

Cronistoria

Chronicles

**of the Institute of the Daughters of
Mary Help of Christians**

edited by Sister Giselda Capetti, F.M.A.

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INTRODUCTION

Volume IV opens up a fresh period in the history of the Institute. The memories it contains begin in June, 1881 while the Sisters still mourned their beloved Mother, and the decision as to who should be her successor was prayerfully awaited. Then flow the first years of Mother Daghero's government up until 1884.

The continued assistance of the Blessed Virgin was made manifest right from the beginning' of Mother Daghero's government, and in a wonderful way. Don Bosco had a dream night after successive night. In this mysterious dream Our Blessed Lady showed him her care and motherly anxiety for the Institute, and in certain scenes she warned him of the dangers threatening it.

Among the most important events of these years the celebration of the General Chapter stands out. It would be both preparation for, and indication of, the maturity of the Institute.

It was actually this Chapter which ordered the compilation of the *Cronistoria*. Although it was not possible to carry this deliberation into effect immediately, it was evidently regarded as important even at that time, and the first incomplete attempts were to prove helpful later when arranging the thread of memories.

The criteria used in editing the other volumes of the *Cronistoria* were kept in mind when revising the present one, as was the decision to shorten part of the *Appendices*. We have limited ourselves to those documents considered necessary or useful in illustrating the circumstances and climate of the time, and have referred, with the necessary [p. iv] indications, to the *Biographical Memoirs* and the *Salesian Bulletin*.

Mother Mazzarello lives again in this volume through the memoirs of her contemporaries. Also included are discourses, teachings and short anecdotes of Don Bosco which concern the Institute. They may be only little things but are clear indicators and fragments of the spirit of the Founder which must not be lost.

We are once more linked to our origins by the records of these years, and as the story of the Institute unfolds they will pass on to us the life-giving breath of its spirit.

Rome, September 8, 1977

Nativity of Our Lady

Sister GISELDA CAPETTI

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1881

Maternal heritage

Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello, the first Superior General of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, left twenty-six Houses as a heritage to the one who was soon to succeed her in the government of the Institute. Seventeen of these were in Italy, three in France and six in America. In all, the works numbered fifteen Festive Oratories, three charitable institutes, five boarding schools and five free day schools and workrooms, five kindergartens, and twelve communities engaged in the workrooms and kitchens of the Salesian schools.

There were one hundred and thirty-nine professed Sisters, fifty novices and between five and six thousand souls receiving education and Christian formation in the name of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco. To these, almost twenty thousand could be added if one counted all those who from August 5, 1872 until the year in question had directly benefited from the work of Mother Mazzarello and her Daughters.

This second Salesian Family, already so well established in every field of labor, had now been deprived of its strong and secure guide. Who could continue directing it along the path it had begun to tread?

This was a serious thought for Mother Catherine Daghero, the twenty-five year-old Vicar General, notwithstanding the consoling words of good Father Cagliero, her confidence in Don Bosco, and her trust in divine help. It was also the secret preoccupation of those who shared responsibility with her, and was the object of silent, fervent [p. 2]prayer for every Sister living with the memory of the beloved Mother who seemed to be spiritually close to them although she had passed away.

However the first weeks of mourning were not altogether sad. The celebrations for the month of Mary brought many young people to Our Lady's feet and this was a great consolation for everybody.

Word came from the Sisters at Cheri that, with the good, capable girls of their boarding school and oratory, they had very beautifully represented the House of Nizza at the magnificent celebrations in honor of Mary Help of Christians at Valdocco.

Don Bosco's hopes fulfilled

From nearby Acqui came the news that on the very day of Mary Help of Christians' feast, a group of Salesian Cooperators from among the most faithful lady retreatants of Mornese and Nizza had gathered together in conference, much to the advantage of their own souls and to the works of Don Bosco. This confirmed what this

venerated Father had told the Sisters:

"The sacrifices you make for the ladies during the eight days' spiritual retreat are not only to their advantage, but will make the Institute known and give rise to vocations both for you and for us. Alms, which is the providence of Salesian works, will not only increase, but will also open the gates of heaven to the donors. Therefore, be happy to make these sacrifices. "

News from America and the return of Father Cagliari

The Director General cheered all hearts by giving hope of his return to Nizza towards the end of May in time for the religious clothing. He also gave news of the latest group of missionaries to arrive. Besides this, he wished to quote [p. 3] the following extract from a letter to Don Bosco from the ex-Director, Father Costamagna: "The Sisters also greet you. Those of La Boca are marching on courageously and those of San Isidro have already done wonders in teaching catechism and in the example of piety they give. The whole of this little village is beside itself with satisfaction. The pious ladies who brought these spouses of Jesus here cannot praise themselves enough for their initiative."

On the 30th Father Cagliari was again among his Daughters, bringing with him news from both Turin and America. He listened to them, encouraged them, heard confessions, held a choir practice for the celebrations of the following day, and solemnly concluded the month of Mary by giving the religious habit to twelve novices and delivering a sermonette worthy of a cathedral.

Also on June 1, the day consecrated to Our Lady of Grace in the diocese of Turin, the Director did not fail to encourage all the Sisters and pupils to unlimited confidence in the divine title-bearer of the House.

When he left for Turin there arose a chorus of thanks for Don Bosco. From Valdocco, he continued to watch over his second religious family, and to console and bless it.

A new wing for the House at Nizza Monferrato

Permission had been granted to contract builders to construct a new wing adjacent to the chapel, with a covered area at ground level. The news was now made known by the Director General.

As they prepared for this work, the Sisters of Nizza felt still more that the spirit of their departed Superior General was present in this House so singularly blessed by Our Lady. All fears vanished. With the Superior General in heaven and their beloved Father Don Bosco on earth, the Institute would continue and prosper.

[p. 4] The "Salesian Bulletin" for June

The June issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* arrived earlier than usual. Mother Daghero, the Vicar, always reluctant to put herself forward, received it like a friend offering her a topic for the Good Night. She stressed its importance and exhorted the community to read it attentively.

Besides the report on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, there was Father Fagnano's letter from Patagonia dated April 18, and the conferences of Don Bosco and Cardinal Alimonda, Bishop of Albenga, to the Cooperators in Rome.

The letter from Patagonia stated, "We have baptized eighty-five adults, among whom were some *babies* of seventy and eighty years of age. We have also given Baptism to four hundred children, and Easter Communion to a hundred and fifty boys and girls. Our Sisters have been a great help to us in all this." ¹

Such words were sufficient to bring serenity and peace of heart.

Don Bosco's conference highlighted the great need of opposing the activities of the Protestants.

The Sisters of Bordighera-Torrione had been sent there for that very purpose and those of Nizza now felt animated with fresh zeal.

Equal attention was given to the conference of Cardinal Alimonda. We include a few extracts from it among these "family memories" so that our future generations may see how, right from the earliest years, the Institute formed its members according to the requirements of the Salesian, religious, missionary vocation.

How precious are those hearts who, seeing evil, do all they can to prevent and dispel it. They resemble the Heart of God. He saw evil in man and, filled with pity, He tempered His threats with a promise and sent Jesus Christ. He saw vice-ridden man and drew him to virtue. He saw man weak and [p. 5] strengthened him; fallen and He raised him up and opened heaven to make him happy. It was this love that inflamed Saint Paul's heart when he said: "Who among you is weak and I am not weak?" The heart of the Salesian conforms to the heart

of the servants of God. This Congregation seems to have been instituted by Providence to pour ointment on many wounds, to raise up many who have fallen and to bring peace to many despairing hearts for the glory of God's name.

You have heard from the Founder and initiator of the Salesians about all the good that has already been done. What will the Salesians do now?

They will do all the good they possibly can. They will seek out children to instruct and set on the right path. They will fight against evil. . .

Protestants try to sow dissension... materialism, communism and socialism are infiltrating society.

It is imperative to strain every nerve to overcome evil with good. What great evil is being inflicted on the people! Ideas are being spread; good customs perverted; religion is forgotten and despised. Feast-days come around and people amuse themselves on railway journeys and excursions, in dancing and many other types of dissipating amusement. They do not go to mass or listen to the Word of God; they do not study catechism or frequent the sacraments. At one time the working classes had their own societies with a patron saint. On Sundays they used to meet for devotions and prayers. Now the banner of the saint has been replaced by another banner and the Sunday reunions have given place to sect meetings. Even the women have changed. They are no longer the heroic mothers of families and educators of virtuous children. They no longer go to church but are on the streets giving scandal while their children grow up in the presence of vice rather than virtue.

These are the evils. How can they be overcome? Saint Paul says that this is done with good. Here is the work of the Salesians! . . . Here is the work of the Salesian Cooperators! . . . Let us give generously for the salvation of souls. God has given generously to us. . . Look at the sun, the moon, the stars and the flowers. They are the alms of creation. Look [p. 6] at Calvary, the blood and wounds of Christ. Are they not also an alms? The alms of Redemption. Does not the Church offer us the charity of the sacraments and the diffusion of God's Word? Everything is a gift of love, an alms.

Let us offer our charity for the good of our brothers! . . .

For the deceased Superior General

The article entitled *The Superior General of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians* was kept for another occasion. The Vicar intended using it at a community conference.

It was, one might say, almost a literal reproduction of what had appeared in *Unità Cattolica*² on the previous May 21. It was introduced in the following manner:

"Our Institute of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians. . . " The word *our*, used for the first time in compiling the *Salesian Bulletin*, must certainly have been the wish of Don Bosco for this occasion, and it meant that the Institute now had a greater right to count on his fatherly heart.

The concluding promise was also comforting:

"We are preparing a short biography of this elect soul, which will appear in coming issues of the *Salesian Bulletin*."

The Vicar then told the Sisters about the new pamphlets in the *Letture Cattoliche* Series.

The first among those for girls, entitled *Angelina*, was written by Don Bosco himself. This also seemed to be a confirmation of his fatherly interest in us and in the girls Divine Providence was sending us.

Bordighera: the blessing of the new chapel

Towards the end of the month the Sisters of Bordighera wrote of their joy on the feast of Mary Help of Christians and at the blessing of the new chapel. These news flashes gave great hope for that apostolate. With good reason Sister Adele David, the Superior, could conclude that [p. 7] only the blessing of Pope Pius IX³ and our good Father Don Bosco could have given hope for such triumphs of faith and of love for Mary Help of Christians.

Fruitful memories

The conversations of the Sisters and the boarders turned continually to memories of their beloved Mother.

There were some who still shed tears and these were not looked upon with disapproval by the Vicar. She said, "It does no harm to cry. It even reveals in a clearer manner the treasure we have lost and will increase the good our holy Mother did among us. Let us not let any of that great grace be lost."

This was a commitment to which all adhered willingly. Among them were the professed, Sister Preda, Sister Telesio, Sister Brusasco and Sister Ravazza; the novices, Sister Bardina, Sister Bessone, Sister Genta, Sister Malvino; and the postulants, Antoinette Baratti and Elisa Marocchino.

The *Salesian Bulletin* was also read in the girls' dining room. Comments were made by one or other of the Sisters, and above all by Mother Enrichetta. Among these comments came some fresh memories. Clelia Armelonghi remembered seeing our good Mother when she appeared in the dining room, urging them to keep a cheerful face when chestnuts soaked in milk, or polenta with cabbage was served, and to eat willingly whatever came to table in order to make a little sacrifice. Then everything seemed to taste good and all were happy to repeat their "thank you." Clelia added that she had often met our Mother on the stairs leading to the ground floor. Mother had said to her: "Do you still find our Piedmontese food very different from yours?" (Clelia came from the Emilia Province) Then she added, "Is it really true that you like chestnuts? Very well, go to Mother Economer and ask her to give you some, but. . . be careful, keep quiet about it, won't you?"

"Mother Economer always considered me rather thin," [p. 8] explained the girl. "She was sure I had been sent to her by Mother, so she filled my pinafore pockets and told me I could share the chestnuts among the most delicate of my companions. However, I was not to say where I had obtained them. I was obedient to the point of scrupulosity in order not to lose my good fortune!"

Sophia Caire also told with pride how she had often been cared for by our good Mother when, because of the intense cold, her hands were covered with broken chilblains that refused to heal. She was sorry not to have obtained a piece of something used by our Mother as others had done, in order to keep it as a relic.

Louise Varvello confessed that she always tried to avoid meeting Mother for fear she might speak to her about the religious vocation, a subject she did not even want to think about. When her companions were inclined to make fun of her she would confide to her assistant, "Oh, what a torment this blessed religious vocation is!"

In fact this boarder was already marked with the signs of a divine call!

The brief Good Night talks were also an echo of the words of the departed Mother because the humble Vicar was neither able to say anything of her own nor did she wish to do so. According to her, she was only in her present position by accident and in order to practice humility. Because of this, she would repeat the exhortations of our dear Mother:

"Our good and holy Mother loved neatness very much. How much then must she have loved interior order. She wanted us to be filled with charity towards our Sisters and she taught us how to sanctify all our work. Let us then see to it that we always practice what she recommended."

Night after night she would take some of Mother's counsels on general or personal order.

"These are small things," she would comment, "but they help us acquire merit for heaven, bring honor to the religious state, and are a comfort to all who work with us.

[p. 9] This is what our dear Mother taught us and this is what we must do if we want to continue to be her Daughters. . .

At the cemetery

In such a climate of treasured and touching memories it was only natural that the weekly walk always took the path that led to the cemetery. Little groups of Sisters in turn would traverse the various shortcuts through the golden wheat fields.

There was no sadness in the Sisters' conversations either going or returning. Rather they preferred to recall Mother's reflections on the wonders of creation.

As yet there was no cross on the precious tomb, but this is no wonder. Others were in the same condition. They were the graves of the poor, and that was the condition of the Sisters.

No sound of weeping came from the humble graveside, but rather a gentle feeling of peace which turned thoughts to the mystery of the Resurrection and filled the soul with deep serenity.

Mother Catherine in Turin

As June 24, Don Bosco's feast-day approached, the Sisters of Valdocco took the opportunity of asking Mother Catherine to visit them. However, she would not move from Nizza except on the express orders of the Major Superiors.

Father Lemoyne, the Director, went as the official representative of the Nizza community and Father Cagliero acted as representative of the whole Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Needless to say none of the Houses, either in Italy or abroad, failed to send letters of congratulations and good wishes.

Father Lemoyne read a poetic address which was, as [p. 10] usual, well conceived and full of feeling. He offered

the respectful wishes of the Sisters to their venerated Father, and then returned to Nizza with the message that Don Bosco and Father Cagliero wished to see the Vicar in Turin.

Everyone rejoiced, imagining how she must have felt the need to see Don Bosco after so much grief and with her heavy burden of responsibility. But Mother Catherine herself barely smiled, as if thinking of the poor figure she would cut at an ordeal imposed by higher powers and from which, through shyness and humility, she would have liked to escape.

From Don Bosco and the Director she received nothing but kindness, but from certain fleeting allusions made by Father Cagliero, she soon became aware that there was more painful strife in the controversy concerning Father Bonetti,⁴ and that a fresh cause for preoccupation had arrived for Don Bosco from Rome.

What could this be?-her heart painfully questioned. Now that we are without our Mother, will our Institute perhaps be suppressed? . . .

Before leaving Turin Mother Catherine yielded to the entreaties of her Sisters and the desire of her own heart and spoke a few words of encouragement to the community. Once again she drew from the thoughts of our dear lamented Mother.

She recommended that love for God which lightens sacrifice, and that mutual help among the Sisters, which forms the delight of religious souls. She was fully aware that the House in Turin was among the most exposed to the danger of hearing from the oratorians sarcastic and vulgar remarks concerning priests. On the other hand, it was one of the most fortunate in being a witness to priestly virtue. She quoted Mother Mazzarello's already well known expression: "I would willingly bow down every single time and kiss the ground on which a priest's foot has trod."⁵

[p. 11] A stopover in Chieri

Leaving Turin Mother Daghero passed through Chieri. With her was Sister Marietta Rossi, who was convalescing after surgery. Mother was hoping to give a pleasant surprise to Sister Angela, her sister.

In Chieri she was able to verify personally the tranquillity of both Sisters and girls, in spite of the unpleasant remarks heard in the city regarding the expected return of Father Bonetti.

On her return to Nizza with Sister Marietta she had a great deal of interesting news for the community.

News from Argentina

At the Good Night, after she had conveyed Don Bosco's blessing and greetings from the Director General and the Sisters of Turin and Chieri, Mother Daghero communicated the news Father Cagliero had given her about Buenos Aires. This had come to him in a letter written to him by Sister Madelene Martini. It ran: "I trust you have received the two letters that I sent you after the arrival of the Sisters. We were deeply grieved at the news the Sisters gave us that our venerated Mother was ill. She herself had already had someone write to tell us that she was not feeling well. Please God, our prayers for her will be answered."⁶

"The rest of the letter is private," Mother concluded, trying to force a smile. Then she added, "Now this letter is dated May 7. Do you understand, May 7. That was when our Mother was already preparing to leave us.

I wonder if those poor Sisters know yet that we are now without her? . . .

Let us pray that she may obtain for us the grace to follow her example and that we may soon have someone to take her place among us."

[p. 12] Sister Marietta's story

As soon as possible Sister Marietta told her story to the general interest of the community. By way of prologue, she began:

I have some wonderful things to tell you, but they are not for everyone because, as they say where I come from, *As times change so do the roses*. What is good for us today may give another perfume and other colors tomorrow.

With my little bundle containing a night jacket and a bonnet which had just come back unironed from the wash, I was admitted to the Mauriziano Hospital by the Subalpine gallery. The Director General paid the fee of two lire per day.

I was allotted a beautifully furnished room because I was one of Don Bosco's Sisters. . . But I felt very awkward as I entered the room, thinking of the poverty of my little bundle. I said to myself, "How will it ever match all this luxury?"

During the month I stayed there my mother, brother and Father Cagliero came to see me.

Among the norms Father Cagliero gave me was this one: "When food is brought to you do not eat all that is provided. Always leave something on the plate." However, as before and while I was seriously ill, I felt a great urge to build up my strength-so much so that I could even have eaten the plate! It was the same regarding drink. Oh, how thirsty I was!.. .

Certainly, the Sister nurse had placed a glass of water ready on the bed table but since I was still unable to use my arms freely and could not even raise myself in bed, you may be sure that I could only think of the souls in purgatory! At one moment when I really felt I could bear no more I began praying to my Guardian Angel to send someone. I had scarcely finished praying when there was a knock on the door.

"Come in," I said promptly, and a priest I did not recognize entered. I tried to greet him and then shyly asked, "Excuse me, but may I have the honor of knowing to whom I am speaking?" He replied, "I am Father Francesia and I come from Don Bosco." Then I plucked up my courage and [p. 13] took the liberty of asking him to give me a drink.

When I left the hospital I was still in need of treatment and Mother Catherine, who was in Turin at the time, would not allow anyone else but herself to perform this act of charity for me. She did it like a mother and an expert nurse.

Even during the journey, she could not have been more attentive or shown me more affection and kindness. Many times I was moved to tears. I think that if she becomes our new Superior General, we would have much to thank God for.

Almost as a privilege, Sister Marietta Rossi, still in need of special care, was assigned our dead Mother's room in Nizza. She was to share this with a postulant, also delicate in health.

Sister Marietta certainly appreciated the thought but she could not deny feeling a little apprehensive. However she virtuously tried not to show it. Let us listen to her again.

I saw Mother last night. She bent over me and asked,
"Are you afraid?"

"No, Mother," I answered, my voice shaking a little.

She continued, "Do not be frightened; soon you too will be coming!"

But as she said these last words she turned away and passed close to the bed of the postulant who, fully awake at that moment, screamed so loudly that I awoke.

"What are you doing?" I said reprovingly. "Why did you scream like that?"

"I saw our Mother pass by the foot of my bed," she replied.

"So," I said to myself, "I was not the only person to see her." I then tried to sleep again and so did the postulant.

As to her statement, "Soon you too will be coming!" I could not be sure whether it was meant for me or for the postulant. Time will tell.⁷

[p. 14] Reassuring words from Father Lemoyne

Reading the June *Salesian Bulletin* reminded Mother Daghero of the distressing question which had made her so thoughtful when she was in Turin.

She mentioned the matter to Father Lemoyne in confidence. With his habitual frankness, and trusting the prudence of the Vicar, he replied that, yes, Saint John the Baptist had provided Don Bosco's feast with some bitter almonds regarding both the pending dispute concerning Father Bonetti and certain advice concerning the Sisters, from a good friend in Rome.⁸

However, there was nothing to worry about because even if some in Rome felt that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians would be able to manage on their own, independent of Don Bosco, this good Father was well aware that they were still in their infancy. Therefore he did not intend changing his method either now or for a long time to come! He intended going ahead in adherence to the words of Pope Pius IX who had told him that his second family should depend on the first, as the Daughters of Charity did on the Lazarists . . . Reassured, the Vicar understood and appreciated still more those pages of the *Salesian Bulletin* that referred to Don Bosco's discourse to the Cooperators of Turin on the vigil of the feast of Mary Help of Christians. She made it the subject of a special commentary to the community, recommending that its content be kept in mind. We therefore print an

extract from this commentary in our family history .

Don Bosco speaks

. . . Don Bosco said that he could have preached on the excellence of charity, or the power of religion for the wellbeing of civil society. Instead, he chose to make a simple report on what had been done in the course of the year and [p. 15] what was still continuing for the spiritual and corporal advantage of poor young people. He noted the increase in Houses opened by the Salesians and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians for the benefit of the young, and spoke of the number of souls who were being set on the path that leads to heaven. He spoke a great deal about the agricultural schools, the kindergartens and schools, and especially the oratories for girls.

"You will get an idea of the good that is being done, dear Cooperators," said Don Bosco, "if you visit our Sisters in Turin on Sundays, or go to the nearby city of Chieri. You will see hundreds and at times thousands of girls gathered around the Sisters, learning the catechism, receiving suitable instructions and assisting at the sacred functions morning and evening. You will perceive a good number in the classrooms learning to read and write. During the most dangerous hours of the day you will see all of them amusing themselves in holy cheerfulness, assisted and supervised while, unfortunately, many other girls, far from the Church and from the eyes of their parents, walk the streets of the city giving and receiving deplorable scandal.

Such a spectacle will doubtless give you great consolation. You could not help wishing that such institutes be opened in other parts of the city, and still more, in other parts of the world.

Now, what you see near you in Turin and Chieri is also taking place in more than forty Houses directed by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians⁹ in Italy, France and in America, even in savage Patagonia. Oh, if only we had greater means, how much more good could be done! . . .¹⁰

The Vicar was pleased to see that the Sisters were following her intently. She added that to complete the picture, account should be taken of Don Bosco's goodness in publishing an invitation in the *Bulletin* for ladies to take part in the August retreat at Nizza; through *Unità Cattolica*, he had highlighted the large part our Sisters in Bordighera had played in the last great celebration in that region. He even reported it again in the July *Bulletin*. "Sister Adele David," she noted, "did not give us much [p. 16] information, but these are things that once known, convince us still more that in Don Bosco we have a true Father. They will reveal to those who come after, how Don Bosco never let an opportunity pass to place us in a good light. By this means he has sown the seeds of holy vocations for us as well. "

Seconding her thought, with filial devotion we report among these family memories what concerns us most, summarizing what relates to Vallecrosia in general.

A very consoling feast was celebrated on June 12 in the Plains of Vallecrosia (near Ventimiglia). It was the feast in honor of Mary Help of Christians and the blessing of a new chapel dedicated to her.

At six-thirty in the morning the Very Reverend Monsignor Roggeri, Vicar General of the diocese of Ventimiglia, performed the blessing ceremony. This was followed immediately by holy mass and general Communion. Many devout souls approached the Eucharistic banquet with great fervor and sanctified the whole of that day, which will be long remembered there. During the distribution of the Bread of Angels, a choir of girls sang a motet for Holy Communion to the accompaniment of the *harmonium*.

At ten-thirty there was another moving function. Monsignor Roggeri, accompanied by the clergy and an immense crowd of people, moved from the new to the old chapel, from which the Blessed Sacrament was carried in procession.

Two lines of white-robed girls, pupils of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians, led the procession. A dozen of them, wearing veils and carrying lilies, looked like angels and drew the eyes of all onlookers, calling to mind the choirs of virgins who encircle the Divine Lamb in heaven. That morning they had received their First Holy Communion and had the right to a place of honor close to Jesus.

The children were followed by the women, then the clergy. Amidst incense and lights, the King of kings was borne along to the music of the band. The instrumentalists had gathered spontaneously to render the occasion more solemn. Last of all came a crowd of people with heads uncovered out of respect for their God... Many eyes filled with tears at the spectacle.

[p. 17] Arriving at the new chapel a solemn mass was celebrated by Father Francis Cerruti, Director of the school at Allassio. A group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians sang the mass of the Holy Infancy composed by the theologian Father Cagliari.

Innumerable people flocked from the nearby villages to take in the celebrations. The public road was

crowded and carriage loads of strangers were continually arriving from many parts.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the church was again filled for the evening celebration. Vespers were sung and Monsignor Roggeri preached. The sermon was followed by the solemn singing of the *Te Deum*, the *Tantum Ergo* and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Fireworks had been exploding all day long, and at dusk some of the families near the church wished to show their pleasure with more displays. The music continued until nightfall when a hot air balloon rose high into the sky, announcing the termination of the festivities even to people living far away. . . ¹¹

Communications from Uruguay and Argentina

At the end of June Father Louis Lasagna, Director of the Pius IX School of Villa Colon (Uruguay), arrived in Turin. He brought news of the work our Sisters had already accomplished and of their spirit of piety, zeal and well-trying sacrifice. But what news could he bring about poor Sister Lucca, except her sad defection? Sad for her and extremely painful for Father Costamagna, for the Provincial, Father Vespignani, and for Mother Provincial, Sister Madelene Martini.

The sum total of their painful communication to the Director General for referral to the Superiors at Nizza, concerning the probable repatriation of the poor Sister, confirmed all that Sister Josephine Pacotto had already written. ¹² The Tempter and his high-ranking emissaries continued to pursue her. The unwary Sister had become their target. Special vigilance was needed day and night, [p. 18] to prevent her pursuers from scaling the walls to the Sisters' apartments.

The Sister was transferred from Buenos Aires, Almagro to La Boca, and from La Boca to San Isidro. There were repeated inconsistent promises followed by an immediate return to reprehensible conduct.

It was understandable then, that not even the feast of Mary Help of Christians with the presence of the Archbishop Monsignor Aneyros, the four clothings and five religious professions, could bring relief to the Provincial in her anguish. She must send the unfortunate creature back to Italy at the earliest opportunity. This was more especially heart-breaking, knowing Mother General was so ill. Had she known that Mother was already dead! . . . what then?

Father Cagliero comforted her with his spirit of confident optimism. "My dear child," he said, "there is nothing new under the sun! Divine Wisdom will know how to draw good even from this! Mother certainly had clear foresight. This is just as profitable an experience for me as for you.

Let us take heart and forge ahead praying and hoping. Mary, our dear Mother, always rights our mistakes herself. "¹³

Towards the middle of July, Nizza also heard the sad echoes of the deeds perpetrated in Rome against the venerated remains of Pius IX. The Sisters responded with hours and days of private and community reparation.

Sad news and the death of Mother Ferrettino

From Alassio Sister Elisa Roncallo sent the news of the serious condition of Mother Economer. She had been in the Salesian House at Sampierdarena since the beginning of the month, with the Sisters and boarders who were due to take final examinations for their diplomas. ¹⁴

The Vicar would have liked to go to the sick Mother immediately but, receiving no express order from the Superiors, she entrusted the mission to Our Lady who, [p. 19] as she used to say, "has no need of this muddler in order to bring consolation to her Daughters. "

But by Friday the 22nd Mother Ferrettino was gone. This renewed the grief of those who appreciated the merit of those first pillars of the Institute. It was especially true of Mother Petronilla and all who had received Mother Ferrettino's acts of service and measureless charity.

Like *Main* she had been a Daughter of Mary Immaculate, and her companion in the clothing and profession ceremonies; she had emulated her generosity in sacrifice and practical love for Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

She used her natural physical strength to dedicate herself indefatigably as Jack-of-all-trades, infirmarian, and bursar. From her religious vocation she drew an ardent piety born of total dedication. The following invocation was familiar to her, "O good Jesus, what a grace You have given me in making me all Yours! How could I not do and suffer everything for You alone when You have been so generous to me?"

After Mother's death she had been sent to Alassio by the Superiors to build up her health.

Feeling herself improve daily she remembered the words of her never-to-be-forgotten *Main*: "Prepare yourself for death because, although you think-you can carry on, you will go before Saint Anne's feast-day." She said to the Sisters of the House: "This time she has made a mistake. Saint Anne's day is nearly here and I am

almost well. "15

But she herself had made the mistake. Surprised by a crisis, she left this earth, well before the feast of Saint Anne.

Mother Ferrettino had been nine years in religion and was forty-nine years of age. She left a void that would not easily be filled.

The suffrages prescribed by the Rule were quickly offered for her at Nizza and the sad news passed speedily to the other Houses. Towards the end of the month, information was received about the solemn obsequies given her at Alassio.

[p. 20] Sister Louise Desirello added the following: "Never as at this painful time had we felt ourselves really Daughters of our Director, usually so sparing in his words. Never before as in these days had we realized how much we were appreciated, not only by the Salesians and the boys of their schools, but by their relatives, benefactors and acquaintances in the city. It is really true that sorrow draws good souls together in fraternal friendship and shows what they really are!"

Salesian charity

The Sisters and students who returned from Sampierdarena were also loud in their praises of the fraternal and fatherly charity of the Salesians. These can be summed up in the lively account of Louise Varvallo.

We had great fun packing for the journey to Sampierdarena and Genoa, and were happy to wear the dresses sent from home for this purpose rather than the school uniform. But we also enjoyed ourselves traveling back and forth in the trams several times a day. What beautiful things we saw and how easily were we provoked to laughter, even if the shadow of the examinations was never very far away!

The Sisters who were our companions both in study and fortune, tried hard to quiet us down but such luck was not to be expected! Even the passengers on the tram seemed to enjoy our cheerfulness for they said, "It is very evident that they belong to Don Bosco!"

The good Salesians of Sampierdarena gave us hospitality in some clean, discreetly furnished rooms, sufficiently separated from their own. There we had breakfast, dinner, snack and supper; we studied, we chatted, we laughed and slept as best we could. We were really very mischievous and up to all sorts of pranks, but they were harmless enough. We cast covetous eyes on the large, red, juicy tomatoes in the Salesian kitchen garden. Oh how lovely they looked! A few of them, certainly, managed to find their way from the garden to our lips in secret! It would have been im- [p. 21] possible not to notice this pilfering but no one said a word to us. When good Father Albera came to see if we needed anything and were being well treated, he always concluded by telling us to keep up our cheerfulness, since cheerfulness encouraged the appetite.

If we were successful in our examinations we owe it, after God and Our Lady, to the good Salesians. Every day Father Clemente Bretto came from Alassio to give us lessons in mathematics and explain those blessed logarithms. He was like a father to us and even served us at table. To think that he looked so serious! We saw that he was a saint.

Father Cerruti, the Director, also came from Alassio to see us, dispelling all our doubts and removing all fear as to the result of the examinations.

Feeling sorry for the poor clerics who had to wash their own dishes, we students offered to do it for them, but were allowed to do it only once.

What beautiful and fond memories we have of that House and those good, capable Salesians! They will certainly remain with us throughout our lives and should we have to return for a higher diploma, I am sure we would all go on wings.

The things we girls are saying have already been stated by Sisters Guido, Mavino, Bardino, Prandi, Elena Emanuela and Genta who were our companions. Sister Elisa Roncallo, our Superior in those days, can confirm this.

Retreat for ladies

By July 30, nearly all the boarders had gone home. The awarding of prizes, which had taken place on July 21, had been quieter than usual.

The day of the Portiuncula had now arrived and from early morning the ladies, young and old, invited by Don Bosco, had been receiving a happy welcome as they came to prepare for eight days' closer contact with God.

Some of the Superiors also arrived early, in order to make a devout pilgrimage to the grave of their late Mother Superior and be present in the Mother House for the feast [p. 22] of Our Lady of Snows.

