

**A Brief Chronicle**  
of the  
**Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata**  
**of Our Lord Jesus Christ**  
**[1800 – 1941]**



**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

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Latest updated on the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, 2005

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**OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST**

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**A Brief Chronicle  
of the  
Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata  
of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
[1800 – 1941]**



**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Introduction**

**Table of Contents, Presentation  
& Early Decrees of the Holy See**

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†††

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[1890-1941]

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[1890-1914]

- |    |  |             |
|----|--|-------------|
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- |    |                   |             |
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- |    |                                   |             |
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## **Preface**

**It would seem to me that I could not offer a better Preface for these historical recollections which see the light of day in order to recall the first centenary of our Congregation – than the Circular Letter that I sent out to the Confreres on that occasion. Along with this, I will also add the kind testimonies that have come to me from the authoritative persons to whom I thought myself to be duty-bound to have them participate in the remembrance of such an extraordinary occasion.**

**I wish with all my heart that this publication might animate us all to realize that yearning that I expressed in my letter, for the greater good of our Institute, souls and of the Church.**

**Fr. John Baptist Tommasi**

**Superior General**

**The Superior General  
to all the venerable Fathers and beloved Brothers  
of the religious Congregation of the  
Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ**

The 4<sup>th</sup> day of November 1816, our Venerable Founder took possession of the locality of the House of the Stimate and established there his dwelling, accompanied by Fr John Marani and by Brother Paul Zanolì, for the purpose of carrying out there the holy plan with which the Lord had inspired him. On that day, therefore, there began our beloved Congregation which as a result will complete on November 4<sup>th</sup> next, the first century of its existence. In this centenary recurrence, the Congregation finds the world in conditions very similar to those which were experienced at its beginning. At that time, there were deeply felt the disastrous results of a world-wide crisis that had just terminated – while the crisis that so travails the world today is even more acute, and we are experiencing all the horrors of an inhuman war and all the alarm for its consequences, which will result from this for the cause of religion and society. Nonetheless, the memory of our beginnings ought to serve as some comfort in the present hour.

There was indeed the desolating spectacle of devastation wreaked on the religious field by so many human deviations at the beginning of the last century. The occasion of all this served the Lord in order to lead our Venerable Founder to experience within himself the inspiration for a new religious community. He thus manifested, with still an additional argument, how the divine Providence always makes His purposes holy even when situated into the greatest human travail.

The fact that there can be no external celebrations would seem to be fitting for the circumstances in which we are living. And therefore, with my present Circular Letter, I invite all the Confreres to celebrate on that day such a joyous recurrence, with some religious service of a family and intimate character, for the scope of thanking the Lord for all the benefits showered on our Congregation in this century of its existence, to placate the Divine Justice and to obtain the grace to keep ourselves ready for all He might permit as a just punishment for our own sins and those of others.

Let us pray above all that the Lord might concede to us, even at the cost of some heavy sacrifice, to re-acquire fully that secret of the saints, through which our early members knew how to harmonize together so many values which, by human criteria, are altogether irreconcilable. Our first confreres knew very well how to unite the following:

1. The continuous quest for the most humble, hidden way, given as the characteristic of their life, together with an illustrious reputation for holiness.
2. The most austere penance the most sincere joy.
3. A heroic detachment and an authentic spirit of poverty with the legitimate expenses undertaken for the buildings of the house and the Church, realized without debt, and also in taking care of them without sparing propriety and décor.
4. The most regular discipline with the most varied multiplicity of occupations.



5. The most complete subjection with the full development of the individual activities of the Confreres.
6. Their constant study and work with their most solid piety.

These conciliations represent the secret of the saints; they remain a mystery to this world, and precisely for this reason, they represent the divine character of the Lord's works. This secret ought to be the precious inheritance that our first Fathers and Brothers have left to us. If we have lost these to some extent, may the Lord grant them to us anew. And let there be the humble recognition that in fact we have lost these values in part, and the vivid yearning that we might reacquire this spirit in its entirety. These are the sole conditions that the Lord asks of us in order to bestow on us this important gift that would constitute for us the most beautiful celebration of our centenary.

In order to facilitate for us the acquisition of such a grace, the reception of the Apostolic Approbation of our Constitutions could indeed contribute to this. It is my hope that during this year, this grace will be granted.

I announce further that as a remembrance of such a happy experience as this is, that there are being published the historical recollections of our Religious Congregation.

I wish from my heart the blessings of heaven on all

Rome, October 24, 1916

The Superior General  
Father John Baptist Tommasi.

**Letter of Cardinal Falconio,  
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious**

October 29, 1916

Very Reverend Father,

With genuine pleasure, I have come to know that this Congregation, under the Direction of Your most holy Reverence, is preparing to celebrate the solemn recurrence of the first Centenary of its foundation, and that this will take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> day of November next. I congratulate Your Reverence and extend this to all Your Confreres, to whom I wish every good from God, expressing the yearning for the prosperity of the entire Congregation, for the greater glory of God and for the salvation of souls.

With particular sentiments of service toward Your Reverence, I profess myself to be,

Your most devoted in the Lord,  
D. Cardinal Falconio of Velletri  
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Religious

**Letter of  
Cardinal Bacilieri  
Bishop of Verona**

From the Bishop's Residence in Verona, November 22, 1916

Very Reverend and dear Father Superior,

I have read and pondered the Circular Letter sent out by you to your beloved Congregation on the memorable occasion that this is about to achieve in the first century of religious life. I extend my most fervent congratulations to your Community of the Stimate for its very apostolic life, conducted by its members through difficulties that have not been insignificant nor few in number in these one hundred years. I am very pleased, Very Reverend Father, for the paternal Circular Letter through which you invite the Community to meditate on its principals, the secret of its success, its precious documents and the splendid examples left to it by the Venerable Founder and by his first companions. These men, from the quiet of their religious tomb, they keep repeating to their successors and sons: *Be mindful of your fathers who spoke the word of God to you, understanding the end of their conversation, imitate their faith* [Qo 13:7]<sup>1</sup>. This cry of the saints wishes to be heard by their not indifferent descendants, from whom the Church expects them to make flourish anew the virtues of the likes of fathers Bertoni, Marani, Fedelini, Benciolini, and on and on and on.

This is the crux of the matter found in the exercise of the virtues, in the cult of piety, and in the holiness of life: without all this, of what good is all the rest? And with this, is it not true that the lack of all the rest harms only a little? *Only one thing is necessary*. Please pray, and have others pray also for me, Very Reverend Father, and for this most beloved Veronese Church – which was, and still is the mother of the Congregation of the Priests of the Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, which is now celebrating its centenary. For you, I desire and I pray for still many more centuries of a productive, holy and sanctifying life.

In the Heart of Jesus I wish you all good with all those with you, and I renew to you that I am,

Most affectionately in the Lord,

Bartholomew Cardinal Bacilieri, Bishop

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<sup>1</sup> A mis-quote?

**Letter of Cardinal Pompilj  
Vicar of Rome**

Rome, November 3, 1916

Very Reverend and dear Father,

I have learned that tomorrow a century will be completed from the foundation of the Congregation, over which you so worthily preside, and on this very happy occasion, I very willingly join with You and Your Confreres in thanking God for the merits acquired by their Congregation in the Church in this century of its existence. At the same time, I express that it might keep itself faithful always to the spirit of the Founder, and that it might be ever more productive of the better results in the field of the apostolate for the salvation of souls. And since in the time from which this same Congregation has established itself in Rome it has always been of great help and consolation to the diocesan authority. So, it is a pleasure for me on this recurrence to give you witness of my particular esteem and benevolence and to invoke on all who make up part of it, the abundance of the heavenly blessings.

With sentiments of genuine reverence, I reaffirm that I am

Of Your Paternity,  
Most Devoted in serving it.  
B. Cardinal Pompilj.

### Letter of Cardinal Casetta

Very Reverend Father General,

I received your venerated notice and the Circular Letter on the first centenary of the Congregation of Stigmatine Priests, and I render my most sincere thanks.

Please accept my sincerest congratulations which I offer from my heart, in blessing the Lord, and expressing the wish that I might see Your Congregation grow and spread its branches over the world for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. I take this occasion to renew to You my thanks for all that the Stigmatine Fathers have done and will do in the Church of *San Nicolo' dei Prefetti* for the honor of God and for the edification of His People.

In recommending myself to its prayers, I profess that I am

Yours, most devoted

F. Cardinal Casetta,  
Bishop of Tusculano

**Letter of Cardinal Ferrari  
Arch-Bishop of Milan**

Milan, October 30, 1916

To the venerated and truly meriting Congregation of the Stigmatine Priests, on their first centenary on the Feast of St. Charles, of this year.

Feasts, no: for this is a time of war, of trepidation, anguish and inexpressible sorrows. Therefore, only prayers: but those that are fervent, confident and persevering.

There will also be my poor prayers, and, even though unworthy, they will be most sincere: and I ask the Lord that the most dear Stigmatines might always conserve those conciliations that are beyond discussion expressed in those six most wise conciliations from your history and opportunely brought to mind by the Very Reverend Father Superior General in his beautiful Circular Letter of this current month; and I recommend myself to their holy prayers, while I beseech upon them every choice blessing and celestial benediction.

Andrew C., Cardinal  
Archbishop of Milan

### **Letter of Bishop Guido Conforti, Bishop of Parma**

I extend my congratulations to Your Very Reverend Paternity for the auspicious recurrence of the first Centenary of the foundation of the Religious Institute of the Priests of the Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

If there are those who ought to rejoice with the admirable sons of the Venerable Bertoni in this joyful circumstance, in a way that is most particular does the Bishop of Parma have reason to do so. He cannot forget that for more than 40 years the Stigmatine Fathers have labored with tireless zeal in this his Episcopal City, for the good of so many of our beloved youth. The Bishop cannot forget so many distinguished Religious, such as Fr. Vignola, Fr. Morando, Fr. Vivari, Fr. Piccioli, and not even mentioning many others who have left behind a lasting memory of themselves because of their learning and virtue, in all those who ever had the good fortune of approaching them.

On this solemn occasion, I would like to show all my recognition and all the most high esteem I feel, and also publicly, to the Venerable Congregation over which Your Very Reverend Paternity presides. However, since the present sad hour that weighs upon us all does not permit this, I express the wish that this might be done in a time that is not far distant, with solemn festivities, that would attest to the excellent Stigmatine Fathers, not only the deference the Bishop has for them, but also that of the entire city of Parma.

In the meantime, in my unworthiness, I pray to the blessed God that this Venerable Congregation might continue to prosper. It is already most worthy of merit for the Church and for its civil counter-part. May this Congregation be conserved for a long unfolding of the centuries ahead in the spirit of its admirable Founder.

It is my joy on this occasion to offer to you my sincerest best wishes, while recommending myself to your prayers. It is in this spirit, that I sign<sup>2</sup>, from

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<sup>2</sup> We think that this is a beautiful and opportune occasion to transcribe here a section of the Pastoral Letter that Bishop Conforti of Parma, addressed to his Clergy and people of his Diocese this past November:

*... And now, before bringing this Pastoral Letter of mine to a conclusion, I experience the need of pointing out to the Diocese a fact that should not pass unobserved for us, even in the midst of these sorrowful circumstances we are experiencing. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of this month there recurs the anniversary of a century from that day on which a modest Priest, great in the eyes of God, because he was rich in every most choice virtue, the Venerable Bertoni founded in Verona the Religious Congregation of the Stigmatine Fathers. The foundation of a religious family always constitutes a great event for the reign of God on this earth and I will not recount now that which this Sacred Institution has done for the good of the Church and its civil counter-part. History itself will make this known.*

*I, as Bishop of Parma, limit myself to pointing out to the public, my recognition on this happy occasion that cannot be properly celebrated with due solemnity, that which the sons of the Venerable Bertoni, who are as humble as they are hard-working, have accomplished among us for the education of the children of our people and for the salvation of souls. They*

Parma, November 7, 1916.

Your most Devoted Servant,

Guido M.

Archbishop - Bishop

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*have done all this within the city, in the country-side, on the plains and in the mountains with the exercise of the sacred Ministry.*

*These facts are already well known and all recall the many distinguished Religious who have left behind of themselves here in Parma a lasting memory for their learning and holiness. Suffice it to mention the likes of Fr. Vignola, Fr. Morando, Fr. Vivari, Fr. Sterza, whole not even mentioning the others still living! And how many parents have entrusted to the Stigmatines the education of their children, and how many excellent Priests have come from their schools, who today honor the Diocese. And how many outstanding professional people and artisans who nourish the family and society, with their civic and Christian virtues. All of these bear eloquent testimony of how these men have been able to accomplish in their 40 years of presence in this our welcoming City of these tireless workers.*

*May the just Lord, true Judge of virtue and merit, grant you, excellent Stigmatines, the reward that awaits you and which mere men cannot bestow upon you, and from now on may your holy Institute prosper even more and may you experience the most vivid gratitude of the Bishop, who highly appreciates your work, and give you the material and moral support, the admiration and the applause of all those who admire all those who sacrifice to God their own energies for the good of others.*

The above-mentioned Bishop expressed the desire that there be observed, with every effort, and with solemnity, this centenary celebration in our House of Parma. And on January 28, 1917, with very many of our former students in attendance, the religious services were conducted, and they remained the entire day with our Fathers, thus manifesting their special affection for them. For this occasion, Canon Professor Castellina delivered the discourse.



**Letter of His Excellency, Anastasio Rossi  
Arch-Bishop of Udine**

Udine, November 8, 1916

Very Reverend Father,

I have appreciated very much the Circular Letter that Your Reverence very courteously sent to me, in which there is recalled the Centenary of the foundation of the meritorious Congregation of the Stigmata.

I enthusiastically extend my congratulations to Your Lordship who worthily presides over your Congregation: I join with you in the most fervent hopes for its conservation and ever greater flourishing, with that spirit of the first Venerable Fathers who know how, as You have said so well, 'to harmonize together so many values which, by human criteria, are altogether irreconcilable'.

Recognizing the good that this Institute has accomplished and still carries out, with their varied activities in my Diocese, I express the wish that this Congregation might see approved its Constitutions by the Apostolic See, in the faithful observance of all that this Institute will find for the nourishment and guarantee of its very fertile activity.

Best wishes to Your Very Reverend Paternity, and I recommend myself to your holy prayers.

Very devotedly yours in Jesus Christ,

Anthony Anastasio Rossi  
Archbishop

**Letter of Fr. Henry Rosa, SJ**  
**Director of the *Civiltà Cattolica***

October 30, 1916

Very Reverend Father General,

I thank you most sincerely for your kind communication, which I have immediately shared with the other Fathers of the ***Civiltà Cattolica***, who reserve for all the excellent Stigmatine Fathers the most cordial esteem and reverence.

With fraternal joy, therefore, we join you, Reverend Father, and your beloved Congregation on this, its happy anniversary. And while we present our most fervent congratulations, we also share in all those religious sentiments of gratitude to God, joy and hope, as You and all your fervent Congregation celebrate the happy recurrence of this first Centenary. So we also join in prayer so that the Lord might prosper always this Religious Family which from its inception was always so fraternally united with ours. And may this prosperity increase, as the perfection of those marvelous conciliations develops, which your Reverence refers to in your most religious letter of October 24<sup>th</sup>. These are truly the 'secret of the saints'. We can say that we have seen a beautiful and example of these in our closeness of so many years with the excellent Stigmatine Fathers. This contact has always been most dear to us, and which is still now, most desired.

May this simple and cordial attestation of my sentiments and that of the entire staff of the ***Civiltà Cattolica*** be acceptable to you, while I with every respect, express my reverence for you, and I repeat that I am

A most Devoted Servant in Christ  
of your Reverence,  
H. Rosa, SJ

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**APPENDIX**  
**Early Decrees from the Holy See**

**Decree of Praise**

Fr. John Marani, Superior of the Congregation, commonly called the Priests of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, has addressed a humble petition to His Holiness, Pope Pius IX, that he might deign to approve and confirm with his Apostolic Authority the above-mentioned Congregation, that has been established now for a number of years in the city of Verona, and do likewise for its Constitutions.

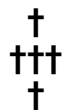
His Holiness, therefore, has taken this petitioner consideration and has been fully informed on all that pertains to this Institute by means of the Testimonial Letters of the Bishop of Verona. From this testimony, the readiness and zeal with which the members of this same Congregation attend to the end proposed for them, are very evident. The Holy Father has ordained that by this present Decree, this same Congregation and its scope are to be highly praised and recommended, so that the religious who are professed in it, being encouraged by this public testimony of the Apostolic See, with an every great readiness, they might dedicate themselves to work for the good of the Church and the salvation of souls.

As for the other requests submitted, His Holiness has established that these will be provided for at a later and more opportune time.

Given at Rome, from the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on the 16<sup>th</sup> day of April, 1855

[Place of the Seal]

**G. Cardinal DeGenga, Prefect.**  
**A. Pagiotti, Under-Secretary.**



### **Decree of Approbation of the Congregation**

In the year 1816, the Veronese Priest, Gaspar Bertoni, obtained from the Pastor of St. John's in Foro, a public Oratory, named for the Stigmata. Fr. Bertoni gathered there a number of associates, and took up residence with them in the house next to Oratory. Their purpose was to dedicate themselves to the works of the sacred ministry under the direction of the bishops, and to attend to the Christian formation of youth, through schools.

During the year 1853, the pious Founder realized that he was near death. He gave his followers, who were then only six in number, the plan of the Constitutions for the new Society, that took as its title the Priests of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Scarcely two years after the death of the Founder, the Institute obtained the Decree of Praise from the Holy See.

Now, the above- mentioned Congregation, having grown with the blessing of God, is made up of priests, students and brothers, seventy-five in number, working in various dioceses. The members of this Congregation, living a common life, in dependence on a Superior General, pronounce the three customary simple vows of poverty, chastity and obedience. While attending to their own sanctification, they strive above all, to assist Bishops in working for the salvation of their fellow-man, through any exercise of the ecclesiastical ministry whatsoever, and through every work of spiritual charity, excluding the ordinary and perpetual care of souls and of Sisters. Therefore, the members of this Institute, propose to spend themselves in assisting the Bishop of the Diocese in which they dwell, especially by giving parish missions, retreats, catechetical instructions and sermons, as well as by the Christian formation of the youth, being totally dedicated to guiding them impiety and helping them in their own studies, in Oratories, Seminaries and in their own schools.

The present Superior, recently reporting on all these endeavors, has petitioned His Holiness, Pope Leo XIII, to deign to grant his Apostolic Approbation to this Institute. With this end in view, he has enclosed with his Petition, the Letters of Recommendation of various Bishops. In these Letters, the Institute and its members are highly praised and recommended to the Holy See. His Holiness, therefore, in the Audience granted to the under-signed secretary of this Congregation of Bishops and regulars, on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of September 1890, after having maturely examined everything, and considered the recommendations of the Ordinaries, has deigned to approve the above-named Institute, saving the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries, according to the norms of the sacred Canons and the Apostolic Constitutions. He has remanded, however, to a more opportune time, the approval of the Constitutions concerning which for now, he has commanded that some observations be communicated.

Given at Rome from the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of September 1890.

Place of the Seal

I. Cardinal Verga, Prefect  
F. Louis, Bishop

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### Decree of Approbation of the Constitutions

Our Most Holy Lord, Benedict, by Divine Providence, Pope the XVth, in an audience granted to the Reverend Father, Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, on the 26<sup>th</sup> day of September 1916. having paid attention to the Letters of Recommendation of the Bishops of the places in which the Sodality named of the Priests of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ is found, the general house of which is located here in the City and having heard the vote of the Most Eminent and Most Reverend heads of this same Sacred Congregation, who in a Plenary Council held on November 24<sup>th</sup> of this year, who after a mature examination have ponder the Constitutions of this above-mentioned pious Sodality, a hand-written copy of which is held in the Archives of the Sacred Congregation, benignly has deigned to approve and confirm in the manner of experiment for a seven-year period, and approves and confirms in the strength of this present Decree, saving the jurisdiction of the Ordinaries in accord with the norms of the Sacred Canons and the Apostolic Constitutions.

Given at Rome from the Secretariat of the Sacred Congregation for matters pertaining to Religious, dated November 16, 1916.

[Place of the Seal]

Cardinal Falconio, Bishop of Velitri, Prefect  
Adolphus Bishop Canoptan., Secretary

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**A Brief Chronicle**  
of the  
**Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata**  
of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
[1800 – 1941]



*The Stimate in Verona, birth place of the Congregation*

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Volume I – First Period**

**From the Origin of the Congregation  
to the Death of the Founder [1800-1853]**

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## Chapter 1 YEARS OF PREPARATION [1800-1816]

**1.** Fr. John B. Lenotti wrote in his *Life of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni*:

*... It is well known that in those calamitous years after 1800, there were in Verona several exemplary priests, who experienced within an inspiration to dedicate themselves to serve God in the Company of Jesus.<sup>3</sup> Without sharing this information among them, almost all of them tended toward this purpose: and with the frequent gatherings that they held among themselves<sup>4</sup>, with their mutual exhortations, and with the continual examples that they gave to one another, all were full of a holy fervor of kicking the world out, and of giving themselves entirely to the Lord, abandoning their families and whatever they owned, for the love of God...*

**2.** Just who these Priests were we can know from the *Life of Fr. Gaspar*: they were those inseparable companions of his who helped him in all his works of zeal, particularly in the Marian Oratories: Fr. John Mary Marani, Fr. Matthew Farinati, Fr. Michaelangelo Gramego and the Seminarian, Louis Bragato<sup>5</sup>.

Fr. Gaspar also makes reference of these in his spiritual diary, when he wrote on September 15, 1808:

Introduction to the Spiritual Exercises. While visiting the altar of St Ignatius with my companions I felt much devotion and recollection with great inner cheerfulness and some tears - even though the visit was short. I had the feeling that the Saint was welcoming us and inviting us to work for the greater glory of God as he did. To work in the same ways: though not using all those means that he was able to use. He seemed to tell us: "Onward, soldiers of Christ! Gird yourselves with fortitude! Pick up the shield of faith, the helmet of Salvation, the sword of the divine Word and fight against the 'ancient serpent'. "Make my spirit alive again in you and in others through you".

Fr. Bertoni was the center around whom their meetings assembled – both because he was the eldest among them, and also because they all held him in great veneration as a holy and learned man.

**3.** This is the way matters were when St. Gaspar, it seems in the year 1809<sup>6</sup>, had a vision, in which God led him to understand that He has destined him to found a new

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<sup>3</sup> The Company of Jesus had been suppressed in 1773, but its dispersed members nourished the hope of obtaining from the Holy See its re-establishment and they obtained this in 1814.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Lenotti himself in his *Life of Fr. Gramego*, speaks of these conferences that were held in Fr. Bertoni's own home.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Fr. Bertoni to Fr. Bragato – cf. ahead: **BC I, # 50**.

<sup>6</sup> It seems that this can be established from a few expressions of his which we find in his Spiritual Diary, under the date of July 23<sup>rd</sup> of that year. We read:

**... To begin the undertaking one ought to have acquired great and heroic virtue.**

***The necessary initial budget plan is Poverty. After that, all other virtues. One should not overlook the tiniest thing, and not to delay in welcoming inspirations.***



Congregation. This news is attested to by Fr. Lenotti in his *Life* of the Saint, and confirmed also by Fr. Marani, who declares that he had this stated by Fr. Gaspar himself:

*... It seems that the Spirit of the Lord much time before [he actually withdrew to live at the Stimate] had placed in his heart the idea of a Religious Institution, and had made him see in anticipation a kind of symbol, a figure, which he confidently confided to me [since Fr. Gaspar was most hesitant in speaking about himself] that it had begun around 1812: i.e., at the very time when there was not only any hope of establishing new Congregations of Religious, but even those existing communities had been from the year 1810 on dispersed everywhere and suppressed.<sup>7</sup>*

**4.** It was natural that he would seek to keep gathered around himself those companions, which seemed to him to be so compatible with this inspiration, and also because they were closely bound to him, and because they were all desirous of embracing the religious life: this had to be the reason that induced him to make known the vision that he had; this seems to be all the more true in that some among them had already been thinking of leaving Verona<sup>8</sup>.

However, the fact that this had been the intention of Fr. Gaspar is confirmed for us by Fr. Louis Bragato, who in that time had been a simple cleric and he frequented each day the Bertoni home for reasons of study:

*... Fr. Gaspar Bertoni had fixed in his heart from the time of the French domination, at the very moment when all the religious houses had been destroyed and all their inhabitants dispersed, the idea of gathering around himself some young seminarians and priests, who would live together in the manner of religious as stones already prepared for the construction of a certain Religious Order, at the very moment when the established state of injury and violence against the Church would cease, and the divine goodness would have brought about better and peaceful times<sup>9</sup>.*

In this manner, therefore, they all held themselves in readiness around Fr. Bertoni, awaiting a propitious occasion in order to begin this endeavor.

**5.** However, these were very sad times in which it was not even possible to think of a religious foundation. Society was pervaded with a pagan spirit, animated by an authentic anti-religious hatred. There had spread also throughout Italy the tragic

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<sup>7</sup> Fr. John M. Marani, *Reminiscences regarding the Congregation*. Printed in Verona in 1855.

<sup>8</sup> Fr. Gramego, for example, had already decided to move to Rome. [cf. his *Life*, written by Fr. Lenotti.

<sup>9</sup> Another circumstance that fits into this context is that which is remembered for us by Fr. Lenotti, in his *Life* of Fr. Gramego. In 1800, as the Church of the Holy Savior [this had belonged to the suppressed Benedictine Nuns] in the Royal Court had to be closed, it was decided to transfer the body of St. Gualfardo from that Church where it was venerated into the Church of St. Firmus. Four priests were chosen to carry this in solemn procession, in vestments, to the Church of St. Firmus. Among those chosen were Fr. Gaspar, Fr. Gramego and probably Fr. Farinati. On that occasion, Fr. Lenotti states, they visibly experienced in their hearts a strong impulse to gather together and to dedicate themselves to their neighbor.

principles of the French Revolution, and they had invaded everywhere, even into the Cloisters<sup>10</sup>.

There reigned above all in the upper classes an un-refrained permissiveness, encouraged by the example of the new dominators, of the thoroughly pagan celebrations that they continuously organized and from the scandal that unfortunately so many apostolate and renegade priests gave. Everywhere Clubs had sprung up, Academies and other patriotic societies which aspired to the triumph of new principles and which combated and pursued good under any form that it might take on. Religious Houses were closed, the Religious living in them were dispersed and Churches were profaned. The institutes of charity were closed, even those which housed orphan children and bands of vagabonds wandered through the streets of the city with all boldness and no restraint, begging money, cursing and stealing everywhere and giving sway to all licentiousness.<sup>11</sup>

And anyone who might think of gathering them in order to take care of their necessary care and providing for them an honest education was held back in a thousand ways, and would be summoned to appear before a Committee in the police headquarters and threatened with most serious penalties<sup>12</sup>. Even this democratic government was in overt opposition to that work of charity, maintaining that those children [for the most part, orphans] pertained exclusively to the military regime, and that since all Institutes of Charity were now under government legislation, nothing new would be tolerated.<sup>13</sup>

**6.** The conditions changed drastically when in 1814, the Austrian Government took over from the French, but the difficulties that surrounded religious foundations had not vanished. The government of Vienna had not forgotten the principles of Joseph II, nor did it look upon Religious Congregations and Orders with a favorable eye.<sup>14</sup> Every gathering was suspect; it was necessary, as a result, to proceed with utmost caution, because a single imprudence could compromise the entire undertaking forever. Fr. Gaspar, therefore, as he had always done even before all this, lived entirely trusting in Divine Providence, awaiting that the Lord might show him some sign in order to begin.

**7.** In this context, the year 1816 dawned and in the Church of St. Firmus there was held that most renowned **Parish Mission** [which lasted for about a month], in which 'the commotion was so great, and the conversions in such a number, and known even publicly, that all the other Parish Missions that were given here and there by truly capable Missionaries, these could in no way be compared to this one<sup>15</sup>.' In that Parish Mission, Fr. Gaspar was chosen as the companion for the Canon Pacetti to preach the Meditation to the People: and his companions, together with Monsignor

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<sup>10</sup> Fr. Bresciani, *Life of Fr. Peter Leonardi*. P. 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ib*, p. 44

<sup>12</sup> Fr. Peter Leonardi had founded the Institute of the *Raminghell*. Cf. Bresciani, p. 46. Fr. Gaspar, too, worked through the Oratories, suffered much from the French authorities. [cf. Sommacompagna].

<sup>13</sup> cf. Bresciani, o.c., p. 45.

<sup>14</sup> cf. ahead, **BCI, #41**, note.

<sup>15</sup> Fr. Lenotti, *Life of Fr. Gramego*.

Pacetti, 'and other Veronese priests in good numbers who gave a hand seemed to have been moved by higher strength in the hearing of confessions day and night.'<sup>16</sup>

It was then, as Fr. Lenotti notes, that in a very singular way that there was enkindled an extraordinary fervor of an apostolic and religious spirit. Whether or not, on that occasion, Fr. Bertoni was gifted with another sign, manifested to him by Heaven, the fact remains that then he had decided to begin the enterprise<sup>17</sup>, perhaps with the idea of forming a union of **Priest-Missionaries**. However, for the present, the Lord was preparing for him a favorable occasion in order to begin.

**8.** With the suppression of the religious orders, as has already been seen, there came to be lacking throughout Verona many institutions of charity committed to the good formation of the youth: therefore a few good persons, full of zeal for the glory of God and endowed with means of fortune, put themselves to work to bring about some kind of a remedy for this. Among these persons we should in the very first place mention Fr. Nicholas Galvani, born within the Parish confines of St. Ambrose of Valpolicella, on March 23, 1752. He was a priest much venerated, and greatly esteemed by all, for his profound piety and knowledge, who had taught Moral Theology for 40 years in the Seminary of Verona. In the year 1795, he had been named Pastor of St. John's Parish in the Foro.

He was bound by ties of authentic friendship with St. Gaspar, for whom he long had nourished a great affection, from the time that young Bertoni had been his student in the Seminary. In 1812, then, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September, Fr. Nicholas had bought a part of the Monastery, annexed to the Parish Church, dedicated to the Most Holy Trinity. This had been constructed in the 13<sup>th</sup> century by the Vallambrosian Monks and ultimately taken over by a suppressed Order of Converse Nuns. Fr. Galvani housed there a few poor Nuns, who had been expelled from their convents, because they were committed to the Christian formation of young poor girls of the neighborhood there. Fr. Galvani supported them from his own resources.

**9.** Also worthy of being mentioned here is a Mr. Joseph Bellotti, who for the same purpose in mind, purchased on October 11, 1813, two other Pious Places situated within the confines of this same Parish of the Most Blessed trinity. The first of these locales set aside for worship was the Church and Convent dedicated to St. Teresa of Avila, which had once belonged to the suppressed Carmelite Nuns. On this property, Mr. Bellotti also gathered in 1814 a few dispersed Nuns, so that they might offer there a tuition-free school for poor young girls of the surrounding area. He did obtain the permission of the government on December 18<sup>th</sup> of that same year, and also re-opened the Church for public worship.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. the Manuscripts of the Librarian, Sommacompagna, still conserved in the Communal Library of Verona.

<sup>17</sup> Fr. Lenotti notes in his *Life* of Fr. Gramego: *From this Parish Mission, the inspiration for the community at the Stimate took its origin.* To remember this fact, every evening in the prayers, after the *De Profundis*, for many generations, Stigmatines would offer the prayer, *Glory to the Father*, ... two times, with the invocation to the Holy Martyrs, Firmus and Rusticus.

The other locale purchased by him was the Church dedicated to the Stigmata of St. Francis [popularly known as the **Stimmate**], with a few adjoining rooms. This had once belong to the Confraternity of the Stigmata, and after the laws of suppression had emanated, it had come to be used as a smithy's shop for horseshoes. After he had redone the rooms, Mr. Bellotti also opened here in 1815 two tuition-free schools for poor children<sup>18</sup>, entrusting the endeavor to two zealous priests whom he supported. He obtained the permission to open there for Feast Days the Church of the Stimmate for the religious instruction of the youth who attended the newly re-opened schools there. In all of these undertakings, Mr. Bellotti worked in harmony with Fr. Nicholas Galvani. This was so true that it was thought, and even said rather commonly, that he had purchased those places in the name of Fr. Galvani, and with his money.

**10.** Mr. Bellotti also bought a third place, situated in St. Stephen's Parish, called the Pious Place of the 'Derelict' [the **Dereletti**]. It has received this name, because of old it had been used to gather there poor and abandoned orphans. The Deed of Purchase was stipulated for July 1, 1816, and the purchase price was 4,770 Lira, that had to be paid within ten years at 5% interest. However, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that same month of July, Mr. Bellotti died, leaving as his heir the three Pious Localities which he had purchased, to the reverend Father Nicholas Galvani.

Already before-hand, he had advised Fr. Galvani that he had made out his last will and testament making Fr. Galvani his heir:

*...Already for some time now that I have drawn up my will: I have left the properties of St. Teresa, the Stimmate and the Dereletti: and I ask you not to refuse this inheritance, and through the mercy of Jesus Christ, I beg you to perpetuate and to develop the work already begun there. You know, but I cannot write further.*

*Bellotti* <sup>19</sup>

**11.** Fr. Galvani knew well the intentions of the Testator, and it was indeed precisely for this sole reason he did not go forward with his intention of rejecting the inheritance:

*... The enormous burden of the intentions of my friend, the Testator, the carrying out of which as a duty would require a more vigorous age, as well as an annual considerable contribution, and even more this required that the fulfillment of all this be perpetuated. The Archpriest clearly lacked the 'vigorous age' [he was already 64 years old], and there were lacking to him also the means to sustain this burden for life. Even more, there were lacking to him the means to perpetuate this fulfillment.* <sup>20</sup>

After having thought over the many expedients without reaching a conclusion about any of them, the ageing priest placed the entire matter into the hands of God. At that moment, Lady Leopoldina Naudet presented herself to him. She was the Foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family, and she asked Fr. Galvani for the use of

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<sup>18</sup> The areas used for class rooms were the old monastic Choir and the Church sacristy.

<sup>19</sup> From a Letter of Mr. Bellotti, conserved in the Archives at the Stimmate.

<sup>20</sup> Facts gleaned from a Letter of Fr. Galvani, conserved in the Archives at the Stimmate.

St. Teresa's Convent as a residence there her own community<sup>21</sup>. Her proposal was for Fr. Galvani a ray of hope, he accepted the agreement and granted the use of St. Teresa's to Mother Naudet. In this way, there was assured the perpetuity of the work going on there. There still remained the properties of the Stimmate and the Dereletti, but a solution was found also for these for Fr. Galvani. 'He then turned to Fr. Bertoni, already close to him, and brought him into his counsel on these matters.'<sup>22</sup> Fr. Galvani suggested to St. Gaspar that he and his companions might assume the direction of the tuition-free school already opened at the Stimmate<sup>23</sup>.

**12.** This was the occasion offered to him by God in order to get his plan underway, and so, Fr. Bertoni willingly acquiesced:

*... To bring his enterprise to term [Fr. Bragato wrote], the most prudent Fr. Bertoni knew well that he was involved in a most plausible reason of which he could make use before the government that would justify the gathering of various Priests together, living in one and the same house, as at that very moment in time, all the other such communities that had existed up to that moment had been destroyed. The pious and zealous Fr. Gaspar knew well that there could be no other better reason, according to which even for the public authorities, a favorable view might be extended toward that work of opening the tuition-free schools for the benefit of the youth. Having considered all this and with firm resolution, he committed himself to the endeavor.*

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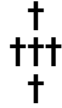
<sup>21</sup> From 1808 on, Leopoldina Naudet was associated with the Marquess Madeline di Canossa at St. Joseph's Convent, living there with the intention of assisting her in her foundation: however, as time went on it came to the common agreement of the two women that the purposes for which they were working were not fully identical, and their disagreement was on matters of great importance. Mother Leopoldina intended, different from Mother di Canossa, to give to her Religious a rather refined culture, so that they might attend not only to the poor girls of the area, but also to work for those of a more elevated social status: and furthermore, she wished to apply herself to the active life without, however, neglecting the contemplative. Her idea was to establish the law of Cloister, even though mitigated somewhat due to the apostolic purpose she had in mind. Since the two women could not reach an agreement on these two points, the Marquess proposed to her companion to seek another residence in good peace, so that each of them could attend to that good purpose that God seemed to inspire them to do.

Mother Leopoldina had taken counsel from her Spiritual Director [at that time, it was St. Gaspar], and she accepted the proposal and thought of seeking a place in which she would take up residence with her Sisters who followed her views. From 1814, she had asked Fr. Galvani, through the suggestion of Fr. Bertoni, for St. Teresa's Convent. However, Mr. Bellotti had in mind other religious Sisters. Now that he had deceased, Mother Naudet once more had recourse to the Arch-Priest and she renewed her request.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Fr. Lenotti, *Life* of Fr. Gaspar.

<sup>23</sup> A plausible reason that further influenced Fr. Galvani, the fact that a great famine plagued the area in those years. Hence, he could not longer afford to pay the two priests who conducted the schools at the Stimmate. In fact, from the beginning it was established that Fr. Bertoni and his companions would have rented from him the properties. [Fr. Marani]. Because of this idea of paying rent, the expenses that Fr. Galvani had to sustain would have been refused.

Fr. Galvani was thinking of leaving also the Dereletti to Fr. Bertoni<sup>24</sup>. Finally, after clearing the deed, in 1818 he ceded the use of this to the pious Lady, Anna Cavalieri, who had housed there a few poor girls since 1816, and maintained them with the offerings of the faithful.



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<sup>24</sup> In fact, he did eventually do so in 1818 with his Last Will and Testament together with the properties of the Stimmate and the Most Holy Trinity. He was so convinced that Fr. Bertoni would have established his work there that would be lasting and perpetual.

## Chapter 2

### The Foundation of the Congregation [1816-1822]

**13.** Fr. Gaspar accepted therefore, without further delay the invitation of his friend, Fr. Galvani, and on November 4<sup>th</sup> of that year, he took possession of the house with his first companions. Fr. Gramego wrote in his early Chronicle:

*...On November 4<sup>th</sup>, the following came to the Stimate: 1. Very Rev. Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, as leader and father; 2. Fr. John M. Marani, his former student from St. Paul's Parish in the Campo Marzio section; 3. Bro. Paul Zanolì, as secretary, economus, cook ... without knowing anything of all of this ...*

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of that same month, classes began, assisted also by Fr. Michael Gramego, who, however, did not actually live at the Stimate. He writes of these days:

*... On December 4<sup>th</sup>, I also came, Fr. Michael Gramego to add one more to the number, and to do what? ... We will see ... thanks be to God!*

On January 1, 1817 Fr. Matthew Farinati was also added, who was, as we have already seen, one of Fr. Bertoni's companions, and one of his cooperators in the work of the Marian Oratories. And in the same year [October 11<sup>th</sup>], Fr. Cajetan Brugnoli entered to form part of the community. He had been a member of Napoleon's Noble Guard, and then entered the Seminary. Once he was ordained a Priest, he had served as a Curate at St. Anastasia's Parish, where he set up and directed that flourishing Oratory.

**14.** The little Community was growing little by little to the great joy of Fr. Gaspar and his companions. Fr. Marani wrote later:

*... For the regime of the house, Fr. Gaspar began from the outset to rule it 'after the manner of religious', but asking for perfect observance and the most perfect common life, as was also the desire of us all...*

Above all, they were distinguished for their activity and mortification. Fr. Charles Zara has been quoted in Fr. Gramego's Chronicle:

*... How well I remember how many times the remaining sons of Fr. Bertoni had spoken of those times of just how they had withdrawn with him to the Stimate. All they would have for breakfast would be a bit of bread and corn meal – nor was there much more, following the soup [and what soup that was!] that would be placed before them for lunch, and all was like that from the breakfast in the morning and through the evening supper; none of this suffice for satiety, nor was it hardly proportioned to the manly tasks that they sustained with such alacrity and zeal...*

**15.** There were not lacking to them real struggles and persecutions of the world, nor could they stop the whispered rumors concerning them. However, they were desirous only of promoting the Glory of God, and they did not pay much heed to all these challenges. They trusted in the Lord's help and they went on intrepidly in their undertaking. In 1817, on the occasion of the re-opening of the Oratory of the Immaculate Conception, Fr. Gramego noted:

*... O saving Victim, opening wide – The gate of heaven to man below. – Our foes press on from every side, Your aid supply, Your strength bestow...*

And a few days later he wrote as the Main Altar of the Church was dedicated:

*... between fear and hope, in the midst of consolations and afflictions – but, rejoice! St. Michael has overcome the enemy!...*

Among their enemies and detractors there were unfortunately some Priests: nor should this cause much surprise when one thinks that at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many Churchmen who had become infatuated with the new principles brought in from France, and were seduced by the dream of false glory, and they aspired to be numbered in that false social re-generation which had been imagined and willed by sheer wickedness. There were in those days some Priests, some Pastors who went about in military guise and preached that '*fraternity, equality and liberty*' and other revolutionary slogans<sup>25</sup>, Priests who gave their names to some of those patriotic societies affiliated with the Masonic Lodges of the times<sup>26</sup>. All of these were enemies because of their choices of the party opposed to all good, persecutors and detractors of anyone who tried to accomplish it. They had already persecuted Fr. Gaspar because of his work in the Oratories, and now they were calumniating him, damaging his good reputation and finding fault even with his intentions. The local Ordinary, Bishop Liruti, however, had already known for sometime about the virtues and the intentions of Fr. Gaspar, and became his defender. However, one day, as the Bishop made his way to the Stimmate in the company of some of those detractors, was much moved in admiration seeing close at hand the work of our Fathers and he encouraged them to persevere, assuring them of his paternal benevolence and blessing.<sup>27</sup>

**16.** In the meantime, on November 20, 1816, the Marquess Magdeline di Canossa had obtained from Pope Pius VII the Decree of Praise for her Institute and thus preparations were underway for its Canonical Erection. Fr. Bertoni had a considerable role in the foundation of that undertaking: he himself had drawn up a Regulation, or Plan for the new Institute<sup>28</sup>. More than any other, he had also shared in shouldering the burden of composing its Rules and Constitutions;<sup>29</sup> and for long years he had directed those Sisters with the lights of his prudence, and he assisted them with the works of his charity, edifying with the examples of every most beautiful virtuous effort.

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<sup>25</sup> cf. Sommacompagna manuscripts.

<sup>26</sup> Perini, *History of Verona from 1793-1882*. Vol. II, p. 418.

<sup>27</sup> Giacobbe, *Life of Fr. Gaspar*, p. 295.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *The Life of the Venerable Marquess di Canossa*, Milano 1906, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Sommacompagna documents.



And precisely at this juncture, when the matters were well along their way to completion, he withdrew. The Marquess prevailed upon him with a certain insistence that he might wish to continue for them his spiritual assistance, and he had already been graced with the necessary church authority. Fr. Lenotti noted this in his Life of Fr. Gaspar:

*... but the situation would never arise when he would want to return to that work, as his customary sharpness of judgment had been called upon in a variety of endeavors and foundations of both men and women, to continue on assisting them with his collaboration once the purpose had been just about achieved, and he would then withdraw to leave for others the honor and the glory of the foundation...*

**17.** In 1817, the Episcopal Vicar, Monsignor Dionisi, asked Fr. Gaspar that he might wish to assign one of his priests to assist those infected with typhoid in the city prisons. Fr. Bertoni accepted this invitation and to this apostolate, he assigned Fr. Matthew Farinati, from among all who desired to undertake this dangerous mission.

Fr. Farinati went very willingly to undertake that ministry of charity. However, from this commitment of his he contracted an illness that in a very short span of time would lead him to the tomb. To attempt one last cure, in 1819, he thought it best to return home to his family in the hopes of recovering his health. The day of his departure from the Stimate was a day of profound sadness. Fr. Gramego noted in his House Chronicle:

*... Alas! Fr. Matthew Farinati left us today to return to his own home, on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of October, to experience that native air of Alcenago...*

Following his departure, Fr. Bertoni commented to Fr. Gramego that their companion, Fr. Farinati would either return, or he would soon be dead. And this is what happened; a year later, he died. On September 17, 1820, Fr. Gaspar was apprised of his very grave state, and went to visit him; and almost as soon as Fr. Gaspar left him, Fr. Matthew gave up his soul to God. On that same day, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Mother Leopoldina Naudet and asked for her prayers for the deceased Fr. Farinati. Fr. Gramego noted:

*... On this September 17<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Matthew Farinati passed to a better life ... May God hold him in peace. Amen...*

Even though after his departure he was no longer considered to be a Stigmatine, St. Gaspar always envied him for the destiny he had of sacrificing his life in the exercise of his ministry and of dying as a martyr of charity. He had always been with Fr. Gaspar as **one heart and one soul** - his most affectionate friend and disciple, as can be seen in the letter that Fr. Bertoni sent to Mother Naudet in 1812.

**18.** In the meantime, another consolation had graced our first Confreres. On October 15, 1818, the young priest, Fr. Louis Bragato joined them. He became Fr. Gaspar's '*Benjamin*', favored one, as from his youngest years he had been the saint's most affectionate and beloved son and disciple. On that occasion, full of enthusiasm, Fr. Gramego noted in the House Chronicle:

*... Hurray! Enough glories for Fr. Louis Bragato: finally, at long last, on the feast day of St. Teresa of Jesus, there first came to dowry and then the spouse. Long life St. Aloysius Gonzaga!*

However, neither was he able to remain long: on June 14, 1819, for reasons of health, he returned to his own home.

**19.** So, there remained at the Stimmate Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, Fr. Marani, Fr. Gramego and Fr. Brugnoli: furthermore, Fr. Gaspar was from time to time subject to health problems; these were the late consequences of those set-backs suffered by him in the first years of his priesthood, which changed for him in 1813 as a mortal illness. In May 1819, this disturbances of his were aggravated and must have given some real concern as can be garnered from a letter of St. Magdeline di Canossa written to Fr. Louis Trevisani, Prefect of Studies in the Seminary, friend and admirer of Fr. Gaspar:

*... From your most esteemed letter, I have come to understand that you are quite upset: do not worry about the wonderful Fr. Gaspar, who never doubted about his being returned to good health ...*

He suffered a further relapse at the beginning of the year 1822 as might be seen in a musical piece composed by Monterossi, written on the occasion of the death of Fr. Louis Trevisani [January 14<sup>th</sup>], where it is noted that Fr. Gaspar, 'that man of God', was ill and all good people were praying for his returning to good health.

**20.** During these years, the principal occupation of our Fathers was **teaching school**. They had begun with the second and third elementary levels, and then gradually they continued adding grades, reaching even the first high school which increased the number of the teachers. For this purpose they had to be endowed with the necessary licenses for teaching as the government regulations demanded. And the men undertook the required studies for this to be a reality. Fathers Marani, Gramego and Brugnoli received their authorization in 1821 and then they took an examination before the Professors of the municipal High School and obtained the license to teach all the classes of Grammar School, and Fr. Gaspar also had one for the Humanities.<sup>30</sup>

**21.** Fr. Marani sheds some light on the method followed by them in an Official Report he wrote much later, in 1853:

*... What studies were undertaken together, and the method [that Fr. Gaspar] had formed them in from the very first year in order to teach with reasonable order the elementary and high school courses, that writings compiled in those years which we still have, provide a record of it all; and there is eloquent testimony provided by the most famous and sharp intelligence of Fr. Louis Trevisani, Prefect of Studies in the Seminary. When he had heard of their method of teaching, he wanted to adopt it also in the Diocesan Seminary ...*

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<sup>30</sup> The Fathers who entered through these years also passed the requirements for the License – such as Fr. Cartolari and Fr. Cainer. These permits were granted for a given number of years, after which each teacher had to present himself to the office which granted them so that they could be renewed.

And he clearly saw the goodness of their method of teaching from the excellent results that they obtained from them: because as their students had to undergo the public examinations, their students came out among the best<sup>31</sup>. As a result of these fine showings, the classes at the Stimate were frequented by an ever-increasing number of young students who went there from all parts of the city<sup>32</sup>.

**22.** However, the early Confreres did not attend solely to the instruction of the youth, but also, and even more so, the men were dedicated to the moral and Christian formation of their students<sup>33</sup>: and the sacred commitment that St. Gaspar and his companions gave to animate ever more those young students to the practice of virtue is very well known from the *Life* of Fr. Bertoni. With this goal in mind, from the very beginning the special Marian Oratory for these students, while they could no longer continue to use the Church because of its disorder, was held in those first years in the little Chapel dedicated to the Immaculate Conception [later dedicated for long years to the Sacred Face], which they prepared as best they could, and from September 6, 1818, they began to celebrate Holy Mass there<sup>34</sup>.

**23.** From this, it should not be believed that teaching school absorbed all their activity. Fr. Marani noted:

*... From the very first year, in addition to **teaching school**, the priests were committed in their free time and on their vacation days and feast days, in explaining **Catechism** in the Parishes where they had been invited. And in a special way there were tirelessly given over to hearing the **Confessions** of the children and those of men, and in this work there was very much to do. The reason is, because of the fact that at that time the Stimate was somewhat set off from the main section of the city, and because there were Confessors there who were always ready both day and night, all those who preferred to unburden their consciences in utmost privacy made their way to the Stimate: and the Pastors also felt free to send over to the Stimate those who had rather involved matters to discuss and those who needed a more General Confession.*<sup>35</sup>

<sup>31</sup> cf. **BC I, # 52**. The students from the private elementary schools, prior to being admitted to any high school had to undergo examinations of the junior high, in a major, or public elementary school. For this examination of presentation, the principal of the private school would be present. Also for high school students who wanted to pursue their studies in a public school had to undergo examinations. In these examinations the students from Stimate always excelled among the better students.

<sup>32</sup> In an almanac dated in 1820, entitled '*The Good Spirit returns*', the classes at the Stimate were qualified as *most numerous and most fruitful*.

<sup>33</sup> This later was codified as one of the central apostolates of the community – the work of the Apostolic Missionaries: **CF ## 165, ff. – Part IX**.

<sup>34</sup> The altar-piece there of the Immaculate Mary was an esteemed work of the artist, G. B. Amigazzi.

<sup>35</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** An even broader commitment to the **Apostolic Mission** was later codified by St. Gaspar in his **Part IX** of his Original Constitutions [**CF ## 158-186**].

**24.** It was only natural that our early Confreres who were so zealous for the good of souls would yearn to re-open for public worship the Church of the Stigmata. As a result, they began quite early to restore it [with the Arch-priest, Fr. Galvani, supplying the financial resources for this, as he was the owner of the property]. They began with repairing the roof and the windows. They then re-did the floor with living rock, and totally repaired the façade. They also set up the main altar which had been removed<sup>36</sup>, restoring as well the side altars, the walls and the vaults. The scholar, Sommacompagna noted: *The Church of the Stimate may now be said to be re-built and placed in the most high décor and cleanliness.* On October 25, 1820, St. Catherine's altar was all restored, and the Church then began to be used as the student chapel.

**25.** On June 15, 1821, the Arch-priest, Fr. Galvani, as Mr. Bellotti had done for St. Teresa's property, with a public act he donated to the Church of the Stimate the sum of 100 Lira, and then petitioned the government for the permission to open it for public worship. The Church was in fact opened on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October of 1822, the Vigil of St. Francis of Assisi, at 3:00 p.m.. Fr. Brugnoli preached on the benefit of God in opening a temple for His worship/ The day after, there was a great abundance of Holy masses celebrated there, and after lunch there was a discourse, with such a large gathering of people that it was indeed a wonder<sup>37</sup>. Fr. Gramego recording the day's proceedings and has left us the following account:

*... Note most extraordinarily well. Oh! Holy Spouses, Joseph and Mary! The blessed and yearned for hour has finally come: today, the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, at 3:00 p.m., the Major Church was opened for public worship, and I, wretched sinner, was the first one to have celebrated on the new Major Altar dedicated to the Holy Spouses. Woe to you, Gramego, if you do not do well...*

For the service of the Church there was only one bell, baptized on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May of that same year: ... *the Mary and Joseph bell was all under the expenses of our good grand-father, the Arch-Priest, Fr. Galvani ...*<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Prior to the forced closing of the Church, over the main altar there had been a canvas representing the Stigmata of St. Francis, the work of the artist, Anthony Balestra. This had been taken down and moved to the communal museum, where it still may be found. In its place there was set up a painting of the Espousals of the Holy Patrons, and on that occasion, the Holy Spouses became co-Patrons of the Church. On the two altars on the side of the Sanctuary there were placed the Crucifix and the Painting of the taking down from the Cross, a copy made of the original of Paul Farinati. In the Chapel half way down there was a painting of the espousals of St. Catherine, the work of the artist Andrew Voltolini, and the Passing of St. Francis, the work of the artist Joseph Leonardi. The depiction of the Passing of St. Catherine had been there in the past.

<sup>37</sup> Sommacompagna manuscript.

<sup>38</sup> Fr. Gramego's Chronicle. In 1833, this bell was donated to the Capuchins at St. Martha's.

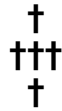
**26.** Once the Church had been opened, the Pastor of the Most Holy Trinity, Fr. Peter Palmidese insisted pressed Fr. Bertoni that he might also choose to set up the Marian Oratory also for the youth of his parish. St. Gaspar willingly acceded to this request and obtained the Decree of Aggregation of his Marian Congregation to the First Primary of the Roman College [April 4, 1824]. From then on, there were welcomed in the Oratory together with the students of the Stimmate also other young men and adults of the Parish. Fr. Lenotti noted:

*... This Oratory grew marvelously and flourished so much so that the Church where all had to be accommodated was filled to the brim and both the young men and the adults who were admitted to Communion, and the Oratory of the Immaculate Conception was reserved for those who had not yet been admitted to Communion ...*

And it is beautiful to hear Fr. Lenotti himself what poetry and harmony reigned among the youth of that Oratory:

*... There were persons in our Oratories from every state and condition, young, old, the unmarried, rich and poor, and almost from every district of our neighborhood. After teaching the Doctrine n every Feast Day, all the aggregates of the Oratory would come to the Stimmate and by three or four Fathers they were led together in a long file two by two. The smaller ones up ahead, and followed by the bigger boys and then the older ones. They would be led out to participate in games through the New Gate in one of the broadest excavations there by the wall of Sammicheli. These were made prior to the re-construction made by the Austrians with the full acquiescence of the citizens. It was a delight here to see so many young people and so many artisans and nobles playing happily together, each at the game he preferred. Some played ball, where there was much running, each one competing for readiness and speed, all struggling forward for the victory. Others would be playing on another side with the wickets of beryllium, and these games were reserved for the smaller boys. Others enjoyed table games, the favorite sport reserved for the adults: simply watching the games! And this picture would be completed for the few older men seated on the grass, or on a stone in animated conversation about their own lives. And the Fathers? They would be here and there, very intent on rooting on both the young and the older ones, to keep the different contests and teams going, and were often called upon to act as referees. When the hour came to end the games, there would be sounded the retreat: each one would pick up his own jacket, his hat, getting in line once again, two by two, and going out from this playing field filing back to the City Gate singing: 'Sins no more, Mercy on us O Lord!' – or: 'O world, for me you are no more! – and other old tunes. And there were those who along the way would recount from some devout examples. And so, quite joyfully, without wondering what others might have thought, they all returned to the Stimmate to the great edification of the people who would see them...*

**27.** As our Fathers came to understand the great good that would be accomplished through these Oratories, zealously sought to spread them elsewhere, nor did they let any occasion pass that might present itself to them in order to promote these and establish these everywhere. If some Priest made his way to the Stimate [as Fr. Lenotti writes further], especially if he were a Pastor, our early Confreres would exhort them to set up the Oratory also in their parishes, in their town, and the Stigmatines made clear to them the great good that could be accomplished with these. And the men from the Stimate did not only do this with the Priests of the Diocese, but the Stigmatines would also persuade those coming from the outside to establish the Marian Oratory, teaching them the practical means to be taken to establish one and the manner to follow in order to succeed in consolidating one. Fr. Lenotti tells us that Fr. Bertoni with Fr. Marani, Fr. Gramego, Fr. Farinati, Brother Paul, would often go personally into other Dioceses in setting up the Oratory, often bringing with them the young men of the Oratory of the Stimate, all organized in the established groups among them.



### Chapter 3

#### The Further Organization of the Congregation

#### [1823-1833]

**28.** Three months after the opening of the Church, on January 6, 1823, the Arch-Priest, Fr. Galvani, died at the age of almost 71. He left Fr. Bertoni as his heir the four places: the Stimate, St. Teresa's, the Trinity and the 'Dereletti.' While still alive, he had received from Fr. Gaspar the promise that he would accept this inheritance: Fr. Gaspar would have preferred to accept only the Stimate, but the Arch-Priest insisted that he accept all four<sup>39</sup>. The last will and testament reads in part as follows:

*... Knowing the spirit of Reverend Father Gaspar Bertoni ... that he is inspired to work for the instruction of the youth in religion, in good manners and in other means leading one to be useful to himself and for his fellow-man, and on my part wishing to cooperate in these wise and useful intentions of this same Fr. Bertoni, I therefore have determined to leave to him as I leave him in bond all that follows... etc.*

Toward the end, Fr. Galvani states that if Fr. Gaspar should pre-decease him, or that he would not accept the inheritance, then they would all be left to Fr. Matthew Farinati. And if he would not accept them, or if he should pre-decease Fr. Galvani, they would be left to Fr. Michael Gramego; finally, if he, too, should pre-decease Fr. Galvani, he would leave everything to Fr. John Mary Marani.

From this it can be seen that Fr. Galvani wanted to leave these properties not only to the person, but to the work of Fr. Bertoni: his intention, as was that of the deceased Mr. Bellotti was to cooperate in the good education of the youth and to perpetuate this holy endeavor.

**29.** Furthermore, both in the last will and testament as well as by voice, this same Fr. Galvani who left to Fr. Bertoni these pious places without binding him to any condition. He stated that Fr. Gaspar was absolute owner and that he could dispose of these properties as he saw best: this held true also for St. Teresa's Convent. In this regard, he commented to Fr. Marani a few days before he died: 'Should Fr. Gaspar choose also to send Leopoldina away, he is the most free and absolute owner.'<sup>40</sup>

However, Fr. Gaspar was content with the Convent of the Stimate: and further, he confirmed for Mother Naudet her use of St. Teresa's, and as for the Dereletti, he invited Lady Cavalieri<sup>41</sup>, and he placed the Sisters and young girls supported by Fr. Galvani in the property of the Most Holy Trinity. To these latter, Fr. Bertoni made it very clear that once the Arch-Priest's, Fr. Galvani's<sup>42</sup>, estate was executed in their regard, Fr. Bertoni did not feel that he could assume the

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<sup>39</sup> From a letter of Fr. Marani. Archives of the Stimate.

<sup>40</sup> From a letter of Fr. Marani. Archives of the Stimate.

<sup>41</sup> As soon as Fr. Galvani had died, Lady Cavalieri wrote to Fr. Gaspar asking him to leave her that property

<sup>42</sup> Fr. Galvani left to his own family other aspects of his holdings.

responsibility of the young girls. He therefore advised the Lady Abbess to send away those young women who had completed their education [unless they wanted to remain there and become nuns], and that thereafter others should not be accepted unless they were able to pay the tuition.

It also seems that at that time, the Nuns housed at the Trinity had every intention of beginning a new Religious Institute. In this regard, the Lady Abbess had asked Fr. Gaspar if it might be possible for them to accept postulants and young women for formation, he responded: whenever the postulant would have the dowry for her own support both for the present as well as for the future, and was blessed with a fitting spirit for their Institute, Fr. Gaspar would not only be content, but it would please him very much to see some development of their Community. As for the young ladies, Fr. Gaspar would make no exception other than for those who did not have their entire maintenance. However, for those who could support themselves fully, this would please him because he would see them as fit candidates; secondly, because in those times, unless there was some public benefit, no one was able to sustain any kind of a Pious Union, and much less could one think of *founding religious communities*.

**30.** In the meantime, little by little, new recruits arrived at the Stimate. In 1822, Fr. Gramego noted:

*... On July 25<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Modesto Cainer came to help us in our grave needs. May God conserve him and bless him, since He compelled him to enter...*

The number of priests increased, as well as did the number of classes, and in 1825, the full high school course had been covered<sup>43</sup>. At the same time, places available for class rooms diminished, since after the Church had been opened to the public, the old choir stall area could no longer be used for classes, as was the case also for the sacristy and the tribunal, as these had previously been deployed. Now, when one keeps in mind that the entire locale of the house of the Stimate was simply five little rooms next to the Church, one might understand what a piteous discomfort were experienced by our first Confreres, who continuously had to move furniture from one room to the next, both day and night. The rooms in which one or two of them would have taken their necessary night's sleep, in the morning would be converted into a class room and furnished with all the equipment necessary for this<sup>44</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> The final two elementary classes were being taught, four classes of grammar and the two of humanities. In order to obtain the license to teach on the elementary level it was necessary to undergo an examination before the Teachers of the Royal High School, and to frequent for one semester a class of Methodology, undergoing also an examination in that material. This elementary license had been obtained by Fr. Cartolari and later by Frs. Benciolini, Venturini, Bragato, Biadego and Fedelini.

<sup>44</sup> cf. *Reminiscences of our Fathers and Brothers*, p. 2. Alluding to these conditions of life, St. Gaspar wrote on April 30, 1820 that he had to make dispositions for the pots and pans [as for the time being there was no other kitchen], and he had to move the stove into a bed room, and eat in another as best he could. He went on to say that his kitchen and class room were the same place and the students did their work on the kitchen table ... he explained that it would be difficult for him to state fully how difficult all of this was. The numbers were few, and they were all consumed in teaching, and they all had need of some quiet. Nonetheless, they were over-taken by consolation for the fruitful good that resulted, at least



**31.** There was a very basic need to provide new rooms. This would have provided Fr. Gaspar with a most just motive to ask for St. Teresa's Convent, since he was its owner and had need of it. But, he did not want to do this: he was content in asking Lady Leopoldina for a little piece of the garden, joined to the land of the Stimate, as this would suffice for him to build a fitting dwelling for his men, and to furnish the places for the young students now in eight classes, into which they were divided<sup>45</sup>:

*... As a result, there began in 1823 to appear on the scene a residence that was well ordered and suitable, a solid and elegant structure, and one that was wholesome. Furthermore, in addition to the advantage that it enjoyed for its location, it was also very airy from the inner court-yard was formed the inner core of the residence, and by a garden that was before it each morning, and on the outside by all the sides of the streets that surrounded it on all sides...*

<sup>46</sup>

There rose up the first wing bordering on the court-yard of St. Teresa's, that on the way of the Stimate [later named for Carlo Montanari]. This was put up between the years 1823 and 1826. In 1826, there was constructed the wing on the Path of the Stimate and the bell tower up to its first frame. In the following years, 1827 and 1828, the main body was put up looking out over the garden and the little court-yard, and the bell tower was brought to completion, and by 1829 it reached the cupola.

Here we do not want to pass over in silence that for the hard work of all this construction our Fathers also gave their assistance:

*... How beautiful and edifying it was to see them, upon leaving their classes for the day, having laid aside their books and pens, to put themselves alongside the laborers to assist them to carry the cement and the heavy stones to their great exhaustion! May their sweat shed on this holy earth guard it, sanctify it and fructify it ...* <sup>47</sup>

**32.** Once the Church of the Stimate had been opened, the father's spiritual work also greatly increased.

To respond to the wishes of the Episcopal Vicar, Monsignor Dionisi, from the very beginning there was instituted in this Church the Prayer Service for a Good Death that was held each Friday evening. This consisted in the old '**Grades of the Passion**', some prayerful reflections on the Five Wounds of Our Lord that were recited before the Altar of the Crucified.

But, above all there increased the work of hearing Confessions. Fr. Lenotti notes:

*... To be able to accomplish a greater good, Fr. Gaspar did not want women's confessions heard, so that he might dedicate himself and employ his men for*

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as far as their limited resources were concerned, that the Lord allows to fall upon us to squeeze out of our anguish and tribulation.

<sup>45</sup> cf. *Reminiscences of our Fathers and Brothers*, o.c.,

<sup>46</sup> ib., p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> ib.

*the greater service and advantage of the men: he believed that for the women there would be many confessors elsewhere. As a result, large numbers of penitents who made their way to the Stimate and the Confessors worked both day and night. Whatever free hours that were left following school hours, there were always some who wanted to go to confession and the Church would actually be filled with penitents. This was especially so during the Jubilee Years when the concourse was most extraordinary ... Of this large number of penitents who consistently came there, some confirmation of this fact has been left behind from the reports that were submitted to the Bishop each year, from the year 1817, where requests were submitted for special faculties. It was stated: '... The Priests of Gaspar Bertoni, finding themselves always with more and more penitents who seek conversion to God from a previously depraved life, has come to the realization that he needs special faculties, so that there will not be the need to disturb so often Your Excellency, implore these special faculties, etc'<sup>48</sup>.*

**33.** Furthermore, to the extent that their little free time allowed to the Priests following their commitment to the School, there were dedicated to preaching Novenas, Octaves, *Triduums* – but **most of all, to giving Retreats to the Priests and Seminarians in the Diocesan Seminary**. In addition to this, many struggling in their vocations were sent, or asked to come, to our dwelling to make their annual retreat.<sup>49</sup>

Fr. Gaspar was the busiest of all. His reputation for virtue and holiness increased and many persons of high social level came to him in order to have spiritual direction and counsel. Fr. Lenotti notes:

*... During the time of the Congress of Verona, Fr. Bertoni heard the confessions of many high personages. Among others, General Michaud came to see him. He was one of formed the inner circle of the Emperor of Russia, Alexander. The General arrived on horseback with his adjutant who accompanied him whenever he went about in the city: they both came often to go to confession to Fr. Bertoni and to receive Communion then at the Stimate. In like manner a number of other personalities who were passing through the city would often come to him for counsel and to go to confession. The Ambassador of Spain who was in Verona for some time, always came to go to confession to Fr. Gaspar.*

**34.** At the same time, he taught the course on Rhetoric and each Friday would preach in the Church of the Stimate. Each feast day, and on days of vacation, he would go to preach to the students in the local Seminary. Furthermore, he with Fr. Marani had established at St. Stephen's the Congregation of St. Charles, and he went there each Thursday after lunch and held a few hours of **recollection and conducted**

<sup>48</sup> They petitioned for the faculties to absolve from all reserved cases and censures laid down by the Diocese, to dispense from vows, from oaths, and the like.

<sup>49</sup> cf. Fr. Marani's Report. Fr. Lenotti also testifies that Fr. Gaspar sought to inspire into his son the zeal to preaching Parish Missions and the Spiritual exercises: as a result, in the long winter nights, they would pretend to be in the pulpit and with the Crucifix, they would give imaginary retreats [cf. *Life of Fr. Gaspar*, 1-21].

**exercises of piety for the many priests gathered there.**<sup>50</sup> He was always ready to carry out his responsibilities and was tireless in conducting those matters entrusted to him by his Superiors, such as very carefully examining those vocations to the ecclesiastical state.

And as though this were not enough, he had made of the House of the Stimmate a center of study, continuing there those researched Conferences [**for Priests and Seminarians**] which he used to hold in his own home before coming to the Stimmate, for the more careful study of St. Alphonsus Liguori and St. Thomas Aquinas. TO these Conferences, many diocesan priests attended. The custom was to read the title of one of the articles of St. Thomas' *Summa*, then without fail one of those present would be invited to respond to the question. Then, St. Thomas' response would be written, and the disputation went on<sup>51</sup>. The same method would also be followed for the study of Moral Theology.

**35.** Here we need to take a step backward and recall that one reality in these years kept the little Community at the Stimmate in some apprehension. This was the recurring illnesses of St. Gaspar which were now localized in his right leg and these had aggravated a number of times to the extent of placing his life in serious danger. The illness manifested itself during the year 1824 and appeared as a swelling of the whole leg, and then was confined to the lower part of this same leg, and looked like a tumor on the shin and spread little by little spread up to the knee. In the beginning, this was cared for by his maternal uncle, Dr. Joseph Ravelli. But, he soon realized the gravity of the problem, and he counseled his nephew to place himself under the care of specialists surgeons, who subjected the leg to a repeated and most painful lancing.<sup>52</sup>

This problem lasted up until 1829, but in all those years Fr. Gaspar was not always in bed. He had periods of relatively good health, during which he was able to get up and celebrate the Mass, and also to attend to some aspects of his broad ministry. He was able to preach the Friday Devotions in the Church of the Stimmate, to hear confessions, and to give some Retreats. Thus toward the end of 1825 his health returned to some extent, and he was able to be up and around, all through 1826. In this manner, he was able to attend with his companions to the ministry of the Confessional, as these had increased greatly due to the occurrence of the Holy Jubilee Year.<sup>53</sup>

As he himself wrote to Mother Naudet on September 14, 1826, the activities were increasing more and more and the care to which he was committed for the conversion of the many types of individuals who had been touched by the grace of

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<sup>50</sup> In this connection we recall that around this time the Emperor Francis I came to Verona and he visited the House of the Stimmate that was still under construction. In his kindness, he showed supreme satisfaction for the arrangement of the classes and the little residence next to it. [Fr. Marani].

<sup>51</sup> From a Letter of one Fr. Filippozzi.

<sup>52</sup> Among the surgeons who operated on him were Drs. Gregori and Manzoni.

<sup>53</sup> The Holy Year lasted in Rome from Christmas of 1824 to Christmas of 1825. The Jubilee was then extended to the whole world and was meant to last for six more months. In Verona, this was promulgated on March 14, 1826.

God in this Jubilee time. He stated that he had need of much help on so many occasions in order to carry out worthily the duty of being a cooperator in the salvation of those souls that the Lord had placed into his care.

**36.** However, on March 19, 1827, he suffered a relapse and was back in bed. His old problem had returned, and once again he had to be subjected to a new series of lancing operations. By the year's end, he was in desperate health. On that occasion, both public and private prayers were offered in all the Churches of Verona. The result was that in February 1828, he began to get up again to celebrate Mass, even though he felt still quite weak.

On March 18<sup>th</sup> of this year, he was back in bed and was again subjected to continuous improvements and relapses, until December of that year, when he began to celebrate Mass once more. In 1829, he was still subjected to some disturbances and every once in a while he would be back in bed, but these were passing and slight disturbances. Fr. Lenotti notes:

*... In the course of this sickness which lasted for more than five years, he underwent very painful interventions, probing, lancing that lacerated his flesh, and each one of them brought about a fever due to the ensuing infections for two or three days following the episode: it is thought that he underwent 300 such cuts, and some of them as long as an extended hand. At long last, all these terrible wounds were healed and he was perfectly cured: however, thereafter he experienced a great weakness in that leg ...*

**37.** In these years he patiently waited until he was able to teach his classes, but in the more serious periods he was in no condition to do so. For these occasions, he was substituted for by Fr. Marani, who as a result taught both his classes. He was often committed to teaching while the others were either eating or catching up on their sleep.<sup>54</sup> However, in 1829, Fr. Marani, too, became ill and he had to suspend his classes for some time; in fact, his malady soon manifested itself to be quite serious. We can just imagine the struggles and challenges that faced the other men: however, the Lord seemed to want to try them, but not to oppress them. In the meantime, St. Gaspar was gradually getting better and then Fr. Marani improved to the extent that he was able to take up his teaching once more.

**38.** In this time, the Lord sent other cooperators to increase the ranks. On October 30, 1828, Fr. Louis Bragato returned. Fr. Gramego made note of this happy event in his House Chronicle:

*... Note well, and be happy! On the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, to our great consolation and for the wondrous designs of Divine Providence, my good Fr. Louis Bragato returned with the resolution not to go away again, until death. [On November 11, 1829, Fr. Francis Benciolini came:] ... a frank and open personality; [In the following year, on September 12] ... after so much waiting to the point of not waiting any more, Fr. Innocent Venturini also came. And then Fr. Vincent Raimondi came on March 17, 1831 ...*

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<sup>54</sup> Fr. Bertoni's Letter to Mother Naudet [71-17]

With the help of these newly arrived our first Confreres were able to dedicate themselves with greater ease to the works of the Priestly Ministry, both at the Stimmate and in other Churches where they were invited.

**And among the works of the Ministry, there is one we have to recall, to which our Fathers were committed from their very first years, but one which they could not conduct with greater exactness. This was a work that was high on Fr. Bertoni's list of priorities, the explanation of Christian Doctrine<sup>55</sup>.** This was taught after lunch on feast days during the summer in the Parish Churches. Since this type of ministry was rather challenging, Fr. Lenotti describes it for us. When the time would arrive for our men to commit themselves to this work, and always gratuitously, there were continuously many requests for their expertise. This would go on in all kinds of weather, with the city divided into sectors, and the men going out to various Churches. Fr. Gaspar wanted his men to be truly experts in this endeavor and that they would all be clear, popular, pleasant and fruitful in their presentations: and they all committed themselves ardently to this work and they accomplished it with genuine dexterity, keeping alive the attention and the interest of the many people who came to hear them.

**39.** Meanwhile, on August 21, 1827, Bishop Liruti died. He had proved to be a most dear friend to Fr. Gaspar, and on every occasion had provided him with real proof of his esteem and affection by entrusting to him delicate and important charges. He often came to consult him and when he had become old, he was no longer able to move about on foot, was would be carried to the room of Fr. Gaspar, who was also quite ill at the same time, to have from him the consolation of conversing with him, whom he held in the concept of holiness.<sup>56</sup>

In him, our early Confreres lost both a father and a Protector: however, the Lord would provide them with another in the person of Bishop Joseph Grasser. He likewise held:

*... for Fr. Bertoni such esteem and such great love that he often came to visit him, consulted him in different matters, most serious problems and would*

<sup>55</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** This aspect of the **Apostolic Mission** holds a major place in Fr. Bertoni's *Original Constitutions*:

**CATECHISM/ CATECHETICS [ cf. the END of the Congregation]**

- matter of Stigmatine study		55		
- Bellarmine's to be learned by heart		51		
- beginning of Stigmatine life of study		51		
- taught by Novices to children		37		
- taught in our schools		170		
- some c. required in Novitiate		37		
- weekly			170	
- sublime Stigmatine ministry	72	163	165	182
- recited and studied		37	51	170
- Roman, matter of special study			51	

<sup>56</sup> Fr. Giaccobbe, *Life of Fr. Gaspar*, p. 295.

*converse at length with him. The love that the Bishop had for Fr. Bertoni he likewise extended to all the members of his Congregation...*<sup>57</sup>.

**40.** In these years Fr. Gaspar was also visited frequently by every quality of person who would come to seek his advice, ask for his counsel in matters of great importance to them.

In 1826, Fr. Anthony Rosmini was visiting Verona, and came to visit Fr. Gaspar to whom he exposed the fundamental ideal that he had for a n Institute of Priests, and he stated that he received from St. Gaspar ‘the most efficacious encouragement to begin it, dissipating every doubt’ that the would-be Founder had pondered<sup>58</sup>. He then sent to Fr. Gaspar for his fuller examination in that same year, his *Plan for the Priests of Charity*, the first rough-draft of his planned Institute, and then in 1832 he sent his *Constitutions*, of this same Congregation before sending them on to Rome for their approbation<sup>59</sup>.

At the same time, Fr. Gaspar encouraged Fr. Nicholas Mazza to begin his Institute of Charity, exhorting him to take in the poor young girls whom Providence had sent to him, and assuring him that his was indeed the work of God.<sup>60</sup>

Fr. Gaspar also assisted Mrs. Campostrini in preparing the Rules for her Institute<sup>61</sup>, while at the same time, he was in contact with Count Cavanis who was struggling to obtain from the Government the approval of the Congregation he had founded.

**41.** But beyond all other comparison, much greater was his commitment to the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family, founded by Leopoldina Naudet: he assisted her continuously in preparing her Constitutions and in the challenge of obtaining the approbation of her Institute<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>57</sup> Fr. Lenotti, *Life of Fr. Gaspar*.

<sup>58</sup> cf. Epistolario-Rosmini. Vol. 13, p. 248.

<sup>59</sup> Later, Fr. Rosmini came often to the Stimmate, and in the year 1833 he actually wrote ‘a little work’ in the room of Fr. Gramego [cf. *Memorie* of Fr. Cainer].

<sup>60</sup> Fr. Mazza founded his Institute for Girls in 1828, and within 2 years he had 300 young girls as his responsibility.

<sup>61</sup> Sommacompagna Manuscripts.

<sup>62</sup> It would be necessary to read his letters written in this time to grasp the enormous difficulties encountered before obtaining the approbation of a religious institute by the civil authorities. The overriding concern of the Imperial Government was the dependence of these Institutes on the Holy See. Once again Fr. Gaspar had stated that Mrs., Campostrini had presented her project after having obtained secretly from a person of the government an extract of its decrees and laws of His Majesty, and thus all kinds of bothersome and really difficult questions were posed. Following all this there was asked also further information and it did seem that the matter was proceeding well: the undertaking was not only well received by the Sovereign, but by his personal order it was also promoted by the Tribunals. And from day to day, they were expecting the Decree of Approbation. However, and this part is not clear, there was suddenly imposed a certain silence. The approval of the Emperor himself showed that it was powerless. Count Cavanis of Venice had 5 or 6 decrees of the Emperor for his Congregation and even with all this, the Government over-turned everything.

And it is a marvelous thing to see from the letters of Fr. Bertoni just how much at heart he had for the good end result for the negotiations in behalf of that Institute which Mother Naudet stated was also the work of Fr. Bertoni. He was carrying on all this even in the midst of his own strong sufferings and various surgical interventions. He continued to direct her and to hurry the work along so that what had been undertaken might come to completion. And this was so also in the year 1830 when Mother Leopoldina would only have a few more years of life left to her.

As she did not yet have a house of her own and not being able to obtain the government's approval, Fr. Gaspar went a step further in helping her with an official document, dated April 19, 1830, he granted her the perpetual use of St. Teresa's Convent, on the condition that it be used to a boarding school and tuition-free classes<sup>63</sup> for the poor girls and that the Institute might be approved by 1833, by both civil and ecclesiastical authorities. If the Institute had not been approved by that time, or if after it, the Community should be suppressed, or would cease operations for any other reason, then the use of the property would cease, which would be con-validated with the ownership, which remained always with Fr. Bertoni and his heirs and successors.

He almost seemed to be prophetic in making such provisions, for this is precisely what happened. Mother Naudet's Institute was approved by the Government on May 5, 1833 and by the Church on October 20<sup>th</sup> of that same year: she died less than a year later, August 17, 1834.

**42.** Let us come now to speak of the efforts that Fr. Bertoni brought forward for his own Congregation. On October 24, 1826, Charles Fedelini entered among our Confreres, as a young lad of only 16. He had already been solemnly vested as a cleric by the Episcopal Vicar, Monsignor Dionisi. Two years later, that is, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1828, a little bit too early in the morning, there came with a great and good will, the Cleric Louis Biadego<sup>64</sup>.

These were the first hopes for the future of the Congregation and the saintly Founder took their intellectual and moral formation uppermost in his own heart.

After they had finished the high school courses, he sent them to classes in the seminary for the study of Philosophy and Theology. However, he saw to it that they were assisted also in the house in their studies: he wanted them to go over their

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Mother Naudet for her Congregation already had the Emperor's support. In 1828, Fr. Gaspar wrote for her a formula of an official Petition which was first signed by the Episcopal Vicar and then presented to the Government, but it was rejected. Once the new Ordinary appeared, he was not accepted by the Government, and the trials returned. With patience, prayer, with the support of influential persons, finally in 1833, the much yearned for approbation finally arrived.

<sup>63</sup> Mother Leopoldina had opened up the Convent of St. Teresa's in 1817. On March 8, 1831 she bought the Monastery of St. Dominic and in that same year she began to live there [cf. Cavattoni Manuscripts: Communal Library of Verona].

<sup>64</sup> Fr. Gramego's Chronicle: young Biadego had entered the Stimmate without saying anything to his family, leaving home about 4:00 a.m. His father on that very day wrote him a very beautiful letter which began with these words: 'My most beloved son, you have done as the Gospel wishes, and therefore, I pardon you that!'

lessons that they would cover that day in school before-hand, so that they might be able to understand them better. Each day, before they left for class, he wanted them to recite their lessons for that day to him, or to some other Priest designated for this. He reserved to himself to listen and to go over the lessons in philosophy. For all that assistance and for the advancement that they manifested, they were proposed as models to the other students, and even on very rare occasions, they were exonerated from under-going the exams<sup>65</sup>.

For the advantage of his own young students and also for the Priests of the community, as well as for his future disciples and sons, Fr. Gaspar thought of completing the construction, and also of setting up a Library. He therefore chose the two largest and most comfortable places in the center of the House and without sparing expenses, he provided for these thousands of volumes of the better works and the more accredited authors and rare editions<sup>66</sup>. For this purpose he made use of the good talents in this regard of Fr. Modesto Cainer. Under the direction of Fr. Bertoni, Fr. Modesto was made to trudge about in quest through the libraries and book-stores and book-stalls, and by writing and searching out even in distant cities he had the great merit of having put together an excellent library at the Stimate<sup>67</sup>.

**43.** In the meantime, on April 20, 1834 there entered the young man, **John Baptist Lenotti**, who was almost 17 years of age. He had been a former student at the Stimate: and on May 8<sup>th</sup>, he had been vested by the Episcopal Vicar, Monsignor Louis Castori. On July 24<sup>th</sup> of that same year, there came to join them as well the young lad, Louis Ferrari, who was not yet 14 years, a genuine 'little dove', as Fr. Gramego called him in his House Chronicle: he, too, would be vested in the clerical garb on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January of the following year. St. Gaspar himself took great care in the formation of these two tender sons of his, as he had with the earlier two. And having by now almost completed the Library, and in the time that remained over and above all this, he would have them read some work which would serve them to complete the studies they were following in School. He had them read and re-read Sacred Scripture with the commentaries of various authors, such as Petavius' *Dogma*, Baronius' *Annals*, St. Alphonsus; *Moral* and his *Apostolic Man*, the Decree of Gratianus, and the *Decretals* and the *Canonical Institutions* of Devoti. He assigned other particular studies of Gregorian Chant, Liturgy, Sacred Eloquence, or of other matters in conformity with the harmony of each one.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, *Life of Fr. Gaspar*, p. 123.

<sup>66</sup> Fr. Bertoni wrote to Fr. Lenotti: **I spent a great deal of money in order to set up this library which makes the value of the books increase in the book stores of Verona; and one could believe this to be true of other cities as well** – as in Padua where he made substantial acquisitions. For example, for the edition of Baronius [Mansi edition] he spent 400 Lira: and for the books ordered at Padua, on two accounts alone, he paid 534 Lira.

<sup>67</sup> Fr. Gramego's Chronicle. These books came from the Libraries of suppressed Religious Orders: hence, in 1833, St. Gaspar asked the Holy See for the permission to keep them, and to obtain others whenever the occasion would present itself. This permission was granted.

<sup>68</sup> This is all from Fr. Lenotti's Official Report on the Studies. Furthermore, St. Gaspar wanted each day that the young students would commit at least 10 minutes every day to the exercises in Greek, Hebrew and French, as well as an exercise in the pure Italian Tuscan. They would be thus formed in the classical authors of the golden age of our literature.



And he wanted, in so far as this would be possible, that such studies also be continued by the Priests, in those bits of time that had been conceded to them, in order to prepare themselves even better to accomplish as great a good as would be possible in their service of the Church.

Speaking of **the importance of study in a Religious Institute that is dedicated to teaching**, he used to say that **after charity and the virtues, one's studies are the principal support**<sup>69</sup> of this building, and **that ignorance is the first germ of its corruption ...**<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> cf. **Part IV**, of his *Original Constitutions*. The ideal permeates throughout:

KNOWLEDGE [cf. LEARNING; TECHNICAL; THEOLOGICAL; WISDOM; STUDY]

- to know how to administer to the dying	291		
- know the practice of the Early Church	252		
- <b>MORE THAN ORDINARY</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>159</b>
- acquired with alacrity	62	125	
- acquired by the Lord	65	127	
- regarding faith, customs		49	
- where to find it		54	
- two-fold theological	50		
- Christ Crucified		51	
- moral purpose	167		
- lack of learning ability, an impediment		18	
- not to precede piety	127		
- <b>PROGRESS</b>	<b>49, f.</b>		
- required of teachers	175		
- required by Postulants	31		
- in Postulants	31		
- sign of Jesus' disciples	187		
- of the affections of the soul	220		
- criteria for the apostolate		288	
- how one should respond		276	
- pf the End, to avoid scandal	286		
- of the perfection of the Apostles		272	
- of one's own responsibility	309		
- of the superior's will	142		
- decree of moderating it		122, f.	
- of necessary matters	124		
- of defects outside of Confession		47	111
- of one's thinking to leave		308	
- to communicate edifying matters	258		
- to know good that is good	259		
- passive, of candidates	29		
- to know how to treat guests	245		
- practices known to the Early Church	252		

<sup>70</sup> Letter to Mother Naudet [69-11].

Above all he sought to instill into his sons the sentiments of sincere attachment to the Holy Church and to her august Head, the Roman Pontiff, and to keep far from them every doctrine that would smack of novelty. This was the ultimate reason that induced him to break off the close friendship that he had conserved for so many years with the celebrated philosopher, Fr. Anthony Rosmini. Since Fr. Anthony one day had manifested to St. Gaspar certain new ideas of his regarding the Holy Church, and the election of her Shepherds by popular ballot<sup>71</sup>, and showing himself decided to publish his ideas<sup>72</sup>, the saint manifested to his penitent his desire of not wanting to see him any more among his sons. When the philosopher eventually departed, St. Gaspar gathered his companions in his room, and gave them an exhortation on their **obsequious** and perfect submission, repeating his well known saying in his own Veronese dialect: *Be humble, be humble: like the little creatures that seek their own nooks and crannies!*

**44.** In these years there also came to the Stimmate also two Coadjutor Brother candidates to assist Brother Paul. Without mentioning also those who only stayed for a few months, we ought to speak here of Brother Louis DalForno, who remained in the Congregation for two full years, from 1827 until 1829. He proved to be of great assistance in the time of the saintly Founder's illness.

On June 9<sup>th</sup>, one month after Brother DalForno's departure, Francis Solari entered. In 1831, Louis Zocca came – then, on November 11<sup>th</sup>, Angelo Casella, and finally, in 1834, Paul Solari, the brother of Francis already mentioned.

By this time, the Community of the Stimmate presented itself under the aspect of a regular and stable Religious Institute, with its head, Fr. Gaspar, with its obedient and hard-working members, with the young hopefuls destined one day to continue the work begun by their elders. 'The bond of the Congregation [as Fr. Bragato later described those days] was charity, that every occupation and fatigue was shouldered with a kind of spiritual sweetness, and its foundation rock was a life perfectly in common, which was regulated by a perfect obedience in everything.' They did not yet pronounce the public religious vows because they did not form a recognized Community, but each one made his vows privately and renewed them from time to time with the consent of Fr. Gaspar<sup>73</sup>.

**45.** They did not yet have a written constitution, but their rule of life was the Founder's example. Fr. Zara would write in his Chronicle:

*... As for the virtue and the perfection that there were there, this is still on the lips of all who knew them, and the sweet odor of their holy life still exudes strongly and remains most pleasing. The example of the Founder and the*

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<sup>71</sup> Fr. Paul Gradinati's testimony in the Diocesan Process of Beatification.

<sup>72</sup> From the oral tradition circulating in the Congregation, it results that St. Gaspar broke off the friendship with Fr. Rosmini because the latter wished to publish his little work, *The Five Wounds of the Church*. This presumably was composed in a little village in the Province of Padova. This decision of St. Gaspar made such an impression on Fr. Rosmini that he delayed its publication for many years. It was later rejected by the official Church.

