on May 5th: "As for the Vatican, there has been no reply from Bishop Macchi after a week and a half. It is a bitter deal indeed, but we must be patient." In the fourth chapter of this volume the reader will guess for himself the reasons why there was such an atmosphere of obstruction around the Pope.

At last at midday, on May 6th, the announcement came that his audience was scheduled for eleven o'clock on Friday the 9th. Don Bosco went to the audience accompanied by Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father

[15] Father Salvatore Di Pietro from Palermo wrote to Father Michael Rua on February 9, 1888: "The well beloved image of our dear Don Bosco is firmly engraved in my heart ever since I stayed in Rome with the Salesian Fathers on my way home from the Lenten preaching in Turin at the church of the Sacred Heart. I had the good fortune of staying five days next to him (April 1884). There was a constant flow of people coming and going in that holy, yet unfinished temple; people from all nations, speaking every language, were going to see the saint, hear him speak and admire him. No one went away without receiving some little thing that had been touched, blessed or used by Don Bosco. If only you knew the things I saw at the time, my dear father, and how my soul was recharged with faith and love for our beloved Christ Crucified! He wanted me to spend long hours with him, talking of holy things. I saw ladies of the foremost Roman, French and German aristocracy leave white and colored handkerchiefs and many other objects at the Sacred Heart Church in Rome, asking that the father use them at least once, and that they might then reclaim them as a precious souvenir."

Joseph Daghero,[16] and was ushered into the presence of the Pope at 1:45. For a few seconds, the door remained open, and the chamberlains of honor, the secret steward on duty and the officer of the Noble Guard approached it to see how the Holy Father might welcome him. The voice of the Pope rang out clearly and Father John Baptist Lemoyne overheard it.

"Oh, Don Bosco! How are you? How is your health? I hear that you are not too well," the Pope said immediately.

Don Bosco, who had knelt down, kissed the Pope's foot, then asked if he might remain standing, since he could not remain on his knees.

"Do not stand, but sit," the Pope said. He motioned Bishop Macchi for a chair to be brought forward. Don Bosco thanked His Holiness and sat down. Only the deceased Cardinal Caterini had been privileged to sit down in the presence of Leo XIII, since the cardinal was ninety years old.

Bishop Macchi had not yet moved, so the Pope turned toward him and said, "You may go."

As the Bishop left, everyone who had been standing by the door listening, withdrew. We will now relate in detail what happened during the audience, following the notes taken by Father John Baptist Lemoyne and a few items in the handwritten minutes of the Superior Chapter.

The beginning of their conversation dealt with Don Bosco's health. When he asked news in this regard, Leo XIII said, "You really must take care of yourself, sparing no means to keep up your strength and help get it back. Take care of yourself without any scruples. Stop wearing yourself out further. Have other people work. You have to go on living because your life does not belong to you, but to the Church and to the Congregation that you have founded and which needs you if it is to reap the harvest for which Divine Providence is waiting. You are necessary, Don Bosco. Your Congregation has grown and has spread its root. Italy, France, Spain, America, even the pagan natives lay claim to your further existence. You have sons who will perpetuate your spirit, but they will always come on the second line after you. It does not matter if at this present time you are unable to do much work. Your life, your existence and your advice are all necessary things that all your friends and I earnestly desire, so that you may complete what you have begun. If I were sick, I

[16] As usual, Don Bosco took some notes on a slip of paper: For the Holy Father, audience of May 1884: (1) Privileges, Dimissory Letters prov;(2) Church and Hospice of the Sacred Heart; (3) Façade; (4) House of La Spezia; (5) Foreign Missions; (6) Distinguished Honors; (7) Special Blessing for anyone contributing toward the Sacred Heart Church or Hospice; (8) For all the Salesians, their pupils and the cooperators; (9) Secretary (introduce him to the Pope).

am sure that you would do everything possible to preserve my life. Now, I want you to do for yourself all that you would do for me. So take every care of yourself and take all the cures. Look for all means that are necessary to prolong your life. This is what I want, you understand. This is what I command you to do. It is the Holy Father who wants it and it is the Pope who commands you to do it. The Church needs your life."

"Holy Father, your goodness is much too great to put me on an equal basis with you," Don Bosco answered. "The dignity you confer on me confounds me. Nevertheless, I will do everything I can to obey your will."

"Good, good! Now what have you to ask of me? Do not hesitate to ask, for the Holy Father is ready to grant everything you ask for."

Don Bosco submitted the list of privileges he wished to obtain for his Congregation. "Holy Father, I implore you to make the pious Salesian Society complete, for now it is only half complete. This could be accomplished by granting privileges. There are Congregations whose members could be counted on one hand, yet they have obtained such privileges in abundance and immediately; and we who are already so numerous and are in such great need of privileges, have been asking for them for so many years and have never been able to obtain any."

The Pope glanced at the papers that Don Bosco handed to him and said, "We will grant all that you are asking. So as to expedite matters, Bishop Masotti, the secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, could submit the required documents right away and I would sign them without referring them to the whole congregation. Tell Bishop Masotti that that is my intention. All the more so now," the Pope added smiling, "since poor Archbishop Gastaldi is no longer with us. At that time, it was problematic to find a harmonious way of granting you the privileges. He really was an adversary of yours. How much did he do against you! How much did he say to prevent the granting of privileges! So, do not be afraid. I want you to be satisfied this time. No, the Holy See has no objections against giving you all that you need. You may have thought that hostility was created against your Congregation. Oh, no! That was only due to special and unwanted circumstances. You see, very often not even the Pope is free to do what he wants to do. I love you, I love you, I love you. I am all for the Salesians. I am the first of the cooperators. Anyone who is your enemy is the enemy of God. I would be afraid to do anything against you. You accomplish colossal things with means so limited. Not even you, as a matter of fact, know the range of your mission or the good that it must do for the whole Church. Your mission is to show

the world that one can be a good Catholic and at the same time a good and honest citizen; to show that a great amount of good can be done for poor, abandoned youth at all times without bumping into political ups and downs while remaining good Catholics. The Pope, the Church and the whole world is thinking of you and your Congregation, and they all admire you; the world either loves you or is afraid of you. It is not you, but God who operates in your Congregation. Its extraordinary growth, all the good that is being done, could not find sufficient reasons in human causes. God Himself guides, sustains and leads your Congregation. Say it, write it, and preach it. This is the secret that has enabled you to overcome every obstacle and every enemy."

"Holy Father, I cannot find words good enough to thank you for the gracious expressions with which you thought best to consider Don Bosco and his sons. I assure you that we have always done our best in our power to promote affection, respect and the spirit of obedience to the Holy See and the vicar of Jesus Christ, both among our boys and the masses of people. What little good we have done we ascribe to the blessing and protection of the Pope."

"And the Pope will continue to protect you and bless you. Now tell me, are you satisfied with your archbishop? Ah, I thought of you," he added smiling. "You see, Cardinal Alimonda is very fond of you - very, very fond of you - and I am glad. I already knew it. He wrote to me, he praised very highly your Congregation and begged me to grant you the privileges. The Pope has given Turin a splendid gift. And I am glad that the Cardinal Archbishop supports you, backs you up, protects you, and is all for you."

"Yes, Most Blessed Father. Turin should be and is grateful to you for having assigned such a shepherd. Even the Salesians could have not had a more benevolent shepherd."

Meanwhile, the Pope, who was of a very nervous temperament, felt the need of changing his position and his chair. He got to his feet and called Bishop Macchi. Don Bosco also wished to rise to change his seat.

"Do not move," the Pope told him. "Sit comfortably where you are. Bishop Macchi will see to it."

Then when the prelate had left the room again, and the Pope was once again sitting at his ease, Don Bosco resumed speaking. "Holy Father, the concessions already made to us by Pope Pius IX have expired and at the present time and I am in a predicament. I would like to ask you to grant me once again the faculty to issue dismissory letters for clerics about to be

ordained until the faculty had been granted by Brief in the proper way."

The Pope granted the faculty on a temporary basis. After that, he turned to the subject of the Sacred Heart Church and asked, "On what are they working now?"

Don Bosco explained how far the building had progressed and the work that was then being done. He spoke about the obstacles encountered, the good that was already being accomplished in the completed sanctuary, which served as a parish church for the time being, and how the congregation of one thousand persons was gathering in the church every evening during the month of May. The conversation went on to include the festive Oratory, the school frequented by two hundred boys, the Sunday catechism classes that were attended by about three hundred girls, the hospice that was being built, and the premises that had either been built or bought to lodge nearly fifty boys.

The Pope listened with keen interest to his report, and then Don Bosco asked, "I wish to ask the Holy Father permission to express an idea of mine."

"Speak up," the Holy Father said.

"This church is Catholic and the whole world is contributing to its construction," Don Bosco said. "The hospice is for the boys of every nation on earth. I would like Your Holiness to participate in this undertaking, too."

"I must not refuse," the Pope said. "What would you propose?"

"That Your Holiness assume responsibility for the cost of the facade of the Sacred Heart Church. How wonderful it would be if one could read this epigraph carved along its pediment: *Catholicorum pietas construxit, frontem autem huius esslesiae Leo XIII Pont. Proprio aere aedificavit!* [The piety of Catholics built it, but the facade of this church was built at the expense of Pope Leo XIII]."

"So you have already thought of the inscription!"

"This or some other more suitable one, provided it expresses the same sentiment."

The Pope began to laugh. "And why not? I agree to the façade. I will provide for it."

"Nevertheless, Holy Father, I do not want you to be alone in building the façade," Don Bosco explained. "I want to help you in every way I can. Did not Countess Fontenay bring you ten thousand lire the other day?"

"Yes, she did."

"Well, it was Don Bosco who advised her to make that offering. Soon

Your Holiness will receive another sum of ten thousand lire, and I also know that someone else in Marseille is prepared to give a generous offering to Your Holiness, so that work on the church may continue."

"Good, good," the Pope agreed. "So that is settled then."

"I thank you for all your goodness, Holy Father. Allow me to say one more thing - I want the world to know of your generosity, so if you will allow me, I will advertise it in the Salesian Bulletin."

"You may give this matter whatever publicity you wish, according to your own discretion."

In his suggestion, Don Bosco had perceived another way to promote donations to Peter's Pence.

Our readers will recall that the Pope allotted a subsidy each month to the house of La Spezia. It was, therefore, natural that Don Bosco should render an account of that school, thus paving the way for reports on the other schools, the Oratory, and of its two principal sodalities; namely, the altar boys and the sodality of the Most Blessed Sacrament.

The Pope said, "Tell those boys of the sodality of the Blessed Sacrament that I love them, that they are the lily of my heart. Give them my blessing with a *mane ad manum* [handshake]. Those dear children are destined to show the world how Christian charity is able to improve society by means of a good education imparted to poor, abandoned children. How many novices do you have?"

"Two hundred and eight, Holy Father, which are scattered in our various novitiates at San Benigno, France and America. There are a few others, too, scattered here and there in different houses, so as not to attract too much attention."

"Two hundred and eight!" the Pope exclaimed. "It is wonderful! Two hundred and eight novices!"

Then at Don Bosco's request, the Pope authorized the Salesian Congregation to have novices even in houses where professed Salesians were living; namely, in Turin and Marseille.

"Help them to challenge all the temptations of the devil and keep them steadfast," the Pope urged. "Tell them from me that they will do a great amount of good if they will behave as so many burning flames in the world, and if they will maintain their morality unfalteringly among these peoples to whom they will be assigned to speak or work with."

Their talk then turned to the Salesian Cooperators, whom the Pope blessed extensively, at the request of Don Bosco. "I myself do not want to be known only as a cooperator, but also as an operator, for Popes must not

abstain from participating in such charitable enterprises if we wish to have an honest Society. There is no other way to ensure it than to give a good education to the poor children, who are now running wild in the streets. Soon they will represent the human race, and if they are properly educated, we shall have an honest society. But if they are brought up badly, society will be in a bad predicament and in their adulthood, our children will have reason to deplore the bad education received from their ancestors and, perhaps, a reason to curse their memory for all eternity. Yet the piety of Christians will never fail."

It was at this time that Don Bosco handed the Pope the list of names of people who wished to obtain some honorific title from the Holy See. This was how the petition was worded:

> Most Blessed Father:
>
> I wish humbly to bring to the attention of the august clemency of Your Holiness the names of several persons very well-deserving in the eyes of the Church and of civil society, and who are also well known for their contributions to Peter's Pence:
>
> 1. Among such distinguished benefactors of religious and civil society one must undoubtedly include Count Fleury Colle of Toulon. Your Holiness already created him Count of the Holy Roman Church in view of his great charity. Recently, he built a church and a house for our orphans in our agricultural school at La Navarre (Frejus). He has also given us more than 100,000 lire to help us pay debts that otherwise would have obliged us to suspend construction on the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. He also gives energetic support to free schools and Catholic press in his own country. The title of Commendatore is respectfully requested for him.
>
> 2. Baron Aime Heraud, a fervent Catholic. He is a knight of sword and cloak, a sponsor of Peter's Pence in Nice Maritime and neighboring towns, and wishes to be appointed Commendatore.
>
> 3. Monsieur Alfred de Montigny, a rich and generous Catholic of Lille, France, who is a stout sponsor of Catholic undertakings and who enabled the Salesians to open a home for poor boys. He would be delighted to receive the title of Roman Count, so that his only son might thus be bound forever to the Holy See. The Bishop of Cambrai addressed a special letter of commendation to Your Holiness on his behalf.

4. Dr. Charles D'Espiney of Nice Maritime, a fervent Catholic and excellent physician who lends his services free of charge to any poor person who appeals to him, and especially to the young orphans at our patronage of St. Peter in that city. He is seeking a knighthood in the order of St. Gregory the Great. To this end, a letter of recommendation from the Bishop of Nice is enclosed.

5. The bishop of the diocese of Frejus in France humbly implores Your Holiness to benignly honor and reward the zeal of the Very Reverend Priest Bishop Mario Guigou, supernumerary chamberlain, by promoting him to the prelature of higher rank. Here enclosed is the honorable recommendation of his ordinary.

The Pope glanced at the list, and then told Don Bosco to have the individual petitions written on separate sheets of paper, so that they could be passed on to the chancellery for consideration with greater ease. Meanwhile, he summoned Bishop Macchi and handed him the list so that he might give it his attention.

The Pope then asked, "Now, have you anything else to ask me? Please ask me, for I am ready to grant you everything."

"Holy Father, I ask for one more special blessing for all the cooperators, their families and friends."

Benevolently, the Pope consented.

"Now if you will allow me, I will call my secretary, Father Lemoyne, and Father Daghero, who is the director of the Magliano Sabino seminary," Don Bosco said, "so that they may have the great honor of kissing the foot of Your Holiness." So saying, he stood up and moved toward the door.

"No, do not take the trouble. I will let them in," the Pope said. He rang a bell and Bishop Macchi appeared, and was told to usher them in.

"Which of you is the director of Magliano?" he asked.

"I am, Your Holiness," Father Daghero answered.

"I understand that there is a certain difference of opinion between the school and certain people."

"It is hoped that it can be ironed out," Father Daghero said.

"Yes, it will be."

"This is my secretary, Father John Baptist Lemoyne," Don Bosco said. "He was director of several of our schools and, more recently, he was the director of the sisters of the Most Holy Mary Help of Christians in Nizza Monferrato."

"Excellent, excellent!" exclaimed the Pope. "So you are his secretary? Then I entrust the person of your superior to you. You must take care of his health and make sure he does not overstrain himself. Do not allow him to do any writing, for his eyes are too tired and ailing. You must be his support and you are responsible for the life of your superior, do you understand? And I want it, the Holy Father wants it, it is the Pope who wants it. Surround him with every care and be his comfort. What an honor you have! You Salesians are greatly honored to have a mission entrusted to you by God. It is a tremendous obligation to which you must correspond. Tell this to all your confreres and urge them to be the consolation of this poor old man."

"Holy Father, I will tell my confreres about it and this will confirm their vocation even more," Father John Baptist Lemoyne replied, deeply moved.

"What of your missions?" the Pope asked, turning to Don Bosco.

"They are progressing well, Holy Father. Already fifteen thousand natives have been baptized."

"Fifteen thousand is a handsome figure, and I am glad that so many souls have been saved. It is a wonderful thing to save souls and the Pope can only rejoice. But talking of souls, why do you not make the poor bishop of Mantua happy? He has come to me and asked me to put in a good word, so that you may send him four or five Salesian priests. He is willing to yield a place for them in his palace. You would be doing me a great favor if you would respond to his request. This excellent bishop is in extreme need."[17]

"Since it is agreeable to you, Holy Father, we will do our best to respond to his request. It is true that the number of our Salesians is very limited because of the great number of houses we have to keep staffed, but we will try to please Your Holiness."

"But wait until I write to the bishop before you send anyone to him. Meanwhile, *Benedictio Dei omnipotentis."*

Don Bosco knelt down, though the Pope sought to prevent him. Then, he said to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "Secretary, help him to get up. Give him your support."

They left the audience with the Supreme Pontiff at 3:15. Although he retained his habitual calm, Don Bosco looked very happy. When they

[17] This Bishop wanted a few Salesians at his disposal, so that he could send them to preach and hear confessions wherever there was need.

were in the coach, Father John Baptist Lemoyne asked, "Are you glad, Don Bosco?"

"Ah, yes! How good the Holy Father is! I really needed this. Otherwise, I could not have made it."

When he got home, his gladness was enhanced by the news that the mayor of Rome had finally applied to the prefect on behalf of the municipality for permission to hold the lottery. There could no longer be any doubt that permission would be granted. On May 27th, the prefecture issued a decree authorizing the sale of 200,000 tickets at the cost of one lira each.

That same day, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote on behalf of Don Bosco to Father Michael Rua, instructing him to inform all the other houses about the audience, what had been obtained in Rome, and about his imminent return.

Just as he was about to leave the eternal city, Don Bosco had a letter written to the Oratory to relate a dream of the greatest importance. He had this dream on one of the nights that he had been feeling sicker than usual. He told Father John Baptist Lemoyne about it in several installments, ordering him to write it down.

On May 6th, he had had someone write to Father Michael Rua, "Don Bosco is working on a letter he wishes to be sent to the boys, and in it he means to tell his dearly beloved children many wonderful things." This letter was mailed on May 10th, but Father Michael Rua did not think that it should be read out in its entirety in public, and so he requested that a copy be sent to him that was suitable for the pupils. Father John Baptist Lemoyne redrafted the letter with only the passages that did not deal with their superiors. When Father Michael Rua read it to them one evening after prayers, the boys were enraptured, especially when the saint wrote that he had read into their consciences. After he returned home, there was a steady coming and going of boys in his room, all of them wanting to know if he had read their conscience, and if so, what he had seen. This had two principal effects: the beginning of a reform in the life of the Oratory and the dismissal of some boys who only seemed to be excellent in their conduct. The following is the complete account of the dream:

Rome, May 10, 1884

My most beloved children in Jesus Christ:
I am always thinking of you, whether I am near you or far

away. I have only one wish and that is to see you happy in this world and eternity. It was this thought, this desire, that induced me to write you this letter. My dear boys, I feel the weight of being away from you and not seeing you, not hearing you, causes such a pain for me that you can hardly imagine. That was why I would have liked to write you this letter a week ago, but all the things I had to do prevented me. Nevertheless, although there are now only a few days left before my return home, I want to anticipate my return among you at least by means of a letter, not being able to do it in person. It is one who loves you tenderly in Jesus Christ who writes to you, and it is his duty to speak to you with the liberty of a father. You will allow me to do this, will you not? And you will be attentive and will put into practice what I am now about to tell you.

I have told you that you are the one and constant thought of my mind. On one of these past evenings, I had gone to my room, and while I was getting ready for bed, I had begun to say the prayers that my dear mother had taught me. Just then, I do not know whether sleep overcame me or whether something distracted me, but it suddenly seemed that two former boys from the Oratory appeared before me.

One of them came up to me, greeted me affectionately and said, "Oh, Don Bosco! Do you recognize me?"

"Yes, I recognize you," I answered.

"Do you still remember me?" the other asked.

"I remember you and all the others. You are Valfre and you attended the Oratory prior to 1870."

"Listen," he said then, "would you like to see the boys who were at the Oratory in my day?"

"Of course! Show them to me," I said. "I would be delighted."

So Valfre showed me the boys and they all looked the same. They were the same height and age as I had known them then. I thought I was in the old Oratory at recreation time. It was a picture full of life, full of movement and merriment. Boys were running, skipping and jumping. Some were playing leapfrog and others were playing ball. In one corner, there was a cluster of boys avidly listening to a priest, who was telling a story. In another corner, a cleric was playing flying donkey and trades with another cluster of boys. People were singing and laughing everywhere

and there were clerics and priests with cheerful boys gathered around them. It was obvious that the utmost cordiality and familiarity existed between the boys and their superiors.

I was mesmerized by that spectacle, and Valfre said to me, "You see, familiarity breeds affection, and affection breeds confidence. This is what opens up their hearts and the boys reveal everything to their teachers, assistants and superiors. They are frank in their confession and outside of it, and docile and obedient to anything they are told to do by someone they know is honestly fond of them.

Just then, the other former pupil, who now had a white beard, came up to me and said, "Don Bosco, would you now like to see and know the boys who live at the Oratory today?" This was Joseph Buzzetti.

"Yes," I answered. "It is already a month since I saw them last."

He pointed them out to me. I saw the Oratory and all of you at recreation, but I no longer heard the shouts of joy, singing or the lively animation that I had just seen before.

Sadly, boredom, weariness, sullenness, and diffidence were evident on the boys' faces and in their actions. It is true that I saw a good many of them running and playing, but I also saw a good many more who were standing alone and leaning against the pillars, prey to disquieting thoughts. Other boys had withdrawn from the general recreation to sit on the stairs, the corridors or on the balconies overlooking the garden. Others strolled slowly in groups, talking softly among themselves, casting suspicious or malicious glances around them. Here and there, someone smiled, but such smiles were accompanied by glances that not only aroused suspicion, but also the conviction that had St. Aloysius been in the company of those boys, he would have blushed. Even among the boys who were playing, I saw a few so listless that it was obvious that they found no pleasure in their games.

"Have you seen your boys?" the past pupil asked.

"Yes, I have seen them," I answered with a sigh.

"How different they are today from what we were!" the former pupil exclaimed.

"Unfortunately! How listless they are at recreation!"

"This causes the indifference that many show when they receive the Holy Sacraments. They are careless in their practices

of piety in church and elsewhere, and that is why they are reluctant to live in an environment where Divine Providence showers all its bounty on their bodies, souls and intellects. That is why many of them do not follow their vocation and are ungrateful to their superiors, and that is why they grow secretive and complain while other deplorable things occur as a consequence."

"I see, I see." I said. "But how can I restore the former vivacity, cheerfulness and expansiveness of these dear children of mine?"

"With charity!"

"With charity?" I asked. "But are not my boys loved enough? You know that I love them. You know how much I have suffered and endured for them during the course of some forty years, and all that I am still suffering and enduring now! All the privations, humiliations, oppositions and persecution I have endured in order to provide them with food, shelter, teachers and especially in order to ensure the salvation of their souls! I have done all I could and all I know for them, who represent the love of my whole life."

"I am not referring to you."

"Then to whom do you refer? To those who took my place? To the directors, prefects, teachers and assistants? Don't you see how they spend the youthful years of their lives caring for those entrusted to them by Divine Providence? Don't you see that they are martyrs of their work and study?"

"I see it and I am aware of it, but that is not enough. The best is still missing."

"What is it that is missing?"

"The boys must not only be loved, but they must know that they are loved."

"Don't they realize that everything that is done for them is done out of love?"

"No, and I repeat, it is not enough."

"So what then is needed?" I implored.

"That they be helped to understand and love the things that are not so agreeable to them, by participation in their childish pleasures. The things that are disagreeable to them are discipline, study, and self-mortification. They must learn these things with love and enthusiasm."

"Please explain yourself more clearly!"

"Watch the boys at recreation."

I watched them and then said, "What special thing is there to see?"

"You do not see it, even though you have been educating boys for all these years? Look again! Where are our Salesians?"

I looked and saw that there were only a few priests and clerics mingled with the boys, while even fewer participated in their games. The superiors were no longer the animating spirit at recreation. For the most part, they strolled up and down, talking among themselves, without paying any attention to what the boys were doing. Occasionally, someone did observe some wrongdoings, but they did nothing to correct the behavior. There were some Salesians who would have liked to mingle with the boys in their groups, but I saw that some of these youngsters were studiously trying to get away from their teachers and superiors.

"Were you not always in the midst of the boys at the Oratory in the old days, especially at recreation time?" my friend asked. "Do you remember those wonderful years? It was a thing for rejoicing, like Heaven, a period upon which we shall always look back lovingly, for we were guided by affection and held no secrets from you."

"Certainly! Everything was delightful then for me as well, and the boys were all eager to come and talk to me. They were always eager for my advice, so that they could put it into practice. But now I see that continuous audiences with others, increased business matters and my health prevent me from doing all this."

"That is all very true, but if you are unable, why are the Salesians not imitating you? Why do you not insist and demand that the Salesians behave toward the boys the same way as you did?"

"I talk myself hoarse, but unfortunately, they do not feel like shouldering the burdens as we once did."

"So by neglecting to do what costs them least, they lose what is most important, and waste all their efforts thereby. They must learn to love what the boys love, so that the boys may love that which is dear to their superiors. In this way, their efforts will be light. The cause of the present change in the ways of the Oratory lies in the number of boys who do not confide in their superiors. Once their hearts were like an open book before their superiors, and they loved them and obeyed them promptly. But now they look on the superiors precisely as superiors, no longer as fathers,

brothers and friends. Therefore, they fear them and love them little. If there is to be but one heart and soul, then for the love of Jesus, this fatal barrier of diffidence must be broken so heartfelt trust can take its place."

"What must be done to break down this barrier?" I asked.

"It is imperative to achieve familiarity with the boys, especially at recreation time. Without familiarity, affection cannot be shown and without affection, there cannot be confidence. He who wants to be loved has to show that he loves. Jesus Christ became little with the little ones and shouldered our own infirmities. There we have the master of familiarity. A teacher who is seen only at the teacher's desk is only a teacher and no more, but if he joins the boys at recreation, he becomes a brother.

"If one is seen only when he preaches from the pulpit, we shall only say of him that he is doing his duty, but should he utter a word or two during recreation time, his will be regarded as the word of someone who loves. How many conversions were brought about by such words whispered unexpectedly into the ear of a boy at play! Those who know they are loved give love in return, and those who are beloved, especially by children, will obtain everything. Such a feeling of confidential trust is like an electric current between the boys and their superiors! They lay bare their hearts and make their needs known and reveal their faults. A love like this will enable the superiors to endure fatigue, displeasures, ingratitude, annoyance, shortcomings and neglect on the part of the boys.

"Jesus Christ did not snap the reed already bent, nor did He extinguish the smoldering wick. That's your model! Then you'll have no chance to see people who work for vanity, who will punish only to take revenge on their offended pride or who leave their assistance assignment out of jealousy for the overpowering ability of others. There will be no one who knocks down others in order to be loved and esteemed by the boys. Then you will not see anyone who favors one child and neglects all the other boys, someone who neglects his very serious duty to assist out of love of his personal comfort.

"If there is really true love, nothing but the love of God will be sought after and the salvation of souls. When this kind of love wanes, then things will begin to go wrong.

"Why should charity be substituted by the coldness of a rule? Why is it that the superiors abandon the observance of those educational rules dictated to them by Don Bosco himself? Why is it that the system of preventing transgressions with vigilance and love is slowly being replaced with one of less worth? If neglected, these laws will breed contempt for the superiors and will be the cause of very serious shortcomings.

"And this does happen if familiarity is missing. If the Oratory is to return to its former happiness, the former system must come back. The superior should be always ready to listen to any doubts or complaints with all eyes to supervise their behavior and all heart to look for the temporal and spiritual good of those entrusted to him by Divine Providence. Then the boys will no longer barricade their hearts. Only in cases of immoral demeanor are the superiors to be inexorable. It is better to run the risk of expelling an innocent boy than to risk retaining one that will cause a problem. The assistants must look at it as their duty to report to their superiors anything that may in any way be offensive in the eyes of God that is brought to their attention."

Then I asked, "What is the best thing to do to make sure that a family spirit, love and trust emerge triumphant?"

"Strict observance of the house rules."

"Nothing more?"

"The most appetizing course in any meal is a good cheer."

As my former pupil finished speaking on this note, I continued watching the recreation with real displeasure, and little by little I was overcome by increasing fatigue. Such weariness overcame me that I could no longer endure it, so I shook myself and returned to my senses.

I found myself standing at the foot of the bed. My legs were so swollen and painful that I could no longer stand upright. It was very late, so I went to bed, determined that I would write all this to my beloved children.

I do not want to have such dreams because they tire me excessively. The next day, I felt myself aching all over and could not wait to get to bed that next evening. But as soon as I was in bed, the dream started all over again. I saw the playground, the boys who are now in the Oratory, and the same former pupil.

"I will tell the Salesians what you told me, but what am I to

tell the boys at the Oratory?" I asked him.

He answered, "That they must appreciate all that their superiors, teachers and assistants are tirelessly doing out of love for them, for if it were not for their welfare, they would not shoulder such sacrifices. Tell them they must learn how to endure the faults of others, for perfection is not of this world and is found only in Paradise. They must desist from complaining because this makes the heart grow cold. Above all, that they must strive to live in the holy grace of God. He who is not at peace with God will not find peace within himself or with others."

"Do you mean to say that among the boys there are some who are not at peace with God?"

"This is the primary cause of the malaise of which you are now aware, and which must be remedied. There is no need for me to specify such causes now. A person who has secrets to safeguard and who fears that his secrets will be discovered is the one who is distrustful. At the same time, the heart that is not at peace with God is full of anguish and is restless, intolerant of obedience, irritated over nothing and feels that everything is going wrong. And since he has no love, he feels that the superiors do not love him."

"Yet, my friend, do you not see how often boys go to confession and communion here at the Oratory?"

"It is true that they go frequently to confession, but the thing that is radically wrong in the case of many of the boys is that they lack steadfast resolution when they go to confession. They do confess, but confess always the same faults, temptations, bad habits, acts of disobedience and neglect of their duties. They go on this way for months and months, even years, sometimes right through their fifth year of high school. Such confessions count for little or nothing at all. They, therefore, bring no peace of mind, and if a boy is summoned before the judgment of God in such a state of mind, it would fare badly for him.

"Are there many such boys at the Oratory?" I asked.

"There are only a few in comparison with the great many boys living in the house," he answered as he pointed them out to me.

I looked around and saw these boys, but in those few, I saw things that grieved my heart sorely. I do not want to commit them to paper, but when I return, I shall confer with those concerned.

At this time, I will only say that it is now time to pray and make steadfast resolutions not only with words, but in deeds, and to show that the Comollos, the Dominic Savios, the Besuccos and the Saccardis still live amongst us in spirit.

Finally, I asked my friend, "Have you anything else to tell me?"

"Tell all of them, old and young alike, to remember always that they are the children of Mary Help of Christians. They should remember that she brought them here to rescue them from the dangers of the world, so that they might love one another like brothers. They should give glory to God and to her with their good conduct. They must remember that it is our Lady who provides them with food and with the possibility of studying, together with countless graces and miracles. They must remember that it is now the vigil of the feast of this most holy mother of theirs, and with her assistance, the barrier of diffidence that the devil has been able to erect between the boys and their superiors to bring about the ruin of souls must come down."

"Are we going to succeed in removing this barrier?"

"Most certainly, provided that old and young alike are willing to endure a few minor mortifications for the love of Mary and put into practice all that I have been saying."

Meanwhile, I continued watching the boys and saw how some of them were heading for eternal damnation, and I felt so sharp a pain in my heart that I woke up. I saw many important things that I would like to tell you, but this is neither the place nor do I now have the time for it.

After all this, do you know what this poor old man, who has consumed his whole life for his beloved boys, wants from you all? Nothing more than the return of the happy days of the old Oratory when love and Christian trust between the boys and their superiors and the spirit of harmony and mutual endurance for the love of Jesus Christ prevailed. I need you to comfort me with the hope and the promise that you will do everything I wish for the benefit of your own souls. You do not realize how lucky you have been to live at the Oratory. I declare to you before God that a boy who enters a Salesian house will be immediately taken under the special protection of the Most Holy Virgin. So let us all work in harmony. The charity of those who command and must obey should ensure that the spirit of St. Francis of Sales reigns among us. Oh,

my beloved children, the time is drawing near when I shall have to leave you for eternity.

[Note by his secretary: here Don Bosco stopped his dictation, his eyes filled with tears, not out of regret, but out of the infinite tenderness that was evidenced by his glance and the tone of his voice.]

I, therefore, am most anxious to leave you, my priests, clerics and most beloved children, on the road of God on which our Lord Himself wishes you to walk.

To this same end, the Holy Father (whom I saw on Friday, May 9th) sends you his sincerest blessing. I shall be with you in front of the picture of our loving Mother Mary Help of Christians on her feast day. I want this magnificent feast to be celebrated with the greatest solemnity, and I want Father Lazzero and Father Marchisio to make sure that you are cheerful, even in the dining room. This feast of Mary Help of Christians should be the prelude to the eternal feast we shall enjoy one day together in Paradise.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

This letter is a treasure that with the brief treatise on the Preventive System and the Regulations of the House forms the pedagogic trilogy that Don Bosco bequeathed to his sons. This humble and lofty pedagogical legacy when properly understood and applied can transform the educational institutions into havens of peace, kindergartens of innocence, a spawning ground of virtues, a showplace for studies and a nursery garden, in short, of excellent Christians, honest citizens and worthy ecclesiastics. But good will and a spirit of sacrifice are required.

Before we go any further, we will quote five letters of the many Don Bosco wrote from Rome; these are the only ones that we have come across. The first is addressed to Father Joseph Lazzero, who continued to direct the Oratory under the title of vice-director. In it there is a reference to a "breastplate" that Father Michael Rua was to take off, since that would otherwise tire him excessively. We would not be surprised if this referred to a hair shirt because at that time Father Michael Rua was ailing. Besides his discomforts, he had an attack of lumbago that had confined him to bed for several days, hence the concern of the saint over his health, expressed to the priest who, during the absence of Don Bosco, was his confessor.

Rome, April 23, 1884

Dearest Father Joseph Lazzero:

This is perhaps the first letter I have written since leaving Turin, and I want to write it to you, ever-beloved Father Lazzero.

Tell our beloved confreres and dear children of the house that my health has improved remarkably in the last two days and when I get home, I want us to rejoice in church and also in the dining room to thank our Lady for the innumerable graces she has bestowed on us and drive away all melancholy and be happy in the Lord.

I believe that Father John Baptist Lemoyne will be giving you detailed news. There is a lot of it and one could write whole volumes.

Tell Father Michael Rua to take off his breastplate, because it will tire him too much.

Are Suttil and Father Pozzan all right? Are they behaving themselves?

I do not know about the condition of my beans, my pumpkins, etc.[18]

We must send special thanks to Madame Nicoline for the lovely grapes she gave me in Turin and sent here to Rome, but she should not send any more because they got spoiled on the way here.

Give the enclosed letter to Father Febbraro.

May the grace of our Lord descend upon you, the whole Superior Chapter, and our beloved confreres and children all abundantly, and may Mary guide us safely along the path to Heaven. Amen.

God willing, I hope to be in Turin sometime between May 12th and 15th.

The prioress of the feast will be Lady Marshall de St. Arnaud, who will be with us during the whole novena of Mary Help of Christians.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

The second letter was to Countess Callori on the occasion of the imminent nuptials of her daughter. Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote it

[18] He alludes to his "little garden" on the balcony outside of his room.

under the saint's dictation, who personally signed his name to it:

Rome, April 24, 1884

My good mamma:

It is understood that I shall celebrate Mass for you and Mrs. Maria on the 28th. I pray to God that the new status will render her happy here on earth and prepare her for the joys of Heaven. I am fully confident that she will continue to be a distinguished benefactress of our houses.

I am here at the Sacred Heart Church. Everything is progressing well, but we are a little behind just now because of the money, which is dwindling notably.

God bless you and your whole family together with Mrs. Maria. Please pray for me too, as I do for you with immense gratitude every day during my Holy Mass. I am in Jesus Christ,

With filial affection,
Rev. John Bosco

The third letter was to a nun, the former Countess Philomena Medolago-Albani, nee De Maistre, who had entered the Order of the Sacred Heart when she was left a widow:[19]

Rome, April 24, 1884

Dear Sister Maria Teresa:

Your letter gladdened me very much because it told me that you still remember poor Don Bosco. I shall pray for Countess Passi's[20] daughter with all my heart, and I am fully confident that God will answer our prayers, if what we are asking is not contrary to the welfare of her soul. The most holy Virgin Mary will convey a special blessing on my behalf.

For my part, I earnestly recommend the building of the Sacred Heart Church and hospice in Rome to this lady. Work on it is progressing wonderfully so far, but has recently come to somewhat of a standstill because our funds are dwindling. You know that the Sacred Heart is a powerful source of graces and blessings.

[19] See Vol. XV, page 367.

[20] See further on, previous document 7.

May the Lord bless you, the whole Passi family, and your religious community to which God called you so that you may become a second St. Theresa.

I will remember you every day during my Holy Mass, and please pray for me, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco
Via San Lorenzo No. 42

The fourth letter was addressed to Mrs. Magliano, who is known to our readers. Instead of sending her the usual circular, which he generally addressed to the more distinguished cooperators in order to convey to them the Pope's blessing, he wished to write a note himself, knowing how this gesture would delight her:

Rome, May 9, 1884

Dear Mrs. Magliano:

I wish that you, so well-deserving madam, be the first to receive the news about the special blessing that the Holy Father sends you through me as of noon today. He assured me that he would also pray for your good health and your sanctity, as I do every day in my own small way.

May God bless us all. Believe me in Jesus Christ,
Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

One of the previously mentioned letters was written in French and was addressed to Count de Villenueve. There is a reference in it to the petit prieur [little prior] for the feast of Mary Help of Christians in 1881.[21] Worried over the financial difficulties encountered by the house of Saint-Cyr, Don Bosco also asked the count to contact the pastor of La Cioat and Aubagne, to whom he says he is also writing, so that they can all work out a plan to assist the institute:[22]

Since the procedural paperwork for the privileges did not seem too close to port, Don Bosco left Rome on May 14th. Don Bosco was the first

21 See Vol. XV, page 125.
22 Appendix, document 12.

one to use the half-fare ticket that the Roman Railways Society had recently granted to the Salesians. He boarded the train for Florence with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father Francis Dalmazzo. The clerics and boys of the house of Magliano Sabino were awaiting him at the Borghetto railroad station. Since the stop was somewhat long, Don Bosco went into the waiting room where the stationmaster had permitted the students to gather. Don Bosco personally thanked him for it, and then gave audiences to the boys, who went to see him one by one. They had lunch at eleven o'clock, and everyone was delighted to see that Don Bosco had a hearty appetite.

Unfortunately, their trip did not go smoothly. Father Confortola, the local director, had said that the train was due to arrive sometime around 12:00 and was to take him to Florence that same evening. But while they were waiting, a very long freight train came into the station, halting alongside their platform. A few minutes later, the express train arrived at the other platform. The other passengers had previously been informed and had crossed over the track in front of the freight train and boarded the express train on time. Don Bosco was completely surrounded by boys and did not see what the others had done. Believing that the freight train would be the first to leave, he did not move. He was not informed of his error until he heard the shrill whistle of the other train. Since he missed the train, he would now have to wait until eight o'clock. The saint was very upset about it, but he was quickly resigned to it and went back to the waiting room, continuing to listen to what the seminarians and boarders had to tell him until two o'clock, when they again set out for Magliano.

It was the eve of the patron saint's feast, which was to be attended for the first time by the new cardinal Bishop Martinelli, who had succeeded the recently deceased Cardinal Bilio.

To occupy the next six hours, the three travelers walked in stifling heat to a nearby tavern where horse owners and coach drivers usually gathered. Unable to walk anymore in that heat and suffering greatly from the pains in his legs, Don Bosco entered a small room to rest. His legs were so swollen that it was a difficult task to help him remove his elastic stockings. He took off his cassock and sat down on the bed, but was unable to sleep. After suffering for an hour and a half in bed, he got up with great difficulty and put on his clothes again. He was so exhausted and agitated that it caused some alarm to his companions.

Father Francis Dalmazzo had an idea. He asked the honest proprietors for a cup of coffee. The hot, fragrant drink did wonders and somewhat

restored our good father, who sat and chatted contentedly until seven o'clock about the Oratory and earlier times.

Then Father Francis Dalmazzo departed for Rome, and Don Bosco boarded the train for Orte with Father John Baptist Lemoyne after having said goodbye to Father Daghero, who had come back from Magliano. But the ordeals of the day were not yet over. The express for Florence obliged him to wait at Orte from 8:30 at night until 12:45. Our Lord, however, provided relief to Don Bosco's discomfort. While he was lying down on a sofa in the station's waiting room, trying in vain to get some sleep, the material objects around him disappeared and the angelic Louis Colle appeared at his side. He talked with him until it was time for his departure. In particular, they spoke of all that Louis had revealed to him in his dream about the missions. At the end, Don Bosco confided to Louis Colle his fear that his poor health might prevent him from continuing the things he had begun.

Louis said, "You say that you are in poor health? You will see tomorrow!" These were his last words.

As the vision disappeared, Don Bosco felt better. To the astonishment of Father John Baptist Lemoyne, he looked quite lively as he boarded the train. This was the first day of the Novena of Mary Help of Christians.[23]

They reached Florence around six o'clock, and found the director of Florence and the director of Lucca, Father Bensi, waiting for them at the station. The boys greeted him as he entered the house. He immediately went to say Mass in the chapel, and then passed the rest of the morning writing letters. In the afternoon, the boys sang a hymn and read compositions they had written to honor him. He then received benefactors late into the evening.

His stay in Florence was a short one. Don Bosco set out on his journey for Bologna on the morning of the 16th and arrived at eleven o'clock. Archbishop Battaglini, whom he had already met in 1882 when he was bishop of Rimini, gave him an honorable and festive welcome.[24] He also met Father John Baptist Rinaldi when the archbishops had expressly summoned him from Faenza. There were a number of callers between two o'clock in the afternoon on the 16th and eleven o'clock in the morning of the 17th. The more eminent citizens wished to talk with him and a number of patrician ladies attended the Mass in the chapel.

[23] See Vol. XV, page 61 and ff.
[24] See Vol. XV, page 453.

Don Bosco said certain things on that occasion that Father John Baptist Rinaldi was glad to recall.[25] There was a private conversation, during which they talked about Bismarck. The great German chancellor had been already forced by the pressure of circumstances to play down his kulturkampf and open negotiations with the Holy See, but he was then pressing his hand, demanding from Rome more than he himself was in the habit of granting. Nevertheless, Catholic journalism did not fail to stress what, at the time, was referred to as a "journey to Canossa."

In their turn, the official newspapers sang the praises of the government for political interests at every condescending gesture made toward Catholics.

In reference to this, Don Bosco said, "Certain people, when it looks like they are protecting the Church, actually behave like those who ask you to sit down and then give a broken chair to sit on. Instead of letting you sit down, they cause you to fall down."

After another seven hours of traveling, Don Bosco finally returned to Turin on the evening of the 17th. As soon as he crossed the Oratory threshold, he immediately entered the church and imparted the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. Then, he walked through the playground amid the frenzied applause of the boys and the strains of the band, and then retired to his room. Everyone rejoiced at the visible improvement in his health, which immediately dissipated the fears that had been circulating.

The next day, there was rejoicing in the church, the playground and the dining room. Among the compositions read aloud to him, he particularly enjoyed the bouquet of Holy Communions that the boys had offered up for him during his absence.

Father John Baptist Lemoyne felt it necessary to apologize to two people who may have been unintentionally offended during their recent journey. The bishop of Ventimiglia had complained that Don Bosco had passed through his diocese twice without calling on him and the director of the Roman Railways had not been personally thanked by Don Bosco for the recent favor he had granted.

We could not end this chapter without quoting some reflections written by Father John Baptist Lemoyne that had been prompted by the recollections of this journey in reference to the memory, genius and culture of the saint:

[25] Likewise, Bishop Taroni mentions this in the manuscript of the chronicles of the house of Faenza.

It is remarkable to see how despite his advanced age of 69, Don Bosco joins in every discussion and puts in his own timely word. His memory has dimmed considerably, yet one can still imagine what he must have been like in his prime. Whenever some former pupil, of all the many thousands who have passed through the Oratory, appears before him, he will still recall the boy's name or his native district. He will speak of things that happened to the boys at the Oratory and a thousand minor anecdotes.

This year, Don Bosco met a boy who had been with him in 1846, and he asked about the boy's brother, who had been in the boarding school. He not only recalled the brother's name, but also inquired about his mother, who had been widowed.

Whenever Don Bosco meets a physician, no matter of what kind of sickness they may speak about, he is acquainted with its cause, development, crisis and the medicines mainly prescribed for it.

If someone mentions Greek, he is at no loss to recite a list of literary references and authors. If anyone speaks of Italian or Latin writers, Don Bosco does not fail to quote from many of their works. This is especially true when he talks about Dante, whose cantos he is able to recite by heart.

When at lunch in Rome with the attorney Menghini, a very learned professor of Hebrew, the conversation turned to this language and, in particular, to the verse from Ecclesiasticus: "There are three things I know not and a fourth that *penitus ignoro: viam viri in adolescentia sua* [I completely ignore: the path taken by a man during his adolescence]."

In Hebrew, Menghini said that this corresponds to a phrase expressing the miracle of generation, and that in Hebrew, the word is not *adolescentia* [adolesence], but *adolescentula* [a small girl]. Alma [a virgin], with a small "a" and not a capital A, indicates Virgin and is really a title given only to the Madonna herself. *"Alma circumdabit virum* [A virgin will encompass a man]."

Instantly, Don Bosco quoted the entire Hebrew text, which Menghini then repeated with the same pronunciation.

Don Bosco was at Sampierdarena, and as dessert was served, a navy captain named Parodi appeared and the talk turned to the subject of how to salvage a ship that had sunk to the bottom of the sea. Don Bosco spoke in great detail, and explained when this was possible and when such an operation was ill advised. When

possible, he said, there were three different systems to apply, and he quoted their specific drawbacks and methods and which of the three was the most preferable. Everyone was astonished at his erudition on naval matters, since it was totally unexpected.

This was true whenever the conversation turned to ancient and modern weapons, astronomy and many other subjects.

History was his forte. He could quote the authors who have dealt with any specific time period. This was especially true if the subject dealt with ecclesiastical matters.

In short, he possessed more than a mere smattering of knowledge of a great many fields of learning.

All these things occurred during his journey to and from Rome.

Don Bosco also spoke with sophistication about the history of the telegraph, magic, architecture, printing, literature, and Arabic and Roman numerals, and could easily entertain his audience.

The joy created by Don Bosco's safe return home doubled the fervor prevailing at the Oratory during the preparations for the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians. The rumors that circulated about his poor health attracted a larger crowd than usual, friends and admirers of the saint, to attend this great and solemn celebration.

Chapter 4

THE GRANTING OF PRIVILEGES

Shortly before receiving the papal blessing with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father Joseph Daghero during the memorable audience of May 9th, Don Bosco had said to the Pope with great humility and confidence, "Holy Father, we have not yet had the comfort of the signature of Your Holiness. Please, comfort us!"

The saint was anxious to get a certain signature more than any other with these subtle expressions, namely the signature on the decree granting us privileges, which he hoped to obtain with a Brief. The closer he felt to the end of his mortal life, the more anxious he became to give the final touches to his Congregation, establishing it on an equal footing with the other congregations approved by the church and putting the same means with which to accomplish good in the world at its disposal. When he decided to go to Rome, this was the intention uppermost in his thoughts.

He had not postponed his pursuit of the matter until that time. Despite the drawbacks of his infirmities, Don Bosco had again begun giving his serious attention to the matter some three months before. After so many years of studies and negotiations, he now possessed more than an adequate knowledge of the subject, and yet, in this final phase, he had to start all of his work over again and persist in his efforts despite the unpleasant surprises which would have undermined the courage and steadfastness of anyone not endowed with his moral fiber. When Rector Major Father Peter Ricaldone offered him the precious reliquary containing a vertebra of the saint in April 1934, Pope Pius XI rightly said, "Ah! Yes, Don Bosco had a very different backbone, unlike anyone we know."

Don Bosco put his hand to this task already in January. He wrote down the reasons why he was seeking this favor, carefully outlining its importance, and sent a copy of this explanation to the cardinal protector and the cardinal archbishop, asking both of them to look it over and let him know what they thought. The two cardinals expressed their favorable opinion. And so he addressed his petition to the Holy Father, enclosing the memorandum he had sent to the two cardinals and a brief explanatory introduction in Latin. The petition read as follows:

Most Blessed Father:

Humbly prostrate at the venerated feet of Your Holiness, I implore a single favor for the pious society of St. Francis of Sales. Your glorious predecessor, the Supreme Pontiff Pius IX, treated this Congregation with benevolence from its early beginnings onward. He drafted its Constitutions in 1858. He commended the definitive approval of the Constitutions on April 3, 1874. After which he endowed it with various spiritual favors. But some were *ad tempus,* others *vivae vocis oraculo,* and as a consequence, we met with some grave difficulties. Such difficulties were removed from other ecclesiastical congregations by granting privileges. Pope Pius IX was about to grant us this outstanding favor when God called him to Himself. Now permit me, oh most blessed Father, to give you a brief summary about the communication or granting of privileges and express the special reasons which lead me to ask that these privileges be granted to us.

In his "brief summary on the communication of privileges," Don Bosco explained how during the past three centuries, the Popes had usually granted privileges *per communicationem* both to religious orders of solemn vows and to ecclesiastical congregations of simple vows. Leo X, in fact, had granted privileges to all the Mendicant orders; Clement VII had granted all the spiritual favors and privileges that had already been granted or were about to be granted to the canons regular to the Theatines; later on the privileges and spiritual graces common to all other religious orders had been granted to the religious of regular observance.

During the same 16th century, although the congregations with only simple vows had already been granted several privileges in order that the same rule be applied to all, the Holy See began to grant to them also the privileges of the religious orders. This is what Paul IV and Pius V did with the Theatines. In the next century, Pope Urban VIII was equally benevolent toward the priests of the mission. The same was done by other Popes toward the Jesuits, the Clerics Regular of the Mother of God, the Pious Workers, the Ministers of the Sick, the Oratory, the Brothers of Christian Doctrine, the Passionists, the Redemptorists and, lastly, the Oblates of Mary in 1826 and the Institute of Charity in 1838. By following this procedure, the Popes honored and favored institutions that, being closely

united with the Holy See, were exercising within the church an extensive and fruitful apostolate.

In reference to the specific reasons that urged him to implore the granting of the privileges, Don Bosco wrote as follows:

> The specific reasons for this humble petition on behalf of the Salesian Congregation are:
>
> 1. It is totally devoid of all material revenue, and is therefore, in need of great indulgences and spiritual assistance if it is to accomplish its mission.
>
> 2. This Congregation was founded and has been consolidated during stormy years, still going on. Nevertheless, it was able to expand, found hospices, schools, minor seminaries in different dioceses in Italy, France, Spain, Brazil, Uruguay, the Argentine Republic and even among the very savages in the remotest region of South America. Considering the stormy times we are in, the diversity of countries in which we operate, the great distances existing among these, especially in reference to the savages of the last regions of South America, if the Salesians were obliged to appeal to the Holy See concerning their doubts and faculties which are indispensable to them, this would prove always difficult and, quite frequently, impossible.
>
> 3. Besides frowning upon the frequent requests made to the Holy See, it actually did happen. In the difficult times in which we live, the civil authorities requested that the decrees and briefs of the Holy See be handed to them directly, and they are not returned.
>
> 4. The humble petitioner wishes to devote the rest of his life to the consolidation of his various houses, instructing all those in control of them to avail themselves prudently and sparingly of privileges, and only in such instances when they feel that this course of action is for the greater glory of God and the welfare of souls.
>
> 5. The number of houses already opened and the many others that are being founded day after day renders the application of privileges increasingly difficult, unless they be regularly granted.

In conclusion Don Bosco replied, very simply, to four "observations" which had been made by several persons against the new granting of

privileges:

In reference to the granting of privileges, some have remarked that:

1. This might give rise to disputes.

2. It might perturb the existing harmony and peace with the ordinaries.

3. It might grant the sharing of privileges to institutions for which they would be unsuitable.

4. The Salesian Congregation has only recently been approved.

1. In answer to the first remark, if the concession of those privileges were new, it might give rise to disputes. But such privileges have now been shared by others for more than three hundred years. They have been constantly investigated, interpreted and applied uniformly and in accordance with the spirit of the Holy See. And so it might seem more proper to describe them as a unifying link, a uniform pattern that therefore excludes all likelihood of dispute.

2. In answer to the second remark, this would not seem to perturb the peaceful relations with ordinaries, since bishops and pastors are accustomed to acknowledge privileges pertaining to congregations approved by the Church. In this country, it would cause astonishment if any religious congregation were to enjoy greater or lesser favors than others. Since these privileges represent a gesture which exalts the supreme authority of the Pope, it is possible to imagine that a congregation would not be definitely approved if it were not favored by the Holy See with the same privileges granted to other congregations. One honorable ordinary could never be led to believe that our Congregation had been definitively approved because he had no evidence that it enjoyed the same privileges as the Ministers of the Sick, the Priests of the Mission, the Oblates of Mary. As a consequence, the Salesian Congregation was exposed to much harassment and had to endure quite considerable material and moral damage which gravely obstructed its development, for it might otherwise have already doubled the number of its houses, its religious and its pupils.

3. In answer to the third remark, no one can say that the grant-

ing of such privileges to newly founded congregations entails granting them unsuitable favors. For under such granting of privileges, the following clauses are always contemplated: *Dummodo Institutis eorum conveniant, ac Regulari Observantiae non sint contraria* [provided that they are suitable for their institutions and are not contrary to a regular observance]. It should also be added that since these favors may be granted exclusively by the Holy See, the same may be able to modify or revoke them in the best interest of the Institute to which they had been granted.

4. In answer to the fourth remark, it is true that definitive approval of the Constitutions of the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales was not granted until April 3, 1874, but its foundation and the observances of its Constitutions date back to 1841. On the other hand it has already grown and already numbers approximately one thousand four hundred religious with one hundred and sixty-six houses where more than 150,000 children and adults receive a Christian education. In bygone days, privileges were imparted almost immediately upon approval. The Oblates of Mary obtained such a concession only a few days after they were approved.

After these remarks concerning the granting of privileges, I now renew my humble petition and implore Your Holiness to make this gesture of supreme clemency by granting to the Salesian Congregation the privileges enjoyed by the Oblates of Mary in Turin, whose constitutions and mission are almost identical to those of the Salesians.

The rescript by which His Holiness Leo XII of blessed memory granted the above favor was worded as follows: *"Ex audentia SS mus Congregationis introscriptae Superiorem Generalem, et Oblatos specialibus favoribus, et gratiis prosequens, omnia et singula indulta, privilegia, indulgentias, exemptiones et facultates Congregationi SS mi Redemptoris concessa iisdem Oblatis eorumque Ecclesiis, Capellis et domibus benigne communicat, extendit, atque in perpetuum elargitur cum omnibus clausulis et decretis necessariis et opportunis. I. Cardinalis Pacca Sacrae Congregationis Episcoporum et Regularium Praefectus."*

All the Salesians represented by their Rector Major lie prostrate to implore and invoke the above-mentioned favor, while on

behalf of us all I implore your Apostolic Blessing.

Your most humble and grateful,
Rev. John Bosco, Rector Major
Turin, January 20, 1884

"With sincere satisfaction of mind," Cardinal Alimonda confirmed in writing the truth of the reasons listed by the saint and praised his Congregation for its exemplary discipline and the great good it had accomplished, adding on his own initiative a further argument in favor of the timeliness of the concession requested: since the religious of other orders had been dispersed and kicked out of the city and diocese of Turin, it was extremely important that a congregation which had been fortunate enough to evade the hits of civil laws and was meanwhile making good of the much which had been lost, be granted prosperity and consolidation. He also addressed a separate recommendation to the cardinal protector from whom he received the following reply:

Rome, March 7, 1884

Most Reverend and Eminent Sir:

I have received your most revered letter of the 4th from Your Eminence in which you were kind enough to recommend the successful outcome of the petition submitted by the Very Reverend Don Bosco in reference to privileges for his congregation, and in connection with which the above mentioned priest had already sent me a special memorandum. I am infinitely grateful to Your Eminence for the graciousness of such valid support in this endeavor and if my health will allow me, it is my intention to take up the matter in all seriousness with His Holiness to persuade him to overrule the extrinsic difficulties which unfortunately have so far obstructed the granting of privileges, by one who should least of all have done so. Nor will I refrain from informing His Holiness that if it is decided to insist on this denial, I would be obliged to resign as protector of the meritorious congregation in question, so as not to appear to be in some way either conniving or indifferent to such refusal which could have no other motivation than an arbitrary one.

Meanwhile, I beg you not to forget me in your prayers and assure you that I will faithfully return this favor, while kissing

your hand humbly with unfaltering veneration and esteem, while remaining,

Your most humble, sincere and devoted servant,
Cardinal Nina

After sending the above documents to Rome, Don Bosco turned his attention to his trip to France, trusting that when he returned, things would have progressed considerably. But things went contrary to his expectations, although two pieces of news did encourage him: the first came to his attention just as he was leaving France, the other while he was on his way to Rome.

The Countess of San Marzano, with whom he again met in Nice as he was on his way home to Italy, gave him the first piece of news. This excellent lady cooperator had been in Rome and during the audience granted to her, she said to the Pope, "Holy Father, I want you to give me a special blessing for Don Bosco."

"What? Do you know Don Bosco of Turin? Where is he at his moment? Where?"

" I left him at Nice Maritime."

"How is his eyesight? How are his legs? Tell him to take care of himself and save his strength. Don Bosco had asked us for many things, serious things and difficult to obtain. But we will grant him everything!"

When the Countess related this conversation, she did not know to what the Pope was referring, for he had given no further explanation, nor had she dared to question him. But Don Bosco understood perfectly that the Pope was thinking of the privileges and that in speaking thus to this lady, he was aware that she would be seeing the saint and would repeat everything to him. It is therefore not improbable that he wished him to obtain the assurance that he was prepared to help him through this indirect channel.

That was exactly what Don Bosco understood, for when he was alone with his spiritual sons, he said, "Good sign! Good sign! Let us hope that this time we shall obtain what has been uppermost in my thoughts for so many years. I have persevered. I have tried. I have once again tried all roads to get to obtain these privileges. I have endured humiliations and rebuffs, but nothing will ever frighten us in this world. I could have given up, but I did not want to. It was for them, namely in the service of those who hold the reins of government in their hands in Rome, for the Church, and not for myself. It was for the welfare of souls. It was so that upon my death, I

would leave a well-consolidated Congregation that after all belongs to the Church. When all hopes seemed lost, I might have said, 'Let us forget about it, let the others worry about it.' But no! We all have to do our share until the very end and leave nothing untried. We know that in plucking roses, we come upon thorns, but there are always thorns to be expected whenever there are roses.

"When I first submitted my petition for privileges to Pope Pius IX, the supreme pontiff was very glad. It looked as if Bishop Vitelleschi was in our favor. He promised and assured me of his support, so I trusted that the outcome would be a certain success. But then when the Holy Congregation met in session, Vitelleschi was so adamantly against us that all the cardinals who formerly had been in our favor all voted no."[1]

The second piece of news, which came from Father Francis Dalmazzo at Sampierdarena, seemed to remove all fears from the more difficult side. It's a known fact that the most energetic opponent in the question of granting privileges was Cardinal Ferrieri who, as prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, was in charge of the whole matter.[2] It so happened that on March 25th, His Eminence had had a stroke and while he was in danger of dying, he seemed willing to grant those blessed privileges if he should recover. During the first days of his sickness he must have worriedly thought about the strange coincidence of that date March 25th. The fact of the matter is that he had several times sent someone to ask the procurator general to let him have a list of the privileges requested. Being more positive than Father Francis Dalmazzo, Don Bosco remarked, "Possibly Ferrieri has been persuaded to yield by the letters from Cardinal Alimonda rather than by his sickness."

Father Francis Dalmazzo, after a stop of only two hours at Sampierdarena, left once again for Rome, and once there, his optimism was almost entirely extinguished. As soon as the illustrious patient for whom Don Bosco had ordered that prayers be said realized that he was out of danger, he again brought up the same reasons for his refusal. He was firmly convinced in his mind that Don Bosco's congregation would not have survived at the death of its founder.

Cardinal Nina, as he promised, fervently pleaded Don Bosco's cause before the Holy Father. He asked, "Holy Father, why not grant these privileges also to Don Bosco? Is his congregation different from the others, per-

[1] These and other facts in the second chapter are all culled from travel notes of Father Julius Barberis, who had gone to France with the saint.

[2] Cardinal Nina was referring to him in the letter just quoted.

haps? If these privileges have been granted to others why not to him? What's the use of being appointed protector of this congregation if my protection is thus overlooked? If the Salesian Congregation does not deserve the privileges enjoyed by others, then please tell me what demerits are found in this congregation, so I may take action in correcting them. But if this is not so, yet all the same the granting is denied, then I am tired of always having to ask and obtain nothing. The Salesians would be justified to accuse me of neglecting their interests or to believe that I have no influence at all with Your Holiness. I therefore resign from my office as their protector, since it is to no avail! And I no longer intend to concern myself with these affairs."

"Come now, do not say that," the Pope answered. "I want what is best for the Salesians. I want to help them. Please be patient. You see how overwhelmed I am with other matters."

"Then I recommend the matter to Your Holiness. Please see that further action is taken on these papers I am handing to you."

However, when he returned on another day to take up this matter with the Holy Father, he asked for these papers, but they could not be found anywhere. Either the secretary or chamber attendant must have picked them up and flung them into the wastepaper basket. They had disappeared by the time the saint arrived in Rome. So all the work had to be done all over again with a considerable loss of time. Nevertheless, at first it did seem that there was a ray of hope. On account of his health, the cardinal prefect had been dispensed from duty and everything was in the hands of the secretary, Bishop Masotti. He attended the audience on behalf of his superior and expressed himself favorably, though he would not take any action for the privileges per communicationem, to the Sacred Congregation with instructions from the Pope that they were to be scrutinized. All Don Bosco received was the information that in a brief, Pius IX had abolished this manner of granting privileges, and so a detailed petition specifying the single privileges of which he believed he had need was to be submitted instead.

Ailing physically and with his mind full of a thousand different problems, Don Bosco made a virtue out of necessity and undertook this effort from the beginning again and humbly submitted the list of privileges to the Holy Father and implored him to take action on his petition. By the grace of God, we got to the end, so thought the saint. But during the evening of May 1st, a curt official note came from His Eminence Ferrieri asking that the dates of the briefs and the names of the individual Popes granting the individual privileges requested be listed, together with the

names of the religious orders enjoying them. This meant another enormous amount of work! The advocate Eleonori called on Don Bosco, as he was frequently in the habit of doing, to assure him that despite this new setback, he really would obtain the privileges.

"My head can't stand it anymore," Don Bosco exclaimed, "and then I shall have to forego the privileges. I will only ask for one or two of the more essential ones and then go back to Turin. If they want to grant them, good. If not, then patience! We shall go on as we have done so far."

"Calm down," the advocate told him. "We shall obtain everything, I promise you. If you do not feel you can undertake all this work, we will look for the briefs and the citations ourselves."

They decided to write to Father Berto, asking him to immediately send the lists of privileges enjoyed by the Oblates of Mary, the Redemptorists and the Priests of the Mission. As soon as these lists arrived, Don Bosco and Father John Baptist Lemoyne went through a number of volumes to trace the privileges requested, the relative dates when they were granted and so on. Don Bosco dedicated several days to this work and Father Francis Dalmazzo also worked through one whole night. At last, all the privileges and references had been copied and the entire documentation was handed over to Bishop Masotti.[3]

In the midst of all these worries, Don Bosco wrote a letter to Cardinal Alimonda that reveals his distress and resignation: [4]

May 3, 1884

Dear and Most Reverend Eminence:

Our fears have become reality. The question of our privileges has landed into the hands of Cardinal Ferrieri, who yesterday sent me a note saying that they could not be granted unless each privilege requested was accompanied by citations of the authentic documents by which they had been granted, and specifications as to whom and by whom they were granted. After this the privileges requested will be examined and it will be decided which are

[3] Don Bosco sent another Latin letter that had been already written in Turin to accompany them, stressing in particular the necessity that the faculty of dimissory letters be granted. This faculty had been granted for a period of ten years by Pius IX, which had expired on April 3rd of that year. Together with this letter, we publish the list and accessory reference in the Appendix (document 18), in order that the reader may have an approximate idea of the work involved.

[4] In 1899, the original letter was in the possession of Father Giuseppe Diverio of Mondovi, who was formerly secretary to Cardinal Alimonda in Turin.

to be granted and which not. This means that for the moment, I must put my mind at rest and not refer to this petition again. Meanwhile the period granted for the faculty of dimissory letters has expired, so I will ask the Holy Father to reconfirm this one, at least. I was unable to send up anyone for ordination at Easter and possibly unable to do so at Pentecost, too.

Despite my reiterated requests, I have been unable to obtain an audience with the Holy Father during the 20 days I have been in Rome.

Cardinal Nina is informed of everything. He is very upset and he will write you himself.

We had agreed that if this matter was to be referred to Cardinal Ferrieri it was useless to renew any petition, and now this has happened.

My health is none too good. I hope to pay my respects to you in person shortly, and thus obtain some comfort.

I beg you for your holy blessing with the greatest veneration, while remaining with profound gratitude,

Your most grateful and affectionate,
Rev. John Bosco Rome,
Porta San Lorenzo 42

The gracious cardinal wrote him a cordial note in reply at once:
Dear and Most Reverend Don Bosco:

Turin, May 6, 1884

I received your note of the 3rd, and will not delay writing to tell you how very distressed I am. I can understand how you yourself are feeling. Take heart, dear Don Bosco. God subjects us to dire tests in order to give us greater comfort. The day of victory will dawn after the day of battle.

Although I know you are doing many good things in Rome, I nevertheless urge you to return soon to Turin where I will be delighted to see and embrace you, as I do now in spirit, being with all my heart,

With fraternal affection,
Cajetan Cardinal Alimonda.

On May 2nd Don Bosco had expressed new fears to his friends. "I can

see what Ferrieri's plan is," he said. "He has declared that Don Bosco would never obtain the privileges. Now he does not want to refuse them because the Pope says they are to be granted, but he is playing for time."

The obstruction preventing him from obtaining audiences with the Pope seemed to justify this statement, but things changed after he had obtained the audience. Already during the evening of the 9th, being anxious to know what happened, Cardinal Nina called on Don Bosco and told him how His Holiness had him read the letter of commendation from Cardinal Alimonda and then Don Bosco's petition, together with the list of privileges, only the day before. "I like Don Bosco's Latin," the Pope had said. "It is not Ciceronian, but it is polished and simple at the same time."

All this was indicative of the Pope's favorable attitude, which was then luminously evident during the audience, even to the extent of permitting Don Bosco to continue issuing dimissory letters pending the formal decree.

What of the famous brief in which Pius IX had abolished the granting of privileges *per communicationem?* This brief was the cause of an amusing little episode, of which we do not want to deprive our readers.

In June, Father Francis Dalmazzo was supposed to report to the office of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, where he found several prelates, among them the under-secretary Trombetta, Boccafagli, the assistant of the auditor De Luca and Masotti, the secretary. Regarding the matter of the brief by which it was said that Pius IX had abolished privileges *per communicationem*, the prelates in question expressed not the slightest doubt as to the truth and nature of this document. But Father Francis Dalmazzo intervened, "Excuse me, sirs, but you are wrong. Such a document does not exist."

"It does not exist? Do you intend to deny something that is known to us all?"

"With your permission, nevertheless, I maintain that it does not exist."

"Do you say that?"

"No, but Don Bosco does and Don Bosco is an authority on such matters, since he has gone into the matter thoroughly."

"Oh, come now! It does not seem to us that Don Bosco is an authority on this matter."

"But gentlemen, Don Bosco never makes mistakes in talking about this subject, for he knows all about decrees and everything."

"That may be, but in this instance, Don Bosco is making a very big

mistake. The facts are certain...there is no doubt whatsoever. I think it was in 1848, no, in 1852. Really I do not remember when, but there was this decree. Oh! Most certainly there was. There can be no doubt about it."

These assertions came now from each of them, but Father Francis Dalmazzo did not give up.

"Forgive me," he resumed. "Since it is such an important matter, we have to make absolutely sure and indicate the exact date of this decree and where it can be found. Where did you read it?"

Thus challenged, the interlocutors were looking at one another. None of them had ever read it. They all had heard it spoken about, but without taking the trouble to trace the source. Father Francis Dalmazzo began to intone a hymn of victory on behalf of Don Bosco, but then one of the prelates jumped to his feet saying, "We can soon verify it. Let us look at the Collectanea because the brief will undoubtedly be in it."

Collectanea in usum Secretariae S. C. Episcoporum et Regularium is the title of the collection of decrees issued by this same congregation, and it had been compiled by the immediate predecessor of Cardinal Ferrieri, Andrea Bizzarri, formerly secretary and then cardinal prefect of the congregation.

Someone went to fetch the volume, but despite all research, no trace of the brief was found. They turned to indices and scanned them without success. They were forced to admit that Don Bosco was right. He even knew whence this legend had originated. Sometime around 1850, it came to the attention of the Sacred Congregation that the Redemptorists were making use of certain privileges which they had perhaps obtained per communicationem, and the congregation tried to revoke them in a decree, but the Redemptorists appealed against it and the decree was annulled. The sentence emanated created much talk in Rome, and in order to put an end to it all, the congregation stipulated that from that time onward granting of privileges in this manner would no longer be allowed. But this private decision, which was never ratified by any public document, remained a purely inter-office affair, and had given birth to the erroneous belief that there was a brief by Pius IX. Although Don Bosco was not ignorant of the true facts, he had understandably felt it wiser not to dispute the existence of the brief during the course of his negotiations.

All that we have related above took place after Don Bosco had to leave Rome without reaching any conclusive solution.

Now let us go back to Leo XIII. His promise to Don Bosco was trans-

lated into action without delay. Upon receiving Bishop Masotti in audience, the Pope told him, "I wish the privileges to be granted to Don Bosco."

"Your Holiness is well aware of the fact that the cardinal prefect is against it."

"You see to it that we find a way to make Don Bosco happy."

"I will try to do as Your Holiness wishes."

Then Prefect Cardinal Ferrieri threatened to resign, but the Pope urged him to think it over. On the 10th, Bishop Masotti sent word that the Holy Father had decided to grant the Salesians the privileges enjoyed by the Oblates of Mary *per communicationem*. Therefore, one had to look for a copy of the decree of this concession while the procurator of the Oblates was to swear under oath that said privileges had neither expired nor been annulled. When Don Bosco heard this, he said, "If they are granting this, then they are granting a good deal more than I had requested. But there might be some subterfuge behind all this to complicate the matter. Now that Bishop Masotti is in charge of everything and is received regularly in audience, why does he never do anything without consulting Ferrieri? He could put a short, concise brief before the Pope and it would be signed immediately. It was the Pope himself who suggested this. Will the Oblates want to specify what the privileges are?"

Nevertheless, he concerned himself personally and immediately with the matter. He spent May 11th, 12th and 13th in consultation with the advocate Eleonori and several prelate friends of his, always insisting on the desire manifested by the Pope. After researching the archives of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, only one brief was found granting the privileges peculiar to the Oblates' privileges. Now there was only the question of routine formalities, so he expected he could leave Rome, especially since Rome was not in the habit of doing these things in a hurry.

In Turin, he looked into the possibilities of accelerating the realization of the Pope's promise, keeping in touch by letter with Bishop Masotti and spurring on the procurator. He again addressed his petition to the Pope a month after he had left Rome, repeating the essential passages of his previous petition and adding the explicit request that the privileges which Leo XIII had granted to the Oblates of Mary be granted to the Salesians, since the Oblates had obtained the privileges of the Redemptorists in their turn *per communicationem*.

During the chapter meeting on June 27th, Don Bosco could at least inform the assembly that the decree of privileges had now been compiled, however, the privileges no longer concerned the ones given to the Oblates,

but those granted to the Redemptorists. Father Francis Dalmazzo had seen and read this decree and said that it contained a magnificent praise of the Salesian Congregation. It included the exemption from episcopal jurisdiction and now nothing was needed except the signature of Cardinal Ferrieri who had declared that since this was what the Pope wanted, he would wash his hands of the matter.

Now why was the communication no longer the one granted to the Oblates? In this connection there had been some delaying tactics that nevertheless worked out in favor of Don Bosco. At first Bishop Masotti, the secretary who was not quite certain of his ground, had denied the very existence of the Oblates in the presence of Don Bosco. But the files supplied the answer to that. Then in view of the insistence of the Pope that these delaying tactics be done away with once and for all, Bishop Masotti pointed out to the Holy Father that the Oblates did not enjoy any special privileges, which was also true, as we have said.

"What of it?" the Holy Father replied. "Write out a decree similar to theirs."

"But the privileges of the Oblates are only in common with the Redemptorists."

"Then write out a decree giving the Salesians the privileges of the Redemptorists."

The resistance could be extended no further. The Redemptorists were asked for all the data related to their privileges, but this required time, since the Father General was away. When he came back, he instantly submitted a copy of them because he was very fond of Don Bosco. The secretary instantly went to work and because the prefect could not raise any more objections, the decree was written, granting in a general sense all privileges enjoyed by the Redemptorists without any particular specification of any single one. This decree contained praise of the congregation, as Don Bosco had informed the Chapter. But when Ferrieri read it, he seized his pen and struck it all out, adding a sentence by which all the concessions and privileges granted to the Congregation *ad tempus*, in writing, or *vivae vocis oraculo* were revoked. This clause was superfluous, since the favors had already expired. And so the decree, cut and dry, was sent and it reached Turin.[5]

At six o'clock in the evening on July 9th, four terrible flashes of light-

[5] If we look in the Collectanea entitled Elenchus Privilegiorum (San Benigno Canavese, 1888), we shall see what privileges were thereby obtained.

ning accompanied by crashing thunder that shook the whole Oratory rent an absolutely clear sky. Everyone in the house was terrified, and people ran here and there, many to seek refuge by the altar of Mary Help of Christians. A boy carrying books tumbled down the stairs leading from the rooms over the church due to the vibrations and the noise. The final clap of thunder was truly terrifying. Father John Bonetti was sick in bed, and he called several times for Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who was in the adjoining room. He came running, but only after some minutes, because the thunder had smothered Father John Bonetti's voice.

"Did you hear that noise?" Father John Bonetti said to Father John Baptist Lemoyne as soon as he saw him. "It did not sound natural to me. The devil must be venting some violent outburst of rage. I would almost wager that at this very moment, Cardinal Ferrieri is signing the decree declaring us the privileges of the Redemptorists."

"If only that were so!" Father John Baptist Lemoyne answered. "Don Bosco has been suffering and striving to obtain them for fifteen years. It really looked as if everything was conspiring against us."

"You'll see that I was not wrong," Father John Bonetti said.

"It would be a fine thing if you turned out to be a prophet. What a comfort for Don Bosco!"

They laughed and said no more. Then Father John Baptist Lemoyne went to speak with Father Joaquim Berto, Don Bosco's secretary, to tell him what Father John Bonetti had said. However, he pretended not to have gone to see him just for that, so he took a letter with him to ask him some explanations about the answer to give to it. He knocked on the door twice and Father Berto came out annoyed as one who had been disturbed while engaged in some highly interesting occupation. He asked heatedly, "What do you want? I am busy. This awful storm does not even allow me to read the decree."

He was indeed holding a paper in his hand that he turned over without looking at the intruder.

"What decree?" Father John Baptist Lemoyne asked in astonishment.

"The decree granting us the privileges."

"Oh! Really?"

"Yes, yes, it is signed by Ferrieri."

"But this just dumbfounds me. When did it get here?"

"A few minutes ago. As it was handed to Don Bosco, the first flash of lightning burst forth all in an instant. Don Bosco tried to read it but he could not. The windows were open and the first three streaks of lightning

almost came through them. I seized Don Bosco's arm and pulled him into the adjoining room and said, 'Come here! Can't you see you're in danger? It looks as if the lightning is looking for you.' Then, as Don Bosco was on his way, the fourth flash came; a streak of fire that seemed almost to reach the desk where the decree was placed. Don Bosco was too moved and could not get himself to continue the reading of the decree right away. Now I was trying to decipher the writing but I could not."

"Come here, come here!" stammered Father John Baptist Lemoyne, quite beside himself. "Let us go and see Father John Bonetti."

On the way he told him about the conversation they had a short while before. When they got into Father John Bonetti's room, they told him what had occurred, with all the accompanying exclamations that can easily be imagined. Overwhelmed with enthusiasm, Father John Bonetti turned to Father John Baptist Lemoyne and said, "Do you remember the dream of the four claps of thunder and the rain of thorns, of buds, of flowers and roses? Don Bosco had that dream four years ago! Take the pocket book that I keep in my coat and give it to me."

He then sat on the bed, took a small card out of the pocket book and read aloud: "Here it is! Don Bosco had the dream in 1880 during the night of July 8th - 9th, which means last night, four years ago today. It was six o'clock in the evening when he told the Chapter about it."[6]

Their delight and excitement were at a pitch and they kept saying to one another, "How could we deny the protection of the Holy Virgin Mary?" That same night, Father John Baptist Lemoyne ran into Father Anthony Notario and told him about it, to which Father Anthony Notario answered, "Now I understand, because at the fourth flash of lightning, the whole library where I happened to be at that time, was full of the stench of sulfur and became so stiflingly hot that I was obliged to go outside!" The Oratory library was next to Don Bosco's room.

Father John Baptist Lemoyne writes:

> This coincidence of lightning and decree favorable to us seems strange, yet it is perfectly logical. That decree could be looked on as a document that had been wrested, so to speak, by force. Without the intervention of Leo XIII, Don Bosco could never have lived to see his wishes granted. "I want this done!" the

[6] See vol. XIV, pp. 424-25.

> Pope said. "I want it. I want to see Don Bosco's hopes fulfilled." But for ten years the venerable father had to endure so many humiliations and rebuttals! We saw him weep when it seemed that all his newly longed for hopes had once again been dashed, and it was then that we heard him exclaim, "If I had known in advance all the sorrow, hardships and contradictions that it would cost to found a religious society, perhaps I would never have found the courage to go and do it."

Don Bosco did not pay great attention to the poor wording of the script because he was satisfied by its content. "I have received the decree granting us the privileges," he wrote immediately the following day to the procurator. "The edging is missing, but all the substance is there, and should you see Bishop Masotti, thank him humbly for me and for the whole Congregation."

He could now truly intone his *Nunc dimittis.* Indeed when it was all over, he said, "Now I have nothing more to wish for, and I pray to Our Lord to take me unto Himself."[8]

Sadly enough, his life indeed was drawing to its close. He lived for three and a half more years, years full of physical suffering, but his holiness shone forth even more brilliantly because of it.

[8] Summ. Sup. Virt., num. VI #159, De heroica spe (witness Father Piscetta).

Chapter 5

DON BOSCO AT THE ORATORY FROM THE FEAST OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS TO THE FEAST OF ST. JOHN AND THE BIG LOTTERY IN ROME

During the last few years of his life, Don Bosco was always assisted and accompanied by a young cleric, tall in stature and distinguished in his manners, open minded and jovial. This cleric, Charles Maria Viglietti of Turin, seemed to have been born just for the task of doing duty in the antechamber, a task which had now become an extremely delicate one due to the increasing number of visitors and Don Bosco's frail physique. He was called upon more and more to lend the support of his strong young arm to the faltering old man.

The saint summoned Viglietti from San Benigno on May 20, 1884, but he had been training him for this charitable task for a long time. He had noticed him in the school of Lanzo in 1878 and expressed his desire to work with him. He repeated the same wish two years later. The sensitive and intelligent Viglietti heard such words from Don Bosco's lips and could not forget them. He anxiously looked ahead into the future wondering when they would come true.

Don Bosco made his plan clearer in 1882 when the young man had finished his high school and received his diploma. He then invited him to join the retreat held in preparation for the novitiate. During that summer vacation while the other novices were sent to Borgo San Martino for two months, Don Bosco kept the young man in Turin in his service and entrusted some tasks to him, among them the drawing of a geographic map of Patagonia. The young man spent some time every day with the beloved father who told him many things, including his dreams. The young man was delighted by these confidential stories. Don Bosco also had him write to him during his novitiate and sent him an occasional small gift.

When the young man was admitted to perpetual profession in 1883, Don Bosco did not want him to go with the others to Lanzo for the summer, but again he kept him at the Oratory, treating him with the utmost affection and confidence. The cleric would wait for him early in the

morning by the door of his room and would accompany him to church, serve his Mass at the altar of St. Peter, and be on duty in the antechamber during the day to direct the audiences. Viglietti would receive the gradual, necessary training for the role that was later to play in the service of Don Bosco, when such an affectionate, assiduous and arduous assistance would become necessary.

When Cardinal Alimonda's visit approached, Don Bosco entrusted Viglietti with a special task. He told him to research and draw up a topographic map of the archdiocese to be offered as a gift from the Congregation to the new shepherd. Viglietti zealously went to work at San Benigno, painstakingly drawing roads, paths, rivers, and marking the localities where there were houses, chapels, parishes and vicariates. He returned to Turin in November to show what he had done, and both the cardinal and Don Bosco were highly satisfied with his work. Don Bosco, in particular, was gratified to see his own village and even the house where he was born marked out on the map.

When he was sending him back to the studentate, he asked, "Would you like to come to Turin to be my sacristan?" Viglietti was overwhelmed with joy, though he did not think he deserved such a good fortune, and he merely replied that he would be delighted to be of service. "Now I shall go to Rome," Don Bosco said, "but be here when I come back. You will be the *baculus senectutis meae* (the walking stick of my old age)."

Upon his return from Rome on May 17th, Don Bosco sent for Viglietti three days later and asked him to accompany him wherever he might go outside his own room and also help Father Berto and Father John Baptist Lemoyne.

This faithful guardian took on an extra and highly meritorious task on his own initiative: he began to write a chronicle which began on May 20, 1884 and continued till January 31, 1888. On the whole, the entries are brief and irregular, though all together they constitute a collection of facts that he alone was able to gather and record. In the final declaration, Viglietti stated the circumstances authenticating the chronicle, which ends with Don Bosco's death:

> I wrote this chronicle as truthfully as I could. I made it a point to avoid superfluous descriptions, reflections, etc. I have simply recorded facts as they were happening or as I heard them from Don Bosco himself, or from others, specifically named. If I have made mistakes in certain things, let no one hold it against me,

> especially when it is remembered that when I was traveling, the excessive work I had prevented me from writing during the daytime, and I was only able to write a few notes at night. All that is written here was written by one who never left Don Bosco's side day or night, who shared all his secrets, and who is therefore better qualified to relate what was happening around this holy man.

At the Oratory, the improvement in Don Bosco's health was looked upon as a grace from Our Lady. No one knew anything about the mysterious apparition of Louis Colle, although everyone knew how many prayers had been addressed to Mary Help of Christians on his behalf, and how he had begun to improve in his health the very first day of her novena. One could see with pleasure that he could now move fairly quickly, and the people closest to him were also aware that the swelling of the liver decreased. But tireless as he was, he felt that the restoration of his strength was not to be taken as an invitation to rest, but instead a call to do more intensified activity. He immediately directed his thoughts to the forthcoming meeting.

Don Bosco was anxious to respond to a pressing duty, namely, to call on the archbishop, but he was not in time. As soon as His Eminence heard that he was back, he anticipated his call and arrived quite unexpectedly at the Oratory where he remained with the saint for two hours.

How full of foresight Don Bosco was in everything he did! He had already given thought in the middle of April while in Rome to the formalities of the meeting, despite all the other worries weighing upon him. He had someone write to Father Michael Rua on April 19th:

> One last word on behalf of Don Bosco: he leaves to you the decision as to when the meeting for the Salesian Cooperators is to be held. He also leaves it to you to decide whether two meetings should be held, one for the men and another for the women. In which case the first could be scheduled for May 20th, the second for the 23rd. They would be held in the Church of Mary Help of Christians at four o'clock in the afternoon. Make up your mind and have your decision published in the *Bulletin*.

There was only one meeting and that was held in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. The invitation that Don Bosco sent out a few days in advance brought no less than two thousand people to the church, among

them a number of French ladies and gentlemen. His address was simple in its substance and had the effect of a gentle beneficial rain falling on parched flowerbeds of a garden[1] upon the listening audience:

> I am very glad to address you all today, partly because of the things I have to tell you, and partly because this year I am addressing you in the church of Mary Help of Christians. It is indeed a most delightful thing to speak with all the cooperators here in this place that we may well call the house of Mary, the house which she herself did build - *aedificavit sibi dumum Maria.* I want to engage your piety so that we can help one another celebrate the Feast of Mary Help of Christians devoutly, by telling of the graces wrought by her at the beginning for those who contributed toward the construction and decorations of this church consecrated to her.
>
> When we began to build this church, we did not have any funds. We had to pay the workers, yet Don Bosco had no money. Then behold, at his advice, a lady recommended herself to Mary, and Mary cured her miraculously. In her gratitude, this lady offered the money required for the first two weeks' pay to the workers in honor of Mary. Other people were informed of this and they too invoked Mary, promising to offer money for this new church, and they too obtained exceptional graces. Then there began a series which was never interrupted of recoveries from serious sicknesses, and from all parts donations came in for graces already received or about to be received, and thus this church was seen to rise up, day after day, as if by magic.
>
> Once it had been built, it needed adornments and Mary Help of Christians arranged for them, too. Do you see the altar of St. Peter here, for example? How was it paid for? I will tell you - a pious Roman matron was sick and she recommended her plight to Mary. She was miraculously cured and soon she wrote to ask that an altar be built at her expense, which was done, and it is St. Peter's altar. A little further on there is another altar dedicated to the holy Turin martyrs, Solutor, Aventor, and Octavian of the

[1]The written copy that was used for the *Bulletin* (July 1884) contained three minor amendments by Don Bosco: we will indicate them in italics. In the first of these, the original draft had read, "to help you to celebrate." Note here the correction.

Theban legion, and another to St. Anne, and who built these? Another Roman lady was also favored by an exceptional grace by the intercession of Mary. She too had been seriously sick, and had promised to build the above-mentioned altar, and instantly she regained her health. At the far end on the other side of the church there is the altar of the Sacred Heart and this too recalls to our mind a grace obtained by someone in Milan, who paid for it as a token of gratitude. By St. Joseph's we see the altar railings. The picture! All donated in thanksgiving for abundant graces received. The bronze statue standing on top of the cupola was also a gift from grateful donors as a tribute to Mary Help of Christians. The choir was a gift from the handiwork of a master carpenter. We would never finish if we were to examine all the different parts and ornaments of this church which are all tokens of gratitude for favors received, because the pillars, the vaults of the roof, every stone and every brick, every decoration you see all represent, so to speak, a grace obtained from Mary.

In the sacristy there are a number of small pictures, all proofs of so many graces. You see there a mother whose son escaped death, one who was freed from a violent toothache, another who was saved from a dangerous fall, and so on. I myself must tell you the details concerning my own person. You may have heard that for some time, I have had very poor health. I was almost incapable of doing any work. Well, on the 15th of this month, the first day of the novena, I began to feel better. My health improved day by day and now, by the grace of Mary, I feel as well as I used to many years ago.

If we could but lift a veil and show you the spiritual graces that have been granted to those dedicated to her, we could intone a magnificent hymn in honor of the mighty Virgin Help of Christians! Wives whose husbands were brought back to a fitting way of life, fathers and mothers whose rebellious offspring became once again obedient, sinners who bemoaned their sins, made a good confession and began to live exemplary lives.

But you, well-deserving listeners, will ask me why all this recital of examples and graces on the eve of the feast of Mary Help of Christians? And I will answer to urge you all to put your trust in her goodness and in her power, and that you might know how you can obtain graces easily. Our Heavenly Mother already

has graces in store for us. She only wants us to ask her for them, and that we promise to help and sponsor those undertakings that are for the greater glory of God, for her greater honor and for the welfare of poor children, as the cooperators do. I am confident that all of you who turn to Mary to obtain graces will do so, provided that this is not contrary to your spiritual well being.

Many prayers will be said for you here tomorrow, for you are our benefactors, and they will be said not only tomorrow, since we are praying for you continuously here in the church. Several hundred boys assemble here every day in the early hours of the morning, and they say five mysteries of the Holy Rosary, attend Holy Mass while a great many of them go to confession and Holy Communion, and this is all for you. At seven-thirty hundreds more boys do the same. Then at all hours there are people who come to visit the blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians, who come to meditate and read spiritual books, to pray for others who have requested prayers to be said for all kinds of things. Therefore from early in the morning until late in the evening, there are practices of piety carried on continuously. Now all of these prayers are offered up to Heaven expressly to implore the blessing of Heaven upon our benefactors here in Italy, in France, in Spain and in America, or in any other part of the world. I believe that because of all the prayers addressed to her here, Mary will continue to shed her blessings in ever more abundant measure year after year upon her devotees.

I must also tell you that the Holy Virgin Mary does not grant graces only to those who come to pray here in this church, but she grants them elsewhere, too. I am now near the end of my life, and I am overjoyed to see how instead of diminishing her favors, Mary increases them every day and everywhere. Her graces are constantly increasing in Italy, in France, in Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Russia, Poland, Austria, the Argentine Republic, Uruguay and Patagonia. Every day now, from this part of the world, no matter how far away it may be, we receive word of exceptional graces obtained through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, sometimes with long reports on them. The Salesian cooperators are the instruments of which God avails Himself to extend ever further His own glory and the glory of His mother. All of you should therefore rejoice, and meanwhile you

should place your complete trust in the protection of Mary.

I wanted to say these things, briefly, so as not to run too long and take advantage of your kindness. Nevertheless, I must now tell you that I have been in Rome at the feet of the Holy Father, Leo XIII, who spoke of the Salesian cooperators saying that he blessed them with all his heart and that he prays for them every day. He said once again that he does not wish to be a cooperator, but the foremost operator, because, he says, the Pope should always lead in all charitable enterprises, and especially when these are concerned with the welfare of poor children. When he was informed of the outstanding things that have been accomplished and all that still remains to be done in connection with the construction of the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome, he chose to assume the responsibility himself of building the facade of the church at his own expense, which will be considerable. He also desires a hospice to be built alongside the church and this has already begun. Now why, you will ask, is a new hospice being built in Rome when there are already so many? I will say in answer that for the most part, the institutions now in Rome require by reason of the facts for which they were founded that the boys comply with certain conditions, which excludes admission to a great many of them. Some institutions, for example, stipulate that the boys must be of Roman origin, others insist that they come from certain cities or nations, but over all they are now inadequately confronted with the needs arising at the present day and age and climate. The Pope wishes to have a truly Catholic institute, one that will take in poor boys in danger, no matter whether they are Roman, Italian, French, German, Spanish or of any other nationality or condition provided that they are exposed to material or spiritual dangers. The Pope is extremely anxious to have this hospice, and therefore, he earnestly recommends that the cooperators contribute toward it with their alms, and he blesses you all for this.

He was most gratified to hear about the church of St. John the Evangelist in Turin. A hospice was also needed alongside this church dedicated to the Apostle of Charity, so that it might be said that that's what charity does in practice, that's how the Apostle of Charity is honored! We already have begun this hospice. Work is now in progress and nearing completion. I hope that

it will be completed this year, and that it will soon be filled with boys. When the supreme pontiff heard this, he said, "If we wish to have a decent society, we must concentrate all our efforts on giving a Christian education to the young who soon will represent the human race. If they are well educated, we will have an honest, domestic and civil society. If they are badly educated, society will deteriorate and the children will perforce bemoan the bad education given them once they are grown up, if not curse the memory of their ancestors."

These are the thoughts expressed by the vicar of Jesus Christ who then imparted his apostolic benediction to everyone.

Meanwhile, if you wish to be deserving of the special protection of Mary Help of Christians and comply with the earnest desire of the Holy Father, everyone of you should see to it that he or she does what is in your power for the benefit of the Sacred Heart in Rome and the hospice of St. John in this town. Your charity is beneficial to civil society, to the Christian families and, let us say it straight out, also to non-Christian families. Thanks to your charity, there will be well-educated and well-informed men, peace in the family, fathers, mothers and other relatives will find greater docility in their offspring who instead of becoming a scourge, will instead be a consolation to them and their support in their old age.

I will say one more thing: your charity will be of benefit to you personally and to those dear to you, for God who keeps His promises will reward you a hundredfold here in this world and give you an eternal reward in the hereafter.

Tomorrow I shall celebrate Holy Mass to call down on you, your relatives, your spiritual and temporal affairs the choicest blessings, and to obtain the loveliest and most important grace of all, namely that one day we may all meet together in Paradise, to sing and praise and enjoy God with our sweetest mother, Mary Help of Christians.

Don Bosco delivered this address with a vigor no longer habitual to him. Indeed, when he descended from the pulpit, he said he felt he could have gone on preaching. Thanks to this state of well-being, he was able to endure the fatigue of the festivities.

A vast crowd of faithful had come to Turin not only from distant parts

of Italy, but also from abroad, and jammed the church and the surrounding areas on the feast day. The cardinal archbishop and his auxiliary, Bishop Bertagna, officiated at the sacred functions to the great joy of the saint who was at last able to ensure the maximum liturgical splendor for the ceremony. The *l'Unitá Cattolica* of May 27th defined the feast as "the Catholic exhibition," because of the crowd of people attending it, the singular piety that was shown, the magnificence of the liturgy and the ornaments, and the quality of the music performed. The article ended as follows:

> We would like to end our description with a word of praise addressed to the principal sponsor of these splendid occasions in Turin, which help us to keep our faith alive and rekindle Christian piety. But what praise could be adequate to the work he is doing? Instead of the praise of poor journalists, may Don Bosco receive all the esteem, veneration and love of the people of Turin. May he enjoy the protection of the Virgin the Help of Christians. May he receive the praise, the blessing and the reward of God, to which he has consecrated his whole life.

Indeed, God alone could measure the abundance of spiritual fruits produced by the zeal of the saint in the goals of so many people through solemn celebrations. Proof of this is found in the events of the morning of the 24th in the presence of several eyewitnesses.

Don Bosco was hearing confessions of the Oratory boys as usual around eight o'clock that morning in the sacristy, when a gentleman entered. He was about thirty years old, and he stood stiffly against the opposite wall and watched the little penitents approach one after another to confide their secrets to their spiritual father. The man's behavior attracted the attention and alarmed the priests on duty. He seemed to be anxious and restless because now and then he took a few steps up and down, and then went back to his lookout stand. When one of the kneeler's sides became free, the man approached it, but remained standing. Seeing that he was not going away, the saint asked what it was he wanted.

"I do not know," the man answered.

"Do you wish to go to confession?"

"Oh! I don't think so."

"If you do not mean to go to confession, then step back and leave place for others."

But the man did not seem to want to step back. It was as if he were

chained by some inner power to the spot where he stood. Not to waste any time, Don Bosco turned to the other side and heard the last boy's confession. Still the gentleman did not budge. It was now evident that here was a soul persecuted by the grace of God. With a gentle, yet resolute gesture, the saint motioned to him to kneel down. The man obeyed, almost automatically. God alone knows what ever happened between this gentleman and Don Bosco. Those present saw him rise to his feet again deeply moved, his eyes wet with tears, and someone heard him exclaim, "It was Our Lady who brought me here!" He then entered the church and remained for some time in prayer, frequently raising his eyes toward the picture of the Most Holy Virgin.

How many people came to implore temporal favors for themselves or for others! During the novena at Montemagno, a thirteen-year-old boy, Giovanni Vaira, regained his physical health, which he still enjoys today as a Salesian priest in Patagonia, and for which he had gone to implore the grace from Mary Help of Christians through the intercession of Don Bosco.

His trouble had begun with his left foot, which caused him immense suffering. He had undertaken every possible cure prescribed by the doctors for four months, but to no avail. He was so thin that he looked like a skeleton. His mother brought him to Turin and was told that his leg would have to be amputated immediately, to which both mother and son refused. A pious and compassionate woman asked his mother, "Why don't you take the boy to see Don Bosco and have him bless him? Sick people call on him every day and are cured."

The boy's mother heeded her advice. Don Bosco asked the boy if he loved Mary Help of Christians. The answer was yes.

The saint then gave him a blessing, told him to follow the novena, and promised to pray for him. The novena was hardly finished when the only evidence of the sickness was the boy's recollection of its pain. While blessing him, Don Bosco told him that one day he would be one of his spiritual sons, and this came true some time later.

While people were fervently seeking out Don Bosco in Turin, as well as appealing to the Madonna, something that may be considered as an indicative sign of the times occurred in a town in the South of Italy.

In Capua, a lady, a school inspector, called at a boarding school run by nuns and found that they were using Don Bosco's *History of Italy* as a text book. She was offended and reported the scandalous incident. She would not rest until she had received the assurance that the book would

soon be banned from that school. A local newspaper stated the following about the incident:

"Don Bosco is a Turin priest who some time ago opened an orphanage in that same town, with handsome donations given him by benefactresses. For this, all praise to him. But for the *History of Italy* he published, no punishment would be adequate."

What mystified the Draconian severity of this statement was a threefold crime committed by that book: his defense of the Bourbons, his defense of the temporal power of the Popes and his hostility to every aspiration toward freedom.

The journalist was immensely outraged to learn that Tomaseo had recommended "such an infamous" history book to schools, and in order to take all the blame from the Dalmatian, he resorted to the two-fold hypothesis that either he was seeing double, or that his "recommendation" had been nothing other than a "base and fraudulent invention on the part of Don Bosco."[2]

To educate young people according to those principles could have meant preparing for Italy "a generation of vipers." Unfortunately, the vipers contained in that book were already there. Good for Italy that Don Bosco was dedicating his whole life to concocting antidotes against their poisonous stings.

When the festivities were over, he went to work on the matter of the Roman lottery that, as we have said, had been approved on May 27th. The first thing he did was to send out the following circular letter:

Turin, May 31, 1884

> The great kindness with which on several occasions you have contributed toward the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus at Castro Pretorio in Rome leads me to hope that you will be pleased to hear about what has already been done and what still remains to be done.
>
> You are already informed that both the church and the hospice now being built alongside the church are to commemorate the glory of Pius IX and give Catholics a monument of faith. You are also aware that Pope Leo XIII entrusted the completion of this task to the Salesian cooperators. They accepted this glorious

[2] *La Compania Liberia* (May 27, 1884).

assignment. An adequate site was bought on which to build the church and orphanage, the excavations for the foundations were carried out at great expense, the rhythm of labor accelerated, and the construction was brought to a remarkable point in only a few years. The choir and sanctuary are completed.

Considering the great difficulty faced by the population of the area concerning their religious duties and providing instruction for their children, His Eminence, the Cardinal Vicar blessed the already completed part of the building on March 23rd last and now thousands of faithful Christians can attend religious services and follow their practices of piety.

On May 9th, I had the good fortune of lying prostrate at the feet of the vicar of Jesus Christ, and the Holy Father was gratified to listen to the details of this pious undertaking. He expressed great satisfaction and praised the charity of the donors, but he was deeply concerned to hear that the work had necessarily slowed down because of the scarcity of available funds. "Go ahead," he told me. "The piety of the faithful will not fail you. See that you make people understand how necessary this sacred building is. Explain how great a need there is in Rome for a hospice for the poor boys who come here from all parts of the world, and who then find themselves abandoned in this town, and you will be given the help you need."

I was then able to tell him of the generous support we received from various nations. Then I promised that I would once again appeal to public charity in the name of His Holiness, and to this end I request his special blessing for our well-deserving benefactors.

His Holiness was visibly moved and said, "I gladly impart my apostolic blessing to every cooperator and well-deserving donor. I shall not fail to pray for them and the peace of their families every day during my holy Mass, and for the prosperity of their temporal affairs and the successful Christian education of their children."

Then the Supreme Pontiff went on: "Since the Holy Father should not only cooperate but actively operate as well, I also intend to make a material contribution toward this undertaking. Therefore, despite the financial straits in which I find myself, I will be responsible for the walls, the decorations, the windows and the three doors. Thus will the world know that the head of the

church sponsors and upholds religion, and that he never refuses to participate in matters beneficial to civil society, and especially beneficial to the more chosen category of the human race – youth – towards whom the Popes have always been benevolent, and on whom they lavished their most solicitous attention. I am confident that more and more Catholics will follow my example and come to our aid with a generous assistance to complete this and other charitable undertakings for the greater glory of God and the welfare of souls."

I have endeavored to respond to these loving words on the part of the Holy Father with my sincere thanks, assuring him that we will all offer up prayers to God for the welfare of the Holy Church, redouble our zeal with the intention of cooperating and upholding those things which, in his infinite charity, the Pope recommends to us and personally sponsors.

For my part, well-deserving cooperators, while voicing my deepest gratitude, I shall not cease to pray for you or to urge the boys benefiting from your charity to pray for you also, so that you may obtain a happy life in this world and a most happy Eternity.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

This circular was reprinted in Catholic newspapers[3] and was the prelude to his invitation to all the cooperators, in which he asked them to help him sell the lottery tickets. He sent a little package of tickets to each of them, to keep for themselves or distribute, with the request that they collect and send the money paid for them. He sent the following instructions to his Procurator General:

Turin, June 8, 1884

Dearest Father Francis Dalmazzo:

Please look at the two letters enclosed and then either send or deliver them yourself to the addressees. They are both very urgent. Everything is ready for the mailing of the tickets, but send them to us.

[3] It was also republished in *La Fede e azione* (Milan, July 5, 1884).

We are praying fervently for all sponsors and are constantly imploring that their charity be rewarded a hundredfold.

Omnibus confratribus nostris in Domino salutem dico (convey our greetings to all the confreres).

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco.

The "very urgent things" concerned applications for the distinguished honors, of which he wrote: "These represent important promissory notes for us and the Sacred Heart."[4] Or, as he expressed later: "I realize that we have debts and have to do everything we can to see that work continues; but at the present time, the only source of money we have lies with the above distinguished honors."[5]

He also called on the Salesian directors to come to his aid, and we can see how he stimulated them to cooperate from this note to the director of the School of Este:

Turin, June 24, 1884

Dearest Father Taminetti:

As collector, you have to call on the families you know, especially on the ladies sponsoring the subscriptions even of small sums, and ask them to help you out. Call on institutions, on their pupils, and make sure that all the names of the boarders of the school are listed with some offering.

If the stamped paper is not enough, take the other paper that is not stamped - *vale*.

Rev. John Bosco

Don Bosco always found his main and most constant source of help in the charity of people who were not only moderately wealthy, but also rather poor. If it were possible to substantiate everything with documentation, we would see for ourselves how well founded in the truth is the saying "woe to the poor, if there were no poor!"

[4] Letter to Father Francis Dalmazzo (Turin, June 15, 1884).
[5] To the above (Turin, July 10, 1884).

A humble domestic from Reggio Emilia doing service in Novara had perhaps heard her master and mistress talk about the lottery, for she wrote Don Bosco on July 30th: "I too wish to contribute a month of my salary to help [people like myself]. I hereby acknowledge receipt of twenty tickets, Series A, and I enclose the sum of Lire 20 in a registered envelope." The maid's name was Angela Duri, and she had been reared by the Sisters of Charity in her native village, thanks to the charitable donations of benefactors. This was, in a certain way, the reason for her desire to assist her equals.

There were, all told, 5,700 prizes on display as we see from the printed list. Both the Pope and the king had contributed: Leo XIII with a handsome gold medal adorned with eleven Oriental pearls and a cameo representing his own image; and Humbert I with a magnificent ceramic vase. Queen Margherita sent another vase exactly the same. The cardinal vicar contributed two graceful Chinese mahogany coffers adorned with metal and two Chinese-style locks, and Cardinal Nina gave a fine gold ring with a cameo representing Nero, encrusted in diamonds, as well as a beautiful prayer book full of precious illuminations. Cardinal Consolini gave a big porcelain vase adorned with gilt flowers and scrolls and a statuette in *biscuit*[6] representing spring. Cardinal Bonaparte contributed a handsome breviary, and the Khedive of Egypt, a magnificent gold bracelet with a big letter I in diamonds and turquoise, and a delightful gold necklace with an emerald and diamond pendant, adorned with precious stones. Princess Blanche of Orleans donated an oil painting that she had painted herself in Byzantine style with a handsome frame, representing St. Claire. There was an abundance of rings, earrings, bracelets, finely wrought gold necklaces and precious mounted stones. A committee of ladies, under the direction of Countess Della Somaglia, had first helped prepare the lottery and now was working hard to ensure its success.[7] These are the lady "sponsors" who are mentioned in Don Bosco's letter to Father Francis Dalmazzo.

[6] Twice-baked porcelain paste that retains its natural white color, being neither painted, varnished or enameled.

[7] The committee was formed as follows:

Countess Guindalina Della Somaglia, nee Princess Doria, Chairman

Princess Francesca Massimo	Marchioness Berardi
Princess Lucia di Motta Bagnara	Marchioness Raggi
Princess Emilia Odescalchi	Noble Dame Grazia Astor Bristed
Princess Del Drago	Noble Dame Giulia Valdre
Countess Caprara	Signora Teresa Cortesi
Countess Visone	Countess Catucci
Marchioness Theodoli	Marchioness Vitelleschi

As we follow our saint step by step through his declining years, we will not be able to continue relating his exploits for any length of time without stopping every now and then to make reference to his health. The improvement continued, but no one knew how long it would last. In order to avoid a probable relapse, he yielded to the insistence of the doctors and his own spiritual sons. He slowed down the rhythm of his work, permitting himself the relaxation of an hour-long evening stroll. Father John Baptist Lemoyne and the cleric Viglietti walked on either side of him. He walked very, very slowly along Viale di Rivoli, along Viale Regina Margherita, Corso Valdocco or Via Cottolengo. At times, even walking as far as the Lenzo barrier. Don Bosco took pleasure in gazing at the wild flowers, and classifying the different kinds of herbs, which he would touch with the tip of his cane. There were not many houses in that area in those days and it was mostly fields and meadows. He always wanted to walk. When invited to ride in a coach only to get out of the city precincts and walk in the open countryside, he would reply that the poor do not ride in coaches. Later on he received a gift of three coaches, one by Commendatore Faja, and two by Count Sacchi de Nemouors of Casale. But he sold two of them to buy food for the boys and only consented to use the third during the last year of his life, since the doctor had told him that he had to get out of the house and he was unable to stand much on his feet. Many people along his route greeted him when they recognized him, and stopped him, so at any given time, there was a good number of people around him, especially children. Often the people knelt down by the roadside and obliged him to bless them.

Dame Serafina Archini Cauvin witnessed such one evening on the Viale Regina Margherita.[8] Children would run up to him in clusters and after a blessing, they would hail him merrily. Her companion advised her to go nearer to Don Bosco to see whether or not his blessing might not cure her arthritis, which had been tormenting her now for several years. But it was not easy for her to get near him because the children were clustered closely around him. So she went to wait for him near the doorkeeper's office. To drag herself all the way to that entrance, she had to stop and sit down more than twenty times because it was so difficult for her to walk.

The saint reached the threshold. The lady, who was kneeling down, asked him to bless her. He halted, turned toward her and gave her his blessing, pronouncing the words with such tenderness that she felt like weep-

[8] Letter to Father Michael Rua (March 27, 1890).

ing. She thanked him gratefully, stood up and walked away. She was walking so well that she went back home quickly and without any pains.

June 8th, the Feast of the Most Holy Trinity, brought something new to the Oratory. That Sunday was the anniversary of Don Bosco's first Mass, and it was the first time that any special commemoration was given to this auspicious anniversary. There was music in the church, a special treat at table, and a concert by the band in the playground. The boys read compositions and poetry in the dining room. Father John Baptist Lemoyne also added to the happiness of this family celebration by contributing a brilliant little sonnet of his own.

Among the correspondence of those days, of which only a very scant percentage has reached us, we find an interesting letter by the Rosminian priest, Father Flechia, and the reply thereto. The saint had known him first as a cleric during the vacation period of 1840. As a subdeacon, he had gone to the Fair of St. Michael together with the cleric *Giacomelli.*[9] Since that time they had always remained good friends. Father Flechia's fellow Rosminian, Father Paoli, was writing the life of Rosmini and was in search of testimonials to his virtues and of people who had personally known this great son of Rovereto. He, therefore, sought this favor now from Don Bosco through the good offices of Father Flechia. Don Bosco instructed Father John Bonetti to answer the letter, jotting down the main points for him in the margin of Father Flechia's letter: "Don Bosco has always enjoyed a friendly relationship with Father Rosmini and with his spiritual sons, as everyone can see from his *History of Italy*. See Rosmini's biography, etc."

Don Bosco was not content with merely giving these points, but asked to see Father John Bonetti's rough copy. He carefully corrected it and gave it its final format, which is why we are quoting the whole text of the document. Undoubtedly, he would have written even more explicitly had he foreseen that in the heat of controversy, his own letter would have become a target for more or less highly emotional comments on both sides.

Turin, June 17, 1884

Most Reverend Father Flechia:

My venerated Superior Don John Bosco received your letter of the 12th, requesting a testimonial in reference to the virtues of

[9] See volume 1, page 368.

your illustrious founder and father, the Rev. Rosmini, who was known to him personally. Since in his present poor state of health he is unable to answer you himself, he has entrusted me with the honorable task of expressing the following thoughts of his in this connection.

Don Bosco always enjoyed friendly relations with Father Rosmini and admired his virtues and his learning, as he states in the biography that he himself has written and included into his *History of Italy told to Children*.

The esteem he always felt for the father founder, he also professed and professes still today for his Rosminians, and especially for yourself to whom he bids me to convey his sincerest regrets for your infirmity. We are all praying to God that through the intercession of the most holy Virgin Help of Christians, you may be restored to perfect health.

Please accept Don Bosco's and Father Michael Rua's cordial regards, while I myself am highly honored to be,

Your most humble servant,
Rev. John Bonetti

Don Bosco found relief from the friendly talks he had with some of his sons, to whom he related recent occurrences, but he preferred more often than not to relate episodes of bygone days. On June 16th, he told them about an important event which had occurred the previous day in his room. A French patrician gentleman, a fervent admirer of the servant of God who had last met him in Marseille, his native city, had called on him. He was a good lawyer, but he had retired from his business due to the conditions of the times. However, he did not stop from acting as a counsel for the defense, especially whenever it was a question of supporting the free schools. For this reason, the Holy Father had given him the title of Commendatore. The lawyer was talking about the good work that he had accomplished, and Don Bosco listened to him with keen interest. Then Don Bosco stared at him but with affection and said to him, "Sir, do you practice the religion that you so nobly defend?"

This unexpected question confused his patrician interlocutor who became red and embarrassed, but quickly regained his control. He asked in return, "Why do you speak to me like that?"

"Because you deal with me with such courtesy and familiarity, I feel

that I would not be doing my duty if I were to fail to respond in kind with these signs of friendship and trust."

The gentleman then tried to change the subject, but Don Bosco insisted, holding the man's right hand firmly between his own.

"Why do you hold my hand so tight?" the lawyer asked.

"Why do you want to get out of it? Answer my question. Do you keep the religion that you defend so much?"

"Don Bosco, you have read it in my heart, have you not?"

At this point Don Bosco felt the lawyer's hot tears dropping on his hand, and between sobs, the gentleman admitted, "I confess, Don Bosco, that I have never practiced it. Besides, I never believed in confession."

"Now tell me that from now on, you will practice it, and promise me that the next time I meet you in Marseille or elsewhere, you will be able to return to the pressure of my hand and say 'I kept my promise.'"

"Yes, I promise you. In fact, I will add something else: as soon as I get back home, I will make my confession and inform you immediately about it; and this will happen in a few days. I give you my word of honor, Don Bosco! If all priests were like you, everyone would yield to religion!"

Don Bosco corrected him, "If everyone were to approach the priests as you do now, there would never be any dissatisfaction felt about us."

"This was the attorney Blanchard, a noble gentleman of great heart," Don Bosco said in concluding his story, "I know he will keep his word."

Then, he went on talking and the saint repeated something he had said again and again: "People come to see me from far away, full of respect and enthusiasm for me, as if there were something extraordinary about Don Bosco, whereas I may well be inferior to them in virtue. I could dismantle their illusions with one single word, and I really would like to do so, but that would bring dishonor to me and to the clergy, and damage to my beloved sons and the Salesian Congregation. I always recall what is written in the church at Crea, near Casale, a church that belongs to the monks of St. Thomas: *Fama fumus, homo humus, finis cinis* (Fame is like smoke, man is like dirt, the end is ashes).[10]

The previous day he had somewhat let go of this reserve. Among the many who jammed the sacristy daily to speak with him, there were some people who began to laugh as soon as they caught sight of him, unable to restrain themselves. Perhaps they had thought they were going to see a tall, imposing looking man, and instead they now saw before

[10] *Summarium* (dioc. proc.) XVI, 106 (witness Father John Baptist Lemoyne).

them a somewhat frail priest and short in stature. Don Bosco likewise started to laugh, and they continued. "Gentlemen, does it surprise you to see me as I am? You ought to see me enthroned in my glory, especially on two occasions: the first at dinner because I eat heartily, and the second when I am among my boys joining them in their pranks."

We do not know what effect such words had, but Don Bosco possessed the power of winning people over whenever he talked.

The conversation would then turn to the early days of the Oratory. What events took place in those days! In those days it was not scandalous to go to a bar and a café. Don Bosco did go to bars and cafes looking for the lost souls to put them back on the right path. These were the so-called *barabbas*, good for nothing and already used to cause harm to individuals. At times those who did know Don Bosco directed insults at him. But the others who knew him would defend him in their own way by getting knives out of their pockets and brandishing them, shouting *"Salop del boia, il sastu nen ch'a l'e Dun Bosc cul li? Se ti 'i 't die encura quaich cosa, i 't scanu* (Hideous rascal, don't you know that he is Don Bosco? If you say anything more to him, I'll cut your throat). The words were repeated verbatim by him, and reveal to us better than anything else could the type of youth he was seeking.

Pushing his way in between them, Don Bosco found words with which to quiet down those violent characters until little by little he was able to instill sentiments of humanity into their perverted minds, turning them kindly and well-disposed not only to listen to him, but also anxious to see him again.

Seeing Don Bosco several times a day and being able to speak to him either in the confessional, the playground, the dining room or his room created the illusion that he had regained his former health. Preparations for his name day festivities went ahead merrily under this assumption. This annual manifestation of filial affection never lost its charm.

In 1884, Count and Countess Colle stood together with Prince Augustus Czartorysky among the illustrious guests. A dialogue in verse written by Father John Baptist Lemoyne and entitled *Good Wishes and Hopes for the Year 1891* was particularly well received as the academic entertainment, the evening prior to his name day feast. That year would have been his priestly jubilee and would have fallen on May 24th, Trinity Sunday, the exact anniversary of his first Mass. It would also have been the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Oratory that had first seen the light on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception in

1841.[11] Don Bosco brought the academic performance to an end by thanking the boys and the guests who surrounded him, wishing them all a pleasant feast day. Then, in reference to the praises paid to him, he said that they had to give praise to God, to Mary Help of Christians and to those who had helped him with their charity, for all the good that had been accomplished. As for him, he said since he did not possess the virtues that his sons attributed to him in their affection, he would try to acquire them in the future, so that on another occasion they would not be telling poetic lies. The one thing that he did admit was true was the great love he always had for his boys, to whose welfare he wished to dedicate whatever little life still remained in him.

Meanwhile, since he knew that there were so many more who wanted to express their feelings in writing, the servant of God promised with a tender smile and in a humorous tone that he would be back there again the next evening to hear their praises.

The following day was indeed a cheerful one. Bishop Bertagna had celebrated the community Mass and confirmed a number of boys and was still talking with Don Bosco when, according to tradition, the delegates of the past pupils arrived around ten o'clock with magnificent church vestments. The bishop was delighted to take part in the reception. On this occasion, the ceremony was more solemn than usual because it was the fifteenth anniversary of Don Bosco's early pupils deciding to honor their common father with the tributes and gifts. Professor Nicola Fabre read a brief address in which he said the following:

> Don Bosco's whole life has been a life of love. Neither time nor discomforts nor the disappointments he had endured have left a trace of sadness on his countenance. His face is always serene, marked, true enough, by a few wrinkles, crowned by hair now almost entirely white. But his lips still curve in the serene and benevolent smile of a father who delights in the love of his children.[12]

When asked to speak, Bishop Bertagna said that on behalf of the cardinal, he invited the past pupils to stop looking to the saints in Heaven for

11 This dialogue was printed (San Benigno, 1884).

12 This brief speech was printed (Turin, Tip. Sal. 1884). There are three affectionate inscriptions by Father Turchi in the appendix, the second of which reads as follows: "On the immense horizon - of your charity - the sun never sets - In our hearts – our love for you – will ne'er fade – oh! Beloved Don Bosco". The third reads: "We were thine – oh! mighty Don Bosco – in the days of trial – Thine are we now – in the days of thy triumph — Pray allow us to be with thee again – when together thou canst see – the far limits – of the two hemispheres thou hast greatly benefited."

a while, and content themselves by contemplating them alive here on earth. He invited them to look at Don Bosco in whom they would find all the virtues of the great Saint John the Baptist blended. As an answer to his words, Don Bosco remarked that if it were permitted to an inferior to slight his superior, he would do so, holding that Bishop Bertagna had been lying. But instead, he would content himself by asking him to give everyone present his fatherly blessing. The good bishop replied, "His Eminence told me to receive a blessing, not to give one." So saying, he knelt down, and all the others knelt with him, and Don Bosco had to bless them.

At table, the feast turned out to be a family feast. Don Bosco went into the big dining hall, which had been especially decorated, with Countess Colle on his right and the Count on his left. Around the middle of the meal, the guests were delighted by a very charming interlude. Father Francis Dalmazzo had arrived from Rome only a few hours before, and got up to loudly read the brief in which Leo XIII conferred the title of Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great on Count Colle. This unexpected gesture moved the noble man and wife to tears. Father Francis Dalmazzo kissed the Count and handed over the decoration to Don Bosco who, in turn, handed it to the Countess, who hung it around her husband's neck amid an enthusiastic applause from those who were present.

Don Bosco's whole life was strewn with so many gracious episodes such as this, and we heartily deplore the fact that no provisions had been made on time to have them all collected. It would have supplied material for one of the most original publications in hagiographic literature.

While the merry banquet was in progress, a young student of the Oratory approached Don Bosco, holding a plate with two lovely tomatoes, which he then put carefully in front of him on the table. This made the other guests curious.

Don Bosco said, "This is the only fruit of my little garden." Right away he began to slice, season them and eat the tomatoes.

From where had two such fiery tomatoes come? A tomato shoot had appeared almost timidly, like an intruder, amid the other tall bean plants that brought a welcome shade to the windows from the little boxes lined up in a row outside his window on the balcony. No one had sown tomato seeds, but it was evident that when the soil was brought there from the garden, it had contained seeds of various kinds. The saint noticed it when the stalk had sprouted small yellow flowers, and had asked the boy who was in charge of the "little garden:"

"Are you growing tomatoes, too?"

"No, Don Bosco, it has grown up by itself. But if you want me to, I will weed it out at once."

"No, leave it here. If it will produce fruits, I will eat them."

The boy took pleasure in helping the little shoot grow and become stronger, and by St. John's Day, two fine tomatoes had ripened. Don Bosco gave orders that they were to be served to him at table, when many guests would be celebrating his name day with him. Don Bosco availed himself of everything to strengthen the ties of love between himself and his children.[13]

Another charming episode connected with Don Bosco's little balcony seems to relate to this same year, and we are glad to have the opportunity to relate it here. The reader will recall how some stout vines in the playground had climbed up the walls to shade the spacious windows on the balcony. One Saturday evening while the saint was in his room hearing the confessions of the pupils of the upper classes, a pupil of the fourth high school grade, named Paul Falla, noticed a bunch of grapes that was hiding amid the leafy branches as he was on his knees waiting for his turn. He therefore picked it from the twig and calmly began to munch on the grapes. Absorbed in what he was doing, he forgot everything else and noticed it when the penitent between him and the confessor had gotten up and left. After giving the absolution to the boy on the other side of him, Don Bosco turned to young Falla to hear his confession. With the bunch of grapes in his hand, the boy flushed and stammered an excuse. Don Bosco told him gently: "Do not get upset, finish eating your grapes and then you can make your confession." So saying, he turned to the other side and continued with the confessions.[14]

After the dinner, the bad weather was threatening to spoil the rest of the day. Vespers had just begun when there was a downpour of rain that lasted until after the vespers. There was no longer any hope of holding the celebration outside in the playground. Some people entered the church to pray to the Madonna that the sky might again become serene while others expected a forthright miracle from Don Bosco.

[13] This boy's name was Joseph Grossoni, and he is today pastor of Moncucco di Vernate (Milan). When he completed high school, he asked Don Bosco about his future. The saint answered him in Piedmont dialect: "You will become a policeman." Then he saw that the boy was disagreeably surprised and so he explained further: "Calm down! You will enter the seminary and become a priest, which means a policeman for Our Lord, one of those policemen who will fight the devil."

[14] That same year young Falla entered the novitiate at San Benigno. He is a priest, and now resides at Cavallermaggiore (Cuneo). He has often asked us if the vines that cast their shade into Don Bosco's old room today are the same ones as in those days. No, those grapes were Muscat grapes and died shortly after the death of the saint. The grapes today are the American variety, and were planted there by Father Michael Rua.

Around six-thirty, a coach drawn by two fiery horses that carried Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda appeared in the playground. The enthusiastic joy of the Salesians knew no bounds. His Eminence had already sent a priest from his own entourage that morning to wish Don Bosco a happy feast day; but he had now come to renew his good wishes in person. The cardinal had a one-hour private conversation with Don Bosco and sat with him at dinner. Upon hearing that the presentation of gifts and a demonstration in honor of Don Bosco like the evening before was about to begin, he said he wished to remain and attend the festivities. The clouds had dispersed a few minutes after the cardinal entered the Oratory. Everyone performed wonders to decorate the area destined for the academic entertainment that began at eight o'clock.

The cardinal took the seat of honor with Don Bosco on his right. The academic entertainment began with an address directed to His Eminence. It had been written in haste only a little while before, and a boy read it with a very beautiful voice and with great feeling. The program then ensued, continuing until ten o'clock, when Don Bosco rose to his feet and thanked the cardinal briefly for his exceptional goodness, saying that His Eminence would also say a few words to which everyone would listen with love and gratitude.

"In order to blend into one and the same celebrations in honor of St. John the Baptist and the name day of Don Bosco," Alimonda said, "I will tell you that the Baptist preached in the desert and along the river Jordan. He preached about hatred of sin, repentance and the practice of virtue. The Baptist was preparing the hearts and minds of the crowd to recognize and love Jesus Christ. The Baptist taught people who Jesus was and pointed Him out, saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sin of the world,' and He led souls unto Him.' Now if we may compare present-day society to the desert of those days, we can see that Don Bosco imitates the example of St. John the Baptist and becomes himself a forerunner in the present-day desert and along the banks of the rivers Po and Dora. Yes, Don Bosco, too, makes Jesus known and loved. He makes Him known in the Oratories and hospices. He makes Him known with his words and writings. He makes Him known in the towns and in the countryside, and makes Him known and loved in the remotest corners of the earth through the Salesians. The crowds went to hear St. John the Baptist speak, and here again do crowds hasten around Don Bosco. Such fortunate people are you yourselves, in particular, my dearest children. Ah, please always listen to this forerunner, and do whatever he tells you, and he will lead you to

that Jesus who alone will give you happiness in this world and in eternity!"

So saying, he imparted his blessing and left the Oratory amid thunderous applause. "That academic entertainment was beautiful, warm, moving," Father Charles Viglietti wrote in his chronicle.

The Cardinal wished Don Bosco to dine with him on July 6th, then he accompanied him back home in his coach in the afternoon around six o'clock. In reference to this event, Father Charles Viglietti calls our attention to two things: the first was that every time Don Bosco set foot in the archepiscopal residence, the doorkeeper followed him, and little by little as he went upstairs, everyone he encountered - servants, coachmen, secretaries, domestic staff – all started to follow him so that by the time he got to the cardinal, the whole household was with him. The second is that as soon as the Oratory boys saw the two black horses which were well known to them go through the open front door, they would begin to run and crowd around the coach and shout so animatedly that it was immediately evident how dearly they loved the archbishop.

Among the cordial good wishes sent to Don Bosco worthy of mention are those of the Princess Solms, on whom he had called at Pegli on his way to Rome:[15]

> Please accept our most sincere good wishes for your happiness on your dear name day. We will never forget your gracious visit, of which we have a most cordial recollection, and we hope that it will be repeated in a not too distant future. We all earnestly request you to remember us in your holy prayers. Above all, please pray for the good health of all of us, that my brother Albert may be cured of his leg trouble, for he is now very weak, and that God may grant the grace of a long awaited son to my good brother George. I beg your reverence to take these requests kindly. I kiss your hand and remain with the greatest esteem,
>
> Devotedly,
> Elizabeth, Princess Solms

The older of her two sons later went to see Don Bosco at the Oratory, but since Don Bosco was away from Turin, he saw Father Celestine Durando. He was asked to wait a little while until Don Bosco's

[15] *Pegli* (June 24th). See this volume, page 60.

return, but the young man had to leave immediately to return to Prussia and could not wait. He entered the Church of Mary Help of Christians both before and after his call to pray and his manner of speaking and his behavior made Father Celestine Durando believe that he was a Catholic.

Feast day followed upon feast day. The short span of time between Don Bosco's name day and that of St. Aloysius, which had been celebrated in advance on Sunday, June 22nd, did not prejudice either occasion. There were the traditional illuminations and the no-less traditional fireworks and the customary procession. Bishop Chiesa, the Bishop of Pinerolo and a great friend of Don Bosco, pontificated. After the name day celebration at the Oratory, Don Bosco went to celebrate the Sacred Feast again on Thursday the 26th with his children of the School of Lanzo.

The two meetings of past pupils took place in July. The past pupils gathered together on the 13th and the priest past pupils on the 17th. The spokesman for the layman was once again Father Fabre, who moved them all with his recollections and encouraged them with his predictions.

"I recall the former years when Don Bosco was in the flower of his youth," he said. "When we boys used to press around him and he shared all our joys, our sorrows, and was our comfort, our love, our father. I recall what he told us about St. Francis of Assisi and the early beginnings of the Franciscan Order which in so short a time grew so big that it spread all over the face of the earth. At that time we did not understand, but now we can appreciate how his constant thought was to found and develop the Salesian Society. Again, I say I recall the bygone days and now I think of the present. I look at Don Bosco and my heart quickens with ineffable tenderness. How changed he is from the one we knew as children! His body is bent, his hair is white, and his steps are unsteady and faltering. May the Lord keep far away the day when he shall receive the reward for all the labors endured on our behalf. May he remain long amidst his children, until he celebrates his golden jubilee Mass. Yet the years pass inexorably by.

"Nevertheless we hope that we will be summoned to eternity before you, dear Father, so that we may then come to meet you along the road you have indicated to us. But should we survive you, it will comfort us to know that the better part of you lives on amongst us – your spirit! Elias shall leave his cloak to Eliseus. Our beloved mother, the Salesian Congregation, will always do it for us. We often hear people of little heart ask in the outside world when Don Bosco will die what will become of the Oratory? Still others say when Don Bosco will be no more, all his

works will die with him. But such people do not know that your works have received an indestructible seal from the hand of Divine Providence. They do not know that they are destined to endure through the centuries. Don't they see that, already now, he can be acclaimed as the hero of two worlds?[16] We therefore thank you, oh Don Bosco, not only because you supported us and educated us, but also because you founded the Salesian Congregation. When you will live in Heaven, enjoying your triumph for all your innumerable good works, we and your children will come here to the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales and we shall always find you again because your spirit will always be here, and we shall be able to repeat always as we cross this threshold, 'We are in our own home because it is still the home of our father.'"

These recollections provided material also for Gastini, the bookbinder who had acted as minstrel in these family gatherings ever since he had been a child. He composed a poem consisting of an introduction and six parts that he read out from a big scroll of parchment, half a kilometer long. In it he sang of the days of the past, the present days and future days. He sang of the living and the dead, the sick and the healthy, those present and those who were absent, Europe and America, Don Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, and ended by expressing thanks to the cardinal archbishop for being fond of Don Bosco and his sons. His listeners laughed, wept and applauded.[17]

Then there was a collection picked up for a solemn requiem Mass for the souls of the deceased pupils, after which Don Bosco spoke to them as follows:

"I would like to say a number of things but time is short, and many of you want to go home to your families or your business. Therefore, I will speak briefly. First of all, I will say that I am very happy to see you all gathered here, especially because during the past year, in a moment of great physical distress and exhaustion, I believed that I would never meet

16 This title was frequently given to Garibaldi in those days because he had also fought in America on behalf of Uruguay.

17 Once, when he wanted to express his satisfaction to Gastini, Don Bosco said: "You, Gastini, will be the minstrel of the Salesians until you are seventy." In his happiness, Gastini used to repeat in all his poems after that: "I will be the Salesian minstrel until I am seventy. Daddy John told me." When he was nearing that age, he fell sick. Father Michael Rua went to see him. Since he was not seriously ill, he said he hoped to see him back at the Oratory soon, to cheer up everyone with his verses and song. To which Gastini said: "Ah, no, Father Michael Rua. I will not come again to the Oratory. On [such-and-such a day] I will enter my seventieth year. Don Bosco told me that I would be your minstrel until I was seventy. It is time for me to prepare myself seriously." In fact he died a holy death a few days after entering his seventieth year. (*Summarium Sup. Virt.*, XVII, #7).

here together with you again. Blessed be God who permitted me once again to find myself in the company of my beloved children.

"Some of you mentioned the Golden Anniversary of my Mass which I should celebrate in 1891, and I certainly do not refuse to attend that very solemn occasion, but we have to deal with this matter. We have to bring up this matter with the one who is the Master of Masters, the Lord of Life and Death. Nevertheless, as of now I invite you all to that celebration, especially since that year will be the first fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the Oratory. If God permits us to live, we will all sing a most solemn *Te Deum*.

"Yet there is one thing for which we should give thanks to the Lord as of now, for it represents an extreme comfort to me wherever I go and that is that I always hear good things said of you all: everywhere people speak of my former sons, everyone speaks of these meetings of ours because it is the best way to recall to mind the advice and council I gave you when you were boys. Yes, I repeat, this is a very great comfort to me and it constitutes the honor and glory of my declining years.

"I see that many of you are already bald, white-haired, your foreheads lined with wrinkles. You are no longer the boys that I loved so dearly. Yet I love you even more than I did then because your presence reassured me that the principles of our holy religion that I taught you and which have guided you in life are firmly rooted in your hearts. I also love you more now because you show me that your hearts are still all for Don Bosco.

"You say, 'Look, Don Bosco, we are here to assure you that we are still walking along the path of salvation, that we still belong to you, and that your thoughts are still our own.' I can assure you that I, too, am all your own in everything I do and say, in all my actions.

"You applauded our beloved archbishop, Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda, and again your applause gave me deep comfort. Cardinal Alimonda represents a great fortune for us. He is truly our protector, a friend and a father to us! Any token of gratitude that we are allowed to express to him will always be inferior to the blessings and love with which he has comforted us.

"Also your hurrahs to the most wise Leo XIII echoed in my heart, which is full of gratitude for all that he has done on our behalf. I could not express in words how good he has been to us. All that we can do is to pray to Almighty God that by the might of His graces and His comfort, He may do what we are unable to do.

"You also spoke of the missions. Don Bosco cannot possibly go to

Patagonia. Yet I do have a great desire to go and meet all those whom I should address by the name of the Son who write affectionate letters to me and whom I have never seen. I would very much like to see once again those who departed from this Oratory with so much sacrifice, to carry Christian civilization among the savage tribes. But if I myself am unable to go, Bishop John Cagliero will go instead. He will take with him to those prairies, the fame of your goodness, and present you as models to his new friends. He will tell those people, 'Come to Turin to see how my former companions are happy in their family life, in society, in their business, because they are good Christians.' When thousands and thousands of these savages have been converted and thousands of their children are living in our schools in an age that is so careless about religion, they, too, will understand how one can love God in this world and at the same time be both honestly cheerful Christians and industrious citizens.

"Now I will close. Continue along the path you have been following for so many years, so that you can say you were happy to have come here. Don Bosco will then be happy, too, and will be able to boast that the children he once loved so dearly have kept as grown-up men and continue now to put into practice the lessons they learned from his lips. You were a little flock. The flock has now grown, grown exceedingly, but it will grow even more. You will be a light shining forth in the world and with your example, you will teach others how to do good, to hate and flee that which is evil. I am confident that you will continue to be the joy of Don Bosco. Dearest children, may Our Lord help us with His grace so that one day we may be all of us together in Paradise."

There is a detail worthy to be noted, namely that three of the boys present at that meeting had been summoned to attend catechism class in 1841 and were seen by Don Bosco dozing off in front of the altar in the church of St. Francis of Assisi. They truly did represent the authentic veterans of the very first cohorts.

How lovely, how agreeable and how edifying it is to catch today the distant echo of those recurrent filial demonstrations. The voice that came straight from the heart also rang out eloquently at the meeting of the past pupils who had become priests. The pastor of St. Augustines, Father Reviglio, spoke a few brief but moving words.

"I am very lucky," he said, "and I am proud to be at the side of Don Bosco. I am convinced that I have earned your envy today because of the place I now occupy. Every one of you would like to be in my place. But it is just that such preference be given to me, since I was one of the first

boys at the Oratory, and I was the very first to be ordained priest. I always remember the times when we were little and all around him and when we ran into his arms. Today, I am ever happier not only because I am at his side, but because of what I have just heard from his lips. I asked him, 'Tell me, Don Bosco, how can we repay you for all that you have done and endured for our sake?' To which he replied, 'Always call me Father and I shall be happy!' 'Yes, we will always call him our father!' shouted the others unanimously."

Father John Baptist Francesia's Piedmontese verses delighted the assembly. Then one of the older among them, Canon Ballesio, who was Circuit Vicar of Moncalieri, spoke.

"Ah! Let the others celebrate learned authors who handed down the stories of great deeds to posterity!" he exclaimed, "I celebrate the man who wrote the sacred commandments of the Lord in the hearts of so many of his sons and friends. Let others celebrate artists who gave life to their canvasses, to the immortal marble. I am celebrating the man who has always reproduced and who still reproduces the most fair and worthy living image of God before the eyes of all his children and all the sharers of his benefits. Let others celebrate the valiant warriors, the brilliant politicians. I celebrate the man who honors his country with his peaceful but endless battles, by giving to his country useful, honest and worthy citizens. Yes, I am celebrating you, oh Don Bosco, angel of our days, you to whom many of my friends and I owe our noble, ecclesiastical career. We sing of you, whose ever-blessed memory is engraved in our minds, tenderly yet irrevocably engraved in our hearts. We celebrate you, whose tender name is like the name of God, bringing light to our doubts, comfort to our perils, restraint to our anger, fortitude when confronted with passions, encouragement to do good. Oh, how many times in stormy and profane moments does not your image appear before us like a conciliatory rainbow of chaste, noble and compassionate thoughts? How many times has not the recollection of this great Father stayed the steps of his sons on the brink of the abyss of sin and dishonor? How many times has the exasperated, deeply troubled soul not felt new strength as he thought of you? How many times have we not felt our heart and mind open up to more serene thoughts, to holy joys of Christian hope! It was you. It is you or the new Philip who has supported and who still supports your children. Ah, may you be blessed and may you be kept among us for a long time, may you be always obeyed and imitated by all your sons! May we grow into many and many thou-

sands and be able to see you once again on the longed for fiftieth anniversary of your priestly ordination. May your sons in the old and the new world alike rejoice again in the presence of your loving countenance, kiss your sacred, charitable hand, and tell you that they love you and because of you, love also the good God from whom you have received your fair countenance."

Don Bosco's calm, fatherly words followed the emphatic, but sincere and effective words of the orator, and the lively audience listened to him until the very last word with religious silence.

"I am very happy that you came here to spend this day with me, and I thank you all for the tokens of affection you have given me. Tell those who were unable to join us at this meeting that I thank them, too, and invite them again to be with us another time. I again repeat to those who belong to the clergy as well as those who live in the world that I cherish them all in my heart, and consider them as my dear children, whom I thank for everything they have done or will do for me in the future.

"I will tell you especially that as you can all see, the Oratory has been blessed by Our Lord. People are calling for us from everywhere, and we would have to increase the membership a hundredfold if we were to satisfy all the demands made on us. The boys who left our houses are preferred whenever they compete for a job or office. Even some of the artisans who when they were here with us did not seem so well endowed, are giving excellent account of themselves wherever they are now. There were boys who were stubborn, lazy, hot-tempered, yet they radically changed their ways when they remembered that they were sons of the Oratory. I know of one who was sent away from the Oratory and who undertook an extremely long journey on foot in order to come back home to Italy.

"'Why do you not think about providing for yourself so that you may live a more comfortable life?' some people asked him. 'I have no money,' he answered. 'Try and earn some. Means are available!'

"He then related, 'On many occasions I had opportunities to keep what belonged to others, but I always said to myself, 'Never! I cannot dishonor the Oratory!' So he walked two hundred kilometers on foot. This is only one incident, but many others of similar nature give us great comfort. Pride may have played its part, but this does not diminish the welcome outcome.

"Now I will address you who are pastors, assistant pastors, ecclesiastics, clerics, employees, master craftsmen.[18] Blessed be Our Lord for

[18] Among the ecclesiastics were also some laymen who had not been able to attend the gathering of their lay colleagues.

having permitted us to come together for this little celebration and for having kept us alive so that we could work steadily to ensure the eternal salvation of our soul. This should be the goal of every Salesian and his constant aspiration. By the word *Salesian* I intend to cover all those who were educated in the principles of this great saint. Therefore all of you are Salesians.

"I shall be waiting for you at next year's similar reunion and I do hope you will all be here and that I, too, will be here. This is both my wish and my intention. But we'll have to see whether the Lord of All Life sees things the same way as I do. I say this because next year I will have many things to tell you that will take place during this current year, and which I am sure will make you happy.

"First of all there is the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. This immense undertaking exhausted me with the weight of constant preoccupation which bent me as if I were carrying an enormous load. We had to find twenty-five thousand lire every month. But now the building of the church has progressed considerably and work is progressing at a good pace on the hospice, and I hope to finish everything next year. Since we are speaking of the church of the Sacred Heart, you will be aware that I have organized a lottery to meet increasing costs therein entailed. I am also relying on your charity, so I will send you all a little packet of tickets to be distributed among the population. If your wallet will permit it, keep them for yourselves. If you cannot, then send them back, for I will be grateful just the same. What I do ask of you is that you help me in whatever way you can to complete a mission that was entrusted to me by the Supreme Pontiff, Leo XIII.

"Secondly, I must tell you that the cholera epidemic is raging in areas all around us, and we may perhaps have to fear that it may reach our own provinces. I therefore want to suggest an easy remedy against this epidemic. This consists in a medal, on one side of which is the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, on the other, the image of the Holy Virgin, Mary Help of Christians. Wear this medal around your necks, in your wallet, just so you have it on you. At the same time repeat every day the following prayer: *Maria Auxiliuim Christianorum, ora pro nobis*. If you do this, you may be quite sure that Our Lady will manifest quite tangibly her mighty protection. I would like you to pay attention to see if any one of you wearing this medal is stricken by the plague. You may go courageously amid the sick, to assist them in their homes, in the hospitals and

improvised field hospitals, without fear.

"It is also necessary that you receive Holy Communion often. But since I am talking to priests who say Holy Mass every day, this exhortation is superfluous. I will rather exhort you to tell others to do it because herein lies the root of all devotion. When the soul is cleansed, everyone can be absolutely sure that nothing bad will happen to him.

"Do not be the only one to practice this habit of wearing the medal, pronouncing the prayer, receiving the Sacraments, but advertise it everywhere, among your relatives, friends and acquaintances, so that it may be used as an antidote against cholera. Our Lord wishes to shake-up consciences with this alarm device. Therefore preach such devotion from the pulpit, too. It may appear strange to some, bold and perhaps absurd, but remember that laughter dies away in the presence of death. I can tell you how a few days ago, a rich man who boasted that the he had no prejudice came to see me in my room. He had heard that I told people about the influence of the medal of Our Lady Help of Christians. He therefore asked me, 'Is it true that you advertise superstitions?'

"'Of what superstitions are you talking?' I asked."

"'The one about the fact that if people wear the medal of Mary Help of Christians around their neck, they will be saved from the cholera epidemic.'"

"'What do you care about what I say?'"

"'I do care. Because my family, and in particular my eldest son are determined to have the medal at any price.'"

"'Do you believe also in the power of this medal?'"

"'I? Not in the least!'"

"'You are free not to believe it. No one is forcing you. If you do not believe it, you may go without the medal, no one wishes to force one on you. But should you believe, it is easy to obtain one.'"

"'What about the superstition? How can I believe that a scrap of metal can have such power?'"

"'Leave that aside! You should however understand that anything which is approved by the Church is not a superstition.'"

"We talked for some time about the news from France, and he became pensive. As he took his leave he said rather hesitantly, 'Don Bosco, would you do me a favor...'"

"'Ten favors, if necessary. What is it?'"

"'Do you still have some of those medals?'"

"'But you do not believe in them!'"

"'When it is a question of saving one's life...you will understand, after all I just said. Give me the medal. I believe it and I want it, and I also want one for my wife and one for each of my children.'"

"Do you hear that? Our Lord, who wants us all to be happy, wants us to appreciate the value even of temporal life, in the face of this plague. So you, my beloved sons, speak often of death as a theme for your sermons. People are committing suicide because they do not want to face sorrow and suffering, people risk their lives in a duel, others squander it in vice, others risk it in daring, and capricious whims, others stake it facing danger just to take vengeance or give full vent to their passions. Therefore, preach and remind everybody that we are masters over our own lives. God alone is Master thereof. Anyone who attempts to take his own life insults God, for the creature would commit an act of revolt against his Maker.

"You who are intelligent will find themes and arguments in abundance to induce your listeners to love life and to respect it with the solemn thought that a life well lived here on earth is our guarantee of an eternal life."

These reminisces of former days at the Oratory and the reports on certain incidents which occurred in those years might induce the reader to believe that things had changed radically and that there was no longer the former spirit of piety and innocence among the boys. Nothing could be more wrong. As we write this, Miss Gerardine Penrose Fitzgerald of Ensbury Park, Bouremouth, England, now 84, lives with an undying memory of her encounter with Don Bosco some fifty years ago.

She had gone to Rome on a pilgrimage in 1884, traveling in the company of Lord Denbigh and his wife. Together with Mr. George Lane Fox, this noble couple called on Don Bosco who showed them over the whole house. As they walked through the playgrounds, they were charmed to see how the boys came up to Don Bosco to kiss his hand while he rested his hand on their heads, patting them gently. Mr. Lane Fox had heard mention of a boy at the Oratory who was something in the way of a saint, so he asked if the visitors might see him. Don Bosco instantly sent for him. "I had never seen so beautiful, so heavenly a countenance," Miss Fitzgerald says.

When the boy left, Don Bosco said. "Oh! God is good! He comforts me now and then with lovely souls as that one."

Mr. Lane Fox then asked him, "Are there many boys of this kind?"

The saint smiled broadly and with a humorous little gesture of the hand said, "Oh, yes! Perhaps more than you could imagine."

As the visitors took their leave, they knelt down to receive his blessing, and Miss Fitzgerald recalls how the blessing seemed to convey an unusual and wonderful feeling of peace within them.[19]

The good wishes for Don Bosco's name day that had come from the most distant of his sons were the crowning features of the festivities. On May 26th, Father Joseph Fagnano had written to him from Patagones:

> I ardently desire to see you one more time, and kiss your hand, after nine years of exile; a voluntary and yet most painful exile for being so far away from you. Please accept the good wishes of five hundred savages who were baptized this year, of one hundred fifty boys and girls now attending our schools, of eight Salesians and seven nuns of Mary Help of Christians here in the house of Patagones.

We have already seen several times and shall continue to see later on that when he spoke of his jubilee, Don Bosco never said he would live to see it. Nevertheless, he did at times like to joke about it, establishing who was going to serve his Mass, who was going to provide the wine, the meat, the candles, and who was going to do this and that. He even said that four hundred singers would have come over from Patagonia. So that in many people's minds, the conviction took hold that this jubilee would indeed be celebrated. But it was love that gave wings to the imagination. Father John Baptist Lemoyne testified that never, on any occasion, did the saint make known either to him or to anybody else that he was gratified at least by the wishes for what we have just referred, his priestly jubilee.

[19] The Universe (London, May 18, 1934) in an article entitled "A Memory of 50 Years ago in Turin."

Chapter 6

LIFE AT THE ORATORY

Don Bosco had a dream while in Rome, which he dictated to Father John Baptist Lemoyne. One evening after prayers, Father Michael Rua read the transcript to the boys and found it very effective. Some of the boys listened with eager curiosity, others with fear and shudders.

Once he had taken care of the more pressing business, upon his return, the saint began to interview the boys every day for a few hours in the late afternoon. Since he had convinced the boys that he was able to see the state of their consciences, the good boys were anxious to know what he had seen and were the first ones to show up. One such boy, Father Paul Ubaldi, testifies that Don Bosco had told him what he knew about his conscience with an extraordinary accuracy. But other boys hesitated about going to see Don Bosco, and they were the ones who were most in need of admonition and exhortation.

A few of the latter boys had not spoken with Don Bosco for a year or two, but others had lived at the Oratory for five years without ever approaching him. Most of them were kept away by secrets or guilt. When Don Bosco would ask these boys why they had never come to see him, they would give excuses, like Don Bosco was always inaccessible or away or they had to study. Yet whenever he was at home, Don Bosco heard confessions in the sacristy nearly every morning where anyone who might have wished could easily have gone to talk with him.

As a rule, whenever anyone offered such an excuse, he would answer, "You tried to avoid me. Do you want me to tell you why?" The boy thus questioned would look frightened, and Don Bosco would go on, "There is only one reason: you were afraid of Don Bosco. You did not dare to confide certain things you have been doing ever since you were at your house...and you have continued to do them here."

If the boys then stuttered some excuse, Don Bosco would quietly and paternally list one by one all the circumstances and things that the poor boy had kept secret. As a rule, when they found themselves thus exposed, the boys would fall on their knees and sob, "Ah! Don Bosco, that is enough!"

Don Bosco would answer, "If you do not like this kind of talk, we can change it, but don't you see that I was right to tell you that keeping away from me was your ruin?"

Some boys said that Don Bosco had told them about a monster in the form of an elephant that he had seen laying waste to everyone in the playground, either trampling them under his feet or tossing them into the air with his trunk.

During that same period of time, the saint told Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "How good Our Lord is to us! He warns us for our own good and for the good of our boys in so many extraordinary ways! Few people in this world have enjoyed all the means that we have."

The beneficial effects of such timely shocks to the boys were not long in becoming evident. There were more Communions and daily visits to the Blessed Sacrament; the docility increased; the life at the Oratory was showing more vim. The series of feast days topped it all. But lasting measures had to be taken, and the Superior Chapter gave thought to this. During several of their meetings, the conditions existing at the Oratory were carefully discussed. It is instructive to learn at least in part what was discussed at those meetings under the guidance of Don Bosco.

The meeting of June 5th seems important for this topic. Father Joseph Scapini, director of Lanzo, and Father Joseph Bertello, director of Borgo San Martino, also attended the meeting. After discussing a proposal advanced by Father Julius Barberis, Don Bosco suddenly took the floor *ex abrupto* [suddenly]. People will enjoy reading this portion of the minutes in its entirety:

> Don Bosco: *We have to see what needs to be done and what needs to be avoided to ensure a good moral conduct among the boys, and how vocations may be fostered. Various rules were already established for this by the General Chapter and were printed. It is distressing to see how so many boys, who began so well, change completely by the time they reach the fourth and fifth high school grade. We have already observed how many pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades decided to go on to university and seek employment instead of entering the ecclesiastical state. Some of them did enter the ecclesiastic life, but went to the seminary to please their parents or because the pastor persuaded them or the bishop advised them to do it.*
>
> *Out of one hundred boys in the fourth and fifth high schools*

grades, perhaps only two pay regular tuition. The others are either kept here entirely free of charge, or at least are provided with the books and their clothes.

This means that we are giving charity funds received from others to the boys who want to become lawyers, professors, doctors or journalists; that this may be the outcome for boys educated in other schools of ours, I have nothing to object against. But this cannot be tolerated in the Turin house where the boys are supported by public charity. I, therefore, propose that we investigate where our conscience duty lies, and what needs to be done.

In past years, there were so many boys who came to talk to me about their vocation. But things are different this year when the aspirants were assembled for special talks, something that has never been done before. Only a few, and with reluctance, came to confer with me and they told me quite frankly that they wanted to go either to a seminary or remain living in the world. When I asked them why they attended the talks for aspirants, a few answered, "To hear what was being said there." Others said more sincerely, "To be seen in a better light by the Superiors."

They may be good boys, but they already have their plans. In itself it is not wrong that we help such youths, but we are, after all, giving of our own bread to a great many who will then turn their backs on us, and we do it at the recommendation of those who sometimes even criticize us after they have taken the boys away from us because we want, so they say, to keep all vocations to ourselves. I had evidence of this only today.

But enough of this: it is my opinion that we should take measures as far as the organization of our study program. We should reduce it to one used by the French apostolic schools. When this is done, we shall see how the boys can be taught and guarded. True enough, this means we will not have such a big number of them anymore - only one hundred, fifty, forty, no matter - but there would be no moral gangrene. I do not believe that the decisions taken in our General Chapter are good enough to reach our goal.

Father Joseph Lazzero suggested that they commence by abolishing the fifth high school grade.

Don Bosco: *I plan to appoint a task force committee to examine the proposal of the apostolic schools. I cannot go into it because it is too complicated. It is necessary that the task force*

committee realize how essential this is and explore all the ways in which it may be accomplished. I think also that it would be helpful if the boys were no longer free to make their confession to whomever they wish. Certain confessors should be appointed, but they should be permanent. The artisans may retain this freedom of choice and let it go, but the academic students do need special guidance. If they do not want to make their confession to the five or six confessors slated for them, they may wait until retreat time.

Father Michael Rua remarked that he had noticed that the success or failure of the fifth high school grade always depended on its professor. Ever since Father Herman Borio had taught at Lanzo, the Congregation had always had novices coming from that school.

Don Bosco: *It has now been for some time that the number of novices coming from the Oratory has gone down, partly because pastors have been sending us* roclo *[rejects] - and highly recommended as far as their good behavior - and partly because once we have admitted them, we have not been forceful enough to send them back home again. We have, therefore, to look into the rules for admitting pupils and how to purge the house of some elements. Meanwhile, we have to consider: (1) will it be advisable that we organize our schools along the lines of the apostolic schools; and (2) which ones are these apostolic schools. From the outcome of these investigations, we shall know whether or not we are to retain the fifth high school grade.*

Father Scapini suggested that we eliminate Greek and mathematics from our school curriculum, or teach only the rudiments of these two subjects, as is the custom in seminaries. Then the boys that have reached the third high school grade and have no intention of going into the ecclesiastical state should make other arrangements for themselves. Boys who are to remain with us can study for their high school diploma, taking Greek and mathematics at San Benigno.

Father John Bonetti approved what had been said, but maintained that this should be the final outcome and not the beginning of a reform. This would be like taking care of the leaves of a tree when its roots are failing.

Don Bosco: *Now we have to attend to the matter of accepting students and turning others away. Meanwhile, the matter we*

should well meditate upon is the apostolic schools and the way they are followed in the seminaries.

Father Joseph Bertello, when questioned by Don Bosco, answered that he did not think an apostolic school could be set up within the Oratory. He felt that doing so would set pastors, bishops, parents and the government itself against us. He was, therefore, not in favor of abolishing the fifth high school grade. He was firmly convinced that the cure for these evils lay in: (1) discipline; (2) severity in expelling bad boys; and (3) vigilant supervision of stairways, terraces and playgrounds not in use for recreational purposes.

Father John Cagliero said that enrollments should be under the supervision of only one person; otherwise it would come about that while the one enrolled the "lambs," another would enroll the "wolves" - older persons accepted out of charity and assigned to various tasks in the house.

Don Bosco explained his project of a catechism course on Sundays where the boys could be instructed according to our principles.

Father John Bonetti again stressed the necessity of taking care of the roots, and said that Father Joseph Lazzero, director of the Oratory, ought to know this better than any other member of the Chapter. He invited him to take the floor.

Father Joseph Lazzero: *First of all, we should apply the house rules as it is done in other schools. This means unity of command because otherwise the office of director is reduced to the humble office of servant. As a matter of fact, boys that have been expelled have procured recommendations of good conduct from some members of the Chapter before they leave the house, thus playing on their goodness of heart. When the other boys discover this, discipline, and/or the authority of the director are damaged. The director's hands are bound, etc.*

Don Bosco said that a committee is to be appointed to look into the measures that need to be taken to improve morality at the Oratory. Father Michael Rua, Father John Bonetti, Father Lazzero, Father Celestine Durando, and Father John Cagliero were appointed to this committee, which will meet the next Monday afternoon to share their views after reflecting on the matter. Father John Bonetti was instructed to ask

the individual Chapter members about their opinions, as well as to ask the individual teachers' opinions and report to the committee.

Father Joseph Bertello suggested: (1) segregating the boarders of the house and subdividing them into three categories - academic students, artisans, and persons not belonging to the Congregation; and (2) vigilant supervision of stairways, corridors, etc.

Father John Lazzero pointed out that in the past when the boys went out for a walk, the groups consisted of no more than 25 boys. Now, the whole class goes out in a group instead. If there is no strict supervision, outings can be a great danger. He also deplored vacations, etc.

Don Bosco again insisted on the urgent necessity of safeguarding morality. In order to do this, neither personnel, nor labor, nor effort, nor expenses should be spared.

Father John Lazzero again deplored the lack of unity in government, saying that he is not given cooperation.

Don Bosco ended by expecting the meeting to find practical solutions to the following issues: (1) rules about the acceptance of students; (2) house cleaning; (3) division, distribution and regularizing of assignments. This applied also to the youngsters, playgrounds, etc.

This was not the first time nor (as we shall see also in the following year) was it the last time that Don Bosco spoke in such a way as to reduce the Oratory to a nursery for ecclesiastic vocations, preferably for the Salesian Congregation. On January 27th, he presented a project of his own to this same end to Father John Baptist Lemoyne.

"I would like to transfer the fourth and fifth high school grades to San Benigno, and only for those who intend to remain in the Congregation," he said, "but first he would have their parents sign a statement, guaranteeing their sons absolute freedom of choice. This would leave only the first, second and third high school grades at the Oratory. If any boy does not want to remain with us upon completing his third year course, let his parents or his pastors take care of it. This will eliminate a number of mouths which otherwise would have to be fed needlessly, and we would not be keeping boys who are enticed away by the blandishments of the pastors just when they could be of use to us."

He clarified his thought for the Chapter members in the meeting of July 18th:

They should read and put into practice what has been deliberated by the Chapter. We are always deceived as to the conduct of the boys, because they always receive good monthly marks from the *decurions*. When we know that a boy is wicked, we must not deceive ourselves with hopes that he will reform. During the coming vacations, I will try to staff the Oratory with the necessary personnel, especially with a catechist.

I foresee that whether we want it or not, our schools will have to follow the directives of the so-called apostolic schools. Insofar as possible, we must take in only those boys who wish to become Salesians or go to the missions. Any boy who is enrolled under these conditions and later does not want to become a Salesian will pay full tuition, if he wishes to stay on. As soon as the boys return to school after their vacation, there should be a retreat for them immediately. Upon the termination of the vacation period, no boy will be readmitted if he does not submit a report of good conduct signed by his pastor. Some of them come back without ever having reported to their pastor during the two or three months they have been home. And even though some do not have such a testimonial, we should question the pastor confidentially, promising to keep his information secret.

We must also investigate whether or not we should reform the Chapters in every individual house, and check to see, in particular, if the catechists are equal to their office. The prefect of studies must be informed of what is being done in individual classes and should visit them often. Let everyone perform the duty particular to his office in the presence of God.

Another thing that needs to be studied is this: whenever there is a boy who promises to become a good Salesian, we must not give any heed to expenses, whether he can pay the fees or not. Let the house provide. I am sure that our Lord will come to our assistance with extraordinary and unexpected means when we make every effort to foster vocations. So we must not take expenses into consideration. Let this be a rule also for our other schools. If a boy is promising and his parents are unable to pay and complain about their financial difficulties to the Superiors, then we are to condone payment of a month's fees, a quarter's fees, if the conduct of the

boy is good. But in such circumstances, there must always be the likelihood of a vocation. Today vocations are steadily declining.

With the selfsame zeal must we prevent boys who are unworthy or who have not been called to the ecclesiastical life. We must be extremely careful in this. We must never admit to the trial period those who have not shown positive results.

Orders were given that boys were no longer to be allowed to leave the house, in order to prevent any possible and dangerous subterfuge. For some time, several boys had been teaching catechism in the parish of St. Donato and the Oratory of St. John. Others used to serve at religious services in the convent of the Sisters of St. Peter and of the Good Shepherd. Some boys took advantage of the opportunity to run home and see their parents, saying they had been given permission; others went to cafes. In any case, such outings meant loss of time for their studies, their religious practices of piety and the sermons delivered especially for them.

Don Bosco said, "Inform these institutes that within a month we shall not be able to send the boys for altar services any longer, so that they should make different arrangements. If the seminary does not help out, why should we? Also, let the church of St. Donato know that they must make arrangements for the catechism classes for Catholic workers, because we can no longer send our own little catechists, since this offers them too much of a distraction."

Now and then the boys who became sick at the Oratory were sent to local hospitals in the city, but Father Michael Rua suggested abolishing this habit in view of moral deterioration that ensued, because of contact with doctors, other patients and nurses.

We do not have any information at all about what was the outcome of the findings of the committee that Don Bosco had appointed to examine ways to strengthen and improve the discipline of the Oratory.

Someone raised a question about discipline at the end of a meeting of June 30th. The director, Father Joseph Lazzero, announced that the following Sunday there was to be some festivities in honor of the Sacred Heart, in line with Don Bosco's intention of obtaining the particular graces for the house. Father John Bonetti began to talk about the assistance to the boys and about the dormitories being open during the day. Don Bosco cut him short with a series of questions.

"Who is actually responsible for discipline? To whom can the teachers and assistants turn in order to gain support? What do the rules say

about what is contentious? When a teacher is absent, who has to arrange for another to take his place? I have said we should not look at expenses, provided that we have everything necessary for the maintenance of order. The director is not to see to it himself, but to make sure that others do."

He then suggested another meeting on July 4th where the same subject would be resumed. However, the saint was distressed over the frequent mishaps that caused discontent among the boys, and was unable to wait. He wrote down seven items that he considered essential if the school year was to come to a peaceful end. These "temporary measures" consisted of the following items: (1) a novena to the holy Virgin Mary according to Don Bosco's intention; (2) kind attitude toward the boys, making them realize that everything was for their own good and the for success of their studies; (3) an occasional talk in the evenings given to them by one of the members of the Superior Chapter; (4) assistance (the Chapter members should make an effort to be present during the recreation of the boys); (5) the director or someone acting for him should talk to those in charge of the boys and exhort them to make sure that all griping is stopped; (6) encouragement to receive the Sacraments, and to state quite frankly in public that some boys had not gone to confession either during retreat or for the feast of Mary Help of Christians; (7) Don Bosco to talk to the boys now and then.

On July 4th, Don Bosco personally brought up again the question of reform at the Oratory, drawing his theme from the rules:

> Don Bosco: *I have looked over the rules that were in force in former times, and I am convinced that they should be observed at the present, since they provide for and anticipate all possible needs. But the director must be in command; he should know his regulations well and also the regulations concerning the others, and all that they have to do, so that all should stem from one sole principle. There seems to be a lack of responsibility among the directors. One says, "It is not my responsibility." Someone else refuses it, but another does not act on it. Even the assistants want to wield authority, and woe to anyone who interferes with it. So let there be, as before, this principle of authority: that one person alone is responsible. This one person responsible shall not perform any work himself; he may stick his thumbs in his belt, but he is to go around and always ask questions, like "did you do that?" and "did you not do it?" He can put someone in charge of read-*

ing and answering the mail. Thus, he will not have more than three or four letters in which he has to check the marginal notes before passing them on to his secretary to answer.

Questioned by Don Bosco, Father Joseph Lazzero said that this was not all, although it did represent a lot of work.

Father John Bonetti asked Father Joseph Lazzero to specify what his difficulties were since, practically speaking, he was the director.

Father Joseph Lazzero replied that there was no unity because subordinates appealed to different members of the Superior Chapter, seeking direction and abiding by whatever they advised, which at times was in contradiction to what the director would have told them.

Don Bosco: *If the director were to put his nose into it, he would soon find out what needed to be done and very soon would become the master of all and of everything. Let there be but one director of the house to stipulate contracts. One person alone should accept those who must belong to the house. One person alone must be in charge of expelling students. One person alone to stipulate the work that needs to be done at the Oratory, and this one person is the director. He alone may invite guests to dine, or should at least be informed in advance before invitations are sent out, so that he will not find himself at table with unknown or unexpected guests. The only authority the Superior Chapter has at the Oratory is exactly the same authority it exercises toward any other particular house. The Oratory director must have that same freedom of action that all the other directors exercise in their houses. It is for him to decide if any work is to be undertaken, and the Superior Chapter only has to approve or reject his plan, while always taking the director's opinion into due consideration. The Oratory Chapter is not the master; the local director is the person in charge. I repeat that during the last few days I read over the rules of the houses very carefully and did not come across anything that needs to be changed. So let there be unity in direction: the staff in this house is at the service of the director and no one else. When unknown visitors come, they are to be stopped at the door, and the director is to be informed; they are not to be ushered straight away into the dining room, as the doorkeeper does now, without even knowing who they are. It is these visitors*

who create a lot of confusion in the house.

Here, Don Bosco asked what measures might be taken in the coming year to ensure the sound moral conduct of the fourth and fifth high school grades: *I have decided to warn the boys that they will not be promoted to the upper classes next year unless they plan to enter the ecclesiastical state, and that the Oratory cannot guarantee pupils their admittance to examinations for the high school diploma.*

Father Celestine Durando maintained that such a measure would drive away any brilliant pupils, while the mediocre intellects would remain. It was only studies and assistance toward their success in it that induced the boys to be good.

Don Bosco: *I do not wish to be contradicted, but instead I want to be backed up as far as this plan, which I think is the best way to reach my objective.*

Father Celestine Durando withdrew his objection.

Don Bosco then proposed another meeting on Monday, concluding: *Everyone is to help the director in charge. Father Michael Rua will give a talk to the whole house staff in this connection, but first he must wait until we are ourselves in agreement. We need to have a head here. The short goodnight talk is the master key of the house. A great deal, when not everything hinges on it.*

Don Bosco did not leave the issue halfway; he never wearied of stressing his ideas again and again to those who could help him carry them out. That was why the internal organization of the Oratory during the meeting on July 7th took most of the time. First, he summed up his instructions, and then, he listened to what the others had to say:

Don Bosco: *(1) Unity of government - the director must be well aware of the tasks assigned to each of his subordinates; (2) he shall entrust to someone else the sorting of the mail - he can read the marginal notes and have the confidential marginal notes written by someone enjoying his confidence, but he will never dictate in the presence of others; (3) he will enroll or expel the domestic staff or pupils on whatever grounds he will think fit, but he will not divulge any difficulties concerning Salesians. Rather, he should refer to that member of the Superior Chapter who is assigned to deal with such matters, and if it should be necessary,*

he may ask the opinion of the Rector Major; (4) insofar as possible, the director will limit his action to checking to see whether or not his subordinates are doing their jobs, but he should not take up any specific job - let him provide preachers, confessors, professors and assistants in sufficient number and find out if everyone is aware of his own regulations, and if he put them into practice, he should make his subordinates also put them into practice.

As to admission: (1) only boys wishing to enter the ecclesiastical state and preferably those boys who show some sign that they wish to become Salesians will be admitted as students; (2) anyone who said, hinted at or did anything contrary to morality should be expelled with the utmost severity. One should not be afraid to use excessive rigor in such instances; (3) let any boy who does not go frequently to holy Communion and who is neglectful in his devotions earn a trade, but never be admitted to studies; (4) the Director should talk affably with the students outside the confessional; he should often call them individually to inquire after their needs, their health, their studies, their problems, their vocation, etc., etc.

Father John Cagliero and Father Joseph Lazzero remarked that the director and the members of the Oratory Chapter were expected to do too many things in that particular house.

Don Bosco: *Everyone is to do only what he is assigned to do. Let the catechist teach catechism, teach boys how to serve Mass, and make sure that the rules are obeyed. The catechist is the key to the Oratory and its smooth running. The director should have others preach, and he should entrust others, if necessary, with the task of confessor. Everything at the Oratory is per accidens for him. His sole, true task is to always be vigilant and to supervise all and everyone.*

Father Joseph Lazzero pointed out that in this case, the director is no longer able to have direct contact with the boys.

Don Bosco replied that if the director is unable to call in the boys, then he should have the catechist do it.

Father Julius Barberis pointed out the main duty of the director was to control his staff, and that the staff at the Oratory consisted of about seventy Salesians.

Don Bosco: *I again repeat, let everyone do his own job. Likewise, the members of the Superior Chapter are only to attend*

to their respective offices, doing away with all other tasks. For example, the prefect of studies is not in charge of directing the nuns. Father Michael Rua is overloaded with work, with material considerations, payments, and disputes. The catechist must abandon all occupations extraneous to his office, and must instead endeavor to know all the members of the Congregation; then, to lighten his own burden and comply with the rule at the same time, he shall get them to consult with the Provincial in their respective provinces. The members of the Oratory Chapter must work together if they want things to run smoothly.

Father Joseph Lazzero said that the members of the House Chapter have a good spirit, but needed formation.

Don Bosco: *The director should listen to them kindly, encourage them to talk, dispel misunderstandings and their bad humor, even put up with them, their human faults or impulsive ways; he should be tolerant, not harsh, let him be the ring which unites all with his charity. In my present state of physical and mental exhaustion, I cannot continue any longer. I need to have Father Michael Rua at my side, to take my place in many things and help me in others that I am hardly able to carry out by myself. Therefore, Father Michael Rua should not have any more direct office here in the house. Let others take over his duties concerning the Salesian Society, such duties being strictly speaking, those of an administrator. Someone, a procurator, should be appointed to take charge of legacies, credits, debits, litigations, contracts, testaments. Let a priest be in charge, or a layman or a lawyer or a procurator of dealing with these matters. Let him look after claims and administrative matters. If Father John Savio were to take on these duties, he would be ideally suited for handling them.*

There are two more things I wish to say about the Oratory. When the spiritual director or catechist of the Congregation admits someone wishing to enter it and this person has to remain at the Oratory, the director of the house should be notified. As far as the young being accepted, they should show an inclination to enter the ecclesiastical state.

Be very careful that the poison of immorality does not find its way among the boys. Should this poison unfortunately come in, unobserved, it will remain invisible and in the end would cause general irreparable damage. If you do not wish to warn the boys

that next year they will be readmitted to the Oratory only if they aspire to the ecclesiastical state, then think of some other way, of some other pretext, but let always the objections that I have proposed be attained.

Father John Cagliero proposed the following in reference to pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades: as soon as the boys have gone home on vacation, we can write to all those we no longer want to have with us, telling them that they will not be readmitted this coming year unless they renew their application for enrollment, to which we can then answer yes or no, as the case may be. The Chapter approved.

Don Bosco gave orders that a similar letter was to be drafted and discussed, more or less as follows: unless you receive confirmation of enrollment by a certain date, make other arrangements for continuing your studies elsewhere. It was necessary to get rid of those boys who were a danger to others and a curse to themselves. Certain boys could no longer be kept in the house. Whenever they reveal certain indications that they have not been called to the priesthood, and whenever their conduct is suspect, they should be prevented from continuing their studies and sent away. One must be careful not to transfer such students to the artisans. If a student has no vocation and is transferred to the artisans, he would only do harm because such boys are the worse possible types of individuals.

Absorbed by such considerations, the saint had a dream in July. He dreamed that he was standing across an endless, gentle slope that was brilliantly lit by a light that was purer and brighter even than that of the sun itself. The slope was covered with green foliage, brilliant with different kinds of flowers, and shaded by a great many trees whose branches were intertwined like garlands. It looked like a veritable earthly paradise. Yet his gaze was attracted, even more than by the garden, by two beautiful twelve-year-old maidens who were sitting on the border of the little path on which he was standing. Their countenances expressed a heavenly modesty, as did their whole demeanor. The candid simplicity of the dove and a supernatural joy was visible in their eyes, which were gazing upward. The grace of their movements gave them both an air of nobility, which contrasted their youth. A white garment fell down to their feet, and around their waists was a purple sash with a golden border, on which was embroidery and ribbons interwoven with lilies, violets and roses. A similar ornament hung around their necks like a pendant. Their shoes were

also candid and white, edged with a gold threaded ribbon. Their hair was long, falling in wavy curls to their shoulders, and they each wore a chaplet around their brow. They were talking together, chattering, asking questions and uttering exclamations.

As a silent spectator, Don Bosco listened to their lengthy conversation without being noticed. They began to climb the slope, walking over the flowers without crushing them, and singing an angelic hymn to which companies of heavenly spirits that had descended to meet them. Many more came to join them, all of them uplifting their voices in unison in a wonderful, most melodic canticle. At the end of the hymn, they all soared to Heaven, and the entire vision vanished, whereupon Don Bosco awoke.

During the next few days, Don Bosco summarized to Father John Baptist Lemoyne what he had seen, but he only told him what he had heard in general; namely the praise of purity, how to guard it, and the rewards given to it in this world and the next. He then told him to use this as a clue for a topic to be developed. The secretary obeyed, but he never had the chance to read the long composition to Don Bosco. That is why we shall quote it in full at the end of this volume.[1]

The Superior Chapter did not concern itself anymore with anything dealing with the discipline at the Oratory until September; we shall return to the subject in Chapter XVII. Before connecting our narrative to the thread provided by the minutes of the Chapter Meetings, we will here turn our attention to a few details that will give us a less fragmentary picture of the Oratory and its conditions in 1884.

During the course of the year, several youths died, and their deaths reveal how the former spirit of piety had not altogether been extinguished, despite the laxity deplored. Virgilio Paganini of Vezzano Ligure, a mature pupil of the second high school grade, died on January 30th. Don Bosco went to see him the last evening of his life. When the sick boy saw him, he became excited and said, "Don Bosco, I am grateful to you for having taken me into the Oratory. Who knows where I would be now if you had not taken me in? I am grateful for all the good you have done to my soul."

"I am glad that you are at peace," Don Bosco said. "Will you pray for me?"

"Yes, I will pray for you and our Congregation. May the Lord allow it to grow for the salvation of many souls."

These were his last words. Don Bosco left his bedside, and Paganini

[1] Appendix (document 22).

died even before the saint had reached the end of the infirmary.

On February 17th, the fourteen-year-old artisan Onorato Chiapelli of Pistoia died. He kept repeating in his delirium, "Oh! Mary, our mother, help us all...but me in particular...me... me...."

Two days before, his assistant, Father Vincent Reggiori of Sangiano, had also died. The artisans said that perhaps they might not have experienced a greater sorrow had Don Bosco himself died. This comparison came to mind spontaneously, since Don Bosco was very seriously sick at the time.

On June 18th, Carlo Godi of Gozzano, an older pupil in the second high school grade, also died. A few days prior to his death, he remarked to a few friends, "Mary Help of Christians has given me the greatest of all graces. I am glad. During the retreat I was able to make my confession and go to Communion as if it were the very last time. I am glad!"

The artisans were deeply impressed by two potentially tragic events. Late one afternoon, a typesetter began to play with a fellow worker during a momentary absence of the assistant and the head of the shop. As he was trying to hide, he ran over the hoist that operated between the basement and his own workshop. He leapt on it, believing that the machine was on the same level as the floor, but instead it was on the lower level of the printing shop. He plunged about seven meters headfirst into the void, banging his head against the iron roof. People ran when they heard the noise and found him motionless, as if dead. But when he was taken to the infirmary and had regained consciousness, nothing remained of the accident but a bump on his forehead and a little dizziness that soon disappeared.

