

# THE SPIRITUALITY OF BISHOP SCALABRINI

Mario Francesconi, cs



Translated from Italian by  
Martin Bortolazzo, cs and Ezio Marchetto, cs



**THE SPIRITUALITY  
OF BISHOP SCALABRINI**

MARIO FRANCESCONI, C.S.

Translation from Italian by  
Martin Bortolazzo, c.s. and Ezio Marchetto, c.s.



# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Acknowledgments.....  | 5  |
| Introduction.....   | 7  |
| PART I  |    |
| A Life of Faith: Spirituality of Incarnation.....   | 10 |
| 1. Doctrinal Foundation   |    |
| 1) A Life of Faith: Divinization.....   | 11 |
| 2) Divinization: Conformity with the Incarnate Word.....                                    | 12 |
| 3) Divinization: The Continuation<br>and Extension of the Incarnation in us.....            | 14 |
| 4) Divinization: The Continuation<br>and Extension of the Incarnation in the Church.....    | 16 |
| 5) Divinization: The Continuation<br>and Extension of the Incarnation in Human History..... | 20 |
| 2. A Life of Faith  |    |
| A. Make me holy.....  |    |
| 1) If only I could sanctify myself.....   | 26 |
| 2) Prayer-life.....   | 30 |
| 3) Mental Prayer and Vocal Prayer.....  | 32 |
| 4) The Eucharist.....   | 35 |
| 5) The Cross.....   | 42 |
| 6) Practices of Piety and Devotion to Mary and the Saints.....                              | 46 |
| B. To make myself a slave to all Spirituality in Action.....                                |    |
| 1) To make myself a slave to all.....   | 51 |
| 2) Missionary Spirit.....   | 59 |
| 3) Pastoral Vision.....   | 62 |

## PART II

### “I believe in the Church”

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Ecclesial Spirituality .....                           | 68 |
| 1) Experiencing Communion with God in the Church.....  | 69 |
| 2) Experiencing Fraternal Communion in the Church..... | 78 |
| 3) Experiencing the Church as our own Family.....      | 83 |

## PART III

|                      |    |
|----------------------|----|
| A Spiritual Man..... | 89 |
|----------------------|----|

### A Human Man

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| 1) Spirituality and Humanity<br>in the Thought of Bishop Scalabrini.....   | 90  |
| 2) The Portrait of the Man John Baptist Scalabrini<br>Drawn up by his Contemporaries.....                                | 94  |
| 3) The Portrait of the Man John Baptist Scalabrini<br>Drawn up by the “Process on his Virtues” .....                     | 99  |
| 4) Wholeness of Character:<br>The Portrait of the Man John Baptist Scalabrini<br>in his Letters to Bishop Bonomelli..... | 107 |

### Bishop Scalabrini and the social question

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1) Socialism and the Action of the Clergy..... |  |
| 2) The Social Problems of Emigration.....      |  |

### Bishop Scalabrini and Politics

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1) A Pastoral Political Choice.....             | 119 |
| 2) Human Politics and Evangelical Politics..... | 127 |

## Acknowledgments

In 1995 the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo and the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo commemorate the 90th anniversary of the death of their founder Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini. The Missionary Sisters celebrate also their one hundredth anniversary of foundation. This is a fitting occasion to add this publication to the list of works already available in English on the Scalabrinian Congregations, their founder, and their charism. These publications, not only help the members of the Congregations to remain faithful to the spirituality of their founder, but they also bring the religious and social values of Bishop Scalabrini closer to our time and relevant for our Church.

The original book, *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini: Spiritualità d'Incarnazione*, was published in 1989 and the first draft of the translation was completed the following year by Father Martin Bortolazzo, c.s. We are in debt to him for starting the process that produced this publication.

The translation was then sent to Doctor Pauline A. Nestor of Sydney's University of Australia who reviewed the text and made several corrections. From there the book was sent to the Center for Migration Studies of New York to be edited and published. It was there that I picked up the project. During the following years, the translation was thoroughly studied and closely compared to the original text. Many quotations of Bishop Scalabrini's writings and sermons were compared and often literally taken from the book *John Baptist Scalabrini, Apostle to the Emigrants* published by the Center for Migration Studies and edited by Alba I. Zizzamia.

The final translation was then read and checked by Father Andrew Brizzolara, c.s. and Father Charles Zanoni, c.s. who gave valuable suggestions regarding style and conformity. Finally, the whole publication was once again proof-read by Father Charles Zanoni, c.s. who devoted much time and energy. I am very grateful to him for the personal interest he devoted to this book.

Ezio Marchetto, c.s., January 1995

Notes:

The abbreviation AGS, often used in the book, stands for *Archivio Generalizio Scalabriniano*.

All Bible quotations are taken from the Saint Joseph Edition of The New American Bible. Catholic Book Publishing Co., New York 1986.



## Introduction

When we consider the earthly existence of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini, we tend to imagine him involved in the concrete, dynamic, and striking endeavors typical of a man of action. We are also aware that we cannot define him within the boundaries of any theological, philosophical, or spiritual school, or place him in any conventional historical category.

Spontaneously we picture him “prone to the ground” for long hours, day, or night, in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament; proclaiming the words of consecration with sparkling eyes and intense expression; in the grip of sorrow for sin or pressing to his heart the pectoral cross in the face of opposition while whispering *fac me cruce inebriari*—that I may lose myself in the cross. We can see Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini sitting at his desk writing to the Pope, after much thinking, petitioning him to put an end to the “ruinous dispute” between Church and state, or in an audience with Leo XIII telling him, humbly, but in all frankness, *verba veritatis*—the naked truth, — whether he liked it or not; or lamenting with Bishop Jeremiah Bonomelli over the internal dissensions of Italian Catholics.

Or again, we picture him getting up in the middle of the night to give shelter in the bishop’s residence to a poor derelict who had taken refuge under his porch; accepting from the police the custody of a poor deaf-mute to whom he tries to teach how to talk or pawning at the pawnshop the chalice given him by Pius IX to provide meals for thousands of hungry people. We can imagine him travelling on mule’s back or even on foot, up and down the rough paths of the Apennines, to visit his most distant children, who had never seen a bishop before. Upon arrival, sometimes after a march of six or eight hours, he would extend a warm greeting to a crowd in expectation, as it were, of the Holy Spirit, kindly questioning the children of

catechism classes, sharing the simple meal of a poor pastor of a mountain village, and carrying on the ministry of reconciliation until midnight in uncomfortable confessionals.

We, Scalabrinian Missionaries, more often picture him fixing his thoughtful and compassionate eyes on the hundreds of migrants crowding the platforms of the station in Milan waiting to board the train to the port of Genoa; joking with the two hundred orphans of the *Istituto Cristóvão Colombo* of São Paulo, Brazil, or crossing the forests of Rio Grande do Sul tossed in a primitive cart to reach isolated Italian colonies.

Finally, we imagine him preparing himself the vessel of holy oil for his anointing, asking the forgiveness of all, repeating, “thy will be done”, turning his eyes in one last breath to the One who is coming to take him and saying: “I am ready, let us go!”

However, we cannot avoid asking ourselves what kind of spirituality nourished his lifestyle. What was the moving force behind all these activities? What was the rationale for his choices? What were the motives of his actions?

We can answer only with one word; a single word which explains it all: a word that is a person, because he is the Word Incarnate: Christ.

Christ truly present in the Eucharist, Christ present in the Church, Christ present in the Pope, Christ present in history, in the hungry, in the prisoner, in the deaf-mute, in the rice-pickers, in the migrant.

Christ made present, “assimilated” in the meditation of the word, in the adoration of the host, in the communion of the Body and Blood; in being nailed with Christ on the cross! To use the very expressions of the bishop: Christ “continuing” in his servant, extending his incarnation in the man John Baptist Scalabrini; “expanding” in the Apostle of the Catechism and of the Migrants.

It is only in this way that we can understand the spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini. He did nothing else but live the ideal he was proposing to all Christians:

God loves his Son and loves him in essence. It is impossible that he may find his delight in anyone else but in him because God’s love is infinite and it can only have an object of infinite value: *Hic est Filius*

*meus dilectus in quo mihi bene complacui*—This is my own dear Son, with whom I am well pleased. (Mt 17,5). But this beloved Son of his, became man. Therefore, he loves man in him. With one joy and one love he embraces all, body, flesh, and soul. Now, we are that flesh, those bones; we are that nature, we are one body with Christ and in him and through him we are made children of God, in fact, the very Son of God who is in us. Therefore, in him we, too, are embraced and included by the Father in one act of love. As the sonship of God by which Christ is the Son of God widens and extends in us and on us, so also the love of the Father widens and extends to us. In this way, we too are made pleasing to God and favored by him in Christ who is, by nature, pleasing to and favored by him: *gratificavit nos in dilecto Filio Suo*—He made us pleasing to him in his Beloved Son. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878. Piacenza, 1878. pp.16-17).

“I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2,20). The love of God is revealed in Christ. God is love. The Spirit infuses love in our hearts. In Christ and through Christ all things were made, all things, therefore, are signs of love, and where there is fullness of love all things are loved, and in love they are all reconciled and harmonized:

It is the will of God. [...] He wants reconciliation between reason and faith, nature and grace, heaven and earth, the works of the creature and the tights of the Creator. It is his will that work and capital, freedom and authority, equality and order, fraternity and paternity, conservatism, and progressivism, call on each other, and help each other as harmonious opposites. He desires that all the components of civilization, science, literature, arts, industry, all rightful interests, and aspirations, may find in religion, the Church, and the Pope, impulse, norms, help, nobility, divine consecration. (Address for the VIIIth Centennial of the First Crusade, April 21, 1895. AG.3018/26).

If in the first quote we find the basis for the unity that Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini was able to create in his own life between love of God and love of neighbors, in the second we recognize the profound reason for his favoring the “conciliation” between Church and state, for his acting as a bridge of dialogue, thus characterizing his presence in the history of the Church in that specific time.

All things have been made in Christ and for Christ, that he might subject all things to himself and all men who live in these realities

and of these realities, so that Christ may subject everything to himself and himself to the Father, and God may be all in all.

Whoever conforms himself to the divine plan, lives the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity; he is a man resurrected with Christ; he lives in “newness of life”, in the true “interior life”, where practices, methods, and options, are but the expressions and means of the “way” he chooses and keeps with fidelity and coherence in a “heroic degree”.

Such is the “spirituality” of John Baptist Scalabrini, the man, the priest, the bishop; this is the way he embodied his resolve to be all things to all people, to win all to Christ, “the only and supreme aspiration of his soul.”

“To do what is good, all the good possible, in the best way possible”: coherently, globally, totally; with joy, enthusiasm, and fervor; in the wholeness of an “undivided man;” with a love kept burning by faith, nourished by hope, sustained by fortitude, ruled by prudence, directed by justice, balanced by temperance, strengthened by patience, moderated by meekness, clarified by sincerity, founded in humility, transparent in chastity, brave in obedience.

The “degree” of the spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini has been established by a lengthy and meticulous “Process on his Virtues” that has been concluded with the solemn declaration of Pope John Paul II:

*Beatissimus Pater sollemniter declaravit: Constare de virtutibus theologalibus Fide, Spe et Caritate tum in Deum tum in proximum, necnon de cardinalibus Prudentia, Iustitia, Temperantia et Fortitudine earumque adnexis, in gradu heroico, Servi Dei Ioannis Baptistae Scalabrini*—The Most Holy Father has solemnly declared: The heroic practice by the Servant of God, John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, of the theological virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity toward God and his neighbor, as well as of the cardinal virtues of Prudence, Justice, Temperance, and Fortitude, and related virtues, is a known fact. (Decree of March 16, 1987)

Part I

**A LIFE OF FAITH**

**A SPIRITUALITY OF INCARNATION**



## 1. DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

### 1) A Life of Faith: Divinization\*

The spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini consists essentially in a life of faith that includes all the three theological virtues:

The proper life of a Christian is a life of faith. *Justus ex fide vivit*—the just shall live by faith. By the light of this divine flame, a Christian knows the true meaning of his present life and of his future destiny in a infinitely more perfect way than that of any of the most famous wise men; he evaluates human events, his duties toward God, his neighbor, and himself, in a way totally different from the perceptions of the senses and far superior to the light of human reason. As with the human senses he sees, touches, and feels material and sensible things, in the same way by the faith infused in him, he sees, touches, and feels the heavenly and future things: *Justus ex fide vivit*. He believes, and his mind is intent in contemplating and understanding his beliefs better than if he were to see them with his physical eyes. He hopes, and his hopes are concrete, real, and substantial, so that his heart clings to them with tenacity and with all the strength he is capable of. He loves, and his love is a flame that overcomes all doubts; a flame of fire ascending to heaven. He almost does not belong to earth anymore; he belongs only to God, he lives in God: he thinks, speaks, and works with God, and for his God he suffers, struggles, and dies: *Justus ex fide vivit*. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1884, pp. 11-13).

Living by faith is, then, the same as living the three supernatural virtues, living on a supernatural level in the theological scholastic meaning of the word used by Bishop Scalabrini in reference to the term of the ancient patristic tradition: “divinization” of humanity. He endorses fully the notion of the Greek Fathers of the Church: by divinizing the humanity of Christ, Incarnation has divinized the whole human race. Nothing is alien to Christ, excluded from grace or from the “supernatural.” The whole reality is part of the history of salvation; everything evolves around Christ, was created by him, in him, and for him; all things tend and are moving toward God through Christ:

Jesus is the center of creation; he is the precious link that unites the work of the Almighty with the divine Creator; he is the goal of all the works and plans of the divine providence; he is the supreme and ultimate reason of all God's designs for the redeemed humanity of which he is the head; he is the measure of all our achievements, because he is the only true light that enlightens every man, and therefore the whole humanity (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 25-26).

Who is then Jesus Christ? He is the Only Son of God made man for us; he is the Word through whom all things in heaven and on earth were made, and not one thing had its being but through him, (Jn I). Who is Jesus Christ? He is the alpha and the omega, the beginning, and the end. (Rev 1,8). Before anything was created, he existed (Col 1,17), the first born of all creation (Col 1,15); he is the heir, the center of the visible and invisible world (Heb 1,2), the synthesis of all time (Heb 13,8). Without the light that radiates from him, all is darkness and mist; without his work, the order of nature and of grace, man, and the world, the past and the future are a book sealed with seven seals (Rev 5,1). (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1877. Piacenza 1877, pp. 5-6)

\*Divinization is a word often used by Bishop Scalabrini in his writings, which seems to refer to the process by which a person is transformed into the likeness of the Son of God.

## **2) Divinization: Conformity with the Incarnate Word**

According to Bishop Scalabrini, faith consists essentially and eminently in believing in Christ:

Jesus Christ is the Light of the world (Jn 8,12), he is the way, the life, and the truth (Jn 14,6), he is the bond of unity, the kiss of peace between heaven and earth, between God and man (Eph 2,14). Jesus is our redeemer, our master, our healer, our head, our companion, our brother, our friend, our comfort, our refuge, our glory, our joy, our greatness. He is the high priest of the new covenant, the eternal priest, the mediator between God and man, the victim for our sins, our true and only happiness. He is the gate through which we must enter his kingdom, the cornerstone, and the foundation on which our spiritual building must be constructed. He is the bread of our souls, the author



and the end of our faith, our reward, our crown, our life, our everything. To him, to Jesus we owe our grace and our friendship with the Father, the confidence, and the freedom of the children of God. To him, to Jesus, we owe all the goods that we have received from God, in nature, in grace and in glorification. To him, to Jesus, we are debtors if God keeps us in existence, sustains us, defends us: if he does not punish us as we deserve; if he still patiently bears with, and waits for us. He is the source of all our enlightenments, judgements, aspirations, good ideas, and pious desires. From Jesus comes our courage when in danger, our strength when in temptation, our forbearance when in sorrow, our patience in adversity, our perseverance in doing good: *In omnibus divites facti estis in Christo*—In union with Christ you have become rich in all things (1Cor 1,5). Indeed, in Jesus we have all things, in Jesus we can do everything, we hope for all things, in Jesus we obtain everything, because Jesus wanted to humble and sacrifice himself, to be all things for us (1Cor 1). (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 21-22).

Faith is, above all, to know and acknowledge that Christ is the Son of God and our Lord; therefore, to believe is “to listen” with faith to his word, (hope); and to love in obedience to his word, (Charity).

Bishop Scalabrini insists on faith as light: faith is vision, it is seeing who Christ really is, it is knowing who Christ really is; it is seeing in Christ the Father and the whole of reality, human and historical: it is seeing God.

After knowing and seeing Christ and God in him, we can see and recognize him again in all things: *Video Dominum Innixum Scalae*—I see God on top of the stairs. (Motto of Scalabrini’s coat of arms).

The whole of reality is like a stairway: God gives himself to us descending among us in the Incarnation of his Son. The whole of creation is assumed by the Incarnate Word and with him ascends toward God. Jesus Christ present today with his body in the Eucharist, is the center of creation. He is the stairway, descending from, and ascending to God, through whom all things continuously come down from God and go up to him:

The Eucharist is to the spiritual world, what the sun is to the physical world. As in the firmament all things gravitate toward this mag-

nificent star whose light and warmth gives fertility and life, in the same way all things gravitate toward the most august Eucharist. It is only through the Eucharist that all created things continually descend from the Creator and continually return to him. In the Eucharist Jesus Christ is then everything for us (Ibid., p. 15).

In the same way, the crucifix is the center of the world:

Jesus crucified is our common center [...] he is the norm of any genuine social progress, since he is the only true light that enlightens all men, and therefore the entire society. [...] True progress [...] is nothing else but Jesus Christ living in us, Jesus Christ who incorporates humanity into himself; Jesus Christ continuing and rising from level to level through time and space; Jesus Christ the center of every harmony that comes together, of every beauty that is renewed, of every greatness that grows. All that is true, all that is holy, all that is perfect, must come from him and return to him, since he is the beginning and the end, he is the way that leads from one to the other. (Homily on the Crucifix, 1880, AGS 3017/3).

Founded in Christ, the center of creation and of the history of salvation, Scalabrini's spirituality is eminently Christological and Christocentric: it is all centered in the divine and human nature of Christ present in the Eucharist and on the cross. That is, in the continuity of the paschal mystery that marks our history and the history of every human being.

Christ is the point of the subsistence of creation, the only mediator between God and creation, the apex of history. We are created in the image and likeness of God, and we can reach fulfilment only when we are the image of God. Now, Jesus Christ is the real image of God: therefore, whoever wants to be an image of God, must become an image of Christ. This is the genuine meaning of *the imitation of Christ*, the true way towards "divinization": the track on which the life of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini runs.

Humanity has been divinized through the Incarnation of the Word. Our individual human nature is divinized by the extension of the Incarnation in each one of us. It is not an automatic and static process; it is rather a co-ordinate dynamism of grace and asceticism. "Whatever has been assumed has also been saved." But Bishop

Scalabrini continues to remind us that all things have been saved through the kenosis of the Incarnate Word by the paschal mystery of his death and resurrection, humiliation, and glorification.

Such dialectic and dynamism embrace our individual existence and the life of the mystical body of Christ, the continuation of the Incarnation of the Word: at the same time, it also embraces the continuation of the historical existence of Christ in all its phases from his birth in poverty to being stripped of his clothes at the crucifixion as a necessary passage to his resurrection and glory.

This is the reason why Bishop Scalabrini does not separate the Eucharist from the cross, eucharistic piety from devotion to the crucifix, the joy of sacramental communion from the “rejoicing” in the cross.

The reality of justification brought about by the redeeming death of Jesus, the reality of sanctifying grace by which God gives himself to us making us “his children in his Son,” co-heirs of his Only Begotten, and partakers of his divine nature, is lived by people made in the image of God, and therefore free and responsible. In other words, justification cannot be lived apart from the true image of God: Christ. It is lived, then, in a personal relationship with Jesus: practically in *conformes fieri imaginis Filii sui*—to become like his Son (Rom 8,29)—by becoming like Christ in his paschal mystery of death and resurrection continued in the Eucharist and signified by the cross, by living with him, dying with him, rising with him to be glorified with him.

The “imitation of Christ” does not consist merely in imitating the gestures, the words, and the virtues of Jesus, but it is a mystical union, an incorporation. It is not just a moral and voluntary choice, an effort to be Christ-like, but a true communion with the historical saving action of Christ: my life is not contemporaneous but simultaneous with that of Christ: “Christ has incorporated us into himself, he has made us his members; now in him we have become Christ. We are truly his body; In him we depend on Christ. *Christi sumus*; even better, *Christus sumus*, not just of Christ, but Christ himself” (Saint Augustine, *Enarat.* in Ps 2,11,2).

Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini is clearly convinced of this mystical reality, but he is equally convinced that the Incarnation continues to

be fulfilled in us only because of the historical Incarnation of Christ. The theology of the Incarnation is a *theologia crucis* (which he calls “the philosophy of the cross”). At a time when the fight against quietism was still fierce, he was quite far from any abstract mysticism to the point that if asked whether Scalabrini was a mystic, it would be difficult to define him as such in the current meaning of the word. Those who accused him of an “amoral mysticism” because of certain attitudes toward the Pope, singled out and took a particular instance out of the whole context of a person who could not even dream of a mysticism without asceticism, without self-sacrifice, without the cross.

At the same time, it would be historically wrong to try to justify Bishop Scalabrini from the accusation of certain pastoral deviations, such as “un-involvement,” political activism, short-sighted conservatism, or, on the opposite side, an inordinate involvement in temporal matters.

The strict identification of the mystery of the Eucharist with the mystery of the cross is a question of life for him; and here we have another proof:

As the Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation, it is also an extension of the sacrifice of Golgotha (*La devozione al SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza 1902, p. 26).

At the feet of our altars, we find the Golgotha, where we cry clinging to the cross, and the Tabor, where we build the tents in which we are inebriated in heavenly peace; [...] there we experience the agony of Gethsemane and the morning of the resurrection, the mystical death, and the fountain of life (*Ibid.*, p. 5).

With these clarifications in mind, we can see now how Bishop Scalabrini understood the individual life of a Christian and the collective life of the Church in terms of a continuation and extension of the Incarnation.

### 3) **Divinization: The Continuation and Extension of the Incarnation in us**

From the doctrine of our incorporation into Christ, Bishop Scalabrini infers that we have been made not only children of God but an extension of the Incarnation as well, indeed an extension of Christ in us: “We are one body with Christ and made children of God through him and for him, indeed the very Son of God extending in us.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza, 1978, p. 16). This is the reason why the Son of God became man:

Jesus comes to earth so that we might live his life; to make us, as it were, one with him. I have come, he says, that you may have life, and life in abundance. The life Jesus comes to give us, by uniting with our soul, is his very own life.

The union of Jesus with the Christian soul marks the foundation of the whole supernatural order. By it man rises to the participation in the divine nature and, in it, he ennobles the whole creation. The Apostle cries out: “[...] this world, life, and death, the present and the future, all of these are yours, and you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.” (1Cor 3,21-22). Admirable words revealing to us the sublime salvation plan of the Gospel in its entirety. United with the Word through the Incarnation, the most holy humanity of Jesus Christ has become one person in him. United with Jesus, by a less perfect union yet intimate beyond all saying, we ourselves are in turn like an extension of Jesus, we belong to him as members of a body: *Unum corpus sumus in Christo*—We are one body in Christ. (Rom 12,5). (Christmas Homily, 1894).

To live in Christ means, above all, to be united with Christ in love:

O Jesus, you are the true fountain of all our good; you always were, constantly, and still are! Jesus, when we call on your name our hearts soften, our spirit is moved, our soul takes to the wings of hope. Jesus, a name sweeter to the palate than honey, more delectable to the ear than the sound of the harp, gentler to the heart than the purest joy! Let us love Jesus, let us love him! Who else could we love if not this most sweet savior of ours? [...]

Love Jesus, stay in unity with Jesus. The meaning of Christian perfection is union with Jesus Christ. Here resides the source of all good, the foundation and the origin of all our greatness: *Ego sum vitis vera et vos palmites* — I am the true vine, you are the branches. (In 15,1-5). As a branch apart from the vine withers away, so you also shall die apart from Jesus Christ. Union with Christ is vital for us: we are dead, our things are dead without it; we become just dead bodies, mere corpses like bodies without a soul! (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 23-23; 26-27).

Living the life of Christ implies a life of intense and global dynamism; it involves not only our spirit (Christian soul), but our whole being in its historical milieu (of life, death, present and future), in its being human and in being a creature (all things are yours).

Above all it involves “our life”: our “life” as Christians is Christ living in us; Christ taking flesh, being born, dying, and rising from the dead; Christ who loves, thinks, speaks, and acts:

It is not enough that we live in Jesus Christ! It is necessary that he himself becomes our life, he must live in us. He must live in us with his spirit, with his grace, with the signs of his mysteries, by the fruits of his sacraments, and above all by the sacrament of his Body and Blood, so that we may be given to say with the Apostle: *Vivo autem jam non ego; vivit vero in me Christus*—It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. (Gal 2,20). Saint Francis de Sales, the gentle Doctor of Geneva, writes that the meaning of this is that Jesus reigns and lives in our hearts as king and master; that his spirit extends and expands in us, rules us as a vital energy, makes everything right, warms all, sanctifies all, deifies all; he loves with our heart, thinks with our mind, speaks with our tongue, works with our hands. Our energies are consumed in him, our studies are done for his glory, our duties are performed with his grace, sufferings are borne to please him, recreation and nourishment are taken for his sake. His throne stands in the heart of the Christian soul: *Regnum eius intra vos est*—The reign of God in your midst. (Lk 17,21).

A coin must bear the image of the sovereign, otherwise it is worthless and cannot be used: and the works of a Christian must bear the imprint of Jesus Christ, for otherwise they have no value in securing heaven, while nothing is pleasing to his Eternal Father if it does

not bear the image of his Son and does not, in a certain way, reflect His character. We too, we ourselves, venerable brethren, and beloved sons, will not be admitted to our glory if we are not found to conform to this Divine Mold. (*See Rom 8,29-30*). (*Ibid.*, pp. 27-28).

The divinization that Christ fulfills in us, perpetuates his Incarnation: Christ takes our flesh so that our humanity becomes the instrument of his love for us, in a way like the individual nature of Christ, hypo-statically united with his divine person, which is his instrument. By accepting and living his love we lend our humanity to Christ so that in it and through it, he may continue to think, to speak, to act, to mediate, and to glorify the Father:

It is necessary that Jesus Christ lives in us. It is necessary that he continues to act in us since he is the only one who can reconcile heaven and earth, who can love God as he deserves to be loved, and who can give him the honor that to him is due.

But how can he, Jesus Christ, live in us? We have said it already, by his spirit: *In hoc cognovimus quia in eo manemus et ipse in nobis, quoniam de Spiritu Suo dedit nobis*—this is how we are sure that we live in God, and he lives in us: he has given us his spirit. (1Jn 4,13). The spirit of Jesus Christ is a spirit of humility, a spirit of love; it is above all a spirit of self-denial, sacrifice, and penance. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1883, Piacenza 1883, pp. 13-14).

In our ascetic endeavor, then, we imprint in our life the mark of salvation, that is, the “imitation of Christ.” We must walk, therefore, in the footsteps of the Savior, directing all our efforts to conform to our divine model that we may be imbued with his spirit in imitation of him, because this is clearly the will of God, the only way to obtain heaven: *quos praescivit et praedestinavit conformes fieri imaginis Filii Sui*—For those whom God had already chosen he had also set apart to become like his Son. (Rom 8,29) (*Ibid.*, pp. 9-19).

Each one of us, obviously with our limitations as human persons and as created beings, must bear the likeness of Christ:

When a painter wants to depict on canvas a true portrait of a dear friend, what does he do? He keeps his eyes constantly on him so that no stroke of his brush may blemish the likeness of the original. We too must behave in a similar manner. All our thoughts, all our words, all our actions, all our desires, all our inclinations, all our sufferings, must be so many strokes of the pen that shape and express in us some aspects of the life of Jesus Christ, to make us, so to speak, so many copies of him.

Do you want to know, venerable brethren and beloved sons, when this will come about? When we judge all things as Jesus Christ had judge them; when we love all that he loved and in the same way that he loved it; when in our hearts we have the same sentiments and dispositions which he had in his heart.

True, not all of us are called to live the total exterior poverty he lived, neither are all of us bound to undergo the unspeakable sufferings he had to bear! All of us, however, young and old, rich and poor, priests and laypeople, without exception, have to have his same inner attitude toward poverty, humility, charity, sacrifice, and all the other virtues, so that we may be willing to sacrifice all things and suffer anything, even death, rather than fail his holy law: *hoc enim sentite in vobis quod et in Christo Jesu*—Have among yourselves the same attitude that is also yours in Christ Jesus. (Phil 2,5).

Let us not deceive ourselves, dearly beloved. We will never achieve such interior conformity to Jesus Christ if we will not also share some form of exterior conformity to him. The life of Jesus Christ—the Apostle tells us—must be revealed in our mortal body. (2 Cor 4,11).

Practically, conformity to Christ means that:

Our manner of speaking must be that of Jesus, [...] the glance of the eyes that of Jesus, the gentleness of our manners that of Jesus. Jesus for mirror, Jesus for model, Jesus for seal. He who must make the judgments, plan the way, make the choices; it is he who must govern, direct, control our life. Finally, he is our love, our joy, our crown, our all-pervading thought, the beat of our heart, the wings of our aspiration, the sound that soothes our ears, the balm that softens our pain, the staff that supports us on our pilgrimage, the hymn and canticle which rises from our lips and accompanies us from time to eternity. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 33-34).



#### 4) **Divinization: The Continuation and Extension of the Incarnation in the Church**

Faith is not only believing in the Blessed Trinity, but also in the Church:

*I believe the Holy Catholic Church: The Church, this beautiful and true image of Jesus Christ, that like him is and always will be the same through all ages, in all places and for all men. [...] I believe the Holy Catholic Church: I believe it to be divine, because the principle informing it is divine. I believe; yes, I believe the Holy Catholic Church, and I would willingly give my life a thousand times for it, rather than fail this belief. (La Chiesa Cattolica, Piacenza 1888, pp. 4-5).*

Christ the Lord founded “his Church so that after his ascension to heaven it should continue to carry on his mission on earth” (*Ibid.*, p. 6), “a mission for the salvation of men, the reason of his Incarnation.”

Hence, the Church “is the moral extension of the Incarnation through the centuries” (*Unione colla Chiesa; obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori*, Piacenza, 1896 P. 8), “is the permanent incarnation of the Son of God here on earth” (*Ibid.*, p. 11), “the uninterrupted continuation of the work of the Redeemer and the Sanctifier of man on earth” (Pastoral letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 17-18).

Already in his *Conferenze sul Concilio Vaticano* (Lectures on Vatican Council I, Como, 1873) Bishop Scalabrini had chosen the definition of Bossuet: “The Church is Jesus Christ; but Jesus Christ extended and communicated (p. 5).” “The Church constitutes the continuation of the person of Christ; it is his living voice, the ineffable instrument of the Holy Spirit” (p. 27).

Through the Church, Jesus Christ lives in the world and continues in the world his redeeming action. Is the Church teaching? Then, it is Jesus Christ who teaches! Does the Church baptize? Then, it is Jesus Christ who baptizes! Is the Church absolving sin? Then, it is Jesus Christ who absolves! Is the Church condemning? Then, it is Jesus Christ who condemns! Is the Church in battle, in pain, in triumph? Then, it is Jesus Christ who fights, suffers, and wins in and for it. In the sublime words of the Apostle, the Church is the mystical body of which Jesus Christ is the head that informs it, gives it life, makes

it fruitful, and forms one moral person with it. (Homily of Pentecost 1898. AGS 3016/16).

The logical consequence of this is that:

To reach Christ one must pass through the Church, in the same way that a person crosses from one bank of a river to the other either over the bridge or by boat. Christ said: no one comes to the Father but through me, the mediator between God and man; in the same way no one can go to Christ but through the Church, the mediatrix between Christ and us. (*Ibid.*).

His statement that the Church is a continuation and extension of the Incarnation is not to be understood as though the hypostatic union of the divine with the human nature, which took place in the person of Christ, makes the whole humanity holy in the same manner it makes the humanity of Christ holy. Bishop Scalabrini insists in his homilies of Pentecost, that the sanctification of humanity is accomplished by the action of the Holy Spirit which Christ has given us through the mystery of his death and resurrection. Pentecost marks the birthday of the Church; this is the moment when the humanity of Christ becomes the vivifying life by which he is made the head of the Church and the center of the world through the work of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, to the definition of the Church as “the moral continuation” of the Incarnation, Scalabrini adds that it is “Pentecost extended throughout the centuries” (Homily of Pentecost 1879. AGS 3016/6), pointing out that it is “the continuation of the work of the Redeemer and Sanctifier of men on earth,” that is, of men in their history. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 17-18).

For the Son of God, the Incarnation has been an act of “con—descension”: “coming in human likeness”; “he emptied himself” to our level assuming “the nature of a slave”; “he was humble and walked the path of obedience to death—his death on the cross. For this reason, God raised him to the highest place above”. (Phil 2,7-9). In the same way, the Church becomes the “kingdom” through persecution and passion. It follows that the journey of faith and of Christian spirituality and the proclamation of the message must necessarily go through the same stages of the redeeming incarnation, that is, the cross and the resurrection. The triumphant

hymns of Bishop Scalabrini celebrating the victorious and invincible Church always imply the paschal sacrifice. *Memoria Crucis et Spes Resurrectionis*—memorial of the cross and hope of the resurrection—constitute the typical dimensions of all those who want to live an authentic spirituality of the Incarnation both as individuals and as people of God. As Christ descended into humanity and was indeed made man, in the same way the Church and the person of the Church bend like the Good Samaritan over the wounded man, victim of men and sin, and commit themselves to temporal and social action with the “eschatological dimension” always in mind.

Faith and spirituality are “incarnate” in the sense that they affect the person in its totality as body and soul, as an individual and as a member of society. A person of faith knows, however, that totality and completeness are reached only by going through the historical phase of the incarnation, which is the work of *salvation* itself through his descent to the human condition of fragility, suffering, and mortality, leading, as it were, to the subsequent phase of complete fulfilment and glorification.

We quote only one of the many passages that reveal this notion in the thought of Bishop Scalabrini:

The life of the Church flows directly from a divine principle that informs and rules its organism, the totality of the faithful. The Church is a society, a natural society entirely different from all others because it is an earthly-heavenly society, the true image, therefore, of its Founder, man, and God at the same time. It may be defined as the Incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth, the continuation of his mortal life: Jesus Christ diffused and communicated in all his plenitude. According to the Apostle in fact, the life of the Church consists basically in the Spirit of God: *Multi unum corpus sumus in Christo: haec omnia operatur unus atque idem Spiritus*—though many, we are one body in Christ, but it is one and the same Spirit who produces all these gifts.

Now, as Jesus Christ experienced here on earth from his birth all the pains of humanity and the wrath and persecution of the wicked, the same must happen to the Church, his bride. It holds his power, continues his mission in the world, reflects his features, and shares his destiny. Look! He was persecuted, the Church is also persecuted. He was unjustly accused, it is also unjustly accused; he suffered, it

also suffers. All the sufferings of the passion of Jesus Christ are continually re-lived by it. (Easter Homily of 1879. AGS. 3016/4).

Another analogy with the Incarnation is applied to the structure of the Church as mystical body of Christ:

It was rightly said that the Church is the moral extension of the Incarnation through the centuries. As humanity and divinity, though distinct, are intimately and inseparably united in Christ, in the same way also the Church, which is at the same time human and divine, represents him, continues his work, and brings forth the same supernatural fruits. More clearly: a spiritual society by virtue of its purpose of sanctification and salvation of souls, the Church has also a physical, visible, and external element, especially because of the members forming it: human beings composed of body and soul, not just pure spirits. As the redeeming mission of the God-Man, although intended toward the ransom and the salvation of souls, was accomplished under the corporal and sensible forms of his Incarnation, preaching, passion, death, and resurrection, in the same way he wanted that also the actions and the ordinary means of sanctification of his religion be performed through material and visible signs: worship, magisterium and sacraments.

In the reason for the existence of this religious society there is a spiritual element which is called *the soul* of the Church: it is found in what vivifies, informs, rules all its mystical members placing them in communion with Christ and one another, brings about the blessed sharing of merits and spiritual riches known as *the Communion of Saints*, and embraces all just people and friends of God. [...] To this dimension belongs all that pertains to the interior and spiritual life of the Church: faith, hope, charity, the gifts of grace, charism, the fruits of the Spirit, and all the heavenly treasures that come from the merits of Christ our Redeemer and from his servants.

What makes up the *body* of the Church is the other part: the visible and external dimension present in the congregation, in the liturgy and in the magisterium in its structure and hierarchy.

As these two essential components forming the Church are inseparably joined together like body and soul, the same harmony and mutual service must reign among the members through love, as the one found in the unity that makes up the human person. It is just as the Apostle describes it when he says (Eph 4,16) that *we must grow up in*

*every way to Christ, who is the head. Under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So, when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love.” (Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori, Piacenza 1896, pp. 9-10).*

What conclusions does Bishop Scalabrini draw from this spirituality?

a) If the Church is the continuation of the *purpose* and of the *work* of Incarnation, that is, of the salvation of humanity, a man of the Church has this same aim, and carries out this same work. Total apostolic commitment is “to be all things to everyone to gain all to Christ.”

b) If the Church is the continuation of the Incarnation in its “form,” that is, “in corporal and visible forms,” a man of the Church fulfils his apostolic commitment in incarnate forms: “worship, magisterium, sacraments.”

c) If what constitutes the Church in all its aspects of communion and social structure, “of body and soul,” is love (or the Holy Spirit which is love), a man of the Church must then work for the unity of the Church in love, only in love and truth, because the Spirit of the Lord is love and truth. (*See Homilies of Pentecost, 1889*).

d) “If the Church is the permanent Incarnation of the Son of God on earth, if Christ and the Church are therefore inseparable, [...] there is no salvation and there cannot be salvation without the Church [...] therefore, my brethren and my children, be in unity with the Church. Remember, however, that it cannot be just any kind of unity: [...] an external aggregation to it, is not enough to be an active member of the Church and share in it as a living branch of its interior life. One must possess sanctifying grace, the rich store of the main virtues binding man to God: faith, hope, and charity, and the exercise of meritorious deeds on behalf of the other members of the mystical body.” (*Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori, Piacenza 1896, p. 11*). “Do you wish, my children, to belong to Christ and share in Christ’s riches? Be united with the body of Christ by staying united with his Church: united in mind by faith, and united in heart by charity.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 12-13).

e) “To be united *with* the Church means to be united *in* the Church. Do your best, I will tell you with the Apostle, to preserve the unity which

*the Spirit gives, by the peace that binds you together (Eph 4,3) be humble, gentle, and patient (Not knowing obedience, pride in fact gives rise to conflicts and disorders). Show your love by being helpful to one another, (Eph 4,2). Because though many we are but one body (Rom 12,5), just as there is one hope to which God has called you. (Eph 4,4). (Ibid., pp. 13-14).*

f) "If by God's will there is in it a unifying and ruling authority, and this, as we have seen, resides in the priestly order, you must acknowledge that there is in the Church a difference of positions, offices, and powers: presiders and subordinates, teachers and disciples, feeders and fed" (*Ibid.*, p. 14). "It is therefore the strictest duty of every true Christian to live in unity with the priesthood, with the shepherds of the Church, with one's own pastor." (*Ibid.*, p. 16).

The "fruitful and perfect union" with the Church is accomplished "in the threefold unity of faith, communion of life, and obedience." (*Ibid.*, p. 17). "The Church is in fact a society of pilgrims gathered by the profession of the one and only same Christian faith, sharing the same sacraments, under the ruling of lawful shepherds, especially of the supreme pontiff." (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

From these principles comes the theological concept and the spirituality of his episcopacy:

Though unworthy, I am your bishop. Who has given me authority over you if not Jesus Christ himself through the one who takes his place here on earth? Christ lives in the bishop as in a living sacrament, I would say, and the life of a bishop draws all its strength from this intimate union with him, the Prince of Shepherds, and with his visible representative, the Pope. It is only in virtue of this union that, within the confines of his diocese, the bishop has authority to teach, rule, forgive, and punish; that he preaches the gospel, administers all the sacraments, consecrates the ministers of God themselves; that he is the judge, the teacher, the pontiff, the lawgiver. Therefore, if the authority of the Church is human in the structures in which it is exercised, there is nothing human in the source from which it derives. Those who tell you what to believe are men, but they do not teach their own doctrine. They are nothing else but the echo of the teachings of the Word of God. They teach you to believe the very same truths they themselves are bound to believe. Ruling, they obey; they do not lord it over you, no, they make you share in the joy of their certainty. (*Ibid.*, pp. 19-20)

## 5) Divinization: The Continuation and Extension of the Incarnation in Human History

Christ is the center of the world and of history: he is “the alpha and the omega, [...] the beginning and the end” (Rev 22,13), “the summary of centuries”, “the center of creation”, “the object of all the works and plans of divine providence.” (See Col 1,1 – ff.) (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878, Piacenza 1878, pp. 25-26).

Christ is also the only “real light which gives light to every man” (Jn 1,9) and therefore to the whole human race (*Ibid.*). “Without his work, the order of nature and grace, the past and the future remain the closed book of the seven seals.” (See Rev 5) (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1877, Piacenza 1877, p. 6) Through faith, instead, “the human mind gains knowledge of time and eternity, and his thoughts can rise from the smallest grain of sand to the immensity of the uncreated Being.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1884, Piacenza 1884, p. 7).

By the light of faith, which is the light of the Word, Bishop Scalabrini reads, in the history of humanity, the history of the salvation of the world. “God did and does everything for his Word. [...] Christ did everything for his Church”: history then, is ordered to the fulfilment of “the great pronouncement of Christ: one-fold, one shepherd.” (Jn 10,16). (Address on the IVth Centennial of Christopher Columbus, Dec. 1, 1892).

History is ever in the making, a steady and irreversible process, but “true progress is found in Jesus Christ, and it is nothing else but Jesus Christ: Jesus Christ living in man, Jesus Christ incorporated in humanity and incorporating humanity into himself, Jesus Christ extending and rising from level to level in time and space.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1879, Piacenza 1879, p. 35).

Even what appears to be sorrowful, and negative is taken up by Christ for the coming of his kingdom:

Glory and humiliation, sorrow and joy, anxiety and peace, life and death, curse and blessing, all things have been placed in his hands. He commanded the sea to “be still” and there was stillness! Even the cataclysms that subvert kingdoms are subject to him and he has the

power to stop them when he finds it fit to turn them to the benefit of his chosen people. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1877, Piacenza 1877, p. 11).

Generally, Catholics of his time, looked with deep concern, sometimes with horror, upon the “revolution”, often seeing the devil in it, even exorcizing it. Bishop Scalabrini, instead, saw the hand of God in it:

We see now society agonizing, as it were, to produce a new order of things; but it does not know, in its misery, that it is to prepare itself for the kingdom of the Man-God; it does not know that it is working to prepare the field for the universal victory of the Church and to fulfill the unfailing prophecy of Jesus Christ: *Confidite; Ego vici mundum*—Take courage, I have defeated the world! (In 16,33). Yes, venerable brethren and beloved sons, as the temporal greatness of the Roman empire was ordained by God to prepare the way for the religious greatness of the kingdom of Christ, in the same way all the struggles of today’s progress and all the efforts of our time with its discoveries, plans, and undertakings, are ordained by divine providence toward the complete triumph of his chosen people scattered down here all over the globe. *Omnia propter electos*—all this is for your sake. (2Cor 4,15). (*Ibid.*, pp. 15-16).

*Omnia propter electos*, that is, for the accomplishment of the “grand plan of God: [...] the salvation of all men through his Church, admirable creation of his infinite love, his home, his city, his kingdom.”

Bishop Scalabrini rejects the defensive or negative attitude of many of his contemporaries towards the ideology of progress, even when proclaimed in positivistic and antireligious terms by the official world of science of the day. He is fascinated, instead, by both the scientific and the technological progress:

While the world busies itself, dazzled by its progress, while man exults over his conquests of matter and lords it over nature, disemboweling the earth, yoking the lightning, cutting isthmuses to mingle the waters of the oceans, eliminating distances; while nations fall and rise and renew themselves; while races mingle, spread and fuse; above the roar of our machines, above all this feverish activity, over and beyond all these gigantic achievements and not without them, a much vaster, nobler, more sublime work is developing; the union in



God through Jesus Christ of all men of good will. The servants of God who labor unaware of his designs are numberless in every age, but in periods of great renewal there are many more that we know or think. Why? Because, and keep it in mind, gentlemen, the ultimate goal of humanity fixed by providence is not the conquest of matter through the progress of science, nor the formation of new peoples who from one time to another seem the incarnation of power, wealth, or learning—not at all. It is the union of souls in God through Jesus Christ. (Address on the IVth Centennial of Christopher Columbus, Dec. 1, 1892. AGS 3018/21).

Though recognizing its negative aspects, Scalabrini sees the kingdom of God becoming a reality particularly in the historical and social phenomenon of emigration:

Seeds migrate on the wings of the winds, plants migrate from continent to continent brought by the currents of the sea, birds and beasts migrate, and in the same way and most of all, people migrate either in groups or individually, always as instruments of the divine providence that watches over and guides human destinies, even through calamity, toward their end, which is the perfection of man on earth and the glory of God in heaven. Such is the lesson that divine revelation and modern history and biology teach us! (*L'Emigrazione degli Operai Italiani*, Ferrara 1899).

In the mind of Scalabrini migration is one of those realities “that is to be viewed as ordained” toward the supreme good and therefore belong to the history of salvation, even when sin may cause them to deviate from the end toward which divine providence set them:

In a word, it may be an individual or national good or evil according to the ways and conditions in which it takes place, but it is almost always good for humanity because it opens new channels for trade, facilitates the propagation of industry and of scientific discoveries, blends, and perfects civilizations, and widens the concept of one’s homeland beyond the borders, making the whole world a homeland. Above all, it admirably helps in bringing everywhere the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, as the ancient Roman empire was prepared by God for an easier and faster spreading of Christianity. (*Ibid.*).

Provided that inertia, ignorance of the ways of God, complacency over laurels won, and differing aspirations do not deviate the people

from the divine plan, one day all the nations will have here numerous descendants, rich, happy, moral, religious who, while retaining the characteristics of their respective nationalities, will be closely united. Out of this blessed land, aspirations shall rise, principles shall be elaborated, new hidden energies shall spring up that will move on to rejuvenate and bring new vigor to the *old world*, teaching the true economy of freedom, brotherhood, and equality, and showing how peoples of different extractions can very well retain their own national way of life and, at the same time, be politically and religiously united without barriers of jealousy and division, without armies to impoverish and destroy each other. [...]

Above the roar of our machines, above all this feverish activity, over and beyond all these gigantic achievements and not without them, a much vaster, nobler, more sublime work is developing, the union in God through Jesus Christ of all men of good will. (Address at the Catholic Club of New York, October 15, 1901).

Christ “unites all creatures of the universe! All things were made through him and nothing can exist without him. All things, present, past, and future, are in reference to the kingdom of Jesus Christ: this kingdom is his Church.” (Address on the Jubilee of Leo XIII, 1887, AGS 3017/6).

Again, from this vision of history, we can draw conclusions that could be summed up in one word: hope.

a) Hope rooted in the basic principle of the history of salvation: God is love. Hope based on God’s faithfulness to his promise, incarnated in Christ and sustained by the Spirit that makes us equal to, and unites us with Christ, and thus leads us back to the Father.

A trustful hope in God, sure that his initiative, sovereignly free and at the same time respectful of the nature of his creatures, has only one purpose: *omnia propter electos*.

It is the hope for the coming of the kingdom, which is hope in the Church.

The obstacles still being raised to oppose the divine plan will little by little disappear and the day shall come when all nations will know where their true greatness is; they will experience the need to return to the Father and will return. What a day that will be! Lucky day, in

which, as at the great Council of Piacenza, all tongues and voices will raise in different languages their hymn of praise and thanksgiving to the Most High. The sun of truth shall shine more brightly and the rainbow of peace—to quote a famous speaker—will circle the earth with all its beautiful colors. It shall be like an arch of triumph under which the Church, victorious peacemaker, will pass drawing to itself the modern world; and society, once again Christian, shall continue in truth and justice in the path of true freedom, true civilization, and true progress. (Address on the VIIIth Centennial of the First Crusade, April 21, 1895. AGS 30180/26).

b) “The life of the Church is a life of immortal hope; and its hope cannot fail.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1877, Piacenza 1877, p. 10). Anyone who hopes knows how to wait, because to hope is to wait. The law of the history of salvation consists in a progressive preparation that grows along a period of time toward a “fullness of time”:

To anyone asking when and how God will have all events of man and the world serve his plan for the triumph of the Church and its august head while often the contrary appears to be taking place, we can answer in this way: wait until the plan of God be completed, then you will see it. God knows when to build and when to destroy in due time he will build and destroy. (Address on the Jubilee of Leo XIII, 1887. AGS 3017/6).