<sup>73</sup> This is what has been garnered from some of the notes in the private spiritual diary of Fr. Bragato. He, for example, renewed his vows each month.

*observance of his every word and counsel served for them for their every rule and constitution. And so, even though they did not have the name, they lived nonetheless the regular discipline in so strict a manner, that the world, which is so curious and sagacious in spying and in finding defects in such persons, could do nothing more than point out that at least in their mortifications, they were somewhat excessive and that the scraps they would eat were very poor fare indeed, and they were rather coarse and neglected even in their manner of dressing. And yet, who would believe it? In such discomfort and voluntary poverty they were so joyful and content that it was like an Easter morning just to see them: they showed themselves ready to sustain as though it were nothing or that they suffered nothing, any heavy duty and fatigue, and in handling every matter even the most arduous and displeasing and against what would seem to be their own inner wishes, that would be imposed on them by their Superior ...*

And speaking of the austerity of the life of our first Confreres in that time, Fr. Zara continues:

*... Such indeed was the opinion of them, as being so abstemious and mortified. This was then on the lips of all so that this abstinence of theirs became proverbial. Let what Brother Zanoli narrated to me suffice: that they had a bit of stale bread, some cheese that was somewhat gone by and rancid that could never be found in the market, cut for each one by such portions that they seemed to be about the size of dice, and they thought of this as a great meal. Let it suffice to say that they looked on this as a delicacy [as Fr. Marani told me one time]. A bit of salad that was given to him while he was ill and without appetite – was more or less the portion that each received...*

There were many who would say that Fr. Bertoni was exaggerated in his rigor. But how would he respond? ***'This can never be excessive at the beginnings of an Institute, that which will be mitigated over time and the changing needs.'***

And we do know that later he himself mitigated this excessive rigor, and ordered that each one should have a treatment that would be more in accord with a just median position between abundance and real need. Even Fr. Giaccobbe stated in the Diocesan Process that even from these years Bishop Joseph Grassler gave to St. Gaspar the obedience of tempering somewhat that earlier rigor, and he immediately obeyed.

**46.** The 'delight of the nascent Congregation' was Fr. Gramego with his good humor, as he consoled the confreres in the midst of the restrictions of their penitential life. And when, for example, he was at table with those small pieces of cheese noted just above, he with a facetious air about him, would roll the pieces of cheese as though he were playing dice, while saying as the old game required: *Two! Six!* He would thus season their modest fare with his innocent joy as that austere scene not much given to hilarity!

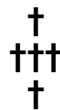
So, all were content and willingly submitted themselves to that tenor of life; indeed, they found in it their delight in mortifying themselves even more than which their life in common together brought them. It was the example of their father Founder, the love,

the veneration that they had for him that so animated them. They were obedient to him [as one writer of that time stated]:

... 'in everything, even the smallest matter, much like children, in a life that was among the more laborious and mortified, even in the midst of abundance, they lived so much like a **family**. How well known was the mortified way of life of the Priests of the Stimmate, with indeed its long and unforced persistence – and it is equally well known that in their perpetual Superior, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, and in the manner of their regimen they found broad agreement in their hearts, in consenting to their experiencing their discomfort, which could not have been faked for such a long time: and they thus give visible and vivid testimony of themselves in those truths that are read of those ancient Religious Communities in the Ecclesiastical Writers ...

**47.** During this time, Fr. Gaspar completed also the work on the bell tower, and he had the bells fused for it: they were set up on June 20, 1833, and then a second time on September 20<sup>th</sup>, because they were not in perfect harmony. They were blessed on September 24<sup>th</sup> and put into place the last days of the same month. For the Vigil of St. Francis they were used for the first time, resounding with their solemn toll. Fr. Gramego wrote this in his House Chronicle:

*... October 3<sup>rd</sup>. Note, and one that is beautiful, and a most beautiful one at that. For the First Vespers, i.e., at 3:00 p.m., of St. Francis of Assisi, we have rung the bells for the first time. They provided an excellent concert of 6 bells, with a lafa tone, composed of the finest metals, i.e., with strains of rosetta, all with the soldering of St. mark and purged in a second instance, and most fine English materials ... Long live Joseph, and long live Mary! The cost from the metals, the lumber for the casing, and for the supports, the metal works and the tongues, and the labor, was 1050... **For the one fearing God there is nothing to fear!***



## Chapter 4

### The Beginning of the Works

#### [1834-1842]

**48.** Meanwhile, in 1832, Fr. Biadego was ordained a priest, and in 1834 so was Charles Fedelini. The number of workers increased and great was the work accomplished by them. After school hours, they were dedicated to the Confessional, to preaching: however, Fr. Gaspar still was not content with all this. As he personally from the early years of his priesthood was applied ardently to the study of the sacred and profane branches of knowledge, so that he would one day be an even more worthy instrument in the hands of God and of Superiors, being ready to assist the Church **in every sort of ministry entrusted to him**<sup>74</sup>, he thus wanted that his sons would do the same. However, he also kept in mind their ability and nature, serving himself as their teacher and guide, he would apply to each that type of study to which each felt himself the more greatly inclined, and in which each succeeded better. His intention was that the Institute founded by him might always have men ready to exercise **any kind of ministries compatible** with the duties of religious life, of which the Bishops, the Shepherds of the Church might have need.

And there was no delay in the occasion arising that permitted him to give an initial realization of this project of his. Bishop Joseph Grasser a teacher for the seminary and he asked Fr. Gaspar for help: and the saint sent Fr. Raimondi who for many years had taught Church History and Dogmatic Theology there.

**49.** And he offered another one of his men around this time to the Bishop for a ministry that was totally extraordinary: we are referring to Fr. Bragato. There had come to Fr. Grasser an order in 1835 to choose a Confessor for Her Majesty the Empress: the Bishop cast his glance toward Fr. Bragato and he asked his services of Fr. Bertoni, who did not know how to day 'no' to his Bishop. Fr. Gramego noted the fact:

*... July 6<sup>th</sup>, the Octave of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. Today there departed from Verona, but not from us, my old and dear friend, Fr. Louis Bragato. He has gone to the city of Vienna, being called there to be the Confessor and the Spiritual Director of the Empress and also to assist in some other spiritual endeavor. But... What is this? That poor little priest of the Stimate being assigned to the Royal Court of Vienna? What is this? Let us bow down our heads and adore the imperscrutable judgments of God. May this God Who has been so good to us, give us the grace of sending us also others, but good, healthy and worthy, otherwise what will we do with this society of poor men which remains to us?*

Surely it was a displeasure also for Fr. Gaspar to separate himself from this beloved son, and he sacrificed him only on the insistence of His Excellency, the Bishop. Perhaps he also could foresee the great advantages that would come to the Congregation as a result. Whenever we think of the moral support that Fr. Bragato

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<sup>74</sup> Fr. Bertoni codified this opening to *any ministry of the Word of God whatsoever*: **CF # 163.**

offered to our Congregation in 1855 in order to obtain for it the Imperial Government's approval and the Decree of Praise from the Church. And again, later, he brought moral support that he obtained for it in the time of struggle with the Royal Government we have to conclude that his going to Vienna proved to be a benevolent disposition of the Divine Providence.

Furthermore, also for Fr. Bragato himself this proved to be a sorrowful detachment because at the Stimate he left his heart behind. Even though he was far away bodily, he always retained a great attachment for his old confreres and for the little Congregation. And it was for him a festival whenever he would pass through Verona he would be able also for a brief time put on with them their habit and to sit down at the poor meals they shared. And for their part, his former companions loved him always with a great affection, and always looked on him as one of their Confreres. And in 1871, the Illrd General Chapter, unanimously decided to confer upon him the Grade of ***Apostolic Missionary***.

**50.** Even after Fr. Bragato's departure, eleven Priests remained at the Stimate, and Fr. Gaspar was thinking of extending their field of activity. As a result, in 1836, in response to the invitation of Father Martinelli, the Pastor of St. Stephen's, he thought of sending someone to work in that Parish, making more use of the House of the Dereletti, already left to him in Fr. Galvani's will. We have already seen that at Fr. Galvani's death, that House had been occupied by a pious Institute of young orphan girls that had begun in 1816, by a Mrs. Anna Cavalieri: following this, the group had received many means of support with which they were able to purchase the Monastery of the Magdelines. Therefore, in 1836, Fr. Bertoni began to send Fr. Marani there to conduct the Oratory and to hear Confessions. He would bring with him each evening Brother Paul and he would spend the night there, and having celebrated Mass each morning in the Parish Church, he would return in the morning to the Stimate in order to attend to school. The Oratory in those first years was held in the Parish Church, but in 1839 as this had been threatened with some danger, it was closed for a period of time: on that occasion, there was restored the little Church dedicated to St. Mary of the Lily, and the Oratory was transported there, where from then on, it remained.

Fr. Marani's very varied activity at the Dereletti was described by St. Gaspar in a letter he wrote to Fr. Bragato, on December 1, 1837:

**... During the day, Fr. Marani is at the Stimate, while evenings and days free from school he is at the Dereletti. At the Stimate, he teaches school and studies a while in the library for his preaching. At the Dereletti, on Saturday evenings and on Sundays, he hears many confessions and with great fruit resulting in that district. On the other evenings, he conducts a Moral Conference with 10, or 12 Priests, in the style of our conferences in days gone by with Fr. Guerrieri at St. Firmus'. He explains and defines, as the occasion demands [and this is every day], the most intricate cases, and the Lord has given him the light, prudence and openness that are not common. On Thursdays, he examines, as is the custom, the Seminarians, and after this, he receives penitents of every type and at any hour, even interrupting his dinner and supper, putting off his own repose. In like manner, on feast days he**

**hears Confessions in the choir area of St. Stephens's. even to the time of being able to come and to give the Instruction at St. Sebastian's, which continues as long as the Lord might see fit ...**

And the work would increase ever more, since a year later, it was judged necessary to give him a helper in the person of Fr. Benciolini: but, of this we will speak below.

**51.** Profiting here of the occasion provided by mentioning what was going on at St. Sebastian's, we will speak of a fact that took place in Verona around this time, that proved to be of great interest to our Congregation.

The Municipal authorities of Verona in the year 1836 invited the Jesuit Fathers to return to the City [after having previously obtained the permission of the Government]: two of their Fathers were sent by their Superiors, Fathers Ferrari and Stoeger, with the intention of establishing there the Novitiate and a College. Fr. Bertoni was most happy at this. Indeed, as the two Fathers encountered at the beginning some resistance and difficulties of every kind. The fear was that they would withdraw without ever having concluded anything.

So, Fr. Bertoni presented himself to them and he offered to them for their needs his House of the Stimmat, beseeching them to accept it and to continue on with the schools he had opened, promising to provide even for their support.<sup>75</sup> And if this offer did not suffice for them to open their Novitiate, he also offered for this purpose his other two locales of his property, from which they could choose which might prove to be the more suitable for their purposes: one of these places [the Dereletti], could hold also immediately in some comfort in one part only, about 40 persons, which he had already set up with other purposes in mind. The other place [the ancient Monastery of the Benedictines], was large, quite beautiful, set up in the style of religious, capable of being adapted with discreet expenditure for our own use. It had a most ample garden the rent from which Fr. Bertoni received 100 tallers annually, and it was in an excellent position.<sup>76</sup> Fr. Stoeger also went to visit these two localities and he was most content with them.

The Jesuit Fathers therefore responded to Fr. Gaspar stating that he should continue the school which he and his companions had maintained for so many years to the great advantage of the youth and to the great satisfaction of the citizenry: as far as their Novitiate was concerned, if they could not have in some other manner found a solution for their needs, they would have willingly accepted one of the three houses that he had offered to them. However, in the time that followed, they obtained for their Novitiate St. Anthony's Convent. For their College, they returned to St. Sebastian's Church and School. They remained forever most grateful to Fr. Bertoni for his kind gesture, and they preserved the memory of his generosity in their regard, in their Annals of the Company, and in their History of the House of Novitiate of Verona.

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<sup>75</sup> From the Annals of the Comp[any] of Jesus: 1837.

<sup>76</sup> A Letter of Fr. Ferrari to his Father General. March 21, 1837.

**52.** In this last source mentioned here, we can find a most precious testimony of the good that our Fathers accomplished, especially among the youth with their schools:

*... These Priests instruct, tuition-free, the youth in letters, taking occasion of their presence to form them in the practice of virtue. And they achieve all this with such success that all those who frequent their House and Church are ordinarily considered to be the best among their peers, and they are this in reality; and the young who graduate from their school so well educated are by far superior to others in their piety and knowledge ... 77*

The testimonies of other authoritative individuals that have come down to us, regarding our school at the Stimate, are not much different from the above. For example, Fr. Bartholomew Sorio, Oratorian of Verona has left in writing:

*... Fr. Gaspar taught there in such a manner as to compete with the most sublime teachers: and every other matter was taught there by his colleagues in an excellent manner, as though the school were an authentic academy of learned men. And this is difficult to accomplish in a city where Fr. Gaspar did this at his own expense with an excellent result. There is maintained there a scholastic discipline to the level that it might serve as a perfect model for any institution of education ... 78*

**53.** Despite all the good that he accomplished there, did not spare him the contradiction, censure, calumnies of those of ill will. Already in the previous years it was said that Fr. Gaspar sought to damage, to suffocate others' schools. He wrote about this to Mother Naudet:

*... We can only reject the criticism, as we know that all the classes of the area are full. and yet it is necessary to pray and always to use a certain dexterity, with much patience and humility, because it will always be **true that those who live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution** ...*

These contradictions did not cease with the passing of the years. In 1837, Fr. Gaspar wrote to Fr. Bragato saying:

*...I will not speak to you about our other tribulations, which are not few in number, and in my keeping silent about them, I do this so that I will not overly sadden our spirit: **'We even boast of our afflictions! We know that affliction makes for endurance, and endurance for tested virtue, and tested virtue for hope. And this hope will not leave us disappointed, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us ... [Rm 5:3, ff. ]** 79.*

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<sup>77</sup> *History of the House of Novitiate of Verona, 1837.* Fr. Anthony Bresciani, SJ, noted the same in writing to Fr. Marani in 1835: *... their students stand out in the opinion of learned men in the competitive examinations ...*

<sup>78</sup> Official Sheet of Verona. June 1853.

<sup>79</sup> Letter 77-2.



**54.** However, all those of good heart and had zeal for the glory of God and for the good of Religion, esteemed our first Confreres, venerated and loved them We have a proof of this in the splendid witness that right at this time a foreign priest rendered. His name was Fr. Louis Schlor, and he was passing through Verona. He stated:

*...Even though they have clearly chosen as the principal characteristic of their life and activities, their retired way of life and remaining hidden before the eyes of others, yet, nonetheless the clarity of their virtues and the efficacy of their Zeal is such and so manifest that the entire city, both laity and clergy, holds them in such love and veneration as holy priests. Their Superior, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, is a lovable and most honored old man, quite versed in theological matters and especially in the government of souls. He is, so to speak, an oracle for the local citizenry as well as toward visitors. Many come even from distant dioceses in order to have his counsel in theological matters, or in matters of their consciences. Now, this man of such intelligence and piety knows with such gentleness of manner and with such firmness to lead his community that one single spirit animates all of them, one single life is diffused in all, so to speak. If you engage them in conversation on what each one of them thinks, what are the sentiments of his heart, in their exterior conduct, one is a faithful portrait of the other. If you wish to know that it is that makes them outstanding it is their humility, charity, their most affable manner of dealing with people. They live rather poor and mortified lives: their rooms are very simple as is their entire set-up: but, throughout the entire house you will notice such an effort at tidiness that it is a delight to see it. The little Church is a marvel, all restored and always outstanding for its cleanliness: they preach their every week, and they hear many confessions, but only of men. They do not accept gifts of any sort, or of any type whatsoever. There is a detachment that is so evident that it places them in great reverence before all. And truly, I would not know by what more name to give them other than they are the hidden pearl of the Veronese clergy ...* **80**

**55.** But, the time had already arrived for Fr. Gaspar to think of assuring the future of the Congregation. It was for this purpose that he had built the House, had accepted the first students, established the library: it was necessary that there should be set aside a principal capital now for the future support of the Institute. And the occasion presented itself in 1838, when the government put o\up for sale a few properties that had once belonged to religious communities, and they were situated in the Valpantena near Verona. Fr. Gaspar, before taking any step, wished to be sure that he was indeed following the will of God, was still somewhat hesitant: this time, what moved him to decide the matter came from the one he considered his superior, Bishop Grassser. As Fr. Gaspar himself would relate knew better perhaps than anyone else his over-all plan and his intentions to found a Congregation.<sup>81</sup> The Bishop then ordered Fr. Gaspar to purchase those lands, assuring the saint that he had himself thought of obtaining from the Holy See the necessary permissions. And the saintly Founder saw in that order the manifestation of the divine will, in August of that year 1838. So, he purchased the lands for 160,000 Lira. And then fearing that he might have been

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<sup>80</sup> L. Schlor, *The Life of the Veronese Church*, p. 38. This testimony was reported by the scholar, Moroni, in his *Dictionary of Historical and Ecclesiastical Education* - Venice 1839.

<sup>81</sup> Fr. Lenotti, *Life of Fr. Gaspar*.

lacking in the confidence due to the Divine Providence, with a noble letter he offered this property to the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Gregory XVI. This is his letter to the Pope:

**56.**

**Most Blessed Holy Father:**

The least of Your servants, the under-signed Priest, with a few companions has been living a clerical life in common with a few companions for 22 years, and gratuitously serves the Spouse of Jesus Christ, in order to honor in her our common Creator and Savior.

And having found two successive Bishops of this Diocese who did not think this endeavor was useless, took heart after having restored and embellished a Church, and built a suitable Residence. As his age is now declining, he decided to set aside a certain sum of acquisition as a means of support, so that this service might last, and not be interrupted at his death.

Now, the most zealous Bishop exhorted him enthusiastically to purchase a religious property which the treasury put up for sale: with this spirit in mind, therefore, he acquired it for the price of 160,000 Austrian Lira. This purchase is now complete, and he presents this at the feet of the Vicar of Jesus Christ and the successor of Peter and of the Apostles. Now if it should appear to the Holy Spirit and to You, Most Blessed Holy Father, that this land might return to the obsequious service of Christ our Lord, and to the usefulness of His Church, to designate this profane investment which is yours, for that purpose which I have had in mind, I would receive it from Your hands as a gift from Heaven. If the Spirit, and your Prudence should dispose differently, I would also be very happy and blessed in the fact that the Lord and You might render me worthy to accept from my hands a gift, even though somewhat meager, of a bit of financial support that with all confidence I have placed at Your Most Holy Feet: nor would I cease for the service I have undertaken, as this would be for me an argument to trust, even to be able to better and with greater perfection, proceed. The fact that this is my own will, and that of my companions, to spend ourselves all in the service of Our Lord, and of His Church, if He considers me worthy of this.

With this end in mind, I have, with other means also furnished an ecclesiastical Library, in so far as the circumstances of the times demand, and I was able to find some books which because of the dispersion of ecclesiastical goods was ordered, and these were placed at a public sale. I therefore, beseech Your Holiness, to give me permission to keep these with this end in view, or to indicate to me that which in the Lord might be pleasing to You that I make of them for His greater glory. And with all the strength of my faith and devotion, humbly prostrate before Your Beatitude, I kiss your most Holy Feet.

From Verona, on the 9th day of August 1838.

Your most humble, devoted and obedient son,

**Gaspar Bertoni**

It is said that the Holy Father on reading this letter broke into tears out of the tenderness he felt: and from the Sacred Penitentiary, on December 7th of that year, it

was granted to Fr. Bertoni to retain those goods and to use them for the purposes for which he had originally acquired them.

**57.** In this same year of 1838, some zealous priests in Verona conceived the idea of re-launching the languishing devotion toward the Diocesan Patron, St. Zeno, with re-discovering his body and exposing it to public veneration. After having worked at excavating many nights in a row, they arrived in the month of March to the ancient urn which contained the sacred deposit. This was opened on April 20th in the presence of an appointed Commission chosen by Bishop Grasser.

The Bishop himself made the announcement of this in his Pastoral Letter which he addressed to the faithful for the Lent of the following year, 1839, and added:

*... The deliberation has already been taken to place the body in an honored sepulcher, wishing to celebrate a solemnity in his honor ... that the memory of this great saint might long be maintained. The great Festival is assigned for the 25th of this coming August. The ten days preceding will be beautiful and full of holy joy expressed through the decorations which will be put in the Basilica of St. Zeno, for the devotions to be held in his honor and in the Pontifical Masses that the Bishops will celebrate ...*

And indeed, the festive celebrations were both solemn and at the same time devout, which got underway on August 16th.

For the Novena, in addition to the moral discourses preached in the morning by a Capuchin Father, and in the evening by a Jesuit, each day there was a solemn Pontifical Mass, with an extended sermon in honor of the Saint, delivered by the more illustrious Orators of the City. There took part in this the Bishop of Mantua, Bishop G. B. DiBelle'; the Ordinary of Treviso, Bishop Sebastian Soldati; and the Patriarch of Venice, His Eminence, Cardinal Jacopo Monico. Together with Bishop Grasser they pontificated and offered the panegyric honoring the Saint on the four last days of the celebrations. They all also came on that day to the Stimmate, to visit Fr. Gaspar.

Fr. Bertoni himself had been invited among the other well known orators to offer his Discourse in praise of St. Zeno, but he could not excuse himself from this honor. This is how he expressed himself in the Introduction to his sermon:

***...Nor could I, as the least, excuse myself, from this honored charge which was imposed upon me by You ... For if in my entire life lived using my tongue to render to you the fruit of my sparse knowledge, exhorting you to good and perfect actions, in accord with the office to which God has called me, so it is now sweet for me to close my career in serving and in pleasing you in such holy affection and with the praises of our Saint on my lips ... 82***

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<sup>82</sup> The discourse was delivered on August 19<sup>th</sup>, and was later printed by order of Bishop Joseph Grasser. Fr. Bertoni's efforts proved to be pleasing and praised by his contemporaries, who called it a magisterial discourse, worthy of the holy Fathers of the Church. [cf. the Poet, Joseph Spandri]. **[NB:** as came to be known later, Fr. Bertoni was unable to deliver his discourse on his assigned day due to illness. Fr. Marani delivered it in his place].

**58.** St. Gaspar at this time was in very poor health, and he suffered repeated disturbances, to the extent that it was believed he was nearing the end of his life. Because of these difficulties with his health, it was feared that he would be unable to present himself all the way to St. Zeno's basilica for that occasion. In this regard, we can recall that pleasant anecdote that has been handed on to us by our elders. Fr. Lenotti records the incident:

*... Since Fr. Gaspar was supposed to go to St. Zeno's to deliver his Panegyric of this Saint on the occasion of the solemnity of the re-discovery of his body, but finding himself so often in bed, he would say to Brother Paul, who was taking care of him:*

- *'Paul, who will go to St. Zeno's?'*
- *'We will see,' the Brother would reply.*
- *'Paul'..., Fr. Gaspar would reply.*
- *My Lord..., the other would reply.*
- *The Founder would ask: 'Am I going to the cemetery?'*
- *'Surely you will go there on day like everybody else!', was Brother's retort.*
- *Look here at how he responds to me, always honest! – the holy old man would respond, much amused.*

Fr. Lenotti observed that the Founder would repeat this exchange with Brother Paul endless times, also in the presence of all those in the house who enjoyed the story no end. And he repeated it again just a short while before dying, as though he had foreseen the lot which would come to his body. But let us not go ahead of events.

**59.** In the year 1839, Bishop Grasser also died. As we have already noted, he held Fr. Bertoni in supreme veneration, and often came to visit him.<sup>83</sup> As he was dying, he wished to see him one more time. An old account of these events has come down to us:

*... Having received the sacraments with his customary peace and serenity, he welcomed the visits of the two distinct personalities that he most especially wanted to see: Fr. Odescalchi of the Company of Jesus, and Fr. Gaspar Bertoni. Oh! What a great grace, he said to them, looking at them, God has let me see them before dying...*

He died on November 22.

**60.** On the 18th of June that year there came to the Stimmate two young men from Lughezzano to become coadjutor brothers, both at age 27. They were Louis Ferrari and Francis Stevanoni. They came to fill the void left by Louis Zocca, who left in 1834,

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<sup>83</sup> Fr. Lenotti writes: During the year 1838, on the occasion of Pastoral Visit, conducted at the Church of the Stimmate, left this attestation: *'We declare that everything corresponds perfectly to our desire and expectation, and so there only remains for us to praise the zeal of the priests living here for the glory of the Lord and for the advantage of souls, especially for the youth, and to find comfort and advancing every more in the way of the Lord. April 3, 1838.'*

and that left by Angelo Casella, who had passed to a better life on April 3, 1835. He was the first of our Community to go to the great eternity<sup>84</sup>.

Our early Confreres continued to occupy themselves in teaching school and in the other ministries which we have remembered above without losing heart in the many tribulations with which the Lord wished to try them. about this time, Fr. Bertoni wrote to Fr. Bragato, in 1840:

***... Pray much for us as we are always in a sea of tasks, litigations, problems; nonetheless one goes ahead, as always in the dark, we hope to be conducted, by the good Lord, Who guides us into clarity when He chooses..***

**61.** We have a proof that we want to record here of the great good they were accomplishing especially among the youth. The number of those who had enrolled in the Marian Oratory had so increased that it no longer sufficed to gather them in the Church of the Stimmate, and the adjoining Chapel of the Immaculate Conception. As a result, Fr. Gaspar thought of petitioning Rome the faculty to set up another Chapel within the House, precisely in the room above the Oratory of the Immaculate Conception. By his Rescript of June 15, 1841, His Holiness, Pope Gregory XVI remitted to the Bishop of Verona the concession of the requested grace, after having verified the circumstances that had been presented to him.

The new Ordinary who had succeeded Bishop Grasser, was His Excellency Bishop Aurelio Mutti, former Abbot of the Benedictine Order, who had taken possession of the Diocese the year before, 1840: he also, as did his predecessors, was animated with sentiments of benevolence and love toward Fr. Gaspar and his Congregation. Therefore, he very willingly gave the faculty of opening another Chapel with his Decree of September 20th of that same year, 1841. Thus, there was inaugurated a third Oratory above the Domestic Chapel of the Transfiguration, where 30 of the most chosen and fervent among the young men and adult members, who came to constitute the Oratory of the so-called, Elite, or Perfect members. They stood out because of their prayerful demeanor and in their frequenting the Sacraments, in their devotion and piety, and for whom there were instructions and sermons adapted to them and inspiring them to further perfection. **85**

**62.** That Domestic Chapel proved to be very opportune also for another reason. The poor health of the saintly Fr. Bertoni was always getting worse, and the weakness in his legs gradually increased, so much so that it was getting very hard from him to go downstairs to the Church in order to celebrate the Mass. And since this new Chapel was right next to his room, every now and then he was able to celebrate Holy Mass in it. And when he had to remain in bed altogether, he would have the Holy Sacrifice offered there by one of his Priests, and he could hear Mass from his bed, and received there Holy Communion, in which he always found 'his sweet comfort in the midst of his travails and most painful sufferings.' **86**

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<sup>84</sup> Fr. Gramego's Chronicle.

<sup>85</sup> Fr. Lenotti

<sup>86</sup> Fr. Lenotti

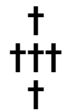
**63.** Here, however, we should not be silent about another commitment to which Fr. Gaspar dedicated himself in those years, i.e., the compilation of his Constitutions and Rules which he wrote for his beloved Congregation. From the beginning he was totally given over to have the rule written on the hearts of his companions, to show us in their conduct a living and speaking rule: but it was also necessary that he might fix these rules in a permanent code that would serve as the norm for his future sons: to this enterprise he applied himself around this time. He attended to this undertaking with the greatest care, as one who realized that he was not writing the dispositions of men, but the will of God.

It is necessary to read the letters that he wrote to Mother Naudet years earlier in order to know what high idea he nurtured for the Rules and Constitutions of a Religious Institute: study, reflection, meditation, seeking out the counsel of others, he wanted all this to be committed in compiling these<sup>87</sup>, but above all prayer. In the end, he maintained, the works of this type are the most principal fruit of prayer.

With these sentiments, he put himself to writing our Constitutions, above all by praying, and by recommending himself to the prayers of others. He wrote to Fr. Bragato on November 5, 1841: **... Pray for us all and for that which I am writing bit by bit, if the Lord should want it, that it might turn to His honor...**

Fr. Marco Bassi noted:

*... Upon these Constitutions, he poured out his every loving care, and severe studies, and long meditations, and assiduous prayer: and with the help of that God before Whom he compiled them, wrote them out, and so worked over them, he ordered them, perfected them, that he might have for them the approval of the most serious theologians and the Decree of Supreme Praise of the reigning Supreme Pontiff. And these make up the most precious heredity that his paternal heart has left us ...*



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<sup>87</sup> He recommended to Mother Naudet to study well not only the concept, but also the expression in order to avoid the necessity of frequent changes which never succeed very well, but rather produce a diminution of esteem for the law and a certain diffidence in carrying them out. [Letter 73-6].

## Chapter 5

### Further Severe Trials

#### [1842-1853]

**64.** We have already hinted several times at the very poor state of the saintly Fr. Gaspar's health. A life-long debility in his legs resulted from the illnesses he so painfully endured in his first years at the Stimate. Therefore, in these years, only rarely was he seen to leave the House, supported always on his cane, since he was also almost continually dedicated to his study, and in receiving persons who flocked to him in considerable numbers to have counsel and comfort from him. All of this contributed even further to render his members more inert. From the year 1842 onward, he was no longer able to leave the house: and even during some years, he did not even leave his room if he was not literally carried. He was condemned to pass his life between the arm chair and his bed.

However, this was not the only trial with which the Lord wished to purify his virtue: the contradictions and struggles that he had encountered in the previous years did not give the slightest hint of diminishing. Indeed, in these latter years of his life these increased due to the evils of the times, and they would increase even more as we will shortly see. And as though all this were not enough, even other more painful trials were unfolding for the saintly Founder and his companions: after having labored so hard and suffered so much for their beloved Congregation, now they saw it little by little becoming less and less and almost entirely disappearing.

On March 12, 1842, after so many years of waiting, Fr. John Baptist Lenotti celebrated his First Mass. However, this was an occurrence that was a two-fold sadness. A few days before this happy event, his beloved study companion, Louis Ferrari died, without ever being able to reach his agonized desire for the Priesthood. In the previous month, Fr. Louis Biadego passed to another life. While their deaths were both holy and edifying, their departures had left a real emptiness in the Community which was already so small. Fr. Gramego records these events:

*... On February 17<sup>th</sup>, my beloved Fr. Biadego died in the kiss of the Lord, at just 34 years of age, repeating with his last breaths 'Jesus and Mary'. Yet, he was full of days, whose memory is held in benediction, leaving us all edified with his holy life and so also with his blessed death...*

*... On March 6<sup>th</sup>, the most patient Angel, Louis Ferrari died, after very long sufferings of so many years; he was with us for eight years, and lived and good and exemplary life, and he left us consoled with a very holy death ...*

**65.** And this deep sadness was only the beginning of the trials. In 1843, after 12 years of living with the community at the Stimate, Fr. Vincent Raimondi left the Congregation. The reason for his leaving, he said, was to spend two or three months at home to restore his health.<sup>88</sup> During that same year, the two blood brothers, and our Coadjutor Brothers Francis and Paul Solari left, after the former spent 12 years in the

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<sup>88</sup> A little later, Fr. Raimondi entered the Company of Jesus. He had taught Church History, and then Dogma for many years in the Seminary.

Congregation, and the latter had spent nine years. In January of the following year 1844, Fr. Modest Cainer died, after four long periods of illnesses, supported with great patience. The little Community tried to cope with all this; and on the other hand:

*... no one else felt the call to give his own name to this Congregation, even though some might have felt so inclined, because Fr. Bertoni's penance, as they said, put fear into their hearts. Some Fathers of the Oratory who were very friendly toward him, had many times jokingly said to him that if he really wanted to see an increase in his Congregation, he would have a place over the door of his house, this slogan and capital letters: 'Here we eat, drink and sleep! And with all this, there would still be more who would not believe it.<sup>89</sup>*

But, Fr. Gaspar did not lose his spirit, nor did he slow down any in his efforts in behalf of the Congregation. Tirelessly, he went on gathering books everywhere he could, ordered from books merchants, dictated rules and discipline, and ruled all things in a manner as though his Institute were teeming with recruits:

*... Such was his hope that he nurtured to succeed in a work which he believed God Himself had inspired him to undertake, that he even came to state that if he knew that for certain that the end of the world would take place tomorrow, he would still today have continued his undertaking. And in order to animate this same confidence in his sons. He would say: Courage! Let us trust in God and let us leave it all up to Him, as He can do all things. In other words, of Fr. Gaspar it can truly be said in truth, that he hoped against hope...<sup>90</sup>*

**66.** It was natural, however, that as the number of Confreres diminished, those remaining were simply unable to sustain all those activities that their zeal had dictated they had thus far maintained. So, in 1843, out of their harsh necessity, they had to come to the conclusion of the closure of the school. Already in these last years, Fr. Gaspar had reached the decision to lessen the class number, because of his own illnesses and those of his companions. For the scholastic year 1842-1843, only five of the usual eight classes were offered, and at the end of that year, also seizing upon the occasion that the Jesuits had opened their own high school at St. Sebastian's, our men withdrew from the teaching mission. This decision was felt with real regret throughout the entire city, because the school at the Stimmat had been held in such very high regard by all. The good that our early Confreres achieved through all these years among the youth, and were still accomplishing. Fr. Lenotti noted:

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<sup>89</sup> Fr. Zara's Chronicle, with annotations from Fr. Gramego's Chronicle.

<sup>90</sup> In 1840, Fr. Benciolini also suffered a serious illness, following which he had to be exonerated from teaching school: also Fr. Biadego in these years was almost always sick. And this is how the distribution of personnel was laid out in 1840: IInd Elementary Classes, Fr. Benciolini; IIInd Elementary, Fr. Venturini; Ist Grammar, Fr. Cartolari; IInd Grammar, Fr. Gramego; IIIInd Grammar, Fr. Brugnoli; IVth Grammar, Fr. Marani; Ist Humanities, Fr. Gaspar. Fr. Raimondi taught in the Seminary. Fr. Fedelini substituted for Fr. Bertoni during his illnesses.



*...From Fr. Bertoni's school, many students came forward, excellent in their life of piety and learning. Many went on to an ecclesiastical vocation, and not a few among them became Pastors of souls. Many went on to religious life, and some of them had even ventured forward to the America, some to Chile, as missionaries: many other young men became excellent fathers of families and remained distinguished in their Christian piety and in the good government of their own homes ...*<sup>91</sup>

**67.** With the closing of the school, more time remained available for our first Confreres, and they achieved the opportunity to commit themselves to other aspects of the priestly ministry. First of all, during this time, some began to live permanently at the House of the *Dereletti*, in order to attend to the spiritual assistance of that population. Already from the year 1840, their work there had much increased, especially for Saturday evenings. There was assigned there as the companion of Fr. Marani, Fr. Francis Benciolini, who assisted him in the hearing of Confessions and in conducting the Marian Oratory. Once the school was closed, they remained in that dwelling together with Brother Paul Zanolì. Immediately, Fr. Benciolini dedicated himself to the good of the youth through the Sunday and Feast Day Oratory and by teaching Catechism, which he did each night for those children preparing themselves for Confirmation or for their First Holy Communion.

**68.** The other Fathers who remained at the Stimate were able to apply themselves with greater commitment to the exercise of the sacred Ministry, both in their own Church, and in others to which they were invited.

In the Church of the Stimate, in addition to the ordinary care of offering the morning Mass, and being available for confessions every evening [and especially on the vigils of the Feasts], each Friday they continued the Devotion for a Good Death, in honor of the Passion of Our Lord. For this evening service, whenever it was possible for him to manage on his feet to come to the Church. Many of the faithful came to hear him, and even persons of high social status. Bishop Mutti came sometimes, as did the Marquis di Canossa, Fr. Bresciani, Fr. Nicholas Mazza, and others<sup>92</sup>. He had also petitioned for, and had received, the Rescript for a Plenary Indulgence to be gained on four Friday's of the year, and 300 days indulgence on the other Fridays for those of the faithful who attended this devout service.

On Sundays, the Oratory was conducted for the youth, and the large numbers were distributed [as we have already noted] in the Church, in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception and in that Domestic Chapel of the transfiguration: furthermore, in a special place the most young among them would be gathered. To

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<sup>91</sup> These comments were confirmed by other authoritative testimonies, contained now in the Diocesan Process for the Introduction of the Cause of Beatification of Fr. Bertoni. The words of Cardinal di Canossa [once a student there] are particularly noteworthy. cf. the *Positio super Introductione Causae* - the Catalogue of Documents, pp. 31, 39.

<sup>92</sup> This testimony is found in the Diocesan Process of Fr. Bertoni's Beatification – from the witness of Biondani Fortunato.

these the lessons were on learning their prayers, and those matters necessary for eternal salvation.<sup>93</sup>

In the course of the year, there would be celebrated with particular devotion the Feasts of the Holy Espousals [January 23<sup>rd</sup>], the Feast of the Stigmata [September 17<sup>th</sup>] and the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi [October 4<sup>th</sup>]. On these days, a Plenary Indulgence could be obtained for those faithful who visited the Church.<sup>94</sup>

There was also celebrated the Feast of St. Aloysius Gonzaga for the youth. For this also, a Plenary Indulgence could be obtained for all the faithful who would visit the Church.<sup>95</sup> And around this time there began to be celebrated with some solemnity the Feast of the Five Wounds of Our Lord in Lent. Fr. Fedelini notes in his Chronicle:

*...In the year 1845, the Feast of the Five Wounds was observed a bit more solemnly than usual, with the hope of doing even more, with the restored Church. The sermon was dedicated, for the most part, on the Five Wounds. Let God's Will be done, Let God's will be done!...*

Also, with regard to the devotion to the Passion, we know that in 1844, Fr. Bertoni had petitioned the Holy See for a Plenary Indulgence for all the Fridays of the year: this, however, was not granted, but there was only confirmed for him the indulgences he had previously requested.

**69.** Our Fathers continued to occupy themselves in **preaching** everywhere they were invited. They were especially involved in the teaching of **Catechism**, all the Sundays' especially in the summer months. Fr. Bertoni remained available to any who would come to consult him, and there was a continuous pilgrimage to the House to receive light and counsel from him: and these pilgrims were not only from the city and the diocese, but also visitors passing through Verona who would ask for the grace to speak with him. Among others, there is recalled at this time the Emperor Ferdinand, and in addition to receiving his homage, he also recommended himself to the saint's prayers.

Every once in a while he would **preach still a few Retreats to Priests and Seminarians, who would come to the Stimate for a few days**. Fr. Lenotti records this:

*... It was beautiful to hear him also in the midst of his many sufferings and in great discomfort, so sick that he was sometimes unable even to move about. It was also beautiful and edifying to hear him in giving Retreats to Seminarians who at times would sit around him and making around him a kind of crown – or, he would be seated at his desk, or even stretched out on his bed, while he gave them a commitment and a spirit that was always alive, always strong ...*

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<sup>93</sup> In the afternoons, once Catechism was over, the young men of the Oratory would go outside the city to participate in sports and games.

<sup>94</sup> These indulgences and the other noted above, were generally granted for a seven year period, that could then be renewed at the end of this period.

<sup>95</sup> On the feast of St. Aloysius, in addition to the panegyric that would be delivered, there would be an 'academy' [a kind of talent show] held after lunch, made up of original poems and songs, delivered by the gifted young members of the Oratory, honoring the Saint [Fr. Lenotti].

It was also on the occasion of the closing of the School that Fr. Bertoni sent another teacher to the Seminary, to take Fr. Raimondi's place who had left the Congregation. This was Fr. Fedelini who taught Moral Theology there for many years, acquiring in the process in good reputation as a learned man in Verona, and also beyond, as we will see later. And there was also need from time to time to send a teacher to the Seminary as a temporary substitute, or where it would be occasionally necessary to send a priest to fill in for a Pastor. Fr. Bertoni was always ready to send men even when this would prove physically quite taxing.<sup>96</sup>

**70.** In these years, the Founder's companions exerted gentle pressure on him so that he might seek the Approbation of the Congregation, for which he had already written the Constitutions. However, for his own reasons, Fr. Bertoni never went along with the suggestion. To think that he would refuse their request solely because of the immense difficulties that he would have to undergo in so doing, we do hold this to be the reason for his refusal. He always manifested this great fortitude of spirit in all other works that he took up for the glory of God. Nor can we believe that his reason was that he did not care to have Approbation, especially that from the ecclesiastical authorities, as he was deeply convinced that an 'Apostolic Benediction that establish the works of God and makes them experience increase and perpetuate them in the Church.'<sup>97</sup>

Furthermore it is known that Fr. Gaspar did indeed desire the Approbation of his Institute, as Fr. Marani informs us. For this latter, Fr. Bertoni never initiated the petition *because of his sublime humility*. And Fr. Fedelini, too, remembered that the holy Founder when he would be exhorted to seek the approbation, he would respond with his customary humility and gentles that *he was not of the stature to found a religious community*.

However, it might also be that he could foresee the real danger to which the Community would be exposed if indeed it had been approved, and so he would await seeking approval for a better time. As facts would prove, the fact that he had not advanced the thorny negotiations for approval, within a few years would prove providential. In 1867, if the Community had been canonically approved and recognized, it would have been despoiled of whatever it owned. And since the group would still be in a rather precarious situation, its total existence would have been threatened.

**71.** On June 12, 1846, Bishop Mutti conducted the Pastoral Visit to the Church of the Stimate<sup>98</sup>. At the completion of this, His Excellency left an attestation which showed not only his full satisfaction, but also his personal sentiments of benevolence that inspired him towards Fr. Gaspar and his companions. His document reads in part:

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<sup>96</sup> This is Fr. Marani's comment. Fr. Marani himself during this time continued as Scrutineer, the examiner of the vocations at the Seminary – and Fr. Bertoni was given the special task by the Bishop to review books that might be suspect.

<sup>97</sup> Letter to Naudet, 72-12.

<sup>98</sup> In preparation for this, On June 9<sup>th</sup> there were erected the stations of the Cross – and for this ceremony, Fr. Marani was delegated.

*... We have experienced the contentment of finding everything even superior to our expectations ... and this is the merit of the Proprietor, Reverend Fr. Gaspar Bertoni,, and of those who with him, offer themselves for the greater glory of God and the sanctification of souls...*

As Fr. Lenotti records, Bishop Mutti, like his predecessors, often came to the Stimate, to visit and consult with Fr. Gaspar. In fact, on Friday evenings, when he could, he would come to listen to his sermons in the Church of the Stimate, as we have already recorded.

Let us come now, though, to further trials with which the Lord in these years chose to purify the virtues of Fr. Gaspar and of his companions.

**72.** Once more, in 1846, we learn of another death from Fr. Gramego's moving Chronicle:

*... July 3<sup>rd</sup>. After five days of a very difficult and dangerous illness, that is, cephalitis, Reverend Father Francis Cartolari died in the embrace of the Lord, like an angel. Our sorrow is so great, that I do not know how to express it. He has left behind the odor of holiness and virtue that I would need a notebook to include it all. He was only 51, almost 52. May Your will be done... this is all I can say ...*

We have already recalled what happened at the death of this loved and gentle Confrere, one who was so zealous for the good of this Congregation, as Fr. Lenotti described him. Out of the affection that he had for the Institute, he left his considerable inheritance that was coming to him to Fr. Gaspar Bertoni. In his fear that the saintly Founder would not accept it, he subordinately left it all to the other three Priests who were his companions, i.e., Fr. Gramego, Fr. Brugnoli and Fr. Benciolini. The reaction in community to all of this is noted by Fr. Lenotti:

*... As soon as Fr. Bertoni heard the will read, he responded immediately with these words: Personally, I do not want a red cent. His other companions generously followed the example of their beloved Father, and they renounced their inheritance in behalf of their deceased confrere's brother, Anthony Cartolari ...*

On this occasion, the early confreres drew up an official document of heir renunciation of the inheritance:

*... July 5, 1846. We the under-signed, of our own free and deliberate will, renounce all the legal rights that accrue to us and which can pertain to us in the strength of the last will and testament of the late Reverend Father Francis, of the noble family, Cartolari: we renounce this in favor of his noble brother, Sir Anthony Cartolari. In faith whereof, and in the presence of witness, we affix our names here...*

After this formal assembly, Fr. Lenotti tells us, Fr. Gaspar:

*... gathered all his sons into the Domestic Chapel, and there he had the candles lit, and after a very brief but very profound sermon, in which he encouraged them all to thank the Lord that he given them the courage and the grace, and inspired them to the love of poverty to follow the poor Jesus Christ the more closely. The **Te, Deum** was then intoned in thanksgiving to the Lord ...*<sup>99</sup>

Fr. Lenotti continues:

*... It cannot be said just how much the world, which does not understand at all this spirit of disdain for riches and the Gospel maxims, would remain astonished and stupefied, this raising up to Heaven that magnanimous and heroic act of Christian freedom, while remaining nonetheless greatly edified...*

A number of newspapers spoke of it in Verona, and also elsewhere. We might recall the review which has as its title, **What to do?** - that was published by Count G. B. Montanari. Another publication in Milan came out with the title: 'Two facts in honor of the Veronese Church.' Fr. Bertoni, for his part, wrote to Fr. Bragato and was content simply to say that the Lord has bestowed on them the grace of getting rid of the financial remnants of Fr. Cartolari's will, and that they would cherish the *inheritance of his virtues*.

**73.** Another real loss was reserved for our men which must have afflicted more than anything: In 1847, Fr. Charles Fedelini left their company. Whether it was because of the very severe way of life among them, or for his excessive study or for his rather poor health – or for all three of these reasons: in August of that year he found himself in such a poor way and his energies totally sapped that he made the decision to leave the Congregation. Fr. Gramego took note of it in his Chronicle:

*... August 25<sup>th</sup>. Alas! What do I have to write! That a young priest, only 37, of which 21 were spent among us as an intern and brother, eight or nine as a student, one who was much loved and most attached. He had been the 'Benjamin' of Fr. Gaspar, for whom we have spent, done so much, ... suffered... that a young man... and so on. Fr. Charles Fedelini who even came to be the Lector in Moral Theology in the public Seminary ... from one moment to the next has gone home. Oh, my God, my God... I say nothing more ...*

It is true that he left only bodily, and with his heart, he remained always at the Stimmate, where he often would come to visit Fr. Gaspar, and brought him little gifts of sweets that the saint accepted and also enjoyed. Nonetheless, his departure at this time was a terrible blow for the little Community. Four days prior to his departure, when it was not yet even thought of [he himself has left in writing], Fr. Gaspar predicted it to him, and strongly recommended to him not to give up his Chair of Moral Theology in the Seminary. In fact, he did maintain this position always despite all the obstacles

<sup>99</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** nearly 40 years earlier, Fr. Bertoni noted this spirit in his Spiritual Diary [cf. **MP – September 25, 1808**]

that he had to encounter. After the death of Fr. Gaspar, as we will see, feeling himself attracted toward his nest of long ago, he multiplied his requests to Fr. Marani so that he might once more be accepted.

There remained now at the Stimate with Fr. Bertoni only six Priests, but full of courage, animated with that confidence that the Lord would ultimately bless this work of his hands, resolved to want at every cost to persevere in the House of God. In the course of the year 1847, there came to join them a Coadjutor Brother, G. B. Bandoria, and there was truly a need of him. Brother Paul, in the meantime, had returned to the Stimate to assist Fr. Gaspar in his continuing infirmity: and he was substituted for at the *Dereletti* by Louis Ferrari. At the Stimate with Brother Paul, there was Francis Stevanoni, and there arrived now a third in the person of G. B. Bandoria.

**74.** In this situation, we come to the year 1848, a year that was all the more critical and turbulent when those spirits intoxicated with the spirit of freedom and dreaming of vague reforms trembled under the yoke of authority. By now, almost all the Italian Princes had made real concessions to their citizens: but this only excited the Venetian and Lombard people the more. They were yearning to throw off the Austrian yoke and to pursue that brand of freedom that their brothers had. Nor were there lacking those who tried to arouse in people's hearts a certain hatred for all foreigners: indeed, many were only interested very little, or none at all in the wellbeing of the populations, and were inspired more by hatred against religion. And they profited by the legitimate aspirations of peoples to obtain the triumph of the anti-religious principles of which they were imbued. These formed the principal part of the sects which then flourished in Italy. They accepted the theories of the French Jacobins, and in the shadows of secrecy they ordered the carrying out, and the preparing the assassins, of the rebellion against authority and the civil revolution<sup>100</sup>.

The times were most difficult, and they required much prudence: in this light, Fr. Gaspar governed his sons. But, he never forgot even in this climate the principles taught by the faith- he looked on the revolution as a great evil, as he always showed himself to be very faithful to the constituted authorities, blaming and censuring the goals of the secret societies. And he sought to impart these principles also in the hearts of others. Fr. Lenotti noted:

*... In his preaching, he and his companions fearlessly, even in 1848, had the heart to preach the Catholic maxims of subjection that is due to authority...*

There is little wonder, then, that the men of the Stimate were in the sights of the sectarians, considered to be enemies of the fatherland and of liberty. We also know from Fr. Lenotti that Fr. Gaspar's enemies had laid plots against him, and had their eyes on his properties.

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<sup>100</sup> Massimo d'Azeglio wrote a book, *My Recollections*, condemning the secret societies and particular the *Young Italy*, which was a bad example and a bad school for Italy with the absurdity of its political principles, the silliness of its proposals, the perversity of its means. Those who believed in the present liberty and independence were indebted to these ... sects of life-carriers and murderers. He responded that those revolution mongers have not hastened, but held back our liberation... [Chapter 29].

**75.** In that same year, our first Confreres had much to suffer also on the part of the Austrian Government because of the zeal of two of the Priests:

*... Many soldiers before exposing themselves to hostile fire, would seek to be reconciled with God: in the Church, especially that of St. Nicholas, there was a great number of them, and Fr. Bertoni had been requested to send two of his priests to help out. So, he sent Fr. Francis Benciolini and Fr. Innocent Venturini, that they might go and hear the confessions of these unfortunate young men. When the rumors got out and circulated through the city that these Priests, rather than hearing confessions, tried to corrupt the young soldiers with money, trying to bribe them to leave the service of their own flag. Not much more than these rumors were needed: the police immediately set out to arrest the two priests, and without delay our two Confreres, and other priests, were locked up. These men with the overcoats and military caps were then conducted by an armed band to St. Thomas' jail. To his great misfortune, Fr. Benciolini happened to have some money in his pocket that had been given to him that very day by Fr. Bertoni for support of his own lodging, for the House of the Dereletti. And that money on his person increased the suspicion and gave substance, transforming mere conjecture into apparent fact. He and his two companions were judged to be enemies of the Germans, and they were men who were subversive toward the militia. For many days, therefore, they were harshly imprisoned, and separated from the others, without comfort of any sort, except that God in Whom alone they placed their trust. Humanly speaking, the entire city was in a state of siege and they could hope for nothing better than from one moment to the next, to be executed...*<sup>101</sup>

We can just imagine Fr. Gaspar's sufferings, too, and the desolation of his other sons, in seeing the lives of two of their zealous Confreres so coarsely threatened, and of whom the Community had such need. However, God protected His servants: in the meantime, the news of their forced imprisonment circulated, and very shortly persons of great influence and situated in high positions gave a hand in the matter attesting to their innocence, their fidelity to the constituted authorities. About this time, Marshall Radetski had returned from the capture of Mount Berico, and he ordered their release. And so, after nine days of harsh confinement, they were liberated. Or, to put it more precisely, they were handed over to the Bishop so that he might supervise them in the Seminary. And finally, on June 13<sup>th</sup>, the act of grace was communicated to all by the Bishop.

**76.** We will mention briefly here in passing another fact that has some tie with our Congregation. In that same year, 1848, there had been offered to Fr. Bragato, as a reward for his services the Episcopal dignity: however, he had been formed in the School of Fr. Bertoni, and he renounced it, preferring to remain in his office, and after

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<sup>101</sup> cf. the Chronicles of Fr. Gramego and Fr. Zara. It is impossible to imagine the discomforts that they experienced in this days during which the two Priests were herded into humid and dark cells, with five sacks to rest on that were meant for 12 persons, and without almost anything to eat: furthermore, they were also exposed to the insults of the soldiers and of some officials who would taunt them with the terrifying antiphon: 'Priests for a few more days, then the firing squad...!' [cf. Thomas Netti, *Castelnuovo and the Austrians*. C. 16].

the abdication of the Emperor Ferdinand, he chose to remain with their Majesties at the Court of Prague, where he spent the rest of his life. On April 11<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Bertoni wrote to him:

***...I had forgotten to share my consolation with you on your renunciation of the miter, even though much recognition is owed to those who offered you this honor. You have followed the voice of the late Arch-Priest, Fr. Galvani: Lowly, lowly, seek out the nooks and crannies...! And the humble in spirit He will save...***

**77.** Following 1848, the state of siege remained in Verona, and consequently, martial law. The military command wished to provide Italian confessions for those who had been condemned to death, and at the same time desiring to have priests that could be trusted in all, Bishop Mutti was addressed, and he chose two companions of Fr. Bertoni who immediately sent them to him. For many years thereafter, our men attended to this office of mercy, trying to bring comfort to those unfortunates, condemned to death, accompanying them even to the point of execution, as Fr. Lenotti informs us in his *Life* of Fr. Gaspar. God blessed their endeavors with happy results and both the Bishop and the Government were most appreciative.<sup>102</sup>

In this regard, we recall here that these two Confreres of ours for much time also preached to those confined in the prisons and heard their confessions, garnering from this ministry much fruit to their own supreme satisfaction. And they would have willingly continued in this ministry if the lack of subjects had not impeded them.

The turbulence and agitation had not yet entirely come to a halt as 1848 drew towards its end, and the Imperial Government of Vienna concentrated in Verona many soldiers, for the purpose of suffocating entirely the fires of rebellion. However, in the city there were not sufficient barracks to lodge all those troops. As a result there were occupied by the military many buildings, both public and private, and among these was also the House of the Stimate, as it was rather spacious and at the moment, without many inhabitants.

Of no avail was the end-result of the repeated appeals directed to the military authorities. It was pointed out that in the dwelling, there were four sick men, and that Fr. Gaspar's illness was indeed serious. Not even the appeals made by Monsignor Bragato at the Royal Court of Prague, availed in this regard. The soldiers confiscated the Stimate on March 6<sup>th</sup>, 1850, and they would remain there for four years. It is true that God made use of this event also to draw good. Fr. Gramego notes what Fr. Zara records:

*... With these soldiers, the few Priests of the Stimate were provided with a new field for their zeal: since the priests exchanged the word of god with the young soldiers, and they were able to convince many of them to go to confession, ad to live from then on in a more Christian manner. In this apostolate, Brother Paul Zanoli had special talents and due to his efforts very soon on each Saturday, in our old Church choir area there would be these soldiers in good numbers who then on the following Sunday, they would also approach the Eucharistic table...*

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<sup>102</sup> The two were Fr. Marani and Fr. Lenotti.



**78.** Meanwhile the saintly Founder's illness was going from bad to worse, so that as the year 1850 ended, he no longer got up out of bed: indeed, as Fr. Lenotti records, he had to remain almost always in the same position, i.e., on his left side, without being able to move, other than with the help of others. What discomfort he must have experienced in this situation can well be imagined: he, however, supported it all with admirable patience. There were many who still would come to visit him in order to seek his counsel and to enjoy a little bit his company: and he never showed that he tired of all this, but always seemed in good humor and content. There was so often that gentle smile on his lips, even though at times he was suffering very much, being forgetful of himself and of his pain.<sup>103</sup>

His sweet comfort through all this was to assist every morning at the Holy Sacrifice from the bed of his suffering and to receive Holy Communion: as a result, he would try very hard each night to use every diligence not to drink anything from mid-night on, in order to be still fasting, even though there were times this would have cost him much effort. It might be that one of the Fathers once in a while could offer him a gentle hint that due to the small number of priests, asking him to allow them to celebrate that Mass that was celebrated each day for him in the Domestic Chapel, on feast days be celebrated in the public Church for the ease of the faithful, he would responded with some emotion: 'I beg you, do not let me be deprived from this, my only consolation: others have healthy legs and they can seek a Mass elsewhere, but I cannot do that if you do not provide me with the Mass.

From then on, in order not to upset him, they never brought the matter up again, but right up; until his very last day, one of them [usually Fr. Venturini] continued to celebrate in the near-by chapel. And he always received Communion fasting right up to the morning on which he died.

**79.** In the year 1852, Fr. Gaspar had to experience one more displeasure in the departure of his friend, Bishop Mutti. He had been named the Patriarch of Venice. For both of them, who esteemed and loved each other, this must have been a real difficult detachment: they parted ways, recommending each other to the Lord, knowing all too well that they would not see each other ever again on this earth. This is the way it was: Fr. Bertoni was like a lamp that was winding down, with his breath becoming weaker and weaker, until that 12<sup>th</sup> day of June of the following year, 1853, when he rendered his beautiful soul back to God.

Their sorrow and the grief were truly profound when he left his remaining sons: but their sorrow was sweetened somewhat in the thought that in Heaven they had acquired a powerful protector. It was also sweetened in the solemn demonstrations of genuine affection that the entire city poured forth for the beloved deceased, on the occasion of his funeral, which was a genuine triumph.

Fr. Marani was elected to succeed him in the government of the Congregation. In a report that he wrote in December of that same year, after making reference to the grave losses suffered by the Congregation in cycle of only a few years, he then went on:

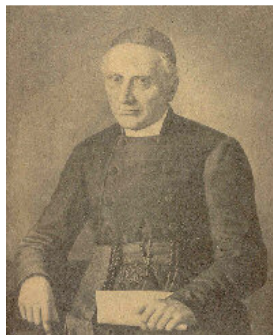
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<sup>103</sup> The testimony of Cardinal Louis di Canossa, in his letter to Fr. Peter Vignola.

*... In this year, God had reserved for the afflicted Congregation the greatest of its misfortunes in the irreparable loss of its Founder and Head, Fr. Bertoni. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of last June, after immense sufferings and very serious illnesses, he flew up to heaven, full of merits. It is not our role here to develop the praise of this extraordinary Servant of God: it will suffice for us to say only that he was considered and honored by all as a saint, that the Prelates of the Church held in high esteem and venerated him, as among all the people of regard, he was consulted as an Oracle. The entire city, at the announcement of his death, was so very much moved. In utmost spontaneity, they rendered him the most sublime funeral honors in solemn testimony of their grief in which they found themselves. In him, they believed that they had lost such a precious treasure, that they realized they possessed in Fr. Bertoni, to his great glory ...*



**A Brief Chronicle  
of the  
Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata  
of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
[1800 – 1941]**



*Rev. John Mary Marani, the Superior General from 1853 to 1871*



**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Volume I – Second Period, Part 1**

**From the Death of the Founder  
to the Confiscation by the Government [1853-1873]**

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## Chapter 1

### HEAVENLY PROTECTION

#### [1853-1857]

**80.** At the death of Fr. Gaspar, the Community of the Stimate numbered six Priests, i.e., Fathers Marani, Gramego, Brugnoli, Benciolini, Venturini and Lenotti. There were also four Coadjutor Brothers, i.e., Brothers Paul Zanolì, Louis Ferrari, Francis Stevanoni and John Baptist Bandoria. In the desolation that they all experienced for the death of their common Father, they were sustained also by the hope that he from heaven would protect the little Congregation for which he had done and suffered so much.

Their first thought, therefore, was to choose a successor for their deceased Father: so, they gathered the same night and elected as their Superior, Fr. John Mary Marani, the first-born son of Fr. Bertoni. He immediately took charge of Fr. Gaspar's funeral so that it would go off well. On the following day [June 13<sup>th</sup>], he purchased a cemetery lot from the Municipality for the price of 545.50 for the purpose of placing the Founder's venerated body there.

The funeral took place on the afternoon of June 13<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua. Fr. Lenotti, in his Biography of Fr. Gaspar, informs us that all the Seminarians of the Venerable Seminary, the Acolytes, who accompanied the Ritual with their song, the Doctrine Classes of the Most Holy Trinity, the Oratory of the Stimate, the first erected by him in St. Paul's Parish, in the Campo Marzio section; and many men who carried torches, took part in the ceremony. Many other priests also attended out of their devotion, in addition to those who formed the funeral procession, and they were in great number. The young boys of the Oratory of the Stimate also wanted a role in carrying him. His own sons, both Priests and Brothers, filed behind the bier.

The procession moved from the House to the Parish Church, is what we read from another eye-witness, and that it was a veritable triumph: there was a great number of people of every class of society.<sup>104</sup> It proceeded through the Piazza Cittadella, the Corso Porta Nuova, and the Street of the Angels and that of the Holy Trinity. Because of the great number of candles and torches, the street looked like a river of light<sup>105</sup>. When they arrived at the Church, where only those who formed part of the cortege were allowed, the services were over, the Most Reverend Arch-Priest offered some affectionate words that deeply moved its listeners even to tears.

**81.** And it had already been determined to carry the body to the Cemetery the following morning. Fr. Lenotti informs us what came next:

*... all of a sudden, two devout and friendly individuals, deeply moved by their esteem and love for Fr. Bertoni, took the step spontaneously of asking the permission to keep the body above ground in the Parish for another day, so that a Petition might be forwarded in order to obtain from the supreme authority the concession of burying him in the Church of the Stimate, and this was done ...*

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<sup>104</sup> Fr. Carminati in the Diocesan Process.

<sup>105</sup> cf. Fr. Pigghi, same source.

On the following day, an instance was presented to the Municipal Offices – so that it might be forwarded to the Imperial Royal Lieutenant of Venice – which was under-signed by the Canons, Pastors, Superiors and principal Nobles and Lords of the city. On this same day, the reverend Father Cajetan Giacobbe asked the Municipal Government the permission to conserve the sacred remains in the mortuary area joined to the Church, so there might be given time for the above-mentioned formal request to take its course. This permission was granted on July 12<sup>th</sup>, with the obligation, however, of placing Fr. Bertoni's body in a second casket of zinc, or of lead: all this was carried out.

Another loss came in the meantime to sadden the little Community On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, Fr. Michael Gramego died at the age of 70, and he went to join his Father and Founder whom he had loved so much in life<sup>106</sup>. Resigned to the Divine Will, the five remaining Priests all continued in their dedication to the good of the Congregation. Two of these, i.e., Fr. Benciolini and Fr. Lenotti, were given the task of gathering data for a biography of their beloved late Father and Founder: they attended to this with some sense of commitment, and within the year they had gathered a good amount of material. This has come down to us with the title: ***A Miscellanea of the Reminiscences on the Life of the Very Reverend Priest, Father Gaspar Bertoni.***

**82.** While all this was going on, Fr. Marani set himself to another very important task. Just having been elected the Superior, the proposal was made to begin the negotiations in order to obtain the approbation of the Congregation, for which the saintly Founder [in the words of Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle]:

*'...had so much suffered and endured. He had set aside resources and support, built the house, set up the library, written the rules, and what is more than all these, he planted the spirit of the Community. Therefore, he always maintained that he wanted to employ every means to reach this goal one day... [And in order to bring this about]... he was encouraged not only by friends, but also by individuals not much inclined toward Religious Orders... This was also the unanimous ideal of all his companions, and also that of the Very Reverend Father Bragato ...*

This last mentioned, had, in fact, arrived in Verona on June 14<sup>th</sup>, and much saddened that he had been unable to be present at the final farewell given to his most beloved Father, he knelt before the bier, he offered his prayer to Heaven.<sup>107</sup> On that occasion, Fr. Lenotti recorded Fr. Bragato as saying that:

*... he had traveled a great deal, and in the duties he had carried out he had come to deal with persons of outstanding virtue, and even Founders; but that he had never found another man of that spirit which he always saw in Fr. Bertoni, and that certainly the Lord, following his death would glorify him ...*

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<sup>106</sup> On this occasion, Fr. Marani also purchased a tomb for the deceased of the Congregation. In this, in addition to Fr. Gramego, there were then transported the remains of Brother Angelo Casella, of Fr. Louis Biadego, and the Cleric, Louis Ferrari. The bodies of Fr. Cainer and Fr. Cartolari had been deposited in their family lots. On September 6<sup>th</sup> of that same year, Brother John Baptist Bandoria also died.

<sup>107</sup> Fr. Giacobbe, *Life of Fr. Gaspar.*

Furthermore, he also encouraged Fr. Marani to carry out his proposed plan of seeking approbation, and he promised to assist him in the undertaking.

**83.** They transcribed the Constitutions left to us by the Very Reverend Father Gaspar, and prepared two copies of the Petitions to be forwarded, one for the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IXth, and the other for the Emperor, Franz Josef I. They also gathered Letters of Recommendation from Nobles, the Municipal authorities, from the Seminary, Pastors, the Delegate, the Capitular Vicar, Monsignor Belloni – and after his death, also from Monsignor Marchi, and from the Patriarch of Venice, the former Ordinary of Verona.

In the Petition addressed to the Emperor, assurance was given that the Institute had the means for its own support, and that it would never be a burden on the Government. And there was joined to this an official deed with which Fr. Francis Benciolini offered the goods of his own property as a kind of dowry and back-up for the Community. When all was in readiness, the entire packet was forwarded on to Prague and the good offices of Monsignor Bragato, on December 23<sup>rd</sup>]. It was his task then to see to it that it arrived at the proper office in Vienna, and in Rome, through the Apostolic Nunzio, Monsignor Prelá. In fact, the Nunzio himself sent to Rome the pertinent documents, addressing them to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on February 2, 1854, accompanied with his own Letter of Recommendation:

*... My deepest respect for Your Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord,*

*I have the honor of sending you and official Petition, supported by documents, addressed to His Holiness, by the Priest, John Mary Marani, Superior of a Pious Union of Secular Priests, living for many years in Verona. This Union was instituted and founded in the Church of the Stimate by the late and pious Priest, Gaspar Bertoni.*

*The purpose of this Pious Union is to place zealous Priests at the disposition of Bishops in order to offer every sort of service to the Diocese, whether in the preaching, or in teaching, and also in the care of souls.*

*Now the Priests who belong to this Pious Union, ardently desire that the rules given to them by their pious Founder, might be approved by the Holy See, and that their Pious Union might be erected as a Congregation under the Title of the Sacred Stigmata. With this purpose in mind, they have sent to me their Petition, and enclosed with it are the rules and other documents so that this might arrive at His Holiness of Our Lord...*

*Recommending myself to Your Eminence, the above-mentioned Petition, and with the most profound service, and so on ...*

**84.** In the meantime, the Imperial Royal Lieutenant of Venice after seeking further information regarding the condition of the Church of the Stimate, on August 4, 1853, denied the request regarding the burial of Fr. Gaspar's body, presenting as the reason that this Church was open for public worship. However, Fr. Marani, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, presented an appeal to the Government, with the accompanying

recommendation of Capitular Vicar, Monsignor Belloni, in which the Petition was renewed, and he responded to the difficulties presented by the Government. The new Petition found greater favor than the first one did, and the Government with an official notification dated February 10<sup>th</sup> – but transmitted only on March 18<sup>th</sup> - requested to know the exact description of the Church of the Stimmate, with minute particular aspects regarding its position, size, ventilation, frequency of services: to all this, the response was forthcoming with even greater exactness and care.

About the same time, the Royal Lieutenant of Venice, by a charge received from his Government, asked for further information from our Confreres. In particular, he presented 3 questions: 1. What method of study was being followed. 2. If the financial support offered by Fr. Benciolini presented every legal security, and for how many individuals would it suffice. 3. What was required of Novices.

Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle provides some details here. Fr. Marani responded to these three, with his document, dated March 19<sup>th</sup>, directed to Monsignor Vicar Capitular. In his response, Fr. Marani stated that with regard to our Students, they would be engaged in the study of philosophy and theology, in accord with the approved method at the Seminary. With regard to the study in external school, it would be as a Founder had done since 1816, following the method of government schools. In response to the other two questions, he replied that nothing was required from the Novices from a financial point of view, and that the support provided by Fr. Benciolini would be sufficient to maintain 15 individuals, and that it enjoyed all legal security. To substantiate his response, Fr. Marani included two testimonies of experts, one a Notary, and the other a civil engineer.

**85.** In the meantime, after the See had been vacant for newly two years<sup>108</sup>, the new Bishop of Verona was elected, in the person of Benedict Riccabona. Since he had to go to Rome for his Episcopal consecration, Fr. Marani thought it might be a good idea to go to Bolzano to speak with him. He did make the trip on the last day of March, and he brought for him a copy of the Constitutions so that he might favor us and intercede for us at Rome. Further, Fr. Marani, following the encouragement of Fr. Bragato and of his other companions, had proposed that Fr. Marani himself should go to Rome, in the thought that were he to present these documents in person, he would have obtained that which he might not get by letter. He waited, though, for a more propitious time for his health, namely the autumn.

The 12<sup>th</sup> of June arrived, the first anniversary of Fr. Gaspar's death, and a letter from Fr. Bragato arrived, with the encouragement to leave right away for Rome, together with the Bishop, because by so doing he might more easily obtain that which he ardently desired. Fr. Marani, then, taking counsel from those in the House, decided to go immediately: he left of June 22<sup>nd</sup> of this same month of June, with Brother Louis Ferrari. From Bologna to Rome he made the trip by carriage and arrived in Rome on

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<sup>108</sup> In 1852, Monsignor Joseph Trevisanato had been named. However, even before making his formal entrance, he had been transferred to the See of Udine. In 1853, then, Monsignor Guglielmi was appointed, but he died on a journey before ever reaching Verona. In these years, the Ordinations and other Episcopal services were handled by Bishop Nauchel, former Ordinary of Parma, who was living in Verona.



June 28<sup>th</sup>, the Vigil of the Feast of St. Peter. Thus, on the following morning he was able to assist at the Pontifical Mass. Even though he was not in good health, he did not feel any disturbance from all this, and he attributed this to a heavenly grace. He took up lodging with Canon Raphael Bertinelli, and remained at Rome for four months, working to obtain the Approbation, as we will see soon<sup>109</sup>.

**86.** On the very day that Fr. Marani left for Rome, the Imperial Government signed in Vienna the Decree that granted permission for the entombment of Fr. Bertoni's body in the Church of the Stimate. The Community immediately received word of this from Reichberg, and on July 12<sup>th</sup>, they received the official communication. In fact, as Fr. Lenotti would note that on that very same day, in a providential disposition, they came into our hands two Decrees: the one allowing the entombment of Fr. Bertoni's body, and the other, long desired decree, that the soldiers would be leaving the Stimate.

Thus, at long last, after four years of taking over a large part of the building, on July 24<sup>th</sup> the soldiers left the Stimate, and the House returned to its former peaceful way. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of that same month, the venerated body of the Father and Founder returned in triumph to his old dwelling place. On this occasion, again Fr. Lenotti records the particulars:

*... the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, the entire street, the little square, our Church were full, as all were saying, for the bearing of the body of a saint in procession. After the ritual was sung in our Church, the Very Reverend Pastor, Fr. Giacobbe, delivered a very moving sermon. There was some time given for the devotion of the people who did not want to leave. Finally, the Church was closed, his body was placed in the sepulcher in the middle of the Church, which was then closed with a commemorative stone, inscribed by Very Reverend Santi ...*

**87.** Fr. Marani, meanwhile, in Rome was taking care of the negotiations for which reason he had made the trip, but from the very beginning it seemed that the cause was desperate, because of the small number of members<sup>110</sup>.

After his Consecration, Bishop Riccabona had returned to Verona. The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on July 8<sup>th</sup>, wrote to him asking for some further information regarding our Congregation. He responded with his letter of July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the same month. In his response, he spoke about the origin of the Congregation, of its losses of personnel that it had undergone, and offered this explanation for the small number of members:

*... on the one hand the reason is due to the calamitous times they were enduring; and on the other, the real need of the approval of the Holy See, the lack of which were holding back some who would like to join. It is therefore, to be hoped that once Rome's sanction has been received, the number will increase. This hope is well founded because even when the news spread that*

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<sup>109</sup> During his stay in Rome, Fr. Marani obtained from the Congregation of the Indulgences, dated August 22<sup>nd</sup> and September 12<sup>th</sup>, the perpetual privilege for the main altars of the Churches of St Mary of the Lily and the Stimate.

<sup>110</sup> Fr. Lenotti records that the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, using a popular saying, stated from the outset: 'They are four cats; Fr. Marani can go home in peace!'

*negotiations were being conducted for the approval, a few requests have been received and some acceptance of new candidates has occurred ...*<sup>111</sup>

He went on then to speak at some length of the great good achieved by our Congregation, and in the end, he concluded:

*... I cannot omit a particular word of recommendation for the Superior of this above-mentioned Congregation, Fr. John Mary Marani. He is a man of prudence, zeal and singular humility ... Being in poor health, subjected to passing the nights in long vigils in spasms of pain and most severe suffering of digestive disturbances, worn out with his efforts for his beloved Congregation, he undertook the journey to Rome, where in continuous suffering and pain he set about the negotiations, awaiting for the Lord to console him in his aspirations. So, I dare to recommend to Your Very Reverend Eminence, this zealous Churchman, so that You might see fit to protect him and to assist him in accomplishment of his desires ...*

**88.** Fr. Marani, then, on St. Lawrence's day, as Fr. Lenotti informs us, paid a visit to the Under-Secretary, just to see if by chance there would be any news. The Under-Secretary inquired about his health, and the Superior answered that he really was not feeling well. Moved to compassion, the Curia official told him that he had given the Founder's Rules to Fr. Perrone and that Fr. Marani should inquire from him. *Thanks be to God!* Fr. Perrone in his turn, nearly over-whelmed by other commitments, promised within the month to examine the Constitutions. He did comment that they were written with great commitment, wisdom and spirit, but that they needed a bit more detail and that they were somewhat lacking in what concerned the Direction of the Government of the Congregation. Fr. Marani took his counsel and was exhorted to draw up a *Compendium* and to present this in order to obtain the Decree of Praise. He wrote and re-wrote this *Compendium*: finally, Fr. Bresciani, SJ and Alfieri, Secretary of the 'Brothers of St. John of God', approved it and passed favorably on it, as did Fr. Perrone. With his positive vote, it went on to the full body of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Fr. Marani finally was able to be said to be content: before departing from Rome he asked for, and received an Audience with the Holy Father, and then he wrote to Verona:

Rome, the 25<sup>th</sup> of October 1854 – Wednesday

Beloved Fr. Cajetan and Brothers,

May God be praised, for He has so helped and assisted me that I have been able to succeed in arranging matters so well that I was hardly able to keep up with their rapid course. The day before yesterday, I was received by the Supreme Pontiff, and I explained everything to him. And he promised me his own intervention: and to the entire Congregation, which he called *his Little Flock*, he has imparted his Benediction. And when I had told him that I had been accompanied by my own Lay Brother, he rang a little bell and had him

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<sup>111</sup> At this time, Monsignor Richard DaPrato and Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti had applied and been accepted, but they entered only after Fr. Marani's return.

enter: he spoke with him with such affability and once more after benevolently blessing us, our meeting was over.

I have nothing more to do in Rome, because I have been able to accomplish my part and the rest will all happen in time. So, I am waiting for our Bishop and then I will get ready for the departure, which in my opinion will be towards the middle of next week. This is all the more pressing since for the past three weeks, I really have not been feeling well. Please pray that God might grant us a pleasant journey...

Then, he gave the order that there might be celebrated on November 17<sup>th</sup> a solemn memorial Office in honor and suffrage of Fr. Gaspar.

**89.** Fr. Marani arrived back in Verona on November 1<sup>st</sup>, and on the 17<sup>th</sup>, participated in the Memorial Service. The Mass was sung by Monsignor Marchi, the Vicar General of the Diocese, assisted by three Pastors of the city: the chant was directed by Fr. Pinali of the Oratorians, once a student of ours at the Stimate. The music was executed by players and singers, almost all former disciples of Fr. Gaspar.

Many priests and religious attended, and in the flood of real terrible weather which raged the entire morning, 40 Masses were celebrated at the Stimate. On that occasion, Fr. Camillo Bresciani, Prefect of the Ministers of the Sick, delivered a splendid oration in praise of Fr. Gaspar, which was later printed. A few days later, i.e., on the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month, the Canon, Richard DaPrato, of a noble family, and Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti both entered and they began their Novitiate on December 8<sup>th</sup>.<sup>112</sup> On January 1<sup>st</sup> of the following year, Brother Joseph Reali entered.

**90.** Then dawned then the year 1855, which would be a memorable year in the History of our Congregation. On **April 16<sup>th</sup>** of that year, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars granted the **Decree of Praise**, to our Congregation. The Bishop, who was in Rome, shared this news right away. He pointed out that the Document was actually signed **on the very day that the Feast of the Most Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord was celebrated**, and he added: *... I do not believe that this circumstance was by chance, but rather a particular disposition of Providence which disposes all things sweetly ...*

The government approval was still delayed because of the very difficult negotiations necessary to assure the support of the Institute. The Imperial Lieutenant of Venice, having received Fr. Marani's response dated March 19, 1854, has sought additional information for the Municipal Committee of Verona, from the Provincial Delegation as well as from the Diocesan Chancery Office. Then, it sent all this documentation to the Office of the Treasury. This office went over the entire matter and having verified that all was in order, gave its opinion on February 28, 1855. Finally, having exhausted all the necessary avenues, the Office of Venice sent the packet to the central Government, which on July 14<sup>th</sup>, signed the Decree of Approval.

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<sup>112</sup> On November 1<sup>st</sup> 1853, Brother Charles Salocher entered, but he left two months later because of health.

Meanwhile, our Fathers who by the decision of Fr. Marani, called themselves *Apostolic Missionaries*<sup>113</sup>, manifested their apostolic zeal by offering their assistance to the cholera victims in various localities in the Diocese, and in their preaching of the Parish Missions and Retreats in Verona and beyond.

**91.** On July 28<sup>th</sup>, they received notification of the Sovereign's approval, and on September 7<sup>th</sup>, they received the official communication of this<sup>114</sup>. Full of joy and of recognition towards the Lord, they chose the 30<sup>th</sup> day of the same month for the Solemn Canonical Institution of the Congregation. Following a course of the Spiritual Exercises, they proceeded to the regular election of the Superior General. Fr. Lenotti once more provides a record of what took place:

*... At 3:00 p.m., in the room of the Very Reverend Founder, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, of venerated memory, the Religious Priests of the Congregation all gathered, excluding the Novices, and having invoked the light of the Holy Spirit with the Hymn, **Veni, Creator**, and they proceeded to the first ballot: these were opened and read publicly, after the ballots had been shaken up in the urn. The result of the election was full votes for the Superior General of the Congregation, in the person of the Very Reverend Fr. John Mary Marani. Then having summoned the whole community, and gathered all into the Domestic Chapel, also the Novices and the Lay Brothers, the elected Superior was made public in the presence of all, and to the great consolation of all, they came to kiss the hand of the newly elected. After this, they offered the Hymn **Te, Deum**, in thanksgiving ...*<sup>115</sup>

**92.** The 30<sup>th</sup> day of the month finally arrived, and as Fr. Lenotti has recorded:

*... after having sounded the bells on the three previous days, and having decorated the Church, inside and out, there was celebrated the ritual of the Erection of this least Congregation...*

At 8:00 a.m., His Excellency the Bishop arrived, accompanied by Monsignor Marchi and by the Master of Ceremonies, Fr. Valbusa, and all the religious were at the door of the Church to greet him. They accompanied him two-by-two in procession to

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<sup>113</sup> The Congregation still did not have an official and recognized title, and the Decree of Praise stated: ***The Priest, John Mary Marani, Moderator of the Congregation of the Priests of the sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, commonly known as, etc.*** to choose the Stigmata of Our Lord rather than those of St. Francis to which the Church was dedicated, ought to have contributed the fact that devotions to the Passion were offered for many years in the Church by our Fathers.

<sup>114</sup> This is the text of the Communication published by the Municipal Committee, in the name of the Imperial Royal Provincial Delegation:

*...His Majesty, with the Sovereign Resolution of July 14<sup>th</sup>, has deigned to approve the subsistence of the Congregation of Priests at the Church of the Stimmate in Verona, with the condition that it can never, and under no title whatsoever, pretend any State subsidy, or from any other public fund: and that even when they might wish to occupy themselves with public instruction, with regard to his, it will be necessary to attend to the relative prescriptions in vogue, and in the future to those even if by then they should be emanated...*

<sup>115</sup> A little after the Solemn Institution of the Congregation, Fr. Marani named his Vicar [Fr. Francis Benciolini] and the Master of Novices [Fr. Lenotti].

the sanctuary, while there was being sung: ***What shall I give to the Lord, etc. – and I will pay my vows to the Lord ...***

The Bishop, then, made his preparation for Mass, put on his usual vestments with the cope for singing of the ***Veni, Creator*** with its ***Oration***. After this, he put on the chasuble and celebrated Mass, in which the Brothers all received Holy Communion. When Mass had been completed, the Bishop once again put on the cope, and incensed the Most Blessed Sacrament, after having first opened the little door of the tabernacle. He then returned to the throne that had been prepared for him, and remained standing with his crosier in his hand, while Fr. Marani having genuflected on the first step of the altar before the Blessed Sacrament, made his Profession of Vows.

Then the Tabernacle was closed, and the Bishop sat with the miter on his head, and Fr. Marani also sat on the Epistle side of the altar, and received the Profession of the Confreres who one at a time genuflected before him, and they pronounced their vows according to the Ritual of the Congregation. Following this, the Psalm was sung: ***How good it is ...*** with some Prayers. The Bishop then delivered a brief allocution praising the Father Founder, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, with the words of the Psalm: ***The Just Man will flourish like the palm tree, etc.*** He then praised the Institute and inspired the Religious belonging to it to the imitation of their Founder, and to continue own his enterprise, saying that it was what the Bishops desired, and that the Supreme Pontiff said to him that he ardently desired for this ***Little Flock*** might increase. Commenting then on the name of the Apostolic Missionaries, he stated that we should therefore imitate the Apostles in the preaching of the Divine Word and emulating their zeal, charity and abnegation.

Then the Bishop blessed from the altar the Religious of the Congregation. After this, the Procession formed, which on leaving the Church, went onto the road on the left, and entered the main door of the House. And after having passed through it, it proceeded out the back door, and returned into the Church. The Bishop, on entering and on leaving the house, closed the door by bolts, thus ceremoniously indicating in the manner and the limits of the Cloister. In Church, at the end, there was sung the ***Te, Deum***, following which the Bishop imparted his blessing to all the present granting an Indulgence of 40 days.

The music for that memorable day was composed by the Very Reverend Father Louis Gagliardi, and it was directed by him and all performed with utmost diligence. There had been invited all the heads of the Religious Orders, the Provincial of the Company of Jesus, Fr. Berretta, Mayor Ferrari, the Assessor, the Marquis Ottavio di Canossa and other dignitaries, both priests and lay people. When the function was over, in Church the ***Remarks concerning the Congregation***, printed by Fr. Marani, were distributed in Church. For those invited light refreshments were offered. In this situation as well, the published ***Remarks*** were handed out, as also was an elegant Latin and Italian composition, presented by the Reverend Jesuit Fathers<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> These published ***Remarks*** were much sought after, and read with great joy. Regarding this special ritual held in the Stimmate on that day many newspapers and periodicals gave an account of the proceedings. The *Balance* of Milan gave an account, and published the complete booklet of the

**93.** A few days before the ceremony of the Solemn Institution of the Congregation, Fr. Charles Fedelini returned to the Congregation. After the death of Fr. Gaspar, he experienced deep within the yearning to return to the Congregation, and immediately made the petition to Fr. Marani. And he then so multiplied his requests, that he was finally accepted, even though he was still in a very poor condition of health. He actually re-entered on September 16<sup>th</sup>, and on the following day, began his Novitiate again, by receiving the Religious Habit. In all these years, he had continued lecturing on Moral Theology in the Seminary, and this he would continue to do up until his death, striving to make known and loved the doctrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who was rejected by many. In 1852, he had published a dissertation with the title: ***St. Alphonsus, vindicating himself.*** In this work, citing the very words of the Holy Doctor, he not only showed the absolute value of his system, but further he demonstrated quite well that all the objections against that system in later years, had already been refuted by him, in the course of his great work.<sup>117</sup>

On September 17<sup>th</sup> there entered also Brother Louis Falzi, and on December 9<sup>th</sup> was held his solemn Vestition in the Church of the Stimmate with two young students, i.e., Francis Madinelli, and another who was later not accepted: the Community began to increase, and all were full of consolation and holy hope.

**94.** Coming now to speak of the occupations of our first Confreres, we will say above all how after the formal election of Fr. Marani, Fr. Francis Benciolini remained to work at the Church of St. Mary of the Lily. He would indeed become the *Missionary* of that neighborhood, by committing himself with sparing himself to the fatigue of the ministries of preaching and hearing Confessions to win souls over to God. His favorite field of activity was the Oratory, around which for more than a half a century, he poured out all his fervent activity. He was able to inspire and move to fervor the many young men who took part in this, and he had a kind manner by which he attracted those who were not interested, or rather restless about being a part of this. He continuously watched over their conduct, seeking to promote in every manner he could the good manners and piety in the midst of his young members of the Oratory, who were so dear to him. Fr. Richard daPrato came to give him a hand on feast days from the year 1854 on.

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**Remarks.** The *Gazette* of Verona also spoke of the day in a lead article, entitled; ‘The Oblates in Verona.’ In this article, there was very little adherence to the events of that day, and it said that the Superior pronounced his vows into the hands of the Bishop. Fr. Marani, however, felt it his duty to offer a correction, in which he declared that he had pronounced his vows, not to the Bishop, but before the Blessed Sacrament. He also had the Bishop himself sign in on his observations, and sent his letter to the *Gazette*, which published the emendation. Also the *Catholic Friend* of Milano reported the **Remarks** published for distribution by Fr. Marani. Many other newspapers even as far away as Germany did likewise, at least providing some account of the booklet. Finally, even the influential *Civiltà Cattolica* reported these events in its December issue [ Series II, Vol. 12]. Their article described quite well the special ceremonies of that day, and provided a very good idea of our Congregation.

<sup>117</sup> This Dissertation obtained the praise of his Bishop, and from persons dedicated to the system of the Saint. However, this did excite the furor of the Jansenists. Fr. Fedelini, however, defended himself well from their assaults in a little work printed in Venice in 1852.

**95.** The principal occupation of the Fathers in this time was that of preaching **Parish Missions** and giving **Courses of the Spiritual Exercises**. In this regard, we really do not know for certain if even up to this time, they had ever been invited to preach in other cities, since no memory of this has come down to us. However, from the moment of the Solemn Institution of the Congregation up until the end of 1855, we do find that they did give these courses in Cremona, Treviso and elsewhere: the Parish Mission that stands out perhaps over all the others was the one our men preached in Caravaggio. Fr. Marani and Fr. Lenotti took part in this Mission. Their role was to preach to the People in the major Church in the town, while Fr. Benciolini preached very well to the youth in other churches in the town. Fr. Venturini spoke in still another Church to the young men of the village.

This Parish Mission began on Thursday evening December 27<sup>th</sup> and end on Sunday, January 6, 1856. The attendance at all these sermons was enormous, as Fr. Lenotti recorded, and the attention in listening was marvelous. The reception of Holy Communion was very numerous, and even much more on the last day at the General Communion which was observed at the same hour in the other Churches of the village as well. They began hearing confessions on the third day of the Mission, and number of those coming for the Sacrament was also extraordinary. There were 18 Confessors, but they had to send for two more Capuchins from Milano who arrived on January 1<sup>st</sup>, and were a great help, and they remained also for a few days after the Mission, to take care of those left over from the crowds.