No less dangerous was the accident involving the tailor. While he was playing on a swing with three companions, the pole supporting the ropes suddenly snapped at its base and bent over him, knocking him to the ground under its weight. He could easily have been killed by such a heavy beam and thick iron rings, but instead he only injured his leg slightly. The artisans regarded both these incidents as outstanding graces attributed to Mary Help of Christians.

Steadfast in his determination to give a satisfactory reorganization to the Oratory, Don Bosco went back again to the Superior Chapter in September when they assembled to appoint new personnel for the various houses. On the 12th, he made two observations on how to safeguard morality and discipline in both the Mother House and the other houses:

"Try to keep all kinds of forbidden books away from our pupils, even though they may have been authorized for use in the schools," he said.

"Still less should such books be put on sale. When Don Bosco wrote the *History of Italy*, he included a short biography of Alfieri and quoted a few passages from forbidden authors. But the famous professor Amedeus Peyron, who had looked over the manuscript, reprimanded me for it, saying, 'Never mention authors who are forbidden because by mentioning them, you arouse in the boys the desire to read them; forget about them.' That is what we must do: we must never introduce, quote or mention forbidden authors. Exception can be made only for those who have to undergo public examinations, but even in these instances, they should use expurgated editions of those works. But even expurgated editions of the works of forbidden authors must never be put into the hands of boys in the lower classes. This arouses fatal curiosity in them to verify and compare amendments with the original.

"We must also be very careful when speaking about them. For example, if we wish to speak about any given period of literary history, we should omit doing it if it is not entirely necessary. Should any director or professor be in possession of any such books, they should keep them under lock and key. I never thought there might be such a craving to read forbidden authors as there is at the present day. It is just the same with the craze for wasting time and corrupting one's mind by reading novels. Preferably, give the boys the lives of our pupils to read, or read them to them; likewise, give them all the issues of *Catholic Readings* and the publications of the *Youth Library*. There are some magnificent things in them. We don't think so highly of our own publications. We are even afraid of listing them in the catalogue of books to be given as prizes in our own schools. Some feel that it is humiliating to give boys of the fourth and fifth high school grades religious books.

"There is another thing I wish to recommend: let all care and efforts be directed to the introduction and practice of the preventive system in our houses. The directors should give talks on this all-important subject because the advantages derived from them will be inestimable for the welfare of souls and the glory of God."

For some time, Don Bosco had been mulling over the idea of having everyone come to know his own authoritative opinion on the subject of reading matter. In 1883, he had already said to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "I will give you some work to do in due course." A year later, he asked, "Do you recall that I said something to you about some work that was to be done? Well, now the time has come."

He drafted the outline for a circular letter to be sent to all houses at

the beginning of the school year. Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote it, Don Bosco edited it, and this long letter was addressed to every school at the beginning of November:

All Saints' Day

Most beloved sons in Jesus Christ:

I am led by a very serious reason to write you this letter at the beginning of the school year. You are aware of how very fond I am of the souls that our blessed Lord Jesus entrusted to me in His infinite goodness. Yet, on the other hand, you must not disregard the responsibility born by all educators of youth, nor overlook the minute account such people have to render in regard to their mission before divine justice. I must shoulder the burden of this responsibility together with you, oh dearly beloved sons, and I want the origin, source and cause of glory and eternal life to be for both myself and for you. Therefore, I am calling your attention to a most important factor, on which the whole salvation of our pupils may depend. I refer to the books that must be removed from the reach of the boys, the books that should be in their use for their private reading, and those that should be read aloud in the community.

Such books lay the foundations of the earliest impressions received by the virgin minds and impressionable hearts of children, which remain with them throughout their whole life. Reading is a great attraction to them, for it arouses their restless curiosity, and very often their final choice of good or evil will hinge precisely on it. The enemies of souls are aware of the influence of this weapon, and experience has taught us how unscrupulously they avail themselves of it to the detriment of innocence. Strange titles, presentable paper, clean type, fine engravings, low prices, racy, popular style, variety of plot, vivid descriptions: everything is exploited with diabolic artistry and craftiness. We, therefore, have to match weapon against weapon, wresting from their clutches the poison put into their young hands by godless and immoral sources, and we have to offer good books in place of bad ones. Woe to all of us if we doze off while the enemy is constantly alert!

Therefore, right from the beginning of the school year, we are

to put our rules into effect; namely, we are to carefully supervise the books that the boys bring back with them to school, even appointing, if necessary, someone to inspect trunks and packages. Besides this, the director of every house will order the boys to make out a conscientious list of all the books in their possession and hand the list over to him. This precaution will not be superfluous because it will assist us in our examination, making it easier to detect any book that has been overlooked. By keeping such lists, we will be able to take action against anyone who perchance has maliciously concealed bad books.

Such vigilance should continue throughout the year. All pupils should be told to hand over any new book they may acquire or that may be brought to them by relatives, friends or day hops during the course of the year. There must also be an inspection of the parcels brought to the young, lest they be wrapped up in very bad newspapers out of ignorance or malice. There must be also a prudent checking of the study hall, dormitories and classrooms.

One can never be too cautious in this matter. Professors, supervisors in the study hall, and assistants must take note of what the boys are reading in church, at recreation, in class and in the study hall. We must also eliminate dictionaries that have not been expurgated; to a lot of boys, they represent the beginning of malice and the snares laid by bad companions. A bad book is like a plague that infects many boys. The director should consider it a lucky day whenever he succeeds in removing any such book from the hands of a pupil.

Unfortunately, boys owning such books are loath to obey and will resort to ruse in order to hide them. The director has to fight against their greed, curiosity, fear of punishment, fear of human respect, and their unbridled passions. Therefore, I believe that we must win over the hearts of the boys and persuade them with gentleness. Speak often on the subject of bad books during the year from the pulpit, in the evening talk, and in the classroom. Point out the harm they do. Persuade the boys that all we want is the salvation of their souls, which are dear to us above all else, after God. Do not be severe, except in cases where one boy might cause the ruin of others. Should anyone hand over a bad book during the advanced course of the year, overlook his disobedience and accept the book as a precious gift. It might be his confessor

who has advised him to hand it over, and it would be unwise to delve into it any further. When other boys hear how benevolent the superiors were, they, too, may be led to squeal on those who might hide such books.

But if we ourselves come across any immoral book forbidden by the church, we are to burn it instantly. It has been seen that books taken away from boys and then kept have ruined priests and clerics.

If we act along these lines, I hope that no bad books will be smuggled into our schools, and that if they are, they will soon be destroyed.

But apart from books that are forthright bad, we also have to keep an eye on other books which, although in themselves may be good or innocent, might nevertheless prove harmful because they are unsuitable for the age of the boys, the environment, their studies, their inclinations, their nascent passions and their location. Such books must likewise be done away with. As to books that are entertaining and harmless, it would still be very beneficial if one could do away with them altogether because the boys would then benefit in their studies. In assigning homework, the professors must carefully budget the time available to the pupils. But since at the present day there is an almost uncontrollable craze for reading and even good books may often unduly excite the passions and imagination, I have planned, should our Lord grant me sufficient life, to arrange for the publication of a series of entertaining books for the young.

What I have said concerns private reading matter. As to books that are read out in the dining room, dormitories, and study hall, no books must be chosen for such a purpose unless previously approved by the director, and any type of novel, no matter what it is, is to be rigorously excluded unless printed in our own publishing houses.

In the dining room, one may read the Bulletin, the Catholic Readings, as the issues appear, and in between them, the history books printed at the Oratory, the *History of Italy*, the *Ecclesiastical History* and the *History of the Popes*, the *Stories About America* and books dealing with other subjects appearing in the *Catholic Readings* series or the historic books or stories appearing in the series of the *Youth Library*. These may be read

out in the study hall wherever the custom remains of reading aloud during the last quarter of an hour prior to the music class.

As to the reading in dormitories, I intend to abolish completely any distracting or merely entertaining reading matter. I wish that the only books read aloud were those that impress the mind of a boy and induce him to be better just as he is about to fall asleep. Therefore, interesting books of a certain holy or ascetic content will be most indicated. I would begin with the biographies of our own boys: *Comollo*, *Savio*, *Besucco*, etc. I would then go on to the booklets on religion that have appeared in the *Catholic Readings* series, and end up with the lives of the saints, selecting the most suitable and the most moving of them. Such books read out after the short evening talk by one who is desirous to save souls will, I am sure, do far more good than an entire retreat.

In order to achieve these desired effects and that our own books may provide an antidote for bad ones, I beg and implore you to support the publications written by our own Salesians and eliminate any feelings you may have of envy or criticism. Should you detect any error, report it, give advice and take action so that the necessary corrections may be introduced, and report your observations to the author or to the superiors who are in charge of the revision of all our publications, if you have time. If the boys hear their teachers or assistants speak in praise of any book, they, too, will respect it, praise it and read it. Remember the significant words which the Holy Father Pius IX once addressed to the Salesians: "Imitate the example of the priests of the Society of Jesus. Why are their writers so highly respected? Because the Jesuits themselves revise and edit them, as if they were their own work; in this way, with all the publications they have at their disposal, they can praise the merits of such writings and ensure their fame, while in their private conversations, they have nothing but words of praise. You will never hear any of these thousands of priests utter any word of criticism to prejudice the reputation of their fellow Jesuits."

That is what you must do in the midst of my beloved children, and you can be sure that our books will prove immensely beneficial.

My dear children, listen; bear in mind and act upon my advice. I know that my years are drawing to a close; your own, too, are passing rapidly. So let us work zealously so that we may have abundant crops of souls to show to the loving Father of all

families, God. May Our Lord bless you and our young pupils to whom you will give my affectionate regards, and ask them to pray for this poor old man who loves them so dearly in Jesus Christ.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

There was still a relevant proposal on the floor regarding the Oratory: the question of either changing the director or of creating two new directors. In 1883, the General Chapter had decided that a Prefect General for Technical Schools was to be appointed for the whole Congregation. There was no one better suited to that office than Father Joseph Lazzero himself. So if the first proposal was to prevail, Father Joseph Lazzero would be promoted to that office, and the direction of the Oratory would be entrusted to Father John Baptist Francesia. But since several people doubted that Father John Baptist Francesia possessed all the attributes required for maintaining the proper order at the Oratory, Don Bosco first let everyone have their say at the meeting on September 4th and then interrupted the debate as follows:

"It is hard to find someone agreeable and acceptable to all: someone will find him too gentle; others, less acquiescent; a third, too careless; and a fourth, too strict. We are but human beings and we have to act accordingly. Let us place our resolutions on a feasible level. In my opinion, the only objection there might be in the case of Father John Baptist Francesia is that he is too kindhearted. But he has such learning and piety that are not easily found in other people. He has worked a long time at the Oratory and he knows it thoroughly. He does whatever needs to be done and he is very well versed in the rules."

After hearing several remarks, it was decided that Father John Baptist Francesia would take the direction of the Oratory while Father John Cagliero would take over the direction of the school of Valsalice.

But next to the proposal of appointing a new director for the Oratory, there was the other of appointing two directors who would act independently at the Oratory: one for the students and the other for the artisans. The reason for this was that the Oratory was too big for one man to shoulder the responsibility of everything. For example, every workshop was equivalent to a whole school, but once a twofold direction had been set up in the same place, would there be enough harmony to eliminate friction? Again Don Bosco allowed the Chapter members to discuss the pros and cons freely and at the meeting of the 12th, he said the following:

Don Bosco: *I have been thinking over the project of having two directors at the Oratory. It is necessary that Father John Baptist Francesia join us here and direct this house together with Father Joseph Lazzero. One director alone is out of the question, with so many people as there are in the house here at Valdocco. Father Joseph Lazzero has asked me several times to exempt him from such responsibility. So we must divide the burden between Father John Baptist Francesia and Father Joseph Lazzero. Father John Baptist Francesia will mind the students and all matters concerning them, and Father Joseph Lazzero will look after the artisans and fill the office of catechist in all matters concerning the artisans of the Congregation in our other houses. He will concern himself with all matters relating to the moral conduct and discipline of the artisans both here in the Oratory and in the whole Congregation. In connection with the other houses, his title will be Councilor for the Technical Schools, but he will be known as Director of the Artisans here in the Oratory. In the future, this office of Director of Artisans will be a permanent one. We will have to work out a modus vivendi between Father John Baptist Francesia and Father Joseph Lazzero that would function while we are here and when we are no longer here, so that it may go on after us. If we want to concentrate all the authority of the whole Oratory in one single person, we would have to establish a new system of rules, and I do not intend to modify our system. Insofar as possible, the artisans are to form an autonomous section, as far as direction. If we do not organize the staff in a fitting manner, we will find ourselves in a monstrous confusion and chaos. Father Joseph Lazzero has informed me several times of this in writing.*

Father Joseph Lazzero remarked about the confusion created by the great number of domestic servants (or one might better say of boarders who were either guests or belonged to a category usually known as "'hangers-on") who came and went according to their own whims. He asked how they should be classified.

Don Bosco: *We will be able to solve all our problems with our experience, good will and agreement between the two directors by modifying and changing things. We do not have to establish hard and fast principles immediately, but should carefully investigate how to put my plan into practice, so that it may continue. We have to estab-*

lish as rules certain traditional maxims that have so far been in use. These are things that must be dealt with greater tranquillity.

Father Michael Rua said that it was essential that the duties of both directors be clearly specified, so as to eliminate eventual friction.

Father Celestine Durando: *Who will be in charge of the church, the kitchen, etc.?*

Don Bosco: *Let us leave out the names of people involved. It is essential that one become the director of the artisans and be responsible for their discipline and morality here at Valdocco. This director should be also for all the other houses where we have artisans and for all things concerning them; what the prefect of studies is for the schools of the Congregation, he should provide school personnel and safeguard morality. What if he is unable to visit these other houses? He will work that out with the respective Father Provincial, but we do have absolute need here at the Oratory of a director for the artisans. I would like you to examine the various things I have proposed. Let Father Michael Rua, Father John Baptist Francesia and Father John Cagliero have a preliminary discussion. Then I will personally take part in it and see what must be done. Let us forget personalities and do everything for the greater glory of God. It's a question of things, not of personalities.*

Father John Cagliero said that anyone who was in charge of the Oratory could not possibly attend to matters concerning other houses. There was too much to be studied at the local government.

Don Bosco: *Whatever you think best and decide to do, that will be it.*

Father John Cagliero insisted that the horizons of one's ideas had to be widened for all the questions, like did they need two kitchens or two separate pantries?

Don Bosco: *As soon as it can be arranged, we will provide all the facilities separately for both sections, namely for the artisans and the students, so as to allow the two directors to have perfect independence in all matters, even as far as premises.*

Father Michael Rua: *How shall we go about it for the time being?*

Father John Cagliero: *Frictions get the ship going.*

Father Michael Rua said that it was necessary to look care-

fully into the position of prefect of studies and the economist of Superior Chapter in their relationship to the new offices of the two directors for students and artisans at the Oratory.

Father John Cagliero insisted that attention be concentrated on the main issue. As far as eventual frictions, they could be dealt with as they arise.

Don Bosco: *Father John Cagliero is right. Concentrate quite calmly on the main issue. Your decision must be taken quite independently of all other secondary considerations. First establish the principle of two directors.*

Father Julius Barberis asked if the Provincial might not be better as director of the Oratory, while the two directors of the artisans and students would be only vice-directors.

Don Bosco: *Let us start by appointing two directors to safeguard discipline and morality. Then the questions may be raised: should the director of the artisans have to deal with the Provincials of other Houses; should he have anything to say as far as the shop heads requested or to be sent to the houses? These are secondary questions and should be studied. The second thing that I would like to see done is to rid our houses of all outsiders who do not belong to the Congregation; they are not to eat with us at table, and they should not come to our entertainment. Such people put their noses everywhere; they hear, see and advertise abroad our business and know what is going on better than we ourselves do.*

Father Julius Barberis asked who was to be Provincial for the Piedmont province.

Don Bosco: *That is not the issue at the moment.*

The meeting adjourned at six o'clock.

This Chapter meeting had taken place at Valsalice, where the retreat was held. Here in the presence of several priests (including Father Anthony Notario), Don Bosco reported on a dream he had had over the past few days.

He thought he was at the entrance of the Oratory and about to enter the main door when all of a sudden, he faced a few of his Salesians whom he failed to recognize because they were shrouded by fog. He walked up to them to see them closer, and saw that they were trying to avoid him. So he called them over, and succeeded in getting them closer. Their chests

were bare, and on the side of their hearts they showed a blemish shaped like some pestilential tumor and in which three colors were discernible: black, sharp red and yellow.

When he woke up, the saint did all he could to drive away those fantastic visions, but his efforts were in vain, for the hideous figures kept reappearing before him as he sat up in bed. He noticed that the fog was thickest around their heads, so that he could barely read certain words, which could only be read backwards on their foreheads. Then, Don Bosco got up and wrote down the names of all those he was able to recognize. From the way he spoke, it was obvious that for some reason there were circumstances that he did not think he ought to reveal.

Don Bosco did not remain very long at Valsalice. One evening, he was on his way home from visiting a family at their country estate, accompanied of the cleric Viglietti, and he felt a pain in his left leg. It swelled up during the night; he had erysipelas. On the 14th, Dr. Fissore was summoned to Valsalice. After examining him, the doctor said that the only cure was to stay in bed, so that his leg might rest. He returned to the Oratory and did as the physician had ordered, but the pain increased day by day. He had a constant fever, his breathing was heavy, and over his heart there was an exceptional swelling, for some unknown reason, one of his ribs was out of place. Furthermore, he suffered from persistent itching all over his body as a result of a residual miliary fever. Yet despite that, he said he hoped to go to San Benigno, where the retreat was about to end on the 27th, provided that people prayed.

He did not stay in bed all the time, but as a rule during the early afternoon hours, he got up and remained seated either in his room or in the corridor until early evening. Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda called on him here one day. Then he began to say Mass again, showing at times a very ardent fervor. One morning, Father Francis Cerruti served his Mass, and witnessed that three or four times, Don Bosco burst into tears, sobbing, unrestrainedly.

The biographers recall two proofs of his great strength during this period of time. Dr. Albertotti's son, who was also a doctor, told Don Bosco to shake his hand, wishing to test his strength. Don Bosco gripped it.

"Tighter! Tighter!" the doctor told him.

"I warn you, you'll bleed," the patient answered.

"It does not matter. Go on and squeeze hard." But then he cried out, "Ah! My goodness! How strong he is!"

Toward evening, the doctor returned with a graduated metal ring used

to measure the strength of patients. At first he himself gripped it with all the strength in his right hand and marked up forty-five degrees; then Father Joachim Berto took hold of it, marking forty with his right hand and forty-five with his left. Don Bosco marked up sixty. That was the maximum. Yet he said he had restrained himself because he was afraid he might break the instrument.

He wished to go to San Benigno as he had planned. The morning of October 3rd, the superiors were holding a Chapter meeting presided by Father Michael Rua when a telegram from Turin announced that Don Bosco's health was somewhat improved and that he was on his way to the railroad station to get to San Benigno. The meeting was instantly adjourned so that they could go and meet him. In the *Minutes*, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote: "He arrived at twelve o'clock to his own joy and our delight, with mutual indescribable affection."

He walked leaning on a cane, and made himself heard with his voice that so inspired and delighted his listeners. Father John Baptist Francesia voiced the general feeling of happiness with six verses in hendecasyllables, beginning as follows:

> Oh! Good Father Don Bosco, what delight
> You gave us in enabling us
> To see you, cane in hand,
> When we feared that you were far away....
> Far away and sick, confined to bed....
> What delight your dear presence gave us!

The Superior Chapter met again five times, with Father Michael Rua presiding, between September 18th and 20th after Don Bosco had left Valsalice, and three times the members went back to the subject of the two directors to be appointed. They examined all eventual difficulties and dangers and tried to work out a more or less reliable *modus vivendi*. All the superiors except Father John Cagliero, who had conceived and now supported the idea, were reluctant to go along with it. Even Father Michael Rua, who had at first raised his objections, bowed down before it solely because of his innate docility to Don Bosco's wishes, and not because he himself was in anyway convinced that this was the best solution. This is how he spoke of the project in the meeting held on the 18th:

"I am prepared to obey Don Bosco, but I foresee difficulties and disorders. I feel that Don Bosco has been pushed to take such a step by others because he was always for a centralized government."

They acted according to what had been established: Father John Baptist Francesia to be director of the students, Father Joseph Lazzero, director of the artisans, and just as before, Don Bosco as Rector Major. But the new system lasted barely two scholastic years, and then they went back to the old system.

The meeting of the 19th dealt with a delicate and unpleasant matter, which was however rendered necessary by circumstances. Don Bosco's health had people very concerned. One had to face the prospect of a tragic event and take precautionary measures for the immediate aftermath. What was to be done about his funeral and how were they to provide as far as the burial place? Father Michael Rua was of the opinion that should this catastrophe come to pass, as feared, an application should be made to the government for permission to bury him in the Oratory church, and he listed several factors that indicated the likelihood of obtaining such a concession. In previous years, they had wanted to purchase a burial ground in the cemetery, and contractor Carlo Buzzetti had negotiated the matter with the municipal authorities, but no more burial plots were available. Father John Baptist Lemoyne suggested that his coffin be placed temporarily in a vault in the cemetery to be taken out later, as soon as the Salesians themselves would have a burial plot of their own. Great sadness descended on them all. Father Francis Cerruti put an end to it by saying that this matter was of little and no vital importance, and they turned to other matters.

We are fully able to understand how Father Michael Rua, who had confidential access to Dr. Albertotti, Don Bosco's doctor, and who therefore was better aware than any other of the true condition of the beloved patient, should have felt it necessary to thus do violence to himself, and look ahead into the future. It was Albertotti who wrote: "After 1880 or thereabouts, Don Bosco's whole organism was more or less reduced to a walking pathological clinic."[2]

From 1884 onward, the decreased ability [to see] *visus*, the increased nephritis and spinal weakness became more and more accentuated. The doctor's son, who on several occasions had examined the inner section of his eye with Liebreich's ophthalmoscope under instructions from the famous specialist Dr. Raymond, had noticed retinal bleeding. His eyesight had decreased to such an extent that on October 14th, he applied to the

[2] Dr. Giovanni Albertotti: *Who Was Don Bosco*, Physio-psycho-pathological biography by his doctor. Genoa, Pala Bros. (posthumously published), page 83 (1934).

holy Penitentiary and obtained permission to celebrate the votive Mass of the Blessed Virgin Sundays and feast days, and the requiem Mass for the dead on other days. Dr. Raymond himself had made a diagnosis of his kidney ailment that although it had already been alarming, grew very much worse during the latter months of 1887, causing him extremely high albuminuria. The weakness in his spine, which began apparently in 1871, increased so markedly in 1884 that he now walked quite bent, his arms behind him in order to keep his balance. Yet despite all these organic ailments which wore him out, we will see how he continued to give his attention to everything and everyone for another four years with an alert mind and Herculean efforts, in order to promote untiringly the glory of God and the welfare of souls.

Chapter 7

DON BOSCO'S SOJOURN IN PINEROLO

Don Bosco was all heart for others. Whenever someone fell sick, it looked as though he had no heart for himself, to the point that his love for work won over any personal concern he should have had. However, during the summer of 1884, the sight of his measureless suffering alarmed his closest collaborators and doctors. They agreed among themselves and, in order to get him away from his unending activity, they obliged him to go and relax in the mountain heights area around Pinerolo. It was the bishop of that diocese, Bishop Philip Chiesa who, in his affectionate veneration for the man of God, had led to the choice of this locality by graciously offering his hospitality in his episcopal villa. Don Bosco agreed to be taken there on July 19th with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father James Ruffino (who was replaced a few days later by Charles Viglietti, the cleric).

Don Bosco still retained precious memories of Pinerolo from the days of his youth. Once when he was a high school student and later as a cleric, he had been a guest of the family of a friend, Hannibal Strambio, as he told his two traveling companions.[1] He also told them that when he had just been ordained, he passed through it again on his way to preach at Fenestrelle.

He left Turin at ten o'clock in the morning and was met at the station of Pinerolo by the bishop himself, and then had him climb into the coach driven by a pair of horses. The young and fervent prelate treated him with every possible attention from the beginning, and was delighted to see how he regained his strength day after day. Don Bosco instantly found great relief in the cool mountain air after the oppressing heat he had endured in Turin, when at times he had to fight for his breath. The peaceful surroundings also favored his digestion, and little by little, his appetite came back. The bishop did everything possible to entertain him, and Viglietti wrote to inform Father Michael Rua on August 7th: "Apart from his heart trouble, which worries me considerably, Don Bosco is well now. He takes

[1] See Vol. 1, pp. 262 ff.

a walk with me, he sings, and tells me a lot of interesting anecdotes, and we say the rosary together. We are all by ourselves because three days ago, Father John Baptist Lemoyne went to preach at Fenestrelle."

Every morning, Viglietti served his Mass. Then, either he alone or together with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, accompanied Don Bosco on an initial stroll in the neighboring hills. He went out again for another stroll toward evening. They could remain outdoors for some hours. By August, he was already able to walk again by himself without support, but naturally, he moved slowly and, at times, he liked to sit down in the middle of the meadows in the shade provided by the century-old magnificent pear tree, which spread its hospitable branches in the vicinity of the villa in the afternoon.

His two acolytes kept him cheerful with their jovial temperaments. But at times, he taught them beautiful songs and delighted them, especially with his pleasant stories. During one such friendly conversation, he suggested that Father John Baptist Lemoyne burn all the papers connected to the controversy with Bishop Gastaldi. The secretary objected.

"What will posterity say when they will see such an enormous gap in our archives? What about the history of the Congregation?"

Don Bosco replied, "If there is any need to say what Don Bosco did during those ten years, during which he suffered harassments, the use of a formula like this will be enough - he continued to mind his own business."

Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who could not ignore the necessity of treasuring those papers, ably changed the subject and looked for flowers along the hedges, since he was afraid that Don Bosco might order him to do something he did not feel was right.

The correspondence we have gathered, all written from Pinerolo, is proof enough of how Don Bosco had regained his health.

Even way up in the mountains, Don Bosco did not stop thinking about the lottery for the Sacred Heart Church. At his request, Coadjutor Rossi sent him bundles of lottery tickets that he distributed among the cooperators living far and near. This first letter shows us how he gave his attention to this matter already during the first few days of his holidays:

Pinerolo, July 26, 1884

My dear Rossi:

I received the tickets and all is in order. Now send me about a hundred red ones that have been requested. Send me the list of

cooperators we have at Pinerolo and its vicinity. Also send me 20 diplomas, etc.

My regards to Father John Bonetti. I need so much that he be in good health and ready to work.

May God bless us all. Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Mrs. Losana, a cooperator from Turin, was also on vacation at Pinerolo. This is how Don Bosco got her interested in distributing the tickets.

Pinerolo, August 1, 1884

Dear Mrs. Losana:

Here at Pinerolo you cannot do much for our boys, so I am asking you to do something for the Holy Father instead. Try to distribute the enclosed tickets for a lottery in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. God will reward you generously for it.

May God bless you and your family. Believe me to be gratefully,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The whole community of Sisters of the Visitation from Pinerolo was to join the Pious Union of Cooperators, and he immediately sought their help on behalf of the lottery.

Pinerolo, August 5, 1884

To the Reverend Mother Superior:

I have been intending to pay you the promised visit every day, but every day something came along to prevent me. I am enclosing the diploma of membership so that your daughters may at least begin to gain the holy indulgences. I have written to Turin to tell them to send you the monthly Bulletin soon.

I am enclosing also a few lottery tickets for sale on behalf of the Holy Father. If you are unable to sell them all or do not feel you can keep them yourself, you may return them.

May God bless you, your religious family and your young

lady boarders. Please pray for my family of orphans and me, while I remain in Jesus Christ,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

He wrote to Father Tullio De Agostini, who had unexpectedly sent some money on behalf of two lovely lady donors from Padua, and told him how timely that gift had been:[2]

Pinerolo, August 13, 1884

Dearest Father Tullio:

I duly received the sum of money mailed to me, namely, 500 francs from Mrs. Antico, and may Our Lord reward her already on earth a hundredfold, and 600 francs from Mrs. Mainardi in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

I feel that the reward will be all the greater in view of the timeliness with which the money was given. Father Michael Rua came here to Pinerolo to ask me for some money so that he could send it to Father Francis Dalmazzo in Rome, who had urgently asked for some to keep the work going on the construction. I had no money because I was away from home. Just at that time, I received the sum you sent me and hastily forwarded it to Rome; it helped pour a little water on parched ground.

Every day at holy Mass, I pray for Mrs. Antico, Countess Mainardi, Franceschino and you, my ever-dear Father Tullio.

God bless us and keep us all in a state of His holy grace. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

He did not forget the spiritual needs of people who habitually wrote to him about themselves. A letter written to the well-deserving Mrs. Magliano seemed to have been inspired by his charity toward her soul:

[2] We came into possession of this letter too late to include it among the other letters addressed to Father Tullio and the Bonmartini family, published in Volume XV pages 557 and ff.

Pinerolo, July 25, 1884

Kind lady:

We were anxious to have news about your health, but on your return from Susa, you left again for Busca.

If you would now be so kind as to let me know how you are health-wise, and especially what you have done not to give any further thought to your past life, you would be doing me a great favor.

I came here to the villa of the bishop of Pinerolo on account of my health and feel much better here. God bless you, gracious Mrs. Magliano, and may He also bless your activities and your family. Please pray for this poor mortal and for all our boys. May Mary guide us all, so that one day we may be happy with her in Paradise.

I am in all things in Jesus Christ,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

July 25th was the feast day of St. James, the name day of Father James Ruffino. Don Bosco sent him a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians, on which he had written some affectionate words in Latin across the back. Since the picture is dated the day of the feast itself, it is probable that he had someone who had called on him around that time bring it to Father Ruffino because he frequently received visitors from the Oratory.[3]

Father John Cagliero spent the first half of August at Nizza Monferrato, conducting a retreat for ladies and then one for nuns. He wrote to Father Michael Rua in reference to the ladies: "The holy retreat for ladies was blessed by God, and we found many vocations." The sisters held their General Chapter and Father John Cagliero informed Father Michael Rua about it: "The General Chapter of the sisters is progressing excellently because it follows the same lines as that of the Salesians. We reviewed the holy rules and are now adapting our own deliberations to their Congregation. It will all be put before Don Bosco and his Chapter

[3] Here is the note: *Dilecto filio in Christo*
Rufino Jacobo Sacredoti.
Maria sit tibi et tuis in vita, subsidium in periculis, atque magna animarum, te comitante caterva, secum vos recipiat in aeternis tabernaculis. Amen.
Die 25 Julii 1884 *Joannes Bosco, Sacerdos*

later. The minutes of the discussions are better than those of Montecitorio.[4] Now and then, Father John Bonetti, Father Bertello and the director attend them." He also wrote in the same letter: "Don Bosco has written us twice; this must mean that he is feeling better. *Deo gratias!*"[5] However, we have only been able to trace the first letter, written during the retreat for ladies:

Pinerolo, August 6, 1884

My dear Father John Cagliero:

I am sincerely pleased to learn that so many ladies are attending the retreat, despite the alarming news about the cholera that now threatens this part of the world. I was even happier to hear in what exemplary manner those chosen souls are making the retreats.

You know how to dispel any fear there may be about the plague. The usual antidote - a medal of Mary Help of Christians, the ejaculatory prayer *"O Maria, auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis"*, frequent Communion, and that is all.

Since the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the source of every grace, I think that with the consent of Mother Superior, you might do some good if you were to sponsor a collection on behalf of the church and hospice of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome.

Although my health is much improved, I still will not be able to go to Nizza, as I would have wished. But I will try to do all I can here. Commencing August 1st, I have said a special prayer at holy Mass for our ladies on retreat, and now I send them the holy blessing of Mary Help of Christians. I will continue saying this prayer until the feast of Our Lady's Assumption.

It is now our good fortune to hold the precious Novena of the Assumption and I wish I could talk to each of the ladies, giving them the advice that would surely keep them on the road to Heaven. I feel that just now Mary is well disposed and that she is saying, "My daughters, do not tarry in severing all your ties with the world. The world is the enemy that does not pay, or when it

[4] Palace in Rome where the Italian Parliament is located.

[5] Letter to Father Michael Rua (Nizza, August 18, 1884). The mother general, Caterina Daghero, wrote a report on the chapter and the retreat for the saint on August 22nd (Appendix, document 23).

the world. The world is the enemy that does not pay, or when it does pay it, pays badly, and will only betray you. Consecrate yourselves entirely and generously to my Son Jesus. All your fortune, your health, your hearts, may they always and forever belong to Jesus, no matter the cost. Oh, beloved daughters of Mary, pray for me, too, and offer up a Holy Communion for my intention, while I shall continue to pray for you. Farewell until we meet again one day in Heaven together with Jesus and Mary. So be it.

The bishop sent Father John Baptist Lemoyne to preach on his behalf to some priests at Fenestrelle, but he will be back here this evening or tomorrow morning.

Bishop Espinosa sent a very interesting account of his trip through Patagonia with the Salesians. Viglietti is translating it and you will see it before it is printed.

The bishop here, Bishop Chiesa, lavishes every attention on me. Today, his episcopal anniversary, we talked a lot about you as we were sitting underneath the pine tree, and we also drank a toast to you.

How is Father Savio and what is he doing? Give him my affectionate regards.

Why have you not sent me any news of Gaia and Vigna?[6]

God bless us all. May Mary help us persevere along the road to Heaven.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. My regards to our nuns, in the Lord.

The saint's niece, Eulalie Bosco, was among the novices clothed at the end of the retreat for nuns. The saint wrote her this precious letter:

Pinerolo, August 20, 1884

My dearest Eulalie:

I blessed the Lord when you decided to enter religious life, now I thank Him with all my heart that you have persevered in your pious intention of severing your ties with the world and con-

[6] Two coadjutors who worked in the kitchen and around the house in the annex building of Nizza Monferrato.

secrating yourself entirely to our beloved Jesus. Make this sacrifice gladly and think of the reward which is a hundredfold in this world, and of the true reward, the great reward in the life to come.

But, dear Eulalie, do not do this lightly, but in all earnest. Remember always the words of St. Chantal's father in similar circumstances: "That what one gives to Our Lord may it never again be taken back."

Remember that religious life is a life of continual sacrifice, and that God generously rewards every sacrifice we make. Our only comfort during our life here on earth lies only in our obedience, in our observance of the rules, in our hope of a heavenly reward.

I have always received your letters with pleasure. I did not answer them because I did not have the time.

May God bless you, Eulalie. May Mary guide you and comfort you until you reach Heaven. I hope we shall meet again here in this life, otherwise farewell. We shall meet as we speak of God in the eternal beatitude. So be it.

I send every blessing to Mother General and to all the nuns, novices and postulants of Mary Help of Christians. I owe the Reverend Mother a letter and will soon write to her. Pray for our whole family and me and believe me always in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate uncle,
Rev. John Bosco

An unpleasant incident at San Benigno necessitated Don Bosco's authoritative intervention before civil authorities. The mayor of San Benigno had assigned the playground of the old cloister where the "day hops" played to the military as a temporary shelter without discussing it with Father Julius Barberis, the director. One day, a cavalry squadron showed up during a heavy rain and found the door locked. The soldiers began knocking on the door and an unexpected quarrel ensued. It was reported that a boy had hurled a stone at a soldier. Once the doors had been opened and the horses and men had settled in, everything was solved amicably. In fact, the officers very much enjoyed wandering around the house and chatting with the Salesians in a friendly manner.

We came to know later that giving the playground to the military was part of a treacherous plot to get rid of the Salesians. As soon as the newspapers got wind of it, they described it in such a way as to incite a revolt

against the army. A catastrophe was mounting.

Informed of what was happening, the saint wrote a simple, concise report and sent it to the prefect of Turin. He included a letter that he had written while at Pinerolo, but he dated it as if he were still at the Oratory:

Turin, August 8, 1884

Most illustrious and well-deserving Prefect:

Something that seemed of minor entity at our hospice in San Benigno is causing serious troubles to the poor youths living in that house.

You will be able to form a clear idea of what this is all about from the enclosed report. I only wish to say that now, when we are threatened by the cholera epidemic and in view of public sanitary measures, it is no slight matter to set up a stable underneath the cloisters of this institute so that the church, the workshops, the dining room, and even the dormitories are invaded by the odor thereof.

Your Excellency is aware that I have taken every measure possible to save the government from the embarrassment resulting from the presence in this area of poor and abandoned boys. Moreover, I have been obliged already to send away some of the pupils from the above- mentioned house, and would not know where to find accommodations for the others who are still living in it.

Please remember also that the cloisters and the porticos of this edifice represent precisely that portion which has been described as monumental, and, mind you, the building has been assigned to the general public welfare for which it is now used. It would certainly be disfigured if it were to continue to be used as a stable for any undefined length of time. I offer my continued services on behalf of the government and earnestly recommend that you come to my assistance in this present matter, while I remain gratefully,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Once the matter was settled, there were no more instances. We shall speak in due course of the underhanded maneuvers employed to attempt to kick the Salesians out of San Benigno.

Two days later, Don Bosco conveyed his condolences and his blessing to young student Peter Oliveri and his family, who lived at Calizzano by Finalmarina in Liguria:

Pinerolo, August 10, 1884

My dear friend:

I was pleased to receive your letter, but grieved to learn of the death of your uncle Francesco, of which I was unaware. I shall pray for his soul. We will also talk about him later on. We are soon about to begin our retreat. Pray that we make it well, and that everyone may observe the precious maxim *"Nostrae divitiae, nosterque thesaurus bona sint animarum, et in arca nostri pectoris recondantur talenta virtutis"* [May the good of souls be our riches and our treasure. May the treasures of virtue find their abode within our hearts] (St. Peter Dam). Have a pleasant vacation. God bless you, your pious mother and all your relatives, especially your grandmother; may our Lord preserve her long. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

In the minutes of the Chapter (the 13th meeting on August 20th), there is no mention of a letter in which Don Bosco recommended three things to the nuns: (1) During their talks, they were to concentrate on the observance rather than on the reform of their rules; (2) They were to regard the path of humility and obedience as the shortest and most sure means with which to attain perfection; (3) In their deliberations, they should concentrate on keeping their body here on earth and their spirit steadfastly soaring all the way to Heaven.

As the period of the great name days approached, Don Bosco sent special good wishes in a fitting manner to those he wished to remember. We do not have the letter addressed to Cardinal Cajean Alimonda for the feast of St. Cajean on August 7th, but we should not overlook the answer he received from His Eminence.

Turin, August 9, 1884

Dearest and Most Reverend Don Bosco:

You took the trouble to write to me a most welcomed letter of

good wishes and affectionate remembrance for my name day, St. Cajean! It did not displease me at all because I count a lot on the help of your fervent prayers. I also wish to retain your benevolence and friendship. I am, therefore, not allowing any time to elapse before expressing my most sincere and fervent gratitude to you.

I am truly happy to learn that your beloved Reverence has improved in health in the favorable climate there. Insignificant as I am, I never cease praying to Our Lord to safe keep you for many a year for the Church and the Salesian Congregation, my dear Don Bosco. My prayers will certainly be heard now that an infinite number of holy souls are praying in both hemispheres for this same intention.

I wish you were here with me. Although for your own sake, I want you to remain up at the villa for this month. I am sure that good Bishop Chiesa will often keep you company, so would you please convey my respectful regards to him.

Please accept the regards from my own family, for they all gratefully remember your kindness.

With fraternal affection, I embrace you in our Lord, and bless you and your big family and great works and remain,

With the most fraternal affection,
Cajean, Cardinal Archbishop

That year Don Bosco had yet a new reason for voicing his gratitude to Cardinal Nina (whose name was that of St. Lawrence), the protector of the Salesian Congregation, and he wrote as follows:

Pinerolo, San Lorenzo's day, 1884

Most Revered Eminence:

On all occasions, the Salesians are bound to join as one heart and soul to express their common gratitude to your august person for all that you have deigned to do for us during the course of the year, but especially on the occasion of your name day, Your Eminence.

The greatest favor of all was undoubtedly the granting of privileges enjoyed by the Redemptorists, which placed our humble Congregation, at last, in a normal standing and brought such

peace to my own heart that I can now intone my *Nunc Dimittis.* Our gratitude, our prayers and actions of grace are being offered up to you and the Holy Father, who put an end to the long, drawn-out history with the definite approval of our Congregation, enabling it to carry out its undertakings and survive in all different dioceses, especially in its foreign missions.

Please accept an album that contains a description of the houses of the Congregation in both Europe and America. An identical copy will be presented to the Holy Father on the occasion of his name day, as well.

On this happy day, all the Salesians and their pupils will pray to God for the return of your good health, and that you may be preserved *ad multos annos* for the good of the Church, and the comfort of your poor sons, who pray fervently for Your Eminence, whom they regard as their most tender father.

I am here at Pinerolo nursing my health, staying with the bishop, who lavishes every attention on me. He asks me to send you his most respectful regards.

Meanwhile, please impart your holy blessing to us all, while with most profound gratitude I consider myself highly honored to remain in the name of all the Salesians,

Your most humble and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Finally there was the feast day of St. Joachim, the name day of the Pope. The album mentioned above was intended to inform the vicar of Jesus Christ of the present state of the Congregation, to which he had granted the privileges a month before, a congregation well deserving of such a grace because of its size and future growth potential. Don Bosco had given instructions regarding this album to a Salesian with excellent penmanship prior to his departure from Valdocco. He sent it to Father Francis Dalmazzo, so that he might present it to the Holy Father together with this letter, dated from Turin:

Turin, August 17, 1884

Most Blessed Father:

On this most happy day that was consecrated to the glory of

the saint who reminds us of your venerable name, Most Blessed Father, your most affectionate and most grateful Salesian sons feel that it is their duty to voice their deepest and unfailing gratitude to you, their most distinguished benefactor, especially this year.

You are well aware, oh, Most Blessed Father, that our humble Congregation needed a significant favor, namely, a strong bond that might link it unalterably to the Holy See. And it was you who deigned to forge this glorious link when you granted us the privileges enjoyed by the Redemptorists last May 9th.

This concession was the crowning event of our efforts, the fulfillment of our hopes and prayers.

The only thing that remains for us Salesians to do is to unanimously, as one single heart and soul, work for the welfare of the holy church. True enough, in these arduous times in which we live and in the face of the immense harvest before us, we can barely describe ourselves as *pusillus grex,* yet we gladly place all our possessions and our very lives in the hands of Your Holiness so that you may deign to use them as something belonging entirely to you, for whatever you may deem best for the greater glory of God in Europe, America and, especially, Patagonia.

I do not think it will displease Your Holiness if I enclose here a list of our members, hospices, houses and residences where we endeavor to work on behalf of youth at risk and adults in addition to our foreign missions amid the savage tribes of Brazil, Uruguay and the Argentine Republic, as well as in all those southern territories where the Holy Name of Jesus Christ is altogether unknown.

We will add special, daily prayers to our weak efforts, so that God may preserve the august person of Your Holiness for many years for the welfare of the Holy Church, the glory of our holy religion, and the further consolidation of the nascent Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales.

All of us humbly prostrate before you, and implore your holy, apostolic blessing while on behalf of all, I have the incomparable honor of being,

A most obedient son of the holy church,
Rev. John Bosco

On the Feast of the Assumption (on which it was now the custom of

celebrating Don Bosco's own birthday), they all went into the town where the saint wished to attend the cathedral services and hear the bishop preach. Before he left his apartment and entered the church, the bishop had ten clerics show up to accompany Don Bosco. Don Bosco looked at them with a smile and said, "Prepare yourselves to receive the holy orders by acquiring the virtues becoming a priest. A priest never goes alone either to Heaven or Hell." In only a few words, he explained what he meant by this.

Half humorously and half seriously, as was his wont, the bishop then added, "Just let them try not to behave themselves! I will soon kick them out of the seminary! They are fully aware that two of their companions had to take off their cassocks last year."

In honor of Don Bosco, the bishop hosted a banquet in his palace and invited the canons. At the end of the repast when they left the dining room, Don Bosco went to sit on a low wall in the garden with Viglietti. As they were talking quietly together, a servant came up to him and handed him two letters addressed to him. Don Bosco broke the seals on one of them and began to frown as he was reading it. He opened the second one and as he fixed his gaze on it for a moment, he began to cry. Alarmed, Viglietti asked him why he was crying. "Our Lady loves us," Don Bosco answered. Without explanation, he handed him the two letters.

Divine Providence had indeed generously paid for the feast. In the first letter, a certain Gazzolo demanded the immediate payment of a thirty-thousand-lire loan. Where could Don Bosco find the money to pay off this enormous debt? He became very upset as he read the news. However in the second letter, a noble lady wrote to him from Belgium and asked him how she could worthily spend the sum of thirty thousand francs. "Blessed be the Lord!" the saint exclaimed.

While Viglietti handed him back the letters, he, too, was quite overcome by emotion. After all, our Lady had been granting similar miracles for Don Bosco for quite some time now.

The previous year, it had cost thirty thousand lire to restore the building at Mathi Torinese to its former condition and turn it into a residence for the Sons of Mary. Don Bosco was seated at the dining table with Count Colle of Toulon and had been mulling over the possibilities of paying the debt owed the foreman. At the end of the meal, the count, who was unaware of the situation, handed him a donation of thirty thousand francs. Don Bosco had turned to him with a smile and told him that during the repast, he had been cudgeling his brains to try and find some means with which he might pay exactly that sum to the foreman, and that the Count

had been chosen by God as the instrument of Divine Providence. At hearing this, the count wept with joy.

Still in 1883, Don Bosco was attending the retreat of his sons at San Benigno. Father Michael Rua and Father Joseph Lazzero were with him, and they were trying to find the means to pay an urgent bill of twenty thousand lire. At that time, the superiors were in serious financial straits. Just as they were engaged in calculations and plans, Don Bosco read a letter that had recently arrived. A gentleman had written to inform him that he had twenty thousand lire available for charity, and asked in what way it might be employed. "Such things do occur every minute," the saint said after relating these two episodes, "yet posterity will not believe them and will dub them as so many fairytales."

That evening, they enjoyed some academic entertainment. The boys of the Oratory had written two letters, one addressed to Don Bosco and the other to the bishop. Father John Baptist Lemoyne read both of them aloud during the supper at the bishop's palace. The first began, "The most beloved sons, the artisans and the students of the Oratory to their most beloved father." It contained expressions of filial affection, good wishes for a complete recovery, promises of prayers and of good behavior. In the second letter, the boys who had seen the bishop at the Oratory and already knew him voiced their gratitude to him for the loving care he had lavished on their dear father.

Meanwhile, the *Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan also arrived, containing an article entitled "Don Bosco's Birthday," and it began as follows:

> Tomorrow, the Feast of Our Lady's Assumption, Don Bosco enters into his seventieth year, the seventieth year of a life entirely dedicated to the glory of God, the triumph of the Church, and the well-being of humanity. The early beginnings of his long career were most humble, and the difficulties he encountered and had to overcome were immense. The wicked times during which he lived helped to enhance the spark of his genius more clearly, the power of his character, and above all, the hand of God which by blessing his works, rendered them fertile and multiplied them marvelously in Piedmont, Genoa, France, throughout Italy and in America.

All that is proclaimed today about Don Bosco's mission was already stated quite clearly in that article. "Even the great personalities respected him and in the hours when revolution raged throughout the Piedmontese areas, destroying everything that had the hallmark of something sacred,

the undertakings of Don Bosco were spared. This man was therefore raised by God to defend religion and the Church." Then the journalist, after recalling that Don Bosco had enjoyed the confidence of Pope Pius IX before and also Leo XIII, drew this logical conclusion: "Don Bosco's institute will live on, for he founded it on the corners of that rock which will never be destroyed." The article ended by announcing that a French book about Don Bosco and his Congregation published that year had recently been translated into Italian.

L'Eclair of Lyons had already written about this same book in its May 17th issue, and had taken the opportunity to praise the social effectiveness of Don Bosco's work.[7] Its author was Albert Du Boys, the former president of the Puy Court of Appeals in the department of Haute-Loire. He had known Don Bosco and his works through the *Bulletin*, and had the greatest admiration for him. Wishing to write something about him for the benefit of his fellow countrymen, he had gone to Italy, visited the more important Salesian houses, questioned friends, collaborators and pupils of the saint, and after gathering the information, he turned to his pen. The book was divided into three parts: in the first, the biography of the founder was interwoven with the history of the houses he had founded in Europe; the second was dedicated to the missions of America; the third was a retrospective survey. An appendix supplied the statistical data of Salesian houses in both the old and new worlds, including the data concerning the houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It also contained the French translation of our rules, the regulations for festive Oratories, some data on Buenos Aires, and an additional big geographic map of South America, on which the extension of our missions was indicated.[8]

The work was the result of a painstaking effort. It was accurate in form and contained a very original chapter in which Don Bosco was described as an eminent poet and his work as a grandiose poem.[9]

The author sent Don Bosco the first copy of the book, which gave rise to an interesting episode. One day while Father Joaquim Berto was shaving Don Bosco, the son of Dr. Albertotti called on him. He was ushered in and told to remain seated until the barber's operation was completed. Then he turned to Father Berto, saying in Piedmontese, "Listen, Berto, give the young doctor that book."

[7] Appendix, document 24.

[8] Albert Du Boys, *Don Bosco et la pieuse Societe des Salesiens* (Paris, Gervais, 1884). The Italian translation by Giuseppe Novelli was published that same year at San Benigno Canavese, without the text of our rules.

[9] Appendix, document 25.

Father Berto offered him a handsome volume, which Don Bosco handed to the young doctor, asking him whether he would care to have it. After glancing at the cover page and seeing what the book was about, the doctor thanked him, adding however that he would relish the gift even more if he were to write something on the cover, to show that he had given it to him personally. This sudden request seemed to distress Don Bosco. He tried to evade the request, and answered in Piedmontese dialect, "It is the first I have, the first that I give away."

Father Berto discouraged the young doctor from any further insistence, so he no longer pressed his request. He still cherishes the volume religiously, and has written, together with the date of his visit, the following words on the cover: "This gift and the answer have a great value for me to know the character of Don Bosco."[10]

It is our belief that Albertotti's son perceived from the gift that Don Bosco was not the least bit dismayed by any publicity given to his works or to the events of his life, while in his answer, he perceived his own personal modesty. To the superficial observer, these two factors might have seemed irreconcilable, but new times called for new ways of advertising, and although Don Bosco was a saint of the most authentic sanctity, he was also a man of his own century. In this regard, what Don Bosco said in a conversation with his close friend on October 16, 1884 seems appropriate. We could not ask for any words more logical and forthright. "Our glory will decrease in Heaven in proportion to the amount of personal fame we shall leave behind us here on earth," he said, "if ever we are found worthy to go to Heaven, that is to say. Besides, I have done everything I could to remain concealed. People talked everywhere about this poor priest. Some said this and others said that, and Don Bosco kept quiet all the time. But when the Congregation became an established thing, then I was obliged (I would not say obliged) to publish my own things, but not to show opposition as resolutely as I had done in the past to those who wanted to publish things that would help make our undertakings known. The person of Don Bosco was identified with our pious society, and therefore, it had to be made known."[11]

[10] G. Albertotti, l.c. page 25.

[11] Du Boys answered a letter he had received from Don Bosco from Tain (department of Valence): "Your kind letter moved me deeply; it also rewarded me for all my efforts and a good deal over and above them. It is indeed a great pleasure to think that you, Reverend Father, and after you, all the members of the pious Salesian Society, will pray for my family and my children. Please do not say that my appreciation makes you blush in your modesty, Reverend Father; I will make you blush the more by saying that my appreciation was not adequate to the truth of the facts, because I, too, felt restraint in saying too much about a man who was still alive."

That same fall, Don Bosco spoke in much the same way to Mr. S. Sestini of Rome who dealt with the *private charity in Italy* in the journal *La Rassegna Italiana* and wished to publish a profile on Don Bosco. He had gone to Turin to visit the exhibit sometime between September and October and had called on the saint, informing him of what he had in mind and seeking his endorsement. "If you do this to flatter me, I would say no. But if you do this to make better known and help out my Institute, then I bless your idea." He reiterated the same words as he left him.[12]

In a final word about Don Bosco's birthday, we know he must surely have received good wishes from many parts of the world, but we have only traced one answer, (and a very amusing one at that) addressed to Countess Balbo:

Pinerolo, August 16, 1884

Dearest Countess:

My mama is very kind and she remembered this naughty son of hers. I mean to be good in the future and will pray often for you. If Mr. Cesare feels like talking with me about our business, I would be delighted and it would serve as a norm for other matters as well.

From Heaven may Mary tell your whole family, "You are my children, and I will protect all of you."

Pray for this poor fellow who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Your most humble and affectionate servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The retreat was about to begin for the Salesians at Valsalice and Don Bosco, who wished to be there for it and to hear confessions, left the hospitable bishop's villa on August 22nd and instructed Father John Baptist Lemoyne from Valsalice on the 25th to write and thank the bishop for him.

In his answer, dated September 3rd, the bishop wrote:

I was very delighted to have had the opportunity of extending my hospitality to the Venerable Don Bosco at my villa, for I

[12] See extract from the periodical La Rassegna Italiana of January 15, 1885, Rome, Befani, 1885, page 27. It is an excellent publication, having 31 big pages, with size 9 print.

> am sure that his presence must have called down many heavenly blessings upon it, some of which will come the way of this unworthy bishop. If Don Bosco was satisfied with whatever little it was possible to do for him, I trust he will show as much by coming back some other time, to gladden us with his presence and breathe in the pure air of San Maurizio under our classic pine. It is true that I am no good at ceremonies and compliments, but your goodness will overlook my deficiencies and enjoy some relaxation and some pure air. We are then agreed: any season, the villa will always be open to Don Bosco, and our "good Victor" will always be at his service, even though the bishop himself will be unable to stay at San Maurizio for any length of time.

"Good Victor" was the bishop's domestic. He had waited on Don Bosco with the firm belief that he was waiting on a saint. In return, Don Bosco had behaved toward him with the same affection that St. Francis of Sales had always displayed toward those subordinate to him.

One day, the bishop had gone to Bricherasio for the feast day of the then-blessed Fidelis of Sigmaringa. The maidservant, Louisa Barberis, had been busy with the laundry, so Victor had cooked lunch. Don Bosco had insisted that both Victor and the gardener, Francis Badino, sit down with him at table. Victor humbly brought up excuses in order to decline such an honor, but Don Bosco finally said, "Do you mean that you do not want to come with me? Are we not going to be always together in Heaven?"

At this unexpected remark, Victor did not know what else to say.

How carefully did Don Bosco time everything he did! He always chose the right moment and the right words to use, whether he wished to reprimand or praise someone. Now and then the bishop had to go away. It would not have been advisable to invite Victor to eat with him when the cook was in her usual place, nor would it have been advisable to invite her, too. So on such occasions, he never said anything. When he left, he gave Victor a picture of Mary Help of Christians with these words written beneath it: "May God bless you, and may the holy Virgin protect you along the certain road which leads to Heaven, dear Victor. So be it. Rev. John Bosco." The maid also asked him to write something for her on a holy picture. The saint satisfied her, but addressed her on it as "Mrs. Louisa." She was rather disappointed because he had said dear to Victor, but she did not venture to complain. How tactful Don Bosco was!

We should add that "good Victor" was so good that he would not

accept any gratuity, and even insisted that the saint accept a few golden marengos from his personal savings for the Salesian houses.

Bishop Chiesa's generosity to Don Bosco was all the more meritorious, inasmuch as he lived in somewhat strained financial circumstances. The following year, the saint preferred to go to Mathi, but sent a tangible testimony of his gratitude. At the time, the bishop was collecting donations for work going on at his cathedral. Don Bosco wanted to contribute to this himself and sent him one hundred lire through Father John Baptist Lemoyne. The worthy bishop was so touched by this that he again voiced his sentiments of profound veneration to the servant of God.[13]

[13] At his reiterated invitation, Don Bosco sent this answer: "Thank you for your offer. Perhaps complex business matters prevent me from accepting it. Would you please visit Don Bosco at Mathi's, the paper mill?"

Chapter 8

THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC OF 1884

The cholera epidemic was at the gates of Turin when Don Bosco returned to the Oratory.[1] The fatal disease had first appeared in Toulon on June 4th and entered Marseille around the middle of July; both cities became a hot bed of the deadly plague. It was then that the Salesians understood the mysterious meaning of certain words found in the saint's Christmas letter to Father Joseph Ronchail, the director of the house of Nice: "Tell your sons that this will be an important year for them, for they will witness important events. So they must therefore behave themselves well."[2] Much speculation had sought to guess the meaning of that baneful announcement, but there was no longer any doubt when the epidemic began to spread all through Provence. In the presence of Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father Camillus De Barruel in Turin on July 2nd, Charles Viglietti had asked Don Bosco in the dining room whether the pestilential plague would extend as far as Italy.

"Yes, it will," he answered, "and it will be more terrible than anyone could imagine."

Indeed, this proved to be true. Terror drove the population to abandon the stricken cities, and Italian frontiers and harbors were soon jammed with refugees. There were some isolated victims at Ventimiglia and Saluzzo. The Italian government regularly applied the health regulations to prevent the contagious disease from spreading; yet there were more cholera cases in July and August at Livorno, Rio Maggiore (next to La Spezia) and Pancalieri (next to Pinerolo). The victims were workers who had escaped the vigilant watch at the borders and had returned home to Italy. These localities were immediately isolated and sanitation barriers were strengthened to halt the epidemic. Yet it spread from Piedmont down to Sicily, where the greater majority of refugees were natives of these provinces.

[1] Letter to Count Colle (Turin, August 23, 1884): " I found our own city of Turin surrounded by the cholera epidemic, but the town is completely free of it."

[2] Letter from Father Joseph Ronchail to Father Michael Rua (Nice, July 4, 1884).

The numbers of plague cases and deaths were not high initially, but in September, the epidemic had invaded twenty-four provinces and the number of people stricken had climbed very high in two large cities, La Spezia and Naples. All categories of citizens vied with one another in offering assistance, even when the plague was rampant; it raged so far and wide in the Partenopean capital that within a period of two months, over 6,500 victims had been buried.

It is incredible to learn how much Don Bosco helped to restore calm, which is the best ingredient in warding off danger among the people. In his private and public correspondences and through the columns of the *Bulletin,* he offered the use of the following precautionary means as an infallible preservative: (1) Frequent approach to Holy Communion with the due dispositions; (2) Frequent repetition of the ejaculatory prayer *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis;* (3) Wearing a blessed medal of Mary Help of Christians around the neck and a contribution to some charitable or religious organization in her honor.

Don Bosco categorically wrote the following to the Marchioness Carmela Gargallo of Naples on July 14th for her name day: "With this antidote, you may even go to serve in the Lazaretto's, and you will not contract any sickness."

Naturally, there was an increasing request for medals. On September 5th, Coadjutor Joseph Rossi wrote to Don Bosco: "I think you will be pleased when I tell you about the number of medals that have been taken out of storage and have been distributed these last five days. A total number of sixty-three thousand."

At Pinerolo, Don Bosco kept himself informed on the progress of the epidemic,[3] and sent encouraging words to his Italian and French benefactors. Among others, he wrote to Mrs. Magliano at her country estate in Busca:

The Bishop's Villa, Pinerolo
August 16, 1884

Dear Mrs. Magliano:

The newspapers have announced that there have been a few cases of cholera at Busca. But you, Mrs. Magliano, need not be

[3] Letter to Count Colle (Pinerolo, July 20, 1884): " I keep an eye constantly on the developments of the cholera epidemic."

afraid. Our antidote is a sure one. Nevertheless, should the epidemic spread in the town, you might come to Turin where we are perfectly safe and tranquil, thanks be to God, and so would you be.

Do not worry about either spiritual or material things.

Poor Don Bosco, all his sons, boys, clerics, priests and pupils are praying for you. Mary will heed our prayers. I am here with the bishop of Pinerolo until the 22nd of this month, after which I shall be in Turin.

May Mary protect you and keep you in good health and holiness for the rest of your life. Believe me to be in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Busca was one of the localities hit hardest. This municipality is not very far from Cuneo and is spread out into many hamlets over an area of approximately twenty-eight kilometers. During the winter months, a large percentage of the population emigrates to France, and so in June, the workers who remained in Toulon and Marseille dodged the violence of the armed patrols and quarantines and returned home, carrying the germs of the disease with them. The epidemic was raging when Don Bosco wrote the above letter.

King Humbert, who was hunting in the Valdieri area, hastened to the scene of calamity, bringing abundant comfort and assistance. But only the arrival of five hundred medals succeeded in halting the spread of the epidemic and finally ending it.

How many unfortunate children were deprived of their parents by the scythe of death! Concerned over their unhappy plight, the saint sent the following circular to all the Salesian houses:

August 26, 1884

Dearest Father Director:

There have been instances of cholera announced in the newspapers in many towns and rural areas, not only in France, but also Italy. In view of this threat, I feel I should issue some instructions to all our houses, urging their directors to wisely make them known to their subordinates.

First of all, I recommend the daily benediction with the Blessed

Sacrament in all our churches for as long as this danger shall last, and to offer facilities to the residents of the town to attend the service in localities where the church is open to the public.

Secondly, I recommend that the Salesians and other members of our staff observe all precautions dictated by Christian prudence in order to escape the fatal epidemic.

Thirdly, I wish that whenever necessary, we lend our services to our neighbors in whatever measure our station permits, be it nursing the sick, giving them spiritual assistance, or taking into our hospices the poor boys who have been left orphaned and abandoned due to this raging epidemic. In this last instance, it will however be necessary that, first of all, we consult with the local health authorities to ascertain whether there is any danger that they will infect the other boarders with the germs.

While informing you of the above, I implore the blessings of Heaven for you and all those in your house, and send my most cordial greetings to you and to all my dear children.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. You may express our willingness to take into our hospices any poor boy who has been left an orphan due to the cholera, to the local authorities: the mayor, the prefect, the assistant prefect.

The Salesians did as their father wished. The prefect of the department at Marseille gratefully took up the proposal made to him by the director of St. Leo's Oratory and sent several orphaned boys, encouraging others to send theirs as well. The same thing happened at La Spezia. The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians also did their share. With Don Bosco's full consent, they offered their assistance and turned over their own vacation house of Nizza Monferrato to the municipal authorities for use as a quarantine station for people coming from France. The municipality gratefully accepted their generous offer and sent people there who had just arrived from stricken localities, whom the sisters provided with linen and food. We regret that we cannot give any more examples, but we do know that other houses were also charitably active. We do not have further documentation of what was done because we do not have that data at hand, since it was either lost or never written down.

In the September 30th issue of *l'Unitá Cattolica,* a letter was printed that contained some magnificent praises for the Salesians of La Spezia. It described the desolate aspect of the city, which was beleaguered by armed troops by land and sea, as an immense prison, to which death alone had access. After praising the spirit of abnegation of the local clergy, the correspondent continued:

> It is with delight that I single out for public admiration the priests of the Salesian house who have vied and still continue to vie with the most charitable and generous people of the city. Not only did they offer their own house as a refuge for orphaned, abandoned boys to the local authorities (as their confreres have likewise done in Marseille and elsewhere), but they have risked their own lives by nursing the sick, day and night, advising and keeping up the spirit of people still in good health, but victimized by fear. Although they themselves live entirely by alms and charity, they have even found ways to offer material assistance to needy families, such as clothing, linen and money. Their church, where a miraculous picture of Our Lady of the Snows is venerated, is jammed with a lot of people, and penitents continually besiege the confessionals.

This same article also condemned the provocative insolence of some unbelievers. Indeed, the article appeared at an opportune moment as a retort to the effrontery of a sectarian publication entitled *Il Muratore* (The Mason). The municipality had turned over a number of orphans to the Salesian school and was paying a subsidy for them. In the opinion of the *Freemasonic Journal,* it was an enormous crime to have entrusted these boys "to the care of Don Bosco," and these children, in fact, had fallen "into the clutches of the Catholic harpies that national dignity and charity wanted to see banished forever from human society and decent company." It further stated that the school was meant to be "a place of learning, not of scandalous fables, nor of insults to learning, nor of aberrations;" that Italy asked, wished and demanded that generous youths be trained to be "honest citizens, hard-workers, willing and capable of taking up their rifles to strike down privileges and establish freedom, and not to be rabbits or moles, beings stupefied by Catholic superstition and good only to recite the childish nonsense of the little catechism, the dictionary of idiocy;" that Catholic institutions were "dung-heaps where the sun-

shine of freedom and truth never shone and whence nothing other than feeble consciences, full of asceticism and ignorance, could emerge."

In this article, both concept and form help reveal a frame of mind that unfortunately endured for a time in Italy. But the final sentence is the one which unmasks the reason for the relentless warfare waged by the Freemasonic anticlerical movement, especially in matters of education, against the initiatives of good people, and, hence, against the work of Don Bosco. At that tragic hour, the government, Queen Margherita and King Humbert rendered public tribute to the heroism of the clergy, and the people were afraid to see the rising of that scarecrow, which today is called conciliation. This was always a call to arms for the dominant party, for which the official organ raged with epileptic frenzy: "The brutal violence with which the enemies of the nation are rising everywhere finds an adequate excuse only in the flirtatious love affairs with which (under the auspices of Depretis and a pretty blonde head)[4] both the Vatican and the Quirinal are besmirching themselves. If the population is not constantly on the alert, we shall soon see the Holy Office reinstated." This, too, helps us understand the kind of stormy, perilous sea through which Don Bosco had to steer his vessel, and the kind of expert helmsman he was to have been able to safely guide it into harbor.

It looked as though an invisible hand was keeping the epidemic far away from Turin. However, their safety was uncertain from one day to the next, and Don Bosco offered his services to the mayor of the town, Count de Sambuy, in the likelihood of a tragedy:

Turin, September 24, 1884

Dear Sir:

According to a number of reports, it would seem that the cholera epidemic, which has already been active in some localities of the province, is now approaching and encircling the city of Turin everyday. So notwithstanding the praiseworthy and effective precautions taken by the authorities, there is reason to fear that it will endanger our town folk.

We trust that this will not come about, but in the event that our mutual hopes should be dashed, I think it will be agreeable for you to know that I am prepared to give shelter at the Oratory

[4] An allusion to Queen Margherita of Savoy.

of St. Francis of Sales to any poor boys between the ages of 12 and 16 years who, as a result of this epidemic, have lost their parents and are abandoned, provided that they satisfy the standards of physical health required by the regulations of our institute.

We made a similar offer to the mayor during the cholera epidemic in 1854, and I now gladly renew it, being happy if I can, in any way, contribute to the relief of human suffering.

The only condition that I wish to stipulate is that any boy to whom we are to give a home be first subjected to physical examination by a doctor who will certify that he is free of any symptom of the plague, so as not to endanger the health of the other boys.

We trust that in His mercy, God will spare Turin from all harm. At any rate, I pray Heaven to preserve you long as mayor of this great and illustrious city, together with all the other people on the municipal staff, to protect you all from this fearful plague and to grant us all strength and the courage to do some good to all.

Confident that you will continue to extend your kind benevolence to the young boarders of this house, I am honored to be with great esteem,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

By return mail the mayor addressed this noble answer to him:

Turin, September 25, 1884

Most Reverend Sir:

It is now many years that Your Reverence, inspired by a sentiment of evangelical compassion, has been giving a house to the sons of working classes who were without the means to survive, guidance and comfort. They are now in a constant and loving care, directed and supported along the path of duty, and educated at the school in a type of work that ennobles a human being, is a source of moral and material well being, and makes of boys good citizens, useful for themselves and for the nation.

Your Reverence was good enough to add to these many claims of great merits, which were so highly appreciated by all those con-

cerning themselves with the plight of the working classes, yet another claim calling forth earnest admiration and applause by offering spontaneous and gratuitous hospitality to boys between the ages of 12 and 16 years at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales (of which you are the founder and a caring and talented director) who, in the event of an epidemic of the Asiatic plague in our beloved city, may be orphaned and consequently left abandoned.

Cognizant of its duties, the municipal administration had neglected nothing in order to ensure as far as possible the immunity of our community against the fatal disease that has been bereaving many Italian communities for so long. But should it be our inexorable fate that the cholera epidemic should also reap its crop of victims here, there is no doubt whatsoever that the municipal authorities will avail themselves of the generous offer made by Your Reverence.

Meanwhile, in the name of the Board of the Aldermen before whom I submitted your letter (cited in the margin), I have only words of well-deserving praise and genuine gratitude for you, Most Reverend Sir, for this new gesture of philanthropy, and might I please have this opportunity to express my great personal esteem and gratitude.

The Mayor
De Sambuy

The mayor also called on Don Bosco in connection with another matter. He had received a request from Countess Sanservino Vimercati and Princess Strongoli of Naples, asking him to find accommodation in some institute of the city of Turin for a number of Neapolitan orphans whose parents had died of cholera. Upon receiving an affirmative answer, they quickly sent the first two, who were immediately brought to the Oratory. But when the situation again returned to normal, some relatives of the two boys demanded the return of the boys to their native area, whereupon the two patrician ladies decided not to send anybody else to Turin. When the mayor was informed of what had happened, he expressed regret that the intentions of the relatives had not been thoroughly investigated first, and apologized very courteously to Don Bosco for the incident.[5]

[5] Appendix (document 27).

Don Bosco wished his charity would reach out to the entire world. Late in the fall, news came from India that the cholera epidemic was devastating the country, leaving orphans everywhere. When he heard this, Don Bosco immediately said to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, "Write to the Indian bishops immediately. Let them know that Don Bosco is prepared to take in and give a home to all the boys they can send him." Charity knows no racial distinctions or distance.

There was only one innovation when school reopened at the Oratory. As a rule, pupils applying for enrollment in the high school entered in August for a preparatory training course, but that summer, precaution advised that they be not accepted so soon. Instead, the period to report was postponed until mid-October, and after a trial period of two weeks, they were required to take a fourth-grammar-school-grade equivalency examination, even if they produced evidence that they had been promoted to that class, which was the last grade in grammar schools at the time. Boys failing the exam were reassigned to whoever had sent them to the Oratory to continue their elementary schooling elsewhere.

The basic problem was always the same: where to find financial means. Especially at that time, it became more and more difficult to solve financial problems. We fully understand what Don Bosco meant when he wrote to Count Colle[6] in the beginning of September: "The cholera epidemic has devastated many parts of France and is now devastating Italy most alarmingly. So far, our houses and the boys have been spared. But charity has sorely decreased and we are financially hard-hit and cannot meet our expenses of building and keeping our houses open." Not wanting to leave anything untried, Don Bosco appealed to as many priests as he could, begging them to help him by the gratuitous celebration of Masses. He provided the widest circulation for the following letter:

Turin, October 31, 1884

Very Reverend and charitable Sir:

The sad events that hit our towns this year have brought great hardships, especially to our charitable homes. Many boys, who have been left abandoned by this public calamity, were seeking shelter. I have now decided to appeal to the charity of the clergy

[6] Turin, September 10, 1884.

who, on so many occasions and in so many ways, have come to my assistance to provide shelter for these orphans and get some help for them.

In order to assist me in this charity, a few pious persons have asked me to celebrate a certain number of Masses, and appealed to charitable priests to come to my assistance by celebrating them themselves or by finding others to celebrate whatever number of Masses they in their charity deemed possible.

Such priests that may be able to assist in this charitable activity are requested to inform Rev. Luigi Deppert, prefect of the sacristy of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

Would you kindly inform the above-mentioned priest of the number of Masses you think you can celebrate within a year and yield the stipend assigned for this purpose?

The boys benefiting from this charitable gesture will attend holy Mass every day, offer up special prayers and frequent Communions for their benefactors.

I join the boys thus benefited in invoking the blessings of Heaven upon the meritorious donors and their families.

With profound gratitude in Jesus Christ, I am,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Our readers might be expecting some news about the results of Don Bosco's antidote. It will not be an exaggeration to say that it worked real miracles. The "good Victor" of Pinerolo was stricken by the plague as he was attending Mass and was obliged to leave the church. He dragged himself painfully back to the villa and asked Charles Viglietti for a blessed medal. As soon as the good man put it around his neck, he immediately felt that he was cured. Before leaving Pinerolo to go and care for the victims of the epidemic, the sisters of St. Joseph first wanted a medal and a blessing from Don Bosco. He promised them that they would all come home again safe and sound, which they did. The bishop attributed the safety of his diocese from all infection to Don Bosco's presence in it.

Reports informing him about the medal were sent from a thousand different places to Don Bosco and the Oratory. Father Trione had administered the Extreme Unction to someone stricken by cholera in Turin. The man's family had wanted no part of doctors, due to the customary current

prejudices. The poor fellow was near death, but as soon as he put the medal around his neck, his vomiting ceased, and soon all symptoms causing alarm disappeared.

The Salesians distributed medals generously on August 23rd to both the boarders and "day hops" of La Spezia. All the boys who obediently put on the blessed object emerged from the epidemic safe and sound. A few of the "day hops" died, however, but it was later discovered that none of them had attributed any significance to the medal.

A tragic occurrence confirmed the fact that immunity was due to nothing else than the goodness of Mary. A poor woman who had heard of the wonders wrought by the medal hastened to procure one. She put it around the neck of her six-year-old daughter who was in the grip of the plague. The child's condition improved visibly, but when her father got home and noticed the holy medal, he wrenched it off her, flinging it away with vile and blasphemous words. The disease regained its grip over the child and never stopped. As the child was about to die, she joined her little hands in prayer and her enraged father forced them apart, not wanting her appeal to God.

The president of the anticlerical association, which ostentatiously bore the likeness of Satan on its flagstaff, showed greater wisdom, for when he was seized by cramps and was taken to the Lazaretto, he sent people in search of a medal, although he did not wish to make his confession. He put the medal around his neck and was cured.

In the city, the immunity of everyone who was wearing one of these medals was so evident that in order to distract public attention from it, the radicals began to broadcast the rumor that it had been the Catholics who spread the germs of the cholera epidemic among the population.

It is very interesting to read what happened in Genoa. The Freemasons had organized teams of nurses in every ward of the city that strove to keep priests away from the beds of the sick. One courageous citizen, Frank De Amicis, organized teams of Catholics that reported to the mayor with the blessing of the archbishop. The mayor asked him what badge his nurses would be wearing so that they might be recognized, and he replied, "The medal of Mary Help of Christians." There was a burst of laughter among those listening, but the fact remains that Mr. De Amicis informed Don Bosco as follows in a letter dated October 22nd: "Your beautiful Madonna has saved all the people on my teams and my own humble person from the plague." It must be remembered that all men and nuns, several hundred of them,

took turns in their service to the sick for approximately fifty days.[7]

The medals of Mary Help of Christians blessed by Don Bosco brought safety to France as well. Provincial Father Albera reported to Don Bosco from Marseille:[8]

> The city is all entirely abandoned. More than one hundred thousand people have left it; many streets are entirely abandoned. Yet despite this exodus, there are still about ninety or one hundred deaths every day. It is maintained that of these only two-thirds die of the cholera epidemic. But it is, nevertheless, a terrible calamity, and the death rate in Marseille, which normally averages barely thirty-three or thirty-five when the entire population is here, is exceptionally high. Some of the victims die within a period of only a few hours, while others last a little longer. It was possible to save some lives. But our house, thanks also to the protection of Mary Help of Christians, has not had one single case of the plague, thanks also to the precautionary measures taken, just as you promised. I might say more explicitly, now and then we did detect all the symptoms of cholera in some poor boy or other, but we had the joy of seeing those symptoms disappear completely in only a few hours. It is a miracle by Our Lady! There are still over one hundred and fifty boys living in the house, and I do not think they will be taken away, even if the epidemic were to rage more violently than it is raging now, either because they all come from Marseille itself or because their relatives are unable to take them home. Even the boys who did go home are all in excellent health; not one of them has been stricken with the plague. Every boy had a medal of Mary Help of Christians around his neck, and they all do everything they can to comply with the instructions you gave them to ward off the infection. Another comforting piece of news: so far none of our friends and benefactors have fallen sick.

Father Paul Albera mentions Don Bosco's promise. It was truly surprising the tone of assurance with which the saint promised that the

[7] We can read a detailed report by Mr. De Amicis, dated November 13th, in Father John Baptist Lemoyne's The Powerful Virgin or Several Graces, etc. (Turin, Tip, Salesiana, 1885, page 128 and following).

[8] Salesian Bulletin (September, 1884).

French, too, would be safe. On July 1st, he wrote to Father Joseph Ronchail, the director of the house of Nice: "It looks as if God means to pay us a visit. Make sure that our boys and our friends have that sure antidote against the cholera on them: a medal of Mary Help of Christians and the ejaculatory prayer *Maria, Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis."* On August 18th he wrote Mlle. Louvet: "I have some wonderful news for you: all our houses in France and all the benefactors of our boys have been spared in this epidemic that is devastating France, and all this thanks to Mary Help of Christians."

But he referred to the following year with grim words when he wrote to Father Paul Albera in November:

Turin, November 15, 1884

Dearest Father Albera:

I wrote the letters as specified to the people in question. I trust they will have a good effect.

Please give my affectionate regards to our confreres, and particularly to our boys. Tell them all that this year has been a good one and that we should thank Our Lord with a full heart. I am afraid that during the coming year we shall again be afflicted by this same calamity, but I cannot find it in me to promise that we shall be safe from the cholera unless you all come to my assistance. Now how can this be? Help me with your good conduct, with your frequent Communions and especially by rigorously turning away from those things that are contrary to modesty.

God bless us all. Pray for my health, which is always unstable.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Truly enough, the epidemic again made its appearance in Marseille during the summer of 1885. As early as January 31st, Don Bosco had remarked when speaking of the cholera: "Last year, I could give a certain assurance that if one were to wear the medal of Mary Help of Christians with the conditions prescribed, he would be saved from the Asiatic plague. But I do not know whether Our Lady will again be as compassionate this year under identical circumstances."

These words justify the belief that the saint's certainty during the

previous year was based on some heavenly revelation or some indubitable inspiration, especially since in 1885, he could make the following statement in all simplicity and firmness in his January circular letter to all the cooperators: "You know how towns and villages in Italy and France were invaded by the terrible cholera epidemic for a period of some months this year, and thousands and thousands of victims were harvested by death. In His mercy, God chose to protect all the Salesian houses and their boarders from this dreadful calamity. I fervently trust that He was equally as merciful to you and all those dear to you."

Some evil-minded journalists would certainly have wished to deny the truth of such an assertion. However, no one, anywhere, rose up to contradict him.

Chapter 9

DON BOSCO AND THE NATIONAL EXHIBIT OF TURIN

Turin was in a festive mood on April 26, 1884! The sovereigns of Italy with the intervention of the entire royal family, the diplomatic corps and dignitaries of state were solemnly inaugurating the National Exhibit for Science, Industry and Art. The king's brother, Prince Amedeus, was president of the honorary committee; Parliamentary Deputy Tommaso Villa was the president of the executive committee. The exhibit buildings were located on the left bank of the Po River in the beautiful park surrounding Valentino castle.

Don Bosco had planned to present only the Salesian print shop at the exhibit with a display of its products. He had filed an application to participate in May 1883, and had received the admission letter on July 16th that assigned a prominent area in the gallery to him (this was the name usually given then to what we now call a pavilion) to display his graphic art productions. And so he had a thousand volumes of all kinds and qualities transported there: scientific, literary, historical, didactic and religious books, as well as illustrated editions, the Salesian *Bulletin* in three languages (Italian, French and Spanish),[1] and essays on drawing and other matters pertaining to elementary, technical and high schools. All these books were arranged on elegantly built shelves, where they made a handsome show with their fancy, costly bindings. Everything was already in perfect order when the exhibit was inaugurated.[2]

Later on, his original plan took on more imposing proportions. The Honorable Villa had visited the Zurich exhibit in Switzerland the previous fall and had gone to see one of the most reputable factories in the city. He had been very impressed by a magnificent machine being built to manu-

[1] The Spanish *Bulletin* was printed in Buenos Aires.

[2] An article appearing in *Il Capitano Fracassa* (Rome, May 5th) entitled "The Exhibit of Literature" read as follows: "Two publishers stand out above the rank and file. Sonzogno, who, if nothing else, is a large-scale speculator who deals in literature as the slave-traders dealt with slaves, and Don Bosco, publisher of the Salesian *Bulletin*, which does better service for the Vatican than the thirty publishers in whose showcases one may admire the pompous illuminations featured in the didactic section."

facture paper. When he asked for whom it was being built and he was told that it was for a *Signor* Bosco of Italy, he had interrupted, "You may safely say for *Don Bosco* because this man is known to everybody."

In all truth, Don Bosco had ordered this new machine for his paper mill at Mathi Torinese. When Villa returned to Turin, he had insisted that this magnificent piece of machinery grace the pavilion at the exhibit. Don Bosco consented without hesitation on the sole condition that he be assigned an entire pavilion so that he could set up and operate every other piece of machinery required in bookmaking. If at first this demand seemed excessive, it was not on a subsequent consideration, once he had thoroughly explained his outstanding project. In fact, the committee even decided to build a pavilion for his use in a courtyard alongside the gigantic pavilion. This new pavilion was fifty-five meters long and twenty meters wide. The sign on the entrance door read the following:

DON BOSCO
Paper Mill, Print Shop, Type Foundry, Bookbinding Establishment
and Salesian Bookstore.

Villa had rightly said that Don Bosco was well known; nevertheless in those days, it did seem out-of-place for a priest to be an exhibitor in a national exhibit, and in the section dedicated to labor, to boot. Therefore, quite a few people smiled when they passed by and read that inscription, imagining that inside there would be articles of no interest to them pertaining to the sacristy. But once they had overcome their prejudice and gone inside, they were immediately impressed by two novel features: the labor and the laborers. The latter were all boys of varying ages, who won over the admiration of all visitors because of their application to their task, their concentration and the quiet competence with which all of them attended to their own individual tasks. General attention was riveted on the evolution of their work from start to finish, and this pavilion became one of the features that aroused the greatest interest in the exhibit.

It had been Don Bosco's intention to give a practical demonstration of the intricate and varied work entailed in the manufacturing of books. The public watched curiously at the gradual process by which a heap of soiled rags became, at long last, an elegantly bound book of verse. As we have already mentioned, none of the more realistic preliminary stages were omitted: division and selection of rags, removal of dust, boiling and

pulping processes.[3] Then came a complicated mechanical process: refining paste cylinders, the vat with accessories for conveying the paste into the gear, the continuous paper process, paper cutting machine to produce pages of the required size, the rolling press and rotary press, and everything else required for arranging paper in packages and reams. This was the first opportunity for many people to watch how the milky paste was gradually purified of all sediment, purged of its last fibrous fragments, drained of water, converted into some kind of textile, stiffened and dried, pressed, clear-finished, rolled and scored. One newspaper described this as the "queen of all machinery on display at the exhibit."[4] It hailed it as such a month before it appeared on display; but other newspapers appropriated the term for themselves once they saw it in action on June 21st. Don Bosco attended the inauguration in person, together with Father Margotti, the theologian, and Father Celestine Durando, and received the most enthusiastic compliments from a number of eminent men who were introduced to him at the exhibit.

A four-columned press with a dynamic indicator was next to the rotary press of the paper mill, being a twin invention of Father Charles Ghivarello. Immediately behind it were two small machines used for the smelting of type (the letters emerged from them fair and clean to be deposited in the boxes of the typesetters nearby). Next was a big printing machine in full activity (it was printing *Fabiola* and the little catechism), and then came all the equipment needed for binding and selling books.[5]

Two serious accidents threatened to cast their blight over Don Bosco's exhibit during the first few days. One had to thank Mary Help of Christians if the likelihood of mourning was thus averted.

On June 30th, a sixteen-year-old boy named Marzano Bertotti from Tortona was told to carefully clean everything found underneath the paper machine. Growing tired, he stopped a moment to rest and looked toward the center of the pavilion. In his momentary distraction, he put his right hand against one of the big cylinders, which was in action. Since he was

[3] The paste manufactured in the pavilion was not enough to meet the requirements of the daily production, so a special tank car was specifically purchased to supply the required quantity every day. The machine manufactured about ten tons of paste every day.

[4] *L'Unita Cattolica* (May 22, 1884).

[5] Likewise, a four-wheeled cart was brought, like those used for house deliveries of goods arriving by rail, and it brought the material needed by the various sections every morning, as well as food for the staff, who ate at midday in the dining room on the premises. At night, the same cart brought back the daily production to the Oratory. About twenty people were working in the pavilion, counting boys and adults. This information was obtained from Chevalier Giuseppe Mascarelli, who is still alive (May 1934), and had been apprentice type-smelter at the time.

caught by surprise, he did not have time to withdraw his hand when he realized his danger before the cylinder wedged his hand beneath a second cylinder. A sheet of paper could barely pass unscathed between the two of them. In an instant, the boy's hand and arm were skinned and crushed between the two solid cylinders, while the sleeve of his shirt on the left arm, with which he had tried to protect the right arm, was caught in the same vice and sucked inward. So as not to frighten the public, he did not shout out, but his excessive pain wrenched a deep groan from him. That was sufficient to attract the attention of the machine operator who was luckily standing nearby. Very cleverly, he detached the strap that activated the two cylinders, and the machine instantly stopped.

The boy was rushed to the first aid station in serious condition and then was quickly transported by coach to the hospital of San Giovanni, where he was immediately given treatment. By the grace of Heaven, his alarming symptoms disappeared in a few days and he returned to the Oratory and recovered completely in a month.

The second accident occurred on July 3rd to Egidio Franzioni of Milan, a fifteen-year-old boy assigned to the paper-cutting machine. That day, the filter was not working properly and failed to throw the paper when cut to the proper place. The boy tried to catch the sheets that were not being properly propelled, but his timing was off and the knife sliced off the index finger of his right hand. The recollection of the accident three days earlier in which his classmate had been injured prevented him from crying out in pain. After stamping on the floor, he rushed to the first aid station, had his hand bandaged and he was sent back to the Oratory. He, too, was free of all pain a few weeks later, having suffered only the loss of his finger.

His father was an actor who had already been the recipient of a great grace prior to the opening of the exhibit. Near death from an attack of typhoid fever, he had made his confession and prepared himself with great devotion to receive the Extreme Unction because, as he himself later admitted, he had been seriously afraid of dying. But after he received the Last Sacraments, his condition improved so rapidly that he was nearly convalescent the very next day. A few days after that, his health was completely restored.

By his magnificent participation in the exhibit, Don Bosco looked forward to two advantages of a religious and moral order: to show that the clergy, too, were earnestly concerned with the arts and progress in them, and to give a good example on how to sanctify the Sundays. The press of the

opposition balked at this obedience to the precepts of the Church, but avoided any outright attack on it with a tacit agreement to do nothing that would be detrimental to the exhibit. *Il Fischietto,* which would not have restrained its language on any other occasion, put malice into an imaginary conversation between a visitor to the exhibit and a member of the committee.

The visitor asked, "What is happening? Don Bosco's machines are all at a standstill while the others are in action. Does not this exhibit form part of the Pavilion of Labor?"

"It certainly does," replied the committee member. "But you see it is Sunday today, and Don Bosco represents the Sunday rest in the Labor Pavilion."

"Blessed are those who can afford to rest!" the visitor concluded emphatically.

One should not believe that Don Bosco found it easy to obtain consent to such a condition. He stood firm, repeating that he did not wish to profane the Lord's Day, and the executive committee did not want to risk losing the magnificent machine. In the end, Don Bosco was victorious.

Don Bosco also had to contend with Protestants who were distributing leaflets at the entrance to the exhibit. These leaflets were the lists of their fellow believers in Turin, Caserta, Civitavecchia, Florence, Genoa, Leghorn, Naples, Rome and Tivoli. At the same time, the Protestants were selling pamphlets and books of propaganda. One pamphlet and book are of particular interest to us.

The title of the pamphlet was *"A Respectful Letter of G. P. Meille, pastor of the Evangelical Waldensian Church, to His Eminence the Most Reverend Cardinal Alimonda, Archbishop of Turin."* The evangelical pastor took advantage of an event that occurred in the town. Augustus of the baronial family Meyer, a man posing as a doctor who was originally from Geneva, had recanted his heresy together with his wife before His Eminence in the bishop's private chapel in the presence of more than a hundred priests. Meille revealed the fact that the false doctor was none other than Caesar Augustus Bufacchi from Rome, who had already apostatized three times and who had likewise recanted three times, deceiving the generosity of Catholics and swindling them. The Waldensian pastor used this ignoble trickery now to show how Catholics are too quick to accept lies written about Protestants. This was not all: the unscrupulous minister sought to discredit the archbishop in the eyes of the population because the royal family and the duke of Genoa had received him with unusual honors. The whole ugly maneuver upset Don Bosco for several

reasons, so he instructed Father John Bonetti to elaborate and publish an answer to it. Father John Bonetti felt at home in this type of literature, and he wrote a rousing pamphlet entitled *"Truth and Trickery."* As we read it over, a temperate strain of ideas and language comes forward that could not have been spontaneous, but inspired and wanted by Don Bosco.

A volume of 343 tightly printed pages written by yet another Waldensian (this time anonymously and sold for only one lira outside the gates of the exhibit) was left unchallenged. The book was page after page of vicious attacks on Don Bosco's *Companion to Youth*.[6] The odd title is thus explained by the author in the warning that acts as a preface:

> I took the word *boccia* and its derivatives from our dialectic expression *boccia* (bowling), since in the Italian language, it would be hard to find any other word that contained so vivid and popular a synthesis of Don Bosco's books. As a matter of fact, since here in Piedmont *boccia* does not have any other meaning than one of nine big wooden balls in which the game of *bocce* consists, the continuous dogmatic charges of the Roman Church, as represented today by the builder Don Bosco, resemble the constantly rolling *bocce* that knock against each other, rejecting one another respectively on the ground, in the popular, noisy games. That's why they stand as a tragic and most arduous opposition to the immutable, serious, heartening and never contradictory Evangelical doctrines. Never before was any house built with bocce or other round material objects.

Starting with the profile of St. Aloysius with which this tender manual of piety opens, the disciple of Waldo reviewed Don Bosco's book page by page, underlining error and contradictions, crazy theories, quibbles, lies, heretical doctrines. One can infer the thesis and purposes of this literary "meatball" (we borrow the term applied to the *Companion to Youth*) from the following remark on page 66: "Oh! My boys, abandon the soliloquies of this obscure and contradicting doctor and receive what the Living Spring, the Gushing Spring, the true Master says to you." In other words, abandon the Catholic teaching and embrace the Gospel, according to Peter Waldo. One single fruit from the tree of the Waldensian Gospel such, as this book, is enough in itself to reveal the nature of the tree that

[6] *Don Bosco's Bowling Pins* or *The Youth Well Stocked With Confusion*, Torre Pellice, Tip. (Alpina, 1884).

produced it. The insolent terms used to attack Don Bosco may have been very Waldensian, but they were certainly not evangelical.

A priest from the area of Trent, who made the saint's acquaintance at the Turin exhibit, published and distributed an excellent booklet entitled *"Don Bosco and His Works."* The idea came from what he read in the *Guide to the Exhibit.* In describing the Labor Pavilion, it read:

> The famous Don Bosco, a priest whose activity we would like any liberal to own, occupies a whole courtyard to the right of the exhibit grounds.[7] Who is this priest who has succeeded in impressing the very liberal? If you were to see him, you would not detect anything that would reveal a sublime genius; he is a simple priest who is barely sixty-nine years old, and whose countenance shows a good deal more than seventy years. Look at him intently for a moment and on his brow you will see clearly written the spell of the Divine Spirit which inspired him and which has chosen him as the instrument for such mighty works. Look at him for a moment and you will find it impossible not to feel overcome by veneration and love for this white-haired old man. His welcome is cordial, his glance keen, his smile delightful, his conversation witty, and some kind of goodness radiates from his countenance and personality that enchants you and captivates you.

From his visit to Valdocco, the author quotes these words of Don Bosco: "There is bread in my house, and Divine Providence provides us with it day by day. There is work and everyone has to work for three. There is Paradise because those who eat and work for God are entitled to a little corner in Heaven." Printed in striking wide-type letters, the thirteen pages can be read in a single breath and must have been useful to quell the attacks of his misinformed critics.

It is a well-known fact that exhibits bring entertainment and various kinds of celebrations in their wake. Joseph Torretta, a manufacturer of Torrone, exhibited his products in the Labor Pavilion. Since he was from Don Bosco's own part of the country, he boasted that he had known him as a child. Since the committee of that section of the exhibit offered a banquet to all participants for a contribution of twenty-five lire, Torretta was asked to invite Don Bosco to underwrite it. He wrote him a letter full

[7] *Guide to the Italian Exhibit in Turin,* Sonzogno, page 105 (Milan, 1884).

of prayers and exhortations, but *consideratis considerandis,* Don Bosco decided that it was wiser for Father Michael Rua to pay his twenty-five lire, apologize for his absence and say that he was away. At that time, he was staying at Pinerolo.[8]

For those who barely knew Don Bosco or not at all, it was a surprise and a revelation to meet him among the exhibitors; while for those who already knew something about him, it represented yet one more reason to admire him. Thus, someone who had just gotten back from Turin expressed his amazement in a popular periodical in Reggio Emilia. We learn from this author that Don Bosco's pavilion was continually packed with pleased and amazed visitors.[9]

As the time approached for the exhibit to close, prizes were to be awarded to the exhibitors. The different sections appointed their own jury that began their examinations in the latter part of September. Once the examinations were over, a jury of revision was appointed to look into any protests formulated against the decisions of the jury that, however, were not final. When informed of the verdict concerning him, Don Bosco felt that the prize awarded him was inferior to what he deserved. No particular consideration had been given to the paper mill because the machine was not of Italian make, and only a simple silver medal was awarded for the general typographical craftsmanship. This campaign, which tended to depreciate Don Bosco's activities in the publishing area, had begun some time in advance. The official journal of the exhibit had already said that only "ordinary, quite common books" were printed in his pavilion. The falsity of this statement was immediately pointed out and contradicted by the fact that *Fabiola,* a handsome volume illustrated by one hundred engravings, was being printed there. But the error was never retracted and the jury merely assigned a silver medal to the Salesian Printing Shop for "spreading its publications throughout the world, for its modest prices, and the magnificent lay-out of the pavilion itself which showed how a book is manufactured from rags to paper, from paper to printing and binding."

In defense of his rights, Don Bosco first wrote his complaints to the executive committee and the revisionary jury, adding that if the verdict were not revised in connection with his participation, he would decline all official recognition and be satisfied only with the generous acceptance he had received from the public. This was the letter he wrote:

[8] Letter from Viglietti to Don Bosco (Pinerolo, August 17, 1884).
[9] *Il Reggianello* (October 4, 1884).

Turin, October 25, 1884

Office of the Revisionary Jury
To the Honorable Executive Committee:

On the 23rd, a letter was written in my name to the Honorable Committee in which some observations were made about the verdict of the jury and the silver medal award that had apparently been awarded to the varied productions of my printing shop on exhibit in the Didactic Pavilion of the Italian Exhibit.

In resuming this argument, I feel that it is only legitimate that, for the information of the jury, I should make a few observations myself:

For the last 16 years, a monthly publication of the Italian Classics, expurgated for the youthful reader with scientific annotations, has been printed in my printing establishment here in Turin, and the issues thus published have already surpassed 300,000 in number. The economic edition of our monthly publication of popular readings, which from its first appearance has now attained its 33rd year, has already reached two million copies. Six million copies have been printed of the 100th edition of *A Companion to Youth,* and other smaller books of the same nature have been distributed in an inestimable number. Latin and Greek Classics with commentaries for use in secondary schools were extensively distributed over the last 20 years. Latin, Italian and Greek dictionaries with their respective grammar books were compiled by professors of my schools and have been much appreciated and praised by competent men of universal fame, which has been substantiated by the plentiful, frequent new editions printed. Furthermore, there have been other books on history, pedagogy, geography, and arithmetic, all duly appreciated and widely circulated and sold at very low prices so that they might be suited to every purse or a large-scale distribution. We have also produced a substantial number of publications of various sizes and entity, illustrated by engravings or not illustrated, but always handsome as to paper and print, and many other publications that, for the sake of brevity, I will not mention. But all of this seems to be, in my eyes, sufficient reason to interest the jury in charge of the examination and induce it to assign a prize that would not be inferior to those awarded to other exhibitors whose products, both in quality and quantity, are inferior to mine.

I would also point out to the jury that all the above- listed editions were printed in my printing establishment by poor boys who had found shelter in my school and who were thus taught to earn an honest livelihood for themselves later on. Yet despite this, the quality of the work (in the opinion of competent craftsmen of the trade) was not inferior to other products on exhibit by other publishers who obtained not only prizes equivalent to mine, but as I have been told, superior to my own.

Nor should I omit to say that my works were not properly visited and compared by the jury and that, therefore, it would not seem to me that the verdict was passed with full knowledge of facts regarding the merit thereof, as a few expert publishers remarked in comparing our books with those of others in reference to the handsome printing executed in the pavilion where my paper mill was in full view of the public.

If I understand rightly, a mere certificate of merit was assigned to my paper mill and I was excluded from the number of competitors and prizewinners. Granting that the paper machine was not given any consideration because it was not made in Italy, it still seems to me that some consideration should have been given to the work improved by it and to the industriousness of the purchaser, who in spite of the high expenses of his work, is now promoting craftsmanship and labor to larger-scale production in Italy at the present Italian Exhibit.

I am also surprised that the jury did not give any thought to my typographic foundry, nor to the typesetting, printing and binding of books, all activities which were constantly seen in action in the pavilion, and thanks to which the intricate operation by which a book is manufactured "from rags to paper, to type smelting, printing and binding" was performed before the eyes of the public.

In view of all these reasons, the favorable reaction of the public was unanimous, and this, too, should be taken into consideration when the jury assigned the prizes.

I, therefore, ask the Honorable Committee to revise its verdict through the medium of the revisionary jury, so as to issue one more award in keeping with its merits of the above-mentioned activities without giving the public any reason to formulate negative opinions in this connection.

I trust that these remarks of mine will be taken into due con-

sideration. But if this should not be so, then, as of now, I forego all prizes or certificates and enjoin on this committee that orders be given that no mention be made to the press either of the verdict or of the prize and certificate in question.

In such an event, it is sufficient for me to know that I had an opportunity of contributing to the magnificent exhibit of the Italian genius and industry, and that I have demonstrated with facts the eagerness with which I have dedicated myself for more than 40 years to the moral and material welfare of poor and abandoned youth and the true progress of science and of the arts.

The appreciation of the public, who had the chance of becoming acquainted personally with the nature of my work and my collaborators, is a reward enough for me.

I avail myself of this opportunity to wish God's bounty upon the honorable committee and jury and remain with the greatest esteem,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

But the revisionary jury was not compelled by Don Bosco's arguments to redistribute the awards, but merely added a paltry certificate of merit to the silver medal awarded to the printing display, which was the equivalent of the formal, meager token of thanks issued to every exhibitor in the Labor Pavilion. The Catholic press rose up in arms against this monstrous act of injustice.[10] With so many Freemasons on the committee and juries, the dull-witted, anticlerical mind of the 19th century could only taint with its partisan spirit, an enterprise inaugurated in the capital of Piedmont under the best possible auspices of general rejoicing and harmony. "Men of common sense and intelligence maintain that Don Bosco deserved the Award of Honor," *Il Corriere di Torino* wrote. "The great crime of this venerable priest is that he opposes and obstructs most powerfully radical and Republican propaganda among young people," *l'Eco d'Italia* explained, "and he also labors unceasingly and with magnificent results for a Christian solution (which is the only possible one) of the serious social problem."[11]

[10] *Amico del Popolo* of Prato (October 31st, November 8th and 15th); *l'Eco d'Italia* (Genoa, November 9th); *Diritto Cattolico* (Modena, November 11th); *Il Corriere di Torino* (November 13th); *Libertá Cattolica* (Naples, November 13th). *L'Unitá Cattolica* remained silent, but it is highly probable that it did so because Don Bosco, who was a friend of Margotti and an enemy of controversy, wanted it that way.

[11] A cooperator from Lyons, who very probably was a priest, visited Don Bosco, the Oratory and the exhibit, and then described his impressions in a noble letter that was published in the French edition of the *Bulletin* in December (Appendix, document 28).

Chapter 18

A FATHER'S TESTAMENT AND A POPE'S PLAN

His fading strength and increasing discomfort made Don Bosco sure his death was imminent. He added this postscript to a letter he wrote to Father Joaquim Berto on October 17th: "We must never forget that the time you and I must render an account of our actions to our Lord is not too far off." His thoughts turned to what might happen after his death, and occasionally, he would write down things that he wanted his sons to know when he passed into eternity. He did not have a pre-established plan in doing so or any special order of ideas to be systematically expressed, but he started jotting down whatever ideas came to his mind in a plain little notebook during the month of September. It is evident that his thoughts were disconnected and haphazard from the way he would insert letters here and there, which his successor was to collect, copy and send to certain people who casually came to his mind as he wrote. Overlooking such letters for the moment, we shall publish the fatherly warnings with the most scrupulous integrity that the good father left his beloved sons, like a spiritual testament, in the likelihood that he would soon be leaving them "orphans:"

> For some time after my death, my successor will see to it that: (1) all construction works are suspended; (2) no new houses are founded and no debts are to be paid in installments. Let ordinary soliciting be used to pay succession dues; wipe out debts and complete the personnel number in the existing houses; (3) people are informed of my death with a personal letter, our main benefactors are thanked and asked to continue to be our benefactors. Be sure to tell them that if by the mercy of our Lord, I go to Heaven, I shall invoke the divine blessings every moment upon all and upon everyone; (4) an invitation be made to all the Salesians to be calm on that occasion. No tears, but courage and sacrifices of all kinds, so that they may persevere in the Society and support the undertakings divine providence has entrusted to us; (5) the boys are told to pray that God may shorten my sufferings in Purgatory if, as I hope, God

grants me the favor of dying in His holy grace; (6) all the Salesians are told that I hope to see them in the blessed eternity.[1]

THE SUPERIOR CHAPTER[2]:

The Chapter shall meet after my death, and shall be ready for any emergency. No one should leave unless it is absolutely necessary.

In agreement with the prefect, my vicar[3] shall compile and read out in the Chapter a letter to be addressed to all Salesians, informing them of my death and urging them to pray for me and for a happy choice of my successor.

Let him schedule a day for the election of the new Rector Major, leaving a sufficient margin of time to permit Salesians from America or other far away countries to attend, unless prevented from so doing by absolutely necessary reasons.[4]

I here list two things of the utmost importance: (1) maintain secrecy in regard to deliberations taken by the Chapter. If there is anything to be communicated to others, appoint some specific person to do it. Be very careful not to mention the names of the members of the Chapter who have given either an affirmative or negative vote or who said anything to this effect; (2) abide by and never change the principle of not keeping any property of estates, save our house or the environment necessary in the interests of the health of either the Salesians or our pupils. To retain interest-bearing property is an affront to divine providence, which has constantly come to our aid in a most wonderful and, I might also say, miraculous manner.

Observe great caution when authorizing building or repairs of houses, and avoid luxury, splendor and elegance. As soon as any comfort makes its appearance in our personal life – in our rooms or houses – then our Congregation will begin to decline.

TO ALL MY BELOVED SONS IN JESUS CHRIST:

After my burial, my Vicar, in agreement with the prefect, should convey to all the confreres these last thoughts of my mortal existence:

Dear and beloved sons in Jesus Christ:

1 These six warnings are not in the notebook, but on a separate piece of paper.

2 Don Bosco himself specified the various headings.

3 The words underlined were added at a later date by Don Bosco while Father Michael Rua was acting as vicar.

4 The adverb was added later.

Before leaving for my eternity, I have some duties to fulfill toward you and, thus, fulfill a wish most dear to my heart.

First of all, thank you for your most lively affection, for your obedience to me and for all the work that you have done to support and expand our Congregation.

I am leaving you here on this earth, but only for a little while. I do hope that God's infinite mercy will grant us to meet, all of us together, in the blessed eternity.

I will be waiting for you there. Kindly, do not cry over my death. This is a debt that we all have to pay, but then we will be abundantly rewarded for all the hardships we have endured out of love for our Master, for our good Jesus.

Instead of weeping, make firm and active resolutions to persevere steadfastly in your vocation unto death. Be vigilant so that neither your love of the world, nor your affection for your family nor your desire for a more comfortable life may lead you to make the enormous blunder of profaning the sacred vows, and thus betray the religious profession by which we consecrate ourselves to our Lord. Let no one take back that which we have given to God.

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future with the exact observance of our constitutions.

Your first rector is dead, but our real Superior, Jesus Christ, will not die. He will always be our Master, our Guide, and our Model; but keep in mind also at the same time, that He will also be our Judge, and will reward us for our faithful service.

Your rector is dead, but another will be elected who will take care of you and your eternal salvation. Listen to him, obey him, and pray for him as you have done for me.

Goodbye, beloved sons, goodbye. I await you in Heaven. There we shall talk of God and Mary, Mother and Supporter of our Congregation. There for all eternity shall we bless this Congregation of ours, in which the observance of its rules so powerfully and so effectively helped to save us. *Sit nomen Domini benedictum ex hoc nunc et usque in saeculum. In te Domine speravi, non confundar in aeternum.*

ELECTION OF THE NEW SUPERIOR:

After my burial, the electors will gather and meet in an estab-

lished place to do what has been prescribed in regard to prayers for the deceased rector, and to elect and acknowledge immediately the new superior of the Congregation.

It will be well that the Holy Father be informed of everything and that his special blessing be implored on this highly important act.

Each elector shall, without heeding either his personal affections or hopes of any kind, give his vote to whomever he deems most suited to ensure the greater glory of God and the welfare of our pious Society. Therefore: (1) he must be well known for his scrupulous observance of our rules; (2) he must never have been involved in any matter which might have compromised him before either civil or ecclesiastical authorities, or which may have caused him to be hated or become disliked by the members of our Society; (3) he must also be known for his attachment to the Holy See and all things in anyway connected.

Once the new Rector Major has been elected, acknowledged and proclaimed, all the electors shall kiss his hand, then kneel down and sing the *Te Deum*. They shall then give him a tangible token of their submission to him by renewing their vows as is customary during the time of spiritual retreats.

THE NEW RECTOR MAJOR:

1. He shall say a few words to his electors. He should thank them for their confidence in him, give them the assurance that it is his intention to be a father, friend, and brother to them all, and ask for their cooperation and advice when he may need it.
2. He shall immediately inform the Holy Father of his election and will place himself and the Salesian Society at the orders and the advice of the Supreme Head of the Church.
3. He shall send out a circular letter to all members of the Salesian Society, and another letter to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.
4. He will then write another letter to our benefactors and cooperators, thanking them on my behalf for what they have done for us while I was here on earth, and begging them to continue to assist the Salesians in their undertakings. Always firmly hoping to be welcomed into the mercy of the Lord, from there I will unceasingly pray for them.

> But let this be marked well, said and preached that Our Lady Help of Christians has obtained particular graces, even extraordinary and miraculous graces, for those who contribute to giving a Christian education to endangered youth with their deeds, advice, good example or prayers.

Having fulfilled these initial, important obligations, the new rector shall then apply himself to investigate the financial situation of the Congregation. He must investigate to find out whether there are any debts and when they are to be paid.

It is advisable that, at least for a time, no new houses be founded and no new buildings or any new work be undertaken unless they are absolutely necessary.

I especially wish to urge you not to let people know about any debts left by the deceased rector. This would only indicate defective administration both on the part of the administrators and the superior, and would give rise to mistrust in public opinion.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS FOR THE SUPERIOR CHAPTER:

Should any member of the Chapter be absent when the new rector is elected, the rector shall avail himself of his right and complete the number by appointing one of the councilors as a substitute for the period remaining until the expiration of the six-year term stipulated for the general election of the individual councilors or members of the Chapter.

But the important reminder that, in my opinion, is fundamental is that no member should engage in occupations extraneous and in no way connected with the administration of our pious Society. In fact, I do not think I exaggerate when I say that there will always be a lacuna in our Congregation until such time as when the individual members of the Chapter will be engaged exclusively in matters specified in our rules approved by Chapter deliberation.

A number of difficulties will have to be overcome in order to attain this, but let sacrifices be made in order to procure this great advantage for the entire Congregation.

A REMINDER FOR THE RECTOR MAJOR:

The Rector Major should read and put into practice the usual

instructions I gave to all directors of new houses, especially in reference to the time for rest and nourishment.

TO THE DIRECTORS OF ALL HOUSES:

The director of every house should be patient, and carefully study his confreres or, better still, examine the qualifications of the confreres working under him. He shall demand from them what they can do and nothing more. It is essential for him to know what rules each specific confrere has to observe in the office entrusted to him; therefore, he shall make sure that every confrere be in possession of that portion of the rules that concerns him.

He must give particular attention to the moral relationships of teachers and assistants with each other and with the pupils entrusted to them.

SPECIAL WARNINGS FOR EVERYONE:

1. I earnestly recommend to all my sons that they take great care when talking or writing, never to relate or assert that Don Bosco ever obtained graces from God or performed any kind of miracle. Although God has been abundantly generous to me with His goodness, I have never claimed to know or do supernatural things. All I ever did was pray and urge pious souls to ask for graces from our Lord. I have always experienced the beneficial influence of the prayers and Communions of our boys. The merciful God and His Holy Mother assisted us in our needs. This was especially evident whenever we needed to provide for our poor, abandoned boys, and whenever their souls were at risk.
2. The Holy Virgin Mary will continue most certainly to protect our Congregation and Salesian houses if we persevere in our trust in her and continue promoting her devotion. Let us always stress, both in public and in private, the importance of her feast days, the solemn commemorations in her honor, her novenas, her triduums and the month consecrated to her; let us do this by means leaflets, books, medals, holy pictures, publication or simply by telling people of the graces and blessings obtained constantly at every moment for suffering humanity by our heavenly benefactress.

The two sources of grace for us are urging our young pupils to receive the holy Sacraments or perform some act of piety in honor of Mary and telling them that their devout attendance at Holy Mass, visits to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, and frequent sacramental or spiritual communions are highly pleasing to Mary and are a powerful means to obtain graces.

ECCLESIASTIC VOCATIONS:

God called on the poor Salesian Congregation to foster ecclesiastical vocations among boys who were poor or of low social status.

Well-to-do families are, as a rule, too imbued with a worldly spirit, which unfortunately all too often influences their children as well, causing them to lose the seeds of any vocation God may have sown in their hearts. If God's spiritual seed is cultivated and developed, it will ripen and bear abundant fruit. But if not, not only will the seed of vocation be throttled, but also a vocation that was already formed and ripening under propitious auspices will be debilitated and lost.

Newspapers, bad books and companions, and unguarded speech in the family circle are often the sinister causes of loss of vocation, and they will often unfortunately ruin and pervert even those who have already chosen their way of life.

Let us remember that whenever we procure a good vocation, we are giving an inestimable treasure to the Church; it does not matter if this vocation or this priest goes to the diocese, the foreign missions or a religious order. It is always a great gift that we give to the Church of Jesus Christ.

But do not advise any youth to enter an ecclesiastic vocation unless it is absolutely sure that he can preserve the angelic virtue to the degree specified by a wholesome theology. One may overlook intellectual mediocrity, but never the lack of the virtue to which we are alluding.

THE WORK OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS:

Develop the work of Mary Most Holy along the lines of its program as known to you. Never refuse to enroll any boy who seems to have a promising vocation because he has no money. Spend everything you have, even go begging if necessary, and do not fear if you should find yourself in dire straits because of it, for

in some way, the Holy Virgin will help you, even miraculously.

VOCATIONS FOR THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION:

The hard work and the good and serious behavior of our confreres will win over and almost drag along their pupils to follow their example. Make financial and personal sacrifices, but follow the preventive system and we shall have vocations in abundance.

Whenever possible, shorten the length of vacations, if you cannot eliminate them altogether.

Patience, gentleness and Christian relationships between teachers and pupils will reap many vocations. But here again, be very careful never to admit anyone to the Congregation, and still less to the ecclesiastical state, unless there is a moral certainty that they will retain their angelic virtue.

Whenever the director of one of our houses notices a pupil of simple habits and virtuous character, he shall try to make friends with him. He should speak to him often, listen to his confession willingly, urge him to pray for him, assure him that he, too, will pray for him during Holy Mass, invite him to go to Communion in honor of the Blessed Virgin or for the souls in Purgatory or for his relatives or his studies and so on.

At the end of his high school, he should persuade him to choose whatever vocation he judges most advantageous for his soul and that will give him most comfort when he comes to die.

Let him examine the state of the youth's conscience to see whether he was more virtuous when he was at home, during vacation time, or when he was at school, etc.

But he should always try to dissuade from the ecclesiastical life any youth who seeks to enter it so that he may help his family because it is poor. In such cases, advise the boys to take up another walk in life – another profession, craft or trade – but not the ecclesiastical state.

ASPIRANTS:

By *aspirants* we mean those boys who desire to live the Christian life that will make them worthy of entering the Salesian Congregation, either as clerics or as coadjutor brothers.

Such boys should be given particular attention, but we should keep only those who have the intention to become Salesians, or at

least are not opposed to this idea when such is the will of God.

Hold a special talk for them at least twice a month and discuss those things that a boy should observe or avoid in order to become a good Christian. The *Companion of Youth* can provide the basic themes for such talks. Do not enter into details about our rules with them or speak of vows or of leaving home and family; these are things that take root in their hearts without any need of taking them as a theme for talks. Insist on the important principle: We have to give ourselves to God sooner or later; and God calls blessed the one who begins to consecrate himself to the Lord from his youth. *Beatus homo cum portaverit jugum ab adolescentia sua.* We must leave the world and all its temptations, our family, friends and home sooner or later, forever.

ADMISSION OF NOVICES:

When aspirants have been tested and are known to us, as mentioned above, they may be easily admitted as novices. But this does not apply in the case of anyone living or studying outside our houses. In regard to these, the rules laid down by our constitutions for aspirants should faithfully be followed.

NOVICES OR ENROLLED MEMBERS:

We should use the trial period, initial enrollment or novitiate like a sieve to separate, recognize and retain good wheat, if advisable. On the contrary, we shall weed out the bad grass and remove it from our garden.

Bear well in mind that our Congregation was not founded for anyone who has lived a worldly life and seeks to come for his full conversion in our midst. Our Congregation is not for such as these. We need reliable members who are already tested as far as the century old virtues. They should not join us in order to attain self-perfection, but to exercise their Christian perfection and to liberate poor and abandoned youth from the huge and serious dangers that surround them. In view of the boys who have already been victimized by human miseries or boys who have already been spiritually shipwrecked in terms of religion and morals, these people should either give up the idea of becoming priests or be advised to join cloistered or penitent orders. During the trial year, there should be a careful attention given to the health,

morality, and degree of learning of the novices. An exact account of all this should be given to the Superior Chapter. But the novitiate director should be careful enough not to present for admission those novices whose morality is questionable.

ADMISSION:

The rules prescribed by the Holy Church, our Constitutions and Chapter deliberations should be followed both in admitting candidates to the novitiate and in the definitive acceptance of candidates for religious profession. Opinions are to be voiced for or against each candidate, but the vote *shall always remain secret*,[5] so that each member of the Chapter may not know the votes of the others.

DISMISSAL:

In dismissing anybody from the Congregation, we have to behave like a gardener who pulls out any harmful or useless weed or plant from his garden. But beware, for at times a meticulous conscience may lead to be afraid of a vocation, even when there is no reason to be afraid of it.

For this reason, let there be a thorough examination of the motive or motives for which a dismissal is requested. A dismissal should not be granted unless it is demanded for *serious motives*,[6] namely when the member would turn out to be the source of serious spiritual and temporal harm to the member himself or to the Congregation. In such cases, we should find out if a dismissal *ad tempus* would be enough or whether the dismissal should be absolute. But in such cases, let all possible attention be given to the person being dismissed. Let sacrifices be endured as long as the one being dismissed leaves in good harmony with us and as a friend of the Congregation.

Ordinarily, let no special relationship be held with him other than the relationship due to a good Christian. No hospitality should be granted to him except in cases of genuine and well-known need and then, only a temporary hospitality.

When a member leaves our society, we should help him find

[5] Underlined by Don Bosco.
[6] Italics by Don Bosco.

a job or a place where he could earn an honest way of living.

COMMUNITY LIFE:

Make every effort to keep community life. Let the superiors give orders and expect just whatever the individual is capable of doing, but nothing more. But when any novice's health does not enable him to fulfill the duties prescribed by our rules, he shall not be admitted to religious profession. In the event that his ailment is chronic, he should be sent back to his family. In the case of a member of the Congregation already professed, he should remain with us and be treated with every care. But it must never be forgotten that we are poor and no one is to expect any consideration unbecoming to someone who has consecrated himself to God by a vow of poverty.

Those who with their labor or in any other way have provided remarkable benefits for the Congregation should be treated with very special consideration. If a change of climate, food or returning to their native air can help the abovementioned confreres, let this be done; however the advice of the doctor should be sought after.

But such consideration is to be restricted solely to periods of sickness or convalescence, and care must be taken that such indulgences do not entail an "extra meal!" This would represent a veritable plague in community life. So if any convalescent member of the Congregation is able to eat at the confreres table, he should do so, but he should still be treated with particular indulgence in his work, and he should not be asked to do anything beyond his strength.

The utmost charity shall be used in this important matter, as well as discretion and forcefulness, but in all instances there should be due charity and gentleness.

PUBLICATIONS:

In my sermons, talks and in the books that I have published, I always did all I could to uphold, defend and advertise Catholic principles. Nevertheless, should any phrase or word be found in them that contained any doubtful element or things insufficiently explained in regard to truth, it is herewith my intention to revoke and amend any thought or sentiment expressed which was not entirely correct. As a general principle, I subject all my say-

ings, writings and publications to our holy mother, the Catholic Church, for any decisions, corrections, or mere advice.

In regard to printing and new editions, I have several things I wish to recommend. Some of my booklets were published without my assistance and others even against my will. Therefore: (1) I recommend that my successor compile or order to be compiled a list of all my writings, but only the most recent editions of each; (2) should it be necessary to reprint any of them, wherever errors were found in spelling, chronology or grammar, then corrections should be made for the benefit of science and religion; (3) should any of my letters written in Italian be printed, an accurate attention should be given to them as far as meaning and doctrine because they were, for the most part, written in great haste and there is therefore the likelihood that they may contain many inaccuracies. Wherever possible, burn any letters written in French, but should any of them ever be printed, please see to it that they are first checked and corrected by someone who is well acquainted with the French language so that the words I used do not express things that were never intended, causing detriment to that religion on behalf of which they are written.

Anyone in possession of information or anecdotes committed either to memory or on paper should see that the notes are carefully checked out and amended so that nothing is ever published that is not fully in keeping with the principles of our holy Catholic religion.

THE DIRECTOR OF ANY HOUSE AND HIS CONFRERES:

The director should be a model of patience toward the confreres who depend on him and therefore:

1. He should assist, help, and instruct them on how to fulfill their individual duties, but never with *harsh or offensive words*.[7]
2. He should show them that he has great trust in them, and deal benevolently with all the matters concerning them. Never reprimand nor give severe admonitions to anyone in the presence of a third person. Always try to do this in *camera caritatis*, namely, gently and strictly in private.

[7] Italics by Don Bosco.

3. Should the reason calling for such an admonition or reprimand be public knowledge, it will be necessary that admonition be given publicly; but in this event, never make personal allusions either in Church or during special meetings. All admonitions, reprimands or allusions are offensive and will not improve when made in public.
4. Never forget the monthly manifestation and at that occasion, let every director become a friend, brother, and father to his dependents. Let him give to every confrere the time and freedom to make his reflections, express his needs and his own intentions. The director, in turn, should open his heart to them without showing any sort of resentment and never refer back to past faults except for the sake of giving fatherly advice or kindly reminding them about performing their duties, were they negligent in them.
5. He should take pains never to deal with subject matters related to confession, unless requested to do so by the confrere himself. In such cases, he should never make any decision that needs to be carried out in *foro externo* without a previous arrangement with the person concerned.
6. As a general rule, the director is the ordinary confessor of the confreres. But he should provide with prudence ample freedom to those who might need to make their confession to someone else. It is, however, understood that such particular confessors are to be known and approved by the superior according to our rules.
7. Since anyone who seeks an extraordinary confessor shows scarce trust in the director, the director should keep vigilant watch to see whether the other rules are kept, and he should not entrust certain assignments to that confrere that might be superior to his moral or physical strength.

   N.B. This remark has nothing whatsoever to do with those extraordinary confessors which the superior, director or Provincial shall take pains to appoint for given occasions.
8. As a general rule, the director of any house should deal with his confreres often and with great familiarity,

stressing the necessity of a uniform observance of the constitutions, and he should recall as far as possible, the actual wording thereof.

9. In the case of illness, the director should do as our rules prescribe and act according to whatever is deliberated by the Chapter.
10. He should readily forget personal displeasure or offenses to his person, and should seek benevolently and with tact to win over or correct those who are negligent, diffident and suspicious. *Vincere in bono malum* [Overcome evil by doing good].

TO THE CONFRERES LIVING IN THE SAME HOUSE:

1. All the Salesian confreres living in the same house should form only one heart and only one soul with the director.
2. Let them bear in mind that the greatest plague to be always avoided is the defect of grumbling. Every possible sacrifice should be made, but never tolerate any criticism of the superiors.
3. Never criticize orders issued within our family or show disapproval for things heard in sermons, talks or printed in the books of our confreres.
4. Let everyone suffer for the greater glory of God and as a penance for one's sins. But for the interest of one's soul, let every criticism of anything dealing with the house, clothing, food or lodging, etc., be avoided.
5. Remember, my sons, that it is the unity between the director and those subordinate to him, and the harmony existing among the subordinates themselves that constitutes a veritable earthly paradise in all our houses.
6. I do not urge you to observe any special penances or mortifications, for you will acquire great personal merit and confer glory on the Congregation if you will mutually bear with the pains and displeasure of life with Christian resignation.
7. Give good advice whenever you have the opportunity to do so, especially when it is a question of consoling some-

one who is afflicted, helping anyone overcome an obstacle, or rendering some service both when someone enjoys good health and when he is sick.

8. If you are aware that something reprehensible had been done in the house, especially if it is something that might even be interpreted as contrary to God's Holy Commandments, you shall respectfully bring the facts to the attention of your superior. He will be able to use due prudence in order to promote what is good and prevent what is evil.
9. As regards the pupils, let every confrere keep the rules of the house and the deliberations issued to keep discipline and morality among the academic students and the artisans.
10. Instead of criticizing what others are doing, let everyone perform the duties assigned to him with all possible care.

FUNDAMENTAL SOUVENIR OR DUTY
OF ALL THOSE WORKING IN THE CONGREGATION:

It is strictly enjoined and recommended to all, before God and men, to take the greatest pains to safeguard morality among the Salesians and those who in any way and under any title have been entrusted to us by divine providence.

THINGS I SHOULD HAVE SAID ELSEWHERE:

The director of any house and all other ordinary superiors are advised to cease hearing confessions of their subordinates during the time of retreat, availing themselves as much as possible of the services of extraordinary confessors or preachers. If these are not enough, they should call on other confessors known to them to help out. Should any exception prove necessary in certain cases, the superior shall decide.

When a Salesian clashes with the ecclesiastical authorities of any city, place, diocese, the superior should use due procedure and assign the confrere in question to another duty. Likewise, should a Salesian confrere find hostility or opposition from his own confreres, he should change house or assignment, but the confrere in question should be told in a friendly manner about his

defects and be provided with norms of behavior that he might use in the future in order to avoid friction.

One has to be very tolerant with the outsiders and endure even harm rather than end up with quarrels. Endure all that can honestly be endured in connection with civil or ecclesiastical authorities, but never permit any issue to be brought before a lay court.

Since despite sacrifices and every good intention one must at times face up to disputes and litigations, I advise and recommend that the issue be referred to one or two fully empowered arbitrators, subjecting the matter to their verdict.

Such action will safeguard one's conscience and put an end to matters that, as a rule, would drag on at great length and involve many expenses, while making it also very difficult that peace of mind and Christian charity be maintained.

For the benefit of all our members and our entire Congregation, let no one become involved with either relatives or friends in matters concerning money, appointments or recommendations.[8]

Should there be any serious reason for someone to be involved in such matters, one should discuss it with his superior and abide in all things by what he says.

Let everyone abide steadfastly by the principles never to sign IOUs or stand as a guarantee for payments to be made by others. Experience had taught us that this always works out to our own harm and displeasure.

If it is possible, let some service be rendered and even some subsidy be given, but within the limits allowed and advised by one's respective superior.

FOR THE SISTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS:

The Salesians shall faithfully observe all that has been established by the Chapter deliberations concerning the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

We should not mind labor, expenses or inconveniences of any kind in order to conduct our relations as established both by the Church and our own constitutions.

When discussing business matters, both male and female reli-

[8] First it read, "become involved in things of...of...of...," but it was then amended in an incomplete manner.

gious should never be alone, but must arrange for others to be present at all times or that they may at least be in view of others. *Nunquam solus cum sola loquatur* [A man should not talk to a woman alone].

One must take care not to admit anyone to the Institute of Mary who is not in good health or who does not seem capable of genuine obedience.

It must be kept in mind that any virtue that was not acquired during the period of novitiate will, as a general rule, not be acquired at any later date.

No sister is to retain possessions either for herself or for her religious community of any real estate property after her religious profession. Exception will be made only in cases where such real estate property is necessary to found educational institutes or grounds necessary in the interest of health.

No one shall utter words either in jest or for fun under any pretext or for any reason that may move members of the opposite sex to laugh or may gain us their respect or benevolence. These words should be read out and carefully explained to ensure a proper understanding of them and this should be done repeatedly.

The mother general and the reverend mothers of individual houses should not allow any familiarity in dealings with laypersons of any category. Should there be any genuine necessity for this, a third person shall be present during such contacts, and the prescriptions of the rules therewith concerned shall be observed.

The mother superior herself may not retain any sum of money in her possession other than for specific purposes, and then only for such a time as the matter in question shall render this necessary.

The same applies to the mother general as to all mother superiors in individual houses.

In this and in like matters, the advice and orders of the Rector Major shall be followed without opposition.

There shall never be any building or repair work undertaken without due understanding with the aforesaid Rector Major.

1. Whenever any important matters are to be discussed either by the Superior Chapter or General Chapter, both

the Salesians and the Sisters alike shall first make their proposals in writing or state them verbally in advance.

2. Everyone shall be guaranteed full freedom to speak up either for or against such matters as each individual shall deem best in the eyes of God, but votes shall always be secret when it comes to voting on any deliberation.
3. Let nuts or beans of different colors be secretly placed in a container or any kind of receptacle and let everyone take out one item; a black bean stands for a negative vote and a white for an affirmative vote.
4. Once a majority has been established in any deliberation, it shall not be amended until another deliberation in which the whole Chapter shall participate.
5. Great pains should be taken to promptly carry out things deliberated upon, and all members of the Chapter should be attentive enough to ensure that those deliberations are not in contradiction one with the other.

It is a big mistake and a waste of effort when proposals forwarded and approved in the Chapter are not carried out and are later relegated to oblivion.

Everyone should seek to avoid eccentric proposals in either meetings or chapters, and things previously approved already either by tradition, rules, or general or extraordinary chapter meetings should be regularly acknowledged.

IN THE EVENT OF DIFFICULTIES:

When any difficulty arises in any city or country in connection with the spiritual or secular authorities, one must endeavor to report in person to whoever is concerned in order to render an account of one's actions.

A personal explanation of one's intentions decreases considerably – and often dispels entirely – any negative opinion that others may have formed in their minds.

If one is guilty of any fault under the law, one should apologize, or at least submit a respectful explanation, but always with a personal interview wherever possible.

This manner of behaving is conciliatory and will often win over our adversaries.

This is nothing more than what God Himself recommends to

us: *responsio mollis frangit iram* [a smooth reply breaks up anger]; or the maxim of St. Paul: *caritas Dei benigna est., patiens est. etc.*

The directors of individual houses should observe this same rule in dealings with their subordinates. Talk to one another and share explanations and it will be easy to reach an understanding without any detriment to Christian charity or the interests of our Congregation.

If you wish to obtain much from your pupils, never show any animosity for the offenses you have received. Tolerate their faults, correct them, but then forget them.

Always behave affectionately toward your pupils, and make them realize that all your efforts are geared toward the interests of their spiritual welfare.

FUNDAMENTAL RECOMMENDATION TO ALL SALESIANS:

Love poverty if you wish to keep the financial situation of the Congregation in good condition.

Do not give anyone cause to say, "Such furniture is not in keeping with poverty; such a table, such clothing, such a room does not suggest poverty." Anyone who advances reasonable motivation for saying such things is damaging our own Congregation, which should always glory in its vow of poverty.

Woe to us if the people to whom we look for charity are in a position to say that we live a more comfortable life than they do!

This naturally applies, and strictly so, to anyone in a normal state of health. But in cases of sickness, all the cares permitted by our rules should be used.

Remember that it will be a happy day for you when you succeed with your benevolence to win over an enemy or make a friend.

Never let the sun set on your anger. Never call to mind any offenses you have already forgiven. Never recall any harm suffered or any wrong forgiven. Let us always say wholeheartedly, "*Dimitte nobis debita nostra sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris*," but ours should be an absolute and definitive forgetfulness of anything that has been done against us in the past. Let us love everyone with brotherly love.

Let these things be observed by anyone who has authority to an exemplary degree over others.

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING MY OWN PERSON:

Oh, beloved children! You have always been my heart's delight. I beg you to go to Communion for the repose of my soul.

With a frequent Communion, you will endear yourselves to God and to men, and Mary will grant you the grace of receiving the holy Sacraments at the time of your death.

You Salesian priests and clerics, relatives and friends of my soul, pray and receive the Blessed Sacrament for the repose of my soul, so that my suffering in Purgatory may be shortened.

Now that I have expressed my sentiments as a father to his beloved sons, I now invoke myself the mercy of our Lord upon me in the last hours of my life.

It is my intention to live and die in the holy Catholic faith, of which the head is the Roman pontiff, vicar of Jesus Christ here on earth.

I believe and confess all the articles of faith that God had revealed to His Holy Church.

I humbly ask the pardon of God for all my sins, especially for any scandal I may have given to my neighbor with any untimely action or word; in particular, do I ask His pardon for any excessive indulgence there may have been used for me under the specious pretext of safeguarding my health.

I must also apologize if at times anyone has noticed that my preparation or thanksgiving before and after holy Mass was too brief. In a certain sense, I was obliged to do this because of the crowd of people standing around me in the sacristy whose presence prevented me from praying both before and after my Mass.

I know that you, too, love me, oh my beloved sons, and do not limit this love and affection to weeping for me after I am dead; but pray also for the eternal rest of my soul.

Please pray, perform acts of charity, mortifications and receive Holy Communion in reparation for any negligence of which I have been guilty in doing good or in preventing evil.

Address your prayers to Heaven in particular so that I may find mercy and forgiveness the moment I appear before the fearful majesty of my Creator.

THE FUTURE:

Our Congregation has a happy future ahead, for it has been

prepared by Divine Providence, and its glory shall be lasting for us as long as our rules shall be faithfully observed.

When comforts or ease shall begin to be present among us, then our Pious Society will have run its course.

The world will always welcome us with delight as long as we direct our care towards the welfare of savages and most poor children, the ones most open to the dangers of society. These are our true comfort that no one will ever come to wrest from us.

Do not found any new houses unless you have the necessary personnel to staff it. Houses should not be founded too close to each other – the greater the distance between them, the fewer the dangers.

Once a foreign mission has been founded, it shall be continued with energy and spirit of sacrifice. Always concentrate your efforts on opening schools, cultivating vocations for the priesthood and finding some sisters among the girls.

In due course, our missions shall open in China – in Peking, to be exact. But do not let it be forgotten that wherever we go, it is for the poor and abandoned children. There in the midst of unknown people who are ignorant of the one true God, wonders never believed to happen shall be seen, for Almighty God shall reveal them to the world.

Do not hold on to any real estate property outside of the houses that we need for ourselves.

Whenever there is a lack of financial means for any religious undertaking, suspend the work; but as soon as our finances and sacrifices shall permit, let the work be resumed again.

Whenever it may happen that a Salesian succumbs and dies while working for souls, then you will say that our Congregation has gained deservedly a great triumph and the blessings of Heaven will abundantly fall on it.

A later phrase was added by Don Bosco's hand at the beginning of this long document, saying: "Remember that these pages were written in September 1884, prior to the nomination of a vicar with the right of succession by the Holy Father; therefore let them be amended as much as it is necessary."[9]

[9] These modifications refer to those passages wherein it was mentioned that the prefect, upon the death of Don Bosco, would no longer be the arbiter of the situation. Later, he personally made the necessary modifications, as we have seen.

In his concern at what might befall the Salesian Congregation at the death of its founder, Leo XIII advanced a proposal that modified even the usual formalities of succession.

It is curious to note that just as the Pope was personally concerned about him, Don Bosco had a dream the night of October 9th; he dreamed that he visited the Holy Father. As soon as he fell asleep, he felt that he was leaving the Oratory and was walking through the playground and along the streets of Turin, where he encountered a number of people he knew. Finally, he dreamed to have reached the central railway station. He got aboard a train and traveled as far as Rome. Upon arriving in Rome, he went straight to the Vatican. He thought to himself that he would have great difficulty in seeing the Holy Father, since Bishop Macchi would find a number of obstacles to prevent him from obtaining an audience. Nevertheless, he called there and Bishop Macchi was most gracious to him. At his request for an audience, he replied that since the matter he wished to discuss was very important, he could and should waive the usual formalities. Without further ado, he ushered him into the presence of the Pope and the audience lasted two hours. The Pope kept Don Bosco talking about many matters at length.

Among other things, the Pope said to him, "Make sure that anyone applying for admission to your Congregation should especially be: (1) of a docile character; (2) endowed with a spirit of sacrifice, without any strong attachments to their native land, their family, their friends, and even forego their willingness to return to their native country; (3) of a sure proven morality."

This was the main topic that took up the better part of the audience. When the audience ended, Don Bosco went back to the station, bought his ticket for Turin and woke up just as he was on the point of arriving home.

Now on that same night, a letter was on its way from Rome to Turin that had been written at the request of the Pope for Don Bosco. It was addressed to Cardinal Alimonda, and among other things, Bishop Jacobini, the secretary of the propaganda, stated the following:

> On this occasion, His Holiness has instructed me to write to you on another very interesting subject. He has noticed how Don Bosco's health is deteriorating day after day and is afraid for the future of his Congregation. He, therefore, wishes that Your Eminence speak with Don Bosco in that persuasive manner of which you are so capable, to induce him to appoint whomever he

> considers most suitable to succeed him or to assume the title of vicar with the right of succession. The Holy Father reserves unto himself the right of taking whatever measure he shall find most advisable, but he wishes your Eminence to do this immediately, since it closely concerns the welfare of the Congregation.

Upon receiving this letter, Archbishop Alimonda called on Don Bosco to talk with him that same evening of October 10th, and remained with him for about an hour. The saint was delighted to comply with the suggestion proffered in the Pope's name, and promised to inform the Chapter members of it as quickly as possible and draw up a reply to be sent to Rome. After that date at the first meeting of the Superior Chapter on October 24th, Don Bosco informed the assembly about the suggestion at the end of their session, and asked for the opinion of its members upon the choice of the person to be appointed, saying, "I have yet another very important matter to report. The Holy Father wrote to me that it is his wish that Don Bosco select a vicar with the right to administer the Congregation and succeed him. By so doing, he had demonstrated his great affection and interest for our Congregation and has given Don Bosco himself a token of his benevolence by wanting him to select his own successor. I would have preferred that in keeping with the rules, the Salesians exercise their right to choose their own superior after my death, but in view of this letter from the Pope, I do not know what other course to take. Already when I was in Rome this year, the Holy Father hinted at this project of his, saying, 'Your health is poor; you need help and assistance. You have to choose someone to work at your side, to gather all of your traditions and be in a position to bring to life so many things that have not been written down or which even if written, would not be understood correctly.' I reflected at length on these words. That is why I am now asking the Chapter what answer I should give to the Holy Father."

The Chapter replied that Don Bosco should select the person he himself wanted because then everything would be settled.

He asked if he should consult the confreres on their own vote prior to submitting to the Pope the name of his own choice, but he was told that this was not necessary. Don Bosco should proceed with the choice of his administrative vicar with the right to succeed him and communicate the name of his choice to the Pope, who would certainly approve of it.

Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who witnessed the scene, wrote: "There was a solemn moment of silence because everyone understood the

importance of the decision by the Pope. Our hearts were filled with deep tenderness because we felt that every day, more and more clearly, everything was telling us that Don Bosco was getting ready to leave us."

After due time for reflection, Don Bosco elaborated on his thoughts more specifically in the Chapter meeting on the 28th: "We now have to appoint a vicar for Don Bosco, one who would represent him in everything before the Church for the canonic institution and before the civil laws as a proxy. The Pope might prefer that Don Bosco should retire altogether and rest. But unless I am mistaken, I might still be able to do a little good for our Congregation if, in the eyes of the world, I retain my position. Even though I continue to be Rector Major only in name, that will be enough as far as France, Spain, Poland, etc., are concerned. My humble existence alone is enough to attract charity for us. But I need to have someone who can be entrusted with the Congregation, who would shoulder the entire burden himself so that all responsibility be left to him. I have had a letter written to the supreme pontiff in this sense, subjecting myself entirely to whatever he may decide. I would have written him myself, but I only succeeded in doing so after a number of events, and at the end I noticed that I had ended my letter on another sheet of paper protruding from beneath the page on which I was writing. My poor head was all befuddled. Now the letter has been mailed. As soon as the papal rescript arrives, we shall have to entrust the Congregation to someone who will take over the control of it as a regent, and have everything under his own complete responsibility."

Father John Cagliero pointed out that if Father Michael Rua were elected, he would have to relinquish the office of prefect and someone else would have to be appointed in his place.

Don Bosco continued talking: "Now everyone will do all they can. I have no complaints to make about anybody; everybody is endowed with good will, but so far, no one has borne any individual responsibility. Our sole concern was to unite all our efforts so that no one individual might paralyze the efforts of another. I shall inform you as soon as I receive an answer from the Holy Father."

He then had Father Michael Rua read out the letter by Bishop Jacobini at the behest of the Holy Father. As we have seen, it suggested two courses of action to him: (1) either that Don Bosco name someone he considered most fit to succeed him; or (2) to indicate someone who might immediately assume the to title of vicar with right of succession.

Don Bosco then continued, "I have suggested a General Vicar with right of succession to the Holy Father, but have subjected everything to the

good judgment of his Holiness. I will give full powers to said-vicar, but I mean to hold him responsible; that is why I again repeat that up to now, such responsibility did not exist. Let this vicar appoint another prefect. I will then retire. I shall talk and confer with my vicar and he will confer and issue orders ex *officio* to the other members of the Congregation."

We do not know to whom he gave the task of writing to the Holy Father, but it certainly was not Father Joaquim Berto who would have kept the original draft, if he had to. He may have destroyed the draft, not wanting news of the matter to leak outside the Superior Chapter for that moment; he may have given the assignment to Father John Cagliero, who was also referred to in Bishop Jacobini's letter. Don Bosco's own letter was handed to Cardinal Alimonda, who delivered it to the Pope on November 27th by the hand of Cardinal Nina. In the letter, he mentioned the name of Father Michael Rua, though he had not said anything specific in the Chapter meeting, undoubtedly because he first wished to receive the approval of the Holy Father.

On November 30th, Cardinal Nina wrote as follows to Cardinal Alimonda:

> On Thursday last, the day of my customary audience, I duly reported to the Holy Father and gave him Don Bosco's letter and that of your Eminence. His Holiness was very satisfied and reassured when he learned that the future of the Salesian Congregation was fairly well assured by entrusting its rule to Father Michael Rua, in the event of the death of the Reverend Don Bosco. May God preserve him for many a year! For this reason, the Holy Father has instructed me to send him a special apostolic blessing.

The archbishop duly informed Don Bosco of all this, and then wrote to Cardinal Nina on December 19th, informing him about the questions of the vicar:

> First of all, I must thank you for your revered letter, in which you are kind enough to inform me that the Holy Father was pleased with the appointment of our Father Michael Rua as the Most Reverend Don Bosco's Vicar General, with the right to succeed him in the government of the Salesian Congregation. Don Bosco and his Salesians were very happy over this welcome news, and even more at the apostolic blessing you sent them, and wish

to express their gratitude to their beloved protector.

Don Bosco was not in any hurry to make the matter public. The Holy Father had not stipulated or even suggested any deadline. It was also a habit of the saint's to preface any important decision by a period of trial, so he extended the range of Father Michael Rua's activities without giving any real reason for doing so. Meanwhile, he prepared the spirits of his confreres to welcome the measure taken. He kept hinting at the necessity that Father Michael Rua takeover many matters on his behalf. He repeated it with increasing frequency, citing his failing health and the necessity of reorganizing things little by little.

A year went by before Don Bosco proceeded to make the official proclamation first to the Superior Chapter. He then announced it to the Salesians at the Oratory, and lastly, with a circular letter to all the houses.

This is what he said to the Chapter on September 24, 1885: "What I have to tell you can be reduced to two things: the first concerns Don Bosco, who by now is half done for and requires that someone else act in his stead; and the other concerns the Vicar General, who must take over all things that have formerly been done by Don Bosco and take care of everything necessary for the smooth running of the Congregation; though in matters of business, I feel sure that he will always gladly accept the advice of Don Bosco and his confreres, and that in shouldering this burden, he will have no other intention than that of helping the pious Salesian Society, so that when I die, my death may not in any way disrupt the order of the Congregation. The vicar must therefore make sure that our present traditions remain intact. The Holy Father recommended this most earnestly. Our traditions are to be distinguished from our rules inasmuch as they teach us how to explain and to put these rules into practice. We must make sure that when I am gone, those who will come after us will maintain these traditions.

"My Vicar General in the Congregation will be Father Michael Rua. This was the thought expressed by the Holy Father when he had Bishop Jacobini write to me. Wishing to give every possible assistance to Don Bosco, he asked me who I felt could take my place. I replied that I would prefer Father Michael Rua, since he is one of the first Salesians in our Congregation, and has for many years held this office; also because his appointment would have been accepted by the other confreres. A little while ago, his Holiness answered through the person of his Eminence Cardinal Alimonda: 'It's good.' Thus, he approved my choice. So from

here on, Father Michael Rua will take my place in everything. Whatever I can do, he can do it himself. He has the full powers of the Rector Major – the admission to the Congregation, the clothing celebrations, the choice of a secretary and delegations, etc., etc. But in appointing Father Michael Rua as my vicar, I intend that he still remain my assistant in all things, and it is essential that he relinquish his office as prefect of the Congregation. So I will avail myself of the faculties granted to me by the rules and appoint Father Celestine Durando, who until now has been prefect of studies, as prefect of the Congregation."

After reading paragraph 2, Chapter III of List No. 1 of the Deliberations of the second General Chapter, Father Michael Rua, Father Celestine Durando and the other members of the Chapter remarked that a temporary modification was necessary in the first sentence of the abovementioned second paragraph, which was worded as follows: "According to our constitutions, the prefect of the society takes the place of the Rector Major. He shall substitute him in the event of his absence, both in the ordinary government of the Society, and in all things for which he shall have been especially empowered."

The following amendment was suggested for the abovementioned sentence: "The prefect of the Society, according to our constitution, takes the place of the Rector Major and of his vicar. He shall substitute them in the ordinary government, etc." The Chapter approved such amendment.

Don Bosco then resumed, "Father Francis Cerruti is appointed prefect of studies general in the place of Father Celestine Durando. He is now the director of the house of Alassio and Provincial for the Ligurian province. Father Rocca shall take over full control of that same school. Father Francis Cerruti will continue to hold the office of Father Provincial for Liguria, since he has many dealings with the scholastic matters on hand that he must see through to their conclusion. As soon as he can, he will take his residence here at the Oratory. It is to be remembered that these changes will go into effect only up to the next General Chapter, which in keeping with the rules, shall appoint the members of the Superior Chapter."

Lastly he instructed the secretary, Father John Baptist Lemoyne, to draft a circular letter to make the official announcement of the appointment of the new Vicar General.

The Salesians living at the oratory were informed of this appointment on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. That evening, Don Bosco addressed them in the choir of the Church of Mary Help of Christians, but first, Father John Baptist Francesia read out the circular

letter addressed to every Salesian house. Then the servant of God spoke to them of other matters, and we do not know whether he added any comment to the circular.

For the first time, the official coat of arms of the Congregation[10] appeared on this circular letter. The letter bore the date of All Saints' Day, 1885, but it had not been sent out immediately because Don Bosco had wanted to reread it and revise it carefully. Then after entering the definitive date "Feast Day of the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary, 1855," he had it printed as follows:

December 8, 1885
Feast of the Immaculate Conception
of the Holy Virgin Mary[11]

Beloved sons in Jesus Christ:

Since I was troubled by various discomforts and I felt that my strength was decreasing every day, I felt the need to be helped and supported in the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to me by divine providence. I saw that it was necessary to have someone who could effectively help me carry out the various tasks of mine and who would also be in charge of all that is indispensable for the smooth running of the pious Society of St. Francis de Sales. To this end, I thought of choosing a vicar to represent me, to act as another copy of myself – a vicar to do this by special appointment, to make sure that the traditions we have observed so far are maintained and continued after my death also by those who come after us. I refer to those traditions that represent our practical guide in interpreting, explaining and faithfully observing our rules as definitively approved by the Holy Church, and which represent the spirit and vitality of our pious Society. It is, therefore, my fervent wish that when the time comes for me to enter the hereafter, nothing may perturb or change our things.

Some time ago as I was reflecting on this project, the

10 See further on page

11 Two notes followed this letter: "Note 1: The directors of individual houses shall read out this letter at the first meeting they have, after receipt of it, to our beloved confreres. Note 2: I recall what I have previously recommended on other occasions, namely, that when writing letters or any public or private document other than those concerning our contacts with ecclesiastical authority, no use of Congregation titles be made, but only use our secular titles such as director, doctor, professor, teacher, prefect, etc. Thus, our missionaries, when writing to Europe from America to any of their confreres, shall not use the appellative Father, but merely Reverend or Mr.

supreme pontiff wrote to me of his own accord through the person of his Excellency Dominic Jacobini, archbishop, to ask me who, in my opinion, of all our confreres was the one most indicated to take my place in the supreme direction of the pious Salesian Society. As I thanked the Holy Father for his benevolence, I suggested Father Michael Rua as my vicar, since in the order of time, he is one of the first members of the Society, and has, to a great extent, already exercised such office for a number of years, and also because his appointment would be agreeable to all the other confreres. A few weeks ago, through our own beloved archbishop, the Holy Father was kind enough to inform me that this suggestion met with his full approval. Therefore, most beloved sons, after praying at length to the Giver of all goods, and after invoking the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and the special protection of Mary Help of Christians and of our own patron saint, St. Francis of Sales, I appoint Father Michael Rua, who at the present is the prefect of our pious Society, as my Vicar General. From now on he shall act in my stead in the total and complete government of our pious Society, and will do all things that I myself might do, being fully empowered in all matters, both public and private concerning our Society and the members of which it is composed. I am sure that the new vicar will always gratefully follow any benevolent council or advice that may be given to him in connection with any matters of importance.

I recommend that all of you, my dearest sons, show him that total obedience you have always professed to him who is known to you as Father and who loves you most paternally; for such a total obedience has represented until now, and I hope, it will continue always to represent my great consolation.

As a consequence of this appointment, I also wish to inform you that, availing myself of the faculties granted me by our rules, I am appointing Father Celestine Durando as prefect of the pious Salesian Society, exempting him from the office of prefect of studies general, which he has occupied until now, and I am appointing in his stead to the office of prefect of studies general for our pious Society Father Francis Cerruti, who is presently the provincial of the Ligurian Province and the director of the school of Alassio. Until further orders he shall however retain his office of provincial.

As to our missions in South America, I appoint Bishop John

Cagliero as my pro-vicar with full authority in all matters concerning the staff and houses and Provinces of that area.

On this same occasion, I think it will please you if I tell you that my health has somewhat improved, and I attribute this to the charitable prayers that I know you have addressed to God on my behalf. I thank you for them with all my heart and I assure you that it is my intention to consecrate entirely to the welfare of our humble Congregation and our souls, whatever little strength and time God in His mercy may yet deign to grant me.

God bless our new vicar, the other superiors and all our confreres, and may He enable us to be forever but one single heart and soul in promoting the glory of our Heavenly Father and in sanctifying our own souls.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Father Michael Rua did not lose any time in taking his office as vicar. About mid-October, he occupied a room next to that of Don Bosco, where Father Joaquim Berto had formerly worked. Don Bosco was manifestly happy and relieved.[12]

Father Michael Rua was now forty-eight years old, and had spent forty of his years at the side of Don Bosco. He had been admitted to his intimate friendship thirty years before and was utterly devoted to him, better able than anyone else to understand him, and was determined to dedicate his whole life to helping him in his mission; so he seemed, in the eyes of all, to be the person best suited for assuming this delicate office for the Congregation. People noted how Father Michael Rua shed his exterior severity that his duties as prefect had enjoined on him, to don instead the loving affability becoming to him who was to worthily represent the person of the Father. Don Bosco guided him in this with his own advice.

One day, the saint was talking with several of the top superiors and said, "Last night I dreamed that I was in the sacristy and wished to make my confession. I saw Father Michael Rua kneeling down, but almost did not venture to approach him because I was afraid he would be too severe."

Everyone looked at Father Michael Rua with a smile, saying, "Good for you! You even frighten Don Bosco!"

[12] Letter to Father Joseph Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, October 23, 1885).

He, too, laughed, but he recognized a warning in Don Bosco's words to shed the last vestiges of his old severity.[13]

Soon letters arrived from all the representative members of the Congregation, applauding the appointment. Father Julius Bellamy, who wrote to Father Michael Rua from Paris on December 15th, expressed the general sentiment of the others very explicitly: "The Feast of the Immaculate Conception has always been a lucky day for our pious Society, and this year, our dear Mother gave us a piece of news that all the Salesians received as the most precious, agreeable and desirous of gifts. I allude to your appointment to the onerous but sweet office of Father to our pious Society. This is one more proof in our eyes that our Lord loves us. And it is also yet another incentive to work harder because now there is no longer any need to fear for the future, knowing, as we do, that we are in the fatherly, strong and holy hands of him to whom we all turn as to another Don Bosco, the Salesian rule personified, and the model for every good and true Salesian."

The enthusiasm of those early months endured warmly and unconditionally also after the death of the saint, as we saw when with a unanimous vote by the electors summoned Father Michael Rua to take over his entire heritage. Truly there was no need of this election, but we shall read in the last volume how and why it came about.

[13] G.B. Francesia, Father Michael Rua (page 89).

Chapter 11

THE FIRST SALESIAN BISHOP

In the preceding volume, we related how an apostolic vicariate and an apostolic prefecture had been created in North and South Patagonia respectively, and who had been appointed to the respective offices. We will now continue to report on the events that followed this glorious landmark in our Congregation, at the end of what was barely a decade since the canonical approval thereof.

The first important act on the part of the new Apostolic Pro-Vicar Father John Cagliero and the new Prefect Apostolic Father Joseph Fagnano was in the form of a respectful protest against the measure taken in Italy to the detriment of the Catholic Missions.

In January 1884, the Court of Cassation in Rome had passed a definite sentence declaring all immovable goods of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith subject to the law of conversion. This was a mortal blow to the dignity and freedom of the Holy See, for since the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith is a noble instrument for the spreading of the Gospel throughout the world, the verdict hit the Papacy in its sphere of apostolic action and in the means adopted herein. The documents relating to its foundation referred to the Propagation of the Faith as something issued by the Supreme Pontifical Apostolic Ministry and therefore, in its sphere of activity. It was to be considered as an eminently cosmopolitan institution, and its heritage was a property of the whole Catholic family. The claim of subjecting it now to the individual laws of an isolated government, because of a sentence passed by a local court of law, was intolerable, since it declared the Congregation to be juridically incapable of possession, and therefore, it had stripped it of its property. Since there were two different aspects to the issue, a diplomatic and a religious one, the Secretary of State first of all addressed a note to the Papal Nuncios accredited to European governments. For the second note, the Propagation of the Faith itself was directed to send a report to the Catholic bishops. Then on March 3rd, the anniversary of the birth and coronation of Leo XIII, the Pope pronounced his condemnation before the Sacred

College of Cardinals, who had gone to convey their good wishes to him.

Bishops from all over sent word of protest and of support of the Holy See, but most of all the protests came from the ecclesiastical superiors of the Missions: the two new Salesian missionary prelates were logically entitled and under obligation to show solidarity with the latter. After drawing up the document and obtaining the signature of Father Joseph Fagnano as well, Father John Cagliero mailed it out on June 1st, addressing it to Cardinal Simeoni, the prefect of the Propagation of the Faith. It deplored the attack not only because of the harm it did to the Church and civilization, but also because it humiliated Italy as a nation, since it struck a severe blow against its prestige and influence abroad.

Father Cagliero was to join his mission with the title of pro-vicar, but not of bishop. Only later would he be elevated to the episcopal dignity. But Don Bosco would have liked instead to send him back to America already vested with the episcopal dignity. The events that immediately followed and others that occurred later demonstrated how wise this desire was on his part. He discussed this project with the cardinal archbishop who, already in Rome, had been a member of the committee of cardinals who had been entrusted with examining the project of the pro-vicariate and prefecture. Hence he, too, was convinced that it was most expedient that Father John Cagliero be consecrated bishop immediately. Naturally, he paved the way as he took the matter in hand, imploring this favor from the Holy Father, in a letter of September 26th. He sought this favor from the Pope for three reasons: to make Don Bosco happy, to honor the Congregation, and to facilitate and render more effective the exercise of the sacred ministry on the part of the bishop elect. As tradition required, Alimonda handed the application to the cardinal protector, deferring to him the final decision as to whether or not he felt it advisable to forward his application.

Cardinal Nina did think it advisable and felt certain to obtain results, so he promptly transmitted the petition to the prefect of the Propagation of the Faith for due presentation. There was, however, a temporary setback: Cardinal Ferrieri, the prefect of bishops and regulars, strongly opposed it, being convinced that the existence of the pious Salesian Society was precarious and that it would collapse upon the death of Don Bosco. But His Eminence Cardinal Nina insisted that *volentibus et nolentibus* were two reasons which should induce people to believe quite the contrary, namely the remarkable growth of the Salesian Congregation and the indisputable good that had been accomplished by it. A little later, he was able to add yet a third proof in favor of it, namely the unique instance in the history of all

religious orders that, during the lifetime of the founder, a unanimous consensus reigned already as to the appointment of his successor.

When the obstacles had been easily overcome, the reply from Rome could not have been prompter or more gratifying, as both Bishop Jacobini, secretary of the Propagation of the Faith, and Cardinal Nina hastened to inform Cardinal Alimonda. Bishop Jacobini wrote him on October 9th:

> In his Sunday audience, the Holy Father granted Don Bosco's request and agreed to confer episcopal rank to Father John Cagliero, the new apostolic pro-vicar in Patagonia. I think that after this we shall have to eliminate the prefix *pro-*, but I will wait to speak with the cardinal prefect about this. Meanwhile, you will please inform our dear Don Bosco, who will be delighted. If I am not too bold, might I ask you also to convey my congratulations to Don Bosco on this new honor he has obtained for the Oratory?

After this unofficial information came the official communication both for Cardinal Alimonda and Father John Cagliero from Cardinal Simeoni. To the cardinal, he wrote that the Holy Father had graciously given consideration to the petition submitted by His Eminence, in view of the merits of Don Bosco; to the latter he said that the reason for this dignity conferred on him was that the higher rank and prestige might render his activity more effective and beneficial to the mission. Father John Cagliero dutifully expressed his thanks to Bishop Jacobini, Cardinals Simeoni and Nina, and the Holy Father himself.

With a brief of October 30th, forwarded by the cardinal prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, the Pope appointed Father Cagliero Titular Bishop of Magida and made this appointment public on November 13th in the Consistory on the same day Don Bosco gave his official confirmation to his superior council about the election and the changes that it would entail. The departure of Bishop Cagliero for America once again would have left vacant the office of Catechist of the Congregation. However, Don Bosco did not want to exempt him from his office until the General Chapter held in 1886. At first he thought of calling on Father John Baptist Francesia to act in his stead, but then he thought it wiser to have Bishop Cagliero substituted by Father Julius Barberis, the novice master. There was reason to believe and to fear, as we will report later, that the bishop would have to come back to Italy for political reasons after

a short stay in Argentina.

The Episcopal See of Magida, as it is termed in speech and writing, or of Magido as it is termed in official documents, had in ancient times been suffragant of Perga in Pamphylia, a province of Asia Minor. It was founded in the 5th century, and its bishops were famous until approximately the 9th century when it was overthrown because of the Oriental schism and then it retained merely the episcopal title, as many other Episcopal Sees. Its last titular bishop had been Bishop Bernadino Caldaioli, who had relinquished his office there in 1883 to take over the government of the church of Grosseto.

This first Salesian bishop was a child of the Oratory in the fullest sense of the word, and represented, so to speak, the solemn consecration of Don Bosco's educational system effectiveness. Only an educator such as Don Bosco would have succeeded in training so zealous a bishop for the church in the person of a young man so exuberant and intolerable of restraint in an environment so devoid of all material comforts.

Father John Cagliero was born at Castelnuovo d'Asti in January 1838. His father had died when he was a small child, and his mother had entrusted him to Don Bosco in 1851. That year, the saint had gone to Castelnuovo to preach on All Souls' Day, and he encountered the little altar boy for the first time as he accompanied him to the pulpit. After his sermon, Don Bosco's keen eye observed how the boy was staring at him in silence, as if he wanted to speak, but did not find the courage to do so. Don Bosco opened the conversation.

"It looks as though you have something to say to me, doesn't it?" he said.

"Yes, Father," the boy answered promptly. "I want to tell you that I would like to go to Turin with you, to continue my schooling and become a priest."

"Excellent! You will come with me, then. The pastor had already told me about you. Tell your mother to accompany you this evening to the parish rectory and there we can talk things over."

The boy and his mother went to see Don Bosco. Don Bosco knew her and jocularly greeted her.

"My good Theresa, is it true that you want to sell me your son?"

"Oh, no!" the good woman exclaimed. "We sell young calves here at Castelnuovo, but we donate our children."

"Better still if you donate him to me," Don Bosco said. "Now get some clothes and linen together for him and I will take him with me tomorrow."

Don Bosco brought him back to Valdocco, enrolled him in the high school, gave him a clerical cassock and sent him to the school of the

Archdiocesan Seminary for the philosophy and theology courses. Being highly active, the young cleric was in charge of the sacristy, music, gymnastics and catechism classes. While still a cleric, the other members of the young Congregation elected him to the Superior Chapter. When ordained a priest in 1862, he withstood tempting offers of well-paid appointments, preferring to stay always with Don Bosco. He attended the course of moral casuistry at the school of his fellow countryman Father John Baptist Bertagna; he took his degree in theology at the Royal University of Turin and taught moral theology and hermeneutics at the Oratory, at the same time dedicating himself earnestly to preaching and hearing confessions, and untiringly working at his music as a performer and as a composer.

In 1875, Father Cagliero led the first Salesian expedition to Argentina and within two years founded five houses and laid the ground for the Patagonian Mission. He was then called back to Turin where he became the spiritual director of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and traveled all over Italy to visit all the houses of the Congregation, negotiating in the name of Don Bosco for the creation of new houses. To this end, he also went twice to France, three times to Spain and once to Portugal. He was what is known today, but in the very best meaning of the word, as a man of great experience (a well-traveled man).

When he was elected bishop, he was puzzled by a curiosity. Thirty years prior in 1855, six clerics were seated at Don Bosco's table and he talked with him in a jocular vein about their future. On that occasion Don Bosco had said, "One of you will become a bishop."

These clerics were John Anfossi, John Cagliero, John Baptist Francesia, Felix Reviglio, Michael Rua, and John Turchi, and they had all taken his words as a joke, for their own humble social condition and the modest status of Don Bosco as well as that of the Oratory seemed to exclude all and every likelihood that such a high honor would be conferred on any of them. In those days no one gave any thought to the prospect of foreign missions. Nevertheless, no word uttered by Don Bosco was ever lightly forgotten. Therefore, Father John Cagliero was overwhelmed by the desire to know what was behind that prophecy, so far away in time, which had come true now in his person. He asked the saint about it and was told that he would let him know about it on the eve of his consecration. It was in his room that night that Don Bosco disclosed the mystery.

The event dated back to 1854 when young John Cagliero had been infected by typhoid fever while nursing the victims of the cholera epi-

demic. He was so sick that there was no longer any hope for his survival. When Don Bosco went to his room to pray, he stopped short on the threshold, for a sudden apparition held him spellbound. A blazing dove with an olive branch in its mouth was flying around the room until it turned in the direction of the sick boy's cot, flying over his head, and stroking the ever-green olive leaves against his lips. It then dropped the little branch on his brow and disappeared in a sparkling flash of light.

Then another vision came. The walls dissolved and a myriad of strange faces, wild in appearance, could be seen crowding around his bed, all eyes gazing fixedly at the dying young man as though afraid for his fate. Two of these strange figures in particular dominated the others, one horrible and black of aspect, the other the color of bronze with an athletic body and a martial bearing. They, too, were leaning with manifest anxiety over the dying young man. All this happened in a lightning swiftness, and no one present caught even a hint of it. The dove seemed to him to stand as the fullest glory of his priestly grace, the olive branch as the ministry of preaching the Gospel of Peace, and in the barbaric figures around him he perceived the savage tribes to be converted. It had then all been fulfilled as he had predicted. The saint understood by this that the final hour had not yet come for the young little John Cagliero.

Bishop John Cagliero was profoundly moved as he listened, and then asked Don Bosco to repeat the story at supper to the superiors of the Chapter. Don Bosco never could say no to anything he believed might be beneficial, so he consented.[1]

Father John Cagliero's episcopal consecration was scheduled for December 7th, so he would be able as a newly consecrated bishop to celebrate his first Pontifical Mass the following day, the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Father Michael Rua solicited the charitable contributions of ladies acquainted with the prelate[2] in order to provide clothing, vessels and ornaments. The mother general of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians also sent out a circular letter that helped

[1] What we have described briefly here is related in detail by Father John Baptist Lemoyne in the *Biographic Memoirs* (Volume V, page 67 and following). He ends his account of it as follows: "We wrote these pages that same evening, under dictation of Bishop John Cagliero." The two characteristic native figures were typical of the peoples of Tierra del Fuego and Patagonia.

[2] When this circular came into the hands of a Freemason, it enraged and inspired him to write a wild letter. This, too, is another example of the blind anti-clerical phobia of the 19th century that opposed Don Bosco's progress and that of his congregation in so many ways.

give wider circulation of the news. Don Bosco addressed the following printed invitation to his main benefactors:

Turin, December 3, 1884

Dear Sir:

I know how kind you have always been to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, and how you have always taken great interest in all things which concern it. I am therefore happy to inform you that on Sunday, the 7th of December, John Cagliero, a former pupil of our Oratory who was officially appointed by His Holiness Pope Leo XIII in the Consistory on November 13th last as titular bishop of Magida in Pamphylia and apostolic pro-vicar of North Patagonia, will be consecrated bishop at 7:30 a.m. in the church of Mary Help of Christians.

His Most Reverend Eminence Cardinal Cajean Alimonda, our venerated archbishop, will officiate at the consecration, assisted by Their Most Reverend Excellencies Bishop Giovanni Battista Bertagna, titular bishop of Capernaum and Bishop Emiliano Manacorda, bishop of Fossano.

I would be very pleased if you were able to attend this ceremony; but should your duties prevent you, I would all the same like you to accept my cordial invitation to the dinner that will be held about twelve thirty in the afternoon.

About six o'clock in the evening, there will be a brief academic entertainment in honor of the new bishop.

With the hope that you will be able to respond to our desire to have you with us on this memorable day, I wish to thank you in advance and wish you every blessing from God and the Immaculate Virgin while remaining with profound gratitude and high esteem.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

N.B. If you are able to be with us at dinnertime, would you please be good enough to let me know in advance.

A fourth bishop also attended the ceremony: Bishop De Maced Costa of Belem from the state of Para in Brazil, who was on his way from Paris

to Rome, and had stopped over in Turin to call on Don Bosco and ask for the assistance of his Salesians. Bowed down under the burden of her eighty years, the mother of the new bishop was seen weeping during the holy rite, while his great spiritual father, standing in the shadow of the sanctuary, drew tender glances from numerous friends and admirers. He would have liked to have a godfather and a godmother at the ceremony as well, and had offered this honor to Count and Countess Colle,[3] but they had not been able to undertake so long a journey on account of their health.

At the end of the imposing ceremony, while the cardinal and the four bishops, following the clergy, passed between two rows of people standing shoulder to shoulder on their way to the first sacristy, the newly consecrated bishop broke away from the procession and turned toward his mother. The dear old lady went toward him, leaning on the arms of another son and a nephew, and tried to kneel down; but her son anticipated her gesture and pressed her venerable head to his bosom, leading her gently back to her seat, to the edification of the congregation. The proud mother was not to survive this great joy for long, for her tired heart stopped beating on Christmas Day that same year.

Don Bosco, head uncovered, made his way with difficulty through the crowd toward the second sacristy, and knelt down to kiss the new bishop's ring. The bishop was concealing his hand in the folds of his robe, and instead he flung himself into Don Bosco's arms. It was a most tender sight, enhanced by the tears! Then the saint was able to press lips against the ring that the bishop had not allowed anyone else to kiss until Don Bosco had done so. After that, Don Bosco always treated Bishop Cagliero with the same deference he used toward other bishops, kissing his ring and observing every formality due his episcopal dignity.

Many guests attended the banquet given in his honor that day, but of all the toasts made, we should recall the toast made by a Barnabite monk, Father Denza, a distinguished physicist and astronomer who delved into his great knowledge to extract a brilliant similitude:

"During the dinner, it seemed to me I was standing in my observatory looking at the heavens, and contemplating one of the loveliest of all the constellations, that of Taurus,[4] with the Pleiades near it and Argo beneath it," Father Denza said. "The principal star of Taurus was visible to me in the person of His Eminence, the cardinal archbishop of Turin. The four

[3] November 7, 1884

[4] Allusion to the city of Turin

stars encircling it were the four reverend bishops present, while Don Bosco represented that star which, on account of its immense distance from us, is barely visible to the naked eye, although it, too, is immense. I saw Don Bosco's schools as the Pleiades, with the infinite number of pupils and Salesian cooperators, and since here and there in the nebula a few brilliant stars were distinguishable, I recognized in them the directors of the schools who were attending the festivities. Lastly, the constellation Argo which is so named after the mythical expedition of the Argonauts, was represented by Bishop John Cagliero, a conqueror like Jason and a musician like Orpheus at one and the same time, who advances with his men undaunted toward a conquest which, compared with the golden fleece, would be nothing but a pallid symbol."

Responding to the toast, the new bishop recalled an episode that we repeat as connected with our story:

"Twenty years ago, Don Bosco reached the locality of Gavi, accompanied by ninety boys, after a tiring march through Liguria," he said. "There they all found a sumptuous banquet prepared for them, offered by a pious Genoese canon who used to spend a certain part of the year at Gavi. Don Bosco took his leave at dusk and set out with his boys from the village. The pious canon would have liked to see Don Bosco once more and to walk part of the way with him, but Don Bosco had already advanced so far into the valley of the Orba that even his followers, accompanied by Father John Cagliero, were unable to find him. It was then that the pious canon exclaimed that he would most certainly see Don Bosco, that man of God, because it is only mountains that never meet again in this world[5]. Well, that very same pious canon is today Cardinal Alimonda who twenty years later has found Don Bosco at his side once again."

Ever since 1841, it had been Don Bosco's custom to give his sons a talk on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception: first to the assembled boys, then to the catechists, then again to the clerics and finally to the Salesians, as the gradual development of his Congregation swayed the prevalence of one or the other category.

In 1884, this festive celebration of the bishop had absorbed all the thoughts of the Oratory before, during and after December 8th. But Don Bosco did not wish to forego this excellent tradition, so he called the meeting

[5] This was the last of the fall outings, the longest ever undertaken by Don Bosco and his boys. It took place in 1864. Father Lemoyne describes it in three chapters in vol. VII (LXXIII, LXXIV, LXXV), and also mentions the above episode. He omits another episode that occurred at Cremolino.

for the 13th of the month. Toward six o'clock that evening, all the confreres were assembled in the parlor near the doorkeeper's office. The saint hailed the great event of the previous week, and then let himself drift on the tide of his recollections to the remote origins of the Oratory, gradually following their course again, back to recent days. In the beginning, he and his mother Margaret had been all things to all: cooks, teachers, directors, and assistants. Then came his first assistants: Father Michael Rua, Father John Cagliero, Father John Baptist Francesia, Father Celestine Durando, Father Joseph Lazzero. The sacrifices and work in every part of the house and festive oratories had been constant, while they studied theology by themselves and attended the classical language courses at the university so as to teach others. Then he spoke of the present state of the Oratory, the comforts that had been introduced, and the better facilities for maintaining order through the accurate distribution of responsibility among the superiors, some directing the trade pupils, others the other students. He declared that holy obedience was the indissoluble link that rendered such good order possible and maintained it.

"Many come to me and say, 'Father, I need some souvenir, since I have just been transferred from this or that other office, and switched to this or that school far away from your paternal care,'" Don Bosco said. "In such cases, I tell them whatever I think is most suited to them. But believe me, my children; you should look to our holy rules! This is the greatest and most precious souvenir that your poor old father could bequeath to you. The rules have been approved by the Holy Mother the Church, which is never wrong; so by obeying the Church, we obey God Himself directly. How many people are there in the world who are fortunate enough to be able to say 'I am certain that by doing this, I am securing the salvation of my soul?' I will not develop this beautiful and all-important theme here because in itself it would require whole volumes. My feeble strength could not endure so lengthy an exposition, and these facts have already been explained to you.

"I shall therefore close with something that is very dear to my heart. When the Apostle St. John was already one hundred years old and was no longer able to speak at any great length about matters pertaining to God, he had people guide him to the church where he would repeat these few words to his disciples gathered there: '*Diligite alterutrum!*' (Love one another). 'When this has been done, what more should I do? *Diligite alterutrum!*' he would say again. But the Christians grew weary of hearing him repeat the same advice, so they begged him humbly to explain why he insisted so much on it. 'Because anyone who obeys the precept of charity has already

done everything!' the saintly Apostle answered. This is what I now say to you, my dear children. Love one another, help each other charitably. I now say let it never happen that anyone of you bear hard feelings towards his brother or cast discredit on him by harsh criticism. Woe to anyone who does such a thing! We must forgive our brother, just as we wish that God forgive us our own sins. How can we repeat *dimitte nobis debita nostra, sicut et nos dimittimus debitoribus nostris* (forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us) if we harbor any hatred in our hearts? Ah! Let us never forget that Jesus Christ said to his Apostles, 'They will recognize you as My Disciples, if you will love one another.'"

Bishop Cagliero went to Rome during the Christmas novena. He had already arranged for the audience with the Holy Father through Bishop Jacobini sometime between December 20th and 22nd. The Pope received him in an audience on December 22nd, and he left very encouraged. Besides the great benevolence shown to him personally, Leo XIII had given him a recommendation for Don Bosco:

"Tell Don Bosco to take care of himself, for his health is precious not only for the Congregation, but for the whole Church."[6]

Bishop John Cagliero wasted no time when he returned to Turin, as he officiated at functions and held conferences. For example, he consecrated the church of Mary Help of Christians at Nizza Monferrato on December 31st, and gave a talk to the cooperators in the church of St. John the Evangelist, taking Don Bosco's place. He also preached at Lu, Casale and elsewhere.

As the date of his departure drew nearer and preparations became feverish, Bishop John Cagliero witnessed Don Bosco's unfaltering calm when faced with sudden adversities. He was having dinner with him on January 24, 1885, when shouts were heard coming from the playground.

"Fire! Fire!"

Everyone jumped up from the table and ran out onto the balcony, but Don Bosco did not budge. Fire had broken out in the bookbinding shop and it looked as though the end of the world had come for the house. Some were running, others were shouting, rushing here and there and searching for water. Chaos reigned supreme and the firemen were called. Meanwhile, the fire spread, threatening to invade the dormitories.

Without the slightest dismay, Don Bosco was absorbed in prayer and occasionally asked if there was any danger threatening the boys, or if peo-

[6] *Summ. Sup. Virt*, num. XIX, #10.

ple had been hurt, and upon hearing that there was none, he replied, "If it's like this then God's will be done."

Thus, he remained perfectly in control of himself, in no way showed that he was worried.

Nearly all the superiors, including the bishop, had gone downstairs to see the scene of the fire at closer range. The firemen showed up on the scene and soon put out the fire. The mayor of Turin, Count de Sambuy, also arrived, and Bishop John Cagliero escorted him to a room near the dining room where they found Don Bosco just as calm as before.