The “moments of grace, in fact, are not always the moments of our impatience. [...] Whoever has placed in God the anchor of hope, hopes against hope itself.” (*Ibid*).

Let us lift our spirit high above our trials; let us open our hearts more than ever; let us hope; but let our hope be calm and patient; let us hope, but without growing weary. The faithful servant waiting for his master does not fail in his duties just because he tarries in coming.

Should God, in his adorable designs, be slow in answering, let us double our trust and uphold the ineffable truth of God’s promises against the judgement of men, our unlimited confidence against the unbelief of the world. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1877, Piacenza 1877, p. 11).

c) Faith then is trust: trust in God, but also in humanity and history, with God as our guide. Salvation has been already accomplished! Therefore, a Christian lives in joy, is enthusiastic, optimistic about people and events in God's hands; he is confident about the future because while waiting for it to become true, he enjoys already the possession of its certitude.

Patience and endurance are tested by tribulations and adversities: such is the way of the cross, "victory of Christ," "hope of Christians," "tree of life," healing ointment for every wound, alleviation of all sorrows, support in every weakness, comfort in every worry, enlightenment of every doubt, light in darkness. "When in trouble, disillusioned, and discouraged, press the cross I gave you to your heart, and with an attitude of complete trust in the hands of God, repeat: *fac me cruce inebriari absit gloriari nisi in Cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi*—that I may rejoice in the cross, may I never boast about anything but the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal 6,14). Your heart and soul will then open wide to all the joys of Christian hope, and all your deeds shall be made worthy of heaven." (Address of June 10, 1884, to the Missionaries on their departure for the missions from San Calogero in Milan. AGS 3018/2).

d) In trustful expectation of the final future, the supreme end, a Christian devotes himself responsibly to the building of the social and historical future by continuing the Incarnation of Christ in the human and social context of his contemporaries; by making the aspirations of human dignity his own; by keeping pace with the evolution of history; and by hailing in progress the gradual approaching of the kingdom of God, not in an abstract way, but as incarnated in the Church, the kingdom of grace.

Because of sin human history is not a history of salvation. It is up to the Christian to assume the responsibility of preparing the future not by destroying the historical facts, but by submitting them to the light of the judgement of the Lord of history, discerning them in the Spirit, and by purifying them with the leaven of the Gospel.

It is the law of the philosophy of history that great events of humanity as they are effects of other events which preceded them, are also causative in relation to the events which follow them.

Therefore, this chain of cause and effect represents the principle of causality in the historical order. Divine providence has ordained and directs the threads of this chain to its own ends.

From this it follows that to be presumptuous enough to destroy great contemporary realities, which are but the consequence of those which preceded them, and to try to destroy them either through *a dolce far niente*, or through a systematic *a priori* opposition is hardly rational to say the least. [...] For if on the contrary, considering what the times have brought about, one distinguishes between good and evil and one tries to lead mankind back to the laws of morality and justice with those arguments which converted the world at another time, then one can hope that the events, having entered the domain of history, will be purged of the dross that covers them and will be directed to the true good of the human race. (*Intransigenti e transigenti*, Bologna 1885, pp. 22-23).

We must face it, “facts” are facts; being aware, however, that they are also the product of human freedom and that they prepare in a certain sense the future, an ethical reflection becomes imperative to direct our responsibility in regard both to the individual and the common future.

The reading of history with faith and in faith urges Christians to assume their share of personal commitment as an act of obedience to the personal call received from God with an attitude of faith in the infallible action of the Lord and of total dedication of themselves to the fulfilment of their respective vocation.

Great wisdom is contained, I believe, in the following saying: to remain perfectly at peace in whatever happens by God’s disposition not only regarding ourselves, but to the Church as well, while working on its behalf in obedience to our divine calling. (Letter to J. Bonomelli, January 1886).

e) Obedient faith and trusting faith, both become loving faith. Faith brings forth love toward man and his historical reality: charity for your “neighbor”, the persons next to you, for whom *you* can and should do whatever they may ask you; the pursuit of what unites, rather than of what divides; love for the Church as the sacrament of the great unity of the people of God, to which the particular unities

lead or open the way and toward which progress is tending. Bishop Scalabrini loves to give the example of emigration as it prepares in a certain way the unification of humanity, a step forward to the unification of the human race in God through Christ.

f) Conciliation between the various elements that may seem to obstruct it, concurs in the edification of unity. Bishop Scalabrini, in fact, devoted himself with great dedication, and much suffering, to the work of conciliation, especially regarding the “Roman Question”:

Our earthly homeland and our heavenly homeland! By all means, let us love the first! It is a gift of God! To love it and seek its greatness and prosperity is a part of the sublime law of charity given by the Gospel. To love it properly, however, one must combine this love with love for religion that leads us to our heavenly homeland! Religion and country! These two cherished sentiments of our ancestors, these two aspirations of all people of noble heart, like two daughters of the same father, must give each other the kiss of peace; they must love and support one another: *quod Deus conjunxit homo non separet*—Let no one separate what God has joined. (Mt 19,6—Mk 10,9) (Address on the VIIIth Centennial of the First Crusade. April 21, 1895. AGS 3018/26).

To arrive at conciliation between Church and state we must above all build unity within the Church itself:

Consider this sacred building and see how variety does not impair its admirable unity. Each stone has its own shape, its position, its function. Some stones stand at the base, others at the summit; some of them, the richest and most splendid ones, adorn the altar and the sanctuary; others, the plainest ones, but not less useful, scattered all around, form the main body of the building. [...]

We have here a living image of family, society, and Church as they have been constituted by God. In them everyone should hold his place and accept with immutable docility the position in which God placed him. As God is the author of all authorities and the supreme arbiter of our destiny, so the true glory of a Christian soul consists in carrying out the will of God to build, Saint Paul writes, upon the foundation of the apostles and of the prophets with Christ Jesus as the cornerstone, upon whom the whole building rises closely knitted

together as the holy temple of God. In him you also have been made the dwelling place of God through the Spirit.

However, as these stones [...] cannot form a solid building unless connected with each other in a specific order and united in peace as though in a bond of mutual love, in the same way, Christians cannot constitute the true house of God unless closely united in the bond of charity: *Domum Domini non faciunt nisi quando charitate compaginantur*—they do not constitute the house of the Lord until they be united in charity. Charity [...] is the noble binding element of Christian society; it is the great cohesive law perfecting and confirming the mutual love we must practice regarding our brethren. It gives solidity and tenderness to man's heart filling it with strength, compassion, and mercy. (Address at the Inauguration of the Temple of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Piacenza, February 17, 1884. AGS 3018/2).

Truth and charity are the indispensable requisites to construct the unity of the Church:

We shall exhort everyone: be strong, be courageous, be steadfast in sustaining and defending the rights of the Church and its august head, but always, as recommended by Leo XIII, with the moderation of manner and expression that does not detract from, but rather adds strength to, the rights of truth and makes them accessible even to the most reluctant minds.

We strenuously insist on this point because, unfortunately, we live in times when even the most obvious truths of Christianity are either falsified or disregarded by many; and therefore, we will never insist enough on this! Let then our fortitude be tempered with prudence and charity, and prudence and charity made fruitful by fortitude: *Resistite fortes in fide*—Resist solid in your faith. (1 Pt 5,9).

Solid in truth, strong in charity, and steadfast in unity: the fulfillment and fruit of love. [...] Unity of minds, unity of hearts, unity of works! The hard times we live in, will not allow us to stand, unless we are united and knitted together. No sacrificing of a personal opinion must be viewed as too great a price to pay to secure this unity in which alone lies the secret of victory. (*Pel suo ritorno da Roma*, Piacenza 1882, pp. 21-22).

Human society, in its progress, must work together in building this great universal unity:

All indications show a slow but progressive evolution of ideas; everything seems to indicate that society, sickened by the foul materialism which corrupts and degrades it, is heading towards a much-desired renewal; all things foretell, as DeMaistre said, some kind of great unity towards which we are moving in great strides. No doubt, this is the unity foretold by the Gospel, the religious unity brought about by the Church, the unity of the whole world into one-fold under one single shepherd that at last will be achieved. Dearly beloved, man strives, but God leads him. Let us pray, I tell you, and let us hope. (*Al Venerabile clero e diletissimo popolo*, Piacenza 1896, p. 15).

Bishop Scalabrini's hope is one that sets itself free of all self-sufficiency and assurance to rest only in God, but, at the same time, walks the path of liberation, of exodus and salvation, by retracing the way of the Incarnation: *per crucem ad lucem*—to the light through the cross.



## 2. A LIFE OF FAITH

### A. “Make me holy”

#### 1) If only I could sanctify myself!

“If only I could sanctify myself and sanctify all the souls committed to my care!” (Letter to C. Fogliani Pallavicino, Jan. 29, 1903. AGS 3025/14). “If only I could sanctify myself! To become a saint”: *hoc est omnis homo*—this is everything for a person. (Letter to J. Bonomelli, Jan. 24, 1897).

Faith, hope, and charity produce the desire for holiness which Scalabrini considers the first step toward achieving it:

The first step or means to holiness is the ardent and generous desire for holiness itself. [...] An ordinary desire or resolution is not enough: what is needed is a desire, a want, comparable to thirst and hunger. “Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill.” (Mt 5,6). Sanctity is the true wisdom for which we must pray, wish, and search as for riches, and dig as for a treasure. [...] No one will ever reach the heights of holiness without a constant and intense desire for it. (Address for the 2nd Synod—*Synodus Dioecessana Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, pp. 181-182).

This was the desire of Bishop Scalabrini which he renewed and rekindled in his spiritual retreats:

The dignity of a bishop is divine. *Deus Honor omnium dignitatum*—God, the source of all dignities! This must be true in a very special way for a bishop. And I must take account of this by uplifting myself, by ennobling and purifying myself, by seeking to partake of the divine. (Resolutions, Jan. 30, 1894).

In all his actions a bishop must be moved by the Holy Spirit, the secret mover of the most holy humanity of Jesus Christ. He must do violence to himself to achieve holiness. A bishop must be virgin, confessor, and martyr. I must uplift myself, ennoble myself, divinize myself. *Tantum proficies quantum tibi vim intuleris*—you will improve in proportion with your effort! (*Ibid.*, July 24, 1894).

His secretary Francis Sidoli, who later became archbishop of Genoa, described him as “a man of extremely virtuous life and the highest perfection.” (Witness A. De Martini, Diocesan Process, p. 271). “His life was heroic; indeed, a truly holy life worthy of a bishop.” (Witness C. Mangot, *Ibid.*, p. 67).

“Only those who had the good fortune to know him intimately [...] can know the degree of perfection to which he practiced the Christian virtues and that I myself could never have imagined.” (Witness C. Spallazzi. *Ibid.*, p. 69). “I cannot explain Bishop Scalabrini in any other way than as a man who practiced all virtues in a heroic degree.” (Witness L. Cornaggia Medici, *Ibid.*, p. 727).

Blessed Guanella “considered him a saint.” (Witness M. Rinaldi, *Ibid.*, p. 681). “Blessed L. Orione expressed the desire that he be beatified.” (See Witness L. Orione, *Ibid.*, p. 820). The Servant of God Monsignor Francis Torta “always thought him to be a holy man because of his extraordinary faith and charity.” (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 355). The saintly Bishop M. Rinaldi considered him “worthy of the honors of the altar.” (Witness M. Rinaldi, *Ibid.*, p. 676). Benedict XV admired “his sublime virtues.” (Autograph, June 30, 1915). Saint Frances Cabrini judged him a man who “finds only in God the secret of his most noble and arduous virtues.” (Letter F. S. Cabrini to G. B. Scalabrini, Dec. 22, 1899. Bishop’s Archives, Piacenza). Blessed John Calabria considered him “a great saint,” and implored of God the glorification of “his heroic servant.” (Letter G. Calabria to Fr. Milini, August 15, 1954). Cardinal Richelmy of Turin stated: “Dead to himself, he lived the authentic life of a disciple of Jesus Christ.” (The XXVth Anniversary of the Institute of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, Rome 1912, p. XVI).

And yet, his behavior was not that of a sanctimonious holy man or of an attitude traditionally considered “ascetical:”

He was considered a man of saintly life, but his manner was natural and normal in every way; he avoided any display of external austerity which makes such an impression on the masses, and he did not create an image of altar holiness as the people commonly think of it. As we read of many other Saints who were able to hide their interior holiness. (Witness J. B. Nasalli-Rocca, Diocesan Process, p. 762).

Confirmed by other witnesses, this statement explains on one hand the absence of a sensational holiness, and, on the other hand, it shows the kind, or rather the style, of his spirituality: a style totally interiorized and rooted in a life of deep faith and “rectitude of heart,” constantly oriented toward God, which constituted the soul of his “exterior life.”

If one should judge him based only on certain expressions of holiness, purely external and often not convincing, his exterior life did not present anything out of the “ordinary.” However, one cannot define as “ordinary” the life of John Baptist Scalabrini if we consider the average level of Christian perfection of those who strive for it. Scalabrini surpasses by far this average both for his “full conformity with the will of God through a constant and exact fulfilment of his duties” — in line with the definition of heroism given by Pope Benedict XV (*See Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 1920, p. 173)— and for his harmonious “continuity” between the two aspects often identified as interior and exterior life. “In reality, we only act externally according to what we are internally.” (Letter to E. Piazza, 1899. AGS 3021/17).

I become more and more convinced every day that in order to carry the burden of a bishop’s exterior life without yielding to it, I need the interior life, the only source in which one finds comfort, strength, interior fervor, light, and the peace that sustains it, the *manna absconditum*—the hidden sustenance. (Letter to N. Bruni, 1901. AGS 3021/17).

The whole Christian life consists in this: the faithful observance of the law of God and the exact fulfilment of the duties of one’s state of life. A great number of souls reached the height of holiness only by following this path. Not all Saints have accomplished astonishing deeds. [...] Even Mary never distinguished herself for any extraordinary gift. We do not find anywhere in the Scriptures that she had ever performed any miracle during her earthly life. Nevertheless, she is still looked upon as the most holy of all creatures. Therefore, neither miracles nor extraordinary gifts are what make the Saints, even the greatest of them: their virtues do. In order to reach the heights of holiness, it is not important to be a prophet, a healer, or a contemplative: all we need is to be humble, chaste, peace-loving, obedient, pious, careful to avoid the allurements of the world, enemy of whatever is evil, zealous in whatever is good, full of charity for one’s neigh-

bor, and totally in love with God. (Homily for All Saints, 1898. AGS 3016/8).

Bishop Scalabrini insists on good intentions, but above all on “rectitude of heart,” which he explains in this way:

What is an upright heart? It is a heart that seeks only God, a simple, pure heart! [...] An upright heart is indeed a great thing! It is the beginning of all virtues, the source of holiness, the root principle of priestly life. [...] Like a wise architect, let the priest set up the foundation of an upright heart oriented toward God, so that he may be able to build on it thereafter. (3rd Address at the 3rd Diocesan Synod, August 30, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 240)

The exceptional and nearly incredible activity of the bishop of Piacenza has often attracted so much the attention of rather superficial observers, that they forgot the “soul of his apostolate,” to use again an expression of the nineteenth century: “We only do what we are.” We must then discover his spirituality not so much in what he did, but in who he was.

In the order of being, a Christian lives the life of grace, the new life, as outlined by the tradition of the Greek Fathers, of which Scalabrini was particularly found, as “divinization,” and precisely as conformity with Christ through the Holy Spirit. Like faith, grace is a gift of God without which man is not justified. Living in grace implies a life of faith, a life on the supernatural level, which is the same as to say that we are “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Rom 8,17), “sons in the Son” (Saint Augustine), incorporated in Christ through conformity to the Crucified “to be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom 8,29), in the precise dimension by which “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.” (Gal 2,20).

Such dimension is threefold: supernatural, mystical, and ontological: “We form but one body with Christ, in him and through him we are made children of God, indeed the Son of God himself extended in us.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878. Piacenza 1878, p. 16).

The moral and ascetical dimension: “to become “copies” of Christ, this will become true [...] when we will love what he loved, and in the way that he loved it; when we will cherish in our hearts the same dispositions and feelings that he cherished in his heart.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1883, p. 10).

The apostolic dimension: to act with Christ and like Christ, that is, to witness, or better to continue the Incarnation of Christ for the salvation of our brethren: “You have all been made to share in the same eternal priesthood, which the very Son of God did not grasp, but received from the Father.” (1st Address at the 3rd Synod; August 28, 1899, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 229).

“With the Apostle, I will mirror myself in the author and the goal of our faith who for the glory of God and the salvation of souls was made man and obeyed even to death on the cross.” (First Pastoral Letter, Como 1876, p. 2).

As to the actual accomplishments of his life of faith, witnesses underline the intensity of the “supernatural” life of Scalabrini:

“I have never known anyone who showed a more ardent faith than he did.” (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, f. 114). “He was a man of extraordinary faith; he had the faith of the Saints!” (Witness L. Tammi, *Ibid.*, p. 833). “He was a man of great faith. I remember hearing him speak these words: [...] “nothing is more natural than the supernatural.” (Witness G. Dodici, *Ibid.*, p. 163).

“The supernatural was the life of his life. It shone from his eyes, from his face, from his words, from his whole person. It was enough to approach him to feel it and to understand that he was constantly guided from on High. [...] He had a sense of the divine, which constantly guided him.” (Witness L. Cornaggia-Medici, *Ibid.*, p. 731). “From its splendid beginning to the end of his glorious tenure as bishop I think he revealed himself particularly as the man of God who seeks God in the ardors of study, God in the zeal of his apostolic labors, God in his conversations with the great and the small, God alone, and God always.” (Witness G. B. Nasalli-Rocca, Commemoration, Piacenza 1909, p. 7).

We have here a whole series of depositions that give us the measure of the level of faith reached by Bishop Scalabrini: the supernatural

“became natural,” a second nature, or more exactly, a “divinized” nature, already in the steadfast practice of virtue, in the ever-present sense of the divine, in a constant orientation of his life and action toward God, of his mind and will, of his analysis and judgement, of his contemplation and love.

To use his very expressions, we can say that faith, “a second creation,” had “the heavenly things substantially existing” for him so as to make him see them “with the eyes of God himself.” It was by now Jesus Christ himself who “expressed his judgements, laid out the way, made the choices, and ruled his life.” (See Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878. Piacenza 1878, pp. 7-9,34).

When named a bishop, considering himself “poor in virtue and fully conscious of all *his* shortcomings,” he had pleaded to be spared “the most holy responsibilities” of the episcopacy, but acknowledging most clearly the will of God in the authority of the Vicar of Christ he obeyed:

Indeed, in fear and trembling but resigned, I submitted to the ministry laid on me, far from wanting to question the reasons of divine goodness and assured, by a most firm hope, that he who guides my will and actions will not fail, in his good mercy, to strengthen and constantly assist me. (First Pastoral Letter. Como 1876, pp. 1-2).

On the 18th Anniversary of his consecration as a bishop he wrote:

Today is the day of my consecration. May God be merciful of this poor bishop! Poor me, how many lost years! It is my 18th anniversary. I am frightened at my extreme unworthiness. I must start anew: to make myself less unworthy of the divine dignity of a bishop; to elevate myself, to ennoble myself, to “divinize” myself. (Meditation note, January 30, 1893. AGS 3027/1).

On his episcopal jubilee he felt he could write to Leo XIII: “Only of this I can assure you, Most Holy Father, that, in all things, I had nothing else in mind, but the glory of God and the salvation of the souls entrusted to me.” (Letter to Leo XIII, January 21, 1901. AGS 3019). To rumors that made him the next cardinal he replied: “To live, to become a saint, and to die in Piacenza is the resolution I renew

every year in my spiritual retreats." (Letter to G. Bonomelli, March 3, 1901).

If "holiness consists in a steady effort to reach it" (2nd Address at the 2nd Synod *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, p. 30), one must admit that the life of Bishop Scalabrini was indeed a constant quest for sanctity.

Very realistically his effort for perfection and his determination to allow himself to be "divinized" by grace consisted essentially in hatred and avoidance of sin.

From what appears in his "resolutions" of 1900-1902, he had to sustain a hard struggle against violent temptations, explained in part at least by the extreme sensitivity of his temper: ("Strict custody of my eyes: what is nothing to others is fatal to me!") (*Resolutions*, August 24, 1893). This explains, in turn, the extreme modesty that characterized him to the very last days when his personal doctor would repeatedly exclaim: "Scalabrini is a most lovable person; he is a man of extraordinary purity, he is an angel." (Witness L. Cella, Diocesan Process, p. 613). We find an echo of his arduous battle in his spiritual notes:

"Be quick to cast out every impure thought. [...] otherwise I will perish, [...] I will perish." (*Resolutions*, August 24, 1893). I shall go to confession as soon as I perceive a temptation, immediately, right at the beginning, or when I shall have unwittingly exposed myself to some danger. Throw myself before God and weep for my miserableness and confess my sins. (*Ibid.*, August 24, 1894). I must purify myself at all costs, with divine help, from this capital weakness, oh my Jesus: promptly erase from my mind any thought that can harm me; be careful about the custody of the eyes. (*Ibid.*, August 1900).

All witnesses agree in stating the great sensitivity of the conscience of the bishop:

He had a most delicate conscience. (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, p. 121). He had an implacable hatred against mortal sin and avoided venial sin as well. (Witness G. Dodici, *Ibid.*, p. 169). His singular piety, his constantly reserved demeanor, were enough to show that the Servant of God was keeping an ever-vigilant watch over himself for fear of the slightest offence. (Witness A. Ranza, *Ibid.*, p. 649).

He kept always faithful to his weekly confession, often going even more frequently, “he did not avoid going to confession to young priests and even to those who worked with him.” (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 121), particularly, to his secretary. (Witness C. Spallazzi, *Ibid.*, p. 83).

This aspect must be kept in mind especially when faced with the temptation of attributing to Bishop Scalabrini only a spirituality of action. He achieved this through a progressive identification with Christ, employing means he considered indispensable: self-denial, mortification, renunciation of whatever might hinder the full embodiment in the paschal mystery of the Holy of Holies. *Tantum proficies quantum tibi ipsi vim intuleris*—You will profit in proportion to your efforts—such was the admonition of the *Imitazione di Cristo* of which he reminded himself and others. With reference to a definition of Saint Thomas he used to say:

Holiness is purity consecrated to God: purity committed to the glory of God. Together with purity of mind, holiness demands then a continuous immolation: holy, in fact, is what is burned on the altar for the glory of God. Therefore, true holiness calls for a priestly life free of all stain and firmly committed to the glory of God. (2nd Address at the 2nd Synod, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, p. 181)

In this way his spirituality became the integrating element of his whole life and constituted the substance of his *fama sanctitatis*: “His contemporaries of all walks of life and even of different religions held the Servant of God in highest esteem both as man and as a bishop. They admired him greatly for his keen mind, for his culture, and for his extraordinary ability in government, but above all for his holiness which transpired in all of his words and actions.” (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, pp. 146-147).



## 2) Prayer-life

If the “first step or means toward holiness is an ardent and compelling desire for it—Scalabrini argues—from love of holiness follows, then the frequent and daily meditation on the law of God and on the heavenly mysteries.” (2nd Address at the 2nd Synod, *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, pp. 181-182).

If holiness consists in the “righteousness of the heart” then “this is how we secure our way to righteousness: meditation on the law of God and a constant dialogue with him in prayer.” (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899, *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 248). We hear in these words a reference to Evagrius’ distinction between prayer as “a lifting of the mind to God” and prayer as “dialogue,” that is, as “conversation with God.”

If Christ, the Holy of Holies, prayed, how much more should sinners do! If the Head prays, why should the members not do the same? If the divine master experienced so deeply the need for prayer, should not the disciples feel the same? The very example of Mother Church must convince us, dearly beloved, of the need for prayer! In the likeness of its divine founder, its whole life is, so to say, one of endless prayer. (Prayer, Piacenza 1905, pp. 14-15).

The need of prayer therefore comes from the need of holiness, of conformity with Christ, and of a share in the mystery of the Church, which means that it comes from motives of faith. Prayer is not faith, but it constitutes the first, the natural, and the fundamental expression of it. It is to know and to acknowledge that we do not belong to ourselves, that we are not self-sufficient and independent, but that we belong to God.

If our life here on earth is a gift of God, if we do not belong to ourselves but to God, obviously we owe him the constant homage of our gratitude, the offering of our obedience, the tribute of our praise, the worship of our adoration, the total sacrifice of ourselves. Sacrifice is prayer, worship is prayer, glory is prayer, because prayer is, in its widest and most noble sense, an elevation of mind and heart to God, the creature’s homage to its Creator. (*Ibid.*, p. 5).

A believer experiences prayer as “an innate, instinctive, and irresistible need.” (*Ibid.*, p. 7). “He who does not pray, has no soul, or no understanding, or no feeling or no love” (*Ibid.*, p. 20). The one who does not pray, is practically saying: “I do not need God.” (*Ibid.*, p. 9). Christ reminds us that *Sine me nihil potestis facere*—apart from me you cannot do anything (*Ibid.*, p. 10). To acknowledge the need of grace is the same as to admit the need of prayer.” (*Ibid.*, p. 12).

“He who prays well lives well”—*Recte novit vivere, qui recte novit orare*, Saint Augustine tells us. Prayer is the identification card of a true believer, a complete profession of Christianity in itself, the sum-total of the practice of the most sublime virtues. It is an exercise of faith, hope, and charity, humility, repentance, adoration, conformity with the will of God, and as such it can never fail to receive its reward. Raising our heart to God, prayer detaches us from the illusions of this miserable life, and it fosters in us the life of the spirit, makes us familiar with the everlasting realities, and gives us a foretaste on earth of the joy and peace of the chosen ones.

Prayer is the light, the fire, the nourishment, the comfort, the life of the human soul. The spirit weakens and withers away if it does not breathe this air of heaven. As a fish agonizes and dies outside the water, in the same way, Saint John Chrysostom states, our soul dies if deprived of the vital element which is the grace of God inhaled through prayer. (*Ibid.*, pp. 18-19).

In its various aspects, the concept of “divinization” is found also in this instance: sharing in God’s life, in the divine life of the Church, in the family of God united around the center of love:

Prayer is, without any doubt, the most noble and glorious function man can exercise in this world, capable of giving him supreme greatness. Not only does it place us in intimate contact with all that is true, beautiful, holy on earth and in heaven, but it makes us also sharers in the friendship of God, in his most tender outpourings, in his most hidden secrets. As Saint Augustine beautifully puts it, prayer is God descending to us when invoked, overflowing, and infusing himself into our hearts; God our creator, our father, our redeemer, our friend, our brother looking after us and listening to us, kindly smiling at our homage and acts of love. (*Ibid.*, p. 24).

Prayer raises man above himself, transfigures him, elevates him, “divinizes” him. [...] Prayer binds together the whole human race. [...] Prayer draws all together; it unites all things. It is prayer that folds the living together in its embrace, and the living with the dead. It binds the family on earth with the family in heaven. It forms between the militant, the suffering, and the triumphant Church that constant inter-flow of prayers and intercessions that theology calls Communion of Saints. Transcending all obstacles, prayer is like an electric current that flows from brother to brother and, passing through the heart of God, the center and source of love, it forms of all hearts one heart, as it were, of all families one sole family. (*Ibid.*, pp. 23-24).

Bishop Scalabrini was not a contemplative in the sense given to this word by the history of spirituality. In him we do not find evident signs of mystical phenomenon or gifts. From his writings we can quote only a few passages reflecting the thought of Saint Thomas Aquinas who defines contemplation as the *simplex intuitus veritatis* (the immediate intuition of truth), and the *fruitio et possessio veritatis* (the enjoyment and possession of truth) deriving of it.

This conversation above is called praise, ecstasy, love, beatitude, eternal happiness. Here below it is a little of all these things and it is called prayer. It is, then, the prelude on earth to immortal life. (*Ibid.*, p. 26).

Bishop Scalabrini often defines prayer as a “conversation with God.” Here he is quite close to his declared model, Saint Francis de Sales, and like the holy doctor of Geneva, he strongly insists on the exercise of the presence of God, the object of knowledge and love. He never talks about the “dark night,” but he is well acquainted with its equivalent, “self-denial,” which is the work of purification, and the “night of faith,” which is the obscurity proper of the act of faith. From what we know, in these passages we do not come to any so-called mystical levels of “simple prayer,” but we come to something even more important, what Saint Francis de Sales defined as *simple remise in Dieu*, the perfect and trusting abandonment in God’s hands.

Another great master of prayer-life for Bishop Scalabrini, was Saint Alphonse M. de Liguori. In fact, he quotes abundantly from this saint’s teachings in his Pastoral Letter of Lent 1905, devoted to prayer.

We know that Saint Alphonse paid little attention to mysticism. He maintained that in order to become a saint, an “active union with God” was sufficient. To achieve this, mental and effective prayer—the exact two characteristics of Scalabrini’s prayer—was indispensable.

Meditation is the irreplaceable means and the nourishment of spiritual life; the instrument of salvation and of Christian perfection which consists, according to the doctrine of Saint Alphonse, in the love of God made tangible through obedience and surrender to his will. As for Saint Alphonse the love of Jesus is the “devotion of all devotions,” in the same way for Scalabrini the love of Christ present in the Eucharist is “the most salutary of all devotions.” (1st Address at the 3rd Synod, August 28, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 232).

Like Saint Alphonse, from the principle that perfect love consists in conformity with the will of God, Scalabrini derives the need for purification. This is the result not only of a voluntary asceticism, but also, and much more, of the sacraments, especially the Eucharist, of spiritual retreats, the examination of conscience and, in a very special way, of prayer. Meditation has a fundamental value where, regardless of methods, what counts the most is frequency and faithfulness. If we consider Saint Alphonse’s classification, we conclude that Scalabrini’s prayer was not “passive or infused” contemplation, but rather “active” contemplation, that is, to look upon “those truths whose knowledge is acquired through strenuous meditation and efforts.” (*Praxis Confessarii*, c. 9).

In conclusion, through the mediation of Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Alphonse de Liguori, we come to *The Imitation of Christ*, the most important spiritual guide of Bishop Scalabrini. Also, according to *The Imitation*, contemplation is possible to all Christians who can come to self-knowledge by eliminating the misguided love of themselves, that is, by “self-denial.” In this way they come to know God, his providence and his goodness as shown in the redemption and surrender in all humility and love to God made manifest in Christ. Perfect surrender to God is nourished by the frequent meditation of the passion and by the loving union with Christ in the Eucharist.

Meditation is the way to purification, the Eucharist is the sacrament of unity; these are the two elements that characterize the prayer-life of Bishop Scalabrini as his main road toward “divinization,” that is conformity with Christ.

### 3) Mental Prayer and Vocal Prayer

For Bishop Scalabrini, meditation is much more than a “pious exercise:” it is listening to the word of God in faith and love, discernment made in the light of the word of God, orientation of the whole life toward one single point of reference: Christ, who is word and bread—“your meditation should be centered on the eucharistic Christ.”

Reflection or meditation, from which prayer derives, offers the following benefits: first of all, it purifies the mind, the very source from which it originates; it corrects excesses and moderates actions; it makes life virtuous and controlled; and finally, it gives an understanding of divine and human realities.

Meditation clarifies what is ambiguous; reassembles what is broken; gathers what is scattered; looks into secrets; perceives what is true; examines what is probable; uncovers what is deceitful and false.

Again, meditation plans our activities and examines them after carrying them out to make sure that nothing remains in our life that is less than correct or in need of correction. Finally, in prosperity meditation keeps us ready for adversity, and this is prudence; in adversity, it makes us hardly feel it, and this is fortitude. (De Consid. I, c. 7).

This is the efficacy of meditation for rectitude of heart and integrity of spiritual life. Immeasurable richness flows from meditation, while desolation upon desolation and absolute sterility of good works results from the lack of it. We will never succeed in carrying out in a worthy manner the duties of our ministry if we do not keep it constantly in mind by an assiduous and intimate union with God. [...]

Believe that charity grows through, and feeds on meditation. “In my thoughts a fire blazed forth—*In meditatione mea exardescet ignis*—says the Prophet (Ps 39,4). [...] Daily meditation must continuously

supply new nourishment for priestly piety so that this fire may keep burning and may grow. The divine perfections of Christ and the immeasurable treasures of wisdom hidden in Christ, are the nourishment of love, provided that you meditate on them with devotion and constancy. [...]

Let your meditation center above all in the eucharistic Christ. [...]. Convince yourselves that the heart of a priest cannot find peace or security if he does not place his happiness in Christ: No one can live without this happiness! [...] The Eucharist, when made the object of meditation, will light up the love of Christ in the heart of the priest and will draw it like a magnet; it will be the delicious honey that springs from the rock; the rich food that nourishes the soul of the priest so that he might also fill the faithful people with the riches of Christ. (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899. *Synodus Diocesana Placentina Tertia*. Piacenza 1900, pp. 249-251).

The object of our meditation is then the Incarnate Son of God, word, and bread.

The word of God is alive: it is the very life of God which, as it were, gives life to his word and makes it bear fruit. It is effective: it has the divine power at its command, ever ready to carry out whatever God wills. More penetrating than a two-edged sword, [...] we can say that it cuts through the sensitive and spiritual components of the soul, scrutinizing the heart and accomplishing in man whatever is pleasing to God, whose instrument it is. (See Heb 4,12). [...] All things are bare and open before its eyes. The fruitful word sees all things, makes them clear to the mind, gives a correct insight into them, brings the soul from sin to justice, and reconciles it with God. [...]

The soul is created by the Word so that it may be the first fruits of creation: "He willed to give us birth by the word of truth that we may be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (Jas 1,18). What happens when, at the proper time, Christ speaks to the soul? It pines away in love to find him and cries out: "My lover belongs to me and I to him. My spirit grew faint when my beloved spoke." (See Song of Songs 2,16 and 5,4). (2nd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 29, 1899. Pp. 237-238).

In fact, not only is the word of God "the truth, absolute truth, the supreme, immutable, eternal truth," but it is the very word of God:

“it is his word, the second person of the most Holy Trinity. The divine word became man and came, ineffable word, to speak to us the word of eternal life.” (La Divina Parola, Piacenza 1897, p. 5). “The word of God is the great means on which our eternal salvation is founded and depends upon,” because “if faith comes to us through listening the word of God, the word of God is as necessary as faith.” (Ibid., pp. 7-8). “My word is spirit and life,” the Divine Redeemer teaches us. It has the power not only to change our will, but also to purify our hearts and to make us holy.” (Ibid., p. 11).

The word of God must be “meditated” and “changed into love:”

It is only through meditation that man learns who he is and who he ought to be; how to look upon and judge all things from a Christian point of view. Should the word of God make us Christians at heart and in deeds? It must then first be transformed into love. Not only we must understand the truth, but we must also love it; and we must not only love it, but we must also put it into practice. Veritatem facientes in charitate—living the truth in love, Saint Paul tells us. (Eph 4,15). (Ibid., pp. 33-34).

These are the reasons that led Bishop Scalabrini to transform his daily meditation into an act of worship by binding himself *sub gravi* to devote to it half hour every day, but then prolonging it until it reached one hour! “What beautiful things did I hear about it!” [...] “Whoever neglects meditation, has either no faith or no brains.” (Propositi, August 1900). “I resolve: one hour meditation including the preparation for Mass.” (Ibid., February 23, 1901).

He urged his priests:

Have a set time every day for meditation on heavenly things, and never neglect this. Do not be carried away by the absurd tendency to help others while neglecting yourselves: *he who is not good with himself, how can he be good with others?* There are often difficulties in the way of this practice, I do not deny: but, in these cases, priests provide ill for themselves if they neglect meditation.

On such occasions instead, one must remember that *he should get up before sunrise to give thanks to God*. It is right that you do all things to all, but while doing what must be done for the salvation of your neighbor, remember the angels ascending to God and descending to

man on Jacob's stairway. Your behavior should copy this image: you too are angles of the Lord of Hosts.

You know that to the exercise of meditation you must add the reading of the Sacred Scriptures. Strongly encouraged by the Apostle, such reading has been recommended in great earnest by the Fathers of the Church. "Let the men of the Church—Saint Gregory the Great states—read and meditate every day on the Sacred Scriptures to keep building through divine teachings what human behavior continues to destroy." (*Allocutio in proluione Synodi*, September 2, 1879. *Synodus Dioecessana Prima*, Piacenza 1880, pp. 228-229).

He reminded his missionaries that: "meditation and spiritual retreats are essential for priestly life. We must want them at all costs." (Letter to Fr. F. Zaboglio, September 21, 1895. *Archivio Seminario Comense*). Spiritual retreats — which he faithfully made every year with his priests for eight days — are necessary if one wishes to engage in a life of which he may say with the Apostle: *I live, no longer I, but Christ is lives in me.* (Ga 2,20). (*De Exerctiis Spiritualibus*, Piacenza 1876, p. 13).

Who is there that does not need God to speak to him and tell in truth to his heart the word which is sharper than any two-edged sword cutting through soul and spirit? If we cannot think anything by ourselves because our ability comes from God alone, it is absolutely necessary, then, that he should speak to us first, and that we give him an attentive, docile, and obedient ear to what he has to say to our heart so that we may adopt a proper and holy norm of life according to the will of God that we came to know, or confirm and strengthen it, if by God's grace we have already one! (*Ibid.*, p. 19).

In Scalabrini's spirituality meditation constitutes a fundamental element. It shows the attitude of a man who places himself in the presence of God and listens to him, thus becoming aware of the initiative of God "who loved us first" and "has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ." Jesus is the substantial word of the Father, who speaks to us also through the reality of things created in and by Jesus Christ, but especially through man, the likeness of God and the dwelling place of Christ. In meditation ("deep knowledge of things human and divine") through the knowledge of God, Bishop



Scalabrini succeeds in understanding man as God's creation; he is able, therefore, to decode human history as a history of salvation and the signs of the time as the voice of God. The answer to the multiform word of God, is a word expressed in prayer which is, at the same time, a pledge of love, justice, and creative solidarity with humanity.

Meditation is "knowledge that begets faith:" "faith in a living, personal and near-to-us God; a "living faith" that becomes prayer; a faith that is absolute trust expressed in confident prayer. Bishop Scalabrini has an unshakeable trust in the efficacy of prayer:

Man speaks and God listens; man asks and God answers; let us boldly dare say it: man gives the order and God obeys! *Voluntatem timentium se faciet, et deprecationem eorum exaudiet*—He fulfills the desire of those who fear him, he hears their cry and saves them (Ps 145,19). (*La Preghiera*, Piacenza 1905, p. 17).

Two great things I admire in heaven and on earth: the power of the Creator in heaven, and the power of prayer on earth. Weak as a man can be, if he prays, he becomes strong with the very strength of God: *nihil potentius homine orante*—nothing is more powerful than a man in prayer. Listen to the Apostle saying: I can do all things, absolutely all of them: *Omnia possum*. (Phil 4,13). How can this be? I can do all things because of prayer! I can do all things in him who, invoked and prayed by me, has the power to comfort, strengthen, and console me: *omnia possum in eo qui me confortat*—I have the strength for everything through him who empowers me.

Prayer, when it is humble, not only equals, but I might almost say, surpasses the very power of God. *God is all powerful*, says the Prophet, *who can resist him?* Prayer, I answer. (*Ibid.*, p. 26).

Prayer is "the most vivifying, strong, and powerful aspect of pastoral work." (Address to Departing Missionaries. January 24, 1889. AGS 3018/1).

A priest becomes a saint and a sanctifier through prayer. Nowadays a priest must "come out of the temple, if he is to carry out a salutary action in the temple; with the understanding, however, that he comes out of the temple after obtaining, from piety and prayer, light, and comfort. Let him come out of the temple, but keeping his eyes always turned to the temple; let him come out of the temple, but in the same

manner that the sun comes out of its canopy, shining with the light of God and on fire with a love that enlightens, brings warmth, and bears fruit." (*Azione Cattolica*, Piacenza 1896, p. 13).

This is what a pious author says of prayer: Should one ask me what a priest in care of souls is most in need of, I would answer: prayer. Should he ask me about what else he would need, I would again tell him: prayer. Should he insist time and time again on the same question, my answer would still be the same. (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 248).

#### 4) The Eucharist

The "divinization" of a person comes about mainly in the loving union with Christ present in the Eucharist in substance and in body. In this case Bishop Scalabrini calls the process "christianization," (which has been called "christification" by recent theologians). Based on the doctrine of Saint Francis de Sales, he explains it this way:

Holy Communion is the spring from which the soul draws the "water that rises to eternal life" (Jn 4,14); it is the place where the wounds of the soul are healed; in a word, it is the beginning and the end of the union with God elevated to supreme heights and brought to the highest degree of perfection one can expect in the present life. In fact, if in the Incarnation the Word, God personally took on human nature, in Holy Communion he partakes even more of our personality. In this way he "divinizes" our essence, he christianizes, I may say, our individual being, and his union with us has the same function of the union that changes food into the substance of the body it nourishes. And so, those who receive Communion, a Holy Doctor writes, have Jesus in their mind, in their heart, in their eyes, and in their tongue. Our Savior straightens up, purifies, vivifies all things. He loves with their heart, understands with their minds, gives strength to their spirit, sees with their eyes, speaks with their tongue, and moves all their powers. He works all things in all so that they do not live any longer for themselves, but it is the word of God that lives in them. (Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, Piacenza 1902, pp. 22-23).

It is always the same recurring theme: the extension of the Incarnation in us, both in its sacramental and sacrificial aspects with a particular personal connotation which stresses on the individual, that is on the interpersonal relationship between the person of Christ and the person of the Christian.

As the Eucharist is an extension of the Incarnation, it is also of the sacrifice of Golgotha. This was actually offered just once in a few hours in Jerusalem, while the former takes place every moments of the day in all corners of the earth. [...] If in the first oblation, the Son of God offered himself for all, in the sacrifice of the Eucharist, he gives himself for each one in particular. He comes to us at each moments to cancel the bond that stood against us because of our sins, and he takes it away nailing it with his blessed body to the altar of the cross. (*Ibid.*, pp. 27-28).

Therefore, the Eucharist is not only the foundation and the high point of the liturgy and of the Church's piety, but also of personal devotion and holiness:

Mass is not only the daily redemption and salvation of the world but also the nourishment of true and solid piety and the furnace in which the supernatural life of the Church is set on fire. Ask this virgin bride of the Nazarene how she feeds and stirs up in so many of her children the spirit of sacrifice to a heroic degree; how the poverty and misery we are beset with can be to her but reasons for her special love for us. She will answer by pointing out to you the inscription decorating the altar: *God so loved humanity*. Sublime words expressing even a higher truth. In fact, never has the horizon of charity grown so much since eternity gave rise to time, as it grew from the moment in which the word of God sacrificed himself under the appearances of bread and wine. Only then did the Church understand that sacrifice is the consummation of a pure, noble, and saintly life; only then was she willing to give life for life, love for love. (*Ibid.*, p. 29).

As with the Mass and Holy Communion, this concept of extension of the Incarnation is at the root of his "eucharistic piety," of which adoration, visit to the Blessed Sacrament, atonement, and the whole public worship are a part. Devoted to the doctrine and discipline of the Blessed Sacrament up to the smallest detail ("because all things are great, all things are divine, and nothing is unimportant when

dealing with the Mass and the eucharistic devotion" [*Ibid.*, p. 34]), the 365 pages of the eucharistic synod are but the expression of the love for the Eucharist of this "father of yours who would willingly lay down his blood and life to set you on fire with love for Jesus in the sacrament," (*Ibid.*, p. 37) a devotion which brings to the very core of piety and Christian holiness as he intended it:

I conclude this pastoral letter [...] urging all for the sake of our Lord to foster by all means the love and glory of Jesus in the sacrament; that is, to have a sincere devotion for it, *so that his life be manifested in your mortal bodies*. Never forget it, eucharistic life is the triumph of the spirit over the flesh, of charity over egoism, of faith over the pride of reason. This life, although one of sacrifice, nourished by the blood of the Redeemer sacrificed for us on the cross, is not hard or painful, because *the life man lives now is not his own any longer; it is Christ who lives in him*. (See Gal 2,20.) (*Ibid.*, p. 36).

As a "personification of the Christian people who offer to God the things of the world and as a personification of Christ bestowing on the world the things of God" (See Heb 5,1), the example of the priest works better in instilling and fostering devotion to the Eucharist than any word, exhortation, or provision of the Synod. (*Il Prete Cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, p. 12).

If you really wish to revive eucharistic piety in your parishes, show that you have it deeply rooted in your own heart, first. Let your devotion be interior and exterior, flowing from a living faith and a sincere love for Jesus, the divine Host.

Alas, we must confess it! Our faith is weak at times, and after so many years in the priesthood, often we do not, as yet, love our divine Master, or we do so with a lifeless love. Yet, a true priest is nothing short of a man who lives, works, and offers himself for Jesus in the sacrament, the only object of his desires. Are you so disposed? What impressions do they raise in you? After receiving the Body and Blood of Jesus—I would ask you as Saint Vincent De Paul asked his priests—don't you feel your heart afire with divine love? Well then, does the fire which so ardently burned in the heart of that humble priest and hero of Christian charity set yours on fire also? Or does it still remain cold and frozen? How can you then muster enough zeal to instill in others a devotion so alien to you? I beg you, even if you do not feel

called to a higher interior life or to contemplation, remain nonetheless with Jesus in the sacrament with your hearts and deeds, in private and in public, now and at all times. May your tongues speak often of him, your heart yearns for him. Do not let any hour of your day pass by without devoting to him a thought of grateful and loving thanks. (*La devozione al SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza 1902, pp. 34-36).

The Eucharist is a treasure and a “deposit” entrusted to priests:

The Church is made by this sacrament and all its riches are summed up in this bread and wine. To you the mandate of enriching yourselves and others of this treasure. He has instituted this sacrament in this way: he entrusted its administration only to priests, who must in turn receive it and give it to others. (Office of *Corpus Christi*).

The Eucharist, a treasure for the priests, is at the same time a “deposit” entrusted to their fidelity and custody. However, it is a “deposit” of a special nature, and quite different from all others. The law requires that whoever receives a deposit must care for it and keep it faithfully so as to give it back intact on demand by the owner. Not so with the Eucharist: it is a “deposit of wheat” that would be a crime to hide: “The people’s curse is on the man who hoards the wheat!” (Prv 11,26). [...]

The Eucharist is the banner under which you gather: “the Lord has assembled us by the Communion of the chalice in which we assume God himself, not by the blood of animals.” (Office of *Corpus Christi*).

The Eucharist is your guiding star. It appeared in your childhood and led you to Christ; it guided you in adolescence and it strengthened your youth! Let it be in your maturity and in your old age your “mighty defense, the support of your virtue, your comfort and custodian, your protection from falling, your help at all times, the elevation of your soul, the light of your eyes, your salvation and life, a blessing.” (See Sir 34,19-20).

All that you are and all that you have, comes from the Eucharist: we can truly say that the priest is fortified on all sides by the Eucharist; he is marked in all things by the sign of the Eucharist. (1st Address at the 3rd Synod, August 28, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, pp. 229-231).

Bishop Scalabrini himself was the first to set the example of an intense eucharistic life:

The manifestations of faith of the Servant of God that most impressed me were those with regard to the celebration of the Mass, his voice, recollected attitude, and the ceremony itself reflected a spirit absorbed in contemplation of the divine mysteries. His long private prayer of thanksgiving after the liturgical one was a source of true edification. The same must be said of his frequent visits, during the day, to the Blessed Sacrament in whose presence he was seen slowly praying the breviary. (Witness E. Caccialanza, Diocesan Process, p. 221).

The faith of the Servant of God was especially expressed in his devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Always devout in every part of the Mass, he was visibly transformed at the consecration to the point of impressing the people. (Witness L. Cornaggia-Medici, *Ibid.*, pp. 733-734). He gave the impression of seeing the Lord with his own eyes. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 114).

A thousand times I myself caught him prostrate in prayer on his knees before the Blessed Sacrament. (Witness C. Spalazzi, *Ibid.*, p. 69).

Various witnesses testify also to the practice of placing his hardest cases and decisions in physical contact with the sacrament: "When confronted with hard and difficult cases, he used to place the documents under the corporal, sure to be enlightened." (Witness A. Bianchi, pp. 664-665).

At those times he was transfigured. It was clear he was communing with the mystery, made tangible to him by the gift of God. It is no wonder, then, if afterwards he took extraordinary decisions, declared innocent without question persons on whom the most severe disciplinary measures were about to be visited, and in conversation read what was in your heart. (L. Cornaggia-Medici, *Un profilo di Mons. Scalabrini*, Rome 1930, p. 4).

He believed that this gift was entrusted to all:

I would like you to read this letter of mine in front of the tabernacle. There you will receive the light and the strength you need to carry out my advice. (Letter to a priest, s.d.). Kneel for a moment before the Blessed Sacrament and then give me your answer: I will resign myself

to the will of God and accept it. (Letter to N. Bruni, September 12, 1894. Archives of Bedonia's Seminary). Be of good heart and do not be caught up in vain fears! Why be discouraged? Do your duty with prudence but in all frankness. Do you not have Jesus Christ in the tabernacle who keeps saying to you *Quare dubitasti?* —Why do you doubt? (Letter to a priest, March 13, 1897. AGS 3022/34).