On Monday morning, January 7<sup>th</sup>, our Fathers were about to depart and they were greeted by the festive ringing of the bells and by a great crowd of people who acclaimed them: they were driven in a carriage through the principal streets of the town and everywhere there were crowds even with tears in their eyes, and their hands raised to offer the departing Fathers their final greeting. Fr. Lenotti offers this comment: 'The experience of this nature could lead one to tears.' Those wonderful inhabitants wished to give as a departing gift the most precious vestments in the parish, but the Stigmatines did not accept the offer.

This Mission remained for a long time in the memories not only of our men, but also by the devout people of Caravaggio: and we would later on occupy ourselves again with this town.

**96.** In 1865, our Fathers continued to occupy themselves in the preaching apostolate: and it could be said that a single week did not pass in which some Parish Mission, or Course of Spiritual Exercises would not be given, in the City and the Diocese of Verona, and even beyond. They preached in the Seminary of Treviso, at the Major Hospital of Milan, in Cremona and elsewhere: and in every part, as Fr. Lenotti recorded, the fruit was most considerable with very many Communion distributed. In many places, at the end of the Parish Mission, the Marian Oratory would be established, or a Pious Union would be established to oppose blasphemy. Fr. Lenotti offers an incisive conclusion: the Lord is clearly showing that our insignificant Congregation is also His work.

**97.** We must also note how in this year, 1855, two requests came in for additional foundations of our Congregation. Again, Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle provides the source:

*... On February 17<sup>th</sup>, there arrived a letter from Bishop Riccabona, in which he exhorted us to establish a House in Trent, for two reasons: to do good in his own native region and also for the benefit of our Congregation, in the hope that from there we would receive good Novices. At the same time, he included a letter from Bishop Gasparini, the Pastor of Trabileno, who is asking for this foundation, and he expresses the fervent hope in his petition for a response. He had already spoken with the Vicar of Trent, who showed himself to be most open to this possibility ...*

This request, however, for the time being did not receive a favorable reply, also because it was not accompanied by any concrete proposal.

The Clergy, however, of that Diocese ardently desired to have a Stigmatine House there<sup>118</sup>: as a result, in September there was sent to us a practical proposal for the Foundation of a Stigmatine House in the town of Riva', offering a Convent with a beautiful House and four elementary schools. Fr. Marani went to the place, and then to Trent to treat of the matter with the Vicar and the Bishop, but unfortunately also these negotiations proved fruitless. We do not know for certain the reason why, but the scarcity of personal must have been a contributing factor. We do know that our Fathers could not correspond to the many requests that came in for their preaching.

**98.** In this same year, in the month of July, Fr. Marani went for the first time to Reichstadt to visit Fr. Bragato. He left Verona on the 7<sup>th</sup> of this month, and arrived in Vienna two days later, where he also visited with Bishop Riccabona. From the Bishop, Fr. Marani learned that the Bishop of Mantua also desired to profit by the work of our Fathers in his Diocese. Fr. Marani remained at Reichstadt until about the middle of August, and returned to Verona on the 21<sup>st</sup> of the same month after having had a good trip. Later, as the Empress had come to visit Strá, a place near Padua, so Fr. Marani also went there for a few days, in order to give a bit of rest to Fr. Bragato to come to Verona and spend a few days among his Confreres.

Meanwhile, On September 22<sup>nd</sup>, the Novices with Fr. Lenotti and Brother Paul had already gone to Sezano to spend a month in the autumn, having already received from the Bishop the faculty of establishing there a House Chapel for their greater usefulness. Fr. Bragato, therefore, after having spent three days at the Stimate, on September 29<sup>th</sup> he went out to Sezano to be with the Novices. He remained there with them for four days, sharing with them a hike to his own great consolation and that of them all. Before leaving, on October 2<sup>nd</sup>, he solemnly blessed the image of Mary in their Domestic Chapel, and delivered to the Novices and

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<sup>118</sup> Fr. Lenotti would write in September of this year: 'The Vicar and many other Priests, Tyrolean Pastors, desire us intensely to come there: may the Lord hear ours, and their hopes according to His Divine Good Pleasure. '



affectionate discourse, speaking to them of the **Grace of their Vocation**<sup>119</sup> and inspiring them to observe the duties of their religious life.<sup>120</sup>

We do not want to pass over how in this year the Church of the Stimate was enriched with 18 benches of walnut, that [at this writing] are still seen there, and in August also an Organ was purchased in Vicenza. Thus, there could be celebrated in a more solemn form the patronal festivities and also there could be introduced some new Church functions.<sup>121</sup>

**99.** Coming now to the personnel of the Congregation, in this year after only one year of Novitiate, by a dispensation of the Father Superior, Fr. Charles Fedelini made his First Profession. On December 8<sup>th</sup> Fr. Richard da Prato also made his. Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti was not accepted due to ill health: however, in his place, the Lord sent other good workers. In the course of the year 1856, there came to the Stimate Fr. Mark Bassi and Fr. Vicent Vignola, already ordained priests, and Rev. Mr. Charles Binoli, a Sub-deacon. Within the year of his entrance, he was ordained a priest and celebrated his first Mass on September 20<sup>th</sup>.

A number of young students also arrived in this year, among whom we remember: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro, Joseph Marchesini, and Brother Anthony Rigoni. At the beginning of February of the following year, Fr. John Rigoni also entered. He had been pastor of Cerea, and also assistant in St. John's in the Valley. The best wishes and the benediction of the Holy Father began to show results on the nascent Congregation, as well as the protection that the Venerated Founder exercised from heaven. By now, the House of the Stimate was no longer sufficient to comfortably lodge all its inhabitants, so Fr. Marani thought of establishing the Novices in the old Convent of the Most Holy Trinity. After the deaths of the religious Women whom Fr. Galvani had housed there, the house was unoccupied<sup>122</sup>. In truth, that old Convent was in most wretched condition, and in the beginning our young candidates had to accommodate themselves as best they could. However, Fr. Marani already had in mind a plan of restoration. With this in mind, he had already drawn up the blueprints and had begun to gather the materials. In the meantime, there had been obtained from the Bishop the faculty of erecting there a Domestic Chapel for divine services.

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<sup>119</sup> cf. web-site [www.st-bertoni.com](http://www.st-bertoni.com), section **Constitutions**, under **NADAL**.

<sup>120</sup> During these summer months Fr. Bragato passed through Verona a number of times, and always stopped over at the Stimate for as long as he could.

<sup>121</sup> In 1857, the Feast of the Espousals was solemnized in a more special manner than usual. The Bishop came for the Mass of devotion, and in the evening, following the panegyric, there was a beautiful illumination, the litanies were chanted with the organ accompaniment, and the Solemn Benediction with the Most Blessed Sacrament, given by the Diocesan Vicar, Monsignor Marchi, vested in the new and precious vestments. [Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle]. In the same year for the first time, the Holy Week was celebrated in the Church of the Stimate.

<sup>122</sup> The last Nun died there in 1851. There remained there still three women, somewhat along in years. They were allowed to remain there in the house by Fr. Marani until 1856, when he needed the locality and he asked them to make other arrangements.

Therefore, they entered the Novitiate of the Most Holy Trinity on February 28<sup>th</sup> of that year 1857. Those making up the Novitiate Community were Fr. Lenotti, Master of Novices, Brother Paul, and 13 Novices of whom there were four already Priests, seven students and two Coadjutor Brothers.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> The four Priests were: Frs. Bassi, V. Vignola, Rigoni and Bissoli, who then left on March 29, 1858.. The students were: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro, Joseph Marchesini, Francis Madinelli [who died in 1859], Fortunato Marini [who also died in 1859] and finally, John Baptist Marchesini and Isidore Fenzi – who both left in that year 1857. The Coadjutor Brothers were Louis Falzi and Anthony Rigoni.

## Chapter 2

### A VARIETY OF FRUITFUL MINISTRIES

#### [1857-1866]

**100.** In the course of the year 1857, after the entrance into the Novitiate of the Most Holy Trinity, we do not find news of great interest. The Fathers were continuously occupied in preaching Parish Missions or Spiritual Exercises, and always drew from these, abundant fruit. This can be seen from the letters of gratitude which poured in from every side to the Superior, Fr. Marani at the end of the various Missions. Many of these are still conserved in the Archives of the Institute.

Here it should be remembered that also within the House of the Stimate itself, from time to time, our Fathers would preach the Spiritual Exercises in behalf of those Churchmen who would come to the House for a week of prayer and to forge themselves anew in the Spirit. During this year, and precisely in the month of August, we find at the House of the Stimate for a Retreat, Fathers Daniel Comboni and John Beltrame, with their companions Frs. DalBosco, Melotto and Oliboni, who had been sent there by the Very Reverend Father Mazza, in order to prepare for their departure for the great Mission in Central Africa. Fr. Lenotti notes in his Chronicle they made their retreats with great commitment and to our edification, and they left quite content. And he added: it suits us very well as Missionaries to give a hand to this.

Also in this year, Fr. Marani went on a number of occasions to Sirá, where the Empress stayed: he went there in the month of June to substitute for Fr. Bragato, who had gone to Bologna for a visit in the name of Their Majesties, Ferdinand and Marianna, to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IXth. On that occasion, Fr. Bragato in the name of the Superior, Fr. Marani, asked and obtained from the Pontiff for all the members of the Congregation the following faculties: (1) to be able to celebrate Mass on hour before dawn, for any just and legitimate reason; (2) to be able at the end of the Retreats or Parish Missions to give the Papal Blessing with its Plenary Indulgence, and further, to bless with the application of the Indulgences, those rosaries and medals presented by the faithful, when all the necessary conditions were fulfilled.<sup>124</sup>

**101.** At the beginning of 1858, a bit of happy news presented itself to us: on the Feast of the Espousals,, observed in a solemn and memorable manner, Fr. Lenotti tells us, the Biography of our Venerated Founder was distributed. Immediately after the Canonical Institution of the Congregation, the challenge was offered to the Very Reverend Pastor, Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, Pastor of the Most Holy Trinity Parish, to write this Life of the Founder. Our Fathers handed over to him the material that had been gathered and many other bits of information and testimonies that they could find. And he set himself right away to this task so that by 1856, when Fr. Bertoni went to Prague, he brought with him several Chapters of the Life, in manuscript form, and he had read them in the presence of Fr. Bragato and his companion, Fr. Negrelli.

The Biography of the Founder published by Fr. Giacobbe was much praised by its contemporaries for the purity of its style, and the elevated nature of its content. Fr.

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<sup>124</sup> These old Rescripts signed by Pius IXth were kept in the Archives of the Congregation.

Bartholomew Solrio, an Oratorian Priest in Verona, offered the following evaluation of the work, in the review entitled *Religious Works*, in Modena:

*... This writing is to be praised for its flowing Italian and historical style. The subject, of course, i.e., the Life of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, I believe is of the greatest importance for the Clergy of our century. This deceased Servant of God began to flourish at the very instant when the Napoleonic period saw the destruction of Religious Orders and Institutes: and our Fr. Gaspar committed his whole care to have flourish anew **the spirit of these Religious Institutes among the secular Clergy**, with the **Marian Oratories** for the entire diocese, in the parishes, enrolling the young priests in this task: and also by re-building and planting the Religious Orders according to the greater need of our times: and in Verona, with this spirit of **priestly and monastic sanctification**, has brought about, as it were, the return of those beautiful times of St. Cajetan Thiene, when all of Verona seemed to have been transformed into a monastery: in like manner, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, with his Oratories, has brought about in Verona the growing of a seed-bed and a hatchery of **holy clerics, religious brothers and nuns**.*

*Therefore, the priests and even more, the Bishops, might learn from this Life, might teach each one in the Diocese how he might publicly have flourish again the spirit of clerical, religious and lay piety. This is the great importance of the biographical composition...*

A copy of this Biography was also sent to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX, accompanied by a devout message, in which the good news of the increase of the Congregation was communicated to him. Pius IX responded on June 28<sup>th</sup> of that same year, in gratitude, and in expressing his consolation over the news received and imparting on the Congregation and on all of its members his Apostolic Blessing.

**102.** Also in this year 1858 our Fathers were still being sought after for their preaching. They gave some Missions also in the cities and throughout the Diocese of Padua, following which the Bishop of that city wrote an affectionate letter to Fr. Marani, thanking him for the favor granted to him. Furthermore, since this was the Jubilee year, he wished to seize the opportunity for our Fathers to preach a Parish Mission in the Cathedral of his city. Fathers Lenotti, Rigoni and Benciolini were sent for this purpose: they saw a great attendance, and obtained consoling results. Fr. Lenotti noted that they praised our clear and popular manner of preaching, and we had many confessions. We were housed in the Bishop's residence, and we received excellent care and much courtesy.

For this same occasion of the Jubilee, in the month of October also the Ordinary of Treviso, His Excellency, Bishop Farina asked for two Priests for his Cathedral. Frs. Rigoni and Benciolini were assigned.

We will also recall here a cycle of preaching assignments that some of our Fathers handled in this year, in the mountainous part of the Diocese of Verona, in order to prepare the people for the Pastoral Visitation of the Bishop. Fr. Lenotti has left his faithful record in the House Chronicle:

*...On June 14<sup>th</sup> Fathers Benciolini and Lenotti departed for Montorio to give three days of Retreat and to hear confessions for two additional days: and then, later, Fr. Vignola left for Missole; Fr. Rigoni left for Pigozzo. And so all of these, either one or two for each village, according to the size of the place, went to Castagné, Trezzolano, Mouriri, Cancelli, San Rocco of Piegara, to Rovere' of Velo, Saline, Cenro, Tregnano, Cogollo, to Badia, Selva of Prognò, to Castelvetro, Bolca, Vesena Vecchia, Vestena Nuova. Despite the difficult season for these villages, nonetheless there was a discreet audience and very numerous on Sundays, and many confessions. In brief, the Lord blessed it, and the Bishop, his Vicar, and the Pastors manifested great satisfaction and gratitude. It was a tiring Mission and for the time of year outstanding for the little sleep we got. Except for a bit of congestion, we all did well ... We returned on July 22<sup>nd</sup>...*

**103.** In this time, there arrived other requests for foundations of Houses of the Congregation, especially at Caravaggio. After the memorable Parish Mission there about which we have spoken above, our Fathers kept in good rapport with the Clergy of the place, and in going to Milan, or to Cremona for some preaching assignment, they would take the occasion to pay a brief visit to the town and its celebrated Sanctuary. On the other hand, those good Churchmen had remembered the great good achieved in that Mission, and so felt the desire to have a House of our Congregation there. In 1857, the Pastor of that town, Fr. Paul Oreni, passed through Verona, and he was lodged at the Stimate [May 11th]. He made a first formal proposal to Fr. Marani for a foundation: he was in accord in this with Bishop Anthony Novasconi, and he had offered to him for the Stigmatines to take over the direction and service in the Sanctuary of Mary, asking him for this scope, three Priests and two Coadjutor Brothers.

A second invitation was extended in January of 1858, on the occasion of the Parish Mission that our men had preached in Cremona: the Missionaries, among whom was also Fr. Marani, were invited to dinner with the Bishop of the city who renewed his offer, desiring to have in his Diocese a House of our Congregation. In the hope of being able to agree to this foundation, which was most pleasing also to our own Confreres, Fr. Marani in March of that same year went personally to Caravaggio: and despite his good will, he could not accept this offering because of the conditions imposed then by the Council of Administration regarding the dependence of our Fathers, and the absolute obligation of residence which this would have imposed on them<sup>125</sup>.

For these same reasons and at the same time, Fr. Marani had to give up the offer for another foundation which was offered to him, with repeated requests. The hope was that the Stigmatines would come to Sacco, a small village in the Trentine region to conduct a college – a boarding house for students who were frequenting the magisterial classes, and the thought was to give over the administration of this to our men. In the month of April, Fr. Marani went to Rovereto in order to handle this matter:

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<sup>125</sup> As we will see more clearly as we go on, Fr. Marani in those first years of his administration, having in mind the small number of members, wanted to keep the Priests at his own disposition in order to employ the now one, not another, in the Parish Missions for which he was receiving many requests.

but, not even this foundation could be accepted. Fr. Marani's own thoughts on the matter, he has expressed thus: '... I was not able to occupy my Priests, who are so few in number, in this ministry, and thereby to take them from preaching Parish Missions, for which there are so many requests that I cannot even satisfy even 10% of them...'

**104.** Fr. Marani did find the courage to work for the glory of God and the good of the Congregation, despite his own poor health that with the passing of time was becoming more and more serious, and at times, obliged him to keep to his bed. In the course of this year he also suffered from miliary fever, from which he had scarcely recovered when he suffered a relapse into further illness toward the end of the month of July: actually his state of health had so worsened that it was thought to administer Holy Viaticum to him. We learn from Fr. Lenotti's note in the Chronicle: '... the illness is really serious: our hope is in the Lord and in Mary and in St. Joseph. For heaven sake, have pity on us...!'

And the Lord heard their prayers, for Fr. Marani did indeed get better, and slowly returned to good health, so that he was able to work further for the good of the Institute. Two other confreres passed away as this year wound down. The first of these was the Novice Student, Fortunato Marini, a young man who offered the best of hopes because of himself, due to his beautiful qualities of his mind and heart. He was a precise young man, a careful observer of every rule, devout, humble, mortified, very obedient – he really was a mirror for others – is the description his Master of Novices left in the House Chronicle. Even though he had not yet finished the Novitiate, he was given the great grace of making his Profession on October 10<sup>th</sup>, the Feast of the Maternity of Mary. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of that same month, he rendered up his beautiful soul to God, leaving all edified and consoled by his holy death.

Just one month later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, Fr. Cajetan Brugnoli also died. Fr. Lenotti eulogized him in the House Chronicle:

*... he was one of the first companions of Fr. Bertoni, who worked so hard in school, in hearing confessions and in building ... Now he enjoys the reward of his great fatigue for this Congregation, for his neighbor, and for the glory of God ...*

However, the Lord also chose to console the Congregation, and as a substitute for Fr. Brugnoli, another valid worker came: on January 20<sup>th</sup> of the following year 1859, Fr. Peter Vignola entered, the brother of Fr. Vincent, who was the ex-Pastor of St. Firmus' Major. On February 2<sup>nd</sup>, he was vested with the religious habit. At the same time, the Lord sent other young volunteers, among whom we remember Louis Morando, Dominic Vicentini and Andrew Sterza.

**105.** The good name of the Congregation spread far and wide, and others expressed the desire to have a house of the Congregation in their region. On January 23, 1859, Fr. Marani received a letter from a Fr. Peter Cagliaroli, attached to the Patriarchate of Venice, asking for a Stigmatine foundation in Lussingrande, on the shore of the Gulf of Quarnero. There had already been built there a house with a chapel, and they wanted our Priests there to attend to preaching, hearing confessions, the Oratory and also to open there some elementary school and a high school. Fr. Marani responded

that this was indeed his desire, and also that of his Confreres, to establish another foundation, that would offer them a **broader field to harvest the copious harvest for our Lord, according to the scope of our Father and Founder**. However, for two reasons, Fr. Marani replied, he could not accept the foundation that had been proposed to him: one was because it would be necessary for the Fathers to teach Christian Doctrine in the Illyrian dialect, which none of them knew; and also because it was too isolated and there were no means of communication. Then, he added that in the present situation in which the Community found itself, there were coming almost continuously invitations for Parish Missions throughout Lombardy, the Venetian Province and also the Tyrol, that he did not have ready, one or other Priests, taking them from the filial houses for 10, 15 or 30 days, and being able to leave always a sufficient number behind to carry out the local commitments. And so this request was also rejected.

**106.** In October of 1859, there was celebrated in Venice the first Provincial Council called by the Patriarch, Angelo Ramazzotti. The Council was to take place in the spring of that same year, but it was deferred because of the war, and was celebrated finally on October 18<sup>th</sup>, in the Basilica of San Marco. It unfolded as a week of particular Congregations which were held in the Patriarchal Seminary. For the 18<sup>th</sup> of October, the Patriarch personally had invited Fr. Marani to intervene with a confrere as a representation of the Congregation: and he did go, accompanied by Fr. Fedelini, and took part in all the Sessions of the Council, as well as in all of its functions that were celebrated, even to its conclusion.

We have just mentioned a war: and this unfortunately had broken out in Piedmont and Lombardy and this year would also involve the Venetian Provinces. Austria, as it had done ten years previously, concentrated in Verona a great number of troops, occupying many public and private buildings. This time, however, the Stimate was not taken over, because it was being used by our Fathers and Brothers<sup>126</sup>. The House of the *Dereletti* was occupied by the soldiers, because only Fr. Benciolini and Brother Stevanoni lived there<sup>127</sup>.

**107.** At this same time, the soldiers took over St. Teresa's Convent. On May 16, 1859, the Municipal Government informed the Superior of the Nuns of the order to evacuate the house within 48 hours, because it was going to serve as a military hospital. The Nuns withdrew to St. Dominic's Convent where they continued teaching school and their Convent life. St. Teresa's Convent was indeed occupied by the soldiers and the church was used as a shop.

At the departure of the Nuns, Fr. Benciolini, as owner of the property, and Fr. Marani, as Superior of the Congregation, advised them by means of a legal document that even when the soldiers were gone, they should not return there, adducing as their

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<sup>126</sup> In this period, the Novices had also returned to the Stimate, because Fr. Marani had begun a new building at the Most Holy Trinity.

<sup>127</sup> He had taken Brother Louis Ferrari's place and died there in 1860. Once more, Bro. Louis Ferrari was sent there. We will remember how on August 20 1860, Bro. Anthony Nicora entered the Congregation. He had been a member of the Oratory of St. Mary of the Lily, from whom we have received many facts about the Congregation.

reason that there had ceased the use of the place specified in the Contract of April 14, 1830. This maneuver was recognized as reasonable by lawyers.

Then, on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, Fr. Marani wrote to Bishop Benedict Riccabona, notifying him of this change in the agreement with the Nuns. To justify his decision, in addition to the reason given above, he also maintained that the Contract of 1830 was illicit, because it was contrary to the Decrees of the Church which forbade the closeness of the religious houses of men and those of Nuns. He sought the Bishop's support for his request, and even asked for a judicial sentence. Following another letter of January 10, 1860, also addressed to the Bishop, Fr. Marani renewed his protest against the return of the Nuns, declaring that he was doing this in the realization that he wanted to keep undamaged, a serious responsibility of this Congregation, and of the one who represents it, rather than just insist on its rights, and there was no other motive. He did not want for any reason whatsoever to see the return of the Nuns, if this did not infer any prejudice on present and future rights. The Bishop, however, after having studied all the circumstances carefully, responded that he did not see any way that he could refuse the return of the Nuns to St. Teresa's Convent.

In the meantime, on December 17th, the Military Hospital was taken from the Convent, but the soldiers remained in the there and also in the Church: in recompense, the City Government of Verona was obliged to pay, under title of 'rent', the annual sum of 1750 florins. Fr. Marani contacted directly the Nuns, claiming that on the basis of the original Contract of 1830, Fr. Benciolini's rights entitle him to receive any income garnered from that property<sup>128</sup>, and also that St. Teresa's Convent should be restored for the use of the young girls. The Nuns, however, denied both rights, and for the time being, negotiations were at a stand-still.

**108.** In 1860, Frs. Lenotti and Peter Vignola went to preach the Spiritual Exercises to the Clergy of Feltre, and then to those of Belluno, invited by the local Ordinary, Bishop Rinieri. and there, too, they were remembered for a long time for their spirit and apostolic boldness.<sup>129</sup>

In that same year, on June 30<sup>th</sup>, Fr. Charles Fedelini died, at the age of just 50, totally dedicated to a studious and apostolic life. He was always active even though he suffered constantly from bad health. Fr. Lenotti recalled his great energy consumed in hearing confessions, preaching, in the Marian Oratories and in the Seminary, concluded by saying that his death was a great loss for the Diocese.

In the meantime, some of the young professed students were ready for Ordination. Joseph Marchesini had already been raised to the Sub-diaconate, under

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<sup>128</sup> Fr. Marani's view of this legal matter was supported by a number of experts in the law – in that the Nuns had only the right to 'use' the property, but not its 'usufruct'.

<sup>129</sup> In this same year, the Priest, Fr. Anthony Sperti of Belluno, who had founded an Orphanage in that city, asked Fr. Marani for some of his Priests that they might take over the direction of this Institute. He added that in that city there was a particular need for a Religious Family, as there had been only one there in the entire Diocese and the harvest has been left abandoned, and there is much, so very much to be done. He maintained that he, and two or three other Priests in the city, were disposed to join our Congregation, if permission would be granted to them to make their Novitiate in that city.



the title of his own family estate; but the other students of the Congregation did not have that possibility of establishing for themselves the necessary patrimony. Fr. Marani in the meantime, addressed a humble Petition to the Holy Father, Pius IX, in which after having hinted at the profess realized in the last years by the Congregation, he sought the Faculty to have the young students ordained with the title of religious of the 'Common Table'. This Faculty was granted to him for 10 individuals with the Rescript of June 14, 1861.

On the other hand, since all the goods, upon which the entire Institute was living, were inscribed in the name of Fr. Benciolini, It was necessary to constitute this Patrimony of the 'Common Table.' As a result, on January 23, 1862, Fr. Francis Benciolini con a regular deed under-signed by him and by three witnesses, obliged himself irrevocably to the following: (1) In order to assure the life of the Congregation, to give to the members of the same the gratuitous and perpetual use of the three Houses that he possessed in the City. (2) For the maintenance, to sub-minister as much as would prove necessary for good and the support of the individual members present and future, even up to the number of 24, passing faithfully and perpetually into the hands of the Superior, for the time being, a half a florin per day for each member as soon as he was incorporated into the Congregation. And Fr. Marani, as Superior of the Institute, accepted in its name this irrevocable offer which assured the life of the Congregation.

On the same day, January 23, 1862, the new Ordinary of Verona, made his formal entrance into the city, the recently consecrated Bishop, Louis Marquis di Canossa, taking over from Bishop Riccabona, who had been transferred to Trent, following the death of the Venerable John Nepomucene Tsiderer.

Bishop Riccabona's departure had struck our men as a real loss for them, because in him they lost a loving father who had so benefited them. However, the Lord in His mercy had sent him on ahead of them, so that in his new See he might be able to help them even more than in the past: as we will have occasion to see in a short while.

**109.** We have already hinted a number of times that in these years our Fathers were continually occupied in the ministry of Preaching. It would be too lengthy even to recall the different Courses of Retreat and the Parish Missions they preached and the great fruit received from their efforts. We will just say one word about those preaching assignments that would merit special attention. In 1861 they gave a Parish Mission in Galliera Veneta, where Monsignor Bragato used to go every year with the Empress and her entourage to spend some vacation time: and the good our men achieved there was so outstanding that the Clergy of the village felt the obligation to send a letter of deepest thanks, undersigned by all the Priests, the Black-smiths and the principal inhabitants of that town.

Another Parish Mission worthy of mention that preached in Lazise in the beginning of the year 1862. This town found itself in open revolution already for four years for a difficulty that had arisen between a Confraternity and the local Clergy: and in all this time each attempt made by the Bishop, the Chancery Office to restore peace proved futile. People were really despairing and even indisposed to listen to sermons

when the Parish Mission began toward the end of that January: however, our Fathers with their charity and prudence were able to move minds and hearts in such a way that by February 2<sup>nd</sup>, peace had been restored. Following this, great, and even extraordinary were the attendance at the preaching and time spent before the Most Blessed Sacrament: at the close of the Mission, in a spirit of reparation, it was proposed to conduct a solemn procession in which the image of Mary would be carried aloft. All were outside themselves with their contentment, and the former adversaries publicly asked pardon of the Pastor, and the other Priests for the disturbances that they had caused by their conduct.

In that same year of 1862, Frs. Lenotti and Benciolini preached in Udine two Courses of the Spiritual Exercises for the Clergy of that City and Diocese. They had been invited by Bishop Trevisanato, who had already been elected as Patriarch of Venice, and was about to make his entrance into that city: he was very consoled for the result obtained by them and he cordially thanked our Fathers for their efforts. When the two Missionaries returned to Verona on the 6<sup>th</sup> of that September, they brought with them a young lad by the name of Anthony Caucigh.

Meanwhile, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of March that year, the student Joseph Marchesini had been ordained a Deacon in the House Chapel of Arch-Bishop Nauchel, titular of Teodosiopoli<sup>130</sup>. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of that same month he went to Trent to be ordained a Priest, by Bishop Benedict Riccabona. Fr. Marani accompanied him for this special time in his life, and on that occasion the Superior spoke with the Bishop regarding a foundation in that city. If even earlier Bishop Riccabona was warmly interested in the idea of having a Stigmatine House in his native Diocese, after he had been transferred there to Trent, he insisted even more so for this to happen, and he did not allow himself any peace until an agreement had been concluded.

**110.** Toward the end of this year, there was nearly completed the building of the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity. From 1859, Fr. Marani had begun the works; and profiting in part from the old constructions already there, on a new plan he had seen rise up a very pleasant building capable of containing about 60 persons. In this construction he spared no expense: since he had no interest in providing every comfort, he did want to add to the elegance of the most beautiful cloister already there, which presented itself near the door way, and also the magnificence in the splendid stairway of granite that gave access to the House, and in the large hall that was placed on the upper floor<sup>131</sup>.

Our students at the beginning of all this construction were lodged at the Stimate, could now return to dwell there comfortably and in a stable manner. With a happy foresight, Fr. Marani established the date of entrance for November 4<sup>th</sup>, the anniversary of the Venerated Founder's first entrance into the Stimate. Fr. Lenotti has left us a rather lengthy account of the events:

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<sup>130</sup> cf. **BCI, # 86**, note.

<sup>131</sup> It was whispered about that in this construction, Fr. Marani spent about 200,000 Lira, due to the charity of Fr. Bragato, and to the munificence of the Empress.

*... On the 4<sup>th</sup> of November, finally, by the Lord's grace and the Holy Spouses, entrance was made into the new Novitiate. In various squadrons the Novices and students advanced with Frs. Lenotti, Vincent Vignola, and Marchesini.<sup>132</sup> Along with the Very Reverend Father Prepositus, all the Fathers of the Stimmate, and all the Brothers that could took part in all this. Father Prepositus imparted the blessing of the new House, and Rev. Fr. Peter Vignola celebrated the Holy Mass in the provisory chapel<sup>133</sup>, with songs that echoed through our students, invoking the protection of Mary and Joseph. All also remained here in the Novitiate, and there was a common meal served in joyful companionship, with the continuous renewal of thanksgiving to the Lord, to the Holy Spouses and to the Father Prepositus, who did so much and worked so hard for this building. Following dinner, Fr. Peter delivered a fitting discourse for the occasion, after which the **Te Deum** was sung, and then there was the singing of a number of songs in honor of Mary and Joseph and St. Aloysius, not only in the Chapel, but through the cloisters, concluding with the old favorite: 'O world! You are no longer for me!' In summary, it was a consolation, a joy, with much rejoicing, a continuous sentiment of gratitude. May the Holy Spouses now think of filling this Novitiate with spirit and with subjects, and to keep it from every difficulty and plot...*

Fr. Lenotti's account ends here, so full of holy joy. It seemed that the Holy Spouses did begin immediately to hear the many prayers to send other candidates: among the new arrivals, we will remember two young men, Pius Gurisatti and James Marini, who made their entrance on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of this same month of November.

**111.** Before leaving this matter, let us recall another fact relating to it. In a room on the lower floor in the new building, there was placed on a niche a rather heavy statue representing the Blessed Mother with the Infant in her arms. The statue was quite old. In 1663, on May 13<sup>th</sup>, it had been discovered closed in between the wall of the Convent and had been placed for veneration, placing it on the niche. Our Confreres found it for the first time when they entered the Novitiate in 1857, and from that time on they had held it in great veneration: even after the new construction, they had left it on the same niche. However, when the 13<sup>th</sup> of May had come in the year 1863, they thought to celebrate it with a bit more solemnity, the second centenary of its re-discovery. On that occasion, Fr. Lenotti writes:

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<sup>132</sup> Fr. Lenotti was the Director of the House and the Master of Novices. Fr. DaPrato was the Econumus. Frs. Vignola and Marchesini were teachers. There were three Professed Clerics: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro and Louis Morando. There were four Novice students: Dominic Vicentini, Andrew Sterza, Joseph DeVei and Joseph Sembianti. This last mentioned entered as a cleric on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October.

There were furthermore, 4 Coadjutor Brothers: Paul Zanoli, infirmarian and wardrobe keeper; Anthony Nicora, tailor and porter; Joseph Realì, cook and Joseph Biasi, cobbler.

And lastly, there were 5 aspirants: Egidio Gervasi, Bartholomew Perazzani, Paul Senter, Lawrence Pizzini and Anthony Caucigh.

<sup>133</sup> The Domestic Chapel was not yet completed: so, for more than a year another room had to be used as a chapel, and precisely that one that was at the end of the corridor on the upper floor.

*... the statue was restored and adorned even more. With the presence of the Fathers of the Stimmat, Fr. Vincent Vignola delivered a beautiful discourse on what was happening: the Litany of Loreto was sung, and some of the brother students offered some of their poetic compositions, and there followed the blessing with the relic. The dinner was provided for all, also for the Fathers and Brothers of the Stimmat...*

On that occasion, there was also placed on the wall this following inscription:

This image of Mary was found on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1663, hidden in the wall and placed here in this manner.

Now, with the second centenary of its re-discovery occurring, the statue was restored and acclaimed the Madonna of this Novitiate of the Apostolic Missionaries.

May 13, 1863.

Finally, in December of that same year, there was brought to an end the construction in the Chapel: Bishop di Canossa was invited to bless it, and he celebrated the first Mass there on December 10<sup>th</sup>: on that occasion, he was conducted through the house to see it. For the main altar, there was hung a painting representing the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, receiving the prayers of the young students: this was the work of the painter, Recchia, who in the painting faithfully represented five of the young Novice students.<sup>134</sup>

**112.** Meanwhile, up until May of that same year of 1863, the Municipal Government of Verona had invited the owners of the houses occupied by the soldiers to stipulate new contracts of rent and more modest rates, or to simply keep for themselves the properties. Fr. Benciolini chose this latter alternative and this would leave the Convent of the *Dereletti* open and free. However, the Nuns at St. Dominic's on May 23rd had already stipulated a new Contract with the Municipal Government leaving to him the use of St Teresa's Convent for 1500 florins a year. Fr. Benciolini once more appealed to Bishop di Canossa, pointing out that the ceding of the Convent could not be called 'forced' but voluntary and that therefore on the basis of their Contract of 1830, the Nuns had lost the use of the property. He asked however, that there should pass over to him all the monies received from his own property, or that the Nuns by rescinding their contract with the Municipal Government should transfer the college of the young girls to St. Teresa's. On March 15, 1864, the Bishop responded, defending the Nuns' position, because the military occupation had been temporary. And they could also perceive the financial allotments during the period of their absence from the property, because their right for its use all that time remained. Fr. Benciolini sought for authorization to bring the matter before a civil tribunal, but the Bishop denied him permission, counseling him rather to appeal to the Holy See.

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<sup>134</sup> The two who are standing are Pius Gurisatti, on the right [under the Blessed Virgin]; Louis Morando is on the left. Below, kneeling, from right to left, are Cajetan Nardelli, Dominic Vicentini and Bartholomew Perazzani.

On August 31<sup>st</sup> 1864, Fr. Bernardine of Vicenza, erected the Way of the Cross, in the corridor which is just before the Chapel. They remained there until 1911, when our students returned to live in the Novitiate.

So recourse to the Sacred Congregation of the Council was made. In the letter of August 20<sup>th</sup>, sought the opinion of the Bishop of Verona. As was natural, in his response of February 14, 1865, confirmed his sentence already communicated to the Stigmatines. We do not know what was the ultimate decision of the Holy See: we know only that in 1865, our Fathers sent to Rome all the documentation relative to this matter. In the meantime, there took place the occupation of the Venetian Provinces on the part of the Italian Government and the Law of confiscation of religious goods on July 7, 1866. Most likely, this thorny question remained unresolved. But, now let us return to our own history.

**113.** On June 12, 1864, Fr. Marani celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his Priestly Ordination: this was a day of festivity for the entire Congregation. They wanted to give public testimony to their sentiments of the love and gratitude that they felt in his regard. Fr. Bragato was present for the celebration as he wanted to assist at the Mass in the quality of a protector. In the evening, they held a solemn 'academy' with the presence of many notable persons both from the ranks of the clergy as well as of the laity, and in this they performed for the first time the festive chant, *Onward, Brothers!* which was prepared for the occasion by the Maestro Gagliardi.

In this same month of June, Fr. Marani went to Trent to continue the negotiations for a foundation in that city: along its general lines, the matter had already been decided, and the thought came to seek the permission of the Imperial Government. About this time, our Fathers began preaching both Parish Missions as well as Retreats in Trent, in Rovereto, and in other places of the diocese. AN advantage was immediately experienced in the numerous vocations who came forward in those areas. Already in 1862, Lawrence Pizzini and Joseph Sembianti entered from Trent. In 1863, there were Richard Tabarelli, Cajetan Nardelli and Brother Amadio Caresia. In 1864, Alexis Magagna, Lawrence Rigatti came, not even to mention others, both students and brothers, who, however, after a brief time, returned home.

And other young men had entered in this period from the Venetian Provinces, among whom we recall here Michael Lanaro, Angelo Graziani, Bonaventure Vivaldi. Fr. Lenotti's wish was being fulfilled a little at a time: the Holy Spouses were blessing the new Novitiate.

The old veterans in the vineyard, who had suffered so much for the good of the Congregation, could now happily sing their ***Now dismiss your servant ...*** and to go forward and receive the reward of their sustained efforts. On February 26, '864, Fr. Innocent Venturini – the great lover of Mary and zealous catechist died. He had been one of Fr. Bertoni's earliest companions. However, the Lord chose to compensate for his loss, and on St. Francis' feast Fr. Thomas Vicentini entered, from San Massimo, near Verona, who had served as a Curate at Bonferraro.

In 1865, our Fathers went to preach a series of Parish Missions also in the Dioceses of Adria, and from there, they brought back with them the young student Bellino Carrara. At that same time, Cajetan Pizzighella of Verona entered, Melchiade Vivari and Joseph Zandonai both Trentines. On January 12, 1865 Brother James Zadra, likewise from the Diocese of Trent. Fr. Lenotti described him in these terms:

‘after he had waged combat for his Sovereign on earth, now he dedicates himself to the service of the King of Heaven.’

In the meantime, precisely on March 12, 1864, Francis Sogaro had been ordained a priest. On August 15, 1865, Joseph Sembianti was also ordained. So, the number of the workers in the vineyard of the Lord was increasing. Fr. Sogaro began from the Festival of St. Peter’s in 1865 as a collaborator with Fr. Benciolini in St. Stephen’s Parish. In this manner, Fr. DaPrato was freed, and on July 27<sup>th</sup>, he was named Master of Novices, taking over from Fr. Lenotti who had become Prefect of Studies.<sup>135</sup>

**114.** In April of the following year 1866, the response from the Imperial Government came down, which permitted the foundation of a House of the Congregation in Trent, with the condition that there might be maintained a secure financial support and that the Government or the Region would never be bothered by this. This permission had arrived just at the right time, because very disturbing storms were being prepared on the horizon for Verona and for other regions of northern Italy.

As a result of the war declared by Prussia against Austria, also Italy on June 19<sup>th</sup> declared war against Austria on June 10<sup>th</sup>, for the conquest of the Venetian Provinces. So, once again these territories were invaded and devastated by troops. The two armies met in battle at Custozza on June 24 of this same month of June, and the battle was very bloody. For many weeks, there were seen entering Verona carriages full of terribly wounded men, of every nationality: Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Rumenians and Slavs. They would be brought to one or other of the more than 34 Military Hospitals that had been hastily set up in the more spacious Churches, or in other public buildings throughout the city.

In this situation, our men offered themselves both for the physical and spiritual well being of these unfortunate human beings: three Brothers were invited by the Municipal Government each night to the Hospital of St. Mary’s to assist these wounded, while the Fathers went one to one hospital and another to a different one [especially to the one at the building dedicated to the Angels] in order to administer the Holy Sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. So, also in these very sad circumstances, the Confreres had occasion to exercise their zeal and to dedicate themselves for the good of souls.

**115.** Around this time, death came to cut off two noble lives in the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity. On June 11<sup>th</sup>, after an illness of only a few days, at the age of 73, Brother Paul Zanolì died in the kiss of the Lord. He had been the inseparable companion of the Father Founder, whose tireless and loving care has assisted him in those long and painful infirmities. Fr. Lenotti noted on this occasion.

*... He was mature for heaven. We have lost so much, and our Congregation will find a great emptiness, with Brother Paul now gone. But we hope we have gained a good protector up there in heaven...*

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<sup>135</sup> In this regard, we will remember that on July 20, 1866, there began in the Novitiate the study of St. Thomas, in common with our young students and priests, in the manner of the way that the Founder used to conduct the theological conferences in the old days at the Stimate.

Two months later, the angelic young man, Anthony Caucigh died. He was a Student Novice who left among us a dear memory and so many noble examples of virtue. Once more, Fr. Lenotti records this unhappy event:

*... precisely on the 11<sup>th</sup> of the month of August, a Saturday, during the Novena dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, to whom he was much devoted, and of Blessed John Berchmans, his protector. His companions literally wept over this bitter loss. And for us, how displeasing is the loss of a young man, of such beautiful hopes! Let us bow down our heads to adore the Divine Providence, which is likewise gently evening taking from us for heaven such chosen lilies. Under one aspect, it would be right to tell the truth: his was an enviable death and this has greatly consoled us...*

**116.** In the meantime, the war had also been suspended, and Austria through Napoleon III, had ceded the Venetian Provinces: within a short time, the Italian Government would take possession of Verona. In the foresight that the new Government would also extend into its new provinces the law of suppression which had just shortly before been approved, Fr. Marani on the vigil of the Assumption, made his way to Trent in order to hurry along the protracted negotiations for a House of the Congregation there, and to put in some safety, if it were possible, our young students. His Excellency, Bishop Riccabona offered to house them in his palace of Villazzano, while the Reverend Bernard Fusari, placed at their disposal for some weeks his college property, until the entire contingent of students could be transferred to Villazzano. And thus, the migration began, and was carried out from August 17-20<sup>th</sup>. Our students remained in Fr. Fusari's building until St. Bartholomew's day, with furniture sent from Verona, and they transported everything to that place, where they were consoled for some days with the presence of the Father Prepositus who had with such swiftness arranged for all this. The Bishop himself came, and every once in a while, he would drop in for a visit and to console all with his person.<sup>136</sup>

After a few days, Fr. Marani returned to Verona, but he would return for the first time to Villazzano, and then also a second, on September 19<sup>th</sup>, for the purpose of conducting a Canonical Visitation of the House, and give some instructions, as he did<sup>137</sup>.

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<sup>136</sup> To maintain the union of spirit and of charity with the Brothers in Verona, there would be sent from Villazzano a Community Newsletter that would come out every 15 days, with the title *New Tyrolean Messenger*. The first edition came out on December 15, of that year 1866.

<sup>137</sup> The following was the distribution of the personnel for this rather large community in exile: Fr. John B. Lenotti, Director and Prefect of Studies; Fr.. Vincent Vignola. On October 23<sup>rd</sup>, Fr. Richard DaPrato arrived as Novice Master.

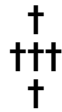
There were these Professed Students: Louis Morando, Lawrence Pizzini, Dominic Vicentini, Andrew Sterza, Bartholomew Perazzani, Pius Gurisatti, James Marini, Alexis Magagna, Bellino Carrara, James Setti [who left that October].

The Aspirants were: George Sabeditsch [from Prague], Angelo Graziani, Bonaventure Vivaldi, Melchiade Vivari, Joseph Zandonai, Cajetan Pizzighella, and Louis Gasperotti who had entered in Verona on June 6<sup>th</sup>].

Finally, the Brothers were: James Zadra, cook and porter; David Chiesa, tailor; Joseph Biasi, cobbler.

Fifty years had passed since the Venerated Founder had withdrawn into the Stimate. Fr. Lenotti made note of this in the House Chronicle:

*...The First Sunday of November, the 4th of this month, there was celebrated in our Congregation, both in Verona as well as here at Villazzano, in Trent, the Golden Jubilee of this small Congregation, by thanking God with all our heart and the Holy Spouses, for the mercy given to us and for the multiplied ineffable graces, both past and present, extended to this Congregation. May the Name of the Lord be blessed, from now and forever...!*





### Chapter 3

## THE TERRIBLE TEMPEST

### [1866-1873]

**117.** The War of 1866 was concluded with the Peace of Vienna, on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. ON the 9<sup>th</sup> of the same month, there was conducted the decided upon ceding of the Venetian Provinces to the new Reign of Italy. On the day that the Italian troops entered Verona [October 16<sup>th</sup>], our Fathers, too, exposed the three-colored flag on the houses of their property, and on the bell tower of the Stimate. Two weeks earlier, as a measure of precaution, the Stigmatines removed the Rosary which up until that time had hung from their sashes, and assumed the little cape, in the style of Diocesan Priests<sup>138</sup>.

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<sup>138</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** if the truth be told, Fr. Bertoni had legislated that there was no religious habit for Stigmatines: cf. Compendium Rude:

**6. The Means [to be employed]:**

The [spiritual] perfection of each one.

Perfection in ecclesiastical doctrines.

Common Life

The perpetual exercise of obedience, chastity and poverty in all aspects.

The program of living regarding food, clothing and lodging, will be in harmony with the more observant clergy among whom the Missionaries live, and for the edification of the faithful, both regarding Christian parsimony and evangelical poverty.

A bit of Commentary:

**CF # 32:** the novitiate should begin with the candidate in some religious garb, in a separate dwelling with the Master of Novices under the customary discipline and the exercise of the prescribed activities]. This does not seem to mean any specific religious "habit", already handled in the Compendium Rude, ## 6; under poverty, CF ## 43; 91; 94; and especially CF # 137, under exterior modesty for chastity]. **CF # 32: The Novitiate will begin in religious garb, in a place, or dwelling separated from the members of the community, under a Master of Novices, and in the traditional discipline and exercise of prescribed activities.** # 7: The Promotion of the Grades of Membership: Promotion, in general is found in **CF Part V, ## 69-82.**

- regarding the "Professed": in **MssB ## 9848 & 9849**, this is **# 11**: this is promotion to the supreme priestly work, the "apostolic mission" - whereas, the promotion of the Students in found in **CF, Part VIII, ## 152-157**; the specific promotion to "Profession" is found in CF Part IX, ## 158-186.

- regarding the promotion of the other members, in **MssB 9848 & 9849**, this is **#**

**12.**

The fact that the Founder did not legislate a particular habit, comes under Fr. Bertoni's ideal: **Perfection of One Self [CF 6 a]:** each one's spiritual perfection: through common life; the perpetual exercise of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty; the manner of living regarding food, clothing, a dwelling in harmony with that of **the more perfect members of the clergy** [*honestas clericalis*] according to the various places and for the edification of the faithful, as well as pertaining to Christian parsimony and evangelical poverty. In this, he followed St. Ignatius:

Religious Habit: also in what pertains to food, clothing, and other external things, they will follow the common and approved usage of reputable priests – so that if anything is subtracted in this regard in accordance with one's need or desire in spiritual progress, it may be offered, as will be

In September of that year there had broken out in Palermo a kind of popular revolution. The population of that city was already in ferment for some time, and became further irritated by the Law of Suppression of Religious Orders, approved by the two Houses of Government, and promulgated on July 7<sup>th</sup>. One reason was that in the strength of that law, thousands of families which previously had been maintained by religious now remained without any means of living.<sup>139</sup>

The upheaval had been prepared therefore, in secret, with printed leaflets hostile to the Government, and in then broke out into the open on the morning of September 16<sup>th</sup> with the cry: *Long Live the republic!* And they had been able to take over government offices even until the 22<sup>nd</sup>, having set up a provisory Government. The real blame for this upheaval falls on those who imposed on the nation its agenda in order to govern it according to their lights: however, the sectarians, the liberals, and some government workers themselves seized upon this occasion in order to calumniate and persecute those whom they wanted to oppress. They claimed that the Clergy had wanted to attempt a great *coup*, with the view to this Law of Oppression, and that in the hidden placers of these religious houses they had prepared financial support and even weapons. And with the hope of discovering proofs for these accusations they conducted very rigorous invasions into Religious Houses, not only in Palermo, but throughout Italy and also in Verona.

The night of October 24-25, the Jesuit Residence and that of the Sons of Mary were invaded, and on the morning of the 25th, also that of the Stigmatines. Fr. Lenotti has recorded this:

*... They came to the Stimate at 9:45 a.m., numbering about 20, between Carabinieri and workers, to conduct a rigorous investigation, for the purpose of seeing if there were in our house any Jesuits or papers relating to the upheavals in Palermo. They did not find anything, as they had to admit in the verbal process. the invasion was conducted in a kind manner, and with courtesy. However, despite this declaration found in the Verbal Process, nonetheless a certain note was placed on the files to the effect that our Confreres did have some connection with the events in Palermo...*<sup>140</sup>

**118.** Already from July 8<sup>th</sup>, as we have already hinted, the Law of Suppression of religious Orders had already been approved, and included the confiscation of their goods. This Law also struck the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family to whom had

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fitting, out of devotion and not obligation, as a reasonable service of the body to God [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.]: ... *Obsecro itaque vos, fratres, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum...*

The norm here is *honestas clericalis* - in its ultimate purpose, this is meant to be a norm referring to the *Apostolic Missionary austerity of life*. For the Jesuit perspective, cf. Luis Gonzalez, SJ, Il 'Modus Procedendi' della Compagnia', in: La Formula del Istituto SJ. ROMA: CIS 1977, pp. 119, ff.

<sup>139</sup> In the city of Palermo, religious maintained more than 3000 citizens. Cf. Balan, *History of the Church*.

<sup>140</sup> One result of this investigation was the Fr. Marani, in order to remove even the suspicion of any communication with foreign governments, put to flames the precious correspondence between Fr. Bragato and Fr. Bertoni, as these letters were conserved in the Archives of the Stimate.

been granted the use of St. Teresa's Convent. Fr. Benciolini, as a result, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, and also because he did not hold that it was the Sisters' property as it clearly belonged to him, at the beginning of 1867 appealed to the Municipal Government of Verona, and then to the Office of Military Intelligence, that St. Teresa's Convent might be freed just as soon as possible. And as he awaited the execution of his request and the emptying out of the Convent, the Royal Department of Finances, by Decree of April 20, sent this on to a higher Court because it considered St. Teresa's as belonging to a suppressed religious community. Fr. Benciolini immediately submitted a solemn appeal against that point of view: therefore, through the good offices of Fr. Rigoni, the Procurator General of the Congregation, on May 14<sup>th</sup>, presented a recourse to the Higher Administration of for Worship in Florence, asking for the property to be returned.

Contemporaneously Fr. Rigoni had written to Honorable Miniscalchi in Florence, begging that some help be given so that this might hasten the solution of this entanglement, adding that the Convent needed some repairs soon, since from 1859 on, it had been occupied by the Austrian Army. In fact, in order to obtain more easily that which he sought, Fr. Rigoni thought about going in person to Florence. He left the 1st day of June and arrived there, and treated of the matter personally with the Director of the Higher Administration for Worship, and then for a long time, with the Secretary of the same office, Sir James Muzzo. To put it briefly, the Administration was indeed disposed to restore the property, and only in obedience to a government circular dated February 16, 1866, a reservation was made first to obtain more exact information from the Mayor of Verona. However, after the conversation had with Fr. Rigoni, this condition was also revoked, being content to ask the Mother Superior of the Sisters, whether if on her part, she had no objection that the property be returned to its rightful owner.<sup>141</sup>

Fr. Rigoni, before leaving from Florence, spoke again with Sir Muzzo also about our Congregation and for every good purpose give him a note [and he assumed it as information that had come to him] that the Congregation of the Stimate in Verona had never received any Decree of Approbation, no approved Rules, did not have a common life. Sir Muzzo, in dismissing him, said to Fr. Rigoni that he would intervene personally if there was ever any need of clarifications, or for anything else: because of this, Fr. Rigoni profited by his good will, writing to him repeatedly from Verona, to solicit the solution of this matter. And Sir Muzzo kept his word and did intervene personally on behalf of the Stigmatines: on August 7<sup>th</sup>, the Finance Department notified Fr. Rigoni that the Higher Administration for Worship would as soon as possible comply with his request: and would have actually given back the Convent, as appears also from an official document from that same Administration, dated September 7<sup>th</sup> of that year. However, in the meantime, the City Treasurer of Verona disturbed the waters, as we will see in a little while.

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<sup>141</sup> In fact, she was interrogated on August 4<sup>th</sup>, of that year 1867, and responded that on her part, she was not opposed to this decision.

**119.** Meanwhile, in Villazzano the Community was getting along as best it could. Far from all the entanglements, amid fear and hope, the Community attended to study and to prayer, begging the Holy Spouses that they might indeed protect the little Congregation, and to send to it many and good workers<sup>142</sup>.

In 1867, the March devotions were observed with extraordinary fervor: at the end of the month, Fr. Marani was also present, and on that occasion there was offered an 'academy' of poetry, a kind of a higher level local talent-show. Fr. Marani returned again to Villazzano for the celebration of the Patronage of St. Joseph, which was also solemnly celebrated and preceded by a Triduum of sermons offered by the Novices.

Also on that occasion, another one of the demonstrations, called an 'academy', was offered in honor of St. Joseph: Richard Tabarelli, who on that day had celebrated his Profession, preached a sermon honoring St. Joseph which moved all who heard it. Finally, at the end of the Scholastic Year [during the first half of August], Fr. Marani was a third time at Villazzano and took part in the examinations of which he was quite pleased.

The Fathers of the House, in addition to being occupied in teaching school, like those in Verona, also remained committed to other works of the sacred Ministry, and most particularly, that of preaching. Fr. Vincent Vignola already from the previous November, taught Catechism on Sundays, and in company with Fr. Lenotti, preached frequent Missions and Retreats, both in the city of Trent, and in other places of the Diocese. They thus corresponded in such a manner with the high hopes of Bishop Riccabona who had called our Confreres there for the good of the local populace.<sup>143</sup> At the same time those Fathers of ours were committed to the youth of Villazzano and the neighboring villages, for which they had opened an Oratory, and Sunday recreation center: and on the occasion of the Christmas holidays, following the example of the House of Verona, they organized a recital performed before the Christmas crib.

However, still another harsh trial tormented the men from this year in the Community of Villazzano: the young students of the Venetian Provinces were drafted into the military service. There was much trepidation for all when some of them had to leave to go and take their enrollment procedures: the Lord, however, and the Holy Spouses protected them visibly: since among those young men, only Bartholomew Perazzani was declared eligible, and he, too, found a generous benefactor, who paid the sum required which liberated him from military service.

And there were other signs of His protection which the Lord gave: on November 21, 1868, on the Vigil of the Patronage of the Virgin Mary, Fr. Peter Beltrami, and

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<sup>142</sup> From the very early days that the Community was in Villazzano, Julius Zanini and Anthony Oss-Balss entered: however, in February 1867, Cajetan Nardelli left. On the following day, there was celebrated a Mass honoring St. Joseph, to obtain good vocations. [A note in Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle].

<sup>143</sup> In 1875, Bishop Haller, the Coadjutor of Bishop Riccabona, gave this testimony honoring our men: The Priests of this Congregation who are found in this Diocese, distinguish themselves for the holiness of their lives, as for the zeal that they show for the good of souls, so much so that they enjoy a good reputation both among the priests, as well as among the faithful.

ordained Priest, chaplain of the Judiciary entered. He was brought to Verona to make his Novitiate there<sup>144</sup>.

**120.** But let us return now to Verona where a very disturbing event occurred. On August 27<sup>th</sup>, as Fr. Lenotti recorded in his Chronicle:

*... at noon, there appeared at the Stimate, two government agents, from the Finance Ministry, the other from the Municipal Government. Their goal was to sequester all the substance of the Congregation possessed by Fr. Benciolini: in accord with their message, they were ready to take force, and they wanted to complete this sequester, sealing some rooms, and on the morrow, they went to the Dereletti and then to the Most Holy Trinity. May Your Will be done in all: may the Name of the Lord be blessed. The Lord will not abandon us: the Holy Spouses will think of how to sustain this, their Congregation...!*

Fr. Benciolini issued a formal protest on that same day, stating that all those goods were his own private property: and then, without delay, he had recourse to the Royal Pretor of Verona and of Soave, asking to be readmitted into possession of his goods. Meanwhile, Fr. Rigoni went to Florence to take up the matter personally with the Higher Administration for Worship. But, he was able to accomplish nothing, and on October 4<sup>th</sup>, a Mr. Vanzetti, a representative of the Finance Ministry presented himself, ordering the departure within two weeks of all three houses where our men were living. There were left for them only 4 rooms on the upper floor at the Stimate; two at the Dereletti, for six priests who had to take care of the both Churches, in addition to the kitchen and the refectory on the ground floor.

To no avail had Fr. Benciolini's previous recourse been advanced, nor was there any effect of a new appeal being made by Fr. Marani to the Ministry of Worship, in order to receive even a temporary stay in the executive decisions that had been made nor nothing regarding the order of evacuating the House. Fr. Rigoni's third trip to Florence also proved fruitless. He merely stated the impossibility of finding a fitting lodging within the time allotted, and so did obtain a delay until the end of the month of that October.

On the 29<sup>th</sup>, our Fathers and Brothers were separated into various Houses, and the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity had to be totally abandoned.<sup>145</sup> At the Stimate, Fathers Bassi, Pl. Vignola, Rigoni and Thomas Vicentini, with Brothers Reali, Rigoni and Raffaelli, were to live<sup>146</sup>. At the Dereletti, Frs. Benciolini and Sogaro, with Brothers Nicora and Amadio Caresia remained<sup>147</sup>. At the Pozza home were Fathers Marchesini

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<sup>144</sup> In that November 1867, the Cleric Stephen Oss-Balls entered. He made his Novitiate in Verona and was ordained a Priest on January 10, 1869. However, a little after this, because of some Masonic threats and other difficulties, he had to return home.

<sup>145</sup> This locale was then given to the Municipal Government, in order to convert it into a provincial boarding house. This is according to the Minutes of the taking possession of the building.

<sup>146</sup> Brother Joseph Reali would die a year later on November 15, 1800. Brothers John Raffaelli together with Joseph Biasi, left in June 1870.

<sup>147</sup> Brother Caresia died on January 26, 1868 after three months from the time he was found in that House. Let us recall here that Fr. Marani in 1866 had torn down a part of the old building of the Dereletti, and had begun the construction of the new Church, which in 1867, were suspended. Meanwhile our Fathers continued to officiate in the old Church which was still standing.

and Zara<sup>148</sup>, with Brothers Falsi and Creazi. Fr. Marani would take up residence within the Parish of St. Nicholas, in the home of his widowed niece, who accepted him lovingly with Brother Ferrari and Fr. Sembianti.

On October 31, once again the government agent, Mr. Vanzetti once again appeared to be sure that the evacuation of our Confreres had been completed. From him, was received the granting [on the strength of a declaration] of the furniture necessary for ten priests, who earlier had been lodged in the three houses, and for ten seculars who attended to the care of the House. Fr. Peter Vignola, in the name of Fr. Marani, signed the declaration of a receipt for these objects, and for some books which were granted to their use: with this, however, our Confreres made it clear that this action did not intend to admit to the formal pre-existence of a Congregation that would fall under this Decree of Suppression. They also reserved every exception, even to the rights of the owner. On that occasion, Fr. Vignola also rented for one year the Garden of the Stimate for 50 Lira.

**121.** In the meantime, every recourse to the Prefectures of Verona and of Soave, forwarded by Fr. Benciolini remained useless. He thought then, of having recourse through an administrative avenue: and he addressed himself to the Higher Administration for Worship in Florence with a documented declaration of his reason and his rightful ownership, and asked for the removal of the freeze on his assets. However, that Administration only listened to the opinion of its own Counsel, in an Audience granted January 4, 1868, and rejected his request, declaring that it held that the reasons of ownership that he advanced, were unfounded.

All that remained now was to have recourse to the Courts, sustaining his ownerships rights over the goods that had been sequestered. However, it did not seem that it would help at all to have any recourse to the local courts which were because of the enthusiasm of their imposed public opinion, and they were at best suspect. Fr. Benciolini, then, had recourse to the Civil Court and the Court of Appeals in Florence, and with a citation of May 4, 1868, he called to appear before it the Royal Government and the General Administration for Worship. However, since the Cause promoted by him did not fall under the competence of that tribunal, he did not include his claim for the restitution of his goods, contesting to initiate only a ***personal** action*, i.e., to prove the non-applicability of the Law of July 7, 1866 in his case. However, his adversaries, leaving aside the merits of his appeal, maintained that the conclusions presented by him really from the perspective of the law, involved a ***real** action*, that was the exclusive competence of the local courts: nonetheless, after desperate struggles and efforts that were more lucky than capable [!]. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of August, the tribunal declared their own incompetence to treat the case. Fr. Benciolini had recourse to the Court of Appeal in Florence, which on March 11, 1869, confirmed the first sentence: and he finally had recourse to the Court of Cassation also in Florence, which on December 2<sup>nd</sup> of that same year, annulled the two previous decisions and sent the case back to the Court of Appeals of Lucca. Fr. Benciolini had recourse to that Court on May 27, 1870, but this tribunal once more declared its own incompetence, on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June of that same year.

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<sup>148</sup> Fr. Zara had been ordained a Priest on March 16<sup>th</sup> in Verona.

**122.** Here let us pause a bit to consider the sad situation of our Confreres in unfortunate time. They were deprived of the income required for their own sustenance, deprived even of laundry, clothing and even of books. They would have almost had to give up their ideal of their life together as a Community, and to send all the promising young students home, if Divine Providence had not intervened by sending them help. And the instrument of Providence for them on that occasion was Fr. Bragato who through the benevolence of the Empress was able to send them what they needed.<sup>149</sup>

Nonetheless, in the midst of such manifest signs of God's protection, there were not lacking also at the same time circumstances that brought these men continuing bitterness. Cast out of their own houses, and confined to the Stimate in a corner of the building<sup>150</sup>, they had to witness the bigger and better part of it as well as St. Teresa's Convent occupied by a college of young girls, and these undertakings were in such contrast with their own life-style. They were further threatened with the closure of the Church of the Stimate, and the consequent expulsion of the officiating Priests. They were continuously exposed to vexations, sometimes sweetened with flattery of them, but often enough, sheer mockery. The idea was to wear them down, and reduce them to reaching some accord. In a struggle with an adversary who abused the total authority it had, and to bend the law to its own liking, and that had at its disposal unjust and prejudiced judges, they saw themselves being forced to lay aside their own rights, to their immense disturbance and expense, and with very little hope of ever being given a fair trial, with the well-founded fear that they would eventually lose their entire patrimony. Nonetheless, based on their faith in a heavenly protection, they remained resolved to sustain their cause to the very end, and at least be able to save their conscience and honor.

**123.** And all this while they continued to busy themselves in the works of the ministry and to do good to the souls that came under their care.<sup>151</sup> By now, also other workers were ready. Additional young men were ready to be ordained: however, after the sequester of the entire patrimony of the Congregation, how could the Community still be ordaining Clerics, with the canonical title of *Common Table* ? As a result, Fr. Marani had recourse once more to the Holy See, on May 1, 1869, exposing the facts, and petitioning for the faculty of ordaining his clerics anyway. This faculty was granted to him on August 7<sup>th</sup> of that same year. And right away, Louis Morando was promoted to orders, and on November 30<sup>th</sup>, he was ordained a priest. And in 1871, Fr. Andrew Sterza, Fr. Dominic Vicentini and Fr. Michael Lanaro were ordained.

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<sup>149</sup> When the Empress heard the news of the sequester of the goods of the Congregation, she wrote to Fr. Marani telling him that she was disposed to assist him in all that he desired: being overwhelmed by her goodness, so he proposed to her, that as much she could, to maintain our students at Villazzano: this she accepted to do and she did maintain them for the entire time that this awful legal battle went on.

<sup>150</sup> Our Confreres occupied the upper rooms of the corridor from the two libraries, and their entrance was from the Vicolo of the Stimate, near the bell tower.

<sup>151</sup> In 1871, in a document addressed to the Holy See, His Eminence, Cardinal Louis di Canossa, wrote of our Congregation: they obtain excellent spiritual results, especially with their Parish Missions and Retreats. Thus, in this my Diocese, as well as in its counter-part, as in the Diocese of Trent, where it also has a House, there is retained in it an excellent spirit, most healthy thinking and an authentic zeal of selflessness for souls.

Fr. Marani was living then, as has been said, with his niece in St. Nicholas' Parish. Due to his long-lasting disturbances and for the continuous and serious problems he faced, saw him sensibly going downhill. In 1869, on the 9<sup>th</sup> of August, he experienced grace discomfort even trying to move about the house, especially in the morning hours. So, he asked and received from the Holy See permission to set up there in the Massalongo home a private oratory with permission to celebrate Mass there, or to have it celebrated by a Priest, and to receive Holy Communion. In 1870, also in August, his state of health worsened so much so that he was considered to be in danger of death, and the Last Sacraments were administered to him. Also this time his health slowly came back, but his strength was strongly shaken. The following year, 1871, in the hot summer months, once more he was reduced to the extremes. After a brief illness, he fell asleep in the Lord, on the **1<sup>st</sup> day of July at the age of 81**. He had been a zealous and tireless worker in promoting God's glory and the good of the Congregation, and his death was mourned by all the sons of the Congregation, as the death of a Father.

**124.** On the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of July, the Fathers of the Congregation assembled for the General Chapter, in order to elect a successor to Fr. Marani. Keeping in mind the exceptional circumstances in which the Institute found itself, the Capitulars decided to elect a temporary Superior who would remain in office until September 17<sup>th</sup>. Fathers Rigoni, Lenotti and Peter Vignola were entrusted to prepare a Statute in order to determine the manner and the limits of the Superior General's Government in those points in which the Venerated Founder had not left anything in writing. Fr. Lenotti was elected as the temporary Superior.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of September of the same year, the Second General Chapter convened. In this there was discussed and approved the plan presented on the Manner of Government for the Superior General with the title: ***Appendix to the 12<sup>th</sup> Part of the Constitutions***<sup>152</sup>. In this, among other stipulations, it was decided that, for the future, at General Chapters, only those Fathers who had received the '**Grade of Apostolic Missionary**' from the Superior General, could participate. Furthermore, the length of term for the Superior General was established to be for life. However, because of the circumstances in which the Institute presently found itself it was decided for this first time to elect him only for five years, and then the Chapter went on to re-confirm Fr. Lenotti up until January 23, 1872.

Then, on October 4<sup>th</sup>, the Third General Chapter was convened and Fr. Lenotti was elected for five years. He was given as his Councilors Frs. Peter Vignola, DaPrato, Benciolini and Rigoni<sup>153</sup>. This last mentioned was also named Procurator

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<sup>152</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** an English translation of this document appears under the heading of the 'General Chapters', with this title of *Appendix* ...

<sup>153</sup> Consequent to the elections of Frs. Lenotti and DaPrato, at Villazzano Fr. Vincent Vignola was elected Director, and Fr. Mark Bassi, as Master of Novices, and Fr. Morando as Prefect of Studies.,



General. In this Chapter the Superior General was also charged to confer the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary** to be conferred on Fr. Bragato<sup>154</sup>.

<sup>154</sup> The following is something of a record of how the Congregation conferred this ‘Grade’ taken from a copy of the proposed Constitutions of 1889-1890 – the work of a Capitular Commission from 1881-1890:

4. At length, after a Priest member has spent some years in the ecclesiastical ministries, he could be **elevated to the Grade of Apostolic Missionary**. But, no one is to be endowed with this Grade unless he has completed his thirty-fifth year, and ten years of vows in our Sodality.

Moreover, there are required in him besides **outstanding piety, love for regular discipline, and zeal for the salvation of souls**, that he be endowed with **suitable doctrine**, i.e., that he has passed with praise his last exams, after having completed the entire curriculum of theology; also, that he be **of great merit to the Institute**:

Either because he was **engaged in giving the Sacred Missions**; or, **the Spiritual Exercises**; or, for a full three years, he had been the **Director of some House of ours**; or, had been **teacher of the sacred disciplines for four years**<sup>154</sup>; or was **dedicated for many years in instructing the youth**; or, lastly, **he had performed well some other office, or duty for the good of the Sodality**.

The judgment of this merit is absolutely up to the Superior and the General Councilors, who, by a plurality of secret votes, will promote those to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**, who are **endowed with these qualities** we have noted above: they will then announce, by Decree, their promotion to the entire Sodality<sup>154</sup>.

This number would be eliminated when the Holy See informed the Congregation that only the Holy See could confer the title Apostolic Missionary.

This **n. 4** of the adapted Rules provides a **very broad sweep of Ministries** to qualify for the conferral of the **Grade**. It seems to be a “photograph” of the many services a confrere could offer for a number of years, in order to qualify for the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**, as it was conferred during these times of the Stigmatine History. **However, the Deputed Commission eliminates it here.** One possible reason is that these proposed Constitutions had been submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Feb. 20, 1889 – and the title **Apostolic Missionary** was considered the prerogative of the Holy See and should not be given by any religious Community. Furthermore, the title of this Chap. IV, of Part IV, had read: **Concerning those to be promoted to the Sacerdotal Office, and to the Grade of Apostolic Missionary in our Sodality.** The underlined part of this title is eliminated by the Deputed Commission, and does not appear in the final copy approved by the General Chapter.[cf. Fr. Stofella, **Historical Introduction to the Booklet of the Original Constitutions, Terza Fase, pp. 30-32**]. At any rate, there was no discussion of the many services included within the **Apostolic Mission** in order to be considered for promotion to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**.

Fr. Stofella offers the history on this matter in his ‘Introduction’ to the Printed Edition of the *Original Constitutions*, in 1951:

#### The Fourth Phase of the Historical Changes in the Constitutions

This time in Rome, the work was given for examination to Monsignor Albert Battandier, who forwarded his judgment to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and regulars on June 12, 1890. He discarded the name **Apostolic Missionaries** from the outset, since it was an honorary title, the bestowal of which was a prerogative reserved to the sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Instead, he suggested **retaking the name Priests of the Sacred Stigmata**, which the Sacred Congregation later completed – recalling the Decree of Praise – **of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ**. As a natural consequence of this, **there could not be a class of members in the Institute called Apostolic Missionaries, a dignity which**

**125.** One of the first thoughts of the new Superior was to complete the negotiations of the House of Trent: and to prepare everything for a regular foundation there. Therefore in February 1872, he purchased for the price of 40,000 Lira a garden with a dwelling, situated near the city of Trent, in the confines of St. Bernardine Vecchio, with the intention of renovating as a house for our Confreres.

At the same time, **he studied a plan to extend the Congregation**, by establishing some houses outside of Italy: and with this in mind, he approached Monsignor Vermillod, the Bishop of Geneva, making him the proposal of establishing in his Diocese a House of our Congregation. But the Swiss Bishop responded that this was not the most opportune time for such an undertaking, because precisely in those days, the Swiss Catholics had to undergo some very difficult struggles against the Government for the defense of Religious Institutes: therefore, the Bishop counseled Fr. Lenotti to wait for better times<sup>155</sup>.

In the spring of that same year 1872 in Trent, Bishop Riccabona was found to be in failing health due to recurring fainting spells. The doctors counseled him to take some rest in his summer home in Villazzano. It was therefore necessary to place at the disposition of the illustrious patient his summer home, and that the Stigmatines would have to rent another home somewhere, one that would be large enough and comfortable that it might be able to house a religious family. After many negotiations, Fr. Lenotti was able to have for rent a house that would be large enough [property of the Ballarini Family in Trent] situated in Sale' of Povo, on the pleasant hills that rise up

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**the Superior General was to confer on certain professed priests for reasons of prestige and age, and which would automatically make them members of the General Chapters.**

As an alternative, Mons. Battandier proposed that members of the general Chapters be chosen by the elective system. Then, he listed a good number of objections, corrections and deletions to be made, as well as modifications and proposals, all summarized by the sacred Congregation, in 16 *Animadversiones* the last of which again noted that *there are still many other items to be emended, regarding expressions, and phrases...*

This time, however, the Sacred Congregation seconded the vote of its Consultor, *deferring the approval of the Constitutions to another time*, but deciding to *grant the approval of the Institute*. In fact, on **September 15, 1890**, the Sacred Congregation published the **Decree of Approbation of the Institute**.

<sup>155</sup> In this year of 1872, Fr. Lenotti was also in negotiations for a foundation in Udine. But as that Archbishop placed as a condition that one of our Fathers should take over a parish, Fr. Lenotti did not want to accept it, so also that plan ended as naught. **NB: Fr. Lenotti was beginning to broaden the Apostolic Mission much in accord with the *Original Constitutions*: cf. *quocumque* [CF ## 5; &290]:**

**290.** Moreover, as it was stated from the outset, our Congregation does not admit of the ordinary care of souls. This is understood with respect had for any community of seculars, and especially of the monasteries and congregations of religious women. But this is also so that no confrere will accept any ordinary care of singular persons, either men, or especially women, as a personal office, or as an obligation binding both parties, or one of the two, nor accept the obedience of another person.

on the eastern of the city: our Confreres entered there on June 17, and they would remain there for two years.

**126.** But now let us go back to the Benciolini case. After the Sentence of the Court of Appeal of Lucca [July 20 1870], Fr. Benciolini renounced his recourse to the Court of Cassation, had recourse in an administrative manner to the Minister of Grace and Justice, asking for a revision and the reform of the decision of the Higher Administration for Worship and the freeing of its goods. His recourse was presented on September 29, 1870, and for the space of one year there was no response.

However, on September 1, 1871 with the legislative unification, there had been renewed the Venetian Courts and established the publicity of its judgments, and important guarantee for their independence and impartiality. Fr. Benciolini, therefore, on September 3 and 11 cited the Provincial Ministry of Finance and the Administration of the Fund for Worship before the civil and correctional tribunal of Verona, asking that there be restored the goods discussed in the Tribunal Minutes of August 27, 1867 and there would be rendered an account of the properties, paying him restitution for its perceived and perceivable profits, compensating him for the damage, and do on. On the 27<sup>th</sup> of that same month, the case was entrusted to the lawyer, Alexander Brasca of Milan.

The citation was presented with the formulae of the *summary ritual*, a privilege established in favor of the public administration. The Audience took place on November 9<sup>th</sup>: in it, the advocate of the two administrations recused them from treating of the merits of the controversy, rejected the privilege of the *summary ritual*. Then, referring to a broad and ordered series of documents [with which the intent was to prove that Fr. Benciolini was only the apparent owner, whereas in reality, all belonged to the Congregation of the Priests of the Stimmate, existing since the year 1816], the government representative asked that this fact be re-admitted to continue the case with an ordinary process. The tribunal accepted this petition, and rejected the subordinate petition of the plaintiff that pending the process outcome, that there be at least restored to him the administration of his own goods.

Fr. Benciolini in renouncing his appeal, in January 1872 constituted his lawyer and deposited in the chancery the documents of his case: the adversary part did the same, and furthermore, with their instance of February 19<sup>th</sup>, sustained that Fr. Benciolini was no longer the proprietor of these goods, because in 1855, her had transferred that endowment to the Congregation. And this position sought that all this be admitted to prove with witnesses the circumstances contained in the five chapters that it presented.

Fr. Benciolini responded to all this with his official reply of March 12<sup>th</sup>. In this, he denied even that this position of this adversary should even be admitted. The adversary part on May 18<sup>th</sup>, responded to prove its thesis, presented 17 documents, to which Fr. Benciolini responded at his appearance of May 31<sup>st</sup>. Finally, the other side insisted in asking the witness proofs should not be just the five chapters previously submitted, but now that there were 10 chapters. Fr. Benciolini furthered the case for the 15<sup>th</sup> of July before the President of the tribunal. He called for both sides to appear

on September 14<sup>th</sup>, for the resolution of the matter of the proofs, and should the matter come up, also the merits of the case.

Finally, on September 3, there gathered in Verona the Fourth General Chapter of the Congregation, and in it, among other questions, there were these two proposals: (1) Whether there was going to be a stable foundation in Trent. The Chapter responded affirmatively, provided that there would not be a harmful end of the long case that Fr. Benciolini had initiated to get the property restored. (2) Whether the Congregation should accept some transaction from the Government in the case that one might be offered. However, this second proposal was not admitted to the Chapter floor for discussion, as all were persuaded that through Fr. Benciolini's case, all were confident in the heavenly protection that our Confreres would persevere even if no happy resolution were reached.

**127.** On September 14<sup>th</sup>, there took place the Hearing in the Tribunal of Verona: in it, our Lawyer, Attorney Brasca, after having established the admissibility of the 10 chapters presented through testimonial proof [because they were not based on facts, but only on approximations and the reading of 'intentions'], showed that Fr. Benciolini had not lost the ownership of his own goods. In 1854, in fact, he had not ceded the property, but only forwarded an agreement with the Government: this seemed further substantiated by the fact that following this no one else made any claim on those properties. Moreover, the Priests of the Stimmate did not juridically form a religious Congregation, because they had not yet had the approval of the Church.<sup>156</sup>

The Sovereign resolution then of July 14, 1855, had not been an approbation [which only the Ecclesiastical Authorities could grant], but had to be interpreted solely as a permission of subsistence<sup>157</sup>: this document had not created the juridical personality of the Institute, nor did it even have formal recognition, because the Government had no concern for the negotiations in which the Institute was engaged in with the Holy See. As a consequence, since the Congregation did not enjoy a juridical personality, as such it could not own property: and even if Fr. Benciolini had intended to cede to the Institute the ownership of the goods in his own name, such a transferal would have been invalid until this Community was juridically capable of owning.

Thus, in a nut-shell is the position advanced by Attorney Brasca. The adversary party limited itself to insisting on their position established for them in the documents

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<sup>156</sup> On December 17, 1871, Fr. Benciolini petitioned the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars that he wished to declare how the Pious Society of the Priests of the Stimmate in Verona had never been approved, but had always remained a private union: and joined with this juridical 'instance' with a Letter of Recommendation from the Bishop, Louis di Canossa. Cardinal Quaglia, Prefect of that Congregation, responded with his letter of January 16, 1872 to the Bishop of Verona, where he declared that after having reviewed all the acts relative to the Pious Union, known as the *Apostolic Missionaries for the service of Bishops*, established at the Church of the Stimmate, it is clear that even though the above-mentioned Missionaries had forwarded a petition to this Sacred Congregation so that their Society might obtain approval, the plain truth is that this formal Petition had never been admitted, since so far no Decree of Approbation had been emitted. This Letter was then joined to the documents under consideration in the Process.

<sup>157</sup> For the tenor of this Resolution, see above, **BC I, # 92, Note.**

they submitted, in support of their position<sup>158</sup>. To these, Fr. Benciolini had responded in a most thorough manner, as of May 31<sup>st</sup>.

This long case was headed toward a final resolution: the Court on September 20<sup>th</sup> did issue a partial conclusion by admitting the testimonial proofs on the first seven Chapters produced by the adversary lawyers. This partial sentence did deeply disturb our Confreres, and began to circulate how empty it was to entrust the justice of one's true cause to the conscience of government judges. Their sole hope remained in divine protection.<sup>159</sup>

**128.** Being firmly resolved to try every possible avenue, Fr. Benciolini forwarded a citation of November 15<sup>th</sup>, and in this he appealed to the Court of Appeals of Venice. The discussion went on and on in that Court, from January 24<sup>th</sup> until the 31<sup>st</sup>, 1873. The sentence of that Court, dated February 1, was only published on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month. In it, this Court considered that the chapters through testimonial proofs were not dealing with facts, or matters under the clear perception of human senses, but more with impressions, intentions, opinions, and this Court annulled the Sentence of the Court of Verona, and recused the testimonial proofs, directing the parties to continue their Process before the Civil and Correctional Court of Verona.

A first step had been taken, but our Confreres had already learned well how little one can trust in the justice of those tribunals. Fr. Benciolini then hired Defense Attorney Gemma. He cited the adversarial position which requested a delay of 30 days. Cited then for March 24<sup>th</sup>, all appeared before the President of the Tribunal, who delayed the proceedings further until April 17<sup>th</sup>, in order to discuss just the matter of this delay, and not the merits of the case.

**129.** In the meantime, however, both parties, considering the length of the proceedings that this Case still faced as well as the total uncertainty of its outcome, began to advance some ideas on reaching a compromise. The first proposals advanced by the Administration were these: to restore immediately all the substance of the property but to be dispensed from any rendering of accounts, and every other possible consequence. Fr. Benciolini, for his part, entered a counter-proposal in which he requested the immediate restitution of the entire substance of the properties, with certain rights based on percentage levels, a record of the documents of the archives, the residue and all present monies, the amalgamation and the return of the entire substance of the properties [ the minimum, at least 4% on the Capital of 276,888 Lira, according to the estimates of the Commune of Verona], and for 6 years to receive 66,453.12. Later, pushing his case further, Fr. Benciolini limited himself in requesting [in

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<sup>158</sup> These documents naturally were papers found in the Archives of the Institute. One of these was Fr. Marani's own composition, entitled *Remarks concerning the Congregation*, distributed on the occasion of the Canonical Solemn Institution of the Institute.

<sup>159</sup> On October 14<sup>th</sup> [as we read in the *Reminiscences of our Fathers* ] Fr. DaPrato and the Fr. Superior were visiting the Church of the Discalced Carmelites. They were talking about the sad wound that their case with the Government was, upon which the future of the Congregation seemed to depend. Fr. DaPrato is recorded to have said: 'I, too, feel this great pain, and if my life were necessary in order to bend events in our favor in this great litigation, I would gladly offer it to the Lord as I do offer it right now with all my heart.' This is the way that great and generous heart spoke, and after a moment's silence, he added: 'My offer has already been made.' Three days later, he was dead.

addition to the substance of the Properties, all the rights pertaining to them, and the documents in the Archives], and a minimum of 60,000 Lira, dispensing the Government for any rendering of their handling of the properties in all this time. He agreed to the amalgamation of the amount of existing values in 1867, at least 10,000 Lira, with the precise credits [an additional 5000], the expenses of this protracted litigation [computed to be about 10,000 Lira], for any damages or deterioration suffered by properties, or their buildings, particularly regarding St. Teresa's Convent.

Meanwhile, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, the lawyers for both sides, Attorney Francis Gemma, and Attorney Augusto Righi, representing both parties. Taking into consideration the very broad development provided by the plaintiff, Fr. Benciolini to the reasons that could justify, or at least support his case, both attorneys judged it convenient now to define amicably, outside of all juridical procedures, the entire object of the controversy. Since the Administration had already proposed to cede all the property goods to Fr. Benciolini [and this presupposed and already implied the handing over of all the claims on record since 1867], the attorneys stipulated in the name of the two parties, the following conclusions: (1) The Administrations would cede all the movable and immovable goods within that present month. (2) Fr. Benciolini would renounce the rendering of an account and any further claim on perceivable profits, reparation for damages, any claim on the expenses of the court fees, and all interest on the properties for these years. (3) A representative from both sides would look over the net income for these years on the properties, and the Administration, within two months, would restore to Fr. Benciolini in Italian exchange, the nominal value of one third of the amount agreed.

**130.** On the 28<sup>th</sup> of that same month, following a Notification of the Administration for Worship, and on the invitation of the Superintendent of Finances, Attorney Callegari convened once more Attorneys Righi and Gemma, together with Fr. Rigoni: and having examined the Note mentioned above, signed off on the following agreements, previously agreed upon and drawn up: (1) The Fathers of the Stimmate would not further any further claims for the payment of pensions due by the Law of July 7, 1866, which they would agree as not applicable to their College. (2) Every care would have to be taken so that the institutes of public instruction that had taken over the building of the Stimmate, might not be disturbed in any way in the execution of these agreements. (3) The payment of a third part of the income resulting from these properties would include also those accrued already on August 27, 1867. (4) The Government, in addition to this third part of the profits, would give to Fr. Benciolini the sum of 5000 Lira. (5) Any income for the year 1873 would accrue totally to Fr. Benciolini.

The Minister of the Finances approved all these agreements, and with its Notification of May 11<sup>th</sup>, gave the opportune instructions to the Administration for Worship, which on July 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month proposed to the Department of Finance a plan for the restoration of the properties, requiring among other things, that the Priests of the Stimmate, for their renunciation of any rights of pension should make this declaration in writing. This Notification was communicated to Fr. Benciolini on May 19<sup>th</sup>, and by the 25<sup>th</sup>, there was signed by our Fathers the requested Declaration.

**131.** Finally, on May 27<sup>th</sup>, in a room of the residence of the Minister of Finance, Commander Anthony Callegari, authorized to handle on the part of the Government

and for the Department for Worship, Fr. Benciolini came with witnesses. He signed the transaction that contained the stipulations agreed to on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of April. There was, however, added the clause that if the agreement was not approved within the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the coming month of June by the General Direction of the Administration for Worship, Fr. Benciolini would be pardoned from any commitment. The expenses of the agreement were for the Administrations to pay two thirds, and the third part remaining to Fr. Benciolini.

The transaction was approved by the Administration for Worship, on June 7<sup>th</sup>: and following the government Decree of July 10<sup>th</sup>, the Department of the treasury on July 24<sup>th</sup> would hand over the goods, including St. Teresa's Convent<sup>160</sup>.

On **August 8<sup>th</sup>**, at long last [!], there was handed over to our Confreres a copy of the official Minutes of April 20 and 27<sup>th</sup> of 1867. Thus, came to an end this terrible litigation which for six years kept our Congregation in supreme anguish: and this final resolution of the case was looked upon not only by our Confreres, but also by our friends and acquaintances, as an evident sign of Heaven's protection.

To recall this happy event and at the same time, to express thanks to the Lord, the Very Reverend Superior, Fr. J.B. Lenotti instituted at the Stimate the Feast of the sacred Heart of Jesus. The entire Congregation obligated itself to promote among the faithful this most salutary devotion. To celebrate in festive manner our Students in Povo, on October 14<sup>th</sup>, conducted an 'Academy' of poetic talent. From that day, these two poems of Paul Gradinati have come down to us:

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<sup>160</sup> In this year 1873, there was sought the opinion of Attorney Brasca on the question of St. Teresa's Convent: he examined the matter before the existing laws and in conscience, he responded on October 4<sup>th</sup>, that all was in conformity with justice and equity, [especially after the long litigation that had been sustained] that the Convent remains with the Stigmatines. The documents are in the Archives of the Institute.

The Exile<sup>161</sup>

From our pleasant sojourn [in Verona?] – with its silent cloisters [the Stimate?]  
Like a horde of angels – fleeing from the disturbance  
We flew among the mountains [of Trent?] – to seek a nest [Villazzano?]

Protected by the mantle – of the Heavenly Spouses  
There smiled on us the mists [[?]] – even on the most mournful days  
We were never deprived – of a roof over our heads, nor of the altar.

Oh! How often – came to our thought  
Of those caring Fathers – of lovable administration  
The noble contest - of knowledge and virtue.

O house of peace! – o happy days!  
O solemn feasts! O Sacred gatherings! [[?]]  
O sweet memories – of a time that once was.

A weeping is silenced – that appeared on the eye lashes.  
Time rapidly passed – and the exile went on.  
A darkened veil – covered the future.

And while the arbitrary powerful - merely played  
With the exiled sons – with their fearsome lot  
Two Fathers [DaPrato and Marani??] in the sleep - of the just now repose

Before the Throne of Grace – from dawn until evening  
The incense arose – of assiduous prayer  
When as suddenly as a smile – Heaven sparkled.

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<sup>161</sup> This is in excellent rhyme [*abb – cdd*, etc] and good meter].



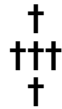
The Victory<sup>162</sup>

O brothers of joy, of glory  
There has burst on the exiles that day  
Already the announcement of our victory  
From the banks of the Arno it was heard.