All were welcomed equally with Salesian enthusiasm and together awaited the imminent arrival of Don Bosco.

However the afternoon brought only the two preachers: the Director General and Father Candido, a Dominican.

Unexpected urgent business had held Don Bosco back, but he would arrive the earliest he could manage.

Don Bosco at Nizza

Don Bosco arrived on August 4, accompanied by the Salesian priest-theologian Father Joseph Bertello, and Count Balbo. Don Bosco had a speaking engagement for an evening, requested by the city branch of the "Union of Catholic Workers." Count Balbo was honorary president of this union, while Charles Bravia, a past pupil of the Oratory, was actual president.¹⁶

Don Bosco was enthusiastically greeted by both community and retreatants. As on that day in Mornese after the death of Father Pestarino, so now in the House of Our Lady of Grace in Nizza Monferrato, inscriptions could be seen here and there, written in large bold lettering, "Come, come, our Father and Superior. Come and bring joy to our hearts! . . . Viva, viva Don Bosco, venerated Superior and Father, come today to console and comfort US!"¹⁷

To his niece Eulalia

Don Bosco paternally greeted all those present. Then he received his niece Eulalia who had come to Nizza from her boarding school in Chieri to take part in the spiritual retreat.

"Wonderful!" he said to her. "I am glad you were able to come. Your sister Maria wished to become a postulant this year but Our Lady wants her in heaven and you here, in her place."

[p. 23] "Oh no, uncle," said the young girl, very surprised and far from any idea of staying in Nizza. "Maria is not going to die, because mother wrote saying that she was getting better. Besides, I do not want to become a Sister."

"Maria will go to heaven and you, Eulalia, will be a Sister. Besides, while the fish is in the net it must not be allowed to escape."

This year, because of the special circumstances, the well loved date of August 5 was not marked by as much solemnity as usual. However the liturgical celebration was enhanced by special hymns and the discourse of the Founder. On this day also the date of election of the new Superior General was fixed for the 12th.

Heaven is assured for Sister Olympia Martini

On August 6 in Turin, the short life of Sister Olympia Martini, sister of the American Provincial, came to a close.

Don Bosco visited her a few days before he left for Nizza. To his question, "Do you wish for a blessing to cure you, or would you prefer a blessing that will send you to paradise quickly?" she had replied, "I choose the second blessing, Father. I want to go to heaven."

She had gone now to the eternal reward so longed for in her little daily acts of virtue.

Her death pierced the heart of her sister far away. But she would doubtless repeat what she had already written to the Director General. Rather than see her leave the Congregation, even for motives of health, she would prefer her "to die a holy death in the Congregation to which we both have the fortune to belong."¹⁸

Don Bosco among the retreatants

Superiors and Sisters, retreatants and others, all wished to profit by Don Bosco's presence in the House. The few remaining boarders also went to knock on his door, as did [p. 24] the bricklayers and carpenters who had been working hard since June to speed completion of the new wing of the House.

A singular personal story is told by a certain Margaret Vezzoli, who had come casually from Brescia, with anything but the dispositions of a young lady intending to stay in silence shut up in a convent for days. She said:

I had just obtained my teaching degree and in order to get a little relaxation, I decided to travel. On the

train I met some young ladies who were on their way to Nizza for this retreat, and decided to join them. I came here, therefore, out of curiosity. But now I am trapped by Don Bosco's words. I approached him partly because I was curious and partly for his blessing. However I intended to leave immediately, and said so.

But he became very thoughtful and looked so penetratingly at me that I could not get up and leave. Then he said:

"So you intend leaving immediately? And what about Jesus? He loves you very much and has given you a heart like mine, with a great love for children!"

"Yes, yes," I replied, "but outside I can do what cannot be done here!"

"Oh no! With a heart like yours you will go to hell if you remain outside." Here, two large tears rolled down his cheeks. He continued,

"Oh, if you would only stay, you would see, you would see . . . We shall open many Houses in Lombardy . . . and still more in your native Brescia. Many Salesians and many Sisters will go there, chosen by God from among the young people of Brescia. But if you go home much of this good will be lost and punishment for it will fall on your soul."

But . . . enough of this, we shall see how this affair of mine will end.

There were not many retreatants this year (scarcely sixty.) Perhaps this was because in every town and village, special missions for acquiring the Jubilee Indulgence ¹⁹ [p.25] had already taken place or were being planned. But those present distinguished themselves by their spiritual effort and ardent piety.

Between Father Cagliero and Father Candido, good, salutary stimulants for the spirit were not lacking and, because the preachers apparently had agreed that no one should go home without securing the precious Jubilee Indulgence, they received full cooperation.

Information on the present condition of Christian life "The Church's struggle

During these days of retreat some issues of *La buona settimana*²⁰ were read with profit. This was a religious periodical addressed to the people of Turin which presented a clear-cut idea of the state of Europe, particularly Italy. There was an imperative need to lead a Christian life, not only in word but, as Father Cagliero repeated, in practical faith, divine grace, good works and Catholic apostolate. This was the concept summarized by Father Candido: a real individual and social renewal for the consolation of the Church and the Sovereign Pontiff.

These texts were read with feeling and meditated by everyone. They served to confirm those dispositions of prayer and reparation which had already been roused at the news of demonstrations and the grave act of profanation committed by the revolutionaries at Verano, as the mortal remains of Pius IX were being transported during the night between July 12 and 13.

Special hours and days had immediately been dedicated to prayer and reparation for this outrage. But now that its full impact was felt, the desire revived for constant effort in the apostolate.²¹

[p. 26] Perpetual profession

There was' an exceptional perpetual profession on August 10. It was requested for special reasons by the House of Este which had been severely tried this year by illness and other difficulties. Don Bosco himself granted the permission on behalf of Sister Josephine Bolzoni, even though she had not yet completed one year of religious profession. She had already given proof of an uncommon spirit of sacrifice and observance even among the Sisters of Borgo San Martino, where she had been a novice.

Don Bosco's Good Nights completed the good done through the conferences of the spiritual retreat, the ministry of the preachers, and dedication of the Superiors.

The proffered theme was charity.

Charity to one's own soul by making sure of being in God's grace and keeping it always ready for the journey from earth to paradise.

Charity towards one's neighbor by loving him in every way possible without counting the cost.

Charity towards God by getting to know Him better in order to love Him more and make Him known and served by as many people as possible.

The last Good Night had a special note and ran thus:

Many people say that Don Bosco is a saint, that he does wonderful things. I instead can only tell you that Don Bosco is a poor priest, an instrument used by God to do great things and, it is true, to work for the

salvation of souls, especially the young. But he can do nothing without the help of good people and without the offerings and aid of his worthy Cooperators. Therefore he also expects the spiritual assistance of your prayers, all the more efficacious inasmuch as you lead truly Christian lives. He also counts on your material offerings, small or great according to your possibilities.

Do me the kindness then of recommending me often to God and Mary Help of Christians, and help me as much as [p. 27] you can, even if you have no other means, than making our work known to those who can give it their support through the pen or by private or public patronage. Then, besides acquiring great merit, in heaven you will find yourselves surrounded by the many souls saved by your charity.²²

At 11 o'clock the closing celebrations were carried out by Don Bosco himself. He left them this souvenir: "A sincere, deep and practical devotion to Mary Most Holy, Mother of all graces because she is Mother of divine Grace, Jesus; most powerful Mother because she was assumed by God to the highest summit of heavenly glory; Mother of love for all men, especially for Christians, and more especially still for her faithful devotees."

Concerning the fruit gathered among the ladies, some of whom wished to stay longer in order to study their vocation, there is Don Bosco's repeated significant statement: "If I had not already founded the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, I would found it just to obtain the good resulting from this work."²³

Retreatants and electors

The departure of the ladies coincided with the arrival of Sisters for the next spiritual retreat and the Superiors summoned to Nizza for the election of the new Superior General.

The recent family bereavement made their reunion more moving and fraternal, especially with Sister Felicina Mazzarello and Sister Orsola Camisassa, who had arrived from Sicily. Don Bosco, Father Cagliero and Father Lemoyne were chance witnesses of these fraternal demonstrations and were pleased with them.

[p. 28] Preparations on the vigil

Mother Daghero busied herself with the necessary preparations. Calmly and serenely, she turned to Sister Teresina Mazzarello who had been her teacher at Mornese. "Take this purse," she said. "It contains all that we have in the House. Take care of it until you know the name of the new Superior, then give it to her."

She then presented herself to Don Bosco in order to make the final arrangements and heard him say, "I have already prepared a large box full of *amaretti* (macaroons) for the poor Sister elected, because. . . poor Sister!"

As there was at this time no suitable place for the gathering, it was arranged that the election should take place in church. Seats and a small table were prepared near the altar rails for the priests. The table held a crucifix, the urn for the ballots, and the forms for distribution to the twenty-one electors.²⁴

With Don Bosco's kind permission the others in the House were allowed to assist if they so wished, together with a small group of boarders not yet home for the holidays. However, they would not be allowed to enter until after the exhortation which followed the singing of the *Veni Creator*.

Election day

The 12th of the month opened with the usual practices of piety to implore special graces for the Institute. At the time established, the bell rang and the electors with those others who were able, or wished to be present, took their places in chapel.

Don Bosco entered with Father Cagliero and Father Lemoyne. All three knelt in adoration for a brief moment before the Blessed Sacrament. Don Bosco then intoned the *Veni Creator*, which was followed by the appropriate *Oremus*, the *Hail Mary* and the invocation of *Mary Help of [p. 29] Christians*. He then addressed a few instructive and gently encouraging words to the gathering.

As an introduction he attributed the choice of the day to Divine Providence. He said that it was Friday and the feast of Saint Clare, virgin and religious, a day well suited for such an important act in the life of the Institute.

He drew from the occasion to exhort all to love the passion of Jesus Christ and the sorrows of the divine Mother, and to have a trusting love for the Blessed Sacrament. He reminded them of the power of Saint Clare's faith in the Holy Eucharist which had turned back those attacking the convent. These were the three essentials for support on the way of the cross, progress in holiness and victory in every kind of battle.

Don Bosco then drew the voters' attention to certain difficulties that could arise in religion, both for Superiors and for subjects. From this he deduced the need for Superiors after God's heart, and for devoted filial subjects, in order that religious life might prove a real antechamber of paradise.

Since this was the day on which they were to choose a Superior to be over all the others it was needful and therefore, he added, morally obligatory, not to consult among themselves but with God alone. This was to insure that the election responded to the greater interest of souls and those of the Congregation in particular.

Then, passing on to the procedure for secret voting and collecting the ballots, he invited the local Director to read the relative articles of the Rule clearly. Then, after a final word of encouragement, he clasped his hands to his breast and immersed himself in deep prayer.

This was the first election to be held with such solemnity and the deep emotion felt was obvious from the expression on the faces of those present.

After every form had been filled in, folded in four and placed in the urn, the scrutiny began.

Don Bosco smiled as each name was read out and, since the first ballot did not produce the required majority he [p. 30] invited the Sisters to invoke the Holy Spirit with mind and heart before a second and decisive vote.

Someone plucked up courage and proposed in humble, filial confidence, "If the venerated Father would give us a short list of those eligible there would not be such a dispersal of votes." This proposal was immediately overruled by the Director General. Don Bosco contented himself with a benevolent smile and the secret balloting continued. This scrutiny resulted in the election of Mother Catherine Daghero.

The Mother concerned wept silently and the Sisters in their emotion wept with her. Even before the authoritative voice of the Founder confirmed the result of the election, proclaiming it with evident and paternal affection, all hearts were singing the *Magnificat*.

You now have your new Mother General, [said Don Bosco,] but you have no Vicar and, because of Mother Ferrettino's death, you have no Bursar either. We shall have to think about this too, but at another time, [he added, exchanging understanding glances with his assistants,] and we shall leave the singing of the *Te Deum* until all the elections have been completed. But let me remind you that the Mother General is Our Lady's representative for you. Therefore age, knowledge or experience do not matter. Think of her only as the true representative of Mary Help of Christians. As such, listen to her, obey her, help her, comfort her and do not let a single day of your life pass without praying for her.

Our Lady will then let you feel her own motherly pleasure in you. She will make you happy in your vocation and grant you the grace of doing great good in the world and of drawing many souls to God.

The candles were lit and the *Magnificat* intoned, followed by benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and a hymn to Our Lady.

The community preceded the new Superior General to the entrance of the chapel. Once outside they lined up along the adjacent corridor, scarcely able to contain their exalta-[p. 31] tion. Through the outside windows opening onto the corridor popped the heads of the few boarders who had witnessed the election from the choir. Their hands were already clasped ready for a sonorous clapping. But Mother was nowhere to be seen. She was still in her place in chapel with her head between her hands.

In her affectionate freedom Sister Teresina Mazzarello did not delay approaching her to return the slender bag containing all the wealth of the Institute. This made poor Mother Daghero smile through her tears. She could no longer repeat: "Oh how glad I am! In an hour, more or less, I shall no longer be in this predicament!" A round of applause greeted Don Bosco and the two Directors when they arrived. "What have you done with the Superior General?" he said to those nearest to him. "Go and get her. Tell her to come here with us."

Mother Catherine came out of chapel covered with confusion and feeling almost humiliated at the general cry of "Evviva," that greeted her at Father Cagliero's prompting. She presented herself to Don Bosco and made as if to kiss his hand, but he said to her: "Here is the promised box of macaroons. Take it. . . My heart goes out to you!" as if he would say, "So young, with such a heavy cross. . ." But he continued aloud almost immediately: "But be of good heart, my poor child; we shall always be ready to help you in every way."

"Yes, yes. . ." interrupted Father Cagliero, "but try not to go from place to place alone any more, not even along the corridors, because if you do, who will ever take you for the Mother General?"

This gave rise to hearty laughter and even dear Mother Daghero smiled, blessed as she was by Don Bosco, congratulated by the two Directors and surrounded by her Daughters who were eager to kiss her hand and profess their affectionate loyalty.

They moved from the chapel corridor out under the covered walk towards the stops leading into the older wing [p. 32] of the House. Here the young boarders paid their first respects in the name of all their absent companions. Little Catherine Tavella, after days of loving study, recited with feeling the short poem composed by Father Lemoyne for the occasion.

There is a fair flower
o Mother most dear
More sweet
More delicate
More graceful
Than all the fair flowers
That gladden the air
In the days of beautiful April.

It is your
Blessed hand
That has set it
In our hearts
Where it is fed
And matures
By affectionate
Grateful love

It is not to be found
In gardens,
And springs to birth
Under no sky,
It does not drink of the dewdrops
Nor spread to the rays
Of the sun.

Sweetest of flowers,
Most delicate flower
Appearing so modest
It bears
A well loved name
And you know it
Dear Mother, as gratitude!

Accept
This flower
Dearest Mother,
It has no equal on earth,
This flower
Born of earth
Will triumph
In the courts of heaven above!

A few minutes of expansive freedom followed for the community, but not for Mother Catherine. She asked to be left alone with God in order to come to grips with herself and stem the tears that welled up from her heart.

Sheltered under the wings of her Guardian Angel, this was the moment when she took and read the note that was in the box her venerated Father had given her.

[p. 33] To the future Mother Superior General
of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
Reverend Mother Superior General,

Here are a few sweets to distribute among your Daughters. Keep for yourself the sweetness to be practiced always and with everyone, but be ever ready to accept the bitter macaroons or rather, the bitter pills when God pleases to send them to you.

May God bless you and give you the strength and courage to sanctify both yourself and the whole community entrusted to you.

Pray for me, who remain in Jesus Christ,

Your most humble servant,

*Father John Bosco*²⁵

Mother immediately said to herself, "Sweetness always; ready for the bitter macaroons; strength and courage from God!" and as she raised her head she seemed to hear her heavenly guardian reminding her of her own dear motto, *Act, be silent, suffer*. Swallowing her tears she seemed to the Sister waiting to escort her to the dining room, to be repeating with the Apostle Thomas, "Let us go and die with Christ! "

The eyes reddened with tears shone with motherly goodness as she accepted all the demonstrations of affection, which she returned with profound, noble tenderness.

In the dining room there were acclamations and spontaneous verses, and affectionate, understanding glances were exchanged with Mother Felicina who was making great efforts to take part in the common rejoicing, but could not refrain from shedding a few tears at the thought of her departed sister and Mother.

In the meantime plans were going ahead for greater festivities on the day of the other elections, and spontaneous comments: "Mother Catherine deserves it for her humility and charity... What our departed Mother Mazzarello obtained with her kindly energy, Mother Daghero will obtain through her motherly goodness. She is truly [p. 34] the angel God has sent us, and certainly deserves the confidence placed in her by the Superiors and electors."

A variety of news and communications

Secretary Father Berto arrived from Turin, and Father Bertello came from the villa of the Counts Balbo, bringing a variety of news as well as some worries for Don Bosco. Also various arrangements had to be made for the spiritual retreat, as retreatants were still arriving.

The communications of the Director General made in the name of Don Bosco on the morning of the 13th touched on the following points:

- To accept a change of plans from Divine Providence, which would mean the postponement of the retreat proper from that evening until the 16th; being satisfied with one sermon today which would take the place of the spiritual reading that evening.

- To prepare to celebrate as well as possible tomorrow, the election of the new Superior General and the other Superiors who will be elected the same day. Father Cagliero added on his own account, "If great festivities are being prepared in Turin on the feast of the Assumption for Don Bosco's sixty-sixth birthday, are we to do nothing?"

- If not prevented by special occupations, to spend the day like Mary in order to obtain for Don Bosco and the new Superior General the graces they need, gathering however at the time established for fraternal, serene and affectionate relaxation.

- To celebrate the feast of the Assumption with such fervor as to mark an epoch in our lives, in order to merit the acquisition of the Jubilee Indulgence during the retreat.

All these instructions were carried out. *Some* followed Father Cagliero for choir practice; others prepared for the celebration in chapel, the festivities in the playground or [p. 35] the cheerful family feast in the dining room. There were those who helped in the kitchen; others who gave a hand wherever it was required; those who found the right moment to approach Don Bosco, and those who prayed before the Blessed Sacrament.

The afternoon recreation, which was extended by half an hour, brought together all those Sisters who had not been permitted to help around because they were especially fatigued by the arduous work they had been doing all year.

Remarks taken at random

Conversation was simple and spontaneous for those who enjoyed the little things of family life.

I was very happy today when I saw the dish: of beautiful peaches being carried to Don Bosco's table. They certainly did not come from Piedmont. Happy the person who could give such a beautiful gift!

I know who sent them. It was Sister Elisa Roncallo's mother. She seems to spend the night planning what she can give to our dear Father the next day. She sent a large basket of really special fruit. . .

And it arrived just at the right moment. Sister Elisa must have suggested it to her mother. . .

Without doubt. She must have written that we would have a new Mother General for the 12th and that Don Bosco would be here.

Oh yes! Mama Roncallo is really at home with us and Sister Elisa is always repeating what Don Bosco said in Turin. *"Every mother of the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians should feel herself the mother of our Houses and works. This is how love multiplies the good done and increases our strength to do more. . ."*

And you, Sister Louise (Boccalatte), are you never going to tire of serving Don Bosco's table with the same dishes?

What do you want me to say? When he arrived he said immediately, "Do not worry about me; polenta and pump- [p. 36] kin will satisfy me." And we, great simpletons that we are, gave him pumpkin and polenta every day, served in every way we could think of!

Don Bosco also came to Penango, [interrupted Sister Colomba Cei,] just to see us at work. He advised the Director to give us Sisters whatever we needed and not to let us want for anything.

I saw Don Bosco in Alassio, [said Sister Rosina Bertone,] and I remember him saying, "Be careful, when you have a lot of work to do, to raise your eyes and say, *All for you my Jesus!*"

Sister Orsola Camisassa was about to speak but hesitated and seemed uncertain as she said, "I really ought to wait for the verification before speaking. "

"Tell us just the same!"

Don Bosco came as usual to Borgo San Martino for the feast of Saint Aloysius. I served him a cup of coffee, and told him that I should be very happy to see my sister a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians, but not until after my mother's death. She was a paralytic and needed a daughter's care. I added that anyway I was not sure my sister had a vocation. Don Bosco replied simply, "Pray... yes, your sister will come." This answer is already a surety for me and I rejoice in it as in a grace already obtained.

But I do not rejoice less when I have the chance of practicing what our dear Mother used to recommend when she came to see us at our work. I remember when in 1878 we saw her arrive unexpectedly, since there had been a spiritual retreat not long before.

In the House of Borgo San Martino, besides Sister Superior and Sister Ermelinda Rossi, we were then six professed Sisters, very "raw" but modestly speaking, all good people. Mother gave us the Good Night in the dining room after supper before we started washing the dishes and saucepans. She said, "I recommend you with all my heart, to love and respect Don Bosco and the Salesians; we are poor Daughters and what would we do without them? You saw how Don [p. 37] Bosco sent Monsignor Belasio during the retreat to explain the mass to us, and the significance of the sacred vestments and the various ceremonies. We never lack Salesian spiritual direction in order to become true religious according to his heart and that of Mary Help of Christians. Let us therefore agree to love, respect and show deep gratitude to Don Bosco and his dear Sons."

It is pleasant to hear our dear Mother Mazzarello remembered. It will be three months tomorrow since we lost her and it would seem that some people are almost afraid to speak of her . . .

Perhaps it is out of regard for her sister, Mother Felicina, but I am sure she would weep for consolation, hearing so many things related.

I am also of that opinion. However only yesterday, right after the election someone said under her breath, "Let us not speak of the other Mother any more for fear of giving the new one pain."

Oh, let us not measure the saints by our own yardstick.

The sound of the bell silenced the Sisters. Following a hymn to Mary they went into chapel for the daily visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

Mother Catherine joined the community at this exercise. She had not been at recreation in obedience to Father Cagliero under the pretext of keeping Mother Felicina and Mother Petronilla company. She had been told not to interest herself in the Sisters today or tomorrow, because they had a lot to do that she should not know about.

However it was not only the Sisters who had a lot to do. Don Bosco also had his share, dealing with the correspondence that had reached him through Father Berto and from America. Father Bertello was also fully occupied carrying out Don Bosco's orders and preparing his sermons for the coming retreat. The two Directors were also busy, one preparing the singing for both chapel and playground, the other with the inaugural poem required by current [p. 38] events. . . without counting the endless hours spent in the confessional.

The new Mother General could then keep quietly apart almost as if she were in retreat.

But even now she had no time for herself because Sisters were already approaching her. She was spending her time listening, helping and giving advice.

For Don Bosco and the Mother Elect

The spiritual reading of the evening as well as the half hour's meditation of the morning were replaced by sermons from Father Bertello. In plain, enlightened words he followed a theme in preparation for the feast of the Assumption. The Good Night by the Director General took the form of a newscast with short commentary.

He announced that tomorrow's community mass would be celebrated by Don Bosco for the intentions of his Daughters both present and absent. He gave notice that the election of Superiors would take place during the morning. Therefore, prayers should be said that the electors might be guided more by head than heart. There would be a feast-day dinner and everything would be done for the greater glory of God and the promotion of good Salesian cheerfulness.

The Director announced that Don Bosco would be present at the little festival in the afternoon. He invited an exchange of gifts to begin that evening by offering for our good Father all the good works of tomorrow in token of gratitude and devotion, from all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to their Founder on his 66th birthday. For his part during his mass Don Bosco would offer them to God and Our Lady according to his own intentions and his many spiritual and temporal needs.

Unintentionally he then let the only sad note of this vigil escape him: "Tomorrow at this time Don Bosco will already be in Turin."

[p. 39] Election of the other Superiors

On the morning of the 14th the twenty-one electors gathered in chapel at the specified time, accompanied by nearly all the community. The act of election was presided by the Director General, assisted by the local Director and Father Bertello.

It began with the ritual prayers, followed by the reading of the minutes of the election of the Superior General.²⁶

After a short exhortation and statement of the norms governing the elections to be held, work was commenced. In a short time the results of successive scrutinies were as follows:

Vicar	Sister Enrichetta Sorbone
Economer	Sister Anna Tamietti
1st Assistant	Sister Emilia Mosca
2nd Assistano	Sister Elisa Roncallo

The *Magnificat* was sung again and in anticipation of a word from the Founder everyone went to the playground giving full vent to their common happiness.

As dinner time approached Don Bosco and the Director General came out from the corridor adjoining the chapel. The latter said hurriedly, "Quick, quick, into the dining room, my Daughters. Don Bosco is here to bless your meal. "

Some immediately surrounded the Superiors; some ran to ring the bell and others ran upstairs and along the corridors repeating the message, "Quick, quick, Don Bosco is waiting to bless our meal!"

Don Bosco saw and smiled; so did Director General. Mother Catherine, standing humbly with the other Superiors, scarcely knew how to contain her joy. But she was also very confused at having to keep the Superiors standing under the porticoes while the professed Sisters, novices and postulants filed into the dining room.

Teresa Germano was the last and she found to her dismay that she was caught between the Mothers and the [p. 40] Superiors. As she tried to get through she heard Don Bosco say to Father Cagliero, "They are already a good number! The day will come when the Mothers will no longer be found at Nizza but in Turin, nearer the Superiors." The words did not impress her at the moment but as soon as she had got out of her embarrassing position she asked herself thoughtfully, "Will that really happen?"

When all had taken their places in the dining room, brightly decorated with flowers, the Mothers of the new Superior Council entered with Don Bosco and Father Cagliero.

They were met by a burst of applause to which Don Bosco kindly added his own applause. He then said with a smile: "You are awaiting my approval for each of the elections which have taken place this morning. Well, I approve them all!" He raised his hands as a sign of his pleasure and there followed another round of clapping together with, "Thank you, Father! Long live our Father! Long live the Mothers! Long live our new Mother Catherine Daghero!"

Once silence had been restored Don Bosco started the grace before meals. Then when all were seated he turned to Mother Emilia and said,

"May I see your helping of soup and main dish?" "Of course, Father!" And Mother Assistant tried to show him one of the best filled plates. But Don Bosco said,

"Mother, what are you doing? These Sisters have been working hard. Feed them well! Do as we do and have two courses! "

Mother Catherine flushed. With the help of the other Mothers she tried to make him understand that her Daughters were content with less; that they did not need to eat as much as men, already found the work of washing so many plates and dishes difficult. . . Then Don Bosco said, "Oh, if that is all that worries you put everything on one plate, but more abundantly, more abundantly! There is a lot of work to be done!"

[p. 41] Don Bosco then went to dinner with Father Cagliero leaving the community with the Mothers. A series of recitations and acclamations began with short songs from Mornese and new songs as well, and amusing jokes intended to make even Mother Felicina smile. She was no longer the same person she had been a few days before.

Mother Petronilla followed her example and the two of them frequently exclaimed, "Mornese, Mornese! We are back again in that blessed Mornese of Main and Father Costamagna! "

As a climax to the community expansiveness a strong, powerful voice was raised synthesizing the enthusiasm of everyone in an expression adapted perhaps from a wellknown page of spiritual doctrine, "Oh if the

world could see and hear us now! How many people would scale the walls of this convent in order to become Daughters of Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians!"

An hour of family festivity

The afternoon was given over to the last minute preparations for an hour of intimate festivity which would gather the whole community around the Mothers and the Superiors, after the singing of Vespers, the Te Deum and benediction.

Don Bosco came with Father Cagliero and Countess Gatti whom he wished to introduce to her new Mother.

"Where have you hidden your Mother General?" he asked those who surrounded him. "Go and find her, tell her to come and show herself. How many Sisters are there in the House? You see, Countess, this is a large House already, but it will become still larger. It will stretch as far as *La Bruna!* Oh, keep up your courage my good Sisters!

You have lost one humble and holy Mother, but now you have another who is not, and will not be less so than the first. "

[p. 42] "Here she comes!" said Father Cagliero, "Where did she hide herself?" "Among the trunks in the attic, Father, where she still has her straw mattress from the time of the ladies' retreat. She was crying . . . "

"Good," interjected Don Bosco, "now we will make her laugh! Shall we give her the chair between us, Countess?"

The time for the festivities had arrived. The porticoes accommodated the audience, and the balcony above the first flight of steps leading to the interior corridor was the stage. A few benches placed against the low wall that served as an external parapet to the balcony held the choir and the harmonium which was used to accompany the two songs, rendered in sustained chorus with "obbligato" parts interspersed.

Poor Mother Catherine, she was seated in full view between Countess Gatti and Don Bosco! A few more tears shone in her eyes as she smiled at that trick of obedience.

First on the program was a song for Don Bosco composed by Father Lemoyne and set to music by Father Cagliero.²⁷

Birthday wishes, spiritual offerings, declarations of profound gratitude and promises of filial devotion followed.

Then all hearts turned to Mother with festal joy, in a poem recited by the novice, Sister Vincenzina Bessone, the smallest in stature and youngest of all. When accepting her as a postulant Don Bosco had said of her, "Golden hair, golden heart!"²⁸

The closing chorus was a hymn voicing the exultation of her Daughters in their new Mother.²⁹

This is your Mother

After the last *Evviva!* Don Bosco showed his approval and pleasure, and then, turning first to the community and then to the Mother, the guest of honor, he said, "This then, is your Mother; and here Mother, you have your Daughters with you! Very good! I see there are two boxes here, one [p. 43] containing sweets and the other tiny macaroons. Now Mother, give each Sister a spoonful from each box, beginning with the bitter macaroons."

Feeling very embarrassed our poor Mother began the distribution as instructed. Don Bosco watched her, then he said, "You must always do things this way. Give each and all a few bitter macaroons and then a few sweets. But the sweets must always come last."

A chorus of gratitude followed, together with renewed wishes to Don Bosco. Then after a farewell greeting to Countess Gatti, the Sisters again surrounded their Mother, united in filial affection. Supper time came, followed by Father Lemoyne's Good Night. "Mary assumed into heaven and Our Lady of Grace mean the same for us. Let us honor Mary assumed into heaven and ask her for many graces. Among these graces let us ask for Don Bosco, for Mother General and for ourselves, the grace 'of living and dying in a continuous attitude of thanksgiving to Jesus and Mary."

Feast of the Assumption and thought-provoking news

The feast of the Assumption had all the characteristics of a great solemnity of the Church. But the morning of the 16th brought sad news which served to prepare the Sisters for their spiritual retreat. Sister Clotilde Turco had died at the age of twenty-eight years.

The poor Sisters had confidently hoped that the special care of her family would enable her to return to the Congregation in better health. Instead, she had been called to eternity from her parental home having with her in her last moments none of the affectionate Sisters and tender Mothers with whom she had lived for six years in Our Lady's House.

[p. 44] From Argentina and Uruguay

Father Cagliero passed on news to Mother Superior which he had just received from our missionary Sisters.

"Mother, here are some sweets and some macaroons for you which have just arrived from Argentina and Uruguay. They should be very useful for the Sisters' Good Mornings and Good Nights during these days of retreat."

They really were sweets and macaroons.

The Provincial, Mother Madelene Martini, wrote to the Director General on May 17: May God in His infinite mercy not permit the sad consequences of the serious illness of our beloved Mother Superior which we fear." Perhaps she was still in the dark at that moment regarding our great loss since her letters of June and the beginning of July manifest an ardent longing for further news.

Mother Madelene also gave the decision reached for poor Sister Lucca. By disposition of Father Costamagna, the Provincial, she had been repatriated and almost immediately rejoined by the person who had brought her to that point.

The poor Provincial confessed herself to be morally and physically ill from this misfortune and a few smaller worries which gave her cause to fear for other Sisters, one from Uruguay and one from Patagonia. However she hastened to add that the good God had taken pity on her weakness and sent her many consolations in exchange. It was comforting to see the good that was being done in all the Houses and to know of the exceptional virtue of the three Teresa's of Villa Colon, Sisters Rinaldi, Mazzarello and Gedda, as well as the humility of Sister Angela Vallese and of others still closer to her.

She was still doubtful as to whether her own sister, Olympia, would finally return because of her delicate health. Sister Olympia herself insisted that she was ready to suffer whatever God might send her for the sake of her own perseverance and that the good spirit might be preserved among her dear missionary Sisters. For his part the Provincial, Father Costamagna, together [p. 45] with Father Vespignani, let Don Bosco and Father Cagliero know that Sister Madelene and the Sisters of Buenos Aires Almagro, were virtuously persevering in the fervor, piety and the spirit of work, sacrifice and cheerfulness of Mornese.

