

ARTHUR J. LENTI

DON  
BOSCO  
HISTORY AND SPIRIT



5.

INSTITUTIONAL  
EXPANSION

LAS - ROMA

# Don Bosco: History and Spirit

## 5. Institutional Expansion

This fifth volume in the series, *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*, is chiefly devoted to a description of the institutional expansion of the Salesian work. The first two chapters describe the school reform legislation in the Kingdom of Sardinia, noting that the secularization of the public school was the first significant step taken by the liberal revolution in its program aimed at a general secularization of society and the gradual elimination of the Church's influence. In this context Don Bosco's historic decision to undertake the school apostolate in a major way in Piedmont and Liguria is understood as part of the Church's effort to counteract the process of secularization. This may be rated as the first great "external" expansion, spanning the 1860s and early 1870s. A second expansion described in the last chapter (Ch. 8) spans the decade 1875-85 and sees the Salesian work established in France and Spain, and further in Italy. This presentation is preceded, by way of context, by a brief historical survey of united Italy under the governments of the radical Left (from 1876), and by an even briefer sketch of the political-social situation in France in the first decade of the Third Republic (1875-85)—all this in the pontificate of Leo XIII (from 1878).

The middle section of the volume (Chs. 3-6) looks at the internal development of the institution especially from the standpoint of Don Bosco's response to perceived needs of society and Church. This includes: Don Bosco's espousal of the devotion and ideology of Mary, the Immaculate Help of Christians, and his decision to build the great church in her honor (1860s); Don Bosco's protracted involvement (in a private capacity) in the negotiations between the Holy See and the Italian State for the appointment of bishops to vacant dioceses and obtaining for them the royal *Exequatur* (1865-74); Don Bosco's founding, in association with Mary Mazzarello, of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians as a companion congregation to the Salesian Society (1864-1872); lastly (from the 1860s), Don Bosco's on-going reflection on the Salesian lay vocation and his articulation of the Salesian Brother's participation in the Society's mission.

Vol. 1: *Don Bosco's Formative Years in Historical Context*

Vol. 2: *Birth and Early Development of Don Bosco's Oratory*

Vol. 3: *Don Bosco Educator, Spiritual Master, Writer and Founder of the Salesian Society*

Vol. 4: *Beginnings of the Salesian Society and Its Constitutions*

Vol. 5: *Institutional Expansion*

Vol. 6: *Expansion of the Salesian Work in the New World and Ecclesiological Confrontation at Home*

Vol. 7: *Don Bosco's Golden Years* (and General Index of the series)



**Arthur J. Lenti**, who has published many articles on Don Bosco and Salesian topics in the *Journal of Salesian Studies* and in the *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*, has degrees in Scripture, Systematic and Spiritual Theology. After over 20 years of teaching Scripture in various seminaries and in Summer programs, Fr Lenti came to Don Bosco Hall in Berkeley in 1975. Since 1984, he has been the lead instructor at the Institute of Salesian Spirituality in Berkeley (an affiliate of the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, member school of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley). His most recent book is *Don Bosco his Pope and his Bishop*.

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ARTHUR J. LENTI

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INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

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## DON BOSCO: HISTORY AND SPIRIT

### **A Survey of the Life and Work of Saint John Bosco (1815-1888)**

#### *A Word to the Reader*

The chapters that make up this series of volumes are a survey of the life and times of St. John Bosco, framed and punctuated by the events that brought both the Western Church and the Western World into modern times.

I call this survey, “Don Bosco, History and Spirit” – “History,” because Don Bosco’s life and work were played out in the context of the fateful events that created a new religious and political world, and thereby also shaped his thinking and action; “Spirit,” because through discernment, interpretation and acceptance he discovered the meaning of this new world and courageously responded to its challenges: his vocation.

These chapters were born, so to speak, in the classroom. The historical materials were the burden of private reading as well as of the instructor’s presentation. But the “Spirit” in them emerged through fairly intensive critical reflection involving the collaboration of both instructor and students.

For the present purpose the material had to undergo considerable revision and re-writing for greater readability, and a number of chapters had to be expanded with Appendices. These contain biographical sketches of figures that were deemed relevant to the matter under treatment. They also contain texts that seemed necessary or useful for a better understanding of the topic under discussion.

#### *Acknowledgments*

The presentation at many point is indebted, sometimes heavily, to the work of scholars, too numerous to mention, who have labored diligently and critically in the field of Salesian Studies, and other related fields. To them goes my grateful acknowledgment.

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Finally, I thank the Director and Staff of Don Bosco Hall for their support over the years.

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## INSTITUTIONAL EXPANSION

This fifth volume in the series, *Don Bosco: History and Spirit*, is chiefly devoted to a description of the institutional expansion of the Salesian work. The first two chapters describe the school reform legislation in the Kingdom of Sardinia, noting that the secularization of the public school was the first significant step taken by the liberal revolution in its program aimed at a general secularization of society and the gradual elimination of the Church's influence. In this context Don Bosco's historic decision to undertake the school apostolate in a major way in Piedmont and Liguria is understood as part of the Church's effort to counteract the process of secularization. This may be rated as the first great "external" expansion, spanning the 1860s and early 1870s. A second expansion described in the last chapter (Ch. 8) spans the decade 1875-85 and sees the Salesian work established in France and Spain, and further in Italy. This presentation is preceded, by way of context, by a brief historical survey of united Italy under the governments of the radical Left (from 1876), and by an even briefer sketch of the political-social situation in France in the first decade of the Third Republic (1875-85)—all this in the pontificate of Leo XIII (from 1878).

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## Chapter 1

# LIBERAL SCHOOL LEGISLATION AND THE ORATORY SCHOOL

### Summary

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P. Stella, *DB:LeW*, 121-127; P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella Storia Economica e Sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980) 123-158, 231-243, and *passim* [*DBEcSoc*]; P. Braidò, *Il Sistema Preventivo di Don Bosco* (Zürich: PAS-Verlag, 1964) 330-344 ("Boarding School"); F. Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)*, 658-654 (Mirabello), 667-669 (Lanzo), 755-757 (Cherasco), 762-767 (Liguria Riviera), 767-768 (Marassi), 768-769 (Valsalice), 769-773 (Don Bosco and Schools), 939-946 (Nice, France); M. Wirth, *Don Bosco et la Famille Salesienne. Histoire et nouveaux défis* (Paris: Editions Don Bosco, 2002) 165-169.

Before enumerating and describing in summary fashion the various Salesian foundations outside Turin, we should briefly discuss the liberal school reforms that provided the context for the first expansion of the Salesian work.

## I. School Legislation in the Times of the Liberal Revolution and the Unification of Italy

*Sussidi* I, 157-162; II, 173-177; G. Griseri, *L'istruzione primaria in Piemonte (1831-1856)* (Torino: Deputazione di Storia Patria Subalpina, 1973); V. Sinistrero, "La legge Boncompagni del 4 ottobre 1848 e la libertà della scuola," in *Salesianum* 10 (1948), 369-391; I. Picco, *La scuola nel Risorgimento. Nascita della scuola nazionale* (Roma: A. Armandò, 1961); P. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 231-243; *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani), s.v. *Boncompagni* and *Casati* in Index.

### 1. Precedents: Situation of the School at the Beginning of the Restoration in the Kingdom of Sardinia and King Charles Felix' Reform

In 1814, after the fall of Napoleon, King Victor Emmanuel I was restored to the throne in Piedmont. The period which ensued was marked by cultural lag and strict censorship enforced by the state police. (French liberal and rationalistic books, however, were available under the counter and in private libraries.) From the well-organized secular educational system of the Napoleonic period the student population was suddenly thrust back into the strictly confessional, but poorly administered, pre-Napoleonic school system that had been in force under King Victor Amadeus II and was totally under the Church's control. (This was one of the reasons why university students took so easily to the streets during the revolution of 1821.)

On July 23, 1822 King Charles Felix enacted a school reform for the Kingdom of Sardinia. These school ordinances (*Regie Patenti*), the chief purpose of which was to put some order into the chaotic school situation immediately following the Napoleonic period, also introduced some genuine reforms modeled on the Napoleonic system, such as compulsory education at the primary level. But again education was to be imparted in a strictly Catholic confessional environment, under the total control of the Church. This is the system under which Don Bosco received his primary and secondary education.

In spite of some improvements, the 1822 school reform did not differ much from the older system; it still was a paternalistic system in which religion itself became the tool for political control and absolutist rule. The hope expressed was that "the system would produce young men equal to the older generations in their attachment to Truth, to Knowledge, to the Throne, and to God."<sup>1</sup> Such control (by throne and altar) amounted to a stranglehold on

<sup>1</sup> King Charles Felix, *Regie Patenti colle quali Sua Maestà approva l'annesso Regolamento per le Scuole [...]* in data del 23 di luglio 1822 (Torino: Stamperia Reale, 1822) 4.

education that cannot simply be excused through historical and cultural considerations. A balanced judgment should also take psychological and pedagogical considerations, such as the effect that educational structures have on the development of the person. It should also be based on more general considerations of human rights and freedom.

Again, one can understand why young people who, particularly at university level, had gotten a taste of French liberalism, would gladly embrace revolutionary ideas if there was a hope of overthrowing such a system.

Apart from its oppressive confessional character, the system was flawed in that it placed the financial burden for setting up and running primary schools on the municipal towns themselves, without providing comparable financial and personnel resources. This situation accounts for the poor quality of primary education on the one hand, and on the other, for poor enrollment throughout the system. In 1825 Turin, a city of some 130,000 inhabitants, had only 850 boys and no girls enrolled in the primary schools. There were only 6 such schools with a total of 17 teachers, and the students had to pay a fee for their tuition. Most well-to-do families employed private tutors (priests) to teach their children. In 1842, 328 of the 1,752 municipal towns in the kingdom still had no primary school.

Credit is given to religious associations, pious societies, and religious congregations for their contribution to public education, as many of them maintained evening, day and primary schools, especially for the poor. In 1850 (after the liberal Boncompagni reform of 1848) schools maintained by such charitable groups numbered 620, only 93 of which received state subsidies.

## **2. Progress in Public Education under King Charles Albert (1831-1848)**

The intellectual and cultural awakening initiated and promoted by King Charles Albert through the 1840s brought about a new awareness of the need for public education. The movement was fostered and enhanced by the presence in Piedmont (particularly in Turin) of political refugees from all parts of Italy, especially from Lombardy (after 1848).<sup>2</sup>

The first concern was to train proper teachers. In 1844, the co-directors of the Reform Authority (Bishop Dionigi Andrea Pasio of Alessandria and Chevalier Luigi Provana di Collegno) called in the educator, Father Ferrante

<sup>2</sup> For Don Bosco's relationship with some of these refugees, cf. *EBM* IV, 285, 287-293.

Aporti (1792-1857), to lecture in the recently established “school of method” (*scuola di metodo*, or teachers training school, normal school) from August to October. With an enrollment of 170 (122 lay persons and 48 ecclesiastics, among whom Bishop Losana of Biella), the course was a huge success. But because of Aporti’s “liberal” ideas in education, Archbishop Frasoni forbade his priests from attending. The *Biographical Memoirs* state that the Archbishop asked Don Bosco to attend the lectures and report to him.<sup>3</sup>

After 1844, classes in “method” were established in many cities of the kingdom, and by the terms of the *Boncompagni law* of October 4, 1848, teachers (including priests and religious) were required to take an examination for certification.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile on March 4, 1848, under King Charles Albert, the Constitution (*Statuto*) came into effect, and the Waldenses and Jews were admitted to the public schools as part of the “Emancipation Act” (the granting of civil rights).

On August 25, 1848, the Jesuits, who were perceived as reactionaries against the liberal movement, were expelled from the kingdom of Sardinia, and their boarding schools became state schools. The Jesuits controlled much of the secondary education in the kingdom.

<sup>3</sup> Lemoyne, critical of Aporti, reports the event in *EBM* II, 163-172. Some doubt the story of Don Bosco’s attendance at the lectures. Ferrante Aporti (1791-1858), priest and educator, had been a student of educator Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and of Milanese jurist-patriot Giandomenico Romagnosi. In 1829 Aporti founded at Cremona the first kindergarten in Italy, for the purpose of providing a safe haven and initial education for young children. Such education was understood as “fostering in the child the gradual acquisition of the habits of love, order and discipline.” Under Aporti’s inspiration kindergartens were established by private initiative in many parts of northern and central Italy. In spite of the fact that kindergartens provided religious and moral education and stressed respect for established authority and laws, conservative people in the Church looked upon kindergartens with suspicion. The new educational methods and to the fact that kindergartens contributed to the education of the masses were regarded as “dangerous.” For a long time kindergartens were forbidden in Rome and the Papal States.

<sup>4</sup> “Method” here means “educational method,” that is, “teacher training.” The name “method” or “methodology” was retained in the Boncompagni school law of 1848, but was later replaced by “normal school” or “teacher’s college” in the Casati school reform of 1859.

### 3. The Boncompagni School Reform (1848)

It is at this point of the liberal revolution that a complete overhaul of the school system and of its central administration took place. The old “Reform Authority” was abolished and replaced by the newly created *Ministry of Education*. All instruction and all administration of schools were placed directly under its jurisdiction. The Law that brought this about comes under the name of the first Minister of Education, Count Carlo Boncompagni.<sup>5</sup> The Boncompagni Bill was drafted by a committee of educators under his chairmanship, and became law on October 4, 1848, without parliamentary action, under the war powers accorded to the government during the First War for Italian Independence (1848-1849).

The Bill marked the end of the old system in education that had been set aside only briefly during the Napoleonic period and brought back in the Restoration.

#### *Salient Points of the Law*

1. The basic philosophical principle at work throughout the new system was that public education as such was a “secular enterprise” and not a Church-related one. Hence it was the responsibility and the prerogative of the state, and all privileges formerly held by the Church (diocesan clergy and religious) in this field were abolished. The State, not the bishops, was henceforth responsible for public education.

2. The Boncompagni reform had all schools in view, from kindergarten to university. It included also all vocational (arts and trades) schools, and homes for special education (such as that for the deaf and dumb).

3. The Bill made education compulsory for the two years of the lower cycle at the primary level (see below), hence generally from age 7 to age 9.

4. Private schools, whether run by institutions or by individuals, were permitted under the law, but besides obtaining approval and complying with the general standards they were subject to stringent controls.

<sup>5</sup> Carlo Boncompagni di Mombello, Count of Lamporo (1804-1880), was minister of justice (1848-1853), and also minister of education (1848 and 1852), president of the Lower House of Parliament from 1853-1856, and later ambassador plenipotentiary of King Victor Emmanuel II. He was active in the cause of Italian unification. He was professor of constitutional law at the University of Turin and author of treatises on the subject. He had a lifelong interest in educational theory and systems.

5. Religious instruction continued to be given in the public schools (this was in accordance with the first article of the Constitution, that the Catholic Religion was the religion of the State). Also a spiritual director or chaplain was retained. But religious instruction was subject to control (as, for example, in the matter of textbooks), and the spiritual director, though nominated by the bishop, had to be approved and appointed by the school authority.

6. The Boncompagni system at primary and secondary levels was as follows:

The primary (elementary) course of studies comprised four years: a first cycle of two years with *compulsory attendance*, and a second cycle of two additional years.

The secondary course of studies comprised a lower section of five years (*ginnasio*) and a higher section of two years (philosophy).

### *Priests-Teachers*

In spite of teacher training efforts (see above), priests were still needed to staff the state schools. Statistics for 1854 show that in the Kingdom of Sardinia of 5,765 primary school teachers 3,021 were ecclesiastics and 2,744 were laypersons. With the progress of the liberal revolution and its secularization program after 1848, especially after the unification of Italy (1861), the clergy in general began to be regarded as a hostile party and therefore cut from school rosters wherever and whenever possible. For their part, the bishops began to look less and less kindly on priests cooperating as teachers with the lay state, which was perceived as the avowed enemy of the pope and of the Church. As a result, within a couple of decades the number of priests teachers was drastically cut in primary schools, reduced to almost nothing in secondary schools, and to nothing at all at the university by 1873, when the school of theology was closed down.

### *Reaction to the Boncompagni School Bill*

Sinistrero (see bibliography above) describes the reaction that followed upon the promulgation of the Boncompagni Law under two headings: general reaction (evaluation and critique) especially from the Catholic part; and particular reaction from teachers and administrators who saw the law as restricting the “freedom of education” (see below).

1. The Catholic reaction proceeded from the perception that the law ham-

pered the mission of the Church and violated its rights in education. The mission of the Church to educate young people in the faith was hampered by the state's takeover of education, including religious education. The immemorial rights of the Church were violated not only by the state's takeover of the public schools but also by the state's control of private schools, especially those run by religious and Church-related institutions.

The Catholic newspaper, *L'Armonia* [*della Religione colla Civiltà*] devoted nine issues to the subject and may be taken as representative of the Catholic reaction. It charged that the Minister of Education and his subordinate departments were now given license to set up an absolute, centralized control that resulted in sheer intellectual despotism. It charged that the law was a "coup" pulled off without parliamentary debate and that it was hatched from party tyranny against the traditions and feelings of a whole people. It charged that the Law infringed on the rights of families and of individuals (both teachers and pupils), and that it violated the right of religion to be part of a person's education, and therefore the right of society as a whole.

The newspaper stressed the point that the teaching of Catholic morality and the supervision of the moral conduct of personnel and pupils in schools were not an abuse but were part of the power delegated to the Church by parents concerned about the education of their children. It was now the ministry of education that had usurped that power and was thereby contributing to the de-Christianization of individuals and of society. *L'Armonia* added:

Then the masses, which now bear their poverty patiently because they are sustained by Christian virtues and by hope, will be driven by a different set of "virtues" they shall have meanwhile acquired. They will descend upon the cities armed with sticks and sickles, and moved by invidious greed and a sense of humiliation they will expend their anger on the rich and civilized. [!]

*L'Armonia* conceded that the Bill aimed at ensuring education for all and at putting some order into public education through common standards, method and content. But it charged that by doing it in an inflexible way it forced everybody into the same mold of mediocrity.

It also conceded that the authors of the Bill had acted with good intentions. But it was a bad bill and it could become a deadly tool in the hands of future executives who might not have the same respect for religion as the Bill's authors. Religious indifferentism had reared its ugly head in Parliament when Waldensian and Jewish children were admitted to State school, a process that would finally reduce all religions to the same level. [!]



2. With regard to the charge made by a number of educators in educational journals that the Law restricted “freedom in education,” it should be noted that the dispute did not have the rights of Church or private schools in view. The hue and cry raised by some educators and administrators across the kingdom was against what they regarded as oppressive centralized control and impossible financial burdens placed on local administrations. They generally agreed that it was a good thing that the Church’s traditional control of education should come to an end. They also agreed that, although education was the responsibility of parents and society at large, hence everybody’s business, it was the State’s special responsibility to see to it that it was properly organized and made available to all. But they saw a danger in a state’s monopoly in education. The debate depicted scenarios in which the most serious infringement of rights by administrators could take place. For the law as it lay was only as good as its interpreters, specifically only as good as the political philosophy of its interpreters.

### *Controversy over the Church’s Rights in Education*

Two things especially alarmed the bishops about the Boncompagni Law. First, it made it difficult to impart religious instruction properly in public schools, and with the years the difficulty would only increase. Secondly, the law extended the State’s control over all educational institutions, including seminaries, with regard to everything that had to do with “education.”

This contravened specific norms of canon law with regard to Catholic doctrine, Catholic religious practice and spiritual-moral guidance. Bishops, singly and jointly, made the point that the teaching of Catholic doctrine was entrusted by “divine mandate” to official ministers of the Church in virtue of the “power of order,” from which flowed the “power of jurisdiction.” The two powers could not be separated. Jurisdiction over anything pertaining to Catholic doctrine could not be exercised by anyone but ordained ministers empowered by the Church.

### *Comment on Don Bosco’s Position*

Don Bosco certainly agreed with the bishops’ argument about the Church’s rights. That order and jurisdiction were the two inseparable foundations defining the hierarchical power of the Church (both for doctrine and discipline) was the general teaching in ecclesiology at the time, certainly in ultramontane



ecclesiology. It may be regarded as certain that Don Bosco also shared the Catholic reaction to the Boncompagni Bill represented by *L'Armonia* (see above), which was typical of the Catholic conservative. The flaw in this kind of thinking was that it failed to distinguish between the “transcendent doctrine” of the Church and its contingent incarnations in historical systems and structures.<sup>6</sup>

The beginnings of the school at the Oratory coincided with the movement in education, and almost exactly with the period of the Boncompagni reform. The first student boarder at the Pinardi house, Alessandro Pescarmona of Castelnovo, entered in October 1847. The numbers of student boarders at the Oratory increased rapidly, and in 1853 (when the Home was transferred from the Pinardi house to the newly built addition (Don Bosco’s House) their number equaled or surpassed that of the shop workers (artisans). By October 1855 Don Bosco had started a secondary course of studies at the Oratory, and by October 1859 (shortly after the passage of the Casati Bill, to be discussed below) he had a full five-year secondary school in operation.

#### **4. The Cibrario Instruction (1853)**

On August 21, 1853 Count Luigi Cibrario, Minister of Education, issued programs and official textbooks for religious instruction in public schools.<sup>7</sup>

In 1856 the City of Turin dismissed the Christian Brothers from the primary schools for boys that they had run at the City’s request since 1830.

#### **5. The Lanza Law (1857)**

The Church’s argument against some of the provisions of the Boncompagni Bill received support from educators and teachers’ associations who protested against a state’s monopoly in education and who called for greater freedom, as mentioned above.

<sup>6</sup> The Boncompagni Law of 1848 is discussed in *EBM* III, 315ff. “Don Bosco immediately saw the need for building Catholic private schools regardless of cost. He sat in on some lectures at the university and became sadly aware of the increasing bitterness of many students and professors toward the Church.”

<sup>7</sup> The importance of the *Cibrario Instruction* is discussed in *EBM* IV, 421-424. Don Bosco had to keep these provisions in mind when deciding on textbooks.

The Boncompagni Bill (1848), the law curtailing the Church's privileges (1850), and the law suppressing religious orders and confiscating Church property (1855) brought about a situation of bitter conflict and left festering wounds that could not be healed but which could perhaps be salved over. Apart from consideration of ecclesiastical policy, Prime Minister Camillo Cavour recognized the existence of a consensus among educators in favor of greater freedom in education. The Cavour cabinets sought to bring this about by the Lanza and (later) the Casati Bills.

The Lanza Bill was debated in the House in January 1857, and became law on June 22, 1857.<sup>8</sup>

Essentially the Lanza Bill introduced some freedom in education by allowing greater local control, a freedom granted also to private and Church schools. It also restricted central government control to certain areas, that is, those having to do with morals, hygiene, the State's educational structures, and public order [Art. 1]. It called for the preparation of special ordinances to regulate the matter in detail [Art. 7]. These special laws, however, were never prepared in view of the fact that a new and complete overhaul of the system was contemplated (the Casati Bill, to be discussed below). The Boncompagni system of state control remained in effect in practice, but the acceptance of the principle of freedom in education (even in such a limited form) was a step forward.

All schools, seminaries and diocesan secondary schools included, remained under the control of the Ministry of Education, in the fields specified in the law, and the principle of freedom was often applied as executives saw fit.<sup>9</sup>

Minister Lanza enforced the provision requiring general teacher certification with no exception.<sup>10</sup> This was a special hardship for nuns, so that as a consequence many were barred from teaching.

This ordinance motivated Don Bosco's decision to send his teachers to the university for certification and degrees. The first to attend university for certification was seminarian Giovanni Francesia.<sup>11</sup> On a visit to the seminary

<sup>8</sup> Giovanni Lanza (1810-1882) was first elected to the Piedmontese parliament in 1848. The leader of the center-left, he served as Minister of Education in the Cavour government from November 1855 to July 1859. He later held several ministries, including the Ministry of Interior of united Italy (1864-1865). He was Prime Minister in 1869-1873.

<sup>9</sup> For Lemoyne comments on the Lanza Law and on Don Bosco's thoughts and actions in that context see *EBM* V, 284-285.

<sup>10</sup> *EBM* V, 166-167. A response of the Holy See is cited in this connection.

<sup>11</sup> *EBM* V, 495, quoting Lanza's order.

of Bergamo, Don Bosco alerted the Bishop to teacher certification requirements, and forecast a complete takeover of education by “evil people” within ten years, unless the bishops took action.<sup>12</sup>

## 6. The Casati Law (1859)

Minister of Education Count Gabrio Casati was the author of the comprehensive school reform that bears his name.<sup>13</sup> After four months of discussion in special committee, the Casati Bill was passed into Law on April 25, 1859, like the Boncompagni Bill without parliamentary action, and under the war powers given to the government at the time of the Second War of Italian Independence against Austria.

Casati is an organic re-ordering of the whole school system, a comprehensive re-writing of the Boncompagni Law after a ten-year experiment, embracing Piedmontese and Lombard educational experience. (The basic structures it established remained in force until the Gentile reform of 1923 under Fascism.)

### *Provisions of the Casati Law*

The Casati Law embraced all areas of instruction: primary in 2 sections; “technical” (that is, non-classical and profession-oriented) in 2 sections; and classical secondary in 2 sections.

1. *Primary school* was divided into 2 sections of 3 and 2 years respectively. The first section, generally for children 7-9 years of age, was *compulsory and tuition-free*. Every municipal town of 4,000 inhabitants or over and every town

<sup>12</sup> IBM VI, 527-528 (softened in EBM VI, 300).

<sup>13</sup> Gabrio Casati (1798-1873) was born in Milan and was deeply involved in the political events in Lombardy, in Piedmont and in united Italy throughout his life. Appointed mayor of Milan in 1837, he tried to negotiate freedoms with Austria, but in 1847 he began to look toward Piedmont. In 1848 he took the people’s part in the Milan uprising against Austria, acted as president of the provisional government, and later was able to moderate Austrian repression. In exile in Turin during the First War against Austria, he served briefly as prime minister. In 1853 he was named senator and thereafter remained a staunch supporter of Cavour’s policies. In 1859, at the outbreak of the Second War against Austria, he was named minister of education. During his six-month tenure he authored the famous law that bears his name. On leaving the ministry, he was elected vice-president of the senate, and then president (1865-1872).

with at least 50 children were bound to establish a primary school (both sections) locally financed. Smaller towns were to set up at least the lower section. Schoolteachers were to be provided by the town, the only qualifications required being certificates of fitness as teachers and good moral conduct. The number of pupils in a classroom could not exceed 70.

2. “Technical” school was also divided into 2 sections, of 3 years each. The lower section (*scuola tecnica*) could be entered after completing both sections of the primary. On completion of the lower section, one could enroll in the 3-year higher section (*istituto tecnico*), which was organized by specific areas or majors (such as accountants, surveyors, industry technician, etc.).<sup>14</sup>

3. The *classical secondary* course of studies was built on the humanistic literary-philosophical curriculum. It comprised 2 sections: a 5-year lower section (*ginnasio*) and a 3-year higher section (*liceo*).

The lower sections of both the technical (*scuola tecnica*) and classical course (*ginnasio*) were to be established in all provincial capitals and in the larger provincial towns. The higher sections of both the above (*istituto tecnico* and *liceo*) were to be established at least in provincial capitals.

Examinations were taken on completion of each section of the classical secondary. Only the student who passed examinations of the higher secondary section (*liceo*), thus obtaining the secondary degree or diploma (*licenza liceale*) had access to the university.

4. The *university* had 5 faculties or schools: theology, law, medicine, physical-mathematical sciences, and literature-philosophy.

### *Merits and flaws of the Casati Law*

The Casati Law marked a great advance in education in Italy by reason of its thoroughness and systematic approach. In spite of weaknesses it was responsible for a remarkable expansion in education. For example, in Turin in 1850 (under Boncompagni) the public schools numbered only 32 (private and religious schools being more numerous). In 1862 (under Casati) their number had risen to 163.

<sup>14</sup> This is a simplified description of the technical school and institute. Actually the *scuola tecnica* was sometimes regarded as an up-graded *scuola popolare*, going no further. Sometimes it was regarded as the lower stage of the *istituto tecnico*. The *istituto tecnico* had a mixed scientific and classical program, and gave access to some university schools [*Enciclopedia Italiana* (Trecani), XXXI, 251].

Freedom in education and other rights were better provided for in the Casati school reform. Private schools, whether operated by individuals or institutions, were accorded a firm place under the law. Art. 246 read:

Any citizen, 25 years or older, who has the required moral prerequisites may establish a secondary school for general attendance, with or without room and board facility. The following conditions must be observed: (1) The teaching personnel must be qualified and certified as required by this law, or must be in possession of comparable certificates. (2) Instruction must be imparted in accordance with the programs specified in this law, and these programs, and any departure from them, must be made known to the public before the start of the school year. No more than two subjects must be assigned to any one instructor. (3) The school must be open at all times to such authorities as have ordinary jurisdiction to carry out inspections, and also to anyone appointed by the Minister for this purpose in extraordinary circumstances.

These provisions both regulate and protect the private school, but hostile executives could conceivably hinder the operation of a private school. Given situations of conflict, such as developed with the years, the freedom granted under the law could be severely encroached upon.

In the Casati Law religious instruction was provided for at all levels of education, but attendance at such instruction was obligatory only at the primary level, not beyond, since it was regarded as an act of religious practice. Furthermore, at all levels parents could obtain for their children dispensation from attending religion classes and connected religious services.

The Law also contained provisions regarding diocesan seminaries (including theological seminaries), giving the Ministry of Education competence to supervise the instruction and formation of seminarians "as citizens." Obviously, this provision was open to abuse by hostile administrators.

The Casati Law of 1859 did not specifically address the subject of local rights and freedom in education. Hence, in this matter the Lanza Law of 1857 [see above] was regarded as continuing in its effect. But since no detailed ordinances had been issued, local control tended to be reduced to a minimum. Central control was assured by the fact that the whole school system was run by administrators appointed by the king.

After the unification of Italy (1861), the Casati system was extended to the whole of Italy (1864). A process of involution in school legislation began to take place through a series of decrees, regulations and circulars, amending the Casati Law. Their total effect was to establish a State monopoly in educa-

tion extending to the whole of Italy. The Casati Law was weak in other ways as well. It failed to provide for more years of compulsory education than just the lower section of the primary; it failed to provide financial help and guidance to towns for the setting up of schools as prescribed by the law. It greatly favored humanistic classical education at secondary level over “technical” (profession-oriented) education, and failed to address the problem of vocational education (arts and trades, job-oriented education). It failed to develop qualified teaching personnel on a large scale and to make the teaching profession financially attractive. It left the whole matter of primary and secondary education to local initiative.<sup>15</sup>

In autumn 1862, Don Bosco began the school term as usual, in spite of being under fire for not having certified teachers. He applied for certification of his teachers, by asking that they be allowed to challenge examinations. But he also began to enroll his seminarians in courses at the university, and in 1863-64 he put up a new school building. But there were pressures and plans by the school authorities to shut down the Oratory school.<sup>16</sup>

### *Comment*

There is no question that overall the Casati Law greatly advanced the quality of education in Italy. At least it was a step in the direction of bringing education in Italy a bit closer to the standards already prevailing in many European nations at the time.

At the same time, the Casati reform was also a political move. It was an-

<sup>15</sup> The *Casati Law* of 1859 is discussed at some length in *IBM* VI, 312-316 (barely mentioned, and incorrectly, in *EBM* VI, 168) “to provide a criterion whereby to evaluate the harassment [of the Oratory] of which we will speak in due time” [cf. *EBM* VI, 348-359, second house search; *EBM* VII, 262-270]. Don Bosco was well acquainted with the Casati Law. *EBM* VI, 350 mentions that, prior to the second house search, Don Bosco had walked out the door “calmly absorbed in reading the government decree on education [the Casati Law].” When the Oratory school was ordered closed in 1879, Don Bosco appealed to the Casati Law, of which he showed detailed knowledge [cf. *EBM* XIV, 61-69, 108-155]. Don Bosco’s memorandum in *IBM* XIV, 163-167 is omitted in *EBM* XIV, 119. For Don Bosco’s letter to the *Gazzetta del Popolo*, cf. *EBM* XIV, 133. Don Bosco also availed himself of the pamphlet by Prof. G. Allievo, *La legge Casati e l’insegnamento privato secondario* [*The Casati Law and Private Secondary Education*] (Torino: Tipografia Salesiana, 1879), which he himself had inspired [cf. *EBM* XIV, 134]. For details, cf. M. Ribotta, “The Day They Shut Down the Oratory School,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* 2:1 (1991) 19-44.

<sup>16</sup> *EBM* VI, 189-192; VII, 234-237, 254-257. The number of students is given as 351, 234.

other important step by the liberal state to establish its autonomy (in relation to the Church) in the ordering of society and in the governance of the country. It also represented a maneuver by the liberal coalition running the government to neutralize conservative or reactionary opposition in House and Senate. The Bill was also a timely move designed to offset the ascending popularity of Church-operated schools. For, the public schools after Boncompagni faced an uphill struggle, and people still preferred the Church-related school for the education of their children. Finally and more generally the Bill's ultimate aim was to defeat through education any political-social vision not consonant with the principles of liberalism.

## **7. The Correnti Circular (1870)**

On November 1870, a mere nine days after the occupation of Rome, Minister of Education Cesare Correnti handed down an ordinance that completely reversed the situation of religious instruction in public schools.<sup>17</sup> Earlier legislation had retained religious instruction as basically obligatory, and parents who wished their children exempted had to submit a formal application. Now religious instruction was merely “available,” and parents who wished it for their children had to request it formally.<sup>18</sup>

## **8. Closing Comments**

### *Summary*

The joint eighteenth-century State-Church management of education, briefly interrupted by the Napoleonic period, was revived in the Restoration on the basis of the Regulations of 1822. In 1848 the state alone took mo-

<sup>17</sup> Cesare Correnti (1815-1888), scholar and liberal politician from Milan, served as Minister of Education in the Ricasoli cabinet (1867) and in the Lanza cabinet (1869-1872), during which he authored the ordinance on religious instruction. Later (in 1874) together with Minister of Education Antonio Scialoja (1817-1877) he authored a bill that (among other provisions) would have eliminated religious instruction from the public schools completely. That Bill was defeated in the House.

<sup>18</sup> Lemoyne speaks of the *Correnti Circular* and of Don Bosco's efforts to counteract its evil effect in *EBM IX*, 447.



nopolistic control of education through the Boncompagni Bill, which aimed at removing the Church, not religion, from public education. With the Lanza and the Casati Bills of 1857 and 1859 certain freedoms touching both public schools (at the local level) and private schools were provided for, but were often negated by an overbearing “laicist” administrative bureaucracy. With the consolidation of “laicism,” religion was eliminated from the school.



1 – Minister Antonio Scialoja of the Department of Public Instruction  
(1817-1877)

### *Don Bosco and the Liberal School Laws*

In the early 1860s, after the Casati Bill (1859) and the unification of Italy (1861), Don Bosco entered the field of education through the school, which became a major Salesian apostolate. The *need* and the *opportunity* for this engagement stemmed from the situation created by the liberal school laws.



Church authorities urged an expansion of the private Catholic school system to counteract the process of laicization. Private schools could be established and operated under the law. Don Bosco was among the first to respond.

It should be borne in mind that the call for a separate Catholic school system was part of the larger posture by the Church of total opposition to, and total disengagement from, the liberal movement. A policy of engagement, or of moderate engagement by the Church (such as that opted for in Belgium), would have required considerable concessions certainly, but would probably have brought Catholic forces to bear on the political and social process as a whole with good results.

This opposition exacerbated the anticlerical sentiment and created a situation of conflict that was aggravated by the government's policies after the unification of Italy (1861) and the occupation of Rome (1870). Although the laws allowed ample freedom to private Catholic schools, often the hostility of government functionaries kept such schools under pressure and in a state of inferiority. As mentioned above, Don Bosco and the Oratory school were subjected to harassment on several occasions.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to say just what Don Bosco's perception of the situation was in reality. But, while evidently committed to the Church's position, he steered a course that was both ideological and pragmatic. With courageous a-political engagement and a deeply religious inspiration, he took the fullest possible advantage of the law and succeeded in building an impressive school system based on an unambiguous rejection of secularism and on an authentic valuation of religion.

It seems that Don Bosco's course of action was dictated by his perception of what the "salvation of souls" required. He was convinced that the secularist and laicist movement stemming from the liberal revolution ran contrary to the cultural tradition and to the very soul of the people, especially of the young people for whom he lived and worked. He believed that to eliminate religion and the Church's guidance from education meant eliminating a powerful formative force from the soul of young people (as from society at large). Apart from causing "spiritual harm," such removal would weaken the very foundation of their cultural identity, and would therefore stymie personality, character and citizenship. For Don Bosco turning out good citizens and good Christians was the indivisible aim of education.

<sup>19</sup> See for example *EBM* VII, 186-193, 262-270.

## II. Development and Organization of the Oratory School under Boncompagni (1848ff.) and Casati (1859ff.)

Cf. P. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 231-243.

The Boncompagni school reform in Piedmont (passed into law on November 4, 1848) was in force for more than a decade, up to the Casati law of November 13, 1859. It basically reflected the principle of the autonomy of the State with respect to the Church. It also affirmed the principle of freedom in education, though restricted by the centralizing policy of the State at the administrative level. The Boncompagni school law did not recognize as valid studies done in diocesan junior or minor seminaries. Hence clerical students had to take public examinations in accordance with general norms.

Professors of diocesan seminaries and schools had to obtain certification like everyone else. The State claimed the right to approve and then to control the instruction curriculum in seminaries.

### 1. Organization of the Oratory School in the Boncompagni Decade 1849-1859

For the decade following the liberal revolution of 1848 the Oratory school, begun in 1847 with the establishment of the Home, operated under the Boncompagni system.

Don Bosco developed the student section at the Oratory to a greater degree than he did the section of the working boys (artisans). By so doing he catered to middle and lower-income families and to their strategies for the professional education of their children.

With regard to teaching personnel, in so far as the development of school premises and the formation of his young Salesians allowed it, he gradually shifted from using the services of trusted outside teachers and their private schools to the establishment of in-house secondary classes under Salesian instructors.

Up to 1854-55, Don Bosco's young students in the first three years of *ginnasio* (high school) attended a private school in the city. As attested, these young students left the Oratory early in the day in a group, made their way along dusty (or muddy) Giardiniera Street up to the Valdocco "traffic circle" (*Rondò*), and steering clear of the great market square (*Porta Palazzo*),

using side streets, they wended their way to Professor Carlo Bonzanino's private school.<sup>20</sup> Another group of Don Bosco's boys, those in the fourth and fifth year of the secondary course (also called, "humanities" and "rhetoric") walked the shorter route to Professor Father Matteo Picco's private school, near the church of the Consolata.

For example, Dominic Savio arrived at the Oratory at the age of 12 with the rudiments of Latin, and attended Professor Bonzanino's classes for the school year 1854-55. The following year (1855-56), when Don Bosco began the Oratory school properly so-called (with only the third, or "grammar," year), Dominic attended this class at the Oratory under instructor Giovanni Francesia, a Salesian seminarian not quite 18 years of age.<sup>21</sup> In 1856-57, however, he studied the fourth, or "humanities" year, again in the city, at the school of Professor Father Picco, for a few months. (He died on March 9, 1857.)

On July 19, 1856 Minister of Public Instruction Giovanni Lanza decreed that secondary school instructors could teach classes only if approved by the Superintendent of schools (*Provveditore agli studi*). It was a further move toward central control, but it was also an effort at preventing abuses in municipal and private schools. Don Bosco, like Rosmini and others, was convinced that he should retain his civil rights and move within the legal structures. He therefore had seminarian Francesia, who was now teaching the first year of high school, enroll at the university for a degree and certification. Later he had others from among his seminarians enroll at the university: Michele Rua, Giovanni Anfossi, Celestino Durando, Francesco Cerruti, etc.

<sup>20</sup> Father Giovanni B. Francesia (1838-1930) describes the itinerary and the behavior of the group of 10 or 12 boys in *D. Francesco Provera sac. salesiano. Cenni biografici* (S. Benigno Canavese: Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1895), 41; and in *Don Giovanni Bonetti sac. salesiano. Cenni biografici* (S. Benigno Canavese: Tipografia e Libreria Salesiana, 1894), 24-25.

<sup>21</sup> Primary school for day students, both young and adult, had been established at the Oratory since the late 1840s. After the Boncompagni school law (1848) and the Suardi laws against the Church's privileges (1850), primary schools of all kinds (day or evening or Sunday classes) were established under Catholic auspices for the purpose of counteracting the secular state school. These schools were often referred to as "people's schools" (*scuole popolari*). The primary school at the oratory was financed from the start by the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, the president of which (Count Carlo Cays) later became a Salesian. The teachers were Giacomo Rossi for older pupils and Giacomo Miglietti for younger children. In 1856 a 20-year old young adult named Giuseppe Reano, aspiring to be a teacher, entered the Oratory. He challenged examinations with Professor Bonzanino and passed with fair grades. Although not in possession of legal certification as a teacher, he taught a primary class of over 90 pupils. He came under sanction in the official inspection (house search) of 1860.

In 1856-57 Don Bosco set up the second year of high school at the Oratory under Professor Father Giuseppe Ramello (1820-1861).<sup>22</sup> He had been suspended from priestly ministry, apparently for his liberal views. One of his star pupils, Francesco Cerruti, remembers him as an able and intelligent teacher.

The Salesian archive (quoted by Stella, cited above) holds Ramello's class log book for the year 1857 (second year of secondary study or high school). He lists his pupils and comments on their performance. The list shows what this (typical?) class of 33 pupils in the Oratory secondary school was like. One is amazed at the many absences due to illness.

Alberti, Pietro (16 years of age) – He has missed 41 class periods due to illness, and he has not yet recovered.

Bellino, Carlo (14 years of age) – of average ability, but very diligent.

Berardi, Costanzo (14 years of age) – Idem.

Bertino, Pietro [no age given] – He has missed 27 periods due to illness.

Bongiovanni, Domenico (16 years of age) – He has missed 22 periods due to illness. – Of less than average intelligence.

Bono, Claudio (14 years of age) – His previous schooling has been spotty. He is not gifted.

Bosco, Francesco (12 years of age, from Dronero; father is dead.) – He was a very good pupil, but he has recently become negligent and lazy.

Candelo, Secondo (14 years of age) – As above. He has missed some periods.

Castellano, Vincenzo [no age given] – He did first grammar last year under Professor Boyer.

Cerruti, Francesco (13 years of age) – He has an excellent memory and is very gifted and well balanced.

Chiuso, Luigi [no age given] – A very lively lad.

Cibrario, Antonio [no age given] – A very frail boy – He has made great progress.

Conti, Evaristo (16 years of age) – A very slow learner.

Cravero, Pietro [no age given] – He has missed about 40 periods due to illness.

Dassano, Bartolomeo (12 years of age) – He has made great progress.

Fornara, Antonio [no age given] – He has made good progress.

Geuna, Giorgio (14 years of age) – He missed about 50 periods due to illness.

Ghivarello, Carlo (22 years of age) – An exemplary young man of excellent character.

Lacchia, Giuseppe [no age given] – Of less than average intelligence. – He has missed some periods.

<sup>22</sup> A certain Francesco Blanch is also mentioned as having been a teacher at the Oratory from 1856 to 1858.

- Magoia, Giuseppe (17 years of age) – A very poor learner. – He has missed over 30 periods due to illness.
- Martano, Giuseppe (16 years of age) – A mulish character (from Cuneo!).
- Martina, Antonio [no age given] – He has been in this class for two months, but he hasn't got a clue.
- Mazzucco, Giacinto (16 years of age) – A young man of poor intelligence and rough manners.
- Mellica, Giuseppe (15 years of age) – A slow learner.
- Minelli, Giovanni [no age given] – Intelligent enough, but has missed over 50 periods due to illness.
- Pagliotti, Michele [no age given] – He has made great progress, in spite of having missed some periods.
- Pasquale, Matteo [no age given] – He's of average intelligence but very diligent. – He's made great progress.
- Patria, Giuseppe [no age given] – He was ill at home for three months.
- Perino, Ignazio [no age given] – He has missed 50 periods due to illness.
- Roppolo, Chiaffredo (13 years of age) – He's made very great progress.
- Torchio, Ferdinando [no age given] – Idem, in spite of having missed some 15 periods due to illness.
- Vittone, Carlo [no age given] – Very diligent; he has made great progress.
- Zolla, Giovanni [no age given] – He has made great progress.

## **2. Organization of the Oratory School under the Casati Law (from 1860)**

The Casati system of instruction has been described above, but it bears repeating for what concerns the primary and secondary school.

### *Primary School:*

Lower section: 3 years (compulsory)

Higher section: 2 years

### *Secondary School:*

Lower Section – *Ginnasio*:

First *ginnasio*

Second *ginnasio*

Third *ginnasio*

Fourth *ginnasio*

Fifth *ginnasio* (State examinations for diploma)

Higher Section – *Liceo*:First *liceo*Second *liceo*Third *liceo* (State examinations for diploma with access to University)

The Casati Law went into effect on January 1, 1860 and provided the stimulus for a further organization of the Oratory school on Don Bosco's part.

The merits as well as the serious flaws of the Casati Law have been noted above. Here it is enough to note that the Church objected to a number of its provisions, as for example the provision that made seminary programs subject to inspection with respect to "citizenship." But the Church's chief objection was that the Law tended to eliminate the influence of the Church in the public school and to secularize public education over a period of time. True, the Law allowed the creation of private schools by individuals or groups of any persuasion. Such schools, however, were approved only under specific conditions, and were to be open at all times to inspection by the competent authority. (See Article 246 quoted above.)

On December 4, 1862 Don Bosco submitted a petition to Superintendent (*Provveditore*) Francesco Selmi (1817-1881) for the approval of the Oratory secondary school.<sup>23</sup> Don Bosco made the point that he was trying to promote the secondary education of young people of the poorer classes to put them in a position to earn an honest livelihood. Following an inspection and a favorable report by Secretary Giuseppe Camillo Vigna, Selmi gave temporary approval.

But he also asked Don Bosco to submit data on the professors, pupils and curriculum. In Don Bosco's report, only Fr. Matteo Picco (1812-1880), listed as director, and Salesian Fr. Angelo Savio (1835-1893) held legal certification. Salesian Fr. Vittorio Alasonatti (1812-1865) held an old certification that entitled him to teach Latin grammar. The other instructors were Salesian seminarians between 22 and 25 years of age that held no certification, some of whom were not even enrolled in any school at the university: Francesco Cerruti (1844-1917), Giambattista Francesia (1838-1930), Celestino Durando (1840-1907) and Giambattista Anfossi (1840-1913). Don Bosco gave the number of students (boarders) as 318, all exempt from fee for room, board

<sup>23</sup> The story is told in *IBM* VII, 319-328, 394-401, 444-455, 319-328, 856-858 (much abbreviated in *EBM*, 254-270).

and tuition [!]. The textbooks used were “only those prescribed by the government’s programs.” For a decision Selmi was caught on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he could not overlook the support Don Bosco could draw on from many quarters, from the royal court, from the university, and from some political and banking circles. On the other hand, he had to cover his flanks with the Ministry and from some powerful people who were hostile to Don Bosco’s educational undertaking. Selmi himself in a conversation with Don Bosco at his office voiced his criticism of Don Bosco’s seemingly anti-patriotic and reactionary ideas put forth in his *History of Italy* and in the *Catholic Readings*. In a letter to Selmi Don Bosco pleaded with him to let the school continue, but the superintendent was taking no action, and Don Bosco suffered though a period of great anxiety.<sup>24</sup> This was in July (1863).

In June the Oratory had been subjected to a particularly rigorous and factious inspection, so much so that Don Bosco was forced to have recourse to Minister Felice Matteucci himself.<sup>25</sup> It emerged eventually that the State’s secondary schools had the same problems as the Oratory school with regard to certified professors. As a matter of fact Minister Matteucci saw fit to set up an extraordinary session for teachers that intended to be certified as secondary school professors. The outcome of this discernment on the part of the school authorities was that on November 2, 1863 the Oratory school received a new decree of approval.

Don Bosco took action to have his teachers certified as secondary school professors, but he was never in full compliance. However, between 1863 and 1876, the year the radical (anticlerical) Left defeated the Historic Right and took over the government, the Oratory school experienced a period of relative peace and prosperity. During this period, inspectors from the Ministry were struck by the educational skills of those young Salesian teachers, by the discipline prevailing in those overcrowded classrooms, and by the lively but friendly recreation in that small playground.

Things changed with the coming to power of the Left (1876). Inspections and demands became more severe. In 1879 the Oratory school was temporarily closed down.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> For this part of the story see *EBM* VI, 281-284. The dialogue between Selmi and Don Bosco is Lemoyne’s “believable” reconstruction.

<sup>25</sup> For the story see *EBM* VII, 186-193, 234-237.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIV, 61-69, 108-155, and Michael Ribotta, “The Day They Shut Down the Oratory School,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* 2:1 (1991), 19-44.





## Chapter 2

# EXPANSION OF THE SALESIAN WORK IN TURIN, PIEDMONT AND LIGURIA (1863-1875)

### Summary

- I. Don Bosco's Decision at the Crossroads in the 1860s
  1. The Situation Outside Turin—in the “Provinces”
  2. Don Bosco's Decision for New Directions for the Salesian Apostolate
- II. Junior Seminary and Boarding School (Collegio)
  1. Motivation and Constitutional Basis
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- III. Significance of the Salesian School: Questions and Comments
  1. New Directions of the Salesian Work in Schools
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  3. The Boarding School as a Formative Educational Experience: The Salesian as a Boarding School Educator
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- IV. Developments of the Salesian Work in Turin and Don Bosco's Building Activities (1860s-1870s)
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  3. The Oratory of St. Joseph in Borgo San Salvario
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  5. Development at the Oratory of St. Aloysius
  6. The School of Valsalice

Stella, *DB:LC&W*, 121-127; *Biographical Memoirs*: (1) Giaveno, diocesan junior seminary (1860-61): *EBM* VI 342-347, 405-407, 418-420, 424-428, 589-594; *EBM* VII, 86-92 – (2) Mirabello, private Salesian school (1863), transferred to Borgo San Mar-

tino (1870): *EBM* VI, 430-431; *EBM* VII, 242-243, 313-319 (*Confidential Letter of Advice* to the Director Father Rua, 316-319), 350-352; *EBM* IX, 413, 426, 446; *EBM* X, 91-92 – (3) Lanzo Torinese, municipal Salesian school (1864): *EBM* VII, 416-417, 475-477; *EBM* VIII, 93-94, 154-155, 437-438 – (4) Trofarello, house donated and used chiefly as a retreat house (1865-70) – (5) Cherasco, municipal Salesian school (1869-71), transferred to Varazze (1871) – (6) Alassio, municipal Salesian school (1870): *EBM* IX, 406, 413, 439, 446; *EBM* X, 197 – (7) Varazze, municipal Salesian school (1871): *EBM* IX, 456; *EBM* X, 94-96, 107 – (8) Marassi, private Salesian school (1871), transferred to Sampierdarena (1873): *EBM* X, 106-108, 112-113, 172-173, 179-180, 465-466.

In speaking of developments in 1864, the Biographer writes: “Don Bosco kept encouraging his clerics to take their [teacher’s certification] exams and not be reluctant to devote themselves to this necessary, noble mission [of teaching in a Salesian boarding school].”<sup>1</sup>

The Salesian (boarding) school (*collegio*) represented a new and major commitment by Don Bosco to education in the context of liberal school reforms. The pages that follow describe this development.

## I. Don Bosco’s Decision at the Crossroads in the 1860s

Details in P. Stella, *DB:Le&W* and *DBEcSoc*, as in the Bibliography in Chapter 1.

In the 1860s and throughout Don Bosco’s lifetime there took place a tremendous expansion of the Salesian work outside Turin—first in Piedmont and Liguria (Kingdom of Sardinia), and later in the rest of Italy, France, Spain, England, and some nations of South America. Now, it is remarkable that the expansion at least for Italy and for the period we’re speaking of (1860s and early 1870s), took the form principally of the (boarding) school with a liberal arts curriculum chiefly at lower secondary level (*ginnasio*). As noted in the preceding chapter, the school at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales was the first to be established. It is also remarkable that some of these schools, and ideally all of Don Bosco’s schools, functioned as junior seminaries.

Oratory work and other forms of Salesian engagement usually went hand in hand with the work of the school; but Don Bosco’s decision had been to enter the field of education through the school *expressly*. Within a few short years this “new” apostolate became quantitatively the chief work of the Society.

What are the circumstances that brought about this development?

<sup>1</sup> *EBM* VII, 439.

## 1. Don Bosco's at the Crossroads in the 1860s

Why didn't Don Bosco concentrating all his activity in Turin, either by multiplying oratories or by expanding existing ones? Why, for example, did he not develop the work at Valdocco into a citadel of Salesian activities for young people to rival (with different objectives) the near-by "citadel of the sick and the handicapped," Cottolengo's *Little House of Divine Providence*?

One of the reasons was that, in addition to a sharp decline in public and private charity due to political and socio-economic factors, the situation in Turin had changed considerably from that which had determined Don Bosco's response in the 1840s and '50s. In the 1860s the flow of immigrant and seasonal workers did not present the problem of earlier years. Industry and the new economic system were being systematically organized, guaranteeing greater permanency and steadier employment.

At the same time, young people in Turin (for reason not fully understood) had changed in that they had acquired greater sophistication and showed a diminished interest in feast day activities of the type provided by the oratories. Thus all oratories in Turin experienced a general leveling off in attendance. Attendance in fact declined even further with the diminution of immigration into the city during the years of economic crisis, that is, from about 1863 to 1868-69.

Don Bosco may have weighed the possibility of opening private schools (permitted under the new school legislation) in Turin itself. There certainly was a call for the education of the children of working people. But, on the one hand, the number of primary and secondary schools established under government auspices was increasing and would give rise to a competitive situation; and on the other hand private schools, especially when operated by individuals, though destined to increase in number through the sixties and seventies, would always be small in attendance. This solution was not congenial to Don Bosco whose aim was to impact the largest possible numbers of young people.

Meanwhile the building development at the oratory of Valdocco had fairly reached its limit, given the space available. The premises were already overcrowded, and by 1868 the number of boarders had reached 800 individuals (including both young people and adults). An expansion out of the city would alleviate the overcrowded conditions, ease the financial burden, and provide "employment" for the steadily increasing membership of the Salesian Society.

Skilled as he was in evaluating new situations, Don Bosco thought it better, as far as Turin was concerned, not to go beyond what he had already done, in terms of oratory work and school. Establishing some new work outside Turin must have looked like the logical solution. But where could new works be located, and what type of works could they be?

## **2. The Situation Outside Turin—in the “Provinces”**

Opportunities for Salesian work were to be found in the “Provinces.”<sup>2</sup> Even in larger provincial capitals such as Vercelli, Novara, Alessandria, oratories like those that were needed in Turin in the 1840s and ’50s were not the most urgent need. Industrial development and immigration of young workers were on a fairly small scale in those cities. On the other hand, in the larger provincial cities and even in municipal towns schools were the growing need. The movement toward mass education promoted by the liberal revolution, and of the new school legislation issued by the secular State, served as stimulus for expanded secondary education for an increasing number of young people. But the Boncompagni and the Casati School Reforms (1848 and 1859 respectively), while reorganizing and promoting education under State control made primary and secondary education the responsibility of local authorities. Municipal towns found it difficult, for lack of money and teachers, to provide primary and secondary schooling in accordance with the Law, especially in a time of economic depression like the ’sixties. This inability to comply prevented the establishment of a secondary school in towns that had none and also hindered the operation of schools already established. Don Bosco therefore saw an opportunity of inserting a Salesian (and religious) presence in these towns to the advantage both of the municipal administration and of the Salesian Society.

<sup>2</sup> Italy was divided into regions; regions were divided into provinces. The Region of Piedmont (with capital, Turin, and a population of some 3,500,000) was divided into six provinces (in order of population): Turin, Alessandria, Cuneo, Novara, Vercelli and Ivrea-Aosta. The Region of Liguria (with capital, Genoa, and a population of some 1,300,000) was divided into 4 provinces: Genoa, Savona, Spezia, and Imperia.

### **3. Don Bosco's Decision for New Directions for the Salesian Apostolate**

After the Casati Law of 1859, therefore, Don Bosco was facing a major decision as to what new direction to give to his work. When we consider his engagement as it developed, we may identify two directions.

First, he offered his services to the bishops for the direction of diocesan junior seminaries. Secondly (a work that eventually took the upper hand) he offered his services to provincial municipal towns by taking on the direction of (boarding) schools for secondary education already established or by establishing secondary (boarding) schools in such towns under Salesian hospices.

## **II. Junior Seminary and Boarding School (*Collegio*)**

### **1. Motivation and Constitutional Basis**

The State's control of junior seminaries in practice interfered with the seminary program, even though theoretically it concerned only standards and citizenship. Don Bosco felt that he could help matters by offering his services to the bishops. Also, many junior seminaries had been forced out of existence by the Rattazzi laws. Don Bosco saw the need, and made private Salesian schools to serve as junior seminaries.

Don Bosco's decision to work for the education of young seminarians (*giovane clero*) led to the broadening of the constitutional parameters relating to the purpose of the Society by the addition of the "article on the junior seminary." The earliest constitutional text, the Rua draft of 1858, lacks such an article. But the article appears in a separate sheet in Don Bosco's own hand, with Don Bosco own emendations, and it was included in the draft of 1860. It read:

5. Moreover, in view of the grave danger that young people desirous of embracing the ecclesiastical state have to face, this congregation shall apply itself with care to cultivating the piety and vocation of those who show a special aptitude for study and an outstanding disposition toward piety.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Motto, *Cost. SDB*, 76-77.

Although Don Bosco's primary motivation here was loyalty to the Church, the Salesian Society would benefit from such "vocation work," as also from the good will that this work would win from the diocesan clergy.

It should be noted that the constitution on the junior seminary serves also for the school as such, which otherwise has *no separate constitution*, though clearly Don Bosco intended the Salesian Society to be engaged in secondary education expressly.<sup>4</sup>

His decision to enter the field of secondary education through the school was motivated by an important religious concern. In the Kingdom of Sardinia since the Boncompagni school reform (1848) and after the Casati Law (1859) in united Italy, the Church was faced with the problem and the challenge of a basically secular public school. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the new school laws allowed religious instruction and a chaplain as part of the school program. However, because of restrictions regarding religious textbooks and services, multi-denominational character of the student population (Waldenses or "Protestants", Jews and others), and objection from some parents, the school could no longer be counted on realistically to provide a Catholic education to the children. Hence, the bishops, expressing the concern of the Pope himself, began to call for the establishment of private schools (allowed by the law) to provide such religious education.<sup>5</sup>

It should also be noted that a significant sector of the population continued to show a preference for Church-sponsored schools in the belief that they provided a better education. That is why many young people who had no intention of studying for the priesthood were enrolled in junior seminaries.

Thus in the context of the Casati Law and its provisions, as well as in response to the call by the bishops, Don Bosco saw the need and took advantage of the opportunity to establish schools in towns outside Turin.

<sup>4</sup> As may be gathered from a comparative reading of the stages of development, this article was expanded to include the idea of secondary education for poor youngsters, but always with junior-seminary aims in view. Don Bosco wrote no constitution on the "secondary school," as we know it today.

<sup>5</sup> Commenting on the situation created by the Boncompagni Law, Lemoyne records the bishops' protests. He adds: "Don Bosco immediately saw the need for building Catholic private schools regardless of cost. [...] For a long time he had been nourishing ambitious projects for the Christian education of youth" [*EBM* III, 316]. We cannot be sure for how long "he had been nourishing ambitious projects," but it is certain that the liberal school reform had much to do with his decision to enter the field of secondary education in the 1860s.



2 – Salesian Municipal School established in 1864 at Lanzo Torinese

## 2. Types of Schools

There resulted three types of schools: (1) The junior seminary, whether under diocesan ownership or operated as a private Salesian school in premises given to, or acquired by, Don Bosco; (2) The “municipal” Salesian school, taken on at the request of a municipal town, to serve as local public school and operated on the basis of a legal agreement defining mutual rights and obligations; (3) The private Salesian school totally owned and operated by Salesians in the service of young people.

As to the population served, two types of schools may be mentioned: (1) Schools established in the smaller municipal towns with relatively small enrollment, mostly in the 'sixties; (2) Schools established in larger cities, usually in lower working class districts, with larger enrollment, mostly in the 'seventies and thereafter. This second type was usually a “private” Salesian school, established at the request of a bishop, in response to a special need such as



the presence of “Protestants” or of anticlerical activity, with substantial help from charity (local benefactors, Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, etc.).

As to residence, all these schools were boarding schools (*collegi*). All of them, however, were also attended by day students.

As to educational and school program, all schools were chiefly for secondary level I (“*ginnasio*,” in terms of the Casati Law). Some schools also offered secondary level II (“*liceo*”), and most schools offered also primary levels.

All “private” Salesian schools served also as junior seminaries (with or without the name). Other types of schools offered the same opportunity. Vocational recruiting and formation was in all cases carried out through personal contact and through the formation of a group of “best boys” (youth associations serving this purpose well).

Finally, all schools (as far as possible) served as a basis for every other type of Salesian work (chiefly the oratory, the press, and the “Salesian church,” which usually served as a public oratory, or even as a parish).

The following paragraphs give descriptions and summary data of all the new foundations up to the early 1870s. More space is devoted to the two schools founded expressly as junior seminaries, including some discussion of general problems common to all schools. (See readings listed in the bibliography of Chapter 1.)

### 3. The Junior Seminary of Giaveno (1860-1862)

It appears that the municipal towns of Cavour and Giaveno were the first to realize that Don Bosco and his men were available for schools. Although both administrations presented requests, Don Bosco favored Giaveno, a town of over 10,000 people located some 20 km west of Turin, where he had a number of acquaintances and friends.<sup>6</sup>

A flourishing junior seminary had existed in Giaveno since 1840 with a studies program that comprised the six years of secondary studies and two years of philosophy under the 1822 school reform of King Charles Felix. The building then could comfortably house some 60 students. The liberal revolution of 1848, and the clerical reaction that accompanied it, had caused the closing of the Turin seminary and the exile of Archbishop Fransoni.

<sup>6</sup> The information regarding the “Giaveno experiment” in the following paragraphs is from Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 127-130, quoting sources.



The crisis also affected the seminaries outside Turin (Bra and Giaveno). The Siccardi and Rattazzi Laws of 1850 and 1855 had further contributed to the decline of priestly vocations generally, of the junior seminary of Giaveno in particular. By 1860 only a small number of boarders remained, and the premises, which had been gradually expanded, appeared deserted. The maintenance of the seminary had become a burden for the archdiocese, and the Giaveno city fathers, who were looking for a way of meeting the requirements of the Casati Law, hoped that the diocese would phase out the junior seminary. But Archbishop Fransoni, who from his exile had been in touch with Don Bosco regarding the constitutions, on receiving the city council's request and proposal thought of entrusting to Don Bosco the task of re-starting the junior seminary. Don Bosco accepted and proceeded at once to make concrete plans. The Giaveno administration was satisfied, for the junior seminaries in many places functioned as regular schools also for those who did not study with the priesthood in view.

Concretely, Don Bosco negotiated individually with youngsters who applied for the Oratory school, and was able to send several dozens to Giaveno, where in any case the premises were more comfortable than at Valdocco. The Turin chancery named a certain Fr. Giovanni Grassino (1821-1902) rector of the junior seminary in addition to several of the old staff. Don Bosco provided Fr. Giuseppe Rocchietti (1836-1876) as spiritual director, seminarian Francesco Vaschetti (1839-1916) as prefect of discipline and financial administrator, and the seminarians Giovanni Baravalle (b. 1838), Giovanni Boggero (1840-1866) and Filippo Turletti (1842-1906) as teachers and assistants. More were sent the following year, including seminarian Domenico Bongiovanni (1842-1903).

It was a good beginning. In November 1860 the enrollment rose to 110; before the end of the school year it had risen to 150; in October 1861 the students numbered 240.

But the spirit of partisanship was working its mischief. Don Bosco was the object of criticism from people who were influenced by the anticlerical press and resented the Salesian presence in the school. The anticlerical *Gazzetta del Popolo* had castigated Don Bosco for his conservatism, and had lambasted his *History of Italy* (1855 and 1859) as the work of a reactionary. It had satirized the education imparted at the Oratory as jesuitical and bigoted. The Rector of the seminary began to distance himself from Don Bosco and his method, and so the lines were drawn. In the Turin chancery Don Bosco had the support of the Vicar General, Canon Celestino Fissore (1814-1889), but the

powerful pro-Vicar, Canon Alessandro Vogliotti (1809-1887), who would be appointed rector of the Turin seminary (re-opened in 1863) was displeased with the way Don Bosco spoke of Valdocco and Giaveno as one community. He was also pressing Don Bosco to send the seminarians studying at the Oratory back to their own dioceses. Archbishop Fransoni was displeased with such hostility toward Don Bosco, but he also had reservations about the Salesian constitutions (as mentioned earlier).

In any case he did not intervene, and the conflict turned ugly with subversion from some of the diocesan staff and pressure put on the Salesian seminarians working there as teachers to leave the Oratory.

The make matters worse, when the Archbishop died in Lyons in 1862, the man who was elected Capitular Vicar of the diocese was not Vicar Fissore or one of Fransoni's political line, but Canon Giuseppe Zappata (1796-1883), of the cathedral chapter, a theologian and a solid university man, holding a moderate political line with respect to the liberal government.

In the matter of the conflict at Giaveno Canon Zappata's line prevailed. On the one hand, Rector Grassino was dismissed; but on the other, Don Bosco was persuaded to retreat. Amid this turmoil, Don Bosco lost two good men. Fr. Rocchietti (who was not a Salesian) remained with the diocese. The excellent seminarian Francesco Vaschetti, who was largely responsible for the success of the school, was persuaded to leave the Society, which he had joined in 1859. Don Bosco recalled the other Salesians to Valdocco in 1862.

In spite of all the grief, the Salesians may be credited with re-establishing the junior seminary, which continued with ups and downs in enrollment but with some success.

But the Giaveno affair taught Don Bosco some valuable lessons. First, he could not rely on the Turin chancery for real support for the Salesian Congregation and its constitutions. Secondly, for a successful operation of a diocesan junior seminary he would need ownership of premises and control of administration.

#### **4. The Junior Seminary of Mirabello (1863-1869)**

Even before withdrawing from Giaveno, Don Bosco had entered into negotiations with the municipal town of Dogliani (later dropped) and with Bishop Luigi Nazari di Calabiana of Casale for the establishment of a junior seminary in the service of that diocese.

By mid-nineteenth century, the diocese of Casale had lost its junior seminary to the liberal revolution. It had been in existence since about 1700, but it had been closed after 1848, and the buildings and property had been confiscated by the Rattazzi Laws of 1855, and never given back. They had been used as a military hospital, and subsequently as a military command center for the army corps of engineers. Writing to Justice and Worship Minister Giuseppe Pisanelli in 1864, Bishop Calabiana complained about the scarcity of priestly vocations to replace his aging clergy, and lamenting the fact that his was the only diocese in the old Piedmontese provinces that was not permitted to have a junior seminary.<sup>7</sup>

Prior to negotiations with the bishop, Don Bosco around 1860 had received a request from the pastor of Mirabello, a small municipal town of slightly over 3,000 inhabitants, situated some 40 km (c. 25 mi.) east of Turin, and not far from Casale. The request was to open a secondary school, for which a local gentleman farmer, Mr. Vincenzo Provera, father of Salesian seminarian Francesco Provera, was offering a sizable tract of land with a small house on it, and some money. With this and with Bishop Calabiana's need in view, in 1861 Don Bosco planned the itinerary of his Autumn outing with some 100 boys to reach as far as the Marian shrine of Crea and as far as Casale. From there the group went on to Mirabello where they camped overnight.

In his negotiations with the bishop, therefore, Don Bosco could make him the attractive offer of a tract of land up front, even though located in an out-of-the-way hick town. In October of the following year (1862) Don Bosco again with some 100 youngsters, including choristers, actors, etc., walked by stages to Mirabello. The land had been cleared and materials assembled, and Mr. Provera had the building plans ready. Don Bosco engaged the building contractor, Giosuè Buzzetti, brother of contractor Carlo Buzzetti, who was at the time putting up some building at the Oratory. (Both had been early oratory boys.) Building at Mirabello started immediately, was resumed in spring of 1863 and completed that autumn.

With the date of August 30, 1863, Bishop Calabiana wrote the specially worded document of institution.

Taking advantage of the offer made by a pious person of a large building erected for the purpose in the municipal town of Mirabello, we have decided to establish a junior seminary in it. It will serve especially for the education of young aspirants to the priesthood.

<sup>7</sup> Historical information for this section is derived from Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 130-133.

To provide good direction for this school, we looked for a priest endowed with all the qualities that are required for the Christian and civic education of the young. We have found such a priest in Fr. [Michele] Rua. We hereby appoint him director of our diocesan junior seminary of St. Charles in the town of Mirabello and we gladly grant him all appropriate faculties. It is our desire that in all matters relating to studies he should be guided by the programs prescribed by His Majesty's government for primary and secondary schools.<sup>8</sup>

The building costs had been high, more than 100,000 lire, but benefactors like Countess Carlotta Callori di Vignale and her husband Federico, who owned much land under profitable vine cultivation in the area, more than Mr. Provera, made it all possible. Count Federico was mayor of Casale.

In August 1863 Don Bosco went on pilgrimage to the Marian shrine of Oropa (in the Alps), where he finalized the regulations for the school. These were essentially those of the Valdocco school.<sup>9</sup>

Back in Turin, he consulted with his council, and then appointed the staff: Fr. Rua (25 years of age) was director and the only priest; the seminarians Francesco Provera (Prefect), Giovanni Bonetti (Catechist), Francesco Ceruti (Prefect of Studies), all in their early 20s, and Paolo Albera (19 years of age and not yet professed). Don Bosco also sent four student aspirants, who had donned the clerical habit for the purpose and were to serve as teachers and assistants: Francesco Dalmazzo, Domenico Belmonte, Angelo Nasi, and Felice Alessio.

The group's departure was an occasion as momentous as that of the later departure of the first missionaries for Buenos Aires. Don Bosco gave them detailed advice and instructions (care of vocations, attachment and service to the bishop, deference to the pastor, and the keeping of a "journal of experience").

Don Bosco also promised Father Rua that he would follow this up with special guidelines in writing. These guidelines (later revised as *Confidential Advice to Directors*) are an important document.<sup>10</sup>

The Salesians arrived at Mirabello on October 13, 1863. Instruction be-

<sup>8</sup> Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 131, citing document from the archive of the diocese of Casale.

<sup>9</sup> These unpublished regulations are described and briefly summarized in *EBM* VII, 519-522 and *EBM* VII, 313-315.

<sup>10</sup> *EBM* VII, 316-319. For critical text and study see F. Motto, in *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane*, 3:1 (1984) 125-166. See *IBM* VII, 524-526 and *EBM* VII, 316-319: text of 1863 (Further editions: 1871, 1875, 1876).

gan in early November with primary and secondary programs. In November 1863 Don Bosco gathered the Mirabello Salesians at the Oratory, and the house chapter for Mirabello was appointed/elected. Thus the first independent Salesian community (which comprised the best Salesians Don Bosco could spare) was formed.

In the constitutions of 1864, Don Bosco states that the boarders (*ricoverati*, given shelter) at Mirabello numbered about 100.<sup>11</sup> In 1865 boarders and day students together numbered about 170, in 1867 about 180.<sup>12</sup>

The school of Mirabello was totally in Salesian ownership. It was a Salesian school offering primary and secondary education to locals and serving at the same time as diocesan junior seminary. The boarders paid for their room and board, and all students paid for their tuition, though there were a good number of charity cases.

Even so, at Mirabello, as later at Lanzo, revenues from room and board and tuition fees were not sufficient for an operation in the black. The same may be said of similar schools maintained by other religious congregations.

There were other problems as well of an institutional and political nature. Clearly, only a small percentage of the students had a priestly vocation in mind. Local administrations did not have the resources to put the Casati Law into effect. At Mirabello as elsewhere, the junior seminary by a tacit understanding functioned also as public school, and some parents, even if otherwise hostile, preferred to enroll their children in junior (and even major) seminaries for their education.

In any case, the standards set by the Law had to be complied with, and in this respect the Salesian school at Mirabello came under attack. First, the district tax office demanded payment, since it was a private school liable to taxation. Secondly, the school authority of the province (Alessandria) found the school in non-compliance with the Law regarding teacher certification.

To obviate such demands, Don Bosco had obtained from Bishop Calabiana of Casale the recognition of the school as a junior seminary (*Piccolo Seminario di San Carlo*) under diocesan jurisdiction. (The document quoted above was written by the Bishop at Don Bosco's request.) The Casati Law could be interpreted as respecting the autonomy of seminaries, except in certain areas. This is how he represented it to the school authorities, and so it was in practice. At Don Bosco's suggestion, Father Rua called on the *Provveditore agli*

<sup>11</sup> "Historical Summary" (*Origine di questa Società*), Motto, *Const SDB*, 68.

<sup>12</sup> Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 132, quoting a letter of Don Bosco to Minister Urbano Rattazzi.

*Studi* (School Magistrate) in person, to explain that the school was officially regarded as the successor to the junior seminary of Casale, which had been closed. The magistrate let it pass. But Don Bosco took steps to have teachers certified as soon as possible. He also took care not to publish the regulations he had written for the school (referred to above), entitled “Regulations for St. Charles’ Boarding School” (*Regolamento pel collegio-convitto S. Carlo in Mirabello*). He published instead a prospectus entitled, “Diocesan Junior Seminary” (*Piccolo seminario vescovile*).

## 5. Lanzo Torinese (1864)

### *Summary Description*

The *collegio* of Lanzo was the first *municipal Salesian* boarding school established by Don Bosco. The two prior ones were not “municipal,” though they served also the local population. Giaveno was a diocesan junior seminary, and Mirabello was a *private Salesian* school serving also as junior seminary for the diocese of Casale. Lanzo therefore was a first.

By this time Don Bosco had received various offers from municipal towns eager to find a solution to their school problem. Don Bosco settled on Lanzo Torinese, a town situated in the beautiful alpine foothills some 30 km (c. 20 mi.) northwest of Turin. Don Bosco had personal knowledge of the area and of the town, for having been on yearly retreats at St. Ignatius retreat house and shrine nearby under Father Cafasso from 1844 to 1859. (Father Cafasso died in 1860.)

A boarding school (*collegio*) had been in operation at Lanzo under city sponsorship and run under various administrations for about 50 years. It was located in the premises of a former Capuchin monastery disbanded by Napoleon in 1802. It had had, like several other such schools in the area, a history of ups and downs, until the City decided to close down the boarding section and to run only the school, whose enrollment had dwindled to practically nothing and was operated on a shoestring.<sup>13</sup> The pastor of Lanzo, Father (Blessed) Federico Albert, persuaded the city to ask Don Bosco for help, and was thus instrumental in bringing the Salesians to Lanzo. He had long been

<sup>13</sup> For a historical survey of the schools in the area, and specifically of Lanzo’s school, see Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 133-138.

Don Bosco's friend, since preaching a retreat in the Pinardi chapel in the early days.<sup>14</sup> Two buildings were available, but they were in a state of utter disrepair.

Again Don Bosco put together the best possible staff to run the school: Father Domenico Ruffino (1840-1865: 24 years of age), as Director; and seminarians Francesco Provera (1836-1874), Pietro Guidazio (1841-1902), Francesco Bodrato (1823-1880), Giuseppe Fagnano (1844-1916), Nicola Antonio Cibrario (1839-1917), Giacomo Costamagna (1846-1921), Antonio Sala (1836-1895) and others as "teachers and assistants"—12 Salesians in all.

The Salesians arrived at Lanzo in October 1864, and found the buildings still in disrepair. They themselves undertook the task of making them habitable. In November 1864 the school started, at primary level only, with an enrollment of 88 boarders and many day students. For the secondary school program Don Bosco needed an additional certified teacher, and had Father Fagnano challenge examinations at the university. He failed, but his grade was later reconsidered as Don Bosco pleaded on his behalf. In October 1865 the secondary level I ("*ginnasio*") was opened.

Tragedy struck when in March 1865 seminarian Francesco Provera became an invalid with a bone disease, and Father Ruffino died in July, that same year, of pneumonia contracted during Easter week. Father Giovanni Lemoyne, who had joined Don Bosco just in 1864, was appointed Director (1865-1877). Under him, after a showdown with the mayor over the expansion program, the school flourished.

*Agreement between Don Bosco and the City of Lanzo – Terms of the Convention*<sup>15</sup>

Before accepting the bid, Don Bosco entered into an agreement with the city of Lanzo to operate the school for 10 years, with option to renew. The agreement, which spelled out the rights and obligation of the contracting parties, was to serve as a model for the establishment of similar Salesian mu-

<sup>14</sup> Federico Giovanni Luigi Albert (Turin Oct 16, 1820 - Lanzo Torinese, Sep 30, 1876) was a priest of the diocese of Turin who had served as a royal chaplain, before being appointed pastor at Lanzo. He declined the episcopal nomination. He founded the *Vincentian Sisters of Mary Immaculate*, dedicated to the education of young people and to the care of the sick and the elderly. A close friend of Don Bosco, he was instrumental in establishing the Salesian school at Lanzo. He died from a fall off the scaffolding on which, being a good painter, he was working at the decoration of his church.

<sup>15</sup> Given in summary in IBM VII, 692-693 and in Ceria, *Annali* I, 72 (omitted in EBM VII, 416).



nicipal schools elsewhere. The document was signed on June 30, 1864. The following are its terms.

1. The City of Lanzo assumes the obligation of paying to Don Bosco a yearly sum of 3,000 lire toward the elementary and secondary school programs, and 100 lire to provide the customary awards each year.

2. The City of Lanzo gives over to Don Bosco for school use the premises of the former *collegio*, comprising buildings, chapel, playgrounds, and gardens.

3. The City of Lanzo assumes the obligation of making ready for use, and of maintaining the buildings and all premises.

4. The City of Lanzo may dismiss Don Bosco only after issuing a five-year notice.

5. Don Bosco assumes the obligation for all expenses involved in establishing the school program.

6. The City of Lanzo shall make Don Bosco a loan of 12,000 lire, for which Don Bosco shall submit a bond.

7. Don Bosco shall provide certified teachers for the three primary grades and for the five years of secondary study (*ginnasio*).

8. All students in secondary school, except those certified as poor by the City Council, shall pay tuition. Students in elementary school who do not belong to the municipality shall likewise pay tuition.

9. The boarding school (*collegio*) shall open its doors for the school year 1864-1865.

Lanzo remained Don Bosco's favorite school. He went there often, and used it as the training ground for his best people, as well as for retreats and other formation activities. He himself in his declining years spent the summer months in the cool retreat of the Lanzo foothills.

## 6. Trofarello (1865-1870)

The house was the gift of a benefactress. Although it could eventually have developed into a school, it never was put to that use. In 1866 it became the retreat house for Salesians, who up to this time had been making their retreats with the boys. By 1870, it could no longer accommodate the ever-growing number of retreatants, and the property was sold. The summer retreats were relocated at Lanzo.





3 – Salesian Municipal School established in 1870 at Alassio

### **7. Cherasco (province of Cuneo) (1869-1871)**

Don Bosco accepted this municipal *Salesian* boarding school on the basis of a written convention with the City similar to that of Lanzo. It did not turn out as he had hoped, however, the small town, located some 50 km south of Turin, being too isolated and in a depressed area. He decided to pull out and move the program to the newly opened school at Alassio, on the Italian Riviera. (See below.) He was taken to court for breach of contract and on other charges, and lost. He appealed, the penalties were reduced, and finally a settlement was reached by which he had to pay some damages.

### **8. Alassio (Province of Savona, Liguria) (1870)**

This foundation was a municipal Salesian boarding school of the Lanzo type. One month after the Cherasco agreement, Don Bosco had a request

from the municipal town of Alassio, on the Riviera west of Genoa. An unsuccessful attempt had already been made by the local authorities to set up some kind of secondary school program. Hence the local clergy thought of asking the Dominicans back (they had had a monastery there), but the friars lacked the personnel. Then the pastor, with the support of Bishop Biale of Albenga, applied to Don Bosco. At first he thought of a hostel with workshops for poor and abandoned boys, to which a secondary school program could be attached; the authorities accepted. But then he felt that a hostel would be more successful near a large city (Genoa), so he offered to staff and run a secondary school program. The city fathers were delighted and a written convention was drawn up and signed.

Don Bosco applied to the *Provveditore* (School Magistrate) for the permit to open a school with primary levels I and II and secondary level I (*ginnasio*), submitting the list of teachers. The permit was granted. The Holy See also granted the transfer of the old monastery property for this purpose.

The staff was composed of Father Francesco Cerruti (26 years of age, by this time a Ph.D.), director, two other priests, three seminarians, and seven novices, who were to do their novitiate under the director while working as “teachers and assistants.”

After a successful first year (1870-71), the secondary school program was established with full secondary level I (*ginnasio*), and the first year of secondary level II (*liceo*). The Catholic families of Alassio and neighboring towns were pressing the Salesians to establish a full secondary level II program, because they did not want their children to attend a secular school. Don Bosco recognized the need, and solved the financial problem by asking the families to contribute what they would have spent to maintain their son at a public *liceo*. Thus the *liceo* program got under way, and Father Cerruti made it a success.

## 9. Borgo San Martino (1870)

The school at Mirabello was unfavorably situated, far from the railway station, and in an insalubrious location besides. When the premises proved unequal to the enrollment, instead of building at Mirabello, Don Bosco persuaded friendly Marquis Fernando Scarampi di Pruney to sell him his villa and large property at nearby Borgo San Martino. The contract was signed in July 1870.



4 – Salesian boarding school established in 1870 in Marquis Scarampi's country house at Borgo San Martino

The Mirabello school continued at the new location under Father Giovanni Bonetti, who had succeeded Father Rua as Director at Mirabello when the latter was recalled to Turin to replace Father Vittorio Alasonatti, Prefect, who died in 1865. The Bishop of Casale approved the new school as a junior seminary for the diocese.

#### **10. Varazze (Province of Savona, Liguria) (1871)**

This foundation, too, was a municipal Salesian school. In December 1870 Don Bosco began negotiations with the city authorities of the little Riviera town, through the mediation of the local pastor. The proposal was for staffing the town's secondary school, already established with a secondary liberal arts and a "technical" program ("technical" in the sense of the Casati Law). Don Bosco was approached after two other congregations involved in education had turned down the offer. The new building capable of housing some 60 boarders was being readied on what had been Capuchin property, and the



5 – Saint Vincent de Paul Orphanage established in 1872  
in the former Theatine monastery at Sampierdarena (Genoa)

convention (of the Lanzo type) was signed in July 1871. It clearly established the parties' financial responsibility, as well as the tuition fees and incidentals in detail.

The staff consisted of Father Giovanni Francesia (33 years of age, also a Ph.D.) as director, three priests, one deacon, seven seminarians, two lay brothers, four novices and two adult aspirants.

The first year (1871-72), with nearly 100 boarders and many day students, was a success; the school kept growing and never looked back.

## **11. Marassi (1871), then Genoa-Sampierdarena (1872)**

This was a private Salesian boarding school. Don Bosco had not forgotten the home or hostel for poor boys he had always wanted to establish in Liguria. It was started through the generosity of the Conferences of St. Vincent de

Paul and of the banker and Senator Marquis Giuseppe Cataldi (1809-1876) who leased his (disused) villa at Marassi to Don Bosco for 500 lire a year.

The staff consisted of Father Paolo Albera (27 years of age, also a Ph.D.) as Director, two seminarians, and three lay novices, who were to conduct the workshops. On arriving they found nothing ready, but the program was begun in November 1871. Boys were not wanting, and the St. Vincent de Paul provided quite a few of them. Don Bosco (as at Valdocco and Mirabello) had also wanted a junior seminary program.

Soon the number of boys exceeded the capacity of the house, which besides was located in the Apennines, quite a distance from the city of Genoa and not easily accessible. Hence the following year (1872) Don Bosco looked for another site. Through the interest of Archbishop Salvatore Magnasco of Genoa, with the help of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, and with permission from the Holy See, he acquired a monastery and a large ruined church that had belonged to the Theatines. It was located in Sampierdarena [*San Pier d'Arena*], a populous and developing suburb of Genoa that bore a close resemblance to the northern districts of Turin, such as Borgo Dora and Valdocco.

Don Bosco acquired the premises for 37,000 lire. For the restoration of the church and of the buildings he needed an equal amount, which he collected through appeals. The response from clergy, nobility and moneyed business middle class enabled him to open the home (St. Vincent de Paul Orphanage), workshops, and oratory.

With an enlarged staff under Father Albera, the Sampierdarena work was well on the way to becoming the "Valdocco of Liguria."

When the Ligurian Province was created in 1881 the Provincial residence was established here, and not in the Riviera towns of Alassio or Varazze.

### **III. Significance of the Salesian School: Questions and Comments**

Don Bosco's decisive move into the field of education through the school outside Turin in the 'sixties and early 'seventies, significant as it was historically, was only a beginning that opened up new and vaster horizons for the Salesian Society. In connection with the successes of this new apostolate a variety of questions arise that we will only briefly address here.



## 1. New Directions of the Salesian Work in Schools

After the convention with the City of Varazze (1871) for the municipal school serving that town, Don Bosco received a number of requests for similar schools, but with two exceptions he no longer got involved in municipal Salesian schools or in private Salesian schools serving small towns.<sup>16</sup> The experience gathered through nearly a decade of school work, especially after the closing and transfer of the Mirabello and Cherasco programs, forced Don Bosco to evaluate his school apostolate and the direction he wanted it to take. Both these places were small and isolated, bound to remain small operations. It is true that both Lanzo and Alassio were small, but they had good railroad connections and were easily accessible. Be that as it may, it appears that Don Bosco was now thinking of a new direction, one that would also allow the best possible use and deployment of limited personnel and resources.

The new direction would be away from schools in small towns, and toward schools situated in working-class districts of provincial capitals and other sizable provincial cities accessible through decent roads and the railway. The very dynamics of such cities (immigration, industrial growth, etc.), offered the Salesian work good chances of development.

One must bear in mind that the original experience of the Oratory in Turin, situated in the middle of growing outlying districts of the city (an experience that was continued in the foundation of Genoa-Sampierdarena), placed Don Bosco in a well-defined social position. He was for the masses of the populous peripheral districts of cities, and the expansion of the work with schools outside Turin should follow the pattern. He saw that the future of the Salesian school lay in that direction. This discernment led him to disengage himself from the school politics bred by the Casati Law as it concerned municipal towns.

But by this very disengagement at a time when, after the taking of Rome in 1870, Catholic opposition to the liberal State was coalescing, Don Bosco (with many others) decided to place his personnel resources at the service of the “Catholic” school.

This was the school promoted by “good, conservative Catholics,” largely financed by them and attended by their children and by the children of people still in some way affiliated with Catholicism. Often the names of the bishop

<sup>16</sup> The two exceptions were Trinità di Mondovì (Cuneo, Piedmont) in 1876, closed the following year, and Randazzo (Catania, Sicily) in 1879.

and of some rich Catholic family appear at the head of the list of promoters. Sampierdarena may be cited as a case in point. As mentioned above, this work started at Marassi in the country house of Senator Giuseppe Cataldi with the sponsorship of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul, and was soon thereafter transferred to Sampierdarena with Archbishop Magnasco's help. Don Bosco's appeal for support was addressed to the "good Catholics" of the area. In the appeal he speaks of young people at risk roaming the streets and of the need of a home and a school. He gives the names of those who made the original purchase possible, and Archbishop Magnasco and Baroness Luigia Cataldi headed the list.<sup>17</sup>

It seems therefore that Sampierdarena signals a new direction that responded no longer to requests by municipal towns, but to the Church's call for Catholic schools needed to counteract the secular system or the inroads of "Protestants."

After 1870, and more so after 1874 (when coincidentally Don Bosco's mediating activity between Italy and the Holy See came to an end), we see his relationships to State administrators on the wane, and those with bishops, clergy and Catholic laity on the increase. The Salesian schools were financed only to a small degree from school fees or from small yearly subsidies from financial institutions. The money came primarily from substantial gifts and legacies by rich Catholic laymen, such as Count Callori, Baron Cataldi, Count Belletrutti, Baron Bianco di Barbania, Count Cays, etc.