We can understand what the celebration of the Mass meant to him from what he used to tell his priests:

I appeal to your experience, venerable brothers! Is it not true that after celebrating the Holy Sacrifice all the things the world considers sweet, turn sour? [...] Undoubtedly, from the celebration of the Mass derives a gentle inclination to recollection, a stronger instinct for prayer, a secret sweetness in the contempt for self, a desire for perpetual immolation, the choice of the hidden life in Christ, the wonderful ascents of the soul to God. (1st Address at the 3rd Synod, August 28, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, pp. 228-229).

Some forms of eucharistic piety, much loved in the 19th century, that marked the flourishing of an authentic “restoration” of the worship of the Eucharist after the winter of Jansenism and the revival brought about especially in Italy by Saint Alphonsus de Liguori, were dear to both Scalabrini's personal devotion and pastoral action. The daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament was one of them. He used to recommend it also to the faithful:

First of all, you will find an effective means to revive and develop the devotion to the eucharistic Jesus in the pious practice of a daily visit to him, a prisoner of love in our tabernacles. [...] How beautiful to devote our souls to a frequent and familiar dialogue with Jesus through such a salutary exercise! *Blessed is he*—the Prophet exclaims—*who abides by your holy tabernacle!* The Lord is his strength and his light, the cure of all his ills, the balm of all his wounds, the comfort in all his sorrows. At the foot of the altar, our souls forget the world and the troubles of life, because where Jesus is there is no sorrow but joy even in the midst of most bitter trials. This is the place where the faithful listens in the depth of its heart to mysterious and sweet words (*La devozione al SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza, pp. 11-12).

We know the great importance that Bishop Scalabrini gave to a frequent encounter and dialogue with Christ from his exhortations to priests:

There is nothing more mandatory and salutary than this encounter! [...] Does not our heart yearn for and dwell where our treasure is? Christ in the Eucharist is, for a priest, wisdom and counsel, defense, and strength: wisdom to enlighten him, counsel to guide him, defense to protect him, strength to ease all his hardships. [...]

It may have happened that in the early years of ministry we had such experience; but with the passing of times, the gold has become tarnished, and its splendor dimmed. We became like those whom the Apostle describes as “faking a piety which is only a mask!” Here we are, for twenty, thirty, or forty years in an intimate relationship with Christ in this sacrament, and yet we have received so little of his fullness! While as participants, or better as makers of this mystery we enrich others, we ourselves waste away in our misery! Why this venerable brothers? Is it not perhaps because our faith is waning? We are in physical contact with the reality of this mystery, but we do not know as yet to delve into its depths: the voices speaking of Jesus in this sacrament are only silent sounds to us!

What should we say about the adoration of Christ in this sacrament by the priest?

It would be highly praiseworthy and desirable for a priest to come, early in the morning, before the holy tabernacle, and there, almost anticipating the sun in praising God, to make his meditation. There, in the presence of the most holy Eucharist, to prepare in an appropriate way for the sacrifice of the Mass and, after the celebration, to pause to make his thanksgiving! Unfortunately, all too often, it happens instead that priests approach the altar without any preparation and neglecting to begin with an introductory prayer and after Mass they are immediately distracted by worldly concerns. [...] They hardly allow a scant quarter of an hour in prayer before the tabernacle and immediately hurry out impatient only with what concern the Lord! Could not Christ, the neglected and strange host of your house, complain: “I have become an outcast to my brothers, a stranger to my mother’s sons.” (Ps 69,9) [...].



Let your people see you often in front of the holy tabernacle saying your office, making you examination of conscience; let them see you paying a visit to Jesus to ask for help and grace before you leave the house, and again let them notice you giving thanks on your return. Blessed is the priest who, leaving aside his occupations, spends part of his time in the faithful worship of Christ the Lord and who learns to give flavor to his work through a friendly dialogue with Christ. (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899. Synodus Dioecesana Placentina Tertia, Piacenza 1900, pp. 252-254).

It is not an individualistic or private devotion, as the spirituality of the 19th century was often characterized. In their ministry, priests are urged, above all, to transmit to the people the word and the life of Christ drawn personally and directly from the tabernacle:

I would like to suggest that you prepare your sermons before the Blessed Sacrament so that you may communicate to your people the very words that Christ has inspired you; this is what Moses, and the prophets did.

Let a priest insistently ask in front of the tabernacle that the ice of his heart may be melted by the heavenly fire burning in Christ; that his soul may be filled with divine zeal, so that he may become a faithful witness among the people of God. (*Ibid.*, p. 255).

Secondly, eucharistic devotion is oriented toward the re-christianization of society:

The first scourge of our century is corruption of the heart. [...] Your mission is to make known to everyone the infinite love of Christ for the Father and for each human being. Only this can eliminate the mortal ills of our time: love begets love. [...]

The second scourge of our times is a certain feeling of bitterness by which men look at each other not as brothers but as enemies, as a consequence, everyone is seeking what is good for himself and not what benefits the common good. [...] We have to present to every creature, the divine, infinite patience and meekness of Christ in this sacrament. [...]

The third scourge is envy and greed to gain a higher positions in society [...] with total disregard for our heavenly homeland. From

this we have countless evils, an infinite number of misfits with consequent unhappiness and delusion for many in addition to an unstable situation in civil society; and, lastly, a general laziness for spiritual and divine realities. Evidently, only the humility of Christ in this sacrament can remedy this manifold sickness. [...]

In conclusion, the Eucharist is the center of the Church, the substance of divine worship, the tree of life planted in the midst of the Church, whose branches give solace to the people. It is the ferment hidden in this sacrament by the Incarnate Wisdom. [...] And this leaven, which through the Church penetrates the various social strata, that is, the ruling classes, the youth, and the family, by means of the priestly ministry, will give flavor to the world, which before was flavorless; it would gather together all the various peoples into the one body of the Church; it would make those who were indifferent to worthy causes, dedicated to good deeds. (*Ibid.*, pp. 257-259).

To bring about the regeneration of society we must begin “with a solid and in-depth instruction the first prerequisite of eucharistic devotion.” Hence the great importance given to the liturgy of the word by Bishop Scalabrini:

What would the Church be without preaching about the Eucharist? A religion without sacrifice, an association of utopians, a house built on sand; Christ himself would be a fable, a myth. [...]

Christ in the Eucharist is the strength and wisdom of God: and we preach Christ the strength and wisdom of God. Think about the concept of preaching. When Christ instituted the sacrifice and ordained his priests he said: *Hoc facite in meam commemorationem*—Do this in remembrance of me (1Cor 11,24). With his action, he joined sacrifice and preaching: without the word the sacrifice would be only an empty remembrance. You know the sublime and divine eloquence Christ used in speaking to his priests at the last supper before and after the institution of the Eucharist. The apostles continued the preaching. [...] They devoted themselves to preaching the word, and the believers, listening to them, were faithful in participating together to the breaking of the bread. (Acts 2,42) (2nd Address at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Synod, August 29, 1899. *Ibid.*, p. 240).

To the provision that the preaching of the word of God should be intensified, never to omit the homily on holy days, Bishop

Scalabrini added every possible initiative to promote eucharistic piety. He introduced or revived a variety of eucharistic devotions. For priests he instituted the perpetual adoration so that no hour, not even during the night, would pass in his diocese without at least one priest in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament. For the faithful he introduced daily adoration in shifts. He had the Forty Hours and the confraternities of the Blessed Sacrament flourish again. The Mass however had to hold a preeminent place:

Some think that attending Mass is a good work, but more or less as good as saying the Rosary, giving alms, saying the stations of the cross, and similar devotions. They are very mistaken! These pious practices are all good and holy, there is no doubt; but Holy Mass surpasses them in infinite measure, for it is of infinite value. This has been and always will be to Christianity the devotion of devotions, the mystery of mysteries, the high point, the crown, the center of spiritual life. [...] In the Mass all the sacrifices and all the acts of worship come together and are completed. (*Come santificare la festa*. Piacenza 1904, pp. 6-7).

One Mass! It is the immolation of a God placed somehow in our hands so that we may partake of it in time according to needs and conditions in the measure and for the ends set down by divine providence! One Mass! It is a God who adores, a God who gives thanks; a God who atones, a God who implores. One Mass! Once again, it is, the crown of religious worship, the center of Christian life. (*Il prete cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, pp. 12).

To have everyone participate in the “oblation with which the whole body the Church offers itself with Christ so that the total Christ (*Christus totus*) be at the same time the priest and the victim” (2nd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 29, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza, 1900, p. 239), Bishop Scalabrini, from the very beginning of his episcopate, employed every possible means, to encourage and secure, on a civil and social level, the keeping of Sunday’s rest. The last two of his Lenten pastoral letters (1903 and 1904) deal with keeping the holy day of obligation, “the day of the Lord, the day of his wonders, of his blessings, of his glory [...], the day of true freedom, of true equality, of authentic fraternity; the day

of our liberation, of our greatness, of our hope, of our glory, and of our joy." (*Santificazione della festa*, Piacenza 1903, p. 7).

In the pastoral letter of Lent 1902 he had made known the goal he intended to achieve by his pastoral action:

When the Lord, in his infinite goodness and mercy, shall grant that I see devotion to the Eucharistic deeply rooted in my beloved diocese, then, there will be no more for me to do but to exclaim with the prophet Simeon: *Now, Master, you may let your servant go in peace, ... for my eyes have seen your Savior* loved, thanked, and adored by those who are in time and shall be in eternity my joy and my crown. (*La devozione al SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza 1902, p. 37).

In his last pastoral letter written 26 days before he died to announce his sixth visitation to the diocese, he expressed the desire to have his most intimate and vivifying encounter with all the faithful during the Eucharist:

Do all you can, my venerable co-workers, that when I come, I may give the Bread of Angels to all my sons and daughters, to all, from the children of First Communion to those who stand at the threshold of eternity. This will be, my brethren and my children, the sweetest consolation you can give to your bishop in the midst of the ceaseless and heavy responsibilities of his pastoral ministry. (Pastoral Letter, May 5, 1905, Piacenza 1905, pp. 4-5).

The moment had come when the Servant of the Lord was to leave in peace with the Holy Viaticum. He spent the whole night before the operation that was to be fatal "in prayer and adoration in his private chapel." On the eve of his death, "he himself asked that the Viaticum be brought to him with all solemnity." [...] He himself made provisions that tapestries be hanging from the windows and that his bedroom be adorned and made ready. He asked to wear the rochet, the mozzetta and the pectoral cross, a gift from Pius IX. [...] When the sacrament was brought in from the parish, as he had asked, he welcomed it with utmost devotion and piety reciting the preparatory prayers, and then made the required solemn profession of faith. [...]

Perfectly conscious, he received the Holy Viaticum, and in expressing with fervent prayer his love to the Lord, he regained much

of his strength to the point the presiding doctor, Luigi Marchesi, called this improvement a miracle, his words were: "It's a miracle; it is a dead man who speaks!" (Witness C. Spalla<sup>77i</sup>, Diocesan Investigation, pp. 78-79).

It was not a miracle, but a sign of the beatitude of which the Lord had given him a foretaste in life when in adoration before the sacrament.

This joy of the pilgrim soul, this tranquility filled with confidence, this restfulness filled with consolation, this harmony filled with sweetness, this peace, full of love, this is in truth the most beautiful example, the truest image of heavenly beatitude. (Pastoral Letter of Lent 1881, p. 26).

He wanted to be buried close to the altar of the Blessed Sacrament where he had his tomb built, and even dreamed to be granted to say one last Mass on the day of the last judgement: a simple dream, but indicative of a deep love for the Eucharist, the most singular aspect of his spirituality.

## 5) The Cross

The Eucharist was born of the Cross: "Christ has opened for us this new way [to salvation and holiness] through his passion; in the Eucharist we receive its fruits." (1st Address at the 3rd Synod, August 28, 1899, *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 225). If it is born on the Cross, the logical consequence for our life is that we have to lose it in order to gain it. "Since the Word of God offered himself under the appearances of bread and wine [...] only then did we understand that sacrifice is the consummation of pure, noble, and holy life, only then did we desire to give life for life, love for love." (*La devozione del SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza 1902, p. 29).

For Bishop Scalabrini, to live the Eucharist, the memorial of the passion, is to conform to Christ Crucified; for him, to live the new covenant, of which the Eucharist is the sacrament, is to live the new unity with God established by Christ with his blood on the Cross. He returns to this notion in many different ways:

The secret of our predestination, Saint Paul states, consists in our likeness to him. Once established this, I ask you: which path did he follow to ascend to heaven? [...] His whole life, writes Saint Chrysostom, was nothing else but cross and martyrdom. [...] (*Imitation of Christ*, II, 12, 7). If my God, by his coming to earth, did not want to deceive me, if he made himself visible to my eyes in order to be my guide, I am forced to hail penance as the only hope for the children of Adam, the only means to satisfy God's justice. (*La penitenza cristiana*, Piacenza 1895, pp. 9-10).

From Bethlehem to Calvary, in no other way does he shows himself to us but under the appearance of the man of sorrows. [...] For what purpose? To teach us and urge us to suffer *ut sequamini vestigia eius*—that you should follow in his footsteps (1 Pt 2,21). Our Christian life then, what else could it be if not a continuous sacrifice, a continuous struggle on the example of Christ Jesus? How could we be the children of his humiliations, his sufferings, and his cross, if we do not accept our humiliations, our sufferings, and our crosses? [...] Either we give up being Christians or we conform to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. [...] Is it not this the pledge that we made at our holy baptism? It is! From that moment on, we belong to him, we have put on Jesus Christ, we have been made members of his body; from that moment on the motherly cares of the Church have indeed been directed toward building in us Jesus Christ and to carve in our heart a living image of him. (Pastoral Letter of Lent 1883, Piacenza, pp. 6-8).

We cannot present to God “the offering of a sacrifice in which we do not share, the worship of a cross of which we do not bear any sign in our own body.” (*La penitenza cristiana*, Piacenza 1895, p. 11).

We must make up for what is lacking in the Christ's passion: *adimpleo ea quae desunt passionum Christi in carne meas*. (Col 1,24). This is the supreme law on which depends our salvation. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our sacrifice are two equally necessary sacrifices; they are two sacrifices that do not placate divine justice if they are not inseparably joined together; our sacrifice, if unaccompanied by the sacrifice of Christ is unworthy of God. The sacrifice of Christ, unaccompanied by our sacrifice, is useless to us. (Pastoral Letter of Lent 1883, Piacenza 1883, p. 16).

As disciples of “a poor, humble, and crucified God” (*Ibid.*, p.11) we must live according to the conditions set by Christ for those who want to follow him:

“Whoever wishes to come after me,” our divine Master himself tells us, “must deny himself, take up his cross and with this uniform, follow me.” (See Mt 16,24). [...] *Must deny himself*, means to renounce our way of thinking by submit it to faith; to renounce our way of acting by always doing God’s will; to renounce our disorderly passions by living always according to the Gospel. Then, *take up his cross*, means to suffer patiently and with resignation when faced with all the ills of the present life, all the trials and tribulations and hardships of our present condition. *With this uniform, follow me*, means let us walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ; let us cloth ourselves with his spirit and his vision; let us be moved by his feelings and behave according to his teachings; let us conform to his will and entrust ourselves to his divine providence. Now, what does all this mean if not that in order to live a Christian life we need evangelical mortification? It is so indispensable that without it we are lost forever: *nisi poenitentiam egeritis*, it is the incarnate truth speaking to us, *omnes similiter peribitis*—if you do not repent you will all perish (Lk 13,35). (*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15).

Mortification of certain human inclinations enhances our deepest aspirations: to become children of God and to attain a happiness that we can never lose. The words “struggle, watchfulness, mortification, penance” should not deceive us. It is not a “religious masochism” (Sartre). Quite the contrary, it is freedom, newness of life, building up the kingdom; it is restoration of human dignity; therefore, it is happiness.

There are people with a very superficial and limited notion of Christian penance. They believe that self-denial is suffering for the sake of suffering. It is not, my beloved, not at all. We aim at a much higher goal! With the words of a famous philosopher, I can tell you that we intend not to destroy, but to build; we want to subdue the flesh, but only to give freedom to the spirit; we want to put aside the old man, but only to put on the new; we want to deny our corrupt will, but only to replace it with the divine will of God; we want to die to ourselves, but only to live for others; we want to demolish the reign of evil, fighting it and all its internal and external accomplices,

but only to establish in us the reign of goodness, the reign of truth and love; we want give up something of the present, but only to insure the future. In other words, we want to regain our crown, we want not only to be men, but also Christians, we want to reign in time and in eternity. (See Eph 4,22-24). (*La penitenza cristiana*, Piacenza 1896, p. 13).

Personally, he embraced wholeheartedly and with deep joy what he called" the philosophy of the cross:"

Consider the crosses, the tribulations, the humiliations, the scorn one receives as precious means for sanctification. I must not complain, not be sad, not be discouraged: I must offer all things in union with the sufferings of Jesus Christ. *Fac me cruce inebriari*. (*Propositi*, August 28, 1896).

The Cross is the only raft of salvation in the stormy shipwreck of life. To suffer, to do penance, to be humble and to accept humiliations: this is the cross: *qui tenuerit eam beatus*—blessed he who holds on to it. Do not let it go ever: *absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini nostri Jesu Christi*—but may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Gal 6,13-14). This is the only true wisdom! A bishop wears a cross without the image of our beloved Jesus: Why? because he must love the cross even without the support of Jesus image: he has to love the cross for what it is. *Fac me cruce inebriari*. Jesus' support will follow: I live in a state of acquired perfection; behold the tree of life: never let it go. You will be blessed in life, in death, and for all eternity! (Notes of his meditations. AGS 3027/1).

*Fac me cruce inebriari!* God educates us through tribulations, through humiliations, through sufferings, through the irritations of the ministry, of the audiences. He protects us, he enlightens us, he makes us great. Therefore, love your crosses, the cross. Love it; unite it to the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Hold the pectoral cross close to your breast and repeat often: *Fac me cruce inebriari*. (*Propositi* August 24, 1893).

God has been particularly good to me; how many extraordinary graces he has given me for my sanctification, how many crosses! Crosses were inseparable from God's designs. [...] And I have never been lacking them! [...] But, blessed be God! *Te Deum laudamus*, I sang this a little while ago in the cathedral. Thanks be to God and courage in the Cross of Jesus Christ our Lord. (*Ibid.*, January 30, 1894).



Similar feelings are expressed in his letters:

As for me, thank God, I maintain a perfect serenity of spirit and I know that *a Blessed be God* (as my Saint Francis De Sales used to say) uttered amid trials and troubles, is worth more than a Rosary said in prosperous times, and I accept all these troubles from the hand of God who permits or ordains them, and I try to accept them with love. Are they not precious bits of the Cross of Jesus Christ? (Letter to a Provincial Superior, s.d. AGS 3022/1).

The Lord has willed to visit me this year with all kinds of tribulations, but I do not think I have ever lost my calm nor my spirit of resignation. I kept in mind always that *omne gaudium existimate cum in tribulationes varias incideritis*, and I was even joyful about this. Oh! the sublime philosophy in those words, true love of the cross. (Letter to L. Cornaggia Medici, May 12, 1896. *Archivio Liberiano di Roma*).

I bless God in all things, and I feel a lively joy in suffering with resignation all the troubles and contradictions he sends me. I receive these difficulties from the hands of God, who permits and ordains them for our improvement, and I believe that I thus do some good for souls. For my part I desire only the glory of God and the greater good of souls, even though these must be won with the greatest sufferings: *Ita Pater, quoniam sic fuit placitum ante te*—Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will (Mt 11,26). (*Ibid.*, s.d.).

The “mysticism of the cross” is always present in his confidential letters to Bishop Bonomelli:

You speak to me of a cross! Dear God, this is our lot, and the Church makes us wear it of gold on our breast while it often turns to rough iron that tears the soul. How many times I clasp it to my heart and raising my eyes to heaven I pray with an ardent desire to be heard: *Fac me cruce inebriari!* (September 17, 1883).

This year the Lord willed to visit me with physical pains and moral sufferings: his holy will be done in and for all things. I...I keep on going, through this storm of words, blessing the name of God, in the hope he will draw much good from it. [...I So be it as he wills! *Sicut Domino placuit, ita factum est; sit nomen Domini benedictum*—As it pleased God, so it was done, blessed be the name of the Lord (November 13, 1884).

During the schism of Miraglia, five years that were the most painful Calvary of his life, Bishop Scalabrini increasingly perfected his sharing in the Cross of the Lord:

That unfortunate priest is plaiting a veritable crown of thorns for me with the audacity of an unrepentant sectarian. But I must say that until now, at least, the Lord has given me so much strength that I almost do not feel the sharp and constant pain. I see that he governs me with a Providence full of mystery, and I feel, or at least I seem to feel, disposed in every instance to repeat: *Ita, Pater, quoniam fuit placitum ante Te*—Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. (Mt 11,26). You who are so zealous, obtain for me the grace of perfect conformity to the will of God. (November 9, 1895).

The Lord indeed scourges me, and he has a thousand reasons! He grants me, however, unique peace and tranquility! *Calicem quem dedit mihi Pater non bibam illum?* —Shall I not drink the cup that the Father gave me? (Jn 18,11) (February 21, 1896).

When Cardinal Agliardi was visiting me, my brother told him: “Although the bishop is a well-balanced man, for some years now he has been practicing an excessive asceticism.” And the Cardinal answered: “Just think, I myself have been suspecting this, etc.” I smiled sadly and thought to myself that if the Lord had not given me the grace of a little asceticism *in tempore opportuno* I do not know how I should have made out. I have suffered trials of all kinds and still suffer for the well-known reasons, but much less. I do the best I can, leaving the final results in the hand of the Lord. (January 24, 1897).

In this letter mention is made of his practices of asceticism. It is known that Bishop Scalabrini used the traditional instruments of penance both for self-control and for *satisfactio vicaria*:

It often happened in Piacenza, that his loyal servant would find the shirt of the saintly Bishop stained with blood. He discovered at last that it was due to the use the bishop made of a rough *cilicium*. (Witness C. Mangot. AGS 3000/8).

In the pale light of the Blessed Sacrament, he caught a glimpse of a human figure. Getting closer he saw the Saintly Bishop Scalabrini scourging his naked shoulders. Canon D. Rolandi was surprised and highly edified. Turning to him quite embarrassed the Bishop pleaded: “For heaven’s sake, do not say a word to anyone! I am here to pray and to do little penance for a poor Priest of my Diocese who is giving

me a lot of trouble; he is a real cross." (Letter of G. Gatti to Fr. Prevedello, September 18, 1939. AGS 3035/3).

He maintained, however, that the "priest's true *cilicium* must consist above all in the exact fulfilment of all his duties and in resigned acceptance of the many crosses and great sacrifices encountered in the ministry." (Witness E. Preti, Diocesan Process, p. 252). For instance, he "never complained about the way he was treated during his pastoral visits, especially in poor mountain rectories." (Witness C. Spallazzi, *Ibid.*, p. 141).

During Scalabrini's difficult trip to Brazil, the saintly Bishop Rinaldi recalls, "our table was extremely frugal and hasty in the preparation because he insisted that I remained by his side rather than worrying about the kitchen. He also rested very little in spite of very busy days.: (Witness M. Rinaldi, *Ibid.*, p. 678). "Only those who saw those places could understand the hardships of the travelling of the Servant of God, who could hardly ride a horse because of a certain condition. When he could not take it any longer, they had him climb on an improvised cart pulled by two or three horses. You could imagine the sufferings of the Servant of God, also considering the winter season and the continuous rain." (Witness L. Gorlin, *Ibid.*, p. 856).

"He was very strict in keeping the prescribed fasts and abstinences; and I know that at times he went beyond. Catherine, his housekeeper, told me that on a Good Friday he only ate one slice of polenta." (Witness F. Gregori, *Ibid.*, p. 574). "He was very moderate, he slept just a few hours." (Witness L. Scalabrini, *Ibid.*, p. 919).

He imbued his missionaries with the spirituality of the Cross:

Here I am with you, poor martyr! With all the virtues adorning your soul you still lack the enthusiasm of a man on the cross, of a sacrificed priest! It would be so beautiful! (Letter to D. Vicentini, September 1894. AGS 3023/2).

Indeed, bad news follows bad news with great rapidity. What to do? Lose heart? No! God wishes to test us in the fire of tribulation and God be blessed now and always, by everyone. Let us often ponder the text: *Recogitate eum qui talem sustinuit contradictionem, ut ne fatigemini, animis vestris deficientes*—Think of the way he withstood such opposi-

tion from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage. Fear not, keep calm, trust in God! (*Ibid.*, November 28, 1893).

In the ceremony of the departure of his missionaries he gave them the crucifix, and this gave him the opportunity to underline the meaning of the celebration as a reminder of the true source and strength of the apostolate:

The Cross is the symbol of universal redemption lifted up in the midst of nations. [...] From the time this sign was lifted on Golgotha and the Church appeared in the world, the word that proclaims the glory of God, enlightens the minds, revives the hearts, regenerates the souls, draws together the dispersed brethren, and reassembles the human family in unity of faith, hope, and love, has never ceased to be heard. [...]

I know, heavy toils, serious dangers, many tribulations, constant struggles, and sacrifices await you, but do not be afraid! The Cross is with you. The Cross which is the defense of the humble and the humiliation of the proud; the victory of Christ and the defeat of the nether world; the death of infidelity and the life of the just; the fullness of all virtues. The Cross, which is the hope of Christians, the resurrection of the dead, the consolation of the poor, the pledge of eternal life, the power of God! Be not afraid! the Cross is with you. This Cross which shapes the heroes of our Religion, sustains them, gives them courage, guides them, enraptures them, helps them to overcome flesh and blood with their pleasures and sorrows; it instills in their hearts the holy desires of the martyr of Christ who knows how to live and how to die proclaiming: "Long live Jesus! Long live the Cross! Welcome my martyrdom:" *absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini Nostri Jesus Christi!*

The Cross is folly to the world, but to you, beloved priests, and catechists it will be wisdom and life! (*See* 1Cor 1,23). [...] In your sorrows, discouragements, and delusions, hold this Cross that I gave you fast to your heart; with an attitude of total surrender to the will of God, lift up your eyes to Heaven and repeat: *Fac me cruce inebriari; absit gloriari nisi in cruce Domini Nostri Jesus Christi;* your heart will then find solace, your soul will open up to all the joys of Christian hope, and all your works will be made precious in heaven! (Address to Departing Missionaries on January 24, 1889. AGS 3018/2).

## 6) Practices of Piety and Devotion to Mary and the Saints

Devotion to the Eucharist and the crucified Christ was the true “devotion” of Bishop Scalabrini; a devotion to Christ in whom all true worship is fulfilled. “The basis of all our acts of worship” consist “in the homage of the believing spirit in adoration of the divinity of Jesus Christ” and “in the homage of a heart moved by the remembrance of the blessings of redemption.” Devotion then is “faith and love shown in the actual acknowledging of Christ’s authority by the keeping of his law.” (Easter Homily, 1903. AGS 3016/4).

“Devotion” is expressed by the so-called “practices of piety,” and devotion to Mary and the Saints.

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was known as the century of “devotions,” at times expressed with sentimental and mechanical deviations when they lost contact with the Bible and the liturgy. At the same time, they contributed to foster a warmer piety, more in line with the romantic environment of the time, while deriving from the Middle Ages, whose ideals were being rediscovered, the most authentic expressions of Christian piety centered on the person of Christ, true God and as well as true man, really present and active in the life of Christians and of the Church. In other words, all “forms” of Christian piety were authentic in so far as they were centered in Christ and in the Church. These were also the characteristics of Scalabrini’s religiosity and devotions, naturally together with his devotion to the Eucharist and the Cross.

He bound himself to the daily practice of fifteen minutes of spiritual reading, the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, the Rosary, the *Angelus*, morning and night prayers, and frequent prayerful aspirations. In order to have enough time for all these scheduled prayers during a day already filled with activities which he himself called “feverish,” he fixed his rising at six o’clock in the morning—but usually getting up at five o’clock, at least in his last years—and he had scheduled at 9:45 p.m.: “night prayers, examination of conscience, and points of meditation.” (*Resolutions*, August 8, 1894).

He was a man of great prayer and piety. (Witness G. Dodici, Diocesan Process, p. 163). You should have seen his admirable composure and the way he prayed during the day and even late at night! (Witness A. Bracchi, *Ibid.*, pp. 469-470). He filled the day with moments of priestly piety. (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 344). He was very faithful to his scheduled prayers which he did not neglect even in days with a lot of work and heavy toil. (Witness E. Preti, *Ibid.*, p. 242).

His praying the breviary was calm and devout, as he had resolved:

I will pray the Office in the best way possible for one special intention every day. Every night I shall examine how I prayed it. Every month a meditation on the *digne, attente, devote*. (*Resolutions*, August 24, 1893). On less busy days I will do a little study on the psalms most in use; on small pieces of paper to be kept in the breviary, I shall write down their meaning, inspiration, and prophetic value, etc. [...] I will begin with the hours. [...] One psalm a day. Oh! How many blessings I will obtain for myself and my diocese if I will pray as a holy man the Divine Office! (*Ibid.*, February 23, 1901).

For him devotion to Mary and the Saints had meaning only for those who, "using devotion to the Saints and the Mother of God like stepping-stones, ascend toward God. [...] We must make sure that while insisting on the mediation and the examples of the Saints, we do not diminish our faith and love for Jesus Christ." (1st Address at the 3rd Synod, August 28, 1899. *Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 225).

We see the spirituality of the Incarnation also in his devotion to Mary: "As the Incarnation of the Word was a pouring out of God's forgiveness and love on a world that had completely forgotten him, so the Immaculate Mary represents for the nineteenth century the reborn human race returning into the arms of its God." (*A ricordo del primo faustissimo Giubileo della definizione dommatica dell'Immacolato Concepimento di Maria Santissima*, Piacenza 1879, p. 27).

His devotion to Mary is Christ-centered:

The one who loves Mary, loves Jesus. Indeed, no one can truly love Jesus if he does not love Mary. A real Christian loves both of them with burning love! He loves Jesus as God, and Mary as the Mother of God; he loves Jesus as the Redeemer of the human race, and Mary as

the co-redemptrix of the human race. No! Jesus and Mary can never be separated in the mind and heart of the believer. (Homily of Assumption 1888. AGS 3017/1)

“Mary in fact is the most perfect image of the Divine Word.” (*Ibid*). “She shares with Jesus the same desires, the same feelings, and the same affections.” (Homily of Assumption, 1893. AGS 3017/1). “If possible, her glory for being like him would be superior to that of having given him life.” (*See* Panegyric of the Immaculate Virgin Mary, 1866. AGS 3017/8), because she was “created to be the most shining image of the virtues and perfections of Jesus Christ her Son and her God.” (*Ibid*). “The heart of Mary is the reflection, the true image of the heart of Jesus *imago bonitatis illius*.” (Homily of the *Madonna del Popolo*, August 5, 1880. AGS 3017/2).

In his devotion to Mary, we also discover his ecclesial spirituality:

As the Holy Spirit at Nazareth consecrated her Mother of God, in the Cenacle he consecrated her Mother of the Church. [...] In the Cenacle, the image of this Church, there was Peter, vicar of Christ and prince of Apostles; and there was Mary the Mother of Jesus and Queen of Apostles! And what does this mean? Through Peter the Prince we belong to the Church, through the Church to Mary’s Son, and through Mary’s Son to the true and living God who communicates with us through the Holy Spirit. [...] Without question, God, Jesus Christ, the Virgin Mary, the Catholic Church, the Roman Pontiff, are all links in the mysterious chain that binds time to eternity! Woe indeed, and woe threefold to anyone who breaks even one of these links. (Homily of Pentecost 1900. AGS 3016/6).

The entire life of the great Virgin, the mysteries fulfilled in her, the graces that adorn her, the good that was spread through her were, in the words of Saint Ambrose, a vivid type, an image, almost a prophecy of the Catholic Church: *Maria figuram in se gerebat Ecclesiae*. No one can deny, in fact, that the life of Mary is directly associated with the life of Christ, and that she shares much more in the destiny of Christ than in the destiny of humanity. Well then, examine the nature of the Catholic Church and you will see how, like Mary, it is one thing with Christ, it lives by his Spirit, it celebrates his glory, and it loves him with a perfect love. The “Eagle” of the Doctors of the Church states that the flesh of Christ is the very flesh of Mary: *caro Christi*,

*caro Mariae*. No one could explain with greater precision and truth the Gospel's statement: *de qua natus est Jesus*—of her was born Jesus (Mt 1,16b). Now, who safeguards, defends, and distributes to men the virginal flesh of Mary! Is it not the Catholic Church? And if you look carefully, you will see that in all the sacraments that the Catholic Church administers, her divine motherhood is reproduced and extended through the virtue of Christ. You will discover in all the sacraments the power of the blood of Christ, you will know that his blood was given to us by Mary and through the ministry of the Catholic Church it is handed down to us. Is there a more beautiful union than the one of the Mother with the Bride of Christ? [...] So intimate is this union between Christ, the Virgin, and the Church that it is impossible to separate them. (Homily of Assumption 1882. AGS 3017/1).

The most loved Marian prayer by Scalabrini was the Rosary, which "is the most engaging picture of what Jesus Christ has done for our souls; it is a memorial reminder of the most stupendous miracles; it is the noble mark of Catholic piety." (*Comunicazione dell'Enciclica Supremi Apostolatus*, Piacenza 1883, p. 7). As he learned the devotion to the Crucifix on "his mother's knees," in the same way he got the habit of saying the Rosary every day in the intimacy of his family and did all he could to have it introduced in the families of his diocese.

The Rosary is the most pleasing prayer to Mary because it reminds her of her most cherished titles and greatest merits in the joyous mysteries, in the sorrows of the passion, in the glories of her triumph. By presenting the Rosary to us herself with the promise of answering us, she declares that the Rosary is more welcome in heaven than any other prayer. [...] Through the Rosary we join Jesus Christ and his Blessed Mother in honoring God in the best way possible to human frailty. The saying of that prayer sends back to heaven, so to say, what heaven has sent down to us. If we repeat it often, it means that our soul cannot stop rejoicing in front of our heavenly Benefactress. If we repeat it continuously it is because our tongues cannot stop praising her. If we utter the same expressions with such frequency, it means that our heart does not find limits to its love for her. [...] The Rosary joins together in perfect harmony both vocal and mental prayer [...], being at the same time accessible to the simple and sublime for the learned, every person can find in it a very sweet and rich pasture and wonderful lessons to learn. (*Ibid.*, pp. 5-6).



From the Rosary a Christian learns that “God is giving love, Jesus sacrificing love, and Mary helping love.” “Through the Rosary Jesus Christ himself prays in us and with us.” In it we contemplate “Jesus, the infinite beauty.” “So, while we contemplate this divine prototype, he in a mysterious but most effective way speaks to our heart and says: “Learn of me (Mt 11,29), [...] because I am the way, the only way to eternal salvation, as no one goes to the Father but through me.” (See Jn 14,6). [...] Wonderful as it is to contemplate Jesus in the Rosary and to listen to his voice, no less wonderful is the contemplation of Mary. In the mysteries of the Rosary Mary is always shown at Jesus’ side.” (Homily for the Feast of the Rosary, October 7, 1894. AGS 3017/2).

Bishop Scalabrini attributed a very special ecclesial and a social value to the Rosary prayed in common. “This devotion is most valuable in establishing ever closer bonds of Christian brotherhood and to foster among men those virtues that form the welfare and decorum of civil society itself.” (*Ibid.*).

The Servant of God had indeed a Marian spirit. He was greatly devoted to the Mother of God, and he fostered her devotion with many ordinary and extraordinary celebrations. (Witness A. De Martini, Diocesan Process, p. 269).

He cherished an admirable and filial devotion to the Most Holy Virgin. I am only going to mention the solemn crowning of Our Lady of San Marco, to whom he gave the precious crowns mounted with his mother’s jewels. I was present at the sacred celebration, very solemn for the presence of many bishops and the participation of the whole valley. He spoke in the open, raising to the Virgin such a beautiful hymn of praise it seemed inspired by an angel. (Witness G. Squeri, *Ibid.*, p. 530). I recall with joy another homily he preached in the Cathedral in honor the Immaculate upon his return from his second trip to America. I was by the side of Father Trussardi, a Jesuit. At the end of the homily, he burst out: “Only angels can speak like this.” (Witness J. Cardinali, *Ibid.*, p. 300).

Devotions to Mary and the Saints are typical expressions of popular religiosity. Bishop Scalabrini encouraged them with enthusiasm, drawing the enthusiastic faithful by manifestations that may seem folklore to the one who forgets that they were prepared by an intense

preaching of the word of God and the Eucharist. For the 1893 crowning of the *Madonna del Popolo* in the cathedral, the bishop prescribed that the feast be prepared with a nine-days mission so that the people of Piacenza might celebrate it “not attracted by its unusual splendor or by its exceptional solemnity; but with humility and approaching the Holy Sacraments of Confession and Holy Communion.” As a result, on the morning of January the 10th, despite the temperature of -14 (Celsius) some twenty thousand Piacentini received Holy Communion. The masonic newspaper branded the feast as “a pompous manifestation of the superstition of holy images by which religion is trivialized into a pagan show.” The bishop answered quoting a passage from Gioberti condemning “the incredible levity of those who cannot discern the idea underlying the form that contains it!” (Pastoral Letter of Lent 1893, Piacenza 1893, p. 7).

In preparation for the crowning of the Madonna of Consolation (or of San Marco) at Bedonia in 1889, he wrote to the rector of the seminary: “Yes, let us have the great celebration of the crowning [...] but, understand, it is to be a celebration pleasing “up there.” First there must be a good mission, which can be attended by all the surrounding towns, where the people are so devoted to Our Lady, General Communion, etc., etc. Please, we must not let the feast of Our Lady turn into a bacchanal! Illuminations, alright; but nothing inappropriate to a distinctly Catholic celebration.” (Letter to N. Bruni, November 27, 1888. Bedonia’s Seminary Archives).

In fact, for Bishop Scalabrini, the essence of the devotion to Our Lady and the Saints consists in the imitation of their virtues:

Keep in mind that our devotion to Mary must be solid, that is, it must not be a superficial or shallow devotion which results in few exterior manifestations; but it must lead you to purify your soul from all stains and enrich it with virtue. [...] In these meetings turn to her and promise her from the bottom of your heart that you would rather die than offend her blessed Son and do not be afraid, victory will be yours! [...] Your very concern to please the Virgin should urge you to enrich your soul with her same virtues. If you really love her, it will not be difficult, because love brings about imitation and produces resemblance. Fix your eyes on Mary’s virtues, observe how she acts,

and do your best to copy her. (Homily at the Church of May 1870. AGS 3017/2).

The proclamation of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, when he was 15 years old, confirmed four years later by the apparitions of Lourdes, must have impressed him as an extraordinary event in Church history. This is confirmed by the solemn celebrations he decreed for the 25<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the proclamation. These solemnities were much more than just important anniversaries: on December 8, 1904, just in the city of Piacenza, thirty thousand people received Holy Communion! Scalabrini, in fact, could not perceive a Marian devotion separated from eucharist devotion, as he could not separate it from devotion to the Church: “two most noble devotions burning in our hearts, love for the Church and love for Mary, shall melt together into one.” (Homily for the Assumption of 1882. AGS 3017/1).

Every day he renewed his consecration to Mary and during his spiritual retreats, he reaffirmed his complete trust in the Virgin, to whom he “owed everything:”

Great, true devotion to our dear and most sweet Mother Mary. *Ora pro me peccatore; nunc et in hora mortis meae. Amen*—Pray for me, a sinner, now and at the hour of my death. Amen. (*Resolutions*, August 24, 1893). I dedicate myself with greater care to the devotion to Our Lady; throw myself at her feet, into her maternal arms every day! (*Ibid.*, August 1900). Constant and tender devotion to Our Lady: she is my Mother and she will obtain all things for me if I am truly and sincerely devoted to her! (*Ibid.*, February 23, 1901).

His devotion to the Saints—Saint Joseph, Saint Charles Borromeo, Saint Francis de Sales, the Saints of Piacenza “fathers in faith” of his diocese—and his zeal in promoting their devotion, are also rooted in his faith and zeal for his faith:

I considered, then, the real need that we have, which has been already confirmed, that the Saints with whom we are more familiar may by our particular devotion and veneration obtain for me and for my beloved children the strong faith necessary today for Christians to win; therefore, wanting to enkindle in my flock the sentiments of devotion to these Saints that nourished the faith and spiritual life of our ancestors and wondering how I could achieve this goal, I determined that

there was only one more thing for me to do to inflame my children toward devotion to our Patron Saints and Fathers: to make known their deeds, their tombs, their relics, and their veneration through proper and scholarly studies that would illustrate with accuracy and certitude the documents and monuments about them and to offer them for meditation; and then to place the bones of Saint Antoninus and Victor in such a way that on specific solemnities or in the imminence of some public calamity they may be put on public display for the devotion of the faithful. (Report on the State of the Church of Piacenza, December 11. 1879. Archives of the Seminary of Piacenza.)

The analogy thus established by Bishop Scalabrini with his concept of pastoral care for emigrants assumes here a particular importance: popular religiosity must be safeguarded as a pillar for the faith. When speaking about emigration, he always referred to the concept of “ancestral faith,” “the faith of our fathers,” the most precious treasure of the spiritual and cultural heritage of the migrant: the veneration of the hometown Saints is the living and concrete symbol of the faith handed down through the generations.

The Church wants that while we honor its Saints, we also join it in “the reason why it glorifies them. They pleased God by their virtues, we must follow their footsteps.” (Homily of All Saints, 1882. AGS 3016/8). The most important result that Bishop Scalabrini expects from the devotion to the Saints is a growth in faith:

Glorious in heaven for the works done in faith and for the faith here on earth, all Saints speak to us first of all of the glories of faith; faith which is the treasure of domestic life, that renews the love of children for their parents and brings everything to perfection and holiness; faith that binds together in charity all peoples and all things of the world and keeps us aware of our final account by reminding us, after the example of the Saints, that the life of a Christian on earth is a battlefield on which like brave soldiers we fight hard to gain eternal happiness. Here, we are tried by fire to be cleansed of our impurities; we are pilgrims on our way home, unceasingly surrounded by powerful and cruel enemies. If the hardships of the battle weaken us, if the flame of purification burns us, if the going is tiresome, let us look at the crown of triumph, at the faith of the Saints; let us look also at the faith we profess, and our souls will find strength. (Homily of All Saints, 1976. AGS 3016/8).

## B. “To make myself a slave to all.” Spirituality in Action

### 1) “To make myself a slave to all” (*See* 1Cor 9,19)

“Divinization,” as continuation of the Incarnation, becomes continuation of the saving mission of Christ. Conformity to Christ crucified becomes conformity to the redeeming work of the cross. Christian prayer, as answer to the initiative of God—Love, becomes love for human beings. The “Our Father” is the most authentic prayer because it offers us the possibility of bringing together faith and life and attention to the saving will of God and readiness to commit ourselves totally to a faithful and creative solidarity with the brethren.

Meditation on human history, in the light of the Bible and in reading *in fide* the signs of the times, brings a Christian to the necessity of becoming actively involved in the history of salvation. Through its action of thanksgiving, the Eucharist places man in a dimension of gratitude and makes him share in the redeeming work of Christ. The eucharistic prayer marks the way to salvation: “It is our salvation, always and everywhere to give you thanks.” When we proclaim the death and resurrection of our Lord while we wait for his coming in glory, we strengthen and make fruitful our faith in the redemption brought about by the cross. By celebrating and living the memorial of the passion and resurrection of our Lord, the life of a Christian becomes a living, grateful, and enthusiastic witness of salvation and becomes itself a proclamation of the Good News. “When we come to know the word of God (that in Jesus Christ was made flesh), we do not have the right to refuse to welcome it; when we welcome it, we do not have the right to refuse that it may be made flesh in us; when it is made flesh in us, we cannot keep it for ourselves: from that moment on we belong to those who wait for it.” (M. Delbr el).

Paraphrasing a Bonhoeffer’s sentence, we could say that two things are equally necessary: to speak to our brother of God and to speak to God of our brother. The two ways of Christian witness are proclamation and prayer.

These are also the principles ruling Bishop Scalabrini's life: from his prayer-life flows his apostolic life; from his "devotion," understood in its Christian meaning of total surrender to God, flows his total dedication to man; from his practices of piety flows what he calls "perpetual prayer." Life becomes prayer when it perfectly combines contemplation and action, love of God and love of man, "the glory of God and the salvation of souls." "He lived constantly present to God and to himself." (Witness L. Cella, Diocesan Process, p. 612).

This explains the unity that Bishop Scalabrini was able to create in his life, his coherence, and the indivisibility he admired in Saint Charles: the ever-present harmony between conviction and action, the flowing of life from faith, the immediate and uninterrupted transition from adoration of Christ present in the Eucharist to the service of Christ present, in his vision of faith, in man and in history: **VIDEO DOMINUM INNIXUM SCALAE.** (See Gn. 28,13).

Bishop Scalabrini's long list of synodal regulations begins with these words: "Faith! We believe that this is the precious deposit from where every talk should begin" (*Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Prima*, Piacenza 1880, p. 2).

Scalabrini's "practices" of piety are acts of faith that enable him to "see the Lord" in all things; to listen to the Lord constantly either when God speaks directly in the silence of meditation and adoration, or when he speaks through the human mediations of the Church, the calls of humanity, the cry of the poor and the signs of the time. When we read his writings, consider the way he talked, the way he faced a religious, human, or social problem, the way he made his decisions and the way he acted, we can see that he was listening to God, in vigilant expectation of the coming of the Lord, in willing availability to the Spirit.

In the order of nature as of grace, all is guided by the hand of God, and the wishes of heaven are sometimes revealed in certain small circumstances that at the time escape the human eye but in time shine with a light clear enough to those who observe them carefully. (Address for the Inauguration of the *Tempio del Carmine*, Piacenza, 1884. AGS 3018/8).

“He was constantly guided by an awareness of the divine.” (Witness L. Cornaggia-Medici, Diocesan Process, p. 731). “We work, God does.” The real actor, the main character in his life is God; he considered himself only the instrument, the worker, the servant! This attitude toward divine initiative involves his whole being, his talents, his strength, and his time in an activity he himself defines as “feverish,” but which always remained prayerful:

Saint Augustine tells us that “he who created man without man, does not want to save man without man” that is without his cooperation. A fundamental part of this necessary cooperation is prayer! [...] Let us bless the Lord then, beloved children, for this beautiful necessity of praying him in which he placed us; let us give him thanks for this rich source of goodness which he opened for us, granting us to be in dialogue with him, in intimate familiarity with him. Let us take advantage of it. *Take*—I will tell you with the Apostle—*the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God (Eph 6,17) praying at all times and in every possible way, while keeping constant watch. (See Eph 5,20; Col 4,2).*

*Yes, dearly beloved, at all times and in every possible way.* Not only in private and alone, not only with our lips and in our heart, but also in public and in community, also in our most ordinary daily occupations. In this regard, this is what the Apostle said to the Corinthians: *So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. (1Cor 10,31).* This is perpetual prayer, the perpetual sacrifice of praise to the Lord; prayer that does not deprive you of your time, but that gives you time; prayer that does not impede any occupation of your life, but that perfects them. Work with your mind and your heart set in God and his law, and you will fulfill the command: *You must pray always. (See Lk 18,1). (Fede, vigilanza, preghiera, Piacenza 1899, pp. 20-21)*

The episcopal ministry of John B. Scalabrini unfolds between two aspirations significantly expressed in his first and last pastoral letter:

As for myself, debtor to you all, I shall embrace you all in my ministry, making myself a slave to all for the sake of the Gospel. (1st Pastoral Letter, Como 1876, p. 2).

I will be happy indeed, if at the end of the visitation I will be able to truly repeat with the Apostle: I have made myself a slave to all so

as to win all to Christ! (*See* 1Cor 9,19). To win all to Christ! This is the constant, the supreme aspiration of my soul! (*Pastoral Letter*, May 5, 1905, p. 2).

His contemporaries were astonished by the activity of the new bishop who had resolved:

With the greatest joy I will spend myself and I will spend more than myself for your souls. So that my spirit may not grow faint, with the Apostle, I will look upon the Origin and Developer of our faith (*See* Heb 12,2), who for the glory of the Father became man and became obedient even to death on the cross! (*See* Phil 2,8). [...] Everything will be totally devoted to you, so that the kingdom of God may grow among you, peace may reign, and everyone may do his part to lead a holy and peaceful life. I shall not spare any effort, venerable brothers, and beloved children, to be a father to those in sorrow, a teacher to the ignorant, a guide to the priests, a shepherd to all, so that, made all things to all, I may win all to Christ. (*1st Pastoral Letter*, Como 1876, p. 3).

Toward the end of his life, by then exhausted from the strains and sickness, he continued the pastoral visitations with the same style and the same commitment that had amazed his companions during his first visitation when he was only 36 years old. In August 1902 he wrote:

This is the 132nd parish that I visited this year; this is almost a crazy thing to do, but I want to make up for time lost last year (because of his visit to emigrants in United States). My health, thank God, is always excellent. They tell me I am getting younger! Yes, it is the youth of the flower that blooms in the morning, full of life and it is good and wilted by evening. But it does not matter so long as we get where we are going. (*Letter to Bonomelli*, August 8, 1902).