Let us raise up joy-filled chants and hurray!  
To the Lord Who has heard the prayers  
And that cloud that hovered over the roof,  
Has fled far from our gaze.

Peace has descended in new splendors  
Looking over the paternal resting places  
From the tombs of the Fathers and Brothers  
Even their relics were heard to rejoice.

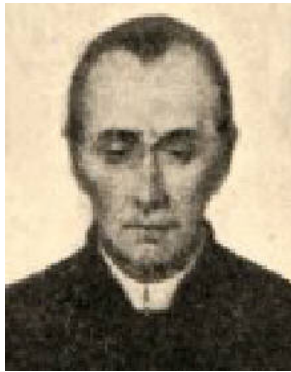
We are a most joyful band of Christ  
This chant for us will never die.  
Whoever hopes for victory from Heaven  
Will live gloriously in heaven.



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<sup>162</sup> This is a clever work as well the lines seem to rhyme as *abab – cdcd* etc.

**A Brief Chronicle**  
of the  
**Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata**  
**of Our Lord Jesus Christ**  
**[1800 – 1941]**



Rev. John Baptist Lenotti,  
Superior General  
(1871 – 1875)



Rev. Peter Vignola,  
Superior General  
(1875 – 1891)

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Volume I – Second Period, Part 2**  
**From the Development of the Apostolic Mission**  
**to the Approbation of the Congregation [1873 – 1890]**

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**Chapter 1**  
**DEVELOPMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSION**  
**[1873-1877]**

**132.** At long last, after six years of continual trepidation for the Congregation, it would now breathe more easily and open its heart to hope. To have overcome that harsh trial was for the Community at large a powerful argument for confidence in the Divine Protection. Having terminated the scholastic year, the properties of the Stimmate and St. Teresa's were finally at the disposition of our men. As a result Fr. Lenotti immediately acted to have the necessary renovations get underway, especially in St. Teresa's Convent, which stood in extreme need. At the same time he thought of bringing to completion the construction in St. Mary of the Lily which had opened to the public on May 30, 1874.

Meanwhile, other valid workers showed themselves to be disposed to work in the vineyard of the Lord. In March of 1873, Pius Gurisatti, James Marini and Lawrence Pizzini were ordained Priests: in June of the same year Bellino Carraro and Bartholomew Perazzani were ordained; and in December, Lawrence Rigatti and Richard Tabarelli reached ordination. With the exception of Fr. Lawrence Pizzini, who was called to Verona, all the others remained in Povo to busy themselves in the formation and in the education of our students. With the help of these new workers, the community was able to attend with greater ease to the works of the ministry. Serious thought was given to a new foundation.

**133.** Requests were coming in for new foundations. In January of 1874, the Bishop of Cremona, Bishop Jeremiah Bonomelli, sought once again to have our Fathers take over the Sanctuary of Caravaggio. Fr. Lenotti responded, thanking His Excellency for the offer, and he recalled to the Bishop's mind how this offer had already been made in 1858, by his predecessor, Bishop Anthony Novasconi. Fr. Lenotti stated he was disposed to accept the foundation, at least on a trial basis, as soon as he would be able to agree on the conditions. By order of the Bishop, the Pastor of Caravaggio was also in Verona to negotiate the matter. Following this, he sent Fr. Lenotti a copy of the conditions proposed by the Council of Administration of the Sanctuary: unfortunately, these were even less acceptable than those offered in 1858, by reason of the dependence in which they wanted our Fathers to be on the Administrators<sup>163</sup>. Nonetheless, the Bishop insisted on February 24<sup>th</sup> he wrote to Fr. Lenotti:

*... For heaven's sake, Very reverend Father, do not leave me in pain, nor would you want to forward any difficulties of this sort. The matter is practically all arranged, and I do not even want to hear you speak of doubts on this point, rather I hope and pray that the two Fathers, who are most desired in Caravaggio at the very least, by the middle of March. I will do all that within me lies, I will do all I can for the Fathers, but, they, too must support me in this matter that is so important for me, and would be of such benefit for my diocese, and others nearby...*

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<sup>163</sup> It would suffice to say that among the conditions that the Fr. Prefect could not in any way, leave the Sanctuary without first obtaining the permission in writing of the Administrators.

To understand the situation better an interview was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> day of February, to which Fr. Lenotti and Fr. Rigoni participated and the Pastor of Caravaggio. They remained in some agreement at least to make the attempt, so they sent Frs. Peter Vignola and Francis Sogaro to the place, and the Bishop had this following Decree drawn up:

*...The Most Illustrious and Very Reverend Bishop, sends to the Prefect of the Sanctuary of Caravaggio, the Very Reverend Fr. Peter Vignola, and as Chaplain, the Very Reverend Fr. Francis Sogaro, with the freedom to recall them for any time that he may have need of them, substituting in such a case, other suitable individuals. The above-mentioned Priests will assume the office destined to them within the 25<sup>th</sup> of March of this present year if this is possible for them – otherwise, on the Monday following the Octave of Easter ...*

Fr. Lenotti, however, had already convoked the Fifth General Chapter which was set to assemble on February 25<sup>th</sup>, and in this, one of the Proposals was to discuss the matter of Caravaggio. The Chapter heard the report of Fr. Superior, keeping in mind the restrictive conditions proposed by the Administrators, and of the opposition they advanced that these made regarding the foundation, and the Chapter decided not to accept for the moment the offices of Prefect and Chaplain, but to send to the place the two mentioned Priests for a period of 15 or 20 days, for the sake of hearing confessions and of exploring the state of the matter. In fact, after the Octave of Easter, the two Fathers did go to Caravaggio, but they were not able to agree due to the opposition of the Administrators. As a result, any further thought of that as a possible foundation, was definitively abandoned.

**134.** During this time, Fr. Lenotti was giving serious thought to bettering the internal life of the Congregation. He had already drawn up detailed rules for the various offices of the house, and had handed them over to the men in those positions. Now, in the Fifth General Chapter it was decided to establish a formal *Method of Studies*, for the young students of the Congregation. The Chapter took into consideration the proposal and charged the Father Prefect of Studies [Fr. Louis Morando] to put into writing the method employed up to that time, then drawing up his own observations. This document would then be examined by a Capitular Commission set up precisely for this purpose, and then established in a stable manner.

In this same Chapter, the Fathers of the House of the Stimate made this proposal:

*... to open an elementary school and a high school, so that **the Community (1) might correspond to one of the principal ends of our Congregation, which was born and made itself loved through instruction.** (2) to correspond to the desire of the public who in the present circumstances expects this. (3) to eliminate the scandal of having a locale that is so vast without any public benefit accruing therefrom: being mindful of that statement of Our Holy Father, Pius IX: 'For the instruction of the youth, go as far as sin!' ...*

The Chapter, recognizing the need of taking part in the instruction of the youth proposed that two individuals be designated by the Superior General to prepare themselves and present themselves for the examinations in order to be qualified for high school teaching. As far as the moment to activate the schools, this was left to the decision of the same Superior General and his Council.

Finally, in the same chapter Fr. Sogaro made the proposal that there be sent to Rome one member of the Institute to expose to the Holy See the state of the Congregation, and to offer the work of this Community for the Church in the Missions outside of Italy. The Chapter judged that the opportune time had not yet arrived for this: however, this desire was universally felt throughout the Congregation, and we will see this realized in a short time.

**135.** Meanwhile, since the most necessary renovations of St. Teresa's Convent had been completed, Fr. Lenotti thought of recalling from Povo our Clerical Students of theology. In the month of March they had solemnly celebrated at Povo the 6<sup>th</sup> Centenary of St. Thomas Aquinas. For the feast, this was preceded by a Triduum, with appropriate discourses delivered by three of our Fathers during the solemn celebrations. On the Feast Day of the Saint itself, Fr. Vincent Vignola, the Director, spoke, and in the evening the great celebrations came to a close even with fireworks. At these same students were preparing likewise to celebrate in the month of July the centenary of St. Bonaventure, when during the early days of June, the little squadron of students had to depart for Verona in order to terminate the scholastic year in St. Teresa's Convent. Together with them, Frs. Tabarelli and Morando, their teachers, came with them, and Fathers Gurisatti and Sterza were then assigned to the House of the *Dereletti*.

At the Stimmate on August 5<sup>th</sup> of this year 1874, the Sixth General Chapter assembled in order to deliberate the request of Fr. Sogaro to be freed from all his obligations contracted with the Congregation. He brought forward as his reason the vocation that he deeply felt, and which he had always had, for the Foreign Missions. He maintained that this call he had already manifested to his Superiors when he was a student. He asked, therefore, for permission to leave the Congregation in order to follow this special vocation of his. At the same time, he sincerely thanked the Superiors for all that they had done for him and he stated that he had always retained for the Congregation a sincere affection and recognition. The Capitular Fathers accepted his request, allowing him to leave the Congregation: and he immediately offered his services in the vacant Parish of St. George's, where he had been made Pastor<sup>164</sup>.

Toward the end of this month, the young students terminated their scholastic year, and then spent a bit of vacation at Sezano, and while they enjoyed a few

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<sup>164</sup> In later years, Fr. Sogaro would be ordained a Bishop in St. Agatha of the Goths Church in Rome. He would succeed + Daniel Comboni in Central Africa – and Cardinal Merry dal Val, as President of the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics in Rome [the Diplomatic Corps]

pleasant days there in that pleasing locality, it made them think of the beautiful hills they had left behind in Povo and Villazzano.<sup>165</sup>

At Sezano, right at this time, there had been brought to a happy end a matter which Fr. Benciolini had sustained against the Pastor of the place in order to maintain his rights; we will refer to this in a short while.

**136.** Up until the year 1867, there had been a door which opened on a little passage way, connecting our old rustic house with the near-by sacristy of the Parish Church: for this, our Confreres had always enjoyed the right of way. In the period of the long litigation with the Government, the Pastor had taken that occasion to suppress this connection, closing it off by constructing a wall. As soon as Fr. Benciolini had realized this in 1873, he made known to the Arch-Priest that he should put things back the way they were in their former state and to open up once more the passage way. The Pastor strongly opposed this, by denying all right of way to our men: hence, after having attempted every manner of reconciliation, it proved necessary to have recourse to the Royal Prefect of Grezzana, before whom the Pastor and the Blacksmiths of Sezano were cited.

Finally, through the intervention of the Bishop, Louis di Canossa, an agreement could be reached. The act of this transaction was under-signed by both parties on September 5<sup>th</sup>, and in it the agreement was that the gate in question would definitively walled in. In return, however, the shop there would give the keys of the gate outside the Sacristy to Fr. Benciolini. These keys would be kept by Fr. Benciolini and were to be made available for his Confreres. If he however, would ever come to serve he property containing the shop to others who would not be members of the Congregation, then, the right of passage would indeed have ceased. Thus, this controversy came to an end by re-establishing the harmony between the two parties that from then on, remained quite cordial<sup>166</sup>.

**137.** In the course of that autumn, a grave loss struck the Congregation: on October 13<sup>th</sup> Fr. Louis Bragato died in Prague. He had always conducted himself as a most affectionate son of the Congregation, and he had often helped it in its moments of great need. All the Confreres mourned his death, and they offered their suffrages for his blessed soul, begging God to grant him a great reward in heaven. On November 13<sup>th</sup>, there was also celebrated for him a service of the 'Month's Mind' in the Church of the Stimmate. The number of priests who participated in this was quite numerous, and many came to celebrate their Masses there. The more sedate and solemn Mass was devoutly celebrated by the Very Rev. Fr. Giacobbe. In the eloquent and learned

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<sup>165</sup> The nostalgia that they felt after having abandoned those places, which contained for so many the memories of their youth. For example, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, on the day of his arrival, Brother Joseph Zandonai wrote: this was a journey mixed with joy and sadness: what a sacrifice! - But, in September, he had written: 'We went to Sezano, Marroni, and so on. What beautiful places ...!'

<sup>166</sup> In the years following the time when our students remained out in the country, they offered themselves always to decorate for the solemnity celebrate in the parish with their assistance and with chant. And in 1883, in September to celebrate the Priestly Jubilee of the Pastor himself.

oration that the same Very Reverend Arch-priest delivered<sup>167</sup> that day over the catafalque, was later printed as a small booklet.

At Povo, then, after the departure of our Professed Clerics, the Novices and Aspirants remained there. In July, they commemorated the 6<sup>th</sup> centenary of St. Bonaventure's death with a religious celebration of an academy manifesting their talents.

In the course of that same year 1874, some consideration was given to renewing the rustic house of St. Bernardine's in Trent for the use of a religious community. Some rooms on the ground floor were done over, and these would serve as the entrance way, the visitor's parlor, refectory and kitchen. A kind of a balcony was constructed with two little side towers, and the old stall was transformed into an Oratory, setting up there an altar that had been sent up from Verona. In November, the work was completed, and on the 25<sup>th</sup> of that month our Confreres moved in there permanently from Povo into this new dwelling. The House was truly quite small for the 24 individuals who made up the community<sup>168</sup>. This was so true that from the beginning the Fathers were forced to sleep two to a room. Finally, however, they were able to have a permanent dwelling and their own lodging. They continued there the scholastic year that was already underway, and on December 6<sup>th</sup>, the Oratory was opened for about 30 young boys, who after the ceremonies were treated to games in the court yard until about noon time.

**138.** Let us return now to Verona. In the House of the Stimate and at St. Teresa's, in addition to Fr. Lenotti, Superior General, there were Frs. Peter Vignola, Director; Fr. Rigoni, Procurator General; Fr. Sembianti, Economist. In addition there were these other Confreres there: Frs. Zara, Morando, Beltrami, Thomas Vicentini and Dominic Vicentini. Pizzini and Tabarelli. There were nine Scholastics and three Professed Brothers.<sup>169</sup> In the House of the *Dereletti*, there were Frs. Benciolini, Gurisatti and Sterza, as well as the aspirant Brother, Clement Albano.

The occupations of the Fathers were teaching classes to our students, and then **every sort of the sacred ministry, especially their preaching**. In the two Churches, of the Stimate and of St. Mary of the Lily, the Oratory was conducted on Sundays: however, it was not as flourishing as it had been in the 'old days'. Fr. Zara made this note in his Chronicle:

*... How happy the young men who frequented the oratories: however, some discouragement is afoot, as seducers roam about, distorting the youth from*

<sup>167</sup> It was thus described in the *Sunday Repose*, in its edition of November 15<sup>th</sup>. In that same edition, there was reported that there had been a biography written about Fr. Bragato by a Fr. Negrelli, and had already been published in the *Catholic Voice* of Trent. Our Fathers made use of this material to compile their own reminiscences of this worthy confrere of ours.

<sup>168</sup> Those assigned there were Fr. Vincent Vignola, Director; Fr. Bassi, Novice Master; Fr. Marini, Economist. In addition, there were also Frs. Vicentini, Lanaro, Perazzani, Carrara, and Rigatti. There were two Novice students [Nicolini and Battisti], and one lay brother [Salbego]. There were nine Aspirants with their Prefect, Fr. Paul Gradinati, and the Coadjutor Brothers Chiesa, Salocher and Zadra.

<sup>169</sup> The Scholastics were: Vidali, Graziani, Zandonai, Gasperotti, Pizzighella, Vivari, Zanini, Oss-Bals and Magagna. The Brothers were: Ferrari, Falzi and Rigoni.



*these pious congregations with every manner of pretext, seduction and deceit. Oh! The Oratories of long ago are no longer seen in Verona ...*

However, our Fathers have not limited themselves to care only for these two Oratories, but continuously they were invited and hastened to reaching Triduum, Retreats also in other parishes: and in the same time, they **preached in the Seminary** and to **Religious Institutes** of the city. It seemed that anyone who was in quest for someone to give a sermon, hastened to the Stimate – the House was a *broad sea of activity!*

**139.** The students, too, were exercised in preaching. And in addition to those practice sermons which they delivered in the Domestic Chapel on the occasion of some solemnity, they also preached in the Church of the Stimate, and in that of St. Mary's of the lily, the six Sundays honoring St. Aloysius to the young men of the Oratory. All the Sundays of the year, they went to the **prisons** to teach **Catechism** to those confined there. The Fathers, then, during the hot **summer** months, continued to explain the **Catechism** in the Parish Churches <sup>170</sup> in the parish churches, and throughout the entire year they were in perpetual motion to correspond to the requests for **Parish Missions** that came into them almost every day.

We will recall here among the many Parish Missions given in this period, that one preached in February 1875, at Solesino in the Diocese of Padua, by Frs. Peter Vignola and Joseph Sembianti. That was at the time, a rather backward and abandoned village, as this is evident from the Diocese of Padua Vicar General's comment to our Fathers in welcoming them: 'Keep in mind that you are going to cultivate a briar patch!' The Fathers in no way were put off: as soon as they had entered the town, they became promoters of the Devotion of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, by exposing to the public veneration Its image and before it they recited public prayers every day. That population responded marvelously well to their invitations, and the devotion to the Sacred Heart in a few days had taken root in the parish, and the fruit from that Mission proved to be most abundant. Not only was there a large crowd for the sermons and for the Holy Sacraments, but there was seen even well known sinners who for years had not frequented the Church, being present in it and for long hours, and even full days in order to go to Confession to our Fathers, neglecting even the rigors of that season and the constant worsening of the weather. In brief, the Parish Mission was a veritable triumph of grace that had been obtained through Devotion to the Sacred Heart.

And here it will help to remember how **in that year of 1875**<sup>171</sup>, there occurred the second centenary of the apparition of the Divine redeemer to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. There were many and solemn ceremonies conducted for that occasion, and even our Confreres wanted to be a part of it all. On May 30<sup>th</sup>, the Sunday within the Octave of the Body of the Lord, at the Stimate there was

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<sup>170</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** this ministry was called the *Fourth Class* - conducted between the two celebrations of the Holy Cross, observed in May and September. Our men were experts in this.

<sup>171</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** early in the Stigmatine History, for years there had been conducted Friday Devotions honoring the Sacred Stigmata.

celebrated a most solemn service: solemn Mass was sung, by the Very reverend Arch-Priest, Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, following which there was a procession conducted inside the Church with the Most Blessed Sacrament, Which then remained exposed all day for public adoration. At the evening devotions, Fr. Louis Morando delivered a panegyric, and the ceremony ended with solemn Benediction in the midst of the light offered by the many torches, carried by the young men of the Oratory. There was thus inaugurated that devout service which then was repeated each year, and still now is celebrated in the Church of the Stimmate.

**140.** That same evening, Fr. Rigoni left for Rome. In the name of the Superior General and of his Council, and carrying with him a Letter of Recommendation from the local Ordinary, Bishop di Canossa, he was going to begin to expose to the Holy See the state of the Congregation. This was all to get underway the long negotiations to obtain the approbation of the Congregation and the Constitutions. With this in mind, he presented himself to Monsignor Vitelleschi, the Secretary of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and even obtained an Audience with the Holy Father, Pius IX.

It was the 16<sup>th</sup> of June, the precise date on which there recurred the 2<sup>nd</sup> centenary of the apparition of Jesus to Blessed Margaret Mary Alacoque. The Holy Father received him warmly, and after having been brought up to date on the matters concerning the Congregation and of the long litigation sustained against the Government, he blessed the Congregation itself, its benefactors and the Attorney Brasca. In the matter of the Approbation, he promised his personal interest: and asking Fr. Rigoni to keep the matter secret, the Holy Father himself gave some suggestions on the best manner to follow for this process, and gave him great encouragement, saying: 'It can be done secretly: I will speak of it myself to the Secretary'<sup>172</sup>.

Fr. Rigoni also had another task to perform in Rome and that was placing the Congregation at the disposition of the Holy See for the Propagation of the Faith for a mission outside of Italy. Therefore, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, he was presented to Cardinal Franchi, the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, and Fr. Rigoni made the offer of the contribution of the Congregation for some foreign mission. The Cardinal willingly accepted this offering, and proposed to him the Mission in Sweden and Denmark. For this, however, Fr. Rigoni did immediately commit himself in an absolute way, but assumed only the commitment, in the name of the Congregation, to prepare the necessary workers.

The Superior General, Fr. Lenotti in his Circular Letter of August 25<sup>th</sup>, he communicated this consoling news, exhorted all the members of the Congregation to offer special prayers in order to receive light from the Lord, and he invited all those

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<sup>172</sup> For the process to obtain the approbation, Fr. Rigoni spoke also to Fr. Steccanella, SJ, who promised him his help. On returning to Verona, he had already prepared the documents necessary for the formal Petition to be presented to the Holy See. He was waiting for the return of the Father General, who was at that time in Trent somewhat indisposed: when Fr. Lenotti returned, he was very sick, and within a few days, he died. With his death, the negotiations were put off for more than 13 years and were not taken up again until 1888.

who felt that the might have a vocation for this kind of apostolate, to manifest this to him in writing within the month of September.<sup>173</sup>

At the same time, the Superior General in conformity with the desires expressed by the Fifth General Chapter, gave much thought to preparing the individuals necessary to open the school again at the Stimate. Therefore, in the month of August he sent to the University in Padua, four young students: Louis Gasperotti, Bonaventure Vivali, Melchiade Vivari, Julius Zanini and Fr. Lawrence Pizzini, who took the government examinations and all obtained the license to teach as elementary school teachers.

**141.** Meantime, the discussions with the Bishop of Parma were coming to a happy conclusion for the foundation of a Stigmatine community in that city. In fact, that March, the Bishop had requested for a few of our Fathers to open there an Oratory and the elementary classes in a working-class neighborhood. Fr. Lenotti was immediately open to accept this invitation, and his only hesitation came from the fact that for the acceptance of the school responsibility, there was the difficulty of having licensed teachers, as well as the opposition the government advanced against private schools. There was also the indispensable condition for the foundation of a Community in the city, a dwelling was needed, and the necessary means for the individuals who would be assigned there.

After various proposals and further discussions were conducted, an agreement was signed on May 18, 1875 including the terms of the service to be rendered. Fr. Lenotti, as Superior of the Congregation, committed himself to send two Priests immediately, and at least two more after the first trimester, to open an oratory in the Community residence, and possibly a second in another location in the city, to take care of the Confessions, to teaching Catechism, to preach Parish Missions in the city and out in the country, to teach should the need arise in the Seminary, and to open whenever this would be possible the elementary school, for the advantage of the children of the working classes. The Bishop committed himself to provide a dwelling to be handed over to our Fathers. Furthermore he obliged himself to provide the sum of 1000 Lira in each of the first three years, and after this three year period, to provide 300 Lira for each Priest living in that community. All of this was contingent upon the extent to which the economic conditions of the house might have waived his responsibility for this debt.<sup>174</sup>

For the service of the oratory he offered the Church of St. Mary of the Quarter, presently owned by a Confraternity of St. Camillus, who showed joy in granting the use of that Church, and already from May 15<sup>th</sup> he had drawn up with Fr. Lenotti a contract,

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<sup>173</sup> When Fr. Rigoni was in Rome, he sought for, and obtained, a number of faculties, among which one was the privilege to celebrate the Feast of the Espousals, as a Feast of the Double Class with an Octave.

<sup>174</sup> Already on March 13<sup>th</sup>, Bishop Villa had made known by means of a Pastoral Letter, his thought of establishing in the city, and then later, in other places in the country, the Sunday Oratory for the children. His plan was to invite for this purpose the Priests of the Stimate in Verona. To sustain the costs for these undertakings, he proposed to print his Homilies offering an association. The cost of the House for our men was 12, 000 Lira.

through which he left to the Fathers all freedom to hear Confessions, to preach and to catechize the people.

**142.** Already the Bishop, through one Sir Camillo Carraglia, a member of the Confraternity of St. Camillus, had purchased the dwelling in the Taschieri Borgo, and was having the necessary repairs and renovations done there. Fr. Lenotti was already thinking of the day when this foundation would be a reality, but unfortunately he would not be able to see this. While he was working so hard for the Congregation, his health was rapidly going downhill. In July of that year, he was counseled by the doctor to the well-known health spa at Rabbi, to try the cures in those waters. However, nothing was to any avail and he left from there in a worse condition than when he arrived shortly before. After having rested a few days in Trent, he returned to Verona about the middle of August and then spent a few days in Sezano, in the hopes that he might feel better. Nonetheless, he experienced no relief so returned to Verona, where he went to bed, and did not get up again.

He died on Sunday, September the 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2:30 in the afternoon. Fr. Zara notes his passing:

*... He died just like our Venerated Founder did, precisely in that hour when his sons were out in the various Churches of the city teaching Catechism ... Oh! What a loss for us... his life was truly that of the perfect religious, an authentic servant of God. Should anyone want to weave a eulogy for him, it would be enough to say: Fr. Lenotti was in fact, a true son of Fr. Bertoni...*<sup>175</sup>

And as though this magnitude was not enough for the Congregation, about 6 weeks later Fr. Thomas Vicentini also died: this was the day commemorating the Purity of the Virgin Mary, to whom he was so devoted. Fr. Zara faithfully records his deep feeling:

*... And now just see whom death touches: Let us be ready. However, for now we are in the Madonna's debt: may she think of us and restore to us a good priest ...*

**143.** On the 26<sup>th</sup> of that month, the Seventh General Chapter was convoked by the Vicar General, Fr. Peter Vignola, for the election of the new Superior General. This time, too, the Capitular Fathers decided to elect the Superior for a term of five years, and elected Fr. Peter Vignola, giving him as his Counselors Fr. Sembianti, Fr. Rigoni [who was also confirmed as Procurator General], Fr. Vincent Vignola and Fr. Benciolini.

The House of the Stimmate had sent in various proposals. Above all, it requested that there be given some effect to those commitments with the Sacred

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<sup>175</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** as might be evident from these few pages outlining his short 4 year service as Superior General, then dying on his birthday, his administration would be much in accord with Fr. Bertoni's great plan of a broad openness to: quocumque in Diocesi et mundo .. quodcumque Verbi Dei Ministerium...

Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, concerning the mission in Sweden.<sup>176</sup> The Chapter in praising those who had advanced this proposal, declared itself ready to pursue the negotiations that had already begun. However, the new Superior declared that the Institute had not as yet assumed any concrete commitment, but had only offered its work to the Holy See. The Chapter then recommended to the newly elected Father General that he might work fruitfully also in this area of the ministry, whenever the right moment came.

The other proposals of the House of the Stimate, such as to open as soon as possible, the elementary classes, and to review the Rules for the house officials which Fr. Lenotti had drawn up, and these were committed to the prudence of the new Superior General. Since the *Plan of Studies* had been readied for the students of the Congregation, in conformity with the Deliberation of the Fifth General Chapter, there was chosen a Capitular Commission, made up of Frs. Vincent Vignola, Rigoni and Bassi, who together with the Prefect of Studies, Fr. Morando within eight months had to review it and to establish it definitively in the name of the Congregation.

Fr. Michael Lanaro had presented his petition to return home for reasons of his health: and the Chapter accepted his request, but it also declared that it would not re-admit him; should he presented himself again at a later date<sup>177</sup>.

Toward the end of the year, Fr. Marini arrived in Verona from Trent as he had been named the Economist for the Stimate. In like manner, the Novices, Nicolini, Battisti, Tomasi, Marocchi and Salbego also arrived, with their Novice Master, Fr. Bellino Carrara.<sup>178</sup> Fr. Sterza returned to Trent and he brought with him young Clement Albano, to begin his studies there. At the Stimate, Fr. Joseph Sembianti was named Director.

**144.** Thus the year 1876 began, and our Fathers took up again the same occupations as in the previous years, especially to the ministry of preaching in the city and outside, everywhere they were invited. One new practice was introduced into the Church of the Stimate: during this year, for the first time, the *Sorrowful Month* was preached, for the last 30 days of the Carnival period before Lent, with devout readings and prayers and chants in honor of the Sorrowful Mother. This devotion then came to be repeated each year, and was still going on when the *Breve Cronaca I* was written.

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<sup>176</sup> **NB: English Translator Note:** This yearning for the Stigmatine Apostolic Mission to go beyond Italy was well within the Founder's fundamental charism: *quocumque in Diocesi et mundo...*! This would also be an element in the background on the enormous difficulties of the Twelfth General Chapter in 1890.

<sup>177</sup> He left in December for his native village: as time went on, he did not maintain any relationship with the Institute, and was definitively dismissed in the VIIIth General Chapter in 1876.

<sup>178</sup> In May, Fr. Paul Gradinati had arrived, and so in Trent, only the aspirants, with their Prefect, Fr. Alexis Magagna remained, who had returned there. It is also to be noted here that beginning the year 1876, the students of Theology from the Trentine Province on the first of October had returned to Trent and frequented the classes in that seminary, in order to free them from the obligation of military service. When the scholastic year ended, they returned to Verona to spend the summer there.

In this year, in solemn fashion, the Feast of St. Thomas was solemnly celebrated with an academy. People attended this observance even from outside the Congregation. The Feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph was preached with a triduum and panegyric by the Novices.

**145.** In February, the House of Parma was finalized, of which we have already spoken. On the first of the month, Frs. Vincent Vignola and Louis Morando left with the Coadjutor Brother James Zadra: and they were welcomed with great benevolence by the Bishop and by other good persons who had helped in those first days to prepare all the necessities for our men. Our Confreres, from the outset, applied themselves zealously for the good of the souls there, in a particular manner, for the **youth**, very soon inaugurating an oratory in the Church of the Quarter, and then a second one in the Church dedicated to the Five Wounds. They also committed themselves to teaching Catechism and preaching in the Churches and Institutions of the city, and accepting the preaching of Missions in the parishes of the Diocese wherever they were invited, without being overwhelmed by the real privations of every sort that they had to endure because of the rather poor economic situation where they were.<sup>179</sup> On March 16, the Bishop wrote to the Superior General:

*‘... I can only repeat my supreme satisfaction for the acquisition that Parma has made in the arrival of the Priests of the Stimmate of Verona. They have already been hard at work in the exercise of their benefit in behalf of the children of that region, and the people is beginning to support them and to profess for them their due reverence...’*

However, the vineyard of the Lord is very broad and there is an abundant harvest to gather. Monsignor John Baptist Gobbi, Arch-Priest and Mitered Abbot of Bassano, wrote on April 13<sup>th</sup> of this year, asking for two of our Priests and a Coadjutor Brother to entrust to them a Boarding House for youth that he wanted to establish in his city. The occupation of the Fathers would be to gather the young men on Sundays and also for some evening hours and weeks day. On the Sunday gatherings, in addition to teaching Catechism to the young children, the Fathers would also instruct the adults in the Cathedral and assist in hearing Confessions. The Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola to reach some decision on the matter, convoked the Eighth General Chapter<sup>180</sup>, that assembled on September 26<sup>th</sup> and the foundation was accepted.

**146.** Once again in this Chapter the thought of serving in Missions outside of Italy arose. And the Father Superior responded to the question regarding what he was doing of furthering this possibility. He declared that he had already entrusted two individuals of the Congregation to study the languages of those countries in order to be able to be serve in the Missions. He promised further to write once again with this

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<sup>179</sup> In the House Chronicle, we read for February 11<sup>th</sup> that year: Brother Zadra had prepared the supper and discovered that there was not enough polenta and bread other than perhaps 2 ounces. He went to purchase some in the little shop across from the house. However, Providence arranged it so that he only had about 10 cents! Thanks be to God!’

<sup>180</sup> A Proposal was also circulated among the Capitular Fathers whether they thought it was necessary to assemble the General Chapter in order to decide on any new foundation. They responded in the negative.

information to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, in order to keep with it, a lively communication.

One of these who ardently had offered himself for the foreign missions was Fr. Lawrence Pizzini. From the time he had been a young student he had experienced a powerful attraction for that kind of life, and in order to render himself more suitable for it, he had learned French, Spanish, German and English. He dreamed that the day was approaching in which he would see realized his deepest hopes, but the Lord had destined his life in another manner. As a result of his apostolic efforts, in June of 1876 he fell into a very serious illness, and when he was somewhat better, he had been sent to Trent in order to restore his health in a more complete manner. However, he then contracted typhoid fever, and died in that city on August 12<sup>th</sup> at the age of only 28. Fr. Zarana wrote in his Chronicle:

*... Poor Pizzini! How fervent was the beating of his heart, how generous his aspirations! He yearned with desire of sacrificing his life for souls in the foreign missions...!*

With his death, a very powerful impulse for this missionary undertaking outside of Italy was lost. It was the will of God that our Congregation, at least for the time being<sup>181</sup>, should occupy itself in other fields of endeavor. For this, the Lord did send some new workers to work for the good of souls. In April of that year, Fr. Alexis Magagna was ordained in Trent, and in December Fathers Vivari, Pizzighella and Zanini were ordained in Verona.

**147.** On February 1<sup>st</sup> of the next year, 1877, the House of Bassano was opened. Fathers Sembianti and Zanini, with Brother James Zadra were assigned there. Brother Zadra's place in Parma was taken by Bro. Charles Solcher, while at the Stimate, Fr. Charles Zara was named Superior. In Bassano our men were greeted with great jubilation: on the day following their arrival [February 2], the Monsignor Arch-Priest preached in the Cathedral for the occasion, and praised the spirit of our Congregation, and invited the population to assist the work of the Fathers, for the good of their youth.<sup>182</sup>

And the Fathers applied themselves right away to the Christian education of the youth in the oratory and by teaching Catechism. They also lent themselves to furthering the good of all the good people there. The Arch-Priest wrote to Fr. Vignola in these terms:

*...I cannot express myself in words that would be due to you, to your entire Congregation, and especially to those excellent Fathers Sembianti and Julius, for their work in spreading the gospel here. They lend themselves with such charity, pleasantness and readiness both for the youth, and also for all their other good works in behalf of souls, that I can only thank God first of all that he has sent me these men and then for all those who served as the means, all to whom I am much obliged ...*

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<sup>181</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** it would take almost 20 more years before any Stigmatine would set up a missionary post for the Congregation outside of Italy.

<sup>182</sup> On this occasion Counts Fietta of Paderno of Ascolo, most attached to our Institute, had printed a poetic composition of theirs honoring our Fathers.

Their field of activity assigned to them had been the oratory and teaching Catechism in the little Church dedicated to St. Aloysius. This had been left for this scope by a pious lady, and the church was restored by the Arch-Priest. Here they also celebrated Mass and heard confessions<sup>183</sup>.

On the same day that the Fathers left for Bassano [February 1], Fr. Rigoni transferred to his new residence, **in the Seminary of Verona, as the Bishop had requested him to be its Rector**<sup>184</sup> and the Superior General went along with this appointment. He proved to be quite capable in that office, corresponding fully to the trust his superiors had in him. In the short time that he held that responsibility, he re-established its discipline and the administration of the Seminary which had left much to be desired, he acquired the esteem and the benevolence of his Superiors and of the Clergy<sup>185</sup>.

**148.** In this year, too, there were five new priests ordained, i.e., Frs. Zandonai and Oss-Balss were ordained in February; Frs. Graziani, Vidali and Gasperotti were ordained in November. Thus the Congregation was able to supply for other workers who had departed to labor in other fields, and they continued to maintain the responsibilities assumed, and new endeavors for the good of souls were already in the works. Of these matters, we will treat later: here we need to look at two happenings that happened during the year 1877.

The first of these brought not a little displeasure among the members of the Congregation. This was the sale which in a certain manner, had to be made of the House of Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity<sup>186</sup>. Since during the preceding Eighth General Chapter, the question arose whether it would be better to sell that building. The matter was left to the prudence of the Superior General. All found little comfort in the thought of depriving ourselves of that House which had always been kept as a jewel, and as a beloved memory of our many predecessors who had lived there. But, there arose at this time in Verona a group known as the *Ottoline* Sisters – who wanted to join in with the Salesians of Padua, and were seeking a suitable place, with a garden and a Church. Since at the moment our Novitiate was empty, they advanced a request, but received a negative reply. As a result, the local Ordinary, Bishop di

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<sup>183</sup> Truly the Arch-Priest desired to have at his disposition one of our Fathers, to send him to celebrate in this or that Church, according to the need: and our men lent themselves to this from the beginning, believing that it was of necessity for them to do so. However, when they saw that this came to be expected of them, they began to refuse and remained both to celebrate in the Church of St. Aloysius, which was the original agreement in accord with the Superior General. This was always a thorn for the Arch Priest.

<sup>184</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note: in the early years of our Congregation, a number of our men had almost constant contact with the Diocesan Seminary – the Founder was Spiritual Director; Examiner of Vocations, as was Fr. Marani. Fr. Peter Vignola as a young priest, went from being the Bishop's Secretary to assistant to the Seminary Rector [Vice Rector] – and here, Fr. Rigoni as Rector.**

<sup>185</sup> That kind of work proved to be very difficult for him because of his disturbances to his health to which he was subject. In the following year, he requested to be exonerated from this task, and on March 15<sup>th</sup>, he returned to the Stimate.

<sup>186</sup> With regard to this sale, Fr. Zara wrote: ' Could this have been necessitated because we are not as holy as we might have been with religious observance? May the lord bless us still.'



Canossa intervened in their behalf. He dearly wanted to regulate the situation of the *Ottoline*, and also to have the Salesian Sisters come to Verona from Padua. Our Fathers, wished to do an act of charity, and to further the desire of **the Bishop whom they did not want to oppose**, sold the Convent to the Superior of *Ottoline* Community, Sister Chiara Perenzoni, with little enthusiasm, because even though at this moment the property was not necessary for them, they had hoped that perhaps in another period, it would prove to be more than helpful to them<sup>187</sup>.

**149.** The other fact that we wish to recall was the Festival celebrated on October 9<sup>th</sup>, for the First Centenary of the Birth of our Venerated Founder. In Trent, on that day the Chapel was decorated as for one of the greatest solemnities. On that morning, the local Director, Fr. Dominic Vicentini, celebrated the Mass of devotion with the accompaniment of songs and instruments. At dinner, poems written for the occasion were recited, and in the evening a sermon recalling this special occasion was delivered by Fr. Mark Bassi. At the end of the day, the **Te Deum** was sung and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament was imparted.

However, the recurrence was celebrated in an even more solemn manner in Verona. The Church of the Stimmate was all decorated. In the middle of the Church, the Confreres erected a triangular pyramid on the top of which was enthroned the busy of the Venerated Founder. Numerous Masses were celebrated throughout the morning with a continuous affluence of people. Following the Community Mass, accompanied by the organ, the Most Blessed Sacrament was exposed, and Benediction was imparted and the **Te Deum** was sung.

That evening, in the Founder's Room there was an 'academy' of local talent, presenting prose and poetry. The Superior General got the program underway with a discourse on the words: **Brothers, remember your leaders ...!** Fr. Zara has recorded the events of that evening:

*...various Italian and Latin compositions were presented on the Founder's life. The Fathers from Parma took part in it also, as Fr. Rigatti and Fr. Vignola presented two poems. Fr. Morando sent a letter. From Bassano, Fr. Zanini delivered a poem and Fr. Sembianti had sent a letter. It was a very pleasant evening for all. We hope that from heaven Fr. Gaspar himself would have been pleased, and would have accepted these best intentions of his beloved sons. Now it is up to him: may he send us a good blessing and may his spirit reside in us. May his bones rejoice as well; but since he still dwells among us, even though he is deceased, in the life of his son who gather around him, as well as in the fact that no one would neglect his examples. Long live Fr. Bertoni! Long live his spirit!...*

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<sup>187</sup> Fr. Superior wrote in these terms to the Sister Superior of the *Ottoline* on May 5<sup>th</sup> of that year. The contract was drawn up on August 8, and in the strength of this, it was sold for the ridiculous price of 42, 500 Lira. There was added the condition that if in the future, the Salesians would have seen fit to sell the property, the Stigmatines would have the first option of re-acquiring it. Fr. Sembianti hinted at this writing to Bassano, on July 3 of that year to the Superior: 'I thank you for bringing to light the particulars of that house of the Most Holy Trinity...the conditions placed in the contract and its guarantees please me very much...'. With the monies received from this sale, with its value at that time of also some other resources, on January 2, 1882, the Community purchased the farm of Calderara in Valpantena for 56, 000 Lira.

We place here a poem composed by our Confrere, Paul Gradinati, in memory of those beloved event. Its theme is:

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### **The Father Founder's Tomb<sup>188</sup>**

On this urn, I prostrate myself – Oh! how in my breast,  
Palpitating with affection.  
There rains down a pleasure both sad and joyful  
In the silence of the world!  
Within this enclosure, Father, I can hear you!  
And while I imprint upon the stone my own kiss,  
I tremble with joy and glow is on my face.  
Oh what mysterious accent, resounds within my thought! ... Father, I hear you!  
Within the arms of my  
Dilated sigh I hold you, o Father.  
Ah! You are indeed dust, as I am also dust myself;  
But in the dusty ashes Is the spark of your immortal life.  
Toward your past I look and this sparkles within me.  
With the planted laurels and the palms I adorn you  
I ask the future, and a glorious  
Eternity responds to my thought.  
At the rays of this day  
I hear exulting within this grave,  
And I can see your bones reflourishing....

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<sup>188</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** This is a kind of free flowing poetry, translated as best as present knowledge would allow!

## Chapter 2

### THE APOSTOLIC MISSION OF THE SCHOOLS

#### [1877-1884]

**150.** In October of 1877, the elementary classes were opened in Parma, as this was one of the purposes that the Bishop had proposed in inviting our Fathers there. From the beginning, however, the Congregation was not able to supply licensed teachers Bishop Villa in the meantime, who was much dedicated to this work of the Christian Formation of the youth, presented a Petition to the Royal Provisor for Education in order to obtain the permission to open the schools, despite this draw-back for the children of working-classes here. He obtained this without much difficulty. We present here a passage of the response from the Provisor because it manifests the level of esteem that our Confreres of that time enjoyed among the citizenry:

*... Being persuaded as I am that the generous institution proposed by Your Most Illustrious and Reverend Lordship is for the greatest utility because it is geared solely to the religious and moral betterment of so many young children of the lowest class of our city, and confident that the Reverend Priests of the Stimate, with their piety that is so well known and with that spirit of sacrifice with which they stand out, they will know how to achieve the most holly purpose that Your Lordship has proposed, cooperating with such good will that these above-mentioned Priests, that they might open across the torrent of this city, an elementary school for the lower grades ...*

To the personnel of that House, in addition Fr. Rigatti had been added the year before, and now Fr. Vidali came so that they could open the elementary grades.<sup>189</sup>

In Verona they were not yet able to open classes for externs because the confreres had not yet taken the required examinations in Padua in 1875. They had not yet received their degrees that arrived only in June 1878<sup>190</sup>. Thus, also in this year at the Stimate only the classes for our own intern students were underway in Philosophy and Theology. Their teachers were Frs. Tabarelli, Sterza, Gasperotti, Zandonai, Graziani and Brother Gradinati. Fr. Graziani also taught physics in the **Seminary** and continued this for several years, as the Bishop had asked for one of our Fathers for this teaching.

Also the Arch-Priest of Bassano dreamed of opening the elementary classes in his area, for the good of those youngsters who apparently seemed to have a priestly vocation, they had to frequent the municipal High School, often to their great danger. Meanwhile he sought our Fathers who might want to offer a bit of assistance to the young students inscribed in his Boarding House: and to this they willingly dedicated themselves especially in the vacation months. Following the summer holidays, they also opened a night school for the young artisans who were living in the Boarding House.

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<sup>189</sup> Fr. Vidali also taught gymnastics in the Seminary.

<sup>190</sup> For the school year of 1876-1877, they had undergone their apprenticeship in the elementary schools of St. Nicholas in Verona

**151.** At the beginning of the year 1878, a very sad event saddened the entire Christian World and in a particular way, our Congregation. On February 8, the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX died. He had always shown such affection for our *little flock*, which he often called us, and had often sent his paternal benediction. Our Confreres with great affection and gratitude offered their suffrages for his beautiful soul: on the 22nd of the same month, they celebrated a funeral Mass in the Church of the Stimate, with a great number of Masses and a crowd of truly devout people. On March 7<sup>th</sup>, an academy of poetic presentations celebrated his glories, his virtues and his great kindness toward our Congregation.

Meanwhile on February 20, the new Roman Pontiff, Leo XIII was elected. The Confreres of the House of the Stimate, on March 29, sent to him a devout message with which they attested to him their sentiments of love and attachment, imploring his Apostolic Benediction on the Houses and members of the Institute. A Father had been lost, and another of no less kindness had been gained. Pius IX had bestowed on the Congregation the official Decree of Praise; Leo XIII would eventually grant the solemn Approbation for the Congregation.

Our Confreres in this time tirelessly continued to work for the good of souls. They heard Confessions at the Stimate, in the Seminary, in various colleges, in the prisons and in a number of Religious Institutes or houses of formation, they preached the monthly retreats in Convents of Sisters, to pious associations or to oratories, and to teach Catechism, these were their regular duties. This is not to mention the various tridiums, retreats and Parish Missions, special months of preaching – in this work a number of our Confreres were engaged in a continuous manner. And also at the Stimate, as has been noted elsewhere, they preached various courses of **Retreats for those Church-men who would come there to our community for days of prayer and reflection**. On a regular basis, during the month of August those to be ordained in the city and for the diocese of Verona, would come there for their retreat. The retreat would be preached to them in preparation for the priestly ordination.

**152.** Time was approaching the new scholastic year, 1878-1879, and thought was given at long last to open the elementary grades also at the Stimate. Permission to do so was petitioned from the Regional Superintendent for Studies, who agreed to this for September 28<sup>th</sup>. The classes actually began on November 12, and for this first year these classes were present: the first inferior and superior grades, with about 20 students. Fr. Louis Gasperotti was their teacher. The second level had about 16 students, and their teacher was Fr. Melchiade Vivari. These were very humble beginnings, but the welcoming for these classes that was shown by the citizenry was heartening. The quality of the students who came for these classes from the beginning gave promise of a glorious future. It is beautiful to see from the very start of that first year on the scholastic registers the names of a number of those students who went on to become priests, pastors, teachers, professors, or they followed some other honored profession.

Toward the end of 1878, Fr. Mark Bassi came down from Trent, as he had been assigned as Novice Master and Spiritual Father for our students. In this same period, Frs. Carrara and Oss-Balss went up to Trent. On January 19 of the following year. There was ordained to the priest, also at Trent, by Bishop Haller, Coadjutor to Bishop

Riccabona, our brother, Paul Gradinati. He celebrated his First Mass in Verona on January 23, the Feast of the Holy Espousals of Mary. On the 30 then of the same month, our young students of whom he had been their Prefect, celebrated him with an academy of poetic presentations. On the first of March, Bishop Riccabona died in Trent. For his funeral, the Superior General went to that city, and to pay tribute to him in death, as Fr. Zara wrote:

*... and to give to him that recognition and offering that he had always professed toward us. He had done so much good for our Congregation, from the time he was Bishop of Verona, and even more when he was in Trent. Therefore, in our annals may our Confreres always remember his venerated name...*

A month later, in April, the Aspirants came down from Trent with their Prefect, Fr. Alexis Magagna, and took up residence in St. Teresa's Convent. Now, the entire student body of the Congregation lived there<sup>191</sup>.

**153.** In 1879, the Supreme Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII granted the special Jubilee Indulgence for a period of three months. On that occasion, a number of our Confreres were called upon to preach many extraordinary Missions. Among all of them, we will remember the one preached at Solesino, where they had been previously in 1875 which also remained memorable and most fruitful.

In September of that same year, there occurred the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Francis Benciolini, and all wanted to celebrated it as a family festival. Fr. Zara records the events:

*... The poor old man, he did not want anything to do with it, and it seemed to disturb him even to have it brought it up in a conversation. In the end, he surrendered to obedience. On September 19<sup>th</sup>, the Church was decorated in a festive manner: at 9:00 a.m., all the Fathers and clerics in cassock and surplice proceeded out from the Oratory of Mary Immaculate with Fr. Benciolini at the end of the long procession. At the door of the Oratory was the Father Superior in cope with two clerics, and he gave the blessing with holy water. At the Gospel, Fr. Rigoni addressed a few words regarding the solemnity. When the Mass was over, the **Te Deum** was sung. Then, Fr. Benciolini remained seated in the Sacristy and he received the congratulations from those who had come and many kissed his hand. At dinner, the table was decorated also by the presence of guests, his family members. In the refectory, there were decorations on the wall, and certain compositions were delivered in honor of the celebrant of the day. After dinner, at 3:00 p.m., they held an academy in his honor. There were many invited: Fr. Benciolini was in the place of honor, surrounded by his fellow Priests, his Brothers, his family members, friends, acquaintances. The poetic compositions, interspersed with music played on the piano, was brought to a close with the hymn, Onward, Brothers! of Maestro Gagliardi. After all this, the Superior*

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<sup>191</sup> At Trent there remained as we have hinted, some students of theology who frequented that Seminary so that they would not have to observe military duty. In 1879, the students were: Joseph Morocchi, Louis Tomasi, Joseph Nicolai: this last mentioned, however, died on February 5<sup>th</sup> of the same year, while he was in second theology.

*General praised Fr. Benciolini with best wishes, and all responded enthusiastically with a prolonged applause...*<sup>192</sup>

**154.** Among all the works of zeal to which our Fathers attended in this time, the one that stood mostly at their hearts was the **Christian education of the youth**. Realizing the great good that could derive from teaching, confreres were being prepared with every effort to exercise also this ministry that was both so useful and necessary. In August 1879, Fr. Perazzani and Brother Piccoli were in Parma, and presented themselves for the examinations in order to obtain the license of Teacher: and since they had completed that three year apprenticeship for the classes they taught in our house, in January 1880, they received their diploma.

Much longer and far more demanding was the process to be undertaken in order to receive the formal approval for teaching in the upper classes: after one would have obtained the high school license, one would then have to enroll in the Regional University to frequent the courses there on a regular basis. However, in the years about which we are treating, a favorable occasion presented itself to our men also in this regard. Because of an insufficient number of approved teachers, in the face of such needs in the teaching profession, on May 10, 1877 a Royal Decree was published which established extraordinary sessions for special examinations, for the period of five years, for the purpose of conferring diplomas of the legal approval to teach both for the junior college and high school, both in the technical and normal schools. The titles required to be able to qualify for these examinations, according to the regulations set down by the Minister Coppino, were that one had to be at least 25 years old, and to have taught with praise in a secondary school for at least four years, whether the school be public or private.

The Superior General, therefore, who for many years had desired to open the high schools at the Stimate, willingly seized this favorable occasion, and directed certain of our Confreres to prepare themselves for these exams. The years that they had taught in our schools fulfilled one of the requirements. The Bishop of Verona was ready to certify that those applying to take these examinations had taught for 6 years in a private ecclesiastical institute subject to his jurisdiction. However, the Chancellor of the University of Padua did not accept his attestation, in that he did not recognize any teaching experience other than that conducted in schools under the authority of the Regional Superintendent of Studies, and that of the Prefect of the Province. On the other hand, the Authority refused to emit the certificates, and would not in any way recognize the Episcopal certification. Recourse was then made to the Prefect, who ordered an inspection of the School at the Stimate, in order to verify whether the existence of that private school did indeed cover all the years of teaching required of the candidates for the government examinations. As a consequence of their investigation the government published an attestation in which it was declared that that which the Bishop of Verona had stated, was indeed true, regarding the years of teaching in the respective classes and matters. Thus, in the November of that year six of our Fathers presented themselves to the Regional University of Padua, two of whom were approved for teaching in the college level, i.e., Fr. Tabarelli for

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<sup>192</sup> By order of the Superior general, an account of the festivities was drawn up for the other Houses, in order to spread this Jubilee to all our Confreres, in order to give it the perpetuity that it merits.

Philosophy, and Fr. Zandonai, for History. Two more were approved for the upper high school level, Fr. Sterza and Fr. Magagna. Three were approved for junior high school, i.e., Fr. Zandonai, Fr. Vivari and Fr. Vidali. Thus, there would be sufficient personnel to open a complete high school course.

The school year began then and on November 10, the first three elementary classes opened at the Stimmate with Frs. Louis Tommasi, Cavinato and Louis Gasperotti were the teachers.

**155.** At Trent, in the meantime, after the departure of the Aspirants, those Fathers who remained there were free from teaching and were able now to apply themselves to priestly ministries. Not having a public Church, several times they entered into negotiations with the Prince-Bishop in order to obtain the care of a Church in the city: finally in February 1880, the Congregation obtained the direction of the Church of St. Martin, with a small residence joined to it, along with the annual stipend of 300 florins. Fr. Anthony Oss-Balss was assigned there and named 'Prior', and Fr. Dominic Vicentini, as Director of S. Bernadine's: they lived here, but every evening they went to St Martin's where they would spend the night. Each morning, after their occupations in their ministry, they would return to the Community. On March 14<sup>th</sup>, they began to operate the oratory for the young men of the neighborhood.

**156.** There were by now lacking only a few months to the end of the Superior General's five year term. In October, the election of the new Superior was to be held. In the meantime, there still remained a few preliminary questions, and first among these, the length of the Superior General's term. In the February of 1880, then, Fr. Peter Vignola convoked the General Chapter, which after a long discussion, judged that those exceptional reasons according to which for two successive times, the Superior General was elected to a limited term. The decision was now made to return to the text of the Venerated Founder's Constitutions, and therefore of electing the new Superior General for life. Fr. Peter Vignola made the proposal for the Chapter to proceed right away to the new election, without any need of convoking the Chapter again in October. However, the other Fathers did not accept the proposal, and even lengthened the present Superior's term up until February of the following year, 1881.

After this, there was elected a Capitular Commission of five members for the revision of the old Document, the **Appendix to Part XII of the Founder's Constitutions** – and further, to decide in what points the General Council should have decisive vote. The following confreres were elected Frs. Peer Vignola, Bassi, Morando, Vicentini and Tabarelli. Since they had been requested that the necessary negotiations be undertaken with the ecclesiastical authorities for a further approbation of the rules, various means were proposed and discussed. These were all directed toward bringing about this common desire. Thus, it was decided that in the meantime, a *compendium* of our Constitutions be drawn up. This would first be presented to the Cardinal Bishop of Verona, because if it could be approved and supported by him, and

then it could be sent along to the competent ecclesiastical authority. This charge was entrusted to Frs. Rigoni and Sembianti.<sup>193</sup>

**157.** While the General Chapter was in session, on February 21, Louis Battisti was ordained a Priest, and he celebrated his First Mass at the Stimate on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. On the following days, the Feast of St. Thomas was celebrated with extraordinary solemnity. This was preceded by a Triduum, with special conferences and recitations offered by the Scholastics. The Roman Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII published his Encyclical *Aeterni Patris*, recommending the doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, prescribing that all the Catholic Schools need to be in conformity with it: our confreres had sent on that occasion a message to the Supreme Pontiff, declaring their full adherence to the teaching of the Angelic Doctor and now they took the opportunity of placing their own schools under his protection. On the day of the actual feast, the Solemn Mass was celebrated by the new Priest, Fr. Louis Battisti, who also that evening delivered the panegyric during the ceremonies.

In the following April, the Community made its Retreat, at the end of which for the first time, all made a solemn renewal of their Vows, which had been decided upon by the last General Chapter.

At the end of this scholastic year, for the first time, there was a solemn conferral of rewards, with the appropriate speech of Fr. Gasperotti, acting as Moderator. Our schools more and more came to the attention to the citizenry, and the local newspaper, *The Adige* - around the end of July, had an article praising the examinations just held at the Stimate, with much praise for the beloved young men who attended there and for their patient and loving teachers<sup>194</sup>.

**158.** In the meantime, in the month of January, Bishop Comboni, Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa, had asked for one of our Fathers to serve as Director of the Seminary for that Mission and permission for this had been granted. Fr. Sembianti took over that position on March 13 and Fr. Morando took his place at Bassano. On the occasion of the Ninth General Chapter, Fr. Sembianti had presented the need of increasing the personnel of that house, because three Confreres alone did not favor very much the maintaining of the religious spirit. He further brought to the attention of the Capitulars that working only with the young men living in the boarding house there provided only a very poor field for the energies of our community. The area of instruction that had been offered to them is one from which we could hope to do better and more. He thus proposed that a plan be studied with which the regular observance might be better maintained in that House, and at the same a means be found to procure our greater usefulness of the town.

The new Director arriving on the scene undertook a study of the area, noted the requests of the priests and the people, proposed to the Superior General the setting up of a private school, being content for that first year with the three lower classes, or

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<sup>193</sup> They prepared this *compendium* and it is still conserved in the Archives of the Institute. In the Chapter Fr. Rigoni resigned as General Councilor and Procurator General – Fr. Bassi was named to the General Council and Fr. Marini took over as Procurator General.

<sup>194</sup> During this year, Frs. Zandonai and Sterza filled in at the Seminary due to the lack of Professors there.



at least two of them. He requested for this work in mind a Confrere already endowed with the regular diploma.

The Superior General examined the matter with his Councilors, and accepted the proposal in part, i.e., there was granted a two year trial of the teaching in the lower grades, however without commitment of leaving there more than four Priests. It was therefore established that for the next scholastic year, one additional Priest would be sent and the third class would be added. At the same time, it was agreed that the boarding house would provide an additional 600 Lira<sup>195</sup>, until agreement could be reached on setting up a capital corresponding to 1300 Lira. In October, Fr. Alexis Magagna was sent there, and first two high school classes were opened.

In Verona in that November, the three elementary classes opened, adding then the 4<sup>th</sup> class. As for our internal schools for our own students, those of **other religious communities began coming**: the Communities of the Ministers to the Infirm, and the seminary for the Missions of Central Africa began sending their candidates.

Meanwhile others began preparing themselves for the ministry of teaching for the benefit of the youth. In August, our Confreres Louis Tomasi, Cavinato and Piccoli all earned at Parma the license to teach in the upper grades. In November, Frs. Vidali and Zandonai also obtained at Padua the diploma for teaching the upper high school level.

**159.** On February 18, 1881, the Tenth General Chapter convened for the election of the Superior General. Fr. Peter Vignola was elected for life, and as Councilors he was given Frs. Bassi, Sembianti, Vincent Vignola and Charles Zara. Fr. Marini remained as Procurator General.

The Program of Studies was approved for our students, and a careful examination of the old supplementary document, the **Appendix to Part XII of the Original Constitutions** had been presented. This had been re-submitted to the Commission for further study, for its members to prepare a definitive document then to be sent to all the Houses and submitted to the vote of all the Graduate Fathers. To this same Commission was given the mandate to examine the Rules for the Offices, already edited by the Superior General, according to the mandate previously given.

The House of the Stimmate presented to the Chapter the proposal to open the entire high school curriculum for extern students and this was approved.

The Chapter then took up the discussion of the School at Bassano, and it was concluded that the Superior General should maintain the obligations assumed, in accord with his Council. However, the two-year trial period had passed, and the Congregation was not to commit itself to establishing in that city the complete high

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<sup>195</sup> The business man, Francis Fontana, was committed to paying these 600 Lira annually, until that moment when this addition to the contract could be formally established.

school, until a proper contract would be set up providing more equitably for the Congregation.<sup>196</sup>

Lastly, the discussion centered on the House of Parma, whose condition of which left so much to be desired. This was true both regarding the situation of the house that was totally insufficient and deprived even of those basic comforts needed for the purposes establishing of teaching school and conducting the oratory – and also because of the patrimony that was totally lacking. Encouraged by Bishop Villa<sup>197</sup>, our Fathers had the previous year sought a more suitable dwelling. With the offerings received from him, and from other benevolent persons, they had purchased a house furnished with a spacious garden not far from the Church of the Quarter in the Bertano Borgo. However, this needed much renovation, in order to be suitable for their desired purposes.

Therefore, the General Chapter entrusted the Superior General to represent to the Bishop the state of that House and the hardships in which the Congregation found itself – and then, either to recall some of those *Confreres* leaving there only those *whom the agreed upon and established income found there*, and who could be supported; or, the second alternative to restore the capital received, and withdraw all the *Confreres*. However, the practical working out of these details was left by the General Chapter up to the final decision of the Superior General and his Council, having heard the opinion of the *Graduate* Fathers of the House of Verona.

**160.** The decision of the General Chapter was communicated to the Bishop of Parma. He was genuinely sorry for the sad condition of our residence there, and was more deeply grieved that there was not much he could do to alleviate the situation as much as he would have liked to, so he promised from his part, to provide annually 216 Lira annually that was still lacking from the agreed upon contract of 1875<sup>198</sup>: further, in compensation the thought was to give to our *Confreres* the capital corresponding to 4000 Lira, which could be used in the work to be done in the foundation of the House. All of this still did not better the situation very much: in fact the purchase price and the costs of labor for the new dwelling surpassed 18,000 Lira, of which 1700 came through offerings, and more than 3000 were taken out in loans. As a result, at the end of all this work, our Community had a debt of some 4, 5000 Lira. As capital, they did own the House in the Taschieri Borgo, and the 8000 credit from Mr. Carraglia. In the end of

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<sup>196</sup> On this occasion, the Chapter established that in the foundation of new houses, room and board would be requested and an annual salary of 500 Lira for each individual.

<sup>197</sup> The Bishop had given on this occasion 5000 Lira which had previously been set aside to pay for the construction of the school.

<sup>198</sup> In 1877, the bishop had given 5000 Lira to our *Confreres* for the purchase of a garden adjacent to the church in the Quarter, for the young boys of the neighborhood. That garden was then ceded to Mr. Camillo Carraglia, in compensation for the expenses that he had undergone in 1875, in the purchase of the House in the Borgo Taschieri. Furthermore the Bishop had further granted to our Fathers a credit toward the same Mr. Carraglia, of 8000 Lira, of which he was paying the annual interest of 400 Lira. If to these 11,400 Lira, there be added the 5000 Lira the Bishop gave in 1880, a capital would result of 16,400 Lira @ 6%, granting another 934 Lira annually. According to the agreement of 1875, the Bishop should also give 300 Lira annually for each Priest, that is, 1200 Lira.

all this, the Community still lacked the patrimony requested, and for their maintenance, they had to rely on the alms received for Masses and the offerings of generous people.

In September there was assembled in Verona a chapter of the *Graduate* Fathers, presided over by the Father Superior and his Council. For the matter of Bassano, as the Arch-Priest had promised to establish a sufficient capital for the support of four Priests and a Coadjutor Brother, the chapter decided that if the Monsignor Abbot offered the capital of 20000 Lira, his proposal would be accepted and the Congregation committed itself to open and to sustain a complete high school curriculum. As for the situation in Parma, having seen the good will of the Bishop, and the recent offer of 4000 Lira made by him, the decision was that it was opportune to sustain further that house. And already the restoration of the newly purchased house was underway, and continued through the summer months. By the early days of December, our Fathers were able to move in.

**161.** In that same year of 1881, new candidates presented themselves for the government examinations: the cleric, Lodovico Luchi in July, received the license to teach the elementary level but the upper grades. In November, Frs. Gradinati, Gasperotti, Battisti, Marocchi and Morando all obtained from Padua the license for the high school level.<sup>199</sup> In the course of the year, there were further ordinations to the priesthood: Fr. Joseph Marocchi [in August] and Fr. Louis Tomasi, in December. However, one of the priests also left at this time, and it was Fr. Lawrence Rigatti. Already for some time, the Superiors were much concerned about his conduct, and they tried every avenue to lead him back to religious observance, but it was all in vain. In the end, he himself asked for a dispensation, and his request was granted<sup>200</sup>.

In November in Verona, along with the elementary classes, there was also added a first high school class for externs: a Bassano, there was also added to the first two grades, also the third high school class, and Fr. Vidali went there to teach it. The Director of that House, Fr. Morando, would have also liked to open a college there – a boarding house type in order to support our school there, but the means for doing so were lacking. On the one hand, there was no desire at that time to entrust the administration of the hoped for college to a lay person; and on the other hand, the Congregation could not assign the personnel necessary to direct also a College. The number of students of the high school classes reached 70.

At the beginning of 1882, we find another new event in the Church at the Stimate: on the morning of January 6<sup>th</sup>, under the direction of the Pious Union of the Holy Infancy, a devout function was celebrated. In the evening, in the same Church, there had been prepared a modest academy of musical and poetic talent for the organization itself. It was the first time that this feast dear to the Italian people was ever celebrated in Verona, and it came to be repeated in the subsequent years at the Stimate. In the year 1883, it switched over to St. Teresa's Church, and the academy

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<sup>199</sup> Furthermore, in that December Fr. Carrara obtained in Padua the license for the teaching of mathematics.

<sup>200</sup> As soon as he left, he became seriously ill, and after a very painful period of suffering, he died, on December 23<sup>rd</sup> that same year. 'What a lesson this should be for us', the Superior wrote.

began to be more and more sophisticated and well prepared, with great crowds of people and the local authorities in attendance.

In the Church of the Stimmate, during the night between January 17 and 18, a robbery occurred from the altar of the Sorrowful Mary, and the statue was stolen.<sup>201</sup> With all of its appurtenances its value was somewhere near 2000 Lira. In reparation for this sacrilege, on the 30<sup>th</sup> of the same month a Triduum was begun that proved very successful due to the great number of the devout and the many Holy Communion. On that occasion, and on the closing of the Sorrowful Month, many precious gifts were contributed to the altar of Mary<sup>202</sup>.

**162.** In October 1881, Bishop Daniel Comboni died, as Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa. His successor was our old confrere, now Bishop Francis Sogaro. He had served for a few years as Pastor of St. George's and then withdrew to the Seminary for that Mission group, in order to prepare himself for this new kind of apostolic life, to which from his boyhood days, he had always felt inclined. Fr. Sembianti, who had been Director of that Seminary, had asked our Superior, Fr. Peter Vignola, to go as a companion to Bishop Sogaro, and also Fr. Dominic Vicentini, who aspired to the same mission. The chapter of the *Graduate* Fathers of the House of the Stimmate assembled, and after hearing the reasons put forward by Fr. Vicentini, decided to let him go to Africa under the condition that he would remain bound with his vows to the Congregation, and would be disposed to return, should the Superior ask him to do that. With this permission, it was also made clear that the Congregation did not intend to assume any commitment regarding that mission.

Following this deliberation, Fr. Vicentini left the House of Trent where he had been Director, and was transferred to Verona, to the Seminary for the African Missions, to study there the Arabic Language: and later, on December 16<sup>th</sup>, he departed for Africa.

**163.** At the end of the scholastic year, great solemnities accompanied the conferral of honors. His Eminence, Cardinal di Canossa attended, as did the Rector of the Seminary, Monsignor Bacilieri, some of the professors of the Seminary, a number of Monsignors, pastors and priests. The young students of the freshman year offered a display of their prowess in Latin, and all were quite pleased with their efforts. However, while our work for the advantage of the youth was much appreciated by so many good souls, there was never lacking an embedded sentiment of envy and jealousy. The Father Superior, in his address, had to declare that with the institution of the schools, he had not intended to enter into rivalry with any others, but that our sole purpose was to supply for a need that was felt by all. Convinced of the holiness of their cause, our

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<sup>201</sup> This stone statue had been done by the Veronese sculptor, Spazzi, and was placed on the altar on February 6, 1882, in place of the painting of Deposition: it had cost 300 Lira offered by a devout person. In 1879 there had also been stolen from St. Francis' altar the painting representing the transition of the Saint, and this was substituted for by another, presenting his Stigmata. This had been the work of the artist Orbetto and had cost 250 Lira, offered likewise by the pious faithful.

<sup>202</sup> On February 18, there was donated a backdrop of silk, embroidered in gold, for the altar of the Sorrowful Mary. On February 28<sup>th</sup> there was placed in service the crystal for the same altar, which together with the frame and ironworks cost 240 Lira, all of which were offerings from the devout faithful.

Fathers redoubled their ardor in this undertaking, and at the same time were committed to preparing new personnel who would be dedicated to the mission of teaching. During this year, 1882, the professed student, J. B. Cavinato, and the Aspirant, **John B. Tomasi**, happily passed all their examinations for the license to teach on the junior college level, while the professed students Stephen Rosa and Julius Zambiasi obtained the high school license to teach.

In the fall of that same year, an even took place that we cannot pass over in silence. A flood overwhelmed the city of Verona, and the work that our Confreres offered valuable help for flood victims. The overflowing of the Adige began on September 17, the Feast of the Stigmata of St. Francis, as it had rained uninterruptedly for several days. The streets of the city were torrents of water – the houses inundated and in real danger. Many took refuge at the Stimate, asking for temporary protection. The rooms in St. Teresa's were emptied as was the Church itself, to offer refuge and all was placed at the disposal of those seeking it. On that day, and on the following night, the torrential rain continued to fall, so much so that by the 18, many houses had collapsed, the new bridge went under, the dock for the boats were damaged, and even the railway was threatened. Verona seemed to have become part of the Adige, and moving about was greatly restricted. More refugees flocked toward the Stimate, so much so that they numbered about 300 in all. Frs. Graziani, Zandonai, Zanini were at the disposition of the refugees, and went about seeking to give consolation. The town sent bread, polenta and food stuffs. This situation remained until the 28 of the same month, when the refugees left for the town hall, as a kind of hospice had been opened up at St. Bernardine's. For these poor victims, the service offered by our Confreres for that people proved to be providential, and all the local papers spoke of our Community's great generosity during the tragedy.

**164.** At long last, the 11 of November finally arrived, a day of such expectancy, when at the Stimate there opened the complete high school course. Among the students attending, were those from the College of St. Aloysius, directed by Fr. J.B. Carrara, so that from the very first year, the students on the high school level, numbered around 80. Also in the classes of Philosophy and Theology, in addition to our own students, there were **externs, and clerics from Bishop Comboni's community** as well as **the Community dedicated to the care of the Hearing-Speech impaired.**<sup>203</sup>

In the following year of 1883, seizing upon the occasion of the new classes, much thought was given to the celebration with utmost solemnity the Feast of St.

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<sup>203</sup> **NB: We-site note:** the training of men for the Priesthood for Dioceses and for Religious Communities, has long been a central mission of Stigmatines. The training of Seminarians and helping Priests and Religious is part of the work of Fr. Bertoni's ideal of those promoted to the *Grade of Apostolic Missionary* : cf. CF ## 67, cf. particularly:

**# 164.** [The 'Professed' will be dedicated to] contributing to the formation and discipline of Seminarians, whether these are living in Seminaries, or are extern students, assigned to parishes or living at home. They will accomplish this either through public courses, or private conversations, by promoting the Seminarians' life of study and spirituality.

Thomas Aquinas. At the morning Mass for all the students, there was celebrated a General Communion and the dedication of studies. In the evening there was held the customary 'academy' in the presence of His Eminence, the Cardinal-Bishop of Verona, his Vicar General, the Rector of the Seminary and others. In this 'talent show' three theology students defended a variety of theses regarding creation. For the event, there were choir pieces of the Maestro Ravignani, which were subsequently often performed among us.

The opening of the school year brought with it the need of more space. Already in August of the previous year, the building of a new House was begun, and in May of this year, renovations were also initiated in St. Teresa's Convent. The floor of the cloister which went around the court-yard was re-done, as were those of the refectory and the kitchen.<sup>204</sup> At the same time, the floor of St. Teresa's Church was repaired, which had begun to be used by the students there: in fact, for them for the first time in this Church the May devotions were conducted.

**165.** On June 20 of this year Fr. Charles Zara died at the Stimate. Up until the beginning of January, he had been the Director of that house, and his place was taken by Fr. Pius Gurisatti. For some time, he had already been suffering from an illness that proved to be extremely painful, and this brought him great sufferings the last months of his life. He was most beloved in the Congregation, and he had gathered with loving care all that spoke of it, completing and continuing the Chronicle of the Congregation. He had worked long for the benefit of the young, especially in the Marian Oratory, and he was deeply mourned especially by the young men who attended it. On the 22 of July, there was a solemn commemoration of his Month's Mind.

That same morning of June 20, Fr. Bellino Carrara left the Congregation, in order to become a Jesuit. He said he had been moved by the desire to embrace an Institute the way of life was more canonically stable and more perfect. Others, however, still entered to work in the vineyard of the Lord. In September, at Parma, Frs. Eugene Laudon and Lodovico Luchi were ordained, and in Verona Frs. Albano Clementi and J. B. Cavinato were ordained: they came to take up the slack of the vacancies left behind.

On December 25<sup>th</sup> of this same year, Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe celebrated his Golden Jubilee. He more than merited the gratitude of Stigmatines and for the affection that he always manifested for our Congregation, and because he had written the biography of our venerated Founder: and Stigmatines who for long had helped him very much in his parish duties, willingly offered themselves to render even more solemn this festivity. In the morning, *during the solemn Mass*, Fr. Rigoni in the Parish Church offered a sermon for the occasion which left an excellent impression. In the evening there was the usual ceremony in front of the Crib, and various compositions were presented in prose and in verse honoring the Arc-Priest, as well as songs and chants adapted for the occasion. In all, this was a genuine production of the customary academy, much merited by the jubilarian.

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<sup>204</sup> The new kitchen and refectory were used for the first time on June 29<sup>th</sup>, for the Name day of the Superior.

**166.** Before leaving this year 1883, we should recall a period of preaching assignments accomplished by our men in the city of Pavia. The bishop of that diocese, Bishop Riboldi had known some of our Fathers who had come to Pavia from their examinations for their licentiates to teach, and he had known from them **the end of the Congregation**, about which he also had fresh testimony from the Ordinary of Parma, Bishop Dominic Villa. He had already conceived the desire to have one of our Houses in his Diocese. In the meantime, he requested two of our Priests to offer a series of Missions that might prepare the population for his Pastoral Visitation, which he had to make in various towns during the autumn months. There were designated for this Frs. Andrew Sterza and Melchiade Vivari, later substituted for by Fr. Zanini. From August 26<sup>th</sup> until November 25<sup>th</sup>, they preached 13 continuous and full weeks, without a break in between.

Meanwhile, without repeating what we have already said elsewhere, preaching assignments continued in other localities as well, especially in the city and throughout the diocese of Verona – not even to mention the many monthly days of recollection in oratories also of other religious families, as well as the teaching of Catechism went on in the colleges and religious institutes, with the spiritual assistance being offered to those who were living in recoveries for the poor. One of the outstanding members here was Fr. Marini, who attended to this with much zeal. Fr. Paul Gradinati noted in his Chronicle, somewhat facetiously: it does not seem that laziness had ever found a home in the Stimmate. Among all the Confreres Fr. Andrew Sterza stood out for his extraordinary physical stamina. He was described with the old saying: *he was a most long-suffering man of labor, being able to sustain far beyond what was believable*. He was able to go on without interruption, and was almost always occupied in preaching parish Missions and courses of Retreat, Lenten courses and monthly days of recollection. He had a great ease about him, and a clarity, being extremely capable of adapting himself to every class of people.<sup>205</sup>

**167.** Another matter that we should note here: about this time, in the Church of the Stimmate, there was established the Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis. From the very beginning a number of our early Fathers and Brothers had enrolled in this, but later the Holy See declared that members of other religious Institutes could not belong to it, it was the Congregation of the Third Order was continued just for the laity. The first solemn vestition took place on September 17, and a second day, was October 4, Feast of St. Francis. In the early days of January of the following year, 1884, a monthly conference was offered for the adherents.

Meanwhile from the previous November 9 school had re-opened at the Stimmate. There is nothing special to be noted here for the new school year, except that there was offered a solemn Triduum for the students in the Church of the Stimmate during the last days of May to commemorate the first centenary of the institution of the May devotions: thus, together with the instruction, every effort was

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<sup>205</sup> In 1887, for example, he preached the entire Lent and then gave a Retreat in the Church of the Rosary in Vicenza, where the Abbot Zanella who went to hear him praised him in these words: 'he is a most effective preacher because of his evangelical simplicity.'

made to infuse into our students that love for piety which is the basis of every authentic and sound education<sup>206</sup>.

**168.** Still in this year 1884, the following were ordained in December: Frs. Stephen Rosa, Julius Zambiasi, Joseph Bertapelle, Joseph Chemello<sup>207</sup>. The first two had obtained in this same year the license to teach on the junior college level, and in November they were transferred to Parma to enroll in the University in order to frequent the Faculty of mathematics, and at the same time, to help the other Fathers there in the elementary school.

In that city, our Confreres were living as best they could in the Borgo Bertano, where they continued being occupied with the education of the youth with the school and the Sunday Oratory, and giving themselves further to other works of the ministry, both in the city, and throughout the Diocese. In 1884, they sold the first dwelling they owned in Borgo Tashieri, increasing just a bit more their patrimony of the House, which still remain quite insufficient and restrictive for a regular foundation.<sup>208</sup>

In the year 1882, worn down and consumed by his apostolic endeavors, and mourned by all, on July 22, Bishop Villa died. He had much loved our Confreres. He was succeeded by Bishop Andrew Miotti, who was consecrated in Rome on October 1 of the same year. In this same House of Parma in 1883, Fr. Andrew Sterza was assigned. He, however, was always; on the road' in preaching throughout the Dioceses of Parma and Reggio, and throughout the Veneto. Fr. Vincent continued to work tirelessly for the good of souls, enjoying the esteem and the affection of all good people, especially by the Bishop who entrusted to him the most delicate charges.<sup>209</sup> The other Fathers took care of the school and other works of the ministry, and around this time they assumed also the care of the small hospital next to the Church of the Quarter.

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<sup>206</sup>**NB: English Translator's Note:** this subordination was to our Founder: cf. his *Original Constitutions*:

**66. It will be up to the Superiors to see to it that neither the love for piety will be cooled through the fervor of studies, nor that through any excess of piety, will the necessary studies be impeded.**

**167. Even though children might be accepted in our ministry for the purpose of educating them, nevertheless the main goal to be sought and intended in our institution is their being instructed in their moral life.**

<sup>207</sup> This last mentioned left in May 1885, for his general poor health brought about by tuberculosis, 'but even more due to a diabolic temptation.' Very shortly, he would repent of this, and state that he would be sorry for the rest of his life.

<sup>208</sup> To make up for this, the people there contributed generously to their support, in a particular manner the families of their students and the Religious Communities to which our men offered their spiritual assistance.

<sup>209</sup> In the year 1886, Bishop Villa had nominated him as a Member of the Academy of St. Thomas.



**169.** In Bassano, from the year 1882, the two years of experimentation were over, and the Director, Fr. Louis Morando, had asked that there be granted to him also the responsibility of the upper grades of high school. The General Councilors were gathered to discuss this, with the *Graduate* Fathers of the Stimmate under the presidency of the Superior General on June 15 of that year. Their view was not to continue on with the classes there with the addition of one upper grade would not require an increase of personnel. So, they granted a year of trial with the faculty of adding to the first three grades also the fourth, without committing to complete the upper high school curriculum, if not under the absolute condition that within the new scholastic year, there would be obtained the necessary funds, already established by the Congregation in support of six priests. This capital was not forthcoming, but at the end of that scholastic year, the Monsignor Arch-Priest came up with 500 Lira for an additional priest.<sup>210</sup> As a result, due to the insistent appeals of Fr. Morando, in 1883 the Congregation did grant the 5<sup>th</sup> priest and the high school curriculum at Bassano was complete. Nonetheless, this remained a precarious situation as no one seemed that concerned to constitute the capital necessary to insure the existence of the endeavor. Added to this, was the fact that the number of the students dipped to a level that was not foreseen. Already in 1881, a boarding house-college had come into being – called the Vinanti Dormitory, to reinforce the public high school, and to the harm of the private high school. Fr. Morando had not been able to found a college, which he did try to do in 1882-1883. His hope was to supply from his students boarding house for the number of students in the afternoon sessions, but the undertaking was too costly and did not bring with it proportionate advantages. Therefore, his endeavor lasted only a year.<sup>211</sup>

In the meantime, there began the battles between those schools, and this overflowed into the newspapers: this even reached the level of violence, in the effort brought to bear to keep students for enrolling. In February 1882, the Superintendent visited the schools, and he had only words of praise and gratitude for our men were doing there. However, this was not enough to pacify the families. There began some indications of real prejudice, spreading he fear that those students of ours who would present themselves for the examinations of licentiate would not pass. In fact, those who presented themselves for the first time in 1884 and in the first session did not have a very satisfying result. However, in the October session, all, except for one, were promoted, but even this did not remove the prejudice and the fears that had built up, and so this proved to bring about defections from our school. As a result, support for this high school was still forthcoming, but it was already clear that it could not last for very long: in that public center there was too much shadow cast by the public schools and ours was exposed to continual struggle.

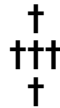
Let us summarize this period for the Chronicle: on the example of our Venerated Founder, our Confreres were dedicated with great ardor and zeal for the ministry in the apostolic mission of teaching. And the men, in order to render themselves suitable for teaching, a great number of them had presented themselves successfully for the examinations of approval, passing them with praise worthy results.

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<sup>210</sup> The Abbot therefore increased his contribution from 700 Lira a year, to 1100 for the school.

<sup>211</sup> On April 11, 1883, the young student, Anthony Conte, came from Bassano and in June he began his Novitiate in Verona.

At this juncture, they were conducting the ministry of teaching school in Verona, both on the elementary as well as on the high school level; the elementary classes in Parma; the high school classes in Bassano; and they were taking in extern students also for our classes of Philosophy and Theology. They had understood well the importance of school for the Christian formation of the youth, that was being threatened on all sides. And they committed themselves to this at great personal sacrifice, achieving wonderful advantages, and were blessed and encouraged by so many good people.



### Chapter 3

### APPROBATION OF THE CONGREGATION

#### [1885-1890]

**170.** Nonetheless, in that face of the enthusiasm which the majority of the Fathers felt for the Mission of the Schools, others felt themselves inclined to the work of the Missions.<sup>212</sup> **There were even those who wanted to restrict to preaching alone, the purpose of our Institute.** We have noted this tendency that manifested itself ten years earlier, especially along the young, for the Missions outside of Italy, a tendency that had not abated in any way.<sup>213</sup>

From June 1884, the Vicar Apostolic, Bishop Francis Sogaro, had written from Central Africa to the Superior General for our Congregation and to fuse our Institute with that for Black Africa. The Superior General convoked the Chapter of all the Fathers present and proposed this idea which by common accord was rejected. In 1885, Fr. Sogaro was nominated Titular Bishop of Trapezopoli, and came to Italy to be consecrated.<sup>214</sup> In August, Fr. Peter Vignola made the trip to Rome to assist at this consecration: and on that occasion, when the newly ordained Bishop visited Verona, he repeated his idea.<sup>215</sup> He did this also out of the sincere affection that he always nourished, and had ever conserved, towards our Congregation, from which he had

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<sup>212</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** there were many at this time who understood Apostolic Mission, to include those Missions outside of Italy, under the responsibility of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith; and there were those who understood *Missions*, to mean solely *Parish Missions*. Frs. Sogaro, Sembianti, D. Vicentini and others believed they were called to the developing apostolates in Africa. The main stream of our membership, however, always held that the intellectual and spiritual formation of the youth likewise remains a central part of the Apostolic Mission as codified in St. Gaspar's *Original Constitutions*.

The Apostolic Mission of St. Gaspar clearly includes both: CF # 5: quocumque in Diocesi et mundo - and cf. especially:

**NINTH PART :      THE GRADE OF THE 'PROFESSED' [## 158- 196]**

**Chapter 1:**      **The 'Profession' [## 158-160]**

**Chapter 2:**      **The Means by which the Institute promotes the  
Salvation of Others [## 161-164]**

**Chapter 3:**      **The Instruction of Children and Youth [## 165-167]**

**Chapter 4:**      **The Means to be employed developing Morality in the Young [## 168-174]**

**Chapter 5:**      **The Means employed for the Academic Progress of the Youth [## 175-181]**

**Chapter 6:**      **The Duties of the 'Professed' [## 182-184]**

**Chapter 7:**      **The Principal Purpose of the 'Professed' [## 185-186]**

<sup>213</sup> While Fr. D. Vicentini with repeated requests did obtain permission to leave for the Missions in Africa, Fr. Vivari had repeatedly asked permission to go to that Mission, or even to place himself at the disposition of the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.

<sup>214</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** this ordination took place in the Church St. Agatha of the Goths in Rome – at that time, the seat of the Pontifical Irish College, also with ties to the S. Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith.

<sup>215</sup> On September 17<sup>th</sup>, being in Verona, Bishop Sogaro celebrated a Mass of Devotion at the Stimate, and stayed to lunch with the Community.

received his education and out of his sincere desire to return to its womb, without giving up that type of the Mission for which he had always felt a strong attraction. However, the realization of his desires was opposed by insuperable obstacles: that Mission would have absorbed all, or almost all of the man-power of our Congregation. Our Community would have had to change substantially its program and its purpose: and this was pleasing to no one.

In June of 1885, Fr. Richard Tabarelli underwent the examinations in Dogmatic Theology at the Academy of St. Thomas in Parma, and achieved unanimous approval and the most sublime praise, and was declared a Doctor in Sacred Theology. He had taught Philosophy and Theology for many years to our Students. In 1876, he had been named Prefect of Studies and then also Director of the Elementary and High Schools at the Stimmate, and continued in this teaching and duties up until 1889, when he was transferred to Rome, as we shall see.

On May 30 of this same year 1885, Fr. Octavian Piccoli was ordained a Priest in Verona. In September, Fr. Paul Gradinati was appointed Novice Master. From July of the previous year, Fr. Mark Bassi was exonerated from that task due to his failing health, and he had already been substituted for by Fr. Alexis Magagna. On September 8, 1885, he ceded the office to Fr. Gradinati, who would then exercise this office for many years, to the great advantage of your young students.<sup>216</sup>

**171.** In the month of November finally the foundation of the House in Pavia was realized. Already since January 1884, following that cycle of Parish Missions which we have already recalled, Bishop Riboldi wrote to the Superior General, proposing to him a foundation in his diocese, but this idea could not be acted upon right away. In 1884, once more that Bishop asked our Fathers for a Parish Mission in preparation for the Parish Visitation as the year before. Fathers Zanini and Zandonai went for this, and later, he was substituted for by Fr. Pius Gurisatti. In 1885, there were established the pacts for the foundation that was set for November 4<sup>th</sup>. To our Confreres, the following tasks were entrusted: (1) assistance at the Sunday Oratory of St. Aloysius opened in the seminary property; (2) the direction of the night school also at the Seminary from the beginning of November until the end of March, teaching Catechism to these three classes in the same schools and offering some rudimentary ideas regarding grammar and mathematics in one of these; (3) the work of Parish Missions in the parishes in so far as they would not prejudice the above noted duties. The Bishop then committed himself to give the Congregation the annual sum of 1000 Lira, which in addition to the alms for the Masses, should serve well for their financial support.<sup>217</sup>

In the letter of definitive acceptance, the Bishop stated that the late Bishop of Parma, His Excellency, Bishop Villa, had sublimely commended our Institute, assuring him both of its apostolic spirit and its sure devotion to the Holy See, as well as the real dedication of the members of the Congregation. And he added that he had also

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<sup>216</sup> On that very day, Fr. Gradinati wrote: 'May God be good our Superiors in their choice, may the Madonna help me to carry it out without any harm to myself or to others.'

<sup>217</sup> The truth of the matter is that our men in asking for 500 Lira for each individual, was computing in this sum also the Mass stipends.

experienced firsthand in his Diocese, all of this, in that the men had already harvested in it most abundant fruit from the zeal of this Community and of these outstanding Missionaries.

Frs. Vivari and Graziani were sent<sup>218</sup>: they were temporarily lodged in one of the rented houses near the Church of St. Gervase<sup>219</sup>, and they had the duty of taking care of the Church. For that House, there was at the beginning some fear of the difficult neighborhood in which it was situated, both for the laity and for ecclesiastics, since among the clergy there remained still the remnants of Jansenism.

And the Bishop himself, a little after the arrival of our men, wrote to our Superior General:

*... From the beginning the good Fathers perhaps will have a bit of penance to endure and to sustain some real discomfort: but later I hope that they will find themselves well off materially and that there will develop in them to their own and my consolation and with great fruit in this Diocese ...*

For that matter, they had found in the Bishop a Father full of concern and good will. Meanwhile, they applied themselves to the oratory and to the night school: later, the Bishop intended to entrust to them the lower high school classes already opened for the boys in the city and a college yet to establish, as also to give to their care a house and a Church under their responsibility which must have been that of St. Peter in his heaven of gold.