The liberal State "defended" itself against the Catholic (and Salesian) schools by denying recognition or parity, and generally by making life difficult for them. Youngsters from Catholic schools would challenge State examinations for the diploma as private students. Some of them received rough treatment. But examining professors (among them Catholic or anticlerical professors of a special brand) could be fair and even lenient.

## **2. The Salesian [Boarding] School and Don Bosco's Option for Poor Young People**

### *Schools Generally for Middle-Class Young People*

The question is asked whether Don Bosco's commitment to education through schools replaced his original option for the poor, since schools at

<sup>17</sup> Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 152-153, quoting sources.

secondary level were largely attended by middle-class youngsters. Clearly Don Bosco never abandoned in principle and in practice his option for the “poor and abandoned,” but also felt duty-bound to respond to real needs spawned in new political and social contexts. The school apostolate was undertaken in addition to, not as a replacement of, the original option. It should rather be regarded as *the original option extended*.

In a provincial town the “poor and abandoned” would be relatively few and would constitute a minority with respect to young people from moderate-income, or even well to do, families. In the sixties and into the seventies, the majority of children of the peasant and working class did not “study.” Seldom did the children of the “proletariat” advance beyond primary levels, if at all. Hence, schools at secondary level in the provinces would prevalently enroll middle-class youngsters. These were the children of proprietor farmers, small business people and merchants, established tradesmen, and officers of the local civil administration—people all that had saved some money and wished to put their children through school to enable them to better their social and economic positions.

Obviously, higher secondary education (*liceo*) was for young people from richer families. This was true also in the case of the few *licei* that Don Bosco accepted.

For these reasons, as far as the school was concerned, Don Bosco could no longer claim in his appeals that his work was for the poor and abandoned, and rely totally on private and public charity. Most of the students paid at least a part of their tuition, room and board. Generally the schools, once established, apparently operated in the black. But the term could now be taken to mean the “morally and spiritually poor and abandoned,” a category which was growing apace with the progressive secularization of society.

Clearly Don Bosco was never troubled by the dilemma: *either* oratories for poor and abandoned youth *or* [boarding] schools for middle-class young people. He saw the need and the opportunity and did not hesitate. Salesian schools could be the training grounds for “honest citizens and good Christians” and nurseries of vocations to the diocesan clergy and to the Salesian Society.

### *Abiding Commitment to the Poor*

While responding to the Church’s call and taking advantage of new opportunities, Don Bosco never abandoned his commitment to the poor both



in principle and in practice, as compatible with reality. All Salesian apostolates are to the young and poor, and this is part and parcel of the Salesian charism. Thus, in all Salesian schools room and board and tuition were in many instances reduced or condoned to accommodate young people from poorer families, especially if these youngsters looked like possible candidates for the “ecclesiastical state.” This principle was embodied in the “seminary article” of the constitutions of 1860 (quoted above), and the idea often found expression in Don Bosco’s appeals to benefactors.

Furthermore, as is known, Don Bosco accepted the school at Valsalice (Turin) only after much soul-searching, and the Archbishop’s insistent requests. His qualms arose precisely because it was a school for the nobility. In a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi Don Bosco stated:

What discourages my associates [from accepting the Valsalice school] is this:  
1. *Our purpose is to work for the middle class and not for the nobility.* 2. If persons of such outstanding ability as are the present administrators cannot make a go of it, how can we, the poor little pygmies that we are, ever hope to succeed?<sup>18</sup>

By “middle class,” Don Bosco may have meant poor, as contrasted to the nobility. But it is nonetheless true that in the sixties and seventies, secondary schools (Salesian schools being no exception) were largely for middle-class youngster.

### **3. The Boarding School as a Formative Educational Experience: The Salesian as a [Boarding] School Educator**

Don Bosco established the first Salesian boarding school outside Turin in 1863. But one should bear in mind that by the late 1850s he had established a boarding school at Valdocco with a full liberal arts curriculum at secondary level. Although the *Casa Annessa* (Home attached to Oratory) had begun as a “shelter” for homeless youngsters and later for youngsters working at a trade in in-residence workshops, almost at once the students outnumbered the workers, and the house soon became a proper boarding school with a liberal arts curriculum. In the ’sixties and thereafter Don Bosco made an all-out

<sup>18</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, March 22, 1872, Motto, *Epistolario* III, 411; IBM X, 344-345 (omitted in EBM).

commitment to the school. Other forms of the Salesian apostolate continued to be carried forward; but the [boarding] school took on a preeminent position.

The question may be asked, Why a *boarding* school? Why not just a school? The boarding school was a time-honored institution, as the Jesuit practice showed. True, in the eighteenth century and into the Romantic period, because of naturalistic ideas of freedom in education the boarding school lost prestige and popularity. But it experienced resurgence in the nineteenth century, at least in Italy. Parents actually preferred to place their children in a boarding school in the belief that they would thereby receive a better education.

The boarding school at Valdocco provided a most important formative experience for Don Bosco, if only for the reason that here Don Bosco had young men whom he could hope to enlist as helpers or to send on to the priesthood. From the standpoint of the educational relationship, the boarding school presented Don Bosco with a stable and controllable student community. This guaranteed the possibility of sustained contact and influence, as well as of experimentation and revision on the part of the educator. The result was an innovative approach that established its validity and proved its worth by forming generations of “honest citizens and good Christians”—Don Bosco’s educational method. No doubt this initial successful and enriching experience at Valdocco was one of the reasons why Don Bosco moved so decisively into the field of the boarding school. All the Salesian schools then became proving grounds of Don Bosco’s method, now become the Salesian method. By such a large-scale commitment of resources and personnel to this apostolate at a time of great need, the Salesian Society won a place among the foremost educational institutes, and (primarily and more importantly) made a considerable contribution to Catholic life.

The boarding school of the Oratory and the Salesian boarding schools that followed became places where the Salesian educational community could best be seen at work. Important educational writings of Don Bosco have the boarding school as their setting. Such are, for example, the *Savio* (1859), *Magone* (1861) and *Besucco* (1864) biographies, the historically based novelette *Valentine or a Frustrated Vocation* (1866), *Souvenirs for the Holidays* (1872), the *Regulations for the Casa Annessa* (1854, finalized in 1876), and the little treatise on *The Preventive System* (1877).

The General Chapters held during Don Bosco’s lifetime and for a period thereafter gave much attention to the boarding school and its structures, and to the activities of both students and educators.

#### 4. The “Junior Seminary Article” and the Salesian School

One should bear in mind, as noted above, that in the early constitutions the school as such does not have a separate constitution. It is not listed as a separate apostolate of the Society, but only in connection with promoting priestly vocations. In Don Bosco’s own draft of 1864, the text (first introduced in 1860) reads:

Moreover, in view of the grave danger that young people desirous of embracing the ecclesiastical state have to face, this congregation shall apply itself with care to cultivating the piety and vocation of those who show a special aptitude for study and an outstanding disposition toward piety.

The article continues:

When giving shelter to young people for the pursuit of study, those that are poorest [poorer] shall be accepted by preference, since they would lack the means whereby to pursue their studies elsewhere, *provided* they give well grounded hope of success in [their vocation to] the ecclesiastical state. In the house of Valdocco the young people who are pursuing a classical course of studies *with this end in view* number about 555, and at Mirabello over one hundred.<sup>19</sup>

Clearly the latter paragraph is still part of the seminary article, and not a constitution on the school as such, whatever one may think of the claim that at Valdocco alone 555 youngsters were pursuing their studies *with this end in view* (that is, of becoming priests).

And yet it is certain that Don Bosco’s option to enter the field of the school, and to develop the school apostolate to the extent that he did, was motivated by a larger concern than just “vocations,” and found larger scope of application than just the junior seminary. He often expressed the idea that the aim of Salesian school was to educate youngsters to be honest citizens and good Christians, not just vocations to the ecclesiastical state. But even while the constitutions were still in the development stage, and successive apostolates were being given separate recognition, the school apostolate as such did not receive separate treatment in the constitutional text.

<sup>19</sup> Motto, *Const. SDB*, 76-77.

## 5. Significance for Today

Don Bosco's entering the field of the [boarding] school and his eventual all-out commitment to this apostolate are to be understood as a response, in a time of opportunity, to a pressing need arising out of a specific historical context. Given a different need in a different context, his response would no doubt have been different, although the school turned out to suit his educational ideas admirably.

Consequently, things that are stated or ordained by Don Bosco or by general chapters with the [boarding] school in view are to be understood in their proper historical context, namely, as referring to that time and place. Furthermore, such directives might have been prompted not by general Christian, educational considerations, but by specific cultural, even local consideration, and might not be transferable to other educational contexts.

## 6. Conclusion

By mid-1870s, the schools of the Salesian Society were fairly numerous and were apparently successful in more ways than one. It seems that on the whole they operated in the black, and even made some money. But the Society's finances overall were depleted due especially to the high cost of the missions and missionary expeditions, of educating vocations and of building operations. Someone came up with a suggestion, as the Biographer, Fr. Ceria, reports:

Another suggestion to strengthen the financial base was to open more boarding schools and thus generate revenues for the Society. Don Bosco's reply was categorical: "We must mainly devote ourselves to poor youngsters. We do need boarding schools, but our festive oratories, hospices, and homes for destitute boys are a source of many vocations and the means of extraordinary good. The best thing we can do is to open houses like this Oratory of Turin, the hospice of Sampierdarena and the hostel of Nice [France], where students and working boys, poor or on the verge of poverty, can live [...]. If we set up our houses in this modest way for destitute boys, we will be welcomed by the good and the bad alike."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> *EBM* XII, 268.

And as for the option for the poor, even in schools, in a conference Don Bosco reported advice received from Pius IX in 1869 after obtaining the approval of the Society:

Strive always to work for the children of the poor. Do not forsake your original purpose. Let your Society always keep this in focus; do not aspire to greater things. [...] Educate poor boys; do not open boarding schools for the rich and the nobility. As long as you dedicate your efforts to poor boys and orphans, always for the purpose of promoting priestly vocations, your Society will prosper. But if you busy yourself with boarding schools for the rich, then your Society will decline. Keep your fees low. [...] If you educate the poor, if you are poor yourselves, if you do not call attention to yourselves, no one will envy you, no one will seek you out. You will be left in peace and you will be able to do much good.<sup>21</sup>

#### **IV. Developments of the Salesian Work in Turin and Don Bosco's Building Activities (1860s-1870s)**

P. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 39-145 (for all information and data given below Stella quotes archival and other sources); *EBM X*, 85-89; *IBM X*, 347-360 (briefly summarized in *EBM X*, 170-171).

From a socio-economic standpoint, 1869 might be regarded and the beginning of a new phase in the expansion of the Salesian works in Turin.

At the Oratory of Valdocco the boarders in 1862-63, students and working boys jointly numbered about 750. After a slight decrease in 1864-65, by 1869-1870 the enrollment had risen to 800. No new applicants could be accommodated; nor did it seem advisable to enroll new pupils and then disperse them to other Salesian schools, as had been the practice. Improving and enlarging the housing and educational facilities at Valdocco might be a way of remedying the situation. But it seemed opportune also to look for new space in the city of Turin, where Salesian work might be developed.

A number of developments in the economy of the country made this possible. True, tax increases, enforced circulation of paper money, imposed salary caps would eventually (1872-1873) bring about a new recession with serious social consequences: strikes in the North, a recrudescence of brig-

<sup>21</sup> *EBM IX*, 263. The apparently "pragmatic" motivations were surely prompted by a situation of anticlerical hostility.

andage in the South, and stimulus to socialism and anarchism. But on the other hand, increases in some sectors of agricultural production, joined with austere economic policies enforced by Minister of Finance Quintino Sella (1827-1884) in the sixties brought about some improvement. The fact is that by 1868 receipts from public and private charity on Don Bosco's behalf had increased. After the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians (1868), he could therefore consider further expansion.

## 1. Chronological Overview of Developments

### *Developments at the Oratory of Valdocco*

Early 1860s – The main building of the Casa Annessa was completed. The Filippi and Audisio houses were restored for occupancy. The print shop was established.

1863-1868 – The southern field (“field of dreams”) was bought back from the Rosminians (1863). On this field the church of Mary Help of Christians was built (1863-1868).

1869-70 – Additions to the church of Mary Help of Christians were made: the choir loft was enlarged and an additional sacristy was built.

1870 – Don Bosco bought a fairly large tract of land on the north side of the main enclosure and had it walled around. It was referred to as the “vegetable garden” (*l'orto*).

1873 – Don Bosco purchased the Coriasco house next to (and east of) the church of Mary Help of Christians.<sup>22</sup>

### *Developments elsewhere in Turin*

1863-64 – The Oratory of St. Joseph operated by Mr. Ocelletti in the southern district of San Salvario was taken over by the Salesians.

1866 – The Oratory of Guardian Angel was phased out, as far as Salesian presence was concerned, but it continued as the Oratory of St. Julia, the parish church built through the testamentary munificence of Marchioness Barolo (1865).

<sup>22</sup> For developments at the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales, cf. Fedele Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo* [...] (Torino: SEI, 1935).



6 – Salesian school of Valsalice (Turin) with Don Bosco's burial shrine at its center, as seen in a 1898 photograph

1870-1875 – At the Oratory of St. Aloysius Don Bosco bought land and houses piecemeal. Later the church of St. John the Evangelist would be built here (1878-1882).

1872 – Don Bosco was asked to build the parish church of San Secondo in the city. Don Bosco modified plans to allow for an oratory. The City vetoed the plans, and Don Bosco resigned from the project. The church was built under diocesan hospices by Archbishop Gastaldi.

1872 – At Archbishop Gastaldi's insistence Don Bosco took over the school at Valsalice (in the hills adjoining the city to the east).

A few of these developments deserve and additional comment.

## **2. Purchase of Land and Building Activity at Valdocco (1869-1872)**

In 1869 and 1870 Carlo Buzzetti, one of Don Bosco's early oratory lads, now a building contractor, was engaged to enlarge the apse-choir of the church of Mary Help of Christians and to build a new sacristy.



Subsequently he put up a building along the re-drawn Via Cottolengo that comprised a new porter's lodge with a new entrance to the Oratory and a workshop.

In November 1861, Don Bosco had sold a field (*orto*), lying beyond and north of the Oratory periphery, for some 4,500 lire. Now, in 1870, the housing business being sluggish, the price of land in the area had fallen. Don Bosco promptly acted to buy the field back, with an added piece of land, for 5,600 lire. Requesting a permit of the Mayor to fence it round with a wall, Don Bosco stated that he planned to put it to use as an agricultural school, "a little-regarded line of training." It would then be possible to steer youngsters in that direction, "instead of training them as workers in the various trades, where competition is already too keen."<sup>23</sup> Buzzetti built the new perimeter wall, and in July 1873 he presented Don Bosco with a bill of 84,000 lire for work done from 1869 to 1872.

In 1873 the Coriasco house came up for sale. It had been there before the church of Mary Help of Christians was built (closer to it than the law allowed). As it lay between the church and other Oratory buildings, it had to be acquired for eventual demolition. To his great benefactress, Countess Callori di Vignale, Don Bosco wrote that a wine merchant was bidding to purchase it, "which would be disastrous. Hence a deed of purchase was signed for 15,000 lire. ... Please help me—either now or some time in the near future or even a year from now."<sup>24</sup>

The deed was signed in October 1873, and the house demolished in 1874.

### 3. The Oratory of St. Joseph in Borgo San Salvario

Data derived from P. Stella, *DBEcSoc*, 173-174; E. Valentini, *L'Oratorio festivo San Giuseppe 1863-1963* (Torino: Scuola Grafica Salesiana, 1963); *EBM* VI, 85-86; VIII, 122; *IBM* VIII, 491 [omitted in *EBM*]; *EBM* X, 519; XII, 56-57.

<sup>23</sup> Don Bosco to Mayor Felice Rignon, January 18, 1871, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 292. This is the first recorded indication that Don Bosco thought of an agricultural school as a desirable alternative to apprenticeship in a workshop. Apparently up to this point (perhaps out of his peasant experience) he had not regarded training in agriculture as a useful way of preparing a youngster for a better life. Fr. Giovanni Cocchi, on the contrary, who like Don Bosco had been involved in oratory work since 1840, had established a large agricultural "colony" in the Moncucco area.

<sup>24</sup> Don Bosco to Countess Charlotte Callori, January 15, 1873, Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 40-41.



The Oratory of St. Joseph was started in 1859 by Chevalier Carlo Occeletti (1812-1881) in a house he owned in Via Federico Campana, in the Borgo San Salvario, at the southern outskirts of the city. The area at the time was developing into an average city district, with buildings tenanted by average citizens, some of them recent immigrants. The oratory premises consisted of a part of Mr. Occeletti's house, a large playground and a large and beautiful chapel prepared for the purpose. Local priests acted as chaplains for the few years before Don Bosco took over the oratory in 1863.

The parish church of the district, dedicated to SS. Peter and Paul, was inaugurated in November of 1865. The pastor, Fr. Maurizio Arpino (1824-1887), adopted an enlightened pastoral practice. To meet new social needs he established a day-care center, a kindergarten, a parish oratory for the younger children, a conference of St. Vincent de Paul, women's associations for charitable purposes and religious instruction, and mutual aid societies.

Mr. Occeletti's oratory had been set up on the model of the Oratory of St. Aloysius, located less than one mile to the north, near Porta Nuova, in the same district; but it operated within the framework of the parish structure. Mothers would themselves accompany their children to the oratory for recreation and religious instruction. The oratory was also a meeting place for adults on civic occasions. It seems that these men preferred the religious ambience of the oratory to the purely patriotic manifestations in the city.

Meanwhile, in 1863 the Guardian Angel Oratory in the Borgo Vanchiglia had been seriously affected by the urban renewal project of the Via Torino (in which it was located); and when the parish church of St. Julia was dedicated in 1866, it merged with the parish oratory.

In 1863 Mr. Occeletti, always close to the Salesians, asked Don Bosco to take over the St. Joseph Oratory. The closure of the Oratory of the Guardian Angel enabled Don Bosco to transfer more Salesian personnel and resources to the oratory in the Borgo San Salvario. Father Giovanni Francesia was appointed its director in 1864. According to figures quoted by Stella, in 1868 the boys attending the St. Joseph Oratory numbered about 400.

Mr. Occeletti regarded Don Bosco as the "founder, owner, sustainer, and catechist of that oratory, and the vigilant assistant of its more difficult and unresponsive youngsters."<sup>25</sup> He was eventually ordained a priest in 1878 and died in 1881.

At the St. Joseph Oratory lay participation and responsibility played a role

<sup>25</sup> *EBM* XII, 57.

larger than at any other oratory in Turin—not only as it concerned the important activity of lay catechists (Mr. Secondo Brillada distinguished himself in this capacity), but also as it concerned the presence of local adult groups that made the oratory their social home base and also the object of their interest.

This phenomenon, due to a kind of clan mentality, could be observed in most of the Turin parishes of more recent date, and its roots lay in the habit of adults within patriarchal families, in city and country alike, of forming associations within the confines of the family or neighborhood. This social tendency found natural scope in both parish and oratory. Salesians, with their special optics focused back on Don Bosco's charism, readily interpreted this associative phenomenon as the fruit of that family spirit that Don Bosco had laid down as the foundation of Salesian education and spirituality. And indeed the Salesian tradition fostered and strengthened this tendency. But its ultimate origins were both autonomous and more remote.

Both youth groups and adult groups of the St. Joseph Oratory participated actively in the Catholic life of the city. In 1913 these groups joined the stream of the Catholic lay movement in Turin to which they also contributed personnel in positions of leadership. By this time the Oratory had been moved to better and larger premises in the Via Saluzzo, not far from the original location.

The Salesian commitment to this oratory continued until 1926, the personnel being drawn first from Valdocco, then from the Oratory of St. Aloysius, and later from the communities of St. John the Evangelist and Valsalice.

#### **4. Don Bosco and the Church of St. Secundus**

The church of St. Secundus (already mentioned above) was planned as a parish church and promoted by a citizens' committee under the leadership of Count Sanmartino d'Agliè. It was to rise in the southern district of San Salvario a few hundred yards to the west of the railway station of Porta Nuova. (The Oratory of St. Aloysius was situated a short distance on the opposite side of the same railway station.) The City gave its approval in January 1868, but the work never got off to a start, in spite of the fact that the City Council had pledged 30,000 lire for the project.

The proposal of entrusting the project to Don Bosco prevailed in the committee, and on July 7, 1871 the City Council offered him the pledged 30,000 lire, should he accept.

Don Bosco was already planning an expansion at the Oratory of St. Aloysius that would have included a big church and a school and had already bought properties for the necessary space. But faced with this new offer, he put St. Aloysius on the back burner and accepted St. Secundus.

For the building Don Bosco called in his trusted contractors, Carlo and Giosuè Buzzetti. Meanwhile he had gotten the architect to modify the plans to obtain enough space for an oratory attached to the church. The preparatory work began in May 1872 and 27,000 lire later the ground was ready. Don Bosco printed and distributed an appeal addressed in particular “to the good will and charity of the business community and to the inhabitants of the future parish.” He prospected a total cost of 300,000 lire. However, City inspectors noticed that the work as described in the appeal was not in accordance with the approved building plans of 1868. In August 1871 the City Building Office refused to accept any modification to the original plans. Don Bosco replied that the City’s decision ran athwart his original understanding, which was “to build an oratory and a recreation facility (*giardino di ricreazione*) for youngsters, together with the parish church to serve adults.”<sup>26</sup>

Don Bosco resigned from the project and the church was built under diocesan auspices.

## **5. Development at the Oratory of St. Aloysius**

After 1869 Don Bosco had turned his attention to the Oratory of St. Aloysius, in the district of San Salvario on the south side of the city. The area east of the Porta Nuova railway station down to the Po River (where the oratory was located) was now built up and settled. But the building of a new street had notably restricted the oratory area and reduced attendance.

To restore the oratory and to expand the Salesian presence in the area, between 1870 and 1875 Don Bosco had to buy several pieces of land and the buildings on them one by one, for a total cost of 70,000 lire.

On October 12, 1870 Don Bosco wrote and circulated an appeal, and later submitted a petition to the administrator of the Royal Household for a subsidy, stating that the complex he was planning would include “a church, a school and a home to house some 400 poor youngsters.” “This development

<sup>26</sup> Don Bosco came into conflict with Archbishop Gastaldi over dedicating the church of St. Secundus and, later, the church of St. John the Evangelist as a memorial of Pius IX.

would relieve the overcrowding at the Oratory of Valdocco, which is already filled to capacity with boarders and which receives numerous requests for admission every day.”<sup>27</sup>

As noted above, he had already purchased considerable property, but he needed two more pieces. In January 1873, he bought the property of a Mrs. Felicita Valenti Binelli for 5,700 lire. There remained a property that belonged to a merchant named Enrico Morglia, a Waldensian fanatic who would not sell at any price.

After repeated unsuccessful attempts to negotiate the purchase, through the mediation of friends, Don Bosco got the Council of State to declare the planned building project to be a work of public utility. This judgment paved the way for expropriation proceedings. For that purpose Don Bosco deposited 15,000 lire with a bank, the final value of the property being set at 5,300 lire.

The project, which included a large school building and the beautiful church of St. John the Evangelist, was entrusted to contractor Carlo Buzzetti; it was completed in 1878 at a total cost of 425,000 lire.<sup>28</sup>

## 6. The School of Valsalice

In 1872 newly-appointed Archbishop Gastaldi asked Don Bosco to take over the floundering diocesan school located at Valsalice, in the hills east of and overlooking the city.

The building had been the property of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, dismissed in 1863 from the direction of the city’s primary schools by the liberal government. It had been built in 1857 and rebuilt in 1862 as a summer residence for the School for the Nobility (*Collegio dei Nobili San Primitivo*). When it was shut down by the government in 1863, the buildings were taken over by the Society of Turin Priests (*Società di Sacerdoti Torinesi*). This society, headed by Abbé Bernardo Michelotti (1798-1882) and Fr. (Teol.) Francesco Barone (1813-1882), established a school there, but with little success.

Archbishop Gastaldi then decided to entrust it to Don Bosco. Don Bosco found himself on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, he had no de-

<sup>27</sup> Don Bosco’s circular letter, October 12, 1870, Motto, *Epistolario* III, 261-272.

<sup>28</sup> More will be said about the churches of St John the Evangelist in Turin and of the Sacred Heart in Rome (cf. below Ch. 8).

sire to displease the archbishop (who was beginning to distance himself from him), and on the other, he was reluctant to accept a school for rich young people. However, when the archbishop insisted, he overrode the advice and the vote of his council, and accepted it.

Don Bosco rented the premises from the Christians Brothers for 5 years (1872-1877) and provided a sizable staff under 27-year old Father Francis Dalmazzo (1845-1895) as director, a degreed Salesian from a well-to-do family. In spite of his talent and effort, Father Dalmazzo had but little success. He did, however, get the enrollment up to 100 students, including primary level and secondary level I and II (*ginnasio* and *liceo*).

Financial problems burdened the school from the start. In 1879 Don Bosco bought the property from the Christian Brothers, and the school continued with increasing success until 1887.

In 1887 Don Bosco decided to turn the Valsalice school into a “Seminary for the Foreign Missions,” in reality a philosophy house of studies for the Salesian Society. It functioned as important center of Salesian formation for many years.



## Chapter 3

# DON BOSCO AND MARY IMMACULATE HELP OF CHRISTIANS IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Summary

1. Don Bosco's Devotion to Mary, Titled and Untitled
  2. *The Month of May*, Don Bosco's First Important Marian Writing
  3. Don Bosco and Mary (Immaculate) Help of Christians
    - Antecedents
    - The Spoleto Appearance and Don Bosco
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  4. The Church of Mary Help of Christians and Its Significance
    - Planning the Church
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    - Iconography of the Help of Christians
  5. Don Bosco Apostle of Mary (Immaculate) Help of Christians: Expressions of His Devotion
- Appendices: 1. Program and Contents of Don Bosco's *Month of May*; 2. Text of Don Bosco's Dream of 1844 (Holy Martyrs); 3. Don Bosco's Favorite Prayer: the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*; 4. The Blessing of Mary Help of Christians; 5. Program and Contents of the *Marvels of the Mother of God*; 6. Content of the *No-vena in Preparation for the Feast of Mary Help of Christians*.

### *Bibliographical Note*

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- Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco: Religious Outlook and Spirituality* (tr. by J. Drury. New Rochelle: NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1996), 138-169 (Ch. VII) [Stella, DB:RO&S]. Stella's essay is taken as basic reference.
- P. Stella, *Don Bosco's Dreams* (tr. By J. Drury. New Rochelle, NY: Salesiana Publishers, 1996) [originally published as an appendix to the above].
- P. Stella, *Don Bosco nella storia economica e sociale (1815-1870)* (Roma: LAS, 1980), 108-121.

F. Giraudi, *L'Oratorio di Don Bosco. Inizio e progressivo sviluppo edilizio della Casa Madre dei Salesiani in Torino* (Torino: SEI, 1935), 165-196.

Among the many valuable papers published in the Acts of the *Accademia Mariana Salesiana* the following have been particularly useful: P. Brocardo, "L'Ausiliatrice di Spoleto e Don Bosco," in *L'Immacolata Ausiliatrice*, Accademia Mariana Salesiana III (Torino: SEI, 1955), 239-272; P. Brocardo, "Maria Ausiliatrice: la Madonna di Don Bosco," in *La Madonna dei tempi difficili*, Accademia Mariana Salesiana XII (Roma: LAS, 1980), 97-134; E. Valentini, "*Hic Domus Mea*. Storia del santuario di Maria Ausiliatrice in Torino (1868-1968)," in *Aiuto dei Cristiani, Madre della Chiesa*, Accademia Mariana Salesiana VII (Roma: LAS, 1968), 89-118.

Among *Don Bosco's writings* in honor of Mary two figure importantly: *The Month of May in Honor of Mary Immaculate* of 1858 and *Marvels of the Mother of God Invoked Under the Title of Mary Help of Christians* of 1868 (cf. below).

For Don Bosco's writings we refer to: Centro Studi Don Bosco, Giovanni Bosco, *Opere Edite*. Ristampa anastatica, (Photo-mechanical printing), 37+1 volumes (Roma: LAS, 1977).

## **I. Introductory Comment: Don Bosco's Mariology and Devotion to Mary—Titled and Untitled**

Don Bosco's personal devotion to Mary transcended all titles, both the traditional historic titles, and the titles tied to local popular shrines. It was solidly founded on the Church's traditional Mariology (Mother of God/Christ, *Theotokos*) and on traditional popular devotion as simply Our Lady (the *Madonna*). His devotion to Mary under particular titles, including Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians, appears as an aspect of his perception of Mary's basic presence in the Church.

Hence, Don Bosco's championing of particular titles should be correlated to particular social and historical contexts and to his perception of the significance of Mary in those contexts. Thus, for instance, when we ponder Don Bosco's decision to name for the "*Help of Christians*" the great church he built in the sixties, and ask how and why Don Bosco came to choose that title, we come to realize that historical forces played a key role in such a choice. Certainly, like the common people around him, Don Bosco felt at ease with the various local Marian titles. But at certain high points in his life, responding to historical circumstances, Don Bosco championed devotion to Mary under special, Church-oriented titles. We may cite "Immaculate Conception" and "Help of Christians" as examples.



In his study on Dominic Savio Father Alberto Caviglia writes:

Under which titles did Don Bosco inculcate devotion to Mary, and which was the object of Savio's devotion? The answer is, "All and none in particular." In the dream at the age of nine it was not a *Madonna* under a specific title that appeared to Don Bosco, but simply the *Madonna*, Mary, the Mother of Jesus. At the time we are speaking about [1840s and 1850s], the saintly master was devoted to Our Lady under the title of Our Lady of Consolation (*Consolata*, the *Madonna* of the people of Turin). (The first statue of Mary in the Pinardi chapel was of the *Consolata*.) Then, as the religious movement that led to the Church's definition of Mary's Immaculate Conception [1854] gained ground, Don Bosco's devotion moved in the same direction and for quite some time his devotion centered on this title. With true Catholic spirit and deep understanding of its implications he turned this article of faith [Immaculate Conception] into a program of devotion and spirituality. For a long time the Immaculate Conception remained in certain respects Don Bosco's *Madonna*. This was the devotion that Savio learned from Don Bosco from the start [...]. But the saintly master encouraged all Marian devotions. Thus the practice of the Rosary implied a devotion to Mary under that title. (The little chapel at Becchi and Mary's altar in the church of St. Francis de Sales, before which Savio was often seen kneeling in prayer, were dedicated to our Lady of the Rosary.) Again, Don Bosco, and after his example his boys, cultivated a devotion to our Lady of Sorrows. (Mary's little shrine in Savio's dormitory was dedicated to her under this title.) ... After 1860, Mary Help of Christians became an ever-growing presence in Don Bosco's life, and with the dedication of the great church in her honor [1868] the Help of Christians became Don Bosco's own *Madonna*.<sup>1</sup>

Don Bosco's Mariology was simple and pastoral in character, and he generally refrained from speculations. At the risk of seeming anachronistic we might say that his doctrine on Mary ran along the lines adopted by Vatican II. It was derived from reflection on Scripture, the Fathers, the early Councils, and the tradition and the history of the Church through the ages. Its soteriological lines are simple: God chose Mary, a woman, to cooperate in the Incarnation of the Son. For this purpose God preserved her from all sin, blessed her in a special way, and because she was perfectly redeemed God raised her to glory even in her physical body. Mary, Mother of the Incarnate Word and hence Mother of God, accepted her election with perfect obedience, in holi-

<sup>1</sup> A. Caviglia, *Don Bosco. Opere e scritti editi e inediti*, vol. IV, part II: *Savio Domenico e Don Bosco* (Torino: SEI, 1942), 314-315.

ness of life, in humble service, and in association with the redeeming passion of her Son. Given to us as mother by Christ on the cross, she continues to be mother and helper of the Church and every Christian in all circumstances. Hence, by reason of God's gifts and of her correspondence, she deserves special, grateful and worshipful reverence.

Within such a doctrinal framework, Don Bosco in his devotion experienced Mary a living and guiding presence his whole life long. He developed a tender and personal relationship, and he expressed his devotion by prayer and by his personal dedication to the mission. He favored the cultic expression of devotion to Mary in the celebration of the traditional liturgical feasts in her honor, making them instruments for growth in the Christian life for himself and his boys. Don Bosco welcomed and encouraged traditional devotions and popular devotions, provided they were theologically sound and spiritually profitable. He discouraged exaggerated piety, superstitious practices, and sentimentality. His Marian prayer was rooted in the liturgy and the tradition of the Church. The Hail Mary, the *Sub tuum praesidium*, the *Angelus* and the *Regina Caeli*, the seasonal anthems (*Salve Regina*, *Ave Regina Caelorum*, *Salve Redemptoris Mater*), the Rosary, the Litany, and obviously, ejaculatory prayers of all kinds, formed the staples. Finally, he could not conceive of devotion to Mary, no matter what its form, apart from an effort to imitate her virtues (especially her faith, love and purity) and to live by the teaching of Christ and the Church. A better Christian life had to be to goal of any devotion to Mary. This ethical-pastoral aspect was a priority in Don Bosco's devotion.

What particular historical circumstances then led Don Bosco to his championing Marian devotion under the titles of Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians?

## **II. Don Bosco's Devotion to Mary under the Title "Immaculate Conception" in Historical Context**

### **1. Mary Immaculate and Don Bosco: Precedents**

Mary as the Immaculate Conception became important in Don Bosco's life for personal as well as for ecclesial reasons. Hence his devotion to Mary under this title merits special attention not only for the importance it acquired in a specific historical context in the fifties but also for the way in which it became associated with Don Bosco's work never to relinquish its privileged place.

The devotion to the Immaculate Conception and its symbols flourished in France after the Protestant Reformation and from France spread to Piedmont through the work of the Jesuits and flourished there even after their suppression.<sup>2</sup> Mary was honored under this title at the Chieri seminary, where the chapel was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception. Her image stood above the altar, and her statue was honored in a side chapel. The church attached to the Archbishop's palace in Turin where Don Bosco received all his sacred orders was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception.

The work of the oratory, as Don Bosco emphasizes in his *Memoirs*, began in 1841 and was resettled in 1844 on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Don Bosco wished to dedicate his second oratory, St. Aloysius, also on the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

In early December 1850, Don Bosco traveled to Milan to preach the Jubilee proclaimed by Pius IX to obtain God's help in those difficult times for the Church, in the wake of the liberal revolution of 1848. Don Bosco then hastened back to the Oratory for the traditional December 8 conference, in which it was his custom since 1842 to recall the protection of Mary Immaculate on the work of the oratory.<sup>3</sup>

It appears, therefore, that before the Immaculate Conception became an ecclesial symbol and then a permanent Salesian educational symbol, this devotion expressed for Don Bosco a very personal experience connected with his life and work.

## 2. Definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception

### *Expectation and Devotion at the Oratory*

In 1847 the Piedmontese bishops requested prayers for the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in response to Pius IX's encyclical *Ubi primum*. Since that time, prayers were regularly offered at the Oratory to that end.

<sup>2</sup> The Society of Jesus, the enemies of Jansenism and Gallicanism in any form, came under pressure by Catholic absolute rulers under the pontificates of Popes Clement XIII (1693-1769, elected in 1758) and Clement XIV (1705-1774, elected in 1769). Clement XIII died, leaving the issue unresolved. Clement XIV finally succumbed to pressure and signed the Bull of abolition (submitted by the Spanish ambassador) in June 1773. Pope Pius VII restored the Society in 1814.

<sup>3</sup> EBM IV, 126-127.

Shortly before the definition in 1854, while the cholera was still raging in Turin and other parts of Italy, the Pope proclaimed a special Jubilee with the encyclical *Apostolicae nostrae charitatis* to obtain the Immaculate Virgin's protection against "all these evils." While tending the cholera victims, the Oratory people intensified their prayers to Mary Immaculate.

By the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus*, toward the end of 1854 Pius IX defined the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, while the cholera that had ravaged the population was subsiding. Dominic Savio, who had enrolled some 5 weeks before as a student at the Oratory, experienced veritable transports at the definition. Cardinal Cagliero testified:

I recall his irrepressible joy at the time of the definition of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854, the year when [Dominic] entered the Oratory. His emotion and enthusiasm knew no bounds during the celebration of that solemn feast. The Oratory and the whole city of Turin were lighted with lamps for the occasion. Don Bosco had given us permission to go out [to watch the festivities], and Dominic could no longer restrain his emotion on witnessing the popular jubilation."<sup>4</sup>

The Oratory boys lived through a period of incredible fervor. The church of the *Consolata* was the center of the celebrations in honor of Mary *Immaculate*, which lasted well into 1855. A special day was reserved at the church of the *Consolata* for the Oratory community. The feast of the Annunciation (March 25) was marked by citywide celebrations in honor of the Immaculate Conception that had the character of a religious revival.<sup>5</sup>

It is fair to say that the Company of the Immaculate Conception founded some time later (June 1856?) owes its existence to this "outbreak" of devotion to Mary Immaculate. According to Don Bosco's *Life of Dominic Savio* it was founded at Dominic's initiative, though there is some conflicting testimony.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Cardinal John Cagliero's testimony at Dominic Savio's Apostolic Process, *Positio super virtutibus* (Rome, 1926), 135; G. Bosco, *Vita ... Savio* (1859), 38-39. Father John Francesia speaking of the fervor of the celebration adds some interesting detail: "The outward popular celebration was to some extent upset by evil people. The lamps that the good people lit to honor Mary were pelted with stones, so that the devout were obliged to remove them and express their devotion to Mary Most Holy in private. At the Oratory, however, under Don Bosco's leadership, we outdid ourselves. The feast was preceded by a solemn novena ..." [J. B. Francesia, *La Vergine Immacolata, Don Bosco e i Salesiani* (San Benigno: Scuola Tip. Salesiana, 1904), 17-18].

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *EBM* V, 138.

<sup>6</sup> Seminarian Joseph Bongiovanni in an undated letter to Don Bosco lists Dominic's name

*Ecclesial Symbol of the Woman Crushing the Serpent's Head*

Father Francesia speaks of anticlerical attempts to disrupt the celebrations (cf. Note 4 above). In the years following the liberal revolution of 1848 the liberal government was proceeding against the Church. The Oblate Father Vincent Berchialla, who preached at the "Salesian" celebration held in the church of the Consolata, spoke on the text, "I will place enmity between you and the woman" and predicted that socialism, liberalism and its secret societies would be vanquished just as original sin was vanquished by her who crushed the serpent's head.

This kind of rhetoric expressed a hope, if not an expectation, among conservative devout Catholics. It also revealed the special political slant of the dogma and of the devotion to the Immaculate Conception in that special historical context at mid-19th century. Pius IX's Bull, *Ineffabilis Deus*, speaks of Mary Immaculate as the One who, totally pure, crushed the serpent's head, who destroyed all heresies, who is the sure defense of the Church, who saves the Christian people from the most deadly evils and is their sure refuge and faithful help. In other words, Mary Immaculate is presented as the symbol of the victory of good over evil.

For an understanding of the political charge of the title, and of the rhetoric connected with it, one should bear in mind the special historical situation it addressed in the Italy of the 1850s, particularly in the Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont). The liberal revolution of 1848, which had turned the Kingdom of Sardinia into a parliamentary constitutional monarchy, also set the stage for the establishment of the Mazzinian Roman Republic forcing Pope Pius IX into a yearlong exile (1849-50). There followed in the Kingdom of Sardinia a spate of actions designed to secularize society and curb the power of the Church. In 1848 a lay school system was created by the Boncompagni school reform. In 1850 the Church's ancient privileges were abolished by the Siccardi Bill. In 1854-1855 the Cavour-Rattazzi Bill, providing for the disbanding of religious congregations and for the confiscation of Church property, was debated and passed in parliament.<sup>7</sup>

in the forth place among the founding members: "He was one of the founders of the Society of the Immaculate Conception, the fourth [to join], and he accepted the proposal with great joy." (Letter included in the docket, *Positio super virtutibus*, 480.)

<sup>7</sup> It was at the time of the debates and of the impending signing of the Bill that Don Bosco addressed to King Victor Emmanuel II letters that threatened divine chastisements in the form of deaths in the royal family.

This was the serpent's head ("all these evils") that Mary Immaculate was called upon to crush.

The idea of Mary's engaging the evil powers in combat and leading the faithful to victory was not new. It was a traditional interpretation of Gen 2:15. In the *Treatise on the True Devotion* by Grignon de Montfort (1673-1716) Mary is presented as an eschatological figure that engages Antichrist (here a suggestion from Rev 12), and her true devotees as the Church's vanguard in the final struggle against the powers of hell. But in the special historical context of the 1850s the powers of evil to be engaged were secularism and heresy. This special understanding was widespread and found expression in devotional books, such as Don Bosco's *Month of May* of 1858, about which we shall presently speak.

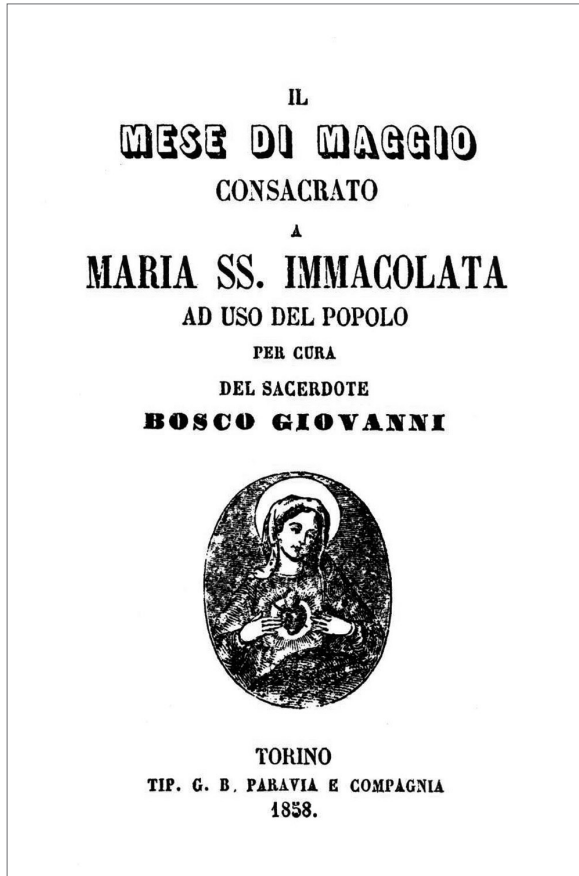
Needless to say, it is this very understanding of the role of Mary that is expressed even more clearly with the title of Help of Christians in the sixties. Hence the melding of the two titles as one: "Immaculate Help of Christians."

### 3. Mary Immaculate and Don Bosco's Work: an Educational Symbol

In Don Bosco's case, the Immaculate Conception provided also a different kind of symbol. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception Don Bosco had begun his work for poor and abandoned youth. This circumstance, interpreted in the light of his first and subsequent dreams and of the "ascent" of the devotion to the Immaculate Conception in the forties and fifties, provided a devotional and theological framework from which he looked at his apostolate. First, by catechizing and educating youth, thus Christianizing society, he joined the Church's on-going struggle against "the powers of evil," although in a less political and militaristic mode. Secondly, the Immaculate Conception provided him with a most appropriate symbol for his educational program, which was also a spirituality patterned after the "Mother Most Pure." "The Immaculate Virgin, the Mother most Pure, hates everything that is contrary to holy purity."<sup>8</sup> Thus the symbol that had been offered in St. Aloysius was invested with theological importance through the Immaculate Conception. The Savio, Magone and Besucco biographies are evidence of this development. This explains the important role that the Immaculate Con-

<sup>8</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 154.

ception Sodality filled at the Oratory. The feast of Immaculate Conception took on a key role at the Oratory, for this was the time when Our Lady “swept out” the house, that is, made it possible for the educator to single out unsuitable youngsters.<sup>9</sup>



7 – Frontispiece of Don Bosco’s devotional work, *The Month of May in Honor of the Most Holy and Immaculate Virgin Mary for the People’s Use* (1858)

<sup>9</sup> Cf. EBM VI, 460 (referring to Ruffino’s Chronicle).



### III. Don Bosco's "The Month of May" (1858) and its Significance

Don Bosco's *Month of May in Honor of Mary Immaculate* (1858)<sup>10</sup> is Don Bosco's first important Marian work and is a milestone on the course of Don Bosco's Marian devotion. True, in 1845, while still connected with the Barolo institutions, he had authored a devotional exercise in Honor of the Seven Sorrows of Our Lady, but no copy of the work has come down to us. The *Month of May*, on the contrary, was published in the Catholic Reading, a booklet of 192 pages, and went through many editions. It was written to serve as an aid for the most important popular devotional exercise in honor of Mary, but intended at the same time to pay homage to the Immaculate Conception.

#### 1. History and Contents of the Practice of the Month of May Devotion

The practice of the Month of May in honor of Mary took root in Italy at the beginning of the eighteenth century. In 1726 the Jesuit Annibale Dionisi authored a *Month of Mary, [...] with the practice of flowers of virtue proposed to Her true devotees*.<sup>11</sup> In the month of flowers (May), the practice of various virtues is inculcated by this author, together with prayers, songs, and meditations. Boarding schools and religious houses took up this practice, which, encouraged by the Jesuits, soon spread throughout Italy. Something similar happened in France when Father Pierre Doré translated the *Month of May consecrated to the glories of Mary* by the Jesuit Father Francesco Lalomia.<sup>12</sup> Like St. Alphonsus, this author celebrated the "glories of Mary," a formula which had great success in France but not so much in Italy. A little later, the Jesuit Alfonso Muzzarelli, took up and adapted Dionisi's formula and authored a *Month of*

<sup>10</sup> *Il mese di maggio consacrato a Maria SS.<sup>ma</sup> Immacolata ad uso del popolo*, per cura del sac. Bosco Giovanni (*Lettture Cattoliche* 6: #2. Torino: G. B. Paravia e Co., April 1858), 192 p. [The Month of May Dedicated to Mary Most Holy for the People's Use].

<sup>11</sup> *Il mese di Maria o sia il Mese di maggio consacrato a Maria coll'esercizio di vari fiori di virtù proposti ai veri devoti di Lei, dal Padre Annibale Dionisi della Compagnia di Gesù, da praticarsi nelle Case de' Padri di famiglia, ne' Monasteri, nelle Botteghe, etc.* (Parma: Eredi di Paolo Monti, 1726).

<sup>12</sup> Francesco Lalomia, *Il Mese di Maggio consacrato alle glorie della gran Madre di Dio coll'esercizio di vari fiori di virtù* (Palermo, 1758).



Mary that had many imitators.<sup>13</sup> In Muzzarelli's "moral-ascetical" formula, the purpose of the *Month of May* exercises was not directly to celebrate the glories of Mary, but to sanctify the Christian life through the practice of virtue and meditation on Christian truths. This approach was criticized by some for the reason that the Month of May took on the character of second Lent, and a kind of controversy ensued between upholders of the two formulae. Then there were those who adopted hybrid formulae that mixed moral-ascetical material with reflection and examples of a Marian character.

## 2. The Christian Life Formula in Don Bosco's *Month of May* Exercise

Faced with this dilemma Don Bosco, in spite of his great love for the "glories" of Mary, did not hesitate to choose the Muzzarelli formula as more likely to better the moral and religious life of the Christian people. Don Bosco's *Month of May in Honor of Mary Immaculate* is less about Mary than it is about the Christian life. It is a little spiritual treatise that takes the reader on a journey from God the Creator to the promised salvation in heaven. For the May devotions then Don Bosco preferred to invite the faithful to consider Christian life and practice, rather than the "glories of Mary." Don Bosco conceived all devotion, whether to Christ, Mary, or the Saints, as an application in real Christian life of the saying of Jesus, "If you love me keep my commandments," with no sentimentality.

He did, however, devote the introductory exercise (set for April 30), the last two days of May, and the concluding exercise (set for June 1) specifically to Mary. For the rest of the month he proposed to his readers for prayer and meditation the same subjects treated in spiritual retreats and parish missions.

The format is simple. After the initial invocation, "God, come to my assistance [...]," there follows the short meditation (spiritual reading) on the subject of the day. This is followed by the "Example," taken from the Bible, from the lives of the saints, from famous people, from simple Christians (some within Don Bosco's own experience, e.g., Dominic Savio, a prostitute on her deathbed). A short invocation and the *Memorare* (the so-called Prayer of St. Bernard, a paraphrase of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*) conclude the exercise for the day.

<sup>13</sup> Alfonso Muzzarelli, *Il Mese di Maria, o sia di Maggio* (Ferrara, 1785). It went through 150 editions and was translated into English, Arabic, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

### 3. Teaching of Don Bosco's *Month of May*

#### *A course in Christian Life*

The teaching of *The Month of May* is vintage Bosco. It offers in summary Don Bosco's own spiritual-devotional program and his convictions of how a Christian life should be lived. He takes advantage of the month of May to set this program forth in simple language for simple folk, and for his boys.

Don Bosco's basic proposal is about "salvation." Salvation in the sense of complete victory over sin and death is what the Christian life is all about: "God, soul, eternity." In the meditation for the second day, he addresses the Christian: "O Christian, you have an immortal soul. If you save it all is saved; if you lose it, all is lost. Think about it. You have only one soul, and one single sin can put it in jeopardy. How would we fare, were we to be called before God's judgment seat this very instant?"

The program of *The Month of May* falls into two sections separated by a consideration of death, judgment, and hell; thus at the center stand death and the verities that follow it (Day 15-19). The first section (Day 1-14) explains how one may prepare oneself for that supreme confrontation; the second section (Day 20-31) explains how one may return after having strayed, and so win heaven. *The Month of May* traces a spiritual journey, the road to salvation. In its structure, sequence, contents and language the work discloses also the author's religious understandings [cf. Appendix 1].

#### *Mary in Don Bosco's Month of May*

The work then overall is devoted to Christian life topics. When Mary is the subject, she is generally presented as Mother of God, Mother of Christ, our Mother, Heavenly Patroness, etc., rather than under particular titles. In the introductory exercise for April 30, in speaking of the reason why we should be devoted to Mary, Don Bosco writes: "I shall begin by giving the three principal reasons: Mary is the holiest being in all of God's creation; Mary is Mother of God; Mary is our mother."<sup>14</sup>

In the course of the work, however, special titles are occasionally offered for consideration, Mary Immaculate as expected being one of them. As the title of the book states, it is a *Month of May* "in honor of Mary Immaculate."

<sup>14</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 12 (Introductory Meditation, April 30).

After all, it was written after the definition of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception (1854) and in the wake of the Lourdes appearances (1858). In speaking of Mary's holiness Don Bosco mentions her Immaculate Conception, (without, however, making any reference to Lourdes). Don Bosco writes: "The Catholic Church expresses Mary's holiness by defining that she was always free of any sin. The Church invites us to invoke her with the following precious prayer: "Queen conceived without original sin, pray for us".<sup>15</sup> Later, speaking of the sin of impurity, Don Bosco urges the reader to pray to Mary Immaculate and kiss her medal, so as to avoid this sin.<sup>16</sup>

In the meditation for May 24, Don Bosco speaks of Holy Communion, in which we receive "Jesus Christ himself as he was born of the Immaculate Virgin Mary."<sup>17</sup> He makes no reference to Mary Help of Christians, in spite of it being May 24.<sup>18</sup>

Another Marian title singled out for consideration is *Help of Christians*. The Meditation on the Christian's Dignity concludes with the words:

Mary most holy, the mother of our Savior, is the most beautiful ornament of the Christian religion. So I turn to you, O most merciful Virgin Mary, in the certainty that I will obtain grace from God and the reward of heaven. My Christian dignity will be restored to me if you will intercede for me, *Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*.<sup>19</sup>

The Example attached to the same meditation speaks of the Litany of the Blessed Virgin, and focuses on the title, Help of Christians.

In the Litany we come upon the title, Mary Help of Christians, *Auxilium Christianorum*. After a victory won by Christian forces against the Turks through Mary's intercession in the year 1771 [*sic*; but read 1571], St. Pius V [d. 1572] added this title to the Litany. In 1815 Pius VII instituted the feast of Mary Help of Christians. This he did to express his gratitude to Mary, the great Queen of Heaven, for his restoration to his Roman See and for the restoration of peace to the Church, which he attributed to Mary's intercession. This feast is kept on May 24. Let us therefore invoke Mary's help.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 148 (Meditation for May 25, "The Sin of Impurity").

<sup>17</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 140 (Meditation for May 24, "On Holy Communion").

<sup>18</sup> The feast of Mary Help of Christians, instituted in 1815 was in the calendar but was not "celebrated".

<sup>19</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 63-64 (Meditation for May 19, "The Dignity of the Christian").

<sup>20</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 64-65 (Example for May 19, "The Dignity of the Christian").

The last two May meditations (Day 30 and 31) are devoted to Mary's protection in life and in death. Don Bosco insistently pleads with his readers to put their trust in Mary, Mother of God, Mother of Christ, and our Mother. In this context we also find mention of, or at least allusions to, some of Mary's titles. Don Bosco refers the reader to the shrine of Our Lady of Consolation (*Consolata*, in Turin) to see the signs of Mary's protection.<sup>21</sup> The meditation ends with the words, "It is you, O Great Virgin, who alone did crush all threatening heresies: *Cunctas haereses sola interemisti in universo mundo*."<sup>22</sup> This text in Marian tradition and liturgy is often associated with the titles Immaculate Conception and Help of Christians. The same may be said of the other words expressing Mary's power to defend us against the enemy: "Fearsome as an army in battle array [*Terribilis ut castrorum acies ordinata*]."<sup>23</sup> And a little later Don Bosco refers expressly to the title, Help of Christians: "Mary is ready to help her devotees at the hour of death [...]. This is what the Church believes when calling Mary, *Auxilium Christianorum*, Help of Christians. Her help has to be all the more necessary at the hour of our death."<sup>24</sup>

True, Don Bosco's *The Month of May* of 1858 speaks only incidentally of Mary Immaculate and Help of Christians, but it does use the invocation, *Auxilium Christianorum ora pro nobis* and texts connected with these titles.

Above we described the historical circumstances of Don Bosco's adoption of the title and ideology of Mary Immaculate. Under what circumstances, we may now ask, did Don Bosco come to champion the title and ideology of Mary Help of Christians? How did this title come significantly into his awareness to power his Marian doctrine and devotion?

#### IV. Don Bosco and the Immaculate Help of Christians

In a book on the Help of Christians, Father Giulio Barberis voices his conviction that Don Bosco was devoted to Mary under that title from his very childhood. He writes:

In spite of our lack of positive proof, we have come to believe on the strength of converging circumstantial evidence that from his childhood, and more espe-

<sup>21</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 169-170 (May 30, "Mary's Protection in Life").

<sup>22</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 171.

<sup>23</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 175 (May 31, "Mary's Protection in Death").

<sup>24</sup> Bosco, *Il Mese di Maggio*, 177.

cially from his seminary days, Don Bosco became devoted to Mary under the title of Help of Christians. He entrusted himself entirely into her keeping in the certainty that she would always be there to help.<sup>25</sup>

As mentioned above, about Don Bosco's devotion and trusting commitment of self to Mary, Mother of God and our Mother, from his earliest childhood there is no argument. But Don Bosco's writings lend no support to the assumption that the title "Help of Christians" figured *significantly* in his devotion before the 1860s.

For example, neither in the *History of the Church* (1st ed. 1845) nor in the *History of Italy* (1st ed. 1855/6) is there any mention of Mary Help of Christians. The title, Mary Help of Christians does not appear before the edition of 1867. The inscription on the frieze inside the great church that Don Bosco saw in his dream in 1844 read not "*Auxilium Christianorum*" (Help of Christians), but simply "*Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea*" (Here is my house, hence forth goes my glory).<sup>26</sup> The title "Help of Christians" is not mentioned in the early editions of the *Companion of Youth* (1st ed., 1847; 2nd ed., 1851; 3rd ed. 1854; 4th ed., 1860). At the Oratory, only in 1867 did the prescribed short invocation, "*Sedes Sapientiae, ora pro nobis*" give way to "*Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*." The statue placed on top of the house after lightning struck in 1861 was one of Mary Immaculate, as was the one later placed on the top of the lantern of the church of Mary Help of Christians.

There are, however, a few forerunner indications from before 1860 of the gradual "ascent" of the Help of Christians in Don Bosco's devotion.

## 1. Forerunner Indications Prior to 1862

Don Bosco knew that the people of Turin had a devotion to the Help of Christians. He writes in fact that they were among the first to honor Mary under this title, as shown by the chapel, altar and statue dedicated to Mary Help

<sup>25</sup> Giulio Barberis, *Il culto di Maria Ausiliatrice* (Torino: SEI, 1920), 56.

<sup>26</sup> In the Dream of 1844, Our Lady pointed to the place of the martyrdom of SS. Solutor, Adventor and Octavian, the very place where a great church was to rise. Was it to be in honor of the Holy Martyrs? In 1863-1868 the church that Don Bosco built was dedicated to Mary Help of Christians in changed historical circumstances. It would have been natural for Don Bosco to identify the church he built in the 1860s with the church he had dreamt about in the 1840s. The words on the frieze, "My House" and "My Glory," undoubtedly refer to God rather than to Mary.

of Christians in the church of St. Francis of Paola.<sup>27</sup> This was the church to which Don Bosco was assigned by Father Joseph Cafasso during his Pastoral Institute years.<sup>28</sup> The statue honored there may have later served as the model for Don Bosco's own conception of what Mary Help of Christians might "look like," though there was also a traditional iconography to draw on.

In 1848 or 1849 (after the Piedmontese Constitution), according to a testimony by Father John Giacomelli, a fellow seminarian, Don Bosco put up some holy pictures in his room with invocations to Mary Help of Christians. The prayer on one of these in particular read: "O Immaculate Virgin, you alone vanquished all heresies; come now to our aid, as we have recourse to you: *Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*." Don Bosco added in his own hand: "*inde expectamus consolationem*" (from her we await our consolation).<sup>29</sup> Here the titles, "Immaculate," "Help of Christians" and "*Consolata*" are combined.

*The Month of May* of 1858 is a turning point in this respect. As indicated above, besides liturgical texts that refer to Mary's help (*Terribilis ut castrorum acies...*; *Cunctas haereses sola interemisti...*), and the use throughout of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, we find a reference to the victory over the Moslem Turks and to the introduction of the title into the Litany. But such historic events as the Battle of Lepanto (1571), the relief of Vienna from siege by the Moslem Turks (1683), and the institution of the feast of Mary Help of Christians by Pius VII (1815) receive specific attention in print for the first time only in 1868.<sup>30</sup> Don Bosco, however, was certainly long before familiar with those events, and in the aftermath of the liberal revolution he probably had drawn a parallel between Pius VII and Pius IX. Likewise he certainly saw the importance of Mary's role as helper of the Church and of the Pope, even though before the 1860s this role was assigned to simply to Mary, or to Mary under the title of "Immaculate Conception."

In the almanac of the *Catholic Readings* for 1860 (the *Galantuomo*, the "Honest Citizen") under May 24 Don Bosco noted for the first time, "[the feast of] the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians." This is expanded in the issue of 1861 to: "The most holy Virgin under the well deserved title of Help of Christians, *Auxilium Christianorum*."

<sup>27</sup> G. Bosco, *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice*, raccolte dal Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino: Tip. dell'Oratorio di S. Franc. di Sales, 1868); *Catholic Readings*, May 1868, 104.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *MO-En*, 202.

<sup>29</sup> *EBM* III, 414.

<sup>30</sup> Bosco, *Maraviglie*, passim.

These precedents notwithstanding, it seems that Don Bosco did not become a standard bearer of the Help of Christians before 1862.

## 2. The Spoleto Events of 1862 in Historical Context

Setting 1862 as the year in which the title Help of Christians began to be significant in Don Bosco's life and apostolate immediately draws our attention to a specific religious event, and to a specific political context.

For the political context, a brief summary will suffice. The Second War of Italian Independence (1859) was followed by the annexation of Lombardy, of most of the Papal States, and of the duchies of Parma, Modena, and Tuscany. In 1860 Garibaldi invaded first Sicily then Naples to unseat the Bourbon monarch, while King Victor Emmanuel II invaded the Marches and Umbria in the Papal States. Italy was thus "united," and the Kingdom of Italy was proclaimed in 1861, with Victor Emmanuel II as its first king. There was no stopping the unification movement, and Rome itself would eventually have to be surrendered. In 1860 Pius IX had condemned the assailants of the Church's temporal power; and in 1864 he condemned liberalism in the encyclical *Quanta Cura* with the attached *Syllabus of Errors*.

The liberal revolutions of 1848 provided the context that made Mary under the title "Immaculate Conception" the object of special devotion in the 1850s. It invested that title with its peculiar political-religious slant. In parallel fashion, the relentless progress of the revolution culminating in the takeover of the Papal States and the Unification of Italy (1861) provided the context that gave currency to the title "Help of Christians" in the 1860s, and conferred on it an even greater political charge.

It was the apparition and miracle at Spoleto in 1862 that precipitated this development.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> For the Spoleto connection and events, cf. Brocardo, "L'Ausiliatrice di Spoleto...," in *Accademia Mariana Salesiana* III, 239-272; and Stella, *DB:RO&S*, 155-169, footnotes.





8 – Icon of the *Help of Christians* of Spoleto as portrayed in a holy picture printed in Turin in 1863 by publisher Pietro Marietti

### *The Spoleto Events*

Spoleto is an ancient and historic city located at the geographical center of Umbria, and of Italy itself. Pius IX had been Bishop of Spoleto (1827-1832). Because of its central location Spoleto was mentioned as the possible capital of a united Italy. At the beginning of 1860, the calamitous year preceding the annexation, Archbishop Giovanni Battista Arnaldi of Spoleto addressed a pastoral letter to the faithful in the name of the bishops of the whole region. In it he voiced the hope that “the Mother of Mercy,” “the undefeated and invincible warrior,” “the Virgin responsible for all the victories of the Church,”



would once more come to the rescue. He called on the faithful to pray to God for help “through the intercession of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Mother God, *Help of Christians*, the powerful One who crushes the rebellious head of the ancient serpent under her feet.”<sup>32</sup> Then came the annexation and the turmoil connected with it.

Early in 1862 the Virgin in a painting on the wall of a ruined church at La Fratta near Spoleto spoke to a five-year-old child, named Righetto (Enrico) Cionchi. The archbishop told the story in his first report, dated May 17 and reported in the Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia* on May 27.

On a hillock located in a sequestered spot [outside of the city of Spoleto] an ancient image of the Virgin Mary has survived in a niche of a crumbling wall—all that remains of an old church that had existed on the site. The fresco, which in spite of its being exposed to the elements is still in good condition, depicts the Virgin Mary holding the Christ child in her arms. The place had long been abandoned and forgotten. But in recent weeks people have been praying at this ancient shrine, because the Blessed Virgin has appeared several times to a child named Enrico, not yet five years of age. However, only after March 19, 1862, and a miraculous cure, have people been flocking to the place in large numbers. A 30-year-old peasant had recourse to the Virgin in that image and was instantly cured of chronic illnesses that had plagued him for a long time.<sup>33</sup>

The report spread far and wide, many cures were reported, and pilgrimages began almost immediately. People began to refer to this unnamed image of the Virgin by a variety of names: Madonna Unsheltered (*Madonna scoperta*), Our Lady of the Star (*Madonna della Stella*), or simply Madonna of Spoleto. Archbishop Arnaldi officially bestowed the title, *Auxilium Christianorum* (Help of Christians) on this Madonna. He sent out periodic reports that were carried by the Catholic press and gave currency to the Spoleto events. The first and most important report of May 17 (quoted above) appeared in the Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia* of Turin on May 27, 1862.

<sup>32</sup> Joint pastoral letter cited by Brocardo, “L’Ausiliatrice di Spoleto,” 252. Giovanni Battista Arnaldi (1806-1867), ordained priest in 1828 and bishop in 1852, served as archbishop of Spoleto from 1853 until his death.

<sup>33</sup> Archbishop Arnaldi’s report is quoted in Don Bosco’s *Maraviglie*, 95-97.

*The Spoleto Events and Don Bosco*

The Catholic newspaper *L'Armonia* was read at Valdocco, and its reports from Spoleto must have fired up the hearts and minds of the Oratory population. Biographer Lemoyne tells us that in a Good Night of May 24, 1862 Don Bosco spoke of the Spoleto events and told the story of the apparition and the miracle with great joy, ending with the "good news" that since the Spoleto image did not have a title the Archbishop wished that it be honored under that of "Help of Christians."<sup>34</sup> This Good Night, however, should probably be discounted.<sup>35</sup>

On the contrary, the Spoleto connection seems certain in the case of Don Bosco's allegory or apologue that goes by the name of "Dream of the Two Columns." Don Bosco narrated it in the Good Night of May 30 (1862), and of it we have contemporary reports by John Boggero, Caesar Chiala, and Dominic Ruffino.<sup>36</sup> Don Bosco spoke of two pillars standing the midst of the sea holding, one the sacred Host and the other the statue of Mary Immaculate beneath which a placard bore the inscription "Help of Christians." He then described a flotilla of enemy ships attacking the Pope's galley and trying to sink it. The Pope is wounded and falls, but he rises and steers his ship in between the two columns and anchors it safely there.

We also have another document, which because of the political situation was published anonymously and which is usually overlooked. This is the *Marian Calendar* of the *Catholic Readings* for June and July 1862.<sup>37</sup> In this calendar,

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *EBM* VII, 105; *IBM* VII, 164-167 follows up with a description of the Spoleto events (omitted in *EBM*).

<sup>35</sup> Doubts exist concerning this May 24 Good Night. Stella [*DB:RO&S* II, 159, note 86] and Desramaut [*DB en son temps*, 699-700, note 56] consider this Good Night apocryphal, and add that May 24 was not yet *significant* for Don Bosco in 1862. Lemoyne quotes Bonetti's chronicle as his source. But apart from the fact that the first report in *L'Armonia* bore the date of May 27, neither the Bonetti chronicle nor Lemoyne's own *Documenti* make any mention of the Spoleto events. Don Bosco must have at some time spoken of those events; and later, after the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians in 1868, published a detailed description of the Spoleto events in his book *Marvels of the Mother of God* (1868) quoting Archbishop Arnaldi's first report (given above).

<sup>36</sup> John Boggero to Chevalier Frederick Oreglia di Santo Stefano *ASC* B221: Boggero; Caesar Chiala to Chevalier Frederick Oreglia di Santo Stefano, in *ASC* A005: *Cronachette*, Chiala, *FDB* 929 C10-D1; Dominic Ruffino's Chronicle: 1862-1863 *Memorie*, 74-76 in *ASC* A008: *Cronachette*, Ruffino, *FDB* 1216 B11-C1; cf. *EBM* VII, 107-109; *IBM* VII, 169-172.

<sup>37</sup> *Diario mariano, ovvero eccitamenti alla divozione della Vergine Maria SSma proposti in ciascun giorno dell'anno, per cura d'un suo divoto*, in *Letture Cattoliche* 10, Nos. 4 & 5, June & July (Torino:

May 24 passes without notice. But April 26 carries an important note on the feast of Mary Help of Christians and its meaning, relating it to the ancient prayer, the *Sub tuum praesidium*. The passage reads in part:

Feast of Mary Help of Christians – Surrounded and attacked as we are without respite by enemies, [...] we are very much in need of extraordinary help against their ambushes and dangerous sallies. [...] But where shall this help come from, if not from Mary, the Mother of God? The Church calls her the *Help of Christians*. Let us, therefore, have recourse to her and beg this most merciful mother to come to the help of Christ's bride, holy Church in distress, and of Christ's most august Vicar, the Church's visible head. To this end we will recite five times the *Sub tuum praesidium* (We fly to your protection) for the needs of holy mother Church.<sup>38</sup>

### *The Spoleto Ideology of the Help of Christians*

This is precisely the significance that Archbishop Arnaldi attached to the Spoleto events. In his reports, he expressed the idea that the Virgin would soon act to deliver the Pope from his enemies, and voiced the hope that Pius IX would crown the Help of Christians of Spoleto just as Pius VII had crowned the Virgin of Savona on his return from exile.

Images of the Help of Christians of Spoleto were circulated. One of these carried the following prayer:

O Mary, powerful Help of Christians, we entrust ourselves to your patronage. We promise that to our dying day we will remain steadfast in the true faith, as obedient children of the Holy Roman Catholic Church and of the supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of Christ on earth, even at the cost of total material loss.

A holy card published by the printer Marietti in Turin in 1863 bore a prayer (composed by Pius IX himself) that entreated God, through the intercession of Mary Help of Christians, to grant steadfastness “in the midst of all these assaults.”

A kind of euphoria and the belief that the “hour of Mary” had come took hold among clergy and Catholic laity. Mary had appeared at the very center of

tip. G.B. Paravia, 1862), 280 pp. [Marian Calendar, or Encouragements to Devotion to the Most Holy Virgin Mary for Each Day of the Year]. The introduction to this anonymous compilation was certainly written by Don Bosco, who may also be the author of the whole work [Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 666-667 and 699, note 53].

<sup>38</sup> *Diario mariano*, 96.

Italy to rescue it from anticlerical forces and revolutionaries. This is what the *Buona settimana* of Turin wrote in November.

The Virgin Mary has manifested her presence through this very lovely miraculous image in a place which is the center not only of the archdiocese of Spoleto, not only of Umbria, but more significantly of Italy itself. This then must be the manifest will of God and of the Blessed Virgin. In appearing in such a miraculous manner at the very heart of the country in these calamitous times, Our Lady has put everyone on notice that she has taken her place there in order to defend it, protect it, and provide help in all its temporal and spiritual needs.<sup>39</sup>

Archbishop Arnaldi believed that Mary, the Help of Christians, at Spoleto was giving a pledge of the coming triumph of the Church and of the Pope.<sup>40</sup> Through her intercession, Catholics will have the strength of dying, if needs be, for their faith, for holy Mother Church and its supreme shepherd, the vicar of Christ on earth. "This is our resolve and this we promise. This will be a reality with your help, O Immaculate Virgin, most loving Mother Mary, most faithful and most powerful help of all Christendom."<sup>41</sup>

The Archbishop of Spoleto then launched the idea of building a shrine dedicated to Mary, Help of Christians on the site of the miracle, as a citadel from which Mary would defend the Church. The shrine was built in 1864-1865. Archbishop Arnaldi wrote at the time: "This is Mary's answer to the revolutionaries: 'From this shrine, from this place made holy by my presence, your attacks will be stymied just as surging waves break up against the rocks: *hinc infringes tumentes fluctus tuos*?'"<sup>42</sup>

### *Don Bosco's Response to Spoleto and Its Ideology*

Don Bosco's preface to his *Marvels of the Mother of God* published in 1868 after the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians, stated that

<sup>39</sup> Arnaldi's report of June 26, 1862 cited by *La Buona settimana* 7 (November 23-29, 1862), 383, in Stella, *DB II* (ital.), 164-165, cf. *DB:ROc&S*, 157; almost identical to *Osservatore Romano*, May 31, 1862, in Brocardo, "Maria Ausiliatrice, la Madonna di Don Bosco," 105.

<sup>40</sup> Arnaldi's report of March 24, 1863, in *L'Armonia*, March 28, 1863, cited in Stella, *DB:ROc&S*, 158.

<sup>41</sup> L. Maini, *Manifestazione [...] di Maria Santissima nelle vicinanze di Spoleto [...]* (Turin: Marietti, 1862), 55-57, in Stella, *DB:ROc&S*, 158-159, note 84.

<sup>42</sup> Arnaldi's Seventh Report, in *Unità Cattolica*, August 6, 1864; cited in Brocardo, "Maria Ausiliatrice, la Madonna di Don Bosco," 105.

there was “a very special reason why the Church in recent times wished to invoke Mary as Help of Christians.” He explains the statement by quoting a passage from a current booklet: “Invariably when the human race faced times of grave crisis it found help through the recognition of some new prerogative of Mary Most Holy, the exalted human being who in this world is the most magnificent reflection of the perfection of its Creator.”

By way of comment he continues:

The need of turning to Mary is universally felt in our days. It is not just an individual need but a general need of society. It is not merely a matter of bringing the lukewarm back to fervent faith and sinners back to God. [...] In our day, it is the Catholic Church herself that is under attack—in its ministers, in its sacred institutions, in its Head, in its doctrine and in its discipline. And it is attacked precisely as Catholic Church, as center of truth, as teacher of all the faithful. Hence, in order to deserve God’s special protection, we have recourse to Mary who is our Mother and the special Helper of Kings, of Catholic peoples and of individual Catholics throughout the world.<sup>43</sup>

Don Bosco’s comment on the quote, which originally referred to the Immaculate Conception but which he applied (with equally good reason) to Mary Help of Christians, is of great interest. The motivation is *historical* rather than theological. Mary is called the helper *of kings*, as well as of Christians. The historical crisis required that Mary be invoked as Help of Christians. Furthermore, a sense of urgency rings in those lines, an expectation that Mary’s hour is about to strike.

It seems fair to conclude that the Spoleto events in the year 1862 marked the ascent of Mary under the title “Help of Christians” in Don Bosco’s ecclesial awareness. True, Don Bosco was familiar with the title, and was personally devoted to Mary as Help of Christians, since this devotion had already gained a foothold in Turin and elsewhere. However, without the Spoleto events, Don Bosco might not have become *the apostle* of Mary Help of Christians. He might have retained the title of Mary Immaculate for the Mornese group that he met in 1864 and that became the “Daughters of Mary Help of Christians” (Salesian Sisters) in 1872. He might not have dedicated his great new church to Mary under the title of Help of Christians.

<sup>43</sup> Bosco, *Maraviglie* [...], 5-6.



9 – Don Bosco in the act of blessing a boy, a Salesian and a Salesian Cooperator, in a 1867 photograph by Achille Sanglaur of Rome

## **V. A Church Dedicated to Mary (Immaculate) Help of Christians and its Significance**

### **1. Decision to Build a Large Church under a Politically Sensitive Title in the Capital of the Liberal State**

Mary had acted at Spoleto, and plans to build a church there dedicated to the Help of Christians were being discussed. But Don Bosco did not wait passively for Mary to act in Turin. In December 1862 Don Bosco began to speak of his own plan to build a great church dedicated to Mary Help of

Christians.<sup>44</sup> In December 1862, probably during the course of an interminable session in the confessional on the eve of the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Don Bosco decided to build a new and larger church. A mere ten years had elapsed since the erection of the church of St. Francis de Sales in 1852. The vast increase in the Oratory population could be given as the reason (for the civil authorities) for building a second and larger church. They would not be disposed to approve the building of the new church once its politically sensitive title became known.

Don Bosco first confided his plan to Seminarian Paul Albera and to Father John Cagliero. He is reported to have said to Cagliero: "The Madonna wishes us to honor her under the title of Help of Christians. The times are so bad that we badly need her help for the preservation and defense of the Christian faith."<sup>45</sup> He immediately set out to solicit help toward the project.

Since the title "Help of Christians" to which the Spoleto events gave currency was closely related to the current political situation, it had to be controversial. Hence, when Don Bosco began to solicit funds for the new church he was fairly reticent about the title. The insufficiency of the church of St. Francis de Sales was the reason he gave the authorities. The circular of February 1, 1863, addressed to the Grand Master of the Order of SS. Maurice and Lazarus, merely spoke of a large church designed to accommodate the increased number of boarders as well as to serve the local population. But the same circular addressed to benefactors stated that it would be dedicated to "Mary Immaculate under the title of Help of Christians." He also made the point that, though large, it would be plain and unpretentious, a point about which he changed his mind when giving instructions to the architect.<sup>46</sup>

Father Barberis, in his chronicle, records Don Bosco's account of how the building permit was obtained and the title, Help of Christians, "approved." Don Bosco said:

<sup>44</sup> The *Biographical Memoirs* describe the planning and the building of the church of Mary Help of Christians in detail. See *EBM* VII, 223-228, 276-280; VIII, 2-3, 57-64, 422; IX, 108-114, 118-140.

<sup>45</sup> *EBM* VII, 196-198. At this time the Oratory was the object of an official investigation, and had gone through several house searches.

<sup>46</sup> For Don Bosco's Circular Letter of February 1, 1863 see Motto, *Epistolario* I, 550-551. The letter begins with the invocation "*Maria Auxilium Christianorum, Ora pro nobis*" before the address.



When I submitted the plans of the church for the city's approval, the superintendent rejected the plans because of the title, Help of Christians. "It's too Jesuitical," he complained. "But, sir," I explained, "perhaps in your line of work you have not had occasion of looking into the historic origin of this title. It commemorates the victories won by a coalition of Italian, Spanish, and other forces against the Turks. It also commemorates the liberation of Vienna, etc." He wouldn't hear of it, and the plans were rejected because of the title. A little later I again submitted the plans and requested approval, but in the petition I refrained from any reference to a title. I simply presented the church as a building to be devoted to divine worship. The approval was given without further ado. After all the papers had been signed and filed, I went to the building office to thank the superintendent for giving his approval. He said to me: "I knew that Don Bosco would not be so stubborn as to insist on a title that so smacked of Jesuitical reaction." "Sir," I replied, "in view of your objections, I refrained from specifying any title. But now that the approval has been given, I am at liberty to choose any title I wish, am I not?" "But this is arrant deception," he exclaimed. "Deception has nothing to do with it." I replied. "You objected to the title and approved a church without a title. But as I must now give the church a title I will choose any title I please. We should be satisfied that we have each won our point." He smiled, but he was only putting a good face on a bad deal.<sup>47</sup>

Ruse and wit notwithstanding, the permit could have been revoked. But the permit was allowed to stand, and implicitly the title also given "approval." In those times of confrontation, and in view the intransigent rhetoric stemming from the Spoleto events, this may be seen as a conciliatory gesture on the part of the authorities, not so much toward Don Bosco as toward the Catholic Church.<sup>48</sup>

## 2. Site of the Church: the "Field of Dreams"

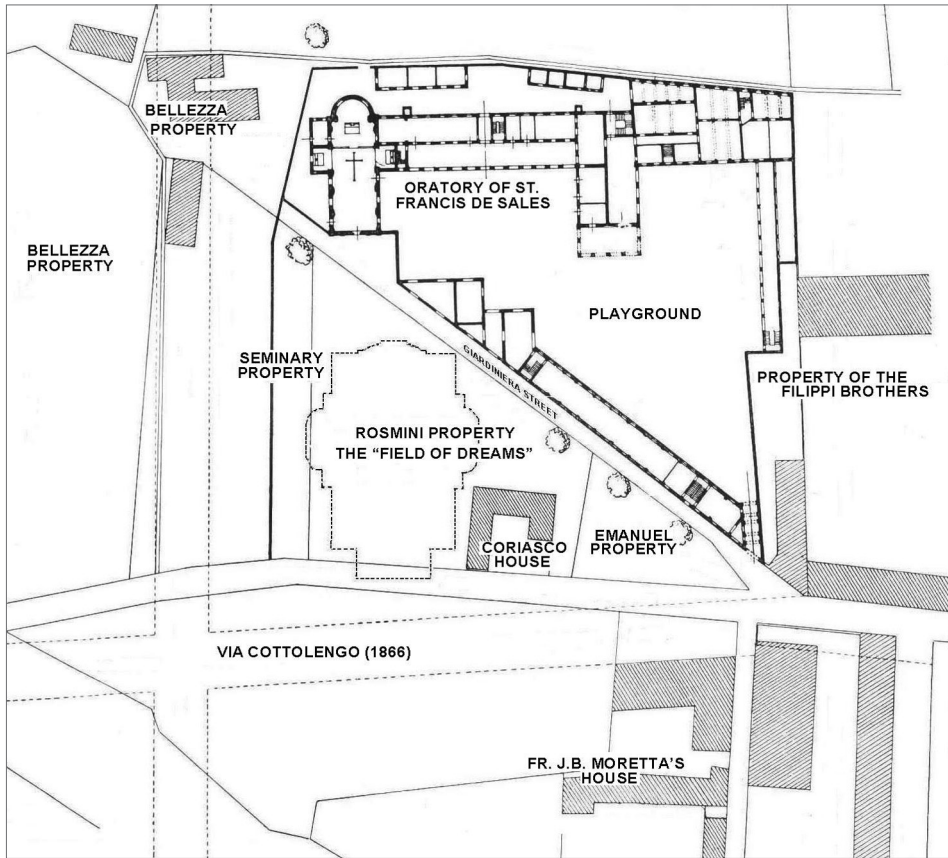
When asked where the church would be built he would point to the field to the south, across the Giardiniera Street, the street running obliquely and fronting the Oratory property.<sup>49</sup> On June 20, 1850, Don Bosco had bought

<sup>47</sup> Barberis, *Autograph Chronicle*, June 26, 1875, Notebook II, 23-24, FDB C1-2.

<sup>48</sup> Likewise, the fact that Prince Amadeus of Savoy (son of Victor Emmanuel II) attended the laying of the cornerstone on April 27, 1865 may be regarded as an even more conciliatory gesture.

<sup>49</sup> This street was actually in the way, for the plans called for a larger building than the





10 – Plan of the Oratory and environs as they might have appeared in 1863, with the traced outline of the projected church of Mary Help of Christians

that tract of land from the archdiocesan seminary. But in a moment of grave need, on April 10, 1854, he had sold it to Father Antonio Rosmini. Father Rosmini intended eventually to build a house there and establish his congregation, the Institute of Charity, in Turin. He meant also to provide priests to help Don Bosco. But with Rosmini's death in 1855, the plan was set aside.

field could accommodate. In January 1865, after an elaborate agreement negotiated by Don Bosco with the widow Mrs. Bellezza (Teresa Caterina Novo) for new access to her house, the Giardiniera street was closed and became Oratory property. He also had Cottolengo street redesigned by the city in February 1866, so as to allow more space in front of the church on the south side.

Eventually the land was put up for sale. At the beginning of 1863 Don Bosco directed his financial administrator, Father Angelo Savio, to inquire about buying the land. The Rosminians had stipulated that it would not be sold back to Don Bosco. Father Savio then proposed the alternate site on the property of the Filippi Brothers, east of the Oratory enclosure. This sale, however, fell through. Don Bosco circumvented the Rosminians by getting a third party to act for him, and so he got the field back much to their discomfiture.<sup>50</sup>

This field came to be known later as the “field of dreams,” because Don Bosco identified it with the field he saw in the dream of 1844. In this dream our Lady showed him the place of the holy martyrs’ death on which rose a large church, later identified with the church of Mary Help of Christians. Thus it is that the church of Mary Help of Christians acquired its numinous character from the place of martyrdom, and could claim a “supernatural pre-history.”

In his *Memoirs of the Oratory*, Don Bosco relates the dream he had the second Sunday of October, 1844, as he was about to leave the *Pastoral Institute*. He dreamt that the Shepherdess led him through various phases of the wandering (while wild animals were being transformed into lambs), until they arrived at a field under cultivation. There he saw a great church rising before him.<sup>51</sup> Father Giulio Barberis reports the same dream on the basis of the narration heard from Don Bosco as the two were returning from visiting some benefactors. In Barberis’ version of the dream the Lady showed Don Bosco successive churches; and in a field under cultivation she pointed out to him the place of the martyrdom of SS. [Solutor,] Adventor and Octavius, marking it with her foot. At this spot he saw the church rising before him. Don Bosco then added various comments on the building of the church, including the buying back of the field from the Rosminians.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> See *EBM* VII, 223-228, noting that *EBM* mentions the proposed alternate site on the Filippi property to the east only briefly [details in *IBM* VII, 371-374].

<sup>51</sup> *MO-En*, 210, Dream of 1844.

<sup>52</sup> The source for Don Bosco’s dealings with the Rosminians about the field is Father Giulio Barberis, reporting Don Bosco narration of the Dream of 1844. Cf. *EBM* II, 232-234, Dream of the Holy Martyrs, to which Lemoyne gives a new context differing from that of his source (Barberis), and from his own transcription of it in *Documenti*. [For the text of Barberis’ report of the dream see Appendix 2.] *Note on the Holy Martyrs*.—These are the legendary martyrs of the Thebean Legion (of Turin), Solutor, Adventor and Octavius. Don Bosco’s library, assembled much later, contained several volumes on these holy martyrs. At the time of the dream, however, his knowledge of the history (or legend) of these martyrs was vague. In his *History of the Church* (1845), he speaks imprecisely about them. Later in the *Pontificate of*

However, the church that was eventually built on this holy ground was to be dedicated (for the historic reasons noted above) not to the holy martyrs, but to Mary Help of Christians. The church of the dream was identified as “that of Mary Help of Christians” only in retrospect. But the church retained its symbolic and numinous character nonetheless. This derived less from the fact that it rose (supposedly) on a place of martyrdom, than from the fact that the Lady of the dream (now invoked as Help of Christians) had a “miraculous image” and dispensed “graces” from her church. The church thus became a place of pilgrimage. The church of Mary Help of Christians was thus believed to have had supernatural origins and to have an abiding numinous character.

### 3. Designing and Building the Church

Don Bosco had engaged a number of architects to submit plans, specifying only that the church (contrary to his earlier advertisement) should be large and magnificent. Architect Antonio Spezia’s design was chosen: a Latin cross 48 by 35 m. (157.5 by 115 ft.), the central nave being 11.5 m. (37.5 ft.) wide. It featured a beautiful composite (chiefly renaissance-style) façade, and a dome. These dimensions are fairly modest, though some people at the time thought them extravagant. Don Bosco would have wanted a much larger church, but the ground could not accommodate anything larger. It would be a tight fit: it would abut on Giardiniera Street (soon to be eliminated) on the north; on the south it would encroach on city property, namely, the Via Cottolengo (soon to be straightened by concession from the City); on the west side, the wall of the left arm of the cross would infringe on seminary property (the needed strip of which was later acquired by Don Bosco, on August 1864); finally the easternmost wall rose closer than the law allowed to the Coriasco house (acquired and demolished only in 1874).

*St. Marcellinus and St. Marcellus* [*Catholic Readings* 13: #2, April 1864], he gives a better account. Still later, Canon Lawrence Gastaldi, at Don Bosco’s request, “researched” and published a larger “history” of the martyrs [*Catholic Readings* 14, #1, January 1866]. The canon believed it possible that these Christian soldiers of the Theban Legion suffered martyrdom in the vicinity or within the enclosure of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales (!). There is no historical evidence corroborating even the existence of these martyrs, and certainly none pinpointing the place of martyrdom. Don Bosco, however, believed in the sacredness and numinous quality of the place. And it is certain that, as he was trying to find a base for his youth apostolate in 1844, he had dreamt of a church to be built on that spot *as part of his mission*.

Having obtained a building permit from the City, Don Bosco engaged contractor Charles Buzzetti for the building.<sup>53</sup> Architect Spezia supervised the work throughout without compensation. Excavations began in the autumn of 1863 and were completed in March 1864. The excavations turned out to be insufficient, the ground being swampy and unstable. More earth had to be removed and pylons sunk around the perimeter. In April 1864, Don Bosco went down into the excavated pit to lay the first stone and start the building. It was on this occasion that he emptied the contents of his wallet (40 centimes) into Buzzetti's hands.

Once the foundations of the church were completed, on April 27, 1865 Bishop John Anthony Odone of Susa (the Turin diocese being still vacant) blessed and placed the corner stone. The Bishop was attended by young Prince Amedeo of Savoy, Duke of Aosta (son of King Victor Emmanuel II), by the Prefect, by the Mayor and by other City dignitaries of the liberal establishment. Again attendance by such authorities, especially by the prince, may be seen as a conciliatory gesture toward the Church.

The work now proceeded at a steady pace, and by the end of 1865 the whole main building (but not the cupola) had been completed and roofed over. As the building progressed, Don Bosco gave evidence of a confidence in Divine Providence that seemed foolhardiness. But he also intensified his efforts in soliciting private and public charity. It should be noted that in his appeals Don Bosco only cited reasons of public utility and devotion for building the church, muting the matter of the title (Help of Christians), and never once referring to the Society's mission or to his personal vision.

Besides the cupola much other work remained to be done, but at this point funds ran out. Having already tapped all possible sources, Don Bosco began to beg for materials instead of money. At this point he found himself in such financial straits that he decided to replace the projected cupola with a simple domed vault. Financial administrator Father Angelo Savio and Contractor Buzzetti, however, without arguing merely stalled the work for a month, hoping that some last minute charity might enable the work to proceed according to plan. The break came when Mr. Antonio Cotta, a local banker and benefactor, was cured of a serious illness through Don Bosco's prayers. He provided immediate funds to resume work, and promised further

<sup>53</sup> Charles Buzzetti was one of three Buzzettis who came to Turin from Lombardy as youngsters in search of employment. They attended the oratory in its earliest years. Charles and Joshua were successful in the building trade; Joseph became a Salesian.

funds to bring the work, including the cupola, to completion. But even Mr. Cotta's money proved insufficient to finance the building as called for in the plans. This explains why a "simple" and not a reinforced ("double") cupola was built, with no proper lantern at the top. This in turn explains why the frescoes on the cupola's ceiling inside suffered deterioration with time.<sup>54</sup>

The work on the "simple" cupola was completed in the summer of 1866. On September 23, young Marquis Fassati climbed the scaffolding with Don Bosco to set the last brick in place in the crown. The cupola rose 40 m. (ca 131 ft.) above the floor.