Thus without even being aware of it, Salesian America had followed the instructions of Don Bosco, keeping the sweets to the end.

Spiritual retreat

The spiritual retreat opened officially on the evening of August 16. Mother Daghero overcame her feelings and presented herself to the Sisters gathered to hear her general recommendations. Here is one of the first: "We must not think that our Mother is dead. She still lives among us with the treasures of her holy example and precious counsels. Therefore let us not be like seculars who never mention the dead. Rather, let those who have special memories of our dear Mother tell us about them at recreation time. It will be good for us all as well as for the individual concerned, and our unforgettable Mother will have greater glory in heaven where we hope she has already found rest."

The Pope's feast-day and jubilee

The Pope's feast-day presented a further topic for the exhortations of these days. It was celebrated on August 21, feast of Saint Joachim, fixed by the Church's calendar for the first Sunday after the Assumption. An extract from a letter printed on the first page of the August issue of the *Salesian Bulletin*, written as a homage to the Holy Father from the Salesian Cooperators, called for special comment.

It was read in the chapel by the Director General during the Good Night of the 20th, after the community prayers. "As good Sons we willingly take the opportunity [p. 46] of this happy occasion for uniting with Catholics all over the world to offer the homage of our mind and heart to you, our common Father. First of all we tell you solemnly that we love you and will love you until death. We share in your joys and your sorrows, and would wish the former to be doubled and tripled, and the latter to lessen and disappear altogether, even if our lives have to pay the price."

The Director continued for about a quarter of an hour on the subject of Don Bosco's love for the Pope. He

spoke of the double duty we have of always praying and making sacrifices for the Pope, especially at a time when troubles were besetting the Church and causing anguish to the Holy Father. It was a double duty for us as Christians and Salesian religious.

Father Cagliero entrusted his colleague, Father Joseph Bertello, with the instructions for acquiring the Jubilee Indulgence, in order to be sure of a peaceful death and freedom from the pains of purgatory.

He also advised the retreatants to read the pages referring to the current sufferings of the Church and the Holy Father in the magazine, *Good Week (La buona settimana)* August 7. They would also do well to read the following article entitled "Protests and Reparation," which spoke of the fervent fidelity and devotion of good people.

It is also consoling to see the enthusiasm with which the Episcopate and Catholics everywhere hasten to protest against the savage acts of aggression which occurred on the night of the 13th of last month, and to send their condolences to Pope Leo XIII.

These arrive in copious numbers from everywhere, even from the farthest corners of the globe: from France, England and America. Hence there is outstanding popular support, which reveals the increasing respect and affection of the faithful for the Vicar of Christ and the Holy See. The *Osservatore Romano* has already published two supplements filled with telegrams, letters and statements from bishops, Catholic associations, notable people, etc. To these voices may be added those of the diplomats accredited at the Vatican, all of whom in the name of their respective govern-[\[p. 47\]](#) ments, declared their distress at what had occurred. Not less eloquent were the continual pilgrimages of Romans to the Basilica of Saint Lawrence and the fervent prayers offered at the tomb of the glorious Pontiff Pius IX, in expiation of the desecration of the venerated remains by those who call themselves liberals.

No one wished to miss out in the universal proof of devotion to the Roman Pontiff, and spiritual offerings to God and the Blessed Virgin in order to console him augmented in number and intensity.

Conclusion of the retreat; clothings and professions

The retreat ended with eleven clothings, twenty-four professions, two renewals of vows and nine perpetual professions.

Among those receiving this last grace was Sister Amalia Meana. Although she had been professed for scarcely a year she was already being considered for a new foundation in France.

The "souvenir" of the retreat was a reaction to the last wound inflicted on the Director's fatherly heart by the sad occurrence in America, "Sincerity, my Daughters! Piety and faithfulness until death!"

"We need - to learn from one another"

Towards the end of recreation on August 23, Mother Daghero invited Sister Adele David to give a talk, not so much about the feast of the preceding June which had already been described in the *Salesian Bulletin*, as about the work itself. By this was meant the humiliations and sacrifices with which the Sisters of Bordighera had achieved so much good already and could foresee a flourishing work for society in that zone endangered by Protestantism.

"We need to learn from one another," said the new [\[p. 48\]](#) Mother Superior, "so now tell us about yourself also, dear Sister Adele, just as if you were speaking about someone in America, and Our Lady will make use of everything for the best."

With edifying simplicity Sister Adele spoke of their poverty, lack of food, linen and furniture; of begging expeditions with and without results; of prayers with arms outstretched and on bare knees on the crumbling stone floor. To all this was added the caustic remarks hurled at them both privately and publicly by the Protestants, and the many acts of virtue required of them by tiredness in work and the difficult problem of supporting themselves. They did all this to obtain material help and personnel to keep the House and the church functioning.

There was still much to do although much had been accomplished, but given time, prayer, work, penance, and the holiness of the Director, Father Cibrario, and the Sisters, the rest would be achieved. The fruits would be gathered by those who came after.

"Congratulations, Sister Adele and congratulations to all the dear Sisters of Vallecrosia," repeated all those present. Someone added jokingly, "We will help you with our saucepans and dishcloths," expressing the good will of those who were working in Salesian Houses without the satisfaction of direct contact with the young.

"That is just what I wanted," concluded Mother Daghero, "rejoicing and sharing in family events; putting everything in common-work, prayer, mortifications, joys and sufferings-because all of us have one aim only, and

one patrimony.”

Returns and transfers

With this program of Salesian life came the preparation for departure to their various destinations.

This year there were several changes, beginning with Nizza where the new Vicar General, Mother Enrichetta [p. 49] Sorbone, would also be Novice Mistress, because Mother Petronilla Mazzarello had been nominated Superior at Lanzo Torinese. Besides the general direction of studies, the first Assistant, Mother Emilia Mosca, would assume special responsibility for the postulants. The second Assistant, Mother Elisa Roncallo, was to replace Sister Morano as best she could in the direction of the boarding school. The latter had been appointed Superior of the third foundation in Sicily.

Other transfers for both Superiors and Sisters became necessary because of three new kindergartens that had been accepted at Fontanile, Nichelino and Visone, and the already mentioned work at Marseilles in France. Hence, during the afternoon of the 23rd, the whole of the 24th and the morning of the 25th, the Superiors and the Director General had serious matters to discuss and not a few worries.

But once all decisions had been taken and each one had gone to her assigned House, Nizza resumed its ordinary life of recollected, silent work.

Another spiritual retreat

In Turin however, they were preparing for a second retreat. When Father Cagliari and Mother Catherine arrived to preside over it, there was scarcely time to give a festive welcome to the new Mother General when the bell rang for the retreat to start.

Two Salesians, Father John Francesia and Father Ascania Savio, had been chosen as preachers.

Don Bosco was too occupied with Salesian retreats and serious business affairs to find time to put in an appearance. But the Director General did the work of three in order that the Sisters might not feel the absence of their Founder and Father too much. He spoke in his name and passed on his advice, greetings and blessing, and faithfully took back to him the devoted sentiments of his Daughters.

[p. 50] In homage to the dispositions of the archbishop

Nothing had been changed from previous years, not even in Turin. There were the same recommendations as at Nizza, the same fervor in acquiring the Jubilee Indulgence and in prayer for the Pope.

By order of the ecclesiastical authority, the archbishop's letter concerning the insults hurled at the coffin of Pius IX³⁰ was read in chapel.

Father Francesia, preacher of the instructions, spoke about this letter. Not content to allow the retreatants only the reaction of the moment, he listed the most serious causes of the Holy Father's anguish: the insolence of the enemies of God and His Church; the frenzied persecution of religious and priests and the open insults against them; and the exile of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, from public and private conscience.

Brought to the knowledge of the Sisters, all this led not only to prayer during those special days of retreat, but prayer to be said throughout the year, throughout their lives, by making of their work, sacrifice and even rest, a continual prayer for the Church, the Pope, the good and the bad, Italy and the world.

These were excellent dispositions for acquiring the Jubilee Indulgence and for a new year rich in merit for heaven.

New professions and the concluding day

The first of September marked the end of the retreat and also the first profession of twelve novices and perpetual profession of six Sisters.

The Director General presided over these ceremonies and, varying the words, assigned the same *souvenir* already given in Nizza, "In order to keep one's heart in the right place we need piety, sincerity and constancy until death."

Once the services were finished, joy overflowed. Some [p. 51] congratulated the newly crowned professed, others expressed their impressions of one or other of the Superiors; some enjoyed being able now to express fully what they had kept subdued during these days, out of love for the Holy Father.

Sister Vincenza Razzatti and Sister Teresa Tricceri of Lu told how busy they had been with the little ones in the kindergarten, in the workroom and among the girls of the oratory while preparing for the entry of the new

parish priest on the actual feast-day of the Pope. They described the marvelous results of the demonstrations by the school, the people, the government authority and even the Salesians, since Don Bosco had sent one of his own to represent him at the town's festivities. But they expressed their sorrow at having to return to Lu without their Superior, who had now become the Bursar General.

Sister Brigida Prandi related that as a special act of virtue she had restrained herself for the whole week from saying "What a pity Don Bosco is not here with us for at least an hour." She continued, "I have not seen him since last May when he came to Chieri. Now just listen to what I witnessed then:

It was Sunday and, knowing that Don Bosco was with us, a poor shoemaker appeared with a four or five-year-old little girl whose legs were paralyzed. He wanted to obtain Don Bosco's blessing and his wish was granted immediately. After the blessing Don Bosco told the man to let his daughter free as she was now quite able to manage alone. In fact, the little one immediately began to caper about on her own. This was indeed something to talk about.

But there is more. The next day while our Father was having his breakfast I tried to approach him and he made me take a cup of coffee with him. Mrs. Lupo, a Salesian benefactress, was also there. You may imagine how embarrassed yet how happy I felt!

Don Bosco was due to leave at nine o'clock that morning but some priests, among them Canon Comino, made him miss the train. He said, "Patience, it cannot be helped," [p. 52] and remained as peaceful as if the upset to his plans did not affect him. At about 11:30 those reverend priests accompanied him in a carriage as far as Trofarello. I think only a saint could do such things, and a great saint at that. What do you think?

Having given a cordial greeting to her ex-Superior, Mother Felicina, Sister Agnes Ricci started to sing her praises.

Our dear Mother Mazzarello is no longer with us, but the one who has returned from Sicily is her faithful copy. What lovely holy years we spent with her at Borgo San Martino! Under her direction we had a foretaste of paradise. There was much work and sacrifices without number; but what great love for God and great holiness in our Superior! She wanted us all cheerful, obedient and mortified, all of us perfect like her. Yes, really perfect!

One morning one of us left a chair out of place. Sister Superior noticed it and said nothing. However at the right moment she asked, "Who left that chair there?"

There was no answer as we did not want to fail in charity. A little later however the name came to light. Mother Felicina said, "I knew, but I wanted to measure how far your fraternal charity would go. Be careful never to fail on this point. Love one another and never place the mistakes of others in evidence. This is a fault that cannot be tolerated among us."

I remember our Mother coming to see us as if it were yesterday. She recommended us always to be grateful to the Salesians who were so good to us. She told us to have a great esteem for them, linked with discretion in word and deed. Our Superior was a shining model of this.

At recreation time Sister Agnes Ricci had to satisfy those who had heard her saying, "You certainly have never experienced what happened at Este. "

Perhaps this might have been forgotten had it not been for Sister Josephine Quarello, who was one of those most interested. She had given up her teaching diploma, feeling she had no vocation for teaching, and had gone to Biella [p. 53] to help the Sisters in the workroom.

So Sister Agnes continued, "I will tell you if you promise not be scandalized and to use what I tell you only for your own good. It is an experience of life and therefore provides a reason for us always to be on the alert and not to slip as I did, but to keep on our feet with prayer and humility."

After the death of our dear Mother Superior I had no peace thinking that perhaps I had given her the last sorrow of her life. I had written clearly and openly that not one of us wished to stay any longer in the House at Este. She had answered me, giving hope that all of us would return to Nizza.

This was our problem. Women had been looking after the linen of the Salesian school before we took over. During that time every Saturday morning a coadjutor Brother had prepared the bags containing the change of linen for each of the Superiors and boys.

When we arrived the women left and the thought of the linen bags also passed to us. However the poor Brother was so upset by this that in order to oblige the Superiors to give him back his responsibility he started mixing the articles in the bags.

You can imagine the disorder in dormitories and rooms, and the talk that went on about us in the

playground, the dining room and, in fact, everywhere.

There were observations upon observations made to the poor Sisters who had worked so hard and had obtained such a result. Our justifications were not accepted or rather, received the same reply, "This never happened when the women were here. What disorganized Sisters you are. . ."

The Brother concerned also played another trick on us. The priests' collars which WP had starched and ironed to perfection were displayed as his work and those already badly mended by the women were pointed out as our work. Sister Superior was at her wit's end to know what to do. We Sisters wept continually and life became almost unbearable.

I should also add that the House of Este was going through a very difficult period during these months because of [p. 54] illness and other worries, all of which meant an increase of work and trouble.

Aware of this, our dear Mother naturally sympathized with us and comforted us with the hope of leaving that blessed House!

However she died a few days later and to the sorrow at having her no longer with us was added that of seeing our hopes of a change disappear. The coldness of those darkened faces around us, even in the early day!! of our bereavement, certainly gave us reason for tears.

The Director was the only one to encourage us a little. Perhaps he was beginning to see the truth of the matter.

Then the other Superiors in the House also began to understand and a few weeks after the death of our dear Mother they gave back to that Brother the charge of his beloved linen bags and everything else then fell into place.

We said immediately that this was one of the first graces obtained for us from our Mother who had gone to heaven.

I should add in conclusion that only a few days ago we were told in confidence, "You are lucky to have Father Tamietti as your Director! Happening to be in Turin with a few other confreres, not belonging to the Oratory, he heard that a proposal was to be made to sign a document calling for the removal of the Sisters from the schools. The reason given was that the Sisters were not as easy to deal with as were the women in service. He however had spoken out clearly saying, "Are you all mad? For my part I still want all my Sisters without even one being changed."

We shall see what happens. But it must be said that once our Director saw clearly where the fault lay, and made a better appraisal of the sacrifices we were making every moment, he started behaving like a father to us.

For the rest, in order to be absolutely just, I must also say again that we have been making a first experience, and so have the Salesians, poor things. We must be persuaded that we are not there to behave as if we owned the House. On the other hand they have to make continual acts of humility in their dependence on us, even when only a handkerchief or a sip of coffee is needed.

Nevertheless, as our dear Mother Superior said many times, if we do not just content ourselves with doing our [p. 55] work, but place ourselves reverently, and with great humility and understanding in the position of good Sisters towards the Superiors, they will not be lacking in giving us that esteem and respect which promotes mutual peace.

"you are quite right," affirmed Sister Josephine Bolzoni, speaking for everyone. "Many a time Sister Ursula Robustelli declared how honored she had been when Father Leveratto, prefect of the school of Borgo San Martino, offered himself as first assistant in the kitchen. Neither she, a novice of only a few months, nor the other Sisters knew anything about cooking. He taught them how to cut the meat and the cheese for the priests and the boys, and how to serve through the turntable. He also used to send a coadjutor Brother to light the fire so the Sisters could make their morning practices of piety peacefully. He was always ready to excuse the involuntary failings of the Sisters in front of his confreres, calling them martyrs of work and of fidelity to Don Bosco and his undertakings."

As they listened to Sister Ricci, others began to remember incidents of bygone days. The circle of Sisters became larger and more compact until there was a single group. The final subject of the community recreation turned on our dear Mother. Without taking anything from the present Mother General, she seemed to be still on this earth, so vividly was she present in the minds and hearts of her Daughters because of her great, strong virtue.

A species of litany seemed to develop: Our Mother was open, upright, sincere, ardent, frank, simple, fervent, humble, pure, impartial, submissive. . .

Our Mother appeared to be austere and she was so, but only towards herself. She sought perfection even in the smallest things. She took great care of the sick, the young and the timid. At recreation she kept everyone cheerful and at the same time united with God. She loved both observance and the perfection of poverty. Love of God consumed her. With regard to charity towards her neighbor, not only did she not spare herself, but she

multiplied her- [p. 56] self day and night, with a spirit of sacrifice that reached heroism. The most wonderful thing about it all was that each narrator had some clear example to prove her own assertion.

Coming a few minutes before the visit to the Blessed Sacrament, Mother Catherine found the Sisters united in this conversation. She could only say: "You could not give me greater pleasure. As we make our way to the chapel let us ask the grace that all of us may be true Daughters of such a Mother."

Foundation of Trecastagni

Before the end of the day the Sisters of the nearby Houses had returned to their destinations. The rest who were not members of the Turin community left on Friday and Saturday, with the exception of the four chosen for the new foundation in Trecastagni. They were Sister Madelene Morano, Sister Louise Bardina, Sister Manuela Elena, and the novice, Sister Marietta Giacone. These left on Monday, September 5 with Mother Felicina Mazzarello and Sister Orsula Camisassa.

There was a special blessing for them from Don Bosco, Trecastagni was considered very far away. Therefore Mother Daghero, although not very well in health, prolonged her stay in Valdocco with the intention of accompanying them at least as far as the train for Rome.

The farewells and good wishes exchanged between Mother and Daughters were most tender. Even when the train was already moving Sister Morano continued to call from the window, "Come to see us soon. Come to see us soon!"

The offer of the ancient building called *Conservatorio delle Vergini* at Trecastagni had been made during the month of August by the Archbishop of Catania, Monsignor Dusmet, in a letter to Father Cagliero.³¹ The first news to arrive from Sicily was an assurance [p. 57] that the work had been initiated with great promise on Wednesday, September 14, under the special protection of Saint Joseph.

Foundation at Nichelino

On her return to Nizza, Mother General prepared a group of Sisters for the foundation at Nichelino. There was to be a kindergarten, an oratory, and probably a workroom. The Director General had accepted this foundation out of charity towards his friend, Father Reviglia.³² However he did not expect it to continue very long.

"Trying can do no harm," Father Cagliero said, "and if it cannot be maintained because essentials are lacking, the good seed sown will not fail to bear fruit."

Sunday, September 11, was the day fixed for the Sisters' arrival. They were to be presented to the people on the feast of the Holy Name of Mary, celebrated the same day. Twenty-one-year-old Sister Delphine Guido had been chosen as Superior. She had obtained a Junior Teacher's Certificate on August 1, and had been professed only twenty days. Nevertheless she had always been outstanding for her practical common sense, and no less for her spirit of piety, zeal, sacrifice and regular observance.

First biographical notes on Mother Mazzarello

Joyful emotion came with the feast of Our Lady's Nativity, especially to the community of Nizza. Among the other things the *Salesian Bulletin* of the current month had announced the election of the new Superior General, Mother Catherine Daghero, and had given a brief outline of the whole of Mother Mary Domenica Mazzarello's childhood.

Thus, there was a renewal of tender and grateful memories, and a growing hope that the outstanding virtue of [p. 58] this first Daughter and Superior of the Congregation would come to be recognized even by the world outside. Everyone blessed Don Bosco for keeping his promise of the previous July, and sincerely thanked the good Director who had prepared the short biography.

No one could have been better able to write about this elect soul than Father Lemoyne. Neither was there anyone better able than he to collect proofs from Mornese and Nizza of the well deserved esteem in which this exemplary Superior was held. These proofs were found in the letters of Father Costamagna, and in the words of Father Cerruti, Father Cagliero and Don Bosco himself.

Suffrages offered for Mother Mazzarello at Cascinette

At the Good Night, Mother Daghero acceded to the general wish and repeated Sister Rosa Codara's story.

The Director of Cascinette had not always seen eye to eye with our dear Mother because she would not give in to certain of his demands. But for all that, he esteemed her greatly and declared himself an admirer of her virtue. Proof of this was seen in the solemnity with which he surrounded the memorial service of the thirtieth day after her death. He announced the celebration the Sunday before and invited all his parishioners to attend, saying, "This was a strong woman with virile virtue, but with such tenderness and affection for her Daughters as to make her equal to Saint Teresa. Come then, and give her this sign of your esteem for herself and for her Sisters and ours." Priests from all the nearby villages were also invited in order to add solemnity to the obsequies. The Director himself paid all the expenses for church decorations and for the choir.

[p. 59] Letters from America

On the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows the community of Nizza held a spontaneous prayer vigil and the arrival of news from America made it seem as though Our Lady wished to show her pleasure in their effort.

The Provincial, Mother Madelene Martini, wrote to her sister under the influence of recent sorrow. Unknown to her, Sister Olympia had gone to eternity about a month and a half previously.

Almagro, July 18, 1881

My dearest Sister Olympia,

On the very day I received the sad news of our beloved Mother Superior's death I also had the consolation of receiving good news from you through Father Cagliero.

What a great loss we have sustained, my dear Olympia, in the death of our good Mother! How hard she worked for our good and to keep us firm in our vocation! Let us pray that God may reward her great charity and patience towards us, and give us the grace of being able to imitate her during this life and of being united with her in the life to come. Be of good heart, dear Olympia; let us be constant in loving and serving God, even if He does not always caress us. It is in sorrow and affliction that we give Him proof that our love is sincere. He observes us and is better pleased with an act of conformity to His will in time of tribulation than with a thousand acts of gratitude when things go according to our own inclinations.

How fortunate we should be, my good Sister Olympia, if in union with Jesus our Spouse, we could suffer something for His love! He is our Father and knows when it is time to caress us. Therefore let us abandon ourselves into His hands and think only about how we can please Him by doing His holy will well.

Be cheerful always! Do not open the door to melancholy under any pretext whatsoever. This ugly beast does a lot of damage and should never be given shelter in our house. Now listen to something pleasant I have to tell you. All [p. 60] our good Sisters here are praying for you. Doesn't that make you happy?

Good-bye for now and pray very much for me. I need your prayers, believe me! If the opportunity offers itself greet our relatives for me. Say many things for me to our Reverend Superiors and dear Sisters.

May God bless both you and me.

Your affectionate

*Sister Maria Madelene*³³

As he passed the letter on to Nizza Father Cagliero added, "Read it to the Sisters. Sister Martini says that this really has been a year of crosses for her. She is not far from wrong, poor thing!"

The Director General also sent some other American letters to be read to the community.

Sister Rita Barilatti wrote on behalf of her companions in profession:

Oh good Father, how sad we are. We were in the chapel for the visit to the Blessed Sacrament when Father Costamagna came in. His face was disfigured with grief and there, before the altar, he told us through his tears: "I bring you very sad news, my dear Sisters. It is Jesus who, on the last day of the month consecrated to Him, is asking a great sacrifice from you. Our dear Mother Mazzarello has winged her flight to heaven! . . . I have just received Father Cagliero's letter! . . ." Weeping bitterly he hurried out and went to San Carlo where, they told us later, he remained locked in his room for the rest of that day. In the chapel, we sobbed our hearts out! None of us could restrain our tears, not even our dear Mother Provincial, and the latest of our Sisters to arrive cried just as much, or even more, than those who had come first. You can imagine how we felt, we who were professed just over two months ago.

The following day our Archbishop, Monsignor Aneyros, came to comfort us, offering himself for anything we needed and speaking to us like a father. And what a holy father he is! But who will be our Mother now?

[p. 61] We have just celebrated our mass in suffrage, [wrote Sister Josephine Vergnaud from La Boca]. It was not a solemn celebration because our poor House was unable to manage it. But what can we say, Father? We seem to have lost a piece of our heart.

The news came to us through our Provincial, Father Costamagna, who seemed half dead himself and unable to give us even a word of comfort.

All he said to us was that the community of Almagro was grieved, especially our Mother Provincial, and that copious suffrages had been offered immediately. All those of us who knew our dear Mother intimately can do nothing else but repeat, "She was a real saint!"

Now shall we be left orphans for long or have they elected another Mother as holy as she was?

In your goodness, Reverend Father, let us know soon. Do not leave us again in the dark for so many months!

Sister Teresa Gedda wrote from Uruguay:

Did our dear Mother really leave us in Our Lady's month? . . .

I seem to see her again in our House at Lasso when, seeing how hard worked we were, she herself went to help in the kitchen and workroom. She would busy herself putting away the utensils, cleaning the vegetables, etc. At the same time she would keep us cheerful and recollected in such a motherly and unassuming way with ejaculations. She taught us how to multiply intentions in order to advance in holiness. In her presence we felt like children close to their mother.

Now no more of her dear letters will arrive to make us weep for joy and do us so much good!

Word also came from Sister Josephine Pacotto in Uruguay. After expressing her deep sorrow at the death of our dear Mother she relived the past, linking it thus with the present.

I remember her, O how I remember her! One day she called me to go to the parlor with her. Her apron was so faded that I could not resist saying to her, "Remember, Mother, that you are the Superior General!" She replied, [p. 62] "Yes, I do remember, and just because I remember, I must give good example!"

I see myself again at Mornese when she asked me to go with her to see the Director, Father Lemoine. As we were on our way she said to me, "What Sisters we are! We do not even know the correct way of introducing ourselves!" She then blushed deeply and laughed.

But why should my mind travel so far away when there are other things to tell you? We have seen her here in Las Piedras. . . and she spoke to us!

On the very morning of our dear Mother Superior's death Sister Victoria Cantu asked to stay in bed. She did not feel prepared to receive Holy Communion and feared the girls might be disedified seeing her abstain from going to the altar. When the Sisters had left the dormitory she heard her bed curtain being pulled aside and saw our Mother beside her looking just as usual. Then half seriously and half good humoredly she said,

"Get up, Sister Victoria, and go to receive Communion!"

"Mother, I cannot," she replied, "because of this and that. "

"Humble yourself before whom you should and then go to Communion."

The Sister did as she was told without any suggestion of fear, but rather of relief. There was almost a feeling of contentment at having seen our dear Mother in this faraway place, and heard her voice.

A few days later I too was in bed doubting whether I should go to Holy Communion or not. I heard the curtain pulled and Mother's voice saying, "Get up and go to Communion because who knows how long it will be before you can go again?" I obeyed, but the point is that from that morning on I had to do without Communion because I fell really ill, with an illness that was serious, though brief.

The same thing happened to Sister Rosina Bosco. But she did not feel like getting up immediately and so for three months, due to typhoid fever she could not go down to the chapel. The Communions she received during her illness and convalescence were very few and far between.

On the same night that Mother had shown herself and spoken to Sister Bosco she also came to me, but this time in [p.63] a dream. She said,

"Why do you call on me so many times during the day?"

I replied, "I am afraid that the Sister in the bed next to mine will lose her vocation."

"You tell her quite plainly to be more obedient, more sincere and more detached from her relatives; otherwise she will lose her vocation and it will be all the worse for her!"

While the Superiors commented on and shared this news with the community at Nizza, they quietly lamented the silence of the Sisters of Patagonia, whose letters would doubtlessly take longer.

Death of Father Chicco

The local Director recommended the elect soul of Father Stephen Chicco to the grateful piety of the Sisters. He had left this life at Cremona during the night of September 16.

He had been the first Director of the House at Nizza. It was he who consoled those who had left their hearts in Mornese and found the remains of former profanation in the ex-convent of *Our Lady*. Those who remembered him, still felt the effectiveness of his deep, cordial Salesianity. Those who were not acquainted with him knew that Don Bosco himself had asked for community and private prayers the previous August when he had been taken seriously ill. He had praised his priestly zeal and his regularity in religious observance. All the Sisters prayed, made the Way of the Cross and offered for him their Communion and practices of piety for the whole day. They regarded this as a duty in view of the sacred ministry the deceased had exercised in the educational establishment of *Our Lady of Grace*, during its most difficult days.

[p. 64] Prayer for peace, even external peace

The House of Nizza was going through a period of trouble during these days, because Doctor Barberis had replaced Doctor Martini as the school physician. The latter had been employed first, but had been found unsuitable for the work required by the Institute. His resentment gave rise to a great deal of annoyance and concern for the Superiors and the Institute. For this reason Father Lemoyne suggested that the grace so desired by the Superior-preservation of peace also in relations with outsiders-be recommended to the prayers of the community.

For an increase in devotion to the Pope

From Turin Father Cagliero informed Father Lemoyne that Don Bosco wished the Sisters of Nizza to be made aware of the joys and sorrows of the Vicar of Jesus Christ, in order that their filial devotion might increase and their unceasing prayer be offered for the Pope and the Holy Roman Church.

The feast of Saint Michael the Archangel offered a fitting occasion, so Father Lemoyne gathered the community before the Blessed Sacrament at the time of the spiritual reading. Here he led them in meditation on the battle of the angel hosts against the enemies of the Church.

The beginning was not long. There were pauses similar to a meditation as he read a few extracts from the magazine, *La buona settimana*.

In his comments he reminded the Sisters of the issue dated August 7 and already referred to, which treated of the protests of fidelity and reparation which were arriving from everywhere since the sacrilegious events of the preceding July.³⁴

Then he read the following extract from the Holy Father's allocution to the Cardinals at the consistory of August 4.

[p. 65] After stating the sad facts that had taken place in Rome on the night of July 13, the august Pontiff continued:

. . . It is already a clearly known fact that We are reduced to a very difficult situation, one that is for many reasons intolerable. But the recent occurrence of which We speak has made this still clearer and more manifest. It has also demonstrated that if the present state of affairs is bitter for Us, still more bitter is Our fear for the future. If the transportation of the ashes of Pius IX gave cause for such undignified disorder and dangerous tumult, who can guarantee that the audacity of the wicked might not break out into the same extravagance when We walk the streets of Rome in a manner becoming Our dignity? All the more so if such people believe they are justified because We, urged by Our duty, either condemn the unjust laws decreed here in Rome or reprove other wicked acts performed in public? Therefore it is now clearer than ever that in the present circumstances We cannot remain in Rome except as a prisoner in the Vatican. Those who understand the signs appearing here and there, and at the same time consider the coming into the open of sects pledged to the extermination of the Catholic name, have reason to be right in their statements that still more pernicious propositions are being contrived to harm the religion of Christ, the Sovereign Pontiff and the ancestral faith of the Italian people. As is our duty we are certainly following the progress of this fierce struggle with attention. At the same time We are taking advice as to our manner of defense. Placing all our trust in God We are resolved to fight to the end for the

safety of the Church, the independence of the Sovereign Pontiff, the rights and grandeur of the Apostolic See and, in this warfare, to shirk no labor and to fear no difficulties. . . ³⁵

Father Lemoyne also read what Monsignor Gastaldi, Archbishop of Turin, had written in his *Pastoral Letter* on the Papacy of September 1. Again deploring the painful events that had occurred at the removal of the body of Pius IX, he added;

. . . This was certainly only the beginning of a fierce war intended to intimidate the Father of the Faithful. [p. 66] Without doubt it was meant to encourage political meetings in Rome and the principal cities of Italy, to stir up the already deceived multitudes, inciting them to fanatical rage against the Holy Apostolic See. The first meeting held in Rome was manifestly a furious incitement to exterminate and wipe out from the world, wherever possible, the divine power of Saint Peter's Successor.

The most horrifying blasphemies are hurled against the Vicar of Jesus Christ. They scream that the Pope is the enemy of science and liberty; the enemy of Italy; a liar; a wolf. His house is a shelter for malefactors. Pius IX was infamous; the holy Catholic Church is idiotic; the Papacy as a religious institution is the negation of reason. Because of this they demand that the State should no longer recognize the power of the Roman Pontiff in any way. His Apostolic Palaces should be taken from him and he should be reduced to the status of an ordinary man deprived of authority.

Similar blasphemies and imprecations resound in all places where these meetings are held (that is, in the principal Italian cities).

Who is there that is not overcome with deep grief? Who is not fired with zeal to defend the highest authority here below - the authority that directly and immediately represents God Himself among men and from whom depends the maintenance of religion on earth, the effectiveness of conscience, justice, order, fraternal love and, in consequence, society? . . . ³⁶

Father Lemoyne, more moved than his listeners, put in some of his own words to link this letter with a summary drawn from other issues of *La buona settimana*, for Don Bosco's concerns were his own. In this case, his concern was that every one of his spiritual Daughters be with Catholic Rome both in her anguish and in her triumphs, and that she fully understand the duty of prayer and a holy life, in order to obtain comfort and grace for the Pope and the Church, equal to the need.