**172.** In 1886, the Superior General recalled Fr. Vicentini from Africa, who did return with the hope to returning there after a few months. Instead, in September he was sent to Parma as Director in substitution for Fr. Vincent Vignola who was re-called to Verona.

In that same time on September 24, there was celebrated in Cerna the Golden Jubilee of the Ordination of the beloved Superior General. Almost all the Fathers took part in the celebrations, having come to Verona from all the other houses, and it came off as a very intimate family festival. In the morning at 8:00, the Jubilarian celebrated the solemn Mass, assisted by his brother, Monsignor Paul Vignola. During dinner, to which the family members of the Superior General were sharing as well as other invited guests, there was a little entertainment from a literary perspective in which to the beloved Father there were addressed affectionate words of good wishes, hopes and congratulations from the hearts of his sons and friends.<sup>220</sup> In the evening, there was offered an Academy in St. Teresa's Church, with the solemn distribution of rewards, that had been put off to that day in order to add to the splendor of the celebrations. All took the occasion to remember the merits of the Jubilarian, who was rightfully described as:

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<sup>218</sup> A few days earlier, Brother Emilio Bernardi went ahead to prepare the dwelling. And before he got there, Fr. Cavinato had already arrived, preparing himself for the examinations at the Royal University.

<sup>219</sup> This rent was paid for by the Bishop.

<sup>220</sup> The most brilliant composition was that of a Fr. Peter Zenari, Pastor of Caldiero, and a very close friend of ours

*... the heir of the spirit, the prudence, no less than the authority of our most venerated Founder, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni. He chose to follow after his example and his traditions, having dedicated the work of his sons also to the instruction of the youth ...*

On that occasion many gifts were bestowed on the venerated Superior General, among which we will recall two chasubles, and there were dedicated to him several printed works for the occasion. Also his sons and confreres wanted to present to him a certain homage by collecting and printing the material as a book, then entitled: ***Reminiscences of our Fathers and Brothers***, which was dedicated to him.

Meanwhile Frs. Rosa and Zambiasi had returned from Parma to Verona after having obtained the licentiate in mathematics and physics, and other young students presented themselves for the public examinations, in order to be ready for teaching and one day offer a real service to the apostolates of the Congregation. However, there were not lacking ungrateful and unfaithful sons who turned their backs on the Congregation, from which they had received their education. In October of that year, Frs. Battisti and Laudon left and returned home, and from there sought to be dispensed from their vows.<sup>221</sup>

**173.** In this time, there arrived requests for new foundations. The Bishop of Borgo San Donnino asked for a House of Confreres in order to open a school: the Bishop of Parma offered to our men **the Seminary of Berceto**; the Arch-Bishop of Udine offered the College, already established, called *John of Udine*, but it was necessary to reject all these requests due to the lack of personnel. In Verona, Parma and Bassano, in addition to attending to the schools, our Confreres were dedicated to every type of preaching and in other ministries to the advantage of our neighbors<sup>222</sup>: in Pavia, the Bishop asked for a third Priest who would attend to the night classes while the others preached the Parish Missions, but there was no one available.

In this city our men were seeking a more stable residence. After much seeking and attempts, they finally found one suitable for their purposes, near the Church of Sts. Philip and James, and they bought on March 31, 1887, for the price of 50,000 Lira<sup>223</sup>. In part, the house was rented and it remained that way subsequently, while the other part was ready for use by a religious community. There was space for a boarding house that some wanted to open to benefit the young university students. While our men were committed to the works of the sacred ministry in that time offered in the Church of St. Gervase had aroused jealousy and opposition from certain members of the Clergy, the subsequent purchase of a new house and later, taking it over [which

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<sup>221</sup> Fr. Laudon later repented, and asked to return somewhat later, and he was accepted; however, in 1889, he left again in a definitive way.

<sup>222</sup> In this time, Fr. Sembianti was administering also other African Missionary Institutes, while dedicating himself continuously in preaching Parish Missions with Frs. Gurisatti and Zanini. Fr. Gradinati was teaching the five high school classes in Seminary. Fr. Zandonai also went each Sunday to St. Michael's 'Extra', for the oratory.

<sup>223</sup> The capital was provided by the Bishop – in addition to this he would have to pay 1000 Lira interest annually, and our Fathers committed themselves to pay this.

happened around the first days of October], excited the wrath of those not happy with us and the really spiteful.

Inflammatory articles were published in the local newspapers with unworthy caricatures and words of hatred, and about the city there were put up notices with messages such as: *Death to the Jesuits! ... Down with the Jesuits!* Processions were organized with the repeated chant: *We do not want Jesuits!* These rowdy manifestations were organized with continual shouting, and the protest passed right under the windows of where our men were living. They were hoping that the government would intervene and apply the law against all religious corporations. The Municipal Council on October 4 made an appeal to the Regional Prefect that he might decide to take opportune provisions to remove from their midst the causes which were disturbing public order. He, however, declined every responsibility for whatever improprieties were resulting. The newspapers assumed a real threatening stance. The cry was that if the government was powerless, the crowds would provide for themselves, as the first and supreme law-giver. The Prefect did intervene seeking information from Verona, from which he learned that these priests were no more than peaceful men and innocent citizens. As a result, he did nothing and the Masonic inspired uprising had to be silent, keeping its anger within.

Meanwhile, that August in Verona, Fr. Anthony Conte was ordained, and he was assigned to Pavia: and he went there about the middle of October. With his arrival, our Fathers took over the caring for the Sts. Philip and James Church, and got the university boarding-house plan underway, all the while busying themselves with preaching Parish Missions in the villages of the Diocese where they had been invited. The Bishop wrote of them the following year, 1888:

*... These excellent Missionaries have achieved great good: their spirit is a spirit that is eminently priestly; they are full of zeal and are most humble men; they love sacrifice even to the point of heroism, and they sustain this with an edifying ease: they profess and defend Catholic Doctrine in all its integrity and in all its consequences, as well as the teachings of the Angelic Doctor and St. Alphonsus de Liguori ...*

In this manner they were truly assisting that most zealous Bishop in regenerating that Diocese, in destroying the evil plant of Jansenism, that had one day planted deep roots there.

**174.** In Verona, there were two events that we should recall, that were celebrated in 1887: the Episcopal Jubilee of Cardinal di Canossa, and the Priestly Golden Jubilee of the Roman Pontiff, Pope Leo XIII. The former occurred on January 23: on that occasion there were celebrated in the Cathedral a most solemn Mass with the intervention of seven Bishops, among whom was the Patriarch of Venice. At the Stimmate for the solemnity of the Espousals, Bishop Brandolini, of Ceneda, celebrated the Mass of devotion, and a General Communion was held for Cardinal di Canossa,

and also a medal commemorating him was distributed. In the evening prior to the imparting of Benediction, the ***Te Deum*** was sung in thanksgiving.<sup>224</sup>

The priestly jubilee of the Supreme Pontiff was celebrated by our Confreres on December 22<sup>nd</sup> of that same year with an academy presentation, in which there was also held the distribution of honors for our students. Cardinal di Canossa attended, as did numerous Monsignors, Professors, Priests and other personalities of regard: the ***Verona Fedele*** commented that the *academy* presentation was most imposing and solemn, and it surpassed by far the expectations of all. On that occasion, there was also sent a telegram to the Holy Father, who responded blessing the Superior General, the Congregation and the schools.

**175.** The Confreres of the House of Parma also held their own jubilee celebrations honoring the Roman Pontiff. In fact, Bishop Andrew Miotti had made an appeal to the young students of Italy to put together an album of poems to present to the Holy Father. Our men contributed greatly to this undertaking, and they were much helped by our own Fr. Andrew Sterza, who on this occasion had written a collage of Latin compositions. As time went on, following the advice of Bishop Miotti, he collected a number of those poems and had them printed in an Italian translation, entitled *A Duck on the Pindo*, which was published by the Fiaccadori press in 1888, and was dedicated to the glorious Pontiff.<sup>225</sup>

Here we should also mention Fr. Richard Tabarelli, who collected some of his works and published them in the learned journal of Parma, called *The Echo of St. Thomas Aquinas*,<sup>226</sup> as a contribution in celebrating the Jubilee of Pope Leo XIII, he published a volume entitled: *The Absolute Optimism in the World*, which was also published in that city in 1887.

Meanwhile, in Parma for that scholastic year 1886-1887, there was added the 4<sup>th</sup> class to the lower elementary grades. In that same year, the new Director, Fr. Vicentini, initiated some repairs in the house, which were then continued also in the following years, in order to adapt some of the rooms as class rooms, and to set up a domestic chapel, which was inaugurated solemnly on May 9, 1889. In the meantime our Confreres opened a new oratory in the Church of St. Apollonia, which was later transferred to the more spacious St. Paul's Church. Through the efforts of Fr. Bertapelle this was furnished with a rather copious circulating library.

**176.** In Trent, in 1885, the Ordinary died, Bishop Dalla Bona, and he was succeeded by Bishop Eugene Valussi, consecrated in the Diocese in 1886, by the Pontifical Nuntius, His Excellency Seraphim Vanutelli. Our Confreres continued to officiate St. Martin's Church, from which in 1887 Fr. Anthony Oss-Balss was transferred, and

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<sup>224</sup> On that day, in the ***Verona Fedele***, there was published a special edition, in which appeared also poems composed by our Confreres, Frs. Vincent Vignola and Paul Gradinati.

<sup>225</sup> In 1889, Fr. Sterza presented at the Concourse of Amsterdam his Latin composition, *Adam and Christ*, which received an award. Other honored works of his at this same concourse came out in subsequent years, as his *The Virgin Mary on Calvary*, in 1891; *The Seven Maccabee Brothers*, in 1893; and *The Poet taught by the Christian Muses*, in 1894.

<sup>226</sup> In January 1886, Fr. Tabarelli had been named a member of the Academy of St. Thomas in Parma; on March 7, 1887 he had presented one of his philosophical studies.



substituting for him as Prior was Fr. Beltrami who in 1888, who organized some extensive renovations.

In October 1887, Fr. Louis Morando was transferred from Bassano, and called to Verona and named General Councilor, taking the place of Fr. Charles Zara who had died in 1883. He had tried every means in order to better the school situation: after his many attempts mentioned above, he had tried in 1885 to open a preparatory school, but this did not work out, just as the public examinations which were happily more than passed by our students in the years 1885 and 1886, but all counted for naught. He left those schools in a very poor situation.

To succeed him as Director, Fr. Joseph Zandonai came with the charge of studying the situation and to draw up a practical plan for the definitive organization of that house. After he had spoken with the Arch-Priest, a final decision was reached on February 12, 1888. The plan was to maintain: (1) the boarding-house, and the Sunday morning gathering of the Oratory, Catechism after lunch, with recreation in the court yard in the morning and afternoon; (2) the *paternal* high school classes with four teachers.

The following questions remained: (1) the care of the Church, to be cared for exclusively by our men; (2) our own house, set up according to the needs of the Fathers living there, near the Church, and sufficient for the classes, and with a garden; (3) a court yard large enough for the recreational needs of the young men living in the boarding-house; (4) a sufficient fund for the financial support of four Priests.

The Abbot responded to these questions with his letter of February 4<sup>th</sup>, and he showed in it that he was not disposed to maintain them, even though he did have great confidence in our men and in the Congregation. As a result in his letter of March 7<sup>th</sup>, the Superior General informed him that at the end of present scholastic year, the Fathers would definitively leave Bassano. In this manner, there came to an end of that House of ours, after 12 years of existence, which proved always to be a struggle and most precarious<sup>227</sup>.

**177.** Meanwhile, Bishop Sogaro once more asked the Superior General for the services of Fr. Vicentini for Africa, and when he did not get him, the Bishop appealed to the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith which asked for his services for two years, March 13, 1888. The Superior General, therefore, acquiesced – and so, Fr. Vicentini left in the month of August, and he was substituted for in Parma by Fr. Perazzani.

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<sup>227</sup> At the last moment, On July 7, there was presented to Fr. Zandonai in the name of the Arch-Priest a new proposal, supported by the Bishop of Vicenza. The Arch-Priest would have given another House, and 4000 Lira to renovate it, with the obligation of staying there for two years, and to stabilize a fund of some 1800 Lira. The Fathers would conduct the oratory, teach Catechism to the boys and the high school classes, and the Congregation would possibly have to add an additional Priest. These conditions as they appear here, were not acceptable because they seemed insufficient; therefore, Fr. Zandonai was authorized to continue the negotiations in order to arrive at better conditions but he did not succeed. Furthermore, on our side, there was much pressure in establishing a house in Rome, and personnel was even more lacking. Thus, our assignment there came definitively to an end.

In the meantime, other requests came from Bishops. Bishop Riboldi of Parma, made the proposal of entrusting to our men **a place of restoration for Priests** that he wished to set up in his Diocese. The Bishop of Vegevano asked insistently for our Stigmatine House in his Diocese for the benefit of his **Seminary**, for the **religious institutes** of his city and for all the populace: but, due to the lack of personnel all these invitations had to be turned down.

In 1888, Frs. Joseph Antonioli and Egidio Stofella were ordained, but at the same time the Congregation suffered a terrible loss in the person of Fr. Anthony Conte. For about a year, he had been working in Pavia, and there he had won universal affection and esteem: he died after a very brief illness on the 18 of December at the age of only 32. He was a religious of outstanding holiness and of tireless zeal. So, his death was mourned bitterly by all, but especially by his own confreres and Superiors of the Congregation, who all held the highest hopes for him.

**178.** Let us come now to what is to form the principal argument of this last chapter. What we have in mind is the negotiations undertaken for the approbation of the Congregation. The Capitular Commission elected by the Ninth General Chapter and confirmed by the Tenth, for the revision of the old Document: **Appendix to Part XII of the Founder's Constitutions** had finally finished its work on September 22, 1887 and had formulated the responses to its work, that were submitted to a careful examination. Following all this, the Constitutions of the Founder were printed with the pertinent Appendices and the collected documents to present to the Holy See in order to obtain its approbation: all was sent to Rome, with an appeal signed by the Superior General and his Councilors. In this packet, there was also included the report on the moral, disciplinary and economic state of the Congregation<sup>228</sup>.

Along with these documents, there were also added Letters of Recommendation from the Bishops of Trent, Parma and Pavia, and especially the one from the Cardinal of Verona. In his letter, His Eminence declared his full satisfaction for the services received in all times from our men, and the great good that they accomplished with their excellent preaching and their unalterable attachment to the Holy See, both in the field of doctrine and also in the practical life.

Fr. Richard Tabarelli was commissioned to present these documents in person. He left for Rome in the early days of July, and there he had the responsibility of negotiating and moving along the project for a foundation of a House in the Eternal City. Fortified with a special recommendation of the Cardinal of Verona, he presented himself to His Eminence, Cardinal Masotti, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. He much encouraged Fr. Tabarelli, confiding to him that if Cardinal di Canossa had this matter so high in his heart, this was a sign that it merited approval.

In depositing the packet of documents for the review of Bishop Sepiacci, the Secretary of the sacred Congregation, Fr. Tabarelli presented a document to assist in

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<sup>228</sup> From this Report, bearing the date June 25, 1888, we note that at that time the Congregation counted 35 Priests, 2 Sub-Deacons, 5 Professed Students in theology, 7 Student Novices, 20 Professed Coadjutor Brothers and 6 Brother Novices: in addition to these, there were also about 20 young Aspirants.

the understanding of our Rules and Customs and to offer support for some points regarding the regime of the Congregation on which our Fathers insisted the more. These pertained above all to those points concerning the length of the Superior General in office, which most wanted for life, his absolute power in governing the Institute, making use of Councilors only for consultative vote; and the length of term for the Councilors which should last as long as the Superior General lives, and the convocation of the General Chapter to be had at fixed intervals, but in the judgment of the Superior General.

**179.** Fr. Tabarelli had with him the Letters of recommendation of Cardinal di Canossa, Bishop Bacilieri, for the Eminences, Cardinal Parrocchi and Rampolla, by whom he was received with the utmost courtesy: Cardinal Rampolla to the step of offering to obtain for him a Private Audience with the Holy Father, Leo XIII, provided he could remain in the Eternal City for a few days. As for the foundation of a house for Stigmatines, Cardinal Parrocchi suggested the section called the *Meadows of the Castles*. Fr. Tabarelli had already taken some steps in this regard, and found individuals who would give him some land gratuitously, provided he would see to the building of a Church and that he would be responsible for providing for its care.<sup>229</sup>

In the meantime, Fr. Tabarelli had received assurances that the documents that he had presented were in good order, and that they had been given to a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation, and so he left to return to Verona on the 14<sup>th</sup> of the same month.

The Consultor in question was Fr. John Mary Cammileri, OSA, and after his own mature examination, he submitted his Report, recommending our Congregation, in these terms:

*... this is a very good community, and is most opportune in these calamitous times that are the present. And furthermore, it is highly recommended by four Ordinaries in the Dioceses in which it has Houses, who describe the zeal and the religious spirit that reigns among them, and the great good that they bring to the people with the Sacred Missions and administration of the sacraments, to the youth, with their teaching, to the Clergy through their retreats, and to the Bishops by placing at their disposal sacred ministers in this time of the scarcity of the clergy...*

In conclusion, Fr. Battandier gave his favorable vote for the Approbation of the Institute, proposing, however, a few substantial modifications to be inserted into the Constitutions.

The Sacred Congregation however, in its Response of February 20, 1889 put off its Approbation, and ordered furthermore to work into the Constitutions the appendices dealing mostly with government, in an organic manner, introducing also several modifications, among which were the following: regarding the office of the General Councilors, in matters of greater importance they should have deliberative vote; regarding the emission of solemn vows, the Church no longer grants them to

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<sup>229</sup> These benefactors were the Superiors of the Pious Latin American College – the land was worth 130 Lira per square.

new Institutes - and the dispensation from simple vows, this is reserved to the Holy See. On the basis of these observations, the Constitutions of the saintly Founder were fused in with the appendices and worked into the text, and then placed again for the review of the Eleventh General Chapter, which gathered in Verona on September 25.

**180.** Also in this year, new foundations were requested. From the month of January, there was requested a foundation in Soresina, a place of about 6000 inhabitants in the Diocese of Cremona, where the idea was to set up an oratory and a Sunday recreation center for the good of the youth there, for which scope they offered a house with a court-yard and a chapel. In the beginning, the foundation was accepted, but then some real difficulties arose, concerning the manner of working it all out: in the month of March Frs. Marini and Sembianti made a visit to the place, and they noted that the house was indeed insufficient for the purposes intended. Furthermore, at the last minute, personnel suddenly became unavailable, due with the rather sudden death of Fr. Anthony Conte, as was noted, and then that of Fr. Vincent Vignola. He suffered a stroke the evening of April 19, Good Friday, while he was preaching at the Stimate. Then, Fr. Morando suddenly came down with a serious illness, and for a long time, all hope was given up for him: there were others by then close to the Priesthood, in addition to Fr. John B. Tomasi, who was ordained on January 26, of the following year, 1890. For all these reasons, every thought of this foundation was abandoned.

Meanwhile, other appeals came in. In March, the Bishop of Pola and Potenza requested our Fathers to take over the direction of a Diocesan Boarding-house [a kind of **Minor Seminary**] that had been opened in Capodistria for the young men of the two Dioceses, aspiring to the **Priesthood** and who frequented the local high school.

In September, a Monsignor John B. Mander of Treviso, with the consent of his Bishop, offered to our Confreres the direction of a **Pious Institute** founded by him in 1880, for the young men of some age, who aspired to the **Priesthood**. If the Congregation had 100 workers at this time, they could have all fruitfully been employed in the Lord's vineyard.<sup>230</sup>

**181.** The Constitutions in the meantime, after having been approved by the General Chapter were sent on to Rome, accompanied once again by a new Petition, dated February 28, 1890 and by new Letters of Recommendations by the Bishops<sup>231</sup>.

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<sup>230</sup> In 1890, an appeal came in for a house of ours in Mirandola, where there was offered a Church to officiate and a few rooms nearby for lodging, and a very spacious garden. The matter was put off for a later time, and in the meantime, the Superior General died. And since there were other defections in the following year 1891, the negotiations were definitively halted.

<sup>231</sup> It merits to be recalled here the Letter of Recommendation from the Bishop of Pavia, who stated: ... desiring to introduce into my own Diocese some religious congregations of men, and following the information obtained from many Prelates and from other outstanding personalities, I received the most beautiful recommendations regarding the Congregation of Apostolic Missionaries ... And now I am happy to be able to say from my own experience, that this above-mentioned Congregation shows itself to be full of a most excellent ecclesial and apostolic spirit, and that the members who make it up, have been formed in sane and solid studies, both in profane learning as well as and principally in the sacred sciences, trained to sacrifice, zealous for

Already that previous December, Fr. Richard Tabarelli had taken up residence in the Eternal City with Brother Alphonsus Guglielmi, and he was commissioned to busy himself about the negotiations for the Approbation of the Congregation, and also to establish a House of the Congregation in Rome<sup>232</sup>.

During the first days of March, he presented the new redaction of the Constitutions, which was presented for the examination of Fr. Battandier. And following the favorable vote of the Sacred Congregation, dated September 15, 1890, the Decree of Approbation was granted. As for the approval of the Constitutions, this was put off to another time, and further modifications were ordered.

**182.** On September 24, of this same month, the Superior General had convoked the Twelfth General Chapter, which emended the Constitutions in conformity with the observations received from the Holy See, and ordered that these enter immediately in force. The Superior General, in adherence to the new Constitutions, resigned from his office, inviting the General Chapter to a new election. He, however, was unanimously re-elected.<sup>233</sup>

In reviewing the Constitutions, a first question arose immediately, on the *title of the Congregation*: since the Holy See did not accept the title then in vogue: **Apostolic Missionaries for the service of Bishops** - and suggested this other: **Congregation of the Priests of the Stigmata of our Lord Jesus Christ**. To many this was not agreeable. After having proposed a new title that was also rejected, the Chapter decided to accept the title assigned by the Holy Spirit, which is evident in the Decree of Approbation.

Another question also arose concerning the **end, purpose, scope of the Congregation**. The matter was a bit complex: whether from the words of the Decree, there should be understood that the schools were **an end equally 'principal'** as the parish missions: and the answer of the Chapter was 21 in favor; one negative and one abstention.<sup>234</sup>

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the glory of God and for the good of souls, sincerely obsequious and devout toward the Holy See, and to the august person of the Supreme Pontiff, very observant of their own rules, in dependence on their Superior, they attend with edifying commitment and copious fruit to the works which the Diocesan Ordinary entrusts and recommends to them, with the genuine recognition on the part of the good faithful and our outstanding diocesan clergy...

<sup>232</sup> In the meantime, the Confreres were living in a rented House in Trastevere, where in 1890, there was also Monsignor Andrew Ferrari, former Rector of the Seminary in Parma, who had been elected Bishop of Guastella. He was in Rome for his Episcopal Ordination.

<sup>233</sup> In this Chapter Fr. Tabarelli presented the proposals to introduce the Cause of Beatification of the venerated Founder, and to petition the Holy See for a Cardinal Protector: both proposals were unanimously approved.

<sup>234</sup> The good that had been achieved that had been conducted at the Stimate was evident for this school year there, 1889-1890: there were 350 students, of whom 193 were in high school. Cardinal di Canossa pointed out that they came from the highest levels of the local citizenry. In Parma, too, in the 5 elementary grades there were about a hundred students. Therefore, our Confreres attended to this work with ardor. In October 1889, Fr. Antonioli obtained from the Region the license of elementary teacher.

In passing, then, on the modifications to be introduced into the Constitutions, two Priests, Frs. Dominic Vicentini <sup>235</sup> and Joseph Marocchi, withdrew disgusted from the Chapter Hall, and after a while, they presented the formal request to be absolved from the bond of their vows. And on the following day, Fr. Sembianti also presented the simple request for the same purpose, recalling a letter he had written to the Superior General and his Council in the year 1879. <sup>236</sup>

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In these same years, Frs. Louis Tommasi and Lodovico Lucchi after extraordinary results in their examinations at the University of Parma obtained the permit to teach in the Normal Schools.

<sup>235</sup> He had returned from Africa in October of the preceding year, recalled by the Superior General.

<sup>236</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note; this Letter of Fr. Sembianti may be found in the folder of the IXth General Chapter of 1880 – and on the English Translation of the General Chapters, found on the web-site [www.st-bertoni.com](http://www.st-bertoni.com), section Constitutions, under GENERAL CHAPTERS, 9th. As Superior of Bassano, he asked to increase the school apostolate there as may be seen from his Proposals in the chapters of that era. Fr. Sembianti seems to be in crisis, with little to do with the difficulties on the 'End' of the Congregation, as discussed so ardently in the XIIth General Chapter of 1890. Here is an English translation of his letter:**

#### A MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENT

##### [A Letter of Crisis?]

VV. J.M. J.

PN 321

Very Rev. and dear Father,

I received yesterday your most gracious letter, with the date of October 31<sup>st</sup>, and I am grateful again, one more time, for the most kind understanding of your Very Reverend Paternity. I am most sorry for having opened this wound, of which your Paternity speaks to me, and your grief only increases mine all the more. But, how could this be helped, my most loving Father, that these two wounds be opened when the most imperative reasons imposed them on me?... And what are these reasons? They are not at all secret, nor will I try to cover them, or hide them. I accept the invitation that Your Paternity extends to me; I will be obedient to my Superior at the Stimmate, and I will be open and sincere, also on this occasion, as I always have been in every encounter with my Superiors. By this, I believe I will give to Your Paternity, and to all my Confreres, an evident proof of the rectitude of my intentions, and of the maturity of my resolutions.

I believe that I should point out to Your Paternity, that up until now in this matter, I have not forgotten at all, the 48<sup>th</sup> Rule of the **Common Rules**: **No one will take counsel from externs, without the permission of the Superior** – and in my own case, I am without fear of having broken it. The formalities of being absolved from the vows, I do not recall; I remember only that for Fr. Sogaro, there was not employed much solemnity, and that the *Appendix* existed then, as now. I do not remember exactly what the late Fr. Lenotti said to me, even though I was a Councilor, on the reason why Fr. Sogaro asked his release from the vows, as certainly he did not say it publicly in the Council, where he only exposed that all the means had been employed, and that they had all come to naught, to have him change his decision, and in insisting in asking to be released, he asked those in the meeting, what should be done. But, this makes no difference; the prescribed formalities, I repeat, I do not remember them, nor do I pretend that they should be omitted for me. The motives for my request, I will expose to Your Very Reverend Paternity, and to the entire Congregation.

I therefore, will be at the Stimmate on next Wednesday, the 12<sup>th</sup> of this month, on the first coach, bringing with me young Tommasi, and I hope to be able to return the same day. And therefore, I do not think it is necessary for you to substitute for me.

These were the consequences of the profound disagreements that existed for a long time among the elder and younger members of the Congregation, principally because of the changes brought by preceding General Chapters, to the *Original Constitutions* of the Venerated Founder, these were changes that displeased the younger members, for the most part. Added to this was the aversion that some members felt for the ministry of the schools, and the great attraction that there was experienced for preaching, and in particular for the ministry of parish Missions: all this was **in part** the cause for the defections that occurred in recent years.<sup>237</sup>

The Chapter, therefore, after long discussions, decided that it could dissolve the vows of Frs. Vicentini and Sembianti. Fr. Marocchi was given a bit of time to deliberate. But, this was not enough: the Congregation had not been content with the conduct of Fr. Cavinato, and the Chapter deliberated whether all the possible avenues had been tried to lead him back to the regular observance. If this were not enough, he would be dismissed from the Institute. And this is what happened: he left on October 12 of that year, and ten days later, Fr. Marocchi also departed.

To all these, we might also add Fr. Zanini: he had asked to be freed from the bond of his vows in 1889, but he left definitively in 1891. These were 7 Priests, all in the flower of their years, who abandoned the Institute: and if to these we were to add the two Priests who died a little before, the Congregation in a little more than two years, had lost nine of its valid workers.

This was a harsh trial for our Institute, but it was necessary: once the Approbation was obtained, and the End of the Congregation established, and the manner of its government determined, hope arose for a new era for the Congregation, in which all the members would in perfect harmony attend to the good and to the prosperity of the Institute and its Increase.

### Volume One ends here!




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I would be most obliged if our Paternity will continue to recommend this matter with me, and that all be done with holy charity, and in conformity to His divine good pleasure.

With the greatest respect, I am

Of your Very Reverend Paternity

Bassano, Nov. 5, 1879

A most humble son and devoted Servant,

Fr. Joseph Sembianti.

<sup>237</sup> In addition to those recorded above, in 1889, Fr. Vidali left, as did Fr. Laudon for the second and final time.

**A Brief Chronicle  
of the  
Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata  
of Our Lord Jesus Christ  
[1800 – 1941]**



Rev. Pio Gurisatti, the Superior General from 1891 to 1911

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Volume II – First Period**

**From the Further Development of the Apostolic Mission  
to the Establishment of the Provinces [1890 – 1914]**

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## Chapter 1

### **FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF THE APOSTOLIC MISSION**

#### **[1890-1904]**

**1.** The solemn approbation of the Church for the Congregation served as an argument of confidence in its future. The Community with new fervor turned itself to the works of the apostolate which it had been cultivating up to that time: the education and formation of the young through the Schools and the Oratories, the sanctification of souls through preaching, and holy ministries.

In Verona, near the Founder's tomb, the number of young candidates who made up the hope of the Congregation increased: the number of Professed Students, Novices and Aspirants was growing, and they were all lodged in St. Teresa's Convent. The thought circulated to build a special house for them, distinct from the community at the Stimate. Fr. Bartholomew Perazzani was suggested as a possible Superior, while at the Stimate the Very Reverend Superior General also served as Director.

Already in January 1890, Fr. John Baptist Tomasi was ordained, and in November of that same year, Frs. Peter Scotton and Victor Gurisatti were ordained priests. Fr Scotton was sent then to Rome as companion to Fr. Tabarelli, who since the preceding December a House had been opened there. They had rented a dwelling on St. Francis di Sales Street, at the feet of the Gianicolo, near the Villa Lante where the Madames of the Sacred Heart maintained their Novitiate. It was there where Fr. Tabarelli met Fr. Anthony Fossa', the personal Secretary of Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, the Vicar General of His Holiness. It was by means of this priest, that Fr. Tabarelli came to know Cardinal Parocchi, who began to think highly of him and to watch over him.

When Fr. Scotton took up residence in Rome, he enrolled in the University, frequenting the Faculty of Letters, in the hopes of obtaining the Doctorate, and then to commit himself to teaching in our schools in Verona.

In December of this year, 1890, there occurred the second anniversary of Fr. Anthony Conte's death. So that the record of his virtues would not be forgotten, Fr. Paul Gradinati wrote a brief Life of the deceased. And in November, the Constitutions were re-printed, with those modifications introduced by the XII General Chapter, in obedience to the observations pointed out by the Holy See.

In the meantime, on January 1, 1891, Fr. Tabarelli moved from Via St. Francis di Sales, to Via del Bologna, in the Trastevere section of Rome<sup>238</sup>, and initiated the practices to obtain a Church to serve, with an adjoining dwelling.

In this same month of January he received from the Cardinal Vicar the charge to teach Philosophy in the Regional seminary of Albano, and he was also named substitute in Philosophy in the Roman Seminary of St. Apollinaris.

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<sup>238</sup> Our Fathers occupied the second floor of the dwelling, n. 40. The third floor was occupied by the Carmelite Fathers, who took care of the Church S. Maria della Scala.

Meanwhile, on January 17, Fr. Julius Zambiasi also was transferred to Rome, to take up studies of Mathematics and Physics at the Roman University, and he was also assigned to teach these matters in the Seminary of Albano. In February, Fr. Tabarelli obtained for the Congregation the Church of St. Nicholas dei Prefetti. At one time, this Church and its adjoining House had been the property of the Dominican Fathers of Santa Sabina. With an official deed, dated March 23, 1848, they granted this Church in perpetuity to the Confraternity of the Most Holy Agonizing Crucified. One part of the house had been made available by a deed dated October 12, 1882, with the signature of a Notary dated February 10, 1883, and was sold to Mr. Cesar Lozza. The remaining part of these Minutes concerning the freeing up of the property, dated May 11, 1878, had become the free property of the Confraternity, in force of the law regarding Pious Works of 1890, it was reduced to a deed of mere use, and not ownership.

Up to this year, the Church had been officiated by the Jesuit Fathers. Our Fathers began their care of the Church on March 19, and on the 23, they transferred their dwelling closer to the Church.

Since, however, all three of the Fathers were occupied with school, and they asked for a Priest who would attend to the ministry of the Church. For the time being, Fr. Pio Gurisatti was sent, and he remained there until about mid-June: and he was then substituted for by Fr. Louis Morando, up until the end of July. At the end of June, Fr. John B. Tomasi arrived, to prepare himself for the doctoral examination in Sacred Theology.

**2.** Meanwhile in Verona, the teaching of school was zealously continued<sup>239</sup>, even though in this year there was experienced a notable diminution of students in the final classes of the high school, since the government had made obligatory the state examination at the end of the lower grades. This obligated the students of the private schools to undergo the examinations for promotion from the third to the 4<sup>th</sup> class, also in the government schools. Fr. Tabarelli tried to obtain from the Ministry of Education the faculty of having the examinations in our own school, suffice, but this was not granted.

There, too, Fr. Antonioli from the previous year had given new life to the Recreation Center for the youth. He restored the old practice for the Christian Season the recitations before the Crib: and in the Carneval season of 1891, there began also plays for theater. For this purpose, the Director of the College of St. Aloysius, Fr. J. B. Carrara, ceded to the Recreation Center of the Stimmate the theater props of his College. Then in this same year he made a proposal to our Fathers of ceding to them the Direction of the College itself, whose members attended classes at the Stimmate, but this proposal was not accepted.

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<sup>239</sup> After the departure of Fr. Tabarelli Fr. Joseph Zandonai was named Director of the School. How these schools were esteemed in the city, was noted in the autumn of 1890, when following the defections suffered in the Congregation, the decision was made to close the Lyceum level classes. Of the 22 students who presented themselves for the examinations for the licentiate, 20 were promoted – and of the students of the Lyceum classes, the Principal of the school declared that he was most willing to accept all those students who had been regularly promoted at the Stimmate.

In the same year, 1891, there occurred the third centenary of the death of St. Aloysius Gonzaga, which was celebrated in all the parishes of the city and the diocese of Verona for the benefit of the youth groups, and our Fathers had many requests to preach.

At the Stimate it had been decided to commemorate it, in addition to the religious services, with a talent-show of literary expositions and musical treats in which there was the intention also to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Cardinal Luis di Canossa, Bishop of Verona. This special Academy was put on May 19<sup>th</sup>, and it proved to be more special than any other before it. However, the Cardinal could not attend because he was ill.<sup>240</sup>

In June, preceded by a solemn triduum there was celebrated at the Stimate the religious festival for the centenary of St. Aloysius. It was also solemnly celebrated at Pavia, where Fr. Bertapelle had given a great impulse to the city Oratory, frequented by 500 young men<sup>241</sup>.

**3.** On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August, the Congregation suffered a grave loss in the person of the Superior General, Fr. Peter Vignola. He suffered a stroke while ministering to the Institute of St. Sylvester, where he had just finished a Catechism lesson, and he died in a short time. His body was brought back to the Stimate, where a solemn funeral was celebrated. For the ceremony there was a large turnout of the local citizenry, as a manifestation of great esteem and sympathy that he enjoyed throughout the city.

The Vicar General, Fr. Louis Morando, convoked the Fourteenth General Chapter<sup>242</sup> that gathered at the Stimate on September 24, and in which Fr. Pio Gurisatti was elected to a ten year term. Fr. Tabarelli was elected to the General Council -along with Frs. Morando, Marini and Zandonai – but he was granted permission by the Holy See to remain in Rome. Fr. Morando was appointed Director of the House of the Stimate, where on November 7<sup>th</sup>, a solemn funeral service was celebrated as suffrage for the deceased Fr. Vignola: the eulogy was delivered by Fr. Louis Giacomelli, Pastor of Holy Apostles.

In the meantime, Fr. Anthony OssBlass died on June 9<sup>th</sup> in Trent. He had acquired the deep love of the people of St. Martin's where he served as Rector, for his zeal in promoting the good of souls and the décor for the House of God. He was succeeded by Fr. Peter Beltrami who also died very unexpectedly in December of that same year. He had suffered a slight stroke in August of 1890, but had recovered sufficiently in order to be able to return to his ordinary occupations. On December 16, he had gone to the Seminary in Trent to preach a Retreat to the Seminarians, and

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<sup>240</sup> On the occasion of the centenary of St. Aloysius, there was printed in Verona a popular biography of the Saint, written by Fr. Louis Morando.

<sup>241</sup> On this occasion, Fr. Bertapelle sent to Rome in the name of the Oratory of Pavia, a devout address which remained exposed for many years in the rooms of St. Aloysius, next to the Church of St. Ignatius there.

<sup>242</sup> In the month of April, the XIII General Chapter had been celebrated to resolve some questions that had arisen within the General Council itself.

while he was making his way to the Church to deliver a Meditation, he suffered some kind of an attack, which in a few hours took his life from him<sup>243</sup>.

As a consequence to these two losses, our Confreres found themselves in the necessity of having to give up their care of St. Martin's, and they withdrew in April of the following year, 1892, gathering all then in the house of St. Bernardine's.

Still another loss was endured by the Congregation early in the year 1892: on February 19, the veteran Fr. Francis Benciolini died in Verona, truly an authentic son of St. Gaspar. After having worked for nearly 50 years in the House of St. Mary of the Lily, within the Parish of St. Stephen's, in 1887, he returned to the Stimate, where he spent the last years of his life, edifying all with his simple piety and with his zeal for the salvation of souls. All in the city were quite moved with his death and attested to the veneration and affection nourished for him on the occasion of his funeral. St. Stephen's Parish also wanted to remember him, with a solemn funeral service celebrated on April 3, in the Church of St. Mary of the Lily.

**4.** To fill in for these vacancies other young workers entered: on March 12, Fr. Cesar Benaglia was ordained in Verona<sup>244</sup>, and he was assigned to assist Fr. Antonioli in the Work of the Oratory and the Recreation Center: this was an undertaking that prospered greatly, to the point that the Superiors thought of granting for it the use of St. Teresa's choir, which had been used in recent years as a theater.

This had been the scene in July of 1892 of a musical entitled, *Saul*, produced under the direction of our own Fr. Cesar Benaglia. The score had been written by the Maestro Coccon, and this produced a broad effect in the city, and was recalled for many years.

Something of a novelty had been introduced at the Stimate during this year. Fr. Louis Morando, Director of the House, on March 4, the First Friday of Lent, instituted the Pious Association of the Sacred Face, which in a short time showed 2000 registered members. On April 29, in a solemn gathering held in the Church of the Stimate, the banner of the Association was blessed. The thought circulated also of re-naming the small Oratory next to the Church, already bearing the title of the Immaculate Conception, and to dedicate it to the Sacred Face. On this occasion, newly refurbished, over the old altar, the painting of the Immaculate Conception was changed for a portrait of the sacred Face, the work of the artist Joseph Zannoni. The Oratory was inaugurated solemnly on November 11. However, this did not find favor in the local newspapers which censured this devotion, saying that it had been condemned by the Holy See<sup>245</sup>. This had brought about great confusion among the

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<sup>243</sup> We think this is the place to recall that in this year 1891, on February 17, there was introduced the practice of reading in public a brief Necrology of the deceased Confreres, on the anniversary of their deaths: this practice eventually was sanctioned in the Constitutions.

<sup>244</sup> In October of this year, in the Church of the Stimate, Fr. Joseph Mattei was ordained by Bishop Francis Sogaro, Vicar Apostolic for Central Africa, who was visiting Verona.

<sup>245</sup> It would suffice to confer the *Acta Sanctae Sedis*, year 1893, p. 749, for the Decree of the Congregation of the Holy Office, the source of the controversy. Fr. Pizzighella, having succeeded Fr. Morando in the direction of the Association, presented to this same Supreme Congregation a question

laity, but once the clarification had been obtained, calm returned and the devotion continued to spread.

In the Church of the Stimate the Stations of the Cross were set up, and there was introduced this devotion, which was then offered every Friday of the year. This substituted for the old devotion for a Good Death which had been prayed there from the time of the venerated Founder.

In Rome, on March 7, Fr. Richard Tabarelli had been named an Urban Associate of the Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, recently instituted by Pope Leo XIII. On April 12, with the communication received from the Secretary of State, he had been named a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. In May, he obtained from the Cardinal Vicar, the care of the Church of St. Mary of the Miracles, in the Piazza del Popolo, to which the Superiors sent temporarily Fr. James Marini, substituting him in November by Fr. Morando. Fr. Tabarelli was much esteemed by Cardinal Parocchi, who had through him come to admire and look out for our Congregation: a sign of this was what the Holy Father himself, Leo XIII, said about the Stigmatines: *They are the Priests of Cardinal Parocchi!*

In November, Fr. Morando was established definitively in Rome, and with him Fr. Zandonai, who had the assignment of teaching Church History in the Vatican Seminary: there, Fr. Tabarelli was teaching Dogmatic Theology, and Fr. Zambiasi, mathematics. Fr. Morando taught Moral Theology there and gave the Seminarians a spiritual conference each week: these conferences in 1901 were published and received good reviews.

5. In Verona, following the departure of Fr. Zandonai, Fr. Louis Gasperotti was named Director of the School. The situation in the school became increasingly more difficult, because of the battle that had been introduced to draw the students more to the public schools. For the scholastic year 1891-1892, the students from the College of St. Aloysius had been withdrawn because the College had moved to a new location, closer to the Seminary, and its students began to attend classes in the Seminary. Nonetheless, our Fathers continued to be most dedicated to maintaining the school. In December 1892, Frs. Lodovico Lucchi and Nicholas Tomasi with extraordinary examinations at the University of Padua, had obtained the licentiate to teach the lower high school grades, in history and geography, for Fr. Lucchi and in Italian Letters for Fr. Nicholas. Already during the previous year, Fr. Scotton had returned from Rome and he was also inscribed with the student, Edward Castellani, in the University of Padua, while at the same time teaching in Verona the high school classes, and to the Professed Students on the College level. In November 1892, Fr. John B. Tomasi returned from Rome, as in June he had obtained the Doctorate in Sacred Theology, and took up the assignment of teaching Philosophy and Theology to our own Professed Students.

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in which, after having explained the establishment of the Association, and the controversy that the local newspapers had aroused, he asked whether the Association could continue. The response came back, dated March 8, 1893, with the simple answer: *In so far as the matter has been presented, Affirmatively*

In 1894, Fr. Scotton and the Student, Edward Castellani, obtained the Licentiate Diploma, which authorized them to teach the lower high school classes. In 1893, Fr. Michael Angelo Zanetti and the cleric, Alfred Balestrazzi, were inscribed in the University. Balestrazzi in 1894, following his examinations at the University, obtained the authorization to teach the French language, which was a required two year subject matter for high school students. On September 22 of that same year, he was ordained a Priest, together with Frs. Joseph Chesani and John B. Castellani. Fr. Michaelangelo Zanetti celebrated his First Mass at the Stimate on the Feast of the Assumption.

In February 1893, Fr. Julius Zambiasi received the doctorate in mathematics, but he continued to live in Rome, where he was much consulted and admired. And having received the consent of the ecclesiastical authorities, he accepted the appointment offered to him to be the Guardian of the National Diapason. This provided him with the opportunity of cultivating his own studies on the physics of sound.<sup>246</sup>

We will also mention here some facts of these years of interest to the House in Verona. In January 1893 there was commemorated there with a solemn academy the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Work of the Holy Childhood. And on March 7 of that same year, with another Academy and philosophical debate, there was celebrated the Golden Priestly Jubilee of Leo XIII, the restorer of Thomistic Philosophy.<sup>247</sup>

On August 13, also in 1893, there occurred the Golden Jubilee of Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, which was celebrated with great solemnity with the participation of all the pastors of the City. There was a good number of the Stigmatine Fathers, who had always been closed bound to him out of affection and gratitude.

On September 17 of the following year there was inaugurated in the Church of the Stimate the new painting representing the Stigmata of St. Francis, the work by the painter, Joseph Zannoni, which had been commissioned by the local Congregation of the Third Order of St. Francis. For the occasion, there was celebrated with extraordinary solemnity the Feast of the Stigmata, receded by a solemn novena<sup>248</sup>.

**6.** In 1895, in March, the Process to introduce the Cause of the Founder's Beatification was begun. Already in February, the Superior General, having gone to Rome, had spoken of this matter with Cardinal Parocchi and with other authoritative personalities and from all of them he received much encouragement. On his return to Verona, he informed all of the houses, asking for prayers for a good result from the

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<sup>246</sup> In 1894, Bishop Francis Sogaro sought, and received, hospitality among our men in Rome at the Church of St. Nicholas dei Prefetti. He had resigned as Vicar Apostolic in Central Africa, and wanted to come back and live with our Community, always having considered himself as a Stigmatine. Later, on October 25, 1903 [taking over from the future Cardinal Mery dal Val], he was named the President of the Academy of Noble Ecclesiastics [Diplomatic Corps of the Vatican], and in that service he died, on February 5, 1912. cf. *BERTONIANO*, 1912, p. 21.

<sup>247</sup> These Academies were held in St. Teresa's.

<sup>248</sup> We will also recall at this time the Fr. Cajetan Pizzighella, Rector of the Church, gathered the Relics of the Saints that had been kept in the House, and organized them, placing them in two frames, prepared for this purpose, and placed in the sanctuary, on the sides of the main altar.

Process. He named as the Postulator of the Cause, Fr. Peter Scotton, who at first, did accept the responsibility, but later, he declined. Fr. James Marini was then named, and he accepted the task and put himself to work.

In February also, on the occasion of the Presentation of the Candles to the Holy Father, the Pontiff, Leo XIII, had made to our men the offer to take care of the Church of the Stigmata of St. Francis, and offer that could not be refused because it was the express will of the Pontiff. Frs. Cajetan Pizzighella and Louis Gasperotti were assigned there, and they took possession of the Church on September 5, a few days before the Feast of the Stigmata. Fr. Gasperotti accepted also the responsibility of teaching in the high school level of the Vatican Seminary.<sup>249</sup>

There was also accepted at this time a foundation in Civitavecchia. A first request for a foundation had been made by His Excellency, Angelo Rossi, the Bishop of Corneto in Civitavecchia, in August of 1894, repeated then in June 1895. Following a visit made to the spot by Fr. Morando, the foundation was accepted.

Our Confreres assumed the charge to teach in the Seminary, and to cultivate the piety and Christian Doctrine for the youth of the city, especially on Sundays and days of vacation from school. In the first year, two Priests were sent, one of whom had the legal title for teaching. The Bishop gave to our Fathers the use of the house and the Church dedicated to St. Nicholas of Bari, which once belonged to the Religious of Instruction, and which had been suitably restored. Furthermore, the Bishop asked the Canon D'Ardia Caracciolo to commit himself to give to our men some 2000 annually, and another 500 Lira for every other Priest who would be added there in the future. The agreement would be that the sum would reach 4000 annually when the Priests assigned there reach four.

Frs. Octavian Piccoli and Peter Scotton were assigned there in the month of September. Fr. Scotton also had to teach in the Seminary, and Fr. Piccoli was assigned to exercise the sacred ministry in the city and to take care of the Church. As soon as the men arrived there, they noted that the dwelling assigned to them was truly in poor condition, and that the church was too small and insufficient to take care of the youth, which was the principal purpose of the foundation. Our Fathers sought that a more suitable dwelling might be provided for them. Furthermore, in order to insure the stability of the foundation, they asked that there be set up an investment that might render some 3000 Lira annually, an agreement that the Bishop had accepted in general. However, Canon D'Ardia in order to insure this fund asked our Fathers also to open a high school for the youth of the city. Since they could not reach any agreement, the Superior General on April 11, 1896, wrote to the Bishop, asking that there might be provided for our men a most suitable house and Church, and that there be assured the established financial support, by means of a legal document before the end of the scholastic year, going back to the basic conditions on which the contract for this foundation had been based. Since, they couldn't reach any

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<sup>249</sup> At the departure of Fr. Gasperotti from Verona, Fr. Paul Gradinati was named Director of the School of the Stimate.



understanding on these points, at the end of that scholastic year, the Fathers were withdrawn.

During this year, Cardinal Joseph Sarto, the Patriarch of Venice, asked also for a foundation in his city.<sup>250</sup> The idea was to take over the direction of the Oratory dedicated to St. Job, administered at that time by the Sons of Charity, the masculine branch of the foundation of Blessed Madeline di Canossa, the Cardinal was thinking of giving to our Congregation the property and the patrimony of these Sons of Charity [the Canossians], but then he came to understand that this land belonged to the Canossian Sisters, and that they would return there if for any reason the masculine branch could not go on. However, the Patriarch insisted nonetheless that our Superiors might accept the foundation, trusting in Providence. However, with those stipulations, our Community did not think it could accept the offer.<sup>251</sup>

7. At Parma, since a house was put up for sale near the Church of St. James, in Via Massimo d'Azeglio, our Fathers thought of buying it, because in that locality they would have enjoyed a greater commodity in expressing their zeal for the good of the youth of the city through the school and the Oratory. They did in fact acquire it, on March 22, 1895, and they transferred there in October of 1897, even while continuing to take care of the Church in the Quarter. On September 17 of this year, they also purchased the Church of St. James, which had been closed to the public, and it adjoining property.

Also in Trent, the need was experienced of having a Church for the exercise of the sacred Ministry, and the proposal was made to build one near the House dedicated to St. Bernardine. This proposal was then approved by the competent authorities. In that locality, the Institute for the Service of the Hearing-Speech Impaired had offered to acquire a tract of land including our House, and their offer was accepted. From the monies received from this purchase<sup>252</sup>, land was bought in Lazise, not far from the Lago di Garda. The work for the construction of the church was begun in the spring of 1896, and on June 5<sup>th</sup>, the corner-stone was blessed. The Church was opened to the public on May 22, 1898, dedicating it to the Holy Spouses.<sup>253</sup>

In June of 1896, there was a request for a foundation in Lecco. The request was presented by the Provost of that city, Fr. Peter Galli, and by Cardinal Ferrari, the Arch-Bishop of Milan. The offer included the teaching of the third to the fifth elementary classes, and the direction of an Oratory and Sunday Recreation Center. The Provost would provide a capital of some 40000 Lira, The interest of which, united to the bond of 1000 Lira annually, for a daily Mass, would serve for the maintenance of our Fathers. Two priests of the place, Fr. Angelo and Fr. J. B. Scatti, were to construct

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<sup>250</sup> For some time, Cardinal Sarto was in communication with the Superiors of the Congregation. In February of 1894, as Bishop of Mantua, he had requested of the Superiors of the House of Verona, a teacher for Greek for the Seminary in that city.

<sup>251</sup> Cf. **BERTONIANO**, 1924, p. 167.

<sup>252</sup> From the sale, 60000 florins were received: 20000 remained as the patrimony of the House, and 40000 were given to the House of the Stimmatas as reimbursement for expenses encountered in the foundation of Trent. With this sum, property was purchased in Lazise, called the Donnatella.

<sup>253</sup> cf. **BERTONIANO**, 1927, P. 80.

at their expense, a suitable dwelling place for our Fathers, the class rooms and the Church for the Oratory. However, they asked for two Priests, retaining a lay teacher for the third elementary class. In the following year, another Priest would be sent, in order to teach that class. The first two classes were taught by the Sisters of Charity. The request was accepted and at the end of October, Frs. Joseph Antonioli and J. B. Castellani were sent for this foundation. However, when they arrived in Lecco, they found that the residence was already occupied by the Sisters who were teaching there. When the matter came up of building a House for our Fathers, the school and the Church, the Provost pretended that the 40000 Lira capital should be used, whereas this had been set aside for their support in the contract of the foundation. In addition, the giving over to the Fathers of the Direction of the Oratory and the school was not granted to them. Contrary to all that had been agreed upon, the tuition monies were taken over by Fr. Angelo Scatti, and also in the exercise of the ministry, the Fathers found hostility on the part of the local clergy.

In order to come to a decision, in December the Fathers presented to the Provost a document, in which they requested that there be granted to them the direction of the school and of the oratory, and that the 40000 Lira be set up as a trust fund, signed by the interested parties and by the Cardinal of Milan: that there would be ceded to them the legal ownership of the place, and that whatever would be need for construction, the 40000 lira should remain untouched. This would insure them of the maintenance of the teachers. There should also be ceded to them the administration of the tuition funds, with which they could then provide for the necessary expenses and to pay for a caretaker. And furthermore, there should be given to them a Church with the freedom to celebrate and to administer the sacraments. Since they were unable to obtain any of this, they received the order to depart even before the end of the scholastic year, despite the appeals and recommendations of the Cardinal Arch-Bishop, who counseled them to be patient, and promised that he would intervene in their maintenance.

In 1896, there arrived also a request from Brazil<sup>254</sup>. Bishop Gonzales of Porto Alegre, of the State of Rio Grande do Sul, also asked for the opening of a House of ours for the religious assistance for the 200,000 Italians who had migrated here to his city and Diocese. The name of our Congregation had been suggested by Fr. Dominic Vicentini who, when he left our Community in 1890 in order to follow his Missionary vocation, had entered the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles, founded in Piacenza in 1887, by Bishop J. B. Scalabrini, for the spiritual assistance of Italian emigrants. In departing for South America, Fr. Vicentini had promised to interest himself in obtaining a foundation for us in those regions. The request for a foundation was renewed in July of the following year by the Arch-Bishop in person, on the occasion of his visit to Italy. He went specifically to Verona to meet with the Superior General, and celebrated Mass at the Stimmatate: after Mass, he spoke to the Community, inspiring all with the desire for that foundation. Also Fr. Vicentini wrote

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<sup>254</sup> Already in 1866, through Cardinal Louis di Canossa, the Inter-Nunzio of Brazil had presented a request for a House of ours in Cuiabá in the State of Mato Grosso, offering the direction and teaching in a Seminary.

from Rio Grande, exhorting the Superiors to accept this offer<sup>255</sup>: but the personnel of the Congregation was too reduced to extend itself at this moment across the Ocean.

**8.** In the year 1896 in September, the XVth General Chapter convened in Rome, for the election of the General Councilors, who were elected for five years. And on this occasion, there was introduced an important innovation concerning the manner of electing delegates. Up to this time, the Capitulars would be: in addition to the Superior General, and the General Councilors – the Directors of the formed Houses [all Capitulars by right] – then, one Delegate for each of those elected by the House Chapters, and one delegate from each formed house, chosen in the same manner<sup>256</sup>. As a result after the convocation of the General Chapter, the local House Chapters would meet to elect their Delegate and also to formulate their own proposals to be treated in the General Chapter.

During this year, though, the Delegates were elected by voting on a list. There was sent to all the Professed Priests a printed ballot with the names of all the Priests who had completed 35 years of age, and each elector had to underline as many names as there were Capitulars who attended by right of their office. Naturally, with the introduction of the new method, the local House Chapters were by-passed in preparation for the General Chapter, and this gave rise to no little dissatisfaction and disturbance. The General Chapter temporarily approved this method of election for the following General Chapter, which would then approve definitively the method to be used and to inserted in our Constitutions.

The Chapter decided that one of the General Councilors should have the office of Procurator General, maintaining his residence in Rome: and elected the general Councilors, Frs. Tabarelli [Procurator General]; Morando [Monitor of Religious Discipline]; Marini [Administration] and Rosa. The Chapter took up the question also of the details necessary for the Process of the Founder's Beatification, and expressed the hope that this go forward as expeditiously as possible.

Fr. Tabarelli during this year was nominated an 'Ordinary' in Dogmatic Theology in the Roman Seminary, and Fr. Julius Zambiasi became an Associate in the *Arcadia*, with the responsibility of delivering in that circle scientific conferences.

In this same year, Fr. Tabarelli, on the occasion that the property of St. Nicholas dei Prefetti was in scribed in the name of the Confraternity of the Most Holy Crucified, stipulated with this group an agreement that was signed on June 9<sup>th</sup>. With this pact, the Confraternity granted to the Stigmatine Fathers the use of the Church and the adjoining residence. They did reserve some space as a garment area for the Members of the Confraternity and also for their Archives, and the right to celebrate in the Church and to pay its taxes and to sustain the expenses of ordinary maintenance. The could be rendered null and void by mutual accord in agreement with one of the parties, with the obligation of giving a six month period of grace.

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<sup>255</sup> Fr. Vicentini wrote again in 1898 proposing a foundation in Caxias.

<sup>256</sup> To enjoy passive voice in these elections, it was necessary to be at least 35 years old. The Directors of the formed Houses who were not yet 35 years of age, would have active voice, but not passive voice.

**9.** In the following year of 1897, Cardinal Marchi offered to our Fathers the care of the Church of St. Jerome of Charity, where there were retained still so many memories of St. Philip Neri, who serve there for many years. But by now the number of the Churches under our care in the city of Rome, became excessive, and there simply was not the available personnel to keep them all going.

In 1896, because of the notable increase in our Studentate in Verona, the need was felt to lengthen the stay at Sezano. And construction go underway to add a new floor level. In this same year, Fr. Louis Fantozzi was accepted into the Novitiate, being priest already now for two years. He pronounced his First Profession on October 28, of the following year, **1897**.

In this year, there was introduced an important novelty regarding the Novitiate. With the decision of the General Council, having heard the opinion of the Fathers who enjoyed Passive Voice for the General Chapter, and after having obtained the approval of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars], the Novitiate formation was reduced to one year. Following this, the custom would be to pronounce vows for three years, before making perpetual profession. From the obligation of this triennial profession those Novices who within the year would have completed their second year of Novitiate were exempted. Admission to Perpetual Vows was reserved to the General Council.

Let us recall here furthermore than in October 1898 the Novitiate was transferred from Verona to Trent, and the Novice Master was Fr. Albano Clementi. He took the place of Fr. Paul Gradinati who held this office for many years. In Trent, that January of 1898, Fr. Andrew Sterza died. For some years, he had been retired, first at Verona in the House of St. Mary of the Lily, and more recently, in Trent.<sup>257</sup>

In the year 1898, the House in Udine was opened. The negotiations for this foundation had begun in the preceding year, and were concluded in May of this year with the signing of an agreement, in which our Congregation committed itself to teach the elementary, high school and junior college grades, for the students of the College there, which was graced with the term, 'Archepiscopal'.<sup>258</sup> To prepare for this foundation, Archbishop Peter Zamburlini named a Commission presided over by Monsignor Louis Pelizzo, Administrator of the Seminary. He had to provide the funds necessary for the building and the acquisition of the furnishings. A first rather considerable offer of 40000 was made by Sir Anthony Colussi: following the Circular from the Archbishop, there were obtained other offerings, and thus it was possible to purchase the land on which the College would rise.

A bit later, the Cernazai Palace went for sale, and the land with it, for a price of 120000 Lira. This included the Palace, with the building in front [the so-called, 'Stall of the Three Kings'], and the street in between. As the Palace needed much repair and renovation, for the first year the College opened on Via Ronchi, in a rented house.

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<sup>257</sup> In 1896, Frs. Bartholomew Perazzani and Mark Bassi died. In 1900, Fr. John Rigoni died in Verona.

<sup>258</sup> In these years other Fathers had obtained the legal titles for teaching: in 1896, Fr. Edward Castellani received the doctorate; in 1898, also Frs. Zanetti and Balestrazzi. In the same year, Frs. A. Dalla Porta, Zanolletti and Fiorio obtained the Licentiate with the authorization to the lower high school grades.

There were assigned there Frs. Angelo Simeone, who had the teaching degree. For the first year, the first high school class was offered, as well as a preparatory class. The internal students numbered 19: later on each year a new class would be added. In the following year, the College moved into the Cenazai Palace and Fr. Zandonai was sent there as Director, following his return from Rome.

At Parma in 1898, the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> elementary classes were suppressed, and there were instituted the first three high school grades, also for the purpose of preparing vocations for the Episcopal Seminary. In the following year there was also opened a small Boarding House for young Students. The Bishop had made the request that there might be accepted into our House the students of the first three grades of the High School, whom he wanted to take out from the Seminary in the city. And our Fathers, with the consent of the Superiors, were disposed to accept them, but in the final analysis, the Bishop withdrew his proposal.<sup>259</sup>

At St. James', our Fathers instituted the Sunday Recreation Center for the young boys, and initiated renovations to the court yard and opened up a small theater. With offerings that had been collected, they repaired the Church, dedicating it to the Holy family with the intention of opening it for the public. However, the new Ordinary, His Excellency, Bishop Magagni, for a long time, denied them permission. It seemed when a misunderstanding arose between himself and Monsignor Tonarelli, because of the Ortalli funds<sup>260</sup>, the Bishop isolated those Religious Institutes favorable to Monsignor Tonarelli, and among these, were the Stigmatine Fathers.<sup>261</sup> Finally, in October 1899, the Bishop granted permission to open to the public the Church which up until then had been officiated solely as a Boarding House chapel. It was blessed, by an Episcopal delegate, the Vicar General of the Diocese, Monsignor Guido Conforti, on October 31. Then, they began to use it for the boys' Oratory, while one for the girls was conducted in the Church of the Quarter.<sup>262</sup>

**10.** In 1898, there was initiated in Verona the Ordinary Process for the Cause of Beatification for the Founder. Fr. Marini, named Postulator, after having completed the required steps, obtained the constitution of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, that assembled for the first time on December 30, 1897. The sessions for the discussion of the texts were held from May 29, 1898 through January 26, 1899. In March of that year, there was conducted the recognition of the body. On the 13, the grave was opened and the

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<sup>259</sup> Later, in 1904, with a view to the difficulties in which the Seminary found itself, in order to maintain the dependency of Berceto, our Fathers offered to accept the Minor seminarians, but the Bishop declined the offer.

<sup>260</sup> Mr. Matthias Ortalli had left in his will a conspicuous estate to Bishop Mitotti, Ordinary of Parma, to be employed in the development of Catholic Works. And Bishop Miotti, feeling poorly in health, left it all to one Monsignore, Canon and Professor, Tonarelli. The new Bishop, Magagni, as soon as he was installed, asked to be put in possession of this inheritance, which he considered to belong to the Diocese, and Monsignor Tonarelli refused: this was the origin of the controversy.

<sup>261</sup> In an appointment granted to Fr. Piccoli in September 1899, the Bishop said that he would bend to our Fathers' will, whenever they would make amends by an official act and of adherence to him, leaving Monsignor Tonarelli to his destiny...

<sup>262</sup> The Bishop went for the first time to visit the Church and the House of St. James, on October 29, 1900.

body exhumed, which had markedly deteriorated due to the humidity of the place that had penetrated the box. It was exposed in a room on the upper floor and then was sealed. It was reexamined on March 22, April 20 and on May 15. And finally, on the 18 of that same month, It was placed in a new box, placed in the Chapel of the Holy Face, sealed in the wall on the Epistle side, on which the following inscription:

The Remains of the Servant of God,  
Gaspar Bertoni, Priest,  
Founder and Law-giver  
of the Sodality of the Priests of the Stigmata.

The process was closed on August 21, and brought to Rome to hand the proceedings over to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. Fr. Tabarelli was named Postulator of the Cause.

The most authoritative witness of the Process, due to the great relationship that he had had with the Servant of God, was Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, who himself would die on New Year's Eve 1898. On this occasion, Cardinal di Canossa offered to the Congregation the Parish of the Most Holy Trinity, which was not accepted, due to the lack of personnel<sup>263</sup>.

**11.** In 1899, in Rome the direction of the Portuguese College was accepted. In an initial meeting, held at the Hotel of Rome near the Viscounts of S. João de Pasqueira on April 28, 1898, in which Frs. Pio Gurisatti and Richard Tabarelli took part, the basis for an agreement was reached: and in a second meeting, held on May 6, at the home of Sir Anthony Bras, the contract of agreement was drawn up.<sup>264</sup> With the economic support for College promised on the part of the Viscounts de Pasqueira, the direction of the College was accepted by Fr. Tabarelli, in February 1899. the College was opened in November of that year in a building on Via Borghese, with 9 students, of whom three were Priests. Frs. Louis Morando and Joseph Chesani were assigned there: however, after three months, they withdrew from the direction of the College, which was assumed then temporarily by Monsignor Jose' de Oliveira Machado, Rector of St. Anthony of the Portuguese, and then later by Dr. Tiago Sinibaldi, of the Seminary of Coimbra<sup>265</sup>.

In the same year, there was also accepted a foundation in Lisbon. Already on July 17, 1896, Monsignor Giovanini, Secretary of the Apostolic Nuntiature of that city, had written to ask for a foundation of ours, that would have the purpose of taking care

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<sup>263</sup> During the vacancy of the Parish, the Cardinal di Canossa, with Decree of November 30, 1899, declared the House of the Stimmat, and the other Houses situated in the Diocese, to be exempt from parochial jurisdiction.

<sup>264</sup> *Osservatore Romano*, July 19, 1941.

<sup>265</sup> In October 1900, the College was transferred to the Senni Palazzo, given by Leo XIII *Osservatore Romano*, ib.

of the Church of the Italian colony there, and to offer religious assistance to those emigrants. On the occasion, the Monsignor visited Italy and was charged officially to deal with this matter, and he had spoken in Rome with Fr. Tabarelli. For the most part, agreement on this offer had been reached, but the final decision was not made. Having returned to Lisbon, the Monsignor discovered that the Italian colony had already drawn up an agreement with a priest already there. Some members of the Committee opposed the granting of a Church to a Religious Community, in fear that eventually, with the passing of time, it would lose its independence. As a result, the negotiations were suspended.

Later, Count Albert Gervais was succeeded as Minister of Italy by the Marquis Spinola, and Fr. Fantozzi wrote to him on February 17, 1897, notifying him that the Stigmatine Fathers were disposed to accept the offer that had been made. After nearly two years, on January 30 1899, the Minister responded asking whether the Superiors still had their dispositions regarding this matter. And when he received an affirmative response, on March 28 he wrote again, presenting a formal request, and indicating the conditions of the foundation. In addition to taking care of the Church, the Fathers would, as soon as possible have to open an elementary school for Italian children. The Superior General, after having requested and received some clarifications from the Minister [who in one of his visits to Italy met in Rome also with Fr. Tabarelli and with Fr. Vivari], on July 11, 1899, accepted the foundation. Frs. Melchiade Vivari and Pio Gabos, with Brother Cesare Bonfanti were chosen to go there. They left Rome on November 14, and arrived in Lisbon on the 26, and were welcomed with very festive celebrations, and with a representation of the Italian Government, as also by the Nunzio, the Patriarch and the Salesian Fathers. The Church of the colony was one of the most beautiful and most frequented in the city. Our Confreres made it become one of the better served as well, so much so, that there came to it also numerous of the Portuguese faithful. In brief, they acquired the genuine appreciation of the Italians living there, and the families seemed to be in some competition to present gifts to them, and showed how much they wanted them to be there.

**12.** In 1899, there was also opened a foundation in Gemona, in the region of Friuli. Mrs. Giacomina Simonetti, nee Guicciardi, with a notary act of intent to sell, on June 13, 1899, ceded her property of the Guicciardi Palace to the Congregation in the person of Fr. James Marini. The Congregation assumed the obligation to conduct the Sunday Oratory for the young men of the area. From the beginning this challenge was assumed by the Community of Udine, which every week on Saturday evening, sent two Priests for this purpose to Gemona, who would then return to Udine on Sunday evening. This went on until October 1903, when the House of Gemona was opened. The Guicciardi Palace in the summer season served also as a vacation house for the College of Udine. Furthermore in Udine at this time there was opened a Sunday Recreation center in St. George's Parish, and its first Director, was Fr. Angelo Simeoni.

In 1900 in Verona, it was necessary to close temporarily the Church of the most Holy Trinity, because of the urgent need of repairs. For a while, therefore, St. Teresa's served as the Parish Church. And in the Church of the Stimmate, Fr.

Bertapelle established the Pious Union of the Perpetual Way of the Cross, aggregating it to the primary seat, at Ara Coeli in Rome. On this occasion, he sent a Circular Letter to the Bishops, and received approval and encouragement for his initiative, these coming from various Cardinals and many Bishops of Upper Italy.<sup>266</sup>

In Verona, also in 1900, that part of the Process of the Founder's Beatification was held to establish that there had been *no public worship* rendered to him. On December 26, 1899, Fr. Marini was named Vice Postulator. The Process was begun on May 10, and the examination of the texts was conducted from May 25 until June 25. The Tribunal emitted its decision that in deed there was every evidence that there had been *no public worship* toward the Founder. After this, the Process was forwarded to Rome. The Bishop of Verona by then, was His Excellency, Bartholomew Bacillieri, who had succeeded Cardinal di Canossa, who died that same year, 1900. Meanwhile, in Rome, the *Ponente* of the Cause was Cardinal Louis Tripepi, the Pro-Prefect of the Congregation of Rites, And The Postulator Was Fr. Louis Morando, who had to be occupied with the practices required in order to obtain the Introduction of the Cause.

**13.** In 1901, the Church in Lisbon was closed. The two Priests who had established it, found it difficult to get along with each other, due to the diversity of their characters. The Superior General, after repeated and useless recommendations, in 1900, came to the determination to recall Fr. Pio Gabos to Italy, and to send in his place, Fr. Nicholas Tomasi. However, the Italian colony there, and especially the Committee, were opposed to the departure of Fr. Gabos. The Minister in one of his visits to Italy, treated of this matter with Fr. Tabarelli and reached an accord that he would intervene. Having returned to Lisbon, the Minister sought to straighten the matter out, and he was able to see the two Fathers agree to settle their differences.<sup>267</sup> Meanwhile a Civil revolution broke out there in April 1901, and a Decree was emanated against all Religious Corporations. The Superior General took this opportunity to recall the Fathers from Lisbon, to great regret of all the Italian Colony there, and they understood this decision in connection with the recall the year before of Fr. Pio which was impeded. At the moment of the Fathers' departure, the populace offered a great demonstration of the esteem and sympathy that they nourished for them.

To put it more exactly, there was also a further reason to have difficulties with the representatives of that Colony in Lisbon. In the original agreement they had committed themselves to giving the Stigmatine Fathers 80 units of Portuguese money of that time: then, they found that what the representatives 'really meant' was that this sum was tied in with the Masses the Priests were supposed to offer regularly, or that they were to hand these stipends on to someone else, if they could not satisfy the obligation to offer them. Therefore, the Priests could not use this money until the Masses were offered. The Superiors of the Congregation lamented this misunderstanding with the minister, and he on December 26, 1900, promised he

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<sup>266</sup> We also record here that in 1902, the Church of the Stimate was endowed with work of the Painter, Charles Donati, a former member of the Oratory at the Stimate.

<sup>267</sup> In 1900, Fr. Vivari had come to Italy to accompany a Pilgrimage of Italians to Rome for the Holy Year.



would straighten the matter out: but there is no evidence that full concord was reached on the matter.

In September of 1901, there was held the XVIth General Chapter in which Fr. Pio Gurisatti was re-elected, and the Councilors were: Frs. Louis Morando [Monitor], Piccoli [Administration], J. B. Tomasi, and Paul Gradinati. the Procurator would be Fr. Tabarelli. For the election of the Capitulars there was established the method that had been in use for the last two General Chapters: i.e., to elect by a ballot with a list as many Capitulars as would attend by right of office [the Superior General and His Councilors; the Directors of the formed Houses]. The Chapter deliberated furthermore that to meet the general expenses, and especially those of the student house, all the Priests of the Congregation should apply each month 10 Masses for the General Curia. The Superior General with his Council could dispense from this obligation those Houses which could not sustain this burden.

At Udine, the College was prospering and there was felt the need of expanding the building. Already in 1900, the Archbishopal Commission had put up a construction on the inside of the interior court yard. However, this still was not enough. So, as they did not feel that they could assume further expenses, and be weighed down by other debts. The Congregation in 1902 offered to re-discuss the matter assuming the economic responsibility. The Confreres accepted as their property the building as they found it, and committed themselves to bring it to completion at their own expense, and to continue the work according to the end and spirit of its founders, leaving to the Commission the obligation to take care of the debts already contracted [about 120,000 Liras]. In that same year, there was begun and completed the second part of the interior construction that boarded the court yard<sup>268</sup>.

**14.** In the same year 1902, we find in Verona a very sad happening: the close of the School of the Stimmate, that occurred at the end of this scholastic year. This came as the result of the refusal on the part of the Ministry of Public Instruction to recognize the titles of teaching for eleven of our men: nine from the high school level, and two from the elementary school. This was simply because they were of Trentine origin, and therefore lacking Italian citizenship. Already in 1897 the Regional Superintendent of Studies in Verona had refused for this reason two of our teachers, and they had recourse to the Ministry, who decided in their favor, declaring that Italian citizenship, in the strength of the Casati law, was required only for the head of the scholastic institution. Now, though, the authorities governing instruction, following the orders they received from the Minister, refused to approve those teachers deprived of this citizenship. For this reason, the General Council found itself in the necessity of closing the schools, giving the families a notification of this through the local newspapers. The disappointment that our Confreres experienced as well as the families of our students was quite deep. The School of the Stimmate enjoyed an excellent reputation for the education imparted to the local youth. On the other hand, it

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<sup>268</sup> In this year, there was sent to Udine as Vice Rector, Fr. Dominic Pittioni, who had entered the Congregation in 1900, and had completed his Novitiate, and pronounced First Vows in 1901. He had been for many years a teacher, and then Spiritual Director of the Seminary of Udine, and recently had been named a Canon of the College of Cividale.

was not possible to continue them because since they were tuition-free, the Congregation did not feel that it was in a position to hire and pay extern teachers.

In giving the notification of this to the populace, the promise was made to do all that was possible to re-open the classes as soon as the conditions would allow: in the meantime, efforts got underway to being the negotiations for these citizens of the Trentine area to obtain Italian citizenship. With the classes discontinued, the rooms available, much thought was given to give new life to the Recreation center, which had been suspended in 1899, for lack of space.

In Parma, too, there were repercussions from this hostile stance on the part of the scholastic authorities: on March 7 of the same year, the Superintendent for Studies in that city also ordered our Fathers to discontinue the school, also because some of those teachers were lacking Italian citizenship. The process to obtain such citizenship were begun, along with the recourse being submitted to the Minister to have the authorization to continue the classes, and this permission was granted.

Meanwhile for two years at Parma there had been accepted boarding students opening up a small locale to house them. In 1902 renovations got underway to make some additions in order to accept a greater number of boarders. At the same time, the Fathers were very engaged in other works of the ministry: in the Church that was put up a new painting, representing the Holy Family, the work of the Painter, Joseph Zannoni. On the first of February, also in Parma, Fr. Fantozzi assumed the office of Chaplain for the Reformatory, or House of Correction at Certosa. However, very soon there was very little he was able to do, due to the limitations imposed by the Director, who would not allow any religious practices. Therefore, after trying for several months, Fr. Fantozzi retired from that endeavor.

Fr. Vivari, meanwhile on the request of Bishop Guido Conforti, accepted the office of Spiritual Director for the Seminary for Foreign Missions that he had founded, thus strengthening the spiritual bonds that have united our Confreres with that religious institute.

**15.** In November of 1902, a House was opened in Fabriano in Umbria. For some time, Monsignor John Zonghi of the Vatican Secretariat of State, had insisted that we open some foundation there. In this year, following the closure of the school at the Stimmate, there remained some personnel available, and the request was accepted. Frs. Gasperotti, Albino Sella and Erminio Lona were assigned there. They were called upon to assume the direction and the instruction in the Institute named for one 'B. Francis Venimbeni', with elementary classes, and an adjoining residence, as well as the direction of a Sunday recreation center. In recompense, they would receive 1600 Lira each month. The agreement was signed on the 15 and 26 of October. For the financial part, a Commission had been elected by a 'Society for Reciprocal Charity' that was supposed to provide for the necessary conducting of the work. In time, this gave way to giving our Fathers this Administration. The Commission, however, either through neglected, or the impossibility of the situation, was not able to give what it had promised: so, at the end of that scholastic year, our Fathers received the order to withdraw.

In 1902 there was also a request of a foundation in Sacco in the Trentine, for the purpose of assuming the direction of a college of students for the teaching profession that had been established there, but this request was not accepted.

On January 1, a House was opened in Piacenza. The request for this foundation had been advanced by the Brothers of the Christian Schools, who offered the administration of the Church of St. Vincent and the use of the adjoining house. There was included in the agreement the spiritual assistance of their own community as well as that of their students, and with the commitment to open in time, whenever this would be possible a high school with tuition. The pact was signed on November 28, 1902.

To our Confreres was also entrusted the direction of the 'Casella Circle', instituted for young students of the Middle level, who would gather there each evening for purposes of study and recreation: there were more than 80 such young boys who frequented it. For this purpose there was granted to our men a house that had been left by a Monsignor Gerard Casella for the use of the Circle, and another locale under construction and to pay off a debt of 8000 Lira that weighed on the enterprise. Very soon in their direction of the Circle our Fathers found that they were in difficulty with segments of the local Clergy. As a result, in February of the following year, they had to give up the direction of this undertaking. And in exchange, they took on the direction of the St. Tarcisio Recreation Center.

Already in 1890, Monsignor Camillo Mangot, Secretary of Bishop J. B. Scalabrini, had acquired a building called the 'Temple', in order to open there a Recreation Center. But at the very beginning, they did not have sufficient personnel: therefore, the property was given in use, with the consent of our Fathers, to the 'Workers Circle of St. Anthony', which used the place for their meetings, and at the same time, would want to be in use as a Recreation Center. However, in reality, no one was taking care of this aspect of the operation: therefore, due to the regrets expressed by Monsignor Mangot and the Bishop, the direction of the Workers Circle invited the Stigmatine Fathers to take over the responsibility of the Recreation Center. Our men accepted the offer and they drew up with the 'Circle of St. Anthony' an agreement concerning the use of the building for the two endeavors. Under the direction of our men, the Recreation Center truly began to flourish.<sup>269</sup> Fr. Bertapelle obtained for the Center from the Brothers the use of the stage and of a court yard, and initiated improvements in the building and opened a little theater there. Monsignor Mangot, to show his appreciation, and to better insure the stability of the work, in 1906 granted to one of the Fathers the legal ownership of the building. In the same year 1906, Fr. Bertapelle started at Piacenza and Boarding house for students.<sup>270</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> In 1904, a representation of the Oratory took part in a National Congress of the Catholic Youth of in Rome, with a flag donated to the Holy Father. He received them solemnly in the Vatican, and personally decorated the flag with his insignia.

<sup>270</sup> In 1903 there was offered to our Fathers the direction of the Seminary of St. Charles, founded by Bishop J. B. Scalabrini, which was not accepted. And since Bishop Scalabrini died in this time, Fr. Dominic Vicentini became the Superior General of the Missionaries of St. Charles.

**16.** In Udine, on January 6, 1903, Fr. Zandonai, while celebrating Mass for the students, suffered a partial stroke, from which he did recover somewhat, but not in a way that he could take up again his duties as Director of the College. At the end of that scholastic year, he was transferred to Verona and Fr. Gasperotti took his place<sup>271</sup>. In the same year they began to accept at Udine into the College students who frequented public school. Here, too, were experienced the effects of the struggle with the public schools: the students of the College who presented themselves then to the public schools in order to undergo the examinations for the licentiate, had to undergo certain restrictive measures. For this reason, families were not all that willing to have their children enrolled in private schools. This was the reason why at the end of the scholastic year of 1903-1904, the internal high school was closed, retaining only the elementary grades: and thus will the boarders of the middle school were sent to the public schools.

In the year 1803, school got underway also in Milano<sup>272</sup>. In December of the preceding year, Attorney Sampietro, President of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, after having spoken to the Cardinal Archbishop, turned to our Congregation seeking three Priests for the direction of the Workers residence that the Society had begun in Milano, on Via Benvenuto Cellini. There had been begun in that place a Sunday Oratory and the thought was then to open a Rooming House for young workers, and also a Course of evening classes. Our Fathers were to take on the direction of these works. In the first days of March, the Cardinal spoke in Rome with the Superior General and agreement was reached that the House would be opened at the end of that scholastic year. However, during the Easter Season, Fr. Antonioli, Director of the House of Pavia, had begun his Work, and came to Milan for Sunday and Feast Days. In August, there were sent there in a stable manner, Fr. Antonioli and Fr. Albino Sella, and latter, Fr. Emilio Baretella was added.

In October, the House of Gemona opened. The request had come from Fr. Anthony Sbaiz, Vicar Substitute of Monsignor Forgiarini, Arch Priest of Gemona: the scope of the foundation was to assume the direction of the Sunday Oratory, the Youth Group and the eventual undertakings connected with this: to open a little College with

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<sup>271</sup> Fr. Zandonai died in Verona on August 22, 1904, following another stroke. In the course of the year, he had taught Church History to the theology students. On April 4 of that same year, Fr. Joseph Chesani also died in Verona. He had just finished and sent out to be printed his work on the First Cantic of the *Divine Comedy*, by Dante Alighieri.

<sup>272</sup> These foundations could get underway because in these recent years many of your young candidates were promoted to the Priesthood:

in 1895, Frs. Joseph Nardon, Pio Gabos, Emilio Baretella were ordained;

in 1897, Erminio Pivato, Edward Casettani, Albino Sella;

in 1899, Angelo Simeoni, Anthony Dalla Porta, Joseph Fiorio, John Lona;

in 1900, George Zanghellini, Emanuel Zanotella;

in 1901, Richard Zambiasi;

in 1902, Paul Sozzi, Leo Sella, Erminio Lona;

in 1903, Dominic Rossi, Joseph Tondin, Francis Pedrotti;

in 1904, Alexander Grigolli, Ferruccio Zanetti and Augusto Fieramonte.

In 1901, Julius Zanini had also re-entered the Congregation, and made his novitiate and profession.

internal high school classes and to give whatever assistance in the ministry that might be permitted from the requirements of the Institute there, and from the circumstances of the foundation. The actual seat of the foundation was the Guicciardi Palace of which we have already spoken. Frs. Pio Gabos and Erminio Lona were assigned there; another Priest would come from Udine to help out on Sundays.

Also in Trent there was experienced the need to further the development of youth work. Therefore, in 1904, there was initiated the construction of a theater, which was inaugurated in May of 1905. There, too in 1903, the local Ordinary died, Bishop Eugene Valussi. The Cathedral Chapter, as was the custom, submitted to the Holy See, the names to be ponder in the election of his successor and one of these <sup>273</sup>names was our Fr. Richard Tabarelli.

In Rome following the death of Pope Leo XIII [in July of 1903], our men withdrew from the Church of the Stigmata [in Largo Argentina], as they were unable to find agreement with the local Confraternity who wished to impose their will on the actual running of the Church. From the year 1898, there had remained there only Fr. Pizzighella, and Brother Andrew Adami. In Rome also, Fr. Julius Zambiasi began publishing the results of his scientific research on the nature of sound, and his efforts were enthusiastically received in the scientific world. And Fr. Tabarelli in the solemn Assembly of the Academy of St. Thomas Aquinas, presented one of his important theological conferences<sup>274</sup>.

**17.** In Verona during this same year, Fr. Joseph Marchesini died. With a legal document, dated February 1, 1900, had had disposed of his substantial estate in favor of Fr. Stephen Rosa. With a deed signed February 20, 1902, notarized by the Hon. Burzio, had sold part of this inheritance to Frs. Stephen Rosa and Victor Gurisatti, for 120000 Lira. This will was published by the Notary Burzio on May 20, 1903 and Fr. Rosa became sole heir. However, on May 23, Hon. Louis Marchesini, nephew of the deceased, cited Fr. Rosa before the Pretor of the First Instance of Verona, to make himself the rightful heir of the deceased, Fr. Marchesini, in the strength of a Document he had, dated August 1, 1901, and on the strength of a letter of July 15, 1902, that he wanted to put forward as the real Last Will and testament of Fr. Marchesini. Fr Rosa contested the writing on both documents, and other papers that were found in a sealed box, presented by Sir Marchesini, and opened on May 29, 1903, in the presence of the Notary Ghirardini of Tregnago. The Pretor, with his Decree of the 10, 12 of June 1903, rejected the motion brought forward by Sir Marchesini. He appealed against that sentence before the Civil Tribunal of Verona. This litigation went on for several years, and we will see it ahead.

In 1904, there was begun in Verona the Workers Boarding House, with which the Congregation sought to meet the needs of these young men, by opening for them a trade school. Renovations got underway to prepare the place for this undertaking, the theater was enlarged and embellished, and on December 18, there was a solemn

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<sup>273</sup> In the end, Bishop Celestine Endrici was named, who in 1941, was succeeded by another Stigmatine, Archbishop Charles DeFerrari.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. *BERTONIANO*, 1927, pp. 25, 85, 176; 1928, p. 237.

inauguration of the work by Cardinal Bacilieri, with the City Prefect in attendance, the Mayor and other civil and military authorities. After Fr. Gurisatti's discourse as Superior General, Monsignor Joseph Manzini spoke, and in the end, so did Cardinal Bacilieri, emphasizing the foresight in this work, and the great good that he hoped would accrue from it.<sup>275</sup>

From that first year, there were also opened night classes on design, with more than 100 students, elementary culture and the French language. There were also instituted weekly religious conferences, which would draw between 200 and 250 young men. In this manner, our Confreres continued the work of education which had been such an important part of the Congregation's program. Here it took another form and that great good that had been achieved through high school teaching.

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<sup>275</sup> The text of the Superior General's talk on this occasion might be found in the *BERTONIANO*, 1923, p. 114.

## Chapter 2

### ACROSS THE SEAS

#### [1905-1914]

**18.** Already for some time, there had been felt throughout the ranks the desire to establish some foundation outside of Italy, and in particular, in South and North America. To keep this dream alive, the hope to open a House in South America had been fanned into flame by an invitation extended by the Bishop of Rio Grande do Sul, earlier by means of a letter in 1896. Then, he came in person the following year, as we have already seen. To attempt a foundation in North America, Fr. Lodovico Luchi insisted greatly, as he had been in communication by letter with a colony of Trentine residents living in the State of Pennsylvania [PA]. In 1904, he presented his request to the General Council, to have permission to go with a companion to North America, to attempt a foundation in Scranton PA, but his request was turned down. He did not lose courage at this, but continued his epistolary contacts with that colony: he even wrote to the Bishop of that city, with the intention of provoking an invitation from his part.

In the following year, he renewed his request and the General Council in its meeting of August 17, granted him the permission, to depart with Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta, in order to undertaking an exploratory visit in that region. The Fathers left Trent on September 26, through Basel, Switzerland, Paris and embarked at the Port of LeHavre, on October 2. On October 8, they arrived in Hazleton PA, and were joyfully and enthusiastically welcomed by the Trentine colony. On October 13, they went to Scranton, and presented themselves to the Bishop, who received them with great cordiality. He gave them all the necessary faculties to exercise the priestly ministry for the good of the Italian emigrants, and to acquire a piece of property and to construct a church.

At the beginning, they started to use for the Italians the Lithuanian Church, who were also disposed to sell it, and to build a new one for themselves. The initial idea of our Fathers was to purchase that Church for the Trentine colony, and they addressed an appeal to all the Trentines spread throughout the United States, to gathering funds. But then, following the suggestion of the Bishop, they came to the decision to buy a piece of property with a house and a bit of land, and on this they would build the Church.

In 1906, Fr. Lucchi began the construction, and in the summer months, the basement was inaugurated.