In May 1867 the copper statue of Our Lady (Immaculate Conception in appearance), was placed on the pinnacle, a wooden structure topping the cupola in place of the originally planned lantern. The statue was cast and gilded through the munificence of benefactors. The newly appointed archbishop of Turin, Alessandro Riccardi di Netro blessed it on November 17, 1867.

On May 21, 1868 five bells were blessed and lifted in place on the bell tower to the right or east as one faces the front of the church looking north. (Three more bells were added in 1870.)

The statues of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel, of cast and gilded bronze, were placed on the twin towers in 1869, replacing temporary simple crosses. The angel on the left or west tower (Michael) holds a copper banner with the word "Lepanto" drilled through it in large letters; the one on the right or east tower (Gabriel) offers a laurel crown to Our Lady standing high up on the dome. The Broggi brothers of Milan ably cast the two statues.

#### **4. A "Prophetic Date" Intended for Gabriel's Banner?**

Lemoyne claims that this east tower angel (Gabriel) was also intended to hold a similar banner (instead of the wreath) with a "prophetic date" drilled into it. He writes:

<sup>54</sup> A restoration was made necessary in 1890-91, under Don Bosco's first successor, Father Michael Rua. At this time the painter Rollini was engaged to paint the great fresco on the ceiling of the cupola, and Architect Louis Caselli submitted a design for a reinforced cupola and the lantern. But again lack of funds prevented its execution.



11 – Frontal view of the Church of Mary Help of Christians, in a lithograph used by Don Bosco in the pamphlet, *Souvenir of a Solemnity in Honor of Mary Help of Christians* (1868)

In a previous design, *which we saw*, the second angel, too, held a banner on which the number “19..” followed by two dots was drilled through the metal. It stood for another date, “nineteen hundred...” without the final two digits that would have indicated the specific year. Though ultimately, as we have said, a laurel wreath was put into the angel’s hand, we have never forgotten the mysterious date which, in our opinion, pointed to a new triumph of the Madonna. May this come soon and bring all nations under Mary’s mantle.<sup>55</sup>

<sup>55</sup> EBM IX, 276. For some reason EBM omits the words “which we saw” at the beginning of the paragraph.



This design, which Lemoyne claims to have seen, has not come down to us and was in any case never executed. This is *all that can be said* regarding the much talked-about “mysterious date.”

It should be borne in mind that the surge of devotion to Mary Help of Christians in the 1860s was accompanied by the expectation that Mary would intervene to defeat the enemies of the Church, and to overthrow the liberal, secular state. Prophecies (in almanacs and by “seers”) circulated to that effect. (Such expectation was noted in connection with the Spoleto events described above.)

##### *5. Features of the Church upon Completion*

By May 1868 the interior of the church was completed.<sup>56</sup> Although the interior was simply finished with stucco and paint, a few interesting artistic and decorative features deserve to be noted.

The altarpiece, a great picture of Mary Help of Christians above the high altar, completely dominated (as it does even at present) the whole of the interior. It was the work of the painter Thomas Lorenzone after a detailed program submitted by Don Bosco. The image of the Virgin holding the Christ child appears surrounded by apostles and saints high above the city of Turin and the Oratory.

It is claimed that, in devising the image of Mary for the great altarpiece, Don Bosco took as a model the statue of Mary Help of Christians venerated in the church of St. Francis of Paola in Turin, which was familiar to him. This is possible; but Don Bosco was also acquainted with the iconographic tradition of the *Hodegetria* (Help of Christians) from the Eastern Church. In this icon, virgin and child are seen in frontal aspect (facing the beholder). The Virgin holds the child usually on her left arm, and points to him with the right hand. The child holds the scroll of Gospel teaching in his left, and symbolizes the Trinity with his right hand. In this icon compositional elements such as posture and attitude, the words ΜΡ ΘΟΥ (*Meter Theou* = Mother of God), ΙΣ ΧΣ (*Iesous Christos* = Jesus Christ), color of garments and other symbols, show us the Virgin Mother of God (Θεοτοκος) offering and pointing to Jesus Christ who is our salvation.

<sup>56</sup> Details in *EBM IX*, 108-114.



12 – Great altarpiece of the Help of Christians, oil on canvas,  
the work of painter Tommaso Lorenzone (1868)

This icon is called *Hodegetria* (Helper), distinct from other icons, such as *Eleousa* (Merciful Virgin) or *Glykophilousa* (Sweet-Loving Mother).<sup>57</sup>

The image of Mary Help of Christians, the Virgin and Child of Don Bosco's altarpiece, is essentially of the *Hodegetria* type, even though Byzantine theological symbols are no longer in evidence, and later devotional elements are added.

<sup>57</sup> *Hodegetria* is a Greek feminine noun (masc. *hodegeter*, *hodegos*) derived from *hodos* (way). It means "leader, escort, help on the way."



Apart from the high altar, richly fashioned and decorated, four other marble altars stood in side chapels with marble railings and mosaic floors. They were dedicated to St. Joseph, St. Peter, to the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (later re-dedicated to St. Francis de Sales) and to St. Anne (in spite of the fact that this chapel stood over the spot pointed out as the place of martyrdom).

The sculpted door and doorway, and the pulpit were the creation of Architect Antonio Spezia.

The choir loft over the doorway, in two graded tiers capable of accommodating a choir of some 300 singers and supported by sculpted columns, was the work and gift of a local master woodworker. The monumental organ in the choir loft was the creation of the prestigious firm, Lingiardi of Pavia.

## 6. Consecration

The consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians by Archbishop Riccardi di Netro took place on June 9, 1868.<sup>58</sup> The students from the Salesian schools of Mirabello and Lanzo were brought in for the occasion. Several choirs performed music by Father John Cagliero and other composers. The altar boys added splendor to the services under the guidance of Father Joseph Bongiovanni. Don Bosco published an account of the festivities in *Rimembranza di una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice* (Souvenir of a Solemn Celebration in Honor of Mary Help of Christians).<sup>59</sup>

Pius IX, in a personal letter to Don Bosco wrote that it was by divine disposition that “while renewed, fierce warfare was being waged by evil people against the Catholic Church, our heavenly Patroness was being honored anew under the title of *Mary Help of Christians*.”<sup>60</sup>

## 7. Salesian Significance of the Church of Mary Help of Christians

The Spoleto ideology that Don Bosco’s church with its proud title seemed to embody was quickly transcended. Don Bosco and the Salesians believed

<sup>58</sup> Details in *EBM* IX, 125-140.

<sup>59</sup> *Letture Cattoliche* 16: #11 & 12, November-December 1868.

<sup>60</sup> Pius IX to Don Bosco, September 23, 1868, in *IBM* IX, 358 (omitted in *EBM*).

that the church had a supernatural origin of its own, and so had the devotion and spirituality connected with it. After all, was it not built in a holy place at our Lady's behest?

More importantly, the church of Mary Help of Christians had a special significance for the Salesian Society as such. It should be noted that it came into existence at mid-point in the great decade 1863-1874, with its consecration on June 9, 1868. The importance and significance of this event in the early history of the Salesian Society cannot be overstated. At the time the Society had not yet won canonical status and internally it still lacked cohesiveness both as to membership and organization. Externally it was fighting for its very survival against superior forces, political and ecclesiastical. The church of Mary Help of Christians stood as an act of faith and courage on Don Bosco's part. Really and symbolically it stood as the center of a work and a movement that could no longer be stopped. From this church Don Bosco's apostolate would radiate to all parts of the world.

## **VI. Don Bosco the Apostle of Mary (Immaculate) Help of Christians: Expression of His Devotion**

### **1. As Founder**

Besides enshrining Mary the Help of Christians at the center of the Salesian Society to accompany it on its historic journey, Don Bosco became the apostle of Mary Help of Christians through the founding, in response to need, of institutions specifically created with this title.

The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters) is the prime example. Founded in 1872 by Don Bosco in association with Mary Dominica Mazzarello, this religious congregation developed from a group of young women, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, who already lived as religious in the world and engaged in works of charity. Father Dominic Pestarino, a priest active in the little town of Mornese, had banded the group together in 1854 under the leadership of the local school teacher, Angela Maccagno, and under the direction of Father Joseph Frassinetti, Pastor of the church of St. Sabina in Genoa. Don Bosco first became acquainted with the Mornese group in 1864, two years after the Spoleto events, when the "decade of Mary Help of Christians" was well underway, and the church of Mary Help of Christians was already under construction. The founding was

accomplished between 1870 and 1872, after the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians.

Other examples are the Work of Mary Help of Christians, an association of Salesian cooperators working for Adult Vocations (Sons of Mary), established in 1875, and the Archconfraternity of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians, based at the church itself, established 1869.

## 2. As a Man of Prayer

Devotion and its style are best attested in the language of prayer. In his efforts to spread and explain his own devotion to Mary (Immaculate) Help of Christians in its ecclesial and personal aspects, Don Bosco used a variety of prayer forms, some of them of his own devising, all very dear to him. The following may be mentioned.

### *Sub Tuum Praesidium* (and *Memorare*)

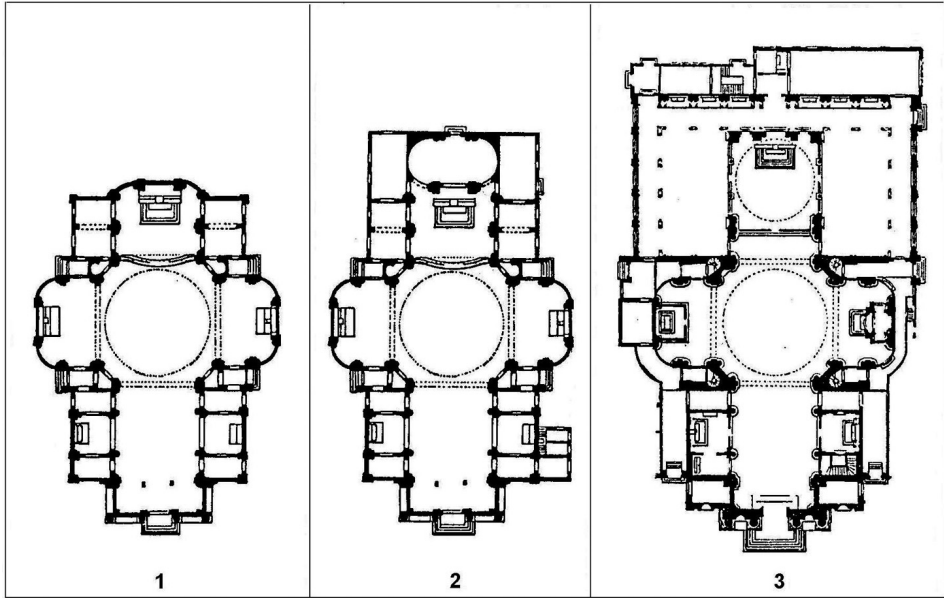
The *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, a prayer from Christian antiquity, was truly “adopted” by Don Bosco. He made frequent use of this prayer and urged others to do the same. He included it as a basic prayer in devotional exercises in honor Mary.<sup>61</sup> For Don Bosco, Mary Help of Christians is the *Theotokos* (Mother of God) of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*, to whom we can flee for refuge in time of need. [For text and comments, see Appendix 3.]

### *Mary Help of Christians, Pray for Us*

The short invocation, “Mary Help of Christians, pray for us,” became common practice at the Oratory in 1867, when it replaced “Seat of Wisdom, pray for us” as a community short prayer. It has ever since maintained its privileged position as the short invocation that punctuates the daily actions of individual Salesians and of Salesian communities. For this short prayer, taken from the Litany of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Don Bosco obtained indulgences in connection with the approval of the Salesian Society in 1869.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> The *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is part of each daily exercise of the *Month of May* of 1858. The *Marian Calendar* of 1862 for the feast of Mary Help of Christians (entry of April 26) recommends saying the prayer five times [see related text above]. The rite of the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians begins with the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*.

<sup>62</sup> EBM IX, 266.



13 – Ground plans of the church of Mary Help of Christians: 1) The church at its consecration in 1868; 2) Expansion of the church in 1870 through the addition of a choir and two sacristies; 3) Restoration and expansion of 1935-1938

### *Blessing of Mary Help of Christians*<sup>63</sup>

The blessing was composed by Don Bosco and was approved with indulgences in 1878. By this time the church of Mary Help of Christians had achieved the status of a place of pilgrimage. Our Lady dispensed “graces” to the person who invoked her and received the blessing. Don Bosco published the Latin text of the Blessing of Mary Help of Christians in the Catholic newspaper *L’Unità Cattolica*, December 31, 1878, with the following words of introduction.

The devotion to Mary Help of Christians is ever on the increase throughout the Catholic world. It was fitting therefore that this great Helper of humankind should be honored with a special rite. She is daily invoked as Help of Christians in the Litany of Loreto by the faithful. On the 24th of May the Church celebrates

<sup>63</sup> *Opere Edite*, XXXVIII, 240-242. *EBM XIII*, 380-381 gives no text. For the Latin text cf. *IBM XIII*, 956-957 (Appendix 36, omitted in *EBM*).

a special feast in her honor. Altars, churches, religious associations in all parts of the world honor her as Help of Christians.

In the church built in her honor in Turin increasingly larger numbers of people have recourse to her daily and find help and comfort in time of trouble and pain.

A blessing rite has been in use for some time in this church. But Father [John] Bosco has now sought the approval of the Holy See, so that everything might be done in accordance with liturgical tradition. The Sacred Congregation of Rites has carefully examined the text of the blessing in the name of His Holiness Leo XIII and has given its approval. [For the text of the Blessing see Appendix 4.]

### *O Mary, Mighty Virgin*

In 1885 Don Bosco, already in his sunset years, composed a beautiful prayer in Latin, a compilation from liturgical texts.<sup>64</sup> It is the prayer of the aging saint, replete with unshakable faith and hope.

Text & Trans.: <i>EBM XVII, 285</i> note 16	Translation
<i>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.</i>	O Mary, mighty Virgin, you are the strong and glorious defense established in the Church; you are the outstanding Help of Christians; you are as awesome as an army in battle array; you are the one who alone has vanquished all heresies throughout the world. In difficulties, in struggles, in straits do defend us from the enemy, and at the hour of our death do receive us into everlasting joy.

### 3. As Author of Devotional Pamphlets

Don Bosco authored a number of booklets by which he sought to spread devotion to Mary, especially under the title of (Immaculate) Help of Christians. The list that follows gives the titles, and in some cases also the contents, of his Marian writings.

<sup>64</sup> Don Bosco sent this prayer to Bishop Cagliero in Argentina, suggesting that he might set it to music, the bishop never got around to doing that himself, but in 1918, on the 50th anniversary of the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians, Cagliero, by that time Cardinal Cagliero, had the great Salesian composer, Father John Pagella, set the text to music.



14 – Photograph of the altarpiece of the Help of Christians (ca. 1880), with Don Bosco's autograph message on the verso: "May the Holy V. Mary, Help of Christians shower her abundant heavenly blessings on you and your whole family. May She be for all a helper in life, a comfort in death, a joy in heaven"

1. *The Month of May Dedicated to Mary Most Holy for the People's Use* (1858).<sup>65</sup> This important work was discussed above. As may be seen from the titles [cf. Appendix 1 below], the program of *The Month of May* falls into two sections separated by a consideration of death, judgment, and hell. Thus, at the center stand death and the verities that follow it (Day 15-19); the first section (Day 1-14) explains how one may prepare oneself for that supreme confrontation; the second section (Day 20-31) explains how one may return after having strayed, and so win heaven.

<sup>65</sup> *Il mese di maggio consacrato a Maria SS.ma Immacolata ad uso del popolo*, per cura del sac. Bosco Giovanni. *Lecture Cattoliche* 6: #2 (Torino: G. B. Paravia e Co., April 1858) 192 p., in *Opere Edite*, X, 295-486. Re-edited: 1864, 1869, 1873, 1874, 1879 and 1885.



2. *Marvels of the Mother of God Invoked under the Title of Mary Help of Christians* (1868).<sup>66</sup> The work, true to its title, takes the reader on a historical journey through which the marvelous deeds performed by Mary Help of Christians on the Church's behalf are recounted. The booklet, composed on the occasion of the consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians, ranks as one of Don Bosco's most important Marian writings. Its 19 chapters recount the traditional images and doctrine of Mary in the Bible and Mary's glorious feats throughout the Church's history, down to the building of the church of Mary Help of Christians. [Cf. Appendix 5.]

3. *Souvenir of a Solemnity in Honor of Mary Help of Christians* (1868).<sup>67</sup> Written immediately after the ceremonies and festivities connected with the dedication of the church of Mary Help of Christians, the booklet gives a detailed account of events on that memorable occasion.

4. *Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians* (1869).<sup>68</sup> The pamphlet describes the nature of the Association and gives an account of the origin and the meaning of the title, Help of Christians.

5. *Nine Days Dedicated to the Glorious Mother of Our Savior, under the Title of Help of Christians* (1870).<sup>69</sup> The format of each exercise of this novena is similar to the one found in the *Month of May* (see above). The prayer "God, come to my assistance [...]," and the short invocation "Mary Help of Christians, pray for us," make up the introduction. The centerpiece is the meditation (a substantial spiritual reading). The exercise concludes with a Resolution and an Example. Again, as in the *Month of May*, Don Bosco proposes Christian life topics for consideration, rather than "glories of Mary." [Cf. Appendix 6.]

<sup>66</sup> *Maraviglie della Madre di Dio invocata sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice*, raccolte dal Sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino, 1868) 184 pp. [text, 5-138; hymns and appendices, 140-184], in *Opere Edite*, XX, 192-376.

<sup>67</sup> *Rimembranza di una solennità in onore di Maria Ausiliatrice*, pel Sacerdote Bosco Giovanni (Torino, 1868), in *Opere Edite*, XXI, 1-174.

<sup>68</sup> *Associazione de' Divoi di Maria Ausiliatrice canonicamente eretta nella Chiesa a Lei dedicata in Torino con ragguaglio storico su questo titolo*, pel sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino, 1869) [Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians Canonically Established in the Church Dedicated to Her in Turin, with an Historical Notice on This Title], in *Opere Edite*, XXI, 339-434 (re-edited in 1878, 1881, 1887).

<sup>69</sup> *Nove giorni consacrati all'Augusta Madre del Salvatore sotto il titolo di Maria Ausiliatrice*, pel Sac. Giovanni Bosco (Torino, 1870), in *Opere Edite*, XXII, 253-356 (re-edited in 1880, 1885).

6. *The Blessed Virgin's Appearance on the Mountain of La Salette with an Account of Other Extraordinary Events Taken from Public Documents* (1871).<sup>70</sup> Don Bosco tells the story of Mary's appearance in 1846 to two young shepherd children (15 and 11 years of age) on the mountain above La Salette, a village in the diocese of Grenoble (southeastern France). The Lady called for repentance from religious apathy, and entrusted each child with a "secret" (later disclosed to Pius IX). A church was built at the site in 1852-1864.

7. *Mary Help of Christians with an Account of Some Graces Obtained during the Seven Years since the Consecration of the Church Dedicated to Her in Turin* (1875).<sup>71</sup>

8. *The Little Cloud of Mt. Carmel or the Devotion to Mary Help of Christians with an Account of New Graces* (1877).<sup>72</sup>

The last two pamphlets (published in 1875 and 1877 respectively) were collections of reports of "graces" (chiefly cures) obtained by devotees from Mary Help of Christians. The two pamphlets evoked strong disapproval from Archbishop Lawrence Gastaldi, who claimed authority over such publications describing miraculous happenings in his diocese.

9. *The Seven Sorrows of Mary. A Set of Meditations* (1845?).<sup>73</sup> Don Bosco compiled this devotional exercise some time during his service as chaplain in the institutions of the Marchioness Barolo (1844-1846). Don Bosco listed it in his last will and testament of 1856 as one of the pamphlets he authored, but no copy is known to have survived.

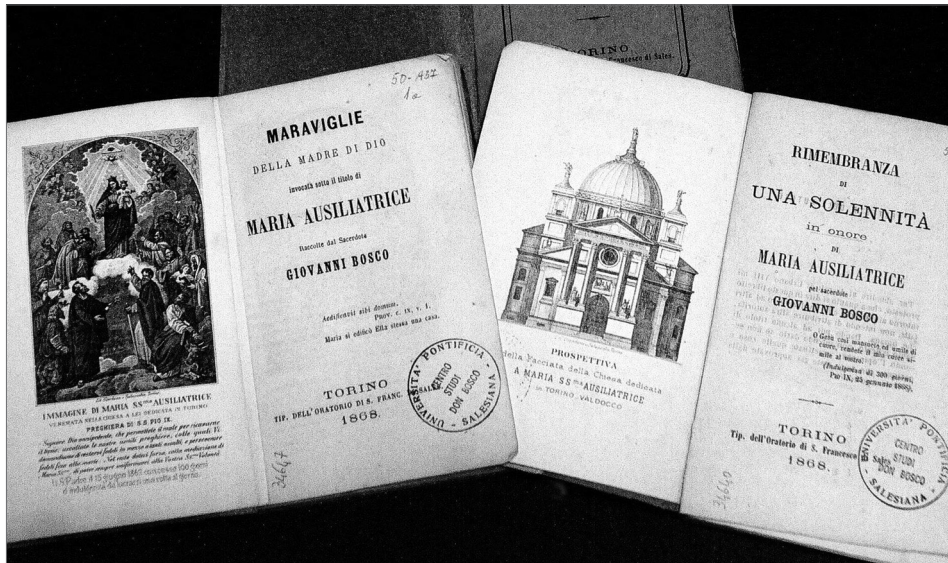
<sup>70</sup> *Apparizione della Beata Vergine sulla montagna di La Salette con altri fatti prodigiosi raccolti dai pubblici documenti*, pel sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino, 1871) in *Opere Edite*, XXII, 401-492 (re-edited in 1877).

<sup>71</sup> *Maria Ausiliatrice col racconto di alcune grazie ottenute nel primo settennio dalla consacrazione della Chiesa a Lei dedicata in Torino*, per cura del sacerdote Giovanni Bosco (Torino: Tip. dell'Orat. di SFdS, 1875) in *Opere Edite*, XXVI, 304-624 (re-edited in 1877).

<sup>72</sup> *La nuvoletta del Carmelo, ossia la Divozione a Maria Ausiliatrice premiata di nuove grazie*, per cura del sacerdote Bosco Giovanni (S. Pier d'Arena: Tip. Salesiana, 1877) in *Opere Edite*, XXVIII, 449-565.

<sup>73</sup> *I sette dolori di Maria considerati in forma di meditazione* [1845?].





15 – Frontispiece of two pamphlets authored by Don Bosco in 1868:  
*Marvels of the Mother of God invoked under the Title of Mary Help of Christians*  
 and *Souvenir of a Solemnity in Honor of Mary Help of Christians*

## VII. Conclusion: Transcending Historical Particularity

The Spoleto euphoria hardly outlasted the decade of the sixties; certainly, it did not survive the taking of Rome in 1870. And it was not long before Don Bosco, on his part, left behind the Marian eschatology that was strictly tied to the political-religious circumstances of the times.

After 1870 Don Bosco speaks of the Help of Christians in wider historical terms. In reference to the past, he views the Help of Christians as the power behind the triumphs of the Church throughout its history. In reference to the future, he sees in Mary's help the promise and guarantee of the ultimate success of the Church's mission, and of *that of the Salesian Society in particular*.

More importantly, Don Bosco retained and incorporated into his brand of Salesian spirituality what was of enduring value in the message of the Immaculate Help of Christians. In Don Bosco's understanding and devotional practice the Immaculate Conception and the Help of Christians are joined to form a double star shining in the firmament of Salesian spirituality. The two titles appear inseparable though symbolically distinct. They remain

forever linked with his person and with the Salesian Society and its work. Mary Immaculate became the presence powering Salesian education and the spirituality connected with it. Mary Help of Christians became the presence powering the Salesian apostolate and the spirituality connected with it. Mary Immaculate is the symbol of victory over personal evil, the symbol of holiness and consecration for both educator and pupil. Mary Help of Christians is the symbol of victory over evil in society through the Salesian apostolate. The same holds true for the Salesian Sisters, who were Daughters of Mary Immaculate before being Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The transcendence thus acquired gave these titles a worldwide scope. Through them Don Bosco became the apostle of the Immaculate Help of Christians, and the great church that he built became the radiating center of this worldwide significance.

## Appendices

### 1. Don Bosco's "Month of May"

*Introduction:* Devotion to Mary; How to perform the daily exercise; List of nose-gays for each day.

(April 30) Why honor Mary?

[I]

(May, Day 1) [*God our Creator*] Created by God, we are called to obey God's holy law.

2. [*The soul*] Our immortal soul is endowed with freedom and can unfortunately disobey God's law.

3. [*Christ our Redeemer*] Adam and Eve disobeyed God's law, but the merciful God promised a Redeemer to the sinful human race. We may therefore be saved.

4. [*The Church of Jesus Christ*] The Redeemer established a Church within which we can work out our salvation.

5. [*The Head of the Church*] The Church has a visible head who is Christ's Vicar; if we separate ourselves from him by leaving the Church, we break our vital link with Christ the Redeemer.

6. [*The Shepherds of the Church*] The head of the Church has helpers under him, who are our pastors, so that "Our parish priests unite us to our bishop, our bishop to the Pope, and the Pope to Christ."

7. [*Faith*] Our faith is what establishes our unity in the Church and with God.

8. [*The holy Sacraments*] Within the Church, in order to sustain us on our way to God, Christ instituted the seven Sacraments, "visible signs of grace necessary for salvation," "channels by which graces flow from God to us."

9. [*The dignity of the Christian*] Hence, as Christians we have God for a father, Jesus Christ for a brother, the Church for a mother, and the Word of God to guide us.

10. [*The Value of Time*] Unfortunately we compromise our salvation when we fail to live up to this dignity; yet "the years, months, weeks, days, hours, minutes between our birth and our death are the time of opportunity allotted to us."

11. [*The Presence of God*] We are continuously under God's scrutiny, who is always present.

12. [*The End of Man*] We were created to know, love, and serve God.

13. [*The Salvation of One's Soul*] What counts at the end is our soul's salvation, for there is no way to remedy its loss.

14. [*Sin*] Sin, "disobedience to God's law and offense against the divine majesty," puts our salvation at risk and requires God's forgiveness.

[The Last Things: Death, Judgment & Hell]

15. [*Death*] Death is the dread moment which separates the time of God's mercy from that of God's justice.

16. [*Individual Judgment*] and 17. [*Universal Judgment*] The particular and the universal judgment are clear proofs of God's justice.

18. [*The Pains of Hell*] and 19. [*The Eternity of Hell*] Hell and its eternal sufferings are the lot of unrepentant sinners.

[II]

Two-thirds of the month have gone by, and we are still on pilgrimage. Even if we have fallen, God still places the means of salvation at our disposal.

20. [*The Mercy of God*] God is merciful and calls us to trust in this mercy.

21. [*Confession*] "In the Sacrament of Confession we have the greatest proof of God's mercy."

22. [*The Confessor*] The confessor as minister of Christ "forgives our sins in God's name."

23. [*Holy Mass*] and 24. [*Holy Communion*] Holy Mass is the greatest sacrifice that can be offered for the glory of God and the good of souls, especially when one takes part in the Mass through holy Communion.

25. [*The Sin of Impurity (the "dishonest" sin)*] The sin of impurity is the most abominable sin that can ensnare us along our way to salvation. It damages the body and stupefies the soul.

26. [*The Virtue of Purity*] Contrariwise, the virtue of purity makes the soul beautiful and fills it with peace and joy.

27. [*Human Respect*] Yielding to the social pressure of human respect prevents us from doing what is right and drives us toward what is evil.

28. [*Heaven*] Heaven, the promised reward, is our hope and is for us a source of strength.

29. [*A Sure Way to Heaven*] Charity (literally, "almsgiving") is the way.

30. [*Mary, Our Protector in Life*] and 31. [*Mary, Our Protector at the Hour of Death*] Mary's protection in life and in death is available to her devotees. Hence we should increase our devotion to and trust in her.

(June 1) *Conclusion*.

## 2. The Dream of 1844 as told by Don Bosco in his “Memoirs of the Oratory” and as reported by Fr. Giulio Barberis from Don Bosco’s separate narration

*Text*

<p><b>Don Bosco’s Narration of the Dream of 1844 in his Memoir of the Oratory</b> [MO-Berto. (“Un nuovo sogno”) in <i>ASC</i> A222, FDB 61 D2-4; cf. MO-En 209-210]</p>	<p><b>Barberis’s Report of the Dream of 1844 from Don Bosco’s separate narration</b> [<i>ASC</i> A0020102: <i>Cronachette</i>, Barberis, “Sogni Diversi a Lanzo”: FDB 866 B10-C1 (“original” copy). For derived (calligraphic) copies, cf. <i>ASC</i> A016: <i>Sogni</i>, Barberis, “Il nastro bianco, Rivelazione della Congregazione,” in FDB 1279 C6-11 and 1282 E8 -1283 A1; also <i>ASC</i> A017: <i>Sogni</i>, Lemoyne: FDB 1314 B10-C5.]</p>
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[Reporter Barberis’ Introduction]

On February 2, 1875 I was walking with Don Bosco back to the Oratory from Borgo San Salvario. We were alone. Among many other things he related to me the following vision. He said that it was the first he had had regarding the congregation, and it was the longest, since it lasted the whole night. He added that he had never opened his heart to anyone about the matter. I was the first person to hear about it.

[Don Bosco’s Narration]

[Introduction]

On the second Sunday in October of that year (1844) I had to notify my youngsters that the Oratory would be moving to Valdocco. But the uncertainty of place, means and personnel gave me real cause for concern. The previous evening I had gone to bed with an uneasy heart. That night I had another dream, which seems to be an appendix to the one I had had at Becchi at the age of nine. I think it advisable to relate it in detail [letteralmente].

[Don Bosco Narration]

[Introduction]

It was the year 1844. I was due to leave the Pastoral Institute of St. Francis [*Convitto Ecclesiastico*] and move to the Rifugio to live with Dr. Borel. I was truly worried about [what I should do with] my youngsters who attended religious instruction [the oratory] on Sundays and holy days. I did not know whether I should let them go or continue to care for them. My desire was to continue with [the work of] the oratories; but I did not see how I could. On the last Sunday I was to stay at the *Convitto* I had to notify my youngsters that they should no longer meet there, as they did usually. In fact I was debating whether I should tell them that they need not go to any place, since the oratory would be terminated; or else I should tell them of a new place where they could meet.

## [Don Bosco's Narration of the Dream]

I dreamt that I was standing in the middle of a multitude of wolves, goats and kids, lambs, ewes, rams, dogs and birds. All together they raised a din, a racket, or better, a bedlam to frighten the stoutest heart. I wanted to run away, when a Lady, very nicely dressed in the style of a young shepherdess, motioned to me to follow and accompany that strange flock, while she walked at the head of it. We kept wandering from place to place, making three stations or stops. Each time we stopped, many of those animals were turned into lambs in ever increasing numbers. After much walking, I found myself in a grassy field where all those animals gamboled and grazed together without the least attempt on the part of some to harm the others.

Worn out with fatigue, I wanted to sit down by the side of a nearby road; but the young shepherdess invited me to walk on a little farther. After another short journey, I found myself in a large courtyard. It was ringed round with porticoes, and at one end stood a church. At that point I realized that four-fifths of those animals had turned into lambs, and their number grew very large.

## [Helpers and the great church]

Just then several young shepherds came along to care for them; but they stayed only a short time, and were soon gone.

Then something wonderful happened. Many of the lambs were changed into young shepherds, and as they grew up they cared for the others. As the number of young shepherds grew very large, they split up and went to other places to gather other strange animals and guide them into other folds.

I wanted to be off, because it seemed time [for me] to go and celebrate Mass; but the shepherdess invited me to look to the south. I looked and saw a field sown with maize, potatoes, cabbages, beets, [various kinds of] lettuce and many other vegetables. "Look again," she said to me. So I looked again and saw a magnificent, great

## [Don Bosco's Narration of the Dream]

On the night between Saturday and Sunday, I dreamt that I was in a vast plain crowded with an enormous number of youngsters. Some were fighting or swearing; others were stealing or engaged in nasty behavior. The air was thick with flying stones from the little war that was being waged by those youngsters—all of them abandoned and gone bad. I was about to leave the scene, when I saw a Lady beside me. "Go among those youngsters," [she told me]. "And what can I do with these street urchins?" [I replied]. "Go in and work," [she countered]. I went in among them; but what could I do? No place was available to shelter even one of them. I wanted to do some good to them; but no one [of the people around] paid any attention to me or lent a helping hand. I then turned to the Lady, and she said, "Here is the place," and pointed to a grassy field. "There is nothing here but a field," I objected. She replied: "My Son and His Apostles had no place where to rest their heads." I began to work in that field; but I saw that my efforts were largely unavailing. I had to find some place where I could provide shelter for some [of the lads] that were wholly abandoned. Then the Lady led me a little farther out and said: "Take a good look." I looked and saw a little church, a small courtyard, with youngsters, etc.

## [The great church and helpers]

But since the [little] church soon proved inadequate, I again appealed to her, and she pointed out another church and a much larger building. Then the Lady took me a little farther to the side, and said: "This is the place where the glorious martyrs of Turin, Adventor and Octavius, suffered martyrdom. It is my wish that here God be honored in a very special manner." So saying, she put her foot out and laid it on the place where the martyrdom had taken place, thus indicating the exact spot. I wanted to leave some kind of marker there so as to remember it; but I could not find anything about for this purpose. Nevertheless, I kept the place clearly in mind. In the meantime, I saw myself surrounded by a very vast number of youngsters; but, as I looked to Our Lady, the means and the premises also kept growing

church. An orchestra and music, both instrumental and vocal, were inviting me to sing Mass. Inside the church a white band was displayed on which was written in large block letters, *Hic domus mea, inde gloria mea* [Here is my dwelling-place, from hence my glory.]

As the dream continued, I made it a point of asking the shepherdess where I was, and what was the meaning of the journeying, of the stops, of the house, of the first and of the second church. [She replied:] “You will understand everything when with your bodily eyes you see in reality all that you now perceive only with the eyes of the mind.” Thinking that I was awake, I said: “I see clearly, and I see with my bodily eyes. I know where I am going and what I am doing.”

At that moment the bell of the Church of St. Francis sounded the Angelus, and I woke up.

[End of Dream Narrative]

[Don Bosco’s Conclusion]

This [dream] lasted most of the night. A lot of detail went with it. At the time I grasped little of its meaning since I put little faith in it.

[Gradual understanding and “another dream”]

But I gained an understanding of it gradually as its premonitions came true one after another. And later, in conjunction with another dream, it even served as a guideline for my decisions.

End of Don Bosco’s narration in MO]

apace. I then saw a very large church rising on the very spot that she had pointed out to me as the place where the martyrdom had taken place. There were buildings all around [the church] and a beautiful square in front with a monument at the center of it.

While all this was going on, I had the help of priests and clerical students; but they helped me only for a short while, and then ran off. I would make the greatest efforts to win them over, but after a while they would leave, and I would be left all alone. So, I appealed once more to the Lady. “Do you want to know what will prevent them from getting away?” she asked. “Take this little cord or ribbon and bind their foreheads with it.” I take the little white ribbon and I notice the word “Obedience” written on it. I tried to do as Our Lady suggested and began to bind the heads of some [of my helpers] with the ribbon, with immediate and great good results. And the results improved as time went on. Those individuals gave up the idea of leaving and stayed on to help me. Thus was our Congregation born.

[End of Dream Narrative]

[Don Bosco’s Conclusion and Comments]

A lot of other things occurred [in the dream], but I see no point in relating them now. (Barberis may have been referring to great things to come.)

[Certainty obtained from Dream]

Suffice it to say that from that time on I have walked on sure ground both in matters regarding the Congregation and the Oratory, and in matters regarding politics. It was because of having seen church, house, playgrounds, youngsters, clerical students and priests helping me, and how the whole undertaking should be managed, that I began to mention the matter to others and to speak of it as a reality. That is why many people regarded the story as irrational nonsense. They thought I had lost my mind, and wanted to commit me.

[Gastaldi’s research on the Holy Martyrs]

As for the spot that the Virgin Mary had pointed out to Don Bosco as the place of SS. Adventor’s and Octavius’ martyrdom, the Rev. Don Bosco had some further comments. He contin-



ued: I made it a point of never telling anybody where that had taken place. I simply gave the task of researching the matter over to Canon Gastaldi (now our Archbishop). The object was to determine as nearly as possible, on the basis of historical data, where the martyrdom had taken place. (In fact I suggested that he publish a book on the life of these saints.) He researched the matter thoroughly and concluded that Valdocco, and indeed approximately the area of our oratory, was the most likely place.

[Buying back the “Field of Dreams” for building the Church]

Meanwhile the decision was taken to build the church at the very place of the martyrdom. That area had formerly been my property. However, since there had been proposals to build the church elsewhere, that is, where the Defilippi house was located, that plot of ground had been sold to the Rosminians, who meant to establish a house of their own there. Negotiations for the purchase of the Defilippi house were already far advanced. The church would be built on the courtyard in front of the house, so that it would have been visible from as far as Dora Grossa Street. But just as the deal was about to be closed, it fell through. The owners were no longer willing to let the house go. Then we again set our mind on the original location; but, of course, the land had been sold to the Rosminians. At this point we receive word that Abbé Rosmini had passed away. Under the circumstances the Rosminians were no longer keen on setting up a house in Turin. So they put that land up for sale, but with the condition that [the agents] should not deal with Don Bosco. They refused to sell to him because they had bought the plot from him at a high price, and it was now depreciated by 8/10 [of its former value]. Seeing that they refused to sell to me, I got Mgr. [Bishop?] Negroni’s brother to act for me (Negroni, or Negrotti, or Neirotti, or Neironi, or some like name). Without giving anything away, he handled the matter for me, and I appeared only for the signing of the contract. The procurator of the Rosminians was no little surprised at seeing me. He would have none of it, of course, since he had received clear instruc-

tions to the contrary. But the matter was urgent. The notary public had been called in. Several city councillors were also present. There was no time for him to write [for instructions]. Everyone put pressure on him to go along with the terms of the negotiations and sell to me. So that is where the new church was built. Without any reference on my part to any specific place, one of the chapels turned out to be situated at the very spot that the Blessed Virgin had pointed out to me. It is the chapel we know as St. Anne's chapel. The altar in it, however, is consecrated specifically to the holy martyrs of Turin.

I will not go into the wondrous events that accompanied the building of the church. I could tell you stories that would astonish you, so extraordinary are they.

[The square and the monument]

Also, in front of the church that the Blessed Virgin showed me there stretched a beautiful square with a monument in the middle of it. Now I shall wait and see if this will be feasible. All the difficulties that may be lying ahead are forestalled, and I walk in full daylight. I have a clear view of the things that will happen to us, of the difficulties, and of the manner of dealing with them.

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### *Comment*

The above are two different reports of the same dream, that of October 9, 1844. It occurred when Don Bosco was about to leave the Pastoral Institute (*Convitto*) to take a job as chaplain in the Institutions of the Marchioness Barolo. His perplexity arose from the fact that he couldn't see how under the circumstances he could continue his work with the youngsters (the oratory).

The two texts are considerably different, though the dream narratives themselves are in basic accord. The Barberis report is more extensive in that it features the additional scene of the Lady pointing out the place of the holy martyrs' death, and of the great church rising on that spot. The Barberis report then goes on to quote Don Bosco's further comments relating to the acquiring of the field and to the building of church and the mention of a "monument."

Clearly, it could not be a monument in honor of Don Bosco. He is in fact quoted as saying, "I shall have to wait and see if this is feasible." However, the Past Pupils who dedicated the magnificent monument to Don Bosco in the middle of the square in 1920 may well have wished to fulfill Don Bosco's "prophetic" dream.

### 3. The *Sub Tuum Praesidium*

The *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is thought to have originated in Alexandria (Egypt) and to have passed from there into all the ancient liturgies (Byzantine, Roman, Ambrosian, Coptic, etc.)

The most ancient form of the text of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* is attested by the Rylands Papyrus 470. This papyrus fragment (18 x 9.4 cm.) was discovered in Egypt, acquired by the Rylands Library (Manchester, UK) in 1917, and published by C.H. Roberts in 1938.<sup>74</sup>

It was variously dated: from the fourth century (Roberts, on the basis of the use of the term *Theotokos*, Mother of God); or from the third century (Lobel, 1948, on paleographic grounds). As for internal evidence, it is noted that, although made a dogma at the Council of Ephesus (431), the doctrine of Mary *theotokos* is attested from the middle of the third century. Moreover, the expressions, “We flee for refuge,” “Deliver us from danger in an evil time,” seem suggest persecution, perhaps that of Decius and Valerian (250 C.E.).

The Rylands Papyrus 470 is believed to represent the Alexandrian, perhaps original, form of the text of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*.

As the papyrus is frayed all around and torn on the right side, reconstructions differ slightly. The reconstruction made on the basis of the Byzantine form of the text is the most common.

Form of the Rylands Papyrus 470 Reconstructed after the Byzantine Form: Under thy tender-mercy we-flee-for refuge, Mother-of-God: / our entreaties do not despise in an-evil-time (*peristasei*), / but from danger *deliver* (*rhusai*) us, O alone chaste, (alone) the blessed-one.

Byzantine Form of the Text:<sup>75</sup> Under thy tender-mercy we-flee-for refuge, Mother-of-God: / our entreaties do not despise in evil-times (*peristasesi*), / but from danger *ransom* (*lutrosai*) us, O-alone chaste, (alone) [the] blessed-one.

Roman Form of the Text: *Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, (sancta) Dei Genitrix: / nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus, / sed a periculis (cunctis) libera nos (semper), (sola) Virgo (gloriosa) (et) benedicta.*

<sup>74</sup> C.H. Roberts, *Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*, vol. III: *Theological and Literary Texts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1938), 46-47, no. 470.

<sup>75</sup> The Byzantine text is closest to that of the Rylands Papyrus. The chief differences are as follows: In the 2nd line Rylands Papyrus has the singular, “in an-evil-time,” whereas the Byzantine (as well as the Roman and others) has the plural. It is likely that the prayer was composed for a specific situation (e.g. persecution), and was afterwards generalized through use of the plural form. In the third line, the Byzantine text has the stronger verb, “ransom,” for the softer one “deliver” of the Alexandrian form.

Under thy protection we-flee-for refuge, (holy) Mother of God: / our entreaties do not despise in times-of-need, / but from (all) dangers deliver us (ever), (alone) Virgin (glorious) (and) blessed.

Ambrosian Form of the Text: *Sub tua misericordia confugimus, Dei Genitrix: / nostram deprecationem ne inducas in tentationem, / sed a periculo libera nos, sola casta (et) benedicta.*

Under thy mercy we-flee-for-refuge, Mother of God: / our entreaties do not lead into temptation,<sup>76</sup> / but from danger deliver us, O alone chaste (and) blessed.

### *Brief Commentary*

The prayer is dominated by the Marian title, Mother of God (*Theotokos*). Two other epithets emphasize the dignity of Mary: (1) “Alone chaste (*mone hagne*)” (Roman form, “virgin”). Here “alone” points beyond mere chastity to virginity (in divine motherhood). (2) “The blessed one (*he eulogemene*),” alludes to the blessings bestowed on Mary in Luke’s gospel. But it is pointed out that the term in Jewish and early Christian texts is most often referred to God (the Blessed One). Furthermore a variant of the Byzantine text has “glorious (*semne*) and blessed” (see also variant in the Roman form). “Glorious (*semne*)” in ancient Greece was an attribute of deities.

In this prayer, therefore, the Virgin *Theotokos*, the merciful and high-exalted being to whom one can flee for refuge, *is directly asked to perform an act of salvation* (“deliver, ransom”). This form of Marian prayer goes beyond the other two forms, that is, of intercession and of communion. In the prayer of communion (exemplified in Eucharistic prayers of the Mass) the Christian community remembers Mary’s role and prays to God to be found in communion with her. The prayer of intercession is addressed either to God through Mary’s intercession (as often in the liturgy), or to Mary to intercede with God. On the contrary, the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* asks Mary *directly* to “save” or “ransom.” Needless to say, this last form, which may be regarded as characteristic of Catholic Marian devotion, is theologically the most difficult. But the *Sub Tuum Praesidium* attests that even this form of Marian prayer dates back to the Church of the Fathers.

The *Memorare*, attributed to St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), is regarded as a paraphrase of the *Sub Tuum Praesidium*. It reads:

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who *fled to your protection*, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, we *fly unto you*, O *Virgin of virgins*, our Mother! To you we come, before you we stand, sinful and sorrowful. O *Mother of the Word Incarnate*, *despise not our petitions*, but *in your mercy* hear and answer us. Amen.

<sup>76</sup> This surprising variant, “our entreaties do not lead into temptation,” seems to ask Mary to help us pray aright or without failing.

In form the *Memorare* has come a fairly long way from the older prayer, but it should be regarded as a developed paraphrase of it. The italicized phrases show its dependence on the older prayer. The main difference lies in the absence of the title *Theotokos* (Mother of God) and in the use instead of the titles, “Our Mother” and “Mother of the Word Incarnate.”

#### 4. Blessing of Mary Help of Christians

Formula Benedictionis in honorem et cum invocationem Beatae Mariae Virginis sub titulo Auxilium Christianorum.	Ritual Blessing in Honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary Invoked under the Title, Help of Christians
[ <i>Sacerdos superpelliceo et stola indutus, dicit.</i> ]	[ <i>The priest, vested in surplice and stole, says:</i> ]
V) Adiutorium nostrum in nomine Domini. R) Qui fecit caelum et terram. Ave Maria, ecc.	R) Our help is in the name of the Lord. V) Who made heaven and earth. Hail Mary, etc.
Sub tuum praesidium confugimus, Sancta Dei Genetrix, nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.	We fly to your patronage, O Holy Mother of God; despise not our petitions in our necessities; but deliver us from all dangers always, O Virgin glorious and blessed.
V) Maria, auxilium christianorum, R) Ora pro nobis V) Domine, exaudi orationem meam. R) Et clamor meus ad te veniat. V) Dominus vobiscum, R) Et cum spiritu tuo.	V) Mary, Help of Christians, R) Pray for us. V) O Lord, hear my prayer. R) And let my cry come up to you. V) The Lord be with you. R) And with your spirit.
Oremus	Let us pray
Omnipotens, sempiterna Deus, qui gloriosae Virginis Matris Mariae corpus et animam, ut dignum Filii tui habitaculum effici mereretur, Spiritu Sancto cooperante, praeparasti; da, ut cuius commemoratione laetamur, eius pia intercessione ab instantibus malis et a morte perpetua liberemur. Per eundem Christum Dominum nostrum.	Almighty, ever living God, by the active co-operation of the Holy Spirit you prepared the body and soul of the Virgin Mother Mary, so that she might be a worthy dwelling place for your Son. As we joyfully keep her memorial, we pray that through her merciful intercession we may be freed from the evils that beset us and from eternal death. Through Christ our Lord.
R) Amen	R) Amen
[ <i>Et personam benedicendam aspergit aqua benedict.</i> ]	[ <i>The priest sprinkles the person receiving the blessing with holy water.</i> ]
Taurinen.	[For the diocese] of Turin
Sacra Rituum Congregatio, utendo facultatibus sibi specialiter a Sanctissimo Domino Nostro Leone Papa XIII tributis, ad enixas preces rev. Domini Ioannis Bosco, rectoris ecclesiae ac sodalitatis Beatae Mariae Virginis sub titulo Aux-	This Sacred Congregation of Rites acting by the special powers received from His Holiness Pope Leo XIII accepts the petition of the Rev. Father John Bosco, rector of the church and of the confraternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary

ilium Christianorum in civitate Taurinensi, suprascriptam benedictionis formulam, antea a se rite revisam, approbavit atque in usum praefatae ecclesiae et sodalitatis benigne concessit. – Die 18 maii 1878.

Th. M<sup>a</sup> Card. Martinelli, S.R.C. Praef.  
Plac. Ralli, S.R.C. Secr.

Help of Christians. Accordingly, after careful examination, it approves the text of ritual blessing as given above for use in the above-mentioned church and by the above-mentioned confraternity. – May 18, 1878.

Th. M. Card. Martinelli, Prefect of the S.C.R.  
Placidus Ralli, Secretary of the S.C.R.

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## 5. Marvels of the Mother of God

The 19 chapters develop the following themes.

1. Symbols of Mary's help to the human race in the Old Testament.
2. Mary shown as the Help of Christians in Gabriel's message that she is to be Mother of God, and in the words of Elizabeth. (A commentary on the Lucan texts, from Church Fathers and theologians.)
3. At the wedding feast of Cana Mary shows her zeal and her power with Jesus.
4. By the will of Jesus dying on the cross, Mary is made Help of Christians when John is made her son.
5. The first Christians' devotion to Mary Most Holy.
6. The Blessed Virgin explain the truths of the Christian faith to St. Gregory the Wonderworker (3rd c.). Nestorius is condemned at the Council of Ephesus (431) and comes to a bad end for denying Mary's divine motherhood.
7. Mary helps those who work for the true faith, while God punishes heretics who revile the Virgin Mary.
8. Mary protects Christian armies fighting for the true faith.
9. The battle of Lepanto and the introduction of the title Help of Christians into the Litany (1571).
10. The deliverance of Vienna (1683).
11. The Association of Mary Help of Christians in Munich, Bavaria, founded in 1684, after the deliverance of Vienna.
12. Appropriateness of the feast of Mary Help of Christians. A summary is given of all the foregoing, to show why Mary Help of Christians should be honored with a special feast.
13. Institution of the feast of Mary Help of Christians by Pius VII (1815).
14. Rediscovery of the image of Mary Help of Christians at Spoleto (the story of the Spoleto events, as described above).
15. Devotion to Mary Help of Christians in Turin, and planning for a church in her honor.
- 16-18. Story of the construction, and description, of the church of Mary Help of Christians.

19. Where did the money needed for the building come from? (Offerings for graces received!)

## 6. Novena in Preparation to the Feast of Mary Help of Christians

The topics for the nine exercises are as follows:

1. Mary, the help of Christians in life's needs.
  2. Honoring Mary on her feast days.
  3. Promoting the observance of Sundays and holy days, the avoidance of blasphemy and of bad talk.
  4. Frequent Confession.
  5. Frequent Communion.
  6. Excuses and pretexts for not receiving Communion frequently.
  7. Holy Mass.
  8. Honoring Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.
  9. Joy and assurance experienced by Mary's devotees at the point of death.
- Feast of Mary Help of Christians.  
Act of consecration to Mary.

## 7. Chronological Survey for the 1860s to Mid-1870

The following chronological survey spans the period 1858-1874 and features dates of significance for Don Bosco and the Salesian Society. It provides a framework for some of the preceding and following chapters.

### 1858

[February 18] *Don Bosco's first trip to Rome and audience with Pius IX to present plan for a religious society and constitutions*

[mid-or late 1858] First draft of the Salesian Constitutions (Rua Ms.)

### 1859

[January 21] Death of Michael Magone

[January] Don Bosco publishes the Savio biography

[October] The secondary school at Valdocco (*ginnasio*) is completed with a standard five-year curriculum

[December 18] *Official founding of the Salesian Society* (preceded by proposal by Don Bosco at conference of December 9) with 18 members (none lay). "First General Council" (Superior Chapter) is elected



### 1860

[–] *The first lay member* (Salesian Brother or Coadjutor), *Joseph Rossi*, received by Don Bosco into the Society

[May 26] The first of 11 [?] house searches at the Oratory

[June 2] First ordination of a Salesian priest, Angelo Savio

[June 11] Draft of Constitutions signed by the 26 members of the Society is sent to Archbishop Fransoni

[July 29] Fr. Rua's ordination to the priesthood

[August] Don Bosco accepts to direct and partially staff the junior seminary at *Giaveno*

### 1861

[March 3] "Historical Committee" to record Don Bosco's words and deeds is formed

[–] Elementary boarding school is established at Valdocco

### 1862

[End of 1861, or beginning of 1862] The print shop is established at Valdocco

[March 26] Archbishop Fransoni dies in exile: Turin See is vacant 1862-1867

[–] Blacksmiths' workshop is established at Valdocco

[May 14] *First* [triennial?] *public vows* by 22 Salesians

[June 14] Frs. Cagliero and Francesia are ordained to the priesthood

### 1863

[–] *Ground breaking* for the church of Mary Help of Christians

[October] Private Salesian boarding school at *Mirabello* is begun (with *Fr. Rua as Director*), serving as junior seminary for the diocese of Casale

### 1864

[January 9] Death of Francis Besucco

[April] Laying of the foundation stone of the church of Mary Help of Christians

[July 23] Don Bosco (without going the Rome) petitions for approval of Society and its constitutions, obtains the *Decretum laudis* and receives the 13 Savini-Svegliati observations

[–] Book Store is established at Valdocco

[October 15] Municipal Salesian boarding school is opened at *Lanzo* (the agreement having been signed June 30)

[October] DB's first meeting with Mary Mazzarello and Daughters of Mary Immaculate at Mornese

[December] "Concert" band is established at Valdocco

### 1865

[April 27] Blessing and placing of the cornerstone of the church of Mary Help of Christians

[–] *Library of Latin Classics* is begun

[October 7] Death of Fr. Alasonatti and succession of Fr. Rua as Prefect [Vicar]

[November 10] *First perpetual profession*: Fr. J.B. Lemoyne

[November 13] Fr. J.B. Francesia is the first Salesian to earn a Master's/Doctor's degree

[December 10] Fr. Albera and Fr. Francesia obtain certification as 'professors'

### 1866

[August 2] First spiritual retreat for Salesians at Trofarello (up to this point Salesians made retreat with the boys)

[September 23] Laying of last brick and completion of the cupola of the church of Mary Help of Christians

### 1867

[January 7] *Second trip to Rome* (to petition for approval of the Society and its constitutions. Petition is rejected)

[January] *Bishop Alessandro Ottaviano Riccardi dei conti di Netro* is appointed Archbishop of Turin

[March 27] Canon Gastaldi is named bishop of Saluzzo

[November 21] Unveiling of the statue of Mary Immaculate on the cupola of the church of Mary Help of Christians

### 1868

[January 19] *Diocesan approval of the Salesian Society* by Bp. Pietro Ferrè of Casale

[May 21] Blessing of the five bells of the church of Mary Help of Christians

[May] Don Bosco publishes *Marvels of the Mother of God* ...

[June 9] *Consecration of the church of Mary Help of Christians*

[October 29] Fr. Rua's grave illness

### 1869

[January 9] *The Young People's Library of Italian Classics* begins publication

[January 15] *Don Bosco's third trip to Rome* to petition for approval of the Society and its constitutions

[February 19] *Approval of the Salesian Society* (decree, dated March 1); but approval of constitutions is put off (to be corrected in accordance with observations of 1864)

[October] Opening of municipal Salesian boarding school at *Cherasco*, the agreement having been stipulated in July (transferred to *Varazze* in 1871)

[–] Don Bosco establishes the Association of the Devotees of Mary Help of Christians (ADMA)

### 1870

[January 20] *Don Bosco's fourth trip to Rome*: during Vatican Council I, Don Bosco is active in support of papal infallibility

[June 24] First celebration of Don Bosco's name day: the *Valdocco Oratory's Past Pupil Association* is founded, a founding component of the later Association of Salesian Past Pupils

[October] Opening of the municipal Salesian boarding school of *Alassio* (Savona), first outside Piedmont

[October] The Mirabello school is transferred to *Borgo San Martino* to better, more healthful premises

### 1871

[June] *Don Bosco's fifth trip to Rome*: Don Bosco is active for the nomination of bishops to vacant sees (Gastaldi's name is submitted for Turin)

[September] *Don Bosco's sixth trip to Rome*

[October] Private Salesian home for working boys is opened at *Marassi* and transferred the following year to *Sampierdarena* (Genoa), to become a second Valdocco

[October] The municipal Salesian boarding school at *Varazze* is opened (absorbing the Cherasco school)

[November 26] *Archbishop Gastaldi enters the see of Turin*

[December 6] Don Bosco's long and grave *illness at Varazze*, bedridden until January 30, 1872

### 1872

[January 29] *Founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*, the Constitutions having been drafted in 1871

[October] The diocesan school of *Valsalice* is transferred to the Salesians at Gastaldi's insistence, the transfer having been agreed to in July

### 1873

[–] *Archbishop Gastaldi's opposition* to the Salesian Society, already felt in 1872, increases.

[February 18] *Don Bosco's seventh trip to Rome*, to petition for approval of the constitutions: petition is rejected; constitutions receive the 28 Bianchi-Vitelleschi observations. First revision of 1873 text

[September 9] Death of Fr. John Borel

[–] Don Bosco drafts the first two notebooks of the *Memoirs of the Oratory*

[December 30, to April 14, 1874] *Eighth trip to Rome*

**1874**

[December 30, 1873-April 14, 1874] *Don Bosco's eighth trip to Rome*, to petition for approval of constitutions; Don Bosco is active for bishops' nomination and temporalities (*exequatur*)

[March 31] *Definitive approval of emended Salesian Constitutions, the Decree being issued April 3*

[1874-18...] Don Bosco drafts the third notebook of *Memoirs of the Oratory*

[June 15] First "General Chapter" of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Mary Mazzarello, elected Superior General ("Mother")

## Chapter 4

# DON BOSCO'S UNOFFICIAL MEDIATION BETWEEN THE HOLY SEE AND THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT FOR BISHOPS' APPOINTMENT (1865-1874)

### Summary

1. Don Bosco and the Vegezzi Negotiations for the Appointment of Bishops (March-June 1865)
2. Don Bosco and the Tonello Negotiations for the Appointment of Bishops (December 1866 - June 1867)
3. A Mission Entrusted to Don Bosco by Prime Minister Menabrea (January-March 1869)
4. Don Bosco and the Nominations of Bishops in 1871
5. Don Bosco's Continued Mediation to Obtain the *Exequatur* for Appointed Bishops in 1872-1874
6. Closing Comments

### *Bibliographical Note*

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Gioachino Berto, *Compendio dell'andata di Don Bosco a Roma nel 1873 [...]*, in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 906 C8ff. [Berto, *Compendio*]; *Appunti sul viaggio di D. Bosco a Roma, 1873* (Notes on Don Bosco's Trip to Rome, 1873), in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 907 D12ff. [Berto, *Appunti*]; *Brevi appunti pel viaggio di D. Bosco a Roma nel 1873-74 [...]* (Brief Notes on Don Bosco's Trip to Rome in 1873-74), 1-117; Table of Contents, 118-148, in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 908 B5 - 910 C3 and 910 C4 – 911 A8. [Berto, *Brevi Appunti*]

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## I. Introductory Questions

Popular biographies of Don Bosco give but scanty information on Don Bosco's activity as mediator between Church and state in Italy in the times of their estrangement following the liberal revolution, the unification and the taking of Rome. And yet such mediating activity is attested for a period of some 20 years (1858-1878) and appears as a quite extraordinary feature in the life of the humble and otherwise "politically uninvolved" priest of Valdocco.

### 1. Reason and Nature of Don Bosco's Involvement in Negotiations between the Holy See and the Italian Government for the Appointment of Bishops and the *Exequatur*

The *Central Salesian Archives* preserve attestation of Don Bosco's involvement, chiefly by Father Gioachino Berto, his faithful secretary. The *Biographical Memoirs* have given some attention to this activity, especially in its later phases. Father Francesco Motto in a series of articles and Father Francis Desramaut in his biography of Don Bosco have written critically on the subject. (For all these see the Bibliographical note above.)

Don Bosco's efforts as a "negotiator" were chiefly concerned with filling vacant diocesan sees, the bishops of which had either been expelled or imprisoned, or had died. The appointment of bishops, therefore, was an important objective of this activity. At a later period the principal purpose of such mediation was to obtain the so-called *Exequatur* after a bishop's appointment. This was a state-issued permit that enabled bishops to enter their sees and obtain possession of assets and revenues, held by the government but now needed to run the diocese—the so-called "temporalities."

In an earlier note we saw Don Bosco acting as messenger in an exchange of letters between the Holy See and the Cavour government in 1858-1859—in the Frasoni Case. These negotiations, which ultimately failed, aimed at solving the problem of the diocese of Turin, the archbishop of which (Luigi Frasoni) had been in exile since 1850.

The following paragraphs tell the story (1865-1874) of Don Bosco's efforts to have bishops appointed, and to develop a procedure (acceptable to both parties) for their entering into possession once appointed.

How, why and in what circumstances did this remarkable involvement



come about? Don Bosco was certainly not an “important” person. He was of peasant origins, and he was not highly educated nor highly placed in the Church. As he often emphasized, he was not involved in politics or in public life. His charitable work, important and successful though it was, did not confer on him special power or distinction. How then explain his remarkable involvement in sensitive Church-State negotiations over many years? One may best judge the matter after hearing the long and involved story of this involvement. Suffice it here to say Don Bosco was no stranger either to the men in the government or to Vatican authorities. Since the late sixties he seems to have had the ear of Pius IX and his Secretary of State, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli. And it is important to understand that Don Bosco was involved in these negotiations in a completely private capacity.

The non-official status of his mediation explains why one finds but little mention of it in official documents or in secular historical writing. In a comment introducing his collection, Father Gioachino Berto, Don Bosco’s secretary, offers an explanation.

At this point in time, few written documents are available that might be used to show the part which Don Bosco played between the years 1867 and 1874 in the nomination of bishops to vacant sees and in obtaining for them the so-called temporalities [*exequatur*]. The reason for such a lack of documentation is that he did not act in any official capacity. Obviously, the Holy See could not compromise the pope’s dignity by negotiating directly with his enemies. Don Bosco did indeed act as a *bona fide* intermediary, but without bearing official credentials. He dealt with the government in a private capacity and by word of mouth, but always in accordance with instructions received from the Vatican. Then he would faithfully report the government’s responses and demands back to the Vatican.<sup>1</sup>

Now, however, we find ourselves in a different and much more favorable position. Both Motto and Desramaut, the two Salesian historians that have written critically on the subject (to both of whom this survey is indebted) cite several histories of the period in which Don Bosco’s activities are mentioned. Catholic Church historians are also cited that mention Don Bosco’s mediation, even though not in any great detail. In addition, research in various archives has produced correspondence and other documentation that sheds considerable light on Don Bosco’s role.<sup>2</sup> This larger body of historical data

<sup>1</sup> Berto Collection, in ASC A026: *Vescovi*, FDB 788 C2. In the next few pages Berto records eyewitness testimonies of various Salesians who were close to Don Bosco in those years.

<sup>2</sup> Motto, *L’Azione*, 252, notes 2 and 3. Among the archives consulted Motto mentions

lends qualified support to the Salesian claim as embodied in the *Biographical Memoirs*. It also enables us to describe Don Bosco's activity as mediator in some detail.

In this context it should be clearly understood that negotiations undertaken between the Holy See and the Italian government were never aimed at a political "reconciliation" between the two contending parties. Since the unification of Italy in 1861, and more so since the taking of Rome in 1870, the Holy See's position was clear and adamantly maintained: Italy was the aggressor and there could not be any reconciliation except on the basis of restitution. Under the circumstances, the very idea of a political reconciliation would have appeared preposterous from the Holy See's viewpoint.

The appointment of bishops to vacant sees and obtaining for them the *Exequatur* and the material means necessary to run their dioceses were purely religious issues that had to do with the good of souls. This was Don Bosco's understanding and the reason for his involvement.

## **2. Political Context: The Unification of Italy and the Roman Question**

The Peace of Zürich (November 10, 1859), ending the Second War of Italian Independence waged by France and Piedmont against Austria, provided for Lombardy to be annexed to the Kingdom of Sardinia, and envisaged in general terms a federation of Italian regional states, with their legitimate rulers restored.

Lombardy was annexed to Piedmont, but otherwise things took a different turn. On the one hand, France's Napoleon III began to shift his position with regard to Italian unification. By the pamphlet *Le pape et le congrès* (1859) he was lending qualified support to Prime Minister Camillo Cavour's program, though apparently he was also committed to defending the pope's sovereignty. On the other hand, the revolutionary movement for Italian national unification intensified to the point that it could no longer be stopped.

In March 1860, following uprisings and referendums, Tuscany, Parma, Modena and the Legations of Romagna were officially annexed to Piedmont.

the Secret Vatican Archive, in its various sections, and the Historical Archive of the [Italian] Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He also mentions a number of historians, P. Pirri, Roger Aubert, G. Martina, among others.

Similarly, in the wake of an uprising against the Bourbon government in Palermo (Sicily), Garibaldi, at the urging of the Action Party leaders, mounted an expedition to Sicily in support of the revolutionaries, and from there went on to overthrow the Bourbon monarchy and “liberate” the South. In a preemptive move designed to take the initiative for the “liberation of Italy” away from Garibaldi, Piedmont’s Victor Emanuel II invaded the Marches and Umbria (Papal States) where the movement for annexation had been strong. On October 26, 1860 Victor Emanuel II met Garibaldi, who surrendered his “conquest” to the king. Referendums were held at Naples and in the Papal States, and the “conquered” regions were annexed to Piedmont. These actions paved the way for the proclamation of Victor Emmanuel II as king of united Italy by vote of the first Italian parliament and senate, and by law of March 17, 1861.

Territorially, Italy was not completely united. The Veneto and other areas in the extreme northeast remained under Austria, and the Pope still held Rome and the surrounding territory (Latium). From the point of view of the Italian *Risorgimento* the latter situation is referred to as the Roman Question. The Third War of Italian Independence (1866) would settle (even though incompletely) the first question (regarding the Veneto and northeastern parts). The latter question (the *Roman Question*) was by far the more sensitive. Would the Pope surrender Rome to be Italy’s capital voluntarily, or should he be forced into surrendering it, and therefore be deprived of the last and most historic portion of the States of the Church? From this point on the Roman Question threatened to be the most divisive issue in Italian politics and society.

On March 23 (1861) the first cabinet of the new nation was formed with Count Camillo Benso of Cavour as Prime Minister, and the Roman Question immediately came to the fore. On March 26–27, in two speeches delivered in Parliament, Cavour presented the government’s position and strategy. The unification of Italy could be regarded as complete only when Rome became its capital. The “liberation” of Rome, therefore, must remain the goal, to be pursued with France’s acquiescence. It must be accomplished without infringing upon the pope’s spiritual freedom and independence, of which Italy must be the guarantor before the world. Such a policy would exemplify the liberal principle, “A free Church in a free state.”

Cavour, however, died suddenly on June 6, 1861. In September, Cavour’s successor, Baron Bettino Ricasoli, following Cavour’s idea, presented a proposal of “reconciliation” between Italy and the Holy See to Paris and to

Rome. The Holy See would renounce all *territorial* sovereignty, in exchange for the recognition of the pope's *personal* sovereignty, right to diplomatic representation, and a large yearly endowment (to be underwritten also by other Catholic nations). The Italian government would pledge not to interfere in the nomination and appointment of bishops. It would also accept international control as to the obligations assumed. The rhetoric of his speeches, however, tended to alienate rather than promote dialogue. The Holy See ignored the overture. France refused to enter into any discussion of the Roman Question on any terms. The Italian government's ecclesiastical policy, more than its words, aggravated an already tense situation.

For the next 15 years the government remained in the hands of the moderate liberals of Cavourian stamp (the so-called Historic Right). But these governments were ineffectual and came tumbling down at every crisis. It will be helpful to have the chaotic succession of Prime Ministers available for ready reference.

Bettino Ricasoli (June 1861 – March 1862)

Urbano Rattazzi (March – December 1862)

Luigi Carlo Farini (December 1862 – March 1863)

Marco Minghetti (March 1863 – September 1864)

Alfonso Ferrero La Marmora (September 1864 – December 1865)

La Marmora II (December 1865 – June 1866)

Ricasoli II (June 1866 - April 1867)

Rattazzi II (April – October 1867)

Luigi Federico Menabrea (October - December 1867)

Menabrea II (January 1868 – May 1869)

Menabrea III (May – November 1869)

Giovanni Lanza (December 1869 – June 1873)

Minghetti II (last government of the Right, July 1873 – March 18, 1876)<sup>3</sup>

Very disturbing for the government were the schemes of the radical Republicans hatched by Mazzini and Garibaldi for the “liberation” of the Veneto from Austria and of Rome from the Pope. The formation of the “Associa-

<sup>3</sup> In 1876 the government passed into the hands of the more radical liberal Left. These politicians of the Left had their roots in Mazzini's republican ideology and in Garibaldi's Action Party, and with the years they also acquired socialist leanings.

tion for the Liberation of Italy” (1862) showed that their ultimate aim was to overthrow the constitutional monarchical government (and the “Church”) and unite Italy as a people’s republic.

A further cause of concern for the government was the anger of Pius IX over the loss of much of his temporal power and over the ecclesiastical policies of the Liberal Right, exemplified by the Siccardi and Rattazzi Laws of 1850 and 1855. These laws, extended to the whole of Italy between 1864 and 1866, led to the suppression of 2,000 religious congregations and of 25,000 ecclesiastical bodies. In the course of the next fifteen years over a million hectares of church land were sold off.<sup>4</sup>

The “September Convention” signed by France and Italy in 1864, opened the way for the eventual occupation of Rome by Italy at the time of the Franco-Prussian War (1870).<sup>5</sup>

Pope Pius IX obviously mistrusted and feared the provisions of the September Convention. But his concerns, as expressed in his Encyclical *Quanta Cura* (December 8, 1864) with the appended *Syllabus of Contemporary Errors*, transcended political developments and were about liberalism as such. Likewise, the magnitude of the problem of vacant episcopal sees called for action on his part.

### 3. The Problem of Vacant Sees

One very serious and damaging effect of the confrontation between Church and State during and after Italian unification was the fact that many bishops were removed from their dioceses, and the government opposed the nomination of new bishops to fill the vacancies. The reason for such punishing policy is to be sought in the fact that bishops protested against what they perceived to be the government’s unjust and unwarranted public policies, and that the government was not disposed to allow dissent or resistance. The takeover of papal territories was not the only reason for the protest. The policies against the Church, in effect since 1848 and now being extended to

<sup>4</sup> Duggan, *Italy*, 135; G. Bonfanti, *La politica ecclesiastica ...*, quoted in *Sussidi* I, 89-90.

<sup>5</sup> The September Convention, signed on September 15, 1864 by France and Italy, was intended to settle the Roman question. Its key provision were that France would recall the protective garrison from Rome within two years (to allow for a reorganization of the papal army), while Italy pledged to respect the integrity of the papal territory. Italy would also transfer its capital from Turin to Florence and give up its claim to Rome.

the kingdom, were responsible to an even greater extent for the souring of relations and for the protest.

The situation was critical if not desperate. According to one historian, in the process of annexation and unification bishops and other clergy in large north Italian cities, such as Milan, Bergamo and Brescia, were investigated, harassed, and in some cases expelled. In central Italy, over a dozen important cardinals, archbishops, and bishops were imprisoned, expelled, deported, or placed under house arrest. In southern Italy more than 60 bishops met with the same fate.<sup>6</sup> According to another historian, after the unification of Italy, 13 bishops were brought to trial, though eventually acquitted, and 5 bishops were taken from their dioceses and imprisoned in Turin. By 1865, 43 bishops had been exiled, and 16 bishops had died and no successor had been appointed. In summary, 24 (of a total of 44) archdioceses, and 84 (of a total of 183) dioceses were deprived of their pastors.<sup>7</sup> In a number of cases, new bishops nominated by the pope were prevented from taking possession of their diocese. For example, in the consistory of December 21, 1863, the pope had nominated new bishops for Bologna and six other dioceses in that part of the former Papal States. The government, however, had refused recognition on the ground that such nominations constituted an act of sovereignty in territories no longer subject to the pope. Don Bosco was especially concerned with the situation in Piedmont, where eight of eleven dioceses, including Turin, were vacant. In Sardinia Archbishop Giovanni Emanuele Marongiu Nurra of Cagliari had been for 14 years in exile.<sup>8</sup>

## II. Mission of Negotiator Saverio Vegezzi<sup>9</sup>

In the summer of 1864, Pius IX is reported to have invited King Victor Emmanuel II to open negotiations aimed at alleviating this religious cri-

<sup>6</sup> D. Massè, *Il caso di coscienza del Risorgimento italiano*, 342-343, in *Sussidi* I, 86; cf. also *EBM* VI, 503, 303-304, 416.

<sup>7</sup> *L'Unità Cattolica* of April 4, 1865, in Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 264 (data confirmed by the instructions given to negotiator Vegezzi).

<sup>8</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 264; Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 518. The 8 vacant dioceses in Piedmont were: Alba from 1853, Alessandria from 1854, Aosta and Asti from 1859, Fossano from 1852, Vigevano from 1859, Turin from 1862 (Archbishop Fransoni in exile since 1850), Saluzzo from 1864, Cuneo from March 1865 [Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 268 and note 27, citing *Civiltà Cattolica* XVI (1864:6) 373].

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 262-275.



sis.<sup>10</sup> However, the September Convention (rejected by the pope), the ensuing condemnations in *Quanta cura* and the *Syllabus*, and the rigid conservatism of curia circles and of the clerical press stymied any progress. Nonetheless Pius IX, even though “reconciliation” was out of the question, was personally inclined to seek some kind of rapprochement for the sake of the people’s religious life. He thought the moment favorable for a solution of the question of vacant dioceses, also because the Minghetti government (1863-1864), in spite of some backsliding appeared to have been basically moderate.



16 – Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, Pius IX’s secretary of state (1806-1876)

<sup>10</sup> Motto, *L’azione mediatrice*, 265, citing Pirri.



## 1. Don Bosco's Involvement in the Problem of Vacant Dioceses

Don Bosco was in touch with his good friend Father Emiliano Manacorda, who was at the time serving as domestic prelate at the Vatican and could have access to "inside information." Biographer Lemoyne tells us that at this time Don Bosco addressed letters to the Pope through Father Manacorda.<sup>11</sup> Don Bosco may have learned of Pius IX's desire to seek a solution to the crisis of vacant dioceses. Don Bosco was personally acquainted with people in the government. He had corresponded with both Prime Minister Alfonso La Marmora and Minister of the Interior Giovanni Lanza.<sup>12</sup> It would have not been difficult for Don Bosco to ascertain the willingness of the government (still in Turin at the time) to enter into negotiations. Don Bosco then would have stood ready to offer his services. But this is conjecture.

In any case, it was Pius IX himself who in a second letter to Victor Emmanuel II, dated March 6, 1865, expressed his willingness to settle the matter. After referring to the government's rejection of earlier nominees, the Pope's letter read in part:

The most serious difficulty in my view is reaching an agreement on the choice of nominees. The policies of Your Majesty's government are so hostile to the Church that, when I agree to negotiate, your government presents candidates that I could not accept. Accordingly, as I told the [French] ambassador, I suggest that Your Majesty send [to Rome] a person who enjoys your trust. As far as I am concerned, I would prefer a good and honest lay person to a priest of dubious character. [...] Please, I beg you, do all that lies in your power to dry some of the tears of the Church in Italy, so tormented and made the object of so much undeserved hostility.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> *EBM* VIII, 44. This finds confirmation in Father Manacorda's letters to Don Bosco, seven of which are preserved in the Central Salesian Archive [*ASC* A143: *Lettere a Don Bosco*, Manacorda, *FDB* 1543 A9-C2], specifically the letter of October 8, 1864 [*FDB* 1543 A12]. Manacorda's role is discussed in detail by Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 266-268. Before his appointment (at Don Bosco's suggestion) as bishop of the diocese of Fossano (Piedmont) he was Don Bosco's "Man in Rome."

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Don Bosco's letters to La Marmora in 1852, 1856, and 1858 [*Motto Epistolario* I, 144, 302, 362-363]. In a letter of August 9, 1865 to Minister of Interior Lanza [*Motto, Epistolario* II, 155] Don Bosco offers to give shelter to some 100 cholera orphans. With an earlier letter of June 12, 1860 to the Minister of Education, Don Bosco enclosed a letter from Minister Lanza written in support of the Oratory school [*Motto, Epistolario* I, 409].

<sup>13</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 269-270, citing original in the Secret Vatican Archive.

The king submitted the pope's letter to his government, and a heated debate ensued, for there were ministers who resisted any concession, in fact, any rapprochement on any basis, to the Holy See. But the upshot was that Giovanni Lanza's Ministry of Interior began to look into the matter. At this point (March 17, 1865) Don Bosco received a note from a government official named Veglio, inviting him to a conference.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Veglio's position in the government (presumably in Minister Lanza's office) cannot be ascertained, but Don Bosco must have kept the appointment. The content of the conversation with Veglio and/or with Minister Lanza can only be conjectured. In this regard, it should be borne in mind that the nomination of bishops to vacant sees was the sole matter under advisement. Hence, Don Bosco may have made the point that, if the Cavourian principle, "A free Church in a free State," and the terms of the September Convention were not to remain dead letter, on purely religious grounds the Holy See should have the freedom to nominate bishops.

## 2. Saverio Vegezzi Appointed Negotiator for the Government's Part

Chevalier Saverio Vegezzi, "a gentleman of noblest character," was appointed negotiator. This gentleman left for Rome on April 6 (1865) bearing a letter from the king to the Pope, with instructions "to find ways of reaching an agreement in the matter of the nomination of bishops to vacant sees."<sup>15</sup>

The first round of talks between Vegezzi and Secretary of State Cardinal Antonelli gave promise of success. A letter of Don Bosco to Pius IX refers to the negotiations in a fairly upbeat tone. It reads in part:

<sup>14</sup> Motto [*L'azione mediatrice*, 270] speaks of an invitation "by telegram." However, the original in *ASC A145: Lettere a Don Bosco*, Veglio, *FDB* 1,587 B3, does not have a telegram format. Nor does it bear the heading, "Ministry of the Interior," as Lemoyne both in *Documenti* and in *Biographical Memoirs* (followed by Motto) would have it [*Documenti* IX, 170; *EBM* VIII, 44]. The invitation reads: "Turin, March 17, 1865. By order of the Minister, the undersigned requests a conference with you, Reverend and Most Esteemed Father. If you can oblige, please come to see me at your convenience during office hours. Very truly yours, Veglio." It should be borne in mind that, although the capital had by this time been transferred to Florence officially (February 3, 1865), government departments were still operating in Turin.

<sup>15</sup> Victor Emmanuel II to Pius IX, Turin, April 4, 1865, in Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 693 citing Pirri, *Pio IX*. Saverio Vegezzi (1805-1888), a trial lawyer in Turin, had held a seat in the Piedmontese senate since the 1840s and had served as finance minister in the third Cavour cabinet (1860).

Most Holy Father, our community has been offering prayers morning and evening begging God to be with you as you try to repair the grave damage already done to the Church, and increasing in gravity with any delay in settling the matter. I am referring to the restoration and nomination of bishops. The world is waiting with trepidation the result of the Holy Father's efforts. There is hope and comfort in the thought that, when the Pope is involved, the outcome will be for the best and for the greater good of the faithful.<sup>16</sup>

Don Bosco's prayers were not to be answered at this time. As mentioned above, there were within the government those who opposed negotiations with the Holy See on any basis. On the popular front, the radical press on the one hand, and the conservative Catholic press on the other, looked upon negotiations as capitulation to the enemy. Furthermore, the royal house of Savoy, and hence its government, still clung to jurisdictional positions in their ecclesiastical policy. For example, they still insisted on the bishops' oath of fealty to the king and on the *Exequatur*.<sup>17</sup> These reasons account for the fact that the negotiations were conducted in total secrecy, as also for the fact that they were ultimately doomed to failure. A letter from Minister Lanza to Paolo Onorato Vigliani (later minister of justice and a correspondent with Don Bosco in the matter of the *Exequatur*) clearly reveals the mood within the government.

Many people in the government have held the position that the annexation of Rome is to be effected only by peaceful negotiations with the pope, in accordance with the principle of a Free Church, and with France's agreement. Now those very same people are attacking the government for accepting to negotiate in matters that are after all purely religious in nature. [...] I'm afraid that this attitude of hostility and diffidence within the Cabinet will prevail, and that as a consequence the negotiations will fail. [...] These ministers still insist on the bishop's oath of fealty to the king, an outworn and useless heirloom, in my judgment. I

<sup>16</sup> Don Bosco to Pius IX, April 30, 1865, in Motto, *Epistolario* II, 129.

<sup>17</sup> The royal *Exequatur* was a permit signed by the king and issued to the bishop upon presentation of the Bull (or Bulls) of appointment. It entitled the bishop to exercise jurisdiction in the diocese and to enter into possession of premises and receive revenues. The Bull of appointment (Latin, *Bulla*) was a protocol sent out from the Holy See's Department of Protocol (*Dataria apostolica*) that certified the bishop's appointment. Different kinds of Bulls were released: the Bull *ad populum* was addressed to the people of the diocese; the Bull *ad clericum* was addressed to the clergy; the Bull *ad capitulum* was addressed to the cathedral chapter; and a Bull *ad episcopum* was addressed to the bishop himself.

can't imagine the Pope accepting to negotiate on these terms. Therefore with such a condition the government would automatically show its unwillingness to come to reasonable and possible agreements.<sup>18</sup>

Vegezzi returned to Rome in June for another round of talks, but apparently with new instructions dictated by the opposition and contrary to Minister Lanza's sentiments. As Lanza had predicted:

The negotiations, which had made a promising start with Cardinal Antonelli, failed in the end when Pius IX refused to accept the conditions laid down by the Piedmontese government—namely, that the bishops nominated by the Pope should take the oath of fealty to the king.<sup>19</sup>

The fealty oath was perceived as implying recognition of the legitimacy of the Kingdom of Italy. The “intransigence,” therefore was reciprocal.

Don Bosco's involvement in the exchanges that go under the name of “Vegezzi Mission” seems to have been minimal. Though always concerned with, and perhaps abreast of developments, he seems to have had no further direct involvement after the exchange with Minister Lanza's office in Turin.

New efforts were made to get the conversations back on course. But neither Prime Minister Lamarmora's expressions of good will, nor Cardinal Antonelli's appeal to Napoleon III, nor encouragement from France and from the moderate press were of any avail. Two more years would elapse before a new beginning could be made and some results obtained.

### **III. Don Bosco and the Tonello Negotiations for the Appointment of Bishops (December 1, 1866 – June 1867)**

Before describing the new effort at negotiations a brief note on important events of the years 1866-1867 seems in order. I am referring to Italy's Third War of Independence against Austria and Garibaldi's Military Exploit Against Rome.

Early in the year 1866 political relations between Austria and Prussia de-

<sup>18</sup> C. M. De Vecchi di Val Cismon, *Le carte di Giovanni Lanza*, vol. 8: 1872-1873 luglio (Torino, 1939), cited in Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 273.

<sup>19</sup> “Vegezzi, Saverio,” in *Enciclopedia Italiana* (Treccani) XXXV, 7-8.

teriorated to the point that war seemed imminent. Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck coaxed Italy into a military alliance by offering Italy the prospect of freeing the regions still subject to Austria in the northeast, and both declared war on Austria. This is reckoned as the Third War of Italian Independence. In the battle of Sadowa (Bohemia, July 3, 1866) Austria suffered a decisive defeat. Italian regulars and Garibaldi's volunteers fought successfully in the Veneto region. Though defeated at sea, in treaties mediated by Napoleon III, Italy was rewarded with Venice and the Veneto, though not with other territories claimed by Italy in the northeast.

At the height of the war, on July 7, 1866, the laws of suppression and confiscation against religious congregations went into effect all over Italy, as noted above. Then, in accordance with the terms of the September Convention, the French garrison completed its withdrawal from Rome that had begun in early November 1865. The last contingent left Rome in October 1866, leaving the city poorly defended by the papal troops. This situation is reflected in Pius IX's Allocution of October 29, 1866. The pope denounced the "unjust and iniquitous acts" perpetrated by the Italian government against the Church and re-affirmed the absolute necessity of the pope's temporal power. He threatened to go into exile if Rome were attacked.

Deprived of French protection, Rome was inviting attack. In March 1867, Garibaldi escaped from his retreat on the island of Caprera and gathered volunteers for a military expedition against Rome. He was arrested by the Italian government and returned to Caprera. Besides warning Italy, Napoleon III deployed a new garrison to be stationed near Rome for the protection of the city and the Pope.

Yet in spite of hostile moves and countermoves, initiatives were afoot to restart negotiations to fill the vacant episcopal sees, for the urgency of settling this matter for the good of the people was widely felt.

With Italy's declaration of war against Austria on June 20, 1866, General Alfonso La Marmora, the Italian Prime Minister, had resigned to take command of the armed forces at the front, and was immediately replaced by Count Bettino Ricasoli. La Marmora had already sought to clear the air by permitting, on former Mediator Vegezzi's recommendation, the return of aging Archbishop Marongiu to his diocese (Cagliari, Sardinia), and Ricasoli began to look for ways to address the thorny question of bishops' nominations.

His letters show a sincere desire to permit "the peaceable return of so many bishops to their dioceses and of so many pastors to their parishes," and

speak of his resolve to work toward that goal.<sup>20</sup> A signal from the Holy See was needed, and it came when Pius IX let it be known that he would “gladly receive any person sent [by the Italian government] to discuss religious issues outstanding.”<sup>21</sup>

### 1. The Mission of Negotiator Michelangelo Tonello in the Government of Prime Minister Ricasoli and the Mood of the Talks

On December 1, 1866, the Italian government dispatched to Rome its representative, Professor Michelangelo Tonello, accompanied by an aide and bearing a letter of introduction to Pius IX from King Victor Emanuel II.

The mission was by no means off to an easy start. One should again recall that it took place while the law of suppression of religious corporations was being put into effect all over Italy, though Prime Minister Ricasoli sought to soften the application of its harsher provisions. The take-over of most of the Papal States (regarded as a “usurpation”) and the fear of a “forcible” solution of the Roman Question (the last contingent of the French garrison was preparing to decamp at that point in time) were not apt to inspire confidence in Rome. Adding to this uncertainty was the fact that the talks started with mutual recriminations for the failure of the earlier Vegezzi mission. Also, Representative Tonello had not been properly accredited to the Holy See and could not be regarded as officially delegated. Nevertheless, in spite of these initial obstacles, the gravity and urgency of the matter on the agenda prevailed. And as a matter of fact, looking back over the course of the negotiations, one could discern a new mood at work. Some examples of the new “spirit of collaboration” will suffice. The government had itself seen the necessity of allowing “bishops to return to their dioceses and pastors to their parishes.” As talks progressed the government would be ready to modify its position to a

<sup>20</sup> Motto, *L’Azione mediatrice*, 277-278, citing the edition of Ricasoli’s letters and papers. Ricasoli did not believe that solving the problem of vacant diocese would solve the Roman Question, but he believed that it would be a good step toward its solution [*Ibid.*]. He was wrong. The Holy See always maintained that filling vacant dioceses was a purely religious question to be addressed for the spiritual good of the people. People in government, even the better disposed, tended to politicize the issue. Pius IX had often offered to settle purely religious questions by negotiation. But, as the Allocution made clear, he was not at all disposed to accept some new political arrangement for Rome or for what remained of the Papal States.

<sup>21</sup> Motto, *L’Azione mediatrice*, 278, citing various authors.

considerable degree. Thus, even though “as representative of the laity” it still claimed the right to present candidates for episcopal nomination, it would no longer do so formally, at least for what concerned the dioceses of the former Papal States. It would be willing to forgo the political oath of allegiance from the bishops. It would require the *Exequatur* only insofar as it pertained to the “temporalities,” and not, for example, to the bishop’s ecclesiastical jurisdiction. It would no longer demand the reduction in the number of dioceses as a condition, even though it still believed in its necessity. And finally, even though the government would not yield in the matter of the suppression of religious corporations and the confiscation of their assets (a matter regarded as demanded by the new social order), Tonello could assure Cardinal Antonelli that the government would exercise “moderation.”