Therefore he highlighted the worst moral devastations of the modern world:

[p. 67] 1 - the education of the young had been withdrawn from the authority of the Church;

2 - freedom had been granted to the presses, works and propagation of every cult and religion except the Catholic Church;

3 - the doors had been opened wide to the most impudent licentiousness and to all subversive powers, but closed to the truths and action of our holy faith;

4 - the law of marital divorce was preached and defended, while every juridical value of sacramental matrimony was denied;

5 - there was a frightening increase of the infamous, anti-clerical press, whose target was the Pope and the government of the Apostolic See;

6 - Rome had become the center of anti-Catholic propaganda and the sovereign majesty of the Roman Pontiff (relegated to the Vatican alone), was recognized only to be sneered at;

7 - for no reason at all Belgium had dismissed its Apostolic Nuncio and France boasted of its persecution of religious orders and congregations;

8 - efforts to banish the Church from human society were being multiplied and since they met with little success, the impossible was being attempted in order to impede her spiritual influence on consciences and peoples.

Because of this and for other reasons besides, the Director continued, he invited the Sisters to stand and listen reverently to the solemn words of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII who, on March 12 of this year, had opened his wounded heart as follows:

A number of Institutes brought into being by the zeal and generosity of Our Predecessors have been closed. Not even the sacred precinct of the "Propaganda Fide," so beneficial to religion and state and which, in times past, no enemy power would have dared touch, has been left unscathed.

Many churches have been desecrated while temples of [p. 68] error and iniquity have multiplied. Laws contrary to Catholic opinion have been promulgated and all this has happened in the very shadow of the

Vatican. . .

Having disregarded and despised the supernatural authority of the one who takes God's place on earth, it is only too evident that human authority, deprived of the powerful restraint of religion, will not be able to control the arrogance of revolting mobs hankering after senseless liberty.

. . . There have been some recent serious disasters such as the floods in Belgium last January and the earthquake in Casamicciola in February with a repetition threatening in March. But do these events frighten present society? Is there perhaps anyone who asks whether greater punishments are on the way? . . .

Father Lemoyne ended his reading at this point, feeling that he had fulfilled the wish of our common Father. He concluded by recommending that everything be offered: masses, Communion, prayers, work, religious observance, etc., in supplication, united with the intentions of the Pope. The following ejaculation should be frequently repeated: "Jesus, may your kingdom come; Mary Help of Christians, pray for us!"

News from Patagonia

On the feast of the Guardian Angels, October 2, the long-awaited news arrived from Patagonia.

It had been sent early in August. Sister Borgna wrote for everyone, this time speaking of nothing else but their great sorrow at the death of Mother Mazzarello.

Are we not indeed at the very end of the world? News was sent from Italy in the middle of May and we have only just received it in a short telegraphic message. The reason is understandable. Father Costamagna must have wept over it and not wished to write to us at length.

It came when we were about to go to chapel for the spiritual reading. Father Fagnano, his face almost disfigured, [p. 69] told us the sad news very kindly and prudently. We all hurried into chapel to weep and pray, finding our comfort only in God's will. Our holy and very humble Superior wept like Mary Magdalene and we kept her company because we are but one heart and one soul. Our girls wept with us and our Indians, who are still unable to cry in a civilized manner, groaned, sighed and lamented piteously.

The suffrages prescribed by the Rule have already been offered and others are continuing, although we feel that our Mother is already in paradise.

Yesterday evening we received the June issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* and our hearts were cheered as we read the announcement of our incomparable Mother's death. How good of Don Bosco and his Salesians to publish the details of our holy Mother's illness and death! Having all this information in the *Bulletin* cannot but help increase suffrages, make our work known and we ourselves, in this out of the way corner of the globe; have come to know something more about it.

How painful it is to be without news of those we have loved and still love!

Has a new Superior been elected yet? Write soon to these poor wretches in Patagonia because, although we are here in the flesh, our minds, hearts and spirits are in Nizza.

Will you write to us then? Say yes, or we shall all return to Italy to tell you that we are your affectionate, sorrowful and far-away Daughters and Sisters in this ever more dear and precious Patagonia.

Death of Sister Tersilla Ginepro

The arrival of a letter from Patagonia was announced at the Good Night but the news itself was kept for another day in order to give everyone a chance to offer an act of renunciation for the soul of Sister Tersilla Ginepro. She had flown from Nizza to eternity on the feast of the Holy Angels and Our Lady of the Rosary.

She had only been in religion for five and a half years and was little more than thirty-five years of age. Nevertheless [p. 70] less she had been greatly loved and esteemed because of her characteristic humility, obedience, hard work and her sincere, generous affection for Superior and Sisters!

On one of her last days she heard from her room the strains of singing rising from the laundry. With evident pleasure she said to those near her, "Just listen to them! When I worked with them they used to say to me, 'We have n't the time to sing a single hymn, even with you here doing the work of three. If you went away, how on earth would we manage?'"

I did come away and they find more time than ever for singing. It is a fact that no one is necessary in this world and that even when a Pope dies they quickly elect another!"

Father Lemoyne, who assisted her until the end, could say with reason: "Don't you notice it? There is a scent of roses coming from that room! "

Foundations at Visone and Fontanile

October 6 saw the departure from Nizza for Visone and Fontanile of more Sisters who were to care for infants and young children whom the priests and parents wished to be trained to a good life.

It was a real charity not to have refused these two new requests for work. Visone especially was a small village marked with poverty. It was impossible to see how the Sisters would survive. But its sponsor, the good Archpriest of Melazzo, Father Joseph Chiabrera, pleaded the spiritual needs so insistently that Father Cagliero concluded by saying: "Let us satisfy him for the time being."

Therefore Mother Emilia Mosca accompanied the three Sisters, Sister Ursulina Marocco, Superior and kindergarten teacher, Sister Felicina Bezzato for the workroom, and the novice, Sister Maria Braga, for the kitchen and domestic needs. All three were twenty-one years of age and so fervent that they went eagerly to meet the difficulties they had [p. 71] already been warned about regarding the means of survival. This, they had been told, was owing to the inadequacies of the accommodations.

If Visone could be called a small suburb of Acqui, Fontanile, a few kilometers from Nizza, might be considered a municipality of some importance. Notwithstanding this, real sacrifices were needed to start the work in Fontanile. The kindergarten had to be opened in the parish priest's barn and the lodgings of the Sisters were for the moment limited to the absolute necessities. It was hoped that soon the situation would improve by reason of a legacy in the form of a tenancy held by the good priest of the town.

Only three Sisters could be spared for Fontanile also. These had a total age of under sixty and among them, six months of profession. Woe betide their Superiors unless their faith in God's intervention was alive and their trust strong in the good will of those setting out under obedience! The three chosen were Sister Maria Genta for the kindergarten and with the responsibility of Superior; Sister Josephine Malvino for the elementary classes and Sister Rosina Barberis for the rest. A fourth Sister was required but there was no other available at the time.³⁷

Family trials and a victorious vocation

A recent occurrence brought back memories of the early days at Nizza and the affair of the famous Miss Bedarida.

On October 13, postulant Candida Rho's mother and brother presented themselves at the House of *Our Lady* demanding the return of the girl. She had stayed on after the August retreat with the intention of becoming a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. Her relatives had written very discourteous letters, ordering her to return to her family and had now come to take her away by force. Not finding her in the House they threatened and behaved in an unbelievable manner. Having found her place of [p. 72] refuge, they went in a carriage to get her. They obliged her to return to the House and change her dress, after which, whether she wanted to or not, she was to follow them to Chieri.

The poor girl wept bitterly. She had been treated like dirt and beaten by her relatives as if she were a delinquent. But because of her goodness she would be victorious in the end.

It was impossible not to comment on the sad event during the Good Night. Then in the general silence which followed, the young Brescian girl, Margaret Vezzoli, stepped forward. Up to that time she had been very undecided about her future. Now she exclaimed enthusiastically: "Dear Mother and Sisters, give me the postulant's cape. I shall do my best never to dishonor it and . . ." The rest of this generous and spontaneous act of self-giving was drowned in a round of applause, but everyone understood what she meant to say. The cape was placed on Margaret's shoulder a few days later and she received it as reverently as if she were shouldering the Divine Master's cross which she had previously feared so much.

Scarcely eight days passed after the enforced departure of the dear postulant, Candida Rho, when she returned, bringing with her a letter of apology for which she had fought gallantly. It was from that same brother, a naval officer, and merited ample forgiveness.

Only forty-eight hours before, the Superior of Chieri had approached her father in order to plead the girl's cause. She had received the reply, "They are all against her; nothing can be done!"

Mother General in Rome

October 14 brought news of an entirely different character. The Director General had written to Mother Superior from Rome, saying he had to go to Sicily. Therefore she should arrange to bring the three Sisters expected [p. 73] by Sister Morano to Rome and he himself would accompany them to their destination. She would then be free and able to represent all her Daughters in an act of homage to the Sovereign Pontiff.

Since the great Piedmontese pilgrimage would be at the feet of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII on the 16th of the month, she should anticipate her journey by two days in order to arrange everything according to previous agreement with Don Bosco.

The moment had now arrived for Mother to go to Rome with Mother Emilia. With them were Sister Carlotta Negri, Sister Amalia Telesio and the novice, Sister Helen Brigatti. The whole of the Nizza community gathered to bid farewell to their Mother, who would soon be kneeling before Leo XIII for the first time and personally receiving his blessing.

Meanwhile both those who went and those who stayed behind raised heart and mind to heaven in prayer, beseeching every blessing on those who in Rome itself would testify to the "sweet Christ on earth" their devotion and unconditional adherence to his will and to his every magisterial directive.

"I would spoil everything"

Mother General returned to the Nizza community from her sojourn in Rome to tell wonderful and holy things of the Eternal City, of the Pope, and above all, of the immense grace of being a Catholic and a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco.

To those who asked for particulars concerning one thing or another, she answered simply with a light in her eyes, "I would spoil everything! Father Cagliero says it will all be printed in the *Salesian Bulletin*. One has to experience these things in order to know what is being seen and heard in such circumstances! "

The *Salesian Bulletin* of November did in fact carry a [p. 74] full report on the Italian pilgrimage to Rome. A letter from Father Cagliero to Father Bonetti related the details of the audience granted by the Pope to the Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians on the 17th, the following day.³⁸

Death of Sister Lucy Bertolo

On the 26th, the last Wednesday of October, Saint Joseph called another flower from Nizza's garden. It was Sister Lucy Bertolo, known as good-hum or personified. With the natural magic of her conjuring tricks she had often enlivened the community recreations.

During her five short years in religious life engaged only in hidden domestic work, she brought serenity to her own life and the lives of others. At the age of twenty-five, generous, cheerful self-giving to God made her worthy to die a holy death, much to the envy of the community.

Foundation at Sampierdarena

On the morning of October 25, a group of Sisters led by Sister Pierina Marassi who was to be their Superior, left Nizza Monferrato station for "desired" Sampierdarena. The adjective is special and significant because the group was to fulfill a wish cherished for some time both by the local Superiors and our own Superiors.

The boys and Salesians of the *Saint Vincent de Paul Hospice* had long felt the need for Sisters in the workroom and kitchen. The Sisters themselves saw the advantage of obtaining a foothold, if not in Genoa itself, at least near it. This was for the sake of scholastic examinations and missionary expeditions, in order not to be such a burden to the good Superiors of the Hospice. But even passable accommodation had not been available. Now, although conditions were not much improved, it [p. 75] was decided to make a trial start in order to satisfy the Director, Father Albera. Fearing he might be transferred to Marseilles, he wished to lessen the burden for his successor by introducing the Sisters. The Sisters and Mothers saw in this a way of proving their gratitude for all he had done and continued to do for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and so they overlooked all difficulties.

Foundation in Marseilles

After Sampierdarena, thoughts turned to another foundation which had been for some time in the heart and mind of Don Bosco: Marseilles.

He had already written in May, 1880 to the curate of Saint Joseph's parish in that city: "Father Cagliero was very pleased with the generous offer of Madame Jacques regarding the Sisters. I shall write to her directly. Let us climb one step at a time and, if we climb high enough, we shall reach heaven."³⁹

On the following November 16, in answer to a question whether the Sisters should come in secular dress since it was a period of open hostility towards religious, Don Bosco accepted the proposal as a matter of

prudence. However he left it to the curate of Saint Joseph's to select the appropriate date for the Sisters' entry into Marseilles.

On December 2, the Salesian Superior Chapter recorded in its minutes: "The date of the Sisters' departure is not yet fixed. Their dwelling is being prepared and should it be close to the Oratory of *Saint Leon*, it would make their task easier.

Trained at the school of Don Bosco their work should be active, intelligent and dedicated, and since they will be cooperating in his work they should be recommended in a special way to the kindness and care of the *Committee of Benefactresses*.⁴⁰

Having acceded to the request of the ladies of the Marseilles Committee, Don Bosco presided over its meeting [p. 76] of February, 1881, and said,

I cannot help rejoicing; I find everything that has been done in these five years providential. . .

We would need to expand by acquiring a certain house which, because its windows open onto the courtyards, present some people with a problem. The Sisters of Mary Help of Christians who are due to come could easily be lodged in such a house. However there must be no other communication with the house except that required for the care of the linen, the laundry and the linen-room. It should be easy to adapt it for this purpose and thus any inconvenience would be prevented from the start. But money will be required to buy the house. Divine Providence seems to want it, as the price is much less than it was before. It has in fact become lower and lower and could now come into our hands at forty-five thousand lire.

Wanting the work, Divine Providence will send the wherewithal to buy it. When I say Divine Providence I mean God. Therefore God wants our work and He will provide the means to start it. Those who work for an end have a right to the means and we are certain this will come. We are the instruments of Divine Providence. Divine Providence and Mary help of Christians have protected us in a very concrete manner during this year.⁴¹

In the meantime, wishing to delay the coming of the Sisters no longer, our kind and zealous benefactress, Madame Jacques, offered one of her coach houses which, with provisional adaptations, could serve the purpose until another and better established residence became available. It was quite close to the Salesian Institute of *Saint Leon*.

Don Bosco immediately made it his business to visit the place, and found it rather damp. Nevertheless before leaving Marseilles he blessed it himself. He did this privately in order not to attract attention to a second religious family entering France, while those long established were being sent away.⁴²

Such preparatory arrangements gave great hope. Yet eight months of indecision were to pass from that February [p. 77] onwards, because of the open religious persecution in France. Then the decision came for Father Albera to leave Sampierdarena and go to Marseilles as Provincial. About the middle of October Don Bosco wrote to Father Bologna, Director of the Institute of *Saint Leon*, and asked, "Tell me then, what about the Sisters?"⁴³

Finally on the last day of October, one definite departure took place: Sister Amalia Meana left, wearing simple secular attire, accompanied by Sister Caroline Bensi and the novice Sister Brigida Bagnasco. In France they would have to suffer all the discomforts of poverty and experience the turbulence and oppression of the revolutionary republicans and at the same time, they would become mothers and sisters to the orphans and neglected children of the people, gathering them under the banner of Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians.

Remembering benefactors

After having recommended the souls in purgatory to the piety of the community, in her Good Night on the eve of All Souls' Day, Mother spoke in particular about the souls of spiritual and temporal benefactors, saying that they were often forgotten once they had left this life.

On this occasion she pointed out especially an announcement in the November *Salesian Bulletin* of the death of Miss Helen Jackson of Montevideo, which had occurred on the previous September 5.

She was our first benefactress in America, [said Mother,] and it is to her we owe our house in Villa Colon, the first of our American missions. Although we have not received the news from our Sisters there, we can understand how they must weep for her and feel her loss!

God must certainly have registered to her credit not only her work and ours in Villa Colon, but also the other works that have sprung from it. So we hope she already enjoys her eternal reward in paradise.

[p. 78] Nevertheless we have an obligation to pray for her in a special way. If we want to have our dear

Father Don Bosco's spirit, we must live as he does, in gratitude towards those who help us do good for ourselves and others.

Yes, let us always give thanks to God, Our Lady and Don Bosco that we are what we are and that our Congregation is expanding as it is. But we must never forget our benefactors both living and dead, in our prayers and good works, since without them even Don Bosco would not have been able to go forward and do all that is being done both near and far away.

In remembering the dead, Mother also recalled the great missionary of Nigrizia, Monsignor Daniel Comboni, who departed this life on October 11 of this year. It was from him that the Institute had inherited the burning motto of the first missionaries of Mary Help of Christians, "Patagonia or death! "

She then returned to the thought of Miss Jackson of Montevideo, encouraging the Sisters to engrave her edifying memory on their hearts, so that they might speak of her in their contact with ladies and young girls. Through acquaintance with this noble and generous soul the opportunity would offer itself of emulating her virtue and becoming rich in the same merits.⁴⁴

"Let us never forget," she concluded, "that our Mother Mazzarello used to repeat that the *Salesian Bulletin* should always teach us how to follow Don Bosco in doing good, and help us teach others to do the same.

During this month of November we learn from the *Salesian Bulletin* of the singular grace given by the Holy Father in promulgating the Jubilee. We are all enthusiastic in our efforts to use it to the best of our ability for our own good and that of our neighbor."

[p. 79] News from Treicastagni

To fill in the sketchy information given by the Director General concerning Treicastagni, news arrived almost immediately from Sister Madelene Morano. She spoke of the joy of having good Father Cagliero among them and sent a copy of the contract to regularize the acceptance of the work, even though only experimentally. It bore the date September 15, the first complete day spent in the House, but it was actually signed by the parties while the Director General was there. It was based on the rough draft from Turin that had already caused Father Cagliero to hesitate: "Will there be bread for us in this?" The five-year trial period would provide the answer.⁴⁵

Sale of the College at Mornese

From Turin arrived the news that the sale of the exCollege at Mornese had been completed on the 8th of the current November.⁴⁶

It seemed reasonable therefore, that soon the greater part of the debt for the construction of the educational establishment of Our Lady of Grace at Nizza, which was still in progress, would be paid.

The Superiors looked thoughtfully at one another. Should they feel relieved? . . . Tears had already welled up spontaneously from their hearts.

Everyone knew that debts were always a burden. Money was needed and urgent demands were made to the "Bursar," Saint Joseph, so that with Mother Mazzarello, Mother Ferettino, and all our Sisters in the other life, they might present themselves to the Mother of Divine Providence to obtain what was needed. But it was impossible that the sale of the College at Mornese not be felt. . .

As long as there was a delay there was always a glimmer of hope that it might not happen.

But if heaven and earth had reached the conclusion, [p. 80] there was nothing to do but adore the plan of Divine Wisdom and pronounce the *Amen* of resignation.

The Superiors were not unaware of what was being said and done in Mornese and the surrounding area. The imputation of injustice to the Salesians and the Sisters caused much suffering to the latter, not so much for themselves as for their dear and venerated Father Don Bosco.

Recognizing the merits of Mornese, Don Bosco had offered the building to the Town Council for only twelve thousand lire. Had the Council accepted the offer it would doubtless have been occupied by the boys and girls of the village school and in that way the general discontent would have been appeased.

But it had not! Perhaps the Mayor, Valentino Campi, did not consider it a suitable proposal to put before the Council, or else had conducted the business in a manner favorable to his own ends. The fact is that no word of acceptance regarding it reached Don Bosco and, only after a repeated offer from Don Bosco did he ask to rent it on a yearly basis, not on behalf of the city council but for himself.

He obtained his wish on payment of two hundred lire and renewed the contract for a second year. The poor ex-College was then used as a storehouse for timber and vine sticks, etc. Some of the rooms were secretly sublet.

There were nocturnal comings and goings and tiny lights were seen flickering, making the place look like a haunted castle.

The elderly townsfolk, without any circumspection whatsoever, said repeatedly, "Look at our school, reduced to a house for witches and ghosts. That little light flitting about from place to place in the depths of the night must be the soul of Father Pestarino or the soul of one of the poor things who died of hunger and hardship there. They have certainly returned to remind us of our duty to avenge them. It is up to us to do it!"

These poisonous comments could not but lead to blasphemies and imprecations.

In the end-no one knew whence it came-the rumor [p.81] spread in Mornese, that if Don Bosco had been ready to cede the College to the Municipal Council for only twelve thousand lire it certainly would not have been privately sold for such a petty sum. It would have been double at least! Loud voices were raised, the women joining with the men, "Campi. . . Give us proof! That College is ours. We made ourselves into a chain to build it up, with our stones, our timber and our bricks. We were all one in giving our vines, the produce of our fields and even our jewels. We are ready to become a chain again and put all our strength into tearing it down!

That College is ours because it was born of the strength of our arms and our hearts. If today-alas-it has become the College of deception and injustice.. . tomorrow. . . who knows if it might become the College of revenge!"

The Superiors were well aware of what was going on and this was why the sale held them in suspense and almost with a sense of oppression. "Who was to own the place? What would happen to their dear Don Bosco?"

Their most earnest prayer then, was not so much to obtain money and pay debts, but that Don Bosco not be dragged into trouble, and that the anger of the people of Mornese might die down.

First Salesian Conference at Casale Monferrato

Father Cagliero, our worthy Director General, asked Mother to send a statement to Don Bosco at Borgo San Martino, on the vocations that had come from the Diocese of Casale Monferrato to the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

This was required for the first Conference of Salesian Cooperators to be held in the diocese. As the meeting was to take place on the 17th of the current month there was little time to lose.

Having made the necessary research the grand figure of forty-one professed was ascertained, some of whom had [p. 82] already gone into eternity.

Among the names of those on the list were those of Angela Vallese, leader of the first missionary expedition to America, and Mother Enrichetta Sorbone, recently elected Vicar General, and the first of five sisters living under the mantle of the Help of Christians.

Father Lemoyne observed that Don Bosco would be well pleased with the account and so would the worthy Bishop of Casale, his good friend. Following the trend of his thoughts Mother Daghero remarked between a sigh and a sad smile, "We can do so little to console Don Bosco!" The question of the juridical position of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians was very present in her mind, because the ecclesiastical authorities still had some reservations. Then there was the controversy in Chieri concerning Father Bonetti which was still unsolved.⁴⁷

In the meantime Don Bosco's confident, clear vision would not permit any obstacle or difficulty to stop him. His only aim was God's glory and the salvation of the souls of the young.

News from Borgo San Martino concerning Don Bosco

Don Bosco always showed that he took nothing else into account but the good will of his Daughters and he seized upon every opportunity to make them known and esteemed. In doing this he provided them with the opportunity of giving themselves generously and with increased vigor for the good of girls and young women, both in Italy and elsewhere.

In fact, during the Conference to the Salesian Cooperators of the Diocese of Casale on the 17th, he touched briefly on the history of his second religious family and pointed out its merits. The Sisters of Borgo San Martino confirmed this. They also wrote that when Don Boseno was in that House they felt his presence more than they saw him. There was much work to do, especially for the feast of [p. 83] Saint Charles with so many invited guests. Woe to them if their worthy prefect Father Isnardi had not been there to help them out of their difficulties!

They also asked the prefect to let them know when Don Bosco was about to leave so that they could at least greet him as he came out the door. No sooner had Don Bosco heard of their wish than, with the excuse of going to get a cup of coffee, he went straight to the kitchen to thank them for the work of that day and everyday. He left

them the following good thought: "My poor Daughters! With all this work and feeling very tired you will often be inclined to complain. But work leaves no time to commit sin and tiredness makes you sleep better at night. Never say, 'Oh what heavy work! How hot it is! How cold it is! . . . How tired I am! . . . ' as complaints. But should such words sometimes escape you, remember you are not committing sin. Avoid them if you can and then be at peace. Remember Don Bosco had said it!"

The Sisters were filled with joy at this visit which compensated more than a thousand times for having sacrificed the much hoped-for journey to Casale to take part in the Conference. It increased in all of them the happiness experienced in consuming themselves entirely in support of Don Bosco's works.

The new Superior General's first feastday

The day of Saint Catherine of Alexandria or Saint Catherine of the Wheel (referring to the instrument of her martyrdom), was chosen for the feast-day of the Mother Superior.

Because of the season of the year, the Saint was also popularly known as "Saint Catherine of the chestnuts." Don Bosco's greetings were the first to arrive with his precious autograph on a simple picture of Mary Help of Christians: "God bless you and may Mary obtain for you and all, the health that is not contrary to the good of your soul.

*Father John Bosco*⁴⁸

[p. 84] The next greetings came from Sicily, along with news of the two first clothings with the religious habit at Bronte, and the profession of Sister Maria Giacone at Trecastagni.

More good wishes followed through letters from other Sisters of Italy and France; and what lengths they went to in the House of Nizza itself to express their filial sentiments!

A complete holiday was declared from the vigil on Thursday, with freedom for the pupils and the Sisters to occupy themselves in whatever would contribute to making November 25 still more joyous and festive.

Mother Elisa went so far as to tell the girls they could do whatever they chose, apart from sin, just as they would do at home when preparing for their mother's feast.

Some of them behaved sensibly, but there were others among the most mischievous whose behavior was far different. At home there were no bells for silence, no timetables and no discipline! Consequently discipline and order were rather neglected.

But it was a feast ruled by the heart, so for the first day and part of the second, hearts were in command. Hence at the moment for greetings and solemn religious celebrations, the offerings of filial, religious piety were spontaneous and grateful.

The feast-day proper was a Friday. Nevertheless the dining rooms of both the Sisters and the girls were in festal array for Saint Catherine. But in the afternoon of the 25th and on the following day, under the pretext of the so-called "fair" organized chiefly by Mother Elisa, the atmosphere began to be excessively noisy because of the mistaken notion of the principle, "We will not commit sin but we will allow our exuberance to take over!"

The stalls were laid out with something to please all tastes. There were caramels, sweets, little bottles of adulterated drink and homemade scented water as well as a variety of toys, stationery, trinkets and fruit. Most of these came from "Mama Roncallo" and the always affectionate oratorians of Turin.

[p. 85] Every stall was decorated with leaves and garlands and those who sold and bought, dressed themselves up in pieces of material to represent gypsies, flower-girls and peddlers. Their bonnets of cloth or paper caused a great deal of hilarity.

Those who had acquired a special negotiable ticket called a *buono* had the right to make purchases and, as many *buonos* gave this right to buy as the Mother Bursar chose to distribute, taking into account their small store. The Sisters also enjoyed a share in this festival.

Fortunately the weather was beautiful and voices could be heard shouting and singing everywhere, alone or in more or less harmonious groups, under the covered passageway, in the playground, in the classrooms, in the study hall and even in the dormitory. Here and there the inevitable quarreling was taking place over trifles, between the little ones and the older girls.

The poor assistants and the teachers had it no easy task to assist, quiet and calm down the more excitable. Such phrases could be heard as "Girls, this is really too much!" "Have at least a little consideration for the Superiors' rooms and a little compassion for your own throats and our ears! Keep quiet for at least a moment!" It was useless and the response was always the same. "We are not committing sin! These are days of freedom! Long live liberty!"

Poor Mother Elisa! She could no longer make herself heard, surrounded as she was by those who had no more *buonos*, crying and screaming in the hope of obtaining more from her. With her hands to her head she kept

repeating, "Never again! Nothing like this ever again! Too much is too much! Experience... oh, experience is a great teacher! "

One of the girls who was most affectionate towards this good Mother got it into her head to build a throne for her. She took six mattresses from the beds of her companions and placed them one on top of the other on the bed of her beloved Mother Elisa.

One could easily imagine what happened when she went [p. 86] into the dormitory . . . But my child what are you doing? Where did you ever dream this up?" . . .

"It is not a sin, dear Mother, it is not a sin! Just a practical joke in friendly, affectionate freedom!" At this point some of the girls burst into scornful laughter while others showed vexation. Some tired to scold the mischievous youngster who was dauntless in the face of reproof, while others hidden under the sheets grumbled like old women, "What are we coming to?" and someone said with a sigh of resignation, "Thank God, it is almost over!"

The oil lamp lit up the sad face of the assistant who, left alone amidst this new style of argument, could no longer restrain her tears. Those nearest to her said to one another, "We have made our Sister cry. Let us put a stop to this! "

There was a moment of silence; then from another part of the dormitory came a loud, shrill whistle. Another girl, using the whistle she had bought at the fair, was attempting to revive the hilarity of her companions. They were only too ready to respond to this fresh piece of buffoonery.

The patience of the poor assistant was completely exhausted.

As luck would have it Mother Emilia chose that moment to make one of her unpredictable appearances. Completely self-controlled she said nothing but observed everything. . . With short, quick steps she walked the length of the dormitory and back, stopping from time to time at the foot of the beds of the most mischievous who, like all the rest, were well hidden under the sheets.

Nothing further happened during the night. On Sunday even the most inconsiderate were subdued and the little sermon of the Good Night completed the lesson.

The brief talks of Mother Assistant were always effective and to the point. She began:

Divine Wisdom knows how to draw good even from evil.

The mistakes of those who have deserved a bad conduct mark for lack of self-restraint and neglect of duty serve to [p. 87] make us understand that school discipline is a duty for a school girl. Lack of discipline means neglect of one's personal duty. Duty is God in the person of the Superiors and in the observance of the rules, just as true freedom is self-control even in moments of great temptation. Let those who have ears to hear, listen.

In granting all that she did grant, our dear Mother Elisa gave proof, first of her humble filial devotion to the Superior General, who was once her most humble subject, and then her trust in you, who are not really bad girls. Those of you who realize you have betrayed this trust must acknowledge your wrong doing and repair it by exemplary conduct.

We shall not give Mother Superior the pain of knowing that her feast was not a real feast for everyone. But those who know they have to ask pardon must first ask it of God and Our Lady. Pray to your Guardian Angels to help you prepare in a worthy manner for the feast of the Immaculate Conception.

If you do this, Mother Elisa, your assistants and teachers, will forget what they do not want to remember, except to draw good from it. Thus the scholastic year will go ahead in a far better way in this blessed House that is Our Lady's own. Goodnight

Many heads were bowed and not a few of the "little daughters" were to be seen furtively drying the tears they had shed in affectionate understanding.

Novena of the Immaculate Conception

The Director General was expected but since he could not definitely set the date of his arrival at Nizza Monferrato, he sent the Director, Father Lemoyne, a copy of the practices assigned by Don Bosco to his conferes in Valdocco for the novena of the Immaculate Conception,⁴⁹ adding, "I shall write when I am also able to fix the date for the religious clothing. In the meantime do what you have to do in order to please Our Lady."

Father Lemoyne immediately set to work adapting the [p. 88] precious practices to suit his needs, and included a short sermon which enraptured both Sisters and girls, and prepared them for a really fervent feast-day. He reminded them of the invitation made in the *Salesian Bulletin* in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Festive Oratory which started on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It was to be celebrated with

devotional practices in all the Houses of Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians, and by all the Cooperators, both men and women.

News from France

Our Lady granted everyone's wish, especially that of our Mother, in permitting news to arrive from Marseilles, where frequent revolutionary outbursts had given cause for preoccupation.

Sister Superior Amalia Meana said much in a few words. Although very happy amid her rags, she had no time to sit at her desk. Her two companions also had no break from their constant work. They asked Mother General and the other Superiors not to worry about them because in Marseilles, just as in Nizza, they did very well under the mantle of the Help of Christians.

A little more news was received from the Sisters of St. Cyr. Having had occasion to go to Marseilles for necessary provisions, they went to see the new tenants of the coach house which had been offered them as a temporary home by the principal benefactress of Saint Leon, Madame Jacques.

The Sisters from St. Cyr wrote:

We found our Sisters in that damp, dark coach house, not only without any essential furniture even for the work they had to do, but even without that most indispensable commodity—a supply of water. It suffices to say that the Superior and Sisters have to go by night to a nearby stream in order to wash their things and empty the trash. The practices of piety have to be performed in haste and the term [p. 89] "recreation" is unknown among them. Yet they are very serene and peaceful. One of them told us, "We have time neither to laugh nor cry. A quick, kindly glance from our Superior and a few paternal words from Father Albera in passing, are enough to keep us going from morning until evening, and help us to sleep well at night."