And in October 1903:

My illness was just a slight fever of twenty-four hours that overtook me on my return from a very tiring visitation to parishes of the upper Apennines. There were too many exhaustions, which I paid with three or four days of rest, and then I was back running! I do not know how to be moderate, nor can I adapt to the idea of changing my ways, and yet I must do so. My years are adding up 64 work is getting



heavier, our needs become increasingly serious. The socialistic tide is rising and everything persuades and impels me to work beyond my physical and moral strength, and to go forward *in nomine Domini* as long as I can. (*Ibid.*, October 4, 1903).

His brother, Professor Angelo, will recall with emotion:

I still see you, as I did the last time when I ran to you at the news of your sickness, at the desk of your study-room where you spent thirty years of unmatched activity.

You told me: I am exhausted to the point of death!

And so, you passed from the peak of your activity to the rest of the tomb as rapidly as the sunset of the tropical sun.

Only a few months earlier you were running through the vast regions of Brazil, apostle of religion and country among the Italian communities, living with such toils and sacrifices that would have exhausted any other person! Only a few days earlier you were climbing the cliffs of the Apennines in your diocese carrying out your episcopal ministry, and finally you were resting, tired to death!

The spiritual activity had worn out your body and your heart, a heart responsive to everything that makes life beautiful and holy: your noble heart was now exhausted!

Love and science worried at your bedside in a silence full of tears; the whole city, anxious and apprehensive, crowded the lobby of your residence; while you, in serenity and peace, had a smile, a word of comfort for everyone, saying for yourself the prayers of the dying.

You were resting, like a good worker who has done his day, like a pilgrim who has finally reached his desired goal. (*Trent'anni di Apostolato—Memorie e documenti*. Roma 1909, pp. 5-6).

The same apostolic activity was what he wanted from his priests:

In the person of this innkeeper, you know, venerable brothers, that we are all instructed: "Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I will repay you on my way back." (Lk 10,35). As though to say: "I gave you a little, it is up to you to supply the rest." You have the money: the talents given you to carry out your ministry and build up the body of Christ.

Trade, work, spend! If necessary, wear yourselves out; spend all you have; spend even yourselves to fulfill your ministry; reach even martyrdom. (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 247).

As you well know, a pastor is in debt to all, always ready to help! [...] Then there are those who set up shop, as it were, in the parish house. If they are asked, they give help immediately and do not neglect to instruct the faithful that come to them; but they are not moved by zeal. They are not concerned about the needs and dangers of their flock; through rash prudence, pusillanimity, or indolence, they neglect the necessary means. These men may be compared to flags hoisted on top of towers for all to see, that do not flutter or ruffle no matter what the wind. This is what the Prophet says of them: *Nihil patiebantur super contritione Israel*—they are not made ill by the collapse of Joseph (Am 6,6). That must not be the pastor's life! Remember well what the father of the house commanded to his servant: *Exi in via et compelle intrare*—Go out to the highways [...] and make people come in. (Lk 14,23). These are the zealous pastors, and they are absolutely necessary in our times! (3rd Address at the Second Synod, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, p. 194).

The salvation of souls is the only reason for the existence of anyone called to apostolic work:

To work hard, readily, unrelentingly for the good of souls, in order to win them for God and save them: *In hoc positi sumus*—we are destined for this. (1Thes 3,3), this is what we are priests for. The welfare of souls? This is our life, our only reason for existence, and all our life must be a constant search for souls. We must not eat, drink, sleep, study, nor even enjoy any recreation except to do good to souls, without ever getting tired, not ever! As Christianity binds a Christian to behave always as a Christian, in the same way priesthood binds a priest to behave always as a priest. (Circular Letter, February 7, 1898, p. 26).

The only “ambition” for a minister of God is to offer himself as a sacrifice for the coming of the kingdom:

To work, to toil, to make every sacrifice to extend the Kingdom of God in men's souls; to get down on one's knees before the world, as it were, in order to beg from it, as a favor, the permission to do it some

good this is the only ambition of the priest! Whatever he has of power, authority, talent, and strength, all things he employs to this end!

Is innocence in danger? He becomes its custodian! Is there a calamity? He hastens to relieve it! Does a quarrel break out? He is the herald of peace! He is here guide to those who are led astray, support to those who stagger, shield for those who are oppressed; there, eye to the blind, tongue for the mute, father to the orphans, mother to the children, companion to the prisoners. He makes himself the slave of all to win all to Christ.

He hurries from the shack of the poor to the palace of the rich, from the altar to the bedside of the dying, from the mountain to the valley in search of the lost sheep. He finds peace only when he holds one close to his heart and carry another on his shoulders; when he binds the wounds of one and provide food, denied to himself, for another; never happier than when, ready to end his day, he can recall the wiping of a tear, the comforting of a family, the defense of an innocent, the name of God glorified. (*Il Prete Cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, p. 25).

Quoting Saint Augustine, this is how he describes the episcopal ministry:

Nothing is more difficult in this world, Saint Augustine writes, nothing harder, nothing riskier, than the office of bishop. *Nihil in hac vita difficilius, laboriosius, periculosius Episcopi officio.*

This is the bishop's mission: to lead the army of the clergy and deploy them in a strategic way to conquer souls; to choose the proper battleground for this peaceful fight of truth against error and against human passions; to assign each soldier of Christ to the post fitting his talents; to distribute responsibilities according to merits; to refrain the eagerness of some and excite the ardor of others; to inspire the lukewarm and encourage the strong; to inflame all with the holy fire of the apostolic work; and, at the same time, to be able to join severity with compassion, the demands of justice with fatherly tenderness; to guard the flock from ravenous wolves, especially those who go about the fold in lambs' clothing; to open wide his heart to embrace all people; to look day and night after the needs of souls; to watch jealously over their spiritual welfare; to multiply the remedies according to their ills; to feed them by word and example; to give himself totally

and at all times without expecting any human recognition; to defend courageously the honor of the cross adorning his chest, always ready to wash it in his own blood rather than deny it; to be the center of holy doctrine and sacred authority in order to burn as a fire radiating light, warmth, and life. (Address for the Consecration of Bishop Angelo Fiorini, November 26, 1899. AGS 3018/4).

We cannot help thinking about his almost 2,000 days spent in the pastoral visitation that he always began praying to the Holy Spirit “that he may grant us light and strength proportionate to the great desire we have to be of help to him, so that your bishop may also repeat, in truth, with the Apostle: “I made myself the slave to all, to gain all to Christ.” He expressed these desires:

We look forward in greatest earnest to embrace all of you, venerable brothers, and beloved children, to hold you to my heart, to bless you, and to feed you the word and the sacraments. [...] We shall come [...] to encourage you in the practice of Christian virtue, of piety, of harmony, and of peace; to raise our voice to defend the oppressed; to offer comfort to the afflicted and consolation to the poor; to welcome back those led astray and mix together tears of joy with tears of sorrow; ready to give up for you not only whatever we have of comfort, tranquility, and rest, but even our own life, if needed; because *the good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep*. (Jn 10,11). Custodians and Teachers of truth *with the command not to keep it a secret* (1Cor 9,16) we shall preach it without reservation and with apostolic freedom, at all times, everywhere, and to all. [...] Do not expect from us sublimity of eloquence or display of human learning; we shall preach in all simplicity Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1Cor 2,2). (Pastoral Visitation, Piacenza 1876, pp. 8, 10, 11).

Monsignor Peter Piacenza, who often accompanied him, has this description of a visitation’s day:

The bishop arrives [...] towards evening; he goes to the church and gives a warm and affectionate talk to the crowd waiting for him. The people are devout, joyful, moved to tears. Immediately he begins to hear the men’s confessions, which last until late at night.

The other priests have finished; they are free. It is near midnight, but at the door of the little room where the good shepherd welcomes them to forgiveness, there is still a long line of penitents. [...]

He is up very early in the morning, hears confessions again, and at the appointed hour, after a brief homily, he celebrates Mass, during which he distributes communion. [...]

The Mass is over [...] one would say the good bishop had a right to a little rest. [...] What rest! [...] during these visits rest in unknown, [...] everything conspires to keep him from it. In fact, when the Mass is over and while the people are leaving, the bishop, to make use of every minute, visits the sacristy, examines the vestments, the altars. Meanwhile, the children to be confirmed are filing into the pews. The pews are filled, the doors are closed, and after a short sermon to the children and their sponsors, the bishop administers the sacrament of confirmation.

The first round is over, but in some places, there are two and three rails full of youngsters. Everybody is tired. The bishop, still standing, encourages the others, is again at the altar. Now all the children are all confirmed, the church is emptied. [...]

The bishop carefully examines the church, the vestments, and the liturgical vessels, and has everything noted down so that he can later issue the necessary directives. He then goes to the rectory, and while the others are finally allowed a little rest, the bishop examines the parish files, the records of baptisms, confirmations, marriages, deaths, the parish statistics. He goes over the church accounts and the bequests. [...]

It is noon time; [...] the meal is over [...] and the bells are joyously calling the people back to church. It is full to overflowing, and we get into the sacristy and choir with difficulty. And here is the bishop, among the children of the catechism classes. This is where he likes most to be. He listens to them, questions them, gives them a little fatherly sermon, blesses them. [...]

During the pastoral visit the bishop is required to perform a special commemoration of the dead. The only way Bishop Scalabrini seems to know how to do this is by leading everyone in procession to the cemetery. [...] He gives one of his characteristic talks to the living; he evokes feeling of great affection [...] he blesses the dead. The pro-

cession returns to the church, and after a closing sermon, the bishop gives the last blessing to his flock; they are all sad to see him leave.

Amid a thousand voices of farewell and the sound of the bells, he mounts his horse and leaves [...] to begin another day in another parish. (P. Piacenza, *Il Giubileo Episcopale*, No. 6, June 16, 1900).

“Not to mention the fact that these periods of pastoral visitation exhausted him!” Archdeacon Francis Tedeschi, who often accompanied him as co-visitor, expressed his opinion in these words: “The bishop works much too hard; if he goes at this rate, he will surely shorten his life.” (F. Gregori, *La vita e l’opera di un grande Vescovo*. Torino 1934, p. 81). Even more because many parishes could be reached only after laborious horseback rides: “In three weeks I visited twenty mountain parishes, riding several hundred miles on horseback.” (Letter to Bonomelli, June 17, 1884). “He spared himself no work or sacrifice in visiting his diocese many times, riding horseback as much as eight or ten hours.” (Witness A. Bracchi, *Diocesan Process*, p. 498). The pace of the fifth pastoral visitation was the same as all the others, but the strain, because of age and sickness, was much harder: “My body is wearing out, and I am moving with long strides toward the last step of all. Meanwhile, I am talking, preaching, writing, journeying on horseback, travelling, sweating, working, so that I may become pleasing at least to the Lord.” (Letter to Bonomelli, August 11, 1903).

The fire of zeal became “fever” on seeing that for reasons more earthly than evangelical a good portion of Catholics of his time were stout defenders of the “pontifical rights,” practically forgetting that the foremost right and duty of the Church was the salvation of humanity.

Another fever has, however, remained in me, the one caused from seeing so many straying from the Church because of those who should instead look for ways to draw them to it! You well know what a torment this fever is! (Letter to Bonomelli, August 16, 1887).

He was not afraid to remind Leo XIII that the Church must devote itself only to the “interests of Jesus Christ and of souls,” not to political, or worse, to parties’ interests:

I have written more than once, strong, and loud, even too loud, you know to whom! I even told him that he will soon be before God to give an account of the many souls that are getting lost, and of the unspeakable sorrows brought on the bishops, almost deprived by now of freedom of speech and action. (*Ibid.*, January 1887).

It was not a bitter zeal however and he overcame even understandable temptations of discouragement:

Unfortunately, things are going very badly! Everyone sees this and no one is giving any thought to a remedy. There is truly no hope but in God. Now that not even the loudest trumpets can wake the sleepers and blow away the last illusions, let us leave things to him. We continue calmly on our way and try to save as many souls as we can. (*Ibid.*, May 1889).

Such a stand even in regard to the Vatican may leave a superficial observer with the impression of an impertinent and untimely zeal. But in truth Bishop Scalabrini rejected this kind of zeal, as he steadily reminded all that the spirit of Christ was one of meekness and merciful love:

It is also fundamental to know how to do the works of God. Some undertake the works of God in a human spirit: they gather little or no fruit. You know what God's spirit is. *Mitissimus Dei spiritus est et mansuetissimus qui non turbine glomeratur, non in nubilo lucet, sed merae serenitatis, apertus et simplex*—The spirit of God is most meek and gentle; it does not abide in the whirlwind; it does not shine in the clouds! But it is clear and simple, pure serenity. (Tertullian, *Ad Marc.*) Christ worked in this spirit, and his ministers must be inspired with like spirit. Since the Lord is not found in commotion and fire, one must minister with this same spirit of mildness. *Fili, says the Sage, in mansuetudine omnia operatus perfice, et super hominum gloria diligeris*—My son, conduct all your affairs with humility, and you will be loved more than a giver of gift (Sir 3,19). With any other attitude, pastors and whoever else is dedicated to the care of souls will hinder their salvation and the work of God. This attitude or spirit of mildness also seems necessary because the works of God are usually prickly with difficulties; these can be met only with generosity and confidence in God. There is no need to wonder, then, if in the ministry one encounters difficulties or persecutions, for all the saints have experienced

these! Instead, we must wonder indeed if everything goes just as we wish. *Si me persecuti sunt et vos persequentur; si sermonem meum servaverunt, et vestrum servabunt*—If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will also keep yours. (Jn 15,20). Persevere, then, to the end with an undefeated spirit. (3rd Address at the 2nd Synod, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Secunda*, Piacenza 1893, pp. 195-196).

The shepherd must be a minister of God in patience:

There is a very subtle temptation, which can with little difficulty steal into the souls of those who give direction to others. They see that often their labor does not yield immediate or abundant fruit. They begin to think that the matter is hopeless. They become depressed; they weaken in their ministry!

But why be surprised if what the Apostle experienced in himself should happen also to others? *Misericordiam consecutus sum, ut in me primo ostenderet Christus Jesus omnem patientiam ad informationem eorum qui credituri sunt illi in vitam aeternam*—But for that reason I was mercifully treated, so that in me, as the foremost, Christ Jesus might display all his patience as an example for those who would come to believe in him for everlasting life (1Tm 1,16). Let them instead be like the ministers of Christ in all patience, remembering the words of the Lord: *Alius est qui seminat, alius est qui metit. Ego misi vos metere quod non seminastis. Alii laboraverunt et vos in laborem eorum introistis*—One sows and another reaps. I sent you to reap what you have not sown; others have done the work, and you are sharing the fruits of their work (Jn 4,37-38). They must sow the word and leave others to gather the fruit! They must remember that in the ordination to the priesthood they were given the duty to care for, not necessarily to be successful. They must, however, radiate love, for *charitas omnia credit, omnia sperat, omnia sustinet*—love believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things (1Cor 13,7). (*Ibid.*, pp. 194-195).

The priest must take the Good Shepherd as his model:

Sympathize with the shortcomings of all; love everyone, everyone without exceptions! Imitate the Good Shepherd: let his zeal that binds not rend, be your zeal; his spirit of mildness be your spirit! Abhor sin, never the sinner! Beware altogether of both excessive leniency and sullen sternness. (*Il prete cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, p. 38).



In his address of thanks on the occasion of his episcopal jubilee, in tracing an inventory of his twenty-five years as a bishop, John Baptist Scalabrini could find only one thing of which he could no reprimand himself, his strong and fatherly love that knew how to reconcile mildness with fortitude:

My years as bishop, however, which in your faith and goodness you find a cause of celebration, are for me a source of fear and trembling. Today more than ever I feel the formidable burden that weighs on my shoulders. I think of all the various, remarkable, extraordinary, special graces which, with constant cooperation on my part, would have brought me to a high degree of perfection, and I am afraid. I think of the great accounting I must render the Divine Judge of my twenty-five years as bishop. I think of the dangers that, especially today, pastoral care implies. I think of the responsibility of the many souls who preceded me in the final journey toward eternity, and I think of all and every one of you dearly beloved, and if the future terrifies me, the past makes me deeply humble and disturbs me: I can say with Saint Augustine, *me terret quod vobis Episcopus sum*—that I am your bishop makes me tremble.

I am humbled and disturbed by the thought of all the good I might have done you with a more dynamic will, a more enlightened zeal, a more industrious virtue.

I remember the promise I made you on the day of my solemn installation, the first time I had the joy of speaking to you! I warned you that you would not find in me all that you had admired in my predecessors, and I added sincerely: *"I assure you, however, dearly beloved, that you will find in me the heart of a father! Have my actions fulfilled the promise? I do not dare answer for myself!"*

But I can assure you of this: I have always loved you, and your joys were always my joys, your sorrows my sorrows. My love for you, o citizens of Piacenza, never wavered nor did it weaken because of oppositions or offences. If I hated the sin, I always sought to embrace the sinner! I came only wanting your salvation; like the Apostle to the Corinthians, I came trusting not in words of human wisdom but *in ostensione Spiritus et virtutis*—with a demonstration of spirit and power. (1Cor 2,4). I came announcing peace; I did not spare any sacrifice to have the humble olive tree grow in your midst, taking care that under

its shade might blossom charity; love for Jesus Christ, the Church, its august head, and an effective desire to do good for this beloved city and diocese! I have loved all of you without distinctions. If some of you have seen my face at times in an attitude of severity with a cloud of sadness on my forehead and words of reproach on my tongue, let them understand that they were coming from a font of love, from a heart in sorrow for being hindered in his desire for good.

I loved you because of a debt of justice because you are my flock! I wish I had the means to show you more than just with words this love of mine for you! Every year is another line in the chain that binds me to you, a chain forged in mutual charity, a chain which, far from eroding with time, grows ever stronger and becomes unbreakable. (*Per il mio Giubileo Episcopale*, 1901. AGS 3018/3).

He urged also lay Catholics to be enthusiastic about both charity and apostolic work:

Have the energy of apostolic work because every Christian is indeed an apostle. How can one know the truth, see it, experience it, love it, and not feel a strong desire to proclaim it, to share it with others!

Have the energy that knows how to face the hour of trial and battle, because a Christian is indeed a soldier. [...] Be strong in battle, but with love! I shall tell you with a famed modern writer, no matter how evil, our adversaries still belong in the general plan toward good, and if God deals out hard blows, they will change! Touch with your hand the sanctuary of their heart; study one by one all its cords; you will find there also the cord of love. Touch it with gentleness which is the sister of charity; that cord will move, and you will have gained an immortal soul and bowed a new heart to the scepter of truth. Remember it always: Christian truth does not want at its service men that kill; it wants men that save. (Address at the 2nd Regional Meeting of the Catholic Committees, April 24, 1889. AGS 3018/18).

## 2) Missionary Spirit

Bishop Scalabrini's missionary vocation, first shown in his early priesthood when he applied for admission to the Foreign Missions' Institute of Milan, remained strong and characterized his life as a bishop. Pius XI, the Pope of the missions, called him a "missionary bishop." In his addresses to departing missionaries, his nostalgia for the missions keeps surfacing:

I feel that faith has made my heartbeat more vigorously, more strongly; the infinite charity of God fills my breast, my mind is exalted with the prospect and desire of the apostolate. As I clasp to myself the golden cross of bishop, I gently complain, almost, to Jesus because he has denied to me the wooden cross of the missionary, and I cannot refrain from expressing to you, my young apostles of Christ, my deepest respect and I cannot help feeling a holy envy of you. (Address to departing Missionaries, January 24, 1889. AGS 3018/2).

On his way to Brazil, he wrote:

We are sailing past the coast of mysterious Africa. For hours at a time, almost motionless and prey to mysterious sadness I keep looking at those once flourishing lands. I think of the vigorous Catholic life in the early centuries of Christianity. [...] I think, in short to what these lands were and what they are, and I am tempted to weep. [...] Oh! why do we priests not run to evangelize these peoples and to sow with our blood the fertile seed of Christianity! (Letter to C. Magot, June 21, 1904. AGS 3022/22).

Invited by the president of the Brazilian state of Parana to take an interest in the extensive parish of Tibagi, which numbered among its 20,000 souls Brazilians, Indians, and Italian emigrants, Bishop Scalabrini immediately accepted to contact the chief of a semi-civilized tribe to whom he promised and sent his missionaries. Then he suggested to the Holy See a project of dividing the mission field of Brazil among the various religious orders and congregations, so that besides their specific and traditional activities they might find a way to dedicate themselves also to catechize the Indios.

We can say that Scalabrini's life was spent in obedience to the missionary mandate of Christ: "Go and evangelize; go and teach!"

He specifically refers to this mandate when he speaks of three characteristic of his pastoral action that can also be classified under the terms of “proclamation of the Word,” kerygma, and evangelization. Communication with words is undoubtedly necessary for the kerygma. “Religion is revelation and revelation is word; God’s plan, in fact, cannot be revealed to man but through the word.” (On the Education of Deaf-mutes, Piacenza 1880, p. 7). “The word: this power coexistent with thought and manifestation of ideal worlds! This mysterious bond that joins together the physical to the moral realm, that unites mind and heart!” (*Ibid.*, p. 5)

The education of the deaf-mutes is communication of the Word to the persons most isolated from communication itself and from social and ecclesiastical communion. Catechesis is intelligible communication and assimilation of the Word which establishes the foundation for the community of the believers. The apostolate among migrants aims to re-establish the communication interrupted or hindered by emigration: a restoration that leads them back to the social and ecclesiastical community. Bishop Scalabrini defines it as the “reconquest to the faith,” in analogy with the conquest to the faith of the gentiles, and “evangelization.”

His pastoral letter dealing with the education (“education,” not “assistance”) of the deaf-mutes begins in this way:

Since the day when Jesus spoke to the Apostles the sublime words *go into the whole world, teach all nations*, Christian churches began to rise, and near them there began to multiply kindergartens and schools for the young, especially for orphans and derelicts [...] and all those forms of education and assistance with which the Religion of Christ has always come to the help of the unfortunate and the oppressed! (*Ibid.*, pp. 3 4).

About the catechism he proclaims that “it is completely based in the word revealed by God to his Church and basically has its roots in the mandate of the Divine Master to his Apostles: *Go and teach all nations*. (*Il Catechismo Cattolico*, Piacenza 1877, p. 3).

To his departing missionaries he said: “Every sendoff of missionaries is nothing else than the renewing, or better the continuation, of what the Divine Master did when he said to his

Apostles: *Go and teach all nations!*" (Address to departing missionaries, Sept. 9, 1891. AGS 3018/2).

The fact that he defined the Congregation of the Missionaries for Emigrants "a project of evangelization" had a special significance in a time when the term "evangelization" meant almost exclusively the proclamation of the Gospel to the infidels or the *plantatio Ecclesiae* where it had never before taken root. Furthermore, in those days, salvation was generally understood mainly in individualistic and eschatological terms, while the relationship between the Gospel and the world was reduced to the point of being identified with the relationship between Church and state. This was so true, that in Italy, for example, the conflict between Church and state paralyzed evangelization and contributed to the progressive de-christianization of the people.

Because of his concern, frequently expressed even in pessimistic terms, over the increasing dissociation between the realm of culture, science, work, and society and the realm of faith, Bishop Scalabrini insisted on the need of reconciliation between faith and reason, nature and grace, Church and state, society, and individuals. He considered the traditional pastoral activity, patterned after a rural and somewhat feudal model as a thing of the past. He deplored the integralism of the aristocrats and the oligarchy who controlled the *Opera dei Congressi* and limited the activity of Catholics to defend the "rights of the Church". He became acutely aware that the style of proclaiming the Gospel had not kept pace with the social and cultural changes brought about by the first industrialization. Preaching had become void of its fundamental content; indeed, it was no longer understood by the people. He vigorously proclaimed that it was the task of the Church to "evangelize the sons of labor and despair." Society would be reclaimed for Christ only through the "evangelization" of the working masses, the new determinant component of the people:

In every country of the world, the sons of labor comprise the great majority of the population. To inspire in the workers the essentially peaceful and salutary spirit of Christianity is to save society. (*Associazioni Cattoliche*, Piacenza 1885, p. 4).

Revolution worked at turning the masses, especially the workers, away from the Church; now, we must bring them back to it. I repeat, we must forge again minds and hearts with the great truths of the Gospel. (Centennial of Saint Aloysius. Encyclical of the Holy Father. *Obolo dell'amore filiale*, Piacenza 1891, p. 10).

From these words, we can clearly see that Bishop Scalabrini still held fast to the idea of the Church as a "perfect society" and to the dream of a "Christian society," but he had also realized that the "missionary" activity of the Church could not be separated from its "pastoral"; activity; true missionaries are not only those who go from Christian to non-Christian countries, but also those who do pastoral work in any part of the world.

Bishop Scalabrini's missionary intuition gives first place to catechesis. A catechist is a missionary because he announces the Good News, he has first received himself, and thus he continues the *plantatio Ecclesiae* as it happened in the first Christian communities which were built upon the proclamation of the Gospel, the Good News announced by Christ:

The catechesis of the early Church [...] was a true source of Christian life, where it developed and flourished. (*II Catechismo Cattolico*, Piacenza 1877, p. 10).

Teachers must be imbued with a great zeal for the salvation of souls redeemed by the precious blood of the Savior. (*Ibid.*, p. 86). Be the apostles of the new generation; the saviors of your brethren. (*Ai Maestri e alle Maestre delle Scuole Catechistiche*, Piacenza 1877, p. 5).

The catechesis of adults aimed to make parents the first catechists, in this way, the presence of the priest was not indispensable for the first *plantatio Ecclesiae*. For migrants still without religious assistance Bishop Scalabrini recommended that they gather together on Sunday for community prayer and for the teaching of catechism. In reality, it was in this way that in many migrants' colonies the Church was "planted" even before the arrival of the priest

Father Silvio Riva understood well the spirit of the Apostle of Catechism:

Men and apostles like J. B. Scalabrini should come down among us again to lead priests and Christians to nourish themselves with the doctrine of Christ and the teachings of the Church with evangelical

ardor and missionary spirit, aware of walking the main road of Christianity, the one that prepared for the first conquests of the Gospel and gave the Church its strength for expansion. (S. Riva, *Mons. Scalabrini, "catechista,"* in L. Rebecchi, *Considerazioni cetechistiche del Servo di Dio Monsignor Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, Piacenza 1956, p. 11).

If we limit ourselves to his verbal pronouncements, sometimes we may get the impression that Bishop Scalabrini held to the idea of a Church on the defensive and therefore closed in itself. Instead, the missionary drive leads him to be open to history in the making. He may also give the impression of dreaming of a return to a middle ages *christianitas*; in reality, he is open to the new and to the diverse, to the point of being considered a pioneer in more than one field of pastoral and social commitment. Proof of this is his concept of religious life for his missionary priests and sisters for migrants: it is a concept free of the rigidity of the traditional forms which creates space for the freedom of movement needed for the missions. We can say the same about his concept of the pastoral care for migrants that bears clear signs of novelty and openness in overcoming not only linguistic and cultural barriers, but also the rigidity of certain local ecclesiastical structures, though always maintaining the episcopal structure.

Still more significant is his interpretation of history in the light of faith that leads him to view emigration as an instrument for the spreading of the Gospel and for sowing the seed of the word. His concern to keep pace with "the world on the move" leads him to that "transigence" which for him is, basically, to consider the irreversible events of history, ever evolving and therefore ever changing, and to instill in them the ferment of the Gospel. The past never returns; to hold on to old methods like "octopuses to rocks" is both anti-historical and anti-pastoral:

Let us keep in mind that as a universal and permanent society the Church has received the power to update its laws according to the needs at all times and places. Bound to proceed in harmony with the providential laws ruling humanity, to who's good it is preordained, it is necessary that the Church follows its movements, study its demands, respond to its needs, in line with its mission. (*Intransigenti e transigenti*, Bologna 1885, p. 16).

It is, then, history that comes into mission. The Church is one and unchangeable, but it lives in history and therefore it can develop its mission only in historical realities:

While remaining solid as an indestructible tower in its divine element, the Roman Church showed an ever-splendid youth, an ever-exuberant vitality, adapting and updating to the flux and reflux of human generations: *circumdanda varietate*. (*Ibid.*, p. 17).

Bishop Scalabrini's "transigence" consists in his choice of the most appropriate means to carry out the mission of the Church within the "events that came into the realm of history," without "ignoring what the times have produced," but calmly discerning "between good and evil" so that "they be isolated from the historical situation and directed toward the genuine good of humanity." (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

Once again, it is especially in the pastoral initiative for migrants that we find, first of all, his analysis of the socio-cultural situation of these persons, that is, of their historical situation, and then his search for the "most suitable and effective methods of bringing the evangelical message to the men of our day." (*Evangelii nuntiandi*, 40), in their actual conditions.

Another example is his urging of local churches to become "missionary" to the migrants: the churches of departure, tempted to consider the emigrants as already "outsiders," or even "forever lost" and the churches of arrival that had difficulty in seeing them as "insiders," or even saw them as impossible-to-reach.

### 3) Pastoral Vision

In Bishop Scalabrini's time, pastoral activity was considered "theology in practice." There prevailed the concept of the Church as above and beyond history and earth. The priest was placed halfway between God and the community, the "shepherd" leading the "flock" of the faithful: just an intermediary of a hierarchy assisted by the Holy Spirit. He himself was subject to the laws of the hierarchy in the formulation of which he had no voice. He was a member not of the



“teaching Church,” but of the “Church taught,” as Bishop Scalabrini himself puts it.

This ran the risk of restricting pastoral activity within the area of canon law. Bishop Scalabrini’s ecclesiology, however, had already been positively influenced by the school of thought of Tuebingen, particularly by Möehler who held that the Church “builds itself” because it is a living organism responsible for its own life and growth. In other words, it is an active organism: the members of the body of Christ are “active in the Church” and therefore “mediators of salvation.” To be a mediator means to be aware of the divine dimension, essential to the Church, and at the same time, of the human dimension in which the Church in fact exists until the Parousia. Once again, we go back to the concept of the continuation of the Incarnation: the Church is divine and human as its founder is God and man. (*See Conferenze sul Concilio Vaticano, Como 1873*). This means that the shepherd pays attention simultaneously to the “divine factor, above time constraints” and to the “singular, conditioned by time:” “to live totally in revelation and entirely in time as well.” (F.X. Arnold).

This is true also for Bishop Scalabrini: while he rigorously respected the theological nature of the pastoral activity that he drew directly from Christ, word, and bread, he was able to acquire at the same time an effective knowledge of the particular historical situation through all the means available in his time. As Rahner would have put it, he was not a man to be satisfied with the sequence “scripture-magisterium-tradition-speculative reasoning,” but he added a “theological analysis of the situation.”

But who can do both things together? He who has a deep spirituality and therefore reads the times “with the eyes of faith.” The assistance of the Holy Spirit does not render human reflection superfluous; it requires it. Bishop Scalabrini firmly believes in the infallibility of the Pope and of the Church assisted by the Holy Spirit, but he also readily quotes T. Salzano:

To consider the Church as an inorganic mass that must be stimulated by an omnipotent hand, with no one able to enlighten it nor to

submit to it humble and pious reflections, is the greatest harm that one can do it. (*Cattolici di nome e cattolici di fatto*, Piacenza 1887, p. 27).

Bishop Bonomelli, one of the keenest experts on the situation of the Italian Church toward the end of the twentieth century, says this of his colleague of Piacenza:

Divine providence placed me in contact with many men in high positions in the Church of God because of their office, their learning and experience, knowledge of society. I can affirm in all sincerity, however, that I never met anyone, or very few, who knew as he did our true social and religious conditions and the real needs of our time. He would have gathered all into his great heart, provided for all, sacrificed himself for all, forgetting himself completely. (G. Bonomelli, *Il Monumento ricordo a Mons. Scalabrini. Le voci del cuore*, Como, September 11, 1913).

Today we would say that he had the “charism of totality,” a charism proper to pastoral activity.

As we have seen, his theological analysis of the situation is evident in his interpretation of the phenomenon of migration. We can also see it in his considerations about the state of the Italian Church of his days. It is a theological reflection that goes far beyond the legalistic view of canon law. He is not all that concerned about the Church losing its temporal privileges and power, even though legitimately acquired; he is not all interested about the glorious past of the Church, but he is more interested in how to prepare for the future, building a tomorrow (that it may built itself). He worries about the absence of Catholics from political life, because abstention contributes to the crumbling of the cultural field of faith: “if this legislation hostile to the Church continues, we will be lucky if after many years there will be something left on which to build again!” (quoted by witness G. B. Nasalli-Rocca, Diocesan Process, pp. 745-746).

Why does he insist on the recalling of the *non expedit*? “To slowly but surely prepare for a better future.” The very “mounting tide of socialism” is to him the “voice of God,” “a warning that it would be a folly to let it pass unheeded.” (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, p. 7).

Theological analysis does not exempt from scientific analysis, even “secular” analysis. As for the verification of the relics of Saints Antoninus and Victor, which he did for an eminently religious purpose, he did not hesitate to ask for the cooperation of the anticlerical Professor Discoride Vitali, a talented scientist; in the same way he turned to “secular” sciences for his analysis of the phenomenon of migration. We have heard him say that migration is preordained by God for the perfecting of man on earth and for the glory of God in heaven. He tells us from which sources he drew this conviction: “This is what Revelation tells us; this is what modern history and biology teach us; only by drawing from these three sources of truth will we be able to understand the laws that rule the phenomenon of migration and establish the norms of practical wisdom that should guide it in its many forms.” (*L'emigrazione degli operai italiani*, Ferrara, 1899).

Bishop Scalabrini studied the phenomenon of migration from all points of view, gathered all data available to him, but he did not stop there! Knowledge of the situation and gathering of data represent only the preliminary conditions for the historical situation of a project, for a connection between question and answer. But the real human needs cannot be fully understood and data cannot be exhaustive: they remain too inconclusive until we know and understand the plan of God for man and history and until we become aware of the task assigned by God to each one of us in carrying out such plan.

To understand man, we need to understand God, his creator, and the love that led God to create man in his own image. To find out what is good for man, we must know the loving plan of the One who molded him. To understand the needs of man, we must understand the love of the heart of God for all those who call him Father. Now, we can learn all this only by faith. In sociology it is not enough to gather data; we must interpret them correctly. In theology, human information, though necessary, is always inadequate without divine information.

For Bishop Scalabrini, the criteria for analysis and the ultimate references for interpretation are to be based in theology and Church teachings. He reads the findings of human research in the light of faith and of the mission of the Church. From this interpretation,

which is the interpretation of faith, he draws his choices, his operative interventions, his actions.

One of Bishop Scalabrini's constant points of reference is the consideration that every man cost Christ's blood and death; his basic concern is that Christ's sacrifice is not wasted because of the culpable negligence, indifference, laziness of those people who, in virtue of their vocation, are called to complete what is lacking in Christ's passion for the building of the Church. This was his concern underlying his polemic with the "intransigents" and the concern that moved him to intervene in favor of migrants. Confronted with the "wandering misery of his country" and with the plea "send us a priest, because here we live and die like animals," he answered in faith: "woe to me if I do not evangelize!"

This answer "in faith," is evangelization and it is a concrete and total answer. All other answers, political, social, or philanthropic, are only partial and introductory because, though part of God's plan, they do not represent its fullness. On the contrary, an answer in faith, being on the level of "fullness," does not neglect the partial aspects; they are parts of human life ordained by God and details in the building of the kingdom.

Out the three surveys conducted by Bishop Scalabrini—emigrants, deafmutes, rice-pickers—came organizations—not just auspices, hopes, or programs—that answered completely to the needs of those poor people. At the same time, he intervened in other "questions" of his time: the labor question, the philosophical question, and the Roman question. It was the typical intervention of a "shepherd" who could "stand fast in the realm of revelation and in the realm of his time."

In a deeper sense, it was the choice of a Christian who makes his own the fundamental option of the only priest, Christ: to do the will of the Father; to offer his whole life in sacrifice to the Father and to the brethren to achieve the fullness of communion with God and among men. Once again, we see Bishop Scalabrini using as final criterion of his personal and pastoral choices, the imitation of Christ, conformity with Christ, the continuation of Incarnation, the practice of faith,

hope, and charity, the virtues through which the Holy Spirit makes us Christ-like.

Bishop Scalabrini's pastoral activity, is indeed marked by the "charism of totality:" everything, time, strength, talents, gifts of grace, the whole man is committed to do the will of the Father who wants the salvation of all, to entrust himself into the hand of the Holy Spirit in order to be a willing instrument of Christ's saving mission: "A bishop must be moved in all things by the Holy Spirit, the secret mover of the most holy humanity of Jesus Christ." (Resolutions, August 24, 1894). It is evident in the charism of "fatherhood" he so deeply experienced for all the faithful; it is recognized in a day of pastoral visitation in which we see that he does not limit himself to the enunciation of doctrines or moral norms, but that he proclaims and witnesses his encounter with Christ and his fundamental choice to be with Christ, in Christ, for Christ.

We heard him saying that a bishop is almost a "sacrament animated by Christ," and that "a bishop's life draws all its strength from an intimate union with him, the Prince of Shepherds, and with his representative on earth, the Pope." (*Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori*, Piacenza 1896, p. 19).

Unity with the Pope, because the totality of the pastoral ministry derives essentially from his relationship with the Church, portrayed by the Fathers of the Church as the wedding between the bishop and his Church: "Groom of the Church, to which he is united by his consecration and of which he wears the mystical ring; he has devoted to it his whole heart. Yes, to a Bishop his Diocese is the dearest thing on earth: father, mother, children." (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

He devotes to the service of the Church's community all the treasures of his spirituality, of his asceticism, of his humanity: contemplation, adoration, asceticism, studies, social commitments, friends. Incidentally, this explains the lack of involvement of which we Scalabrinian missionaries complain about that he did not devote much time to the government and formation of our Congregation. He was entirely committed to his mission as a bishop.

*Sacerdos alter Christus; Episcopus post Deum terrenus Deus.* He is indeed as much as he contemplates God and centers his spirit on

the person of Christ to the point of becoming a copy. He attains this ideal through a deep familiarity with the meditation on the word of God and on the mysteries of Christ, through imitation of him, and by unceasing prayer: meditation, the Eucharist, and prayer enable him to become a “sacrament,” a transparent mystery, because expressed and proclaimed in the open style of an experience lived personally and communicated with the warmth of a father and a spouse. This is his liturgical celebration that edifies, moves, rouses fervor, leads to piety and enthusiasm.

Scalabrini lived the spirituality described by Vatican Council II with its hinge on the *Charitas Pastoralis*:

Christ, in order to continue to accomplish without interruption the will of his Father in the world through the Church, works in his ministers and therefore remains always the principle and source of the unity of the presbyters. Therefore, to achieve this unity they will have to join Christ in the discovery of the will of the Father and in the gift of themselves to the flock entrusted to them. In this way, representing the Good Shepherd, they will find in the pastoral activity itself the bond of priestly perfection which will accomplish the unity of their life and activity. At the same time, this pastoral charity flows especially from the eucharistic sacrifice. This sacrifice is therefore the center and the root of the whole life of the priest, so that the priestly soul strives to mirror what is made real on the altar. But this cannot be achieved unless the priests themselves go deep into the mystery of Christ through recollection and prayer. (*Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 14).

The highly spiritual element that characterizes the thought and action of Bishop Scalabrini does not imply at all a spirituality detached from reality. His charism of totality and his pastoral charity do not allow it. Rejecting a bureaucratic and administrative pastoral activity and a diocesan government conducted from a desk, he goes to the people; he wants to know as much as possible in person his flock; he wants to see beyond reports and statistics the real “state of souls;” he does not wait for people to go to him in his episcopal palace, rather, he goes looking for them, right from the beginning, in their homes, in fields and factories, in schools and associations; he goes looking for those who are “separated,” geographically or spiritually from the fold; he climbs material and spiritual cliffs and crags, anxious to bless

and comfort the faithful and eager to embrace those who are stray or lost; willing to risk criticism, slander, and even scandal from the self-righteous, to gain a soul to Christ: "I would ride on the devil's back if I were sure that he would lead me to save a soul."

He breaks with magnanimity, the bread of the word and of the Eucharist for the faithful assembled together, but he also visits the sick, the prisoners, the workers; he spends four days with lumberjacks on 1700-meter-high Mount Penna; he assists the poor, dispels long-standing hatreds, comforts, and exhorts his priests.

His "pastoral charity" reaches all human wants and miseries. He assigns not only to the Saint Raphael's Society, but also to the Congregation of his missionaries the task of "keeping alive in the hearts of our emigrant countrymen the Catholic faith, and to promote as much as possible their moral, civil, and financial welfare." (Rules of Life of 1888). In fact, "the immediate goal of religion is to lead souls to God; its indirect mission, intrinsically connected with the first one, is to guide civil society on the path of genuine civilization." (Notes for a letter to the bishops on emigration, preparing for an audience with the Pope, Nov. 9, 1887. AGS 1/4).

As we shall see, such wholistic approach is found also in Bishop Scalabrini's interventions in the "labor question" and in the organization of the Catholic Action. It is interesting to see the link between the goal of Catholic Action—to bring Christ back into society—and the means for it. First place is obviously given to "moral renewal," but are also included all those means "on the economic order that respond to the rightful aspirations especially of the working class:"

This mission of peace and social renewal belongs precisely to us men of the Church, to us before anyone else, as men who have received from God the means and the mandate. I would like all the members of my clergy to understand this. In our day it is almost impossible to lead the working class back to the church unless we are in constant contact with it outside the church. We must go out of the temple, venerable brethren, if we wish to exert a salutary influence in the temple. And we must be men of our time. Certain forms of new, or new-old propaganda must not frighten us. We must live the life of the people: let us get close to them through the press, associations,

committees, benevolent societies, public conferences, conventions, workers' unions, children's centers, and through all kind of private and public charitable institutions.

Let us fight prejudices with lively zeal but let us just as warmly support and second the legitimate interests and aspirations of the people, being careful, however, not to feed them with illusions nor to excite them to contempt toward the middle or ruling class. Instead, let us study a way to bring them together in friendship. After the example of Catholics of other countries, let us master the modern movement and lead it, working instead of standing aside and grumbling. My dear friends, the world is moving forward and we must not stay behind because of some formalistic difficulty or the dictates of a mistaken prudence. If it is not done with us, it will be done without us and against us: let us remember it. (Centennial of Saint Aloysius—Encyclical of the Holy Father—*Obolo per l'amor filiale*. Piacenza 1891, pp. 11-12).

The concern for the whole person is also evident in the founding of the organization for the rice-pickers (*Opera pro Mondariso*):

As anyone can see, it is a great work of charity of great importance. In fact, those poor unfortunates encounter many serious dangers and evils, moral and physical dangers and evils that are easy to imagine.

It is urgent to find remedies, it is urgent to take measures so that they will not fall victim to greedy speculators, so that they may be aware of the snares to their faith; so that they will have the time and the possibility to observe the Lord's day, so that they will be protected from immorality, so that they will be better paid for their labors, in short, so that far from their families, they may find defense, protection, comfort. (Letter of August 22, 1903).

Both in his *Opera pro Mondariso*, and even more in his concern for emigrants, or more generally in the social question, Bishop Scalabrini tackles the problem of humanizing labor and makes it the object of his pastoral care. In the program of spiritual renewal, the family and the parish maintain a privileged position, but the difference between the bishop of Piacenza and the great majority of his contemporaries is that he widens his concern to the world of workers.



Bishop Scalabrini was convinced that any action aimed at the humanization of labor and of nature in general becomes by this very fact a factor in the building-up of the kingdom of God; but he is also aware that nothing comes automatically; that no purely human act is by itself a means of salvation, because the world, including labor, is marked by sin, injustice, abuse, exploitation, enslavement, alienation. His books on emigration are a strong denunciation of individual and social sins which are the root of the evils of migration. However, he does not stop at denunciation! As shepherd, he commits himself to find out and pull up the roots of evil; he proclaims justice and redemption, but he also gets down to work and acts in the field of justice and evangelical charity.

If often we find him insisting on what we call today “spirituality of intention”—the intention to devote everything to God and the neighbor, in loving union with God and trusting his providence—this is not a pretext to avoid the “spirituality of commitment”—an effective, individual, and communal commitment to overcome injustice and sin, to make work more human. The Church “has never forgotten, nor will ever forget the mission entrusted to it by God to evangelize the children of labor and misery. [...] Where there are people who work and suffer, there is the Church.” (*L’emigrazione italiana in America*, Piacenza 1887, p. 50).

A similar total commitment comes from the charism of fatherhood, which is the root of his pastoral government and action. Formally, it is granted by the imposition of hands and by the apostolic origin of the episcopal ministry. We know with what great strength Bishop Scalabrini appealed to these sources of his pastoral authority and responsibility, but he shows the intensity of his fatherhood in the life-situation in which he freely and ardently puts himself, in his beautiful witness to the fundamental option of his life for the Gospel and the Church; in the evangelical manner of exercising his pastoral authority as a servant of the community in the name of Christ. He is well aware of being the “vicar” of Christ but expresses his conviction above all through his suffering and service, by “drinking the chalice” of Christ, in living the most perfect of all charisms: charity.



## Part II

### **“I BELIEVE IN THE CHURCH”**

#### **ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY**



Bishop Scalabrini's spirituality, which is basically a life in fide living the three theological virtues, is manifested in the way he lives his faith in the Church: he believes in the Church, he trusts the Church, he loves the Church; he lives the mystery of the Church, sacrament of Christ, in faith, hope and charity. He lives the mystery of the Church, experiencing in it communion with God and the brethren; with the Church he becomes the "sacrament" of salvation for humanity.

### 1) Experiencing Communion with God in the Church

Bishop Scalabrini's ecclesiology and ecclesial spirituality are rooted in the concept, particularly dear to him, of the continuation and extension of the Incarnation of Christ. We heard his favorite definitions of the Church: "The Church is the true continuation of the person of Jesus Christ;" "the Church is Jesus Christ, but Jesus sown and communicated" (*Il Concilio Vaticano*, Como 1873, pp. 5; 27); it is "the moral continuation of the Incarnation throughout the centuries." (*Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori*, Piacenza 1886, p. 8).

His immediate conclusion is that "he who does not love the Church, is outside the love of Jesus Christ, and therefore outside the only love that ennobles us, elevates us, and makes us love everything that is worth loving in the universe." (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, p. 35).

To him the "motherhood" of the Church is not just a theological speculation, or a metaphor, but it is a dogmatic truth. He states that to believe in the "motherhood" of the Church means to love it as our own house, our own family, where there is a father, God, an older brother, Jesus Christ, in whom we are all brothers and sisters, a bride, virgin and mother, who by the work of the Holy Spirit gives us life,

nourishes it, makes it grow, brings it to maturity, in order to make us in the image of Christ.

Since this is not just a figure of speech, Bishop Scalabrini concludes that to believe and to love the Church is to believe and to love God in Christ, entering into the mystery of the trinity.

The light of faith and the flame of love are the work of the Holy Spirit: "By his descent upon the Apostles, as the spirit of truth, he enlightens their minds with the deepest understanding, and as the spirit of love he fills their hearts with the most ardent charity. [...] These are the workings of the divine Spirit not only in the souls of the first disciples of Jesus Christ, but also in all the faithful who lived on earth since then." Therefore, these are the consequences for spiritual life:

The Holy Spirit is essentially the spirit of truth and love. Let us live then in conformity to truth, judging things for what they really are, doing good and shunning evil, not letting ourselves be deceived by the foolish vanities of this world. Let us live in charity by loving God above all things, doing our best with all the means at our disposal to gain our brethren to God, seeking their real good and the good of our souls. If we have received, like the Apostles, the gift of the Lord, let us start to talk and act like the Apostles spoke and acted, and if divine providence so disposes, like the Apostles let us also be ready to suffer. As true disciples of the Redeemer filled with his spirit, let us frankly and openly confess his name; let us be worthy witness of our faith in the world whenever needed; let us do then, our own part, whatever we can, working together in the great project the Apostles began: the destruction of errors and the spreading on earth of the kingdom of love, the kingdom of God. (Homily of Pentecost 1882. AGS 3016/6).

If you want to live then in the Holy Spirit, hold on to charity, love truth, wish for unity, that you may enter the eternal kingdom: *si ergo vultis vivere de Spiritu Sancto, tenete charitatem, amate veritatem, desiderate unitatem, ut perveniatis ad aeternitatem* (Saint Augustine). [...] The Holy Spirit is a spirit of unity both in eternity and time. In eternity he is the union of the Father and the Son in absolute unity of nature; in time he is the union of the redeemed man with God, a unity of adoption and grace. In eternity he is the fullness of the Trinity in its intrinsic relations and operations. In time he is the revelation of the

Trinity in the external works of creation, conservation, formation, and unification of the body of Christ, the Church, that receives its invincible strength from this very unity. (Homily of Pentecost, 1884. AGS 3016/6).