## 2. Don Bosco's Involvement in Florence

How did Don Bosco become involved? From letters to Countess and Count Uguccioni-Gherardi of Florence we learn that Don Bosco was keeping abreast of developments. He speaks of good news with regard to the contemplated “restoration of bishops and pastors to their dioceses and parishes,” the very words of Ricasoli’s proposal. Hence it appears that, even before the Tonello mission, Don Bosco had information regarding the upcoming talks. A few days after Tonello’s appointment, Don Bosco left for Florence (the new capital), where he arrived on December 11 or 12 and lodged with the archbishop.<sup>22</sup> Father Berto, Don Bosco’s secretary, claims that Don Bosco went to Florence at Prime Minister Ricasoli’s request.

In 1867 [Prime] Minister Ricasoli summoned Don Bosco to Florence with the object of getting him to approach the pope in a private capacity in the matter of the bishops’ nomination. In Italy at the time, over fifty diocesan sees were vacant. Don Bosco himself had written to the [Prime] Minister asking him to take steps to remove the cause of so much grief.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Don Bosco to Countess Gerolama Uguccioni, Turin, July 20, and to Chevalier Tommaso Uguccioni-Gherardi, Turin, September 28, 1866 [Motto, *Epistolario* II, 275 and 299]. Like several other Florentine families, the Uguccioni-Gherardis were Don Bosco’s good friends and benefactors.

<sup>23</sup> Berto Collection in ASC A026, FDB 788 C2.



This may be pure inference on Father Berto's part, as he collected testimonies of Don Bosco's involvement at a later date. The *Biographical Memoirs*, on the other hand, at this point simply record the agenda Don Bosco had set forth for his trip to Florence. Besides obligatory visits to illustrious friends and benefactors and various other engagements, this included calls at no less than four government ministries or departments: Interior, Finances, Public Works and Justice, all on Salesian Congregation business.<sup>24</sup>

Don Bosco's sojourn in Florence lasted one busy week, from Tuesday, December 11 to Tuesday December 18, 1866. From Florence he left for Bologna and Turin.<sup>25</sup>

According to the main (printed) text of Lemoyne's *Documenti* (the forerunner of the *Biographical Memoirs*) from Bologna (before returning to Turin) Don Bosco is said to have briefly returned to Florence in response to an invitation from Prime Minister Ricasoli.

It appears that from here [Bologna] Don Bosco, invited by Ricasoli, went [back] to Florence for a very brief visit. [The Prime Minister] was eager to engage his support for Comm. Tonelli [*sic*], as the latter was negotiating various matters with the Holy See.<sup>26</sup>

A later (undated) marginal note in Lemoyne's hand at the same place in *Documenti* explains:

This is how it was. On hearing that Don Bosco was in Florence and desiring to speak with him, Ricasoli, who was minister at the time, invited him to call at the government palace. He wanted to engage his help in the negotiations for the nomination of bishops, for he knew that Don Bosco was on familiar terms with Pius IX. Don Bosco went [to the palace] and as he stepped into the office he told the minister, "I think Your Excellency knows who Don Bosco is—that I am first and foremost a Catholic." "Yes, yes," the minister replied, "We know that Don Bosco is more Catholic than the pope himself." The minister explained what his

<sup>24</sup> Don Bosco's undated holograph is in ASC A2210634: *Promemorie*, FDB 744 C5-6. Cf. IBM VIII, 539 (omitted in EBM).

<sup>25</sup> Don Bosco's letter to Oblate Maria Maddalena Galeffi is dated from Florence, December 18, 1866 [Motto, *Epistolario* II, 317]. Letters to Father Bonetti and Father Rua are dated from Bologna, December 19, 1866. He writes: "Arrived at Bologna; this evening I shall be in Guastalla and tomorrow night in Turin."

<sup>26</sup> *Documenti* X, 89-90 (printed text), in ASC A006: *Cronachette*, FDB 1,004 C11-12.

purpose was and begged him to get in touch with Comm. Tonelli [*sic*], who was the [government's] negotiator in Rome.<sup>27</sup>

In the *Biographical Memoirs* Lemoyne greatly expands the marginal note of *Documenti* on the basis of a “confidential report” later made by Don Bosco to a canon of the cathedral, Lemoyne himself being present (so he claims).<sup>28</sup>

The expanded story makes the following points. (1) Immediately Don Bosco warned the Prime Minister that he would honor his commitments as a Catholic priest in all circumstances. He is quoted as saying, “Your Excellency, I want you to know that Don Bosco is a priest at the altar, a priest in the confessional and a priest among his boys. He is a priest in Turin and a priest in Florence, a priest in the house of the poor and a priest in the palace of the king!” (2) Don Bosco, at the Prime Minister’s request, accepted to facilitate in a private capacity the Tonello negotiations in Rome. But (3) he added that the government should not object to the pope’s choice of bishops, and Ricasoli agreed. (4) At this point Ricasoli was called to an inner conference room where the cabinet was meeting under the presidency of the king himself. (5) After a long while, he returned to convey the government’s agreement. But (6) he added that the government would like to see the number of smaller dioceses reduced. To this Don Bosco replied that he had neither the authority and nor the desire to offer such a suggestion to the pope in the matter, and that with such a condition he would have to withdraw altogether. (7) There was a few moments’ break in the conversation during which the Prime Minister went in again to consult the cabinet on the issue, and quickly returned to reassure Don Bosco. (8) The conversation ended with the Prime Minister’s plea that Don Bosco would meet with negotiator Tonello in Rome and lend his support.

Given the special “literary genre” of such story-reports one may question details, particularly the dialogue.<sup>29</sup> This appears to be the case especially if the story is compared with the marginal note of *Documenti* (quoted above). But, in spite of uncertainty with regard to itinerary and chronological sequence, there seems to be no reason for us to doubt that while in Florence Don Bosco met with Prime Minister Ricasoli at the latter’s invitation. As for the burden or upshot of the conversation, though we remain in the realm of

<sup>27</sup> *Documenti* X, 90 (hand-written marginal note), FDB 1,004 C12.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. IBM VIII, 533-535; EBM VIII, 239-240.

<sup>29</sup> So Motto, *L’azione mediatrice*, 281, Note 64.

conjecture, it may be inferred that the Prime Minister did ask Don Bosco to help with the negotiations, and that Don Bosco accepted.<sup>30</sup>

### 3. Don Bosco's Involvement with Tonello in Rome

Meanwhile negotiations in Rome had gotten under way. Professor Tonello and Cardinal Secretary of State Antonelli had presented their respective positions and had explored the more difficult issues standing in the way of an agreement. The Holy See would easily accept a negotiated arrangement for nominations to sees within the former Kingdom of Sardinia. But it would not negotiate on nominations in other *annexed* regions. In this respect the territories of the former Papal States presented the greatest difficulty, for the Holy See did not recognize the Italian government's authority there. Hence for episcopal nominations to dioceses within the former Papal States the Holy See rejected any demands by the government especially in the matter of the presentation of candidates and of the bishops' political oath.<sup>31</sup> It appears that in early January the talk had reached something like a stalemate on these very issues.

It is at this point (so it seems) that, according to the *Biographical Memoirs*, Don Bosco came on the scene. From Turin on January 7 Don Bosco left for Rome with Father Giovanni Battista Francesia acting as his secretary. Their stay in the eternal city would be prolonged till March 2, 1867. Business of the Congregation had been the main purpose of the trip. Don Bosco was seeking the approval of the Salesian Society (as it turned out, without success).

Contemporaneously he was also involved in the Tonello negotiations—to what extent being matter of dispute. Lemoyne describes Don Bosco's Roman activities in detail,<sup>32</sup> on the basis of Father Francesia's reports. These consist of letters that Francesia addressed to various Salesians and of a memoir that he wrote at a much later date. The reliability of Francesia's reports is again a matter of dispute.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Desramaut is more skeptical. He regards the meeting itself as at least probable, but "we are in the dark as to the content of the conversation, particularly as to the extent in which the Tonello mission was discussed." Furthermore, the challenging statement "on being a priest," while perfectly true, in itself, is regarded as spurious as ascribed to Don Bosco by the *Biographical Memoirs* under those circumstances [*DB en son temps*, 713-714].

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 281-282.

<sup>32</sup> *IBM* VIII, 592-636 and (more succinctly) *EBM* VIII, 258-280.

<sup>33</sup> Father Francesia's letters have come down to us only in copy and not even in their entirety. His memoir [*G. B. Francesia, Due mesi con Don Bosco a Roma* (Torino: Libreria Salesi-

To what extent was Don Bosco involved with Tonello in Rome? A letter from Father Francesia written 10 days after their arrival in Rome suggests that Don Bosco was quickly involved. He writes:

In two separate audiences Don Bosco held lengthy discussions with Cardinal Antonelli. He was able to smooth out a number of difficult issues of a political nature, and reach an understanding on very weighty matters. He met with Tonello who received him most amiably and told him he was welcome any time he thought it helpful.<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, Don Bosco met with Pius IX in the first place. In the dramatic interpretation of the *Biographical Memoirs*, Don Bosco is said to have advised Pius IX not to make any distinction between the various regions of Italy in the matter of the bishop's nomination. Let both the government and the Holy See present their list of candidates. Then let the pope choose those candidates that are acceptable to both sides, and let him begin with those dioceses in which the need is most pressing. Lemoyne comments:

Pius IX accepted Don Bosco's advice and empowered him to negotiate with Comm. Tonello, but reserving all decisions to himself. As a first step, Don Bosco contacted Cardinal Antonelli and with some difficulty brought him round to his point of view, a point of view that was religious in the strict sense rather than political. He then called on Tonello who had received a telegram from Ricasoli that read, "Try to reach an understanding with Don Bosco." The *Commendatore*, who was no enemy of the Church, was easily won over and promised not to place any obstacles in the way of the bishops' nomination in spite of Ricasoli's exacting instructions.<sup>35</sup>

In the process (so the story continues) Don Bosco had to shuttle back and forth between the negotiators and the Pope till an agreement was reached.

ana, 1904)] was written some 37 years after the events. Then, one should bear in mind that by force of circumstances Francesia was in no way a participant in anything that concerned the negotiations. He was in fact practically left in isolation throughout the Roman sojourn. The talks were conducted in strictest secrecy, and not a word was leaked to the press, it is unlikely the Don Bosco would jeopardize the negotiations by disclosing what he knew to Father Francesia. Francesia was a poet endowed with a naïve but vivid imagination. All these factors tend to weaken the force of his testimony [Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 742, Note 20].

<sup>34</sup> IBM VIII, 596 (omitted in EBM).

<sup>35</sup> IBM VIII, 594-595, and (inaccurately translated) EBM VIII, 259-260.

According to the *Biographical Memoirs*, therefore, Don Bosco's involvement was a major one, for he appears outright as mediator and referee.

However, Lemoyne's construction has been called into question. As indicated above, Francesia's testimony, on which Lemoyne's story is based, is weakened by numerous critical considerations. Furthermore, the above-mentioned telegram from Ricasoli to Tonello, instructing him to get in touch with Don Bosco is dubious. It has in fact been regarded as a later inference by Lemoyne. Neither the original nor copies of the original are extant. Neither Francesia, nor *Documenti* make any mention of it.<sup>36</sup>

Motto admits that the extent and the precise contribution of Don Bosco's mediation cannot be determined. But he credits Francesia's (and Lemoyne's) report for the main point—that Don Bosco was rather heavily involved. Against some historians who doubt or deny, he writes:

[Historian] De Cesare, while admitting the possibility of Don Bosco's contacts with the government's representative, dismisses Francesia's statements with finality: "There's not a shred of documentary evidence of Don Bosco's involvement." On the contrary, the facts as we know them today reveal the rashness of De Cesare's conclusion. Very reliable documentation and a whole series of verifiable controls support the thesis of Don Bosco's direct, explicit and sustained mediating activity.<sup>37</sup>

That Don Bosco was involved in some way, that he discussed matters with Pius IX and Cardinal Antonelli, and that he presented a list of candidates for the sees of Piedmont is beyond doubt. Tonello himself states as much in his report of February 1, 1867, to the government:

[Cardinal Antonelli] handed me a note, which I enclose herewith and of which I retain a copy. It's a list of persons that in the judgment of the Holy See may be nominated to episcopal sees. I would suggest that the government make appropriate inquiries. I have reason to believe that the names that were proposed for Piedmont are the suggestions of the Torinese priest, Don Bosco. I think he came to Rome for that purpose.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 714 and 742, Note 23. Desramaut faults Motto and Church historian G. Martina with taking the statement at face value.

<sup>37</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 283, citing De Cesare's work of 1905. On p. 284, Note 78, Motto adduces reasons in support of Francesia's credibility in essential points.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 291, citing the historical archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The last sentence shows that Tonello was aware of Don Bosco's presence in Rome and of some of his activities. But, though the two may have met, it seems to cast doubts on the idea that they had been engaged in repeated conversations.

#### 4. Bishops' Appointments and Don Bosco's Suggestions

Both the government and the Holy See submitted lists of candidates, to which Don Bosco had contributed his suggestions for dioceses of the Piedmont region. But on January 17, 1867, a bill was presented in the Italian parliament specifying the final disposition of confiscated Church property (the Borgatti-Scaloja Bill). The furor that followed had the effect of delaying agreement on the nominations. Furthermore, inquiries and counterproposals by both sides regarding candidates turned out to be time-consuming. But by the beginning of February progress had been made. It was due first of all to the fact that both parties agreed not to aim at reconciling opposite positions on general principles regarding nominations, but rather at dealing with each case individually as expediency required. It was due also, on the one hand, to the Italian government's surrender of jurisdictional claims such as the political oath and the submission of the Bulls of appointment;<sup>39</sup> and on the other, to the willingness of the Holy See to accommodate the government's candidates as much as possible.

The list of candidates submitted by Don Bosco contained 13 names. In the process of Don Bosco's beatification in 1891, Father Berto testified to having seen the list, on which Canon Lorenzo Gastaldi's name appeared "among the first" (*pei primi*).<sup>40</sup> In the autograph list of 13 names that Cardinal Antonelli handed to Tonello and that Tonello transmitted to Florence on February 1, Gastaldi's name is in second place.<sup>41</sup> Clearly Don Bosco strongly favored the

<sup>39</sup> For the Bulls of appointment see Note 17 above.

<sup>40</sup> *FDB* (Rua section) 2,333 A12.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Note 38 and related text above for a mention of this list. The names (or titles) of the candidates on Don Bosco's list are given in Motto, *L'Azione mediatrice*, 291-292. It contained only the names of candidates to be ordained bishops, not names of existing bishops such as that of Bishop Alessandro Riccardi di Netro of Savona. According to Father Francesia, Bishop Riccardi and Don Bosco had held conversations in Rome. "[Don Bosco] had a talk with the future archbishop of Turin [?!], who had earlier met with him at [Count] Vimercati's house. He will no doubt be favorable to us, I would say, out of *gratitude* to Don

appointment of Canon Gastaldi who, besides being a worthy candidate, in those early years was also a staunch supporter of Don Bosco and his work.

In a letter to Father Durando dated February 4, Father Francesia writes from Rome:

In recent days, Don Bosco has been hatching, and is in fact hatching, a plot against Canon Gastaldi, our esteemed professor of moral theology. When you next see him in class, tell him so. But if he asks what the scheme is all about, you shall say that it's not for you to say. It's a mystery, and mum's the word.<sup>42</sup>

On February 9, 1867, Cardinal Antonelli handed to Professor Tonello a second list of 23 possible nominees, to which Tonello added another 3. Don Bosco may have contributed some names also to this list.

By this time, however, the country was in a state of turmoil occasioned by the violent campaign unleashed against the Borgatti-Scaloja Bill (mentioned above), bitterly opposed (for different reasons) by both Catholic and anticlerical factions alike. The Ricasoli government fell, and the electoral campaign that followed was fought on platforms pro or con Ricasoli's conciliating ecclesiastical policy.

Meanwhile in a secret consistory held on February 22, 1867, Pius IX announced 17 episcopal nominations or transfers to dioceses in various regions of Italy. And even though in the heat of the electoral battle Ricasoli had to promise that the government would desist from further accords with the Holy See, on March 27 the pope nominated another 17 bishops, whom the government had approved on March 9.<sup>43</sup>

Bishop Alessandro Riccardi of Savona was transferred to Turin as archbishop, while Canon Lorenzo Gastaldi was named bishop of Saluzzo. The remaining diocesan sees in Piedmont were filled with "friends" of Don Bosco. Only three dioceses whose bishops had recently died were left vacant for the duration.

Back in Turin on March 2, Don Bosco through letters and memorandums

Bosco" [G. B. Francesia to F. Oreglia di Santo Stefano, January 17, 1867, in *IBM VIII*, 596]. But, one may ask, if the text of the letter is genuine how could Francesia know at the time [January 17] that Bishop Riccardi would be "the future archbishop of Turin"? In any case, Don Bosco did not submit the name of Bishop Riccardi of Savona, who was appointed archbishop of Turin in the consistory of February 22, 1867.

<sup>42</sup> G. B. Francesia to C. Durando, February 4, 1867, in *IBM VIII*, 642.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Motto, *L'Azione mediatrice*, 292-295.



continued to press for bishops' appointments. In a letter to Cardinal Antonelli, after reporting the general feeling of satisfaction with the appointments already made, he makes further suggestions:

The situation in which Bishop [Giovanni Antonio] Balma finds himself merits careful consideration. This worthy prelate is deservedly regarded as a saint. His private and public life testify to this. For the past 20 years he has worked untiringly for vacant dioceses, not shirking either the fatigue of trips or the pains of visits to government departments. In spite of this, his name does not appear on anyone's list of candidates. This has made a bad impression, and a thousand rumors have begun to circulate. Moreover, he finds himself in financial straits and gets by thanks to free-will offerings from kind and charitable persons. Please do look into this matter and do all you can for a person who is universally regarded as pious, learned, wise and zealous.

We have a number of persons here who are highly regarded for their virtue, and would be well received by all authorities. Among these are [Pietro Giocondo] Salvaj, vicar general of Alba, [Pietro] Garga, vicar general of Novara, [Giovanni Battista] Bottino, canon of the cathedral of Turin, Canon [Francesco] Nasi of the same. Even more deserving of consideration is Father Dr. [Francesco] Marengo, professor of theology in the seminary of Turin. [...] All these persons are completely devoted to the Holy See.<sup>44</sup>

In response Cardinal Antonelli laments the government's unwillingness to pursue further negotiations and assures Don Bosco that his suggestions will be taken into consideration. In allusive rather than explicit words he writes:

I need not speak at length of the Holy See's desire to reach a general settlement regarding the dioceses that remain vacant. We cannot therefore but lament the fact that no further progress is being made, due to the lack of response from the parties pledged to negotiations. And yet the initial breakthroughs held out such hope of success. It would be highly desirable that some way be found prudently to apply pressure where pressure is appropriate, so as to overcome the present stalemate. Meanwhile I have not neglected to take the additional suggestions you made into due consideration. I have given special attention to your just recommendation of the worthy prelate who has labored hard and long for the orphaned dioceses.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli, Turin, April 5, 1867, in Motto, *Epistolario* II, 349-350.

<sup>45</sup> Cardinal Antonelli to Don Bosco, Rome, June 4, 1867, in *ASC A130: Lettere a Don Bosco*, *FDB* 1,441 E9-12. The prelate is the above-mentioned Giovanni Antonio Balma, titular bishop of Ptolemais. He was subsequently appointed archbishop of Cagliari in Sardinia.

From Florence Professor Tonello also continued to work in the pursuit of the same goal, with no success. By May 1, 1867, the government had shut the door on further negotiations.<sup>46</sup>

#### **IV. A Mission Entrusted to Don Bosco by Prime Minister Luigi Federico Menabrea (January-March, 1869) [?]**

Again a quick overview of political developments will help to set a framework for this new, poorly documented (perhaps hypothetical) episode of Don Bosco's involvement in Church-state affairs.

##### **1. Revolutionary Activity and Social Unrest**

The rhetoric and the activities of Italian revolutionaries, Garibaldi's in particular, in the year following the removal of the French garrison (1866) showed how perilous the situation had become. France's demand that the Italian government keep revolutionaries in check and prevent an attack on Rome had no effect in spite of the best intentions. On October 20, 1867 Garibaldi escaped from Caprera, the small island where he was "confined," and marched on Rome with some 9,000 volunteers, while a bloody but unsuccessful uprising was taking place in Rome.

He defeated the papal troops in two separate engagements, but because of the failure of the internal uprising he refrained from attacking Rome itself. The French forces stationed at Civitavecchia with their superior firepower drove the insurgents back into Italian territory, where Garibaldi was captured by Italian forces, placed under arrest and returned to Caprera.

During the whole Roman crisis of the year 1867, popular protests in support of Garibaldi and dissention in regard to the Roman question caused the repeated fall of the government. Ricasoli was unable to form a cabinet. Rattazzi and Menabrea, who succeeded him, were unable to sustain the pressure and were forced to resign. The chaotic condition of the economy, the war debt, and the mounting deficits, which the sale at auction of confiscated Church property and additional taxes were unequal to compensate, complicated the problem.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Motto, *L'Azione mediatrice*, 295-299.



17 – Prime Minister Luigi Federico Menabrea (1809-1896)

The years 1868 and 1869 were especially troubled years. In Italy nationwide popular unrest and mass demonstrations against the grist tax (May 21, 1868) required deployment of army units and the use of force making numerous victims. In Rome revolutionaries were executed or imprisoned in great numbers.

## **2. Don Bosco Invited to Florence by Prime Minister Luigi Federico Menabrea [?] <sup>47</sup>**

Two cabinets headed by Prime Minister Menabrea were formed in succession. It was during the second Menabrea cabinet (January 5, 1868 – May

<sup>47</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 299-302.

7, 1869) that Don Bosco *might* have been involved again in Church-State affairs.

In a letter to Chevalier Carlo Canton, a department head, second grade, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Don Bosco writes: "Please see that His Excellency Menabrea gets the enclosed letter. It is to thank him for his kindness. There is also a confidential message [for him] in it, to which he may ask you to reply, should he think it necessary."<sup>48</sup>

The confidential message alluded to in the letter could *conceivably* have had to do with some Church-state matter in which Don Bosco was involved.

Entries in a short chronicle or memoir by Father Rua might be cited in confirmation. He speaks of invitations made to Don Bosco by the government and of a stay of Don Bosco in Florence. He writes:

[1868] November: Don Bosco received an invitation from [Prime] Minister Menabrea. He is being asked to go to Florence to discuss important matters. [...]

1869. January 1: Don Bosco received two stags, a gift from His Majesty the King. Some time ago he received another invitation from the King to go to Florence. [...]

January 7: Don Bosco again gathered all the boys of the house in the study hall to bid us goodbye. He is about to leave for Rome. He told us that he had to attend to very important business that would be of great advantage to the Oratory. He asked us to help him with our prayers [...]. He *left* for Florence where he spent 8 days; from there he *journeyed* on to Rome. His stay in Florence was in response to the above-mentioned invitations. We don't know as yet what he did there, but it appears that he held conversations with highly placed [government] persons. In Rome he avoided public appearances in order to attend to his business with greater freedom. [...] During Don Bosco's sojourn in the eternal city the news leaked out that a new slate of bishops was being prepared to fill vacant sees.<sup>49</sup>

In Florence Don Bosco lodged with his good friends, Marquis and Marchioness Uguccioni-Gherardi. Letters from the marchioness to Chevalier

<sup>48</sup> Don Bosco to Carlo Canton, Turin, November 2, 1868, in Motto, *Epistolario* II, 591-592. Don Bosco had received help from government ministries.

<sup>49</sup> Rua, *Chronicle*, in ASC A008: *Cronachette*, Rua, FDBM 1,205 E12 – 1,206 A1. The use of past tenses by Father Rua in the January 7 entry would indicate that the entry was made after the "event," perhaps following an oral report by Don Bosco. The chief reason for Don Bosco's trip to Rome was to try again for the approval of the Salesian Society, which he obtained on March 1, 1869.

Oreglia di Santo Stefano and from Don Bosco himself to Father Rua confirm Don Bosco's weeklong stay in Florence. These letters, however, make no reference to any conversations held with government officials. On the other hand, a letter from Father Domenico Verda, O.P. to Oreglia, taken at face value, confirms Don Bosco's meeting with a department head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with Prime Minister Menabrea himself at the Pitti palace.<sup>50</sup> Verda writes:

Marquis Ugucioni and Mr. Carlo Canton, department head in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, met him at the station. [...] Saturday morning I hurried to Mr. Canton's office. Not finding Don Bosco there, I went back down to the courtyard [of the Pitti palace] and there I saw him trying to find his way around. [...] I took him by the hand and guided him up to Mr. Canton, with whom he reached an understanding on a variety of issues. [The meeting over] I accompanied him to see Father Giulio [Metti], and then escorted him back to the government palace for his appointment with [Prime Minister] Menabrea. [...]<sup>51</sup>

On the basis of the Rua chronicle and of the letters Lemoyne speaks of a meeting with Menabrea, and conjectures that the Prime Minister entrusted Don Bosco with an unofficial mission to the Holy See.<sup>52</sup>

That a meeting took place in Florence is practically certain. That Don Bosco was entrusted with a mission is not attested but cannot be ruled out. Reasons can be adduced: the execution of revolutionaries in Rome had caused a public outcry and drawn official protests from the Italian government; Prime Minister Menabrea hoped to establish some kind of understanding with the papal government for a possible solution of the Roman Question; the opening of the Vatican Council was imminent, and the Italian government was eager to guarantee its freedom. A number of vacant dioceses (3 in Piedmont alone) were still awaiting episcopal appointments. These and other matters needed to be resolved.

Motto found no further documentation relating to a possible mediation by Don Bosco on this occasion.

<sup>50</sup> Prime Minister Menabrea also headed the ministry of Foreign Affairs.

<sup>51</sup> Domenico Verda to Federico Oreglia di Santo Stefano, Florence, S. Marco, January 10, 1869, in *IBM IX*, 582, *EBM IX*, 221.

<sup>52</sup> *IBM IX*, 482-483; *EBM IX*, 221-223.

## V. Don Bosco and Bishops' Nomination in 1871

### 1. Political Developments

The First Vatican Council opened on December 8, 1869, in St. Peter's in Rome. It would continue its deliberations until September 1870 and be adjourned *sine die* after the occupation of Rome by the Italian army. The Constitutions *Dei Filius* and *Pastor aeternus*, the latter defining papal infallibility (July 18), were its two principal documents.

On the political front, the election of Leftist members of parliament to leadership posts forced the resignation of Prime Minister Menabrea and the dissolution of his cabinet. On December 14, 1869, Prime Minister Giovanni Lanza, who also held the Ministry of Interior, formed a new government. Shortly thereafter, in February 1870, taking advantage of popular unrest, Giuseppe Mazzini returned to Italy with the object of organizing a revolution, overthrowing the constitutional government, taking Rome and establishing a people's republic. Uprisings broke out in several Italian cities in the months that followed, but the revolts were put down, and Mazzini was arrested in Palermo (Sicily) and imprisoned. (He was later released on the occasion of the amnesty decreed to celebrate the occupation of Rome.)

Meanwhile, on July 19, 1870, France declared war on Prussia ostensibly to prevent a Hohenzollern prince from occupying the Spanish throne, while Italy declared its neutrality. The war was quickly over. On September 1, in the battle of Sedan, the French suffered a crushing defeat, and Napoleon III himself was taken prisoner. On September 4, 1870 the Third Republic was proclaimed in Paris.

At the onset of the hostilities, on August 5, the French expeditionary force deployed for the protection of Rome had been recalled. Immediately the Italian parliament in extraordinary session voted for a quick settlement of the Roman question "in accordance with national aspirations." A memorandum was dispatched to the European powers emphasizing the urgent need of settling the Roman question, so as to forestall a republican revolutionary takeover.

On September 5, following Napoleon's defeat, the Italian government reached the unanimous decision to occupy Rome, though not before making a further attempt to get Pius IX to surrender the city voluntarily and peaceably. Count Gustavo Ponza di San Martino was the bearer of a letter from King Victor Emmanuel II to Pius IX guaranteeing the Holy See's complete



independence for the exercise of its spiritual office. As expected, Pius IX rejected the proposal with disdain. On September 20, 1870, the Italian artillery opened a breach in the wall at Porta Pia, and the ensuing skirmishes left 49 Italian and 19 papal soldiers dead. The surrender was signed, and the whole city, with the exception of the Vatican palaces where Pius IX had taken refuge, was occupied. In early October by popular referendum Rome and the surrounding territory of Latium were annexed to Italy. With the encyclical *Rescriptum* of November 1, 1870, Pius IX deplored the condition of captivity that prevented the pope from exercising his sovereign pastoral office and excommunicated the king of Italy and anyone who might have had anything to do with the "usurpation."

To reassure the international community, but also pursuing a policy that had guided the Historic Right since Cavour, Prime Minister Lanza introduced a Bill to establish guarantees for the free exercise of papal power, as the king had also promised in his letter (referred to above). The bill bore the title, "Prerogatives of the Pope and the Holy See, and Relations between Church and State in Italy" (the "Law of Guarantees"). By the encyclical *Ubi nos* (May 15, 1871) Pius IX rejected the law and affirmed once again that temporal power was the only true guarantee of the pope's independence.

At the same time, Lanza presented a Bill to transfer the capital from Florence to Rome. The official transfer took place on July 1, 1871, and on July 2 King Victor Emmanuel II and his government made their entry into the eternal city.<sup>53</sup>

Such then were the new political arrangements and the ensuing political climate that marked the years 1871-1874. It was the period of Don Bosco's deepest involvement in matters of Church and State. He worked hard and long for the nomination and appointment of bishops to the many dioceses that still remained vacant. Subsequently, while engaged in a veritable struggle to have the Salesian constitutions definitively approved, he was deeply involved in negotiating a formula that would enable the bishops, once appointed, to obtain the royal *Exequatur* and their rightful "temporalities."

<sup>53</sup> The government and parliament were established in the Montecitorio Palace later in 1871. It still took the better part of a year before the transfer of government offices was completed. Officially Florence had served as the capital of Italy from February 3, 1865 to July 1, 1871.



## 2. Don Bosco's Mediation for the Appointment of Bishops in 1871

*Don Bosco's Activities in June 1871: A Conference with Prime Minister Giovanni Lanza in Florence [?]*

The tension following the occupation of Rome and the total rejection of the Law of Guarantees on the pope's part brought about a situation of fear and uncertainty. In letters to Cardinal Berardi and to the Pope Don Bosco's voiced dire presentiments. But in spite of the existing situation of conflict, on purely religious grounds, it was imperative to proceed with the appointment of bishops to the many sees that still remained vacant.

Biographer Angelo Amadei, author of Volume X of the *Biographical Memoirs*, tells us that in June 1871, on the occasion of Pius IX's jubilee (the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his election of the Chair of Peter) Don Bosco decided act.

In summary this is how the story (now thought to be spurious) goes as told in the *Biographical Memoirs*.<sup>54</sup> (1) Don Bosco is said to have obtained the pope's permission to approach the Italian government in a private capacity on the subject of new nominations of bishops to vacant dioceses. (2) As he was planning a new trip to Rome on the occasion of the pope's jubilee passing through Florence, he wrote to Prime Minister Lanza for an appointment. (3) Immediately he wrote to Count Tommaso Uguccioni-Gherardi that he would be in Florence on the evening of June 22 at 7:35 and catch a train two hours later for Rome. He would see the count and his family on the way back.<sup>55</sup> (4) Don Bosco arrived by train punctually and ran to his appointment. ("Your Excellency should know that I am above all a Catholic (a priest?)." "Yes, we know that Don Bosco is more Catholic than the pope!") (5) After initial comments, Lanza is said to have agreed in principle to the nomination of bishops, and Don Bosco suggested that the government refrain from demanding the suppression of small dioceses. (6) At this point Lanza was called away to attend a meeting of the cabinet presided over by the king himself. (7) Returning over an hour later, Lanza reported that the ministers had no objection to the nomination of bishops, but that they wanted the number of dioceses reduced. (Amadei regards such demand as motivated by the desire to

<sup>54</sup> Cf. *EBM* X, 186-192, 194-196.

<sup>55</sup> Don Bosco to Tommaso Uguccioni-Gherardi, Turin, June 21, 1871: "I am leaving for Rome in the morning. In Florence I shall stop a mere two hours, waiting [to catch the next train], that is, from 7:35 to 10 PM. On my way back, God willing, I shall stop over for a couple of days and pay you and your family a visit" [Motto, *Epistolario* III, 341-342].

confiscate more Church property.) Obviously Don Bosco was in no position to deal with this further issue, and if that were set as a condition, he would have to withdraw. (8) Lanza returned to the ministers and then returned to report that the government agreed to leave aside for the moment the matter of the suppression of small dioceses. (9) After some further discussion (which in Amadei's view aimed at making Don Bosco commit himself), abruptly Prime Minister Lanza brought the meeting to a close with the words, "So, Don Bosco, let's be off for Rome?" "Let's," Don Bosco replied.<sup>56</sup> (10) Lanza was driven to the station in a coach and boarded a first-class car. Don Bosco trotted along on foot and took a second-class seat. (11) In an audience (on June 28) Don Bosco made a report to pope, stressing that he had acted in a private capacity in order not to compromise the Church in any way. (12) Pius IX is said to have authorized Don Bosco to continue the conversations unofficially. Don Bosco is said to have met with the Prime Minister before and after the papal audience.

Both Desramaut and Motto are skeptical about the story. Motto points out that the timetable given in Don Bosco's letter to Count Ugucioni leaves little room for a meeting (in two sessions with a long interval in between!) with the Prime Minister on the evening of June 22, between 8 and 10. Cabinet meetings and Lanza's own movements, are recorded and do not tally with those described in the *Biographical Memoirs*. For example, the only day of Lanza's and Don Bosco's simultaneous presence in Rome was July 1, when Don Bosco was preparing to leave the city for Florence and Turin, and when the Prime Minister was busy with preparations for the official entrance of the king.

But Motto stops short of denying that the two ever met. He merely supposes a looser time frame.<sup>57</sup> Desramaut, on the other hand, denies that the Lanza interview ever took place.<sup>58</sup> He sees it as a literary doublet of the meeting that took place the following September. Amadei took the story of the supposed meeting in Florence (already fictionalized) from Lemoyne's *Documenti*.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>56</sup> The capital was being transferred to Rome in those very days, a situation requiring Lanza's presence there. The King made his official appearance in the new capital on July 2.

<sup>57</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 305-306, esp. notes 142 and 143.

<sup>58</sup> F. Desramaut, "L'audience imaginaire du ministre Lanza (Florence, 22 juin 1871)," *Ricerche Storiche Salesiane* 11:1 (1992) 9-34, with documentation and a reconstruction of events.

<sup>59</sup> Lemoyne records the story, set in June, in *Documenti* XII, 146-149, FDB 1,017 A12-B3. According to Desramaut, it may have been Father Francesia's creation, that is, an inference in the context of Don Bosco's new trip to Rome [G. B. Francesia, *Vita breve e popolare di D.*

*Don Bosco at Countess Corsi's Villa*

Don Bosco remained in Rome from June 22 to July 1, 1871 and attended the celebrations of the Pope's jubilee. In a private audience on June 28, Pius IX, who had resolved to proceed with the appointment of bishops to the dioceses that still remained vacant, asked Don Bosco to submit names and information on worthy candidates.

Back in Turin on July 4, after a two-day stopover in Florence, Don Bosco was immediately engrossed in affairs of the Society, the opening of a Salesian school at Varazze, the closing of the school at Cherasco and visits to Salesian houses. From August 6 to 20, he attended the spiritual retreats "for lay people" at St. Ignatius retreat house near Lanzo.

Don Bosco had for some time been suffering from a painful illness that seriously affected his feet and that was to grow worse with the years. He therefore took advantage of a standing invitation from Countess Gabriella Corsi of Nizza Monferrato to spend a few days at her place in quiet seclusion, from August 21 to 30.

The *Biographical Memoirs*,<sup>60</sup> following Lemoyne's story in *Documenti*, speak of a meeting of diocesan vicars called by Don Bosco (while at Countess Corsi's villa) to help him compile his list of episcopal candidates. We read in *Documenti*:

From Lanzo Don Bosco, attended by Father Francesia, traveled to Nizza Monferrato, where he was the guest of Countess Corsi at her secluded villa. The Countess used to spend the summer and autumn season there with the family of her brother-in-law, Count Cesare Balbo. Don Bosco began to work on a list of names of priests that he regarded worthy of being named bishops. He had written numerous letters to obtain information, and had invited outstanding priests to come to Nizza for a conference. Mgr. Tortone came to Nizza at Don Bosco's request to discuss some candidates. On one occasion seated at the dinner table with him were no less than 18 diocesan vicars general and capitular. These conferences, however, were held covertly (*alla chetichella*), the villa lying secluded among the hills, and guests arriving separately and unobserved. Don Bosco could thus compile his list of candidates and forward it to the Holy Father.<sup>61</sup>

*Giovanni Bosco* (Torino: Libreria Salesiana, 1902), 302-305]. The story of the meeting with Lanza exhibits striking similarities with the story of the meeting with Minister Ricasoli on a similar prior occasion [cf. Note 26-30 and related text above].

<sup>60</sup> *EBM* X, 195-197.

<sup>61</sup> *Documenti* XII, 156, *FDB* 1,017 B10. Motto points out that the presence at Nizza of

Thus, according to Lemoyne (in *Documenti*) and to Amadei (in the *Biographical Memoirs*), Don Bosco returned from Rome with a clear strategy in mind, the convening of a conference. However, the two letters to the countess whereby he set up his trip give no hint that such was the case, and surely the countess had a right to know. True, in his letters Don Bosco speaks of visitors, but they appear to be casual visitors from the area. He writes in one letter:

I think I shall have time to accommodate everybody. But let's keep to this norm. Those that come with an offering or to discuss things pertaining to the good of souls are welcome at any time on any day. I shall be very happy to see them. Those that come merely to pay their respects should be thanked and dismissed.<sup>62</sup>

Don Bosco's conversations with visitors held at the Corsi villa (apparently informal) may or may not have had a bearing on the bishops' nominations, but no "conference" was held. However, it is certain that Don Bosco was working on his list of candidates. He was also encouraging vicars of vacant diocese to petition the Holy Father to act.<sup>63</sup>

*Pius IX's Letter to the King – and Don Bosco*<sup>64</sup>

As Don Bosco was leaving for Nizza and Countess Corsi's villa, Pius IX, on August 21, 1871, was addressing a letter to King Victor Emmanuel II declaring his intention to appoint bishops to vacant dioceses in Italy. The King was vacationing in the Alps at the time, so the trusted bearer of the letter delivered it to Msgr. Tortone, the Holy See's *chargé d'affaires* in Turin. An attached note by Cardinal Antonelli suggested that Tortone consult with Don Bosco as to the safest way of getting the letter into the King's hands. Twice Tortone invited Don Bosco (already in Nizza) to Turin by telegram "to deal

Msgr. Gaetano Tortone, the Holy See's *chargé d'affaires* in Turin, cannot be reconciled with his attested activities at the time, as will be seen. Lemoyne's testimony in the process of Don Bosco's beatification at this point [FDB 2478 A3 (Rua section)] cannot be taken at face value.

<sup>62</sup> Don Bosco to Countess Gabriella Corsi, St. Ignatius, August 18, 1871, in Motto, *Epistolario*, 360.

<sup>63</sup> Don Bosco to Msgr. Pietro Giuseppe De Gaudenzi, Turin, September 4, 1871, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 366-367 (cf. Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 307).

<sup>64</sup> Here I summarize Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 308-310, where documentation is submitted.

with an urgent matter.” Don Bosco replied that “poor health and other business” prevented him from leaving Nizza. Tortone was only too glad to dispense with Don Bosco’s services and entrusted the letter to a court chaplain and to the king’s *aide de camp*.<sup>65</sup> The king pondered the letter and on August 31 handed it to Prime Minister Lanza (in Turin at the time). The Holy See had meanwhile contacted archbishops and bishops to submit lists of candidates, and since the news of imminent nominations had leaked out, Lanza immediately called a meeting of the cabinet in Florence. But before sending a report to the king, he wished to have a talk with Don Bosco. Don Bosco had by this time returned from Nizza and was at Lanzo with the Salesians’ retreat. Prime Minister Lanza dispatched a telegram to the Prefect of Turin, who summoned Don Bosco to his office and relayed the Prime Minister’s message to him. To Father Gioachino Berto, who had been with him to the Prefect’s office, Don Bosco said that the summons came as no surprise, for he had been involved in this matter by the pope’s command for quite some time. He added:

I regret to have to leave this very night and be absent for several days while the spiritual retreat is in progress at Lanzo. Besides I feel quite tired. But the good of the Church must come first; it has priority even over the good of our congregation. I shall take the 7 o’clock train this evening, travel the whole night, and be in Florence early tomorrow for my meeting at the Ministry.<sup>66</sup>

#### *Don Bosco in Florence*

We have no report on the topics of the talks at the ministry. But (1) it is likely that Lanza stressed the need of appointing moderate candidates as bishops. A confirmation of this may be read into the letter that the king wrote to the pope immediately afterwards. The king and his government would welcome the appointment of “persons who can join the discharge of their pastoral duties with a high regard for the laws of the State.” (2) Agreement was reached on allowing freedom to the pope to choose candidates as he saw fit and on the granting of temporalities by the government. Later, when dealing with the matter of the *exequaturs*, Don Bosco refers to these agreements in

<sup>65</sup> Tortone and people close to the king doubted Don Bosco’s discretion [Motto, *L’azione mediatrice*, 308, note 155].

<sup>66</sup> Berto’s testimony at the process of Don Bosco’s beatification, in *ASC A2660102: Testi, FDB 2,108 C9*.

a letter to Lanza, in which he writes with disappointment, "When I had the honor of conferring with Your Excellency [...] I took it as agreed that the government would allow freedom of choice to the pope and place no obstacle in the matter of temporalities."<sup>67</sup>

*Don Bosco in Rome and the Nomination of Bishops*

With these assurances, from Florence Don Bosco went on to Rome and made his report to Pius IX and to Cardinal Antonelli. He had compiled a list of candidates and noted their credentials. He may already have discussed his list of candidates in his meeting with Lanza, and may even have made a case for the worthiness of some who may not have had the reputation of "moderates." The list that he presented in Rome is attested in four holograph sheets from the Secret Vatican Archive, cited by Motto.<sup>68</sup> Don Bosco submitted 10 names, all basically recommendable, some without any reservation, others only in certain respects. He writes:

Having pondered all aspects of the matter before the Lord and offered special prayers, I believe the following can be put forward as models in the pastoral ministry.

1. Giovanni Battista Bottino. He is a doctor in theology, a canon of the cathedral [in Turin] and a preacher of renown.

2. Celestino Fissore. He is a canon of the same [cathedral], a doctor in theology and canon law, and a jurist of renown. He has been for many years vicar general of the diocese of Turin.

3. Giorgio Oreglia. He is a canon, provost and vicar general and capitular of the diocese of Fossano.

The three above-listed candidates are also well-to-do.

Canon Luigi Nasi is worthy in every respect. But he's in very poor health.

Both Canon [Stanislao] Gazzelli [di Rossana] and Canon [Carlo] Morozzo [della Rocca] can be recommended and are moreover readily acceptable to the king. But in the present circumstances they are not as desirable as the first three above.

Recommendable but less appropriate would be the nomination of Provost Gaeti, vicar forane of Castel Ceriolo. He is completely acceptable to the king to whom he is very close, but his theological education is inadequate.

<sup>67</sup> Don Bosco to Prime Minister Lanza, Varazze, February 11, 1872, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 398.

<sup>68</sup> Motto, *L'azione mediatrice*, 311-312.

Msgr. Andrea Scotton, a canon of Bassano Veneto. He preached in the cathedral [of Turin] and gave evidence of saintliness and great learning. He comes recommended by numerous works and supporting reports. He is well-to-do, in great health and courageous to a fault.

Canon [Anacleto Pietro] Siboni, vicar general and capitular of Albenga, comes highly recommended from many quarters.

Bishop [Lorenzo] Gastaldi of Saluzzo has support among the best of the clergy on account of his learning and piety. They would like him transferred to Turin. As a doctor in theology on the faculty of the University of Turin he would be ideally placed to keep theological studies at the University on the right track.<sup>69</sup>

Don Bosco submitted other names as well. Amadei, citing Papal Prelate Msgr. Emiliano Manacorda as the source, states that Don Bosco submitted 18 names, among which those of Giuseppe Sciandra (for the diocese of Acqui) and of Salvatore Magnasco (for the archdiocese of Genoa).<sup>70</sup> It should be borne in mind that Don Bosco's list, which was concerned only with Piedmont and Liguria, was only one of many sent in at the request of the Holy See.

There followed a diplomatic shuttle of messengers from Rome to various dioceses and back that could not escape the notice of the press. Speculations, positions pro and con, and acrimonious debates raged in the press through the remainder of September and most of October, as appointments became known or conjectured. Anticlerical sheets conducted the usual defamatory campaign that contributed significantly to poisoning the atmosphere against

<sup>69</sup> This document is proof positive that Don Bosco did recommend Gastaldi for Turin, as the Salesian tradition has always held. Later, during his unfortunate and bitter conflict with the archbishop, Don Bosco maladroitly reminded him of the fact. He wrote: "I would like you to know that someone in Turin is circulating certain papers taken from government files. These papers state that the appointment of Canon Gastaldi as bishop of Saluzzo came about through Don Bosco's recommendation, and if Bishop Gastaldi was appointed archbishop of Turin, it was likewise through Don Bosco's recommendation. There's also a record of the obstacles that had to be overcome for these appointments, and of the reason why I supported your candidacy" [Letter of May 14, 1873, in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 96-98]. Archbishop Gastaldi, in a letter to Pius IX, complains about Don Bosco's "insolence" and lack of respect, when the latter claimed to have been reprimanded in Rome for having supported Gastaldi [Letter in the Secret Vatican Archive cited by Motto, *L'Azione mediatrice*, 311, Note 167]. One of the reasons why Don Bosco recommended Gastaldi was that the latter had always been supportive of Don Bosco and his work and would hopefully continued to be so as archbishop of Turin. It was not to be.

<sup>70</sup> EBM X, 199.



particular nominees.<sup>71</sup> But the list of candidates was finalized by Pius IX and, after some objections, accepted also by the government. Finally on October 27, 1871 Pius held the consistory in which 41 bishops were officially named and appointed to various dioceses throughout Italy. Among them (for the regions of the old Kingdom of Sardinia) were: Giovanni Balma (Archdiocese of Cagliari, Sardinia), Lorenzo Gastaldi (Archdiocese of Turin), Celestino Fissore (Archdiocese of Vercelli), Pietro Giuseppe De Gaudenzi (Diocese of Vigevano), and Pietro Anacleto Siboni (Diocese of Albenga) – all five of them proposed by Don Bosco.<sup>72</sup>

### *Don Bosco's Continued Involvement in the Nomination of Bishops*

While the nominations were being pondered and decisions made in Rome, Don Bosco returned to Turin (September 16, 1871). However, even pressing affairs of the Congregation and other important commitment did not stymie Don Bosco's active concern for the vacant sees. Even after the nominations of October 27, the diocese of Fossano remained vacant, in spite of earlier petitions by the cathedral chapter, the municipal council and Don Bosco himself. The authorities in Fossano now renewed their petition, asking specifically for Msgr. Emiliano Manacorda, a papal prelate and a friend of Don Bosco and the Salesians. They also asked Don Bosco to act as intermediary with Cardinal Antonelli and to add his own recommendation. Don Bosco gladly obliged.<sup>73</sup> On November 6, the cardinal notified Don Bosco of the pope's favorable decision. Mgr. Manacorda was nominated and appointed bishop of Fossano in the consistory of November 27, 1871.

Don Bosco's active involvement in the nomination of bishops continued,

<sup>71</sup> The anticlerical satirical newspaper of Turin, *Il Fischietto* (the Whistle) undertook a rabid smearing campaign against possible nominees for Turin. The invective became more vicious as soon as the appointment of Bishop Lorenzo Gastaldi of Saluzzo to the archdiocese of Turin was announced. The malevolent satire reached the point of holding up him to ridicule for his physical appearance [*Il Fischietto*, issues of October 5 and 14, 1871, cited in Giuseppe Tuninetti, *Lorenzo Gastaldi, 1815-1883*, vol. II, 22-23].

<sup>72</sup> Giovanni Balma had been "sponsored" by Don Bosco earlier in a special letter to Cardinal Antonelli [cf. notes 44 and 45 and related text above]. Lorenzo Gastaldi's appointment to Turin came one year after the death of Archbishop Riccardi di Netro, who had been appointed in 1867 and had died on October 16, 1870. The diocese had meanwhile been vacant.

<sup>73</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli, Turin, October 31, 1871, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 382-383.

as Motto relates in detail, through the pontificate of Pius IX, who died in 1878, and in a different form even beyond that date.<sup>74</sup>

## **VI. Don Bosco's Continued Mediation to Obtain "Exequatur" and Temporalities for Appointed Bishops (1872-1874)**

Don Bosco's involvement in obtaining the royal *Exequatur* and the temporalities for appointed bishops opened another chapter in Don Bosco's mediating activity. In the situation of conflict brought about by the occupation of Rome and the Law of Guarantees obtaining this royal permit was now more difficult and more onerous.

### **1. Archbishop Gastaldi's Uneasy "Entrance" and Don Bosco's Illness (December 1871 - February 1872)**

Archbishop Gastaldi entered the See of Turin on November 26, 1871. His entrance was in a less solemn and public form than had been originally planned. The rabid propaganda of the anticlerical press and the fear lest the archbishop be subjected to personal abuse forced the City to cancel the procession and the accompanying pageant. The local civil authorities received him ambivalently, even if civilly, but it's probably true to say that he entered as a *persona non grata*. After all, he had been a well known and in many ways controversial figure, no passive spectator in the religious and political events of the past quarter century. To forestall a confrontation, instead of proceeding to his cathedral from the church of St. Philip where the clergy was gathered, he preferred to go there privately from the Church of the Consolata where he had been "in hiding." Meanwhile the various ranks of Catholic laity and orders of clergy (among whom Don Bosco) waiting for the archbishop at the Church of St. Philip proceeded without him to the cathedral, to find it filled to capacity with people.<sup>75</sup> The following day the archbishop took up residence in the diocesan seminary. Nearly three years were to pass before the archbishop could obtain the *Exequatur* and temporalities.

Walking from St. Philip to the cathedral on November 26, Don Bosco be-

<sup>74</sup> Motto, *L'Azione mediatrice*, 315-322.

<sup>75</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi II*, 15-25.

gan to feel ill with a sharp pain in his shoulders and heavy palpitations of the heart. Back at the Oratory, he seemed to recover. A few days later, in spite of misgivings Don Bosco undertook a trip to Genoa for the purpose of visiting the Salesian houses in Liguria. He visited Marassi and went on to Varazze, where he arrived on December 4. On December 6, returning to Varazze by train after paying a visit to a benefactress, he collapsed. He was taken to the Salesian school and put to bed in the infirmary. This marked the onset of a serious illness that kept him bed-ridden for nearly two months.<sup>76</sup>

## 2. *Exequaturs* and Temporalities: Terms of the Question and Don Bosco's Involvement in 1872

During the long siege, Don Bosco was kept informed on how matters fared in the dioceses to which bishops had been recently appointed. Things were not going well. The bishops were not being given the necessary temporalities. Once on the way to recovery, before returning to Turin, Don Bosco wrote to Prime Minister Lanza demanding to know why.

I meant to write sooner and ask for a clarification regarding the question of the temporalities to which the recently appointed bishops are entitled. Illness has thus far prevented me from doing so. [...] When I had the honor of conferring with Your Excellency on September 9 [11] past, I understood that the government agreed not only to allow the Pope full freedom in the choice of candidates, but also not to place any obstacles in the way of their obtaining the temporalities. [...] I have been receiving inquiries about this matter, and I myself would like to know if I misunderstood or if the government has had cause to change its position. [...] When people saw their bishop forced to take up residence in the diocesan seminary, or in a private house, or at an inn, or in a rented apartment, they began to take a different view of the government's credibility.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> The story of Don Bosco's participation in the archbishop's "entrance" and of his subsequent illness at Varazze is told in detail in *EBM* X, 122-130. What is known about the nature and progress of that illness is based on letters by Salesians at Varazze to the Salesians in Turin. The letters of Pietro Enria, who served as Don Bosco sick room attendant throughout the illness, constitute the chief source [*ASC* A024: *Malattie di Don Bosco*, *FDB* 430 D12 – 435 E4]. For comments and evaluation, cf. Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 821-824.

<sup>77</sup> Don Bosco to Prime Minister Lanza, Varazze, February 11, 1872, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 398.

*The Government's and the Holy See's Positions*

What had happened? We must refrain from imputing malicious intent to the Prime Minister. When he had agreed that the temporalities would not be denied to the newly appointed bishops, he must have understood that they would be granted in the form prescribed by law. Now, if according to the provisions of the Law of Guarantees the Italian government surrendered the right to nominate bishops, it still claimed the right to issue the *Exequatur*. As already noted, the *Exequatur* was the name given to a royal permit enabling a newly appointed bishop to take possession of the bishop's palace and other premises and to receive revenues from the diocesan benefice, and so set up household and administration.<sup>78</sup> A royal decree with the date of June 25, 1871 reaffirmed this policy and established that to obtain the *Exequatur* the bishop must submit the *original papal Bull of Appointment* to government authorities.<sup>79</sup> It seems anomalous that the government should permit on the one hand the free election of bishops (as it did in 1871), and then demand that the bishops should present "official credentials" so as to obtain a permit (*Exequatur*) to enter into possession (temporalities). Historically, this was an ancient prerogative claimed by the kings of Sardinia, who had always followed a "jurisdictionalist" ecclesiastical policy. This policy, some times established by concordat, allowed the sovereign to exercise a measure of control, not only on the bishops' activities but also on their very nomination.

Failure to obtain the *Exequatur* would paralyze the running of the diocese from an administrative and juridical point of view. Now by the Law of Guarantees and by royal decree the Pope could freely appoint the bishops, but once appointed they must obtain the royal permit in order to enter into possession. To ease tension, the government would later clarify the juridical issue by introducing a distinction: the submission of the Bull would not be for the purpose of obtaining the *Exequatur* with its juridical implications. It would only be for the purpose of recording officially that the bearer of the Bull was the person to whom the temporalities pertained.

<sup>78</sup> *Exequatur* (*Exsequatur*) though used as a noun is a Latin verbal form meaning "Let him put into execution." A similar permit (called the *Placet*, "It is decided") had to be obtained from the local authority for the appointment and installation of a parish priest as pastor.

<sup>79</sup> This referred primarily to the Bull of appointment addressed to the people (*Bulla ad populum*). Later the submission of other Bulls would be required. As noted earlier (note 17), the Holy See also dispatched Bulls addressed to the clergy (*ad clericum*), to the chapter (*ad capitulum*) and to the bishop (*ad episcopum*).

But the Holy See (and in particular Cardinal Secretary of State Antonelli) would have none of it, because they did not acknowledge the government's jurisdiction in the matter. *The government* was the usurpers of the pope's temporal power and of the properties of the Church and of religious orders. The bishops, therefore, were instructed to avoid any action (such as the submission of credentials) that could be construed as recognition of the illegal and unjust situation. Thus, on October 31, 1871 a circular from the Holy See (Cardinal Antonelli) directed the bishops to enter their diocese as soon as possible, immediately perform some act of jurisdiction, and send notice of their election to the government. If the government demanded that they request the *Exequatur* and submit the Bull of appointment in accordance with the law, they were to ignore the demand and take the consequences. They were not to request the *Exequatur* either directly or indirectly.<sup>80</sup>

On November 29, 1871 Archbishop Gastaldi reported to Cardinal Antonelli that his notification to the government had drawn a negative reply and inquired whether he could request the *Exequatur* indirectly. He suggested that the Holy See might supply "a certificate of election" that the bishop could show to the authorities, and thus obtain the temporalities. Cardinal Antonelli remained inflexible. And when Gastaldi made a second attempt on January 9, 1872, the cardinal replied that if the Archbishop was in want, the Pope would allot to him, as he did to other bishops, a stipend of 700 lire.<sup>81</sup>

The bishops were chafing at the bit under such strictures from the government and intransigence from the Holy See. Attempts were made in certain dioceses to get around the obstacle. We have the case of the canons cathedral chapter of Saluzzo who petitioned the Minister of Justice for the *Exequatur* and submitted in lieu of the Bull of appointment a transcript of the minutes of the meeting at which the bishop read the Bull of appointment to them. The government granted the *Exequatur*, signed by the king, on February 25, 1872. But Bishop Alfonso Buglione di Monale and his chapter received a stern rebuke from Cardinal Antonelli.<sup>82</sup>

In this case the government's action may have been motivated by the recognition of the propaganda value of the incident. On the other hand, on March 3, 1872 the government did relax the condition for obtaining the

<sup>80</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 52, citing document from the Archive of the Archdiocese of Turin.

<sup>81</sup> Gastaldi accepted the offer [Tuninetti, *ibid.* citing sources].

<sup>82</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 53.

temporalities by approving three alternatives to the direct submission of the original Bull of appointment (to be discussed below). Nevertheless on March 10, 1872 a circular from the Holy See forbade any compromise. The bishops were not to make any move to request the *Exequatur*.

Don Bosco was aware that the government, fearing the political backlash from this stalemate or simply out of a desire to see matter resolved, was seeking a compromise. He was also aware that both Cardinal Antonelli and Pius IX had decided to make no concession to what they perceived as aggression and bad faith. But he did not give up. Writing to Pius IX on April 8, 1872, he comments on the question of the temporalities.

When the government began to raise objections, I immediately wrote to Prime Minister Lanza. I reminded him of the formal pledge made by the government and by the king himself that nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the bishops' temporalities. He replied that there was no cause to worry because the difficulties that had arisen were temporary and would be resolved, and that the government's position in the matter had not changed at all.

As time went by, noting that nothing was being done I made further inquiries but got no reply. I know for a fact that the government would like to move out of this embarrassing situation, but it cannot find a way.<sup>83</sup>

Pius IX replied on May 1, 1872 (in Latin):

What you write regarding your endeavors to obtain the temporalities that are due to the bishops is appreciated, and We praise your zeal and concern. But you know how matters stand, and you understand therefore that it is better to turn in prayer to God who alone can change people's hearts. Since God promised the Church perpetual protection, God cannot fail us.<sup>84</sup>

Apparently Pius IX no longer believed in diplomacy. Was he also telling Don Bosco that, in spite of his "zeal and concern" his diplomatic endeavors were no longer helpful?

#### *Don Bosco Renewed Efforts to Seek a Compromise*

But Don Bosco was not ready to stop trying. On May 21, 1872, he wrote to Prime Minister Lanza asking him to move the matter of the temporalities

<sup>83</sup> Motto, *Epistolario* III, 422-423.

<sup>84</sup> IBM X, 570 (Latin text); EBM X, 210.

forward. To help toward this end, he suggested a compromise formula for notifying the government formally of the appointment.

In a recent letter to Your Excellency I stated my belief that it would not be too difficult to come up with an acceptable arrangement, one that would not require either the government or the Holy See to give up cherished general principles. I don't engage in politics, am not involved in public affairs, nor have I received any mandate to negotiate. But I believe that an authenticated note from the Holy See would meet the government's requirements. The note would state that in the consistory held on such and such a date, such and such an individual was officially appointed bishop to such and such a vacant diocesan see.

Perhaps this or some similar formula that Your Excellency might suggest will serve the purpose. In this event, should Your Excellency wish to make use of me to bring it to the attention of the right parties, I should be more than happy to be of service to my government and of some use to the Church.<sup>85</sup>

We have no record of Lanza's reply, if there was one. But a new move of the Holy See confirmed what Don Bosco had already surmised from the Pope's letter of May 1. In an open letter to the Cardinal Secretary of State dated June 16, 1872, Pius IX shut the door on negotiations with a government that he regarded as willfully interfering with the Church's freedom.<sup>86</sup>

Don Bosco saw that there was nothing for it but to wait for a thaw in the glacial relationship that had developed between the contending parties.

### 3. Don Bosco's Involvement with the Question of the *Exequaturs* in Rome in Early 1873

On February 18, 1873, Don Bosco and his secretary, Father Gioachino Berto, left for Rome where they arrived on February 24 after stopovers at Parma, Bologna and Florence. The definitive approval of the Salesian constitutions was the chief item on Don Bosco's agenda. But he quickly became involved again (in a totally private capacity) in the issue of the *Exequaturs*. The day before his departure from Turin, he had had a meeting with Archbishop

<sup>85</sup> Don Bosco to Prime Minister Lanza, [Turin,] May 21, 1872, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 434.

<sup>86</sup> Pius IX to Cardinal Antonelli, June 16, 1872 (referred to in Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, citing the journal, *Civiltà cattolica*).



Gastaldi on that very subject. The archbishop, like other bishops, was impatient with the delay, and he had been to Rome shortly before to speak with the Pope. In January, at Alessandria, contrary to the Holy See's express prohibition, Canon Giuseppe Bernardo Corno on his own initiative had submitted a transcript of Bishop Giocondo Salvaj's Bull of appointment and obtained the *Exequatur*. Cardinal Antonelli's wrath was swift, and the bishop survived only by apologizing and submitting proof of his innocence.<sup>87</sup>

### *Don Bosco and the Four Modi Vivendi*

Father Berto has left diaries of the Roman trips on which he accompanied Don Bosco, including the present one of 1873. After describing the trip, he relates (though not in detail) Don Bosco's activities as go-between in the matter of the *Exequaturs*.<sup>88</sup>

Not long after his arrival in the city, Don Bosco received an invitation from Prime Minister Lanza to discuss the issue of the bishops' temporalities.<sup>89</sup> Apparently at this meeting Lanza presented to Don Bosco three alternate procedures that did not require submission of the original Bull of appointment for requesting the *Exequatur*. Together they are referred to as "the four *modi vivendi*." We have Don Bosco's holograph in a memorandum that he penned in view, no doubt, of a meeting with Cardinal Antonelli.

#### Bishops' Temporalities

The four *modi vivendi*, so-called, proposed by the Prime Minister and approved by the Cabinet are:

1. The bishops shall notify their appointment and present the official Bull in accordance with the law.
2. The cathedral chapter, or the diocesan chancery or other competent diocesan authority shall submit a summary of the Bull, with a declaration that nothing has been added [in the original] to the formulation that is customary in such texts.

<sup>87</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 54.

<sup>88</sup> Berto, *Compendio*, FDB 906 C8ff., esp. D7-12; *Appunti sul viaggio di D. Bosco a Roma, 1873*, FDB 907 D12ff., esp., E1-4.

<sup>89</sup> Prime Minister Lanza and Don Bosco also discussed the government's policy for the suppression of religious congregations and the taking over of their properties in the province of Rome. Earlier Don Bosco had asked Lanza to spare some convents that were dear to him, in particular the convents of Tor de' Specchi, of the Bocca della Verità and of Trinità dei Monti. The Prime Minister was able to reassure him [Berto, "*Compendio*," FDB 906 D11].

3. [A competent diocesan authority] shall submit the text of a typical Bull, with a declaration that the original Bull issued for N. N. agrees with that text.

4. The secretary of the Consistorial Congregation shall submit, in each case of appointment, name, date, and diocese, with a declaration that nothing has been changed in the official Bull.

Generally speaking it seems that the government is afraid lest secret codes might be appended or inserted into the Bull. This fear was dispelled to everyone's satisfaction. [...]

The second alternate procedure (*modus vivendi*) appears to be more in conformity with principles guiding the Holy See, especially if modified as follows:

"The [Cathedral] Chapter, the chancery or other competent [diocesan] authority shall forward to the Royal Procurator or other government authority a declaration of appointment. This shall be a statement that in the [papal] consistory held on (Date) the priest (Name) was officially appointed bishop of (Diocese), and that the customary Bull (couched in the customary terms) has been sent."

The government seems to have accepted this procedure. However, the Minister would like to wait till the [parliament's] Easter break, or preferably till the June recess to put it into effect. At that time the government will not have to deal with [parliamentary] debate and will proceed as desired. [...]

[Prime Minister] Lanza moreover pledged to protect the Generalates [of religious orders from confiscation], or [should the government move against them] to submit his resignation. He will also try to compensate the bishops for the losses sustained because of the necessary delay.

[Signed]

Father Giovanni Bosco.<sup>90</sup>

Berto reports that some time during the meeting with Lanza Don Bosco was "set upon" by cabinet ministers who argued with him and tried to trick him into contradictions or compromising statements. He came out of the meeting tired, bathed in perspiration and flushed but smiling. To Berto he explained what "those scoundrels (*canaglia*)" were trying to do to him and to "poor Lanza."<sup>91</sup>

After the meeting Don Bosco sent the memorandum with Lanza's proposals to Cardinal Antonelli. And on March 15 and 16, 1873 he met again with both the Prime Minister and the Cardinal.<sup>92</sup> However, in spite of the fact

<sup>90</sup> Berto, *Collection*, FDB 789 C8-10 (Don Bosco's holograph), B4-6 (Berto's transcription).

<sup>91</sup> Berto, *Compendio*, FDB 906 D9-10.

<sup>92</sup> Motto, *La Mediazione*, 25, Note 66, citing an unpublished letter of Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli (dated March 15, 1873), now published in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 66-67 (lines 9-10).

that the Don Bosco-Lanza conversations had made a breakthrough, and the cardinal seemed to want to go along with the new proposal, no real advance was made in the new direction. On the one hand Lanza would have to wait for parliament to recess in June, and on the other Cardinal Antonelli, still skeptical, adopted a wait and see attitude.

The business of the Society, the approval of the constitutions, had not gone well either. The revised text Don Bosco had brought to Rome and submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (Text *Ns*, 1873) was rejected after drawing no less than 38 serious critical observations from the examiner (reduced to 28 by Secretary Vitelleschi). Therefore after taking leave of Pius IX on March 18, on March 22 with his secretary he left Rome for Turin. With stops at Florence, Modena and Bologna a week went by before the travelers were back at home on March 29, 1873.

In Turin Archbishop Gastaldi was also looking for a way to notify his appointment to the authorities and obtaining the *Exequatur* without submitting the original bull directly. He proposed to Cardinal Antonelli that the Bull to the people or a copy thereof might be displayed in the cathedral, in a corner of the sacristy. The reply was that the Archbishop should not take such a course of action until the Holy See had explored its implications.<sup>93</sup>

Meanwhile in early May (1873), the Bill of suppression of religious orders and confiscation of their properties in the province of Rome began to be debated in parliament. The Pope voiced his protests and launched excommunications, but the Bill was passed into law and published on June 26. It would go into effect in October 1873. Eventually a total of 472 convents and monasteries would be suppressed and some 8000 religious men and women dismissed. The value of the properties was estimated at 8,000,000 lire.<sup>94</sup> Prime Minister Lanza, as promised, fought hard to save the general houses of religious congregations in Rome, and he succeeded to some extent. But the parliamentary opposition and a groundswell of popular anticlerical feeling forced his resignation on June 25, 1873. His government fell on July 5, leaving the question of the *Exequaturs* and temporalities unresolved.

<sup>93</sup> Tuninetti, *Gastaldi* II, 55.

<sup>94</sup> *Compact-De Agostini*, 172.

#### 4. Don Bosco's Fight for the *Exequaturs* at the Beginning of the Ministry of Prime Minister Marco Minghetti and of Justice Minister Paolo Onorato Vigliani (Latter Half of 1873)

On July 10, 1873, Marco Minghetti, designated Prime Minister, formed a new government, in which Onorato Vigliani took the post of Minister of Justice. A few days later, on July 14, 1873, Don Bosco wrote to Prime Minister Minghetti recalling the progress made in meetings with Prime Minister Lanza, and requesting that the talks be restarted on the basis of the second modified option.<sup>95</sup>

[Prime Minister Lanza] put forward four options worked out by the cabinet ministers, the text of the second of which, slightly modified, is herewith attached. I reported the proposals to Cardinal Antonelli and to the Holy Father himself. All parties understood that once the debate on the Bill against religious corporations was concluded, and parliament adjourned for the summer recess, the proposal would be put into effect as modified. I hope the new government still intends to work toward the settlement of a dispute that is harmful to many and advantageous to no one. I shall be happy again to be of service in any capacity that may be for the good of my country and of the Church.<sup>96</sup>

On July 16, 1873, Prime Minister Minghetti assured Don Bosco that he would give attention to the matter and get back to him. Come August, however, there was as yet no reply. Don Bosco thought that the delay was occasioned from the fact that Minister of Justice Vigliani was away taking the waters. The negotiations would eventually be turned over to Vigliani.

##### *Cardinal Antonelli's New and More Restrictive Position*

In the first week in August Don Bosco and Cardinal Antonelli carried on a lively correspondence. Don Bosco made an updated report to Cardinal Antonelli and asked whether someone else had been appointed to negotiate and he should cease and desist—or did he have the Cardinal's permission “to deal.” On August 6 Cardinal Antonelli gave permission, but he lay down new and more restrictive demands, thereby making the obtaining of the *Exequatur* and

<sup>95</sup> Don Bosco's memorandum to Cardinal Antonelli, cf. Note 90 and related text above.

<sup>96</sup> Don Bosco to Marco Minghetti, [Turin,] July 14, 1873, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 64 (published in Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 128-129).

of the temporalities more problematic. On August 25, Don Bosco brought to the cardinal's attention the discrepancy between the new formula and the procedure (*modus vivendi*) agreed upon the previous March. On September 13, Cardinal Antonelli restated his position, and told Don Bosco to adhere strictly to it.<sup>97</sup> In spite of the cardinal's statement that he just wanted to establish parameters to what had been agreed in Rome, the new formula forbade any move by the bishop, the chancery, or any other diocesan authority. The "inquiry" was left up to the government.<sup>98</sup>

*Don Bosco and Minister Paolo Onorato Vigliani in Late 1873*

Don Bosco did not give up, but he had no other option than to work with the new intransigent position of the Cardinal secretary of state. Not having had a reply from Prime Minister Minghetti, on October 12, 1873 he contacted Onorato Vigliani, to whose department (Ministry of Justice) the matter did pertain. He brought the minister abreast of the March agreement with Prime Minister Lanza and his writing to Prime Minister Minghetti, but not receiving a reply. Then in an effort to sell the new position he writes.

The March talks dealt only with the procedure [to be followed in seeking the temporalities] for the bishops to be named in the future. But a second procedure applicable to bishops already named and in place at the time (marked *Modus*

<sup>97</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli, Turin, August 3, 1873 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 137-138); Cardinal Antonelli to Don Bosco, Rome, August 6, 1873; Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli, Turin, August 25, 1873 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 150-151); Cardinal Antonelli to Don Bosco, Rome, September 13, 1873—all in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 64-67.

<sup>98</sup> Cardinal Antonelli's formula ran as follows: "[The government] may address an inquiry to the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of the Consistory regarding the date [of appointment], the bishops' names and the dioceses to which they have been appointed in various consistories. [The secretary of the Congregation] will gladly provide name, date, and diocese to which each bishop was appointed. He will likewise certify that the customary Bulls of appointment were dispatched in each case." [Letter of August 6, as in Note 97 above]. The alternate procedure recorded in Don Bosco's memorandum is considerably different. "The second alternate procedure (*modus vivendi*) appears to be more in conformity with the principles guiding the Holy See, especially if modified as follows: 'The [cathedral] chapter or the chancery or other competent [diocesan] authority shall forward to the Royal Procurator or other government authority a declaration of appointment. This shall contain a statement to the effect that in the [papal] consistory held on [date] the priest [name] was officially appointed bishop of [diocese]', and that 'the customary Bull [of appointment] has been delivered.'" [Cf. note 90 and Don Bosco's memorandum above.]

*Vivendi* B on the sheet herewith attached) was agreed upon. Discussion [about the implementation] of this second formula, however, was put off to a more appropriate time. [...]<sup>99</sup>

It seems to me that this *Modus Vivendi* B is entirely consonant with the government's view of the matter and advantageous to it. (1) The government would be contacting the Holy See and establishing a direct relationship. (2) The Holy See would respond directly and officially. (3) Upon receiving the official list of appointed bishops, the government can judge the merits of the case in each instance. (4) The government would then be wielding an effective *Exequatur*, for it may decide not to grant the temporalities or, if needs be, even to set appropriate conditions.

In the practical implementation of this plan certain details of the procedure could be modified, and I believe that the Holy See would raise no objections. For example where it is said, "The government may address an inquiry, etc.," one may take it to be an oral inquiry through a delegate. [...]

I am totally uninvolved in politics or in public affairs. Hence, should Your Excellency see fit to make use of my humble services in this matter, there would be no unwanted publicity. [...]<sup>100</sup>

Minister Vigliani replied immediately. After lamenting the sad condition of the dioceses in which the bishops were still deprived of the *Exequatur*, he goes on to say that Prime Minister Minghetti, who like himself was desirous of seeing the conflict resolved, has asked him to look into the matter. But not having found any files on the previous negotiations, he will need time to consult with former Prime Minister Lanza. Vigliani, however, shows acquaintance with the general situation, when he writes:

What's needed is that both sides give evidence of good will and Christian tolerance. Then a settlement may be reached that satisfies all requirements. You are a devoted priest and a committed citizen. I beg you therefore to take the most

<sup>99</sup> "The first *modus vivendi* mentioned here by Don Bosco is the *second* alternate formula proposed by Lanza in March 1873. As modified in Don Bosco's memorandum it was the preferred formula, in harmony with the mind of the Holy See [Cf. Note 90 and Don Bosco's memorandum above]. Don Bosco here mentions a second mysterious *modus vivendi*. This is the new formula laid down by Cardinal Antonelli. Although the Cardinal states that it was the agreement worked out in March [cf. Letter of August 6, note 97 above], it does not appear in Don Bosco's memorandum, which lists Lanza's proposed alternate formulae [cf. note 98 above]. Is Don Bosco trying to sell the new position of the Holy See to Vigliani?

<sup>100</sup> Don Bosco to Minister Vigliani, Turin, October 12, 1873, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 67-68 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 166-168).

effective steps to persuade the Holy See to meet the government halfway. For the government needs to find a way to conciliate the requirements of the law, which is above the will of any individual minister, and the concessions that will make the granting of the *Exequatur* possible. You may know that the bishops of Alessandria, Saluzzo and Aosta have been generously granted the *Exequatur*. Why don't other bishops follow the good example of these, their fellow bishops? Why can't they find a way, through their chapters, the local mayors, or other trusted person, to forward a transcript of the Bull of Appointment to the government authority, without seeming to make an act of submission? I don't see in this mode of acting anything that might offend our holy religion.<sup>101</sup>

As mentioned above, the procedure described by Vigliani and adopted in the dioceses of Saluzzo, Alessandria and Aosta is what called forth Cardinal Antonelli's ire.<sup>102</sup> It would in any case be ruled out by the Holy See's new position.

Don Bosco quickly wrote to Cardinal Antonelli on October 20 to acquaint him with his exchange with Minister Vigliani. He had placed the new position of the Holy See squarely on the table, but Vigliani had withheld comments, and had instead cited deviant examples. Don Bosco was willing to travel to Rome if the Cardinal thought it helpful. Cardinal Antonelli's reply on November 1 restated his intransigent position, forbidding the bishop or any other diocesan authority to make any move to request the *Exequatur*. He couldn't say whether a trip to Rome by Don Bosco would help, "since the government seems unwilling to do anything right."<sup>103</sup>

As the year 1873 came to a close, therefore, several months after first contacting Prime Minister Minghetti, Don Bosco had to accept the fact that the contrast remained unresolved.

On December 17, 1873, Archbishop Gastaldi had a notarized copy of the Bull of appointment displayed in the sacristy of the cathedral, as was being done with the bishop's pastoral letters, an act that could be interpreted as a petition for the *Exequatur*. To make matters worse influential lay people in Turin started a process whereby the notarized transcript of the Bull would

<sup>101</sup> Minister Vigliani to Don Bosco, Rome October 15, 1873, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 68-69.

<sup>102</sup> For Alessandria, cf. Note 87 and related text above.

<sup>103</sup> Don Bosco to Cardinal Antonelli, Turin, October 20, 1873 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 171-172); Cardinal Antonelli to Don Bosco, Rome, November 1, 1873, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 69.



reach the authorities. Nothing came of it, however. Minister Vigliani refused to take action because the move had not come from the archbishop and the document presented was not the original Bull. Gastaldi was not aware that such action was being taken “on his behalf.”<sup>104</sup>

Don Bosco was then preparing to leave for Rome on the business of the approval of the constitutions. He had been revising (though not significantly) the text of the Salesian constitutions (Text N<sup>o</sup>, 1873). On December 29, 1873, he left for Rome with his secretary, Father Gioachino Berto. They arrived on December 30 after a brief pause in Florence as the guests of Count and Countess Uguccioni-Gherardi. The business of the definitive approval of the constitutions (the main reason for the trip) would keep them in Rome until the decree of approval on April 13.

## 5. Don Bosco Involvement with Minister of Justice Paolo Onorato Vigliani for the *Exequaturs* in Rome in 1874<sup>105</sup>

Before leaving for Rome Don Bosco had conferred with Archbishop Gastaldi, promising to keep him informed of developments. Don Bosco's letters to the archbishop from Rome (to be cited below) give evidence that Gastaldi was impatiently waiting for a breakthrough. During his protracted stay in Rome Don Bosco was determined to continue his diplomatic activity for the bishops' temporalities, and hopefully get the parties to agree on a compromise formula. He needed to meet with the parties immediately, so as to ascertain their respective positions.

<sup>104</sup> Motto, *La Mediazione*, 36-37.

<sup>105</sup> Father Berto's chronicle of the trip and Don Bosco's correspondence are the chief sources for this the final chapter in our story. For Berto's chronicle of this trip to Rome and of Don Bosco's activities there [Berto, *Brevi Appunti*], cf. Bibliographical Note above. Motto [*La Mediazione*, 38] discusses the reliability of Berto's chronicle. Apart from Berto's penchant for aggrandizing the figure of the master, he finds no reason for doubting these reports. The *Biographical Memoirs* carry the reports, embellishing them with dialogue and other detail [EBM X, 223-245]. The most important pieces of Don Bosco's correspondence relating to the *Exequaturs* are likewise given in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 56-79, from which some letters have already been cited above.

*Finding a Formula for a General Settlement of the Issue*

On December 31, the day after his arrival in Rome, Don Bosco met with Minister Vigliani and with Cardinal Antonelli. Immediately Don Bosco's understanding was confirmed: the positions of the contending parties were irreconcilable. In a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi written that very evening Don Bosco reported words of Vigliani that revealed the two irreconcilable positions. Vigliani said, "We are not demanding that bishops submit a request for the *Exequatur* [with its juridical connotations], but only for the temporalities." Don Bosco adds, "But even this second request is ruled out by order of a higher authority [Cardinal Antonelli]." <sup>106</sup> After a new meeting with Minister Vigliani devoted to discussing the basic formula, <sup>107</sup> the evening of January 2, 1874 Don Bosco wrote to Cardinal Antonelli. He reported that Vigliani wished to modify certain expressions in the formula to forestall objections that might be raised. Otherwise he accepted the formula in its entirety, and anticipated no opposition either from the Cabinet or in the Council of State. More meetings took place through the next week (including an audience with Pius IX), and letters were exchanged. Both Minister Vigliani and Don Bosco were convinced that progress was being made.

But the government's proposal did more than modify certain expressions in the basic formula, for it still required the bishop to notify the Ministry of his appointment and entrance into the diocese. The position of the Holy See emphatically ruled out any action on the bishop's part that might be construed as a request for the *Exequatur* or simply for the temporalities. It also ruled out displaying the Bulls to the Clergy and to the Chapter in the sacristy of the cathedral. On the other hand, the government required that all the bulls be shown, or at least the Bull to the People with an accurate description of the contents of the others. But, making a juridical distinction, it required only that the bishop request the temporalities, not the *Exequatur*.

A person of lesser staying power would have despaired—not Don Bosco. His numerous conversations and exchanges with the parties concerned must have convinced him that an understanding was possible if a fresh approach were adopted. The principle to be safeguarded was that in any formula the bishop must not be required *directly* to submit the request. Hence Don Bosco,

<sup>106</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, December 31, 1873, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 70 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 188).

<sup>107</sup> This is the second (modified) formula recorded in Don Bosco's March, 1872 memorandum as the most acceptable to the Holy See [cf. Notes 90 and 97 and related text above].

either single-handedly or in collaboration with others, came up with the following new proposal.

Avoiding any personal involvement, the bishop has the Bull *ad capitulum* (and perhaps that *ad episcopum* as well) displayed in the sacristy of the cathedral or in some other appropriate place. Anyone, including a notary public, is allowed to make authentic copies [of the Bull]. Then the mayor, the prefect, or the royal procurator shall be asked to forward this authentic copy to the Ministry of Justice. The Minister contacts the bishop in writing to inquire whether by that act he intends to request the temporalities. The bishop replies in the affirmative, and that he does so in order that any obstacle in the way of the free exercise of his pastoral ministry may be removed. He asks the Minister to see to it that the obstacles are removed and the temporalities granted. Finally the Minister sets in motion the process whereby the temporalities are granted, and the bishop and his signature are legally recognized.<sup>108</sup>

The new formula seemed to satisfy all requirements, so that on January 11 Don Bosco could write reassuringly to Archbishop Gastaldi, who was impatient to see the issue resolved.

I hasten to notify Your Excellency of the fact that good progress has been made in the matter under consideration. The formula accepted by the Holy See has also been approved by Vigliani and by the cabinet. Some time next week it will be put before the Council of State, hopefully also with a favorable outcome. After which, if the devil doesn't stick his finger in the pie, there will be immediate implementation. Vigliani has repeatedly told me that the presentation of the Bull to the People would suffice, provided a statement accompanies it to the effect that it was being presented for the purpose of obtaining the temporalities. [...] I ask you therefore to wait out this week and the next, after which you shall hear from me. If the present plan won't work, I will ask Cardinal Antonelli about displaying the Bull *ad clerum* in the sacristy. To date, however, he has not allowed bishops to request the *Exequatur*.<sup>109</sup>

On January 15, after a new round of talks with Minister Vigliani and Cardinal Antonelli, Don Bosco had real cause for optimism. His letter of January 16 to Archbishop Gastaldi is really upbeat.

<sup>108</sup> Berto, *Collection*, in FDB 789 B7 (transcription signed by Berto with the note that it agrees with Don Bosco's holograph).

<sup>109</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, Rome, January 11, 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 71-72 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 200-201).

Agreement in the matter under consideration has been reached. Both parties have accepted the formula. An authentic copy will be sent to Your Excellency this coming Monday together with a form letter that each bishop will address to the Minister of Justice.<sup>110</sup>

On January 19 the Congregation of the Consistory sent the protocols to the archbishop, testifying to his official appointment. A cover note by Cardinal Antonelli specified that both the documents and the bishop's letter should be addressed to Minister Vigliani. It was understood that no publicity should be given to this agreement and that no action was to be taken by the bishop before matters were finalized in Rome. Unfortunately Archbishop Gastaldi began to speak about the issue as resolved and on January 22, disregarding Don Bosco's pleas for patience, he took matters into his own hands and sent his file of documents to the Royal Procurator (not to the Minister of Justice, as instructed.)

Don Bosco learned the facts from the Minister himself who was angry with the Archbishop, as was Cardinal Antonelli. Don Bosco's disappointment is voiced in a letter of January 24 to Gastaldi.

Everything seemed to be falling into place—now this. [...] People here wanted explanations, especially when it became known that a newspaper [in Turin] published a point-by-point account of the transaction. The Council of State meeting earlier today was in a state of bewilderment, and motions were made that will be presented tomorrow. In any case, I have been told to ask Your Excellency to keep this whole business under strictest secrecy. [...] Some Members of Parliament have made inquiries at the Ministry regarding the truth of reports that have appeared in some newspapers. Clearly the devil has had a hand in this.<sup>111</sup>

### *Breakdown in the Negotiations*

On January 26, Don Bosco discussed the situation with Cardinal Antonelli, who strongly condemned Gastaldi's action. However, the breakdown in the negotiations cannot ultimately be imputed to Gastaldi's indiscretion, or to the action of a few others who had similarly taken matters into their own

<sup>110</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, Rome, January 16, 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 72 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 203-204).

<sup>111</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, Rome January 24, 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 72-73 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 211-212).

hands.<sup>112</sup> Don Bosco's activities in Rome could not escape the unwanted attention of the anticlerical press. Throughout January and February, the anticlerical newspapers went on the attack. They inveighed against a liberal government that was about to buckle under the demands of the Holy See and that was making "illegal" concessions aimed at "reconciliation!" Nor were conservative clerical newspapers, such as *La Voce della Verità* (The Voice of Truth) of Rome, less hostile. Don Bosco came in for a drubbing.<sup>113</sup>

The outcry from the anticlerical press over the government's imagined attempts at "reconciliation," or simply over "concessions" made to the Holy See, had international repercussions. On February 2, Don Bosco had a long interview with Cardinal Antonelli in which he learned that the issue of the bishops' *Exequaturs* had become entangled in international diplomacy. It had in fact even raised the hackles of Chancellor Otto von Bismarck of Germany. Father Berto reports in his chronicle:

As we were going down the stairs and out of the Vatican, Don Bosco said to me: "Do you want to know why our government no longer wishes to proceed with the matter of the bishops' *Exequaturs*? The reason is that it has received a diplomatic note from Bismarck forbidding any accommodations."<sup>114</sup>

<sup>112</sup> On January 8, Archbishop Balma of Cagliari (one of Don Bosco's "nominees") had obtained the *Exequatur*, and there had been questions asked of the government in parliament. Cardinal Antonelli had not been amused when he learned that the Bull to the People had not only been displayed in the sacristy of the Cathedral, but had been submitted to the Ministry [Motto, *La Mediazione*, 51].

<sup>113</sup> Cf. details and quotes in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 41-46. The attack on Don Bosco by Msgr. Saverio Nardi (describing him as "a partisan of compromise") came in the issue of February 1, 1874 of *La Voce della Verità*. This newspaper was the organ of an intransigent, ultramontane society established in Rome in defense of the Holy See. The article, which took even Don Bosco by surprise, drew cogent rebuttals from other more moderate Catholic newspapers. Don Bosco himself had Father Berto take down and mail a strongly worded note of protest to Msgr. Nardi [Text given in Berto, *Brevi Appunti*, 55, entry of in February 16, 1874, in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 909 B12].

<sup>114</sup> Berto, *Brevi Appunti*, 45, in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 909 A12. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck was a dominant political figure in Europe after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871. His *Kulturkampf* program led to a ruthless repression of Catholicism in Germany. His influence was especially felt in Italy after 1876, when anticlerical governments of the Left were engaged in similar ecclesiastical policies. Instances of intervention and political pressure by the Chancellor in Italian affairs are given in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 47-48.

Some time in February, in a letter to Archbishop Gastaldi sent through a trusted messenger, Don Bosco voiced the same conviction.

With the definitive agreement signed by the minister of Justice and approved by the Holy See [...], nothing, so we thought, could stand in the way. So we thought! Then I was sent for [by the Minister] and given an earful of the wrongdoings of the archbishop of Turin—that he had leaked information, and the newspapers had gotten hold of it [...], etc. But such recriminations were just a screen to hide the fact that the day before the government had received a bristling letter from [Chancellor] Bismarck calling for an end to attempts at reconciliation, especially as it concerns the bishops, etc. The negotiations have not been broken off, but they have been shelved.<sup>115</sup>

Bismarck's intervention in this instance is not separately attested, but it is not at all unlikely. The fact is that the government retreated from commitments already made. Don Bosco had further conversations with Minister Vigliani on February 11 and March 3, with Cardinal Antonelli on March 1, and with Pius IX on March 4. But by March 1874 negotiations for the bishops' temporalities had come to an end and were for all practical purposes dead.

#### *Practical Expedients Become the Norm*

Most of the bishops were still waiting for the *Exequatur* and the temporalities, without which they could not exercise their pastoral ministry. Attempts at negotiating a general formula for the bishops already appointed and for those waiting and for those to be appointed in the future had failed. Each bishop therefore had to proceed as seemed best in each individual case. Thus to Archbishop Fissore of Vercelli, who was asking for guidelines, Don Bosco replied that the Archbishop could try to display the Bull to the People (and perhaps also the Bull to the Chapter).

I am herewith enclosing a procedure by which some bishops, such as those of Susa and Aosta as I am told, have obtained their temporalities. The Holy See does not object to such procedure. At first, displaying the Bull to the Chapter had been permitted. This was later reversed, so that only the Bull to the People may be displayed. [...]<sup>116</sup>

<sup>115</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, [Rome] February 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 74 (February 8: Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 223-224).