As we gave another a helping hand in her work she said, "The revolutionaries do not trouble us because people think we are servants of the *Saint Lean* Institute. We go through the streets very seldom but when we do we see so many innocent children mixing with rascals and villains, that there comes a tremendous urge to mix with them in order to do some good. But we have to hurry away because no one thinks we are Sisters. Once in the House we tell our Superior about the temptation and our pain at having only *rags* to care for instead of bringing children and young girls to God. Every time, she repeats the same thing, 'Let us do everything for God and we shall still belong to Don Bosco.' This is her way of telling us that we too, can be apostles and missionaries. For goodness sake, do not let her know about these confidences because she does not want us to talk about our sacrifices, and her theme for the Good Night never changes. Nor does it change for the Good Mornings: God knows and sees all things, therefore . . . "

Before leaving, the two of us tried asking Sister Meana: "Do the Ladies of the Committee of Benefactresses make you waste much time?"

She replied, "They come seldom and see nothing."

We learned from a Salesian passing through St. Cyr that they had scarcely any food, but never said a word about it.

Oh dear Mother General, if our three Sisters in Marseilles are not already working miracles they are not far from doing so!

Needless to say, while this news filled Mother General's heart with tenderness it also provided her with a topic for her Good Night: "Let us be convinced, dear Sisters, that hidden sufferings and generous love are two great means of holiness. We must not let a day pass without reminding ourselves that every pain well endured can gain a soul for heaven. "

[p. 90] Another letter from Argentina

Father Cagliero sent Sister Madelene Martini's letter to Father Lemoyne and instructed him to share it with the community of Sisters before the feast of the Immaculate Conception. "Something good can be learned from everything and everyone," he wrote in the margin.

Almagro, October 7, 1881

Dear Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

What sharp thorns come with the few roses that we meet in this poor world!

We received with jubilation the news that we were no longer orphans, and that in the virtuous Sister Catherine Daghero we would find a worthy Mother to take the place of our lamented holy Mother, who continues to protect us from heaven.

We thank God for this election and with divine help we hope to give this dear Mother the respect and filial trust we owe her as her Daughters. I now understand better the grace of having lived close to her in Turin for a few months. She had my full confidence then and came to know, in part, my shortcomings. Thus, even at this distance, she will be able to direct me with ease and give me the necessary counsel and advice.

We must really acknowledge God's goodness in arranging everything to our advantage.

Meanwhile, I trust that your Reverence will carry out your fatherly promise, and in your kindness bring our new Mother on a visit to us. In this way everyone will get to know her and she will be able to see how things are going with us: if we are on the right path or not, and if the spirit of our holy Congregation reigns in these Houses. We would be very grateful if you would do us this favor, Father.

On the other hand, I did not expect to hear of the death of my beloved sister Olympia so soon. It is true that I was to a certain extent prepared for the news since your Reverence had written that there was little hope of recovery. Nevertheless, I cannot but feel her loss deeply.

Yet even in this fulfilling of God's will, an occasion [p. 91] of saying a very costly *fiat* presents itself. I think that this year, more than ever before, God has been pleased to let me experience that we are in a vale of tears and in a place of real trial. We must be patient! All this is nothing if we consider what has value in the sight of God!

Very Reverend Father, do not imagine me to be sad or melancholy because of what has happened.⁵¹ 51 Oh no, Father, rather I bless God for the many graces and the special help with which He has favored me. I want to love Him more and more, and to please Him by humbly accepting any suffering or pain He should see fit to send me in the future.

The thought that Jesus is with us and that prostrate before Him I can recommend myself, my Sisters, and all that concerns me and us all, to Him, is such a comfort to me that if it were taken away I do not know how I could survive.

If only you knew, Reverend Father, how good God is in America also! I do not know how to explain it but I feel and experience it vitally within me. Thank Him for me, your Reverence, and please pray much for me that He may grant me humility and charity, virtues that I sadly lack.

There follows some special news about the House of La Boca and the community there, and then the letter ends as follows:

Be so kind, Reverend Father, as to recommend me very much to the prayers of our beloved Father Don Bosco and to render him our humble respects.

Accept, Reverend Father, the humble greetings of your poor Daughters and deign to bless us all, but especially her who needs it most and declares herself to be in Jesus,

Your Reverence's poor child,

Sister Maria Madelene Martini, FMA

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

The feast of Mary Immaculate brought the Jubilee year to an end. In the ardent community of Nizza Monferrato, the Director, besides being a poet, made himself also the mystical painter of the virginal beauty of Mary.

[p. 92] The eyes of the pupils shone with the splendor of innocence and on their lips was a hymn of love for the *All-Beautiful*, the *All-Pure*. The Sisters seemed unable to express themselves in any other manner than by saying to one another, "Oh to die in the holy joy of this day and to see her and form a crown of glory for her above! "

The feast might have been magnificent had it been possible for the clothings and the reception of the new Children of Mary to take place on that day. But this year, circumstances had made it necessary to postpone these functions.

With minds still filled with the festive celebrations, letters and notes containing a great deal of news were

written for Father Lasagna to take back to Uruguay with him, which would certainly cheer the hearts of the missionary Sisters.

Religious affection is always a sweet bond for those who are close at hand, but it is much stronger among those who are far from their native land. This was well understood in Nizza and continued to be cultivated in a true Salesian spirit, as it had been under Mother Mazzarello.

Death of Sister Catherine Succetti

On December 10, the feast of Our Lady of Loretto, Sister Catherine Succetti left this earth. Her death was another link in the chain gradually being formed for a blessed eternity. where by now there were quite a number of lovingly remembered Sisters.

Her passing was a smile to the Spouse she had loved so much and served so faithfully all through her life.

She was just over thirty-five years of age. In spite of her illness, she was a precious asset to the House of Alassio. She had been one of the pioneers in that House where she was now mourned like a lost treasure.

Although the illness with which she was afflicted did not confine her to bed, it gave her no respite. Yet she [p. 93] knew how to be Martha and Mary during her six and a half years of religious life, working and praying almost to the end of her days. Even in death she showed that a joyful sense of humor was the enviable reward of piety, humility and true love of God and neighbor.

A joyous novena in preparation for Christmas

During the Advent Ember Days Father Cagliero went to Nizza Monferrato as extraordinary confessor to the community.

The Christmas novena began with the joy of the seven. teen postulants who, having waited for some time, now received the religious habit. At this celebration a group of boarders was also received among the Children of Mary.

The morning celebration was arranged for 9:30 a.m. on Sunday the 18th and the afternoon one was delayed in order to give the Director General time to return from his appointment at Fontanile.

Father Cagliero at Fontanile

With good horses, a carriage can travel to Fontanile in half an hour. Therefore Father Cagliero willingly accepted the invitation, all the more so as he had been informed of the miracles of zeal which, according to the parish priest, the three young Sisters were working there.

He met with some surprises and a few setbacks on his journey. However he managed to get back to Nizza and reentered the sacristy just as the Sisters were preparing to sing Vespers.

After the function Father Cagliero congratulated the Superiors on the general fervor and he also spoke of Fontanile.

"In three months! . . . Think of it! In just three months they have prepared forty girls for the Sodality of Mary [p. 94] Immaculate! And they are still youngsters, themselves really youngsters! But we shall talk about that later. Now, just one thing about the present. After supper see that the harmonium is taken into the dining room. We must have a new-style celebration in honor of Our Lady. I will not have it said that Father Cagliero did not come on the feast of Mary Immaculate to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Salesian Oratory with you."

The Superiors opened their eyes wide, embarrassed because they had not thought of preparing anything. The Director continued, "Do we understand one another? *Saint Fix-It* is a very great saint!"

A new-style celebration

Even before the harmonium had arrived in the dining room a small statue of Mary Immaculate was placed in a position of honor and Mother Assistant found someone to speedily write an appropriate composition. She then said clearly and seriously, with just the trace of a smile in her intelligent eyes: "Let us try to be quick at supper and leave everything in order. Who knows, perhaps Father Cagliero will bring us a surprise! "

After supper both Father Cagliero and Father Lemoyne appeared. "Do you have copies of Don Bosco's *Companion of Youth* handy? If not, go get them quickly," said Father Cagliero.

When all the professed, novices and postulants had returned with their prayerbooks and he had exchanged a few words with the Superiors, he announced the items on the program. Then Miss Lavagnino came in and seated herself at the harmonium. First they were to sing *Lodate Maria*. This would be followed by the composition of

occasion. After this each novice would recite one or two verses of a hymn to Our Lady taken from the *Companion of Youth*. The hymn *Sei pura, sei pia*, would bring the celebration to an end and that would be sufficient for the day!

[p. 95] Only those present would have been able to describe the event adequately or put into words the impression it made on those ardent souls!

Father Cagliero left for Turin where the visit of Monsignor Espinosa was imminent. He was Vicar General of the Archbishop of Buenos Aires and had led a pilgrimage from Argentina to Rome in homage to the Holy Father.

News from Fontanile

A letter from Sister Maria Genta gave detailed news of this new House.

Fontanile, December 20, 1881

Dear Mother Superior and Mothers all,

We have been fortunate in having our worthy Father and Director General with us, even if only for a short time. Our thanks are due to you who made it possible for him to satisfy our desires and keep the promise he had made us.

You must already have heard that about forty of our dear oratory girls were prepared as Children of Mary. They were expecting to be enrolled on the feast of the Immaculate Conception. But we told them that one of the highest Superiors would be coming from Turin expressly for them and that the enrollment would take place in the parish church on a Sunday, in front of all the people. We had to keep our promise and were able to do so, much to our own joy and the joy of our parish priest, the girls and the people of Fontanile.

When Father Cagliero arrived, the bells began to ring. People streamed from everywhere to solemn Vespers in the parish church. Neither the parish priest nor we ourselves needed to do much explaining. Our Director General under stood immediately and only asked for a few minutes to collect his thoughts before speaking to all those good people.

The reception of the Children of Mary took place after Vespers. You should have seen the mothers, children, boys and even fathers standing on the church benches or pushing up closer to the high altar, in order to see and understand [p. 96] better what was said and done by those forty girls who were moved to tears.

During the distribution of the medals, our own girls sang one of the thirty hymns we had taught them and which they knew quite well. When they had finished we three Sisters started singing. Do you know what we sang? Nothing less than *La Vergine degli Angeli!* Our trio had no need to envy the great choir of Nizza! . . . (all modesty aside!)

Father Cagliero then preached a first-rate sermon, well adapted to the new 'Children of Mary,' the other girls of the village and the parents who, he said, should feel the responsibility of bringing up their children as true Christians.

The sermon was short but contained a great deal and everybody understood it well!

After benediction we invited our good Father and the parish priest to our House for a glass of wine. Now listen to what happened! Father Cagliero took me aside and said, "My dear child, what a thing to do! With all the hymns that there are available why did you have to sing, *La Vergine degli Angeli?* You even made the Holy Spirit flyaway from me and I could no longer remember the thread of my sermon! "

Taken aback, I could find no excuse for myself but the parish priest was very good. He helped me find my tongue again by saying to Father Cagliero, "These three Sisters must have been overcome by the wine of Pentecost like the Apostles in the Cenacle, so they just performed their whole repertory!"

Enough, dear Mother and Superiors. Father Cagliero has made the whole of Fontanile happy and Fontanile is happy to have had Father Cagliero here!

I wonder what our good Father told you about us when he returned to Nizza? Will you tell us sometime?

In the meantime we are persuaded that Our Lady loves us and that our good Superiors will forgive our mistakes because of our good will! You will, won't you? We know you will.

Hoping to greet you soon in person.

Your poor *Sister Maria Genta*

[p. 97] Without going into details, the Director General had in fact, highlighted the need to use every single experience in the formation of the Sisters, especially those chosen to govern individual Houses, even small ones. Therefore the above letter from Fontanile suggested to the Mother Superior a pleasant and useful Good Night for the professed Sisters on the practice of zeal regulated by a well understood discretion.

When the opportunity presented itself, Sister Maria Genta came to Nizza to offer Christmas greetings to the Superiors. In her ingenuous simplicity she spoke freely of her accomplishments. Her only regret was that she could not see Father Cagliero in order to talk them over again and share them together. However Mother General did not fail to admonish her saying, "Three or four hymns are enough for the first year. You must remember that even with regard to fervor and zeal, too much is simply too much!"

News from Quargento Lessons from experience

A similar lesson was suggested by a lively letter from Quargento. It had a family tone, written by the novice Sister Teresa Vallino as an introduction to a collective letter of good wishes.

Dearest Mother,

Before everything else we want to give you a consolation. Here it is. On the feast of the Immaculate Conception we had . . . guess how many . . . sixty Children of Mary. That is certainly no small number for a place like Quargento!

With the help of the parish priest we are forging ahead with the preparations for the feast of Saint Agnes, Martyr. There are Sunday meetings in our House for all the girls of the village. They have really responded better than we could have hoped.

But do you know what? The devil did not leave us unscathed and we have had a rather unpleasant interlude.

[p. 98] Should I tell you? Why not? How could we keep anything back from a Mother as good as you?

Among the girls who seemed most eager to become Children of Mary, there was a thirteen-year-old who told a story of extreme poverty and trouble at home, thus managing to win the sympathy of our Superior. She obtained from her, at the cost of sacrifice, a considerable amount of linen, clothing and even a share of our food, which was already limited to real necessity.

The young girl showed herself pleased and we treated her as one of the family. No one could have imagined that she was not a good girl, with her eyes always cast down and her head to one side.

But as the feast of Mary Immaculate drew near, we found one of the rooms locked and the key taken away. We had been using this room for the older girls and in it, had prepared everything needed for our first group of Children of Mary!

What a night we passed! We made conjectures, worked out suspects and prepared what we would say in no uncertain manner to all our girls when they returned to the workroom next morning.

You should have seen and heard us with our loud, menacing voices. The girls, poor children, shouted still louder, "It is that girl who comes from a bad family. It must be she! She has been expelled more than once from local schools as a thief and a robber!"

Some of those present ran to find her and dragged her before us like a delinquent. She denied everything, protested vehemently and screamed. She had even been slapped, "as a sincere demonstration of affection" and the girls surrounded her shouting, "Tell the truth, you liar! Tell the truth or we'll hand you over to the police!"

O dear Mother, what ugly moments those were!

However the key was eventually found hidden in the crevice of a window on the ground floor of the boys' school. It was here that our little "crooked neck" had hidden it, to await the right moment to retrieve it and carry out her robbery .

The affair was not a very happy one, as you will understand, but it has opened our eyes and taught us a lot that we [p. 99] can use in the future. We will tell you about it by word of mouth, dear Mother, at the first opportunity. For the present we console ourselves and you by telling you that we have sixty Children of Mary. Is not this a wonderful gift, dear Mother, for Christmas and the New Year?

After reading this letter Mother commented to the Sisters :

What kind of gift is this supposed to be? In Turin under the eyes of the Superiors, they enrolled five Associates of the Sacred Heart for the first occasion and even now they think well before admitting an oratorian among those enrolled in that sodality!

So it is in our other Houses where they have Children of Mary and Salesian priests as directors; places like Chieri, Bordighera and Nizza. But in the villages where we are already or are about to go, and where there is little or no help in forming the girls to a life of piety they take the greatest delight in having a large number of girls almost immediately. with a big show of ribbons and medals! My dear Sisters, it is not numbers that count, but quality, and we should not be in a hurry to put ourselves on show, even in these good things. We

must give ourselves time and pray and ask advice before acting! Fortunately we have Our Lady who makes good our mistakes like a true Mother. As Sister Vallino says, she herself opens our eyes and shows us how to do better in the future.

But, let us learn the lessons. Instead of using our hands to "slap as a sign of affection!" -certainly not the style of lesson Don Bosco or Our Lady would give-let us use our heads a little more, and be more cautious, reflective and masters of ourselves even in difficult moments.

These motherly words which directed but did not wound, penetrated the hearts of the Sisters and provided a guideline which would benefit both the present and future works of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

[p. 100] Christmas celebrations

The novena and feast of Christmas were celebrated in the usual atmosphere of religious enthusiasm. Immediately afterwards Father Lemoyne left for Turin, taking Don Bosco his own wishes and those of the community for the New Year. He had already sent Christmas wishes by Father Cagliero.

In Turin he was given another proof of Don Bosco's esteem and fatherly affection. Our good Father confided a *dream* to him. It was the last *dream* of that year, coming at the end of December, and was totally for the benefit of his Daughters.⁵²

Besides this, he gave the Director General the task of letting the Superiors know that the Archbishop of Buenos Aires had written to Don Bosco saying that the "Sisters of the place" are, like the Salesians, "a great help and corn. fort" and because of this he "gives praise to God and sends his thanks and good wishes." ⁵³

A gift from heaven

Father Lemoyne's return to Nizza brought fresh consolation to the Superior General and the other Superiors. The Director General's promise to relate the dream in full and, with the permission of their venerated Father, leave them a faithful copy of it, increased their gratitude and trust in Don Bosco. Hence the singing of the *Te Deum* was even more fervent and enthusiastic as it rose to heaven in a chorus of gratitude to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament at the close of the year 1881.

[p. 101]

1882

The long-awaited "dream"

Sunday, New Year's Day and the feast of the Circumcision, awakened tender emotions in every heart. In the evening after the *Veni Creator*, the renewal of Baptismal vows and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, the hymn, *Su figlie cantate, bell' alme innocenti (Sing, Innocent Souls)* was sung enthusiastically while all went to kiss the tiny foot of the statue of the Infant Jesus. .

A little later Father Lemoyne told the Superiors that Don Bosco would be very glad to tell them about his "dream of the chestnuts."

"The chestnuts?" exclaimed Mother Vicar immediately, "Are we Don Bosco's chestnuts, Father Director?"

There was general laughter at this spontaneous query but the wise spiritual Director decided that the answer should wait until the feast of the Epiphany. In this way they could make an act of self-denial and obtain the grace of understanding the "dream" and living its message.

On the feast of the Epiphany, therefore, the anticipated "dream of the chestnuts," abbreviated for the moment, was related.

It seemed to Don Bosco that he was gathering chestnuts in a wood near Castelnuovo. There were many large nuts on the grassy soil. All at once a lady appeared and came towards him, collecting chestnuts in a basket as she approached. Don Bosco wondered at her audacity in collecting on other people's property. Turning to her he asked, "What right have you to come here'? I cannot understand how you can gather chestnuts on my land."

"What do you mean?" she replied, Why don't have the right?"

"Well, I believe I am the owner and these nuts are mine."

"That may be true, but gathering chestnuts for you too."

The lady spoke with such conviction, gathering chestnuts all the time, that for the moment Don Bosco did not dare insist but resumed his task of collecting. When they had both filled their baskets the lady called Don Bosco and said:

"Do you know how many chestnuts there are here?"

"What a strange question to ask me!"

"Answer my question. Do you know how many there are?"

"How could I know? I am no fortune teller!"

"Then I will tell you."

"Five hundred and four?"

"Well, how many are there?"

"Five hundred and four."

"Exactly! And do you know what these chestnuts symbolize?"

"No, what do they symbolize?"

"The Houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, that is, the number of Houses your Daughters will found."

While this conversation as going on they heard loud voices like those of drunken men, moving towards them through the trees.

Don Bosco and the lady fled until they came to a halt on the bank of a river. They could go no further and to turn back was unthinkable. Don Bosco grew apprehensive. Then the men appeared, shouting loudly and spitefully trampling underfoot the chestnuts remaining on the ground.

[Here Father Lemoyne commented that perhaps these were vocations, impeded principally by all the opposition to the Houses of our Sisters, or better perhaps, they signified the fortunes of those who remained in the world.]

The shouting roused Don Bosco but he soon fell asleep and began to dream again.

[p. 107] He seemed to be seated on the edge of a steep bank. A little distance away the lady was also seated with her basket of chestnuts. The shouts of the men could still be heard fading away in the distance behind the hills.

Don Bosco kept his eyes on the chestnuts which were large and beautiful. However on looking closer he perceived that some had a worm hole.

"Oh look!" he said to the lady. "What shall we do with those that are worm-eaten?"

"They must be taken out or they will infect the others. . . Those young girls who are not good and do not have the spirit of the House because they have the worm of pride or other vices, must be sent away, especially if they are postulants. "

[Father Lemoyne commented that the chestnuts in the second dream represented the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.]

Don Bosco continued looking at the chestnuts. He took out one or two and found that there were not many bad ones. He remarked on this to the lady, who replied:

"Do you think that all the rest are good? What about those with the worm inside that have no external blemish?"

"But how can these be detected?"

"It is difficult. They certainly know how to deceive, and in such a manner that it is almost impossible to bring things to light."

"What can be done then?"

"Look, there is only one way. Put them to the test of the Rule and watch well. Then you will be able to see who has or has not the spirit of God. A vigilant guide will not easily be deluded."

Don Bosco thought and thought again, and continued looking at the chestnuts until suddenly he awoke. It was dawn.

This dream was repeated every night for a week. It was enough for Don Bosco to fall asleep for the scene of the lady and the chestnuts to present itself. Once the lady warned him:

[p. 108] Be careful of rotten or empty chestnuts. Place them in a saucepan of water to try them. The trial is

obedience. Cook them. If you press the bad ones they will immediately squirt out putrid liquid. Throw these away. The vain, empty ones will rise to the top. They will not stay down with the others but always want to be on top in one way or another. Skim them off and throw them out.

Neither is peeling the good ones after cooking them an easy matter. First the rind must be removed and then the membrane. The nuts will then seem quite white. But look well! Some are double. Divide them and you will find another membrane between the two parts. Still more bitterness is hidden there.

[Father Lemoyne added that this was a beautiful symbol indicating the different qualities of the persons found in religious Houses and the difficulties of trying to penetrate certain hearts, even the good ones.]¹

The Superiors were not surprised; rather, they were fully aware of these things. They found the lesson of the "dream" very practical and in keeping with their experience. Hence they accepted it for what it was: a gift from heaven. Without commenting much they turned over those blessed pages with devotion and emotion and resolved to preserve them as precious instructions for their formative action in the government of the Institute.

Mother Catherine, who had read the pages of the January *Salesian Bulletin* with attention, could not help lingering over the rapid development of the works of Mary Help of Christians both in Italy and abroad. She was struck by the number, "five hundred and four" of the prophetic dream. This was her conclusion:

"If we go ahead at the present rate and remain with Don Bosco we shall soon reach this number of Houses. God help the poor creature who has to carry such a sweet burden on her shoulders! Poor thing, poor thing! "Our Lady and Don Bosco will always be there to [p. 109] help," returned the other Superiors.

This thought supports all frailty and urges one on ward along the road of holiness and the apostolate.

Sister Maria Brega dies

On January 10, gentle Sister Maria Brega made her vows and went to meet her heavenly Spouse.

She had come to Nizza from her native Abruzzo. A natural simplicity and joviality marked her bearing, and these qualities she retained during the eleven months she spent as postulant and novice. Simply and joyously too, she went to her heavenly home at only twenty-three years of age, leaving as her motto: "Let it pass, let it pass! . . ." which she repeated with a smile at every difficulty.

Consoling developments

The January *Salesian Bulletin* was being read in the dining room, offering a subject for reflection on the intensity of the work of the Sons and Daughters of Don Bosco. It also promoted the spirit of charity and apostolate among the Salesian Cooperators.

At the moment the missionary Sisters of Patagonia had only four little Indians and seventy day girls, but already they felt the need of enlarging their House to cope with the increasing needs of the mission. Would they not soon be asking for more personnel? How many and who would those fortunate chosen ones be?²

A new building project was also being planned for Buenos Aires in the form of a church dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. Everything there was going ahead well.³

This caused a fresh surge of gratitude for the gift of a vocation and for the tireless work undertaken by the Superiors in Don Bosco's name.

[110]Two more bereave ments

Sister Angela Delodi died at Nizza while the pupils were celebrating the feast of Saint Agnes.

Because of her quick character and her very delicate health, she spent her eight years in God's House in constant conflict with her natural weakness. More often than not, by prayer and humility, she was the conqueror rather than the conquered.

Now she had breathed her last with a peaceful ejaculation, *Jesus and Mary*. Having worked to the end, she won the reward of the strong.

On the morning of Sunday, January 29, the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, there was a sung mass. But in the afternoon, although there was another solemn celebration in chapel, a cloud hung over the House which presaged a sad shock.

About two o'clock in the afternoon, Sister Agatha Roggero, who was not yet nineteen years old and had made her profession the previous August, went to Mother Superior and told her, "I feel I am going to

die today and I want to go to confession and Communion."

Questioned affectionately, she only repeated, "Be so good as to arrange for me to go to confession and Communion because I am to die today!"

Father Lemoyne was consulted and after a moment's reflection he said, "Let us comply with her wishes!"

Sister Agatha then went to lie down as if death were imminent. She made a brief confession, then immediately assumed the aspect of a dying person. She begged to be given the holy oils quickly, renewed her vows and without showing the slightest sign of pain, went to God.

Such a death coming a week after the other, threw the community into consternation, but the good Director hastened to comfort them. "You must not weep over this passing. The God who today called Sister Agatha is the same God who helped her conquer every obstacle in the [p. 111] way of her vocation, and who made her a model of piety and regularity. Happy are those who listen to the voice of God speaking in their hearts and, like Sister Agatha, follow Him faithfully until death!"

The reason for that "Oremus"

In one of her Good Nights Mother recommended praying for the gift of health because of the need to work for souls. She referred to one of Don Bosco's special reminders regarding this:

One day Father Cagliero told us that the *Oremus* after the Litany of Loretto should be the one from the *Angelus* and not the one we were using. He said that three times he had consulted Don Bosco concerning this, but had always received the same reply: "Do you not understand the great need we have of health in order to give ourselves body and soul to the salvation of the many souls who are so sorely tempted by the devil? The *Oremus* we use is precisely intended to secure this grace. Tell the Sisters to recite it with faith, even at the moment of Communion if they so wish and, if they still do not understand, make them understand, and you will soon see that they reap the benefit of it."

Therefore [concluded our dear Superior] it is Don Bosco's will that we ask for the grace of health, especially through this beautiful *Oremus*. Let us follow the instructions of our good Father and revive our faith in this prayer. If God sees fit to give us "eternal joy" instead of good health we shall say our *amen* with great love in life and in death. He is the Lord and we are his lowly handmaidens in everything and always.⁴

Information about Don Bosco's visit to Marseilles

On February 5, Sister Alexandrina Hugues wrote to the Superior General from St. Cyr:

[p. 112] I promised Sister Meana to give you news of Don Bosco's visit to Marseilles as I happened to be there on one of those same days. I am now fulfilling that promise. But how can I, or how and what shall I write about, when so many wonderful things could be told?

The corridors of Saint Leon's were constantly filled with all kinds of people—the sick, the afflicted, the incredulous and those uncertain of their future. Not all had the good fortune of a word from Don Bosco because there were so many there. But no one, no matter what the inconvenience, would leave without at least seeing him. All regarded themselves as fortunate if they could only touch his clothing. This had already been replaced three times because it was torn by the crowds who pushed against him in a manner impossible to describe.

A young lady was said to have been freed from the devil. She had been exorcised before but without result.

It is also said that Mrs. Noli Prat, a renowned benefactress of the Oratory of Saint Leon, had the privilege of a visit from Don Bosco in her own home. She asked him on that occasion: "How is it that while I think about your Sons, Our Lady does not think of mine, who give me so much trouble?"

Don Bosco replied, "It is because you are still too proud!" The lady was so pleased with this answer that she immediately gave an offering of eighty thousand lire for the new church at Bordighera.

Our Sisters have already seen him and he has spoken of them to the Committee Ladies. Sister Meana herself will write to you concerning this. Yesterday Don Bosco left for Toulouse where he is expected to stay for a few days. He will then return to Marseilles. After that we hope to have him at St. Cyr and at La Navarre. Then we shall have some more news for you.

"In paradise soon," as Don Bosco said

From Villa Colon came news that Sister Angela Denegri had said a last good-bye to this world. They wrote of her that she seemed to be an angel of baptismal innocence and [p. 113] added, "We do not know whether we should cry or smile as we think of her flight from this world."

The Sisters of Nizza remembered Sister Angela when she entered Mornese as a postulant at the age of thirteen and a half years-little more than a child. There were others who saw her on the day of her religious clothing ten months later, and still others who remembered the day of her profession and subsequent departure with the first missionaries for America.

It was also remembered that Mother Mazzarello was almost unwilling to admit her to profession-so young in years that her skirts had to be lengthened very often! But Don Bosco had removed all uncertainty with the decisive words: "Let her become a Sister for she will soon go to paradise."

As a young girl she had read the *Eternal Maxims (Massime Eterne)* of Saint Alphonsus de' Liguori and decided on her program of life: "To save her soul and think of nothing else." Her mother tried to dissuade her from going to the missions so young, by saying,

"You would throw yourself into the fire to please others. "

"You are quite right, mother," Sister Angela had replied, "I would throw myself into the fire to save souls."

How many souls she must have set on the path to heaven during her five years of missionary work! How many would one day form her crown, in proportion to her ardent desires!

Sister Meana's letter

More information came from Sister Meana in France.

Marseilles, February 9, 1882

. . . I asked my Guardian Angel's permission to steal half an hour from sleep, in order to tell you what dear Sister Hugues could not have known at the time she wrote.

[p. 114]Everyone here says that our dear Father Don Bosco is a living miracle. We expect him to return in a few days and then we shall see how many more wonderful things he will do for us. Since the 3rd, he has already done so much.

During the meeting of the Benefactresses and the Ladies of the Saint Leon's Committee, he praised the great work they do for the Salesians and thanked them cordially for their charity. He said that this charity urged them to meet not just once a year but even every week to see to the poor linen and clothing of Our Lady's orphans. He urged them always to have one heart and one ideal: the greater perfection of Christian charity. Then he turned to a subject not less close to his heart.

I do not know, dearest Mother, whether I already wrote to tell you that on the eve of All Saints we left our first kingdom, that is Madame Jacques' coach house, to take up residence in a little house close to the Oratory of Saint Leon's. Well, our good Father touched on this point in his own interest. He said that much had been done but much more still had to be done, and done still better. He made the Ladies to understand that at Saint Leon's there were priests, clerics, boys and a few men-servants, and that possible problems might arise with the Sisters so close. He gave the example of the House at Valdocco, saying that in the Sisters' section there was a large room for the ladies who helped with the clothing of the Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales. He said that sometimes they held their special meetings there. He even made them laugh a little when he told them that the ladies not only mended torn garments, but sometimes managed to make one good garment out of two or three, thus making them last the boys a little longer without their losing them along the road. Then, summing up, he gave them to understand that the Sisters' House should be a little more separated from that of the Salesians. He said he would rather see the two Houses disappear altogether than that there should be reason for gossip and danger to Salesian reserve.

In conclusion he said that he already had a suitable house in mind. He had spoken of it to the Salesian Director and the Provincial, using the words he now repeated to them:

"The Sisters must be given a permanent and convenient [p. 115] dwelling place. Divine Providence will think of sending the thirty-five thousand francs required for the proposed purchase."⁵

I learned all this in confidence from one who added, "I ask you if anyone who is not a saint could attempt so much with such confidence, in a situation such as ours in France, at this present time. He infuses the same fervor and trust into us. We all know that during the last year and a half the republican government has

appropriated more than two hundred and fifty ecclesiastical properties, and that more than five thousand six hundred religious, belonging to some forty different Institutions, have been expelled."⁶

Dear Mother, what do you think of it all? But now if you permit me, I will go and close my eyes which will no longer stay open. I shall have more news when our venerated Don Bosco comes back to us in two or three days' time.

Bless us all, dear Mother, and may we meet soon! (Our Father has promised it). V.G.M.G!

Your affectionate and obedient Daughter,

Sister Amalia M.

The Director General writes

A letter arrived from the Director General announcing the coming arrival of a group of young girls from Sicily. They had been presented by the Bishop of Acireale himself with the words: "Here they are, a lovely bouquet of postulants for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians."⁷ After reporting to Mother General on his journey to Rosignano to see the site of the new foundation, and his visit to the Sisters at Quargnento, Father Cagliero expressed the hope that Mother General would soon be visiting France as "papa Don Bosco" wished.