As mentioned before, this truth—the Church as continuation of Christ’s Incarnation—explained by the tradition of the Greek Fathers and reaching Scalabrini through Bossuet, is viewed by him in the light of the doctrinal development of the schools of thought of Tübingen and Rome, and of Newman. They made perfectly clear the identity between the visible and invisible Church. In this way they rectified the theology of the spiritualistic deviations of the Reformation and the legalistic deviations of the Counter-Reformation (still evident today in the unjustified opposition between the Church of the spirit and the Church of the institutions).

If the Church is a continued Incarnation, Möehler said, one cannot separate the soul (the Spirit) from the body (hierarchy, preaching, sacraments). We can only experience God in Christ, Newman reasoned, but we can only experience Christ in the Church, namely in its authority and its sacraments. Passaglia, in turn, underlined the tasks of the Church in terms very similar to those used by Bishop Scalabrini: the Church is the instrument that communicates the revelation and accomplishes the salvation of humanity since it is an instrument of the word of God, the only word that can bring salvation. Therefore, it communicates to us sanctifying grace, which is not only the grace of Christ given to each faithful, but also the grace of God given to the whole body and to each of the faithful.

The Church, “mystical body living in the world, is nourished in all its parts by is the lymph of the life of Christ” (*Synodus Dioecesisana Placentina Prima*, Piacenza 1880, p. 129), it is “the society of believers united in the profession of the one and same faith, in the communion of the same sacraments, who obey the same legitimate shepherds, and especially the universal pastor, the Roman pontiff. It is the great family of the souls who look for God, hierarchically structured. It is the mystical body of Christ of whom we are members. [...] As a member must remain closely united with the body in order to live the natural life deriving from the head, in the same way we must be

closely united with the Church if we wish to live the supernatural life of grace which comes and flows from its invisible head, Jesus Christ.” (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, pp. 36-37).

Certainly Jesus Christ, through his divine power, could have saved men without using other men, but in his infinite wisdom he did not choose to do so. And so, in the order of grace, as in the order of nature, he created intermediate and secondary causes. Between men and himself he placed his priests, in whom he deigned to continue himself, and in his prayer to the Father he recognizes as his disciples only those who have believed through them. The Gospel in fact always mentions three: God, the priest and man. Whoever excludes the priest removes the link and breaks the chain; he destroys the bridge and creates an abyss. I know that this is hard for human pride to accept, but the Church, dearly beloved, is what Jesus Christ, eternal wisdom, has established. [...] He wanted to give to it a human and divine structure founded on Peter and the Apostles. These, in the person of the lawful shepherds, these, I repeat, we must absolutely obey and no one else, [...] because it is the Holy Spirit who put them to rule the Church; we must listen to them as we would listen to Jesus; we must listen to them with such conviction to the point of proclaiming anathema even an angel, should he come to preach differently. (*Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori*, Piacenza 1896, pp. 22-23).

In his realistic attitude and concrete pastoral action, Bishop Scalabrini wants that our trust and our faith, and even more, our love, be directed not toward an idealized Church, detached from the human conditions and limitations of its members, nor toward an archaeological Church “of the early centuries” or toward an utopian “as-it-should-be” Church, but toward the historical, actual, structural Church made up of men, who will always be men, and yet a Church which is always alive in the spirit of Christ:

Let us love the Church alive and present in our times that speaks through its august head and its bishops, that lives and suffers for us and with us prays and hopes! Let us love it as the dearest reality in this world after Jesus Christ; let us love it as our own family, as our most beautiful and loving mother; let us love it as the one who best represents and expresses the infinite beauty of God who is all our love. Let us entrust ourselves to the arms of this mother! *My mother*



told me, exclaims the little boy and saying this, he continues secure on his way. Each one of us must say the same: *The Church told me, and that's all.* (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, pp. 35-36).

Bishop Scalabrini— “vir ecclesiasticus” as understood by the Fathers of the Church: a man of the Church—loves the past of the Church, meditates on its history, explores, and respects its traditions, but not to escape in bygone ages, nor to condemn the Church of his time. He likes to go back with his thought to the early Church still fresh after Pentecost, when the preaching of the Apostles was still echoing (Irenaeus’ expression quoted by Scalabrini), but at the same time, at least following the first hard experiences that cleared him of a certain naiveté, he is distrustful of the “golden age” used by cowards as an easy pretext for condemnations and scandals, because he knows that Christ is always present in his Church till the end of times.

“Woe to the Church of Rome, if it had been stricken with immobility, like the schismatic Church!” (*Intransigenti e transigenti*, Bologna 1885, P. 16). And so, he deplors the “axiom” of the ultra-conservatives: “to fight innovations and lock themselves up in immobility, in absenteeism, in ancient pyramids, attacking those who did not yield to represent a system of mummification or the stone age.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 21-22).

He opposes such fruitless attitudes with the “perfect union” with the Church which is accomplished through “the triple unity of faith, communion, and obedience,” the very elements that constitute the “hierarchical principle” and at the same time make us true members of the body of Christ.

We are one body in Jesus Christ; as in the human body not every member has the same function, so also not every member of the Church has the same task. [...] In this way a chain is forged that beginning with the Pope reaches orderly and hierarchically the very last farmer who laboriously steers a plough through his field. If he has the spirit of Jesus Christ, he too is united, like us, in faith, charity, and obedience with the Pope and the Church. (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, pp. 36-37).

Certainly, Bishop Scalabrini does not reject the definition of the Church as a perfect society, whose “first and essential condition [...]

is definitely unity," but he cannot conceptualize unity without the three elements of communion: communion of faith, charity, and obedience; they create communion with God. We cannot understand the spirituality of Scalabrini if we fail to realize that he considers the hierarchical order not just a purely juridical hierarchy, but a principle of life, of supernatural life, of the life of faith and grace:

Thus, all who believe form one vast family, one compact united body, wonderfully articulated through the connecting links and levels of the hierarchy, the invisible head of which is the same divine author, Jesus Christ. And from Jesus Christ, as from the head through the members of the human body, the moral person of the Church derives its strength, its beauty, its movements, its life, the life of grace on earth, the life of glory in heaven: *Crescamus in illo per omnia, qui est caput, Christus*—We shall grow in all things into Christ, who is the head. (*Unione colla Chiesa, obbedienza ai legittimi Pastori*, Piacenza 1896, pp. 8-9).

The prototype of the Church is Christ himself in his hypostatic union. As in the incarnate word divinity and humanity are inseparably united, in the same way the Church is, at the same time, a visible and a spiritual society. As Jesus saves through the "bodily and perceptible forms of the Incarnation," in the same way, the Church continues its saving action through worship, magisterium, and authority.

In the Church, we heard Bishop Scalabrini say, there is a "soul," "it is what vivifies, informs, and governs all the mystical members and places them in communication with the divine Head and with one another." It includes "faith, hope, charity, the gifts of grace, charisms, the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and all the heavenly treasures that came to it through the merits of Christ the Redeemer and his servants." (*Ibid.*, p. 9-10). But the soul cannot be without the "body:" "all that is visible and external, whether in the union of its members, the ritual of worship and the ministry of teaching, or its external organization and regime." The unity of the two parts is made possible by Christ through charity. (*Ibid.*, p. 10).

Charity unites us with the Church through grace, which in itself unites us to the "soul," and through the hierarchical priesthood, which in itself unites us to the "body." These two bonds cannot be

separated: without the union with the hierarchy there is no union with Christ in grace. "Whoever does not obey the Pope or the Catholic priest can be anything at all but certainly not a Christian, nor a Catholic. He is a proud person, a hypocrite, and nothing else; he is outside the Church." (*Ibid.*, p. 18).

Consequently, the test bench of ecclesial spirituality is then obedience. Obedience is an act of faith, not just a security of social order. It is a distinctive aspect of Bishop Scalabrini's spirituality, the ability of discern the invisible reality in the visible reality, that is, in the historical community of the Church of his days, even when deploring in clear terms the dullness and the obstacles built by its human element. He is not scandalized by the law of Incarnation in which God wants to save humanity through the mediation of men and events, even when obscured by sin; he continues to believe in the Church, certain that above all human mediations the only and true mediator will always remain Christ who continues to bestow on the Church the spirit of truth, charity, and unity.

Obedience to the Pope was a constant feature of his life and it constitutes one of the elements of the heroism of his virtues. When he was still a simple priest, he could declare in his first book:

Many others of his confreres could leave him behind for nobility of style, higher manners, frank, and clear reasoning, but no one can surpass him in simple and enlightened obedience to the successor of Peter, the true vicar of Christ, father and doctor of all Christians, the infallible teacher of truth. (*Il Concilio Vaticano*, Como 1873, p. XXVI).

His writings and his relationship, though not always idyllic, particularly with Leo XIII, reveal his "devotion" to the Pope. Rather than a social and disciplinary obedience, from his concept of the Church emerges a kind of obedience in faith and love whose ultimate object is Christ, represented by the Pope and present in the Church as the "true and real monarch who invisibly supports and rules it," "the only center of the double unity of his bride: unity of spirit and body. Center of the unity of spirit, essential aspect of its interior and divine life, that joins its children to the one Lord in the same faith and love; center of the unity of body, which belongs to its exterior life, that gathers them together through baptism into one visible and

substantial worship." Christ has appointed "the one, who, endowed with his wonderful sovereign power, was to take his place among men, gather the scattered children of God, teach them in his name, and sanctify them with the gifts of his grace." (*Ibid.*, pp. 162-163).

Christ has then bestowed Peter with infallibility and primacy of authority and jurisdiction so that he might continue in history his mission of priest, prophet, and king; a mission of love: "Peter has been appointed by the Savior as vicar of his love for us." (*Ibid.*, p. 173). Bishop Scalabrini always stresses the order of faith and grace where in the logic of the Incarnation "the Church reproduces in itself the most perfect image of its founder:"

As in the unity of the divine and human nature in his person, his heavenly spouse lives the life of both and used both of them to redeem man, in the same way the Church, while living a divine life since it is united with and invisibly guided by Christ, lives also an exterior life being visibly guided by his vicar who represents and centers all the energies, all the powers, all the churches of the great Catholic family, endowed through him with a mysterious unity of graces. (*Ibid.*, pp. 176-177).

His declarations of obedience, loyalty, devotion, and love for the Pope are many and well known:

To obey you and love you unto the death, this will be our ambition, the sweetest comfort of our life. (*Al Venerabile clero e diletterrino popolo della Città e della Diocesi*, Piacenza, 1878, p. 5). Holy Father, speak and it shall be our boast to obey you; guide us and we shall obediently follow you; teach us, and your teachings will be the constant, invariable form of our conduct, for we well know that you alone have words of eternal life, that he who is not with you is against Jesus, and that our eternal salvation depends upon our union with you. (*Notificazione dell'elezione di Pio X*, Piacenza 1903, p. 6). It will always be our boast to think as he does, always and in all things, to judge as he does, to feel as he does, to work as he does, to suffer with him, to struggle with him and for him; [...] we would consider ourselves fortunate to be able to give our life's blood for his cause, which is the cause of God. (*Atti e Documenti del Primo Congresso Catechistico*, Piacenza 1890, p. 238).

We know that some questioned the coherence between such declarations and his actual obedience and devotion because of certain expressions in regard to the Holy See and the Pope himself and because of certain attitudes and instances that did not give the impression of a perfect agreement of thought and judgement in particular with Leo XIII.

We must remember the situation from where such suspicions were born. When he arrived in Piacenza the priests of his diocese were divided into two factions: intransigents and transigents. "The bishop, open-minded and understanding, though remaining impartial and in compliance with the directives from Rome, favored the more lenient tendency; consequently, malicious people and even some in good faith negatively interpreted the decisions of the Servant of God and took position against him: but they were wrong. The same must be said of some of the press." (Witness G. Cardinali, Diocesan Process, p. 286).

"Bishop Scalabrini was broad-minded and of generous spirit. He stood always and absolutely with the Pope and for the Pope and, as he used to say, he would have cut off his head for him twenty times, and for this reason he sometimes declared that the intransigents certainly were not with the Pope." (Witness F. Torta, *ibid.*, pp. 339-340).

"The catholic press censured the bishop because it thought that he supported the moderate political party rather than the progressive. Underneath, however, it was the work of the Freemasonry who had at this time a special significance. Its main purpose was its own political and financial interests, to the point that the major exponents were reconciled with the Church before they died. This criticism was groundless and proven completely false by the facts." (Witness E. Martini, *ibid.*, pp. 190-191).

Basically, Bishop Scalabrini was accused of disobeying, or at least neglecting, the pontifical directives concerning Rosmini's philosophy, liberalism, the *Opera dei Congressi*, and especially the *non expedit*, that is, the prohibition for Catholics to take part in political elections. All this took place within an environment of exasperating polemics brought about by a political situation in which two equally legitimate

and holy sentiments had unfortunately come into conflict: love for religion and love for one's country. Church and state were at odds with each other, but not everyone could clearly distinguish between Church and Vatican policy or between state and "liberal" ideologies that claimed for themselves the independence and the unity of Italy. In protest, the Roman Curia chose the most absolute intransigence, while the Italian parliament and government endorsed the most ferocious anticlericalism. What suffered the most was the mission proper of the Church, hindered on one side because the Vatican gave the impression to be concerned mostly with temporal power, and was accused to be an enemy of the country, on the other side because the efforts to take the people away from the Church, multiplied.

The reasons for Bishop Scalabrini's attitudes should be sought entirely in his effort to correct this situation so detrimental to the pastoral action of the Church. In the final analysis, the one who was really obeying the supreme and universal shepherd was Bishop Scalabrini. Circumstances were such as to demand a truly heroic obedience for the one who had chosen the road of truth and charity as irreplaceable conditions to rebuild unity. In his strenuous defense of truth and charity, the bishop of Piacenza may have thought differently, and indeed he thought differently from some elements of the Roman Curia. He considered his duty in conscience to warn against the danger and the harm that a certain ecclesial policy was causing to pastoral action. But every time the Pope came out with a decision, "even when it was different from his position, he would stop in his tracts: it is a command of the Pope! That's enough!" (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, p. 132). Even when they were simple indications or wishes: "it was enough for him to know its wishes of the Holy See, to bow to its will." (Witness F. Gregori, *ibid.*, p. 559).

There were two crucial points: what kind of pastoral action to embrace in the changed conditions of the Italian Church, and what was role of the bishops in guiding the local churches. Basically, Bishop Scalabrini had different ideas than the Roman Curia about the solution of the "Roman question" and about the autonomy of the bishops in their immediate pastoral activity, not with regard to the pope, but to the power-centers, like Catholic newspapers and the *Opera dei Congressi*, created and directed by "private people," priests

or laymen. A good portion of the Roman Curia supported them because they pledged to defend the “rights” of the Holy See, and it did not pay too much attention if their defense neglected the rights and duties of truth and charity, thus jeopardizing unity.

The “Roman question” had become a burning question of conscience for many Catholics. It was too entangled with politics and it provoked a great deal of confusion. The intransigents had become a party that under the pretext of absolute obedience to the Pope was allowed to judge, question, and even libel the bishops, thus sowing disagreement between bishops and priests, between clergy and people. This create an environment of suspicions and of more or less malicious insinuations that had disastrous effects in the pastoral field, because it “caused great injury to the episcopacy,” and “great scandal among the faithful.” (Letter to Bonomelli, September 11,1881).

In this situation, Bishop Scalabrini considered his duty as a bishop, responsible for a local Church and co-responsible for the universal Church, to speak clearly to the Pope and to ask him to be satisfied with “enough temporal power” that, also according to international laws, would secure his full independence, free exercise of his ministry and his guidance of the universal Church. Therefore, there had to be reconciliation between Church and state and this could only be achieved through the Italian parliament: hence the proposal to abolish the *non expedit*. Obviously, the parliament and the government, which was the product of it, would cease the hostilities against the Church only when the anticlerical would cease to have the majority.

The problem is continually mentioned in the correspondence between Bishop Scalabrini and Bishop Bonomelli. It is true that in it we find strong expressions deploring the Vatican “policy,” but we always find also that the only reasons for his concern were the glory of God, the “honor” of the Church, and the salvation of souls, with faith always having the last word. Of the furious attacks of the intransigents, he says: “We must oppose their insane attempts by keeping our peace, purity of intention, seeking only the glory of God, the honor of the Church, and the salvation of souls.” (Letter to

Bonomelli, September 22, 1881). "Let us not loose heart, [...] peace, strength, and prayer; with our eyes fixed on Jesus Christ and trusting only him." (*Ibid.*, February 1, 1883). "We must indeed look up to heaven, suffer, and keep quiet." (*Ibid.*, May 6, 1891). "We must think about saving the greatest number of souls possible." (*Ibid.*, May 1889).

It is this "burning thirst" for the salvation of souls that impels him to speak with such candor to the Pope:

For years, Holy Father, I have been weeping and crying bitter tears before God over such evils! Now we cannot hide them any longer! Do not think, Most Holy Father, that I speak without reason, or that I am moved by personal gain, or other motives! No! God, whom I serve and before whom we shall all appear in a short time, is my witness that I am not pressure by any political party and that I do not endorse any of them! By his grace, I am united only with him, with you who are his vicar, and with his holy Church. (Letter to Leo XIII, November 11, 1881. AGS 3019/2).

The word "party" is one of those key words that allow us to explore the ecclesial spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini. For him, there cannot be "parties" in the Church, since one of its "characteristic" is unity.

This is one of the reasons why he opposed the so-called "intransigents" who were then controlling both the Roman Curia and its "secular arm" the *Opera dei Congressi*. We do not want to deny their loyalty to Christ and the Church, but only to point out that the different views of Bishop Scalabrini are rooted in a more spiritual and evangelical vision of the Church as compared with a more political and jurisdictional one.

Intransigents put the question of temporal power mostly in terms of a hierarchical pyramid, making the centrality of the Pope a basic question of authority: authority which was stressed so much that it overshadowed the jurisdictional and magisterial authority of the bishops. For them, the Church is like a state and the Pope is an absolute monarch; unfortunately, they pretended to follow the models of an earthly state and monarchy. Bishop Scalabrini himself defends the "hierarchical principle," but first of all, he stresses the importance of the "links" of the episcopate and the presbyterate and



even more important, he considers the hierarchical order not so much a requirement for a functional society, but rather a vital link between Christ and his people in the proper order of grace.

In defining the Church as the continuation of the Incarnation of Christ—"the Incarnation of Jesus Christ on earth; the continuation of his mortal life; his perpetual manifestation on earth" (Homily of Easter 1879. AGS 3016/4)—he stresses its intimate union with the life of Christ: with Christ the Church is destined to win and to triumph in eternity, but meanwhile it must, with Christ, suffer and be the object of hatred and persecution. The Church shares in the sovereignty of Christ; actually, Christ "reigns and rules on earth right through the ministry of the Church his bride, heir of his sovereignty," but this sovereignty has only one purpose: "to lead man to perfection and make him happy of the same perfection and happiness where God himself is perfect and happy.": (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, p. 8).

Obedience to the Church, then, is one of the conditions for a "fruitful and perfect union with the Church," which is made up by two more elements: "the triple unity of faith, communion, and obedience" by which "we must remain intimately united with the Church if we want to live the supernatural life of grace, which comes and it is extended in it from its invisible head Jesus Christ." (*Ibid.*, p. 37). Hierarchical unity, Bishop Scalabrini proclaims, is the "body" of the Church; the unity of grace is its "soul." The union of the faithful with the Church comes through sanctifying grace which unites us with the "soul," and through the hierarchical priesthood which unites us with the "body." These two elements are necessary and inseparable.

A characteristic of the ecclesial spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini is his notion of the Church as one single unity. From it he derives a solid and coherent line of conduct which can help us to understand his attitudes toward the Vatican on the level of faith and spirituality.

This point was intensely discussed at the "Congress of the Consultors Theologians" on the heroism of Bishop Scalabrini's virtues. We quote here the conclusions of the *Relatore della Causa*, the late Father Valentino Macca, OCD:

After studying for many months, the “cause” and the various and vast problems underlying it, especially those concerning the relationship of the Servant of God with Pope Leo XIII and Pope Pius X, I cannot but continue to think:

a) that the “mysticism of the cross” and of the will of God, already outlined in clear and quite exhaustive terms, even within the limits of the vote on the heroic virtues, by consultor theologian IX, can coexist with the frankness and insistence with which our Servant of God spoke to Leo XIII or *confidentially* spoke and wrote to his friend Bishop Bonomelli of Cremona.

I would even say that for a man constantly committed to perfection, as unanimously acknowledged by *the Congress*, and well documented beyond any doubt, his deep suffering for a Church whose image was obscured by the temporal power could only be a wonderful component of a desire of extraordinary love for the bride of Christ.

Neither must we forget his life of constant communion with God expressed in a strong, deep, and tender devotion to the Eucharist and to Mary characterized by a truly extraordinary theological brilliancy. Extraordinary is also his commitment to prayer, as we can learn also from his brief personal writings that providentially reached us, expressions of a faith that kept the bishop continually oriented toward God, making him, in a certain way, a “living prayer.”

Nor should we forget the untiring apostolic zeal that shows Bishop Scalabrini as the “true shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep.” He reaches to them with up-to-date and appropriate initiatives intended to promote the life of the faithful in an evangelical fidelity to Christ and the Church, even in new situations such as emigration and labor.

b) In a man so consumed by the love of God, zeal for the “salvation and welfare of souls,” a refrain he repeats in every occasion, his very love for the Church with the characteristics of a humble, generous, and sincere love for it, so pronounced that it cannot go unnoticed by anyone who seriously examines the vast documentation available, must be viewed as no small cause of the “mystic” torment and of the “fever” that tested him so deeply throughout his whole life.

The men of the Church of his days were divided on the question of the Pope’s temporal power, but Bishop Scalabrini, like Bishop

Bonomelli for that matter, relied in the last analysis on the judgement and the decision of the supreme pontiff himself. Bishop Scalabrini, however, gifted with a particular sensitivity not social or political, but exclusively evangelical, a clear gift of the spirit that moves the bride of Christ, clearly understood:

1) that the temporal power, dreamed up by a good portion of the hierarchy itself, also and especially in the Vatican Curia, together with some very questionable material advantages for a truly evangelical apostolate, brought about a clouding in Italy and abroad of the image of the Church with serious harm to what Bishop Scalabrini rightly held to be the supreme principle of existence and action of the bride of Christ in the world. That is, to be “relationship” with the world itself in an unbroken line with the mystery of the Incarnate Word, while its only mission—so often stressed by the Servant of God, as I said before—is the salvation of souls.

2) that because of this and because of the vision enlightening him from within, by virtue of his episcopal ordination, he felt responsible *cum Petro et sub Petro* for the whole Church (See *Lumen Gentium*, 22). The doctrine proclaimed by Vatican II in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church concerning the bishop who “as a member of the episcopal college and a legitimate successor of the apostles, is obliged by Christ’s decree and command to be solicitous for the whole Church” (See *Lumen Gentium* 23) was the doctrine that Bishop Scalabrini had already endorse wholeheartedly. Prayer, meditation on the word of God and on the coming of God in history, impelled him to intervene *in charity* with the Pope whom he sought to open to a more positive and clear understanding of men and times in view of a more evangelical service consistent with the demands of God concerning the world to save.

3) In this perspective must be read the letters written by the Servant of God to Leo XIII and to the Roman Curia. It has been documented that they were a real struggle and caused real suffering for his spirit *so tenderly filial* toward the Pope. And yet, as the text of his letters and the revealing correspondence with Bishop Bonomelli show, after having prayed, reflected, and sought advice, solely moved by spiritual motives, he wrote, even when he knew that this would have caused him sufferings and martyrdom, also from a human point of view.

He, then, was always against human careers. This is proven by his definite opposition to be made a cardinal. [...] Age, health, habits, difficulties that a change in his lifestyle would have caused, were pointed out by Bishop Scalabrini with admirable simplicity and strength to avoid having to leave the episcopal see of Piacenza to which he was committed and bound by an exceptional love, made stronger by the great trials of the Miraglia and Rocca cases, and by the deplorable interferences and the fierce struggles against him in *L'Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan, mounted by Don Davide Albertario, who caused great suffering to many bishops and priests.

In this perspective, we can then understand, especially in its episcopal and supernatural dimension, the various interventions of the Servant of God with Leo XIII, who was by Scalabrini highly esteemed and loved. (*Relatio et vota Congressus peculiaris super virtutibus*, Rome 1986, pp. 136-138).

At this point, to those who had objected that a truly virtuous man would have imitated Christ (*Jesus autem tacebat* – But Jesus was silent, (Mt 26,631), the relator points out the “severity” of the Redeemer himself with the scribes and the pharisees, and even with Peter (“an obstacle”, “Satan” [Mt 16,23]), but above all the “open opposition” of Saint Paul to Peter in Antioch (“I oppose him to his face.” Gal 2,11). He, then, compares Bishop Scalabrini to Saint Brigid of Sweden and Saint Catherine of Siena who “spoke to the Pope with fiery words of the “reform” and “renewal” of the Church:”

I believe that our Servant of God should be seen in this “mystic” line of action. With his nature, his culture, his high sense of the times, his “angry”; torment of expression, he is on the same level of grace of Saint Brigid, and above all Saint Catherine. The painful realism of his words to Leo XIII and in his private correspondence with Bishop Bonomelli about Leo XIII or on the “temporalistic” political action of the Curia of his day, should be viewed in the same “mystic” perspective of his impassioned love for the Church which fills all his writings, as variously underlined by the theological censors. This is manifested not only in his “pledge of love” for the Church and the Pope, but above all from his untiring and heroic activity so that the bride of Christ might show an ever-clearer image of Christ. (*Ibid.*, p. 139).

The sincerity of his love for the Church and the Pope, the integrity of his intentions, his sense of responsibility and co-responsibility as a bishop, his total obedience and therefore his consistency of words and actions, are proved by declining to publicly defend himself in acquiescence to the will or even to the simple desire of the Pope, even when this risked damaging his reputation as a bishop.

Once he asked Leo XIII to be allowed to publicly defend himself from the public attacks of *L'Osservatore Cattolico* asking "candidly the supreme benevolence of the Holy Father for at least a word of comfort. He did not consider it proper to grant it to me; I humbly adore the judgements of God and I shall continue *per infamiam et bonam famam*—through insult and praise (2Cor 6,8)—to seek the salvation of my soul and of the flock entrusted to me." (Letter to Leo XIII, November 19, 1881. AGS 3042(2).

Another time he had prepared a pastoral letter to deny the calumnies published by the same newspaper following the publication of the pamphlet *Intransigenti e transigenti*, made by order or at least with the full approval of Leo XIII:

I had intended to defend myself, and so I have written the brief pastoral letter here enclosed. I sent it to the Holy Father who, as I can see from the red marks, gave it to someone to examine, I do not know whom. He, then, returned to me with the petition not to publish it. I was imposed a truly heroic sacrifice, which I have accepted, I must confess, only for the love of God. (Letter to P. M. Schiaffino, November 29, 1886. AGS 3020/4).

A third time, openly accused of disobeying the *non expedit*, he asked to be allowed to defend himself:

I had prepared a pastoral letter in which I talked about the political elections and I made public all the reactions that I had from Rome. In it I openly touched on the burning questions that torment many consciences; but the Holy Father, to whom I had sent it, asked me not to publish it because it could cause some misunderstanding. I obeyed. (Letter to Bonomelli, early 1887).

Quite rightly Cardinal Giulio Bevilacqua remarked:

At difficult times he suffered for the Church and for such a Church! Only because he had come to this essentiality of the Church had he learned so well when to speak and when to keep silent. And his silences were more expressive, more filled with teaching, even than his words. [...] After having spoken out as a son of the Church, he submitted in silence to that obedience of which he was a true champion. (Lecture held at Piacenza in 1955).

Some of Scalabrini's stands in regard to the Holy See impress us for their intensity and courage, but they are the marks of a strong spirituality and genuine love for the Church. In fact, what he really worried about was "not his personal cause, but the cause of the episcopate in terror, of the Church in turmoil, of religion betrayed."

What should we do then? Must we allow ourselves to be destroyed? This matters little for us, at least for my totally insignificant person. What about the souls under our care, the Church, and the interests of Jesus Christ? (Letter to Bonomelli, March 2, 1883).

## 2) Experiencing Fraternal Communion in the Church

Considerations about the divinity and the inner life of the Church, a life of grace in Christ, dominate and determine the positions and choices of Bishop Scalabrini. His emphasis, certainly very strong, on the hierarchical authority and his tenacity in asserting and defending the authority of the bishop, are guided, and motivated by a desire to safeguard and respect the ordinary channels of grace as Jesus Christ had actually established them.

The same must be said of his concern for unity, as the condition and at the same time the result of charity, and therefore of communion with God and true communion with the brethren. Our membership in the Church is but the answer we give in charity to the gratuitous and "gracious" call of God. Saint Augustine says that charity is at the core of the Church, it is participation in the charity proper of God, which is the charity of the trinity. The communion in charity lived in the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit is a reflection and a

communication of the charity with which the persons of the Trinity love one another.

The sufferings of Bishop Scalabrini over the lacerations of ecclesial charity are the sufferings for a sin, for the breaking of God's law which is the only law of the Church: charity, love. "As the beloved disciple kept repeating during the last years of his life to the Christian assemblies no other words than these: *children love one another*, so also the Church teaches and repeats to its children nothing else but the great law of love." (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, p. 30). "It loves: this is its whole life." (*Cattolici di nome e cattolici di fatto*, Piacenza 1887, p. 74).

His strenuous struggle against those who subverted the "hierarchical principle" is explained by the typical and strictly spiritual vision Bishop Scalabrini had of the hierarchical unity, which, to him, is substantially "the unity of charity or communion":

Full submission to one head representing God, that is, the unity of communion, was the hope of the Divine Redeemer for his present and future followers when he ardently prayed the Father that *they may all be one as you, Father, are in me and I in you; that they also may be in us*. Such was the unity taught by the Apostle when he said: *Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together*. (*Il Concilio Vaticano*, Como 1873, pp. 119-120).

At this point we should underline a characteristic of Bishop Scalabrini's spirituality: his love, better, his devotion to truth: *Facientes veritatem in charitate*—living the truth in love (Eph 4,15).

The priest is a man of God communicating the truth. He gives it to all, big and small, as God gives the light of the sun to the cedar and to the grass. (*Il prete cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, p. 20).

Religion is truth: it is the duty of everyone that possesses it to make it known, to share it with those who do not know it, and to defend it with all the strength of the soul when it is attacked. In this sense every man is an apostle of truth and every man could be a martyr for it. (Address at the Inauguration of the Diocesan and Parochial Committees, April 18, 1881. AGS 3018/18).

Is perhaps martyrdom not for us, dearly beloved? In the divine Scriptures the Holy Spirit tells everyone: agonize for your soul and fight even to the death for justice. This justice is the truth of Christ [...]. For this truth we would fight up to the threshold of death itself. (On the solemn recognition of the relics of Saints Antoninus and Victor, Piacenza 1880, p. 29).

This is the commandment Jesus received from the Father and left in heritage to his friends: devotion to the truth even at the price of one's blood. [...] The greatest battle in this world is to tell the truth of Christ to our enemies as well as to our friends, and to tell it in prosperity and in sorrow, in shadows and in light, in prisons and in palaces, to commoners and to powerful, without ambiguity, without shame, not with trepidation but rather with a sublime contempt for danger, which is the privilege of great souls. (Homily of Pentecost 1880, AGS 3016/6).

The decree on the heroicity of his virtues states:

Defender and herald of the faith, he protected it not only against the errors of his time, but also against the useless diatribes that offended charity and truth. In fact, he fought and suffered so much for the truth that we can truly say that he knew how to turn the *studium veritatis* into an intrepid *servitium veritatis* accepting with coherence, fortitude, and patience the *martyrium veritatis*, thus showing extraordinary loyalty to the Church and involvement in the situations of all the churches. Alien to any selfish interest, he endured in humble silence personal oppositions and sufferings, but he considered it a crime to keep silent whenever the cause of Jesus Christ, the Church, and the Pope were at stake or whenever the *bonum animarum*, *suprema lex* was endangered; this ruled all his choices, often innovating and against the tide.

Saint Pius X publicly acknowledged this virtue of Bishop Scalabrini when he defined him as “a learned bishop, both gentle and strong, who in the most difficult circumstances always defended and loved the truth and made others love it, nor did he ever abandon it whether in the face of threats or flattery.” (Autograph of October 18, 1913).

It was a virtue which this “provincial” bishop thought his duty to practice also with his superiors, the Secretariate of State, and



the supreme pontiff himself, to whom, as he used to say, he never neglected to tell *verba veritatis in camera charitatis*—the plain truth in charity.

A powerful mind as you have and with a heart modelled after the heart of Jesus Christ, whose vicar you are, you cannot but love truth and wish that it be made known to you as the saints wished. (Letter to Leo XIII, September 26, 1881. AGS 3042/2).

As you well know, Holy Father, one of your great predecessors used to turn to God every day imploring him to inspire some bishops to openly tell him the truth, and I am sure that this is the hope of your most noble heart. I have no doubt, then, that you will forgive me if I want to reveal to you the whole truth, even if painful. (Letter to Leo XIII. November 19, 1881. AGS 3042/2).

#### And to Cardinal Secretary of State:

A doctor of the Church would cry: “Alas for religion when bishops are forced to keep silent!” (Letter to L. Jacobini, April 8, 1883. AGS 3020/1).

Are they not placed by the Holy Spirit to rule the Church of God? Do they not have, more than the right, the duty to enlighten, when necessary, also their superiors? I think too highly of the Holy Father and of those who work with him in the government of the universal Church to believe that they would be displeased should a bishop tell them frankly, honestly, and with no second intentions, the truth, for the most noble purpose of preventing resolutions that may have fatal and disastrous consequences. Where they deal with issues that regard the whole world, it is very difficult to judge particular events, and God has provided for the good of his Church with the divine institution of the episcopacy. (Letter to M. Rampolla, July 17, 1893. *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*, Rub. 3/1893).

“It is the duty of our ministry to let the Pope know the true state of events in order to save what we can.” (Letter to Bonomelli, August 1882). He could not accept a false or untimely prudence, the prudence of the flesh: “To be careful when it is the truth? I would feel as betraying of the word of God!” (Quoted by L. Cornaggia-Medici in *Un profilo di Mons. G.B. Scalabrini*, Roma 1930, p. 4).

For being faithful to the truth he had to face misunderstandings even from the Pope, and open or surreptitious hostilities. He suffered especially when attacked with twisted, malicious, or even slanderous interpretations. Quite often he reacted to these with such a vigor that impressed particularly those familiar with the adulating environment of the time and the timid silence of almost all the bishops. "In the midst of this general pusillanimity of the colleagues," (Letter to Bonomelli, May 25, 1883), he was almost the only one with the courage to denounce the injustices, the discriminations, the sectarian policies, and the psychological terrorism that polluted the interventions of the intransigents in defense of the rights of the Pope and of the Church:

We must not mistake lack of courage for prudence. There is a time to keep silent, and I kept silent for a good six years. But there is also a time to speak, and I have spoken as I felt it my duty to speak. [...] The depressing silence of the entire hierarchy, either frightened or humiliated by the constant attacks of a press that claimed to hold the hierarchy, and especially the Holy See, in profound veneration, was already viewed, by more serious and thoughtful souls, as evidence of extreme weakness and connivance with the disorders that resulted from it. (Letter to G. Boccali, November 29, 1881. See *Carteggio Scalabrini-Bonomelli*, p. 41).

However, his worship of truth was always accompanied by his worship of charity, and Bishop Scalabrini rightly blamed the intransigents "for showing disdain toward the most amiable virtues of Christianity and almost scorn anyone who defends and holds them dear and precious above everything else. [...] All this is clearly against the spirit which inspires a true Catholic. Whoever does not understand or does not feel it, has lost his sense of Christ." (*Cattolici di nome e cattolici di fatto*, Piacenza, 1887, pp. 19-20).

The attacks of ardent intransigent journalists were aimed at those Catholics whom they considered "liberals," particularly against the "Rosminians" because they viewed Rosminianism as a base for liberalism. This same accusation was levelled against Bishop Scalabrini for the removal of Canon Rocca from the position of rector of the seminary of Piacenza:

An extremely simple and private act was distorted into a *Rosminian* question, and that is the secret of all the noise that was stirred up. But what could be more untrue? I do not follow the philosophical system of Rosmini; I state this frankly. I would loudly declare the opposite if it were true. [...] I declare, however, that I esteem, respect and love, in the charity of Christ Jesus, all men of good will, who work with pure intentions for the holy cause of God and his Church, whatever the opinions which they profess and which the Church allows to be discussed. [...] Why should anyone wish to turn the yoke which Jesus Christ called sweet into tyrannical burden? Why not leave to the mind that honest freedom that the Church accords and has always jealously guarded? (Letter to G. Boccali, November 29, 1881. op. cit.).

In this letter to the private secretary of Pope Leo XIII, he pointed out that he had required his seminarians to study the Thomistic philosophy since the first year of his episcopacy, therefore, three years before the encyclical *Aeterni Patris*. That same decree, however, had ended with a moving appeal for unity based upon charity and fidelity to the magisterium of the Church, exhorting like Saint Paul: "If anyone is inclined to be argumentative, we do not have such a custom, nor do the churches of God" (1Cor 11,16). He had to struggle for many years to restore unity among the clergy of Piacenza divided between Thomists and Rosminians. These two schools of thought, however, more than philosophies were ideologies and they gave rise to two pseudo political parties. Disorder and confusion had by then infected a great number of the clergy of northern Italy: "The factions which latch on to one pretext or another to undermine little by little the episcopacy and to mold Catholic opinion according to their own way of thinking are becoming increasingly bold, to the point at times of rendering it impossible for the bishops to exercise their sacred ministry." (Letter to Leo XIII, September 26, 1881. AGS 3042/2).

For Bishop Scalabrini, this was a "newly coined liberalism:" "an anarchical system that divides our resources and creates disagreement between children of the same father, members of the same family; a barbaric system that does not care about continuously causing sadness in immortal souls and killing the light of charity in the heart of many." (*Cattolici di nome e cattolici di fatto*, Piacenza 1887, p. 19).

True love for Christ, the Church, and the Pope could only “banish the spirit of partisanship and contention, tendencies of exclusiveness and egoism:”

Let charity be our uniform, the weapon of our battle. [...] The fire, the strength, and the affection of a soul in love with Christ, the Church, and its head have nothing to do with exaggerations, boastfulness, abuses. [...] Do not say like those whom the Apostle reproached in his day: I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollo and I belong to Cephas, while we all belong to Christ. (*Sull'opuscolo: La Lettera dell'E.mo Card. Pitra...*, Piacenza 1885, p. 18).

“The true Church of Jesus Christ” defined by Scriptures as vineyard, field, ship, house, army, city, kingdom of God and body of Christ, “must show on its forehead, shining with the most radiant light, the banner of unity.” (*Il Concilio Vaticano*, Como 1873, p. 119).

A man like Bishop Scalabrini who loved the truth and held charity dear above all things would necessarily have a passionate longing for unity. He knew it was difficult because we are humans. He learned it at his own expense. When he was young, he viewed all Church's realities through rose-colored glasses, all beautiful, all holy, all perfect. Later he realized, how different the facts were, but he did not relent from the pursuit of this ideal, suffering and fighting to make it become a reality.

Experience with the world, dear brother, has made me rethink many, many things, and I regret the loss of those days when my soul, all zeal, saw the Church as perfect and everything pertaining to it through rose-colored glasses. But there have been changes, and these too have their reason. They detach me more and more from the things of this poor world and they incline me towards the type of program I proposed to you one day. (Letter to Bonomelli, May 23, 1883).

The ideal I had of the Church in its highest levels, was beautiful, sublime, almost heavenly. I envision it as all love for truth and justice, all zeal, all holiness; I could not even dream of one single weakness! What a cruel disillusion to see most of this ideal vanish! Now I understand what Saint Peter Damiani, Saint Bernard, Saint Charles and others must have suffered in those times much worse than ours. (*Ibid.*, May 25, 1883).

His reaction to disillusion, however, was not pessimism, defeat, bitter polemics, or rebellion; not even discouragement, giving up the fight, or retreat.

The Church seems to have become a real Babel. [...] We must indeed look up to heaven, suffer and keep quiet. *Si tu scis tacere et pati, statim et procul dubio videbis super te auxilium Domini*—if you know how to keep silent and suffer, without any doubt you will soon experience God’s help. It is a great saying, rich in practical wisdom. (*Ibid.*, May 6, 1891).

To suffer, to keep silent, and to adore: this is the summary of Rosmini’s spirituality. There is another Rosmini’s saying dear to Bishop Scalabrini who recalls it in one of the most crucial moments of his life, when after publishing the pamphlet *Intransigenti e transigenti* with the full backing of Leo XIII, he is abandoned by the Pope to the wrath of his adversaries: “One does with open heart and solely for goodness sake what he is allowed or advised to carry out, and then not only they leave those in the front line alone, but, if possible, they even join the enemy in beating them down and crushing them to pieces, and good night!” (Letter to P.M. Schiaffino, January 21, 1887. AGS 3020/4).

Great wisdom is contained, I believe, in the following saying: “to remain perfectly at peace in whatever happens by God’s disposition not only in regard to ourselves, but to the Church as well, while working on its behalf in obedience to our divine calling.” (Letter to Bonomelli, January 1886).

In spite of his sufferings, his reaction was always positive: to work, to continue working despite everything else for the good of the Church according to our vocation, to do our part and to leave the result in the hands of God. But what did cost him this conformity with the will of God that apparently seemed one of a resigned or defeated man who abandons his fight?

It cost him the stripping of himself and thus he conformed himself with the kenosis of Christ, the price one must pay for pure and unselfish longing for purification and sanctification leading to the resurrection through the cross. Forgetting himself, he found the

strength to fight to the end, often against the tide, with clarity and sincerity, with the courage of Christian strength. He reached the point where he would carry not only the cross laid on him by the enemies of the Church and by his ideological adversaries but even the one born of the real tensions of our earthly pilgrimage, of the moaning of gestation. To work for the Church, to always feel part of the Church, to overcome every temptation to lose heart, to give up, or to abdicate from personal responsibility requires a genuine and deep spirituality. For Bishop Scalabrini it is the place where he works out his personal Christian perfection.

He felt deeply the experience of salvation, of belonging to a people saved, "holy." This certitude provided him, in the depth of his heart, with an unshakable peace build upon a strong and living faith. At the same time, he suffered in his flesh—to the point of falling sick—and in his spirit the experience of the process of conversion and sanctification which he started not so much on his own, rather in unity with the whole Church in order to reach, or at least to get close to, the ideal. He willingly accepted to experience in his own flesh the tension between Church and kingdom, between holiness and purification, between unity and division.

If after this gigantic effort to bring back to their proper size all the religious, political, and philosophical questions, since I intend to bring them all up with the Holy Father, I do not get any result, which is probable, then, lamenting the afflictions of the Church, I will devote myself entirely to prayer and to the exercise of my holy ministry. I will do by myself whatever I will consider useful for the good of souls, being concerned only with preparing myself for death, fighting strenuously against the enemies of peace, charity, and religion. (Letter to Bonomelli, September 19, 1882).

He was forty-three when he wrote these lines, but this same thought is voiced in 1897, when he was fifty-eight, in an analysis which is at the same time a self-criticism and a premonition of the era of modernism:

The period we are living in is more dreadful than it seems. Something evil is brooding among the clergy, not well defined as yet, and for now only the most daring come out into the open with an explo-

sion of unprecedented crimes (he is hinting here, we believe, at Miraglia and few other priests who had followed him into his schism). Perhaps, even we bishops have restricted too much individual liberties and now discipline, so meticulously detailed, has lost that certain austere greatness it once had, and as a consequence the prestige it had on souls: perhaps we wanted the best, but the best is the enemy of goodness; all perfect, but not all have the talents to be perfect.

Then, philosophy, social and Catholic action, which in themselves are of great value, were used by some as cover, by others as defense, by many as self-promotions, etc... These are serious problems we could write a book about and I think about them often in the government of my diocese. Unfortunately, those who should care have learned nothing, forgotten nothing, forgiven nothing. God help us! Indeed, this is a time for prayer and to be prepared for anything!

As for myself I resolved to care only about my diocese, my missions, and my friends, who keep dwindling in number every day while I do not worry about making new ones. Oh! If only I could sanctify myself! To be a saint! *Hoc est omnis homo!* Lucky you, who have always been one! I try to be, but I am afraid I will not reach the goal, not even on a freight train. (*Ibid.*, January 24, 1897).

This was not pessimism, but rather realism and also a proof of his determination to respond to the call of God with total commitment: “The *laudator temporis acti* is true of man at all times with all its consequences. But the world was always more or less like this, and so also the life of a bishop. Let us have a clear mind then and our heart at peace. Some asceticism, the good one, shall cure all our sad moods.” (*Ibid.*).

### 3) Experiencing the Church as our own Family

In any case, he defended himself against the temptations of pessimism and discouragement by his sense of community and belonging in the Church:

My beloved, have always fixed in your mind the great saying of the martyr Saint Cyprian: *who does not have the Church as mother, cannot have God as father.*

And the Church is indeed our mother. This is not a figure of speech; it is a strictly dogmatic teaching! As in the natural order between us and God the creator there are our parents and the line of our ancestors through whom we are connected to the first man Adam, in the same way, in the supernatural order of faith and grace between us and Jesus Christ there is a virgin mother, the Church. Through an uninterrupted series of spiritual generations, the Church reaches back to the Apostles and Christ. As the wave of natural life flows from God to the whole creation through the necessary cooperation of parents, in the same way, the supernatural and divine life comes from Christ to all believers through the equally necessary mediation of the Church, his bride and therefore our mother. It is destined to feed us with the milk of its teachings, to raise us in the spiritual life of grace, to enrich us with all the treasures of heaven and to help us reach the full maturity in Christ. (*Ibid.*, pp. 25-27).

The Church, the Apostle teaches, is the body of Jesus Christ. Now, the members of one body are united by a continual interchange of mutual services. One member supports and helps the other and together they share in the same benefits [...].

The Church is a family. Now, all the members of a family are united in similar manner. The weaker member leans on the stronger, and the stronger protects the weaker. Name, wealth, and health influence all members and form a common bond [...]. When a member of the family suffers all the others suffer with him; when one rejoices all the others rejoice with him. In this way the human family, like the human body, is an interchange of mutual services and functions in the bond of mutual love. (Homily of All Saints, 1897. AGS 3016/8).

The coming together of all men in this family of God—a wish frequently expressed by Bishop Scalabrini also in his considerations on migration—begins on earth, in a space and a time that constitute the two concrete dimensions of the city of God, the Church, in its earthly pilgrimage. Only by accepting to “remain each in our own place,” that is, “to work for the Church according to our vocation,” we can achieve our own fulfillment in all the dimensions and potentialities offered to us by creation and redemption.

It is the Church that fulfills our vocation of community and communion. A community always implies rules, but these are



“liberating” because they allow us to achieve an authentic personal fulfillment. Bishop Scalabrini warns us that it is an illusion to imagine the unity in the Spirit without the unity of the body. He reminded this in very concrete terms to his missionaries:

You have answered his call, dearly beloved; you have gone and accomplished much; but this is not enough, I repeat; this good must last: *ut fructum afferatis et fructus vester maneat*—to go and bear fruit that will remain. (In 15,16). What does the vine branch need to give fruit! That it stays connected to the vine. Now, Jesus is the vine and you, dearly beloved, are the branches [...]. So, as long as you remain in him, you will feel possessed of superhuman power, and the fruit you will produce will be abundant and long-lasting. Instead, if you are separated from him, you will be like a body without a soul, sterile of any good work. You would be branches good only for being cast into the fire: *sine me nihil potestis facere*—without me you can do nothing. (Jn 15,5). Union, therefore, my dearest brothers and sons, union with Jesus Christ before anything else [...]. And the fruit of this union will be union among yourselves, that union that Jesus Christ so ardently invoked for his disciples is really so necessary. No body of people, howsoever rich in individual talent, will ever accomplish great things, if it does not abide by the great law of unity, and much less will the missionaries, for, in working with souls as simple instruments of Jesus Christ, they derive from this sovereign principle that animates them, their entire efficacy. And so, beloved brothers, I implore you, I beg you in the bowels of Christ and for the good of our confreres not to fragment your energies, each one working on his own account and with no other guide except one’s own will, but rather to be all united and like one thing: *ut sint unum*. United in thought, affections, and aspirations, just as you are united for the same goal [...]. How can you succeed in this? By bearing with one another with every humility and meekness and patience [...]. Each one should be calm and tolerant in fulfilling his duties. Each one should bear with the defects of the other. Each one should strive *to preserve unity of spirit by the bond of peace*. Peace, my beloved brothers, not just among yourselves but also with your brothers in the ministry. By force of things, you must often come into contact with priests and missionaries of different nationalities, you must learn from their experience. Be most deferential toward them, love them sincerely, respect them always.

Peace in the house and outside the house; peace with everybody. (*Ai Missionari per gl'italiani nelle Americhe*, Piacenza 1892, pp. 4-6).