<sup>116</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Fissore, Rome, March 9, 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 74 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 250-251).

A few days later in similar circumstances Don Bosco made the same suggestion to Archbishop Gastaldi.<sup>117</sup> The procedure suggested in these cases was the very one that Don Bosco had devised early on and that the parties had agreed to, though at the time there was disagreement as to which Bull should or could be displayed.

Throughout his Roman sojourn Don Bosco did not neglect the important business of the Salesian Society, the approval of its constitutions. This was no foregone conclusion. On the contrary it was a long drawn-out struggle centering especially on the structures for priestly and religious formation deemed insufficient as embodied in the constitutions. Against Don Bosco's efforts to retain certain features dear to him, the examiners of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars and the four Cardinals of the general congregation introduced important modifications before recommending approval. The Decree of approval was signed on April 13, 1874. Don Bosco had lost the battle of the *Exequaturs*, but he won the battle of the Salesian Society.

The next day, April 14, Don Bosco and Father Berto left Rome and were back in Turin (via Florence) on the 16th. Don Bosco met with Archbishop Gastaldi, according to Father Berto's chronicle, the afternoon of April 18. Berto reports nothing of the conversation, except that "it wasn't about the affairs of the Salesian Congregation."<sup>118</sup> The fact is that without delay the archbishop prepared his request for the *Exequatur*, which was forwarded by the Royal Procurator to Minister Vigliani together with the Bulls to the Chapter and to the Clergy. He obtained the *Exequatur* and temporalities by a decree signed by the king on May 15, 1874.

By and by the Holy See conceded. Not only could the Bull to the People be displayed in the sacristy of the cathedral or submitted outright, but other Bulls as well. One bishop after another took advantage of the concession. And although the government still claimed the right of judging the merit of each case, by the end of 1874 most bishops had obtained the *Exequatur* and temporalities. By 1876, this practice was allowed by the Holy See to become the norm "in view of circumstances."<sup>119</sup>

<sup>117</sup> Don Bosco to Archbishop Gastaldi, Rome, March 14, 1874, in Motto, *La Mediazione*, 75 (Motto, *Epistolario* IV, 253).

<sup>118</sup> Berto, *Brevi Appunti*, 111, in ASC A004: *Cronachette*, Berto, FDB 910 B9.

<sup>119</sup> Motto, *La Mediazione*, 55-57; Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 867 and 881, Note 112.



## VII. Closing Comments

The story told in the foregoing pages has shown if nothing else the considerable extent of Don Bosco's involvement in the matter of bishop's appointment and of the *Exequaturs* and temporalities (while at the same time engaged in the thousand concerns of a founder). The occasional critical exceptions taken to elements in the Salesian tradition do not detract quantitatively or qualitatively from this remarkable involvement. But as we stand back and ponder this "side activity" undertaken over a period of many years, we are tempted to ask, How did Don Bosco get involved, and Why Don Bosco?

As was noted at the beginning of this chapter, part of the answer comes from a consideration of Don Bosco the man, living and working in those historic years of change. Don Bosco was known to the Piedmontese ruling class, people like the Cavour brothers, Rattazzi, Lanza and others who were the architects of the liberal revolution and of the unification of Italy; they admired him for his humanitarian work. From 1849 on, he was also personally known to Pius IX and to his Secretary of State, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli. He was thus acceptable to both sides. Those who knew him liked and trusted him, for his personality and character had much to recommend him. His approach to people was simple, direct, sincere, unpretentious, and completely non-threatening. This might explain why he might be asked to carry messages or to sound out the opposition. On his part, his intuitive intelligence could quickly divine where possibilities lay. Then his trust in God and in the basic decency of people, no matter what their stripe, made him confident and fearless. For in some instances Don Bosco did not wait to be asked. He took the initiative or, one might say, he volunteered.

More significant perhaps was the fact that he was a man of faith and a man of the Church. He thought it his strict duty to offer his services in any matter that he regarded as vital for the Church and the good of souls. "*Da mihi animas*" (Give me souls) was the banner he had adopted at the beginning of his ministry and that guided him all his life. It was no mere symbolic device but stood for a real consecration that motivated his every action. His Christian, Catholic commitment made him totally available for anything that might be conducive to the "glory of God, the good of the Church and the salvation of souls." For this he was ready to leave everything else aside, even what was so close to his heart, the business of the Salesian Society.

In the matter of the nomination of bishops, Don Bosco would appear involved in the Church's historic confrontation with the liberal State in Italy,

but his involvement would be totally directed toward religious aims. Thus he could truthfully write to Prime Minister Lanza, "I don't engage in politics and am not involved in public affairs."

True negotiating the appointment of bishops to vacant Sees and obtaining for them the material assets or temporalities for the exercise of their pastoral ministry had political implications, but Don Bosco's aim was purely religious, the good of the people: "*Da mihi animas.*"

In pursuit of this goal he displayed extraordinary perseverance, uncommon staying power, a saint's patient endurance of pain, suffering and humiliation for the cause. The third of the nine resolutions taken at his ordination struck that very note: "I will not shrink from suffering, from striving, nor even from humiliations, whenever it is a question of saving souls."<sup>120</sup>

<sup>120</sup> F. Motto, *Memorie dal 1841 al 1884-5-6 pel Sac. Gio. Bosco a' suoi figliuoli salesiani (Testamento Spirituale)*, Piccola Biblioteca dell'ISS, 4 (Roma: LAS, 1985), 21-23 [Spiritual Testament].



## Chapter 5

# THE FOUNDING OF THE “INSTITUTE OF THE DAUGHTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS” (1862-1876)

### Summary

- I. Don Bosco’ Idea of Founding a Women’s Congregation ant Its Progress
    1. A Religious Society of the “Mothers” at the Oratory [?]
    2. Don Bosco’s Interest in Miss Benedetta Savio for a Women’s Congregation [?]
    3. Don Bosco’s Interest in Sr. Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac for a Women’s Congregation [?]
  - II. Don Bosco, Fr. Pestarino, and the New Ursulines – Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Mornese – A new Spiritual Orientation
    1. Mornese’s Daughters of Mary Immaculate
    2. Mary Mazzarello and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate
    3. Don Bosco and Fr. Pestarino: Circumstances of Their Meeting
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    5. Don Bosco and His Council: Consultation on the Founding [?]
  - III. Don Bosco Proceeds With the Founding and Drafting the Constitutions
    1. Collaboration of Mother Enrichetta Dominici Sought by Letter of April 24, 1871
    2. Pivotal Points of the Letter and Additional Comments
    3. Don Bosco (ill at Varazze) Pursues the Matter of the Founding with Fr. Pestarino
    4. Elections of the Council held January 29, 1872: Mary, Petronilla, Felicina Mazzarello and Giovanna Ferrettino
    5. Profession Ceremony of August 5, 1872 (Official Date of the Founding) with Bp Sciandra presiding. Don Bosco’s presence and puzzling behavior
  - IV. Note on Early Historical and Juridical Developementes in the Institute of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (1872-1876)
- Appendices: 1-2. Biographical Sketches of Frs. Giuseppe Frassinetti and Domenico Pestarino; 3. Key Biographical Data on Mary Mazzarello; 4. Mary Mazzarello’ Spiritual Development in Biographical Context; 5. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians Made Autonomous (1906)

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\*Treacy, Mary C., "Mother Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac and Don Bosco—An Idea Matures," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 5:1 (1994) 133-159. The first part of this article is devoted to a fairly detailed biography of Clarac. The second part discusses Don Bosco's "designs" on Clarac and his definitive option for the Mornese group.

\*Wirth, Morand, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, tr. & updated by David de Burgh (New Rochelle, NY: Don Bosco Publications, 1982) 150-161, 162-169—[Recast and updated as: *Don Bosco et la Famille Salésienne. Histoire et nouveaux défis* (Paris: Éditions Don Bosco, 2002), 199-223.]

### Introductory Note

Before recounting the story of the founding of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, based on the above listed works and on the data provided therein, a few general preliminary observations relating to its historical context seem to be in order.<sup>1</sup>

1. The historical and ecclesiastical context within which the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians appeared was, paradoxically, a period of travail and growth, of crisis and religious vitality. Professor Giacomo Martina affirms that the situation in religious institutes in Italy round about 1870 reveals a striking antinomy: persistent crises within the Institutes, coupled with a flowering of new enterprises and new foundations.<sup>2</sup>

2. The appearance of new religious institutes forced the development of new juridical procedures that previously had been either nonexistent or inad-

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Posada, "The Institute," 225-228.

<sup>2</sup> G. Martina, "La situazione degli Istituti religiosi in Italia intorno al 1870," in *Chiesa e religiosità in Italia dopo l'unità (1861-1878)*, III/1 (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 1973) 194.



equate and very slow in developing. This was especially true in Italy and particularly where institutes of women were concerned. This juridical evolution in turn promoted the expansion of religious congregations for women.

The situation of women was in a state of evolution. "On the one hand," writes Martina, "women were gradually given greater freedom of activity, especially in care work and elementary education. On the other hand, Church law in the 19th century was evolving and beginning to recognize that women's institutes, which had hitherto not been considered officially as 'religious,' possessed the essential attributes of religious life in its strict sense."

It is likely that Don Bosco was influenced by this situation when considering founding a new institute of sisters. On the one hand he was encouraged by the gradual recognition given to women in the field of education and social activity, while, on the other hand, he was conscious of the procedural requirements regulating the founding of any new institute. In actual fact he was initially somewhat reluctant about founding the Institute and even more reluctant about obtaining the approval of the Holy See once the Institute was founded. As P. Stella remarks,

One seeming anomaly in Don Bosco's life is the fact that he never asked, or even resolved to ask, Rome's approval of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. This is all the more disconcerting when we consider his general attitude and outlook. Here was a man who placed great emphasis on the person of the Pope and the papal prerogatives then being asserted by Catholics. [...] In order to safeguard the shape and structure of the Salesian Society as he had envisioned it, Don Bosco did everything he could to free it from episcopal pressures in Turin. Yet at the same time, and for very similar reasons or feelings, he avoided submitting himself to Rome insofar as the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were concerned.<sup>3</sup>

3. One should also note the diversity of the first group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians compared with the first Salesians. Nearly all of the latter grew up in the environment of Valdocco; they were boys that Don Bosco himself had educated.<sup>4</sup> The first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, on the other hand, came from a group that was already in existence, with its own spirituality and organization, namely the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Mornese.

<sup>3</sup> Stella, *DB:LW*, 227.

<sup>4</sup> *EBM IV*, 297-298.

4. A final remark relates to the sources. In this regard critical study is still in progress, though we have critical work by P. Stella, C. Romero, M.E. Posada and some others cited above.

Writings on this subject by Salesians, whilst attempting an accurate account, are more edifying than scientific. This applies to the *Biographical Memoirs* as well as to the *Cronistoria*.

### **I. Don Bosco's Idea of Founding a Women's Congregation and Its Progress**

For a description of the founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians the following titles are chosen from among those listed in the bibliography for their relevance: Cecilia Romero, *Costituzioni per l'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice (1872-1885). Testi critici* (1983); Id., "Alle origini delle Costituzioni dell'Istituto delle Figlie di Maria Ausiliatrice," (1983); Maria Ester Posada, "Alle origini di una scelta"; Id., "The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco," Pietro Stella, *Don Bosco: Life and Work*; Francis Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps (1815-1888)*; Mario Midali, *Madre Mazzarello. Il significato del titolo di Confondatrice* (1982); Mary C. Treacy, "Mother Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac and Don Bosco," Parts I and II.

It is unlikely that the idea of founding a congregation of women came to Don Bosco only a short time before April 1871, when he approached Mother Maria Enrichetta Dominici (superior general of Barolo's Sisters of St. Anne of Divine Providence) for help in drafting constitutions for the women's congregation he had in mind. These constitutions were intended for Mornese's Daughters of Mary Immaculate, an established and well organized group of religious young women, whom Don Bosco had known since 1864, and who were soon to become (in Don Bosco's plan) the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. How did he come to this decision?

#### **1. A Religious Society of the "Mothers" at the Oratory [?]**

According to Father Rua, as far back as 1856 Don Bosco (after the death of his mother on November 25, 1856), expressed the idea of having a group of religious women in residence to care for his large family (a fairly prosaic reason).<sup>5</sup> This need must have been felt with greater force by 1870 with the

<sup>5</sup> Father Rua's testimony at Don Bosco's process of beatification, *POS*, 323.

establishment of several boarding schools. But by that time Don Bosco had expanded his project to include the concept of a parallel congregation to educate young girls.

## 2. Don Bosco's Interest in Miss Benedetta Savio of Castelnuevo

Igino Tubaldo in his biography of Father Giuseppe Allamano (Father Cafasso's nephew from Castelnuevo) speaks of Benedetta Savio, her charitable work and Don Bosco's interest in her as a potential helper in the founding of a women's congregation.<sup>6</sup>

Benedetta Savio (1825-1896) was director of the kindergarten (or "maternal school") at Castelnuevo from 1857 until practically her death. Gifted with great vitality and affective love, she lived the Christian life with simplicity and total dedication to service. On the advice of her spiritual director, Father Giuseppe Cafasso, she lived as a "consecrated woman in her own house" (*monaca in casa*). She was moreover a competent teacher and gifted educator of the young. All these qualities could not but arouse Don Bosco's interest. He was a frequent visitor to his hometown.

A memoir stemming from one of Benedetta's nieces (apparently corroborated, according to Posada)<sup>7</sup> tells us that Don Bosco, "in Father Pestarino's times" (*ai tempi di Don Pestarino*—the name is badly misspelled), hence between 1862 and 1871, sent two Salesian priests to Castelnuevo to speak to Miss Savio. Their mission was to put before her Don Bosco's proposal that she become the "founder" and "superior general" of the religious congregation he was planning to establish. The mission failed due to a tantrum from the niece and consequent intervention of the niece's mother.<sup>8</sup> Obviously the pompous titles "founder" and "superior general" are read back. But it is possible that Don Bosco had formed designs on Miss Savio as his collaborator in the founding.

<sup>6</sup> I. Tubaldo, *Giuseppe Allamano. Il suo tempo, la sua opera*, I (Torino: Edizioni Missioni Consolata, 1982), 10-18.

<sup>7</sup> Posada, *Alle origini*, 160-162.

<sup>8</sup> *Memorie di Benedetta Savio* (typescript by the niece, 5). The little girl threw herself down on her knees before Benedetta, and her loud cries awakened her mother, etc. (Were the two Salesians trying to abduct Miss Savio during the night?)

### 3. Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac (1817-1887), Daughter of Charity of Saint Vincent de Paul, Founder of the Sisters of Charity of Saint Mary<sup>9</sup>

It is also possible that Don Bosco at one point looked to Sister Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac (1817-1887) for collaboration in the founding. This deserves a more extended comment, designed (if nothing else) to dispose of the idea.

#### *Sister Clarac, a Brief Biographical Sketch*

Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac was born on April 6, 1817 at Auch (Bers-Gascogne, France). In 1842 (May 12) she donned the habit of the Daughters of Charity. After a turn as a teacher, in 1848 she volunteered for the mission in Algiers, where she worked and taught in an orphanage. In 1851 she became gravely ill of a liver ailment and was forced to return to Paris for two years.

In 1853 (May 21) Clarac was assigned to Turin, to the community of the Daughters of Charity in the Borgo San Salvatio. She would live and work in Turin practically all her life. As “Servant” (Superior) of the new Mercy House in the parish of St. Maximus, with 5 other sisters, she immediately established charitable works for the poor, and an orphanage in Sardinia.

In 1862, at Don Bosco’s suggestion, Clarac purchased a building that would later become the mother house of her congregation. It was situated in the Viale del Re near the Oratory of St. Aloysius.

In 1865 Clarac’s works were transferred to the house in the *Viale del Re*. From this point on, Clarac’s own institution was gradually distinguished from those of the Daughters of Charity.

Archbishop Alessandro Riccardi di Netro when appointed to Turin in 1867 began to support and protect Clarac and her institute. Shortly thereafter the archbishop nominated the Salesians as associate chaplains of Clarac’s institution. The principal chaplain was the famed preacher Father Maximilian Bardsesono di Rigras (1838-1879).

But Archbishop Riccardi di Netro died in October 1870 (to be succeeded one year later by Archbishop Lorenzo Gastaldi).

<sup>9</sup> For a biographical sketch see G. Pettinati, “Clarac,” in *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, II (Milano: Paoline, 1975), col. 113-114 (and see below). See also Mary Treacy’s article cited above.

In April 1871 Clarac, made the object of complaints and criticism from her sisters, was ordered back to France; but she asked for a 2-months delay. She conferred with Don Bosco about leaving the Daughters of Charity, a decision that apparently Don Bosco supported, and at Don Bosco's suggestion she applied to Bishop Moreno of Ivrea, the Dean of the Piedmontese bishops. (The See of Turin was still vacant at this time.) Bishop Moreno advised her to leave the community of the Daughters of Charity at San Salvario in Turin, and join temporarily the Sisters of Charity of Mary Immaculate under the bishop's patronage.

In May 1871, she submitted her resignation and left the community of the Daughters of Charity at San Salvario in Turin with 4 other sisters. Father Marcantonio Durando, superior both of the Vincentians and of the Daughters of Charity in Turin, refrained from taking sides or from exercising pressure.

In October 1871 Bishop Lorenzo Gastaldi of Saluzzo was appointed archbishop of Turin. In line with his reform program of clergy and of the diocesan institutions, he inaugurated a policy designed to bring religious communities under his control. Here began Clarac's woes with the Archbishop. In this respect her story parallels that of Don Bosco.

Pressured by the Daughters of Charity of San Salvario, the Archbishop ordered Clarac and her sisters to lay aside the habit of the Daughters of Charity (which they were still wearing) or have their public chapel placed under interdict. On December 20, 1871 Clarac closed down the chapel rather than laying aside the habit.

In April 1872, Archbishop Gastaldi notified Clarac that she was no longer a religious of any sort. A little later he excommunicated her and gave her a public reprimand in the church of SS. Peter and Paul.

Not permitted to speak to the archbishop personally, Clarac wrote the first of many letters (between 1872 and 1875) pleading her case and begging to be allowed to receive Holy Communion and to reopen the chapel. (It is known that she received the sacraments secretly from sympathetic priests, perhaps including Salesian priests.)

Following the filing with the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of Archbishop Gastaldi's brief against her in 1873, she pleaded her case with the Congregation and with individual Cardinals, and finally with Pius IX himself. The case dragged on and was never satisfactorily closed.

In 1879, with the support of some influential people, and after modifying the habit and temporarily changing the name of her institute to "Daughters

of St. Peter,” Clarac was allowed to continue her work (though not in Turin), and she established foundations in central and southern Italy.

As in Don Bosco’s case, her trouble with the archbishop ended only with the latter’s death in 1883 and with the appointment of Cardinal Gaetano Alimonda as archbishop of Turin.

In 1885 Archbishop Card. Alimonda officially restored Clarac and her institute, to be known thenceforth as the Daughters of Charity of Saint Mary. The public chapel in the Viale del Re was reopened with a spiritual retreat directed by Father Angelo Savio, financial administrator of the Salesian Society, about to leave for the mission of Ecuador. Don Bosco awarded Sr. Clarac the certificate of Salesian Cooperator.

Sr. Clarac died peacefully on June 21, 1887 after receiving the sacraments and the blessings and delivering a spiritual testament to her sisters.

In 1948 Archbishop Card. Maurilio Fossati of Turin opened the Ordinary Process of Beatification, which reached completion in 1953. With Salesian Father Luigi Fiora as postulator of the cause, in 1981 John Paul II signed the Decree for the introduction of the cause of beatification in Rome.

Sister Clarac has now been vindicated as a legitimate continuator of the work of St. Vincent de Paul for the poor. She was also deeply imbued with the spirit of charity and devotion stemming from St. Francis de Sales. There was close spiritual and educational affinity between Don Bosco and Sister Clarac. This above all is what brought Don Bosco and Sister Clarac into close association, rather than the fact that both had incurred Archbishop Gastaldi’s displeasure.

Father Luigi Fiora, postulator of the cause, described Sister Clarac as a spiritual daughter both of St. Vincent de Paul and of Don Bosco, “the St. Vincent de Paul of the nineteenth century.” According to Father Fiora, she acknowledged Don Bosco to be, “by right the founder of her congregation” (or of her oratory?).

*Don Bosco and Sr. Clarac Collaborators in the Founding of a Women’s Congregation [?]*

Don Bosco maintained a close relationship with Sr. Clarac, and supported her work. It is possible (though perhaps not likely) that Don Bosco as late as 1870 (perhaps early 1871) looked to her for cooperation in the founding of the Salesian Sisters, a hypothesis first put forward by P. Stella.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Stella, *DB:LW*, 208-212.

About Don Bosco's support of Sister Clarac and her work there is no question. The question is about his entertaining a serious consideration and a realistic hope of her collaboration. Stella's hypothesis rests on two pieces of evidence. First, there an enigmatic word attributed to Don Bosco as spoken to Father Lemoyne in 1866.<sup>11</sup> Secondly, there is the fact that Don Bosco helped Sister Clarac in her vocational decision and encouraged her to seek Bishop Luigi Moreno's advice in the matter. Eventually this led to her separation from the community of the Daughters of Charity.

F. Desramaut believes (as does Posada) that while Don Bosco could have entertained the idea, and would perhaps have liked to have her as a collaborator, he could not have seriously believed that she would be available. In the first place, in 1870 she was still a Daughter of Charity, and the director of an important charitable institution in Turin (quite similar to Don Bosco's in spirit). Secondly, even after she separated from her religious community to found her own, she never for a moment wavered in her "vow" and "habit" as a Daughter of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. Posada writes:

She was purposeful, strong-willed and intransigent in her views, and her personality was completely pervaded by the spirit of St. Vincent de Paul, a commitment that she would never betray. Then she presided over a whole cluster of works for the poor, some of which were foreign to Don Bosco's specific apostolate." These and other factors make it doubtful that Don Bosco would seriously have considered or hoped for her collaboration.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps, rather than collaborators in the founding, Don Bosco saw in women like Miss Savio, Sister Marie-Louise-Angélique Clarac, Mother Maria Enrichetta Dominici (of Barolo's Sisters of St. Anne of Divine Providence), and others, examples of a new spirit of feminine initiative that he wished his prospective parallel women's congregation to possess. This feminine initiative (anachronistically, "Feminism"), still tentative at the time, implied a will and

<sup>11</sup> *EBM* VIII, 187. Lemoyne on June 24, 1866 asked Don Bosco whether he was thinking of founding a sister congregation of nuns "affiliated to our Society." Don Bosco replied, "Yes, this too will be done! We shall have nuns, but not yet." Don Bosco's biographers understand this remark of his to mean that (in 1866) he had already formed plans around the Mornese group. Stella, however, is not so sure, given the close association of Don Bosco (and his Salesians) with Sr. Clarac, and the fact that Clarac's work was closest to that of Don Bosco [*DB:LC&W*, 210-211].

<sup>12</sup> Posada, *Alle origini*, 157. See discussion in Treacy, "Mother... Clarac [...]" in *Journal of Salesian Studies* 5:1 (1994), 152ff.



charism to associate for the purpose of religious life and the apostolate, as well as a solid spirit of independence with respect to prevailing male religious dominance. Sister Clarac was certainly such a woman. Such were also the women living the consecrated life in their own homes, the “New Ursulines” (“*monache in casa*”), like Miss Savio and the young women of Mornese, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.



18 – Mornese’s skyline seen from *cascina* Valponasca

The foregoing considerations on Don Bosco’s developing idea of founding a women’s congregation leads us to Mornese and the relationship that gradually developed between Don Bosco and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, and Father Pestarino, their spiritual director. This relationship entailed a mutual transformation. First, the group of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, which became the founding nucleus of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, appears as an evolving group that was genuinely modified as a result of Don Bosco’s intervention and their contact with him. Secondly, Don Bosco himself, who was going through a process of searching and decision-making regarding the founding of a women’s congregation, was also caught up in the dynamics of transformation, as he sought to preserve

continuity in the group while, at the same time, steering the group toward a new form of Salesians religious life and work.

According to Posada,<sup>13</sup> this transformation may be described as occurring in three successive stages differing in length and character: 1) The new spiritual orientation within the group of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate resulting from contact with Don Bosco (1860-1870); 2) The truly historic choice that determined the founding of the Institute (1871-1872); and 3) The growing sense of belonging that matured within the group as a result of their link with Don Bosco (1872-1876).

This handy schema will guide us in the presentation that follows.

## **II. Don Bosco, Fr Pestarino and Mornese's Daughters of Mary Immaculate – Successive Contacts and Progress Toward a New Spiritual Orientation (1860-1870)**

### **1. Mornese's Daughters of Mary Immaculate**

The Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate was started in the parish of Mornese in about 1851 through the initiative of Angela Maccagno (1832-1891). Father Domenico Pestarino, by then established in Mornese, gave the group every encouragement and became its spiritual guide. The Genoese theologian, Giuseppe Frassinetti, at the request of Father Pestarino, compiled a Rule for them, based on an outline by Angela Maccagno.<sup>14</sup> This pious association called itself "(New Ursulines) Daughters of Mary Immaculate," and placed itself under the patronage of St. Ursula and St. Angela Merici.<sup>15</sup>

The group of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate lived as deeply committed Christians. They dedicated themselves to different works in the parish and were given regular spiritual guidance by Father Domenico Pestarino in a spiritual climate that was greatly influenced by Father Giuseppe Frassinetti.

<sup>13</sup> Posada, "The Institute," 230-231.

<sup>14</sup> For biographical sketches of Frs. Giuseppe Frassinetti and Dominic Pestarino see Appendices 1 and 2 below.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. G. Frassinetti, *Opere edite ed inedite. Opere Ascetiche II* (Roma: Postulazione Generale dei Figli di Santa Maria Immacolata, 1909), 108ff.; M.E. Posada, *Giuseppe Frassinetti e Maria Domenica Mazzarello. Rapporto storico-spirituale* (Roma: LAS, 1986). The date 1851 given by Posada for the founding of the Pious Union ["The *Institute*, 227, Footnote 8] does not seem compatible with the biographical data that at its founding in 1854 Mary Mazzarello (born in 1837) was the youngest of the *original* five members (17 years of age).

The aim of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate was to ensure “the sanctification of its members and to assist in the salvation of others by works of corporal mercy [...], especially by helping poor sick women in the locality.”<sup>16</sup>

The group first came into contact with Don Bosco through the initiative of Father Pestarino. The sources do not make clear just how the group became involved with Don Bosco. Some versions present Father Pestarino as “offering” the group to Don Bosco, without even asking them first. In other versions, it is Don Bosco himself who, after hearing Father Pestarino speak, “made the move” because he was interested in the group.

## 2. Mary Mazzarello and The Daughters of Mary Immaculate

According to the biographical data in our possession, when the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate was founded at Mornese, it included five members of whom Mary Mazzarello, at the age of 17, was the youngest. The date of the founding therefore is 1854.<sup>17</sup> Besides mutual spiritual support and personal sanctification, the purpose of the Pious Union was the work of charity, especially on behalf of the poor and the most needy. Mary was among the most dedicated.

In 1860 (Aug 15) Mary Mazzarello became gravely ill with typhus, caught while attending people stricken with the disease in the typhus epidemic at *Mazzarelli di Qua*. She recovered, but remained permanently debilitated. This illness was for her a serious trial and crisis, but by her acceptance and surrender to God it was a moment of conversion and vocation.

No longer capable of labor in the fields, in 1861 Mary began to train as a seamstress, and in 1862 with her close friend, Petronilla Mazzarello, she opened a sewing workshop for girls in Mornese.

Through the 1860s Mary Mazzarello with Petronilla Mazzarello (and some other young women of the Group) engaged in works of charity, such as small oratory activity and visiting the sick, while engaged in the sewing workshop for young girls.

<sup>16</sup> *Regola della Pia Unione delle Figlie di S. Maria Immacolata* (1885), I, 1; III, 37, in Posada, “The Institute”, 228.

<sup>17</sup> For detailed biographical Data on Mary Mazzarello see Appendix III below. This list contains also coincidental data relating to Don Bosco’s contacts with Fr. Pestarino, Mornese and the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.



19 – House in which St. Mary Dominica Mazzarello was born on May 9, 1837

The meeting between Don Bosco and Father Pestarino (see below), the latter's subsequent visit to the Oratory and his profession as a Salesian (probably in 1864), alerted Don Bosco to the existence in Mornese of the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate. Don Bosco, for the first time in late 1864 and repeatedly through the 1860s, had occasion to visit Mornese and the Mary Immaculate group. Having seen Don Bosco in 1864 and having heard much about him from Father Pestarino, Mary Mazzarello was completely enthralled.

In October 1867 Mary Mazzarello definitively left her family and, together with some of her companions, moved to the House of Mary Immaculate (*Casa dell'Immacolata*), a house owned by Father Pestarino and located near the parish church. The small group gradually separated themselves from the “New Ursulines,” who under the leadership of Angela Maccagno continued to live with their own families. The separation became definitive by 1869. The group living at Mary Immaculate House under Mary Mazzarello's leadership

retained the name, Daughters of Mary Immaculate, though they were simply referred to as *Figlie* (Daughters or Young Women). They led the common life, a life of poverty and privation, yet fervent and joyous, driven by Mary's courage and enthusiasm.<sup>18</sup> The group engaged in charitable activity in behalf of local girls and cared for a few little orphans or boarders.<sup>19</sup> It is to them that in 1869 Don Bosco sent a simple "rule of life" (*orario-programma*—not a Rule in the strict sense, nor a constitutional text (see below).

### 3. Don Bosco and Father Domenico Pestarino—Circumstances of their Meeting

The circumstances under which Don Bosco and Father Pestarino first met are not well attested, for the sources do not agree about the date of the meeting or about where it occurred; nor do the accounts agree even about the substance of the exchange. All versions do, however, agree about two important elements: Father Pestarino's enthusiasm about the personality and work of Don Bosco, and Don Bosco's interest in the group of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate that Father Pestarino was directing.

With respect to the time, a *Memoir of Cardinal Giovanni Cagliero* in the General Archives of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (AGFMA), states that this meeting (and subsequent contacts) took place in 1860, 1861, 1862 and 1864, and that Father Pestarino "filled with respect for [Don Bosco's] virtues, conceived the desire to come to Turin."<sup>20</sup> The *Cronistoria* and the biography of St. Mary Mazzarello by Ferdinando Maccono rely upon the testimony of Father Giuseppe Campi, a Salesian priest from Mornese, according to which the encounter is said to have occurred "around 1862."<sup>21</sup> The author of the *Cronistoria*, Mother Clelia Genghini, Secretary General of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, suggests, on the basis of her own research, that possible dates for the meeting might be August, September or October 1862.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> See the testimony of Felicina Mazzarello (Mary's younger sister) quoted in *EBM* X, 261f.

<sup>19</sup> Posada, *Alle origini*, 164.

<sup>20</sup> *Memoria del Cardinale Giovanni Cagliero*, 15 febbraio 1922, in AGFMA.

<sup>21</sup> *Testimonianza di D. Giuseppe Campi*, in AGFMA; *Cronistoria* I, 111; F. Maccono, *S. Maria Domenica Mazzarello [...] I* (Torino: Istituto FMA, 1960) 100.

<sup>22</sup> *Cronistoria* I, 111-114.



With respect to the place, Cardinal Cagliero in his above-mentioned *Memoir* writes: "I recall that Father Pestarino told me that he had known Don Bosco in Genoa, when they met in the home of Father Frassinetti, the parish priest of St. Sabina." Father Giuseppe Campi, on the other hand, affirms that the two met on a train, when both happened to be travelling from Acqui to Alessandria. This is the version accepted by the *Cronistoria* and by Father Maccono in his biography of Mary Mazzarello.

According to some testimonies, Don Bosco was at first rather reluctant to found a women's congregation, or at least uneasy with the idea; but others point out that this "providential" encounter aroused in Don Bosco the idea of a new foundation. Posada thinks that in this encounter (which she dates with probability in the summer of 1862) Don Bosco found the definitive way towards the realization of a project that had been maturing in his mind for a long time.<sup>23</sup>

From that point on (the encounter in 1862), a clearer and more reliable picture of the actual events is obtained from the sources.

#### **4. Don Bosco and Mornese—Contacts and Influence<sup>24</sup>**

The group of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, through the mediation of Father Pestarino, became gradually more closely involved with Don Bosco. Don Bosco's influence was manifested in three ways:

(1) Through his own personality, which aroused admiration, respect and veneration on account of his reputation for holiness.

(2) Through his work as an educator, which had a telling effect not only on the Daughters but also on the whole population of Mornese, especially when the Saint first visited the village in 1864 with over 60 boys, band, etc., and stayed for four days.<sup>25</sup> The Daughters of Mary Immaculate were particularly involved in the preparations for this visit and, later, in the proposal that Don Bosco made to all the villagers, that a school for boys would be started at Mornese. The young women of the group even helped with the construction work on the building.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Posada, *Alle origini*, 161-169.

<sup>24</sup> For Don Bosco visits to Mornese see Appendix 3 below.

<sup>25</sup> *Racconto-memoria della fabbrica di Borgoglio* (attributed to Father Pestarino) in *ASC* C609, 1, 5, f. 4.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* ff. 2ff.; *Cronistoria* I, 147-154.

(3) Through a special project that he gradually unfolded in the course of his visits to Mornese during the next few years. For example, in 1867 Don Bosco visited Mornese on several occasions.<sup>27</sup>

The relationship between Don Bosco, Father Pestarino, the Daughters and Mornese developed and deepened through mid- and late 1860s. A number of letters from Don Bosco to Father Pestarino testify to this: letters of February 1865; October 4, 1867; December 3, 1867; December 25, 1867; March 8, (?); (January) 28, 1868; February 23, 1868; October 26, 1868; May 2, 1870; July 10, 1870.<sup>28</sup> These important documents show Don Bosco's growing interest and involvement.

Around this time (possibly in April 1869), Don Bosco proposed a program of spiritual life to the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, which, according to the *Cronistoria*, was a "daily program (*Orario-programma*)," a kind of Rule of life. It was a small notebook containing a timetable and a set of guidelines to govern the Daughters' daily life. This notebook has since been lost, but its contents were *later* summarized by [Mother] Petronilla Mazzarello: (1) Strive to live habitually in the presence of God; (2) Make use of frequent short prayers; (3) Be sweet, patient, amiable in all your actions; (4) Watch over the girls attentively; keep them always occupied; help them to develop a simple, sincere and spontaneous piety.<sup>29</sup>

That it was a "rule of life" in the strict sense is out of the question. C. Romero writes: "Without wishing to enter into the question of the existence and dating of this *Rule*, it seems possible to affirm that we are *not* dealing here with a text of norms governing the religious life of a community."<sup>30</sup>

However, the way in which the Daughters of Mary Immaculate were effectively, even if indirectly, drawn into the orbit of Don Bosco during these ten years of gradual change and transformation, was a genuinely spiritual process. It was the expression of a common interior disposition that was manifested through the members' admiration for Don Bosco and his work, and through their willingness to be guided by him. For his part, Don Bosco showed interest in the group and, at the same time, as his contacts with its members enabled him to form a better knowledge of their spirituality and apostolic work, he was weighing up possibilities for the future.

<sup>27</sup> *Cronistoria* I, 204-239; also Appendix 3 below.

<sup>28</sup> ASC A173: *Lettere autografe*; in Motto, *Epistolario* II, 104, 413, 440, 453-4, 464-5, 478, 491-2, 500-1, 605-6; III, 205, 224.

<sup>29</sup> *Cronistoria* I, 222-224.

<sup>30</sup> Romero, *Alle origini delle Costituzioni*, 32.



Father Pestarino's autograph *Memoir*, which begins its account of the founding with the year 1871, confirms Don Bosco decision to found a congregation for the Christian education of poor girls, and it was a decision *for Mornese*. Father Pestarino writes in the third person:

In 1871 the reverend priest, Don Bosco, was explaining to Father Domenico Pestarino [...] his desire to do something about the Christian education of poor girls, and he said that Mornese would be the most suitable place [...] since there had already existed for several years the Union of young women under the title of Mary Immaculate and of New Ursulines.<sup>31</sup>

In January 1871 Father Pestarino, attending the annual Conferences of St. Francis de Sales at the Oratory, reported on the progress made in Mornese and on the school that was being built, and Don Bosco discussed his "vast plans" with him. Back in Mornese, on March 31 Fr. Pestarino bought the Carante house (in the high western district of the town) to obtain more property for the boarding school.<sup>32</sup> (This house would serve as a temporary residence for the Sisters before they moved into the school.) It seems that Don Bosco by this time (early 1871) had definitely settled on Mornese as the venue for the implementation of his plan.

## 5. Don Bosco Consults with His Council

In the *Biographical Memoirs* Amadei (without indicating the source) reports that on April 24, 1871, Don Bosco consulted with his council regarding the founding, and left them time to discern. After a month, on May 24 (Feast of Mary Help of Christians) the council declared its support. Stella accepts the report.<sup>33</sup>

Desramaut (following Posada) has doubts about the matter. The information was not gotten from minutes of the council meetings since none exist for 1871, but probably from Maccono's biography of Mary Mazzarello. Maccono on his part indicates that his source was "an unpublished memoir preserved in the central archive of the FMA." Posada states that such written material on the origins of the Institute is of later date, the earliest dating from about 1887, and is based on oral narratives.

<sup>31</sup> D. Pestarino, *Memoria autografa*, Manuscript A, in *AGFMA*.

<sup>32</sup> *IBM* X, 593; *EBM* X, 260.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. *EBM* X, 261, 263 and in greater details *IBM* X, 594, 596-7; Stella, *DB:JW*, 207.

It is more than likely that Don Bosco told his Council. Father Paul Albera later testified that there was a consultation, though he dates it in 1870 [!]. Everything considered, it would appear that the meeting of the council on April 24, 1871, as given in the *Biographical Memoirs*, was an “inference” that had found expression in the tradition of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

However that may have been, we may take it as certain that by April 1871 Don Bosco had reached a decision.

### III. Don Bosco Proceeds With the Founding and Plans the Constitutions (April 1871)

#### 1. Collaboration of Mother Enrichetta Dominici Sought

With the date of April 24, 1871, the beginning of the month of Mary Help of Christians, Don Bosco sent an annotated copy of the Salesian constitutions to Mother Enrichetta Dominici, superior general of the Sisters of St. Anne of Divine Providence (founded by Marquis and Marchioness Barolo). In a cover letter (to be discussed below) he asked her to draft constitutions for his new women’s congregation on the basis of the Salesian Constitutions. This action marked the end of the period of discernment—a process that, with the mediation of Father Domenico Pestarino, resulted in Don Bosco’s decision for Mornese’s Daughters of Mary Immaculate—and for Mary Mazzarello, who had meanwhile risen to a position of spiritual leadership in the group and would shortly be the spiritual leader of the new Congregation.

In seeking the collaboration of Mother Enrichetta Dominici, Don Bosco wrote:

4/24/71

Dear Reverend Mother,

I am entrusting into your hands the Rule (*regolamento*) of our [Salesian] congregation. Please be good enough to read it and see if it can be adapted to an institute of religious women, as I have already had the honor of explaining to you in person.

You should begin with [Chapter] No. 3, Purpose of this institution, Daughters of Mary Immaculate (*Scopo di questa istituzione, Figlie dell’Immacolata*). Then [feel free] to delete or add anything that you in your wisdom think appropriate to the founding of an institute whose daughters would be true religious in the eyes of the Church, but each of them also a free citizen in the eyes of civil society.

I would be only too happy to use such chapters or articles of the Rules of [the Congregation of] St. Anne as can be adapted.

When you think it advisable for us to get together for a talk, you can let me know through one of our seminarians or messengers who have often occasion to come by your place. This is an added annoyance [for you], surely, but one, I think, that will turn out for the greater glory of God. If we manage to win some souls, it will be mostly your doing.

God bless you and your religious family. I commend these pupils of mine and myself to the charity of your holy prayers.

Your grateful and devoted servant,

Father Gio. Bosco<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Pivotal Points and Additional Comments

From this letter it emerges that by April 4, 1871, Don Bosco had reached certain decisions: (1) He was going to found a women's religious congregation; (2) It would have the same characteristics as the Salesian Society: true religious in the Church and completely free citizens in civil society; (3) The Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Mornese would form the new society; (4) The new congregation would be patterned after the Salesian Society.

Besides indicating the juridical position of the new Institute after the pattern of the Salesian Society, the letter also provides an insight into the origin of the first rule of life of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It is interesting that Don Bosco had recourse to a woman in working out the rough draft of the Rule, and to that end chose the Superior of a religious institute dedicated to the education of working-class girls.

Mother Maria Enrichetta Dominici, whether directly or through her secretary, Sister Francesca Garelli, adapted the Salesian constitutions for a women's congregation, and produced a draft that Don Bosco sent to Father Pestarino for review and for comparison with the regulations of the Mary Immaculate group. Sister Garelli's good copy of this first draft, referred to as *Abbozzato*

<sup>34</sup> Don Bosco to Mother Enrichetta Dominici, April 24, 1871, in Motto, *Epistolario* III, 325; also transcribed from Ms. by Stella, *DB:LW*, 207, note 3. Mother Enrichetta Dominici (1829-1894) was born at Carmagnola Borgo Salsasio, near Turin. She entered the Institute founded by the Marchioness of Barolo in Turin, the Sisters of St. Anne of Providence, who were devoted to the education of working-class girls. She was Superior General for 32 years. Don Bosco had reason to trust her spiritual wisdom and administrative ability. She was beatified in 1978.

("Draft A") has been lost, but the text was copied by one of the Daughters under Father Pestarino's dictation and backdated to April 24, 1871.<sup>35</sup>

With regard to the date of this draft Desramaut writes:

The manuscript, Draft A, of the constitutions of the Institute dated January 29, 1872 seems to have been the text sent by Don Bosco to Father Pestarino and in all likelihood the first text to appear in use. [...] Thus it is certain that Don Bosco's option was definitive by January 1872, a decision to which he had most likely already committed himself in April 1871.<sup>36</sup>

Be that as it may, a comparison between this text, the Salesian Constitutions and the Constitutions of the Congregation of St. Anne shows that dependence on Don Bosco's text is clear. For example, it is likely that Don Bosco had already specified the "purpose" of the new society, for he sent Mother Dominici a hand-written Italian text (probably that of 1863-64), asking her to start with Chapter 3, *Scopo di questa istituzione, Figlie dell'Immacolata* (Purpose of this society, Daughters of Mary Immaculate).<sup>37</sup> In this first draft, Article 1 on the Purpose of the Institute clearly parallels (with appropriate adaptations) Article 1 of the Purpose of the Salesian Society:

It is the purpose of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, or of Mary Help of Christians, not only to attend to their own perfection, but also to contribute to the salvation of their neighbor by imparting a moral and religious education to girls of the working class (*fanciulle del popolo*).<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> This is the date on which, according to the *Biographical Memoirs*, Don Bosco committed himself before his council to founding a women's congregation.

<sup>36</sup> Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 810.

<sup>37</sup> Don Bosco asked Mother Dominici to start with chapter 3, on the Purpose of the Society. Since it was an Italian language Ms. text, it had to be the text of 1864 (*Gb*) or an earlier one. Texts produced after 1864 would have been in Latin and printed.

<sup>38</sup> Romero, *Costituzioni*, 59; Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 810. "Help of Christians as the name of the Institute appears here for the first time. As discussed in an earlier Chapter (Ch. 3, above), the title "Mary Help of Christians" acquired religious and political significance in the decade of the unification of Italy (1860s and early 1870s), even as the title "Mary Immaculate" had, during the preceding decade of the liberal revolution. The great church Don Bosco built in the 'sixties stood as a monument to the Help of Christians. The Daughters of Mary Immaculate became a second and living monument as the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

But there are some other adaptations from the Rule of the Congregation of St. Anne that are not really "Salesian." For example, while Articles 1 and 2 of the chapter on Purpose specified the education of girls of the working class (*fanciulle del popolo*), and of young girls from poor villages and hamlets (*giovanette dei villaggi e paesi poveri*) respectively to be the purpose of the Institute, Article 3 dealt with a higher class of girls. It read:

3° They may, however, admit to their houses girls of middle class (*di mediocre condizione*); but they shall never provide for them instruction in such of the sciences and the arts as are appropriate to the education of the daughters of noble and rich families. All their care shall be to train them in piety and in all that is apt to make them into good Christian women and good mothers to their family.<sup>39</sup>

This article is from the constitutions of the Sisters of St. Anne, and reflects the class-bound and sexist mentality prevalent in the nineteenth century. That is the negative aspect of it. But if that particular mentality could be transcended (as eventually it was), that would have widened the scope of the Institute's educational activity.

We do not know whether Don Bosco read and accepted the article as it stood in the earliest draft. Don Bosco would not have been interested in taking a position on nascent Feminism, or in whether or not a young woman should have equal educational opportunities. His whole concern was that the pupil (boy or girl) should turn out to be a good Christian and a good citizen, able to earn a livelihood and take his/her place in society. Nonetheless, the article was modified somewhat in subsequent drafts and re-written in the draft of 1885.

Over the years 1871-1878 seven drafts of the constitutions were produced. These notebooks contain marginal notes and comments in Don Bosco's and in Father Pestarino's hands. The draft of 1875 is noteworthy for the revisions that Don Bosco introduced while attending the celebrations in honor of St. Paul of the Cross, in the town of Ovada, intending to present the manuscript to the Bishop of Acqui for approval. The Constitutions of the Institute were first printed in 1878.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Romero, *Costituzioni*, 43, where Romero gives the St. Anne and the FMA articles side by side.

<sup>40</sup> For a study and detailed comparison of the constitutional text in its development see Romero, *Costituzioni* and Amadei's analysis in *IBM X*, 600-608 (mostly curtailed in *EBM*).

### 3. Don Bosco (Ill at Varazze) Pursues the Matter of the Founding (1871-72)

Meanwhile toward the end of June 1871 Don Bosco journeyed to Rome to attend the celebration of Pius IX's silver jubilee as pope (1846-1871). In August 1871 he was involved in mediating the appointment of bishops to vacant sees (see preceding Chapter 4). In late 1871 Don Bosco took part in the reception of the newly appointed archbishop of Turin, Bishop Lorenzo Gastaldi, during which he felt ill. Feeling somewhat better, but not without misgivings, Don Bosco left Turin to visit the Salesians in Liguria. There he fell seriously ill and was put to bed in the recently founded Salesian house at Varazze. The "Varazze illness" turned out to be long and serious, though perhaps not life-threatening (December 1871 - February 1872).<sup>41</sup>

On January 6-7, 1872, when Don Bosco, though improved, was still keeping to his bed, a group of men from Mornese visited him to pay their respects and to offer good wishes and gifts of produce. Father Pestarino had preceded them on January 2,<sup>42</sup> and in the course of this visit Don Bosco discussed with him the matter of the founding. Father Pestarino in his *Memoir* relates the exchange (in the third person):

On one occasion, when Father Pestarino found himself alone by the sick bed, Don Bosco asked him about how matters stood in Mornese, and whether there was anyone [among the young women] who might be suitable for the purpose (*scopo*) [of the founding]. He also wanted to know whether the membership of the group had reached a certain number and whether they were spiritually well disposed. Father Pestarino assured him that he could vouch for their readiness to obey and to make any sacrifice that the good of their soul and the service of their neighbor might demand. "If that's the case," Don Bosco replied, "we might proceed with what we discussed this past summer [June-August 1871] in Turin. When you're back in Mornese, if you think it's the right thing to do, call them together and urge them to set up a council by ballot—to elect a Superior, Assistants, etc., in accordance with the rules that have been sketched out for them. Also ask to the meeting the [other] young women from the village who belong to the association (*congregazione*) of Mary Immaculate."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Cf. EBM X, 122-156; Desramaut, *Don Bosco en son temps*, 821-824 ("Was Don Bosco's life really in danger?").

<sup>42</sup> IBM X, 273; EBM X, 142.

<sup>43</sup> *Memoria di don Domenico Pestarino*, as edited by Romero, *Costituzioni*, 50.

The tone of this passage of Father Pestarino's *Memoir* seems to indicate that the members of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate were faced with a difficult choice. Now that they were in close contact with Don Bosco, they had to decide whether they wanted to make the kind of life commitment that acceptance of his proposal of "religious life" demanded. One section of the New Ursuline Daughters of Mary Immaculate (under Angela Maccagno's leadership) openly refused to become "religious," having a clear awareness of the radical change in their way of life that this would entail. Others readily agreed to the change, seeming to be merely carrying out a choice that they had already pondered interiorly. The small group that lived in community with Mary Mazzarello in the House of Mary Immaculate were ready and willing. Yet others joined in later, showing that they too had an inkling of the change that was involved.<sup>44</sup>

The passage also shows that Don Bosco would have liked to include in the new society also those young women who, led by Angela Maccagno, had opted to live at home (as New Ursulines).<sup>45</sup> It also indicates that the text of the constitutions had already reached a fairly advanced stage, as the mention of council members would imply.

Before Father Pestarino left Don Bosco's bedside, the question of habit, its color and style, was raised. It should be noted that the early draft of the constitutions in speaking of the habit did not specify color and style but left it for a later decision. Don Bosco's preference was for something similar to what middle-class women wore at the time: brown dress, small cape, long sleeves with a narrow trim of black velvet at the cuff, and a light blue kerchief for church and street wear. Father Pestarino had brought such a dress tailored by Mary Mazzarello, and Don Bosco had Brother Enria (his sick-room attendant) model it. They had a good laugh, but no decision was made. For a number of years, because of their poverty, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians had no common dress. Only in 1875 attention was given to a common religious habit, but its design and style went through several transformations until a final alteration was made for the clothing ceremony of August 1876.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> *Cronistoria* I, 272-274.

<sup>45</sup> It is also significant that in 1872 Angela Maccagno made an attempt to unite, under Don Bosco's direction, the New Ursulines living at home to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and wrote a set of regulations to the effect [Romero, *Costituzioni*, 26].

<sup>46</sup> *IBM* X, 609-610; XI, 361, 365; XII, 286; *EBM* X, 269-270; XI, 336-337; XII, 205.



#### 4. The Elections of January 29, 1872

Pursuant to the above-quoted conversation with Don Bosco (still ill at Varazze) and following Don Bosco's advice, Father Pestarino back at Mornese on the feast of St. Francis de Sales held the elections in accordance with Chapter 3 of *Draft A* of the constitutions. Father Pestarino recorded the event in his *Memoir*. Before the crucifix placed on a table between lighted candles the 27 young women present, after reciting the *Veni Creator*, cast their votes. Father Pestarino and Angela Maccagno read the ballots: Mary [Mazzarello] obtained an absolute majority of 21 votes on the first ballot, Petronilla [Mazzarello] 3, Felicina [Mazzarello] 2 and Giovannina [Ferrettino] 1. Father Pestarino continues:

On hearing the tally, Mary Mazzarello stood up and asked to be dispensed. She said she was grateful to all [her companions], but she did not feel she could carry such a burden. Some of the girls told her that they had voted for her, and therefore she must accept; otherwise the others would want to bow out too. But she persisted; she did not feel capable and she would refuse unless forced to accept under obedience. After some further remarks, the Director [Father Pestarino] added that he would not decide the matter himself, but would wait for Don Bosco's to give his opinion. Mary Mazzarello then suggested that they leave it up to Don Bosco to choose the first superior, and that would satisfy everybody. They all approved of the suggestion, but they told her that in the meantime she would have to be first Assistant with the title of Vicar in accordance with the Rules.

The group then proceeded to the election of the second Assistant. Petronilla [Mazzarello] was elected with 19 votes. The two [Mary and Petronilla] stood aside, and the group named Felicina [Mazzarello] director of novices, Giovanna [Ferrettino] financial administrator, and the school mistress [Angela] Maccagno Vicar or assistant-superior for those who lived at home in the village.<sup>47</sup>

Don Bosco's preponderant role in the founding (which has sometimes erroneously been attributed to Father Pestarino) is evident not only in the elaboration of the constitutions, but also in the formation of the first general council of the Institute.

<sup>47</sup> *Memoria di don Pestarino*, as edited in Romero, *Costituzioni*, 50.

## 5. Profession Ceremony of August 5, 1872—Official Date of the Founding

The elections took place, while Don Bosco was beginning his convalescence at Varazze. He returned to Turin on February 16, and Father Pestarino was on hand to make a report to Don Bosco and to the directors who were assembled on the occasion of the Conferences of St. Francis de Sales.

Between February and August, probably in May (1872), the new community at Mornese moved in stages (via the Carante house) to the school (*collegio*) that Father Pestarino had built in the section of the town called Borgoalto to serve as a boarding school for boys.<sup>48</sup> The *collegio* thus became the motherhouse of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and at the same time a school for girls, not without a protest from the citizenry.

We now come to the eventful day of the profession, August 5, 1872. Speaking of the event, Posada states that the Institute received its historical-ecclesial seal from Bishop Giuseppe Maria Sciandra (successor to Bishop Contratto of Acqui) while Don Bosco stamped the historical-Salesian seal on it.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, Don Bosco's attitude on this occasion is puzzling.

Bishop Sciandra had been ill and was at the time convalescing at Mornese where Father Pestarino had prepared quarters for him at the motherhouse (*collegio*). Father Pestarino, urged by priest-friends, took advantage of the bishop's presence to set up a spiritual retreat that was to culminate, with episcopal pomp and circumstance, in the taking of the habit and the profession of the new Sisters.<sup>50</sup> Don Bosco certainly gave his consent, but everyone was disappointed when he said that he would not attend. When the bishop heard of this, he demanded that Don Bosco should be present, and had Father Pestarino write to Don Bosco in those terms. Don Bosco replied that he had not yet fully recovered from his illness, that he had a spiritual retreat going, that the bishop was more than enough for the ceremony, and that Father Pestarino had all the competence that was needed. Since Don Bosco could not be moved by letters, Bishop Sciandra sent his own secretary to Turin with orders to get Don Bosco down to Mornese the next day. Don Bosco relented and arrived at Mornese the evening of August 4.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> For the date and the circumstances of the move see *IBM X*, 612-614 and *EBM X*, 271-273.

<sup>49</sup> Posada, "The Institute," in *DB's Place in History*, 233.

<sup>50</sup> The biographies speak of "taking the habit," but this should be read and understood in the light of what was said above regarding the habit.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. *Cronistoria*, vol. I, 297 and footnote on pp. 354-365. The facts are given as related

Don Bosco took part in the solemn ceremony of the “taking of the habit” and of profession on August 5, feast of Our Lady of the Snow, and addressed a few words to the new religious. Immediately afterwards he left with some haste, omitting even to sign the procedural report.<sup>52</sup>

How explain Don Bosco’s puzzling *modus agendi* on this occasion? Perhaps Don Bosco resented having to defer to the bishop in a matter that rightly pertained to him as the Superior General of the Institute, according to the constitutions (Art. 1 of the chapter on the General Organization of the Institute [*Sistema generale dell’Istituto*]).<sup>53</sup> He regarded the Institute as part of the Salesian Society (at least as an appendix). This he clearly stated in 1874 in his report to the SCBR, when seeking the definitive approval of the Salesian constitutions: “As an appendix and dependent on the Salesian Congregation, the House of Mary Help of Christians founded with the approval of the ecclesiastical authority in the diocese of Acqui [...]” He made the same statement in his “triennial report” to the Holy See in 1879. And this is also the reason why he never sought the separate approval of the Holy See for the Institute, and was satisfied with the diocesan approval of 1876. Therefore, just as he had received the vows of his Salesians since 1862, he felt he should receive those of a community over which he presided as superior general.

Bishop Sciandra always maintained good relations both with Don Bosco and with the two groups at Mornese. He also resolved the question of the young women guided by Angela Maccagno whom Don Bosco had sought to “bring into the fold,” but who wanted instead to retain their secular status. The bishop made them *officially* New Ursulines.<sup>54</sup>

#### IV. Note on the Early Historical and Juridical Developments of the Institute (1872-1876)

The first community of the Daughters seems to have lived and worked at Mornese in a kind of isolation, although the school there prospered; the Sisters seem not to have been fully aware of their new status as an Institute, and of what that implied. As Posada points out, however:

here. The FMA tradition argues only about the hour of Don Bosco’s arrival (7 or 9 or 11 PM).

<sup>52</sup> Capetti, *Cronistoria*, vol. I, 296-306; Posada, “The Institute,” in *DB’s Place in History*, 233.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Romero, *Costituzioni*, 212.

<sup>54</sup> Correspondence on the subject in Romero, *Costituzioni*, 83-84.

Certain events that followed hard on the heels of the new foundation show that the members became progressively more conscious that they belonged to a juridically constituted Institute, and this, in turn, influenced the relationship that existed between the primitive community and their founder.<sup>55</sup>

This institutional progress may be briefly summarized:

(1) By Decree of August 19, 1873 Bishop Sciandra of Acqui conferred on Father Pestarino, local Salesian director, and his successors "parish privileges" with regard to the Sisters.<sup>56</sup> (Father Pestarino died less than a year later, on May 15, 1874.)

(2) In 1874 (while Father Pestarino was still alive) Don Bosco appointed Father Giovanni Cagliero Director General of the Institute, an important juridical move justified by the fact that Don Bosco could not personally attend to it and had foreseen its rapid expansion.<sup>57</sup> After Father Pestarino's death, outstanding Salesians were appointed as local directors, who greatly helped strengthen the sense of Salesian belonging in the community.<sup>58</sup>

(3) At the time of Father Giovanni Cagliero's appointment as Director General, Don Bosco appointed Mary Mazzarello Superior General of the Institute, as demanded by Church law. Up to this point she had presided over the community as Vicar, in accordance with what had been agreed in the elec-

<sup>55</sup> Posada, "The Institute," 234.

<sup>56</sup> Romero, *Costituzioni*, 77.

<sup>57</sup> Even though Mornese was still the only house of the Institute, when Don Bosco visited the Sisters on the occasion of Father Pestarino's "Month's Mind" Requiem Mass (June 15) he gave the religious habit to 13 postulants and received the first profession of 9 novices, among whom Emilia Mosca and Enrichetta Sorbone, both of whom would hold important posts in the Institute. The previous year (August 15, 1873) there had been the donning of the habit of 9 postulants and the first profession of 3 novices [*IBM* X, 636 and 622 and *EBM* X, 286-7 and 278].

<sup>58</sup> In the above-mentioned revision of 1875 (Manuscript F), which Don Bosco carried out with a view to obtaining diocesan approval, he specified that "The Director General shall be a member of the Superior Council of the Salesian Society;" and that "The local Director shall be any person to whom is entrusted the direction of any house of the Institute." In earlier drafts it was simply provided that the Institute was "immediately dependent upon the Superior General of the Society of St. Francis de Sales." [Posada, "The Institute," 234, footnote 40, citing Bosco, *Scritti*, 209-252]. After Father Pestarino's death on May 15, 1874, Don Bosco appointed Father Giuseppe Cagliero to succeed him as local Director, who died on September 5, 1874. Father Giacomo Costamagna was then appointed in his place, and after the latter's departure for Buenos Aires (in 1877) leading the third missionary group of Salesians and Salesian Sisters, Father Giovanni Battista Lemoyne held the office until 1883.

tion of January 29, 1872 (leaving to Don Bosco to decide what her position in the community should be). Don Bosco in 1874 ruled that Mary Mazzarello was the Superior of the community, not just his Vicar: "Superior General of the Institute" was Don Bosco's clear and final disposition.<sup>59</sup>

(4) As mentioned above, Don Bosco revised the Constitutions in 1875 (Manuscript F) in view of obtaining Ecclesiastical diocesan approval from Bishop Sciandra of Acqui. The manuscript is signed by Don Bosco, Father Giacomo Costamagna (local Director) and by "Sister Maria Mazzarello" (to whose signature Don Bosco added in his own hand, "*Sup.*" (Superior)).<sup>60</sup> Posada notes that Don Bosco's petition for the approval of the Institute and its constitutions is a document of great significance for what it reveals of the Institute's "beginnings, foundation, purpose and development." The approval was granted, January 26 (?), 1876.<sup>61</sup>

Letters written by Mary Mazzarello to Don Bosco during these years show that she was fully aware of her juridical position as Superior General, but they also demonstrate her personal dependence and that of the Institute on Don Bosco as their Major Superior. For example she writes:

Allow me, most Rev. Major Superior, to recommend myself to your efficacious prayers, that I may be able to discharge faithfully all the duties imposed upon me by my office, and that I may correspond with the great graces that the Lord has given me, as well as with your Reverence's own expectations. Have a persuasive word with Mary Most Holy, so that she may help me to practice what I have to teach to others, that they may receive from me the example that my position obliges me to give them.<sup>62</sup>

The spiritual bond that had formed between Mary Mazzarello and Don Bosco, at first spontaneous then strengthened in the historic decision of the

<sup>59</sup> Posada points out that the title "Mother General" is already found codified in the draft of the rule of 1874-75 (Manuscript D) [Posada, "the Institute," 234, footnote 42, citing Bosco, *Scritti*, 85-95].

<sup>60</sup> Lemoyne quoted by Amadei states that Mary Mazzarello "was not well educated because Mornese had no school for girls. She could read but not write" [EBM X, 291]. Amadei hastens to add in a footnote that "she quickly learned how to write from Emilia Mosca," an educated young woman from a well-to-do family who had professed in 1874 (See EBM, X, 291, footnote 57 above and references given there).

<sup>61</sup> Posada, "The Institute," 235 and footnotes 46 and 47.

<sup>62</sup> Mary Mazzarello to Don Bosco, Mornese, June 22, 1874 in Posada, "The Institute," 235-236.

founding, was sealed when the Founder obtained official ecclesial approval of the Institute and its constitutions, and thereby "assumed *in proprio* real paternity of the Institute in the eyes of the Church."<sup>63</sup> By the same token, this action also confirmed Mary Mazzarello in her role as Mother and Teacher.

As quoted by Amadei in the *Biographical Memoirs*, Pope Pius XI, in the Decree on Mary Mazzarello's heroic virtues, has the following appraisal:

This frail, simple, poor peasant girl, who had hardly had an elementary education, soon manifested a singular, distinguished talent—that of leadership. It was a rich talent indeed! And she had it to such a degree that St. John Bosco, [...] an expert appraiser of men and a master in the art of government, saw it without delay and put it to good use. The wisdom and effectiveness of that choice were proven both in the firm, sound foundation of the new Institute of the Daughters of Mary, Help of Christians, and in its rapid, surprising growth and development.<sup>64</sup>

By recognizing Mary Mazzarello's outstanding leadership in the government of the Institute, beyond her role as *Mother* and *Teacher*, the Pope implicitly recognized her role as *Co-Foundress*. The mission that Mary Mazzarello was called to fulfill in the Church, and therefore her specific vocation, was that of being *Mother* and *Co-Foundress* of the Institute. It is emphasized that she was *Co-Foundress* historically and juridically, not merely as the "instrument" for the foundation of the Institute. This was because of her position as *Mother*, and therefore as "educator" of a new religious family. In this respect, one may note the three outstanding aspects of her charism. The first has to do with her *central position* in the Group prior and during the Founding. The second has to do with her capacity after the founding to *govern* and *guide* the Institute in its beginnings and initial expansion. The third has to do with her capacity to *educate* her sisters in the spiritual life in a *distinctively* Salesian way—a *personal synthesis* of Don Bosco's *Salesian* spirit, made possible through the abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, crowning a life of asceticism, dedication and love.<sup>65</sup>

Amadei adds by way of comment:

Indeed, this was the secret of the Institute's wondrous development: fidelity to the guidelines and advice of its holy founder in all things!

<sup>63</sup> Posada, "The Institute," 236.

<sup>64</sup> EBM X, 292 citing the Decree *Postquam Deus*, May 3, 1936.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. M. Midali, *Madre Mazzarello. Il significato del titolo di Confondatrice* (Roma: LAS, 1982).

The year 1874 marked the opening of the first house at Borgo San Martino. [...] At Mary Mazzarello's death (1881), the Institute had 26 houses, 139 sisters, and 50 novices. At Don Bosco's death (1888) it had 50 houses, 390 sisters and 99 novices, and at Father Rua's death (1910) it had 294 houses, 2,666 sisters, and 255 novices.<sup>66</sup>

## Appendices

Two saintly priests play significant roles in the story of the origins of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians: Fathers Giuseppe Frassinetti and Domenico Pestarino. They were responsible for gathering and guiding the group of young women, the Daughters of Mary Immaculate, out of which Don Bosco and Maria Mazzarello founded the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. A brief biographical sketch of each follows.

### 1. Father Giuseppe Frassinetti (1804-1868): Biographical Sketch

Father Giuseppe Frassinetti, pastor, writer, and founder of outstanding merit, was born in Genoa on December 15, 1804. Ordained a priest in 1827, he exercised the parish ministry first at Quinto al Mare, near Genoa, and then from 1839 until his death in Genoa itself as pastor of St. Sabina Church.

In 1847, on the eve of the Liberal Revolution, Father Frassinetti (and others, including Father Pestarino) incurred the suspicion of the authorities for political reasons. He was forced to leave Genoa for writing a critical pamphlet on the liberal priest and patriot, Vincenzo Gioberti.

The place of his exile was a little town in the mountains not far from Genoa. It is at this time that he began to work on his *Précis of Alphonsian Moral Theology* and on *Christ the Rule of the Priest* (see below).

After his exile he returned to St. Sabina where under his direction the Christian life flourished. Like the church of St. Francis of Assisi in Turin under Fathers Luigi Guala and Joseph Cafasso, St. Sabina under Father Frassinetti became a center of Christian life and Catholic activity. Young priests ordained from the seminary in Genoa (Father Dominic Pestarino among them) became Father Frassinetti's "disciples." Eventually, with the collaboration of Father Luigi Sturla, Father Frassinetti gathered a group of young priests in care of souls and founded the Congregation of the Sons of Mary Immaculate (1861).

<sup>66</sup> EBM X, 292.



Besides being a widely sought director of souls, his intensely active pastoral ministry won for him the reputation of being "the Italian Cure of Ars."<sup>67</sup> Parish ministry undertaken with zeal and selfless dedication became his engrossing concern. All classes of people benefited from his ministry, but he took special care of young people, holding out for them the ideal of a genuine Christian life. For young women he established the Pious Union of Mary Immaculate, with a rule of life that opened up for them the vocation of living as religious in the world.

He authored some 100 works in ascetical, pastoral and moral theology, which went through many editions. These include:

*Compendio della teologia dogmatica* (Précis of Dogmatic Theology) (Genoa 1839; 26<sup>th</sup> ed., Turin 1903)

*Gesù Cristo regola del sacerdote* (Jesus Christ the Rule of the Priest) (Florence 1852; 11<sup>th</sup> ed., Genoa 1899)

*Il conforto dell'anima divota* (The Comfort of the Devout Soul) (Naples 1852; 14<sup>th</sup> ed., Rome 1906)

*La monaca in casa* (Living As a Nun in One's Own House) (Genoa 1859)

*Manuale pratico del Parocho novello* (Practical Handbook for the Beginner Parish Priest) (Novara 1863; 10<sup>th</sup> ed., Turin 1902)

*Il religioso nel secolo* (Living As a Religious in the World) (Genoa 1864)

*Compendio della teologia morale di S. Alfonso de' Liguori* (Précis of St. Alphonsus de Liguori's Moral Theology) 2 vols (Genoa 1865-66). There were 4 editions within the author's lifetime, and several more after his death (The 11<sup>th</sup> ed. was brought into conformity with the Code of Canon Law by F.M. Cappello, SJ and A. Gennaro, SDB, Turin 1948)

These and other titles evidence Father Frassinetti's concern for the renewal of Christian life among the people and the renewal of priestly life.

*Jesus Christ the Rule of the Priest* and the *Moral Theology* became *vade mecums* for priests even outside Italy.

Father Frassinetti also contributed at least 8 pamphlets to Don Bosco's *Catholic Readings*. In January 1857 Don Bosco had gone to Genoa and had paid a visit to Father Frassinetti at St. Sabina. The two became good friends. It was then that Don

<sup>67</sup> Anecdotes are narrated of him that express his charity and devotion. On one occasion, not having any money in the house, he gave the pot of stew off the stove to a poor woman who had come asking for help. On another occasion, having reproved some young woman for improper conduct, he was attacked by her brother behind the altar and punched in the face. He literally turned the other cheek. When the policemen wanted to take action against the attacker, Father Frassinetti reminded them of Jesus on the cross. His modesty was proverbial. Once he spoke against certain pictures that showed the child Jesus undressed, saying that Our Lady, like any good mother, would never have shown the child to people undressed. [!]

Bosco asked him to contribute to the Catholic Readings. Father Frassinetti's collaboration began in May 1859 and continued until 1866. His two most successful titles were: *The Life of Rosa Cardone* and *The Right Use of Money*.

In 1864 Don Bosco took the boys on the autumn outing as far as Genoa. Father Frassinetti, who hardly ever went out except for ministry, personally accompanied Don Bosco and the boys on a visit to the harbor, and then provided them with a guide for the rest of the tour.

Father Frassinetti died in Genoa on January 2, 1868, and his cause for beatification was introduced in Rome in 1939. The following characteristics stand out in Father Frassinetti's life and doctrine:

- (1) His intense personal dedication to pastoral ministry after the example of the Cure of Ars;
- (2) His unrelenting campaign for frequent, and even daily, Communion;
- (3) His affirmation that all Christians, while living "in the world," can and must embrace the evangelical way of life;
- (4) His Alphonsian Benignism and Equiprobabilism in ascetical and moral theology.<sup>68</sup>

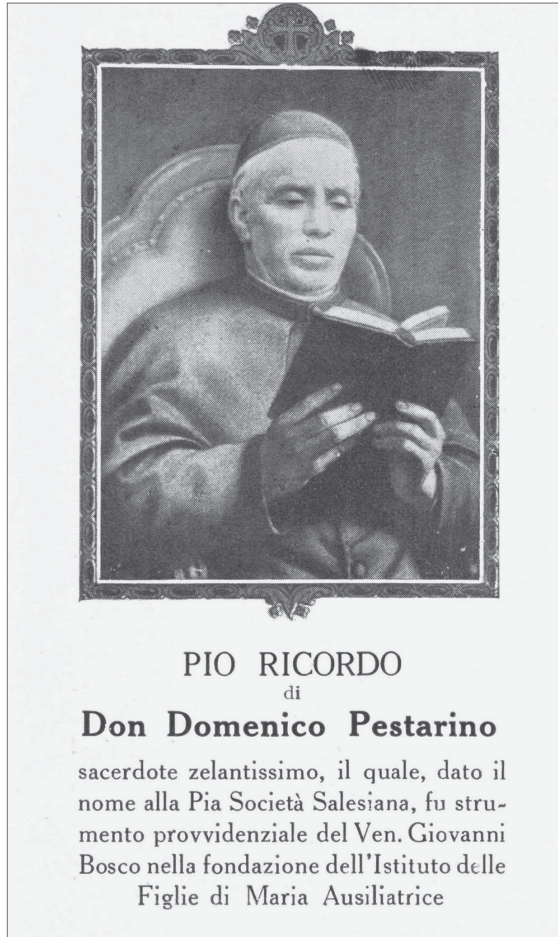
## 2. Father Domenico Pestarino (1817-1874): Biographical Sketch

Father Domenico Pestarino was born at Mornese on January 5, 1817 into a fairly well-to-do family. He entered the seminary at Genoa at an early age, and was ordained there on September 21, 1839.

After his ordination to the priesthood, Father Pestarino served as Prefect of the junior section of the diocesan seminary for a number of years. In 1847 or 1848, like Father Frassinetti, he was forced to leave Genoa for political reasons. As an "exile," he decided to seek the isolation and safety of his native Mornese.

The town of Mornese is located in the Diocese of Acqui (Province of Alessandria). In the time of the Restoration and the Risorgimento it belonged to the Province of Novi Ligure (District of Genoa). Located geographically in the southernmost part of Piedmont and isolated in the foothills of the Ligurian Appennines, Mornese (then a town of some 1100 inhabitants) found itself under the cultural and political influence of Genoa rather than of Turin. This is true also with respect to theology and spirituality, Genoa having been generally free of Rigorism. At this time both the seminary and the parish ministry stood largely in the school of St. Alphonsus. Father Frassinetti [see above] was a devoted Alphonsian in moral and pastoral theology.

<sup>68</sup> Father Frassinetti's sister Paola (1809-1882), with her brother's encouragement, embraced the Christian life as a "religious in the world," and went on to found the Congregation of the Sisters of St. Dorothy. In 1882 Don Bosco visited and comforted her as she lay dying in Rome. She was canonized by Pope John Paul II on March 11, 1984.



20 – Memorial holy card printed for the fiftieth anniversary  
of Fr. Dominic Pestarino's death (1817-1874)

Mornese had a republican tradition (in the Mazzinian sense of the term). It had been under the Republic of Genoa and had retained a spirit of independence even after Liguria (Genoa) was annexed to the Kingdom of Sardinia (Piedmont) by the Congress of Vienna (1814-1815). Throughout the Restoration Mornese remained a pocket of "revolutionary" activity.

During his seminary days, and to a greater degree as a young priest, Pestarino had become a follower of Father Frassinetti's as to moral theology, spirituality and pastoral practice. Now at Mornese, even though only one of several resident priests not officially connected with the parish, he found every opportunity to exercise his priestly ministry in the Frassinettian style and soon became the most influential force

for spiritual renewal in the parish. Immediately he set about encouraging sacramental practice, especially frequent Communion, to gather the young people for recreational and religious activities first in his house then at the church, and to devote long hours to hearing confessions and to spiritual direction. Within a few years the whole parish, including the adult male population, experienced a religious transformation that had Bishop M. Contratto of Acqui refer to Mornese as “the garden of my diocese.” Because of such remarkable achievements, and not only because of family connections, Father Pestarino was named financial administrator of the parish and was at various times elected to the City Council.

Since his arrival at Mornese Father Pestarino had taken special care of a group of girls that stood out for their religious spirit. Among them was the young Mary Mazzarello, who gradually came under Father Pestarino’s influence after receiving Confirmation on September 30, 1849 and first Communion on March 27, 1850 (at 11 and 12 years of age). In 1850 or 1851 Angela Maccagno, local school teacher (only 18 or 19 at the time), decided to live as a religious in the world, under Father Pestarino’s spiritual direction. In 1854, with Father Pestarino’s help, she gathered a group of these girls and established the *Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate*, for which Father Frassinetti of St. Sabina in Genoa wrote the regulations. Thus at this time Mary Mazzarello, the youngest of the group at the age of 17, seriously entered the way of the spiritual life under Father Pestarino.

In 1854 (as earlier in 1836) the cholera morbus swept through Mornese. Father Pestarino, and the members of the Mary Immaculate group, among others, distinguished themselves in caring for people stricken with the disease. In 1860 a typhus epidemic struck. Mary Mazzarello, having devoted herself to caring for the sick in her village of *Mazzarelli di Qua*, came down with the disease herself, and survived only after a long siege and with permanent physical debilitation. This was for her a time of crisis followed by vocational discernment and decision.

Father Pestarino and Don Bosco had first met in 1857 or 1858 at the home of Father Frassinetti. But the meeting in 1862 while traveling by train from Acqui to Alessandria was probably decisive. They talked about their respective work, and Don Bosco invited Father Pestarino to visit the Oratory. This he did, and was won over.<sup>69</sup> His decision to go with Don Bosco and his profession as a Salesian (perhaps in 1863 or 1864 [?]) sealed his “vocation.” At Don Bosco’s behest, however, Father Pestarino continued his work at Mornese. In 1865 he attended the general conferences of St. Francis de Sales, and reported on his work in Mornese.

This turn of events brought about important developments at Mornese.

(1) Don Bosco had visited Mornese for the first time in October of 1864 and had met the *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*. Mary Mazzarello and her friend Petronilla Mazzarello had previously started an “oratory” for young girls and an “orphanage” (1863). Greatly impressed with the group, with Mary and Petronilla in particular,

<sup>69</sup> Cf. *EBM* VII, 173-175; X, 254, but on these points see our discussion above.

Don Bosco perhaps began to look upon those young women as a *possible* first nucleus of the women's congregation he was planning to found. During this visit Don Bosco launched the idea of a school for boys in Mornese.

(2) In 1865 with the agreement of the City, Father Pestarino broke ground for the construction of the boarding school for boys. The laying of the cornerstone united the local people to help with labor and materials, though Father Pestarino himself financed the building. To provide staffing and teachers for the school, Father Pestarino regrouped the young women: some led by Mary Mazzarello, separated themselves from Angela Maccagno's "New Ursulines" as the *Daughters of Mary Immaculate*. In 1871, after attending the Conferences of St. Francis de Sales and learning of Don Bosco's "vast plans," Father Pestarino bought the Carrante house for additional property, as the school building was made ready for occupancy.

Meanwhile in 1871-1872 Don Bosco decided to build his women's congregation on the Daughters of Mary Immaculate led by Mary Mazzarello. In line with Don Bosco's "vast plans" (and much to the chagrin of the local people), in 1872 the *collegio* became a girl school and the motherhouse of the newly formed *Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*.

When the *Institute* was officially established with the Sisters' first professions on August 5, 1872, Father Pestarino, by Don Bosco's appointment, became officially the Director of the Institute. He thus continued to be, together with Don Bosco, the spiritual guide of the Sisters. But after two short years he died unexpectedly of a cerebral hemorrhage on May 15, 1874.

Father Dominic Pestarino, within the limited scope that historical circumstances imposed on his pastoral ministry, must be regarded as an outstanding apostle, imbued with true spirituality and great zeal. He must also be regarded, in a real though not in a juridical sense, as an associate in the founding of the *Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians*.

### **3. Key Data of the Life of Mary Mazzarello (1837-1881) and Early History of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians**

1837 (May 9) – Mary Mazzarello (MM) is born at the Mazzarelli di Qua, a hamlet of Mornese, located a mile or so SE of the town.

1839 (September 21) - Father Dominic Pestarino (1817-1874) is ordained after completing his studies at the seminary in Genoa.

1847/48 - Father Pestarino, after serving as prefect at the seminary in Genoa, returns to his native Mornese as an "exile" for political reasons. He is a priest-in-residence, later parish administrator. He becomes a force for spiritual renewal, especially with the young, by his zeal and spiritual direction. The pastors of Mornese in the 19th century are: Father James Carante (1799-1840); Father Lawrence Ghio (1840-1860); Father Charles Valle (1860-1895). A report by Father Carante referring

to 1819 speaks of 3 resident priests, 6 priests native of Mornese but residing elsewhere, 6 seminarians, and a mob of friars.

1849 (September 30) - MM receives confirmation at Mornese.

1848/49 - MM and her family move to the isolated *Cascina Valponasca*, a property of Marquis Doria of Mornese, as tenant farmers. She lives there for 10 years (from age 11 to age 21).

1850 (March 27, Wed. of Holy Week) - MM receives her first communion. The register reads: "*Domenica della Valponasca*." (The date Apr 19, 1848 is sometimes erroneously given for this event, but this is the date of the first Communion of a cousin with the same name.)

1854 - The Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate is founded at Mornese. Angela Maccagno is credited with the idea of forming the group and with developing a first sketch of the regulations. Father Pestarino is credited with encouragement, guidance and development of the group. Father Joseph Frassinetti of St. Sabina in Genoa (1804-1868) is credited with drafting the regulations and with taking personal interest in the group. MM at age 17 is the youngest of the five original members of the group.

1855 (December 9) - MM consecrates herself to Mary for the "exercise of charity."

\*1857 (January) - Don Bosco meets Father Frassinetti for the first time in Genoa. Father Frassinetti becomes a contributor to the *Catholic Readings*. Also in 1857 (or 1858) Don Bosco and Father Pestarino meet at Father Frassinetti's home. [See Stella, *DB:LW*, 215.]

1858/59 - After a robbery at the *Cascina Valponasca*, MM and her family move to Mornese proper, to a house of their own in the *Via Val Gelata* at the outskirts of the town. Her brothers continue to work the *Valponasca* vineyards.

1860 (August 15) - MM becomes gravely ill with typhus, caught while attending victims of a severe typhus epidemic at *Mazzarelli di Qua*. She recovers, but she remains permanently debilitated. For MM this illness was serious trial and crisis, and by her acceptance and surrender to God, a moment of conversion and vocation.

1861 (April 2) - No longer capable of labor in the fields, MM begins to train as a seamstress.

1862 (May) - MM and her close friend, Petronilla Mazzarello, open a sewing workshop for girls in Mornese.

\*1862 - Don Bosco and Father Pestarino meet on a train traveling from Acqui to Alessandria, and exchange information about their work. Later, at Don Bosco's invitation Father Pestarino visits the Oratory in Turin [cf. *EBM X*, 254f].

\*1862 - [>] Don Bosco, through Father Pestarino, sends Mary and Petronilla Mazzarello a written note, before ever meeting them in person.



\*1862 (July 5-6) - In a dream (Dream of the Red Horse) Don Bosco tells the Marchioness Barolo that he must take care of girls, too [EBM VII, 128-9].

\*1862 (?) - Don Bosco's Dream of Piazza Vittorio with the suggestion that he take care of girls also by opening an oratory [Francesia, *Life of MM*, not recorded in *BM*].

1863 (May) - MM and Petronilla begin a festive oratory for girls in Mornese.

1863 - MM and Petronilla leave their families and open a shelter for two orphan girls in Mornese.

\*1863/64 - Father Pestarino is professed [?] in the Salesian Society, but continues his work at Mornese.

1864 - Because of difficulties within the Group arising from her apostolate, MM, on Father Pestarino's advice, retires for some time to the *Cascina Valponasca*, where her brothers are working the vineyards.

\*1864 (October) - [1>] *MM and the Group meet Don Bosco* for the first time. (Don Bosco was passing through the region on what turned out to be the last of the autumn outings.) Impressed with the ideas and spirituality of the Group, Don Bosco gradually began to think of it as the nucleus of the congregation of women he was thinking of founding.

1865 (June 13) - Father Pestarino lays the cornerstone of the *collegio* at Mornese, located in the high western section of the town (*Borgo Alto*). Intended for boys and built mostly at his own expense (with the help of the townspeople), in 1872 it was to become the first mother house and school of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

1866 (June 24) - Don Bosco tells Father Lemoyne of his plans to found a religious congregation of women (EBM VIII, 187).

1867 (October) - MM definitively leaves her family and moves to the *Casa dell'Immacolata*, a house owned by Father Pestarino (located near the parish church). The small group living in community are known as the Daughters of Mary Immaculate.

\*1867 (December 9-21) - [2>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese* for the blessing of the chapel of the *collegio*.

\*1869 (March) - [3>] *Don Bosco sends MM and the group a small notebook* with a timetable and a set of guidelines to govern their daily life. This notebook has been lost, but its contents were later summarized by [Mother] Petronilla Mazzarello: (1) Strive to live habitually in the presence of God. (2) Make use of frequent short prayers. (3) Be sweet, patient, amiable in all your actions. (4) Watch over the girls attentively; keep them always occupied; help them to develop a simple, sincere and spontaneous piety. [See brief discussion above.]

\*1869 (April 19-21) - [3>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese to discuss plans* regarding the Group of Mary Immaculate.



\*1870 (May 9) - [4>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese* for Joseph Pestarino's first Mass (Father Pestarino's nephew).

\*1871 (January) - [>] *Father Pestarino*, attending the annual Conferences of St. Francis de Sales at the Oratory, *confers with Don Bosco* and learns of his "vast plans" [?].

1871 (March 31) - Father Pestarino buys the Carante house in Mornese (in the high western district) to obtain more property for the *collegio* (This house would serve as a temporary residence for the Sisters before moving into the *collegio*).

\*1871 (April 24) - [>] DB writes to Mother Maria Enrichetta Dominici of the Sisters of St. Anne of Divine Providence (Barolo), for help in drafting the Constitutions for the Congregation.

1871 (April 24) - [>] [¿?] Don Bosco lays before his council his plan to found the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (The council approves the plan on May 24).

\*1871 (end of April) - [5>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese* to discuss plans for the founding of the Congregation.

\*1871 (end of June) - [>] *On his visit to Rome*, Don Bosco presents the plan to Pius IX, and the Pope approves.

\*1871 (July-August) - [>] With the definitive decision to proceed with the founding of the Institute, Don Bosco completes the first manuscript copy of the constitutions, based on the Salesian Constitutions and on the input from Mother Dominici of the Sisters of St. Anne. He passes the Ms. Draft on to Father Pestarino, who has one of the Daughters make a good copy (and backdates the copy, April 24, 1871). This is the date on which Don Bosco's council, according to the *BM*, approved the founding [¿?]. During the years 1871-1878 seven drafts were produced. These notebooks contain marginal notes and comments in Don Bosco's and in Father Pestarino's hands. This was preparatory to the first printing of the Constitutions (1878).

\*1872 (January 29) - [>] *Feast of St. Francis de Sales*: 27 Daughters of Mary Immaculate (soon to be known as "Daughters of Mary Help of Christians") meet with Father Pestarino, with Don Bosco's instructions (DB is ill at Varazze), and *elect MM* as "Superior." Angela Maccagno is elected Vicar for the Daughters of Mary Immaculate living with their families (New Ursulines).

1872 (May 23-24) - MM and the Sisters (with the girls) gradually move into the *collegio* (via the Carante house), over the protest of the townspeople.

\*1872 (August 5) - [6>] *Founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians* with taking of the habit and profession during spiritual retreat (Jul 31-Aug 8). Recently appointed Bishop Joseph Sciandra of Acqui presides with last-minute attendance by Don Bosco [!]. MM is the first (*lei la prima*) to profess the Constitutions with temporary vows. Don Bosco confirms MM as "Superior," but allows her to be known simply as Vicar. [See discussion above.]

\*1873 - [7>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese* several times [?].

1874 (May 15) - Father Pestarino dies of a stroke at the age of 57. He is succeeded as local spiritual director of the Sisters' community by Father Joseph Cagliero (who died Sep 4, 1874); Father James Costamagna (1875-77); Father J.B. Lemoyne (1877-83); (Father-Bp. John Cagliero is "spiritual director general.")

\*1874 (July 15) - [8>] *Don Bosco attends the Month's Mind Mass* for Father Pestarino at Mornese. On the same day he *presides over the elections* of Superior and Council of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. MM is unanimously reelected and confirmed by Don Bosco—to be called Mother! (This is reckoned as the First General Chapter of the Institute).

\*1874 (October 8) - The first community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians is established outside Mornese, at Borgo San Martino, whereto Don Bosco had transferred the Mirabello school in 1870 (The Sisters manage the kitchen and run an oratory for young girls).

\*1875 (August 29) - [9>] *Don Bosco visits Mornese* for the perpetual profession of MM and 7 other Sisters.

\*1875 (August 29-31) - [>] *Don Bosco* (visiting Bp. Sciandra) *puts finishing touches to the Constitutions* of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

\*1876 (January 23) - [>] *The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians* is canonically *approved by Bp. Sciandra of Acqui*. Don Bosco never sought the Holy See's approval of the Institute and of its Constitutions. He regarded the Sisters as "appended" to Salesian Society, as he was Superior General of the Institute. [See brief discussion above.] With the publication of the *Normae secundum quas* in 1901, the Holy See required that Congregations of women be autonomous. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and its revised constitutions were approved by the Holy See in 1906. [See discussion in Appendix below.]

1876 (March 29) - A community of 7 Sisters establish a house at Valdocco in Turin. This would become the motherhouse in 1929. (The Gastaldi chancery had given permission for a foundation in Turin on Oct 31, 1875.)

1877 (November 14) - Six Sisters leave for the missions (Uruguay and Argentina), with the 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary group led by Father Costamagna. MM presides at the good-bye ceremony and accompanies them to Rome and to their ship at Marseilles.

1878 (December 8) - The first printed edition of the FMA Constitutions is published, for which Don Bosco writes a foreword. Don Bosco expressed the characteristic features of the Institute in the following points: (1) The purpose is to attend to one's perfection and to help in the salvation of one's neighbor, especially the young of the poorer classes; (2) As to juridical status, the Institute is "under the direct and immediate dependence of the [SDB] Rector Major;" (3) Essential virtues proposed are patient and zealous charity, holy cheerfulness, obedience and a spirit of prayer.

1879 (February 4) - MM and the Sisters (under local director Father Lemoyne) move to the new motherhouse at Nizza Monferrato. (On October 14, 1877, Don Bosco had obtained from the Holy See permission to purchase a disused monastery. He blessed the beautiful, restored church on October 24, 1878.)

1880 (August 29) - MM is unanimously reelected Mother General.