[p. 116] Prayers for the Pope

In keeping with Don Bosco's recommendation the fourth anniversary of the Pope's election was celebrated by the community of Nizza in a spirit of thanksgiving and filial rejoicing, and in prayers of gratitude and praise to God.

Mardi Gras

The last days of Mardi Gras lasted from February 18-21. The Blessed Sacrament had been exposed for adoration and prayerful recollection expressly during this period of greater worldly folly. However, there was at the same time ample opportunity during the afternoon for community cheerfulness in homey entertainment.

Retrospect on the thorny history of Mornese

A fresh trial, connected with the thorny history of Mornese, pierced the hearts of the Superiors.

The story of this trial however remains as a documentary of the Institute, witnessing to the filial reverence of the Superiors towards Don Bosco and their humble trust in the mysterious ways of Divine Providence.

No one seemed to know exactly how the business of selling the first House of the Institute was being carried out. It was enough for the Sisters to know that the Superiors in Turin had dealt with the matter. But worthy Father Joseph Pestarino (Sister Rosalia's brother and nephew of the revered Father Dominic Pestarino,) and the faithful Angela Maccagno could no longer keep the great secret to themselves. Each, unknown to the other, decided to make use of the Mardi Gras holiday to take a trip to Nizza. There, individually, they unburdened their heavy hearts. This they did not so much for moral relief, but to avert, if at all [p. 117] possible, an irretrievable step.

Here is a combination of the two confidential statements. A certain Joseph Mazzarello, known as Giacomulo, had returned from a visit to Turin and related the whole story from beginning to end to a friend, in confidence.

He used to spend many hours in the Campi house without ever compromising the two brothers Valentino and Francesco or abusing their trust. But one evening the conversation between the two brothers assumed such gravity and was carried on with so much circumspection that even Giacomulo with his seeming inattention and dreaminess understood everything and was able to make good use of it at the appropriate time.

He understood that the two brothers were planning to put together a sum of money, perhaps by loans. Then, deceiving Don Bosco, they would acquire the College for themselves instead of for the Mornese town council.

This knowledge roused him to action. He did not go to his own home in spite of the late hour, but directed his steps to the Castle of the Marquis D'Oria. Those two traitors must be denounced! The Marquis must be told about their conspiracy and thwart it as soon as possible.

Hence there was no time to lose.

At this late hour the Marquis was enjoying his first sleep but that did not matter. They would have to call

him and get him out of his room because Giacomulo had something very important to tell him. Giacomulo's request was granted and the Marquis listened to his tale.

Once aware of the facts, he responded: "Say nothing to anyone but go to Turin at once, in my name. Here is money to settle everything and make all arrangements. If when you return you can tell me that you have concluded the business, you will be rewarded by an assurance of shares in the produce of the farm for yourself and your family. "

Giacomulo did not wait to be told a second time. He arrived in Turin while audiences were being arranged with Don Bosco. He was dressed in Mornese style and looked almost like a mountaineer, so no one thought of introducing him among the first visitors. However he took no offense and even seemed better pleased, in the hope that when his turn came he would be able to take all the time he needed.

That is just what happened and the good man was able to deal with his case at length, completely at his ease. He said he was commissioned to tell Don Bosco that the town council in Mornese had no intention of acquiring the College. However for a sum that would be profitable to the seller too, he himself would pay in cash the full sum required by the transaction in the name of another person, "to be revealed later."

To Don Bosco this seemed just the Providence he had prayed for so much to make part payment of the debt on Nizza, so he accepted immediately. Nevertheless he was rather surprised to see before him, when the deed of purchase was drawn up, the actual name of the purchaser, Marquis Andrew D'Orio.

When the midday Angelus bell rang Father Rua appeared to escort Don Bosco to dinner. Giacomulo greeted Our Lady with both of them, better than he had ever done in his life before. At the end of the prayer he heard Don Bosco say,

"Do you know, Father Rua, that I have at this very moment sold the College of Mornese?"

"Sold the College? Don Bosco, what have you done? Have you forgotten that we have an agreement with Campi?"

But now Giacomulo's task had been completed as he wanted and, once out of the room, he was so excited that he could not find the exit door!

He returned to Mornese almost beside himself and kept on repeating, "How well things have gone! How good Don Bosco was to me!"

The friend to whom he blurted out the whole story was sworn to absolute silence. But after a while conscience, rectitude, and a revival of disgust for the Campi brothers who, through self-interest had lowered themselves to such [p. 119] an act of injustice, together with the fact that the affair was of real interest to the whole town, all influenced him to unburden himself to the one who, according to him was the most understanding and discreet person in Mornese: Angela Maccagno. He also spoke to Father Joseph Pestarino, the relative who was closest and most affectionate towards his deceased *previn*.

In the meantime several months passed. Nothing new was seen or heard and it was impossible to keep silence any longer. The number of people in possession of the secret began to increase and there was danger that they might group together and take unpredictable revenge. Could such a thing happen in Mornese? Maybe not, but the two who first shared the knowledge and were most involved in the distressing affair, made a journey to Nizza.

What could the Superior General or her Counselors say to them?

"Is it, perhaps too late to retrace our steps? Father Rua should be consulted before Don Bosco... If God permits that one or other of us should meet Father Rua we must talk to him about the matter. In the meantime let us pray and keep silence."

Silence and prayer then, were the only weapons in the hands of the Superiors capable of soothing hearts and encouraging filial abandonment to the dispositions of our heavenly Father.

Foundation at Rosignano Monferrato

In the afternoon of February 21, Mother Tamietti escorted the three Sisters chosen for the new House at Rosignano to their destination. They were Sister Josephine Roccati, the Superior; Sister Elisa Marocchino; and Sister Amalia Calaan.

They should have been in residence at the end of January but some unexpected difficulties had arisen. Now however, in agreement with Father John Bonelli, the parish [p. 120] priest and rural vicar, they were able to start work. Rosignano was the native town of the Sorbone sisters. In order to finalize the foundation Mother Enrichetta, the Vicar General, had visited it a short time previously with Mother Emilia Mosca.

Mother General announces her pending visit to the Houses in France

Fresh instructions came from Valdocco for Mother General to visit the Houses of the Institute, beginning with France. Don Bosco's letter concluded with a very pleasing invitation: "Wouldn't you like to come for the blessing of Mary Help of Christians before you go?" Mother left for Turin immediately and returned to her Daughters in Nizza that same evening.

At the Good Night to the professed Sisters and novices she announced that she would soon be leaving Italy to visit France. Don Bosco had so promised the Sisters there. She recommended herself to the prayers of everyone, that she "might not spoil God's work through her inexperience and lack of virtue." She assured them that she was only undertaking the journey in obedience to the Superiors, and because of the great trust she had in divine protection which was always so generous in help for the weak. She consoled herself with the thought of the great spirit of faith her Daughters in France possessed. They had written: "Come; we are awaiting you with open arms!" She finished by exhorting the community to gratitude towards God and the Salesian Congregation and also for the frequent requests for new Houses.

"And what about Mornese?" they asked. "What does Father Rua think?" Mother answered in a low voice, "He too, thinks that there is no other remedy but silence, prayer and leaving the matter to God!"

[p. 121] On the way to France

Mother General left for France on the morning of February 27, while the community was completing the usual devotional practices.

After a short stop at Sampierdarena she intended continuing to Alassio. From there she was to continue her journey in the company of Father Cerruti, the new Provincial of Liguria. Traveling with them were the Sisters destined to complete the personnel of the Houses along the route to France.

At Sampierdarena Mother saw it opportune to accept the advice of the Director, Father Belmonte, to wait and meet Don Bosco on his expected return from France.

So she waited until March 4, then left for Alsassio. Father Cerruti, who was also the Director of that House, said she would almost certainly meet Don Bosco at Nizzamare if she resigned herself to stay with them for a short time. What would she not do to receive at least the venerated Father's blessing on her first visitation as Superior General?

Don Bosco arrived in Nizza-mare on the 7th. However he was so taken up with the crowd of well wishers and benefactors of his work at Saint Peter's Institute that our good Mother could only see him for a few moments. He greeted her with a "Well done!" for not letting him down regarding his promise to the Sisters. It was Don Bosco himself who then arranged her itinerary. She was to go straight to Marseilles and afterwards to the other Houses, taking everyone the blessing of Mary Help of Christians which he gave with both hands.

From Marseilles Mother wrote to the Sisters of Nizza telling them of the many times she was filled with emotion on hearing of the marvels worked there by our venerated Father. From St. Cyr and La Navarre she sent fragments of news, promising to give details on her return. From Nizzamare she wrote that wherever she went she had the impression that even the sea breezes spoke of Don Bosco.

[p. 122] A festive return

Mother Catherine returned to Nizza Monferrato on March 28, where she received a festive welcome from the whole community in songs, poetry and music. All the Sisters were eagerly awaiting news from beyond the border.

A conference to the professed and the novices satisfied their legitimate curiosity.

Mother was overcome with emotion as she related certain of Don Bosco's prodigies and she repeated, "To think that we are his Daughters and that we have to become saints like him!"

She told them that the Sisters of Marseilles could scarcely get near him, because of the crowds of needy people who pressed around him for help and comfort through his blessing and counsels.

Don Bosco had to remain in the small town of St. Cyr, which was all too tiny for the many people who flocked there just for his blessing.

In the conference he gave in the parish he strongly recommended that the people come to the aid of the poor Saint Isidore's Settlement in order to bring relief to both the boys' and girls' orphanages.

Only Sister Superior and Sister Sampietro were actually able to meet Don Bosco, and then only for a few minutes because of special circumstances. Sister Sampietro herself tells us about this in a letter she wrote to the Sisters of Nizza. Mother read it aloud, as it was of interest to the whole community.

Don Bosco did not come to see us, but I went to him. I had been suffering from an ingrown toenail for over a year and it was very painful indeed. I happened to mention to a countess benefactress of ours how much I would like to obtain a cure for my foot through our good Father's blessing because by this time the toe had started producing annoying bunions. The countess sent a carriage, so Sister Superior and I were able to go where Don Bosco was staying. He listened [p. 123] in a very fatherly manner as I spoke of my trouble. Then he began,

"Well, supposing the foot had to be amputated. . . "

"O Father," I interrupted, "I couldn't. . . I have already had one operation."

He then told me to pray and raised his hand in blessing. That same day the condition of my foot changed for the better. Now the pain has gone and I am completely cured.

Viva papa Don Bosco!

Mother wished to end her report with this incident, but the community pleaded with her, "Tell us more! Tell us more!" So she continued, lingering over the many heavy sacrifices that the children and Sisters had to undergo. She herself had suffered with them just a short time previously. But she said that the last two years in St. Cyr had been much more difficult than any of those she had spent there when she was Superior of *lady poverty*, the queen of the original orphanage.

She had at least been able to wear the religious habit then. Thus she had received a certain deference from lay-folk. Now however the Sisters had no such advantage. As in our other Houses in France they were like servants and dressed almost as such-so much so that they met with many humiliating and caustic remarks in the streets and squares.

The Salesians, the boys, the Director particularly and a few good lady benefactors appreciated their sacrifices, but they rarely had occasion to meet because of the amount of work which often continued well into the night.

Mother added that throughout the past two years, the Sisters had lived in almost continual fear of an assault on their House, insults in the public squares, and actual violence. The number of priests and religious who had already undergone these trials was far from insignificant. But the power of Our Lady together with their spirit of faith and the prayers of Don Bosco had thus far saved them, as also the priests and boys of the respective Houses, from all [p. 124] serious frightening incidents. And so, there was an obligation for all to thank God, more so now that it seemed the storm in France had almost spent itself.

Mother Catherine did not fail to let the Sisters know that La Navarre and Nizza-mare had been specially favored: Don Bosco had stayed five or six days on the first visit and ten days on the second. In the short meeting the Sisters had with him, they came to understand his fatherly heart and were stimulated by his words, "Take heart, children! Keep cheerful! Paradise will make up for everything. "

They had also been cheered by news of his miracles and successes in spite of the increased work in the kitchen, in the fields and in undertakings of all sorts.

Many important persons had come to La Navarre for the ceremony of laying the corner stone of the new building, and at Nizza-mare there was always a fresh multitude calling for the "saint of instant cures," of conversions and prodigious blessings... Then there were the continuous visits of priests, prelates, magistrates, etc., at all times of the day and night.

When the report had been completed, Mother Assistant said in an undertone to those around her, "Our Mother has not said a word of the great good she must have done on her visits. "

Mother Vicar took up the thought and said aloud, "Oh that is already written in heaven; here and there, we are reaping the fruits!"

Later on Mother would inform her Council of the results (already experienced) of Don Bosco's suggestion to the Lady Patronesses of Saint Leon's in Marseilles.

A few days after the notable conference of February 3, while Don Bosco traveled from Marseilles to Valenza on the business about the two properties he had in mind, his cherished dream became a reality through a generous, unexpected offering. This meant that by the feast of Saint Michael, the properties, vacated by the actual tenants, could be placed at the complete disposal of the Sisters.

[p. 125] The Director of Saint Leon's was more than happy even though he was aware that he had in hand only part of the 80,000 francs required for the purpose. But the curate of Saint Joseph's repeatedly told him, "We know it already! With his system of drawing down the blessings of God through the channel of charity, Don Bosco always prefers to remain a little in debt in order to oblige Divine Providence to intervene."

"These observations are of value for us also," concluded the Mothers. "Often, we do not take a step forward because we are so terrified by debts."⁸

Mother also said that the order Don Bosco had given before leaving Marseilles had been carried out. It was a

matter of walling up a window and installing a "turn" between the Salesian dining room and the kitchen. Our dear Father also showed interest in his Daughters at Nizza-mare. He wrote to Father Bologna that the Sisters also should be entrusted to the care of Father Provincial. Both these provisions were very much to the advantage of the Sisters.⁹

News from Mother Martini

When Mother General returned from France the Director General gave her the latest news from the missionaries of America, dated January 27.

The Provincial, Sister Madelene Martini, who had not been very well, said she now felt better, was always happy to be a Daughter of the Congregation and, by God's grace, to be in America. She felt the burden of her office more and more since it was so filled with responsibility and so difficult to fulfill. "But, patience!" she wrote, "let it be for the love of Jesus. In expiation for my sins I am resigned to it as long as He wishes."

She rejoiced in the news that poor Sister Lucca, the "straying sheep," as Father Costamagna used to call her, was accepting her present sufferings in a spirit of reparation, hoping that Jesus and His holy Mother would be her refuge [p. 126] in life and in death. The letter, which was directed to Father Cagliero, ended with the statement that at the close of the spiritual retreat there had been five clothings with the religious habit and three perpetual professions. She asked him to present her humble and cordial greetings to our "common Father Don Bosco" in whose prayers she had complete trust.¹⁰

Monday of Holy Week--religious clothings

The letter carried a postscript from the Director General himself: "Since I cannot come any earlier, I shall arrive on Sunday evening for the ceremony of religious clothing to take place on the following Monday."

The community was overjoyed even if the function had to take place on Monday of Holy Week. It would also give them an opportunity of celebrating Mother General's safe return from France, that country which was such a great admirer and helper of our venerated Father Don Bosco.

The twelve new novices, clothed in white gowns and wearing white veils, were ready for the procession to the chapel but only eleven reached the altar rail. Everyone was stupified. It became known later that a timely word had come from Don Bosco in Sampierdarena and one candidate had been withdrawn.

Among the eleven were Candida Rho and Margaret Vezzoli who have already been mentioned. On the page where the names of the new novices were inscribed, there is a note near the name of Vezzoli: "Won by the long suffering charity of Father Cagliero and Mother General. What a miracle of salvation for this young girl! How Our Lady must love her!"

After the ceremony Father Cagliero discussed a few important matters with the Superiors. He then extended his wishes for the neo-novices to the whole community: May they be clear as crystal, simple as doves, sincere as innocence itself and fervent as the prudent virgins, in order [p. 127] to console Jesus and Mary and prepare for a holy Easter.

He then left for Turin in order to be present at the Holy Thursday services.

"Pray always, pray much"

During the Easter feasts the Director, Father Lemoyne, animated the community to share in the glory of the Risen Savior and the joy of His holy Mother. This would be to the measure in which each had made her own the ineffable sufferings of Jesus and Mary, in order to be their comfort and to obtain many special conquests of grace for both just and sinners. He concluded with, "And pray! If you only knew the power of prayer over the Heart of God when it rises from pure, consecrated souls! And if you only had the faintest idea of the Church's need for fervent prayer and generous sacrifices in these days, in order to maintain herself gloriously through the insidious and open warfare of her bitter enemies."

After Vespers had been sung on Low Sunday, Father Lemoyne gave the usual religious instruction to the whole community. Returning to the exhortation to pray for the Church; he introduced his topic with a summary report on the outrages committed in Turin by masonics, anti-clerical and liberals against God in the person of His Vicar.

On the very day of the solemn consecration of the Church of Saint Secundus (April 11) a horde of rowdy, frenzied sectarians with whistles, ropes and stones had removed the bust of Pius IX from the pediment of the church which had been raised in his honor. They smashed the bust to pieces, together with the inscription which

registered its dedication on behalf of the citizens.

Don Bosco, who was in Rome at the time, must have known all the details of these serious offenses against God, the Pope and religion. What would he not have said or done to comfort the Holy Father? In his own heart, he must certainly have suffered the pain caused by this public [p. 128]act of impiety, especially since he himself had supported the initiative of that construction, promoting the participation of the choir and the band of his Oratory in Valdocco. This was a new reason increasing the fervent request for reparation for the great iniquity of degenerate people, for making the greatest possible contribution to the moral renewal of Italy, and a means of imploring comfort for the Sovereign Pontiff and their beloved Father Don Bosco.¹¹

The Sunday instruction of the 23rd also brought the Director to the topic closest to his heart: praying always and much for the Holy Father, the true, good Shepherd of the universal Church, and praying for Don Bosco, the Father of the Salesian Congregation.

It was Director Father Lemoyne's continuous apostolate to remind the community entrusted to him to pray for Mother Church, the Sovereign Pontiff and their Founder, Don Bosco. No one on earth would ever be able to measure the efficacy of his work. In fact, with the help of such spiritual nourishment, both Sisters and girls became centers of radiation for exemplary religious virtue and attachment to the Apostolic See. Catholicism was their life style.

Mary's month A page from the "Salesian Bulletin"

Following the invitation given in the April *Salesian Bulletin*, every study hall and workshop, every room and corridor had its little altar to Our Lady with flowers and burning lights.

The most loving care of these was taken by the best among the boarders. Everyone took the resolution to avoid all deliberate faults because the worthy Director had stated clearly that one cannot honor Our Lady and at the same time offend her Son. The task of teachers, assistants and Children of Mary was to pray, work and play in union with the most holy Virgin, offering every action to God through [p. 129] her hands. Every letter to relatives and acquaintances was to contain some reference in honor of Our Lady. This was a promise that even the children of the first grade made.

When the *May Bulletin* arrived the Director himself read the first page to the Sisters, novices and postulants at the Good Night:

If there were one single event concerning which we would wish our voice to reach all the faithful, it would be the occasion of the feast of Mary Help of Christians which is celebrated on May 24.

On this occasion we would like to inflame every heart with at least a spark of love for the august Mother of God. We would like the faithful at her feet in endless numbers and have them honor her as she deserves. We would wish a hymn of gratitude to be sung that was worthy of the numerous benefits of all kinds which she distributes on earth. We wish that her sweet name, coming from an immense crowd of grateful and loving children, would resound from one end of the world to the other. If it were permitted us, we would wish to draw all who live in the proud cities to celebrate her feast in their sumptuous basilicas, raised to her name by the piety of their forefathers; to invite all country dwellers to honor her in their lowly churches, and all new believers of the forests and deserts to venerate her in their impoverished huts. We would cry aloud, "Come, all of you, great and small, princes and people, rich and poor, civilized and uncivilized; love, thank and invoke Mary. After God, she loves us best, blesses us and protects us as a sister, a mother, she who is now Queen of heaven and earth, the arbiter of our destiny, dispenser of divine treasures. Preach Mary who is the delight of paradise, the comfort of earth, the terror of hell; exalt Mary whom the stars encircle, around whom the angels form a halo and to whom the saints pay court. Celebrate Mary of whom the poet sings,

In You is all mercy, in You is all compassion,
In You all magnificence,
Whatever is good in creation unites itself in You.

[unofficial free translation]

[p. 130] Finally praise her who is unequalled in beauty, love and power, surpassed by God her Creator, alone."

But since our voice cannot reach so far nor to so many different places, we turn to our Cooperators and earnestly beg them, with their families, to unite with us in celebrating the approaching feast of Maria Auxilium Christianorum in a worthy manner. Celebrate it with the love of children, with the gratitude of

those who have been blessed, and with the trust of the needy poor.

Father Lemoyne then made his final point very clearly: "Parents who have given their daughters to Our Lady either as Sisters or to be educated by us in a Christian manner according to the method of our dear and venerated Father Don Bosco, are all Cooperators. Therefore each one of you, either by word of mouth or by the written word, should remind everyone to honor Don Bosco's Madonna, your Madonna! "

News from Argentina

During these days a letter arrived from San Isidro dated the last week of March.

After a few brief items of news from the two Houses of Uruguay, Villa Colon and Las Piedras, "where great charity and good spirit reign," the Provincial went on to speak of the capital of Argentina. At La Boca "there are a group of two hundred or more young girls as dynamic as gun powder and nearly all of them come from families originating in Genoa."

"At San Isidro," she said, "the holy Rule is lived and there is a very happy union of spirit and a real appreciation for spiritual things." Then with obvious motherly pleasure, she declared that although in the House at Buenos Aires Almagro there was no lack of reasons for serious preoccupation and sense of responsibility, the professed Sisters were real models of observance and charity. This committed the novices still more to correcting their shortcomings and [p. 131] acquiring Salesian virtues.

With regard to herself, she repeated that she was not as patient as circumstances and good example warranted. She asked for prayers that she might be able to reach her ideal of holiness. Reiterating the happiness she felt at belonging to the Salesian Congregation, she declared her readiness for any type of work or sacrifice to obtain the gift of final perseverance from Divine Mercy.

Finally she expressed the wish that the new Mother General would visit the Sisters, who already felt themselves her devoted Daughters. She then asked for herself and all the Sisters in America one of Don Bosco's special blessings that worked miracles for both body and soul.

More explicit and detailed news came from Father Joseph Vespignani, whose task was to guide the Sisters of Buenos Aires-Almagro in their apostolate among the young.

He began jokingly with a statement of the Archbishop, Monsignor Aneyros, "I am so pleased to see the Salesian works among us completed by the efforts of the Sisters, that I find myself tending to sing the *Sancta Dei Genitrix* and the *Sancta Virgo Virginum* Italian style." He had been among those who tenaciously held on to the Spanish pronunciation of the Latin.

With reference to Mother Provincial, who had recently undergone a serious operation, he did not spare his words.

Right from the first occasion I had of meeting her I recognized her deep piety; the peace of soul she manifested amidst all the vicissitudes and sacrifices brought about by the first difficulties and experiences in a field absolutely new to her; her earnest desire to work for God's glory; her simplicity in seeking to fulfill God's will in everything; the prudence and discretion of her government among difficult elements and the fact of having to extend her maternal authority from Argentina to Uruguay as well.

I remember that when Father Bodrato died, Don Bosco wrote to us: "At this moment we must all keep united to [p. 132] God, gathered closely together under the mantle of Mary Help of Christians in whom you must place your whole trust."

Good Mother Martini intimately shared in our sufferings and reacted to the seriousness of our situation. It was at that time I began to understand more deeply the spirit of faith and trust in God that animated her.

This death also meant heavier preoccupation for her. There was the founding and then the supporting of new Houses; the absolute lack of means with little or no outside help; many requests to shelter poor girls with no House of her own to accommodate them... But her spontaneous reaction was a revelation for me: "God sees and knows all this. Our Lady herself will think about helping and consoling us as we continue to pray and hope, even if we cry."

Indeed those days brought many extraordinary signs of divine assistance and protection. Finally our common sorrow was changed into joy with the nomination of Father James Costamagna, former Director of the first Sisters of Mornese, as the new Provincial.

Who could be happier than our Sisters here? They, especially, could place complete trust in such a Superior, attached as he was to the Mornese traditions and ever ready with memories of Don Bosco and that blessed cradle of the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

In fact I noticed more than ever before that, under him, these Sisters lived Mornese just as we live

Valdocco.

There is an inexplicable rivalry between our two Institutes. We try to reproduce Turin-Valdocco here, and the Sisters try to re-create their own Mother House. It is not just a matter of names but a real resemblance even in the most minute details. Like us, they feel something like a sweet nostalgia for the origins of the Salesian spirit lived under the eyes of Don Bosco.

I often have the opportunity of listening to one or other of the Sisters, and am always filled with admiration at their way of thinking and judging. How respectfully and with what esteem they speak of their Provincial and all the Superiors! They also agree with one another and show themselves happy and contented even in the face of poverty, work and [p. 133] study, and never cease performing acts of charity. They edify me continually.

After a few other points Father Vespignani spoke of the next House the Sisters were to open in Buenos Aires-Almagro.

One would need to know the story of their life there in order to measure the sacrifices of these Sisters of ours and to rejoice that their many prayers and *Ways of the Cross* had become effective.

Even before their arrival Father Bodrato had endeavored to procure a suitable house for them, but unhappily without success. There were unacceptable obligations attached on the one hand, and extreme difficulties on the other-so much so that he could do nothing better for them than adapt a kind of hut he had just acquired for the Salesian students.

As long as he lived, he himself continued to search. When he departed for the next world, it would seem that he immediately commissioned Our Lady to provide for the needs of her Daughters, since what then occurred was prodigious.

The letter continues:

A certain Mrs. Petronilla Rodriguez of Buenos Aires fell ill. She possessed over 17,000,000 Argentine pesos and was benefactress to quite a number of religious communities. Among these were the *Servants of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament*, whom we Salesians serve in the sacred ministry.

We had never been put in touch with her but, during one of her visits to the generous sick lady, good Mother Benita Areas, foundress of the *Servants of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament*, spoke of the Salesian works and especially of our work in Almagro. She hinted at the idea of placing us on her list of beneficiaries since we worked for poor children, and accepted them gratuitously, or almost so, in our hostels and schools.

Mother Benita's warm recommendation bore fruit and Mrs. Rodriguez left us the sum of 500,000 pesos in her will.

This was to be used for the benefit of our trade school [p. 134] in Almagro.

As soon as the fact became known, Father Costamagna, the Provincial and the other Superiors of the House began to reason in the following manner. This legacy was the result of charity towards the nascent Institute of Mother Benita. It was the fruit of the sacred ministry exercised in favor of the Sisters. Therefore it should be used for our Sisters and still more for Mary Help of Christians, our common heavenly Mother. The Sisters were in dire need of a house and we needed the little shack and the land they occupied. By ceding our kitchen garden in order to build a school for them, and a church that would be the first Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in America, and a center of Salesian union to be used for our own personnel, the Sisters and the Cooperators. . . we would satisfy all our present needs. If Don Bosco authorized this we could quickly have all our best desires fulfilled at this providential moment.

The proposal was sent to Turin immediately together with a rough plan of the building project. This reflected all the skill the Provincial had acquired during his years of practice in Turin, Mornese and the other schools and convents he visited. By approving the whole project Don Bosco made it possible for the work to go ahead quickly.

It was hoped that the ceremony of laying the corner stone will take place next May. If so, we will arrange solemn celebrations.

This would be a great consolation to us all, both Salesians and Sisters. Our dear Father Don Bosco could then tell us again with joy in his heart: "Only have faith and you will see what miracles Mary Help of Christians can work."

Foundation of Incisa Belbo

May 12 saw a new foundation in Incisa Belbo, just forty-five minutes' walk from Nizza.

The kindergarten was made possible by the generosity of Father Louis Ferraro. Sister Lucy Ferraris was to be the Superior, Sister Maria Bodrato, the teacher, and Sister Vincenza Razzetti was to handle the domestic work

and [p. 135] outside commissions.

There was to be an oratory, of course and also a workroom for young girls of the parish, but the Sisters' first task was to enroll children for the kindergarten and then to prepare for the official inauguration, scheduled for the approaching month of June.¹²

First anniversary of Mother Mazzarello's death

In the afternoon of May 13, the Director Father Lemoyne delivered to the community a simple memorial oration on our unforgettable Mother Mazzarello.

The Constitutions of the Institute did not prescribe special suffrages for the anniversary of the death of the Superior General. But the hearts of her Daughters wished to make a spontaneous offering of prayer, The girls themselves rivaled one another in collecting among themselves the sum required for a mass offering. The mass was to be said on Monday because the 14th was a Sunday.

As he spoke to the Sisters about their good, deceased Mother and his own spiritual Daughter, he flicked over the pages he had in his hand. Having reminded them that her quick, resolute disposition as a girl detracted nothing from her modest, Christian reserve, Father Lemoyne brought out in a masterly manner the principal religious virtues of this first Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and Superior of the Institute.

At one point he suddenly raised his voice and said clearly:

I am here among you not only to help you become holy religious but also as our dear Father Don Bosco tells me continually, to enlighten you regarding your important duty as educators.

This evening, therefore, in memory of your good Mother Mazzarello, I intend to offer you a particular aspect of her life which will serve to impress upon your minds forever [p. 136] the great duty you have of forming your pupils in a Christian manner.

We can honestly state that our Mother's virtue was the fruit of her home training. This training was strong and sincere. The words inculcated by the priest in church were an inspiration to the most exemplary parents in the town, and became the practice and life of the whole family.

If we can now boast of the great, strong virtues of our Mother Mazzarello, we must thank her own father who, after God and Our Lady, enabled her to preserve the lily of her innocence unsullied. How prudent and circumspect he was regarding his virginal daughter!

He gave her freedom in the friendly contacts with her own age group and with various relatives, but he was always on hand. She was free to work in the fields with the laborers, but always under his eyes.

How alert he was in distracting his daughter's attention from vulgar words and common jokes. This he did almost without his Mary's realizing her father's ingenuity. He was quick to warn her about the need for mortifying her eyes and of not behaving in a flippant manner on outings or at fairs or markets.

This is what you must gradually do among your pupils in order to keep them pure, circumspect and strong in the various situations of life. Just as the advice of Mother Mazzarello's dear father was in complete accord with the example he gave and with the manner of his life at home, so you must show by your actions, that your lessons on morality, pedagogy and religion govern your own habitual actions and judgments.

Would you like me to relate an incident that perhaps has never been spoken of before but of which I was a witness'?

It will suffice to give you an understanding of the venerable man who gave us Mother Mazzarello.

Towards the end of his life he used to sit outside his house surrounded by his children and grandchildren. A life of intense hard work and the inclement weather to which he had been exposed, had made it very painful for him to move about. Thus he was constrained to rest and could not go to church daily as he used to.

Yet he never complained, and if anyone mentioned his [p. 137] sufferings he only blessed God for giving him the opportunity of doing penance and obtaining merit through his cross.

One evening while he was conversing with someone who had come to see him, a friend approached and started commenting indignantly on something that had happened in the family a few days previously.

Our good Mother's own mother had been suddenly seized with severe pain which seemed to threaten her life. The doctor had been called urgently, but all he did was to ask, "How old is this woman?" When he was told he added, "She has already lived long enough! So..."

This forthright account aroused general disapproval. However the good old man turned to the narrator and said, "Tell the whole truth. It was certainly not right of the doctor to come to such a villainous conclusion but, even if he did not come to see the sick person, he did inquire about the symptoms of the

illness and prescribed suitable remedies which produced their effect. *Let us be just always, and in everything!"*

This was the school of Christian rectitude in which our Mother Mazzarello was formed. You teachers, assistants and Superiors, who have to form your pupils for life, insist, insist on the need of acquiring today the virtue which tomorrow must bear fruit in the field where God wills to place them.

Doing this we shall perform a work of the highest merit before God. Besides this we shall increase the glory of our dear Mother, whom we hope is already in heaven. Let us seek to give her still greater joy during these days by all the means our piety suggests.