With the same sense of practicality, he adds:

Peace is not possible without order, and order cannot exist without a rule. And you, my brothers, and sons, have your rules approved by the Apostolic See. Be exact in observing them even to the point of scruple [...]. Let obedience to the lawful superiors be your uniform. Obedience first of all to the venerable pastors of the American dioceses [...]. Remember, beloved brothers, that you exercise your ministry in the field reserved to their immediate jurisdiction; that they alone are the ordinary and legitimate judges of the works that have to do with the spiritual good of the faithful committed to their care, judges as well of the most opportune time and way to begin and end them. So be very careful never to start anything without the approval of the one whom the Holy Spirit has appointed to rule the diocese where you happen to be. Humbly and devotedly look on him as your father, as the one who must call down God's blessing on your labors. And bestow on him as such the most reverential love and the most affectionate regard. (*Ibid.*, pp. 6-8).

Another condition for peace, we heard him say, is to "hold one's place:"

Only then will peace reign among men, writes Saint Augustine, when everyone remains faithfully in the place divine providence assigns him: *Pax est in hoc, quod omnes teneant loca sua*. So, the one among you who has the task of commanding must firmly and at the same time modestly fulfill this task. And he who must obey, let him, in the words of Saint Bernard, obey *libenter, simpliciter, velociter, indesinenter*. (*Ibid.*, p. 7).

He finds the reason of this in the theological dimension and in the spiritual structure of the Church as the body of Christ saying that "priests who are truly priests" well know that the gifts of their state are confined to the limits of their apostolate, and that all their light and strength are only for the fulfillment of the ministry assigned to them. They know how to remain in their places; they do not claim for themselves rights they are not entitled to; they do not presume to judge the whole situation when they have only a partial knowledge

of events; they only devote themselves to the task assigned and carry it out successfully [...]. These are the good priests, who by their spirit of obedience establish and strengthen this great body of the Church, because obedience respects the hierarchy, hierarchy fosters unity and unity begets strength. (*Obbedienza, unione, disciplina*. Draft for a joint Pastoral Letter of the Bishops of Emilia. AGS 3018/20).

These statements seem to indicate a notion of the Church as *ecclesia juris* more than *ecclesia charitatis*, instead, they are expression of a desire for unity for the edification of which Bishop Scalabrini worked and suffered all his life, sacrificing ambition, time, health, and personal interests.

I do not look for recognition, nor for self-fulfillment [...]. Was it not so, why would I suffer so much for the present turmoil? I suffer in seeing the Church slave to a party that deeply dishonors it; I suffer in seeing so many consciences troubled, so many noble minds humiliated. I suffer in seeing perpetuated a conflict that causes so much havoc to religion. I hope God will ascribe it to me as meritorious if with my weak efforts I would have contributed to bringing it to an end. (Letter to Jacobini, July 16, 1886. Vatican's Secret Archives, Leo XIII, Miscellanea, IX A).

He had a very precise idea of unity in the Church: he did not confuse it with uniformity, rigidity of centralization, stifling of legitimate differences and diversities, authoritarianism intolerant of the freedom proper of the children of God. Unity is charity:

Christians cannot make up the household of God unless they are closely united in the bonds of charity [...]. Charity gives solidity and elasticity to the human heart filling it with strength, compassion, and mercy. (Address *per l'Inaugurazione del Tempio del Carmine in Piacenza*, Pef. 17, 1884. AGS 3018/2).

"Solidity and elasticity" are the balancing weights that allow him to sail through the storm of disputes with firmness and lucidity, with strength, compassion, and mercy: strength in orthodoxy and obedience, against sin and disorder; compassion and mercy toward all men, even toward those who made him suffer personally. And so, he knew how to harmonize the strength of his convictions with the respect for the convictions of others provided they remained

within the bounds of the freedom allowed by the Church. For him these bounds were considerably wider than those defined by the intransigence and fanaticism of people who showed themselves more papal than the Pope.

The Church is threatened by a great calamity: extremist and intolerant factions are its most cruel wound! Every day I pray, and impose special duties on myself, in imploring God to raise up another Francis de Sales who will be able to put an end to this ill-omened philosophical questions that saint ended the fiery controversy *de auxiliis*. Among my priests there are more than 200 who studied Rosmini. My concern during this time in anticipation of an eventual condemnation, was to win their minds and, while leaving them the liberty granted by the Church, to prepare them for submission whenever the Pope should make his decision. With the help of God, I believe I have succeeded. (Letter to Bonomelli, March 28, 1882).

This pursuit of unity and concern for charity, fruit of prayer and penance, are truly the soul of the ecclesial spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini and the springboard of his relentless action for building the Church in truth and charity:

A sorrowful mother, she has often reasons to complain about children who abuse her and rend her heart; yet, as a living and universal institution, placed in time and space, she also finds in herself the proper means to provide effectively for the salvation of her members in any new situation or difficulty of human events [...]. A wonderful bond connects all her parts, this bond is charity. Woe to anyone who breaks it! She loves: this is her whole life. Made for man, she enters all his institutions, guides, and blesses all his endeavors, feels sorry for, and corrects his errors, provides for reparation, rejoices over his return to God [...].

What happens to society happens also to the individual and in both instances, we have to apply the same therapy, not violent, not severe, but rather kind, patient, and loving. No doubt, when circumstances demand it, one must show an apostolic determination, as not to betray in any way the truth even at the cost of life; but we are children of the Catholic Church, and this Church [...] even when it speaks to defend itself, does not forget the divine meekness of its heavenly

spouse, thus keeping intact the virtue of gentleness. (*Cattolici di nome e cattolici di fatto*, Piacenza 1887, pp. 24-26).

Bishop Scalabrini was the champion of the indissolubility of this triplet: truth-charity-unity. It inspired his whole life and action, his words and example, convinced that only out of the fullness and conciliation of these three elements the great Christian family is born, grows, and continues to live, and the body of Christ is built and becomes the “communion of saints,” which is, “overcoming of divisions, demolition of separating walls, anti-Babel, new and universal brotherhood, [...] a communion of love, [...] communicating to each other the experience of Christ.: (S. Dianich).

If the members derive their life especially from the head, we should not consider the other members alien to this life. In fact, the Apostle says: “God has so constructed the body [...] that the parts may have the same concern for one another (*See 1Cor 12,24-25*) [...] so that the abundance of some may supply the indigence of others. Well then, if this is the natural condition of the human body, the body of the family and the body of the city, should this not be true also of the Church, the body of Jesus Christ, the family of those elected, the city of God?

Let us look at the innumerable host of Saints who lived on earth and are now triumphant in heaven. So many sufferings, prayers, and sacrifices that flow like countless streams into the infinite ocean of the merits of Christ to form the treasure of the Church.

I see in this treasure not only the overabundant satisfactory and propitiatory merits of Christ, but also those of the Virgin and of the Saints: I see the blood of martyrs, the austerities of anchorites, the zeal of apostles, the faith of confessors, the palms of virgins; I see your good works too, the very prayers you have raised to God today in union with your bishop. By virtue of the “communion of Saints” our prayer goes out of this temple, flies on the wings of the angels, crosses the oceans, and goes straight to the heart of our distant brethren, of our unrepentant brethren, of our separated brethren. It brings them the balsam of consolation, the grace of repentance, the gift of perseverance. The “communion of Saints” reaches all places; it has no limits of either time or space. (Homily of All Saints, 1897. AGS 3016/8).

The Church, then, is not only “the perfect society,” nor only a visible society hierarchically constituted, but it is the mystical body of Christ, the Communion of Saints, the bride of Christ, and therefore our mother:

Behold the Church; behold your Mother, the most precious gift given us by Jesus Christ [...], behold the Church our Mother, his greatest work, the price of his blood, the mystical body of Him who is her Head; united with him in the most intimate way, sanctified by the same Spirit, tenderly loved by him, destined to reign eternally with him and established on earth as the interpreter of his will, the depository of his teachings, dispenser of his graces, the only harbor and sure means of salvation, appointed by Christ our Lord as the universal mother whose triumph we must lovingly hasten by holy deeds.

Words are not proof of love; deeds are and by their deeds we will know the true children of the Church. Saint Augustine tells us that they rejoice and are glad about the accomplishments of their mother; according to their condition and possibility, they willingly cooperate by word and deed in widening her horizons, in increasing her members, in making her glories known, in promoting her victories. The decorum of the holy temples and of the sacred rites; filial love for the infallible teacher of truth, for the bishop and the shepherd, for all ministers of religion, for her customs and laws, and for catechetical instruction, are all elements extremely dear to the true children of the Church. They cry and are saddened, continues Saint Augustine, for her ills, and full of zeal they commit themselves to defend her from the attacks of so many enemies who fight her; to safeguard so many of her children in danger of being snatched away from her arms by perversion; to stem the flood of disorders and scandals that disfigure and threaten her. (Homily of Epiphany 1877. AGS 3016/3).

Bishop Scalabrini did not clearly define the position of lay people nor the specific nature of their mission in the Church, but he entrusted them with the essential task of evangelization through the catechetical apostolate. But he insisted more on the duty that not only the clergy but all the faithful have to work for the defense and the building of the Church:

Certainly, the Church will not perish because of the present struggles as she did not perish because of those far more formidable over

the past 18 centuries, but it would be denying the economy of divine Providence if we abstain from contributing to its triumph. No doubt, we are in God's hands, but not to remain inactive. Salvation comes from him, and certainly he will never fail us provided we do our part. He could do all things for us without us, but he wants to do it with us. In other words, we must be convinced that the restoration of society is the duty of everyone, and to do this we need more actions than words. We must act and encourage and help those who act [...]. There is no use in deceiving ourselves: a speculative and neutral Catholicism, a religious neutrality, is an absurdity, if not an outright betrayal, at a time when society is shaken and tossed by the most vital questions. There is one single step between hiding the faith and losing it! (*Unione, azione, preghiera*, Piacenza 1890, pp. 4-6).

But one cannot work and suffer for the Church if he does not love it if he does not feel a real "passion" for it. Love and passion are shown in deeds, but they are also expressed *ex abundantia cordis* in the truly loving and passionate words with which Bishop Scalabrini hails the Church:

Hail, one, holy, Catholic, and apostolic Church! How sweet it is to rest the tired mind, bewildered by so many human wanderings, in the contemplation of your greatness! Blessed is he who espoused you in his own blood! Blessed is the day when you called me your son! Blessed is the water that opened for me the gates of your tabernacles! Blessed is the chrism that anointed me as your soldier and minister! No tribulation, or torment, or the world, or hell, or death itself, can ever separate me from you, my refuge, my stronghold, my life! When I consider my sins and my miseries, I grow faint and tremble; but when I think that I am your son and contemplate in faith the unmeasurable riches from which I as your son can draw freely, all my fears disappear, my heart rejoices, I raise my head in hope, and joyously proclaim: *I believe the Holy Catholic Church*. (Homily of Pentecost 1898. AGS 3016/6).

O holy Church, o Church of Christ! How beautiful are your tents, how rich your dwellings. You are the light of the world! You are our freedom, our salvation, our peace, our joy till the end of the earth. Hail, one, holy, Catholic, apostolic and Roman Church! Let my right-hand wither and my tongue cleave to my palate if I forget you if I do not count you as the greatest of my joys if you are not the object of all

my concern and efforts till the end of my life! Hail, o Church of God!  
In you we find Jesus. (Homily of Epiphany 1895, AGS 3016/3). (see  
Ps 137).



## Part III

### **A SPIRITUAL MAN**



## 1. - A HUMAN MAN

### 1) Spirituality and Humanity in the Thought of Bishop Scalabrini

The vision of faith that guided the “interior” and exterior life of Bishop Scalabrini had its origin in his constant meditation on the word of God and in the familiar “conversation” with Christ during his ‘eucharistic adoration. From the word of God, he gained knowledge of man: himself and others. With the assimilation of the word of God he became a “spiritual man.”

The Bible presents man as son of God, different from God because man is a creature conditioned by material limitations, but at the same time called to intimacy with God in Christ. The spiritual person is the one who accepts in freedom this relationship with God. “To him, to Jesus we owe the grace and the friendship of the Father, the trust, and the freedom of the children of God. To him, to Jesus we owe all the gifts of nature, grace, and glory we receive from God.” (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1878. Piacenza 1878, p. 22).

The Bible looks at the material world as participant in human destiny, as the actual place where man fulfills his destiny by freely accepting in his own history the free and gratuitous call to love that God addresses in history to man. “Jesus is the common center of creation; he is the precious link that binds the work of the Almighty to the divine Creator; he is the goal of all the initiatives and all the plans of providence; he is the supreme and ultimate reason of all the aspirations of God for the redeemed humanity whose head he is; he is the guideline of all our growth since he is the only light that enlightens every man, and therefore the whole humanity.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 25-26).

The Bible considers sin as the refusal of God's plan in Christ. Christ saves man from sin because he is the meaning and purpose of the very existence of man and saved the world through his redemption. Sin is committed in history. The Bible points out the "historicity" of sin: it reveals the relationship between personal sin and virtue, and human history of sin and salvation thus revealing human solidarity in good and evil; it reveals the relationship of the various periods of history; the initial moment of creation and disobedience, and the central moment of redemption. "Through his death he wanted us to rise to new life, [...] communicating to us his very spirit, so that united and almost made one with him, from slaves of the devil, we might become adopted children of God, his brothers, and co-heirs of heaven." (*Ibid.*, p. 13).

The Bible sees the Lord as the Lord of history which he "rules" through the saving plan of mercy, "incarnated" in Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, who died under Pontius Pilate, and on the third day rose again. As man, Christ is different from God, but the Incarnation through the work of the Holy Spirit unites what is different from God with God himself in a perfect and exemplary way. Christ is the perfect man. Being one with the Father he has the power to communicate the Spirit to all men making them "new," "spiritual", united with Christ and in him with the Father through the Spirit. Therefore, men become "sons in the Son," different from God, but united with God in love. He is "the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." (Rev 21,6). "He is before all things, the firstborn, and the prince of all creation. He is the heir, the center of the visible and invisible world, the synthesis of all centuries." (*See Col 1. Ibid.*, pp. 5-6).

Though not employing the same terms that we use today, Bishop Scalabrini well understood that anthropology is an integral part of Christology. From this intuition, which permeates his whole thinking, he derives the conviction that although man and history are essentially different from the reality of God, they can be brought back to God, as the human history of Christ, "different" from God, is led by Christ back into communion with God while preserving intact its human difference.

It is Christ, for whom and through whom all things were created, who is the beginning and the end of creation; he who brings about reconciliation by gathering all things and men into one in himself. Christ, firstborn of the perfect creation, assumed a humanity already made spirit, the reality of a creature able to live with and in God. Anyone who conforms to and is united with Christ allows himself to be transformed into him, lives his Spirit, forms one life with Christ, and fulfils his vocation of being “called to be Godlike.” (Saint Gregory of Nazienzen’s epitaph of Saint Basil). Only the humanized Word transforms the physical man—*animalis homo, psychicòs*—into a spiritual man—*pneumaticòs*—without losing any of his three biblical components: flesh-soul-spirit.

The spiritual man “lives for Jesus Christ.” Moreover: “Christ himself must be our life and must live in us. He must live in us with his spirit, with his grace and with the sign of his mysteries.” (*Ibid.*, p. 27). Docility to the Spirit does not demand that we deny our corporeal and social reality, instead, it places our whole personal, social, and ecclesial existence under the guidance of charity. It makes all our actions, even the “earthly” ones, “spiritualized” so that they become the expression of our conformity with God through our conformity with Christ, and a witness of our intimacy with the Father according to the spirit of Christ, who is “the link of unity, the kiss of peace between heaven and earth, between God and man.” (*Ibid.*, p. 21). “The Holy Spirit must dwell in me, guide me, and lead me—*sine tuo numine nihil est*—he must be the secret moving force of all my actions.” (*Resolutions*, September 19, 1894. AGS 3027/1).

According to the Bible the spiritual man is the “just man.” The Sermon on the Mount tells us that the justice of Christ’s disciple must surpass that of the scribes and pharisees. It must surpass it in the sense that the disciple must evaluate everything not according to the letter of the law, but according to the will of the Father: “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Therefore, “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” in imitation of the Father who makes his sun rise on the bad and the good (Mt 5,44 45). All the commandments are reduced to the commandment of love.

The second sign of justice is serenity, "beatitude." The serenity that dispels anxiety, seeks salvation only in the word of God, and puts its trust only in the Father. The "peacemaker" does not draw back from the seriousness and urgency of commitment, but he carries it out with serenity, "blessed" when opposed, contradicted, and persecuted for the "sake of righteousness," "because of him." (See Mt 5,11-12).

The third sign of justice is to proclaim Christ not by words but by deeds: to listen to the word and to put it into practice. The disciple is vigilant, makes good use of all his talents, is involved in the present reality while waiting for the return of the Lord who will pass judgement based on love.

Here we have the opportunity to point out a characteristic of Bishop Scalabrini's life of faith: he lived it with joy, with enthusiasm, with tireless activity, with love for everyone and everything.

To him serenity, peace, happiness, and perfection are synonyms. Through the apparently hard ascesis with which he seeks Christian perfection, he only seeks and attain happiness; this is the innate desire of every human being. This is the way he chose in order to become "a human man."

The perfection of our being: this is what our happiness actually depends on. Only then do we possess true happiness when our faculties reach their proper end and hold it fast. In this consists the perfection of all beings destined to achieve a specific end. Any good thing that does not raise, ennoble, and perfect us, cannot give us true happiness. Perfection then is the source of true happiness, and true happiness necessarily presupposes perfection. One is inseparable from the other. (Pastoral Letter, Lent 1881, Piacenza 1881, pp. 7-8).

"I must uplift myself, ennoble myself, divinize myself!" (*Resolutions*, August 24, 1894. AGS 3027/1). This was the goal of the ascetical effort of Bishop Scalabrini. "Only faith fulfils our faculties, satisfies all our needs; simply put, it ennobles us and perfects us."

Let us start then by looking at the first of our faculties: intelligence. In the actual order of providence, it is made for infinite truth, therefore, only God's truth can completely satisfy it. In the same way, the human heart is made for infinite good, therefore, only God's love can

completely satisfy it! If you give the mind information which is all purely human, it will never be satisfied because it is made for the un-created truth. In the same way, all the goods of the earth can never fulfill the heart's desire, because it is made for the uncreated good. Now, the complete truth of God, known in heaven through the beatific vision, is only communicated on earth through the revelation of faith, as God's love replenishes the heart through the communication of grace. (Pastoral Letter. Lent 1881, Piacenza 1881, pp. 8-9).

Without faith, "human intelligence cannot reach its destination or embrace its goal, and so it grows restless, is confused, and is at war with itself" (*Ibid.*, p. 9): it is not serene and peaceful. It is not even free, because outside faith "there is indeed freedom, but what kind of freedom? The freedom of doubt, which is an excruciating infirmity; the freedom to make mistakes, which is always a disgrace and a slavery." (*Ibid.*, p. 11). In faith, instead, we find "the rest, joy, and happiness of a mind imprinted with a desire to learn everything and to know everything." (*Ibid.*, p. 14).

For Bishop Scalabrini the conflict between faith and reason, that bewildered so many of his contemporaries, did not exist: "daughters of the same heavenly Father, reason and faith are two streams of the only truth; two beams of the same light; they are like two sisters who, holding hands along the journey in this dark century, are joined together and help each other in perfect and indissoluble accord." (*Ibid.*, p. 15).

Scalabrini, on his part, appeals to human psychology. Man cannot live without a creed or without a faith, even if just a human faith. "The world is full of mysteries; man is full of mysteries; science is full of mysteries! Why then should religion, that everywhere joins us to God, religion which is God himself speaking to and working in humanity, not have mysteries?" (*Ibid.*, pp. 16-17). He quotes "his" Saint Cyril of Jerusalem: "If the farmer had no faith in the future harvest that he does not see and appears far away, would he subject himself to so much labor?" "Yet, he does all this because he believes, because he hopes for what he believes, and because he loves what he hopes for." (*Ibid.*, p. 18). Bishop Scalabrini firmly integrates human faith with divine and supernatural faith, so that we can truly say

that he did what he did because he believed, he hoped for what he believed, and loved what he hoped for.

This was not a “blind faith,” because we have already seen that Scalabrini was one who “seeks the reasons of his belief, searches all times and all places, brings together past and present, and analyzes events.” (*Ibid.*, p. 21). This is how he discovers the plan of God and “looking at this wonder, in the Christian soul grows admiration, love, respect, tenderness, and joy.” (*Ibid.*, p. 22).

“But the peace, joy, and happiness” faith brings to the mind “is nothing, we can say, compared with the peace, joy, and happiness it brings to the heart:”

Created by God for God himself, the human heart cannot find perfection but in God and with God. Since perfection is the natural state and the end toward which all things tend, the human heart has an imprinted, necessary, indestructible inclination to be united with God, to be satisfied only in God, to become one with God: *fecisti nos, Domine, ad te, et inquietum est cor nostrum donec requiescat in te*—you made us for you, Lord, and our heart cannot find peace until it rests in you. [...] What can a man who has God, be missing? *Quid non habet si Deum habet?* He is, above all, in peace; a peace of mind, a serenity of the heart so sweet, so lovely, and so ineffable to surpass, the Apostle tells us, any earthly sweetness: *pax Dei quae exuperat omnem sensum*. This joy of the soul on the road, this state of tranquility full of trust, this rest full of consolation, this harmony full of sweetness, this peace full of love, is truly the most beautiful foretaste, the most perfect image of the heavenly beatitude, because in peace, according to the solemn proclamation of Saint Augustine, resides beatitude.

And what in the world can disturb this peace in a true Christian? Not concern over earthly goods because he does not desire them; not worrying over spiritual goods because he does not envy them; not slander because he is above it; not personal offences because he forgives them; not personal interests because he renounces them; not presumption because he restrains it; not passions because he fights them! Oh, peace of the soul always promised by the world, but never given. [...] Oh, the peace of the soul that born in the mind by faith in the word of God descends into the heart for the possession of divine charity. (*Ibid.*, pp. 23-27).



We find here many of the elements that made Bishop Scalabrini “a spiritual man”: the faith of the intelligence, the faith of the heart, the practice of charity which entails unselfishness, rejection of envy, forgiveness, self-denial, “the spiritual battle” by which a Christian attains to peace and “beatitude” without renouncing any of the deepest aspirations that make up human nature:

His heart is like the smile of God, always full of the most genuine happiness, even when forced to fight against the world and the instincts of our fallen nature. This is the enigma that, according to the Apostle, the material man cannot understand! Should we be surprised? Unfortunately, he ignores the mysterious pleasures that the just man tastes after conquering his passions! [...] Oh the life of the just; a truly enviable life! Life of the just; serene and peaceful! Life of the just; the only true life! (*Ibid.*, pp. 30-31).

Scalabrini’s insistence on the close relationship among perfection, happiness, and peace, and his ability to find all this in the life of faith, reveals his most deep human and spiritual dimension, because it answers his most radical desire and satisfies it. Bishop Scalabrini appears as a happy man, a “blessed,” because he is at peace with God and men. Naturally, an inner peace not disturbed by conflicts, sufferings, and oppositions which remain on an “exterior” level.

We can bear anything; we can bear to be deprived of material goods, we can bear the ailments of the body, the loss of life itself, but we cannot renounce, if not the actual enjoyment, at least the hope of peace, because in our heart the desire of peace is the same as the desire of happiness; our intelligence cannot conceptualize true happiness without peace. It is a gift from heaven. [...] Human tongue cannot put into words the peace of a soul that possesses God. (Christmas Homily 1896. AGS 3016/1).

During last century, asceticism gave, at times, the impression of understanding mortification, self-denial, and penance in a negative way: it seemed, in some cases, almost to push man to become disembodied and to live in a voluntaristic rejection of his own nature and to enjoy suffering for suffering’s sake. Bishop Scalabrini warns his priests against such notion which is contrary to the instinct of happiness implanted by God himself in the heart of man: “the heart

of the priest cannot find either peace or security if it does not place its happiness in Christ; and without this no one can live." (3rd Address at the 3rd Synod, August 30, 1899, *Synodus Dioecesis Placentina Tertia*, Piacenza 1900, p. 250). The problem is to understand where the secret of happiness resides. Bishop Scalabrini finds it particularly in the eucharistic Christ: "This is where the faithful perceives, in the secret of his heart, mysterious and gentle voices; from here he leaves with the holy desire to return, with the holy desire to always come back where his treasure is, and where he finds a treasure of supernatural energies." (*La devozione al SS. Sacramento*, Piacenza 1902, pp. 36-37).

Eucharistic life, [...] though a life of sacrifice because it is nourished by the blood of the Redeemer, it is not a hard and painful life, because in it, it is no longer the man who lives for himself, but it is Jesus Christ who lives in man; therefore even in the midst of the most bitter struggles, we should proclaim with the Apostle Saint Paul: I am full of joy, I am content with every hardship, because for me to live is Christ; to die is gain. (*Ibid.*, p. 36-37).

Bishop Scalabrini's spirituality, has always an "eschatological connotation" joined to the mystery of the cross, and constantly connected with the mystery of the Eucharist. The kingdom of God is a mystery: not a mystery that is made, but one that we receive, welcome, and enter into. He warns that man's happiness and salvation are not the result of human deeds, and even less, of the collective work of humanity. Human activity is a valid contribution to the coming of the kingdom only if it obeys the commandment of love. True progress, Scalabrini insists, is Jesus Christ. This very concept makes him an "incarnationist." Proof is in his progressive interpretation of history where, "even through upheavals," he sees a gradual nearing of the kingdom of God, and therefore a fundamental relationship between human activity and the coming about of the eschatological fulfillment.

This fundamental relationship does not take place only within Bishop Scalabrini's person, so that we can consider him a fulfilled and totally realized man, but also in his exterior activity constantly enlightened by his determination to "divinize" himself. With the terminology of his time, he always speaks of the "salvation of souls,"

but it is clear that he means the salvation of the whole man and even the salvation of all men.

The roots of salvation are found in belonging to Christ, the only savior; in belonging to the Church, the living body of which Christ is the living head; and in belonging, through the love infused in our hearts by the Spirit, to the whole of humanity and the whole of creation. Christ, as head of the body, which is the Church, and as head of the entire creation, through his mystery of death and resurrection, offers to man, whom the Lord has put to rule the earth, a real possibility to defeat evil, to abolish enmity, to enter into the fullness of love and life with other men, discovered in faith as true brethren.

To be children of God in Christ, carrying on his Incarnation and saving mission, is a gift of God and, at the same time, a commitment in history which involves the freedom and the answer of the historical man. "Divinization" is not an abstraction, and even less a mystical alienation, but a reality lived as a response of the whole person to the gratuitous gift of God. The encounter with Christ present in the Eucharist and adored on the cross, is an encounter between real people and transforms man into a new creature, a true son of God by adoption, a living member of the body of Christ, in solidarity not only with Christ, but also with all men and creation, as co-heirs of his resurrection and his lordship over history. The "salvation of the soul," which is nothing else but being saved in Christ and in him being a child of God, does not destroy any element of human nature, as the divine sonship did not destroy the one of Christ and does not destroy any human commitment. Instead, human commitment, historical and earthly, becomes the means through which man, freed and divinized in time, fulfills, moved by the spirit of Christ, the wonderful plan with which God builds history and eternity: "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev 21,5).

His relentless effort to conform to the image of Christ and to allow himself to be transformed in him in the Eucharist, and his very aspiration to be one with the crucified Christ, creates in Bishop Scalabrini a spirituality of peace and joy, the sign of an authentic vocation to take part in the redemption of the world in union with

Christ. Scalabrini allowed himself to be epitomized by Christ, and precisely because of this he was indeed a “human man.”

## 2) The Portrait of the Man John Baptist Scalabrini Drawn up by his Contemporaries

In the portrait drawn by those most close to him and by those who had known him well, we have a proof of this element of his character.

Cardinal John Baptist Nasalli Rocca, archbishop of Bologna, commemorating in 1909 the bishop, whose “fatherly tenderness” he had experienced “since the early years of life,” said:

I had the opportunity to admire all the virtues that enriched you in spite of your diligent humility in hiding them; I could admire them in the loving effusions of your beautiful soul to me, as a loving father would do with the dearest of his children. [...]

Entering the secret of that great heart and of that great mind of a bishop, I could better express my eulogy by applying to him the same words Paul spoke of his Timothy: *Tu es homo Dei*. In Bishop Scalabrini, in fact, from the dawn to the all-too-early closing of his life and from the brilliant beginnings to the—too soon reached—end of his glorious tenure as a bishop, we can see the man of God. The man who seeks God in the depth of his studies, God in the fire of his apostolic endeavors, God in his relationships with the great and the humble; only God, always God: here we can truly say that on his work and his spirit God has stamped his great seal. This is the reason of the veneration and love with which people surrounded him; hence the fascination of his word; hence his beneficial influence on men and events. (*Commemorazione di Mons. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, Piacenza 1909, pp. 6-8).

Father John Semeria too, defines him as a “true priest, *homo Dei*!”

One of those men who embodies the deepest aspirations of a given historical moment but foresees and foretells (and this prematurity is sometimes misunderstood by those who hear and dangerous for those who speak) what will be the safest and easiest path for the future. [...] When we look at the past history of the Church for someone similar to you, Bishop Scalabrini, we should not stop at the bishops of

the Middle Ages, at times very active in civil matters, but we should go back to the virile bishops of old who, in the name of Christ, felt the call to do every kind of good work for their people—men of deep piety, and this very deep piety took away any frivolity and mediocrity. [...]

Because of his great mind and generous heart, he spontaneously raised above a technical concept of piety and a bureaucratic concept of priesthood. It seems to me, that this is the only way we can and should baptize the tendency to turn the priest into a sacred officer, vigilant not to remain outside the boundaries of his specific duties, while vigilant not to go beyond them, as any good civil servant should do. This is the classical concept men of the world, the most faithful followers of the liberal party, have of the good priest! And so, when a priest goes beyond his purely religious sphere, they do not acknowledge him as a priest any longer. This is classical concept of the world. But the true priests of Christ will never resign to this concept. [...]

This is how Bishop Scalabrini understood his priestly mission and how he shaped his multiform character that made him in turn a man of politics, a man of the arts, a man of social reality, while remaining always and in all things a priest, a minister of God, and in his name a benefactor of the people. (G. Semeria, *Mons. G.B. Scalabrini. In memoriam*, Piacenza 1905, pp. 3-9).

“In everything we commend ourselves as ministers of God.” (2Cor 6,4). We have already noticed that Bishop Scalabrini had many interests, was busy in many different activities, was involved in almost all the debates of his days and was interested in seemingly “profane” values, but he did all this as a priest and a bishop. Bishop Bonomelli describes this multifaceted man in this way:

God had given him a quick, versatile, sharp, clear, and great intelligence. In whatever subject he took up, he succeeded without difficulty and the most difficult questions—whether in theology, philosophy, history, or politics—he treated and explained with such confidence and clarity that he never failed to astonish me. One would think he had made a special study of those questions alone. [...] Filled with a pleasant dignity, quick, witty, clear in presenting his ideas, frank, always consistent, he loved only the truth without bending it for anyone. He knew how to join with admirable ability a steadfast

firmness with the understanding and adaptability necessary in human circumstances and successful in the most difficult undertakings. I had frequent occasions to be with him in time of sorrow and difficulty beyond all telling! No word of discouragement, no disrespectful expression, no complaint ever came out of his mouth! Peaceful and in control of himself, he gave the impression they were not his sorrows, but of other people.

He had a great intelligence, but an even greater heart! He was only able to love and always wanted the best, the very best, for everyone, always with an incredible generosity and magnanimity. He did not know what self-interest was: he received to give. (J. Bonomelli, *L'Emigrato italiano in America*, June 1906).

Cardinal Nasalli Rocca, too, underlined the harmony and the togetherness in an existence that faced so many struggles:

The Holy Father is right when he describes our venerable bishop as a *peerless presbyter*, because it would be very difficult to find anyone who could resemble him in all the qualities that distinguished him. It is possible that someone may surpass him in one or another virtue, in one or another prerogative, but hardly in all the abilities that shone in his privileged nature. Charity and knowledge, piety and open-mindedness of opinion and intention; rigidity of behavior and with an unaffected style; firmness and gentleness; dignified without being overbearing; amiable without being ungraceful; popular and a *gentleman*, as we say; Bishop Scalabrini was indeed a *peerless presbyter* and he had indeed the gift to make people love and worship him. (G.B. Nasalli Rocca, *Un elogio di S.S. Benedetto XV e un voto di un piacentino per Mons. G. Scalabrini*, *L'Emigrato italiano in America*, March 15, 1916, pp. 1-2).

Cardinal Alphonse Capecilatro underlines the Christian courage of his friend:

I came to know Bishop Scalabrini in 1889, when, invited by him to preside over the solemn Catechetical Congress in Piacenza, I had the consolation of spending several days with him. We became friends and our friendship grew more lively and, I hope, more fruitful as he came several times to visit me here in Capua. In many respects, Scalabrini had within himself something of the bishops of the finest eras of the Church. I will mention here only one of his merits, which is generally quite rare in our time. He was an unusual bishop in his

Christian courage. He liked to speak the truth to everyone with apostolic candor even when it was difficult, he did it with so much charity and charm, that most were not displeased by it. He governed his own diocese, where he had many bitter experiences, with great charity but also with that fortitude born of Christian courage, which in doing good keeps its glance fixed on God alone and does not fear. (A. Capecelatro, *Nel XXV anniversario dell'Istituto dei Missionari di San Carlo*, Roma 1912, p. XIV).

Cardinal A. Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin and President of the *Consulta Ecclesiastica dell'Opera Bonomelli*, recalls his gifts of grace and nature:

Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini had indeed a beautiful mind, and the Lord had bestowed on him an abundance of the best gifts. He knew well how to nourish them with study, work, and noble endurance in the most difficult undertakings. But I think that his best eulogy lies in the goodness of his heart.

His motto was that of the Apostle: *Charitas Christi urget nos!* This can surely be testified by those who had the good fortune to know his most intimate aspirations, to constantly admire the achievements of his episcopate, to help him with his institutions on behalf of the poor emigrants. His charity knew no limits; egoism, the terrible enemy of holy love, sought in vain to extinguish the flames of his zeal.

Dead to himself, he lived the life of the true disciple of Jesus Christ; and *went about doing good*. (Acts, 10,38). His memory is blessed. A sweet and heavenly light surrounds his name on earth and it seems to me his spirit is to be sought among the heroes of the Catholic apostolate, among the martyrs of charity. (*Ibid.*, pp. XV—XVI).

The portrait drawn by the Barnabite Father Peter Gazzola is sharp and deep:

The spirit of the bishop of Piacenza was shaped by magnanimity and humility, or rather, by a magnanimous humility and most humble magnanimity. His magnanimity derived from the fact that he carried within himself the Church, which spoke, felt, and worked within him like a living organ, and his humility was rooted in his sense of being a part of the whole, ordained for the whole, and sustained and carried forward by it. A drop of water in the spiritual ocean of the

Church and by the Church expanded to infinity: such was the soul of Bishop Scalabrini! Hence the composure that inspired respect and the amiability that engendered trust! Hence the authority with which he governed and the humility with which he accepted the opinions of others.

It is proverbial, among the people of Piacenza and those who were closed to him, the fact that everyone, clergy, and lay people, was conquered by the greatness of the bishop. They did not experienced a superiority of intelligence or knowledge, even though he was quite endowed of both, but the sovereignty of a mind invested and permeated by a sublime concept of the priesthood, from which he drew both the stimulus and the manner of his action. This man, with such noble mind, was almost unconsciously humble in his attitudes and manners, which made him utterly engaging. He had so much goodness and kindness that he almost forgot the demands of his high dignity. (P. Gazzola, *Lo Spirito di Mons. Scalabrini, L'Emigrato italiano in America*, November–December 1912, pp. 30-31).

Monsignor Luigi Cornaggia Medici, in whom Bishop Scalabrini often confided like a spiritual son from the time he was a young layman, wrote a booklet on the “characteristics” of the bishop, discovering them in “an ascesis which is not of many, and in a freedom of truth which is of even fewer people.”

He loved the highway! He did not like the crooked ways, the ways invented by men, even by clerics, he did not like them, and never travel them. (L. Cornaggia Medici, *Le caratteristiche di Mons. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*, Reggio Emilia, 1935, p. 6). Philosophy, theology, politics, social question, labor question, Roman question, Catholic press, Catholic action, people, and things living, flaring up and active in the old liberalism or in new issues, all of them came out of the mouth of the wise and holy bishop and were expressed in much listened to and appreciated words. (*Ibid.*, p. 8).

I had the honor of spending several days with him, of getting close to him many times, and I had always the impression that something uncommon constantly accompanied him. [...] His total disregard for himself, his indifference about what would happen to him, good or bad, because of an attitude or because of one action or other, while constantly seeking and pursuing only and always the good of souls,



the glory of the Church, and the true welfare of society, are eloquent proof that he was assisted from above and that he could truly say with the Apostle: *Caritas Christi urget nos*. The love of Christ moves us—yes this—and the love for the brethren; for him, everything else was vanity and he never cared for it. The love of Christ made him fall in love with his heart and his glories; the love of brethren made him an apostle in his diocese and beyond, on this side of the ocean and on the other side. [...]

Extremely intelligent, greatly appreciated in high circles, keenly conscious of the extraordinary mission entrusted to him by providence, strongly aware of God's gifts, someone else than Bishop Scalabrini would have spurned the simple people [...] and locked himself up in a holy seclusion where he would have granted audiences only with great formality. But he—above and before all a man of God and naturally with such a great heart—could never behave in this way. Indeed, he was never as happy as when he could mingle with the humble, with the least of the world. [...] He was a man for all peoples, because he had the mental and moral virtues to be such a man; one to whom all turned, because everyone—according to their abilities, according to their need, even according to their psychological condition, at times contrary to the supernatural—felt, almost unconsciously attracted to him, in whom they instinctively recognized a man full of the light of love from whom they would only benefit. (*Ibid.*, pp. 20-22).

Antonio Fogazzaro recalled his encounter with the bishop in this way:

He welcomed me into his modest office with kind dignity. He gave the impression of being neither too aware nor too forgetful of the position of a bishop in the presence of a simple layman. I do not know why, but his fine features, though not new to me, gave me this time a new impression, it reminded me of Saint Augustine. This perhaps was due in part to what I had recently found out about the shredding of the document of his last will, in imitation of Saint Augustine. It was a handsome face; a face so masculine as to manifest a virility even of the mind, a predisposition for higher studies, and also an apprehension to have to meet his severity; a face so filled with the spiritual to show a great inner devotion to superior laws; so sharp to let one understand that his Lombard good-natured manners could add here

and there a touch of irony without malevolence, though not without shrewdness. [...]

I burnt with the desire that I had expressed to him and that I was saying to myself: what a blessing it would be for the Holy See to have such a councilor, wise, immeasurably faithful, and yet immeasurably free. (A. Fogazzaro, *Una visita a Mons. Scalabrini, Rassegna Nazionale*, July 1, 1905).

Monsignor Giuseppe Cattaneo, pastor of Fino Mornasco and a student of Bishop Scalabrini, relies on his personal recollections:

[The Lord] endowed him with a noble spirit, a gentle and pure conscience, a clear and sound mind, wisdom and prudence, a big heart filled with generosity and love. [...] He was convinced that a minister of God, even though a spiritual man, must not separate himself from the world nor from the intellectual and civil life of his contemporaries. [...] He had a magnificent intuition of the new times and of the ways of providence. Wherever you follow him, you will notice that he gave a new direction to every institution he was involved in and that he left everywhere a deep and indelible mark. With a gentle countenance, simple and dignified manners, exquisitely noble in words and action, he revealed the composure of his strength, the goodness of his heart, the heights of his soul, and the integrity of a vigorous and healthy nature. [...]

I cannot forget the beautiful days I spent with him in September 1882. [...] How full of life, of youth and hope he was then! How vast the horizons opening then before his eyes! After a few hours of relaxation in the woods above the villa, he suddenly would outrun me down the slopes, and then, with his spirit rested, he recollected himself to pray in the devout chapel, where every morning he celebrated the sacred mysteries. A long time went by, but I have never forgotten those friendly and learned conversations with him. [...] Close friend with the most illustrious men of science and literature, he followed the rapid changes brought about by the most recent studies, but he never changed any of his principles because he had nothing to change. [...]

Everywhere shone the integrity and the strength of his spirit. He never clothed himself in the false uniforms of diplomacy; he never approached the humble with the devious intentions of the powerful; he never followed the prudence of the world which brings death be-

cause it is an enemy of God; but he always followed the enlightened wisdom of the spirit. As one who had neither human hopes nor ambitions, he never knew of any obedience without love or of any authority without paternity. [...] He knew very well how to combine the strength of a command with the sweetness of words and of fatherly glance, because he had a great and noble heart like all those who see God in his creatures. (G. Cattaneo, *L'Emigrato italiano in America*, September 15, 1914).

Architect Cesare Nava, one of the first “Catholic representatives in parliament,” said of Bishop Scalabrini:

He embraced as much knowledge as he could so that he would use it as an indispensable tool for action; without stopping—with the intellectual compliance of a scientist, even though he had the ability of a researcher—to study in depth any specific discipline. He was quite familiar therefore with the positive sciences, history, sociology, and with the most important modern languages; because he considered all this patrimony of knowledge useful to his ministry and to the apostolic work he intended to carry out.

The serenity of judgement and the practical sense he was endowed with, did not allow him to be close-minded. He wanted to know all the reasons of each happening, of each hypothesis, of every political event, of every philosophical or social system, no matter how daring or apparently contrary to his own convictions. He did this with absolute objectivity of discernment, always pointing out the good wherever he found it, even if mingled with the dross, and without any fear of the gratuitous and superficial criticism of others and of the scandalized complaints of the self-righteous.

This disposition of his spirit, this innate kindness of his soul, and the goodness of his heart, would naturally and necessarily have shaped an attitude of great discretion—though never at the expense of truth and justice—in all the external manifestations of his spiritual action, and urged him on to seek a solution for every conflict that was not fundamentally or substantially incompatible. [...]

The whole life of Bishop Scalabrini reveals a sharp, clear, broad and practical mind, the wisdom of a man of government and the tireless and generous activity of an apostle. When an institution that he had organized, was beginning to take shape, one could rest assured

that it was preceded by a conscientious and thorough study of the needs it was created to answer to, of the most opportune means to achieve the goals it was intended for and of the difficulties which naturally had to be overcome. No wonder then that—with the unfailing help of providence—such institutions immediately grew strong and then prospered beautifully. (C. Nava, *Mons. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Vescovo di Piacenza*, Roma 1916).

### 3) The Portrait of the Man Scalabrini Drawn up by the “Process on his Virtues”

The statements of his contemporaries could sometimes be suspected of apologia, or even hagiography. Cardinal Roncalli, writing specifically about Bishop Scalabrini, said that history takes it upon itself to cover up with dust the sepulchers of the “great” or to blow the dust away with the wind of truth:

I came to a noble and clear conclusion about Bishop Scalabrini: he was a very pious, learned, and zealous bishop, generous in the service of God and of souls. In my humble opinion, the introduction of the Apostolic Cause will be an event destined to heighten the nature and the tasks of the Catholic episcopacy. [...] Now that several decades have elapsed since the delicate and difficult situations which may have raised a little dust here and there, it is up to the absolute competence of the supreme authority to say the last word, if, that is, the Lord has blown that dust off the tomb of the bishop of Piacenza, raising heavenly signs of greatness. (Postulatory Letter of A. G. Roncalli, July 9, 1955).

The long proceedings of the apostolic process reached the crucial point at the *Congresso Peculiare dei Consultanti Teologi* when the Congregation for the Causes of the Saints finally called a vote on the question posed by the third Consultor:

Little can be objected or questioned about the eminent personality of the Servant of God. John Baptist Scalabrini was indeed a zealous and exemplar bishop, deeply devout to the Eucharist and Mary, tireless in the care of souls, untiring organizer, an innovator, a pioneer in the modern movement of catechesis, with an apostolic missionary

spirit, a pride of Church and country. All this has been widely illustrated.

However, the question here is to give an answer on a kind of holiness rooted not only on an eminent, extraordinary, admirable, impassioned exercise of the virtues, but on the heroic degree of that holiness which has to be constant, uninterrupted, simple, exact, well balanced, prompt, serene, peaceful, lifelong. [...] (*Relatio et Vota Congressus Peculiaris super Virtutibus, die 25 Novembris an. 1986 habiti, voto III, Roma 1986, p. 29.* (We quote only the number of the vote, because the names of the Consultors are covered by secret).

Here lies the dilemma that challenged and still challenges those who study the figure of Bishop Scalabrini: was he a holy man or was he just a great man? There is still another dilemma underlying this question: are they Saints only those canonized because of “heavenly signs”—miracles—or also all those who have lived in union with “Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Spirit is praised as being “alone holy,” loved the Church as his Bride, delivering himself up for her. This he did to sanctify her?” (*Lumen Gentium* 39). “Those who have faithfully followed Christ” and showed us “a most safe path by which, among the vicissitudes of this world and in keeping with the state in life and condition proper to each of us, we will be able to arrive at perfect union with Christ, that is, holiness.” (*Lumen Gentium* 50).

Granted then, as Bishop Scalabrini taught so many times, that holiness does not consist in miracles or extraordinary accomplishments, but in the union with Christ, we must also keep in mind that holiness is a personal reality: therefore, it is necessarily shaped by the characteristic traits of the person and, like the person, it continually grows. We are real persons, existing in a concrete historical order, human persons living in the “history of salvation,” “divinized” by the Incarnation and Redemption of Christ. Since the raising of man to the supernatural level does not undermine the human personality, it is difficult to distinguish between what is “human” and what is “holy:” one who is united with Christ is “holy,” but the personal union with Christ responds to the innermost yearnings of the person as such. First of all, it is true that “grace was

given to each of us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Eph 4,7), but it is also true that grace does not destroy human nature, but it presupposes it and perfects it.

Since we are now dealing with Scalabrini as "spiritual man," yes, spiritual but a man, we are interested in knowing the notion held by the theologians in charge of verifying whether the bishop of Piacenza had practiced the virtues to a heroic degree. Let us begin with the only one who gave a negative answer:

In his thirty years as a bishop, he planned and carried out numerous initiatives not only in his diocese of Piacenza, but also on a national and international level. [...] Indeed, a very intense activity superior, if not to the capability of his mind and will, certainly to the human strength of a man, and yet he accomplishes them without compromises, and with great generosity, dedication, and rectitude, even in the midst of every kind of great difficulties, internal and external, at home and outside, ecclesial, civil, social, and political. (Vote III).

Consultor IX sees in Bishop Scalabrini the "man of God," and the "man of his times:"

A man very sensitive to the love of Christ and his Gospel, which must be witnessed and proclaimed to the man of today according to the emerging needs; always searching for the most appropriate means to answer to the ever-changing realities of the world and of man. To the very end, even in the midst of the difficulties that sought to hinder his pastoral work, Scalabrini, true "man of God," as he was constantly called by his fellow bishops who knew him well, while making his life "a legitimate proclamation" through constant prayer, nourished by an apostolic life-style of austere poverty, detachment, constantly devoting himself to catechesis, to the continuing education of the clergy, to the spiritual life of the faithful, he felt ever more impelled to come to the help of man's every need. With no concern for his health, criticism, slander, and blame, even from some "righteous" or those who wanted to appear so and could take advantage of a press apparently more inclined to divide than to unite, he desired that all men, beginning with his flock, should feel that the love of Christ reaches all, embraces all, cares for all, and brings to all a message of concrete concern, a sign of the justice and liberation of the Gospel. (Vote IX).

Searching for the secret of so much activity he adds:

He was a man of peace. With a remarkable sense of the historical reality of his time, he worked and suffered, going against the tide, so that the Church could shine with its bridal face clean of every earthly power, able to freely announce the Gospel to all and to call all to salvation. He was an apostle concerned for the life of those who were exposed to the ill of his time, emigration. [...] What was the secret of so much activity? [...] His simplicity as a child of the Gospel, never dimmed by his learning, by the blessings of the Lord on his initiatives, by the recognitions, especially in his last years, by many important people and by Leo XIII and Pius X themselves, for whom he had profound devotion, sincere obedience, and availability of service, though always in the freedom of a spirit born of his humility and sense of responsibility toward the Church. [...] Only an intense and very lively faith, deep and childlike at the same time, could mold his spirit to make him so dynamic and modern, so open to learn, and a thinker so sensitive to theological questions, one of those men who deserve to be numbered among the greatest scholars of the real presence of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. (Vote IX).

This “*pietas*,” according to Consultor V, enriched his human qualities:

His additional personal studies, and, above all, his mental availability open to the realities of Church and society, with a lively pastoral sensitivity, made of him a man of remarkable learning, as we see in all his writings: depth and clarity, precision of notions and a very particular farsightedness and a sense of the future. But Scalabrini is not a theoretical man: his ideas and dialectics stand in function of his mission in the Church; he lives what he thinks, and, as a good Lombard, he wanted to put it into action. Hence his innate suffering in the presence of closed and conservative minds, of the “intransigents” anchored to the past, of the useless discussions and debates, of the inconsistencies and ambiguous stands he discovered in the Church’s height spheres. Hence also his creativity and his initiatives with a broad vision that reached beyond the limits of his diocesan responsibilities! In his confidential observations to Bishop Bonomelli, his friend and admirer, we find a kind of *vis caustica* that must be placed within the context of the temperamental character of the writer and the clerical climate he knew well. (Vote V).