1881 (February 7) - MM becomes gravely ill at St. Cyr, France. (The Sisters had 3 communities in southern France by this time.)

1881 (March 28) - MM is able to return to Nizza Monferrato.

1881 (April 5) - MM is again gravely ill.

1881 (May 14) - MM dies at Nizza Monferrato at the age of 44. She is succeeded by Mother Catherine Daghero.

1885 - Second printed edition of the FMA constitutions is published, based on the first edition and on the deliberations of the FMA general chapter of 1884. (This is the last edition prepared under Don Bosco's direction.)

1885 (July 17) - Don Bosco's dream of Via Po (similar to the 1862(?) Dream of Corso [Piazza?] Vittorio), suggesting an oratory for girls. (*EBM* XVII, 448-449; from Viglietti, *Original Chronicle*, vol. II, 82-87, "Mathi, July 17, 1885," *FDBM* 1,223 B12-C2.)

1906 - The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians is made autonomous. The Holy See approves the revised Constitutions and the Institute of pontifical right.

1929 (December 8) - The motherhouse is transferred to Turin (Valdocco).

1936 (May 3) - Recognition of MM's heroic virtues in the process of beatification.

1938 (November 20) - MM's beatification.

1951 (June 24) - MM's canonization.

#### **4. Mary Dominica Mazzarello's Spiritual Development in a Biographical Context**

The serious illness (typhus) which Mary Mazzarello contracted in 1860 at the age of 23 induced a crisis accompanied by physical and spiritual experiences which led to "conversion" and to a re-directing of her life. This event clearly divides her spiritual development into two periods. Each period then may also be divided into two stages—all clearly distinguishable by their characteristic traits, as follows:

##### *1. First Period (1837-60)*

Stage 1: Childhood, up to the age of 13 and first Communion (1837-50)

Stage 2: Adolescence and young womanhood, up to the age of 23 and the critical illness (1850-60)

## 2. *Second Period* (1860-81)

Stage 1: Maturity, up to the age of 35, from the critical illness and "conversion" to the Founding (1860-72)

Stage 2: Achievement up to the age of 44: Co-Foundress and Mother (1872-81)

### *Period I, Stage 1 (1837-50)*

#### *Context*

From 1837 to 1849, Mary Mazzarello lived at Mazzarelli di Qua (a hamlet of Mornese) in a patriarchal-type, extended family composed of 15 persons of diverse ages, all belonging to the endogenous group of the Mazzarells. Within such a family relationships are varied and extensive.

From 1849 to 1850, Mary began to live at the isolated *Cascina Valponasca* (a property of Marquis Doria, located across a valley, nearly two miles NE of Mornese). There she lived in a more restricted family composed of 10 persons (parents, 7 children, 1 female cousin). In such a family relationship are more intensive.

#### *Father's Influence*

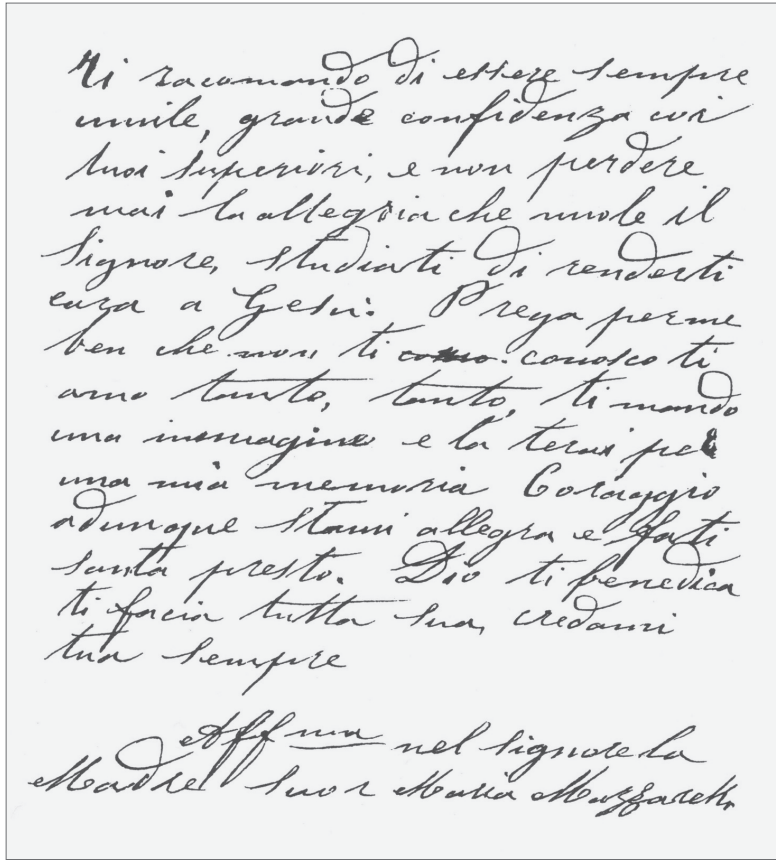
The father, rather than the mother, appears to have been the dominant familial influence in Mary's childhood. He provided the model for a spirituality based on closeness to nature, to people who were also biologically related, and on a peasant world of work and genuine faith.

From her father Mary learnt a *sense of work*, under the circumstances chiefly in the fields. Later, work would be fully appraised in its human, ascetic, educational and apostolic value, and would become constitutive of her spirituality. From her father Mary also learnt a nature-based, as well as a transcendent, *sense of God*. This sense would be expressed in prayer, devout practices of the Christian life, honest relationships and genuine holiness.

#### *Father Dominic Pestarino's Influence*

It seems that this new all-important influence on the child began as soon as Father Pestarino (having had to leave Genoa) returned to Mornese in 1847/48. Although one of several priests in town not having a diocesan appointment, he functioned as a kind of assistant pastor, and became the agent of a great spiritual renewal at Mornese, in which Mary would become deeply involved.

But at the time she was just a "normal child", not particularly "devout" (in the popular sense of the term), but with a keen sense of the genuine and the real. The first contact with Father Pestarino merely allowed her to "reflect" on, and to some extent "interiorize," her faith.



21 – Closing paragraph of the letter, Mother Mary Dominica Mazzarello to Sister Laura Rodriguez, Nizza Monferrato, July 8, 1880: “My recommendation to you is this, that you be always humble, [that you have] great confidence in your superiors and that you be always cheerful, as the Lord wishes us to be. Try to become Jesus’ dearest friend. Pray for me. Even though I am not personally acquainted with you I love you very very much. I am sending you a holy picture; please keep it to remember me by. So take courage, keep cheerful and become holy quickly. May God bless you and make you wholly his. Believe me ever affectionately yours in the Lord, the Mother, Sister Mary Mazzarello”

With her first Communion (1850) she began to give evidence of a “personal” movement toward God, with accompanying understanding of prayer, asceticism and the sacramental life.

For 26 years (1847/8-1874) she enjoyed the benefit of Father Pestarino’s sure and continuous spiritual direction.

### *Period I, Stage 2 (1850-60)*

#### *Context*

From 1850 to 1858/9, Mary Mazzarello continues to live at the isolated *Cascina Valponasca*.

From 1858/59 to 1860, Mary begins to live with her family in the house purchased by her father in the Via Valgelata, situated in the western outskirts of Mornese. It should be noted that the family did not return to their native hamlet of Mazzarelli di Qua, but was instead established in the town of Mornese. Hence, Mary, now a young woman of 21, lives in a larger community.

#### *The Valponasca Period*

After the experience of first Communion, under Father Pestarino's spiritual direction, Mary's spiritual development was quick and remarkable. She began to develop a true interior life. Her prayer began with an early morning one-hour walk to the parish church for Mass and Communion. It continued through day while she worked in the fields in touch with nature and in union with God. Union of work and prayer became habitual with her. In the evenings, she would stand or sit in contemplation at the (famous) window from which she could see the parish church and the whole town looming against the sky. Contemplation, doubtlessly with Father Pestarino encouragement, fostered the desire for a life of virginity.

Some time in 1855, at the age of 17, she joined with other young women in forming the Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate (*Gruppo delle Figlie di Maria Immacolata*), under Father Pestarino's direction and with Father Frassinetti's support. Here Mary established new relationships with kindred spirits, discovered the meaning of Christian service, and consecrated herself for the "exercise of charity."

### *Period II, Stage 1 (1860-1872)*

#### *Context*

From 1860 to 1867 Mary Mazzarello continued to live with her family in the house in the Via Valgelata in Mornese.

#### *Illness and Crisis of 1860*

In 1860 the "exercise of charity" nearly cost her life. In attending the victims of the typhus epidemic, Mary caught the disease; and although she recovered after a struggle, physically she remained permanently debilitated. At the psychological and spiritual levels also, this illness and the crisis associated with it marked a turning

point in her life. For the first time, the indomitable peasant young woman was made to experience her physical, psychological and spiritual fragility. In her “collapse”, she had to find her strength in a new experiential knowledge of God, and in a new surrender to God, leading to a radical “conversion.” “My God, if it is your good pleasure to allow me a few more years of life, enable me to spend them for you, ignored and forgotten by all except by you” [*Cronistoria* I].

### *A New Vocation*

The first four years after her illness were difficult and trying years for Mary, as she sought to adjust to and to accept her new situation. Her physical strength being greatly reduced, she began to look for a new way in which her life might be spent for God. Herein was born the inspiration to dedicate herself to *educating and helping the young*.

In 1867, at the age of 30, MM leaves her family and moves with two companions to the *Casa Immacolata*, near the parish church. She lives with the group in community here until the founding of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in 1872. Then they move to the *Carante House* and to the *Collegio*, the first mother house.

### *Don Bosco's Influence*

The eight years preceding the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians witnessed the beginning and early development of the *new apostolate*, as well as of *community* life by Mary and the group. Through these years (from 1864 on) Mary came increasingly under Don Bosco's influence. In spite of the fact that the contacts and exchanged between the two saints were few, there was immediate *mutual intuition*, which gradually developed into the *partnership* which led to the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

This stage then was the formative period of Mary's spirituality and dedication to the apostolate, under Don Bosco's increasing influence and guidance, but not without Father Pestarino's mediation (he was by then a Salesian).

## *Period II, Stage 2 (1872-1881)*

### *Context*

Mary Mazzarello heads the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians from the mother house, first at the *Collegio* in Mornese and then at Nizza Monferrato.



### *Co-Foundress and Mother*

This is the period in which Mary's specific vocation as *Co-Foundress* and *Mother* of the Institute (the mission she was called to fulfill in the Church) was realized. It is emphasized that she was the Co-Foundress historically and juridically, not merely the "instrument" for the foundation of the Institute. This was because of her position as Mother, and therefore as "educator" of a new religious family. In this respect, one may note the three outstanding aspects of her charism. The first has to do with her *central position* in the Group prior and during the founding. The second has to do with her capacity after the founding to *govern* and *guide* the Institute in its beginnings and initial expansion. The third has to do with her capacity to *educate* her sisters in the spiritual life in a *distinctively* Salesian way—a *personal synthesis* of Don Bosco's *Salesian* spirit, made possible through the abundance of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, crowning a life of asceticism, dedication and love.

## **5. The Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians Made Autonomus (July 17, 1906)**

Summary after E. Ceria, *Annali* III, 645-671; A. Amadei, *Rua* III, 260-263.

### *1. Context: the Decree "Normae Secundum Quas"*

In view of the proliferation of religious institutes with simple vows (especially in the nineteenth century), the Holy See took steps (since the 'sixties) to establish rules and guidelines for them. To this effect, on June 28, 1901, it issued the Decree *Normae secundum quas* (Norms by which [...]).<sup>70</sup>

Article 202 of the *Normae* provided that a congregation of women with simple vows could not by its constitutions be attached to a congregation of men of the same kind.

Article 1 of Title II of the constitutions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), written by Don Bosco and approved by the diocesan ordinary, ran counter to this provision of the Decree. The article stipulated, "The Institute is under the high and immediate direction of the Superior General of the Salesian Society, called Rector Major."

In effect, the Rector Major governed the Institute "as a father," and was represented by a Director General (a Salesian priest, Father Giovanni Cagliero, appointed by him) and at a regional level by the Salesian provincial. Those ordinaries in whose

<sup>70</sup> *Normae secundum quas Sacra Congregatio Episcoporum et Regularium procedere solet in approbandis novis Institutis votorum simplicium* (Rules by which the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars normally is guided in approving new Institutes with simple vows).

dioceses the Salesian Sisters worked were happy with this arrangement, and so were the Sisters. It helped them preserve the spirit of the founder, and made it easier for them to deal with civil authorities, especially in matters relating to education.

On the other hand, according to the constitutions, the Institute was governed by the Mother General and her council in all internal matters.

Several other articles of the FMA constitutions were related to this basic article. This fact would require that the constitutions as a whole be revised to eliminate this dependency.

The Salesian Rector Major at the time (1906) was Father Michele Rua, and Sister Caterina Daghero was the Mother General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

When first made aware of the situation, Father Rua did not take immediate steps. Mother Daghero, on the other hand, wrote to Rome to the effect that the present status was satisfactory and allowed them complete autonomy in the management of their affairs.

But Rome had already begun to look into that matter, and the story leading up to the “separation” may be briefly summarized.

### *Action by Rome and Role of the Salesian Procurator General—Revision of the FMA Constitution Required*

In 1902 Cardinal Gotti, Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (SCBR), asked Father Rua for a report on the FMA, including: a copy of the constitutions and of all the regulations, documents of approval by ordinaries, and resumes of the origin, purpose, membership, discipline, material assets, and financial state of their Institute. Father Rua responded at once, and the Sisters in addition forwarded to the Roman Congregation a statistical summary of each of their foundations.

In October 1904, Cardinal Ferrata, Cardinal Gotti's successor as Prefect of the SCBR, requested the same materials. On May 10, 1905, in the name of Pope Pius X, he ordered that the revision of the FMA constitutions in accordance with the *Normae*, begin without delay. On May 24, the Auditor of the SCBR summoned the Salesian Procurator General, Father Giovanni Marengo. He praised the work of the Salesians and the Salesian Sisters, but emphasized the necessity of the reform, which had been initiated by the Pope himself through the Holy Office. He then explained how the revision should proceed.

Father Marengo was given a copy of the observations that a consultant of the SCBR had made on the text of the FMA constitutions, and was officially given the charge of revising them accordingly. Once the revision of the constitutions was completed, then all the deliberations of past General Chapters of the FMA (General Chapters I-IV) were to be abolished.

### *Sisters Notified—Initial Reaction*

Father Clemente Bretto, Director General of the FMA, immediately notified Mother Daghero and her council of these developments; and on September 4, 1905, he notified all the members of the Sisters' General Chapter V, which was about to open in Nizza Monferrato.

All this came as a great shock to everyone. It seemed as though a mortal blow was being dealt to the Institute. At this remove, we can no longer appreciate, or even understand, such fearful reaction; but at the time it would have appeared not only justifiable, but natural, in view of the Institute's past history, present situation, and future prospects.

It will be remembered that the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians had been for 16 years under Don Bosco's direction and, after his death in 1888, in accordance with its constitutions, for another 17 years under that of his successor, Father Rua. The Mothers General and their councils had recourse to Don Bosco and to Father Rua in matters of importance, and had particularly wanted their advice for new foundations and missions. Above all, it had been with their advice and help that the Sisters had entered into numerous agreements with local Church and civil authorities, and with school boards. The Salesian Rector Major's "paternal" guidance, sought by the Sisters themselves, had become part and parcel of the Institute's existence and operation. Nor had such "paternal" guidance ever interfered with the Institute's internal government. On the contrary, such cooperation had been extremely productive in all fields. Above all, such close relationship had been a great help in preserving the Institute's charism, especially in diocesan situations, in which the Sisters were "subject" to the local ordinary. Ordinaries, and even Church authorities in Rome, dealt with the Sisters with confidence because the Salesian Rector Major's direction inspired confidence. Thus such past experiences were regarded as a guarantee that the future of the Institute would be secure.

Now deprived of this guidance and support, the Sisters could only face the future with apprehension. For one thing, they would have to start negotiating directly with various authorities about foundations and other matters, and in this they felt at a disadvantage. But primarily it was the idea of "being left alone" to direct such a vast undertaking that caused dismay.

Some action by the Sisters seemed appropriate at this point. Even independent persons in authority were advising the Sisters to try to obtain a reprieve. Mgr. Bettandier, who was the author of a commentary on the *Normae*, expressed the view that a presentation of the "facts of the case" by the Sisters to Rome might be helpful.

### *Tentative Action by Father Rua and His Council*

The Salesian Rector Major and his council shared the Sisters' apprehension, but their recent experience with the Holy Office with regard to the 1901 Decree *Quod*

*a Suprema* suggested caution in dealing with Rome.<sup>71</sup> Unfortunately, for a while they seemed totally paralyzed. Then in the meeting of August 21, 1905, the matter was brought up for discussion. The council acknowledged that it was its responsibility to see to it that the reform did not adversely affect the Institute as to its nature, purpose and charism. The minutes were to show that this was their clear understanding and resolve. One of the members remarked that it was up to the Rector Major to take the initiative. Father Rua, however, preferred to have the council as a whole decide on the most appropriate action.

The council immediately charged substitute-secretary Father Calogero Gusmano to obtain a copy of the revised constitutions, so they could be studied. This action, which can only be described as tentative, took place a mere two weeks before the Sisters' General Chapter V was to open. A mere couple of days before its opening session, Father Rua and his council notified the Sisters of their view (which was that safeguards should be established), but insisted that the FMA General Chapter should debate the matter freely and decide accordingly.

### *Action by the Sisters' General Chapter V*

At the Chapter Procurator General Father Marengo presented the constitutions as revised by him for general discussion. In a session that Father Rua (who presided at the Chapter) chose not to attend, the Sisters decided that the Institute could generally speaking live with the revisions, but thought that it could not survive if deprived of the Rector Major's "paternal" direction. Hence, it mandated that the Mother General petition the Holy Father for permission to retain the Rector Major as superior *pro tempore*. The Chapter embodied these concepts in a resolution drafted as follows:

In order to preserve unity, regular observance, and the spirit of the founder, the Rector Major of the Salesian Society shall continue to exercise his paternal direction and guidance of the Institute. This shall in no way infringe on the jurisdiction which Ordinaries exercise on religious congregations in accordance with canon law. The Mother General shall seek the Rector Major's advice in matters of importance. He shall preside over the Sisters' General Chapter [...], and shall moreover personally or through his delegate ascertain that the houses are well run and that unity, observance, and good spirit reign in them [...].

Shortly thereafter, by letter the Mother General formally notified Father Rua of the Sisters' resolve to remain as "Don Bosco had wanted them to be," and begged Father Rua "not to abandon them."

<sup>71</sup> The Decree *Quod a suprema* forbade directors of boarding schools (and similar establishments) to hear the confessions of their charges. It appeared aimed at Salesian schools and communities in particular, where traditionally the director acted as regular confessor. When Father Rua appeared to be evading the Decree, Rome dealt very severely with him.

### *Presentations Made to Rome and Ensuing Dialogue*

Father Marengo made a report to the SCBR, and the resolution in particular made such an impression that he was authorized to insert it into the revised text of the constitutions, while being asked at the same time to make a detailed exposition of the reasons behind the resolution. This was more appropriately done by the Sisters' Superior Council.

Since the resolution as conceived did not aim at making the Sisters' dependent on a congregation of men (which clearly would have been against the *Normae*) but only on Don Bosco's successor, allowing separation in all other respects, Father Rua and his Council advised the Sisters to go to Rome, engage a good lawyer, and present their case to the SCBR.

Since Father Marengo in his capacity as consultor for the SCBR and revisor of the constitutions could not be officially available to them, Father Rua assigned Father Joseph Bertello as their special assistant. The team did three things: (1) With Father Marengo's and other expert advice they carried out a minute revision of the constitutions which were to be presented to the SCBR for approval; (2) They printed and presented the constitutions so revised to the individual cardinals of the SCBR together with a detailed memorandum explaining their point of view; (3) They called on the cardinals and prelates personally in order to provide any further explanation, as needed.

The Sisters continually made the point that their request for the continuance of the Rector Major's guidance was prompted not by a desire to resist the SCBR but by the consciousness of their own insufficiency and by the fear of irreparable damage to the Institute.

The Roman authorities regarded this "humility" and these fears as excessive. For example, Cardinal Vives y Tuto (a ranking member of the SCBR and a friend of the Salesians) tried to allay their fears. He pointed out that the new regulations affecting all congregations of women were necessary and in the long run beneficial, and that Don Bosco from heaven would watch so that no harm came to the Institute from these changes.

The Holy Father himself in an audience of January 7, 1906 told the Mothers not to worry and assured them that everything would turn out right. (They took this to mean that their petition would be granted!)

On January 12, 1906, the revised constitutions were presented to the SCBR for examination and approval. That Congregation, however, did not take immediate action, and the work of examination required several months.

On April 1, 1906, in a special audience Father Francis Cerruti raised the subject with the Holy Father. He related how in his capacity as Councilor for Academic Affairs he had been in position to help the Sisters in matters having to do with their schools and with their work of education. He remarked that with the projected separation he would no longer be in that position, and the Mother General was terribly

worried. The Pope told him that he could and should continue to help them, and also that he should tell the Mother not to worry. (Pius X's reassurance, however, did not mean that he could continue to help the Sisters as delegate of the Rector Major, nor that the Mothers' petition would be granted!)

### *Action by the SCBR on the FMA Constitutions*

Between January and June, the SCBR gave attention to the FMA constitutions. The revision was completed at a session held on June 26, 1906. As was to be expected, the resolution of FMA General Chapter V, introduced as an article into the constitutions, was eliminated. But the Sisters were spared a rebuke in this regard. On July 17, 1906, Father Rua was officially notified that the new constitutions were now in effect and that all previous constitutions and deliberation of General Chapters, in so far as they diverged from the new constitutions, were abolished. The copy of the revised constitutions was sent to Archbishop Cardinal Agostino Richelmy of Turin to be passed on to the Mother General. This was officially done on September 22, 1906.

By these actions the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and its constitutions received definitive approval without passing through the usual procedural stages.

By circular letter of September 29, 1906, Father Rua notified all the Sisters of what had taken place and asked them to accept and practice the constitutions that their Mother General would give to them. He added that he, as all other Salesian superiors, would always be available to the Sisters to help and advise as needed.

Mother Daghero made her announcement to the Sisters by circular letter of October 15, 1906.

### *Separation of the Institute from the Salesian Society, and Division of Assets*

#### *Father Rua's Directives to Salesian Personnel*

On October 3, 1906, Father Rua and his council took up the practical problems of the new relationship. By circular letter of November 21, 1906, he notified all the Salesians of the new order of things and issued an 8-point directive for provincials and directors. He wrote:

Since the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesians have the same founder and the same spirit, our relationship shall be based on mutual charity, acknowledgment and respect. But we have no further right over them, nor have they any further duties toward us.

As for spiritual guidance, the Sisters are subject to their respective ordinaries, to whom alone it pertains to name confessors, spiritual directors, etc. Salesian priests may

be involved in these capacities only when appointed and authorized by the ordinary of the diocese where the Sisters reside.<sup>72</sup>

In other words, Father Rua immediately ceased from all direct activity towards the Sisters and directed all Salesians to do the same.

### *Property and Financial Settlements*

The two General Councils began at once to work on the division of material assets and concomitant financial adjustments, and a deed of division and separation was signed by both parties (the Generals and their Councils) on February 4, 1907. The detailed transactions, however, took some time and were made more difficult by the legal problems encountered in different countries.

Speaking of Europe alone, in 1906 the properties where Sisters worked were held as follows: (1) 97 were owned and administered by the Sisters alone with no participation by Salesians; (2) 36 were held in the name of Salesians, although they had been acquired with the Sisters' money (in which cases papers had to be legally transferred); (3) 21 were in the Sisters' use, but were owned by the Salesians and were mostly attached to Salesian works (in which cases action was needed only to ensure separation of the communities); (4) 14 were of ambiguous ownership (in which cases the separation was worked out by a mixed committee under the chairmanship of Father Philip Rinaldi).

With regard to the Latin American situation, by special circular letter Father Rua gave provincials directives to proceed in accordance with local laws.

In a letter to Father Rua, the Mother General and her Council acknowledged the impartiality with which the division had been accomplished, the true good and progress of the Institute having been the chief concern.

### *FMA General Chapter VI (1907)*

As mandated by the SCBR, one year from approval of the revised constitutions the Sisters held General Chapter VI under the presidency of the bishop of Acqui.

Before closing, the members signed a letter of acknowledgment to Father Rua and the Salesians, requesting that they continue to provide assistance to the Institute.

### *Near-Estrangement and Recovery*

Father Rua, apparently out of a kind of (misguided?) heroic obedience, humility and respectful deference to the Holy See, made no move to continue any sort of relationship with the Sisters. This may seem remarkable, but that is how the Decree was understood—that the Salesians could no longer to have any meaningful contact with the Sisters. The Sisters obviously felt abandoned and almost adrift.

<sup>72</sup> Amadei, *Rua* III, 262.



It was Mother Daghero that first took action. With the consent of her Council and in agreement with Father Rua, through the Salesian Procurator Father Marengo, she petitioned the Holy See that a Salesian priest should be appointed in each province as adviser to the Sisters. On August 6, 1909, Cardinal Vives y Tuto (Prefect of the SCBR newly organized by Pope Pius X) replied that the appointment of a permanent Salesian advisor seemed inappropriate, but that the Sisters could seek the advice of Salesian priests as they saw fit.

On January 10, 1910, the Cardinal Prefect inquired of the newly appointed Salesian Procurator, Father Dante Munerati, why the Salesian Sisters did not make use of the services of the Salesian Procurator in their dealings with Rome. The Sisters' sense of isolation was intensified with Father Rua's death on April 6, 1910. The general council of the FMA (in agreement with that of the SDB) submitted a petition to the Holy See to have the Salesian Procurator serve as their Procurator as well. On June 25, 1910, the SCBR gave an affirmative reply.

This was an important symbolical as well as practical step forward, for the SDB and FMA were thereby represented as brother and sister congregations before the Holy See. However, that did not generally improve the relationship locally. In some diocese, through some kind of devious misinterpretation, Salesian priests were *forbidden* to exercise their ministry on behalf of the Salesian Sisters, who were (in many cases) regarded as an ordinary diocesan congregation.

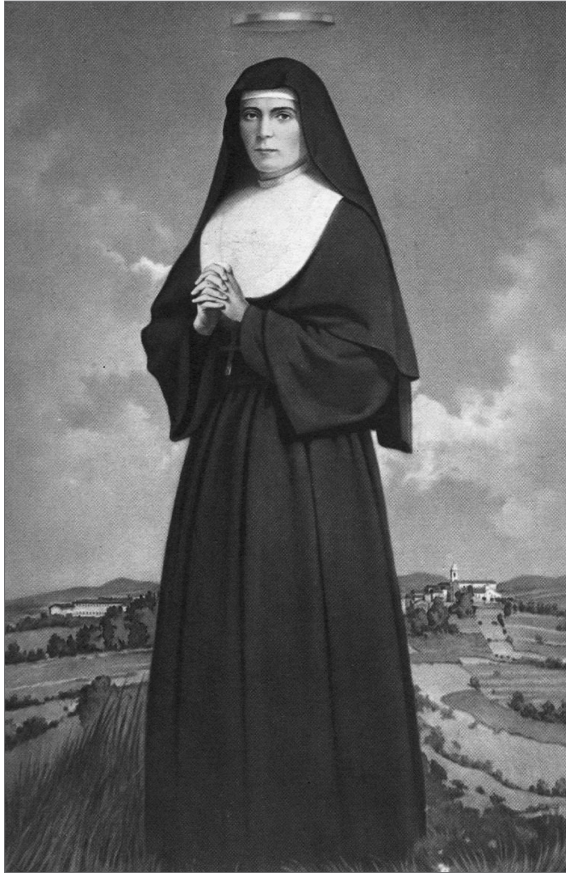
On December 8, 1911 (Father Paul Albera being the Rector Major), the SCBR handed down a Decree that vindicated both the FMA and the SDB. The Decree made it clear that the FMA were and should be regarded as a congregation of Pontifical right approved by the Holy See, and not merely a diocesan congregation, and that the SDB could freely exercise their priestly ministry on behalf of the Sisters whenever requested to do so.

### *FMA General Chapter VII a Turning Point*

On April 28, 1913 the Holy See empowered Father Albera to be present in an advisory and facilitating capacity, in person or through a delegate, at the Sisters' upcoming General Chapter VII.

Pursuant to a resolution passed at the Chapter—that the Sisters regarded the guidance of a Salesian priest as desirable and necessary for their Institute, a petition was addressed to Rome to that effect. Salesian Cardinal John Cagliero pleaded the Sisters' cause, and the response was favorable.

A complete "recovery" was only a matter of time. On June 19, 1917, the Salesian Rector Major (Father Albera) was appointed Apostolic Delegate to the Sisters for 5 years. His chief duty was to visit the Institute every 2 years to ascertain that the Salesian spirit was being maintained. The Decree was renewed on July 18, 1922 (Father Philip Rinaldi) for 6 years, and for another 6 years on June 26, 1928 (Father Rinaldi), and again on June 19, 1934 (Father Peter Ricaldone) for 10 years.



22 – Idealized portrait of Mary Dominica Mazzarello,  
a painting by Mario Caffaro-Rore

Before this 10-year period expired, the Salesian Society was given renewed “privileges.” One of these provided that the current Rector Major had all faculties necessary for the spiritual assistance to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.



## Chapter 6

# THE LAY SALESIAN (SALESIAN BROTHER) AND THE SALESIAN LAY VOCATION IN DON BOSCO'S ONGOING REFLECTION

### Summary

1. The Lay Salesian in the early constitution
  2. Early Documents Apart From the Constitutions – The Term Coadjutor
  3. The Lay Salesian in documents from the 1870s: the Lay Vocation explained
  4. The Lay Salesian in Don Bosco's statements from the 1880s
  5. The Lay Salesian in the work of General Chapters III and IV (1883 and 1886)
- Appendix: *Additional* documentation from the Rua, Albera and Rinaldi periods (1888-1931)

### Sources-Bibliography

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- EBM (Ceria) XI, 263-267; XII, 120-122, 459-464; XIII, 637-639; XIV, 302 (for documents see IBM XIV, 783-784); XVI, 312-314; XVII, 343-344 (admissions); XVIII, 642-646 (Documents from General Chapter IV).
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- G. Vespignani, “Scuole professionali [...]” (Vocational and Agricultural Schools and the Salesian Coadjutor),” in *AttiCapSup* VII #36 (September 24, 1926) 508-514 (report to the Congress of European Directors, July 26-28, 1926, and of Italian directors, August 30-September 1, 1926).

Before attempting a description of Don Bosco’s reflection on the Salesian lay vocation and of his progress toward defining its identity, it seems appropriate to give a concise summary of the achievements of this, the decade of Don Bosco’s maturity.

## I. Preliminaries

### 1. Overview of the Decade 1875-1885

In the decade 1875-1885, Don Bosco completed the founding, put into effect a great [second] expansion of the Salesian Work, set about establishing internal structures for the Salesian Society, and engaged in reflection and writing on the Salesian work.

1. Don Bosco’s ongoing reflection on the lay component of the Salesian Society (the Salesian Brother) brought about important statements for a definition of, and new impetus to, the Salesian lay vocation. One might say that Don Bosco thereby “finished” the founding of the Salesian Society.

2. Don Bosco brought his founding plan to completion through the organization of the Salesian Cooperators.

3. Don Bosco’s personal experience of the worldwide Church at Vatican I firmed up his conviction of long standing that the Salesian vocation had a global scope.

This perception led to expansion of the Salesian work in quick succession to the whole of Italy (including Rome, at last), to France, to Spain and to several South American countries (Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Chile and Ecuador). At the same time Don Bosco committed the Salesian Society to missions among native populations of South America for which he obtained official Apostolic recognition. He also envisioned the worldwide spread of the Salesian work and the missions proper (to Asia, Australasia and Africa).

4. After the approval of the constitutions Don Bosco gradually set about

systematically to consolidate the life and work of the Society and to put in place structures for study and formation.

5. The creation of provinces (“inspectories”) signaled the first effort at organization of the Society for better government.

6. Four general chapters established norms for further consolidation and development of Salesian life and work.

7. Don Bosco imparted new impetus and new direction to the apostolate of the press.

8. Out of a systematic reflection, he authored important writings on the Salesian life and work.

9. All this took place while Don Bosco and Archbishop Gastaldi were locked in bitter conflict over a variety of issues—beyond the question of the approval of the Salesian Constitutions (as discussed earlier in Vol. 4, Chs 3, 4 & 6).

10. The granting of the privileges of exemption and the appointing of a vicar with right of succession by Pope Leo XIII (1884) were important developments in support of the aging founder.

In this chapter the principal documents and utterances stemming from Don Bosco and relating to the Salesian lay vocation are surveyed with brief comments. (Additional references are given to cover summarily later developments.)

## **2. The Salesian Lay Vocation in Don Bosco’s Ongoing Reflection**

After affirming the oneness of the Salesian vocation in the Constitutions, Don Bosco over the years (1860s to 1880s) engaged in reflection on the identity of the lay Salesian, and endeavored to find scope for the Salesian lay vocation.

Fr. Albert Caviglia, describing the originality of the Salesian lay vocation as Don Bosco conceived it and finally articulated it, wrote about the Salesian Brother as follows:

The creation of a religious laity actively engaged in apostolic-educative activity—that is, the placing of the lay person in street clothes on a par with the priest in the religious life and apostolate—is, together with the preventive system, Don Bosco’s most original idea.

I leave it to the reader to weigh the educational impact which the perfect

identity in condition existing between the [lay Salesian] educator and the pupil has from an educational standpoint. The youngster learns to live as a Christian lay worker from a master who is likewise a lay worker.

And how genuinely Christian, modern and democratic is this equality of status by which lay person and priest share on an equal basis the concerns of the religious life and of the apostolate, thus working together for the Christian transformation of society.

From another standpoint (and I am sure that many will agree), the Salesian brother represents symbolically an even deeper consecration than that of the Salesian priest. The latter is in a way under official obligation [to lead a life of consecration] because of the habit he wears. The Salesian brother, on the other hand, who without any outward sign lives by the evangelical counsels, exemplifies in his life the pattern of the Christian person according to which the Author of Christianity wished society to be constructed. After all, human society, by its very nature and as a whole, is lay, although in a Christian understanding it is built up by the collaboration of both the lay and the priestly component.<sup>1</sup>

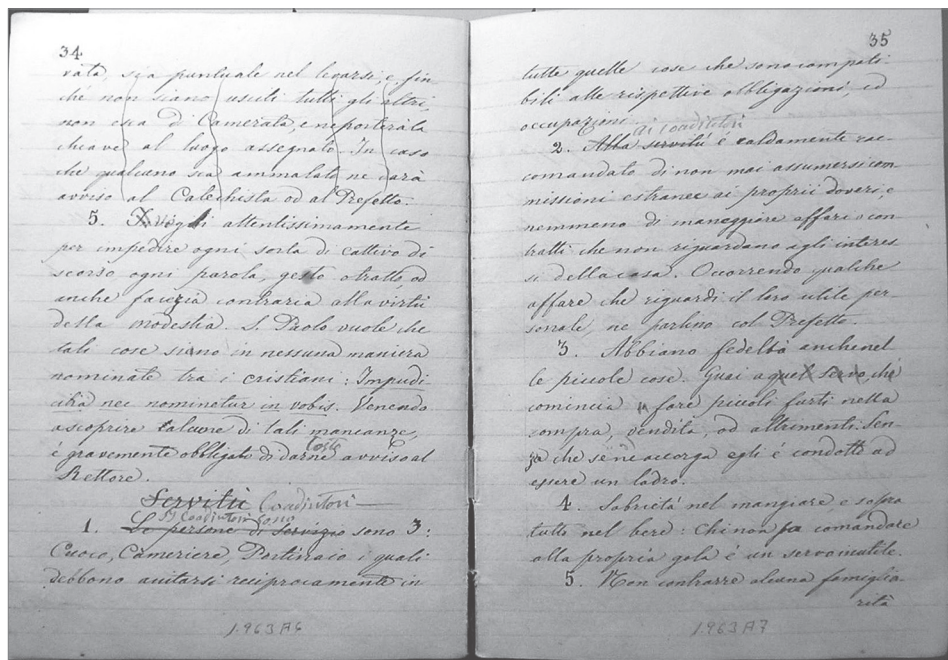
By way of comment we should note that, although the above description of the Salesian lay vocation reflects the original insights of the founder, historically the Salesian brother has been engaged in a continuous, arduous, almost elusive search for identity, and is still so engaged. Don Bosco himself struggled to incarnate the ideal in concrete historical circumstances. For even though the original insight virtually contained all that Fr. Caviglia states and more, Don Bosco labored hard and long to conceptualize the vocational identity of the Salesian brother, to define his role, and to generate “job descriptions” in actual historical circumstances.

It should also be noted that Fr. Caviglia, arguing from the reality he had observed, sees the Salesian lay vocation as connected (essentially, it seems) with the “world of work.” Such a connection, however, may just be due to historical circumstances.

Here we want to trace in historical context Don Bosco’s on-going reflection on the Salesian lay vocation by examining key documents on the subject from different periods of Don Bosco’s life.

<sup>1</sup> A. Caviglia, *Don Bosco. Profilo storico* (Torino: SEI, 1934), 131-132.





23 – Draft of the *Regulations for the Home* of 1867. Note corrections in Don Bosco's hand: "servants" and "service personnel" are changed to "Coadjutors"

## II. The Lay Salesian in the Early Constitutions<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Foundation Articles on the Purpose and Form of the Society

In the earliest draft of the Salesian Constitutions (1858) and in all succeeding revisions, Article 1 of the Chapter of Purpose places the lay Salesian side by side, and therefore on an equal juridical footing, with the clerical counterpart.

*Purpose of this Congregation.* – 1. It is the purpose of this congregation to gather together its members, priests, clerical students and laymen too, in order that they may perfect themselves by imitating the virtues of our divine Savior, (especially in his charity towards young people).

<sup>2</sup> All the quotes and references are from Motto, *Cost SDB*, 72ff.

Even when rewriting the article on a different syntactical basis (1864), Don Bosco described the membership of the Society in the same identical terms of equality: “[It] is composed of priests, clerics and laymen.”<sup>3</sup>

Likewise Article 1 of the Chapter on Form, from the earliest draft to the approved text, in describing the kind of religious consecration the “gathered” members profess, makes no distinction between the clerical and the lay component: “*All the gathered members.*”

*Form of the Congregation.* – 1. All the gathered-members (*congregati*) lead the common life, bound together only by fraternal charity and by the simple vows, which bind them to form one heart and one soul in order to love and serve God.

## 2. The Lay Member throughout the Early Constitutions

The failure to specify the role of the “layman” in the Society is one of the defects of the early constitutions. The following points indicate where and in what terms a distinction is made between clerical membership and lay membership, and where (most of the time) no distinction is made, even when a distinction might be expected. The various terms used to designate the lay member are also to be noted.

(1) *Historical Summary.* – Final sentence, 1858 only: “The persons who profess these rules at present are: 5 priests, 8 clerical students, 2 laymen [*laici*].”

(2) *Purpose* [see above] – Art. 1: 1858-1860: “to gather together its members, priests, clerical students and laymen too [*laici*];” 1864-1875: “This society is composed of priests, clerical students and laymen [*laici*].”

(3) *Form* [see above] – Many articles speak of “all associates,” “all members,” “no one,” “each one,” etc. without any distinction. The same holds true for the Chapters on: *Obedience, Poverty, Chastity, Religious Government of the Society, Practices of Piety*, and other chapters as well.

(4) *Chapters on: Religious Government, Internal Government, Election of the Rector Major, Other Superiors, Local Houses.* When speaking of superiors, including the Rector Major, and of their qualifications for office, and similar matters, it is

<sup>3</sup> The tripartite division of the membership (ecclesiastics, clerics and laymen, too) is actually bipartite, meaning “clerical and lay members.” The second category (clerics, i. e., clerical students or seminarians) is probably introduced to specify that, unlike some congregations that accepted only ordained priests as members, the Salesian Society also had clerical students not yet ordained in its membership—and laymen, too.

never stated that the superior must be a priest— that is, Brothers are never *expressly* excluded. It is certain, however, that Don Bosco took for granted that the superior is always a priest. He was establishing a “clerical” congregation of basically Tridentine form (as enjoined by Rome), and in such a congregation jurisdiction is held by an ordained person.

(5) *Chapter on Admission*, Art. 1: 1874-1875: to be admitted, laymen [*laici*] must, among other things, have received rudimentary instruction in the Catholic faith. Art. 8 (or 9): 1860-1873: Coadjutor Brothers, Adjutor Associates (*fratelli coadiutori, socii adiutores*) on entering have to bring with them their clothes and 300 lire (only). (This is like a dowry, which is higher for clerical students.)

(6) *Chapter on Studies*: The chapter on studies, first introduced in 1873, deals with studies for the priesthood. Nothing is said that concerns the Brothers.

(7) *Chapter on Practices of Piety*, Art. 2: 1864-1875: “Clerical students and Coadjutor Brothers (*fratelli coadiutori, sodales adiutores, coadiutori*) attend Mass daily and receive Holy Communion at least once a week.” When suffrages are prescribed for various deceased Salesians (whether clerical or lay), a distinction is made between (living) “priests” and “those that are not priests” (with reference to offering Mass or receiving Communion).

(8) *Chapter on Novitiate*: 1874-1875: No distinction is made between clerical and lay novices.

(9) *Chapter on Habit-Dress*, Art. 3: 1860-1875: Coadjutors, Adjutor Members (*coadiutori, socii adiutores*) are to wear black, if possible.

### 3. Comments on the Lay Member in the Early Constitutions

First, it is certain that the terms, *laymen*, *lay associates*, *coadjutor brothers*, etc. as used throughout the early constitutions refer to the same institutional reality, and that the variety in usage does not reflect a change in concept.

Secondly, by these terms Don Bosco meant to designate uniquely “the Salesian Brother”, that is, the lay vocation expressing the one kind of consecration in the Salesian Society. Consequently, he did not mean to designate the “extern members” to be introduced after 1860 (who could be priests);<sup>4</sup> nor, as Don Bosco makes it abundantly clear, *conversi*, or *brothers* as in older religious orders.

<sup>4</sup> The three extern members on record (including Fr. Pestarino) were priests.

Thirdly, Where did Don Bosco get the idea? Lay people had been part of religious communities, forming new, modern forms of association with the clerical membership, long before Don Bosco established his Society. Thus, for instance, the Cavanis Constitutions (1839), which Don Bosco used as a model in compiling his own, had a similar formula (not the idea): “This Congregation of the Schools of Charity is a society of secular priests and clerics, with attached lay brothers as servants” [Ch. 1, Art. 1]. The Vincentian Constitutions also (1642-1670) could have provided the formula and (to some extent) the idea: “This Congregation is composed of priests [ecclesiastics] and laymen” [Ch. 1, Art. 2].

In either case, however, the formula may be the same but the reality is different. In the first instance, these lay religious were servants; and in the latter instance, they functioned in a secondary capacity within a society of priests with private vows or promises. Don Bosco, on the contrary, had seen the viability of one vocation for both the lay religious and the clerical religious, both sharing the same consecration and apostolate. More accurately stated, Don Bosco was thinking of one Salesian religious vocation that would be open to members who might opt either for the priesthood or for the lay state.<sup>5</sup> This is the originality of which Fr. Caviglia speaks.

But in spite of the clear initial statement about the lay Salesian throughout the history of the constitutional text from 1858 to 1875, the Salesian lay vocation remained unspecified. Apparently Don Bosco required time and experience to conceptualize and express in practice the nature and the apostolic task of the lay Salesian.

<sup>5</sup> At what point before 1858 (when first attested in the Constitutions) Don Bosco might have developed the concept cannot be documented. That he had been thinking along those lines before 1858 may be deduced from the last sentence of the Historical Summary which was the second chapter of the first draft of the Constitutions. There he states: “The persons that are at present committed to the observance of these Constitutions are 15 in number: 5 priests, 8 clerical students and 2 laymen” [Motto, *Const. SDB*, 70]. We do not know who these 2 laymen were, for at the founding in 1859 there were no laymen (unless Joseph Gaia was among them). Louis Chiapale is called a layman only because he had not yet donned the clerical habit). Joseph Rossi (who is reckoned as the first lay Salesian) was admitted to the “practice of the rule” (novitiate) in 1861, though he did not profess until 1864. Meanwhile at the first official (temporary) professions in 1862 two lay Salesians (Joseph Gaia and Frederick Oreglia di Santo Stefano) were among those who professed.

### III. Early Documents Apart From the Constitutions – The Term *Coadjutor*

As described above, in the early Constitutions, Don Bosco uses a number of terms to describe the same reality. One of these is *Coadjutor*, which appears for the first time in the draft of 1860 and several times thereafter. The same term *Coadjutor*, however, occurs in other early documents, where it either does not refer to the lay vocation, or is at best used ambiguously. One must therefore deal with this term in context.

#### 1. Regulations [*Piano di Regolamento*] for the House Attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales

The Central Archives preserve several drafts of the *Regulations for the Home*, some of which corrected by Don Bosco. These manuscripts are dated: 1852, 1855, and 1867. Chapter 8 deals with *Domestics*.

In the 1855 Ms. (in Rua's hand with corrections by Don Bosco), Ch. 8 is entitled, “*Servitù*” (Servants, Domestics). Art. 1 & 5 of Ch. 8 are relevant to our discussion.<sup>6</sup>

##### Chapter 8. Domestics (*Servitù*)

1. The domestics (*persone di servizio*) are [employed in] three [areas, as]: cook, waiter (*cameriere*) and doorkeeper. They are to help each other in all things, as compatible with their individual duties.

5. They must not be on familiar terms (*contrarre familiarità*) with the boys (*figli*). [They should certainly show] respect and charity toward all [the boys they have to deal with] in the fulfillment of their duties, but they should never enter into close relationships (*confidenza*) or [develop] particular friendships.

In the draft of 1867 of the same regulations Don Bosco himself introduced changes. In a copy with marginal and interlinear corrections in his own

<sup>6</sup> ASC D482: *Piano di Regolamento* (1855), Ms. Rua with others, corrections by Don Bosco; FDBM 1,959 B3 (A4-D3). Other Mss. of these Draft Regulations (with identical text for Ch. 8) are in the same location in ASC D482 and in FDBM. Two of these are dated 1852, a third, with corrections by Don Bosco, bears no date, but it appears to be from the same year. The text given in EBM IV, 547 is derived from one of these.

hand, Don Bosco changed the title of Ch. 8, “Domestics,” to “Coadjutors,” and emended the text of Ch. 8 (otherwise unchanged) accordingly—as follows:

**Chapter 8. Domestics** (*Serviti*) Coadjutors (*Coadiutori*)

1. The domestics (*persone di servizio*) Coadjutors are [employed in] three [areas, as]: cook, waiter (*cameriere*) and doorkeeper. They are to help each other in all things, as compatible with their individual duties.

5. They must not be on familiar terms (*contrarre familiarità*) with the boys (*figli*). [They should certainly show] respect and charity toward all [the boys they have to deal with] in the fulfillment of their duties; but they should never enter into close relationships of a worldly nature (*secolare confidenza*) or [develop] particular friendships.<sup>7</sup>

Henceforth Chapter 8 will use the term “Coadjutors.”<sup>8</sup> It appears that the change was due to the fact by that time Salesian brothers (who, as mentioned above, were called also “coadjutors” in the early Constitutions) were serving in those capacities. However, the text of Chapter 8 throughout remained written for domestics. It is possible that at first the term coadjutor was applied indiscriminately to all lay persons who “helped” at the Oratory in some capacity. Eventually, however, a distinction was made between domestic helpers (*persone di servizio*) and Salesian helpers (coadjutors, *coadiutori*). This appears in the definitive Regulations printed in 1877. Chapter 8 remained largely written for domestics as late as that, but it was entitled “Coadjutors and Domestics;” and a distinction was made in a new article, which read:

**Chapter 8. Coadjutors and Domestics**

7. The Coadjutors who belong to the Salesian Congregation are to observe the practices of piety as laid down in the Rules.

The question of terminology was raised at General Chapter III (1883), as will be discussed below. Don Bosco thought that the term, “Coadjutor” for the Salesian brother should be retained, because it was in the usage of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, but should not be used for domestics.

<sup>7</sup> ASC D482: *Regolamento della Casa Annessa* (1867), FDBM 1,963 A6-8 (1,962 C9-1,963 D2).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the calligraphic copy dated 1867, FDBM 1,961 C8 & 10 (1,960 D10-1,962 C8).



## 2. Confidential Guidelines (*Ricordi confidenziali*) for Directors

The same kind of “ambiguity” and evolution is documented in the *Confidential Guidelines to Directors*.

This set of instructions was originally contained in a letter of Don Bosco to Fr. Rua, when the latter was appointed director of the school at Mirabello (1863). They were successively reedited and expanded for more general use, and were printed in their definitive form in 1886.<sup>9</sup>

Chapter 4 of the *Confidential Guidelines* of 1863 consists of four articles and is entitled, “With Domestics (*Colle persone di servizio*).” It reads:

### **With Domestics** (*Colle persone di servizio*)

1° They should not be on familiar terms with the boys. See that they have the opportunity of hearing holy Mass every morning and of receiving the holy Sacraments every fortnight or once a month.

2° Always be kind in giving orders [to domestics], and make it clear that you are interested in their souls’ welfare. Women [doing housework as domestics] should not be allowed to enter the boys’ dormitories or the kitchen; nor should they deal with anyone in the house except for reasons of charity or necessity.

3° Should any disagreement arise between domestics and boys, or other persons in the seminary,<sup>10</sup> listen kindly to all concerned; but as a rule give your opinion separately, so that what you say to one may not be heard by the others.

4° A person of proven integrity (*probità*) should be appointed as head of the domestics. He should especially watch over the work and the moral conduct of those under him (*subalterni*). He should zealously endeavor to prevent theft and bad talk.<sup>11</sup>

As may be seen, these instructions of 1863 refer entirely to domestic personnel. However, at some uncertain date before 1871, probably in the late

<sup>9</sup> For a study of archival documents and for a critical edition of the texts of 1883 and 1886 see F. Motto, *I “Ricordi Confidenziali ai Direttori” di Don Bosco*, Piccola Biblioteca dell’Istituto Storico Salesiano, 1 (Roma: LAS, 1984). The version of 1863 is edited in *EBM* VII, 318; the extended version of 1871, with a critical note is edited in *EBM* X, 449.

<sup>10</sup> The school of Mirabello was named, and was in reality, the *Junior Seminary of Mirabello*. It functioned in that capacity at the request of Bishop Ferrè of Casale, in whose diocese it was located.

<sup>11</sup> *ASC* A0951002: *Lettere originali di Don Bosco*: Rua; *FDBM* 47 A4 (A2-5); Motto, *Ricordi*, 26; *EBM* VII, 524.



sixties, Don Bosco rewrote the chapter in question to include “Coadjutors.” He did this by personally correcting and expanding a draft of the earlier text in Fr. Berto’s hand, as follows (Don Bosco’s additions are given in *italics*):

### With Coadjutors and with Domestics

1° They should not be on familiar terms with the boys. See that they have the opportunity of hearing holy Mass every morning and of receiving the holy Sacraments ~~every fortnight or once a month~~ *in accordance with [what is prescribed by] the Rules of the Congregation*. Domestics should be encouraged to go to confession every fortnight or once a month.

2° Be ~~always~~ very kind in giving orders, and make it clear [to them] that you are interested in their souls’ welfare. Women [doing housework as domestics] should not be allowed to enter the boys’ dormitories or the kitchen; nor should they deal with anyone in the house except for reasons of charity or of absolute necessity. *This article is of the greatest importance.*

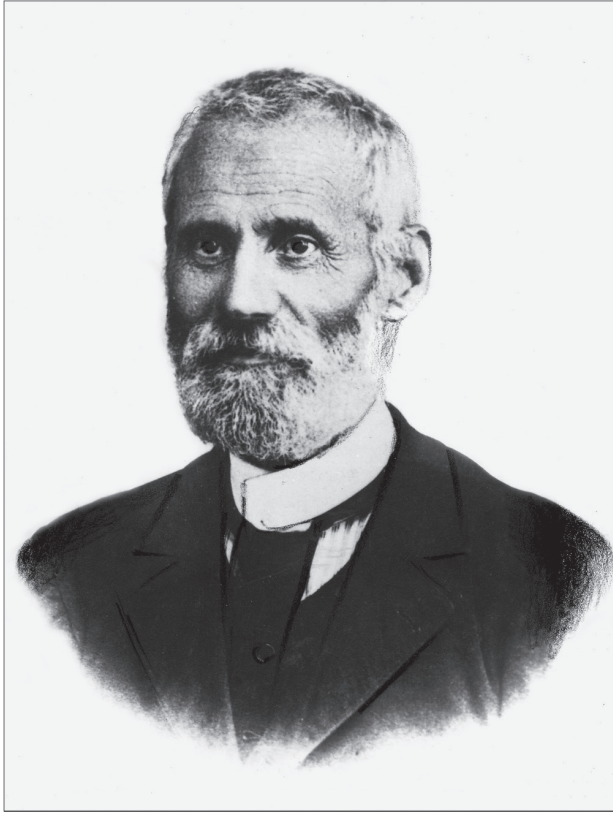
3° Should any disagreement or quarrel arise among domestics or among assistants or among the boys or other persons,<sup>12</sup> listen kindly to all concerned; but as a rule give your opinion separately, so that what you say to one may not be heard by the others.

4° A ~~person~~ *coadjutor* of proven integrity (*probità*) should be appointed as head of the domestics. He should ~~especially~~ watch over the work and the moral conduct of ~~those under him (subalterni) the domestics (serviti)~~, ~~He should zealously endeavor~~ so as to prevent theft and bad talk. He should constantly try to prevent anyone from taking on commitments, [that is, any] business involving outsiders, whoever they may be.<sup>13</sup>

In all successive drafts of the *Confidential Guidelines* coadjutors appear in association with domestics. And in spite of the fact that the corrections show that the two categories are clearly to be distinguished, the newer drafts of the chapter retains features of the old draft, thus causing ambiguity or confusion. For example, the prohibition, “They should not be on familiar terms with the boys” (Art. 1, referring not to particular friendships, or the like, but to mixing and contact) had been written exclusively for domestics. It does not apply to

<sup>12</sup> Don Bosco probably meant to say: “between domestics, or between [coadjutor] assistants and the boys or other persons.”

<sup>13</sup> ASC A095: *Ricordi Confidenziali*, FDBM 1,361 E4. This is a good copy by Berto with corrections in Don Bosco’s hand. For a discussion of date and features, cf. Motto, *Ricordi*, 12-13.



24 – Salesian coadjutor brother Marcello Rossi (1847-1923), who for 48 years served as manager of the Salesian bookstore of Valdocco

Salesian Brothers, who by the time this draft was produced were demonstrably active as educators and administrators, especially in workshops.<sup>14</sup>

The term *Coadjutor* to designate the Salesian Brother was now well established, not only in the Constitutions (as shown above), but also in general Salesian parlance, both written and oral. What is the precise denotation of the term? On linguistic or etymological grounds, the component “co-” should probably not be taken too strictly, because Don Bosco in the Constitutions used also the simple form “*adjutores*” for the same reality. But from the com-

<sup>14</sup> Because of this apparent ambiguity, this prohibition was at one time erroneously understood by some as excluding the Salesian Brother from participating in Salesian educational work.

posite form some have argued that the term denotes a *co-helper*—that is, one who helps, together with the clerical section of the Society (presumably on an equal basis), in the Salesian work. In this sense the priests would also co-adjutors. Don Bosco used to say to prospective candidates, “Come and help Don Bosco;” but it is a fact that Salesian priests and clerical students are never called co-adjutors. It seems therefore that co-participation on an equal basis in the Salesian vocation and apostolate, real as it should be, must be predicated on grounds other than of etymology.

#### IV. Documents From the Seventies

In the 1870s Don Bosco began to articulate and speak of the Salesian lay vocation in the context of the development of the workshops and their vocational program.

##### 1. Don Bosco’s Conference of October 29, 1872 – addressed to novices, both clerical and lay

Caesar Chiala, who was a novice in the year 1872-73, took notes on talks addressed by Don Bosco to the novices both clerical and lay at Valdocco.<sup>15</sup>

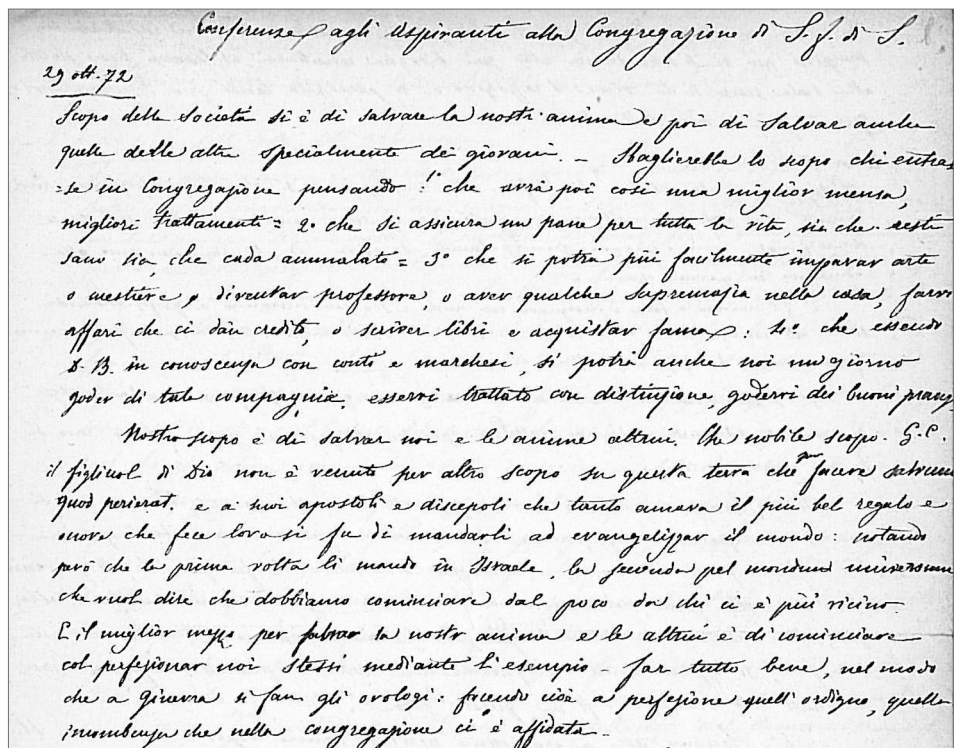
##### *Context and Contents of the Conference*

The conference dated October 29, 1872 is on the “Purpose of the Society.” After stating the purpose in the simplest possible terms (salvation of soul’s, one’s own and others’, especially boys), Don Bosco addresses lay novices (*EBM*, *ad sensum*, has “lay religious”) and tells them that the salvation of souls is everyone’s business, not the priests’ alone. All are called to contribute, each in their own special way—in the case, through the skill acquired in one of the workshops.

Through this 1872 address of Don Bosco, we first learn of Salesian lay vocations being drawn from the “artisan” section of the Oratory. It appears that up until mid-seventies the workshops (the artisan section) were not a

<sup>15</sup> *ASC* A0250201: *Conferenze*, Chiala, Conf. agli Aspiranti, 29 ott. ’72, *FDBM* 441 E11-12; edited in *EBM* X, 474-482.

real source of Salesian lay vocations, as Don Bosco will explain in 1876 (to be discussed below). In the seventies not many of the relatively small number of lay Salesians that had joined since 1860 (Joseph Rossi having apparently been the first in 1861) had come up through the Oratory workshops or even through the school. Most of them had joined Don Bosco as young adults or as adults from "outside," with varying degrees and kinds of education.



25 – Caesar Chiala's holograph of his report of Don Bosco's address to the novices (October 29, 1872): "The purpose of our Society is to save our own souls and the souls of others, especially of young people..."

But apparently by this time (1872) some young men from the artisan section had either joined or aspired to join, though Don Bosco would not publicly advertise the Salesian lay vocation to the artisan community until 1876. It should be emphasized that these young "working" men had indeed learned a trade, but they had had very little "vocational training" through a program of study, and hardly any liberal education at all. Such a situation was a historical

“given.” Moreover (and this was also a historical “given”) fostering priestly vocations through piety and study (the liberal arts curriculum) was *the* priority for the Society as for the Church at large. Traditionally the priest alone held the roles of minister, evangelizer, educator, and more. One would think that with the secularization of society through the liberal revolution the priority would shift to developing an educated Christian and religious laity for key roles in education. But that was not to be for yet a while!

In the meantime a conjunction of historical circumstances relating to the “world of work” made possible an expansion of the field of activity for the Salesian brother. Don Bosco’s quick perception of social movements persuaded him that committing the Salesian brother as a religious and as an educator to this “world of work” was a practical way of defining the field of activity of the Salesian lay vocation. In this context, as the workshops were gradually developing into a proper vocational school, Don Bosco saw the artisan community at the Oratory as playing a larger role.

*Text of Don Bosco’s Conference of October 29, 1872*

EBM X, 476-477.

### 3. Purpose of the Society

The purpose of our Society is to save our own souls and the souls of others, especially of boys.

It would be a mistake to enter the Congregation in the hope of faring better as regards food, health care, education, positions of authority, fame, social contacts, and so on.

Our goal is to save our souls and those of others. How noble an aim! Jesus Christ, the Son of God came into this world for no other purpose than to save what was lost. The finest gift he bestowed on his dearly beloved apostles and disciples was to send them out to evangelize the world. It is noteworthy that he sent them first to Israel and later to the whole world. So, also, we are to begin with those who are nearest to us.

The best way to save our soul and that of others is to reform ourselves and set a good example. Let us do everything with the precision of Swiss watches. Let us perfectly carry out the task the Congregation has entrusted to us. Some of you lay novices may say:<sup>16</sup> “The Congregation may well aim at saving souls, but

<sup>16</sup> IBM has “*qualcuno degli artigiani*.” EBM translates “some lay religious.” Don Bosco was speaking to novices (both clerical and lay); hence he meant, “Some of you lay novices.”

this is for priests, not for us.” Nowhere does the communion of saints appear so true as in a religious congregation, where anything one religious does benefits the others. Those who preach and hear confessions must eat. How would they manage without a cook? So, also, learned teachers need clothes and shoes, and how will they get along without tailors and shoemakers? The same is true of our bodies. The head is more important than the leg, the eye more than the foot, but the body needs both. If a thorn should pierce the foot, immediately head, eyes and hands are mobilized to its aid.

Here the comparison of a watch factory is quite apropos. When all the components of a watch are precision-made, they mesh perfectly. The result is a precision watch. True, some parts are more delicate and essential than others, but remove any part at all and the watch will no longer function properly.

One whose authority or learning gives him a higher position should remember what David said at the height of his glory: “Being exalted, I have been humbled and troubled” (Ps. 87:16). The higher one’s station, the more the need to be humble. It’s like a fireman’s extension ladder; the higher one climbs, the tighter must be his grip, lest he get dizzy. The higher you go, the harder the fall!

*Comment: Commitment of the Brother to the “World of Work”*

The workshops and the artisan community had been established at Valdocco in connection with the “hostel” for *practical reasons*—primarily in order to provide extra protection for those young apprentices by removing them from the moral dangers and abusive treatment met with in workshops in the city. There was an added practical reason: as these lads were extremely poor, and perhaps unable or unwilling to “study,” it was important that they should acquire the means whereby to earn an honest livelihood. Moreover, the workshops would supply needed goods and services for the house, and also serve a limited external clientele.

Hence the six workshops established at the Oratory between 1853 and 1862 (shoemakers, tailors, bookbinders, cabinetmakers, ironworkers and printers) served practical purposes. In principle, Don Bosco would not have wanted to keep a lad restricted to a tradesman or a peasant condition, with no access to education and no possibility of social betterment, unless it couldn’t be helped.

However, the programs of mass education of the liberal revolution and the gradual introduction of new methods of production brought about a new situation. Don Bosco was quick to see the workshops (gradually turning into a vocational school) as playing a new role, and thus decided to offer the



artisan community of the Oratory the challenge of the Salesian lay vocation in that connection.

Meanwhile Don Bosco had already experienced the value of the few Brothers that had joined in the sixties, precisely with reference to the direction and administration of workshops. Lemoyne reports that from the standpoint of direction and general organization the workshops passed through several phases. At first Don Bosco had gotten hired crafts masters, under various arrangements, to run the workshops for him. Not happy with these arrangements, at a certain point he himself stepped in as director and manager of the entire sector. But he succeeded in placing things on a sound basis only when, after 1860, he could dispose of his own Salesians lay to direct and manage the workshops.

The Regulations for the Workshops of 1862, replacing earlier ones, reflected this new organization. Above the crafts master (by force of circumstances not a Salesian) there stood a new presence, a “lay Salesian assistant” whose duty it was to watch over the moral conduct of the youngsters, to manage the shop, and to procure equipment and materials. Joseph Rossi, Frederick Oreglia, and Joseph Buzzetti served in this capacity. Joseph Gaia, on the other hand, worked as a cook. True, this structure was modified by the introduction of a “clerical assistant” charged with the moral and disciplinary supervision of the boys (an arrangement embodied in the definitive Regulations published in 1877). However, this was done (probably and mostly) to free the lay Salesian for a more effective direction and management of increasingly larger and more complicated workshop programs.

In the context of the historic social developments referred to above, these successful experiences prompted Don Bosco to commit the lay Salesian to the “world of work” in a big way. But we should note (as we already have noted above) that in relating the Salesian lay vocation to the “workshop,” Don Bosco was responding to concrete historical circumstances and trying to adapt to them. He was not defining the Salesian lay vocation *as such* in those terms.

Historical circumstances and practical concerns played a part in determining the direction toward which the activity of the lay Salesian was steered, and for which the “working component” in Salesian houses (as General Chapters III and IV express it) was trained and educated. But it would be wrong to think that in setting forth the idea of the Salesian lay vocation in the Constitutions in the late fifties Don Bosco was motivated primarily either by historical developments in society, or even less by pragmatic concerns of his own.



We should rather think that he did so out of a profound understanding of the nature of religious life and of the possibilities it offered to a layperson. We may safely say that Don Bosco never relinquished the idea of a companion Salesian lay vocation working generally for the salvation of souls side by side with the priest, and active particularly in areas closed to the priest either by custom or by law.

The workshops became definitively oriented toward the new “world of work,” gradually developing into a vocational school, in mid-eighties. General Chapter II (1880) discussed introducing some morning classes for the artisans, but it did not take action on developing a program of training and study for a vocational school. On the other hand, General Chapter III (1883), as will be discussed below, drafted a comprehensive program of study, training and formation that was expanded and finalized in General Chapter IV (1886).

Thus, from mid-seventies on, Don Bosco, sensing perhaps that new great developments were afoot, launched his recruiting campaign among the artisans.

Furthermore, after the approval of the Constitutions (1874) Don Bosco was entering a period of reflection (trying to systematize, even theoretically, aspects of his work), and embarking on new ventures. The new foundations in Italy, in France and in South America (with plans for even greater expansion) made the presence of lay Salesians even more important.

In this respect it should be borne in mind that, though without publicity, Don Bosco had not been idle. In 1876 there were 50 professed lay Salesians in the Society (28 in perpetual, and 22 in triennial vows); and there were 28 coadjutor novices and 25 coadjutor aspirants waiting in the wings.

It was under these circumstances that in 1876, in two addresses, he sent out his appeal to the artisan community of Valdocco.

## **2. Don Bosco's Conference of March 19, 1876**

*EBM* XII, 459-464.

### *Source and Context*

The *Biographical Memoirs* describe the occasion of Don Bosco's address and give Barberis as the source. Ceria writes:

Usually St. Joseph's feast was marked by a conference of Father Rua to the Salesians of the Oratory, but, as he was then visiting our schools and supervising mid-year theology examinations of our clerics, Don Bosco gladly took his place. He spoke to the Salesians, the novices, the postulants, as well as the Sons of Mary and students of the last two secondary grades [4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> *ginnasio*]. [...]

Two hundred and five [people] attended Don Bosco's conference, whose theme was the biblical text, "The harvest is rich, but the workers are few" [Lk 10:21].

The following day, Father Barberis reconstructed Don Bosco's conference from notes he had made during the talk. Though he stated he was more concerned with substance than with words, he still did us a remarkable service [...].

Father Barberis commented: "[Don Bosco's] message was very plain, but he spoke with such energy that in the following days several young men asked to join the Salesian Congregation [...]."

*Text of Don Bosco's Address (as reported by Barberis<sup>17</sup>)*

*Mensis multa, operarii pauci*

One day Our Divine Savior was walking through the countryside in the neighborhood of Samaria. Gazing about him at the plains and valleys and seeing a bountiful harvest, he pointed it out to his apostles that they too might enjoy the sight. Soon, however, they noticed that there was no one to harvest it. Turning to the apostles and certainly alluding to something far more sublime, Jesus said to them, "The harvest is great but laborers are scarce."

Throughout the centuries the Church and people of all nations have reechoed this anguished cry.

You quickly grasp that by fields and vineyards our Divine Savior meant the Church and all mankind and that the harvest he had in mind was the souls to be gathered into his granary. How abundant a harvest this is! Millions of souls live on this earth and vast is the work which remains if everyone is to be saved! But the workers are few—not just priests but all those who in one way or another work for the salvation of souls. Certainly, priests are more directly involved in harvesting souls, but they are not alone, nor are there enough of them. All those who work for the salvation of souls are called apostolic laborers, just as all who help in harvesting are themselves harvesters.

See how many kinds of laborers we need to work a field. Some plow, others clear the ground, break up clods, rake the soil, sow seeds and cover them with

<sup>17</sup> Discussed in *EBM* XII, 112-113 and transcribed *ibid.*, 459-464.

earth. Then a dozen other tasks have to be done before the wheat is finally harvested and stored.<sup>7</sup>

The Church, too, needs all kinds of laborers, and I mean all kinds. No one can ever say, "My conduct is blameless, but I would never be any good working for God's greater glory." Don't think that way, because everyone can do his share.

The laborers are few. What a blessing it would be to have enough priests for every city, town, village, and hamlet—enough to convert the whole world. Since this is impossible, others must lend a hand. Besides, how are priests to give full time to their ministry if they do not have persons to bake their bread and cook their food? Suppose they had to make their own shoes and clothing.

A priest must have help, and I believe I am not wrong in saying that all of you here present—priests, students, artisans, and coadjutors—can become true evangelical laborers in the Lord's vineyard.

How? In many ways: for instance, you can all pray, and this is the most important element mentioned by Our Savior in remarking on the scarcity of laborers. Therefore pray to the Master of the vineyard to send laborers into His harvest.

Prayer strongly appeals to God's goodness and as it were compels Him to send workers. So, let us pray for our own country and for foreign lands, for the needs of our own families and cities, for souls still shrouded in the darkness of idolatry, superstition and heresy.

Let us all pray most heartily and insistently to the Lord of the harvest.

Another thing we can all do, extremely helpful and effective, is to give good example. How much good we can accomplish this way—good example in word, encouraging each other to do what is right and offering salutary advice. One person may have doubts about his vocation, another may be set to make an irreparably harmful decision. Timely good advice and encouragement can avert that. Often indeed a single word can mark the difference between choosing the right path or the wrong.

St. Paul used to exhort the faithful to be a "lamp set aflame and burning bright" [cf. 2 Pt. 1:19]. Oh that such a light were visible in us, and that everyone were edified by our words and deeds! If we only had that burning love that makes us put everything aside in order to help others! If we only had that perfect chastity which enables us to wipe out all vices, that meekness that conquers all hearts! Then I believe that we would draw the entire world into our nets.

[A few paragraphs with moral and spiritual advice follow. Then:]

These and a thousand other ways are open to all workers in the Lord's vineyard, be they priests, clerics or laymen, regardless of age and position. Everyone, you see, can help gather in the Gospel harvest as long as one is motivated by zeal for God's honor and the salvation of souls.

Now you may wonder, "What are you driving at, Don Bosco? What are you trying to tell us and why?"

My dear sons, the cry, “The laborers are few,” did not resound only in past eras, but it is more imperative than ever in our present day and age. The harvest allotted to our Congregation grows daily at such a pace that I may well say that we do not know where to begin or how to go about our task. That is why I would like to see all of you very soon working hard in the Lord’s vineyard.

An extraordinary number of requests for new resident schools, houses and mission stations reach us from different parts of Italy, France, and foreign countries, such as Gibraltar, Algeria, Egypt, Sudan, Arabia, India, China, Japan, Australia, Argentina, Paraguay, and practically all of South America. Everywhere the scarcity of evangelical workers is thoroughly shocking when we consider how much good can be done and remains undone through lack of missionaries. Heartrending news comes to us from Father Cagliero. In Argentina a priest does not ask his penitent “How long has it been since your last confession?” but “Have you ever gone to confession?” Not infrequently men and women between the ages of thirty and forty reply that they have never been to confession. And this is not due to dislike for the Church, but only because there was never an opportunity. So you can imagine how many will find themselves at death’s door, desirous of making their confession and receiving absolution and this consolation cannot be theirs because very rarely is a priest available.

But I do not intend to urge you to journey to such distant lands. Some can, but not all, and there are reasons. First, we have an urgent need right here, and again, not everyone called to the Salesian Congregation is inclined to go so far. But in view of such need and such a lack of evangelical laborers, how could I remain silent? Realizing that you can all in one way or another work in the Lord’s vineyard, how could I keep from revealing my heart’s hidden desire? Yes, really, I would hope to see you all eager to work like so many apostles. This is the goal of all my thoughts, cares and efforts. This is the reason for our crash courses, and for the greater opportunities we offer you to don the clerical habit, and for other special study courses.<sup>18</sup>

How was I to remain silent in the face of so many and such urgent needs? How was I to turn a deaf ear to people appealing to us from all sides? I feel that it is God Himself speaking through them. Can I remain silent and not try to increase the ranks of missionaries, when God makes it so clear that He wants to accomplish great things through our Congregation?

[Paragraphs of moral and spiritual exhortation follow. Then, in conclusion:]

Let a strong brotherly love reign among us so that what happened in the Church will also occur in our Congregation. Besides the apostles there were seventy-two disciples, deacons, and other evangelical co-workers; they all worked in

<sup>18</sup> Don Bosco is referring to the Work of Mary Help of Christians (Son of Mary), established in 1875-76 for young adult vocations. An accelerated course of study was offered to them, leading quickly to donning of the clerical habit and eventually to ordination.

harmony with each other, all bound together, firmly united in love. That is why they succeeded, as they did, in changing the face of the earth; so, too, with us. Wherever we may be, whatever tasks may be assigned to us, let us strive to save souls, and above all, our own. Do that, and it is enough.

*Comment: Significance of Don Bosco's Appeal*

The significant thing in this address is that Don Bosco spoke to a group representing all sections of the Oratory community, including “the lay component.” And under the theme, *Messis multa, operarii pauci* (the harvest is plentiful, the workers are few), he spoke of the mission entrusted by Christ to his Church and by the Church to the Salesian Congregation, and of the need for all kinds of workers, “priests, students, artisans, and coadjutors.” He outlined ways of helping others spiritually and of preparing oneself to be a worthy evangelical laborer.

### **3. The Good Night Talk to the Artisans of March 31, 1876**

*EBM XII*, 120-123.

*Source and Occasion*

In this “Good Night,” reported by Ceria in *Biographical Memoirs*, Don Bosco “unveiled” the lay vocation, and invited the artisans to consider this possibility. Explaining the occasion, Ceria writes: “In the last few evenings of March Don Bosco gave three ‘Good Nights.’ Constructive and brief, these talks, *rescued from oblivion*, are delightful in their freshness and insight.”<sup>19</sup> On March 26 he spoke to “students and Salesians.” On March 30 he spoke to the boys’ community on various points of discipline.

The third “Good Night,” on the last day of the month, was addressed *to the artisans alone*.

<sup>19</sup> *EBM XII*, 113-114.

*Text of the “Good Night” Talk of March 31, 1876*

Time has passed since our last get-together after night prayers and you have seen many things happen since then, such as the disbanding and reassembling of the brass band. I believe you’ve been told why this was done. The main, really the only reason, was that although some boys were doing very well, many others were not. A good musician is one who brings joy to people as they hear the music that we shall one day enjoy in paradise. But many of the musicians acted as if they wanted the devil to rejoice. [...] <sup>20</sup>

One thing that badly hurt you and grieved me, to the point that I had to expel several boys, was my sad discovery that some of you were thieves, chronic complainers and foul-mouthed individuals. I was very, very sorry to dismiss them, mostly because some had no place to go and would have to fend for themselves. But what else were we to do? When a boy no longer heeds his superiors and acts as a ravening wolf among his companions, I cannot let him stay here to harm the rest of you. You know that we do not give in on this point; I cannot tolerate your suffering harm in the matter of morals.

Be on your guard. If any of you have unfortunately failed in this matter, let him turn a new leaf, and let him not start talking about it with others, for they would thereby ruin their own reputation and risk expulsion. If anyone cannot make up his mind to mend his ways or does not intend to obey the rules, let him say so and look for some other place. We shall even give him whatever certificates he needs. In this way everything will be done peacefully and we shall remain friends as before.

Otherwise, if the evil action is discovered, the culprit will be expelled in disgrace and would not receive a good conduct recommendation from us. He would thus risk losing any chance for employment for such a statement is a necessary prerequisite for obtaining employment today.

But I didn’t come here tonight to talk about unpleasant things. I also want to tell you that I am most pleased with those of you who frequently come to me, not only in the confessional but also in the playground and for private talks. It’s quite a change from the time when artisans looked on Don Bosco as if he were a scarecrow and kept clear of him. In those days students would throng about my confessional, especially on Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings, but, in spite of all my efforts, I could get very few artisans to come or none at all. Things have improved, but, to tell the truth, a few of you let a considerable time go by without showing up. Remember that I am always very glad to see you in church and everywhere else. But don’t just come to please me. Come for some good advice.

<sup>20</sup> Don Bosco disbanded the artisan’s brass band for its lack of discipline in 1875. And reestablished it on a new basis in early 1876. For this band he wrote a set of regulations.

Another thing I want to tell you. The day before yesterday and today some of you asked me if they could join the Salesian Congregation. I gave each of them an answer, but since I know that others would like to ask the same question, let me give all of you a quick reply. I think that nearly all of you know of our Congregation. It is not just for priests or aspirants to the priesthood; it is also for artisans. It is a Society of priests, clerics and laymen—artisans especially—who wish to work together trying to help one another and others spiritually. So keep in mind that our Congregation numbers quite a few lay brothers. Anyone who wants to save his soul is welcome. If some of you really have this desire because you foresee that, after leaving the Oratory, you will suffer spiritual harm and, after a miserable earthly life, risk eternal damnation, you may ask to join the Congregation.

“What do we do for food and clothing?” you may ask. With endless trust in Divine Providence, a most compassionate mother, let me assure you that we will never lack what we need both in sickness and in health, in youth and old age. This is why many have decided to join our Congregation. Outside, they might be abandoned, rejected, helpless and pushed aside in illness or old age, but here they will want for nothing. So if you are looking for a place where you will never lack food, lodging, or clothing, ask to join this Congregation, which will also care for your spiritual needs. Note also that our Congregation makes no distinction among its members; all are treated equally, be they lay brothers, clerics or priests, for we regard one another as brothers. Meals are the same for all; what is served to Don Bosco, to Father Lazzero or to Father Chiala, your director, is also served to the rest of the members.

You may say: “Don Bosco really wishes us to join. He would be quite pleased if we did.” No, my dear friends; let no one join our Society to please me, not at all. I am not urging you to join. I have told you these things so that you may know how matters stand and may see if this is what you want in life—for no other reason. I am not pressuring anyone. If you want to join, fine; if not, don’t worry.

Another thing: on joining our Congregation, anyone wishing to go to [South] America would have a chance to do so. However, we do not send anyone there against his will, only those who want to go. You know that some companions of yours who were here last year now labor there as missionaries and are doing much good. While they were here, they rated the same as everyone else, but now they rate pretty high. You remember Gioia: here he was a cobbler; now I understand he has become a famous jack-of-all-trades. He cooks, cobbles and catechizes. You know Scavini, an artisan carpenter. Well, he heads a cabinet-making shop where he trains some twenty boys, and in the short time he has been there he has done wonders. And Belmonte, remember him? He thought he had no special talents when he was here; now we hear great things about him: he is sacristan, musician, catechist and even housekeeper of our residence in Buenos



Aires. I could also mention Molinari, who is now studying music. Last year they were all simple artisans. Now they are respected, honored men in Argentina. Well, anyone who wishes to go has every opportunity to do so, while the rest can tranquilly stay here.

Before I leave for Rome, I'll have a letter written in your name to the Pope, of whom I shall ask a special blessing for you, my dear artisans. I hope that it will be of spiritual and material benefit to you, and above all that it will make you strong in resisting all the devil's temptations that so sorely beset boys your age. Most particularly I hope that this blessing will help you overcome all temptations against the virtue of modesty. [...] Take heart and you will see that God, through the blessing of His vicar, will enable you to overcome the devil. What more would you like me to say to you?

*Comment on the Significance of Don Bosco's Talk to the Artisans (March 31, 1876)*

Ceria writes:

This little talk is far more important than it would seem at first glance. It aimed at presenting the lay Salesian and inviting generous-hearted artisans to think of possibly joining the Salesian Congregation. Don Bosco had never spoken so publicly and so plainly on this subject. The conference he gave on the feast of St. Joseph [March 19] may have been meant to prepare the way.<sup>21</sup>

True, in this important statement Don Bosco began by expressing his displeasure with the poor behavior of some, but he went on to note with joy the fact that the artisan community as a whole appeared much improved. This may be the reason why he had not "officially" offered the Salesian vocation to the artisans before this time.

After such an introduction, (1) in the words of the Constitutions, he states that the Salesian Congregation is not only for priests, but also for clerics and laymen, adding surprisingly "artisans especially" [!]; (2) the salvation of one's soul should be the basic reason for entering, but Don Bosco (in the most practical terms) also speaks of the security offered in the Congregation, though that should not be the real motivation; (3) because of the oneness of the Salesian vocation, "all are treated equally, be they lay brothers, clerics or priests. We regard one another as brothers;" (4) the missionary apostolate

<sup>21</sup> EBM XII, 113-114.

is offered as an option, and Don Bosco speaks of successes obtained in the missions by some of their former companions; (5) Don Bosco gives considerable space and importance to spiritual preparation.

#### **4. Don Bosco's Circular Letter to Diocesan Parish Priests January 1880**

*IBM XIV, 783-784.*

To strengthen the ranks of the Salesian Brothers Don Bosco decided to recruit outside the Salesian house.

##### *Text of the Circular Letter*

[Beginning of January 1880 (?)]

Very Reverend Sir:

In spite of the evil times we live in, privileged souls may still be found among the young who, given the opportunity, would gladly leave the world in order the more easily to ensure their own salvation. It is in this conviction that I am addressing this request to you.

Should there be among your spiritual sons anyone who is so inclined and is ready to embrace a life of sacrifice as a religious, please ask him to inquire about the Salesian Society founded by Don Bosco.

Such young men should be of antecedently proven good conduct, healthy in mind and body, and ready to work in any capacity—in the fields, in the garden, in the kitchen, in dining rooms as managers, in house maintenance. If they have sufficient schooling, they might be employed in offices as secretaries. If they have training in one of the arts or crafts taught in our schools, they could be employed in one of our workshops. The young men should be between the age of 20 and 35, approximately. In applying, besides a certificate of good conduct from their parish priest, they should submit birth and single-state certificates.

Should you be in a position to recommend any such young man, you would be doing a great service to our Society, while gaining much merit with God.

I thank you in advance.

Sincerely and respectfully yours.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> *IBM XIV, 783-784 (App. #48) cf. 394 (omitted but referred to in EBM XIV, 302).* The circular is undated, but *IBM* and *EBM* refer it to the beginning of January 1880.

*Comment*

The preferred age requirement of 20 to 30 years in the candidates may perhaps indicate a desire on the part of Don Bosco to start a lay Sons of Mary program similar to that of the clerical Sons of Mary begun some years previously. In this appeal, Don Bosco again places the salvation of one's soul as a priority in religious life. Further, beyond the various possibilities for manual work, Don Bosco offers also such alternatives as secretarial work and vocational teaching in workshops for those who are so educated or trained. This may indicate that some sort of vocational instruction was taking place in the workshops (over and above practical apprenticeship to the trade) although as mentioned above a comprehensive program of instruction was not instituted before General Chapter IV (1886).

## **V. Don Bosco's Statements in the Eighties—Developments Through the Work of General Chapters III and IV**

General Chapters III and IV tackled the problem of vocational (and professional) education both of the lay Salesians and the working boys.

### **1. General Chapter III (1883)**

In line with a plan to commit the lay forces of the Society to the "world of work," and to draw on the existing "working communities" in Salesian houses for lay vocations, Don Bosco decided that General Chapter III should discuss the matter.

With this aim in view, two topics (each assigned for study to a standing committee) were placed on the agenda and were presented on the floor at the Chapter. *Topic IV* dealt with "the education (*cultura*) of Salesian brothers." *Topic V* dealt with "the orientation to be imparted to the 'working component' in Salesian houses, and means to develop Salesian vocations among the artisans."

From the minutes we learn that drafts on the two topics (including a detailed program of study and formation) were produced and given over to Don Bosco and his Council for further study and for reconsideration at General Chapter IV.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ceria discusses General Chapter III in *EBM* XVI, 326-332. He states that the minutes, such as they are, are incomplete, the initial pages having been lost (cf. *EBM* XVI, 326,

In addition, the minutes record (summarily) a discussion on the coadjutor, including some important remarks by Don Bosco.

*September 6, morning session*

At 9:15 Fr. Rua calls the meeting to order and offers the customary prayers.

Fr. Belmonte, as spokesman [for the committee] presents a report on the study of Theme IV, dealing with the education (*cultura*) of the coadjutor brothers (*confratelli*).

[At this point] Don Bosco arrives. [The report on] Theme V is read, dealing with the orientation, etc.<sup>24</sup> as it relates to the education, etc.<sup>25</sup>

However, [immediately] the question is raised, Should the term *coadjutor* to designate the lay member be retained, or should it be changed to *confrere*? Don Bosco and many others are for retaining the designation “*coadjutor*,” but making it clear that it cannot appropriately be applied to domestics. In connection with this question, Brother (*Conf.lo*) Barale mentions his having noticed some carelessness on the part of Salesians [priests?], both young and old.<sup>26</sup>

To this very appropriately Don Bosco responds by reading: “All members shall treat one another as brothers, etc. [*Constitutions*] Chapter 2, Art. 1.”<sup>27</sup>

Fr. Bonetti then moves that a canon so worded be accepted: “All members, whether priests or laymen, should treat one another [as brothers].”

footnote). Actually the minutes by Fr. Marengo, though skimpy, are complete; and the initial pages are in the file, though not in the right place: ASC D579: General Chapter III, FDBM 1,864 B10-12 (initial pages thought lost), and 1,863 D7-12 + 1,864 A1-B3 (Minutes). From these records we learn that General Chapter III began on Sunday afternoon, September 2 (not September 1, as Ceria states), and ended on Saturday afternoon, September 7.

<sup>24</sup> “Orientation to be imparted to the working component in Salesian houses, and the means of developing Salesian vocations among the artisans.”

<sup>25</sup> “Education of Salesian brothers.”

<sup>26</sup> This sentence is obscure. Does it mean that there has been carelessness in the use of the term, or (in view of Don Bosco’s reaction in the following sentence) that there has been carelessness in treating the Brothers as domestics? *Confrere* (that is, Lay Brother) Barale is not listed among the 35 members of GC III. [cf. FDBM 1,864 B6] He must have been specially invited for the discussion. Peter Barale (1846-1934), the “knight of the Press,” worked successfully with the Oratory bookshop and press. He started the *Bibliofilo Cattolico* (1876) to spread good books—which Don Bosco transformed into the *Salesian Bulletin* in 1877 after the “founding” of the Cooperators.

<sup>27</sup> Art.1 of Ch. 2 of the Constitutions reads: “All the members lead the common life bound only by the bond of brotherly love and the simple vows, which united them so that they form one heart and one soul [...].”

It seems essential that [the following practical measures should be implemented]:

1. Every professed brother should have his own cell. If such an arrangement is not immediately feasible, they should at least share a room apart from non-Salesians, and [have the privacy of] a curtained bed.