Fr. Dalla Porta, however, acting on Fr. Tabarelli's suggestion, who had already spoken in Rome to the Bishop of Springfield, Massachusetts [MA], and who knew a number of priests in that city as they had been his students in the Roman Seminary<sup>276</sup>, in May, made his way to Springfield. He reached an agreement to open a House there and to dedicate himself to the spiritual assistance of the Italians. He established

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<sup>276</sup> Among these, was a Fr. Kelley, who was taking care of the Italian emigrants in the basement of the Springfield Cathedral. cf. The Parish Commemorative Edition of Springfield, 1932.

himself thereon July 26, taking a room with the priests of the Cathedral, and taking care of the Italian faithful in the Cathedral basement itself.<sup>277</sup>

**19.** In August of 1905, in Rome there was received from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the Decree of Approbation of the Founder's writings.<sup>278</sup> The next step was to prepare the *Positio* for the Introduction of the Cause, and to request Letters of Postulation from the Cardinals, Bishops, Superiors General of Religious Orders, and other personalities to present these to the Holy See<sup>279</sup>. The Postulator of the Cause was Fr. Louis Morando, who in December of that same year was named to be the Arch-Bishop of Brindisi, and on January 7, 1906, he was consecrated in Rome by Cardinal Peter Respighi, the Vicar General of His Holiness. Following this, he went to Verona where on January 23, he pontificated in the Church of the Stimate. On March 25, he made his solemn entrance into Brindisi, and on April 1, to Ostuni as well, where he had been appointed Apostolic Administrator.

In Rome Fr. Cajetan Pizzighella succeed him as Rector of the Church of the Miracles, and he was also named Postulator of the Cause of Beatification, and Fr. Richard Tabarelli succeeded him as a General Councilor. Already in the Ordinary Congregation of the Sacred Rites, on February 26, with Cardinal Louis Tripepi, Pro-Prefect of the same Congregation, as *Ponente* of the Cause, there had been proposed and favorably resolved this doubt: whether there should be sign off on the Commission for the Introduction of the Cause, and on March 2, the Holy Father, Pius X, ratified and confirmed the vote of the Sacred Congregation. As a consequence of this step, according to the norms that in vogue, Fr. Bertoni could be considered under the title of 'Venerable'.<sup>280</sup>

In May of the same year 1906, the Superior General, Fr. Pio Gurisatti, in his Circular Letter addressed to the entire Congregation, resigned his office, and convoked the XVII General Chapter for the election of his successor. The Chapter gathered in the House of the Stimate on September 18, and during it, Fr. Gurisatti withdrew his resignation. The following were elected General Councilors: Frs. Tabarelli [Vicar and Procurator]; J. B. Tomasi, Julius Zambiasi [for the Economy], Balestrazzi. The Chapter approved some modifications to be brought into the Constitutions: the reduction of the Superior General's term and that of the General Councilors, to six years; there was confirmed definitively for the election of Capitulars, the method employed in the last General Chapters; there were modified also some points of the Constitutions, to bring them into conformity with the *Norms* of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars had published in 1901, as it was the thought of

<sup>277</sup> cf. **BERTONIANO**, Special Edition, 1924, p. 50.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. *ib.*, 1927, p. 176.

<sup>279</sup> Letters were received from Cardinals Bacilieri, Cassetta, Ferrari, from the Patriarch of Venice – and from the Bishops of Parma, Bergamo, Ceneda, Lyons, from the Vicar General of Rome. Letters also came from the Dominican, Capuchin, Conventual Generals. From the Mothers Superior of the Canossians, the Pastors of the Cathedral, of Sts. Firmus in Verona, from the Superiors of the Episcopal Seminary, and from Counts Cartolari, Ravignani and Guarienti.

<sup>280</sup> On this occasion, the inscription on the tomb of the Founder was modified in this manner: The remains – of the Venerable Servant of God – Gaspar Bertoni, Priest ...



the Superiors to present as soon as possible these Constitutions to the Holy See for their formal approbation. For this purpose, a Commission was formed that had the responsibility of drawing up the text.<sup>281</sup> Furthermore, in the Chapter it was also decided to transfer the Residence of the Superior General to Rome<sup>282</sup>, and in November, he did transfer to Rome, taking over a room in the Church of St. Mary of the Miracles, together with Frs. Pizzighella and Balestrazzi<sup>283</sup>.

**20.** In Milan, Fr. Antonioli, in March of 1905, had purchased a good sized tract of land, that could sustain a building, in the 'Acquabella' section of the city, outside of the Porta Montforte. He had begun to build there a dwelling with the thought of opening there a Rooming House for Students and workers: for this purpose, he sent out a Circular Letter to advertise the endeavor. The General Council, which at first showed little interest, as it did not want to assume the responsibility for it, later on, after speaking with Fr. Antonioli and hearing his own account of the work and his plans to open in that area a popular Institute, authorized him to go ahead with the construction. He was authorized to proceed with the building, but within the limits which were judged by the Superior General to be necessary. He was authorized also to receive loans, promising to be of financial help to him. Fr. Antonioli however, dedicated himself to liquidating the debts contracted with the sale of a part of the land, just as soon the price of it would consent to receive a good return on his investments<sup>284</sup>.

Having terminated the construction, at the beginning of 1907, our Fathers moved to Via Benvenuto Cellini, in the Acquabella section: and they acquired a large pavilion, which had served for the International Exposition of the year before, and they made this over to serve as a Church, which was then blessed by Cardinal Andrew Ferrari on February 2, dedicating it to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In this time the Rooming House was also opened, and 16 men were boarded there, almost all students<sup>285</sup>.

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<sup>281</sup> Since there had been re-ordered the Roman Congregations in accord with the Apostolic Constitution, *Consilio Sapienti*, dated June 29, 1908, the General Council decided to put off the work of revision, in the expectancy that the Sacred Congregation of Religious would establish the Norms according to which this work could be completed.

<sup>282</sup> Fr. Gurisatti had written to the Holy Father, Pope Pius X, asking him if he would allow this moving of the General Curia. The Holy Father responded through his own Chaplain, Monsignor Francis Gasoni, on November 16, that he not only permitted this, but that he was quite happy that the General Curia would be established in Rome.

<sup>283</sup> In this year, Fr. Balestrazzi received the invitation to assume teaching Church History in the Roman Seminary, but he did not choose to accept.

<sup>284</sup> The contract of purchase was stipulate on March 17, 1905: the expense was 140,050 Lira – plus another nearly 9,000 for the contract. The construction got underway on August 18, and he expense was 150,000 Lira. There was also need of a loan for the furnishings, of another 75, 000 lira: there was in full, a loan for 137,000 lira. All the rest was given by the Congregation, which for some years also paid the interests on these debts.

<sup>285</sup> On January 20, 1908, later in that foggy night, there was a terrible train accident at the Acquabella junction, near our House. The Fathers of Acquabella was the first to arrive on the scene, to impart

In 1905, also in Udine a bit of land was purchased near the College, part of which was used as a garden for the College, and a part was made into a court yard for the Sunday Recreation Center, directed by our Fathers. In 1900, they had taken over the direction of the Parish Recreation Center of St. George's. That Oratory later on had shown enormous development, and to obtain even greater results our men opened it up to the entire city, re-naming it the Sunday Recreation Center of Udine. In order to be better able to direct and cultivate this, they transferred it then to a locality closer to the College, making use of the Parish Church of the most Holy redeemer for religious services. There, in these years,, they constructed the theater, and acquired for it a passage way which from Via Tiberio Deciani gave access to the Recreation Center- and another passage way that placed the College in connection with the Recreation Center.

In 1906, still in Udine, Fr. Pittioni was named Director of the College, while the Director of the House was Fr. Piccoli. He was able to procure the services of the Handmaids of Charity to take care of the kitchen and laundry. In this same year, he obtained from the Archbishop the care of the Church of St. Peter the Martyr, which up until then had been cared for by Monsignor Valentine Liva, who that year was transferred to a place in Cividale.<sup>286</sup>

**21.** In Verona, Fr. Louis Fantozzi greatly developed the enterprise of the Workers Boarding House, and continued the adaptation of the buildings: he re-organized the interior court yard and decorated it with a statue of the Immaculate Mother, the work of the sculptor, Ugo Zannoni, placed in an appropriate niche in the wall of the House of the Stimate. This was inaugurated on the Feast of St. Aloysius in 1905.

To further the development this Workers Rooming House, without in any way invading the space of the Student House, in 1906, he thought of acquiring the Menegazzoli Palace, looking out on Piazza Cittadella, with the intention of placing there the Professed Students and the Aspirants, thus leaving St. Teresa's free for his Workers Boarding House. In fact, he did buy it, at a price of 117000 Lira, but then the General Council decided to transfer the Professed Students to the House of St. Mary of the Lily.<sup>287</sup> The theology students were sent for class to the Diocesan Seminary. Those in Philosophy for still another year were taught by our men, but for the following school year 1907-1908, they, too, began to frequent classes at the Seminary. So, the Menegazzoli Palace remained empty, and in 1907, it was re-sold to the

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absolution to the dying and assistance to the injured, some of whom were carried to a room in our House.

<sup>286</sup> Already for some years, our Fathers had given Monsignor Liva a hand in the care of St. Peter's Church.

<sup>287</sup> There remained at the Stimate the aspirants of the upper high school level. In the following year, the Superior General forbade for three years the acceptance of any new Aspirants, but authorized Fr. Pio Gabos to accept them in Gemona, where he had functioning the entire high school curriculum. There was also being conducted there a little College of boys who frequented our internal high school classes and the Commune elementary classes. In 1908, Fr. Pio Gabos built at Gemona the theater for the Oratory, which cost 7000 Lira.

Serghetti Institute, who wanted to join with the Daughters of the Sacred Heart, and they sought a building where they could open a Religious House.

In 1907, the General Council authorized the Workers Boarding House to build a gymnasium<sup>288</sup> and a school of music along the Vicolo Teresa, on the condition that there would be avoided any interference or block the passage way through St. Teresa's garden.<sup>289</sup> Furthermore renovations and the embellishment of the St. Teresa's Church were permitted, which was then set aside for the use of the workers of the Boarding House.

At Parma, too, a real development was given to the youth work: in 1906, the theater of the Oratory was increased, and there were organized in the 'D. M. Villa Group' religious conferences to prepare the young men for the life of the apostolate. On December 12, 1907, in that city, Bishop Francis Magani died and he was succeeded by Bishop Guido Conforti, who had such benevolence toward our men. He recommended to them above all, the work of the Oratory for the youth, both boys and girls, and promised to help out in the necessary expenses with an annual offering. At the same time, our Fathers, while continuing to teach the internal classes of the lower high school level, began to accept into the boarding house also students from the Technical School who were sent to the public schools: until 1908, when they closed the internal school, keeping only the Boarding House for the students who were then all sent to the public schools.

**22.** In Piacenza in these years our Fathers had to sustain a series of litigations for the localities where the Oratory was conducted, that eventually led them to give up the work. When, in 1906, Monsignor Mangot granted to them the property called the 'temple', the Associates of the St. Antoninus Group', who had obtained permission to use the areas for their meetings, they loudly protested, pretending to have on their own the right to change the rooms around, and they committed other actions of aggression. They even came to the extreme of changing the locks on the doors, and to expel the Stigmatines, who were the legitimate owners. Our Fathers, already well experienced how empty was the hope of arriving at a compromise, without much fruit they appealed to the Diocesan Authorities, and from there receiving the authorization to appeal to the legal authorities, they appealed to the urban Pretor in order to obtain the right to be readmitted into the possession of the locale. In the meantime, the new Bishop, J. B. Pellizzari [who had succeeded Bishop Scalabrini] claimed that it was all diocesan property, had recourse to Rome and this brought the civil suit to an end. The Stigmatines had recourse to the Congregation of the Council, which on April 13, 1908, decided in favor of their view.

However, in the meantime, Fr. Bertapelle had left Piacenza, and in the meantime the Recreation Center had been temporarily closed by our decision. Fr. Scotton substituted for Fr. Bertapelle, and he gave up the care of the Recreation

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<sup>288</sup> In 1908, on the occasion of the Congress of the Athletic Federation, Fr. Fantozzi accompanied to Rome the gymnastic team called the *Scaligera*, which performed its routine in the Vatican, in the presence of the Holy Father and received an award.

<sup>289</sup> In 1908, the garden became an athletic field, for the use of the young workers.

Center to dedicate himself exclusively to the care of the Boarding House of the Students, which was assuming greater development.

On January 1, 1907, as House opened also in Pistoia. The foundation had been requested by Monsignor Marcello Mazzanti, the Ordinary of that city: its scope was to assume the direction of the Boarding House for the sons of the poor people. It had been founded by the Bishop in 1904, thanks to a generous donation of Canon Monsignor Cecconi. He had given for this scope, a large building, known as the '*Temple*'. The goal of the Boarding House was to gather the young men in their free hours from school or work, in order to keep them from dangers, instruct them and form them in a Christian way. To this Boarding House, there was joined the 'Congregation of St. Aloysius', and the 'Nicholas Forteguerra Group': there was also a theater company. This was all maintained financially and morally, by an association of ladies and gentlemen called 'Patrons', who contributed to this work an annual donation. The locale was furnished with a gymnasium and in 1908, it was also provided with a covering, so that it would serve as a closed in hall, and also one for meetings. Up to that year, the Boarding House had been conducted by the Salesians. The Bishop gave over to our Fathers the Church and the House of the Temple, with its court yard and garden, and the benefice connected to the Church.

The foundation was accepted in the meeting of the General Council of December 16, 1906, and Frs. Albino Sella and Henry Gabos were assigned there.

In the following year, February 1908, there was accepted also the foundation in Capodistria. The request for this was presented in 1904, by the Bishop of Trieste, Bishop Francis Nagl. Further, he requested two priests and two Brothers for the 'Grisoni Institute', founded about 50 years earlier, by Count Grisoni of Capodistria. It was an orphanage for poor boys and girls, with internal elementary schools. One of the Fathers served as Director of the Institute, and assumed the spiritual direction of the girls department, entrusted to the Sisters of Providence. The other had the office of Master for the masculine branch. The Administration was held by an Economist with dependence on a Council of Administration, according to the dispositions left by the founder of the work. Frs. Erminio Lona and Fortunato Pedot were assigned here, and they moved in during the month of October.

In 1906 there had been requested also a foundation in Constantinople with the scope of opening there a high school for the Italian population there, under the care of the National Association for Italians away from home, founded by Senator Schiapparelli. Fr. Scotton was sent there to look over the situation and the condition of the foundation. On his return, on the basis of his negative report, the General Council declined the offer, because it would have been too demanding on our Institute, both because of the considerable sums of money that it needed, and also because of the number of personnel that would have been necessary. Furthermore, the independence of our working there was not sufficiently guaranteed.

**23.** Additional requests also came in around this time for foundations in Brazil. In 1905, the Bishop of S. Paolo, Dom Jose' Barros, on the suggestion of the Missionaries of St. Charles, asked for three Priests for a foundation in his diocese and offered a

fitting residence. It seemed at first that the Community would accept this invitation, but then gave up the idea, much to the disappointment of that Bishop.<sup>290</sup>

In 1906, this same Bishop came to Italy and had a private conversation with the Superior General in Milan, in which he expressed his regrets that the promise made to him earlier had not been kept, so he renewed his request. Some agreement was reached that within that same year the foundation would have been established: but then, on his return trip to Brazil, the Bishop died in a ship-wreck of the steamer 'Sirio', and thus once again, the Superiors did not think they were abolished to carry out the agreement reached.

Meanwhile, the deceased Bishop was succeeded by his Secretary who had accompanied him on that voyage to Italy, Dom Leopoldo Duarte e Silva. Therefore, in 1907, he wrote to the Superior General to obtain the foundation that had been promised, and he offered us an enchanting locality, one of the better places in his entire Diocese.<sup>291</sup> This time, too, it seemed as though all was agreed upon – but, then, in the meeting of February 1908, the General Council decided to decline the offer. In that same year, 1908, the new Bishop came to Italy, and meet with the Superior General, insisting on taking the foundation that was so much desired, and offered a place in Amparo. The General Council, with a view to the scarcity of our personnel, declared that it was impossible for the moment to accept a stable foundation: and only granted the Superior, if he should think it opportune, to send on the site someone of our Priests, in an extraordinary mission and without any obligations. In the end, nothing was done.

The difficulty in accepting foundations in Brazil was due also to the necessity of increasing the commitment in North America. In 1907, the Superior General went to make a Visitation of our houses there, taking with him, Fr. Joseph Nardon and Brother Camillo Ramus. And having seen the enormous need that our Fathers had there of additional help, on his return, he proposed to Fr. Balestrazzi that he should leave for North America, and he willingly accepted the proposal. He resigned his office as General Councilor, in which he was substituted for by Fr. Graziani, and left that same year and joined Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta in Springfield. In the meantime, Fr. Dalla Porta had purchased two houses on Wilcox Street, near Union Street, and had moved in to one of them. Later he made the other one into an oratory, and began to take care of it, helped now by Fr. Balestrazzi. Fr. Dalla Porta then accepted the care of another Church not very far away from Springfield, to which Fr. Nardon was assigned. Also Fr. Lucchi in Pennsylvania accepted a new foundation in Scranton, the Episcopal See, where there were 35,000 Italians. Therefore, in 1908, two others Fathers left for North

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<sup>290</sup> From a letter from Fr. Louis Capra of the Missionaries of St. Charles, it came to be known that our Fathers were anxiously awaited from day to day. Fr. Ferruccio Zanetti some years later [March 16, 19124], wrote from Brazil that the locality offered by the Bishop on that occasion, was the City of Campinas, which at that time, pertained to the Diocese of S. Paolo. The clergy of Campinas in 1914 declared: Campinas would have belonged entirely to the Stigmatines!

<sup>291</sup> Fr. Capra, who came to Italy in this time, stated that the place that had been offered, was the best in the entire Diocese of S. Paolo, a real little paradise: the task would be to work among a population that was almost entirely Italian, almost all from the Veneto, and very religious.

America: Victor Gurisatti who went to open the House in Scranton, and Lino Cembran, who stayed in Hazleton with Fr. Lucchi.

**24.** In Italy in these years, there circulated rather ugly political rumors: more and more talk centered on state laws that would be opposed to Religious Corporations, and of the confiscation of the goods they possessed Religious Institutes became more disturbed by all this, and with the approval of the ecclesiastical authorities, they sought to place in security, by alienating those goods necessary for the exercise of their activities. Also the Superiors of our own Congregation thought in these terms, and they thought of protecting in some way, the funds supporting our Institute.

In 1907, there were sold the property in Calderara near the Montorio Veronese, and also the estate of Stallavena in Valpantena. In 1908, the land on Lazise near the Lake of Garda was sold and all the funds that remained in Valpantena were invested, with the exception of the vacation house and that land surrounding it and the Maroni property. And then the height of misadventures occurred, following the suggestions of the ecclesiastical authorities, all the monies were invested in stocks and bonds of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. Following World War I, all of these investments were de-evaluated.

In these years, too, there came to some resolution the civil case that had arisen for the inheritance of Fr. Marchesini. We have already seen that in 1903, Sir Louis Marchesini had appealed against the Pretor's decision, before the Civil Tribunal of Verona. This, after a long and laborious trial, following the testimony of various hand-writing experts, confirmed the falsity of the documents presented by him, and having heard the testimonial proofs on the articles presented by the two sides, with its decision of August 3, 1906, confirmed the earlier decision of the Pretor, and condemned the plaintiff to pay the expenses of the case.

Meanwhile, from July 7, 1903, Sir L. Marchesini had cited before the Tribunal of Verona, Frs. Rosa and Victor Gurisatti, to have declared null and void the sale of February 17, 1902: having obtained from the President of the Tribunal the judiciary sequester of the funds, sought the confirmation of this from the court itself. Finally, with the citation of March 21, 1906, there was proposed also to the court the petition to adjudicate on the inheritance. These three cases were decided with a single sentence on May 5, 1906, in this manner:

- (1) there is no case of the plaintiff in the litigation seeking the inheritance;
- (2) there is no case in seeking to nullify the purchase-sale contract of February 27, 1902;
- (3) the sequester agreed upon with the presidential decree is revoked;
- (4) Sir Louis Marchesini must pay the court costs.

Sir Louis also appealed against this sentence, and appealed to the Court of Appeals in Venice: with its decree of June 8, 1907, his appeal was rejected, and he was ordered to pay these court costs.

Following this, others among the legitimate heirs of Fr. Marchesini, who joined in with Sir Louis, after his death, with a document of November 20, 1907, cited Frs. Stephen Rosa and Victor Gurisatti, citing them before the Tribunal of Verona. Their position was that the court should declare that Fr. Marchesini's will of September 1, 1900, should be considered null and void. Furthermore, the contract of purchase and sale, of February 27, 1902, Fr. Rosa should hand over to the appealing heirs the substance left by Fr. Marchesini, and give a full accounting of his Administration from May 19, 1903. These plaintiffs, resolutely rejected as deprived of foundation the hypotheses brought forward to impugn the legitimate right of Fr. Rosa for the inheritance and the validity of the appeal of February 27, 1902. They wanted to leave on his shoulders a certain moral responsibility in behalf of the plaintiffs, with a view to the rather unfortunate economic conditions in which some of these legitimate heirs of Fr. Marchesini were living, they thus came to an agreement<sup>292</sup>: there would be returned to these heirs the immovable aspects of the estate valued at 120,000 Lira; and Fr. Rosa ceded to these same heirs, all the goods that came to him through the inheritance. Those benefiting thereby would be bound to pay the hypothecary debt of 40,000 Lira weighing on the funds, from November 6, 1897, in favor of Fr. J. B. Tomasi, and to pay Fr. Rosa some 32,000 lira in two six month installments. Fr. Rosa then deposited 12,000 lira in the Chancery Office to satisfy the obligation imposed by the last will and testament to celebrate a Mass on all festive days, in the Private Chapel of the Pozza Estate In suffrage for the testator.<sup>293</sup>

**25.** Meanwhile in Verona there proceeded with some speed the renovations and decoration of St. Teresa's Church. As this work went on, there developed the idea of establishing a Sanctuary in honor of Our Lady of Lourdes. Having had the permission of the Superiors, Fr. Fantozzi, in a pilgrimage he made to Lourdes in 1908, reached an agreement with the Bishop of Tarbes, that he would come to Verona for the inauguration of the Sanctuary. And at Lourdes, together with Brother Sante Albertini, he took the exact measurements of the grotto, in the hopes of reproducing it in Verona, according to its natural size. There was then demolished a part of St. Teresa's Church, that wall separating the presbyterate and the old choir of the nuns. And on this foundation there was constructed the rocky grotto, and a double stair way of access. When these works were terminated, on March 12, 1909, the Church was consecrated by Bishop Schaeffer, of Tarbes and dedicated to Our Lady of Lourdes. On the occasion, there was celebrated a solemn triduum of festivities, in which the Bishop; of Tarbes, our Archbishop Morando and Cardinal Bacilieri, Bishop of Verona, all celebrated Pontifical Masses.

At the same time with the Church, the main altar was consecrated: the first two side altars, dedicated to St. Joseph and to St. Aloysius, were blessed by the Bishop of Tarbes in 1910: the other two dedicated to the Good Shepherd and to St. Teresa were

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<sup>292</sup> There was behind this agreement the well-founded fear that the Tribunal might declare null and void all the preceding court decisions, since they were made by an advocate in behalf of the Institute at the Stimmat, legally incapable of possessing – this is what happened a few years earlier in the Tribunal of Udine, for the deed on the purchase-sale of the house of Gemonia.

<sup>293</sup> Fr. Eugene Salvi, of the Foreign Missionary Society of Milan, renounced his share in the will in behalf of Fr. Rosa, about 10,000 Lira.

blessed in 1911 by Cardinal Bacilieri, when there was also placed in the Church a marble bust of Fr. Gaspar. The statues of the altars and the bust were the work of the sculptor, Ugo Zannoni, who executed these works of art gratuitously, as also the statue of the virgin placed in the niche in the rock. On the occasion of the consecration, there was also published a special edition remembering the event.

In the year 1909, we must also recall a proposal made by the Holy See which was of interest to the entire life of our Institute. The Sacred Congregation of Religious presented the question to the Superiors of our Institute whether they wanted to unite with the Theatine Clerics Regular,, in order to assure the continuation of this Order which was in danger of being extinguished. The General Council held a kind of 'referendum' among all the Professed Priests of the Congregation, and entrusted the General Councilors, Fr. J. B. Tomasi, and Ml. Zanetti to gather the views of the houses in Italy. The question was:

... 'whether to be substituted for a dying Order, assuming the simple title of Clerics Regular, and the canonical position of the Theatines in the Church; and gradually, and in accord with the possibilities, the property and the care of the Churches that still remain the responsibility of this Order, in the city of Rome, Frascati, Naples, Sorrento, Lecce, Palermo, Messina, Piazza Armerina. These Churches, by order of the Holy See to the respective Bishops would then be held always under the care of the Religious Institute, for the entire time reputed necessary to occupy them, even if there should come to be lacking even the few Theatine Priests who now take care of these. This agreement will not impose any modification on our Institute, nor on its particular physiognomy. No modification will be inserted into the Constitutions, except that some in our Institute would have to make solemn profession...' <sup>294</sup>

In 1909, the foundation of the House of Belluno occurred. The Bishop of that city as His Excellency, + Francis Cherubin, seriously ill at the time. There had already been given to him a Coadjutor, in the person of Bishop Joseph Foschiani, who appealed to His Holiness, Pius X, to obtain through his mediation, a foundation of ours there. He wanted to entrust to us the direction and the teaching in the Major Seminary of the two reunited Dioceses, of Belluno and Feltre. Despite the difficulties made known to the Holy Father by the Superiors of the Congregation, and among these, the real lack of personnel for such an undertaking, the Pope insisted on the proposal and the Community had to accept. Fr. J. B. Tomasi was sent there as Director and teacher of Dogmatic Theology, to whom were added Frs. Balestrazzi, re-called from North America; Fiorio, Leo Sella, Friedmann, and the Deacon, Henry Fadanelli, who was ordained a Priest at Belluno, at Christmas of the same year. There remained one extern teacher who lived in the Seminary, as did also the Coadjutor Bishop.

In 1910, Bishop Cherubin died, and Bishop Foschiani succeeded him. The one extern teacher, Fr. Emilio Palatini, was set free, and to substitute for him for the teaching of Canon Law, the Community sent Fr. Fortunato Pedot. In 1910, there were also sent to Belluno Fr. Joseph Stofella, as Latin teacher, and Fr. Rossi as Administrator. In the preceding year, the administration had been conducted by a

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<sup>294</sup> The Circular Letter of the Superior General, dated May 21, 1909.



local priest. In recompense for the labors offered to this enterprise, to each Confrere was give a n annual salary of 200 Lira.

**26.** The Congregation suffered three grave losses in the one year, 1909. On March 19, Fr. Julius Zambiasi died in Rome. He had acquired the esteem of scientists for his publications, and was also much appreciated by the Ecclesiastical Superiors due to his scientific competence. The Roman Congregations many times entrusted to him most important and delicate studies. A terrible illness, the consequence of his assiduous labor, threatened his existence, and he would not admit to it, until he had become incurable.

On August 20, in Brindisi, Archbishop Louis Morando died. He had ardently dedicated himself to the spiritual welfare of the faithful, by neglecting himself, and he fell victim to his zeal, mourned and missed by all his children, of whom he had acquired the esteem and affection.

However, the most grave loss was that of Fr. Richard Tabarelli. In 1908, he had published his tract *On Grace*, which had won a magnificent encomium from the Holy Father, Pius X. He had no hesitation in referring to Fr. Tabarelli as 'the glory of the Congregation and the Church'. In the same year, he had been named a member of the Commission of Vigilance in Rome, instituted as a result of the Encyclical, ***Pascendi***, against Modernism. He suffered a stroke on October 11, while he was hearing the Confessions of the Madams of Sion, and in a few hours, he died. He left a broad sense of loss especially in Rome. And still today, more than 40 years since his death, he is still remembered with esteem and affection by those who were his disciples, not only in Rome but in every part of the world. It seems that the Holy Father had told him that he was to be created a Cardinal within the year.

**27.** In 1910, we find at long last the first Stigmatine foundation in Brazil, which came about through strange and unimaginable circumstances. A certain priest arrived in Trent, by the name of Fr. Sanson, who said he had been delegated by the Bishop of Marianna in Minas Gerais, to lead a colony of Italians to the village of Sete Lagos, and he assured all that he was acting in full accord with the Brazilian government. He asked for a few Stigmatine Priests who would then have the spiritual care of the colony, and the direction of a little seminary which many desired to open there. For this purpose, he had sent out through the Trentine region, a Circular Letter with the approval of the Bishop. In all truth, not everything about that priest inspired much confidence, and his truthfulness gave rise to much perplexity.

Fr. Balestrazzi, entrusted to do so by the Superior General, addressed himself to the Foreign Minister to obtain information, eventually to be of some help for the journey: and the Commissariat for Emigration responded to him that from 1902, there was forbidden gratuitous emigration into Brazil, because of the wretched conditions in which many of the Italian colonies were living in that Country: and this same Commissariat found itself in the necessity to refer to the Justice Department those who would favor gratuitous emigration toward that country.

With all this, the General Council still believed it a good idea to accept the invitation, and assigned for that foundation Frs. Alexander Grigolli and Henry Adami,

with Brother Dominic Valzacchi: as these were not able to leave from an Italian port, left from Trieste, at that time under Austria, on November 10.<sup>295</sup>

They arrived in Rio de Janeiro on December 5, and went by train to Sete Lagoas, where they found out that all the declarations of that priest was phony, and they found themselves abandoned to their own resources. They took refuge then in Sao Paulo with the Missionaries of St. Charles: in the meantime, Fr. Vicentini had arrived in Brazil, and he withdrew his own Missionaries from a Parish in Tibagy, in the State of Paraná. Fr. Grigolli presented himself to the Bishop of Curitiba<sup>296</sup>, Dom José Braga, to ask him for the care of a Parish. The Bishop had received high recommendations about the Stigmatines from their old Confrere, Fr. Vicentini, and he entrusted to them a Parish, where the Stigmatines entered on March 29, 1911.

In 1910, the Superior General conducted a second Canonical Visitation to the Houses of North America, where the foundations had consolidated, and he brought with him Fr. Peter Piemonte, who shortly before had made his First Profession.

**28.** In 1911, the term of the Superior General and that of his Councilors term had ended, and in September, there gathered in Verona the XVIII General Chapter. In this **Fr. John B. Tomasi** was elected Superior General, and his Councilors were: Frs. Balestrazzi [Vicar General]; Albino Sella [Monitor], Piccoli [Revisor]; and Baretella. Fr. Graziani was named Procurator General, and the Economist was Fr. Pio Gabos.

There were approved some further modifications to be introduced into the Constitutions, and a Commission was elected to review and draw up the Constitutions, in order to present them to Holy See, and to obtain their approbation. This Capitular Commission was made up of: Frs. Piccoli, President; Zaupa [Secretary; Fiorio, Sozzi and J. B. Castellani.

At Belluno, Fr. J. B. Tomasi was substituted for by Fr. Balestrazzi, and Fr. Tarcisio Martina was added as dogma teacher.

In Verona, the Sisters of the Visitation were thinking of selling the Convent at the Trinity, and to move on to Vicenza. The Superior General, when he came to know of this, asked the Sisters to exercise our Community's right of precedence in the right of re-purchasing it, in the strength of a clause inserted into the old contract of purchase-sale of 1877. With this end in view, he searched high and low, but could find nothing in writing. Cardinal Bacilieri also took an interest in these proceedings, and he had a study made of the Chancery Archives, but found nothing that substantiated this claimed right on the part of the Stigmatines, but the price being asked of them seemed equal and just. The Convent was re-sold to them at a cost of 138,000 Lira, and there should be kept in mind, that these Sisters had built a new Convent on the property. The Students entered there on October 20, after having completed the necessary renovations, and these works continued throughout that year. On this occasion, there

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<sup>295</sup> In those days, to leave the country there was not required any passport, or other document of that nature.

<sup>296</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note: early in the new millennium, 2000, a Stigmatine was named Archbishop of Curitiba: Dom Moacyr Vitti, CSS.**

was also re-activated the entrance off Via Tetone [later called Via Bertoni], and the stair case of granite was re-built, as this had been partially removed. There was also recalled from Trent to Verona the House of Novitiate and it was established in the House of the Trinity, naming Fr. Michaelangelo Zanetti as Novice Master.

In this year, during the vacation time, there were issued the first numbers of the **BERTONIANO**, the periodical reserved for the Stigmatines, under the care of Fr. Zaupa. The first issues were mimeographed, but these were later reproduced on a printing press, including these issues beginning in 1911. In Trent, once the Novitiate Community had been shifted to Verona, the house was available for a Boarding House for Students, which had already begun. Fr. Erminio Pivato, in 1910, had added new rooms to the building, adding on an entire new floor, and as a result, a discreet number of boarders could be accepted<sup>297</sup>.

Still, in 1911 a tract of land was purchased in forest region of the Commune of Malosco, in the Upper Anaunia, with the idea of building there a Vacation House for the students. This was constructed in the years 1911-1912, with money given by Bishop Sogaro, and other benefactors.<sup>298</sup> The students were able to go there on vacation for the first time during the summer of 1912.

**29.** In 1912, there closed the opening Apostolic Process of the Founder's Cause of Beatification. This phase bears the title: *Ne Pereant Probationes* ['So that these Testimonies might not be lost'].

Already in 1907, Cardinal Tripepi had died, and Cardinal Jerome Gotti, was named *Ponente* of the Cause. Fr. Pizzighella was appointed the Postulator of the Cause, and on October 23, he obtained the *Remissorial Documents* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites for the Inchoative Process. This was opened on June 5, 1908, and sessions for the examination of 15 documents under question began on the 16 of the same month, and were terminated on January 24, 1912.

This process formed the first part of the Apostolic Process, and bore the title: *Super Virtutibus et Miraculis in Specie* ['Concerning his Virtues and Miracles in Particular']. This phase would be complemented in the Continuing Process. Therefore, the original Acts had to be sealed and kept in the Chancery Archives until they would be considered anew in the Continuing Process: however, through some unexplainable negligence, the Process was printed, and a summary of it was brought to Rome. Here, the Sacred Congregation took note of the error in procedure that had been committed, and kept sealed the copy received in Rome, and this would eventually be brought back to Verona when the Process was taken up again.

Meanwhile in Verona, devotion to the Servant of God was promoted: on June 30 there was organized a pilgrimage to his tomb of all the young boys enrolled in the

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<sup>297</sup> In 1908, there had been offered to our Fathers in Trent the care of the Church dedicated to St. Francis Xavier, but this was not accepted.

<sup>298</sup> From a Document located in the Archives in Verona, it appears that the construction cost 60,000 Lira, of which 18,000 had been donated by Bishop Sogaro.

Oratories of the city who in the course of that year had received First Communion. On this occasion, there was distributed a memorial printed for the occasion.<sup>299</sup>

There was also felt in Verona the need of having a Biography of the Founder, in order to spread knowledge of him and devotion to him among the faithful. The proposal was made to Professor Joseph Ellero of Udine, who out of regard for our Fathers, at first accept this charge, but then found himself in the impossible situation of finding the time to dedicate himself to this challenge. This was then offered to Professor Joseph Trecco of Verona, who accepted it.

**30.** In Verona in 1912, the College at the Stimate was opened<sup>300</sup>. This had been an idea that had been bandied about for some time. Already in 1907, Fr. J. B. Tomasi, then Director of the House, after the students had been transferred to St. Mary of the Lily, thought of utilizing the rooms for a College of Students. The thought was taken up again by Fr. Michaelangelo Zanetti in 1910, and he had already decided to go ahead with the re-opening for the next year. However, during that August, in a trip he made to Parma, he became quite ill with an attack of appendicitis that had burst, with the danger of peritonitis. Being brought to the hospital in that city, he was operated on for a burst appendix, and a severe internal abscess, and he remained in bed for five months. He returned to Verona in April 1911, with his surgery still open and draining, due to another abscess in the intestine, which could not be reached. Following an additional operation, it came out well, and he was finally freed from any further setbacks. In 1912, he had been re-appointed Director of the House of the Stimate, and was able to bring into life his old idea, opening the College in October, at the beginning of the scholastic year.

All this while there continued at the Stimate the Boarding House for workers, and in 1911 further professional classes were offered, as there was established a School for Automobile Mechanics, authorized by the Government. However, since this whole endeavor of ours was quite weighed down with debts as a result of the renovations brought to the building, and the income was not able to balance with the necessary expenses in its operations. As a result, the Superiors decided to reduce its activity in accessibility and in 1912, the musical band was discontinued. Thus, those rooms could be rented, and this brought in new financial revenue to support the trade schools.

In 1912, the Aspirants were recalled to Verona from Gemona, and they were lodged in the House of the Most Holy Trinity: here, Fr. Louis Benedetti had been appointed Novice Master. In the same year, the House of St. Mary of the Lily was closed, and the building was rented to the Morando Institute. There was serious thought given to the sale of that property, but Cardinal Bacilieri wanted our men to

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<sup>299</sup> Also, Fr. Michaelangelo Zanetti in 1907 had had printed in Pavia, a little leaflet with an image of the Venerable Founder, with a brief presentation of his life, and prayers to the Most Holy Trinity to seek his glorification.

<sup>300</sup> It had long been the desire of many to re-open the schools of the Stimate. In 1910, a request was made of the Superiors to open two elementary grades, with the intention of have them followed by the high school classes: but the times were not yet mature.

continue the Sunday Oratory in the parish of St. Stephen's, which was held in the Church of St. Mary of the Lily. The Oratory was entrusted to Fr. Benedetti and he had his Novices help out in the apostolate.

In Piacenza, in order to insure the flourishing life of the Workers Boarding House for the future, Fr. Scotton sought to acquire a locality suited for sale, at the price of 120,000. However, the Superiors did not feel that we could assume even additional expenses, and then in 1912, withdrew Fr. Scotton from Piacenza, transfer him as Director of Udine. Fr. Charles DeFerrari who up to that point had been Director of the Oratory of Capodistria.

This Oratory was entrusted to our men in 1910, and Fr. Edwin Job was appointed as Director. He was, however, dependent upon a Commission of Administration which was supposed to provide for the necessary financial means for the endeavor to function. In 1911, Fr. Job was succeeded by Fr. Charles DeFerrari. Already from the beginning, these Fathers found themselves often in conflict with the Commission, and after two years, they realized that it was not possible to collaborate with it. In place of busying itself with the finances of the oratory, they were trying to control the internal direction of the apostolate, often being an obstacle to the Director's efforts. Therefore, they gave up the direction of the Oratory, and this was assumed by a local Priest.

Fr. DeFerrari arrived in Piacenza, and had to experience a certain sense of hostility directed by the Brothers of the Christian Schools against the work of our Fathers. This might have been because of the development that our Workers Movement was taking. This had already been noticed by Fr. Scotton from 1911. When the Students' Boarding House was begun, our men were in agreement with the Brothers in this sense, that they would have accepted as internal students only those enrolled in the elementary schools, and in ours, would be those enrolled in the trade school and high school level. Following this, the Brothers accepted also the students from the trade schools and did not appreciate the fact that our Boarding School was more flourishing than theirs.

These contrasts got worse with the passing of time, and so, two years later in 1914, it was decided to give up the work and to close that House. Fr. DeFerrari then was assigned Director of the College of Verona.

In Pavia, our Fathers already in 1909 had given up the direction of the Sunday Oratory, and now thought of opening in their dwelling, a Dormitory for young students<sup>301</sup>.

In Udine, given the good results from the studies there, the College and the internal schools flourished all the more, so that by 1914, there had to be put up a new wing in the building for the elementary classes. The Oratory prospered as well, frequented by more than 300 young men. In it, Fr. Pelanda had instituted a gymnastic team, and he also supervised some important works of enlargement and decoration of the theater. At the same time, in order to improve the environment of the College, the

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<sup>301</sup> In 1905, there had been offered the direction of St. Augustine's College, which was not accepted.

building on the Cossetti property in front of the College was purchased, and there were projected renovations of the old 'Stall of the Three Kings', in order to make it a dwelling: these works were completed in 1915.

**31.** In Gemona in 1912, there was finally concluded a misunderstanding that had dragged on for some years, and that would decide for us the outcome of that house. It has already been recorded that in 1899, Mrs. Giacomina Simonetti, with a notarized deed, had sold her Palace to Fr. James Marini, with the obligation on the part of the Stigmatine Fathers, to institute there an Oratory for the young men of Gemona. Later, the Arch-Priest James Scisizzo, who had succeeded Bishop Fogiarini, in order to assure the purpose of the beneficence in favor of the parish, wanted that to the notarized document there be added a private memorandum, what had been signed in three copies, on August 21, 1901. In this document the woman stated that she had *ceded* to the Superior of the Stigmatines, on June 13, 1899, her Palace for the purpose of a benefice: giving permission to the same Superior of the Stigmatine Fathers, for the time being, to develop it for that work of local beneficence, which he might feel to be the most opportune, in accord with the Arch Bishop of Udine<sup>302</sup>, with the Arch -Priest, pro tempore, of Udine.

At Mrs. Simonetti's death [May 1902], her heirs found among her papers a copy of that later document, and they wanted to make use of it to lessen the value of the purchase-sale contract, of June 13, 1899. So, on April 2, 1908, they cited before the Civil Tribunal of Udine, Fr. Marini – and then, on January 20, 1910, also Fr. Henry Gabos, to whom, Fr. Marini with a deed authenticated by the Notary Bertoldi of Verona, on May 16, 1907, had sold the property of the Palace.

The two cases were combined, and in the hearing of March 29, 1912, the conclusions of the two parties were presented. On the part of those summoned, it was observed that for the Tribunal of Udine, whether it had jurisdiction for Fr. Gurisatti and Fr. Marini, it was not for Fr. Henry Gabos, in the strength of the 98 Article of the Code of Procedure. On the part of the plaintiffs, it was asked whether there could be a declaration of nullity of the contract of sale of June 13, 1899. As for the '*Promemoria*', it was noted that the property had not been sold, but *ceded* to the Congregation, as this was not legally capable of owning, and furthermore, there is lacking the deed of its acceptance. There was further petitioned whether the testimonial proofs could be admitted to prove the existence of the movable materials for the value of 8,000 Lira.

The Tribunal with its decision of July 2, 1912, declared: the contracts of June 13, 1899 and that of May 14, 1907, were declared null and void: as a result, all the goods about which the plaintiffs make a claim need to be returned as property of the estate of the late Giacomina Simonetti. As for the movable values, the testimonial proofs were admitted.

The Arch Priest insisted that they make an appeal, but the Stigmatines, after hearing the opinion of Attorney Carnelutti, renounced it. The Arch Priest, then, got into

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<sup>302</sup> In Udine, in 1909, Arch Bishop Peter Zamburlini died, and he was succeeded by Arch Bishop Anastasio Rossi.

the case, on the strength of what had been written in the memorandum: that should the Stigmatines ever withdraw, the estate should then serve for a work of beneficence to be designated by the Pastor.

Contemporaneously, there were initiated negotiations to reach some kind of a compromise, and a Commission was set up that was meant to act in the name of the Parish. At Mestre, a sister of the deceased Mrs. Simonetti lived: and one half of the estate was meant to go to her. The part that belonged to her was ceded by her, and it was acquired by Attorney Fantoni. Following this, the Arch Priest insisted with the Superiors of the Congregation that they might leave some Priests in Gemona, who would be able to use one half of the House already purchased, to attend to the Oratory and to the Recreation Center, committing themselves at the same time to providing lessons for the private students, and offering their ministry in the Parish. The General Council withdrew the Aspirants to Verona<sup>303</sup>, and transferred Fr. Pio Gabos to Milan, leaving the House still opened until the litigation might reach some conclusion.

In 1914, the Parish acquired from the Simonetti heirs also the other half of the estate, that was inscribed with the name of the Rural House of St. Joseph, substituted later for the more anonymous sounding 'Juventus'. And so, that House was able to pick up again its normal activity, committing itself to the men's Oratory, frequented by about 400 of them, and also maintaining the trade schools with a little Rooming House.

**32.** In Rome, the Superior General, desiring that some of our students would study there and frequent the Ecclesiastical Universities and obtain the academic degrees, in 1912, rented a few rooms next to the House of St. Mary of the Miracles on Via Ripeta, where were placed in connection with the rest of our house there.

In this time the General Council attended also to bettering the internal organization of the Congregation, by approving some disciplinary regulations for the various classes of membership [aspirants, novices, temporary and perpetually professed, preparing also forms for the disciplinary reports for the individual houses. The Superior General, with his Circular Letter of October 13, 1912, made it obligatory for each house to send each month the financial reports to the General Curia<sup>304</sup>.

It was also established that for admission to perpetual profession there would be required the vote of the local Chapter and a written report of the Director and the Prefect. And then, in the light of a reform instituted by Pius X, in the praying of the Breviary it was deliberated to seek from the Holy See the faculty of using the Universal Calendar, with the addition of our own feast of the Espousals and the Virgin Mary, whereas up to that point in time, in the individual Houses the local Diocesan Calendar

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<sup>303</sup> However, for one more year the Aspirants of the lower high school level.

<sup>304</sup> Already in 1890, a form had been introduced for the economic account, the same for all the house, which at the end of the year, had to be sent to the Superior General. And in 1907, with the Circular Letter of November 15, the same Superior General had imposed on all the Directors the sending in twice a year to the General Council a report on the disciplinary state of each house: a report which in 1915 was made obligatory three times a year.

was followed. <sup>305</sup> There were also obtained from the Holy See special faculties for blessings and applications of indulgences, for the Directors of the Houses, and the rectors of Churches.

**33.** Before closing this Chapter, we have to recall two consoling facts: i.e., the offering made to our Congregation of the two Churches of the Holy Cross, one in Milan and one in Rome, which were meant to commemorate the 16<sup>th</sup> Centenary of Constantine. In Milan, Cardinal Arch-Bishop Andrew Ferrari, who was also well disposed toward us, from March 27, 1912, in a Pastoral Letter, referred to the Church that was to be constructed as a memorial of that Centenary. He expressed the wish that it should be constructed in the 'Acquabella' section of Milan, 'where our beloved Stigmatine Fathers of Verona accomplish such wonders of priestly seal.' Returning to this same matter on May 30 of the same year, while he was addressing a fervent appeal to the Milanese Catholics to invite them to assist in the cost of construction, he named a Commission presided over by Monsignor Locatelli, who were to concern themselves with the matter. As a consequence to this, there were initiated negotiations between the Chancery Office and the Superiors of the Congregation.

The General Council decided to grant gratuitously the land for the construction of the Church, on the condition that this remain the property of the Institute, when it became a Parish: and that if one day, the Stigmatine Fathers had to abandon that locality, the Diocese would pay them the value of the land. Meanwhile the construction got underway and at first, the desire was to name the Church in honor of St. Helena, and there was set up a local Commission which together with the Archdiocesan Commission they would set about collecting funds from the faithful. <sup>306</sup> On September 28, the corner-stone was blessed.

In 1914, with the work progressing well, thought was given to establishing an Agreement to be stipulated between the Diocese of Milan and our Congregation, in order to regulate the property and the service of the Church. The General Council had presented to the Archdiocesan Commission a series of proposals in this regard: reserving the right of executing in the Church those works that it thought opportune, and to receive reimbursement, in the case that the Community ever had to abandon that locality for the work done and for the price of the land. On the basis of these proposals the Commission prepared a plan of an agreement which, if accepted by the General Council, would be presented to the Cardinal Arch Bishop, for approbation. However, he did not think any formal agreement was necessary, and tore the papers up which had presented them in the presence of the members of the Commission. He declared that he had intended to build this Church for the Stigmatine Fathers, and this should remain their property, nor could any of his successors ever think of depriving them of it.

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<sup>305</sup> On this occasion, it was decided to celebrate the feast of the Espousals as a Double of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Class, without Octave, while previously it had been observed as a Double of the 1<sup>st</sup> Class with an Octave.

<sup>306</sup> On this occasion there was also organized a musical concert, offered *for a church to be raised*, directed by the well-known Maestro Lawrence Perosi, for the scope of raising funds.



In Rome, the construction of the Church of the Holy Cross had begun in 1912, and on October 17 of that year the corner-stone was blessed by Cardinal Frances Cassetta, Bishop of Frascati, and the Protector of the General Council for the Constantinian celebrations. The work continued for the entire year 1913, and on December 29, the Church was inaugurated with a sacred rite, celebrated by Cardinal Cassetta. The first offering of the Church was made to the Superior General towards the middle of the same month of December by Cardinal Basil Pompili, Vicar of His Holiness: but the official handing over was made by the Holy Father to the Superior General, on July 7, 1914, with the order of beginning to care for the Church by the following Sunday, July 12: already on March 19<sup>th</sup>, it had been canonically established as a Parish.

The Cardinal Vicar in communicating to the Superior General the will of the Holy Father to entrust to our Congregation this new Parish, declared to him that our Fathers would have to give up the other two Churches of St. Nicholas of the Prefetti and of St. Mary of the Miracles. The Superior General, in accord with his Council, had recourse to the Cardinal Vicar himself, in order to see if at least the Church of the Miracles might be left under our care. Just a short time before this some renovations were made here at considerable expense for our students. The appeal, however, was to no avail because the cardinal had already promised this Church to other religious. However, during another Audience the Superior General obtained from the Holy Father the permission to acquire, at the expense of the Holy See, another bit of land of some 2000 square meters, near the Holy Cross Church, and also to retain the Church and house next to the Prefetti Church. With the abandonment of the House of the Miracles, the General Curia was transferred to Holy Cross parish in the Flaminia section, and there our first students came to live and were inscribed at the Gregorian University: Virgilio Job, Joseph Lona, and Remigio Zadra.

**34.** In 1913, Fr. Tomasi the Superior General, accompanied by Fr. Balestrazzi, made his first Canonical Visitation to the Houses of North America. He noted that there was dire need for additional personnel, so he sent Fr. Erminio Lona, Joseph Rosa, and Anthony Toniolli. Thus a new house could be opened in Milford Massachusetts [at that time, in the Diocese of Springfield]. To this were destined Frs. Lona and Toniolli, who from the outset had great struggles with a rather numerous colony of socialists and anarchists.<sup>307</sup>

In Springfield, Fr. Dalla Porta from 1911 had purchased a house with some land connected to it, on William Street. In April construction began on the Church. The Bishop on July 16, blessed the corner-stone, and on December 24 the Church opened to the public. On May 12, 1912, the Bishop imparted his solemn blessing. In 1913, on Wilcox Street, Fr. Dalla Porta constructed a large hall, called 'Columbus Hall', that was to serve for meetings of the parish associations, and as a place where the youth could gather. At Scranton, too, in 1913 a tract of land was purchased on which a Church was built for the Italians, and it was inaugurated on December 28, of the same year.

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<sup>307</sup> In the summer of 1911, returning from a visit he had made to Italy, Fr. Dalla Porta brought with him back to America Fr. Nicholas Tomasi, who remained there only one year. In 1909, Fr. Angelo Simeoni was also sent

In Brazil, too, the foundation was assuming greater solidity. In 1912, Fr. Ferruccio Zanetti was also sent there, and he would serve for many years as the Missionary for Tibagy. With his help, our Fathers were able to accept temporarily also the care of St. Jerome's, in the territory of Tibagy, for provide some schooling for the youth in that area. And Frs. Adami and Zanetti were assigned there. In 1914, taking the occasion of an illness that struck Fr. Grigolli, for whom it was suggested that there be sought a place near the sea, Fr. Adami had sought another foundation in Sao Palo, but to no avail. There were still there some hard feelings toward our Congregation for the many refusals it had rendered to the requests there for a house of our Congregation. As a result, Fr. Adami had recourse to the Bishop of Campinas<sup>308</sup>, who offered a foundation in Limeira. The foundation was accepted and opened in the first days of July. Fr. Adami went there with Fr. J. B. Pelanda, who for this purpose had been sent to Brazil.<sup>309</sup> As a result, the foundation in Brazil was becoming better established: at long last, the heart-felt desires to have Houses in Brazil, nourished all this time, had become a reality.

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<sup>308</sup> The Diocese of Campinas had been established on June 7, 1908, taking it from the Archdiocese of Sao Paolo.

<sup>309</sup> In June 1915, Fr. Pelanda left for Italy, in order to regulate his military situation [Italy had entered World War I on May 24 of that year. He was substituted for by Fr. Zanetti who in September returned to Tibagy, and Fr. Grigoli took his place in Limeira.

**A Brief Chronicle**  
of the  
**Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata**  
**of Our Lord Jesus Christ**  
[1800 – 1941]



*Rev. John Baptist Tomasi,  
Superior General (1911 – 1922)*



*Rev. John Baptist Zaupa,  
Superior General (1922 – 1934)*

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
[1876 - † 1958]

**Volume II – Second Period**  
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## THE APPROBATION OF THE CONSTITUTIONS

[1914-1925]

**35.** We have seen that the XVIII General Chapter had elected a Capitular Commission to review and to draw up the text of the Constitutions, to present to the Holy See for approbation. At the beginning of the year 1914, it had completed its work and Fr. John B. Tomasi, Superior General, in February of that same year, having obtained the authorization, convoked the XIXth General Chapter, the task of which was to examine and establish the text proposed by the Capitular Commission. To facilitate this treatment, the same Commission had printed a kind of guide, or *Schema*, of the Constitutions, keeping in distinct print, with different printing characters, the obligatory articles, in the strength of common law - and then our own regulations, thus distinguishing easily those articles which could be modified or excluded. In another little booklet, also printed up, there were presented those Notes that would explain the reasons behind the single articles of the *Schema*. Two months before the General Chapter assembled, there was given to each Capitular a copy of this printed work. The Commission had also prepared a *Schema* for the Directory, which intended to present to the Chapter for its approval: but, since this was not yet completed, the Chapter voted to put off its discussion for another time.

The Chapter, therefore, assembled on August 224 in Rome: at the last minute, however, due to the death of the Pontiff, Pius X, it was transferred to Verona, where it assembled in the House of the Stimmate on the day established. The Constitutions which were approved by the General Chapter, were reprinted, and in July of 1915, were submitted to the Congregation of Religious, which in its General Assembly, approved them on November 24 1916 for *a seven year period*. The new Holy Father [Pope Benedict XV] approved these on the 26 of the same month, and the Decree of Approbation bears this date.<sup>310</sup>

**36.** On January 26, 1916, there occurred the Silver Jubilee of the priestly ordination of the Very Reverend Superior General, Fr. John B. Tomasi: the occurrence was celebrated in Rome in the Church of St. Nicholas dei Prefetti, and on that occasion there was obtained for the Jubilarian an autographed picture of the Holy Father. This anniversary was also observed in Verona, at the Church of the Stimmate on February 11: the students of the Most Holy Trinity took part in the festivities with an *academia*, manifesting the local musical and literary talent, held on the same day. For this occasion there was published a Special Edition of the **BERTONIANO**.

On February 24 of the same year there was officially inaugurated in Rome Holy Cross Parish, and the first Pastor was installed, Fr. Octavian Piccoli, by His Eminence, the Cardinal Vicar. From March 17 – 28, there was held in the Parish a Sacred

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<sup>310</sup> The Constitutions presented in July 1915, were first examined by a Consultor of the Sacred Congregation, who proposed some modifications, which were accepted by the General Council. On November 3, 1916, they were submitted to the examination of a special Commission which approved them: on the 24 of the same month they were approved by the General Congregation, and on the 26, presented for the approbation of the Holy Father.

Mission, to which a great number of the faithful were drawn: this served to provide a kind of thrust to the parish life.

Still in February of that same year, the Superior General transferred his residence to St. Nicholas of the Prefetti, as this locality was more suited, because it was more central: here Fr. Graziani began in this year the decoration of the Church, which was completed in the subsequent years.

**37.** Meanwhile, in the preceding August, the First World War broke out in Europe, which would call to arms a number of our Confreres. First among these was **Brother Angelo Martinelli**<sup>311</sup>, who departed from Verona on August 3, 1914 and was sent to Galicia, where he took part in the combat, until being captured by the Russians and imprisoned. He was released in 1916. In May of 1915, Italy also entered the war, and other confreres were drafted and called to arms. On May 14, 14 Trentine students presented themselves to the Austrian Consulate of Venice, to regulate their situation: and in conformity with § 29 of the Austrian Military Code, as students for the Priesthood, that were considered exempt from the obligation of presenting themselves to arms.

On March 29, Fr. Tarcisio Martina was called into the service, and sent to Eastern Front, as a first Lieutenant in the First Infantry Regiment. Other confreres were likewise called into service: Fr. Fortunato Mantovani, served as Chaplain in a Field Hospital; Fr. Louis Benedetti, became Chaplain of the Fourth Alpine Regiment, and he offered service first in Cadore, and then in Ala, in the Province of Trent, and finally in 1917, he served at Salonic in Macedonia; Fr. Paride Lucchetti Donazzan was assigned to the Field Hospital in Cadore; **the cleric Dominic Soravito, served in the 54<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiment in Cadore and was killed by a hostile bullet on July 20 1915 at the feet of the Tofana**; the Cleric Marucci, served in the 8<sup>th</sup> Bersaglieri regiment and then was transferred to the Air Corps, and did not return to the Congregation.

As a consequence of Italy's entering the war, the armies were massed in the North-eastern Provinces, and also took over the Seminary of Belluno, then occupied by the military. This was the reason why our Fathers, as soon as they had finished the school year, had to leave there. However, even independently of the War, it had been decided to close that House. At the death of the Pontiff, Pius X, the General Council had entrusted the Superior General to initiate the process with the Bishop, for the withdrawal of our Fathers.<sup>312</sup> The Superior met with the Bishop first at Feltre in October 1914, and then in Belluno in February 1915: on the one side, there was felt the need that the Congregation had of personnel; and on the part of the Diocesan Authorities, they wanted to entrust the direction of the seminary to local Priests, and there was common accord that our Priests would leave there at the end of the Scholastic year.

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<sup>311</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note: *Fra Angelino* would be well known and much loved by the Professed Students of the North American Province, at St. Agatha's in Rome, from 1952-1958.**

<sup>312</sup> Bishop Joseph Foschiani died on October 5, 1913, and was succeeded by Bishop Joshua Cantarossi, transferred there from Albenga.

However, the Bishop then wrote on March 1, asking if there might be left a few of our Priests both for teaching, and he was disposed to entrust to our Congregation the Parish of Sts. Blaise and Stephen, The Superior General, declined the offer of the Parish, and stated that he was willing to leave a few teachers there: however, the Seminary was shortly occupied by soldiers, and remained so for the duration of the war, and so classes could not re-open.

Fr. Balestrazzi moved to Rome then, and was assigned to Holy Cross Parish. Fr. Fiorio was sent to Verona as Novice Master, Fr. Stofella also went to Verona: Fs. Sella, Zaupa and Fadanelli went to North America.

**38.** In that region, a new foundation was established in Pittsfield Massachusetts [MA], a city of some 45, 000 inhabitants, of whom 5,000 were Italians, in the Diocese of Springfield MA. Fr. Toniolli was sent there, and from the beginning he had to struggle against a strong current of subversives. However, through his charity and patience in a short time he was able to reconcile the confidence of that colony, and very shortly began the construction of a magnificent Church, the basement of which was inaugurated at Christmas of 1916.

In Springfield, Fr. Zaupa, after having taken up the census of the Parish, began the publication of a Parish Bulletin, which had as its title *The Friend of the Truth*, and in 1918, he established the Italo-American Columbus Organization, divided into three sections: culture, social assistance and sport. Within the first two years, of a very intense life, it served as a great help both from the civil perspective, as well as the religious.

Likewise, in North America Fr. Luchi, from 1913, he had accepted, without any authorization, a foundation in Milwaukee. The General Council, prior to taking a position on this, asked of the same Confrere, a complete report on his foundation. From this, the Council came to understand that the ownership of that House was the responsibility of the Congregation, and in its name, he had assumed a debt of some \$5,000.00. At one time Fr. Simeoni had been sent there, who, however, left the Congregation, and became incardinated into that Diocese, and Fr. Fadanelli was sent to take his place. The General Council decided to take on the responsibility for that foundation for the time being, and nominated as 'Delegate' for the Houses of North America, Fr. Erminio Lona, with the faculty of making decisions within the limits of the authority that would be communicated to him. He, then, with a view to avoiding scandal to the harm of the Congregation, had to sign a promissory note of \$5,000.00, the indebtedness caused by Fr. Luchi: and the Council ordered him to place on the property a lien, that would insure our deposit, and would include also another \$1,500.

In Brazil, our Fathers found themselves in real difficulties in the house that had been acquired in Limeira, and they asked the Bishop of Campinas if they might open a Parish in that city. He, however, in 1915, offered a foundation in Rio Claro, where he entrusted to our men the care of Holy Cross Church, and provided the use of the adjoining residence, with the promise of granting to them also the property if they performed well in their work among the people: he asked for this foundation three Priests. The offering was accepted and in October, they took over the residence. Frs.

Grigolli and Adami with Brother Valzacchi moved there from Limeira. Then on December 31, Fr. Pelanda returned from Italy.

**39.** All this while the Houses in Northern Italy felt the sad consequences of the War. In Trent, the locale of the Oratory and also part of the House were occupied by soldiers and the wounded in battle: the Boarding House and the Oratory continued to function, but much hindered.<sup>313</sup>

In Verona, the rooms of the Workers Boarding House were occupied by troops. The Workers Group was able to function, but was continuously disturbed by air raids, one of which in November 1915, damaged the building without causing any victims. To recall this fact, as a sign of gratitude, a commemorative stone was cemented into the wall, under the statue of the Immaculate Mary and a votive lamp was placed before it.

The Workers Group did continue to function, even though in a reduced form. To assure its life in 1913, there was formed an Administrative Commission presided over by Monsignor Joseph Manzini, and Count Ugo Guarienti. In 1914, this Commission presented to the General Council a formula for a contract that was approved and signed: by means of this, the Commission assumed the task of providing the necessary funds for the expenses incurred in this work.

In Verona too, the Aspirants of our Apostolic School in May of 1916 was moved to Sezano to take over that House, that had been requisitioned by the military authority. And for the same reason, in November of that year the Novices and Postulants were transferred to Sezano, and they remained there for the entire scholastic year, 1916-1917.

In Udine, some of the areas in the College had been occupied by the local's schools and others, by the military: nonetheless, the College continued to show life, as did the care of St. Peter's Church continue.<sup>314</sup> In Milano, the construction of the Basilica was proceeding very well, and in 1916, it was completed. However, the construction company opposed the opening of its opening unless the debt of 250,000 Lira that still weighed upon it was paid. When three members of the Archdiocesan Commission [Monsignor Locatelli, Monsignor Pantalini and Fr. Varisco] renewed its guarantee for the extinction of the debt, on December 24, 1916 permission was granted to open the Church.<sup>315</sup> There still remained a debt on the House, and the General Council, waiting for better times, sold a part of the land, and in 1918, authorized Fr. Pio Gabos to seek an insured loan of 50,000 Lira at the Credit Bank, and another 25, 000 Lira from another Religious Community.

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<sup>313</sup> Before Italy got into the War, Fr. Pivato, Director of the House, was not in good relationship with the civil authorities. He left the city and withdrew to Udine. Frs. Miori and Socrella remained in Trent.

<sup>314</sup> In 1917, the Military Command had emitted the order of requisition of the Church [October 24], but the order was not carried out because of the retreat of the Italian troops following an enemy invasion.

<sup>315</sup> In 1918, the Commission still had a debt toward the Ferraresi Gandini Company for 92, 000 Lira. Monsignor Locatelli and Fr. Varisco, with a loan of December 28, obliged themselves to extinguish this in 28 payments of six-month payments of 3,300 Lira, plus the interest of 5 % on the remaining debt. The responsibilities for the years 1919 and 1920 were met by the Commission – but, from 1921 on, they were paid by the Stigmatine Fathers.



**40.** On November 4, 1916, there occurred the First Centenary of the Congregation. However, because of the conditions brought on by the War, no celebrations could be held. The Superior General, putting off for another time all official celebration, did send out a Circular Letter to the entire Congregation, to commemorate this happy occasion and to invite the Confreres to follow the examples of virtue and priestly zeal that our first Confreres left us<sup>316</sup>. A copy of this Circular Letter was also sent to the Bishops of the Dioceses where there were Houses of the Congregation, and other most eminent and benevolent personalities, as to Cardinals Pompili, Casetta and Falconio, to the Secretary of the Congregation of Religious, to the Director of the *Civiltà Cattolica*, Fr. Andreoli, Superior General of the Ministers of the Infirm. From all there were received beautiful responses. For that First Centenary, there was also published a ***Brief Chronicle of the Congregation***, that covered from the beginning to the approbation of the Holy See [1816-1890]<sup>317</sup>. At the beginning of this published book work, there are also included this Circular Letter of the Superior General, and also included some of the letters he received in response<sup>318</sup>.

It was also the plan of the Superiors to gather and publish a second volume of ***The Reminiscences of the Deceased Fathers and Brothers*** who had died after 1886, to continue the edition of a similar book published in 1886, 50 years earlier, for the Golden Jubilee of the priestly ordination of Fr. Peter Vignola: however, the War, as it had counseled against any external manifestation of celebration, likewise impeded several of the compilers of this planned work called to military serviced to present in time their portion of the work entrusted to them. There was published at this time the biographies of the Vignola brothers, Frs. Peter and Vincent, and Joseph Marchesini<sup>319</sup>, the work of Fr. Pio Gurisatti.

In the meantime, other confreres had been called to arms: Fr. Gino Gruppo, attached to the Military Hospital of Verona. Fr. Emilio Recchia served as Chaplain of the 247 Infantry regiment, and in 1917 was a Prisoner of War in Friuli, and interned in Germany. Fr. Godfrey Friedmann was assigned to the Military Hospital in Udine, which in 1917, after the enemy invasion, withdrew into our Archepiscopal College of Udine, and during the period of the invasion he served as Curate in Pantianico. Fr. Richard Piccioni, in 1918, was sent to France with the Austrian Troops, dislocated there, where he was able to capture the esteem and the affection of both officers and simple soldiers. The Deacon Angelo Caimi was assigned to a Field Hospital in Albania. Fr. Angelo Pagliarusco and Brother Edward Avesani were attached to the Military Hospital in Verona. Brother Charles Valenti, in 1917, was a Prisoner of War in Friuli. Cleric John Bolzanello and the Novice, Humbert Ghiringhelli, did not return to the

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<sup>316</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** an English translation of this much cited Circular Letter appears on the web-site [www.st-bertoni.com](http://www.st-bertoni.com), section **History**, under **A Brief Chronicle**, as part of the 'Introduction' of the English translation of *Breve Cronaca I*.

<sup>317</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** an English translation of this appears above in this web-site.

<sup>318</sup> Also in 1916, there appeared the booklet, *The Spirit of the Venerable Gaspar Bertoni*, printed in Milan by the Eucharistic League press, and a number of Ecclesiastical Reviews commented on this publication.

<sup>319</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note:** An English translation of this appears on the web-site [www.st-bertoni.com](http://www.st-bertoni.com), section **History**, under 'Early Biographies'

Congregation after the War. And in January 1917, Fr. Dominic Rossi was called to arms, and assigned to the Military Hospital of Verona.

**41.** In 1917, inconformity to the Constitutions approved and which became obligatory for the members, Fr. Erminio Lona was named 'Visitor' [regional superior] of North America. Permission was granted to the Coadjutor Brothers, already Professed, who had not yet put on the religious habit, there was given them the freedom to choose to do so, or not. However, the obligation for entering Postulants that they would have to wear it in accord with the Constitutions.

In the same year, there was completed the six year term of the Superior General, and since he could not assemble a General Chapter due to the War, there was requested of the Sacred Congregation to extension of one year, and this was extended still another year. So, the General Chapter finally assembled in 1919.

Still in 1917, another step forward was realized in the Cause of the Venerable Founder's Beatification. At the death of Fr. Pizzighella in 1911, Fr. Graziani was named Postulator, and he mis-placed the documents of the process so far underway, so much so that the Congregation of Rites had the impression that the Cause had been abandoned. In 1916, there was nominated as Postulator, Fr. Balestrazzi who obtained the naming of a new *Ponente* of the cause in the person of Cardinal Philip Giustini, since Cardinal Gotti had died on March 19, 1917. He proposed to the Sacred Congregation the treatment of the Process, *Concerning the non-public worship*, a phase of the Cause for which Fr. Pizzighella, in his time had prepared and had printed the *Positio*. But, since 16 years had passed, the Bishop of Verona himself issued a decree stating that there had been no public worship rendered the Founder. This was based on the phase of the Process that was established in 1901. However, the Sacred Congregation of Rites ordered that a new visitation to the tomb be made and this was supervised by the charge of Cardinal Bacilieri. Fr. Jordan Corsini, Fr. Peter Valbusa of the Most Holy Trinity were appointed, as was Fr. Charles DeFerrari of the house of the Stimmate. Following the report of this visit, Cardinal Bacilieri, on April 27, sent to the Congregation of Rites a new declaration on the absence of public worship. On July 3, in the particular Congregation of Rites, there was confirmed the sentence of the Bishop of Verona under the condition that there be obtained from the Holy Father the dispensation from keeping the body of the Founder, *not under the ground*, but in the wall of the Oratory.<sup>320</sup> After this the Postulator petitioned the Remissorial Documents for the Apostolic Process Regarding *his Reputation in General*, and these were promulgated on July 17, and sent to Fr. Marini, Vice-Postulator: the Process opened on July 17, 1918 and closed on January 17, 1919 and a collection of all this was sent to Rome.

**42.** Meanwhile, in October 1917, the events connected to the war heightened: the Austro-Germanic troops opened up a wedge at Caporetto, in the eastern boundary and invaded the Provinces of Udine and Belluno. One part of the Italian army was

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<sup>320</sup> cf. *BERTONIANO*, 1929, p. 178.

surrounded and captured<sup>321</sup> – another part put up a resistance, on the right bank of the Piave River. The terrorized population fled *en masse* before the enemy, and took refuge in Central Italy. The Superiors of the Apostolic School were concerned by the rumors that circulated, which spoke of a possible occupation of Verona, and of the danger deriving from the air raids, and also the threatened mobilization of the city, to which the Trentine students would be subjected, they sent the Aspirants and Novices to Pistoia – the temporarily Professed to Parma, and the perpetually Professed to Pavia. After some days, the Superior General being informed of the matter, called the Professed to Rome, lodging them with the Sons of Holy Immaculate Mary, on Via del Mascherone, enrolling them in the Pontifical Gregorian University. The Aspirants were housed in the Summa Villa of the Seminary of Pistoia, at St. George's in Ombrone. To here was also transferred the teaching personnel of the Student House, and they continued their internal classes for the Aspirants. The Bishop of Pistoia, at that time, was Bishop Gabriel Vettori, who had succeeded Bishop Sarti, in 1915. Even some of the college students of Gemona, who had not been sent home into their families, were brought by Frs. Madussi and Henry Gabos to Pistoia, and lodged in the old 'Temple'<sup>322</sup>, until such time that they could be reunited with the families, who had fled into different regions of Italy.

**43.** In Gemona, there remained Frs. Edward Castellani, Nicholas Tomasi and J.B. Perenzoni, who continued to busy themselves with the Oratory, which first had met in the House Chapel and then later in St. John's Church: he also taught some school there to the high school students, some of whom had been in the Diocesan Seminary. At the same time, he maintained a small College, and offered his spiritual assistance to some nearby villages, as they had done prior to the enemy invasion.

From Udine, at the notice of the enemy invasion, Frs. Scotton and Pivato left right away, and they took refuge in Rome: there remained there Frs. Zambiasi, Zanghellini, Pedrotti, Angeli, to whom was added also Fr. Friedmann, who remained in the city to take care of the wounded and sick soldiers in the Military Hospital, and the Brothers Spagnoli and Guzzola. In the days of the invasion, the city remained practically deserted because of the flight of almost the entire population: the private houses and the stores were all sacked, and even our own men had to gather food stuffs, which in great part they hid for the enemy requisitions, to be assured of some provisions for the entire time of the occupation.

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<sup>321</sup> In the days of the hostile invasion, Brother Charles Valenti was captured in defense of Friuli; Fr. Emilio Recchia was interned in Germany [cf. *BERTONIANO*, 1923, P. 29]. Fr. Tarcisio Martina, in the year 1918, carried out a bold mission in territory occupied by the enemy, by gathering important information: for which service he was awarded the Silver Medal for bravery.

<sup>322</sup> In Pistoia, Fr. Bertapelle remained. Already in 1913, while waiting for a field of activity to open up, somewhat restricted now that had been allowed for our Fathers, and the great need for personnel that the Congregation experienced, the General Council had decided to close the House: however, the Bishop, + Andrew Sarti, transferred there from Guastalla, at the death of Bishop Mazzanti, and following an appeal made by the population that were not happy with the proposed departure of our Fathers, turned to the Holy Father, Pius X, to obtain that at least Fr. Bertapelle might be left there. The Council had granted him a year. And in February 1914, they extended this stay there in that place, without limit.

Then, on the evening of December 16, 1917, while they were seated at table for supper, there appeared a military command that placed them under arrest, and immediately, without even allowing them time to take with them objects of clothing necessary for them, they were all led, including the Sisters, to the city prisons.

They were confined there for two days, and subjected to interrogations, without receiving hardly any food. In the meanwhile, the College remained at the discretion of the military authorities and of the public who took from there whatever they wanted: the damage done was estimated to be 70,000 Lira. Fortunately, they did not discover what was hidden, as they had supplies, which was thought to be a grace from heaven: and already in the days of their imprisonment, the Fathers bound themselves by vow to make a Pilgrimage to the Madonna of Castelmonte, near Cividale, if they would find that they had hidden<sup>323</sup>.

In Capodistria, there remained Frs. John Lona, William Ludescher and Acler, who in 1916 had opened to the public the Church of St. Blaise, next to the Grisoni Institute, after having renovated it anew: it was much frequented by the faithful.

In Trent, Frs. Miori and Socrella were assigned. Brother Quiriono Toller served his military time in the city, and Louis Guardia in Innsbruk. As was the case with the House of Trent, likewise it was the situation at Malosco, they were taken over by the military. This was also the situation with the House of the most Holy Trinity in Verona, which was requisitioned by the military, and they placed there a territorial hospital.

At the Stimate, the Automobile Mechanics School, next to the Workers Boarding House, was much frequented, and it had permission to set aside some good revenue. The Administrative Commission, following the counsel of Cardinal Bacilieri, thought of investing some of these sums realized into the purchase of the Canal Palace, which would have stood for the patrimony of the Workers Organization. This also would have served with its income to cover the expenses of the entire endeavor. The Palace was acquired on August 24, 1918, and inscribed into the name of the 'Anonymous Civil Society of Stable Goods' [S.A.C.I.]<sup>324</sup>. It was set up on that occasion for a period of 30 years, with the social capital of 180,000 Lira, divided into 36 stocks and bonds: it had promised to acquire and administer the stable goods, and open and maintain places of moral, professional and civic instruction and education.

**44.** In October 1918, **hostilities** ceased, and the Provinces of Udine, Belluno, Treviso [as well as those of Trent and Trieste]. Were cleared of enemy troops: the Houses of Trent, Capodistria, Udine and Gemona, took up their relationship with the other Stigmatine House of Italy. In Verona, the House of the most Holy trinity continued to be occupied by a Military Hospital. The Aspirants and the Novices were kept in Pistoia until May of 1919, when they moved to Sezano. Only in October of this

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<sup>323</sup> This vow was fulfilled on March 21, 1921. Frs. Zanghellini, Friedmann, Pedrotti, Angeli, and Brother Spagnoli. Fr. Zambiasi and Brother Guzzola were impeded from participating in it.

<sup>324</sup> In 1917, the Commission for Administration of the Workers Association had presented a request of the General Council, to set up their organization into a moral entity. However, in order to do this it would have to provide its own patrimony, and to cede the ownership of these locales, to those presently occupying them: as a result, the petition was not granted.

same year were they able to re-enter the Most Holy Trinity residence. Likewise, the Professed Students remained in Rome<sup>325</sup>. Little by little the Confreres who had been called to arms were discharged from the service, and they returned to our Communities: in the individual Houses, they took up again their normal and ordinary occupations.

In January 1919, since the state of war had ended, the General Council decided to convoke the General Chapter for the election of the major offices, calling for it to be held in Verona, on August 4. In this same session, of January 28, then was treated another question that was of interest to the Confreres in Verona. The birth-place of the Venerable Founder, situated in Via Nichola Mazza, once known as Cantarane, in St. Paul's Parish, had come into the possession of one Fr. Cajetan Fiorio, a zealous apostle of the youth. Continuing the ancient traditions that had made of that home a place of refuge for the youth of the parish, and there had been constructed there a small theater. Wishing now to retire to a private life, and desiring to sell this property, he offered it to the Stigmatine Fathers, disposed to cede it at a very favorable price. The Council took this offer into consideration, and decided to accept it if it did result that economically it proved to be feasible: the one charged with seeing this through, did nothing about it, and the house passed into other hands.

**45.** In August of that year, the XXth General Chapter assembled in Verona, and Fr. John B. Tomasi was re-elected, and the Councilors were Frs. Zanghellini [Vicar], Pio Gabos, DeFerrari [Secretary] and Friedmann who was also named the Procurator General. Fr. Balestrazzi was elected Economus General.

In the Chapter there were also approved further modifications on the Constitutions, now to bring them into conformity with the Code of Canon Law, just recently promulgated. There was also approved the proposal to publish a monthly periodical of a religious and educative nature, to be diffused among Christian families, and to publish a popular biography of the Founder. Furthermore, the Chapter deliberated that our Students ought to study the languages of the regions where our houses have been opened, and ordered that steps be initiated to obtain an Office and Mass of the Sacred Stigmata.

Following the General Chapter, the General Council decided to keep the Professed Students in Rome, housing them at Holy Cross<sup>326</sup> and our Priests would teach them philosophy and theology there. However, the House there was notable to accept them immediately, so there was rented for one year, an apartment from the Sons of Mary Immaculate, that had been left free at that time by the Doctrine Fathers. Our students were then transferred there and attended internal classes, until at Holy Cross there were accomplished the renovations. In the following year, 1920, the students of theology moved into the renovated House at Holy Cross, while the philosophy students were sent to Verona, where they also attended internal classes.

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<sup>325</sup> During the summer vacations, they were able to spend time in 1918, at Rocca Priora, with the Pallotines. In 1919, they were at Palestrina, with the Franciscans. In 1920, they spent the summer in Malosco.

<sup>326</sup> On 1918, for reasons of health, the Pastor, Fr. Piccoli, was exonerated from his office, and he was substituted for by Fr. Erminio Pivato, who took possession of the Parish on September 8.

In obedience to a Deliberation of the General Chapter, the Council also have the task to Fr. Pio Gabos, Director of the House of Trent, the task of initiating the publication of a Stigmatine periodical, the title of which would be: *The Missionary in the Family*, but it came out with the title” *For the Good*. The Council further decided that the official image of the Venerable Founder would be the one that Fr. Marani had done. It also reconfirmed in the office of ‘Visitor’ of the North America region, Fr. Erminio Lona, assigning to him two Councilors.

In 1920, for the first time, there was conducted the Canonical Visitation to the Houses of Italy, in the form prescribed for the Constitutions, which had entered into force two years earlier: Frs. Friedmann and Gabos were delegated to conduct this. Following this Visitation it was deliberated to close the House of Capodistria. Already for several years, our Fathers there were often at odds with the Council of Administration there, which wanted to overlap its oversight into the disciplinary area. Even in their administrative responsibilities, the care of those who lived there was quite poor. The General Council, in 1913, had decided to withdraw our Priests, but the Bishop of Trieste [Bishop Karlin, who had succeeded Bishop Nagl] intervened, making his influence felt on the Council of Administration.

As long as the War raged, matters went on as best they could. When the war ended, the same difficulties in many instances continued, and even more so now there was felt the lack of personnel. So, it was decided definitively to close that House. The departure of our Fathers occurred on October 11, to the great displeasure of the populace. Following that Canonical Visit, there was also deliberated the close of the House of Pistoia, and Fr. Bertapelle was recalled from there.

**46.** In 1920, the Superior General made another Canonical Visitation to the Houses of North America, and noted that the work our men were doing there was most promising. There was experienced there, as well, the need for additional personnel, as the work continued to increase.

In Springfield, in the preceding year, there had opened a parochial school for the Italian children. And five Sisters of Our Lady of Mercy of Savona came to care for them. In the beginning, they were housed in a lodging next to the Columbus Hall, but then they moved to Margaret Street, in two houses acquired for them. In 1920, there was purchased a small temporary Church, for the sections of the area known as ‘Mittingue’ and ‘Agawam’, which served until 1925, when St. Anthony’s Church was built.

In Milford, too, thought was given to open a parochial school, and two homes were purchased that would serve for a Sisters’ Convent, and a tract of land next to the old Church, which had been used from 1913. Later, there was given to the Parish a house with some land next to it, situated between the Church and the Sisters’ Convent. For Christmas of 1920, there arrived there in Milford, four Sisters of Mercy, who assisted the Fathers in the teaching of Christian Doctrine, and they opened a kind of Maternity School, where they taught sewing and repairing, and a school of Italian for the children of the Parish.

Upon the return of the Superior General from North America, there was appointed as Visitor for that region, Fr. John B. Zaupa, who made a visit to Italy in 1921, seeking new helpers. Fr. Balestrazzi volunteered to return there, and his petition was accepted, and so he resigned as *Economus* General and from the office of Postulator of the Cause of the Founder.<sup>327</sup>

In Springfield in 1920, Bishop Tomas Beaven died. He had shown such good will always toward our Fathers, and especially toward Fr. Dalla Porta, who assisted him in his last illness, and comforted him with the Sacraments of our faith. Bishop Thomas O'Leary succeeded him, who also manifested sincere affection for our Fathers, appreciating the work they accomplished.

**47.** From Brazil, Fr. Grigolli had come to Italy to participate in the General Chapter of 1919, and after the Chapter remained in Italy. The Fathers who continued on in that region were not sufficient to sustain the works of the two Houses of Tibagy and Rio Claro. The thought was to give up Rio Claro, and that all should work out of Tibagy. However, the men there, hoping always for better times, retained the House of Rio Claro, where, for the time, they had not been able to do very much: but, the better times did arrive. In 1920, the following were sent to Brazil: Frs. Albino Sella, Joseph Toniolli, Cyril Zadra<sup>328</sup> and Brother Charles Valenti. With the help of these men, they were able to retain Rio Claro, and to accept a new Parish in Paraná, in the city of Castro, 70 kilometers from Tibagi. This new parish had been offered by the Bishop of Curitiba, and Fr. Pelanda took possession of it in 1921.

In the same year 1921, Fr. Albino Sella was named Visitor for Brazil, and he established his residence at Rio Claro and did what he could to consolidate that foundation. On March 13, the Association of Carmel had granted to our Fathers the rights that they had on the Holy Cross Church with its adjoining land. The Bishop, with a deed of May 14, had ceded to the Congregation the property of another piece of land, which in the past he had promised to the Association of Carmel for the establishment of an Institute there in behalf of the youth. On July 18, Frs. John Lona and Fortunato. Mantovani: the first of these two remained at Rio Claro, whereas the other, with Fr. Cyril Zadra, went to assist Fr. Pelanda in the Parish of Castro. On December 13, while celebrating at Rio Claro the Feast of S. Lucy, the corner-stone of the College under construction was blessed. The primary purpose of this building was to serve as an Apostolic School, to accept Aspirants.

**48.** Still in 1921, as the state of war had ceased, and the communities had returned to their regular life, there was taken up once more the publication of the **BERTONIANO**, which had been suspended in 1915, with the difference that it would not be monthly, but every other month.

In Verona, the Workers' Organization was in full swing once more, and with its professional trade schools, it drew about 500 young men. The Minister of Public Instruction on February 21, 1921, granted to this association the Medal of Gold. The theater of the Association was used as an ordinary hall for cycles of conferences on

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<sup>327</sup> Fr. Rossi took his place as *Economus*, and Fr. Friedmann as Postulator.

<sup>328</sup> In 1919, this last mentioned Father left the Congregation, leaving no trace of himself.

literary or religious matters. In the same year of 1921, the Diocesan Congress of Catholic Youth met there. Also the Workers Association was flourishing, and there was already felt the need to increase the facilities: the thought dawned of accepting Sisters for the kitchen and laundry, and an apartment was constructed for their Convent. The Sisters of the Holy family of Castelletto on the Garda were contacted, and they entered into service at the end of January of 1922.

In Milan in 1920, the Church of Holy Cross had been established as a Parish, and Fr. Alexander Grigolli was named its Pastor.<sup>329</sup> He was installed into his service that year by Monsignor Nasoni, Delegate of the Cardinal Arch Bishop. It was also necessary for the men serving in this Parish to employ the Ambrosian Rite, obligatory then for Milan.<sup>330</sup> In 1921, the Administration of the House assumed the obligation of liquidating the debt that still remained on the Church, those exonerating the Archdiocesan Commission.<sup>331</sup> In May of this same year, Monsignor Locatelli solemnly blessed the new Baptistery, and in June the Bishop of Pavia, + His Excellency Ciceri, consecrated the new main altar.

At Holy Cross in Rome, as was noted earlier, our students of theology still lived there: at the end of the scholastic year, noting the many inconveniences that derived from the frequent contacts of the young students with the parishioners, and of their being involved in parish life in so many needs, distracted them from the necessary commitment they had toward study and regular discipline. As a result, the General Council transferred the entire student body to Trent, with those on the college level attended the internal schools, and the theologians went to the Diocesan Seminary for their classes. The Director of Trent was Fr. Friedmann, and Fr. Fantozzi took his place as Procurator General and Postulator of Fr. Bertoni's Cause.

In Verona, at the Most Holy Trinity, the Apostolic School remained as well as the Novitiate<sup>332</sup>: and the Director was Fr. Silvio Segà, who, on December 13, solemnly consecrated the Apostolic School to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

**49.** In 1922, there was begun in Verona, the Apostolic Process, continuing *On His Virtues and Miracles in Particular*, another phase in the Cause of Beatification of the venerated Founder. Already earlier in 1919, there had been completed the phase entitled; *On His Reputation in General*, and had been forwarded to Rome. Following this, as Cardinal Giustini had died, there was obtained as *Ponente* of the Cause,

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<sup>329</sup> In 1923, Fr. Grigolli returned to Brazil, and Fr. Tarcisio Martina was named Pastor.

<sup>330</sup> The Bull establishing the Parish bears the date February 9, 1920. The Decree of carrying this out is May 31 – the taking possession by the Pastor, was July 11.

<sup>331</sup> This was an agreement stipulated in May 1923, and approved by the Archdiocesan Commission. The Stigmatine Fathers declared that they would be obliged to extinguish the debt in so far as they held the care of the Parish, and of its contributions.

<sup>332</sup> In April 1920, Monsignor Francis Grillo joined the Community. He was the Arch Priest of St. Daniel in Friuli, and in 1916, he had been named Bishop of Pesaro, and obtained permission not to accept this, from Benedict XV. In March 1921, Fr. Joseph Finetto entered. For many years, he had been Pastor of Spren in the Diocese of Feltre: and in December, Fr. Peter Campi entered, after two years of negotiations to obtain the permission from his Bishop of Vicenza.