Such a fatherly exhortation did much to revitalize the affection and gratitude of all the community. Between Sunday and Monday, the 14th and 15th respectively, little groups could be seen getting together and making their way to the cemetery. There they prayed at the lowly tomb on which there had just been erected the cross of the poor, symbol of that faith which is the life of those redeemed in Christ.

[p. 138]The pupils of Nizza in Turin for the feast of Mary Help of Christians

The novena of Mary Help of Christians followed immediately. Father Lemoyne said that the Sisters and pupils of Nizza Monferrato must not let Valdocco outdo them in fervor, therefore. . . those who had most must give most. and those who knew most must tell others all that might be useful for honoring Our Lady, increasing her glory and doing good to souls.

If everyone answered the call the coming feast of the 24th would not pass without a beautiful gift from heaven.

There was fresh movement of life in the community and the gift had already been prepared.

On the evening of May 23, nearly all the pupils with their teachers and assistants boarded the train for Turin, along with many other devotees of the Queen of Valdocco and admirers of Salesian works.

Having arrived the night before they were ready for the first dawn mass and neither the thunder, lightning or the heavy early morning rain disturbed them. They met the fine, noisy crowd of a hundred twenty oratorians who had come from Chieri under a deluge of rain and hail protected by heaven, while their horses reared in fear at the crash of the thunder"¹³

A great wave of joy was spreading everywhere. This was also experienced by Don Bosco's two benefactresses from France, Miss Louvet and Miss Deslyons, who were guests in our House. The children returned to *Our Lady of Grace* on the evening of the same day. They were filled with gratitude to God and the Superiors who had arranged such a lovely, happy day for them under the dome of Mary Help of Christians.

The Director General, Father Cagliari, had bid them farewell, saying: "We shall meet again at Nizza on the first of June, feast of Our Lady of Grace, to conclude the month of May and celebrate some new clothings with the religious habit. You can expect me . . . "

[p. 139] However the date had to be postponed and a new one fixed for the clothings on the 4th or 5th of June.

Father Cagliari at Nizza for the clothings

Father Cagliari reached Nizza on Sunday evening, June 4. He remained in the confessional until late that evening and returned there early next morning.

After the community mass he spoke with each of the ten candidates for the religious habit.

After the ceremony he left them as a souvenir one of his characteristic expressions: "Be cheerful, dear children. Our Lady loves you very much and expects much of you for the consolation of Jesus and our dear Father, Don Bosco. Help her to save many souls and your own first of all."

No one now had any thought any more about the difficulties of the way. Looking upwards they repeated the old yet ever new refrain, "Oh what a great and beautiful grace it is to be a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and of a saint such as our good papa Don Bosco." Without doubt, Father Cagliari had the gift of elevating and bringing peace to all hearts. Skies were always blue when he was in the House even when there were rain clouds outside.

News from America

The Sisters in Uruguay were in a festive mood over the arrival of Father Lasagna, their new Father Provincial. Mother Provincial, Sister Madelene Martini, had undergone a second operation and by a special

grace of Mary Help of Christians was cured in just a few days.¹⁴ The Sisters in Patagones already had about ninety pupils even though they lived in an impoverished dwelling. Father Cagliero brought the following letter from the Sisters of Patagones.

[p. 140]

Patagones, April, 1882

Very dear Mother Superior,

You have already asked us twice about how we live in Patagones but our Sister Superior and our worthy Director, Father Fagnano, always tell us that we must not give our dear Superiors pain by relating some of the things that have happened to us...

This time, however, I have managed to convince them that instead of feeling pained, you would be very pleased to hear how we are managing and would pray much more for us.

And so, I shall tell you a few things that perhaps you do not know yet. I'll send the letter directly to Father Cagliero and if he thinks fit he can grant free passage to this muddled mixture, written in bits and in a great hurry.

When we arrived here we were very disorganized. This town is populated by poor people who suffer every form of neglect.

Father Fagnano immediately urged us not to omit any work of charity or any opportunity for the apostolate and so, with all the fervor of missionaries "out in the jungle," we gave ourselves at every moment to every cause that presented itself. This we did without considering our own inexperience or the dangers we might meet when least expecting them. So much for the day hours!

But at night time! Oh how often we had to stay up! We had no ready-made clothes, only pieces of cloth. I cannot tell you for how many months we had to use linen that was only tacked together. This, of course, gave rise to many little incidents which made us laugh till the tears ran down our cheeks.

We suffered a great deal from fear and cold but not from hunger. We managed to collect herbs by the roadside and wood from the fields, etc.

We taught catechism until our throats were often all dried up. . . We found ourselves in circumstances which left us astonished and wide-eyes, even at night! For example sometimes we had to go to the parish church after dark, heavily disguised and by unfrequented routes. This was in order that we should not be recognized as we went to witness [p. 141] a marriage being rectified. There might be seven or more children present, the offspring of the two who now wanted to be united in the Church.

For some time now we have been visiting homes in order to ask parents to send their children to school, oratory or catechism.

We do not generally get the door slammed in our face as the priests do. We can thus say a good word or two to adults as well. We usually do this work on the eve of feast-days.

We greet all those who greet us in the streets pleasantly, and take no offense at the rudeness or scorn of certain others. Because of this many who used to turn their backs on us now look on us kindly and even greet us. If it should happen that we are greeted at a house with, "We want no visitors here," we have only to mention that the owner of the house greets us when we meet him in the road. Then the person at the door goes away, and after a few moments returns to let us in.

We then exchange a few compliments and are allowed to see anyone who is sick. Little by little we become friends and without preaching sermons, we prepare the way for the visit of the missionary priest.

It was Father Fagnano who taught us this method. We shall never be able to repay him enough for all that he has done and is still doing for us in placing us on the road of the apostolate. He has opened our eyes to many things we need to know, and he edifies us in many ways.

He cares for us like a father, without any danger of excessive familiarity. It is true that he is good natured but he is also discreet and decorous. He listens to the account of our escapades from beginning to end, answers our questions, approves or disapproves freely, but always in a businesslike manner. He is already very much esteemed here and we think it will not be long before we will reap copious fruits of culture and religion.

This is enough for now, my dearest Mother, because I have already chattered a good deal. If Father Cagliero consents to pass on to you what I have thrown together just as it came to me, you will say, "Very good, Sister Joan!" and like a child, I will jump for you.

[p. 142] You will receive further news from my Superior but now, many greetings and a hearty, "Viva Gesù e Maria" to "Papa" Don Bosco and all at Nizza!

Your affectionate Daughter,

Sister Joan Borgna

Monsignor Scotton saw what Our Lady had done

The June *Salesian Bulletin* carried the last chapter of the short biography of Mother Mazzarello and a part of Monsignor Scotton's panegyric for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, in San Siro's Basilica, Genoa. Some of the Nizza community remembered the judgment he had made concerning the first Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Mornese. At that time, he had regarded them as absolutely incapable of forming a new religious family. Now instead, he praised them, together with the "flourishing Salesian Congregation."¹⁶ He might have repeated in his heart the reply Don Bosco had given him on the former occasion: "We shall see what Our Lady will do."

Yes, Our Lady had known all the time how to draw her glory from the humility of her Daughters and their trust in her as well as Don Bosco's. Her Daughters would never forget this because they wished to remain humble instruments in the hands of their heavenly Mother and powerful Queen.

The Mornese intrigue uncovered

Fresh visits from Mornese brought distressing tidings. Others besides Father Pestarino's nephew, Father Joseph, felt it a duty to let the Superiors know about their compatriots' latest outbursts of anger at what had now come into the open.

Now that the transfer of the property was an accomplished fact, the famous Giacomulo made no secret of his [p. 143] part in the affair. Everyone was told why the building had gone to the Marquis D'Oria and therefore relations between the Campi brothers and Giacomulo were completely severed. Invective upon invective was hurled at the brothers who, not feeling themselves strong enough to attack the Marquis, poured imprecations and every other type of malediction on Don Bosco, the Sisters and religion, every time they passed the College.

It was useless to bring forward excuses or reasons to sweeten the pill. Still more useless was it to invoke fraternal forgiveness, respect for consecrated persons and the duty of Christian resignation in order to be at peace with God when approaching the sacraments. Spirits became increasingly exasperated and, with few exceptions, the women and even the boys and girls did their utmost to aggravate the flame of popular anger.

Maybe time would prove a healer but much prayer would be needed before calm returned and Mornese had peace once more.

The situation at Chieri Fresh gossip

In spite of this painful news, the Director and Mother General went to Turin for Don Bosco's feastday. He had just returned from Borgo San Martino, where they had celebrated the annual feast of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga.

After visiting Mary Help of Christians the first dutiful greetings had to be conveyed to Father Rua and Father Cagliero. Then Mother soon found work to do among the Sisters who were all happy at her arrival. However some of them wished to speak to her of their troubles and difficulties.

First among these was the Superior of Chieri, Sister Rosalia Pestarino.

Her troubles were certainly not lessened by the frag- [p. 144]ments of news her brother gave her about the happenings in Mornese. She also suffered for the affair of poor Father Bonetti. She felt she needed to talk about it. Furthermore to her mind, it was only right that Mother should know all that the Sisters knew clearly, and what was being talked about in the Chieri market place. It would mean extra suffering for her but it would also result in still more insistent prayers being said that the painful, unedifying story might be concluded.

Sister Rosalia stated:

For a few weeks now, it had been rumored that Father Bonetti has been found guilty even by the supreme authority of Rome. This would appear clearly confirmed by the fact that he no longer shows himself in the town, not even to administer the sacraments. Then it became known that in spite of the Archbishop's prohibition, Father Bonetti was living tranquilly in Chieri, defying all ecclesiastical suspensions.

Some people continued to be exasperated with the Archbishop. Others were against Father Bonetti, the parish priest and priests in general. Some were against Don Bosco's Sisters who, with their crowd of oratory

girls, must have been the cause of the endless, malicious rumors.¹⁷

What should be said and what could be done to help those who come to unburden themselves in the Sisters' parlor, and what advice could be given to the older oratorians, who would not listen to lying stories about their saintly Father Bonetti? . . .

All this made Mother suffer deeply as for the nth time she repeated: "Let us pray. Perhaps we are not praying as well as we should. Let us pray better and add some voluntary mortifications, especially those of the tongue. Then we must place all our trust in Jesus and Mary. They know the reason for this long and painful trial and we must look to them alone to bring it to an end."

[p. 145] Mother at Valdocco for the feast of Don Bosco

Father Rua let Mother know that if she came to the Oratory as Don Bosco was arriving, she would see for herself how his Sons welcomed him.

So she went at the appointed time with some of the Sisters and was able to take part in the expressions of filial affection and gratitude as she blessed God who compensated His saints in such a way for the bitterness of their sufferings.

Don Bosco noticed her and smiled as he said, "Oh good! Are you here too? Wonderful! We shall see each other later." This was sufficient to fill her heart with joy for the whole of the evening entertainment which took place in a corner of the playground. Joy still filled her the following day at the celebrations in church and during the three-hour family entertainment. This was made up of instrumental music, songs, a presentation of gifts, dialogues and unrestrained applause.

It was not the first time Mother Daghero had experienced such enthusiasm, but never before had she been able to measure the increasing proportions of our venerated Father's work. So many pupils, past pupils, representatives of church and civil government both from the city and outside, surrounded him and demonstrated their esteem and devotion.

The following day after almost giving up hope of seeing Don Bosco, Mother was called by Father Cagliero who took her to the Founder's room. She found him tired but very fatherly.

She came from the room in an ecstasy of joy, and spent the rest of her time with Mother Petronilla who had come from Lanzo.

[p. 146] Mother Petronilla tells of her experiences

Mother Petronilla had a variety of things to relate to Mother. They were experiences of her own, some of which were quite amusing.

Here we quote:

We now say the rosary during mass because we are in church with the boys and have to do as they do. Father Bonetti wrote to us to this *effect* from Turin. We grumble about this because we have no time to pray as each one wishes. But we must be patient! There will always be someone else who prays in our stead and the sacrifice we make *of* our will is bound to be *of* some use! . . . I remind myself and the Sisters *of* what Father Lemoyne once told us, "Do not ask Jesus for a tender love, but for a strong love."

Without thinking *of* anybody or anything I sent some Sisters to Turin for medical examination and treatment. But what do you think? I was soon given to understand that the House where the Sister works should provide all she needs. However I have learned my lesson. First I must ask permission from whomever is in charge. Then, all things arranged, I send the Sister to the doctor. That way, I leave no room for observations and we can all live in peace!

Seeing some *of* the Lanzo Sisters here, the Sisters *of* Turin thought they could do the same. So one at first, then others have appeared among us for a day or two, to relax or rest. Corrections have also been made to me on this score. I was told that the Salesians pay for board and lodging when they go from House to House. I *felt* like retorting that our visitors have been sent to us as our Sisters. . .

But then I spoke to Don Bosco *of* the matter so that I would know what to do in the future. He showed himself rather upset as he replied, "When the Salesians pay the Sisters for their work, then the Sisters will pay for what they eat in Salesian Houses."

One day two Sisters arrived at about eleven o'clock. Since Don Bosco was at Lanzo I took them to see

him. He said: "Have you told the cook that there are two more for dinner?"

[p. 147] "No, Father, but two more or less. . . we shall manage quite well!" "Oh no," he said, "the right thing to do is notify the cooks and the Sisters who set the dining room in time when this kind of thing happens, so that they may not be embarrassed or inconvenienced later. Do so always. That is also charity!"

A short time ago a Salesian passing through Lanzo brought us a piece of material to be made into a *palio* for him. I took the cloth and went to the workroom to ask if anyone could tell me what a *palio* or *paliotto* was. Only one was able to tell me that it was a *Contraltare* (an altar frontal). We were all very happy to have learned something extra.

Another day a lady came to ask us to make two *zinali*. This was also a new word for me. But not wanting to show my ignorance I accepted the order in the hope that someone in the House would be able -to explain. By chance I met Father Director so I asked him. He laughed and told me that *zinali* and *grembiale* (apron) mean one and the same thing.

On my way to Turin I chanced to meet Father Rua. I took the opportunity to ask him what was meant by the statement that the monthly confession should be more accurate than usual. He said, "It means not only mentioning the faults committed but also the good done in order to see how it has been done. For example: How the practices of piety have been performed and with what profit? What intention I had in doing good to others? Was the good done in accordance with the norms of Don Bosco?"

One day I met Father Bonetti who spoke to me for a few moments about a Sister who was not very well. As he left me he said, "Make it well understood that the cook is the first doctor and nurse of the community."

These experiences provided opportune subject matter for Mother's Good Nights to serve as guidelines to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians for the practical living of their vocation, especially in those Houses de- [p. 148]pendent upon the Salesians or subject to governmental or parochial administration.

A letter from Borgo San Martino

Mother drew more material for her exhortations from a letter of Sister Louise Boccalatte who wrote from Borgo San Martino, telling what she had seen and learned from the feast celebrated in honor of Saint Aloysius Gonzaga.

Here are some of the essential points:

Borgo San Martino, June 25 and 29

My dearest Mother,

Here is your faithful Sister Louise to whom you said, "Do not cry too much because you have to change from Turin to Borgo. Don Bosco often goes there and stays several days. Perhaps you will enjoy being there more than in Turin.

Should this happen, write me from time to time about what you see and learn concerning our dear Father."

I now keep my promise and between today and Thursday, the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, I shall relate what I reber so that you and the Sisters of Nizza may also enjoy it. Do not take any notice of the paper, the scribbling and all the rest, because I am not a *professor*. Just think of the love and gratitude of the one who writes.

We have just come to the end of three days of festivities. Chinese lanterns lit up the avenue between the station and the school. Firework displays also took place because, besides Don Bosco, our Bishop too, came to celebrate his episcopal jubilee.

I shall not tell you about the extraordinary amount of work we had to do and the number of people who gathered, even from other nearby villages. *As* in former years Don Bosco came to offer mass in our chapel everyday. He told us, "During these busy days do not worry about me. We are all one family. Just do your best to satisfy all those others who come for the feast."

Our feasts are meant precisely to attract strangers, so that they may get to know our educational and charitable [p. 149] enterprises and grow closer to God through charity and the sacraments. Work and fatigue are for us of the household. But let us be content with our lot. God will reward us."

We told him we had no time during the day for our practices of piety and that sleep overcame us in the evening. He replied, "Say the Hail Mary three times, as well as you can and then go peacefully to bed. You are already tired out with the day's work. However, ask Jesus during mass and Communion to give you health, holiness, joy and perseverance, and to make you other Saint Teresa's."

Morning after morning he would suggest to the cooks with fatherly goodness, what they should give for dinner. On the last day he also said, "Collect all the pieces of bread the boys leave on the tables and use them once a week to make a good bread pudding for everyone."

The Superiors used to come to give us the Good Morning.

We had a lot of fruit and much had fallen from the trees.

One evening I thought it a good idea to give it to the attendants. These were all men without work and the school was supporting them until they found a job. They sweep the playgrounds and corridors, etc. Don Bosco happened to pass after supper and noticing what I had done, he said, "Be careful not to get these people into the habit of taking fruit to supplement their meals. Bread, soup and a portion of meat and vegetables should be sufficient for them. If they get into this habit they will not be able to do without fruit when they find other employment and they might even be tempted to steal it."

One morning Don Bosco said to our Father Cagliero, "You speak to the Sisters and give them a good thought." But Father Cagliero answered promptly, "When the Father is present the Sons are at a loss for words."

Then our Superior asked Don Bosco to give us a practice for the day and he did so at once: "Keep cheerful! The devil is afraid of cheerful people. And never complain of heat or cold."

One day we heard him praise each of the Superiors who were around him:

"Father Cagliero, you are my right arm. Father Bonetti, [\[p. 150\]](#) you are my left arm. Father Belmonte, you are Our Lady's confidant.

"And what about me?" asked Father Bertello.

"Oh, you are the just man."

Father Montiglio was about to ask the same question when Don Bosco forestalled him.

"And you, my dear Father Montiglio, are the flower of the Gospel."

The Sisters here told me about an incident that one of the Salisians had related to them last year. He said that when dinner was nearly over, a telegram arrived from Turin, telling Don Bosco that the schools of his Institute were in danger of closure because not all his teachers held a diploma. Those at table saw large tears fall from the eyes of our poor Father, and they heard him say to his Sons who were with him, "Are there any among you willing to take the examinations for a certificate or diploma?" Immediately our dear Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti and others replied, "I am! I am! I am!" Don Bosco was certainly justified in praising Sons of that caliber, wasn't he, Mother?

The last part of this letter is a personal manifestation followed by a veritable litany of greetings and wishes which Mother Daghero summarized for all.

More from the missionaries

Next day Father Cagliero sent two letters from Turin addressed to Don Bosco and which had been delayed. One was from the Provincial, Mother Madelene Martini. Referring to it, the Director General wrote, "Don Bosco permits all that is edifying in this letter to be read to the community." The other came from the courageous missionaries of Patagones, with an attached note: "Don Bosco sends this one so that others may prepare themselves to join the pioneers in Patagonia."

We shall give these letters in their entirety because, as Mother Daghero said, "Nothing is too much for those who will come after us. "

[\[p. 151\]](#)

Almagro, May 16, 1882

Very Reverend Father in Our Lord Jesus Christ,

I remember that before I left to come here, your Reverence promised me that if I gave you an account of myself you would send me absolution by letter. So, the goodness I experienced on the first day I met you and the love you then manifested for my soul, encouraged me to open my heart to you, Reverend Father, and confide to you some of my shortcomings, hoping for a few words of comfort and guidance. Should it not be possible for you to do me this favor, of which I realize my unworthiness, I should still be happy just to know you are aware of my inner conflicts and will, in your charity, entrust everything to God.

In all truth I have only myself to complain about, my little correspondence with grace, my lack of trust in God and my self-love which I have not yet succeeded in overcoming as I should, and which very often, alas, blinds and deceives me. I find great difficulty in observing the practices of piety as I should. I am very distracted but, thank God, I usually perform them willingly and, even if I find no consolation in them, they afford me help and comfort in my needs.

Praise be to God who has given me in prayer such an efficacious way of obtaining graces. It seems impossible for me to keep in God's presence and do everything with purity of intention. This is why no day passes without my failing in charity towards one or other of my Sisters. Sometimes, because of a resentment or aversion I feel within myself, I give advice sharply and fail to give the word of encouragement I know is needed. But thank God, I love them all and am sorry that I do not succeed in overcoming my natural spitefulness and in treating them always with charity and kindness as I should. In spite of this they all love me and more or less all have confidence in me. It really seems that God hides my shortcomings from them and allows them to see only the little good there appears to be in me.

I say "appears" because at times I am afraid that everything in me has only the outward appearance of good. May God avert this catastrophe! I often allow myself to become disheartened in facing the cross I have to carry and the [p. 152]duties I have to fulfill.

Sometimes I feel myself so alone and discouraged, that it seems impossible for me to carry a cross entailing such responsibilities. This happens when, as I think of myself and all the difficulties I have to overcome, I fail to turn to God immediately and place all my trust in Him. However the thought that I belong to our Congregation and have come to America gives me increasing happiness. I thank God with all my heart for having deigned to show so much favor to such a poor creature as I. The graces I have received from God through Mary Help of Christians and Saint Joseph, are truly great, and this raises in my heart the sweet hope of obtaining through their intercession the precious grace of final perseverance.

Tell me, Reverend Father, what I must do in order to become truly more humble and patient and to love God very much.

I want to suffer for God. I want to please Him in everything and become a saint; but when opportunities present themselves I find myself weak and I fail to use them.

Therefore, Reverend Father, I beg you, who can obtain so much from Mary Help of Christians, to obtain strength and constancy in suffering for me.

Forgive me for taking so much liberty and for any disturbance my story may cause you. My reason for not writing to you before was that I believe Father Cagliero reports all matters of moment to you, so I usually write to him and Mother General with greater frequency, and give them detailed information.

Thank God, the moral status of the House is fairly good. We have two Sisters who are not very well at present but there seems to be no cause for alarm so far. The schools of Las Piedras and San Isidro have had to be closed because of illness among the girls. We regret this very much and hope we shall be able to reopen them soon.

Without further delay I offer you my profound respects and recommend myself with my Sisters here and my relations, to your prayers. I beg your Reverence to bless me who remain with esteem and respect,

Your humble Daughter in Jesus Christ,

*Sister Madelene Maria Martini*¹⁸

[p. 153]

Viva San Giovanni!
Patagones, May 21, 1882

Dearest Father in Jesus,

You cannot imagine how ardent our desire is to see you here among us, but our hopes are always being dashed. We have one consolation however: to be able to write a letter to you from time to time. Knowing that this brings you much pleasure, we avail of it with great enthusiasm.

Very Reverend Father, we would like to join those many Sons and Daughters who surround you on this beautiful day and so we unite in spirit to offer you our greetings through this letter.

First I take the liberty of giving you some news about our House. Thank God, we all enjoy excellent health and work hard in giving instruction to girls. We began classes on March 13 and they are going well, thank God. There are already sixty pupils in the school and many more attend the Sunday festivities.

During the days of this novena to Mary Help of Christians we have services in our chapel and many people take part in them. Our own girls come along and ask to help us with the decorations. This they do at the cost of

sacrifice by denying themselves some delicacy or comfort. Oh, if only you could see how happily and enthusiastically they sing hymns to Our Lady! This makes sacrifice seem less hard as we think of the grand celebrations taking place in Italy. We recommend ourselves very much to your good prayers that we may continue in our missionary endeavors, become saints and do a lot of good to these souls.

We shall do all we possibly can to correspond to the concern which the Superiors, and especially you, most Reverend Father, have for us. Today, when Holy Church venerates your protector, we shall redouble our prayers to obtain choicest blessings for you and all the graces that could add to your happiness.

In the meantime we wish you a happy feastday and since we cannot offer you any gift, we content ourselves with offering you our hearts. Persuaded that God will heed our [p. 154]prayer, we are happy to sign ourselves

Your most obedient Daughters in Jesus,

Sister Angela Vallese

Sister Joan Borgna

Sister Catherine Fino

Sister Angela Cassulo

Sister Maria C. Minguez¹⁹

Closing of the House at Visone

With the end of the scholastic year the work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians came to an end at Visone.

This was a foreseen event because of the absolute insufficiency of maintenance both for the Sisters and the kindergarten itself. The families of the district could not help because they had scarcely enough for their own needs. The president had assumed responsibility for a contribution towards the maintenance of a third Sister, in the hope that the less poor would contribute some share. However, he withdrew from his commitment when things did not turn out according to expectations. Father Melazzo, the worthy parish priest who had sponsored the cause, could not increase his material help and since the Superiors would not consent to only two Sisters carrying on the work, he was obliged to resign himself to a complete withdrawal, even if he had hoped a year ago that such an event could be deferred.

It was a grief for everyone, but God does not demand the impossible.

Spiritual retreat for ladies

From early morning on August 1, good young ladies of all ages gathered in the House of *Our Lady* at Nizza Monferrato. They were preparing to take part in the spiritual [p. 155] retreat to which they had been invited by circular, and through the *Salesian Bulletin*.

Already more than a hundred had arrived, cordially welcomed by the Sisters of the House as well as Father Cagliero, who came forward to give them Don Bosco's greeting. Nevertheless there was one question on everyone's lips, "What about Don Bosco? Is he coming? When is he coming here?" Everyone had something to tell him, ask him or offer him!

The preachers were already noted for the warmth of their words and their apostolic virtue. They were the Director General and the Archpriest of the Cathedral of Acqui, Canon Raymond Olivieri. Ten years or so ago the latter had assisted at the origins of the Institute at Mornese. Now he could see for himself and admire its prodigious development.

He preached the opening meditation, stressing the importance of the retreat since, he said, it has been arranged by the Blessed Virgin herself. No one better than she could have put together for them such significant and precious days also for acquiring the Jubilee Indulgence. The first days contained two of Mary's feasts, that of the *Portiuncula* or Our Lady of the Angels, and Our Lady of the Snow.

Don Dosco's arrival

Don Bosco was expected the following day, and he did not fail to arrive on time. His presence and the private interviews consolidated resolutions and fertilized the ground which had already been enriched by the sermons, preparing it for effective apostolic action.

He faithfully gave his favorite type of little sermon, "the Good Night," in chapel. To his first words of congratulations to those who were so attentive and recollected, he added words of exhortation. They should make sure they were in the grace of God and fulfill the practices enjoined for acquiring the Jubilee. Such practices should be per [p. 156]formed in the best possible dispositions. Great importance must be given to

prayer for the intentions of the Sovereign Pontiff. Don Bosco then outlined briefly the many and serious attacks leveled at the Holy Father in Italy itself, from the sons he had most benefited. He urged the ladies to devout and frequent reception of the sacraments, and advised them to add to this, the practice of Christian charity in the form most acceptable and most conformable to the moral and material needs of those with whom they came into contact.

The 5th of the month marked the tenth anniversary of the foundation of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the subject for that day was premoulded. Why was it that Don Bosco shouldered the responsibility of a new religious family for women?

Because Our Lady wanted it for the complete development of his program, *Da mihi animas, caetera to tolle*, and Don Bosco could only obey.

But the two Salesian religious families were not sufficient for the development of this same program. A third was needed, that of the Cooperators of Don Bosco. This was also the will of Mary Help of Christians.

Therefore all the ladies present, married or unmarried without exception, were invited to help poor Don Bosco by prayer, watchfulness, exhortations at home or in school, good example and alms. They were invited never to forget that the divine commitment to save souls is a sacred one for all who call themselves Christians and feel themselves to be earnest Catholics.

He also advised the ladies to read again attentively what the *Salesian Bulletin* of last July reported regarding almsgiving. He raised their thoughts to the reward God gives both in this world and the next to those who open their hearts and their hands to spiritual and material charity. The souls saved through Salesian works would surround the Cooperators with splendor in the kingdom of God.

Our venerated Father must have seen in the eyes of those present the good resolutions stimulated by his words, [p. 157] because he willingly left one of them the following precious autograph:

*Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians
in Nizza Monferrato*

God tells us, "Give and you shall be given a hundredfold in this present life and an eternal reward in the life to come."

May God bless you and give you good health.

Nizza, August 5, 1882

Father John Bosco

According to the fatherly confidence made by the Director, Father Lemoyne, Don Bosco included a note with his letter to the Bursar General, Father Francis Dalmazzo. It ran as follows:

I am here in our House of Nizza Monferrato for a retreat organized for school teachers and mothers of families. There are about one hundred and fifty altogether. They are very edifying and are likely to prove as many apostles in the world.

The following day was the 6th-a date which brought fresh annoyance for our venerated Father. Doctor Martini was persevering in his resolve to avenge the disgrace of his dismissal from service as doctor to *Our Lady's House* and sent Don Bosco an insolent accusation. Don Bosco took it with perfect calm and placed the affair in the hands of lawyer Gallo of Nizza.

While the retreatants were listening to the sermons or waiting for confession, Don Bosco gave himself completely to those who belonged to the House. Among these were Letizia Lavanigno who had finally accepted the invitation of Our Lady of the Angels and was already wearing the postulants' uniform. Rosina Gilardi, one of the pupils, also wished to consult him about her vocation.

According to her own words the young girl last mentioned was not only received by Don Bosco with fatherly goodness, and questioned by him regarding the angelic [p. 158] virtue, but he also encouraged her by offering her a medal, reassuring her with the words: "Be of good heart! One day you will be a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians!"

Her eyes shining with happiness, Rosina protested that she would always keep in her heart the gentle but profound gaze of our Father. From it she was to draw strength and help at every moment of her life, which had already begun to prove difficult.

The Good Night that evening was like a farewell.

Don Bosco for the Pope

Don Bosco planned to be at San Benigno Canavese the next day where Monsignor Riccardi, Bishop of Ivrea, had reserved a day for the Salesian House during his pastoral visit.²⁰

He spoke that night from the abundance of his heart and reminded the retreatants and Sisters that the feast of Saint Joachim would occur on the 20th of that same month. He encouraged them to read what the *Salesian Bulletin* had to say about this, with the intention of consoling our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIII. Just as the children of the Evil One, not content with exalting their wretched prince, used everything and sacrificed everything to demonstrate the strength of their perverse convictions, so it was not enough that Catholics give proof of their devotion to the Pope on his name day. They must spare neither words nor work nor sacrifice of time, nor even money nor health nor even, if need be life itself, to oppose the snares of Satan. It was also necessary to support the Pontiff's efforts for the integrity and propagation of Our Lord's doctrine, as well as for the renewal of modern society, through the Christian education of the young and the apostolate to Christian families.

Don Bosco observed again: "The greatest sorrows are often the sources of most comfort. In these hours of grave [p. 159] tribulation the Pope expects much from teachers, wives and Christian mothers, as well as from priests and religious. Therefore, let none of us fail to respond to the call. May the coming feast of the Pope find all of us ready for open battle against evil, and dedicated to practicing the duties demanded of us by our holy religion and charity."

Night time, when many good thoughts are born, began to produce fruit early on the morning of the 7th. The idea arose spontaneously from among the retreatants of offering Don Bosco a sum of money collected among themselves, to be sent to the Pope in token of their filial devotion. It was quite a discreet amount and Don Bosco was very pleased indeed. He promised that he himself would notify the editor of the *Unità Cattolica* of this gift, as he had previously done with regard to other offerings, in order to encourage others to follow the example given.²²

"Not now-later, yes we'll see..."

Canon Olivieri, who was a witness and always a great admirer of the good done by the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, asked Don Bosco, "Will you accept among them our group of the *New Ursulines (Nuove Orsoline)* of Acqui also? They have been living in community since January and we could say that they too are a branch of the Daughters of Mary Immaculate of Mornese. I am their Director and could easily prepare them for fusion and union. . . What do you think, Don Bosco . . . ?"

Our venerated Father thought a moment. Then he smiled kindly as he replied: "Not just now. Let them continue under your direction for the present. Later on we shall see. . . Later on. . . !"

Canon Olivieri really hoped that later on the group of *Nuove Orsoline* of Acqui would unite with us. If they are roses, they will bloom!²³

[p. 160] Don Bosco leaves Nizza

Don Bosco did not leave without first going to see the builders engaged in constructing the new wing. This was to include a larger parlor suitable for the needs of a flourishing boarding school and would be linked by various internal passages to the old wing of the ex-convent. Don Bosco approved of the work and spoke words of encouragement to the Superiors and the laborers. He then turned their thoughts to higher things, saying: "Do everything for God and Our Lady in order that everything may serve for the eternal salvation of a greater number of souls, not forgetting your own."