2. At table the professed brothers should be seated immediately below the priests and clerics.

3. Outsiders [guests] who do not need to be shown special consideration should be seated below the brothers.

4. More distinguished guests should be seated at the superiors' table.

5. Brothers should come to table neatly groomed and dressed, that is with shoes, shirt and cravat in good order, etc.

Fr. Lazzero observes that at the Oratory [Salesian brothers and non-Salesians] are not so separated. Don Bosco responds that such a situation developed for special reasons. But it is now time to do the right thing.

Don Bosco [further] remarks that the terms in use by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, such as *Fratres coadjutores* [coadjutor brothers], should be retained.

After modification and approval [by vote?] of the canons referring to the education of coadjutors [Theme IV], the reading of the reports on Theme V, Orientation to be imparted to the working component [in Salesian houses], begins. [...]

### *September 6, evening session*

The question is debated whether a separate novitiate should be established for artisans who desire to join the Society as Brothers. Don Bosco is thinking of separating them [as lay aspirants] from the other artisans and, in order to improve their situation, to establish a novitiate that would provide vocational training in their trade along with formation. Most of the members support the idea. And, although no decision is reached, Don Bosco and his council are asked to look into the possibility of realizing such a plan at San Benigno.

Don Bosco and his council acted quickly, for a month later the coadjutor novices were established at San Benigno.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> ASC D579: General Chapter III, *FDBM* 1,864 A7-9.

### *Comments*

General Chapter III advanced the discussion on the Salesian brother considerably, even though it dealt with the problem almost entirely from the standpoint of the internal need of the Society. The idea was to cultivate those artisans that excelled so as to entice them to join the Society, and eventually become Salesian crafts masters, thus replacing non-Salesian crafts masters. A Salesian crafts master would exert greater influence from the educational and religious point of view.

A similar motivation lay behind the effort to make a better education and training available to those that joined the Society as lay Salesians. The setting up of a separate novitiate for coadjutors was part of this effort, as was also the decision to create the post of Councilor for Arts and Trades (at the time called, *consigliere artistico*) on the Superior Chapter (Fr. Joseph Lazzero being the first appointee). However, the “programs” were not fully worked out by General Chapter III, which was in session for only 5 days. They had to be reworked by Don Bosco and his Council, then again by General Chapter IV (1886), and then again by the Council before they were finalized and implemented.

## **2. Don Bosco’s Address to 22 Coadjutor Novices at San Benigno, October 19, 1883**

### *Context and Occasion of Don Bosco’s Address*

As mentioned above, in October 1883, by mandate of General Chapter III, a separate novitiate for coadjutor novices was established at San Benigno. San Benigno had been established as a clerical novitiate in 1879, while coadjutor novices did their novitiate while continuing to live and work with the rest of the artisans at the Oratory. Now both clerical and coadjutor novices lived at San Benigno, but in separate communities with different programs.

Don Bosco had gone to San Benigno for the donning of the habit by the clerical novices. Before leaving to return to Turin he wished to address the coadjutor novices separately. Fr. Barberis recorded Don Bosco’s famous discourse.

The talk is in two parts: Part 1 is a “pep-talk” on the status of the lay Salesian in the Society, on the theme, *Nolite timere, pusillus grex* (Fear not, little

flock); Part 2 is a short moral-spiritual exhortation, concluding on the same theme.

### *Text of the Address*

This morning's gospel contained the words [of Jesus]: "*Nolite timere pusillus grex*, fear not, little flock." You are a little flock; but have no fear, *nolite timere*—you will increase. I am happy that a regular trial-year [novitiate] for artisans has now begun. This is my first visit to San Benigno since your arrival here; and even though I came for the donning of the clerical habit [of the other novices] and am staying only one day, I could not leave without addressing a few words to you specifically. I will only leave with you two thoughts.

In the first place, I would like to explain to you what my idea of the Salesian coadjutor is. Till now I have not had the time or the opportunity to do so.

Now—you are here to learn your trade and to grow in religion and piety [the spiritual life]. Why? The reason is that I need helpers. There are some things that priests and clerics cannot do, but that you can. What I need is [to be able] to take one of you, send him into a print shop with the instruction, "You take charge, and see to it that it is well managed." [I'd like to be able] to take another, assign him to a house and tell him, "You take charge of that shop, of those shops, and see to it that they are run properly, that nothing is lacking, and that things come out the way they should." I need [to have] in each house some [capable] person to whom matters of trust might be committed—such as managing [handling?] money, [dealing with] troublesome people,<sup>29</sup> representing the house with outsiders. I need the kitchen to be properly run and the entrance supervised; I need someone to see that whatever is needed [in the kitchen] is provided on time and nothing is wasted, and that nobody leaves the house [without permission?]. I need people to whom these matters can be entrusted. You are to be those people. In other words, you are to be not the day laborers who slog away, but the people in charge (*chi dirige*). You are to function as masters (*padroni*) of others who labor, not as servants. Obviously all this must be done with measure and within the limits dictated by need; but your job has to do with being in charge (*direzione*), with being masters (*padroni*) of a workshop and its equipment.

This is my idea of the Salesian coadjutor. I am desperately in need of many helpers of this sort. I am very happy therefore that you have suitable, clean clothes; that you have proper beds and cells. For you are to be not servants but masters (*non servi, ma padroni*); not subjects, but superiors (*non sudditi, ma superiori*).

<sup>29</sup> "Dealing with court cases" (*il contenzioso*).



Now let me present the second thought. Since you are called to help with important and sensitive tasks, you must acquire many virtues; and since you are to be put in charge of others, you must first be an example to others. We must have this assurance, that wherever you happen to be, there order, good moral conduct, and virtue will flourish. For, if *sal infatuatum fuerit* (salt loses its savor)...

[...]

I would like to end as I began: *Nolite timere, pusillus grex*. Have no fear; you will grow in number. But you must grow even more in goodness and energy [for good]. You will then be as invincible as lions, and you will be able to do much good. And as a result, *complacuit dare vobis regnum* (it pleased [the Father] to give you the kingdom)—mind you, a reign, not slavery; and above all, an eternal reign!<sup>30</sup>

### *Comment*

Don Bosco's use of the master-servant rhetoric may have been calculated to "lift the spirits" of a "downhearted" group; but clearly he wished to emphasize the leadership role of the Salesian brother within certain areas of the Society's apostolate. Within those areas (management of workshop and other managerial activity), the Salesian brother is "staff" on a par with the priests in his own areas, and can be entrusted with highly responsible affairs.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> *EBM* XVI, 245-247.

<sup>31</sup> Such concepts, couched in such unusual rhetoric as they were, must have shocked some people at the time. They certainly appeared shocking to some Salesians as late as General Chapter XII, the Chapter that elected Fr. Philip Rinaldi in 1922. According to this Chapter's minutes, Topic 5 (on the Salesian Brother) came on the floor in Session 11. During the debate, a Chapter member (Fr. Costa) expressed his reservations about giving currency to Don Bosco's San Benigno speech of 1883. In fact, he questioned whether the speech was genuine and, if so, whether it had been reliably reported. Fr. Nay responded that he could guarantee it, since as prefect of the house at the time, he had been present and had heard the speech. Fr. Barberis likewise stated that he had been present and that he was in fact the author of the report. These witnesses further stated that Don Bosco spoke in that manner, using (obviously in an extended sense) the term "master-*padrone*" in order (1) to rectify certain false ideas about the inferior status of the Salesian brother circulating in the Society; (2) to give the brothers' sunken spirits a boost. Fr. Rinaldi added, by way of confirmation, that back at General Chapter III, when "some one" moved that the coadjutors be kept "in their place," that is, in their lower status, Don Bosco protested, "Absolutely not! The coadjutors are like all other confreres." Neither "some one's" suggestion nor Don Bosco's reply are recorded in the minutes of General Chapter III [cf. above]. But the minutes do make the same point, and that is probably what Fr. Rinaldi was referring to.

### 3. General Chapter IV (1886): The Field of Activity of the Lay Salesian and a Program for the Vocational School

General Chapter IV, the last General Chapter presided over by Don Bosco in his failing years, took over Topics IV and V from General Chapter III. They were discussed then under Theme II of General Chapter IV, “Orientation to be imparted to the ‘working component’ in Salesian houses, and means to develop the Salesian vocation among artisans.”

With reference to the Salesian Brother, General Chapter IV produced an important “doctrinal” statement and a set of practical directives. With reference to the artisans, it produced a well-balanced vocational program under three headings: religious-moral formation, intellectual formation or study, and vocational training aimed at turning out skilled workers.

#### *Text of the Regulations*

##### **§ 1. Coadjutor**

###### [Preamble]

Our Pious Society is composed not only of priests and clerics, but also of laymen [*Const.*, Ch 1, Art. 1]. They are called Coadjutors [*Const.*, Ch 10, Art. 14; Ch. 13, Art. 2; Ch. 15, Art. 3] because their specific role is to help with (*co-adiuvare*) the priest in the works of Christian charity proper to the Congregation. All through the history of the Church examples abound of lay people who were powerful helpers of the Apostles and other sacred ministers. In every age the Church has called on a devoted laity to work for the good of the people and for the glory of God.

In our own more than at any other time, Catholic apostolates, and those of our Congregation in particular, can benefit greatly from the effective help provided by lay people. And in certain circumstances, lay people can work more freely and do more good than priests.

In particular, a vast field for the zealous exercise of charity toward neighbor, for the greater glory of God, lies open to our Coadjutors. [They can be active in this field] by assuming the direction and management of various undertakings of our Pious Society; by becoming crafts masters in workshops, or catechists in festive oratories; and more especially by joining our foreign mission force.

###### [Practical Directives]

[The following guidelines will help the coadjutors] the better to correspond to their vocation:

1. Let them, in every place and circumstance, be respectful toward superiors and priests, regarding them as fathers and brothers [respectively], with whom they are to live united by the bond of brotherly love, so as to form one heart and one soul [*Const.*, Ch. 2, Art. 1].

2. Let them diligently fulfill the duties assigned to them; and let them bear in mind that it is not the importance of a work, but the spirit of sacrifice and the love with which it is performed, that makes it pleasing to God.

3. They should not take on any work or any order from outsiders without first obtaining the superiors' approval.

4. In every place and circumstance, whether in or outside the house, and in both word and deed, they are to give evidence of their religious profession. It is not the habit that makes one a religious, but the practice of the virtues of religious life. People, and God too, will honor as a religious one who, though dressed in lay clothes, sets an example of a fervent religious life, rather than one who wears a fancy habit, but does not show fidelity and commitment.

## **§ 2. Artisans in Training**

[Preamble]

Among the works of charity undertaken by our Pious Society, one in particular stands out. It is that of giving shelter to as many abandoned youngsters as possible, and of starting them on a trade. For unless that is done every effort to teach them the truths of the Catholic faith would be in vain.

In houses where the number of artisans is large, a Salesian might be appointed to take special care of them. This is the Vocational Councilor (*Consigliere professionale*).

In accepting these young artisans, the Pious Salesian Society aims at giving them an education through mastery of a trade, sound religious instruction, and general knowledge appropriate to their state in life. Thus, on leaving our schools after completing their training, they will be able to earn an honorable livelihood.

[Guidelines for a Program]

Such an education requires formation in three areas: the religious-moral, the intellectual, and the vocational area.

### **Religious Moral Formation**

1. The Regulations of the house should be very carefully observed.

2. The pupils should often be reminded of God and duty, and of the fact that a good moral life and the practice of one's religion are basic for people in every walk of life.

3. The pupils should feel that they are loved and esteemed by their superiors. To this effect, they should be treated with that spirit of true charity that is so strongly recommended in the holy Gospel.

4. Catechetical instruction should be given importance; and to this end, a special examination should be held, and prizes should be awarded.

5. The pupils should receive careful instruction in Gregorian chant, so that when they leave our schools they may more easily participate in parish programs and confraternities.

6. Besides the sodalities already in place for artisans, that of the Blessed Sacrament should be established [for them] to foster the frequent reception of Holy Communion.

7. Wherever practicable, separate arrangements should be made for younger pupils, especially as to dormitory and recreation.

8. Students whose conduct proves unsatisfactory and who need to be disciplined should not be transferred to the artisan community. If in the director's judgment an exception has to be made, such students should be sent to another Salesian school to learn a trade.

9. Every other month the director shall meet in conference with assistants and heads of workshops, listen to their observations, and give suitable guidelines and advice for the good management of the workshops. He should also ask non-Salesian heads, if any, to the conference.

10. Many good crafts masters are needed if the Society is to open new houses and extend to as many young people as possible the benefit of an education. In view of this, every confrere (*confratello*)<sup>32</sup> shall by good example and by the practice of charity foster in the pupils the desire to join the Society. And when a pupil applies and is accepted, every sacrifice should be made to see that he gets to the novitiate.

11. It is important that pupils who have completed their training should be placed with good Christian employers. They should also be given a testimonial letter for their parish priest.

12. Pupils should also be given a letter of introduction to some Catholic workers' society; and, if their conduct has been satisfactory they should be asked to join the Salesian Cooperators.

### **Intellectual Formation**

The following norms are laid down to ensure that during their training the artisans may acquire also the necessary body of knowledge—literary, artistic and scientific.

1. An hour-long period of class should be scheduled daily after work. For the more backward pupils an additional period of class should be held in the morning, after Mass and before breakfast. In addition, with regard to instruction, our schools should comply with the requirements of law in any particular place.

<sup>32</sup> The term as used here may designate any Salesian or, more specifically, a coadjutor.

2. A standard instruction program to be implemented in all our vocational schools should be drawn up. Textbooks and reading books should also be indicated.

3. All pupils should be graded through an entrance examination and be placed in the appropriate level for instruction, and under practiced teachers.

4. The pupils should receive a weekly lesson in etiquette and good manners.

5. No pupil should take on special subjects, such as drafting and French, before he has passed the courses of basic instruction.

6. End-of-year examinations should be scheduled, and prizes should be awarded.

7. Whenever a pupil leaves the school on completion of training, he should be issued a diploma and a testimonial that indicates the degree of proficiency attained in his trade and in general knowledge, as well as an evaluation of his conduct.

### **Vocational Training** [in a craft]

It is not enough for an artisan to have acquired skill in his trade; he should also have acquired a habit of work and an ability to work on schedule, if he is to use his skill profitably.

With reference to acquiring skills the following should be kept in mind:

1. A youngster's aptitude and desire should be taken into account when counseling him regarding the trade or craft to be chosen.

2. Skilled and honest crafts masters should be provided, even at considerable cost, so that our workshops may turn out perfect products.

3. The vocational councilor and the crafts masters should work out or adopt a graded program for each craft, so that the apprentice may pass through each stage in order, and master every aspect of his trade.

4. Since requirements for each trade differ considerably, no common time can be set for the completion of the training. For most trades five years are sufficient.

5. Every year each vocational school should set up an exhibit of artifacts produced in the shops, at the time when awards are given out. Every three years a general exhibit of works from all Salesian vocational schools should be organized.

### **With reference to work habits**

1. It would be helpful to grade each pupil every week separately for achievement and for conduct.

2. Jobbing the work would also help, so that a percentage will accrue to the pupil, according to a system worked out by the committee.

3. The house of novitiate for artisans is to be provided with all needed equipment, so that novices may perfect their skills in their trade. The novitiate is to be staffed by the best Salesian crafts masters.<sup>33</sup>

### *Comment*

The *Preamble* of the section on the coadjutors (#1, above) is important in that it gives what amounts to a “ecclesiological” description of the Salesian lay vocation, and defines its possible fields of activity, as seen open *at the time*. Particularly important is the reaffirming of the constitutional equality of the Salesian lay vocation, as is the statement that the coadjutors’ “specific role is to help *with* the priest in the works of charity proper to the Congregation.” Among the fields of apostolic activity, other than the workshop, the catechetical and missionary fields seem particularly important. General Chapter IV was a landmark in as much as it launched the Salesian vocational school on a serious professional basis, and in that connection called for a systematic training and education of the Salesian brother. It also looked to the recently established South American “mission” as the proper field of activity for the lay Salesian.

### **Closing Comments**

Don Bosco, as we have seen, over a number of years tried to formulate his concept of the Salesian lay vocation, and to define its fields of activity in concrete historical circumstances. But he left it to his successors to continue such exploration, and to indicate where the development of the original insight should lead—virtually into all areas not proper of the ordained ministry.

General Chapter XII (1922) was principally responsible for confirming, or perhaps restoring, the status of the Salesian brother. First, it defined the true character of the Salesian lay vocation under the Constitutions. Secondly, to symbolize the oneness of the Salesian vocation (in its two branches, clerical and lay), it officially abolished the system of separate novitiates (which, though dictated by practical necessity, theoretically produced ambiguity in

<sup>33</sup> *EBM* XVIII, 642-646. For an account of the work of General Chapter IV see *IBM* XVIII, 137-154.

understanding the oneness of the Salesian vocation). Thirdly, it emphasized the unique role of the brother in expanding fields of activity. This included both responsible jobs in the houses and leadership role in the developing vocational schools.

The proposals of General Chapter XII underwent considerable development under Rector Major Fr. Rinaldi and his associates (Fr. Ricaldone, Prefect, and Fr. Vespignani, Councilor for Arts and Trades). Fr. Rinaldi, more than his predecessors, was responsible for a systematic elaboration of Don Bosco's insight.



## Appendix

# THE SALESIAN BROTHER AFTER DON BOSCO

## 1. The Salesian Brother in the Rua-Albera Period (1890-1921)

### *Sources*

*Lettere Circolari di Don Michele Rua ai Salesian* (Torino: Tip. S.A.I.D. «Buona Stampa», 1910) – Re-edited: Torino: Direzione Generale Opere Salesiane, 1965. [Rua, *Circ.* (1965)]

*Lettere Circolari di Don Paolo Albera* (Torino: SEI, 1922) – Re-edited: Torino: Direzione Generale Opere Salesiane, 1965. [Albera, *Circ.* (1965)]

### *Introductory Comment*

Fr. Michael Rua (1888-1910) and Fr. Paul Albera (1911-1921) simply tried to emphasize Don Bosco's ideas on the Salesian lay vocation and to continue Don Bosco's program as set forth in General Chapter IV (1886). In the Rua-Albera period, there were no new significant theoretical statements on the Brother. Likewise (due also to the turmoil preceding, during, and following World War I), no great development of structures for formation and training was possible.

In 1920, Fr. Peter Ricaldone (Councilor for Vocational Schools at the time) laments a kind of regression in vocational schools, and gives the following statistics for Italy: "At our Ven. Founder's death, there were 9 vocational schools out of a total of 24 Salesian foundations, a ratio of 37%. Today there are 17 such schools out of 126 foundations, a ratio of only 14%."<sup>34</sup>

The following is a selection of significant statements emphasizing Don Bosco's ideas regarding the lay Salesian vocation, recruiting lay vocations, and formation of the Brothers.

### *Father Rua on the Salesian Brother*

#### [Fostering Salesian Lay Vocations]

Our Society is so constituted that it offers abundant possibilities for apostolic ministry not only to its Salesian priestly members, but also to its dear Salesian Brothers. They

<sup>34</sup> *Atti del Capitolo Superiore* 1 (December 24, 1920, #4), 103. The *Acts of the Superior Chapter* (=General Council) were founded by Fr. Albera in 1920. They began to be published in English in 1932.

too are called to true apostolic ministry on behalf of the young in our schools, especially in our vocational schools. We must foster the Salesian lay vocation among our artisan pupils. The vocational school is the Salesian work that is most in demand in the Americas, in Africa, in Asia, and in several nations of Europe. To meet this demand, and to increase the number of good lay vocations, General Chapter IV laid down excellent guidelines for the moral intellectual and professional formation of our artisan pupils. [...]

With regard to this important matter, the forming of personnel is vital to the work of our Society. In Italy our Brothers have obtained notable successes. Many of them, for example, have obtained high school diplomas, college degrees, and teaching credentials for primary schools.<sup>35</sup>

#### [Brothers' Spiritual Formation Preparatory to Salesian Work]

Speaking of vocations, I believe we have to put a priority on forming our Brothers to genuine and persevering virtue. The field open to their zeal for the apostolate in our various houses is immense—particularly in the missions. They should also show that they have the good of the Congregation at heart by fostering vocations among the artisans with whom they work. For a start, we can house such novices in the clerical novitiates, until such a time as increasing numbers will warrant the opening of novitiates exclusively for them.<sup>36</sup>

#### [Need for Salesian Lay Vocations in Response to the Cry from the Missions]

I urge you to promote vocations, not only to the Salesian priesthood, but also to the Lay Brotherhood—for the need of good Salesian crafts masters is great. You are aware that urgent requests are continuously received from all parts of the world, particularly from the missions, for workshops and vocational schools. Society, today more than ever, has desperate need of good Christian workers. [...] Therefore I cannot rest until I learn that each Province has set up its own novitiate for Brothers, modeled after that of San Benigno. I believe this to be the only way of forming qualified Salesian crafts masters, worthy of the posts they will fill.<sup>37</sup>

#### [Religious Instruction and Catechetics]

I urge our Brothers to become proficient in the knowledge of the Catholic faith, so that when called upon to give religious instruction, they will be up to the task. [...] I was very happy to hear that Brothers, as well as priests, have been the organizers of successful contests among pupils in our schools and among young people attending our oratories.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Letter of January 31, 1897, #7 & 8: Rua, *Circ.* (1965), 188f.

<sup>36</sup> Letter of January 20, 1898, #3: Rua, *Circ.* (1965), 194. Don Bosco had already established a separate novitiate for lay novices in 1883 at San Benigno as provided by General Chapter III. Given the oneness of the Salesian vocation, the idea of a separate novitiate began to be called into question very quickly, but it was not until General Chapter XII (1922) that this solution was discarded.

<sup>37</sup> Letter of June 24, 1898, #2: Rua, *Circ.* (1965), 207f.

<sup>38</sup> Edifying Letter of July 2, 1906, #2: Rua, *Circ.* (1965), 408.

## [Not Servants but Brothers]

I would like to add a word on our Brothers, and on how they should be welcomed in our communities. I can say that I love our Brothers with all my heart in Jesus Christ. In the first place, I find many saintly religious among them, rich in virtues (all the more precious for their being unnoticed) and ready for any sacrifice. Secondly, I see how well deserving many of them are for their dedicated work in our vocational schools, in administration, and in the missions themselves. Therefore I urge you [Provincials and Directors] to love them truly as brothers, and to show your love for them by treating them with kindness, by listening to them, by caring about their health and well-being, and by providing for their needs. We must show by deeds more than by words that we respect and love them as true brothers.<sup>39</sup>

*Father Albera on the Salesian Brother*

Fr. Albera's great concern was the spiritual life of the Salesians. He wrote many substantial circular letters dealing with points of the spiritual life. Taken together, they form a kind of spiritual directory, or a compendium of Salesian spirituality. His last circular letter, on Vocations, makes important statements on the Salesian Brother.

## [Apostolic and Educational Mission of the Salesian Brother]

In older religious congregations, lay brothers formed a kind of *second order* subject to the *first*, and sharing only in part the spiritual good of the congregation and the spirit of the founder. Don Bosco did away with such dualism. All Salesians share the same rights and privileges. [...] [Brothers] do not constitute a *second order*; they are fully Salesian religious, with the one Salesian vocation, and the same apostolate as the priests, except for what pertains specifically to the ordained ministry.

It follows that our Brothers should be equipped for this apostolate: catechetical instruction, lectures on religious and social topics, teaching in primary and secondary schools, teaching as crafts masters, taking on the duties of daily and nightly assistance of the boys, financial administration of a community, etc. In other words, Brothers should be involved in all those areas of the Salesian apostolate that are not proper of the ordained ministry.

This is how we should speak of the Salesian lay vocation to our young people. Lay vocations are essential to Salesian work. Without them, our Congregation would not be able to meet the urgent challenges that modern society offers to it. Moreover, the institution of the Salesian Brother is a truly original creation of Don Bosco's charity also because it offers the layperson, in the one vocation, the means of full religious spirituality and perfection.

Let us therefore foster Salesian lay vocations. Let us make it clear that one can be fully

<sup>39</sup> Letter to Provincials and Directors of November 1, 1906, #7: *Rua, Circ.* (1965), 425.

and completely a Salesian without being a priest. And let us emphasize that priests and Brothers are equal in the one Salesian vocation, as regards both social rights and spiritual benefits. [...]

Let us further bear in mind the power of good example. Our words and our efforts for lay vocations would be in vain, if our young people did not see in the practice of our communities that equality and brotherhood among Salesian priests and Brothers. [...]

Once a Salesian Brother is assigned to a house, the Director is not to think that nothing further needs to be done for his education and formation. Rather, these should be continued with all patience and care.<sup>40</sup>

## 2. The Salesian Brother in the Rinaldi Period (1922-1931)

### *Sources*

*Atti del Capitolo Superiore* (Acts of the Superior chapter) [*Acts*]

Note: The *Acts* are the official vehicle through which the Rector Major and his Council address the Salesian Society throughout the world. Their publication began under Fr. Paul Albera in 1920 (the last year of his tenure as Rector) with the title, *Atti del Capitolo Superiore*. Their English-language edition began in 1932 as *Acts of the Superior Chapter*. Except for the war years (1940-44), the publication of the Acts has been continuous. In 1965 (General Chapter XIX, first renewal Chapter), the title was changed to *Atti del Consiglio Superiore* (*Acts of the Superior Council*). In 1984 they began to be published with the title, *Atti del Consiglio Generale* (*Acts of the General Council*).

### *Introductory Comment*

The Rua and Albera rectorates are “transitional” with respect to the formulation of a doctrine and practice of the Salesian lay vocation. But both Fr. Rua and Fr. Albera made a considerable contribution in that they sought to clarify and emphasize Don Bosco’s ideas.

The decade of Fr. Philip Rinaldi’s rectorate, on the other hand, must be regarded as fundamental to a formulation of the doctrine and practice of the Salesian lay vocation. Fr. Peter Ricaldone (Fr. Rinaldi’s Prefect General, later his successor), and Fr. Joseph Vespignani (Councilor for Vocational Schools) helped and supported Fr. Rinaldi’s great work of organization and development. He is responsible for a full and mature formulation of the Salesian lay vocation, and for setting in place the structures for a practical implementation of the principles involved.

<sup>40</sup> Letter on Vocations of May 15, 1921, #20 & 30: Albera, *Circ.* (1965), 504-506 & 525. Cf. also *Atti* 2:4 (1921), 205-207 & 223.

This was done in a thorough and systematic way through a series of theoretical and practical developments:

(1) The study and reflection preceding and accompanying General Chapter XII (1922) issued in a restatement of the oneness of the Salesian vocation and in the abolition of separate novitiates (as noted above). Unity of novitiate was seen to be “more in conformity with the new Code of Canon Law (1917), which makes provision for *one* novitiate for all religious having *equal status* in their Congregation.”<sup>41</sup> It was also seen as symbolizing and “fostering that unity of religious education and formation for both priests and Brothers demanded by the oneness of vocation.”

(2) Fr. Rinaldi’s fundamental and programmatic letter of 1927 on “*The Salesian Brother in Don Bosco’s Thinking*,” recaptures and develops systematically the formulations of Don Bosco and Fr. Albera.

(3) Fr. Vespignani’s interpretative commentary on Don Bosco’s address to the lay novices at San Benigno in 1883 highlights formative, ascetical and religious aspects.

(4) The thoroughgoing reorganization undertaken under Fr. Rinaldi gave Salesian vocational schools new substance and a new look.

(5) The establishment of houses for lay aspirants and post-novitiate proficiency schools for Brothers provided a systematic curriculum of professional formation.

### *General Chapter XII (April 23 - May 9, 1922)*

General Chapter XII was the General Chapter that elected Father Rinaldi (first Rinaldi Chapter). Because of World War I, no General Chapter had been held since 1910 (GC XI that elected Fr. Albera).

Among the themes proposed for discussion, one referred to the Lay Salesian: “V. *Programs of study and formation for Brothers, especially in reference to their religious and professional education; possible new forms of vocational school, other than the typical boarding school for arts and trades.*”

General Chapter XII worked for 16 days and 24 sessions. After elections (Fr. Joseph Vespignani was elected councilor for vocational schools), protracted discussions and deliberations were held on the proposed themes. This resulted in new sets of general regulations, including sets for vocational schools and the Brothers.

### *First Official Regulations for the Salesian Brothers (1924) stemming from GC XII*

In 1924 a new edition of the Constitutions and of the General Regulations was issued (as mandated by GC XII, 1922), revised in accordance with the new Code of

<sup>41</sup> Words from the minutes of meetings of the commission (composed of both priest and Brothers) appointed to study the matter in preparation for GC XII. The decision to abolish the practice of separate novitiates was taken up in Session 12 of this Chapter (May 1, 1922).

Canon Law (1917). A chapter on the Salesian Brothers appeared in the Regulations for the first time, being a distillate of deliberations of earlier General Chapters.

58. On-going religious instruction of the lay brothers shall be provided for through suitable weekly sessions.

59. There shall also be in the house library books adapted to the needs of the lay brothers, for their instruction and relaxation.

60. It is prescribed that those lay brothers who are in trades shall, after their first profession, go through a two years' course of training, in order to complete their professional preparation. If possible, there shall be in each Province a house set apart for this purpose. In its management, the general Regulations for the Houses shall be followed, keeping in view what has been said in Art. 53. [This dealt with the training and care of clerical students.] The syllabus for the 2-year course that the General Councilor for vocational schools has prepared shall be followed.

61. The lay brothers shall be thoroughly instructed and trained to work in Festive Oratories.<sup>42</sup>

### *General Chapter XIII (July 8-20, 1929)*

In 1925 the fiftieth anniversary of the Salesian missions (first missionary sending) was celebrated. This was part of a renewed, great missionary effort by the Salesian Society, *in which the Brothers were to have a major role*.

In 1926 the European Salesian Directors' Convention (with some 300 participants) was held in Turin. *The professional formation of the Brothers was a major topic*.

In 1927 the Agricultural School at Cumiana (near Turin) was established as a proficiency center for Brothers and as a training center for lay missionary aspirants. This was part of a development of structures for the education of brothers in progress through the 1920s, paralleling those for the education of clerical students.

At General Chapter XIII (1929, second Rinaldi Chapter) major attention was given to the theme on vocational (*professionalità*) and agricultural Schools. The following themes were discussed:

- (1) True schools, as the Constitutions (art. 5) and the Regulations demand;
- (2) Reports on the present situation;
- (3) Organization, curriculum and management of our vocational and agricultural schools;
- (4) Two-year proficiency course (*perfezionamento*) for lay brothers after the novitiate.
- (5) Lay vocations and houses for lay aspirants.

<sup>42</sup> *Regulations of the Salesian Society* (London-Battersea: The Salesian Press, 1925), 24-25 (Part I, Section III, Chapter III, "Lay-Brothers").

*Documents from the Desk of the Councilor for Vocational Schools, Fr. Joseph Vespignani*

Fr. Vespignani, elected Councilor by General Chapter XII (1922), as spokesman for the Rector Major and his Council in the matter of vocational schools and of the Salesian Brother, issued a number of directives.

(1) The Salesian Brother's Mission and Apostolate. Salesian lay Vocations and their Professional, Religious, and Salesian Formation [Acts 3:16 (October 24, 1922), 28-30]. In this first letter, Fr. Vespignani addresses "the Very Rev. Superiors, Provincials, and each Director of vocational schools, whether for trades or agriculture," and asks for their help in the job entrusted to him. He also asks all the Brothers "who are part of the educational undertaking" in such schools to enter into a pact with him on two points: (1) to take such work as a mission and an apostolate, and (2) to work to develop Salesian lay vocations. He writes:

In the first place, this work of teaching and assisting should truly be regarded as a mission and an apostolate, aimed at the older lads in particular. [Beyond training and instruction in the trade] we must aim at fostering the family spirit; love for the Salesian school, duty, and work. This may be achieved through a climate of mutual trust, through rewards, through conferences, etc. [...] By love and a spirit of sacrifice we should draw them into living our kind of life. All too often [...] one sees our graduating pupils leaving the school and us with indifference. [...]

Secondly, our Constitutions lay on us the duty of fostering vocations among pupils in our vocational schools [...].

The General Chapter that was recently held [GC XII] did indeed acknowledge the progress made through the foundation of so many new houses and missions. But it also noted the lack of personnel, trained and capable of undertaking the apostolate of our vocational schools. In other words, at the moment the Provinces are unable to staff such schools with professionally capable Salesian personnel. [...]

Since trained Salesian personnel is scarce, [...] it should not be thinned further by dispersing it to various needy Provinces. Rather, it should be concentrated in centers for formation and professional training [...]. These centers will then be nurseries of professionally trained Salesian personnel.

(2) Promotion, Formation, and Education of Salesian Lay Vocations [*Acts* 4:19 (April 24, 1923), 79-80].

With regard to this matter, I [Fr. Vespignani] would like to add the following:

(1) Whenever possible, each Province should designate a house, or a section thereof, in which lay aspirants, and Brothers, are particularly cared for [...].

(2) This house of pre-novitiate formation should be well organized, and equipped with up-to-date and efficient workshops, such as will attract intelligent young men, motivated and desirous of advancing professionally in their field. [...]



The programs and the norms published, or planned by the Center should be followed by all in matters of curriculum, textbooks, examinations, diplomas, etc. Likewise, great importance should be given to periodic and permanent exhibits [...].

(3) Other Similar Documents from Fr. Vespignani. The Councilor for Vocational Schools (Fr. Vespignani) restates the above points, with variations and new emphases in successive documents over a number of years. The following are significant:

[i] Means of Formation of Artisans and Salesian Brothers [*Acts* 7:35 (June 24, 1926), 465-470].

[ii] Salesian Vocational Schools and the Salesian Brother – Report on the Congresses of European Directors (July 26-28, 1926) and of Italian Directors (August 30-September 1, 1926) [*Acts* 7:36 (September 24, 1926), 508-514].

[iii] Professional Proficiency Program (*Corsi di Perfezionamento Professionale*) a Priority – a 2-year course for Salesian Brothers decided on by GC XII, leading to diplomas or degrees [*Acts* 7:37 (December 24, 1926), 533f.].

[iv] Further Religious Education and Professional Proficiency Programs for Salesian Brothers [*Acts* 8:40 (July 24, 1927), 582-584].

[v] Professional Proficiency for Salesian Brothers: to be pursued with greater intensity during the moratorium declared by Fr. Rinaldi for the years 1929-1932 [*Acts* 10:47 (January 6, 1929), 723f.].

[vi] Further Religious Education and Professional Proficiency for Salesian Brothers – New Emphasis [*Acts* 11:51 (January 24, 1930), 841f.].

[vii] Professional Proficiency Courses and Recruiting Salesian Lay Vocations [*Acts* 11:53 (April 24, 1930), 869f.].

The above-listed documents emphasize the following points:

(1) The workshops (from which stems the Salesian vocational school) are the second “work,” attached to the oratory, established by Don Bosco.

(2) The need and demand for vocational schools of the Salesian (charitable) type is great everywhere. But our trained personnel is scarce. We must therefore foster Salesian lay vocations among the best artisans in our schools, and train our Salesian Brothers through a regular curriculum.

(3) Vocations are to be sought everywhere, but especially among the best artisans in our vocational schools. Our “charity” should be concentrated on them. They should receive a good moral-religious formation, a good general education, and a good professional training from the start.

(4) Every Province (or group of Provinces) should try to establish its own centers for formation and training at the pre-novitiate level, and after novitiate, a 2-year proficiency course (*corso di perfezionamento professionale*). A Province should not rely on other Provinces, or on the Center, to supply their personnel needs.

(5) However, the Center has set up model programs: San Benigno for professional training in various fields (since 1883); Cumiana for agricultural training (1927);

Rebaudengo (1930) that Brothers from the Provinces may attend. These centers also have a missionary purpose.

(6) Brothers must aim at acquiring a good knowledge in their field and specialization, and should be given the opportunity.

(7) The continuing religious formation, the general education, and the professional training of Salesian Brothers must go hand in hand and should be given priority. Provincials, and especially Directors, must care for the Brothers.

[viii] *The Salesian Brother in Don Bosco's Thinking* – A Commentary by Fr. Vespignani on Don Bosco's two-part Address to the Lay Novices at San Benigno in 1883 ("Fear not, little flock") [*Acts* 11:54 (October 24, 1930), 888-909].

This extensive essay comments on each important sentence of both parts of Don Bosco's address (the first part explaining his idea of the Salesian Brother as a professional and a master; the second dealing with the spiritual formation of the Brother).

Fr. Rinaldi introduces and commends the essay as "the words of the Father explained by a son." He hopes the essay would be made accessible to all Brothers through translation. It would provide "a guideline for their formation and perseverance," while it brings home to them "the importance of their mission and of their spiritual formation" [*Ibid.* 877].

### *Documents directly from the Desk of Rector Major, Father Philip Rinaldi*

Fr. Rinaldi's circular letters (published in *Acts*) are usually brief. Among the half dozen longer letters, the one on the Salesian Brother is significant:

(1) The Salesian Brother in Don Bosco's Thinking [*Acts* 8:40 (July 24, 1927), 572-580]. He develops the following points:

[i] Need and importance of vocational education of poor young people in the missions, especially as regards agriculture; The agricultural school at Cumiana (1927) is being opened with a missionary purpose to train Brothers.

[ii] The Salesian Brother is one of Don Bosco's most original and inspired creations. The Brothers "are not a second order, but are fully Salesian religious, bound to the same perfection [as the priests] and called to undertake, each in his own profession, trade or work, the same educational apostolate which is the essential work of the Salesian Society. [...] The Salesian Brother is not a second best, and not the priest's helper or the priest's right-hand man. He is the priest's equal in the call to religious perfection [...]."

[iii] Don Bosco saw the Salesian Brother as an essential component of the Society and its work. As a Salesian religious he is called to evangelical perfection; as a Salesian Brother he is an indispensable and characteristic part of Salesian work.

[iv] The field open to the Salesian Brother is immense and the harvest most abundant. This calls for numerous vocations, which must be sought everywhere through intense activity, especially in our festive oratories, in our vocational schools (for trades and ag-

riculture), and in parishes in cities and country. Signs and criteria for evaluating a young man's vocation must be made known and applied.

[v] Publicize the Salesian lay vocation.

[vi] Since the Salesian lay vocation was conceived by Don Bosco together with the Society itself, it follows that Don Bosco is fully the model of the Salesian Brother, as to spirit and dedication to working for young people.

"In his Constitutions, Don Bosco established the principle of one religious-Salesian vocation with perfect equality, except for what is proper of the ordained ministry. This innovation made it possible for a great number of lay people to engage in the Salesian apostolate throughout the world simply and fully as Salesian religious."

[vii] Don Bosco's basic spiritual advice to all Brothers, often repeated by his successors: "fidelity to the practices of piety [=prayer life], and obedience [=availability] as the foundation of all virtues [=the spiritual life]."

(2) For a Better Formation of the Salesian Brother [*Acts* 9:46 (September 24, 1928), 688-691]. Fr. Rinaldi recalls what he had written about Don Bosco's idea of the Salesian Brother in his previous letter, and emphasizes some points. He then adds that, just as in the previous year the agricultural school of Cumiana had been established, so now a professional proficiency program was set up at San Benigno. This was a step toward realizing some of the Founder's intentions for the Brothers. He goes on to report on the spiritual retreat for Brothers held at Valsalice. The last day of the retreat was set aside for a study of the lay Salesian vocation and the Brother's professional formation. Fr. Fedele Giraudi [Financial Administrator General] and Fr. Peter Ricaldone [Prefect General] spoke on vocation and on formation respectively [*Ibid.* 696-698].

(3) Lay Apostolate, Sodalities, Salesian Brothers as "Educators and Teachers" [*Acts* 11:55 (December 24, 1930), 913-915].

(4) The Brother's Professional Development [*Ibid.* 921f.].

(5) Uniqueness, Greatness, and Spirit of the Salesian Lay Vocation. The Brothers' On-Going Formation [*Acts* 12:56 (April 24, 1931), 945-948]. After referring to Don Bosco's address of 1883, and to Fr. Vespignani's commentary, Fr. Rinaldi names a number of distinguished Brothers trained by Don Bosco himself: Joseph Rossi, Andrew Pelazza, Francis Frescarolo, Cyprian Audisio, Joseph Buzzetti, Charles Fontana, Dominic Palestrino, Marcel Rossi. He goes on to state that every effort is being made to set up structures and programs for the training and formation of the Brothers.

### **3. The Salesian Brother in the Ricaldone Period (1932-1951)**

Fr. Peter Ricaldone's rectorate was the most intensely active period with regard to translating into practice, into actual institutions, the accepted principles and the ideas

developed in the preceding periods. During the Ricaldone period, houses for aspirants, centers for the Brother's professional proficiency and programs for education and technical instruction, teachers' training, spiritual formation, social studies, etc. were established and regulated.

In particular, the problem of the formation curriculum for Brothers, only recently developed, was addressed in a fashion that paralleled the centuries-old curriculum for the formation of seminarians. Developing such an up-to-date and effective curriculum for Brothers became an absorbing preoccupation of Superiors and of General Chapters. General Chapters XV, XVI, and XVII in succession (1938, 1947, and 1952) worked on this project and developed permanent regulations.

Fr. Ricaldone stressed the oneness of the Salesian vocation and therefore of novitiate and religious consecration. Priests and Brothers, therefore, are not two classes of religious (related as first and second, or even as parallel); they are rather two categories within the one religious vocation.

The Code of Canon Law of 1917 (as well as by the new Code) upheld this doctrine. For instance, Canon 558 of the Code of 1917 specified that there should be a separate novitiate for separate *classes* of religious within an Order or Congregation, not for separate categories of the one class, as commentators explained:

This canon does not apply to those religious institutes in which there are different categories, but only one class of religious. Such are, for example, the Congregation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools [de la Salle] and the Salesian Society. Hence here the novitiate is one. [...]

This is the case in a lay religious institute in which there are only a few priests; or in an institute in which there are no priests but only laymen of different category [but one class]; or in an institute in which, by provision of the Constitutions, categories of priests and laymen form only one class of religious. Cf. *Constitutions of the Salesian Society*.<sup>43</sup>

A synthesis of the Salesian conception of the Brother was presented to the Congress of Religious Institutes (States of Perfection), meeting in Rome in 1950, by the then Councilor for Vocational Schools, Fr. Anthony Candela. In it he brings together the juridical, historical, religious and educational elements that characterize the Brother, the "Salesian in street clothes."<sup>44</sup>

<sup>43</sup> A. Larraona, *Commentarium pro Religiosis* (Romae: Institutum Iuridicum Claretianum, 1935), 152-153, 172 (& note 1), 183-184.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. *Acta et documenta Congressus Generalis de Statibus Perfectionis* (Roma: Pia Società San Paolo, 1953), vol. III, 208-212.

## Chapter 7

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT 1876-1890

#### Summary

- I. Survey of the Political and Social Situation in Italy under the Governments of the Left (1876-1900)
  1. Parliamentary revolution of 1876: parliamentary and extra-parliamentary political forces
  2. Quick overview of the Depretis and Cairoli governments (1876-1881)
  3. Survey of significant events in the Depretis-Cairoli period (1876-1881)
  4. The Depretis Era (1881-1887)
  5. The Crispi Era (1887-1896)
- II. Pope Leo XIII, Biographical Sketch
  1. Pre-papal career
  2. Election to the papacy
  3. Initiatives in the Church
  4. Leo XIII and international affairs
- III. Overview of the situation in France in the early phases of the Third Republic
  1. Constitution of 1875
  2. Crisis of May 16, 1877 (*Seizè Mai*)
  3. Presidency of Jules Grévy and the anticlerical laws
  4. The Boulanger Crisis
  5. Cardinal Lavigerie's *Ralliement* and Pope Leo XIII

#### I. Historical Context 1876-1890: The Governments of the Left

Our presentation of the historical context for Don Bosco's last years is in the nature of a survey of the period of the "Historic Left" and its governments (from 1876). This period, marked by strife between competing factions both in and outside parliament, for our purpose may be practically divided into three stages: (1) The Depretis-Cairoli governments (1876-1881); (2) The Depretis "era" and its governments (1881-1887); (3) The Crispi period (1887-1896).

Of this last period, however, which would take us well beyond Don Bosco's lifetime, we shall only note the first two ministries (1887-1891) to indicate its general direction.

*Prime Ministers or Premiers of the Left (1876-1897)*

Agostino Depretis I (March 25, 1876)  
 Depretis II (December 26, 1877)  
 Benedetto Cairoli I (March 24, 1878)  
 Depretis III (December 19, 1878)  
 Cairoli II (July 14, 1879)  
 Cairoli III (November 25, 1879)  
 Depretis IV (May 29, 1881)  
 Depretis V (May 25, 1883)  
 Depretis VI (March 30, 1884)  
 Depretis VII (June 29, 1885)  
 Depretis VIII (April 4, 1887)  
 Francesco Crispi I (July 29, 1887)  
 Crispi II (March 9, 1889)  
 Antonio Rudini I (February 9, 1891)  
 Giovanni Giolitti (May 15, 1892)  
 Crispi III (December 15, 1893)  
 [Rudini II (March 10, 1896)]

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## 1. “Parliamentary Revolution” of 1876. Parliamentary and Extra-Parliamentary Political Forces

In March 1876 the last government of the Historic Right, which stood in the tradition of Camillo Cavour, Bettino Ricasoli, Giovanni Lanza and Marco Minghetti, came to a parliamentary crisis over the abolition of the grist tax.<sup>1</sup> Prime minister Minghetti’s government opposed its immediate discussion; but the Left, led by Agostino Depretis (1813-1887), called for a vote of no-confidence and won (242 to 181).<sup>2</sup> The Minghetti government was forced to resign, and the Left came to power.

King Victor Emmanuel II called on Depretis to form a new government.<sup>3</sup> Depretis assembled his cabinet (*Depretis Government I*, March 25) and let it be known that his government would rely on support from the Left and be guided by Leftist principles and ideas, but that it would work in the name and for the good of the whole nation. He then dissolved parliament and opened the electoral campaign (October 8) with a speech that outlined his platform: expanding the franchise, school and tax reform, elective local administration, and more.

The general elections that followed on November 5 gave the Left an overwhelming parliamentary majority. It was a “parliamentary revolution” that

<sup>1</sup> When local farmers had grain ground at the public mills a fee proportionate to the amount was assessed by the state. This was the *grist tax*, which since its imposition in 1868 had been the cause of unrest, protests and revolts. Since the Third War of Independence against Austria (1866) the public debt had been on the rise. The grist tax was one of the measures adopted by the government to amortize the debt and balance the budget.

<sup>2</sup> Marco Minghetti (1818-1886), politician and scholar, served in the Piedmontese army under King Charles Albert (first war of Italian independence, 1848-49). Under Cavour he served as minister of exterior (1860-61), of interior (1861-62); of finance (1862-63) and of agriculture and commerce (1869). He served as prime minister (1863-64) and the last prime minister of the Historic Right (1873-1876). He also served as ambassador to London (1868) and to Vienna (1870-73). Among his works were *Dell’economia pubblica* (1859), *Stato e chiesa* (1878), a biography of Raphael Sanzio (1885).

<sup>3</sup> Agostino Depretis (1813-1887), politician of considerable ability, had been a supporter of Giuseppe Mazzini, and a member of the Piedmontese parliament (from 1848). He founded the journal *Il Progresso* (1850). First prime minister of the Left, he served in that post in 1876-78, 1878-79, 1881-87, and held the post of minister of interior (1879-81). Known for the policy of *Trasformismo* (i.e., including other parties in his cabinet for practical reasons of government), his premiership was marked by reforms and ameliorations. He brought Italy into foreign policy by membership in the Triple Alliance (with Germany and Austria, 1882) and by initiating a colonial policy in East Africa (from 1882). [Details are given below.]



held the promise of possible reforms in the area of politics, education and the economy. And indeed with a balanced budget, after the economic crisis that had contributed to the downfall of Minghetti's government of the Right, the infrastructure network of the country began to be expanded: industry, initial electrification, railroads, etc.<sup>4</sup>

On November 20 the new legislature opened with 508 deputies or representatives and elected its president, Francesco Crispi, a deputy of the extreme Left who was later to serve as prime minister.

The Historic Right (Marco Minghetti) still held a certain number of seats, but was a minority in the House. However, the parliamentary Left was not monolithic but ranged from fairly moderate (Depretis) to radical (Benedetto Cairoli), with grades in between.

It was in fact ideologically divided and motivated by conflicting political tendencies and sectional interests. C. Duggan writes:

The Left did not really have a coherent programme. Its disparate ranks were united more by a general opposition to the fiscal and centralising tendencies of the Right than by any consensus about what to do instead. [...] The few important laws that the Left passed (and they were confined to a brief period around 1880) were themselves heavily tailored to meet sectional needs. The suffrage reform of 1882, for example, which trebled the electorate to a little over two

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps it was to show their commitment to expanding the infrastructure of the country that Prime Minister Agostino Depretis, accompanied by the minister of the interior Giovanni Nicotera and by Giuseppe Zanardelli, minister of public works, and other dignitaries accepted the mayor of Turin's invitation to attend the inauguration, on August 6, 1876, of the Turin-Lanzo railway line at its completion. The mayor and city council of Lanzo petitioned Father Lemoyne, director of the Salesian school there, for the use of the school's spacious grounds and garden as the most suitable place for the reception of the dignitaries after the inaugural. Lemoyne contacted Don Bosco for instructions and was told to get the students and school's facilities ready. He himself, the day before, traveled to Lanzo with some Salesians and with the Oratory brass band to be on hand for the inaugural and the reception. After the official inauguration and blessing of the railway at the bottom of the hill, the dignitaries and the many people in attendance climbed the hill to the Salesian school and were treated to a rousing reception. The dignitaries then proceeded to the garden where after cordials and refreshments they began to ply Don Bosco with "embarrassing" questions, to which Don Bosco replied "without the least embarrassment" [The event and the dialogue are described in detail in *EBM* XII, 300-309 from *IBM* XII, 417-431 (Ceria), itself based on Lemoyne's *Documenti* XVII, 423-431. Lemoyne, though present, relies for his description on Giulio Barberis report in *Autograph Chronicle*, Notebook 8, entry of August 6, 1876. The event was also noted in the Catholic and anticlerical press].

million (about 25% of the adult male population) ensured that the bulk of the peasantry was excluded by retaining a literacy qualification.<sup>5</sup>

Other political forces were active outside parliament and potentially violent. Foremost among them was the leftist Workers' Coalition, consisting of Mazzinian Republicans, Democrats and international Socialists. These adopted a policy of political non-participation and advocated revolution aiming at empowering the workers.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, Catholics likewise continued their policy of non-participation set by Pius IX's decree *Non expedit* (1874), thereby remaining outside the political process. They constituted to be a non-violent but increasingly influential force.

## 2. Quick Overview of the Depretis and Cairoli Governments (1877-1881)

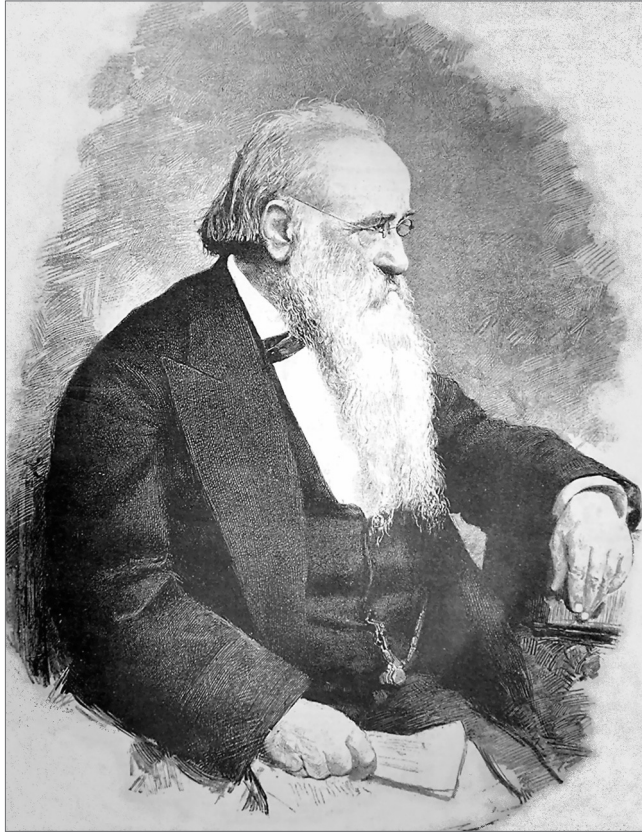
The first Depretis government constituted in March 1876 was too slow in implementing promised reforms to suit the parliamentary opposition from the Left. On December 16, 1877, some deputies of the Left withdrew their support from the Depretis government forcing it to resign (December 16, 1877).

Immediately reappointed by King Victor Emmanuel II (December 26), Depretis assembled a new cabinet (*Depretis Government II*) with Francesco Crispi (1819-1901) as Minister of Interior. But Crispi's forced resignation (because of an accusation of bigamy) brought the second Depretis government down (March 9, 1878).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> C. Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, 158.

<sup>6</sup> The extra-parliamentary political groups included the following (terms to be understood in their nineteenth century sense): Republicans, taking inspiration from Giuseppe Mazzini; and closely related to these, Democrats, advocating a people's republic in the style of the French Revolution; International Socialists, taking inspiration from the Russian Socialist Revolution; Anarchists, taking inspiration from the Russian anarchist Michail Bakunin (1814-1876), advocating a radical abolition of all traditional political orders.

<sup>7</sup> Francesco Crispi in 1855 had married in a Church wedding (only) Rosalia Montmasson, the only woman who had been part the *One Thousand* expedition in 1860 and who had stood by him as with Garibaldi he fought for Sicily and Naples against the Bourbon. Now, he left Rosalia, and on January 26, 1878, he married Lina Barbagallo in a civil wedding. Hence the accusation of bigamy.



26 – Prime Minister Agostino Depretis (1813-1887)

Then King Umberto I (son and successor to Victor Emmanuel) called on Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889), of the extreme Left, to form a new government (*Cairoli I*).<sup>8</sup> It was short-lived, however, and was forced to resign (December 11, 1878) when it came under fire for proposing, among other things, a reduction in military spending as non-productive.

<sup>8</sup> Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889), politician of the extreme parliamentary Left, had served with Giuseppe Garibaldi and, after the unification of Italy, as an elected representative in the House (1860-1870). After the Left came to power (1876), he served as prime minister (1878, 1879 and 1880-81, as noted above). As a member of the Pentarchy (Group of Five, 1883) he resisted Depretis' policy of *Transformismo* (see below). He was a dynamic leader of the extreme parliamentary Left but was unable to control it.



27 – Prime Minister Benedetto Cairoli (1825-1889)

The king called again on Depretis (*Depretis II*). But this government also was short-lived and fell over a proposal to abolish the grist tax.

Cairoli was again called upon (July 14, 1879, *Cairoli II*). In November a new crisis, internal to the cabinet, forced Cairoli, with Depretis' agreement and participation, to form a new government (November 25, *Cairoli III*). On April 29, 1880 the Cairoli government received a vote of no-confidence in the House over the budget, and was forced to resign. At this point King Umberto rejected the resignation and called for general elections, which took place in May 16, 1880.

As will be noted below, Depretis' moderate Left obtained a sizable majority (though not an overwhelming one). On this basis, the king called on Depretis to form a new government (May 29, 1881, *Depretis IV*). This began a Depretis era of five consecutive governments (1881-1887), which will be surveyed below.

### 3. Survey of Significant Events in the Depretis-Cairoli Period (1876-1881)

Against the background of the rise and fall of cabinets in the period 1876-1881 described above, and of division and strife among factions of the Left within and outside parliament, we give here a brief survey of historical events (social, political, religious) that seem worthy of note, bearing in mind that the Left was united only in their general opposition to the Right and in their deep-rooted anticlericalism.

1876

The fourteenth congress of the “federated” workers’ societies (of Mazzinian inspiration) met at Genoa on September 24-26, 1876. It voted not to take part in elections until general suffrage became the law. It also passed a resolution calling for cooperation by all workers’ societies to ensure the end of the current unjust order of labor.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Work of the Congresses (Opera dei Congressi)*

The third Catholic congress opened at Bologna on October 8, 1876. Disrupted by a popular anticlerical protest, it was closed down by the Prefect for reasons of public order, a decision that was strongly denounced in the press as unconstitutional. The second Catholic congress, held in Florence the previous year (September 22-26) had organized the “Work of the Congresses” (*Opera dei Congressi*). This was a permanent structure approved by Pope Pius IX for the purpose of coordinating Catholic action in Italy. Catholics, while maintaining a posture of *political* non-participation, were encouraged to participate in administrative elections (provincial and local), to be active in education and in works of charity, and to fight socialism and immorality through the press, meetings and petitions to parliament. These directives re-echo the work of the first Catholic congress of June 13-16, 1874 held in Venice. That congress particularly stressed the need of establishing Catholic schools and hospitals.

<sup>9</sup> The workers’ societies had adopted the Mazzinian compact of federation (*patto di fratellanza*) at their 13<sup>th</sup> congress held at Rome on March 29-31, 1874. Giuseppe Mazzini had died on March 10, 1872.



The Work of the Congresses, founded in Venice in 1874, sworn to obedience to the pope at the time of the decree *Non expedit*, was the main organizing instrument of Catholic opposition to the liberal State.<sup>10</sup> From 1875 to 1890 its steering committee and executive council, under three presidents, were located at Bologna. The Work experienced a reorganization and resurgence in 1889-1890 under the presidency of the Venetian lawyer Giovanni Paganuzzi. The transfer of its central organs of government to Venice (the movement had been strong throughout the Veneto) inaugurated a more systematic social program, especially through the founding of mutual aid associations for workers and of agrarian cooperatives, encouraged by Pope Leo himself by his encyclical *Rerum novarum* (1891). From 1890 on, under the leadership of its dynamic president (Stanislao Medolago Albani), the Work proved to be an influential social and quasi-political force throughout Leo XIII's pontificate, until its suppression in 1904 after Leo's death (1903).

On November 6, 1876, Cardinal Giacomo Antonelli, Pius IX's secretary of state since 1850 and staunch defender of papal temporal power, died at the age of seventy (He had been Don Bosco's friend and supporter).

### 1877

The congress of the North Italian Federation of the Socialist International took place at Milan on February 17-18, 1877.<sup>11</sup> The assembly dissociated itself from the anarchist movement, promoting instead the socialist cause by

<sup>10</sup> Don Bosco re-organized ("founded") the Salesian Cooperators in 1876 at the time when the government had passed to the Historic Left and the Work of the Congresses was beginning to make its influence felt in society. Don Bosco, as an ultramontane devotee of the pope, was equally opposed to the liberal State, and likewise he enjoined the policy of political non-participation (conformably to the decree *Non expedit*) on his Salesian Cooperators as well as on the Salesian Society. His engagement in social action was simply an engagement in Christian charity. Neither his Salesians nor his Cooperators, nor he himself (though invited) participated in the Work of the Congresses.

<sup>11</sup> The First International (International Socialist Organization) was formed by Karl Marx in London in 1864 as an international working men's association, but was dissolved twelve years later because of infighting between Marxists and Anarchists. (Here we are dealing with local Socialist workers' associations active under the umbrella of the Marxist International.) The Second International was formed in Paris in 1889 and still survives as a loose association of Social Democrats. The Third International, also known as Comintern, was formed by the Bolsheviks in 1919 to further the cause of world revolution. It was abolished during the Second World War (not to irk the allies).

every legitimate means from simple propaganda to extreme popular demonstrations. It approved a letter from Friedrich Engels advising political struggle and competing in elections.

On the front of public education, an ordinance sponsored by Minister Michele Coppino (1822-1901) on March 5, 1877 provided for free and compulsory primary schooling for all children 7 to 9 years of age. It proved to be a restricted but much needed reform considering the widespread illiteracy, especially in the South of Italy.<sup>12</sup> It is significant that by this law catechetical instruction, which had been an important element of a child's education at school, was removed from the curriculum. The primary school was thereby laicized.

A new income tax law was passed (June 28, 1877) that affected individuals or families making 800 or more lire. (The earlier upper limit was 250 lire, that is, the law exempted individuals and families that earned 250 lire or less). The law accorded more favorable terms to industrial and professional concerns.

At the same time a strike of workers was called on June 28, 1877 against the wool factories in the region of Biella that lasted over three months. The workers demanded the retraction of new factory regulations that seriously affected working conditions. In spite of police intervention and repression, the strikers persisted and won. The regulations were withdrawn.

The fourth Catholic congress met on October 8, 1877 at Bergamo. It addressed social problems at considerable length, especially with reference to the situation of the working classes.

Toward the end of the month (October 28) the congress of the workers' associations meeting at Arezzo addressed subjects of importance: pensions for disabled workers, legal recognition of mutual aid societies, establishment of cooperative banks and professional instruction of workers.

## 1878

The year 1878 saw the passing of the two outstanding "rival" personalities of the unification of Italy: King Victor Emanuel II and Pope Pius IX.

<sup>12</sup> Mack Smith quotes Professor Pasquale Villari, who writes: "It is high time that Italy began to realize that she has inside herself an enemy which is stronger than Austria. Somehow we must face up to our multitude of illiterates, the ineptitude of our bureaucratic machine, the ignorance of our professors... It is not the quadrilateral of fortresses at Mantua and Verona which has arrested our path, but the quadrilateral of seventeen million illiterates" [Denis Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 124].



King Victor Emanuel II died on January 9 and was succeeded by his son, Umberto I. The king's remains lay in state in the Quirinal palace for the viewing; then Rome's City Council petitioned that the king be buried in the capital rather than in Turin's Basilica of Superga, the traditional mausoleum of the House of Savoy. Meanwhile, after solemn funerals celebrated in the Pantheon, Umberto was officially proclaimed King of Italy.<sup>13</sup> He decided that his father should be entombed in the Pantheon, in Rome.

Pope Pius IX died on February 7 and was temporarily entombed in St. Peter's, awaiting the official transfer to St. Lawrence outside the walls (as noted below). After a conclave of only two days Cardinal Gioacchino Pecci, archbishop of Perugia, was elected pope and took the name of Leo XIII. His election won favorable comments from the Liberal press because of his learning—and because, not having taken the name of Pius X (contrary to advice from intransigents), he seemed willing to be conciliatory toward the Liberal establishment. But, as he explored the possibility of modifying Pius IX's stance in relation to the State (as noted below), he quickly realized the impossibility of dialogue with the Left, especially the radical Left. This is the reason why Leo XIII, while encouraging *social* engagement by Catholics, maintained Pius IX's policy of *political* non-participation, which was rescinded only after his death in 1903.

On April 11, 1878, the fourth congress of the Italian Federation of the International was held at Pisa secretly. The assembly passed a resolution whereby the anarchists were encouraged to go forward with their revolutionary program, to hasten the day when the proletariat could take up arms and purge the country of “everything bourgeois, throne and altar.”

At the end of April, the first Republican congress met in Rome, attended by some 120 representatives of the many democratic associations, for the purpose of defining a program of the Republican Party. The President (Matteo Renato Imbriani) stressed the urgency of freeing for Italy the regions of Trent and Trieste in the extreme Northeast, still under Austria. The previous May Imbriani had founded an association for this very purpose, *L'Associazione per l'Italia Irredenta* (“unredeemed” Italy) with a program of organizing anti-Austrian uprisings. Henceforth the term *Irredentismo* became part of the Ital-

<sup>13</sup> Umberto's wife, Margherita of Savoy (a cousin of his) became the *first* Queen of Italy. Victor Emanuel II, after the death in 1855 of Queen Consort Maria Adelaide of Augsburg-Lorraine, had never “properly” remarried, though he had marriedmorganatically his low-born mistress (Rosina Vercellana) after making her “Countess of Mirafiori.”

ian political vocabulary. The congress went on to discuss the formation of a national committee, which would actively organize popular protests and promote lectures and publications.

An attempt on King Umberto's life was made in Naples on November 17, 1878 by an anarchist, Giovanni Passanante. Prime Minister Cairoli, riding at the king's side in the royal coach, shielded him and took the dagger's blow to the leg. Passanante was tried in early March, 1879 and condemned to death, a sentence that King Umberto commuted to life imprisonment. The day after the attempted regicide at a celebration held in Florence for the king's safety, a bomb exploded that killed four people and wounded many. In January 1880, fourteen members of the Socialist International accused of complicity in the bombing (among them the Russian revolutionary, Anna Kuleshoff) were tried and convicted, receiving heavy sentences.<sup>14</sup>

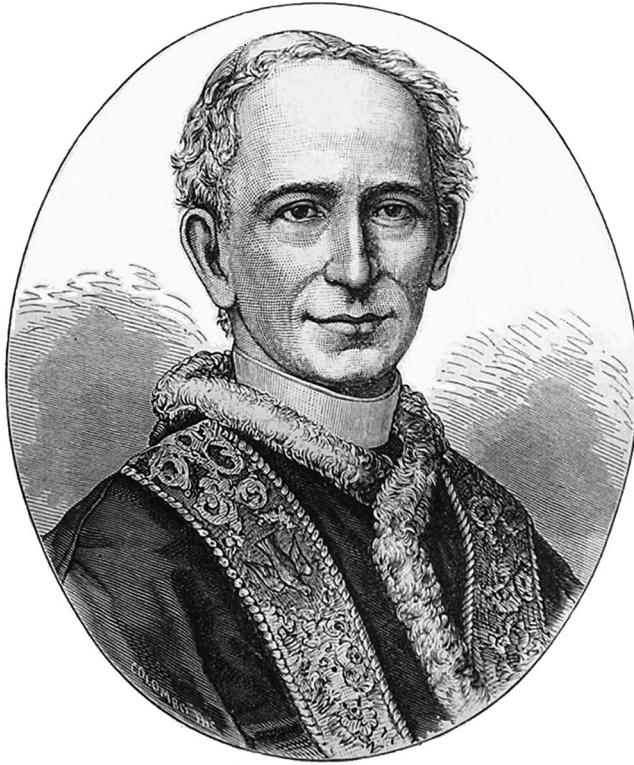
On December 28, 1878, Leo XIII issued the encyclical *Quod apostolici muneris*, by which he condemned socialism, communism and anarchism as destructive of society and civilization. The encyclical was widely read, and liberal journals commented on the text, underlining its importance.

### 1879

The year 1879 saw significant developments that included (among others) the initial use of the telephone under license of the Bell Company and a planned expansion of the railway system, for which huge allocations had to be budgeted. The large deficits anticipated from such expenditures would affect the upcoming parliamentary debate on the abolition of the grist tax.

As mentioned earlier, the government of the parliamentary Left, divided by the rivalry between Depretis (moderate) and Cairoli (radical), caused Depretis' resignation over the issue of the abolition of the unpopular grist tax (July 3), whereupon a second Cairoli government was formed (July 14) on a platform of abolition of the grist tax and of electoral reform.

<sup>14</sup> Ever since the rising to power of the Left, the ideological fragmentation of the parliamentary bloc not only threatened the stability of government but also revealed its inability to maintain social order. In addition, the extra-parliamentary radical groups (Mazzinian Republicans or Democrats, Socialists and Anarchists) by their revolutionary activity threatened the very survival of the constitutional political order. The pope (Papacy) and the king (Monarchy) were their principal target. Eventually Umberto I would fall victim to an assassin, the anarchist Gaetano Bresci (July 29, 1900). Bresci belonged to an anarchist group active in the Italian community in Paterson, NJ (USA).



28 – Pope Leo XIII (1910-1903), elected on February 20, 1878

But on November 19, some ministers within the cabinet, opposed to the abolition of the grist tax, brought about Prime Minister Cairoli's resignation. Immediately King Umberto called on Cairoli again to assemble a new cabinet. This third Cairoli government was made possible by an accord reached between the two rivals (November 25, 1879), as Cairoli called on Depretis to serve as Minister of the Interior. The Bill for the abolition of the grist tax was brought to the floor for discussion, but it remained in committee and, as explained below, could not be acted upon in parliament until after the general elections of May 16, 1880.

Meanwhile, in response to an initiative by Socialists to break with radical revolutionaries and form a legitimate party, Garibaldi on April 21, 1879 banded together the various strands of radicals and republicans and founded the Democratic League. Its program, which would be advanced by means of the press and popular rallies, called among other things for a revision of the

constitution, the abolition of the Law of Guarantees, the confiscation of all Church property, the transformation of the standing army into people's militias.

Later in 1879 (October 21-24) the fifth Catholic congress met in Modena. The agenda included the discussion of a draft proposal to form a Catholic-conservative party for political action. The idea met with the strongest opposition from the group of intransigent Catholics committed to maintaining the policy of total withdrawal from national political life.

### *1880*

As mentioned above, the parliamentary fight over the budget resulted in the resignation of the Cairoli ministry (April 29). King Umberto rejected it and called instead for general elections, which were held on May 16. Adult males (25 years or older) having the franchise on the electoral lists numbered some 622,000 (2.2% of the population). Of these some 59% cast their vote, with the result that the parliamentary Left won 210 seats, the dissidents of the Left gained some 80 seats, and the radicals of the extreme Left, 20. The Historic Right, which had suffered a disastrous defeat in 1876, showed considerable gains, passing from 110 seats to 170.

Following the general election, the reconstituted Cairoli ministry introduced a Bill for the abolition of the grist tax, which in a modified form, won the approval of both Houses of Parliament. The law called for a gradual diminution of the tax and for its total abolition by January 1, 1884.

### *1881*

The representatives of the Democratic associations met in Rome on February 10 for the purpose, among other things, of calling on the people to fight for universal suffrage, women included.

On March 24 an electoral reform Bill was debated in the House. It provided for a broadening of the franchise but it rejected proposals of universal suffrage. The debate faltered repeatedly and had to be remanded to January 1882.

The Cairoli government met with further unforeseen difficulties that had to do with the international situation. France had for some time conducted an aggressive policy in North Africa. An international crisis was provoked when France occupied Tunisia and imposed its protectorate. The opposition

introduced a motion of censure against the Cairoli government for its “hands off” policy (April 29). The crisis that followed brought about Cairoli’s resignation. However, he was persuaded to stay on till a new government should be formed.

#### 4. Depretis Era

The king called again on Depretis, who presented the new government (his fourth) on May 29, inaugurating the “Depretis Era.” In outlining his program, he stressed the urgency of a realistic electoral reform and the need of improving the military, now that the economic boom made funds available. But he declared that in its international relationships Italy intended to be a force for unity and peace.

During this time (the Depretis era, from May 29, 1881 to July 29, 1887), Agostino Depretis served as prime minister through five ministries. Denis Mack Smith, speaks with admiration of Depretis as a “statesman” and writes:

Depretis in the eleven years after 1876 showed himself a master of tactics and expedients, placid, subtle, with an infinite capacity for assimilating other political groups, able to mold parliament almost at will. Nothing had been seen like this since the death of that other great Piedmontese statesman, Cavour. The chief gift of Depretis to Italy was efficient administration, under which some liberal reforms were unobtrusively carried out without the surface of politics being ruffled by too much violent controversy. In foreign as in domestic policy his natural instinct was, as he put it, to open his umbrella when he saw a cloud on the horizon, and wait till the storm had passed. He developed the tactic of forestalling parliamentary defeat by timely resignation, and successfully in 1883, 1884, 1885 and 1887 resigned so as to leave himself free to change direction and remold his coalition. When he formed his eighth and final cabinet in April 1887, he dropped Generals di Robilant and Ricotti of the Right and took on Crispi and Zanardelli of the Left. Crispi in opposition had not stinted his criticisms of Magliani but now had no qualms about becoming his colleague [...].<sup>15</sup> By collaborating with the foxy Depretis after ten years out of office, Crispi abandoned the independent

<sup>15</sup> Agostino Magliani, of the Historic Right, served in the eighth and last Depretis Ministry as minister of Finance, while Francesco Crispi served as minister of the Interior. (On Crispi see below.)

Left and entered the system of *transformismo*, and he thus marked himself out as the obvious successor to Depretis when the latter died later that year.<sup>16</sup>

#### *Depretis Ministry IV (1881-1883)*

1881 [*cont.*]

Pius IX, as mentioned above, had died in 1878 and had been entombed in Saint Peter's. On July 13, 1881, as the Pope's remain were being solemnly transferred to the Basilica of St. Lawrence Outside the Walls for permanent burial, the funeral cortege came repeatedly under attack from a large anticlerical mob, attempting to throw the coffin into the river Tiber. With some delay the police arrived to disperse the mob. The distressing episode drew Pope Leo's indignant protests, accusing the government of willful negligence. In response to continued aggravation from Republicans and Radicals the Pope would later threaten to leave Rome and settle elsewhere in voluntary exile.

1882

On February 15, 1882 Leo XIII accused the Italian government publicly for its anticlerical policies. Relations became so tense that in March Austrian Emperor Francis Joseph dispatched an extraordinary mission to the Holy See for the purpose of dissuading the pope from the idea of moving to Austria.

#### *Triple Alliance*

Back in October 1881 King Umberto had made an official visit to Vienna, which presaged Italy's new orientation toward Austria, a shift provoked by French expansionist policy in Tunisia. On May 20, 1882 Italy entered into a Triple Alliance with Prussia and Austria, thus becoming definitely involved in international politics.

This alliance, of a purely defensive nature, helped reorient Italy's internal politics in a conservative and militaristic direction, for the treaty aimed at reinforcing the monarchic principle for social order. The treaty also supported

<sup>16</sup> Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 126-127. (For the meaning of *Trasformismo* see below.)

Italy's case in the Roman question, in as much as the territorial unification achieved with the taking of Rome in 1870 received implicit recognition from Austria, the foremost Catholic power.

Alliance with Italy also strengthened Austria's and Germany's security in the event of conflict with Russia or France, for they could now count on Italy's neutrality and support from the south.

Italy's orientation toward Austria put a damper on the "Irredentist" movement (*Irredentismo*), which in the spirit of the *Risorgimento* aimed at completing the unification by "redeeming" for Italy the regions of Trent and Trieste still under Austria.<sup>17</sup>

On August 2, at Trieste, an attempt was made on the life of Austrian Archduke Karl Ludwig on an official visit to open an agricultural and industrial faire. The bomb, thought to be the work of Irredentist terrorists, killed or wounded a number people, but not the archduke. On December 20, the execution by hanging of the Irredentist activist Guglielmo Oberdan at Trieste stirred up widespread protests against the Triple Alliance that increased the influence of the radical Left among the people.

### *General Elections*

Earlier in 1882 (January 22) Parliament had acted on a Bill of electoral reform introduced the previous year (March 1881). This law provided for a reduction of the voting age (from 25 to 21 years) and of the enrollment fee by half. Those who could not pay could still be enrolled if they had completed satisfactorily the first two years of primary schooling. By requiring an enrollment fee and literacy the law severely limited the franchise, which fell far short of the hoped-for universal male suffrage. (Women were likewise excluded.) Nevertheless the electorate increased from 621,896 to 2,017,829 (from 2.2% to 6.9% of the population).

On October 22, 1882 the first general elections were held with the expanded suffrage and with the participation of 60.7% of those having the franchise. The vote was favorable to Depretis and his sizable moderate Left

<sup>17</sup> The term *Irredentismo* had entered the political dialogue in 1877 with the founding of the Association for Unredeemed Italy. This had followed a lively campaign for the "redemption" of Trent and Trieste waged by the newly formed party of Mazzinian republicans with the radical group, Garibaldi included. The Irredentist hopes were dashed to pieces with the Congress of Berlin (1878), in which Italy renounced further territorial claims, and with the signing of the Triple Alliance mentioned above.



majority, which made considerable gains. The extreme Left, with its radical core, also gained, obtaining a total of some 40 seats, and the Historic Right maintained its position in Parliament. A coalition of socialist and workers' parties garnered a small percentage of the vote (but no seats).

### *Trasformismo*

During the electoral campaign, in a speech delivered on October 8, Prime Minister Depretis had set forth his new policy of "Transformism." The idea was for the moderate Left to form partnership with those conservative forces of the Historic Right that were willing to collaborate in tackling the concrete questions facing the government, leaving behind the old ideological differences of the time of the *Risorgimento*. This was an invitation and a challenge addressed by Depretis to conservative candidates, calling for "transformation." As the elections revealed, the idea appealed to large segments of the middle class that desired to see stronger majorities for a more effective practical government. Such a proposal implied a "transformation" also in Depretis, who back in the campaign of 1875 had stated that the program of the Left called for a "parliamentary revolution," that is, for the defeat of the Historic Right and the Cavourian tradition.

The above is a summary description of "Transformism" from *Compact De Agostini*.<sup>18</sup> Duggan, on the other hand, gives a more realistic and less flattering description of "Transformism," as a "surrender of principle to short-term expediency." He speaks of it as

The process whereby during the 1880s the old party labels of Left and Right lost their meaning as governments became shapeless amalgams of one-time opponents. In part this development was due to the absence of major reform proposals after 1882: to many it now seemed logical to bury old differences, and focus collectively on ad hoc issues.

However, Transformism was also the result of uncertainty, a feeling that Italy's ruling class needed to close ranks in order to face the growing challenge of socialism. The pessimistic and deeply conservative leader of the Left, Agostino Depretis, a quintessential northern bourgeois, who [...] raised expediency and indecision to fresh heights of political artistry, was worried that 'new social strata' would destroy the institutions: he saw the 1882 electoral reform as a perilous, but

<sup>18</sup> *Compact Storia d'Italia. Cronologia 1815-1990* (Novara: Istituto Geografico De Agostini, 1991), 197.

necessary, leap in the dark. Marco Minghetti, the dominant figure of the Right, a man of high principles and profound intelligence, was no less fearful. He offered to work with Depretis in their common task of holding back the flood of what he called 'seething demagoguery'.<sup>19</sup>

### 1883

The beginning of the year 1883 was characterized by widespread anti-Austrian protests and uprisings in many larger cities, such as Milan and Rome. Immediately such unrest was occasioned by the execution of the "Irredentist" Guglielmo Oberdan (mentioned above) but more generally by the growing strength of the Irredentist movement and its opposition to the Triple Alliance. Only the decisive intervention of the state police with massive arrests, searches and imprisonments could restore order.

On April 12, 1883 one of the most important economic reforms of the Depretis era went into effect: the abolition of the "enforced value" (*corso forzoso*) of the Lira and of the connected consortium of issuing banks. The policy had been established in 1866 (at the time of the Third War on Independence) and the issuing consortium in 1874. Their abolition had been decreed by law on April 7, 1881 but the reform could not go into effect due to the crash of the Paris stock exchange in 1882. The law dissolved the issuing consortium and placed the issuing and circulation of money under government control. This permitted the conversion of the old circulating paper money and of the huge deposit of the consortium into gold and silver coin and into new bank notes, all legal tender. Sizable loans drawn on London and Paris banks at 5% interest served as equalizers. The Lira could thus be competitive in international exchanges, with considerable commercial advantage.

On May 12-19 a no-confidence motion against the Depretis government, followed by a parliamentary debate on the validity of Transformism led by Minister of Justice Giuseppe Zanardelli (1826-1903) and Minister of Public Works Alfredo Baccarini (1826-1890), brought the government into crisis. Although Depretis easily survived the no-confidence vote, the two ministers resigned, and Depretis himself submitted his resignation to the king.

Immediately King Umberto called again on Depretis to form a new government (his fifth, May 25, 1883).

<sup>19</sup> C. Duggan, *A concise History of Italy*, 161. Compare Deggan's portrayal of Depretis with Mack Smith's assessment quoted above.

*Depretis Ministry V (1883-1884)**1883 [cont.]*

During the next four Depretis ministries, until his death (July 29, 1887) and Francesco Crispi's accession (August 7, 1887) we note a crescendo in political strife and social unrest.

On August 5-6, 1883 the congress of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, founded in 1881, met at Ravenna to discuss a proposal to bring together and unite all the socialist groups of Italy. The state police intervened to break up the meeting.

A congress of the Radical Party, with the participation of republican and socialist leaders was held at Bologna on August 8 and founded the Democratic Union (*Fascio della Democrazia*), with the aim of forming a front to oppose Transformism. The Union, however, was short-lived because of the partners' failure to agree on a common political strategy.

The Worker's Federation of Lombardy, of recent founding, held its congress in mid-September, with radicals and socialists in the leadership. It stressed the importance of fighting the capitalist establishment openly by means of strikes.

On November 25 Giuseppe Zanardelli and Alfredo Baccarini, who had resigned from the fourth Depretis ministry, were joined by Benedetto Cairoli, Giovanni Nicotera and Francesco Crispi and formed the so-called Pentarchy ("Group of Five"). They intended to propose a constitutional alternative to Depretis' Transformism. They founded the newspaper *La Tribuna* and attracted to their cause a number of distinguished political individuals who joined the Pentarchy in the fight against Depretis. They were actively united throughout the Depretis era until 1887, when Zanardelli and Crispi accepted to be part of the last Depretis ministry.

A popular political rally held in Naples by the extreme Left in mid-December was dispersed by a military detachment. They demanded universal suffrage in administrative elections and municipal autonomy.

The year 1883 ended in a hopeful note. A letter to Pope Leo XIII signed by King William I and countersigned by Prime Minister Otto von Bismarck of Germany expressed satisfaction over the improved relations between Germany and the Holy See. It announced a revision of the punishing laws of the *Kulturkampf* against the Catholic Church. As indicative of the welcome thaw in relations most of the dioceses in Prussia were restored, and the German

heir apparent, Prince Frederick William, on his visit to Rome (December 22), had a private audience with Pope Leo.

### 1884

A note from the Holy See dated February 10 and addressed to the papal Nuncios accredited to European governments lambasted a judgment of the Italian Supreme Court ordering the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith to convert its immovable assets to certificates against the public debt. Leo XIII regarded such action as an unwarranted invasion of the Church's rights and spiritual office. He repeated his accusation when addressing the cardinals some time later, in March.

In March the state police shut down newspapers of the radical Left: *La Questione Sociale* of Florence and *Il Comune* of Ravenna, and jailed their editors.

Meanwhile (March 29-30) the Workers' Congress of Romagna met at Forlì with the participation of local democratic associations. It reaffirmed unanimously the workers' right to strike, a policy supported by socialists and republicans. The same had been debated and approved in February in the fourth congress of the Workers' Federation of Lombardy, the radical wing of which had rejected any government interference or mediation in the relations between workers and employers.

Parliamentary opposition to the Depretis government and its Transformism had been growing in strength especially due to the dire situation of farm laborers, leading to widespread unrest and uprisings through 1884 and 1885. Also, the narrow passage of a Bill granting the University "financial, disciplinary and didactic" autonomy—all this combined to bring the Depretis ministry into crisis. Several ministers resigned, and Depretis himself submitted his resignation to the king (March 20).

Immediately King Umberto called again on Depretis to assemble a new government—his sixth ministry, presented to Parliament on March 30, 1884.

### *Depretis Ministry VI (1884-1885)*

#### 1884 [cont.]

On April 5 Minister of Foreign Affairs Pasquale Mancini in an address to parliament restated the government's intention to adhere to the Triple Alli-

ance, strengthening ties with Germany and Austria, a foreign policy that ran contrary to the activities of the Irredentist movement.

But, as mentioned above, the sixth Depretis ministry is noted for a deep and prolonged agricultural crisis in regions where the capitalist transformation was more pronounced, as in regions of the Po valley. The living conditions of peasants, especially of farm laborers, worsened to the point where strikes and unrest became inevitable, led by radicals and promoted by the Association of Italian Farm Laborers of socialist inspiration. Duggan writes:

The worsening agricultural crisis caused increasing unemployment, especially in the Po valley, where landless day labourers became more numerous and desperate. Strikes grew common and were almost invariably violent. [...] To the consternation of the government, the unrest mounted. In 1884 a waves of strikes swept across the entire Po valley. The landowners clamored for help; they received it in the shape of police and military intervention against workers, the forcible dissolution of peasant leagues and resistance societies, and, in 1887, tariffs.<sup>20</sup>

The revolt was finally put down the following year with massive intervention of state police and the arrest of some 2000 striking day laborers. However, in 1886 the high court in Venice ruled in favor of the strikers, who were defended by able socialist lawyers. The acquittal received nationwide notice and came to be regarded as a precedent, implicitly recognizing the workers' right of association, to form labor unions and to strike.

On April 20, 1884 Leo XIII by the encyclical *Humanum genus* renewed the condemnation of Freemasonry, an action that caused heated debates.

A great cholera epidemic originating in Southern France and brought into Italy by seasonal workers raged on and off from mid-1884 to 1887, the longest epidemic of the century on record. The victims numbered 50,000 overall, 8000 in Naples alone, equal to a mortality in 50% of the cases. Here the disease spread with particular virulence due to the city's abominable hygienic and structural conditions. A Bill calling for a "cleansing" and restructuring

<sup>20</sup> C. Duggan, *A Concise History of Italy*, 162-163. See plate on p. 151 showing a group of idle farm laborers by their straw huts, a photograph dating probably to the end of the nineteenth century (!). Duggan notes the backwardness of Italian agriculture as also Italy's slow industrial progress. He writes: "Italian manufacturing in the 1860s and 1870s was still in its infancy [...]. At the time of the unification, Italy had 500,000 cotton spindles: Britain had 30 million, France 5.5 million. The annual output of pig iron was a mere 30,000 tons, compared to four million tons in Britain and a million tons in France" [*Ibid.*].

of the city presented by Prime Minister Depretis was approved unanimously. The Bill was signed into law on January 15, and a society for its implementation was established.

### *1885: Beginnings of Italian Colonialism*

The year 1885 marks the Italian government's fateful decision to establish colonies in East Africa, a decision encouraged by Bismarck's conversion to colonialism and by England's permissive posture. Back in 1870 the Italian Rubattino Shipping Company had negotiated with local tribal chieftains for the acquisition of the bay and port of Assab on the red Sea (Southern Eritrea), to be used as a station on the new Suez-Red Sea commercial route. In 1882 the Italian government had taken possession of Assab, which became the kernel of the Italian colony on the Red Sea coast (later called Eritrea). In 1883 (March 15) the Italian commander signed a treaty with the sultan of Assab whereby Italy obtained part of Ablis (Aussa), in the hinterland southwest of Assab.

With these precedents on January 1, 1885 the pro-government newspaper *Il Diritto* announced the government's decision to establish colonies in Africa, thereby joining other European powers in the race to establish a colonial empire.<sup>21</sup> Encouraged by England, a detachment of 1500 soldiers trained in specialized corps sailed from Naples on January 17, 1885 and on February 5 occupied the coastal city of Massawa (North of Assab). The Egyptian garrison guarding the port allowed the Italians to take over without a protest. The Egyptian and Turkish governments later made only symbolical protests, so that in a few months the contingent had occupied the coastal area from Massawa in the north to Assab in the south. A second and a third expedition (February 12 and 24) firmed up the Italian hold along the coast. From there Italian contingents at once began to push into the highlands of the interior. In April an officious mission was dispatched to the Negus John IV (ruler of Tigré, Ethiopia) to allay his fears arising from the Italian occupation.

Soon, however, questions began to be asked in parliament about this new policy, faulting the ministry with lack of clarity as to its purpose and expected advantages. In early May a debate on this very matter was held in parliament in which Depretis himself intervened in support of the policy, asking for a

<sup>21</sup> England, France, Germany, Belgium and Portugal were the principal European powers that in the 1880s and 1890s scrambled for the "partition of Africa." In East Africa, immediately south of Assab, in 1884 France established its protectorate over Jibuti, and England over parts of the Somali coast.

vote of confidence. The Red Sea colonial undertaking was approved by 180 votes to 97. (On December 2, 1885 Massawa would be officially declared to be an Italian colony.)

Meanwhile a Bill on the management of the railroads was presented in Parliament by the Depretis government. It entrusted the management of the railroads to large private companies, a provision that met with fierce opposition from all sections of the radical Left and from the opponents of Transformism, and caused acrimonious debates through 75 tumultuous sessions before it came to a vote on March 6, 1885. In the end the vote was in favor of the government's Bill by a slim majority of 23 votes.

Likewise, a Bill detailing the responsibility of employers to provide insurance coverage for workers suffering injury on the job was approved in the House by a narrow margin, but met with stiff opposition in the Senate, forcing its withdrawal. This situation, added to opposition arising from the colonial policy, forced the resignation of the Depretis ministry (June 18).

The king called again on Depretis to reassemble a new cabinet (his seventh), in which Depretis held the ministry of Interior and, for a time, also of Foreign Affairs.