"Thank you for your concern, Count," he said. "You have always wished our Oratory well, and now you have given us further proof of it. They tell me that the fire has already been isolated and that there is no further danger threatening the house. Thanks be to God."

Don Bosco alone had remained perfectly serene and quite resigned to God's will while everyone else was panic-stricken.

On the 26th, he wrote Prince Czartorysky: "You will come to know from the newspapers that a fire has burnt a considerable part of our house here on Saturday. It has done a considerable amount of damage; but no one was hurt. Blessed be God both in prosperity and adversity."

His faith in God was soon rewarded by an affectionate gesture from Divine Providence that also helped to console the fainthearted. Ten thousand lire was required immediately in order to repair the bookbinding shop, and lo and behold, a letter came from France containing a check for exactly that needed amount of money.

Moved by the report made by Father Taminetti on the fire, the pupils of the Este's Manfredini School spontaneously collected 195 Lire. They had their director hand the money personally to Father John Baptist Lemoyne so that he might give it to Don Bosco. The saint was deeply touched and instructed Father John Baptist Lemoyne to thank them, summarizing the content of the letter for him. The Pope, too, sent Don Bosco a special blessing to comfort him[7] as soon as he was informed of the fire.

Meanwhile, the eve of Bishop Cagliero's departure had arrived. All that day, the idea that Bishop John Cagliero and the others going so far away, and the knowledge of the absolute impossibility that he could accompany them to the place of embarkation as he had done on other occasions, and even that it might even be impossible to say goodbye to them in

[7] Letter from Father Dalmazzo to Don Bosco (Rome, February 3, 1885).

the church of Mary Help of Christians, caused Don Bosco a great deal of emotion which, at times, left him depressed and certainly exhausted.

On the night of January 31st, Don Bosco had a dream just like the one he had had about the Missions in 1883. He told Father John Baptist Lemoyne about it, who immediately wrote it down:

> *"I thought that I was accompanying the missionaries on their journey. We talked briefly before setting out from the Oratory. They were gathered around me and asked for advice. I think I said to them, 'Neither with science, nor good health, nor riches, but with zeal and piety you'll be able to do a great deal of good to promote God's glory and the salvation of souls.'"*
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> *"We had been at the oratory only a little while before, and then without knowing how we had gone there or by what means, we found ourselves in America almost immediately. At the end of the journey, I found myself alone in the heart of an immense prairie located between Chile and Argentina. All my dear missionaries had scattered here and there over the infinite expanse. I wondered as I looked at them why they seemed so few to me. After all the Salesians I had sent to America on several expeditions, I had expected to see a greater number of missionaries. But then I remembered that it only seemed as if there were so few of them, because they were scattered in so many different places, like seeds that have to be transplanted for cultivation and multiplication.*
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> *"I saw a great many long, long roads in that prairie and a number of houses scattered along the routes. These roads were not like the roads we have here, nor were the houses like the ones we know in this part of the world. They were mysterious, I might say - spiritual houses. There were vehicles, means of transportation, moving along the roads, and as they moved, they assumed a thousand fantastic different forms and aspects, all of them wonderful and magnificent, so that I could not define or describe a single one of them. I looked with wonder and saw that when these vehicles were driven near to any group of dwellings, villages, or cities, they soared into the air, so that anyone traveling in them would see the roofs of the houses beneath them although these houses were very tall. Many of them were below the level of the roads that had run along the ground level through the wasteland, but suddenly became airborne as they reached inhabited areas,*

almost creating a magic bridge. From the bridges, one could see the people living in the houses, people in the playgrounds and streets, or on their farms in the countryside, busily working.

"Each of these roads led to one of our missions. At the far end of one very long road which came from the direction of Chile, I saw a house[8] *where there were many Salesians engaged in scientific pursuits, practices of piety, and various trades, crafts and agricultural activities. To the south lay Patagonia. In the opposite direction, I could see in one single glance all our houses in the Argentine Republic. I could also see Paysandu, Las Piedras and Villa Colon in Uruguay. I could see the School of Niteroy in Brazil and a number of other schools scattered in the various provinces of that same empire. Finally to the west, another long, long road that crossed rivers, seas and lakes leading to unknown lands. I also saw Salesians there, too. I looked very carefully and noticed only two of them.*

"Just then, a man of noble, handsome appearance appeared at my side. He was pale and stout, so closely shaven that he seemed beardless although he was a grown man. He was dressed in white, wearing some kind of cloak of rose-colored material, interwoven with golden threads. He was altogether resplendent. I recognized him as my interpreter."

"'Where are we?' I asked, pointing to this territory."

"'We are in Mesopotamia,' my interpreter said."

"'In Mesopotamia?' I echoed, 'but this is Patagonia.'"

"'I tell you that this is Mesopotamia,' the other said."

"'And yet...and yet ...I cannot believe it.'"

"'That is what it is! This is Me-so-po-ta-mia,' the interpreter repeated, spelling it out so that it might well be impressed on my mind."

"'Why do I see only so few Salesians here?'"

"'What is not there now, it will be in the future,' the interpreter said."

"I was standing motionless in the prairie, scanning all those

[8] All the topographic indications prior to and after this would seem to indicate the house at Fort Mercedes on the left bank of the Colorado River. This is the training school of the St. Francis Xavier Province, and has a large student body, professional training courses, agricultural courses, a regional museum and a shrine that is host to many pilgrimages.

interminable roads, and contemplating quite clearly, but inexplicably, all the places the Salesians were then and were going to be later. How many magnificent things did I not see! I saw each individual school. I saw as if they were all concentrated in one place, all the past, present and future of our missions. Since I saw all of it as a whole in one single glance, it is extremely difficult, indeed altogether impossible, for me to give you even the most vague idea of what it was that I saw. What I saw in that prairie of Chile, Paraguay, Brazil, and the Argentine Republic, would in itself require an immense volume, just to give a few overall pieces of information about it.

"In that immense plain, I also saw all the savages who lived scattered in that territory of the Pacific, down to the gulf of Ancud, the strait of Magellan, Cape Horn, the Diego Islands, and the Malvinas. All this was a harvest awaiting the reaping by the Salesians. I saw that as of now, the Salesians were only sowing, but that those coming after them would reap. Men and women will swell our ranks and become preachers. Their children who, so now it seems, cannot possibly be won over to our faith will themselves become evangelizers of their parents and friends. The Salesians will succeed in everything with humility, work, and temperance.

"All that I saw in that moment and later concerned all the Salesians: regular settlements in those territories; their miraculous expansion; and the conversion of many natives and many Europeans settled there. Europe will stream into South America. European trade began to decline from the very moment that Europeans began stripping their churches, and it has continued to decline more and more ever since. Hence, workers and their families, driven by their own poverty, will go and seek their fortune in those new hospitable lands.

"Once I saw the area assigned to us by Our Lord as well as the glorious future of the Salesian Congregation, I had the impression that I was setting out on a journey again, this time on my way back to Italy. I was carried at an extremely rapid pace along a strange road, which was at a very high level, and in an instant, I found myself above the Oratory. The whole of Turin was beneath my feet and the houses, palaces and towers looked like so many low huts to me, for I was so high up. Squares, streets, gar-

dens, avenues, railways, and the walls of the city to the countryside and adjacent hills, the cities, the towns of the Turin Province, and the gigantic chain of the Alps all covered with snow lay spread out beneath my gaze like a stupendous panorama. I saw the boys down below in the Oratory and they looked like so many little mice. But there was an immense number of them; priests, clerics, students, and master craftsmen were evident everywhere. A good many of them were setting out in procession while others were coming in to fill the ranks where the others had gone forth. It was one constant procession.

"They all went thronging to the immense prairie between Chile and Argentina to which I myself had now returned in the twinkling of an eye. I stood watching them. One young priest who looked like our Father Joseph Pavia, though he was not, came toward me.

"With his affable manner, courteous speech, candid appearance and boyish complexion, he said, 'Behold! These are the souls and the territories assigned to the sons of St. Francis of Sales.'"

"I was amazed by such an immense multitude, all gathered there, but it disappeared in an instant and I could barely detect the direction they had all taken in the far distance.

"I must point out that as I relate it, my dream is described only in the summarized form, and that it is impossible to specify the exact chronological order of all the magnificent sights that appeared before me and of all the secondary features. My spirit is incapable, my memory forgetful, my words inadequate. Apart from the mystery in which everything I saw was shrouded, the scenes before me alternated. At times, they were interlocked and repeated according to the variations of amalgamation, division or departure of the missionaries, and the way in which the people they have been called upon to convert to the faith gathered around them or moved away from them. I repeat: I could see the past, the present and the future of the missions with all their phases, hazards, triumphs, defeats or momentary disappointments concentrated as in one single whole; in a word, all the things that will be connected with the Apostolate. At the time, I could understand everything quite plainly, but now it is impossible to unravel these intricate mysteries, ideas and people one from another. It would be like trying to cram into one single narrative and sum up

in one sole instance or fact the whole panorama of the firmament, relating the motion, splendor and properties of all the stars with their individual laws and reciprocal aspects; one star by itself would supply enough material for the concentration and study of the most formidable brain. I again must point out that here it is a question of things having no connection with material things.

"Now resuming my narrative, I repeat that I stood bewildered as I saw this great multitude disappear. At that moment, Bishop John Cagliero stood beside me. A few missionaries were at some short distance away. Many others stood around me with a fair number of Salesian cooperators. Among them I saw Bishop Espinosa, Dr. Torrero, Dr. Caranza and the Vicar General of Chile.[9] *Then my usual interpreter came over to me, talking with Bishop John Cagliero and a number of others, and we tried to ascertain whether all this had meaning.*

"Most kindly my interpreter said, 'Listen and you will see.'"

"At that same moment, the whole immense plain turned into a big hall. I cannot describe exactly how it looked in its splendor and richness. The only thing I can say is that if anybody tried to describe it, he would not be able to withstand its splendor, not even with his imagination. It was so immense that it escaped the eye, nor could one see where its sidewalls were; no one could have estimated its height. The roof ended with immense arches, very wide and magnificent, and no one could see what supported them. There were neither columns nor pillars. It rather looked as if the cupola of this immense hall was made of the finest candid linen, something like tapestry. The same applies to the floor. There was neither illumination, nor the sun, moon, or stars, though there was a general brilliance distributed evenly everywhere. The very candor of the linen blazed and made everything visible and beautiful so that one could see every ornament, every window, every entrance and exit. There was a most beautiful fragrance all around formed by a mixture of the loveliest aromas.

"Just at that moment, I became aware of something phenomenal. There were many tables of extraordinary length arranged in every direction, but all converging towards one focal point. They were cov-

9 Perhaps thus alludes to Bishop Domingo Cruz, Capitular Vicar of the diocese of Conception.

ered with refined tablecloths, and on them were crystal bowls in which many various kinds of flowers were arranged handsomely.

"The first thing that struck the attention of Bishop John Cagliero was that there are tables here, but no food.

"Indeed, there was no food and nothing to drink visible on them, nor were there any dishes, goblets or any other receptacle in which one might place food.

"Then my friend the interpreter spoke, 'Those who come here, *neque sitient, neque esurient amplius' (they will never thirst or feel hungry anymore).*

"As he said this, people began to stream in, all clothed in white with a simple ribbon of rose hue embroidered with golden threads around the neck and shoulders. The first to enter were small in number, only a few together in small groups.

"As soon as they entered, they went to sit at a table set for them and sang, 'Hurrah!'"

"Behind them, other more numerous groups advanced singing 'Triumph!' Then a great variety of people began to appear: old and young; men and women of all ages; of different colors, appearances, and attitude, and one could hear canticles on every side. They sang, 'Hurrah!'"

"Those already seated sang 'Long live!' and those entering sang 'Triumph!' Each group that entered represented yet another nation or section of a nation which will be converted by our missionaries."

"I glanced at those infinitely long tables and saw that there were many of our nuns and confreres sitting there and singing, but they did not have anything to show that they were priests, clerics or nuns for all of them wore the same white robe and rose-colored ribbon. But my wonder grew when I saw men of rough appearances dressed the same as the others who sang 'Long live! Triumph!'"

"Just then, our interpreter said, 'The foreigners, the savages who drank the milk of the divine word from those who educated them, have become heralds of the word of God.'"

"I also saw many boys of strange and rough appearance in the crowds and I asked, 'Who are these boys whose skin is so rough that it looks like that of a toad, and yet at the same time it is beautiful and of a resplendent color?'"

"The interpreter replied, 'They are the children of Cam who

have not relinquished the heritage of Levi. They will strengthen the ranks of the armies defending the kingdom of God that has appeared in our midst at last. Their number was small, but the children of their children have made it larger. Now listen and you will see, but you will not be able to understand the mysteries placed before you.' These boys belonged to Patagonia and to the southern part of Africa.

"Just then, there were so many people streaming into this amazing hall that every seat seemed taken. The seats and benches did not have any specific form, but assumed whatever shape the individual wanted. The seating was satisfactory to everyone.

"Just as everyone was shouting 'Hurrah!' and ' Triumph!' on all sides, an immense crowd appeared to join the others, and sang, 'Hallelujah, glory, triumph!'

When it looked as if the hall were entirely full and no one could have counted all the thousands of people present, there was a profound silence, and then the multitude began singing in different choirs:

"The first choir sang, 'Appropinquavit in nos regnum Dei: laetentur Coeli et exultet terra. Dominus regnavit super nos. Alleluia' *(The kingdom of God has come among us. Let the heavens and the earth rejoice. The Lord has reigned over us).*

"The second choir sang, 'Vincerunt et ipse Dominus dabit edere de ligno vitae et non esurient in aeternum. Alleluia' *(They won and the Lord Himself shall give them food from the tree of life and they shall never go hungry).*

"A third choir sang, 'Laudate Dominun omnes gentes, laudate eum omnes populi' *(Praise the Lord all you nations, praise Him all you peoples).*

"While they were alternately singing these hymns, a profound silence suddenly fell once more. Then one heard voices from high up and far away. No one could possibly describe the harmony of this new canticle. Solo Deo honor et gloria in saecula saeculorum *(To God alone honor and glory forever).*

"Other voices still higher up and further away replied to these other voices, 'Semper gratiarum actio illi qui erat, est, et venturus est. Illi eucharistia, illi soli honor sempiternus' *(Forever thanks to Him who was, is, and will come. To Him alone thanksgiving and honor).*

"These choirs seemed to descend from their high level and draw nearer to us. I also noticed Louis Colle among the singers. Everyone else in the hall also began to sing, joining in, blending voices, sounding like an exceptional musical instrument with sounds with an infinite resonance. The music seemed to have a thousand different high notes simultaneously and a thousand degrees of range which all blended into one single vocal harmony. The high voices of those singing soared so high that one could never have believed it. The voices of the singers in the hall were sonorous, fully rounded and so deep that one could not believe that either. All together they formed one single chorus, one sole harmony, but both the high notes and the low were so fine and beautiful and penetrated so deeply through all the senses and were absorbed by them that one forgot his very existence, and I fell on my knees at the feet of Bishop John Cagliero and exclaimed, 'Oh, Cagliero! We are in Paradise.'"

"Bishop John Cagliero took me by the hand and answered, 'This is not Paradise, but only a pale image of what Paradise really will be.'"

"Meanwhile, the voices of the two magnificent choirs continued singing in unison in indescribable harmony: 'Soli Deo honor et gloria, et triumphus alleluia, in aeterum in aeterum!'"

"Here I quite forgot myself and I no longer know what happened to me. I found it difficult to rise from my bed next morning, and as soon as I came to my senses, I went to celebrate Holy Mass.

"The main thought which was impressed on me after this dream was to warn Bishop John Cagliero and all my beloved missionaries of something of the greatest importance regarding the future of our missions: all the efforts of both the Salesians and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians should concentrate on cultivating vocations for the priesthood and religious life."

Every time he told us about the dream and repeated the words hurrah *and* triumph, *Don Bosco's voice took on such a vibrant accent that it made us shiver. When at the end, Don Bosco mentioned the name of his beloved son, Bishop John Cagliero, he paused for a moment in his narrative because a sob choked him and his eyes were filled with tears.*

Father James Costamagna wrote a thank-you note to Father John

Baptist Lemoyne who had sent him a copy of this and other dreams:[10]

> You may tell Don Bosco that we shall not obey what he wrote in his last letter to Bishop Cagliero: "Do not believe everything that my dreams say, for we are willing to recite Urban VIII's profession of faith, but cherish the visions of our Father who – and I shall never forget it – once said to me 'Perhaps of all religious Congregations and Orders, ours is the one which has received most the Word of God.'"

In the morning of February 1st, the bishop ordained eight priests in the church of Mary Help of Christians, together with two deacons and four subdeacons, and conferred minor orders on ten clerics. He and several of those ordained would eventually leave. He delivered the farewell talk at the evening farewell ceremony, and then the cardinal came to bless those about to leave. Don Bosco was forced to obey the orders of his physicians and did not even leave his room. Not until the next day was it known what had caused his infirmity.

After sending off his traveling companions that same evening, February 1st, Bishop John Cagliero stayed at the Oratory. He was feeling tired and intended to join the others the following day at Sampierdarena. This brief respite allowed him to enjoy one last affectionate chat with Don Bosco.

He went to his room at about seven o'clock that same evening and sat down by his side in silence. Don Bosco, likewise, did not speak. How many memories must have come crowding into both their minds during that solemn silence!

At last Don Bosco asked, "Have your companions gone?"

"Yes, Father. They left already."

"They seemed very concerned about my health. As soon as you can see them, tell them not to worry. I am not sick. It was only my emotion that made me look sick. Poor fellows. It was evident that they were very upset at the state I was in."

"Do not worry; I'll do my best to dispel any sinister presentiment they may have."

"And when are you leaving?"

[10] Undated letter, but from the contents, one may well believe that it was written at the beginning of May.

"I have to be at Sampierdarena tomorrow."

"What train are you taking?"

"Let us not talk about the time right now. We can think about that later."

"If you could leave a little later and rest peacefully now..."

"Do not worry about that, Don Bosco. I feel very well. Leave it to me. We'll see each other again this evening and will arrange everything."

Then they began talking about the missions until the bell rang for supper. Bishop Cagliero left and Don Bosco, unable to stand up any longer, was forced to lie down. At nine-thirty, the bishop returned and forced himself to keep his habitual free-and-easy manner as he approached Don Bosco's bedside.

"Well now, dear bishop?" Don Bosco said somewhat hesitantly.

"I just came to receive your blessing," the bishop answered.

"What? This evening? Come back tomorrow morning. We could talk some more at greater ease."

"Perhaps there will be no more time tomorrow morning."

"At what time are you leaving?"

"Early. Very early."

"Stay until two o'clock tomorrow afternoon. You are tired. When you have had a good rest, the journey will be less fatiguing."

"If Don Bosco has no objection, I would like him to leave the hour of my departure to my own choice."

"Do whatever you think best."

"Then bless me and bless my companions also, once again."

Bishop Cagliero knelt down and Don Bosco took him by the hand.

"Have a good trip," he said. "If we are not going to see each other again here on earth, we shall meet again in Paradise."

"Let's not talk about this. Before we see each other in Paradise, we shall meet again on earth, too. Remember that I have promised to come back for your Golden Jubilee celebration..."

"That will be as Our Lord wishes. He is the Master. You will have much work to do in Argentina and in Patagonia. Work hard and Our Blessed Lady will assist you to reap a great harvest from your mission, then they will summon you and give you a diocese."[11]

Then he began his blessing; his voice became like a whisper. The bish-

[11] In 1915, Bishop John Cagliero was summoned to Rome where he received the Cardinal's hat, and five years later was put in charge of the Tuscolana diocese, which had already been declined by eight other cardinals having the right of option. He referred to this prediction made prior to his departure in a letter to Father Giuseppe Vespignani (Rome, January 23, 1921). The other details were culled from the *Bulletin* (March issue, 1885).

op had to prompt his words, adding words befitting the occasion, and Don Bosco repeated them like a child who is taught by his mother how to pray.

Once he received his blessing, the bishop rose to his feet and said, "Now, goodnight, dear Don Bosco."

"Give my best to your traveling companions, our confreres in America, and the cooperators, wherever you may meet them."

"Certainly, certainly, but now get some rest, Don Bosco."

"I still have so much to say to you! But in Marseilles you will see... Go ahead, have a pleasant trip. God bless you and your companions."

He said these last words as the bishop left his room with a heavy heart. Don Bosco was unable to leave his bed again the following week due to an attack of bronchitis, the early symptoms seeming to threaten more dire complications.

The expedition should have left Europe more than a month before, but the cholera epidemic had closed the ports of Brazil, Montevideo and Buenos Aires to all traffic arriving from the Mediterranean. Italian and French mail ships were allowed to dock towards the end of 1884, but were kept in quarantine, which meant discomfort, expenses and a certain amount of danger. Hence, Bishop Cagliero had preferred to wait until permission to travel was once again granted.[12]

He arrived in Marseilles on February 11th after visiting the houses along the Ligurian and French Riviera, and there he found the Salesians and the sisters who were to travel with him, all waiting for him.[13] Don Bosco wished to have his presence evident in the city, and so he sent Father Bonetti to meet him and convey his final good wishes to them, as well as to deliver a letter written with his own hand to the Bishop. This is an extremely important letter:

Turin, February 10, 1885

My dear Father John Cagliero:

I trust that your health will continue to be good, and beg you to take every care of yourself, such as you may think compatible with your present status.

[12] Letter from Bishop John Cagliero to Bishop Jacobini (Turin, December 1884).

[13] There were six sisters and of the Salesians, there were six priests (Nicole Baradiotti, Giuseppe Betti, Antonio Fossati, Evasio Rabagliati, Antonio Riccardi [secretary to Bishop Cagliero], and Angelo Savio), ten clerics (Giovanni Aceto, Angelo Cavorta, Pietro Cogliol, Carlo D'Allera, Giovanni Fossati, Michele Grando, Francesco Ramello, Fabrizio Soldano, Ambrogio Turriccia, and Alessandro Stefanelli), and two coadjutors (Silvio Milanese and Marco Zanchetta).

I have just received a letter from the Archbishop of Buenos Aires. He wrote about matters we have already discussed. I have kept a copy of it and this should help you when you report to the Archbishop and negotiate with him with full power of attorney, as you may deem best in Our Lord. Remember that Chile is looking to the Salesians, who in their turn are looking favorably in the direction of that nation. But do not found too many houses all close to one another.

Father John Bonetti will give you the affectionate regards of every Salesian in Europe, and you will please convey them to our confreres in America. You can rely fully on Father Louis Lasagna's discretion and on our older confreres and the bishops who love us in Jesus Christ. But be very cautious in any decisions you have to make connected with civil authority.

All the cooperators in Europe are praying for your safe trip and will continue to pray for the prosperity of your undertakings, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls. God is with us. Do not be afraid.

Urge all our confreres to concentrate all their efforts on two cardinal points: to make themselves loved but not feared and to make every personal and financial sacrifice with a view to cultivate vocations for the priesthood and religious life.[14]

Once again, I urge you not to give too much importance to dreams. It is all right if dreams assist one in understanding matters of moral nature or our rules; if so, they may be taken into consideration. Otherwise, do not hold them in any account.[15]

God bless you, dear Bishop John Cagliero, and with you the whole Salesian expedition. May Mary lead you all to win many souls for Heaven.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be with us always. Amen.

Pray everyday for him who will always be in Jesus Christ.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

14 At that time, it was more customary to use the word nun rather than *sister* at the Oratory. The original words used in the text are *vita monastica*. The sisters were called *monache*.

15 This was an allusion to what Father Costamagna had written when writing the phrase we have already quoted previously (on page 186) to Father Lemoyne.

The saint also wrote Bishop John Cagliero another precious letter:

> Words to be set to music by Bishop John Cagliero when he reaches the banks of the Rio Negro in Patagonia, and which, God willing, we shall also sing in the church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin - *O Maria, virgo potens. Tu magnum et praeclarum in Ecclesia praesidium; tu singulare Auxilium Christianorum; tu terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata; tu cunctas haereses sola interemisti in universo mundo; tu in angustiis, tu in bello, tu in necessitatibus nos ab hoste protege, atque in aeterna gaudia in mortis hora suscipe.*[16]

With this paternal thought, the saint hoped to dispel all fear about his health in the minds of the departing missionaries. They telegraphed him, and asked for his blessing once again, shortly before going aboard the Bourgogne. The ship sailed on Saturday, February 14th.

So far everything had gone without mishap and they hoped they would have a safe journey; but what would happen when they would arrive on the American soil was unknown. The traveling companions of Bishop John Cagliero did not know the things that he knew, things that were causing him a certain anxiety.

The mission in Patagonia had been shaken by some alarming events already since September 3, 1884. Brigadier General Winter, commander of the frontier guards along the banks of the Rio Negro, the Neuquen and the Limay, was also governor in that same territory. Everything went on smoothly for as long as he was friendly with the Salesians. But now that the national government had attacked religion and broken off relations with the Holy See, as a consequence of its sectarian conspiracies, and had expelled Apostolic Ambassador Bishop Matera on the pretext that he was *persona non grata*, the governor took advantage of an imprudent action performed solely out of an excess of zeal by Father Dominic Milanesio.

Being directed by false principles and possibly being egged on by the President, he began to persecute the unfortunate missionaries relentlessly.

16 Cardinal Cagliero had Father Pagella set the following words to music for the fiftieth anniversary of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians in 1918. The translation is "Oh Mary. All powerful Virgin, thou art great and glorious champion; thou extraordinary Help of Christians; terrible as an army set in array, alone didst thou destroy all heresies throughout the world; thou in difficulty, thou in battle, defend us from the enemy in our need, and welcome us into eternal beatitude in the hour of our death."

During this time of strife, the governor accused the Salesians before the minister of Grace and Cult of being uneducated, scandalous men and also declared that they were something like traffickers. He urged the central government not to allow any of them to work in the parishes in Argentina. He also slandered them through the intervention of his subordinates before the archbishop of Buenos Aires, seeking to drive them out of Viedma and Patagones by every conceivable ruse, even beginning to do so *manu militari* (by using the army).

Two things saved the Salesians from this disaster: the energetic reaction of Father Joseph Fagnano and his sharp foresight. While doing everything he could to pacify the governor, he sent a forceful letter in his own defense to both the ecclesiastic and civil authorities, since the Free Masonic press was mainly up in arms against him personally. Unfortunately, the Catholic press, which reacted energetically in defense of the Salesians, struck a note of violence in its language, attacking the government and arousing indignation. All the families living in Patagones and Viedma together with the population inhabiting the banks of the Rio Negro knew the enemy was behaving infamously, but did not venture to protest, for fear of their own personal interests that were subject to national authority.

Father Joseph Fagnano was undismayed, and had been prepared for a strenuous material defense should violence be carried to the extreme. He was able to do this wherever he had property of his own, and since he had bought land with his own money on which he had built, no one was lawfully entitled to force him to evacuate. This resolute stand on his part saved the Salesians from a surprise attack that had already been planned by their adversaries, and allowed Buenos Aires to evaluate both accusations and defense. Because of this and the mediation of the Curia, the minister paid no attention to the note from the governor, whereupon the governor found it more prudent to take a more conciliatory attitude.[17]

Calm was restored, but not safety. The attitude of the capital on the religious question stiffened. Furthermore, General Roca, the President of the Republic, fell from his office in October 1886, and there were already premonitory signs of fierce political warfare ahead for the succession to his office. This was the tense situation when the new vicar apostolic arrived in Buenos Aires.

[17] Appendix, doc. #40, A, B, and C. These three documents complete and explain each other on the subject matter of this advisory, and are actually two letters from Father Fagnano and one from Father Milanesio.

Already in December 1884, he had written to the secretary of the Propagation of the Faith: "Will not the attitude of the present Argentine government, which is both hostile and overbearing against the Church and its representative, represent yet another obstacle to us? Let us hope not, but even if it were so, as it has done in the past, Divine Providence will continue to watch over our Missions."

Later on January 31st, Father Louis Lasagna confided his fears to Don Bosco from Villa Colon, in reference to Uruguay. "For some weeks now, the government is at odds with the Curia, and it is threatening restrictive laws against religious," he wrote. "A decree has already been issued prohibiting the foundation of any new religious institute without prior permission from the government." So this meant that the hostile campaign had passed beyond the borders of the Argentine Republic.

The possibility that Bishop Cagliero would be unable to establish himself in Argentina cast its shadow on the horizon, and had been discussed when the vicar general of Conception (Chile) happened to pass through Turin. This prelate, whose bishop was then in exile due to the government oppression, spent the month of January in Turin, discussing with the superiors how to keep a house in our town ready for the vicar apostolic in the event that he would be prevented from entering his own territory or living where the decree of the Holy Father had assigned him.

There was yet another problem afoot which complicated the matter. The archbishop of Buenos Aires had alluded to it, as he replied on January 2nd, to communications he had received from Don Bosco. He wrote:

> I shall be delighted to welcome a Salesian bishop, and I trust he will do so much good, since his religious family in this part of the world is already so numerous. But I am forced to add that at times, and now even more than before, our government will never permit the establishment of a vicariate in Argentina without its own approval. They feel like they are the lords of this land more than the kings of Spain themselves. I cannot do anything to solve this problem, since it is a concern of the Supreme Pontiff, but today it is overlooked. I wish your Excellency would arrange matters so that His Excellency Bishop John Cagliero could come here without the title of vicar of Patagonia. On my part, I will grant him every faculty to

exercise his episcopal powers both here and in Patagonia, and will see to it that he is both honored and respected as a bishop, but we have come to a stage when the very Nuncio of the Pope is expelled, and some of the Salesians are persecuted and expelled from Patagones, so I cannot believe that a bishop will be looked upon with favor or tolerated under a title which would offend the arrogant national liberal powers. Your Excellency has already overcome so many obstacles, kindly try to overcome also this obstacle so that there may be no pretext whatsoever to attack the Salesian Congregation. You have honored us exceedingly by sending us a bishop, and I would not like this to be a cause of displeasure.[18]

Don Bosco received this letter some time in January or February and wrote a reply to it as soon as he was able to leave his bed. He did not speak of this extremely delicate matter, but instead sought to strengthen the benevolent attitude of the archbishop:

Turin, February 9, 1885

Most Reverend Excellency:

I cannot write to you at length as I would like because my health does not permit it. For the time being, I must limit myself to thanking you humbly and most cordially for the protection you have on several occasions extended to the Salesians.

Our most venerated archbishop, who often speaks to me about you, has instructed me to give you his most respectful regards, and to inform you that he, Cardinal Alimonda, hopes that before long, some fortunate event might bring Your Excellency to delight us with your presence, together with our boys who to a great extent all remember you. Bishop John Cagliero and his companions will give you a detailed report on how we are, but they intend to entrust themselves to your fatherly hands, and carry out all that you advise and order them to do.

I have grown very old myself, but I am fully confident that I will be able to see you again here on earth before Divine Mercy

[18] See this volume page 290.

summons me into the hereafter.

All the Salesians, myself foremost among them, implore your holy blessing, while with profound gratitude I am happy to remain,

Your most affectionate and devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

It was at this time that the campaign in the newspapers no longer restricted its attacks to the missionaries in Patagonia, but included all the Salesians alike, striving to make them disliked by the whole of Argentina. They were described as a bunch of vagabonds - a kind of adventurous mercenaries inept to provide any contribution to the progress of civilization - deceptive, turbulent, greedy, and fanatic. They were presented as men without family ties or national identity, only good for wresting money and give a bad name to Argentina abroad. It was declared that the Salesian *Bulletin* was merely a means of rousing a sectarian spirit among its readers and spreading wild tales about the Republic. They urged that the Salesians ought to be disbanded from where they have already taken foothold, while the doors should be slammed in the face of any other Salesian who might be about to arrive.

Alarmed by the direction things were taking, the archbishop called the attention of the cardinal prefect of the Propagation of the Faith to the danger of even greater government reprisals, when Bishop John Cagliero had already arrived in Montevideo. Hence, His Eminence wrote Don Bosco on May 6, 1885:

> As to the Vicar Apostolic Bishop John Cagliero, the bishop of Buenos Aires writes to tell me that he is seriously alarmed that he may not be received by the government, since he had been sent there without its previous consent. I cannot hide the fact that this news has caused me some apprehension, and several acts on the part of this same government make me think that such an occurrence is very likely to take place. Please arrange things so that this danger can be avoided, and enjoin the utmost prudence on all your missionaries.

When Don Bosco received this letter, Bishop John Cagliero was already in Buenos Aires. He had arrived at Montevideo on March 12th, and after inspecting all the houses in Uruguay, he moved on in *nomine*

Domini. On the 31st, Father Joseph Costamagna duly informed Don Bosco, "So far, the journey, the arrival and the welcoming of Bishop Cagliero have been genuinely triumphant. The Catholic press is not talking about it because prudence counsels them not to. A few bad newspapers spit poison, but not to any extent that could cause alarm. The apostolic delegate did not only welcome our bishop most graciously, but even gave him some very costly gifts *praeter expectationem*[19] (beyond any expectation). Bishop Aneyros was, and always continues to be, a sincere and tenderly affectionate Father to both Bishop John Cagliero and the Salesians."

While waiting for events to happen, Bishop John Cagliero resided at San Carlo de Almagro, doing whatever he could at the houses of both the Salesians and the nuns. He was frequently invited to officiate at functions in town and preside at meetings of associations whenever the archbishop was absent. But he behaved with the utmost tact and circumspection, being fully aware of his exceptional position and provisional status in the Salesian missions and his arrival in the Republic. He kept silent and worked.

In 1875, only a few newspapers were attacking the church, but now the government itself was openly opposing it. He wrote Father Joseph Lazzero on May 5th:

> Their satanic hatred of the Church is quite indescribable because they trample underfoot everything savoring of logic, right, justice, common sense and even decency, provided that they can vent their insane unbridled hatred against religion. There is one newspaper urging its readers to attack religious houses, to set fire to them and to kill all religious.

But the bishop kept longing for Patagonia, and declared that in order to set his tent there, he was ready to go there dressed not as a bishop, but as a humble sacristan. He felt that he would be making an important step

19 This was Bishop Matera, whom he had met at Montevideo. With reference to the events quoted here (see Vol. XVI, page 297 and following). This is what the Bishop wrote to Don Bosco in reference to this encounter on March 23rd: "I talked with him alone for more than an hour, dispelling with the torch of truth all the clouds which might have been overshadowing him in regard to us. He wished me the greatest success in this extremely difficult mission in Patagonia because he had been informed that the Chilean Minister had telegraphed the minister in Montevideo, urging him to interrogate the minister in Argentina and find out about the Apostolic Vicariate of Patagonia and the Salesian Bishop, and giving instructions that as soon as he appeared, he was to be kicked out. I replied that I would go there dressed as a sacristan, not as a friar so that I could not be unfrocked, and that Mary Help of Christians would never permit it."

in this direction if he were to obtain an interview with President Roca. Father Joseph Fagnano helped him to do this in May, making peace, at least outwardly, with the governor of his territory, and coming to Buenos Aires on missionary business.[20]

Since the storm in the press was abating, the obstacles that were preventing his reception by the first official of the Republic were dwindling every day. People were disarmed when they saw him go about his business without any special pomp "just like any other human being".[21] At length, Bishop Cagliero was told that he could report to the President, and did so in the company of Father James Costamagna. General Roca remained seated and haughtily asked Bishop Cagliero, "Are you a bishop?"

"Yes, I am the titular bishop of Magida," he replied.

"Are you aware that the Pope cannot send bishops to this Republic without first having some understanding with the government?"

"Mr. President, I am bishop *in partibus infidelium* (among the Pagans) and have therefore neither diocese nor jurisdiction. I was already in this Republic for a few years as a Salesian missionary of Don Bosco and I have now come back to dedicate my attention to the Patagonian mission."

Father James Costamagna took this opportunity to remind the President of the many occasions he had stood at the general's side during the military expedition into the desert in 1879. The general could not conceal a certain satisfaction at being thus reminded.

Bishop Cagliero was encouraged and went on: "The Argentine Republic is open to everyone who wants to work. We have, therefore, come here like so many other immigrants, but not only to work, but also to teach people how to work. I have brought along with me some thirty missionaries, among them several Salesian laymen who are experts in every kind of craft and trade. Some of us will be teaching farming and how to raise cattle, and others will attend to souls in the territories which Your Excellency had reclaimed for civilization."

"But you all form a religious Congregation..."

"Yes, but only as a private society or association, whose members all retain their full civil rights, without claiming any privilege or recognition from the state. We are citizens just as everyone else, and are only associated for the purpose of giving an education to the poor young people in

[20] Letter from bishop to Father Lemoyne (May 5, 1885).

[21] Letter from the above to the above (Buenos Aires, June 15, 1885), and to Cardinal Alimonda, (B.A., June 25, 1885).

homes, hospices and training schools. Our founder, Don Bosco, was advised to found a society suited for modern times, by Ministers Rattazzi and Cavour themselves."

Smiling, the President remarked, "Don Bosco was very shrewd indeed!" He then got up from his chair and shook hands with Bishop John Cagliero, saying, "We shall be friends."

Thus encouraged, Bishop Cagliero asked him for a letter of recommendation for General Winter. The President satisfied his request, couching the letter in kind and flattering terms. When speaking about the event, Father Joseph Vespignani, being fully aware of what had occurred, used to conclude his story by saying: "This was a handsome campaign victory won with Don Bosco's own method of education, prudence, simplicity and frankness."

The friendship thus established between them endured until the very end. The prestige of General Roca was of considerable assistance to Bishop John Cagliero during the years of his apostolate in Patagonia, but at the same time, it produced two substantial advantages for him immediately.

Among the difficulties encountered by the bishop's journey to Patagonia was the problem of fares. All the Salesian houses were burdened with debts and could not give him the money he needed. But now Father Joseph Fagnano, who was in Buenos Aires to confer with the vicar apostolic, obtained ten free tickets for traveling from the government. Bishop John Cagliero wondered what good it would do to him to go to Patagonia if it were possible to be rendered helpless by the local authorities. But his friendly relations with General Roca assured him safe passage to the headquarters of the military commander with whom he had to reckon if he were to pursue his mission in peace.

After reaching Patagones on July 9th, he hastened to visit him, doing so in his prelate's robes. Already informed of how well he stood with General Roca, the governor gave him an honorable reception, asked him to be seated and began with the bluntness proper of a soldier.

"Doctor, you must have a bad opinion of me. I am a very bad fellow."

"Just the opposite," the bishop answered promptly. "We have been reading some fine things about Your Excellency in the *Geographical Bulletins* about your exploration trips. In Italy, we read these *Bulletins* with keen interest and pleasure. We have seen in them a man of great heart and intellect. We are also aware of all the good things that Your Excellency has done for the Salesian Missionaries."

This opening speech had softened the hot-tempered general. Then the bishop handed him letters from President Roca and the minister of the

Army and Navy, all of which recommended the bishop to his benevolence, in all matters related to the exercise of his sacred ministry. The governor promised to help him in anything that the Salesians needed that solely concerned the welfare of souls and preaching the Gospel without interfering in any way with politics. This was no mean consideration in a country where politics occupied a preponderant role in the lives of its citizens.[22]

During those first few months, letters arrived at short intervals, one after the other, to gladden Don Bosco with their prevalently favorable news, but one item of news filled his heart with joy more than all the rest. Bishop Cagliero, who had visited all the houses of the Salesians and the sisters, save that of Niteroy in Brazil, between mid-March and early July, was able to write to him: "Don Bosco may well be proud of the fact that he has many who love him and are helping to make him beloved."[23]

22 Letter from Father Anthony Riccardi to Don Bosco (July 25, 1885).
23 *Patagones* (July 30, 1885).

Chapter 12

REQUESTS FOR NEW FOUNDATIONS IN ITALY AND DETAILS REGARDING ITALIAN HOUSES IN 1884

Seeing that the Christian education of youth was obstructed on all sides, Don Bosco, in the eyes of good people, had truly the appearance of a man sent by the Providence of God to build a dam in defense against the encroaching onslaught of secularism in the schools. All priests and laymen, therefore, turned their gaze to him, eager to cooperate in such an important and urgent undertaking as the protection of youth. The continuous requests made to the Salesians indicated the moral discomfort pervading the entire peninsula, and enabled the Salesians to gauge the immensity of their mission in the eyes of the Church and civil society more specifically. At the same time, their lack of personnel and qualified staff required by state laws caused their souls to grieve because of the impossibility of adequately responding to the universal feeling of trust which people had in them. No one should be surprised if, despite the many requests addressed to them, it was not possible for the Salesians to establish even tentatively any new foundation in Italy during 1884. But the ones that were already established prospered, and a few even developed to some considerable extent. As we have done in previous volumes, we shall report requests that were stranded along their course, and likewise relate what role Don Bosco had in them. Later, we shall also add a few details on houses already well known to us.

We shall begin with the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, for our saintly founder together with this Chapter still continued to follow directly their progress.

One day, Father Celestine Durando proposed the establishment of boarding schools for little boys from four to seven years of age who were to be under the management of the nuns. This would help families where, as a result of the death of either father, mother or both parents, there were too many children to be cared for by the surviving parent or their guardians. But Don Bosco answered, "This has nothing to do with our mission."[1]

[1] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (February 28, 1884, afternoon).

We shall refer here only to three requests made for the sisters: two of them coming from Northern Italy and one from Sicily.

The auxiliary judge of Francavilla, Sicily, wrote to Don Bosco and asked him if he could send two nuns there to take charge of the school and its girls, but nothing more than a courteous reply came of this. Some fairly promising requests were made by Castel San Giovanni in the area of Piacenza, but Don Bosco was afraid of having to deal with excessively heavy expenses, while the Chapter was already shouldering too many at the time. At any rate, a visit from Father John Cagliero would sufficiently clarify the situation for him to be able to give a definite answer.[2]

The pastor of Moncrivello in the area of Vercelli offered on behalf of Signore Persico, a widowed lady, a school for girls to be entrusted to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The elderly lady intended to bequeath in her will a fine house she owned, an additional income of seven hundred lire, and an estimated income of twelve thousand lire accruing from a vineyard to Don Bosco. The house would transfer to the Salesians as it stood, with repairs to be done and taxes to be paid by the Salesians. This, however, would have eaten considerably into the revenue. Now, the similar experiences at Lu, Chieri and Vallecrosia had shown that the houses belonging to the sisters would always represent a liability. Hence, it was decided that the best thing would be that the sisters dealt only with administrations promising them a fixed sum, as for the kindergartens in their charge.

Experience had also taught something more: that now and then unforeseen circumstances would show up in which it was impossible to continue to survive without a fixed income. That same year at Lu Monferrato, in view of the scarcity of the crops, half of the families had removed their children, both boys and girls, from the Salesian Sisters. With their monthly dues taken away from them, the poor nuns had barely been able to survive. They had only done so thanks to a collection of funds gathered by the pastors and the mayor.

"If that is how things are, I do not feel that the request from Moncrivello is suitable," Don Bosco said. "We will have to ask for a suitable financial guarantee."

Father John Cagliero was told to go there in November and try to negotiate for a yearly income of three thousand lire.[3]

[2] See above (January 22, 1884).

[3] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (October 28, 1884).

The Salesians made only two requests of any entity, and both were in Piedmont. Mr. Marengo, brother of the deceased canon, wanted the Salesians to take charge of a vacant boarding school and a church at Carmagnola, a historic little town in the area of Turin.

After a lengthy discussion on the matter, Don Bosco gave these instructions: "Negotiations should commence with the understanding that an agreement for the starting period should be postponed for the time being and that we should be free to stipulate whatever terms we find most expedient."

Negotiations continued, but nothing came of them. The municipality of Carignano, another important town in the area of Turin, made a financially attractive request. The local monastery of the Franciscans was unoccupied, since the few remaining religious who had lived in it had gone elsewhere. The Franciscan Provincial gave legal assurance that their father general was pleased that the Salesians would take over. The municipal council extended a unanimous invitation to Don Bosco to open up an elementary school there immediately, and proceed gradually toward a high school. They would have turned over the building to him and assigned him an annual revenue of six thousand lire. Someone else promised to contribute ten thousand lire toward work needed to adapt the place to this new requirement. Furthermore, the two adjacent houses, both of which belonged to two good priests who were close friends of Don Bosco, would later be left to him by their will and testament. Don Bosco would have consented had he been permitted to take one thing at a time, but people were impatient and did not want to wait.[4]

Bishop Achille Manera of Ancona, capital of the Marche, first offered Don Bosco a house, which was not accepted because of lack of personnel, and then a parish of six thousand souls in Borgo Pio. The population, the prelate wrote, was "to a great extent composed of blue collar workers, strangers to the area, railway employees who gave the parish priest little work to do, though they were in great need of spiritual help."

Don Bosco wrote at the top of the letter: "Father Celestine Durando should read this at the end of the Chapter."

Bishop Manera then became a cardinal and though a fragile old man, he lived on to see the present Ancona School with the new church he had built as a parish inaugurated in 1901, and witnessed the radical

[4] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (February 21 and May 19, 1884).

transformation of a disreputable district, thanks to the influence of the Festive Oratory.

In the Chapter meeting of February 28th, Don Bosco had four applications read aloud, three of which came from abroad and one from Teano in Campania. We shall speak of the first three in the next chapter, but in reply to the last, written by Cardinal D'Avanzo, the bishop of that diocese, Don Bosco ordered that he be courteously answered that this was impossible. During the discussion about it, Don Bosco seized the opportunity of recalling to mind a prudent maxim the Pope had passed on to him: "Remember," he said to the other superiors, "never too many houses in the same area. This only causes envy among the others and jealousy on the part of civil authorities."

The matter concerning Penne, a town in the remotest part of the Abruzzi, was not settled so swiftly. Reverend De Nardis had begun insisting already in 1882 that some scholastic institute be inaugurated in his town. His letters to both Don Bosco and Father Celestine Durando reveal the sincere ardor of his zeal on behalf of youth. A ray of hope that had been held out to him in the beginning, though without stipulation, had overjoyed him.

In October, he went to Turin, which he found to be "far superior in reality to its reputation." He also said that Don Bosco had "instilled the sentiments of his paternal heart into everybody." He stated this in a memorandum submitted before the municipal authorities. In this memo, following the instructions given him by Don Bosco himself, he requested the legal transfer to the Salesians of a former Carmelite monastery, the money needed to adapt the existing house to what was requested by the new status, and the assurance of support money for six Salesians. The municipal authorities applauded the request wholeheartedly, but substituted the above-mentioned monastery with the old monastery of the Reformed Friars Minors, since it was better suited to the project. Authorization for this was obtained from the Holy See, which stipulated that an agreement should be made in this matter with the Franciscan Provincial who resided in Aquila. This, however, met with relentless opposition,[5] which was finally overcome thanks to the intervention of Cardinal Bilio, the protector of that Order.

Then, the municipal authorities drew up a draft of their terms that

[5] Appendix (document 41).

Father De Nardis forwarded to Turin. Impatient for an answer, he solicited Don Bosco for one while he was in Rome. Father John Baptist Lemoyne answered Father Michael Rua on his behalf:

> I enclose a letter from Father De Nardis from Penne. Give your attention to this matter either by letter or in person. Don Bosco is absolutely unable to attend to it himself, because his head cannot take it. You are fully empowered and be sure to use discretion. Please be so kind as to see if Father Celestine Durando will attend to it.

This implied that Don Bosco was inclined to consent; in fact, he had even promised to take a trip to Penne while in Rome, but circumstances did not leave him time to do it. The matter dragged on for some years, since it was obstructed in the municipal council by a free Masonic minority that had not disclosed its hand in the initial phases. Despite his industrious zeal and selfless eagerness, the good priest was unable to realize his project.

No request had ever been made by Naples until 1884, when one of singular importance arrived. Father Lawrence Apicella, a priest who was highly esteemed by his fellow citizens, had founded four homes for deaf and dumb boys and girls, and entrusted them to the charge of six priests and twenty-five laymen who wore cassocks. It was his desire to tie up these initiatives with a Salesian school. The project was discussed in the Chapter during the afternoon session on December 27th. The minutes that record the discussion are very interesting:

> Don Bosco: *Let us consider the matter on principle. It does not seem as if there would be need to send a big staff there. We might write to Father Apicella that he should come here to talk it over in Turin, and we can send back a few people with him to Naples to look into the question and learn the ropes. We could settle the deal little by little.*
>
> Father Celestine Durando objected that a big staff would be required for four different houses.
>
> Don Bosco: *I am not saying we have to agree, but only to see if it is to our advantage to undertake the education of the deaf and dumb. Tell Father Apicella to come and discuss the matter personally, but since the weather is too cold now, he should postpone*

his visit until after Easter.

Father Celestine Durando: *Before Father Apicella comes to Turin, we ought to find out if his associates agree to this unification.*

Father John Cagliero: *Before we talk it over, let us consult the rules to see if they permit us to undertake the education of the deaf and dumb.*

Father Celestine Durando: *The rules say that our purpose is to dedicate ourselves to poor, abandoned children. Who is more unfortunate than a deaf and dumb?*

Father Michael Rua: *San Jose Calasanz, who was inspired by the same aspirations as us when he founded his orphanages, likewise took in the deaf and dumb.*

Father Julius Barberis: *I would like to say that those Salesians who are assigned to the deaf and dumb ought to dedicate themselves solely to them, without being assigned to any other office, because they have to be well versed in what they are doing if they are to teach them.*

Father Celestine Durando: *I ought to point out that this would require a special province solely for the deaf and dumb.*

Don Bosco: *Some time ago, somebody insisted most vehemently that I accept an institute for the blind, but I never wanted any part of it. I felt that the idea in itself was excellent, but I did not feel it was suitable enough to give my attention to it. But the deaf and dumb are another matter. I would like to do everything I can to help them. I am therefore asking the Chapter to investigate the matter and see if there is any possibility that we can take care of this new category of boys and girls.*

Father John Bonetti: *I do not think we could be successful in such an undertaking. There is a more urgent call for us to dedicate ourselves more and more to children who are to live in the Society and reform it.*

Father Anthony Sala: *We would have a fair portion of our staff already working in these houses, and we could associate the helpers who wear clerical garb to our Congregation as a Third Order.*

Father Celestine Durando: *I am convinced that a number of those helpers will not want to join us, and that they will leave sooner or later. If we were to send a few Salesians to Naples and they were abandoned by the former helpers, how could we keep*

all four houses open? Should we retreat in confusion? Restrict all four houses to only one? That would only bring shame and dislike upon us.

Don Bosco: *Delay all negations until after Easter. Meanwhile, find out if Father Apicella's helpers will certainly agree to unification and life in a community with us, or if not, how many are opposed to the idea.*

Father John Cagliero: *We must think it over carefully. There are four houses. Some of the helpers will certainly leave them, not wishing to subject themselves to others, and some will undoubtedly be dismissed because that is what our experience has taught us.*

Father John Bonetti: *If we wish to encompass this new category of deaf and dumb, we should first start by opening a small house with only two or three children, and in the course of some years train teaching personnel that would be alert, experienced and well-versed. But from one minute to the other, we cannot take any enterprise of such large- scale proportions. I would like to know why Father Apicella is so eager for this unification. Does he have some debts perhaps? Is he unable to make ends meet? Is he hoping that the Salesians will doctor his deficiencies?*

Father Celestine Durando: *Father Apicella is not in any debt, but since he is already 65 years of age he is afraid that at his death, his institute will die, too.*

Father John Bonetti: *In that case, we should not hold out any hope to him of our support because otherwise he will feel reassured and will not look for any other source that could help keep his institute alive, and that means it will die through our own fault. If we want to devote ourselves also to the deaf and dumb, let us set up the new institute on our own foundations.*

Don Bosco: *This is how you are to answer Father Apicella: At the present moment, we cannot agree to his proposal for lack of personnel. Meanwhile, we can think what can be done during the course of the current year. At the same time, Father Apicella must give some thought, too, to find in what other way he could assure the continued existence of his institute. If he wants to entrust it to the Salesian Congregation only, there will be no difficulty for us taking it over after his death.*

Father Michael Rua: *I think we ought to be very careful in saying such things. The priest who founded the Oratory at Belluno*

has already bequeathed it to us in his will. He might die soon and where would that leave us if we are not in a position to take over our inheritance?

Father Anthony Sala: *In Schio, Father Rossi has already drawn up his will, bequeathing his magnificent Oratory to Don Bosco. As to Father Apicella, I believe that he wants to join forces with us so that he can enjoy our moral support, which will inspire his benefactors to more generous donations because they will then see that the future existence of his Institute is assured.*

Don Bosco: *So what do you all think we should write as an answer to Father Apicella?*

Father Michael Rua: *We should simply say that as a general idea, we like the project, but that we are unable to agree to it.*

Don Bosco: *Add at least the line that "for the moment, we are unable to accept."*

The Chapter approved this reply. Father Celestine Durando proposed adding the following promise to the letter: Someone would be passing through Naples on his way to Randazzo and he would stop over to visit the institute. The Chapter approved.

Of the above mentioned four houses for deaf and dumb, one was in Naples, the second only a little distance away at Casoria, and the other two at Molfetta. As time went by, this charitable institution underwent some changes and moved elsewhere, until Cardinal Sanfelice had it established as a moral entity under the protection of the archbishop pro tempore. All the boys would be concentrated in a big building in the Tarsia area and the girls at Casoria. After many vicissitudes, his second successor, Cardinal Prisco, persuaded Father Michael Rua to let the Salesians take over, and the institute for boys attained great prosperity, while the Salesians also took an interest in the institute for girls that was directed by nuns.

Catania in Sicily was still waiting. In January, Archbishop Dusmet asked that a technical trade school for young trade students be inaugurated in the town during the following spring. Don Bosco sent word that this would not be possible so soon, but urged the writer to use words that would soften the disappointment of the enforced delay. Later, the zealous bishop begged that at least one Salesian be sent to direct a Festive Oratory and the elementary school. The Salesians decided to look for someone suitable.

"It is essential that we have a house in Catania," Father John Cagliero said. "If any of our confreres visit that town, they are obliged to lodge at

a hotel. Now that we are established in Sicily, we have to strengthen our position there. Unless we set up house in Catania, I am determined to call the sisters back because they are left entirely to themselves as the situation now stands. The archbishop will be glad just as long as we make a start. We cannot play for time any longer because if we do not agree to terms, he will be forced to turn to others."

After listening to it all, and to everyone else's opinion, Don Bosco said the last word: "We absolutely need that house. If there were not enough personnel, the other houses would have to sacrifice themselves a little and relinquish some of their own personnel. The archbishop had already been given too many promises that had not been kept."

This was how the House of Catania was established.[6]

Meanwhile, the sectarians were not idle in Catania. As soon as they had word that the Salesians might be coming, they sought to discredit them before public opinion. This tendentious news item suddenly appeared in their official organ:

> From Genoa, newspaper reports inform us that Don Bosco's school at Bosco Marengo by Novi in the province of Alexandria has been closed by order of the authorities since certain reprehensible things have come to light there, where it seems that the priests and friars teaching in the school have consecrated themselves to the detriment of morality and decency, getting into...the Penal Code. [7]

Father John Bonetti wrote to the editor denying the statement, but couching his protest in calm and courteous words, revised at the request of Don Bosco. The gist of the letter was as follows: "Don Bosco has instructed me to inform you that you are erroneously informed on his account. The school located at Bosco Marengo is a reformatory for young delinquents, and neither Don Bosco nor any of his teachers have ever been in any way connected with the school."

The denial by law should have been published in the Catania newspaper, but instead, the publication restricted its action to a cynical, hypocritical reference in a small paragraph worded as follows:

[6] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (January 22, July 4, and August 30).

[7] Gazzetta di Catania (February 3, 1884).

> TRAGEDIES AND COMEDIES: A little while ago, we quoted a news item from newspapers on the continental mainland regarding the closing of one of Don Bosco's schools at Bosco Marengo by order of the authorities, following up on certain events in regard to which it is preferable to maintain silence. Now one Father John Bonetti, Don Bosco's secretary, writes us that the school in question is a reformatory for juvenile delinquents and that neither Don Bosco nor any of his teachers have ever had anything to do with that school. Since the matter in question involved certain little things to which priests are usually addicted and which they will have done, the newspapers of Genoa, Rome, etc., inserted the names of Don Bosco and his priests, though they were not involved.[8]

Father Peter Guidazio wrote, "They need to be taught a lesson. If I were not a priest, I would give them a lesson myself." [9]

But Don Bosco was not of the same opinion. As we shall see, the conspiracies by the Free Masonic lodges became more and more blatant year after year.

Let us now retrace our steps, directing our attention northward to a few houses on our way back from the south, since Don Bosco had occasion to concern himself in some way with them during 1884.

Let us start with Rome. Although the Church of the Sacred Heart was still far from completion, the saint did not want to delay the beginning of the construction of the often-mentioned school any longer. The building contractor, Cucco of Biella (for this new building, Don Bosco avoided dealings with any Romans), began the excavations, following the plans of the Turin engineer Vigna. He intended first of all to build the part of the house overlooking Via Porta San Lorenzo, which today is known as Via Marsala. This two-story portion of the building (the third floor was added very recently) had no basement and was to be linked with the old house at the corner of Via Marghera by the passageway alongside the church. Don Bosco wanted Count Colle to go to Rome for the ceremony of the cornerstone, and instructed Father John Bonetti to make arrangements with him when he traveled to Marseille to convey the saint's farewell

[8] Gazzetta di Catania (#37). It was published by the Catholic Journal (February 21).

[9] Letter to Father Bonetti (February 17, 1884).

greetings to Bishop John Cagliero and the missionaries. But the ceremony took place during the spring of 1885 with neither Don Bosco nor the count being present.[10]

Magliano is not far from Rome. Time and experience were to show how difficult it was to maintain a permanent foothold in seminaries, especially after the death of the bishop who had first summoned the Salesians to run them. The Magliano Seminary was the first to prove it.

Trouble began at the beginning of the school year 1883-1884, originating from the school adjoining the seminary. Canon Pagani, a member of the Tridentine Committee, tried to attract the school's boarders by diverting their attention from Father Daghero. He did the same with the clerics, insisting that he did so because of instructions received from Cardinal Bilio.

"Cardinal Bilio is incapable of issuing any such instructions," Don Bosco declared when informed of this. "That is, unless someone had instigated him."

Unfortunately, this cardinal died January 30th, but was succeeded by Cardinal Martinelli, who was so well disposed toward the Salesians that he sent a solemn reprimand to the one who had caused the disturbance and his clerics. Nevertheless, Cardinal Bilio had granted authority to open a semi-boarding school that removed the boarders from Salesian control, and his successor allowed it to continue. This was a type of hospice with its pupils attending the Salesian school as day students without paying any fees. This invalidated the agreement made when the boarding school was first opened and our Salesians took control of it.

The ill feeling was intensified by another incident. Father Joseph Daghero had expelled an insubordinate cleric who had run away, and then demanded to be readmitted. In short, it was no longer possible to live peacefully in coexistence with Father Pagani. After carefully considering the matter, Don Bosco gave public notice that he was about to withdraw from the school in May, but the new bishop was against it and so was the Pope. In fact, he stopped his patronage and charity toward the little school that had been opened to the detriment of our own.

It was then that Canon Rebaudi, who was in charge of it, recommended in a very subtly written letter that the boys be entrusted to Don Bosco's charity, thereby seeking to save his own school and safeguard his

[10] See the debate during which the Superior Chapter decreed the immediate commencement of construction in the Appendix (document 43).

prestige in town. Don Bosco had a clear and unequivocal answer sent to him: 1) the Salesians were ready not only to relinquish the boarding school, but the seminary as well which they had until then administered solely at the desire and express command of the Holy Father and the cardinal; 2) the sacrifices of the Salesians had made at that school were proof enough of their good will toward the population; 3) the Salesians had provided schooling for day students and the education of the poorer children of the town; 4) in reference to the poor boarders, some of them would receive assistance from the Holy Father, some from Cardinal Martinelli, and some from Don Bosco himself, provided their conduct was good.

This answer left the matter entirely unresolved, with the additional drawback that the bishop's promises were unfulfilled. In fact, he himself granted authority and his favor to the Rebaudi hospice, transferring boys for whom he himself paid fees, from the episcopal boarding school to the Rebaudi hospice. Furthermore, it was said that he had assigned five thousand lire that the Pope had destined for the seminary to this same Rebaudi hospice. Lastly, he insisted on an unconditional readmission of the cleric who had been expelled.

Faced with all this, Don Bosco said, "It would be very good if we were to write and tell the cardinal that since it is impossible for us to continue in this fashion, we are withdrawing from the seminary immediately at the beginning of the school year, and that others can take over the teaching. But this is a decision that must be thought out very carefully. We have to stress the following with the cardinal: we have so many debts that we are unable to continue. The Magliano house has a twenty-thousand-lire debt without considering the salary of the staff, which also has to be taken into consideration. It really seems impossible, that everyone should try to gnaw at poor religious congregations!"

But before taking any action, it seemed opportune to gather more information.

Father Francis Dalmazzo and Father Joseph Daghero supplied this information. The cardinal professed to be a friend of Don Bosco and who was willing to pay his debts, as well as anxious to respect the existing agreement. But there was a hidden ambiguity on the most salient point, namely his promise to pay the debts, for he meant debts contracted by the school toward the Tridentine Committee and not Don Bosco's own personal debts contracted for furniture, paper, books, clothing and so on. There were no debts at all with the Tridentine Committee, only credits. The cardinal had said this relying on erroneous statements made by

Canon Rebaudi, and it was with Canon Rebaudi that the cleric mentioned earlier would be admitted to it very soon, even prior to the ordination of the other classmates.

The cardinal had given substantial proof of his affection for Don Bosco when he had supported his application for privileges, but now as head of the diocese, he was influenced by local cliques who played on his good faith. They had even convinced him that the municipal authorities were against the Salesians, and well disposed toward the hospice, but instead, the municipal authorities were so attached to the school that they would have done everything possible to prevent the closing. Not that the mayor had any sympathy for teaching priests! He would gladly have done away with them, but he did not know how to recruit lay teachers at such a cheap salary. Thus, he was happy to have the Salesians.

Meanwhile as a result of all this intrigue, the number of students had gone from ninety to only fifty-three, and it looked as if the cardinal intended to do away with the services of the Salesians as soon as possible. He even wanted to take a more radical course of action, not only doing away with the school completely, but also limiting the seminary to only twenty clerics, thinking that that number was sufficient for the requirements of his diocese.

The cardinal protector was informed of the whole issue, and after looking into all the documents, he decided that the Salesians were entirely in the right. Don Bosco did not lose his head in the labyrinthine controversy, but stood firm on his point of view, which was the most concrete and least compromising.

"Let us put all other considerations aside," he said, "and let us stand firm on this single issue: if our debts are not paid, we are unable to continue. That is enough. If they want us to continue, they should pay us a fixed subsidy."

Nevertheless, it was agreed to continue in harmony until the end of the school year. They would write to inform the cardinal that his generous offer to pay the Salesian debts had been gratefully accepted, and asking when approximately during the course of the year, payment would be effected, and in any event, it should not be later than May.

Upon receiving this letter, the cardinal denied the alleged deficit and that Rebaudi's hospice had damaged the Salesian boarding school in any way; hence, he concluded with the remark that it was necessary to review the accounts of the school. This last observation hurt Don Bosco, and he said, "I shall never allow anybody to check our accounts. I will think it

over and see what has to be written in reply."

Father Joseph Daghero tried to establish a modus vivendi with Father Pagani for the future. Father Michael Rua described him as "a diplomat with an exceptional dose of cunning." At any rate he did succeed, but only with great difficulty. But Don Bosco was not satisfied. "How can we discuss the future unless we have first settled matters related to the present?" he said. Then he added, seeing that the Chapter was endeavoring to make the best of the situation, "I can already foresee that we shall not decide to leave the school because we always have to shoulder the consequences of the desire. We always had to satisfy everybody on all occasions. The bottom line is that the school staff has always worked without being paid. We could write meanwhile to Father Joseph Daghero: 'You have a debt of twenty thousand lire to pay. Pay them because we cannot shoulder any debts on your account and make greater sacrifices than before.'"

Since there was some insistence that the negotiations continue in order to reach a settlement, Don Bosco again stressed his own viewpoint: "The only way to fix everything is for them to pay our debts and let us get out in the end and within the shortest time possible. We shall neither agree nor decline to negotiate, but I do not feel that it is proper for us to negotiate with Father Pagani."

It was all too evident that His Eminence and the staff of his Curia had lost their faith in the Salesians. It was also in consideration of this that Don Bosco felt that by the end of the school year, the staff of the Magliano School should be assigned here and there in other localities. Father Michael Rua was afraid of a reprimand by the Sacred Congregation if they did not stand by this agreement, namely that notice of termination had to be served five years in advance.

"No one can force us to stay on at Magliano at a total loss, giving our service free of charge," Don Bosco replied. "Write Father Joseph Daghero that he is to convince these gentlemen to give us back our liberty to go away as soon as possible. The only way to hold us there a little while longer is that they pay our debts. In our contract we did not agree to teach the other school founded to our detriment; as a fact, its boarders attend our schools."

It was indeed strange that "those gentlemen" should demand that we teach in the Salesian school after having caused its decline!

Things dragged on as before throughout the school year 1884-1885. In 1885, Father Michael Rua called on Cardinal Martinelli in Rome to find out what his intentions were, and came away with the conviction that

it would be better for him to adapt himself to the status quo. But that was not the way Don Bosco felt about it. In June he said, "We cannot go on like this. The reason for breaking the contract must be of a greater weight. We cannot prevail in the matter before the Sacred Congregations because Cardinal Martinelli is highly influential in all the congregations. So let us write and tell him that we are prepared to pay any indemnity: five, ten, twenty thousand lire. We will pay them everything they ask, provided they will let us go."

Father Michael Rua raised a few respectful objections to justify his own conflicting different opinion, to which Don Bosco replied resignedly, "Do as you wish! After all, we will submit to any stipulation. We will remain another year or two, so as not to put the cardinal in an embarrassing position, but it is in our interests that we go. Sooner or later, a catastrophe might befall us. Our reasons for going away are that they failed to meet the contract, the resulting poor health of the Salesians, the small Rebaudi School, and our own losses in which we are steeped."

So saying, he listened to more remarks made by Father Michael Rua concerning a project submitted by Father Pagani. Father Michael Rua was really motivated by a lingering scruple of justice, for, in his opinion, the Salesians should not get out of the Magliano school before the termination of the five-year period stipulated in the contract. He felt that it would be to their discredit to leave prior to that date. The deal with the Conceptionists and the situation at Albano and Ariccia had already discredited the Salesians in the eyes of many.

Don Bosco rejected these and all other observations advanced by other Salesians, and insisted that the Salesians should leave Magliano. "I leave the responsibility of all the consequences to the Chapter," he resigned.

It was then decided to adopt a proposal made by the cardinal, namely to welcome priests from the town who were able to teach in schools to the seminary, and train them in their teaching so that they might replace the Salesians who could then go out one at a time, without upsetting the seminary.

No one at that time could have foreseen how events would have proven that Don Bosco was so right. One year after his death, the Salesians were forced to leave Magliano under most unpleasant circumstances. But Father John Bonetti, impressed by Don Bosco's insistence on how necessary it was that they get out of Magliano's school, had recalled with some apprehension what had occurred at Cremona. Then, too, a year prior to the events now known to us, Don Bosco had said again and again

without apparent reason that it was urgent and essential that the Salesians move out of Cremona. One could not find two more similar incidents.[11]

The conditions for the house of Lucca did not satisfy Don Bosco's wishes. The house was located in the heart of the city and did not offer any facility or outlet for the students in the playground who were at the mercy of everyone who chose to look out of the windows of the surrounding buildings. There was an oratory, but only a few boys attended it at the time because of the opposition on the part of pastors - at the most, forty boys. There was also the church, but this did not belong to the Salesians and was in need of repairs. Instead, Don Bosco would have liked to develop in Lucca a quid simile to the Turin Oratory. He therefore decided to sell the building they now occupied and buy instead the villa of the Royal College outside the town that happened to be for sale. He was so determined about it that in a very short time a provisional agreement was drawn up for its sale. But the final contract was not carried into effect because the ministry interfered, insisting that the villa be put up for auction. This meant that they would have to spend a good deal more than the eighteen thousand lire he had already planned to lay out. Under the circumstances, the school could not survive very long.[12]

Another Salesian house that was engaged in a genuine struggle for survival was the one in Faenza. When its adversaries had seen how all their onslaughts against it had failed one after another, they changed their tactics. They opened a lay recreation center where the children could play, which would entice them to abandon the Salesian oratory.

As the people of Romagna are wont to do, they spoke out frankly. When the proposal was put before the municipal council on March 4th, it was stated publicly that this was the exact object of the plan. The motion was passed unanimously because the municipality was in the hands of the republicans and their sympathizers. A house that had formerly been occupied by some nuns was granted for the project, five hundred lire were appropriated and a subscription was opened.[13] Naturally, the young people split up into factions. The newspapers fanned the flames of controversy, but on the whole there was a general indifference on the part of the public that caused the ridiculous initiative to collapse little by little.

[11] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (January 16, May 19, August 26, October 28, December 5, 9, and 18, 1884; June 12, 1885).

[12] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (May 19, 1884).

[13] A circular and statutes were also printed (Appendix, document 44)

Father John Baptist Rinaldi, meanwhile, was very active, as he hoped to establish a boarding school at Faenza. But having paid a deposit on a house with an adjacent lot, he was unwise to seek authorization from the Royal School Superintendent of Ravenna, who as expected, rejected his application. When Don Bosco met with the director at Bologna, he told him how mistaken he had been, and showed him how to make amends for his mistake.

"From now on, we shall be opening houses for trade students here in Italy, first of all, because trade students constitute a shield for the academic students. We can then, out of mere courtesy, inform the civil authorities of what we are doing, though not even that is advisable. If it should become necessary, then we can approach the Ministry of the Interior Affairs, which controls charitable foundations. The Interior Ministry recommends such foundations."

He then told Father John Baptist Rinaldi to explain to the superintendent of schools that he had written to ask him for an authorization although it was not necessary. Since it was a question of opening only a grammar school, it was sufficient that the teaching staff had diplomas. So in the beginning, there was no reference to anything other than trade schools.

When the school opened, the Salesians had moved from the outskirts into the city. The sectarians spied on their movements. A recently founded weekly newspaper entitled *Il Lamone* (after the river that flows through Faenza) carried a violent attack against the Salesians in its issue of October 5th, the Feast of the Holy Rosary. Reliable, trustworthy people informed the Salesians that a hired criminal was to climb the wall, get into the Oratory playground during the night, and hurl bombs into the cellar in the basement to blow up the house. But Divine Providence stayed the hand of the criminal.

The river was swollen and had given cause for alarm for several days, so there was vigilant patrol along its course by guards. Precisely at midnight, it overflowed and flooded the adjacent area. The bells in the town began ringing at full blast and warning horns sounded from the surrounding countryside. The whole population was in an uproar, and the general state of chaos prevented the criminal from executing his misdeed. On the advice of some friends, Father John Baptist Rinaldi requested that soldiers keep watch for a few nights in the house and authorization was granted.

He felt that some kind of an answer was necessary to the insolent threats of the newspaper. He mailed a letter to the editor, asking that it be published in the next Sunday issue. But instead of complying with his

request, the newspaper only redoubled its insults. Then Father John Baptist Rinaldi flooded the entire town with a pamphlet of his own initiative, in which he firmly replied to the accusations and slander hurled against the sons of Don Bosco. Honest people approved of the publication, and it helped to make the Salesians better known, for even a good many of these people were not well informed as to who they were or what they were doing.

As soon as the new house was ready, they took possession of it on November 19th. Yet several precautions were necessary. They moved their furniture on carts by night and came to their new quarters before dawn while guards and carabinieri took up strategically defensive positions, in the event that any hostile action would be taken against them. Even after they had moved in, the representatives of law and order came almost every day to see if anything new had occurred.

Father Paul Taroni had been at Valdocco at the beginning of the month and told Don Bosco and the superiors about the battles and triumphs of the Salesians at Faenza. When the saint had heard it all, he turned to the others who were listening and said, "Do you see what Our Lord has done? Human calculations and precautions would have counseled us to begin edging into Romagna from afar, approaching the area gradually, pitching our camp only to its borders at first. But behold, Our Lord has driven us to Faenza, into the very heart of the region, there to fight and conquer. Blessed be Our Lord and Mary Help of Christians."

Director Father John Baptist Rinaldi raised many questions for the superiors. First of all, he wanted to know on what terms he was to enroll boarders. Don Bosco replied, ""Send them the program of the Oratory. The boys must be between the ages of eleven or twelve. The monthly tuition should be twenty-four lire. But the director may, at his discretion, condone the fees wherever he sees fit, making whatever arrangements he can, as we do here at our Oratory."

Then Father John Baptist Rinaldi asked with what he should start. It was decreed that two workshops, for tailors and shoemakers were to be inaugurated immediately. Thirdly, Father Rinaldi asked what work needed to be done to adapt the irregular agglomerate of buildings more ideally to his purpose. Don Bosco sent Father Angelo Savio to Faenza to draw up a general plan, but with these instructions: "Changes, yes; additions, no, however."

Lastly, the director wanted to know if the motherhouse would come to the assistance of the Faenza house if it found itself in financial crisis

because of the above-mentioned work. To which Don Bosco replied, "We live off Divine Providence, and therefore, we are continually in the hands of Divine Providence, without definite resources of any kind. We do not refuse to share with Faenza whatever Divine Providence may give us and come to your assistance."

Despite the change in location, the Festive Oratory was not suspended, even for one single Sunday.

Meanwhile *Il Lamone* continued to inveigh against the Salesians, even going so far as to declare that it was not true that Don Bosco had given shelter in his house to orphaned boys who had lost their parents in the cholera epidemic. Father John Baptist Rinaldi provided the names and surnames of the boys so enrolled, but when he was about to submit them to refute publicly these and other lies with his evidence, Don Bosco opposed the idea, saying, "We do not have to produce any evidence in answering these journals; a simple denial is sufficient. If we offer proof, it only gives them material and opportunity for further insult. You may, however, protest and say that if they want to know how things really stand, let them look for proof themselves. If they have to write letters to their correspondents and lose them, buy stamps or lay out money for traveling, they will certainly not undertake any such thing, and will soon grow tired."[14] This wise course of conduct was more effective than any controversy.

Before going back to the events of Turin, we shall briefly refer to three houses in Liguria: first of all, the hospice at Sampierdarena.

Although at first Don Bosco had not looked favorably upon the creation of the parish of St. Cajetan,[15] he changed his mind later, and the decree of its institution was issued. But the decree immediately became the cause of a disappointment for him. The Superior Chapter had drawn up the lines of demarcation for the new parish, and the Genoa Curia had approved it. But later, the archiepiscopal secretary had arbitrarily narrowed them, as was evident from the wording of the document. The decree was therefore returned with an explanation.

In reference to this matter, Don Bosco observed, "The Genoa Curia should have sent me a plan first so that I could look it over, ponder it, approve and sign it. After that, we could have written to Rome so that the Sacred Congregation might make any observation it found fit and then approve it. It is essential that the parish be instituted canonically. If only

[14] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (December 1 and 9, 1884).

[15] See volume XVI, page 419 (Italian Edition).

the bishop approves it, it could be taken away from us again at his pleasure; but if it is approved by Rome, the parochial rights are perpetual. Furthermore, whatever matter one has to discuss must be discussed with the Congregation of Rome. It is essential that one be thoroughly acquainted with one's subject and certain of one's facts because otherwise one is likely to be unsuccessful. The Curia staff does not bother about keeping abreast of the times with all the briefs, decrees and deliberations, etc." He therefore entrusted to Father John Cagliero the task of writing to Bishop Magnasco in order to set aside any likelihood of misunderstanding.

Seeing the way the change of the demarcation had been made, the vicar general did not take the rejection of the decree amiss. Then when the pastor had to be appointed, the archbishop was pleased that Father Michael Angelo Braga, the Catechist in Rome, had been chosen. But the Congregation was not fully empowered to help hold onto the parish as of yet. Therefore Don Bosco insisted, "See to it immediately. First of all that there is an agreement between the bishop and the Rector Major, then the draft of the agreement should be sent to Rome for approval. By following this procedure, we shall enter into complete possession of the rights to which we are entitled. At any rate, Father John Cagliero should study Bouil's *De Collatione Parochiarum ad Regulares* to see what needs to be done and report it to the Chapter. As for the government placet, we shall always have the difficulty that a pastor who is a religious may refuse to hand over his parish to others or to change his residence when ordered to do so by his superior. To avoid this, it is better that we assign our parishes always to the directors who are most likely to prove reliable. If they are unable to fulfill their parochial duties, let them elect a vicar."[16]

On December 9th, Don Bosco presided over the lengthy discussion on the Sampierdarena deal, frequently interjecting remarks of his own into the debate. Our readers will certainly be interested in reading the minutes of the meeting taken down by the secretary. Father Dominic Belmonte, the director of the house in question, also took part in the meeting:

> Father Belmonte has the floor and says that there is hardly any Festive Oratory for externs at Sampierdarena any longer, since it is incompatible for boarders and day boys to mingle. Formerly, the Oratory had flourished, but now it is attended by

[16] Minutes of Superior Chapter (July 4 and October 24, 1884).

barely twelve boys. The playground is even too small for the 300 boarders, between academic and trade students who play together at recreation, and since they play wildly, there are often accidents. If the Festive Oratory was to flourish anew, there was no other course than to turn either part of the garden to recreational area or to buy the house next door that faced the sea and had ample grounds. Formerly, it had belonged to Marquis Ignatius Pallavicini. Since the grounds would be too big for our needs, people willing to buy almost all of them had already been found in the event that we wished to resell. Mrs. Garibaldi had bought almost all of the land constituting the flank of the hill behind the hospice, and had already built twenty small rental villas there. The same lady would be willing to buy this land from us if we had found it excessive for ourselves. There was a plan supported by both the municipal authorities of Genoa and of Sampierdarena, though it had not yet been approved, which would build a handsome road behind the school at the foot of the hill. This road would be built in a year or two. This meant that the surrounding area would increase three times in value. It would, therefore, be entirely to our advantage if we could settle this transaction as soon as possible.

Don Bosco: *The present owner is Marquis Marcellus Durazzo, Pallavicini's heir and in the past he never wanted to sell to Don Bosco because he was afraid of not being paid. In any case, he would never sell unless the transaction was highly advantageous to him. At any rate though, I authorize Father Belmonte to deal with the matter.*

Father Dominic Belmonte: *There are rumors that there are already other people who want to buy this Durazzo property to establish a ribbon factory there. Meanwhile, we have to admit very sadly that the free masons have established a wonderful recreational center in Sampierdarena offering all kinds of amusements, gymnastics, a rifle range, a theater, music, etc., and have gotten a hold on all the young people in the town. As a badge, they wear a red kerchief around their necks and parade through the streets led by their band, etc.*

Don Bosco: *Well, Father Dominic Belmonte will negotiate with Marquis Durazzo without regard to price for the purchase of the land in question. Call on some good friends of ours to act as go-*

betweens to explain to the Marquis what is at stake. There is Father Gaspar Olmi close to him at Pegli. Ask him to act on our behalf.

Father Dominic Belmonte explained how Father Michaelangelo Braga had suggested drawing up a petition signed by all the pastors of the neighborhood, as well as by Don Bosco and the archbishop. The petition was to be sent to Don Bosco for examination, and then submitted to Marquis Durazzo.

Don Bosco: *Send me the petition already drawn up by Father Michaelangelo Braga. It will be carefully examined and meanwhile Father Dominic Belmonte will talk with Mr. Dufour and the project will be carried out.*

Father Michael Rua suggested that in the meantime, Father Dominic Belmonte work out an agreement with Mrs. Garibaldi.

Father Dominic Belmonte then spoke about the bell tower that was to be built at Sampierdarena. The sound of the bells was not audible from 200 meters away. Some unknown person had sent 1,000 lire already for the construction of the tower. The pastor from Teglia had already called at Sampierdarena and expressed the desire of the people and parishioners that the construction be carried out. He suggested the creation of three committees, under the chairmanship of the chaplains of the two oratories and the priest of the Rolla chapel to collect alms and get the work started. Cavaliere Borgo had come to inspect it and had said that the tower could be built where the present tower now stood because the walls could support the new weight. He had already instructed his son-in-law to go ahead on the building plans.

Don Bosco (to Father Dominic Belmonte): *You may proceed. We have the Roman lottery on hand now, but that will only take a few months and will soon be over. With the prizes that are left over, we shall organize another lottery at Sampierdarena, sending out tickets to our cooperators. We did everything with the least amount of possible publicity. The Prefect's office in Rome warned us to go ahead quickly with the display of the prizes, since it will soon be time to draw the winning numbers. They were afraid that on account of the delay, there would not be any profit and they urged us to hurry. We replied that Don Bosco thanked them and would accelerate the sale of the tickets. These gentlemen have no idea that everything has already been done.*

Father Michael Rua was of the opinion that the committees

had best be appointed for the bell tower. The lottery would be useful for other needs. Don Bosco and the Chapter approved this observation.

Don Bosco: *I suggest that you go very slowly with the construction of this tower. Lay the foundations then wait awhile before resuming work. In this way, we will proceed little by little.*

Father Dominic Belmonte asked that someone be appointed to officiate as pastor since the population did not know to whom they should approach and convey their grievances.

Father Michael Rua remarked that Father Francis Cerruti, the provincial for Liguria, had already called on the archbishop to again agree on this appointment.

Don Bosco: *The parish is not established until we have been informed on the condition and census of the parishioners. We shall first have to call on all the homes, even those of the Jews and Protestants, treating the latter courteously, explaining who we are, assuring them that we do not come in order to interfere with their religious beliefs, but only to get acquainted, etc., etc. We must ask Catholic families the following, 'Do you have any children? Do they go to church on Sundays? Have they already received their First Communion?' Then only will the parish be properly active and established.*

Father Michael Rua asked whether the pastor would be movable or immovable.

Father Dominic Belmonte: *The pastor will be movable. The superior will inform the bishop about the persons that would be assigned to succeed him. Should these persons prove not suited, the bishop will inform the superior so that he may remove them.*

Don Bosco: *It is not important what we should call the person in charge of souls, for he will assume office not as a pastor but as a spiritual administrator. When we have determined how this priest is to be confirmed in office, he will report to the bishop who will acknowledge him and assign him to act as his representative in the parish, and as representative of the bishop, he will make himself known to civil authorities. Father Francis Dalmazzo tells me that in Rome pastors are appointed ad annum, and are known only as curates. Hence, religious who are appointed curates may be removed from office whenever their superior sees fit. The bishop, therefore, will appoint someone who will act as*

pastor and we shall decide what title to confer on him, so that it may not offend anybody, and take him as the parochial vicar.

Father Michael Rua said that it looked as if everyone was in favor of Father Michaelangelo Braga for this office. The Chapter confirmed this.

Father Anthony Sala asked if there was to be any fixed income.

Father Dominic Belmonte replied that the Curia had given a voucher for lire 900 and stole rights, but that there would be nothing from the government. Therefore, the parish has nothing to do with the government.

Father Michael Rua suggested that the Curia should be asked to sign a document assuring us of our freedom to assign or to remove any priest or whoever was to be in charge of souls.

Father Dominic Belmonte confirmed that this was precisely the intention of the Genoa Curia, but that the Curia also wanted the priest assigned to this office to be known as curate, or vicar, so that he might be approved by the government and his signature recognized on certain documents.

Don Bosco: *The appointee will be a true pastor, but he will be considered as temporarily in office before the Curia, and as vicar before the government.*

Father Dominic Belmonte then said that the roof of the church needed repairs, which would entail heavy expenses.

Don Bosco: *Try to appeal to the municipality, the government, the pious institute, and the royal steward's office.*

As we have seen, the office of pastor represented a constant subject for renewed review by the Congregation. The Congregation membership directory *(Elenco)* for 1885 included the name of Father Michaelangelo Braga among the chapter members of the house, listing him immediately after the prefect of studies with the title of "councilor and pastor."

For some time, the anticlerical factions of Varazze had been instigating the Genoa authorities to antagonize the school. The school building belonged to the municipality that suggested to Don Bosco that he should buy the building, but the price demanded was eighty thousand lire, while another estimated its value at twenty-eight thousand. There were four terms stipulated: 1) Don Bosco pay out forty thousand lire; 2) that he grant use of the first and second floors free of

charge to the municipality for the municipal school classes; 3) the premises were always to be used as a boarding school; and 4) in the event that Don Bosco use it for any other purpose, he was to pay another forty thousand lire.

In the meantime, the municipality no longer intended to be responsible for any further maintenance costs, although the roof, walls and stairways were in a very bad condition.

How could anyone take into consideration such exorbitant demands, which seemed to have been formulated only to force the Salesians to go away? Don Bosco said, "First of all, we must consider whether this contract is to our advantage from both a material and moral point of view, namely before the government. Meanwhile, we should write to the agent of the Duchess of Falleria of Voltri to find out what the present position is in regard to opening a school in that locality. Whatever he tells us must serve as a guide in our dealings with the Varazze municipality. It would certainly be better for us to leave Varazze in view of the repairs that need to be made, the threats that the school board might close down our elementary schools and appoint their own officially qualified teachers, and in view of our lack of personnel.

"Of course, we should have given notice of this intention two years ago, but I do not think anyone would contest our issuing a public notice, due to the fact that repairs have to be made on this building, that the municipality is not doing anything about it, that we are not under any obligation to bear this expense, and we are not under any obligation to be crushed if the roof should fall in. Nevertheless, Father Celestine Durando and Father Francis Cerruti should go to Varazze to look into the situation and suggest to the municipal authorities that if they do not want to undertake the necessary repairs on the school, then they should either sell us the building at the price estimated by the expert or else we will have no choice but to withdraw. The two of them will only be asked to report on the matter and the Chapter will decide."

Thus, it was agreed.

The municipality did not consider the matter of the reiterated request for repairs worthy of an answer, and it was shaken when it received this information in a legal form. The mayor was a genuinely fine person, but weak and easily swayed. Confronted with the population that was genuinely fond of the Salesians, he did not want to be blamed for having been the cause of their departure. After hearing his report, the municipal council gave orders that the repairs be carried out

from the foundations to the roof, which prevented any extreme form of action from being taken.[17]

There were many debts at Vallecrosia after the recent building operations. Don Bosco decided to resort to his usual means of raising funds, namely a benefit lottery. After getting a thousand prizes together, he applied for authorization to the assistant prefect of Ventimiglia, but he was denied. He then sent a petition to the prefect of Portomaurizio. At the same time, he asked the Honorable Biancheri, the deputy of the school, if he would kindly add a recommendation to his application. The deputy did what he could, but it was to no avail because of the decree of 1881 that, as we already said in reference to Rome, did not permit any lotteries to be held unless they were sponsored and controlled by legally instituted organizations. Since no other beneficial expedient could be found, there was nothing else to do but put the prizes donated up for sale.

We shall bring this peregrination of ours up and down the peninsula of Italy to an end in Turin. Here the most outstanding feature was the transfer of the Sons of Mary from Mathi to the hospice adjoining the Church of St. John the Evangelist. Too many applications had been turned down at Mathi because of the limited accommodations. Hence, it became necessary to either find a new building or move the school elsewhere. The second alternative seemed the most advisable.

Everything was ready at their new quarters for the new boarders in November. At that time, the houses that later constituted Corso Vittorio Emanuele II did not stand along the tree-shaded Viale del Re. Therefore, the church and hospice of St. John's stood out in relief forming a structural complex of an elegant appearance.

One day, King Humbert I admired the new building as he passed by it on the way to Turin Exhibit. He turned to the mayor and asked, ""To whom does this house belong?"

"It is one of Don Bosco's hospices," Count de Sambuy replied.

"Don Bosco!" exclaimed the king. "Everyone is talking about him, yet I have never been able to see him."

The premises looked almost too elegant for the status of its boarders who felt as if they had been wafted from a rustic dwelling to a palace. The beautiful church benefited from the liturgical services, Festive Oratory, and the catechism classes they taught. Don Bosco was delighted to have a school so close to him that had cost him so dearly and from which he

[17] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (February 21, June 27, August 26, September 11, 1884).

hoped to obtain so much. He would call there fairly often during the first school year to see how things were progressing, even going downstairs at times to inspect the kitchen. When he was unable to go there again for some considerable length of time, he would send for the director, Father Philip Rinaldi, to be informed of everything and give him some norms.

One of these norms was that the director should give a friendly talk to the Sons of Mary every Wednesday or Thursday, teaching them, for example, how to teach catechism and in general, adding what he could not tell them in sermons. He was to speak of everything he thought beneficial to them.

"Something which should never be forgotten because experience has proven that it is most beneficial," Father Rinaldi wrote down in a little memorandum.

Another norm he noted down regarding the admission of candidates stated: "We have to act on the principle that the boarding of any Son of Mary is gratuitous, when we are well informed on his account. We will accept whatever he is able to pay."

In October 1885 when a young man named Zanella went home to his family, the prefect wrote to him that he would not be readmitted to the school unless he paid up his debt. The young man wrote to Don Bosco, who responded, telling him that no one was ever sent away from St. John the Evangelist for the mere reason that he was unable to pay. Zanella came back, became a Salesian cleric and received permission to go to America where he gave an excellent account of himself, leaving a good, zealous memory behind him.

Don Bosco purchased something for Valdocco that had been long coveted. It had long been felt that the area surrounding the house of Mrs. Bellezza, adjacent to the Festive Oratory, should be bought for the house.[18] It was never possible to come to any understanding as long as the proprietress was alive. After her death, her sons had demanded an exorbitant price. Don Bosco offered them seventy thousand lire, but they demanded a hundred thousand more. Then, they began to come down in price until they stopped short at one hundred and twenty-five thousand lire. By sheer insistence, they finally agreed to the round sum of one hundred thousand, and Don Bosco was delighted. Now he had the house that could be used in many different ways, the ground space for a new play-

[18] LEMOYNE, Biographic Memoirs (vol. II, pages 421 and vol. IV, pages 423 and following).

ground that was essential for the recreation of the festive oratory, and some land to settle the area assigned to the trade students. As for the money with which to pay for it, we have already seen how the generosity of Count Colle came to his assistance.[19]

After this expansion, the area of the Oratory that had measured barely 2,219 square meters in 1848, increased to 52,035 in 1884. We will never stop blessing the foresight of Don Bosco for having thus expanded his Oratory by so much ground on which it was possible to build.

[19] See vol. XV, page 98 - not in the English edition.

Chapter 13

REQUESTS FOR AND FOUNDATIONS OF HOUSES OUTSIDE ITALY IN 1884

Don Bosco received two requests in 1884 from the two opposite extremes of Europe: from the lonely island of Malta and from the immense territory of Russia. In Malta, they wanted a school that would take in boys, free of charge, and teach them a trade. To this end, a wealthy gentleman requested a program and expressed his desire to enter into negotiations. Don Bosco sent him his *Breve notizia* (a brief description) on the foundation of the Oratory in Turin,[1] informing him of his own good intentions. Certainly matters would have been brought to a head very quickly if one had not had to reckon with the British government, which was jealous of the Italian influence on this British possession. But after long drawn-out and laborious exchanges of opinions, a settlement was finally reached in 1903 with the School of St. Patrick, a flourishing primary school with some well-equipped workshops.

There was not even a word on the possibility of the Salesians entering into Russia. The Congregation was known and frowned upon in government circles. Police restrictions forbade the importation of the *Bulletin* into the empire, and there were orders that it was to be confiscated at the border. Father Pozzan ventured to ask for the reason from the general director of the Imperial Mail, and he found out that this obstruction was due to the religious opinions of the publication. Likewise the sale and distribution of pictures of Mary Help of Christians was severely forbidden throughout the Russian territory. Yet both the *Bulletin* and the pictures were smuggled into Russian Poland from Austrian Poland to such an extent that the rubles mailed by the pious Poles seriously contributed to the upkeep of Salesian works during that critical year.

One day, an unsigned letter containing some rubles arrived with these few accompanying words: "Poland at the feet of Mary Help of Christians in Turin. When will our chains be broken?" But still more remarkable is the

[1] See volume XV, page 703.

incident of two other letters, in which one asked for a Salesian priest and for Sisters of Mary Help of Christians for Petersburg, later known as Leningrad; and the second which proposed the foundation of a Salesian hospice in Odessa.[2] Russia was not to see its first Salesians until after the Great War, when three Salesians became members of the Pontifical Mission in charge of providing food for the starving people, funded by the charity of the Pope.

The first Salesian school in Belgium was founded at Liege by Father Michael Rua in 1891 and was dedicated to St. John Berkmans. But in order to bring this about, its sponsor negotiated uninterruptedly for a period of eight years. In that industrial city the bishop, Bishop Victor Joseph Doutreloux, a renowned name in the history of the Belgium Church, was most anxious to found a school similar to the Turin Oratory with the two-fold intent of assuring a Christian education to needy youth by means of a professional training school, and to cultivate vocations for the priesthood in secondary schools. His first application, made in 1883, met with the assurance of favorable intentions, but without any specifications of time. Well aware of all that his school could accomplish in such a setting, Don Bosco suggested that he and the bishop meet at Nice Maritime, where he was intending to go toward the end of September, since he wished to encourage the bishop's hopes. But despite his eagerness, the bishop could not guarantee that he could keep the appointment. Instead they met the following year during the novena of Mary help of Christians at the Oratory. The bishop was on his way to Rome and stopped over in Turin solely to confer with our saint.

After being welcomed by Don Bosco with his customary respectful and charming cordiality, the bishop left his room with an overflowing heart, feeling a warm affection for Don Bosco. This was evidenced by the ensuing correspondence. Before leaving the Oratory, the bishop went once again to pray fervently to Mary Help of Christians, asking that she might take the matter into her own hands. When in Rome, he then spoke with Leo XIII about Don Bosco, and the Pope was pleased to recall that he had seen him only a little while before. He asked the bishop to write and tell him that since the Holy Father was very familiar with the town of Liege, he was most anxious for it to be endowed with an orphanage directed by the Salesians. These words, which were pronounced very forcefully, impressed Bishop Doutreloux and convinced him of two things: in addressing his plea to Don Bosco, he had acted according to Divine Designs, and therefore, the necessary funds would not be lacking. "May I not be unworthy of such a grace!" the prelate added.

[2] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (February 28, 1884).

Although driven by a holy impatience to see his wish fulfilled, the bishop was convinced that Don Bosco shared his own feelings and, knowing that he did not have the personnel he needed at the time, he did not bother him with premature insistence. However, he never lost sight of his ideal. Two years went by and then during the novena of Mary Help of Christians in 1886, he sent the attorney Doreye, a staunch sponsor of Catholic schools in Liege, to see Don Bosco. He, too, was deeply interested in the coveted project, and since he wanted to have an exact idea of Don Bosco's schools, he surveyed the Oratory.

Meanwhile, the bishop himself was not inactive, but already had a spacious building ready for the patronage, with an ample ground area around it that would permit any expansion desired. It was his firm belief that within a short time, the diocese would supply a greater number of boys for Don Bosco than he himself would send to him in Liege. Yet besides all this, since he was a man of faith, he put his greatest trust in the power of prayer. "Ah!" he wrote to Don Bosco. "If you would but deign to ask Mary Help of Christians that she may inspire you in regard to my petition, which I do not doubt is in harmony with God's will."

Don Bosco had promised that he would open a school where arts and crafts would be taught at Oporto in Portugal in 1884, and the school was to be dedicated to St. Joseph.[3] Count Samodaes reminded him of it, enclosing in his own letter a recommendation from the Apostolic Nuncio Bishop Vincenzo Vannutelli.[4] Unfortunately, more time was still needed because Don Bosco did not know where to find the personnel he required to staff it.

Baron Gomez from Lisbon wrote on behalf of Cardinal Neto, the patriarch, that there was a substantial sum of money and a building at Don Bosco's disposal in that city already prepared for occupation as a seminary. Not satisfied with the answer he received, the cardinal wrote personally to him on September 29th:

> I'd like you to make yet another effort to respond favorably to my request. Then perhaps the Lord in His mercy for Portugal will provide you with the means you did not have or you do not have at this time. Try to find them, I beg you. With the blessing of Divine Providence, may your charity succeed in finding personnel for my country, whose spiritual needs are so great. Please, list the patriarchate of Lisbon among the countries under the protection of

[3] See volume XVI, pages 668 and following.

[4] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (February 28, 1884).

> Mary Help of Christians. Oh, how much we need her assistance and your prayers so that we may reach our goal! Ah! May you yourself consecrate this diocese to Mary Help of Christians and implore from God the conversion and reform of its clergy.

Such an earnest appeal must have moved Don Bosco's heart all the more forcefully, since he did not know how he could respond so soon to it in the way that he would have wished.

In the neighboring country of Spain, things were building up toward a new foundation that was destined for a great future. In 1880, Don Bosco had predicted that a wealthy woman would become a widow and would invite the Salesians to go and found a big school in Barcelona that would pave the way for many other foundations.[5] Now the first two things, the widowhood and her invitation, both came true in 1882; the third, namely the foundation of the house, was soon to follow.

A lady of great wealth did live in Barcelona, and she was equally endowed with Christian charity in abundance. Her name was Dona Dorotea Chopitea de Serra. She was the daughter of a wealthy Spaniard resident in Santiago de Chile. After the war of independence, her father had been forced to return to Spain with his whole family to safeguard his interests and he had established residence in Barcelona. In 1832, the young Dorotea married Don Mariano Serra, who had also left Chile. After a long life together, and precisely in the same year that they were to celebrate their golden wedding anniversary, her husband died. Always sensitive to the needs of her neighbors and convinced that it was more necessary than anything else to look after poor youth, she was inspired by the pious intention of doing something for the repose of the soul of her deceased husband. She resolved to invest her money generously in the establishment of a school that would be in keeping with her intentions. She planned to buy a house and put a worthy priest in charge of it, and then look for able workers who would give instruction in some trade to children of the working classes who were in greater need of assistance.

However, she did not want to act entirely on her own impulse, so she sought advice from a member of her family. Her relative pointed out how difficult it would be to organize the noble project she visualized and even more difficult to ensure that it would last. The relative then told her that he had read somewhere about an Italian priest who had founded a religious congregation with this identical plan in mind, but that he no longer recalled

[5] See volume XV, page 328.

where had read it. Dona Dorotea thought she was touching Heaven with her fingers. She warmly begged her relative to trace that periodical immediately, and he located the *Salesian Bulletin*. She thus learned who Don Bosco was and what he was trying to do with his foundations and also that one of his priests, Father John Branda, had been in Spain already for about two years at Utrera, as he had been called there by Marquis d'Ulloa.

She wrote at once to Seville, seeking information. Upon hearing that there were Salesian workshops in Marseille, she wrote to that same address even before receiving an answer and requested news about the school founded by Don Bosco. After obtaining it, she then wrote to Father John Branda and asked him to let her know what terms he would require if a Salesian house were to be founded in Barcelona. It almost seemed as if some mysterious force were urging her to act in haste.

Then Father John Branda remembered Don Bosco's prediction and told the lady about it when he wrote to her. In reference to the foundation she desired, he suggested that she contact Don Bosco directly. Overjoyed that her own plans coincided so remarkably with the designs of Divine Providence, Dona Dorotea wrote to the saint on September 20, 1882, informing him of her intention of contributing to the foundation of a professional training school in Barcelona to be entrusted to the Salesians. Don Bosco was unable to answer her letter immediately. Not being able to stand any delay, she wrote him again on October 12th, suggesting that he send someone in his name to Barcelona as soon as possible. This representative was to confer not only with her, but also with other people, and especially with the bishop. She offered hospitality to the representative and refund his traveling expenses. Don Bosco sent word to her that the lack of personnel and the great many new houses he was founding made him unable to act upon her offer immediately, but that he hoped to do so in a not too far distant future.

This reply turned Dona Dorotea's joy into a profound sadness. Nevertheless, she did not give up, and she appealed to the Holy Father. Don Bosco then yielded and sent Father John Cagliero and Father Paul Albera to the Catalonian capital with instructions to negotiate and conclude the matter.

The generous lady immediately bought an estate near Sarria, not far from Barcelona, for twenty thousand duros (100 pesetas). Without any delay, she ordered that the villa be turned into a school. Father John Branda went from Utrera to supervise the work and was the guest of his benefactress for a month. Everything went perfectly and the house was inaugurated on February 15, 1884, and Father John Branda was its director. Just like the Turin Oratory, the Salesian workshops of Sarria at first

looked like a miniature representation of what they were to become in the course of time. Until her saintly death in 1891, Dona Dorotea remained an ever affectionate and generous mother to her beloved Salesians.

When Father Michael Rua officially informed the Superior Chapter that the house in Barcelona was inaugurated, Don Bosco was asked if it would not be wiser to appoint a Provincial for Spain itself.

"Let us leave things as they stand for the time being," the saint said. "We shall see what happens and who should be elected a few months from now. We shall do whatever is best for us under the circumstances. Meanwhile, let Spain continue under the direct control of the Superior Chapter."

But the "few months" became several years, though not too many. It was not until 1889 that the Spanish houses had their first provincial – Father Philip Rinaldi.

During this year, two new houses were founded in France: one in Lille and the other in Paris. But there were many other requests being mentioned which led to abortive negotiations. A site of ten thousand square meters in Antibes, a town by the sea in the area of Grasse, was offered without any obligation. Don Bosco would have liked to accept the offer because the location offered an excellent opportunity to become a vacation spot for the boys of La Navarre and Nice, in addition to providing accommodations for the Salesians during time of retreat and for clerics studying philosophy. But four thousand square meters belonged to a real estate agency of Cannes that was ready to grant use of them without any financial obligations. However, they set certain conditions that would have curtailed the freedom of Salesians in their activities, so the proposal was declined. Theoretically, all the property offered by an elderly Monsignor Villemont of Gevigney near Besancon had been accepted for the organization of an agricultural school there, but no conclusion could ever be reached in the negotiations. We shall return to this subject again toward the end of the volume.

A priest of the Angouleme diocese who had founded an orphanage housing some one hundred boys, found himself without reliable personnel. He declared himself ready to unconditionally turn the orphanage over to the Salesians and to become a Salesian himself. But since he was asking for personnel immediately, Don Bosco advised him to continue as he was doing and write his intentions in his will and testament.

Madame Cambulat, who lived in Lourdes, wanted to donate a castle not far from Toulouse to Don Bosco to do whatever he wished with it. She had a heart trouble and was eager to conclude the matter quickly. The saint told Father Paul Albera to inspect the premises, authorizing him to agree to her terms without any definite obligation. He informed her that he was sending one of his representatives to see her and that the castle would be gratefully

accepted in order to do with it whatever might be most beneficial to the greater glory of God. But certain people urged her to write down a condition that the castle should be used as a school, and the offer was declined.

The negotiations concerning the foundation of Lille started under a more favorable star. Cooperators of the area had already laid the groundwork. Don Bosco's visit to Lille in 1883 had worked wonders in expediting the deal. The Salesians were expected at the orphanage of St. Gabriel, where he had been a guest. First planned in 1871 and inaugurated in 1874, this pious center offered a home to the orphans of the French-Prussian war and was run by the Sisters of Charity. The boarders had been taken in when still very young, but now they had reached their fifteenth year of age and could no longer be left to the care of the nuns. That was why the sons of Don Bosco had been invited to take it over and convert it into a training school for arts and crafts.

The Superior chapter formally accepted the proposal on January 16, 1884. However, the inauguration had to be deferred until the question of its ownership had been settled by the formation of a civil association made up of Frenchmen, Italians, Salesians, and others quite foreign to the Congregation. Monsignor de Montigny, a very zealous Salesian cooperator, contributed to the new foundation more than anybody else.

Father Joseph Bologna was chosen as director. Don Bosco recommended him to Monsignor Philippe Vaud, a wealthy industrialist and an excellent Christian, whom he called his great friend.[6] He also wrote to Bishop du Quesnay, the archbishop of Cambrai and then the ordinary of Lille, to ask for the required authorization. The director took possession of the orphanage on January 29th. The nuns could not have been more helpful in giving him all the information he wanted and doing everything they could to facilitate the transfer of powers. The archbishop treated Don Bosco's son with the most affectionate courtesy. Father Bologna's greatest sadness was to see how the boys were obliged to go to city factories to learn their trade since there were no workshops in the orphanage. He resolved not to balk at any sacrifice until the Lille house was fully equipped to the same extent as the houses of Nice and Marseille.

One should not imagine that it was easy to impose a new discipline on the young boarders. It took six months of patience before they were first won over and became accustomed to Salesian rules. Not that they were wayward, but they were indifferent toward the Salesians. To calm them, they reminded

[6] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (January 16, 1884). The cause of beatification is about to be initiated for the Vaud brothers.

them of Don Bosco, who had made such an impression on them that they were eager to see him again. Instrumental music also helped to discipline them and gave them a source of pride, accomplishment and income.

The First Family festivities also helped a great deal. Since eight boys were to receive First Communion on the Feast of the Assumption, the director seized this opportunity to hold three days of spiritual retreat for all of them. Not having Salesian preachers available, he invited two Jesuits. This was a novelty that bore good fruit. The holy fear of God was brought into the house with these and other initiatives.

Yet two things contributed to Father Joseph Bologna's difficulties: the scarcity of personnel and the limited accommodations. He had only one priest, three clerics and a coadjutor in a house that had as much to do as the house of Marseilles. Since the boarders were packed together as tight as anchovies, he did not know where to turn. Despite everything, no one had to go out to work.

By August, Father Joseph Bologna had set up satisfactory workshops for tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, bookbinders, printers, lithographers, and blacksmiths. It was a genuine tour de force that so much was accomplished with such space and time limitations.[7]

However, it was essential to expand the premises. The building space was there, but they lacked the funds. "The people of Lille are not like the people of Marseille," the director wrote. "They do not budge. They tell us that nothing can be done, that people in this part of the country need first to see before making up their minds as to whether they ought to help us or not." They eventually realized that the Salesians were working and helped.

In order to stimulate public charity even more, he created a committee of ladies in Lille, modeled after the one he had already admired so much in Marseille, and provided them with a very simple and practical set of rules that had been revised and approved by Don Bosco. Don Bosco sent each lady the diploma of Cooperator and a copy of the *Bulletin*. The house expanded, widened its range of influence and became one of the foremost institutions in town.

The excellent progress of St. Gabriel's during its first year of existence inspired an outstanding speech before a distinguished public assembly. In November 1884, a Congress of Catholics from Northern France and Pas-de-Calais was held in Lille under the auspices of Bishop Langenieux, the archbishop of Rheims, who was assisted by bishops of

[7] Letter from Father Joseph Bologna to Don Bosco (Lille, August 6, 1884).

the diocese of Cambria.

At that Congress, Monsieur Houze de l'Aulnoit proposed that the superior merits of the system used by Don Bosco in his educational institutions be made more widely known. He then related how the Salesian school in Lille had come about, described the development of the school founded by our saint, stressed its peculiar characteristics, and concluded by extending an invitation to all those attending the Congress that they strengthen the newly renovated St. Gabriel's orphanage with their tangible support. "The city of Lille had relied on the support of the government in founding a professional training school for crafts," he concluded. "This support was not given, but the Most Holy Virgin never forsakes any work which is placed under her protection. The Catholics of our country must never forget the fact that Catholic education of youth is the salvation of society. So let us make sure that the many orphans who are abandoned today may enjoy the benefits of a Christian education, and let us train for our factories leaders who believe in God, whose mere presence in our factories may mark the dawn of an imminent social rebirth. We are therefore honored to propose the support of the Northern Catholics and those from Pas-de-Calais assembled in Congress here in Lille to the orphanage of St. Gabriel in Lille, now under the direction of Don Bosco's Salesian priests. May you all protect and encourage it with every possible means." This proposal was approved unanimously.

Don Bosco's triumphant visit to Paris in 1883 had awakened confident hopes that the Salesians would soon be going to establish themselves in the French capital. Don Bosco had asked from the pulpit of St. Augustine: "Is there any way to establish in Paris a school just like the ones we have in Marseille, Nice and Turin? I believe that such a house would be very necessary here, and that it ought to be established."

His words did not fall on deaf ears. Of his own free will, Monsieur de Franqueville undertook the task of looking for a suitable site for a Salesian hospice. But while the Parisian cooperator was combing the city, two offers from the outskirts of the town were sent to Turin. These concerned the possibility of opening a house situated between Saint-Ouen and Saint-Denis, and another at Chatillon. The pious Countess Stacpoole, who lived in Rome at Villa Lante, made the latter offer. Since both these houses were to be donated, Don Bosco agreed to accept both of them. He intended to house the Sons of Mary in the former, but then realized that the area was unhealthy. A tenant who had already had a school for girls on the other premises threatened endless trouble. The deal was shelved and finally abandoned. Divine Providence was guiding Don Bosco to a site within the walls of the great

metropolis where the Salesian school would be in its proper ambiance.

The nest was already waiting for them. There was already a patronage dedicated to St. Peter founded in 1878 by Father Pisani that was the property of a lay association of which he was the president. It was located in the district of Menilmontant, which until a few years before had been a hotbed of antireligious fever at the time of the Commune.[8] The Oratory prospered there until 1884 when its founder was appointed secretary to Bishop d'Hulst, the rector of the Paris Catholic Institute, which severely threatened its existence. Having no one to take his place and being heartbroken to see the result of so many sacrifices destroyed, he was delighted to make an arrangement with Monsieur de Franqueville that both the house and land would be sold to Don Bosco. The Salesians went there immediately. The house with all its furniture was estimated at a value of 175,000 francs. An initial down payment of 55,000 francs had to be made when the contract was signed. Thirty thousand francs were already in the hands of Don Bosco's representative, and had been collected precisely for the purchase of a house to be entrusted to the Salesians in Paris. The remaining payments would be made at long deferred intervals with a three percent interest. The stock bonds were nominative and in Father Pisani's possession. He would hand them over to anyone representing the Salesians, so that once full payment had been effected, all stock would be in the possession of the representative.

First of all, Don Bosco was required to send Father Pisani a private promissory letter agreeing to buy all the stock. At the same time, the priest would give Don Bosco a promissory of his own, agreeing to transfer all stock and the premises to him before full payment had been effected.

It was however necessary for a delegate of the Superior Chapter to go to Paris to confer with Monsieur de Franqueville and Father Pisani and see what neighbors the house had and other details. In reference to this matter, Don Bosco said, "Father Paul Albera will go to Paris and confer with Monsieur de Franqueville and Father Pisani. He will look over the premises, find out if there are any mortgages, if the neighborhood is healthy, if there are any rumors of bankruptcy, and what kind of reputation the establishment had and so on. He should approach the Vicar d'Hulst for this information, for he has numerous contacts and access to funds. When I was in Paris, he offered me five hundred thousand francs for the foundation of an institute for girls, but I did not think it was wise to accept. Father Paul Albera is also to call on the archbishop and

[8] *La Comune*: The Revolutionary Party of 1871 in Paris (N. Trans.).

his coadjutor Richard, who is very well disposed toward us and wants us in Paris. The vicar general is enthusiastic about Don Bosco. Cardinal Guibert is hesitant, however, to call us to Paris because he is afraid we may be attacked by being in the public eye. Therefore, Father Paul Albera should only speak to him when everything is accomplished. We have to buy this house because of the charity the city of Paris has displayed toward Don Bosco."[9]

Father Paul Albera could not go to Paris because he was busy with the retreat for the Salesians. So Father Celestine Durando and Father Camillus De Barruel went instead and accomplished their mission satisfactorily. When they called on the cardinal, they discovered that the local pastor was very much opposed to the idea. He recommended extreme caution, advising them to proceed very slowly with their expenses, and insisting on the necessity of being very, very cautious when admitting French postulants to the pious society because they were exposed to the risk of accepting impostors, hypocrites who would only be unmasked when it was too late, and it would then be impossible to remedy the damage already done.

A number of good laymen who had formerly assisted the boys and taught them catechism offered their continued services. The house was not subjected to the indiscreet eyes of the neighbors, with the exception of the garden, which was looked on by a few houses that could easily be purchased. The estate was located on a hill and the locality was very healthy. There were no financial liabilities of any kind. All their friends recommended that the Salesians buy the house, saying that the terms were excellent, but that it was necessary that they act quickly before the news got around and other prospective buyers be found. Upon hearing their report,[10] the Superior Chapter decided to close the transaction immediately with the terms we have already mentioned early on.

Father Pisani was anxious that the new personnel arrive no later than the feast of the Immaculate Conception. During the evening of December 5th, Don Bosco said to the Superior Chapter, "I find myself between two pressing alternatives. On the one hand, the scarcity of available personnel, and on the other, the favorable opportunity which we should not allow ourselves to neglect. We also have to remember that much of the alms we received in Paris in 1883 were given to us mainly to found a house in that same capital. Today, enthusiasm over Don Bosco has waned somewhat, but it will be easy to revive it. This coming year, the Salesian personnel

[9] *Minutes of the Superior* Chapter (September 12, 1884).
[10] *Minutes of the Superior* Chapter (September 28, 1884).

in France will be doubled with the novices of Providence[11] and we hope to reinforce the ranks of our French houses with new champions."

It was impossible to gratify Father Pisani's wishes by the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, but Don Bosco sent Father Albera to Paris to sign the contract and introduce the Director, Father Charles Bellamy[12], toward the end of December. They were very well received everywhere.[13] This letter of thanks, in which there is no reference to the addressee, must have been written to Bishop d'Hulst, the vicar general and close friend of Father Pisani:

Turin, January 10, 1885

Most Reverend Monsignor:

Your gracious courtesy to the Salesians, especially in regard to the foundation of a school in Paris, certainly calls for our particular thanks. I only wish I knew how I should convey to you our feelings of gratitude, but I am at a loss on how to do it.

The only thing that I can do, and wholeheartedly do is to assure Your Reverence of our services, and beg you to look on our Salesian houses as something entirely your own. Whenever you come to Turin, please honor us with your visit and stay as our guest for as long a time as possible.

Meanwhile, I beg you to continue extending your powerful protection to the house recently opened in Paris, and to assist it with such advice and means as you, in your enlightened wisdom, may deem expedient, for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

May God keep you in good health, so that you may continue your charitable activities, and while relying on your powerful and holy prayers I am happy to be with deepest gratitude.

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Some college students who were spending their evenings among the boys, assisting them in the classrooms and teaching catechism rendered a precious

11 Reference to the Novitiate of St. Margaret in Marseille; volume XV, page 55N. Trad.

12 See volume XVI, pages 309 and following.

13 Appendix (document 53).

service to the house.[14] Father Hugot, who was already living in the house, continued to do so, working there for several months until he moved out and was put in charge of a parish. Monsieur de Franqueville appointed himself collector of alms, which were given in sufficient measure to provide for the costs of the upkeep. Don Bosco had said, "Charity will not fail us in Paris. From ten people alone we can already obtain much in one single month. Many people have promised their help once the house will be inaugurated, and they will certainly give generously." His prediction was not entirely wrong, at least at the beginning.

The following circular letter that he sent to the more eminent benefactors and cooperators certainly helped in this direction:

Turin, January 29, 1885[15]

Kind Cooperator and Ladies and Gentlemen of Paris:

It is now almost two years since I had the great pleasure of being among you, charitable cooperators.

On that memorable occasion, I became fairly convinced that the spirit of piety flourishes among you, as well as such charity and generosity that I gave thanks for it to the Lord. During those days, each one of you expressed an earnest desire that Don Bosco found a house in Paris for the purpose of removing children from the streets so that they might be educated and taught to become good Christians and honest citizens.

Your wishes were graciously heard, and today they have become an accomplished fact. The house known as the Patronage of St. Peter was recently inaugurated at Menilmontant on Rue Boyer 28.

For the moment, we are limiting our activities to a festive oratory and hospice for a few of the most poor and abandoned boys. But with the help of God and the support of your charity, I hope that we can increase the number of pupils and give a more exten-

[14] Among them there was the future Father Virion, Salesian Provincial of Belgium who at the time, was a dashing officer.

[15] This *nota bene* followed: "For the convenience of the contributors, offerings, may be delivered into the custody of the Rev. Father Le Rebours, the curate of La Madeline; to L'Marquis de Franqueville, Chateau de la Muette; Monsieur Adolphe Josse, bookseller, Rue Sebres No. 29-31. The kind gentlemen are collecting the charitable offerings made on behalf of the Patronage and will forward them in due course to its rector."

Father Bellamy undertook to translate this into French, with Don Bosco's approval (Appendix, document 54). The circular inspired an article in *Le Figaro*, which can be read in the Appendix (document 55).

Three letters from Father Charles Bellamy described in detail the first month of life in the new house after his arrival in Paris (Appendix, document 56, A-B-C).

sive assistance to the beloved youth of your magnificent city.

We have already purchased an adequate house to live in with a devout chapel, premises for classrooms, and a playground for recreation. However, it must still be paid for. We also have to maintain the patronage and consolidate its existence. This offers you a wide field for your charity. You are aware that my means and my fortune, or I had better say the beginning and continuation of my works for the good of poor youth, are supported by your charity, by the assistance you give me. Of myself I own nothing more than my good will and my desire to do some good for poor boys who always were and will be the joy of my heart. I have nothing more than the personal services of the priests who have consecrated their lives to this same purpose. All the rest is in your hands.

I am not suggesting any annual support here. Each of you should feel free to make whatever offering the charity of your hearts dictates, how and when you are able.

Father Louis Bellamy, the director of the patronage, is empowered to collect any offerings that you may be good enough to make, on behalf of the above-mentioned patronage.

Since I am acquainted with the fervor with which the children of France hasten to give their support to good works, I will add nothing more to kindle your zeal. I will only say that after God, I am relying on you for my first house in Paris, and that I am quite assured that my hopes will not be disappointed.

For my part, I assure you that I shall pray and have our boys pray for you every day at the altar of Mary Help of Christians, so that she may gather you all under her maternal mantle, together with your families, protect you and bless you both temporally and spiritually in this world, and obtain the grace of receiving the reward for your charity one day from her Divine Son Jesus in Heaven.

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

A remarkable gesture of Divine Providence had been manifested just when the contract had to be signed. Monsieur de Franqueville had thirty thousand francs in his hands, but another forty thousand were needed without delay. Father Michael Rua had neither the money nor the hope to have any money to send him any time soon. He therefore wrote to him to tell him of his predicament and asked him to persuade Father Pisani to have more

patience. He had hardly finished writing the letter when a registered letter arrived from Rome, and upon reading it, he found that Mrs. Stacpoole had forty thousand lire available for the house in Paris and wanted to know to whom her agent was to deliver the sum. Deeply moved, he replied that the money could be delivered immediately to M. de Franqueville.

This initial foundation in Paris was a godsend for the subsequent development of the Congregation throughout France and French dominions. The patronage, which began modestly, grew to such gigantic proportions that it not only inspired the confidence of its benefactors, but also helped to create a completely different opinion regarding the entire Congregation and its beneficial social influence. Though the Menilmontant Patronage was overthrown in the general wave of disaster caused by the laws of persecution, it was restored and resurrected elsewhere, thanks especially to the powerful good will of its past pupils.

On November 12th, while talking with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, Don Bosco spoke of the glorious future that lay ahead for the Congregation and made an important observation about the festive oratories: "I see ever more clearly the glorious future ahead for our Congregation," he said, "and how it is destined to grow, and all the good that it will accomplish. It is destined for great things, despite its present discouragements, betrayals and defections. When the general public events quiet down a little, Uruguay, Argentina and Patagonia will offer us a magnificent field of action. As long as we attend in particular to poor, abandoned boys, no one will envy us. In these oratories we shall train priests who will serve as examples to others, and who will be welcomed wherever they go, even finding a welcoming attitude among those who are hostile to priests. They will be easy-going men who know the world. It is my wish that directors be appointed for the festive oratories, who have nothing to do with the schools. What a great harvest of souls we shall reap!"[16]

[16] Father Semeria, who had frequented the Festive Oratory of St. Aloysius in Turin already since 1875, wrote: "I, too, was a guest amid those little urchins. I did not understand all the good that was done in these Oratories! Yet my fervent liking for the Salesians dates from that time. This Order was truly a godsend, which came into being just when the lower middle classes and skilled workers were making their entrance into the cycle of modern civilization, and therefore needed to be evangelized. Don Bosco, through the channel of his spiritual sons and daughters, was the apostle of these two worlds then standing on the threshold of the new economic structure, the new social and political way of life. That was how this Order developed in the rapid, miraculous way of which we are all aware. The Cottolengo House of Divine Providence remained a Turin product whereas the schools and institutions of Don Bosco became worldwide. It took root everywhere. With his spiritual cohorts, Don Bosco followed in the wake of the Piedmontese advance into the rest of Italy throughout the world. The greatest fortune lay in the new world, in America, in South America to be exact. The Salesians are the only great Italian religious order which developed on a worldwide scale during the 19th century." FATHER GIOVANNI SEMERIA, *I miei oratori*, (Recollections of the Oratory), Amatrix, Milan-Rome, pages 17-18.

Chapter 14

SOME PRACTICAL RULES AND THE STORY OF TWO DREAMS

Up until this time (1884), the Congregation did not have its own official coat of arms as all other religious families. As a seal, the pious Salesian Society had used the figure of St. Francis of Sales surrounded by a Latin text. It was only on September 12, 1884 that Father Anthony Sala submitted a sketch of a Salesian coat of arms to the Superior Chapter, when given the opportunity of having it placed on the facade of the Church of the Sacred Heart between the coat of arms of Pius IX and Leo XIII. The design had been drawn by Professor Boidi and was comprised of the following: a shield with a big anchor in the middle; to the right, the bust of St. Francis of Sales and to the left, a flaming heart with a six-pointed star on top; below, a forest with high mountains in the background; on the bottom two branches (one of palm, the other of laurel) with the stems entwined and encircling the shield half way; on the lower portion, a waving streamer with the words "*Sinite parvulos venire ad me*" [Let the children come to me].

Some objected to this motto because others had already used it. Father Julius Barberis suggested that it be changed to "Temperance and Labor;" this idea being prompted by Don Bosco's dream in which the two words had been proposed precisely as the distinguishing coat of arms of the Congregation. Father Celestine Durando would have preferred "*Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*" It was Don Bosco who solved the dilemma by saying, "A motto was already adopted in the early days of the Oratory at the time of the convitto when I was visiting the prisons: '*Da mihi animas, caetera tolle*'" [Give me souls, take away the rest]. The Chapter acclaimed Don Bosco and agreed to this historic motto.

The saint did not care for the star above the shield because he felt it was too similar to the Freemasonic coat of arms, so he had it replaced by the cross with rays emanating from it. Later, the star was inserted on the left, above the heart, thus linking the three symbols of the theological virtues.

The motto selected had been visible *ab antico [sic]*, written in big let-

ters on the door of Don Bosco's little room, so testified the oldest pupils of the Oratory, among whom were Canon Ballesio and Cardinal John Cagliero, who said they had seen it there as children. Nothing could have better expressed the supreme goal of the saint in all his actions and sufferings, in his writings and his talks; a goal that was to constitute the essential program of the society he founded. His major concern had always been the welfare of souls, which is sufficiently evident to anyone who reads his life story. We shall also notice it in reading this chapter, in which it is our intention to incorporate precious words uttered by him during the Chapter meetings, familiar conversations, or when he reported on a few of his dreams.

Don Bosco had many suggestions on the matter of cultivating, examining and strengthening of vocations. There were boys in the Oratory and other schools who had promise, but very little money. They were barely able to pay the modest school tuition and found it difficult to provide for themselves. On July 18th, Don Bosco said in a Chapter meeting, "Whenever we see a boy who promises to be a good Salesian, we should not trouble about expenses, and it should not matter whether he is able to pay the school tuition or not. Let the house provide for it. I am sure that our Lord will come to our aid with unexpected, extraordinary means if we make every effort to foster vocations. So let us not worry about expenses. Let this also be a guiding principle in our schools. If any boy seems likely to be a good priest and his parents are unable to pay or find it difficult to pay, and let the superiors know that they are in financial difficulties, perhaps unable to pay the essential extras the boy needs, then a month's fees or a whole quarter can be condoned, if the boy behaves himself well. But there should always be the likelihood of a probable vocation. Vocations are growing fewer every day. We should apply the same zeal in stopping those who have not been called and those who are unworthy, preventing anyone from embracing the ecclesiastical career and in stopping those who are unworthy of it and have not been called. We must apply the utmost prudence in doing this. Never allow anyone to enter their period of trial unless they have first shown good promise of success."

He often took the floor when there was any discussion of admitting aspirants to the novitiate. A twenty-year-old cleric, who had recently come from the Ivrea seminary, applied for admission to the novitiate after a few weeks' stay at San Benigno. Don Bosco said, "Since he has been with us only a month, and we have so far been unable to get to know him, he may be admitted as an aspirant. If he perseveres and behaves as he should, he

can enter the novitiate by the Feast of the Immaculate Conception."

Another cleric from the same seminary, whose family was wealthy and devout, produced neither the authorization nor the recommendation from his bishop (as the former cleric had done), but merely a simple statement in which it was said that he could no longer return to the seminary on account of his studies. This document gave rise to some doubt, still more so in view of the fact that when at San Benigno, the aspirant had not made a good retreat and had been seen talking in church to his neighbors. This is what Don Bosco said about it: "One should always be intransigent when morals are concerned, as a general principle. It is preferable not to admit into our house anyone whose morality is dubious. One can overlook carelessness, lack of education, inadequate schooling. But morality is a cardinal point. Experience has taught us that when someone avoids the superiors, that is an indication that his morals are no good."

A third cleric from the Milan seminary had always wanted to join a religious congregation, and maintained that he had found exactly what he wanted in the pious Society. The saint advised that he was to be treated with a certain consideration, in the spirit of St. Francis of Sales, and that one should talk with him about the beauty of the congregations in general or the grace conferred by our Lord on anyone who had a vocation.

A boy of the Oratory had received his high school diploma, but did not show any sure sign of a vocation. Don Bosco remarked, "I talked with the boy, and he fully agrees that he will not don the cassock this year. He did, however, assure me that he would sooner sweep floors than leave our house. We might put him with the trade students, and I mentioned it to him. At the present moment, put him to work in the printing shop, on the *Bulletin*, or give him some other task around the house. If he continues to behave in an exemplary fashion, he will be admitted; if there is any cause for complaint about him, he will be instantly dismissed. If he remains good and makes up his mind to become a priest, we shall then suggest that he enter the Congregation."

Two boys who had completed the fifth grade of high school at Varazze and three boys who had completed the fourth high school year at Borgo San Martino were admitted to the Congregation. Aware that a few of their number would meet with great opposition from their families, Don Bosco made the following suggestions: "Teach these boys how they are to answer. They should reply very calmly 'I have studied my vocation carefully, and am convinced that if I am to be happy, I must enter a congregation. I prefer the Salesian Congregation most of all. I feel that my

conscience is calling me, and I must obey it if I do not want to be victimized by remorse and be a failure.' They could also talk of the spiritual or material advantages involved, according to the specific dispositions of their parents."

A seventeen-year-old boy from Borgo San Martino, who had only completed his third year in high school, sought admission to the Congregation. Don Bosco turned to his director, Father Angel Bordone, and said, "How is his intelligence and diligence?"

"Not very bright," the director replied.

"Is there any hope that he might keep up with his companions when he starts the philosophy course?"

"It would be difficult, but if he tries hard, he could succeed."

"Then tell him that if he tries hard, he can succeed. This will encourage him."

The younger brother of a Salesian priest also wished to enter San Benigno as a novice. But Don Bosco pointed out that his mother was poor and was constantly asking for a subsidy. "The son who is already a priest acts on his mother's behalf. We have enormous expenses to bear to teach boys who are in the selfsame situation and once they become priests, the relatives seem to think they are entitled to a lordly treatment, and behave accordingly. If we admit youths like these, the house will have to provide them with everything, even undertaking to foster their vocations. The families expect money and want their rent to be paid, ask for vouchers for the Institute of St. Paul, a dowry for the boy's sisters, and when there are other sons, they expect us to take them into our schools free of charge. As for this boy, I would have liked to dedicate special attention to him, as I told him in previous years. But I hardly ever caught a glimpse of him because he never came near me. I only came across him once this year, quite by accident, on the stairs. Let him learn a trade. When he has learned it, he will be able to support his mother. After all, he did not show any signs of having a vocation for the priesthood."[1]

Father Julius Barberis once renewed the proposal of admission for a postulant already rejected in a previous Chapter meeting. Don Bosco knew him and had looked into the matter, and remarked, "He looked promising to me. That was why he was sent to Lanzo. I received a good impression of him because he received the sacraments regularly. Now they say he is somewhat odd, but he looked very good to me. What does

[1] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (August 30, 1884).

his teacher think of him?"

"He is way behind in his class, and not very diligent. In fact, his whole behavior seems like an act. But there is no evidence of it. He has completed his fourth year of high school."

"Then see if he holds out any promise."

"He is no less gifted than many others we have already admitted."

"Then tell him that he should study during vacation time and pass an examination at the beginning of next year, given to him by a professor assigned to him. Encourage him to hope. We shall take him if he passes his examination."[2]

Don Bosco expressed his own point of view in reference to three instances when novices were to be admitted to profession. The San Benigno House Chapter rejected one novice from Alassio twice, on the grounds that he did not have the disposition to make a good priest. Don Bosco was not satisfied with such a generic judgment, and investigated the matter in detail and very instructively during the meeting of September 6th.

"Let us proceed slowly," he said, "and not come to any decision without due consideration. I, therefore, want to know how he behaved."

"He is very disobedient," Father Julius Barberis answered. "He never takes any remark in good stride and is excessively indolent."

"*Et de vita et de moribus*? [What about his life and morals?]"

"He has always had particular friendships with those who were behind in their studies, although nothing wrong has been noted so far."

"Is he clever?"

"Barely adequate."

"How much schooling had he had?"

"Not much, but his penmanship is very good and he is fairly adequate in grammar."

"What does the San Benigno Chapter think of him?"

"Unanimously negative vote."

"Yet, at first glance he seemed acquiescent to me, and ready to listen to any advice given him."

"I will agree that he has good manners. In fact, he is always protesting that he is prepared to obey and begs people to admonish him, but if one does, he justifies himself with his companions. He will never acknowledge his faults and is troublesome to the assistants."

[2] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (September 6, 1884).

"What about his health?"

"He is not very strong and has a hernia."

Here, Father Celestine Durando remarked that no one at Alassio wanted anything more to do with him, and that he was not allowed to go back to Alassio again, even for a short vacation. Father Michael Rua said with conviction that if he were to be admitted, he would only prove a burden on the Congregation. Yet, Don Bosco did not give up.

"Could we not use him as coadjutor?" the saint asked.

"He does know how to deal with outsiders," Father Julius Barberis admitted, "and he is clever in material things."

"Could we not put him to work in the bookstore?"

" I don't think that would be advisable. He might be dangerous in the midst of the young boys. His virtue is very unstable, his past is none too reassuring."

"Could we rely on his fidelity?"

"His father left an unpaid debt of more than six hundred lire at Alassio," Father Michael Rua said.

Father Julius Barberis insisted that a decision be reached because the candidate had already been rejected twice from the profession. The saint concluded, "Tell him that Don Bosco defended him, but that the Superior Chapter was against him, and that Don Bosco cannot prevail with his own vote over those of the Chapter."

The verdict of the Chapter was that the young man should take off his cassock and be assigned to the printing shop as coadjutor.[3]

Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote this separate comment in reference to the minutes of the debate:

> Note the detailed inquiry made by Don Bosco regarding the conduct of this young man: he did this whenever a young man had been rejected from the Congregation. He wished every vote to be based on the facts discussed and proven, not on vague rumors or on account of the simple opinion held even by the majority. With his inquiries, he would even check on the votes that he felt had been justified. By this, he taught his sons how to be prudent and unbiased when forming such judgments. But very often, he acted as an attorney for the defense of the boys, and at times he would even be seen recommending a protégé to the

[3] L.C.

members of the Chapter before the vote was called, asking them not to give him a negative vote, although he knew they were against him.

On another occasion,[4] the application for profession submitted by a twenty-nine-year-old coadjutor, who had already contracted debts and which had not been paid, was discussed. Father Michael Rua said that he was a very good element. Father John Cagliero appealed to Canon Law, which prohibits the admission of anyone in debt to religious congregations. This is what Don Bosco said: "He could be admitted to profession on three conditions: (1) If his creditors condone the debt; (2) If he were to pay it; (3) If the Congregation were to pay it. But he is unable to pay his debt, the creditors will not condone it, and the house is under no obligation. In view of the fact that he is good and unable to pay, he could ask the creditors to condone part of the sum, and the Congregation could pay the rest. The creditors would issue a receipt for the total sum, after which he could be admitted to take his vows." This was the deliberation taken by the Chapter.

Here Don Bosco made the following statement: "This will be the last case of admission to vows granted in a benevolent manner, according to the temporary faculty granted by Pius IX. Beginning next January, we shall proceed with our admissions in the light of the most holy instructions imparted by Pius IX in his decree of 1848, and the committees prescribed therein will be appointed. Father John Baptist Lemoyne, our secretary, is instructed to remind the Chapter of this desire on the part of Don Bosco."

Another coadjutor,[5] seventy-two years old, had applied for admission, and the San Benigno House Chapter had approved him.

Father John Cagliero asked indignantly, "By what right are we admitting old men of seventy-two?"

"This represents an exception," Don Bosco answered.

"We make exceptions every day," Father John Cagliero retorted. "This establishes the principle that the young people have to support the old. A little bit of reasoning is needed in such things."

" I do not think their age would represent any obstacle in admitting them, if they were priests," Don Bosco answered.

"Even as priests, we do not need such old men," Father John Cagliero answered back.

[4] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (October 3, 1884).

[5] Minutes of the Superior Chapter (September 12, 1884).

Father Michael Rua helped to ease the dilemma by checking on the membership list, and found that the aspirant had not yet been regularly admitted to the novitiate.

"Tell him that he may enjoy all the privileges of the Salesians by becoming a cooperator," Don Bosco said.

In reference to the coadjutors, Father Michael Rua expressed his own viewpoint on September 6th. He had already voiced it at some other time, but Don Bosco was not present. With regard to coadjutors, he recommended that they be divided into two social categories. It seemed inappropriate in his eyes that a lawyer, a doctor, a pharmacist, or a professor should have to associate with "any kind of simpleton."

Don Bosco replied, "We cannot contemplate two categories of coadjutors. We must be careful not to admit to the Congregation anyone who, though good, is coarse in manner, obtuse in mind, or capable, if the occasion arises, of going off to a bar quite peacefully without giving it a thought. If we were to grant access to the house to such people, they should not be known by the name *coadjutors*, but instead as *domestics*. They shall never be admitted to join the Congregation, certainly not to take vows."

Father Michael Rua explained his viewpoint, and asked if a status similar to that of members of a Third Order, such as the Franciscans have in their monasteries, might be created for them.

"For the present time there is no need," Don Bosco said.

Don Bosco's paternal charity was most evident in an instance of admission to Holy Orders. It must be remembered that after September of that year, he had stopped hearing the confessions of people attending retreats for the first time because his strength would not permit him, and had assigned Father Michael Rua to this task. On the 12th of the month, he said, "Since I did not hear confessions during this retreat, I was more free to deliberate on vocations. And so by asking questions and seeing the answers I have received, I can determine what advice I consider beneficial to those who come to ask for it."

Then, Father John Cagliero announced that three clerics had been rejected for Holy Orders by their respective Chapters. When he was told their names, Don Bosco said of one of the three, "He holds that he aspires to the priesthood, and that he has no intention of ever leaving the Congregation. He says that he feels mortified at being considered so inept in the house and had, therefore, neglected his manifestation and had lost his confidence in his director, whom he approached only in cases of absolute necessity. But he says that he has always gone regularly to con-

fession every ten days, and has gone to Communion. There is nothing reprehensible in his moral conduct. He has diplomas for the third and fourth elementary grades."

"The director has complained about his disobedience and lack of discipline," Father John Cagliero answered. "He is better than the other two, but he was already rejected from the seminary. All the same, he does not want to be ordained yet, but will abide by the judgment of his superiors as to when he should be ordained; namely, when they should see that he is well prepared for it."

"Could he not be tested in some other house?" Don Bosco asked.

"He has been transferred to other houses already three times."

"If there were even a mere shadow of immorality, I would dismiss him without hesitation from the Congregation. But it seems that there is nothing against him on this matter. He has his diploma. Any congregation would take him in!"

"And we would be ready to give him away as a gift!" Father John Cagliero said.

When Father Michael Rua remarked that he was somewhat sickly, Don Bosco said, "Well, let us not make any commitments. Let us see if he can keep up with what he has to do in class. If his health does not permit him to continue, we shall tell him to make other arrangements. Let a little time go by and then we shall see."

It certainly will be good for all Salesians to know what Don Bosco thought about the manifestations. He spoke about this when the Oratory was to be reorganized under two different directors.[6] He specified rules for the confreres of the mother house, but there are few items applicable to all the other houses. "The members of the Superior Chapter and its secretary will make their manifestations to Don Bosco. I am available to listen to them and hear their confessions every evening after six o'clock. But for the confessions, I would like to schedule them Thursday evenings. I would be very glad to do it informally in the sacristy, as I used to, but too many others would want it and I would grow tired too quickly. Father John Baptist Lemoyne could receive the manifestations of the priests who are without any specific job among the academic or trade students, and of all the personnel dealing with the students. Father Joseph Lazzero can receive the manifestations of all those having to do with the trade students. Father Michael Rua can hear the manifestations of the elder con-

[6] *Minutes of the Superior* Chapter (October 24, 1884).

ferees. Another person would find it difficult to have them come and make their manifestation. There will only be four or five of them."

Father Joseph Lazzero pointed out that he would have had no less than eighty people make their manifestation to him and that he did not know how he could listen to them all in the span of one month. Don Bosco answered, "Do not take the word *monthly* literally, but go ahead with the freedom of one who seeks what is good and tries to attain it. In the beginning, the manifestations may be lengthy, but will eventually be extremely short. For quite a number of our conferees, we might have to insist on a monthly manifestation; for many others, once every two months will be enough, but do not allow more time pass than that. Some will have to be called upon prior to the end of the month. I beg you not to hear these manifestations while strolling in the playground, but the person in charge is to have the individual in question to come to his office, so that he may speak with all freedom and undisturbed. This manifestation is so important that we might say it is the master key to the structure of the Congregation. Those who are in charge of the manifestations should receive them with the greatest possible charity, diligence and punctuality. How many when questioned by me answered, 'It is six months, a year, or two years since I last made my manifestation' This sort of negligence undermines the spirit of the Congregation. The superior should not show any signs of impatience when he has to deal with someone who is a bother! Do not say of anybody 'It is useless to talk to him or her'. He should send for them, he should not grow weary; he should repeat the same remarks. He should act with patience and with a heart guided by compassion."

He wrote seven remarks with his own hand and distributed among the directors at the end of the retreats, which are of the greatest importance:

> Advice for the directors of our houses: (1) Sponsor subscription and distribution of the Catholic Readings and of our books in general; (2) Economize the paper that has been used, sending what is torn to our paper mill and what can still be useful to our hospices or printing shops; (3) Be sure that no members of the opposite sex have an office or lodge for any reason whatsoever in our houses. The strictest vigilance is necessary in this; (4) Let us respect what was decided in the deliberations regarding our nuns; (5) Keep all forbidden books away from our pupils, even though they have been required for school use, nor should they be kept on sale. Exceptions may be made in cases of necessity, but only

for those who have to undergo state examinations. In this event, only the expurgated editions should be made available; (6) Preferably read aloud, or have the boys read, the lives of our pupils; (7) Plan and make every effort to introduce and practice the preventive system.

Don Bosco returned to the subject of Salesian readings in our schools often and insistently. Even on September 11th, he said in the Chapter, "Sponsor the subscription and distribution of *Catholic Readings*, the *Youth Library*, the *Bulletin* and, in general, all our books either printed in our printing shops or written by us. In many of our schools, such recommendations to the boys are neglected. Do not force them, but urge them to get such books. Make them understand that they would do a great deal of good by sending them home, lending them, giving them to their friends, or repaying any services to them by one of the little books of the *Catholic Readings* series, instead of a gratuity of two cents (*soldi*). Recommend the subscription to *Catholic Readings* at the beginning of the year; the new boys will be enthusiastic, especially since it is a question of a small sum of thirty cents (*soldi*). All the boys have some allowance of their own when they come to the Oratory. When boys send these booklets home, it is never taken to be a lesson to their families and friends, but only as a gift. They might also write their parents that once they have finished reading them, they could call on the pastor and ask him to give them out to the boys of the catechism class or to a poor family, etc."

His recommendation that persons of the opposite sex be kept away from our houses was also repeated together with similar recommendations on many occasions. The last of these was on September 11th, when he stated very emphatically in the Chapter meeting, "I wish that it be made absolutely sure that no person of the opposite sex, for any reason whatsoever, be employed or permitted to lodge within our houses. Keep vigilant watch on this matter. A woman is always a woman, even though she is the mother or sister of a Salesian. We will have no trouble from those already known to us, all of who are truly praise-worthy women. But from the initial practice of allowing them to stay here, they will become permanent fixtures little by little unless we establish a definite rule that they be excluded. We have to think of those who will come after us and who need to have an absolute norm to go by. Observe also very carefully that which is written in the deliberations concerning our nuns, and obey with the utmost fidelity what has been stipulated."

In keeping with Don Bosco's wishes, the Superior Chapter deliberated in its meeting of September 30th that directors should no longer be permitted, as they had been in the past, to have their mothers stay in their respective schools.

It was a principle with Don Bosco that no one should complain that his side of any story had not been heard. There is a reference to two such important incidents in the minutes of the Superior Chapter.

Coadjutor Brother Graziano, who had recently returned home from America, had remarked that there were too many people in the bookstore and the *Bulletin's* office. Not everyone shared his opinion, especially Father John Bonetti, in reference to the *Bulletin*'s office. "We have a huge amount of work," he objected. "One has to write, another keeps records, and another answers letters. Then we have new cooperators to deal with, keep lists of addresses up to date, enter additions and send off copies. None of the people here present can have any idea of how much work is involved in the *Bulletin*'s office."

"Yet, Graziano feels he could conduct the office with only two assistants," Don Bosco pursued. "And he says that there is a heavy load of work only for two or three days of the month and that for the rest of the time, there is not much to be done."

"I am afraid that Graziano is not experienced enough as yet to voice such a judgment," Father Michael Rua said.

"Father Anacletus Ghione and Coadjutor Brother Branda are both of the same opinion as Graziano," Father Joseph Lazzero said.

"Ask what Father Ghione, Graziano and Branda think," Don Bosco ordered.

The other incident is referred to in the minutes of November 13th. Father John Cagliero had submitted the minutes of the General Chapter meeting of the sisters during retreat and the observations on their rules, based on the deliberations of the Salesian General Chapter in 1879 and 1883. He suggested that the Superior Chapter appoint a committee to examine the minutes and observations, so that on the basis of the verdict of the above-mentioned committee, the rector major might approve, modify or change at his discretion, any article that he believed necessary in the Lord. When this committee was to be formed, Don Bosco wanted one of the former directors of the sisters to be one of its members. The previous year, he had raised a number of objections about the general organization of their communities. Father John Cagliero objected that the director of the sisters was only their director a *consiliis* [as an advisor] and should not

interfere in their internal rule except as their spiritual director. It seemed that, therefore, the director in question should be given the rules of the sisters not officially, but officiously, so that he might make any observations he chose in writing and hand them over to the Superior Chapter. It was immaterial to Don Bosco whether this was done in an official or unofficial way, provided that the opinion of this director also be heard.[7]

We have spoken of confessions. Don Bosco was no longer in any condition to continue his former, habitual task of hearing confessions during the retreats of the Salesians or during the daily community Mass. It was too burdensome to bear. During the Chapter meeting of October 28th, Father Michael Rua asked him how he wished things to be rearranged. This is how the saint answered: "I want Father Michael Rua to hear the confessions of the Salesians. He will use my confessional in the sacristy. It is very unlikely that I resume this task, but if that were so, Father Michael Rua would then hear confessions in church beneath the pulpit. I would hear the confessions of the Chapter members, any other priest who so wishes, and the boys of the fourth and fifth high school grades in my room on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. I would also hear the confessions of the same students on the eve of feast days, and during the exercise for a Happy Death. The confessors of religious communities must be approved, not only by the bishop, but also by the superior. The confessors of the boys should be subject to my approval. There is a thing that I can never recommend insistently enough, and that is that all of you agree on certain things and no reprehensible indulgence be shown to anyone giving scandal. We must find a prudent way by which all the victims of scandalous actions report what has happened either to the director, prefect, or some assistant in whom they have confidence. I would not want them to be absolved until they have filed their accusation. This is required by sound theology."

Father John Cagliero objected that this was an extremely delicate matter, especially if the victim was resolutely determined to avoid any connection with the perverts. "One could insist and demonstrate that such a report is beneficial for the welfare of their companions," he declared, "but what happens when the one who also caused the scandal makes a confession? It is essential that everyone conduct himself according to the same pattern. If the culprit is a recidivist, absolution should be denied him until he has mended his ways. Should he roam from one confessional to anoth-

[7] The committee appointed consisted of Father John Cagliero, Father John Bonetti and Father John Baptist Lemoyne.

er, everyone should be steadfastly agreed on how to react and behave."

Don Bosco did not have any objection to that and concluded, "Insist often with pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades that they go often to confession to Father Michael Rua. All the others are to make their confession either to their two directors or to Father Celestine Durando and Father John Baptist Lemoyne. Father Joseph Lazzero should confer often with the catechist about the moral conduct of the trade students. People say that he exaggerates too much, but that is no reason not to heed what he says. Do not take immediate action, but be ready to believe what is an exaggerated truth in order to ascertain what is a small truth. Also, let the assistants speak up often. Find out whether there are any trade students who rarely go to confession."

We will quote yet another incident taken from this same source. On October 2nd, the Superior Chapter meeting at San Benigno, presided over by Father Michael Rua, discussed the project of a separate dining room for Don Bosco and the members of the Chapter at the Oratory. The debate itself would not be of interest to us were it not for a few details which came up during the meeting. The following is the verbatim report of the meeting:

> Father John Bonetti proposed a separate room as a dining room for Don Bosco and the Chapter members, thus taking them out of the community dining room. This would allow ample freedom for the Chapter and Don Bosco to discuss matters of the Congregation.
>
> Father Michael Rua pointed out that in order to avail one's self of the advantages offered by this project of a separate dining room, Don Bosco would have to respect the timetable scheduled for meals because his business always obliged him to delay his entrance some 10 or 20 minutes. Such a delay would result in: (1) considerable inconvenience for busy people and a great loss of time; (2) the possible elimination of recreation, which would be bad for the digestion; (3) only a few chapter members being there to entertain Don Bosco because several of the Chapter members were frequently called elsewhere immediately after meals; (4) Don Bosco sometimes eating his meals by himself; (5) the purpose for which such a dining room would be created not being attained, since very often there would be pastors, other ecclesiastics or lay friends invited to meals as a courtesy, and one could not avoid asking them to dine at Don Bosco's own table. In such

instances, which were very frequent, it would not be possible to discuss our business at table; (6) the Chapter inevitably being given special attention, and this would affect the others; and finally, (7) Don Bosco being totally separated from his spiritual sons, who only see him a few times a year due to his travel. When they did see him, it was only in the dining rooms and even then mostly without a chance of talking with him. Nevertheless, in view of Don Bosco's poor health, it appears that one would be obliged to take up Father John Bonetti's necessary, yet regrettable proposal.

Father Celestine Durando proposed that the present dining room be divided into two parts by a collapsible partition wall that could be removed on feast days of great solemnity. Thus, one portion of the refectory would be assigned to the Chapter only, but it would have to be stipulated that the Chapter was to sit down at table by midday punctually, whether Don Bosco was present or not. Time is precious for anyone overburdened by excessive work.

Father Michael Rua remarked that twenty-five years before, Don Bosco had delayed going down to the dining room and the prayers were said and people began to eat. Don Bosco did not like it at all, and yet the whole community was waiting for him.

Father John Baptist Lemoyne suggested, and Father Michael Rua seconded it, that the project assign the furthermost room of the first floor, near the church of St. Francis, which had windows overlooking the terrace, to the Chapter as the new dining room.

The Chapter approved the suggestion, but hesitated to carry it into effect because it would signify yet another step forward in the separation – a total one this time, between the father and his children. The life of a Salesian Rector Major should be spent in the company of his sons, and it was essential that everyone, insofar as possible, have an opportunity to approach him and talk with him.

It became necessary to override all the objections raised, since it was apparent that Don Bosco would soon no longer be able to descend the stairs to join the community at meals without tremendous effort. The antechamber of the library (which is the Provincial's office today) was converted into a dining room for the Superior Chapter.

During a private talk on December 15th, Don Bosco related two widely different episodes that nevertheless contained the same moral.

That day, a little lady had come to see him. By her appearance, she

looked as though she was coming to beg for alms. She had called on Don Bosco many times, but she had never been able to speak with him. That morning when she called on him again, the saint, hearing rather high-pitched voices talking in the antechamber, looked through the door and saw his secretary trying to send the lady away. This time, she was given an audience and was so delighted that she thought she was in Heaven.

When Don Bosco asked her to be seated, she demurred at first, apparently feeling unworthy of such a courtesy. Then she said, "I tried to speak with you three times already, but to no avail. Now, here I am at last, almost by a trick because I raised my voice on purpose. I came to bother Don Bosco. All I ask is that you promise to pray for two intentions that I have. Take this donation, but I do not want to tie you down with any commitment." As she spoke, she handed him a one thousand lire note.

Don Bosco was surprised and explained to her all the good that she was doing through her charity. He told her about the needs of the Oratory, the merit she had thereby acquired in the eyes of God by following her desire to invest her savings while still alive in good works.

Delighted by his words, the lady cried, "Oh, if only I had one hundred thousand lire here! I would gladly give them to you! But leave it to me! I'll see to that. I do not have a family or heirs, and I still have some money saved up. If you will allow me, I will come and bother you once again."

After reporting this happy incident, Don Bosco told another story which was completely different.

A man in very expensive clothes visited Don Bosco and received a welcome befitting an outstanding gentleman of social stature. Much to the saint's surprise, he was actually poor and hungry. The man was genuinely appreciative to Don Bosco for a hunk of bread, which he ate on the spot as though he were famished. After kissing Don Bosco's hand, he readjusted his clothes and went on his way.

"I am convinced that the people outside in the anteroom who saw him emerge will have thought *what a big donation he must have given Don Bosco!* But actually, he had lost all his fortune, though he retained his lordly clothes so that he could gain access to palaces and perhaps find employment."

The moral was obvious, and this is how the saint expressed it: "See how appearances can mislead us. That is why I have told the person in the antechamber that he should not make any exceptions for anybody, but should show them in no matter what. How many visitors there have been who looked like ragamuffins, yet they became generous benefactors!"

Two dreams he had in September and December provide a precious

teaching. The first, which he had the night of September 29th, was a lesson to priests.

He had found himself walking through a plain on his way to Castelnuovo. An old priest, whose name he did not recall, was walking beside him. Their conversation was about priests. "Work, work, work!" they both said. "That should be the purpose and the glory of a priest! Never grow weary of working. How many souls might thereby be saved! How much one could accomplish for the glory of God! If only the missionary were truly a missionary, the pastor a pastor. How many miracles of holiness would be shown forth everywhere! But unfortunately, many are work-shy and prefer their own comforts."

As they were talking on this subject, they came to a place known as Filippelli. Here, Don Bosco deplored the current scarcity of priests.

"It is true that priests are few," the other said, "but if all priests would only act as priests, there would be enough of them. Yet how many priests there are who do nothing for the ministry, whereas if they were to be active in their ministry, if they would pass their examinations as confessors, they would fill an immense void within the church. God gives us vocations in keeping with our needs. When clerics were subjected to military draft, everyone was scared, as if no one would ever become a priest. But when these fantastic ideas subsided, we saw that instead of diminishing, the number of vocations were increasing."

"What can be done now to increase the number of vocations among boys?" Don Bosco asked.

"Nothing more than to safeguard their morality jealously," his companion said. "Morals represent the nursery garden of vocations."

"*Presbyter discat domum regere et sanctificare*. No greediness, no excessive preoccupation with temporal things. Let a priest first become a model in his own home, and then he will be the first model outside of it."

At a certain moment as they were walking, the other priest asked Don Bosco where he was going. Don Bosco pointed toward Castelnuovo. Then, he let the other priest go ahead of him, lingering behind with a group of people who walked on ahead. After walking only a few steps, Don Bosco woke up. In the dream, we see a recollection of his former walks in that area.

The second dream concerned the Congregation, and forewarned against threats that might undermine its existence. More than a dream, this was a theme that recurred in a series of dreams.

The night of December 1st, the cleric Viglietti was abruptly awakened

by piercing screams coming from Don Bosco's room. He leapt out of bed immediately and listened.

In a voice choked by sobs, Don Bosco was calling, "Ah! Oh, help! Help!"

Viglietti entered his room at once and asked, "Are you sick, Don Bosco?"

"Oh, Viglietti!" he said as he woke up. "No I am not sick, but I was unable to breathe, you know. That is enough, now. Go back to bed and sleep peacefully."

Next morning when Viglietti brought him his usual cup of coffee after Mass, Don Bosco confessed, "Oh, Viglietti, I cannot take it anymore. My whole chest is sore from having screamed so much last night. I have been dreaming now for four consecutive nights. These dreams force me to scream out and they tire me out. Four nights ago I saw a long line of Salesians walking one after the other, every one of them carrying a flagstaff with placards with a printed number on them. On one I saw 73, on another 30, 62 on a third, and so on. When many of them had gone by, the moon appeared in the sky, and as soon as a Salesian appeared you could have spotted a number, which was never higher than 12, and behind it there were many little black dots. All the Salesians that I saw went by and sat down beside an empty grave."

This is the explanation of his dream as it was given him: the number on the placards represented the number of years that each of them was to live; the appearance of the moon in different shapes and phases indicated the last month of their existence; the black dots represented the days of the month in which they were to die. He kept on seeing more and more of them, at times standing in groups; these were Salesians who were to die all together, on the same day. He said that if he were to mention all the accessory details and circumstances minutely, it would take him at least ten full days.

"I dreamed again three nights ago," he continued. "I will tell you about it in brief. I thought I was in a big hall where many great devils were gathered as though for a convention. They were discussing how they could destroy the Salesian Congregation. They looked like lions, tigers, serpents and other animals, though their appearance was somewhat muddled, looking somewhat like human beings. They also looked like shadows, now higher, now lower; now smaller and now taller – just like bodies would look behind a lamp if one were to move it this way or that way. Now lowered to ground level and then raised up again. The whole fantastic vision was terrifying.

"One of the devils stepped forward to open the session. He proposed one

way by which the pious Society might be destroyed: gluttony. He expounded on the consequences of this vice: sluggishness in doing good, corruption of morals, scandal, no spirit of sacrifice, and no concern for the boys.

"But another devil responded, 'Your suggestion is neither general nor effective, nor can all members of the Society be undermined by it collectively, for the dining table of religious is always frugal, the wine measured, their regular meals are set by their rules, their superiors are alert so as to prevent disorder. Instead of causing scandal, anyone who was to eat or drink to excess would sooner arouse disgust. No, this is not a weapon to use against the Salesians. I will find some other way that is more effective, and more likely to help us in our intent: love of riches. When the love of riches enters a religious Congregation, the love for comforts will also enter with it and the members will attempt everything to secure money (*peculium*) for themselves, the bond of love will be shattered. Since everyone will think only about his own needs, the poor will be neglected in order to dedicate themselves only to those who have means, and there will be stealing from the Congregation.'

"This devil would have continued speaking, but a third stood up and said, 'Gluttony? Get lost! Riches? Get lost! The love of riches will affect only a few among the Salesians! The Salesians are all poor; they have but a few opportunities of making money for themselves. On the whole, their structure is so designed, their needs so immense with all the boys and the houses they have, that no matter how big any sum of money may be, it will soon be used up. It is impossible that they hoard anything. But I do have one infallible means by which we can conquer the Salesian Society for ourselves, and this is *freedom*. So let us teach the Salesians to disregard their rules, refuse certain assignments because they are burdensome and less glamorous, create division from their superiors by proposing conflicting opinions, and go home on the pretext they have been invited, and so on.'

"While the devils were discussing among themselves, Don Bosco was thinking *I am all ears to hear what you are saying. I want to know. Go ahead – talk! By all means, talk because this will enable me to upset your conspiracy.*

"Just then a fourth devil leapt to his feet, shouting, 'Rubbish! You are only proposing broken weapons! The superiors will know how to check such a freedom, and will expel from their houses anyone who ventures to rebel against the rules. Maybe a few will be led astray by their craving for freedom, but the vast majority will remain steadfast in their duty. Now I have a weapon that will surely undermine the whole Congregation down

to its foundations. It is a weapon against which the Salesians will hardly be able to defend themselves. It will carry the rot to their very roots. Now listen to me carefully – convince them that their main glory should consist in their learning! This means inducing them to study for the sake of study, learning for the sake of attaining fame and not for the sake of practicing what they preach and not for using their learning for the benefit of their neighbor. They will become arrogant in their attitude toward the poor, ignorant and lazy as far as their sacred ministry. No more Festive Oratories, no more catechism classes for the boys, no more humble classrooms where they could teach poor, abandoned boys, no more long hours in the confessional. They will hold onto only preaching, but only occasionally, in a form well measured and sterile because it will only be an outlet for their own vanity, aimed at being praised by their listeners, not at saving souls.'

"This devil's suggestion was hailed by applause. Don Bosco foresaw the day when the Salesians might really be led to believe that the interests of the Congregation and its honor lay solely in learning, and he grew afraid that not only would they act accordingly, but they would also preach that such a belief should be shared far and wide.

"Don Bosco was again standing in a corner of the room, watching everything and listening to all that was said. One of the devils discovered him, and shouted, pointing him out to the others. At his scream, all the devils rushed at him and yelled, 'We will put an end to this!'

"A whirl of infernal ghosts pushed and seized him by his arms, and at this point, he began to yell, 'Let me go! Help!'

"At last he woke up, his chest all sore from so much screaming."

The following evening, he saw that the devil had begun working on the Salesians in their most essential core, urging them to neglect their rules. He was able to see them all distinctly, some were keeping the rules and others were breaking them.

The last night, the dream became more fearful than ever. Don Bosco saw a big flock of sheep and lambs representing so many Salesians. He approached them, trying to caress the lambs, but as he drew nearer, he saw that their wool was not real. It was not a lamb's wool, for hidden under it there were lions, tigers, pigs, panthers, and bears. Every one of them had a hideous, ferocious monster at their sides.

Some were standing in a huddle talking in the midst of the flock. Unnoticed, Don Bosco approached the group to hear what they were saying. They were discussing what to do in order to destroy the Salesian Congregation.

One was saying, "We must cut the Salesians' throats."

Another chuckled and said, "We should strangle them."

But just then, someone saw that Don Bosco was standing by listening. This demon sounded the alarm and they all shrieked together that they should start by killing Don Bosco. At that, they all rushed at him to choke him. It was then that he uttered the terrible cry that had awakened Viglietti.

Don Bosco had a heavy heart, not only because of the diabolical violence with which he had been attacked, but also because he had seen a great banner floating over the heads of the flock, and on it was written "*BESTIIS COMPARATI SUNT*" [They are like beasts]. As he said this, he bowed his head and wept.

Viglietti took his hand and pressed it against his own heart. He said, "Ah, Don Bosco! With the help of God, all of us will always be faithful, devoted sons, will we not?"

"Dear Viglietti, be good and get ready to see what is going to happen. I have barely outlined these dreams to you. It would have taken me much longer were I to have told you everything in detail. How many things did I see! Some of the confreres of our houses will not live to see another Christmas Novena.[8]

"Oh, if I could only talk to the boys. If I only had the strength to be among them, if I could only make a tour of all our houses, do all that I used to do, revealing the secrets of individual consciences to everyone as I saw them in the dream. If I could only say to some, 'Break the ice, make a good confession for once!' They would answer, 'But I do make a good confession!' Then I could reply by telling them all that they concealed, and that would stop them from opening their lips again. If I could only say a word to some of our Salesians, as well, to show them how much they need to put their own conscience in order by repeating their confessions. I saw how some kept their rules and others didn't. I saw many youths who would go to San Benigno and become Salesians, but then leave us again. Even some, who are now already Salesians, will defect. There will be those who will seek only knowledge, the brand of knowledge that inflates the ego and craves praise. This will have them disregard the advice of those whom they consider less learned as they are."

These sorry thoughts were interwoven with providential consolations that filled Don Bosco's heart with joy.

[8] A trade student, Antonio Garino, died at the Oratory on December 18th. On the 25th, another trade student named Stefano Pisano also died.

The evening of December 3rd, the bishop of Para (that is the focal point of his dream about the missions) arrived at the Oratory. The following day, he said to Viglietti, "How mighty Divine Providence is! Listen and then tell me if God does not protect us. Father Paul Albera wrote to tell me that he could no longer go on, but needed one thousand francs immediately. That same day, a religious lady in Marseille, who was looking to see her brother in Paris, gave Father Paul Albera a thousand francs, delighted for having obtained from our Lady the grace of seeing him again. Father Joseph Ronchail is in a serious predicament, and has urgent need of four thousand francs. Today, a lady wrote to Don Bosco and told him that she is holding four thousand francs at his disposal. Father Francis Dalmazzo does not know where to turn for money. Today, a lady donated a substantial sum of money for the Church of the Sacred Heart."

Then on December 7th, he experienced a great joy for Bishop John Cagliero's consecration. All of these things were even more encouraging because they were manifest signs of God's hand over the work of His servant.

Chapter 15

CORRESPONDENCE CONCERNING THE YEAR 1884

In arranging the few remaining letters to complete our report on the year 1884, we came up with a number of biographical details rich with significance. Our need to illustrate their content induced us to publish them as well.

LETTERS TO BENEFACTORS

The child of Ceriana, a Turin engineer, was seriously ill, and so Ceriana recommended him to Don Bosco's prayers. This is Don Bosco's reply, dated the Feast of Mary Help of Christians:

Turin, May 24, 1884

Dear Mr. Ceriana:

Today we offered all the prayers and Communions of our young orphans to God and the Blessed Virgin, in order to obtain from God the recovery of your son. We shall continue likewise tomorrow. May God grant a gracious hearing to our community's prayers. I will always think highly of you and of your whole family.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Unfortunately, the grace implored was not granted on this occasion, and the child died a few days later. The saint wrote this second letter to console the child's father:

Turin, May 31, 1884

Dear Engineer:

Your letter deeply grieved me. We have prayed as all our orphans did, and have offered up also Communions, imploring

God to spare your son's life. But God deemed best otherwise, and He chose to transplant this little flower into the lovely garden of Paradise. From there he will undoubtedly protect his parents and the whole family until all of its members will have overcome the sorrows of life, and join him in the eternal happiness of Heaven.

I shall not fail to continue my poor prayers for the health of the rest of the family and for its prosperity and business success. Thank you for your kindness, while I hold high esteem for both you and your wife, most gratefully, I am,

Your obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

As soon as Marchioness Fassati came back home from her country estate, she sent Don Bosco a donation for Mgr. John Cagliero, who was soon to be consecrated bishop. The saint hastened to thank her:

Turin, November 27, 1884

Dear Marchioness:

I bless God for having granted you and your family a pleasant vacation and a safe return to our city of Turin. I must thank you for having been so good as to remember us with your charitable donation.

Meanwhile, I thank you and Mr. Azelia, but I hope I will be able to soon pay my respects to you all at your house or call on you with Father John Cagliero, who is anxious to thank you in person.

May Heaven shower its blessings on you, Baroness Azelia and Baron Carlo, and please pray for this poor priest, who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

After she had obtained a great grace that year, the marchioness was more generous than usual toward the saint. She had been near death, and the physician had restricted her visitors to family members only, so as to avoid any unnecessary exertion. However, she had wished to see Don Bosco at any price. Being informed of the physician's restriction, Don Bosco had at first not responded to her initial requests for his visit. Then,

faced with her insistence, he called on her and gave her the blessing of Mary Help of Christians. The lady then said, "I am ready to do anything that Mary Help of Christians may wish, for her greater glory."

By this, she meant that she intended to help the Oratory. From that moment on, her health rapidly improved, contrary to all expectations, and she scrupulously carried out her promise.

As the Feast of the Immaculate Conception drew near, he wrote to Countess Uguccioni of Florence, since the house in Florence was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. He was grateful for her motherly kindness towards the Salesians.

Turin, November 28,1884

Dear Good Mother in Jesus Christ:

We are very close to the solemn Feast of the Immaculate Conception, and I do not want our mamma to be forgotten. All the priests and our boys make sure to say special prayers for your holy intentions every day, as a small recompense for your constant kindness to us all and our humble house Florence, in particular.

God bless you, and your two families, both the great and the small. Please believe me always to be your poor but filially affectionate son,

Rev. John Bosco

He sent good wishes to French benefactors at the beginning of the Christmas novena, through the director of La Navarre:

Turin, December 17,1884

Most dear Father Perrot:

I am appointing you both bearer and mailman, as you prefer: one letter is for Count Colle, the other for Monsieur Leon.

Please tell Monsieur Reymond that I have been praying for his whole family and his business and will continue to do so.

The same applies to the Botiny family. For three days now I have been praying for rain in the church of Mary Help of Christians, at La Navarre, as well as for the surrounding area, and hope our prayers have been granted. Write a short article on Marshall de Breiteville and send it to me. Also, let me know the exact address of his wife.

God bless you, your children and mine. Give my best wishes and regards to all our benefactors, and tell them we are praying for them and ask them to pray for us.

Father Michael Rua has no more money, so think about sending him some. Pray for me, who remains always in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. The letter to Count Colle was mailed after all.

FRENCH COOPERATORS

Three batches of letters written in French were addressed to three French women cooperators in 1884; we already know Madame Quisard of Lyons, one of these ladies. Among the letters sent to her was one addressed to her son, for whom Don Bosco had written words of encouragement and advice on the eve of his examinations. He recommended to the young man's mother "the certain antidote against cholera," and promised her special prayers for her daughter's wedding.

Five more letters, all in French, were addressed to a mother and daughter named Lallemand at Montauban. The daughter sent copies of them to Father Michael Rua after her mother's death in 1891, adding that if only her hand would obey her, she would have tried to write with a more elegant penmanship to show her respect for so holy a memory (*pour une si sainte memoir*). A few gaps are marked by ellipses, where the lady who copied the letter omitted references to sums of money sent as a donation to the Oratory and reference to things of which Father Michael Rua was well informed. She, too, was well advanced in years and in frail health. At a certain point, she wrote, "Oh, dear Don Bosco! You know how I have neither arms nor legs any longer, or indeed anything else. All that is left of me is the zealous aspiration of a grateful soul, who is unable to do anything more than pray."

The advice that Don Bosco gave to both mother and daughter in the first letter is worthy of note: "Bodily penances are not for you. It is enough for elderly people to endure the discomforts of old age for the love of God, and for slightly ailing persons to endure their afflictions serenely for the love of God, obeying the orders of their physician or the requests of their relatives in a spirit of obedience. In the eyes of God, it is more pleasing when they eat some delicacy in obedience, than when they fast in disobedience."

Then to the mother in particular, he wrote, "I do not find anything in your conscience that may require a reform. Go as often as you possibly can to the holy sacraments and when you are unable, do not worry about it. At such times, make a spiritual Communion more frequently, and resign yourself entirely to God's holy will, in which all things are most amiable."

In the second letter, Don Bosco comforted and encouraged them to hope against all fears to the contrary that a soul dear to them might have found its eternal rest (we shall see more of this later on):

When we carefully think about these things in the presence of God, who is all goodness and mercy, we have every reason to be comforted. The fact that no express signs of repentance were voiced to the lady does not mean that there was no good internal disposition. We should believe instead that there was repentance beyond any doubt, and that only the condition of health did not allow any expression of repentance other than to the confessor, since it was not possible to make any atonement. The holy sacraments were received, and the priest who administered them was touched by the manifest presence of a good disposition. These are comforting things to know. All my many children and I prayed for him and keep on praying every day. Meanwhile, I am fully convinced that all the many acts of kindness already shown and still intend to be shown for our little orphans will have already contributed to shorten the suffering of the soul dear to both of you in Purgatory. Perhaps this soul might be indebted to your charity for its eternal happiness, for this charity may have been what drew God's mercy down upon him at the last moments of his life.

COOPERATORS FROM VERONA

After becoming a widow, a noble lady from Verona, Laura Bottagisio, pondered the dilemma as to whether or not she should abandon the world and retire to a cloister. As a zealous cooperator, she turned to Don Bosco for advice. The saint replied, "Your soul is not in any danger by living in the world, while you might win over many souls for Heaven. But I do not want to go against any advice you may have received from someone wiser than me."

Apart from this note, we found a copy of a letter written to her by Don Bosco in June:

Turin, June 10, 1884

My dear lady:

I have received your letter in which you recommended several

people who are sick to me. Thank you for the trust you kindly place on our poor prayers. We shall pray and encourage our orphans to pray before the glorious throne of Mary, fully confident in the Lord's goodness. We shall pray and offer up special prayers for Marquis Fumanelli and are certain that they will be granted, if they are not in conflict with the eternal well being of his soul.

I would like you to notice what God often mentioned: "Give and unto ye shall be given," and that "faith without good works is as a dead thing in itself." I'll be waiting to see you in Turin with great pleasure, and pray that the Blessed Virgin grant you a pleasant journey and have some special graces for you to take along on your way back to Verona.

God bless you and your brother, Mr. Salomoni. Consider me in Jesus Christ.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The lady came to Turin in June, as we can see from a letter written by another Veronese cooperator, Chevalier Joseph Salomoni, who was mentioned in the above letter. He had sent Don Bosco two thousand lire without receiving any acknowledgment. Although he imagined this was due to lack of time, he nevertheless wrote again for fear that there might have been some misdirection in the mail. He received the following answer from the servant of God:

Turin, June 29, 1884

Most beloved in the Lord:

In your kindness, you charitably sent to me 2,000 francs on behalf of our missions in South America, and may I ask you now to perform a second act of kindness by forgiving my delay in informing you that the money had been promptly received. My failing health and my earnest desire to personally answer your kind letter caused this act of negligence on my part. I am most sincerely grateful to you for your donation, but even more for the truly Christian spirit in which it was given. God bless you and may He reward your charity abundantly.

You are cooperating in the salvation of souls and you are cer-

tainly assuring your salvation. The first savage to be baptized in Tierra del Fuego will be given your name, and will pray for you in a special manner every day as long as he lives for having given the material means by which he is able to secure his eternal salvation.

I saw Mrs. Bottagisio, but only hastily because I was far from well that day. If I see her again, I hope to ask her to deliver something to you. Father Michael Rua, Father John Cagliero and all the Salesians were edified by your presence among us, even for a short time. Once again, I want you to look on this house as your own home.

May I ask you to kindly recommend my soul to the Lord. Consider me always,

Your most affectionate servant and friend,
Rev. John Bosco

In December, Don Bosco sent the chevalier five hundred tickets for the Roman lottery, asking him to sell them, but the chevalier kept them for his own use and paid the corresponding amount unhesitatingly. The saint promptly thanked him:

Turin, December 22, 1884

Most dear Chevalier:

I have been so bold as to ask you to sell 500 lottery tickets, but you dispensed with all difficulties: you kept them all for yourself and immediately sent me the corresponding sum of money.

I am particularly grateful to you because I have received your sum of money when we happened to meet with an exceptionally difficult predicament: we need clothes for both our boys and priests, most of whom are still wearing summer clothes.

May God reward you as you well deserve and grant you a Blessed Christmas. May the old year end happily and the New Year begin prosperously for you, and may health and holiness be your companions until your dying day. Should you be seeing Mrs. Laura Bottagisio, would you please give her my kindest regards and assure her that I shall keep my word to have a special memento every day for her during the holy Mass.

Dear Mr. Salomoni, thank you for all your charity toward us, and please be sure to say a little prayer for this poor mortal, who

will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate and obliged friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Through Mrs. Bottagisio, the chevalier had recommended Countess Emanuela Cartolari, who was in great need of a special grace, to Don Bosco's prayers. The countess was due to give birth, and she and her family feared there would be serious complications. The saint asked Mrs. Bottagisio to inform the Salomoni family as follows: "Please tell Mrs. Cartolari that she need not be afraid. She is to pray to Mary Help of Christians and have faith in her, and everything will be quite all right." He also sent a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians and wrote a few meaningful words across the back of it for the countess.