Cardinal Gennaro Granito Pignatelli di Belmonte, who on June 28, 1921, in the Particular Congregation of Rites, he had proposed the treatment on the validity and the review of the earlier Process *On the Reputation*, and there was recognized the Founder's Reputation for Holiness, and this was declared by the proper Decree.<sup>333</sup>

Fr. Fantozzi succeeded Fr. Friedmann in the office of Postulator, and Fr. Octavian Piccoli, who had handled the negotiations required for the setting up of this Process<sup>334</sup>. This began in Verona on June 7, 1922: and already in the first session, there was noted a very serious irregularity that had been incurred in this long Process. When the Original Acts of the Inchoative Process had been taken from the Diocesan Chancery, these were supposed to have been sealed with the Seals of the Ecclesiastical Tribunal. These were found opened, and without a trace of any seals. Fr. Fantozzi, the Postulator was made aware of this. After conferring with the General Promoter of the Faith, he responded that the Process could go on, but that in the Minutes of the meeting this fact should be recorded: in the proper moment, a petition would be made for a canonical '*sanatio*.' The sessions for the examination of the texts began on June 19, and were protracted until May 23, 1923. On June 12, of that same year, there was made the recognition of the body of the Founder by the Ecclesiastical Tribunal, presided over by Bishop Jordan Corsini, Auxiliary of Verona: following this, the Process was closed, and the documentation was brought to the Sacred Congregation.

**50.** Returning once more to North America in 1921, by disposition of the General Council, there was established in that region an Association recognized by the State of Massachusetts, with the name: *The Trustees of the Stigmatine Fathers*. Their purpose was to cultivate the virtue and the piety of the Roman Catholic Faith through the preaching and teaching, by giving Parish Missions, having in general, the care of the Italian emigrants.; It was authorized to acquire, sell, dispose of in any many whatsoever the stable goods and personal properties, in the necessary and fitting manner to tend toward that above-mentioned purpose. The General Council ordered also that to the name of the Association there be inscribed the names of our Houses, and that there be formed a Central Account in which there should be deposited the movable capital of the individual Houses, which would retain the ownership and the usufruct of these funds, not necessary for the annual running of the local community. Regarding this order, Fr. Victor Gurissati, former Director of the House of Scranton, simply refused to carry this out. In the previous year, he had also refused to be transferred to Springfield.<sup>335</sup> Repeatedly he had been invited by the Visitor, and repeatedly warned with the threat of expulsion, but he did not choose to hear any of it. As a result, the Superior General with the consent of his Council, on April 10, decreed his dismissal from the Institute. Following this Decree, Fr. Gurisatti had recourse to the Holy See, to seek secularization: but the Superior General was opposed to his secularization until he would have satisfied his duties toward the Congregation.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. *BERTONIANO*, 1929, P. 178.

<sup>334</sup> For the taking up of this process anew, there was brought back from Rome to Verona, the copy of the Inchoative Process which in 1923, by mistake had been transmitted to the Congregation of Rites.

<sup>335</sup> The Council showed itself disposed also to leave him in Scranton, provided he would have accepted another confrere as Director, and someone else as Economist.

Fr. Lucchi, too, opposed a direct order of the Superiors, who asked him to leave Hazleton and to go to some other House in North America. The General Council tried to meet him part way in this difficulty, and allowed him to choose whatever house he would have preferred: he was even informed that he would be left in Hazleton if he would accept another Confrere as Director, and someone else as Economus. But he would accept none of this. Being unable to transfer these two Fathers from Hazleton and from Scranton, the General Council decided to give up the two houses in Pennsylvania.

**51.** In 1922, the Superior General considering that within the year, the seven year experimental period allowed for the Constitutions would be up, in this long process for the approbation of these, believed that it would be opportune for this reason to convoke the General Chapter. With the consent of his Council, he petitioned the Holy See for the authorization to convoke an Extraordinary General Chapter, with the faculty also of proceeding also to the election of the major offices if those men who held these positions and the Chapter would agree. The Holy See granted the requested authorization, making the disposition, however, that the Chapter should be presided over by its own Delegate, and this was the Very Reverend Fr. Benedict Lopez, OSB.

The Chapter was convoked for August 8, in the House of Holy Cross in Rome. Coming together on the day and place established, the Superior General in the act of indicating the order of business that had to be treated, declared that he had come to the decision to resign his office, as he no longer had the strength necessary to govern the Congregation: and he invited the Chapter to proceed in the first place to the election of a new Superior and to the Major Offices. The Chapter, after having invited him to withdraw his resignation, and discovering that on this matter, his decision was final, it proceeded to the election of his successor.

On the very first ballot, **by postulation**, it elected as the new Superior General, the Very Reverend Fr. John B. Zaupa, because he was not yet of sufficient canonical age. A dispensation was immediately obtained for this, and the Councilors elected were the following: Frs. Zambiasi [Vicar], Fiorio, DeFerrari [Secretary], and Fantozzi. The Procurator General was elected by acclamation, in the person of the out-going Fr. General, Fr. J. B. Tomasi. The Economus General was Fr. Rossi.

The Chapter then discussed and approved the modifications to the Constitutions which needed the approval of the Holy See, along with including those changes required by the new Code of Canon Law. The modifications were then brought to the Congregation of Religious, with the petition that they receive the definitive approbation.

Following the celebration of this Chapter, the General Council named as Ordinary Visitor of North America Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta, and approved a Statute in which there were indicated the role of the Visitor and of his Council. The Council then assigned to North America Frs. Remigio Zadra, William Ludescher [Ludessi], Charles Zanini, Louis Fontana, Joseph Kuster [Costa] and Fr. Joseph Zuliani. It entrusted Fr. Balestrazzi with the task of handling the difficulties with Fr. Lucchi and

Fr. V. Gurisatti, bestowing on him the authority to do this with opportune instructions. For Fr. Lucchi, he maintained that it was impossible for him to leave Hazleton; he was given the faculty to choose any other Stigmatine House in the North American region. For Fr. V. Gurisatti, who was seeking secularization, there would be required that he first put himself right with our Congregation.

**52.** The General Council also decided to give up the foundation in Milwaukee, and to transfer Fr. Fadanelli to another House: he refused to obey, and had recourse to the Holy See, seeking secularization. The Council, in order to persuade him not to take that step, showed itself even disposed to hang on to that House and even to leave him there as Pastor, provided he would accept someone else as Director and an Economist. He would not accept these stipulations and preferred to leave the Congregation: we will see later on how this all concluded.

Also Fr. Lino Cembran, in 1921, obtained an Indult of exclaustation for one year, on condition that there be carefully observed the Vatican Decree, *Magni semper*, of the Consistorial Congregation, dated December 30, 1918.<sup>336</sup> In 1922, that same Congregation forbade under pain of suspension *a divinis* [forbidding a priest the exercise of his priesthood] to remain in the United States of America, and following the favorable view of the Superior General, he was given permission to go to Central America: under these conditions, he obtained the indult of secularization.

In 1922, also Fr. Lawrence Donazzan abandoned the Congregation, without benefit of any dispensation. He incurred canonical censures, which were imposed on him by the Apostolic Delegate, His Excellency, + John Bonzano. When he returned to Italy in January of 1923, he obtained from the Holy See the absolution from the censures, after having left in writing that he had deplored his own conduct, and asked pardon for the scandal he had given. In May of 1923, there was granted to him the Indult of exclaustation for one year, which then was prolonged. In 1923, he did receive the Indult of Secularization, with the prohibition of returning to the United States.

To make up for these sorrowful losses suffered by the Congregation in North America, the Superiors sought to look for other foundations. Already in 1921, Fr. Zaupa, the Ordinary Visitor, following the giving up of the Houses in Pennsylvania, addressed himself to some Bishops in the United States, in order to obtain in their Dioceses an Italian Parish and the permission to open there a House of Formation. The Cardinal Arch Bishop of Boston responded to him, offering him a parish in Lynn, about 12 miles from Boston, and the permission to open a Student House, in a locality yet to be agreed upon. Frs. Balestrazzi and Sozzi were sent to this new foundation, and they took possession of the Parish on April 20, 1922, taking care of the little Church which was inaugurated on August 13. The Cardinal of Boston was quite satisfied with the work of our Fathers, and in November he offered to the Congregation also a Parish in Waltham, which was inaugurated on the 26 of that same month.

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<sup>336</sup> This concerned the moving of secular Priests from Europe to the Americas. – cf. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Year 11, p. 39.

In the same year 1922, the Arch Bishop of New York, following a recommendation from the Apostolic Delegate, offered to the Congregation a Parish in White Plains New York, in the periphery of New York. The parish had been established a few years earlier and was conducted by a secular priest who lived in a small house, and officiated on the ground floor in another small place in Brooklyn. The foundation was accepted in June, and Frs. Leo Sella and Joseph Rosa took possession of it.

**53.** In the meantime in Verona, in Verona, from June 12, 1921, commemorating the Founder's death. there arose the idea of celebrating in 1924, the centenary of the Oratory of the Stimate, From this first idea, it grew to the idea of celebrating in the same year, the Centenary of the Stigmatine Works, since because of the War in 1916, it was not possible to celebrate the centenary of the foundation of the Congregation.

The idea was approved by the Major Superiors and in December 1922, to prepare for these celebrations, a Committee of Honor was established, as well as an Executive Committee divided into five sections: one for the presidency; a second made up of ex-students; a third for the Oratories; a fourth for the festivities; and a fifth group, artistic in nature, that was to concern itself with preparing a monument for the Venerated Founder, to be set up as a memorial of the 100 years. A Circular Letter was sent out to the ex-students and to friends of the Community in order to collect commitments and offerings. And there was organized a contest for ideas on the monument that was to be set up in the little square on Via Carlo Montanari, in front of the House of the Stimate. Among the many proposals for these festivities, was the publication of a Biography of the venerated Founder. This came out in 1922, written by Fr. Joseph Fiorio<sup>337</sup>, and printed in Verona by the Bettinelli Press.

Another fact to recall here, which might have some tie with the centenary celebration, was the consecration of the Church of the Stimate. In this year 1922, there occurred the first centenary of the reopening of the Church of the Stimate for public worship. The Church had been closed for a while in 1919, and was used exclusively as the domestic chapel of those who lived there. In November of 1921, it was re-opened for the public, and in it the Pious Union of Franciscan Tertiaries had solemnly celebrated the recurrence of the 7th Centenary of the Franciscan Order. The consecration of the Church was celebrated on September 29, 1922, by Bishop Jordan Corsini, Auxiliary of Cardinal Bacilieri<sup>338</sup>.

**54.** At the beginning of the year 1923, we find another new fact in the story of our Congregation: the naming of the first Cardinal Protector. Many times previously the General Chapters had presented the proposal to petition the Holy See for a Cardinal Protector. The Very Reverend Fr. Zaupa, after his election, with the consent of his General Council, sought as our Cardinal Protector, Cardinal John Bonzano. He had been Apostolic Delegate in North America, and was created a Cardinal on December

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<sup>337</sup> **NB: English Translator's Note: Fr. Fiorio was the author of these two volumes of the *Breve Cronaca* - as he was of the still very valuable *Spirit of the Founder*.**

<sup>338</sup> On November 22 of that same year, Cardinal Bacilieri died, and in June of 1923, there was called to succeed him, the Most Reverend Jerome Cardinale, Canon and Theologian of the Cathedral of Genoa.

11, 1922. The Brief naming him was dated February 22, 1923, and he took possession in the Church of the Holy Cross, on April 22.

In Verona, on March 29 of this year, there was celebrated the Golden priestly Jubilee of Fr. James Marini. He was surrounded by the Confreres of the two Houses and a choice band of friends, especially among the clergy.

In Verona also the undertaking of the Workers Association was well set up, and the General Council in July of the same year 1923, decided to exonerate the Commission for Administration and these responsibilities were taken over by the Institute. They did ask the group that the might remain in the role of 'Patrons' of their organization. This deliberation had been preceded by opportune negotiations with the Commission itself. From 1922 on, the former Fr. General, Very Reverend Fr. John Tomasi, had denounced the Agreement of 1914, and Fr. Zaupa, after his election, was in agreement with the Commission concerning the manner of taking part, without obligations, in giving a written guarantee.

In that same session of July 1923, the General Council, following the proposal of the Superior General, in order to provide for the needs of the Mother House and the Student House, both from the disciplinary perspective, and also to obtain a better distribution of personnel also in the other Houses, decided to transfer it to Verona. At the same time, the Council decided for the next scholastic year, to open private schools at the Stimmate beginning with the first high school class, and named Fr. Peter Scotton as the Director.

Fr. Fantozzi, in returning to Verona, took up again the direction of the Workers Association. On November 5, on the occasion of the awards ceremony and the inauguration of the new year, in the presence of the local authorities, the Superior General made public the decision regarding the re-opening of the high school class. He also gave a brief resume' of the history of the Workers Organization, and of its development over the years. He thanked those in attendance, especially the Administrative Commission for the assistance that it had given to this Work in its most difficult moments: and in the name of the Congregation, he assumed the solemn responsibility to sustain the Institution for the good of the working class.

Meanwhile, the Student House was slowly building up again. At the beginning of that scholastic year, the students of Theology came down from Trent.<sup>339</sup> They returned to their old 'stamping grounds', which they had left six years earlier. A good number of new aspirants came increase the ranks of the Apostolic School. For this, important renovations and additions were made, constructing an entire new floor on the eastern side of the building. On the first floor of the building, in that space leading toward the interior court yard, there was set up a new Chapel, capable of holding 200 persons.<sup>340</sup> The aspirants of the first three classes frequented school at the Stimmate – all the other students attended internal classes.

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<sup>339</sup> The high school students had come down from Verona from Trent for the previous scholastic year.

<sup>340</sup> In 1914, important work had been done in Sezano in order to furnish the villa with its own freshwater. During this undertaking, a controversy with the Commune of Stella broke out, which

**55.** In 1923, there was a request for a foundation in Ortonovo, in Lunnigianna, on the part of His Excellency, + Bernard Pizzorno, Bishop of Luni e Sarzana. The request included the care of the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Mirteto, built by the piety of the people to remember a prodigious event on July 24, 1537. The local belief was that a statute of the Sorrowful Mother had shed tears of blood. This Sanctuary had been taken care of by the Dominicans and most recently by the Passionists. However, the latter wished to withdraw, and the Bishop appealed to Pius XI who intervened with his authoritative voice, to invite our Congregation to accept the care of the Sanctuary. On that occasion, the Bishop thought of giving to the Congregation also the Parish, in order to obtain some unity in the care of souls, and to avoid possible contrasts between the clergy of the parish and those assigned to the sanctuary.

The foundation was accepted, even in consideration of the recommendation of the last General Chapter that directed the Superiors to look for a place of repose for our sick Confreres, and for this purpose it seemed that the Sanctuary might be utilized. Our Confreres took over the Sanctuary, on July 12, with the intervention of the Bishop, who introduced the Fathers to those attending the ceremony. Also, having obtained the authorization for the parish, the Superior General presented as the first Pastor and 'abbot', Fr. Erminio Pivato: the Bishop, with his Decree of December 6, declared this religious parish to be entrusted to our Congregation, *at the will of the Holy See*<sup>341</sup>. The solemn entrance of the Pastor took place on September 8, 1924.

As a consequence to this, Fr. Bruno Chiesa was named Pastor of Holy Cross parish in Rome, and he made his entrance on April 15, 1923. A new pastor was also named for Milan at this time – as Fr. Grigolli was returning to Brazil – in the person of Fr. Tarcisio Martina, who took possession of the Parish on October 25.

In Parma during this year the Church was renovated under the supervision of the Architect Camillo Uccelli.<sup>342</sup> Two years earlier, there had been completed an enlargement of the Boarding House, and several small houses were purchased at the far end of the court-yard. These were demolished to extend the courtyard.

In Udine, there was celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the foundation of the College. On that occasion, the renovations and decoration of the Atrio got underway, and the monument to ex-members of the Student Association, who had died in battle in the War, was set up, and the College flag was blessed. At this celebration, there were present the civic authorities as well as a large representation of the local organizations. There, too, during this year, a technical School began operation, with the four lower grades offered, making use also of extern teachers. In the available space of the Recreation Center, there was opened a military organization, the first of its kind in Udine.

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accused our community of having tapped into the public water supply. In time, this accusation was shown to lack any basis in fact, as the Commune sent in their own people to investigate. However, *for the good of peace*, an agreement was reached, by offering to the Commune a certain percentage of the water thus obtained. The expense for this work was 60,000.

<sup>341</sup> This is a technical canonical phrase.

<sup>342</sup> The Lourdes Grotto, in the side chapel, was constructed in the year 1936.

In December, the Superior General left for North America, accompanied by two students, Joachim Bortignon and Louis Zuliani<sup>343</sup>. They were being sent also to help; out in the Apostolic School there, and they were at the same time to continue their studies in the Diocesan Seminary, in Brighton. It was the intention of the Superiors to open the Apostolic School in Lynn. But it soon became apparent that that would not be the best place. The city of Waltham offered a much better locality, as nearby was an elementary school conducted by Sisters, and a nearby high school, conducted by the Brothers of the Christian Schools. A few miles distant there was also Boston College, conducted by the Jesuits and the nearby Diocesan Seminary. Therefore, after our fathers had been invited to care for the Italian Parish in that locality a piece of property on Lexington Street, with a beautiful main residence and a rather large piece of land. It was here in 1924, that Fr. Erminio Lona initiated the Apostolic School.<sup>344</sup>

The clerics Bortignon and Zuliani first attended a special class in English at Boston College and in the following year they enrolled in the course of First Philosophy.

**56.** In 1924, in Holy Cross parish in Rome, there was opened an elementary school for the youth of the parish. The theater was also enlarged, in order to render it more suited for the development of parish activities.

In Verona, there was celebrated with much the Golden Jubilee of St. Stephen's Oratory. Also in Gemonia, the Oratory there observed its Silver Jubilee. On the contrary, the *Oratory of the Stimate*, which precisely in this very year should have been celebrating its centenary, because of long and difficult discussions with the Pastor of the Most Holy Trinity, and the Bishop of Verona, it had to be shut down<sup>345</sup>.

In November 1924, there were celebrated in Verona the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Stigmatine Apostolates. It was established in the Festival Program<sup>346</sup> in which there were announced the Congress for the Marian Oratories and one for its ex-members. However, since the Oratory at the Stimate had to be discontinued, the thought was abandoned of the Congress, as was also the one for the former students. The end result, there was only the religious ceremony. On November 13-15, there was celebrated a solemn triduum in St. Anastasia's Church, and a large number of the faithful were in attendance: Fr. Julius Bevilacqua of the Oratory presented, and he spoke of Fr. Bertoni as a priest, a religious and a saint.

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<sup>343</sup> From 1923-1926, Fr. J.B. Castellani also stayed in North America, being assigned to Preaching and giving Parish Missions to the Italians, especially in those parishes entrusted to our care.

<sup>344</sup> In those early years, the aspirants attended the Christian Brothers' High School there [St. Mary's].

<sup>345</sup> The Oratory, considered now as an Institution of Catholic Action was declared as under the competence of the local Pastor, and he wanted to conduct it in his own parish. In 1925, for the same reason, the Oratory of St. Mary of the Lily was ceded to St. Stephen's Parish.

<sup>346</sup> The General Council in July 1923, had approved the program of festivities: a religious feast in St. Anastasia's, the publication of a simple booklet, a Congress of former Marian Oratory members of both the city and the Diocese; the setting up of a commemorative stone at the birth-place of the venerated Founder; the transportation of the remains of those buried in the Church of the Stimate a raffle in support of the tuition free schools; the refurbishing of the Chapel of the Transfiguration and of the Founder's room, and a commemorative stone for the benefactors.

On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Archbishop Cherubini came from Rome, and celebrated the Mass in the Stimate and he distributed Holy Communion to the large number of faithful who attended. At 10:00 a.m., in St. Anastasia's, the Bishop of Verona celebrated the Pontifical Mass, in the presence of representatives of the Religious Orders and Congregations who were involved in instruction were in attendance. At the Gospel, Monsignor Joseph Manzini, the Vicar General of the Diocese, delivered the sermon, on the text: *The Just Man shall flourish, and like the cedar of Lebanon he will be multiplied*. He treated of the virtues and work of Fr. Bertoni in magisterial style. The celebrating Bishop, by a special concession of the Holy Father, imparted the Papal Blessing on all.

In the afternoon in the theater there was held a solemn Academy, in which the official discourse was delivered by Count Ugo Guarienti: in all these celebrations the music was offered by the students of the 'Bertoni Apostolic School'.

For the occasion, the Holy Father had sent a precious autographed document. Several Cardinals and Bishops throughout Italy and beyond also sent their best wishes for the occasion. As a remembrance of these celebrations there was printed and distributed a Commemorative Edition, richly illustrated, placing in evidence the works of the Congregation. There was also a brief biography of Fr. Bertoni distributed, the work of Fr. Joseph Mattei. On this occasion, there was redone the entrance way of the House with multi-colored marble of St. Ambrose. This was mounted on a rich setting of oak leaves and laurel, surrounding the bust of the Founder placed above the seal of the Congregation. The former Via Trettone was re-named 'Via Bertoni', and there was placed an inscription of the Founder's bust on the commemorative stone, with the words " *You benefited your home-land*. And finally, on this occasion, there was obtained the transfer into the confines of the Church of the Stimate the remains of 43 confreres who were resting in the Cemetery. These remains were placed in the Church, where, for 45 years, those of the Founder had rested.

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary was celebrated also in other Stigmatine Houses of Italy. In Parma on October 26. It was celebrated with a Solemn Pontifical Mass, and discourse, offered by the Arch-bishop, Guido Conforti. Bishop Corsini, the Ordinary of Guastalla also participated as did representatives of Religious Orders and Congregations and Catholic Associations. In the evening, there was offered a kind of 'talent show', in the Academy conducted in the local theater.

On January 25, 1925, in Milan, the Cardinal Archbishop was in attendance at the morning celebration. In the evening the usual Academy was held, including the discourse of Sir Panighi, Secretary of the University of the Sacred Heart. In Udine, with the House of Parma joining in, on February 15, 1925, the celebrations were held in the Church of St. Peter, Martyr. The Pontifical Mass was celebrated by Archbishop Anthony Rossi, in the presence of the authorities and representatives of the very institutions of the city. There was also put out a commemorative edition, and the unveiling of the Bust of the venerated Fr. Bertoni, a gift of the former members of the Oratory.



In Trent, on June 21, 1925, the Vicar General offered a more solemn celebration of the Eucharist and then Bishop Marconi, OFM celebrated the Pontifical, substituting for the Prince Arch-bishop of Trent, with a great participation of the faithful.

**57.** In 1924, in Springfield of North America, Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta became gravely ill, and for two months the parish was in great trepidation: public prayer was offered for his cure, and the joy of the population was unbounded when he could return to them. A further manifestation of affection occurred in October of that same year, when he celebrated his 25<sup>th</sup> year as a priest: at the solemn reception in his honor that was offered on that occasion, the Mayor of Springfield also participated in the name of the entire city, and the Vice-Consul of Italy was presented to honor the jubilarian.

In West Springfield on October 9, the new church of St. Ann's was inaugurated with the visit of the Bishop. After the blessing of the Church he celebrated a Pontifical Mass and administered Confirmation. In Pittsfield, also on April 20, the new Church was opened to the public. This proved to be an event which interested the whole city. The inauguration was celebrated by the Superior General, and on October 26, the Bishop of Springfield celebrated the solemn blessing with a Pontifical Mass and the conferral of Confirmation.

The basement of the Church was used as a reception hall, and the local populace offered a theatrical performance, with a concert in the evening <sup>347</sup>.

In Waltham on January 28, the old Church burned down and on February 10 the work of reconstruction got underway: in the meantime, services were held in the basement. On February 20, the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the parish was celebrated, and on March 12, the services in the Church were re-established. On September 24, construction began of the new Church on River Street, which was inaugurated that Christmas Eve.

In White Plains from their arrival there, Frs. Leo Sella and Joseph Rosa found that the Chapel and the dwelling next to it, were really indecent and in very poor condition. So, they set about looking for another central location where they might meet the needs and the aspirations of the Italian colony there. They found a most opportune locality, near the electric station on South Lexington Avenue. However, they did encounter a very strong opposition on the part of the Diocesan Council. They took their case to Archbishop Hayes, explaining to him the needs and the desires of the Italians there, and they were authorized by him to acquire that property: it was a rather large house with three floors, with ample and comfortable surroundings, with much fresh air. Behind this, and connected to it, there were two large halls one next to the other. The entire area was also a vast, shady area. With a down-payment in September 1923, they were assured of the property, And with another payment of \$45,000.00 on March 1, 1924, they obtained that passing of this to the Italian Parish. In the meantime, they sold the property of Brookfield, and on July 1, they began to

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<sup>347</sup> In June of this year at Pittsfield, a piece of property was acquired with two houses near the Church. Eventually these were used as a Sisters' Convent.

conduct services on the upper floor of South Lexington Avenue. This was blessed by the Pastor, Fr. Leo Sella on July 3, to the great joy of all.

Likewise in White Plains, in the Silver Lake section where there were 600 Italians in 1923, a large hall was purchased which was reduced to the Chapel dedicated to St. Anthony, and was served by our Fathers, and very soon the Italians of the area flocked there in large numbers, and with them, also the faithful of other nationalities, which cost our men a tremendous effort. In 1925, in the northern section on Ferris Avenue, where there were more than a thousand Italians, a tract of land was acquired with the intention of building a house there.

**58.** Fr. Fadanelli remained in Milwaukee, and in 1922 he obtained the indult of secularization. However, the Consistorial Congregation informed the Archbishop there that for special reason, it was not permitted for Fr. Fadenelli to remain there, under suspension of the faculty to celebrate the Mass. There followed then negotiations between the Superior General and the Archbishop of Milwaukee in the hopes of reaching some accord regarding that foundation. Finally after a written declaration from the Archbishop according to which he declared that the Stigmatine Fathers had acted correctly in all these discussions regarding their withdrawal from Milwaukee, with the assurance from him that Fr. Fadanelli had left the Archdiocese, nor was he able to return there in the future. The Superior General, then in the name of his Council, declared that the community abandoned its every right in this controversy regarding the Italian Parish. Also, Fr. Lucchi, in 1924, submitted a declaration in which he recognized and regretted his own failings, and asked pardon for the scandal associated with his conduct, recognizing that the manner of our Superiors' acting in his regard had been fair and, unfortunately, necessary. Following all this, the Superior General that it well not to oppose his secularization and insertion into the Diocese of Scranton.<sup>348</sup>

In Fr. Victor Gurisatti's situation, the Holy See committed the case to the Apostolic Delegate, His Excellency Fumasoni Biondi. He ordered Fr. Fadanelli to submit all of his financial records to two representatives, one from the Diocese, and one from the Congregation, so that they might verify which of the goods presently possessed by him, pertained to the Diocese, and which to the Congregation. He refused to hand these over, and therefore, in September 1924, he was suspended from serving any further as a priest.

In 1925, the Superior General, in order to facilitate the entire matter and to put an end to the scandal, declared that as soon as Fr. V. Gurisatti would submit to the order of the Apostolic Delegate, and would have obtained the indult of secularization, the Congregation would charitably hand over to him, whatever the two representatives had seen justly belonged to the Congregation. He still refused to obey: and the Superior General, in 1927, with the consent of his Council, presented to the sacred

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<sup>348</sup> Fr. Lucchi died in Hazleton in 1944.

Congregation of Religious the Decree of Dismissal, already emitted in his regard, on April 10, 1921, and by this decision was confirmed.<sup>349</sup>

**59.** In Brazil, following the Superior General's Visitation, there was nominated a Council with the same faculties<sup>350</sup> as those established for North America: there was also established in that region a kind of Legal Corporation [known as the *Associação dos Estigmatinos para a Educação e Instrução Popular*]. Its competence was to incorporate all the financial goods of the Community there. There was set up a Central Account in which there was to be deposited all the monies not necessary for current expenses.

At Rio Claro, in 1923, construction got underway for the future College for which a Count Materasso offered a considerable donation. In 1924, the Apostolic School was opened with ten young men, of whom 6 were sons of Italian emigrants.<sup>351</sup>

In Paraná, the Bishop of Curitiba made a Pastoral Visitation of Castro and Tibagy: accompanied by the Fathers from September until December 1923, he crossed the entire region and all the localities dependent on those two parishes. He was most pleased at the level of the practice of the faith in the area among the inhabitants, and he offered an enthusiastic comment on the zeal of the Fathers committed there. At Tibagy, Fr. Zanetti had returned from Italy in March 1923, arriving with Fr. Julius Sieff.<sup>352</sup>

In 1923, the Arch-bishop of São Paulo offered to our Congregation St. Cajetan's Parish, which up until then had been administered by the Scalabrini Father, of the nearby parish of St Bernard's, where they went to teach Sunday. The parish was accepted on September 18 and Fr. Pelanda took possession of it on December 13. In February 1924, was assigned there also to assist. Fr. Pelanda committed himself right away to restoring the Church which was in much disorder, and to invigorate the Parish Associations: the Parish was officially inaugurated on April 13, 1924.

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<sup>349</sup> Following all this, Fr. V. Gurisatti suffered a mental breakdown and later was a patient in a Baltimore Hospital. There he regained some mental balance and recognized and regretted in writing the wrongs he had committed against the Community, and vigorously asked to be readmitted into the Congregation. The Superiors assured him of this, as he continued the care being given to him. However, he died suddenly on May 26, 1931: from September 12, 1938, he had been incardinated into the Diocese of Scranton.

<sup>350</sup> He had departed for Brazil in October 1922, and returned that December. In 1922, Fr. Ferruccio Zanetti returned to Italy to participate in the General Chapter: in May of that same year, Fr. Fortunato Morelli also departed for Brazil

<sup>351</sup> Fr. John Lona, assigned there in Rio Claro, for some time had the responsibility of a parish in Cadeiras, a few kilometers distant from Rio Claro. In 1924, he began publishing in Portuguese a little work for the spiritual assistance of the sick, which proved to be of real value for those vast regions where priests were so few in number.

<sup>352</sup> In the Parish of Castro, in this year, there were constructed four new Chapels for the religious services: and in the center, there was opened a parochial school in order to combat the advertising campaign conducted by the Protestant schools in the area. At this time the men began publishing a Provincial Bulletin with the title, *O Amigo da Verdade*.

**60.** Before closing this chapter of the Chronicle, we will add that on June 12, 1925, the Sacred Congregation of Religious, in its Plenary Session, gave a favorable vote to the definitive approbation of our Constitutions: on the 23 of the same month, the Pontiff, His Holiness Pius XI, approved in a definitive manner the Constitutions of the Congregation. The Sacred Congregation emitted its Decree with the date, July 28.

The Superior General, in communicating this happy news to the entire Congregation, appealed to the Confreres in his Circular Letter that all understand the great importance that the Constitutions have for the life of the Institute and the need of observing them, by all the members of the Congregation.

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**A Brief Chronicle**  
of the  
**Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata**  
**of Our Lord Jesus Christ**  
**[1800 – 1941]**



*Rev. John Baptist Zaupa,*  
*Superior General*  
*(1922 – 1934; 1940-1946)*



*Rev. Bruno Chiesa,*  
*Superior General*  
*(1934 – 1940)*

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine**  
**[1876 - † 1958]**

**Volume II – Third Period**  
**From the Stigmatines in China**  
**to the Establishment of Three Provinces [1925-1941]**

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**[1925-1934]**

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## Chapter 1

### AMONG NON-BELIEVERS

#### [1925-1934]

**61.** There had always been deeply felt in the Congregation the desire to have some Mission among non-believers, and many times zealous Confreres had offered themselves to Superiors for this aspect of the Apostolic Mission. And thus even though far more than would have been imagined at the time, but just as soon as the centenary celebrations had been observed, there very soon offered itself the opportunity to realize also this part of the program, set down for us by our venerated Founder, which called us to work ***anywhere in the Diocese and the world***.<sup>353</sup>

On December 24, 1924, His Excellency, Archbishop Francis Marchetti Selvaggiani, offered to the Superior General of our Congregation, the direction, along with the requirement of providing teachers, for a much desired Regional Seminary in Kaiphong, in the Honan region of China, where there were four Apostolic Vicariates. The Superior General, after seeking further information from individuals familiar with the scene, he consulted the Superiors of the Missionary Institutes who were in charge of these Vicariates in Honan, addressed a referendum to the Priests of the Congregation who had shown themselves to have the greater interest in favor of accepting this undertaking.

As a result, he was able to respond to the Sacred Congregation, on January 27, 1925, by adhering to this invitation, and putting at the availability of the Sacred Congregation four priests who would be willing to leave within the year. The Sacred Congregation, at first seemed very pleased with this acceptance of its offer. However, in a letter dated July 25, notified the Superiors that because of reasons brought forward by the Vicars Apostolic of Honan, this would mean that the ideal of opening a Regional Seminary would have to be delayed for a long time. However, the hope was expressed that the Stigmatines would accept a territory there to be evangelized. This offer the Superior General and his Council accepted on July 30.

One of the Missionaries invited to bring about this foundation, was Fr. Tarcisio Martina, willingly accepted the invitation On May 8, 1925, he said his farewell to the faithful of the Parish in Milan. To succeed him there, Fr. Bruno Chiesa was named, and then later, his place was taken by Fr. Charles DeFerrari. This appointment of Fr. DeFerrari coincided with the return to Rome of the General of the General Curia. After an absence of two years, with the Houses and the works of Upper Italy re-organized, he returned to his normal place.

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<sup>353</sup> CF # 5. [The Missionaries are] to be ready to go anywhere in the diocese and the world.  
CF # 193. No one should sadden, or offend his confrere concerning any defect of his nationality, or country, or his party, neither publicly, nor privately, even in jest. So, let everyone be very careful so that no conversation be had, or remark made concerning these matters, but let each one not even entertain unkind thoughts or sentiments.

Other Confreres assigned to the Mission in China were: Fr. Louis Fontozzi, whose place on the General Council was then taken by Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta<sup>354</sup>; Fr. Henry Adami, called from Brazil for this<sup>355</sup>; and Fr. Angelo Caimi. Fr. Fantozzi was appointed Superior of the Mission. The four Missionaries solemnly received the Crucifix from the Bishop of Verona, in a moving ceremony on November 22, 1925 in the Church of St. Mary's of the Stair, and on December 1 they departed from Naples for the shores of China. After a pleasant journey, they arrived in Peking on January 12, 1926, and were festively welcomed by the Apostolic Delegation and the Italian Legation. They were given lodging at the Catholic University directed by the Benedictine Fathers, where they remained for some months to study Chinese. Then, they moved to Paotingfu, the See of the Vicariate, where they spent further time studying the Catechism in Chinese. After having passed the required examination, they immediately received by the Vicar Apostolic the missionary faculties, and were distributed through various residences of the Vicariate to begin their apprenticeship of missionary life under the direction of the Lazzarist missionaries. In the meantime, Fr. Fantozzi, in the name of the Congregation, on April 21, officially accepted the Mission of Yishien, which had been taken from the Vicariate of Paotingfu. This was made up of three Sub-prefectures [Yishien, Lai-Juen, and Lai-Shoei] – which extended some 15, 000 square kilometers and a population of some 500,000 inhabitants, of whom only 2,000 were Christian.

**62.** In the meantime, the Superior General on August 27, 1925, left for Brazil and North America. During his stay in Brazil, he accepted the foundation in Campinas. Already in 1923, that Bishop had offered to our Fathers a Parish that was being built up in the city, with a sanctuary dedicated to the Sacred Heart, but they were not able to accept it due to the lack of personnel. The Superior General had by now already committed himself to sending other Fathers to work in that region. The Bishop had offered the Church of St. Benedict and this was accepted and handed over on April 26, 1926. Even though this was not a parish church, there were established in it a number of Associations of believers independent from the Parish. Outstanding among these was an Association of the Children of Mary, made up entirely of black members. In 1928, there was established also the Marian Congregation for men<sup>356</sup>.

In 1930, they began there the decoration of the Church which was completed in 1933. There were also set up 3 Altars, a new floor, and balcony, and new images for the Stations of the Cross, in artificial ivory, and new confessionals put in. At the end of all these works, the Church could be said to have been completely renovated.

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<sup>354</sup> Fr. Dalla Porta had shortly before translated into English a work of five small booklets, written by Fr. Francis LeBuffe, SJ, entitled: *My Unchangeable Friend*. The Italian original had been printed in this year in Rome with the presses of the *Civiltà Cattolica*.

<sup>355</sup> In this year, Fr. Joseph Finetto was sent to Brazil. He had been in working in Ortonovo, in the Curacy of St. Martins'. Following his departure our Fathers renounce this place which was then taken over by a diocesan priest. In 1924, Fr. Silvio Sega also left for Brazil, but returned a year later because of health.

<sup>356</sup> In 1927, the Fathers in Campinas accepted the Chaplaincy of a nearby Hospital called *The Circle of United Italians*. At that time, it was already one of the most modern clinics in Brazil and was under the direction of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart.



**63.** From Brazil, the Superior General then went to North America, where he arrived on December 2, 1925. In that January of 1926, Fr. William Ludessi had succeeded Fr. Dalla Porta as pastor there. He constructed a new Rectory for the Church of Mount Carmel<sup>357</sup> and a dwelling for the Sisters. Following this, the property on Wilcox Street was sold.

In the North Agawam section a Church dedicated to St. Anthony's was built and that moveable chapel [Quonset Hut] was transported to feeding Hills for the benefit of the people of that area.

In Waltham, with an official Rescript of February 11, 1926. There was canonically established the Novitiate, and Fr. Balestrazzi was named the Novice Master. He had been serving as Ordinary Visitor for the region, following the departure of Fr. Dalla Porta: on August 15, he vested the first novice of that area.

In Sacred Heart Parish, also in Waltham, there was inaugurated a school in Italian, and a tract of land near the Church was purchased, and then a parochial school. In 1927, the Parish House was built and a tower for the Church, provided with new bells.

In Lynn, in the section of West Lynn, a building was purchased and pressed into service as a Church, being dedicated to St. Francis. In 1926, on the occasion of the centenary of the Saint, it was embellished and provided with an organ. Another piece of property was purchased on Bessom Street, upon which Holy Family Church was built, and this was inaugurated on March 29, 1925. This Church was destroyed by a fire on Christmas Day, 1926. In November, then, of 1927, the work of re-construction was begun and on February 12, the Church was re-opened for public worship.

In Milford, in 1927, there was also initiated work on a new Church, beginning with the basement, which was blessed on December 18: the old, Church in 1930, became a parish hall, easily adapted into a theatre, for plays. In Pittsfield, on September 1, 1925, Fr. Toniolli died suddenly, leaving a deep sense of loss to the Italian colony there: In the following year, a monument was set up in his memory, being inaugurated before a large crowd of his devotees. In 1929, in memory of him, donors provided for a new main altar in the Church.

In White Plains, in the Ferris Avenue section, the Church dedicated to the Assumption of Mary was constructed, and in the Silver Lake region, the Church of St. Anthony was enlarged. In 1928, the new Church of Mount Carmel was constructed on South Lexington Avenue which was opened on December 23. In 1930, in this same Church, the main altar was set up as well as two side altars, given by a member of the

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<sup>357</sup> In 1927, there was had at Springfield a frightful flood that inundated St. Ann's Church and the Rectory of Mount Carmel, bringing about tremendous damage. This phenomenon was repeated in 1936, 1938.

metal works there, and in October of that same year, the Church was solemnly blessed by the Cardinal Archbishop.<sup>358</sup>

**64.** However, the event that may be the most worthy of mention for the history of our Congregation in 1926 is that of having obtained from the Holy See, through the support of the Cardinal Protector, John Bonzano, **the Church of St. Agatha of the Goths in Rome**, with the adjoining diaconal residence, as the seat of the General Council. This Palace [with another part of the building and its interior garden had already been sold to the Bank of Italy], had been occupied up to this time by the Irish College<sup>359</sup>. They left on November 12, 1926, and moved to a new locality [near St. John Lateran Basilica].

When our Superiors came to know that this locality was available<sup>360</sup>, then through the good offices of the Cardinal Protector, they in good time made a petition to the Secretariat of State in order to have the use of the Church and of the House connected to it. This petition was favorably received: the Holy Father approved this transaction in an Audience granted to His Eminence, Cardinal Cajetan Bisleti, on June 9 of that year. On November 19 Cardinal Bisleti handed over the house to the Superior General, and on December 12, there was signed the agreement between the Holy See, represented by Cardinal Bisleti and our Congregation, represented by the Superior General. Meanwhile, the old residence had been demolished by order of the Holy See so that its foundations might be reconstructed. Our men officially entered there on January 7, 1927, and took up rooms temporarily in the places available next to the Church, while waiting for the completion of what is called the Diaconal Palace. In the Church of St. Agatha on the altar on the left side of the nave, there was placed a painting representing the Espousals of the Virgin Mary with St. Joseph, brought there from the House of the Prefetti, and on this altar, the Superior General celebrated his first Holy Mass in thanksgiving to our Holy Patrons for the grace that they had obtained for us.

The new multi-storied residence was completed near the end of June 1928, and our men were then able to occupy it. Following this, there were renovations done as well in the Church: there was demolished a construction that stood over the left nave of the Church and the upper windows were opened up, as they had all been walled in. The window frames had to be replaced with new frames of metal that permitted them to be opened, to allow air into the Church. The vestibule of the Church was opened up, which had been used as a library, and the walls that closed it in were removed that

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<sup>358</sup> In 1930, by order of the Archbishop, a large part of the Church debt was paid off, leaving the Church still indebted by some \$200,000.00.

<sup>359</sup> **NB: Web-site Note: the Irish College resided there since 1837. In 1881, a Fr. Marmion, of the Archdiocese of Dublin was ordained there. He later became a Benedictine Abbot, and is well known throughout the English speaking world through his writings, now as Blessed Dom Columba Marmion, OSB – he was beatified by Pope John Paul II.**

<sup>360</sup> At first, the idea had been to use this place, that had already been refurbished, as the new seat for the Lombard College: however, when it was noted that there was no court yard the thought was given up. It was in that moment that our Fathers learned of all this from the College Administrator of the Irish College, Monsignor Tizi – who had by chance come to our house of St. Nicholas dei Prefetti, seeking to offer a funeral in that Church.

closed in the arches of the little square between the Church door and the street [Via Mazzarino]. This helped to lessen the humidity trapped in there, which was damaging the vestibule of the Church. Two cumbersome choir stalls, that had been placed length-wise, were removed, as these occupied almost totally the central nave of the Church. From the monies gained from the sale of these, the community was able to purchase benches for the Church. Following all these renovations, the Church took on a new aspect, and was liberated from much of the oppressive humidity that up to that time was most evident there.

The Superiors, in petitioning the Holy See for the use of the Diaconal residence, offered to concur in the expenses of re-construction, and in the course of these labors, the Community committed itself to pay the expenses of an entire top floor that was not in the original project<sup>361</sup>, desired to have enough space to welcome our young students whom they intended to call to Rome in order for them to complete their studies at the various Ecclesiastical Universities in the City. In fact, from 1927 on, some of our students in theology lived there and attended classes at the Propaganda Fide.<sup>362</sup> Among these were Joachim Bortignon and Louis Zuliani, who had returned from America.<sup>363</sup>

**65.** In Verona in 1926, a propitious occasion presented itself. The old Canal Palace, owned by the Workers Association, was sold, and the money received from the sale was kept by the Association in their patrimony. One portion of this was invested in the purchase of a rural property in Debba in the Province of Vicenza, which was inscribed with the name of the *Civil Society of Immovable Goods*.

In 1927 there was likewise put in the name of this Society also the property of the College of Udine, which up until that time had been owned under the name of Fr. John B. Tomasi. With these financial maneuvers, there was intended to insure that property in the eventuality of certain laws that could be hostile to religious corporations owning property.

In Parma in 1926, on March 14, there was commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of that Foundation, with the intervention of Bishop Guido Conforti, Bishop Corsini of the Diocese of Guastalla, and other important personalities from among the clergy and the laity. For the occasion there was also published a study on the Works of the Stigmatine Fathers during their years in Parma<sup>364</sup>. On February 24 of this same year,

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<sup>361</sup> The expenses for all the re-construction of the third floor amounted to some 100,000 Lira. At the last moment, the Cardinal Titular, instead of asking for this money, established that the Congregation would pay annually the interests, paying 4,000 Lira in two amounts annually: this disposition was included in the Contract. These payments served to finance the work also done in the Church.

<sup>362</sup> These students in 1926 had been living at Holy Cross on Via Flaminia: in 1927, they moved over to St. Agatha's, continuing to attend the Propaganda. In 1928, this University moved to the Gianicolo, and then our students began attending classes at the Lateran.

<sup>363</sup> In America, they had obtained a permit of temporary residence: therefore, they had to return to Italy to complete their studies and to be ordained Priests.

<sup>364</sup> Our Fathers had committed themselves there always with great zeal for the instruction and education of the youth. We might remember in this regard that in the years 1940 and 1941, the Associations of the

Fr. Valentinelli assumed the spiritual direction of the young men in the Reformatory at Certosa.

In Milan, also in 1926, the two arches that stood at the head of the wide naves of the Church, were walled in, and there were placed there for the time being the two altars of the Sacred Heart, and of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. In January, they re began also the emanation of a Parish Publication. In 1929, the construction of the sacristy got underway, which was then inaugurated in October 1930.

In Gemona, following the ceding of the property to the Parish represented by the *Juventus* [Youth] Society, in 1927 there was stipulated a new Contract between the Arch-priest [who acted in the name of the Archbishop] and the Congregation. There remained unchanged the obligations which in the past had been assumed by our Fathers, and there was guaranteed to them the perpetual use of the immovable properties, and the reimbursement of the expenses that would have been encountered for the work of an extraordinary nature, that had to be undertaken with the consent of the temporary Pastor. And as in this year 1927, there were also executed certain renovations required by the School Authorities, under penalty of otherwise having to close the schools and the College, as a guarantee for the expenses that were anticipated, there was given to them a portion of the Stocks and Bonds of the Society the legal owner. In 1930, both the schools and the College were closed to make room for the Novitiate which remained there two years. In 1932, the Fathers gave up the Direction of the Oratory, which was substituted for the 'Children's Mass' in the Cathedral, directed by the Archpriest. In 1934, school opened again, beginning with the first class of High school and the lower Technical Institute level.

Other matters worthy of being recorded in 1927 are the following: the closing of the House in Pavia, that took place following the death of Fr. Octavian Piccoli, the Director<sup>365</sup>; the Golden Priestly Jubilee of Fr. Angelo Graziani, celebrated with a good crowd of friends and admirers on November 5 in Verona, in the Church of the Stimmate – and on the next day, at Trent in the Church he had built there; the Golden Priestly Jubilee of Fr. Louis Gasperotti, also celebrated with solemnity in Verona at the House of the Stimmate, on November 6; and at Parma, where he had served as Vicar of the House on the 19<sup>th</sup> of the same month; the death of our Cardinal Protector, John Bonzano happened in Rome on November 26. Following his death, the Congregation received, as its Cardinal Protector, His Eminence, Bonaventure Cardinal Ceretti, who was named with a Brief dated March 31, 1928, and he took possession of his Protectorate on April 19<sup>th</sup> in Holy Cross Church.

**66.** Meanwhile in China, while the other Fathers had been distributed in the various residences of the Vicariate of Paotingfu, Fr. Fantozzi, toward the end of 1926, accompanied by a Chinese priest, began to visit the principal centers of the new

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College and that of the 'D. M. Villa Group', for the examinations of religious culture, they won a national honor which they received from the hands of the Holy Father.

<sup>365</sup> The principal reason for this closing was the lack of personnel: our men left there toward the end of December.

Mission<sup>366</sup>. The difficulties of travel, which were always considerable in that region, were greatly aggravated in that time due to the war that had broken out between the North and the South. In Liangkochwang [a city of some 5,000 inhabitants], Fr. Fantozzi found a piece of property for sale. It included a building that had 27 rooms in it plus one hectare of land. Not having sufficient money to purchase it, he thought of renting it, and began the negotiations for the contract, which were long and torturous. Due to the opposition of the military authorities who did not want the opening of new missionary residence. Finally, after having obtained a special authorization from the military Command of Tientisin, on the night between March 18 and 19, he was able to sign the contract to rent the place and to open a residence. In it, the Missionaries immediately began the work of evangelization, assisted also by the military authorities. They opened a kind of clinic, and a Convent-School for girls, to which was soon joined a boys' school, and they set up a Minor seminary/ On November 1927, they already had 22 students, of whom 15 were seminarians.

A second residence was opened at Lai-juen where Fr. Caimi was assigned with a Chinese priest. A third was opened in Shannon village of about 1000 inhabitants, where the Mission possessed about 1,000 square acres of land, and an Oratory and nearby hut: another 1,000 square acres were purchased to construct a residence for the Missionaries. Once this construction was completed, after having overcome many contradictions and difficulties, Fr. Adami came to live there.

Meanwhile, the dangers of war had lessened as the Southerners were winning and the Northerners were in flight: now the danger was brigands, deserting soldiers who infested the region.

In the meantime, two other Missionaries arrived in China: Fr. Albert Pancheri and Fr. Attilio Zadra. They received their Missionary Crucifix on May 13, in St Peter the Martyr Church, Udine, and at the end of the month they set sail from Venice. Once they arrived in China, they stayed in Peking until the middle of July and from there, they went to Liangkochwang to study the catechism in Chinese: in September, they took their examination in Paotingfu and obtained the Missionary Faculties, and then went to make their apprenticeship in a residence.

In August, following the request of Fr. Fantozzi, Frs. Dario Wegher and Ugo Giardinieri were sent to the Mission. They set sail from Italy in December and arrived in the Mission at the beginning of February of 1928. Meanwhile there was aggregated to the Mission a fourth District [San Puo'], taken from the Vicariate of Peking, with 100,000 pagans who up until that time had been abandoned because of the sheer difficulties of access. The care of this District was taken over by Fr. Martina.

**67.** In the residence of Liangkochwang, this was where our Missionaries had lived for about a year. One day, the owner, wishing to sell the residence, refused to let it out any longer in rent. On their part, the Missionaries could not purchase the property, as the selling price was \$30,000.00. Fr. Fantozzi, following the advice of the Apostolic

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<sup>366</sup> On November 23, 1926, on a visit made to the College of Udine, with the six Chinese Bishops consecrated on October 28 of that year, by the Roman Pontiff, Pius XI, Monsignor Celso Constantini, Apostolic Delegate in Peking, highly praised our Stigmatine Missionaries.

Delegate bought as a result another piece of property outside the village, on which they could eventually construct a residence. This construction got underway in 1929, and on May 26, the corner stone was blessed.

In the meantime other important happens took place in the Mission. In March 1928, Fr. Fantozzi, having made a visit to Peking, suffered a serious disturbance which was diagnosed as *angina pectoris*, and cerebral congestion [mini-stroke?]: as a consequence of this it was considered prudent for him to return to Italy. Within that same year, he did return, having been recalled by the Superiors, leaving as Superior of the Mission, Fr. Martina. In 1929, by decree of May 20, there was established juridically the independent Mission of Yishien, and Fr. Martina was named the ecclesiastical Superior of the region.

When the state of war ceased in the Mission, as a consequence of the withdrawal of the Northern armies, the Missionaries could dedicate themselves to the spreading of the faith, by opening in the villages Catechism classes. The requests were quite numerous for this and they were not able to respond to it all, because of the lack of being able to support the catechists. At Liangkochwang, in 1928, there was opened a teaching school for young women, in order to prepare instruction for the villages. In Si-ku-sien, there was purchased a tract of land upon which it was intended to put up a new residence with a Church and school.

And in 1929, two more Missionaries left Italy: Fr. Valerio Tomasi and Fr. Louis Benaglia, after having received the Missionary Crucifix in our Church of Trent. They arrived in Tientsin on November 1, and on the 8<sup>th</sup>, they reached Liangkochwang. After a week there, they went on to Shan-nan where they dedicated themselves to the study of the language.

**68.** In 1928, the six year term of the Superior General drew to a close, as well as that of the other men assigned to the major responsibilities and it was time to convoke a General Chapter. The Procurator General in December of the previous year, in the name of the Superior General and his Council presented a Petition to the Holy See, in conformity with a Deliberation of the last General Chapter, in order to obtain the faculty to elect the Capitulars from a list, in a number equal to those who went by right, including among these also the Directors of the 'formed' Houses. The Holy See granted for this one time to use this method of election. It prescribed dividing the Congregation into 'Circumscriptions', as the Constitutions had legislated, and to elect in each Circumscription one of the Directors pertaining to it: then, to elect from a single list as many Capitulars as there were Capitulars attending by right of their office. Thus, the Chapter was made up of 28 Capitulars. The convocation, as well as the instructions for the elections, was done on February 5, 1928, and the Chapter was convoked on August 6 in the General House of St. Agatha of the Goths in Rome.

Assembling on the established day, Fr. Zaupa, the Superior General, was re-elected, and his Councilors were: Frs. John B. Tomasi [Vicar and Procurator General], DeFerrari, Benedetti and Fiorio. The Econumus General Was Fr. Ernesto Battisti.

In June of that same year, there recurred the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of the venerated Founder. The **BERTONIANO** published a commemorative edition for

the occasion, with a Circular Letter from the Superior General, as well as an historical study of Fr. Joseph Stofella. He, then, continued to publish in the **BERTONIANO** other such historical studies, a Series, on Fr. Bertoni's life, and his relationship to the now Blessed Madeline di Canossa, as well as reflections on the Founder's manuscripts and his letters to the Servant of God, Leopoldina Naudet. All of these studies, a 'Historical Series', were published with further explanatory notes, in the **BERTONIANO**, from 1929 onward.

In the meantime, in 1926, following Fr. Fantozzi's departure for China, Fr. Fiorio was named Postulator of the Founder's Cause. He withdrew the *Public Copy* of the Apostolic Process, and applied himself to preparing the *Positio*, an additional phase in the long Process, necessary for the validity of the entire endeavor. The matter was proposed in the Ordinary Congregation of Rites on December 12, 1929, and the entire matter was adjudicated to be valid, on the condition that the Holy Father might extend the *sanatio*, a canonical verification of the matter. All of this was caused because there was lacking a signature on the original Acts of the Inchoative Process. This was readily granted, and the 'Decree of Validity' was used on December 18.<sup>367</sup>

**69.** In October of 1928, the Superior General left to visit the Houses in North America, and with him, Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta, whose health had been restored. The General Council had named as Visitor of the Region, Fr. William Ludessi, who transferred his residence to Waltham, assuming at the same time, the care of Sacred Heart Parish. In Springfield, Fr. Ermine Loan succeeded him as Pastor.

In Waltham, the Apostolic School was showing wonderful signs of life. In 1928, the community purchased 'Racoon Island', not far from Boston, that was to serve as a summer house for the community. In 1930, there began publication of *The Stigmatine* a periodical that would offer some news of the community.

Additional personnel were sent to North America: in 1929, Frs. Bortignon and Zuliani returned there, and there were also sent Frs. Julius Valentinelli and Dante Turri. In 1930, Brothers Gino Deho', Ettore Linda, Joseph Bocchio and Joseph Fontanari were assigned there. At the same time, the first signs of numerical development began to appear in the first hopes of the Apostolic School: the Superior General, returning there in 1929, brought back with him the first two Professed Students, Joseph Riley and Daniel Meany.

In Brazil, in Rio Claro, in 1927, there had been obtained legal approval of the high school which was frequented also by extern students: in 1929, the Fathers of that House assumed the spiritual direction of a leper clinic. In the same year, the Novitiate was canonically established, and five Postulants began their formation, and were vested with the habit. In the following year, they made their First Profession, and were called to Rome to complete there their studies of Philosophy and Theology.<sup>368</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> **BERTONIANO**, 1929, p. 179

<sup>368</sup> In 1926, there was purchased in condition the 'Sant'Anna Farm' situated about 25 kilometers from Rio Claro. It included 300 hectares of cultivated land, largely coffee plants. It had a central farm house, capable of housing 100 persons. This was meant to serve as a summer place for the Aspirants.

New workers came then to assist at the Apostolic School. In 1927, Fr. Louis Pisetta was ordained and Fr. John Consolaro: in 1929, there arrived to join them also Fr. Anthony Presacco, and from North America, Fr. Paul Sozzi. However, Fr. J. B. Pelanda returned to Italy for good.

In Paraná, in 1926, new Dioceses had already been established in Ponta Grossa and Jacarezinho, taken from the large Diocese of Curitiba, to which Fr. Anthony Mazzarotto and Fr. Ferdinand Tadddei, of the Lazzarist Congregation, were appointed Bishops. The Parishes of Castro and Tibagy were under the Diocese of Ponta Grossa, but a part of the *sertão*, evangelized by our Fathers, fell under the Diocese of Jacarezinho, as did the Parish of Pirahy, which for a while had been under the care of Fr. Finetto. As a result, in 1928 when the Bishop Dom Taddei, conducted his Pastoral Visitation to the region he was accompanied by Fr. Zanetti: and in February 1930, Fr. Finetto also accompanied him when he conducted the Visitation of Pirahy, a parish which in March of that year was entrusted to a diocesan Priest.

These same Fathers also, for more than two months, also accompanied Dom Mazzarotto in the Visitation of the Parishes in Castro and Tibagy. Both Bishops were quite satisfied with the efforts of our Fathers, and had for them all words of high praise. In 1931, the Parish in Tibagy was cut in half for the establishment of the new parish of Sertanopoli which was entrusted to a diocesan priest.

**70.** In Italy, our Fathers continued to sustain the works of the ministry, particularly for the Christian education of the youth, even though this became much hindered by the Fascist Government which wanted to take over each phase of the formation of the young. As a result, the classes under the auspices of our Works Association<sup>369</sup> in Verona had to give their adherence to the National After-Work Association, and it was necessary to shut down that section of our Association that was the Explorers' Department. This was then enforced in all our Houses in Italy, by government order, which had imposed the ending of all independent groups of Explorers in Italy<sup>370</sup>.

In Verona, the College and the schools were flourishing, to the extent that the realization dawned that it was necessary to expand the facilities, and in 1929, there was constructed that wing which runs along Via Montanari, raising one more floor above. Then, in 1930 following negotiations and governmental inspections, our high school classes received governmental approval.<sup>371</sup>

Also in Udine there was experienced the need of enlarging and improving upon the College environs. In 1928, there was installed electricity and built the gymnasium-theater. In the same year, the garden was transformed into an athletic field that was named for a former student, Augustine Brunetta, and was inaugurated the 29 of

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<sup>369</sup> In 1927 there was opened a school also for Master Carpenters, Builders.

<sup>370</sup> In 1931, the head of the government attempted a decisive intervention against all Christian education, suppressing all youth Associations, including those attached to parishes, and having all their local meeting places hut down. However, the firmness of Pius XI in defending the rights of the Church made him withdraw from his insane ideas: and in September of that same year, all the local organizations were reopened.

<sup>371</sup> In 1940, this approval was also received for the junior college level classes.



January. In 1929, there was opened the first class of the scientific junior college, with the intention of adding each year a new class until it would be complete. And, in 1930, there was begun the construction of the new wing of the building, that greatly decreased the size of the court yard on the south side: this was completed in 1931, and inaugurated that November.

**71.** In these years, there broke out in Udine an argument between our Fathers and the Pastor of Holy Redeemer Church on the matter of the Sunday Recreation Center. With the building up in Udine of other parish Oratories, also that one directed by our Fathers near the Church of the Redeemer had for all practical purposes, became part of the Parish, i.e., formed exclusively of the young men of that parish. Fr. John Brutto' had become Pastor, and he thought that he would simply take over the Oratory and to dispose himself of the theater facility. For this purpose he simply informed Fr. J. B. Tomasi, as legal owner of the premises, of these orders – totally by-passing the agreements signed in 1907 when it was built: (1) to withdraw the theater that was supported by the wall of his sacristy, by building a new wall at a distance of three meters from this sacristy; (2) close the windows and the doors of the theater that opened on that side abutting with the property of the building; (3) tear down the wall of the theater built at the far end of the garden boundaries, the property of the building and the flooring that had been built over the garden.

The Stigmatine Fathers, *for the good of peace*, were willing to hand over to him the property of the theater, following a granting of the part of the garden, and a compensation of 100,000 Lira, but the Pastor would not hear of the proposal. The entire matter was brought before the ecclesiastical Tribunal of Udine, which noted that erroneously had the organization cited Fr. Tomasi because from 1927 the property had passed into the administration of the Immovable Property Society of Udine. Nonetheless, it declared as null and void all the acts then accomplished, and at the same time, declared that all these were ecclesiastical goods, and therefore, the exclusive competence was the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical tribunal. Following this, discussions got underway, through the intervention of the Archbishop<sup>372</sup>, to come to some kind of a compromise. At the end of 1930, it was agreed to hand over the Oratory and the theater to the Pastor. In return, our Fathers accepted the direction of a Student Association of the middle schools, which had then been instituted through the initiative of the archbishop, and would meet in the rooms of the College.

In Trent, work to change over the house for the first two classes of aspirants sent there in October of 1928. In 1929, the Aspirants were recalled to Verona, to leave the place for the Novitiate, which remained there also a year, after which it was transferred to Gemona, and the aspirants returned to Trent in 1932.

**72.** In Parma, following the death of Fr. Nicholas Tomasi, the legal owner, the property of the house was transferred into the name of the Civil Society of Immovable Property of Verona. In the name of this same Society in 1929, there was also purchased a Villa in Genzano, once the property of the Capuchin Fathers, and then

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<sup>372</sup> At this time, it was Archbishop Joseph Nogara, who had succeeded Archbishop Anastasio Rossi.

taken over by the government. From 1921 on, the Commune of Genzano sold it to the Architect, Marcello Piacentini.

The draft of the contract was signed on May 25 by Fr. J. B. Tomasi, and he put this also under the legal ownership of the Society of Verona [S.A.C.I., as it was abbreviated]. Following all this it came to be known that the Capuchin Fathers were pushing forward their rights on the old building: after having refused in 1921 to redeem it from the Commune which had offered them a ridiculously low price for it, now, after Mr. Piacentini had spent some several hundreds of thousands of Lira on the building which was in bad repair at the time, the capuchins wanted it back free of charge: it might have been for this reason that Mr. Piacentini got rid of it.

Still another problem surfaced right after the signing of the initial contract that the seller in acquiring the building in the first place had left four rooms for those Priests who would take care of the officiating the nearby Church of St. Francis. He had set aside for this purpose four small rooms on the ground floor, which had remained outside of the preliminary contract. But they proved to be insufficient. For this reason, Fr. J. B. Tomasi on July 30 set down the obligation of compensating the buyer if perchance in the future it proved necessary to set aside for their use the clergy assigned to the Church. This contract of sale and purchase was stipulated on December 21.

In the meantime, Article 28 of the Concordat just signed by the Holy See and the Italian Government on February 11 of that year, the Holy Father accorded full condonation to those owners who retained ecclesiastical goods, would have complied with the prescriptions of the Holy See that had emanated with this in mind.<sup>373</sup> Following this, Mr. Piacentini presented himself to Fr. Fantozzi, authorized to do so by the competent ecclesiastical authority, and had regulated his position receiving a written declaration of this on September 17. When this contract of purchase and sale had been stipulated, the goods by then were within the free ownership of the seller. With all this, the Capuchin Fathers had recourse to the Sacred Congregation of Religious to push forward their pretended rights. And the Sacred Congregation, while admitting that under the title of strict justice, nothing was due to them, under title of equity, the judgment was that it would be fitting to give to them a few rooms, sufficient for a community of three or four persons, and a small tract of the land. The consequences of this decision will be seen shortly, which led to our selling of this villa.

One happy result of the Concordat noted above was the exemption recognized in it of young religious from serving in the military. Already in 1926, this had already been extended to seminarians, the faculty of putting off military service until the age of 26, the General Council had established the asking those students who had received permission for later military service, to pronounce only temporary vows until their 26<sup>th</sup> birthday. The Council reserved to itself the faculty of seeking from the Holy See the faculty of admitting them to perpetual profession to the period of their reception of the Subdiaconate. From 1929 on, following the Concordat, for the fact that after first profession religious men were exempt from military service, at the expiration of their

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<sup>373</sup> These had emanated from the Sacred Penitentiary on May 12<sup>th</sup> of this same year.

temporary profession, Italian Religious, students and brothers, could pronounce freely their perpetual profession.

In 1929, in August, the House of Ortonovo was closed. The closure was decreed by the XXI<sup>nd</sup> General Chapter, In August of 1928: the Superiors had requested the consent of the local Ordinary, Bishop John Constantini, who, after having insisted on our remaining in that place, declared that he would grant permission for our departure once there had been found a Religious Institute disposed to assume the care of the Parish and the service of the sanctuary. In 1930, the Dominican Fathers of the Bologna Province, accepted to return to Ortonovo, and our Fathers were able to withdraw from there.

**73.** In that same year 1930 in China, there took place an event of not minor importance for the History of that Mission: Fr. Martina, in a private manner, accompanied by a single servant, established his residence in Yishien, a city of some 20,000 inhabitants, as the center of the Mission which from this city took its name. Before that time, it had not been possible to open there a residence, because the population there was for the greater part Muslim, which showed itself strongly opposed to the Christian religion. Fr. Martina had purchased a piece of property with a rather broken down house in a central and tranquil location, and had gone there personally to take possession of it.

However, the matter did not run very smoothly: the Mandarin of that city, when he was presented with the contract of purchase, he refused to register it, declaring that according to the laws of the place, foreigners could not acquire land in China. Fr. Martina went to Trientsin to interest the Italian Consulate and to the Chinese authorities of that Province, and after some days, returned with the best of assurances. In fact, just a bit later he came to understand that the Mandarin had been transferred.

However, the matter had not yet concluded: the new Mandarin was equally hostile to our Missionaries, and sent to the authorities of Trientsin a report full of false accusations. To these, Fr. Martina responded with a document addressed also to the Italian Consul of that city. In January 1931, it came to be known that the Chinese authorities had sided with the side hostile to us. Fr. Martina, however, did not lose spirit, and remained firm in his position, trusting in Divined Providence, until a bit at a time, the hostile side became more calm.

In the meantime, he had been able to acquire another piece of property, with a series of Chinese houses on it, uninhabited because the local population believed that they were inhabited by evil spirits. When all the negotiations had been carried out, through the good efforts of Fr. Albert Pancheri who had come to join Fr. Martina, they made use of that locality as the central residence for the entire Mission, and as the temporary locality for a girls' school. This was later moved to Liang-koch-wang: already on November 15, 1931, the new chapel was blessed and inaugurated. Following this, on the ground floor there arose once more some excellent

accommodations, where the Franciscan Sisters of Egypt came to live.<sup>374</sup> On the second floor of the residence of the Missionaries, there was opened at first a school to prepare catechists, and then a pre-Seminary school which in 1933 numbered 30 students.

At Yishien, on June 10, 1932, there was ordained the first indigenous priest of the Mission, Fr. T'sae. On December 13, 1933, there was baptized in the Sisters' Chapel the first family converted in that city, fruit of the charity of these Sisters, who tirelessly went around from house to house, healing the sick and bringing with them the Good News of God.

**74.** With the residences thus established, the real life of the Mission began: from the various out-stations, as from centers of radiance, the Missionaries made frequent excursions into the villages of their own district, in order to cultivate Christianity by preaching sacred missions, organizing Catechism classes, and to examine in determined periods the catechumens and to admit them when they were well instructed to receive Baptism. On the great Solemnities [Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Domini, the Assumption] they would remain in their stations where the sacred services would be celebrated. These were not only attended by the faithful of the place, but also those of other villages, who in great numbers approached the Sacraments- and during those days, all attending would be sustained by the Mission Station itself. To this residence also the inhabitants of the area would flock to take refuge when the locality was under attack by brigands, which happened rather frequently in those years: the Missionaries had to concern themselves with lodging them and feeding them.

In the residences already existing [Liangkochwang, Lai-juen, Shannan] in 1931 there was added that of Kao-she-chwang, a city apparently lost in the mountains, but a very promising center of new Christianity: the residence was blessed on December 8, and in 1934, there was constructed a Chapel there which was inaugurated in early August.

In Liangkochwang there was constructed a new residence on the land purchased earlier, and on March 20, 1930, the Community transferred there: the building of the Seminary attracted the admiration of all, because of its size and the unusual height. Fr. Martina, on the following day, blessed the Chapel and celebrated there the first Mass. In the Seminary, there were 23 students which in the following year, arose to 30, and by 1932, the number was 49. In the district 15 schools were opened and others were opening gradually in the principal village, in the measure that the economic conditions of the Mission would allow. Also at Lai-juen there was constructed a new school and the residence was renovated: nearby, there was a boys' school and a girls' school with 10 students each. In 1931, on the occasion of the Visitation of the Ecclesiastical Superior, more land was purchased near the residence,

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<sup>374</sup> These Franciscan Sisters, numbering four [two Italian and two Chinese] entered the Mission of September 8, 1932, and took up lodging in the first residence of Yishien, where there was the school for catechists and a few orphan girls: there was opened there a walk in clinic, where no fees were charged, for the ailing of that locale.

upon which in 1937, there was constructed a very beautiful Church. Also at Kao-lo in 1931, a beautiful Church went up, which was the first constructed in the Mission.

At Shan-nan in 1930, there was opened a school to which all the children of the village attended, abandoning their own public school. This was the first school in the Mission, legally recognized. In 1931, there was purchased also another piece of land not far from the first residence, and on this. Fr. Wegher in that same year constructed a new residence that was much more comfortable and suitable, in which the personnel of the Mission was transferred. In this same time, the little chapel was able to be enlarged and embellished with offerings received from Monsignor Hildebrand Antoniutti, part of the Apostolic Delegation of Peking, and other benevolent persons, in order to make it beautiful and sufficient for the population there.

In the meantime, other Missionaries arrived from Italy: in 1932, Fr. Erminio Pojer arrived with two students of theology: Mario Stefanini and Tarcisio Pesamosca, who would finish their studies in China, and at the same time, would be able to study the Chinese language. In 1933, Fr. J. B. Carnovali arrived, and Frs. Pancheri and Zadra returned to Italy. In 1934, Fr. Adami returned to Italy, in order to participate in the General Chapter, and then returned to China, bringing with him, Fr. Primo Carnovali. The number of Missionaries had increased, and the General Council in 1930 named Fr. Louis Benaglia the Religious Superior of the Mission with the title of 'Pro-Visitor'. There was compiled a temporary statute in order to regulate the relationship of the religious Superior and the Missionaries.<sup>375</sup>

Fr. Martina, in order to provide for the needs of the Mission, obtained the permission from the Sacred Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith, to found a Congregation of indigenous Sisters, with the title of the 'Sisters of the Sacred Heart', who were found to assist the Missionaries in the works of evangelization as catechists. The first house was opened at Liangkochwang, where on June 30, 1935 there were vested the first five Postulants.

We will also recall here that the *Missionary Association of Fr. Bertoni* [AMB] was transferred from Verona to Rome, where there continued the printing of the Bulletin, *For the Good*. In 1934, this was re-named *The Missionary*. In 1931, there was also established a moral entity named *The Procuration of the Foreign Missions of the Stigmatines*, which was recognized by the government with its decree of December 3. And another moral entity came to be recognized a little before this, with its decree of October 29, with the name: *The Bertoni Apostolic School with its Seat in Verona*.

75. In 1931, the Superior General left for North America in a Canonical Visitation for the Houses of the area. There, in Waltham, in September of this year, there was begun an internal high school for the aspirants. The other students, after having completed their Novitiate, were sent to Italy to complete there their studies of Philosophy and Theology: early, in 1929, the first two had already arrived, to whom

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<sup>375</sup> *BERTONIANO*, 1930, p. 250.

others were joined in the years that followed: five in 1930, two in 1931, and eight in 1932, and three in 1933<sup>376</sup>.

In Springfield in 1931, in celebrating the Silver Jubilee of the Parish, the opportunity was taken to extend the Church which had become insufficient for the population. Already in 1929, a house was purchased which stood next to the Church, which blocked both air and light. Initially, the thought had been to demolish it in order to give the Church more room and area. Later the preference was to make use of it in order to enlarge the Church itself, which was lengthened and made in the form of a Cross with the addition of two lateral arms. This construction was performed in 1931, and in the following year the Church was decorated and provided with an organ: its inauguration was made on June 2<sup>nd</sup>, with a Pontifical Mass celebrated by the local Bishop. Following this, Fr. Lona was transferred to Waltham, as Director of the Apostolic School, following the death of Fr. Anthony Dalla Porta<sup>377</sup>. Fr. William Ludessi returned to the parish in Springfield, as Ordinary Visitor.

In Milford, the parochial school was going well, and the number of classes increased. As a result, it was considered necessary to enlarge the rather crowded facility. In September 1932, there was a state investigation of the buildings and they were declared insufficient for the numbers attending, and so the schools were ordered closed. Permission was granted for them to continue only under the condition that the Parish would commit itself to constructing a new building for the following scholastic year. However, the parish was unable to assume this burden due to the lack of means, and preferred rather to carry out immediately some work of adaptation that reached an expense of \$ 4,000.00, and these were completed by the end of September. Other work was taken on, as the building of the school and also the Convent of the Sisters, and these were executed in 1934, the year in which the school reached the level of a complete elementary school with eight classes.<sup>378</sup>

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<sup>376</sup> In 1929, Joseph Riley and Daniel Meany came [this latter made Novitiate, but was not admitted to Profession]. In 1930, Louis Bonan, Gerald Hogan, Leonard Dalla Badia, John Golden, Louis Ecker. In 1931, George Ecker and Paul Daly came. In 1933, Adolph Ferrari, Paul Piskel, Joseph Welch, Guido Costabile [who, in 1938, was dispensed from his vows], Dominic Ruscetta, Charles Armour, John Stanton and Michael Cariglia joined them. In 1933, Seraphin Piazzi, Francis Mackin and John Dickinson were added. The Students Hogan, George Ecker, Piskel, Welch, Armour, Stanton were kept in Rome to obtain the Licentiate in Theology at the ANGELICUM: The others, after two years of Philosophy went to Verona in 1932. Dickinson returned to America in 1935, and Piazzi in 1937, for reasons of health.

<sup>377</sup> Fr. Dalla Porta died on March 22, 1932, at Waltham, where he had been Director and Novice Master. In the same year, Fr. Balestrazzi returned to Italy for reasons of health. To make up for these losses, several confreres went to America: Fr. Peter Toretta in 1931 and Fr. Richard Zambiasi in 1932.

<sup>378</sup> In 1934, the Italian Government had offered under the title of a reward an all-expenses-paid trip for 150 Italian students from the parochial schools in which the Italian language was taught. There were chosen three students chosen from the parochial schools in Milford. They left Boston on July 14, and visited the ports of Venice, Naples, Genoa and the cities of Rome and Milan. Also in 1936, four students from Milford won the same prize – and with them, Fr. Valentinelli for his merits in the field of education.

In Pittsfield in 1931, the Parish welcomed the Venerini Sisters, who opened a trade school and one for the Italian language which gave good results. In 1934, there were executed the work of re-decorating the Church. In White Plains in 1931, Fr. Michael Madussi succeeded Fr. Leo Sella. He gave a great impulse to the parish life: in 1932, he obtained the help of the Sisters of Good Counsel College<sup>379</sup>, and other women teachers for the Catechism classes to the children. In order to attract children to the frequent these lessons and Holy Mass, they organized weekly movie shows for them in the three churches of the parish.

**76.** In July 1931, the Superior General from North America traveled to Brazil, bringing with him, Fr. Joseph Nardon.<sup>380</sup> As the North American students, so, too, those from Brazil, after their First Profession, they went to Italy to complete their studies: in 1931, the first five arrived, and in the next few years other students came up until 1933<sup>381</sup>.

At São Caetano, on the occasion of the Centenary celebration honoring St. Anthony, there was opened a College of St. Anthony for young girls, and this was entrusted to the Sisters of Providence. Already in 1928, there had been purchased here the parish House with its land. In 1929, there had been donated to the parish additional land to build there a new Church. On this plot, in 1933, the construction of this began, following the blue prints drawn up by Fr. Grigolli, who directed the construction: it was inaugurated and opened for Christmas in 1934. At the same time, work got underway to renovate the old Church.

In the two parishes of Castro and Tibagy, the Fathers continued the work of the apostolate, with great personal sacrifice and the lack of personnel. In 1931, at Castro, in order to combat a powerful Protestant propaganda, there was opened a small college that was entrusted to the Marists. In 1932, on the occasion of the Pastoral Visitation, there was also renovated the ceiling and the decoration of the Church. In the same year, Fr. Lona, for reasons of health, returned to Italy, and so in Tibagy there remained only Fr. Zanetti, and in Castro, Fr. Sieff. As there was no hope of receiving further help from Italy, in 1933, it was decided to close those two Houses.

**77.** In February 1932, there occurred the Silver Priestly Jubilee of the Superior General and it was celebrated on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. There was the presence of confreres and friends, and on March 10, it was more solemnly observed in Verona with the participation of the civil authorities, and a large representation from our Houses and Colleges.

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<sup>379</sup> **NB: translator's personal note:** Sr. Mary Judith, RDC, his blood Sister, became a religious in this Community in 1953.

<sup>380</sup> Fr. Nardon died in Rio Claro on March 5, 1933. In 1931, Fr. Peter Scussolino went to Brazil; in February 1931, Fr. Presacco returned to Italy.

<sup>381</sup> In 1930, Lawrence Correr, Augusto Casagrande, John Crepaldi, Oswald and Amerigo Casellato [this last mentioned obtained the dispensation from his vows in 1934]. In 1931, there were Isidore Stenico, Lazzaro Camargo, Charles Mazzero. These students frequented classes for Philosophy at the ANGELICUM in Rome, and then went to Verona to study theology. In 1933, Paul Campo Dall'Orto, Nestor Arzolla, Victor Zanin, Angelo Casagrande, Valdemiro Darcy came; in April 1934, Felisberto Campagner also came: all of whom went directly to Verona.

In Rome, at St. Agatha's in 1932, there was inaugurated the new organ and there were executed renovations to the house to be able to receive the Professed students who came to Rome from Italy and the Americas, to complete their studies in the Ecclesiastical Universities.<sup>382</sup>

In this same year in St. Agatha's Church seizing the opportunity provided by the removal of the main altar in order to reconstruct the ancient mosaic urn, there were also opened the urns containing the Relics of the Greek Martyrs, both on the main altar, as well as the altar dedicated to St. Agatha. This was done in order to conduct a new recognition of these relics. It was a most memorable and interesting occasion, not only because of the authenticity of the relics, because this also shed much light on the methods and the diligence used by the Church authorities in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, in conducting the solemn translations of the bodies of the Martyrs from the catacombs of Rome to its Churches. In the coffins of the relics there were also found the original sacks which had contained the bodies of the Martyrs even before their translation, with their original inscriptions which indicated the names of the Martyrs: these precious records were then placed in the Archives of the Vatican Library. The relics, after having been exposed to public veneration for several days, were placed in new reliquaries and replaced in the containers in which they were held all these centuries, and placed once more in the main altar, and some under the altar dedicated to St. Agatha. On November 30 1933, there were consecrated the two altars by Bishop Joseph Rossini. On December 2, for the Feast of the Greek Martyrs, there was celebrated in St. Agatha's a solemn Pontifical Mass, by the Cardinal Protector, Cajetan Bisleti<sup>383</sup>.

On the occasion of these festivities, the Holy Father, Pius XI granted to the Church of St. Agatha the privilege of being a Lenten Station Church for Tuesday, after the III<sup>rd</sup> Week of Lent.<sup>384</sup>

Also in Rome, the Cardinal Protector, Bonaventure Ceretti, died, and the Congregation obtained a new Cardinal Protector, Peter Cardinal Fumasoni Biondi, who took possession of his Protectorate with a ceremony celebrated at Holy Cross Church on December 10.

**78.** In Verona, at the most Holy Trinity, in 1932, there was re-established the School of Theology, which was frequented not only by our Italian Students, but also

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<sup>382</sup> For the summer vacation of 1933, the students went out to Genzano, and they published there a few mimeographed sheets, and entitled their composition, *Stigmatine Youth [Juventus]*. In 1934, the professed student Cornelius Fabro won a contest sponsored by the Academy of St. Thomas, for theology students, with his work on the *Principle of Causality*: on December 20, he was given the prize of 5,000 Lira in the presence of Cardinal Bisleti.

<sup>383</sup> In 1938, the Fathers of the House of St. Agatha were granted the permission to celebrate each year on December 2, the Mass and Office of the Greek Martyrs as a Double Major.

<sup>384</sup> In 1929, there had been granted temporarily the dignity of a Lenten Station Church, in substitution for Santa Pudenziana, which could not serve in that capacity, due to the work going on in that Church. In the definitive concession, however, the day remained fixed for the Church of Santa Pudenziana.



those from North and South America<sup>385</sup>. The Novitiate from Gemonia, and in order to enlarge the surroundings, there were purchased several areas of the Recovery for the Invalids from Work. There was also acquired for the Apostolic School St. Andrew's Villa of Affi, and there was sold the property of St. Mary of the Lily.

At the Stimmate, the College was closed, and the rooms were occupied by the Aspirants, having recalled the first two classes from Trent. In 1933, celebrating the Workers Organization Silver Jubilee there was constructed for the Sanctuary of Lourdes a new major altar with very precious and esteemed marble.

In Udine, following the illness of Fr. Paul Zanini, Fr. Charles DeFerrari was named the Director.<sup>386</sup> In 1933, there was also purchased the old Sacristy for the Church of St. Peter, Martyr, which was then readapted and restored to its first destination.

In the same year, also at Udine, there was resolved definitively the thorny matter of the Sunday Recreation Center. In 1932, the Pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish was named in the person of Fr. Louis Pilosio, very kindly disposed toward our Fathers. He proposed to return to them the Direction of the Oratory and the ownership of the theater. His predecessor, Monsignor Buttó, had much improved on the theater, but he was unable to reopen it. There was drawn up a new Agreement, dated December 28, 1932, between the Parish and the Stigmatines: with this, all returned to the way it had been in the past, and there was returned to the Fathers the ownership of the theater, without any obligation of restitution for the expenses that Monsignor Buttó had incurred.<sup>387</sup>

With Fr. DeFerrari's departure from Rome, Holy Cross Parish remained vacant. Fr. Bruno Chiesa was called from Milan to take it over. Here it should also be recalled that in the course of these years, the parish was divided two separate times, for the creation of the Parishes of the Mother of God, in Piazzale of the Milvian Bridge, and St. Robert Bellarmine's Parish, in the Monte Parioli section of Rome.

In substitution in Milan for Fr. Bruno, Fr. Peter Campi was sent. Here in 1933, the appearance was much improved, with the addition of colored windows for the Church- and also because of the transformation into a splendid avenue in place of the old railway line that passed directly in front of the Church. In 1934, the lower Church

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<sup>385</sup> The Congregation of Religious had published on December 1<sup>st</sup> 1931, an Instruction on the qualities required in the candidates to be promoted to Holy Orders and on the manner of admitting them. In conformity with this Instruction the Superior General, on April 14, 1932, established opportune Norms for those students striving toward the Priesthood. [BERTONIANO, 1932, p. 210]. In 1933, the same Superior General, Fr. J. B. Zaupa, published a very helpful little volume entitled; *Juridical, Disciplinary, Ascetico-Pastoral Norms for the Use of the Stigmatine Professed Students*. It was printed in Rome at the Sallustriana Printing Company.

<sup>386</sup> In 1932 there was assembled once again the reunion of the former-students of the College which elected a Council of Presidency.

<sup>387</sup> In the theater there had been installed the mechanics for a move theater, for public use, with the title; *Rex Cinema*, and there was established a Society for stocks and bonds for those in charge of its operation.

was changed into a Chapel for the boys of the Oratory, and there was constructed there the Sacred Heart Altar.

**79.** In 1934, it was time once again to assemble the General Chapter for the election to the higher offices in the Community. On November 7, the Superior General convoked the Chapter for May 7<sup>th</sup> in Genzano near Rome. However, on April 23, 1934, notification was given that the Chapter would be held in stead at the House of Holy Cross parish in Rome. The method for the election of the Capitulars was that prescribed in the Constitutions, i.e., to elect two Delegates for every Circumscription: there resulted 21 Capitulars.

The Chapter assembled on the established day, with Fr. Albino Sella absent, for reasons considered valid by the Chapter itself. As Superior General, Fr. Bruno Chiesa was elected. His Councilors were: Frs. Hycinth Largher [Vicar]; Alfred Balestrazzi, Emilio Recchia [Secretary], and Ferdinand Dominici. Fr. J. B. Tomasi was chosen as Procurator General, and Fr. Joseph Fiorio, as Economist.

The Chapter, acting on the Proposal of Fr. Louis Fontana of North America, approved an order of the day with which there was presented the hope that as soon as possible, North and South America would be erected into Provinces.

Following the election of Fr. Chiesa, Fr. Emilio Recchia was named Pastor of Holy Cross, Rome. Fr. J. B. Zaupa, Superior General emeritus now, during the Chapter had renounced his right given to him by the Constitutions, as an out-going Father General, to choose the house for his dwelling that he preferred, left for North America in August, together with Fr. Joseph Riley, the first priest of that region, who had been ordained in Trent on June 29<sup>th</sup>.

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## Chapter 2

### THE CONSTITUTIONS OF THE PROVINCES

#### [1934-1941]

**80.** Immediately following the Chapter, the General Council decided that in the House of the Stimate there should be re-opened the College: the aspirants of the upper high school classes were transferred to the Most Holy Trinity, those of the lower grades remained for still a year at the Stimate, and then they too moved over to the Trinity, continuing to frequent classes at the Stimate.<sup>388</sup>

In 1934, there was opened a House in Vasto, in the Diocese of Chieti, in Abruzzi, where the ordinary was Bishop Joseph Venturi, a native of Verona, who knew and loved our Congregation. He desired very much to have a House of ours in his Diocese. He offered the Congregation the pastoral care a Boarding House for young Students, already open in that city, and gave the fathers the care of the Mount Carmel Church. The House was opened in July of that year, and Frs. Godfrey Friedmann, Aldo Belli and Emilio Moresco was assigned there.

They were warmly greeted by the people there, but not so by the local clergy, who seemed to hinder their work of the ministry, and especially that directed toward the education of the youth. To this was added the consideration that the income from this work was quite insignificant, that it would not support the religious community there. The Superiors, after having entered into discussions with the Bishop-, were unable to come to an agreeable solution, and so they decided to give up that foundation. The Fathers left there in June of 1935 at the end of the scholastic year.

In Trent, too, there was opened a Boarding House for students. And to assist in the direction of the College Students, some of our Professed Students were sent from the House of the Stimate, and in those of Udine, Trent and Vasto: other students in theology were sent to Brazil. In August 1934, Fr. Benedetti left for that region, taking with him the Brazilian students, Augusto Casagrande and Lazzaro Camargo. In October of the same year, Frs. Victor Nardon and Federico Marasca<sup>389</sup> with other Brazilian students [Lawrence Correr, Oswald Casellato, John Crepaldi, Isidore Stenico, Charles Mazzero, and Felisberto Campagner], with four Italian students [Ezio Gislimberti, Joseph Anselmi, Cesare Bianco, and Federico Vettori]. As a result, it was possible in 1935, to begin a school of theology at Rio Claro. In August 1935, Fr. Arthur Devigili and the student, John Missoni left for Brazil: and finally in November of the same year, the Superior General went there to conduct the Canonical Visitation of the Houses, taking with him, Fr. Dennis Martinis and Aldo DaMadice<sup>390</sup>, as well as five Brazilian students in philosophy [Paul Campo Dall'Orto, Nestor Arzolla, Victor Zanin, Angelo Casagrande and Valdemiro Darcie], as well as four Italian students in theology [John Avi, William Decaminada, Joseph Pasquali and Modesto Nones]: thus at Rio Claro it was also possible to begin the school of philosophy.

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<sup>388</sup> In 1937, there were reopened at the Stimate, the internal classes for the Aspirants. In 1934, for the first time, the Aspirants were allowed to go home for a brief period of vacation.

<sup>389</sup> Fr. Marasca died in Campinas on July 7, 1935, following a surgical operation.

<sup>390</sup> He was secularized in 1938.