### *Depretis Ministry VII (1885-1887)*

#### *1885 [cont.]*

The cholera epidemic of 1884 that, as mentioned above, had raged over the length and breadth of the peninsula, revisited with a vengeance in September 1885, making many victims and reaching its peak in Palermo (Sicily). Here 189 deaths were recorded in a singled day, and the city was quarantined. Panic and popular uprisings spread through the island, requiring the deployment of no less than 17 units of the army to maintain public order.

Leo XIII's encyclical *Immortale Dei* on the Christian constitution of states (released on November 1, 1885) marked a step forward in the matter of political participation by Catholics, *in cases when the Church thought it necessary*. In certain circumstances citizens would not only be permitted but duty-bound actively to participate in the political life of the State.<sup>22</sup> However, the general prohibition was not lifted until after Pope Leo's death in 1903.

<sup>22</sup> The Congregation of Bishops and Regulars when ordering the article forbidding the Salesians' participation in politics removed from the early constitutions in 1864 (Chapter on



1886

The huge deficits caused by the spending policies of the Minister of Finance (Agostino Magliani) and his efforts to cover up the deficit in order to justify further expenditures lay at the basis of the crisis that overtook the new Depretis government early in 1886. The deficits were related to the large outlays needed to finance the government's expansion of public works, especially the railroads. When on February 22, the Finance minister presented a Bill in the House designed to make up the deficit and balance the budget, the maneuver met with fierce opposition from the Left and from anti-Transformists. Debates ensued over the measure, but the budget was approved by a narrow margin (March 5).

The government survived, but unsure whether it could command a majority in the House, Depretis (without formally resigning) reached an understanding with the king and dissolved parliament, calling for general elections (April 27).

The elections took place on May 23. The registered voters that went to the polls numbered close to 1,500,000 or some 58% of the nearly 2,500,000 having the franchise. Some Catholic groups, too, relying perhaps on Pope Leo's encyclical (see above), participated in the elections in spite of the *Non expedit* prohibition. The government's coalition barely withstood the attack mounted by the Pentarchy (see year 1883 above), leftist Radicals and dissidents of the Right, joined in the campaign by the Workers' Party, the Socialist Revolutionary Party and the Radicals. It survived thanks to progressive independent groups that stood in fear of the growing workers' movement.

In response to the action of the Catholic groups, on July 30 Cardinal Monaco La Valletta, prefect of the Congregation of the Holy Office, reaffirmed the policy of non-participation established by the Decree *Non expedit* of 1874.

All along the extra-parliamentary radical Left had been growing bolder. On March 25 the Italian Socialist Revolutionary Party had held its second congress under the presidency of its founder (Andrea Costa, 1881). It had

Purpose, Art. 7) gave the same reason. The explanation given, as quoted by Don Bosco, read: "In this day and age, circumstances may well force one in conscience to enter the political arena, since politics are often inseparable from religion. In such cases good Catholics cannot be forbidden political activity" [ASC D578: *Capitoli Generali*, General Chapter I, Session 4, September 7, 1877, Barberis' Original Minutes, 53-55, *FDBM* 1,843 C12-D2 (edited in *IBM* XIII, 265, and in *EBM* XIII, 195)].

approved a motion to work towards the creation of a single party that would unite all the extra-parliamentary forces (Socialist, Workers' and Anarchist groups).

1887

The year 1887 was noted for a series of events that would affect both domestic and foreign policy for years to come.

In Eritrea on January 26 a contingent of 500 Italian soldiers was massacred at Dogali-Saati by Ras Alula, ruler of the region of Hamasen. Saati, an Italian outpost in the Eritrean hinterland west of Massawa, had come under siege by Alula. The soldiers dispatched to its aid were ambushed and annihilated at Dogali.

The slaughter of Dogali provoked massive demonstrations against the government's colonial policy in Rome and other Italian cities. It also stiffened the parliamentary opposition of the extreme Left, of the Pentarchy and of dissident groups of the Right, forcing Depretis and his cabinet to tender their resignation to the king (February 8). King Umberto refused to accept the resignations and bade Depretis assemble a new cabinet, the eighth and last Depretis ministry.

#### *Depretis Ministry VIII (1887)*

1887 [*cont.*]

On April 4, 1887 Depretis reconstituted the new government. As a parliamentary majority of the moderate Republican center was no longer possible, Depretis succeeded in bringing into the cabinet two ranking members of the powerful Pentarchy: Francesco Crispi (future Prime Minister) as Minister of the Interior and Giuseppe Zanardelli (author of a new penal code) as Minister of Justice (thus bringing about the dissolution of the Pentarchy). Prime Minister Depretis himself in addition to the premiership took the Desk of Foreign Affairs.

In a speech made in the House on May 20 Crispi presented the government's program calling for real progress on the many Bills still lagging in House and Senate: reform of provincial and local structures, public security, mental hospitals, penal code, public sanitation, employment code, charitable

institutions, prison system, emigration. He stressed the urgency and the need for a united effort of all parliamentary forces.

*Attempt at Church-State rapprochement*

At this time (May 20) in an allocution to the cardinals Leo XIII expressed the Church's desire to live in peace with the Italian State, provided the rights of the Church were respected. An earlier papal address to the cardinals (February 28) was understood by "conciliatory" (as opposed to "intransigent") Catholic groups as favoring a reconciliation and Catholic participation in public life. The movement found support (with the pope's tacit acquiescence) from a few ecclesiastics. For example, Bishop Geremia Bonomelli of Cremona and Bishop Giovanni Scalabrini of the Christopher Columbus Institute proposed ways in which papal temporal power (the bone of contention) might be "re-stored," at least minimally and symbolically. The Benedictine Luigi Tosti published a pamphlet entitled *La Conciliazione* and held secret conversations on the subject with Crispi. Depretis approved in the hope of strengthening the government's position by developing a new relationship with the Church. But intransigent Catholics connected with the Work of the Congresses (see 1876 above) at this time presented a petition to the House in support of the pope's right to true and complete freedom and to temporal power. The hurdle of papal temporal power, however, could not be surmounted. Leo XIII, in a letter to cardinal Mariano Rampolla (made public on July 26) made it clear that "restitution of genuine sovereignty" was an essential prerequisite for any rapprochement. On the other hand, shortly after the papal allocutions and the conversations with Tosti, Crispi in a speech delivered in the House flatly declared that Italy, not being at war with anyone, needed no reconciliation, and that the king was the only sovereign she acknowledged.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The Law of Guarantees of 1871 provided for the pope to retain certain properties (Vatican, St. John Lateran and Castelgandolfo), to have unimpeded domestic and foreign communication, and to enjoy diplomatic representation, royalty honors, and other "privileges." But all the provisions were "concessions" by the state to which the pope had no right. They were not "restitution of genuine sovereignty" or of temporal power. That is why both Pius IX and Leo XIII rejected the Law of Guarantees and would not negotiate for any rapprochement or reconciliation except on the basis of *restitution*. Later, in 1929, the reconciliation (*Conciliazione*) negotiated between Pius XI and Benito Mussolini was accomplished on the basis of restitution, without use of the word, so that the pope held genuine sovereignty in the "Vatican State."

Agostino Depretis died on July 29, 1887 at the age of 74 and was accorded State funerals and national mourning. On August 7, by royal decree, Francesco Crispi took over the premiership as well as the ministry of Foreign Affairs.<sup>24</sup>

## 5. The Crispi Era

After Depretis' death in 1889, by royal appointment Crispi served as prime minister in three administrations: 1887-89, 1889-91 and 1893-96. As these dates take us considerably past Don Bosco's lifetime, we shall only survey briefly Crispi's first and ministries.

### *Crispi Ministry I*

1887 [*cont.*]

Soon after his appointment, on October 1, Crispi conferred with Bismarck at Friedrichsruhe (the chancellor's summer residence) where, as Crispi reported, the two prime ministers "conspired for peace." Actually they entered into a military convention, within the Triple Alliance, to be signed in February 1888 for defensive purposes.

<sup>24</sup> Francesco Crispi (1819-1901), a much discussed politician, had a long and varied history. He belonged to an Albanian family that had long before migrated to Sicily. He served in the Sicilian revolutionary government in 1848-49, and in 1853 he was exiled to France and to England for revolutionary activity in Milan. While in London he became associated with Giuseppe Mazzini, also in exile for a similar reason. In 1860 he joined Giuseppe Garibaldi in the "One Thousand" expedition to Sicily and related popular uprisings. Of radical republican persuasion, he served as Sicilian representative in the Italian parliament from the unification of Italy in 1861 until practically his death in 1901. When the Left came to power in 1876, as leader of the radical Left, Crispi served as president of the House (1876) and minister of the Interior (1877-78). After Depretis' death in 1889, by royal appointment he served as prime minister in three administrations: 1887-89, 1889-91 and 1893-96. In foreign policy, he cultivated the Triple Alliance and organized the Italian colonies on the Red Sea as Eritrea. He endeavored to impose an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia, but failed when the Italian military contingents suffered a disastrous defeat at Aduwa (1896). Following this massacre, popular uprisings in all major Italian cities, abetted by the parliamentary radical Left opposed to Italian colonial policy and to the Crispi government, spelled Crispi's downfall. Surrounded by banking scandals, he died in disgrace in 1901.

1888

The French looked on the Italian-German military convention with suspicion as directed toward strengthening Italy's position in the Mediterranean and as a response to their own aggressive North African colonial policy (Algeria and Tunis). In addition, protectionist export-import policies imposed by Italy provoked a trade war with France that heightened the enmity. The result was that large surpluses of Italian agricultural products, such as wine, olive oil, etc., remained unsold. Many farmers were put out of business, especially in the South.

In November of the previous year a large contingent of reinforcements under a new commander had sailed for Massawa (Eritrea) in five new steamers. In March (1888) the Italian troops began to penetrate into Ethiopian territory and reoccupied Dogali, Saati and other localities. This action drew a strong protest from Negus John IV (ruler of Tigré), who had been assured of possession of these sites by England in the treaty of June 3, 1884. When the Italians demanded that their possession of the territory already occupied be recognized, negotiations broke down; so they pushed on up to the Ethiopian plateau. Crispi in a speech delivered in the House on May 12 defended his government's colonial policy and won the vote of confidence by a large majority.

On the home front in 1888, the Crispi government was responsible for important reforms. The following may be mentioned: a law reorganizing the central administration of the state, increasing the powers of the executive and of the prime minister vis-à-vis the Parliament and empowering provincial and local administrations (February 12); a law establishing new programs governing instruction in the primary school, new guidelines on teaching methods based on principles of positivistic inspiration (experiential, non-dogmatic learning, education to methodical doubt, education of the mind to discipline and a sense of duty, education of the body through gymnastics as curricular subject (February 16, April 3); a law regulating prostitution, and a program for the prevention of venereal diseases, entailing the closure of old hospitals and an aggressive program for the treatment of infected persons (April 12); a law (the first of its kind) establishing the right and freedom to emigrate (December 30).

1889

At the beginning of February, the Minister of the Treasury was replaced, and his successor reported to the House huge undeclared deficits from the

earlier administration, and proposed attempting to balance the budget by cutting allocations and assessing tributes. Most of the deputies opposed the project, and in order to avoid a vote of no-confidence, eventually Crispi submitted his resignations (February 28).

### *Crispi Ministry II*

Quickly a new government was formed (March 9) by Prime Minister Crispi with new ministers in key positions and with the addition of the new ministry of Post and Telegraph Services.

Throughout Crispi's second ministry, the expansion of Italy's East African colonies continued to be at the center of his foreign policy.

### *Colonial Policy under Crispi*

Italy's colonial policy was first set in place at a time when European colonial powers were already expanding their colonial holdings in Africa. Portugal, France, Belgium and more recently Bismarck's Germany (but not Italy) in the Berlin Conference (November 1884-Feb. 1885) had decided the partition of those African territories not yet claimed by a European power. That conference had shown that Italy had not yet "arrived," and that the national honor and prestige required a more vigorous colonial policy. That is what motivated Crispi's policy. Other factors were involved, such as the pressure put on the government by shipping companies and industrial concerns, and the expectation that colonies would provide an outlet for emigration. Opposed to Crispi's colonialism were the socialists and republicans, the opponents of the Triple Alliance, and those that thought that the Red Sea coast and the horn of Africa only distracted Italy from her historic center of interest, the Mediterranean.

In early January 1889, Negus John IV, Emperor of Ethiopia, had concluded an alliance with his rival Ras Menelik II (ruler of Shewa or Shoa), designating him as his successor.<sup>25</sup> With this turn of events Italy decided to wait for Menelik's succession to negotiate for an Italian protectorate over Ethiopia.

<sup>25</sup> John IV (also Johannes, Yohannes, 1831-1889) had defeated Menelik in the contest to succeed Tewodros II as Emperor of Ethiopia (1872-1889). He is credited with preserving the territory of Ethiopia from encroachment from enemies in Sudan and from European

After John IV's death and Menelik's succession as emperor ("king of kings," March 10, 1889), negotiations began, and by the treaty of Ucciali (May 2), styled in Italian and Ethiopic, Italy acknowledged Menelik as emperor, and Menelik conceded to Italy the conquests made on the Red Sea coast (Eritrea), but rejected Italy's attempts to impose a colonial protectorate on Ethiopia. Italy claimed the protectorate on the basis of an article in the Italian text of the treaty (art. 17, missing in the Ethiopic text), providing for Italian representation of Ethiopia in international circles—which implied the existence of a protectorate.

On August 3 the military corps stationed at Massawa pushed westward and occupied Asmara in the hinterland of Eritrea uncontested. Meanwhile an Ethiopian delegation arrived in Italy to confer with Crispi's foreign ministry about updating and finalizing the treaty of Ucciali. Italy could retain the territories already occupied in exchange for substantial financial aid to Ethiopia.

But the experts of the Italian foreign ministry failed to ascertain the exact correspondence of the two texts of the treaty, and failed to note that the article on representation, on the strength of which Italy claimed the protectorate, was missing in the Ethiopian text.

Ethiopia (in good faith?) knew nothing about a protectorate, but Crispi (in good faith?) on October 11 ordered all ambassadors accredited to the governments signatory of the Berlin Conference of 1885 to apprise them of the "fact" of the Italian protectorate over Ethiopia. A few days later, speaking in Palermo (Sicily) he touted Italy's historic "civilizing mission," magnified the advantages the colonies would bring to Italian industry and commerce, and defended himself from the accusation of megalomania.

In November Italy extended her protectorate to the Benadir coast in Southern Somalia, but Crispi, impatient with the slow pace of Italian colonial penetration dismissed the commander of operations and appointed his own man.

Meanwhile an international conference held in Brussels on November 18 under the chairmanship of Cardinal Charles Lavigerie (archbishop of Algiers and primate of Northern Africa) abolished the slave trade. Italy, who had made a commitment to abolition in the treaty of Ucciali, represented Ethiopia at the conference.

colonizers (Italy's at Dogali). He was killed in battle against the Mahdists (Sudan) in 1889 and was succeeded by Menelik II.



1890

By the royal decree of January 5 the Italian colonies of the Red Sea were to be known by the official name of “Eritrea.” They were to be administered by a governor aided by three councilors under the ministry of foreign affairs (therefore under Crispi himself).<sup>26</sup>

On February 9 Crispi through his representative lodged a complaint against Negus Menelik for having notified his coronation as emperor of Ethiopia to the European nations directly, bypassing Italian diplomatic representation provided for by the treaty of Ucciali.<sup>27</sup> Menelik reconfirmed the treaty as updated and finalized in March 1889, but did not acknowledge any right of diplomatic representation (protectorate) claimed by Italy.

### *The Zanardelli Penal Code*

On January 1, 1890 the new penal code came into effect. It had been in process for several years under the guidance of Giuseppe Zanardelli and was presented by him, as minister of justice in Crispi’s second government, in parliament for discussion and approval (June 30, 1889). Some of its contents had already become known by 1888 and drew a stinging critique from Pope Leo XIII in an address to a consistory of cardinals on June 1. Two months later some German bishops issued a stern judgment on some of the code’s “unheard of provisions” that infringed on the Church’s rights.

The Zanardelli code reorganized and unified for the whole of Italy all penal legislation, supplanting Piedmontese and other regional codes. Some of its provisions that had been the object of prolonged and harsh debates may be mentioned. The code abolished the death penalty, providing for life imprisonment in its place, and lessened penalties for crimes against property. A new, updated law of public order and security provided for the use of very severe measures (house arrest, restricted right of assembly, military and police intervention). It made no provision regarding the right to strike, thus allowing the going prescriptive practice in the matter. The failure of attempts at reconciliation between Church and State (see year 1887 above), and

<sup>26</sup> From this point on the various regions occupied by Italy along the Red Sea coast and immediate hinterland, conceded by Ethiopia under the treaty of Ucciali, were to be known collectively as Eritrea, one Italian colony.

<sup>27</sup> As mentioned above, Italy claimed the right of diplomatic representation (implying protectorate) on the basis of art. 17 of the Italian-language text, which was missing in the Ethiopic text of the treaty.

more so Zanardelli's and Crispi's extreme anticlericalism had brought about an increasingly severe tension and polarization. This was reflected in the law that provided for the punishment of ecclesiastics that were found in non-compliance or in active opposition.

By his encyclical *Sapientiae christianae* of January 18 (1890) Leo XIII called upon Catholics to be guided by the Christian moral tradition whether in private or social life and to oppose any state law not compatible with the laws of the Church.

A Bill presented in parliament by Crispi himself, was passed into law after bitter debate on July 17. It provided for the laicization of all religious works of charity by creating in every municipality a "Congregation of charity" under lay management. It thus brought to completion the process of laicization of works owned or controlled by the Church.

In early October the Work of the Congresses (see 1876, October 8 and 1877, May 20 above) held its eighth conference. It renewed its commitment to extend Catholic associations and social activities on behalf of the working classes.

#### *Brief summary of Crispi's second government*

The second Crispi government (1889-1891) met with fierce opposition to its policies from republicans, democrats, socialists, radicals, conservatives and workers' associations of every stripe both inside and outside parliament. Crispi managed to weather the groundswell of opposition until King Umberto by royal decree dissolved parliament and called for general elections, to be held on November 23. The general elections of 1890 recorded the lowest voting percentage since 1870. Perhaps for that reason, but also due to the bruising campaign waged by Crispi and to the disarray of the radical Left, his government coalition was reaffirmed by a large majority.

Immediately Crispi and the German chancellor Georg Leo von Caprivi moved to restore the Triple Alliance (November 29).

But economic crisis and financial deficits, which had plagued the country throughout Crispi's tenure as prime minister, had resulted in the accumulation of a large public debt. After violent exchanges during a stormy session with deputies of the Historic Right, characterized by mutual accusations and recriminations, Crispi and cabinet resigned (January 31, 1891). The king called upon Marquis Antonio Starabba di Rudinì, the leader of the Historic Right (Rudinì for short), to form a new government.

Mack Smith appraisal is worth quoting.

It was Crispi's misfortune to be governed too exclusively by motives of personal and national dignity. He lacked balance and serenity. He was moody, taciturn, quick to anger, [...] excessively proud and oversensitive to criticism. He could be grossly discourteous, not only to the press and parliamentary opponents but to foreign statesmen [...]. It must be added that well-founded charges of political corruption and personal immorality were made against him, [...] and on this and other matters he received much abuse and denigration from his many personal enemies. [...]

Crispi's politics were nothing if not personal to himself. [...] He it was who had led the retreat from republicanism with the much-quoted slogan "the monarchy unites us, the republic would divide us." Out of office he at first sat well over to the Left in Parliament, and on my points saw eye to eye with the *estrema* [radical Left] since along with Nicotera and Cairoli he had both a Garibaldian and Mazzinian past. [...] He remained radical and anticlerical, however much he differed from other radicals over foreign policy.<sup>28</sup>

Crispi's military and diplomatic endeavors to establish a colony in East Africa failed principally due to the inherent military and financial insufficiency of the undertaking. The disastrous defeat inflicted on the Italian forces by Emperor Menelik's army at Aduwa (March 1, 1896), coupled with the financial scandals of the Bank of Rome (1893) spelled Crispi's downfall.

## II. Pope Leo XIII Biographical Sketch

M. J. Walsh, *Lives of the Popes* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1998); *New Catholic Encyclopedia*.

### 1. Education and Pre-Papal Career

Vicenzo Gioacchino Pecci was born at Frosinone on March 2, 1810, was elected pope (Leo XIII) on February 20, 1878, and died on July 20, 1903.

<sup>28</sup> Mack Smith, *Modern Italy*, 127.

*Early Years, Priest and Diplomat*

The sixth of seven sons from a family of the minor aristocracy, Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci was educated by the Jesuits in Viterbo and at the Roman College, before proceeding to the Academia dei Nobili in Rome for training in the papal diplomatic service.

Ordained in 1837, he served as papal Legate in Benevento, in the Papal States (1838-41), and then as Governor Archbishop of Perugia (1841-43). Both in Benevento and Perugia he showed great energy in dealing with banditry and with opposition from liberals. An exceptionally ambitious young cleric, he was appointed Nuncio to Belgium and made titular Archbishop of Damietta (1843).

Whilst in Brussels he went on brief diplomatic missions to London, Paris and Rome. But his time in the diplomatic service was cut short by the fact that he interfered in Belgian politics in a dispute between the government and bishops over education. He was recalled to Rome at the express wish of King Leopold I.

*Archbishop of Perugia and Cardinal*

In 1846 he was reappointed archbishop of Perugia, where he served until 1878. He showed special interest in seminary studies and formation. With the help of his brother Joseph, a Jesuit and professor at the seminary, he favored the renewal of Thomism and established (in 1859) the Academy of St. Thomas. During the revolutionary events of 1859-60 he reaffirmed the legitimacy of the papal temporal power and protested firmly the religious policy of the Italian government. At Vatican Council I he voted with the majority, but was not an outstanding member.

Although appointed cardinal in December 1853, he was never brought into the center of papal government. Cardinal Antonelli, Pius IX's Secretary of State, thought him suspect on the question of the Papal States and distrusted him. The archbishop's pastoral letters (1876-77) on the Church and civilization, emphasizing that the Church must enter the current of modern civilization, drew wide attention. In 1877, the year after Card. Antonelli's death, Pius IX made him *Camerlengo*, the official responsible for administering the affairs of the Church on the death of a Pope.

## 2. Leo XIII's Pontificate<sup>29</sup>

### *Election as Pope*

Traditionally a *Camerlengo* is not elected to the papacy. But at the conclave following Pius IX's death (1878), Card. Pecci (a candidate for the moderates) emerged as Pope on the third ballot with 44 of 61 votes (February 20, 1878).

Even though 68 years of age, he was to be no transitional Pope (as some may have thought). He held the office with distinction until 1903, when he died at 93 years of age. His pontificate came to be ranked among the most significant in recent times because of the Pope's numerous teachings, initiatives and exceptional prestige. Though patient, conciliatory and wise, yet he displayed a strong will and calm energy in his actions. Though in many ways as conservative as his predecessor, he was, nonetheless, more pragmatic. The fact that in 1879 he made John Henry Newman a cardinal indicates that he was capable of tolerating a diversity of theological views in a way that would have been quite impossible for Pius IX.

### *Encyclicals and Initiatives in the Church*

In line with Pius IX's earlier initiative, Leo XIII favored devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. His encyclical *Annum Sacrum* (May 25, 1899) consecrated the whole human race to the Sacred Heart.<sup>30</sup> Nine encyclicals were concerned with devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and to the Rosary. The encyclical *Auspicato concessum* (September 17, 1882) renewed the Franciscan Third Order.

Missions received much attention. Leo's pontificate coincided with the apogee of colonialism. To speed the abolition of African slavery he published two encyclicals, *In plurimis* (May 5, 1888) to the Brazilian hierarchy, and *Catholicae Ecclesiae* (November 20, 1890). A concordat (June 23, 1886) restricted the King of Portugal's right of *padroado* in India solely to Portuguese possessions. In the same year the Pope established the hierarchy in India. The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith reorganized the missions

<sup>29</sup> See also Pope Leo XIII's frequent interventions as noted in the historical survey of the governments of the Historic Left given above.

<sup>30</sup> For the solemn consecration of the Salesian Society by Fr. Rua see Ceria, *Annali* II, 92-103.

in China, though the French protectorate over Catholics in China would not permit (1886) the erection of a Nunciature in Peking.

Leo XIII had high hopes of reunion with the Oriental and Slavic Churches. Bishop Strossmayer urged the Pontiff to display his interest in them.<sup>31</sup> The encyclical *Grande munus* (September 30, 1880) recalled the Holy See's approval of the apostolic methods of SS. Cyril and Methodius. The Eucharistic Congress in Jerusalem (1893) and the apostolic letter *Orientalium* (November 30, 1894), which dealt with rites questions, reaffirmed his hopes for reunion (which, however, did not materialize).

A papal commission was appointed (in 1895) to study Anglican Orders. But the apostolic letter *Apostolicae curae* denying their validity (September 13, 1896) greatly weakened prospects for union with Anglicanism.

### *Fostering Scholarship in the Church*

In the intellectual order, the encyclical *Aeterni Patris* (August 4, 1879) was of decisive importance. Urged by his brother Cardinal Joseph Pecci and by Father Matteo Liberatore, Leo XIII sought renewal of philosophical thought in the Church on the basis of Thomism to insure sound doctrinal teaching in seminaries.<sup>32</sup> In Thomism he found the body of thought that he wished used in opposition to liberalism on the political and social planes. The reorganization of the Roman Academy of St. Thomas (1886), the nomination of Désiré-Joseph Mercier to a chair of Thomism at Louvain (1882) and the unfortunate condemnation (1887) of forty propositions extracted from the works of Father Antonio Rosmini-Serbati were all part of a program to restore Thomism.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Josip Juraj Strossmayer (1816-1905), bishop of Diakovo (Croatia, under Austria) was an ardent promoter of the union of the Orthodox Churches with Rome. To this end he worked with Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviyov (Soloviev)—for which he was rebuked by Emperor Francis Joseph (1888), but upheld by Pope Leo XIII. Vladimir Soloviyov (1853-1900), Russian philosopher and historian, advocated the union of the Orthodox Church with Rome.

<sup>32</sup> Fr. Matteo Liberatore (1810-1892), Jesuit philosopher and theologian, was co-founder and permanent editor of the conservative journal, *Civiltà Cattolica*. With Thomistic epistemology, he “refuted” J. Locke and I. Kant, and wrote against Fr. A. Rosmini-Serbati, whose philosophical writings were condemned. (Rosmini was finally vindicated with his beatification by Pope Benedict XVI on November 18, 2007.)

<sup>33</sup> Désiré-Joseph Mercier (1851-1926), outstanding Thomist philosopher, was appointed archbishop of Maline and primate of Belgium in 1906, and created cardinal in 1907.

The opening of the Vatican Archives in 1881 to historians demonstrated concretely Leo XIII's eagerness to promote scholarly research.

The encyclical *Providentissimus Deus* (November 18, 1893) explained the paths open to Catholic Biblical exegesis, though the creation of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (1902) enforced a more restraining policy on Catholic Biblical scholarship at the time when Modernism was developing.

### *Position on Church and State and on the Social Question*

Addressing questions on the organization of society and on the relations between Church and State Pope Leo published the famous encyclicals *Diuturnum illud* (June 29, 1881), *Immortale Dei* (November 1, 1885), *Libertas* (June 20, 1888), and *Sapientiae christianae* (January 10, 1890), which reaffirmed the condemnations of the principles of liberalism by Gregory XVI and Pius IX. They recalled also the divine origin of authority and the proper union between Church and State, both "perfect" societies. The encyclicals further demonstrated that the Church is not hostile to any form of government. Also they contrasted "legitimate and honest liberty" with "immoderate liberty" that refuses all reference to God and admits the coexistence of diverse cults. Especially did the Pope urge Catholics to accept existing institutions in view of the common good, and to make use of the liberal institutions of the press and the parliamentary systems of government in the interest of the Church.

Social questions were also the topic of papal encyclicals that gained wide attention even from unbelievers. *Quod Apostolici muneris* (December 28, 1878) condemned socialism. *Arcanum* (February 10, 1880) defined the Christian concept of the family.

The Encyclical *Rerum novarum* (May 15, 1891), published 3 years after a letter to Cardinal Gibbons concerning the Knights of Labor, was Leo XIII's most important social pronouncement. Directed against socialism and economic liberalism, it drew its inspiration from the Catholic social studies and imparted a strong impulse to the Christian Social Movement. The idea of "Christian Democracy" began to circulate in Belgium, France, and Italy, but the encyclical *Graves de communi re* (January 18, 1901), while accepting the term Christian Democracy, emptied it of its political connotations by defining it as "beneficent Christian action in favor of the people."



### 3. Leo XIII's Policy with Various States

The policy of Pope Leo XIII and of his successive secretaries of state (Franchi, Nina, Jacobini, Rampolla) was dominated by the contrast between an intransigent attitude on the Roman Question and a search for a solution to the conflicts with various governments that had arisen at the close of Pius IX's pontificate.

#### *Italy*

No sooner was Leo XIII elected than he protested against the situation confronting the Pope in Rome. After several attempts at conciliation failed, he despaired of a settlement of the Roman Question by direct negotiations with the Kingdom of Italy. From this point of view, the year 1887 and the appointment of Cardinal Rampolla as secretary of state were decisive. Henceforth the Pontiff sought in vain to pose the problem on an international plane, placing his hopes on Germany after the *Kulturkampf* subsided, and then on France. For Italian Catholics he maintained the policy of *Non expedit*, requiring abstention from politics and political elections. However, conservative Italian Catholics developed a civil movement for social action in the Work of the Congress (*Opera dei Congressi* from 1875).

#### *Bismarck's Germany*

The *Kulturkampf* in Germany, and the persecution of the Catholic Church associated with it, came to an end after long negotiations. The Center Party wanted the complete abolition of the May Laws, which placed severe restrictions on the Church's life and action. Leo XIII was content (1880, 1883) with partial, compromise settlements. Only in 1886-87 was there a formal revision of the May Laws.

#### *Belgium*

In Belgium the Pope had to face thoroughgoing anticlericalism. The Belgian school law (1879) occasioned a conflict that led to the rupture of diplo-

matic relations with the Vatican (June 1880). Despite this, Leo XIII invited intransigent Belgian Catholics to accept the constitution of their country. It was in this period that a truly Catholic party was formed whose success at the polls (1884) resulted in the renewal of diplomatic relations.

### *France*

In France Leo XIII urged moderation on Catholics at the time of the vote on the lay laws. After hopes for a restored monarchy proved vain and Boulangism failed, the Pope pressed French Catholics to accept the Third Republic. From the Algiers Toast pronounced by Cardinal Lavigerie (November 12, 1890) to the encyclical *Au Milieu des sollicitudes* (February 16, 1892), he promoted the Ralliement (see below). This policy was stalemated, at least for a while, by dissention among French Catholics, by their attitude on the Dreyfus case and by the new wave of anticlericalism that led to the vote (1901) on the Law of Associations and to the accession of Emile Combes as premier.<sup>34</sup>

### *Other Nations*

Relations were strained with Austria-Hungary, which was particularly defiant of Cardinal Rampolla. Improved Vatican relations with Russia, a condition for reunion with the Orthodox Churches, disturbed the court of Vienna.

Leo XIII on many occasions expressed his favorable sentiments toward the United States. He followed closely the growth of Catholicism in this country, as he made clear by naming Msgr. Satolli apostolic delegate (1893) and by the encyclical *Longinqua* (January 6, 1895). Disputes over "Americanism" were ended by the letter *Testem benevolentiae* (January 22, 1899).

<sup>34</sup> On France's Lay Laws, on the Boulanger Crisis and on Cardinal Lavigerie's *Ralliement* see comments below. Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), a career French army captain, was convicted of treason in 1894 and imprisoned on Devil's Island. Later investigation, forced in large part by Emile Zola (1898), proved that his conviction was based on documents forged by army officers. During the re-trial the case became the center of major political division in France in which anti-Semitism (Dreyfus was Jewish) played a major part. Convicted a second time (1899), he was pardoned by President Loubet. The original conviction was set aside (1906), and Dreyfus was restored to rank in the army and awarded the Legion of Honor decoration.

Relations with Latin American nations improved. In 1899 an important council met in Rome representing the Church of those countries.

Leo XIII sought to win an important role for the papacy in international affairs. On many occasions he recalled the Church's mission as peacemaker and pointed out the costs of an armed peace. His sole success, however, was the Roman mediation (1885) in the dispute between the German empire and Spain over the Caroline Islands. When the Hague Peace Conference met (1899), the Pope was not invited because of the opposition of the Italian government. Thus the Roman Question frustrated Leo XIII's efforts. But despite setbacks, Leo XIII pontificate scored notable achievements.

#### 4. Evaluation<sup>35</sup>

Leo XIII was a gifted diplomat, and his election marked a change in the style of the Papacy. Leo possessed a more liberal and tolerant spirit than his predecessor, Pius IX. He narrowed the intellectual gulf between the Church and modern society: by encouraging a renewed study of Thomas Aquinas in all Catholic seminaries. This resulted in a spread of the doctrine that between true science and true religion there was no conflict. He fostered the study of Church history, in the belief that, among other things, such study would show the Church's contributions to the progress of civilization. He supported experimental science among eminent Catholics.

In 1885 Leo XIII was asked to arbitrate a dispute between Germany and Spain over the possession of the Caroline Islands. He also acted as arbitrator in a number of other cases. As his pontificate wore on, Leo perceived that democracy could prove fully as useful as the monarchy for preserving and strengthening Catholic principles. He therefore encouraged Catholic political parties with distinctly liberal tendencies in Germany and Belgium. He adopted a friendly attitude toward the government of the French Republic. Instructions were given to French Catholics to break with monarchical principles, and to support the republic.

In 1890, however, the policy of the *Ralliement* in France (see below) was also motivated by the pope's desire to secure French aid for the solution of the Roman question. Relations with the Italian government had grown stead-

<sup>35</sup> Cf. W. L. Langer, *An Encyclopedia of World History [...] A Revised and Modernized Version of Ploetz's "Epitome."* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1940), 671f.

ily worse (see historical survey given above), and in an encyclical addressed to the Italian clergy (August 5, 1898) Leo insisted on the duty of Italian Catholics to abstain from political life while the pope was kept confined in an “intolerable position.”

The encyclical on labor questions, *Rerum novarum* (May 15, 1891), aimed to apply Christian principles to the relations between capital and labor, won for Leo the title of “the workingman’s pope.” It pointed out that the possessing classes, including the employers, have important moral duties to fulfill, and that it is one of the first duties of society (State and Church collaborating) to improve the position of workers.

Of the political principles of Pius IX, Leo altered little. He expressed in his encyclicals the same condemnation of many phases of liberalism and nationalism, and reiterated the view that the Church should oversee and direct every form of secular life. But, unlike his predecessor, Leo never appeared as a violent partisan of any particular form of government. It was his object to bring about harmonious collaboration between Church and State. In the German *Kulturkampf* he adopted a moderate and conciliatory attitude, and succeeded in obtaining the repeal of the legislation against the Church.

### III. Brief Survey of French History (1875-1888) in the Papacy of Leo XIII

#### 1. Political Situation in France after the defeat suffered in the Franco-German War

After the capitulation of Napoleon III at Sedan (September 2, 1870), the Third Republic was ritually proclaimed. But re-organized French forces continued to fight with the German army of occupation.

The insurrection of the Paris Commune (March-May, 1871) was put down by the forces of the National Assembly of Versailles in the Bloody Week (May 21-26, 1871).

A monarchist offensive followed (1871-1873). But the Monarchists were divided: the Legitimists supported the “legitimate” Bourbon line and its pretender, the Count of Chambord; the Orléanists supported the Count of Paris (grandson of Louis Philippe, who had ruled from 1831 to 1848); the Bonapartists, on the other hand, stood for a restoration of the Napoleonic line.



29 – Henry Charles Ferdinand Marie Dieudonné, comte de Chambord (1820-1883), pretender to the throne of France

In this situation the republicans eventually prevailed (Third Republic), even though the Count of Chambord and the Count of Paris came to an agreement as to the succession.<sup>36</sup>

## 2. Constitution of 1875

After prolonged discussion of various constitutional projects, a “Law on the Organization of the Public Powers” was introduced. On January 21 Hen-

<sup>36</sup> In 1883 Don Bosco visited the Count of Chambord, who was ill in exile at Frohsdorf (cf. *EBM* XVI, 260-279).

ri Wallon proposed an amendment, which read: “The president of the *republic* is elected by an absolute majority of the votes of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies sitting together as the National Assembly. He is chosen for seven years and is eligible for re-election.” The term *republic* was crucial because acceptance of the amendment meant acceptance of the republic.

Because of dissension in the Monarchists’ ranks the Republicans prevailed. On January 30 the Wallon amendment was adopted by one vote 353 to 352. The “Law on the Organization of the Public Powers” was accepted as a whole (February 25), as was the “Law on the Organization of the Senate.” The “Law on the Relation of the Public Powers” (passed on July 16) completed the so-called Constitution of 1875.

The executive was a president who was not to be a member of the legislative body. He was elected according to the Wallon amendment, and possessed the usual executive powers (command of the army and navy, right to choose civil officials and military officers, etc.). However, a counter-signature by the pertinent minister was required for each of his acts. The Senate was to have 300 members: 225 elected for nine-year terms, and 75 named by the National Assembly for life. (Senators for life were discontinued in 1884.) The Senate shared the right to initiate legislation (except finance laws) with the Chamber of Deputies, whose members were elected by universal direct male suffrage. The Chamber was subject to dissolution only by the president, with the consent of the Senate. The seat of the government was fixed at Versailles, reflecting fear of Republican Paris.

### 3. Crisis of *Seize Mai* (May 16, 1877)

With the adoption of the new constitution, the National Assembly came to an end, and the new Senate and Chamber met for the first time on March 8, 1876. The Senate had a Conservative majority, while the Chamber was overwhelmingly Republican. In the next quarter-century the new republican institutions were to be repeatedly attacked by their enemies of the Right.

The first test came in the affair of May 16, 1877 (*Seize Mai*) when President Marshal MacMahon (1808-1893), irritated by Premier Jules Simon’s weakness in opposing the anticlerical attitude of the Left, forced him to resign. A new cabinet, headed by the Orléanist Monarchist Duke de Broglie, was given a vote of “no confidence” by the Chamber, 363 to 138. President MacMahon dissolved the Chamber with the consent of the Senate (the only dissolu-

tion in the history of the Third Republic). In the elections that followed the Chamber remained strongly republican.

De Broglie's ministry was forced to resign, as were successive ministries until MacMahon presented a ministry acceptable to the Chamber (December 13, 1878).

In 1879 (January 5), the Republicans gained 58 seats in the senatorial election, so that MacMahon, faced by a hostile majority in both Senate and Chamber, was forced to resign, and was succeeded in the presidency by a Conservative Republican, Jules Grévy.

#### 4. Presidency of Jules Grévy (1813-1891; president 1879-1887)

The Conservative Republicans (Opportunists), in power from 1879 to 1885, instituted a series of anticlerical laws or laws impacting the Church.

In 1880 (March 29, 30) two decrees were issued. (1) One enjoined all non-authorized religious associations to regularize their position within three months; (2) The second ordered the dissolution and dispersion of the Jesuits within three months, and the dissolution of all religious teaching associations within six months,

[The Salesian schools in (Southern) France, especially Nice and Marseilles narrowly survived.]<sup>37</sup>

On July 11, a law was passed that provided virtually full amnesty to the Communards of 1871 (the leaders who had revolted and established the Commune in Paris, following Napoleon III's defeat in the Franco-German War).

In 1881 (March-May) The French occupied Tunis (Treaty of Bardo, May 12), largely the work of Jules Ferry (1832-1893). This was important as marking the emergence of French imperialism and colonialism.

In 1882 (March 29) A law reforming the primary school made education from 6 to 13 years compulsory, free and "neutral" (that is, public schools were not to provide any religious instruction).

In 1884 (July 27) divorce was re-established by law substantially as it had been permitted under the Napoleonic civil code. (It had been abolished by the law of May 8, 1816.)

In 1884 (March 21) a Trade-Union Act legalized unions forbidden by the *Loi Chapelier* (of 1791) and subsequent legislation, but tolerated since 1868.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. EBM XIV, 475-490.



By this time the labor movement, temporarily in eclipse after the Paris Commune, had begun to revive and to veer in a Marxist direction. In 1876 Jules Guesde (1845-1922) had returned from exile and had begun to propagate Marxist ideas. At the third congress of French workers (Marseilles, October 1879), the Guesdists had won the day over the more idealistic cooperative socialists, and steps were taken to organize a socialist political party, the *Fédération du Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes de France*. In the party the more moderate group (Possibilists) were at first dominant. In 1882 the Guesdists withdrew and formed their own *Parti Ouvrier Français*, while the Possibilists reorganized the majority as the *Parti Ouvrier Socialiste Révolutionnaire Français*.

In 1884-1885 the French advance in Tonkin (Northeast Indochina, North Vietnam), resulted in war with China and the downfall of the second Ferry ministry (1883-1885).

## 5. The Boulanger Crisis (1886-1889)

In 1886, in the presidency of Jules Grévy, amid widespread discontent with the Conservative Republican regime, the Radical Republicans wished to democratize further the constitution and to separate Church and State. The workers were suffering from economic depression and demanded state action in their behalf. The Monarchists continued to hope for an eventual restoration of the monarchy.

In the crisis that ensued, in 1886 (January 4), General Georges Boulanger (1837-1891) became minister of war in Prime Minister Freycinet's cabinet. He was the friend and protégé of Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929), dominant figure among the Radical Republicans, who had imposed Boulanger on Freycinet. Boulanger won popularity with the army through various reforms (such as improvement of the soldiers' food and living conditions), and among the people by frequent and impressive appearances in public, notably on July 14, 1886, after which he became a national figure.

In 1887 (May 18) when Boulanger left office, his popularity only increased. The government became alarmed and relegated him to the city of Clermont-Ferrand (Auvergne) as commander of an Army Corps. At this point the Wilson Scandal shook the prestige of the republic and offered Boulanger an opportunity to widen his support. [Daniel Wilson, son-in-law of President Grévy, was discovered to have been trafficking in medals of the Legion of Honor.] Grévy, although not guilty of complicity, was forced to resign from

the presidency (December 2), and was succeeded by François Marie Sadi-Carnot (1837-1894).

## 6. Sadi-Carnot's Presidency (1887-1894)

During the Wilson crisis, Boulanger maintained relations with the Radical Republicans and made contact with the Orléanist leaders taking advantage of every opportunity. Although as a military man Boulanger was ineligible for the Chamber, he permitted his candidacy to be posed repeatedly as a test of his popularity.

In 1888 (Mar 27) the government, alarmed, put him on the retired list, but this made him eligible for the Chamber, to which he was promptly elected (April 15). He initiated a vigorous campaign for revision of the constitution and demanded the dissolution of the Chamber as an essential preliminary.

In 1889 (January 27) Boulanger won a striking victory in Paris. It was believed he would march on the Elysée Palace that night. But he failed to seize the opportunity to make himself dictator and his popularity rapidly declined. The government prepared to have him tried for treason by the Senate; but he fled into exile in Brussels (April 8), where he eventually committed suicide on his mistress' grave (1891, September 30).

The general elections of 1889 were a triumph for the Republicans, a crushing defeat for the Boulangists.

## 7. The *Ralliement* (1890ff.)

The Boulangist fiasco was a blow to the monarchists and to their ally, the Church. Pope Leo XIII, discouraged by the failures of the monarchists, turned to a policy of conciliation with the Republic (see biographical sketch above).

In 1890 (November 12) Charles Cardinal Lavigerie, Primate of Africa, expressed the new mood in a famous toast offered at a banquet given in honor of French naval officers at Algiers ("The Algiers Toast"). In it he declared it to be the duty of all citizens to "join" (*se rallier*) in support of the *existing form* of government, once that form of government had been accepted by the people. But both Monarchists and Clericals on the one hand and Radical Republicans and Socialists on the other vigorously opposed this so-called *rall-*

*liement* in support of the republic. But, given the international situation (and in Italy the crisis precipitated by the Crispi government), the pope approved Lavigerie's policy.

In 1891 (May 15) Leo XIII's encyclical *Rerum novarum* (on the condition of the workers) attempted to win the support of both Radical and Conservative Republicans through a more liberal (though by no means radical) statement on the social question. More specific papal support to the *ralliement* movement came with the encyclical *Inter innumeras* (February 16, 1892), which declared that a government once established was legitimate.

Despite opposition, the *ralliement* introduced a new spirit into the relations of Church and State in France. The period of the Meline ministry (1896-1898) has been termed "the Golden Age of Clericalism." Eventually, however, the *ralliement* foundered during the *Dreyfus Affair* (1894-1906), in which the *ralliement* supporters were opposed to Dreyfus.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>38</sup> For the Dreyfus affair see Footnote 34 above and related text in Pope Leo XIII's biographical sketch.

## Chapter 8

# FOUNDATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE SALESIAN WORK IN FRANCE, ITALY AND SPAIN (1875-1888)

### Summary

1. Beginning of the Salesian Work in France: Foundations and Developments  
Southern France  
Northern France
2. Foundations and Developments in Italy  
Various New Foundations in Italy  
Turin: Church and Hospice of St. John the Evangelist  
Rome: The Salesian Work in Rome. Church and Hospice of the Sacred Heart  
Turin: Building Developments at Valdocco
3. Beginning of the Salesian Work in Spain  
Southern Spain: Utrera (near Sevilla)  
Northeastern Spain: Sarriá (Barcelona)
4. Various Foundations in Some Nations of Europe and South America in Don Bosco's last year.

The decade 1875-1885 [1888] is, among other things, a decade of great expansion and consolidation of the Salesian work. Earlier chapters dealt with the expansion of the Salesian work to South America and the creation and entrustment to the Salesians of apostolic mission territories there.

The present chapter surveys the further expansion of the Salesian work in some European nations, for which reference is given to the *EBM* and brief summaries are provided. The Historical surveys given in the preceding Chapter 7 provide a context for such expansion.

### I. Salesian Foundations in France

Don Bosco visited France every year from 1875 to 1886, usually in the early months of the year. Up to 1883 his visits were confined to Southern France, where the Salesian houses were located, and where he built up an active group of cooperators-benefactors. He visited Northern France in 1883, where he established foundations in Paris and Lille.

In parallel fashion, Mother Mazzarello visited Southern France, where the Sisters' foundations were located, from 1878 (May) to 1881.

### 1. Southern France on the Riviera from Nice to Marseilles

(1) **Nice** (November 1875). [*EBM* XI, 394-401; XII, 89-98; XIII, 72-73, 81-87, 546-547]. SDBs: *Oratory and Patronage St. Pierre* (Orphanage, Fr. Joseph Ronchail, director): official inauguration, March 12, 1877 (for which Don Bosco wrote the Letter-Treatise on the Preventive System).

FMA: *St. Athanasia Hospice* (September 1877).

[Cannes (October 1877-1878) – failed]

(2) **La Navarre** [Estate] at Crau d'Hyères (July 1878) [*EBM* XIII, 413-417, 554 (SDBs), 555 (FMAs)]: St. Joseph Orphanage and Agricultural School (Fr. Peter Perrot, director).

(3) **Marseilles** (July 1878): St. Leo's Hospice (Fr. Joseph Bologna, director) [*EBM* XIII, 72-79, 411 (Mme Prat-Noilly, benefactor) 557-559 (arrival), 561-563 (novitiate, see below)].

(4) **St. Cyr** (June 1879): FMAs: Orphanage [*EBM* XIII, 72-97 *passim*, 404-421; XIV, 1-23].

[Auteuil (Paris): orphanage offered 1878/79 – not accepted].

[Challonges, diocese of Annecy (1879 – failed the same year: *EBM* XIV, 256-261)].

**Note:** *The laws against religious congregations in France (1880) and the Salesians* – In the nineteenth century numerous religious congregations had been established in France without government approval. By 1877 some 500 of them could be counted, with a membership of over 20,000 men and women, many of them involved in education. After the defeat of Napoleon III in the Franco-German War (1870), and his subsequent abdication (1871), the Third French Republic was established. A republican constitution was voted in 1875. There followed a period of political and social turmoil, marked by radicalism and anticlericalism.

As mentioned in the preceding Chapter 7, under the presidency of Jules Grévy (1879-1887) and the ministries, first of Jules Ferry and then of Léon Gambetta, an attack was mounted against the Church generally, and religious communities in particular. This was part of a radical program of secularization, which included amnesty for “communists,” secularization of

all education, total exclusion of unauthorized religious congregations from education and limiting the role of religious in schools. In 1880 the government issued two decrees (March 29-30): (1) disbanding and expulsion of the Jesuits; (2) expulsion of all unauthorized religious congregations from their houses. Church authorities and Catholic laity put up a strong resistance; many magistrates resigned; for a time it looked like the government would fall. But the secular press and propaganda prevailed, and the laws went into effect.

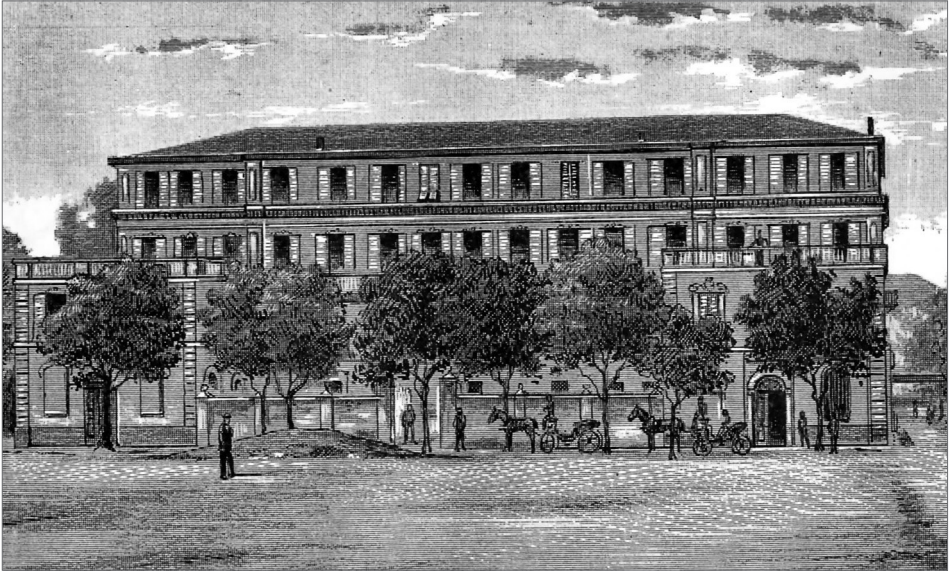
Don Bosco gave Fr. Ronchail his instructions: the Salesian were to claim that they were not a religious congregation, but employees of the *Beaujour* Society of Marseilles (which had sponsored the Salesian foundation there); they were merely engaged in philanthropic work on behalf of needy youngsters in farm and workshops. The Superiors were to be shown to be Frenchmen. In Marseilles, St. Leo's hospice was represented as part of Fr. Guiol's parish. However, a French Salesian seminarian betrayed this strategy to the authorities, and Fr. Bologna (of St. Leo's in Marseilles) was about to move the community to Italy. But Don Bosco told them to stand firm and assured them (on the strength of a dream) that they would not be expelled (see Historical Context [Chapter 7] and *EBM* XIV, 475-493).

Meanwhile, in 1877 the Salesian Congregation was divided into provinces (inspectors). The French province was independently established in 1881, with Fr. Paul Albera as provincial (inspector) residing at St. Leo's, Marseilles. (As was the custom, he also served as director, Fr. Bologna serving as vice-director.)

(5) **Sainte-Marguerite** (near Marseilles) (September 1883): Divine Providence Novitiate [*EBM* XIII, 561-563 XIV, 160; 165: first planned 1878; *EBM* XV, 37-39: Don Bosco's dream, 1880; progress; (on p. 39, line 12: emend date of establishment from 1888 to 1883); *EBM* XVII, 49-51: established, dream "verified"].

In 1878 Fr. Guiol in a letter to Don Bosco had mentioned the advisability of establishing a novitiate in France. Don Bosco agreed that it would be a necessary step to take [*EBM* XIII, 561-563]. In his first triennial report to the Holy See on the state of the Society (1879), Don Bosco had mentioned that a novitiate had already been established in France with Rome's permission, a statement of *non-fact* that caused a lively argument [*EBM* XIV, 160, 165].

In 1880 Don Bosco had dreamt of a spacious house on a beautiful, wooded tract of land that included a pine grove and was crossed by a stream. He related it to a skeptical Fr. Guiol. An offer from Mme Broquier was found not to correspond. In 1883 a second offer of a property at Sainte-Marguerite



30 – Saint Peter Oratory and Orphanage in Nice (*Patronage St. Pierre*)  
in an 1878 engraving

came from Mme Pastré, a Parisian lady whose daughter Don Bosco had cured. The property corresponded to the dream, and the novitiate was established in September 1883. By 1885 the number of novices had risen to 16—all, except one, “clerical” novices [EBM XVII, 560].

**Note:** *Count Louis Antoine Fleury Colle* – Count Colle (from Toulon) was the outstanding benefactor and Salesian cooperator in France since first meeting Don Bosco in 1881. He also supported the Salesian missions and other important Salesian projects (such as the church of the Sacred Heart in Rome) most generously.

The Count and his wife, Baroness Marie Sophie Buchet, had a son whose name also was Louis Antoine Fleury (Colle). The lad died of tuberculosis at the age of 17. He “appeared” to Don Bosco and accompanied him in dreams. Don Bosco authored a biography of young Louis Colle (1882).

On this family (with letters) see: EBM XV, 56-102. For further letters see EBM XVI, 464-489.



## 2. Northern France – Lille and Paris

*EBM XVI*, 78-219 (detailed description of the journey and its events).

As may be seen, all the foundations listed above (with the exception of Challonges, which failed) were located in Southern France, along the Mediterranean coast, from Nice to Marseilles. But Don Bosco was eager to establish the Salesian work in Paris as far back as 1878 [cf. Auteuil, above], but certain conditions regarding ownership and management, and Cardinal Guibert's insistence on a one-year trial for the Salesians, forced Don Bosco to decline the offer. But Paris remained an important, if elusive, goal.

In February-May 1883, Don Bosco undertook a long and difficult journey through France, from the Mediterranean coast, through Lyons, and northward to Paris and Lille. One of the purposes of the trip was to explore the possibility of Salesian foundations in those two northern cities.

(1) **Lille** (north-east, near Belgian border) (January 1884): Patronage St. Gabriel (Fr. Joseph Bologna, director) [*EBM XVII*, 328-330 (foundation), 715 (Appendix 49, document of agreement)].

During his stay in Lille in 1883, Don Bosco visited the St. Gabriel Orphanage, staffed by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. It had been founded in 1874 to shelter orphans of the Franco-German War. As most of the orphans were by then in their teens, the orphanage was offered to the Salesians. Fr. Joseph Bologna, from Marseille, was appointed director, and took possession on January 29, 1884, with the blessing of Bishop Quesnay of Cambrai-Lille. There were many problems to be solved: the house was too small; it was understaffed; the youngsters were undisciplined; it lacked in-house workshops. Fr. Bologna, after setting up temporary workshops and organizing the Salesian cooperators on the Marseilles model, began to develop the orphanage with success.

**Note:** *Mlle Claire Louvet* – The orphanage was the special object of the charity of Mlle Claire Louvet, of Aire-sur-la-Lys, a small town near Lille. She had met Don Bosco on the Riviera (where she was vacationing and visited him in Turin). She had become a generous supporter of the Salesian work, before Don Bosco's visit to Lille in 1883. Her contributions to the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome and to the South American Missions were noteworthy and particularly appreciated by Don Bosco. From Lille, in 1883, he had intended to visit her at her home, but was detained and had to forego the

trip. His letters to her, dated between 1882 and 1887, show her to have been the outstanding cooperator in the north of France, just as Count Louis Colle was in the south.

[Biographical information on Mlle Louvet is meager. But see *EBM* XV, 486-508, with various letters; and, additional to these, letters by Don Bosco to Claire Louvet (*EBM* XVI, 448-463); E. Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 447-479; J. Itzaina, "Charitable Mademoiselle. Don Bosco's Fifty-Eight Letters to Clara Louvet," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 1 (1990:1) 35-46, and in *Don Bosco's Place in History* (Roma: LAS, 1993) 487-499.]

(2) **Paris, Ménilmontant** (1884/1885): Patronage St.-Pierre (Fr. Charles Bellamy, director) [*EBM* XVII, 330-336].

During his stay in Paris in 1883, Don Bosco had spoken publicly of his intention of establishing a Salesian foundation in the capital. Of several offers received in 1884, Don Bosco regarded that of St. Peter's Hospice the most promising. It had been founded in 1878 by Fr. Paul Pisani, noted Church historian, in Ménilmontant, a crowded working-class district of Paris. On being appointed to the *Institut Catholique* in 1884, Father Pisani was looking for someone to take over the hospice, hence the offer. After a fact-finding visits by Fr. Durando (with Fr. de Barruel) and by Fr. Albera (Provincial), the Superior Chapter meeting with the ailing Don Bosco in late September 1884 decided on the foundation. Fr. Albera, acting for Don Bosco, bought the property and signed the deed.

Benefactors, such as the Marquis de Franqueville, Countess de Cessac (both of Paris) and Countess Georgina de Stacpoole (of London and Rome) collected the money to buy the property and supported the work. Fr. Bellamy, a priest of Chartres who had joined the Salesians the previous year, was appointed director (January 29, 1885). The local pastor at first objected to this Salesian "takeover," but later conceded. The lay staff stayed on. University students helped with the young people, and helped make a promising beginning.

## II. Salesian Foundations in Italy

### 1. Various Foundations in the 1870s and Early 1880s

(1) **Vallecrosia** (a town between Bordighera and Ventimiglia, on the coast near the French border) (1875-76) [*EBM*, XI, 388-394]. The presence of the



31 – “Manfredini Salesian Boarding School” established at Este (Padova) in 1878

Waldenses was a problem. Don Bosco built the Church of Mary Help of Christians with oratories and schools run by SDBs and FMAs.

(2) **Ariccia** (November 1876-1879, closed), **Albano** (November 1876-1879, closed), **Magliano Sabina** (November 1876-1884, closed) – all located south of and near Rome. These were junior seminaries of small suburban dioceses whose bishops (cardinals) worked in Rome [*EBM* XII, 353-357; XIII, 534-537 (Magliano Sabina); XIV, 245-247 (Albano and Ariccia)].

(3) **Trinità di Mondovì** (Cuneo, Piedmont - Fr. Louis Guanella, director) (1876-1879, closed) [*EBM* XII, 357-359].

(4) **La Spezia** (Liguria) (December 1877) [*EBM* XIII, 512-519].

(5) **Mathi** (Piedmont), paper mill and residence (1877) [*EBM* XIII, 508-512].

(6) **Nizza Monferrato** (Piedmont), new FMA mother house (1878/9) [*EBM* XIII, 137-156].

(7) **Chieri** (Piedmont) Girls' Oratory run by the FMAs (May 1878) [*EBM* XIII, 537-538]. For the confrontation between Fr. Bonetti and the parish



32 – Former Basilian monastery of the Holy Redeemer in Randazzo (Sicily), given over to the Salesians in 1878

priests of Chieri (an episode of the Gastaldi conflict described in *EBM* XIV, 170-190), see later separate discussion (in Vol. 6, chs 6&7 of this series).

(8) **Lucca** (Tuscany) (mid-1878) [*EBM* XIII, 519-527].

[Montefiascone, near Rome (1878-1879: one-Salesian, failed: *EBM* XIII, 532-534; XIV, 244-245].

(9) **Este** (Veneto) (Oct 1878) [*EBM* XIII, 527-532].

(10) **San Benigno Canavese** (Piedmont) (Aug 1879) [*EBM* XIV, 248-254]. The town of San Benigno had grown around a great Benedictine abbey dating back to 1,001. In the 18th century the abbey gradually dwindled and ceased. The premises and lands passed to the diocese. By the law of suppression (1855) everything passed to the State. After a while the historic building was given over to the city, and the city sub-ceded it to Don Bosco. Don Bosco accepted to open a school there with the idea of establishing a novitiate. To the mayor he wrote that he intended to establish several works, including (lastly) a “personnel-training center” (novitiate) [see *EBM* XIV, 251]. On Oc-

tober 20, 1879 Don Bosco gave the clerical habit to 51 novices. But he also did all other things, as promised.

(11) **Randazzo** (Sicily) (October 1879) [*EBM* XIV, 264-270].

[Cremona (Lombardy) 1879-1882, failed; Brindisi (Apulia) 1879-1880, failed: *EBM* XIV, 254-256].

(12) **Penango** (Piedmont) (1880/81) [*EBM* XIV, 538-539].

## 2. Turin–Church (1878-1882) and Hospice (1882-1884) of St. John the Evangelist

*EBM* XIII, 446-457, 463-465 (development of project and building); XV, 308-330 (consecration); for earlier information see *EBM* IX, 365, 427, 445, 454; X, 88, 170-171, 533-534, 548-549.

### *Church of St. John the Evangelist*

Don Bosco had since 1869 been planning to build a large church at the site of the St. Aloysius Oratory, which had been opened in 1847 in a district where the Waldensian (“Protestant”) activity was strong. But only in 1877 was Don Bosco able to proceed with his plans.

The delay had been due to the fact that a local Waldensian person who owned a strip of property within the projected area had refused to sell. Don Bosco had applied for a decree of expropriation in view of public good; but enemies at City Hall had prevented it. The ruling was finally granted in 1877.

Don Bosco’s plans included the church, a hospice-school, and new buildings for the oratory. The complex was to stand in opposition to the Waldensian center nearby, and as a monument to the memory of Pope Pius IX.

Architect, Count Arborio-Mella designed the church in the Romanesque-Lombard style of the thirteenth century. The building measures 60 by 22 m.; it has three naves, a 45-m. high tower over the façade, and a capacity of 2,500 people. Count Louis Colle of Toulon and other French cooperators contributed most of the funds for the project.

Building began with the laying of the cornerstone on August 14, 1878, with Archbishop Gastaldi’s blessing, and reached completion in May 1882. The on-going Gastaldi-Bosco-Bonetti conflict delayed both the building and the consecration of the church, once completed. Pope Leo XIII finally en-





33 – Turin: Saint John Evangelist Church and Salesian boarding school as seen in a 1905 photograph

forced a settlement of the conflict, with the signing of the *Concordia* document in July 1882.

The church was consecrated on October 28, 1882, Archbishop Gastaldi officiating.

Archbishop Gastaldi objected to Don Bosco's decision to dedicate the church to the memory of Pius IX because another church (St. Secundus) in memory of this pope was being built in Turin under diocesan sponsorship [cf. *EBM* XIII, 446-454]. Don Bosco reduced the publicity in this connection, but "stuck to his guns." The dedication to Pius IX was symbolized by sculpted panels on the door and by a statue of Pius IX placed outside on the right-hand side of the entrance. The anticlerical press was loud in denouncing such dedication.

**Note:** *St. Secundus Church* – In 1867 a group of proprietors formed committee to build a church in the district of San Secondo. The City granted a building permit (January 2, 1868), and donated land and a subsidy of 30,000

lire. But the project stalled until 1871 at which point the committee and of the diocesan vicar prevailed on Don Bosco to take it over. On March 27, 1872 the preliminary work began for the preparation of the ground and materials, and Don Bosco asked the architect to modify the plans to include a facility for an oratory. The City rejected the proposal, and Don Bosco resigned from the project. All the while Don Bosco had been purchasing land piecemeal for the construction of St. John Evangelist Church in the adjoining district of San Salvario at the site of St. Aloysius Oratory, as noted above, as a *tribute* to Pius IX. Meanwhile the recently appointed Archbishop Gastaldi revived the St. Secundus project under the sponsorship of the diocese, and began to publicize it as a *tribute* to Pius IX. Work was resumed in 1875, and the church was consecrated in 1882. Don Bosco began construction of St. John Evangelist Church in 1878, and Archbishop Gastaldi consecrated it in late 1882. By this time Pius IX had died, and both churches, planned as *tributes*, were consecrated as *memorials* to Pope Pius, hence the conflict.

#### *Hospice-School of St. John the Evangelist*

The beautiful school building was begun in 1882, just as the church was nearing completion, and was ready for occupancy for the school year 1884-85. Count Louis Colle again proved the great benefactor. Don Bosco decided to house the Sons of Mary here.

Because of Archbishop Gastaldi's opposition, the Sons of Mary had at first (1875) been housed at Sampierdarena (but also quietly at Valdocco), in a situation of hardship, adults and young adults having to live and study with young school boys.

In 1883, after the death of Archbishop Gastaldi, Don Bosco transferred them to Mathi (near Turin), to a house located near the paper factory that Don Bosco had acquired. Being in a program designed especially for them, under the guidance of Fr. Philip Rinaldi, the Sons of Mary did well at Mathi. But the house was small and uncomfortable. Hence Don Bosco decided to move them to St. John the Evangelist in Turin (autumn 1884), thus giving them the advantage of fine premises, church and oratory. Unexplained worrisome health problems, however, of uncertain origin did arise in 1885 [cf. *EBM* XVII, 503-504].

From this point on, the Sons of Mary (founded for the general purpose of fostering adult vocations to the priesthood in general) began to opt in



increasingly greater numbers for the Salesian Society (with the missions in view), instead of returning to their dioceses. In 1887 and 1888, out of “graduating” classes of 30 and 32, 28 and 30 respectively entered the novitiate at Foglizzo.

### 3. Salesian Work in Rome

#### *Failed Attempts by Don Bosco to establish the Salesian Work in Rome*

EBM XII, 353-357; XIV, 245-247 (Albano, Ariccia & Magliano Sabina); XIII, 534-537 (Magliano Sabina). Offers in Rome: EBM XIII, 105-106, 502-506; XIV, 51-53; 242-244 (IBM XIV, 319-324 with correspondence); Ceria, *Annali* I, 370-376.

Don Bosco had wanted to establish the Salesian work in Rome at an early date—not only for reasons of prestige, but also for the reason that, with the expansion of the Salesian Society, a base in Rome would be desirable if not necessary. However, in spite of many offers received and of his efforts to meet the conditions, he was not able to establish a base until 1880.

In 1867 Pope Pius IX offered Don Bosco the staffing and care of a juvenile home he had founded. After visiting the place and sketching out the terms of an agreement, Don Bosco realized that he would never be given a free hand by the juvenile authority. In spite of pressures, he declined the offer.

In 1868 Don Bosco began negotiations for the Church of the Holy Shroud and adjacent building. (These premises had belonged to a confraternity of that name, which had ceased to exist.) Pius IX gave his consent, and Don Bosco presented the draft of an agreement. The practice became snarled in “red tape,” and was finally dropped when Rome was taken in 1870.

In 1869, Pius IX made another offer—the church of St. Cajus and two adjacent buildings on the Quirinal hill, which belonged to a congregation of nuns who had vacated the premises and moved elsewhere. The pope wanted Don Bosco to establish a studentate for his seminarians, who would be attending the Roman universities. An agreement was reached; but when it came to signing, the nuns, abetted by some people in Rome, trebled their demands. When the Italian army occupied Rome in 1870, the nuns lost their property. With the money Don Bosco had raised for this purchase he acquired a piece of land in front of the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

Again, in February 1870, Pius IX offered Don Bosco the beautiful little

Church of St. John of the *Pigna* (Pine Cone) with the adjacent building. And again, political developments prevented the conclusion of the deal. In September 1874, when the confusion caused by the Italian occupation of Rome had quieted down somewhat, Don Bosco tried to revive the negotiations. However, the Cardinal Vicar of Rome thought it inadvisable to establish a religious congregation in those premises at that time, and the deal was shelved (In 1905 Pope Pius X gave both house and church to the Salesians as a residence for their general procure.)

In 1874, Prince Gabrielli offered the Salesians the Hospice of St. Michael *a Ripa*, an immense vocational establishment founded and supported by former Popes, and now taken over by the Italian government and administered by the prince as president of the board. Don Bosco accepted the proposal and drafted basic terms on which to work out an agreement. He required absolute freedom in all that concerned internal discipline and education, evacuation of all externs (entire families were housed in various parts of the hospice), and freedom in the administration of two-thirds of the allotted funds (the books showed outlays of money that were unaccounted for). The prince had difficulty in getting the board to agree, but Don Bosco stood firm on the terms. Negotiations continued for a long time. At first Don Bosco got a trusted friend in Rome to act as his intermediary; then he let the prince himself (who was well disposed) to take matters in hand [see letters, *IBM* XIV, 321 (omitted in *EBM*)]. We have no further information on these negotiations. One can only assume that the prince could not get the board to agree.

It is interesting nonetheless that the Italian government, in mid-seventies, should think of the Salesians in connection with a large institution that needed to be saved.

Further offers also were made to Don Bosco, but none of them could be brought to a favorable conclusion.

### *Don Bosco and the Conceptionists (1876-1880)*

*EBM* XII, 359-367; XIII, 28-44.

In 1876 Don Bosco was asked by Pius IX to visit and evaluate the Conceptionist Brothers, with a view to possibly incorporate this congregation, members and houses, into the Salesian Society. These Hospital Brothers of the Immaculate Conception had been founded in 1857 with the purpose of

serving in hospitals. By 1876 their membership had been reduced to 50—of which 42, established in a beautiful house in Rome itself, worked in the large Holy Spirit Hospital; while the rest worked in two smaller hospitals near Rome.

Don Bosco, having obtained the consent of his Council, visited the Institute carefully and made a report to the Pope [see *EBM* XIII, 37-38]. He identified two main causes for the decay of the Institute: first, lack of a proper Christian and religious formation (novitiate, etc.); and secondly, lack of clear and unified governance. Because of such failures, the members lacked discipline and religious spirit.

After protracted negotiations, Don Bosco agreed to provide a director for the Institute, and appointed Fr. Joseph Scappini, who would be responsible directly to the Pope. As for Don Bosco, he would supervise the “reform” and visit the Roman community as often as possible. After a “purge” and a spiritual retreat, it appeared that the reform was on the way to success. However, the activity of the Salesians with the Conceptionists was misrepresented in Roman circles, and a plot seems to have been hatched to keep the Salesians out. When Fr. Scappini had to absent himself because of illness, he was not allowed to return.

It should be noted that the Pope’s idea was that the Conceptionists should become part of the Salesian Society, with personnel, premises and ministry. This would establish the Salesians in Rome without further ado. Don Bosco quotes the Pope’s words: “I want you to look after the Conceptionists. [...] Your task is not to reform or amend them, but rather to combine their constitutions with those of the Salesians.”<sup>1</sup> Such a union, however, would be very difficult, in fact ultimately not feasible.

#### *Procurator and Procure First Established in Rome (1880)*

Ceria, *Annali* I, 376-377; *EBM* XIV, 299-301 (Fr. Dalmazzo’s appointment as procurator mentioned), 346-348 (audience with Card. Ferrieri; 352-353: burglary and arson at the residence of Tor de’ Specchi).

The first Salesian to be permanently established in Rome was Fr. Francis Dalmazzo, when he was appointed Procurator General of the Society in

<sup>1</sup> Don Bosco to Card. Bilio, November 29, 1877 in Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 244; see *EBM* XII, 360.

Rome in early 1880. Don Bosco had acquired the Salesians' first residence in Rome in 1876 in the following manner:

Don Bosco had earlier had contacts with the Institute of the Noble Oblates of Tor de' Specchi, whose convent was located near Capitol Hill. Mother Maddalena Galeffi, president of that congregation, had since 1870 acted as the agent of Don Bosco in Rome for the distribution of books and religious objects. In 1874, in auditing the books (the transactions were handled by a lay person) she found that a large sum owed to Don Bosco was unaccounted for. She decided to make it up little by little out of her own personal money. But she died in 1876. Her successor found that the convent still owed Don Bosco some 20,000 lire. When Don Bosco was told of the affair, he asked that in payment he be given the use of some rooms on the third floor of a nearby house owned by the convent. They were poor rooms accessible only through a small back door and narrow stairs, but it was a pied-à-terre. The deed was signed in March 1876. Here Don Bosco (and his secretary, Fr. Barberis) stayed for the first time in December 1877. This first Salesian residence in Rome was located near the archaeological center of the city. It was demolished when the whole district was razed and the area of the republican and imperial fora was cleared under Mussolini. But in 1880, when Fr. Dalmazzo was appointed Procurator, it became the seat of the Salesian Procure.

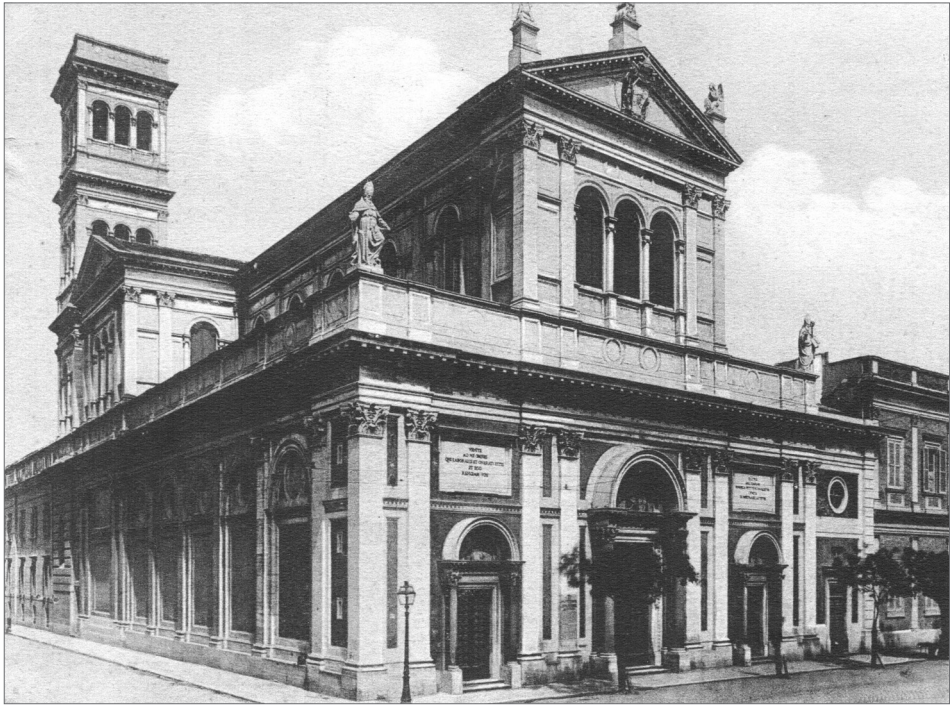
The Vatican directories of 1877, 1878 and 1879 list Fr. Michael Rua (residing in Turin) as procurator general. Fr. Francis Dalmazzo is listed as procurator in 1880. In the Salesian directory, however, for some reason he is first listed in that office in 1884.

### *Church (1880-1887) and Hospice (1885-1887) of the Sacred Heart*

*EBM* XIV, 455-474: Church of the Sacred Heart, Preliminary; XV, 331-350: Church of the Sacred Heart, Progress (see Index of *EBM* XV, entry *Church of the Sacred Heart* for scattered details); *EBM* XVII, 486-501: fund-raising and progress in church and hospice; *EBM* XVIII, 273-298: consecration.

#### *Preliminary phase (1879-1880)*

1. Location: the developing Castro Pretorio district.
2. Initial plans by Pope Pius IX (1870-1871) with little progress.



34 – Rome: Sacred Heart Church and Salesian boarding school

3. Plans revived by Pope Leo XIII and initial work at construction site (1878-1880). The Pope established a building committee and launched a worldwide collection, with only moderate success. The design of the church was finalized.

4. Erection of the Sacred Heart parish and laying of the foundation stone (August 16, 1879). But the work came to a halt for lack of funds.

*Don Bosco takes on the task of building the church of the Sacred Heart (1880)*

1. *Reconstruction of events by Lemoyne (Documenti) and Ceria (IBM)* – In March 1880 Card. Alimonda, acting for Leo XIII, approached Don Bosco about the church. Don Bosco was reluctant to accept and cited good reasons—lack of funds; lack of enthusiasm in Rome; building already started; administration people hard to deal with, etc. On April 5, 1880, Leo XIII himself asked Don Bosco, and Don Bosco accepted, on condition that provision was made

in the plan for a hospice and an oratory. Immediately Don Bosco had to deal with rival factions among the workers. But he drafted and submitted an agreement. He had to override the objections of his council: It is the Pope's "command."

2. *More probable reconstruction* – Don Bosco was experiencing serious difficulties with church authorities at the height of the Bosco-Bonetti-Gastaldi controversy. He had enemies in Rome. Cardinal Innocenzo Ferrieri (of Bishops and Regulars) was ill disposed toward Don Bosco and the Salesian Society. Leo XIII himself seemed distant and unfavorable. In January 1880 Don Bosco appointed Fr. Francis Dalmazzo his representative in Rome. Father Dalmazzo was to expedite Fr. Bonetti's case before the Congregation of the Council. He would act as Don Bosco's representative throughout the conflict with Archbishop Gastaldi, till the signing of the reconciliation document (*Concordia*, 1882). He too regarded Card. Ferrieri as "an enemy."

Don Bosco followed this appointment of the Procurator with a personal visit to Rome (March 12-April 23, 1880). Its purpose was to press for the privileges, and thus indirectly also resolve the Bonetti case. Ill-disposed Vatican officials made it difficult for him to obtain an audience. When, after a long delay, he was received by the Pope (on April 5, 1880) Leo XIII told him that he was "systematically opposed to the privileges of religious congregations" and that he would only renew a few minor ones. Don Bosco felt slighted by being sent "from pillar to post" before being granted an audience, by the delays, by the small concessions obtained, and above all by the attitude of Cardinal Ferrieri, who had not been pleased with his 1879 *Report*. Don Bosco had the impression that he was being blacklisted.

It was under these circumstances that on March 28, 1880, Don Bosco accepted a proposal by Cardinal Vicar Monaco La Valletta to take over building the church of the Sacred Heart, with connected hospice—the whole "as a monument to the revered memory of Pius IX."<sup>2</sup> It seems that in his audience with Leo XIII on April 5, 1880, the church was not mentioned.<sup>3</sup> Before leaving Rome, however, Don Bosco wrote a well thought-out proposal of acceptance for Cardinal Monaco, asking him to present it to the Pope for his approval and blessing.<sup>4</sup> The Pope must have been gratified; that appears to

<sup>2</sup> Berto's notes, in *Documenti* XXII, 88, sparingly summarized in *EBM* XIV, 348.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *EBM* XIV, 356-359.

<sup>4</sup> *Memorandum* Don Bosco to Card. Vicar, April 10, 1880, in Ceria, *Epistolario* III, 564-566; *EBM* XIV, 462-463.



have been all. But the Salesian tradition (above) has it that Leo XIII requested Don Bosco, and the latter exclaimed, “This is the Pope’s order, and I obey!”<sup>5</sup>

This was perhaps the real achievement of this visit of Don Bosco to Rome in 1880. His offer to build the church, and his subsequent success, helped break down the barriers against which he felt so helpless.

### *Building of church and hospice*

As a first step, Don Bosco bought more property and restored a house on it. In 1881 Sacred Heart parish (erected in 1879) was entrusted to the Salesians, and Procurator Fr. Dalmazzo was named its first pastor. Work resumed and some progress was made.

But by 1883 difficulties with the administration and lack of funds stalled the work. Don Bosco dismissed the old administration and bought up contracts and building materials for 40,000 lire.

Benefactors, such as Count Colle and Mlle Louvet, proved steady contributors. In 1884-85 Don Bosco launched a great and successful lottery in Rome, in which Pope and King served as honorary co-sponsors. But a heavy debt would remain.<sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile in 1884 the building of the church resumed.

In April 1885 the cornerstone of the hospice was laid. This was to be a boarding school (to house some 500 boys) and a day school—with attached oratory. It would mark the beginning of the Salesian work proper in Rome.

The consecration of the still unfinished church and of the hospice took place on May 12, 1887—a year in advance of projected completion so that Don Bosco, whose health was failing fast, could attend. The Oratory choir from Turin under the Salesian Maestro Joseph Dogliani performed the music. The celebration, took on an international character (Italian, Spanish, French, German, and English languages being used). Whereas the Catholic press in Rome did not give the event the attention it certainly deserved, the secular (anticlerical) press wrote with admiration and sympathy.

<sup>5</sup> *Documenti* XXII, 90-92, *FDBM* 1,070 C6-8.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. letter Don Bosco to the Duke of Norfolk, January 13, 1888, *Ceria*, *Epistolario* IV, 407-408, in which Don Bosco places the remaining debt at 250,000 *lire*.



#### 4. Other Salesian Foundations in Italy in the 1880s

- (1) **Florence** (Tuscany) (1881): *EBM* XV, 274-283.
- (2) **Faenza** (Romagna-Emilia) (1881/82): *EBM* XV, 283-294; XVI, 319-323; XVII, 521-525.
- (3) **Mogliano Veneto** (near Treviso) (1880/81/82): *EBM* XIV, 540-541.
- (4) **Catania** (Sicily) (1885): *EBM* XVII, 301-302, 526-528.
- (5) **Foglizzo** (Piedmont) (November 4, 1886): *EBM* XVIII, 205-208. A novitiate had been opened at San Benigno in 1879. In 1883 a separate novitiate for brothers was also established there. In 1886 Don Bosco purchased a large house at Foglizzo (a small town located about 4 miles from San Benigno) from a local count. After restoration it could house uncomfortably up to 100 novices. The clerical novitiate was thus transferred to Foglizzo. Among the novices in 1886-87 were Andrew Beltrami and Louis Olive. Fr. Barberis served as novice master for both novitiates. At General Chapter IV (September 1886) Don Bosco "recalled" that Pius IX had recommended that novices be separated as soon as possible from both pupils and professed confreres. Foglizzo began to operate as a traditional "closed" novitiate.
- (6) **Parma** (Emilia) (property bought 1882/83; dedicated 1888): *EBM* XV, 253-255; *EBM* XVIII, 367-368.
- (7) **Trent** (Trentino, under Austria) (1887) an orphanage (larger works in 1893): *EBM* XVIII, 368-369.
- (8) **Valsalice** (Expansion and change of purpose, 1887): *EBM* XVIII, 434-436. The college of Valsalice was expanded, and turned into a Salesian philosophical studentate, with Fr. Barberis as director. To forestall criticism, Don Bosco renamed it "Seminary for the Foreign Missions."

### III. Salesian Foundations in Spain (1881 and 1884)

#### 1. Southern Spain

(1) **Utrera** (February 1881): *EBM* XV, 265-273; *EBM* XVII, 542-544. Utrera is located some 20 mi. SE of Sevilla (Andalusía). In 1879, the Archbishop of Sevilla wrote to Don Bosco on behalf of Marquis Diego de Ulloa, requesting that the Salesians open a school for poor boys in Utrera, the Marquis' hometown (some 12,000 people). In January 1880, after a second request, Don Bosco sent Fr. John Cagliero (back from South America) and



35 – Former Carmelite monastery in Utrera (Sevilla)  
given over to the Salesians in 1881, as seen in an 1889 photograph

Brother Joseph Rossi to prepare the foundation. A church (Our Lady of Mt. Carmel) and a residence were given to the Salesians. But it wasn't until February 1881 that Fr. John Branda (director) with 5 Salesians, accompanied by Fr. Cagliero (who alone could handle the Spanish!), could begin the work in the former Carmelite monastery. The work began with the formation of a group of Cooperators and the reopening of Mt. Carmel church. There followed in 1885 a hospice-school with some 150 destitute lads. Financial difficulties and the cholera (1885) threaten the continued existence of this work; but it survived while remaining committed exclusively to the poor.

Fr. Cagliero stayed on till mid-April (1881); visited Portugal in view of a possible Salesian foundation (realized only in 1894).



36 – Façade of the Martí-Codolar family residence (Barcelona),  
deeded to the Salesians in 1949

## 2. Northeastern Spain

(1) **Sarrià**, Barcelona (February 1884): *EBM* XV, 274; XVII, 325-327. In 1882 the wealthy widow, Doña Dorotea Chopitea de Serra of Barcelona, heard about the Salesians through the *Salesian Bulletin*. As she wanted to sponsor a hospice-school for poor boys in memory of her late husband, she applied to Don Bosco twice. The answer was negative for the present, but open-ended. The lady insisted, and even wrote to the Pope. Don Bosco then send Fr. John Cagliero and Fr. Branda to look into the matter. The negotiations were quick and successful.

The vocational school (*Talleres salesianos*) had its humble beginnings on February 15, 1884, with Fr. John Branda (transferred from Utrera) as director. With Doña Dorotea's patronage, and the help of many Salesian Cooperators, over the years the school developed into one of the largest Salesian complexes in Spain.

**Dorotea Chopitea** was the daughter of a wealthy Spaniard from Santiago, Chile. He settled in Barcelona with his family when the war of independence from Spain broke out in Chile. In 1832 Dorotea was married to a well-to-do gentleman, Mariano Serra. Don Mariano died in 1882. And it was then that Doña Dorotea approached the Salesians.

Not only is Doña Dorotea Chopitea de Serra rightly regarded as mother of the Salesian work in Barcelona, but she remained its staunchest supporter till her death in 1891. The Pascual and the Martí-Codolar families were also among its distinguished benefactors.

**Note:** Madrid – An offer of a large juvenile hall (St. Rita) being built by a committee was made to the Salesians. Its purpose was to “offset” rampant delinquency, and the influence of the *Black Hand*. After lengthy negotiations (1885-1886), the proposal could not be accepted. (The first Salesian foundation in Madrid was established in 1899.) [*EBM* XVII, 548-557].

(2) **Mt. Tibidabo** (Barcelona). The top of the highest hill in the range surrounding Barcelona, commands a breath-taking view of the city and surrounding area. It was the property of people who intended to establish some kind of resort or even build a Protestant church there. In 1885, to prevent such projects, a group of Catholic gentlemen bought the property and built a small chapel on it dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. When Don Bosco was in Barcelona (April-May 1886) and visited the place, these gentlemen presented him with the deed transferring ownership to him, with the hope that a church in honor of the Sacred Heart would be built on the hilltop. Don Bosco accepted and stated that on leaving Turin he had had a premonition of this event.

The Church of the Sacred Heart Church on Mt. Tibidabo (now a complex Salesian center) was founded in 1912, but left incomplete. The bronze statue of Christ waiting to be placed on the pinnacle was smashed by the Communists on July 25, 1936. Building was resumed after World War II, and the great church was dedicated on October 21-29, 1961 [cf. *Bollettino Salesiano* 85 (December 1961)].

**Note:** From its inception in 1881, the Salesian work in Spain was placed under the Roman Province, nominally one of the six existing provinces at the time. When the school at Barcelona was opened in 1884, the question arose whether a separate province should be erected in Spain with its two houses. Don Bosco preferred to wait a little longer [cf. *EBM* XVII, 327].



37 – Don Bosco in the park of the Martí-Codolar country house  
in a photograph of May 3, 1886

In 1889 Fr. Rua appointed Fr. Philip Rinaldi director at Sarriá; and in 1892 he appointed him provincial of the newly created Spanish Province (which included Portugal, though at the time there were as yet no Salesian foundations in that country).

During his tenure as Provincial (1892-1901) Fr. Rinaldi opened 16 houses in Spain and 3 in Portugal.



## Appendices

### 1. Don Bosco's Last Foundations in Europe and South America

#### 1. Established under Don Bosco (1887/1888)

- (1) **Trent** (in Trentino, Italy, but under Austria) (1887); first foundation in Austria proper was in Vienna (1903).
- (2) **Concepción** (Chile) (Mar 1887).
- (3) **London-Battersea** (England) (November 1887).
- (4) **Quito** (Ecuador) (January 28, 1888); the Vicariate Apostolic of Méndez y Gualaquiza (the *Shuar* mission) was established in 1892.

#### 2. Negotiations Begun under Don Bosco – Work Established Later

- (1) **Talca** (Chile) (1888).
- (2) **Bogotá** (Colombia) (1890).
- (3) **Liège** (Belgium) (1891). First requested in 1867. On December 8, 1887 Don Bosco (ill in bed) had a “dream” in which Our Lady told him to accept the Liège proposal.
- (4) **Lima** (Peru) (1891).
- (5) **Braga** (Portugal) (1894); proposal first investigated by Fr. Cagliari in 1881
- (6) **Caracas** (Venezuela) (1894).

## 2. Statistics at Don Bosco Death

### 1. Salesians of Don Bosco

Year 1888: Professed members: 773; Novices: 276; Houses: 58

Year 1889: Professed members: 881; Novices: 320; Houses: 64

### 2. Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

Year 1888: Professed members: 415; Novices: 164; Houses: 54

Year 1889: Professed members: 466; Novices: 190; Houses: 59