Meanwhile, the lady's father, Count Saint-Just di Tuelada, died quite suddenly in Cagliari. Against all expectation, this shocking event did not overly upset the countess as was expected, and she urged her relatives not to be afraid on her account because Don Bosco had already told her that everything would be all right. The birth could not have been more successful, and her new son was baptized John Mario, the first name in memory of Don Bosco, the second name in honor of Our Lady. Later, both mother and son went to Turin on the Feast of Mary Help of Christians in 1885 to fulfill a vow.[1]

DISTINCT HONORS GRANTED TO COOPERATORS

Don Bosco had considerable difficulty obtaining the five distinct honors he had applied for during his audience with the Pope on May 9th. Everything had been properly arranged after the Holy Father's kind words. The instructions had been given to Mgr. Macchi, but a month later, still nothing had been done. In order to move things along, Don Bosco enlisted the assistance of Cardinal Nina:

Turin, June 8, 1884

Most Reverend Eminence:

While waiting for the outcome of the request for the distinct hon-

[1] Letter from Chevalier Salomoni to Don Bosco (Verona, January 20, 1885).

ors that the Holy Father was kind enough to grant to a few well-deserving Catholics on May 9th, I earnestly recommend the matter to your good offices so that everything may be settled as soon as possible. Your Eminence is well aware that we do not have the money with which to continue work on the church and hospice of the Sacred Heart in Rome, and that the people recommended to the kindness of the Holy Father are precisely the people who have helped us in the past and are ready to help us again now. Moreover, these same people have already done and continue to do a great deal for the Peter's Pence collection, so I am, therefore, most anxious that they receive this token of great benevolence from the supreme head of all the faithful.

I am appealing to Your Eminence as our benevolent and well-deserving protector, and all of us shall not fail to pray for the upkeep of your precious good health and for the success of the many matters that Divine Providence entrusts to the supreme head of the church.

I also wrote to Msgr. Masotti today about the final touches on the matter of our privileges, of which we are most urgently in need in view of the forthcoming expedition to Patagonia, which will be impossible to be carried out without these privileges.

I am very glad to inform Your Eminence that for the last twenty days, my health has improved considerably, thanks to the beneficial blessing which the Holy Father was kind enough to grant me.

Allow me with the most profound gratitude to remain,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Meanwhile, the procurator wrote to him from Rome on June 13th, giving him discouraging news:

I went to see His Eminence Cardinal Jacobini, the secretary of state, four times and was never able to speak with him. I also called on Msgr. Mocenni twice, who spoke of the matter with the Holy Father and Cardinal Jacobini, referring later to me that neither of them know anything about what you are asking. This may be due to the fact that the papers handed in for such matter got lost. So you must send detailed information on the merits of all concerned people – name, father's name, country of birth – as soon as possible because that is what they want. Then we can hope that we may obtain some positive action right away.

One of the persons proposed for these distinct honors was Count Colle, who was soon to get to Turin for the celebrations prepared for Don Bosco's name day. Father Francis Dalmazzo was also expected for the same period. If Father Francis Dalmazzo made his appearance empty-handed, it would have been a terrible failure, since everyone concerned knew that the matter was already underway and certain to succeed. Therefore, Don Bosco immediately wrote the following:

Turin, June 15, 1884

Most dear Reverend Father Francis Dalmazzo:

You wrote to me a nice letter, but did not give me an answer about what I wrote directly to Msgr. Masotti about our privileges, nor to what I wrote to Cardinal Nina about the distinct honors.

You must bear in mind that the people I recommend for these distinct honors have done so much for the Church of the Sacred Heart and are still ready to do more. It would be most unpleasant to have them appear when I do not have the distinct honors that I have announced to them in the name of the Holy Father. So please check the letter sent to Msgr. Masotti again and also the letter to Cardinal Nina. If you find any obstacles in your way, arrange to meet with Msgr. Macchi confidentially and remind him that halfway through the audience on May 9th, the Holy Father sent for him and told him to take the papers with my memorandum of the five names submitted for whatever distinct honors our most kind Holiness might choose. Tell him that this memorandum was then handed over to of the pontiff himself. Since then, no one has been able to tell me what became of it.

I imagine that perhaps the Holy Father wants to dispense with paperwork if he can, but any sacrifice should be made to see to it that this goes through. So please persuade Msgr. Macchi to pick up the threads and see that it gets done.

When you come here to see us, try to bring with you something definite on our privileges (just as they were already granted to the Oblates and the Redemptorists) and the distinct honors granted by the Holy Father, which in our opinion represent so many important checks for the Church

of the Sacred Heart.

I cannot write you anymore than this. God bless us. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco.

Father Francis Dalmazzo only brought one distinct honor with him, The Order of St. Gregory the Great for Count Colle. When the procurator had left again, Don Bosco wasted no time in renewing his insistence that he should work on the matter:

Turin, July 10, 1884

Dearest Father Francis Dalmazzo:

I received the diploma for Dr. Giraud in Nice, and Father Ronchail will see that it is given to him with appropriate festivities.

I likewise received the decree of our privileges. There are no decorative borders, but the substance is all there. Should you see Msgr. Masotti, please thank him humbly on my behalf and in the name of our whole Congregation.

In connection with these famous distinct honors, you have to bear in mind that all these people have already contributed to the Church of the Sacred Heart and are ready to give more. For example, Monsieur de Montigny is still holding ten thousand lire for us to be paid out the moment he receives the diploma of Count.

It is also proper that you remember that the fervent Catholic Dr. Charles D'Espiney was proposed for knighthood by the bishop of Nice. At my request, Msgr. Guigou sent a magnificent letter of commendation to the Holy Father from the bishop of Frejus.

All of this was reported to the Holy Father, who authorized me to reassure the persons proposed for these distinct honors, which I duly did. These details enhance the importance of the matter inasmuch as all the people sponsoring the Peter's Pence collection are fervent Catholics.

You can pass all this on to our well-deserving Msgr. Mocenni; repeat it with the greatest possible tact, in keeping with whatever he may say.

I know we have debts and we have to use every possible

means to keep the work going, but just now the sole source of money we have lies in the above-mentioned distinct honors.

My gratitude, my thanks and regards to Msgr. Mocenni, for whom I am praying. God bless us all. Consider me,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

Since he had not yet received anything and was particularly eager to get the distinct honor he had requested for Monsieur de Montigny, Don Bosco recommended the matter to Msgr. Mocenni, the assistant to the secretary of state, on August 14th. The office of secretary of state only sponsored distinct honors for diplomats and was not permitted as a Vatican state department to interfere in matters relating to other departments. Nevertheless, Monsignor referred the matter to the Holy Father as a token of personal deference toward Don Bosco, but the application was rejected because the person being recommended had not yet been knighted. The Pope was not aware that he was a nobleman.

Don Bosco should have applied to the chancellery of briefs, but saw fit to consult Msgr. Boccali first, since Msgr. Mocenni had told him that it was possible that he might be in possession of the relative documents:

Turin, August 28, 1884

Most Reverend Excellency:

A matter of some importance obliges me to call on your well-known kindness of heart in order to get something done. This is the situation:

During an audience I had this year with the Holy Father on May 9th, I humbly asked him for certain distinct honors to be granted to some very eminent benefactors of our own houses and particularly of the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. His Holiness was gracious enough to accept my humble requests and commendations regarding every one of these candidates, and gave me a favorable reply in reference to all of them. Since the matter was looked upon as already settled, he authorized me to inform all of them about it.

While I was there, His Holiness summoned Msgr. Macchi

so that he might take care of the individual memorandums regarding each of the persons proposed. But unfortunately, the illness and later absence of Your Excellency somewhat delayed matters, and only a few weeks ago was I informed that the papers concerning this matter had been lying in your office, awaiting your return.[2]

In the meantime, Father Francis Dalmazzo asked Msgr. Mocenni to look into the matter, and he was kind enough to take it up with His Holiness, even without the letters of recommendation. The Order of St. Gregory the Great was granted to Count Fleury Colle of Toulon, but in reference to the others, the Holy Father said that one would have to refer to the Congregation.

I am appealing to the influential patronage of Your Excellency, asking you to help me in the matter. On the whole, these benefactors have given generous donations and are prepared to give more, and I assured His Holiness that I would dedicate their donations to the Peter's Pence collection by assigning the sums for the construction of the facade of the Sacred Heart Church, which His Holiness undertook to pay at his own expense.

Since the Holy Father did not have the required documents at hand, he pointed out to Msgr. Mocenni that Monsieur de Montigny was apparently not of noble birth, but from definite reports, one may see that the very noteworthy acts of charity on the part of this generous gentleman are truly worthy of a nobleman. In France, he is highly esteemed for his zeal in public benefits and pious charities, especially in connection with St. Gabriel's Home in the city of Lille, of which he was the administrative director and chairman until this was entrusted to the care of the Salesians. He is now holding the sum of twelve thousand lire that he intends to offer on behalf of the Church of the Sacred Heart.

I am here enclosing a copy of his genealogical tree that shows

2 Monsignor wrote the following reply to Don Bosco, who had written to him during his sickness:

Vatican, July 14,1884

Most Reverend Don Bosco:

I am most grateful for your solicitude on my behalf, and I thank you for the prayers you and others have said for me to our Lord. Thanks to you, my health is gradually improving. You would be doing something most agreeable to me if you would kindly continue praying for me, and in return I shall not cease to implore ever greater amount of graces for you from Heaven, to help you in the important tasks connected with your priestly ministry.

I am glad of this opportunity to express once again my feelings of great esteem for you,

Most devotedly and gratefully your servant,

G. Boccali

how he descends from the former kings of France.

I now beg Your Excellency to be so kind as to advise me as to whether or not I should again take up this matter with the Holy Father or appeal directly to the chancellery of briefs, as the Holy Father himself suggested. At any rate, I will follow whatever advice you may be kind enough to give me through Father Francis Dalmazzo.

Please forgive the trouble I am giving you, and I assure you that in return, I will repay you for your kindness by saying special prayers to God every day that you may keep your precious good health, while with gratitude I am highly honored to be,

Your most humble and most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

In November, Baron Heraud received the distinct honor of knight in the Order of St. Gregory the Great, and Dr. D'Espiney was also made a knight of that same Order. The nuncio in Paris had to be consulted before the title of Count could be bestowed on De Montigny, but the title was granted. The promotion of Msgr. Guigou was the last request to be granted.

THE CATHOLIC CLUB OF PRATO

At one of the first meetings of the Catholic Workers' Club of Prato in October, the name of Don Bosco was venerated as a father and enthusiastically acclaimed as the name of a great and providential benefactor of the working classes. They informed him of this and begged him to send his blessing. This was the reply sent by Don Bosco to Mr. Cesare Natali, president of the club:

Turin, October 31,1884

Most Honorable Mr. President:

I have received the kind letter that you wrote to me on the 22nd of this month on behalf of the Catholic Workers' Club recently founded in your town.

I could not properly express to you how happy I was to read this letter, not merely because of the kind words you addressed to me therein, but also for the information you supplied about the set-up of the Catholic Club for Workers, whose spiritual and

material welfare has always been a major concern of mine.

I wish to thank you and all the members of the club for having been so kind as to dedicate one of their initial recognitions to my own humble person, and I assure them that I will pray for them gladly, asking God to bless and comfort them. I am confident that with the protection of Heaven, the enlightened guidance of your excellent pastor and the assured benevolence of the supreme head of the church, the wise Pope Leo XIII, this Catholic Club will grow and grow continually, gathering under its banner a great number of workers of good will and rescuing them from the snares of the enemies of faith and civil society, who, under the pretext of improving their lot, deprive them all of their peace of mind and the hope of the undying joys beyond the tomb.

In your praiseworthy letter, you were kind enough to address me with many honorable titles, among them that of Father. I will gladly forego all the titles save this last, and as your father, I am happy whenever I may be of use to any of you, whom I consider my sons.

Lastly, please accept my cordial good wishes and help while I wish you and all members of the club the bounty of God and of the Blessed Virgin, Help of Christians, I am delighted to remain,

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

L'Amico del Popolo, the Catholic weekly journal of Prato, published the above letter on November 8th.

THE SISTERS' MOTHER HOUSE

Hoping to do away with various minor inconveniences, Don Bosco had authorized Father Louis Bussi, the director of the mother house of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, to discuss with the municipal authorities the transfer of a strip of land in the vicinity of the Belbo river to the nuns, who needed an area for a playground for the girls of the town attending their Festive Oratory. He had also decided on the purchase of a field in front of the former residence of the director, which also belonged to the municipality. Hoping to begin the negotiations, Don Bosco wrote to the mayor himself, informing him of his intentions and the reasons for them:

Turin, October 16,1884

Most Honorable Mayor and Honorable Aldermen of the city of Nizza Monferrato:

The Reverend John Bosco appeals respectfully to you in connection with the project of enlarging the educational school for girls of Our Lady of Grace in your town; namely, in the immediate area of the Belbo river for an overall length of approximately thirty meters. I therefore ask you to be so kind as to transfer to the school in question a 32-meter-long strip of land in the immediate proximity of the convent and the twenty-eight trees standing on it.

For his part, the petitioner would build the road marked in red at his own expense, which would measure four meters in length in the adjoining Tipo-Bocca, and could be used as a road and avenue.

The above-mentioned enlargement plan is necessary in the opinion of the undersigned for the following reasons: (1) the danger that the windows of the school will be broken; (2) the almost continuous disturbance now inflicted on religious functions; (3) the considerable damage now caused by the passage of carts that constantly graze the wall and shutters outside the windows due to the excessive proximity of the road and wall; (4) The danger of all kinds of immorality, due to the conversations that are not always clean held by people all too frequently in the street immediately beneath the windows of the school; (5) to provide for the health of the children by enlarging the southern wing of the school where the air is healthier, which would offer possibilities of enlarging the garden and form new paths where young ladies attending the school could stroll; (6) lastly, it would improve an area for a workshop and playground for the exclusive benefit of poorer girls of the town, for it is the intention of the undersigned to open a free professional trade school for sewing classes and daily courses for such girls between the ages of 12 and 15, as well as to provide recreation for them on Sundays and feast days, imparting moral, civil and religious instruction to them as in an Oratory.

Knowing the great care and concern that all of you give to the moral and civil advancement of the population under your administration, especially where youth is concerned, the undersigned is confident that the above request, so humbly formulated, will be granted.

Rev. John Bosco

THE CARMELITE CONVENT OF CARTHAGE (AFRICA)

In his zealous apostolic fervor for the progress of his African mission, Cardinal Lavigerie felt that it would be highly beneficial if a religious community, which was dedicated to prayer and penance, were to go to the ancient city of Carthage in Africa.

"Bathed in the blood of the martyrs, I know how impotent man is, unless he is supported by the grace of God," he wrote, "and I also know by my experiences that we must do violence to the heart of Our Lord by dint of penance and prayer if we want to obtain the graces of the apostolate from Him." This was what the great cardinal wrote in 1884 to Mother Mary of the Angels, the superior of the Carmelite Convent on the Avenue de Messine in Paris. He earnestly asked her to send some of her nuns to found a convent there so that they might raise their clasped hands heavenward there on the hill, while he waged God's battles down in the plain.

Mother Mary of the Angels was the superior of the convent where Don Bosco had celebrated his first Mass upon arriving in Paris, and she had associated the Salesians with the Carmelite Order[3] in an official and spiritual way. Although she had the fullest confidence in the cardinal, the good nun did feel somewhat hesitant at first in the face of such an important proposal. She, therefore, decided to consult Don Bosco and send him a copy of the letter from His Eminence. In the reply, which Don Bosco had someone else write, he dictated these words: "Thank you for having sent me the wonderful letter of His Eminence Cardinal Lavigerie. Have faith; if you have faith, you can want for nothing. The Lord is ordering you to undertake this work. Without any doubt, He will see to everything. But let us pray hard and act with complete confidence in the help of God."

Such decisive advice from Don Bosco encouraged the reverend mother, and she no longer felt any hesitation.

"Those words of your blessed father were inspired directly by God," the present mother superior at the Carmelite Convent in Carthage wrote to us. "Our Lord did most certainly want us to found that convent. He has protected us always most particularly, and especially in these recent difficult times."[4]

When the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the convent,

[3] See vol. XVI, page 128.

[4] Letter dated August 17, 1935.

which was inaugurated in 1885, was celebrated, the words written by our saint were widely publicized.

TURNCOAT

Ever since he had first attended high school at the Oratory, Rev. Augusto Biancardi from Lucca had never stood out among his peers. Nevertheless, his superiors always tolerated the introverted and expressionless young man, and eventually admitted him to final profession and holy orders, since his outward behavior did not appear scandalous. When he became a priest, he had been sent to the house of Magliano Sabino, and one day disappeared without giving anyone a hint of his intention. Later, it was known that he had gone to Florence, where the archbishop had refused to incardinate him in his own diocese.

Finding himself in difficulties, he wrote a vicious letter to Don Bosco, threatening to report matters dishonorable to the Congregation to Rome. Don Bosco refused to justify the threat, saying that if he wanted a few lines in answer to his letter, he could write a more appropriate letter. Instead, the turncoat addressed a series of infamous accusations against the Salesians to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, but in this gesture, he did not hesitate to confess to his own dishonor that he had lied when he expressed his willingness to enter the novitiate to make his religious profession and receive holy orders.

He received no reply from Rome, so he wrote once more to Don Bosco, seeking dispensation from the Congregation, making his request through Canon Martini of the collegiate church of San Lorenzo in Florence. The saint replied that now the matter was in the hands of the Congregation, and he himself could no longer take any action. In the meantime, he was informed that the above-mentioned Sacred Congregation had called on Father Francis Dalmazzo to get some explanations and received a copy of the accusations.

In mid-January, he received another request through the same canon that called him to dispense the fugitive from his vows and write a letter of recommendation. This is the admirable letter that the saint wrote in reply:

Turin, January 17, 1884

Dearest Canon:

I have received your letter and I'm sorry to hear that the Rev.

Biancardi is not feeling well. I also received the copy of his accusations addressed to Rome. He has drawn on all possible inventions to denigrate the Congregation, which only treated him as well as it was able to and gave him all that he now possesses.

I would not have believed that he could possibly have only pretended to make his profession of vows, his religious profession, and even receive his holy orders after expressing such unlimited confidence in his superiors and such affection for them.

He could make amends to a certain extent for the terrible slander with which he has blackened us by writing a letter of apology and reparation either to Rome or Don Bosco.

Please be patient if I am disturbing you once again because I cannot add any recommendation, as I would have liked to do, to the dispensation here enclosed.

Believe me in our Lord,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

There was no difficulty obtaining a dispensation from his vows for this turncoat, but no one could give him a recommendation. Don Bosco, therefore, wrote a statement that dispensed him from all ties with the Salesian Congregation, stipulating two very serious motivations for it:

Turin, January 17, 1884

In view of the statement in which the Rev. Augusto Bianciardi declared that his religious profession and pious practices were nothing more than an act and in consideration of slanderous accusations he described to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, the undersigned is granting his request and hereby declares him to be totally dispensed from all ties with the Salesian Congregation. This statement is issued to clarify how things stand, though the undersigned is willing to accept any and every decision that may be passed by the above-mentioned Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Rev. John Bosco
Rector

PRINCE AUGUSTUS CZARTORYSKY

In the preceding volume, we described Prince Czartorysky's first meeting with Don Bosco in Paris. During the two years that followed, his vocation grew stronger with the conflict and external opposition he had to endure, which we shall now describe after a brief outline of the Prince's lineage.

The early origins of the Czartorysky family are shrouded in the shadows of the past, but Prince Wasyl was the acknowledged head of the family at the beginning of the 15th century. Little by little, the family attained a most eminent position of wealth and standing in the foremost ranks of Polish aristocracy. Its splendor then waned somewhat in the 19th century when the grandfather of Augustus, Prince Adam, risked his life and fortune for his country in the desperate rebellion of 1830. When Warsaw fell, he was condemned to death by the Russians and his property was confiscated. The generous hero was able to escape by crossing the frontier. While in exile in Paris, he gradually rebuilt his fortune and became a staunch supporter of his compatriots who found a second homeland in France. Upon becoming head of the family, his second-born son, Ladislaus, married Princess Maria Amparo, daughter of Maria Cristina, Queen of Spain. Augustus was born to them on August 2, 1858 in the magnificent Lambert palace, where he was to meet with his future spiritual father for the first time in 1883.

After their encounter in Paris, Augustus would have liked to call on Don Bosco at Valdocco during the summer and learn of his work, but he was not able to do so. He did have another opportunity in September when he was sent to Rome as a member of a Polish delegation, which was to convey the good wishes of Poland to Leo XIII on the second centenary of John Sobieski's victory over the Turks. On his way to Rome, he stayed briefly in Turin, though he did not meet Don Bosco. He carefully inspected the Oratory in the company of Father Michael Rua, who advised him to come back again in May for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, which he did. He remained at the Oratory for the whole day of the 24th, attending the church services and eating at Don Bosco's table.

He was moved by everything he saw, and even decided to delay his departure so that he might have a better chance to talk with the saint. He was lodging at the Grand Hotel d'Europe and went every morning to perform his devotions in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. He would then have an early coffee with Don Bosco, and often accompanied him on his walks during the afternoon. In this fashion, he prolonged his stay until

the Feast of St. John. In later years, he always looked back on this period as one of the most pleasant of his whole life, and as one of the greatest graces the Lord had ever granted to him.

His spirit was constantly troubled by the thought of his vocation, of which his family was very seriously against. His father intended to make the firstborn son heir of his entire estate. He, therefore, wanted his son to acquire experience in the management of the estate and to join high society more frequently. But Augustus was concerned with thoughts very different from these, and up to that time he had not ventured to mention it. When his stepmother became sick in the fall, he begged Don Bosco to pray for her recovery and Don Bosco replied:

Turin, October 5, 1884

Kind and dearest Prince:

As soon as I received your gracious letter, I instantly scheduled special prayers to be said morning and evening at the altar of Mary Help of Christians. I will have a special memento every morning during my holy Mass. We must hope that in her divine goodness, the Blessed Virgin Mary will protect you, dear Prince, and restore the august patient, your mother, to her former state of health, physical and spiritual, while obtaining for your pious father all the graces necessary for their joint eternal salvation.

I rely on the charity of your prayers, while I am greatly honored to be with deepest gratitude in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

When the princess recovered, Augustus' father wished to distract the prince from his troubles and sent him to London. When he returned to Paris, his spiritual disposition did not seem to have undergone any change. He felt the need to confer with Don Bosco, and so he wrote to him, asking for his advice on several matters. Don Bosco dictated the following reply:

Turin, October 17, 1884

Most dear Prince:

I have to avail myself of the services of a secretary to give you

an answer, which is already overdue because of my failing eyesight. You did well to defer your choice of a career. I shall pray with you and for you, and God will certainly lead us to recognize His divine will.

As to the secretary recommended to you, I think you could use him when occasion arises, but do not make any commitment. I would like you to take a little time, at least, to get to know his character and find out how religious he is.

I received the 100 francs and the 100 tickets sent to you on behalf of the Sacred Heart Church and Hospice in Rome. I am grateful to you, and the Sacred Heart of Jesus will reward you abundantly.

I am delighted to hear that Mamma is out of danger. I prayed to Mary Help of Christians, imploring that she might regain her former health. I shall continue my prayers and all our boys will be praying with me, asking that she may be permitted to enjoy good health and her family for many years to come. Should I have an opportunity to visit Nice this winter, I would be greatly honored to pay my humble respects to her in person, and assure her of our prayers. And you, my dear prince, will you not be going to spend a few days there, too, together with your parents?

All the members of our house who had the honor of meeting you in person and of paying their respects to you in Turin join me in sending you their good wishes for a blessed Christmas and a New Year, and ask that you remember them in the charity of your holy prayers.

God bless us all, and may He help us walk steadfastly along the road to Heaven.

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. As to the firstborn inheritance right, try to satisfy your Papa as much as you can, but I trust that we will speak of this some other time.

The prince's anxiety was growing, and he asked for further advice, especially on his acceptance of the firstborn inheritance right, which was a crucial issue for him. Don Bosco expressed his own opinion on

the subject very clearly:[5]

Turin, January 26, 1885

Dear Augustus:

Your letter certainly calls for a prompt reply, but it is not easy to give you one in a letter. Nevertheless, this is what I think: if in your heart you feel this strong urge to become a priest, you will forego all and every firstborn inheritance rights; but should this resolution not be fully matured in your heart as yet, you will do well to do whatever your Papa wishes, and agree to the firstborn inheritance right and all its consequences. We will have to write each other again about other matters or possibly discuss them in some conversation together in the spring.

Meanwhile, we are praying and you will pray, too, that our Lord reveals His Holy Will to us unequivocally.

You may have seen in the newspapers that a good portion of our house was destroyed by fire on Saturday. A lot of damage was caused, but no people were hurt. Blessed be God in all things, good and bad.

May the Blessed Virgin protect us and guide us along the road to Paradise. So be it.

Your humble friend and servant,
Rev. John Bosco

While thanking him, Augustus also told him that under the advice of his confessor, he would go to Turin to be under Don Bosco's direction while making his spiritual retreat. Don Bosco praised this plan and wrote:

Turin, May 27, 1885

Dear Prince:

I shall be very glad to see you here, and I heartily endorse the idea of making a spiritual retreat. All I regret is that I will not be able to direct you, but I hope others may do so in my stead, for my health being still so uncertain, I will not be able to do as you

[5] This letter and the others following were written in French (Appendix, document 62, A, B, C, D and E).

wish. But come, come by all means; I am anxiously looking forward to seeing you.

Thank you for the news you gave me about your dear parents. I am delighted to know everyone is well. Please give my congratulations to Prince Adam on his First Communion.

Oh, may Our Lord bless and keep him always in His Holy Grace. May He help him to become a staunch defender and protector of our religion.

Please give my humble regards to Their Highnesses, the Prince and Princess, and to the whole family, not forgetting the dear little Prince Vitold, for whom I pray with all my heart. We'll see you soon, then.

God bless and accompany you. Please accept my respects and consider me as,

Your most affectionately in the Lord,
Rev. John Bosco

Augustus arrived in Turin during the early part of June. He booked a room at a hotel upon his arrival, but a few days later, asked Don Bosco if he might stay at the Oratory.

"Will you be able to adapt to our frugal board?" the saint asked with a smile.

"Do not worry as to that. Whatever is enough for Don Bosco, will be enough for me, too."

"Then come by all means, if you wish. Don Bosco will never refuse a seat at his own table to anyone who requests it."

At table, sitting beside Don Bosco, the prince was able to voice his feelings and to closely study the holiness of the saint and the life of his spiritual sons. He spent the greater part of his time in meditation, prayer and pious reading. In his concern over the young man's future, his father put an abrupt end to this delightful sojourn and sent for him to come home. After generously paying for the trouble he considered he had caused the Oratory, the young man departed for Poland. When he reached the family estate in Sieniawa, he did what Don Bosco had told him and concerned himself with the administration of the family property, which he had come to own in accordance with his rights as firstborn son. Although this pleased his father, his heart was elsewhere.

As soon as he had rested after his journey, he wrote to Don Bosco, who answered him somewhat vaguely, though it was not possible for him to do otherwise in a letter:

Turin, July 3, 1885

Dearest Prince:

Your kind and gracious letter gladdened all the Salesians. It looks as if Divine Providence is guiding you in a certain sense to God's church. We are all praying fervently that the grace of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin be with you always. Your father's plans and intentions are truly wise and you may obey them quite serenely, especially looking after your estate. Your somewhat hasty departure prevented us from winding up some business, but I hope that some future occasion or correspondence will enable us to get a clearer understanding. My health is still no good and I want you to pray for me.

I am most grateful for your generous charity towards us. Our boys will offer up prayers constantly, and go to Communion for your intention.

God bless you, most dear and beloved friend, allow me to use this word and may the Blessed Virgin protect you always on the road to Heaven.

Your humble, grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco.

The prince's father was delighted to see how he dedicated himself to the administration of the family estate, and had high hopes for his own plans. However, had he been able to read into his son's heart, he would have seen what an enormous effort it was to adapt himself to a kind of life which was so greatly different from his aspirations.

Don Bosco's letter only increased his anxiety, and he again called on him for advice in August. He received an answer even more vague than the former one, written in great haste, as we can see from the original. At the time, Don Bosco was absorbed in the retreat of San Benigno and was not feeling well:

San Benigno Canavese, August 26, 1885

Dearest and most honorable Prince Augustus:

I was very pleased to receive your letter, which was like a precious gift for all the Salesians, who will not fail to pray for you and your entire family.

At this time, we are making our spiritual retreat.

My health is far from good, but every morning, all our priests are having a memento for your intention. I will be glad to write you again very soon. The plans of your father, the Prince, are most wise; one could not describe them better. In the event that I am unable, Father Michael Rua will supply the details you requested in your letter.

May the Blessed Virgin guide you in all your resolutions. Please remember me in your charitable prayers and may God guide us along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Not wanting to add to the prince's anxiety, Don Bosco instructed Father Michael Rua to write and let him know how he felt. On the 28th, Father Michael Rua wrote:

Our dear Don Bosco is sick, so I am writing you on his behalf. As to the advice given you, dearest Prince, by your honorable Father, Don Bosco says that I am to remind you that our Lord always blesses the children who obey the wishes of their parents, and he is, therefore, praying that God may bless you. Meanwhile, Don Bosco and our boys are praying for you and offering holy Communions so that the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians may obtain the graces and the enlightenment necessary for you in this most important matter. Our beloved father Don Bosco assures you that he is glad to pray for you and your whole family.

Prudence would not allow him to say more than that. The prince's father was no longer unaware of the hopes of Augustus and as long as he believed that the youth was a prey to uncertainty, he increased his efforts

to sway him, even suggesting that he take a wife. More desperate than ever, the prince once again appealed to Don Bosco in December and the saint replied with the following:

Turin, December 15, 1885

Dearest Prince Augustus Czartorysky:

We were all very anxiously waiting news from you, and are now delighted with the good report you sent us about yourself and your family. I feel that the question of matrimony is but a matter of finding someone suitable, and I think that insofar as this is concerned, you would do wisely if you followed the advice of Papa and the aunt to whom you referred. Nevertheless, I will not fail to pray myself and to have our boys say prayers and receive Communions in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and at her altar for you.

There are many things we could say if we were to meet, but these cannot be explained in a letter. The Blessed Virgin has guided us thus far, and will not deprive us of her maternal protection. I am fully confident that during the course of next year, we shall meet again, to the great joy of all the Salesians who love you like a father and benefactor.

May God bless you, dearest Augustus, and may the desire to reach eternal happiness guide you in your words and deeds.

Please pray for the whole Salesian family and me in your great charity, while I gratefully remain always in Jesus Christ,

Your humble, grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

We should not be amazed that Don Bosco wasn't very specific in his letter to the prince. Before doing so, he was waiting for Augustus to form a clearer vision and steadfast resolution to his own intentions. Until that time, his spirit had wavered between two feelings: the filial affection that had kept him from an open conflict with his father, and a growing inclination to embrace religious life in the Salesian Congregation, even though he foresaw the various difficulties he would have met by taking such a step. The saint's conviction was fully justified and the final solution was reached in 1886.

Chapter 16

ANNUAL JOURNEY TO FRANCE IN 1885

A newspaper from Milan, which was considered among the best in the financial and political world, launched this sentimental piece of news in February:

> Don Bosco left Turin for America last fall on a visit to the schools he has founded there. For some time now, there has been a persistent rumor in circulation that Don Bosco died in America, and it is claimed that his death has been kept secret so as not to prejudice certain interests of the party of which Don Bosco was the heart and soul[1].

This odd and malignant announcement shook up the press and did even more damage to the friends of the saint. It is true that *Il Corriere di Torino* was quick to publish a denial[2], but the false rumor (not to call it an outright lie) still circulated. There was nothing that could be done as far as the foreign newspapers, for they did not receive the correction until it was too late[3], but without even going through the trouble of seeking more information, some Italian newspapers and Turin publications continued to copy the article from one another. As much as two weeks later, one weekly journal did not have the slightest suspicion that it was a hoax.[4]

[1] *Corriere della Sera* (February 28, 1885).

[2] Issue of March 2, 1885.

[3] On March 5th, *l'Echo du Nord* published the following in Lille: "We recall the visit of Don Bosco to Paris. He is the famous preacher who for three months was the idol of the Paris faithful. After spending some time in Italy, Don Bosco departed for America, where according to the Italian newspapers, he died after only a short illness. It is claimed that his death was kept secret, so as not to compromise the interests of the party of which Don Bosco was the heart and soul."

[4] On March 14th, *La Cronaca dei Tribunali* undauntedly published this in Turin: "We have undertaken a careful and necessary investigation and the results of our investigation fully coincide with the announcement of the Lombard paper. But we also wrote to an acquaintance we have in Patagonia, who is in a position to give us reliable news. We are now awaiting his reply, which we shall hastily bring to the attention of our readers. So far, despite our inborn anticlerical sentiments that know no limits, we reverently bow down before the mortal remains of this man. Setting aside all partisan questions, and when the news will be confirmed, we will retain the right of speaking about him with the impartiality and reverence with which honest men judge the philanthropists of humanity."

It thus happened that on the evening of March 13th when Don Bosco left the house to go for a walk in the company of the cleric Viglietti, he encountered a number of anxious people at the door who wanted to know the truth after having heard the news vendors in the streets announcing the death of Don Bosco at the top of their voices. He answered jocularly to their congratulations: "They had me die a few days ago in Buenos Aires, then in Marseilles, yesterday at Pavia, and today – only this morning in fact – they said I died in Turin; yet I am going out for a stroll this evening! Oh, there is no danger as long as one hears about one's death with one's own ears."

Even the people in the streets stopped to stare at him, amazed as they saw him pass by, and expressed their delight when they became absolutely sure that it really was him.

The following extract from a letter written by the director of Paris tells us of the effect the tragic announcement had had on his faraway sons:[5]

> A few days ago, a French newspaper carried the news of the death of our beloved Father Don Bosco! Our dear Congregation could not have suffered any greater mishap. Therefore, you can imagine our grief and our anxiety while we waited for an answer to the telegram we sent immediately to Marseille to find out the truth.
>
> But blessed be God, blessed be the Blessed Virgin, Help of Christians likewise, for the announcement was without any foundation, and this is yet another proof of the light-mindedness of journalists who, out of their mere delight at launching startling news hurriedly, are unafraid to cause anguish in the hearts of deeply devoted sons by falsely announcing the death of the father they love so tenderly without first ascertaining the truth.
>
> You can imagine our joy when as we received your letter and read that our dear father was feeling better and planned to come and visit his sons and his houses here in France, including the house at Menilmontant. This hope really looks like a star to us amidst the storm, and we hail the star with the keenest happiness. I might also say that our boys feel a joy that is by no means inferior to our own because they are now beginning to look on our Don Bosco as their own loving father.
>
> Would you please tell Don Bosco of the happiness of his sons

[5] Father Bellamy to Father Rua (Paris, March 10, 1885).

in Paris, and also that I feel that his visit is more essential than ever before for the welfare of this new house. We shall pray to Mary Help of Christians that we may enjoy this blessing, and that this good fortune be granted to our house at Menilmontant.

The French newspaper that carried the false rumor of Don Bosco's death admitted its mistake this morning, and also announced the arrival of Don Bosco in France at the end of that current month.

Don Bosco made a journey to France, but not to Paris. Overriding the protests of his physicians, unyielding in the face of loving protests from his sons, he only gave heed to his urge to solicit the charity of others to help his charitable works[6], and he set out the morning of March 24th in the company of his secretary Viglietti and Father John Bonetti.

On the way from the Oratory to the station, he suddenly asked Viglietti, "Where are you going, Viglietti?"

"I am going with Don Bosco."

"Do you know where Don Bosco is going?"

Since Viglietti hesitated before answering, Don Bosco went on, "Not even I know where Don Bosco is going. He is in the hands of Divine Providence."

His conversation was cheerful on the train between Turin and Sampierdarena, and once he arrived, and he enjoyed the pleasantries of Bishop Scotton, the Lenten preacher, during lunch. That same evening he went to Alassio. This was the season when the whole Ligurian Riveria was turning into a garden charmed with flowers. Don Bosco was so fascinated as he stood at the window of the train that he shouted like a child as he saw daisies and peach blossoms all over.

After spending the night at Alassio, he went on to Nice. Father Francis Cerruti took Father John Bonetti's place and Father John Bonetti remained at Sampierdarena. At Ventimiglia, Don Bosco met his good friend Baron Heraud, who had gone there to meet him with Father Francis Fasani, the prefect of the Nice patronage. The Salesians at Vallecrosia barely had time to kiss his hand and exchange a few words with him. At the station of Nice, many ladies and gentlemen were waiting for him with

[6] In order to raise some money, he had Father John Bonetti write and publish a letter, which he had signed himself as a supplement to the Salesian *Bulletin* at the end of 1884, and in which he implored priests to say Masses for his intention, transferring the stipends received for them to him (Appendix, document 63).

their coaches. The enviable honor of driving him to the Salesian house fell to the coach of a wealthy marchioness.

Once the joyous and affectionate welcome was over and he was going to retire to his room, Don Bosco stopped short of the threshold, being stunned by the almost princely luxury of the room. Then, he gave orders that the carpet covering part of the floor be removed immediately. The director did not think that this was a luxury, but merely an act of deference toward Don Bosco and the people of high station who would be coming to visit him. But Don Bosco thought differently about it. He sat down and in his habitual, calm kindliness, told an anecdote concerning Marquis Fassati.

One day, this noble friend and benefactor of his had noticed certain decorations in the doorkeeper's office, and had said that he hardly ventured to offer Don Bosco any more money because it looked as if he had money to spare. Not that the decorations had been in any way extraordinary; in fact, they were fully justified by the construction requirements specified by the municipal authorities, as well as by the necessary decorum in the appearance of the little square before the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

"Who do you think will feel inspired to give us alms if they see that we have turned into rich people?" the saint asked. "They would only feel that they would slight us, offend our sensitiveness. How could we find the courage to make an appeal to public charity if anyone were to respond by saying that our rooms and our houses showed that we had no need of public charity and that we were lodged like rich people?"

He then went on to speak of something else, earnestly recommending that scripture quotations be engraved under the porticos, just like the ones in the Turin Oratory.

After this talk, he spent the remaining hours of the day in complete rest. He seemed to be fairly well, considering his good cheer; all that troubled him was a toothache. Later in the evening, he sent for Viglietti and had him write the following letter to Father Michael Rua:

> Don Bosco wants you to give orders that someone copy and send the scripture quotations written under the porticoes at the Oratory to Nice. He also wants me to give his regards to you and to Father Joseph Lazzero, from whom he would like to receive news, to Father John Baptist Lemoyne (to whom he will be sending a nice basket of green salad[7]) and all the superiors, together

[7] The good father was mindful of a weakness Father John Baptist Lemoyne had for this type of food.

with all the boys at the Oratory, to whom he gave the advice that they should rely solely on God for success in their examinations *(the term exams which were usually held before Easter).*

Honorable visitors completely filled the morning of the 26th. Don Bosco attended a private dinner party at noon with Count de Montigny, Father Joseph Ronchail and Charles Viglietti. The count had prolonged his customary winter vacation on the Cote d'Azur to wait for Don Bosco's arrival. Around four o'clock, he went to hear the Lenten sermon at the Church of Notre Dame, which was preached by a Jesuit who had chosen Don Bosco's visit to Nice as his topic.

In his diary Viglietti wrote:

> Oh praise be God! I would never have believed it had I not been here to see it! I had heard talk of Don Bosco's visits to France, but I was very far from imagining what they were really like. In the streets, people stand still to gaze at Don Bosco and they press around him as he walks along, all eager to touch him; others weep for joy when they hear him address a few words to them or when he glances at them; others are content merely to look at him from a distance, feeling themselves unworthy of approaching him.
>
> The Church of Notre Dame was very crowded. I will not refer to the sermon made by the preacher, nor to his praise of Don Bosco or to all that happened afterward because Father Joseph Ronchail will describe it more fully in a letter he is writing for publication in the *Salesian Bulletin.*

Although the preacher was aware of the affection of the congregation for Don Bosco, he would nevertheless never have imagined the amount of enthusiasm of which he was a witness; such a spectacle set his eloquence on fire. He proved how necessary it was to give children a Christian education, he pointed out how Don Bosco's schools had come to fill an immense gap, and described the saint as "the broker of Divine Providence," for he exchanged earthly goods for eternal goods. His words were so effective that the collection yielded over four thousand francs.

After the ceremony, Don Bosco went back to the house of Count de Montigny, who offered a sumptuous banquet in his honor to some thir-

ty guests, all of them eminent benefactors of his houses in Lille and Nice. When fruit was put on the table, the count expressed his delight for having Don Bosco at his table amid so distinguished a gathering of friends. After relating how the St. Gabriel orphanage in Lille had passed into the hands of the saint, he said, "The Salesians have now had this house for the past fourteen months and, now as I am about to go back home to my native city, I am pleased to say to Don Bosco before these distinguished gentlemen that we are deeply grateful to him for the good work he has done on behalf of French youth, and particularly for the young people of Lille."

In his reply, the saint described his first meeting with Count de Montigny in Nice, he referred to the wonderful reception given him the previous year in the "Rome of the North," praising the charity of the French people toward his houses and stressing the general concern of the people of Lille for the St. Gabriel orphanage.

Then he paused a moment and after a while he continued: "Such charity touched my heart, but I did not know how I could give full expression to my gratitude. Very simply I told the Holy Father all that I had seen and done in that very Christian city when I last went to Rome. The pope is fully aware of the charity of the Lille Catholics and of their devotion to the Holy See chose to give proof of his fatherly benevolence to these fervent Catholics and the benefactors of our institute by conferring the title of Roman Count on Monsieur Alfred de Montigny, the man who was the first to summon us initially to Lille and who is still our most valid collaborator. This is a title which may be passed on to one's descendants and which is an imperishable token of the love which the Holy Father feels for Catholic works of charity."

With those words, he handed him the papal brief with his own hands. The other guests congratulated the count cordially and expressed fervent hopes that Don Bosco would regain his health and prosper in his charitable undertakings.

It was late at night when the saint returned home, and he nearly collapsed from exhaustion.

Our readers are fairly well acquainted with the vicissitudes that took place prior to the granting of this and other papal honors. Here, we will only add that the brief for Monsieur de Montigny had arrived in Turin a month before, and Don Bosco had sent it to Father Joseph Ronchail so that he might hand it over with befitting solemnity, adding the following letter:

Turin, February 24, 1885

Dearest Father Joseph Ronchail:

At last, the long-awaited matter concerning Count de Montigny has come to an end. Here you have the brief that has been circulating in Rome, for which both specific and unspecific dues have been paid. But now it is all over.

If this gentleman is still in Nice, organize a becoming celebration for him. If he has already returned to Lille, make arrangements with his sister.

Bear in mind that this was all done on behalf of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome.

My health is improving, but I am still unable to leave the house, so my visit to Nice is uncertain.

Give my regards to all our cooperators and tell them that I pray fervently for them and that I am working on behalf of the Holy Father, namely, for the church and hospice mentioned above.

Write me all your news. Love me in Our Lord and may God bless us all.

Most affectionately,
Rev. John Bosco

Father Joseph Ronchail chose to postpone the matter and await the arrival of Don Bosco so that the gesture of handing over the distinct honor would be more becoming and welcome to the benefactor.

A number of gentlemen attended his Mass on the 27th, and once they left, coaches came and went, discharging visiting noble ladies and gentlemen. The lobby and waiting room were never empty for a second. People came to thank him, implore graces from him, and make donations to him. As people emerged from Don Bosco's room, their faces showed their pure contentment.

"I saw one lady emerge from Don Bosco's room quite radiant with joy," Viglietti wrote, "and it certainly was out of tune with her years to see her skipping across the playground."

Among other visitors there was the stepmother of Prince Augustus Czartorysky and Monsieur Harmel.

An entire family arrived from Cannes during the afternoon, some seven or eight persons in all. With them there was a poor, crippled girl, for whom they implored a blessing. Just as Don Bosco was concluding the

blessing ritual words, they all began to weep, declaring amid the sobs that the girl was cured. Indeed, she left with her relatives without requiring the support of anybody. Don Bosco did not like such sudden recoveries, for he said he was more pleased when the grace was granted after a slight delay, such as a triduum or a novena.

Although French generosity was evident, as always, in the alms given, money was no longer as plentifully donated as it had been in the past. There was no lack of generosity, but that was only relative since on account of the economic crisis, money was scarce. This is exactly what one gentleman said to Don Bosco after serving his Mass on the 26th. He apologized that he was only able to give three hundred francs for his annual contribution that year, owing to the scarcity of crops. In bygone times, he had never given less than one thousand francs, representing a tenth part of his income, which he had promised a few years previously in thanksgiving for a grace he had received.

When Don Bosco was visiting La Navarre, this gentleman had literally carried his wife there after the physicians had given up all hope for her recovery. The saint's blessing had restored her health completely. Faithfully keeping his vow, he wanted to always be in a position to give generous help to the man of God.

The lady just mentioned returned the next day with her husband to recommend her mother to Don Bosco, for it was believed she stood on the threshold of death. Don Bosco imparted to them his blessing, thinking also of the sick woman. It was not yet evening when a telegram arrived to inform the lady and her husband of her mother's recovery, which had come about, it was discovered later, at the exact moment when Don Bosco imparted his blessing on them.

His prayers also had a beneficial influence on another person who was absent. A gentleman from Nice had suffered from insomnia for some months and was driven to desperation. At the request of his relatives, Don Bosco said a Mass for him on the 30th. That very day, the sick man slept for four consecutive hours.

We must also recall the spiritual graces received. A young man was making fun of the saint, the Salesians, and even religion itself. He was recommended to Don Bosco. The boy had been doing this for several years, to the great concern of his relatives. But four days had hardly elapsed after he had been thus recommended when someone came to tell Don Bosco that the wayward young man had gone to confession of his own free will after his blessing.

On Sunday the 28th, Don Bosco celebrated Mass in the little chapel of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. The altar boy was Leon, the eleven-year-old son of Levrot, the engineer who was so devoted to our saint. The Mass was attended by a group of the saint's close friends and the altar boy's father. After the Mass, everyone waited for the celebrant in a small, adjoining room. Sitting in a big armchair, Don Bosco asked questions, listened, and gave answer. All of a sudden he looked around, as if to look for someone. Levrot asked him what he wanted. Don Bosco did not answer. But he did this two more times. The third time he looked around, Levrot again questioned him.

The saint asked, "Where is Leon?"

The boy was in the playground with his brothers and some other boys. Someone called him instantly. The shy boy approached the saint, and without saying a word, the saint bade him to sit down on a footstool to his right, keeping his hand on his head at length, and on his shoulder. At last when they were leaving, he gave Leon a souvenir: a little cross of palm leaves.

Don Bosco said, "This is for my little cleric." But he used the term *choirboy (enfant de choeur)*, which the boy interpreted as "particular friend" *(enfant de coeur)*. He instantly became proud at what he had imagined was a token of special affection, but then forgot all about it; he even disregarded it completely. Yet, it came back to his mind during the winter of 1892 when he was exhausted during a violent attack of influenza and a persistent hemorrhage. He was in such a state of collapse that he had been forbidden to make the slightest effort and was not even allowed to read. It was then that he remembered Don Bosco's words, interpreting them in their proper meaning, feeling within him a curious echo, which conferred to the memory the urgency of a summons and the value of a prediction as well. It seemed to him then that he could see his path clearly mapped out ahead of him. This was the vocation of the Salesian priest Father Leon Levrot, and such was the effectiveness of a simple word uttered by Don Bosco.

Although many tourists had already returned to their hometowns that late in the season, there was still a steady flow of distinguished visitors, for many had come from very far away and sometimes waited entire days to be able to speak with him. Among these visitors was the Duchess of Parma and Prince Augustus Czartorysky, who came every day. He wanted to be told in no equivocal terms that he should become a Salesian because then he would have rushed immediately to the Oratory. Don Bosco studiously avoided any such statement.

We will not report all the correspondence that followed Don Bosco everywhere, which mostly concerned pleas for his prayers. Even a Muslim lady wrote to him in French from Russia, imploring him to pray for the recovery of a Mohammedan gentleman.[8] He had an answer written to her in the same language on March 28th, thanking her for her modest donation of three rubles and promising his prayers.

As the Easter holidays approached, the good father could not stop thinking about Valdocco, and wished to receive a gift from that house for this great feast that could represent his spiritual communion with the distant family in a tangible way. Viglietti, therefore, wrote to Father John Baptist Lemoyne: "Don Bosco gave me explicit instructions that three or four loaves of bread from the Oratory are to be sent to Marseille for Easter Sunday."[9]

He left Nice on April 1st, and before going to Marseille, he visited Toulon, where Count Colle waited for him with open arms. Shortly before his departure, three ladies called on him, one of whom was suffering from dizzy spells and had not been able to set foot outside the house for some time. She was also painfully frail, emaciated and crippled.

The ladies asked for Don Bosco's blessing and after he had satisfied them, he turned to the crippled lady and said, "Follow what I am going to do. Stretch out your arms, open your hands and clap one palm against the other, and shout 'long live Mary!'"

"But I am sick. I cannot do it," the woman said.

"Come on now and obey me," Don Bosco insisted.

"It is impossible. All my limbs hurt me."

"You have no faith. Do as I tell you."

The woman then stretched out her arms. Opened her fingers out and clapped her hands quite freely while shouting, "Long live Mary!"

Her two friends, beside themselves with amazement, could only weep.

The count had persuaded Don Bosco to make the trip to Toulon by promising him a substantial sum of money for the Sacred Heart Church and his Missions.

"Your letter forces me to come and see you, despite my frail health," the saint wrote to him.[10] He traveled with only his secretary. At the station in Nice, many people were waiting for him, all wanting to wish him a safe journey. Count de Montigny, who had delayed his own departure for Lille so as

[8] Appendix, document 64.
[9] (Nice, March 31, 1885).
[10] (Turin, March 3, 1885).

to have the pleasure of traveling with him, gave him a few bottles of his own excellent wines to invigorate him on his travels. Getting on the train with him, he sat at his side until Toulon, where they parted with warm assurances of their affection, and the count continued on his journey northward.

When Don Bosco and his secretary got off the train, they expected to see Count Colle right away, but not a soul was insight. Father Peter Perrot of La Navarre had not sent word to the count in time. Poor Viglietti had a tough time; he could barely walk with a big Easter palm under his arm, which he was bringing to the count, a heavy valise in each hand, and two overcoats thrown over his shoulder. Don Bosco, too, was barely able to walk; nevertheless he was of good humor. As they were walking in this fashion toward the count's residence, Countess Helene de Sampoule pulled up next to them in her coach. She bade them both get in it and took them to the count's home. Both the count and countess were surprised to see them arrive, but soon they overwhelmed them with courteous attention and indescribable tenderness. They wanted Don Bosco to sit between them and were delighted just to look at him and listen to him talk. They gave him the money they had promised that same evening.

Holy Thursday fell on April 2nd and Don Bosco, the Count and Viglietti went to the Cathedral that morning to fulfill his Easter duty. All along the way, people stopped to look at him. The short walk, climbing up to the sacristy and his genuflections sapped his strength. On his way out after Mass, those nearest to him gathered close around him. Word spread rapidly and in a few minutes, there was a crowd around him at the foot of the steps, all kneeling down, shouting, and weeping, which greatly disturbed the priests continuing the religious ceremonies. To get away, he was forced to give them his blessing. Viglietti wrote: "The people came crowding in the street. No one passed by without stopping and looking curiously at Don Bosco. People asked one another if it was really he. They all seemed overwhelmed by his presence. It is heartrending to see him leaning on his cane, somewhat bent, with those keen eyes of his, which reveal something exceptional inside of him."

In the silent peace of the Colle household, he thought of the Oratory. He saw many visitors, recalling each one with some individual characteristic. Thus to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who loved to eat garden vegetables, he had Viglietti write: "Don Bosco has heard from Father Joseph Lazzero that today you are enjoying (in fact, devouring, in Father Lazzero's own words) the salad he sent you from Sampierdarena, and this pleases him. This morning when he happened to see a handsome basket

of tomatoes, his thoughts instantly flew to Father John Baptist Lemoyne."

The same applied to Father Joseph Lazzero, the leading tenor at the Oratory and a man of candid simplicity: "Don Bosco asks me to answer Father Joseph Lazzero's charming letter, and he stopped several times only to break into exclamations of admiration as he read it. He said, for example, that Father Joseph Lazzero has grown pompous and very elegant, quite emphatic, in fact, in his way of writing. At one point, he exclaimed, 'What if Father Joseph Lazzero were to disappear from this world altogether?' Then, Don Bosco paused and said, 'What about his singing?'"

Divine Providence intervened on his behalf that day in Rome in a most miraculous way. Father Francis Dalmazzo had written to Turin and asked for money because on Holy Saturday, he had to pay out twelve thousand lire. Since the Tiberina Bank had already loaned him eighty thousand lire without mortgage, an additional loan had been refused. At noon on Holy Thursday, Countess Stacpoole, a lady he knew, summoned him at the doorkeeper's office; he had already appealed to her in vain. He sent word to ask for her indulgence while he finished eating, but she again sent word that he was to come to her immediately. As soon as he joined her, she told him that she had a sum of money to give him very urgently because she was very anxious to give this donation to him on the day when the most Holy Eucharist had been instituted. At most Father Francis Dalmazzo expected her to give him a one hundred lire note; but instead, to his great surprise, he saw her thrust a package into his hands that contained fifty-one thousand lire notes issued by the National Bank. Father Francis Dalmazzo forgot his dinner and raced to the Tiberina Bank, insisting that he be given the money during the week. But the cashier excused himself, saying that he had even telegraphed Director Caranti in Turin and had received a negative answer. No other recourse of action could be taken.

"But if I were to make a deposit, could I draw some of it?" Father Francis Dalmazzo asked.

"You could withdraw it all," the cashier told him.

"I do not need it all."

He then handed over the fifty thousand lire. "I could not find words to express the astonishment of the cashier, Mr. Angelois, at that moment," he declared during the course of the process of Beatification and Canonization. "I only recall that he exclaimed, 'Money really rains from Heaven for Don Bosco.'"

On Good Friday, the name of Don Bosco was mysteriously linked in

Turin with that of a famous deceased person. On Monday morning of that week, Father Ludovico from Casoria, an apostle of charity and the founder of the Grey Friars, had died in Naples. Even the anticlerical newspapers acknowledged his merits. On April 3rd, La Gazzetta di Torino carried a letter from a correspondent that praised the deceased man, but so as not to belie the spirit of the journal, it tacked on to it this arrogant statement: "The Church, which canonizes lazy and filthy people like Labre, will certainly never hear anything about this saint." The editor, who could have easily struck out this digression, let it stand, but felt that some sort of amendment was required. He felt he had found such an amendment in a word of praise directed at Don Bosco. Though in all sincerity, this praise did not amend anything, it does nevertheless represent something of particular value in our eyes, since it came *ex inimicis nostris* (from our enemies). He, therefore, tacked the following sentence onto the unfortunate paragraph:

> We should add that here in Turin we have Don Bosco. On a more extensive and elevated plane, Don Bosco has already performed and still performs miracles on behalf of suffering humanity and poor children. He, too, is a simple priest, who has never sought nor accepted any honors or ranks.

On Holy Saturday, Don Bosco said Mass in the hall that the count had converted into a chapel, and even erected an altar in it. A number of ladies and gentlemen attended the Mass, while Father Francis Cerruti, who had arrived the night before, and Charles Viglietti served it. Almost everyone present received Holy Communion from his hands. Don Bosco instructed Father Francis Cerruti at dinner to write a fine epigraph to be engraved on a marble stone in the Church of the Sacred Heart, eternally commemorating the generous donations of the count.[11]

After taking his leave from the count and countess, Don Bosco left for Marseille in the afternoon and arrived in that city at six o'clock, welcomed by delightful performance staged by the boys in his honor.[12] Easter was never so joyfully celebrated at St. Leo's Oratory.

The saint received two consecutive letters during the Easter celebrations at Marseille. One came from the previously mentioned Countess

[11] Don Bosco's wish was fulfilled later in 1893, with the Latin inscription by Vol. XV (footnote to page 124).

[12] Two separate speeches were read, containing very affectionate words, on behalf of the Salesians and their pupils respectively (Appendix, document 64).

Stacpoole, who told him that she was holding the sum of fifty thousand lire for him. Don Bosco replied:

Marseille, April 5, 1885

Dear Countess:

I am convinced that you performed a very wonderful thing, perhaps without even knowing the full value and significance of what you did. Thanks to you, the house in Paris is now in existence and a church will be erected amid savages. The souls that will be saved there will be due to the harvest sown by your charity.

For your greater convenience, you might deliver the sum of fifty thousand lire to Father Francis Dalmazzo, our general procurator, who will do whatever is necessary to see this is all done.

May Our Lord be with you always and the Blessed Virgin guide you to visit our house in Turin, where prayers are said for you every day at the altar of Mary Help of Christians.

Please pray for me, too, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Just as he mailed this answer, he received another letter from Father Francis Dalmazzo, informing him that the fifty thousand lire had already been given to him. So he again took his pen to write to the Countess:

Marseille, April 5, 1885

To the Countess of Stacpoole, Rome:

You could not possibly imagine my joy over your generous donation of fifty thousand lire on behalf of our missionaries in Patagonia. I thank you with all my heart and promise you that the church now being built in that savage territory will be consecrated to the Blessed Sacrament, as you wish.

Moreover, I intend that all the Masses, Communions and other religious practices taking place in this sacred edifice be offered up to God for your pious intentions. The Salesians never forget you in their community prayers or individual devotions.

I have written on this matter to Bishop John Cagliero, the bishop of that far and wide and problem-laden diocese in Patagonia.

God bless you and may Mary Help of Christians protect and guide you through all the perils of life.

Believe me with fitting respect and deepest gratitude,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The lady giving the donation had contributed this sum, as we see, for reasons other than the erection of a church to the Sacred Heart, but her intentions did not call for any immediate enactment. The investment of this sum in Rome would later on permit the investment of another equivalent sum to fulfill the intentions of the countess. But Bishop John Cagliero was informed of the matter and immediately wrote to thank the countess.[13]

Don Bosco had brought along some call cards that had been printed in French at the Oratory, and used them to send his respects, offer prayers or invoke a blessing. On Easter Sunday, he sent such a card to Madame Prat, telling her that the following day he would celebrate Mass for her intentions.[14] This great benefactress, who had been impressed by the saint's holiness when he was celebrating Mass even before making his acquaintance,[15] could not have hoped for a more precious gift.

Don Bosco found a little respite in the distractions of Easter when the visits were somewhat fewer in number; he was in great need of the rest. "Don Bosco's health is very weak, and he has a slight cough and headaches," his secretary wrote. "Don Bosco's charity, which knows no limits, has led him to an exceptional state of exhaustion. He looks even more crippled these last few days."[16]

One of the first visits Don Bosco received was from Mrs. Baroni. The previous year, she had brought along her critically ill daughter to receive Don Bosco's blessing. She had incurable tuberculosis and epilepsy, but after his blessing, her condition progressively improved until she was

13 Letter from Bishop John Cagliero to Father Joseph Lazzero (Buenos Aires, June 15, 1885).

14 "Charitable Mme. Prat: The Rev. John Bosco sends you his respectful regards. He and his orphans are praying for you and all your intentions, and implore the greatest blessings of Heaven upon you and yours. He is happy to say that tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock in the morning he will say Holy Mass for you in the church of our orphanage, namely on April 6, 1885."

15 See M.B. XIII page 411, XIV page 323.

16 Letter to Father Michael Rua, April 5, and to Father Febbraro, April 6th. For the latter, he enclosed a note from Don Bosco saying: "I enclose a precious document, a token of the immense love our beloved father has for you. He asked me to check whether there were any errors in it; but I believe that even though there might be some, my hand would commit a sacrilege if it were to touch any of this holy handwriting."

completely recovered. The mother had come to give her thanks.

Don Bosco had a dream the night of the 6th. It seemed that he was talking with a number of Salesians when all of a sudden a most beautiful maiden, clothed in white, and very modest in appearance, showed up and joined them. Don Bosco was disturbed at her appearance, and explained to her that she should go away. She did so, laughing and joking, but reappeared again shortly afterward. Don Bosco went up to her and sternly ordered her to go away. As he did so, he woke up.

The next night, he had barely fallen asleep when he found himself in an uncultivated field. As he was about to walk across it, he again saw the maiden who held out a saw to him, telling him to hack a path for himself through the weeds that encumbered the ground. He took hold of the saw and began to wield it, laughing, yet his path remained just as rough and fatiguing as before.

The maiden appeared to him again the third night and said, "The superiors should agree among themselves. Never postpone any correction they feel is necessary."

The saint reported these three dreams to Father Charles Viglietti immediately, but he held on to the explanation of them until later. This he actually did a few days later.

The weeds obstructing his path were bad books, bad talk and all those things that represent obstacles in the service of God and the welfare of souls. "The wisdom of the director and the other superiors consists precisely in knowing how to remove such poisonous weeds from among the boys," he said. "It is not such an easy task to foresee the coming of these weeds, discover them and cut them. It is a task for the saw, not for the scythe because one can stumble upon thick offshoots and dried tree trunks. Even though the harmony reigning among the superiors and the timely corrections may not entirely prevent evil from entering, they will, nevertheless, prevent the paths from being covered with stumps."

He did accept a few invitations with great discomfort to dine out. On the 7th, he went with Charles Viglietti to see Madame Broquier. As he strolled with her in the garden, he halted before a flowerbed, plucked an evergreen bloom and offered it to the lady, saying, "Here I am giving you a flower. It is a thought."

"Which thought is that?"

"The thought of eternity. It is one that we should never let out of our minds. Everything we do and say should always be directed toward this goal. In this world everything has an end; only eternity lasts forever and

will know no end. Let us strive to make our eternity happy and full of every joy."

The next day, they visited the Olive family. What a wonderful family that was! They had nine children and despite his very large family, the father was extremely generous in giving alms. All the members of the family venerated Don Bosco as a saint. As they waited to go into the dining room in a magnificent drawing room, Monsieur Olive talked with Don Bosco while Madame Olive carefully removed the hair that had fallen on Don Bosco's shoulders. Not satisfied with these bits of hair, she fetched her scissors and very deftly, thinking he would not notice the indiscretion, she skillfully snipped away curl after curl, almost shaving his neck. Don Bosco had become quite red in his face, but pretended to be absorbed in the conversation, so as not to embarrass her.

After lunch, each of the children discussed their respective vocations with Don Bosco. The saint then said that he could very well have founded a Salesian house there because all the sons wanted to become Salesians and all the girls wanted to become Sisters of Mary Help of Christians.

As he was about to leave, he couldn't find his hat. After hunting for it high and low, they concluded that Father Paul Albera, who had left the house a little earlier, must have mistakenly taken it. Then, a handsome new hat appeared.

"But this is not my hat," Don Bosco said.

"It most certainly is. Put it on your head," the lady of the house answered. She was the person responsible for this little trick. "Put it on or you'll catch a cold and get sick."

"This is too much," he murmured to Father Francis Cerruti, quite red in his face and almost in tears.

"Bear with them," Father Francis Cerruti whispered to him. "As long as you are Don Bosco, you have to resign yourself to accept also this."

"You are right," the saint said. "Patience, then! All for the love of God."

Thus did they leave that blessed house, but not until Monsieur Olive had given Don Bosco a generous donation. Don Bosco referred to the Olive family as the family of the cooking pot and the family of the Pater, Ave, Gloria to Don Bosco, referring to an incident we have already mentioned early on.[17]

He visited with the Count de Villeneuve on the 9th. There were many

[17] See this volume, pages 52-53.

guests, all having a good time; their cheerfulness was enhanced by Don Bosco's pleasantries. When speaking of the game of lottery, he remarked that some people would come to him to ask him for a number they might play, to whom he would laugh and answer, "My dear, if I only knew such numbers, I would be the first to play them!"

Then he said that on one occasion, he had written "Faith, Hope Charity" on a visiting card to rid himself of people who would press him for numbers. He folded the card, saying that they were not to unfold it until a given time. They obeyed and looked up the numbers corresponding to the three theological virtues in the Cabala. When they played them, the numbers won and they came back to see him and give him a fair amount of money as a donation.

When he got back to St. Leo's, he found a lady waiting for him with a good-looking boy. No one would ever have imagined that it was the same boy that had been led there the previous year by his mother, when he was completely crippled. The blessing of Mary Help of Christians had performed the miracle.

He spent the better part of the 10th at the novitiate of St. Marguerite. The young men, who did not yet wear cassocks, gave him a festive welcome. He was delighted by the little celebration staged for him and thanked them in a paternal way, promising that they would go to Turin on an outing to see the Church of Mary Help of Christians and the novitiate of San Benigno once they had received their cassocks. Several times, his emotions prevented him from speaking further, and big tears ran down his cheeks.

In the afternoon, visitors filled the house. A paralyzed woman with edema arrived in a coach and was carried indoors by two people.

After blessing her, Don Bosco said, "Now try to walk a little."

The woman had been immobile for several years, but she stood up and walked up and down the room, and left without assistance except that of a cane. The two persons who had carried her indoors thanked God in tears, and Don Bosco remarked to Charles Viglietti, "I would have said to her, 'Come, get rid of that stick and go out to work,' but had I done so, it would have created too much of a stir."

There is an entry referring to a remark and an episode on the 11th. In the presence of the famous attorney Roland, Don Bosco repeated a phrase in the dining room of St. Leo's that had often been heard from his lips before:[18] "When I hoped last year that the cholera epidemic might do

[18] See this volume, pages 228-229.

some good to souls, I suggested as antidote the medal of Mary Help of Christians; but the result was very different from what I had hoped. Nothing improved in the cities; indeed, everything became far worse. So I do not know if I ought to do the same this year."

These words contained a sinister forecast that was fulfilled as the recurrence of the contagious plague in 1884.

When the guests had left, a lady approached him with her crippled daughter. She had called on Don Bosco to bless the girl, who was suffering terribly with her nerves and was unable to walk one single step by herself. After receiving his blessing, her pain had disappeared, and to the utmost amazement of everyone who knew her, she was able to walk straight and unaided.

Since his arrival in Marseille, the saint had not yet been able to pay his personal respects to the bishop. He now called on him during the morning of the 12th. In his great kindness and courtesy, Monsignor scolded him for having come to see him in such a weak state of health. He had intended to get to see him instead at St. Leo's. Meanwhile, he said he would do anything he could for him, promising to attend and address the meeting of the cooperators. He also asked for detailed news of the Congregation and asked about several of its members, such as Father Celestine Durando.

Something interesting happened to Don Bosco at noon. During the course of the week, a young lady who did not know how to earn her living, although in appearance and apparel she seemed to be quite well off had visited him. No one wanted to give her employment, due to a certain ailment she had. Don Bosco blessed her and sent her away with God. Now when he was invited to have dinner with the Martin family, he suddenly saw the same young lady on the threshold, and deeply moved by feelings of gratitude, she flung herself at his feet. After receiving his blessing, she had not only felt her ailment disappear, but a gentleman approached her outside St. Leo's and asked her if she would be willing to work as a maid in his household. The gentleman was Monsieur Martin.

In the same household, he again found a former acquaintance. This time, it was the governess, who was the young lady he had blessed and cured of a serious disease the year before.

An affectionate little note to Father John Baptist Francesia is dated the 12th. Father John Baptist Francesia was now the director for the Oratory students, under the recently inaugurated new system. He apparently had his troubles, and must have confided them to Don Bosco, who wrote to pacify him:

Marseille, April 12, 1885

My dear Father Francesia:

I cannot write to the others, but want at least to pen a few words to Father Francesia, who is the apple of my eye.

First of all, try your best not to create for yourself pains and troubles where none exist; and whenever they do, accept them resignedly from Our Lord's Holy Hand.

Please tell our dear boys and our confreres that I am working for their sake and will be entirely devoted to them until my dying breath. Tell them all that they are to pray for me, be good, and avoid sin so that all of us can be saved for all eternity. All of us! *Que Dieu nous Benisse et que la Sainte Vierge nous protégé* (May God bless us and the Blessed Virgin protect us).

Most affectionately,
Rev. John Bosco

On the 13th, Don Bosco held a diplomatic dinner party. Count and Countess Colle were invited with the Commendatore Rostand, the president of the Beaujour Society, Monsieur Bergasse and several others. At the final toast, Don Bosco aimed his words at Monsieur Bergasse in particular, voicing all his satisfaction over his most welcomed visit, and thanking him for his infinite charity to the Salesians. He also introduced him to his two greatest benefactors, Count and Countess Colle. He then recommended the Salesian Congregation to his outstanding protection and called down the blessings and reward of Heaven upon him.

"It is extraordinary," Viglietti wrote, "how Don Bosco makes almost more of an impression when he talks off-the-cuff – making mistakes and stumbling – than when he is well prepared in advance."

In turning aside deftly the praise given him, Count Colle said that one of the greatest fortunes one could hope to attain was to serve and assist Don Bosco. Then Monsieur Bergasse took the floor; he was endowed with a simple, enchanting eloquence all his own. He said that he would gladly make every conceivable effort to cooperate with the good work of the Salesians. Adding that he was ably assisted by the Society of which he was president, he offered Don Bosco six hundred francs on behalf of the sugar refinery. He spoke with deep feeling about the disaster into which one could see contemporary society going down and highlighted the zeal

of Don Bosco who, he said, had been sent by Divine Providence to powerfully help the stemming of so much evil. At this point, his love for Don Bosco so carried him away that his words drew applause and tears.

But he had not yet finished. He went on to praise the education the Salesians gave to the young people they had rescued from the streets, and quoted newspapers that had paid tribute to Salesian pupils as boys who instilled in others love of the Church and love of the church ceremonies by their heavenly singing and the perfection of the liturgical ceremonies.

"These boys, these dear boys are loved and admired by all," he said. "The pastor of St. Joseph's speaks of them publicly, praising them from the pulpit. Marseille and France also praise them. They well deserve to be loved. The boys in this house love Gregorian Chant, preferring it even to ordinary music. It is enough for us to hear them sing as they do, it is enough for us to see them so modest, so well disciplined in church, to say, 'Look, they are the children of Don Bosco! Then it is not true after all, that everything is going to the dogs!' We still have a Don Bosco with us. May God preserve him unto us for a long time. May God bless him and help him prosper. France and the whole world need him."

It was a great joy for Don Bosco to hear that his boys were held in such a high esteem and that, thanks to them, sacred music and liturgical ceremonies were appreciated. In regard to Monsieur Bergasse, of whom we have already spoken several times, we might add that he was a most excellent Catholic. Nearly all the Catholic associations had claimed him as their president. He was always extremely busy, rarely granted audience, and rarely wrote letters; but he would have made any sacrifices for Don Bosco, and actually wrote him long, frequent letters, and was happy whenever he was able to enjoy his company.

Meanwhile, the crowd of visitors grew excessive at St. Leo's. When the secretary saw the rooms and corridors jammed with people, he would inform Don Bosco and ask everyone to kneel down to receive his blessing. Don Bosco would then come out from his room, address the crowd briefly, bless them all and distribute medals to them. This constant state of siege was very wearisome.

"What I admire in Don Bosco," Charles Viglietti wrote in his diary, "is his extraordinary gift for concealing his sufferings. At times, he is in a great deal of pain, and if he is unable to conceal this fact, he only laughs and says, 'Look, Don Bosco has no money.' Yet, he is so wonderfully detached from money in itself. As soon as he has put his hands on any money, by dint of much dexterity and effort, he is happy to distribute it among his houses."

Father Guiol, too, had already observed the previous year that in the evenings after his most tiring days, Don Bosco would simply say, "I am tired."[19] He seemed quite forgetful of self and concerned only about others.

"He tells me to send many regards to Father Joseph Bonetti," the secretary wrote to Father John Baptist Lemoyne. "He thanks you for the loaves of bread and begs you to look after yourself."[20] The loaves of bread had been sent from the Oratory for Easter.

Invitations to dinner continued and on the 14th, he was expected to be at the Gavotti's house. As he entered the drawing room and noticed such luxury, he exclaimed to some Salesians who were with him, "They ought to put a sign on the door – no poverty admitted here."

Count Colle had not yet left Marseille, and promised him that were he to pass again through Toulon, he would give him another gift of twenty thousand francs. He also agreed to assign a substantial sum to La Navarre to help complete the building work there. In addition, the countess, who was as noble as she was wealthy, constantly encouraged her husband to be generous toward Don Bosco, for whom she had a maternal affection. Indeed when he wrote to her, he often signed his letters as if he were her son.

The night before he left, the count had supper with the community. It so happened that after four eggs had been served to him at table, only the fifth one proved edible. Everyone at table was terribly mortified. The next morning, he sent for Father Paul Albera, who was still embarrassed at the poor fare he had served. The count gave him one hundred francs for each of the five eggs.

Even Don Bosco talked jocularly that morning about the incident. A lady begged him to bless her, saying she was deeply unhappy because her husband used to beat her. "But if I bless you," the saint said, "I shall also be blessing the blows that he rains upon your shoulders and this will only multiply them."

The people present laughed, then the saint dismissed her, urging her to pray, to be patient and never to talk back to her husband when he was angry.

The wonderful attorney Michel, who had just returned from his tour around the world [21], had supper with Don Bosco the evening of the 15th. They started talking about the pagan naturalistic principles that were now quite fashionable in formerly devout and Christian countries. In particu-

[19] *Oral hearing* (February 20, 1885)

[20] Letter of April 13, 1885.

[21] Four double issues of Catholic Readings appeared in 1887 by E. Michel, entitled *The Tour of the World in 240 Days* (1. Canada and the United States; 2. Japan; 3. China; 4. India).

lar, they spoke of certain Catholic intellectuals who spoke highly of religion, though without heeding what was most essential; namely, they were those intellectuals who were, as the phrase then went, "Catholics in theory but not in practice."

Don Bosco asked the attorney, "What do you think is the cause of such a deviant attitude? What is the origin of such great evil?"

Michel quoted some secondary factors and so the saint went on, "No, no, dear attorney. The cause of such evil is one only: the pagan education imparted in schools, as a general rule. Now that the school is everything, an education that is based entirely on pagan classics, steeped in pagan maxims and principles, handed out by pagan methods, can never train a true Christian. I have fought this perverse type of education all of my life, for it corrupts the mind and the heart of young people. My ideal has always been to reform education on a strictly Christian basis. That is why I took up the printing of expurgated editions of profane Latin classics most used in the classroom. That is why I began to publish Latin Christian authors. I had this in mind when I gave careful instructions to the Salesian directors, teachers and assistants. Now that I am old and decrepit, I die with the regret of seeing that I was not properly understood."

As he spoke, Father Francis Cerruti, who had been sitting next to him, remarked that "his voice was a blend of gentleness and pride."[22]

He attended the meeting of the Ladies' Committee on the 16th at the home of the pastor, Father Guiol. It was quite a simple affair; not a regular session, as they had on other occasions and no minutes were taken. Instead of the usual report, only a brief mention was made of this on May 15th when Don Bosco had already returned to Turin. But this mention is significant inasmuch as it reads:

> The hopes voiced at our last meeting that we might see Don Bosco in our midst have come true and the committee experienced the great joy of having him preside over a meeting and hearing him speak a few words. His frail health may have curtailed the number of words, though it could not diminish their precious effectiveness. In fact, the brevity of his words constitutes yet another reason for our pious gratitude and deep veneration. Don Bosco came to us exhausted more because of the

22 *Don Bosco's views on education, instructions and the present mission of the School.* Two letters (San Benigno Canavese, 1886).

> efforts made in his apostolic zeal than because of his years or his ailments. From what he said, it did not sound as if he expected to get back to Marseille again, and his health might confirm fears of this. But fortunately, human predictions are subject to modification by Divine Providence. He did not expect to see us even this time. His presence and his advice are so essential that we must look to Divine Providence and hope that they may continue, although this seems unlikely at the moment. The curate urges us to pray fervently for Don Bosco's health, so that it may improve and thus prolong his life. This is something that we should do because of many reasons, but it is a very sweet duty and one that should be fervently carried out with fervor. If the idea of praying for a saint may seem preposterous and one to be rejected, we must bear in mind that the well being of an important foundation is involved, and that it is a question of keeping here on earth a father whose crown is already waiting for him in Heaven.

The diary of the cleric Charles Viglietti gives us a sketchy outline of his short talk. He spoke of the immense general poverty deplored at that time, and of the excellent work the ladies might do in collecting alms to help support so many boys whose souls also received nourishment with the material food. He spoke of vocations for the priesthood, which had been stifled, but were now beginning to blossom in the houses he had founded in France. Lastly, he delighted them all with the promise of his prayers and the prayers of those he would petition to pray.

Don Bosco later had dinner with a family and the secretary had not told the saint their name. There was a neurotic lady in this household who spent her days in a wheel chair. After dinner Don Bosco asked that she be led to him. Right away, he ordered her to stand up, and just as she began to walk, the people who were supporting her let her slip, and the poor lady fainted and remained unconscious for an hour. In the meantime, Don Bosco called another sick lady, and then returned to the woman who had fainted and who had by now, recovered her consciousness. In similar cases, he would say, "You need faith. Only faith can obtain this grace, but only and always if this is not contrary to the well-being of the soul."

He could not leave Marseille without meeting the cooperators. It was exactly in view of his arrival that the conference of St. Francis of Sales had been delayed. The cooperators were summoned at four o'clock on the

17th in the Oratory chapel.[23] Don Bosco was to be the first to address the meeting, but he was troubled by an excruciating headache. He told Father Charles Viglietti about it, who suggested that he pass his headache on to him. On that instant, Father Viglietti was seized by so terrible a migraine that he could not stand on his feet and went to lie down. The saint went to see him after the meeting, blessed him and the pain vanished.[24]

When he appeared to address the assembly, he moved them all with his strained, old man's voice, but a voice still warm with affection, and at times vibrant with feeling. "I am not getting to the pulpit to preach you a sermon," he said, "because my health does not allow it. A far more eloquent tongue than mine will deliver the sermon. I have only come to thank God first of all and then the charity of our cooperators toward my orphans, for their charity has continued again throughout this year, too, despite the fact that there is no one who does not have some story of hardship to tell. My gratitude, as well as that of the boys you have assisted, will be eternal. Who knows if this may be the last time that I can be with you all; but should God summon me into eternity and choose to keep me with Him in Heaven, my first concern will be to pray to Jesus, Mary and all the saints to bless you and protect those who cooperate for the well being of many souls."

After expressing these general thoughts, Don Bosco sat down and the bishop spoke, opening his speech with a magnificent tribute of praise for Don Bosco, whom he called a *saint.*

The collection yielded seven hundred francs, but, as usual, there were also many donations given individually. Don Bosco himself went around the church with the plate, saying, "For my poor orphans" as he approached the people. Then in reply to all, he said, "May God reward you." It was a very moving scene.

After the conference, Count de Villenueve stood with a group of other gentlemen around Don Bosco and told the story of a recent miracle that had taken place in his own house. One of his servants was over eighty years old and practically near death. As soon as a medal blessed by the Saint of Mary Help of Christians was placed around his neck, the old man was perfectly and instantly healed.

Ladies and gentlemen followed one after another and surrounded him, some of them presenting to him their sons, daughters, husbands, or

[23] Appendix, document 66.

[24] Father Viglietti told this story to Father Trione. Father Riviere mentioned it in a very brief account now in the files.

nephews saying, "Here, Don Bosco! Do you know him? He or she is so-and-so. Last year you helped him (or her)."

But he would say, correcting them, "It was Mary Help of Christians who healed him (or her)... Don Bosco is only a poor priest."

Charles Viglietti's diary carries four events under the date of the 18th that are worthy of interest. As soon as an officer saw the saint, he fell before him at his feet and showed him a picture of Mary Help of Christians, saying, "Look, Don Bosco. Look who saved me from death and mortal wounds in the war in Tunis!"

Before that officer had left France for Africa, Don Bosco had written across the back of that same holy picture: "May Mary be your salvation in every peril."

The mother of Count de Villenueve believed that she was indebted to Don Bosco for her life. Indeed, one might well say that she was a living miracle, for when the doctors had given up on her and she was about to die, she had been brought back to life when a medal of Mary Help of Christians that the Saint had given her was hung around her neck.

Some distinguished people who anxiously recommended a son of General Colombe to his prayers also visited him. This young officer had been dangerously wounded in the Tonking wars and was now about to undergo a dangerous operation. His father was in Marseille and was not yet fully informed about his son's true condition. We do not know what happened after that.

The day before, a lady had tearfully implored him to pray for her husband, who refused to do his Easter duty as a Christian and would neither go to church nor hear talk of priests. Don Bosco had given her two medals – one for herself, the other for her husband. But knowing the way her husband felt, she did not even venture to show it to him.

"Give it to him, give it to him," Don Bosco insisted.

The woman obeyed, and came back to say that her husband had taken it in his hand and after gazing at it for a while, put it to his lips and had gone to confession and Communion that same morning.

The house was literally invaded when it was announced that Don Bosco was to leave the town on Monday, the 20th. On the eve of his departure, the corridors, church, and playground overflowed with people. An exceptional occurrence enhanced the wave of general enthusiasm. Just as Don Bosco was getting vested to go to the altar, he had been informed that a lady named DeBarbarin was coming, although it was known that she had been confined to her bed for five years. On Saturday evening,

Don Bosco had sent word to her that she should come to attend his Mass the following day. Her mother, thinking that the invitation should not be accepted, did not want her daughter to move. However, her daughter would not listen to her. As the time approached, she sent for her maid, got dressed, got in her carriage, and amid universal astonishment, reached St. Leo's. Those who knew her personally could not believe their eyes when she entered the church. She attended the Mass, kneeling down almost all the time, drank coffee with Don Bosco and was later seen strolling around the playground unassisted, as cheerful as a lark.

We shall now yield the floor to Charles Viglietti, so as not to repeat what we have already said again and again in similar circumstances. On the 19th, he wrote:

> It is by now impossible that I record all the extraordinary graces that have come about... Everyone who comes here has some story to tell me and all are related to blessings received early on. These are the type of people who are brought to see Don Bosco: deaf people who can now hear; sick and dying people who are now in perfect health; and sinners who have repented and come to implore Don Bosco for his blessing. As much as thirteen thousand lire were collected in petty cash contributions by individuals. In two or three days, the visitors have taken away all the pens that, every minute of the day, I was obliged to set out anew on Don Bosco's table. I have thus lost some seven dozen pens. They have also taken away his beretta three or four times, and have snipped up in a thousand different ways, sheets, blankets and pillowcases.

That same day, the clever secretary wrote to Father John Baptist Lemoyne:

> It is quite impossible now that I attend to everything. At times I have to answer as many as twenty and thirty letters, and I have to record fifteen and twenty events. I have to do this or that for Don Bosco. I have to calm down the people who flood the house and insist on seeing Don Bosco. I have to turn away others who were either here before or should not be received at all. So how can I now write to my dear Father John Baptist Lemoyne? It is impossible that I record all the graces that have been granted

through Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians. Everyone who comes here to the Oratory can talk of nothing else but the wonderful results of Don Bosco's blessing that they have received in recent days.[25]

No matter how well disciplined, there is no Christian school where the *inimicus homo* does not sow the seeds of sinister discord. A revealing dream in Marseille warned Don Bosco about this. We do not have any indication as to the day on which he had this dream, but this does nothing to cast doubt on its accuracy, since a sworn testimony was given in reference to it by one who was directly and unequivocally informed of it, in the process of beatification and canonization.

At about midnight, Father Francis Cerruti was about to go to bed when he heard a scream. At first he thought it had come from the room of a priest, guest of the house, who was sickly. Then, he heard another loud cry. A while later, he heard another one that was even louder. Undoubtedly, it came from Don Bosco's room, which was separated from his own solely by a thin wall with a communal door. Father Francis Cerruti put on his cassock again and went to open the door. He saw Don Bosco sitting up in bed awake. He inquired anxiously, "Are you sick, Don Bosco?"

"No, no," Don Bosco answered quietly. "Do not worry. Go back to bed to sleep."

As soon as he got up again in the morning, he went in to the saint's room and found him sitting on the sofa in a state of great exhaustion.

"Don Bosco, it was you who shouted out last night; was it not?" Father Francis Cerruti asked.

"Yes, it was I," Don Bosco answered.

"What happened?"

Since Don Bosco seemed somewhat hesitant about saying anything,

[25] Among Don Bosco's papers regarding his trip to France we find this memorandum, which apparently dates back to 1885, and had been sent to him from the Turin Oratory: Madame Dessernois at Couches-les Mines sends Lire 20 for a Mass to be said by Don Bosco on Easter Sunday or as soon as possible.

"Countess de Cessac-Montesquieu of Paris urgently asks for prayers for her sick husband.

"Mademoiselle Emilie Isnard asks whether Don Bosco is coming to Lyons. She lives six leagues away from Lyons and would come to the town to meet him, to hand him her offering of two thousand francs. If Don Bosco should go to Lyons, will Viglietti please write to Mlle. Isnard at Saint-Julien par Brace (Rhone), telling her where she could meet him.

We were just worrying because we had no money when Mr. Lorenzo Busca of Alba sent us an offering of six thousand lire by the hand of the former Prior Chevalier Rocca, asking Don Bosco to pray for him. *Deo Gratias et Mariae.*"

Father Francis Cerruti begged him to please let him know about it.

"I saw the devil enter this house," he said then, very seriously. "He was in one of the dormitories, walking from one bed to the next, saying loud and clear from time to time, 'This one is mine!' I protested. All of a sudden, he rushed at one of my boys to seize him and take him away. I began to shout, and he turned on me then, as if to strangle me."

After relating this, Don Bosco went on, deeply moved and weeping, "Help me, dear Father Francis Cerruti. I came here to France to raise money for our boys and for the Sacred Heart Church, but now I have found a far greater need here. We have to save these poor boys. I will put all the rest aside and attend to them. Let's make a good exercise for a happy death."

That same evening, the director of the house announced the exercise of a happy death, adding that Don Bosco would be there to hear confessions. He actually heard them in his room, sitting on the sofa, for he was so exhausted that he could not sit upright on a chair. Everything was so successful that later Don Bosco said jokingly, "You see, the devil made me miss a night's sleep, but he got a good drubbing for it."

When Father Francis Cerruti told Father Paul Albera about the dream, he confirmed it, saying, "Don Bosco is right, unfortunately. There are a number of boys whose bad conduct had made me weep."

Later Father Francis Cerruti asked the saint if he had noticed the devil's presence in any more of the Salesian houses. He said that he had and mentioned some of them.

"But are these boys who the devil tried to take away with him those who do not go to confession?"

"No," the saint replied, "they are more particularly those boys who make bad confessions, who commit sacrilege with their bad confessions. Remember this carefully, especially when you are preaching to young people: always stress the necessity that they should make good confessions and insist also very much on the need for sorrow."

The main cause for the disorders deplored at St. Leo's Oratory seem to be indicated fairly plainly by a remark made by Don Bosco on September 16th before the Superior Chapter. When it was a question of admitting French youngsters to vows, he said, "We must make it easier for our French youngsters to enter our congregation by having them don their cassocks already in the third high school year, when they are well-behaved. We have to replace or expel the garbage, the dross that we have been obliged to employ in our schools. These are the youngsters who will

accomplish a great deal of good."

Since he lived there for almost two weeks, everyone felt that Don Bosco was now part of the house and that he would never again leave it. But then hard facts came to light, when they saw the preparations for his departure the evening of the 19th. A veil of melancholy shrouded both Salesians and the youngsters. There were some moving scenes in the early hours of the 20th. Some were crying and some wandered around in the vicinity of his room. Whoever approached him asked him for a word of advice, a souvenir, or a blessing. Very soon, visitors began to arrive. The whole Oratory hummed with life. Toward eleven o'clock, he blessed the Salesians who had gathered together in his room, and then he uttered these words as a souvenir, "Remember that you are all brothers."

He blessed the youngsters as they knelt in the playground. Father Paul Albera was crying like a child.

After his goodbye to the Marseille house, he arrived in Toulon by one o'clock. After writing his fiftieth letter in the evening, Charles Viglietti wrote a letter of his own to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, informing him that it was Don Bosco's wish that he should write a letter on his behalf to be read aloud to the boys, for no one better than Father John Baptist Lemoyne knew the way he felt about them.

"Let him write the letter," the secretary wrote. "Let him write it at once to express that Don Bosco's thought is always with the Oratory and that in the evenings he and his secretary reminisce with great delight on everyone at the Oratory, boys, superiors, etc. and pray for them all."

Father John Lemoyne did as he was asked and wrote such a letter so convincingly that no one suspected that Don Bosco had been writing through an interpreter. Instead, they all believed Charles Viglietti had written the letter under dictation.[26]

He did not stay more than twenty-four hours in Toulon. He celebrated Mass in the house and was given the twenty thousand francs that the count had promised. On his way back to Nice, he was met at the station of Cuers by the superiors, the boys and the nuns from La Navarre; they had all gone there to wish him a pleasant journey, and were anxiously on the look-out for the in coming train, waving their handkerchiefs. Don Bosco waved back from the window of the train. He barely had time to bless them before the train was again in motion.

He stayed in Nice from April 21st to the 28th. The cooperators gath-

[26] Letter from Viglietti to Father Lemoyne (Alassio, April 29, 1885).

ered in the chapel to hear him speak during the evening of the third day. But Don Bosco was too tired. They had perforce to make a virtue of necessity, and were pleased to listen to the talk by Bishop Guigou, who had arrived for this purpose from Cannes. He was a Salesian at heart.

Among those who had gathered there, one could distinguish the martial bearing of General Perigo, who had made a name for himself in the African campaign. He was now enjoying a well-deserved retirement in Nice. After the conference, he asked to be ushered into Don Bosco's presence with his whole family. He was shown in, but found the room crowded. Sitting down, Don Bosco was exchanging a few words with some people, but with great difficulty, and at last everyone asked for his blessing, so as not to tire him excessively. They all knelt down, save the general who stood stiffly upright. Slowly and with dignity Don Bosco stood up to recite the formula of the blessing. At the sound of that voice, so sweet and full of unction, and at the sight of him, standing upright in the center of all those people who prostrated before him, the proud soldier was touched and fell heavily to his knees, just like all the others. As he went out he said, "Who could withstand such a sight? My heart grew hard on the battlefield, but I cannot stand such a scene as that."

He had also been pleased to accept a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians, and Don Bosco acquiesced to write a few words with his own hand on the back of it, as a souvenir of that memorable occasion.

The stream of eminent visitors left him no peace. The Duke of Vallombrosa, an exceedingly wealthy man had come to see him from Cannes.

"I never saw a more extraordinary looking man," the secretary wrote in his diary. "He is handsome, at least two meters tall, excellently built and proportionate. A veritable giant like those in the days of Homer."

A solemn banquet was organized for Don Bosco, and was to be held in the hall of the Catholic Club. Don Bosco went there on the 27th with Father Joseph Ronchail, Father Peter Perrot and Charles Viglietti. There were more then thirty guests present, all distinguished gentlemen, presidents of other similar organizations in Lyons, Marseille, Menton, and Cannes. Since his health and the limited time at his disposal prevented him from accepting any individual invitation, they convinced him to respond to their wishes as a group. There were many very exuberant toasts.[27] Then, he retired to a villa nearby to rest, but it was in vain

[27] Monsieur Beaulieu, president, recalled gratefully the hospitality Don Bosco had granted in his own house to the newborn club (Appendix 68, and Vol. XIII, page 93).

because as soon as people heard where he was, they again almost attacked him without any mercy. Somewhat put out, the secretary pointed out that Don Bosco was in absolute need of rest. The hall emptied when the secretary stood firm, after which the owners of the villa accompanied Fr. Charles Viglietti to another room. But when he was gone, the visitors came back again until it was time for him to go to an academic entertainment organized for him by the club members.

Again he found himself in a crowd of ladies and gentlemen of high society. Orators and poets hailed him as an angel of his century, as a reincarnation of St. Vincent de Paul. Then when the collection had been taken up and refreshments served, Don Bosco blessed the gathering and walked very slowly home on foot. He was so exhausted that he could not take much more.

This was, in a certain way, his farewell to France, for he left for Alassio the afternoon of the 28th. When he arrived at Alassio and was walking toward the school from the station, he saw the building lit up and heard the acclamations of the boys. He presided at the awards ceremony for those pupils who had best distinguished themselves during the term exams. He also assembled the cooperators and wrote a letter to Cardinal Alimonda. Here everything reminded him of the former bishop of Albenga, who moved by the gracious thought, replied immediately, saying how anxious he was to see him again, and embrace him fraternally, while greeting him with "veneration and esteem."[28]

The month of Mary had begun, and several extraordinary graces reported to the boys intensified their devotion to Mary Help of Christians. That first day, a five-year-old boy named Ernest Maria Demaistre of Diano Marina was brought to Don Bosco. Half of his body was paralyzed as a consequence of a brain concussion. The little cripple was healed instantly when blessed by the saint. A little later, his nine-year-old brother, who could not articulate a word, suddenly began to talk as soon as he had received Don Bosco's blessing.

A girl named Airoldi of Alassio, age fifteen, hadn't walked since she was a small child. Her parents came now to implore a special blessing for her, and it was reported that she began walking and was quite well that same day.

[28] Don Bosco took note of three things, as we see in the following note he took: "Ernest Maria Demaistre of Diano Marina; cerebral concussion and paralyzed on one side. Received blessing of Mary Help of Christians and is now perfectly cured. May 1, 1885. Aged 5. Giuseepe Demaistre, brother of the above, could not articulate a word. As above (namely, he was blessed), now he is perfectly cured; he lives at Savona, no pain. Aged 9. Airoldi, girl, American, never walked until age 15. Blessed, etc. Now walks perfectly. Lives in Alassio."

He set out for Varazze the morning of May 2nd. Fortunately, Father Francis Cerruti had gone to the station ahead of him, and the head of the railroad station who had always liked Don Bosco very much, had delayed the departure of the train, seeing that he was somewhat late. It was wonderful to see how he quickened his step with unusual agility as he walked along the road.

Jocularly, he said, "Get going, Viglietti! What are you doing here? Run along! Run and call a coach for me in Piazza della Consolata. There are always a few stationed there."

At the station, he expressed his thanks, took his seat and the train moved on.

He stayed at Varazze no longer than it was necessary to have dinner with a certain degree of comfort, and then went on to Sampierdarena. If we repeat that the next day he was immediately besieged by visitors, we would only be repeating what our readers can easily imagine for themselves. Good Mrs. Ghilini was among them. There was also much correspondence awaiting Don Bosco there. Among other letters, the one already mentioned from Cardinal Alimonda, one from Bishop John Cagliero with the long expected news of the missionaries, and a third from Princess Doria Solms, who insisted in vain that he go to Pegli.[29]

He was able to call on Mrs. Luigia Parodi of Sestri Ponente together with Charles Viglietti. This charitable lady was nearly blind and lived a lonely life in her villa, never receiving any visitors. But she used to say that there were no doorkeepers to bar access to Don Bosco, for whom she had the greatest veneration.

The two Catholic newspapers of Genoa, *Il Cittadino* and *l'Italia,* had carried news of his arrival at Sampierdarena, so there was no end to the visitors who went to see him. Captain Bove, who was a great admirer of the saint, went too. Today, scholars only know this bold explorer, but at that time, there was much talk about him.

Born at Marenzana in the province of Alessandria, he had retired from the Royal Navy, and was the manager of a Genoa shipping company. His initial explorations had begun in 1878 when he had sailed around the Arctic Sea on the ship Vega, together with Nosdenshiold. Later on, he attempted to explore the Antarctic polar regions, but the expedition failed

[29] Appendix, document 70. Cousin of Kaiser Wilheim II, a Catholic, but married to a Protestant who had allowed her to rear her daughters only in her faith, while the boys had to embrace the religion of her father.

for want of money. So instead, he carefully explored the area of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, and then navigated northward up the great Parana River into the heart of the misiones territory. Like Don Bosco, he, too, had planned ideally of establishing an Italian settlement in that infinite expanse, but was unable to raise the necessary funds in Italy.

Meanwhile, the Free Congo State had been formed and the ministry sent Captain Bove there to see if any settlement was possible. But the region of the Lower Congo River looked too barren to him, and he thought it was premature to undertake any such attempt in the Upper Congo. So he returned resolutely to his former plan to form a settlement in Argentina. He met with fierce opposition. The impossibility of overcoming it had him go out of his mind, and in 1887, he committed suicide. This is the only explanation we can find for this final catastrophe, for, apart from the fact that he was a bold man, he was also a man of faith and his faith did not play any small role in his devotion toward Don Bosco.

Two strange things happened while Don Bosco was at San Gaetano. Charles Viglietti reported the first one in his diary. Two ladies accompanied a sick woman to see Don Bosco. After she received his blessing, she exclaimed, "I am cured. I want to go home by myself."

"Oh, we will take you home," the other two ladies assured her, for they could not suspect such an extraordinary recovery.

"No! No I want to go by myself. Mary Help of Christians has cured me."

Several people, among them a friend of the house, Mr. Bellagamba, later reported that they had seen her walk without any difficulty. This drew upon herself the sympathetic attention of everyone who knew her.

Mrs. Anna Chiesa also felt herself inspired to take her fifteen-year-old daughter, whose name was Sabina, to see Don Bosco. The girl had always been sickly after she had pneumonia, and no treatment had succeeded in restoring her health. In fact, there was every reason to fear she was affected by tuberculosis. Don Bosco gave her a kind welcome and said he would order a most effective medicine for her. The mother started wondering what kind of drug this could be, but he only told the girl to say seven *Ave Marias* to Mary Help of Christians every day for the entire month of May. What happened as a result is truly miraculous. The girl regained her health so fully within a short time that thirteen years later, her mother testified that she was still enjoying perfect health after having become a mother in her turn.

The diary also mentions two ladies, Carlotta Odero and Mary

Bellagamba, saying that both of them had been ailing in the past, and had asked Don Bosco to pray for them. They now came to thank him, feeling themselves indebted to him for their recovered good health.

He who had been endowed by God with such infinite powers *gratias curationum* (the gift of healing others) bore the heavy burden of his own increasing infirmities with resignation to God's will. But at the end of his journey, Divine Providence ordained that he should feel less exhausted, so that when he left Sampierdarena and arrived at Valdocco, he would not alarm his sons unduly by making too discomforting an impression on them.

He started out for Turin the evening of May 6th in the company of his old secretary, Father Berto, who had come to meet him, and his new secretary Charles Viglietti. The community of the Oratory was in church for Benediction when he arrived, so he went to impart the benediction himself. Then, the diary tells us:

> All the boys gave him a festive welcome, shouting their hurrahs for their father, who had returned among them, as he crossed the playground which was handsomely illuminated, and decorated with suitable inscriptions. Affection conferred significance even to accidental things. Thus does yet another account inform us that an hour prior to Don Bosco's arrival, while festoons were being draped here and there around the playground, a nightingale perched on a tree top, filled the air with its joyous trills and all those who heard its song, looked on it as a herald and as a interpreter of the forthcoming joyous event.[30]

[30] A poet for the occasion dedicated these two stanzas to the songbird in his hymn: "Don Bosco has come home!"

In the eve time in rare enchantment
A nightingale 'twixt the boughs,
Seemed to herald the last of our tears,
So frequent 'midst these sons of Adam;
In accents sweet it seemed to tell us:
Your Father is here, be merry!
Listening to his harmonious song,
'Twixt wonder and delight, we said:
What can this thing be?
Tears hovered on our lashes
For we heard, we saw
The solitary, plumed envoy.

Bishop John Cagliero wrote a letter on May 5th in Buenos Aires to Father Joseph Lazzero, which at that time had not yet reached Valdocco:

> Our beloved Don Bosco must certainly have returned from France, laden with rich and holy spoils, but wounded in his health, exhausted by his labors like the great soldiers of Jesus Christ. Ah, may Our Lord and Mary Help of Christians, our good mother, keep him for us *ad multos.* Yes, *ad multos annos.* In our love for him, we will not allow to be outdone by others. The heart can say far more than the pen. We challenge you to love him more than we do.

This contest in filial love, which lost nothing of its ingenious fervor in his sons as the years went by and their responsibilities grew, survived after the death of their father in the hearts of the boys he had nourished with his own bread and fortified with his own faith.

Chapter 17

IN THE ORATORY, BY THE ORATORY AND FOR THE ORATORY – A SOJOURN AT MATHI

It was certainly painful for the older members of the Oratory to see Don Bosco moving around so weak that he would have fallen without some kind of support. The evening of December 31st, Don Bosco became very weary as he was giving his New Year's *strenna* for 1885 to the Oratory boys who were assembled in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. From time to time, he was unable to finish the sentence he had begun. At the end, when he called on them all to say a *Pater*, an *Ave*, and a *Gloria*, he was only able to say one *Ave Maria*.

He was so weak that he needed the assistance of strong arms for his every movement. He did not like to trouble his sons in this way, nor was their zeal in helping him always devoid of drawbacks. Sometimes, even though they wished to help him, they were inexperienced and caused him more trouble and embarrassment than he would have experienced on his own. For example, those who helped him walk should have held their arms high so that he could grasp their hand with both his, and thus stand upright with sufficient resistance to enable him to lean quite confidently on them. But those who were less experienced only pulled him along, hurting him instead of helping. When someone noticed that they had hurt him, they anxiously would ask for his pardon, and he would answer, "Oh! Do not worry. The biggest hunk of all always sits tight!"

Another time when he had a painful boil under his right arm pit that had already begun to wane, a Salesian who was trying to help him walk downstairs clumsily put his hand on the boil, breaking it open and causing him acute pain. A little while after that, the same thing occurred again. On both occasions he said with a smile, "It is my fault. I should not have allowed this boil to come up as a penance for my sins."

In this state, he was in constant need of help from others, but behaved like a true son of obedience. Someone would ask him at the table, "Do you want some of this, Don Bosco? Or some of that?"

"Give me whatever you think," he answered. "My teeth are strong

enough. I can eat everything."

"Shall we go here or there, Don Bosco?" they would ask when accompanying him on a walk.

"I will go wherever you lead me," was his unvarying answer.

"It is not nice here. Would it be better if we were to go there instead?" someone would say in reference to a given spot.

"Then let us go there," he said at once, retracing his steps.

He had a heavy heart when looking back over the years behind him, and he was thinking of the immense amount of work he had once been able to get done, while now he had neither the strength nor the eyesight to accomplish one-twentieth of it. "On certain days I used to write more than a hundred letters," he said now and then with a tinge of melancholy. Indeed, his correspondence had been truly phenomenal. One of the reasons for this was that this was the means by which he had raised money for his houses, and that was why he never forgot the name days or other anniversaries dear to his benefactors. But at that time Divine Providence assisted him in making up for his former diligence. For example, in barely twenty days (from May 7th to 27th), he received the sum of seventy thousand lire in alms[1] by mail, all of it unforeseen and unforeseeable.

But his mental alertness did not wane, although this, too, tired him on account of his years. "The good Don Bosco is truly growing old," one Tuscan weekly[2] wrote, "but his mind is still clear, and he talks with such warm joviality that it reminds one of his counterpart, St. Philip Neri." Yet his brand of joviality was not altogether similar to that of the Apostle of Rome. One day during a familiar talk, he happened to say that ever since he had been a boy, his temperament and character had been somewhat serious, and that he had never laughed heartily whenever he did or said humorous things.[3]

Finding himself obliged to sit alone and idle, he gave thought to his plans, examining them from all sides. He did not restrict such a planning to things of imminent execution, but moved on with his thought toward quite remote possibilities. Thus he planned out how to celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of the consecration of the Church of Mary Help of Christians, and discussed it several times with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, even though in 1885 this anniversary still lay four years away.

[1] Viglietti's diary (May 27, 1885).

[2] *L'Amico del Popolo* (Prato, July 4, 1885).

[3] Viglietti's diary (June 25, 1885). People who see his picture as a young priest now in exhibit in his room are impressed by the gravity of his expression.

He wanted it to be celebrated with the utmost solemnity and with an exceptionally large crowd of devotees. He even planned to obtain discounted railway tickets to encourage the faithful to undertake the pilgrimage. He had already tried once before to obtain a special discount for the pupils from his other schools for the 7th anniversary.[4] His application was not successful, but the failure had dismayed him so little that he was planning this renewed application on a much bigger scale.

It is obvious that his mental activity centered on the organization and affairs of the Congregation. One day, for example, as he was talking with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Charles Viglietti,[5] he explained, "When the boys ask for advice about their vocations, we should follow these rules in giving our answer: (1) Never advise them to become Salesians if they are found lacking as far as chastity; (2) If they have been guilty of moral misdemeanor with others and wish to enter the seminary, you should only issue their school diplomas or transcripts for them. If when they return to their homes, they write to ask for a certificate about their morals, do not answer; (3) Be careful about advising them to become Salesians, on account of the continual opposition on the part of bishops, pastors and relatives. They will only say at once: 'It was Don Bosco who put this idea into your head.' When a boy asks, have him give the answer himself. It is the easiest way because any investigation of vocations entails objections, retorts, and queries, with the result that the boy is put on the alert and feels ready to withstand you, especially if the parents want him to stay with them. Just ask him quite simply, 'Tell me, were you a better boy at home or are you better here?' If he replies that he was a better boy at home, ask him why. He will reply because here I found friends, had books, etc. Then tell him that if he wishes to enter the seminary, he should go back home and ask the advice of some wise person. But if he answers, as they generally do, that he is a better boy here, then you can say, 'Well, do you feel you can continue to be as good outside in the world as you are here? You decide what is best for you. I will not say anything more. Where did you find what was beneficial to your soul?' Thus, it will be the boy himself who supplies the answer and when he goes back home, he can tell his parents, 'It was not Don Bosco who suggested I become a Salesian, but it is I myself who wanted it.'"

[4] The original of this application, hitherto unpublished, is not dated, but Father Berto copied it among similar documents pertaining to the period following 1875. Prior to 1876. The boys already benefited by 50% discount; he was asking 75%. (Appendix, doc. 71.)

[5] Diary (May 27, 1885).

Some people would ask him when they saw him absorbed in all these different thoughts, "You have too much going on in your mind, Don Bosco! How can you possibly think of everything? You must necessarily forget certain minor details." He would humbly answer, "I do not forget only the minor details. I am afraid of forgetting the most important thing of all, the only thing that is essential - the salvation of my soul!" This was a two-sided lesson for those who thus questioned him.

After his return home from France, he was no longer able to go down to the Church of Mary Help of Christians to say Mass, but the morning of May 24th, he did not want to celebrate on the altar he kept locked away in a closet in his room. That year, May 24th coincided with the Feast of Pentecost, so the Feast of Our Lady was postponed until June 2nd. The saint then reappeared at the usual altar of St. Peter's and a crowd of the faithful soon gathered.

Many people turned to Don Bosco, both in Italy and abroad, for comfort in their sorrows, advice in their doubts, and the support of his prayers in their sickness. That year the superior of a religious community in Caen recommended to him a poor young lady who for some years had been troubled by serious spiritual trials. "I have been a priest now for almost forty years," he wrote, "yet I never met any person so painfully subjected to spiritual hardships, and still so submissive to God's Will for the sake of His Glory and the salvation of her own soul. Throughout her lifetime, she has been so steadfast in her faith that I do not believe she has ever lost her baptismal innocence.[6] It appeared that the evil one tormented her, especially in preventing her from attending religious functions or engaging in pious practices. The evil one would cause her to break out into blasphemous speech against Our Lord when she was thus engaged. The morning of June 4th she attended Don Bosco's Mass, feeling herself free and healthy already during the *Introit*. She received Communion and remained for a long time praying before the little altar of Our Lady in a small room adjoining the chapel, while the other ladies who had come with her from France were waiting to confer with the saint. She prayed very devoutly, one might almost say, with the avid pleasure of someone who tastes a long coveted joy and nothing around her seemed to distract her. Ever since that time she felt extremely well."[7]

[6] A letter was written to Don Bosco about the same young lady by the pastor of St. Gilles (Appendix, document 72 A-B).

[7] The French Bulletin in July also spoke of this in its first article. It seems that the name of the young lady thus touched by the grace was St. Leger.

No one had expected Don Bosco to speak at the conference of the cooperators, so the large congregation was pleasantly surprised when he appeared in the pulpit. His invitation circular letter contained the following:

> We have two special reasons this year for holding this meeting and for celebrating the feast of Mary Help of Christians tomorrow with great devout delight and these reasons are: to give grateful thanks to the august Queen of Heaven for having saved us from the cholera epidemic during the past year, and our need of her protection against it likewise during the current year, should the Divine Will allow the fearful epidemic to reappear in our country again.

This meeting was the only one held that year, and it was held on the eve of Our Lady's feast day in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. The saint's sermon has been handed down to us as follows:

"I am not here before you, my dear and honorable Cooperators, to give you a long talk, for my frail strength would not permit it, but merely to report on a few things which I think you ought to know. First of all, what does the word Salesian Cooperator mean? To be a Salesian Cooperator means to cooperate with other people in the support of a work founded under the auspices of St. Francis of Sales with a purpose of assisting the Holy Church in her most immediate needs. By so doing, one helps to promote an undertaking warmly recommended by the Holy Father, since it will educate the boys in virtue and guide them toward the sanctuary. Its main purpose is to educate the young who are today the target of evil people, and to promote the love of our religion in the midst of the world, in schools, hospices, festive oratories, and the family circle, and to promote also morals, prayer, approach to the sacraments and so on.

"You will ask me many things. You will, for example, want to know whether the works in which you participate with your charitable donations are growing or declining. Let us rejoice in Our Lord, worthy Cooperators, for our undertakings assume greater proportions every day. Every day our houses, churches and the number of the boys to whom we give shelter increase in number. On all sides we are called on to found new houses, in order that we may give shelter to boys now abandoned in the streets and exposed to the anger of losing both their faith and their virtue on the road of dishonor and imprisonment. Let us first of all give thanks to God for this heartening growth and progress in our pious works, and then we must

give thanks to you, charitable ladies and gentlemen. Yes, the physical and spiritual health of many boys and girls depend on you. Their temporal and eternal fate lies in your hands.

"Our Congregation is growing in a gigantic measure in Patagonia, where Bishop John Cagliero recently went. There is work everywhere. There are schools, churches, hospices, and after all the things that we have done, accomplished and provided for, we find ourselves back at the beginning, for the tasks in front of us and the requests increase every day in volume. Let it be enough for me to say that if we had 2,000 missionaries available, we could give all of them an assignment. If we had 2,000 churches, we could fill them all with faithful congregations, thus increasing the number of the chosen ones. In the midst of such an immense harvest, Bishop John Cagliero writes us, 'Oh! You, who are living in the very heart of Catholicism, come here and you will see Europeans! Here you will see an infinite multitude of people following you, begging for your charity. Not charity in the form of money or bread, but spiritual charity, such as instruction, religion, civilization, the salvation of their souls.'

"In what tasks are you invited particularly to participate in order to be good Cooperators? Many are the houses which should be opened, but which despite our good will we are unable to open now due to lack of funds. At the present time, the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome and the hospice which is to stand alongside of it, having a capacity such as to accommodate several hundreds of poor boys of that city, are absorbing a major part of our resources. This enterprise needs your charity, wonderful Cooperators, and the Holy Father Leo XIII recommends it to you warmly through me, his spokesman. Apart from this, we have many houses in Liguria, the Venetian provinces, Romagna, Sicily and here in our territory. All these houses need to expand with extra buildings. What should I tell you about our houses in France, Spain, and America? They send us heartening news from those countries. Among other things, in Brazil a new house will now be opened in the city of Sao Paulo, offering a home to an infinite number of poor, abandoned boys. All of these schools, whether near or far, call for the support of your charity for their upkeep.

"Another institute now claiming our attention is the house of Paris. Many are the boys who now roam the streets of that immense French capital which numbers almost three million inhabitants, and they are all in danger of getting lost. Therefore an immense field is open to us for the exercise of charity. With the help of God, that house will save thousands

of boys from damnation, and will help dry the tears of many parents who now no longer know where to turn to as they try to guide their children back to the path of virtue from that which leads to vice.

"In all our houses there has been an extraordinary enrollment increase this year in our schools. In one house alone, do you know how many we have received after they had all been added up? As many as 5,000 and to our immense regret, we were forced to reply to them all that there is no more room available. Oh! How much more we could accomplish if we could but found new houses, if we had the money with which we could provide food and clothing for so many destitute boys! How many more good sons, Christians, honest family men, and better citizens could we not educate for the benefit of their families, the church and society?

"I realize that I can no longer talk with you at great length, and will therefore stop, and conclude. Rest assured, the harvest is immense, and your action, your charity, your donations are not only useful, but also essential. Therefore, help us according to your means. Apart from your reward in Heaven, you will also have the joy of cooperating here on earth for the benefit of religion, the family and society. Thanks to you, many boys and many girls will be able to praise God and thank God now instead of cursing Him here on earth and hating Him in the company of the devils for all Eternity. Nowadays bad people are trying to disseminate godlessness and immorality everywhere, and are trying to corrupt imprudent youth in particular with their associations, publications, assemblies which aim more or less blatantly at turning them away from their faith, from the church, from healthy morals. Now Salesian Cooperators, ladies and gentlemen, try to fight back against this campaign! Now how can this be done? By upholding good principle, by spreading Catholic books, publications, associations, catechism and so on.

"There is yet one more thing I wish to recommend. Pray for each other. For my part, I shall remember you all every day during my Holy Mass, and our boys will also pray for you. Give them a little material support and help them live, and they in return will give you the spiritual support of their prayers. Perhaps you are unable to pray much. Well, the boys, the Salesians, and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians will pray for you and obtain from Heaven for you the graces of which you are most in need. Besides, every year many of our Cooperators are summoned to eternity. We join you in praying for the repose of their souls. Perhaps one day we shall need others to do for us what we are ourselves doing now.

"Finally, kind Cooperators, let us strive to do all the good we can for

ourselves and for others, so that Mary Help of Christians may delight in seeing many souls fly toward Heaven thanks to our efforts. Oh! When you will be in Heaven, how enthusiastically each of you will say, 'Blessed be the day I joined the Cooperators of St. Francis of Sales, for every act of charity I performed on behalf of this Salesian work will form so to speak a link in a chain of graces, thanks to which I was able to attain this place of joy and ecstasy.'"

When Don Bosco returned to the sacristy after the meeting, he found many people waiting for his blessing, but in their midst he noticed a woman and a boy with his eyes bandaged. He asked them to step forward and tell him what ailed the boy. They were mother and son and had come from Poirino.

The child, John Penasio, was eight years old and for twenty months had suffered from such an intense eye-sickness that he was obliged to be constantly in the dark. Two eminent specialists, doctors Sperino and Peschel, who had been consulted several times before, had examined him that same day. They had both concluded that there was nothing else to do but to remove the left eyeball in order to save the right. The poor, distraught mother brought the boy to Don Bosco so that he might bless him. The saint blessed the boy and accepted her offering for a Mass, promising to pray for him.

When he returned home, the child began to feel better that same evening. The next day when he opened his eyes and saw the sunlight, he shouted, overjoyed to tell his mother that he was perfectly cured. The relatives showed up, followed by the neighbors, and everyone saw for himself that he truly had recovered his eyesight. Instantly, the whole village where his condition had been public knowledge confirmed the reality of the miracle with general wonderment. Ever since that time, the boy had excellent eyesight, and even found employment in the printing establishment of the Canonico brothers in Turin.

Although the joyous solemnity of Mary Help of Christians was celebrated later on a weekday, it surpassed previous years as far as the participation of people. Don Bosco had urged everyone to do everything possible to ensure that the celebration be a splendid one.[8] In a long article on June 4th, *l'Unita Cattolica* had printed the following remarks:

> Although ailing in health, the Reverend Don Bosco wished to come down from his room to celebrate mass at the altar of Our

[8] Letter from Father Joseph Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, May 26, 1885).

> Lady. The good Salesians wanted to save their father such an inconvenience, but Don Bosco, who loves Mary Help of Christians so dearly and looks to her protection for everything, wished to be there also to celebrate her feast. His presence enhanced the festivities. The people of Turin thronged and jammed the corridors to kiss his hand. It was a most moving sight.

Cardinal Alimonda, Bishops Pampirio from Alba and Valfre from Cuneo, some members of the nobility from France, and a number of Turin priests joined Don Bosco at a dinner prepared in the big hall of the library. At the end of the repast, His Eminence addressed a few, moving words to the Servant of God. The above mentioned newspaper wrote, "There were toasts, poems were read out, and all in all, it was a day of happiness and rejoicing for everybody, but most particularly for the very venerable Don Bosco, who needed consolations of this kind."

It was by no means a minor concern of his to preside at the Chapter meetings, in which he played an active role as we have already seen and will see later on. During the meeting of June 5th, he surprised everyone when he produced a memorandum he had written, dealing with six things that were to be done for the future celebration of the Feast of Mary Help of Christians, and had someone else read it out: (1) No draperies save those that are proper to the church; (2) See to it that the number of outside musicians be kept down to whatever was strictly necessary, hence simple Gregorian chanting with organ accompaniment;[9] (3) Respect scrupulously what had been deliberated by the Chapter in reference to food; (4) The office items on sale should be sold in the respective workshops, but not at the so-called booths where there are generally complaints about confusion and not infrequently disorder;[10] (5) If there are to be any booths set up, they should be entrusted to someone whose honesty and loyalty is known to us. As a rule, we never come to know how much was stolen on these feast days; (6) Strictest vigilance to make sure that the boarders do not have any opportunity of mingling freely with the day students.

The Chapter members felt that the first item on the list, which concerned draperies, would be difficult to observe, but Don Bosco said decisively, "We shall do whatever is best, but such is my opinion."

[9] He meant to eliminate brass and strings instruments, which were used everywhere in those days, on more solemn occasions.

[10] There was a big book fair and sale of religious articles, as well as articles for school use, especially in view of the boys, who bought them with vouchers.

The boys never ceased being the main object of Don Bosco's fatherly interest, although they only saw him rarely and even then fleetingly. One day he had it announced that he knew in what state their respective consciences were, saying that if anyone who wished to find that out should go to talk with him, either in or out of confession. He also said that in particular he would speak to them about their future. The boys of the upper classes were the first to impatiently lay siege to him. Some of them were amazed and later on revealed and even shared what he had told them, or at least, mentioned to each how minutely he had described their individual spiritual state of conscience. During the last days of his life, Father Paul Ubaldi still mentioned the event to us all with feeling. At the end of the talk, the saint had told him, "Beware of the serpent trying to catch you with its coils." Naïve as he was, he casually repeated this to another boy who turned pale. "Ah! I am the serpent," he exclaimed. "You did not notice it, but that's the way it is." From some veiled indication it seems that at the time, Don Bosco also told Father Paul Ubaldi that by becoming a Salesian he would have provided much honor for the Congregation.[11]

Two fifth grade high school students, Maffei and Manelli were both good friends from Lambardy, and they went together to ask for Don Bosco's advice on their vocation. Maffei would have liked to go to college and the university and to enter into some civil career. Manelli instead wanted to become a Salesian or at least a secular priest. After thinking for a moment, Don Bosco told Maffei, "You will become a good pastor, Maffei." Then to Manelli, he said, "You will neither become a Salesian nor a priest, Manelli. You will attend public schools and let us hope you will keep on being good and make a name for yourself."

Both of them came away dissatisfied, determined to do as they wished. Maffei enrolled in the Alassio's school, but was sent home towards the end of the year, possibly because of his health. He then entered the seminary and became a priest. Just the opposite happened to Manelli who entered the seminary, but he soon tired of that life. He then enrolled in the royal classic college of his hometown, and died as a university student after a somewhat dissolute life.

Here is still another incident of the same nature that aroused no less surprise. Young Stephen Gigliotto of Varazze was a cousin of Salesian priest Father Francesco and a day student attending our school there, and

[11] But he said this vaguely. The second time, when Ubaldi was already a cleric, Don Bosco broke off his talk abruptly and stared at him so hard that the youth was disconcerted. "Who do you think you are?" he asked him severely. Perhaps he wanted to stifle the possible dawn of vanity in him.

he decided that he wanted to be a Salesian as well. The house catechist, Father Joseph Descalzi, had carefully fostered his vocation. He had already obtained the consent of his parents, and he had even gotten his wardrobe together.

"Here is a cousin of mine, Don Bosco, who wishes to become a Salesian," Father Francesco said.

Without putting any of his usual questions to the boy, Don Bosco instead turned to Father Francesco and said, "Good. Give him a copy of the book *A Companion to Youth*." He did not say anything else and dismissed them.

This dry rejoinder astonished the priest, who instantly drew the following conclusion that his cousin would not become a Salesian. In fact, Stephen remained steadfast in his intention until it was almost time for him to go to Turin. He suddenly regretted the step he was about to take and no longer wanted any part of it, although Father Joseph Descalzi tried to encourage him. Instead he entered the seminary of the diocese, but left it again barely two months later and eventually got married.

The student John Masera, one of the first boys in his class, who usually distinguished himself in his public essays, also went to consult Don Bosco on his vocation. Half serious, half laughing, the saint told him, "I do not want you!"

The young man got his degree in Letters and taught in state schools, always mindful of the loving and grateful memory of the man who guided his first steps along the path of learning and honor.[12]

Undoubtedly, Don Bosco often received higher inspiration in discerning vocations. The evening of October 31, 1885, he told Father John Baptist Lemoyne that at times when he was in church, he saw something that looked like a candle move away from the altar and circle round the church until it came to hover over the head of some boy or other. This in his eyes was a manifest sign of a vocation.

There was always more or less a lively and curious desire at the Oratory to find out what Don Bosco might see in someone's conscience, and even the cleric Viglietti had his share. Since he enjoyed an intimate association with the servant of God, he would at times lead the conversation around this topic. Thus one day he asked him about the dream of the pitchforks, in which it had been given to him to read into the conscience of many people. The saint replied by telling him a story that happened around that time. A boy had gone to see him to make some kind of man-

[12] Since he wrote rapidly, Father Rua called on him with some others, to take notes of Don Bosco's speeches in public.

ifestation, but he had kept silent about the most important things that caused him the most shame. "But do you not realize that you are concealing this and this?" Don Bosco said.

"Ah! You've been talking with my confessor!" the boy cried angrily. "It cannot be otherwise."

"Of course not! Don't you know that I am able to read your conscience like a book?"

"No, no. You came to know these things from my confessor."

"Poor child! It is obvious that you do not know Don Bosco."

But there was no way to make him change his opinion. He left Don Bosco angry and greatly confused. The next day, a Sunday, he came back again fully repentant and remorseful to ask for Don Bosco's pardon, acknowledging that the grace of his conversion stemmed from God and from Don Bosco.[13]

At Carignano they still recall an extraordinary event that occurred precisely on June 2nd, the day on which the feast of Mary Help of Christians was celebrated. A cleric novice from Carignano, Louis Nicola, who had fallen seriously sick at San Benigno had gone back home at the insistence of his relatives. His condition grew steadily worse. When Father Michael Angelo Chiatellino, who was a close friend of Don Bosco at Carignano, went to Turin for the feast day of Mary Help of Christians. He met the saint and recommended the sick young man to his prayers. Smiling, Don Bosco answered, "Reassure the family that the cleric Nicola no longer has any need of our prayers. In fact he is already praying for us. By now he is in Heaven and he came to say goodbye to me at the Consecration time." Taking out his watch, Father Michaelangelo Chiatellino checked the time, made his calculations and learned that that evening back at Carignano, the cleric had died while Don Bosco was saying Mass.

We feel that we should not omit the testimony we have of another miraculous event that occurred around the same time that was reported by a person highly respected by Don Bosco for his piety and charity who saw and heard it all. In the area of La Reole, the main town in the area of La Gironde, a nun lived who suffered the sorrows of the passion of Our Lord every Friday. Despite their incredulity, Mademoiselle Lallemand and her mother allowed someone to take them to see her.

They found themselves among priests and laymen, a number of them putting on the bed of the nun in ecstasy little notes asking for graces.

[13] Diary (November 13, 1885).

They did the same as the other people and asked for the spiritual and temporal graces needed by Don Bosco. The ecstatic nun was comforted by a visit from the Blessed Virgin Mary after the agony of the Passion. Kneeling down, she rummaged through a heap of papers, and at last she came upon the one referring to Don Bosco, whereupon she began to give praise to God for his apostolic zeal and the multitude of souls he had wrested from Satan's clutches with his burning charity. The nun said, "Oh! How necessary it would be to have ministers of Jesus Christ who resemble Don Bosco! He never stops imploring you, O Mary, to be able to serve you until his dying breath, despite all the trials to which he is subjected and his infirmities." Then, bending over the petition, she went on. "As for myself, this ardent servant of Mary will never abandon my spirit nor my heart until my last breath."

As her ecstasy came to an end, the cooperator approached her and she heard a word from her that gave her great comfort. Her father had died recently without being able to receive the Sacraments, so both she and her mother were in great anxiety as far as his eternal salvation. Now the visionary nun told her that her father only waited for a few Masses and a few prayers more before going to Paradise. He had been saved because his daughter had prayed fervently for him and had performed many acts of charity at the time of his death. More or less, she told her the same things as Don Bosco had told her.[14]

The evening of June 9th, a quite unexpected visitor arrived from France. An imposing bearded cardinal appeared at the entrance door of the Oratory, accompanied by only one attendant. He anxiously asked the doorkeeper whether Don Bosco were at home. When he was told that he was, he exclaimed, "Oh! I am glad! I was really afraid I might not find him here." It was Cardinal Lavigerie, the archbishop of Carthage.[15] He talked with Don Bosco for about an hour, and renewed his plea already formulated in Paris that he would send a few of his sons to take care of the Italian immigrants living in Africa. After inspecting the classrooms and workshops, he entered the church of St. Francis and talked with the trade students there, urging them to behave always like honest and generous Christians in every circumstance in which they might find themselves. When he saw the picture of Bishop John Cagliero, he asked who the bishop might be. He was told everything and they also reminded him

[14] See above, page 394. The facts related above were told in a report by Mlle. E. Lallemand of Montauban (June 7, 1885).

[15] See Vol. XVI, page 252.

about the year 1871 when he had visited the Oratory and a hymn in honor of Pius IX had been sung in his presence. "Ah! Is he the composer of that hymn?" he asked, " I remember it very well." In fact, he even recited the opening verses and hummed the theme *To Rome, Ye Faithful*[16] He went to Rome when he left the Oratory.

Three days later another distinguished prelate called on Don Bosco. This was Bishop John Marango, the archbishop of Athens and apostolic delegate to Greece for Catholics of the Oriental rite. He, too, conferred with Don Bosco at length.

When the festivities in honor of the Heavenly Mother were over, the hearts were hastening the forthcoming feast of Don Bosco's name-day their beloved earthly father. It was by that time traditional that Father Michael Rua inform the Turin cooperators about the event when he announced the imminent festivities in honor of St. Aloysius. The invitation format was more or less the same:

> While sending you the sacred invitation for the feast day of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, the undersigned ventures to bring likewise to your attention that on the 24th of this same month, which is the feast day of St. John the Baptist, our most beloved rector and father Don Bosco will celebrate his name-day. This festivity will be solemnly commemorated by his sons with song, music and literary compositions. In order to enhance the joy of this occasion, you are respectfully invited to be so kind as to honor our entertainment with your presence. The festivities will be held the 23rd of June at 8:00 p.m. circa and on the actual feast-day June 24th at 7:30 p.m. circa.

The wording of the announcement, subordinate to a "sacred invitation," is noteworthy for its modesty.

Even to people who had taken part in these festivities for years, the occasion always brought cause for fresh delight. "This feast has something about it which is both magnificent and poetic," a previously mentioned publication said.[17] "We need not say that there will be music and of the finest kind. But what stands out and reigns supreme is cordiality. Right from the eve, the Oratory boys prepare their gifts for their beloved father."

[16] See Vol. XVI, page 252.
[17] *L'Amico del Popolo* (July 4).

Among all the presents given to him, one pleased him the most, namely a portrait painted by Rollini on canvas depicting Mamma Margaret. It can still be admired in the saint's small rooms. When Don Bosco looked at it closely, he exclaimed, "This is truly her! The only thing missing is her spoken word!"[18] About the presence of cordiality we have already spoken early on, but it especially transpired from the warm letters written by the oratory boys.[19] This time we will make a bouquet-like anthology by relying on a group of letters written on this occasion in 1885 by his sons in America. These are all documents that will help show to posterity that Don Bosco truly was a "conqueror of hearts."[20]

The vicar apostolic, because he had become a bishop, did not stop considering himself as a good son to Don Bosco. He wrote:

> On the occasion of your name-day, your sons are competing, trying to surpass one another with saintly expressions of filial affection, praise, blessings, promises and acclamations long live a hundred years and again a hundred years more for the one who is their superior, benefactor and father! An enviable competition, a noble contest and a legitimate jubilation of the children, the confreres and all members of the Salesian family! For your firstborn son and for all your children in America (Oh, how far away!) there remains on this day of general, holy rejoicing only the sweet memory of the past which we would like to turn into a most ten-

18 Letter from Father Joseph Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, July 3, 1885).

19 Letter from Father Joseph Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, July 3, 1885).

20 With the letters forming the words *Viva Don Bosco Giovanni* (Long live Don John Bosco), the initials of two anagrams were constructed, one in Latin, the other in Italian:

Vale	Vivi	Live
Iterumque	In etreno	In eternity
Vale	Vivi	Live
Auguste Pater	August	August
Dulcissime	Dolcissimo	Most Sweet
Optime	Ottimo	Excellent
Noster	Nostro Padre	Father of ours
Benevolentiam	Benedizioni	Blessings
Ostendis	Ovunque	Everywhere
Singulis	Spandi	Spread
Caritatemque	Comfortando	Comforting
Omnibus	Ogundo	Everyone
Gaudio	Gradisci	Pray accept
Iuvenes	Intimi	Intimate
Omniumque	Onomastici	Name-Day
Voce	Voti	Wishes

> der present, to demonstrate to you that in our hearts we stiil have courage and feelings much like anyone else! Even though far away, we still have among us, within us, engraved in our hearts the words DON BOSCO – ORATORY - VALDOCCO and MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS capable of spurring us on more than any prose, poetry and music, and of satisfying the desires of our hearts. Let our European brothers, the Benjamins of Turin, enjoy the lovely festivities. Let them rejoice and exalt, but they will never surpass us in love, gratitude or sacrifice for Him who was given to us by God to be our guide, our teacher, our shepherd and our father. Bless your sons in America and your firstborn.[21]

The bishop's secretary joined all of Don Bosco's other sons, voicing with jubilation and gladness of heart on behalf of the confreres working in Patagonia. Of the two houses of Buenos Aires, the most fervent good wishes that the merciful God might keep his precious life in peace and happiness for many a year. "May Heaven so ordain," he exclaimed, "that our dearest Don Bosco continue to direct, rule and support all his many sons for many and many a year to come!"

After a brief reference to his forced stay in Buenos Aires and a word about his troubles, he said to have found most comfort, after God from recollecting Don Bosco's own troubles while founding the Oratory and the Salesian Congregation. The untiring Father Dominic Milanesio conveyed to him his own good wishes, adding, "I would like to give you a present on this occasion, but do not know what to choose. If you wish, I might remind you about the three thousand Indians that were baptized by your sons during the course of several years in Patagonia and among them several hundreds of children who have already entered the glory of Heaven. For your loving heart this will represent a cause for joy, at your advanced age, to know that the good Lord has already begun to reward your sacrifices through the Patagonian Missions."

Father Evasius Rabagliati wrote his "most venerated and beloved Father" from the St. Nicholas School:

> We never stop praying for you here, begging Our Lord to keep you here for many a year to come for our sakes, and for the welfare of our Mother, the Congregation, of the souls and of the

[21] (Buenos Aires, May 23, 1885). On top of the letter: *Viva San Giovanni* (Long live St. John).

entire church. But on the occasion of your name-day, during this month of June, we will endeavor to increase our prayers both in quality and fervor. It is so sweet, so rewarding to pray for our father, who loves us so dearly, and to whom we owe so much! Pray also for us, beloved Don Bosco, for we are the ones who need prayers. Far away from the Oratory without your advice, without your blessing, it is easy to lose our Salesian fervor here.

The jubilant last words of the Provincial, Father James Costamagna, came to Don Bosco from Argentina with his warm wishes and welcome news:

Dearest and Most Venerated Father:

It is impossible to express our jubilation, but at this moment gathered together around Bishop Cagliero we can shout from far away but certainly with all our hearts. We can shout from afar, certainly, "Long live our most beloved Father! Ah! May Our Lord keep you with us way beyond your fiftieth anniversary!" We have just finished printing the life of Michael Magone in Spanish and everybody, especially the boys, are reading it so avidly that there are not enough copies for everyone. Oh! How much good is this biography doing. Blessed be the hand that wrote it! Father, pray for us to Our Lord that all of us may imitate Magone in his conversion and undaunted constancy unto death. May St. John grant you a crown of millions and millions of other sons, oh, most beloved of all fathers!

The signatures of other Salesians followed that of Father Provincial.

The madness of religious persecution had seized the government in Uruguay; therefore Provincial Father Louis Lasagna was putting up an energetic struggle to protect his property and personnel. He wrote:

There is no doubt that we have been chosen as a target very particularly because of our rapid development. Colon, Paysandu and Las Piedras represent a painful thorn bush in the eyes of certain people. Meanwhile, our good wishes for your name-day this year are being sent to you in a moment of great anxiety, but nevertheless they are always sincere and fervent wishes. Oh! How much we would appreciate a word from Don Bosco just now! Ah! Please pray for us!

Three other letters from Salesian priests came from Uruguay. Father Louis Calcagno of Villa Colon had hoped to be able to celebrate Don Bosco's name-day at the Oratory that year, but he had been making plans without checking the situation. "But I am happy just the same," he declared, "yet I would be very upset were we never to meet each other again here on earth." He did see Don Bosco again in 1887.

The other two letters came from Paysandu. The one from the director Father John Allavena began this way:

> After working for five years in this city, your sons are not alone to present their good wishes for your name-day, and send to you their filial greetings from the banks of the Uruguay. Mainly because a chorus of children's voices, expressing their sincerest affection, joins our own to wish you a happy name-day and to bless the Lord, and begs Him to keep you for many more years. These are the new little children gathered under the mantle of the Most Holy Mary Help of Christians, who recognize in you the ambassador of the Heavenly Queen, who teaches them to love her and be good.

Father John Baptist Rossetti recalled Don Bosco's frequent exhortations addressed to his sons that they assist him in saving their souls, and then placed at the feet of the Virgin on that joyful occasion the twofold vows: "To follow his holy desires and fatherly cares, and to see his precious life prolonged for many a year by the grace of God."

Six clerics from various localities voiced their tender affection openheartedly. Cavaglia wrote:

> I always keep remembering you in my mind and heart. Several times I was saved from committing a sin by only thinking of you. In certain moments of temptation, anguish and sadness, the thought of you inspired me to fight, to work, and it actually restored the happiness I had lost. I would so like to have a letter from you, only a few words, one single phrase, as a souvenir.

Giovannini wrote:

> I wish I were a learned individual, a poet, dearest Father, so that I might write you many things. But on this happy day, I do at least wish to offer you a gift, a holy, fervent Communion, pray-

ing that Our Lord allow me to write to you again and again on this happy occasion, dear both to you and your sons. Bless this son of yours, dearest Father so that he may become always better in his zeal and in his imitation of your virtues.

Grando wrote:

Before anything else, I must give thanks to Our Dear Lord and to you for having assigned me to this place. I prayed to God for two consecutive years that I might come here. It is unfortunately true that owing to my poor health and scarce talents, I cannot do anything but the congregation will always have jobs suitable to my condition. I am glad to do everything possible to carry on the assignment of general assistant. Nor shall I ever forget your saintly advice in moments when the observance of virtue may require a greater effort. I can tell you, dear Father, that with the help of God, I shall not want for good will.

Milanese, still a cleric at that time but later coadjutor and meteorologist, wrote:

For me, Don Bosco is all I have and I would have none other than him. I think of him always and talk about him continually with others. Every possible exaggeration seems inadequate in my eyes. I have consecrated all my labors, efforts and tribulations to God. Nevertheless, my weak nature at all moments is trying to overcome me. But as I quickly turn my thoughts to the model I have chosen for myself; to my father Don Bosco, every effort seems light to me, and all the troubles become a reward for my sacrifices here .... Perhaps, dear Father, these words will strike you as slightly exaggerated but this is not true. I felt I needed to get them out of my chest and I chose to do it at a time when everyone is recalling what you did and the love you have shown your sons. Today, were I to know that among all your sons there is one who loved you more than I do, I would feel sad, for I love you immensely, since I have fully assumed before God the sacred duty to love you and be grateful to you.

O'Grady wrote:

I join whole-heatedly the confreres of this far-away country to express to you my affection and devotion, and wish you with

all the enthusiasm of my heart a good and happy feast day, followed by many other such anniversaries. Yes, dear and beloved Father, I send you the most fervent good wishes that a son could express to a much beloved father.... You will be glad, dear Father, to hear that I am happy here, happy in my vocation and I do hope to persevere in it with the grace of Our Lord. I do not forget, oh no, to whom I owe this grace, this happiness, after God. I wish I could express all the gratitude I feel for you, dearest Father, but sincerely I cannot find the words with which to do so. I hope however to prove it by some other means, namely by my deeds, endeavoring to be a true Salesian, a worthy son of yours.

Soldano wrote:

Oh! Happy bygone days at the Oratory! They are so deeply engraved in my memory that I cannot help but think of them! I shall never forget all the love that was lavished on me then. Indeed, the more clearly I realize it, the greater grows my affection and my gratitude toward you, beloved Father, who was so concerned with my well being.... Dearest Father, with my pen I am unable to tell you how glad I am in my vocation, how happy I feel in my tribulations.

Stefanelli wrote:

I hope to be in my beloved Patagonia already on June 24th. On that day, dear Father, I shall pray that God may comfort you here on earth and may allow you to see this barren land converted, at least in great part even though not entirely, to the true faith thanks to the labors of your sons. For my own part, I promise you that I intend to sacrifice my whole life to the glory of God, but there is a great amount of danger and my own weakness is even greater. Please obtain for me from Mary Help of Christians, dear Father, that I may keep my chastity and have a genuine humility and I will respond to your wishes.

Likewise, three coadjutors expressed their affection to Don Bosco. The cook Fasciolo wrote:

Thinking that unworthy as I am, I, too, am your son, I am writing this letter now to greet you with a full heart, like a true son, and I beg you to write to me a few words at your convenience

either directly or through your revered secretary, just so long as you deign to sign it with your own venerated hand. At the same time bless me. I badly need your blessing. Help me, Most Reverend Father, help me! Please give my regards to your great field adjutant, Father Michael Rua, and also Father Celestine Durando. Ask them to pray for Nicholas Fasciolo, who was formerly their cook and who is now at San Nicholas de los Arroyos. I salute you with all my heart, and I send you a kiss for the blessed right hand that blesses me.

Jardini wrote:

"I always remember you and will never forget you. Please accept my gratitude for all the good I have received from you ever since the time I placed myself under your guidance. Pray for my soul, and if I am saved, it will be thanks to your prayers."

Zanchetta wrote:

Oh! How lucky I consider myself for having been able to be with you for a while, and luckier still for having brought you your meals! I trust that later on I shall appreciate even more how fortunate that period was. So far I have not yet realized that I have left Italy and that is because I have not yet left him who bears the likeness of Don Bosco within himself,[22] but I think I shall realize it when I shall be in the midst of savages, and I shall need strength to persevere in Don Bosco's spirit. But I lived next to him and that will be good enough to recreate the picture of your spirit for the eyes of my mind and to be encompassed by it with the Lord's help. May Our Lord grant you so much strength as to be able to come and visit your beloved sons here in America, in Patagonia, in your own Patagonia. If it were possible, but I do not know if it is, I would like to say that when you write to Bishop Cagliero, please do not forget that the bearded domestic is tucked away in a little corner. Ah! Do not deny me one little word, one line, dear Father, if you are well and able to write me something just for me. May Mary Help of Christians prompt it to you, and may you repeat it for me.

22 He means Bishop John Cagliero.

The sons who were near to him celebrated his feast day with joy on their faces, but also with a great sorrow in their hearts. They realized that unless a miracle came from God, the physical decline of their father would progress instead of slow down or remain at least at a standstill. At the entertainment the eve before his feast, he had succeeded in addressing the public gathered in the playground with a certain energy and forcefulness. But in the evening of the feast day itself, he was barely able to utter a few words, limiting himself to bestowing on his listeners a blessing in the name of the Holy Father Leo XIII.[23]

Among those who had gathered to celebrate Don Bosco's feast day was a young Bavarian priest, Johann Mehler, who was to distinguish himself with numerous publications dealing with Christian sociology and Christian education for the masses. He observed everything, stored it all away and once back home, widely spread his feelings of warm admiration for Don Bosco and his work in Catholic action environments. He reported to the XXXII Annual Assembly of the German Catholics, held at Munster from August 30th to September 3rd, on the undertakings and system of the saint before the impressive assembly representing German Catholicism. The convention was impressed most of all by all the organizations of the festive oratories because of their social aspects. This dynamic champion conveyed Don Bosco's blessing to the entire convention and wrote: "The Germans love Don Bosco and will continue to love him like one loves a father."[24] In the meantime, he eagerly set to work to enroll Salesian cooperators in Germany, especially in Bavaria.[25] He wanted Don Bosco to authorize him to issue diplomas to them on his behalf, signing them with his own signature, but Don Bosco felt that he should not issue such an authorization. In speaking about it on September 17th to the Chapter, he said: "The diplomas will be printed in German and signed in Turin. When the diplomas are being sent out, a letter could be included which should ask these gentlemen to look for other cooperators to be enrolled. We should not let this opportunity pass us by. I would have liked to establish relations with Germany, but did not know how to go about it. This is a God-sent opportunity. It would have been absurd to try any other way. Now the path has been paved for us by two biographies of

23 Letter from Father Joseph Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, July 3, 1885).

24 The November *Bulletin* published a translation of his letter without a word of introduction or date. (Appendix, document 73).

25 A cooperator enrolled by him asked Don Bosco to enroll as cooperator his school in Munich in the Salesian Society (Appendix, document 74).

Don Bosco published in German. This will do a lot for us, you will see, and we shall receive financial assistance."

As we have already said, God had endowed Don Bosco with the ability of making him loved by others. The theologian Anthony Berrone in a very cordial speech enthusiastically evidenced this. In his address to the academic entertainment, speaking on behalf of the past pupils he said, "You, too, Don Bosco, can well boast that you conquer all hearts. Allow me to tell you and tell you repeatedly that you are a thief, an incorrigible thief. You have stolen and still go on stealing the hearts of everyone who knows you. But let it be understood, this theft is not committed *invito domino,* that is to say against the wishes of the owner, quite to the contrary; those who love you are proud of loving you and are proud to be loved by you in return."[26]

Father Bologna had taken Maurice Berthe, a pupil from the school of Lille, France, to the festivities. The young man spent a week at the Oratory. On the eve of his departure, he did not only feel a desire, but a genuine necessity of consulting Don Bosco on his vocation. An inner voice urged him to serve the Lord closely, but it was a vague voice, and no certain indication was evident to guide him. As he was pensively, slowly pacing up and down along the corridor leading to the saint's rooms and hoping that some kind soul might come along to usher him in, Father Joseph Bologna emerged and guessing the youth's intention, told him to go in.

In his shyness and concern over the issue that so perturbed his heart, he did not pay much attention to Don Bosco's opening words as he welcomed him until he finally found the courage to say, "I would dearly love to consecrate myself to Our Lord, but I do not know what direction I should take."

"Soon you will have to do your military service," Don Bosco answered.

His hopes were dashed, for he had been expecting a clear, definite word which might set him free from all hesitancy, even though this might have been the advice to embrace the Salesian way of life. He left the room discouraged, but later understood that Don Bosco had spoken as a prophet. He still had to draw his number at the draft board, and there was a chance that he would obtain an exemption from his military obligations. Since he already had a brother on active service, he was entitled to an

[26] REV. ANTHONY BERRONE: *Don John Bosco, Thief of Hearts.* His former pupils on the joyous anniversary of his feast day (Turin, Sal. Printers, 1885).

exemption. In any case, he had two further motivations for an exemption: his poor eyesight and a certain deformity in both legs. Don Bosco could not have known any of these things, and there was no mention of military draft, so the young man did not attribute any significance to the answer he had been given.

Instead, everything came true as Don Bosco had said. Berthe did extract a low number and the recently introduced regulations made the fact that he already had a brother in the service meaningless. The military draft board paid no attention to his defects, and he had to go into the army. When he had finished his service, some influential person advised him to enter the Cistercian Order, which he did, and is still with them today.[27]

Likewise, Father Peter Perrot brought a young man from Toulon, France, to the Oratory shortly after the feast of St. John who wished to become a Salesian.[28] Father Perrot sought Don Bosco's permission and he was given the following answer:

Turin, June 14, 1885

Dearest Father Peter Perrot:

I am glad that you are coming to see me with the son of Monsieur Marquand, but if he so desires, he may remain with us definitively. However if he wishes, he may postpone his trip, but it should be a thing already decided upon and their son should remain with us for a proper period of trial. Everything you say and do is all right. God bless you and our dear children.

Believe me in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Most cordial regards to Count and Countess Colle and Monsieur Marquand.

According to a long-standing tradition that had practically become a law, Gastini invited the past pupils with the consent of Don Bosco to a special reunion: the laymen on July 26th and the priests on the 30th. They had presented Don Bosco with two tall, gilt candelabras to enhance the

[27] Letter to Father Auffray (Romont [Switzerland] November, 1934).
[28] See letter from Don Bosco to Count and Countess Colle (July 14, 1885).

decorations on the main altar in the Church of Mary Help of Christians on his name-day. But before those two dates came around, Don Bosco had left Turin. The heat in the city had exhausted him, so on the advice of his doctor, the superiors of the Chapter begged him to allow himself a period of relaxation in a more temperate climate. He wanted to make them happy, so he went to Mathi on July 15th. Alimonda was more of a friend than his cardinal archbishop and was gracious enough to extend his personal good wishes to him by delivering them in person. During their talk, His Eminence asked, "How are things at the house? How are the finances?"

"Ah!" Don Bosco said. "Look. I have a bill here that is urgent. I have to pay back thirty thousand lire within 24 hours and I do not have that money."

"So what will you do?"

"What are we going to do? I am hoping in the help of Divine Providence. I have just now received a registered letter. There will certainly be something inside it."

"Let us look!" the cardinal said.

As he opened the envelope, a bank check for thirty thousand lire fell out of it. Words could not describe the impression it made on the archbishop. Tender hearted as he was, he could not restrain his tears.

When Don Bosco reported this to his close collaborators,[29] he added a second anecdote connected with something that had occurred two days before in the presence of Father Joseph Lazzero. The latter had to pay a heavy debt at the Oratory, but when he had put all his resources together, he found that he was still short one thousand lire. His only hope was Don Bosco. He rushed to Mathi.

"Look! All my riches lie here in this registered letter," the saint told him.

It was opened and contained precisely one thousand lire. In telling about such things, Don Bosco would interrupt his story to give thanks to Divine Providence and urge everyone listening to give thanks likewise and rely on it wholeheartedly.

While we are on the subject, we think that it is proper that we should as well repeat a conversation between Don Bosco and Count Paul Capello from San Franco, who left us an accurate account of it.[30]

29 Viglietti's diary (August 16, 1885).

30 Letter to Father Lemoyne (Parma, February 9, 1888).

The count did not know the saint in 1885, so when he was staying for a short while in Turin and had to make a donation to him, he thought he might take the opportunity to make his acquaintance. Ushered in by Bishop Cagliero, he saw Don Bosco sitting in an armchair, his legs propped up on two other chairs. He knelt down, kissed his hand repeatedly and handed him one hundred lire in gold. Taking them, the Servant of God pointed to a pile of letters and envelopes which had recently been delivered and said, "This morning Father Michael Rua came to me and told me that he was urgently in need of a substantial sum of money because a heavy bill had to be paid that day, yet at the moment he did not have a cent in his possession. I told him that I, too, was without money, but that I felt confident that Divine Providence would provide. Father Rua was clearly worried when he left me. Meanwhile, when the mail came I received such a pile of letters that it was astonishing. I opened the first that came to hand and found a fairly big sum in it sent in by a cooperator. The sum was more than Father Michael Rua needed. I picked out another letter among the several hundred and found it was from an anonymous donor. Enclosed there was a very generous donation. I sent for Father Michael Rua, who was amazed, and he was forced to acknowledge the manifest intervention of Divine Providence."

The obvious intervention of Divine Providence in meeting Don Bosco's financial needs gives us an understanding of Don Bosco's attitude towards money. One day when Father Della Valle asked him about the rapid growth of his congregation due to the continuous assistance of Divine Providence, Don Bosco answered, "The Congregation will prosper as a long as the Salesians will know how to value money."

These words must be interpreted in a spiritual sense. To know the value of money in his way of thinking meant to use it carefully. Since God had sent it, it should be used in the spirit and for the objectives of the Congregation.

Don Bosco regained his appetite as well as his strength in the peaceful dwelling near the paper mill on the left bank of Stura, halfway between Turin and Lanzo. The noise of the machines was not loud enough to cause any disturbance. He enjoyed strolling in the garden and delighted in narrating interesting incidents of his life story. He also found great benefit in sleep.

This general well-being enabled him to dedicate greater attention to his business, so he always wanted a few members of the Superior Chapter to be with him. They alternated their staying at Mathi, even spending several days at a time with him. "I too, was there four full days," Father

Joseph Lazzero wrote Bishop John Cagliero on August 1st. "You can well understand how wonderful those days were for me."

Yet Don Bosco was unable to get any rest the night of July 17th. From the minute he shut his eyes, something troubled him until dawn.

"I do not know whether I was asleep or awake," he said the next day while talking about the matter with several Salesians, "because it seemed to me that I was dealing with reality."

It seemed to him that he was leaving the Oratory in the company of his mother and his brother Joseph. They were walking in the direction of Via Dora Grossa (today known as Via Garibaldi) and then entered San Filippo Church to pray. When he came out of the church, he saw a number of people waiting for him and they all wanted him to visit them at their private homes, but he said he could not do it, for he had other calls to make.

An honest looking worker said, "Stop here just a moment, please, and call on me first."

He consented and then resumed his walk toward Via Po with that worker. As he approached the big Piazza Vittorio Emanuele, he saw a number of young girls playing in a little square nearby, and the worker pointed to the spot and said, "Now look, this is the spot where you will have to open an Oratory."

"Oh, for goodness sake!" Don Bosco exclaimed. "Do not say that. We already have too many Oratories and we are hardly able to provide for them all."

"But here we need an Oratory for girls. There are only private Oratories for girls, but so far a true public Oratory was never seen."

As they were walking toward the Po River near the porticoes on the right side of the square, the girls all stopped their games and crowded around him, yelling, "Oh! Don Bosco, please open an Oratory for us. We are in the clutches of the devil who does with us as he wants. Help us! Open a haven of safety for us as well. Open an Oratory."

"But my children, I cannot do it just now. You see, I am at an age when I can no longer attend to such matters. But pray to Our Lord. Pray to Him and He will provide."

"Yes, we shall pray. We shall, but you must help us. Hide us under the mantle of Mary Help of Christians."

"Yes, you must pray. But tell me, how do you expect me to open an Oratory here?"

The girl who seemed the most talkative among them asked, "Look, Don Bosco. Do you see the road along the Po River? Get closer to it.

There is a No. 4 and that's where the soldiers live. A man whose name is Burleza is the landlord. He also owns that building there and would be glad to turn it over to us, since it is ready."

"Well, we'll see. We'll see, but in the meanwhile, pray."

"Yes, we will. We will," the girls replied in chorus, "but you remember us and all that we need."

Then Don Bosco walked away from them and decided to look at the building. He did see the soldiers, but Mr. Burleza was not to be found. Then he went back to the Oratory and woke up as soon as he got there.

After relating this dream, he told Charles Viglietti to take note of it and to find out if the building truly existed (for he had never noticed it) and if that gentleman lived there. Viglietti instantly asked Father Bonara to go there and check. Father Bonara found everything as Don Bosco had dreamed it, though it did not notice any sign for sale, as Father Lemoyne observed in a note at much later date.

On the 23rd, all the boys from the Lanzo's school were taken to see Don Bosco. They gathered around him with filial affection and heard his fatherly advice. His witty remarks delighted them. Truly enough, his returning health restored some of his former fascination to youthful audiences. He was also able to work.

One day, he talked for four hours with Dr. Turina, the director of the hospital of San Maurizio Canavese who had come to discuss a legacy with which both had an interest. On another occasion, he wrote five letters without the difficulties and told many wonderful stories. When he remembered the games he had once played, he demonstrated them. Performing the "stick trick," he balanced a stick lightly on the thumb of his right hand and made it jump and gyrate whichever way he chose.

This new surge of strength made him interrupt the peaceful and refreshing stay at Mathi and return to Valdocco on July 26th to join the dinner of the lay past pupils. On this occasion, the muse of Father John Baptist Francesia, borrowing the Muse from Father Anthony Berrone's talk mentioned early on, drew an ingenious parallel in elegant Piedmontese verse between Napoleon and Don Bosco, stressing Don Bosco's superiority over Napoleon.[31] At the end of it, Don Bosco briefly

[31] Don Bosco and Napoleon. Piedmontese Canticle dedicated to the former sons of the Oratory by Father Francesia (Turin, Tipografia Salesians, 1885). The first person to compare Don Bosco with Napoleon I had been Bishop Forcade in 1881. He had been archbishop of Aix (See Vol. XV, page 50). This great cooperator and good friend of the saint died a victim of his own zeal nursing the victims of the cholera epidemic in 1885. Don Bosco eulogized him on September 16th at Valsalice before the Superior Chapter.

addressed the gathering.

"My dear friends, thank you for this demonstration of affection, for having come to spend a few hours in my company. May God be blessed in you, by you, and amongst you. May He always keep you in good health and in His grace. My life is now drawing to an end. I do not know whether Our Lord will allow me to linger here a while longer. But should I enter my eternity ahead of you, I assure you that, while I beg you to remember me in your prayers, I will not forget you in mine. Should my life continue for a while longer, I assure you that I shall go on loving you and helping you in whatever small measure I can. Meanwhile, wherever you may be or wherever you may go, always remember that you are the sons of Don Bosco, the sons of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales. Be true Catholics with sound principles and good works. Faithfully observe the religion which is the only true one and which will one day bring us all together in the Blessed Eternity. Happy will you be if you will never forget any of the truths I strove to impress deeply in your hearts while you were young. Pray for me and I will pray for you. I will end now and join you in acclaiming that wisest of Pontiffs Leo XIII and also His Eminence, our own Cardinal Archbishop Cajetan Alimonda who is so good to us."

He returned to Mathi that same evening, quite exhausted from the heat and fatigue. Once there, he received from Rome the tragic news of the death of Cardinal Nina, the protector of the Salesian Congregation. He had died at the age of 73. Superior in his learning and prudence, he had rendered an important service to the Holy See when he was only a simple prelate, but most of all when he was made a cardinal. He was secretary of state under Leo XIII and later prefect of the Council. Though steadfast in his principles, he possessed the moderation essential in those days for the efficient management of ecclesiastical affairs, which was so well attuned to the spirit of Don Bosco. Their last friendly exchange had occurred at the time of His Eminence's priestly jubilee. Don Bosco had told all the Salesian schools of America and they all addressed letters of congratulations to him. The cardinal instantly sent a telegram to Don Bosco on December 22nd, thanking all the schools and then wrote a handsome letter to the saint, which turned out to be his last benevolent gesture toward our dear father.[32]

As a dutiful tribute, the saint had a solemn requiem Mass celebrated in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, pontifically celebrated by the

[32] Appendix, Document 75.

cardinal archbishop of Turin. He arranged for many prayers to be said for his soul in the other houses of the Congregation.

He could not be stopped from going back to the Oratory the morning of July 30th to attend the gathering of the priest past pupils. As soon as he entered the playground, Bishop Berchialla approached him. He was the archbishop of Cagliari and belonged to the Congregation of the Oblates of the Virgin Mary. They both went up to Don Bosco's room together and they remained there for almost an hour. At the banquet his final speech was the most significant feature. However his, speech was not as short as the previous one. Here is an outline of what was handed down to us:

"I do not mean to say a lot of things to you. I only wish to stress one important thing that I ask to carefully keep in your memory. Something has to be done to make up for the scarcity of priests. No priests should stop trying to find, to encourage even at the cost of sacrifices to themselves, the spirit of vocations in others, so as to leave them when they are gone as their heirs and their successors in the work of saving souls. The scarcity of priests is sorely felt in many localities to the tragic detriment of souls. We have done whatever our weak strength permitted us to do in the past, to cope with the situation. We founded the institute for young adult men wishing to train for the priesthood. You will recall how in the last year of His Pontificate, Pius IX, blessed the newly founded Institute of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians, founded for the training of zealous priests for the Church. This institute has been approved by the bishops and was hailed by everyone who understood how important its purpose was. Several of you who are present here today have this institute to thank for having received the dignity of the priesthood.

"All of you know what this institute of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians is all about. It was founded for the benefit of young men already grown up who had not been able to be trained for the priesthood as they would have wished, and to which way of life they had been called either because they did not have the money, the time, or had been obstructed in the course of their studies by their military service. Many such young men were waiting for a friendly hand to help them walk the road of their vocation. The hand that was thus to guide them was extended, and the institute was founded as the great Pontiff Pius IX wished it to be. Now should you encounter any young man of good will, do not neglect him, but do everything you can to enable him to take up his career. The Church has to be provided with missionaries, pastors, and curates. There are a thousand urgent needs to be addressed and their number increases daily.

"In your towns, in our parishes, you will quite often come upon young men 15, 16 and 20 years old who have not yet begun their studies, and yet would like to study. These young men would not be accepted by the ordinary seminaries or schools because of their age or because they would feel awkward to sit with younger students or because they have not properly exercised their intellectual faculties and would find it difficult to start a regular course of study. They will appeal to you and ask for your help so that they may become priests. Such things do happen every day. Receive them kindly, encourage them, and advise them to apply wherever you think best. If you know of places in your vicinity suitable for them, if they are able to pay the fees, good. But if you do not know where to send them, if they do not have enough money, send them to Don Bosco, who will somehow do what he can for them. Make sure only that they do have a vocation, and that by their conduct one may expect them to be good priests. For such young men the doors of our houses will always be open.

"That is what I wanted to tell you. Blessed be Our Lord who has allowed us once again to meet here together. By following the advice I have given you, try to increase the merits of your priestly ministry. The glory of the Church is our own glory; the salvation of souls is our concern. All the good that will be accomplished by others thanks to us will enhance the magnificence of our glory in Paradise. May the Blessed Virgin protect you and God be with you always."

Before they parted from him, these affectionate sons of his persuaded their beloved father to sit among them for a picture. By dusk he was once again back at his cool vacation home.

While at Mathi, he also agreed to pose for a painter from Brescia, who had asked him if he would so that he might put the finishing touches to a portrait he had painted from a small photograph. Apparently, he was never reluctant to sit for a picture whenever his sons or his friends asked him to do so, for also in this he was following the exceptional example of acquiescence shown by St. Francis de Sales. There is no doubt that the picture was going to do a great deal of good. As far as the painter we have mentioned, Don Bosco felt that it would only be an act of charity to respond to his request, for he had a son who was a trade student at San Benigno, and with the full consent of Father Julius Barberis, he was hoping to pay off the modest monthly fees he owed.

When the painter was shown into the presence of Don Bosco, the saint said, "See to it that you make me look good, or else no one will want to be my friend any longer."

He continued in his jocular strain all the time the artist was working. The painter left in a delightful mood, but later he said that it was very difficult to make a portrait of Don Bosco just as he was because a faithful rendering of the angelic expression that emanates from his countenance and his entire person was hard to reproduce. "He does not have the classic features," he added, "but there is something supernatural about him that is difficult to reproduce."

A lady named Domenica Garelli went to Mathi on August 5th from Caramagna, confident that Don Bosco would obtain for her a grace from Mary Help of Christians and promised to give him three thousand lire. Her feeling of confidence stemmed from something that had previously occurred in her family. An uncle of hers who had gone to Turin the previous winter to undergo a dangerous surgical operation had been unable to persuade the surgeons to operate. They did not think the patient could undertake it. He went to see Don Bosco and he was given a blessing and was told that he would recover after a novena he had to follow. In fact, he did recover after the novena. The lady had now come to intercede for a niece of hers on whom the doctors had given up.

Don Bosco replied, "Jesus said, *'Date et dabitur vobis.'* Begin by offering half of your donation. The Lord will then act."

She went away reassured and promised to put his advice into practice. The next week, she returned and that time not empty-handed.

When she left, Don Bosco told Viglietti and some others who were there to keep him company, something which had recently occurred. A few days earlier, a lady had written him, enclosing a donation of Lire 2,500 for a grace obtained. He wrote her a special letter of thanks, for the donation was considerable, and promised to say prayers for her and have the boys pray, too. Touched by such goodness, the lady replied with another donation of three thousand lire. Don Bosco wrote to thank her once more, with some encouraging words about Heaven. Now that very day, August 12th, she sent him yet a third donation of ten thousand lire. "Now I am in a big predicament!" he cried. "I am afraid if I write her again, she will send me a fourth donation, but if I do not write, it would be impolite. I really do not know what to do."

Mrs. Garelli made another appearance at Valsalice on September 16th and told Don Bosco that after her last visit, as soon as she had carried out part of her promise, her niece had recovered almost instantly. When she got home, she had found the girl up from her bed, eating with the rest of the family. "But yesterday her sickness suddenly came back and she com-

plained to me," she said, "attributing her relapse to my delay in fulfilling the rest of my promise. Now I'm here to settle my debt."

But Don Bosco said that he could not venture to repeat the assurance given her the first time. Nevertheless, they should pray. Unfortunately, we know nothing more of what occurred.

Little by little, Don Bosco's health condition was the cause of alarm. He was bothered by continuous headaches, painful dysentery and eyesight problems. "Yet he is always cheerful," the diary says, "and he never complains about anything." His own suffering never let him forget the physical needs of other people. In a note dated August 5th to Father Joachim Berto, he said, "I think that a week of mountain air and pleasant walks would do you good."

Cardinal Alimonda intensified the signs of benevolence toward Don Bosco. On August 7th when Bishop Calabiana, the Archbishop of Milan, called on him to pay his respects, he felt that he could not do anything more agreeable to the illustrious guest than to accompany him to see the wonders wrought by the saint, who had not seen the Milanese archbishop since 1867. The two prelates spent a full hour at the Oratory and the band entertained them when it was time for them to leave. Don Bosco had sent his good wishes to His Eminence who in turn replied with this beautiful letter:

Turin, August 9, 1885

Dearest and Most Revered Don Bosco:

The Salesians overwhelmed me with their kindness on my name-day. They even gave me some good bottles of wine to celebrate my feast day in a becoming manner, but nothing could be more welcome to me than your own autographed letter. Despite your infirmities and need of rest, you were gracious enough to send me most good wishes with an affection that stemmed right from your loving heart. Too bad that what you wrote is so far removed from the truth and only embarrasses me while you assure me of your friendship! Love can prevent one from seeing things as they are, so may God forgive you.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks for so much kindness and courtesy, and this (it is understood) is not only for the Superior, but also for all the Salesians in general, priests, cooperators, pupils and benefactors.

I pray that Our Lord may prolong your precious days here on

earth, and that He may bless and help prosper your Congregation and all your holy undertakings.

The printed brochures concerning the facade of the Sacred Heart Church have now been distributed to all the dioceses and I have already received commitments of spontaneous contributions from several bishops.

Bishop John Cagliero sent me a very nice, affectionate letter from Buenos Aires that I hasten to enclose with the request that you return it so that the first free moment I have I can thank him for his courtesy.[33] Please make a copy of it or publish it in its entirety or in part, as you prefer in the *Bulletin,* if you wish.

Please take care of yourself, and do not work at all. I think you would feel better in a cooler climate.

I embrace you in Our Lord. Please pray for me. With best regards from my whole family and with my pastoral blessing, I am,

Your most affectionate servant in Jesus Christ,
Cajetan, Cardinal Archbishop

The cardinal was quite right when he thought that Don Bosco needed some cooler air and some rest, but as soon as he felt a little better, he returned to his work with his customary energy and a relapse ensued. It had already been arranged that he was to be in Turin on the Feast of the Assumption to attend the distribution of prizes and enjoy a little celebration of his birthday. But two days before, he had to have an abscess under his armpit lanced. In his delicate condition, this caused a fever and he did not leave Mathi. The invitations that also mentioned his birthday had already been printed but were not mailed. In fact, Viglietti asked Father Michael Rua to try to discourage him from going to San Benigno on August 17th for the retreat of the novices. He said that Don Bosco intended to attend all the retreats, but he did not have enough strength and all the doctors maintained it would be most unwise. The recommendation had its effect. Don Bosco did not go anywhere, and in 1885, he was noticeably absent from Turin on his birthday and did not attend the award ceremony. Out of respect for Don Bosco who was not feeling well, the ceremony took

[33] In his reply the cardinal spoke of two letters from Bishop Cagliero, though we have only traced one. (Appendix 76 & 77). From his reply above, we can imagine the content of the cardinal's letter, as well as from another letter to Leo XIII, of which we shall speak later.

place in a simple, family-like atmosphere. The Oratory was gladdened by the unexpected appearance of the bishop of Novara and the theologian Margotti.[34] A committee of young academic and trade students went to Mathi from the Oratory to bring him the good wishes of the house.

We already know how eager he was not to be absent from Nizza Monferrato during the retreat for ladies, though he later gave up the idea on his own and asked Father John Bonetti go instead to represent him:

Mathi, August 9, 1885

Dearest Father Bonetti:

New inconveniences have come upon me and prevent me absolutely from enjoying the pleasure of attending the retreat at Nizza. You will apologize to the ladies for me when they come for their retreat and tell them that I really am quite incapacitated.

But I shall pray for them during the whole retreat and will say a Holy Mass for their intention on the day the retreat ends.

May God protect them all and may Mary be their guide throughout all the dangers of this world until they attain Heaven, where I trust she may graciously welcome them all one day in Paradise.

Tell them to pray for this poor priest who is half-blind, and who plans to have a special memento for them every day during Holy Mass.

Please give a special greeting for me to our beloved sisters and tell them that if my health improves only just a little, I will call on them during their retreat because I have some rather important things to tell them.

May Mary protect us all. Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

The good performance carried out by Father Michael Rua saved Don Bosco a lot of emotional stress on the occasion of his birthday and the departure of the boys for their vacation. But as far as prolonging his vacation, they only succeeded in adding one week. As we shall see, Don Bosco went to Nizza Monferrato on August 22nd and on the 25th he was at San Benigno, but did not tire himself as he usually did.

[34] Letter from Father Lazzero to Bishop Cagliero (Turin, August 13 and 21, 1885).

In between the Feast of the Assumption and his own departure, the whole Olive family arrived at Mathi from Marseille, some twelve people in all. They attended Don Bosco's Mass, received Communion from his hand and stayed with him for dinner and supper. They also gave him a spiritual account of themselves, one by one, as they had done in Marseille. Another visit worthy of note was the one by the school inspector of Nice Maritime. Impressed by the paper mill, this gentleman told Viglietti that Don Bosco really was the man of the century and that he had solved the social question. This was the main aspect under which the French considered the Salesian Congregation. The last visitor he had was his old comrade and intimate friend Canon Nasi, who spent a whole day in his company.

From August 22nd until October 12th, Don Bosco stayed at three houses: Nizza Monferrato, San Benigno and Valsalice. We will deal with these sojourns separately elsewhere. He went back and forth to the Oratory for short visits, as he did on September 4th on his way from San Benigno to Valsalice when he was recalled by an urgent necessity.

Little Henri Olive, age nine, was not feeling well when he left Marseille and in Turin his condition grew worse and he was confined to his bed at the hotel. The child's father told Don Bosco that he was afraid the hotel keeper might tell him to leave the hotel at any moment, since the presence of the sick boy might keep away prospective clients. With his usual pious and charitable character, as Father Lazzero wrote,[35] "Don Bosco offered hospitality to the child at the Oratory, as well as to whoever was needed to assist him."

The child's parents wept with relief, for they felt confident that in the shadow of Mary Help of Christians, their son would recover. But at the beginning of September, it looked as if he were about to die. He was delirious for two full days and nights. The physicians Fissore and Albertotti merely grimaced when questioned, as if they meant to say that they no longer held any hopes. The child had typhoid fever, and three other children in the family had already died from it.

The parents had telegraphed Don Bosco at San Benigno. He answered, assuring them of his prayers and begging them to feel reassured. Shortly after that, the delirium abated and a visible improvement set in. As we have just said, Don Bosco visited the little patient on his way to Valsalice. The boy was already sitting up in bed, albeit with difficulty. After giving him his blessing, the saint said, "Be a good boy, Henri. I want us to have a good

[35] Letter to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, October 1, 1885).

time together. When you are well again, we shall have a nice dinner and you will have the seat of honor at table."

On October 28th, the eve of their departure, that moment came. There really was a dinner and the little boy, perfectly restored to health and agile and merry as never before, sat at the center of the table. One can easily imagine the general rejoicing. There were speeches given, singing, playing, and a firm conviction in all present that by his prayers, Don Bosco had obtained a miracle from Mary Help of Christians.

For some time now, Don Bosco had been planning an innovation at the Oratory. In order to thoroughly understand the reason why, we should not overlook two things: ideally and practically for its founder, the Oratory was essentially a charitable undertaking for the welfare of youth; and in keeping with his ideal, the section assigned to the students was meant to be a nursery of ecclesiastical and religious vocations. In view of this two-fold aspect of this original creation, Don Bosco felt that it was a mistake and a danger that the high school fifth grade should be kept there. Little by little, the decision to do away with it was reached. He realized, without any doubt; all the difficulties that would ensue, so he did not bring it up sharply, but first paved the way for it, preparing the atmosphere.

He broached the subject for the first time in the Chapter on the evening of August 24th at San Benigno, finishing the statement as follows:

"I may have adversaries on this matter, but I will not change my mind. Anyone who wishes to attend the fifth high school grade should go to another school and pay regular tuition. It is not right that a number of boys should eat the bread purchased with the sweat of our brows in order to forge ahead in a career other than the one for which we intend to train our pupils."

The discussion was brought back at the morning meeting of the Superior Chapter on September 16th at Valsalice. We print the following interesting debate from the minutes:

> Father Rua brought up the project proposed by Don Bosco, regarding the termination of the high school's fifth grade at the Oratory.
>
> Don Bosco: *I mean that this termination should be applied only to charitable institutions.*
>
> Father Bonetti requested that both pro and con as regards the project be expressed because the Chapter needed to be updated as far as an issue Father Rua gave a summarized report of Don

Bosco's remarks. He had personally looked into the final results of the examination undertaken by high school fifth graders and had checked how many had manifested religious vocations and how many of them had remained living in the world after receiving their diploma. He had checked the records for eight consecutive years and had found that every year a good professor had taught the fifth grade, the examination or the diploma had been successful, and there had been a good many vocations. While in other years when the professor had been unsuitable, or not very capable, the vocations had fallen off and the results of the examination had been very poor. That meant that the maturing of vocations depended on the professor. The more one encourages the boys to study for worldly renown, the less they will be available for our Congregation. If one had considered what is being said against the high school fifth graders, he would have found out that they had no other thoughts than for their studies and the examination for their diploma, and that they gave little or no attention to piety and their vocation: in exhorting their pupils to study, the professors harp constantly on the theme of passing their final examinations with honors for their diploma and on making a mark for themselves in the eyes of the world with a learned profession. He said he had talked with Father Dominic Belmonte, who, without being asked directly, proposed that the fifth grade be abolished. Father Alvin Carmagnola, likewise, without being questioned, had declared that, pressed by the examination for a diploma, four or five pupils of his at Sampierdarena had refused to go to the Oratory.

Don Bosco: *It is now several years that I have been thinking this over and worrying about this craze for getting a diploma. We have to consider this matter from a most important viewpoint. These boys are living at the Oratory free of charge or at half tuition fees. Where does charity go? Not in sponsoring vocations or for the benefit of religion, as our benefactors would wish. We must not expose ourselves to the risk of incurring their disapproval! It is unthinkable that we spend their money to keep certain youths who will say who gave them their education? And they will be told they were educated by Don Bosco. It is a disgrace for us! But in terminating the high school fifth grade we have a number of other reasons related to morals. In passing from the fourth*

to the fifth, the minds of the boys are corrupted with hopes of a more prosperous future, the coveted ideal of freedom, and their awakening ambitions. Therefore we should cut this access to the fifth grade from under them. Anyone wishing to go on to the fifth can go to our schools, such as Alassio or Lanzo. What if they are unable to pay the fees? That is not our concern. That is for them to worry about. But should any boy be particularly meritorious and worthy of consideration, we might make a very extraordinary exception. I recall how the school superintendent Rho accused us of upsetting the lives of the boys by allowing them to take their high school diploma and fostering their hopes of continuing in their studies when this was precluded to them because they did not have the money. He is not a judge of such things, but this shows us the way other people look at us. Therefore, once the boys have attended the fourth year of high school, that's it. This year only one pupil of the fifth remained in the Congregation.