This *vis caustica* of certain confidential outpourings with the friend of his soul has scandalized someone (Consultor III says: “they seem to me, to indicate an embittered heart, in need of outbursts with expressions far from edifying”), while for the other consultors this is typical not only of the “Lombard” frankness, but also of the “parrhesia”: that Christian frankness that in the heart and in the attitude of Bishop Scalabrini is not a sterile spirit of criticism, lack of control or of loyalty. Instead, it is, as the Promoter of the Faith said at the conclusion of the *Congresso Peculiare*, “loyalty to the Church, strong and sincere, beyond discussion.” It belongs to that clarity of relations, to that sincerity of words that invites dialogue, to that ability to talk and listen, which is found in its highest expression in his dialogue with Leo XIII:

He spoke frankly and respectfully so that the Pope might be informed on the complexity of the events and on the various solutions that could be adopted. He was convinced that obedience is also an exercise of intelligence, and that observations made to clarify the complex aspects of a problem are themselves an expression of obedience and love. [...] One or another private and confidential expression, not only does not say anything against a faith made of love and obedience, but, instead, it manifests, even in the context of the interior torment that may have in certain moments of extreme tension laid bare a strong wounded nature, the wounds of a heart that dreamed a Church and a papacy with the most perfect purity and freedom, even at the cost of renouncing the temporal power. (Vote IX).

It belongs to that sense of joint responsibility, the fruit of the freedom of the children of God called to respond personally and freely to the gift of love, without waiting for someone to think and decide for everyone. It belongs, then, to another fruit of parrhesia: inventiveness, creativity, ability to change and to renew oneself. “Undoubtedly Bishop Scalabrini, who lived the pain of the division that, after 1870, was causing in the nation so much harm to the souls, considered his duty to do everything possible to steer the events in a new direction, because he considered the return of the temporal power impossible; but, regarding this last topic, he always relied entirely on the actual judgement of the Holy See, and wanted everyone to do the



same." (Vote IX). This is why the bishop of Piacenza belongs to the "non-aligned:"

Scalabrini accepts the risk of *not aligning*, fully aware that this option, while disappointing the liberals, who at first had hailed him as one of their own, would bring about the opposition of the intransigents, strong in the public arena through their newspaper "L'Osservatore Cattolico" of Milan, and even to be branded a "liberal" in the Vatican circles. (Vote V).

Together with his "theological and moral preparation," his "concrete sensitivity to the newly emerging realities," his "exact perception of a society in fast evolution with serious breaks with tradition and formation of preceding ages" (Vote IX), "equilibrium and steadfastness were the unmistakable traits of his interior strong and harmonious personality. [...] A man of action because of his apostolic vocation, Bishop Scalabrini truly anticipated the times in the realization of his institutions. In this context of exceptional accomplishment, however, he knew how to maintain a serene evaluation of himself and his work, an amiable simplicity, and a deep humility." (Vote VIII).

These aspects of his personality find their explanation in the "channeling" of his creative and organizational energies towards both his "political" involvement and ascetical dedication, and his total commitment to his brethren. Undoubtedly, in the most Christian meaning of the involvement in the temporal reality, he always perceived "politics" in its most rich and positive sense, that is, as a body of events that must serve Christ and his Church, free of temporal compromises." (Vote IX).

His exceptional farsightedness and his powerful temperament stood out strongly in the very harsh social and political reality of his day. Mindful of the drama of emigration, experienced in his own family, his life became a sharing in the struggles of the poor, the oppressed, the outcast, the defenseless, because they had no weight in society. The defense of the human rights of his people—today so relevant in the magisterial and pastoral concern of the Church—was for Bishop Scalabrini a strong and consistent commitment to the battle of

ideas and to the social activity inspired by evangelical pastoral care. (Vote V).

The same must be said of his ascetical efforts toward perfection. "His desire for perfection, however, did not limit itself to self-gratification over a job well done or to a refined form of narcissism, but it found its purpose in his will to edify his neighbor whom he cherished with boundless love." (Vote VII)."

Consultor VI, summing up, asks himself whether Scalabrini was a "manager" or an apostle:

The central pivot around which revolves Scalabrini's whole action, is a wealth of love where the words of the Lord are completely fulfilled: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart. [...] You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Mk 12,30-31)

In Scalabrini's case, we could rephrase the words of Jesus, if possible, in this sentence: "You shall love the Church with your whole life." Scalabrini take his place among the great figures who have not only honored, but "edified"—in the etymological sense of the word—the Italian Church of the second part of the 19th century and of the early 20th century, side by side with Don Bosco, Don Orione, and Don Guanella. His love for God and man was indeed exceptional in intensity and was made manifest through a relentless flourish of initiatives which he carried out with every sacrifice.

One thing that clearly emerges from the abundance of witnesses is the total commitment of the Servant of God to his vocation as a Christian, a priest, and a bishop; a vocation lived in every activity undertaken as an apostle, in every directive presented as a shepherd.

A life so feverish with activities, so dynamic in a continuous finding of new apostolic propositions, so consuming in an untiring generosity, is not possible if the soul is not moved by a great ideal; this ideal is either human, and we have an exceptional "manager," or it is heavenly, and we have an apostle.

That Bishop Scalabrini had what it takes to be a great "manager" appears, though indirectly, also from the depositions that speak of his "shrewdness" in reading men and using them for the realization of his grand plan. But Scalabrini did not want to be a "manager," he wanted to be an apostle. Depositions [...] allow us to state that he was not a "manager" dressed in clerical garb, but a shepherd full of zeal,

tireless in his innovative and constructive activities, an apostle who had placed all his talents and devoted all his strength always and only to the service of the Church, the glory of God, and the welfare of souls.

The feverish activity of his thirty years as a bishop certainly had moments of difficulty and misunderstanding, they are the signs of contradiction that accompany the action of an apostle. But the wealth of his pastoral activity is so imposing that leaves us not only edified, but also amazed by the amount of work he accomplished. (Vote VI).

From the depositions at the Diocesan Process, we select now the “human” elements that could help us understand the personality of Bishop Scalabrini and the transformation the grace of God operated in the existential complexity of his life and action, especially in his human relations, creating the fundamental harmony and unity that attracted the attention of his contemporaries and of later generations to this “spiritual man!”

Scalabrini had a very sensitive temperament: we can see this in the frequent tears he shed with those who suffered and those who “converted,” or over the harm brought on the faith of his people. We can see it even in his short-temper and impulsiveness, always immediately controlled. “All human miseries touched his great heart.” (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, p. 125). Visiting the deaf-mute, “he was moved to tears when he could find that those poor creatures had acquired the gift of speech.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 123-124). During the Miraglia schism “while talking about the unfortunate events, he cried.” (Witness C. Douglas Scotti, *Ibid.*, p. 321).

“Sometimes he was a little quick to react, but he immediately controlled himself, and generously rendered the greatest satisfaction.” (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 345). “I recognize that the Servant of God had a somewhat irascible disposition; I must add however that if at times he gave vent to a sudden outburst, I was greatly edified by the way he immediately controlled himself.” (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 153).

His human sensitivity was of great help to him in the exercise of charity while not hindering, his generosity in forgiving.

The practice of a generous charity toward all people in need and sorrow has been the characteristic of Scalabrini's episcopacy. (Witness A. Carini, *Ibid.*, p. 433). I never heard of anyone who asked him for help and, if he could, was not helped. (Witness F. Calzinari, *Ibid.*, p. 632). As to his charity towards his neighbor, I must say that it was truly boundless. (Witness C. Mangot, *Ibid.*, p. 38). He was exceptionally generous. (Witness C. Douglas Scotti, *Ibid.*, p. 320). His charity had no limits. (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 345). When he could, he gave always and to all. (Witness G. Squeri, *Ibid.*, p. 531). He was always present in a public calamity: the Servant of God gave and had others do the same. (Witness A. Ranza, *Ibid.*, p. 649).

He showed a "very special concern" towards both the families of the "impoverished nobility" (Witness E. Morisi, *Ibid.*, p. 455) and towards prisoners: "he took specific care of each and all of them, personally visiting the cells of the most pitiful cases to give them help in nature and money." (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, pp. 124). "He helped and made the entry into the seminary and the continuation of the ecclesiastical career possible for many of the poor classes." (Witness E. Morisi, *Ibid.*, p. 455). "He did not just go, but he flew to visit the sick." (Witness L. Tammi, *Ibid.*, p. 838). "Whenever he was asked, the Servant of God visited the sick of any walk of life," (Witness F. Gregori, *Ibid.*, p. 365) "rich or poor, he brought to them a word of encouragement and often the assistance of his great charity." (Witness E. Morisi, *Ibid.*, p. 565).

This was his constant and daily concern for his brethren. There is no need to mention the events that made him famous such as his care of people stricken with cholera, the distribution of 3,000 hot meals every day in the winter 1879-1880, the founding of the Institute for Deaf-mute Girls, the organizations for migrants, the *Opera pro Mondariso*, the organization of the *Comitati dell'Opera del Congresso* which he oriented toward a social assistance, free of any political connotation even an ecclesiastical one.

But the clearest proof is his generosity is in forgiveness. "Bishop Scalabrini was never the man to hold a grudge against any of his opponents and offenders. On the contrary, he readily forgave them and often had expression of genuine affection toward them, to the point of making them his closest friends." (Witness E. Morisi, *Ibid.*,

p. 455). "One of his characteristics was in fact to become a benefactor of his offenders, going out of his way to show them his particular benevolence." (Witness G. Squeri, *Ibid.*, p. 532).

The most famous instance remains the forgiveness he granted his great opponent Don Davide Albertario. Cardinal G.B. Nasalli Rocca adds a meaningful detail: "I must say that I have never heard him utter one bitter word against this publisher priest!" (*Ibid.*, p. 750).

He showed to the priests of his diocese a happy combination between the charism of a father and a *savoir faire* that certainly belonged to his natural temperament: "He was a father to everyone, but especially to the clergy, whom he won with a grace and tact that made them do everything he wished." (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 337).

His highest concern was to promote harmony, suggesting in every situation to smooth corners, as he himself always did: a great skill that did much good to all since he knew how to gain all by his fatherly attitude. When he could not satisfy someone, he sweetened the bitter pill with words and manners so courteous and amiable that the person itself was in the end happy anyway. (Witness G. Cardinali, *Ibid.*, p. 305). He was a born diplomat and it was almost a peculiarity of his to mitigate conflicts and to avoid divisions. I often heard people saying: "What could we do? With that man we always have to give in." (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 352). He could present things in such a way that one felt it necessary to agree with him. And I know from personal experience, for he made me go where I did not want to, and yet I always ended being glad of it. (Witness L. Tammi, *Ibid.*, p. 831).

"If we could mention something about him, we could say that he was too good." (Witness A. Ghizzoni, *Ibid.*, p. 773). But never to the detriment of determination when necessary.

One day he told me his heartbreak in having to remove a priest from his parish. [...] "When I saw him coming to meet me in his cope, it broke my heart, especially considering his advanced age!" (Witness G. Cardinali, *Ibid.*, p. 295). When the Servant of God was forced to make serious provisions against someone, he did not neglect the habitual fatherly touch that conquered souls and bent even the least docile wills. (Witness E. Caccialanza, *Ibid.*, p. 226). He was not hasty, he suffered, and would always try to mitigate the blame and soften the punishment. (Witness G. Squeri, *Ibid.*, p. 533). He had great com-

passion for the unfortunate priests who had dishonored their character and he assisted them spiritually and sought to help them settle down. (Witness G. Polledri, *Ibid.*, p. 593).

Particular emphasis is given by witnesses to his overcoming the “spiritual antinomies” that are a normal component of the human psyche. We have already noted how Scalabrini, apostle of unity, achieved unity in himself and gave witness to it. Don Orione remarked that “he was not one to let an occasion go by where he could be the intermediary, with the holy intention of reconciling and bringing children ever closer to the common Father of all the faithful. Disregarding the dross, he aimed at the core of things, seeking to deaden whatever passion afflicted his times.” (Witness L. Orione, *Ibid.*, p. 281). But he could not have achieved reconciliation in others if he had not achieved it within himself. Here are some examples of his interior harmony:

His bearing was quite dignified, but he was always affable in manners. One could say of him that he tempered a royal dignity with a motherly touch. (Witness F. Calzinari, *Ibid.*, p. 628). He had an intrepid and dignified temperament, and even in the most stormy vicissitudes he showed an extraordinary courage and did not back away from his duty when facing injustices and abuses. (Witness E. Caccialanza, *Ibid.*, p. 230). But he was not haughty at all, (Witness E. Preti, *Ibid.*, p. 243) and his manners were extremely gentle. (Witness A. Scarani, *Ibid.*, p. 406).

His strong temperament never let him be discouraged or give signs of weakness, always sustained by his trust in God. [...] He always acted with great rectitude, he was firm in his principles and attitudes, without being stubborn. [...] He held to his rank, but without ostentation. (Witness G. Radini Tedeschi, *Ibid.*, pp. 370-371). He was a man of great initiative and enterprise, without falling into temerity. He was the just man who gave to each his own: he was firm and courageous. (Witness G. Cardinali, *Ibid.*, p. 296). He was never partial because of likings or disliking as to cause moral or material harm to anyone. I can actually state that in case of doubt about who he should assign to a post, whether a person of his particular liking or one who had not particular reason for his affection, before deciding, he sought the advice of several trustworthy people for fear of following the im-

pulse of his heart rather than the demands of justice. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, pp. 139-140).

He always put a solid trust in divine providence: but he never neglected to use all the means that prudence and wisdom suggested. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 117-118). He felt very strongly about his responsibility, but at the same time he lived with total confidence in divine providence. [...] I have never seen him waver a moment, even in the most difficult circumstances. But this did not made him presumptuous and he never disregarded the normal human means. (Witness F. Torta, *Ibid.*, p. 347). He used to say that we can do nothing with credits, but with debts we accomplish something [...], but he busied himself seeking offerings from people and institutions. (Witness E. Caccialanza, *Ibid.*, p. 218). He was often heard saying that we must not cease carrying out good works for fear of not being able to meet expenses, but always with prudence and economy. (Witness G. Cardinali, *Ibid.*, p. 301). He used to say that in every occasion it is necessary to see, foresee, and provide. (Witness C. Mangot, *Ibid.*, p. 39).

He was very friendly with everyone and felt particularly at home with the poor and the children of the poor. (Witness G. Dodici, *Ibid.*, p. 171). He was most affable especially with the common people and never disdained to be with them. While he treated the noble and the rich with great courtesy, he flattered no one. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 143). He never avoided contact with persons of humble station; in fact, this aspect of his virtue might be summed up by saying that he stopped the poor to speak with them, while he allowed others to stop him, except when the good of souls was at stake, in which case he was available to everyone. (Witness L. Cornaggia Medici, *Ibid.*, p. 738). He made no distinctions between one poor and another: he always gave wherever there was a need. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 123). He was a cheerful giver, often repeating that when we give tenfold to the Lord, the Lord will gives us back a hundredfold. (*Ibid.*, p. 117). The motto he frequently repeated, especially to the members of his household was: *Date et dabitur vobis*. Whatever activity he wished to undertake, the poor had always priority. (Witness C. Mangot, *Ibid.*, p. 39). While he knew how to deal nobly with nobles, he never disdained to be with people of the lower class, letting everyone come near him freely without ever showing any sign of being annoyed. (Witness A. Carini, *Ibid.*, p. 438).

He always insisted on a moderation, to the point, one day, of remarking to his uncle: "They have not broken your windows yet? Is it, perhaps, a sign that you did not do your duty" and smiled because, not to boast, but his uncle was actually a very worthy priest. To a pastor who had followed too literally a general provision, he remarked: *Noli esse nimis iustus*. (Witness F. Calzinari, *Ibid.*, p. 634). He was so faithful in performing his duties to be an inspiration for us. This ability to always show the same attitude in every moment and in every place, was to me heroic virtue." (Witness E. Preti, *Ibid.*, p. 243).

This complex and well-balanced mixture of gifts of nature and of grace explains the fascination he exerted on his people and on all those who came in contact with him.

His contemporaries of all walks of life and even of other religions had a very high concept of the Servant of God both as a man and as a bishop: he was highly esteemed for his intelligence, his culture, and his extraordinary ability to govern, but above all for his holiness which shone in his every word and action, edifying even those less favorable toward religion. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, pp. 146-147). The minister of finances Luigi Luzzatti, who I believe he is a Jew, once declared in parliament that if all the bishops were like Bishop Scalabrini, he would become a Catholic. This because of the personal fascination that Bishop Scalabrini had on him! (*Ibid.*, p. 121). The journalist Galimberti, editor of the liberal and Masonic paper *Il Progresso*, used to say that he avoided contact with Bishop Scalabrini because everyone said that he won over to the faith all who drew near him. (*Ibid.*, p. 130). He had a particular intuition for knowing men; he had a quick and confident vision of affairs and problems and a fine touch. In this way, he often succeeded in preventing or soothing divisions and disputes among the clergy and gained the favor of civil authorities and institutions. (Witness G. Squeri, *Ibid.*, p. 533).

On the other hand, "he always showed the strength necessary to resist oppressions, abuses, and usurpations by civil authorities." (Witness C. Spallazzi, *Ibid.*, p. 89). "When it was a question of defending the rights of God and of the Church, the Servant of God raised his voice even against civil authorities and did not bow to anyone." (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 141). "During the stormy period of his episcopate, in the midst of the Masonic political opposition and of the



continuous election of parties hostile to religion, the self-composure and the courage of the Servant of God gained the esteem of even his adversaries, and truly shows the strength of his soul." (Witness A. De Martini, *Ibid.*, p. 266). In spite of all this, "he knew how to maintain good relations with civil authorities and he shone because of his personality and *savoir faire*." (Witness L. Tammi, *Ibid.*, pp. 830-831).

All admired the serenity of his soul during the most trying periods of his episcopate, particularly during the Miraglia schism.

During all these events you could see that he was suffering so much inside, that even his physical appearance was affected and he lost an impressive amount of weight. But I never saw him showing any sign of impatience; he was always calm and never uttered a word of complaint. (Witness C. Spallazzi, *Ibid.*, p. 71). Many times, I saw him weep and prostrate himself before the Blessed Sacrament to implore the mercy of God on that poor unfortunate and the salvation of the souls entrusted to him. But I never heard him say a word or seen him make a gesture that would indicate any impatience, rancor, or irritation toward the unfortunate apostate. And in fact, if one of his household uttered a hostile word against Miraglia, he reminded him of the obligations of Christian charity. (Witness L. Mondini, *Ibid.*, p. 107).

One of the hardest periods was that of the polemics with the "intransigents." "He suffered much opposition, which he sustained with serenity: opposition that came not only from the enemies of the faith, but also from many so-called Catholics who did not approve of his zeal which they called untimely." (Witness, C. Mangot, *Ibid.*, p. 42). "The dispute with Don Davide Albertario was terrible! Bishop Scalabrini suffered deep sorrow. This priest, who was considered a journalist, was imprudent and pretended to dictate to the bishops: the bishop was right then not to allow the reading of *L'Osservatore Cattolico*. But when Albertario mended his ways, the Servant of God forgave him with signs of great benevolence." (Witness P. Scarani, *Ibid.*, p. 481). He strongly pleaded with the government to obtain his release from prison following the events of 1898, or, at least, permission to say Mass and wear the cassock. He had previously invited him to give a conference in the episcopal palace, and the priest "with moving words, mentioned his relationship with Bishop

Scalabrini, stating that his criterium, announcing the truth, was to be “intransigent.” With equal emotion, Bishop Scalabrini answered that when proclaiming the truth, it was not enough to be “intransigent,” but one should be “very intransigent,” but always careful to do it in charity.” (Witness A. Ghizzoni, *Ibid.*, p. 766). “He defended the rights of the Church against its enemies with strength, but also with charity. To me, then, the peculiar feature of Bishop Scalabrini is his ability to express his opinion, when opinion was allowed, against the intransigent tide of those days even before the supreme pontiff, not worrying about the many sorrows that this attitude could cause him.” (Witness F. Lotteri, *Ibid.*, pp. 712-713).

Through all these instances, however, rather than his fortitude as such, one should admire one particular aspect of it: his patience! Bishop Scalabrini showed it in keeping strictly silent when the prestige of the Pope might have suffered; in bearing without getting discouraged or saddened by the offences and the harm done only to his person; and above all in his generous forgiveness persistently offered and abundantly granted to those who offended him in those areas most dear to him: love for truth, devotion to the Pope, and love for his diocese and his clergy.

#### 4) Wholeness of Character: the Portrait of the “Man” Scalabrini in his Letters to Bishop Bonomelli

Scalabrini chose Saint Charles Borromeo as the model for his episcopate and his missionaries because he was “an example of all the virtues that make a true apostle of Jesus Christ,” and because he saw in him “one of those men of action who are never hesitant or divided among themselves and who never retreat, who throw into every act the whole strength of their conviction, all the energy of their own will, their whole personality, all of themselves, and win.” (*Ai Missionari per gl’italiani nelle Americhe*, Piacenza 1892, p. 13).

Wholeness of character is one of the most typical aspects of the “man” and the Servant of God Scalabrini. We can see it, for instance, in friendship which even from a human point of view presupposes virtue. Cicero said it already: “There is no friendship without virtue.

[...] It is virtue that forms and safeguards friendship because in it we find harmony, stability, and fidelity." Saint Thomas points out: "More than a virtue, it is the fruit of virtue. Through friendship, a believer, "divinized" through his conformity with Christ, shares in the human-divine love of the Lord: he is a friend in Christ, with Christ, for Christ."

Harmony, stability and fidelity mark the emblematic friendship between Scalabrini and Bonomelli; better yet, it is "philadelphia:" a brother-friend relationship, a carrying of one another's burdens, a reciprocal protection and concern, a without-border and constructive love that shares joys and hopes, but which is even better revealed in helping the brother in difficulty, in working together towards a mutual growth in the love "with which Christ has loved us," to the point of a fraternal correction that seeks to prevent the risk of a moral evil in fidelity to the Gospel.

During the *Processo*, the questions about this friendship were expressed in rather negative terms. It was considered whether Scalabrini "had been prudent enough so as not to bear any responsibility for whatever unpleasant happened to that famous Prelate." The attention of witnesses was thus drawn more to the prudential than to the human and Christian aspect of it. Several witnesses insisted on the role of moderator that Bishop Scalabrini played with his friend, reporting episodes that showed frankness and "holy freedom," and therefore, the authenticity and loyalty of a relationship rooted in virtue. There were, however, witnesses, who stressed the fraternity and total sharing. It will be sufficient to quote one deposition that sums all of them up: "Bishop Scalabrini was to Bishop Bonomelli the true friend who takes upon himself his friend's sorrows, who defends him in public and in private, even before the supreme authority of the Pope, and advises him with wisdom and prudence." (Witness, L. Cornaggia Medici, *Ibid.*, p. 736).

Actually, no one, except themselves, could know the depth of the exemplary friendship of the two bishops who opened their hearts to each other only in the intimacy of their conversations and their most confidential correspondence. Fortunately, at least the correspondence remains and it reveals some very interesting aspects of their personal

history and human existence, together with details until recently unknown of the history of the Italian Church of their day. One year after his friend's death, Bishop Bonomelli thus recalled their 37 years of friendship:

Seeing each other, talking to each other, and feeling immediately bound by a close friendship, was all one! A sincere, caring, and affectionate friendship that was to last undimmed until June 1st of last year when Scalabrini left earth for heaven. [...] Our friendship remained alive and grew thanks to a periodic and interesting correspondence in which we expressed our ideas, our hopes, our fears, and our joys, with that holy freedom that does not know secrets.

In 1871 I was made bishop of Cremona, and a few years later he was appointed bishop of Piacenza. Divine providence placed us near one another; and our sharing became more frequent through letters and visits, and our friendship, if it were possible, grew stronger. In 37 years, there was never the smallest cloud over it. There were no secrets between us, nor could any be suspected; he, my friend, read my heart as I read his! I believe that it will be difficult to find two friends in so perfect unison as the two of us. This friendship, though so intimate, did not hinder our freedom to think and act in different ways; indeed, this made it sweeter and deeper, and, when needed, heroic. Bishop Scalabrini gave me repeated and truly sublime proofs of it in hard times. [...] Faithful in friendship to a heroic degree, he never hesitated to make his own the cause of his friend, ready to face sorrows and challenge difficulties to be of help. (*L'Emigrato Italiano in America*, June 1906, pp. 74-75).

One such "hard time" resulted from the publication of Bonomelli's pamphlet *Roma e l'Italia e la realtà delle cose*. Bonomelli had already revealed to his friend the intention to intervene publicly in the Roman question in 1887: "You know that I do not hide anything from you, nothing at all. [...] Before starting it, I open to you, as to a trusted friend, my heart and I tell you everything, and ask for your advice." (Bonomelli to Scalabrini, April 2, 1887). Bishop Scalabrini probed the ground in Rome and advised Bonomelli to write an edition reserved for the Pope, the king, and a few prelates, and to be careful: "Go slowly, my friend; be careful not to take the wrong step. Times are changing, but I do not think they are quite ripe enough for this yet" (Scalabrini

to Bonomelli, December 12, 1887), but Bonomelli, unable to wait any longer, ignored the prudence of Bishop Scalabrini and published the pamphlet on March 1, 1889, informing Scalabrini about it only afterwards. The bishop of Piacenza did not approve of it but was not offended by the haste. As was his style, he acknowledged the facts, including those he would have personally neither done nor advised, and concerned himself only with avoiding negative consequences, and deriving something positive when possible. When the pamphlet was blacklisted in the *Indice* and the bishop of Cremona made his famous public submission during the Easter homily, he mediated between the Pope and Bishop Bonomelli, and defended his sincerity, pleading with Leo XIII not to embitter any further the wounded heart of one who had obeyed “like a son, if not like a subject.” “God bless you for what you have done for me! For the affection you have shown me!” (Bonomelli to Scalabrini, April 26, 1889).

When Bonomelli, whose “soul was fed up with such annoyances” (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, May 11, 1889) said he “longed for a cell in the desert,” Scalabrini encouraged him to hold on to his just ideas:

A cell in Egypt indeed! Let those who are the cause of so much desolation go and bury themselves there; not a bishop like you who has spoken, written, and done so much to prevent it. Come, come! God has set you on the battlefield and you must stay there, even though enemy bullets rain down from every side. You are gloriously wounded. After all, ideas move forward. They are ideas of truth, charity, and peace. Draw back and let them march forward. They cannot fall to conquer and you will be able to say that you open the way for them. (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, June 6, 1889).

The following year Bonomelli was reported to the Holy Office for certain footnotes he had written to the translation of the works of Monsabré. Scalabrini sought to reassure him: “Do not worry! This phase we are about to begin is indeed painful, but full of light. Let providence take care. As to myself, no need to tell you that there is nothing that I would not do for you which I would not do for myself! [...] Calm, courage, trust in God, and keep going!” (*Ibid.*, April 17, 1890). Unfortunately, the sentence came and Scalabrini was once again at his friend’s side:

With my whole soul I share your sorrows and your pains; but you must be strong and bear with great dignity the weight of the present tribulation. I am sure that the day is not too far when justice will be done to you. [...] *In omnibus*—Saint Ambrose wrote—*cupio sequi Ecclesiam Romanam: sed tamen et nos homines sensum habemus*: I think he meant, just because I am a bishop must I allow myself to be imposed upon like a beast of burden? [...] So long, dear friend, be steadfast, place your cause in God's hands; he will comfort you, for this I pray every day! (*Ibid.*, April 28, 1890).

In 1892, the Pope was ready to take Bonomelli out of his diocese and send him on a diplomatic mission to Central America. The bishop of Cremona begged Scalabrini to intercede personally with Leo XIII. The friend cut short his trip to Sicily and ran to the Pope: "I spoke strong words! He answered that he will have all due regard and your good in mind, and that he himself will discuss the matter directly with you. You need to keep your cool and your strength. [...] If you have to correct something, correct it, but hold on to your post." (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, May 16, 1892). Scalabrini himself wrote a letter in defense of Bonomelli so strong that Bonomelli did not have the courage to forward it to Rome, thus giving us also another glimpse into the temperament of Scalabrini:

*Expavi* at such strong and proud words. But tell me, would you really dare write like this to Rome? I am astonished and I admire your courage. I myself, I would have been afraid of a thunderbolt! You are a different person! I do not know why, but from your mouth certain cannonades go through, but from my mouth ... it is quite a different story! (Bonomelli to Scalabrini, May 30, 1892).

In his answer Scalabrini does not speak of courage, but of duty: "I understand respect, obedience, piety, heroism! I understand all this; but a bishop is not the owner of his good name as a private person is." (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, June 10, 1892). Bonomelli finally decided to defend himself in person with the Pope, who promised to send him for a few months to America without taking away his title of bishop of Cremona. Scalabrini, asked by Bonomelli, did all he could to have even this solution of compromise overturned, while continuing to

calm down his friend who was on wit's end—"in a short while either I become a monk or I become a Savonarola!"

To become a monk? A Savonarola? The first would be good for one who has a true vocation, and the second would be glorious for one who feels up to it. But probably, the best thing is not to do anything; devoting ourselves in the best way possible to promote the glory of God and the welfare of souls, sure that *si scimus tacere et pati videbimus auxilium Domini*—if we know how to keep quiet and suffer, we shall experience the help of God. In the meantime, let us work, pray, and hope for better times. (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, July 10, 1893).

In 1895, when the Miraglia's schism broke out, it was Bonomelli's turn to comfort his colleague: "My eyes and my heart are always turned to Piacenza, to you, the dearest of my friends! Your tribulation is almost incredible, and I feel it in my heart as if it were mine!" (Bonomelli to Scalabrini, January 27, 1896). In 1899, Scalabrini paid him back rushing to the bedside of his friend sick with a dangerously illness. In 1900, he warned Bonomelli that his Institute for Italian Emigrants in Europe was becoming politicized and exploited by lay organizers for nationalistic interests. We may question the reservation of the bishop of Piacenza: "I do not care for lay initiators in strictly religious matters," as a general principle. But we must also keep in mind the concrete circumstances. Bonomelli had always been the most vocal enemy of the snobbish bishops when it was a question of intransigents. Bishop Scalabrini reminded him that this should have been true also with regard of transigents: "Was there not loud criticism of the bishops in top hats? I love justice and consistency in all relationships." (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, April 24, 1900).

Bishop Bonomelli started to believe that their friendship was cooling, while during the sickness of the preceding year his friend was "totally for him." Scalabrini assured him: "If at this time last year as you like to say I was totally for you, you may rest assured that I am still totally for you and I will be in the future, even when I do not approve of some practical oversights." (*Ibid.*, June 21, 1900).

This kind of sincerity and frankness could not dim such authentic friendship. When Bonomelli did not follow his advice not to print a public edition of his conciliatory pamphlet Scalabrini told him: "If you

continue like this, they will take away even your baptism.” He did not hesitate to express his disapproval to see the tricolor waving from the bishop’s residence in Cremona on September 20, anniversary of the seizure of Rome: “What are you doing? [...I What are you thinking about? You are intelligent, but you don’t understand! One would say that you act first and think afterwards!”: (Witness L. Mondini, Diocesan Process, pp. 134-135). “You and Don Albertario—although different—resemble each other.” (Witness F. Lotteri, *Ibid.*, p. 710).

In his honesty and sincere love for the Church, Bishop Bonomelli readily accepted his “fraternal correction,” declaring, in fact, that it was a sign of the authenticity of their friendship, which was never selfish or possessive: “Though so intimate, this friendship did not hinder our freedom to think and act differently on various issues; indeed, it made it stronger, and even heroic when necessary.”

Even in this friendship we find some similarities with Saint Francis de Sales, who while saying of himself “I am a man, nothing more” did not hesitate to declare: “There is no one who loves more cordially, more tenderly and frankly more lovingly, than I.” Let us read again some passages from the correspondence between Scalabrini and Bonomelli:

*Omnia mea tua sunt*, and you know that I love you not just as a confrere, but also as a most tender brother. (Scalabrini to Bonomelli, June 16, 1882).

I have not written to you these past few days out of respect for your filial sorrow, which I felt deep in my heart as if it were my own father! Whatever concerns you affects me greatly! (*Ibid.*, April 25, 1883).

The fire of our friendship is so vast that *nec flumina obruent ilium*. (*Ibid.*, November 27, 1883).

Good wishes are for many just a compliment, an act of convenience; but mine to you are a fact of the heart, an expression of high esteem, of a deep and reverent friendship, of an unchanging unity. (*Ibid.*, December 21, 1883).

The first and best wishes of my heart, are reserved for you *dimidium animae meae*. Our souls are united by a mysterious bond, and even



far apart they can always speak to and understand one another. (*Ibid.*, Christmas 1892).

The human friendship of a “spiritual man” is a Christian friendship, made transcendent by charity, made to share in the friendship Christ offered to man, lived by the one who is intimate with God, and expressed in accord with the degree of one’s participation in the life of God. It is a reciprocal help to grow “in knowledge and love” of Christ and in Christ, of the Church and of all men. In other words, it is an experience of the love of God, the love of the Church, and the love of the apostles.

Already in 1941, the theological censors in charge of examining Scalabrini’s writings declared about his letters:

They reveal better than his public writings a true holy man. They are very clear documents of all virtues: his faith as a just man, with which the Servant of God accepted from the hand of God all things, good and bad, and referred all of them back to God; his supernatural hope, through which, never broken in spirit, but only relying in God, he hoped against hope, and undertook enormous projects though short of money and human support; his blazing love of God and neighbor, a love, I say, that is patient and kind, that is not jealous, not pompous, not inflated, that does not seek its own interest. Beside his outstanding theological virtues there also shine his moral virtues. Shines his *pietas in Deum*, nourished not by sentimentalism, but genuine, born out of love. There also shines his prudence in acting; his justice, especially the distributive justice; his fortitude in bearing oppositions and not just those of enemies, and the hardships of life and of his trips over land and sea. No less admirable are his humility, gentleness, meekness, detachment, interior, and exterior mortification. (*Positio super Causae Introductione, Judicium prioris Theologi Censoris*, p. 11).

The censor himself, does not close his eyes to the “imperfections and shortcomings” that had in fact blocked his cause for so many years. But the *Congresso Peculiare* of the theological censors of 1986 accepted in full the judgement of 1941: *Mendae autem quae notari possunt apparent sicut levissimae nubes in lucidissimo coelo*—the shortcomings that one may find are like extremely small clouds in a brightly shining sky. (*Ibid.*, p. 12). Bishop Scalabrini himself, in fact, when speaking to newly-weds, used to warn them to keep always

far away “those dreadful, grim, and stormy clouds that seem to dim the light of the sun and threaten winds and hail.” But he also added: “You have often seen instead those light, light little clouds, adorned with gold and silver, surrounded with unique soft colors, that are turned into an astonishing spectacle of different and graceful forms almost as to compete in beauty with the pure and serene sky. But where does the grace of those condensed vapors that disturb its clarity come from? You know it well: it comes from the friendly sun that takes hold of them and imperceptibly embellishes them. [...] Love the sun of charity, which is God; keep always in mind the crucified love, which is Jesus Christ; be ardent in charity, which is effused in Christian souls by the Holy Spirit.” (Homilies for Weddings. AGS 3018/29).

## **2. BISHOP SCALABRINI AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION**

### **1) Socialism and the Action of the Clergy**

During the last century, though less than in the first half of this century, a debate was going on about the human commitment of Christians, particularly of priests and religious, in their search for spiritual perfection through ascetism. Since ascetism implies detachment from material goods, some insisted on a level of detachment from any commitment in world’s affairs, a commitment that in the end would have always been limited since for man true salvation consists in the salvation of the “soul.” The fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation will be achieved only in the “new heavens and new earth” of the escaton. Others, instead, held fast to the notion that the Incarnation of Christ had already “elevated” creation and had consecrated it in his humanity, it had brought all things visible and invisible together in his human-divine person subjecting them to the lordship of God. The world, therefore, has an intrinsic value and we can and must use it in a spiritual dimension since it is a continuation

of the mystery of the Incarnation: Christians cannot refuse to act in the whole process begun by Incarnation.

In Scalabrini's day, the theoretical debate had already been practically resolved not so much by a "theology of the earthly reality," but rather through the main road of charity. We have only to mention Saint Vincent de Paul, Don Bosco, Cottolengo, Don Guanella, Frederic Ozanam, to limit ourselves to those who were closest to Scalabrini in thought and moment in history. Besides, the relevance Bishop Scalabrini gave to the concept of the continuation of the Incarnation in history, in the Church and in the human person, set him on the path of the essential dimension of Christian ascetism which is the taking up of the human reality that in Christ becomes the "body" of his divinity.

We had already the opportunity to notice that the spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini was far from being disembodied; and that rather than urging him to escape reality and to detach himself from history, it placed him right in the middle of the realities of his time while holding on to the "eschatological reservation" and to the primacy of contemplation over action. Saint Augustine said: "No one should be so contemplative as not to be concerned in his contemplation, about helping his neighbor, and so active as not to seek the contemplation of God." (*De Civitate Dei*, 1.19). This is how Scalabrini translated it for his missionaries: "They shall root their apostolic work in the great saying of the Saints that one should not be so devoted to the salvation of souls as to neglect his own, nor abide so much in the joys of the interior life as to neglect the exercise of the apostolic ministry." (*Rules of Life* 1888, c. XII,2). And the "apostolic ministry" of the Missionaries of Saint Charles had to strive: "to keep the Catholic faith alive in the hearts of our fellow countrymen, and to provide as far as possible, for their moral, civil, and financial welfare." (*Ibid.*, c. I, 2).

For sure, he would have never approved of a missionary who had become so involved in the social care of the poor, the oppressed, the outcasts, the "pariah" of the civil society, as he defined the emigrants, to the point of forgetting the forms of spirituality of prayer and meditation. He would have viewed as deviating the consideration of these practices, or even the Sacraments themselves, as an expression

of individualism, selfish intimacy, and alienation from the reality lived by the neighbor. On the contrary, he would have condemned as alienating a vision of the cross that would separate the sufferings of the Head from those of the members of the body of Christ. His devotion to Christ in the Eucharist, as it has been previously showed, was also a dedication to Christ present in "the poor" and "the afflicted;" his devotion to the crucified Christ became concrete in his service with compassion and effectiveness for the members of the body who share in history the sufferings of Christ.

Bishop Scalabrini often reflects on the crisis of contemporary society, studies its causes, sizes up its dimensions, places them in the historical context of the Church and the world and foresees the possible consequences. He accepts reality without losing courage and without withdrawing from the battle, presents solutions and the means to achieve them, seeks allies among friends but also outside the narrow boundaries of Church and pure orthodoxy, looks forward with trust in the final results, and foresees, utopistically perhaps, but with an unshaken hope in God, a better tomorrow. He hopes also in man, convinced that God wants him associated in his plan for the world.

This is why he summons Christians to "Catholic action:"

This is the exact purpose of the Catholic action: to promote, with an organization that answers to the needs of our times, this movement of return, already present in the conscience of all men of good will: to bring Jesus Christ back into the schools, the customs, and society.

It is not our purpose to engage in politics, as our adversaries would have people think. We wish above all to work for a moral rehabilitation, and to provide for the economic needs and legitimate aspirations especially of the working class. The exploiters of the poor have made magnificent promises up until now, but they have kept none of their promises. They have promised bread and justice, and today people lack justice and bread.

Now it is our wish to organize, precisely for these people, helpful institutions, to expand mutual aid, favor the development of industry and commerce, and develop the charitable works that are most suited to our time. (*Azione Cattolica*, Piacenza 1896, pp. 7-8).

When he was pastor in Como, he had founded a mutual benefit society for textile workers, he secured for them the material to be worked at home, urged landowners to invest money in jobs: "he turned mediator between silk manufacturers and workers who asked for jobs, even if most of them were socialists." (Witness A. Bianchi, Diocesan Process, p. 670).

Made a bishop and faced with the growing social unrest that risked being manipulated by Marxists, he urged his priests above all to study the social question; then, to promote associations, to encourage mutual benefit and security societies, Catholic banks, rural credit unions, farmers' and consumers' cooperatives, insurance offices. He exhorted them to get involved in "all modern means for the good of their neighbor." (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, p. 42).

Some of you have already intervened to smooth out the frequent differences between landlords and farmers; and during the pastoral visitations I myself together with you have worked towards the elimination of practices and financial burdens of other ages. Continue on this line with prudent determination, and do not allow, as far as it depends on you, that abuses and immorality may come in to make the life of the workers and of the poor more difficult and more oppressive.

You can secure other benefits for farmers by studying on their behalf the new agricultural discoveries and systems that help increase the yield of the land at almost no expense or increased labor. [...]

During these last twenty years I have seen many parish properties in my diocese, formerly uncultivated, transformed into vineyards and fertile fields through the praiseworthy initiative of the pastors, and following their example whole tracts of land recovered and made productive by more intense and more rational cultivation. I should like to see this work, done by a few, become everyone's work in the future. To this end I have instituted *Cattedre agricole*—courses in agriculture—in my seminaries so that the young clergy will have the necessary knowledge to give the people entrusted to their care bread for their bodies as well as their souls. Meanwhile, it will not be difficult for anyone who wishes it, to learn from books those few necessary notions that could help farmers, often tied down to old ways, with

useful suggestions and practical projects that could be easily understood and put to use; even notions that are the result of long studies and expensive experimentations. *Conferenze agrarie*—agricultural lectures—too are very helpful, and I strongly recommend them. (*Ibid.*, pp. 43–44).

In order “to bring Jesus Christ back into society,” besides “moral restoration,” all initiatives and measures “on the economic level that respond to the rightful aspirations especially of the working class” have to be implemented.

The humanization of labor must be promoted, not hindered, by the progress of science and technology. Progress, therefore, must be guided by the Gospel.

To study and take a strong interest in the social question is a dutiful task for Catholics. The Holy Father himself [...] gives us the example. This is the new field he points out to the zeal and action of his sons. We have to do the opposite of what revolution does. Revolution works to divide the multitudes, and especially the workers, from the Church; the Church must now bring them close. We must, I repeat, inform once again minds and hearts with the great truths of the Gospel.

Willing or unwilling, this is the only remedy for our present ills, the only antidote against the impending bigger ones. Machines, industries, discoveries, scientific conquests, let them all march in! It is good for man to make progress through hard labor and to seek to improve the conditions of his existence everywhere and in everything. I rejoice wholeheartedly for it, because, after all, all this is for the greater glory of God.

What we, men of the Church, want is that the Gospel be called to direct these economic and industrial transformations; that the sincere practice of its law may purify and ennoble material progress. (*Centenario di San Luigi—Enciclica del Santo Padre—Obolo dell'amor filiale*. Piacenza 1891, pp. 10-11).

Just as he viewed emigration as an instrument for the unification of mankind destined by providence to prepare the “great unity,” that is the unification of the human race in God through Christ in the Church; in the same way, he saw in labor ordered by God and in the humanization of labor after the negative and sad consequences

of sin, a contribution to the realization of the saving plan of God; a contribution that becomes concrete in the service of God and his kingdom, in the self-fulfillment of the person as participant in God's creative power, (and also of God's "rest") and consists in the service of the community brought about by the rediscovery of unity and solidarity among workers.

Man must work and put to good use the talents given him to fulfill the divine plan, which is accomplished in heaven, but which is prepared by a commitment here on earth:

Catholic religion, which has made man aware of his greatness by clearly revealing to him his high destiny, has also imposed on man duties proportionate to the sublimity of this call. A Christian cannot limit any longer his action to the narrow boundaries of reason and time without betraying his divine origin and his noble destiny. [...] In this wonderful plan nothing remains isolated: a human being is linked to another, and an action to another, all individuals and nations have their task and a share in the work assigned to them for the perfecting of the structure. To fulfill this task is to answer to the intention of divine providence, the interweaving in time of that eternal crown of justice which Saint Paul saw already on his head before dying; to leave it unfinished is to disrupt the order established by God and to betray his trust; it is to become guilty of the same sin of the servant that buried his talent instead of putting it to profit. (*Discorso per la Seduta 1 annuale dei Comitati parrocchiali*, 1882. AGS 3018.18).

God has endowed man with dignity not only in the order of grace by adopting him as a son, but also in the order of nature which was put under him and which he rules with his work:

If we are not the final purpose of created things, in the physical order we are certainly their immediate purpose: all of them have been in fact subjected to and made to serve us: *constituisti eum super omnia opera manuum tuarum; omnia subiecisti sub pedibus eius*— You have given him rule over all the works of your hands, putting all things under his feet. (Ps 8,7) Why does the sun send the inexhaustible streams of his light? Who steals energy from electricity sending it to follow precise directions, making it an instrument of traction, motion, and new life? Who can force a beam of the sun to become a magic painter of the works of nature and of art? Who binds air and steam to his carriage

in order to surpass the speed of birds in flight? [...] All these wonders cannot be explained; all these things have no reason to be, to multiply, and to last, without man. (*Discorso per l'inaugurazione del Tempio del Carmine in Piacenza*, February 17, 1884. AGS 3018/2).

Freedom is an essential element of human dignity. "Extending over the external world, freedom becomes the work that produces, modifies, increases, assimilates the forces of nature, and imprints its mark on it. [...] Man recognizes himself, with all the rights of his being, in whatever comes out of his hands and mind. To be deprived of its use, or of its utilization in any way he chooses; or worse, to be forced to produce or to use products in a certain way and not in another, means to be at the mercy of others, to be a slave. [...] Work is a form of freedom, or has, at least, the quality that makes it sacred and infuses into it the power to associate the worker with his work and to make what was produced by one, untouchable for everybody else. In fact, to be free means, to be our own master and to be in control of all our physical and spiritual faculties, employing them in the work of our choice, with the only limitation of not infringing on the rights of others. [...] The man who cannot use all his faculties as he wishes, or worse, who is forced to employ them as directed by others, or who cannot have the free use of what he produces, is no longer the master of himself; and, as I said, he is a slave." (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, pp. 15-16).

Scalabrini accused employers, who forced employees to work even on Sunday, of attacking "human dignity and freedom:"

To multiply your own enjoyments, to increase production for your own profit, would you make a slave of a man, a beast of burden? You are barbarians! Are you unaware perhaps that in that body bronzed by the sun, in those limbs hardened by labor, their lives an immortal soul equal to your own? Do you not know that with respect to Christian faith and knowledge the worker is in everything, except in his material circumstances, equal to the most noble of princes and to the most powerful of monarchs? Precisely in fact because he is a workingman, he is the clearest reflection of the divine Artificer who gave existence and form to all things, and of the divine Artisan of Nazareth who, by his example, ennobled labor and poverty! (*Come Santificare la festa*, Piacenza 1903, pp. 23-24).



It may seem superfluous to note how much Bishop Scalabrini valued unity and solidarity, which, in the social field, are indispensable:

Every care must be devoted to the societies, varied in form and in purpose, which are flourishing among us, so that the spirit of association may increase and strengthen the bonds of brotherhood, so that it may provide what the weakness of the individual cannot and remedy the unexpected blows of misfortune. *A brother helped by a brother is like a fortified city.* Far from opposing this new spirit of association, which is spreading and penetrating everywhere, continue to support it and do all you can to keep it on the right track when inexperience or bad advisers threaten to lead it off course. [...] In the past the rich endowed the Church with convents and public charitable institutions; today, they could do something more pleasing to God by taking the lead in organizations of workers, producers, consumers, cooperatives, in order to improve the conditions of the workers. (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, pp. 42-43).

Certainly, we cannot accuse Bishop Scalabrini of a “spirituality of escape.” This accusation is, with too much generalization, levelled against the spirituality of the nineteenth century, while on the contrary, the *beati possidentes*, and their representatives of the time, that is the governments, under the pretext of public order, tried to stifle the voice of the Church, and even accused it of connivance with subversion, (an example is the imprisonment of Don Albertario accused together with socialist leaders of fomenting the riots of May 1898.)

Civil authorities are wrong if they continue to think that the clergy is dreaming reversionary approaches and it does not perceive the destined progress of society — preordained on a principle of unlimited Christian perfectibility — towards higher forms of social living. (G. Borelli, *Il clero cattolico e le condizioni politico-sociali d'Italia. Un colloquio con Mons. Scalabrini*. L'Alba, July 15, 1900).

Scalabrini rejects individualistic and private ethics and, instead, embraces the social commitment of the Christian and also of the priest.

While devoting itself to the care of souls, the Church does not neglect what pertains to earthly life. It strives and seeks that especially

the workers be freed from poverty. It accomplishes this first indirectly by freeing men from vice and teaching them virtue; and then directly by the creation of thousands of beneficial institutions, [...] inspired by that charity that cannot be substituted by human ingenuity, because it is a virtue that can come only from the most Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, p. 31).