**81.** In February 1935 there opened in Brazil the House of Ituiutaba, in the Diocese of Uberaba<sup>391</sup>, in the state of Minas Gerais, with a most extended parish and a rich patrimony of land [about 960 hectares]: Frs. Joseph Tondin and Julius Sieff were sent there, with Brother Robert DiGiovanni. On March 24, Fr. Albino Sella and Fr. John Consolaro opened a House in Uberaba, taking possession of the parish and sanctuary of Our Lady of Abadia. That population had been up to that time somewhat neglected, and our Fathers found there so much that was to be done: they applied themselves with great zeal to the sacred ministries, beginning with organizing the Parish Associations.<sup>392</sup> In February 1937, the parish school got underway, for which they had at their disposition teachers provided by the Commune.

The Fathers of Rio Claro in 1935 inaugurated a new Chapel in the village of Matta Negra [composed of almost 1000 Italian inhabitants from the Venetian provinces] and it was one of the most distant from the Parish: in this territory, there were 22 chapels, in some of which our Fathers reached once or twice a month to exercise there their ministry, and in other places they reached even more rarely. At the same time, they had to attend to school, to the assistance of the sick in the hospital, to helping out in the parish, to the boys' oratory and to the Association of the Daughters of Mary.

In 1937, they received also temporarily the care of St. Gertrude's Parish, and, in 1938, when Monsignor Botti, Pastor of Rio Claro, retired to private life, the Stigmatines accepted for a while also the care of this parish. In 1939, there was demolished in Rio Claro the old Church of Holy Cross, and they began the new one: on May 2, the corner-stone was blessed.

There merits to be remembered here also the extraordinary cure obtained in May of 1937 for the Professed Student, Joseph Anselmi at Rio Claro. For several years, he had been subjected to real pain and suffering due to a stubborn stomach ulcer. In 1936, he was operated on in Campinas without any positive result. In the spring of 1937, he was a patient in a Hospital in São Paulo, where it was decided that he needed another operation. However, it was impossible to go through with it, due to the extreme weakness of the patient. He returned to Rio Claro, following repeated hemorrhaging and in the month of May he was reduced to such extremes that he was unable to take even a little bit of food, and from one hour to the next, his death was expected. He was taken as an emergency patient to the Hospital of Rio Claro. On the morning of May 27, after having invoked the intercession of the venerated Fr. Bertoni, he swallowed a bit of water with a small fragment of a relic of the Founder.

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<sup>391</sup> Already in 1928, the Bishop of Uberaba, a Salesian, had asked for a foundation in his Diocese, which the Community was not able to accept at the time. In 1935, the Bishop of that city was Fra Luiz da S. Anna, a Capuchin, born in the Diocese of Verona.

<sup>392</sup> At the same time, they thought of sprucing up the Church: on August 15, 1935, the Feast of Our Lady of Abadia, they inaugurated in that Sanctuary 42 new benches.

Immediately he was cured, so that he was able right away to digest a good amount of food without any discomfort: and he never suffered from this again<sup>393</sup>.

**82.** On January 1, 1936, there was also opened a House in Casa Branca, by Frs. Louis Fernandes and Joseph Finetto. They assumed the care of the parish, with the obligation of organizing the various parish associations, of teaching catechism in the schools, of lending assistance on Sundays on the plantations. In addition to caring for the Parish Church, they assumed also that of the Sanctuary of Desterro, situated a little outside the city.

In 1938, they acquired a House in which there was established a religious Community, that up until that time it had been used as a pigeon coup! In 1939, they restored the Church of Desterro, by inaugurating there a new altar: and at the same time, there continued there the work on the construction of the new Church.

In June 1936, the House at Morrinhos also got underway: Fr. Primo Scussolino was assigned there to whom later on Fr. Oswald Casellato was added. Their responsibility was to care for the parish churches in Morrinhos, Caldas Novas and Ponto Alto, three very vast parishes, and very distant one from the other. In 1937, they also took on in Morrinhos also the direction of the '*Senador Hermenegildo de Moraes* High School, which in 1938 was recognized also legally, and declared an official high school. In 1939, there also began in Morrinhos the contraction of the new High School.

In 1937, there was also opened the House of Salles Oliveira, in the Diocese of Ribeirão Preto, that included the care of the two Parishes of Sales and Nuporanga: this was closed in 1942.

The work increased by leaps and bounds, and the need for new workers was felt more and more: in 1936, there were ordained Frs. Casellato, Crepaldi, Augusto Casagrande, Lawrence Correr, Federico Vettori, Camargo and Mazzero: in September, Frs. Louis Eccli, Angelo Pozzani, Joseph Dalvit, Simeone DiLenardo<sup>394</sup>. In 1937, Frs. Gislimberti, Stenico, Bianco and Campagner were ordained; and in 1938, Frs. Silvio Todeschi<sup>395</sup> and Dario Deromedis arrived from Italy. With these helpers, the works of the apostolate could be sustained in the various houses.

**83.** The Superior General returned to Italy in January 1936. In the meantime, an important event happened in Italy: the naming and the Episcopal consecration of Fr. Charles DeFerrari. He had been called to be the Bishop of Carpi in the Consistory of December 16, 1935, and consecrated in Rome in Holy Cross Church by Cardinal Raphael Rossi on January 12, 1936. On February 18, he made his entrance into his Diocese<sup>396</sup>. During this same year, there was the Silver Priestly Jubilee of the Superior General, which was celebrated in Verona on October 28, with

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<sup>393</sup> In 1940, there was obtained from the Sacred Congregation of Rites the Remissorial Letters in order to present through the Episcopal Chancery Office in Campinas, an Apostolic Process regarding this cure.

<sup>394</sup> During this year, Fr. Julius Sieff returned to Italy.

<sup>395</sup> Fr. Todeschi left the Congregation in 1940.

<sup>396</sup> In 1941, he was transferred to the Archdiocese of Trent.

the presence of Bishop DeFerrari, and a large representation of the Congregation. On that occasion, there was published a Commemorative Edition of the **BERTONIANO**, added then to Volume 7 in the collection.

In August of that same year, the Superior General had conducted a Canonical Visitation to the Houses of North America. In that region there was growing ever more the work of our Fathers, and it was reaping consoling results. In Springfield there was constituted a 'Catholic Action Club', with the scope of promoting the Christian life in the Parish: it was the first of its kind to spring up in that city, and came to be imitated by many others. There also another group stood out, the 'Mount Carmel Guild', formed by men and women who assisted the St. Vincent de Paul Society in bringing help to the poor, preparing for them all kinds of clothing. In February of that same year, there was opened a filial house in West Springfield, which took on the care of the Churches of St. Ann's<sup>397</sup>, St. Anthony's in North Agawam, and Feeding Hills.<sup>398</sup>

In Milford, on June 12, 1936, for the first time there, the Italian colony celebrated the *graduation* of the first group from the parochial school. Diplomas were handed out on the completion of the elementary course for 25 students of those schools: there in July, too, the Italian cemetery of the Parish was inaugurated.<sup>399</sup>

**84.** In September 1936, there was opened the House in Vancouver, British Columbia, a city of some 300,000 inhabitants in Canada, as a territorial parish. Frs. Joachin Bortignon and Leonard Dalla Badia were assigned there, and in the following year, they had a Rectory constructed, since the one they found there was insufficient.

In December 1936 there was also opened the House in Timmons, Ontario [Canada] with an Italian Parish. Fr. Louis Fontana was sent there. In the beginning the Italian community used the basement of a French Church for their services. In May 1937, some property was purchased to build there the Italian Church: in the same month, construction got underway, and on October 10 the Church could be used.

In these years, the American Professed Students who were in Italy continued to be ordained, and as this occurred, they returned home. In 1935, Frs. Dalla Badia, Bonan, Golden, Louis Ecker were ordained; in 1936, Frs. Hogan, Daly, and George Ecker were as well; in 1937, Frs. Piskel, Welch, Armour, Stanton and Cariglia received Holy Orders; and in 1938, Fr. Ruscetta. In 1939, it was the turn of Frs. Mackin and Ferrari.<sup>400</sup> In 1937, Frs. Victor Demichei and Angelo Daprai were sent to

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<sup>397</sup> In St. Ann's in 1940, there was inaugurated a new electric organ.

<sup>398</sup> In 1941 there was opened a further bond in North Agawam. The Priests from St. Ann's also took over the care of St. Anthony's Church and that of Feeding Hills, while remaining at St. Ann's, West Springfield.

<sup>399</sup> In 1941, there began in Milford the construction of raising the Church to a new floor. This work would then be suspended during the World War, declared by the United States on December 7, 1941. The Church was finally completed and opened to the public in 1947.

<sup>400</sup> In 1936, other American students came to Italy: William Girolamo, Ellsworth Fortman, Samuel Chameal; in 1937, Gilbert Fini; in 1938, James Mullen, Guy Rossi. [All returned to America in 1940 when Italy was on the verge of going to war.] At the same time in 1936, there was begun at Waltham the internal course in Philosophy; and in 1937, the course in Theology.

the United States. Thus, the number of the workers increased, and the Congregation could multiply the work of the Apostolate.

**85.** In 1937, the Villa in Genzano was sold. We have already noted the pretexts under which the Capuchins forwarded to obtain this property back, as well as the opinion expressed by the Sacred Congregation of Religious. Following this, there arose also the question of the General Direction of Worship, to which the Commune of Genzano had handled the adjoining Church of St. Francis. In February of 1930, the Architect Piacentini was summoned to appear before the civil Court of Rome [and in February 1931, so was the Legal Entity of Ownership, the Corporation], to recall the four rooms that would be set aside for those tending to the Church, as was noted as a commitment in the contract assumed by Mr. Piacentini in the contract of 1921<sup>401</sup>.

The Tribunal of Rome rejected the request, observing that following the Concordat that had been stipulated between the Holy See and Italy, the Churches remained under ecclesiastical authority: therefore, it is the Church's responsibility, and not to the government Administration of Worship that the obligation of providing worship pertained. However, the Administration had recourse to the Court of Appeal, which reformed the sentence of the First Instance, accepting the request of the state Administration: and after conducting certain judiciary investigations, with its sentence of April 1936, found that Mr. Piacentini was liable for the costs of adapting the four rooms for the use of those assigned to the Church, and the Society of legal ownership had to place at the disposition of the Church these four rooms, designated in the judiciary investigations, along with an additional 11,578 Lira that Mr. Piacentini would have to pay.

As a consequence to all this, the Superiors decided to sell the Villa, which was then acquired on January 19, 1937, by the Little Sisters of the Assumption.<sup>402</sup> On these Sisters was imposed by the Congregation of Religious the responsibility of giving to the Capuchin Fathers, in addition to the four rooms noted by the Tribunal, also an ample tract of the land upon which the Capuchins could construct a small convent.

**86.** In that same year 1937, there was verified in Verona something that was very displeasing to many confreres: in the month of September, the Public Oratory of the Immaculate Conception [later, dedicated to the Sacred Face], was renovated to become a reception room. This Oratory had first been opened in 1818 by the venerated Founder himself. It was used by him and his first sons for a number of years in the first period of their coming to the Stimmate. Some time later, it was transformed

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<sup>401</sup> Following all this, the Congregation of Religious declared that the matter was suspended between the Stigmatine Fathers and the Capuchins, putting off any decision until after the civil Court had decided on the matter.

<sup>402</sup> In the three following years, the students went up to Malosco di Fondo, Val di Non, Trent, for their summer vacations. This mountain Villa remained opened for the summer months and welcomed two courses of retreats, as well as being available for a period of vacation for the Confreres of the Houses of Italy. In 1937, renovations were done in the attic, making it suitable for a dormitory for the students. **[NB: the Professed Students from the USA, in the summers of 1953-1955, enjoyed this wonderful place].**

into a semi-public Oratory of the transfiguration, where the Founder had many times celebrated Mass in the course of his infirmities.

Consequently, a request was submitted to the Holy See for permission to transfer to the Church of the Stimate next door, the remains of the saintly Founder, which had been entombed in the wall of this Oratory. When the authorization to do so was received from the Sacred Congregation of Rites, the translation of the body was conducted on September 16, in the presence of the Episcopal delegate for this, with the Promoter of Justice, Fr. Louis Zenati and of the Chancellor of the Episcopal Curia. There formed a small procession, and the account of all this was submitted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The body was interred under the arch in the left wall of the Church, not far from the main altar, and placed under the covering of the floor, as the ecclesiastical prescriptions require. On the facing of the marble, which covers the tomb, was inscribed:

The Mortal remains

of the

Venerable Gaspar Bertoni<sup>403</sup>

**87.** In 1937, new Houses were opened in Italy: in Reggio Emilia and in San Severino Marche. In Reggio, there had been offered the direction of the Institute, 'Zefirino Jodi,' founded in the last century by a pious Priest who wanted to gather poor children to educate them in Christian piety and in the exercise of some honest trade. This had been managed by a Council of Administration, under the overall administration of the Bishop. The offer was accepted, and Frs. Louis Benaglia, J. B. Perenzoni and Mario Tais were assigned there on August 24. A temporary Agreement was drawn up between the Council of Administration and our Congregation. After a year's trial, it was confirmed and ratified by both parties. However, the Prefecture of the City was opposed to it. There were necessary to accept some modifications regarding the management of the Pious Institute, to which every effort was made to respond by the drawing up of internal Rule of Life, that would regulate the relationship between the Direction of the Endeavor and the Council of Administration. Evidently, the situation of our Confreres there really could not be considered as a foundation of the Congregation, properly so called. Therefore, the Superiors sought to open in the City a House with its own apostolate, and possibly with the taking care of a Church as a part of our presence there: but they found difficulty with the Bishop. In 1940, by way of experiment, they tried to open a Residence for young students, independent of the Pious Work noted above, in a place on the same property that was rented.

In San Severino, there was offered the direction and the teaching of a Minor Seminary, of the two united Dioceses of San Severino and Treja. Bishop Francis Longinotti had built there a new and beautiful Seminary, and hoped to call the Stigmatine Fathers to direct it, and they accepted the invitation: on October 14, Frs.

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<sup>403</sup> In 1941, in the Founder's old room, now made into a Chapel, there were placed the remains of the casket which had contained his body for nearly 50 years.



Peter Campi served as Rector; Frs. Modesto Vettori and Godfrey Friedmann were on the staff. Later on, Fr. Edward Castellani was added. In the first days, they took lodging with the Capuchin Fathers, until October 31, they were able to take over their new residence, by now completed. In 1938, on the request of the Bishop, there was also appointed as Rector of the Cathedral, the Stigmatine Father, Federico Gebelin. In the following year, Fr. Cesare Salvadori took his place, and in 1941, it was Fr. Airstide Belli.

We should also recall here that on October 30, 1937, Fr. Cornelius Faro obtained the Doctorate in Theology at the ANGELICUM in Rome, defending his thesis on *The Metaphysical Notion of Participation according to St. Thomas Aquinas*. Two years later, this thesis was published and it received wide acclaim among philosophers and theologians. In the same year 1937, Fr. Fabro was appointed to the office of teaching Philosophy at the Lateran Athanaeum, and in 1938, he was given the chair of biology at the Urban Athanaeum of the Propagation of the Faith. In 1939 he was named 'Extraordinary' Professor of Philosophy – and finally, in 1941, he was appointed to 'Ordinary' of Metaphysics in the same Athanaeum of the Propagation of the Faith. In this latter year, he had published a work on Perception in two volumes: *The Phenomenology of Perception* and *Perception and Thought*. These were printed by the University of the Sacred Heart in Milan. At this same time, he was collaborating in various scholarly reviews of Philosophy and Theology, as the *Review of Neo-Scholastic Philosophy*, and the well known *Divus Thomas*, publishing various articles.

**88.** In these years, also in the Mission in China, we find events worthy of being noted. In 1935, Fr. Louis Benaglia was recalled from China, being designated as Professor of Dogmatic Theology in the Student House in Verona. Fr. Valerio Tomasi was then appointed the Religious Superior of the Mission. On December 9, 1935, the Mission was raised to a Prefecture Apostolic, and on January 3, 1936, Fr. Martina was named the Prefect Apostolic. In September of that same year there was opened the residence in Lai-shoei, a kind of capital of the District with the same name, where there were already two schools functioning, for boys and girls.<sup>404</sup> Fr. V. Tomasi was sent there with Brother Ugo Giardinieri and immediately, he opened there a walk-in clinic. The personnel of the residence were expected to be concerned for the entire District of Lai-shoei, in which there were already 29 schools opened and that of San Puo', with which Fr. Martina himself had been occupied. When he went there in 1928, he did not find a single Christian, but in eight years of work with great sacrifice, he had opened five mission stations, and brought about a general re-awakening of souls toward the Christian religion.

Meanwhile, other workers were added to the Mission. On March 27, 1935, Fr. Tarcisio Pesamosca was ordained: however, during the preceding December, he underwent a surgical operation for appendicitis in Tientsin, and returned to Yih sien,

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<sup>404</sup> In January, there exploded a vicious campaign against the Missionaries in Lai-shoei, with insults, anonymous letters, accusations and trials, that disturbed the early planting of Christianity there: however, after three months of real trial and worry, all ended and the protagonists eventually asked pardon and promised not to be of further bother to the Missionaries.

still suffering severe pain in the kidney. In April, this condition suddenly worsened, and he died on the 24<sup>th</sup>. In that same year 1935, Fr. Paul Ly was ordained, as was Fr. Mario Stefanini: in November, Frs. Lino Inama and Paul Daly arrived in China, while Fr. Adami returned to Italy. In 1938, Fr. Severino Fontana and Mark Blasutig arrived and Fr. Stefanini returned to Italy.

In 1936, Bishop Celso Costantini was succeeded as Apostolic Delegate in China by Bishop Mario Zanin, former student of our men in the Seminary of Belluno. In 1937, he conducted a Visitation of the Mission, where he received a very warm welcome, especially in Yih sien, where he greeted Monsignor Martina, his former Teacher of Dogmatic Theology.

Meanwhile, in July 1937, the War between Japan and China broke out: in the month of September, the Japanese occupied Lai-juen, Yih sien and Shan-nan: the populations, terrorized by the continuing air raids, flocked to the Mission stations, bringing there whatever they could carry with them, clothing furnishings and house wares], in the thought that both the Japanese and the Chinese respected the Missions. But, the worst was yet to come, for after the Japanese had passed through, the land was dominated by roving bandits, many of them escaped convicts or dispersed soldiers, who spread terror with the sudden attacks on villages, and imposing severe taxes on the population<sup>405</sup>. To these need to be added a regular army of red troops, Communists, who opposed the takeover by the Japanese, and they occupied the central Mission stations.

In May 1938, Lai-juen was occupied by the Red Army which closed down the residence and forced the Missionaries to leave.<sup>406</sup> Liangkochwang was also occupied by the Reds, who, in July of the same year, gave the order to close the residence, and they conducted a very careful search of the house: and since they did not find anything that would compromise the Missionaries' position there, they hoped for a reprieve. At Lai-shoei in May of that same year, the residence was assailed during the night by brigands who did not succeed in taking it over. In these frightful conditions, however, the work of the Missionaries was paralyzed.

**89.** In Italy in 1938, the Novitiate was transferred from Verona to Affi: on that occasion, as there was to be opened the new House there, and drinkable water was provided, thanks to the excavation of a well near the town limits of Ari, and a huge pipe brought the water into the Villa. In 1939, in St. Andrew's Church, the old main altar had been exchanged with that one taken from the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception, and was consecrated by Bishop Charles DeFerrari, on January 22,, 1940. In that year, the Church was thoroughly cleaned and newly decorated, and there was placed over the main altar a painting of the Apostle, St. Andrew, done in Rome by the Artist, De Filippi.

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<sup>405</sup> They were called 'red' brigades because they wore red silk scarves around their necks.

<sup>406</sup> In 1936 the residence was enlarged and a school had been built.

At the Most Holy Trinity in 1938, the Sisters of the Holy Family of Casteletto on the Garda, were contacted to take over the kitchen and the laundry.<sup>407</sup> In Milan, also in 1938, there was taken from Holy Cross Parish a notable part of its territory, for the new Parish of Sts. Nereus and Achilleus. In the preceding year, Fr. Peter Campi was succeeded in the office of Pastor, by Fr. Richard Piccioni, who in 1939 had set up the paintings of the Way of the Cross, the work of a Professor Charles Donati. These were established in remembrance of a Parish Mission preached there in March of the same year. The work was begun in May and completed in September: the Way of the Cross was blessed by Cardinal Schuster, on November 1. And in 1940, this same Professor Donati began the decoration of the Church, beginning with the transept and from the apse, and this work was completed in 1941. Already in 1936 there had been constructed in the Church, the new altar of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, and the large court-yard was set up, completing the main gate on Via Goldoni. In 1935, there was constructed on the corner of Via Soldi and Via Cicognara a little villa that was rented out and used as a little store. In 1936, the Sisters of Mercy of Savona were engaged for the kitchen and laundry.<sup>408</sup>

In Rome at Holy Cross Church in 1938, a new pulpit was constructed on a design left by the Architect Leonori, which was completed in 1940, with a stair way of access in the same style. There also in 1939, there were installed colored windows for the central nave, and in 1940, windows with scenes from sacred history were installed in the sanctuary and the apse.<sup>409</sup> In 1939, then, with the authorization of the Holy See, there was sold a part of the land on Via Flaminia, and with the revenue that accrued, there was constructed the Oratory of Our Lady of Peace, with various floors above, that served as the new residence for the Community.

In Udine in 1939, important renovations on the College were completed for a better arrangement in the kitchen and laundry, and other work in the theater, in order to improve the building<sup>410</sup>. Negotiations also got underway to obtain the legalization of the schools [both the Trade School as well as the Scientific Junior College]. Following an evaluation by the government, there was obtained a ministerial decree which granted this approval, with the right of conducting the examinations at the school,

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<sup>407</sup> In January 1938, a Mrs. Bianca Ceetti left in her will to the Apostolic School a piece of land in the country, situated near San Martino Buon Albergo, near Verona. This was sold by order of the Italian Government in 1951.

<sup>408</sup> In 1934, there began the publication of a monthly Parish Bulletin, with the title: *The Smile of the Cross*. In 1941, there was established in the Church the Association of the Perpetual Way of the Cross, which was aggregated to the primary cell in Rome.

<sup>409</sup> In 1940, there was also published a monograph on *The Church of Holy Cross, in the Flaminio Quarter*, written by Sir Guido Bosi, who illustrated the works of art contained in the Church. In 1936, there was adopted as the Parish Bulletin, *The Observer of Sunday*, a weekly publication, with a page reserved for the local parish.

<sup>410</sup> Already in 1936, while celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Recreation Center, there was dissolved that Society for Stocks and Bonds that had been established for the management of the Rex Movie. At this time, its administration was taken over by the House.

beginning with that very year. After another inspection, six of our own teachers obtained the necessary documentation for teaching in the middle schools.<sup>411</sup>

In 1941, also the middle school of Gemona achieved government approval. In that House in 1937, Fr. Albert Pancheri had transformed the theater into the Oratory, dedicating it to St. Therese of the Child Jesus. In 1939 he was able to recover the ownership of the House, receiving the stocks and bonds of the *Juventus Society*, with the obligation of paying out 43,259.50 Lira in 10 annual installments.<sup>412</sup> In the same year, there was also constructed a new wing of the building for class rooms.

**90.** Let us also recall that in 1938, there arrived a request for a House in Marseilles, where there was offered the direction of an orphanage, which the children of Italians there wanted to open under the sublime patronage of the Italian government. The offering was happily accepted as an occasion which permitted some expansion outside of Italy: and Fr. Fantozzi was sent to the place, for which the Superiors had set aside some capital to bring about the foundation. He examined the situation close at hand, its concrete conditions, he spoke with the Italian Consul, and with the Local Bishop, and returned convinced that it could be a success. As a result, it was accepted by the General Council, and it was agreed to for September 1939. However, in that month, the Second World War broke out, involving also France. So all further negotiations were stopped.

In 1939 the Founder's Cause of Beatification took another step forward. Following the proposal of Fr. Ferdinand Antonelli, OFM, the General Relator of the Historical Section of the Congregation of Rites, Fr. Joseph Stofella was called to Rome. After a few personal meetings with Fr. Antonelli, Fr. Stofella was given the task to seek out and to illustrate the documents which could serve to shed some light on the person of Fr. Bertoni, and to strengthen the proofs regarding his virtues, which from the long Process still did not look convincing.<sup>413</sup> It was then that Fr. Stofella began gathering the documentation helpful to the Cause, even copying over some of the documents that had been deposited in the Sacred Congregation of Rites. He worked to shed light on the individual documents, publishing them, then, based on these. A Series of 6 or so, Historical Notes regarding the life of the Founder. These were published in the **BERTONIANO**, between 1940 and 1942.

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<sup>411</sup> Worthy of mention here is the fact that the Director of the House, Fr. Anthony Presacco, on November 22, 1939, returning from Cividale, the train on which he was traveling, crashed into the Tower because of the damage caused by the rain to the bridge. Many were killed on impact, very few were left uninjured, and Fr. Presacco was among these. To this day, no one knows how – he suffered only some minor bruises.

<sup>412</sup> The entire debt was paid off in 1944.

<sup>413</sup> The Minutes of the various stages in this Process, following the counsel of the Promoter General of the faith, were handed over to the Historical Section in 1931, for its judgment on the historical value of the documents included in the Process. The Historical Section had considered it necessary to compile a Position paper that would illustrate the person of Fr. Bertoni.

**91.** In 1938, Fr. Paul Zanini, so entrusted by the Superior General, conducted the Canonical Visitation for the Houses of North America. Here there were continually noted the spiritual rewards harvested by our Fathers through their work in the apostolate. In Springfield, on Sundays it became necessary to use even the basement of the Church, as the upper Church was insufficient for the parishioners.<sup>414</sup> For the same reason in Pittsfield in 1938, the basement of the Church served as a Chapel for the service of the faithful. Here, too, in 1940, there was inaugurated a new organ, and in 1941, the Church was re-done and its façade was cleaned up. Still in Pittsfield in 1938, there was purchased a good sized piece of land, and a hall for the youth was opened which served also for parish gatherings.

In Lynn, in 1938 the new Holy family Church was inaugurated. In White Plains in 1941, the lateral naves of Mount Carmel Church were decorated, and colored windows were installed, that produced a beautiful effect: in 1939 the basement was changed over into use as a theater.

In Waltham in 1937, there was inaugurated a new students' chapel. In the following year, on January 20, a violent fire broke out in the house that destroyed a good part of one of the buildings. It became necessary to send some of the aspirants home for a while until the repairs could be completed. Here, too, in 1939, there was instituted a Society that was committed to collecting funds for the support of the student house.<sup>415</sup>

The number of the students continued to increase, and not all of them could be housed properly in Waltham, due to the structure of the houses. Therefore, in 1940, the Community purchased a magnificent estate called 'Elm Bank' in Wellesley, not very far from Waltham, that it might serve as a House of Philosophy and Theology. This was certainly one of the more beautiful properties in the entire area, with over 70 acres of land, some of it cultivated into gardens, sport fields, and partly a place of gigantic and beautiful trees. On three sides it was boarded by the Charles River. In the center, was the magnificent brick House of a striking construction, with 50 rooms in it. The students came there in the month of July.

In that same month, there was also acquired the property of Hinsdale MA, in the Berkshire Hills, near Pittsfield, that would serve as a vacation place for these same Professed Students. They would spend the summers there, beginning in 1939.

**92.** In Brazil in March of 1938, there was opened a new House in Ribeirão Preto, a city of about 80,000 inhabitants. For two years, the local Bishop allowed the premises of the Diocesan Seminary for the use of our men: the students of Philosophy and Theology were sent there, to which in 1939, there was added the Novitiate, being transferred there from Rio Claro. Afterwards, a large tract of land was purchased on

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<sup>414</sup> In 1941, a Mission Exhibition was held in the Springfield Auditorium, in which our Mission in Yih sien was well represented by a booth that received the praise of the local newspapers.

<sup>415</sup> In 1936, there was established among the Professed Students a kind of Mission Club for the Stigmatine Missions. In 1940, on the occasion of the Mission Sunday, they organized a show, exhibiting 200 mission magazines.

which the Student House would be built. In 1941, the region began publishing the Bulletin, *A Friendly Voice*.

In August of 1938, there was opened a new House in Formosa in Goiás, with the simultaneous responsibility for the care of Planaltina and Cristalina, situated 40 and 180 kilometers respectively, from Formosa: Frs. Angelo Pozzani and Charles Mazzero were sent to there. The territory assigned to them was enormous: just the Commune of Formosa itself measured some 10,000 square kilometers.

At São Caetano in October of the same year, the Auxiliary Bishop, Dom José de Alfonseca e Silva, blessed the Chapel of the Rosary in the new Church, inaugurating at the same time in an official manner, the façade<sup>416</sup>: in the following year the ceiling of the Church was re-done so that the entire undertaking could be said to have been completed. In 1939 there was inaugurated the Chapels of Our Lady of Lourdes and of the Holy Family: there were renovated some rooms for our Confreres. The parochial school was opened, and the equipment was installed for it to serve as a movie house for the children of the Catechism classes.

In Ituiutaba in 1938 there were undertaken the preparations to construct the new Mother Church, when in October a fire broke out which entirely destroyed the old building. Immediately a chapel was established and was used on week days. For Sundays, they used the secondary Church of our Lady of Abadia. A Commission was set up that would occupy itself with the re-construction of the mother Church. On March 19, 1939, there was cemented in place the corner-stone and the re-construction got underway: the Church was completed and inaugurated in 1942. In the meantime in 1938, the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles arrived, to open a College there with a school for young girls. This had been a long-nourished hope, and already in 1937, our Fathers undertook the discussions with this end in mind, with the Missionary Franciscans of Egypt, and then with the Sisters of St. Joseph in Venice. In January 1939, there was drawn up an Agreement between the Sisters of St. Charles and the Parish. In March, the College opened and was named for St. Therese.

Moreover, bringing back to life an old plan, our Fathers took up again the old labors of Fr. Joseph Tondin, who had begun years before, that of St. Joseph's College for young men. The hope was to open it in April of 1940. In the first year, the young men would have attended St. Therese's College, and then they would have had their own school. In October of 1939, the project was approved by the Provincial Council and by Fr. Paul Zanini who was in Brazil to conduct the Canonical Visitation, in the name of the Superior General. The College was really opened in 1941, with the primary school.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> In September 1938, the Archbishop, Dom Duarte Leopoldo e Silva, had conducted a Visitation of the Parish and expressed words of sincere praise and admiration for this new Church. On November 13, he died very unexpectedly, and was succeeded by his Auxiliary, who took possession of the Diocese on September 17, 1939.

<sup>417</sup> In the first year, there were 37 students, of whom six, were our own internal students

**93.** In 1940, January 28, there was celebrated in Rome the Golden Priestly Jubilee of Fr. J. B. Tomasi. A solemn Mass was celebrated in St. Agatha's, in the presence of numerous personalities from among the clergy and the laity. There was a large number of friends and admirers.

In the same year 1940, the General Chapter was convoked for the election to the major offices in the Congregation: therefore, on November 7 of the previous year, the Very Rev. Superior General, had convoked the General Chapter for Rome in the General House, opening on May 7. In preparation for this, he had presented to the Holy See, also in the name of his Council, an Instance, in which observing that while the election of the Capitulars had already been held in the manner prescribed by the Constitutions, and that there are supposed to be 40 Capitulars present for the Chapter, 15 of these men would be coming from the Americas. This would present a serious difficulty, both for the expenses of the trip, as well as for the impossibility of substituting for the absence of so many duly elected Delegates. The petition submitted by our Father General was that in the dividing the Congregation into electoral Circumscriptions, there might be established as the minimum, the number of 30 priests in each of these, rather than 12. The Sacred Congregation, on May 4, conceded this request, ordering that the Congregation should insert into the Constitutions this modification into the text of the Constitutions. As a consequence to this, the Chapter delegates would number 21, and these all gathered on the established day and place, with the exception of Fr. Mantovani, the Ordinary Visitor of Brazil, and Fr. Baretella, an elected Delegate from North America, both of whom justified their absences with reasons presented in good time and these were recognized as legitimate.

A serious question presented itself to the Chapter: whether the time had come to divide the Congregation into Provinces. Already in the Chapter of 1934, the hope of the establishment of Provinces for the two regions of North and South America had arisen: for this reason, the out-going Administration had prepared a plan of modifications to introduce into the Constitutions in the case that the decision would be reached to divide into Provinces.

Furthermore, it seemed that the time had indeed come, when it was taken into consideration how difficult it was for the Institute, divided by enormous distances could remain much longer without these divisions: how difficult it was, for example, for the various regions to have a proper representation in the General Chapter – and further, that each region could stand somewhat by itself with a student house sufficient to meet its needs, and being capable of having its own schools.

As a result, in the very first Session, the Chapter decided to elect a Commission to study this problem, taking into their consideration also the outline of possible Constitutions for Provinces, that had been prepared by the out-going Administration, and then to proceed to the election of the Major Superiors in a preliminary session, in which it would be possible to take into consideration the conclusions of the Commission itself.

This preliminary session took place in the afternoon of May 9: in it the Commission stated that it recognized as just the principle of dividing the Institute into Provinces, from the mere fact that this already existed as the real state of the situation. However, after taking into consideration the various problems that would come to the fore in the realization of this proposal, its conclusion was that the Congregation really was not quite ready for an immediate establishment of Provinces. The Commission, therefore, proposed to give the responsibility to the new General Council to prepare a more thorough proposal of possible Constitutions for the provinces, that would then be submitted for the examination of the Confreres of all the Houses. Then, after having received the observations from all, the Council then would be able to draw up a definitive text to be submitted to the Holy See, in the hopes of having an approval within the first three years of the new term of the General Council. After all this, then the Provinces might be established.

The conclusions of this Commission were unanimously approved by the General Chapter, which on May 10<sup>th</sup>, then proceeded to the elections. Fr. John B. Zaupa was elected as Superior General. His Councilors were: Frs. Fiorio [Vicar], Albino Sella, Dominici [Secretary]; Dalla Via. The Procurator was Fr. J. B. Tomasi, and the Economist was Fr. Fortunato Pedot.

In the subsequent sessions, the Chapter took under consideration the juridical situation of the Provinces within the context of Constitutions, in order to define the fundamental lines in an outline to present to the confreres before its definitive redaction. Lastly, a number of matters dealing with regular discipline were studied carefully, as was the organization of the student house, the formation of young priests, the conformity of direction of our various works, the unity of the religious spirit to be conserved in the various regions of the Institute.

As for the establishment of Provinces, the Chapter decided: (1) to give for the first three years of the next six year term to the Visitors of the two American regions faculties as close to their being Provincials as is possible, obtaining, if necessary, the authorization of the Holy See; (2) to entrust to the General Council the task of drawing up the plan of Constitutions for the Provinces and to provide a copy of these for the Directors of Houses, so that the Confreres might have a look at them and discuss them in the House Chapter, with the obligation then of referring all to the General Council; (3) the same Council, having drawn up the definitive plan on the basis of the observations received, might present this to the Holy See, and then seek the division of the Institute into 'Pro-Provinces'. All this should be done in a manner that in the first three years the Pro-Provinces might be able to live these, and so function until the next General Chapter, to which it will pertain to judge on the definitive establishment of the Provinces, also on the basis of the experiment lived.

The Chapter, furthermore, also expressed the wish that there be prepared a *Program of Studies* for the organization of our Student Houses, and that all the Students actually live in the Student Houses. The Chapter further proposed that there be made an accurate theological study of the **Glorious Stigmata of Our Lord**, that might be employed in supporting the petition to present to the Holy See to obtain the Titular Feast of the Institute, and in the meantime that there be sought, under the title



of devotion, for the Institute the Mass and Office of the Sacred Wounds in the time of Lent. Lastly, that there be elected a Commission that should collect and weigh the practices and the usages which make up the good spirit of the Congregation, to which all the members ought to find inspiration in it.

**94.** Meanwhile, since Italy had also entered into the World War [June 10, 1940], and as the communications with the two Americas became ever more problematic, there were obtained from the Holy See special faculties for the Visitors of those regions. By means of these they would be able with the vote of their own Councils, to take and act upon those necessary deliberations validly, even without having received the consent of the Superior General in those cases in which the Constitutions required it. This would hold for whenever it might prove impossible to see this, or to receive authorization for necessary decisions in good time.

In conformity with the Capitular Deliberation, all the students who at the time, were living in other houses, were called to Verona, to be housed at the Most Holy Trinity.<sup>418</sup> However, in the state of war, to remaining the city became dangerous, due to the frequent air raids. Hence, in the middle of June, all the students were sent out to Sezano. The House of the Most Holy Trinity was taken over by the Red Cross which set a Hospital up there, to which Fr. J. B. Pelanda was named Chaplain. Later, the House was occupied by military personnel, and there was established there a territorial Hospital, appointing as Chaplain there Fr. Gino Righetti. Later, when he was transferred to Greece, Fr. Julius Pedot took his place<sup>419</sup>.

Other Confreres called into the service as Military Chaplains were: Frs. Marino Coati, Costante Gosetti, Ferruccio Tribos, and for a time, Fr. Alziro Furlanis. The Students and Brothers, with respect to the dispositions of the Concordat, were not called into arms.

Meanwhile, immediately after the celebration of the General Chapter, in June of 1940, before the lines of communication were definitively disrupted, the American

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<sup>418</sup> Let us recall here that in 1938, the Command of Military Intelligence had requested the Superiors of the Congregation, to acquire a part of the land of the Most Blessed Trinity, to extend their present barracks. The General Council, imagining, on the one hand, a possible further sequestering that would be forced; and then, on the other hand, the overall general depreciation that the building would have suffered if only one part of it had been sold, in January 1940, responded that the Community had no intention to sell the property. However, in the case that it might be obliged to sell, it would sell the entire property altogether, but not just a part of it. And this would always be under the condition of being able to realize a sum sufficient to acquire another equivalent residence. These discussions went on for several months, but then with the declaration of war, there was no further word about it.

<sup>419</sup> Later, the Military Hospital was removed from there, because the locality was in danger, since it was near the railroad line and station. The locality was then taken over as a military prison: and it was during this period that use of it that the building was struck and destroyed by an air raid in 1945.

Students who were still in Italy were sent back to America, and with them, also Fr. Paul Zanini<sup>420</sup>.

**95.** After the Chapter, Fr. Charles Zanotti was named Visitor for North America and he moved his residence to Waltham, to the Student House.

For Brazil, as Visitor Fr. Louis Fernandes was appointed. In that region, in 1941, there were opened the House of Palmeiras and Caconde: in December of the preceding year, there had been opened that of Ipamery which was then closed in February of 1942.

In 1940, the Archbishop of São Paulo offered our Fathers a parish that was being formed, dedicated to Our Lady of Good Counsel, in the Alto da Mooca, and this was assigned to Fr. Victor Nardon, in the early months of 1941.

In China, the Missionaries struggled against the difficulties in that region, and not being able to work in the territories of the Districts they sought to intensify their labors in the places where they resided. At Yih sien there were constructed two new schools, for boys and girls, and a new infirmary. There was also established a rest home for the elderly, who then were transferred to Liangkochwang in July of that same year. In 1940, a plan was developed to construct at Yih sien a new Cathedral and all the necessary preparations were made. However, during the month of June, a good part of the old building simply collapsed, and the thought gained ground that it would be now necessary to lengthen this some meters, but it would be necessary to wait for better times for the new construction.<sup>421</sup> In the city, the Japanese commanded, but throughout the outskirts the area was infested with brigands. The Monsignor himself was on a trip through the Mission had been captured, and then released.

Also Liangkochwang had been re-taken by the Japanese. In that area the Mission had two internal schools for Catechumens, with 40 male Catechumens being prepared and 80 women also studying there. The Seminary numbered 40 candidates. After the departure of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart, there was transferred there the Rest Home, with its 50 aged people in residence, being assisted by Franciscan Sisters. In 1941, a beautiful Church had been built there.

In Lai-shoei also the work was paralyzed by the reds who occupied the entire District, except for the city. Here, in 1940, there had been acquired a piece of land in a central location and to this the Missionaries transferred. In the old residence, there was opened an internal School for women Catechumens and there were about 50 of them there, under the direction of the Sisters of the Sacred Heart. To add to the misery, caused by the war, and the scourges brought by the brigands, there were

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<sup>420</sup> In 1938 and 1939 Fr. J. B. Pelanda went to the United States for a few months, in order to preach to the Italian communities. In February 1940, Fr. Adami also went, and he was blocked there by the war, and could only come back to Italy in 1946.

<sup>421</sup> On June 23, 1940, the Religious Superior Fr. Valerio Tomasi, celebrated the Silver Jubilee of his Priesthood. In the same year, Fr. J. B. Carnovali went to Italy to prepare for the General Chapter and he had to remain there due to the World War. Also in 1940, Fr. Paul Daly was sent to the Regional Seminary at Suanguafu, in order to teach Dogmatic Theology there.

added in that area the torrential rains and the floods that destroyed the harvest: the Missionaries were called upon to provide the sustenance of that poor population who made haste to the Mission.

The other two residences of Shan-nan and Kao-she-chwang had to be closed. In 1941, an attempt was made to reopen that of Lai-juen which had been taken over again by the Japanese, and Frs. Simone Juen and Francis Liu were sent there. The former died there on January 1, 1942, and his place was taken by Fr. Paul Ly. However, these two had to abandon the Station and make their way to Yih sien in 1943: the residence was thus closed a second time.

**96.** Meanwhile the General Council <sup>422</sup> was busy in carrying out the tasks it had received from the last General Chapter. It prepared the outline for the Constitutions for the Provinces, and sent this for the examination of all the Houses: it received back pertinent observations, drew up a definitive text, and submitted it to the Holy See for approbation.

At the same time, it presented the petition for the faculty to divide the Congregation in Pro-Provinces, in the sense understood by the General Chapter. However, the Sacred Congregation of Religious responded that the Holy See did not ever grant the establishment of 'Pro-Provinces', or Provinces *as an experiment*. Therefore, the General Council, believing that it was interpreting the desires of the Confreres, presented a new petition for the establishment of three Provinces: the Italian, North American and Brazilian.

It then petitioned the sacred Congregation of Rites for the faculty to pray the Office and Mass of the Five Wounds – this faculty was granted on March 3, 1941, assigning the day of the Feast to be that of Friday, after Sexagesima Sunday. <sup>423</sup>

In January 1941, there gathered in Rome at the General House, under the presidency of the Superior General, the Directors of the Houses of Italy, to treat of a few matters regarding the Italian region. Among others, there were taken two decisions; the first, to require of our students in temporary profession, a year of practical apprenticeship to be lived in some of our Houses <sup>424</sup>, in which, while

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<sup>422</sup> From their first days in office after the Chapter, Fr. Albino Sella had been invited by telegram to come to Italy, as he had been elected a General Councilor. At first, even though he was in poor health, hope was entertained that he would come. In the meantime, with the permission of the Sacred Congregation of Religious, Fr. Cornelius Fabro was appointed General Councilor for the time being. When it became known that Fr. Sella would not be coming, in his place Fr. Denis Martinis was named, who arrived in Rome in June 1942.

<sup>423</sup> In conformity to a desire of the General Chapter, in 1945, Fr. Ignazio Bonetti was invited to prepare a theological study on the Stigmata, or Wounds of Our Lord, a work that he prepared as the theme of his doctoral thesis in Sacred Theology, and he presented it to the Institute of the ANGELICUM, in Rome in 1949. Following this, it was printed and came out in 1952, edited by the Padano Institute of Graphic Arts, in Rovigo, with the title: *The Stigmata of the Passion*.

<sup>424</sup> **NB: Translator's Note for the web-site:** This was simply a practice lived by the Jesuits, and incorporated into the *Original Constitutions* by St. Gaspar - these First Formation

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Experiments/Experiences had as their purpose the preparation of ever more capable Apostolic Missionaries:

**THIRD PART**  
**The Second Probation**  
**Chapter I**

**The Time after Novitiate**

40. Those who are still to apply themselves to the required studies, must first become well versed in the Humanities and in the study of languages for at least two years.

Then, they will learn the philosophical disciplines over a three year course.

Afterwards, Scholastic Theology will be taught to them for four years.

Lastly, two or three more years are granted to them for the private study of the Fathers and for reviewing the more serious areas of study.

41. Those who entered already endowed with the necessary doctrine, upon having completed their Novitiate, will be perfected in it. They will also be tested in applying this through their ministry toward their neighbor.

42. In this time, through varied and new experiments and testing, each will show himself to be formed, so that his piety, humility and prudence will be evident to all, especially to the Superiors.

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**FIFTH PART**  
**THE PROMOTION**

**OF THE CANDIDATES OF THE INSTITUTE**

**Chapter 1**

**Those to be promoted to the Priestly Office**

69. They will not wear any clerical garb until after high school has been completed.

70. They will attend class until their twenty-fifth year, and only then receive Minor Orders.

71. They will apply themselves to the study of those doctrines and liberal arts which are cultivated among us, and in which their own native talent is the most inclined, until their thirtieth year. In this time, they will be initiated into Sacred Orders and into the Priesthood.

72. While not omitting any study of those matters in which they are the more proficient and which are the more necessary, gradually they will be exercised in preaching in our own churches, in teaching catechism to children and to the unlettered, in hearing confessions of children and adolescents.

73. Then, they will be assigned to the hearing of confessions of men of all walks of life, and to giving sermons also in the churches of the city where they dwell, in giving retreats and the like.

74. Sometimes they will be given to the Missionaries as their helpers, and at times they will hear the confessions of women.

75. Then they will more often hear the confessions of women, and serve ordinarily in the work of the Missions.

76. Finally, they will accept the task of directing the Missions, and will give themselves over totally to the salvation of souls.

[Some of the candidates envisioned here, would already have been ordained Priests. When all these experiments/experiences have been successfully met, at the end of their Studies – there would still be one more year, the *Schola Affectus*, prior to ultimate commitment to the Priesthood [to be continued at the bottom of the next page]:

**EIGHTH PART**  
**ON THE PROMOTION**  
**OF THE STUDENTS**

suspending their regular studies, under the direction of one of the Priests, assigned for this, they might dedicate themselves to special studies, to scholastic assistance, to the supervision of the young men in our Colleges, and to teaching Christian Doctrine. And all of this was to form better their religious and ecclesiastical vocations, and to give them experience in some of the ecclesiastical ministries, helping to prepare them to face better the dangers of the active life.<sup>425</sup>

The second decision was that of attempting a foundation in southern Italy, in order to expand as well into those regions. In 1940 two foundations had been requested: one at Spoleto in Umbria, where the Commune offered the direction of the 'National Umberto I<sup>o</sup> Association'. The other offer was for Isernia in the Molise region, where the Bishop offered a Diocesan Boarding House that was already active. Some close hand investigations were made in both places, from which it became apparent that the Congregation would have had to assume a very serious financial burden, without any guarantee that it would succeed. As a result, these requests were not accepted.

**97.** Following this meeting of the Directors, and heeding the wish that they expressed, the Superior General entrusted Fr. Louis Fantozzi to seek a foundation in the South. He left Rome on March 2, 1941, and stayed about a month and a half in

## Chapter 1

### On the Final Formation after the Completion of Studies

**152.** Once their studies have been completed, the students will be proven still for another year, both in the exercises of devotion and humility, as well as in the ministries of the Congregation. This is in view of rekindling some fervor for virtue, which could have grown tepid because of literary studies.

**153.** This probation might be conducted either in the same place as the Novices, if their number is small, or in a separate house, removed from the customary contacts of their friends and relatives, either personally, or by letter.

**154.** If their number should warrant it, these confreres will gather in the same house under one Instructor, who will be suited for this office due to his own authority and experience in governing.

## Chapter 2

### On the Nature of this Formation

**155.** This Instructor will take care to form all the students spiritually, and will explain the universal nature of our Institute, on a few assigned days of each week, as well as making clear to them the practical way of helping their neighbors' salvation.

**156.** The Instructor might also privately impose penances and mortifications, which he may judge would lead to their perfection. However, whatever pertains to the external discipline, he will do all only after having consulted the Superior of the House, in case their dwelling be separated from the house of the community.

**157.** Should it happen that any one of the candidates prove to be less than satisfactory in this period of formation, he would be sent away and put off until another time.

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<sup>425</sup> This Deliberation was tried for three years as an experiment. In practice, it was soon noted that this apprenticeship did not reach the desired purposes, and consequently, the General Council deliberated to abolish it.

Naples, seeking from the ecclesiastical authorities any field of activity whatsoever for our Institute: parish work, the care of a Students' Boarding House, an Oratory, Recreation Center. All his efforts seemed fruitless, and on April 25<sup>th</sup>, he presented himself to the Archbishop of Salerno. His Excellency, once he heard the reason for Fr. Fantozzi's coming to him, was visibly moved, and saw this as a call from Providence, for the salvation of a Parish in Battipaglia. On the very next day, he accompanied Fr. Fantozzi to the place, and without much ado, they remained in agreement that as soon as would be possible, some of our Fathers would make their way there to that very important center, and to work for the well-being of the youth there. He was already looking for some kind of fitting accommodations for our men, when very unexpectedly, the local pastor died. Thus, the Archbishop offered to our men the direction of the Parish. On May 15, Fr. Fantozzi established himself there, and was then followed by two other Confreres. On June 24, the Agreement was signed between the Archbishop and the Congregation, On July 11, Fr. Michael Madussi arrived there, and was presented as the first Pastor, to whom the Archbishop handed over the parish officially on August 10.

**98.** Meanwhile, on October 10 of that year, 1941, the sacred Congregation of Religious gave to the Superior General the faculty of establishing the three Provinces, and on November 28, approved for a seven year period of experimentation the Constitutions that pertained to these. The General Council decided to re-print the little booklet of the Constitutions, and so they petitioned the Holy See to be able to introduce a few modifications into them, in order to clarify the text and to make it more in conformity with the laws of the Church: this permission was granted, and the booklet was re-printed.

The division into Provinces did not really begin yet by right, but existed as a fact. The North American and Brazilian regions for some years, had considered themselves to be Provinces, and at long last, due to the exceptional circumstances deriving from the state of the World War, they had received special faculties in order to govern themselves independently from the General Curia. To set also the Italian region on the way to living and acting as a Province, the General Council deliberated to grant them a certain economic autonomy. Thus, on October 7, 1941, there was named a Council of Administration for the Houses of Italy, with the responsibility of watching over the administration of the Houses, and to assure the regular contributions assigned to the different Houses, for the expenses of the whole Province.<sup>426</sup>

Special difficulties arose in the establishment of the two American Province, because the rapidly deteriorating political-military conditions had interrupted all communications. These did not allow either to receive the necessary information for the designation of the Provincial responsibilities: therefore, there was deferred the

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<sup>426</sup> On this occasion, as some provision had to be made for the financial contribution for the establishment of the Provinces, there was also the matter of some contribution to the General Curia, for its general expenses. Thus, the Superior General, as a temporary measure and until such time as it could be made permanent legislation, decided that each Priest of the Congregation should apply five Masses per month according to the mind of the General Curia.

execution of the Pontifical Rescript for those regions, in the hopes that the conditions might improve. Finally, since the first three years had indeed passed, that had been granted by the General Chapter, and since there was not even a hint of bettering the political situation, the General Council on January 21, 1944, declared to the formal establishment of the two Provinces. And the Superior General officially established the Provinces with his Decree of January 23, naming the North American Province that of the Holy Souses, and Holy Cross Province in Brazil.

The first Superior Provincials were: Fr. Charles Zanotti for North America – and Fr. Louis Fernandes for Brazil.

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**End of Translation of**

***Breve Cronaca,***

**Volume 2.**

## Appendix by the English Translator <sup>427</sup>

### The Ignatian Apprenticeship for

#### Professed Students:

#### The ‘Scholastics’.

### **[A] Ignatian Influence: Part IV: cc. I-XVII, nn. 307-509**

#### Premise

[1] This long Part IV in the Ignatian ***Constitutions*** covers Fr. Bertoni’s ideals expressed for Temporary Profession after Novitiate [CF ## 40-46]; **Progress** in the ***Spiritual*** Life [CF ## 47-48] and **Progress** in Ecclesiastical ***Doctrines***, in the Program of Studies [CF ## 49-68]; ***Apostolic Progress*** [CF ## 72-76].

[2] The Stigmatine Founder’s source here would be much more that of **F. Suarez, SJ**, and his commentary, ***De Religione Societatis Iesu***. However, most of the values expressed here by Fr. Bertoni do refer back to the Ignatian ***Constitutions***.

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### **1. A Lengthy Development of this Extended Part IV for the Jesuit *Constitutions***

a. The Jesuit Colleges and Universities were a providential gift to the Church in the post-Tridentine era. The central objective for this wonderful mission, however, is precisely as the title suggests: “The Instruction of Those Who are Retained in the Society, in Learning and in Other Means of Helping their Fellowmen”.

b. This is an orderly process:

Part I: The Admission of those who are suited;

Part II: The Dismissal of those who are not;

Part III: The Spiritual Progress after this selection.

And now Part IV describes how the last group can be helped to make Academic Progress and Progress in the Apostolic Mission, their intellectual and pastoral formation.

c. The Jesuit ***Constitutions*** in Part IV are divided this way:

- cc. 1-10: Colleges;

- cc. 11-17: Universities

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<sup>427</sup> It is not a part of the Breve Cronaca.



The style here is basically that experienced by Ignatius and Companions at the University of Paris - Polanco did his studies in Padua <sup>428</sup>.

## 2. The Colleges, a Jesuit “Need”:

a. Part IV for Ignatius is the only one preceded by a *Proemium*, a Preamble. The author found it necessary to **explain the reason for studies and the colleges**: they are a requirement for the Jesuit vocation. The End of the Society [aiding our fellow human beings spiritually] requires in addition to the example [witness] of one’s life, learning [competence] and a method of expounding this <sup>429</sup>. The idea here is that after self-abnegation has been achieved by those admitted, and spiritual progress which is the foundation of religious life, it is now necessary that **the building of their learning and manner of employing it**, is a vital means for taking care of this essential Apostolic Mission. Since it is difficult to find “good” men, who are also “learned”, the Colleges/Universities came into being and **provided a “seed-bed” for Jesuit vocations** [cf. CSJ n. 308].

b. This “**difficult** vocation” is such for the Apostolic, Missionary life: by traveling through the various regions of the world at the order of the Vicar of Christ: to preach, hear confessions, and **use all other means** it can with the grace of God. These numbers need to be compared with that *Declaration* regarding the Fourth Vow, of Part VII, **On the Missions** <sup>430</sup> - this is the meaning behind the opening number of the *Formula* of the entire Jesuit *Constitutions*.

c. The *Formula* **does** open the *Constitutions*, **with** the statement that this vocation takes “all the strength” of the members. This is an **arduous and difficult vocation** [cf. our **CF # 185**], which the early members knew from experience: it demands great labors and self-abnegation <sup>431</sup>. “Virtue is not enough” - **learning, adequate intellectual formation is needed** - and there is this realistic note: **those who are good and learned, are few**. The “**learned**” were those who had been to the university - the “**good**” were the “**upright priests**”: and even fewer of these would be willing to assume this challenging apostolic abnegation. This fact led the early Jesuits to gear their thoughts towards colleges and universities, where they might derive a steady supply of future Jesuits, **both “good and learned”** candidates.

d. The purpose and character of the Colleges was explained - a clear balance was needed. On the one hand, the houses of the Society are not geared simply to the pursuit of studies, but rather they are to be dedicated to labor in the vineyard of the Lord. Yet, it became most apparent that they needed a rarified atmosphere to find “good and learned” candidates. They keenly felt the need of preparing laborers in this vineyard, and the colleges could provide a “seedbed” for this: **Spes messis in semine!** [to quote the old adage]. So, the first purpose of the founding of these colleges is to form young men to be “good” **AND** “learned”.

<sup>428</sup>cf. deAldama, *Constitutions... An Introductory Commentary...* o.c., p. 145.

<sup>429</sup>cf. CSJ, nn. 307, 308 - cf. also *Examen* n. 108.

<sup>430</sup>cf. CSJ n. 605.

<sup>431</sup>cf. CSJ n. 308.

e. These “seed-beds” immediately felt the need for qualified teachers - they would need a certain number of teachers <sup>432</sup> - this ministry must remain gratuitous <sup>433</sup>. It is principally for this reason that “curacies of souls, obligations to celebrate Masses, and similar duties” should not be accepted in the Colleges. There must remain always the **necessary freedom for the Apostolic Mission** <sup>434</sup>.

f. Gratuity is also the reason for not accepting obligations to supply a preacher, or a confessor, or even a lecturer in theology <sup>435</sup>. This is expressly noted since **the teaching of theology is more appropriate to the Society** - Ignatius agreed with secular subjects, with a view to further education. In the Universities, the Society obliges itself to teach the appropriate subjects, including theology.

### 3. The Scholastics: Spiritual Progress [cf. CF Fourth Part, c. 1, nn. 47-48]:

a. To be accepted, they need these qualifications: they should be without impediments noted above - and give reasonable hope that they will be fit laborers in the vineyard of the Lord <sup>436</sup>. Secondly, they should have expressed the promise, or intention of serving God in this Institute <sup>437</sup>.

b. The physical health of the Scholastics is a prime concern - only three points emphasized here, as more appropriate for the time of studies: abstaining from study when it could be harmful; sufficient sleep; and moderation in mental labor <sup>438</sup>. Fr. Bertoni treats this in **c. 6** of the next **Part** <sup>439</sup>.

c. The Spiritual Welfare:

1.] Two extremes need to be kept in mind [nn. 340; 582]:

- on the one hand, care must be taken that through fervor in study the Scholastics do not grow cool in their love of virtue and the religious life:

In regard to spiritual matters, the same order of procedure will be used with those who are received in the colleges, as long as they are still going through probations, as that which is observed with those who are received in the houses. But after they have been approved and while they are applying themselves to their studies, just as care must be taken that through fervor in study they do not grow cool in their love of true virtues and of religious life, so also during that time there will not be much place [cf. nn. 362; 363] for mortifications and long prayers and meditations [cf. nn. 340-345, rules for those in formation; and cf. nn. 582-584] for those already formed]. For their devoting themselves to learning, which they acquire with pure intention of

<sup>432</sup>cf. CSJ, nn. 325; 398-399; 441-442.

<sup>433</sup>cf. CSJ, nn. 478; 565.

<sup>434</sup>cf. CSJ nn. 324; 588-589.

<sup>435</sup>cf. CSJ, nn. 398-399.

<sup>436</sup>cf. CSJ, n. 334.

<sup>437</sup>cf. CSJ, n. 338.

<sup>438</sup>cf. CSJ, n. 339.

<sup>439</sup>cf. CF, # 59.

serving God and which in a certain way requires the whole man, will be not less, but rather more pleasing to God our Lord during this time of study [cf. n. 361] [n. 340].

In view of the time and approval of their life through which those wait before being admitted among the Professed and even among the formed coadjutors, it is presupposed that they will be men who are spiritual and sufficiently advanced to **run in the path of Christ our Lord** to the extent that their bodily strength and the exterior occupations undertaken through charity and obedience allow. Therefore, in what pertains to **prayer, meditation** and **study** and also in regard to the bodily practices of fasts, vigils and other austerities or penances, it does not seem expedient to give them any other rule than that which discreet charity dictates to them [cf. n. 134], provided that the Confessor should always be informed and also, when a doubt about expediency arises, the superior [cf. nn. 8; 9; 283; 300]. The following statement is the only one which will be made in general. On the one hand, the members should keep themselves alert that the excessive use of these practices may not weaken the bodily energies [cf. nn. 292; 300] and consume time to such an extent that these energies are insufficient for the spiritual help of one's fellow man according to our Institute; and, on the other hand, they should be vigilant that these practices may not be relaxed to such an extent that the spirit grows cold and the human and lower passions grow warm [cf. n. 340] [n. 582].

- During that time of studies, though, there will not be much place for mortifications, long prayers and meditations. The demands of the intellectual and pastoral formation require the whole man. This total sacrifice will not be any the less, but rather - even more pleasing to God than mortifications, prayers, and long meditations already noted - since such commitment flows from a more forceful charity.

2.] Duration and manner of prayer [nn. 342-345]: it is surprising that St. Ignatius, the great Teacher of prayer and personal witness to it - would prescribe only one hour of prayer for scholastics - over and above weekly Confession and daily Mass. This hour includes the following:

- two examinations of conscience, at noon and at night;
- recitation of the Hours of Our Lady [the "Little Office"];
- other prayers according to the devotion of each individual, until the hour is completed.
- it is only in the following **Declarations** [nn. 343; 345] where it is said that at times, some of the scholastics, not obliged to recite the Divine Office, may substitute for the Little Office and other exercises, that of mental prayer and other spiritual exercises <sup>440</sup>:

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<sup>440</sup>Usually *Spiritual Exercises* refers to the course of a 30 day Retreat for which St. Ignatius is most well known. However, "**spiritual exercises**" also refer to the customary expressions of the prayer life of committed Christians, and as described by Ignatius in nn. 342-345.

To go [to Confession and Communion] more frequently than every eight days, should not be permitted, except for special reasons and more because of necessity than of devotion. But, neither shall the reception be deferred beyond eight days without special reasons. For such reasons Mass, too, could be omitted on some days, and with some the period of prayer could be lengthened or shortened. All this will remain within the discretionary power of the Superior.

Although the determined hour, or a little more or less, is taken for the recitation of the Hours of Our Lady, nevertheless in the case of the Scholastics who are not obliged to recite the Divine Office, that hour can more easily be changed at times to meditations and other spiritual exercises by which the hour is filled out, especially with some who do not advance spiritually more by another. This is to be done with the permission, or through the order of their superiors, whose duty it will always be to consider whether, for certain reasons with particular persons, something different is more expedient, in order to carry it out while keeping in view the genuine devotion of the subjects, or of the founder, and also the circumstances of persons, times and places.

For those who do not have experience in spiritual things and desire to be helped in them, some points for meditation and prayer could be proposed to them in the way that seems best for persons of this kind [cf. nn. 277; 279]. The elders, or superiors, will have the right to decide whether or not the Scholastics may recite a part of the Hours, for which they have the assigned hour, during that time of the Mass when the priest is speaking aloud in order that the people may understand him. These superiors should provide for this according to the subjects, places, conditions and times, in the way which seems best to them for greater divine glory... [n. 343].

All of this, and what follows, however, are to be regulated by the Superior. The reason for this insistence on the part of the Saint is his emphasis on the situation of Scholastics “**who are in studies**”, in an intense period of intellectual formation - not of Novices, and not of Religious already formed <sup>441</sup>. It should be noted that Ignatius fixed this norm for the approved Scholastics who had already passed through the “experiences” of the Novitiate, during which they had laid down the proper foundation for self-abnegation [n. 307]. These men had already made the month of the full course of the **Spiritual Exercises** and would be supposed to have emerged as inclined to prayer and devotion. Thus, Ignatius felt there was more need for restraint rather than exhortation.

“Discreet charity”, is sometimes translated “prudent”, and “discerning love” is a phrase characteristic of Ignatius, a figure of speech by which he means the charity exercised by a discreet person, one who exercises natural and supernatural prudence or judgment in his actions. This discreet charity impels him to choose **the objective better course** after all the circumstances have been considered. Ignatius presents discreet charity as a norm of acting [cf. nn. 209; 237; 269; 582]. In his usage, the

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<sup>441</sup>These are treated in Part VI, nn. 582, ff.; the **Religious Life of the Society**

phrase denotes a discernment of spirits, in which he exercised his natural and supernatural prudence with special care<sup>442</sup>.

3.] Contemplatives in Action: daily prayer seems almost reduced to vocal prayer: the praying of the “Little Office”, the Rosary, with other prayers of personal devotion. St. Ignatius, however, is close to St. Teresa of Avila in her esteem of this prayer:

...In regard to the recitation of the Rosary, they should be instructed how to think or meditate about the mysteries which it contains, that they may take part in this exercise with greater attention and devotion...[cf. n. 277] **[n. 345]**<sup>443</sup>.

This prayer needs to be “perfect”, including mental accompaniment. Thus Ignatius would legislate that the Scholastics need to think and meditate the mysteries so that they may take part in this with greater attention and devotion **[n. 345]**. This is more “Ignatian” as it involves the “whole person” - *my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God!* [cf. Ps 83]. As in the Carmelite tradition, the important aspect is always the love that comes to the fore in authentic prayer. In his own personal life, Ignatius was described as having the Lord constantly before one’s eyes. A key Ignatian ideal is **to seek the Lord in all things** [cf. nn. 101, f.; 288].

4.] Renewal of Simple Vows **[nn. 346-347]**: Fr. Bertoni will discuss this in his Sixth Part **[CF ## 83, ff.]**. For St. Ignatius, this served a variety of purposes:

- that the Scholastics would recall their obligation to serve God, and confirm themselves in their vocation **[n. 346]**. This would provide the Society with a greater guarantee of their perseverance. At this time, Scholastics were not obliged to anything more than taking a simple vow of entering the Society;

- fostering devotion was another objective of the renewal of the vows. Hence, Easter and Christmas were chosen, as good occasions in which the men are the more disposed toward God. A triduum of preparation was devised to prepare for these events in the Scholastics’ life.

**4. The Scholastics: Intellectual Progress** **[nn. 351-391]**: [Fr. Bertoni discusses this aspect in his Fourth Part, Progress in Ecclesiastical Doctrines: **[CF cc. 2-6, ## 49-68]**. The central theme of St. Ignatius’ Part IV is the intellectual and pastoral formation. The Jesuit Founder dedicates two chapters to intellectual formation: Chapter 5 **[nn. 351-359]** on the subjects to be taught; c. 6 **[nn. 360-391]**, on the means used for making progress in studies. Then cc. 12-15 **[nn. 446-480]** deal with subject matter, teaching methods, books, courses and degrees.

<sup>442</sup>cf. George E. Ganss, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus*. Translated, with an Introduction and a Commentary. St. Louis: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1970, p. 261, n. 2]; cf. St. Gaspar Bertoni, *Memoriale Privato*, Prolonged prayer is an advantage: (Nov. 16, 1808); Prayer & activity mutually temper one another – (July 12, 1808). **[NB Fr. Bertoni speaks of Charity as ordered: CF ## 187-190; 208; 216; 220; 262; 220].**

<sup>443</sup>cf. St. Teresa of Avila, *The Way of Perfection*, c. 30.

a. Subject Matter: the purpose of all Jesuit learning, acquired through God's favor, is to help the souls of the members of the Institute and those of their fellow man [n. 351] - the whole idea is "**to help souls**". It is to fulfill the function of **sowing and dispensing the divine word** and attending to the spiritual assistance of their neighbors - for this, there is needed a **sufficiency of sound learning** [n. 109: 446].

b. To form priests-apostles: the whole purpose of the educational system is to **imitate the apostles**, and to **provide the church with Apostolic Missionaries**. The Scholastic was called to be a "prophet", i.e., to become an interpreter of Scripture. For this, knowledge of **languages** becomes a necessity. **Latin** opens the door to many of the treasures of the Church. Thus, there develops great **flexibility**: whatever helps the more to fulfill the End in view, viz., the **spiritual help to our neighbor**.

c. "Specialization":

...According to the age, ability, inclination, and basic knowledge which a particular person has, or in accordance with the common good which is hoped for, he could be applied to all these branches or to one or several of them. For one who cannot distinguish himself in all of them, ought to try to do so in the case of some one of them [n. 354].

Not every Scholastic can be eminent in all subjects needed. While a general formation is always required, each person ought to give his best to be distinguished at least in one area of study. This is left to the discretion of the Superiors, noting each one's natural inclinations, aptitudes. This is an entrance requirement: whether they will allow themselves to be directed to what they should study, how long, and the like [cf. n. 109].

d. Theology dominates [n. 446]:

Since the end of the Society and of its studies is to **aid our fellowmen to the knowledge and love of God and to the salvation of their souls** [cf. nn. 3; 156; 163; 258; 307; 308; 351; 360; 603; 813]; and since **the branch of theology is the means most suitable to this end**, in the universities of the Society the principal emphasis ought to be put upon it. Thus diligent treatment by highly capable professors [cf. nn. 369; 456] should be given to what pertains to scholastic doctrine and Sacred Scripture, and also to the part of positive theology [cf. nn. 351; 353; 464; 467] which is conducive to the aforementioned end, without entering into the part of the canons which is directed toward trials in court. [n. 446].

All other studies have relative value - all are taken up with a view to theology. The circumstances of the times and the local conditions need to be kept in mind [n. 447]. The study of philosophy is closely related to theology - whereas, medicine and law are more remote from our institute [n. 452].

e. The Plan:

The curriculum in theology will be one of **six years**. In the first four years all the matter which must be lectured on will be expounded [cf. nn. 418; 518; 519]. In the remaining two, in addition to the reviewing, the **acts customary for a doctorate** will be performed by those who receive it [cf. nn. 388; 390].

Ordinarily, the cycle of the curriculum will be begun every fourth year and the books which are to be lectured on will be arranged in such a sequence that a student can enter the curriculum at the beginning of any one of the four years. By hearing the lectures on what remains of the four-year curriculum, and then on the matter immediately following until he reaches the point where he began, he will hear the lectures of the entire curriculum within four years **[n. 476]**.

It is apparently from this number where Fr. Bertoni got his 6, or 7 year commitment to theology <sup>444</sup> - as in the old system, after six years one became a "Bachelor" in theology - to become a "Master", or "Doctor", the new "baccalaureus" had to continue at the university for another six or eight years, teaching, debating, and preaching. For the early Jesuit Scholastics, the time given to each one of these branches is not fixed, nor when they are to move on from one to another. All was left to the view of the Rector. Later it will be clarified: in order for one to be promoted to profession, he would have had to have studied theology for at least four years [cf. n. 518].

f. Doctrine: the old "jargon" was not so much "giving a course", but "reading, hearing a book read or expounded upon." – thus, offering the safer and more approved doctrine, explained by its authors **[n. 358]**. This is the idea in the title of Part IV, c. 14: "The Books that are to be read" [cf. nn. 464, ff.] - the Latin term is *praelectio*. Ignatius had studied in Paris under the Dominicans - so, after Sacred Scripture, he suggests St. Thomas and Peter Lombard. The Ignatian emphasis was on just the good books **[n. 469]**. The purpose of these arduous studies was not so much scholarly research in itself, but to help our fellowmen, to instruct and form suitable ministers of the Church.

g. Obstacles: the first noted is of a spiritual nature: the challenge is to keep their souls pure and their intention of studying right, by seeking in study nothing except the glory of God and the good of souls - to beg in prayer for grace to make progress in learning for the sake of this end **[n. 360]**: *wisdom will not enter the deceitful soul, a holy and disciplined spirit will flee from deceit..* [cf. Ws 1:4, f.]. There is needed a real commitment to study, keeping alive the firm resolution to be thoroughly genuine and earnest students. They need to study with the intention of pleasing God **[n. 361]**. The act of studying takes its inspiration from obedience and charity:

In order to make good progress in those branches, the scholastics should strive first of all to keep their souls pure and their intention in studying right, by seeking in their studies nothing except the glory of God and the good of souls [cf. nn. 307; 351;

<sup>444</sup>cf. Antonio M. deAldama, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. An Introductory Commentary...*, o.c., p. 167 - [cf. here **CF # 40**].

440; 466]. Moreover, they should frequently beg in prayer for grace to make progress in learning for the sake of this end. [n. 360].

Furthermore they should keep their resolution firm to be thoroughly genuine and earnest students, by persuading themselves that while they are in the colleges they cannot do anything more pleasing to God our Lord than to **study with the intention mentioned above** [cf. nn. 340; 360]; likewise, that even if they never have occasion to employ the matter studied, their very labor in studying, taken up as it ought to be because of charity and obedience, is itself work highly meritorious in the sight of the Divine and Supreme Majesty. [n. 361].

Some obstacles are:

- excessive devotions and mortifications;
- burdensome household tasks;
- spiritual ministries with neighbors - it is wise to postpone exercises such as these until after the years of study [cf. n. 362].

h. Order: this emphasis is said to have been made in that Ignatius himself had to repeat some of his studies poorly made earlier on. Latin is needed for Philosophy - this is needed prior to Scholastic Theology - and this is a requirement prior to positive theology [n. 366]. Once a theological framework has been acquired through the study of Scholastic theology, it is easier to discern the doctrine of other authors. St. Ignatius also suggests Hebrew, Greek and Aramaic - one of the aims must be the defense of the Vulgate [n. 367]. One of Ignatius' concerns was the fact that a number of promising young minds give up the faith to embrace new doctrines, in that they lacked sound theology. He believed that the knowledge of theology would be much helped by the study of Latin, Greek and Hebrew [n. 447].

i. Methods: after the professor's *lectio* [nn. 369; 374] the students would engage in *repetitio* [NN. 374; 375; 459]; *disputatio* [nn 378-380]; *compositio* [nn. 380]; speaking in Latin [n. 381]; *oratio* [n. 381]. These university events would draw the interest as perhaps inter-collegiate sports do today. So, Ignatius encouraged not only "learning", but also "**modesty**":

Because of the utility there is in the practice of disputation, especially for those who are studying arts and scholastic theology, the scholastics should participate in the disputations, or ordinary circles of the schools which they attend, even though these schools are not those of the Society itself; and they should endeavor to distinguish themselves both by their learning and by their **modesty**... [n. 378].

The student should not be passive before the lecturer, but should actively take part in his own formation, with much exercise. In addition to attendance, the Scholastic is encouraged to private and undisturbed study, to understand ever more profoundly what has been treated [nn. 373; 376; 384-385; 389]. Teachers need to be learned, diligent and assiduous [nn. 369; 450].



j. Degrees: not every Scholastic was required to get a degree. Were one to strive for a degree, he does so only to be better able to help one's fellow man for the glory of God [n. 390]. These three conditions were laid down:

- degrees are only granted to those who are found deserving after a careful examination;
- there should be no special honors for those who do obtain them;
- poverty should be safeguarded: the only regard should be Jesus Christ.

5. **The Scholastics: Pastoral Progress**: intellectual progress was covered in cc. 5 & 6 of Part IV - c. 8 [nn. 400-414]. The Saint now considers instruction as a means of helping one's neighbors - this might be called "Pastoral Formation" today. This c. 8 lists the means by which the missionary might help his neighbor, in which the Scholastics should be instructed: formation is geared toward the Mission:

a. The same order is followed here by Ignatius as he will explain in his Part VII, On the Missions:

- Mass, the Sacraments;
- preaching, with the Exercises and the teaching of Catechism;
- the assisting of the dying.

In every priest's life, preaching has a preeminent place - but, for Ignatius, it is not suitable to separate it from the other forms of ministry of the Word of God, such as the Spiritual Exercises, teaching Catechism - just as Holy Communion should not be separated from Mass.

b. The soldier before entering into battle, must know how to handle his **weapons** - just as in building the **tower** one must know if he has the tools to bring it to completion: an idea met before [cf. **Formula n. 4; Lk 14:28-30**; cf. also **Ph 1:6**]. The purpose of studies is to aid our neighbors [nn. 351; 446] - the dominant character here is practical, to prepare future ministers for the Church. A few thoughts on each of these ministries:

- the **Sacraments**, Confession and the Eucharist [n. 407]: central to the priestly ministry: the Scholastic is trained in these also in the use he makes of these over the years of formation.

- **preaching**: the need for the missionary to learn well the vernacular [n. 402] - this is very important for the apostolic purpose of the Society, for communicating with one's neighbor, in a pleasing manner of speech [cf. nn. 157; 814]. All that is studied is from this point of view of the mission - each is to have as matters previously studied and ready at hand, the means which are most useful for this ministry, [n. 404]. Each Scholastic should have those books he needs: e.g., the Gospels, Epistles' material for sermons on morality [cf. n. 404].

- **Spiritual Exercises**: there is **a gradual formation** of the Director:

After they have had **experience** of the ***Spiritual Exercises*** in their own selves, they should acquire **experience** in giving them to others [cf. nn. 437; 648]. Each one should know how to give an explanation of them and how to employ this spiritual weapon, since it is obvious that God our Lord has made it so effective for His service. [cf. n. 408].

They could begin by giving the ***Exercises*** to some in whose cases less is risked, and **by conferring about their method of procedure with someone more experienced**, noting well what he finds more useful and what less so. Their explanation of the ***Exercises*** should be given in such a manner that it does not merely give satisfaction to the others, but also move them to desire to be helped by the ***Exercises***. Generally, only the exercise of the First Week should be given. When they are given in their entirety, this should be done with outstanding persons, or with those who desire to decide upon their state of life [cf. n. 649] [n. 409]. [Fr. Ganss notes here that the chief reason why Ignatius advised against giving the more advanced ***Exercises*** indiscriminately to all persons was seemingly his principle for selecting ministries which is given in Part VII [cf. nn. 622-624]. The time of priests was to be reserved for far-reaching and long-lasting works. One priest usually directed a single exercitant, and except for a few rare instances, group retreats had not yet arisen].

He should then acquire experience by giving them. There is also needed the speculative knowledge on how to proceed - we need to give a reason for the hope we profess [cf. 1 P 3:15];

- the **teaching of Catechism**: [n. 410]: always adapted to the level of the capacities of children or simple persons.

- the **assistance of the dying**: [n. 412] - dealt with only here in the ***Constitutions*** - it is good to have a **Compendium** on the method to refresh one's memory when this holy ministry is to be exercised.

c. Pars IV, c. 8, n. 414: is a kind of epilogue on the manner of dealing with our neighbors in general, ending the chapter with these elements:

- to go to various parts of the world;
- engage a great variety of people;
- with inconveniences, dangers - but also opportunities;
- only the function of the Holy Spirit;
- and the prudence which God our Lord communicates to those who trust His Divine Majesty. - cooperation is needed [n. 134].

### **Summary**

The Scholastics are called to prepare themselves for the difficulties and demands of the apostolic mission. This is the whole purpose of the intellectual life. **The**

**Apostolic Mission is the ultimate criterion for whatever is studied and for all the formation**<sup>445</sup>.

### §§§

#### Fifth Part

#### Chapter 1:

**Concerning those promoted to the Priestly Office** [nn. 400-416: **the gradated Experiments** [CSJ, nn. 64, ff.] are noted here for Jesuits]

[CF ## 69-76]

**CF 69:**      **No clerical habit** until high school is completed! [This prescription perhaps was more common in Europe than ever in the USA]. Fr. Bertoni makes frequent mention of what the members are to wear:

- **# 6:**    they will dress as the more observant clerics where they live;
- **# 29:** “postulancy” [?] will be conducted in lay garb, so that those to be received will be recognized;
- **# 32:** novitiate will begin with **religious** garb;
- **# 43:** the only penance is common food, dress, etc.
- **# 69:** **clerical** habit;
- **# 91:** nothing superfluous regarding clothing;
- **# 133:** the fourth exercise of exterior moderation concerns clothing;
- **# 137:** clothing should be **simple and ‘honest’!**

The matter of **clothing** very often appears throughout the Jesuit ***Constitutions***

- **nn. 18; 19:** **no certain habit** of the Society is assumed;
- **n. 81:** clothing **accommodated to the poor**;
- **n. 197:** be vested in **usual** clothing;
- **# 292:** **only the necessities** for food, clothing, dwelling;
- **# 297:** a key Constitution regarding “**habit**”, with its basic requirements: **it is designated by reason of its purpose:** shield from the cold; not be

<sup>445</sup> For these pages, cf. Antonio M. deAldama, SJ, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. An Introductory Commentary...* o.c., pp. 139-187, *passim*; cf. also Simon Decloux, SJ, “Cuarta Parte Principal. Del instruir en letras y en otros medios de ayudar a los prójimos los que se retienen en la Compañía”, in: *Constituciones de la Compañía de Jesus. Introducción y notas para su lectura*, o.c., pp. 155- 166, *passim*.

indecorous; suited for abnegation and mortification; in harmony with the people among whom one works, and **the apostolic work the person is doing.**

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**CF # 70:** scholastics will attend class until they are 25 years old - then, they may receive the minor orders.

- nn. 16; 71; 98; 119; 336; 346: the years of probation;
- nn. 514; 544: even after the third probation this time could be lengthened.

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**CF # 71:** they will be applied to studies in those sciences and liberal arts which are cultivated among us and in those areas in which their own talent leads them most specially, up until they are 30 years old. In this time, they might be initiated into Holy Orders and the Priesthood.

- n. 518: their learning should be “sufficient”;
- n. 520: their preparation should not be mediocre [cf. **CF # 159**].

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**CF # 72:** Not omitting any study of those matters in which they are the more proficient, or which are the more necessary; little by little they should be exercised in giving **sermons** in our own churches, in teaching **catechism** to children and to the unlettered, in hearing **confessions** of children and adolescents. [These are the fifth and sixth of the Ignatian **Experiences** - a **graded** approach to these aspects of the apostolate].

- n. 77: the preaching begins in our own houses - and then to other places;
- n. 113: confessions, exhortations and Christian doctrine - prime ministries;
- n. 308: prime exercises of the ministry;
- n. 407: among the ministries for the young priests still in formation;
- n. 528: specially mentioned aspects of the apostolic missions [n. 528] - Ignatius' concern was that **catechism** would be neglected due to the more “glamorous” [*magis speciosa...*] apostolates, such as preaching and the like, a concern of Pope John Paul II<sup>446</sup>.

[The Apostolic Exhortation of Pope Paul VI, ***Evangelii Nuntiandi***, emphasizes the intimate connection between the Sacraments and the Ministry of the Word. From the

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<sup>446</sup>cf. John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, ***Catechesi Tradendae***, October 16, 1979, ## 15;16; 18; 40; 45; 52; 64 65.

beginning, St. Ignatius saw the importance of providing good confessors for the Church<sup>447</sup>.]

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**CF # 73:** Then the members will be assigned to hearing the confessions of men of all walks of life, and giving sermons in the Churches of the city, and in giving the Spiritual Exercises, and other ministries. [The gradated approach is evident here: the young priests will go from hearing confessions of children and adolescents, to men; and their sermons will not be confined to our own churches, but to those in the city; and they will begin giving retreats - always an important Stigmatine ministry].

- n. 408: this is a **prime** “spiritual weapon” in which the men need to be exercised, after having experienced them themselves - the means of the “spiritual combat” noted elsewhere by Ignatius -cf. nn. 400 in general, the ministries]; 595, in assisting the dying.
- n. 409: the many benefits of this ministry are rather fully outlined;
- n. 437: the Rector of the Colleges where the candidates study are to assign the young priests to spiritual conversations, giving the Exercises, hearing Confessions, preaching, giving lectures, and teaching Catechism - all prime Jesuit apostolates;
- nn. 622-624 [in the Part VII, on the “**Missions**”: the varied and proper ministries of the Society, there are given here the **Rules for Apostolic Discernment**: whatever serves the “more”, the “greater” - [cf. **A.M.D.G.** is the ultimate rule. In the comparison between hearing **Confessions** or giving the **Exercises**, whatever is the more universal, and which extends help to the greater number; what will have the more lasting effect, etc.]
- nn. 645, ff.: the Apostolic Mission in the Colleges: **preaching, giving lectures, catechism**;
- nn. 648, 649: even **pious conversations**, and the **Spiritual Exercises** [a proper mission of the Society] to name just a few, are prime Jesuit ministries.

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**CF # 74:** At times, they will give themselves to serving as helpers to the Missionaries, and sometimes they will even hear the confessions of women [**feminarum**].

- n. 588: strict rules for not hearing the confessions of nuns regularly - the Latin adverb is **semel**.

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<sup>447</sup>cf. de Aldama, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. An Introductory Commentary...* oc., pp. 259, ff.; Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, December 8, 1975. ## 20; 47.

**CF # 75:** Then they will hear the confessions of women, and will serve ordinarily work in the Missions.

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**CF # 76:** Finally, they will accept the task of directing the Missions, and will be totally committed to the salvation of souls.

**[NB:** in the Stigmatine community, there is a two-fold acceptance of the word “**Missions**” here:

- one view is that the Stigmatine Founder’s intention here is to assist primarily in the Parish Missions conducted by one of the “Professed” Members of the community - in the light of the interpretation of the **Compendium Rude # 2**: this view holds that the central “Mission” in Fr. Bertoni’s Plan is the **Parish Mission**;
- another view holds that the Parish **Mission** is only one of the tasks of the Apostolic Missionary:

The **Compendium Rude # 2** speaks rather of the missionary manner [or, the Missionary Obedience] in which the Stigmatine is to be committed to the service of the Bishops - always getting faculties beforehand from the Bishops, chosen by the Holy Spirit [cf. **CF # 185**; cf. Ac 20:28] for the *varia et propria suae vocationis munera* to rule the Church - ad non errandum in via Dei - this ideal seems to be from Ignatius’ explanation of the Intention of the Fourth Vow [cf. n. 605: *ne in via Domini errarent...; ad res graviores ...non errare...*; n. 624]: these terms interpret the **Formula # 3** and its explanation for the Fourth vow: *ob devotionem tamen maiorem ad obedientiam Sedis Apostolicae, et maiorem voluntatum nostrarum abnegationem, et certiores Sancti Spiritus directionem summopere conducere iudicavimus...*

In this connection, Fr. Bertoni’s idea of being promoted to the fullness of the **Apostolic Mission** happens long after priesthood has been received - in **CF # 71** he speaks of candidates being *initiated* into Holy Orders and the Priesthood - a common enough phrase, but a fuller meaning is possible: that still after ordination, the **continuing, intensifying exercises** in the **Experiments** [**CSJ n. 71**] goes on, and eventually after “many trials and proofs”, one would be approved for the “Profession”. The work of the Apostolic Missionary is only brought forward in the **Original Constitutions**, after the living of the Vows, there is the Third Probation [**Part VIII, CF ## 152-157**] - and finally, The Grade of the **Professed** [**Part IX, CF ## 158, ff.**]

The meaning of **Mission** in the Society of Jesus <sup>448</sup> is that the members will exercise any ministry of those the men of the Society use for helping their neighbor [cf. **CSJ nn. 308; 743**]. The **"Pontifical Mission"** is any apostolic work or ministry

<sup>448</sup>cf. deAldama, *The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. An Introductory Commentary...*o.c., pp. 249-251. Same source for the quote following from Ignatius’ *Spiritual Diary*.

exercised in any place by order of the Pope. On February 11, 1544, St. Ignatius wrote in his *Spiritual Journal*:

**At this moment, lights came to me, namely, how the Son first sent the Apostles to preach in poverty and afterwards the Holy Spirit, giving His spirit and the gift of tongues, confirmed them, and thus, the Father and the Son sending the Holy Spirit, all three Persons confirmed this Mission."**

In the Jesuit Constitutions, the concept of **Mission** is treated often throughout the *Constitutions* often as the "End" the "Scope" "Purpose" of the Society, its studies, its **gradual** apostolic commitment, as part of the formation program - [cf. e.g., **nn. 3; 109; 156; 163; 258; 304; 307; 340; 351; 398; 400; 446; 586; 603; 813**]. For the constitution # 79, the following might be of interest:

- **n. 408**: they are to give retreats so that they might make use of this spiritual weapon and acquire dexterity in its use:

After they have had experience of the Spiritual Exercises in their own-selves, they should acquire experience in giving them to others [437; 648]. Each one should know how to give an explanation of them and how to employ this spiritual weapon, since it is obvious that God our Lord has made it so effective for His service. [**n. 408**].

They could **begin** by giving the Exercises to some in whose cases less is risked and by conferring about their method of procedure with someone more experienced, noting well what he finds more useful and what less so. Their explanation of the Exercises should be given in such a manner that it does not merely give satisfaction to the others but also moves them to desire to be helped by the Exercises. Generally, only the Exercises of the First Week should be given. When they are given in their entirety, this should be done with outstanding persons, or with those who desire to decide upon their state of life [cf. n. 649] **nn. 409**].

- **n. 648**: sometimes only a part of the Apostolic Mission can be helpful - judgment needed:

Likewise, they will endeavor to be profitable to individuals by **spiritual conversations** [cf. nn. 115, 349], by counseling and exhorting to good works, and by **conducting the Spiritual Exercises** [cf. **nn. 408; 437**].

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