Father Rua pointed out that by removing the best boys from the third and fourth grades in view of a religious or ecclesiastical life, it was quite natural that the least desirable elements alone remained in the fifth.

Father Francesia remarked that if the Chapter were to approve this deliberation, the diocesan school at Bra, Giaveno and the Cottolengo School would represent an even fatal competition to us. They would be taking away our boys, since they would have the fifth grade. The Cottolengo School sent all its boys to take the diploma examination in the fifth grade. If we decide to abolish the fifth grade, boys would attend our school for one or two years, and then go elsewhere. Even pastors would say that our course was incomplete. Even ignorant parents would be saying that we did not have all the classes at our school, and thus we are going to have fewer boys and hence fewer vocations.

Father Rua replied that this rumor should not be spread because the boys would have every facility for completing their studies at other schools belonging to us.

Father Francesia said that if we were to send to other schools the boys who had attended the fourth year of high school at the Oratory, the boys would be badly surprised and could also represent an unforeseen danger at the present time. This change of direction requires some reflection. Boys who had been sent to the

Oratory from other schools with excellent certificates had cut a bad figure here. He therefore proposed a new program for the Oratory only. We could retain the fifth high school grade, but without the secondary subjects of history, natural sciences, etc., with an emphasis on mathematics. Give the widest possible attention to Greek, Italian and Latin literature. Before passing the examination required for donning the cassock in the seminaries, one had to submit the diploma of the fifth high school grade. This year the pastors had issued a certificate to all the boys of the fourth grade who had left the Oratory and wanted to enter a seminary, stating that they had themselves provided for them the curriculum of the fifth grade. There should be emphasis on insisting that professors dedicate the greatest attention to the three literature courses, and we shall see an immense progress in our studies that now appear to fall behind. The classrooms should be better supervised.

Don Bosco: *I am still of the same opinion. If we do not take this precaution, we shall be forced to open apostolic schools.*

Father Bonetti supported Father Francesia's proposal.

Father Durando maintained that if we were to abolish the fifth grade, we would find ourselves in the end only with the worst boys on our hands.

Don Bosco: *Any boy who comes from his own home armed with bad books or bad principles will be sent away. Out, out, immediately away from the Oratory!*

Father Bonetti remarked that we might institute a year's trial period, along the lines of Father Francesia's proposal. This would fulfill Don Bosco's own purpose because in that way the fifth would only be of use to boys intending to become priests.

Father Rua pointed out that if the subsidiary subjects were eliminated to a great extent, the professors would be deprived of any opportunity to talk in class about the exam for diplomas, and therefore to stir the boys with the ideas of worldly renown

Father Durando pointed out that we have to send our clerics to take the high school examinations so that they may receive their diploma in preparation for their doctorates and other diplomas.

Father Barberis answered that courses could be completed at San Benigno.

Don Bosco: *Very well, I will go along with Father Francesia's*

suggestion for a year, as a trial period and as a transition to help carry out my own project of terminating the fifth grade. Now I want to know what is being done in schools as far as Christian Latin authors. The pagan sentiments of the classics are no good for the boys.

Father Francesia answered that once a week the Christian writers were explained in the classes to the boys.

Father Rua then spoke of catechism instruction in class. Having visited all the houses, he declared that it was a disgrace to see how this subject was neglected in the high schools. The pupils knew their catechism well in the elementary schools and particularly in those classes where the teachers were laymen. He quoted examples. The prefect of studies should pay attention to this. Father Julius Barberis stressed this obligation for the clerics.

Don Bosco again resumed the discussion on pagan classical authors: *There are professors who will use discretion when explaining their works, but others go right ahead haphazardly even when they come to indecent passages, explaining these either out of ignorance or because they were unprepared and taken by surprise. As some people claim already the Latin of the Christian writers may not be classic, but everyone who reads St. Augustine or St. Bernard will be astonished by the beauty of their style, even though it is not that of Cicero.*

The Chapter concluded: the fifth high school grade was to remain, but secondary subjects would be eliminated, save for mathematics.

Father Durando stressed how important it was to persuade the boys to have confidence in their superiors, while good professors must be assigned, especially to the fourth and fifth high school grades.

Don Bosco: *I would like a short circular letter to be sent around to our professors during the course of the year and to all our houses, dealing with how the teaching personnel is to behave in the classroom. In this circular, we shall repeat all that I used to tell the professors in particular in bits and pieces during lectures, as well as what is already contained in our rules. Professors, too, should open their classes with Ave Maria, reciting it with the proper attitude and devoutly because this gives the boys an excellent example. Likewise, teachers should be cautious in giving*

their explanations of profane authors. When they come to any passage concerning religion that is good, it should be passed over without the remark that even though they were pagans, these authors recognized Divinity, etc. This is what is called finding something good even in things that are not entirely good in themselves. Likewise, they should find a way to give some good advice on the eve of important feast-days. Only saying a few words, such as for example, "Today is the Feast of the Holy Cross and we are Christians. We must remember that the Cross reminds us of our redemption." That is enough. No sermons. Father Cerruti will write this circular letter.

Father Francesia's suggestion was agreed upon by Don Bosco and was implemented the following school year of 1885-86, but the year after that the fifth high school grade disappeared from the Oratory forever.

One should not believe that by the way he spoke of the pagan classics Don Bosco intended to banish their works from the classroom and substitute them with Christian authors. His fears were based on moral considerations connected with the "indecent things" the boys might find in them, but the expurgated texts had done away with any danger of this. In this matter, he was well aware of the tradition of the Church that only the previous May had been confirmed by Leo XIII in a letter to Cardinal Parocchi regarding the study of the classics.[36]

The *Library of Expurgated Italian Classics for Youth* had been continually published by the Oratory printing press since 1869. This series, of which Father Celestine Durando was editor, had now reached its two hundred and fourth volume. It looked as if it were now about to end, since there was no further real necessity for it, and the series of writers more essential to school studies had by now been exhausted. It was therefore decided to put an end to the publication. Don Bosco then said, "We should now start publishing a series of entertaining books, but this is something which still requires some reflection on the manner in which this is to be done. We shall see."

He was right in his desire of providing entertaining, wholesome reading to substitute the tidal wave of short stories and novels that had little or no respect for religion or morals, and were particularly dangerous as they

36 Since these *Biographic Memoirs* are principally for the Salesians, it is most timely that they all acquire full knowledge of this important papal document (Appendix, document 78).

were a source of corruption for young men involved in studies. The new series, announced in 1886 by the Oratory bookstore, was inaugurated the following year.

But the *Little Series of Dramatic Reading for Educational Institutions and the Family* originated in 1885. This series was edited as one could read in the prospectus printed on the cover of the first volume "by experienced priests, under the direction and responsibility of the Rev. John Bosco." A booklet of about one hundred pages was printed every two months. The first issue contained the well-known play by Father Lemoyne *Le Pistrine e L'Ultima Ora Del Paganesimo [The Roman Theater Mills and Paganism's Last Hour].* The saint was anxious to create a small theatrical library with selected plays that could be staged either "by the boys only or by the girls only in Christian educational institutions and schools." In this field, too, Don Bosco was a pioneer. Following his example, collections of the same kind of books were later published in Milan, Turin and elsewhere.

Another experiment, apart from the one involving the new-format high school fifth grade, was already being enacted at the Oratory. We refer to the creation of the two directors. Don Bosco observed how it worked out and listed some practical suggestions regarding the relations between the two directors when the schools reopened. This is what he said at the Chapter meeting on October 2nd at San Benigno:

"As for the set up of the Oratory, Father John Baptist Francesia, director of the students section, will also be fully in charge of the kitchen, cellar and church, but will have no jurisdiction over the workshops of the trade students, which are entirely subject to Father Joseph Lazzero. Yet both directors will work together. If, for example, Father Joseph Lazzero detects anything amiss when entering the kitchen, he will immediately attend to it. The same applies to Father John Baptist Francesia, should he enter any shop and witness any violation of the rules. He should instantly call the offenders to order. They are to act as one. Father John Baptist Francesia should let Father Anthony Notario, the school's Prefect of Studies for the academic students, preside over the Salesian dining room, and will himself take his meals every day with the other members of the Superior Chapter."

"In saying these things," Secretary Father John Baptist Lemoyne remarked at this point, "Don Bosco expresses his own steadfast determination and with very resolute terms."

We should not overlook an innovation that was introduced at the

Oratory unbeknown to Don Bosco. Until 1885 there had never been any lines of pupils marching from the playground after recreation to study hall, church, classroom, dining room or dormitory, nor from these parts of the house to the playground. The catechist of the students, Father Stefano Trione, inaugurated this disciplined orderliness of marching in line. When Don Bosco heard of it, he was very upset and reprimanded the director of the students, saying that it was a pity that the family way of life was gradually disappearing altogether from the Oratory. Father John Baptist Francesia nevertheless did not go back to the former practice and we know not why.

Don Bosco hoped instead to inaugurate another innovation, and talked of it in the Chapter meeting on March 20th. He foresaw that in time it would be necessary for academic and trade students to have a separate chapel of their own for their church functions, so that the church of Mary Help of Christians would be free entirely for the faithful. He hoped to obtain two advantages from this: one being the religious instruction of the boys, and the other the greater convenience for the faithful. But it is only now that the plans for enlarging the basilica, which is underway, have made possible the fulfillment of Don Bosco's wish.

The saint had returned definitively to the Oratory only a few days before when a dream revealed to him the conflicting fates of two people living at the Oratory. The Irish cleric Francis O'Donnellan lay seriously sick in the infirmary. The saint went to see him during the evening of October 19th and found him almost about to die but perfectly tranquil. Although suffering greatly, the patient felt greatly relieved by Don Bosco's presence and asked Don Bosco, "Do you have any errand for me to do on earth? Would you like to have some errands for Heaven?"

"I am at peace," was his answer. "I have no errands for this world. As for the next world, it is for you to tell me."

"We shall pray for you so that you may soon be in Paradise, and when you are there, you will tell Our Lady how dearly we love her."

He died the following evening and was buried the morning of the 22nd, on which day the exercise of a "happy death" was observed. Now the following night Don Bosco had a dream reported by him as follows:

> I went to bed with my thoughts on O'Donnellan, on his serenity, on my hope that he was already in Heaven, on my desire to come to know something of him. And as I passed from one thought to another, my mind came to dwell on someone else,

someone uncertain, confused, unknown to me, but so insistent was the thought that it became clearer and clearer. When I was sound asleep, I began to dream. I felt that I was walking side by side with O'Donnellan, who was so beautiful that he looked like an angel and had a heavenly smile, all radiant with light. I could not feast my eyes enough on him. To my left there walked another young man with head hanging so that I could not see his face. He seemed very distraught. I addressed him.

"Who are you?"

He did not answer. I insisted in my question, but he did not speak, just like someone who stubbornly insists on keeping silent.

After a long walk, I came to a magnificent palace, the doors of which stood wide open. Beyond the threshold I saw something that looked like an immense portico. It seemed that the portico had an immense cupola on top from which such radiant torrents of light streamed down that one could neither compare it to the light of the sun, nor to that of an electric light, nor to any other source of mortal illumination. The portico, too, was ablaze with light, but the light emanating from it was enhanced by the light that streamed down from above.

A great many people, all of them resplendent, were gathered inside. In the middle of them there was a lady dressed with great simplicity, but every stitch of her robe shone with many rays of light that stood out vividly in the midst of all other splendor.

The whole assembly looked as if it were waiting for somebody. Meanwhile, I noticed that the young man was trying to hide behind me. I then questioned him again.

"Tell me, who are you? What is your name?" to which the young man replied, "You will soon find out."

"Tell me what is it that makes you so melancholy?"

"You will find out."

"But come, tell me your name."

"Soon you will know it."

His voice sounded angry. Just then O'Donnellan came near to the door of that immense palace and the beautiful lady moved in his direction, and behind her, all the crowd that had been standing around her. She addressed O'Donnellan with a melodious voice, *"Hic est filius meus electus, qui fulgebit tanquam sol in perpetuas aeternitates"* [This is my chosen son who will forever

shine like the sun].

It was then that, as if she had sounded the starting note, the whole assembly broke into a canticle that repeated those same words. It was not a human voice. They were not musical instruments, but the harmony was so sweet, distinct and indescribable that not only the ear, but also one's whole being was entranced by it.

O'Donnellan entered. At that point two fearful beasts emerged out of a hole in that plain. They were enormous and long and they moved toward the young man standing behind me. All the light had disappeared, and all I saw was the brilliance emanating from the rays around the lady.

"Now what is this?" I asked. "Who are those monsters?"

Behind me I heard that grim, angry voice. "Soon you will find out," The lady then exclaimed, *"Filium enutrivi et educavi, ipse autem factus est tanquam iumentum insipiens"* [I have nourished and educated a son and he has turned into a dumb animal].

Behind me the voice went on, "Soon you will find out, soon you will find out." All of a sudden, the two monsters leapt at the young man, one of them biting his shoulder, the other biting the nape of his neck and his throat. I heard his bones crack as if they had been pounded in a mortar. I looked around me, trying to find someone to come to my aid, but not seeing anybody, I hurled myself on those monsters, saying, "Since there is nobody, I myself will have to try and help him."

But the two monsters then turned on me, opening their jaws wide. I can still see the flashing white of their fangs, the fiery red of their gums, but my terror was so immense that I woke up.

The secretary who was sleeping in the adjoining room was awakened by his cries for help. He went into Don Bosco's room and found him in the grip of terror, trying to shake himself out of the nightmare. He waved his arms, sat up in bed, and clutched the blankets, almost as if he were trying to find out if he were still asleep or awake.

He related the whole dream to the Chapter members during supper on the 25th, but then he had the second part of the dream related to the main superiors of the house and they were profoundly terrified. The director Father John Baptist Francesia gave a "good night" talk that terrified the boys. The few among them who had not gone to confession on the occasion of the recently-celebrated Forty Hours or the Exercise for a Happy Death all

hastened to do so the morning of the 24th and a number of others went to confession again, although they had already made their confession.

Meanwhile, the director had his eye on one boy who wanted no part of the Sacraments. Wondering whether this was the boy seen by Don Bosco in his dream, he sent for him before going to bed. He warned him and had him promise that the following morning, he would go to confession. The boy did as he promised, but since too many had gone ahead of him and he would not have had time to go to communion afterward, the director told him to wait and go back again the next morning. Luckily, he did not wait.

The catechist of the students, Father Stephen Trione, was in the habit of going to the Chapter's dining room every evening after going through the dormitories in order to accompany Don Bosco up to his room. He had succeeded in finding out that very same evening the name of the unfortunate boy seen in Don Bosco's dream as standing on the brink of Hell. The boy's name was Archimedes Accornero and he was a pupil in the second high school grade, which was taught by Father John Baptist Francesia. Already the year before, his conduct had been so bad that the superiors had wondered whether they should let him stay home after the holiday period. He had been allowed to come back after all. Unfortunately, he had not given any sign of repentance. The incomparable catechist had kept his eye on him once he was out of bed and, seeing that he had not made his confession, called him aside and persuaded him so ably with his kind words and influential manner that he should not leave the church without making peace with God.

It was truly providential! During an afternoon game, the unfortunate young man was leaning on a pile of iron bedsteads underneath the portico. All of a sudden, the whole heap tipped over and crushed him beneath its weight. He was quickly rescued and taken to the infirmary where he lay from half past one until three o'clock quite conscious, but in constant pain. By four o'clock his condition worsened and he died around midnight. His mother was immediately sent for, and before she even set foot inside the Oratory, she asked whether her son had committed suicide. This proved how convinced she was that her son was pursuing the path of evil!

His tragic death proved true a prediction made by our saint. Father Cologero Gusmano, secretary to the Superior Chapter and who was then a student at the Oratory, recalled that Don Bosco announced the imminent death of six persons among those present at that time as he was giving out the *strenna* for the year 1885. He also recalled perfectly well that

he and his companions had begun to ask one another in October, "Five are already dead, who will be the sixth?" The sixth was Accornero.[37]

A great missionary was a guest at the Oratory from November 14th to the 15th: Bishop Sogaro, the Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa. He was a great admirer of Don Bosco and had listened humbly to descriptions of Africa made by the saint as he had seen in his dreams. This zealous apostle would have liked to become a Salesian, to join the sons of Don Bosco for the redemption of that territory. Cardinal Simeoni, Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, objected that if he did so, his missions would pass into the hands of others and he would no longer be their true leader. In response, he answered forcefully, "What do I care? As long as souls can be saved!"

His complaint was that the missionaries not bound by any vow of obedience were going to Africa only for a few months. Then when they changed their mind, they would return to Europe. "The bond of obedience is essential," Don Bosco said, "The missionaries are scared by this way of thinking: let's go out there, and then if we become sick, or grow old, or are unsuccessful, we have no alternative but to go back home or remain there. If we remain there, we are only going to be unhappy and if we come back here who is there to give us food? The Salesians instead have brothers both there and here, and do not have any worries about their future, which is assured." But the time had not yet come for the Congregation to branch out into that apostolic undertaking.[38]

The French newspapers announced that the bishop of Orleans would call on Don Bosco before he arrived in Turin. But Bishop Coulle did call on him on November 21st. When ushered into the room of the saint, he knelt down before him, asking for his blessing. Don Bosco did the very same thing, bowing down profoundly even though seated and with joined hands. The contest ended when they had both gratified each other's wish. After a long conversation with him, the future cardinal went on to Rome.

During the second half of November the newspapers all over the world gave great attention to the mediation provided by Pope Leo XIII between Germany and Spain on the issue of the ownership of the Carolina Islands, which belonged to Spain but were at that time occupied by

[37] Here are the names of the others: Father Ferdinando Demartini, Salesian priest, (February 24); Francesco Siparelli, bookseller (May 24); Carlo Bai, student, (July 31); Francesco Alemanno, Domestic, blacksmith (September 6); Francis O'Donnellan, Salesian cleric (October 20); Archimedes Accornero (October 24). There is no date for the death of Alemanno in our records, but we found it in the Turin Obituary Lists of *l'Unita Cattlioca* (September 8). On November 3rd, the young man Joseph Torretta, a pupil of the first high school grade, lower section, died, too. But when Don Bosco had spoken thus in December 1884, this boy had not yet come to the Oratory.

[38] *Minutes of the Superior Chapter* (May 26, 1886).

Germany. The mediation of the pope was accepted by both sides and put an end to a dispute that would otherwise have degenerated without a doubt into war. The Roman Question, which was hanging on Italy like the sword of Damocles, proved to be alive and threatening also in this event. The Italian government used to show forth its self-assuredness that a solution would be neither possible nor even desirable. Yet it was instantly plunged into a state of alarm every time a leaf rustled in the Vatican. The fact that even Bismarck had called for the papal mediation and had bowed before it in a manner which acknowledged the international standing of the Holy See before the eyes of the whole world appeared to be a precedent loaded with consequences for the Italian unity with Rome as its capital. The official organs of the various parties trembled and unleashed their old long-winded cart of abuses against the Pope. Don Bosco rejoiced over the triumph of the Church.

Taking the clue from the repercussions of this incident on the free Masonic-ridden Italy of that time, he made a prediction that the Roman Question would be solved. This prediction encompassed both the inevitability of such a solution and the manner in which it would come about. He formulated two hypotheses, of which the second did not seem probable even to Catholics, yet turned out to be the one selected by Divine Providence.

On November 21st, after listening to what was being said about this burning topical question, Don Bosco spoke as follows with some of his close friends, "Certainly neither Germany nor Spain will pass over such an outstanding service as the one rendered to them by the Pope without some sort of recompense. Italy trembles and is afraid. Now what would happen if the Pope were to call on Germany, to act as mediator between himself and Italy and somehow call also for Germany's protection? Italy is afraid and keeps silent, for her own sake, but perhaps within a short while being afraid of the big powers of Europe, she will herself appeal to one of them to act as mediator between herself and the Pope, or else she will appeal to the Holy Father Himself whom she is now forced to respect, and ask Him to propose the least dishonorable course by which this abstruse question can be solved."

Now when the second, more honorable course was taken in a new political climate, the motivating force was not fear, but the wisely acknowledged importance of the problem and the necessity of a fitting solution.

December 8th was a wonderful day for the Oratory. Don Bosco delighted everybody by appearing among the confreres for dinner. It was now very rare that he imparted benediction with the Blessed Sacrament in

church, but he did impart it that evening. People climbed on the benches in order to catch a glimpse of the venerable old man as, bent in body and with faltering steps, he moved toward the altar. Later in the evening he delivered the traditional talk to the Salesians in the choir loft of Mary Help of Christians. But that year, he had something to tell them that went beyond tradition: he had to announce the official appointment of Father Michael Rua as Vicar General.[39] Once Father John Baptist Francesia had read out the circular letter in reference to this assignment, the Saint spoke. He said that we owe everything to Mary and that all of the most important events of our Congregation had either begun or been completed on the feast day of the Immaculate Conception. He described what the Oratory had been forty-four years before and compared it with the Oratory as it looked then. He said that all the blessings that had been showered upon them were thanks to Our Lady and were all the outcome of the first *Ave Maria* that had been recited together with the young Bartolomew Garelli there in the Church of St. Francis of Assisi with true fervor and the right intention. He ended by saying that our Congregation was destined to perform mighty deeds and to spread all over the world, provided that the Salesians remained faithful to the rules given them by the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Viglietti wrote in his diary that Don Bosco spoke that evening with extraordinary vigor, and that he had been feeling much better for some time. Such an improvement looked as if it were to last longer. On the 13th, he gathered all the pupils of the fourth and fifth high school grades in the library. He talked to them about vocation and sent them away happy, after giving them all a lot of hazel nuts. Again on Christmas Eve, he went down to the church to impart the benediction with the Blessed Sacrament. As the congregation was streaming out of the church and the square was full of people, lo and behold, the cardinal was riding in his coach. He had come to thank Don Bosco in person for the good news he had received by mail.

Another indication that Don Bosco's health was improving was given the evening of the 31st when after evening prayers he gave the *strenna* for the New Year to all the Oratory people from the pulpit of the Church of Mary Help of Christians:

"Two greetings, my dear children, are being repeated tonight by parents, companions and friends: *Buona Fine and Buon Pricipio* [Happy Ending, Happy Beginning]. Nevertheless, when I said Mass this morning

[39] See this volume, page 280 of the original.

I could not get rid of what I was going to say tonight to my beloved children. An inspiration kept on haunting me and said, 'This is good. A happy ending and a happy beginning!' This might be enough for the rest of the world but not for my children! Nevertheless when I said my Holy Mass, I felt as if Our Lord were speaking to my heart, 'This good wish is not your own. Why do you not wish them something that is yours and which depends on them? For the other wish certainly does not depend on them.'

"Now what is there that I can wish you? Prayer! Pray! I shall pray to God that He may keep you for a long time to come, that you may end the old year well and begin the new one well and go on living in it well and in a holy fashion. This is already good. Prayer! But I ought to say something more specific, so I will say that this year is about to die and will never again return, but it will instead be set-aside in *perpetuae aeternitatis annos* [among the eternal years]. The new year will come; if we are going to begin it well, it will all be to the greater glory of God and the great benefit of your family, friends, benefactors and superiors. If we are going to begin it not so well it will all be wrong and time will be wasted. I say this in passing.

"If I had the time and my strength would allow me, I would speak to you of things that will take place this year. I would tell you that just as several people who were here listening to me last year are no longer among the living now, so will no less than six of those who are listening to me tonight be missing at this time next year. They will appear before Our Lord to render account of their actions, and let us hope that their actions may have been good.

"I would like to tell you about the great mishaps that will befall someone in this very house and of the many joys that many of those who are here tonight will receive. I would like to tell you of the general calamities that will affect our country. But let us leave all these things hidden in God's secret designs so that He may permit them to come to pass for the greater glory of good people and for the wholesome fear and correction of the evil ones. He is Our Loving Father and He blesses us at all times and does not send us these punishments save to induce us to appeal to His Mercy.

"I would rather say a few words to you about what you should do during the course of the coming year. First of all, go often to Holy Communion, but receive it well, in a fitting manner, and with a clear conscience. Each of you should receive Communion after making a good confession and with a steadfast resolution of carrying out the promises made during Holy Confession. Therefore, go often to Holy Communion.

"Secondly, saints and spiritual directors maintain that there is a virtue which generates and protects all the others: obedience.

I would like to explain what is meant by the word *obedience,* but other people will do so instead. Do everything you can to practice obedience as it will be explained to you, and you will derive great benefits for both soul and body. True obedience does not mean to do what you yourself want. No, someone will explain to you what this virtue really means.

"After all this, I will pray every day for you and I beg you to pray for me. For if I say that you cannot be sure of being still alive next year, there is far more reason to say the same of poor Don Bosco. It becomes more and more obvious every day that it is time for him to think of the hereafter, month after month and even day after day.

"So please remember me in all your prayers and whenever you go to Communion. I will now conclude. If we spend our mortal life well, we have good reason to hope that we shall all meet together again in Life Immortal. We shall have the joy and happiness of abandoning temporal things to meet together, all of us, in the splendor of God *in sempiternos aeternitatis annos* [for eternity]."

We will now add an epilogue to all the things we have reported in this chapter, one that could not be more appropriate and was provided for us by a Liberal paper from Emilia in a correspondence from Turin in November.[40] As an opening to it, the correspondent submitted a statement of principle by way of exorcism, or as one might say more vulgarly, to ward off the evil eye. Namely, he expressed reservations on the diversity of religious and political creeds and on his own disagreement with the political and social fitness of a direction taken by Don Bosco and handed down to his institutions. All the same, the acknowledgment of the work itself and of its author, coming as it does from a militant activist in an enemy camp that was actively hostile to him, acquires double value in our eyes.

After such an introduction, a topographical description of the Oratory as viewed by a profane eye followed:

> Just try to imagine one of our own boroughs in Emilia built around a majestic looking church. Enlarge that vision of buildings, then put them all together and embellish them, not like our buildings that cut such a sorry figure in our own boroughs. Then add a coating of cleanliness, order and feverish activity in workshops

[40] *La Stella d'Italia* (November 13, 1885).

> and classrooms, and you will see the Valdocco Institution. It is fascinating! Over a thousand persons live there and are trained to work, to have a good idea of what family is and a good self-awareness. For the most part, they are poor unfortunates who are prepared for a less grim future under strict but wise and charitable discipline that educates and nourishes the paupers. It is also wonderful that in the Valdocco Institution one finds many different establishments all united together. Each of them would be enough to give credit to an experienced industrialist. Here we have a shop for blacksmiths, there a carpenter's workshop. Further on a magnificent and fully equipped printing shop. A little further ahead, a composition room. To our right, a well-stocked and carefully selective bookstore. To our left, a workshop for tailors, another for bookbinders. Everywhere there is a silence, but a happy, confident silence, I might say. Everywhere admirable order reigns and it is, so to speak, a spontaneous one because here you can detect more the feeling rather than coercion of duty and discipline. But the thing that counts for everything in such an institution, one that is evidenced by all and everyone, is a serene atmosphere of peace, of well-being that delights and heartens one.

The unwitting reader found in this article a desire to know how this eighth wonder of wonders came about, namely the desire to know how a man could ever have created, directed and nourished this miniature world. The correspondent went on:

> Dear readers, you will agree with me that without a sacred spark, all of this cannot be conjured up out of nothing. Such miracles are not possible without some superior mind. A daring attitude, an outstanding mental ability, and the definite ability to get things done are not enough. A captain does not win the battle unless he has the support of his generals. The Valdocco Institution would not prosper without, over and above, the mind that conceived, controls and inspires it and able arms to take care of its order and its very life. Truly enough, Don Bosco must have a wonderful gift for knowing the men with whom he deals, for he has known who to select as his reliable ministers, to lead and safeguard his creation.

At the meeting of the past pupils, Father John Baptist Francesia had made the witty comparison between Don Bosco and Napoleon in his Piedmontese verses. The journalist had had some hint, we know not from where, of this bold comparison, and lingered on it to make some reflections of his own:

> Don Bosco has been compared to Napoleon I. The man who made this commendable comparison was one of Don Bosco's own generals. Therefore, he could not quote the greatest gift of all which makes this comparison possible, namely the gift of knowing how to choose his generals wisely. I do not have the honor of knowing them all. But if they are all as wise as experienced, as gentle and full of fortitude as the Reverend Professor John Baptist Francesia, who is the director of studies in that institution, I can no longer wonder at such splendid achievements. He is a Latin scholar and only a few like him can be found in Italy today. He is an inspired and polished poet, a writer of learned, polished prose. His manner is exquisitely courteous, and he has the utmost authority because of his stainless life and holiness of morals. In that institution he is a mentor, a father, a model.

The article ended with the recommendation to the readers that if they should chance to visit Turin, they should not forget to pay a visit to the *Valdocco Institution.* Perhaps his liberal nerves were disturbed by the more simple term *The Oratory of St. Francis of Sales* or *Oratory of Don Bosco*, instead of the description he had chosen, namely the Valdocco Institution; but fifty years after the event, we can safely assert that the article of this liberal author truly deserved to be preserved in our files, as indeed it was.

If the sight of the Oratory made such an impression on many strangers who visited it, its memory kept tenacious roots in the hearts of anyone who ever lived there. "Despite the high mountains and the infinite seas separating us, I never cease to look back with my mind's eye at the beloved Oratory," a missionary who had been a student there for three years commencing in 1865 wrote from China, "and I feel as if I could see all of my dear companions one by one."[41]

[41] Letter from Father Pacifico Fenocchio, Franciscan, to Don Bosco (Chang-Chun, September 22, 1885). Don Bosco had someone answer the letter November 24th.

Chapter 18

THE DUKE OF NORFOLK

As Don Bosco got off the coach in the Oratory playground on his return from his latest trip to France, the chaplain of the duke of Norfolk approached him and talked with him for several minutes in Italian. The saint asked about the duchess and her son who had just arrived in Turin, but who were not feeling very well and were tired after their train journey. He also asked about the duke and requested the kind chaplain to give him his own respects. The chaplain was expected to make arrangements then and there for an audience for his masters, but Don Bosco quickly said that he would be available for them at any time. Then they took leave of each other.

Just as the chaplain was leaving, Don Bosco noticed two foreigners walking behind the priest and greeted them, thinking they might belong to duke's retinue. As he noticed Don Bosco's gesture, the chaplain singled out one of them and said, "Look, Father. This is the duke of Norfolk. He speaks French fluently."

Don Bosco was amazed that so great a gentleman should be casually dressed and wearing a wide hat. There was certainly none of the aristocratic severity peculiar to the English noblemen about the duke, since he wore a modest commoner suit. Even his servants were better dressed than he. They now shook hands cordially and exchanged greetings. The saint asked him to forgive his misunderstanding, and they talked together for a few minutes to the great satisfaction of the duke who had come there incognito, so that he could form a better opinion of Don Bosco.

Before we go any further, we wish to relate a few facts that will help complete others already mentioned in Volume XV.[1]

His Highness, Duke Henry Fitzalan-Howard, the fifteenth duke of Norfolk, earl of Arundel, Surrey and Norfolk, earl marshall of England, knight of the Garter, foremost duke and earl of the realm, and member of the House of Lords, was one of the most influential leaders of the Catholic community in Great Britain. With admirable fidelity, he had

[1] Vol. XV, page 465.

remained true to the Catholic faith handed down to him by his ancestors from the days of Henry VIII. He was thirty-eight years old.

In 1877, he had married Lady Flora Abney-Hasting of the Lords of Donnington. Both of them were fervent servants of the Church of Rome. They owned an immense fortune, but invested great part of it in good works, such as the upkeep of monasteries and other Catholic Church agendas.

Yet the marriage had not been successful in producing a large family. They only had one child who had been blind from birth and also suffered from a disease that was incurable. Words could not describe the desperation of this deeply religious couple over the plight of their unhappy child who at the time was about five years old. But his physical sufferings were not their only problem. If the child had died, a Protestant branch of the family would inherit the Duke's fortune under British law. Having heard of the reputation of holiness that surrounded the name of Don Bosco, they had made up their minds to visit him and bring along their son, hoping that his blessing might restore the child's health and eyesight. The boy's mother had already written of this intention to the saint in April:[2]

Arundel, April 15, 1885

My dear Don Bosco:

We have at last made up our minds to come and see you in Turin, thus postponing our pilgrimage to Lourdes until next fall.

We have decided on the month of May as the most propitious time of the year because the great heat will not have begun by then. So we shall be in Turin by the 5th of that month. Would you please let us know, Don Bosco, if we shall have the good fortune of finding you there at that time? If you were away, the whole journey would be without purpose. We are deeply grateful to you for the very gracious letter you were so kind as to write us, and for your promise to keep a little place for us in your heart. Ah! How many mishaps, how many sorrows, must have been confided to your charitable heart, mishaps and sorrows so great that ours in comparison are nothing. Now Father, I have something to tell you in all confidence: I come from a Protestant family (which is now converted), but many of my ancestors have done many sorts of evil, a great amount of harm. Now when I became a

[2] This letter was possibly written in English, but we only found the Italian translation.

mother, and the mother of a son, I prayed to the Dear Lord, almost making a promise to Him, to afflict him with any kind of sickness, even death, rather than allow him to commit any sin. I did this when the boy was sick, and so far I have not even told my husband about it. On account of it, I am often full of anguish and assailed by doubts. At any rate, as you see, I cannot complain if the good God has given such an affliction to my poor child, yet this does not prevent me from feeling the full burden of it, and now and then I find it difficult to resign myself to His Divine Will.

I regret having to write you in English. From your letter I think that you have mistaken me for my husband's mother, who knows Italian very well, whereas I myself do not know a word of it.

Hoping to pay my respects to you soon in Turin, I pray you to believe me, dear Don Bosco,

Your most obliged servant,
Flora, Duchess of Norfolk.

Don Bosco received the letter on April 24th while at Nice, France. Father Rua had forwarded it, so he anticipated his return by several days.[3] He was greatly confused at reading such flattering expressions written with such humility.[4]

Not knowing the cause of his delay in answering her letter, since she expected a prompt reply, the duchess called on Monsieur Albert Du Boys, Don Bosco's second French biographer, to act as intermediary. She asked Mother Abbess of the Poor Clares in London, whose convent was under the patronage of the duke, to write as much to the above mentioned Monsieur Du Boys. The novice mistress had suggested this because she knew Monsieur Du Boys, for she herself had been converted to Catholicism by Monsignor Dupanloup and had been solemnly received into the church in the author's own chapel. Monsieur Du Boys therefore wrote to Don Bosco on April 28th:

It is not a question of gratifying the wish or the tenderness of an Englishwoman, a good Christian and of illustrious family. This, most Reverend Father, is a cause you must champion *totis viribus* before Mary Help of Christians, and I am convinced that

[3] Letter to Count Colle (Nice, April 24,1885).
[4] Viglietti's diary (April 24, 1885).

you will win it. Naturally, as we say, there will be a *subsidiary clause* one might stipulate with the Divine Mother, namely that in the event that the firstborn child would not recover, Our Lady deign to grant the Duchess of Norfolk a second son. This second son could save everything insofar as the Catholic interests. Although maternal tenderness would barely be appeased by this solution.

Both the duke and Don Bosco had arrived punctually for their appointment. The visit was scheduled for the morning of May 7th, at eleven o'clock. It was only a few minutes before the hour when four coaches arrived at the Oratory, carrying the duke and duchess with their son, their chaplain, footmen and other servants – eighteen people in all. The little blind boy was immediately accompanied inside the church to the foot of the main altar, and then the group went upstairs to see Don Bosco. When the duke and duchess appeared on the balcony, the band struck up the British national anthem "God Save the Queen." They stood there a minute, graciously accepting the tribute. The day before the duke had said to Don Bosco, "I shall remain here until you have healed my son." To which Don Bosco replied in utter simplicity, "Good, good! That means I will appoint you chairman of the festivities for Mary Help of Christians."

When the little boy heard that he was in the presence of Don Bosco, he groped for his hand and kissed it, pressing it tightly and laughing animatedly, while his mother exclaimed in deepest feeling, "I never saw him do that ever before, he is not so demonstrative even when his father takes him in his arms."

They all attended Don Bosco's Mass in his own little chapel on the morning of the 8th. Later, the duke and duchess had some coffee with him. They were full of admiration at the sight of the multitude of boys, but they were impressed most of all by Don Bosco's manner and his way of talking. They came to the shrine every morning and evening, edifying those who saw them with their piety. They left for Florence and Rome on the 10th.[5] "To come to Italy and not go to Rome," Don Bosco said, "would be the same as if an Italian were to go to Rome and not see the Pope."

They left, but planned to come back. Don Bosco wanted them to be at Valdocco on June 2nd, the feast day of Mary Help of Christians, but since

[5] Letter from the Saint to Count Colle (Turin, May 10, 1885).

they could not remain in Italy for that length of time, they again came to perform their devotions on May 24th. Don Bosco celebrated Mass at the altar of St. Peter that day, as was previously mentioned. The duke and his wife attended his Mass, kneeling within the altar rails, and receiving Communion very fervently. All absorbed in prayers after Communion, during their thanksgiving, they did not notice that a miracle was taking place in front of them. The little altar boy, who served the Mass and saw it with his own eyes and heard it with his own ears, is still alive. He was then in the fourth high school grade. He is today the Rev. Father Joseph Grossani, pastor of Moncucco of Vernate in the archdiocese of Milan. Every time he recalls this episode, he is filled with saintly enthusiasm.

As is the usual practice when people go to Communion *infra Missam* at an altar where the Blessed Sacrament is not permanently kept, a small pyx with just enough hosts for the communion of the duke, duchess and their following had been put on the altar. There were not more than twenty hosts in all, just enough for the group. The saint consecrated them. When it was time for Communion, the number of the faithful had filled almost the entire area beyond the altar rails and the nearby pews. As soon as they saw who was celebrating Mass, they came to the altar and knelt down on the steps, pushing one another so that they, too, might receive Communion from his hand. Both the altar boy and the main sacristan tried to make them understand that there were only a few hosts and that they would have to leave the other hosts for the English party, but nobody paid any attention. It was too great a good fortune to pass up, the possibility of receiving Communion from the hand of Don Bosco.

When Don Bosco noticed that they were trying to send away those who did not belong to the English party he told the altar boy, "Let go!"

"But the hosts are numbered! Shall I have some brought over from the main altar?" the boy asked.

"Let go! Let go!" he said.

The altar boy no longer ventured to insist, but he was noticing with growing astonishment the genuine miracle of the multiplication of the hosts, for without breaking even one single host, Don Bosco kept on administering Communion to scores of the faithful. Today Father Grossani asserts with conviction that there were over two hundred communicants. The English party did not notice it, nor did the Italians, and the pastor to this day fails to understand why no one has attributed any importance whatsoever to the reiterated account of what happened. This is, in fact, the first time that this story has been printed.

The English pilgrims left Turin on the 25th and a day later, Don Bosco wrote to Count Colle: "They were delighted with their stay here with us, and with the improvement of the sick boy."

Besides what we have already mentioned about their first visit, the evening of the 23rd Don Bosco was able to have the boy walk for a few steps, which up to that time had never been possible. In his diary Viglietti wrote under the date of the 28th: "Don Bosco told me that the duke of Norfolk has written to him to say he is very pleased because they find the boy much improved. But, he says, he is leaving it all in the hands of God. It is not a question of healing him, but of creating a mind and vision now missing."

Later Don Bosco told the superiors that the duke had left money to treat the boys to a little feast. The secretary mentioned that he had given ten thousand lire as alms prior to his departure.

Several newspapers, particularly *La Nazione* of Florence, mentioned the duke's visit to that city and his journey to Rome, but none of them referred to the true reason of his visit, nor of his stay in Turin. This was reported in an article on May 27th by *L'Unita Cattolica*, from which we will glean a few details:

> With admiration, we and other people have come to know that the duke and duchess and their whole retinue of eighteen persons received the holy sacraments several times in the shrine of Mary Help of Christians, and attended all the many devotions of the month of Mary held in that church both morning and evening. One might well say that on the first day of the novena (the 24th), the duke spent the entire day in the church and the adjoining house of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales where the Reverend Don Bosco resides. It would be impossible to describe his veneration for the man of God: it looked as if he did not know how to tear himself away from his company; nor could we describe the admiration that he and his entourage felt for the many and varied charitable undertakings our beloved Don Bosco was involved in. When the Duke, who is a generous and practical man, visited the Oratory, he did not overlook a thing. He asked to see the dining room, the kitchen, the workshops, the bakery, etc. He was delighted with everything that Don Bosco and his sons had done to try to make his visit a pleasant one. His heart was touched as a faithful subject of England when he heard his own national anthem played by the boys in the band. Visibly moved, he

> applauded and thanked Don Bosco for the gracious thought, saying that never in his life before had he ever listened to that anthem with greater satisfaction.

In its issue of May 30th, the Catholic weekly from Prato also wrote, among other things:

> The duchess was truly admirable and in her mood of tears and grief, she really looked as if she wished to force the Queen of Sorrows to take pity on her unhappy plight. I learned that their piety was not merely a put-on but a genuine one. Several times the whole family received the holy sacraments in that church, and apart from their fast trip to Rome, their steps were always directed towards the Church of Mary Help of Christians during the two weeks they spent in Turin. Oh, what a shock it would be to British heresy if the Virgin were to grant their prayers!

To our knowledge, nothing more came regarding the relationship between Don Bosco and the duke of Norfolk until 1887 when the duke stopped in Turin on May 23rd to visit with Don Bosco on his way to Rome. He called on him at the Oratory, had a long talk with him, and remained for dinner with the superiors.

Word of a miraculous occurrence concerning the duke's family relates to that same year. We heard of it from the Jesuit Cyril Martindale in the year of the Don Bosco's canonization. He reported it to Father Aeneas Tozzi, the Provincial for the Salesians of England. We knew that the venerable Father Martindale was very fond of Don Bosco. In fact, Father Aeneas Tozzi chose him to compose a hymn to be sung in church in honor of the new saint. Then he asked him how it was that his family had so strong a feeling about Don Bosco. This was arousing all the more astonishment in view of the fact that Lord Martindale was still a Protestant, and Father Cyril, his son, was a convert. This is the explanation he gave:

The duchess of Newcastle, a distant relative of his father and a great friend of the Norfolks, had gone to Lourdes to implore the long coveted recovery of their child. While there, although she was by no means a woman easily swayed by emotions, nor endowed with any living fantasy, something so phenomenal occurred that she feared she was suffering from hallucinations. While she was praying in the Grotto, she seemed to hear a voice saying, "Pray for the mother, not for the son." She turned

around to see if anyone near her was talking, but there was not a soul in sight. A few moments later, she heard the same words uttered again, and became somewhat alarmed. An overwhelming urge to call on Don Bosco remained with her all the way to Turin. She was granted an audience with the saint upon her arrival. As she entered his room, he was writing. He went on with his work without paying any attention to his visitor who could not understand why a priest for whom she had such a great esteem should behave in this fashion.

At last, calmly putting his pen aside, Don Bosco turned to the duchess and said quietly but quite abruptly, "Pray for the mother, not for the son." Precisely just like at Lourdes!

Very much alarmed, the duchess prayed as she had been told to do in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, and when she got back to London, her friend, the duchess of Norfolk died within four days. Hence the origin of the affection which the Anglican Martindale family felt for Don Bosco, and of their attachment to his memory.

The same year that the duchess died, Don Bosco opened the house at Battersea in London, as we shall see in due course, and sent two British Salesians there in November with a letter of introduction and recommendation addressed to the duke of Norfolk:

Turin, November 13, 1887

Your Highness:

When Your Highness honored our humble hospice with your presence, your late pious wife, the Countess, was pleased to see how the boys of this hospice practiced our Christian faith, and voiced her hopes of seeing to her gratification a hospice similar to our own in Turin founded in the city of London where many poor boys who are found abandoned and exposed to danger, especially insofar as their religious instruction was concerned. At the time, we did not have sufficient personnel, but at the present time, we could have people available and I would be willing to venture with this foundation that had already begun with a church in Battersea.

For the present no less than five Salesians would go there, and if necessary, others will follow. Certainly, an undertaking of this kind requires courage, especially in such a great city as London. But God who has assisted us in our other foundations will also come to our aid in this, and I hope it will have the support of Your Highness. This church is already equipped with some furniture

donated by a few charitable citizens, but as yet, we have nothing at all for the house where the priest instructors are to live. I am appealing to Your Highness for help and advice in reference to these initial needs. Our Father Macey and Father Edward Patrick MacKiernan will take the liberty of paying my respects to you in person, and will seek your precious advice. Here we all recall your visit with us, with great pleasure, and every day we say special prayers, asking God to shower His abundant blessings on you, your whole family, and especially on the precious offspring who is still the special subject of our prayers and common concern.

I am greatly honored to be with the deepest respect and veneration,

Your most humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

There is a copy of another letter written in French two weeks before the saint entered into eternity now in our files. Those were the days when hearts were full of high hopes, for Don Bosco's sickness had not only entered into a remission phase, but also had even shown remarkable improvement.

On January 7th, Father Charles Viglietti wrote that Don Bosco was almost capable of getting up, writing and working. It is hardly likely that Don Bosco wrote the letter of his own hand, although the remark in parenthesis was one found exclusively in his correspondence. This is what he wrote to the duke on January 13, 1888:

I will now give you news about myself. I am always in bed; my health is always unstable and I do not know when I shall be able to get up. God's will be done! I am very much perturbed by something just now: the debts of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. We have concentrated our efforts on it for the past ten years, yet there are still 250,000 francs to be paid, and I have been recently asked to pay up. That is one of my major worries. If Your Highness could help me in whatever measure your charity and present circumstances may permit, it would be an immense relief to me. You would be doing something immensely helpful to our poor Salesian Society and the whole universal Church, something therefore most agreeable in the eyes of God and His vicar on earth, the Most Holy Father who did himself entrust this Church

> of the Sacred Heart in Rome to us. Our poor orphans (over 250,000 of them) will always pray together with me for your spiritual, temporal and eternal happiness. God bless you and comfort you, Your Grace, and may He reward you becomingly for any assistance you may give to the Salesian Congregation.[6]

The anxious thought about the Sacred Heart Church troubled him until the very end of his life!

The letter has the Rome address, so the duke was, in fact, in that city. The year of 1888 began with worldwide demonstrations in honor of Leo XIII, who was celebrating his golden episcopal jubilee. Sovereigns and heads of states sent outstanding delegations to pay tribute and present costly and varied donations to the Pope at the Vatican. Even Queen Victoria of England appointed a brilliant mission, made up of noblemen and led by the duke of Norfolk, to go to Rome. On his way through Turin, the duke stopped at the Oratory and called on the saint as he was lying sick in bed and remained with him for about half an hour, kneeling by his side on the floor. The above-mentioned letter reminded the duke of his visit. The great patient gave him several messages for the Holy Father and asked for news of the new Salesian house in London. The Duke had earnestly begged him to model the London house after the Oratory. They also talked of his own country and of the missions in China. Don Bosco added something more about Ireland. Finally the humble nobleman requested his blessing, undoubtedly thinking that that would be the last blessing imparted by a dying saint.

The duke's little son, who was the subject of so much concern, never recovered. In 1904, his father married for a second time. He married Baroness Herries who in 1908 presented him with the present heir, Barnard of Norfolk. The duke died peacefully in 1917 at the age of seventy. In a letter he wrote to the Salesian Father Eugene Rabagliati, who spent the greater part of his life in England, this most Christian gentleman said that if Don Bosco had not cured his child, he had nevertheless told him things so comforting that they had even greater value than the recovery itself would have had.[7]

[6] Appendix, document 64.

[7] Father John Boselli, a Salesian priest who is still alive today, saw and read this letter in London with his own eyes; the reason for writing it was to thank Father Eugene Rabagliati for having sent him as a gift, a copy of the book *Twenty-Five Years*.

Chapter 19

THE CHURCH AND HOSPICE OF THE SACRED HEART AND MORE ABOUT THE LOTTERY

One cannot read the kind of words Don Bosco used to obtain help on behalf of the Church of the Sacred Heart in the edited letter to the Duke of Norfolk (mentioned earlier) without being moved. When we remember that he wrote these words during his final illness, barely eighteen days before his death, we can really say that the Roman undertaking was a nightmare for him from the year 1881 until his last breath. For this project, though in a deplorable condition of health, he undertook tiresome journeys that completely exhausted him. "I accompanied Don Bosco on several occasions on his journeys through Italy and southern France in order to raise money, money needed to build that church," Father Francis Cerruti testified during the hearings.[1] "I was a witness to the terrible exertions and intense physical and moral sufferings he endured in order to meet with the Pope's wishes. I am in fact intimately convinced that such exertions and suffering shortened his life."

Here again must we repeat that work did progress on the church and hospice, but costs piled upon costs and the donations collected were not enough to cover them. By suggesting to the Holy Father that, in his munificence, he might undertake building the facade, Don Bosco had hoped to create yet a new expedient by which he could further stimulate the generosity of the faithful. He began by a simple, unadorned announcement made to the Turin cooperators at their meeting on May 23, 1884. Then, he informed all the cooperators about it in a circular letter on May 31st. The august example set from such a high level was already in itself an invitation to contribute toward the undertaking. But Don Bosco did not stop there. Inspired by him, *l'Unita Cattolica* on June 20th exhorted Italian Catholics with two separate articles to send donations to relieve the Pope of the commitment he had undertaken. The first article said the following:

[1] *Summ. Sup. Virt.*, number III, #67.

> Like the Holy Pontiff, Don Bosco is also a beggar and lives on alms. He is calling upon the charity of Catholics, but not for himself. Do you know how much Don Bosco spends during the course of the year? Three million lire, and if he spends that much, he also has to find that much, somehow. And find it he does, or rather, the Lord sends it to him. He now has to spend two million in Rome, for the Sacred Heart Church and the adjoining Oratory. The first person to come to his assistance is an august pauper, the Roman pontiff, the most charitable Leo XIII, who granted it to Don Bosco during the last audience. He assumed all the costs of the church facade. This may exceed one hundred thousand lire, for in papal Rome churches are built on a magnificent scale and the Church of the Sacred Heart will be well worthy of Rome. This church is to be built as an act of reparation, much like the chapel of expiation in Paris, and also as a monument to the fund of Peter's Pence and to the charity of the Catholics toward the pontiff who has been robbed of everything.

These final words hinted at a wider idea that had already matured in the mind of Don Bosco, though he did not as yet feel that it was sufficiently mature to be made public. Cardinal Alimonda acted as Don Bosco's spokesman before the Holy See on October 15, 1884, when he suggested to present the project of the construction of the facade of the church to the Italians as a national vow to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and to invite them to contribute toward it with donations. The proposal met with favorable acceptance, as we can see from this letter written by the secretary of state to the archbishop of Turin:

> Rome, October 20, 1884
>
> Most Eminent and Reverend Archbishop:
>
> I was pleased to inform the Holy Father of the project Your Eminence outlined to me in your letter of the 15th of this month, and I am delighted to inform you that it met with the fullest approval of His Holiness who cordially blesses not only the creators and sponsors of the idea, but also all the pious and faithful Italians who will contribute with their offerings to the above mentioned national vow to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. If, as there can be no doubt, the project is successful, there will be a lasting

memory of these donations on the facade of the Church of the Sacred Heart in this capital. I am pleased to inform you that in the appeal which is to be published in this connection, mention may be made both of the approval of the project and of the blessing of the Holy Father extended to all those hereto subscribing, and am meanwhile honored to serve you with the greatest esteem, while I humbly kiss your hands,

Your most obliged and sincere servant,
L. Cardinal Jacobini.

But before the matter was made public, Leo XIII dictated a restriction on Alimonda's project on February 1, 1885. He wanted one single central office to be established for collecting offerings contributed to the construction of the facade and that the cardinal himself would be in charge and all money contributed by Italian faithful should be remitted to the Vatican. Don Bosco instantly realized the drawbacks such a ruling would bring about, and his concern was eloquently confirmed almost immediately. The Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools came to Turin on February 15th with twenty-thousand lire accumulated by his own religious,[2] but not being able to hand the sum over to Don Bosco, he had to take it with him to Rome. The sum represented a contribution to the cost of the facade, and the saint knew what the Pope wished to be done. This entailed an endless amount of work for Father Francis Dalmazzo before he was able to claim and make use of that money!

Meanwhile, debts increased and the bookkeeping was haphazard because Father Francis Dalmazzo didn't have an understanding of such a work or the time to give any great attention to his books. Hence, no account was kept of money that was paid out. In May, Father Michael Rua went to visit the Salesians and the nuns in Sicily, and on his way back home, he tried to check the books to see what had been spent, but this would have called for more time than he could possibly dedicate to it. So on June 12th, he proposed before the Superior Chapter that work be suspended until all accounts had been

[2] See vol. XV, page 412.

checked and settled. Don Bosco said, "Write to Father Francis Dalmazzo as follows: suspend the work, check what the building is costing and what materials have already been bought. Then Father Anthony Sala should go to Rome, if necessary, to preside personally over the signing of the contract with the contractor Cuocco. We must give some serious thought to funds. The Holy Father has handed over to us the twenty thousand lire offered by the Brothers of the Christian Schools from France. The Pope has approved Cardinal Alimonda's project of making an appeal to Italian Catholics through their bishops, but now it appears that the cardinal secretary of state has limited this appeal to the diocese of Turin. This means putting too heavy a burden on the people of Turin. Cardinal Alimonda is going to write again. Meanwhile, I will write to the cardinal secretary of state, asking him to help us out, since there is a considerable flow of alms for the Church of the Sacred Heart going to the Pope."

He then read out the following observations he had written down when in Rome in 1884: "1. Keep an account of all that is coming in and going out. 2. Check the prices that have been stipulated. 3. Check the building materials that could be transferred elsewhere, since the foreman is working on other constructions in other localities; this applies to push-carts, bricks, mortar, etc. 4. See to it that no materials are wasted or stolen, especially the lumber."[3]

But Don Bosco's entire project for the facade of the Sacred Heart Church was still waiting for the propitious moment to be made public. Don Bosco had been studying it since winter with Cardinal Alimonda, Bishops Bertagna and Cagliero and Father Margotti. The ensuing set-backs delayed the announcement until May 25th, on which day the world-wide celebrations for the eighth centenary of the death of St. Gregory VII began. In connection with this event, the Catholic Italian press opened their pledge campaign for the Holy Father Leo XIII. It was necessary to let the aftermath of this centenary die down a little, and thus two and a half months went by before they acted.

At last on August 9th, *l'Unita Cattolica* appeared without its habitual black border, a sign of mourning, which it carried ever since September 20, 1870. It had a festive border to take its place, in order to confer a solemn and pontifical note to the occasion and it devoted the whole of its

[3] It was a known fact that truckloads of material had entered the yard on one side and had left it again on the other. These and other thefts that went on unhindered had been going on for some time.

front page and more than half of the second to the subject. The leading article was entitled *A Demonstration of Catholic Italy for the Church and Pope Leo XIII* and read as follows:

> Now the propitious moment has arrived when Italy can renew those outstanding protest demonstrations already carried out several times during the reign of Pius IX and that of the reigning Leo XIII. But this new protest demonstration should not only make its appearance in ephemeral newspapers, but should be recorded in a lasting monument, to be seen by the traveler as soon as he emerges from the railroad station upon arriving in Rome. This beautiful idea was conceived by an illustrious patrician from Piedmont, Count Cesare Balbo, in whose heart the noble, fearless faith of his father and grandfather lives on. The one who proposed it is our archbishop, His Eminence Cardinal Alimonda, who obtained the approval and blessing from the sovereign pontiff. As anyone can see, Don Bosco had disappeared from the scene and had put forward instead Count Balbo as the person who had first conceived the idea and the archbishop as the sponsor of the proposal. This was his customary strategy: induce others to work for his own ends, while he remained behind the scenes.
>
> "This is the only way to act, in the face of the enormous expenses entailed in the Sacred Heart Church," he told Charles Viglietti.

The above-mentioned article referred to the example given by France with the basilica of Mortmartre. After recalling how the church at Castro Pretorio had originated, it continued on:

> Once the building of the church was entrusted to the enlightened, indefatigable zeal of our own Don Bosco, its progress suffered no delay, and it might now be considered as practically completed. The Holy Father Leo XIII shouldered the enormous cost required for the magnificent facade in June 1884. Then that same year the cholera epidemic appeared which threatened Rome, and the loving generous pontiff paid out a large sum of money, despite his poverty, so that a hospital to which he might have easy access could be opened inside the Vatican. It was then that Count Cesare Balbo conceived the beautiful idea of suggesting to Catholic Italy an exceptional Peter's Pence collection for the completion of the

facade, as a national vow of those Italians who believe, pray and hope, and the same time as an act of gratitude and love toward the reigning pontiff, and as a monument which might prove that there is really no need for any conciliation between the true Italy and the Pope, since no discord reigns between the two, but both live in a most beautiful, most paternal and filial harmony.[4] When the Holy Father was informed of the moving project, he graciously approved and commended it, and now our archbishop has added to the project the authority of his own name and rank, and proposed that this be carried out by the Catholic Episcopate of Italy.

This article was followed by a series of documents, among them an appeal to the Catholic population of Italy and a letter from the cardinal to the archbishops of the entire region of Italy. This letter aiming at presenting the appeal to them had been sent out three weeks earlier with forms for the listing of pledges. This is the letter addressed to the Episcopate:

Turin, July 16, 1885
Feast of Our Lady of Carmel

Most Reverend Excellency:

I am sending to your Most Reverend Excellency the enclosed appeal in order to relieve the Holy Father of the heavy financial burden entailed in the building of the facade of the new Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus now being undertaken by the Salesian Congregation in Rome. Part of the church is already active as a parish. What I am doing exceeds the limit of my jurisdiction, since I have no relationship with Your Excellency other than that of a great admiration, fraternal charity and humble service. Nevertheless, I hope you will forgive my gesture if you consider my close relationship with the outstanding Fr. John Bosco and the first and main house of his Congregation, and the confidential friendship existing between us, which causes me to share with him his tense anxiety over the upkeep of many of his colossal charita-

[4] This was a small, political slap at Liberals and liberal-minded people who dreamed of a conciliation that would make no call on official Italy, but in which the Pope would purely and simply forego his own rights. The Catholic press of the day made a distinction between a real Italy (the land of good Catholics) and another legal Italy (the land of its governing party).

ble undertakings and the foundation of many others, among these being the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome and the adjoining edifice destined to rescue the poor children of Rome.

On the other hand, why would it not prove agreeable to the most amiable heart of Jesus the unanimous contribution of all the dioceses of Italy, consecrated to His name toward the beautifying of His church as a national vow and as a confirmation of a consecration already made, now that we are surrounded by new needs and new perils. But what encourages me the most is that I am introducing myself to you and making my appeal to you confidently on behalf of the Holy Father himself. The particular requirements of the rapidly expanding district and the population of Castro Pretorio already invaded by the "minister of error" has the Pope most anxious to see this monumental temple, begun with an appeal by his own Cardinal Vicar to all his dioceses of Italy and the world's, completed as soon as possible and adorned to the best of existing possibilities. That was the reason why the proposal for which I now invoke the contribution of Your Most Reverend Excellency, received both the encouragement of the Pope and his apostolic blessing.

I know that you will be greatly inconvenienced by the fact that I'm begging you to forward copies of this letter to your auxiliary bishops, with the enclosed appeal and forms. But I am confident that the holiness of the project will stir up the zeal of your most distinguished ecclesiastics and devout laymen who under so many trials have still remained steadfast and faithful to the Church and the Pope. I trust that it will not be long before I can place at His Venerated Feet a sum of money such as will enable him to build the facade of the Sacred Heart in no way inferior to those of the most celebrated basilicas. This facade, according to the estimate of the distinguished and late lamented architect, Commendatore Vespignani, will cost something in the area of two hundred thousand lire. The appeal to the Catholic people of Italy that, as is only proper, I am enclosing herewith to Your Most Reverend Excellency, will likewise be publicly announced in Catholic newspapers. The assistance of the Catholic newspapers will, I hope, be of valid support for the successful outcome of our undertaking. It only remains now for me to thank Your Most Reverend Excellency most cordially for the charitable zeal you will dedicate to the sponsoring of this holy undertaking, which

has been recommended as such by the Supreme Pontiff himself. Kissing your hand respectfully, I am honored to be,

Your most obliged servant,
Cajetan, Cardinal Archbishop

The appeal, written by the archbishop himself, eloquently developed the idea mentioned above and included some magnificent praise of Don Bosco: "There is a man, a most worthy ecclesiastic in Italy, to whom apparently many precious designs have been entrusted by Divine Providence." The Most Holy Pontiff Leo XIII turned his attention to this priest and he said, "To you shall we entrust the construction of the great temple which shall be consecrated to the devotion of the Sacred Heart in Rome. We also shall contribute toward it, taking upon ourselves the construction of the facade. And Fr. John Bosco set himself resolutely to work."

In referring to the current condition of the work, His Eminence went on: "The new church already stands high, with a spacious building alongside of it for the residence of the priests who will open a home for poor boys there with a day and night school. It stands there in the district of Castro Pretorio, opposite the chapel and school of the Protestants, almost like a Holy Ark facing Dagon. There where the new profane city of Rome begins, the Rome of the middle-class, the city of workers, of commerce and industry, there where as yet no Catholic church stands, and where religion is sorely missing, the temple stands there on the heights, as if it were looking out over the world, where there is a continuous arrival of visitors, on account of the immediate proximity of the central railroad. At first sight, this nascent temple holds out a great promise, and should become a worthy companion to other Roman monuments. But it is still waiting for its completion, its decorations, and the architectural friezes. Admirably, Don Bosco has already showered treasures into it, laboring alongside his sons in the Salesian Congregation. But other treasures are being requested in order to adorn it becomingly. But even though the ardent activity of the Salesians may be able to accomplish this, not everything will be completed. The temple waits for the classic facade from the Pope."

There followed a description of what had already been done and what needed to be done to carry out the proposal.

At Mathi, Charles Viglietti read to Don Bosco and the others during dinner the two pages of the newspaper carrying this lengthy address. As he did so, everyone noticed the saint's calmness and indifference to the litany

of praises to his name. In fact, precisely at the most important section of the article, since he had his glass in his hand, he drank from it as if nothing at all had taken place. He then had someone tell Father Lemoyne to have it all printed separately in a pamphlet to be sent to the cooperators.[5]

The bishops' responses were not slow in coming. Don Bosco congratulated Count Balbo on this, still attributing everything to him, but unwittingly revealing who had truly inspired the whole project in a phrase that expressed his whole being:

Turin, August 12, 1885

My dear Count Cesare:

As you may certainly know by now your idea and project were approved by the Holy Father and will, we hope, bear good fruit as the initial results indicate. We will labor indefatigably, but without ostentation for the Sacred Heart of Jesus. A generous reward is assured, is it not?

On Saturday we shall offer up special prayers to the Blessed Virgin Mary asking that she bless your whole family, keep you in good health and holiness so that you may all see her one day in Paradise, gathered around her.

Humble regards to you, your mamma, Countess Maria, and all your little cherubs. Please be so kind as to pray for me who am honored to be,

Your most affectionate friend and servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The Pope made himself heard while speaking with the cardinals on the occasion of his name day, St. Joachim's. He first deplored the destruction of several churches in Rome, due to new building plans, and then urged them *expressis verbis* to recommend that collections be taken up to help build the facade of the Sacred Heart Church.[6]

Since the Holy Father had made it clear he wanted the donations to be sent to the archbishop and then forwarded to the Vatican, nothing more had been said which might have hinted to any change in the program. So

[5] Viglietti's diary (August 9, 1885).

[6] L'Unita Cattolica (August 21, 1885).

in full agreement with the cardinal, Don Bosco set out to work to settle this matter in the best possible way. Under the auspices of the archbishop, an outstanding committee was appointed in Turin to take charge of the donations sent by the Italian dioceses and to be forwarded to Rome. The committee had its headquarters in the archbishop's palace and had to render an account of the donations, whenever there was any considerable amount of money to be forwarded to Rome. *L'Unita Cattolica* was to print the lists of donations with the names of the donors. Curias could apply to the committee secretary for forms and every pastor could apply for forms to the Curia in his respective diocese.[7]

It looked as if everything was coming along splendidly, when Hell suddenly hatched a plot that might have had disastrous consequences. At seven o'clock in the evening on September 29th, an arsonist tried to destroy the whole church building by setting fire to the scaffolding of the church. The various pillars of the outer scaffolding consisted each of four girders held together by smaller pieces of nailed joists. Some criminal had poured combustible liquid between two such girders and had then lit the fire. In a few moments, the flames had invaded the entire fence built all around for the safety of pedestrians passing by and reached all the way up to the level of the roof. Had the fire penetrated the inside of the building, it would have found ample fuel in the entire scaffolding, which had an estimated value of sixty thousand lire, not to mention the other damage which would have been done. But Divine Providence did not permit such destruction. Five water hoses arrived promptly on the spot, and working at intense speed, stopped the fire. There was never any evidence that the police had looked into this serious crime of arson in order to try to detect the criminal. The facade was to be a papal monument and in those tragic times, anything that had to deal with the Pope in Rome aroused the fiercest wrath of the sectarians.

The appeal raised 172,000 lire, but a great deal more would have been collected if it had not been thought wise to put an end to the collections

[7] Here below is the list of the committee members with the qualifications of each member a la Don Bosco (Don Bosco's peculiar way of using titles...out of fun!) The Most Reverend Monsignor Luigi of the Nasi Barons Family, collegiate doctor and Canon of the Cathedral; The Most Reverend Stanislao Schiapparelli, Domestic Prelate of His Holiness, Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Catholic Youth Organization; Most Reverend Commendatore Father Augusto Berta, collegiate doctor, Canon of the Congregation of the Most Holy Trinity, Ecclesiastical Assistant to the Catholic Workers Unions; the Very Reverend Father Maurizio Arpino, Curate at the Parish of Sts. Peter and Paul in Turin; Count Francesco Viacino di Viacino, President of the Piedmontese Regional Committee of Catholic Conventions; Baron Carlo Ricci des Ferres, Giuseppe Antonio Musso, banker, Treasurer; Canon Raffaele Forcheri, Secretary. They were all friends of Don Bosco.

in July of that year, so as not to paralyze donations for the golden jubilee of the Holy Father's ordination to be celebrated in 1886.

Don Bosco contrived still another manner of obtaining contributions. Every Salesian house would have been greatly honored to be represented in this monumental undertaking. So as the day approached when schools were to reopen, Don Bosco wrote to the directors suggesting two ways by which they might come to his aid:

Turin, September, 1884

My dear Father Director:

I earnestly wish that every house of our Pious Society be represented in some manner in the monumental Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus now nearing completion in Rome.

To this end, I earnestly ask you to sponsor a pledge among your boarders and day students attending your school for the current school year, and that you add to whatever is collected, the money which on the occasion of the name day of their director the boys usually collect for this same holy purpose.

To this same end, you might also try to solicit any Salesian cooperator who has any particularly cordial relations with the religious family entrusted to your care. While such donations will represent a heartening cooperation with my efforts and troubles on behalf of this magnificent construction, they will in particular call down the generous graces promised by the Sacred Heart of Jesus upon your house and the meritorious donors. For He gave us the assurance that He would generously bestow His blessings wherever those devoted to Him might undertake anything for His sake, and He also promised that He would be their Refuge in this world, and especially at the hour of their death.

Send any such money collected to me with the indications, if you so wish, of the thing you wish to have bought with it that would remain in that church as a gift from your house.

May the Divine Blessings be showered upon you, your pupils and all our well-deserving cooperators, and may the compassionate Virgin Mary guide us safely along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco.

There is little for us to say about the hospice insofar as the building is concerned. The foundations of the walls had been completed in December and on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Bishop Manacorda, the Bishop of Fossano, blessed the corner stone with great solemnity. Count and Countess Colle were to have been the godparents at this ceremony, but since they were unable to attend it, a friend of their household from Toulon, General Count d'Oncieu de la Batie, officiated in their stead with his wife and mother-in-law, Countess Soardo de la Serraz. In the ritual parchment Don Bosco wanted the purpose of the building under construction expressly outlined, namely that it was to "offer a home to young boys of all countries who were led to the Catholic metropolis by their hopes of finding work or making their fortune, and to save them from the corruption and ruin to which they were exposed, being surrounded most of their time by the most grave perils."

But three-quarters of what was written in the document dealt with praise of Count and Countess Colle. After acknowledging who they were, the document went on as follows:

> The charity which inspired them would not allow them to overlook the hospice built by Don Bosco, for whom they both felt an esteem and an affection which never waned and were the greater because of they greatly appreciated their chance of being associated with all his many charitable and pious undertakings. Although it is true that God has written all their virtuous acts in the book of life and will reward them in a measure befitting their merits, we nevertheless wanted to remember them briefly here, as an example to anyone who will one day open this document and to leave a remembrance of our gratitude and the gratitude of all for all the inexhaustible charity of Count and Countess Colle. While grateful prayers like fragrant incense will be offered up daily by the lips of children to the throne of God for their benefactors, it is our steadfast hope that in His Goodness God will raise among His people other men who will imitate their beautiful example and manifest the same charitable sentiments toward poor and abandoned youth as they did. We hope that such an example will help to rekindle the zeal of our cooperators and that, thanks to their generosity, we will soon end what we have undertaken so that we

> may lead back to God many poor boys now exposed to the perils of living far away from Him forever.[8]

Meanwhile, the lottery was following its course. Here, we will complete the account of the lottery that began in the two previous chapters.[9]

The cooperators had a wide-open field for their charity by selling tickets. Don Bosco had already praised their zeal and unselfishness in his circular letter dated January 1885:

> Not satisfied with keeping for themselves and selling the first tickets they had received, many cooperators requested other tickets. Quite a number of them remitted the sum covering the sale of the tickets together with the tickets themselves so that they might be sold to other people, thus being paid for twice over. Such unselfishness and generosity on the part of so many people in extending a helping hand to me in order to do good is a great comfort to me and in it I perceive the hand of God, for considering the critical year we are living in. this sentiment and this sincere proof of charity could not be explained without turning our thoughts to God who is the Lord of all hearts, and who makes easy that which in the eternal order of things would seem to be extremely difficult and arduous.

The gifts donated to be given as prizes were orderly displayed in 1885. Such a display was so interesting that it attracted visitors who generally never left without purchasing some tickets. All acknowledged that such a display was never seen in Rome before. It was laid out in the new buildings adjoining the church between the corridor and the twin sacristies inaugurated on January 20th. These rooms constituted the first three main halls. The first hall was dedicated to glassware and contained all the crystal objects with a scintillating splendor of myriad of colors, such as to give visitors the illusion of walking through a showroom at Murano. In the second room, the woodwork showcase, one could see inlaid objects of mahogany Indian walnut, varied, and exquisite carvings done with delicate objects of tortoise-shell and ivory. The third room, dedicated to books and art, had the appearance of a costly library. It con-

[8] See French issue of *Salesian Bulletin* (January 1886).

[9] Chapters III and IV.

tained theological works, books of philosophy, science literary works, and books on asceticism. There were also incunabula of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and this excited the curiosity of antique dealers.

Then came a suite of five smaller rooms. One room had walls and big tables covered with magnificent arrangement of ceramics and porcelain. One could admire huge, magnificent Japanese vases, tea and coffee service sets, a thousand playthings representing animals from the elephant to a mouse, from the eagle to the butterfly, as well as serpents and fishes. There were statuettes and figurines placed on marble or inlaid wood pedestals. Another room contained valuable articles, gold and silver objects shining in show windows and glass cases, many of the objects being encrusted with jewels. There were watches and pieces of jewelry and boxes, little coffers, graceful containers, the so-called *hold-alls*, decorated with silver and precious stones. The cooperators of Italy and France had vied with one another in sending necklaces, pendants, brooches, bracelets and rings of great value. There were an infinite number of articles in bronze and other metals. The last three rooms were reserved for ladies articles, products of such crafts having been sent in great profusion: embroidered silk, linen, wool and an immense quantity of laces.

There was no room especially dedicated to paintings, but in each of the rooms had paintings by well-known painters hanging on the walls, among them two Flemish artists whose works were estimated as having a value of twenty-five thousand lire each.

The printed catalogue listed 5,700 prizes, but later on, another 2,600 prizes were added. The date of the prize drawing was scheduled first for the end of April, but then postponed with the consent of the competent authorities to December 31st. Don Bosco had been obliged to seek such an authorization for three reasons: the great many tickets that still had to be sold; the constant arrival of more articles for prizes; and his need for money to continue building and pay off his debts.

During the last few months of the year, Don Bosco did everything he could to sell tickets everywhere, writing to eminent Italians and foreigners, as well as to retrieve tickets that had been sent out but were still unsold. He sent out the following circular letter all over Italy:

Turin, November 10

Dear Sir:

I beg your benevolent indulgence if I am now making a special call on your proven charity and goodness of heart. On

December 31st, the lottery winning numbers will be drawn. This lottery was organized some time ago for the benefit of the Hospice and Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. With praiseworthy competition, the Salesian cooperators lent a helping hand to this charitable enterprise that is also an act of faith by applying for tickets, selling them among their friends and acquaintances, and remitting the money thereon collected to the prescribed destination, little by little as they could. I am happy to list you among these benevolent people, and I am most cordially grateful to you.

But now as the date scheduled for the above- mentioned drawing is getting closer, and I still have several thousands of tickets unsold, I am obliged to call on you again for yet another favor. If you are still able to keep any tickets for yourself, or have any probability of selling some in your area, please be so kind as to apply for some tickets, so as to help me in this matter as you have done already. Should you still be holding some of the tickets previously sent to you, and you were unable to keep them for yourself, you would do me a great favor if you would distribute them to others as quickly as you can, collect payment on them and send the money to me in Turin. Should you on the other hand be unable to sell any of them, please be so kind as to return them to me at once, so that I may attempt to get rid of them elsewhere while there is still time.

I realize that I have already abused of your kindness and indulgence excessively, but you are also aware that I call upon your charity on behalf of many poor boys who are abandoned, and exposed to grave perils for both body and soul. I call upon your charity so as to complete a task of piety and faith which is very dear to the heart of the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, and which is all for the glory of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the honor of the Catholic Church, and the benefit of the civil society. It is for these reasons which for a noble heart are more valuable than any other reason, that I feel sure that you will not refuse me the favor I am asking, but that you will instead, feel happy to be in a position to cooperate in this way for the relief of human afflictions, and with a tender hope in your heart that you will receive the hundred fold reward which God promised us in this world and eternal life in the hereafter.

Full of profound gratitude, I pray to God and the Blessed

Virgin Help of Christians to extend over you and your dear ones the mantle of their divine and heavenly protection, while I am honored to remain with high esteem and the greatest respect,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

In almost every issue, the *Bulletin* carried a small news item that helped to keep the interest alive. At long last, the drawing of the winning numbers was announced, though the results could not be published so soon since an immense amount of work was involved in coordinating, registering and printing the numbers extracted with due precision. They were published in a special supplement to the February *Bulletin*.

The sale of a number of prizes that no one claimed yielded a substantial sum. We have not been able to find out exactly what the net profits were on the lottery, but it is certain that Don Bosco was gratified by the results, for in his circular letter to his cooperators in January 1886, he wrote, "Throughout the whole year, the tickets sold represented our biggest resource for keeping the works going."

Chapter 20

SOME HOUSES AND REQUESTS FOR NEW HOUSES IN ITALY

In this chapter, we shall deal with a few houses and a few requests made, but only with those that, apart from what we have already related in previous chapters, offer us an opportunity of recording some noteworthy idea or gesture on the part of our saint or a reference to things written by other people either for or against him and his work.

There were several houses scattered here and there in different areas that constituted a province *sui generis*, and were directly subject to the Superior Chapter, namely over and above the houses in Spain, the other houses of Este, Mogliano, Veneto, Faenza, Rome, Magliano Sabino, and Randazzo. Father Rua was in charge of them, but in 1885, the growing accumulation of business matters for which he was responsible and absorbed his hard-working days induced him to appoint some competent person to whom he could entrust responsibility for them. Don Bosco was not of the same opinion, and he did not feel that the moment had come as yet for such a step. Only the authority of Father Rua assured him that the spirit of the Congregation could be preserved intact in those houses that were beyond the absolute control of their immediate superiors. In obedience to Don Bosco's wishes, Father Rua docilely bowed his head.

We shall now speak of several houses in Italy visited by Don Bosco between the end of the summer and the fall and several others with which he was concerned during the course of the year 1885. During the months above mentioned, he only paid personal visits to three houses, namely Valsalice, Nizza Monteferrato and San Benigno. We do not find any mention either in written documents or personal records that he visited the house nearest to him, St. John the Evangelist, but he did discuss it with his Chapter in reference to a question that might well be described as one of life and death. He later chose it as a guest residence for an eminent prelate who had resigned from his office.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

The health of the Sons of Mary, who now had taken up residence at St. John the Evangelist's in the fall of 1884, was no longer as good as it had been when they were at Mathi or Sampierdarena. Don Bosco was very concerned about it, and called the attention of the Chapter to the matter during the meeting of July 10:

> Quite a number of the Sons of Mary have gone back to their own homes already on account of their poor health. Can the climate be the cause? Or are their new quarters humid? Or do they study too much? Or work too hard at other things? Father Michael Rua should ask our Dr. Albertotti, the physician for that house, and our own Dr. Fissore to undertake an inspection of the premises, and then report on their findings. We should remember that modesty is somewhat threatened in that house, on account of the windows.

Without waiting for the report of the physicians, it was decided that one of the causes for the poor health lay with the somewhat disorganized schedule of their occupations. Perspiring, they would go down to the refectory and chapel, which were located in the basement, and back to work too soon after meals. They were also too eager to study and had radically changed their way of life. It must surely have come hard to the young men, who had spent the better part of their early years working in the open air in the country, to find themselves shut up within four walls. After the sanitary inspection of the house, the three doctors submitted proposals to improve their health without necessitating the transfer of the Sons of Mary elsewhere. Someone had even suggested the idea of buying a spacious building at Cirie for such eventual transfer. A house was available and Dr. Turina, the owner, was ready to sell at a reasonable price. The doctors suggested modifying their schedule in order to eliminate any further decline in health, and that was immediately done.

Such fatherly concern casts new light on the consideration in which Don Bosco still held his Sons of Mary. In fact in that same Chapter meeting, he once again expressed his viewpoint with the remark, "To a great extent the Sons of Mary stay with us, and it is our advantage in more ways than one. In the first place, we are not upsetting the bishops who as a rule do not give attention to such people, being wary of their conduct, and preferring younger men. Then again, their relatives do not oppose their vocation so much, and they themselves do not have so many projects in mind,

whereas younger people create a thousand different aspirations in their imagination. Lastly, the scholastic authorities are not to worry about them and are not so jealous of schools as theirs."

He spoke again of this favorite institution of his during the Chapter meeting of September 17th, explaining another aspect of his considerations. "The Sons of Mary are trained for action, whereas the younger boys educated in our houses will be more for learning."

Father Celestine Durando felt that as time went by the Sons of Mary might grow discouraged when they would see that they were inferior in learning to newcomers who were younger than they. But events proved that Father Julius Barberis was right when he maintained that this would occur. Trained by Father Philip Rinaldi, they had no ambitions to shine on account of their learning, but were above all anxious to be active in works pertaining to priestly zeal. Yet there was no lack of brilliant minds among the Sons of Mary, who gave good account of themselves in their studies.

At the wish of Don Bosco, the house of St. John the Evangelist was honored in 1885 to offer a fitting dwelling to a venerable guest who had been forced by human wickedness to end his apostolic life in silent retirement. In this incident, the charity of a saint and the edifying humility of a virtuous prelate stand out.

For a number of years, Bishop Basilio Leto, the bishop of Biella, had shown great affection and admiration for Don Bosco and provided lodging for him as well. Right at the beginning his episcopate had met with two great difficulties: a difficult succession and the hostility on the part of the diocesan curia members. It was an arduous task for anybody to succeed Bishop Losana, for during the thirty years of his government, various abuses had been introduced into the diocese and the newly elected bishop immediately realized that he would have to sacrifice himself in order to make the path easy for the man who would succeed him later on. Bishop Leto had a most gentle disposition, and he was affable toward everybody and very humble. This proved disagreeable to others who were accustomed to the aristocratic bearing of Bishop Losana. People said that the new bishop had no consideration for his own dignity because sometimes in the evening he would start the rosary in the cathedral and he even lit the candles at the altar and adjusted the lamp in front of the Blessed Sacrament. Once Father James Costamagna was in Biella to visit the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. He had lodged in the seminary that was adjacent to the convent, and when he went to church to say Mass at 5:30 a.m., he found everything set up in the sacristy. Monsignor was used to getting up

very early in the morning and he had set up everything himself. Since Father James Costamagna had to leave immediately after Mass, he also found coffee ready, prepared for him by the paternal hand of the bishop.

At this time, very serious slanderous accusations had been made against this excellent man and had been reported to Rome. His maidservant, an old hunchbacked lady who was lame and of a boorish nature, had been assigned by him to work in the nuns' kitchen to teach them how to prepare meals for the seminary. But the poor sisters trembled in the presence of this shrew, who would even brandish knives, threaten and chase them. At length, once the exequatur enabled Monsignor to leave the seminary and take possession of the episcopal building, he yielded to Don Bosco's request and recalled her from the kitchen. But instead of dismissing her, he kept her at the chancery as his own cook out of the great kindness of heart.

But unluckily, vipers are not tamed by charity. One evening Monsignor heard an uproar in the kitchen about midnight. He went downstairs and found the woman drinking with some servants. Angrily, Monsignor ordered them to go back to their rooms and then went out into the playground to try and calm his own ruffled spirits by strolling to and fro, being agitated after the unpleasant surprise. But his biggest trouble was yet to come.

When he wanted to go back indoors, he found the door bolted and barred. He knocked repeatedly, but no one answered. Fortunately he happened to have the key to the seminary in his pocket, so he was able to go to sleep in his old room there. It was precisely on the grounds of this incident that his adversaries wove a strange fantasy that was all the more believable because the bishop did not dismiss the sinister woman even after this shameful behavior.

After investigating the matter and considering the obstinate hostility of his adversaries and the impossibility of any settlement, those in Rome felt that it would be wiser to ask Monsignor to resign because of the possibility of further inconveniences and scandal. But at the same time, he was ordered to remain in his See and administer the diocese until his successor had been appointed. This gesture weighed heavily upon him like a cross, even though it restored his good name, because it did show that the accusations made against him were unfounded. He was obliged to live among people hostile to him who now crowed in victory. He couldn't eat and suffered day and night from a relentless headache. At certain times, this holy man seemed to be in a daze.

But Divine Providence watched over him. No sooner had he written

his resignation than he had said to himself, "Oh! If only Don Bosco would allow me to live in retirement by the Church of St. John the Evangelist, I believe I could regain my peace of mind and end my days in serenity!"

He did not confide this thought to anybody. Now as soon as the word of his resignation reached Turin and Don Bosco heard it while at table, he said, "Poor Bishop! He has been such a good friend and benefactor to us! Would it not be only becoming, indeed our duty, to write and ask him to stay with us?"

"Where could he live?" Father Celestine Durando asked. "It would not be possible here at the Oratory."

"At St. John's," Don Bosco answered. "We could set up an apartment for him there, one becoming to a prelate. Father Celestine Durando, write him at once and invite him to accept our suggestion, in my name."

Here someone advanced two wise objections. Two canons of the Biella cathedral had called at the Oratory to ask Don Bosco to give his support to their case against the bishop before the Holy Roman Congregation. Naturally, Don Bosco had refused. Some felt it would look like a gauntlet thrown in the face of the diocesan curia if he were to offer hospitality immediately to Bishop Leto in the house of St. John's. It would also look as though he were interfering in such a burning issue, thereby creating formidable enemies for the Salesians. Apart from that, no matter how gracious an invitation might be, it still created obligations once it had been accepted. Anyone who is invited to live in one's house acquires the right of being treated in a manner befitting his individual rank, and no matter what one may do, it never seems to be enough. They felt it would be wiser to wait and see whether Bishop Leto made any such request to Don Bosco. That way, there would have been no fear of any sour reaction, such as would have happened if it appeared that he was condemning the conduct of the bishop's adversaries and taking the bishop's side.

After listening to such reflections, Don Bosco thought it over and said, "Well, do not write for the time being. We shall suit our decision to what will happen."

Meanwhile, the Holy See appointed Bishop Cumino as bishop of Biella and Bishop Leto had to leave the diocese. At the end, Bishop Leto had decided to go and live with Father Faa from Bruno, but the Pope instructed Cardinal Alimonda to find a home for him in some religious institution. The cardinal informed Don Bosco of this and suggested that he offer hospitality in the house of St. John the Evangelist. Don Bosco consented at once, and thus Bishop Leto saw his initial wish fulfilled in a God-given manner.

The good bishop had dinner at the Oratory when he arrived in Turin. He looked very depressed, as was to be expected for someone stricken by such a serious punishment. He talked a little and hardly ate anything. After dinner, he went to Don Bosco's room, knelt down at his feet and asked for his blessing. Don Bosco did not want to give it, but yielded at his insistence. Then he laid a hand on his head. In that instant, the headache that had tormented him for several months vanished, and did not return to trouble him again.

As soon as he met the director at St. John's, Father John Marenco, he said, "I have come to join your sons and hope you will be a father to me."

"Monsignor, I and my confreres will be your sons," Father John Marenco replied. "Here you are both father and master."

The superiors and the young men welcomed him on their knees and Monsignor was very touched. Father John Marenco accompanied him to the best apartment in the house, which Father Anthony Sela had furnished tastefully according to Don Bosco's wishes. It consisted of a big room for audiences[1] and a few rooms for his residence. A priest and a neatly dressed young man reported to him and would act as his secretary and attendant respectively.[2] "But all the young men in the house are at your service," Father John Marenco told him.

He was treated as a bishop at Mass and all functions. Since after that first morning when he said he would be willing to celebrate Mass privately, without any assistance from anybody, the director asked, "What are you saying, Excellency? You must feel as if you were in your own diocese. Such is the intention of Don Bosco and we are very fortunate indeed to have Your Excellency share our dwelling with us."

Monsignor could not find words to express his gratitude. His appetite came back, and he regained his joviality. In July 1886, Father Joseph Lazzero wrote about him to Bishop John Cagliero:

> Poor fellow! He believed that in his retirement he would be forgotten by everybody. He was prepared to live a lonely, melancholy life. But instead, finding himself invited to some function or other at every moment, he felt relieved, happy, and he expressed his happiness by his cheerfulness and kept on saying, "I am truly grateful to Don Bosco. I could not have found a better lot."

[1] This room has been done away with now to make room for several smaller rooms.

[2] The son of Maria Cardano, who later became a Salesian Provincial for the houses in Palestine.

When they came across his name frequently mentioned in the *Bulletin* and newspapers, other bishops and parish priests did not experience that certain hesitancy that is apt to keep people away from anyone who is thought to have fallen into disrespect. Instead, they often called on him and when they saw how Don Bosco treated him, they praised the kindness of the saint. His high moral stature appeared particularly outstanding when he heard that his main adversary, a canon who had attacked him relentlessly, was in Turin to be treated for eye trouble. Bishop Leto went to visit him at once! This gesture of humble charity so overwhelmed the priest that in the presence of an intimate friend who later told us about it, he could not refrain from exclaiming, "We have lost a saintly bishop!"

VALSALICE

Don Bosco stayed at Valsalice from September 5 to September 28, 1885. Right from the beginning, he found it beneficial to his health. During a retreat, he was able to listen to the confreres and bring the retreat to a close himself with short exhortation. In doing so, he emotionally told them of the visit of Emperor Otto to St. Nilus, and after making an apt comment, he ended with tears in his eyes. "Nor do I ask anything more from all of you except that you save your souls."

He presided there at some fifteen meetings. On the established days, the superiors would go to Valsalice, have a meeting in the morning and another in the afternoon, save on September 24th when they only met once. Don Bosco had also sent for some Salesians who did not belong to the Chapter and asked them to attend the meeting. This is why we find in some of the minutes the names of Father Julius Barberis, Father Francis Dalmazzo, Father Paul Albera, Father John Baptist Francesia, Father Francis Cerruti, Father John Branda and Father Peter Pozzan, who had to report on the request of a new house made by the cooperators of Vincenza, as we shall see later on. The saint took part in the debates, always giving a chance to everyone to voice and defend his own opinions, even when these conflicted with his own.

Cardinal Alimonda went to Valsalice twice during those weeks, in the company of theologian Father Margotti and other eminent Turin ecclesiastics, to confer with Don Bosco on matters pertaining to the Church of the Sacred Heart.[3] On the second of these two occasions, His Eminence and

[3] See previous chapter.

his companions stayed for dinner. Everyone was amazed and delighted to see how intimately the archbishop talked with the Servant of God. After the meal, they strolled arm-in-arm beneath the porticoes in an almost familiarly fashion. The magnanimous cardinal supported his frail body with the same charity with which he had always supported his Congregation.

For his part, the courageous director of *l'Unita Cattolica* confirmed with deeds and words the devoted affection that he had had for so many years for the saint. As he met him on one of these occasions, he kissed his hand in the presence of Father Francis Cerruti. He was so moved by his manifestation of respect that when Don Bosco took a seat at some distance away from the window because the light hurt his eyes, he walked over to the theologian Father Margotti and said, "I cannot refrain from thanking you, dear theologian, on my own behalf and in the name of the Salesians for the affection you show toward Don Bosco."

"How could anyone know that man and not love him?" Father Margotti answered.

The artist Rollini arrived at Valsalice that same afternoon. He had succeeded in painting a very interesting picture from a small photograph sent from America of Bishop John Cagliero between the first two young men he had baptized, both authentic and handsome sons of Patagonia. He came now to show it to Don Bosco. The good father was delighted looking at it and showed other people the precious first fruits reaped by his brilliant son in the land he had seen in a dream.

NIZZA MONFERRATO

Don Bosco and his Chapter still continued the direct management of the material concerns of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. At the meeting of March 20th, a report by the Nizza doctor was read out, lamenting the unsanitary state of the dormitories at the Mother House. The sisters were immediately authorized to have them adequately ventilated. On June 5th, the proposal made by Father John Bonetti, who succeeded Bishop John Cagliero as general director, was taken into consideration with the consent of Don Bosco. It suggested that new premises be built to accommodate the growing number of postulants and novices. Since the doctor had complained about the excessive crowding, the administrator, Father Anthony Sala, had already submitted a plan on the 22nd suggesting that an additional story be added to the house. The Chapter voted favorably, and Don Bosco also gave his consent.

The year 1885 remains unforgettable in the annals of that institution, for the holy founder paid his visit to it. Although urged to go there by Father John Bonetti, he had been unable to do so as he used to at the time of the ladies retreat. The general director renewed his request on August 20th toward the end of the retreat but prior to the clothing day and profession, and sent a letter to Mathi by the hand of the local director Father Louis Bussi:

> Allow one of your sons to beg you most earnestly, and even respectfully order you, were this be permissible, Father. I who live here do not only think it advisable, but also see it as essential that you should come to Nizza. Here we have 300 nuns who have come from all over to make their retreat, and there are so many of them mainly because of a wee-founded hope that you would keep the promise that you had made. A few days ago you wrote, saying that you had some important things to tell them. Come, and your visit would do them good individually and the whole Congregation would benefit from it. The glory of God, the welfare of souls, and my own peace of mind demand that you come. I have accepted to shoulder this cross and find it very heavy. I am sorely in need of a powerful support so as not to give up and yield to discouragement. After God, I look to you for such comfort. Do not deny it to me.

The mother general also wrote to Mother Petronilla at Lanzo and told her to call on Don Bosco and tell him how many postulants and novices were eager to meet him, since as yet they had never met him. After welcoming the envoy in a paternal way and hearing her deliver her message, he said jovially, "Ah! Yes! I no longer have any control over Don Bosco. Now Don Bosco obeys Father Michael Rua and his doctor. If they will allow me, I shall be glad to go to Nizza, and will sit there high up so that everyone will be able to see me."

Mother Petronilla arrived at Mathi early in the morning with two or three nuns from the school of Lanzo. When she had delivered her message and had received her answer, Don Bosco surmised that they had not yet had breakfast. "Did you have your breakfast?" he asked.

"Yes, Father, on my way," The mother replied for all the sisters.

"What did you eat?" Don Bosco wanted to know.

"We had some bread with salami."

"What!" Don Bosco exclaimed with a stern face. "Is that the way you

keep the vigil? How wonderful you are!"

"Oh! Woe to us!" the sisters cried unanimously and in dismay. "We did not know. We did not look at the calendar."

"Yet you knew that today is the vigil of tomorrow." Don Bosco smiled and the sisters laughed in their relief, glad to see him in such a good humor.

He left Mathi the morning of the 22nd in the company of Father Louis Bussi and clerics Viglietti and Festa and arrived at Nizza at noon. He celebrated Mass for the community next morning, but he gave Communion only to the mothers and a few others. Later he attended the clothing and profession, but was completely exhausted. The priests accompanying him had to physically lift him bodily onto the little podium from which the preachers addressed the congregation. Many of the sisters wept at the sight. He, too, seemed very moved, and took some time to overcome his emotion. He began to speak.

"I see that you are young now, and I do hope that you will grow old, but without any of the infirmities of old age. I always believed that one could grow old without any great inconvenience, but then one understands that old age is inseparable from infirmity. The years pass and the discomforts of old age make their appearance, so let us accept them as our cross.

"This morning it was my pleasure to hand out crosses. I would have liked to hand out many more of them, but some already have them and others will obtain them later. I urge all of you to bear them gladly, not to want to carry the cross of our own choice, but whatever cross is assigned to us by the Holy Will of God. Let us carry it gladly, thinking that the cross will pass, as the years pass. Then let us say, 'Oh, blessed cross! Now you weigh a little, but it will only be for a short time, and it will be that cross which will earn a crown of roses for us in Eternity.'

"Bear this well in mind. Remember it in your hearts and repeat it often with St. Augustine, 'Oh, holy cross! Go ahead. Have me sweat as I carry you here on earth, provided that after I have borne you, I will enter into glory.' Yes, my daughters, let us bear our cross lovingly, without burdening others with it. Let us instead help our neighbors to bear their own crosses. Say to yourselves, 'Certainly I may be a cross to others, just as at times they may be a cross to me, but I want to bear my cross and I do not wish to be a cross to others.' Note carefully that when I say cross, I do not mean only the light-weighted cross I gave out this morning. Instead, the cross sent to us by Our Lord which is, as a general rule, quite contrary to our own wishes, and it always hits us in this world, and it does hit espe-

cially you, teachers and directors, who are particularly concerned with the salvation of others. Such a tribulation, such a work, such a sickness, even slight that you may be called upon to bear, it still is a cross. Carry it joyfully and willingly because it is the cross sent to you by Our Lord.

"At times, we work hard and hardly satisfy the others, but go on working for the glory of God always, and carry your cross willingly, for this is pleasing to Our Lord. There will be thorns, true enough, but these thorns will later blossom into roses that will last throughout Eternity.

"You may say, 'Leave us a souvenir, Don Bosco!' What souvenir am I to leave you? Here it is! I will leave one that may well be the last you will ever receive from me. But as you see I have grown old, and I am but a mortal like everyone else, and therefore will not be able to last much longer. So I will leave a souvenir with you and will not regret it if you observe it. Do good and engage in good works. Work hard for Our Lord, all of you, with a right good intention. Oh! Do not lose any time. Do good, do all the good you can, and you will never regret doing it.

"Do you want another souvenir? Practice your holy rules! Carry out your rules, and I again repeat that you will never regret it. You see, dear daughters, our rules are infallible, and give us many benefits, but the most important of them all is the assured salvation of our souls. Do not be surprised by the word infallible because our rules were approved by the Pope in Rome, who is *infallible*. Therefore, every article of rules approved by him will be infallible. Read your rules, meditate on them, seek to understand them thoroughly and live by them. Especially you should do this, if you are either a mother superior or a teacher, or are in any way dealing with the world outside.

"I shall always pray for you! I always do say a special prayer for you during my Holy Mass because I regard you as my beloved daughters in Our Lord. But you try as much as possible to keep your rules. By doing so, you will know peace in this world and happiness in the hereafter; you will be a joy to your superiors and give immense joy to your poor Don Bosco. When it is known that your rules are observed in all your houses, then you can live peacefully, fully satisfied. As you see, Don Bosco cannot be here with you all the time, but remember well that in his prayers, he is with you always and everywhere. And when you observe the rules, you are obeying the will of God and the wishes of Don Bosco.

"Be cheerful, beloved daughters. Be healthy and holy, and live harmoniously with one another. I should start talking to you all over again, but I am already weary, and you will have to be content with this little.

"When you write to your relatives, give them all Don Bosco's best wishes and tell them that Don Bosco is always praying for them in particular that Our Lord may bless them, allow their business to prosper and that their souls be saved, so that they may meet again in Heaven with the daughters they gave to my Congregation, which is as dear to Jesus and Mary as that of the Salesians.

"May all of this be to the glory of God and to the benefit of our own eternal salvation. Pray for your Don Bosco, for the Pope and for the Church! Now I will give you my blessing and that of Mary Help of Christians. I will thus bless you so that you may keep the promises you made during these retreat days."

A number of sisters gathered around him after the ceremony as he walked through the little corridor leading from the church to the rooms of the Salesians. He looked at them very kindly, particularly at one who he saw was tormented by some inner struggle in her heart, and said in an inspired voice, "Let us be holy if we want people in the world to talk about us!"

The meaning was very clear: disregard all foolish ambitions of vain glory; the only true glory is that which stems from holiness.

Before continuing to his room, he yielded to the request that he say a few words to the sister members of their Chapter. With Father John Bonetti at his side, he entered the parlor where the superiors were anxiously waiting for the favor of his visit. He said, "Now you want me to say something to you all. How many things I would have to say were I able to talk! But I am old and decrepit, as you see for yourselves. I even find it difficult to talk. All I wish to say is that Our Lady loves you very, very much, and you know that she is here among you all!"

Then Father John Bonetti, seeing that he was deeply moved, interrupted him and began to talk, only to divert his attention. "Ah! Yes, that's the way it is! That's the way it is! Don Bosco means to say that Our Lady is your Mother and she is watching over you and protecting you!"

"No, no," the saint said. "I meant that Our Lady is actually here in the house and that she is happy with you all, and that if you continue with the spirit that you have now, which is the one Our Lady wants...."

The loving father became more and more moved and again Father John Bonetti interrupted him. "Yes, that is it exactly! Don Bosco means to say that if you are always good, Our Lady will be pleased with you."

"But no, no," Don Bosco said with difficulty trying to control his own emotion. "I mean that Our Lady *actually* is here, right in the midst of you! Our Lady moves around this house and covers it under her mantle."

As he spoke, he held out his arm, raising his tear-filled eyes as if he wished to convince the sisters that he really could see Our Lady moving around here and there, as if she were in her own home, and that the entire house was under her protection. It would take the brush of an able artist to reproduce this scene, so that it and the demeanor of Don Bosco might be indelibly engraved in the hearts of those who witnessed it when he took his final leave from his elder daughters with that solemn statement.

He left forever that blessed house the morning of the 14th.

SAN BENIGNO CANAVESE

Don Bosco stayed at San Benign twice during 1885: from August 24th to September 4th and again from September 28th until October 12th. Both were during the time of the spiritual retreat. When he arrived the first time, the retreat of the young postulants was about to end, and he instantly began to receive them in audience. On the last day, he celebrated the community Mass, though now and then he was interrupted by an inner overwhelming emotion. His tears prevented him from going on when he came to the words *Domine non sum dignus.* At the *Agnus Dei* prior to administering Communion, tears ran down his cheeks. For some time now, people had observed an exceptional sensitiveness in him when he celebrated the Mass, for he would shed a lot of tears and he always cried at the final blessing. Even when he was talking at times, he had to avoid certain topics that might move him so he did not cry.

The upkeep of the house at San Benign involved heavy costs, and in meeting them, Director Father Julius Barberis had no other resource than Don Bosco's own fatherly charity. Even Don Bosco, often finding himself without money, was obliged in his turn to test the generosity of his benefactors. One of these of long standing was the old Father Benone, the local pastor. This is the confidential tone the saint used to appeal for his help in order to meet with Father Julius Barberis' pressing needs:

San Benigno, August 27, 1885

Dearest Father:

For some days now Father Julius Barberis has been at my heels, so that I may pay some of his debts and provide for some pressing needs of his. We do not know where to turn to find money, and are in dire need of some 5,000 francs. If you, dear

Father, are able to come to our assistance even for the time being, you would be doing a great act of charity for an institute for which we have already labored hard, and from which we hope to see good workers for Holy Mother Church emerge.

If necessary, Father Barberis himself will say together with me, "*Date et dabitur vobis,*" especially to those providing us with food.

May Mary protect you.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

He stayed another week at San Benigno after the retreat because there was another retreat then in progress for the Salesians. He was extremely tired and drained of strength. "Rarely have I seen him suffer so much," Viglietti writes.[5] Again it was Charles Viglietti who went with Father John Baptist Lemoyne and Father Joseph Ronchail to say goodbye to the saint, and heard the saint exclaim amid sobs, "You are all leaving me here all alone!" Yet toward evening, they saw him happy and in good humor. Perhaps he made believe he was happy, as he usually did and his secretary also suspected. His serenity was apparent in a jocular retort he gave to a boyish remark, for one of the boys had said, "In the explanation of the Gospel, the preacher said that the sparrows do not labor. They never do anything, yet God provides them with food and clothing.[5] How lucky they are!"

Don Bosco replied swiftly, "Yet Our Lord also allows them to grow fat, my good fellow, and to be fried in the pan to nourish those who labor!"

On August 31st he remarked that a few days earlier during Mass, a blazing light had blinded him after the Elevation that prevented him from going on with the Mass. Charles Viglietti also recalled how that same morning while he was assisting him on the altar, he had seen him all confused and had to interrupt his celebration. "That blaze of light was followed by dense shadows," Don Bosco went on, "and when they had faded away, I resumed the celebration and finished the Mass. Later I thought over what had happened and said, 'These are sudden shadows, which followed so swiftly on that intense light, possibly a warning that I am to die soon, perhaps even immediately?' With that thought in mind, I sent for

[5] The diary mentioned early on (August 30th).

[6] Gospel for the 14th Sunday after Pentecost, which that year fell on August 30th.

Father Julius Barberis to come to my room that evening, and had him write down some important recollections before they ever found me dead in my bed in the morning."

During his second stay at that house, he received the religious professions of forty-five novices on October 4th, and clothed sixty new clerics on the 11th. He delivered a sermon to the clerics.

"There is no need, my sons, for me to tell you of my joy and happiness at seeing you, for in you who have taken your vows, I perceive the support foundations of the Congregation. Of those who preceded you, some are now here, others there, scattered in different houses, and others are leaving for our missions. Therefore, we need others to take their places to build pillars for the Congregation, to which we have all sworn fidelity.

"Did we perhaps take our vows to please Don Bosco or other superiors? No, we took our vows because it was our vocation to do so.

"At one time, some young folks used to ask me, 'What is better to take the vows and keep them or not to take the vows and still keep them?' Such a quarry calls for a satisfactory answer. Something that is done under a vow has greater value than something done without any vow. The difference between something done by a vow and something done without a vow is the same as the difference between someone offering fruit from his own orchard and someone who donates both the fruit and the orchard together. Therefore anyone who makes a vow to the Blessed Virgin, as you did, puts into her hands the entire capital representing their fortune.

"I do not know whether you understand me fully. I have used this comparison (which has already been used before by saints and doctors of the Church) to tell you that anyone who consecrates himself by a vow is offering all that he possesses.

"But because we acquire two-fold merit if we obey God's commandments by a vow, we will be doubly guilty of sin if we neglect to obey them after taking vows. Therefore let no one believe that binding one's self to God is a Godsend by which one can only gain and never lose anything. Not at all! We shall acquire double merit if we keep the promise we make, but if we do not keep them, we shall be doubly discredited.

"There is something very important which I usually tell those who take their final vows. When anyone takes final vows, they regain their baptismal innocence, according to the theologians such as St. Thomas Aquinas. Anyone who pronounces his final vows regains his baptismal innocence.

"There is something else I wish to tell you. He who makes his vows contracts the obligation of keeping them and is therefore no longer a child of the world, but instead beloved son of Jesus, Mary and St. Francis of Sales.

"Each of you should say within his heart, 'I am no longer a son of the world!' Now if one is assailed by temptation, he should answer, 'No, I am a son of Mary!' Therefore, not one glance, not one thought nor word which in any way might be in conflict with the vows taken.

"Some of you may ask, 'Is one obliged to keep these vows strictly?' If anyone were to take vows with the intention of not keeping them, he would be lying. It would be a bad joke played on Our Lord and a betrayal of one's conscience. Therefore, one should only take a vow with the firm intention of keeping one's promise unto death, so that one might receive the just reward in Paradise for what we have done in this life.

"Someone may ask, 'The difficulty lies in keeping the vow! Don't you think that the Lord and His Mother who came into the world to call us and while the rest of the world lives in iniquity, inspired us and upheld us in making these vows, will also help us to keep them, provided we do all we can?'

"It is certain that if we were to take vows and then defile them, our failure to keep them would be an insult to our Maker and would bring immense grief to Mary Help of Christians, and cause inestimable damage to one's soul. In a word, we would be committing a terrible sacrilege.

"I hope you will keep your promise, and not defile your souls by betraying the fidelity to which you have sworn.

"If you wish to find the key on how to keep your vows, I will give it to you. All virtues are contained within obedience. All other virtues will disappear if one is not scrupulous in the virtue of obedience, particularly in little things, for it is these that guide us to do bigger things. *Si vis magnus esse, a minimo incipe. [If you strive to be great, begin by being least]*

"I will now leave it to others to complete, develop and explain the things to which I have briefly referred. I assure you that I will pray for you all, but particularly for you who have taken your vows today so that no ill may befall you. I will end by telling you that you are the sons of Jesus and Mary and that I want you to remain always sons of Jesus and Mary. Be steadfast and do not defile the vows you have pronounced today. Be prepared to endure death a thousand times sooner than defile these golden ties that unite you with God. You, too, pray for me and for your companions whom I warmly recommend to you. Goodbye, beloved sons."

Just before leaving for Turin on October 12th, he chose to give a brief

exhortation to all the clerics; and he addressed them as follows, so the chronicles tell us:

"We are at the beginning of the year and as they say, he who begins well, is already half-done, but then can add quickly, 'You never begin well unless you start with and from Heaven.' Certainly you began with Heaven, so continue that way. I hope that if Our Lord blessed you when you began, He will bless you continually so that you will provide great joy to your superiors and your friend Don Bosco who has a special memento during holy Mass for you every morning, and asks Our Lord to keep you in good health and holiness."

Because, believe me, even though you may be strong and healthy, you would succeed in nothing, unless the holy fear of God is well established in your hearts. Bear in mind on the other hand, that you will be capable of everything, with the help of Our Lord.

Meanwhile everything possible and even a little more will be done here, so that you may lack nothing of what is necessary for you to serve God and be fed.

It will certainly be a great comfort to me to receive good news about you whenever I ask to be informed about your health, your piety and your progress in your studies by Father Julius Barberis or some other superior.

While assuring you that I will pray fervently for you, I recommend myself to your prayers, especially your Holy Communions on which I count so much; and I trust that the Blessed Virgin Mary will grant you her special care and provide you with the things you need most.

There is something that I want you to keep first for yourselves and then to recommend it also to your families, and that is to tell them that everyone who comes to our assistance, either in a spiritual or temporal way, will be visibly protected by Our Lady, and that she cannot fail to answer their prayers.

So saying, he blessed them and went back to the Oratory. The Superiors had met together with him several times, for Chapter meetings, also at San Benigno. They had seven meetings in all, and at everyone save one, he presided.

We cannot, as yet, follow Don Bosco elsewhere outside San Benigno, for in 1885 there was a clamorous conflict concerning that house between the noisy anti-clerical patriotism of the day and Don Bosco's own Christian charity. However the uproar did not stem from Don Bosco's side of the issue, but instead it was created by his adversaries and those who championed him. It is a page of history, in which the story of the

duel between a well-armed Goliath and a defenseless David, was repeated, and the battle had a similar outcome.

First of all, it must be explained that this new Goliath was not an individual warrior, but a much feared organization of the day which descended into the arena as to a single man to uphold against Don Bosco the claims advanced by the new mayor in the Canavese municipality of San Benigno. This Mr. Parisi was very different from his predecessor, and as soon as he was at the head of the municipal administration, he boasted that he was a priest hater, and made no secret of the fact that he meant to try and gobble up Don Bosco himself, since the Salesians had not supported him during the recent elections. He wanted to evict him at all costs from the Fruttaria abbey, which he could not do; without first rescinding the contract which had been legally drawn up five years earlier. To achieve this end, he first of all tried side ways, beginning by attempting to bring the municipal council over to his own side of the fence, calling for a vote detrimental to Don Bosco. But after he had tested the waters, he realized that nearly all the board members would be against him. After bringing to an end the meeting at which he had announced his intentions with such scant results, he had minutes drawn up which were opposed to the feelings of the majority, and slanted to his own ends. He signed them, and sent them to the Prefect in Turin, insisting that Don Bosco be given orders to be evicted. But the municipal councillors got wind of the plot, and hastened to submit the correct report of the meeting, so that the Prefect refused to approve the counterfeit minutes.

Despite this, the mayor did not give up. He allied himself with some friends who enjoyed a certain authority in both Turin and Rome, and brought back the accusation of insults launched against the troops of the Italian army[7] by the boys, and availed himself of a propitious opportunity, when he put the whole matter into the hands of the Veteran's Association of National Wars. He believed that he had now found the right channel to reach his ends.

The Veterans of National Wars had formed an association of which General Crodara Visconti was the president, and at the time, they were trying to found an institution for the orphans of soldiers. Mr. Parisi immediately suggested to the President that he could engineer the expulsion of the Salesians from the Fruttuaria abbey; he would then convert it to this very purpose. The proposal was enthusiastically received, though not immediately divulged.

7 See this volume, page 701 and following.

Don Bosco had known nothing of all these maneuvers until he was informed of it by Mr. Asti, lieutenant of the firemen from Turin, and a former pupil and cleric of the Oratory; he was at that time the secretary of the above mentioned organization. In order to avert this danger, the Saint immediately elaborated a plan of action together with he reverend pastor of San Benigno. The latter wrote at once to Constantino Nigra, the King's ambassador at he Imperial Court of Vienna. The famous diplomat who was a friend of his, and who hailed likewise from the Canavese area, promised his support. On his turn, Don Bosco solicited the help of Mr. Bartholomew Casalis, the prefect of Turin, but he was told that on this matter he would wash his hands. He also sought the help of a few deputies.

In the meantime the bombshell exploded noisily. On October 25 the third convention of War Veterans was inaugurated in Venice under the auspices of Benedetto Cairoli, and on the 26th the sectarian proposal was put before the assembly for discussion. Mr. Asti, who sacrificed his own conscience for the sake of his office, and Mr. Paretti, who was a member of the committee elected by the second Convention in Turin, both upheld the necessity of wresting the historic abbey which was also a national monument, from the hands of Don Bosco, so that it could be opened as a home for the orphans of Italian soldiers. The reporter Mussa, an employee of the municipality of Turin, and also the celebrated author Paulo Fambri intervened in the debate. There was some rousing remarks about Don Bosco's unpatriotic attitude. One member of the convention proposed that the chairman call on the assembly for a vote of praise for the municipality of San Benigno which had given evidence of being one of the most liberal-minded communities of Italy. A telegram sent to the gazette of the Turin free Masonic anti-clerical party[8] stated that the "assembly had burst into frenzied applause". The Italians Catholic newspaper commented[9]: "We only need frenzy now, to afflict Don Bosco, who has forfeited his health, and has sacrificed his life for poor boys. Those who now accuse him of lack of patriotism never did anything and will never do anything similar to what our Don Bosco has been doing for the last fifty years".

In the meantime, the Director Father Julius Barberis had hastened to Rome to try and persuade the parliament deputy Ercole to take up the defense of Don Bosco. Although this honorable deputy was an unfrocked

[8] *Gazzetta Del Popolo*, October 27, 1885.
[9] *L'Unita Cattolica*, October 28,1885.

priest, he was nevertheless always glad to support the Salesians, and got himself, to work fervently, right away, taking such positive action with the state department, as to obtain the assurance that the petition of the Veterans would not reach the Chamber of Deputies. Even Mr. Asti himself who, as secretary of the association, had felt it his duty to give support in public, in private he persuaded Cairoli that it would be an unjustifiable action if Don Bosco were to be deprived of the use of the abbey.

Not all the members of the Association acted like so many sheep. Father Bernardi, was a well known Venetian patriot and moderate Liberal who had been exiled in Turin during the Austrian rule. He had been Vicar General at Pinerolo, and on several occasions a guest at Don Bosco's table at the Oratory. The priest certainly did not behave like a sheep. He exercised all his influence on behalf of Don Bosco.

Finally an investigation carried out by order of the Turin Prefect's Office ascertained that the improvement which Don Bosco had undertaken in the old building, would have forced the government to pay out sixty thousand lire if it were to take possession of the premises. That was the coup de grace, the death blow to the whole harassing project. King Humbert made a much better provision for the children of the military when he offered the magnificent castle of Soperga to the Veterans for the institution they wished to found.

Don Bosco's name was the target of the sectarian spitefulness in connection with two other houses, namely the house of the Salesians in Faenza, and the house of the Sisters of Catania.

FAENZA

No new hostilities flared at Faenza, but the campaign which had been waged already for four years against Don Bosco and the Salesians kept on flaring up. The renewal of these hostilities coincided with the arrival of the new bishop, Bishop Joachim Cantagalli, who in his initial pastoral letter, written in classic Latin style, had devoted a few sentences to the sons of Don Bosco, and contained words of the highest praise for them, while he acknowledged his own unlimited confidence in them. The rage which had been briefly held in check, now burst forth in an open criminal form. On April 12 an article in *Il Lamone* assailed the Salesians and stirred up the population against them, and the result was not long in coming. The evening of the 15th, while the Salesians assisted the boys in the playground, a rifle shot was heard from the other side of the wall, echoing in

the cloudy, menacing evening air. They did not pay much attention to it, but a little later they noticed a head peering over the low surrounding wall, and heard another riffle shot, aimed this time in their direction. The bullet whizzed over their heads and grazed a column nearby, then buried itself in the ground. News of this criminal deed spread rapidly through the town, arousing indignation. The authorities intervened, and confiscated the bullet, and could easily have found the author of the deed, but were held back in their action by the presumptive impossibility of obtaining proof, so that apart from a scant report by the police, no judiciary action was taken.

There was an echo of it however in the controversy which then raged between the Catholic and Liberal newspapers in the peninsula, the former crying out against the criminal attack, the latter qualifying the deed as a mere prank, and accusing the Salesians of slander, of provocation, and of disturbance of the public peace. The claim that it had been the Salesians who had disturbed the public order became the favorite refrain of the adversaries in the press, since they had the obvious intent of forcing the authorities to close the Oratory. On May 3, *Il Lamone* wrote without the slightest restrain: "Prior to the arrival of the Salesians there were no more of those fight challenges among the boys hurling stones against one another, as had happened during the dark days of the papal government, but now they do happen between the boys who attend the Salesian school on the one hand, and those who do not attend it on the other. The cause then is quite evident: it's the Salesian Oratory, where students are being taught hatred of their own kind, and all their generous sentiments are distorted. Therefore, let the Salesian Oratory be closed; and then there will be no more deplorable and bloody fights. The newspaper's issue of the 10th had the following statements not as vulgar but printable: "while there is a persecution going on and all sorts of propaganda against those people who pass as radicals, the Jesuits, disguised as some kind of friars, are granted ample freedom to insult an entire region and lead boys of the same locality to fratricidal fights and, aware of the evil consequences which will come out of this, one day, they pour into these little "trees", entrusted to them by careless hands, anti-patriotic doctrines and Faenza recalls with horror what came of it. The provincial newspaper *Il Ravennate*, a worthy companion of *Il Lamone,* played on, the same tune.

The battle was still raging when Father Michael Rua arrived in Faenza on May 18, on his way back from a Sicilian tour. As he walked through the town, he saw writings on the walls either by hand or pasted on as printed posters: "Down with the Salesians! Salesians, out!" Instead of

showing alarm, this disciple of Don Bosco who was paying his first visit to Romagna, seemed gladdened by it all, and just kept on repeating: "Oh! Look at all the good we shall be able to do in this city! How much good.!"

Not even Don Bosco was alarmed by news of all this furor. As a matter of fact, at the Chapter meeting on May 29th, Father Anthony Sala submitted a plan for the work required in order to turn the Faenza house into a school; and when some of those present voiced fears that, at the completion of this turn-over, the sectarians might be successful in driving the Salesians out, Father Anthony Sala added: "The young boarders will be our shield. Time, the political changes and the people of the area are in the hands of God. These threats do not stem from the authorities, who instead support us. We should not fear the riff-raff, and it might be wise if we were to coax it. Let the people see that we are doing some work, and let us begin by opening a few workshops; but gradually or little by little." By proceeding slowly, charity was given an opportunity to lend a helping hand. It was therefore decided that for the time being, only what was needed in order to maintain the premises would be undertaken, without heaping expense upon expense.

When the question came up as to whether or not an application should be made to the government for authorization to open the hospice, the Saint expressed his opinion as follows, mindful of the refusal received when authorization had been asked to open the school to day students: "I think it is wiser to apply for such an authorization, but without any mention of the word *boarding school.* The director should send an application to the assistant Prefect, and he should tell him that a handful of poor, abandoned boys have asked for shelter; he should say that elsewhere, ordinarily no application is made for similar authorization, but we are applying for it out of deference to the authorities; he should say that otherwise such boys would only end up being handed to the police, so that at long last they would end up being in a reformatory, at the expense of the State...he should end up by saying that we are however referring the whole matter to the wise judgment of the assistant Prefect."

On another occasion Don Bosco expressed his own thoughts about the Faenza house. This was when the director, Father John Baptist Rinaldi, came to Turin for the Saint's name-day. At that time, while giving him some encouragement, he said:[10] "Mary Help of Christians will

[10] These words of Father Michael Rua just quoted and these others uttered by Don Bosco are quoted in his diary by Bishop Taroni.

assist you. Go ahead as if nothing had happened. Our major battles today are being waged in America and in Romagna. Be brave! I too, was the target of rifle shots. I was alone. The municipal authority, the government, and even private citizens were all against me. Even good people tried to put me in a lunatic asylum. And yet... There were threats even a few months ago; word was sent to me that somebody wanted to kill me and that I was to leave the country. But I answered: I want to stay in my own home, and Mary Help of Christians will help me."

Work began at once on the building of the church and a small theater. When Father Anthony Sala went to inspect the work in progress, he found that on account of the yielding ground, foundations had been built one meter sixty centimeters in width. In the Chapter meeting on November 2, Don Bosco had disapproved of such colossal foundation and observed: "it could have been possible to build pillars, columns and bind them together with arches of big stone blocks at ground level. Keep this in mind as a principle when building."

There is on record an interesting chapter regarding Faenza dated December 14. The Director Father John Baptist Rinaldi suggested a form of agreement with the master craftsmen hired from outside the house, which would prevent any uprising on the part of the local craftsmen against the Salesians, as a result of their fears of competition. Inside their workshop, the boys would be acting as apprentices to their foreman or shop head who would pay them a modest salary in proportion to their output, but keeping the profits for himself, and likewise taking on himself the responsibility of procuring work.

When he had heard the articles of the agreement read out, Don Bosco said: "Such a project strips the director of his authority. I made every conceivable attempt along these lines in the early days of our Oratory, but found that it only caused inestimable damage, even in a material way. First I had the shop head or foreman provide the tools also for the boys; then this obligation was restricted to the foreman or shop head while the house undertook to provide tools for the boys; at times it was agreed that I would provide only certain tools for the foreman or shop head, while they would have carried all the others from house to house; at times the foreman or shop head was to provide some of the tools for the boys, the remainder being provided by the Oratory. But this always entailed expenses at the whim of the foreman or shop head, and either the boys were without tools, or the shop head or foreman were using the tools belonging to the boys, so as to save their own... There

was always trouble of some sort, either with broken tools, tools disappearing because they were used elsewhere than at the workshop and even outside the scheduled working hours ...There was also trouble about the system of working, about the negligence in the teaching imparted to the boys, there were squabbles over the profits when the foreman or shop heads had a hand in the work being done. I tried to send the boys to work in shops in town, then kept them here to work in the workshops opened inside the house. I also tried to place the boys, under the authority of a foreman or shop head who wielded the same authority in our workshops as the owners of a factory; but this only made the boys thoroughly subject to the foreman shop heads and removed them from the authority of the Superior. It was no longer possible to maintain any direct supervision over them, for the boys gave heed only to the shop head or foreman; sometimes, when the job was urgent, even their time-table for work was jeopardized. It only amounted to having one trouble after another."

Father Michael Rua held that in Faenza the Salesians were faced with particular circumstances, and this should be taken into account. To which Don Bosco retorted: "What need is there to have workshops at Faenza, just now? For the time being, Father John Baptist Rinaldi should hold on to the Oratory for day boys and the night-school. He should follow the rules we followed here in the Oratory at the beginning, and then there will be no conflict with the population or the authorities. The students were the first boarders of the Oratory and then came the trade-students who helped the academic students. So the first trade-students we had, were shoemakers. Bedino was the first bookbinder, and his nickname was Government. Then we had to start building the shops, so the carpenters and blacksmiths came into being; then we had to found associations for Catholic publications, text books, etc., which called into being the typesetters and the printers. It is the academic students who provide work for the trade-students, and this is the principle we ought to follow, especially in smaller towns. The trouble we had here in Turin with the Congress of Printers who wanted to do away with the Oratory printing shop, shows us that it could be dangerous to try or appear to compete against the others of the same trade even in larger cities.

In view of all these reasons, the Chapter rejected Father John Baptist Rinaldi's draft, and he succeeded in organizing his house very well, without any deviation from the rules outlined for him by Don Bosco.

CATANIA

In its issue of April 17, *Il Mattino,* a stoutly Liberal Turin newspaper carried a brief news item entitled *"Don Bosco and the Salesian Nuns"* which read as follows: "People are aware that, not being satisfied with establishing everywhere his so-called educational institutes which are after all, nothing else but institutes of ignorance and superstition, the celebrated Don Bosco has also founded convents for nuns known as Salesian nuns. Such convents do exist in various cities, and it would be useful to know how the girls are tortured there, so that they may become nuns. This does not come from us, but from the *La Gazzetta di Catania."* It then quoted the article of the above journal *eiusdem furfuris,* [of the same stuff], indeed even more impious. Since March 7th the paper had launched a series of attacks against Don Bosco and his houses which continued until May 29th. The insignificant incident which gave them an occasion to do this was a mere pretext for the anti-clerical faction of Catania to rouse public opinion against the Salesians whose arrival in the city was known, or believed to be imminent. A poor girl of the working classes had been taken in by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at Bronte as a postulant, and had been later sent to Nizza Monferrato, where she had been found mentally disturbed, so that she was sent back to her mother after a brief period in the Turin mental hospital. The rantings of this poor deficient girl found easy credit and audience with the editorial staff, which wove a whole plot for "a tragedy among the nuns," out of what she said, with literally incredible scenes. Father Michael Rua who was in Sicily at that time, hastily gathered the necessary data so that he could draw up a informative statement later published by the press.[11] A pinch of good faith would have been good enough to open people's eyes, but the Gazette despite the denial, substantiated by facts, in a long letter from Father John Bonetti,[12] was unperturbed, and did not publish a single word retracting what had been written. Instead, in a partisan controversy with the municipal council of Bronte, it attacked those responsible for having entrusted the direction of the Bronte school for girls "to those hyenas disguised as lambs", and made fun of "the daughters of Don Bosco."

But in reality, the *Gazette* did not care either for the sisters or their supposed victim; the real purpose was to hit Don Bosco. So the

[11] Appendix. Doc. 85. It was published by L'Amico Della Verita. A Catholic newspaper from Catania in its April 27th issue.

[12] Addressed to the Gazette but not published, it was then published in *l'Amico della Verita,* May 1.

Gazette left the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in peace, and picked up and spread out a hateful slander concerning Don Bosco personally, which had been published in *La Capitale*, a blasphemous Roman newspaper. A poet and philosopher, by name Terenzio Mamiani della Rovere, from Pesaro, had died in Rome; in the parish of the Sacred Heart. He had been a minister under Pius IX in 1848, a minister for Public Education of the Kingdom of Italy in 1860 and finally senator. Well, the above mentioned newspaper had accused Don Bosco of improper, downright insolent conduct toward Countess Mamiani at the death of her husband, and accompanied the accusations with malicious insinuations of yet another kind. *La Gazetta di Catania* rashly served this spicy and quite ridiculous news item, for the consumption of its anti-clerical readers, and carefully avoided, in harmony with its habitual chivalrous practices, to publish even one single word of retraction when the facts were bared down to the smallest detail. Don Bosco had nothing whatsoever to do with the whole affair, but only one of his sons did, the pastor Father Francis Dalmazzo who, however, had not done anything irregular or impertinent. The 'impertinence' had to do with a letter inspired only by priestly zeal and worded in most respectful terms. Aware that the death of Terenzio Mamiani was approaching, the pastor was saddened by the fact that he had already made several fruitless attempts to approach the dying man's bedside, and had deplored sincerely the fact that as yet, he had not been summoned as the lady had promised that she would, and her husband wished that he be summoned. In those days and for many years later, the freemasons kept such a vigilant watch at the bedside of the dying members they were stronger than anything and anyone.

Then as always, in Catania as elsewhere, *per infamiam et bonam famam,* [no matter what people said, good or bad] Don Bosco was concerned solely with doing what was good, the good that he knew Divine Providence expected of him.[13] Hence in his January letter to the Cooperators, in 1885, he was able to announce serenely; "At the request of outstanding persons, we have taken over the direction of night schools for young male adults, and the administration of a public church, while opening at the same time a festive oratory dedicated to

[13] Father Michael Rua was given a warm welcome at Randazzo, almost as a reparation for the slander of the sectarians in Catania, and from there the following telegram was sent to Don Bosco on April 18: "To Don Bosco who knows his times perfectly and who showers the benefits of learning and piety over all classes of society, the Mayor and Municipality, the Archpriest, Rua, the Salesians and boarders unite to send affectionate greetings from fraternal banquet."

St. Philip Neri to provide a Christian instruction and give shelter to boys, thus rescuing them from running wild in the squares and streets of the town." He referred to the Church of St. Philip and the oratory known as 'of the Philippines' Via del Teatro Greco, an oratory which flourishes even today.

LA SPEZIA.

It seemed that a password was circulating among sectarians all over the peninsula, urging a full-scale attack on Don Bosco. Two newspapers at La Spezia, *Il Muratore* and *Il Lavoro* rushed at him relying on the pretext of a municipal deliberation. Don Bosco had given shelter in his house at the recommendation of the local municipal authorities, to eight boys who had lost their parents in the cholera epidemic. It was therefore the most natural thing in the world that a small subsidy be assigned to the house. It had been decided to assign them a yearly subsidy of one thousand lire. But when it came up for discussion at the municipal council meeting, several board members who were friends of the Salesians, suggested that the sum be raised to four thousand. The proposal irritated both the Liberals and the Democrats, who duly protested, in the fashion of the day, in their respective newspapers. The Liberal newspaper *Il Muratore* on may 31 informed its readers of what had happened and cried: "Is it possible that our municipal representatives have fallen so low as to subsidize someone who sings hymns to the Temporal Power of the Pope, in flagrant conflict with the finest traditions of La Spezia? Far from merely being reprimanded, such behavior truly should be qualified as ill-advised, and such as to provoke a well justified and forceful resentment on the part of the entire population." The same day the democratic newspaper *Il Lavoro* published an infamous article, making fun of Don Bosco in coarse and obscene terms, and with shameful variation games on his name.

Here again Don Bosco went straight on his way without seeming to notice anyone barking at his heels. The plan of exchanging some land with the municipality, at the suggestion of the municipality itself, was submitted to the Superior Chapter in September. The site turned over to the Salesians was bigger than the site which would be accepted in exchange. This would satisfactorily suit our property there, while the municipality would remove a road already planned which would have cut across the school grounds. The removal was however subject to the building of a church which Don Bosco had contracted to build on that same site

with Chevalier Bruschi.[14] The church was to be as big as that of St. John the Evangelist, and the time for starting the work on it had not yet been established. When this land exchange was discussed and reference made to the church to be built, Father Francis Cerruti remarked that the sacred building was to serve as a parish, and that the municipality should be persuaded to share in the expense. Don Bosco replied: "We shall apply to the Municipality of La Spezia for a subsidy when we start the work. I foresee that little or nothing will be obtained. We have to work on behalf of the municipalities even though they give us nothing but trouble; at the present time, that's the way we have to act, if we wish to work for the welfare of souls. Now let us discuss the plan. We will accept the exchange proposed by La Spezia, but without any terms and compensations. Do not allow any conditions to be introduced into the notarized contracted deed, which have to do with the church, not even that the land, which makes the difference, is given to us in view of the church to be built. We will not accept any wording. It is understood that no building will begin here until the churches in Rome and Bordighera have been completed. But give Mr. Bruschi this promise orally, not in writing."

Today the church is the lovely shrine dedicated to the Queen of La Spezia, Our Lady of the Snows. It was begun ten years after Don Bosco's death, on January 17, 1898, and was consecrated April 27,1901.

In his eagerness to develop the house of La Spezia even as his extensive plans called for, and remembering the half-promise given him by Benedetto Brin, the secretary of the Navy, Don Bosco wrote to His Excellency with the hope of obtaining some sort of assistance from him.

Turin, May 25,1885

Excellency:

When I had the great honor of conferring with you about the great need of opening schools for the workers employed by the La Spezia Arsenal, you encouraged me very generously and assured me that if necessary, you would come to my assistance in the matter

Now as your Excellency can see from the enclosed report from the Director of both the hospice and the school, our mutual wishes have been fulfilled, though at a very considerable sacrifice and financial outlay, as well as with intense concern on the part of the staff.

[14] See M.B. XIII, page 676.

I therefore appeal now to Your Excellency, begging you to come to our assistance, with whatever means you may deem suitable for a so warmly desired school which promises to yield excellent results.

I am most respectfully,
Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

We do not know whether the minister replied, or if he did, in what manner. We do know instead what end the generous subsidy from the Holy See came to have. At first Leo XIII had continued the monthly subsidy of 500 lire granted by his predecessor. But when the person who usually called to collect the money, came to collect the September subsidy in 1885, he was told that the Vatican Administration office had no authorization to pay beyond the August past. Hoping to assure the continuation of the subsidy, Don Bosco submitted the following petition to the Holy Father through Cardinal Jacobini, the secretary of state.

Turin, December 1,1885

Most Holy Father:

Ten years ago the city of La Spezia which in a very short time had grown from a mere handful of inhabitants to more than thirty-thousand, was living in an extreme state of destitution insofar as religious instruction is concerned. In his deep concern particularly for the dangers to which Youth was exposed, His Holiness Pius IX of holy memory, proposed that the undersigned make some provisions, and advised the founding of a school and orphanage. To this end he establishes that the sum of Lire 500 be given as a subsidy every month. Upon such an invitation and encouragement, the undersigned opened at La Spezia the school known as St. Paul's, on December 10,1877 and with the above mentioned subsidy was able to meet with the current expenses.

After the death of Pius IX, as a special act of benevolence at the beginning of your pontifical reign, Your Holiness with Your Inestimable Charity deigned to continue the above mentioned monthly subsidy, which made it possible not only to continue with the day school and festive oratory in their original premises, but even to enlarge them, since in view of the constantly increas-

ing number of boys attending the school, and the growing spiritual requirements of the big population, the original chapel and premises we had occupied proved insufficient after only a few years, and it became necessary to find larger quarters, better suited to house an orphanage.

It was then that Your Holiness on September 10,1880 contributed to the building of the new school with the sum of Lire 6000, to be refunded by a deduction of one hundred lire a month on the monthly subsidy above mentioned in the amount if Lire Five Hundred, which in this decreased measure was paid to us charitably until the end of June of this current year. Your Holiness also gave additional alms in the amount of lire two thousand for Masses which were promptly celebrated. This enabled us to build a larger chapel with an adjoining hospice where approximately 150 boys, are lodged, some of whom are poor orphans needing support and religious instruction, and the learning of some craft which would enable them to earn an honest livelihood. Some of these boys are of proven virtue and talent and aspire to the priesthood, but would be unable to pursue their studies elsewhere because of their insufficient funds. This is how things stood, as they yielded truly heartening results for the welfare of souls. Then, at the beginning of August of this current year, the Administrative cashier informed us that this subsidy which represented the sole resource of this extremely poor house, had been revoked until further orders by Your Holiness.

Greatly distressed and unable to carry on the undertaking alone, I am appealing to you, most Holy Father, and beg you to continue to extend to us the charity and benevolence given us till now, by assigning to us the above mentioned monthly subsidy. I would be deeply grieved to see the death of an Institute which began under such happy auspices and which with the help of God and the generosity of Your Holiness has prospered so far. What makes it even more necessary is the scarcity of clergy in La Spezia, and the overwhelming numbers of poor, abandoned boys, and the connivings of our Protestant neighbors who unfortunately, have been generously provided by their sect with hospices, schools and churches. For our part, Most Holy Father, we would be eternally grateful to you for the charity for which we implore Your Fatherly Heart. The Salesians and boys, especially in the

house of La Spezia will offer to God and Mary Help of Christians the most fervent prayers every day for the well-being of Your Holiness, our generous benefactor.

Please accept, Most Holy Father, our sincerest words of gratitude and our devotion, and while I implore for myself and the whole Salesian Congregation your Apostolic Blessing, I am happy to be,

Your most humble and obliged son,
Rev. John Bosco.

The Cardinal referred the matter to the Pope; then he wrote to Don Bosco on February 24, 1886: "His Holiness is very sorry that he can only partially gratify your request. Because of the heavy expenses he is obliged to meet here in Rome, confronted as he is by these bad times, he is forced to limit his charity and hold back the wishes of his paternal heart. But in order to prove to you how dear he holds the school which you direct so admirably, he instructed me to send you a lump sum of five thousand lire which in obedience to his sovereign order, I am remitting to you by check through the Banco Nazionale."

Now we come to requests which never went further than the papers they were written on. We will only mention those in which there is some echo of words pronounced by Don Bosco in the negotiations, or reference to some gesture on his part. We shall therefore speak of Rimini, Vincenza, Trent and Cuneo.

RIMINI

Monsignor Alessandro Chiaruzzi, bishop of Rimini, wanted Don Bosco to take over a country parish in his diocese. He received several requests of this kind from various localities, but this might have given also an opportunity to have a country house to restore one's strength during vacation time for the Salesians of Faenza. Nevertheless, in a Chapter meeting on March 20, the Saint said: "In the early days of our Congregation, we agreed to open houses without worrying too much about the terms offered to us. But now we have to coordinate and organize, and refrain from founding any more houses for these coming two years. America absorbs too much of our personnel. Some people left us and others died and our number is down." The chapter voted against the proposal.

VICENZA

Already in 1879 Senator Fedele Lampertico, as president of the Congregation of Charity, had joined several other worthy persons and planned that the sons of Don Bosco should be asked to come to Vicenza to direct the orphanage for boys which was then in decline in that city. In December the Saint instructed Father Celestine Durando to inspect the orphanage, but nothing came of it. Later on, in 1880 correspondence began between Mr. John Sala, the president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and Father Celestine Durando about the advisability of founding a hospice. After a tour of inspection, Father Sala said the premises purchased for this purpose by the members of the above mentioned association, were suitable, though he did not see where the money would come from to finance the undertaking. On January 29,1883 Don Bosco received a petition signed by 212 "Cooperators" from Vicenza; the list of names began with that of Bishop Farina, the bishop of the diocese, and ended with Mr. Horace Lampertico, the senator's son, who qualified himself as "secretary to the Vicenza Cooperators." The Saint hesitated before replying: he dictated his reply as follows as soon as he could, after his return:

Turin, June 20, 1883

Dear Mr. President:

Your letter of the 4th of the month together with the petition signed by a goodly number of honorable people of all categories of the Vicenza population, headed by His Excellency the Most Reverend Monsignor the Bishop, was handed to me by the Rev. Pietro Pozzan, fervent champion of good causes.

Everyone is asking as a grace, for a settlement of Salesians in your illustrious city, to take charge of endangered boys. I was already informed about the kind sentiments the Salesian Cooperators and members of the worthy Society of St. Vincent de Paul have toward the humble Society of St. Francis of Sales, but had I still fostered any doubts on the matter, this latest act of confidence would have dispelled them all from my mind once and for all.

In our eagerness to respond to such trust, your gracious application was the subject of a very detailed discussion, and in full agreement, we looked into the matter to see if it were possible to gratify you, but to my regret, I am obliged to tell you that we had

perforce to decide against it, not because of lack of good will on our part, nor in view of the terms proposed to us, but solely because we do not have the necessary personnel. Military draft takes away from us every year some 15 to 20 teachers and craftsmen, while our existing commitments to open houses in various places, the necessity of sending assistance to our missionaries in Patagonia and Brazil so drains our manpower that it is impossible for us to undertake any further foundations.

I very much regret that we were unable to come to an understanding some years ago, when we did have the personnel available to take over the orphanage; but we may hope that Divine Providence that seemed at the time to want to pave the way for the arrival of the Salesians there, will open the path anew to them on some future occasion, and thus enable us to gratify our common desire.

Nevertheless, since we are unable to say when we would be able to give you an affirmative answer in this matter, I think that you ought to urge the members of the Society of St. Vincent, as well as all those who signed their names in the courteous petition, to pray that God may bless all their charitable efforts on behalf of poor youth, and reward them a hundred fold for their efforts, preparing a magnificent crown of glory for each of them in Heaven.

At the same time, I wish to recommend my own person and all my boys to the charity of your prayers, and offer my respectful regards, being honored to remain with the greatest esteem,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

But the good people of Vicenza did not give up. A third petition was submitted in 1885, during which year the Superior Chapter, with Don Bosco presiding, gave its attention to the matter on six different occasions. One of the usual change of scenes occurred also where Vicenza was concerned. In the beginning everything looked rosy: substantial funds already available, various pieces of land which would either be given away or sold at low cost, magnificent premises obtainable for very little, general expectations on the part of the population. Then in practice, there were only defections and disappointments. Sent by Don Bosco to see how the situation looked like in reality, Father John Tamietti was given a splendid welcome; but he also found out that more expenses than estimated would

be required. And since several gentlemen expressed their willingness to contribute generously, he agreed to the request, on the condition that everything should start with a festive oratory, and the foundation of the school should be postponed to a later date. When Don Bosco heard his report, he told the Chapter on June 22: "If that is the way things stand, we can go ahead; because for a short while we might be able to struggle along easily with only one priest."

The first cloud appeared on July 13. The daughter of one of the donors, the lawyer Ruffo, who wished to donate his whole estate, wrote a protest letter to Don Bosco, because she herself was in a desperate predicament, unable to give her children a proper education, and she could not tolerate the thought that her father's estate should be thus whittled down. In all truth, her father was set against her, and took no care of her in her need, because she had married a man who was poor, against his wishes. Nevertheless, Don Bosco wrote, telling her that she should not worry, because as yet nothing had been arranged, nor would anything be done if detrimental to her.

Sometime between July and October there were further proposals as to the premises, more promises of financial contributions, further discussion in the Chapter, the evening of September 22. When asked his opinion by Father Michael Rua Don Bosco replied: "We already have too many irons in the fire. Nevertheless I am prepared to approve whatever the Chapter will decide." In support of this Father Celestine Durando, reminded them all how St. Ignatius had begun by opening houses hurriedly here and there, and then he had to close fifteen of them at one single time, in order to consolidate his Society. Father Michael Rua suggested that the Salesians announce their arrival in Vicenza for 1889, but Don Bosco replied: "What good is it even if we were to say 1890? For the moment we cannot go there, because we do not have the personnel. Let them give something meanwhile, a legacy or something. We commit ourselves to do everything we can to help Youth, and as quickly as possible."

Further difficulties arose later to convince the friends from Vicenza that it would be better if they waited. Confirming what had already been said, the Saint repeated on October 26: "After thinking things over carefully, it is better if for the time being we let things take their course. Do not refuse, but sit on the matter."

Reporting on one of his trips, during the course of which he had also visited Vicenza, Father Anthony Sala described what he had seen and heard on November 5. Among other things four sisters named Caldozzi,

spinsters and very wealthy, were prepared to give him twenty thousand lire immediately and more later on; and besides there would be a legacy of twenty thousand lire from Countess Druscilla Dal Verma, widow of Loschi, to be paid when the house would be open. But forced with the insurmountable difficulties which would delay exceedingly the execution of what appeared to be a favorable plan, Don Bosco expressed himself as follows: "Could we not write to the Caldonazzi sisters that in view of the way this transaction is dragging on, we are asking them to donate the twenty thousand lire either for the Sacred Heart Church in Rome or for the Missions? I would write to them myself, promising them that this sum of money would be considered as already donated, as soon as the house in Vicenza would be opened."

"The people of Vicenza are only interested in things which concern their city" Father Sala answered.

"I will give it a try, at any rate," the Saint said, "and I shall also write to the heir of the Duke of Parma who is to pay out the Loschi legacy. The Duchess of Parma called on me when I was at Nice Maritime, and so, there is even more reason to do so. As to Vicenza, send word that we are letting the plan rest until the spring. At this time, charity is more uncertain than when we opened our houses at Sampierdarena, Alassio and Marseille. When spring comes, we shall delay it until the fall, and so on."

He did as he said. On November 16 he wrote to the Caldonazzi sisters, asking them to assign the sum to Bishop John Cagliero instead, who was in the heart of the wastelands of Patagonia, without resources with which to attend to an infinite number of essential charitable activities there, and with a great many Sisters and Missionaries.[15] But they stood firm on their plan to assign this sum only to a Salesian school in their own city; but they did send him one thousand lire for his Missions.[16]

The tenacity of the people of Vicenza appeared once again during Don Bosco's lifetime. Canon Cavedan, the vicar general of the diocese, who was the one who from the beginning had coordinated the actions of the sponsors; officially informed Turin thereof, "All people, both good and bad, are anxious to see a Salesian house established in Vicenza," Father Moses Veronesi wrote to Don Bosco in 1886.[17] "Both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities are ready to help us. In fact the prefect of the

[15] We glean this much from the letter quoted below.

[16] Letter from Mr. Eugene Panizzoni to Don Bosco, Vicenza, November 23, 1885. He probably received an identical reply in regard to the Loschi legacy.

[17] Mogliano, September 22, 1886.

province would like to recommend a few orphaned boys to the Salesians, and pay a monthly subsidy of twenty lire for them." In June, 1887 the Canon visited the oratory with Father Gennari, the pastor of San Stefano, and was invited to state the case as it stood, together with his companion, before the Superior Chapter, at which Father Michael Rua presided. Everything seemed to be already arranged. But despite all that, everything fell through. "If the transaction failed," the above mentioned pastor wrote,[18] "it was not for lack of any good will, but because it was not within the spirit of the Congregation, to give attention to boys below the age of eight, as the sponsors wished them to do. Later tries were made but they all met with the same fate, and until the present day, no Salesian house has yet been opened in Vicenza.

TRENT

With a beautiful letter, the mayor of Trent informed Don Bosco that, with the fullest agreement of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, he was calling on the Salesians to take over the management of the local reformatory for boys. He said the house was already waiting for them, that this house belonged to the Congregation of Charity and the Municipality. Don Bosco was invited to state his views on education, and what arrangements he wanted made in the house, so that nothing would be started from a different perspective. Don Bosco's jurisdiction would begin during the month of November, over a small handful of boys already living there. Don Bosco liked the unexpected way in which the gates of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire had been flung open to his Congregation. He was also pleased that this should have occurred in the historic city of the Council of Trent, and also because it was a fertile territory for vocations. In the Chapter meeting on July 13 he said that an answer should be drafted, asking how much the salary for the Salesians would be, and if this was to be calculated in a lump sum or individually. Meanwhile, he told several members of the Chapter to examine the project, saying that in the fall, Father Anthony Sala would be going there to inspect the situation.

Father Anthony Sala was given a warm welcome but both the mayor and the gentlemen of the Congregation of Charity maintained a scrupulous reserve, so that he could not find out anything about the orphanage,

[18] Vicenza, August 29, 1887.

not even what kind of food was served to its boarders. The house was magnificent, new and spacious. The Bishop, Bishop Della Bona, was anxious that the Salesians would go to Trent also for reasons of his own. There was a certain hostility existing between the municipality and the Congregation of Charity which was detrimental for its influence on the common well-being of the city. The Bishop hoped that the Salesians would form a unifying link between these two authorities. There were twenty-five orphan boys in the house, and as many orphan girls. It contained workshops, where the shop heads behaved like masters, and were directly interested in the profits. This meant that the boys were completely under their jurisdiction. A few of the boys were attending the public schools but without causing any inconvenience. Both boys and girls attended religious services in the same chapel, at the same time. The director did not seem particularly gifted. Everything seemed to indicate that the Salesians would be favorably regarded in Trent.

The mayor would have liked to have a draft agreement drawn up immediately, but Father Anthony Sala was wise enough not to agree. He only outlined several conditions verbally, and they would have to be submitted to the Superior Chapter for examination. These were: free transfer to the Salesians of the Crosina and Santori Palace, as the building was called; removal of the orphan girls; for whom another house had to be found; the exterior repairs and modifications were to be carried out at the expense of the Municipality and the Congregation of Charity: an inventory was to be taken of all articles then existing in the house, with the obligation of returning the same in whatever condition they might be if the Salesians should leave the premises; the Salesians were to undertake the acceptance of no more than twenty-five boys; the Municipality and the Congregation of Charity would pay eighty centesimi a day for any boy recommend by them over and above that number; boys would be enrolled but not younger than ten years old and not older than twelve, and they would have to be physically strong and healthy; the Salesians were to be free to take in as many boys as they wished, under whatever terms they chose; the Director would be free to assign either to study or to shops even the boys entrusted to him by the municipality and the Congregation of Charity; it was to be established that classes and workshops were all to be located on the premises; notice had to be served five years in advance, if the Municipality wished to dismiss the Salesians; the director alone could be in charge of the internal direction and administration; he would also be free to keep separate the newcomers from the orphans already living in

the orphanage, or to allow them to mix freely with them.

Father Anthony Sala read his report upon his return to Turin, and read out the articles which have been briefly summarized above. When during the ensuing debate there was talk of repairs necessary to the building, Don Bosco said: "We must look into the matter carefully, before we oblige the municipality to undertake these repairs, because we have had difficulties in this respect in many other places. The tendency of municipal authorities is to promise, but not to carry out what they promise. We might write an article worded as follows: "The director shall inform the municipality of repairs needed. The Municipality will carry out an inspection, and if no action is taken, the director shall be entitled to have repairs done and send the bills for the same to the Municipality." We must be very careful in wording the phrase in order to hold responsible those who are obliged to carry out the repairs."

Speaking about necessary precautions when dealing with municipal authorities, Don Bosco had made the following remark on some other occasion:[19] "We have to be careful in dealing with municipalities, because there are always certain conditions which do not seem very heavy, and to which therefore not great attention is given, and yet they really contain the worst possible consequences for us."

He appointed a committee composed of Father Anthony Sala, Father Celestine Durando and Father Joseph Lazzero, so that they might write up a draft agreement to be submitted to the next Chapter meeting for examination. This meeting took place on December 1. After a long debate, sixteen articles were stipulated which in 1887 served as a basis for the final agreement.[20]

CUNEO

Father Peana planned to turn over to Don Bosco a magnificent hospice he had built himself in Cuneo, and which was equipped with everything necessary for about one hundred young boarders. Here again, the situation entailed two different sides. On the one hand, the usual arguments dissuaded the Salesians from accepting the proposal; on the other, the importance of the locality and the need to thin out the house of San Benigno, by scaling down the number of trade students there, so as to

[19] Minutes of the Superior Chapter, August 25, 1885.
[20] Appendix, Doc. 87.

afford more space for the clerics who could no longer find suitable accommodation, constituted two urgent reasons for not neglecting this request. Since the opinion was divided, Don Bosco solved the problem by saying "We cannot go ahead, for lack of personnel. Write to Father Peana that he bequeath his school to us in his will, and at his death we shall succeed him and continue his work. It is deplorable to realize that some Salesians have no Salesian spirit. We have Salesians who leave us every year, and we end up with a great disappointment, if we think of all the work we have done to educate them. They have to be sent here and there to other houses as soon as they are ordained, and they do not have the time to be formed. Some of our priests were ordained because we were pressed by necessity. We will have to proceed very slowly as regards ordinations, and prior to them, clerics should be obliged to live for a year in a house of formation. Love for their families and the families themselves conspire always to wrest these Salesians from us. We have to consolidate."

There was no follow-up on the negotiations for Cuneo. We will now close this chapter with two remarks on words uttered by Don Bosco on the above mentioned circumstance.

There will always be people who leave us, like in every religious congregation. Don Bosco had had this painful experience already at the beginning when out of eight boys trained by him in two separate groups, by dint of loving attention and sacrifices until they became clerics, only one of their number remained at this side: Father Michael Rua. Such defections in the ranks decreased to a more or less considerable degree as the Salesian Society took on form and stability, yet there were other people who left the order and this grieved him deeply, all the same. The older Salesians still recall with sadness the case of the three Cuffia brothers, all of them endowed with brilliant minds, and who for many years had had Don Bosco's fatherly care lavished upon them. And as soon as the two of them were ordained priests, and the third was about to be ordained, they all turned their backs on him coldly. When confronted by such sad events the faithful ones tightened their ranks around Don Bosco, and formed that glorious general's staff and that magnificent company of veterans who constituted the true rock foundations of his edifice. On the other hand, the fact that some people left on their own , removed negative elements which might have undermined the structure during the period of settlement. That was the reason why Father Michael Rua was able to stress so movingly before the judges of

the apostolic tribunal[21] in his testimony "that never during the life of Don Bosco, there was ever any division among his various houses, and also at his death there was no trend either collective or on the part of individuals, against what he had decreed, and the congregation went on just as when he was there to govern it."

In the words quoted above, the Saint likewise referred to the immaturity of some Salesians sent to the houses. Had Don Bosco waited to act until all of them had grown to perfect human beings, he would have died, leaving behind him only a meager heritage. But in reference to this subject matter, the judgment expressed by Bishop Tasso, bishop of Aosta, former pupil of the Oratory and priest of the Mission, is clear and decisive. When he too testified about the prudence of the Servant of God, he expressed himself as follows:[22] "To some it seemed that he went beyond the borders of prudence by undertaking large-scale operations without adequate means, and by sending men who did not show adequate training, to direct his first schools and institutions. But in this I would rather admire his immense faith in God, and after seeing the excellent results yielded by such institutions, I can and must believe that he had received special inspiration from Heaven."

21 Summ. Of the Pos. sup. Virt. Number IX. #5.
22 L.c. #94.

Chapter 21

IN SPAIN AND IN FRANCE

During the initial phase of the negotiations for a new foundation at Dinan (this actually occurred much later), everything proceeded so smoothly that Don Bosco wrote Father Martin, the main sponsor of the project, "Only one thing astonishes me in the face of all the immense amount of good that can be done in Brittany, and that is the absence of trials."[1]

The enemy of good was not dozing off, however, and Don Bosco did not have long to wait. Though these trials did not occur right away to obstruct the groundwork being done for the foundation, they did appear during the first phase of the development. There were so many and of such an entity that they tested the courage of the Salesians sent to open the new house. This is what we have seen so far and we shall continue to see it also in the future: scarcity of personnel, financial difficulties, and hostility of all kinds that imposed sacrifices. All this usually proved to be fruitful in the final outcome, assuring not only stability, but also vitality to the institutions being founded.

The house of Utrera met with the same fate. One hundred and fifty of the poorest youngsters attended the school as day students, but the director complained that he had only one priest, Father Charles Pane, to assist him. In addition, Marquis Ulloa could not pay him the customary two hundred lire monthly subsidy he had been giving him because his financial situation no longer enabled him to do so. Since the four-year term of the agreement was going to expire in 1885, the superiors debated as to whether or not they should remain there.

In the hope of raising enough money to cover maintenance costs, Father Celestine Durando suggested sending a few first-class instructors to Utrera to provide a number of courses for the sons of wealthy families. He was convinced that it would soon become the most outstanding school in town.

Don Bosco only listened without saying a word, and Bishop John

[1] Letter to Father Michael Rua. This is undated, but written after Don Bosco's death.

Cagliero took the floor after everybody else had his say. He had done so much for the foundation, and he forcefully opposed the prefect of studies' general proposal. Such an action would have only drawn students away from the other town schools to join the Salesians, and this would have marked the beginning of envy and wars against the Salesians themselves.

"Let us be caring only for the poor," he said. "Then the municipal authorities will always favor us and subsidize us. Let us not start competing with the municipal schools. The church can provide us with enough for our keep. The marquis assured us that in case of emergency, he would not abandon us. The clergy seems to like us and gives alms to us, so there is no reason why we should leave Utrera. Father Ernest Oberti must be patient for a while and we shall provide for them."

Don Bosco approved what had been said, and without further discussion, the others all backed up his motion.[2]

Aware of Don Bosco's wishes and with the assistance of the cooperators, the director was so encouraged that by January 29th, he was able prepare for an elaborate Feast of St. Francis of Sales with a preached novena, despite the extreme scarcity of personnel.

The splendor of the celebrations was enhanced by the presence of an eminent cooperator from Seville, Bishop Marcello Spinola, who had just then been consecrated bishop of Coria. He arrived in Utrera the night before the feast, preached, heard confessions, pontificated, confirmed and addressed the meeting of cooperators. It was a delightful surprise to read in the February 4th issue of *El Diario de Seville* how perfectly he had understood the meaning of Salesian cooperation, and how fond he was of Don Bosco and his Congregation. The director wrote[3] that in him "the Salesians of Utrera were losing their father, friend and councilor, and his helping hand in any crisis."

The Salesians of this house had to face a more arduous trial that summer, which was all the more arduous since it was a reoccurrence, namely, the resurgence of the cholera epidemic. The first cases of infection were reported in Madrid on June 8th. The announcement that cholera had reappeared caused a general wave of extraordinary turmoil. Soon the contagious disease caused havoc in the provinces of Castellon, Valencia, and Murcia. Eighty percent of the stricken people died and terror swept the

[2] Letter to Don Bosco (Utrera, April 1, 1885).

[3] *Minutes of the High Chapter* (January 9, 1885).

nation. The July heat caused the infection to spread so rapidly that the above three provinces became tragic spectacles of desolation and mourning. The plague lasted for six months, spreading so violently that very few provinces were untouched by it.

In circumstances as serious as these, it was obvious that the director of the school could not leave his house and go Turin during the spiritual retreat. In view of this impossibility, Don Bosco wrote to him a fatherly letter:

Turin, August 10, 1885

My dear Father Oberti:

I thought that I would be able to see you and some of our confreres during this vacation period, but the public calamity now raging will perhaps deprive us of this pleasure.

While we resignedly accept God's will, we should not be discouraged. God is always with us, and all the Salesians are ready to make any sacrifice to assist you.

Should you be in need of anything in order to help the children left orphaned by the epidemic, let me know and we shall see what we can do to help them.

We mean to do the same thing for France and Italy, where, at least for the moment, we are immune from the fearful scourge. Thank Heaven, at least for the time being.

I am looking forward to receiving detailed reports of our beloved children and if you can, try to get some vocations for the priesthood in Spain. Send me the name and surname of our benefactors, particularly the Ulloa family.

Remember that the following is a powerful antidote against the cholera epidemic and you will try to put it into practice and should recommend it to others: wear a medal of Mary Help of Christians; frequent Communion; the daily ejaculatory prayer *O Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*

Give warm regards to your boys and all our benefactors, assuring them that I pray everyday for their spiritual and temporal happiness.

May God bless all and keep us in His holy grace. Pray for me, too, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

The house of Sarria was faced with no lesser difficulties both within and without, but the serenity of its director enabled things to proceed without discouragement. The saint had written to him as well:

Turin, August 10, 1885

My dear Father John Branda:

The newspapers tell us that the epidemic grows more menacing every day. This is a trial to which God is subjecting us. We have our remedy against it, so let us use it. Use it yourself and recommend it to others: every day, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum or pro nobis,* said three times; frequent Communion; wear her medal. You yourself should offer to take in the orphans of the plague according to the capacity of your hearts. Tell the Chopitea family that Don Bosco is praying himself, and that other prayers are being said by all his orphan boys, some 160,000 strong, every day during Holy Mass for their intentions, and that I thank them for all their charity towards us.

If general events will permit, we shall meet to discuss our business matters, which are quite substantial. Begin by sending Father Michael Rua a list of everything you might need for next year, and we shall do all we can to provide you with what you need to work for the greater glory of God.

Give our dear boys my best, and tell them I send them all a special blessing.

My health is improving and I am able to deal with a few more special matters. May Mary help us all, protect us, and defend us against all dangers to soul and body. Pray for me, too, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

The early Salesian directors, who had been trained at the Oratory and who had gone forth from it with hearts full of love and veneration for Don Bosco, availed themselves of their own sentiments as a powerful tool in their dealings with the boys. To this end, they did not only instill into them similar sentiments toward the saint, but helped them and guided them in his name, and even encouraged them to write to him personally, as we

have seen this time and again in previous volumes. It was, therefore, not merely complimentary when Father John Branda wrote the following in December to the Servant of God:

> Here we are thinking and talking about our father, Don Bosco, all the time, fervently hoping to see him some day, not too far away. Oh, if only such a journey were possible! Don Bosco is expected with equal affection in the furthermost corner of Spain, namely in Andalusia.

The cooperators of Barcelona were amazed by the new system of charity in action by Don Bosco's sons, and their astonishment grew as soon as they saw the effects of it. Two small brothers, who had lost their parents to the cholera epidemic, had been assigned to the school and would not resign themselves to the attention of the men Divine Providence had given them to take the place of their parents. But the Salesian way of life wrought such a great change in both of them that they were unrecognizable to people who had known them before. They had become docile, industrious and pious.

Another orphan of the plague lived as best he could on the beach, receiving the charity of a little unsalted military bread from the sailors or stealing coal and other articles from the ships and boats when he could get away with it, and selling his stolen booty to still his hunger. Once, the customs officials found him half-dead on the beach and took him to the hospital, where he regained the strength he had lost through starvation. A Salesian cooperator showed compassion towards him, recommended him to Father John Branda, and asked him to rescue the boy from the path of delinquency. When Father John Branda took him in, the boy told him that he had no relatives at all in the world. Little by little, the young "savage" learned how to pray, read, write and work as a tailor.

After hearing people talk constantly about him, another warm-hearted boy wanted to write to Don Bosco and thank him for all the charity he had enjoyed in the Sarria School. After his parents died, the poor child had been bound, gagged and left to suffocate beneath two heavy wooden planks. A night guard had miraculously heard him moan as he passed nearby and rescued him. Some evil-minded thief stole some of the furniture that belonged to his dead parents and left the boy to die. He was secretly recommended to the Salesians and gave signs of exceptional talent and goodness of heart.

Faced with such an eloquent testimony as this, a general wave of approval hailed the coming of these new religious, brought there by the efforts of the charitable Dona Chopitea, who had persuaded Don Bosco to send them to take care of the poor children of the working classes.

Word of all the good work done by the Salesians at Utrera and Barcelona spread throughout Spain, and as was only natural, it aroused the desire to have them go to additional cities. Father Casimir Vasquez from Vigo, Spain, called on the Salesians to found a trade school for the poor and abandoned boys of his own town. The only answer he could give him was to pray to God that He might bless the Congregation by sending some Spanish personnel to them. Without Spanish cooperators, Father Vasquez realized that it would be difficult for the Salesians to set roots in Vigo.[4]

A number of Salesians made their retreat in August with the Jesuits at Jerez de la Frontera in Andalusia. On the 6th, Father Charles Pane wrote to Don Bosco from the haven of that retreat:

> If you but knew, dearest Father, how much these excellent cooperators here love you, and how much they desire to see you here in their midst. I think that only in a few cities of this world is Don Bosco loved and awaited as much as here. How many tokens of their affection have they given us, merely because they know that we are Don Bosco's sons! Since they cannot meet you, they at least would like to see a house of Don Bosco's sons to display to the sons the love they have for their father. When I told them that it was absolutely impossible to found any house at Jerez, they answered, "Tell Don Bosco to send us one priest and cleric, or at least a layman so that we, too, can have one son of St. Francis of Sales and Don Bosco here to start doing some good for thousands of boys who are on the road to perdition. There is a great need of Catholic workers here at Jerez.

This letter was accompanied by a warm invitation in Latin from Father Emanuel Cuelenos, the Jesuit superior. Don Bosco had Father John Baptist Lemoyne write a warm reply, but we were unable to find a copy of this correspondence.

As can be seen through the document just mentioned, the good

[4] Don Bosco dictated the reply in Italian and it was then translated into Spanish. (Appendix, document 88). The Salesians went to Vigo in 1894.

Spaniards were growing more and more convinced that if Catholic Spain were to be spared dark days in the future, then someone with a broader vision had to take care of the deplorably neglected working classes. A number of wise and honest gentlemen saw the rapid growth of the so-called "black hand" movement (an association of anarchists who plagued the nation with atrocious crimes) and realized that the cause of such an evil movement lay in the destitution and corruption of youth.

A committee of noble and wealthy persons was formed in Madrid under the direction of Senator Silvela, who had formerly been foreign secretary and later ambassador in Paris. Realizing that the government was incapable of making proper provision, they decided to give an example to the nation by shouldering the expenses of building a reformatory school for boys in the capital. The state did not completely show disregard for the initiative, for on January 4, 1883, a bill was passed, authorizing the foundation of a private school under the patronage of St. Rita named *Escuela de Reforma Para Jovenes y Asilo de Correcion Paternal* [Reform School and House of Paternal Correction for Boys].

Before starting the school, the committee tried to find out what system of education should be applied there. The deputy (later on Senator Lastres) and another gentleman from Madrid toured all through Europe, calling on their national consuls in every country to introduce them to the government authorities with whom they were accredited. But wherever they went, they were only shown correction houses, and went home with the overall impression that they had seen institutions that were more like prisons than educational institutions. They had never heard any mention made of Don Bosco.

When the boys were registered, it was decided to divide them into four categories: (1) abandoned boys; (2) boys at risk; (3) boys already guilty of misdemeanor, but not yet punished by law because they were not yet held responsible for their actions; and (4) delinquent youngsters from good families who should be housed separately so that no dishonor might be reflected on their families.

This was the state of affairs when a senator presented the committee with a large section of his own land near Madrid so that a building might be erected there. Two wings of the building were already completed when Senor Lastres heard of the Salesian house in Barcelona. He had the work suspended instantly, and wrote to a banker in that same city. The banker sent one of his secretaries to Sarria and then went there himself. All they could talk about was the reformatory conceived according to the model of

old-fashioned houses of correction, but Father John Branda told them that such was not the mission of the Salesians. He gave them D'Espiney's book to read so that they might learn what Don Bosco's system was like. He would have preferred to give them the book by Du Boys, but unfortunately, he did not have a copy available.

When he reported this last detail about the books to the saint, Don Bosco answered, "It is better to give people the books by Du Boys in such instances. D'Espiney is still all right for ordinary good people to look at and to inspire them to open their wallets, whereas the book by Du Boys explains our system, and he fully understands the spirit of our Society. In the beginning, Don Bosco was reluctant to have people print anything about him personally, but now since the die had been cast, they had to move on. Du Boy's book should be distributed as widely as possible, sold, given away if necessary, because it teaches people about us as we really are."

Now let us return to our story. Two months after the above-mentioned visits, Father John Branda received a letter from Deputy Lastres at Sarria. He had come with another gentleman to look at and study the house. These two also only spoke of reformatories, while Father John Branda never wearied of repeating that if what they wanted was a house of correction, they should go and look elsewhere, since such things formed no part of the mission of Don Bosco's Congregation. He advised them instead to visit the nearby state correctional institution run by the Friars of St. Peter in Chains. The gentlemen complied, out of mere formality, but came back again and spent a whole day at the school observing its routine, rules and customs. They concluded that they should write to Don Bosco.

When they got back to Madrid a month later, they wrote to Father John Branda and asked him to call on them in the capital. Father John Branda demurred, saying that he felt the journey would be quite useless and he had people in the house who were sick. Eight days passed, then a letter from Bishop Rampolla, the Apostolic Nuncio, renewed the invitation. Now he could no longer postpone it.

Lastres and Silvela were waiting for him at the station. When he called on the nuncio, Bishop Rampolla begged him to enter negotiations, assuring him that it was the wish of the king, who had promised his support.

The whole committee (made up of senators, deputies, and bankers) met the following day. Father John Branda was given first place. The ideas expressed by the gentlemen of the committee were somewhat in conflict with the principles that guide our own educational system since it was hardly understood by them. Nevertheless, they said they would give

complete freedom of action to the Salesians in order to attain what they wanted. The Cortes had already passed the law, but they were able to amend and modify it. Their wish was to rescue youth, and the institution was not state-operated, but private.

They agreed that Don Bosco should be written to and given the assurance that the building now under construction would be his property. They would draw up a contract, Don Bosco would be free to do whatever he thought best, and his administration would be free of any obstruction. If he wanted them to work with him, they would do so; if he preferred to work on his own, they would stand aside. Minister of State Silvela spoke thus in the name of the others.

When the Superior Chapter discussed the proposal (September 22, 1885), Don Bosco exclaimed upon hearing the report, "Paris, Madrid, Trent! What a vast new horizon for the Salesian Congregation!"

Father Celestine Durando remarked that if they only halted a bit in the rush to expand, they could have easily founded a house a year without weakening the Congregation.

However, Don Bosco did not agree with his statement. "See how Divine Providence is guiding the Salesian Congregation? Notice that when we opened houses, we did not even know what we were going to do. Even more, we do not have to take into consideration the good work that is accomplished in our houses or done on behalf of the boys, but that which indirectly is done by others through our influence without any effort on our part.

"La Spezia! We got there without any help and our arrival marked the deathblow for Protestantism. Faenza! They hailed us with cries of 'Death to the Salesians,' a cry which continued and still continues to be heard. Look, that seminary was decaying, practically reduced to zero. The children of the future, that was the abyss into which unfortunate youth precipitated.[5] We attacked them because at that time no one paid attention. They were hardly any more priests in the Faenza diocese, and what few were there were Democrats. The hopes of the clergy were concentrated on a few little altar boys who roamed around the town. But ever since we got into it, thanks to the efforts of the admirable Father Paul Taroni, the seminary is no longer big enough to accommodate all the seminarians.

"Remember that, first of all, the rector had suggested to the bishop that he close down the seminary, but Father Paul Taroni suggested instead,

[5] Letter from the Saint to Count Colle (Turin, May 10, 1885).

'Have Don Bosco come here and you will see.' At the beginning, the seminary did not have more than twenty or thirty seminarians, and now there are one hundred and twenty resident and fifty or sixty living in the town. We, too, in the Congregation have a few seminarians from Faenza, and I hope that we, too, shall soon reap a rich harvest of vocations from our schools. The Oratory will continue extending its influence and much good will be accomplished for the diocese by the boarders and the day boys who attend it."

As Don Bosco paused briefly, Father Michael Rua intervened and reported on what he had seen with his own eyes how the presence of the Salesians had restored the courage of the clergy who previously were totally demoralized. They were inspired by the example of the Salesian Oratory. Pastors in various localities had opened festive oratories of their own which were now prospering.

Don Bosco then resumed his remarks. "All this is due to the poor Salesian Congregation! When I went to Faenza, the bishop was restless because he was afraid that his seminary might be totally deserted because of the Salesians. I told him that when Don Bosco went anywhere, he always had the blessing of the bishop. I said I was, therefore, fully ready to leave immediately, if His Excellency did not want to have Don Bosco in his diocese. But I said that I was in Faenza with the full approval of the Holy Father and should the Holy Father ask news of the situation, I was under obligation to let him know the truth and report on what I saw. The bishop softened when he heard this and said he was happy that he had come to Faenza, but that he feared for his seminary. Then, full of faith, Father Paul Taroni declared that he promised that since Don Bosco had arrived in Faenza, the number of seminarians in the diocese would increase within a few days by about twenty. And that is exactly what happened, and no one could provide an explanation for the encouraging phenomenon.

"Now getting back to the proposal for Madrid, I believe we might appoint somebody to look into the matter and see where we ought to start in our negotiations, and how we can best demonstrate our good will to the gentlemen in question. We shall, therefore, have to send someone to Madrid to stay there for a while and inspect, investigate and draw-up a conclusive agreement."

Father Paul Branda was present at this meeting and said that the gentlemen in Madrid were determined to appeal to the Holy Father if the Salesian Superior Chapter opposed the realization of their project.

Don Bosco said, "Then appoint a committee to investigate this

Madrid project and see how it can be modified in the light of our system. Let Father Celestine Durando, Father Francis Cerruti and Father John Branda be in charge of this, and they will report on their findings to the Chapter. We, too, will give our assent to all that does not touch upon the substance of our system, and the means will be no problem at all. But let us stand firm on our practices of maintaining, as in all of our schools, the two categories of academic and trade students."

After hearing the reports of the above-mentioned three priests, the Chapter decided to answer the committee and the Nuncio by saying that it was according to the guiding spirit and principles of the Salesian Congregation. A copy of the House Rules was enclosed with the letter. After discussing the matter with Senator Silvela, the chairman of the committee, the Nuncio informed Don Bosco that the wishes of the committee were perfectly attuned to the demands of the Salesians. As for himself, he was ready to do all he could so that the outcome of the project might be successful.[6]

The following November when an international penitentiary congress was held in Rome, the two famous jurists and scholars of penal procedures, Silvela and Lastres, attended it as representatives of the Spanish government. They passed through Turin on their way to Rome and called on Don Bosco, but we do not have any details of their visit.

The great building was completed in three months and on March 5, 1886, Silvela once again renewed his appeal, accompanied by a memorandum written in French which contained the history of the institution, the text of the decree passed on January 4, 1883 and the list of the charter sponsors. Don Bosco replied quickly with the following letter, which he dictated to Father Francis Cerruti in Alassio:

Alassio (Genoa), March 17,1886

Dear Sir:

I carefully examined the plans for the School of St. Rita, which you were kind enough to send me, together with the law passed on January 4, 1883 authorizing it, and can only convey my sincerest thanks to you and the other honorable members of the committee for your benevolence towards the Salesians, and my sincerest admiration for the fine Christian charity which inspires

[6] Letter to Don Bosco from the nuncio (October 11, 1885, Appendix, document 89).

you all. I would be most anxious to take up your invitation to direct the institute, as you again urged me to do in your gracious letter of the 5th of this month, but apart from the fact that we don't have personnel due to the many commitments already taken, the nature of this institution and its disciplinary system do not permit me to second this mutual desire of ours. Despite all our intentions of doing good, we cannot depart from the system set forth in our rules, of which I sent you a copy last September. We would be able to open an institution along the same lines as our Salesian workshops in Barcelona-Sarria, though we could not do likewise with a reform school along the lines planned for the institution of St. Rita.

I trust, with the help of God, to be able to go to Barcelona in April, and I shall be delighted if I have an opportunity of meeting once again with you and our excellent Señor Francisco Lastres, for I have most pleasant recollections of both of you and pray fervently that Our Lord may keep you both in His Holy Grace.

Believe me, dear sir, with the most sincere esteem and gratitude,

Your most humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The saint was on his way to France at that time and afterward went to Spain. No sooner was his arrival in Barcelona made known than Lastres hastened to meet him and hand him a letter from the Nuncio. In order to please Silvela, who had urged him to bring about the fulfillment of his wishes, the prelate again wrote that he was anxious that Don Bosco make every effort so that the Salesians might take charge of such a beneficial and important an institution. He added that the committee was prepared to do everything necessary to ensure the respect of the rules of the Congregation. When he sent the letter from the Nuncio to Turin, Don Bosco wrote at the top of the first page "Let the Chapter examine the letter and do whatever is possible."

Father Michael Rua accompanied Don Bosco to Spain and had a long interview with Señor Lastres on April 18th. We know the basic essentials of their conversation from several notes he jotted down immediately afterward.

After informing Mr. Lastres of the sincere good intention of both Don Bosco and his Chapter to go to Madrid, he stressed the shortage of available personnel and insisted on five basic conditions: (1) freedom granted to

the future directive authority to assign the young boarders to whatever trade they believed most suited to their talents, with due consideration being taken for the requirements and conditions of the institution, as well as freedom to assign any well-deserving boy to a study program; (2) some kind of necessary arrangements to keep pupils who seemed likely to exercise an obstructive influence away from them; (3) advisability of stipulating a fixed salary for each individual Salesian or, better still, stipulation of an annual salary for all the Salesians collectively who were active in the institution; (4) advisability of stipulating a tuition fee to be paid by every boy; (5) indispensability of giving serious thought on how to provide work for the shops.