There is no charity without justice. Inspired by love, the works of charity and assistance were at that time more necessary than today because of the lack of help. The state was still absent. It did not have the slightest idea of a “social State.” Bishop Scalabrini reminds it of its duty:

In order to solve the labor question, the cooperation of each and all is necessary, especially of the people in government. They must contribute first of all on a general level, by fostering public and private prosperity, which results especially from good morals, the good health of the family, the practice of religion and justice, the moderate and just distribution of public taxes, the growth of industry and commerce, the flourishing of agriculture, and other similar activities. Secondly, the state must also provide equally for all classes of citizens, rich and poor, maintaining *distributive* justice with absolute impartiality.

Granted that the social welfare must be rooted primarily in virtue, nonetheless every well-organized society needs also material goods. They come from the activity of the worker, the farmer, and the laborer. The activity of the workers is what generates national wealth. It is only right, then, for the state to take an interest in the worker, and to provide him with a share in the riches he generates. (*Ibid.*, pp. 31-32).

He often denounces social injustice in the name of the Gospel which preaches the good news even when condemning sin:

Precious instrument in the hands of others, powerful producer of the riches of others, the worker in our day lacks sometimes the necessities of life. While at least half of the commercial and industrial growth of the nation and of the wealth of the people is the fruit of his work, he is not called to share in it. [...]

Unjust laws and greed have made the worker a slave of labor! He struggles with the present and is disenchanted about the future; he

loses his strength and his life to secure a piece of bread which is not even enough to satisfy his hunger. [...] This is, then, a work of justice that we should undertake if we want to bring hope and tranquility back to the working class. Workers have duties, but they also have rights, and society must defend them, before they decide to defend themselves through violence. Justice and charity: justice for all, charity towards all. (*Centenario di San Luigi—Enciclica del Santo Padre—Obo- lo dell'amor finale*, Piacenza 1899, p. 4).

Bishop Scalabrini feared the maximalist, hegemonic, provocatively atheistic, and anarchic “socialism” of his day. At the same time, he had some socialist friends—Representatives Paul Carcano and Angiolo Cabrini, and even his brother Angelo. He did not hide his liking toward “those who experience a stronger compassion for the unfortunate, and a greater nausea for the corruption infiltrating and penetrating political organisms reaching the higher ups; and who can hardly tolerate without complaining, the social injustices, the free-fed idleness of the few and the penury of workers and, together in one individual, wealth, power, and unworthiness.” (*Il socialismo e l'azione del clero*, Piacenza 1899, p. 4).

In his analysis of the causes, he identifies: the anarchical ferments, social life “becoming wild,” the excessive individualism, “the sting of economic insecurity,” the overbearing of capitalism, and the loss of religious values. Whatever the interpretation of the phenomenon, he warns that “it is a sign which would be folly to let it go unheeded.” In his study of the remedies, he condemns both the fatalistic resignation, and the repression by police and by the military. He sees the necessity to work on the causes: “to eliminate with wisdom and justice the religious, moral, and economic evils” that stand at the root of an already explosive situation.

He regrets not being able to use the term “Christian Socialism” because of possible misunderstandings. The Church must act. The clergy must, first of all, update their studies, because the “moral theology as taught in the schools does not always have the right answer, because [the questions] are about new forms of social life, new rights and duties.” They must not confine themselves to a view of socialism as a devilish sect or limit themselves to decrying and praying: “they must enter the battlefield,” and accept and put into

practice the “just claims” of socialism, such as sharing in the profits through just salaries, the legal right to work, the rights of education, the right to healthcare, personal safety, social security in sickness and old age.

“The protection of workers’ rights is a strong mandate in the words and teachings” of the Old Testament. Christ identified himself with the poor and the outcast, he helped all, he preached human brotherhood and universal equality. “The rebirth of society wanted by Christ begins on earth and it is accomplished in heaven: it is moral regeneration for the rich, the powerful, the strong and the wise; it is moral and material regeneration for the underprivileged.” (*Ibid.*, p. 22).

The Church, which recently intervened with the *Rerum Novarum*, shows that “while it devotes itself to the care of souls, it does not neglect what pertains to human life on earth. It wants and seeks that especially the workers be taken out of their destitution.” (*Ibid.*, p. 31). It defends “*the right* of ownership as it is rooted in natural law; but as to *the use* of it, the Church does not hesitate to declare that man must hold material goods in common and share them with others according to their needs.” (*Ibid.*, p. 30). On its part, the “state must provide equally for all classes of citizens, rich or poor, applying *distributive* justice with absolute impartiality.” (*Ibid.*, p. 31).

Bishop Scalabrini adds some personal considerations to the encyclical letter of Leo XIII. If the causes of the social crisis are economic instability and weakening of the religious spirit, then, there must be two remedies: wise economic laws and the strengthening of the sense of religion and of duty, particularly in the ruling classes. But they must be applied simultaneously:

The economic reform would be ineffective because such is human nature that without the restraint of higher motivations it desires and wants what it does not have. Then, concretely speaking, every concession would only generate hopes and desires for bigger concessions. Civil and religious education would also be ineffective because a despairing heart can hardly understand the word of faith. The bread of the soul must be given together with that of the body. (*Ibid.*, p. 38).

But Scalabrini does not dwell on principles, which today may seem outdated, (not to be surprised: just compare *Rerum Novarum* with *Populorum Progressio* and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*); he insists, instead, on the action to be undertaken by the clergy: to revive in the people a Christian conscience; to teach the poor that poverty is not a disgrace and the rich that their money “must be used for the benefit of all;” to be relentless, even bothersome, in their mission of charity; to condemn anarchy which aims “to destroy every kingdom in the world,” while a Christian must only spread the kingdom of Christ on earth; to proceed with serenity, discernment, equality, wisdom, and conscience; to seek practical remedies.

In this field, Bishop Scalabrini has in mind the social fabric of his diocese, which was almost entirely rural. Therefore, he suggests the association system to be implemented in social security and mutual benefit societies; Catholic banks and credit unions that may stamp out usury “the curse of farmers;” modernization and rational planning in agriculture (a chair of agronomy in the seminary; agricultural conferences in the farms); clarifications and advice in emigration.

He forcefully reminds them of the principle just enunciated by the moral theologian P. Lehmkull: “The changes that have taken place in the social field and in the attitudes of people necessarily call for a change of methods in the care of souls. A pastor who would not strive to establish and develop associations in his parish would totally neglect his duty.” (it is an addition to the second edition, Torino 1899, p. 82).

Priests must support the “demands of modern socialism:” “limitation of the hours of work and minimum wages for the workers fixed by law, the right to work, the right to strike,” the institution of “arbitration procedures, pensions for incapacitated workers, reorganization of the work of women and children, healthy conditions in factories.” (*Ibid.*, p. 45). But they must always act as priests: “You must never forget that you are the spiritual fathers of all the souls entrusted to your care. Your intervention in matters outside the church which you judge useful to the community, must not foment conflicts and divisions, but it must unite all in the holy purpose of working together for the welfare of the needy.” (*Ibid.*, p. 45).

Finally, Bishop Scalabrini asks himself whether the social question was a matter of justice or of charity. His answer begins with a premise: "the evil afflicting society today is not, as socialists would say or even liberals, purely economic, but it is also moral, indeed especially moral." It is then a problem of fidelity or not to the Gospel, which teaches both justice and charity: "Therefore, when you remind individuals of their fidelity to evangelical charity and to the dictates of religion, you work for social justice, because the welfare of society depends above all on the religious and moral renewal of individuals: the rest will follow." (*Ibid.*, p. 47).

## 2) The Social Problems of Emigration

Bishop Scalabrini's social involvement is revealed in many other fields: we recall the first mutual benefit society for the textile workers of his parish in Como; *the Institute for Deaf-mute Girls*, the *Opera pro Mondariso*; his mediation during the strikes of the button factory, (at the time the largest industry of Piacenza); the promotion of the *Opera dei Congressi* and the *Comitati Cattolici* in almost all the parishes of his diocese; the restoration of the Cathedral done also for a social reason:

I must also mention another very different reason, but one which should also carry great weight (as it did in inducing me to assume the responsibility of this undertaking) with all those for whom the suffering of the workers is not merely a simple and easy subject for speech-making but a grievous fact, which each of us must try to remedy with the measure of his own possibilities. The economic depression, which is serious throughout Italy, is most serious here for lack of factories that can offer a decent job to those without one. I am very happy, therefore, thinking that the money we donate to this great project will be turned into so much bread for a great many families. I believe that because of these jobs, for several years there will be much fewer unemployed in our city, and that all its citizens, directly or indirectly, will benefit. (*Pel nostro Duomo*, Piacenza 1894, pp. 6-7)

His action on behalf of emigrants remains however his most important intervention. His study of the phenomenon reveals not so much the spirit of the psychologist or the economist, but instead, the

spiritual reflection of a man of the Church on an eminently human reality that required an urgent, concrete, and possibly complete, intervention. The lesson learned from the study of the size of the problem, "should not end in a sterile accusation, but it should signal the beginning of a rational and practical action." (*L'Italia all'estero*. Torino 1899, p. 6). He begins with a courageous denunciation of the unjust causes and with a realistic awareness of the causes that do not derive from either individual or social sin. His denunciation of the absence of the state, the unjust taxation, the curse of enlisting agents "true traders in human flesh," the greed of Italian landlords, the enslaving tactics of Brazilian fazendeiros, the mafia system of the *padroni* in the United States, the pseudo-bankers accomplices in acts of "banking plunder," go hand in hand with his condemnation of all other "infamous moral speculations" and all their dreadful consequences for religion which concern the heart of a man who is a Christian and a bishop. Nor does he hide the sins and omissions of the Church.

He supports the right to emigrate which must be exercised in a manner worthy of human beings, the result of free choice, not the only alternative to destitution and death of hunger, the consequence of capitalistic or nationalistic exploitation. He advocates the protection of their rights: Medicare, family, salary, culture, social welfare, and social security on the part of the state. He defends the right to one's own ethnic identity, threatened by "forced assimilation" even by the Church, which has the universal mission to "evangelize the children of misery and labor" and has to look "with an anxious heart" while so many of its children, "in forced isolation, are losing the faith of their fathers and with faith, all sentiments of Christian and civil education."

The founding of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, of the Saint Raphael Society, and of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo, is not only the fruit of his apostolic zeal but also of his human concern for the "wandering misery of his country." The Saint Raphael was to secure funds for the missionaries, for the opening of new missions and to foster religious assistance during the ocean trip, while, at the same time, working to secure medical assistance, the opening of schools, legal

and social protection in juridical matters and contractual obligations, the opening of information and employment offices, etc. In this way, as mentioned before, the religious, social, and human purposes are intermingle in the mission he set down for his religious congregations.

To the cry of the emigrants—"here we live and die like animals, without a priest, without teachers, without doctors: the three components representing social life to the mind of the poor"—the Apostle to the Emigrants answered with a "Congregation of Missionaries [...] that achieve its purpose by establishing churches, orphanages, hospitals through priests united as in a family by the religious vows [...] ready to hasten wherever they are sent to, apostles, teachers, doctors, nurses, according to the need." The sisters had also to "adjust" to live in small communities, to build the first schools without pretensions, to teach catechism, and to assist the sick, even in their homes. He called to the Saint Raphael Society all men of goodwill "without distinction of class or political party, citizens of all walks of life, of different persuasions, but all surrounded by the esteem and respect of all and known for their enlightened charity and warm sentiments of love for their country."

Is this an inversion of roles or is it rather the belief that man cannot be divided into watertight sections, that his salvation and promotion is the salvation and promotion of the whole person? The action and thought of Bishop Scalabrini do not leave room for doubt. The fear of a "dichotomy" could not cross the mind of one who had proclaimed in the same page of a pastoral letter that the priest is "the sacred man par excellence", and "the social man par excellence." (*Il Prete Cattolico*, Piacenza 1892, p. 22). The fear of a "double loyalty" to God and man, to the temporal and the eternal welfare of man, could not create any difficulty for a bishop who had persistently urged his priests to get out of the sacristy and the temple, "but always keeping your eyes turned toward the temple, and coming out of the temple like the sun coming out of its pavilion, splendid with the light of God and with the fire of charity that brings light, warmth, and fruit." (*L'Azione Cattolica*, Piacenza 1896, p. 13).



### 3. BISHOP SCALABRINI AND POLITICS

#### 1) A Pastoral Political Choice

Bishop Scalabrini's spirituality is not separated from history. As it was said before, the "eschatological reservation" is always on his mind, but it is a reservation that becomes an "eschatological tension:" he reads history as "sign of the times," therefore as a sign of the coming of the kingdom. He is aware that total salvation will be accomplished in a dimension outside time and space, but he also knows that salvation is prepared here on earth, in time, in space, and in human history.

He is not a professional "theologian," but he reads theology in men and their history: in men who, as free persons, are the makers of history, and because of this, more or less conscious instruments of divine "economy." "Here on earth the servants of God who work for his plan are always numerous, but in times of great social renewals there are many more people than we know and we see, who unknowingly work for his plan, for his glory." (*Discorso pel Centenario di Cristoforo Colombo*, December 1, 1892. AGS 3018/21).

In faith he perceives the presence of God in history, mysteriously sovereign while respecting human freedom. Man can disrupt God's plan by sinning, but he can never destroy it; instead, he is called by God himself to be a partner in his providential design.

In this way he resolves another spiritual conflict: the one that exists between keeping quiet, being satisfied in preserving order or moving toward progress. If on one hand he acknowledges that the world goes awry, on the other he does not remain still, crying over the bad times, because he believes that with the help God certainly gives to men of goodwill, everything, or at least a lot, can and must be changed.

We heard him rejecting the conservatism of those intransigents whose axiom is "not to give in on anything, not even on the evidence of the facts; to fight all innovations; to lock themselves in immobility, in abstentionism, in the pyramids of antiquity, while attacking those

who do not want to be identified with a system of mummification or of the Stone Age.” (*Intransigenti e transigenti*, Bologna 1885, pp. 21-22).

In history there exists a “chain of causes and effects” whose “high strings are woven and directed by divine providence towards the ends she intends.” The present events of humanity are the consequence of those that preceded them and the cause of what is to follow. The man of the past affects the present, the man of the present has an influence on tomorrow. It is simply unreasonable, then “to try to destroy the great contemporary realities, which are but the consequence of previous facts, and to try to destroy them either with a sweet-do-nothing, or rather with a systematic a priori opposition.” (*Ibid.*, pp. 22-23).

In clarifying his thought, Scalabrini blames the “revolution” “for turning against the Pope [Pius IX] the reforms he had promulgated for the welfare of nations.” As Pius IX had set up in 1846 “a system of government different from that of his predecessor because he thought it necessary for the changed conditions of his time,” so also Leo XIII’s policy of *ralliement* with France was legitimate: it was not a justification for the “revolution,” but the realistic recognition of “the great events of our day,” a discerning of good from evil, an injecting the yeast of the Gospel into history, the “bringing of humanity back to the law of morality and justice.”

Man can do good or evil. One can do evil also by just remaining idle or passive:

It is easy and quite convenient to sit back on a passive policy of inertia in expectation of some upheaval that by a historical law unknown to experts may turn the world back to prehistorical time. This system will probably have to wait till the day of the cataclysm of the world that will pave the way for the great restoration, the palingenesis. For ourselves, we prefer a policy of dynamism to a static one. If we should succeed, in the best way possible, in making modern society Christian, and in preventing the greater evils threatening mankind, we believe to have served Church and country well. (*Ibid.*, pp. 28-29).

If, on the contrary, aware of what the times have brought about, we can distinguish evil from good [...], then can we hope that the

course of history will clear the events of the dross and direct them toward the good of the human race. (*Ibid.*, p. 23).

So far, we could speak of a philosophy, or even of a theology of history, but Bishop Scalabrini's reading of the times is dynamic and creative because it is rooted in the inner self of a person who believes in God and his divine providence. It becomes a passionate love for the concrete man; it becomes patience, which is a will to overcome all obstacles, to withstand all trials, to fear no opposition; it is an ability to wait for ideas to mature; it is the courage to put yourself on the line, in imitation of Christ who gave his life for men.

Looking at the religious conditions of the Italian people of his day, in that particular situation created by the loss of the temporal power of the Pope, and by declaring that a Christian could not adopt a policy of nonintervention, Bishop Scalabrini did enter the field of politics but with only one purpose in mind: the glory of God and of the Church, and the salvation of souls. This is proven by the political choice of "transigence" he advocates for himself, but with a different meaning from the one used by the "intransigents" as a pretext to label him "liberal."

As far as he was concerned, the whole question of whether to compromise or not was restricted to the facts: "An intransigent is one who does not surrender anything, one who does not allow anything to his opponents in political matters and maintains intact the whole heritage of his ancestors to pass it on to his descendants. On the contrary, a "transigent" is one who finds it necessary or timely to come to terms, that is to make some concessions to his political opponents. Besides, in politics as in law, the concept of compromise does not involve any concessions with respect to principles, but by its nature excludes it." (*Ibid.*, p. 4)

To clear the ground of any ambiguity he specifies:

1) We accept with our mind and our heart all the doctrinal teachings and practical norms set forth by the religious Authority. [...] Among the teachings of the Roman Pontiff we declare that we recognize and adhere specifically to those which relate to his temporal power. We desire that the Pope be powerful, morally great, sovereign,

and free, the sole judge of the form, extent, and amount of freedom necessary for him in governing the universal Church. [...]

2) Therefore, we reject the charge that we are *Liberal Catholics*, for these are transigent with respect to principles and therefore are in essence rejected by our program. [...]

3) It is not our intention to indicate any person or to lessen the respect due to him. (*Ibid.*, pp. 4-5).

“Our proposals remained in the field of hypothesis and discussion: the mind studied but the will was at all times subordinated to the decisions of the Church.” Scalabrini’s hypothesis is well known:

It was our conviction that competition in well-ordered elections would contribute to the legislature a contingent of Catholic Deputies. [...] And then, the probability to prevent the presentation or approval of laws opposed to the Church, and the hope to have the existing laws abrogated or derogated. [...] But when we were given to understand that for reasons of the highest order, the only elections in which, for the present, it was permissible for Catholics to participate were the municipal ones, we reverently accepted the august statement and withdrew from the discussion of a hypothesis considered to be *non-expedient*.

We gave constant and diligent attention, however, to the municipal elections, and tried to have elected to the city councils, at least in large numbers, those citizens whose religious faith was unquestioned or who at least were certain not to attack it. Our candidates could not always prevent an evil but they often succeeded in mitigating it at least in its consequences. And certainly, the present and future generations ought to be grateful to them for having seen to it that religious instruction was retained in the elementary schools. (*Ibid.*, pp. 32-33).

We are not interested in judging the political or strategical value of this choice, but rather in knowing the moral motivation and the ethical reason why, in the thought of Bishop Scalabrini, a Christian should be involved in politics. We can read this in his contrasting descriptions of intransigents and Pope Leo XIII. (Here too it is not a question of passing a historical judgement on the accuracy of this statements):

They, intemperate; He, most balanced in his words; they, violent in their attacks, He, advising moderation and charity; they, intolerant and exclusive; He, merciful and compassionate; their blows aim to destroy; His lightnings are intended to give light; they want to kill; He wants to heal; to them the lost sheep is an object of contempt; to Him the object of loving care to be led back to the fold. (*Ibid.*, p. 34).

The *Osservatore Cattolico* of Milan, the newspaper of intransigent extremists directed by Don Albertario, had radicalized the polemic against the philosophy of Rosmini which it considered the “philosophic substratum” of transigence, and raised this polemic to the level of “principles” and “doctrines.” But, though rightly rejecting the theory of the “what is done is done,” it identified the freedom of the Church with the political freedom of the Pope and concluded the necessity of abstention from the polls and the condemnation of anything “liberal.” The “transigents,” though rejecting the “what is done is done” and claiming compensation from the guilty party, the Italian government, were instead convinced that they could secure the freedom of the magisterium and of the ministry of the Supreme Pontiff by an actual arrangement, a conciliation, and a *modus vivendi* similar to the one Leo XIII was establishing with France and Prussia, two governments certainly not less “sinful” than the Italian government.

Obviously, an agreement would have meant an actual transaction involving the renunciation of the city of Rome, but the obstacle that actually hindered the mission of the Church in Italy would then have been removed. The problem was “political” but only because it concerned the finding of and adopting the most appropriate *means* for the Church to fulfill its mission in that particular historical situation. Bishop Scalabrini still held Bellarmine’s idea of the Church as “perfect society,” but he did not conclude from it that the Church had also to use temporal and political means like any other state. He rejected an ecclesiology that viewed the temporal sovereignty of the Pope as the stronghold of Christian society, of personal freedom, and of civilization achieved by Christianity. Christianity, freedom, and civilization, had still to find in the Pope their stronghold, but in the “primacy” of his divine authority and magisterium guided by the Holy Spirit, and shared with the college of bishops; in his “spiritual

power” and not any longer in a temporal power beyond the purpose of securing his independence and freedom according to international law.

The intransigents made it, instead, a political issue in the sense that they wanted to impose on all Christians, bishops included, a political agenda, that is, a “party” which had, if not the name, all the characteristics of a political party. Bishop Scalabrini rejected the idea of a confessional political party that would create confusion, a “Babel,” the bishop of Piacenza continually deplored. He was convinced that religion and politics do not mix; the Pope must remain above all parties. “Political organizations,” he proclaimed, cannot “be above the rights of religion:” religion does not automatically have the right to a State of its own, but only the right to the freedom and autonomy necessary to carry out its apostolic and saving mission. This mission had to be accomplished in the actual situation in which Italy, or rather, the Italian people were historically living. Like in other European nations, also in Italy aspirations of freedom and national unity were growing. What was needed was discernment and proper evaluation and valorization of the positive aspects of such aspirations in the vibrant schools of modern thought that were fundamentally Christian—freedom, equality, brotherhood—or, at least, worthy of free debate. “Intransigents” instead indiscriminately opposed “the modern world” with refusal, resistance, and mistrust, thus cutting off the road for the necessary “inculturation” of the Gospel’s message.

Piacenza’s diocesan newspaper *L’Amico del Popolo*, willingly or not the “political” arm of the bishop, ironically summed up the accusations that *L’Osservatore Cattolico* made directly against the newspaper, but indirectly against the author of *Intransigenti e transigenti*:

We have on our conscience a great sin, we wrote blasphemies like this one: *freedom of thought and speech is the aspiration, the need, the conquest of the modern spirit, of a civilization grown since the barbarisms of the middle ages, a flower bloomed in the dawn of the new era; we spoke of brotherhood and even (sic) of solidarity of all nations. [...] The way to eliminate or limit the evils of our day is not to reject everything or condemn whatever the modern age has brought, entrenching ourselves into a ridiculous anachronism, even deleterious, to the most vital concerns*

of Church and society. We must instead distinguish good from evil, guiding these ideas of progress, liberty, and civilization, in which our century takes pride, back to their true principles, thus showing that the Church and the Gospel are not opposed to genuine progress and true freedom, they are instead their defenders and avengers. (*L'Amico del Popolo*, March 6, 1886).

Bishop Scalabrini had also another basic concern in his work toward reChristianizing society: it was harmony among Catholics. This could be assured only by the simultaneous unity of faith and hierarchy while the unity of the hierarchy was called into question, instead, by intransigent extremists, who got to the point of preaching disobedience to the bishops under the pretext of obedience to the Pope, as it actually happened in Piacenza.

Parties that find one pretext or another to overpower little by little the Bishops, and shape in their own liking Catholic public opinion, are becoming more and more aggressive to the point, at times, of hindering even the Bishops in the exercise of their sacred ministry. (Letter to Leo XIII, September 26, 1881. AGS 3042/2).

To Bishop Scalabrini this was the “revolution” that threatened the Italian Church of his day, and he would have liked to publish a book with exactly this title: *Revolution in the Church*.

The idea is very simple. Revolution is essentially destructive, and with its tools it has already demolished everything in the civil order, beginning with the principle of authority. If one observes carefully, he can see the same now happening in the Church through the activity of a party that using the same tricks, at time with greater dishonesty, has assumed and appropriated the task of bitterly censuring individuals and Communities, Prelates, and Bishops, as it is more or less convenient to its purpose, that is, personal interests. (Letter to G. Boccali, November 29, 1881. *Archivio Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Milan.)

Two months later, Leo XIII expressed the same concern: “This harmony of souls is now threatened by opposing parties that find topics for disputes in a newspaper of Lombardy [*L'Osservatore Cattolico*] and in the doctrines of a philosopher well known in modern circles [Rosmini].” He deplored the lack of moderation and the “highly vehement style, the excessive carelessness in rousing

suspensions of others, or whatever might detract from due reverence and respect for the person." (Leo XIII, *Cognita Nobis*, November 25, 1882).

Scalabrini's thought, then, coincided with the one of the Pope both on the need for unity of action and on the primacy of charity. In obedience to the wish of the Pope, he refrained from supporting publicly the need for Catholics' participation in political elections, even though he saw in abstentionism the perpetuation and worsening of a conflict that caused "great detriment to people's conscience and to the very authority of the Church." (Letter to Leo XIII, August 1882. AGS 3019/12).

In private, however, at the audiences benevolently granted him by Leo XIII, he never hid from the Pope his sufferings as a bishop wholly committed to the salvation of souls and to the cause of the Church and of the Vicar of Christ. He would consider it a "crime," a relinquishing of his responsibilities as a shepherd, a selfish cowardice, to keep silent or turned his attention away from the steady worsening of Christian life, the scandal of division and disintegration brought about by disputes he rightly looked upon as pretext for the real intention of intransigent extremists to impose a political line he judged harmful to the main concern of the Church: evangelization and reconciliation with God. Besides, in their style of conducting the political campaign he saw a flagrant violation of the first law of the Church: charity. Actually, intransigent polemicists had created among the ranks of bishops, especially of northern Italy, a climate of intimidation that prevented in many cases and many aspects the pastoral renewal required by the changed political and social conditions that put the brakes on initiatives of cultural updating and adjusting to the needs of the new times; with an evident danger of confusion and anxiety for consciences, they pit the love of God against the love of country, both innate to man, and therefore necessarily compatible.

Bishop Scalabrini was fully aware that this stand would ruin his "career" and expose him to "excruciating" sorrows even to the loss of his health, but he was not concerned about his personal interest.

Faithful to his belief, he never thought of a "Catholic party." The programmatic editorial of the first issue of *L'Amico del Popolo*



reveals the bishop's thought: the new publication was to be "Catholic in the literal sense of the word, without restrictions, exaggerations, or tendencies; for this very reason it will be above and independent of all parties, because to us Catholicism is not a party." (*L'Amico del Popolo*, January 2, 1886).

For Scalabrini, Catholic meant confessional, and religion could not be confused with politics. In supporting the necessity of Catholics' participation in national life, he did not put forward Catholic representatives or representative Catholics, but simply and clearly Catholics and representatives. For him it was a question of persons, not of parties, also because those with the right to vote were very few, and Catholics were not even allowed to vote. The parties in the government at the time, did not represent the Italian people at all, but only the interests of financial and ideological groups concerned with gaining power in order to impose their interests and their ideologies. It was notorious that out of 500 representatives, 300 were Masons. Scalabrini's idea was to demolish this stronghold of anticlericalism by strengthening the opposition with "men of order." He saw them, in the beginning as members of the liberal conservative party, but with substantial reservation as to its actual line of action. In fact, he blamed this party for "never having the courage to follow its most cherished goals," that is, the "modern freedoms:" "a very strange and backward Voltairianism still muzzles it. [...] The liberal conservatives still live in prejudice and fear." Instead, a strong and united Catholic contingent in parliament, would have been the "most healthy and effective element of social and political conservation. I say "conservation" not "reaction," and civil authorities are wrong if they continue to think that the clergy is dreaming reversionary approaches and it does not perceive the destined progress of society — preordained on a principle of unlimited Christian perfectibility — towards higher forms of social living." (G. Borelli, *Il clero cattolico e le condizioni politico-sociali d'Italia. Un colloquio con Mons. Scalabrini. L'Alba*, July 15, 1900).

According to Bishop Scalabrini, naturalism and rationalism were the great evils of his period because they had proclaimed a progress that was actually a regress, since it contradicted the ideas of liberty, equality, and fraternity. By flaunting these "distorted truths" (one historian will define them "truths gone wild") the "revolution" had

gained a wide following, that Catholics could now have reclaimed on “legal ground”, that is, in virtue of the liberties warranted by the *Statuto* of King Albert. The “conservation” preached by Scalabrini was nothing else but the proclamation of the Christian order, rooted on social peace, that can be achieved only if God’s authority is recognized by both those who obey and those who rightly rule; if human laws are made according to God’s law and respectful of the rights of each and all; if the first law is love; and if “it is restored to the Church that state of freedom in which it can fruitfully display its beneficial influence in favor of human society.” (Pastoral Letter of Lent 1879, Piacenza 1879, p. 19). Freedom, not privileges:

Freedom! This is all it asks. [...] Freedom for its altars and its feast-days, that is, the freedom to offer to God its supreme worship; [...] freedom for the ministry and evangelical preaching; [...] freedom for the holy hierarchy, that is, freedom for the vocation of its ministers and for the necessary communication of bishops with their supreme leader; [...] finally the great fecund freedom of Christian teaching and Christian education. (*La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888, pp. 21-22).

A strong and united Catholic front in parliament could pave the way for conciliation by restoring freedom and independence to the Pope, who would insure in turn, not politically but morally, the true independence and freedom of Italians according to their “true Italian identity” whose culture had remained substantially Catholic until then, and whose life was still, in the majority of the population, informed by Christian faith and morals. In this way, Bishop Scalabrini hoped, the misunderstanding that caused Catholics to be perceived as “enemies of the country” would then be dispelled, and the “case of conscience” raised by the Roman Question would also be solved:

Let all hearts be firmly convinced, as many are already, that only from the Roman pontificate can Italy expect salvation and true prosperity. Ceased then all party disputes, let us now direct our common effort towards this noble and holy purpose inspired by a most pure love for Church and country. (*Al venerabile clero e diletissimo popolo della città e della diocesi*. Piacenza 1894, p. 2).

Shared commitment without party competitions: this was Scalabrini’s political utopia vis-à-vis the immobility of so many

Catholics who waited for the inevitable fall of the liberal and “revolutionary” state under the avenging hand of God:

It is not virtue, nor it is faith, but just a reprehensible presumption to expect everything from miracles. Yes, a true believer believes in miracles, but he knows quite well that they are not the ordinary means by which God rules the world; he believes in miracles, but he is also quite convinced that they will never be wrought to satisfy the vain curiosity of the foolish nor to reward the inertia and cowardice of anyone. (*Discorso Apertura Adunanza Regionale IV-11 June 1897. AGS 3018/18*).

Today [...I it is not permissible to remain lazily within our houses, sighing and praying. [...] Let us, therefore, get out of our tents, and above all let us remember that we have no weapons but faith and charity. With these weapons, let us enter public life, without regard to political parties, in accordance with state’s laws and our Catholic conscience, ready to die rather than come to terms with what is false or unjust. Let us enter public life, not as enemies of the constituted authority, but as tireless adversaries of evil wherever it is found. Let us enter as men of order, who can, after the example of Christ and his Church, tolerate evil but who can never approve it or commit it. (*La Chiesa Cattolica, Piacenza 1888, p. 41*).

In this ideal scenario, he would have been working promoting, as we have seen, Catholic associations, and supporting “Catholic action,” represented, at the time, by the *Opera del Congressi*, but rejecting its integralism, confessionalism, and its underlying views on temporal power. Catholic action had to be involved in the political life of the country only to fulfill its socio-religious mission: to shape all aspect of social life according to Christ and his Gospel. The *Opera del Congressi*, officially charged at that time with the Catholic action, was blessed and endorsed by the Pope; but, reasoned Scalabrini, the purpose outlined by the Apostolic See could only be the “good of the Church;” the means to attain it could be different. “In purely political matters” the Church allowed freedom of opinion; in no case, however, were the means permitted to “jeopardize the purpose.” Up to a certain point in history, the temporal power had been a useful means, now it was no longer, except for the amount needed to make the situation of the papacy “acceptable.” What was now much more

important, indeed necessary, was to reconcile in the hearts of Italians their love for the Church and their love for the country, both free and independent, in order to “prepare, slowly but surely, a better future.”

Bishop Scalabrini was one of those who overcame a “legitimistic understanding of temporal power without suggesting an outright capitulation to the Italian state.” (F. Fonzi, *I cattolici e la società Italiana dopo l’Unità*, Firenze 1977, p. 37). To accept the “what is done is done” did not mean a legitimation of the political actions of the state, severely condemned by Scalabrini, but only the acknowledgement of an irreversible historical reality, whose juridical problems should be solved through a concordat that could secure for the Pope that “little piece of territory” that even Pius IX would have been satisfied with. His real concern was for the religious situation from which he was convinced that also the social conditions depended. Besides, it belongs to the political utopia of a Christian, of a “spiritual man,” to question for what future must the present society be built. The answer of the Bible is unmistakable: the kingdom of God, that is, the heavenly Jerusalem, the building of which begins in the world, in history and in the earthly homeland:

Let us raise our hearts to our heavenly homeland, and we shall learn to properly love this place of exile called our earthly homeland; we will wisely discern where its true glory is; we will easily solve the difficult problem for which there is only one solution: the common good of nations and their true greatness are found only in the keeping of the laws of God and his Church. (*Parole in occasione dell’ufficio funebre pei soldati morti in Africa, celebrato il 26 Febbraio, 1887 in S. Antonino.* AGS 3018/24).

The political ideal of Bishop Scalabrini consisted in his effort to have society become Catholic again also through a legislation and a respect for freedom that would agree on a coexistence of faith and reason, dogma and liberty, Church and state, religion and country; transigence on the political aspect of the Roman question, intransigence on the doctrinal and disciplinary level; recognition of whatever was positive in modern society, total rejection of whatever was against the Christian ideal of society both on the theoretical and practical level; defense of the authority of the Pope and of the rightful autonomy

of persons, particularly bishops, responsible for the pastoral care and the direction of consciences; harmony among Catholics and also among all other people of good will without distinction of parties, in the “preservation” of the *Christian order*; support to the social action of the *Opera del Congressi*, but with reservations about the confusion of politics and religion that its leaders made. Bishop Scalabrini, with his political utopia, sought to sail between these shores.

The political utopia of a Christian does not get lost in the clouds. When the reciprocal and intransigent stiffening between the Holy See and the Italian government marked in 1887 the “turning point” that wiped away hopes for a reconciliation, Bishop Scalabrini, who saw the end of his dream of bringing Catholics to parliament to pave the way for it on a political level, turned his energies to a conciliation in practice with the founding of his institutions for emigrants: “a practical means, a beginning of the reconciliation of consciences that has always been one of the most deep desires of my soul.” (*Il disegno di legge sull’emigrazione italiana*, Piacenza 1888, p. 46). With the cordial approval of Leo XIII, he could raise in Rome a hymn to reconciliation:

Religion and country: these two supreme aspirations of every noble soul are interwoven and they complete one another in this work of love and redemption which is the protection of the weak and are then united in wonderful harmony.

The shameful barriers raised by anger and hatred disappear, all arms open up to a brotherly embrace, handshakes hand warm with love, lips put on a smile and a kiss, and eliminated all distinctions of class or party, it appears in them, beautiful with Christian splendor, the saying: *Homo homini frater*. [...]

May Italy, sincerely reconciled with the Apostolic See, emulate its ancient glories and achieve a new lasting one by setting its far-off sons on the bright paths of true civilization and true progress. (*1 conferenza sull’emigrazione*, February 8, 1891. AGS 3014/6).

“The secret of utopia is to keep our gaze fixed on greater and better things, on the symbols of the absolute. This is the secret promised to the disciples of Christ.” (S. Spinsanti, see “Utopia” in *Nuovo Dizionario di Spiritualità*, 1985, p. 1660). His intervention in the field of emigration is one of the signs that show how “incarnate” his utopia was in the

history of man, especially of the man who is “poor and unfortunate,” isolated and an outcast; and how it was turned into a historical commitment of liberation and promotion of the integral person, in the conviction that this commitment is a fundamental dimension of the life of a Christian who as man must take an active role in the effort of all mankind to humanize the world.

## 2) Human Politics and Evangelical Politics

Scalabrini was enthusiastic about the pastoral and cultural initiatives of the Pope of the *Libertas*, the *Immortale Dei*, and the *Return Novarum*, but he was not afraid to judge severely certain positions of Leo XIII, which he thought were dictated more by human policy than by the Gospel. He highly praised the great doctrinal guidelines and general directives given to the activity of the Church vis-à-vis the world of his time; but he criticized his day-to-day political action, his way of responding to practical situations, his relations with the local Churches and the Catholic movements; and even more frequently he criticized the diplomacy of the Roman curia and the pontifical court. It was not a public criticism, but one made directly to the Pope or to the secretariat of state and expressed in the confidential correspondence with Bishop Bonomelli and other close friends with whom he shared the same passion for “souls” and the Church, that is, for the cause of Christ.

There were two critical points: a different point of view on the solution of the Roman question, and a different practical understanding of the autonomy of the local bishops in their immediate and daily pastoral ministry, not in regard to the Pope but to the power centers run by “private people,” priests or laymen. On the level of principles, both Leo XIII and the bishop of Piacenza hoped for a solution of the Roman Question that would safeguard the inalienable rights of the supreme shepherd and teacher of the Church. Leo XIII often and solemnly insisted that the bishop is the indispensable link of the hierarchical cohesion of the Church, and that he must be obeyed and respected by divine law as the head chosen by the Spirit to rule the local Church. But Scalabrini did not always find consistency between

teaching and action in the Vatican, and he spoke of it, at least referring to the Roman Curia, as a “Babel,” a confusion of languages, a place of human and not evangelical politics.

The “confusion of languages” was, in his mind, so “dreadful” to run the risk of making the administration of the dioceses impossible: the bishops were forced to be “extremely careful,” because they were “spied on by certain pharisees, even more malicious perhaps than those of old, who avidly seek any excuse” to bring the bishops in front of their tribunals and make them appear at odds with the Holy See by rousing the usual suspicion of liberalism and its “underlying philosophy” of Rosmini. In 1881 he spoke to Leo XIII “clearly, with too much frankness perhaps [...] about the impossibility of governing the dioceses, if that audacious party were not held back [...] that made itself untouchable, even by the bishops, by exaggerating its attachment to the Pope.” (Letter to Bonomelli, September 22, 1881). But the Pope did not want to disavow *L’Osservatore Cattolico*, the voice of that “party” and fierce defender of the “rights” claimed by the august prisoner of the Vatican. The bishop concluded: “It’s no use to expect from Rome a strong intervention such as we would need in this circumstance. Their usual answer is: *utantur jure suo.*” (*Ibid.*, October 14, 1881).

But the fact was that the bishops could not avail themselves even of their rights to forestall undue meddling in their dioceses, as it was happening in Piacenza.

This was the heart of the statement: “the body of the bishops has not longer the authority to stop two priests, and what priests” (*Ibid.*) precisely because the Pope protected them. Don Albertario and Don Bonacina prevented Italian bishops from becoming “one body” because they raised doubts about their obedience or even their orthodoxy if they did not share the political ideas of *L’Osservatore Cattolico*, that were too much at the heart of Leo XIII, who up to the end of his life wanted to have at least the whole city of Rome.

Scalabrini wondered whether there was greater concern for the interests and rights, though all so legitimate, of the pontifical state and of a deposed sovereign or for the interests and rights of the Apostolic See and of the Vicar of Christ. This confusing the



Apostolic See with the Pontifical state was not just in the mind of Italian "liberals," but also in the integralist environment of the *Opera del Congressi* then headed by Paganuzzi. His followers, Gambasin states, "did not realize the trespassing of religion into politics and the temporal and ecclesiastical hybridism of their activities, that became serious when they claimed the official stamp of the supreme authority to authenticate their program and their choice of action. They actually attributed to the papal investiture of their president the value of a tacit or explicit mandate to act in the name of the Pope on all levels of the fields of the polls and of the dioceses." (*A. Gambasin, Gerarchia e laicato nel secondo Ottocento*, Padua 1969, p. 215). Scalabrini saw Leo XIII entangled in a system, which he considered human not evangelical, of defense of his "rights" that was giving free hand to the schemes of "intransigents" who "systematically appealed to higher authorities to overcome opposition." With exaggerated zeal in "securing papal letters and credentials [an attempt was made in this sense also on behalf of the most persistent adversaries of Scalabrini, canons Rocca and Rossi] they involved the Supreme Authority in the most minute questions so as to drag it into the vortex of the disputes of their conventions and of their press. They claimed the exclusive right to interpret the documents of Leo XIII that were intended to secure the purity of the doctrine and the fidelity of Church discipline." (*Ibid.*, p. 224).

The bishop of Piacenza complained about another inconsistency of the Vatican that always declared its support for the episcopate and admonished intemperate journalists, but only in general terms. It did it, in fact, even with strong words; but while the admonitions were sent secretly, blessings and subsidies were made public by the explicit order of those who sent them. Instead, when the bishops, publicly accused of disobedience or lacking respect for the Pope, asked "the Holy Father for a public word," they were told to be patient and something would be done, etc. (*See Letter to Bonomelli*, November 30, 1881). And so, insulted and suspected in public, the bishops were not allowed to defend publicly "not a personal cause, but the cause of a terrorized Episcopate, of a betrayed Religion, of a Church in turmoil." (*Letter to Leo XIII*, November 19, 1881.AGS 3042/2).



The Pope, then, should not be surprised if Bishop Scalabrini spoke of “revolution and revolutionary tactics brought into the Church:” “fearless and cunning men have learned the way to attain impunity by shouting loudly against authors and persons whom they consider suspicious to the Supreme Pontifex.” (Letter to Leo XIII, November 19, 1881. AGS 3042/2). The same tactic was employed in the “philosophic question:” “We all know, and unfortunately we gave them reason, that this is the work of a party that deceives the Pope on the matter.” (Letter to G. Boccali, November 29, 1881. *Archivio Biblioteca Ambrosiana*, Milan).

Bishop Scalabrini bitterly commented:

Every government, the Church included, that does not rely entirely on the great principles of the Gospel but it is based and puts its trust in human politics, cannot be but a government of little expedients, ambiguity, and fleeting splendor, giving the sad spectacle of steady and inexplicable contradictions; it will be judged with the most severity by God and men. (Letter to Bonomelli, December 13, 1882).

With reference to this “serious statement” he adds: “Let us not make any reference! Let us consider and use this warning for our own conduct.” In other words, he sought as much as possible to distinguish between the Pope and a section of the Curia:

When men act always according to human politics and not according to the politics of the Gospel; when with the same ease they say and deny, they build and destroy, they praise and blame, all at the same time; when greater attention is given to seditious clamors of scandalous individuals than to the most solemn statements of bishops moved only by the desire to do good; when even the most solemn acts of the bishops are considered the work of heedless children; my dearest bishop, what is not possible! We must take comfort however because we have in Leo XIII a Pope who will surely enhance the prestige of his and our authority. He certainly will not allow that his public and private instructions on the matter be nullified. (*Ibid.*, February 1, 1883).

Yet something was incomprehensible: “It was the greatest mystery to see a Pope who knows how to write and say so many beautiful things about obedience to, and respect for the bishops, giving his

support, at least apparently, to certain individuals who are the executioners and the constant slanderers of Bishops." (*Ibid.*, February 22, 1884). This was the summary of a letter he had written to the archbishop of Perugia, a personal friend of Leo XIII, precisely so that he could read it to the Pope. One year later, in 1885, Leo XIII highly approved Scalabrini's pastoral letter in the case of Cardinal Pitra and of his pamphlet *Intransigenti e transigenti*, but what happened was exactly what the bishop had foreseen in the attitude of the Pope:

We understand that he sees quite well what kind of Catholics he has to contend with, but it seems to me that he is restrained by the fear of irritating them further and of giving rise to who knows what scandals. (*Ibid.*, November 13, 1884). The theory now prevailing down there is good, but the practice is what it is. (*Ibid.*, December 31, 1885). What we need are facts and facts that do not allow objections; but this is the problem, because the one who has the power to act either does not want to or cannot. (*Ibid.*, January 1886).

In 1886 there was the incident of the political elections; Bishop Scalabrini acted according to the instructions he directly solicited and secured from the Pope's personal secretary; in spite of this he was denounced to the Holy Office. Bewildered by the behavior of the Vatican, the bishop expressed to his closest friend all the bitterness caused him not only by the inconsistency, but also and especially because of the consequences for the Church:

No consistency of principles, no understanding of the times, no uniform and sure direction! A confusion, a Byzantinism impossible to describe. [...] In the meantime, faith is growing ever weaker, charity is waning, and hatred of the laity against the clergy is growing. The consequences cannot but be fatal, and who knows for how long we will have to live with them! The worst is that, down there, they are all celebrating, convinced as they are that this marks the beginning of the end. Poor fools! Poor blind men! (*Ibid.*, November 1, 1886).

We must say that Leo XIII, though so jealous of his prestige and authority, let the bishop of Piacenza reprehend him, privately of course: evident proof that he considered his courageous positions as dictated only by his apostolic sincerity and pastoral concern, by his true love for Christ and the Church. Moved by his pastoral concern,

Scalabrini undeniably showed signs of impatience at human and political calculations. He may have been hasty perhaps, as some think; but what “prophet” is not hasty? He feared the sin of omission, but he did not fear the risk and the pain of displeasing someone or being misunderstood:

In his function as an overseer, always difficult and risky, the Bishop, Gentlemen, has three things constantly before his eyes to keep him in continuous trepidation: the dangers for souls, the crime of silence, the judgement of God. [...] No ambiguity, no inconsistency, no second intentions. [...] His good faith may sometimes be deceived, but he deceives no one; in fact, it is to keep others from being deceived that he often exposes himself to contradictions and sufferings that are hard to believe. It is not his own comforts, not his own interests that concern him, not the small satisfactions proper to others, but the truth, only the truth is his rule and guide, and he sacrifices everything rather than betray it. (*Discorso per il Giubileo Episcopale di Mons. Geremia Bonomelli*. Cremona 1896, pp. 10-11).

A prophet is one who, going against the tide, lays the foundations with his ideas and his action for the concepts and methods that will be commonplace tomorrow. Bonomelli will remind Pius X of this: “now are condemned opinions and ideas that seem audacious and erroneous to some, but within twenty years they will be commonplace. This was said to me more than once by Bishop Scalabrini, whose merits you highly appreciate.” (Letter of Bonomelli to Pius X, October 7, 1911). Scalabrini considered it erroneous and harmful to feel bound to a period politically and historically outdated; he sided instead with the evolution of his time in transformation. He strove to know the problems and to find the solutions; he fought with faith and hope not in “human politics” but in “evangelical politics” rooted not in earthly calculations but in faith and hope in Christ, Lord of history, and in the Church guided by the Holy Spirit who renews all things. If he strongly contested Vatican’s politics of his day, it was only because he felt deeply the call for consistency between faith and life, word of God and Christian praxis, teachings, and good example. His prophetic opposition, is authenticated by his charity and holiness of life, his personal consistency between what he said and what he did, by the self-sacrifice to pave the way for the “desperately long”

evolution of ideas: "Some flags must go up in the air, if I have to be that flag, *sit nomen Domini benedictum!*" (Letter to Bonomelli, December 31, 1885).

The scrupulous investigation of the "political" behavior of Bishop Scalabrini conducted by the Relatore of the Cause of Beatification, Father Valentino Macca, leads to a conclusion that heightens the figure of this "spiritual man." In answer to the objection of those who thought of seeing in the Servant of God some kind of split personality that seemed to move from an excessive mysticism to amorality he writes:

Personally, I see absolute unity in Scalabrini's whole action with one and only commitment of love for Christ in the Church and for the Church in Christ. He was a great mystic even when for the love of truth, as he often states, he talks about what must be quickly changed for the good of souls. His love for Christ and the cross was a living experience of the passion of the cross lived by the Church. It was not his intention that the Pope should renounce his temporal power, even though he saw the spiritual dangers of this. He wanted only to help Leo XIII to understand the reality of the situation in a way the Pope seemed unable to perceive; and this only for the love of the Church and of the Pope for whom he had an extraordinary devotion.

And it was indeed this devotion, matured within an authentic theological charity, for his moral authority, and concern for his responsibility vis-à-vis the negative consequences *for souls*, that urged him from within to intervene personally and privately with the Pope with the intent of helping him understand that particular moment of history, whose importance, also in view of the new times that were being shaped, seemed to elude Leo XIII and those around him. Even the sad problem of the *non expedit*, with such "dreadful" consequences for Catholic Italy, is presented to the Pope by the bishop in a wholly supernatural light, full of love for the Church and for the Pope himself. [...]

After reading all the documents in serenity, I believe that they prove that the bishop, even with all the strength he applied to ideals whose realization he contributed to as a bishop full of the Spirit of God, was a great lover of the Church and of the Pope; a man willing to sacrifice all things, even himself, to help whoever had the responsi-

bility of reading the passing of God in history, so as to foster the “real good of souls.” This is the ideal of every true friend of God, who by virtue of his episcopacy, is called to cooperate with all his strength for the salvation of the world. (*Relatio et vota Congressus peculiaris super virtutibus*. Rome 1986, pp. 143-145).

\* \* \*