After stipulating these basic principles, Father Michael Rua promised that the matter would be put before the Superior Chapter in Turin and that should the proposal be taken up, a draft agreement would be drawn up and sent to either Silvela or Lastres for their examination and suggestions. At the same time, he was careful to make very clear that it would not be possible to send the Salesians to Madrid in the near future.

Visits were forbidden in Spain during the latter days of the Holy Week, and this left Don Bosco a little free time. On Thursday, he was able to answer the letter from Nuncio:

Barcelona-Sarria, April 22, 1886

Dear and Most Reverend Excellency:

I was very pleased to receive your venerated letter regarding the institution, now planned to be entrusted to the management of the Salesians in the capital. We shall be delighted to be of service in this undertaking, especially since Your Excellency had repeatedly recommended it. When talking with Señor Lastres, we found ways to overcome a number of obstacles that would only have arisen later on. It now only remains for us to stipulate an agreement between our own pious Society and the committee sponsoring the undertaking. As soon as I get back to Turin, this will be one of our most urgent concerns. As soon as the agreement is drafted, it will be sent to Mr. Manuel Silvela so that he may put it before the above- mentioned committee for its consideration.

For the time being, the really big difficulty facing us comes from the lack of available personnel, but we trust that with the

help of Divine Providence, this difficulty can likewise be overcome. In the meantime, Your Reverend Excellency may assure the above-mentioned Mr. Manuel Silvela that we shall do everything we can to gratify his wishes and those of the other members of the committee.

Please accept my humble regards, Your Excellency, and please bless my big family and me. For our part, we shall not cease praying to the Lord fervently that He may keep you for many and many a year for the good of the church.

Believe me when I say I am honored to be with the greatest veneration,

Your most humble and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The Superior Chapter could not attend to the matter before June 25th when Don Bosco would preside over the meeting. After Father Michael Rua's report was read, the Chapter voted in favor of accepting the proposal for this house, provided that the principle of Salesian independence was assured both in the direction and the administration of the institution. Then, they passed on to a review of the general terms of the draft agreement submitted for consideration.

There was a heated debate on the characteristics of a genuine reformatory that the committee seemed anxious to confer on the Madrid institution. It was finally decided to submit the following preliminary terms: (1) the name and the features of house of correction should be done away with so that the boys might not feel humiliated by it; (2) for the initial period, enrollment should be restricted to boys either homeless or at risk; (3) for the time being, no boys should be accepted if coming from police headquarters; (4) the boys to be accepted should not be older than fourteen and not younger than nine; (5) the Salesians were to be free to direct any boy they thought suitable toward higher studies; (6) after a few amendments, the agreement already drawn up at Trent should be sent to Madrid.

As soon as all his many commitments allowed him, Father Michael Rua sent the draft agreement outlined by Father Celestine Durando (on the basis of the one for Trent) and an explanatory letter to Senor Silvela. We do not think that it would be superfluous or unbecoming to quote the letter here in its entirety, since Don Bosco signed his name to it:

Turin, July 8, 1886

Your Excellency:

Please be so good as to forgive us if we have delayed somewhat in sending you the draft for an agreement between your honorable committee and the undersigned. Upon my return home from my long trip, I was beset by so many different things that it was only today that I have been able to turn my attention, as I wished to do, to the matter on hand. We now enclose this draft so that you may examine it with the committee and make any remarks you may find suitable. It is incomplete, since there is, for example, no specification of the time when the institution in question is to be inaugurated. This had been omitted intentionally because it can easily be filled in with the other details once we are in agreement on the basic issues.

You may perhaps find things herein that will meet with opposition on the part of the committee, for example, what is stipulated under article 2, namely, that no boy may be enrolled if he has already been previously convicted. In this connection, I wish to explain something to you: we do not want any boy to leave this new institution, which is being formed for the civil and Christian education of boys, with any brand mark of infamy upon him. If anyone were to say that he had just come out of a reformatory or a house of correction, this would create a mark for the boy that might last all of his life. We want to do away with any trace of anything that could suggest a house of correction to the public. To this end, we feel that the house should simply be known either as an institution or hostel, rather than as a reformatory or correctional institute, etc., for at least five years.

Likewise, we do not want to enroll any boy who has been previously convicted, and this is precisely so that the public may not think of it as a house of correction. This is also because we are anxious to create a substantial nucleus of well-trained boys who will help those who come to the institution later on and accustom themselves more easily to a routine of work and of virtue. After the first five years, we hope to start enrolling, little by little, those boys who have already been previously convicted, but even then, all possible precautions should be taken so that this is not brought to the public attention. This is our practice in a number of insti-

tutions in different localities, where gradually and without attracting any public attention, the Royal Police Force recommends such young unfortunates to us from time to time, without either the institute or the boys in question forfeiting their good name in the least. I trust that Your Excellency and the committee will appreciate this reasoning.

As for the daily subsidy that ought to be paid for the boys and the annual sum to be paid for the managing personnel, etc., we are leaving it blank, waiting for a proposal on the part of the committee. Perhaps some consideration will be given to the duration of the journey.

There is just one more minor thing we would like to point out, and that is that since it is to be an institution for boys, we think it would be more suitable if the title were in the name of a male saint rather than a woman saint. It might perhaps be dedicated to St. Isidore and put under his patronage.

One more thing remains to be said, and that is that in view of the lack of personnel, it is with my great regret it will not be possible to comply with your wishes nor my own for a few years. Perhaps we shall have to wait until the year 1888 or 1889 before I have the required personnel available for this undertaking.

Waiting for any observations that Your Excellency or the committee may have to make in reference to this project, I and my sons pray that the Lord shower His gifts upon Your Excellency and all the honorable members of the committee while I remain with the greatest esteem,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Months went by after this letter was written without any answer forthcoming. In December when he sent his Christmas good wishes to the Apostolic Nuncio, Don Bosco must have mentioned this inexplicable silence because on January 5, 1887, Monsignor wrote, " I am unable to tell you why you have not had any answer to the letter you sent together with your draft agreement to Senator Silvela, as requested. I believe that in the next few days I shall have an opportunity of meeting with someone belonging to the family of the above-mentioned gentleman, and you can be sure that I will not let the opportunity of confirming the very special

regard I feel for the Salesian Congregation slip me by."

There might have been verbal and written clarifications, but the fact remains that our documents come to a standstill here. Since the institution was subsequently entrusted to the regular Franciscan tertiaries, which kept the features of a reformatory school intact, it would not be a far-fetched supposition to imagine that the committee had been loath to accept Don Bosco's fundamental suggestion in this same connection. Eleven years after the death of the saint, the Salesians went to Madrid on their own terms.

The cholera epidemic spread from Spain into Southern France where it expanded rapidly, though far less violently, than the previous year. One famous victim of the plague was Monsignor Forcade, the archbishop of Aix, who was struck down in the exercise of his ministry while tending the victims of cholera. The Salesians grieved deeply over his loss, for not only was he a zealous cooperator, but also a great benefactor. In 1881,[7] the archbishop had gone purposely to Marseille to address the meeting of the Salesian cooperators and in the talk he compared Don Bosco with Napoleon and proclaimed him greater than the French emperor for having driven his troops right into Patagonia. Don Bosco commemorated him at the Chapter meeting on September 16th and passed instructions that he should be mentioned in both the Italian and French *Bulletins.*

Don Bosco had written to Father Paul Albera when the news broke on the new cholera outbreak:

Turin, August 9, 1885

Dearest Father Paul Albera:

It appears that we are not without trials even in our houses in Marseille. Yet wherever God passes, He certainly renders justice, but He always leaves His mercy and His blessing behind Him. The first time, it was the smallpox[8]; now the cholera is beginning. We must put our trust in Him. God is our Father. Let us pray to Him, but let us also follow the right path: good conduct and frequent Communions. And the Blessed Virgin will be a Mother to

[7] Vol. XV, page 49.

[8] The house had been stricken by smallpox in July, some thirty cases in all. They had written to Don Bosco asking for his prayers and a special blessing. A few days later, they wrote to say that after his prayers and blessing, they had not had any further cases of smallpox and that the patients were on the way to recovery. (Letter from Father Lazzero to Bishop Cagliero [Turin, August 7, 1885]).

us; we need have no fear of that.

I do not know whether we shall be able to talk at the time of retreat, but meanwhile, begin by sending Father Michael Rua a list of all you need and then all together, we shall provide for everything. I imagine that you have received a report about something concerning La Navarre. We promptly arranged for whatever could be done from here. Now you are to make arrangements for St. Marguerite.

Let me know whether our poor, dear Father Camillus Barruel is still bothered by his fixations or whether he shows some sign of improvement. His relatives feel that in his present condition, he is no longer able to hear confessions of the faithful.[9]

Offer to take in the orphans of the cholera epidemic again, as you did last year. God will help us.

For some time my health had been deteriorating daily, but now as I write to you, I feel as if I were in perfect health. I believe that this is the effect of the great pleasure it gives me to write to you.

Tell our friends and benefactors that we are praying for them everyday during Mass and during our devotions, morning and evening, at the altar of Mary Help of Christians. You would please me very much if you were to send me detailed news of everyone and if you recommend me to his or her individual prayers.

May God bless you, your family, the novices and our sisters, and may He keep all of you in His Holy Grace.

Everyone greets you in Jesus Christ while I am,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

N.B. Many in Marseille promised they would attend the retreat with you. I do not believe that this is going to be possible at the present time. Do whatever you can in these circumstances. I grant you all the authority you need.

This letter was a great comfort to Father Paul Albera, who was in dire need of comfort. Sickness, debts, and his anxiety for the three neighboring houses of St. Leo, St. Marguerite and the convent of the nuns were

[9] Father Camillus De Barruel never recovered from a certain form of mental derangement.

knocking down the courage of the poor Provincial, even though they did not drain his patience. He had written to Father John Bonetti on July 4th: "I assure you, I cannot take it anymore. I am not going to write to Don Bosco because I would upset him too much. I feel that I cannot go on like this up to September. Pray to our Lord that He may grant me some sickness, but that He may deliver me from this condition, and if it were possible...but God's will be done."

Nevertheless, forged at Don Bosco's school, he never lost his confidence in Divine Providence. The gradual organization of the workshops was accomplished, thanks to his undaunted steadfastness, and year after year they made remarkable progress. The boys in the house were very fond of him, and even venerated him as a saint. Outside the house, everyone with whom he had any contact liked him and people called him "Little Don Bosco." He was also comforted by the fact that the novitiate at St. Marguerite had sixteen French novices in '85, all clerics except for one.

It had been decided that Father Michael Rua was to go to France for the retreat of those Salesian confreres in September, but the general consideration of public health advised him that his departure be postponed.

"Cholera is spreading," Don Bosco said during the Chapter meeting on September 18th. "So write and tell Father Paul Albera that any trip to France would be unwise. What we read in the newspapers advises us not to do anything rash. There would be an uproar if the smallest inconvenience were to occur through any fault of ours. So Father Paul Albera should arrange everything for the retreat, according to what was agreed. Since Father John Bonetti is at Saint-Cyr, he can go to hear confessions in one of the houses, at least. Once the danger is over, Father Michael Rua will go to France without fail, and will take care of everything. Have this information shared with the four French houses and Father Bonetti." But in the end, Father Michael Rua's journey was necessarily canceled.

Things in Paris were progressing very slowly toward a definitive organization, despite many difficulties. In June, Don Bosco had sent word that he wanted the house at Menilmontant to be called the Salesian Oratory of Saints Peter and Paul. The Feast of the Two Apostles was celebrated with great solemnity, and their statues, which had been donated by the Count de Cessac, were blessed. The purchase of an adjacent lot cost forty thousand francs, but this purchase assured the Oratory of an area measuring one thousand one hundred square meters on which to build. It cost the director of the house an immense effort to raise the needed money.

In November, the Servant of God remembered him and affectionate-

ly sent him his good wishes for his name day, the Feast of St. Charles. This fatherly attention brought Father Charles Bellamy a long letter, which was full of information. He also wrote to the saint about his boys:

> Our beloved boys are growing increasingly fond of the Salesians and of their father, Don Bosco. They give evidence of their affection in every way, above all with their assiduous attendance at the Oratory and with a more fervent approach to the Sacraments. They celebrated my name day. It would be hard to describe how spontaneous the festivities were, how authentic and fervent the boys were, how lovely the gifts and other tokens of their affection. But the thing that gladdened my heart most was that on this occasion, they voiced their hopes of seeing Don Bosco, kissing his hand, receiving his blessing and listening to his holy advice. How happy I was to see how these good children love Don Bosco even though as yet they have not met him!

New undertakings had begun and they proved beneficial to the students. In the beginning, they used to meet at the Oratory on Thursdays, but could not find accommodations on Sundays because that was the day when many children of the working classes gathered there. Opening a separate playground with the necessary personnel for the students and adding amusements, festivities and special prizes remedied this. In November, one hundred and twenty pupils of the public schools attended the Festive Oratory. They had Mass, catechism classes, a sermon and other functions separately from the others. Although Father Charles Bellamy had entered the Congregation already a priest, he had made a thorough study of the Salesian methods and founded small sodalities, such as he had seen done in Turin among the day students attending Menilmontant.

Not even in Paris could the entire activity of the Salesians be concentrated solely on the boys. On all sides, applications were being made for the prospective boarders. Petitions for a bed, food, training in some trade, and civil and Christian education had already totaled four hundred. So putting his faith in Mary Help of Christians, Father Charles Bellamy went to work to try and give shelter to as many of these boys as he could. But Divine Providence subjected him to great trials. With the exception of a few generous people, all the Parisian cooperators remained deaf to his appeals.

"Yet pray for us, beloved Father," he wrote in the letter just quoted. "Write to our Cooperators. We would gladly stretch out our hands and beg

in the name of the poor, homeless boys. Without losing either our confidence or our courage, we shall continue to do whatever good deed Divine Providence call us to do."

Naturally, he tried to arouse the interest of the two great friends, the first benefactors and quasi-founders of the institute, Father Pisani and Bishop d'Hulst. But on November 24th, he received a reply that explains the coolness with which he had met until then. As to actual money, neither one nor the other had enough means to give any valid assistance. In reference to the proposal that they take an active part in any propaganda, they remarked, "The only way out of the difficulty facing the Menilmontant School is to make right the error which was made at the beginning. Any institution of Don Bosco's, if announced as such, would have instantly raised substantial funds in Paris. Instead your venerable Father Superior felt that Paris would go on its own, and kept the prestige of Don Bosco's name and his personal intervention to help other institutions. Hence, the house was opened unbeknownst to everybody, and even today it is almost entirely unknown. It requires more than an appeal made by two men, whose credit is almost now entirely drained, on behalf of other institutions. If we are to help this house emerge from the shadows that are stifling it, then a personal appeal should come from Don Bosco himself."

Such was the opinion of these two distinguished men. The history of Don Bosco's institutions teaches us that they were not established through the benevolence and power of man, but instead by the God-given help obtained by Mary Help of Christians. The house in Paris was to yield yet another proof of this.

When Don Bosco heard in Turin from Father Charles Bellamy of the predicament of his house, he told him with his usual simplicity and cordiality, "Work miracles and you will see that you will not want for money."

Father Charles Bellamy took his words literally. Before the end of the year, he had the boys at Menilmontant make a novena to Mary Help of Christians to obtain the recovery of a child of wealthy parents. The boy had been seriously wounded and his recovery occurred in a truly miraculous way.[10] This extraordinary occurrence was the beginning of many blessings.

Early on, we spoke of Count and Countess de Cessac-Montesquou. When Don Bosco wrote Father Charles Bellamy, the director, he told him about the countess, "Look on her as a mother, for that is what she will truly be to the poor sons of Don Bosco at Menilmontant."

[10] Salesian *Bulletin*, French edition (January 1886).

The good lady truly did behave as a mother, on account of the immense esteem she had for the Servant of God. She came to the house two or three times a week to ask for detailed news of everything. There was no corner of the house that did not have some token of her generosity. She had lost her twenty-five year old son, and had thereafter disregarded her position in society, which was rightly hers as a consequence of her birth and personal attributes, and lived a withdrawn life, devoting herself to good works. In gratitude to her, the Oratory, which had formerly been known as St. Peter's, had been re-named Saints Peter and Paul, since Paul was the name of her dead son.[11]

[11] Salesian *Bulletin*, French edition (November 1886).

Chapter 22

IN URAGUAY, BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA

Of all the saints that have been canonized, Don Bosco was the first that ever took an interest in meteorology. Though the salvation of souls was his ultimate goal, he did not hesitate to back-up the progress of that science, which was in its early stages, when he sent his missionaries abroad. In fact, as we have already related in 1881, he had planned to study atmospheric phenomena with the famous meteorologist Father Denza to find out if the findings could be extended to areas that had never been explored up to that time.[1] Before making the proposal that Don Bosco's cooperation be solicited before the third International Geographic Convention of Venice, Professor Cosimo Bertacchi had tried to gauge what his reaction might be, and had already imagined that the answer would be that his missionaries had other things to attend to. Instead, Don Bosco welcomed him with a mysterious smile, listened to him with fatherly interest and said that he would think it over.[2] In fact, his mysterious smile indicated that he had already given thought to it. As a matter of fact, he sent Father Louis Lasagna to see Father Denza at Moncalieri in July to tell him about the plan to establish a regular meteorological station at the St. Pius School of Villa Colon. An agreement was so readily reached and that the following December 16th, the instruments and the staff that was to work with them were already on their way to Montevideo.[3]

It was not long before the Observatory of Villa Colon acquired an exceptional reputation in South America. Besides the results of its observations, its monthly bulletin contained articles that made it look like a regular magazine on meteorology. This observatory was not left alone and isolated, for Don Bosco soon wished to place others at the disposal of the Italian Meteorological Society, mainly the observatories of Buenos Aires and Carmen de Patagones. The latter was inaugurated on January 1, 1884,

[1] See Volume XV, pages 20 and following and page 515.
[2] Article in *L'Italia* of Milan by Bertacci (March 29, 1934).
[3] Monthly Bulletin of Father Denza (Series II, Vol. II, N.1, pages 3-4).

and was under the direction of Father Joseph Fagnano, who wrote to Father Denza on the 25th of that month: "I hold three observations a day: the first at nine in the morning, the second at three o'clock in the afternoon, and the third at nine o'clock at night. They are carried out with scrupulous precision and constancy."

Father Alexander Stefenelli, who traveled with Bishop John Cagliero's party in January 1885, later distinguished himself at the Carmen Observatory. Don Bosco personally recommended him for that observatory. He had made arrangements for him to acquaint himself thoroughly with the technique of such observations under the guidance of Father Denza. Father Alexander Stefenelli had assiduously attended courses under this eminent teacher from September 1884 until January 15th of the following year. When he arrived in America, he founded the observatory of Almagro and worked there until June when Father Fagnano took him to Carmen. Here, he built a modest observatory that was nevertheless adequate for the basic scientific requirements. Assisted by naval officers and maintaining constant contact with Father Denza, who helped him in many different ways, he succeeded in organizing a comprehensive study of atmospheric pressure and thermo-pluviometric and hygrometric conditions in that region.[4] Later, other Salesian observatories were opened at La Boca, San Nicolas de los Arroyos, Paysandu, and Puntarenas, which today is known as Magallanes.

Don Bosco's example also in this area was fruitful, since other Italian and foreign ecclesiastic institutes followed it. First and foremost was Father Lodovico de Casoria at the end of 1882.[5]

The Salesian Observatories constituted a network centered in Villa Colon. From here, the observations made were forwarded directly to Father Denza, who published them in the *International Polar Bulletin* of St. Petersburg and in the bulletin of the Italian Geographical Society. They were given prominent eminence at the National Turin Exhibit in 1884, and were edited by the cleric Albanello, to whom Father Denza wrote on December 6, 1883: "I am most enthusiastic over the regular observations made in the Observatory. I have edited them very carefully and with great diligence and confess that they are genuinely excellent. I am sure that they will bear excellent fruit for science and also for your honor, reputation and religious Congregation."

The Observatory of Villa Colon brought honor and fame to the St. Pius School, but it also meant survival in 1885. Under a repressive law passed

[4] See article by Father Denza, "Meteorology in South America," in *Il Corriere di Torino*.

[5] Father Bernardo Paolini, Benedictine. "Meteorology and the Italian Clergy" in *Vita e Pensiero* (November 1934).

by Parliament, all religious orders, including the Salesians, were about to be expelled from the Republic of Uruguay. The Sisters of the Good Shepherd and their girls had already suffered the effect of this law by being driven out of their institutions. But the intensity of the sectarian government was aimed principally at the Salesians. As soon as Don Bosco had a hint of danger, he sent word and helpful documents to Father Louis Lasagna and Father James Costamagna (because Buenos Aires was threatened with the same measures) on what they were to do in order to ward off the blow. Among other things, he sent to the former the text of the award by which the jury of the Turin Exhibit had given Father Dominic Albanello a silver medal and also a copy of the letter that Father Denza had solicited from Minister of State Mancini that praised the Observatory. When these documents were made known to the public through the press, people believed that the Observatory had been sponsored and protected by the Italian government. Therefore, the ruling party feared a clash with Italy and wisely retreated, leaving the Salesians in peace. Thus did the Villa Colon Observatory render outstanding service to the Congregation.[6]

While he directed the Salesian retreat, Don Bosco's thoughts crossed the ocean and projected the needs of his faraway sons. This led him to write them individual letters overflowing with paternal affection and rich with holy exhortations. He wrote two such letters from Valsalice to Uruguay. One was for Father John Allavena, the pastor at Paysandu and director of the hospice and school adjoining the parish church:

Turin, Valsalice College,
September 24, 1885

My dearest Father John Allavena:

I always receive the letters you write to me with great pleas-

[6] That the activity of these observatories was well accepted in Rome is evidenced by the fact that when the officers of the Royal Italian Navy went ashore at Montevideo, they visited the school and accepted refreshments, in turn inviting Father Louis Lasagna to go aboard. This would not have been even conceivable with the way things were in Italy at that time, if it had not been known for certain that the government would not frown upon such an exchange of courtesies. Once an Italian journalist did print something at Montevideo that criticized the officers for fraternizing with priests, but he was made to pay for it. One evening, as he was going home after the theater, he was badly beaten up by four sailors who then said to him, "Please send a receipt to the officers of the Vittor Pisani." Nor was this all. The director of the observatory, Father Albanello, spent a month aboard an Italian corvette to repair their meteorological instruments after they had been damaged during a storm. Since he had failed to report for military service, the ship's commander issued his discharge to him in exchange for his services.

ure and I do read them carefully. Since I do not have the pleasure of having you here with me at the Valsalice retreat, I thought it best that I should at least write to you to assure you of the love that your father always felt and still feels for you.

When we parted and prior to your departure for America, I warmly recommended the observance of our rules to you, for it is under these rules that you consecrated yourself in perpetuity to the service of Our Lord. I am confident that you have observed them faithfully to your own advantage and the edification of your confreres. Besides our rules, you will find it beneficial if you go over frequently the deliberations of our Superior Chapters,[7] which I hope have been sent to you.

As a curate, behave very charitably towards your priests, so that they may help you zealously in your sacred ministry. Give special attention to children, the sick and the elderly. If at the missions or anywhere else you come across any boy who promises well for the priesthood, remember that God has placed a treasure in your hands.

No effort, no fatigue or expense is ever excessive in fostering a vocation. Always consider it well spent.

Praebe teipsum exemplum bonorum operum [present yourself as an example of good works], but endeavor to make this good example shine, thanks to the queen of virtues - chastity. No control of speech, glance or actions is ever too much in order to foster this virtue.

I am barely mentioning these things to you, but you are capable of explaining them wherever it proves necessary.

May God bless you, my ever-beloved Father Allavena! I pray for you everyday during holy Mass, and please pray for me, too, for I have grown very old and am nearly blind. If we do not meet here on earth, let us live in such a way that we may for sure meet again in Eternity.

Give my warm regards to all our confreres, earnestly recommend me to their prayers, and tell them they are *gaudier meum et corona mea* [my joy and my crown].

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

[7] He must certainly mean "General" Chapters.

On November 24th, Father John Allavena wrote to Don Bosco to wish him a Merry Christmas and thank him for the loving letter:

> It gave us great joy to receive your dear and venerated letter of September 24th, which had been entirely written by your own hand. To tell you the truth, it seemed something utterly extraordinary to us when we thought of the infinite number of things you have to do and the weight of the enormous problems placed on you now with your frail health. After it was read out to our beloved confreres during a conference, we all appreciated your autographed letter with its three outstanding reminders about the scrupulous observance of the rules and the deliberations of the Superior Chapter, the meticulous upkeep of chastity and the particular attention to religious vocations. We looked upon it as a genuine testament. I made comments on it and drove home its salient points to my companions because we received identical recommendations from our beloved Superiors here, Father Louis Lasagna and Bishop John Cagliero. I must, therefore, express my sincerest thanks to you, and will endeavor to translate these holy instructions into practical observance, both for the Salesians in my charge and myself.

The second letter was for the Provincial Father Louis Lasagna. We must recall that at this time, Don Bosco was feeling down more than usual. This will help us understand the tone of the letter he wrote, almost as a testament:

Turin, September 30, 1885[8]

My dear Father Louis Lasagna:

> I have wanted to write to you for some months, but my lazy, old hand has obliged me to delay this pleasure. But now it seems to me that the sun is about to set, so I think I ought to put a few thoughts into writing as a testament from one who has always loved you and who loves you still.

[8] In the copy of the letter by Father Berto (of which we do not have the original), it reads "September 30th," but Don Bosco was no longer at Valsalice on the 28th, but instead at San Benigno. It is, therefore, a *lapsus* either on the part of the saint himself or the priest who copied it.

You answered the call of Our Lord and consecrated yourself to the Catholic missions. As you guessed, Mary has been your faithful guide. You will not be without difficulties, and you will also suffer from the malice of the world, but do not worry about it. Mary will protect us. We seek souls and nothing else. I try to echo this into the ears of our confreres. Oh, Lord! Send us crosses, thorns and persecution of all kinds, provided that we may save souls and, among others, save our own.

It is nearly time for our retreat in America. Stress the charity and gentleness of St. Francis de Sales, whom we must imitate. Stress the scrupulous observance of our Rules, the frequent reading of the Chapter deliberations, and a careful meditation on the individual regulations for the houses. Believe me, dear Father Louis Lasagna, I have had to talk with some of our confreres who were utterly ignorant of these deliberations of ours, while others have never read those sections of our Rules or discipline relating to the duties of their office.

Another thing that threatens us is forgetfulness, or better, neglect of the Rubrics of the Breviary and the Missal. I am convinced that a good retreat will bear excellent results, if it convinces the Salesians to celebrate Mass and recite their Breviary properly.

I have most warmly recommended to those to whom I have been able to write during these few days that they cultivate vocations, both for the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Search, make plans and do not worry about expenses, provided you can get priests for the church and especially for the missions.

When you have an opportunity to talk with our sisters or your confreres, please tell them for me how glad I am to receive letters or their regards from them and how happy it made me and how much it comforted me to hear that they were all praying for me and will continue to do so.

Let us all take heart. Mary blesses our Congregation and protects it. The help of Heaven will not fail us. The workers are increasing and although funds are not abundant, they do suffice.

May God bless you, dear Father Louis Lasagna, and may He bless all our sons and daughters and pupils. May Mary assist and protect the Buxareo and Jackson families and all our benefactors, too. May she guide us all safely along the road to Heaven.

I am here at Valsalice for the retreat. Everyone is well and

sends their regards to you.

My health is somewhat uncertain, but I am getting along.

May God keep us all in His Holy Grace.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

On December 30th, Father Louis Lasagna replied when he sent Father Louis Calcagno and Father Peter Rota back to Italy for a few months. His letter is so affectionate that we cannot refrain from quoting a passage from it, even though it is somewhat lengthy. This is how Father Louis Lasagna introduced his two young priests to Don Bosco:

> Behold two of your dear sons, who are coming to you from this faraway land to receive your paternal blessing and convey to you the most tender and affectionate regards from all of us. You sent them forth when they were still boys and they are now returning to kneel at your feet as priests that have already exercised their apostolic ministry with excellent results. You can use them both, quite safely, for preaching, for both of them are endowed with an enlightened, ready eloquence and a genuine Salesian spirit and fervor, especially Father Peter Rota, who is able to preach extemporaneously with astonishing results. We all envy them and accompany them on their way with heart and soul, and while you bless these two fortunate sons of yours, you may also bless all of us in them, for we shall all prostrate there before you in spirit. Yes, prostrate, oh most beloved Father, to thank you for all that you have done for us, especially for having accepted us and kept us in your beloved Congregation, which is a grace so immense that we could never repay you sufficiently for it, not even if we were to lay down our lives for you.

Then came the act of submissive obedience to Father Michael Rua and Bishop John Cagliero, who had been appointed by Don Bosco as his vicars, the former for the entire Congregation, the latter for South America: "We also have to thank you for your solicitude in giving us a second father, one in Italy and the other in America, in the persons of our dearly beloved Father Michael Rua and our venerated Bishop John Cagliero, respectively. All of us who are his sons in the Uruguay and

Brazil Provinces hail him and revere him as the loveliest gift you could possibly have awarded us, and we shall obey him in all things always, and in our great love for him, we have resolved never to cause him any grief, not even in the slightest degree."

Lastly, there was a personal section referring to his last letter: "What am I to say to you, dear, venerable father? How can I resign myself to the idea of losing you, now that God has enabled me to understand more fully the immense treasure He gave me in your affection and guidance? Yet, you keep on saying so in your personal and circular letters. If only I had heeded your advice! At least then I'd be able to act in a way attuned to your own dear expectations! Ah, help me with your prayers! Do not forsake me now that I am burdened with heavy responsibilities."

Father Louis Lasagna refers to Bishop John Cagliero as Vicar for America. When Don Bosco had decided to appoint Father Michael Rua as his Vicar General, he had said, "Father Michael Rua will be my vicar in Europe, Monsignor John Cagliero, my vicar in America."

When Monsignor John Cagliero heard of Don Bosco's intentions, he had someone tell him that there was no need to appoint him Superior of the Provincials, since he had already such an inborn appointment; but the Vicar's letter to Turin crossed with the circular letter to the Provincials from Turin that announced that Don Bosco had appointed Monsignor John Cagliero as their immediate superior.[9] Hence, in the Congregation membership catalogue of 1886, you can read under America: "Pro-Vicar General for all houses in South America, His Most Reverend Excellency Bishop John Cagliero, Bishop of Magida."

Father Louis Lasagna's Provincial jurisdiction extended also to Brazil, as we have already said. So, he had to handle negotiations regarding the foundation of a house in Sao Paulo. He had returned there at the invitation of the zealous Bishop Monsignor Lino on June 19, 1884, to attend the solemn consecration ceremony of the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was to be entrusted to the Salesians. The cooperators were building a spacious house alongside the church with a capacity for accommodating at least one hundred boarders in addition to the day-boys. The good prelate would have immediately liked to draw up the deed, donating both the church and the school, but Father Louis Lasagna could not give his assent, since he did not have the definite approval of Don Bosco yet. Since he was convinced that this foundation had to be final-

[9] Letters from Father Lazzero to Bishop John Cagliero (Turin, August 7 and October 6, 1885).

ized quickly, he wrote a most tender letter to his beloved father, imploring him not to delay the matter.

During the two visits of Father Louis Lasagna, the bishop had developed such affection for him that he used to say that Father Louis Lasagna was for Don Bosco what St. Francis Xavier had been for St. Ignatius of Loyola.

The Salesians hailed Monsignor John Cagliero's arrival in Montevideo with great delight because of the episcopal dignity conferred upon him and the personnel reinforcements he had brought along for that Province. He also brought the joyful news that Don Bosco had left the decision as to whether or not the house of Sao Paulo should be opened to his discretion. After some mature reflection and the invocation of light from above, it was decided that they should go to work instantly. The new house was to be known as the Sacred Heart School, and Father Lawrence Giordano, the assistant director of Villa Colon, was proposed as its director. Father Louis Lasagna had known him as a pious, intelligent young man at Lanzo, and had great respect for him, nor was he ever disappointed in his expectations.

Father Lawrence Giordano left Montevideo with two companions on May 15th. He arrived at Nicteroy after five days at sea and reached the capital of the state of St. Paul on June 1st. Like elsewhere, the beginning here was humble and difficult. Once the first wave of enthusiasm that had preceded and hailed them was over, they did not have enough money to keep building. The Salesians found out that not even their rooms were set up for their stay, so that Father Lawrence Giordano lodged at the hospital, while the other two found charitable hospitality with the nuns known as the Sisters of Our Lady of Luz. In the meantime, they did not stand idle. Besides taking care of the church and the hospital, they undertook visits to Italian immigrant settlements, where they found a vast area for their apostolic zeal.[10]

It was evident that Mary Help of Christians was giving them visible assistance. There was a poor, sick lady in the settlement of St. Cajetan, which consisted of some fifty families. This lady had neither eaten, drunk nor spoken for four days, and was seized by such intense nervous convulsions that it took four men great difficulty to hold her down. The physician did not know what to do with her. After reiterated insistence that he go to see her, Father Lawrence Giordano, who was then unable to leave the house, sent word that a novena should begin in honor of Mary

[10] Letters from Father Lawrence Giordano to Don Bosco and Father Michael Rua (Sao Paulo, August 14 and September 5, 1885).

Help of Christians. Finally on July 20th, he did visit the settlement and was led to the sick lady's side among nearly thirty people. When questioned, her sole answer was to grind her teeth and writhe. Father Lawrence Giordano bade all those present to kneel down, and he said three *Hail Marys* with them with the invocation *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*. Then he blessed her and asked everyone else to leave the room so that he could try to prepare her to receive the absolution, for before she had fallen into that condition, she had expressed a desire to make a confession. Just as he was recommending her to Mary Help of Christians, she exclaimed, "Oh! I feel better!"

He heard her confession, and then her relatives and friends came back into the room and found her quite calm and talkative. There was a general excitement and Father Lawrence Giordano seized the opportunity to say a few words about the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Their faltering faith was awakened in their hearts, so that this material grace became a source of abundant spiritual graces.

Meanwhile, Father Lawrence Giordano and his companions were patiently waiting for the chance to devote themselves to the work that was their main purpose for going to Sao Paulo. They wrote to Father Provincial, begging him to come back to Sao Paulo to stir up the good will of the rich with his fiery eloquence. Father Louis Lasagna responded to their request. He came and looked up his old acquaintances, talking so eloquently and working so hard that shortly afterward, the yard was reopened and building resumed.

During the Salesian retreat at San Benigno, Don Bosco thought of the new director Father Lawrence Giordano and wrote to him this warm letter:

San Benigno, September 30, 1885

Dearest Father Giordano:

With great pleasure, your companions and I have received your letters and had them read publicly during our retreat. Any letters you write to us are most welcome.

You will certainly have a number of difficulties, especially at the beginning, in a mission that is as wide as that of Sao Paulo. Am I right?

You must try to find some companions to help you and foster vocations. I am told that these are very rare, so should you

detect any, you must undertake every effort and meet any financial expense in order to succeed.

Here we have many vocations, but all the same, were you able to send me just about a hundred, it would be wonderful. We would see to it that they are trained well and then we would send them back to you, already capable of helping you in your missions even as far away as the Mato Grosso.

During the forthcoming retreat or on any other occasion that you may be able to speak with our confreres, please tell them that I have been told that there is a vast harvest, but few laborers. However, we are praying that the help of God will not be denied us nor shall we want for whatever is necessary.

I am here at San Benigno with 160 novices who are making their retreat prior to taking their vows. The preachers are Father John Baptist Francesia and Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who often talk about you and your companions.

We had just as many people during the previous retreat, except for all the postulants who will be entering upon their regular year of novitiate next week.

Goodbye, beloved Father Lawrence Giordano, and take care of your health. May the Lord bless you and also our confreres who are working there with you. May you all win over many souls for Heaven. Give everyone my greetings and tell them that every day during Holy Mass, I pray to Jesus and Mary for them, asking them to help us to win many souls so that we can all be happy together one day in this world and in the blessed eternity. Amen.

All our confreres are praying for you and send their regards. Please pray unceasingly for,

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Quite overwhelmed with happiness, Father Lawrence Giordano replied on December 22:

A letter from Don Bosco written with his hand! Oh! I thought that I was dreaming. As I was reading, I thought that I was right in front of you, and that I was hearing the words from your own lips! Thanks so much for this treasure, which I shall keep as a

> precious relic. I read it out during a conference and you, who are aware of how much your sons here in America love and venerate you, can readily imagine what we all felt about it. Yes, we shall endeavor to follow your holy advice, and will look for vocations and cultivate any that we may find, making every effort to love and persuade others to love Jesus and the man who is His representative and His beloved image, Don Bosco.

The director wrote that he had publicly read Don Bosco's letter during a conference because there were three confreres there. Father Cavatorta had joined the first two, who were the cleric Peter Cogliolo and the coadjutor Brother Bologna.

Father Peter Cogliolo, who died in 1932, had been a promising young man at the time as charge d'affaires at the Apostolic Inter-Nunciature in Costa Rica, and he had written a letter to Don Bosco on December 4th:

> As you will already know, Father, the contract under which the Salesians become full owners of this house and church has been signed. By a special grace of Our Lord, all difficulties were overcome and people were more amenable to the terms we proposed. Now we own the field, but do not have a thing. This encourages us because we know how your Oratory began and how all Don Bosco's works have thrived. The Sunday catechism course is going on very well. The boys attend it willingly, especially since we have had a swing, a merry-go-round and other games installed. The church is well attended as well. The Italians in the town and nearby settlements come very often to perform their devotion here. There are a lot of bad things here in Sao Paulo, as there are in the whole of Brazil. All of them stem from a vast ignorance in matters of religion, but the Brazilian nature is easy-going, and on the whole, these poor people have a lot of faith. The Salesians ought to take Brazil by storm. Certainly you, Father, would do it immediately, if only the Salesians were in far greater number than they are at present.

The activity of the Salesians shook and alarmed the Protestants, who closed in on them on all sides. Being particularly alarmed by the festive Oratory, they began to work underground, spreading the ridiculous accusation that the Salesians were enticing boys to attend the festive Oratory

so that they might then draft them into the navy. But the Salesians just let them gossip and took this type of hostility as a reason to intensify their efforts on behalf of youth.[11]

While Don Bosco's sons were making a name for themselves in Brazil, Monsignor John Cagliero was displaying all his enthusiasm to meet with the mandate received from the Holy See at the other extremity of the South American continent. Along the banks of the Rio Colorado and Rio Negro, there were settlements made up of Europeans and Argentineans. These people had brought along only religious indifference, arrogance and immorality from the old world. Very often, the Indians who sailed along the two great rivers fell into undesirable hands. Monsignor John Cagliero had heard when he arrived in Patagonia about the barbarian actions perpetrated against the poor Indians and had to endure fierce battles before he could obtain for them enough freedom to instruct them in the faith and baptize them.

The early population made up of converted Indians and undesirable Christians were all curious to see the Pope's envoy and meet the bishop as soon as they heard of his arrival, but their curiosity went no further than that. Monsignor quickly realized that he had to place all his hopes on the younger generation. Therefore, he concentrated all his efforts on conquering the affection of the boys and girls. The Salesians and the Sisters had already accomplished something with their four schools, two for boys and two for girls, at Patagones and Viedma. He was delighted whenever he visited these schools, for there he found a simplicity and trust that enchanted him. There were a great many boys and girls attending them, either as boarders or day students. On Sundays, the Oratory did the rest.

The apostolic vicar had to turn his attention at the same time to the real missions. He sent the courageous Father Dominic Milanesio with a coadjutor on a trip to pave the way for his own coming. In his turn, Father Joseph Fagnano had aroused great expectations among the Linares Indians. Before he set out on his mission, Bishop John Cagliero wrote an official report for both the Congregations of Propaganda and the Propagation of the Faith, informing them about the present rough and tough condition of his mission.

He then sent Father Michael Rua a letter dated July 30th, informing

[11] Letter from Father Lawrence Giordano to Don Bosco (Sao Paulo, December 22, 1885).

him about the Salesians in America: "Don Bosco can be proud to have so many excellent sons to represent him thus far in America who love him and have others love him too." This letter warranted a beautiful letter in reply from Don Bosco:

Turin, August 6, 1885[12]

My dear Monsignor Cagliero:

I was delighted to receive your letter, and although my eyesight has become very weak, I insisted on reading it myself from start to finish, despite your handwriting, which you insist you learned from me, which has deteriorated from what it originally was. The others will answer the administrative questions raised for me. For my part, I will tell you what now follows:

When you write to the Propagation of the Faith and the Society of the Holy Infancy, keep in mind all that the Salesians did at different times. I think that you have the forms you must use when reporting to their chairmen on our activities with you. Should there be any difficulty about writing the reports in French, they will not mind if you write in Italian. Should one letter not be enough, write them several letters about the exploration of Fathers Joseph Fagnano, Dominic Milanesio, Joseph Buvoir, etc. Give them the figures of the number of people baptized, confirmed, or who are receiving instructions or have been taken into our houses either in the past or recently. Remember to report everything, but only in general, when you report to the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, and give details on travels, commercial undertakings and discoveries. When you report to the Congregation of the Holy Infancy, give them details about the boys, girls, the Sisters and the Salesians.

Should you need any more of the forms on which to write your reports, let me know and we shall send you some. They are very willing to help us, but it is good that I know what you are writing them, at least along general lines, because they may very

[12]Don Bosco was not really at Mathi at the time, but in Turin. But the key to this must lie in a note addressed to a Father Berto and dated August 5th, which read as follows: "Do with this letter (namely, the enclosed one) as with all the others, and give it to Father Rua." Perhaps he did not want it known that he was absent from Turin to prevent any worrying about his health.

well call on me for questioning at any time.

As to the auxiliary bishops, I ought to have a definite application,[13] and hope I can accomplish something soon. The motion for the "red hat" for the archbishop was already well underway, thanks to Cardinal Nina, but to our misfortune, he passed away. I have already turned elsewhere and I will let you know in due course.

I am writing a letter to Father James Costamagna, and, for your information, I shall stress in particular the Salesian spirit that we must enforce in our American houses.

Charity, patience and gentleness; no humiliating reprimands, no punishments ever. Be kind to anyone you can reach, and do no harm to anybody. This applies to the Salesians whether they are among themselves, the pupils, the boarders or other. Exercise great patience in your dealings with our Sisters, but be severe on the observance of their rules.

On the whole, despite our financial difficulties, we will make every sacrifice to help you, but urge everyone to cease any building or purchasing of houses, unless this is essential to our own needs. Buy nothing with the idea of reselling - no fields, land or house - for financial profit.

Try to help us in this. Do everything you can to get vocations for both the Sisters and the Salesians, but do not commit yourself to a lot of undertakings. He who would do too much can keep hold of nothing, and only spoils everything.

If you have a chance to talk with the archbishop, Bishop Espinosa or other such people, tell them that I am at their complete service, especially for any matter that might concern Rome.

Tell my niece, Rosina,[14] to be very careful about her health, and that she should be sure not to go to Heaven all by herself. She may go there, of course, but only accompanied by many souls saved by her. May God bless all our Salesian sons, and our sisters, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

May God give us all good health, holiness and perseverance along the road to Heaven. We shall pray for you morning and

13 This was a plan to have auxiliary bishops, elected in order to meet the needs of the immense diocese, out of a few good priests who were friends to the Salesians.

14 She was a nun of Mary Help of Christians.

evening before the altar of Mary. You, too, pray for this poor half-blind fellow, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Countless people have asked to be remembered to you and send their regards.

The letter mentioned above and addressed to Father James Costamagna is a document of fundamental value. For some reason or other, there was a prevailing tendency in the houses of the Argentine Province and especially in the school of San Carlo at Almagro, to use a disciplinary severity that was out of tune with the finest Salesian traditions. Hence, Father Joseph Vespignani and others deplored it.

Father Michael Rua had already written to Bishop John Cagliero on June 30th: "We have been hearing for some time now that the Salesian houses and schools over there are not directed with kindness or governed by the preventive system, and that in some schools, the repressive system is rather more in vogue." When Don Bosco was sure that this was really the case, he made up his mind to write to the Provincial about it:

Turin, August 10, 1885

Dear ever-beloved Father Costamagna:

The time for our retreat is drawing near, and seeing that I'm getting old, I wish I could have all my sons and our sisters in America with me. Since that is not possible, I decided to write you a letter that may help you and other confreres to be true Salesians during your retreat, which is not very far away in time from our own.

First of all, we must bless and thank the Lord Who has assisted us with patience and might to overcome many serious obstacles that we could never have been overcome by ourselves. *Te Deum, Ave Maria, etc.*

Then, I would like to preach a sermon or deliver a conference on the Salesian spirit to everyone to inspire and guide all our actions and all that we say. The preventive system should be really our only system. Never any corporal punishments, never a humiliating word or severe reprimand in the presence of others.

In class, let the word be coated with gentleness, charity and patience. Never use a caustic word or a blow, neither light nor heavy. Use negative punishment, and only in such a way that those who are corrected become better friends and do not leave us disheartened. Never complain against the dispositions of superiors, but tolerate these things that do not meet with our taste or are burdensome and unwelcome. Let every Salesian be a friend to everyone, never seeking to take revenge. Be ready to forgive and never bring up again whatever has already been forgiven.

Never criticize the orders of a superior, but let everyone endeavor to give a good example. Stress it always, constantly recommending that one should encourage religious vocations, both for the nuns and the Salesians.

Gentleness in speech, action and corrections will always conquer everything and everyone. Let this be the guide for you to follow and for the others to follow during the forthcoming sermons of the retreat.

Grant everyone great freedom and great confidence. Anyone wishing to write their superior or who receives any letter from him must know that it is certain that no one else will read it other than the person for whom it is intended. In reference to difficult points, I earnestly recommend that provincials and directors hold special conferences. Indeed, I urge Father Joseph Vespignani to be very outspoken in these matters, explaining them thoroughly to his novices or postulants with due caution.

Insofar as I am able, I want to leave the Congregation free of all troubles. That is why it is my intention to appoint a vicar general to be my "alter ego" in Europe and another in America. But in this matter, you will receive the proper instructions when the time comes.

It is highly opportune that at some point during the year, you call together the directors in your Province to inform them about the practical rules I have listed above. Read and stress the necessity of rending and knowing our Rules, especially the chapter that deals with the practices of piety, the introduction I wrote to our rules, and the deliberations of our General Chapters and Provincial Chapters.

As you see, my words call for lengthy explanations, but you will surely be able to understand them and pass them on to our

confreres wherever there is need to do so. As soon as you are able to speak with Monsignor Archbishop, Bishop Espinosa or his vicar generals, Father Carranza, Dr. Ferrero or our other friends, give each and all of them my most humble and affectionate regards as though I were to greet them individually. May God bless you, dear Father James Costamagna, and also all our confreres and sisters, and keep you all in good health. May Mary Help of Christians guide you all along the road to Heaven. Pray for me, all of you.

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

One would have to more intimately know the love and obedience that the older Salesians felt for Don Bosco in order to understand fully how reverently Father James Costamagna held these fatherly admonitions. This is what he wrote to thank his beloved father on November 11th: "I am most grateful for the wonderful four-page letter that you were so gracious to write to me with your own hand, despite your frail health! How much comfort I found in it! I promise you in the name of my fellow Salesians that it will become the theme for many a conference, and that we shall always look upon it as the token of love that our beloved father sent us in his old age."

These were not just mere words. Father Joseph Vespignani said that many people copied the letter and wished to thank Don Bosco personally for such timely reminders. They wrote, promising him to apply the preventive system scrupulously. Father James Costamagna said that a few realized that they were more at fault and bound themselves with a vow. They regarded it as a fourth Salesian vow and renewed it every month when they made the exercise for a happy death. Even Father Joseph Vespignani would say that the spiritual and temporal prosperity of the Argentinean Provinces was attributed to this letter from Don Bosco.

Father James Costamagna was greatly inspired and gave the maximum possible publicity to the general text of the letter and the particular parts of its content. He made many copies and took it as a topic for exhortations in a circular letter and sermons to the confreres.

In addition to the preceding two letters, there is a third of similar importance. This letter was written to the director of San Nicolas de los Arroyos just about the same time as the two others. Besides having the same date, it also reveals the very same preoccupations:

Mathi, August 14, 1885

My dear Father Tomatis:

Since I rarely receive letters from you, I imagine that you must have a lot to do. I believe it, but sending news of yourself to your loving Don Bosco is surely something that should among other things not be neglected. What am I to write about, you will ask. Write about your health and that of our confreres. Tell me if they are keeping the Rules of the Congregation faithfully; tell me if you keep the observance of the Exercise for a Happy Death and how you do so, the number of pupils you have, and what hopes you have that they will be successful. Are you cultivating any vocations and have you any hopes? Is Bishop Ceccarelli still a good friend to the Salesians? These are the things I am most eager to hear about.

Since my own life is rapidly drawing to a close, the things I am writing to you in this letter are the things I want to recommend to you during these final days of my exile, like my testament to you. Dear Father Tomatis, keep well in mind that you became a Salesian in order to save your soul. Preach the same thing to all of our confreres.

Remember that it is not enough that we know things, but we also have to put them into practice. May God help us that the words of our Savior may not apply to us: *Dicunt enim, et non faciunt* [they talk, but do not do anything]. Try to view these things that concern you with your own eyes. Promptly admonish anyone who is at fault or neglectful without waiting for the evils to increase.

Many others will be drawn to the Congregation because of your exemplary way of life and your charity in speech, government and endurance of the faults of others. Always urge others to go frequently to Confession and Communion.

Humility and charity are the virtues that will make you happy in this world and eternity.

Always be a friend and a father to our confreres. Help them in spiritual and temporal matters in every way you can, but also understand how you can use them in all that may be done for the greater glory of God.

Everything that I am saying in this letter needs further explanation, but you can do this for yourself and others.

May God bless you, my dear Father Tomatis. Give my most cordial regards to all our confreres, friends and benefactors. Tell them that I am praying for them every day in my Holy Mass, and that I humbly recommend myself to the prayers of all of them.

May God grant that we may one day praise the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary in the blessed Eternity. Amen.

I shall write you shortly, or will have someone write you about other important matters.

May Mary keep all of us steadfast and guide us along the road to Heaven. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

Our readers certainly have not overlooked Don Bosco's insistence on the cultivation of vocations. On November 5th, Father Dominic Tomatis pointed out the following to him:

Unfortunately, vocations are fostered, but with scant results. Only very rarely will a father allow his son to become a priest. That is why, despite the flourishing schools of the Jesuits, Franciscans, Bayonnese, Lazarists and others, the priests active in this country are almost all foreigners. Some of them are good people who had been sent to Rome for studies and came back as priests. Every year, eighteen or nineteen boys leave the seminary out of twenty boys who enter. If anyone does persevere until his ordination, he is either Spanish or Italian. In this respect, we are worse off here than in pagan countries. But exceptions should be made for some provinces, such as Cordova, where there are a few more vocations. So far, four or five Salesians have come out of San Nicolas and are now in Buenos Aires, either as novices or have taken temporary vows. But at the present time, we have many hopes.

Eventually, these hopes came true. Patagonia yielded vocations, despite the pessimistic predictions of other religious who had been working in the republic for many years. Since their own experience in Buenos Aires had always been negative, they shook their heads when they heard that the Salesians were enrolling aspirants. But here again, the spirit of Don Bosco triumphed over every difficulty.

The venerable Father Mario Migone was an excellent specimen of these initial vocations. When he came to Italy in the company of some wealthy relatives in 1885, he attended the festivities for Don Bosco's feast day before returning to Buenos Aires. This is what Father Joseph Lazzero wrote about him[15]: "America, too, was represented by the cleric Migone, who genuinely edified everybody who had the good fortune of seeing him or talking with him during the few days he stayed with us. If there are such vocations as his in America, there is no further need to send people over from Europe."

An excellent cleric, John Beraldi (who today is a zealous priest in our house at Bahia Blanca), had written to Don Bosco from Almagro to complain that he had not written to him. His spiritual problems and other common difficulties made him deeply long for a word of comfort or advice from his aging spiritual father. The saint replied with one of his letters that provided healing balm to his heart for the rest of his life:

Turin, October 5, 1885

Dearest Beraldi:

I was delighted to get your little note in August. Do not be upset if I have not written you before. My physical disabilities make that quite impossible now. I am almost blind and barely able to walk, write or talk. What do you expect? I am old, but God's Most Holy will be done. Yet, I pray for you and all my sons every day, and I want all of you to serve our Lord willingly in holy joy, even in the midst of difficulties and snares of the devil. You can drive these things away from you with the sign of the cross and by saying, *"Jesus, Mary mercy"* and *"Long live Jesus"* and, above all, by disregarding them, praying, avoiding idleness and keeping away from proximate occasions of sin. As for your scruples, only obedience to your director and all your superiors can make them disappear. Do not forget, therefore, that *vir obediens loquetur victoriam* [An obedient man will speak of victory].

I am glad that you are encouraging the devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. See that you and your pupils become devout children of the Blessed Virgin Mary and devotees of the Blessed Sacrament because with time and patience, *Deo iuvante*, you will work wonders.

15 Letter to Bishop John Cagliero (Borgo, San Martino, July 3, 1885).

Therefore, take heart. Do everything and endure everything to please God and do His Holy Will and you will store up a treasury of merits for all eternity.

The support of my prayers will always be available. God bless you and all your pupils, and may Mary Help of Christians protect you all and guide you along the road to Heaven.

Pray, too, for your old friend and father.

Most affectionately in Jesus and Mary,
Rev. John Bosco

Now let us go back to Bishop John Cagliero. He had barely been on the banks of the Rio Negro for a month when he had the joy of solemnly baptizing two teenaged Indian youths. One of them was from the Namuncura tribe and the other was from the Payue tribe. They had been forcibly wrenched from their families by the armed Argentinean troops, and like so many other young Indians, were assigned to live as servants in private houses. Monsignor had immediately established contact with the population upon his arrival, and had met the boys. He had learned that, like many other Indians, they were not baptized.

He obtained permission from their masters to instruct both of them in the faith. They did not speak any Spanish but Father Milanesio prepared them because he had learned their tongue during his missionary work along the Rio Negro. Their willingness made his task much easier. They received the Sacrament of their spiritual rebirth on the feast day of St. Cajetan with all the pomp befitting the ritual. These were the first two flowers plucked by the apostolic vicar in the infinite territory of his mission, and he thought of honoring two great friends of Don Bosco's by naming the new converts after Cardinal Cajetan Alimonda and Louis Colle. He confirmed them the following Sunday, and administered First Communion to them. They were then photographed with Monsignor, and copies of the photo were sent to Don Bosco, His Eminence and the Count.[16] The cardinal dictated and sent the monsignor a letter, thanking him for those and other courtesies.

These ceremonies deeply impressed others to seek the same grace, among them the twenty-year-old son of a *cacique* [Indian chief]. Six ado-

[16] Father Lazzero wrote Father Riccardi (Turin, September 29, 1885): "I had Rollini copy the other (photo) where you see Bishop Cagliero between the two (who were baptized), and he did a beautiful job." (See this volume, page 533).

lescent girls joined the tall, muscular youth. They were baptized on August 16th, which was the name day of the Pope. The apostolic vicar baptized the *cacique's* son and named him Joachim, in tribute to the Pope. He then named the girls Margaret Bosco, Teresa Cagliero, Manuela and Maria Fassati, Gabriella Corsi and Carolina Callori. The ceremony took place with the greatest solemnity at Viedma. There were other sacred rites, singing and music in honor of Leo XIII during the day. This was the first time that the name day of the Pope was celebrated in that distant territory, and the vicar sent a detailed report about it to the Holy Father.

Later, additional groups of Indians were baptized and were given names and surnames of people who were benefactors of Don Bosco and the Salesians. After he had established the proper climate, Monsignor had people canvas the territory and the inhabited areas to ask landowners to send him the Indians that worked for them so that he might give them instructions and baptize them as Christians.

Don Bosco had urged the missionaries in Patagonia to dedicate their efforts to youth above all. The local situation confirmed the timeliness of such an urging. It was precisely for this purpose that Father Joseph Fagnano, supported by the other Salesians and ably assisted by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, had attracted over four hundred young people, both boys and girls from different localities and of various colors, to Carmen and Viedma, where they attended schools and the festive oratories. When Monsignor got there, he found everything so well directed that after visiting the two youthful settlements on either bank of the river, he exclaimed, "This is our own Turin Oratory in miniature!"

Following the footsteps of Don Bosco, Monsignor hoped to save the parents through their children. Unfortunately, the men, including the Italians among them, had all forsaken the idea of religious practices. They were, as the saying goes,[17] "full of compliments, but devoid of Sacraments." The thirst for gain and the state of spiritual neglect in which they had been living for so long had led them to the most deplorable consequences.

Don Bosco had once said, "If I had two thousands priests to send to the Pampas and Patagonia, I would know how to employ them." There were those who had smiled when they heard him say this, thinking he was exaggerating, but the further the Salesians penetrated into that territory, the more convinced they were of the great truth of Don Bosco's words.

As they rode on horseback over the wasteland, they came upon set-

17 Letter from Father Riccardi to Don Bosco (Carmen de Patagones, August 20, 1885).

tlements located at immense distances one from the other, far from any center of civilization, where no priest ever went. The people lived practically as savages, insofar as religion was concerned. Apart from this, the population in the area was constantly increasing. There were still large tribes of Indians, too, encamped at the foot of the Cordilleras, who were hunted and tracked down by people seeking to enslave them. In the face of such infinite spiritual misery, Father Angel Piccono (who was sent to Viedma in August to replace the infirmed pastor, Father Taddeus Remotti) wrote to Father Joseph Lazzero on the 25th of that month: "Send me priests, clerics, laymen. Send me whole families, provided they are honest, for there is an immense need here not only of catechism instruction and sermons, but also of good examples. Here, there is food and fodder enough for everyone, provided one has the will to explore and work."

The civilized world wanted to deny the very existence of these poor Indians, but these facts spoke louder than bureaucratic reticence. On November 1st, *La Nacion* in Buenos Aires published the account of an investigation reported in the Argentinean Parliament that proved that Indians existed and showed the manner in which they were treated. There had been barbaric and scandalous scenes at La Boca. A great number of these unfortunates had been lined up in two rows (women and children in one and men in the other) after being herded off a ship. The women were shamefully clad, but this was not the only offense. When the time came for the natives to be distributed to anyone who chose to apply for them, the children were snatched from the arms of their mothers, while both women and children shrieked in desperation. A mob of people stood by watching this disgusting scene. Two state representatives had the courage to speak out before the Parliament in the name of humanity against such inhuman treatment, and the war minister was obliged to give them an answer, promising to punish whoever was responsible for the shameful scene.

Further details came to light during the investigation. One state representative accused a high-ranking officer of having had 250 Indians shot, including women who clutched their children to their breasts to protect them. Word of other revolting acts of a similar nature that were committed in the vast expanse of the Patagonian desert never reached the capital. Many times, the militia seized entire caravans of Indians, forcing them into slavery on behalf of communities or private persons.

On November 10th, *La Nacion* related a story of 150 Indians who had been traveling by train to a locality where there was need of labor. The sergeant in command of the military escort on the train got off at a station

beyond Tucuman to get something to drink. A gentleman went up to him in the wine shop, offered him a bottle of beer, and asked for a little Indian boy in exchange. Seizing the bottle with one hand, the sergeant opened the door of the train compartment with the other, grabbed the first Indian boy he saw and handed him over to the man, despite the screams of the child and his mother's despair. The train moved on and the poor child was left in the power of a man who had bought him for a bottle of beer.

It is necessary to relate such things because we want people to more easily understand the actual conditions in which the first Salesian missionaries exercised their ministry in the Patagonian missions. Father Anthony Riccardi, Bishop Cagliero's secretary, wrote with a heavy heart about it to Father John Baptist Lemoyne, the editor of the Salesian *Bulletin* on November 12th:

> I could tell you some atrocious things about the way the military authorities treat the unfortunate Indians who fall into their hands, but I am sending you the newspaper articles where you can read the accounts of it made by the very state representatives in the Parliament. All I will add is that the things that are quoted as isolated incidents, committed against only a few individuals, can in all truth be regarded as everyday occurrences, applicable to every unfortunate Indian. They are not even treated like the beasts. Beasts at least, are fed sufficiently to keep them alive every day and are not forced to work beyond their physical capacity. Oh, if only we could all make known the atrocious crimes, the cruelty and the shameful actions that are being perpetrated here for some years now. But God willing, history will report these things some day, so that the world may know who the real savages are in Patagonia.

On November 4th, Monsignor set out for his first mission in the territory with Father Dominic Milanesio, a catechist and two coadjutors. Although the governor was far from well disposed toward the missionaries, he tried to be courteous and sent a soldier to act as their guide. He also instructed the military commanders in the various outposts that they were to do all they could to help the bishop. Monsignor continued the journey until the 30th, traveling two hundred kilometers along the Rio Negro. He had called at ten missionary stations with satisfactory results, preaching, catechizing and also baptizing a good number of Indians. He immediately discovered that substantial funds would be needed if any good were to be accomplished for the settlements and tribes. A mission-

ary could have contributed his effort, sacrifice, hunger, thirst and more, but unless he had stout horses, expert guides, sacred vestments and articles to distribute among the various families, he would accomplish very little. In their letters, the missionaries constantly appealed to the generosity of the cooperators in connection with all these needs.

Father Angelo Savio and a coadjutor made a bold venture, sailing south from Buenos Aires on November 22nd and landing safely on the 29th at Santa Cruz, the budding capital of the area of that same name that was located at the mouth of that river and constituted the southern border of the Vicariate. The governor had asked Bishop John Cagliero to send him a chaplain. Monsignor did not want to send any one priest such a distance by himself, so he planned to send Father Joseph Maria Beauvoir as chaplain with Father Angelo Savio. Since he foresaw opposition on the part of the central government to issue an authorization for Father Savio, he applied for permission and obtained it for him under the colorful qualification of an agronomist. Father Angelo Savio really did know about agronomy, and later turned his knowledge to good use. As Monsignor wrote later, the government was concerned with persecution, not with religion.

The agronomist priest was the first to depart and found a wooden hut in which to live. He celebrated Mass in his room, moving the bed every day to convert a little table into an altar. The population of Santa Cruz consisted of about one hundred people - ten families, plus the civil servants, the employees of the sub-prefecture or the harbor command, and those in charge of the administration.

The Indians lived withdrawn in the interior in fear, but would occasionally approach the settlement to bring guanaco skins, feathers, cloaks and blankets that they made to exchange them for brandy, mate, tobacco, rice, sugar and other commodities. They came in small, unarmed groups because they did not want to expose the tribe to the dangerous possibility of an encounter with the soldiers, and the much-feared deportation to Buenos Aires. Here again, the civilian population treated them like animals and harassed them, feeling that they were entitled to exploit them to their own advantage. Yet, the missionary believed that if they were treated charitably, they would soon grow friendly and become Christians.

One of his first excursions brought Father Angelo Savio in contact with an Indian who spoke Spanish, and he used him as his interpreter to speak to his tribesmen of religion whenever he met with any of them. The Indians had never heard any talk of this kind before, and

manifestly listened to him with pleasure. Father Savio wrote to Don Bosco on January 6, 1886:

> There are many Indians here, although the official reports try to hide this fact. People try to mask their existence. Dear Don Bosco, we can hardly hope that the government will give us any valid assistance in the work of civilizing these unfortunates. It would be great if they were only to leave us the necessary freedom to act. In my own position, I have to be very cautious in what I do. Perhaps later on, Divine Providence will show us means, reveal paths as yet unknown to me.

He had written to the apostolic vicar along the general lines: "Dear Monsignor, things here are in a sorry state."[18]

In reply, Monsignor might well have answered that they were in a sorry state, too. Fifty years later, we ask ourselves in dismay what would have become of the entire Patagonia from the standpoint of religion if it had attained to its current state of development without such energetic evangelical laborers who were capable of any and every sacrifice in their efforts to link it closely to Christ and His Church and who had been sent there by Divine Providence in the early phases of its development.

Certainly, the life of a missionary is essentially a life of sacrifice. These pioneers of the Patagonain missions were truly heroic in their sacrifices, which they endured for so long and in such extreme measure. God undoubtedly recorded their sacrifices in the Book of Life, but it would only be desirable that we, too, record them in the "book of history" for general edification. Something has been done, albeit late, in this direction, and is still in progress, so that the recollection of all these heroic deeds may not fade. But God alone knows the greater part of it.

In those years of privation and suffering, the love that the missionaries felt for Don Bosco and the Congregation proved a perennial source of strength for them. The influence that the thought of Don Bosco and the powerful effect of his prayers had over their troubled hearts was incredible, and so was their eagerness to honor the young Congregation to which they felt more and more attached as the area entrusted to their zeal and its problems increased. The letter exchange helped to keep this loving feeling alive, and this exchange could never have been more intimate or frequent.

[18] Letter (Santa Cruz, December 26, 1885).

Monsignor Joseph Fagnano (as we shall henceforth call the Prefect Apostolic) could hardly wait for the moment when he was to embark for the Malvinas Islands and Tierra del Fuego. Yet, he was forced to postpone his departure until the following year. Even Don Bosco was thinking about both him and his mission. In August, he wrote what amounted to a detailed design for living for his own personal benefit and the exercise of his apostolate. This, too, is a most valuable document:

Turin, August 10, 1885

Dearest Father Fagnano:

I, too, wish to write a few lines to you, and these may well be the last that this friend of your soul will ever pen to you before you set out on your mighty mission as Prefect of Patagonia, for which God has prepared an abundant harvest.

You will enjoy greater freedom in this new sacred ministry because you will be far away from the other confreres destined to keep watch over you and help you, especially in your spiritual perils. You must, therefore, constantly meditate upon and help bear this wonderful thought constantly in your mind and your heart: <u>God sees me. God sees you, he will also judge me, you and all of our confreres and all the souls entrusted to our care.</u>

In your travels, whether these are long or short, pay no heed to temporal advantage. Think only of the glory of God. Remember that your efforts must always be guided toward satisfying the growing needs of your mother. "*Sed Mater tua est Ecclesia Dei* [But your mother is God's Church]," St. Jerome said.

Try to found schools and small seminaries wherever you go, so that a few vocations for our nuns and the Salesians can be cultivated, or at least be sought for. In these difficult undertakings, try to have a thorough understanding with Bishop Cagliero.

Let your daily readings be our Rules, especially the chapter dealing with piety, the preface to them that I wrote, and the various deliberations taken from time to time by the Chapters.

Love sincerely all those who labor for the faith and try to support them.

It is my intention to appoint a Salesian Vicar for America, as I also intend to do for the Salesians in Europe, to make governing our affairs easier. But you will receive letters and instructions

regarding this matter if the merciful God grants me a little longer lease on my declining years.

I formally entrust you with the task of giving to the nuns, our sisters, and my Salesian sons and their pupils my greetings, and inform them of what I have written and that which may be to their spiritual or temporal advantage.

One more thing - treasure the secrets that our confreres or our sisters may confide to you, and give them fullest freedom and the assurance of secrecy as far as their letters, as our rules prescribe.

God bless you, dear Father Fagnano, and all the civil authorities with which you may have dealings. May He bless your works. Pray for me, all of you whom I hope to see again here on earth, please God! Yet, I feel greater certainty of seeing you in the Blessed Eternity with Jesus and Mary. So be it.

Your most affectionate friend in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

During the waiting period, Father Joseph Fagnano spent his time in apostolic undertakings and building. He was building the church of Viedma and other wooden chapels in settlement centers. He was also building houses in a more Patagonian style than the others. Naturally, he was accruing debts and relied heavily on Divine Providence to pay them.

One can readily imagine what the Patagonian style was like when we consider that building materials consisted of mud and pillars. The episcopal residence, for example, was built along the same architectural plan, consisting in two rooms five meters by six and four meters high. One room was for the bishop, and the other for his secretary, both on the main floor. There was one window in each room and even when they were closed, the constant wind blew at least a centimeter of sand over the floor and furniture.

The Provincial, Father James Costamagna, was also deeply in debt in Buenos Aires, but he was not concerned. In fact, he founded a new house in the heart of the city, which is now the school of St. Catherine. He founded day schools and a festive Oratory, attended during its first month by 130 boys who were all ignorant of religion. There was a church next to it where the boys gathered for their catechism lessons. Don Bosco had authorized this new foundation in July 1884, but unforeseen obstacles had delayed its opening for more than a year.

The house suffered a tragic loss barely two months after it opened.

Father Giovanni Paseri, the twenty-six-year-old director, died on November 11th. Two years before, Don Bosco had written to him: "I love you dearly here on earth, and shall love you even more in Heaven." The boys had already been so fond of him that a few of them offered their own lives to God, so that his life might be spared. He had been working in America for seven years. His Provincial wrote in reference to him[19]: "He died with the knowledge that he had never caused his superiors any displeasure, but had always helped them to endure bitter woes. He was an avowed enemy of all and every recompense, as modest as an angel, as zealous as an apostle."

His life was cut short by a swift attack of pneumonia. Shortly before his death, he had exclaimed, "How happy I am to die as a Salesian!" These words were an echo of the battles he had fought with his parents to give up his vocation. Father Lazzero wrote: " The loss of our good Father Paseri was a severe wound to all our hearts, but especially to the heart of Don Bosco."[20]

Don Bosco received letters from various parts of South America, calling for the Salesians. The government of the Republic of Ecuador wrote from Quito through its representative in Paris, making an official request that the Salesians accept the management of schools in that capital. The bishop of Loja in the same republic beseeched on behalf of Cariamanga and Loja that were they to come, they would find houses, churches and funds available. The Superior Chapter answered them all in Don Bosco's name, saying that for the time being, no requests could be considered, since they didn't have sufficient personnel, but the Salesians would go there, as soon as possible.

Discussing it during a Chapter meeting on September 16th, Don Bosco said, "We should be encouraged by these requests, for they should convince us that our Congregation has been blessed by Our Lord. People are asking for us and are putting funds at our disposal. Otherwise, how could we ever manage to go to such distant countries? You see they are offering us everything, while we have nothing at all of our own now! It is true that we have the backing of charity, which comes knocking at our door. Divine Providence never fails us, but that is all we can rely on, for we cannot rely on any human resources."

From time to time, Divine Providence would reveal the future before the very eyes of Don Bosco, thus revealing the progress the Salesians

19 Letter to Don Bosco (Buenos Aires, November 12, 1885).

20 Letter to Monsignor Cagliero (Turin, December 27, 1885)

would make in future times in the vast field of missionary work. Again in 1885, a revealing dream informed him of God's design for a remote future. Don Bosco told of this dream and commented on it to the assembled Chapter on the evening of July 2nd. Father Lemoyne hastened to write down what he heard:

> It seemed that I stood before a high mountain. At the summit, a magnificently radiant angel who lit up the remotest corners of the horizon stood. A giant crowd of unknown people had gathered all around the mountain.
>
> The angel held a sword that blazed like a flame in his right hand, and he pointed out the surrounding countryside to me with his left. He said, "*Angelus Arphaxad vocat vos as proelianda bella Domini et ad congregandos populos in horrea Domini* [The Angel of Arphaxad summons you to wage the battles of the Lord and to gather all peoples into His granaries.]" He did not utter these words in a commanding voice, as he had done on other occasions, but instead as if he were making a proposal.
>
> A wonderful crowd of angels, whose names I did not know or cannot remember, surrounded him. Among them, I saw Louis Colle, who was surrounded by a crowd of younger people. He was teaching how to sing the praises of God, which he himself was singing.
>
> A great number of people lived all around the mountain and on its slopes. They were talking among themselves, but I did not know their language and could not understand them. I only understood what the angel was saying. I cannot describe what I saw. There are things that you can see and understand, and yet they cannot be explained. At the same time, I saw isolated things all simultaneously, and these changed the scene that was before me to the point that it now looked like the plains of Mesopotamia. Even the mountain on which the Angel of Arphaxad stood assumed a myriad of different characteristics at every moment, until the people living on it looked like mere drifting shadows.
>
> Throughout this pilgrimage and in the face of this mountain, I felt as if I were being elevated above the clouds and that an infinite void surrounded me. Who could find words to describe that height, the spaciousness, the light, the radiance, or the vision before me? One could delight in it, but not describe it.
>
> In this and other scenes, there were many people who accom-

panied and encouraged me. They also encouraged the Salesians not to stop along the road. Among those who eagerly urged me onward were our dear Louis Colle and a band of angels who echoed the canticles of the youths gathered around Louis.

Then I thought I was in the heart of Africa in an immense desert. Written on the ground in gigantic, transparent letters was one word: Negroes. Here stood the Angel of Cam, who said, "*Cessabit maledictum* [the curse will stop] and a balmy salve and the blessing of their labor shall descend upon His sorely-tired children and honey shall heal the bites of the serpents. Thereafter, all the sins of the children of Cam will be covered." All of these people were naked.

Finally, I thought I was in Australia. Here, too, there was an angel, but he had no name. He shepherded and marched, urging the people to march toward the south. Australia was not a continent, but a number of islands grouped together, whose inhabitants varied in temperament and appearance. There was a big crowd of children living there who tried to come toward us, but could not because of the distance and the waters that separated them from us. Nevertheless, they held out their hands towards Don Bosco and the Salesians, saying, "Come and help us! Why do you not fulfill what your fathers have began?" Many held back, but others made every possible effort to push their way through wild animals to reach the Salesians, who were unknown to me, and they began to sing "*Benedictus qui venit in nomine Domini* [blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord]." A little distance away, I could see groups of many islands, but could not distinguish any details. I felt that all this indicated that Divine Providence was offering part of this evangelical field to the Salesians, but for some future period. Their efforts will bear fruit, for the hand of God will be constantly outstretched over them, unless they become unworthy of His graces.

If only I could preserve some fifty of the Salesians we have with us now! They would be able to see the magnificent destiny Divine Providence has reserved for us within a five-hundred-year span from now, provided we remain steadfast.

Within 150 or 200 years, the Salesians would be the masters of the whole world.

We shall always be well liked, even by malevolent people because our particular activity is one that arouses benevolence in

everybody, good and bad alike. There may be a few hotheads who would prefer to see us destroyed, but these will only be isolated incidents and will not find any support from others.

It all depends on whether the Salesians will resist the desire for comforts and will thereby shirk their work. Even if we were only to maintain what we have already founded, we would have a long-standing guarantee, provided we do not become victimized by the vice of gluttony.

The Salesian Society will prosper in a material sense if we uphold and spread the *Bulletin* and the institution of the Sons of Mary Help of Christians. These we will uphold and spread. Many of these dear children are so good! The institution of the Sons of Mary will provide us with valiant confreres, who are steadfast in their vocation.

These are the three things that Don Bosco saw most distinctly, recalled best, and reported on them that first time. But as he told Father John Baptist Lemoyne later on, he had seen a good deal more. He had seen all the countries where the Salesians would be summoned as time went on, but he saw them fleetingly, completing a rapid journey that started out from a given locality and returned to it again. He said it all happened just in a flash. Nevertheless, as he covered this immense distance in the blink of an eye, he had seen whole regions, inhabitants, seas, rivers, islands, customs and a thousand other things all interwoven. The scenes changed so rapidly that it was impossible to describe them all. But there was barely a distinct recollection left in his mind of this phenomenally fantastic itinerary. He was, therefore, not able to give any detailed account of it.

It had seemed to him that there were many people with him who encouraged him and the Salesians not to stop along the way. Among those who encouraged him to move forward with the greatest fervor was Louis Colle, about whom he wrote to his father on August 10th: "Our friend Louis took me on a tour through the heart of Africa, "the land of Cam," he called it, and through Arphaxad; that is, China. If Our Lord shall so dispose that we meet, we shall have a lot to talk about."

The following is the description of Don Bosco's itinerary when he traveled through a circular area in the southern part of the globe, as Father Lemoyne declared he had heard it from his very lips:

He set out from Santiago, Chile. He saw Buenos Aires, Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Cape of Good Hope, Madagascar, the

> Persian Gulf, the Banks of the Caspian Sea, Sennaar, Mount Ararat, Senegal, Ceylon, Hong Kong, Macao at the mouth of the infinitely vast sea and facing the gigantic mountain from which one could see China. Then, the Chinese Empire, Australia, and the Diego Ramirez Islands. He ended his trip by returning to Santiago, Chile, once again. In his lightning-like travels, Don Bosco distinguished islands, territories and nations scattered all over the different degrees of latitude and many areas that were barely inhabited or altogether unknown. He could not recall the exact names of many of the places he had glimpsed at in his dream. Macao, for example, was called "Meaco" in his narration. He talked of some of the more southern latitudes visited in America with Captain Bove; but the officer had not rounded the Magellan's Cape for want of funds, and was obliged to turn back on his voyage for various reasons, and so he was unable to clarify matters for Don Bosco.

We would say something about the enigmatic Angel of Arphaxad. Don Bosco had no idea of who he was prior to his dream, but later talked about it rather frequently. He instructed the cleric Festa to look for the word in Biblical dictionaries, history and geography books and periodicals, so that he might know with what people of the earth the presumptive person was connected. At last, he believed he had found the key to the mystery in the first volume of Rohrbacher, who states that the Chinese are descendants of Arphaxad.

His name appears in the tenth chapter of the Book of Genesis in the genealogy of Noah's sons, who divided the world amongst themselves after the flood. In Verse 22, we find: "*Filii Sem Aelam et Assur Arphaxad et Lud Gether et Mes* [The sons of Sem are: Elam, Addur, Aphaxad, Lud and Aram]." Here, as in other portions of the vast ethnographical panorama, the individual names indicate the ancestors of different races, and reference is made to the regions they inhabited. Thus, *Aelam* means "high land," and refers to Elam, which became a province of Persia with Susiana. Assur was the ancestral father of the Assyrians. Exegetes do not agree about the population to which reference is made in the third instance. Some, such as Vigouroux (just to quote one of the better known names), held that Arphaxad should be connected with Mesopotamia. At any rate, since he is listed among the ancestors of Asiatic peoples immediately after two other people who occupied the most extreme eastern border of the

land described in the Mosaic document, one may well believe that Arphaxad indicated a nation connected with the area of those preceding it, and which later spread still further east. It would not be improbable, therefore, to see that the Angel of Arphaxad stands for the Angel of China.

Don Bosco fixed his attention on China, and said he believed it would not be long before the Salesians would be summoned there. In fact, once he added, "If I had twenty missionaries to send to China, I am sure that they would be given a triumphant welcome, despite the persecutions." So from that time on, he always took a keen interest in all that concerned the Celestial Empire.

He frequently thought about this dream and was always glad to talk about it, considering it as a confirmation of his previous dreams about the missions.

Chapter 23

ANECDOTES, DIRECTIVES AND LETTERS

We have now completed our account of the year 1885. We still have a number of scattered incidents to relate, which we shall try to assemble and coordinate as best we can in this final chapter. First place will be given to anecdotes directly or indirectly connected with Don Bosco.

The infirmities of his old age, intensified by prolonged and excessive work, should not lead us to believe that Don Bosco was utterly broken down and incapacitated. He never lost his dignity, the impressive serenity of his countenance, and above all, his keen penetrating glance that remained constant up to the end of his days. An alert spirit, a spirit ever present and stronger than any infirmity, lived on in his spent and exhausted body.

One day in Turin, Don Bosco met a fairly well known Protestant minister who had a certain reputation in Turin because of his relationship with La Gazetta del Popolo and a children's clinic he had founded. As they crossed each other's path, the saint gave him such a penetrating glance that made his whole body shudder. It is also reported that after Don Bosco's death, the man converted to Catholicism.[1]

His words, to which we can bear witness, never lost any of their effectiveness. His words worked even at a distance, as can be illustrated in the case of a former pupil, who had strayed from the path of virtue. One day, the saint was traveling with the Provincial, Father Francis Cerruti. Since the latter had to change trains at a given station, Don Bosco grabbed his hand as he was leaving, he pressed it so tightly that he shook him up and said, "You will see so-and-so. Tell him to make Don Bosco happy, at long last."

Father Cerruti promised, and when he met the gentleman, he repeated what Don Bosco had said.

The man reacted as though he was thunderstruck, buried his face in his hands, and exclaimed very tersely, "Ah! What have I done! How unhappy I have made Don Bosco!"

[1] Dr. Laura related this anecdote on April 14, 1891 as she proposed a toast at the banquet given on the occasion of the consecration of the new church at Valsalice.

This was not only a momentary grief, for as Father Francis Cerruti related, this man went to confession that very evening, reformed his way of life, made amends for the scandal he had caused, and he lived a Christian life from then on.

What then should we say about Don Bosco's way of dealing with people, when his incomparable delicacy never waned, despite his physical exhaustion? A young cleric was assigned to him, who was expected to help him take care of his correspondence. As he was telling him about his own faults, he also acknowledged that at times, overcome by an unbridled curiosity and taking advantage of the trust placed in him, he had read certain letters that he thought might be of interest. He begged for his pardon and promised that never again would he ever do such a thing. In reply, Don Bosco smiled as he pressed the cleric's hand to his heart, then he collected all the letters lying on his desk and put them into his hands.

Father Stephen Trione, who was then the catechist for the students at the Oratory, often had the good fortune of chatting with Don Bosco who loved his candid, cheerful ways. Father Trione recalls a few interesting little anecdotes, all related to the year 1885.

The first deals with one of the greater infirmities that troubled the servant of God. Once, in the middle of summer, Father Stephen Trione was strolling up and down with him in the library. The Servant of God walked very slowly, very absorbed in his thoughts, apparently more listening to him than talking. All of a sudden he stopped. He twitched his shoulders convulsively, and, like a groan, he let out these words, "If they do not send him somewhere, Don Bosco will burn, he will burn!"

It only lasted for an instant and he quickly regained his composure, but Father Stephen Trione understood that he was in the grip of intense physical pain. This is, indeed, what must have been: in the heat, the eczema that for some time had inflamed the skin around his shoulders, was heightened, causing an unbearable itching. As we have said, he then went to the cool climate of Mathi.

One evening in the presence of Fathers Stephen Trione and Charles Viglietti, he took the three things out of his pocket that he always carried along: his rosary, the *Rubricae Missalis* and a small metal box with a hermetical spring lid that held holy water. He said in reference to the Rubrics: "These are still the Rubrics of my first Mass. I had them rebound several times. I read some of them every week, and it is very rare that I do not come across something that I have to correct or improve upon while celebrating my Holy Mass." It was a Pomba edition printed in 1830 with 202 pages.

Another time Father Stephen Trione happened to be in Don Bosco's room when the mail was brought to him. Among the many letters heaped on his desk, a big envelope was conspicuous, for it looked most certainly as if it contained something of value. Almost instinctively, the saint reached for it, using thumb and index finger to extract it from among the others. He barely touched it before he withdrew his hand, and without interrupting his conversation, began to take the letters off the top of the heap and break their seals. It looked to Father Stephen Trione as though, accustomed as Don Bosco was to do everything in an orderly fashion, this gesture was made to correct an instinctive action that might have had a somewhat imperfect element

In one of their many intimate talks, Don Bosco told him about something that had happened in bygone days. "Festa came to ask me for a blessing, since he was suffering from a violent toothache. I blessed him, but I did not ask that his pain be transferred to me. I had done it once before, and had such a terrible pain that in the night I had to go to the dentist to have the troubling tooth extracted."

The cleric Festa completed the story for Father Stephen Trione when he spoke to him about it, saying that he was relieved of the pain when he put the saint's own biretta on his head.

The detail of the biretta reminds us of a similar incident. In 1885, Don Bosco was about to lose his confessor, for Father Giacomelli had been suffering from a brain hemorrhage after being attacked by some criminals. Although he had already been given the Extreme Unction, his sister called again on Don Bosco, frightened at the idea of losing him, and begged the saint to pray for him. Once she brought him a skullcap, which belonged to her brother, only to have it blessed. With great charity, Don Bosco obliged and she returned home and put the skullcap on her sick brother's head, without saying a word. From that time on, Father Giacomelli's condition began to improve until he was fully recovered. We must also add that the Servant of God had already reassured the broken-hearted sister, saying, "He will not die yet; it is I who have to go first."

In fact, a few days before Father Giacomelli got sick again, Don Bosco had invited him for dinner and noticing that he was depressed and melancholy, said to him in the presence of all the members of the Superior Chapter, "Rest assured, do not be afraid, my good fellow. It will be your task to assist Don Bosco when he is about to die." It came true, exactly as he had said.

Another prediction, made to Father August Amossi, a Salesian, was

also fulfilled. Father Amossi had been assigned from Lanzo (Piedmont) to Randazzo (Sicily) in the fall of 1885. Since his mother was old and ailing, he greatly feared that he would never see her again, for in the event of sudden crisis, it would take him too long to get to Piedmont from Sicily. He had confided his anxiety to Don Bosco, but listening kindly, Don Bosco answered, "You can go to Randazzo quite peacefully. I assure you that nothing will happen for as long as your superiors keep you there."

Then he paused and said, "Go to Randazzo, but you will not stay there long. You will get back to Lanzo."

The young priest remained at Randazzo for three years, and in all that time, his mother's condition grew no worse; but no sooner had he been recalled once again to Lanzo, her health declined steadily and she died on April 4, 1889.[2]

There was another healing attributed to Don Bosco. On the last day of the year 1884, Father Leonardo Murialdo contracted pneumonia as a result of rheumatic fever and bronchial inflammation, and the doctors were convinced that there was no hope of curing it. Deeply concerned, the Fathers of St. Joseph thought it best to appeal to Don Bosco, for they remembered the old friendship that had linked their own Father Joseph with him. Confident that they might obtain a miracle, they wrote to Father Lazzero on January 8th, since there was no earthly hope for their patient's recovery, and asked Don Bosco for a special blessing. A reply came back immediately on that same evening that Don Bosco would go in person to give his blessing as requested.

Along with Father John Baptist Lemoyne, he entered the room of the ailing priest. He remained with him about thirty minutes and blessed him. As soon as he got out of the room, everyone gathered around him, anxious to know whether their founder would die. It was Father Reffo who asked the question, and Don Bosco replied, "He will get over it this time. At least, I think he will. He still has to help this plant grow."

By *plant*, he meant his own religious family. The people present knelt down for his blessing, and rose then to their feet, reassured that Father Murialdo would live.

He did indeed begin to get better from that evening on. Three days later, Cardinal Alimonda called on him, and acknowledged his improvement, which then continued day after day until he was fully recovered. Then, speaking about it to the Fathers of St. Joseph, he said, "Don Bosco

[2] Letter from Father Amossi to Father Lemoyne (Lanzo, April 8, 1889).

and Father Murialdo are two jewels in my Diocese."[3]

At the end of May, Don Bosco received a letter from Canon Rouviere, the pastor of St. Louis in Toulon, who suggested that he should begin working in Rome on the introduction of the cause and beautification of young Louis Colle. One reason that urged the priest to make such a suggestion was what had been referred to him by the convent of the Good Shepherd in Toulon. The superior, Sister Mary of St. Leocadia, decided to write a letter to the parents of Louis Colle, thinking that they were at home in Toulon, on the anniversary of their son's death, and she hoped to ease their suffering by so doing. But then she heard a voice saying very distinctly, "It is useless for you to write to them because they are now in Turin, and Don Bosco is giving them all the comfort they need."

The nun felt so absolutely convinced that when another nun went into her cell a little later, she told her with assuredness, "I am not going to write to Count and Countess Colle because they are not here, but with Don Bosco in Turin."

"Who told you that, Reverend Mother?" the nun asked.

"Their angel Louis. I am absolutely sure of it."

They were indeed in Turin. Later, when the convent was without water, the superior appealed confidently to Louis, and believed that she heard his promise that water would be forthcoming. It was restored twenty-four hours later. When faced with other predicaments, she appealed to Louis Colle with ever-growing confidence and received what she had asked for.

Besides this reason prompted by outside events, Father Rouviere had a personal one, all his own for backing his request. Count Colle's son never had any spiritual director other than himself. It is for this reason that Father Rouviere referred to him as a child of benediction and, with full knowledge of what he was talking about, he extolled his angelic life and saintly death. Nothing was done about it in Rome, but what has been said here confirms, as nothing else could, the idea Don Bosco had about this young man, and helps us understand how reliable the manifestations were that we described in the third chapter of Volume XV.

The following anecdote happened early on, but it came only recently to our knowledge, since Lady Herbert had reported it in a trustworthy London newspaper [4] in 1884. The writer was a relative of Marquis S. of Turin and had heard the story.

[3] E. Reffo, *Father Leonardo Murialdo, Founder of the Fathers of St. Joseph* (1828-1900). III Edition, Turin, printed by "La Salute," 1931 (pp. 306-308).

[4] *The Month,* article entitled "Don Bosco," pages 43-59 (January 1884)

A young man from a good family had fallen into utter destitution, due to heavy gambling losses. Terrified by the prospect of having to declare bankruptcy, he had called on the marquis for help. This gentleman generously loaned him a substantial sum of money. The young man disappeared without a trace, leaving no hope of the money being refunded.

A few years went by and one day when the marquis was on his way to the railway station at Porta Susa, he unexpectedly ran into the young gentleman in question. The hard lesson taught him by experience had had its effect. He had begun to lead a serious, industrious life and had attained financial security. He had now come expressly to Turin to fulfill his obligation of paying back the money loaned to him.

The marquis continued on his way, but the train had already left the station. He decided then to wait for the next train and thought he would pass the time by calling on Don Bosco. It must be understood that he had not mentioned the matter to anybody. As he entered Don Bosco's room, before he could open his mouth to ask about his health, the saint said, "I was expecting you! I want you to give me the money you have in that pocket."

So saying, he pointed to the pocket and specified the sum. Quite dumbfounded, the marquis exclaimed, "How could you possibly know of this? This is money that I only received a short time ago and in a most unexpected manner. Do you know young Count B.?"

"No," Don Bosco replied, "but I do know that you have exactly the money I need to pay a debt. You will get it back next week."

"Then take the money, by all means," the marquis said.

Don Bosco gave him a receipt for it and was prompt to repay it the following week.[5]

Despite the supernatural gifts that never failed Don Bosco wherever he went, especially during the last eight years of his life, he never ceased to fear the judgment of God. Now, more so than ever, did he ask others to pray for him, so that he might save his soul. Once when he was at San

[5] Don Bosco had asked Lady Herbert to recommend to him any young Englishman who might have a religious vocation. "We tried to help him," she wrote in the above-mentioned article. We sent him a young man who, although excellent in every respect, was a good and practical Englishman and unwilling to accept anything out of the ordinary. He had not been at the Oratory a year when he wrote to a priest, who had been his former spiritual director: "You know how reluctant I was to believe any of the extraordinary things that were told to me when I first came here. But to see is to believe, and the exceptional miracles wrought almost every day by Don Bosco are so manifest, that only a blind and stubborn man could fail to realize he was in the presence of someone who even though he might not be a saint, is nevertheless extraordinarily favored by God. Why? Because he obtains all that he prays for, whether it is material means to help his great undertakings, or the healing of spiritual and temporal evils." The young man mentioned here, though not by name, was the first future director of the house at Battersea, London, Father Francis Macey.

Benigno, Don Bosco recommended his own soul to a gentleman whom he also asked to pray for him. The gentleman replied, "Oh! Don Bosco has no need of this stuff!"

Don Bosco's countenance became very serious, tears came to his eyes and he said with great conviction, "I am greatly in need of this stuff."[6]

We now turn from anecdotes to some thoughts expressed by Don Bosco. We report on them mainly because they reveal the guiding principles he followed in his work and serve as directive guidelines for anyone who may find himself in similar predicaments. We draw some of Don Bosco's thoughts from the Minutes of the Superior Chapter. We mean to express them in an orderly fashion to make their reading easier.

"The interior arrangement of the Salesian Society has to be developed gradually," he said in the Chapter held on February 24th, "for the very nature of things demands this."

This very wise rule, which had been adopted by him from the very beginning when he was trying to organize his Congregation, had guided him also in creating the type of novitiate most attuned to his own ideal. After a series of experiments to which we have referred elsewhere[7], he had succeeded in creating a specific house for the novices at San Benigno. But still a lot remained to be done in order to reach full regularity. Even here, he proceeded slowly and by degrees. It now seemed the time to tighten the admission rules for candidates, setting up special committees (already envisaged in the Pontifical Decrees of 1848) for Italy and its adjacent islands. Don Bosco had delayed doing this, availing himself, as we have already said several times, of faculties granted to him by Pope Pius IX.

The committees that controlled the admission to the novitiate were of two kinds: a general committee with a deliberative vote and a particular or provincial committee with a merely consultative vote. It was agreed upon that the first committee be composed of members of the Superior Chapter and the second committee would be composed of as many members as there were Provincials. But since only the Piedmontese Province in Italy had a novitiate that was accessible to novices from all over the different Provinces, it was decided that only one single committee would be created for that time. In the debate on this matter at the Chapter meeting held February 23rd, Don Bosco had the two decrees of Pius IX read out, and then he remarked, "Since we are dealing with a novitiate house, we must

[6] *Summ. Sup. Virt.*, Num. VI #161, *De heroica spe* (witness Father Francis Pascetta).

[7] See Vol. XI, page 271 and following.

overlook rigidity as far as the way it must be constituted. This is what both the Supreme Pontiffs, Pius IX and Leo XIII, have told me. Pius IX even took a personal interest on this matter in a committee especially convened for this purpose. Two or three novices are enough to form a novitiate house, even though fifty other novices may be scattered here and there in other houses, out of reasons of necessity. Then they are not materially present in the novitiate house due to the urgent need of their work, yet they are not definitively assigned to the houses where they reside. This helps to make it much easier to set up novitiates in our other Italian Provinces."

It was, therefore, decided that a Provincial committee would be appointed for every Province in Italy. But for the time being, attention was given only to the committee for the Piedmontese Province, which had the one and only novitiate house at San Benigno.

As specified in the Rules, this novitiate was directly dependent on the Superior Chapter. Hence, the question came up regarding who should be in charge of collecting due papers and information, who should take care of convening the committee for the first scrutiny, and who should deal with the admission of candidates coming from other Provinces.

On February 24th, Don Bosco and the Chapter so declared and deliberated: (1) The Provincial of the Turin Province has the same authority as the other Provincials outside Turin, and his jurisdiction does not extend beyond the borders of the Piedmontese Province; (2) the jurisdiction of the Provincial of the Piedmontese Province does not cover the house of the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales, which is directly subject to the Superior Chapter, for as long as it remains its headquarters; (3) the Piedmontese Provincial does not exercise jurisdiction over the novitiate, which is instead directly subjected to the Superior Chapter, its spokesman being the Catechist of the Congregation; and (4) one sole Provincial Committee should be elected to examine the novices for the entire Congregation.

This having been deliberated, eight members, among them two Provincials, were elected to comprise the above-mentioned Committee.[8]

[8] These are the names of the committee members:

1. Father Julius Barberis, Director of the house of the novitiate.
2. Father Francis Cerruti, Provincial of the Ligurian Province and Director of the house of Alassio.
3. Father John Baptist Francesia, Provincial of the Piedmontese Province, and Director of the Oratory, Students Section.
4. Father Joseph Bertello, Director of the house of Borgo San Martino.
5. Father Dominic Belmonte, Director of the house of Sampierdarena.
6. Father John Marenco, Director of the house of St. John's in Turin.
7. Father Louis Nai, Prefect of the novitiate.
8. Father Eugene Bianchi, novice master in conjunction with Father Barberis.

In the true spirit of the decrees, this election should have been made by secret ballot, but it was not. Don Bosco said, "For the time being, it is solely a question of laying the foundations." By this he meant that he wanted to begin with an initial trial period, and then come to a definitive and final arrangement later on.

Two questions were left unanswered; namely, who was to gather the documents required for the admission of novices - either the director of the novitiate or the Peidmontese Provincial - and who was to chair the provincial committee. As to the first question, Don Bosco spoke and the Chapter approved what he said: "The Director of the novitiate will collect the documents, relying on several members of the committee to gather them together, and any papers that might be sent to the Superior Chapter should be forwarded to the director. When the time comes, he shall call a meeting of the committee, which needs only a quorum of four members. Then he can go to Liguria and convoke four of the members of the existing provincial committee for that Province, so as not to oblige them to go to Piedmont (which would inconvenience them) to examine the papers with them and call for an initial vote."

As to the chairmanship, Don Bosco formulated a plan to solve the problem: "The director of the house where the novitiate is located should be the chairman. Nevertheless, for the time being, until things are well settled, the chairman will be any member of the Superior Chapter who shall be appointed, though according to the decrees, he shall not be a member of the general committee."

It sometimes happened that some young postulants among the artisans were reluctant to enter the congregation because they did not want to go to San Benigno. The reason for this was that in their eagerness to learn their trade, they felt that at San Benigno, they would have neither available facilities nor the convenience for so doing.

When Don Bosco heard this, he said on August 24th, "I would never make any exception in the case of any academic student, but since this concerns the trade students, in certain instances I would have no objection to admitting them to novitiate, though dispensing them from the obligation of going to San Benigno."

It was not enough to accept the coadjutors who applied for admission; we also had to look for them. "It is essential that we find good coadjutors," Don Bosco said on September 18th. "For this purpose we should keep in contact with pastors and ask them if in their rural districts they have any reliable young men of sound moral fiber, endowed with piety

and willing to abandon the world, and we should ask them to direct these young men to us."

Father Joseph Lazzero objected, saying that it was the pastor who would be coming to ask the Salesians for young men like that, in order to assume them in their parish apostolic services.

"That does not matter," Don Bosco answered. "We should address a similar question to the pastors known to us. This is what Father Moses Veronesi did, and he obtained a fair number of sincerely honest and reliable coadjutors."

We have already seen how Don Bosco dictated on several occasions practical rules to be used as precaution when admitting candidates to the novitiate. During the afternoon session of the Chapter Meeting held on August 24th, he said, "When we deal with young men who wish to enter the Salesian Congregation as novices, especially if they wish to do so as clerics, we should speak to them quite frankly on the subject of morals. We should ask them, 'Would you mind if I ask you a question?' When they answer, 'No, I don't,' then we should say, 'Tell me, how have you behaved this year insofar as morals are concerned? As far as deeds and thoughts? Is it very long since you mended your ways?' Or else, 'Is it a long time that you have had this habit?' If anyone had been defiled by such a habit up to the days prior to the novitiate, we should no doubt discourage him from going ahead, unless he shows manifest signs of a vocation and a steadfast intention to do everything necessary to persevere in it.

"We should be very careful and cautious in questioning those who are timid. We should help them with charity, but we should be careful with whom we are speaking, so as not to do anything imprudent. One could begin in this way: 'If you want me to give you any advice about your vocation, allow me to ask you something - how do you stand as far as your morals?' In similar examinations, this question should always be asked."

In the meeting held on the following day, Don Bosco spoke about the impartiality necessary for admitting novices: "When we admit candidates, we should be very careful not to be swayed by our likes or dislikes. Never let our own personal feelings influence us when we are voting either for or against the admission of any candidate. I say this because I believe that here and there, some people were accepted on the grounds of personal feelings or friendship. Let us always put the common welfare of the congregation before our own individual welfare. We do not have to yield to our own preferences, and never go by whether these people are liked or disliked. We should not follow any preconceived ideas or

antipathies. Our particular interest should be disregarded when it is a question of the common good or interest."

On July 13th, Don Bosco quoted a saying of Leo XIII in reference to one category of postulants; namely, illegitimate children. "In the case of illegitimate children, whether they are natural-born offspring or spurious, there is no need to apply for dispensation to enter a religious Congregation, if the facts are secret; such blemishes are eliminated by religious profession. When a dispensation has to be applied for, have the individual who applies to enter the Congregation write it himself, but without stating in which Congregation the postulant wishes to enter. All the same, the matter should be reviewed from both the moral and canonical standpoint, to know how we stand. Never forget what Leo XIII said to Don Bosco in reference to the spurious, 'Never let your houses be entangled with people of this kind because they can only procure scandal and grief to you. Be wary also in admitting children born out of wedlock. If the Church does now authorize children born out of wedlock to be ordained, it does so with the utmost difficulty, and when it is a question of spurious children, only on very rare instances."

Cardinal Guibert, the archbishop of Paris, had recommended this, particularly to Father Celestine Durando. When he visited the French capital the previous year, the archbishop had told him that one had to be especially cautious in France when anyone asked to enter the Congregation. First of all, before admitting anybody, one would have to inquire very carefully about the conduct of both father and mother, and even more carefully about the family background. His Eminence had talked about this, very earnestly, and at great length.

On October 26th, on behalf of Father Paul Albera, Father Michael Rua had proposed the admission of two Frenchmen: one priest and a cleric. It appeared that both of them were well recommended as far as their conduct. Don Bosco wanted to find out since both had belonged to the Diocese, if the prescribed practices had been followed with the respective Diocesan authorities. Then he went on, "Write and tell them that we were delighted with the excellent information received, but that since we are a religious Congregation, we have to follow first what is prescribed by our Rules. Nevertheless, we are mindful of the fact that the decrees of Pius IX *super statu regularium* do not apply in France."

Father Joseph Bologna likewise had several candidates to propose as either novices or postulants from his house in Lille. The Chapter admitted them, but then difficulties arose. The house of Lille was in need of

such personnel. Was it absolutely necessary that they be sent to St. Marguerite, or would their novitiate be valid also if they lived in a house not destined for that purpose? In other words, could the houses, where some novices were located due to special needs, be considered as extensions to a regular novitiate?

Don Bosco said, "When the Rules were approved in Rome, it was understood that the novices were to spend a whole year studying our Rules, and be exclusively involved in the exercise of the practices of piety. The Sacred Congregation did not intend to yield on this point. Don Bosco referred the matter to the Holy Father. 'Well, is your battle over or has it just begun?' Pius IX asked me one day as soon as he saw me.

"'It is up to you, Holy Father, to fire the cannon shot or set up the last canon,' I answered.

"'Go ahead. The devil is more afraid of a house where people work than he is of one where they only pray. Very often in such houses sloth reigns! There are also Orders that admit postulants at their first phase of formation and send them to other houses where they are put to work. So why are there so many obstacles put only in the way of poor Don Bosco?'"

After relating this, the saint continued, "On the whole, let us be very generous in admitting postulants, unless they are known to be rascals. But in accepting a novice, let us observe all the formalities prescribed by the Church. In our case, however, following only the decrees should be enough. Let us also consider whether they will be of material or moral benefit to the entire Congregation. If we fail to perceive this clearly, under the one or the other aspect, let us wait, prolong the trial period, and do not be afraid of moving very cautiously.

On November 29th, Don Bosco dictated four special rules to be followed when it was a question of admitting candidates to take vows: (1) the military draft, if imminent within one year, should not be an obstacle in admitting to religious profession. For many, this serves as a restraining factor when they are in the service. Anyone who loses his vocation could be dispensed, and several dispense themselves simply by not returning to the Congregation; (2) as to the triennial vows that, as Father John Bonetti suggested, should be imposed on all prior to taking final vows, I'd say that anyone who is not prepared to take final vows after one year in the *novitiate remittatur* [he should be let go]. They would make an effort that may last only for a moment, but then they would be back from where they started. Exceptions could be made only when it is evident that someone might be of a great service to the pious society, and is, as far as morals,

impeccable as well; (3) greater severity should be exercised in regard to morals in reference to anyone who is to receive Holy Orders than in reference to those who are only to take vows. But in both instances, severity is to be exercised. When it is openly a question of thoughts and readings, we could suspend our judgment. When it's a question of self-abuse, bad habits, even in this case, a greater severity. If it's a question of sporadic cases, rare cases, let them go by and then we shall see. If it's a question of a misdemeanor with others, then it's very difficult that any change may come about. Relapses do occur even when a person in question has consecrated himself to God; and (4) it must be understood that at the present day no objections are raised in cases of people who were merely born out of wedlock; but both the Church, the Pope and the bishops earnestly recommend that the spurious be excluded from both Holy Orders and from vows.

Now let us look at more specific directives concerning candidates for Holy Orders. Don Bosco made two recommendations on September 9th, both regarding the time of application. During the morning session, he insisted on the necessity that a superior summon any cleric for a confidential talk prior to authorizing him to receive Minor Orders, so as to give him timely advice and warn him not to proceed ill-prepared.

"The following questions might be put to him: 'Do you feel you are sufficiently well prepared in the eyes of God? How have you behaved yourself as far as morals? Did you do anything wrong, voluntarily?' If he answers affirmatively, find out whether this was from habit or caused by exceptional circumstances. Another question: 'How do you behave with your confessor?' If the matter requires postponing the decision, tell him: 'You see, this obligation binds me and you; prepare yourself better, etc.' When clerics have to apply for admission to Holy Orders in writing, then the following instructions, issued by Don Bosco during the afternoon session, were to be followed: we should not expect clerics to apply for Holy Orders themselves when the time comes. That is the task of the catechist of the Congregation, who will attend to it and inform the candidates."

Don Bosco referred to a delicate subject on September 10th. It could always happen (since we are only human beings) that when the time approaches for a cleric to receive Holy Orders, he may have a disagreement with his immediate superior. This is how Don Bosco approached the subject: "Should there be any friction between a candidate for Holy Orders and his immediate superior prior to his ordination, when it's a question of nonessential things, the candidate should be assigned to some

other office or sent to another house. It is unfitting that the cleric receive this token of esteem; namely, his admission to Holy Orders, under the nose of the superior he has offended whether justifiably or unjustifiably. This would imply condemnation of that same superior's conduct."

When Holy Orders have been delayed, what should be the rule of conduct to be followed by the Chapter in sending the candidate elsewhere? During the same meeting, Don Bosco derived a rule:

> If any cleric who has a vocation (or causes some doubt as to the same) is guilty of manifest but not grievous defects to the extent that they make it necessary to delay his ordination, notice thereof should be sent to the director of the house to which he is to be transferred, advising him to keep an eye on him. But before giving the cleric another assignment to the new house, he should be told quite frankly, "Go, but remember that your small external defects have been pointed out to your new director. If he should admonish you, do not be upset because we are the ones who informed him about you." This is our practice when someone's vocation is uncertain, but he has enough talent and there is nothing to say against him from the moral standpoint. Such clerics must also be assured that in advising his new director about him, the Chapter only did its duty and acted for his own good.

Naturally, Don Bosco did not believe that the above-mentioned procedures should be made on the eve of ordination. "I earnestly recommend that when any cleric is to receive Holy Orders," he said on September 18th, "that he be carefully observed and examined prior to receiving the order of subdiaconate, so that a conscientious decision may be made. Ask him if he studied, how is his conduct and if he wasted any year doing nothing. Demand both moral stability and theological knowledge from him, and make sure he has adequate marks in the theological tracts on which he was examined. There should be no laziness as far as studies, etc.

Some of Don Bosco's directives concerned assigned work in a general or specific sense. The wise remark he made on August 25th could be applied to all the confreres in general: "Remember that sometime a Salesian Confrere who seems unfit for a job can be successful in it, if helped by the grace of God and by the help provided by the Superiors of the house."

He made another less specific, but widely comprehensive remark on

September 18th: "Let there be concern before anything else for the health of a cleric's soul, over and above the way his job is carried out and above our interests."

We also have some detailed instructions regarding various assigned jobs. On July 13th, he spoke about the urgent necessity that the directors of individual houses be changed every six years. He was not unaware of the disadvantages of this decision, but wanted this principle to be retained in practice despite the exceptions that at times would have to be made.

On September 10th, he very earnestly stressed the director's obligation of hearing the monthly manifestations. "We must put pressure on the directors so that they do not forget to have people make their manifestation every month," he said, "and first we must decide what they have to say, so that this practice may prove beneficial. Some of them are neglecting this duty. When reproached for such negligence, certain directors have said, '"I do not know what to say!' They should ask if people make their meditations, if they are studying, if they assist the boys; they should inquire what difficulties they find in their individual assignments. Are not these questions good enough to enable a director to dialogue with his confrere? Directors with some sense in their heads are infinitely grateful for the fact that this manifestation was ever instituted. Yet, this is done only by dint of great pressure on the part of some superiors, while others neglect it all together. This is the key to the proper running of the house and of the Congregation itself."

On October 2nd, he urged both the Provincials and the catechists to visit the houses frequently; but such visits should not have any ceremonial character, but should be undertaken in order to do what the rules prescribed.

On September 24th, he endeavored to list several tasks peculiar to the Economer General: "The Economer must read what the Rules prescribe for him, and should abide by them. He is not to act as assistant supervisor over any construction work, but must supervise instead those in charge of this. He will consult with the individual houses about whatever work needs to be done, but he is not to go ahead with any such work himself. He shall not authorize any construction or modifications, unless they have been previously approved by the Chapter following a pre-established and approved plan. He shall then see that the work is accurately carried out along the lines of the plan submitted."

On November 16th, the Chapter concerned itself with the duties of the Prefect of Studies, an office assigned since November 7th, to Father

Francis Cerruti who had succeeded Father Celestine Durando, who had become Prefect. At that time, the various assignments of the confreres in all the houses were communicated by letters signed by the member in charge of that particular assigned task. It seemed, instead, that it was most important that all the obediences should come from a supreme central authority when it was a question of being transferred but the distribution of various assignments was to be done by the directors of the houses. Don Bosco said, "So far, we have followed a fatherly system; but from now on, we should go by the legal system, if we are to maintain order within the Congregation." Nevertheless, all proposals of innovation were postponed until the next General Chapter.

We do not have anything further to add to the duties of Father Michael Rua in his office as vicar. Before his appointment, Don Bosco had informed the Chapter on June 22nd, "Father Michael Rua will have to free himself of all other duties and to be solely at the disposal of Don Bosco because in his present condition, Don Bosco is no longer able to go on. If Don Bosco can rely entirely on Father Michael Rua and be free of all other worries, he will be able to help with his own experience, and can still go on for a while. We need someone to solicit charity by means of letters and visits not only here in Turin, but also in Genoa, Milan and Rome. Until now, Don Bosco saw to all this, but now he is no longer able and he needs someone else to do it in his name." These words were, so to speak, the prelude to the installation of Father Michael Rua as vicar, which became effective five and a half months later.

People who wished to see a Salesian house opened in their territory very often dangled the prospect of legacies by wealthy people who had no direct heirs in order to encourage the acceptance of their requests before them. On September 10th, Don Bosco warned the Salesians about this, remarking, "We should not rely on certain vague hopes provided by legacies. People change their minds very readily. What complications such legacies would bring upon us, were we later on be obliged to abandon that work. It would create ill will, litigations and losses of various kinds. Anyone who wishes to bequeath something to us should retain his property, and when he dies, he should leave everything well disposed for. When municipalities are involved, the laws favor them."

During the afternoon session of that same day, Father Anthony Sala submitted a project for the construction of a Salesian tomb in the Turin cemetery. The Chapter granted him full authority to proceed. The subject of this cemetery plot for the Salesians inspired Don Bosco to think about

the deceased Salesians. "There is one thing we have to consider," he said. "We should collect the biographies of the deceased Salesians and see what still has to be done to complete them before we turn them over to someone who will try to add to them whatever is missing. Then they will be printed and read out during the retreat. We must appoint someone for this task and he would see to it that this task is carried out in a more or less literary fashion, yet, a serious one. Copies of these biographies should be sent out to the houses of Italy and America. For the time being, we should send copies to France, but in due course, they will be translated into foreign languages - Spanish, French, English, etc. We should give this assignment to someone who has time to dedicate himself to it. I have looked through some of the little books containing biographies of our younger confreres, and read some of those dealing with their ordinary virtues, and found some highly edifying things. I do not expect that these biographies be perfect, and I'll be satisfied to see a routine job done, at least for the time being. We need not appoint great doctors for this task, but only someone capable of assembling whatever news is available, and then write the biographies the best way he can. As we go on, the work can be perfected. For now we should appoint such research workers, and the work should begin now, be it well done or not."

On September 16th, Father Michael Rua read out a circular letter written by Casimir Mazzo, who was about to publish an Italian yearbook, which was to contain the list, city by city, of all charitable institutions, with a brief description of each of the Salesian houses. He was charging twenty lire for every house. "This is just a speculation to make money," someone said. "Religious Orders do not advertise that way," someone else objected.

Father Michael Rua was in favor of the usefulness of such publicity. Don Bosco let them all talk, and then said, "I suggest that we write saying we are always ready to participate in anything that fosters the welfare of society, but that we are unable to do all we would like to, since we live on charity. Certainly, it is indispensable that each of our houses should procure a copy of this publication. And so, tell him that, for the time being, we will do two things: (1) we shall buy a few copies of this work; and (2) we shall try to advertise through our own bookstore, provided that it does not contain anything against the Catholic Church. We should hold as a principle that it is to our advantage to go along with such publications that refer to our houses, provided that they are not against our institution. But we must be careful, for at times such books contain pages conflicting with

the spirit of Catholicism. They are so cunning in the way they hide their poison! We should make sure that we do not cooperate in such things."

There is also a very interesting reflection made by Don Bosco concerning the Salesian *Bulletin*. He reported it to the Chapter the afternoon of September 17th. "The *Bulletin* is not to be a local pamphlet for every different locality - France, Spain, Italy, etc. - but should instead be the general medium of communication used by all these areas; namely, to advertise not only a particular area of the Salesian Congregation, but the whole of the Congregation. Information should be gathered so that all different regions may find some interest in them, but all the various foreign language editions should be identical. To this end, all the different foreign language issues should be published in the Mother House, so that all of them may be inspired by the same spirit. This is a powerful weapon and it should not be yanked out of the hand of the Rector Major."

These words considering the freedom, which Don Bosco never curtailed to voice personal opinions, met with opposition, of which Father Michael Rua was the interpreter. He objected that the purpose of the *Bulletin* was to raise money, and that if people living outside Italy were to be encouraged to give alms, the *Bulletin* had necessarily to deal with local interests. He had written to both France and America on this subject, and had received word in reply that the Salesians there would follow Don Bosco's thinking, doing everything possible to accomplish this. But certain matters, which might be well indicated for the Italian *Bulletin,* might only prove detrimental to its Spanish edition. Furthermore, if the Salesians in America wanted some of their speeches or accounts of their festivities printed in Turin, the reports would first have to be sent to Europe, be printed there, and then sent back to America. This would mean that American cooperators would read matters of immediate interest to them only four months after these things had taken place. Certain announcements addressed to cooperators in this area could not possibly reach them in time, or else one would have to think of these things four months in advance.

Someone suggested that the *Bulletin* occasionally be cut by several pages to make room for a supplement that might deal solely with local matters. Father Michael Rua suggested that the *Bulletin* should always have two parts: one dealing with general interests and related to the Salesian Congregation as a whole and the other dealing with local matters of interest for particular countries, thus imitating what the newspapers do by adding a column of other news.

Don Bosco rejected all these proposals, and repeated, "I am determined to hold on to my opinion: only one *Bulletin*! The reason why I should keep in my hands this most powerful tool in its widest extension is that I am fully aware that the *Bulletin* is for my goals and that, at times, it might deviate from the purpose I have assigned to it. What is there in the *Bulletin* that pleases our cooperators? The history of the Oratory and the letters of the Missionaries. This is the stuff the *Bulletin* should be made of. We can include a small concise column with other news concerning meetings or celebrations in other countries, or in Italy itself. If there is anything exceptional, everyone, including foreigners, will be glad to read about it. If there is any need of urgent solicitation, the Salesians are in contact with Catholic journalists, who publish our invitations or any other matters of urgency in their own papers. If this is not convenient to them, let them send out circular letters. That is the way I see it. Remember that the *Bulletin* is the main support of the Salesian Congregation and of all that which concerns us, of vocations and of our schools."

The saint always looked upon the *Bulletin* as the most excellent tool to advertise the Salesians and their work. He had foreseen that, in time, a good publication would be the most effective pulpit. A saintly man and a lawyer, Father Bartolo Longo, who created the Pompei Institution, called on Don Bosco. We do not know whether it was in 1884 or 1885.

"Tell me your secret, Don Bosco. What did you do to conquer the world?"

"Dear sir, I will tell you my secret. I send the Salesian *Bulletin* to anyone and everyone, whether they want to receive it or not."

Father Bartolo adopted the idea and made it his own. He published a bimonthly periodical entitled *The Rosary* and *Our Lady of Pompei,* without having a clear vision of the power already wielded by the press. When he went back to Valle di Pompei, he improved his printing shop, acquired more machinery and had more copies of his publication printed. From four thousand published in 1884, he increased the circulation to seventy-two thousand within ten years. That is why Don Bosco is considered down there as the man who "set the pace for the second phase of the periodical and the printing shop of Pompei."[9]

Some fifteen letters, which we have kept and have not been published up to this time because they had no bearing on what we have related so far or because they would have been out of place if introduced previous-

[9] *The Rosary and Our Lady of Pompeii,* 51st year, pamphlet No. 5 (September October, 1934).

ly, are interwoven here at the end of this chapter, with some biographical data included as a further clarification for them.

MISSIONS AND GOVERNMENTS

In Chapters XI and XII, we read that the governments of Argentina and Uruguay concentrated their attacks on religious Congregations when they issued any legislation against the Church. As soon as Don Bosco caught the first rumble of a stormy weather from afar, he tried to ward off the consequences by sending instructions to the two South American Provincials as to how they should react. Among other things, as the moment of danger approached, they were to call on the Italian diplomatic representatives in both capitals. But in those days, it was not easy, in view of the existing relations between Church and State in Italy for a man of the cloth to find support among men who were frequently sectarian and generally outspokenly liberal in thought. The saint, therefore, studied the way to obtain some beneficial statement from the Italian Government.

Pretending to seek a subsidy, Don Bosco drew up a report on the schools he had opened in America, and sent it to the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. We already know how a Piedmontese Jew, James Malvano, who was the secretary general to that state department, had always been willing and ready to help the servant of God, if he could. So Don Bosco addressed the letter to him, and asked him to see to it that the letter reached his superior, the Honorable Mancini:

Turin, February 9, 1885

Dearest Commendatore:

I know how you love and protect our schools in South America, and that you are aware of how they are growing.

I will do no more than recommend everything to your charity, and will pray fervently to the Lord of Heaven and Earth that He may keep you in good health for the benefit of civil society, and especially for the benefit of many of our fellow countryman living in foreign countries, far away.

With deepest gratitude I am honored to be,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

On February 10th, Malvano replied, acknowledging receipt of the letter and assuring Don Bosco that he would not neglect to plead his cause with His Excellency. The minister wrote Don Bosco the following letter very promptly:

Reverend Sir:

I would be very happy if I could only respond, as I would like to, to the application Your Reverence addressed to this department, in the hope of obtaining a subsidy for the schools you have founded abroad. Truly, one could never give encouragement enough to the eminently civil mission of education in our colonies. But the expenses the department has to bear for this same purpose are such that every year, they almost completely absorb the funds allotted to us by Parliament. And once the regular subsidies are paid, what little remains is devoured almost entirely by the ever necessary costs entailed in readapting buildings, providing for supplies, educational equipment and so on.

At any rate, I am most anxious to give Your Reverence some small token of the interest this department takes in the excellent progress made by the various schools you have founded (and I would very much appreciate a summary of news regarding each of them). So without any hesitation, I am putting at your disposal the sum of 500 lire that Your Reverence may collect at the treasury department of this office, upon presentation of the present letter, and issuance of regular receipt.

With very kind personal regards,
Mancini

This letter from the minister was all Don Bosco had wanted; the sum of money meant very little. But even this helped to show abroad how his own government genuinely appreciated the good work of the Salesians in America. If this had been made known wherever danger threatened, it could not but be to the advantage of the beleaguered Salesians, as it indeed was.[10]

[10] See this volume (pp. 594-5).

THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS

As our readers are aware,[11] Don Bosco was not anxious to press the matter of approval of the Rules for the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Such an approval would have removed the nuns from the jurisdiction of the saint, whereas he felt that it was necessary that he still give them his special attention so that their congregation might be consolidated. We can say even more: Don Bosco would have preferred to retain the sisters always, or at least as long as possible, under the control of the Salesian Rector Major. There already existed an outstanding example of such a control within the Church; namely, in the case of the Sisters of Charity, who remained permanently under the ordinary jurisdiction of the superior of the Lazarist Fathers. Father Paul Stella, a priest of St. Vincent's who was the assistant of the General of the Congregation for Italy, dealt with this topic in a little pamphlet he had written. Don Bosco asked him for a copy, in the hope that he might obtain from the booklet some enlightenment for his own problem.

Turin, June 13, 1885

Most Reverend Father:

I had hoped for the honor of a visit from Your Reverence here at our school, but now I think this is unlikely; hence, I am writing to you for this humble request.

In our Congregation, we also have the sisters known as Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and I would like them to be more or less subject to the Salesian Superior, as the Sisters of Charity are subject to the superior of the Lazarist Fathers. Your Reverence would be doing me a very important service if you could lend me a copy of the pamphlet that I am told you have printed on this subject.[12]

Please forgive the handwriting of someone who is half-blind. May God grant that the Congregation you direct so honorably prospers more and more, and in your great charity, please pray for this poor mortal, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

[11] See Vol. XV (p. 352).

[12] Despite our careful research, we could not find a copy of this pamphlet.

In June of 1885, the reprint of the Rules drawn up by Don Bosco in 1876 for the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians was completed, which explains why he was so concerned about the question of their dependence. The new edition of the Rules contained some striking amendments, though these were still based on the previous Rules. Father John Bonetti had prepared them with the assistance of Bishop John Cagliero and the advice of the Superior Chapter. Before it was printed, Cardinal Alimonda checked the manuscript. He kept it for a long time, but then returned it without adding or eliminating a single syllable. Don Bosco said that when he had drawn them up originally, he had not had the chance to study them thoroughly, so he chose to have them read to him from the beginning to end and added several things. He must have said this so as to show that he was in no way mistrustful of what Father John Bonetti had done. Finally, so that nothing might be neglected, he gave orders that they were to be read out to the entire Chapter, so that everyone might make his observations. Thus from various sources, a number of dispositions were added, tending to facilitate more and more the purpose for which the Congregation was founded; namely, the sanctification of the sisters themselves and the salvation of souls. When the printing was completed, Bishop John Cagliero and Father James Costamagna were both asked to look over the Rules carefully, take notes and pass on their reflections on whatever they advised for the third edition. The old original edition copies were collected during the retreat and the new edition copies distributed.[13]

COUNT EUGENE DE MAISTRE.

We have three letters written to Count De Maistre by Don Bosco in 1885. Some relatives of the count were sick, among them his mother, Charlotte du Plan de Sieyes. The venerable lady was to die a few months later. On his first letter, the saint consoled De Maistre and thanked him for a generous donation.

Turin, March 1, 1885

Dearest Count E. de Maistre:

Your agent, Monsieur Vergan from Borgo, gave me

[13] Letters from Father Lazzero to Bishop Cagliero, Turin, April 10th, and June 9th and 27th, 1885.

news about your family that I had been hoping to get for some time, but the news was not as good as I would have wished.

We have redoubled our daily prayers before the altar of Mary Help of Christians. We shall also say special prayers for those of your family whom God has visited with suffering.

Your agent also gave me the generous and charitable donation of two thousand francs. Such generosity is truly extraordinary, so we shall say very extraordinary prayers to our Lord, from whom we also hope to receive special graces, since He says, *"Date et debitur vobis* [Give and it shall be given you]."

Yes, dear Count Eugene, the Blessed Virgin Mary, who blessed and protected your family on so many occasions and in so many ways, will surely continue to be the mighty and merciful help of Christians for you and yours.

Please do me the great additional charity of praying for me and my family, while I am honored and happy to remain with profound gratitude,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. At this very moment, I have received a visit from Marchioness Fassati and Baroness Ricci, who are both well. They brought me further news on your family and they agreed to deliver this letter personally. As you will perhaps know, my health has not been too good this year; now it has improved somewhat, and I have already been out for two short walks. I am enclosing a few little medals of Mary Help of Christians that I have blessed and placed on the altar of our compassionate Mother, while I said Mass especially for those in your family who are sick.

The visit to which he refers had occurred just as Don Bosco was returning to the Oratory from his customary afternoon walk. He saw a princely coach outside the door, and Marchioness and Baroness Ricci got out of it. These two noble ladies talked at length with Don Bosco, and gave him a substantial sum in alms for the novitiate house.

Marchioness Fassati had been near death in 1884. The physicians had expected her to die soon, and so they had forbidden anyone other than her immediate family to enter her room. But she had insistently asked that

Don Bosco be called to see her. After such reiterated requests, which at first he had thought best to ignore since he was aware of the doctor's prohibition, at last he did go to see her, giving her the blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

The Marchioness then told him, "I am willing to do anything that Mary Help of Christians may want from me for her greater glory." By this, she meant that she would help the Oratory. Now, quite contrary to every expectation, she became convalescent from that same moment on, and recovered completely in a very short time, and she scrupulously fulfilled what she had promised. Don Bosco wrote her a charming little note to accompany a gift of fruit picked in the Oratory orchard.

Turin, November 24, 1885

Dear Marchioness:

These are fruits that grew in the shadow and under the protection of Mary Help of Christians. May your health and that of your family prosper likewise. So be it.

May Mary guide us to Heaven.

Pray for this poor fellow, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Upon returning home from France where he used to spend part of the summer, the count had called at the Oratory in the hope of seeing Don Bosco before going on to Borgo Cornalese, but the saint had been at Mathi for about a month. As soon as he heard of the count's visit, he wrote to him very courteously.

Mathi, August 12, 1885

Dearest Count Eugene:

I was very happy to hear that you came to Turin and honored us with a long awaited visit. I hope that I shall be able to come and call on you at your castle at Borgo to pay you my respects, but in the meantime, I want special prayers to be said for you and your whole family.

May the Blessed Virgin take all of you under her special pro-

tection, help you follow her virtuous example here on earth, and then one day surround her in the glory of Paradise.

I find it a bit difficult to write, but you must be patient as you read. Please, pray for me and the whole growing Salesian family together with which I am highly honored to be in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most humble and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The De Maistre family kept a priest on their premises at their own expense who was also a teacher for the benefit of the resident families constituting the little hamlet of Villastellone, Borgo Cornalese. He also acted as chaplain for the castle whenever its master was in residence. Formerly, Father Chiatellino had been there, recommended by Don Bosco[14], but when he left, another had to be found to take his place. The count again asked the servant of God to help him, and he received the following reply:

Turin, October 22, 1885

Dearest Count Eugene:

I shall be very happy to attend to the matter of finding a schoolteacher for Borgo. It will not be too easy to find him, but I will do all I can, together with our priests, and will write and let you know the outcome.

I am writing this in case that we are somewhat delayed in our research.

Dearest Count Eugene, I am praying for you and your family every day.

God bless you all, and grant you good health and holiness always on the road to Heaven. Amen.

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

SYMPATHY LETTERS

Mr. and Mrs. Ceriana from Turin, both benefactors of the Oratory and already mentioned several times in previous volumes, were mourn-

[14] See Lemoyne, *Biographical Memoirs*. Vol. IV (p. 582).

ing the loss of another child.[15] Don Bosco wrote words of Christian comfort to them.

Turin, May 10, 1885

Dear Giuseppe and Teresa Ceriana-Racca:

I deeply sympathize with you over the tragic loss of your son Marcellino, who was summoned by God to join Him at the dawn of his life. Let us bow down to His divine decrees.

I pray that the good Lord may grant you other consolations, other heirs of your virtues in the future.

May Mary Help of Christians keep you both in good health, protect you, and provide happier days for you from Her Divine Son.

With the deepest respect I am honored to be,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Professor Michele Messina from Naples, who was a pious Salesian cooperator, had his troubles. He made them known to Don Bosco in 1883, and received from him a holy picture of Mary Help of Christians with this little note written on its back:

Turin, November 17, 1883

Beloved in the Lord:

May God bless you and may Mary console you in the troubles of your life. May she help you to overcome the dangers of this wretched exile, and lead you and your sister to enjoy one day that true happiness that the world can never deny, nor steal from us. So be it.

Pray for this poor mortal,
Rev. John Bosco

The same troubles still weighed upon him two years later, when he sent Don Bosco a souvenir from the Holy Land. It was one of those pic-

[15] See this volume (p. 390 - of the original).

tures made up of flowers gathered on the sites of the Passion of our Lord, then dried and pasted on small cards so as to represent various subjects. The servant of God took this as a theme in comforting the donor.

Turin, February 24, 1885

Beloved in Our Lord:

I was most grateful for the delightful wreath from Gethsemane that you so kindly sent me, and that I shall keep as a souvenir of you. May this be in anticipation of that same crown that in His mercy, Our Lord will, I hope, give us one day in Paradise!

I see from your letter that you are not without troubles. Now do this - come here with me. We shall live like brothers; we shall not want for either bread or work, and our Lord will get our salary ready. Do you like the idea? God bless us and help us to suffer with Him along the way to Heaven. I remain wholeheartedly in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

PRAYERS

Just as people called upon Don Bosco personally to ask for his blessing, people also wrote to him from everywhere, even from the most faraway countries, every week, by the hundreds, asking for the charity of his prayers and the prayers of his boys. As the case or circumstance called for, he either replied himself or had someone else do so. The three answers we report here give a very inadequate sample of such a correspondence, which would be very abundant, if only we could but trace it. Nevertheless, even these few, together with those which have already been published, have the quality of precious relics salvaged from being lost.

During the month of February, Mrs. Rosina Ferrerati, a lady from Turin, asked for a triduum of prayers for the recovery of one of her sons, who was gravely ill and had already received the last Sacraments. Just as the family was anxiously waiting for the fatal moment, a picture of Mary Help of Christians arrived for the patient with these few lines on it written and signed by Don Bosco himself: "May God bless you and may the Blessed Virgin herself convey a special blessing to you. I shall gladly pray

for you during my Holy Mass."

The young man described the effect of this blessing to us:[16] "Since my condition continued to be serious, other doctors were called in for consultation. While my mother was questioning them about my illness, the picture of Mary Help of Christians that Don Bosco was so kind to send me arrived. When I opened the envelope and read the beautiful words that Don Bosco had written, I felt something like an interior shock, and an instantaneous joy made me forget my sufferings. Meanwhile, the doctors were telling my mother they could not say anything, since it was not possible for them to give me a thorough check-up at that time (which in view of my condition, really would have been impossible) unless I sat up in bed. 'How should I sit up?' I asked. 'Like this perhaps?' And quite suddenly, I sat up in bed without any assistance from anybody, while the doctors gaped at one another, amazed, crying out that this was truly a miracle, and that they could not explain how I had been able to do such a thing. I, too, clearly recall how I myself could not understand how I had done it."

The recovery of the young man was not immediate, but his condition did improve steadily so that he regained his former perfect health. His mother instantly rushed to tell Don Bosco about his grace, adding that her neighbors had also received extraordinary graces through Mary Help of Christians. A few minutes later, Father Festa assured Father John Baptist Lemoyne that the saint appeared deeply moved as he talked of these things with those who were with him at that time, and said: "It is really obvious that our Lady is always our good mother. We see this with our own eyes every day, and even several times a day."

Carolina Gori, a Salesian cooperator from Massa Carrara, asked him to say a Mass so that a temporal grace might be obtained for a family from Rome, where she herself was residing at that time. The saint answered with the following:

Turin, August 5, 1885

Dearest Mrs. Carolina Gori:

I shall gladly pray for the successful outcome of this pious undertaking. May God grant that it be successful for the benefit of the family you recommend. I shall gladly say a holy Mass and our orphans will pray with me and offer up their Communions

[16] Report by the attorney Mario Ferrerati (Turin, January 21, 1886).

for this same intention.

May God bless us and grant us what is good for our souls.

I rely on the charity of your prayers and remain,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The grace was not granted, but, as the lady wrote to the Salesian *Bulletin* on April 2, 1891, an extraordinary confidence in the prayers of Don Bosco took hold of that same family. After his death, when they were in dire straits, they appealed to Mary Help of Christians through the intercession of the servant of God, and were almost miraculously relieved of their troubles. This much is confirmed by a report by Father Cagnoli, the pastor of the Sacred Heart Church.

Mrs. Maggi Fannio from Padua went so far as to tell Don Bosco that he was to order Mary Help of Christians to immediately grant her a long expected grace, and she received the following reply:

Turin, September 15, 1885

Dear Lady:

I would like to order our Lady to grant you the grace you desire, but the most I can do is to humbly pray to her.

In this same spirit, together with my orphans, I will implore our heavenly Mother to listen to you, and you will surely be gratified in anything you may ask that is not detrimental to the eternal welfare of your soul.

I am half-blind and write with difficulty, and so I must ask you to forgive my awful handwriting.

May God bless you, kind lady, and please come to my aid in your charity, for God will reward you generously.

Please pray also for this poor fellow who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The same lady sent an adequate donation to Turin shortly after this, insisting that he obtain the long awaited grace for her. She received acknowledgment of her donation on behalf of Don Bosco who was away.

When he was told about it, he wished to write to her a personal letter.

October 2, 1885

Dear Lady:

I was absent from Turin, but I believe you were informed that I had received your generous, charitable donation of 500 francs.

Again my most heartfelt thanks, and I assure you that we shall continue in our humble prayers, both in community and individually, while I for my part will never forget to have a special memento for your pious intentions every morning during my holy Mass.

I am fully confident that you will receive the grace you implore from our Lord, but only if what we are asking is not detrimental to the welfare of our souls. Do you agree with this?

I shall gladly say a holy Mass for the intentions to which you refer in your letter.

May God bless you, dear lady, and with you all your relatives and friends. May Mary guide them all along the road to Heaven.

Please accept our sincere thanks and our daily prayers for you. In turn, please pray for this poor, tottering priest who will always be in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco
Oratory of San Benigno, Canavese

The time had now sadly come when he could no longer find enough strength to personally answer every request for prayers. In 1885, he used the expedient of formulating a few answers for various circumstances; he had a fair number of them lithographed and then sent them to people asking prayers. The people who received them saw that the writing was his, and whether they realized or not that they had received a lithographic reproduction of it, they all kept the letters as jealously as if they were authentic autographs. One such circular letter was worded as follows:

1885

Dear Sir:

In reply to your kind letter, I am glad to assure you that my

dear orphans and I shall most happily pray for you, and that for your intentions, we shall begin a novena of prayers and Communions on .....Please join us in our pious practices: (1) by saying *3 Paters, Aves* and *Glorias* and a *Salve Regina* every day with the ejaculatory prayers *Cor Jesu sacratissimum, miserere nobis, Maria Auxilium Christianorum,* and *Ora pro nobis;* (2) by receiving holy Communion, which is the source of every grace; and (3) by performing some charitable deed.

I recommend our poor orphans to your generous charity, and pray to our Lord who said, "Give and it shall be given to you," that He reward generously for all that you may do on their behalf, since they are sorely in need.

We are fully confident that our prayers will be answered in a measure most beneficial to the true welfare of your soul.

May God bless you, and may the Blessed Virgin comfort us all with her maternal protection, while I remain with great esteem,

Your most humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

GRATITUDE

There is a substantial number of thank-you letters in Don Bosco's correspondence, and here are a few of them:

He wrote a thank-you note to Clara Giuganino, a cooperator from Villastellone, for a donation she had sent him. The note reads as follows:

Turin, May 18, 1885

Dear Mrs. Clara:

May God bless you and reward you for your charity! By coming to our assistance, you are helping to save many poor, homeless children. Take heart and continue in the service of the Lord. I pray for your business, your family and your own soul every day.

Please pray for me, too, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

As July 26th approached, he wrote to Anna Fava, a kind cooperator,

and conveyed to her his good wishes for her name day and thanked her for her constant charity:

Paper Mill of St. Francis
Mathi, July 22, 1885
St. Anne, pray for us.

Dear Mrs. Fava:

May God bless you today and always, and may the Blessed Virgin reward you generously for your charity to our orphans and us. May St. Anne obtain from Jesus for you and Ms. Mary peace of mind, a serene conscience and perseverance along the road to Paradise.

I hope to be able to pay my respects to you personally soon.

Please pray for me, who will say a Mass for you on Sunday.

I am in Jesus Christ,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

Every now and then, Mr. Giulio Felisi would send Don Bosco small donations, whenever he recommended his special intentions to him, from San Pietro di Lavagno in the area of Verona. His family still treasures two thank-you notes written to him by the saint in 1885. In the first note, Don Bosco wrote: "I have received the donation you sent for our missionaries. May God generously reward your charity. We are all praying for your pious intentions." In the second note, he wrote: "I received with immense gratitude the money that you in your charity sent us in payment for the lottery tickets on behalf of the pious undertaking in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome. May God reward you as you deserve, while for my part I shall not fail to pray every day for your good health, and for all people and business matters you are dealing with."

Two letters that overflowed with gratitude were addressed to the very well deserving engineer Levrot from Nice Maritime. On July 19th, Don Bosco wrote these few lines on the back of a picture of Mary Help of Christians: "O Mary, convey personally a special blessing to thy son Vincent Levrot and his family, and guide them all surely to Heaven."

In the first letter, he wrote to thank him and another sick gentleman for the donations he had recently received from them:

Turin, November 21, 1885

Dearest Chevalier:

I hope that by now Father Michael Rua has already conveyed my humble thanks to you, dear Monsieur Levrot, and the kind gentleman, Monsieur Montbrun.

My eyesight and my strength have sorely waned and are barely of service to me. Nevertheless, this kind gentleman's charity calls for special words of thanks and special prayers to God for his health.[17]

To this end, I have arranged for a Mass to be said every day until Christmas at the altar of Mary Help of Christians, while our boys will say prayers and receive holy Communion.

All these petitions before the throne of Mary will not be in vain, and I hope to obtain abundant spiritual and temporal favors for our beloved patient.

A thousand thanks to you also, dear Chevalier, for your special interest in the predicament of our orphans. I pray that God keep you and your family in good health and in His Holy Grace, and I am happy to remain in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

The other letter somewhat anticipates his good wishes for Christmas and the New Year. His affection for the engineer is evidenced also by the efforts he made to write to him, despite his health:

Turin, December 13, 1885

Dearest Chevalier:

I shall not be happy until I have written a few words to you. We are praying every day for you and your family, but I mean to say special prayers and offer up Communions during this novena at the close of this year and at the beginning of the next that Our Lord may keep all of you in good health and along the road to

[17] From a letter written to Levrot by Don Bosco, we see that this distinguished benefactor died on August 1, 1886.

Heaven, and that he may abundantly reward you for the great charity you have extended in the past and still continue to extend in the present to the poor Salesians.

Your most affectionate and grateful servant,

Rev. John Bosco

IN FRENCH

We only have copies of a few French letters, written by Don Bosco. Undoubtedly, almost all of them have been edited, but the wording and style are certainly Don Bosco's. Three of them are addressed to a well-known cooperator from Lyons, Madame Quisard. In the first, he sends his good wishes for the New Year, and invites her to Turin for the feast of St. Francis of Sales. The second letter expresses pious feelings regarding the authorization to keep the Sacred Species in her house chapel, a concession Don Bosco had himself obtained for her. In the third, he asks for information on his Salesians; namely, her son Antoine. We can see from these three letters, which become shorter and shorter in length, how Don Bosco was gradually getting weaker.

We have frequently mentioned the names of the Lallemand ladies, mother and daughter, in these last few volumes, as two souls deeply devoted to Don Bosco. Early on in 1885 Don Bosco wrote to express his profound gratitude to them. About two weeks before, his good friend Count Boulanger di Villanueve had been entrusted humorously with an errand. Don Bosco had urged him to carry it out with a highly original reasoning. Father Varaja, the director of the house of Saint-Cyr, needed some money to pay the masons. Don Bosco gave the count all the necessary faculties, and instructed him to pay all the debts the Salesians had at Saint-Cyr.

"Count, do you accept this honorable assignment?" he had asked. "I want to assess your valor and courage; not in the military, but in the financial sense."

A sixth letter, addressed we know not to whom, was a thank-you note for a donation and invited the donor to Turin.

We should also recall a letter that, although Don Bosco had not written it, had perhaps been directly inspired by him and bore his signature. Father Fociere-Mace, rector of Lehon in the province of Cote-du-Note, had sent him his handbook on the Via Crucis as a gift, asking to pray that he might succeed in completing the construction of a church. In thanking

him for the gift, the saint informed him that a novena to Mary Help of Christians would begin at the Oratory on January 14th for his intentions.

All of Don Bosco's correspondence shows confidence in the value of prayer; and this is an indication of how much he treasured it and used it.

As the Salesians were eating on August 30, 1885, the conversation veered towards the saint's own *History of Italy* and the success it enjoyed, despite the conflicting opinions expressed when it had first been published. At that time, men, sects and political parties were all disagreeing among themselves, yet they had allied forces toward one single effort: to wage war against the Church and its institutions. At a certain point, Don Bosco made a remark that cast light on the great secret that enabled him to do all the good that he had done, moving unscathed amid the warring factors. He uttered these memorable words: "I never let the trends of the day influence me. I worked out a plan of action that was approved on general lines from the beginning of my apostolate. I pursued it in stormy periods and persevered in it even when I was in danger of being overthrown. I never changed the system, and it was this that yielded and that still yields the good fruit that we see with the protection of the Virgin." This line of conduct did not protect him from harassment and persecution, but it did save him from being overrun. As a staunch champion of Jesus Christ, he fought for God throughout his whole life, without concerning himself with worldly matters. For having thought so rightfully, he deserved to attain a victor's crown, not only in the life to come, but also in this life.[18]

ERRATA-CORRIGE

In Volume XVI:
On page 13 in both title and in text on page 15 read *Father Provera* instead of *Father Alasonatti.*
On page 34, line 8, read 25 instead of 26.
On page 276, line 16 read *Wednesday* in place of *Tuesday.*
On page 310, line 30, read *known* instead of *unknown.*
On page 397, line 17, read *November* instead of *December.*
(Some of these errors were detected and reference made thereto in form of inquiry. Naturally, the page numbers here do not correspond to those of translated text, all of which has already been delivered to you by now.) (Translator's Note)

[18] See II Timothy 2:3-5.

Appendix of Documents

1

DON BOSCO TO MADAME QUISARD

A. Turin, January 8, 1884

Charitable Madame:

Father De Barruel is away and he is dealing with our business; that is why I cannot send you the things you asked for.

I can only assure you of all my gratitude for the kindness with which you and Monsieur Quisard so often treat us.

May God bless you and your whole family with you. May the Blessed Virgin always be your guide and the protectress of my little friend, my dear Antoine.

My most respectful regards to all the people who speak of me to you. Please pray for this poor priest, who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

B. Turin, February 16, 1884

Madame Quisard:

I understand your feelings thoroughly, Madame, for they are the same as mine: A Salesian house for the poor orphans of the city of Lyons. But we still have to pray a little. For my part, I will do everything possible. We have to pave the way with the ecclesiastic authorities very carefully. My health is a little better, but I am still confined to my room.

Madame, I shall not fail to pray for your intentions every day during Holy Mass.

May God bless you, your kind husband, your family and all your undertakings, and may Mary Help of Christians, guide your business to your complete satisfaction.

May God keep us all in His Holy Grace. So be it.

Your very grateful and humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, February 28, 1884

Dear and Charitable Madame Quisard:

Your very kind letter and your generous donation oblige us to intensify our prayers and pious devotions for your intentions.

I thank you with all my heart, and we shall continue to pray unceasingly to the Blessed Virgin so that she may bless, protect and guide you and your family, keeping you all and your husband in particular in good health, and always on the road to Heaven.

My health has improved a little recently and the doctors tell me that Saturday I may set out for Nice, as I intend to do. But you can keep on addressing all the correspondence here to Turin.

With deepest gratitude and assuring you that we shall continue our humble prayers, I shall remain always in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

2

CARDINAL LUDOVIC CAVEROT

Cardinal Ludovic Marie Joseph Eusebius Caverot, the successor of St. Potinus and St. Irenaeus in the Primatial Metropolitan Church of Lyons, was born in Joinville, a little town in the diocese of Langres, on May 28, 1806. He studied in the colleges of Troyes and Dole, completing his studies at Saint-Acheux, in the diocese of Amiens. He went to Paris, received a degree in law, and was employed for a time at the War Department. He was ordained a priest in 1831 and followed Cardinal Louis de Rohan Chabot to Besancon. In 1832, he became vicar of the Metropolitan Church. Three years later, he became pastor archpriest in that same church. Ever since he entered the service of the Church, his whole life was consecrated to the glory of God and the welfare of souls. As a priest, he had dedicated his time to his ecclesiastic ministry, study,

prayer, the pulpit and works of charity, and he continued to do the same when he became bishop and later cardinal. One of the glories of the Church in France, His Eminence Cardinal Mathieu, soon recognized the virtues that Father Caverot concealed under his humble exterior, and promoted him canon in 1841, then appointed him as his vicar general in 1846. His conduct when he was holding this office opened up before him the way to the episcopate.

On April 20, 1849 His Holiness Pius IX, after pronouncing the allocution *Quibus quantisque malorum procellis* against the Roman Republic, at the Consistory in Gaeta preconized a few bishops, among them Canon Caverot, to whom he entrusted the church of St. Didie. The new pastor took possession of his diocese, and remained there twenty-seven years. His diligence in all things, his concern for everything related to the Church, his devotion to the Holy See, which had already distinguished him among the other French ecclesiastics, shone with great splendor. He won over his whole diocese with the fatherly rule of gentleness and kindness. At St. Didie, they all believed he would always remain with them, but God had disposed otherwise. When he was transferred to Lyons, the separation from so gracious a Father was extremely sad.

While at St. Didie, Bishop Caverot dedicated special attention to the institutions of ecclesiastical education, devoting great care to Autrey and Chatel. He sponsored meetings of ecclesiastics; he introduced the obligatory Roman liturgy. He founded a fund to subsidize old priests, and encouraged pilgrimages to the Shrine of the Blessed Fourier, the apostle of Loraine; he also convoked the diocesan Synod.

He went to Rome for the canonization of the Japanese martyrs. He signed the famous address that the bishops, gathered in Rome, submitted to the Holy Father, rendering homage to His Infallible Rule in magnificent terms. He went back to Rome at the time of the Vatican Council, and was much admired for his devotion to the authority of the Pope.

When the Church of Lyons was bereft by the death of Bishop Guenouilhac and the French Government had to propose someone as his successor, it submitted the name of the Bishop of St. Didie to the Holy See. Pius IX accepted the choice, and at the Consistory of June 26, 1876, Bishop Caverot was promoted archbishop of Lyons and of Vienne. It was a well-deserved appointment and received universal acclamation. He did not wait to visit his archdiocese, where he cooperated most efficiently for the inauguration of the new Catholic University in Lyons, which had begun so well under the assurance of Bishop Thibaudier, who is today

Bishop of Soissons, but who had been auxiliary bishop and capitular vicar for some time, in charge of the diocesan administration during the sickness and after the death of Bishop Guenouilhac.

On March 12, 1877, His Holiness Pius IX made Bishop Caverot Cardinal-Priest of the Holy Roman Church, dedicated to St. Sylvester in Capite, and summoned him to participate in the works of the Congregations of the Council, Propagation, Index, Indulgences and Sacred Relics. Bishop Joseph Francica-Nava, secret chamberlain to His Holiness, was chosen to hand to him his Cardinal's hat, and Marshall Mac-Mahon, availing himself of the faculty which the Holy See had granted to several heads of the governments, invested him with it, paying due tribute to the new cardinal with moving words. (Don Bosco, *The loveliest flower of the Apostolic College*, page 230 and following).

3

HYMN TO CARDINAL ALIMONDA

Don Bosco and his sons unanimously applaud His Eminence Cardinal Cajetan their most venerated archbishop on his name day, for he is a living example of the wisdom, meekness and industrious charity of St. Francis of Sales, and are happy to welcome him at the oratory on the feast day of their patron saint.

The joy you see engraved
On the brows of these many children
Will tell you how this long-awaited hour
Is a sigh and expression of love.

For a long time have we
Awaited you anxiously, with fervent expectation,
Our song which we now intone to our
Illustrious shepherd is one of love.

Who could look at you and not feel
His heart swell with affection?
Like a rainbow do you appear
Certain harbinger of a happy future.

If you speak, 'tis love which launches
His darts from your holy lips,
Every fiber of the soul with love doth tremble
Soaring high to God with prayers and sighs.

You are love! From Heaven Mary returns
All the love within your heart;
Fervor sparkles in your eye,
As one who reads the secrets of Heaven.

The secrets of infinite beauty,
Are concealed in the soul and on the face of Mary.
You are witness to the sweetness with which
She doth enrapture every faithful soul.

You are love! The tender likeness of the man
From Sales you bear in your countenance.
How gracious and how loving Our Lord must be
If so much love is displayed by you.

You are the dawn portending rest
To the wanderer and the afflicted.
You are the genuine torch of wisdom
Which guides us to the fold of Jesus.

You are love! To the Venerable Ancient in Rome
You sing idyllically disclosing
The joy encircling his brow,
The power that Heaven gave him;

The glory and the power he wields
In Heaven and on Earth
He promotes with the arm of God
As prisoner he scatters all wars.

You are love! 'Twas Leo who uprooted you
Sighing, from his sacred vicinity
And as a token of his love did give you
To the people inhabiting the Po.

Here is the Shroud of Christ: here is memory
Of the host so radiant with light;
Of her who doth console, and victory
Endows her sons in opposing evil men.

Then thanks be to this New Most Holy Aaron
Who with you has given us of his own heart!
Thanks be to thee who from the heights of Sion
Dost come herald in piety and peace.

Come, take your place among you sons! Infinite
Is the applause of a grateful people.
Cocytus alone utters a strange sounding groan
At the triumph of so much goodness.

Come, sit among your sons who got their name from the man
Of Sales and their virtues from Mary;
At first a humble plant, but now
The gospel's seed has blossomed.

'Tis not the effort of mortal arm
Nourished by earthly rain;
But 'twas the immortal Word of God
Which accomplished the mighty work of Heaven.

You are love! Come, spread you holy wing, oh Shepherd,
O'er your children of Pius!
Lead us: you art God's angel,
Both flame, and cloud, banner and soldier.

We steady our gaze on you and are certain,
We shall attain our splendid goal,
Suffering along shadowed paths,
Climbing in love along the arduous paths.[1]

[1] The poet sang of love in particular, drawing his inspiration from the first sermon delivered by the Cardinal at the Cathedral the day of his arrival. This was printed by the Salesian printing house with the title: *Sweetness of Love in Rome and in Turin.*

4

SPEECH OF CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO THE TURIN COOPERATORS

Dearly beloved Salesian cooperators, I, too, have dealt with matters pertaining to the Salesians in Rome and when our dear Father John Bosco held his yearly conferences in the Chapel of the Noble Oblates of Saint Francis of Rome in Tor de Specchi. I, too, participated in them, said a few words, and exhorted the people who assembled there. I talked there with keen interest of the Salesian Institutions and of their founder. Who would have thought then that Divine Providence would have appointed me Archbishop of Turin, where this same Institute was founded and grew, and from whence it has already spread to many other parts to the advantage of society and of faith? Who would have thought that it would have been my good fortune to attend, in Turin, those same Salesian conferences at which I spoke in Rome as a friend, and in the cause of faith, but, as a shepherd and a father? Oh, yes! Indeed gladly, I accept the office of presiding over this elect gathering, for I love the Salesian Congregation far more now that I can call it my own, and Don Bosco permits me to use this word.

Whence was this love for the Salesian Congregation instilled in me? From the fact that I must love and encourage all those institutions that are imbued with the spirit of the Gospel and with the spirit of Our Lord Jesus Christ. That is why, if I now explain to you how the Institution of Don Bosco, the Institution of the Salesians, is animated by the spirit of the Gospel, by the spirit of Jesus, it is to show you also why I must love it and encourage it as fervently as I can.

1. One of the missions most dear to Our Lord Jesus Christ was the preaching of the Gospel, the instruction given to the poor, poor not only in wealth, but in virtue too, so that they might be enriched by His grace, and might share in the wealth of Heaven. That was why our Divine Master said that He had been sent so that He might teach and save that category of people: *Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. Sanare contritos corde* [He sent me to bring good tidings to the poor and heal the contrite of heart]. Now then, this is the great undertaking the Salesians have chosen. In founding his Congregation, Don Bosco intended, in particular, to help

those who were materially poor and poor in mind and heart, those who were poor in religious instruction, whose souls were wounded. Right at the beginning, he felt great tenderness within his heart for such derelicts, and set out to look for them in the streets, exercising his ministry by relieving the physical and spiritual sufferings of these unfortunates, who heeded neither God nor their soul and were heading toward damnation either because they were abandoned to their own devices or were employed in low paying jobs and oppressed by misery. It is to this noble endeavor that the Salesian Institution is dedicated, and so, too, is the charity of the cooperators. This, as you can see, is truly a task harmoniously linked with the Gospel. Therefore as Shepherd and Archbishop, I must love and protect it; and love and protect it I do.

2. Let us abide by the spirit of the Lord. He, too, had an infinite love for children, and children loved Him in return. When Jesus journeyed preaching through Palestine, they would run joyfully to Him and hail Him with delight. The Apostles were afraid that they might disturb the Divine Master and drove them away, but Jesus did not wish this to happen and ordered them instead to let them come near to Him, saying, "Sinite parvulos venire ad me" [Let the children come unto Me, that I may caress them]. In his turn, Don Bosco felt his heart aflame with love for children, and here in Turin he pitched the camp of his apostolic mission on their behalf. Young men came to him, followed him, and saw in him the image of Jesus Christ. Don Bosco and the Salesians opened boarding institutions, schools, hostels and festive oratories for boys, and became their friends, brothers and fathers. This is truly an evangelical Institution, and love it I must, because I, too, am deeply therewith concerned. Now children do come freely to their shepherd, to the representative of Jesus Christ in the diocese. There are no Apostles to drive them away from us, yet there might be one obstacle that might prevent us from caressing and blessing them. This obstacle might be their own bad behavior, evil passions, envy, pride, laziness, and bad habits. My episcopal office prohibits me from embracing children who are stained with sin, boys who are clothed with vice. Now then what do Don Bosco, his Salesians and their cooperators do? Oh, blessed may they be! They labor so that the innocence of these dear little children may be protected, they help them to fight and overcome their sinful inclinations, to destroy the vice lurking in their minds and hearts, if it has already found its way there. They make these children virtuous for me to see, they make them humble, loving, obedient and pure, so that like to our Lord, I, too, may press them to my

heart. Oh, let them come, let these thus-sanctified children come unto me! Let them come, for I want to imprint a fatherly kiss on their foreheads. But meantime, it is only proper that I love and protect the Salesian Congregation that procured this happy, joyous possibility for me.

3. In the Gospel, Jesus Christ recommends prayer and assures us that wherever a few people are gathered in His Name, He will be there among them: *Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi, sum in medio eorum*. Churches especially, but also oratories, educational institutions where souls come together, where fervent prayers are recited, where sacred hymns echo, where people think, talk and labor for the glory of God: these are all houses of the Lord, these are all places to which He turns His Loving Gaze, these are also places where He resides like a Father among his sons and daughters: *Ubi sunt duo vel tres congregati in nomine meo, ibi sum in medio eorum*. Now what has Don Bosco done with his Salesians and his cooperators? He has opened houses, oratories, chapels and churches as lovely as this, where thousands of people come to pray and sing the praises of the Lord. He has multiplied the places where Jesus Christ resides in person within the sacred Tabernacle. He has multiplied the places where He resides in His Spirit of Goodness and Mercy, where he grants pardon to the sinner, perseverance to the just, relief the sick, courage to the weak, and comfort to the afflicted. In this manner, the Institution of Don Bosco, of the Salesians, have promoted the practice of prayer everywhere and most effectively. It is, therefore, an institution tuned with the spirit of the Gospel, and, therefore, must I love and encourage it. I must love and encourage it all the more because many of these places of prayer are in my own archdiocese, and for the benefit of the souls entrusted to my pastoral vigilance.

4. The Holy Gospel wants all people to be but one family, one single flock under the rule of one single Father and one sole Shepherd. Consequently, unity of faith is requested, religious discord is condemned, and heresy is abhorred. The Divine Master prayed that His disciples might receive the grace of such unity of mind and heart that they might become one, just as He and His Divine Father were in nature one and the same: *Ut sint unum sicut et nos*. In order to ensure such a unity, He appointed St. Peter and his successors, the Roman Pontiffs, as the visible heads of His Church and ordered all the faithful to obey His Church, under penalty of being regarded as pagans and excommunicated: *Si ecclesiam non audierit, sit tibi sicut ethnicus et publicanus*. It is, therefore, a unity of faith and religion in the spirit of the Gospel. It is furthermore desired and

commanded by Jesus Christ. Hence, anyone who labors to protect such unity as this does something eminently evangelical and just, namely the Will of God. This is precisely what our dear Don Bosco is doing. With his instructions, he labors for this unity of faith in many ways, but especially by a close range opposition to the Protestant heresy. Therefore in Rome, Florence, La Spezia and Ventimiglia, his schools and Catholic churches are founded side by side with the Protestant schools and churches, so as to obstruct these heretics as they try to sow their own errors, perverting the hearts and minds of Catholics. We see the same thing happening here in Turin. Here, too, Don Bosco and the Salesians promote unity of faith and war against heresy. As we walk down this lovely avenue, we will come upon a Protestant temple, which is more than a mere chapel, and our heart is afflicted by it. But then we are full of gladness again a few steps further at the sight of this beautiful church of St. John the Evangelist, which stands there like a sentry, thanks to Don Bosco's Institution and the contributions of his cooperators, to bar the way so that error may not pass beyond the border line and sow division and disorder within the hearts of the people of Turin. Hence, the Institutions of the Salesians promote unity of faith, and I must love it. What bishop could fail to love, and love dearly, any such institution as this?

5. Should I omit mentioning Don Bosco's mighty undertakings in the missions? Our Lord Jesus Christ sent His Apostles to preach the Gospel throughout the world: "*Euntes*," He told them, "*in mundum universum praedicate evangelium omni creaturae*." And Don Bosco likewise sends his Salesians to several parts of Italy, France, Spain, and America. We have just heard from the reporter all that the Salesians are now accomplishing in far away Patagonia. Don Bosco, too, says to his sons, "*Euntes docete omnes gentes*," and thanks to them, the echo of the Gospel and of the Christian faith is already heard in those regions, and tribes and peoples are gathered within the fold of the Church. *In omnem terram exivit sonus eorum et in fines orbis terrae verba sorum.* Nor must it be said that in sending his Salesians to the foreign missions Don Bosco is depriving our own country of priests. The example and sacrifice of these apostles has a most beneficial and effective influence on those who remain behind, enhancing their zeal, multiplying their works, and on the other hand it also stimulates a greater number of holy vocations, procuring more priests for us who came to take the places of those who have vacated them as heroes. Let us do our best to stir up the spirit of faith and piety among the Catholic people, and then these peo-

ple, as in the past, will supply us with evangelical laborers to be sent to our cities and to distant nations, still living in the shadow of death. This is what the Salesian Congregation is attempting to achieve in its institutions. Don Bosco sends his missionaries to the different parts of the world, so that together with the other blessings they might bring, they may also sow the seeds and foster the blossoming of ecclesiastic vocations in other countries, thus supplying the Catholic Church with an ever greater number of heralds of the Holy Gospel. So let these new apostles go forth from us, for God will repay us for the loss of them, in an abundant measure.

I think I have demonstrated adequately enough how the Salesian Congregation is in harmony with the spirit of the Gospel, with the spirit of Jesus Christ, and I have also demonstrated why I must love and sponsor it. Indeed everyone must love it and contribute toward its effectiveness, so that it can increase ever more and more and expand further. Let no one say, "The Congregation progresses all by itself, it has already spread far and wide, and no longer needs my cooperation." No, this would be bad; but it is heard from the lips of people who never want to inconvenience themselves for the glory of God. We must do our utmost to cooperate to its advantage, knowing that we are doing something pleasing to God and beneficial to our neighbor, precisely because we can see that God blesses it and protects it. Certainly, we have to make some sacrifice in order that we may give alms. But what of it? Many of us make similar sacrifices for the sake of luxury, of futile amusements, perhaps even for our sins, yet would we refuse to make a sacrifice for the sake of so lovely an institution as this? At all times and today more than ever, we have to inconvenience ourselves, endure pain and discomfort to oppose what is evil and promote what is good. Without this there is no merit, no glory; without this the violent stream of evil will overturn every dam and drown us all.

Here, dear children, one can very aptly quote that which the Holy Scripture tell us about Elijah the prophet. This great man had already labored much for the glory of God and the welfare of the people of Israel during very difficult years, yet with hardly any satisfaction. Hence discouraged as he was, he decided he would live at last in peace and retired to live in a cave. He was hiding at the far end of it when he heard the voice of God calling to him: "*Quid hic agis, Elia*?" [What are you doing here, Elijah]? You sit here idle while My enemies triumph, My Children are forsaken, My Commandments trampled underfoot. You could fight and pre-

vent the enemy from leading My people into total destruction. You could raise up those who have fallen, comfort the faint-hearted, and train them for a magnificent victory, yet you have locked yourself up here. *Egredere.* Go forth from here. At these words, Elijah felt ashamed and left his cave, returning among the people, resuming his defense of religion with his former ardor, enduring the harshest tests.

Today in our time, too, there are people who see so much religious and social confusion in the world that they become afraid and discouraged, and retire into their rooms, which are not as uncomfortable as the cave of Elijah. There they are content to deplore the evils of society, but without any inconvenience to themselves, without putting out a hand to do anything, without making any sacrifice to prevent or decrease their impact. Now even as Our Lord said to Elijah, I say to such people: "Go forth, shake off your inertia, and if you do not know how to descend into the battle or are prevented from doing it, not being capable of facing and fighting the enemies of God, then help at least by the alms you give, by your charity those who are actually fighting, who bear the brunt of the battle. Foster good institutions and among these, sponsor the Institution of the Salesians, which is imbued with the spirit of the Gospel, the spirit of Jesus Christ. In doing this, be comforted by the thought that by increasing the number of souls saved by your generosity, you are at the same time increasing your own right to their gratitude, your claim to more grace for your own sanctification, your claim to a more magnificent crown, your claim to praise from God and even from man. And you have already received this glory, a well-deserved glory because you have effectively helped the Salesians and through them you have accomplished so much good. Continue to do this, and I shall bless you."

5

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO A FRENCH GENTLEMAN

Marseille, March 17, 1884

Monsieur:

I was very comforted by your Christian letter, dear sir, and shall not omit to pray for you, while our children will pray for your intentions. I will gladly have a memento for you every morning during Holy Mass, and also for your relatives and the people in your family who are sick, and in

general for the entire family.

I also recommend all my orphans (150,000 of them) to your charity, and trust you will help us with your prayers.

Every day you must recite three *Paters*, *Aves* and *Glorias* to the Most Blessed Sacrament until the Feast of St. Peter. Also try to go to Holy Communion with your whole family.

You wanted my address and here it is: To Rev. John Bosco, Marseille (until the 29th of this month, after which date Turin.)

May God bless you, dear Monsieur, and may He reward you generously for your charity, and may the Blessed Virgin grant you and your whole family, health and holiness. Please pray for me, who will always remain in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

6

LETTER TO FATHER MICHAEL RUA AFTER THE DEATH OF DON BOSCO

February 3rd, 9 o'clock

Reverend Father:

Alas! The tragic news arrived here on the eve of the Feast of the Purification through the newspapers. I heard about it Thursday, February 2nd. I then got your own sad letter this evening the 3rd, confirming this immense grief.

On January 18th, I wrote the Reverend Father Director of the St. Leo Oratory in Marseille, since I was alarmed by the news bulletins about the health of our venerated and deeply lamented Don Bosco.

I had no reply and had hoped that the bulletins were either false or at least exaggerated.

Unfortunately, after a few days of hoping since the last bulletin had announced that three devoted doctors of the venerated patient had declared they had certified a noticeable, progressive improvement in his condition on January 3rd, saying he was approaching convalescence (the word filled me with hope), the most fervent prayers only

delayed for a few days his beautiful, edifying death after a life entirely consecrated to that which was Good, and to the exercise of the finest charitable virtues.

His ceaseless labors, his spirit that coped continuously with immense undertakings, completed or awaiting completion, shortened the precious days of this holy, venerated Servant of God and of His Holy Mother!

I will repeat it right before you, Father, that God is essentially just and kind in His inscrutable designs, and we can only bow our head under His hand that chastises us, only to test our submission and our faith. Despite the immense void and profound sorrow his death causes to all his sons, his many children, his institutions and oratories, and to all those who knew him either personally or only through his admirable works, we cannot but rejoice today as we think of the glory and utter happiness he now possesses, of the crown of the elect already resting on his head ever since he left this world. For who could doubt that this great and chosen soul, this servant of the merciful God, the constant tool of His Divine Inspiration, is already in Heaven?

Nevertheless, Father, in keeping with your own reflections on the beloved deceased, it will be for all of us a most tender occupation and a holy thought to remind the merciful God often of such a wonderful recollection.

From high above us in Heaven, this venerated Father is already guiding, sustaining with strength and inspiring all the institutions entrusted by him here below to his zealous assistants. His institutions will never grow less! They are founded (as their holy patron says) on the goodness of God, and on the mighty intercession of Our Lady, Help of Christians, and on the contributions of all his cooperators, who will never fail them.

It is after all only four years, since that winter 1883-1884 which we spent in the south, that we made the acquaintance of this saint whose name filled a great part of the world with the echo of his good deeds, and were happy to do so.

The good Father welcomed us for a quite lengthy stay at the house of La Navarre by Hyeres; twice during this visit to him that we shall never forget, his kindness, his prayers and his blessing filled us with courage and with strength in our anxiety. He talked to us of his immense undertakings, of the lottery that he was then organizing under the supervision of us four cooperators. And for a long time, he graciously received my requests for

his prayers, always graciously answering my indiscreet supplications.

The venerated Father chose to send us comforting words, of which he knew the secret source so well, when the good God took our children back unto Himself three years ago! I treasure all these memories so much! And all the many words that the sorely lamented and venerated Don Bosco ever wrote to me are assembled and classified like a genuine relic jealously treasured.

La Semaine Religieuse of the diocese informed me of the tragic news, quoting it from *Le Monde*; it refers to a paralysis after a stroke on Sunday morning that deprived him of his consciousness and of the awareness that his end was at hand during the last few hours of his precious existence.

A few more days still, Father, and then I would be very grateful for some details about his holy death.

It is indeed providential that Bishop John Cagliero arrived in time to be with our venerated Don Bosco. I read in the *Bulletin* with tears the account of the moving dialogue between the beloved Bishop and his Reverend Father, before whom he was kneeling. I read that he, with drooping head, kept on kissing the bishop's ring.

How happy Bishop must be, despite his profound sorrow, that he could be there with you all, to close the eyelids of his well-beloved Father.

Be brave, Father; you have a wonderful mission. You were chosen to succeed him after assisting him in all his works for such a long time. From on high in Heaven, the holy, venerated founder is watching over his sons and over all those to whom he has entrusted this magnificent mission here below. The memory of him will never fade. Unceasingly, he will enhance their courage, supporting them to follow his example, and his far-reaching advice, while he will be an impeccable model to his cooperators, guiding them to exercise charity according to their means....

L. Remacle Auxerre (Yonne) Rus Bueve 15

7

LETTER FROM FATHER FEBBRARO TO DON BOSCO

Oratory, April 26, 1884

Dearly beloved Father:

Your letter told me once again what a loving paternal heart you have,

and that it is my duty to be a good son to you. When I see your loving, yet serene solicitude in thinking of us and of the boys entrusted to us, I feel ashamed that I am so different from you. I allow my minor problems to upset me, whereas you remain calm and tranquil in the face of all the serious problems and difficulties that oppress you.

I pray that both Jesus and Mary allow me to cherish the example given by such a loving Father for a long, long time, and that they also give me the grace to imitate him. If I am unable to do so, then I will at least try to acquaint others about our Father's heart, and I will do my best to instill into our confreres and our boys love for Don Bosco, so that they may learn from you how to love God.

I gave your message to the pupils of the 4th and 5th high school grades, and they were touched by the token of affection that you gave them. They look as if they mean to give sincere and serious attention to the matter of their vocations. As soon as I have assembled all their letters, I shall give them to Father Joseph Lazzero, who will hand them over to you when he gets back.

I gave your regards to the students, and they all asked me to thank you, particularly for your prayers on their behalf and the blessing you are going to ask from the Holy Father for them. We all wish you good health and may the blessings of Jesus and Mary be showered upon you and your works, so that the sons may also be blessed in their Father.

I do not dare to write any more than this, considering your health and all the work you have to do. I shall send Father John Baptist Lemoyne more specific details about how the boys behave themselves. We all feel the need of having Don Bosco here with us, and we pray to God every day that he be brought back to us soon.

You will have your troubles with us, but you can be sure that we love you; just as we are sure that in you we shall always have an affectionate Father who forgives everything and who loves us all. Pray for us that we may become better, and especially for me, so that I may become good.

Your most affectionate son,
Rev. Stefano Febbraro[2]

[2] In reference to this letter, Father John Baptist Lemoyne wrote to Father Michael Rua on April 28th: "Tell Father Febbraro that Don Bosco received his letter and was very touched and pleased with it. What a heart Don Bosco has!"

8

SPIRITUAL BOUQUET FOR DON BOSCO BY THE ALTAR BOYS OF THE ORATORY

Reverend Father:

You might be thinking that we have forgotten you because we have not communicated with you during the time you have been away, but the reason for our silence was related to the examinations. But if we have been silent as far as the written word, we were not silent as far as our prayers to Jesus and Mary. During your serious illness at the Oratory, we began a Spiritual Bouquet made up of Communions and visits, so that the Virgin might restore the good health we crave for you. We did not slacken the intensity of our prayers while you were away, particularly during the month of our beloved Mother Mary, but we intensified them instead, praying both for your frail health and that Our Lord deign to protect you on your journey and assist you in your holy intentions of spreading what is good.

We are continuing to appeal to the tender Most Sacred Hearts of both Jesus and Mary, so that they will soon make you well again for many years to come. Please continue to love us and remember us in your prayers. Please obtain a blessing for us from the Holy Father especially, so that we may be able to comfort you, our kind superiors and our Lord.

Tell the Holy Father that we are praying fervently for him, so that he may find comfort despite the sorrows that ungrateful souls cause him and live for many happy years still for the welfare of the Church and of our society.

Please accept these simple good wishes from us with your usual graciousness, and bless us, love us and believe us always,

Your most affectionate and obedient sons,
The Altar Boys of the Oratory

Spiritual Bouquets of Communions

Antonio Amerio.....4
Bernardo Chicco 4
Bartolomeo Moretti 4
Amilcare Berlenda.....4
Bartolomeo Gaido 5

Giovanni Graffione 7
Giovanni Sfondrini 4
Gaetano Solita 6
Giogio Tomatis.....6
Enrico Verghetti.....6
Pietro Brassea 10
Pietro Buratti 10
Bartolomeo Cravero.....10
Antonio Dones.....9
Domenico Giacoma 5
Enrico Marelli 9
Michele Martina.....8
Attilio Mazzuchelli 9
Luigi Santi 1
Giovanni Sola.....9
Camillo Barassi 9
Edoaardo Baroni 9
Domenico Daira.....7
Giuseppe Grossoni.....7
Ernesto Nicolai 5
Michele Quaranta.....6
Pietro Appiano.....8
Domenico Batuello 10
Ermenegildo Bianco 10
Michele Cerruti 9
Eugenio Chiaravalle.....9
Alfeo Dedionigi 9
Francesco Della Croce, II.....9
Salvatore Fumagalli 5
Saulle Galbiati 8
Carlo Livio.....8
Domenico Olivero 10
Alessandro Perni 10
Giovanni Piatti.....10
Felice Roncati.....9
Enrico Scaltriti.....10
Giovanni Fantardini 10
Ernesto Valz-Blin.....9
Marcellino Bertolotto 8
Carlo Ranzini.....9

9

ST. JOHN BOSCO AND THE NEWLY ORDAINED ENGLISH PRIESTS

Bishop Kolbe, a former pupil of the Roman College of Venerable Bede, wrote as follows to the Salesian Father Walsh:

February 11, 1835

My dear Father Walsh:

I send you the paragraph you asked for, and I am glad to be able to contribute even so small an item to the life of your saint.

It is recorded that in the days of St. Philip Neri, the students of the English College (the Venerable) who used to be greeted by the saint with "*Salvete flores martyrum*," had the custom of going to ask his blessing before going on the mission. Only one student did not go, and that student gave up the faith. I was at the English College and left in 1882. The next year (or perhaps the year after) one of my fellow students (Rev. I.S. Chapman) wrote to me: "We have discovered a saint and have decided to resume the old custom of going for a blessing." The saint was Don Bosco, and I have always regretted that we did not discover him a year or two sooner.

If the Bishop of Leeds (Rev. Cowgill) has recovered from his present illness, perhaps he will confirm this statement. He was one year after me.

Yours most sincerely,
F. C. Kolbe
The Monastery, Sea Point

10

LETTER FROM FATHER MORTARA TO DON BOSCO

Utrera, Santiago-Mayol, April 9, 1884

Most Reverend Father:

I do not want to leave Utrera without handing a letter for Your Reverence to your beloved son, Father Ernesto Oberti of the Reverend

Fathers of Our Lady of Carmel.

In His infinite goodness, our Lord so disposed that, after preaching in other towns of Catholic Spain, I also should come to Utrera, where I met and formed fraternal ties with the beloved sons of Your Reverence, calling on them often, being profoundly edified by their charitable goodness and their eminently pious, zealous, generous and magnanimous spirit. One can perceive in them the good, incomparable Father who can be proud of such sons, just as they are proud of their Father. *Laus Deo perennis et indeficiens qui dedit potestatem talem hominibus* [Everlasting and unending glory to God who gave men such power].

So I have been in Spain (in the province of Chiclana, diocese of Cadiz), since 1882, and now that I have learned the language with tremendous difficulty, I go wherever Our Lord summons me, working and suffering, since a residual of my last serious sickness has me going through a real martyrdom certain days. Our Lord Jesus Christ would never have saved the world if He had not suffered, and *non est discipulus supra magistrum* [the disciple is not above his master].

When you honored me with your visit in Marseille at the home of the Maccorelles ladies while I was suffering from the illness mentioned above, you told me that our Lord might suspend the decree of death, which had already been issued for me.[3]

The decree has been suspended; you brought this about, and now woe unto me should I neglect to dedicate whatever life still lies ahead of me to the edification, defense and propagation of the mystical kingdom of God, as the Saintly and Immortal Pontiff Pius IX, of blessed memory, said. I, therefore, beg you with everything in me to remember me for this same end in your effective powerful prayers. I want to be a great saint through the path of deep humility and great suffering. This is the only way open to me to do good with the grace of God and convert my unhappy family. To this end I implore a special blessing from Your Reverence.

Our good Father Ernesto put me on the list of cooperators of your dear Congregation. From this moment on I shall endeavor with every possible means, especially by preaching, to uphold it, make it known and loved. There are six priests here in Chiclana, and we have some Spanish novices and day schools, but no one gives us any assistance, save Divine

[3] See Vol. XV, page 26.

Providence. Your sons in Utrera are more fortunate. With all my heart and deepest respect I am,

Your most humble and devoted servant in Jesus Christ,
Rev. Pio Maria Mortara

11

LETTER FROM FATHER JOHN BAPTIST LEMOYNE TO FATHER MICHAEL RUA

Rome, May 9, 1884

Dearest Father Rua:
Praised be Mary Help of Christians!

O dies felix memoranda fastis
Gestiens Clerus, puerique puri
Corde Reginae celebrare coeli
Minuera certent.

Today at one fifteen in the afternoon, Don Bosco had an audience with the Holy Father. After an indescribable and affectionate welcome, everything was granted. *Deo gratias*. A detailed account will come some other time. Today also, he received official confirmation that on behalf of the municipality, the mayor of Rome has made formal application to the prefect for authorization of the lottery. Don Bosco is much better and has improved considerably since leaving Sampierdarena, especially during the last three days.

The meeting was held on the 8th at Torre de' Specchi, but terrible weather kept the majority of cooperators at home.

Wednesday, the 14th, we shall set out for Turin. We shall let you know the date and time of arrival, if Don Bosco will permit me to do so.

Don Bosco sends you his regards and blessing, and wants you to know that the Supreme Pontiff sends a special blessing to all the Salesians.

Pray from me, for I am most impatient to be back in my cell.

Most affectionately yours,
Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne

12

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO COUNT DE VILLENEUVE

Rome, May 1, 1884

Dear Count de Villeneuve:

I am in Rome, but have not forgotten you, Count, or your family. You know that I have a memento for you every morning at Holy Mass, and that I shall continue to do so.

Tomorrow I shall have an audience with the Holy Father[4] and shall nor forget to ask him for a special blessing for your intentions.

I hope that the Countess, my little prior and the rest of the family are well. May the Blessed Virgin protect you always.

I have received word from St. Cyr that the debts there are seriously compromising the building of the orphanage. I wrote about it to the pastors of Laciotat and Aubagne, asking them to help us and saying that you would discuss with them what should be done in the matter.

Take heart, dear Count. The Grace of God will not fail us. Are we going to see you here in Turin for the Feast of Our Lady Help of Christians?

May God bless you, may the Blessed Virgin protect us and help us to progress safely along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Your humble servant and friend,
Rev. John Bosco

13

LETTER FROM THE BISHOP OF VENTIMIGLIA TO DON BOSCO

Very Reverend Sir:

It was naughty of Don Bosco to pass through Ventimiglia twice without

[4] This is what he hoped for, but he did not have the audience until a week later.

letting the Bishop know! As a penance for this, I am sending you my Archdeacon, who is not coming to Turin solely to celebrate the Feast of Mary Help of Christians with solemnity, but also to seek Her help here, and present a request that I also earnestly recommend, before Your Reverence. It will not require any great staff or persons of any exceptional ability. We only need someone to take a little care of some abandoned and rather wild boys. I rely on your charity, and joining in the praises of Mary Help of Christians, I remain,

Your most devoted servant,
Thomas, Bishop

Don Bosco wrote the following on the side:
Father John Baptist Lemoyne to say that I really am naughty. I promise to be better and make up for the past failings, in some manner, etc. The project was for a festive Oratory in Ventimiglia, and Don Bosco sent a priest there from the House of Alassio.

14

LETTER FROM FATHER JOHN BAPTIST LEMOYNE TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROMAN RAILWAYS

Turin, May 21, 1884

Dear Sir:

Don Bosco was in Florence briefly on the 16th of this month. He very much wanted to call on you to thank you for your great courtesy in granting him a discount in the fares for traveling on the Roman railroad, but he was unable to do so on account of his poor health and a persistent inflammation of his eyes. Nevertheless, he has asked me to write to you on his behalf, assuring you that he will never decrease his gratitude for this great favor, and that he and his young charges will always remember their benefactor in their community prayers. At the same time, he asks me to inform you that he, Don Bosco, is willing to give a home to such children of railway employees that the railways management may, in certain instances, wish to place in some institution.

I again convey Don Bosco's most respectful regards and remain,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne

15

PETITION DON BOSCO ADDRESSED TO POPE LEO XIII FOR PRIVILEGES

(See page 710 of the original, in Latin)

Illorum omnium participes esse deberent

16

COMMUNICATION OF PRIVILEGES SINCE THE 16th CENTURY

For a long time, the Pontiffs have granted the Communication of Privileges to Ecclesiastical Congregations of simple vows.

Leo X granted mutual communication of privileges to all Mendicant Orders. In the Brief that starts with "*Exponi Nobis*," which created the Theatines (June 24, 1524), Clement VII granted to them all the privileges and spiritual favors either already granted or then about to be granted to the Canons Regular. This same Pontiff (1525) in the bull that starts with "*Dum fructus uberes*," granted to religious of regular observance the communication of privileges and spiritual graces together with any other order *quibusvis Congregationibus et aliis Ordinibus quibuscumque etiam non mendicantibus quomodolibet concessis aut concedendis, etc.*

During that same century, Congregations of simple vows, even though they might have obtained a number of privileges of religious orders by direct concession, were first granted privileges of religious orders so that they might all have a regular, uniform rule to be studied and practiced, and a directive already known and well defined.

Thus, Paul IV (October 7, 1555) said the following relating to the *Theatines: Ut omnibus, et singulis privilegiis, indulgentiis, praerogativis, exemptionibus, immunitatibus, gratiis et indultis Societati Iesu Almae Urbis tam in Spiritulibus, quam temporalibus in specie, vel in genere per quoscumque Romanos Pontifices predecessores suos, et dictam sedem quomodolibet concessis, et concedendis, et quibus societas huiusmodi tam in vita quam in mortis articulo etiam circa peccatorum remissiones, et junctarum poenitentiarum relaxationes et alias quomodolibet utebatur, potiebatur et gaudebat ac uti, potiri, et gaudere poterat, similiter nostra Congregatio, et Clerici Nostrae*

Congregationis, uti, potiri, et gaudere libere et licite possent et valerent, ac illorum omnium partecipes esse deberent.

In the Brief that starts with the words "*Ad immarcescibilem*" (February 7, 1587), St. Pious V granted the communication of privileges to the Theatines with all other Religious Orders and Congregations.

The reason for this communication of privileges was given by Clement VIII in the bull (December 20, 1595) that began with "*Ratio Pastoralis efflagitat et quorum religionem ac virtutem sedi Apostolicae, totique Ecclesiae non modo illustrem, et preclaram, sed utilem etiam ac necessariam esse animadvertimus, eosdam nostris et eius sedis Apostolicae honoribus ac beneficiis libenter prosequamur.*" In paraphrasing the words of Clement VIII, an eminent scholar of canon law writes: *Regulares, qui licet diversorum ordinum, unum in Deo et professione existant, equum etiam est, ut in iisdem indultis, et privilegiis uniantur, et sic uniti arctiori vinculo Sedi Apostolicae, et inter se ad nomen Dei in terris propagandam animaruque salutem pprocurandam copulentur; ut quos coniungunt par labor et paria merita teiam conjungant privilegia. Ita ab Aragonia, elucatio Privilegiorum* (Tract. 5, chap. 8).

17

COMMENDATION FROM CARDINAL ALIMONDA, SUPPORTING THE PETITION FOR GRANTING OF PRIVILEGES

February 29, 1884

CAJETAN ALIMONDA, CARDINAL OF THE ORDER OF PRIESTS, PATRON OF ST. MARIA IN TRANSPONTINA, BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND THE HOLY APOSTOLIC SEE ARCHBISHOP OF TURIN DOCTOR AND GRAND CHANCELLOR OF THE COLLEGE OF THEOLOGIANS

We have read the petition in which the Reverend Father John Bosco, Founder and Superior General of the Salesian Congregation, implores the Holy Father for the communication of privileges enjoyed by the Oblates of the Virgin Mary in this same city for his own Congregation.

It is with sincere spiritual gratification that we confirm the truth of the

reasons respectfully submitted to His Holiness in imploring this grace.

We give due praise to the Salesian Congregation for the exemplary discipline that reigns among its members, the immense amount of good work done by them in this city, which was the cradle of the Congregation (and its Mother House is still located here), as well as in the many other houses that they have established elsewhere, within only a brief period of time. We deem the granting of privileges implored to be all the more timely inasmuch as here in our city and diocese, we witness the desolating dispersion of religious of other orders. It is of immense importance that the benevolence of the Holy See confers prosperity and stability to a Congregation that, in a most providential measure, is making up for great losses, while being fortunate enough to escape the rigors of our civil laws.

We, therefore, join our petition to that of the above-mentioned Superior General in asking the Holy Father to grant the same privileges enjoyed by the Oblates of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

(Seal) Cajetan, Cardinal Archbishop
Canon, Raphael Frochieri, Archepiscopal Secretary
Turin, from the Archepiscopal Palace

18

NEW PETITION AND LIST OF PRIVILEGES

(See pages 724-729 of the original, in Latin)

19

LAST PETITION MADE FOR PRIVILEGES BY DON BOSCO

(See pages 719-720 of the original, in Latin)

20

DECREE FOR THE COMMUNICATION OF PRIVILEGES SHARED BY THE REDEMPTORISTS

(See page 721 of the original, in Latin)

21

LETTER FROM THE ROSMINIAN PRIEST, FATHER FLECHIA, TO DON BOSCO

June 12, 1884

Most dear and venerated Don Bosco:

Although I think very often of your dear and venerated person and would like to see you, I know that you are overburdened with correspondence, problems and business, to an infinite degree. Therefore, I refrain and do not dare to increase your worries. For this reason, I did not to write you for a long time. But now, since I want a favor from you, I have gotten out of bed, to which I have been confined because of trouble with my leg, so as to write to you.

I do not know whether you were in favor or not of the teachings of Father Rosmini, but whatever you may think of them, this is beside the point, since everyone is free to think whatever he considers best. But I do know that you knew Rosmini personally, and I do know that Father Paoli, who has written a brief biography of him, is now engaged in another work dealing with his virtues. He is calling on those persons who knew him personally (albeit somewhat late since the majority of them are dead by now) and asking them to issue some statement about the virtue that each of them in the presence of God believes that he possessed and used by the Grace of God and for God's Own Glory. *Lauda post mortem* [Praise him after his death]. He has already received more than 300 such testimonials, and now both he and I are asking you for such testimony, as well as the testimony of other members of your Holy Congregation who may have known him. They are to say and confirm all the good they know about him, and to what they can with a clear conscience testify about the virtues and holiness of Father Antonio Rosmini, signing their name to it. This is the very precious favor for which I am writing to you, and bothering you, and for which I thank you in advance, begging you to be so gracious as to honor the Shrine of Sacra at least once again with your presence.

I kiss your hands in reverence, implore your holy blessing, and beg you and our dear Father Michael Rua, as well as all of the others, to

remember in your prayers this poor old invalid who loves you all, while he is honored to be,

Your most humble and devoted servant,
Rev. Caesar Flechia

22

PURITY AND WAYS IT CAN BE SAFEGUARDED

He seemed to see before him an enchanting and immense green slope, gently inclined and leveled. At the foot of it, a meadow formed that was equivalent to a low step from which one could jump off onto the little path where Don Bosco was standing. All around it looked like an earthly paradise, magnificently illuminated by a light that was brighter and purer even than that of the sun. It was covered all around by green vegetation, star-spangled by a thousand different kinds of flowers, and shaded by an infinite number of trees, whose branches intertwined, stretching out like immense festoons.

In the center of the garden and stretching to its further border was a carpet of magic candor, so dazzling that the eyes were blinded. It was several miles wide, as magnificent as royal pomp. Several inscriptions in golden letters ornamented the border encircling it. On one side it read: *Beati immaculati in via, qui ambulant in lege Domini*; on another side: *Non privabit bonis eos, qui ambulant in innocentia;* on the third side: *Non confundentur in tempore malo, in diebus famis saturabuntar;* on the fourth: *Novit Dominus dies immaculatorum et haereditas eorum in aeterum erit.*

At the four corners of the area surrounding a magnificent rose bed were four more inscriptions: *Cum simplicibus sermocinatio eius; Proteget gradientes simpliciter; Qui ambulant simpliciter, ambulant confidenter; Voluntas eius in iis, qui simpliciter ambulant.*

In the middle of this area was the last inscription: *Qui ambolant simpliciter, salvus erit.*

In the middle of the slope and on the upper border of this carpet, there was a pure white streamer with gold letters that read: *Fili mi, tu sempre mecum es et omnia mea tua sunt.*

Though Don Bosco was enchanted by the garden, his attention was drawn to two lovely, little maidens who were about twelve years old and

who were sitting at the edge of the carpet where the slope formed a low step. Their whole gracious mien emanated a heavenly modesty. One did not only perceive the innocent simplicity of a dove in their eyes that gazed steadily upward, but also a most pure, fervent love and a joyful, heavenly happiness. Their broad, serene brows seemed to harbor candor and sincerity, while a sweet, enchanting smile hovered on their lips. Their features denoted tender, ardent hearts, and the graceful movements of their bodies conferred a dignity and nobility on them that contrasted oddly with their youth.

A pure, white garment fell to their feet, and no stain, wrinkle, or even speck of dust was apparent on it. Around their waists were fiery red sashes, bordered with gold and adorned by what looked like a ribbon embroidered with lilies, violets and roses. They wore a similar ribbon like a necklace that was made of the same flowers, though somewhat different in design. There were little wreaths of white daisies at their wrists, like bracelets, and all of these things and flowers were so beautiful in form and color that it would have been impossible to describe them. Even the most precious jewels of this world mounted with the most exquisite workmanship would have looked like mud in contrast.

Their pure, white shoes were edged with a white ribbon interwoven with gold, handsomely tied into a center bow. They were laced with a narrow white cord, in which small golden threads glinted.

Their long hair, forming a shadow in its thickness and falling in curled ringlets over their shoulders, was covered by a crown.

They were talking with each other. They took turns to speak, asking each other questions and issuing exclamations. They would both sit, or one sat while the other stood or they would stroll together, but they never stepped off the candid carpet or touched either the grass or the flowers. Don Bosco stood there like a spectator in his dream, without speaking to the little maidens, and they did not seem to be aware of his presence. One of them addressed the other in a harmonious voice: "What is innocence? The happy condition of sanctifying grace preserved by constant, scrupulous observance of the Divine Commandments."

The other girl answered in a voice that was no less sweet: "The purity of innocence preserved is the source and origin of all knowledge and virtue."

The first maiden: "How splendid, how glorious, how magnificent is the virtue to live honestly among those who are evil, to retain the candor of innocence and purity of one's habits amid those who are evil."

The other maiden rose to her feet and standing beside her companion

said, "Blessed is the boy who does not heed the council of the godless, who does not walk in the way of the sinner, but who delights in the Commandments of the Lord, contemplating them day and night. He shall be like a tree planted beside the river were the water of God's grace flows, and which shall, in its good time, yield the abundant fruit of good works. The leaves of his holy intentions and his merit shall not fall before the blowing of the wind, and all that he shall do shall be successful. In all circumstances of his life, he shall work to enhance his reward."

So saying, she pointed to the trees laden with beautiful, fragrant fruits in the garden around them, while sparkling little brooks ran between two flowering banks or fell in tiny waterfalls, forming small lakes, bathing the trunks of the trees with a murmur that sounded like the mysterious strains of distant music.

The first maiden answered, "He is like a lily amid the thorns which God shall pluck in His garden to wear as an ornament over His heart. He may say to his Lord, 'My Beloved is mine, and I am His, who feeds among the lilies.'"

So saying, she pointed to a great cluster of beautiful lilies that lifted their candid heads amid the grass and other flowers, and also to a tall hedge in the distance that surrounded the gardens with greenery. This hedge was thick with thorns and beyond it one could perceive horrible monsters moving around like shadows, trying to get inside the garden, though the thorns on the hedge barred their way.

"It is true! How much truth there is in your words!" the other girl said. "Blessed is the boy who shall be found without sin! But who can he be? How are we to praise him? For he has done wondrous things in his life. He was found to be perfect and shall have glory in eternity. He could sin and did not; he could have done wrong, but did not. For this the Lord has prepared his reward, and his good deeds shall be celebrated by all the Congregations of Saints."

"And what great glory God has in store for them here on earth! He will summon them, giving them a place in His Sanctuary, He will make them ministers of His Mysteries, and shall confer on them an eternal name which shall never perish," the first said.

The second rose to her feet now and exclaimed, "Who could describe the beauty of the innocent? The soul is magnificently arrayed like one of us, adorned with the white stole of Holy Baptism. His neck and arms are ablaze with divine jewels, and on his finger gleams the ring of an alliance with God. His soul moves lightly along its journey toward eternity. Before

him there is a path spangled with stars. The innocent is a living tabernacle of the Holy Spirit. The blood of Jesus runs through his veins, staining crimson his cheeks and lips, and the Most Holy Trinity on his immaculate heart sheds torrents of light all around it, which clothes it in the brightness of the sun. From on high, clouds of celestial flowers fill the air in a downpour of rain. All around him, sweet melodies are heard and the angels echo the prayer of his soul. The Most Holy Mary is at his side, ready to defend him. Heaven stands open for him. The infinite legions of the saints and of the Blessed Spirits stand ranged before him, inviting him to advance by waving their palms. In the inaccessible radiance of His Throne of Glory, God lifts His Right Hand to indicate the place prepared for him, while in His Left, He holds the magnificent crown with which he shall be crowned forever. The innocent is the desire, the joy and the pride of Paradise. An ineffable joy is engraved on his countenance. He is the Son of God. God is his Father. Paradise is his heritage. He is constantly with God. He sees Him, loves Him, serves Him, possesses Him, enjoys Him, and possesses a range of heavenly delights. He is in possession of all treasures, all graces, all secrets, all gifts, all perfections, and the whole of God himself.

"That is why the innocence of saints, and especially of the martyrs in the old and New Testament, is depicted so gloriously. Oh, innocence! How beautiful you are! Tempted, you grow in perfection; humiliated, you soar even higher; embattled, you emerge triumphant; when slain, you soar toward your crown. You are free in slavery, serene and certain in peril, happy when in chains. The mighty bow before you, princes hail you, the great do seek you. The pious obey you, the evil envy you, your rivals emulate you, and your enemies succumb before you. Always shall you be victorious, even when men shall condemn you unjustly!"

The two little maidens were silent for a moment, as if to take a breath after this impassioned rhapsody. Then, they took each other by the hand, exchanged glances, and spoke in turn.

"Oh, if only the young knew how precious is the treasure of innocence, how jealously would they defend the stole of Holy Baptism from the beginning of their days! But alas, they do not reflect, and do not know what it means to soil it. Innocence is a most precious nectar."

"But it is contained in a jar of fragile clay, and unless one carries it with great care, it is easily broken."

"Innocence is a most precious jewel."

"But if one is unaware of its value, it can be lost and will easily be transformed into base metal."

"Innocence is a golden mirror which reflects the likeness of God."

"Yet a breath of humid air is enough to make it rusty, and one must needs keep it wrapped in a veil."

"Innocence is a lily."

"Yet a mere touch from a rough hand will wither it."

"Innocence is a candid garment. *Omni tempore sint vestimenta tua candida* [May your garment be always white]."

"Yet a single blemish will defile it, so one must proceed with great caution."

"Innocence and integrity are violated if soiled by only one stain, and will lose the treasure of grace."

"Only one mortal sin is enough."

"And once lost, it is lost forever."

"What a tragedy it is that so many lose their innocence in one single day! When a boy falls victim to sin, Paradise closes its doors; the Blessed Virgin and his Guardian Angel disappear; music is silent; light fades away. God will no longer be in his heart; the star-spangled path he was following vanishes; he falls and will linger like an island in the midst of the sea, in one single place; a sea of fire will extend to the furthest horizon of eternity, falling down into the abyss of chaos. Over his head in the darkly menacing sky, flash the lightning flares of divine justice. Satan has hastened to join him, and loads him now with chains; he places a foot upon his neck, and raising his horrible countenance toward the sky, he shouts, 'I have won. Your son is now my slave. He is no longer yours. Joy is over for him.' If in His Justice God then removes from beneath him that one little place where he is standing, he will be lost forever."

"Yet he may rise again! The Mercy of God is infinite! A good confession will restore grace to him and his title as the son of God."

"But not his innocence! And what consequences will linger on in him after that initial sin! He is now aware of the sin of which he had no knowledge previously; terrible will be the evil inclinations he will experience; he will feel the terrible debt he has contracted toward Divine Justice and will find that he is now weaker in his spiritual battles. He will feel that which he had never felt before: shame, sadness, remorse."

"To think that previously it was said of him, 'Let the little children come unto Me. They will be like God's Angels in Heaven. My Son, give me your heart.'"

"Ah, those wretches who are guilty for the loss of innocence in a child commit a hideous crime. Jesus said, 'Whoever shall give scandal to

any of these little ones who believe in Me, it would have been better if he had put a millstone around his neck, and drown in the depths of the sea. Woe unto the world because of scandal. It is not possible that scandal be prevented, but woe unto him who is guilty of it. Beware, lest you despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in Heaven see constantly the face of My Father Who is in Heaven and Who demands vengeance.'"

"Wretches, indeed, are they! But no less wretched are those who permit them to steal their innocence."

Then they both began to stroll up and down, talking about how innocence could be preserved.

One of them said, "Boys make a great mistake when they think that only those who have sinned should do penance. Penance is necessary so that innocence may be retained. Had St. Aloysius not done penance, he would, beyond any doubt, have committed mortal sins. This should be preached, driven home, and taught constantly to the young. How many more there would be who would retain their innocence, whereas now there are so few."

"The Apostle says it. We should be carrying within our own body the mortification of Jesus Christ everywhere, so that the life of Jesus may manifest in our body."

"Jesus, who was holy, immaculate and innocent lived His Life in privation and suffering."

"So did the Blessed Virgin Mary and all the saints."

"They did this to give an example to youth. St. Paul says, 'If you live by the flesh, you shall die; but if you slay the action of the flesh with the spirit, you shall live."

"So innocence can only be retained through penance!"

"Yet, many wish to retain their innocence while living in freedom!"

"Fools! Is it not written that he was taken away, so that malice should not destroy his spirit, and temptation might not lead his soul into sin? For the lure of vanity obscures what is good, and the vortex of lust perverts the innocent soul. The innocent, therefore, has two enemies: the evil maxims and bad words of the wicked and concupiscence. Does not the Lord say that death at an early age is the reward of the innocent because it sets him free from battle? 'Because he was pleasing to God, He was loved, and because he lived among sinners, he snatched him away.' 'He lived but briefly, and had a great career.' 'For his soul was loved by God, and for this He hastened to pluck him forth out of iniquity.' 'He was taken away so that malice might

not destroy his spirit, and temptation might not lead his soul into sin.'"

"Fortunate are the young who embrace the cross of penance and who repeat with Job (27:5) with a steadfast resolution *'Donec deficiam, non recedam ab innocentia mea* [I will maintain my innocence to my dying day]."'

"Hence, mortification is needed to overcome the boredom they experience in prayer."

"It is also written: *Psallam et intelligam in via immacualta* (Psalm 100:2). *Quando venies ad me? Petite et accipietis. Pater noster!* [All along the immaculate path I will sing and I will understand. When will you come to me and ask and you shall receive Our Father!]"

"Mortification of the mind by accepting humiliation, by obedience to one's superiors and to the rules."

"It is likewise written: *Si mei non fuerint dominati, tunc immaculatus ero et emandabor a delicto maximo* [Never let (pride) dominate me, then I shall be above reproach and free from grave sin] (Psalm 19:13). This is pride. God resists against the proud and gives grace to the humble. He who humbles himself shall be exalted, and he who exalts himself shall be humbled. Obey your superiors."

"Mortification always in telling the truth, in acknowledging one's faults and whatever dangers one may find himself in. Then, one will always be well advised, especially by his confessor."

"*Pro anima tua ne confundaris dicere verum*, for your soul be not ashamed to tell the truth (Ecclesiasticus 4:24). For there is a kind of blush that calls for sin, and another kind of blush which calls for glory and grace."

"Mortification of the heart by restraining its ill-advised impulses, by loving everyone for God's sake, and resolutely turning away from anyone who we realize is tempting our innocence."

"Jesus said it. If your hand or your foot give scandal, cup it off and cast it from thee; it is better that you go through life without a foot or without a hand than to be cast into eternal fire with both your hands and your feet. If your eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it away from you; it is better that you should enter eternity with but one eye only than to be cast with both your eyes into the flames of Hell."

"Mortification in courageously and frankly enduring the scorn of human respect. *Exacuerunt, ut gladium, linguas suas: intenderunt arcum, rem amaram, ut sagittent in occultis immaculatum* [They sharpened their tongues like swords shooting bitter words like arrows shooting them at the innocent from cover](Psalm 64:3)."

"They will overcome the evil person who scoffs, fearing that his

superiors may find him out, at the thought of the terrible words of Jesus: 'The son of man shall be ashamed of the one who will be ashamed of him and his words, when He shall come in all His majesty, and the majesty of His Father and of the Holy Angels.'"

"Mortification of the eyes, in looking at things, and people, in reading, and by avoiding all bad or unsuitable books."

"One essential thing. I have made a pact with my eyes never to even think of a virgin. And in the psalms: Turn away your eyes, so that they may not look on vanity."

"Mortification of the ears: never listen to evil conversations or mawkish or godless speech."

"In Ecclesiasticus 28:28, we read: *Sepi aures tuas spinis, linguam nequam noli audire* [Fence your ears with a quick thorn hedge never heed a wicked tongue]."

"Mortification is speech: do not let curiosity overcome you."

"It is likewise written: Put a door and a lock upon you lips. Take heed, lest you slip with your tongue and fall in the sight of you enemies who lie in wait for you, and your fall will be incurable unto death (Ecclesiasticus, ib)."

"Mortification of the palate: Do not eat or drink too much."

"Too much eating and drinking brought the flood upon the world, and fire rained down over Sodom and Gomorrah, and a thousand other punishments came over the Jewish people."

"In short, mortification by bearing all that happens to us during the course of the day, the cold and heat, without seeking our own comforts. Mortify your members that are on earth (Colossians 3:5)."

"Remember that Jesus told us: *Si quis vult post me venire, abneget semetipsum et tollat crucem suam quotidie et sequatur me* [If anyone wants to come after Me, let him deny himself, carry his cross daily and follow Me] (Luke 9:23)."

"With his provident hand, God surrounds the innocent with crosses and thorns, even as He did with Job, Joseph, Tobias and other saints. *Quia acephus eras Deo, necesse fuit, ut tentatio probaret te* [Because you were acceptable to God, it was necessary that you be tested]."

"The path of the innocent has its trials and sacrifices, but it finds strength in Holy Communion, for he who goes often to Communion will have life everlasting: he lives in Jesus and Jesus lives in him. He lives of the very life of Jesus, and will he be raised by Him on the Last Day. This is the wheat of the elect, the vine that buds with virgins. *Parasti in conspectu meo mensam adversus eos, qui tribulant me. Cadent a latere tuo*

mille et decem millia a dextris truis, ad te autem non appropinquabunt [You set up a dining table right in front of those who give me trouble, but they will fall thousands and ten thousands by your sides and they shall not get close to you]."

"And the most sweet Virgin by Him beloved is His Mother. *Ego mater pulchrae. dilectionis et timoris et agnitionis et sanctae spei. In me gratia omnis (to know) viae et veritatis; in me omnis spes vitae et virtutis. Ego diligentes me diligo. Qui elucidant me, vitam aeternam habebunt Terribilis, ut castrorum acies ordinata.* [I am the mother of beautiful love and fear and knowledge. In me you will come to know the right way and the ways to truth; all hope to live and be virtuous is found in me. I love those who love me. Those who make me known will have eternal life. I am terrible just like an army set for war]."

The two little maidens then turned and slowly climbed the slope. One of them exclaimed, "The salvation of the just stems from the Lord. He is their protector in times of tribulation. The Lord shall help them and shall set them free. He seizes them from the hands of sinners and shall save them because they put their hopes in Him (Psalm 57)."

The other went on: "God girdled me with strength and made the road I was to follow immaculate."

When the two of them came to the center of the magnificent carpet, they turned around.

"Yes!" one of them cried out. "Innocence, when crowned by penance, is the queen of all virtue."

The other also exclaimed, "How beautiful and splendid is a chaste generation! Its memory is immortal in the eyes of God and man. Men imitate it when it is present, and long for it when it is gone to Heaven, crowned triumphantly in eternity, having wrested their reward for their chaste battles. What a triumph! What rejoicing! How glorious a thing to present God with the immaculate stole of one's Holy Baptism after so many battles waged, amid the applause, the canticles, the splendor of the heavenly hosts!"

As they were thus speaking of the rewards awaiting innocence retained through penance, Don Bosco saw hosts of angels appear, who descended on that candid carpet. They joined the two young maidens, who took their place in the middle of them all. There was a vast multitude of them, and they sang, "*Benedictus Deus et Pater Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, qui benedixit nos in ipso in omni benedictione spirituali in coelestibus in Christo; qui elegit nos in ipso ante mundi constitutionem, ut essemus sanc-*

ti et immaculati in conspectu eius in charitate et praedestinavit nos in adoptionen per Jesum Christum (Eph. 1:4) [Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of Heaven in Christ. Before the world was made, He chose us, chose us in Christ to be holy and spotless and live through love in His presence, determining that we should become his adopted sons, through Jesus Christ]."

The two maidens then intoned a magnificent hymn, with such words and notes that only the angels nearer to the center were able to follow. The others sang too, but Don Bosco could not hear their voices, although they made gestures and moved their lips as if singing.

The two maidens sang, "*Me propter innocentiam susceptisti et confirmasti me in conspectu tuo in aeternum. Benedictus Dominus Deus a saeculo et usque in saeculum. Fiat! Fiat!* [You have made me welcome because I was innocent, you have made me steadfast in Your presence forever. May the Lord God be ever praised, forever and ever. So be it! So be it!"

Now, other hosts of angels came to join the first ones, and the others after them. They were arrayed in many colors, with ornaments differing one from the other, and very different from those worn by the two little maidens. Yet, the richness and splendor of it was magnificent. They were each so handsome that the human mind could never in any way conceive even a remote idea of what they were like. Nothing could describe this scene, though if one adds words to words, one may perhaps render some confused idea of it.

When the two girls had completed their canticle, they could all be heard singing together in one immense, harmonious canticle, the likes of which has never before been heard nor will ever be heard here on earth.

They sang, "*Ei, qui potens est vos conservare sine peccato et constituere ante conspectum gloriae suae imaculatos in exultatione, in adventu Domini nostri Jesu Christi; Soli Deo Salvatori nostro, per Jesum Christum Dominum nostrum, gloria et magnificentia, imperium et potestas ante omne saeculum, et nunc et in omnia saecula saeculorum. Amen* [To him, who is able to keep you without sin and has allowed you to stand immaculate right in front of His glory, when our Lord Jesus will appear, to him alone, who is our Savior Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory and splendor, power and rule before all ages for now and for all ages. Amen]."

As they were singing, ever more angels came to join them, and when the canticle was over, they all soared slowly aloft, one after the other, and disappeared together with the entire vision.

Then, Don Bosco woke up.

23

REPORT FROM MOTHER DAGHERO TO DON BOSCO

August 22, 1884

Most Reverend Father:

Thanks to Divine Providence that always assists us in a truly marvelous way, we ended our first General Chapter this morning. Father John Cagliero presided over it in your name, our Reverend Father Rector Major, and Father John Bonetti, our own Director, and the theologian Father Bertello were present at the sessions several times.

During this Chapter, there were fifteen sessions in all. During the first ones, we examined our holy Rules and several of them were coordinated, but not altered. We clarified others in the light of our experience, and introduced a few things, taken over from the Rules of our brothers the Salesians. During our last sessions, we endeavored to adopt for ourselves the very fine and highly significant deliberations of the General Chapters of the Salesians, our brothers, your worthy sons, and I hope that our observance of these deliberations will have a very beneficial effect on the development of our Congregation.

This is what I was eager to communicate to you, Most Reverend Father, also in the name of our Chapter and our Mother Superiors. The minutes of the meetings and the deliberations taken will very soon be sent to you, together with our holy Rules, so that you may do with them whatever you decide is best *in Domino*, and approve them if you think this is to the advantage of your daughters in Jesus.

Our holy retreat is drawing to an end, and relying on what our Reverend Father Superiors tell me, I can give you the comforting news that it has been most beneficial, and we owe this to the support of your prayers, oh venerable Father, and to the zeal of our good preachers. *Deo gratias*!

After the general Communion, which we shall offer up for your long life, dear Father, next Sunday, there will be twenty who will receive the habit, there will be about thirty novices who will profess their triennial vows and six their final vows. There are approximately 250 sisters participating in this holy retreat and some sixty postulants. Thanks to God, the Congregation is in a fairly satisfactory moral and physical condition. But please assist us with your fervent prayers and precious advice, and we will hope to have good news to give you, likewise, in the future. Please accept

the respectful regards of the community, especially from the novices and sisters now about to take their vows. Pray for me, please, and for all of us, that none of us for the love of God become unworthy of the Divine Mercy.

With all the esteem and filial veneration, I remain now and always in Jesus,

Your humble and most devoted daughter,
Sister Catherine Daghero
From Nizza Monferrato

24

DON BOSCO

Éclair, May 17, 1884

In recent times, we have been obliged, for a number of reasons, to delve into the lowest layers of our society, and we have encountered the evils of misery face to face. We have gone down to see the unknown depths of vice and ignorance with our own eyes, that vice and ignorance that live side by side, and we have been dazed. In our own world, no one has any idea of the incredible depths of evil and ignorance existing at the very core of our presumed civilization. A shameful poverty corrodes our unhappy society to the very heart. We saw it and heard it ourselves, and we should pay attention to it.

Just as we were contemplating in horror the ravages wrought by the plague around us, the *Life of Don Bosco* by Du Boys accidentally came into our hands. We read with the keenest interest the simple, yet impressive account of the mighty accomplishments of this saintly priest.

We were frightened by the evil we saw, but the hope of a remedy for it, given to us by Don Bosco, restored our courage.

What this man has achieved and is still achieving sounds miraculous. The beginnings of those great accomplishments, like all beginnings, were small; practically imperceptible. For a long period, Don Bosco was forced to gather his boys in the middle of a meadow, without roof over their heads, and teach them their catechism. There came a day when even this last shelter was denied him. But he had faith in God, and his spirit did not give way to despair. He kept on developing his plans. It was then that his

enemies, themselves priests, tried to convince others that he was insane. The outcome proved Don Bosco right.

Today, his Congregation is established in both the Old and the New World with 150 houses, 150 houses where children are educated at all levels, 150 houses where punishment is unknown, and everything goes on with kindness.

Every year, hundreds and hundreds of Christian workmen, skilled laborers, priests, learned men emerge from Don Bosco's institutions to spread light throughout the world in their turn and they are at the head of all pious undertakings. This is how Don Bosco salvages from the streets children without father or mother, pulls out of prison thousands of these people and gets them to be level-headed, learned and believers instead of being condemned to hard labor. It is even said that of all the children Don Bosco has taken in, not one, mind you, not one single one has gone to prison; yet God knows whether they had not been there before they knew him.

It's because of the presence of this regenerating power, provided by Catholicism, that our hopes are born again. Speaking from a purely human standpoint, I venture so far as to say that we are lost! But God is there, and even though there is an immense, frightening amount of evil all over, Don Bosco proves that everything is not yet lost.

Thanks to God, we have plenty of excellent Christians who understand the situation. They know full well that no sword or man alone can save us from chaos, and they realize that a revolution in the government would only serve to briefly distract the attention of those who do not think. They realize that a social revolution is necessary and that this can only be brought about by Catholicism. That is why they support every pious undertaking. Yes, but there are not enough of them as yet. There is so much that is bad and so much faith and charity are needed to provide instruction and well being.

Once again, a change of government would not achieve anything. What we need is a total revolution in our thinking. The people have to be educated, youth must be supervised and our prejudices must be destroyed. We must penetrate into the hovels that we have seen, to get an idea of the appalling ignorance in which a major portion of our people live. In the heart of France, in our largest cities, in Lyons itself, there are dens where all moral ideas are dead, where hatred for the priest has reached its limit because he is absolutely unknown. Well, the nation can be regenerated by dint of undertakings like those of Don Bosco's, by a wave of charity and kindness, and only by that.

Let it be thoroughly understood, any reform that is not based on Catholicism would be necessarily ephemeral and absurd.

May such works multiply then on the ancient soil of Lyons, stained by the blood of martyrs. Wickedness threatens to engulf France; let us build dams everywhere. Such dams would be Catholic schools, institutes, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, etc., etc.

In the name of our country, let's not give up! Let us follow the path blazed for us by Don Bosco. Let us work and give donations.

Donations? Yes, they are needed, and plenty of them. I know of a school operated by brothers, I know of a school operated by sisters, I know of a school that has no money at all, and they are forced to refuse applications to take in children. Now please note that I really do know this school of brothers, this school of sisters and this institution. What are we to think of Lyons charity if everywhere things are the same?

Ah, may this ancient tradition of charity never weaken! I was reading yesterday in a report by Maxime du Camp on the Parisian charitable institutions that in the capital alone, these institutions absorb between sixty and eighty million francs a year! People of Lyons, if Paris gave you such a good example at the last municipal elections, do not tolerate that Paris should surpass you also in charity, you whose city is known as the "city of good works."

Read the excellent book by Monsieur du Boys on Don Bosco to find encouragement and without sticking only to theory, get to work and put it into practice immediately. And so, once more I say make donations for all our schools, for all our institutions and undertakings.

Augustin Remy

25

THE POEM BY DON BOSCO

The great poets like Homer, Virgil, Dante, Milton, etc., at different stages of human history, have thought out and translated into poetry and plastic arts their ideas, and they have referred to these productions as poems. This term was applied to Raphael's gigantic work *The Debate on the Blessed Sacrament.* Immense cathedrals, too, raised in honor of God by the faith of our fathers, have also been called poems, and more justifiably so! They were ingenious and found another way

to express ideas other than verses and with no lesser splendor or grandeur.

There is yet another class of poets, a truly epic kind of poet, the men who erect a moral edifice with living material. These are the men who found empires or create nations. In a different order of ideas and from high, mystic levels that control human nature from on high, one can include among the highest achievements the founders of the most fertile religious communities like Saints Benedict, Francis of Assisi, Dominic and Ignatius. Divinely inspired, these great saints accomplished magnificent things that were first suited to the needs of their contemporaries, and which later exercised a lasting influence over the world.

Don Bosco has been a poet much like these men of God: he realized that the great destructions evident in our day and age called for new institutions more than for a restoration of those already existing, and conceived quite suddenly a vast design, availing himself ideally of the means with which he would be able to carry it out in order to respond to the immense religious and social needs which had arisen.

Don Bosco knew ahead of time that he would be able to transform their apparently base and valueless material into precious jewels worthy to adorn the temple of God. Don Bosco was mystical and a great architect, even in the days when he had nothing of his own, with only two or three children attending his lessons. He could see his workshops filled with thousands of children and students; he would prepare and foster many vocations for the priesthood, erect the domes of his churches in densely populated cities and in far away deserts.

He developed his poem in his mind, and, at last, he found the tangible expression to reveal it to the eyes of the world.

Dante made a sublime effort to lead the world beyond, to the eyes of this everyday world, but did he succeed with his magic brush in doing anything more than to give us a few glimpses of the afterlife, already revealed to us by our sacred books?

Don Bosco, who was a genuine visionary, has made of his poetic ideal a living thing. His intuitions that for a time were considered by others to be the hallucinations of a diseased mind were but the seeds of a new creation. Now the seed has blossomed, and Don Bosco has given a concrete form to his ideal, translating it into a magnificent reality.

Once again, is this wonderful creation very different, as an intellectual concept, from that which must have been formed in the mind of Homer when he planned his thoughts and translated them with the 150 cantos of

his mighty epic?

Don Bosco, instead of composing verses and stanzas, wrote his poem with men. Can we believe that this poetic matter is any was easier to handle?

One often detects the inspiration of the Holy Spirit on Don Bosco's lips. He is a poet-orator[5]; but even if he were not able to speak, his works would speak for him.

May God keep Don Bosco, this Homer of the Catholic Apostolate, for a long time. Furthermore, his creation will last, no matter what may come; it will not die with him. Elijah shall yield his cloak to Elisha and in his turn Elisha shall give it to the newly elect, summoned by God, among the Salesians. (*Du Boys, Don Bosco*, pages 317-320).

26

THE BISHOP OF PINEROLO'S LETTER TO FATHER JOHN BAPTIST LEMOYNE

Pinerolo, July 18, 1885

Very Reverend Sir:

I could not explain to Your Reverence how happy I was when I read your gracious letter of the 11th of the current month, informing me that the venerable Don Bosco has condescended to take an active part in restoring my cathedral. I am most profoundly grateful to him, not only for the generous offer of 100 lire that he chose to send me, but also for the prayers he promises to have the children of your Congregation say for me. A donation of 100 lire from Don Bosco is worth more than 10,000 lire from someone else because I know full well the difficulties he is in for an analogous reason; namely, the church in Rome. I can but wish the generous donor a hundredfold reward for his offering to me from wealthy people, while reserving to myself the right to do something in my turn for the Oratory, as soon as I have disposed of these heavy expenses undertaken for the Cathedral and the Episcopal College.

Would Your Reverence kindly inform our venerable Don Bosco of my fervent gratitude, and accept it also for yourself, asking him to give a special blessing to these repair works.

[5] One would have to hear Don Bosco speak in his native language, Italian, to appreciate the powerful effect he has in the pulpit, and what he must have achieved by it in the full flower of his youth and strength.

Since Your Reverence chose to mention what little I was able to do for Don Bosco last year, would you please remind him that come tomorrow, it is precisely a year ago that he honored my villa with his visit. Please tell him that I am putting the house once again at his disposal, and that I sincerely hope he can come to regain the good health that he found there last year. Please tell him that I would call on him to invite him in person, but cannot leave this place because I have some important business to deal with, so he must kindly accept my written invitation. It is your duty to make him come because it is also your duty to keep the Father of your Congregation alive for many a long year to come, especially since we are all in agreement about the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of his first Mass.

Please let me know on what day Don Bosco will start his holidays at San Maurizio, so that I can make all the necessary arrangements, and if possible, come to meet him in Turin.

With renewed thanks, I am gratefully yours,

Your most obedient and grateful servant,
Philip, Bishop

27

THE MAYOR OF TURIN'S LETTER TO DON BOSCO

City of Turin, Office of the Mayor
File No. 9261

After urgently begging me on several occasions to find accommodation in the schools of this town for a given number of orphans whose parents died of cholera in Naples, Countess Sanseverino Vimercati and Princess Strongoli have now sent me a telegram, and I take the liberty of copying it here in the margin, to inform you that no more orphans will be coming.[6]

I very much regret that these two ladies did not think that it was only advisable to question the relatives of the orphans we are dealing with as to their intentions before making arrangements for their settlement. Consequently, I was obliged to cause Your Reverence some needless and

[6] Telegram: Mayor, Turin. Despite urgent requests, impossible to persuade relatives of orphans to be sent to you since distance was judged excessive. All the same, thank you for your noble, generous offer.

quite substantial inconvenience. It is my duty to thank you most gratefully for your courteous cooperation to respond to my request. While assuring you that I shall remember with the utmost gratification your deferential acceptance, the supremely humane principles peculiar to you and of which you gave me renewed and magnificent proof in this present instance, I trust you will accept my most deeply respectful regards.

The Mayor
Di Sambuy

28

A VISITOR FROM LYONS CALLS ON DON BOSCO, THE ORATORY AND THE EXHIBIT

December 1884

Dear Friend:

I must write you something about my journey. I had heard you talk so often about Don Bosco's great institute that I wanted to see and admire all that he has accomplished with the help of God with my own eyes at my leisure.

It was night when I got to Turin, but word of my arrival had already preceded me. There was a guide to meet me at the station and I had supper at the Oratory. I was given a neat, tidy little cell. I was offered painstaking service and shown truly Christian, exquisite kindness and courtesy. There is no lack of any of this in Don Bosco's house. Had it not been for the late hour, I would not have needed a guide, for as you are aware, whenever any stranger in Turin asks anybody how they can get to Don Bosco's, they are instantly given the most detailed instructions. "Take this and that road if you are going to Don Bosco," one is told. I was not surprised to hear this because this institution truly is an honor to the city of Turin, where Don Bosco is immensely popular. Even on the train, I heard several people talk about him.

The Oratory of St. Francis of Sales looked like a village to me, and certainly a village is far less densely populated! Practically 800 children! Without mentioning the heads of shops, the employees, the Salesian priests and superiors who govern the oratory and the pious Society. It is a small town within a big one. Perfect order prevails there; the clock and

the bell are always promptly obeyed.

I paid my first visit to the Oratory church, which is dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. This spacious shrine is built in the style of St. Peter's in Rome, even with its handsome dome. The architecture is perfect, and the church is handsomely decorated and adorned, particularly by a large, magnificent picture of Mary Help of Christians. It would not be out of place to describe this church as the Fouvieres of Turin, for it is visited every day by a great many pious Christians and sightseers. I have been told that Divine Grace has touched some of the latter who went there merely as tourists, but went away from it thoroughly converted.

I was delighted to see Don Bosco. This holy priest is at all times most gracious and affable; in his goodness, he makes one think of the Divine Master. Among other things, I asked him about his suffering during his recent illness and of the successful prayers that had been offered for his recovery. "Yes, my children are still small," he answered. "They still need me, but should God ask for my resignation, He will undertake to make them grow up." This good priest is compelled to submit to the most painstaking care in the minutest details because this was the wish and express order of His Holiness Leo XIII.

I inspected the workshops during the course of the day. Our French printers would envy the lovely printing establishment with its vast machines. After seeing this model printing shop, I was most eager and delighted to linger on in the workshop and watch how the type letters were precisely and perfectly composed by the hands of the children. These two shops, together with that for bookbinding and gilt-edging, supply a well-stocked bookshop that exhibits handsome liturgical volumes, the classics, and the most interesting Italian and French books. The shops for tailors, shoemakers and carpenters are equipped with everything they could possibly want, but I must pay a special compliment to the blacksmiths and locksmiths, who do very important work and are well versed in mechanics.

I will not say anything about the many students there: like the trade students, they are skilled workers, their smiling faces reflect that gentle joy and tranquil serenity that is the outcome of wisdom and sound piety. It is delightful to hear thousands of voices pray and sing together every evening in tribute to the Most Blessed Sacrament. The sight and sound restore the soul and make one's

heart overflow with joy.

Yet, this immense establishment is still too small for Don Bosco: the boarding school at Valsalice on the right bank of the Po is only an inadequate branch of his institution. In the very heart of Turin, he has built another immense, splendid and lovely church, consecrated to St. John the Evangelist. Near this same church, another Oratory will soon provide shelter for some three or four hundred children. I can understand now how the name of Don Bosco is on everybody's lips.

I might perhaps have left the town without troubling to pay a visit to the Exhibit here, which suffered a setback on account of the cholera epidemic, had I not been told (forgive me for saying this) that there was something of Don Bosco's there. I could not forgo a visit to it. As in every exhibit, a good deal of space is devoted to inventions and to futile and quite secondary gadgets. All the same, there is a good deal of both excellent and beautiful items in the pavilions dedicated to railway coaches and railway engines. But it was in the immense pavilion of the last section of the exhibit that one could see the show of a complete and industrial synthetic process functioning before one's eyes; it was both interesting and instructive, and it was organized by Don Bosco. There before your eyes, you can embrace in one single glance all the branches of industry that go into the making of a book, from the manufacturing of paper to the bookstore, passing through the various phases of the type casting shop, printing shop and bookbinding department. Nothing was lacking in the process, but everything followed a logical sequence.

In an immense vat to the right, you could have seen the paste that is later converted into paper by a model machine of recent construction, with all the latest benefits of modern scientific progress. To the left was the bookstore, where you could buy a book made with this same paste that was waiting to be churned in the machine before it becomes paper.

Now take a short walk; follow this paste as it falls first into a large brick vat where it is again churned so that it can be mixed smoothly with pure water; follow this whitish liquid through the various sifters which drain it of water; and you will then see it, lying on endless rolls of linen, pass between the giant cylinders that compress it, dry it, and convert it into a flexible, resistant paper that is cut before your eyes, for almost immediate delivery, in spotless white sheets, to the young printers. They have already had their printing plate with types prepared set out in front of them by their companions in the typesetting shop, and they subject the page to the action of the printing press, and then pass it on to the bookbinders who fold it, join it with all its pages to be solidly sewn together. In a word, you have a morocco-leather bound

book that is passed over to the gilder to be artistically adorned with elegant gold lines.

While I was there, a magnificent edition of *Fabiola* was being printed. It had a many very fine engravings as illustrations. I was amazed. Beyond any doubt, this delightful ensemble, this enthralling synthesis of labor and rapid execution on economic lines that detracts nothing from the perfection of the article produced, was the most interesting and useful thing I saw at the Turin exhibit. It will remain my best, possibly my one real recollection.

Don Bosco has shown the whole world that the Church and the priesthood are not enemies, but on the contrary, are the best of friends for healing your civilization and fostering true progress.

I am getting back to my journey and to my impressions with the one single thought that I expressed at the beginning of this letter. I have seen what God has accomplished through Don Bosco. God has given His blessing and His grace. Don Bosco, his contribution of charitable, intelligent dedication. Don Bosco's sole capital was his poor mother, from whom he inherited the generous zeal of his noble heart, an old watch, the gift of a charitable friend, and a few *centimes*.

My friend, you may be assured of my fervent gratitude to you for your kind recommendation of me to Don Bosco, and of my most devoted regards in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Your friend who is honored to be,
A Salesian Cooperator

(Salesian *Bulletin* [French Edition])

29

PROTEST FROM FATHER JOHN CAGLIERO AND FATHER JOSEPH FAGNANO OVER THE APPROPRIATION OF PROPERTY PERTAINING TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH

June 1, 1884

Most Eminent Prince:

Clama ne cesses et quasi tuba exalta vocem tuam (Isaias, 58:1), said the

Lord to His servant. Lift up your voice like a trumpet, claim unceasingly the rights of Heaven here on earth, of justice over iniquity, of reason over brute force. The Man of God, the Vicar of Jesus Christ, the Great Prophet, the Roman Pontiff, the Avenger of the Divine and Mortal rights of the Church of Jesus Christ has repeatedly raised his voice in protest against those who have wickedly pillaged him, who oppress his freedom, who squander his ecclesiastical property. More forcefully than ever before did his voice echo recently, arousing from thousands and thousands of people all around the world a protest against the sacrilegious sentence by which the Court of Cassation in Rome wanted to hit the heart of the Catholic world, and has become, so to speak, arbiter of the universe in Rome, and has actually hit that most cosmopolitan of institutions, the most beneficent, humanitarian and civilizing institution for all peoples of the earth; we mean the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.

There still remained one more crime to be committed by the revolution, and it was committed last January: the subjection to Italian National Revenue and eventually to the arbitrary decisions of and dependence on the Italian government of all the cosmopolitan funds of the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, interested to be the sacred, universal and inviolable patrimony of the Catholic faith and the means to spread the Holy Gospel and with it civilization to the barbarian and pagan nations. Most Eminent Prince, the echo of this crime committed against the freedom of the Gospel and its propagation, and the protest of the whole world even echoed along the banks of the Rio Negro, causing great grief, indignation and humiliation to us Italian missionaries there. Even the very savages in our remote territory of Patagonia and the still more remote islanders of Tierra del Fuego were astonished by this despotic, tyrannical gesture, performed to the detriment of the divine faith they have recently embraced! How could they possibly understand the behavior of a government that though Italian, persecutes an Italian Pope, while he himself has sent Italian missionaries to civilize them in the most southern area of the American continent?

Lo and behold, the Protestant propaganda machine, which unfortunately got here before we did with the sponsorship, assistance and protection of the British Government, now chuckling and applauding the Italian government for thus persecuting the Catholic Propagation of the Faith. The motivations given by the department of foreign affairs in defense of such procedure, are, in the opinion of eminent men of law, far from juridical, being ridiculous so that a mere protest by some foreign power would be sufficient to overthrow them. For this question, *euntes in universerum mundum, praedicate evangelium omni creaturae* [go out into the whole world and preach the good news to

every living creature] (Mark 16:15), which is said to be purely internal and national in nature, would then become foreign and international. In fact, a simple observation made by the Ambassador of the United States of America about their American College existing in Rome was good enough to knock down the entire Italian jurisprudence gathered in assembly, and also its irrevocable verdict.

Since we do not dispose of any other weapon with which to defend the most holy cosmopolitan rights of the Propagation of the Faith, we protest before God and mankind against this act that is injurious to the freedom of the Church, harmful to religion and to civilization, and humiliating to our country. We repeat, it is humiliating to our country, because if the Italian language echoes sweetly and melodiously along the banks of the Rio Negro, the Chubut and Magellanes, as far as Tierra del Fuego, if Italian glory, art and science form the objects of enchanted wonder here, it is due to the action, the impulse and funds of this same Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith which has been trampled underfoot and violated by the Italian government.

Then, if not out of love for justice and right, let the Italian government stop its hostile campaign against the Church, at least out of love for our country and for the honor of Italy's good name. Let it leave to the Church that freedom and right to teach, civilize and save the world that is lawfully hers by the mandate received from her Divine Founder. *Euntes in universum mundum praaedicate Evanglium omni creaturae* (Mark 16:15). Then the Italian missionaries need no longer be ashamed of their country or of their government in the presence of the savages of Patagonia. If our protests, jointly voiced with those of the Church, the Pope and Bishops throughout the world, do not obtain the desired effect with the other nations of the earth, then they will certainly obtain it from the power of Heaven. Jesus Christ, the King of Kings, Lord over all who rule, assured us when He said, "*Nolite timere! Ego vici mundum* [Be not afraid! I conquered the world]."

Meanwhile, we shall continue in our protest and our indignation until the might of right shall no longer be oppressed by the sole right of might. Most Eminent Prince, bless our Patagonian converts and our immense field of evangelical endeavor, as well as the Salesian missionaries working on the banks of the Rio Negro.

Rev. John Cagliero, Pro-Vicar Apostolic
Rev. Joseph Fagnano, Prefect Apostolic

30

A PETITION OF CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO POPE LEO XIII FOR FATHER JOHN CAGLIERO'S EPISCOPAL ORDINATION

Turin, September 26, 1884

Most Blessed Father:

Since Your Holiness graciously instructed me and other cardinal colleagues of mine two years ago to investigate the matter of establishing a Pro-Vicariate and an Apostolic Prefecture in faraway Patagonia to be entrusted to the Salesian Congregation, which has already missions and a substantial number of priests and cooperators there, I could not but rejoice greatly when the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith agreed to this proposal, and Your Holiness deigned to appoint the worthy Salesian priests Father John Cagliero as Pro-Vicar Apostolic for Northern and Central Patagonia and Father Joseph Fagnano as Prefect Apostolic for Southern Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego.

It is now nearly time for Father John Cagliero and some twenty other priests and clerics to depart for this distant mission, and I venture to inform Your Holiness of the hope that the new Pro-Vicar Apostolic will leave Europe distinguished by the episcopal consecration.

This would mean a very great joy for the indefatigable and worthy founder of the Salesian Congregation, Father John Bosco. It would be an honor that the Congregation itself could never appreciate enough. If he were enhanced by the grace of the Holy Spirit and vested with this new dignity, the newly elect would have a greater prestige on the missionaries and the authorities of that territory and could overcome the obstacles that he foresees in the exercise of his ministry with greater ease.

In view of the successful results obtained by the Salesian missions in the extensive territories above mentioned, it will not be long before the presence of a bishop may become imperative. Now it would be extremely difficult in view of the no less than 300 leagues that separate the residence of the Pro-Vicar Apostolic from Buenos Aires, if he were to be consecrated bishop in America.

Having voiced my humble hopes, I leave all decisions to the exalted

wisdom of Your Holiness, feeling certain that you will graciously dispose whatever will be the most pleasing to God and ensure His greater glory, and the more extensive welfare of souls.

Prostrate at your Holy Feet, I kiss them with the greatest reverence, imploring your Apostolic blessing.

(Signature)

31

LETTER FROM CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO CARDINAL NINA

Turin, September 26, 1884

Most Reverend and Eminent Sir:

Poor Don Bosco, who is quite exhausted from his work and in poor health to boot, hopes for something that will add luster to his Congregation and promote the welfare of souls now being won over for God in the Salesian missions of Patagonia.

He foresees the Rev. John Cagliero, who has been elected Pro-Vicar Apostolic of Northern and Central Patagonia by the Holy Father, will one day receive the dignity of episcopal consecration. But since Father John Cagliero is soon to leave from here, while any further residence of his in civilized countries seems highly remote, he would like the Holy Father to make him Bishop before he leaves Europe. To this end, he has asked me, who, to a certain extent, had a hand in the matter of creating the Pro-Vicariate and Prefecture Apostolic, to address a humble petition to the Holy Father.

Such a petition would pass through the revered hands of Your Dear and Most Revered Eminence, since you are the protector and distinguished benefactor of the Salesians, and we, therefore, need your advice. If you do believe that this would not prove displeasing to the Holy Father, I would like to ask you to give this to the Eminent Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, so that he may submit the petition. Should you, however, feel that our petition comes at an untimely moment, do not take any action on it, for I and Don Bosco will be grateful equally for your illuminated advice as for the service, if rendered.

Kissing your hands, etc.

32

LETTER FROM CARDINAL NINA TO CARDINAL ALIMONDA

Rome, October 4, 1884

Most Reverend and Eminent Sir:

I received your letter with the enclosed petition on the 29th, relating to the desire that a Salesian be elevated to the rank of Titular Bishop. First of all, I cannot thank you enough for the interest you take on every possible occasion in the welfare of this well deserving Congregation. I wish to inform you that since the matter in question exclusively concerns the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, I passed it on without any hesitation the morning of the 30th to His Eminence the Prefect thereof, but first discussed it all thoroughly with him and then with the Bishop Secretary, and found both of them very well disposed to lend their support before His Holiness. I do not mean to lose sight of the matter until it has been safely steered into port. I trust that Our Lord will enlighten His Holiness, so that our good Don Bosco may have this consolation in the midst of all his tribulations.

I received a letter about him this morning from Father John Bonetti, who informed me that his health has improved considerably. Let us hope that our Lord grant him further years in which he may live to consolidate ever better the gigantic undertaking that I feel is destined to render great services to the Church in these days of calamity.

Do not forget me in your prayers, while I assure you that I will faithfully remember you. Humbly kissing your hand, I am, as always with the greatest esteem, etc.

33

LETTERS OF THANKS FROM FATHER JOHN CAGLIERO FOR HIS ELECTION AS BISHOP

A. To Bishop Dominic Jacobini:

Turin, October 15, 1884

Most Reverend Excellency:

By the recent dispositions of the Holy See concerning me, I saw ever

more evident the affection which Your Excellency bears towards our humble Congregation, and which links you with our venerated Superior, Don Bosco.

It is useless for me to tell you how confused I am by my new dignity, or how much I look to God's assistance to help me in every way to live up to it in a worthy manner. I am a son of obedience, and I must obey.

It is, however, established that our missions will derive no mean advantage from here, while this gesture of goodness on the part of the Holy Father will give the Salesians still further reason to love him as his sons, and to work with ever greater zeal in their evangelical ministry in Patagonia.

As for myself, I feel an ever greater obligation incumbent on me to gratefully return the tokens of affection which Your Excellency has given me and our missions, and I also feel that I must place myself now and forever at your service, calling on you for your enlightened advice.

A telegram has come from Buenos Aires, informing us of some rather perturbing news regarding the government there, which appears to have approved the expulsion of the Apostolic Delegate. The Free Masonic viper felt its tail crushed by the encyclical *Humanum genus*. But *est Deus in Israel*!

Our dear, venerated Don Bosco is much better, and the Salesians all want to thank Your Excellency, assuring you of their undying affection for all the good that you have attained for our Congregation.

Allow me to kiss your sacred ring, while I remain,

Your most obedient servant,
Rev. John Cagliero

B. To Cardinal Nina:

Turin, October 16, 1884

Most Reverend Eminence:

I feel both the desire and the obligation of disclosing before Your Most Reverend Eminence what I feel in my poor heart, namely the profound veneration and heartfelt gratitude for all that you have done and continue to do for our Congregation, and particularly for your valid support and cooperation in connection with the recent dispositions of the Holy Father regarding me.

As an obedient son, I could not and would not oppose the wishes of our venerated Father Don Bosco. Our Lord so disposed that as a reward for many of his past troubles, one of his sons be elevated to the episcopal rank. A great comfort for him in his old age! So, may this just as well be a source of embarrassment for me, provided that he whom we have called Father for thirty-four years be comforted by it.

As I wrote to the Holy Father and the Cardinal Prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, apart from my own unworthiness, I cannot but foresee that our Congregation and our mission in Patagonia will benefit greatly by the *honors and onus* conferred upon me by such Pontifical patronage.

The Salesian Congregation sees in Your Eminence a father more than a protector - a father who loves us like so many affectionate sons of his. Oh, would that we could only respond fittingly to your saintly patronage! And if only God helps us, you can be sure we will respond.

Most Eminent Prince, there are hearts capable of gratitude in far-away Patagonia, and they, too, love you and pray for you that God may keep you *ad multos annos* for the welfare and advantage of our Congregation, just as their confreres do here in Europe. May God graciously hear our prayers.

Our venerated Father Don Bosco is much better already, and has asked me to give you his regards and express his thanks, while recommending the whole Salesian family to your fervent prayers.

Kneeling before Your Eminence, I kiss the sacred purple, and as I confirm my filial obedience, I remain,

Your most humble and grateful servant,
Rev. John Cagliero

C. To Cardinal Simeoni:

Turin, October 16, 1884

Most Eminent Prince:

It is with a heart overflowing with gratitude and, at the same time, profound embarrassment that I venture to express my affectionate feelings of my humble heart, to Your Most Reverend Eminence.

The Salesian Congregation owes to your solicitude and kindness the splendor that adorns it and the great joy that provides comfort to our venerable superior for all the sufferings of the past.

My own heart is conscious of the embarrassment created by the high episcopal dignity that the Holy Father, at your suggestion, has graciously conferred on me, the poorest of the Salesians. I am only comforted by the thought that often God chooses the most insignificant and weak as His instruments for arduous undertakings, so that the glory and might of His divine arm may blaze with ever greater splendor.

It is, therefore, with confidence in the Divine Assistance and the prayers of Your Eminence that I draw comfort and new hope for the responsible office as Pro-Vicar Apostolic in Patagonia.

May I venture to ask Your Eminence to deliver the enclosed note to the Holy Father, as a token of my profound gratitude and absolute submission to his sacred wishes?

Eminent Prince, may I ask you also to bless our humble Congregation and our most venerated Superior Don Bosco, together with our missions, and allow me while I kiss the sacred purple, to remain,

Your most humble and obedient servant,
Rev. John Cagliero

D. To the Holy Father Leo XIII:

Turin, October 16, 1884

Most Blessed Father:

The sublime episcopal dignity to which Your Holiness was so gracious as to elevate me glorifies the humble Salesian Congregation of which I am a son and comforts its venerated founder on the one hand, and humbles me to the very core of my soul on the other hand, for I realize how unworthy I am of such an honor and feel that I am unable of shouldering such responsibility.

But since *qui in altis habitat humilia respicit* [the one who is on High looks on the humble], I will rely entirely on the support of the Divine Assistance, forgetful of my own embarrassment and strengthened by your Apostolic blessing, and I will subject myself entirely, Most Holy Father, to your commands, I will put myself at the disposal of Divine Providence, I will regard every wish or request from you as a command and I will reconfirm my duty of complete and unlimited obedience to Your Holiness as the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Certainly in this way, the arduous undertaking of the Northern and

Central Patagonian Missions, of which Your Holiness has deigned to appoint me Apostolic Pro-Vicar, will prove much easier for my Salesian Confreres and myself.

Your most humble and devoted son,
Rev. John Cagliero

34

BRIEF OF THE APPOINTMENT OF FATHER JOHN CAGLIERO AS BISHOP

(See page 747 of the original, in Latin)

35

CIRCULAR LETTER FROM FATHER MICHAEL RUA TRYING TO ORGANIZE A PLEDGE CAMPAIGN ON BEHALF OF BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO

Turin, November 4, 1884

Dear Madam:

By now you may have already been informed that the Holy Father Leo XIII was so gracious as to elevate the Reverend Father John Cagliero to the rank of Bishop, and that he is soon to be consecrated.

For this solemn occasion, the bishop elect needs purple vestments and all such ornaments and vessels that his new dignity and the Liturgical Rites at which he will have to officiate require. Among such items to be purchased are: t*he pastoral cross, several miters, the crozier, the pastoral crosses, etc.*

Now, since I know that you have been and still are in personal contact with the new Prelate, I believe that you will appreciate the fact that a pledge campaign is now being organized so as to provide him with the above articles, thanks to whatever pledges may be made.

A special album will list the names of the donors, and will be presented to the new bishop who will, I am sure, not only regard this gesture as a further token of the benevolence of people he esteems highly, but will also feel himself tenderly encouraged to remember them during the

course of his sacred ministry before the Lord, especially during the first Mass he will celebrate after his Episcopal consecration.

Should you, in your goodness of heart, wish to take part in this affectionate demonstration, you may send your donation either to Don Bosco or to the undersigned, to Turin, Via Cottolengo N. 32, possibly prior to the 25th of this month.

Relying on your cooperation, I thank you in advance, and wishing you all the best from the Lord, I am,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. Michael Rua

36

LETTER TO FATHER MICHAEL RUA FROM A FREEMASON

November 21, 1884

Rev. Michael Rua:

Your naturally unctuous circular letter, addressed to all your hypocritical fellow associates asking them to contribute to the purchase of sacred objects for the priest Cagliero who has been appointed Bishop by his Far from Holy Holiness Leo XIII, came accidentally to our notice.

We who concern ourselves solely with the factual truth think that this letter was solely in order to get money out of the poor credulous fools, since priests boast that in such matters they have exclusive rights, trading on the Commandments of Christ our Savior.

Luckily, our Society will make every effort to acquaint our neighbors with the true nature of the evil weed hiding behind the black cassock, and we are confident that the clergy will be obliged to fade away like snow under the sunshine to the satisfaction of the entire world once they are fully informed of the law that governs their religion, which is religion only in name, being really nothing else than an immoral commerce.

You, ultra-conservatives of the Vatican, are you not ashamed when you look at the light that gave you life, when you think how you sponsor the most abject of living under the pretense of teaching virtue?

You who know what the love for one's family is, you who run away from society as though it were the devil in person, you who, in short,

know nothing more of the world than your housekeepers know, would still try to pass yourselves off, by the channel of your highly immoral confessional, as masters of civilization? Oh, a curse upon you!

Oh, poor Italy, partially victimized by the poisonous clutches of priests, grant that a new redeemer may come forth, and you will certainly see that the first to be slain will be these serpents that damage you, the prelates of the Church.

His Holiness (as they call him) lives in a prison (so they say), in gilded halls, surrounded by pomp befitting a minister of God (though not one created by God, but by a devil and appointed by his equals) because God died humble and poor, as he had lived.

Bear in mind that the propitious moment is not far from us, and we already foretaste the delight of seeing you overthrown not by violence, but by the truth that will defeat you.

It would take too long to list your crimes, and after all, you know them far better than we do. Beware, you belligerent crows, for catastrophe is imminent and the Pope may be building another Vatican in the proximity of his majesty the Devil for it is there (if Hell really exists) that he will find all of his subjects, as well as his deceased equals.

Please receive, little revered one, the sincere statements of a nucleus of anticlerical freedom volunteers, and not slaves of that ignorance that you spread abroad, so that you may find it easier to remain in a position of command.

The most anticlerical of them all on behalf of the others,
(Signature illegible)

Do not consider this letter as written to you personally, but only as extended to the whole black host of which you form a part.

37

THE FALL OUTINGS TO CREMOLINO IN 1864

Father Joseph Rossi, a Salesian priest, wrote to Father Peter Ricaldone on June 27, 1834 as follows:

"Don Bosco arrived very tired and perspiring at a neighboring farm house in this area, where he met Marquis Pallavicini,[7] his benefactor, who

[7] He had called on Marquis Pallavicini at Pegli, and had seen Marquis Serra at Cremolino.

was expecting him. He stayed at the farmhouse, and asked if he could have a glass of water for himself and his boys. The good farmer immediately offered him the shade of his courtyard and a good glass of wine to the whole large company. Don Bosco accepted his prompt, generous offer, but insisted that all he wanted was water. Then, he sat down on a rough bench, while water was served to all his company.

The farmhouse family realized that there was something singular about this priest. They were quite enchanted by his gracious gentleness as he thanked them and by the brief conversation they had with him, and religiously treasured the bench where Don Bosco had sat and drank the water.

As a boy, I was taken to that same farmhouse by my father, and heard the head of the house tell the story. At that time, he was a little boy, and he had witnessed this moving scene."

38

MINUTES OF THE CONSECRATION OF THE CHURCH OF NIZZA MONFERRATO

(See page 752 of the original, in Latin)

39

LETTER TO THE PUPILS OF THE SCHOOL OF ESTE (PADUA), WRITTEN ON BEHALF OF DON BOSCO

Dear Father Tamietti:

I gave Don Bosco your letter, and he was very touched by the sensitive charity of your boys. While he thanks you for the filial concern you show for his condition, he also wants to address the following words to your pupils, through me:

My dear children:

I cannot tell you how happy your generous gesture made me. I exclaimed, then and can repeat it again with all my heart, "May the Lord bless these boys!" I was greatly in need of some comfort, and I found it in your charity. I could not be indifferent, of course, to the harm caused by the fire because it represented much less bread

for boys who, unlike you, do not have the good fortune of having wealthy parents. Also the departure of our missionaries made a deep impression on me. I have now been in bed for a week, and the doctor tells me that I must not leave it, on account of my persistent infirmities. But I repeat, your token of affection comforted me greatly because now I know that there are many good boys with such generous hearts at the Este School who correspond in kind to all the attention that their director and the other superiors there lavish on them.

I shall never forget you and I shall pray, as I always pray, that the Lord deign to help you grow up in piety and learning, remaining good and healthy, leading you all to Heaven where I hope that I, too, may one day share in all the eternal rejoicing.

Pray for me that Our Lord may help me to still continue to work for His glory during the few years of life remaining for me. I thank all of you from the bottom of my heart, and bless you all, wishing you a happy year filled with God's grace. Be obedient, go often to Holy Communion, be devoted to our Loving Mother Mary, and you will be lucky in this world and in the next.

There, dear Father Tamietti, this is what Don Bosco told me to write to you. He is sick and in need of prayers. This is now the third time he has been confined to his bed in the short span of one year.

Well! Greetings to you and all the Salesians with you from Don Bosco. He hopes to get up soon, but the cold weather should be included among the causes of his sickness. My best to you!

Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne

40

TROUBLE IN PATAGONIA

A. Letter from Father Joseph Fagnano to Don Bosco:

Patagones, February 5, 1885

Dear Don Bosco:

Deo gratias! The Lord has visited us with troubles and it now looks

as though things are calming down and going back to normal. I will tell you the story briefly.

The territory of Patagonia and the banks of the Rio Negro are under the jurisdiction of Brigadier General Lorenzo Winter, Governor of Patagonia, who is also the commander of the frontier troops ranged along the Rio Negro, Nuequen and Limay. Things went very well because the governor was a friend of ours. But what do you know? When the religious issue came up in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina, with the backing of the government, the governor, whose mind was saturated with wrong principles and who may also have been pressured by the president of the Republic, broke off his relations with us. This was due to the influence of Dominic Milanesio. The governor did all he could to drive the Salesians out of Viedma, which is the capital of Patagonia, and out of Patagones, which forms part of the province of Buenos Aires, where we have our principal house. He even slandered us before the archbishop through some of his subordinates.

I did all I could to calm the governor, and I wrote to the archbishop in my defense, since the accusations and insults printed in two of the national newspapers had been directed against me personally.

We intensified our prayers for our persecutors and were cautious in everything we did, but it was all in vain. When the Catholic newspapers learned what was happening, they came to our defense and attacked the general and the national press, thereby enraging everyone worse than before.

Although the families residing in Patagones and Viedma and the whole population along the banks of the Rio Negro were aware of the infamous behavior of those persecuting us, they did not dare to defy the enemy because they feared for their own interests, which are subject to national authority.

It was a good thing for us that last year we had built some houses on our land because it prevented the authorities from driving us out, as they would have done in the heat of their passion. I must confess that I was ready to defend all of us, the boys and girls we have with us, even in a physical sense. This drastic attitude saved us, and no one paid attention to what the governor wrote to the Minister of the Cult. He accused us in a note of being uncouth and scandalous, and urged the national government not to allow any Salesian to enter parishes in the territory of Argentina.

Nevertheless, he agreed to the appointment of Father Taddeus Remotti at Viedma and Father Raymond Daniele at Pringles, and next week they will take over these two parishes. This occurred between September 3, 1884 and February 1, 1885.

I do not know what will happen this year. I believe that the religious issue is becoming serious, and now there is the political issue coming up for the candidate for presidency of the Republic, whose term of office ends October 12, 1886. May the Lord protect this country from the chaos with which it is threatened, and guide it instead toward true moral progress, which is the sanctification of its population.

All our confreres are well, and I can assure you that they keep our holy Rules scrupulously, just as the sisters give all of us a good example with their obedience, poverty, retiring ways and hard work.

As to the particular requirements of this house, we need: (1) More staff, so that we can cover the missionary territory; (2) At least one thousand lire a month to pay our expenses; and (3) 40,000 lire to provide lodging for Bishop John Cagliero and the new missionaries.

When we came here, we had two houses and two pieces of land where we could build. In the five years since then we have sold one house for 20,000 lire and some land for 30,000 lire. We used the money to buy two pieces of land in Patagones. We built a school for boys and another for girls at Viedma. This wiped out all the money we had and obliged us to contract a debt of 30,000 lire with the bank that had been opened here in Patagones since May of last year.

Rev. Joseph Fagnano

B. LETTER FROM FATHER DOMINIC MILANESIO TO DON BOSCO

Buenos Aires, February 20, 1885

Most beloved Father:

We here in America are often worried about your health. True enough, the more recent bulletins have been good, but the mere fact of the distance between us increases our anxiety. We are praying for you and for the good health of the other superiors, so that the Lord preserves them always in good health and holiness.

I believe it will interest you to hear the details of my most recent mission in Patagonia. You must surely have already been wondering at the delay. This was due to the uncertainty I felt for a few months, as to whether I ought to write to you or not.

But one letter that the Very Reverend Father Michael Rua wrote me made me make up my mind to write a few scribbled lines to give you

some news about Patagonia.

In my report, I refrained from telling you the reason for the troubles mentioned herein. It is now clear, in my opinion, that Divine Providence loves us dearly and is allowing our mission to be somewhat embattled, so that we can correct some of our faults or make amends for acts of imprudence. Here, in brief, is the story:

Viedma does not like the idea of being subject to Patagones, and although in reality it is not, every shadow seems to become actual fact where Viedma is concerned.

The continuous coming and going between Viedma and Patagones for minor trifles, such as matters pertaining to the kitchen or linen, forebode trouble, as did the fact that I was obliged to leave the parish. On one hand, it proved beneficial because it left me free to do missionary work in the field, but on the other hand, it was unwise because no steps were taken with the ecclesiastic Curia to have someone else appointed. Hence from April 1883 onward, there was no pastor at Viedma, but only a priest from our congregation who acted as one. Then, we had the misfortune of a fire breaking out in the church, the night of Maundy Thursday last year. Father Joseph Beauvoir retired to Buenos Aires and Father Joseph Fagnano took over the complete control of the parish. This exasperated those who were already tense and proved to be the final straw. Every time I came home from my mission, I called on the governor, as chaplain of the area by order of my superior. In our talks, the governor continuously voiced his displeasure over the fact that I kept leaving the area without his permission. On one occasion, he promised me that he would put soldiers, horses and even a little steamboat at my disposal to move around on my mission, provided that I would always act in obedience to his orders. I reported this to my superior, who told me that I had no account to render whatsoever, but I was to obey him. I realized then that we could not get through this impasse unscathed, and truly enough, seeing that all his efforts were fruitless, the governor began to dislike me and openly declared himself as my enemy.

Upon the death of General Conrado Villega, Lorenzo Winter received the government's appointment as commander-in-chief of the frontier troops between Patagonia and the national territory, thereby disposing of new ways to punish the Salesians, to subject by force those people he was not able to bend with his words.

When Bishop Espinosa and I were in Norquin, some 210 leagues from Patagonia last year, he received a letter from the archbishop, informing him

that the governor of Patagonia had sought advice from Dr. Bernardo Irigoyen, the Secretary for Domestic Affairs, on how he should behave in regard to the Salesians, and he urged the bishop to try and put things right. When we came back from that mission around the middle of June, I made preparations for another mission that was to begin at the end of August, and this proved to be the setting and origin of what I am now about to describe.

Father Joseph Fagnano does unfortunately have one defect, which results in a great deal of trouble for him and his associates. I allude to the fact that all this buying and selling creates only trouble for him and others. As a proof of this, it would be enough for me to mention the following facts. In 1880, he sold an island called Las Almas (which had been bequeathed to the church by a charitable soul) so that he could invest the money made on the transaction in some construction to enlarge the school premises. He did this with the permission of the Curia, but the population did not understand him and complained about it. In 1883, he sold some land belonging to the mission, which caused gossip at the Viedma School. He sold three church vestments and a cope that were the property of the Sisters' school at Patagones and the mission of St. Francis of Solano, which later was transferred to us. In 1884, he made the mistake of selling the Church of Patagones without first consulting the Curia. He did it with the laudable intention of using the money to build a nave in the new one, yet all the same, people talked about it, and incredible things were printed in the newspapers, exaggerating the issue. Finally, a list of indictments was drawn up, handed to the Ministry of Public Education, and a decree that would banish all the Salesians from Patagonia was solicited. The main accusations were that the Salesians' conduct was immoral, that they had been trading in church ornaments and were guilty of having sold the chapel at Patagones. As final evidence that the Salesians were traders, they pointed out that the shoemakers' workshop, located in a hall of the school, was open to the public.

The first and last of these two accusations are completely without any foundation, and are a real calumny to boot. Bishop Espinosa did us a great service by writing to Father Joseph Fagnano, advising him to defend himself by saying that he had sold the church with the permission of the ecclesiastical Curia. On the basis of this authorization, Father Joseph Fagnano defended his position and collected the signatures of people who would attest to this.

In January, the archbishop sent a representative, Father Luis Dupra, together with Deacon Roca Carranza, to appease the governor. They did this and persuaded the governor to make friends with Father Joseph Fagnano and accept Father Taddeus Remotti (the former as pastor of

Viedma) and Father Raymond Daniels of Coronel Pringles. Deo gratias! In my opinion, if we want to keep on the good side of the authorities in the future, we must keep hidden the religious aspect of the Salesians in Patagonia in our transactions *coram praesidibus* [before the authorities].

Your son in Jesus and Mary,
Rev. Dominic Milanesio

C. LETTER FROM FATHER JOSEPH FAGNANO TO DON BOSCO

Patagones, March 4, 1885

Dear Don Bosco:

Deo gratias! The Lord has visited us by abating a very serious persecution started against the Congregation and us, and it seems to be working itself out. I say "it seems" because there is still the chance that it will intensify, seeing that we are the target of the government's wrath. Father Dominic Milanesio has already written to you, but it will not be superfluous if I write, too, to give you a brief account of the facts.

We administer two parishes and direct four schools. One parish and two schools are at Carmen of Patagones, which is located on the left bank of the Rio Negro and subject to the Buenos Aires province. I was appointed pastor here in 1880. Now one of the buildings intended for the school is rented.

The other parish and the remaining two schools are at Viedma, the capital of Patagonia, located on the right bank of the Rio Negro and directly subject to Argentina's government, which is represented by the new governor, General Winter. First Father Rizzo and then Father Dominic Milanesio were appointed pastors of this parish by the archbishop, Bishop Frederic Aneyros. At one time, they were the chaplains of the governor. I had obtained General Winter's permission to send Father Dominic Milanesio out on missionary work, and left a priest to fill his place at Viedma. I did this especially because the general had told me he wanted to have an understanding with me about the services rendered.

This was the situation when the church of Viedma caught fire on April 12, 1884. The general was very angry, and told me that the fire was due to the carelessness of the fathers. To appease the governor, I sent Father Joseph Maria Beauvoir away, who had, by the way, already asked me if he could go to Buenos Aires. The general went to Buenos Aires in July and came back again

in September. In the meantime, the religious issue flared up. Influenced by false principles and egged on by the newspapers backing the government, the general looked for excuses to quarrel with us. On September 7th, Father Dominic Milanesio declined to comply with some pretentious demands made by the governor's wife, and he was fired from the position of governor's chaplain that same evening. On the 9th, the governor took possession of the parish church of Viedma, confiscated the sacred vestments there, and evicted the missionaries. I had an interview with the governor that same day, and he completely forgot his dignity and the friendly manner with which he had always behaved toward me, and flew into a rage, using violent and offensive words against Father Dominic Milanesio and Father Joseph Maria Beauvoir. I withdrew, since it was impossible to appease him, and ordered Father Dominic Milanesio to reside at the house of Patagones where the governor could not exercise any authority over him. Meanwhile, Father Raymond Daniels and Father Andrew Pestarino continued holding services for the parish in the chapel of the sisters in Viedma. They started to do this on April 12th.

Twenty days later, Father Dominic Milanesio decided to set out on a mission, but he had to apply to the general for authorization to do this, since this was a military frontier. He did this only partially because he only had made a request for Pringles, which is located eighty kilometers away from Patagones. Later, he pushed further in his apostolic wanderings. As soon as the governor, who is also the commander-in-chief of the military frontier, heard of this, he gave immediate orders that he was to return, and forbade him to continue exercising his sacred ministry. As soon as Father Dominic Milanesio got back, I sent him to Buenos Aires. What can I say? We are in the right, the Ecclesiastic Curia knows it, but reason cannot prevail against force. Now we have to endure the consequences of an unjustified anger.

While all this was happening in Viedma, a regular Sunday newspaper at Carmen suddenly attacked both the mayor and myself. The attack was fueled for this newspaper by General Winter, who had urged some army officers to insult me and accuse me before the ecclesiastic curia. I wrote in my own defense in the journal *La Voz de la Iglesia*, and requested that the curia send some representatives to Patagones to clarify the matter of the accusations made against me. At the same time, I sought authorization to bring to court the people who had slandered me. But Father Costamagna did not grant it, preferring instead that someone else be sent to find out the truth about the issue. They came and found that we had done everything properly. This avenged our good name, and the population, which had always been on our side, was satisfied by the outcome.

Meanwhile, our house has lost some of the assistance it had been receiving, thanks to the generosity of some government agents, and our orphans and we are sorely pressed in trying to keep afloat.

We have started building the new church in Patagones, or I should better say we continue to work on the church that we started to build during the first year of our mission, but we are progressing very slowly for want of money. The population is very poor and so far the government has not given us any assistance whatsoever.

We really should get more comfortable lodging ready for Bishop John Cagliero when he comes because there is not enough room for here and we do not have the money to expand. If Bishop could only bring us some help from Europe!

I received word from Father Michael Rua that my mother was allowed to board at the Oratory. Thank you from the bottom of my heart for this act of charity, and may the Lord repay you and the Congregation for all you have done for my family! This has been a great comfort to me, and it does restore my peace of mind.

I greet you with all my heart, wish you happiness, and I will do everything possible to live up to whatever the Congregation asks of me. I will send pictures of the confreres and our nuns with their respective pupils. I am not in them because I had to go two hundred kilometers away and visit someone who was sick the morning the pictures were taken.

Please receive the best regards of our confreres, the nuns and our orphans, both boys and girls.

Your most affectionate son in Jesus and Mary,
Rev. John Fagnano

41

A LETTER FROM THE PROVINCIAL SUPERIOR OF THE REFORMED FRIARS MINOR FROM ABRUZZI TO DON BOSCO

September 5, 1883

Very Reverend Sir:

It was a genuine, sweet and immense consolation to my faith to read reports and articles related for the edification of our neighbors, to the

many undertakings in which Your Reverence engages with such angelic evangelical charity and indefatigable zeal.

Yet if I am to speak the truth, the beautiful consolation I experienced was considerably soured when it came to my knowledge that you and the Salesian Fathers had undertaken to found a boarding school for children of the lower classes at Penne, in the Province of Teramo, and precisely in the old monastery of Santa Maria Cobromano, which had for more than three centuries belonged to the Reformed Friars Minor of the monastic province of St. Bernardino in Abruzzi, over which I still exercise ordinary jurisdiction!

Your Reverence, if what they say is true, I imagine that you have been led into error and have not sufficiently considered the matter related to the premises you intend to occupy for the purpose mentioned above, while I would not even venture to imagine that you are unaware of the fact that any undertaking inspired by charity must be free of blemishes of all kind and under every aspect.

Now even though a humanitarian institution would, to all intents and purposes, be a charitable one, it would, after all, be defective and not agreeable to God if it were to be installed in a monastery, which is lawfully and canonically the property of others since, based on injustice, it would never really accomplish anything truly good, which can only be brought about *ex integra causa.*

After which, in full confidence that, like the deeply fervent Catholic priest that you are, you will not allow others to cry scandal in the event that you should, in connection with the situation above described, be so small minded as to forget the solemn and fearful anathemas the Vatican hurls against audacious usurpers of Church's property, and because I hope that my duty will not oblige me to issue a solemn, public protest against any attempt at so iniquitous an action, I wait for your reply, which will surely be dictated by what is both just and honest.

Most devotedly in Jesus Christ, Friar Tito da Scanno
Provincial Superior of the Reformed Friars Minor
Aquila (Abruzzi) Monastery of St. Julian

42

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM FATHER APICELLA

Naples, December 26, 1884

Reverend Father in Jesus:

First of all, I wish Your Reverence, the Reverend Superiors, all your asso-

ciates and the boarders of all your houses the choicest graces of our Lord Jesus Christ *ad multos annos*, and pray to the Divine Mercy that none of those to whom you have given shelter and who have or who will learn sound doctrine in any of your houses, in the present or future times, may be lost. Unworthy sinner that I am, I pray to Almighty God that these houses may multiply all over the world, grafting this small bunch of grapes consisting of our houses for unfortunate deaf-mutes onto the fruitful vine of the Salesians, if this be to the honor and glory of God. *Messis multa, operarii pauci.* Yes, my good Father in Jesus, our beloved Mother Mary herself asks this of you. There is no lack of good young people and providential means here in Naples. For my part, I shall be happy and contented to occupy the lowliest place.

We have four charity houses; one in Naples, one at Casoria and two at Molfetta, with about 140 deaf-mutes of both sexes; six priests, one coadjutor, and twenty-five brothers who wear the cassock. The houses belong to us, and are duly subject to the Ordinary.

You may write to me or come in person to see me, for further clarifications. *Ecce me* [here I am] ready to obey you. I kiss the hand of Your Reverence and of all your superiors, and kneeling at your feet, I implore your blessing for my undertaking, and remain,

Your most devoted and obedient son in Jesus,
Rev. Lawrence Apicella

GOD BE ALWAYS WITH US.

42

THE HOSTEL OF THE SACRED HEART

(Minutes of the Superior Chapter, September 12, 1884)

Don Bosco presiding. Present: Father Michael Rua, Father John Cagliero, Father Celestine Durando, Father Joseph Lazzero, Father Anthony Sala, Father John Baptist Francesia, and Father Julius Barberis. The meeting was opened by the customary prayers at 11 a.m.

1. Father Anthony Sala submitted the plans for the construction of the Sacred Heart Hostel in Rome. There were three plans: by Vespignani, Cucco, and Vigna. He said that some deliberations should be made urgently. First of all, he explained that the area is still enclosed along Via Marghera and Via Magenta by a board fence for which a yearly tax of 550 lire was paid to the

municipality. This fence represented a cause of continuous annoyance, due to fines imposed on us, at the instigation of our neighbor, Deputy Bonghi, who could not stand the sight of those boards. He, therefore, suggested that the board fence be removed and replaced with a brick wall. The expense of this would be covered by taxes for one year. The Chapter approved.

2. Father Anthony Sala suggested that a wing of the hostel be built facing Via San Lorenzo, which would link the house with the corridor of the church at the corner. The hostel would only be two stories high on this side of the building. The main floor would consist in two parts: classrooms or workshops, or porticos; the second floor would consist of two big dormitories. The design by the contractor Cucco indicated that if the side of the building facing Via Porta San Lorenzo were formed like an extended trapeze, it would adjust the inside playground into a perfect quadrangle with regular porticos, and the rooms behind it would overlook the street diverging from, and nor parallel to, the opposite side. The rooms would gradually become larger, but, naturally, they would be irregular in shape. The regular shape of the rooms would be sacrificed in order to ensure the regularity of the playground.

The design of the engineer Vigna was not concerned with the playground, but rather with the regularity of the rooms that with special partition screens would fit a certain use and without the partition screens would turn into beautiful halls. Some few square meters would be gained in the interests of the recreation of the boys in the fairly narrow playground, and the cost would be reduced to almost half.

Father Michael Rua was in favor of Cucco's design, Father Sala of Vigna's design. Don Bosco agreed to Vigna's plan.

The Chapter approved the immediate construction of the wing overlooking Via San Lorenzo and Vigna's plan. In principle, Vigna's plan was likewise adopted for the entire construction of the hostel, which had two rooms five meters wide, divided along their length by a two-meter-wide corridor on each floor. It was held that five meters was the minimum width allowed in a boarding school's dormitories.

3. Father Anthony Sala submitted two plans for the facade of the wing overlooking Via San Lorenzo; one by Cucco, which was simpler; the other by Vespignani, which was more elaborate.

Since this wing was right across the church facade, Father John Cagliero said that it would only be attractive if this side of the hostel were more elaborate. Father Michael Rua supported this, saying that the prestige of the house of God demanded as much.

The CHAPTER approved and adopted Cucco's plan, but chose

Vespignani's designs for the two entrance doors on both far ends.

4. Father Anthony Sala suggested that the wing overlooking Via San Lorenzo be built without basements; this would prove to be a big savings. (a) No ground would have to be removed; and (b) the foundations of the walls would not, as would otherwise be necessary, have to be built fourteen meters below ground level, but would need to be supported by pillars. He pointed out, too, that since Via San Lorenzo was a road of heavy traffic, the basements would only have continuous noise and, thus, disturb the hostel.

Father Michael Rua added that there were drains and sewers in Via San Lorenzo; hence, we would have to lay our own drains in that direction, which would mean that iron drainpipes would have to pass through the basement. This would entail expenses, inconvenience and might even render the basement altogether useless, at least as storerooms. Then, both the church and the two wings of the building will have huge basements.

The Chapter decided not to build any basements beneath the wing overlooking Via Porta San Lorenzo.

5. Father Anthony Sala then raised the question that had been left unsolved at the last meeting; namely, as to whether Cucco should be entrusted with the building of the hostel under contract or only under administration. He again stressed how much building material there was in the yard. Father Anthony Sala wanted the church to be finished first, and then building on the hostel would start. In this way, the two undertakings would not be confused. If Cucco were to build the church under their direct administration and control while being given also a contract for the hostel, a fence would be needed to separate the church material from that of the hostel, as well as two lime pits, etc. One would have to use different masons for the one and the other structure; otherwise how could it be avoided that the foreman should call on the masons working on one structure to give a hand to the masons working on the other structure? Or how could the truck drivers be prevented from unloading into one courtyard the material destined to the other courtyard? This was a very delicate matter and it involved great expense.

The Chapter deliberated that Cucco should build the church, and be responsible for its administration, together with the wing facing Via San Lorenzo. When this is done, a detailed inventory would be taken of all the material remaining in the yard. A specific contract would then be made for the remainder of the building, which would be done for a lump sum, and the material remaining would be sold to Cucco for a stipulated price, to be deducted from the sum total of whatever debt the Salesians would contract with him for payment of the work to be completed.

6. Don Bosco remarked that Count Colle in Toulon intended to contribute further to the cost of building both church and hostel, but wished to lay the foundation stone of the hostel in person. This meant that the ceremony would have to be scheduled for April.

The Chapter deliberated that the corner stone of the hostel could be laid in April under the foundations of the wing overlooking Via San Lorenzo.

7. Don Bosco asked whether the engineer Vespignani knew that the other engineer Vigna and the contractor Cucco had drawn plans for the hostel that he hoped to build.

Father Sala said that when Vespignani had come to inspect the hostel of St. John's, he had himself declared that he was not the man for what we needed. This was equivalent to leaving us the freedom to do as we wished.

Don Bosco remarked that one should go about doing things carefully because these people know how to create pretexts. We already committed enough to him in regard to the church. Nevertheless, we did not have any agreement with Vespignani about the hostel, and he could not really interfere. We must find all possible means to hold on to our freedom in this matter.

Father Sala remarked that engineer Grazioli, who had come regularly to inspect the work at the Sacred Heart, would be able to say something as soon as he saw work begun on the excavations.

Don Bosco replied that all responsibility could be put on him. They should say that it was Don Bosco who had given orders. Once the church is finished, everything should be under our complete control. Vespignani should not interfere with the matter at all.

Father Sala said that, in the beginning, Vespignani had hoped to do all the work, but it looked now as though he had given up all his pretensions by what he had said.

The meeting was closed with the customary prayers at 12:20 p.m.

Rev. John Baptist Lemoyne, Secretary
Chapter Hall, Valsalice, September 12, 1884

44

CONCERNING A LAY FESTIVE ORATORY IN FAENZA

Faenza, April 2, 1884

Dear Sir:

Relying on a far-sighted advice, the municipal council has decided to cre-

ate a Festive Recreation Center, governed by the regulations herewith enclosed. In this center, the children of the working classes would grow up staunch in heart and strong in body, with sentiments of honor and awareness of their individual dignity, with a wholesome love of family and country, safely removed from the snares of idleness and the sinister consequences of running wild.

Yet, since the good will and generous contributions of the municipality alone would not be enough to carry out this plan, it is necessary that all other institutes and associations of the district, all categories of citizens, join in charitable cooperation, and it is to this end that we will be directly calling on you to ask for a valid contribution to this most beneficial educational endeavor among all other civic institutions.

With kindest regards,
The Municipal Committee
Count Chavelier Achille Laserchi, Chairman
Andrea Poletti, Attorney
Professor Giuseppe Cesare Abba
Pompeo Babini

Statute for a Festive Recreational Center approved by the Municipal Council of Faenza during its meeting of March 4, 1884

1. The Municipality of Faenza sponsors a charitable educational association with a view to entertaining the children of the working class on feast days, with pleasant, useful occupations, thus rescuing them from the dangers of idleness and neglect, and intends to found a special recreational center, along the lines of similar institutions in other Italian cities.
2. All male children of the city and its suburbs, ages seven to fourteen, will be allowed to attend the recreational center without exception.
3. The center will be open every feast day during the hours stipulated in the agreed upon regulations.
4. Both instructions and recreation will be provided for the children under the supervision of special personnel. Instruction will be imparted in an entertaining and facile form; amusements will consist in such exercises as may best ensure the physical health and moral rectitude of the children.
5. The institute will concentrate especially on formation of character of the attending boys, instilling into them love and honor and awareness

of their individual dignity, and training them to love their families and country.
6. So as to render the foundation of the center easier, the municipality is placing at its disposal a highly suitable place, and every year will assign a given sum toward its upkeep, as forming part of the municipal budget.
7. To this same end, a public subscription fund for the purchase of stock in the association, with shares costing three lire each per year, will be inaugurated. Stock purchasers will contract to a three-year long obligation.
8. All citizens, and all charitable and financial institutions having also philanthropic interests, will be called upon to participate in the subscription mentioned in the previous article.
9. The municipality will also take steps to ensure contributions from the government and the province for this charitable institution.
10. A committee, charged by the major and made up of four members nominated as indicated next, will be in charge of the administration of this association and the domestic management of the recreational center.
11. Two members of the committee will be appointed by the municipal board of aldermen, and they are not to be necessarily board members. The other two will be elected among the stockholders at a general assembly of the association.
12. The four citizens forming the managing and administrative committee shall hold office for a period of three years and are eligible for re-election.
13. Regulations for the Recreational Center will be drawn up by the committee elected as above indicated.
14. The committee shall be responsible for engaging the full-salaried personnel necessary, and shall likewise administer it and direct it.

45

LETTER FROM FATHER JOHN BAPTIST RINALDI TO FATHER MICHAEL RUA

Faenza, November 27, 1884

Dear Father Rua:

A week ago, I sent you an urgent letter, informing you about the definitive terms of the agreement and our peaceful entry into the city to take possession of our new house in which, by wondrous ends ordained

by Divine Providence, we are at last settled fairly well.

In my letter, I insisted on how essential it was that, if you could, either you or some other intelligent superior should come here soon to look over this chaotic agglomeration of buildings and draw up a general, overall plan befitting our ends.

We shall have to arrange something for the chapel, which is now located in two rooms linked by a common door. We also have to rent, for the time being, part of the house and an enormous orchard. We would have to set up one of the rooms as a little theater, which is essential here in this part of the country.

Something has to be done at once to shut the mouths of spiteful gossips. The whole town is waiting for this. And there is something else. Besides the many applications I receive to take boys into the house, the Deputy-Prefect himself has five boys he is recommending, while the municipal authorities have one or two more. This would justify the protection they give us, while for us it would signify the best possible testimony of their approval before the government and the population because the children in question are thoroughly destitute and abandoned....

Your most affectionate son in Jesus and Mary,
Rev. John Baptist Rinaldi

46

PETITION BY DON BOSCO REGARDING THE VALLECROSIA LOTTERY, ADDRESSED TO THE PREFECT OF PORTOMAURIZIO

Excellency:

Touched by the deplorable intellectual and moral condition affecting a large selection of young people residing in the Vallecrosia plains near Ventimiglia in the Torrione area, the undersigned opened elementary schools in 1876 free of charge for boys and girls, where they might be given an essential basic instruction in moral and civil education. This undertaking, which began by dint of substantial sacrifices, met with extensive approval. Young people, especially those living at a greater distance from the public schools of the city, attended our class-

es with the general satisfaction of the people of the area, who thus saw their children protected from the ravages of ignorance and vice. But our needs grew, and over and above the instruction given, many orphaned and homeless children were also in need of material support in order to survive. In order to provide for them also in this, the undersigned undertook to build two separate hostels where both boys and girls not only received a free education, but also found lodging and upkeep. These hostels have now been completed and many children are already living in them. But we still have outstanding debts for the work which was done and that which needs to be completed according to our plan. To this end, several well deserving persons offered me a number of different articles, nearly one thousand items, so that I could organize a charity lottery on behalf of this hostel. Aware of the benevolent haste with which the royal government usually attends to any matter involving the moral and material assistance to poor, homeless children, I am calling on Your Excellency to kindly issue the required authorization for the lottery.

I am sure that Your Excellency will wish to favorably respond to the hopes of the undersigned, which are shared likewise by the people of the Vallecrosia plains, by granting this permission, and offering these people the possibility of safeguarding their children against vice, poverty and vagrancy to which they would certainly soon be exposed unless they are properly housed and educated. With this happy conviction, I extend my heartfelt thanks to Your Excellency in advance, and assure you of my deepest gratitude, also on behalf of the many poor children, who will thus be assisted, while I remain with the most sincere esteem, etc.

47

THREE LETTERS FROM THE BISHOP OF LIEGE TO DON BOSCO

A.

Most Reverend Father General:

Thank you for your gracious reply and the great charity with which you lessened the anxiety caused by the delay. I am honored to inform you that, unfortunately, I shall not be able to visit Nice on September 15th. Next Spring, I am going to Rome and hope that I shall then have the good

fortune of paying you a visit.

While waiting, I pray to the Lord that he may send you many laborers, and inspire you to keep a few of them for me, for my dear orphans and the ecclesiastic vocations that have so alarmingly decreased in my diocese.

Please accept, Most Reverend Father General, the tribute of my deepest esteem and my great devotion in our Lord Jesus Christ,

Victor Joseph Doutreloux
Bishop of Liege (Belgium)

B. Rome, May 31, 1884

Very Reverend Father General:

As I get out of my audience with the Holy Father, I feel it is my most agreeable duty to inform you that I faithfully carried out the errand you had entrusted to me. The Holy Father extends his paternal blessing to the entire house of Turin. He told me that he had seen you only a few days before, and was not in the least surprised when I told him what you, your religious and your charges feel about the Holy Father.

I informed him of my visit to you, and when I implored his support, he told me to write to tell you that "he knows the city of Liege, and is very concerned about it, for he loves it dearly and is most anxious to see it enriched by an orphanage under the direction of your religious."

These words, which he uttered in a firm, urgent tone, impressed me greatly, and strengthened more than ever my belief that in addressing my ardent petition to you, I fulfilled the Will of God, and that, consequently, the means for that which you told me was an ardent aspiration on your part, an aspiration supported by your whole heart, will not be lacking. May I not prove unworthy of such a grace! I am putting the whole issue into the hands of our Lady Help of Christians, for I went to pay her a visit before I left your house. Our good Mother will certainly grant my prayer for my poor children, who are also her own; ever since I said this prayer, I have regarded myself as an instrument in her hands, for the undertaking that, at my humble request, she made her own.

Again, my thanks, Reverend Father, for the warm welcome you gave me with all your Salesians. I shall cherish a most edifying and comforting recollection of it.

I prayed in particular in Rome that what I have asked you may be fulfilled. I prayed in the church of St. Philip Neri, at the tomb of St.

Aloysius Gonzaga, and that of my own countryman, Blessed John Berkmans. I recommend the matter unceasingly to the gracious angels and the patron saints of my own diocese. I also presume to count on your prayers. I do not know whether I told you that I have given this same mission to a holy priest of mine who asked for my blessing before dying about two months ago, so that he can press the matter in Heaven. Forgive me for writing to you in such a confidential tone; your kindness toward me has made me so fond of you in our Lord Jesus Christ that I do not feel any compunction about opening myself to you with the utmost simplicity.

Please accept, Very Reverend Father, the assurance of my deep, and most devoted veneration.

Victor, Joseph Bishop of Liege

C. Liege, May 17, 1886

Very Reverend Father General:

Since I recall with both joy and gratitude your gracious welcome of me two years ago, I am making so bold now as to request that you grant a brief audience to the bearer of this letter. He is an attorney, Monsieur Doreye, the organizing head and mainstay of many Catholic organizations in my episcopal city and diocese. He would be very happy to receive your blessing and to express once again to you my fervent aspiration that your order establish a house in the industrial city of Liege. You were so kind as to promise me that this would come about as soon as you had sufficient personnel. The Holy Father, with whom I discussed the project, authorized me to tell you that he knew the city of Liege very well and was most anxious for you to comply with my petition. I have some land and an immense building with a chapel in it that is already being used as an institution that could easily be enlarged. Nothing could be easier than to establish an institution there similar to the one in Turin. I am sure that the diocese will provide more personnel in a very short time than you yourself will be able to send me.

I submitted my petition to you during the novena of our Lady Help of Christians. I entrusted the matter to this tender Mother. I shall now prepare for her feast day with an octave of prayers, and hope that she will tell you that it is the Will of Her Divine Son that you come to the assistance of my poor young orphans, who are abandoned now to the government

institutions. There are many good people who are also anxious to seek salvation with your good religious. Ah, I implore you! Deign to ask our Lady Help of Christians to shed light over my petition for you. I have no doubt whatsoever that it corresponds fully to the Will of God.

Monsieur Doreye wishes to know something of your institution in Turin. He will be very grateful to you if you would kindly give him one of your religious to show him around.

Please accept, Very Reverend Father, my most respectful and devoted regards,

Victor Joseph Bishop of Liege

48

LETTER FROM DONA DOROTHEA TO DON BOSCO

Barcelona, October 12, 1882

Venerable Father:

Besides writing to you and asking for information about the institutions of the Salesian Congregation, I also wrote to Father Branda, the superior of your house at Utrera, and he supplied me with much information in detail. You will perhaps recall how in my letter to you of September 20th last, I told you that it was my intention to help found an institution in the environs of Barcelona where boys might learn arts and crafts under the direction of the Salesian Congregation.

I think that in order for this matter to be settled soon, and in the event that you yourself are unable to come to Barcelona, the best thing would be that some other Salesian priest who is experienced in such foundations come here soon, so that we can talk the matter over together with some other people living in the city, especially with His Excellency the Bishop, on whose paternal support we can rely fully.

The Salesian priest coming to Barcelona could stay with me at my house, and I will refund all the expenses incurred for his journey.

I beg you to remember me in your prayers and remain,

Most devotedly,
A.B.S.M.
Dorothea Chopitea de Serra
Calle de Cortes, 276

49

DRAFT AGREEMENT BETWEEN DON BOSCO AND THE LAY SOCIETY OF LILLE

(December 19, 1883 and January 14, 1884)

1. Legal transfer of a building with classrooms, chapel, and 4,575 square meters of land.
2. Don Bosco to take possession of the above February 1, 1884.
3. Duration of such legal transfer to Don Bosco to be for a period of fifteen years.
4. During such period another term of fifteen years is to be promised.
5. Don Bosco will take charge of the children and their admission to the institution and shall be entitled to reject those having passed their sixteenth year, or who have not yet attained their eighth year.
6. Don Bosco to admit children (a total number of fourteen) recommended by the founders of the institution. During his term of occupancy, Don Bosco shall receive an income of three hundred francs from Cap. Destombes. The Society shall draw an annual sum of 3,600 francs.
7. In return for his work, half to be given to Don Bosco, said sum to revert to former owner in the event that Don Bosco does administer the institution for at least three years.
8. Twelve parts shall be established, and shall become the property of Don Bosco or his priests, but without obligation of payment. In the event that Don Bosco withdraws from further administrative responsibilities, said twelve parts shall be redeemed for as much as a sum equivalent to a third of the number of years having elapsed since he entered into possession of same. The parts redeemed are to benefit those still existing.
9. Don Bosco intends to build a house and purchase furniture for a sum total value of 15,000 francs, representing the twelve parts, and to be regarded as an asset of the lay society.
10. The lay society has assigned an income of 1,300 francs from the capital of 20,000 at 4.5% to the account of Monsieur Vandebenque.
11. Don Bosco shall become the owner of the stock transferred to him. In the event that he withdraws from the management, he shall first provide and give adequate guarantee.
12. The orphanage has a savings account amounting to 1,200 francs.
13. In the event of liquidation, this shall be used by Don Bosco in payment for the additional parts assigned to him.
14. The present agreement may not be modified or altered, save by the

consent of a 2/3 majority of the general assembly.

50

LETTER FROM DE MONTIGNY TO DON BOSCO

Lille, January 29, 1884

Very dear and venerated Don Bosco:

I am most grateful for your kind and affectionate letter, which you graciously sent through Father Joseph Bologna, the new director of the St. Gabriel's orphanage.

As you so rightly said, we must indeed give thanks to God for having allowed this plan, elaborated a year ago, to become a reality. I valued very highly its realization.

Now everything has been successfully achieved and I installed Father Joseph Bologna in our establishment this very day.

This worthy priest wished to spend a few days with me before taking over his new office, and I must say that I am most edified by his great piety, his devotion to the children and his eagerness to do good. He will be successful, I have no doubt, and I must congratulate you on your selection of him for the continuation and expansion of our establishment.

Father Joseph Bologna took over St. Gabriel's quietly, just as he wished, and the good Sisters of Charity were extremely kind and helpful in the transfer of authority.

They gave the new director all the information he needed, and since the mother superior is staying in Lille, she will be very helpful to the house with assistance that she is most willing to give us.

Madame de Montigny was most touched by your fatherly remembrance. Like myself, she is deeply attached to the general of the Salesians, and both of us thank you with all our hearts for the special blessing you so kindly gave to our well beloved son.

Please accept once again, Reverend Father, my most respectful and devoted regards.

A. de Montigny

P.S. I introduced Father Joseph Bologna to the archbishop of Cambrai on Saturday, January 26th, and he gave Don Bosco's representative a most affectionate welcome.

51

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM FATHER JOSEPH BOLOGNA

Dear Don Bosco:

I have been in Lille now since Monday of this week. The de Montigny family has been most kind to me. I have called on as many families of the town as I could. I will not start living at the orphanage until Tuesday. I hope someone will arrive here by that date.

I have not yet seen the children and do not think I shall address them until I am thoroughly installed in office. I spend an hour each day at the orphanage with Mother Superior, and I am gathering information from her. The sisters have been most helpful under the circumstances.

Everyone with whom I have spoken seems to be delighted at the news that we are taking over at St. Gabriel's. The clergy, too, seem very well disposed.... I had been told that the Archbishop of Cambrai was in Paris, and would stay there until the end of the month. I thought I would send him all the letters that I had with me for him, and did so. I mailed him your letter the day before yesterday, together with the letter from Bishop Robert[8] etc., another letter that I had requested from Bishop Guiol (so as to please him); Monsieur de Montigny added a note to my application to the bishop, asking for all the necessary faculties.

By chance, the bishop had gotten back to Lille yesterday evening. So this morning, I called on him with Monsieur de Montigny. He welcomed me just like he would a son. He had only just received all my letters. He embraced me and remembered having seen me at St. Leo's Oratory when he visited it five years before. He then told me that I had every faculty for confessing inside the orphanage, and throughout the diocese, etc. Tomorrow he is to dine with Monsieur de Montigny, and I shall be seeing him again. He is a kind old man who wishes us all the good in the world.

I called on Monsieur Vrau, but did not see him; he came twice to see me, but did not find me at home. Here is the letter he sent me later on.[9]

[8] Bishop of Marseille.

[9] "Ph. Vrau tenders his respects to the Reverend Father Bolognia (sic.) and regrets that he was not able to meet him yesterday during his visit to Monsieur de Montigny. He hopes that a favorable opportunity for so doing will not be long in presenting itself, so that he may confer with him about the realization of projects in which Don Bosco is deeply interested, relating to the welfare of our population. He requests that Father Joseph Bologna pray for him, and begs him accept his most devoted regards."

I do not know what can be done with the children still living in the orphanage. They have been spoiled in their eating habits: they are given coffee and milk every morning, beer at their meals, and two courses at supper, etc.

Since we are not entitled to teach, we need a priest who can teach them a little music and singing at the beginning. If Father Michael Rua could send us someone, he would be most welcome....

Little Alfred de Montigny is doing very well.

Forgive this long letter, and assure me that you have forgiven me.

Your grateful servant,
Rev. Joseph Bologna

52

RULES FOR THE TAILORING WORKSHOP OF ST. GABRIEL'S ORPHANAGE

1. The Tailoring Workshop of St. Gabriel's Orphanage is instituted to provide for the upkeep of the boys, to manufacture indispensable articles of clothing so as to ensure their decorous appearance, and to provide for the basic outfit required in underclothes.
2. This workshop is supervised by a four-lady member committee, consisting of: the chairlady, the assistant chairlady, the treasurer and the secretary.
3. Expenses to be paid by voluntary donations (either in money or in articles of clothing) and by annual subscriptions.
4. There is no specific amount stipulated for such subscription, though the minimum contribution is set at twelve francs.
5. The ladies will carry out their work in their own homes.
6. Lady members are divided into two different groups: active members and honorary members.
7. Active members meet once a month at the orphanage to inquire about the needs of the orphans and divide the work among themselves. At such meetings, the priest in charge of spiritual guidance of the workshop shall address a few edifying words to the lady members.
8. Honorary members are under no other obligation than to contribute an annual sum of no less than twelve francs.
9. Every year, a Mass will be celebrated at the orphanage to invoke the blessing of Heaven on all members of the workshop, their families,

and deceased lady members. On such occasions, the orphans shall pick up a collection for the benefit of the workshop.

10. The children shall attend Mass, recite the rosary and say a special prayer for their benefactors in the orphanage chapel every day.

Applications to be addressed to:
Madame Aime Houze de l'Aulinoit, rue 61, Chairman,
Madame Charles Huet, 34 rue des Arts, Treasurer,
Madame Erneste Loyer, Place de Tourcoing, Secretary,
or to the Director of the Orphanage.

53

LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM FATHER PAUL ALBERA

Dear Father in Jesus Christ:

The house in Paris has been founded. *Deo gratias*! On Saturday, a week ago today, we were received in audience by the Very Reverend d'Hulst, dean of the university who invited us to dinner. He introduced us to the cardinal, who said some very flattering things about Don Bosco and the Salesians.

After lunch that same day, we called on the attorney Monsieur Olivier, who read in our presence the various minutes already drawn up and known both to you and Father Michael Rua. A few remarks, some slight variations and explanations were requested and given, and then we agreed that they should be signed on Tuesday.

The stockholding company, which will be constituted in a few days, does not foresee any complications, since it is formed by Don Bosco and his friends, and there will never be any obligation to pay dividends, as there is in Marseille. That company had already been in existence when Don Bosco came into the picture.

The withdrawal of Father Pisani could not have been better timed, so as to avoid expenses. Both the attorney Olivier and Count de Franqueville are extremely able, and most eager to do all they can for Don Bosco.

Father Pisani had too many irons in the fire, and it will be difficult to keep up the same rhythm. Nevertheless, I did urge Father Charles Bellamy not to change too many things at the beginning, but to avail himself of the services of the young men attending the institution. Father Hugot, who is now living there, will stay on, but we shall be free to dismiss him at any time.

Father Charles Bellamy was very displeased over the behavior of the

cleric Berk, and did not want to have him around. I have allowed Bessiere to receive his cassock; he is the best of our novices, and I assigned him as his companion. He will do a lot of good by his example, if by nothing else. For their upkeep, they will use the money that Count de Franqueville has for the time being, and will be able to raise what they need by making some visits. If you think it advisable, it would be a great help to us if you were to write to a few people to inform them that the house has been founded, and that it has certain needs.

Would you please write a few words also to Bishop d'Hulst, to thank him for the welcome he gave us, and also to keep him as a friend? He has a lot of power in Paris with the ecclesiastical authorities and could help us a lot with the pious laymen. I tendered Don Bosco's respects to the cardinal when I called on him on his behalf.

The house at Saint Ouen is still at the project stage; in fact, the curate of La Madeleine suggests that we relinquish the plan for that house and buy another at Montmorency, which is a little further away from Paris. Madame Meissonnier would buy a castle there instead of a building. The curate seems to support this new project. We should think it over and write to him. He relies on this principle: now we have a foot inside the door in Paris! Would you please give thought to this and let the curate of La Madeleine know in due course what you think about it?

Forgive this long letter, and please accept our best regards, and bless us all.

Your most humble son,
Rev. Paul Albera

54

DON BOSCO'S CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE COOPERATORS OF PARIS

To our dear Parisian Cooperators:

It was two years ago that I had the pleasure of being among you all, and had an opportunity of seeing for myself how great was your faith, your charity and generosity; and also to give thanks to God because of it!

At that time, a number of you told me how anxious you were to have an institution in Paris that would offer shelter to homeless children and provide them with schooling and education, so as to make them grow up into good Christians and honest citizens.

Your wish has now been fulfilled and today, this is an accomplished fact. The Patronage of St. Peter, which will now be known as the Salesian Oratory of St. Peter, has been inaugurated at Menilmontant, Rue Boyer No. 28.

For the time being, we are limiting our activity to providing a shop for apprentices and young workmen who attend the institution on Sundays and to pupils attending the house on Thursday. We also take in poor, homeless children. But with the help of God and the support of your charity, I hope that we shall be able to increase the number of boarders and make ourselves useful on a larger scale to the young people of your great capital.

We found a modest house, a chapel, a big playground and some classrooms, but we still have a sizable debt to pay for all this. Furthermore, we have to maintain and develop the institution and there you have an open field for your charity.

You are aware that my wealth and fortune depend on your own charity. If I have founded and continue to operate so many institutions benefiting youth, it is because I am supported by your alms. For my own part, I have nothing more than the desire to do good for youth, toward which I have always and will always feel a powerful attachment. This is all the resources that I have, together with the devotion of those priests who like myself, are dedicated to pursue the same goal. The rest is in your hands. I am not asking you for annual subscriptions, but leave each of you free to donate whatever your charitable hearts may inspire, within the limits of your possibilities.

Father Charles Bellamy, the director of the institution, is authorized to accept whatever donations you may be good enough to give us for our new house. Since I know how ardently the sons of France hasten to cooperate in all charitable endeavors, I do not think I need to add anything else. I will only say that I entrust our house in Paris to you, and I am happy to feel that my confidence will not be disappointed.

For my part, I assure you that I shall pray every day, and tell our children to pray at the altar of Mary Help of Christians, so that she may take all of you and your families under the mantle of her maternal protection and obtain temporal and spiritual blessings for you here in this world, and at its own time, the eternal glory of Heaven and the reward for your charity from our divine Jesus.

It is with the most fervent gratitude that I remain from the bottom of my heart,

Your most obedient and grateful servant,
(He signed his name personally to every copy of this circular letter)

Donations may be addressed to:
Monsieur the Rev. Le Rebours, Curate of La Madeleine,
The Rev. Father Pisani, Catholic Institution, 74 Rue de Vaugirand,
Count de Franqueville, Chateau de la Muette-Passy,
Monsieur A. Josse, book store, 29-31 Rue de Sevres.

Anyone wishing to do so may collect alms from others and then deliver them to the director.

55

AN ARTICLE IN *LE FIGARO* ABOUT THE HOUSE IN PARIS[10]

Don Bosco's Institute

Yesterday, we allowed the anarchists to assemble at Boulevard Magenta, the exiles of 1851 to meet at the Louvre City Hall, and the socialists to gather at Montparnasse, etc., etc. By now, our readers are acquainted with the various sections of the Republican Party. It will be quite enough if they are allowed to take their places ten days from now at the banquet on March 18th; no one will be present except Louise Michel. Today, we have something better to do than to describe something unpleasant. We will even point to a remedy for evil.

People know about Don Bosco, this venerable Italian priest who conceived the idea of establishing workshops and associations where workers are taught "to be happy with their lot and resigned to work," in order to check the Socialist movement. He set up his first workshop in Turin, placing it under the patronage of St. Francis of Sales; hence, the name given the house was *Salesian*.

This first workshop was so successful that there are more than one hundred and twenty similar ones today in Italy, Spain and the south of France. There are two thousand workers in the workshop of Turin.

Don Bosco came to Paris a few years ago. A great many priests and benefactors begged him to establish a Salesian house here. Don Bosco

[10] Father Charles Bellamy wrote in reference to this article (letter to Father Michael Rua, March 10, 1885): "A journalist from Le Figaro, which is very widely circulated (80,000 copies), came to see us last Sunday and asked a lot of questions, taking keen interest in what we answered and then wrote a long article, full of mistakes, but overflowing with enthusiasm for Don Bosco's institution."

tried to find accommodation in the most crucial district, the most densely populated area. He found it on the hilltop that was the last and most formidable stronghold of the Paris Commune.

This was at Rue Boyer No. 28, Menilmontant, which is very near Pere-Lachaise. When still only a seminarian, Father Pisani already installed a religious house there. Now that he has been appointed secretary to Bishop d'Hulst, he has been obliged to abandon the institution. Don Bosco founded a stockholding company that bought the house where this new institution has been created. He bought it, but did not pay for it. His benefactors are in the habit of relying on Divine Providence for this last detail.

It is an enormous property, covering four thousand square meters. We just went to see it...and we saw about one hundred and fifty workers there, ranging in age from twelve to twenty-three.

Don Bosco's purpose is two-fold. He begins by training workmen in his big Salesian house. Then, he endeavors to keep them with him, establishing side by side with the workshops a kind of club where the young people can find recreation of a healthier sort than they would find in a café. Unfortunately, Paris is short of money. To date, Don Bosco has been unable carry out the second part of this program. He found two huge rooms and two courtyards at Menilmontant. He converted one of the rooms into a theater, dividing the other into several classes. The smaller of the two courtyards is used as a gymnasium; in the other, the boys play to their heart's content.

From eight to ten o'clock each evening, the director of the house, Father Charles Bellamy, two other assistant priests, an architect, a physician and two law students impart instruction in French, mathematics, singing, drawing, hygiene and common law, etc.

The house is open from midday to midnight on Thursdays and Sundays. The boys do whatever they want there. While some are working out in the gymnasium, others are amusing themselves on the parallel bars or playing dominos. They are quite at home in a big house where no inside doors are closed to them.

A lottery has been organized with as many articles as it has been possible to assemble or to buy, and the tickets are being paid with good conduct marks. The prizes consist of clothing, tools and good books.

In one of the classrooms, some boys are rehearsing a comedy play. In another, they are making costumes and props.

The theater is open every Sunday to the relatives of the boys. It is the

theater that has defrayed the heavier expenses of the house up to the present time. The audience pays twenty-five *centimes* per seat, and whole families pay fifteen *sous*. Only comedies are performed, old ones where it is possible to dispense with female roles. The theater can accommodate up to one hundred persons.

Thanks to an innovation that gives Don Bosco great credit, the three priests living in the house are more guardians than directors. Everything is done, administered, and controlled by the boys themselves, who thereby learn to grow up as men. In turn, they act as doorkeepers, comptrollers, cashiers, administrators, etc.

Menilmontant is not a school run by a religious congregation. We must stress this point. The staff of the Salesian house is made up of students from public schools. A dozen of them are members of the scholastic battalions. Father Charles Bellamy does not exercise the slightest pressure. He enrolls anyone who comes to him; he even prefers it when bad boys are sent to him. He maintains that, thanks to this system, he will soon transform them completely with his regime of freedom and comradeship.

Once, in Turin, Don Bosco asked for permission to accompany 350 juvenile court convicts from a reformatory school on an all-day outing.

"I want to take them on an outing to the royal villa at Stupinigi," he said.

Everyone thought he was insane. He called on Monsieur Ratazzi, who was the head of a state department at the time, and begged him earnestly to yield, until at last Ratazzi consented, saying, "I will put fifty policeman at the head of the group, fifty to the right and fifty to the left of it. Fifty more will bring up the rear."

"I do not want one single policeman," Don Bosco answered. "I will answer for the boys."

He insisted so much that, at last, he obtained permission.

Need one doubt the pleasure of the three hundred and fifty young convicts when they saw the gates of their prison open before them? But Don Bosco had had a talk with them. They followed him through the town like a flock of sheep following its shepherd. Even sheep are kept in line by sheepdogs. Don Bosco did not have one single policeman to help him keep order. That evening when they returned, not one single boy was absent at the roll call. This is the way that this venerable priest considers education. He is sixty-two years old today. He, therefore, has lived beyond the age of experience. He considers children as if they were men. The story we have related above, and which is famous throughout Italy, is sufficient to show us what Don Bosco can do in Paris.

Unfortunately, his institution is poor. He needs money to build another two stories. In one of these stories, he will install dormitories, in the other a dining room. With the remainder of the money, he will open the doors of the house to orphans, children of indigent parents, and incorrigibles.

Count de Franqueville is collecting donations for this wonderful institution at his chateau de la Mauette (Passy-Paris), or they may also be addressed to Father Charles Bellamy, Rue Boyer 28. It is our duty to inform all those people who feel that the time has come to do something about our social disorganization of the above two addresses.

Paris is too vast an area for evil to be allowed to spread. One may find Father Charles Bellamy at the Salesian institution every day, save Wednesdays and Fridays. Anyone wishing to help him develop this area and make it more accessible to what is good should take a trip to Menilmontant. When they come away, they will be glad that they have cooperated in something good, and will be proud to have fought in the most effective way with the weapons of religious socialism against the socialism of revolutionaries.

Charles
Le Figaro, March 9, 1885

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THREE LETTERS ABOUT THE HOUSE IN PARIS FROM FATHER CHARLES BELLAMY

Paris, February 6, 1885

Most beloved and venerated Father Prefect (Father Michael Rua):

You should, and indeed ought to, be very displeased with me because of my extended silence, but I could not do otherwise on account of all the work there is to be done here. So I must ask you to forgive me.

After this apology, here are the clarifications requested by you:

I received a list of Parisian cooperators and thank you for it. I also received the notes to be sent out to the above cooperators, but cannot say that I am grateful for them, since it says in them that the house in Paris was opened, above all, to raise money. Now this announcement was made

from Paris itself at the very moment in which the new house was inaugurated, and can only have a negative effect on our benefactors. As proof of what I say, I received a letter, which you will find enclosed herein, only this morning, and it may possibly not be the last letter of the kind that I shall receive. But it cannot be helped.

I also received this lovely letter that our venerated Father Don Bosco has addressed to the cooperators as above. In this letter, you will find its French translation. I would very much like this letter to be printed and returned to me soon, so that our cooperators will be informed without any great delay of the new foundation of which the newspapers are already talking.

The announcement, of which I am sending you a copy, was sent by Count de Franqueville to the leading newspapers, such as *La Semaine Religieuse de Paris, l'Univers, le Monde, La Defense, le Gaulois, and le Francais.*

The announcement has already had an excellent effect, and I am receiving visitors and letters from all parts, recommending boys to our houses because they are said to be at risk. It is obvious that we cannot wait very long before we open a hostel, since this will be the most effective way to receive alms and do good above all else.

The matter of the civil association established for our house will soon be settled. Then Count de Franqueville suggests that we send you a detailed report on all that has been decided for the welfare of the house. The bonds that Count de Franqueville has now yield a dividend of about one thousand lire per year.

After a certain hesitation, nearly all the gentlemen who had been approached with a view to forming a part of the institutional committee of our house consented, last of all Senator Chesnelong. *Deo gratias*!

Now we shall have to constitute a committee of ladies to raise funds for us, and we are thinking of making Marchioness de Rende its president.

Speaking of her, I think I should tell you that this excellent lady, who is the mother of the Apostolic Nuncio, has informed me of her eager desire that the Salesians agree to direct an institution on behalf of Italians living in Paris. This institution was first founded by the Reverend Barnabite monks, but it is now jeopardized on account that they have been expelled. So for the time being, we would have to take over one of their missionary centers at la Villette, which is quite near Menilmontant, and go there to preach the sermon on Sundays and feast days, hear confessions and say Mass, though continuing to live in the Menilmontant house.... Any Salesian doing this would act in agreement with the one Barnabite monk who would remain behind to be in charge of the general direction of all their apostolic centers located near Paris.

For the time being, nothing could be done about anyone of us living there.

I talked in detail and at great length about this project, which is very dear to the heart of the Nuncio, with our own Provincial, Father Paul Albera. I trust that he wrote to you about it, and I now await your reply, since the Nuncio will soon ask for Don Bosco's decision on the project. Namely, he will ask whether Don Bosco can assume this apostolate on behalf of the Italians living in Paris.

We want to hold the first meeting of the Parisian Cooperators in honor of Mary Help of Christians here around the end of April. This would be, so to speak, the inaugural meeting of the Salesian Institution. We hope to have Auxiliary Bishop Richard as chairman of this occasion, and Bishop d'Hulst (who is so kind to us) has promised to address the meeting. A lot of people are eager to have a picture of Mary Help of Christians here in our chapel because they say it would be a significant means to increase the devotion and, hence, the spiritual and temporal blessings of our house. We are, therefore, thinking of buying a statue similar to the one in Marseille during this inaugural meeting. But there is something else that is longed for by everybody, and that is a personal visit from our dearly beloved Don Bosco. Count de Franqueville, in particular, looks on this visit as a certainty, and is going to write to you about it in a few days. Our heart throbs...just thinking of this possibility! Both from a material as well as a moral standpoint, our newly founded house did present certain difficulties, which I have always reported to our dear Father Provincial. Expenses, too, were far heavier than we had expected and alms are coming in very slowly....

Things seem to be improving now from the moral standpoint; in fact, on the feast of St. Francis, our boys did everything they could to show their gratitude and their good spirit. I gave the older boys D'Espiney's *Life of Don Bosco*. This constitutes the delight of our people at Menilmontant, who are now learning to know and, hence, to love our dear Father. *Deo gratias*. Our little cleric Bessiere has begun to behave excellently. Victor Rapetti is also doing very well.

We held the exercise for a happy death last Saturday, and although it was on a modest scale, it was very encouraging. Little by little, things are improving.

Pray for us, dearest Father Prefect, and we shall pray for you whom we love and venerate so much.

Yours most obedient and affectionate in Jesus and Mary,
Charles Bellamy

B. Paris, February 8, 1885

Dearest Father Don Bosco:

A letter written by our own Don Bosco's hand! What a grace, what a blessing of Divine Providence, to help us forget the distance that separates us from our Father, and our anxiety in trying to do our duty here.

These duties take up so much of our time that we were unable to thank you sooner for your loving, precious letter. Yes, we felt that we ought to sacrifice our most sweet pleasure to the duties incumbent on us in our assignments! I mean to forego the pleasure of writing to our dear Father.

Together with this letter you will receive the French translation of the lovely letter you were so kind as to write to the cooperators of Paris. You could not have written anything more appropriate, and the very new corrections we have made only concerned the form, since we felt that this would better please the Parisians. Be reassured, dear Father, because although there are certain difficulties in managing this house of ours, we have already a number of consolations that give us good reason to hope for the successful future of this institution.

In overcoming our evils, I find powerful support in the singular veneration that many people here feel for you, and it is enough that I introduce myself as a son of Don Bosco to see all the obstacles disappear.

I informed our Father Provincial, Father Paul Albera, of the wish of the Apostolic Nuncio, Bishop di Rende, that Don Bosco participate in the apostolate on behalf of Italians living in Paris.

I gave assurance in your name that such an invitation was very dear to your heart, and said you would do everything possible to comply with the wishes of the representative of the holy Apostolic See. Please let me know, Most Venerated Father, if I am to give a positive reply to the new proposals that will be forthcoming.

We plan to hold the first meeting for cooperators in Paris sometime in April or May. This is to be in the form of an official inauguration ceremony of the new house when a statue of Mary Help of Christians is to be blessed. Everyone is expecting a very big and very special grace from the Lord on this occasion, namely, a visit from you, so that you may bless us and the newly opened house, thereby giving us a guarantee for its future prosperity. But I will leave the task of urging you to grant such a favor to others.

For your consolation, I will tell you that our boys are a real satisfaction to us because of their excellent disposition and growing trust in the Salesians.

The Feast of St. Francis, although celebrated on a very modest scale, was very encouraging because the boys gave abundant evidence of their excellent sentiments in regard to our beloved Father Don Bosco, whom they are getting to know better and better every day, and are, therefore, learning to love him more.

I trust you will sign your name to the letters that are to be sent to our cooperators. Might I ask that attention be given to procuring a printing good enough to satisfy the Parisians who are particularly sensitive to such things? Send the letters back to me quickly, so that I can send them out to our benefactors. I would like to have a number of extra copies of this letter to hold in reserve.

A number of newspapers have published announcements about the opening of our house, and we have already received many applications to take in poor boys. It is obvious that we cannot delay opening the hostel for very long.

Now, I will close my long letter. You will certainly laugh a lot over my Italian, but you need to laugh sometimes to help you forget things which may make you cry, so I am glad, and please forgive me, for I had the best of intentions.

The three of us who are here ask that you bless us and believe in our intense affection. Please bless our benefactors and the boys, too.

I am your most affectionate and humble son in Mary Help of Christians,

Charles Bellamy

C. Paris, February 28, 1885

Dear and Most Reverend Father Michael Rua:

I am so eager, I should say I am so much in need, to see the lovely letter that our good Father Don Bosco wrote, already in the hands of our cooperators, that as soon as I received it, I made some minor corrections that I thought necessary and am sending it back. May I recommend that good quality paper be used.

I do not know if the name of Monsieur Josse should really be featured in the list of our principal benefactors at the end of the letter, as it does now. Perhaps we ought to reserve this for another letter to be sent out by the Parisian Committee. I am afraid that a number of people would be surprised to read his name; in fact, I am also afraid that this gentleman makes rather too extensive a display in his business of all that Don Bosco does

for him. You decide whatever is best.[11]

I fervently hope that our beloved Don Bosco will be able to sign his name at the end of the circular because that will make it far more acceptable.

Please be so kind as to send me a good many copies, so that I can address them to whomever I think should receive one, even though these people may as yet not be cooperators.

As for the lottery, you know what a negative effect it had here. Many people, among them Count de Franqueville (!!), Baron Reille, etc., etc., returned the tickets I had sent them, so that I have an enormous quantity and I do not know what to do with them. Even more, it displeased a good many people. But we must be patient and hope that Diving Providence will come to our assistance. Write and let me know what to do with the tickets.

Count de Franqueville tells me to inform you that the money he is holding is barely enough to pay the initial cost on the purchase of the house, and is far from being sufficient to provide all that needs to be done. On the other hand, alms are very scarce and many people are awaiting Don Bosco's visit to Paris before giving us anything. So we do not feel that his visit would be helpful, but indeed essential. Otherwise we do not know what more can be done to reawaken public welcoming feeling so as to provide us with what we need to pay for the house and its upkeep.

The most propitious time for Don Bosco's visit would be toward the end of April or the beginning of May, when we are to hold the meeting of our cooperators for the inauguration of the house, at which His Excellency Bishop Richard or the Apostolic Nuncio will officiate. On this same occasion, a statue of Mary Help of Christians is to be blessed.

Please think about this and give me an encouraging answer. People are saying that Don Bosco, who received a lot of money the first time he came here, would obtain a good deal more now that he has a house here in Paris....

As for the apostolate on behalf of Italian nationals living here in Paris, I called again on Countess di Rende to give her the answer of Father Paul

[11] In a letter written in on March 10th to Father Michael Rua, Father Charles Bellamy explains this concept more clearly: "As to Monsieur Josse, I feel that his name might almost read as an insult, which placed close to the names of the other distinguished people such as Rebours, and De Franqueville; this, too, was the impression of several persons to whom I gave the letter to read. This man who is very well meaning, appears to mix the sacred and profane all too willingly. I mean his love of money and zeal in doing good. It appears that he is cashing in on the prestige of Don Bosco's name. I am afraid that this can become an abuse. Now I think, however, that your opinion is very wise, so I do not think we should eliminate Josse's name from the list of collectors."

Albera, which was identical to the one I received from you today.

But since the countess seemed very displeased that we could not possibly do anything in the matter, I felt I had better immediately reassure her that we shall make every effort to start doing something, at least on a modest scale at first, as soon as everything has been prepared at La Villette.[12]

The Apostolic Nuncio has given his patronage to this undertaking and is very anxious about it. I am to be introduced to him soon, which will be an excellent thing for us. I will explain matters to him as best as I can, but I am always abiding by your answer....

There is plenty of work and it is constantly increasing in all directions. We already have one poor, homeless boy living here who seems to have a vocation for the priesthood, probably for the Salesians, but his vocation is somewhat threatened. Did I perhaps do something wrong? I could not look at such destitution and risk without helping the poor abandoned young man. I am very pleased with our boys, and *Deo gratias*.

On the 15th, we shall be celebrating the Feast of St. Joseph in our house, and ten older boys, who were destitute, will receive First Communion. The Curate of Menilmontant will be with us and we'll give him a fine welcome. Pray for us. I have three spiritual retreats to preach at Easter.

Pray for your poor Charles Bellamy P.S.

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LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO MADAME QUISARD AND HER SON

A. Turin, May 24, 1884

My dear friend:

I received your kind letter and I thank you for it. I shall not fail to pray for your intention. You will be certain of a victory if you dedicate yourself in all seriousness to your work in class and if you are obedient to Papa and Mama.

[12] In the above-mentioned letter, he wrote: "I would like to have the completed collection of both the Italian and French versions of the Bulletin, to give it to our boys to read, for when they get to know the history of the Oratory, they will come to admire and love the Salesian Congregation. I would also like to have the Catholic Readings because this would enable us to start a small library for the young Italian boys who attend our Oratory. I am teaching catechism to four little Italian boys and preparing them for First Communion right now."

Go to Holy Communion as often as you can.
God bless you and guide you always on the road to Heaven.
Please pray for me, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your good friend,
Rev. John Bosco

B. Turin, July 9, 1884

Madame Quisard:

I am always grateful for your letters and your good news about the family, as well as for your charitable donations on behalf of our orphans. I received the two hundred francs that were enclosed in your letter dated on the 3rd of this month, and will not fail to have our children pray and go often to Holy Communion for your intentions.

You are now working on some shirts for the children who will live in the house of Lyons, while I am working to try and overcome the obstacles that never fail to obstruct us. God will assist us to do whatever is best for His Glory and for the welfare of souls.

I am very sorry to hear that you, or should I say your husband, is not as well as you might hope. Be patient. God has a consolation in store for you, and you will see it very shortly. You will also perceive a very considerable improvement in your business.

I will not forget to have special prayers said for your daughter, so that she may find happiness in her marriage, and a still happier life in eternity some day, for this awaits us all.

Remember that the following is a definite remedy against cholera: (1) wear a medal of our Lady Help of Christians; (2) say the following ejaculatory prayer every day: O Mary Help of Christians pray for us; and (3) go to Holy Communion.

May God bless us and keep us in His Holy Grace and in good health. So be it.

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Pinerolo, August 21, 1884

Madame Quisard:

Your very kind letter and charitable donation arrived here at Pinerolo

yesterday, where I am staying for a few days with the bishop of the diocese for health reasons.

Thank you for all your kindness. I am very sorry, but my health will very probably prevent me from going to Lyons for the period you mentioned. I hope to be able to say a Mass to invoke the blessings of Our Dear Lord on the engaged couple at the date already set. Meanwhile, I never omit a special memento during Holy Mass for you, Madame, your husband, your business and your family.

God bless you, and may the Blessed Virgin protect you and guide you along the road to Heaven.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Please forgive my genuinely awful handwriting.

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LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO THE LALLEMAND LADIES

A. February 5, 1884

Dear Madame and Mademoiselle Lallemand:

I listened very attentively to the reading of your accounts, and am grateful that our Lord delivered you from the many perils of this life and of the world, while I pray unceasingly to the Blessed Virgin for you, so that through her intercession, you may have a total victory over the obstacles now thwarting your peace of mind and your spiritual and temporal happiness.

As for bodily penance, this is not for either of you. When people grow old, it is enough that they endure the discomforts of their old age for the love of God. When people are sick, it is quite enough for them to endure with docility their ailments for His sake, following the instructions of their doctor or their relatives in obedience. A delicate repast eaten in obedience is more agreeable in the eyes of God than fasting in disobedience. I do not see anything to be corrected in your conscience. Receive the Holy Sacraments as often as you can, and do not be upset when you are unable to do so. In such instances, perform acts of spiritual Communion as often as you can, resigning yourselves to the Holy Will of God to be loved in all things. May our Lady Help of Christians protect you in your troubles and

difficulties along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Before closing this letter, I received your last one and now add that Father de Lamintette truly is a most excellent friend to us and that he will make every effort to give Monsieur Wilz all the spiritual assistance possible. Meanwhile, both adults and children began to pray for the benefit of his soul and shall continue to do so every day.

Orders are being given that the Salesian *Bulletin* be mailed to you regularly. We are sorry that you did not receive it so far; please forgive this mistake or oversight. I also gave thought to recommending one of our good cooperators in Paris to act as your agent, but nothing further was done about it since this is now superfluous. I wholeheartedly endorse what your lawyer advised you in this matter.

God bless you, and may He comfort you through His Holy Mother. I beg you both, you and your dear Mama, to accept the respectful regards with which I am in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

B. February 24, 1884

Dear Madame and Mademoiselle Lallemand:

I received your last welcome letter some time ago with one from Father Laminelle and all things considered before God, Who is all Goodness and Mercy, we have reason to rejoice. The absence of a satisfactory attitude toward Madame does not detract from the good, interior intentions that one should, without any doubt, presume to have existed. Besides his condition was such that he could justifiably only have confided them to his confessor, but this did not allow him to offer due reparation. He received the Holy Sacraments, and the priest who administered them was moved by his devout attitude, which is reason for consolation. My many children and I prayed for him and continue to pray daily. Furthermore, I am fully confident that all your charity and all that you have done for our poor orphans have already contributed substantially to the shortening the term to be spent in Purgatory by this soul dear to you. This is possibly due to your charity, which called Divine Mercy to look upon his last moments. Blessed be God.

So take heart and be at peace without any anxiety for his fate. Just say a little prayer for him every day and offer up all your good works for him. Anything you may send us will always be gratefully acceptable under the agreed terms that we add special prayers for the beloved soul of Monsieur Wilz.

May the blessings and grace of Our Dear Lord be showered on both of you abundantly, and I will always remember you in my Holy Mass. In your piety, please pray for me, too, now and accept my respectful regards.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. March 28, 1884

Mademoiselle Lallemand:

I herewith acknowledge receipt of your kind letter of the 24th and assure you that my prayers and those of our orphans in Turin and in all the Salesian houses I am visiting during this period will continue. We are praying everywhere for you, and your dear Mama Madame Lallemand, as well as for your deceased relatives and all your good intentions. I shall be very grateful for whatever you are about to send me....

On the 1st, you will be at St. John the Evangelist. That's perfect! I shall be away from Turin for some time, but please address all correspondence to Turin, Via Cottolengo 32 (and not 33 as you sometimes write by mistake). Permit me once again to point out that one single seal of wax is not enough on a registered letter. It would be wiser to put on at least five. Such precautions make registration utterly safe. I say this because quite often we receive registered letters with only one seal, which does not quite safeguard the opening at he flap, where one might attempt to violate the contents.

I invoke the choicest blessings from Heaven and every joy that may not conflict with your eternal welfare, on you and your dear Mama, and beg you to believe me in Jesus Christ always,

Your humble servant,
Don Bosco

D. May 18, 1884

Madame Lallemand:

I just got back from Rome, and hasten to inform you that I saw the Supreme Pontiff Leo XIII, who sends a special blessing to all benefactors and Salesian Cooperators and their families; consequently to the Lallemand ladies, mother and daughter, their relatives and families as well. I could not describe the affectionate and warm welcome that the Holy Father deigned to give me on the 9th of this month, nor express his indescribable kindness toward the poor Salesians.

May our Lady Help of Christians be praised and thanked for it, together with Almighty God, the Creator of all things. *Deo gratias et Mariae.*

If you decide to send...what you mentioned in your letter, we shall accept it with the deepest gratitude on the condition that if you need it and let us know, we shall return it to you within a week. As to the difficulties you fear about returning this, they can be overcome if we carry out the dispatch through one of our houses in France, Nice, Marseille, or Lille. But we hope that such obstacles will not arise. I was very sorry that I did not have time to have medals procured in Rome.

If you would care to read the interesting life of the Venerable Father Cottolengo, I could have it sent to you right away as soon as you let me know. Should you move prior to the Feast of St. John, please be good enough to let us know the new and exact address in good time for our convenience. I will now close by invoking upon you the choicest blessings of Our Lord and Our Lady Help of Christians, and by offering to you my own respectful and grateful regards.

Please, Madame, pray for me who will always remain in Jesus Christ our Lord,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. My secretary assures me that the medals (Forsaken Mother) do not exist in Rome. He is sending you a parcel of medals of *Mater Dolorosa*, which he himself submitted to the Holy Father Leo XIII. They are, therefore, blessed by the Pope with all possible indulgences.

E. December 27, 1884

Madame Lallemand:

Following what I told you in my letter of the 17th, I am honored to enclose herewith....

It only remains for me to confirm my previous letter to you and renew my best wishes for the New Year, invoking a thousand blessings from the Holy Child Jesus, and asking you to pray for me always.

My very best regards to you and Mademoiselle. May the Blessed Virgin comfort you with her motherly protection.

Your very humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

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A LETTER FROM BISHOP MOCENNI TO DON BOSCO

Office of the Secretary of State of His Holiness

Most Reverend Father Don Bosco:

I was honored to receive your kind letter of the 14th, and talked with Father Francis Dalmazzo of the person in charge of Special Distinguished Honors, but do not want to deprive myself of the pleasure of writing to you directly.

First of all, I must tell you that I ventured to refer the matter of your petition on behalf of Count de Montigny to the Holy Father, but that he did not wish to grant it. I say "ventured" because it is absolutely prohibited that any one department concern itself with matters pertaining to another department. The office of the secretary of state cannot sponsor other than on behalf of diplomats, but for no one else.

Now could you make inquires of either Bishop Macchi or Boccali if, as you say, they may be holding the documents in question, so that they may take up the matter because otherwise why should they be retaining them?

The department that deals specifically with special distinction honors and noble titles is the Chancellery of Briefs, which refers petitions to the Holy Father ex *officio*. Nothing prevents the Chancellery of Briefs from applying to the Holy Father for exemption from payment of fees.

Thank you for the prayers you were so kind as to say for me. Please keep on praying, since I am in dire need of the prayers of saintly people.

With the greatest admiration I am,

Your most humble and devoted servant,
Mario, Archbishop of Heliopolis

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LETTER FROM FATHER FRANCIS DALMAZZO TO DON BOSCO

Rome, November 29, 1884

Most Venerated Father:

The victory over Ferrero is complete, since Cardinal Ferrieri, who

had already proposed a settlement, has been forced to take to his bed with a violent attack of gout.[13]

Nevertheless, he did send a petition of Ferrero, who came especially to Rome, to the other cardinals to expedite matters, since the suit was suspended. However, the cardinals did not think it warranted any action and passed sentence. All of them without exception voted in our favor. However, we did not obtain the *amplius* that would allow for an appeal. Re: Ferrieri – he is angry with Don Bosco for having created a bishop without his consent or even informing him of it. I will explain everything in due course.

The Order of St. Gregory has already been granted to Baron Heraud. It was done in such a manner that the Pope did it all on his account, handing him the brief himself without any charges. The count honor has also been granted to De Montigny, but first they chose to write to the nuncio and only agreed to grant it when he had sent his commendation letters. The Holy Father said, however, that for this, eight thousand lire – I repeat, eight thousand – are to be paid.

I renewed the application *pro gratia*, or at least for a discount, and will get the answer Monday.

I submitted papers referring to Bishop Guigou, too, and this can be obtained without a doubt.

I received the invitation for the important feast of the consecration, but what can I do about the Feast of the Immaculate Conception? How can I do anything with all the confessions I have to hear, and with so many sick people and the black plague now raging? You know how I long to see you again, kiss your hand, receive your blessing, and how I yearn to share in so much joy, but...I will see, and will do everything possible. Bishop Sallua will come to preach on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and Cardinal Gori will impart the blessing. Bishop Sallua is even coming to dinner, so would it be possible for me to be absent? I await your orders in this matter. I have much I want to

[13] The Ferrero here mentioned was later discovered to be a Freemason. He had lived at the Oratory for three years. When dismissed, he sued Don Bosco before the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, claiming damages because the Salesians had not participated in an auction of his house at Saluzzo, as they had promised they would, and in the payment of services he had rendered. The Salesians had attended the auction at first, but when the bidding had exceeded thirty thousand lire, which was the actual value of the house, they had withdrawn their bid. As to repayment for his services, nothing was due to him because at the time he had come to the house, he had signed the customary declaration that he would give his services gratuitously. Indeed, it was possible to prove that he had only caused harm and procured no advantages, since heavy expenses had been undertaken in order to satisfy his demands for his pharmaceutical research work, which proved unsuccessful. Prior to the ecclesiastic court, he had already lost his suit before a civil court.

tell you. But let us hope.

Please accept regards from all my dearly beloved confreres. Bless us all and believe me in Christ Jesus,

Your most affectionate son,
Rev. Francis Dalmazzo

61

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO THE MOTHER j748 SUPERIOR OF CARMELITES IN PARIS

July 17, 1884

Turin, Via Cottolengo No. 32
Oratory of St. Francis of Sales

Reverend Mother Sister Mary of the Angels
and Sister Marie Imaculae de Jesus:

I am honored to answer your very gracious letter to assure you that I am praying fervently for you. My poor children and I are beginning a novena for your intentions on August 2nd, Feast of St. Mary of the Angels and of Good Succor.

Would you join us by saying three *Paters, Aves and Glorias* to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and three *Salve Reginas* to our Lady Help of Christians every day, together with the ejaculatory *Cor Jesu Sacratissimum, miserere nobis; Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*? I recommend my poor orphans to your charitable generosity. God told us "Give and unto ye shall be given." I implore Him to grant you to experience how true these divine words are by generously rewarding all that you may be able to do for these children.

Let us trust fully in the goodness of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and in the maternal love of our Lady Help of Christians, and our prayers will be answered in the measure most becoming to the glory of God and the true welfare of our souls.

You would do well if you could go also to Holy Communion, for this is the living source of all graces.

May God bless you and all those who are dear to you, and may the Blessed Virgin protect you all with her maternal patronage.

Your very humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Thank you for having sent me the wonderful letter of His Eminence Cardinal Lavigerie. Have faith. If you have faith, you will want for nothing. Our Dear Lord orders you to rely on this foundation. He will do everything necessary, most assuredly. But we must pray fervently and do everything with the conviction that God will assist us.

62

LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO PRINCE AUGUST CZARTORYSKY

A. Turin, January 26, 1885

My dear Auguste:

Your letter certainly calls for a prompt reply, but it is not so easy to give you an answer in writing. Nevertheless, this is what I think.

If you feel a powerful inclination to the priesthood in your heart, you will renounce all your firstborn son rights; but in the event that you are not yet certain of this, you would be well advised to do whatever your Papa wants you to do, accepting your status as firstborn son with all its consequences. As to the other decisions to take, we shall have to write further, unless we can meet personally some time next spring.

Meanwhile, let us pray. You pray and the Dear Lord will manifest His will to us plainly.

You will have read in the newspapers that on Saturday, a fire burned a considerable part of the house. There was great damage done, but no one was harmed. Blessed be God, both in our good fortune and in our sorrows.

May the Blessed Virgin protect us and guide us along the road to Heaven. So be it.

Your humble servant and friend,

Rev. John Bosco

B. May 27, 1885

Dear Prince:

I shall be very happy to welcome you here and fully endorse your plans for a retreat. I only regret that I will not be able to direct the retreat myself, but I do hope that others will be able to do it in my stead, for my health is still too precarious to allow me to attempt any such things. Come! Come, by all means. I await you eagerly.

Thank you for the news you sent about your dear family. I am sincerely happy to know that they are all well. Please congratulate Prince Adam for me on his First Communion.

Oh, may Our Lord bless and keep him always in His Holy Grace, making him grow up as a valiant patron and defender of the faith, a saint!

Please give my humble respects, I beg you, to their Highnesses the Prince and Princess and to the whole family, not forgetting dear little Prince Vitold, for whom I pray whole-heartedly. Goodbye then until very shortly.

May the Dear Lord bless you and be with you always. My respectful regards, and believe me,

Most devotedly yours in our Lord,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, July 3, 1885

Dear Prince:

Your gracious letter delighted all the Salesians. It looks as though Divine Providence is leading you toward the Church of God. We are praying fervently that the Grace of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin be with you always. The instructions and intentions of your father are truly wise and you can safely follow them, especially in administrating your fortune. Your somewhat hasty departure here prevented us from winding up several matters, but I hope that some fortunate opportunity or correspondence will allow us to explain ourselves more clearly. My health is still poor, and I beg you to remember me in your charitable prayers.

We are very grateful for your generous kindness toward us. Our orphans will pray unceasingly and also offer up Communions for your

intentions.

God bless you, dear and kind friend (allow me to call you this) and may the Blessed Virgin protect you always along the road to Heaven.

Your most humble and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

D. August 26, 1885

Dear and honorable Prince August:

Your letter came as a most welcome gift for myself and all the Salesians, and we shall not fail to pray for you and your whole family.

Just now we are making our retreat.

My health is far from good, but every day all our priests have a memento during Mass for your intention. I will be happy to write to you again very soon. The advice of your father, the prince, is very wise. One cannot say more than that. Should I myself be unable, Father Michael Rua will give you all the details you asked for in your letter.

May the Blessed Virgin guide you in all your decisions. I beg you to remember me in your kind prayers, and may God guide us along the path to Heaven. So be it.

From our house at San Benigno Canavese,
Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco.

E. Turin, December 13, 1885

Dear Prince Auguste Czartorysky:

We were all very anxious for the news of you and now we are very glad to hear about yourself and your family. I think that the question of marriage hinges upon finding someone suitable, and in this I think you would be well advised to follow the advice of your father and the aunt you mention. Nevertheless, I shall not omit to pray, and our orphans will offer up prayers and Communions at the altar of our Lady Help of Christians in church.

There are many things we could discuss together in person, but which are hard to explain by letter. But may the Blessed Virgin, who has guided us so far, not deny us her motherly protection. I am fully confident that during the course of the coming year, we shall see you to the great joy of

all the Salesians, who love you as a father and benefactor.

God bless you, my dearest Auguste, and may your aspiration to eternal happiness guide all your words and actions.

I am now half-blind, and, therefore, you will have to be somewhat patient in trying to read my poor handwriting.

Would you, in your great charity, pray for me and for the whole Salesian family, with whom I will always remain with gratitude in Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful and humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

63

SUPPLEMENT TO THE SALESIAN BULLETIN FOR DECEMBER 1884

Turin, date of postmark

Very Reverend and charitable Sir:

The tragic events that have struck our country, especially this year, have been a cause of extreme poverty for our charitable institutions. As a consequence of this general affliction, many boys have found themselves abandoned. They turned to us, asked for shelter and we have given it to them.

Now, so that we can provide for such orphans and assist them, I have decided to appeal to the charity of the clergy that, in so many different ways and on so many occasions, has already come to my assistance.

To assist me in this charitable endeavor, a few pious persons have entrusted to me the celebration of a substantial number of Masses. I, therefore, implore the kind priests to come to my assistance by celebrating them, or persuading others to do so in whatever measure the piety of their heart may suggest.

Those priests who are able to cooperate in this charitable undertaking are requested to inform me of the number of Masses they intend to celebrate within the period of one year; sending the stipends for the work we have mentioned.

The boys who will benefit from this will attend Holy Mass every day, also offering up special prayers and frequent Communions for their benefactors.

I will join them in invoking the blessings of Heaven upon these worthy donors and their relatives.

Profoundly grateful in Jesus Christ, I am,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

N.B. I would also like to ask Your Reverence to do me the favor of letting priests known to you to have information on the contents of this letter if they are in a position to help me.

64

LETTER TO DON BOSCO BY A MOHAMMEDAN LADY

Russian Government of Vilna Lukiszk
Lianczevsky House
Mohammedan Quarter Jeszku Bogdanowicz.

Very Reverend Father:

I am writing to you with the most steadfast conviction that your unlimited charity will also be extended to myself and all those dear to me, and that you will donate us the support of your prayers. I implore your help for someone who is now sick, and who is very dear to me, and I am firmly convinced that through your intercession, God will hear our prayers, although the sick man and myself are of the Mohammedan faith. The sick man is now twenty-six years old; his name is Zachary, and he has been sick already for two years. He began by coughing, and lost weight and strength after a bad cold. But now, especially since the month of May of last year, his condition has grown frighteningly bad. In September, his voice became husky and is failing more and more all the time. Now he's had a sore throat for the last four weeks, and throws up after every meal. He has dragged on in this manner now for a year, and his sickness is gaining greater hold over him, while the doctors do not hold out any hope. Right now, he is in agony.

Unfortunately, we knew nothing about you until today and we were absolutely desperate. We have only three rubles to send you since the sick man only has his personal work as his means of making a livelihood. If God restores his health, he will never forget what you have done.

Take pity on us, and do not refuse us the assistance of your prayers, which must obtain the good health of our beloved patient for our mutual happiness.

Your very humble servant,
Rosalie Bogdanowicz

65

THE SALESIANS AND THE PUPILS OF MARSEILLE WRITE TO DON BOSCO

A.

Reverend, dearly beloved and three-times-dear Don Bosco:

We consider this year an unhappy one, since, so far, we have not yet had the joy of seeing you here. But praised be God who today has filled us with the most tender delight. Yes! It is sweet to know, dearly beloved Father, that your health has improved, and that we shall be seeing you here in our midst. It seems as if all the blessings of Heaven will be showered on our house the moment our dearly beloved Father will arrive. Oh, certainly the joy of the governor of Egypt was no greater when he embraced his father, the holy patriarch Jacob, after living for so many years in a foreign land! A thousand times blessed be the Lord, and may He grant our prayers for the return of a perfect health to you, keeping you for our affection for many a long year.

Since all my dear confreres have asked me to convey their veneration and filial love to you, I can find nothing else to tell you than this: dearly beloved Father, we love you; you know that we do, but we can never say it often enough. Yes, we try to love you as much as one should love the tenderest and dearest of Fathers. Here we know but three names: God, Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

Your name, beloved Don Bosco, your remembrance inspires us in difficult moments. There is an immense harvest here in the house, but the workers are few. Dearly beloved Father, allow me to reassure you and I say it with great joy: all your Salesian sons here in Marseille, from their venerated superior down to the humblest novice, have inherited to a generous measure the fire consuming your own heart, the fire and zeal for the glory of God. They work and struggle and pray for the things they are unable to accomplish. Oh, if God were to keep an account of the effort, the holy lamentations addressed to Him during the course of a day by the

holy angels in this house, each of your sons in Marseille would be able to repeat some day with St. Paul: "*Reposita est mihi corona iustitiae*!"

Once again, dearly beloved Father, be happy, live long, live forever for the happiness of your sons and pray for us. Bless us that more and more, day after day, we may become worthy sons of Don Bosco.

In the name of all the Salesians of France, Italy, Spain and America, we repeat: "May Don Bosco live forever!"

B.

Dearly beloved Father:

If we were to express our happiness at seeing you in our midst, our every word would have to consist not merely of sounds issued by the voice, but instead of actual hearts. Please try to picture all the genuine hearts of all your sons in Marseille divinely assembled to write the name of Don Bosco. Even then, you would only have a pale image of what our love means.

Today is the loveliest day of all days for us, dearly beloved Don Bosco. So please accept all the good wishes that beloved children may express for the tenderest of all Fathers.

Permit us to rejoice and repeat a thousand times that we love you. We have often told you this, but shall keep on repeating it always because it is true. We do love you.

Please accept the hearts of all your children, who beg you to bless them, to continue loving them, and to make them grow up as good Christians. We all promise you that it will be our greatest delight to be able to say: "I am a son of Don Bosco," and in so saying, we shall all do our duty as men and as Christians. We shall find again the memory of all the virtues your name will remind us of, following in the path blazed by these same virtues until our dying breath.

This, dearly beloved Father, is the desire of all of us: take within yourself the hearts of all your sons of Marseille.

May the Lord lengthen your days, tender Father. May He console you in all your sorrows. We shall pray to Mary Help of Christians, especially while you are here with us, but you, too, must pray for us and bless our superiors and our families.

Do not refuse us this grace, kind Father. The patriarchs blessed their children and, at the same time, God also blessed them. May this blessing descend on all the pupils of this house, both present and future. May it also descend upon you, dearly beloved Father, for as long as your pilgrimage here

on earth shall last, and may you one day see all your children around you, like a garland of roses, to crown you throughout eternity.

In the name of all the pupils at the Oratory, The artisans and students. May Don Bosco live forever and ever.

66

CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE COOPERATORS OF MARSEILLE

Marseille, April 14, 1885

Monsieur:

We are living in times quite difficult for the institutions that know no other revenue than that of public charity. Such is the institution to which I have consecrated my whole life, and which is maintained by the generosity of the Salesian Cooperators. St. Leo's Oratory and the Orphanage of Saint-Cyr in the Var district especially are in great need. It is on account of this that, despite my weak health, I have decided to go to Marseille to appeal to your charity, which has never yet failed me.

Friday at four o'clock in the afternoon of April 17th, there will be a gathering of cooperators in our chapel. His Excellency the Bishop, our eminent benefactor, had promised to preside and say a few words.

I wish to remind our dear cooperators that the Holy Father grants a plenary indulgence to all persons who will attend.

For my part, I assure you, that our children will say a special prayer every day at the feet of our Lady Help of Christians for you and your family.

Please accept my respectful and most grateful regards in our Lord.

Rev. John Bosco.

67

LETTER WRITTEN BY FATHER JOHN BAPTIST LEMOYNE UNDER THE INSTRUCTIONS AND IN THE NAME OF DON BOSCO TO THE BOYS OF THE ORATORY

Toulon, April 20, 1885

My dear children:

I went to France, and you can guess why. You eat the loaves of bread and if I were not to go out and look for [money] *cum quibus*, the baker would start to shout that he had no more flour and nothing to put in the oven. Rossi, the cook, would be tearing his hair, shouting that he did not know what to put in the pot to cook. Since both the cook and the baker would be right, and you, even more right than they, I had to go out in search of fortune to make sure that my dear children lacked for nothing. It is true that it tires me out a great deal to travel around, giving audiences from morning until night, calling on our benefactors. On some days, I feel really sick with weariness and my infirmities, but then I think of you and this makes my troubles sweet. I am always thinking of the Oratory, especially in the evenings when I, at last, have a little peace. I then begin to think of the superiors and the boys there, one by one. I talk about them with whoever is with me at the time, and I am always praying for you. Do you think about me and pray for me as well? Oh, yes! Certainly because your director, whose letters delight me with the news of the house, told me that you do.

Now I have to recommend something to you. The month of May will start soon, and I would like you to dedicate it very particularly to Mary Help of Christians. If only you knew all the graces that the Blessed Virgin Mary has obtained during these few days for her good children at the Oratory! Our Lady really deserves the token of your special gratitude! If only there were time, how many lovely things I would have to tell you!

I am, therefore, suggesting a little "nosegay" to be observed throughout the whole month, and I want you all to carry it out faithfully.

This is what it is: <u>each of you, in honor of Mary, is to make an effort to keep his soul free of mortal sin, by avoiding any occasion for committing it and by receiving the Sacraments often.</u>

Last year, we had the cholera plague in Italy, but in the future we shall have something far worse. So we need that Our Lady spread her mantle over us. Let us be ready for what comes.

I hope to be back among all of you soon, and I am asking the director to keep all of us happy on that day in the dining room. You like to be happy, do you not? So do I, and I hope and pray that Our Lord grant that you and I one day may attain the eternal happiness He keeps in store for those who love Him.

May Our Lord bless you and believe me always,

Your most affectionate friend,

Rev. John Bosco

68

THE CHAIRMAN OF THE NICE CATHOLIC CLUB THANKS DON BOSCO - A TOAST!

Reverend Father:
Gentlemen:

Today is a very great day for us. Joy is radiantly evident on all faces, and one can see it in people's eyes. The children are welcoming their kind, venerated Father.

Yes, we are very happy, and I am proud of the honor that is mine to inform you of it, Reverend Father. We shall never forget that when God inspired a few kind-hearted men (whose names I will not mention since most of them are here) with the idea of founding our institution in a time when we were poor and small, you chose to adopt us on the basis of these two factors as your own children. Yes, you took us as your own; you assisted us with your counsel, encouraged us and blessed us.

It is this recollection and the gratitude that inspire us, and that now make up our joy.

The little baby that you took into your arms when he was just born, arms that stretched out its arms for paternal love, has now grown somewhat. It has attained its eighth year, but is still little and quite poor. This means that it still belongs to the company of those who lay claim to your tender, benevolent fatherliness as though entitled to it.

I, therefore, ask you, gentlemen, to drink together with me to the good health of our venerated Father, to the father of the poor, to the friend of the working man, to the missionary, to the servant of God, praying that God may keep him for many a year for our delight and His Own Glory.

69

LETTER FROM CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO DON BOSCO

Turin, April 30, 1885

Dear and Most Reverend Don Giovanni:

How welcome and pleasant it was to receive a letter written by you, after the tiring journey you undertook for the benefit of the Congregation! Just as I did not neglect to pray that Your Dear Reverence might endure the fatigue without damage to your health, so do I now rejoice and thank the Lord for having brought you back to us safe and sound, and I hope in better health.

We shall see each other and embrace fraternally soon, and will arrange to postpone the delightful festivities of Mary Help of Christians since, rightly enough, Pentecost will be celebrated in its stead.

My family thanks you and sends regards and all best wishes.

I embrace you in the Lord, and bless you from the bottom of my heart together with all the Salesians and their holy works, and remain with veneration and esteem,

Most affectionately
and fraternally yours,
Cajean, Cardinal Archbishop

70.

LETTER FROM PRINCESS DORIA SOLMS TO DON BOSCO

Pegli, Villa Doria, May 3rd

Very Reverend Don Bosco:

Only a few words to tell you how very anxious I am to see you again, and to beg you to grant us this pleasure!

We beg you remember us in your holy prayers, since all of us are troubled.

We are deeply grateful for and most touched by your pious remembrance of us.

Asking your holy blessing and humbly kissing your hand, I am honored to be most devotedly,

Most respectfully yours,
Princess Solms Braunfels

71.

APPLICATION TO THE MANAGEMENT OF RAILWAYS

Last April, the undersigned requested that on the 20th, 21st, and on the 23rd of the current month of May, a special discount in railway fares be granted for our pupils coming from the stations of Alassio, Varazze and Borgo San Martino on the occasion of the fair and solemn celebrations of the feast day of Mary Help of Christians.

The 18th of that same month, reply was received to the effect that the current regulations prohibited the concession of any such traveling facilities, other than those already contemplated by the statutes of the railway company.

The general manager is now requested to give consideration to the number of boys who on their journey to Turin and back would amount to approximately some eight hundred, and the fact that this would create considerable traffic because other travelers, such as the relatives and the friends of the boys, would be added to the boys.

It is, therefore, requested that one-fourth of the current fare be discounted for this sole solemn occasion, as was once granted previously by the well-deserving administration to all pupils of the above listed houses without any exception.

This favor is asked also in consideration of the peculiar status of the pupils who, to a large extent, are sons of fathers employed by the North Italian Railways.

In view of the critical situation now prevailing, it is likewise respectfully requested that an answer be given within the shortest possible time.

With profound gratitude, etc., etc.

72

LETTERS TO DON BOSCO FROM CAEN

A St. Marie C, May 26, 1885

Most Venerated Father:

This note will be delivered to you by someone who has been sorely afflicted for the last two years at least.

The trials that have often been confided to me have revealed to me that this person is an honest, very generous soul fully resigned to the Will

[14] Up to June 1867, the pupils had been granted a 75% discount on fares.

of God. If she is seeking comfort from you, she is doing it only on obedience, well determined to bless the Lord in all things, no matter what may come.

I have been a priest now for nearly forty years, but have never encountered any soul more sorely afflicted, nor resigned to the Will of God for His Glory and the welfare of souls.

She has been faithful to God all her life, and I believe, she has also retained her baptismal innocence.

Please, Reverend Father, extend your blessing to he who is writing you these few lines and accept my most respectful regards.

R. Vauquelin
Missionary Priest and Superior of the Free
Institute of St. Marie near Caen

B. Caen, June 1, 1885

Reverend Father:

I earnestly recommend a parishioner of mine, who is leaving today for Turin for the sole purpose of talking with you, of receiving your reassurance, consolation and recovery from your hands.

Her moral state is a most distressing one, as you will see for yourself, but there is no reason whatsoever to suspect her honesty or her good faith.

I venture to hope, Reverend Father, that you will do everything possible for her.

I beg you to accept my most respectful regards and my gratitude as I am honored to be,

Your very humble and obedient servant,
Recoy
Curate of St. Gilles

73

LETTER FROM FATHER MEHLER TO DON BOSCO

Most Beloved Father:

The undersigned is a German priest who had the good fortune of being a guest at the Oratory in Turin and of attending the moving feast celebrated on June 24, 1885.

At the General Convention of German Catholics in Westphalia, I took the floor twice to speak about your institution.

Some 5,000 outstanding persons from all parts of Germany, Austria, Flanders and Holland attended the Convention. After saluting the distinguished assembly in the name of Don Bosco, I related all that this Man of God had accomplished in Turin, Italy, France, Spain and South America in order to rescue youth. The convention was filled with admiration over so stupendous an achievement, and broke into a thunderous applause, giving thanks to Divine Providence. When the social significance of the Oratories and the immense advantages that could accrue had been rendered public, the assembly decided to found associations to rescue poor, destitute young people. Don Bosco loves German youth, too, and will pray for us. He has blessed our assembly and the Germans love Don Bosco like a father, and will continue to love him.

This was the deliberation of the assembly. The first Youth Association will be founded at M. Gladbach, Munich and Aix-la-Chapelle, and Don Bosco will please bless this social undertakings. On this occasion, I have enrolled 110 distinguished persons as your cooperators, and am now working on the German translation of the Cooperators' Diploma, and a *Bulletin,* too, will now have to be published in this same language.

I also brought to the convention the picture of Don Bosco, his biographies by Espiney and Albert du Boys, the picture of the Immaculate Conception and of St. Anthony, paintings made by the artist Rollini (a pupil of the Turin Oratory), and the picture of Mary Help of Christians. All of these items were shown in the exhibit of Christian arts.

We Germans have two biographies of Don Bosco in German: the one by Espiney (that was translated and published in Munster in 1883) and the one by Albert du Boys (translated at Mayence by the initiative of the bookseller Kirhleim). Stegl, a missionary seminary for Germans in Holland, will soon publish a small pamphlet for us on Don Bosco.

Now I am trying my best to make your institution known by means of publications and sermons. The Bishop of Ratisbonne and the Archbishop of Munich back me up. Germany needs someone like Don Bosco; in fact we would need several. Don Bosco's and the Salesian Congregation is very popular here. I am at the moment at M. Gladbach near Aix-la-Chapelle in Northern Germany, and I am staying with the Rev. Dr. Hitze, who is a representative in the Reichstag of Berlin and general secretary for social problems and workers for the whole of Germany. If we want to

operate in Germany along the lines set down by Don Bosco, it is necessary to know what Germany needs and what the particular social conditions are in the country. Here at M. Gladbach, I discovered at the secretary's office all the theories and practices of the various associations active in the town. This town has mostly factories, and there is a club with about three hundred young workers, another club and hostel for five hundred working girls, and a third club for adult workers. I mean to study the problem for a year, acquire all the necessary background, and then perhaps open the first Salesian Oratory in Munich.

A few factory owners in Aix-la-Chapelle, which is another fervently Catholic and very industrial city, would like to create an association or clubs for boys between the ages of fourteen and eighteen. One well-known manufacturer, Biesl, has asked me to ask you, dear Father, if you would kindly write him a few encouraging words, or send him your blessing, because he feels that if you do, he will find the beginning of his undertaking possible. Everything is easier, if you but say the word, for already a great many people love you here in Aix-la-Chapelle. I, therefore, ask you most earnestly to kindly write just a page, with these words: Don Bosco is happy to hear that a club for young workers is about to get started at Aix-la-Chapelle and sends his blessing.

Your servant,
Maher
Priest and Salesian Cooperator at Ratisbonne
(*Salesian Bulletin,* November 1885)

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LETTER FROM A BAVARIAN PRIEST, FATHER WERNER, TO DON BOSCO

Reverend Father:

(In Latin. See page 807 of the original)

75

LAST LETTER WRITTEN BY CARDINAL NINA TO DON BOSCO

Rome, January 7, 1885

Most Reverend Don Bosco:

Many and warmhearted were the congratulations that you yourself and the other Salesian houses have sent me on the occasion of my priestly jubilee, together with all the prayers directed to Almighty God. They not only filled me with great spiritual joy on that day, but they have once more shown that affection and benevolence that your institution has professed towards me on many occasions. My many occupations do not permit me to address individual letters of thanks to everyone who wrote me, but since I neither desire nor could I venture to neglect so solemn a gesture without sincerely giving thanks for it, I have decided to write you this letter as the honorable head of the Salesian Congregation. I ask you to be so gracious as to act as my faithful interpreter to all, to convey my sentiments and to express my most fervent thanks to everyone, assuring them that I shall remember and recommend to the Sacred Heart of Jesus with all the fervor of my soul during my Mass, not only the Congregation and its Superior, but every one of its members.

And so with my best wishes for the New Year, I remain always with esteem and veneration,

Your sincere and most devoted servant,
Cardinal Nina, Protector

76

LETTER FROM BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO TO CARDINAL ALIMONDA

June 30, 1885

Pious College at San Carlo
Almagro, Buenos Aires

Most Reverend Eminence:

It was both my wish and also my duty to write to you prior to this time about our journey, our arrival and stay in the capital of Argentina. We waited, however, confident that in your generosity of heart, you would for-

give us, so that we might have better news to send you about the missions.

As Your Eminence already knows, we had a very pleasant journey and a most festive welcome from our Salesian confreres and our many Italian and Argentinean friends upon our arrival.

I was not only received with great courtesy, but also with genuine affection by the Archbishop, his Vicar Generals, and both the diocesan and religious clergy because of the esteem and veneration they feel for Your Eminence and for our most revered Father Don Bosco, and also because their hearts are truly Catholic, loving what is good and those who desire to do what is good.

This was not the case with the infamous press that dominated these unfortunate republics. We had hardly arrived here when they were already calling the people to take arms, since they were well aware that a captain of the Salesian phalanx and a general in the army of Jesus were due to arrive, and they sought to turn both the government and the population against us and our mission with a number of articles.

Prudence consequently cautioned me to steer clear of them, remaining in the background to show that things were very different from what they thought.

So first of all, I toured and inspected our schools and seminaries and all the many houses we have in both the republics, and then I began to preach and confirm people to the great satisfaction of Bishop Aneyros, who really does need Rome to appoint an auxiliary bishop (who could be one of his excellent vicar generals) to help him.

At length, I appeared at public and even at official ceremonies, but always as a simple Salesian prelate and bishop of Magida.

In this way, the storm clouds that had been gathering so threateningly were driven away, and Divine Providence was allowed to proceed with the organization of our missions.

And, really, I needed the three months I spent in the city to become aquatinted with the governors and other military authorities of Paraguay and Tierra del Fuego to establish contact with them and persuade them to support our plans for civilizing these wastelands. Likewise, this period was also needed to try and raise some financial support among pious Argentinean Catholics.

Our Good Mother, Mary Help of Christians, protected us and so arranged matters that the two governors of Santz Cruz and Neuquen have already admitted our missionaries, while Father Fagnano, our prefect apostolic, will soon be leaving for the South, Malvina Islands and Tierra del Fuego.

We obtained free passage for eleven Salesians from one of the state departments, and five of them have already set out. I obtained a special letter of recommendation from the minister of the provinces for the military authorities under his jurisdiction, and tomorrow, God willing, I will be leaving Buenos Aires with a small group to reach my destination. I will let you know from the banks of Rio Negro how the Pampas wind up and how the light breezes of the deserts are blowing.

You will receive this letter when I am already in Patagonia, and people in Turin will be shouting their praises to St. Cajean, acclaiming the fortunate cardinal who bears his name so worthily and who has inherited his wisdom, virtue, innocence, social charity etc., etc.

This day of rightful rejoicing for the people of Turin, my friends, and of holy joy for Your Eminence, will likewise tenderly remind the Salesians of America about you and be a source of deep joy for the people of Patagonia, who will hail St. Cajean and loudly say on your behalf to Your Eminence, *"Ad multos annos! Ad multos annos!* May Heaven preserve him for our veneration, our love and for the welfare of our Congregation."

May the Lord also preserve my dear and beloved friend Bishop Bertagna. Please kindly accept, Most Reverend Eminence, the assurance of my gratitude and all my love with the most sincere and cordial regards to our dear Canon Forchieri, Father Anthony, Father Maggia, our good Remigio and the whole holy family.

May I ask you to remember me in your ever-fervent prayers, and also our missions, as I remain,

Your most respectful and grateful son
in consecration,
John
Bishop of Magida and Pro-Vicar
Apostolic of Patagonia

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LETTER FROM CARDINAL ALIMONDA TO BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO

Turin, October 9, 1885

Dear and Most Reverend Excellency:

You sent me an even more heartening letter for the feast of St. Cajean

right after your first very affectionate one of good wishes. They both gave me great pleasure. I did not know what to answer to your first letter, since in it you told me that your departure for your beloved Patagonia was imminent. Now that I know you are established among your beloved sons and the savages you intend to redeem for Christ, I will tell you how grateful I was for the affection expressed in both your letters and for the news, some excellent and some promising, that you were so good to send me.

I follow the evangelical wanderings of Your Excellency with keen interest, and address my humble prayers to Heaven every day, asking that your labors and glorious endeavors on behalf of the Kingdom of Christ and His Church may be generously rewarded. I pray that the strength of Your Excellency and your worthy companions may not decrease, and that you may increase the numbers of your cooperators to help the growth of an abundant harvest in the vast area assigned to you all by the vicar of Jesus Christ. May Patagonia become a land of saints, a garden of every virtue!

Among all the tokens of affection you have chosen to give me, certainly nothing was dearer to my heart than the knowledge that you baptized the first flower plucked in this territory, gave him my name and entrusted this soul to my patronage. The fortunate youth, Cajean Santiago Neycolas Alimonda, will hold a place of honor in my house, just as his companion Joachim. Please give them both my blessing, and tell them that I hope they will keep steadfast in every virtue, and that I send them a warm embrace of friendship and peace.

I occasionally see your venerated superior Don Bosco. Not so long ago, I spent almost an entire day with him. He is always of good cheer and full of hope, and this leads us to hope that despite his infirmities, he will still be able to take charge of the many undertakings that he so deservedly initiated for many more years. The missions in Patagonia and the church and hostel in Rome are the topics he talks about most frequently and with greatest interest, both with us and with all of his friends and admirers.

I trust that Your Most Reverend Excellency will continue to remember me in your prayers, and to favor me from time to time with interesting news. May I now convey the respects of my secretary, Father Videmari, and of all my family to you. For my part, I embrace you with fraternal affection and veneration, kissing your hands and feeling honored to remain,

As affectionately as a brother,
Cajean, Cardinal Alimonda

78

LETTER FROM LEO XIII TO CARDINAL PAROCCHI IN REFERENCE TO THE STUDY OF THE CLASSICS

To our beloved son, Lucido Maria Parocchi, with the title of St. Sixtus, Cardinal of the Order of Priests in the Holy Roman Church and our Vicar in Rome.

POPE LEO XIII

Beloved son, our apostolic blessing and greeting. You have well understood what we have often declared, and very rightly so, namely, that the clergy should seek to make more efforts to keep its doctrinal heritage. This necessity has grown even greater at the present times, as we may see from the situation in which we live. As a matter of fact, the clergy would be unable to carry out its mission with becoming dignity and effectiveness amid so many brilliant minds inspired by a tremendous thirst for knowledge if it were to disregard the learning that others seek often so fervently. That is why we gave our attention to a careful program of studies to be pursued by the clergy. Starting with that branch of learning that is concerned with the most serious things, we sought to bring back the study of philosophy and theology within the guidelines set out by our ancient scholars and the system set by St. Thomas Aquinas. The already excellent results are the best proof of their timeliness. Still, since an infinite amount of delectable doctrine and doctrine highly suited to refine human behavior is found in the *belles lettres* (liberal arts/fine arts), we have decided to establish a few rules for their improvement.

Here again, it is essential that the clergy hold on to that position to which it is entitled, for the knowledge of letters is most noble, and all those who have acquired it deem that they are in possession of something extraordinary, while those who are deprived of such knowledge are denied almost all credit in the eyes of man. Hence, we can realize how cunning and deplorable the decree of the Emperor Julian was to forbid Christians to devote themselves to the study of liberal arts. For well did he foresee that men who were ignorant of letters would be looked on in disdain, and that the reputation of the Christians would not endure if people had believed that Christians did not know anything about the fine arts. Since we are so built that from the things we learn through our senses, we

naturally rise to things far beyond these very senses, there is nothing that proves so advantageous to the learned than the power and grace of writing. Indeed, men can be driven most wondrously to listen and to read by the grace of one's native tongue, and it so happens that the truth of a word or a phrase more easily penetrates, almost radiant with new light, into the human mind and rests there. This, to a certain extent, resembles the cult rendered to Divinity. It is from the external cult that an immense usefulness comes from the human heart and mind, for they are elevated from the magnificence of corporeal things to the contemplation of the majesty of the supreme light.

One after another, St. Basil and St. Augustine mention the fine fruits of erudition, and with great wisdom, our predecessor, Paul III, ordered elegance of style to be used by Catholic authors to triumph over the heretics, who claimed to be the only ones to know and master the fine arts. When we say that the clergy should diligently pursue the study of the fine arts, we do not mean only our own, but also Greek and Latin fine arts. In fact, greater attention should be given by us to the study of ancient Roman fine arts, both because the Latin tongue is the companion serving the Catholic faith throughout the Western world, and because many people cultivate them less intensively, to the point that the ability of writing Latin with the necessary dignity and style seems to have waned little by little. One must also study Greek authors carefully, for the Greek luminaries are so magnificent in almost every way that one could not conceive anything more gracious or perfect. This is the cause behind the prevailing custom among people of the East, in virtue of which Greek letters survive and are incorporated in the monuments of the Church and in daily customs. Nor should we forget that those who are well versed in Greek letters for what they know of Greek, assimilate Latin virtues more readily. Considering the usefulness of such things, the Catholic Church, whose practice has always been to use all things that are fair, gracious and worthy of praise for its own purposes, used the fine arts to this same end, always devoting considerable attention to facilitate their study and foster them. Actually, all the doctors of the Church were well versed in letters to the extent requested by the period in which they lived. Among them are some whose genius and application led them to positions not too inferior to the names of the greatest ancient authors of Rome and Greece.

The Church is also responsible for the immense benefit of preserving most of the ancient Latin and Greek books, the works of poets, orators and historians. In ages when the fine arts had fallen in esteem either through

indifference or neglect and had withdrawn into silence on account of the clash of arms heard throughout the whole of Europe, everyone knows that these fine arts could only find asylum amid the chaos of revolt and barbaric customs in communities of monks and priests. Nor should it be forgotten that many Roman Popes, our predecessors, are listed among the number of those called learned because of their knowledge of these fine arts. Among those deserving such names are Damascus, Leo and Gregory the Great, Zachary, Sylvester II, Gregory IX, Eugene IV, Nicholas V and Leo X. Their memory will last forever. In the long list of Popes that form the glory of the Church, it would be hard to find one alone to whom the fine arts are not greatly indebted. Under their encouragement and munificence, open schools and boarding schools were gradually founded for the young craving literature, libraries were founded for the nourishment of the learned, and bishops were ordered to create literary academies in their dioceses. Learned men were granted favors and were encouraged to make greater strides with the promise of great rewards. This is so true and so evident that even those who slander the Apostolic See have often been forced to admit that the Roman Pontiffs acquired great merit in the field of higher studies.

Hence, convinced by the advantages that can be drawn and guided by the example of our predecessors, we have decided to concentrate our attention on and to provide all possible encouragement for these very studies among our clerics, with the hope that the ancient glory may be brought back to life. Relying greatly on your good judgment and cooperation, beloved son, we undertake to put into effect the plan we outlined for our holy seminary in Rome. Therefore, we wish that special classes be opened there for the young men of more lively intellect and greater application so that once they have completed the usual courses in Italian, Latin and Greek letters, they may, under the direction of experienced teachers, pursue in those three languages all that there is of the greatest perfection and profundity.

In order to implement this according to our wishes, we instruct you to select men for this purpose, so that what we have proposed may be accomplished thanks to their advice.

Meanwhile, as a token of our benevolence and good auspices of divine favors, we affectionately impart our apostolic blessing to you, most beloved son.

Written in Rome, at St. Peter's, the 20th day of May, in the year 1885, eighth year of our Pontifical reign.

Leo PP. XIII

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LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO THE DUKE OF NORFOLK

Turin, January 13, 1885

Your Highness:

I will now give you news about me. I am still confined to my bed; my health is still uncertain and I do not know when I shall be able to get up. God's will be done! The thing that worries me most is the matter of the debts we have for the church and hostel of the Sacred Heart in Rome. Our efforts have been concentrated on this for the past ten years, and I have recently been asked to pay the remaining 250,000 francs still owed. This is one of my greater worries.

If Your Highness could come to my assistance in whatever measure your charity and position may suggest to you, it would be an immense relief to me, and you would be doing something of great advantage to our poor Salesian Society and the whole of the universal Church, and, therefore, something most pleasing to God and His Vicar here on earth, the Holy Father, who entrusted this church of the Sacred Heart to us in person.

Our orphans (250,000 of them) will pray together with me every day for your spiritual, temporal and eternal well being.

God bless, comfort and reward you fittingly for all that you may be able to do for the Salesian Institution, while I will remain always in Jesus Christ,

Your very grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

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LETTER FROM FATHER FRANCIS DALMAZZO TO DON BOSCO

Rome, April 27, 1885

Most Venerated Father:

Please do not attribute my silence to negligence. There has been an exceptional amount of work to be done at Easter time, and it truly brought us comfort. It looked as though our church were having a continuous Sunday celebration. There were seven of us hearing confessions and although four of us spent between ten and twelve hours every day in the confessional, there was still always work to do. Blessed be God for it. To this, we must also add five separate retreats for boys and girls prior to First Communion and a long list of sick people to be visited. The past week, we administered the Last Sacraments to twenty-four sick people. If this keeps up, we shall all "fade away."

We have been waiting for your visit to comforts us. Many people who came from Poland, France, Spain and Portugal all hope for the same thing. Among these, I should mention the Portuguese de Rasto and the French de la Fontaine. I delayed writing to you also because I was hoping from day to day that you might arrive.

On Maundy Thursday, I received the 50,000 lire from Countess de Stacpoole, and half an hour later, I deposited the money in the Tiberina Bank, hoping to wipeout the whole debt. However, that payment left 10,000 lire still owed, which by yesterday increased to 20,000 lire. But I managed to get 20,000 lire from the Pope after many attempts. I had tried in vain to get the money through the cardinal vicar several times. I appealed to Cardinal Nina, who begged me to leave him in peace. To tell you the truth, he has been ailing now for some days. Bishop Boccali tried again after I wrote him a long letter, but without success. Then it occurred to me that I should appeal to the Cardinal Secretary of State, who asked me for a memorandum. I wrote it out and sent an additional letter, which I had the one in charge of the facade write, and from whom he had received a bill of 40,000 lire (two thirds of which have been paid). The additional letter said that if 10,000 lire had not been paid within a week, all work would be suspended. I had worded the memorandum very humbly, expressing nothing but grief and anxiety over my predicament and all the debts. The result was immediate. That same evening the cardinal vicar had the 20,000 lire and on the following day (Sunday), he would have let me have them, were I able to collect them.

I collected them today and paid the debt at the Tiberina Bank, where something should be deposited for any emergency.

What about the 50,000 lire from Count Colle? The cornerstone can be placed now whenever desired. See that you have Count Colle come here. If he is unable, we can ask either Prince Paolo Borghese or his

father, Marcantonio.[15]

Please be so kind as to ask Father Joseph Ronchail to send the material for our lottery, which has been extended until December with the authorization to sell more tickets.

We are expecting Father Michael Rua back from Sicily soon, but we expect you, Reverend Father, even more, and send you our humble and devoted regards, kissing your hand and imploring, all of us together, your fatherly blessing.

Your most obedient son in Jesus Christ,
Rev. Francis Dalmazzo

81

APPEAL TO THE CATHOLIC POPULATION OF ITALY

Turin, July 16, 1885

The growth of faith and piety aroused in recent years by the cult of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, is a token of celestial love, a supreme disposition of Divine Providence. It would seem that this present day and age, with all its sensual appetites, its arrogance and its new heresies, seeks to detach the heart of man ever more and more from the thought of Life Eternal. God wishes that the healing influence exercised over worldly miseries be reserved exclusively to the Blessed and Divine Heart of Jesus, which is so fervently loved and venerated by the Catholic Church, so that it may guide mankind back to the love of spiritual and heavenly things. The Catholic Episcopate was so firmly convinced of this in recent years that it worked steadily toward the consecration of all the dioceses to the Heart of Jesus. In this act of devotion, it was felt that a certain haven, a refuge from danger, strength in battle and timely comfort in affliction would be attained for the bishops themselves and for the faithful.

The Episcopate was strengthened in this tender belief by the proposal that was to be promptly taken up, of building two monumental churches (one in Paris, the other in Rome) in honor of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus. This plan was hailed as an inspiration from Heaven, as a most admirable project. It seemed that Paris, the city of Voltaire and hailed by

[15] Namely, father of Prince Paul

many as the metropolis of sin, would make a religious and national reparation to His Divine Heart. On the other hand, Rome was the historic see of St. Peter and the capital of the Catholic world, and, therefore, a most becoming site for the new temple, a place ready to summon to faith and love all peoples of the world.

We are delighted that the Parisian temple, which is truly beautiful and sumptuous, is being erected on the top of Montmartre, to atone in a certain sense and to wash away, if it is only possible, the stains of unbelief. We, of the Italian Episcopate, feel it is our duty to contribute to the erection of the new temple in the Eternal City, not only with our solicitous admiration, but also with our effective assistance. There is a man in Italy, a worthy priest to whom, it seems, many of the precious designs of Divine Providence have been entrusted. The Most Holy Pontiff Leo XIII cast his eye on this same priest and said to him, "We entrust to you the construction of the great temple to be consecrated in Rome to the cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. We shall thereto contribute with our wealth and commit ourselves to build the facade of the temple."

So did Don John Bosco go resolutely to work. The new church already stands tall, with adjacent buildings to provide lodgings for priests and a home for poor boys who can attend day school and night school. The church stands in the area known as Castro Pretorio, facing the chapel and school of the Protestants, much like a Sacred Ark facing Dagon. It stands on the threshold of the new Rome, middle-class Rome, working class Rome, a city of tradesmen and manufacturers where there is, as yet, no Catholic church and where religion is sorely neglected. It stands there on the hill, apparently looking down at the world beneath it, and exactly where, due to the close proximity of the railway station, a lot of strangers show up. The appearance of the rising temple holds promises: it intends to be a worthy member of the family of Roman monuments. But now it awaits completion, it awaits ornamentation and decoration. Together with the sons of the Salesian Congregation, this admirable priest, Don Bosco, has already spent a fortune. But more "fortunes" are necessary to adorn the church with all it needs. Should the persistent work of the Salesians ever be able to accomplish this, it would still not be entirely complete. The temple awaits its classic facade from the Pope.

Two rivers, the Po and the Dora, saw the boy Bosco arrive on their shores. They now had him close by for fifty years as an educator of the people, and are proud to have several magnanimous families of patrician lineage. Now, one illustrious son of such a family has conceived an idea

not unworthy of Don Bosco's own apostolate, attuned to the traditions of his religious native city.[16] This is what he thought and said: "The church that Rome now sees raised to the glory of the Divine Heart should stand as a special symbol of the faith and piety of our country, Italy. Therefore, it is fitting that all Italians substantially contribute toward it. Our Holy Father, who took the lead in advising us all to raise this glorious temple and who promised he would provide its facade, is burdened by crushing obligations. He lives on the donations of Catholics. Should he not expect perhaps that we, too, contribute something? Furthermore, since the Italians were recently attacked by the cholera epidemic and are still surrounded by serious dangers, should it be not becoming that they turn to God for protection against this affliction, labor in His honor and contribute as much as possible in a generous measure? Should we not look to the example given to us by the Pope, who contributed one million lire to the new hospital of St. Martha next to the Vatican, while opposed as he is by the world, yet always looking to and hoping for everything from Divine Providence, and with eyes and mind fixed on the cult of the Divine Heart? Then, let us go ahead and make a national vow, and let all the children of religious Italy – the poor ones with their modest donation, the rich ones with their generous donation – let all Catholics decide to supply the Holy Father with the money he needs, so that he may build the facade of the Italian temple in Rome with the assistance of us all.

People were pleased about this project suggested by the Turin patrician, and word passed favorably from mouth to mouth. The plan was honored to excite the halls of the Vatican, and the reigning Pontiff found it pleasing, and praised it. He sent a letter to Turin through His Eminence the Cardinal Secretary of State on October 20th, and with it he graciously announced that he would impart his apostolic blessing to anyone participating in this noble and holy enterprise, and called it the *Sacred National Vow of the Italians to the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ.*

Now, one thing remains to be done: the project (which had the backing of the highest authority and is, therefore, all the dearer and precious to us) should be carried out, but the episcopate should be the first one to effectively promote this vow of the Italian people. This is what we hope for. Hence, with the hope of the immense good which would thereby accrue, we shall be forgiven if we venture to rely on the support of the venerable and most excellent archbishops and bishops of the Peninsula, by

[16] Count Cesare Balbo, nephew of the famous historian of the same name.

calling on them to associate themselves with us and take this project under their patronage. The humble request that we address to them is this: Let us see, if all of us are fervently united in one and the same spirit. We cannot urge the faithful to give their contribution, if we cannot urge the reverend pastors to encourage their parishioners to do this and guide them in this manner. Let us look for the assistance to be provided by all committees of all Catholic Conventions wherever these may be held, and by other pious associations, among which we are pleased to find the association of Catholic Youth and that of Catholic Workers. Let us urge them to back-up this undertaking and to open national subscriptions in whatever form they may think most suitable. We feel that a participation in this solemn act of faith and divine love is equivalent to the renewed consecration of our dioceses to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The names of the contributing Italian dioceses shall be inscribed in a handsome marble tablet on the facade of the new temple in Rome. The august name and sovereign coat of arms of Leo XIII will crown this glorious tablet. The marble tablet will become a historic, memorable monument to all who see it, and will speak of us and of our faith even to the very last of our descendants. Italy is an eminently Catholic country and wishes to be such; this is what the national declaration in Rome intends to proclaim. A beautiful idea, an evangelical project! With the facade of the Sacred Heart, the Pope shall embrace the bishops of Italy as so many brothers, and in their turn, the bishops of Italy shall embrace their own dioceses, and lead all the sons of Italy to the feet of the Pope. The Heart of Jesus, where all the sons, shepherds and flock are united, will become the focal point of our communal living. The blessing that the Vicar of Christ imparts in advance, is a certain guarantee of God's blessing over Italy.

Your most devoted and grateful servant,
Cajean, Cardinal Archbishop
Feast of the Blessed Virgin of Mt. Carmel

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LETTERS CONCERNING THE ROMAN LOTTERY

A.

March 12, 1885
2 Cromwell House
London

Dear and venerated Don Bosco:

It is now some time since I have delayed sending the money (you will now find enclosed) in exchange for the lottery tickets you sent me. The fact is that at the present time, it is not easy to find people able to contribute other than on a modest scale to Catholic undertakings, schools, etc., etc.

All of us are poor because the lower classes, the working people, are out of work; the middle class, the business people and merchants have no customers; and the result is that we, who are men of property, are not getting any income. Everything is going downhill.

Little by little, I was able to accumulate 250 francs, which I am sending for the purpose mentioned above, namely the new house in Rome which is about to open, and I ask that you remember in your daily Mass all those besides myself who have hereto contributed. Our unfortunate country is now in a very critical predicament, threatened by domestic revolution in Ireland and by foreign warfare in Egypt and India.

I always pray that God's Holy Will be done and that everything may work out to His Greater Glory.

My wife and my children also beg you to remember them in your holy prayers, while I am as always,

Your most devoted servant and friend,
Denbigh

B. Turin, December 18, 1885

Dear Princess:

Please find enclosed the ten lottery tickets that you requested for your charity. You will undoubtedly deserve your reward in Heaven. I am praying that this may be so.

A Merry Christmas to you and a happy New Year. May the Blessed Virgin be with you and guide you and all your family along the path to Heaven.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, February 1, 1886

Reverend Sir:

His Royal Highness, Prince Eugene of Savoy, received your letter of January 28th last. He kept the two hundred lottery tickets, for which I sent you the money the day before yesterday.

I will now fulfill the honorable task entrusted to me by His Royal Highness, and express to you his gratitude for your devoted sentiments, and conveying at the same time his endorsement of your truly admirable industriousness by combining religion and Christian charity in the interests of civilization and progress in a hundred different ways.

Please accept the homage of my admiration and my sincerest feelings.

For the Intendant
Salati

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LETTERS TO DON BOSCO FROM FATHER JOHN BONETTI

Nizza Monferrato, August 5, 1885

Most Dear and Most Reverend Father in Jesus Christ:

The retreat has just begun and it looks as though everything is going on well, and promising good results. There are ninety-six persons, including ladies, teachers and others, who have come here *ad experimentum* to test their vocation.

Now I wish to ask you for a favor, and I do this on the day of our Lady of the Snows. I am certain that if you can, you will do it as a tribute to Mary, and the advantage of her daughters. Both the ladies on retreat and the sisters here are asking to see Don Bosco during these few days, at least. Quite a few of the ladies came with the hope of such grace, and if they were to see you, they would not only take away with them the memory of it when they go back home, but they would inspire others with the desire to come here themselves, and would themselves wish to return some other time. This would be beneficial both to them and to the Institution. I can also tell you that a few who did not see you here last year as they had hoped for feared that the same thing might happen again this year, so they did not return. Last year, there were as many as 120 ladies, I am told, whereas there are only one hundred, and that is already a lot.

Therefore, should your health enable you to undertake this journey, I

beg you to come on behalf of them all. If you leave Turin at 8:40 in the morning, you would arrive here by midday. If you wish to leave at seven o'clock in the evening, you would arrive at ten o'clock when it is cool. We would wait for you with the coach at the station at any time you say.

When could you come? We have to try and kill two birds with one stone. Since you should be in Turin for the 15th, you might come here on the 12th, which is the last day of the ladies retreat, or also the morning of the 13th when the retreat closes. That same evening and also the morning of the 14th, there will be many nuns here, coming from other convents to attend their own retreat, and who will come precisely with the hope that you will be here, so that they can at least have the good fortune of seeing you and making your acquaintance, for some of them have never seen you and are mortified so to speak. You could leave for Turin in the cool of the evening again at 6 o'clock and be there for your birthday.

What do you say to this suggestion, Don Bosco? Is it feasible? Do you accept? These good ladies and the sisters have prayed so hard for your good health, and hope most fervently that their hopes may be responded to.

I will say no more, but will only ask that you tell one of your secretaries to write on your behalf. If necessary, Father Bussi would come to accompany you on the journey, but I only wait for a word from you to know what to do.

God bless you. Pray for me, who, so far, is well. Father Olmi also sends his respects, and, likewise, Father Bussi, Father Campi and Bergese. Best regards to the guard of honor. I am with affection and great esteem,

Your most devoted,
Rev. John Bonetti

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PRAISE OF THE SALESIANS FROM THE BISHOP OF FAENZA

(See page 833 of the original, in Latin)

85

REPORT ON THE SITUATION IN CATANIA BY FATHER MICHAEL RUA

While in Sicily, I read in the newspapers about the Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians and the young woman Agatha Spano.

As General Procurator for the Salesian Society, I am in a position to give a detailed report on the events that formed the subject matter of these newspaper articles.

I consider it my duty to make these facts public, so as to dispel any sinister impression these accounts may have made.

During the year 1881, a young woman, Agatha Spano, earnestly requested to be admitted into the Congregation of the Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians as a nun. She was admitted after repeated applications.

The terms of admission call for an adequate wardrobe, and a monthly payment of thirty lire during the trial period, and later, a dowry worth no less than 1,000 lire.

In view, however, of the restricted financial possibilities of the abovementioned young woman, Agatha Spano, an exception was made, and she was admitted as a pauper, without the required minimum of wardrobe and the modest sum of 302 lire, which was to pay her fare from home to the Mother House of Nizza Monferrato (Piedmont) and whatever was left over to be applied to her keep. Miss Spano did not remain in the Caraci hospice in Catania, but went to the convent of the Sisters of Bronte on March 15, 1882, handing over to them the sum of 292 lire, having had to spend the remainder of her capital for the journey.

She remained over four months at Bronte, spending the better part of this period in embroidering a batiste handkerchief that she had brought with her not yet finished and that she said she intended to offer to the Madonna.

She could not remain any longer at Bronte being a postulant, but had to go to the Mother House of Nizza Monferrato.

When she was told a few days in advance that she was to leave, the young woman burst into uncontrollable tears.

When asked why she was crying, she answered that it was not true that she was going to Nizza, but that they intended instead to take her back to her family in Catania.

She was given assurance several times that she would truly be accompanied to the Mother House, but nothing seemed to persuade her of it. She only became convinced when she was long past Catania and realized that she was not to be excluded from the Congregation.

The kind sisters at the Mother House in Nizza treated her with the utmost kindness and charity, customary in their treatment of postulants, upon her arrival, but unfortunately, it was not long before she began to

manifest unequivocal symptoms of mental derangement.

She was taken to Turin, where she spent a few days in the convent of the sisters there, with the hope that the change of air and the treatment of excellent doctors might prove beneficial to her health. But she became violent, and it was necessary to engage a strong woman to prevent her from doing herself or others harm. At the same time, the management of the Royal Asylum was contacted, so that she might be admitted. The necessary steps were taken, entailing great inconvenience and sacrifice, and the help of the police was enlisted to find accommodations for her in asylum. After receiving the best of care for two years, she regained her mental sanity and was sent home.

Therefore, the stories of ill-treatment and torture brought as an accusation against the sisters consist in nothing more than the necessary violence used to put her in a straitjacket, which was necessary for her own good. Furthermore, after leaving the asylum, she again begged most earnestly to be readmitted into the Congregation, which she certainly would not have done had she been subjected to the aforesaid ill treatment and torture.

As for the sum of money she brought with her, it is easy to understand in what way this was invested, and whether she has any right to lay claim thereto.

On the other hand, the competent civil authorities already carefully investigated the financial issue and were obliged to acknowledge how charitably and tactfully the Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians had treated Agatha Spano.

It would not be out of place if we were to recall here how Miss Spano had already been dismissed from another institute in Catania due to her bad conduct and her symptoms of insanity prior to being admitted into the Institute of the Salesian Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. This fact was unknown to the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians until long after she was admitted into their Institute, namely when she was already in the hospital. This fact also explains the almost total lack of any surprise on the part of the mother when she was informed that her daughter had been put in the asylum.

After these explanations, we will forego any further publication in reference to this matter, but are fully prepared to submit all pertinent documents to the competent authorities upon request.

Rev. Michael Rua
Procurator General for the Salesian Society

86

LETTER FROM FATHER FRANCIS DALMAZZO TO COUNTESS MAMIANI

Rome, May 20, 1885

Dear Countess:

You had given me your word of honor as a gentlewoman that in the event of any intensification of your husband's illness, you would send for me immediately, so that he might receive the comforts of religion. To my painful astonishment, I have been obliged to convince myself that not only was I not sent for during the crucial moments of the distinguished patient's life, but that had I called on you spontaneously, I would not have been granted access to him. I did, in fact, call on you, making repeated efforts, but was denied the favor I implored, though the health bulletin expressly read "slow agony."

I leave it to your imagination to gauge how upset I am over this, and the extent of your own responsibility before God and man, also in consideration of the scandal it may cause, for none of the great statesman who have died during the last ten years wished to be deprived of the last comforts of religion. The matter assumes all the more gravity in my eyes since I have certain knowledge of how, during the moments of greater suffering, the count cried out, "If the physicians are unable to cure me, there is nothing more for me to do than to send for my curate."

Forgive my boldness, but my priestly ministry obliges me to be bold, and so does the respect I felt for the distinguished professor, whose own sentiments I believe I am faithfully interpreting. May the Lord grant that my words awaken an echo in your heart, and that we are still in time to give him the consolation that our holy religion alone can provide. With the greatest esteem, I am honored to be,

Your most devoted servant,
Rev. Francis Dalmazzo

87

DRAFT OF THE AGREEMENT APPROVED BY DON BOSCO FOR THE CROSINA-SARTORI ORPHANAGE OF TRENT

1. In agreement with the Congregation of Charity, the municipality of Trent will yield use of the Crosina and Sartori palace, with its adjacent structures and all furniture and fittings therein contained, gratuitously to the Rev. John Bosco.
2. The municipality shall provide other accommodations for the orphan girls now occupying the southern wing of the palace, where said orphans are to be transferred prior to the opening of the hostel.
3. All repairs (which are the responsibility of the proprietor under the civil code), as well as any modification or adaptation work necessary in the palace shall be paid for by the municipality, whereas the Rev. John Bosco shall pay for minor repairs and the whitewashing of the interior walls. The municipality shall likewise be responsible for all taxes and dues of all kinds.
4. Whenever the director of the hostel shall see any need for repairs of the category for which the municipality is held responsible, he shall promptly advise the mayor thereof, and the mayor is under obligation to have the same undertaken as soon as possible.
5. An inventory shall be made of all furniture, utensils and fittings, as well as of all linen now in the house, all of which shall be returned to the municipality by the Rev. John Bosco whenever, *quod Deus avertat*, he may leave the hostel. Said property is to be returned in the condition it will be in, at such time, without any obligation of replacements for ravages occurring in consequence of wear and tear.
6. The Rev. John Bosco and the director by him appointed shall be entirely in charge of interior direction and administration of the institution, its discipline and time schedule for the various occupations therein pursued.
7. These orphans now living in the institution shall remain there and the municipality and Congregation for Charity shall be entitled to refer other boys to the said institution at any time of the year, with a previous agreement with the director of the institution and a contribution of one lire per day to the keep of each boarder.
8. Boys must be healthy, strong and physically fit before they can be admitted to the hostel. They must not be older than fourteen, nor younger than ten years of age, and must submit birth, baptism and vaccination certificates, as well as a previously issued good conduct proof from their pastors. This, however, does not apply to all boarders now living in the house, who will be either kept with such boys as shall be admitted from hereon after, or shall be assigned to separate quarters according to the discretion of the director of the institution.

9. In the event that any of those boarders for whom the municipality or the Congregation of Charity are responsible contracts an infectious or chronic disease, be guilty of immoral conduct, or harmful to their companions for any reason, the director shall inform both the mayor and the chairman of the congregation accordingly that their protégé cannot remain any longer in the hostel, and they shall arrange to move him elsewhere within the shortest period of time possible.
10. It shall be at the discretion of the Rev. John Bosco to take any boy recommended to him by either relatives or benefactors into the above-mentioned institution under whatever terms he shall consider most fitting, over and above those referred to him by either the municipality or the Congregation of Charity.
11. The director of the institution may freely assign any or all of the young boarders to instruction in some art or craft or to higher studies.
12. All workshops and classrooms are to be on the premises of the institution, and it shall, therefore, not be allowed that any boarder attend school or work outside the walls of same.
13. When going out, the boys of the institution shall wear their present uniform, if so desired by either the municipality or the Congregation of Charity.
14. Board and timetable for school and workshops will be more or less identical to the board and timetable now applied for the young boarders in the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin.
15. This agreement is to become effective on the same day of the inauguration of the institution and shall have a duration of five years. If after a three-year period has elapsed and neither of the contracting parties has served notice on the other, it will be considered automatically renewed for a further period of five years.
16. Should the municipality wish to regain access to the school for its own use, formal notice shall be served thereof on the Reverend John Bosco four years in advance, and he shall be reimbursed for any expenses incurred for traveling of personnel and transportation of furniture belonging to him.

88

REPLY DICTATED BY DON BOSCO TO A REQUEST FOR A HOUSE TO BE OPENED AT VIGO

Turin, January 7, 1885

Dear Father Casimiro:

We have received your letter of the 19th of last month, in which you requested some Salesians for the establishment of an arts and crafts training school for boys.

Might it so please God that we could respond to your desire and relieve the misery of so many poor, homeless children, in need of a Christian education. But the great number of houses that we already have in Italy, France and America (as well as the recently inaugurated establishments at Utrera and Barcelona) have absorbed all our available personnel, and for the time being, it is impossible that we give any consideration to your request, even though we desire to extend the kingdom of God to embrace these children, too.

Pray that God bless our Congregation and sends us personnel in the Spanish houses, for then it will not be difficult for us to set roots also in Vigo. I am glad to take this opportunity to convey to you the respects of our Superior Father John Bosco and recommend ourselves to your fervent prayers and those of the chaplain.

Antonio Ricardi, Secretary

89

LETTER FROM THE SPANISH NUNCIO RAMPOLLA TO DON BOSCO

Madrid, October 11, 1885

Most Reverend Father:

My sponsoring the project of establishing a Salesian institution here in the capital for the education of poor and homeless boys is motivated by the sincere respect and special benevolence that I feel for the congregation of which you are the very worthy Superior. I am, therefore, pleased to reconfirm once again these same sentiments in reply to your very gracious letter of the 5th of this month. Since I noted with pleasure in your letter to Senor Silvela that a harmonious agreement exists between the wishes of the committee of the project and the wise guiding rules of your well deserving Salesian Congregation, I am hopeful that you will extend

the area of your activities to Madrid within a short time. For my part, I am pleased to repeat what I already told Father Branda; namely, that you will always find me ready to cooperate in every way possible for the successful conclusion of the project.

Meanwhile, I appeal trustingly to your prayers and beg the Lord to bless the whole Salesian Congregation, showering favors and graces upon its most worthy superior, while remaining with great esteem,

Your most devoted servant,
Archbishop of Heradea
Apostolic Nuncio

90

LETTER FROM THE STATE MINISTER SILVELA TO DON BOSCO

Madrid, March 5, 1886

Honorable Sir and dear Friend:

You will recall the visit that Señor Lastres and I were honored to pay you when we were on our way to Rome this past November to represent the Spanish Government at the Convention of Penitentiaries. At such time, we repeated the request already addressed to Father Branda, director of the Barcelona workshops, and begged you to put the Salesian Congregation at our disposal for our school of St. Rita, which is dedicated to the correctional education of boys. In order to acquaint you fully with what we had in mind, we sent you some copies of a booklet printed in French, from which you could learn the history of the institution, the law authorizing the above-mentioned school of St. Rita and the number of charter patrons.

As we already told you, we have now completed two buildings for the above- mentioned school. These buildings have facilities to accommodate, for the time being, twenty-five boys: the ones sent to us by the administration and four others subject to correctional treatment by an agreement made with either the father or head of the household. Public opinion and the committee I am honored to represent are anxious for the school to open, and all we are now awaiting is your reply. We assure you that we would be most gratified if you decide to give us your assistance and send us a few of the Salesian Fathers, so that we can work

out the details with Father Branda and have our school inaugurated immediately.

From what I have said, you will understand how urgently your answer is expected, and I beg you to send it as soon as possible, so that I may report to the committee in the name of which Señor Lastres and I both send our most respectful and appreciative regards, while I remain, at your service, and kiss your hand.

Manuel Silvela
at residence, Calle de Almagro 28

91

ANOTHER LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM BISHOP RAMPOLLA

Madrid, April 17, 1886

Most Reverend Sir:

I am delighted to know that you came to Spain, for I have no doubt that when you become better acquainted with the piety and faith of the Spanish people, you will be even more desirous of procuring for them the great advantages that would undoubtedly accrue from the expansion and increased number of houses belonging to the Salesians. Señor Emmanuel Silvela has not given up hope that you will consent, in the name of the Congregation of which you are the most worthy Superior, to take over the direction of the charitable institution hopefully to be inaugurated in the immediate vicinity of this capital, as you are already aware. Nevertheless, when he called yesterday at the residence of the Nuncio, he again asked me to encourage your compliance with his wishes. In obedience to so commendable a request, I can only reiterate my assurance that I fervently hope you will be able to put your well-deserving Congregation in charge of this very important and beneficial institution.

The above-mentioned gentleman also assured me that the committee sponsoring the project is prepared to do whatever may be required to carry out the objective in harmony with the rules and constitutions of the Salesian Congregation. In view of this assurance, I am happy to hope that the day will come when the well deserving Salesians shall extend their area of activity to include assistance to the poor, homeless children of this cap-

ital. With this hope, I wish to convey my most respectful regards to you.

Your most devoted servant,
Archbishop of Heraclea
Apostolic Nuncio

92

AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE MOST HONORABLE COMMITTEE OF MADRID AND THE REV. JOHN BOSCO REGARDING THE FOUNDATION OF A HOSTEL FOR POOR, HOMELESS BOYS

With the charitable intention of assisting poor, homeless children in the city of Madrid, it has been agreed as follows between the honorable committee appointed by the government and the Rev. John Bosco, founder and Rector Major of the Pious Society of St. Francis of Sales:

1. The committee shall yield gratuitously to the Reverend John Bosco use of the building destined for the above purpose, with its adjacent structures and all necessary furniture and fittings.
2. The institution is to house poor orphans and children who have been abandoned by their parents, but who have not been previously sentenced to any penalty for misdemeanor.
3. All such repairs, modifications and work of adaptation necessary in the building as are the responsibility of proprietors under the civil code, shall be paid for by the committee, whereas the Rev. John Bosco shall be held responsible for minor repairs. The committee, likewise, is to be responsible for all taxes and dues, without exception.
4. Whenever the director of the hostel shall see any need for new furniture, fittings or any repairs in the category for which the committee is responsible, he shall promptly advise the president thereof. Said president will be under obligation to have the same undertaken as soon as possible.
5. A detailed inventory shall be made of all furniture, fittings and equipment now on hand in the institution that shall be returned by the Rev. John Bosco in the event that he withdraws from the institution, but said material is to be returned in the condition in which it shall be at such time, without any obligation to replace what has been consumed by the ravages of wear and tear.

6. The Rev. John Bosco and the director appointed by him shall be entirely in charge of the interior direction and administration of the institution, its discipline and timetable scheduled for the various occupations therein pursued.
7. The committee is to pay so much...per day for each of the boys being referred to the institution and contribute an annual sum of ... lire for the maintenance of the director, teachers, assistants and domestic staff, etc.
8. Boys must be healthy, strong and physically fit before they can be admitted to the hostel. They may not be older than fourteen or younger than nine years of age. They shall submit birth, baptism and vaccination certificates, as well as proof of their present and previous good conduct, issued by their pastor.
9. It shall be left to the discretion of the Rev. John Bosco to take into the above- mentioned institution, over and above those boarders recommended by the honorable committee, other boys who may be recommended to him by their relatives or benefactors, and at whatever terms he may judge to be most suitable.
10. The director of the institution may freely assign any boy housed in the institution to be trained in some art or craft or else to higher studies.
11. All workshops and classrooms are to be located within the walls of the institution. It shall, therefore, not be allowed that any boarder attend classes or work outside the institution.
12. The committee shall cooperate in every way possible with the director to make sure that the boarders are not without work and that they learn a craft that will enable them to earn an honest livelihood.
13. Board and time schedule for classes and workshops and regulations are to be more or less identical with those practiced by the youths living at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales in Turin, except for what depends on the diversity of climate and customs.
14. This agreement is to become effective on the same day on which the institution is inaugurated, and shall have a duration of five years. If, after a three-year period has elapsed, neither of the contracting parties shall have served notice to the contrary on the other, it shall be considered automatically renewed for a further five-year period.
15. Should the committee later desire to regain possession of the building, formal notice of such desire must be served on the Rev. John Bosco four years in advance, and he shall be reimbursed for any expenses incurred for traveling on the part of his personnel and for transportation of such furniture that may be his property.

93

THIRD LETTER TO DON BOSCO FROM BISHOP RAMPOLLA

Madrid, January 5, 1887

Dear Sir:

My best thanks for your warm good wishes that you were kind enough to send me again this year on the occasion of the holy festivities of Christmas. In grateful reply, I wish you all kinds of graces and comforts from God. I also extend my good wishes to the whole Congregation of which you are the superior, and pray that God increase its members and bless its efforts on behalf of youth, which is in such great need of a proper education at the present day.

My interest in Spain and my knowledge of the excellent results of the Salesian activity, both in Barcelona and Utrera, make me hope most earnestly that you will extend your Congregation up to the capital itself. I am unable to explain to you why you have had no reply to your letter to Senator Silvela on the project referred to you. I expect to have an opportunity, during the next few days, to speak with someone of the above-mentioned gentleman's family, and you may be assured that I will not overlook the opportunity offered to confirm my special benevolence toward the Salesian Congregation.

Meanwhile, may I recommend myself to your personal prayers and to those of your many worthy sons, while I assure you once again of my affectionate esteem. I remain,

Your most affectionate servant,
Archbishop of Heraclea
Apostolic Nuncio

94

LETTER FROM FATHER JOSEPH LAZZERO TO BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO

Turin, March 10, 1885

Beloved Bishop:

Our dear Father Don Bosco has instructed me to inform you, since he is anxious that the position of his sons be properly assured, that in the event of any persecution on the part of the authorities against religious congregations over there (which might also include our own Society), the local superior should appeal to the competent authorities, the Italian Consul, etc., to state and champion the following reasons:

1. Our own constitutions plainly show that we are not to be considered in the same light as other religious congregations, but instead as a lay society because it is a fact that we are individual proprietors, etc., in our own right, and are recognized and regarded as such in Italy, France and Spain.

2. We live in our houses and enjoy all the rights granted to other free citizens even though they are foreigners.

3. We came to America because we were instructed, in particular, to supervise the instruction and education of Italian nationals located in America, in agreement with the Ministry of the Italian Kingdom, in which Crispi, Lanza and Depretis have all been Ministers.

Here you may add any other reasons that might have a local impact.

I enclose a copy of the letter to Don Bosco received from Mancini in person; its original is in our files. Point out that it does not mention any limit of jurisdiction, but refers to South America. Hence, what it says is equally applicable to Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, etc.

We already sent a copy of my letter and a copy of Mancini's letter directly to Father Louis Lasagna.

There is nothing more of any importance to tell you for the moment. We hope to have news of your safe arrival within a few days.

Everyone I meet asks about Bishop John Cagliero and instructs me to convey their respects, an honorable task that I am glad to undertake.

I beg your pastoral and episcopal blessing for Papa, for myself and for the whole house here. I kiss your sacred ring in spirit and remain,

Most affectionately in Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
Rev. Joseph Lazzero

95

LETTERS FROM BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO TO LEO XIII, ON THE OCCASION OF HIS NAME DAY

Carmen de Patagones, August 27, 1885

Most Holy Father:

The day of August 16th, sacred Feast of the glorious Patriarch St. Joachim and the name day of Your Holiness, was a day of sacred recollections and particular jubilation for us, the Salesian missionaries in Patagonia. United in mind and spirit with all your children throughout the Catholic world, we also celebrated this solemn occasion on the banks of Rio Negro. Our dear converts prayed with us to the great Father who is in Heaven, asking Him to bless and preserve ad *multos annos* the great father and shepherd He gave us here on earth.

We implored Him earnestly, too, that He may comfort and console Your Holiness in your present tribulations and anxiety for the welfare of the Church.

At the beginning of last July, I rejoined my Salesians here in this immense evangelical field of action, after quite a few difficulties.

One of my first thoughts was to seek out some lovely flower in this immense desert land, so that I might offer it to you as a token of our unfaltering affection and profound gratitude to Your Holiness. Divine Providence allowed me to find just such a flower on the same day as your name day, on which I had the great joy of regenerating the son of Likuful, chief of all the Caciques of Angol, in the waters of Holy Baptism.

He is twenty years old and is endowed with great gifts by nature. Jesus also conferred on him the ineffable beauty of grace.

Thus clad in grace and innocence, I offered him to Your Holiness, Most Holy Father, giving him the glorious name of Joachim Francisco Likuful.

Please deign to accept this first lily plucked in the immense vicariate that Your Holiness deigned to entrust to me, and bless this child of the desert, who has now become a child of grace and of Your Holiness, Most Holy Father.

Deign also, Most Holy Father, to bless our mission, our converts and all my Salesians confreres, priests, clerics, catechists and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, who have already offered a beautiful and consoling number of maidens to Mary Immaculate.

In conclusion, bless Patagonia and its first vicar apostolic, who kisses your sacred foot, prostrate before Your Holiness.

Your most affectionate and grateful son,
John, Bishop of Magida (signed)
Vicar Apostolic

96

LETTER FROM BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO TO DON BOSCO

Patagones, December 12, 1885

Most Reverend and Beloved Father in Jesus Christ:

I am now back from my first exploration of the right and left banks of the Rio Negro as Vicar Apostolic. We inspected ten mission stations, went as far as Conesa and returned home by way of Pringles.

My company consisted of an aide, Father Dominic Milanesio, Brother Zanchetta, a coadjutor from the house, and an escort consisting of one soldier and twelve horses.

My uniform consisted of boots reaching the knee, trousers, cassock, pectoral cross, sash and the famous poncho, or black garment that protected me against the dust, wind and rain.

We ate whatever we could find, when we found it, and wherever we found it, thanks to Divine Providence. Many recollections came right away to my mind, about the outings that you, dear Father, got us used to, from Becchi to the hills of Monferrato.

Divine Providence revealed itself as a true mother to us, as it did already then. We did not lack anything. The waters of Rio Negro are plentiful, sweet, soothing and refreshing, especially when one is exhausted and one's throat is full of dust.

I mean to write to Father Julius Barberis about the problems, beauty and the events of this first pastoral tour, so that he may use all as a theme for study, as material for meditation and as a guide for his novices, our future apostles.

The journey lasted a month, and we covered forty leagues; that is to say two hundred kilometers, equivalent to the distance separating Turin from Genoa. This does not include trips from one ranch to another or to the outlying huts and colonies. On the way home, our fiery steeds covered as much as sixty kilometers all in one gallop, while Father Dominic Milanesio covered almost one hundred kilometers and all in one session.

I slept in a number of Indian dwellings, baptized some sixty people, taught catechism to a great many more and also confirmed a great number. I totaled two hundred First Communions! This is an unusual thing at the present time, but in the future, it will become more and more fre-

quent. In the past, we sought only to baptize and confirm people. Then, I realized that it would be necessary to give spiritual nourishment to the people we baptized and confirmed if their souls were to be saved. There were many boys and girls and also people fifty, sixty and even seventy years old who received First Communion! Their souls were utterly innocent, since they had only just been baptized and confirmed! The Sacrament of Matrimony laid the foundations for one more Christian family and one less *choza* [hut] of savages.

All of this abundantly rewards us for our efforts, trials, exhaustion, uncertainty and countless discomforts. I hastened to return home for the blessing of the newly rebuilt and well restored church at Viedma. It is true that this has cost us money, and we contracted a debt with the bank, but it was indispensable for the welfare and honor of the missions and of our Congregation.

I shall be going to Buenos Aires and Montevideo for the retreats after Christmas. I have had some good news from Colon, but no such good news from Brazil, and still less from Buenos Aires. But Our Lord and Mary Help of Christians will assist us. In Heaven, the beautiful soul of Father Anthony Passeri will plead our cause before the Seat of Divine Mercy. The personnel I have here is good, but also good for ***nothing.*** I shall send Father Evasio Rabagliati as companion to Father Joseph Fagnano on his forthcoming trip to Tierra del Fuego.

Father Angelo Savio left for Rio Santa Cruz and Father Joseph Maria Beauvoir could not go with him because the government is concerned with persecutions and not with religion. Please note that they accepted Father Angelo Savio as an agronomy expert. That is why I am restless, and I shall get him back here the first time a boat leaves for that territory.

We are approaching a critical moment here; namely, the elections of the new president! A lot of people are losing their money, others their minds and a number have already lost their lives! It seems to me that it will be a violent struggle once again! And abuse, tyranny, graft, immorality and murder are in power!

This applies also to Chile, Peru, Buenos Aires and Montevideo. The tyrants of Syracuse have found their fitting brothers here!

Here at Carmen de Patagones, we are without fear in the hands of Divine Providence. During a visit to the governor, he spoke with me quite plainly about his intentions, which aim at seizing possession of the provincial territory to form one sole capital of Patagones and Viedma.

The newspapers insult us and he allows them to do so. He is fully

blinded by his political passion, since he belongs to the party that opposes religion. He welcomes me kindly and always agrees with all I ask, but when the final accounts are rendered, who knows if I will have gained anything! May God help us!

The spirit of these two populations is slowly awakening, and the people are progressing in virtue; this explains the rage of Satan and his disciples.

Pray for our missions and us, and ask God to give me the inspiration and virtue necessary for my new status and office. Father Remotti, Piccono, Pestarino and the cleric Dallera are in the south; Father Fagnano, Riccardi, Fassio, Daniele and the cleric Stefanelli, Father Milanesio, Panero, Zanchetta, the coadjutors, the sisters and the boys and girls all ask for your holy blessing together with me.

Your most affectionate son in Jesus Christ,
John Cagliero, Bishop of Magida

97

LETTER FROM BISHOP JOHN CAGLIERO TO FATHER JOSEPH LAZZERO

Patagones, December 12, 1885

My dear Father Joseph Lazzero:

If I become Pope, I will make you a cardinal, for your punctuality, swiftness, sincerity and generosity with which you keep me abreast of all things concerning the Oratory and the Congregation, if for no other reason. Your letters make up the theme for our Thursday conferences.

Father Riccardi is writing a letter for me to our beloved Father, and I am also writing him one on my behalf. They deal with our own immediate family matters.

Thank Dogliani for his nice letter and tell him that the Mass for St. Cecilia, which was given to Buzzetti as his property, is to be performed, if possible, like the Mass by Hayden with several string instruments, and dedicated, if it is found fit, to His Most Reverend Eminence the Cardinal. It must not refer to the composer other than as J. Cagliero. I appoint you as my will and testament executor.

I will soon send you a nice little funeral Mass for our schoolboys, basses and tenors *ad libitum*. It was composed in the style now desired by

the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

This is merely to show that the old musical talents are not yet dead, and also to furnish my vicariate here with a repertoire.

As soon as you see the New Personality (Father Francis Cerruti) who goes from Alassio to take the chair at the chapter of Turin, give him my affectionate regards, and ask him to forgive me if I was unable to be present to welcome him, due to a little circumstance of time and place.

Give my respects to the new Prefect of Turin, namely the Prefect of the Congregation, Father Celestine Durando, and tell him that I rely on him for his charitable contribution, if he has also inherited the treasure chest, tell him that I am related to Crispino![17] Give my regards and my thanks to Father Anthony Sala for his kind letter and lovely, motherly project.

My respects to Father John Bonetti, Father John Baptist Lemoyne, Father John Baptist Francesia and Vicar Number One, and tell him that I am Vicar Number One in Patagonia, but Number Two in the Congregation.

My best to those pupils who went to Communion for me, and to Suttil, Palazza, Grasso and Buzzetti.

My best to the *aunts*[18] and the nuns and ask them to pray for me.

Most affectionately,
John Cagliero, Bishop

98

LETTER FROM FATHER JOSEPH VESPIGNANI TO DON BOSCO ABOUT THE HOUSES IN BUENOS AIRES FOR THE YEAR 1885

1st day of 1886

Most Reverend and Venerated Father:

How pleasant it is to enter into the New Year, writing to our beloved

[17] Namely "broke," the same as Crispino in the playful melodrama *Crispino e la Comare* by the Neapolitan Ricci Brothers.

[18] Just as the male domestics at the Oratory were known as "uncles," the female domestics who lived in the convents of the nuns, not precisely as domestics, but as boarders of the house, were known as "aunts."

Father! It is true that my good wishes will not reach you in time, but with our good news, they will help enhance the joy of your father's heart on the Feast of St. Francis of Sales. Thank God, we have come to the end of the school year, which has been highly satisfactory both as far as piety and moral conduct of our boys. Their numbers increased considerably this year both in this school and in the other schools and oratories in town. This year, we had as many as 190 boarders all told, between artisans and students, with seventy day students, the majority of whom remain with us all day from morning until evening. There have been so many First Communions here in this very house alone! In the special ledger that we keep for this, I see that the following number of boys were prepared: for the Feast of St. Joseph (the first feast of our school year), thirteen First Communions; twenty-five at Easter; fourteen at Pentecost; thirty-two for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians (by the hand of Bishop John Cagliero at the end of the retreat in the church dedicated to her); thirty-five on our Lady's Assumption (which is also the birthday of our venerable Father Don Bosco); twenty-four for the Feast of St. Charles (the patron saint of the parish) and the third centenary of the vocation of St. Aloysius (Nov. 2nd); nine at the end of the month of Mary; twenty-nine on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception; and eight on Christmas Eve. In all, 180 First Communions between young boarders, students, artisans, and day students, apart from isolated instances of individual First Communions, which were due to various circumstances.

Our Lord showed us this year how important it is to receive First Communion while in school. This is the reason why we concentrated every effort so that no single boy would leave the school without having approached this Divine Sacrament. We attribute the success of our catechetical mission to the extraordinary fact that this year we did not have to expel one single boy from the school on account of serious acts against religion or immoral conduct, whereas in a previous year, we once had to expel fourteen boys in only one month because their bad conduct was incorrigible and appeared to be "contagious." Praised be Our Lord this year for having given us such a wonderful and eloquent lesson in pedagogy.

Similar results were obtained at La Boca, where about two hundred boys attend the Festive Oratory. Practically the same number attend St. Caterina, even though that Oratory is still in its early phase. There are still more in the Italian Chapel, where there is certainly the highest number of First Communions, not only on principal feast days, but almost every Sunday. We can, therefore, say that this year, we had some thousand

youngsters constantly under our spiritual supervision. We educated them, according to the principles of our holy faith, and spurred them on to keep the feast days holy receive the Sacraments regularly.

Yet, I ought to say that the efforts made by the Salesians are surpassed by the industriousness of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, who are also daughters well worthy of Don Bosco, their spiritual Father. My superior sent me to supervise the examinations at several convents of the sisters, and I was full of admiration to see how the weaker sex outdoes us in valor, wresting far more substantial triumphs from Satan than we do. I think that our Reverend Father Provincial sent me to the convents on purpose so that I could report back to our confreres on all that I had witnessed there, and be encouraged to do as much for our boys. I saw a whole host of little girls who knew their catechism to perfection, who were proud to wear the medal of the *Children of Mary* in public: some 120 girls at Moron, another 100 at St. Isidore, 225 at La Boca, and another 180 at Almagro. This is only counting the girls who attend school regularly. We would have to double that number to estimate the number of all the girls who attend the Festive Oratories. At La Boca, there have been at times as many as four hundred, and three hundred at Almagro. This means that we have 2,000 souls of both sexes (in Buenos Aires and environs), who are children of the sons and daughters of Don Bosco. The ways in which we foster this piety are the same as the ones we learnt from you, Father; namely, the sodalities of St. Aloysius, the Blessed Sacrament, St. Joseph, the Immaculate Conception and the Guardian Angel for the little children. Thanks to the usual practices of these sodalities, we saw how their members received the holy Sacraments more frequently. It was possible to ensure greater regularity in religious instructions by means of conferences and to enlist a number of vigilant guardians of morality among the boys themselves. Both the boarders and day pupils of the sisters display admirable enthusiasm for the sodality of the *Children of Mary*, who offer a rare showing at La Boca, Almagro, St. Isidore, Moron and in other convents of Argentinean sisters under our spiritual direction.

Rejoice, therefore, Don Bosco, for our Lord has blessed the Salesians here, too, in this faraway land. Our weak efforts have already been rewarded by results far exceeding our expectations! What a delight it is to labor for our Lord, for the unfortunate youth, which responds to us so well, to work in harmony with the Salesian spirit that offers such varied and certain tools for doing good to souls! I have had the immense grace of taking care of our late Father Paseri up to the very end, and witnessed an immense

truth; namely, how sweet a death marks the end of the life of a good Salesian who did not give up when confronted by sacrifices to be made on behalf of poor, destitute boys! Let us hope that the example given us by this genuine missionary will be imitated by many of us, so that we may see the Salesian field of activity constantly blossoming and prosperous!

I do not want to omit the story of a certain triumph that has come to gloriously end our past school year and that will certainly please you! It is the solemn baptism imparted to three young adults who were led to us by Divine Providence during the last two months of the year and the heartening and extraordinary events that accompanied this baptism.

The first youth adult came from San Caterina, and we still call him "the son of Father Paseri," since it was he who led him to us originally. As soon as that excellent Salesian went to San Caterina, he came to know that one of his pupils, a boy name Hannibal Porcel, had not yet been baptized on account of his parents neglect (or better still, on account of the lack of religion of his father). The boy was already twelve years old, exceptionally intelligent, and endowed with excellent moral qualities. He inquired about the boy's family background, and realized that the youth could not be given a Christian education unless he were taken in *gratis* as a boarder at San Carlos. Our superior agreed, and the boy's mother strongly cooperated to bring this about. Father Paseri had already given him instruction, but the boy did even better at the school. His unbridled vivaciousness was a bit slowed down so that he might realize what was going to take place within him. One might say that until the time Father Passeri entered his death agony, he kept on preparing him. He even scheduled his baptismal ceremony for 3:00 p.m. on the afternoon Feast of St. Martin. The parents of one of our clerics were invited to act as godmother and godfather. Who would have foreseen that at the very moment – 3:30 p.m. – when this boy, Martin Hannibal, was reborn to the grace with baptism, his catechist, Father Paseri, would be born to glory (since he died at that same hour)? No one could have foreseen such a coincidence, but everyone was pleasantly surprised to see the fulfillment of the words *animam salvasti, animam tuam praedestinasti* [you saved a soul, you have predestined your soul].

Martin became a good, diligent and pious young man, he made his confession and his First Communion on Christmas Eve with fervent devotion. After only three months of study, he won two prizes at his examinations, and we hope that by the beginning of the next school year, his father will allow him to come back again because it appears that he has

realized what a wonderful effect the Holy Sacraments have had on his son.

On the 5th day of her month, Our Lady granted us another wonderful event, as if she wanted to relieve us from our grief over the premature death of Father Paseri. At the very moment he died, a youth was brought to us by his father to learn the bookbinding trade, saying that he was a Protestant, but wished to know about the Catholic faith. The boy's ingeniousness and the sincere promise with which he assured us that he really did feel an inner urge toward our holy faith, induced us to overlook the fact that he was really older than eighteen, and did not comply with a few minor requirements stipulated in the school regulations. At first, we only saw that he was indifferent about making a decision, although it was obvious that he was sincere when he spoke and was eager to receive instruction. He never failed to attend the sermons during the month of Mary. While walking with a cleric in the afternoons, he would have him explain the Catholic faith, and even while he was at work in the shop, he would ask the youngest of his companions to explain some dogma or religious ceremony for him. In the meantime, we found out about an intriguing and sensitive dealing on the part of these gentlemen who call themselves Protestants. We discovered that the boy and his whole family (which consisted of fourteen people) were Orthodox Jews. The father was a rabbi at home and among the Jews, and at the same time, a Protestant (at least in appearance) for the public church of Swiss-German Protestants in Buenos Aires. This original type of minister reads the Gospel out in public, knows both Latin and Hebrew, and pours out his hypocritical eloquence in German to deceive the poor simpletons among the Jews and Protestants. Nor is this all, for when we examined the beliefs of his foremost disciple, his son, we discovered that he had taught him to hold everything in doubt, to deny the hereafter, the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and so on, so that these presumed Protestants and Jews were, in reality, genuine atheists and materialists who nevertheless were recognized as masters by both the Synagogue and Reformation. This young man told us about the formula of baptism that prevails among them. The infant's cradle is luxuriously decorated, and all the relatives gather together around it. Then, the most eminent member of the family lifts the infant in his arms three times, calling it by the name by which it is to be known, and those standing around repeat it. After a few nuts and hazelnuts are thrown around the room, the ceremony is over.

Our youngster, Adolph, assured us that he had seen his own thirteen brothers being baptized (for that is what he called this meaningless cere-

mony) in this way. Two of his brothers have since died, and he added that he himself had been baptized the same way.

We had given the catechumen two months to make up his mind, but already at the end of the first month, he had practically decided that he wanted to become a Catholic. At the end of the Christmas Novena, he went to the superior and said he wanted to be baptized on Christmas night and receive First Communion on the same occasion, if possible. He was examined and found adequately prepared for this second sacrament, so we applied to His Excellency the Archbishop for the faculty to receive his full profession of faith (since there was still some doubt that he might be an incorrectly baptized Protestant), and before Holy Mass on Christmas night, he received the grace of baptism before a large Congregation. So, this "second flower" planted in our house by Mary during her month was reborn to grace.

What a change then came about in the heart of that Protestant Jew! A few days after his holy baptism, he said to me, "They were surprised because during the first few weeks, I was so cold and uncertain about Catholicism. Oh, if they had only seen what was going on inside me! I was in the grip of the blackest sadness and melancholy. Whenever I went to church, I felt like I was on my way to death. It was as though I were shrouded in darkness, locked up in a dark room. But everything changed, as though a lamp had been lit or the sun had risen. Happiness and peace came to me. Now I know that Jesus is in the Church. I know that I receive Him in Holy Communion. I am in the grace of God, and I have hopes for Paradise. Now all I desire is to do for my unfortunate brothers and for my mother what the priests in this school have done for me. I believe that if a priest were to visit my home sometimes and discuss religion, at least some of my brothers and sisters would become Catholic, for they are all very anxious to know about the Catholic faith!"

It is a fact that there is no sermon in San Carlos that the father of our young neophyte does not listen to, and his son says, "You can notice that his great mind is restless because he is terribly anxious to hear a priest talk. The thing that most impressed me was the fact that there is only one God, and that there must be but one single truth, one single faith that will make us good and happy for all eternity."

I would never end this letter were I tell you all about the pious sentiments of our convert. He has already brought his twelve-year-old brother to see us several times, and he hopes to win him over to the Church, just as he hopes to do so for all the other twelve members of his family. We

shall help him with all our zeal in this commendable effort.

I am delighted to tell you, most dear Venerable Father, that this *flower of Mary* seemed all the lovelier in our eyes because we chose to offer it to our beloved Father Don Bosco, and that was why, thinking of you, our Reverend Father Provincial James Costamagna gave the catechumen the name of John at baptism. This name should be an indication or a token of the benevolence of Mary Help of Christians, and a guarantee of his perseverance and eternal salvation. Our souls rejoice when we see the name of our Father spread out in different parts of the world, and this name is already echoed on the banks of the River Plata and along the deserted banks of the Rio Negro. You, too, will remember your *tocayo*, as they say here [namesake], and send him your blessing to help him bear your name worthily. I believe that this will also enable him to inherit a little of your features and come to understand your feelings.[19]

The third *little flower* was also born that same night of Christmas in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, where the sacred services were held for our sisters. The third flower was a girl of thirteen or fourteen years, who had never been baptized because of her evil parents, from whose ruthless jurisdiction a Salesian cooperator rescued her. She was placed in the safe keeping of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, so that she might receive a Christian education.

I can tell you, as an aside, that this is not the first time that a Salesian cooperator has been instrumental in rescuing tender, young maidens from the cruel clutches of Satan or godless, merciless parents. The Sisters of Mary Help of Christians have looked after other such maidens, while we, too, have had several young men in the same predicament.

A little over two years ago, Señora Isabella Elerdondo, a very noble matron and godmother of the Church of Mary Help of Christians, rescued a boy who had been physically tormented and spiritually abused by his

[19] The young man, Bach, wrote Don Bosco a letter from the school of Pius IX in Almagro. We reproduce it verbatim as follows:

Buenos Aires, January 6, 1884

To the Most Reverend Father Don John Bosco.

Honorable Father:

Although I do not have the pleasure of knowing Your Reverence, I nevertheless wish to express my immense joy at having received the Sacrament of Holy Baptism here, and of being at Pius IX School, where I am receiving an education that confirms my faith more and more. Another reason for my happiness herein is that at baptism, I was given the name of so distinguished a priest as Your Reverence.

Please, pray for me, so that I may live up to the grace God has granted me, and be worthy of the name given to me. Do not forget my unfortunate parents and my eleven brothers either, who still move on the darkness of error. Bless your new son, who loves you most tenderly, and permit me to kiss your hand.

Adolph Juan Bach

cruel father and brought him to us. Now this young man, who was baptized and educated here, is already an assistant teacher in our bookbinding shop, and has an excellent record of behavior. He is well aware of the fact that he owes his physical and spiritual life to this cooperator, who really did act towards him as the Archangel Raphael, and he stays with his benefactress during every vacation, respecting and loving her like a mother, since he has no other mother here on earth.

To come back now to the fortunate young lady, who was the symbol of the spiritual birth of Jesus among our sisters, she was baptized with the name of Mary, after the name of Sister Maria Mazzarello, the former Mother General of the nuns. Our Reverend Father Provincial administered the two baptisms in both churches, and both neophytes received First Communion that same evening. They also went to confession to be even more certain of the required dispositions of mind for baptism and receive the advice needed to avoid sin.

This is the little bouquet of three lovely flowers that the Blessed Virgin Mary allowed to blossom during her own month, that it might be placed on the cradle of the newborn Infant Jesus. Thus were our endeavors of the school year rewarded, and we hope that a harvest of blessings will also be reaped during the course of the new school year that just began.

This is the strenna that we offer to you, Reverend Don Bosco, for the new year. You sent a wonderful circular letter, informing us that you had appointed two lieutenants, a Vicar in Turin and a Pro-Vicar in America. In that same circular letter, we saw for the first time, the coat of arms of our pious Society, adorned by the expressive and characteristic epigraph that we always saw on the door of your room: *Da mihi animas, caetera tolle.* We could not give you a greater joy than to tell you how Divine Goodness provides us with means to save souls, especially young souls, which are so dear to you.

Therefore, bless us and kindly obtain perseverance for us for us from the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians in our vocation and the zeal we need to work with you to save souls. May I convey to you the respects of my superiors and confreres, as well as the respectful and tender good wishes of our young novices, students and artisans. We invoke one of your patriarchal blessing on him so that they may increase in number, piety and all kinds of virtues. Lastly, may I kiss your hand and happy to be,

Your most affectionate, grateful son in Jesus and Mary,
Rev. Joseph Vespignani, Salesian

P.S. A singular occurrence, which will give you great pleasure, is connected with the conversion of the young Adolph John Bosco Bach. One day, I happened to ask him what had first given him the idea of Catholicism and the first urge to enter our holy religion. He replied that he had often heard his father discuss problems with Catholics at home. He sometimes even remained awake until one in the morning to listen to a Catholic talking. I asked him again, "Did you ever read any books on religion?"

Then, almost as though he had just remembered an interesting item, he said, "The only book on religion I ever saw in my own home (besides the Hebrew and Protestant Bibles of my father) was *Companion to Youth*, which had been forgotten at my house by a friend who had been at your San Carlos school."

"Did you read the book?'

"Yes, I read it from start to finish, except for the Latin, which I did not understand, and the prayers. The thing to which I gave most attention was where it is proven that Jews, Mohammedans and Protestants do not possess the real faith." He then quoted several passages to me, which proved what an excellent memory this young man had and how seriously he had read the book, as well as how God's grace had used this book, so casually forgotten, in order to prepare this soul for conversion. He then added, "I can still recall the advice the book gave to boys, to help them avoid the reading of bad books, and especially telling them to fling bad books and journals into the fire, since it is better that the book should burn now than to permit our souls to burn in hell." He quoted some other passages, which I will omit here for the sake of brevity.

Don Bosco, when our Reverend Father gave the name of John Bosco to Adolph Bach, he was not yet aware of this episode, so when I found out about it, I praised God for having thus divinely disposed that the new convert should be given the name of the man who, through one book, *Companion to Youth*, was capable of converting even the Jews in America!

When all our boys heard about this, they were fully convinced how precious this golden booklet is, and now they set far greater value on *Companion to Youth* than they have done hitherto. May it so please God that everyone, both young and old, Catholics and heretics, may realize what a treasure is hidden in that same booklet.

Before ending my appendix, I would like to tell you about a friend of our Adolph Bach, the same friend that forgot (unfortunately for himself), the *Companion to Youth.* This boy was Victor Braun who was of German

parentage with a Jewish father (although some people say he was only a Jewish sympathizer, that he had become a Christian in order to marry a Catholic girl, Victor's mother, who is also a Catholic). After attending military school (where he was trained for the artillery), Victor was assigned to work with a Protestant naturalist. One day, his employer harshly reprimanded him, whereupon the boy wanted to take his own life out of despair and shame. He dissolved a number of little boxes of phosphorus in a glass of water and he drank it. Immediately, violent pains, vomiting and cramps seized him to the point that he looked like he was about to explode. He was taken to the hospital of St. Aloysius, which is run by the Sisters of the Garden, whose confessors we are. I happened to go to the hospital to perform this ministry, and Mother Superior told me about this boy. She took me to him, I talked with him, and he made his confession several times and was so transformed by the religion he had never known before that we were all amazed. The boy's father lived far away and his mother was dead. For this reason, the president of the Ladies of Charity, who is also a Salesian cooperator of ours, asked me to talk with our superior to try and get him admitted to the Pius IX School. He came to the school, made his First Communion, and displayed great talent, though he was uninhibited and explosive in his buoyant temperament. We gave him permission and advised him that whenever he had an argument with the assistants or his companions, he was to run straight to the chapel or to his superiors. This is what he did and nothing ever happened. He remained with us for two years and gave us great satisfaction. Then, his Jewish father got back from the province of St. Juan. The boy tried to convert him, but that was impossible. Then the father's friends used so much pressure on him that at last they got him out of our school.

From being our friend, he became an ungrateful enemy. He even wrote in a newspaper against the very school that had rescued him. At this point, other pupils of ours, who had been his companions, took up our defense. They wrote to other newspapers, on our behalf, and forced him into silence. We were very unhappy about this, but now we see the threads woven by Divine Providence. Unwittingly, Braun helped to convert Bach. In his turn, Bach seems anxious to guide Braun back to the right path, and Braun seems to have already repented for having committed such a monstrous act of ingratitude at the instigation of bad companions.

Bless these unhappy young people, Don Bosco, and bless us, too, that we may dedicate our whole being to saving them with pure and constant zeal.

99

LETTERS WRITTEN BY DON BOSCO IN FRENCH

A. Turin, January 1, 1885

Madame Quisard:

You have caused me great embarrassment. Your kind wishes, your donation, and the benevolence of your whole family are a source of great comfort to me and encourage me to look after our orphans.

My health is much better, but not yet good enough to allow me to set out on a journey. In the event that a trip to Turin is not too tiring for you, it would be a great pleasure for us all to see you here in Turin for the Feast of St. Francis. I will try to let you know in good time the date set up for this solemnity.

Please convey my most respectful regards to your husband and the rest of the family. I shall not fail to have a special memento for you every day at my Holy Mass, praying that God may grant you a happy future, which I believe is not too far away. Courage, patience and prayer.

Please give the enclosed note to my good friend Antoine.

God bless you and yours and protect you all. May the Blessed Virgin be your guide along the road to Heaven.

The entire Salesian family sends its good wishes to you for the New Year and begs you to remember them in your holy prayers, while I remain as always in Jesus Christ,

Your grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

B. Turin, July 27, 1885

Charitable Madame Quisard:

Our prayers have been answered. If God is with us, then who will be against us? I hope that since you have the dear Lord really living in your home, you will be able to speak to speak His Master and, with unlimited confidence, you will be able take from Him all such graces and blessings as may be beneficial to you and your family. On the requested day, the 10th of next month, I will say a Mass for your intention and our children will also pray and go to Communion for everyone who attends this

solemn ceremony.

Father Michael Rua will also pray, and he is in charge of carrying out all your errands.

God bless you, your relatives, friends and business affairs. Please be so charitable as to pray for me, too, and for my whole family, with whom I am as always in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, November 27, 1885

Madame Quisard:

My poor health will not allow me to write but very little. I received your kind, charitable letter. I was delighted with the good news about your family. We will say special prayers for you, your husband and the whole family every morning during this Novena.

Thank you for your donation on behalf of the orphans. And what about my Salesian?

God bless you, and may the Blessed Virgin be your guide to Heaven. Please pray for me, too.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

D. Turin, January 4, 1885

Dear Count de Villeneuve:

I was genuinely delighted to receive news about your whole family. Blessed be God! I am grateful from the bottom of my heart for what you do for the orphans and me. They will certainly pray and offer up Communions for all those dear to you. And now I must ask you to help me in a matter that is worrying me, and that you, as a neighbor, can settle.

Father Varaja is asking for money to pay the masons, and I am entrusting the matter to you, giving you every faculty to pay all the debts we have contracted at St. Cyr. Do you accept this honorable task, dear Count?

I am waiting to see your valor and courage, in a financial sense and not a military one.

I have written a letter to the Countess, but do not know if she will

be able to decipher my bad handwriting. Would you be kind enough to help her?

May Our Lady Help of Christians bless you and your whole family. May she protect you from spiritual dangers, while guiding you always along the road to Heaven.

Please pray for this poor, but very affectionate friend, who is with all gratitude in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

E. Turin, January 16, 1885

Mademoiselle Lallemand:

Thank you for your donation, and this charitable act will receive its reward even here in this world in the form of spiritual blessings as well as temporal ones, for Our Lord has so promised us. We are praying and urging others to pray for all your intentions, and above all, that our Lord grant Madame, your mother, a very long life and a holy death when the time shall come.

We were very happy to know that you have so many good people around you. This is a great blessing, and we thank God for it. We are sending the diploma of Mlle. Lemane to Poitieres. In due course, she will also receive the *Salesian Bulletin* in French.

May Our Lord grant His greatest blessings to you and render you as much happiness as is possible here on earth, and assure you of an eternity of happiness in Heaven. Please give my regards to Madame, your mother, and receive my most respectful regards for yourself, while I am honored to be your very devoted servant,

Rev. John Bosco

F. Turin, August, 1885

Charitable Sir (?):

I received your donation for our orphans. They will offer up prayers and Communions for you and your whole family.

The dear Lord will not forget to generously reward your deeds in this life, and give you your great and true reward in the hereafter.

I trust that some lucky chance will lead you to visit us, to honor with your presence at the institution you have assisted so generously.

Please pray for me, too, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

G. February 3, 1885

Oratory of St. Francis of Sales – Turin

Your Reverence (Fociere-Mace):

First of all, permit me to thank you most sincerely for having considered me worthy of the homage of your book *The Way of the Cross of the Souls in Purgatory.*

My many tasks and a persistent indisposition have prevented me from examining it thoroughly, but after hearing what so many distinguished and venerated bishops and other people have said about it, I can only hope that I may soon see it widely circulated for the greater benefit of souls. I pray that Our Lord may expedite this in every way. I also pray to Our Lady Help of Christians that she may guide some influential benefactors to your church and with this thought in mind, I will start a Novena on the 14th of this month to Mary, together with my children, and trust you and your most devoted parishioners will join us. We shall be saying three *Paters*, three *Aves* and three *Gloria Patris* to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and three *Salve Reginas* to Mary Help of Christians with the ejaculatory prayers *Cor Jesu Sacratissimum, miserere nobis. Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis.*

During the course of the Novena, our orphans will offer up a number of Communions for your holy intention.

Please pray a little for me, too, and accept my very respectful and grateful regards, while I am honored to remain,

Your very devoted servant,
Rev. John Bosco

DOCUMENTS AND INCIDENTS OF PREVIOUS DATES

I

APPLICATION REQUESTING SUBSIDIES FROM THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF THE LEARNED MENDICITY

There are two things in these petitions that are unknown to all biographers and are on file in the archives of the Royal Institution: one is that in the petition written in 1850, there is no reference whatsoever to evening schools among the list of meritorious endeavors quoted in the hope of obtaining a subsidy; the other is the statement contained in the first petition of 1852 that the evening schools had been inaugurated barely three years earlier. The silence and the statement have provided a two-fold argument to the thesis supported by the brothers of the Christian Schools that their evening schools had been in existence for a number of years prior to those instituted by Don Bosco.[20]

We must, first of all, bear four things in mind: (1) in the first letter of 1852, we find a sentence that questions the conclusion drawn by the above-mentioned brothers. Don Bosco declares himself "mindful of and grateful for the subsidy that the meritorious gentlemen" had assigned to him three years earlier "on behalf of his three Festive Oratories in the city, which had been founded for the purpose of gathering and giving instruction in elementary subjects and religion to homeless and endangered youth," as if in the petition of 1850, he had already alluded to something outside his three Festive Oratories; (2) *The Memoirs of the Oratory,* which Don Bosco wrote in 1874 and is preserved in our files, contain a note that he had added later, which reads as follows: "Consider that the first evening schools operating in Turin were those inaugurated at the Moretta's house in November 1845. No more than two hundred pupils could then be accommodated in the three rooms or classes. The excellent results encouraged us to reopen them the following year, as soon as we had a permanent building at Valdocco"; (3) in the same "*Memoirs of the Oratory*" Don Bosco refers to Sunday schools and evening schools held also at St. Francis of Assisi (1841-1844) and the shelter (1844-1845); (4) two public performances given by the pupils of the Sunday schools and evening schools (one in the presence of the Rev. Aporti and the other before representatives sent by Turin municipality[21]) took place three years prior to 1850.

There consequently cannot be any doubt that priority in this matter is

[20] See *La Salle Review* (September 1934).

[21] Lemoyne, *Biographic Memoirs* Vol. III (pages 20 and following).

definitely on the side of Don Bosco. As we may see, the documents in the archives of the above- named institution and unknown to all biographers of our saint reveal that the brothers entered into negotiations for the foundation of evening schools on May 2, 1845, and they announced their opening in December of that same year, while they actually were opened the following year.[22]

Now how can the phrase quoted by Don Bosco be explained? Don Bosco first conceived and operated his Sunday and evening schools for a number of years after that as a way by which he could easily instruct boys in Christian doctrine. In his Memoirs, he writes: "I already realized that there was a need for some instruction at St. Francis of Assisi's. A number of the boys were already mature in years, yet still ignorant in the articles of faith. For such boys as these, a mere oral instruction would have been too long and would have bored them. They would, therefore, very probably have stopped attending classes. So I tried to hold some sort of class, but this was not possible, due to the lack of space and of capable teachers to help us out."

The system applied in teaching confirms Don Bosco's intention. He goes on: "A regular Sunday school was inaugurated first at the shelter and continued in Moretta's house, and a regular school with evening classes began when we were at Valdocco. In order to get the best possible results, we only taught one subject at a time. For example, for one or two Sundays, we went over the alphabet and relative spelling, and then we instantly began with the short catechism. We had the pupils read it and spell it out until they were able to read one or two questions therein. This supplied material for lessons throughout the week. The following Sunday, we would repeat what we had learned and go on to new questions and answers. Thus, in eight feast days, I brought some of the boys so far that they were able to read and learn whole pages of their catechism by themselves. This saved a lot of time because older boys had to attend catechism classes for years before they could be sufficiently well instructed to make their confession."

The same intention is evident in his choice and use of books: *Short Catechism* and *Sacred History*. Don Bosco goes on: "Books constituted a big problem because once we had gone through the *Short Catechism,* I had no more text books for them. I looked through all the smaller editions of *Sacred History*, such as the ones used in the classroom, but did not find

[22] See Caviglia, *Preliminary Notes* to the critical analysis of Don Bosco's Ecclesiastic History.

one that answered my own needs. In order to make provision for this branch of instruction, in keeping with the requirements of the times, I decided to write a *Sacred History* of my own that would not only be easy to read and simple in style, but would also be without the faults mentioned." He published this in 1846. So at first, Don Bosco's evening schools were not precisely what was later understood by this term.

Moreover, he was without qualified teachers at the time, so he "improvised" with young tutors that responded to his objectives. He goes on to relate: "to meet with these needs, I began to teach a number of city boys. I gave them free instruction in Italian, Latin, French and arithmetic on the condition that they would come to teach catechism and other subjects in my Sunday schools and evening classes." He then named three who thus helped him in the Convitto Ecclesiastico and another seven who did likewise at the shelter.

Since this yielded good results, Don Bosco enlarged his program, also in view of the pressing needs of the times. "Encouraged by the results attained in the Sunday schools and evening classes, I added arithmetic and drawing to the instruction in reading and writing," he said. To facilitate the study of arithmetic, Don Bosco published his *Decimal Metric System* in 1849.

By that time, he also had better teachers. This was the period when his evening schools were definitely organized and had become proper schools of learning. This was made possible by new premises because in 1849, he took out a lease on the Pinardi's house that (as we see from the notary purchase document drawn up in 1851) gave him eight rooms on the main floor and five on the floor upstairs. Don Bosco started then from here when he wrote in 1852: "The Sunday and evening schools have been in operation for three years."

We will close with the remark that if we are speaking in a restricted sense of evening schools, the brothers did precede Don Bosco by several years because they had technical staff at their service and already inaugurated regular classes in January 1846. But if we are speaking of evening schools *sic et simpliciter,* that is to say, schools held in the evening for working youths who were employed in factories, building yards or the open fields during the day time, then Don Bosco precedes the brothers by at least two months (November 1845).

Don Bosco biographers have been supporting two statements that are unjustified. The remark that the brothers conceived their plan of evening schools from the example given by Don Bosco is purely gratuitous. In

close contact with the working classes as they were with their flourishing elementary schools, the brothers must have realized all by themselves how essential it was to meet the growing needs of the day halfway by supplying a more extensive possibility of instruction for the masses also in such a form. It is even worse when we read that the brothers borrowed their method from Don Bosco. The brothers, the disciples of John Baptist de la Salle, were far too steadfast and uniform in their own methods, which are the natural result of a pluralistic experience, to need to go begging elsewhere. At any rate, there is absolutely no evidence in support of either the one or the other statement.

Coming back to the petitions now, we can say that the Royal Institution granted a subsidy of one thousand lire to the first undertaking and another subsidy of six hundred to the second, but always with the condition that such grants were not to create any precedent. The three successive petitions were "buried" instead, as the secretary of the Pious Institute wrote himself, on the respective copies. Here again must we admire Don Bosco's great charity, for he never blushed when he humbly extended his hand wherever he hoped to find some support for his zealous endeavors.[23]

A. Turin, February 20, 1850

Gentlemen:

In his desire to procure the civil, religious and moral advantages for destitute boys that he himself had enjoyed, the Rev. John Bosco began to gather a few youngsters at the premises adjacent to the Church of St. Francis of Assisi in 1841. The space available obliged him to limit the number to some seventy or eighty youngsters.

In 1844, the undersigned was obliged by his own government to move to the pious institute known as Rifugio, but he continued to gather the boys as described above, and whose numbers had now increased to three

[23] Such schools, known as "night schools," existed in Rome already in 1819. We find their history in *The Real Friends of the People* by Bishop S. De Angelis, a series of biographies of priests of the Roman clergy (Rome, Typ. Leonina 1927, pages 127-128). A recollection of 1841 informs us that "as night fell, several hundred young artisans varying in age and trade washed their hands after work, put on their jackets and gladly hastened toward such schools for instruction." *(Pious Institute of Night Schools for Young Artisans in Rome, printed by the Apostolic Hospice near Marcus Aurelius, 1841).* There the boys were taught elementary reading, writing and arithmetic and the catechism. These institutions were connected with the youth Oratories, which flourished here and there on Sundays and feast days. On March 9, 1847, Pius IX and his chamberlain, Bishop Piccolomini, inspected the night school in Via dell'Agnello ai Monti, and attended the award ceremony scheduled for that evening for the boys.

hundred. Not having any suitable premises at his disposal, the gatherings thus described would take place here and there, always with the consent of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

In 1846, he was fortunate enough to rent accommodations in the site where the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales at Valdocco was inaugurated. Here, attendance grew so much that he would gather something between six and seven hundred boys at times, ranging in age from twelve to twenty years of age. A good number of these youngsters had just left prison or were in danger of going to prison.

The Lord blessed this undertaking, and when the Oratory became too small, Don Bosco opened another one and dedicated it to St. Aloysius at the end of 1847.

The climate in which he lived convinced him more and more that it was necessary to provide both education and assistance for homeless boys. Therefore, in October 1849, he reopened a former Oratory at Vanchiglia known as the Guardian Angel, which had been closed a year previously by the very zealous priest Father Cocchi, assistant curate at the Church of the Annunciation. The total number of boys attending all three Oratories now amounted to a thousand.

By means of pleasant recreations and games, catechism classes, religious instruction and singing, several boys reformed their conduct and grew fond both of work and religion. There were also singing classes every evening and Sunday schools for anyone who was able to attend. We have already had several public displays of their progress, to the full satisfaction of everyone who attended them.

There is also a hostel giving shelter to some twenty or thirty boys, on account of their particular, extreme need that often affects them.

Until now, everything has progressed well, thanks to the help given by a few charitable ecclesiastics and lay persons. The priests who have dedicated particular attention to the institute are the theologians Borelli, Carpano, Vola, and Rev. Ponte, Rev. Grassino, Rev. Murialdo, Rev. Giacomelli and Prof. Marengo.

Since the undersigned is the director of all three oratories here mentioned, he is afraid that he will no longer be in a position to continue because he is all too often obliged to appeal to those same people who have supported his undertakings until now. The total amount of money he has to pay for renting all three of the above-mentioned premises amounts to 2,400 francs a year. But he also has to pay for the maintenance of the three chapels in which all services are held on feast days

and, likewise, he runs into expenses for the indispensable urgent needs of some of the boys.

The undersigned has now realized that the origin, purpose and objectives of the Oratories mentioned above are identical to those of the Institution of the Learned Mendicity and, therefore, humbly asks that the gentlemen of the administration board take the above report into benevolent consideration, considering the Oratories as an extension of the Institution of Learned Mendicity, and granting to them whatever charitable subsidies that they may deem suitable in their enlightened judgment and kindness, so that he may continue in something that has already provided spiritual and temporal benefits to many helpless members of our society, and from which we hope much more may still be obtained.

Trusting that, etc.
Rev. John Bosco
Petitioner

B. Turin, November 18, 1852

Gentlemen:

Still mindful of and grateful for the subsidy granted three years ago by the meritorious board of the Pious Institution of Learned Mendicity to the three Oratories founded in this city for the purpose of gathering boys, both homeless and at risk, to whom instruction in elementary subjects and religion was imparted, I am obliged to appeal to you once again.

The considerable increase in the number of boys (they now exceed two thousand in the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales alone) who attend the Sunday schools, evening schools that have been operating for the past three years, the rent of our premises, upkeep of the church now being built and almost completed at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales at Valdocco, have placed me in a serious predicament.

This is why I am relying on the proven kindness of you gentlemen, as I appeal to you once again and ask you to take this special case into your benevolent consideration. This will enable me to continue in this charitable endeavor that is concerned solely with the moral and religious welfare of boys abandoned and at risk.

With the most fervent and heartfelt gratitude, I thank you for all you have done and all that I hope you will still do for me, and wish you the

most abundant blessings from Heaven while I am honored to remain,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. November 22, 1852

From the Oratory for Boys at Valdocco

Your Excellency:

Your goodness of heart proven by your concern for all the undertakings related to public welfare permits me to hope that you will also take the enclosed memorandum into benevolent consideration. I am particularly encouraged to hope by the favor granted to me three years ago when I applied for a subsidy, which was charitably granted to me by the Royal Institution for Learned Mendicity.

May the Festive Oratories founded in this city likewise be included in the many institutions to which you extend your generous support, so that you may rejoice at having rescued a great many abandoned boys from the dangers of the streets boys with whom I join together to pray with a full heart, not being able to do more, that the Lord God deign to grant you a long and successful life and abundant blessings from Heaven for you and your most honorable family.

With the greatest veneration, I am highly honored to be,
Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

D. Turin, November 13, 1854

Gentlemen:[25]

A few years ago I appealed to you and asked for a subsidy for the three Oratories instituted in this city in order to gather and instruct the most poor and abandoned boys. In view of the identical objectives pursued by the undertaking for Learned Mendicity and the Oratories in question, my application was favorable taken into consideration, and a gener-

25 The original is not written by Don Bosco himself and neither was the signature. The manner in which it is undersigned (Don Bosco John) shows that it is a copy of an original by Don Bosco himself, as the style of the writing also confirms it.

ous subsidy was granted. I now find myself in an exceptional predicament, and again venture to inform you of my great needs with the firm belief that they will be given an understanding ear. The most urgent of these needs are: (1) the rent for two of these Oratories, which both have fairly spacious enclosures where a goodly number of boys can gather for recreation after attending holy services in Church. The rent for these premises amounts to 1,250 lire; (2) the upkeep and maintenance of all three churches existing on the premises of all three oratories, and the cost of maintaining evening schools, especially at the Valdocco Oratory where boys learn catechism, reading, writing, elementary arithmetic and Italian grammar; and (3) the upkeep of several among the poorest and most abandoned boys. We have ninety boys this year because many children were orphaned and left abandoned by the tragic cholera epidemic.

Pressed by the burden of these needs, I appeal respectfully and trustingly to you, asking that you take into benevolent consideration the condition of total abandonment of these unfortunate boys, granting whatever subsidy you may think suitable in view of the present exceptional circumstances.

Fully confident in your well-known and proven generosity, I am highly honored to be most gratefully,

Your most obliged petitioner,
Rev. John Bosco

E. Turin, November 21, 1855

Dear Sir:

I beg you to include the boys housed at the Oratory of Valdocco for Boys among the many works of charity to which you are dedicated.

This year is a crucial one, especially where bread in concerned. Therefore, would you please recommend my case and put the enclosed memorandum before the board of the Pious Institution for Learned Mendicity, of which you are the worthy president. I will have the boys, for whom I am appealing, pray, and I will join them, imploring God to shower His Blessings upon you and yours.

With the greatest esteem and sincerest gratitude, I am

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

F.[26] Turin, November 21, 1855

Dear Sir:

Full of fervent feelings of gratitude toward you and the gentlemen of the board of the Pious Institution for Learned Mendicity for the subsidies that you have granted on previous occasions to the poor boys housed at the Valdocco Oratory for boys and those attending the evening school or religious instructions imparted at the Oratories of St. Francis of Sales in Valdocco, St. Aloysius at Porta Nuova, and the Guardian Angel at Vanchiglia, I beg to inform you that I am faced with the critical problem of having once again to appeal to the selfsame source of charity this year.

The increased lack of food and the growing unemployment have caused many boys to be abandoned and at risk, who would perhaps come to a bad end unless they were to be given material and moral assistance. Many of them – approximately one hundred orphans due to the fatal cholera epidemic of last year – are at present housed at Valdocco, while others receive whatever assistance we are able to give them. In all three of the Oratories, the total number of boys now exceeds 1,500.

It is on behalf of these poor, abandoned children that I am appealing to your well-known and proven generosity and goodness, fervently asking that you take the distressing predicament of these boys into your benevolent consideration, and grant me whatever charitable subsidy the seriousness of their situation indicates to you as suitable on their behalf.

With sincere gratitude, also on behalf of the above-mentioned boys who will benefit from your kindness, I wish you and all the other gentlemen of the board abundant blessings from Heaven, and am greatly honored to be,

Your humble petitioner,
Rev. John Bosco

II

TWO LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO THE MUNICIPALITY OF TURIN

A. During the latter part of 1851, work was briskly progressing on the

[26] This was the memorandum mentioned in the previous letter. The handwriting is not Don Bosco's, but the signature is.

construction of the Church of St. Francis of Sales. But in August, Don Bosco's funds were so low that he was forced to make a wide appeal to public charity. Among other debts, he still had to pay building taxes to the municipal authorities, to whom he wrote, seeking an exemption.

Turin, October 22, 1851

Most Honorable and Distinguished Sir:

While thanking you from the bottom of my heart for all that you have done for our Oratories, I must ask you to grant me yet another favor by exempting us from payment of the taxes due on the issue of permits to build our church and enlarge the existing premises. Full of the most fervent gratitude, I am honored to remain,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco
Director

P.S. The new church being built has already reached the roof level. Dear sir, please continue your benevolence toward us, and we shall be able to complete it.

(The Mayor G. Bellone wrote a very courteous answer, enclosing the authorization [See Lemoyne, Vol. IV page 224]).

B. The cholera epidemic had wrought great havoc in 1854. This, in turn, brought with it a considerable tightening in generosity, and an unusual increase in applications for admission to the Oratory by poor boys coming from the working class. The following letter is an eloquent document:

Turin, January 23, 1855

Most Honorable Mayor:

In view of the heavy expenses incurred by the Turin municipality in endeavoring to alleviate the havoc wrought by the cholera epidemic, I had decided not to address any requests for subsidies this year to you, yet my present needs oblige me to do so after all. Besides the heavy expenses I have had to face to comply with the sanitary obligations that the present times demand in the premises where we live, I now have about ninety-five

boys to keep, clothe and provide for their bedding. I had intended to decrease this number, but instead, the cholera increased the number of orphans, and I have now given shelter to more than forty of them between those sent to me by the public committee assisting victims of the plague and those I myself have found wandering through the streets of Turin.

I am not asking for any subsidy to help pay my rent, neither for the schools nor for the construction that has been undertaken. I only ask a subsidy for the winter season, so that I can feed my poor boys. Once the winter is over, I hope that Our Lord will make some other arrangement so that I can place at least some of them elsewhere.

I am appealing to your own proven goodness of heart in view of the above, begging you to help me under the exceptional circumstances. I am convinced that you lack neither the means nor the good will to extend a helping hand to these boys and children of the working class most poor and abandoned. With the most sincere gratitude, I remain,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

(We do not know the outcome of this petition. The originals of these two letters are now preserved in the Civic Library of Turin.)

III

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO COUNT SOLARO DELLA MARGHERITA

Count Solaro della Margherita, a patrician gentleman from Mondovi, was secretary for foreign affairs under Charles Albert from 1835-1847. As an austere Catholic, he was the leader of the group of Piedmontese noblemen who tried to withstand the rising tide of anticlerical liberalism. They were, for the most part, under the spiritual direction of Saint Joseph Cafasso.

Count Lovera of Castiglione found the original of this letter among the papers of the nobleman to whom it had been addressed, and gave a copy of it to a special edition being published in Cuneo.[27]

Father Lemoyne had already published the letter,[28] but since he had

[27] *Tribute from Cuneo to Don Bosco.* (Published by Gros Monti, 1935, page 24). Count Lovera made a mistake in the date. The day written by Don Bosco's own hand is the 5th, not the 3rd.

[28] See *Biographical Memoirs,* Vol. V, page 2.

only a copy of it and not the original, he was unable to discern certain details and that is why we are publishing it again. One of such details was something that Solano had written on the letter: To be kept. He must, therefore, have divined that there was something unusual in the humble petitioner writing to him.

Lovera prefaced the reproduction of the letter with a heading of two pages, from which we are quoting these very significant passages: "The priest from Valdocco is writing to a famous, widely known man; yet how dignified he is in his petition! Not one single word of empty flattery, which was so customary in letters of this kind. He does write to the austere patrician as a pauper, but also as a priest. This priest from Castelnuovo is not a simpleton; he knows how to handle his pen. He neglects nothing in his brief report, neither his mental anxieties, nor its social concerns (the words 'at risk' and 'risky' express a whole lot) or his material worries. One senses the presence of a man who has faith in Divine Providence, but who is aware that Divine Providence does not assist the indolent. As a born propagandist, he wastes no time, but seizes the opportunity to try and obtain recommendations to approach other people – not to just anybody, for that would be a waste of time if he were to appeal to someone who could not understand. He wishes to be recommended to people sympathetic toward this kind of charity. The conclusion of the letter is dignified, sober, and without futile exaggerations or waste of time. The letter is completed; it is obvious that it was written all in one breath or in haste. He reread it and a new idea came to him; he inserted an earnest plea under the printed letterhead, a plea for his newly inaugurated *Catholic Readings.*[29] He was about to close the envelope when a thought must have entered his mind. A letter of commendation might be advisable to give the old statesman some idea of the priest from Valdocco; hence, the first postscript. Almost accidentally, he mentions the name of Father Joseph Cafasso.

Then, he has yet one more thought; hence, the second postscript. He is poor and he has nothing to offer in return for the favor he is asking. That is to say, not exactly, because he does have something, and he offers it – 'seats for the play that will be presented tomorrow at one-thirty.' Now the letter is ready to be sent off, with all its wealth of charisma."

[29] The page bears this letterhead: CENTRAL DIRECTION OF CATHOLIC READINGS. Don Bosco wrote underneath these words: "Warmly recommended for Count and Countess La Margherita."

Turin, January 4, 1854

Your Excellency:

Although I have never before appealed to Your Excellency for a subsidy, I am nevertheless encouraged to do so by the active part you play in many charitable undertakings, and by my own dire need, hoping you will graciously read what I am setting forth below.

The increasing cost of living, the growing numbers of ragged, abandoned boys and the decreased amount of donations previously received from private persons who are now no longer in a position to give them have put me in a predicament from which I can find no escape. This does not yet consider all the many other expenses: the baker's bill, which for the last quarter amounts to over 1,600 francs, and I do not know where to turn to find one single cent. Yet, the boys must eat and if I deny a crust of bread to these poor and at risk boys, I shall expose them to grave risks, both material and spiritual.

Under the exceptional circumstances, I have decided to appeal to Your Excellency, asking that you extend to me whatever assistance you may deem suitable in your charity, as well as recommend me to such charitable persons who, to your enlightened understanding, seem inclined toward this kind of charity. It is not a question of assisting one single individual, but of holding out a crust of bread to boys whose hunger may expose them to the grave danger of forfeiting their moral integrity and their religion.

With the belief that you will take into benevolent consideration my critical situation, I assure you that I shall be most grateful to you, and while wishing you and all your honorable family all the bounty of God, I am most honored to remain,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. (1) Should you decide to make any donation to this cause, you could, if you so wish, address it to the praiseworthy Father Joseph Cafasso. (2) You are also respectfully invited to attend the performance of a religious play that will be presented tomorrow at one-thirty at the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales.

This is how Count Lovera ends his comment: "Eighty-one years have elapsed since that time. The world has been transformed from its very

foundations, but the grain of mustard seed that was cast into the soil of Valdocco has grown into the magnificent Salesian plant that casts its peaceful shade over all five continents. The young priest who was in need of 1600 lire has been elevated to the glory of the saints. Everything has changed, and no one of that era is still alive today. But the spirit of Don Bosco, which is so vibrant in this brief letter, is manifested in the bright flame of its original primitive ardor in the eternal springtime of the saints."

IV

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE VALDOCCO FESTIVE ORATORY

A. Turin, August 2,1935

Oratory Father Michael Rua

I was born at Magnano in 1862 and at the age of nine, I went to Turin around the time of Lent, as was then the custom, to find work with the bricklayers. On that first Sunday, I went to the Oratory of Don Bosco with my companions, who had been there the previous year. Our pastor had urged all the boys who were setting out for Turin to do so. I liked it there, and every year when I came back to Turin at the beginning of Lent (to remain working there until All Saints), I continued to attend the Oratory until I was drafted into the army.

In those years, the entrance door of the Festive Oratory faced Via Cottolengo, to the left of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians, at the corner where the present day printing establishments stand. It was all fenced in. The front door was a rough, wooden plank door, just like the fenced doors built by bricklayers. To the left was a wooded shed, where there was a doorkeeper looking out of the window. We would put our attendance cards on the windowsill to be signed by him. We used to play our games in that long courtyard that extended way behind the Church of St. Francis. There would be three or four priests and several clerics with us. Don Bosco usually came for Mass in the morning and for Catechism in the afternoon.

When I returned to Turin for the second time, the superior spoke about First Communion. Since I was working from 5:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., I only attended Catechism class on Sundays. On the important day, we all wore clean suits, and those who could not expect one from their

families were given one by Don Bosco. Everyone had a white ribbon tied around his arm.

We occupied the first pews in church. Don Bosco himself celebrated Holy Mass in our Chapel of St. Francis of Sales, and we approached the altar rails to receive our First Communion. The younger children had their mothers with them, too. We said our prayers led by the catechism teacher.

Afterward, when we came out of church, we found a table set for us in the playground. Our breakfast of bread, cheese and salame was already prepared for us, and then two boys went around with a breadbasket to serve those who were still hungry. Later, Don Bosco came around to give us some wine, pouring it into each boy's glass, while a boy carried the bucket. He also served cookies and a soft drink.

At that time, we ate a lot of food, but we did not yet have the habit of drinking coffee and milk.

Don Bosco always served breakfast on every feast day when boys received Communion. They came out of the sacristy door and found him sitting on a footstool with a basket of small loaves already cut, with a slice of salame and prosciutto inserted into them. In the afternoon, especially during the summer months, there was always someone in charge of distributing lemonade from a bucket with a wooden lid on it.

Toward the end of October, the attendance cards were collected, our marked presences counted, and prizes like watches, clothes and other things were awarded, while the best musicians amongst us received musical instruments.

If any boy had a ragged jacket or trousers or broken shoes, he was given clothes or shoes in good condition, even though they may have been patched up.

The boys who attended the Oratory were attracted to it by the merry-go-round (which cost one *soldo* in the public squares), swings and presents given out on that occasion. The swings were made up with ropes put together and ending with a knot. The boys would put their feet on the knot and sway or be swayed.

The musical band, too, drew a lot of attention, not only from the boys, but also from other people who would stop to listen as they passed by the Oratory fence.

In those days, Don Bosco did not have so many boys in the Oratory because of some conflict he had with the clergy, especially the pastor of *Ballon,* namely, the parish of Saints Simon and Jude. There might have been seventy boys at most. He often urged us to bring our companions with us.

Nearly all of us were mason apprentices, mechanics and sheet metal workers.

Father Leonardo Beinat wrote these recollections faithfully, and they correspond exactly to the things I have kept in my memory.

Enrico Bana Angelo of Magnano Biellese

B. Turin, November 8, 1935

I was born in Turin on July 19, 1866. I began attending the Oratory in 1871. Don Bosco was always calm and smiling. His eyes bored right through you, even into your brain. We were all overjoyed whenever he appeared in our midst. He would have Father Rua and Father Lazzero walking on either side of him, as if they had Our Lord himself between them. Father Barberis and all the boys would run up to him, gather around him, some walking along beside him and others walking backward, their faces turned toward him. It was a stroke of good fortune, a much sought-after privilege, to be near him and speak with him. He walked slowly, talking and looking at everybody with those eyes that turned this way and that, everywhere, electrifying our hearts with joy.

At times, he would come down from his room and stand under the porticoes to the left of anyone coming down the stairs. This was just about 1875. Father Rua and Father Lazzero were always at his side. The boarders and the day hops would gather around him.

One day when he was standing there, he offered me a pinch of snuff tobacco. I was then about nine years old. Delighted, I put my finger inside his black snuffbox. But just as I was extracting a pinch from the box, he closed the lid down and caught my fingers in it. These were jokes that delighted us.

On another occasion, he appeared by himself through the front door by the sacristy. A crowd of boys began to race toward him. But he snatched up his umbrella, which had a big handle and a rod like the umbrellas that peasants carry. He lifted it and wielding it like a sword, he ably held off the assault. He touched one with the tip of it, another with the length of the spokes, but in the meantime, other boys pressed in on him from the other side and we were delighted. He looked like any of those country pastors, those who are easy-going and simple. He walked slowly, as if he were trying to say with the umbrella, "Leave me alone! Leave me in peace!"

Pietro Pons

C.

At the old Franciscan Shrine of Our Lady of the Angels, where the humble dome overlooks the wide Stura Valley next to Coni in Piedmont, a neat old man with the head and manner of an artist appeared in the sacristy to serve Mass. He served it with profound, yet simple piety.

As he returned from the altar, he suddenly informed the celebrating priest, who he knew to be a Salesian,[30]"I, too, was educated by Don Bosco."

"By Don Bosco himself?"

"Most certainly. At the Oratory in Turin between the years 1870 and 1876."

"Then you must have known him when he was in his prime, right?"

"I certainly knew him then."

"And what do you remember about him?"

The little old man thought for a moment, a long moment, searching carefully in his memory to extract definite recollections. He said, "I recall two things about him in particular: his good sense of humor was constant and he never punished us."

"Come now, that is impossible, for you must have been naughty from time to time."

"Certainly, none of us were saints. That is only natural, but he had his own way to call us and collect us."

"And what was that?"

"Very simple, but very effective! He would call for us, and it was already a punishment to be called for by Don Bosco when we had done something wrong. He would welcome us with his kindly smile, and looking right into our eyes, he would say, 'It is very obvious that you do not love Don Bosco.'"

"'Why do you say that, Father?'"

"'Yes. Yes, that is the way it is.'"

"'No.'"

"'No, you do not love him because if you did, you would not have done this or that.'"

"That was enough. We had already been scolded, punished, and we were sorry and were forgiven. Oh, Don Bosco! Dear Don Bosco!"

The little old man's eyes were wet with tears at the memory of those happy days.

[30] This episode is related by Father Auffray, editor of the French *Bulletin*.

Cheerfulness and kindness make up the whole secret of education, or at least a good portion of it. Cheerfulness, which opens up others, which invites others to open their hearts, keeping the aura of youth; kindness, which conquers the heart so as to transform it from within, once it has taken hold of an adolescent soul.

(Salesian *Bulletin*, French Edition, November 1935).

V

TWO LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO COUNT UGO GRIMALDI OF BELLINO, A PATRICIAN FROM ASTI

A. Turin, September 24, 1862

Beloved in our Lord:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

I received your two letters, which you were so kind as to write to me, but did not answer them because I was not sure where you might be.

I enclose the red ticket; in fact, I enclose two of them, so that you will win two prizes.[31] The tickets I sent you were not really for sale, but they were for you personally so that you might help poor Don Bosco get more bread for his poor boys.

Now to get back to what you said in your first letter, I greatly admire the impulse of your heart, since you wish to blindly follow the advice of a poor old priest like myself.[32] It is a hard task for us both, but let us try to do it.

You asked me what you had to do in order to live a life that would detach you from the world and bind your heart to God so that you would always love virtue?

The answer is that goodwill fortified by grace of God will bring forth this wonderful result. But to succeed, you must try to recognize and savor the beauty of virtue and the joy that those who strive toward God experience in their hearts.

Think of the futility of the things of this world. They cannot give us the slightest consolation. Put all your trips together, all that you have seen, enjoyed, read, and observed. And now compare all of this with the joy

[31] On January 30, 1862, Don Bosco had announced a lottery on behalf of the Oratories.

[32] They used to meet at the spiritual retreats at the Shrine of St. Ignatius.

experienced by one who has received the Holy Sacraments and you will realize that the other things were empty, whereas the second thing contains everything.

Now that we have a basis to rely upon, let us come to practical things. For you: (1) Mass and meditation every morning; (2) some spiritual reading every afternoon; (3) sermon and benediction every Sunday; and (4) go slowly. You may shout, a little at a time.

You are right – start doing what I have written here for the moment, and if you feel that you can keep pace with me, I hope that, I can lead you into the third Heaven with the help of God.[33]

When you come to Turin, we shall discuss somewhat more ambitious projects. In the meantime, do not omit to pray to the Lord for me, as I wish you all the bounty of God and remain,

Your most affectionate servant and friend,
Rev. John Bosco

B. Turin, September 24, 1863

Dearest Cavaliere:

Please bear with me if I do not answer your letters as I would like to, but I really do not have the time.

You are now at Maretto[34] with a saintly man. Follow his advice and his example and you will be complying with the will of God.

I read the famous prophecies myself and gave them to others to read, but I do not think it would be to the glory of God if they were published. I will not discuss their merit, but I do not perceive the spirit of God in them, for His spirit is all charity and patience. I will send them wherever you tell me.

Would you like us to make an attempt with young Vaianeo? Fifty-fifty. The usual fees for room and board is $30, but I would cut it down to $15, and you will see about the rest. If he promises well, we will allow him to continue. As for the future, we will do whatever God reveals to us in furthering His greater glory.

We shall pray for you, Cavaliere, and you will pray for us. Give my affectionate regards to dear Father Ciattino, your superior. May Our

[33] The count's daughter tells us that her father was fond of jesting cordially with Don Bosco about attaining the third Heaven.

[34] Municipal community in the area of Asti.

Lady of Mercy bless us all here on earth, and make us worthy of His eternal mercy in Heaven. Amen.

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

VI

LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO BISHOP MORENO, BISHOP OF IVREA[35]

Work on the Church of St. Francis ended in June of 1852. Don Bosco wished to have a prelate officiate at its solemn blessing. He, therefore, turned to Bishop Louis Moreno, bishop of Ivrea, with whom he was already in contact about subscriptions to popular publications. He wrote him the following letter:

Turin, Holy Feast of Corpus Christi, 1852

Dear and Most Reverend Bishop:

Your positive intervention on several occasions in matters concerning our Oratory so encouraged me that I am now appealing to your already proven kindness and ask for a new favor.

The church, which was already several times recommended to your good heart, is now nearing completion. On Sunday June 20th, we will be able to go inside, bless it and celebrate the holy functions in it. Bishop, would you come to officiate at this holy function? This is my humble request. Your goodness of heart and readiness to assist such works of charity lead me to hope that you will, so I am not asking anyone else. Dr. Vallauri is the "prior" of the celebration this year, and all members of the organizing committee are anxious that you come, so do try to please everyone.

I received the prospectus for our library from Father Gallenghe[36] with the wise changes you yourself made in it. When you come here to Turin, we can see what still remains to be done. At the beginning of next week, I will send you the manuscript of the booklet *Warning to Catholics.*[37]

Meanwhile, with the gentle trust that my request will be responded

35 All these original letters are kept in the episcopal archives of Ivrea.

36 The secretary of the Bishop.

37 Father Lemoyne refers to this pamphlet by Don Bosco in his *Biographic Memoirs,* Vol. IV, page 159.

to, I thank you most fervently for all that you have done for me and this Oratory, and while I wish you all the blessings of Heaven, I kiss your venerated hand and remain with the greatest esteem,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco
Leader of Little Rascals

(The bishop was unable to go to Turin. We can read his answer in Lemoyne's Biographic Memoirs, Vol. IV, page 299)

B.

The topic of the following letter relates to a matrimonial problem that was dragging on at great length. For information regarding the progress of *Catholic Readings,* see Chapter 1 of. Vol. V, passim.

Turin, December 16, 1855

Dear and Most Reverend Bishop:

After an infinite number of setbacks, it has still been impossible to celebrate the marriage of the lawyer Giudici with Miss Grida. Since the whole matter was in the hands of the curia, difficulties were continuously created and no one could reason with this blessed vicar to try and straighten them out. Now it seems that everything is set, but at the very moment that the papers were sent to me, a new obstacle arose: the banns had to be published under the terms of the papal dispensation. I told the vicar that His Holiness was willing to dispense, but he began to say, "It cannot be done. I cannot, it cannot be done. I cannot," so that I had to take the papers back again. I am now handing the whole matter over to you, and if you feel that under the exceptional circumstances you could celebrate this wedding, I think that neither of the parties concerned would object to having to go to you. I wanted to deal with this matter when I was there, but could not. At any rate, please let me know what I should do.

We must have crossed paths on our way. I postponed my departure for two days with the pleasurable hope of seeing you, but I did not see you. If we can settle everything that concerns the *Catholic Readings* from here, I shall do whatever you tell me. The best bids received are: Tortone, who would give us a discount of 14% and Paravia, 15% on the prices

agreed on with Deagostini.

Some choices have been made and others are still in progress. I will write to you again before the week is over.

Believe me to be with the greatest veneration in the Lord,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. December 30, 1860

Bishop Moreno had recommended that a boy named Thomas Louis Jarach be accepted at the Oratory. The pupil wrote to the bishop on December 29, 1860 to thank him and to convey to him his good wishes. The letter was written in French and the reason the boy gave for his gratitude was the following: "Who has been better assisted by Your Grace that I? Your fatherly affection has assured my spiritual and temporal happiness, and has placed me in a state of grace among the children of Mary, thus making it possible for me to reach Heaven. Never shall I forget such favors as those that, in your magnanimity, you deigned to bestow on me and my family." To this, Don Bosco added with his own handwriting:

P.S. The whole letter was Jerach's own idea and he wrote it himself. He is the best pupil in the first rhetoric class and this class has a lot of students. His conduct is truly exemplary.

I wish to add my own good wishes to those of our good Jarach, and do so with a full heart and sincere gratitude in Our Lord.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

D.

Once again, Jarach wrote to the bishop, in Italian this time, on October 25, 1861, asking for his assistance, for he wished to enter the priesthood. "My beloved Father Don Bosco has kept me free of charge in his house until now," he wrote, "and also in the future, he is prepared to do all he can for me, but expenses will be much heavier if I decide to embrace the ecclesiastical life, and the house is in very serious difficulties for money, so I am appealing to you."

Then, recalling the past, he refers to the charity the bishop had

already shown him, by assisting his "rebirth to the grace of Christ." Again, Don Bosco added a few lines to his letter:

P.S. He thought out this letter and wrote it without anyone prompting him. I am sending it to you so that you see the gratitude he has in his heart.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

The bishop replied to the youth as follows:

October 30, 1861

Dear Tommasino,

I was very pleased to hear of your desire to embrace the ecclesiastic life, and I am granting you permission to don the cassock. When you do so, you would do well to repeat *"Dominus pars haereditatis meae"* [The Lord is part of my inheritance]. I shall be glad to continue contributing toward the expenses necessary for you, and am already in agreement hereon with Don Bosco. Let us hope that Divine Providence will continue giving you assistance.

VII

LETTER TO COUNTESS PASSI

This letter is addressed to Countess Elisabeth Passi Zinceroni of Bergamo, who had asked him to pray for her daughter-in-law, Countess Julia Passi Valier, who was seriously ill. The original is kept by Count Henry Matthew Passi, president of the Catholic Insurance Company of Verona.

Turin, July 9, 1867

Dear Madame:

I received your letter and will not fail to pray and have my poor boys pray for the lady you recommended. In fact, I have already made sure that a number of Communions be offered up for the young lady about whom you wrote.

God is infinitely good and all-powerful. Have faith!

May the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians bless you and your family. Pray for me also, who am in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

VIII

DON BOSCO AT VERZUOLO

Don Bosco visited Verzuolo, which is in the area of Saluzzo, on September 9, 1866. We are informed why he went there by the following two letters: one is from the future Cardinal Cagliero to Cavaliere Joseph di Rovasenda and the other from Countess Adele di Rovasenda to Father Botta, the local pastor. Both letters were published in a special edition of 1929 on the occasion of the first centenary of the construction of the parish church consecrated to the Most Holy Name of Mary at Verzuolo (Operaia Press, Saluzzo, 1929).

A. Turin, August 28, 1866

Dear Cavaliere:

I sent Don Bosco the plans for the celebrations to be carried out on the feast day of the Most Holy Name of Mary at Verzuolo, and he was very pleased with them and agreed to come. Therefore, unless the world comes to an end, we hope it will be a wonderful feast day. He also agreed to deliver the sermon, etc. etc.

I also gave him the gracious donation you sent, and he was very grateful, telling me that you should be reassured that Our Lady (due to the confidence that you all have placed in her) will protect you and your whole family from the cholera.

He even added that should anyone else that you know make a donation to the Church of Mary Help of Christians, he would assure them that they will escape this imminent danger. Let him who reads be well advised.

I imagine that the countess, your wife, is also there with you, so please give her my respects and those of Don Bosco, as well as to your small family.

We ourselves can exchange our regards with a powerful handshake that hurts nobody. Pray for me.

Yours most devotedly,
Rev. John Cagliero

B.

Genoa, December 20, 1917

Very Reverend Sir:

I have just received your kind letter, and I am hastening to faithfully reply thereto with all eagerness, going straight to the heart of the matter.

In 1865, we called on a famous and very talented band from a neighboring town to come to Verzuolo, and we could not have had a finer High Mass. But perhaps the abundant drinking that went on during the lunch afterward dimmed both the senses and the voices of the choir because in the late afternoon, the Vespers and Benediction were really terrible!

My mother-in-law, Countess Josephine di Rovasenda, came out of the church with Baroness Mongiardi, who was the grandmother of the future archbishop of Genoa, Bishop Edoardo Pulciano, who came to pass all his summer vacations as a boy at Verzuolo with his holy grandmother. She remarked, "Never again must there be any scandal like this at Verzuolo! Next year we will ask Don Bosco to bring his young musicians here to celebrate the feast day of the Holy Name of Mary. I will accommodate Don Bosco at my house and a few of the musicians, too. You could find room for some of the others, and if we divided them up a few in each house, we can accommodate them all and be sure of a wonderful feast day, while Don Bosco will deliver the sermon."

The Baroness consented very gladly, and all of the families there on vacation offered to help out with the problem of lodging and meals for the musicians. The word got around very quickly with the immense gratification of the entire population.

The year after 1866, as usual, we were on vacation at Verzuolo, but somewhat earlier than in other years; I believe it was around the end of June. I think that the cholera epidemic had broken out in the early part of August that year.

One day, Mr. Emil Boarelli, father of the late lamented Mrs. Quagliotti (I believe he was the local mayor), a very good man who was

not at all contrary to Church festivities, came to see my mother-in-law to tell her that there were people in the village who were grumbling about Don Bosco coming there. They were saying that it was extremely unwise because this would mean a big crowd in the church and, hence, so much danger of contagion. In fact, the epidemic did increase shortly after that, so much so that we had as many as nine new cases in one day, which gave greater justification to those who were grumbling.

My mother-in-law, who had known Mr. Boarelli as a child, cautioned him not to let people influence him with such gossip because more than causing an increase in the epidemic, the advent of Don Bosco would be capable of rescuing us all from it.

So Don Bosco came. We had wonderful music and an enormous crowd in the church. In the evening, the venerable of God delivered the panegyric. After saying that our Lady was a warrior, and explaining the origins of the feast day of the Holy Name of Mary, he went on to say, "But our Lady was not invoked solely in wartime, but also during the plagues. You are now surrounded by the cholera epidemic. I can tell you what I myself suggest: anyone who will utter the ejaculatory prayer *'Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners'* will not be affected by the cholera epidemic."

I have tried to quote what I believe were the words uttered by the venerable Don Bosco, but I could truly take an oath on the meaning of what he said, namely, the second part of the *Ave Maria* uttered like an ejaculatory prayer, leaving out the last words *"now and in the hour of our death,"* and I can add that I have heard it said that there were no further instances of the cholera epidemic. This is my exact recollection, to which I am ready to testify with an oath on the Gospel.

May God allow me to live long enough to see him elevated to the glory of the altars.

Your most humble servant,
Countess Adele di Rovasenda

Even the purely material advantages of St. John Bosco's visit to Verzuolo are certainly not adequately comparable to the expenses entered into the ledger of the sacristy. For we see under the entries relating to the September celebrations of 1866, the following: "To Don Bosco, for sermon in honor of the Most Holy Name of Mary - 10 lire."

If we look into the death records for that period, we will find 15 deaths listed in the parish of our Lady alone, while the figures revert

immediately to normal after that. The spiritual advantage was evidenced by a general increase of faith in the protection of the Blessed Virgin, so that a few years later when they wanted to found a chapter of the Sodality of the Children of Mary in the parish, the members called on Don Bosco in Turin, and received encouragement and advice from him. He urged them to have a painting of Our Lady done by Rollini and establish the Pious Sodality, which still continues to celebrate the feast of Mary Help of Christians on the second Sunday of October as the special patroness of the chapter.

IX

NINE LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO THE MARCHIONESS MARIA CARMEN DE LABRUGNIERE OF GONDI (FLORENCE)

The first of these letters is one of the handwritten small circulars that Don Bosco used to send to his more eminent benefactors whenever he returned from Rome. With the next three letters, Don Bosco tries to comfort the Marchioness, who had recently lost her young husband (1842-1869), whom she had married in 1865.

In the sixth letter, we may perhaps perceive a hint that Don Bosco's correspondence was checked. It does not seem to have come from him personally, since he had someone else write the address.

In the eighth letter, he speaks of the magnificent carpet given by the cooperators of Florence (1875, see Vol. XI, page 225). Fearing that church property might be confiscated by the state, the ladies had suggested that the carpet be featured as belonging to them. The receipt of delivery still exists in the Gondi household.

These and other pieces of information that we shall find in footnotes were passed on to us, together with the letters by Marchioness Maddalena Patrizi Montoro, the daughter of the lady to whom they are addressed. We must also thank her for the following collection of letters:

A. Rome, February 8, 1870

Wishing to bestow spiritual benefits on the families who have in some way been of assistance to the institution for poor boys in that building, which is called the Oratory of St. Francis of Sales, His Holiness Pope Pius

IX grants expressly to the whole Gondi family, Marchioness Maria and all her relatives and kin having blood ties up to the fourth degree as follows:

1. The Apostolic Blessing
2. A Plenary Indulgence whenever they receive Holy Communion.
3. A Plenary Indulgence at the hour of their death.
4. An Indulgence applicable to the Holy Souls in Purgatory.

Rev. John Bosco

B. Turin, May 28, 1870

Dear Madame:

I received your gracious letter, which gave me genuine pleasure. In it, I see that your heart is sorely grieving over the loss of your lamented husband, but it has grown calmer, as you resigned to the Divine Will of God, to which we are obliged to submit.

Do not fear – in the hereafter, your husband's love for you will not decrease; instead, it will be far more perfect. Have faith – you will see him under much better circumstances than when he was here in our midst. The most agreeable thing you can do for him now is to offer up to God all your troubles for the eternal repose of his soul.

Now allow me to speak freely. It is a truth of faith that we will live an infinitely better life in Heaven than on earth. So why grieve if your husband is already living such a life?

It's a truth of faith among Christians that death does not mean separation, but only a little delay before we see one another again. Hence, we need only be patient when someone is called into eternity ahead of us. All they do is to go and prepare a place for us.

It is also a known truth of faith that you can constantly help the soul of the dear departed at any and every moment by acts of piety and charity; so should you not rejoice in your heart if God has permitted you to survive him? Then, the fact of looking after your children,[38] your task of comforting your father-in-law, your religious practices, the spreading of good books, your giving good advice to those in need of it – are not all these the things that will call down the blessing of Our Lord on us constantly for all the years that may remain for us to live?

[38] Maddalena, born in 1866 and married to Marquis Philip Patrizzi in 1885; Charles, born in 1868 and married to Luisa Guicciardini in 1891. Marchioness Maddalena Patrizzi kindly gave us these letters and the others under number X.

There are also other reasons that, for the moment, I do not think I should quote them to you.

In short, let us worship God in all things, in joy and in sorrow, knowing for sure that He is a Loving Father who never allows our troubles to affect us beyond our strength. He is All-Mighty and, therefore, is always able to lift us up whenever He wills.

Meanwhile, I pray constantly for you and your family during my Holy Mass, and shall continue to do so, both in my private devotions as well as in our community prayers before the altar of Mary.

I have had the news that Mrs. Marianna del Turco[39] is somewhat better. Blessed be God. Let us continue to implore Him with our joint prayers.

Please give my regards to the whole of your family and also to the Uguccioni's,[40] if you should happen to see any of them.

God bless you and your works. Pray for me, who remains gratefully,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, July 17, 1870

Dear Madame:

I delayed somewhat answering your gracious letter, so that I might find a little peace of mind to do it, which I did not enjoy at all during these few days.

I am delighted to hear that peace and resignation are now dawning in your heart. We are powerless by ourselves, yet with the help of God, we are capable of anything. Continue devoting yourself to all kinds of charity, and spend time with pious and affectionate people, for you cannot but derive moral benefit there from.

I am happy that Rev. Father Messi[41] has granted you permission to go to Communion several times a week. Go once for your deceased husband, once for your children, and the third in honor of Mary Help of Christians,

39 Marianna Gondi, married to Pierfrancesco Rosselli del Turco in 1862. Sister of the late lamented husband of the Marchioness and mother of Antonio, Pio, Stefano, Giovanni, Maria Teresa and Filippo.

40 At the time, the Uguccioni family consisted of: Mrs. Gerolama Ugucioni Gherardi (1812-1899), and her daughter Marianna, wife of Joseph Rosselli del Turco (1837-1905), and mother of John Baptist, Gertrude Mary Isabel, Cinzia and Thomas.

41 Her confessor of the Oratory Fathers, who later became Bishop of Leghorn.

asking that you may be resigned to God's Holy Will.

You ask me to give you some reasons Divine Providence might have had in his regards. I could tell you many such reasons, and will begin with those that, in my opinion, are not beyond our present understanding. Now I am speaking to you with the Voice of Our Lord:

1. Your husband was summoned to Me because a better place awaited him than the one he had on earth. This was because many spiritual and temporal dangers awaited him below.

2. You did have need of him, yet had you died before he did, the loss and separation would have proven too bitter and cruel. Now instead, when the Last Day shall dawn, you shall experience great joy knowing that he who is most dear to you already awaits you in the bosom of His Maker.

3. The bread, which you have bathed with your tears and grief for about a year, represents an immense treasure that relieves your husband, even though your failure to be resigned does diminish its merit. It helps you come to realize that the things of this world are of no value, and gives you an opportunity of doing some penance for your past life. It will prevent you even more from falling prey to a long sequence of spiritual dangers, to which you would have been exposed otherwise.

4. To give an example to the world of a mother who, in the full bloom of her years, renounces all worldly aspirations to dedicate herself solely to her offspring, unlike many heartless mothers who remarry and leave their infants in the hands of hirelings with a paid-for education, who serve vice as a drink before they recognize it as such, etc., etc.

I do not know if these reasons, which I would have liked to mention to you before this time, will upset you. I shall write to you a good deal more as time goes on, and as your heart grows better prepared to hear it. Please note that I am writing to you with the strictest confidence. These things reveal how gracious Our Lord is to you.

My warmest regards to Mrs. Girolama, your sister-in-law and your father-in-law[42] and may God bless them all. Pray for me, too, who remain as I bless you with all my heart,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

[42] Mr. Joseph Gondi, (1808-1882).

D. Turin, October 19, 1870

Dear Countess:

Although I cannot join the others on Friday who will be gathered to pray at the tomb of your lamented husband, I shall not omit to do what I know to be so very dear to your heart. I will celebrate a Holy Mass that morning in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, and my boys – over eight hundred of them – will recite the Rosary and go to Holy Communion, all for the repose of the soul of your husband who, speaking quite frankly, I believe is already in Heaven.

Meanwhile, let us be comforted. As St. Paul says, with the hope that soon we shall see our dear ones, for among Christians death is not a separation, but only a simple delay seeing one another, and I'm sure that you believe that you will see or rather that we all will see those who cared for us on earth in far better conditions, and that we can also increase their happiness in the present life.

Now, I will speak of my own troubles. The enforcement of the military draft is affecting some of my best clerics, who will soon have to lay down their breviary to take up the rifle unless we receive extraordinary aid from Divine Providence. I have thought to myself several times, "Who knows whether Countess Gondi could help me in this?"

I will tell you what it is all about. Every cleric can be exempted on payment of 3,200 francs. If you, on behalf of your dead husband's soul or any relatives of yours, wish to do this act of charity, you would not only acquire merit before God, but you would be remembered every day in the Holy Mass with a special memento that this priest would be bound to have for you and your whole family. The freedom with which I am writing to you will grant you even more freedom to give me an answer. Whatever you may decide, I shall not fail to invoke the blessing of Heaven constantly for you, your children and your father-in-law, and pray that God may shower His bounty on you all and grant you happiness here on earth and in eternity.

I recommend my boys and me and to your holy prayers, and beg you believe me to be gratefully,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

E. Turin, December 3, 1870

Dear Countess:

Thank you for your good intentions and for the hope that you may

come to my assistance in ransoming some pious priest for the Church, which today is so grievously harassed. Now, I pray that God blesses you and allows your business matters to prosper materially, so that your wealth may once again be adequately abundant as to allow you to do the charity that your heart desires and still respond to the needs by which you are unfortunately constantly beset.

In order to second what you ask, knowing your great devotion to the great Mother of God, we will hold a religious service next Tuesday, which is the eighth day of the Novena. Gathered around the altar of Mary Help of Christians, our boys will recite special prayers, go to Communion, and say a Rosary while I will celebrate Holy Mass at seven in the morning. All this is in keeping with your pious intentions that God allow, if this has not already happened, that your late lamented husband enter Heaven. I also pray for the good health, strength and fear of God of your children, and for the precious grace of perseverance in virtue for you all.

God bless you, Countess, and may He make of you here on earth, the true mother of mercy to the poor, so that in Heaven, you may receive the reward of the just. Amen.

Pray for my poor soul, and believe me always in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

F. Turin, June 8, 1871

Dear Countess:

I am trying to write this letter, which happens to be the third one written from here. I really do not know how to explain it. I write a great many letters and many of them never reach their destination, but I always receive your letters regularly.

Should you receive this one, it will inform you that I will be passing through Florence around the 18th of this month. I will be spending the entire day in Florence and this time would be reserved for you. There we will exchange verbally what we cannot do by letter.

I once again acknowledge that I received the two hundred francs you sent us for our needs, and that a Mass was said with Rosary and Communions by our boys for your pious intentions.

God bless you, your family and your father-in-law, and believe me to be gratefully,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

G. Turin, May 27, 1875

Dear Countess:

We received the famous carpet and, as you may have already heard from a reply or learned by way of the newspapers, it constituted the handsomest feature of our celebrations. I am most deeply grateful to you and all the other ladies, and pray to Mary to reward you all as you deserve, by helping you here on earth and assisting you at the time of your death, welcoming all of you, when your time comes, into Blessed Eternity, but all around her with me located in the lowest corner.

Should I write a personal letter to the cooperators that you mention in your letter, please be kind enough to let me know if it would be enough to use the simple address you gave me. Then, I will take care of doing what I have to do.

God bless you and your whole family, Countess. We shall pray for you every day, and you will help me with the charity of your holy prayers, while I remain with the most profound gratitude,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

H. Turin, June 28, 1875

Dear and worthy Countess:

The Countess of Bricherasio has sent me the act related to the carpet that the Florentine ladies have offered so charitably to the church of Mary Help of Christians. I looked it over carefully and it would be but a simple formality if (as you were so kind to write) the matter were to remain between us. But if it should fall into the hands of those who will come after us, it does seem somewhat humiliating for the rector of the church, and it would be a cause of displeasure to our heirs, which is something far from what any of us would wish.

Nevertheless, since I want to do what you intentions desire in your honorable, I gladly consent to the obligations specified, and ask only that you add a few words to the second condition therein and, consequently, also to the third condition, which is closely related to the second. I beg you

in particular to forgive me if I am "inspecting the mouth of the horse given as a gift," as the proverb says. It is perhaps the first time that there has been such a correspondence between us, especially in reference to a church that is the property of a congregation of private individuals who retain ownership of what is theirs with the most reliable guarantees.

Whatever may be the outcome, I shall not fail to have a special memento for you, dear Mrs. Maria, and for your whole family during my Holy Mass every day, nor shall I forget the other charitable ladies who lent a generous hand in this undertaking.

Please remember me in the charity of your prayers, and believe me to be with great gratitude,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

I. Turin, September 8, 1872

Dear Countess:

I am very happy to know that you and your family are in good health, and I pray to God that He keep you thus, both you and your little girl, for many a long year.

I will not fail to say special prayers for the trip you are about to undertake. I have no doubt but that it will be a successful one.

In the fall, I am always either here or in the area of Turin, so if you would let me know in advance when you expect to be here in town prior to your return home, I can easily arrange to be at home because it would grieve me too much if you were to come here while I was away.

God bless you, your little girl and your father-in-law. Pray for me who remains,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. When you arrive in Turin, just say to any coachman of any public transportation, "Take me to Don Bosco." That will be quite enough.

X

SIX LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO MARQUIS JOHN PATRIZI MONTORO

See what Father John Baptist Lemoyne writes in Vol. VI on page 270, in reference to the conferences herein mentioned. Don Bosco had discussed them at that time in the household of Marquis Patrizi, who was the chairman of the Society of St. Vincent's in Rome:

A. Turin, May 22, 1858

Beloved in the Lord:

I very much wanted to talk once again with you and thank you for all your courtesy before leaving Rome. I also wished to recommend the conferences that I am enclosing herein, although I am intimately convinced that you will do everything without any need of further recommendation. I talked about you here and will often have occasion to speak of you again because you supplied me with abundant reason to do so, and may this be to the glory of God.

My colleague, Father Murialdo, informed me that he was present at the conference on the Blessed Virgin della Quercia, and found it to be very good. *Deo gratias!* Take heart. Please champion the cause with both Father Biondi and Father Cattini. As soon as you meet with the boys of the joined chapter, give them my warmest regards in the Lord, and tell them that my own boys have the greatest affection for them and that while they pray for them, they also recommend to keep on being steadfast and persevering.

I continue to recommend *Catholic Readings* to you, and would like someone to keep me informed of all that is being done about it, namely, if consignments arrive regularly or if there are delays or if we should increase or decrease the copies sent to subscribers.

Certainly, your important daily occupations do not leave you much free time, but in your charity, you will certainly find a moment or two to dedicate also to the *Catholic Readings.*

Please give my regards and convey my thanks to all the kind gentlemen who undertook to sponsor these booklets. God will take it into account. Should you come to this part of the country, do not fail to visit our boys and our own chapters. You did give me something in the way of a promise.

God preserve you and may the Immaculate Virgin bless you and your whole family. Believe me in Our Lord.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. If you have the opportunity, please give my regards to the Duke Salviati.

B.

From the following letter, it is apparent that the Marquis was thinking of founding a periodical similar to the *Catholic Readings* in Rome:

Turin, August 8, 1858

Dear Marquis:

The fall is near at hand and I am already talking as though you were here with us. I would not like you to visit us unexpectedly. For this reason, I would be very pleased if you were to drop us a few lines in advance, so that I can be sure that some other friends will be here in Turin, who otherwise might be absent. I would like to know if you could remain with us at least one Sunday, so as to see our general gatherings. There is also another thing that I must dwell on, and that is to ask you to graciously condescend to accept our hospitality here in our humble house, and consider all that we possess as your own. This invitation is somewhat bold, I know, but we shall see if you can comply with our wishes.

You will be receiving a limited number of copies of the *Catholic Readings* for the Roman subscribers. Deduct your expenses in this matter from the money paid in for subscriptions. I am most happy that His Holiness gave his attention to the *Reading* and that sales are still increasing there. But it is my belief that until such time as the printing can be done in Rome, we should send all the issues from here to anyone anxious to receive them, so as to keep the initiative alive and vital because it would otherwise mean that the iron would cool off once removed from the fire. But I must, for all eventualities, recommend that should these many booklets be published, their subject matter may be suitable for consumption by the masses, as far as style, wording and simple feelings because if they are not, subscriptions may start drop off just as easily. The writers you mentioned are unsuitable for this type of literature. They are accustomed to addressing themselves to people of a cultural background, and it would be exceedingly rare if they were to succeed in talking down to the masses in a way to make themselves understood. For the time being, you could select whatever seems most suitable to you from what has hitherto been published and reprint it. All of which *in nomine Domini.*

I was genuinely pleased to read of the progress of the joined chapter of Rome. When our boys heard the report on it, they were overjoyed and are still saying, "Thanks be to Our Lord who multiplies His blessings upon the fortunate young people of Rome." We shall talk about this when you will be here with us.

Would you please put the enclosed letters in the mailbox? Courage, Marquis. You have a great harvest in your hands, but we must remember that we are working for a Master who repays even our smallest effort in an abundant measure. Pray for my family and me, and please count me as one of those who with respectful gratitude remains,

Your most obliged servant and friend,
Rev. John Bosco

C. Turin, August 18, 1862

Dear Father John in Our Lord:

Rev. Onorio Taramelli is going to Rome to attend to business related to his priestly ministry. If you are able to obtain a short audience for him with His Eminence, the Cardinal Vicar, you would be doing me a great favor, too. He was unfortunate enough to fall victim to Protestant heresy and has now recanted and wishes to live and die like a good priest. I earnestly recommend him to your courteous mediation.

A lawyer, Barlani-Dini Joseph, is also on his way to Rome with him to look into some accounting he has with your secretary. He is a man of sound principles and a staunch Catholic.

Our joint chapters are continuing with cheerfulness in the midst of obstacles. The results obtained are most satisfactory. Is the Roman joint chapter still on?

The Oratories are flourishing both in number and with excellent results. Some six hundred boys attend the one here in the house. How often we talk about you, and I pray that Divine Providence permits us one of these days to have the great consolation of seeing you here, so that we may be edified by your words and your charitable ways!

Count Cays, Count Colengo, Marquis Fassati and Count Giroldi, the president of the Turin Joint Chapter, all send their regards.

I join them all in wishing you good health and courage from Heaven, and in recommending us all to the charity of your devout prayers, while remaining with deepest gratitude,

Your most grateful and affectionate servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Thank you for all you do for our lottery, which I recommend once again.

D. Turin, June 20, 1863

Dear Father John:

I enclose a receipt of the sum you sent me in the form and with the clause that you were so kind as to specify. I am even pleased over my error, since this gave me the pleasure of obtaining direct news from you, which, apart from what we hear through the worthy Duchess Melzi, is all too rare.

Dear Father John, Our Lord wishes to test us. It is the first time that a Protestant envoy has been seen preaching in the streets of this city! You can imagine the scandal and the harm done, with the books, leaflets, catechism, sermons, promises of employment, alms and donations, which are all means generally exploited by the Protestants. The clergy labors untiringly and steadfastly, but we must admit that youth is in great danger.

Despite this, the Oratories are still well attended on Sundays, and as a rule, the number of boys attending them exceeds three thousand. We have seven hundred boys living in the house, and these are the most abandoned and, hence, most at risk. We also have two boys from the very city of Rome.

Thanks to the Lord, our house is progressing nicely. Many priests, clerics, Cavaliere Oreglia, Count Cays and Marquis Fassati, join me in sending you their most cordial regards, and fervently ask that you remember them in your prayers. While I recommend my boys and my own person to your charitable prayers, I am happy to remain in the Lord,

Your most affectionate and grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Should Divine Providence permit you to make a donation, it would be a great act of charity, beneficial to the welfare of souls.

P.P.S. This letter got misplaced with other correspondence at the post office; it was opened and returned to the sender. I am now sending it

Registered to you again. Let us see if it will not be delayed again.

God bless us all. Amen.

Rev. John Bosco
Turin, October 24, 1863

E. Turin, November 12, 1863

Dear Marquis:

I received your kind letter with the list of obligations and the salary specified for the Montoro chaplain, and instantly passed it on to two priests with whom I had already discussed the possibility. Both of them found the proposal worth considering, under every aspect, but when they came to the final analysis, both of them felt that their position would be greatly diminished because one of them earns 1,200 francs and the other 1,000 just by teaching elementary school. They are also free to engage in anything else that may be helpful to them.

I will tell you why. Here, too, there is an overall shortage of priests, but the bishops are looking out for the same kind of priests you are seeking, and who are the only priests I would venture to recommend. They are, therefore, well paid because of the important tasks entrusted to them. It may be that during the course of the year, someone might be available and suitable for what we want, in which case I will let you know in case you still have need of someone.

Help me get going with the Church of Mary Help of Christians and I will pray that she may prepare a handsome crown for you in Heaven.

God bless you, and pray for me, as I remain very gratefully,

Your most affectionate servant,
Rev. John Bosco

F. Turin, October 23, 1865

Dear Marquis:

I was genuinely delighted to receive your kind letter, and rejoice in the Lord that He is granting you good health and the good will to persevere in your worthy works.

As to the priest I mentioned, I have hopes of finding one of excellent spirit, but he is now employed. We will have to find out if his position would not be lessened as a consequence of the change we planned. Meanwhile, let me know whether: (1) you wish to have a priest holding a

diploma for any given class and what his office would entail precisely; (2) what salary he would receive and if the celebration of the Mass entails offering for a given intention or whether he is free in this. I am asking you this because the priest I have in mind is under an obligation for certain Masses, which, however, does not impose any residential obligation on him. Once I have this information, I will be able to take the matter up immediately.

I was at Lonigo and talked a lot about you while in the Sorango household, where you had been earlier. What a good and saintly family! I also passed through Milan and stayed there for a few hours as I called on Duke Scotti and Duchess Melzi, but they had both gone to Rome. You would do me a genuine favor if you were to give them my respectful greetings, should you meet them. God bless your labors, dear Marquis. Pray for this family of mine and me, and believe me with the most sincere esteem and gratitude,

Your most affectionate servant,
Rev. John Bosco

XI

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO FATHER OGGERO

Father Oggero was a pastor at Rivarolo Ligure. We do not have any evidence that Don Bosco went to Genoa in 1870, as he writes here that he intended to do:

Turin, ... 1870

Beloved in the Lord:

Blessed be God in all things. He alone can rescue us from fearful anguish, which presently oppresses the moral fiber of suffering humanity. We are praying, and I will also have prayers said in honor of Mary Help of Christians at her altar for the intentions you mentioned.

Meanwhile, since I have to take a trip to Genoa during the fall season, I will not fail to comply with your gracious invitation and stay for a while at the Certosa of Rivarolo, of which you are the worthy pastor.

God bless you and help you fulfill your excellent plans. Pray for my poor boys and me, and believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

XII

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO FATHER GUIDAZIO

Father Pietro Guidazio, who founded the school at Randazzo in Sicily, was at Lanzo in 1870 as a cleric and councilor to that house chapter. He had first come to the Oratory at the age of 25 after roaming around the world, and was endowed with a vivid imagination. So, he felt the full discomfort of his new way of life and was, at times, prey to discouragement. From this letter, it appears that he was tempted to go back to his early life style:

Turin, September 13, 1870

Dear Guidazio:

You will always be restless, and, I might also say, unhappy until you observe the obedience you promised, and until you have submitted entirely to the guidance of your superiors. The devil has tortured you cruelly so far, and has driven you to do just the opposite.

I do not see any reason in your letter or in the talks we have had together for dispensing you from your vows. Should any such motivation exist, I would have to write to the Holy See, which reserves such rights for itself. But *coram Domino,* I advise you to meditate on the *abneget semetipsum* and you will find that *vir obediens loquetur vistorias.*

Believe me, I have experience of this. The devil would like to deceive both you and me. He has partially succeeded in your case; but with me, insofar as you are concerned, he has utterly failed. Have full confidence in me, as I have always had it in you, not with words, but with deeds, with a positive willingness, a humble obedience, a prompt obedience and an obedience that knows no limits. These are the things that will contribute to your spiritual and temporal happiness and give me true consolation.

God bless you and grant you the precious grace of persevering in doing good. Pray for me, who remains with fatherly affection,

Most affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Rev. John Bosco

XIII

LETTERS FROM DON BOSCO TO COUNTESS CAROLINA GAMBARO

Countess Carolina, nee Cataldi, was the wife of the pious Catholic Count Francesco of Genoa. Among these letters, there is one addressed to Baron Giuliano Cataldi, Carolina's father, who was a famous Genoese banker and a former mayor of that city. The original letters are still in the possession of their son, Count Giuliano Gambaro:

A. Varazze, February 13, 1872

Dear Mrs. Carolina:

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with us. Thanks to the mercy of Our Lord, I am now strong enough to return to Turin and resume my most urgent tasks. Thank you, Mamma, and the whole family for what you all did to further my recovery. Please pray that I can devote all my good health to the greater Glory of God.

Meanwhile, I can inform you that when I get back to Turin, I will not fail to say the Masses you wanted at the altar of Mary. Please assure Mamma that in Turin, special prayers are being said morning and night for you. On Sunday, I will celebrate Mass and our boys will go to Holy Communion for this same intention, namely, for forcing God to grant Mamma a holy resignation and some considerable improvement in her eyesight. Join us in this pious intention. It is impossible that so many prayers go unanswered.

God bless our good Mamma, you holy Papa and the whole family, and may He grant you all steady good health and the holy gift of perseverance in doing good.

My health does not allow me to pass by Genoa or, I should say, to stop over there as you wish me to do. I hope to be able to do so before long. Tell Mamma that I am most grateful for her holy intentions regarding Sampierdarena.

Pray for this poor soul and I will pray for you. Believe me with the deepest gratitude to be,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Father Cuffia sends his respectful regards and will not fail to keep me

informed of any news, should he chance to get to Genoa.

B. Turin, June 11, 1872

Dear Baron:

The project of a house at Sampierdarena now seems close to realization. The archbishop has written to tell me that on the 20th of this month, the written act on the church and the adjoining house at St. Cajetan will be drawn up. Now it is a question of raising money (about 37,000 francs).

If under these exceptional circumstances you were able to help me, we would carry out a project first conceived at your Villa in Sestri last year. I will be going to Varazze tomorrow and Friday evening I hope to be in Genoa. One of the first things I shall do will be to go to your house, where I hope you will help me with your advice and active assistance.

God grant you and your whole family all His Bounty, and as I pray that you may enjoy steady good health, I beg you to remember me in your prayers and remain,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Please give the enclosed note to Mrs. Carolina.

C. Turin, June 11, 1872

Dear Mrs. Carolina:

I'll be going to Varazze tomorrow and, God willing, will get to Genoa, too, so that we can meet at your house. Tell Mamma that the house has been bought at Sampierdarena. All we need now is the money for the written act, but I hope to talk about this with you in person.

Please give my respects to Mamma and the whole family, believing to be with the most profound gratitude,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

D. Turin, June 16, 1877

Dear Mrs. Carolina Cataldi:

I will not fail to pray for you, albeit feebly, at my Holy Mass. You pray for me, as well, and for this family of mine, which is growing continually. While there are more members and more applications to become part of it, our needs are also increasing.

God bless you and your whole family once again.

Rev. John Bosco

E. Turin, January 4, 1882

Dear Mrs. Carolina:

Mrs. Josephine Podesta, your sister, brought me your donation of 250 francs and another 100 francs from another pious person.

I was not able to see your above-mentioned sister, as I wanted to, so I think I am only doing my duty to assure you that I did get the money, and have already spent it. Now, I have another duty, which is to thank you with a full heart and tell you that I will pray for you and your family often, so that God may preserve all of you in good health and in His Holy Grace. Please give your husband, Mr. Francesco, my humble regards, and assure him that I do pray for him every morning at Holy Mass. If you have an opportunity, please give Mamma my respects and ask her, too, to pray for me, who remains always in Jesus Christ.

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

F. S. Pier d'Arena, April 2, 1882

Dear Mrs. Carolina:

I received the donation of 100 francs you sent me for our boys, who are in dire need. We are, therefore, even more grateful to you, and will pray for you, your husband and the whole family.

God bless you, dear Mrs. Carolina, and may the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians obtain a perfect health for you.

May the same blessings be showered on Mr. Gambaro and his growing family. Please pray for my orphans (100,000 of them) and me, and believe me in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

Your most grateful servant,
Rev. John Bosco

XIV

TO THE CLARA COUPLE

This letter was addressed to Mr. Cesare and Mrs. Paolina Clara from Turin. The Salesians of Cuneo are in possession of the original. His urgent request for their prayers is motivated by his desire to overcome the last obstacles obstructing the approval of his Rules:

Holy Picture of Mary Help of Christians,
Share your blessing with Mr. and Mrs. Clara

Rome, March 9, 1874
Via Sistina 104

Dear Mrs. Paolina:

The Novena of St. Joseph will begin tomorrow, and I would like us to renew our trust in the saint. I will pray and have a special memento every morning during Holy Mass for Cavaliere Cesare, who you say is not as well as he should be. We pray for good health and holiness to both of you, but you and Cavaliere Cesare must help me, praying with that fervent faith that can raise valleys up to mountaintops and lower the mountaintops to the valleys.

I hope that your sister, Miss Polliotti, has already conveyed to you the blessing of the Holy Father. Now, I have requested another one for Madame Campana and her husband and one for Madame Jano, with the intention of obtaining good health and the strength of Samson himself for all three of them.

I'll be staying in Rome for another two weeks. If you need anything, let me know, and I will gladly carry out the errand, whatever it is.

I have a lot of things that I would like to tell you, but do not want to put them on paper, so I will keep them until I can tell you about them in Turin. It is understood that this will be at mealtime, and only after a good glass of Barolo, right?

One of my reasons for writing to you is the special need I have of prayers during the next two weeks. Do me this charity; pray fervently and urge other pious souls of your acquaintance to pray for my undertakings, too, and besides being grateful, I will endeavor to reward you all abundantly with other prayers some other time.

Meanwhile, please give my respects to Madame Campana, as I hope she is better, and my respects also to Madame Vacchetta, Madame Jano and Miss Polliotti. Give my special regards to Cavaliere Cesare, for whom I wish with all my heart a steady good health and a happy life. God bless us all. Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

XV

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO CLERIC ENRICO MORGANTI

The addressee, who was then teaching at the Oratory, was a brother of Bishop Pasquale, archbishop of Ravenna, and of Father Massimino, also a Salesian.

Turin, September 29, 1876

My dear Morganti:

Speak to Father Rua, who will tell you when you can go home in good time for your military service obligations. I hope that you will be exempt, and I am praying to Our Lord that He may do for you what we cannot.

Think about your third high school grade for next year.

God bless you and pray for me, who will remain always in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

XVI

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO FATHER GROSSO

This is the same Father John Grosso we met at Marseille as choir-master. At the time of the letter, he was a cleric at Lanzo, whence he left in the fall of that year to go to St. Leo's Oratory.

Turin, July 17, 1878

My dear Grosso:

So far, nothing has been decided. I first will talk it over with you. We will do what has to be done to see that you are exempt from military service. But we will attend to this at the proper time and when you are here.

Just try to be a model Salesian. Obedience is the foundation and mainstay of all virtues. I look to you for a miracle to comfort me by procuring a multitude of Salesian aspirants.

Faxit Deus.

Regards to them all from me. God bless you all and believe me, as I remain forever in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

XVII

TO A PUPIL AT VARAZZE

The originals of this letter and the following one are in the possession of the pastor of Albissola Superiore, (Savona) Father Luigi Savina. Young Simone Caviglia became a priest and died when he was pastor of that same locality.

Turin, April 16, 1875

My dear Caviglia:

You with one hand, and I with two.

Then, if you agree, I will enroll you as of this moment among my beloved son of St. Francis.

End the school year, and then we will do whatever needs to be done.

Meanwhile, we will have a chance to talk about our confidential matters when I get to Varazze. When you need to, you can write me quite freely.

God bless you and all your family. Believe me to be always in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

XVIII

TO THE PASTOR OF STELLA SAN MARTINO

This is the parish in the Apennines, bordering on Albissola. Father Joseph Tobia, who died in 1902, was the pastor there.

Turin, November 11, 1882

Dear Father Pastor:

The director of the Varazze School, Father Monateri, brought me 200 francs from Your Reverence to relieve us in our increasing needs.

I am grateful to you with all my heart, especially just now when we have to feed our orphans and buy apparel for our clerics, who have no heavy clothing for the imminent winter season.

To thank you as good Christians should, as I know you would prefer, I will celebrate a Holy Mass for you on the 21st of this month, the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lady to the Temple, and our boys will say prayers and go to Holy Communion for your pious intentions.

On my way to Varazze, I hope to be able to pay my respects to you in person and thank you.

God bless us all. Please pray for me, who will always remain with the most sincere gratitude and veneration in Jesus Christ,

Your most obliged servant,
Rev. John Bosco

XIX

LETTER FROM DON BOSCO TO FATHER FAGNANO

This is one of the many letters addressed to the Salesians in South America by Don Bosco and personally handed by the confreres departing from Turin at the end of January 1881. The original letter came only recently into our possession. (See Biographical Memoirs, Vol. XV, page 10)

Turin, January 31, 1881

Dear Father Joseph Fagnano:

Considering your great need, I am sure you will now have some help with new personnel. I hope it will not be long before we can get another expedition going. Here in Europe, there is such an unceasing demand for us; I might say an almost violent one and we can barely breathe. That means that we cannot form our personnel.

Poor Rizzo got here and has gone home to his mother. I do not know what will become of him. I am doing all I can to prevent his downfall.

I received your last letter, but did not get the things as yet. I am anxious to receive them. The idea of embroidering a stole with the words "Long Live Leo XIII" is excellent and will do us great honor.

As to the rest, do not worry. The biggest undertaking of our Congregation is the mission in Patagonia. You will know it all in due course.

I cannot conceal from you the fact that a heavy responsibility is weighing upon you, nevertheless, but the help of God will not fail you. We will pray for you and help you in every way possible.

I already received your two letters and hope to receive the others that you will write.

Father Debella is bringing you some things, information and some assistance in your work.

God bless you, ever-beloved Father Joseph Fagnano, and may He keep you always in His holy grace.

Keep our Rules and see to it that others keep them as best you can.

Pray for me, who will always be in Jesus Christ,

Your most affectionate friend,
Rev. John Bosco

P.S. Give my regards to our sisters, the boys and girls, and tell them all that I bless them and am praying for them all, very specially.

P.P.S. The Superior Chapter has definitively elected Father James Costamagna as the American Provincial. But the time is not far off when the Patagonian Province will be erected as a Vicariate Apostolic, according to the will of the Holy Father, or into another Salesian Province.

XX

TO A FRENCH LADY

One of Don Bosco's cousins, who was a Benedictine nun in the abbey at Pradines (Loire), wrote to her cousin, Mother Eulalie Bosco of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, on January 20, 1930 as follows: "There is a priest who has an authentic original letter from the Blessed One, and he has been kind enough to leave it with me for a couple of days. It is so charming that I am sending you a copy of it." There will be reference to this relative of the saint's in Vol. XVIII of these memoirs.

Rome, May 5, 1882

Porta San Lorenzo 22

Madame:

Our mortal life is made up of thorns and flowers, but one day, all the thorns will turn into blossoms, with which the angels will weave our crowns for eternity.

Nevertheless, I will not fail to pray and tell our children to pray for your recovery or, at least, for a considerable improvement.

You ask me what you must do to get the assistance of Divine Providence. God Himself told us, "Give and unto ye shall be given, and faith without good works is a lifeless thing."

Therefore, I think it is only wise that you make a donation for the church and orphanage of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, regarding which I am sending you a circular letter.

My children (100,000) and I will all pray for your recovery or, at least, for a substantial improvement in your condition.

God bless you. Please pray for me, also.

Your humble servant,
Rev. John Bosco

XXI

EXCERPT OF A CIRCULAR LETTER TO THE SALESIANS, REGARDING THE UNITY OF SPIRIT AND ADMINISTRATION

This excerpt of a circular letter bears no date; we are reproducing a faithful copy from Don Bosco's draft:

To my dear Sons and Confreres of the Society of St. Francis of Sales:

The month of May, which we usually consecrate to Mary, is about to begin, and I think I should avail myself of this opportunity to talk with my sons and confreres, and tell them a few things I was unable to say at the conference of St. Francis of Sales.

I am convinced that all of you have the steadfast intention of persevering in the Society, and will, therefore, make every effort to win souls over for God, saving your own souls before all else. In order to succeed in this great endeavor, having the greatest concern about the observance of the rules of our Society should be taken as our basic rule, for our constitutions would avail us nothing if they were to remain a dead letter, tucked away in our desks. If we want our Society to progress with God's blessing, it is indispensable that every one of our actions be conformed to each article of our constitution. Nevertheless, there are a few practical and most helpful ways by which we may be sure of doing this, and among them I can point to unity of spirit and unity in administration.

By unity of spirit, I mean a steadfast, constant determination to want or not to want those things that the superior may hold to be to the greater glory of God. No matter how great the obstacles obstructing our spiritual and eternal welfare in front of us may be, this determination must never slacken in the light of St. Paul's doctrine: *Caritas omnia suffert, omnia sustinet* (I Corinthians 13:73). It should urge the Salesian to be exact in doing his duty, not only because he is ordered to do this and that, but also because he wishes to further the greater glory of God. This will ensure being on time for the scheduled hour of meditation, praying, visiting the Most Holy Sacrament and examining the consciences and spiritual reading.

It is true that all these things are prescribed by our rules, but unless we seek to observe them for a supernatural reason, our rules will fall into oblivion.

The thing that powerfully contributes to maintaining this unity of spirit is the frequent approach to the Holy Sacraments. Our priests should do everything they can to celebrate Holy Mass regularly and with devotion. Those who are not priests should do their best to go to Communion as often as possible. But the fundamental issue hinges on frequent confession. Let everyone do his best to observe all that the rules prescribe in this regard. It is essential that one should have absolute confidence in the superiors of the house where each individual Salesian lives. The big mistake lies in the fact that a good many confreres try to interpret certain

rules dictated by their superiors in an erroneous manner, or they consider them to be of minor importance. Meanwhile, they slacken the observance of the rules to one's own detriment, the distress of one's superiors, and they omit or neglect those things that might have powerfully contributed to the welfare of souls. Everyone should let go of his own will and give up the idea of his personal interest, make certain only that what he is called to do will be for the greater Glory of God and then let him go ahead.

Now, the following difficulty may arise: one may come across situations in which it would seem wiser to act differently from what was ordered. That is not true. It is always better to be obedient, never altering the spirit of the rules as interpreted by our respective superiors. Hence, let everyone do his best always to interpret, observe and recommend the observance of the rules among his confreres. Let him put into practice in his dealings with his neighbor all those things that his superior may deem to turn toward the greater Glory of God and the good of souls. This is the conclusion that is considered the fundamental basis of a religious society.

Unity in administration must go hand in hand with unity of spirit. A religious resolves to put into practice what our Savior said, namely, to renounce all that he possesses or might possess in his world with the hope of receiving a better reward in Heaven. He offers up his father, mother, brother, sister, house and all things that are his for the love of God. Yet because his body is still united to his soul, he is in need of material things with which to nourish and clothe himself and do his work.

So while he renounces all that he has owned, he seeks to join some society where he will be provided with all his requirements for a living, without the burden of temporal administration. How is he then to conduct himself in the Society in regard to temporal matters? The rules of the Society provide for everything, and so by observing the rules, all his needs are satisfied. A garment and a crust of bread should be enough for a religious. If he needs anything more, he needs only tell his superiors and it will be provided for him.

But it is here that everyone should concentrate his efforts. Anyone who can secure some advantages for the Society should do so, but without boasting about it. Let him strive so that there may be but one single coffer, as there is to be but one single will. Anyone who seeks to sell, buy, exchange or retain money for his own purpose is like a farmer who scatters the wheat and casts it from him, while the threshers are busy stacking it up. I must here recommend that none of you retain money for yourselves under the specious pretext of thereby deriving benefit for the Society. The

thing that is most beneficial to the Society is to observe the rules.

The clothes, one's room and its furnishings should be far from luxurious. A religious must always be prepared to depart from his cell at any moment and appear before His Creator without feeling regret for anything and without the need of changing one's intentions, abandoning his call to which may constitute reason for the Judge...

XXII

CANON BELLONI TO DON BOSCO

The *Osservatore Romano* of August 21, 1935 had an unsigned article entitled *"An Era of Charity in Palestine - Abuna Antun Belloni."* The article by Canon Belloni reported on the institution as follows:

How can this institution be perpetuated? By creating the small congregation of the holy family. Yet, since he wished to ensure his holy undertaking more definitely, he came to Turin in 1878 and called on Don Bosco, to whom he offered both himself and his institution. Don Bosco received him very graciously, showing him great benevolence, both in private and in public, but did not agree to his pious request.

"I cannot agree now, for want of personnel," he said. "My sons will get there later." Don Bosco was a prophet. In 1891, Don Bosco's first successor, the servant of God Father Michael Rua, yielded to the reiterated pleas of Abuna Antun Belloni and sent a few Salesians and some sisters of Mary Help of Christians to Bethlehem, which assured both the continuation and the development of that institution.

XXIII

THE DUCHESS OF AREMBERG

In Volume XVI on page 113, we wrote that on May 23, 1883, the Duchess of Aremberg had requested an audience with Don Bosco. She had already visited the saint in the convent of the Poor Claires in Lille in that same month on the 20th. In the files of that convent, there is an account of Don Bosco's visit, which contains this detail:

Madame, the Duchess of Aremberg, came all the way from Brussels

to see and talk with the saintly religious. Before Mass, she gave the nuns an envelope, asking them to give it to Don Bosco. He sent for her after his thanksgiving to thank her for the generous donation she had given him. Her Highness asked him for some advice about her children's education (for she had lost her husband and could not stop crying). She was fortified and encouraged when she left Don Bosco's presence, and was very grateful to the community for having arranged the meeting for her.

The chronicle of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, who also received a visit from Don Bosco, reports on a previous brief encounter between the Duchess and the saint at their own convent on May 9th. In it is a reference to the duke, but it is either a mistake or else it referred to the little duke, her son.

XXIV

SOME ADVICE AND A PROPHECY MADE BY DON BOSCO

On pages 147-148 of Volume XVI, we quoted a piece of information obtained through the testimony of Countess Grochelska, but saying that we could not mention the person concerned. Now, thanks to the zealous efforts of our Polish Provincial, Father Kopa, we are able to clarify the matter and publish the following declaration made by the lady to whom the advice and a prophecy were given.

December 22, 1935

Domaine de St. Sauveur
Roquebrune - Var

I had the good fortune of seeing Don Bosco at Cannes during the winter of 1883-1884. I told him about my desire to become a Carmelite. He looked at me and said, "No, no, no. You will marry within two years from now and will go to a very far away country to join a very large and pious family. You will have many children and you will be happy and live to be very old."

That is what Saint Don Bosco told me. It all happened just as he said. That same winter, I met Count Andre Zamoyski and married him on November 19, 1885. That same day, I departed for Poland and went to live

with a very large and deeply devout family that showed me great affection.

I lived with my husband for forty-two very, very happy years, surrounded by our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, all of whom I recommend to the protection of St. John Bosco.

Carolina de Bourbon
Princess of the Two Sicilies
Countess Andre Zamboysha

XXV·

IN REGARD TO "BIG COURT FUNERALS"

When the law regarding ecclesiastical property and the suppression of convents was in the making in November 1854, Don Bosco had two dreams, foreshadowing great court funerals in the event that the king gave his sanction to this law. Father John Baptist Lemoyne, who related these dreams in Volume V (pages 115-117), also says how the threat was made known to the sovereign. Now thanks to a document published for the first time by Antonio Monti in the *New Anthology* (January 1, 1936, page 65), we are able to make an interesting comparison. In her great piety, Queen Mother Maria Teresa, widow of King Charles Albert, had anticipated Don Bosco in the same trend of thought by four years. Just as in 1850 when the Siccardi Bill concerning the abolition of the ecclesiastical court was about to be passed, this holy woman wrote her son, Victor Emanuel, from Moncalieri on April 9th, seeking, with a most tenderly worded missive, to dissuade him from giving his royal consent before he had consulted with the Pope.

Among other things, she wrote: "God will reward you, He will bless you, otherwise who knows what punishment, what dire penalties from God you will call down upon yourself, your family and the country, if you should approve the law. Just think about the grief you would feel if the Lord were to allow your beloved Adele, whom you so rightly love, or your Chichina (Clotilde) or your Betto (Umberto) to fall sick, or to be taken from you. If only you could look into my heart and see how grieved I am, how anxious and fearful that if you immediately ratify this law, many misfortunes would be visiting on us, if you do this without the consent of the Holy Father. Perhaps your heart, which is sincerely honest and sensitive and has always been deeply attached to your poor mamma, would allow itself to be softened."

One can read how the sinister forebodings were fulfilled in the above-mentioned volume on page 185 (death of Maria Teresa), page 186 (death of Queen Maria Adelaide), page 196 (death of Prince Ferdinand, Duke of Genoa and brother of the king), and on page 238 (death of Victor Emanuel's youngest son).

XXVI

DON BOSCO FEATURED IN THE UNPUBLISHED MEMOIRS OF GENERAL G.B. ROLLA

G.B. Rolla of Genoa, major general and secretary of the Navy, wrote his memoirs when he was eighty years old. His grandchildren still have the unpublished manuscript. A man of great learning and a true Christian, he retained an alert memory until the very end of his days. He dedicated a short chapter to Don Bosco in these memoirs, putting down his own personal impressions and a few precious details incorporated in the biography of the saint:

It was nothing more than a glimpse when I saw Don Bosco for the first time in 1880, but the mere appearance of a saint cannot pass unobserved, for it will always make a deep impression on the mind.

When I was appointed reporter to the administrative board of the Royal Marine Hospital at La Spezia and went to that city from Rome in 1879, I found that the Salesians ran an elementary school founded by Don Bosco in Via Degli Aranci at the behest of Holy Father, who also subsidized it. Both the school and the boarding quarters of the Salesians were on the first floor, but there was a little chapel with two altars in a fairly spacious room near the narrow entrance. Since I was lodging in a nearby boarding house, I used to go and attend Mass in their chapel in the morning, and often went there in the evenings for Benediction, for those religious, who had been dubbed the "little priests" by the people of La Spezia because a few of them were short of stature, but mainly on account of their extreme youthfulness, held services everyday and reformed them very well. Even the director, Father Angelo Rocca, was very young. I saw him very often and soon made my acquaintance with him.

One fine day, he told me that he had enrolled me as a Salesian cooperator and handed me the booklet of membership, signed with Don

Bosco's own signature, and I was most grateful to him for it. Another day after Mass, he came up to me and said that if I could wait a while, I would be able to see Don Bosco, for whom he was then waiting.

"Gladly!" I answered, and stood with him by the door that opened into the little front porch of the house. I had heard talk and read so much about this great man in the brief biography by Dubois, but I had never been lucky enough to see him. He did not delay his entrance.

He had gone to Rome once during the years I had lived there, but I did not have the good fortune of being introduced to him then, although some of my friends knew him personally and one had called on him at the monastery of Torre de Specchi, where he was a guest. Someone who had helped him find the money for the foundation of his house at Sampierdarena and who then chanced to be in Rome saw Don Bosco and told me he had mentioned that he had told the Holy Father about some sinister rumors circulating in Rome about the conduct (I believe during the past) of Cardinal Antonelli, saying that the Pope had answered that he was, unfortunately, already informed about them.

In those days, I recall how *la Voce della Verita* (the Voice of Truth) sought to be more papal-minded even than the Pope himself, and made a veiled but menacing reference to the presence in Rome of a Piedmontese priest who, it was said, had been entrusted with the effort of negotiating a conciliation. Oh, those zealots! They sought even to impose on a saintly priest and a saintly Pope!

But enough of this gossip, which threatens to become sour.

As soon as Bosco entered the house at Via Degli Aranci, Father Rocca introduced me to him as a recently enrolled cooperator, and in reply, I was given a kindly smile. Likewise, the two people with him smiled, namely, a priest who must certainly have been Father Rua (because I retained a vivid recollection of his face) and Cavaliere Joseph Bruschi, the director of the post office who, a few months later, entered the Salesian Congregation and died some time later as a priest at La Spezia. Then, they all went upstairs with Don Bosco.

It was a brief glance and nothing more, but I already regarded it as an immense stroke of good fortune for me, just as I am grateful to him wherever he may now be for having enrolled me as a Salesian cooperator.

At this time, the Salesians had abandoned their narrow quarters and the yard in Via Degli Aranci and had moved to a house built especially for them in Viale Garibaldi, adjoining a modest little church. Here they did not only run a school, but they had a boarding school as well, a few shops and

a Festive Oratory. The population attended services held in the little church, especially because it contained the miraculous image of Our Lady of the Snows, who is so deeply venerated by the people of La Spezia. It had been removed with all solemnity from the Church of St. Mary's in a procession in which the bishop of the diocese, Bishop Rosati, also marched.

So Don Bosco came, but I do not remember exactly in what year it was, possibly in 1882 or during the first months of 1883. He came to pay a visit to this Salesian house that had made great strides from its humble beginnings and was to make greater progress in the future.

I remember greeting him the day he arrived and again how I kissed his hand, probably doing this again the day he left, but, for what I can recall, without having an opportunity to exchange a few words with him. I heard the speech he delivered from the pulpit in the church before a somewhat sparse congregation, due perhaps to the fact that it was a weekday and the hour at which the meeting had been called. But the saintly man looked tired and his gait was already somewhat unsteady.

I hoped to have a proper conversation with him in the summer of 1884, but again, I was disappointed. A big artistic and industrial exhibit had been opened in Turin and my father and I went to see it. We did not forego a visit to that other great exhibit of mortal suffering, known as the Little House of Divine Providence – the Cottolengo Institution – which is a perennial miracle of charity and a tangible proof of the divinity of our religion. We also called at the nearby Salesian Oratory with the specific intention of speaking with Don Bosco, for whom we asked.

In reply we were told, "Now he is hearing the confessions of the boys, and you may speak with him when he is finished."

Since we were in the playground, he was pointed out to us. He sat near the open door of the sacristy in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, surrounded by a crowd of small boys who were making their confession to him. Time passed and one little penitent after another approached him, and we gave up on the hoped-for fortune to see him.

This was unfortunately the last time I ever saw the saint, but his image will always remain in my mind as the Apostle of Youth, exercising the sacred ministry by which he saved so many souls, guiding so many boys on the road to perfection, and having them become his own imitators and disciples.

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