The whole community lined up along the chapel corridor in order to bid a grateful and devoted farewell to our venerated Father, whose smile embraced everyone and gave joy to all hearts. But he had a special word for the postulants: "All of you must be missionaries! All for the missions! "

After he had gone the comments began. "Will it come true? Shall we all go on the missions? You too, who are such a harum-scarum?.. And you there, so shy and quiet?" Angela Cagliero cut the discussion short with: "If we do succeed in going, I shall always remember Don Bosco as I saw him this morning during the sermon, angelic and mortified. He did not even rest his poor tired back against the easy chair."

Renewed joy

The farewells of the retreatants were in keeping with the joy of their hearts and the resolution of their will: "We shall never forget this retreat and shall all return next year, bringing others with us."

By noon of August 14, the Director General and Father Anthony Notario had already arrived in Nizza Monferrato, [p. 161] where the Sisters were gathering for the spiritual retreat.

Before the end of recreation Father Cagliero appeared on the playground, much to the satisfaction of all, particularly those who had not seen him at all during the year. He immediately explained why this time the retreat would count one day less and one feast more. That feast was in honor of the Pope! He regretted not being able to make better arrangements to prevent Our Lady's greatest feast being enveloped in silence. However he promised that there would be celebrations just the same, because there would be music at mass and Vespers and the subject of the sermon would be the greatness of the Divine Mother and the power of her merciful love.

This was accepted unanimously with vigorous applause.

The retreat ended on the 20th with eight candidates for the religious habit, seventeen professions, two renewals and seventeen final professions.

Some of these had definite missionary vocations, such as Angela Cagliero, Clementine Rabagliatti and Ursula Rinaldi. Great hopes had been set on the success of these Sisters.

The "souvenir" sermon was a summary of the sermons preached during those days: daily victories over one's own shortcomings, and above all those relating to heart and head, in order to fulfill the obligation of tending towards holiness. The retreatants were to make the sufferings of the Church and the Roman Pontiff their own, and to remember him in prayer and in the exercise of Christian and religious virtues. In the kindergartens, schools, oratories and also among relatives and acquaintances, they should seek by all the means at their disposal to infuse the idea of the greatness of the Pontiff and of the Christian duty of obedience, love and veneration towards the Pope, the Vicar of Our Lord Jesus Christ on earth.

The singing in chapel, the verses in the dining room and the open air entertainment at the coolest time of afternoon, were all expressions of the heartfelt devotion for the Holy Father, and set the spiritual program for the coming scholastic year.²⁴

[p.162]The House at Cascinette is also closed

There may have been festivities at Nizza but there were none at Cascinette because August 20 was the day marked for the Sisters' departure. The town was in mourning.

The House had been opened at the insistence of Father Peter Quilico, Director of the parish and president of the administrative council for the kindergarten. The business had been difficult from the very beginning. Two Sisters only were requested, but Don Bosco would never allow a House to be opened with less than three. He asked that the administrative council negotiate in writing for "At least three Sisters, who should also be allowed to open a Festive Oratory and workroom." It was then agreed that if the administration found it impossible to provide the established salary, the families of the parish would supplement it with voluntary, private offerings.²⁵

The local government had been unable to meet their financial commitments due to economic losses and the inadequate funds made available to them for administrative purposes. This led to another effort on the part of the parish priest to get Don Bosco to limit the number of Sisters to two. But Don Bosco would not give in, "because the Rule so required," he wrote, "and because of the many requests from other local authorities and parish priests, who offer much better moral and material conditions."

This occurred during the first half of the year and Father Quilico told the Sisters on May 29, 1881 that because of this reply they could consider themselves at the disposition of their Superior at the end of the scholastic year.²⁶

However, the town offered to contribute, privately, if not with money, in kind. So the Sisters yielded to the protestations of the people who were so rich in heart yet so poor in purse, and the experiment was tried for another year.

But today the sacrifice of leaving had to be made because even the voluntary offerings had proved absolutely [p. 163] inadequate for the indispensable needs of the Sisters or the House.

Spiritual retreat at Turin

On the evening of August 24 another group of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians gathered at Turin-Valdocco for the annual spiritual retreat. This was to be preached by the Salesian Superior, Father Francesca, with Father Notario. Mother General was present, and also Father Cagliero with his much appreciated assistance. Everyone wanted at least to be blessed by Don Bosco, but he was, as usual during this period, occupied with his

own Salesians who were also making their annual retreat.

The closing date of the retreat was fixed for September 1, when there were to be three 'first professions and four perpetual professions. The "souvenirs" were the same as those suggested to the retreatants on the previous August 20.

Death of Sister Innocenza Bologna

"Sister Death" once more visited Nizza Monferrato and took away Sister Innocenza Bologna in the flower of her youth. She had been an example of serenity, obedience and interior life, and had proved herself ready for heaven at the age of 23, after only two and a half years of religious profession. She had been outstanding in her thoughtfulness for others and her only fear had been to become useless to the Institute. But both Superiors and Sisters regarded her as a model of piety and hard work.

Blessed are those souls who eagerly and noiselessly go to their eternal reward, verifying the marvels worked by grace in simple, upright hearts!

Mother General, who returned to Nizza just in time to attend the removal of her remains, comforted everyone [p. 164] by her own heartfelt praise of the silent virtues of this dear Sister and of other Sisters who, like her, loved God generously in humility and sacrifice.

The quick emphasis Mother was able to place on these precious gifts was a manifestation of her own predilection as a religious and a Superior, and her Daughters encouraged each other to make these virtues their own.

News and comments

At the Good Night Mother gave the community the news from overseas which she had received in Turin.

She said that the Sisters of Uruguay wished to make their House an antechamber of paradise through the practice of obedience and fraternal charity. They wished each other the joy of feeling themselves to be Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and of Don Bosco, their beloved Father.

Mother commented, "This is an excellent desire! These are the two virtues which are needed morning, noon and night in order to be really good Sisters, and they will please everyone beginning with God Himself, Our Lady and our own consciences."

She added that the Provincial of Buenos Aires had given assurance that much good was being done by the Sisters in Patagonia and that she hoped to visit them all before the end of the year. Then Mother asked a question: "Is there anyone among you who feels prepared to go and help them? . . . What? So many of you? . . . But being prepared means, as you must know, hungering and thirsting for sacrifice. . . Enthusiasm is of little use if there is no readiness to face daily sacrifice without a long face and the 'disability of a twisted neck.' "

This made the Sisters laugh but they took the lesson to heart, and Mother continued.

[p. 165] Now I will tell you something else. Last June our Sisters in Buenos Aires took part in the important celebration of laying the corner stone of the first church in America dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. It is also to be the community chapel. Our worthy Father Cagliero told me that it will be featured in this month's *Salesian Bulletin*, so we hope we shall soon read about it. In the meantime let us consider the "corner stone" of our own personal church—that is, our own soul—already 'laid' by Baptism and by our Salesian religious vocation. It is up to us to get to work day by day on the construction of our interior edifice in honor of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, as Mary Help of Christians wishes. This thought is not mine but that of our Director General and each one of us should profit all she possibly can from it.

A pontifical solution for Father Bonetti

Good news at last!

It has been thought that the last days of August would bring an end to the painful trial of poor Father Bonetti. However, although everything was not completely satisfactory, he at least had the happiness of knowing that the Holy Father understood him completely, and he submitted to the Pontiff's every direction with perfect serenity of spirit.²⁷

This is the grace we have prayed for very much [said Mother to her Chapter] and we Daughters of Mary Help of Christians can never thank God and Our Lady enough for it, because we must not forget that the sharpest thorns in this affair came from our oratory in Chieri. It was here, as we all know, that Father Bonetti's zeal helped and guided the souls of those dear girls of ours so well. It is to be hoped that the affair is

over, once and for all! Then even dear Don Bosco may be granted a little respite. From a word dropped here and there by our Director General, it was not difficult for me to gather that Don Bosco was not completely in the dark regarding all that was being said and done against [p. 166] him, his schools and his educational system, in a certain town not far from Monferrato.²⁸

Let us pray much and get others to pray for our dear Father [exhorted Mother General] because we know he will always have much to suffer and we must never be indifferent to his son's especially at this time when furious invectives are being hurled at those priests directly consecrated to the good of the young.

Various reasons for a special exhortation

Sister Marietta Rossi had left for Turin on August 26 in order to undergo a second operation. Mother Superior gave good news about her, but did not attempt to hide the fact that when certain illnesses repeat themselves there is always the danger that things might go badly. She asked for prayers on this account also, because health is indispensable if one is to work.

By September 20 nothing else was spoken of but the floods occurring all over Italy and the many disasters and great distress that accompanied them, especially in the Veneto region.

The Sisters of Este wrote a few lines expressing their fears for the future. Would they have to leave the school? Where and how could they find refuge?²⁹

"You see," Mother commented, "God is making Himself felt in order to call everyone to repentance. Let us listen to our heavenly Father's voice. Let us call with insistent trust on Our Lady's intervention and try to be very good and fervent in order to obtain an end to this calamity."

Preparations for the scholastic year

The date for the opening of the scholastic year was approaching. The new dormitory, the new study hall and the entertainment hall had to be put in order in time for the entrance of the already large numbers of boarders [p. 167] accepted for the new year.

"This means more work and fatigue," was the comment, "but it will also mean greater facility for doing good to the girls who will soon be among us. Besides it will also be another form of joyful penance and self-sacrifice in order to obtain graces for all those in the flooded areas where everything is being ruined."

Towards the end of September Sister Marietta Rossi was ready to return to Nizza with Sister Teresa Baioni who had been her companion in the Mauriziano Hospital. They both had much to say about the consideration given them because they were "Don Bosco's Sisters."

Liberal propaganda...

Toward the commencement of the previous scholastic year, liberal Milan, in its congress of primary school teachers, had decided to remove God from the souls of children by abolishing the teaching of catechism in the schools and forbidding the teachers even to mention religion.

This year, at the very beginning of September, Naples had not only imitated, but even gone a step further than Milan, in the intention of substituting the reign of Jesus Christ on earth with that of Satan. In its congress for the primary teachers of Italy it proposed and prescribed that children should be brought up to hate the Pope, the Church and even God himself. They were to be taught to mock all the truths of faith, to deny faith in the immortality of the soul, in the last judgment, in hell and in heaven, and in this way to give full liberty to all kinds of iniquity.

... and the reaction

The Catholic papers and the pastors of souls immediately raised their voices and incessantly opposed the diabolical outrage. Parents and Christian educators were exhorted to spare neither private nor public effort to avert the danger of having an unbelieving and perverse generation before long.³⁰

Director Father Lemoyne also found it impossible to keep silence at a time when the new scholastic year was about to open. He decided to give a special conference to the Sisters of Nizza Monferrato in which he stressed the value of catechetics. "Let us save the young by means of religious instruction. Let us infuse a passion into the

young people for catechetical instruction in their homes, in their schools and parishes, so that every girl may be carried into the apostolate as by an irresistible heavenly magnet."

The Director General, writing from Turin in Don Bosco's name, issued more or less the same recommendations while at the same time he sent the latest news from America, dated August 14.

Latest news from America

Mother Provincial Madelene Martini gave assurance that after eight months of suffering, she was now feeling much better. She said she rejoiced in the great progress being made in the Old World by the Institute, especially in Italy, and prayed and had others pray that God might bless it more and more, and increase in its members the spirit of courage and fervor in religious observance. Then, with filial simplicity, she begged the Superiors "not to send to the mission field Sisters who cherish the idea of becoming Superiors, but rather to forewarn them about the occupations and sacrifices proper to the missions, in which the spirit of humility, renunciation and dependence are no less valuable than zeal for the salvation of souls."

Then Father Cagliero related part of the letter almost word for word, translating it from Spanish into Italian for the benefit of the Sisters.

[p. 169] If I knew that the first to come to our mission were not accompanied by your Reverence and our new Mother General, I would take the liberty of adding that they should keep together during the voyage. They should only move around the ship in pairs. They should speak little and exchange confidences with no one.

Should I be recalled to Italy and have to leave this blessed land forever, well and good! May God's will be done, cost what it may. Although the present circumstances of the Houses and the personnel are such as to need someone to keep a restraining hand on everyone and everything, I feel that with God's help I should be able to obey instantly. I would arrange all things according to obedience and place myself and everything entrusted to me in the hands of Divine Providence.

I tell you sincerely that I should feel it very much. But by God's grace, I am disposed to go or stay in any place or House, with no other occupation than to obey and love my good Jesus. Or at least this is what I think, if my selflove is not making me completely blind.³¹

A copy of Sister Angela Vallese's letter to Don Bosco was also sent by the Director General in order that the general news might be given to the community. Here it is:

. . . Heaven has granted us a great favor during these days. Reverend Father Costamagna arrived among us on July 20 and stayed for over a month. During this time he gave himself entirely for the good of our souls and those of the poor girls frequenting our House. He preached the spiritual retreat in which some of the older girls took part. They were so well prepared that when the retreat ended we had the joy of seeing nearly all of them approach the sacraments.

The Sodality of Children of Mary has been established in this House. There are thirty-eight at present, and they give great edification to the other girls and even to the perverse world.

I must also tell you, very Reverend Father in Jesus, that at the closing of the retreat, Sisters Joan Borgna and Angela Cassulo made perpetual vows. They both ask me to thank you warmly for the great favor you granted them through [p. 170] Father Costamagna. The novice we had here last year has also made her vows. . .

As for the rest, we all trust that with the help of Jesus and Mary we shall become saints. In the meantime we sincerely recommend ourselves to your prayers, especially during the holy sacrifice of the mass. Be so kind as to ask Jesus to set us on fire with His love. We shall never forget you in our prayers.

In conclusion we ask you, our beloved Father in Jesus, to accept the most sincere good wishes which your poor Daughters of Patagonia send from their hearts.

We prostrate ourselves before you as we ask you to give us your fatherly blessing, and heartily rejoice to be able to sign ourselves

Your most humble Daughters in Jesus,
and the poorest and most unworthy of all,

*Sister Angela Vallese*³²

Third centenary of Saint Teresa

The third centenary of the death of Saint Teresa urged Father Bonetti, her great devotee, to treat of her life as traced in the book entitled, *The Rose of Carmel (La Rosa del Carmelo)*.³³ He gave readings from it to both the community and the girls in preparation for the feast of October 15. This, according to Mother Superior, was "to be celebrated in a more solemn manner than usual because of the centenary, and because Saint Teresa is our special Patron. It also falls on a Sunday and feast of the Purity of Mary. Finally it was certainly Saint Teresa who obtained consolation for Father Bonetti by breaking the unending series of Chieri vicissitudes this year. Everything started precisely from our oratory, which was far too flourishing in evil eyes."

[p. 171] Departures for Sicily and unexpected trials

While preparations were going ahead for the feast, a letter arrived from the Director General fixing the date for the Superior General's departure for Sicily. It was the first time she was to go so far away but the Director himself was to go with her, as well as Sister Maria Genta and Sister Angelina Buzzetti, who had been chosen for the new foundation at Mascali-Nunziata.

On October 13, the eve of Mother's departure, the postulant, Josephine Louvel, who had given evidence of strange behavior and shown signs of an unbalanced mind, returned home.

The previous July 5, Don Bosco had sent her to Nizza on trial. He felt he could not immediately refuse the influential person who had taken an interest in her.

Because of her advanced years she was proving a burden to herself and the community. However she was treated with great kindness, in the hope that the Superiors would intervene and convince her that she was not in the right place, and that she herself would decide to leave. The problem had now unexpectedly solved itself and was regarded by the community as a providential grace. However it proved to be rather painful in view of the consequences suffered by her companions.

After a day or two of freedom in her own home the poor creature came to her senses. She then began to cause trouble by a massive correspondence between her administrator, De Rossi, and the Institute. Finally, after an interminable sequence of letters and injurious visits, an approach was made to the public prosecutor. The trouble and gossip caused over a few pieces of furniture brought with her into the Institute reached the ears of the Mayor, who gave kindly advice. He suggested that rather than hold to one's rights it might be better to give in to the strange demands of a sick mind and thus bring the matter to a speedy end. His suggestion was immediately complied with.

However trials did not end there.

[p. 172]A week later, October 21 to be precise, two novices unexpectedly disappeared. "As it is Saturday, Our Lady will surely come to our aid," was the general thought. However everyone in the House was very anxious.

Mother Vicar gave herself no rest and begged that prayers and sacrifices be multiplied, in order that some light might be known on the situation. They began to fear that some catastrophe had occurred. A full day and night passed in anguished searching and persistent prayers.

At last, on the second day, a letter arrived from the parish priest of Santo Stefano (Alessandria) stating that the two poor creatures, faint with weariness, had taken refuge with him, and he was sheltering them until the Superiors decided what was to be done.

Mother Vicar found a companion and took the next train for Santa Stefano, in order to thank the parish priest for his charity, and invite the fugitives to return.

One of them, Rosa Garzo, agreed to this until she could arrange to rejoin her family. But the other, Quinta Saglia, preferred to retain her freedom and seek employment immediately.

This incident, painful both for their companions and the Sisters, gave cause for much reflection and would not easily be forgotten.

An anticlerical attack

A few days later the press came into the attack. The newspaper, *L'Avvisatore Alessandrina*, published a calumnious article entitled *Annals of a little priest, (Fasti pretini)* on November 4.

For some days now talk has been going around concerning an incident which, if true, might interest the judiciary. We are saying that something is being whispered around that demands either a denial or an

admission by those involved.

Here is the story as it is being passed from mouth to mouth. An old servant of an honest priest, not through [p. 173] intrigue as is the case with some electoral agents, but peace. fully and in keeping with her religious faith, managed to amass a considerable fortune by saving. What devil disturbed her mind? . . . One day she went to her master and said:

"Father N., you had better start looking for another servant."

"What do you mean?" the good priest answered opening his eyes wide. "Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"No, Reverend Father; I believe I have a vocation to become a nun."

"What! At your age! You must be mad, I tell you!"

"It is no use. This is the only way to get to heaven.

Father N. assures me that this is so."

The good priest shrugged his shoulders and exclaimed, *Fiat voluntas tua!*

A few days after this dialogue the elderly spinster left for a convent. She went, it is said, to Nizza Monferrato. Here, for awhile, she was treated kindly. But what happened later? She was sent away without either receiving the habit or taking vows. She was absolutely destitute and as poor as Job because her fortune no longer existed. It has passed into other hands.

We are told that this convent is under the protection of the famous Don Bosco.

This miserable servant is presently insane and is now obliged to beg. She has been deprived of all her belongings. It is not unlikely and indeed it would be a lucky event if that poor unfortunate ended in an asylum.

The nuns maintain that what is brought into the convent becomes common property and that if an individual leaves

she has no more right over it. But was this person aware of all this?

On the other hand today, this right will have no value from the moment these nuns cease to be recognized by the government.

What was to be done now? Should a public denunciation be made of this defamatory article? Father Lemoyne declared, "Our part is to suffer and pray, leaving the Superiors to make the decision whether to rectify these calumnious attacks at their source."

[p. 174]News from Sicily

In the meantime, much to the general relief, news arrived concerning the journey of Mother General to Sicily in a letter written by Sister Maria Genta.

After stating that the story of the journey from Nizza to Naples, with its fatigues and adventures, would have to be related vocally, she said that their first stop was with the Sisters of Saint Anne, who were very devoted to Father Cagliero.

Then they boarded the train again at Naples, tasted the "rare delights" of the Strait of Messina and finally, still comforted by the fatherly care of the Director General, they arrived by train at the station in Catania. Here they were given a festive greeting by Sister Camisassa and Sister Piccono.

The Superiors of Bronte and Trecastagni accompanied Mother General and her companions to pay her respects to the Archbishop, who welcomed them as a blessing from heaven. They then stayed in Mother Felicina's House for a few days' rest.

The new house at Mascali was not yet quite ready, so a temporary residence was necessary in order to get the work underway, or at least organized to some degree.

Father Cagliero began arranging matters with the Archpriest, Father Angelo Patane, while most of the Sisters of the three Houses came together for a spiritual retreat, which was enhanced by five clothings and one triennial profession.

"The time passed like a dream," concluded Sister Genta. "Those who know Mother Morano and Sister Buzzetti will remember how jovial they are. During these days they surpassed themselves. Sister Buzzetti was aware that she was to take charge of the new foundation and so in her case there was a good deal of laughter blended with tears. This aroused a number of amusing comments from Mother Morano which kept everyone alive and cheerful."

[p. 175] After a little more than a week a short letter from Mother informed them that Mascali seemed like an earthly paradise and that the clergy of the town was very fervent and zealous. In a word, our Sisters could consider themselves very fortunate indeed.

Before Mother's return another short letter arrived from Catania. Sister Piccono summarized everything in a few lines: "Father Cagliero and Mother Superior have provided well for each and every House. The retreat ended on October 28 and every Sister is now at her post. We have been in Mascali since the November 9.

When Mother returns to the mainland she will take our hearts with her as well as those of the whole island."

At last on November 20, the Sisters of Turin had occasion to rejoice at the return of their Director General and Mother Superior from Sicily.

Don Bosco's grandniece a postulant

On November 14 the Sisters of Nizza rejoiced over the admission of Eulalia Bosco among the postulants. Almost everyone knew her as Don Bosco's grandniece and many had been her schoolmates at either Mornese or Chieri. She herself took pleasure in repeating the words of her beloved uncle when she told him she had decided to become a postulant:

"Oh Eulalia, you are my consolation!" He said this to me with his eyes raised to heaven and shining with happiness because he had often spoken of his desire that there be either a priest or a Sister among his nephews and nieces.

From Sicily to Piedmont

The last train on the evening of November 21 brought joy to Nizza Monferrato and a happy prelude of feastday wishes. Celebrations were to be held from the 22nd until [p. 176]the 25th. They began in the chapel on the morning of the 22nd and overflowed into the House. There were various forms of celebration and all were much better prepared than were those of the previous year which, as Mother Elisa Roncallo explained, had been an *experimental year*.

The young postulant Caroline Grillo, who had come to Piedmont from Sicily with Mother, was enthusiastic and repeated to everyone she met, "Why not bring the whole of my beautiful island here? Piedmont would then share a little of our blue, starlet sky and Sicily would be able to meet Don Bosco as I have met him and enjoy as I do, this great House of Our Lady."

She had written down the words our Father Don Bosco had said to her besides engraving them on her heart, "Let us ask Our Lady never to let you escape from her. To the name of Mary, which Father Cagliero gave you, I add, 'Daughter of Mary Help of Christians,' and when you become a Sister we shall send you back to your Sicily to light a fire. Not a material fire but the fire of the love of God. Our Lady is preparing many consolations for you!"

Mother Superior did not speak of the consolation she must have scattered wherever she went. She mentioned only the good to be done down there, where the sun lit up human souls as it shone in the azure sky.

Sister Cevennini, the first Sister for heaven from Sicily

When Mother left Bronte Sister Rita Cevennini was so ready for heaven as to be the envy of all.

"How beautiful it is," said the sick Sister, "to feel so close to the eternal reward after having worked and suffered for God and souls!"

Mother would have liked to assist her to the end but the Director General gave her to understand that such was not the divine will, so she left. Now she felt in her heart the certainty that Sister Rita was already in eternity. A few days passed and the first news that came from [p. 177] Bronte brought the notification of the peaceful death of Sister Cevennini. It occurred at the very moment the Superior General was arriving in Nizza to the joyous acclamations of her Daughters.

Sister Rita had suffered much and bravely, both physically and morally. To the general edification of all, she had succeeded in dominating her character. She had undergone every type of sacrifice in the orphanage of Carcaci in conditions that were far from easy. Among the orphans, pupils and oratorians she had always been an exemplary Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and of Don Bosco, and had given undeniable proof of her great courage during the illness that progressively undermined her strength.

The administration spontaneously offered to pay all expenses necessary for special and costly treatment in the Catania Sanatorium but the sick Sister did not hesitate an instant in stating her preference for the poor little hospital of Bronte where she could enjoy the care of her own Sisters in religion.

Although there were no symptoms of her immediate end, she asked for a lily to be placed in her hands ready for her meeting with God. When this was done she smiled gently and in that very act she breathed her last.

The period of her religious life was short, just five and a half years. But they were precious in the eyes of God and in the general esteem of all who had come into contact with this noble soul.

Novena and feast of Mary Immaculate

The first day of the novena to Mary Immaculate led to other thoughts "all pure," to quote the fervent, poetical Father Lemoyne. The younger members of the community were eagerly awaiting Father Cagliero's arrival in order to be vested in the religious habit, while others expected the blue ribbon of the Children of Mary. Instead the Director General wrote that unexpected circumstances prevented [p. 178]him from keeping his promise and he recommended the Sisters, novices, postulants and pupils to persevere in their fervor until Christmas when he would do his best to satisfy their wishes.

A "Welcome back" for Sister Boccalatte

Sister Louise Boccalatte arrived from Borgo San Martino and spoke about Don Bosco's visit to that school.

He came as usual for the feast of Saint Charles, and with him arrived a grand entourage of priests, both Salesians and seculars.

He remained with us after the feast and came to say mass in our chapel during his stay. Among other things, he told us, "Let us speak as much as we want about good things that animate us to virtue, but regarding those things that do not lead to good, let us keep silence. Unfortunately we are drawn to evil by our very nature and we fall into it with out the need of any prompting from others."

As he came through the kitchen he repeated, "The feast has now passed and since the visitors have all gone, you can give us just *polenta* and pumpkin." Our cook, in her simplicity, thought she had to obey to the letter and prepared dishes of *polenta* and pumpkins either mashed, fried or boiled. Fortunately our Superior arrived in time to add something more suitable for Don Bosco's weak stomach.

The Brother in charge of tidying the room Don Bosco used thought it a good idea to spread a well-worn carpet over the cold floor. Next morning, as he himself told us, he found the carpet rolled up under the window. When, with bowed head, he went to ask Don Bosco if he required anything he received the reply: "Be good enough not to lay a carpet for me again. If we permit ourselves certain luxuries I fear God will no longer bless the Congregation and He might even allow it to be destroyed. It would not be the first time this has happened where religious poverty was not observed.

I should also like the Sisters to be told that I am not pleased when they iron my bed linen or personal linen. This [p. 179] is not a correct thing for those who have made the vow of poverty. Let us all be very careful not to fall into excess and procure unnecessary comforts for ourselves. We must be careful to waste nothing. *As* long as we live like the poor, Providence will help us and we shall also be able to take more young people into our Houses. This is a great means for doing good and one which we must not and cannot neglect."

Perhaps it was on the same day that he also paid a visit to the workroom at the time we usually made our spiritual reading. He then recommended us to economize as much as we could even in carrying out our work, so that more boys could be accepted and many more souls saved. He dwelt a little on this thought saying, "Remember always that all the clothes you handle, just like all the utensils, pots and pans that you use, can be means of reaching out to the many boys who are playing, studying and praising God here on earth. Later they will all bless God in heaven and will be a joy to you for all eternity. Because your work is so fatiguing and always the same, the devil will try to discourage you. Do not pay any attention to him but remain cheerful, because the ugly brute is afraid of cheerful people and runs away from them. "

He concluded by making us laugh at some pleasantries special to himself. He questioned,

"Are you very advanced in Latin?"

We immediately answered in chorus,

"Oh dear, no!"

He continued,

"Then you have still another reason for being cheerful because this proverb cannot be applied to you, "Beware of women who have knowledge of Latin!"

More than one Salesian has told us that what struck them most in Don Bosco at this time was the gratitude he showed to all his benefactors, even the most modest and insignificant. Some stated that this same trait was revealed in the way our good Father expressed himself at the consecration of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist. In fact we ourselves had already read in the November *Bulletin* and fully realized that Don Bosco not only acknowledged as his benefactors those who helped him do good in any way, but even those who placed no obstacle in his way.

Two news items arrived from Bordighera-Torrione. Neither was unpredictable. There was the news of the opening of a new educational establishment adjacent to the Sisters' House. This aroused the hopes of many families in that area.

At the same time news came concerning the displeasure of Letizia Lavanigno's family who would not accept the idea of her following a religious vocation. They had planned great things for her and there were also financial interests involved. According to them, Letizia was a musical genius able to draw beautiful music from even the poorest quality instruments. Why then *oblige* her to become a Sister? . . .

Oblige her? It is certain that no one was using any pressure. It was she herself who had at heart the salvation of her own soul, and she wished to avoid the dangers to which she might be exposed, perhaps even those of the stage. But the world could not judge or choose according to the ways of God. This is why it spread poison through word and deed and thus increased current difficulties. However, Sister Superior Adele David, strong in her ardent faith, did not pay much heed to all the idle chatter but went ahead imperturbably along the path to her apostolate.

Letter for Father Cagliero from Buenos Aires

A letter arrived from the Provincial of Buenos Aires which had been written in September.³⁴ Possibly it had been mislaid among others directed to Father Cagliero during the time he was travelling from Sicily back to Piedmont.

Mother Martini gave good news about the Houses. There was a good Salesian religious spirit, and the number of pupils and oratory girls was increasing. Among these the spirit of piety was growing through enrollment in the [p. 181] "Children of Mary." She felt grieved at not yet being able to provide suitable buildings in Almagro to receive the many girls who certainly wanted to come under their care.

The Provincial also gave information of a recent visit from the Archbishop's sister who, in order to speed up the much desired foundation in Moron, had sent more money to help defray the current expenses.

Memoirs of Sister Cevnini

Don Bosco arranged for an article dedicated to the memory of Sister Rita Cevnini to be printed in the December number of the *Salesian Bulletin*. We print it in these pages of our family chronicle, repeating for ourselves the thought of our venerated Father: "It is a good and holy thing to keep alive, among present and future members, the sweet memory of souls outstanding in virtue."

The First Sister of Mary Help of Christians to die in Sicily

The heavenly Bridgeroom has called to Himself a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians from our House of Bronte in Sicily. Her charity, zeal and loving kindness towards the pupils aroused great enthusiasm in the Carcaci Orphanage of Catania, in the school of Trecastagni and lastly, in Mary's School in Bronte. She fell ill and suffered the pains of her sickness with admirable resignation, watching the approach of death with the joy of a bride who sees the day of her espousals drawing nearer. She was called to present herself before God on the day of Mary's Presentation in the Temple, a very happy coincidence for this Sister of Mary Help of Christians who was only twenty-six years of age. We publish the following letter for general edification. It announces her death and gives an account of her funeral which was attended by ten thousand people, wishing to show the veneration and esteem in which she was held.

[p. 182]

Bronte, November 22, 1882

My dear Father Cagliero,

It is with an overflowing heart that I announce the sad death of Sister Rita Cevnini which occurred at about 7 o'clock yesterday morning. On the eve of the Presentation, feeling that her condition was deteriorating, she asked for confession and then wished to be fortified by holy Viaticum and the holy Anointing which I administered in the afternoon. She received the sacraments with angelic composure and holy joy. The following day, sacred to the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin, the prayers for the dying were recited. When all had been completed she surrendered her soul to her divine Spouse.

Yesterday also happened to be Awards Day for the children and many people had been invited. It was

therefore thought advisable to keep the news of the death even from the Sisters of the school, with the exception of Mother and two other Sisters who were present. This morning the remains were taken from the church of the Capuchins to Rosary Church, followed by requiem mass and the blessing of the catafalque.

There was an indescribable concourse of people throughout the sacred functions. At 3 o'clock in the afternoon the remains were to be taken to the cemetery but unexpectedly the whole populace had assembled outside the closed church. When the doors were opened for the funeral procession they demanded to see the sacred remains once more. Far from causing repugnance the body seemed to inspire love and veneration. The doors were opened and the crowds that filled the great square began to pour into the church. They surrounded the corpse which showed no signs of deterioration or decomposition. Then accompanied by all the clergy, a large number of important personages, the band and an immense crowd, the remains were taken to the cemetery which was more than a mile from the town.

The lay teachers with their pupils also attended. The latter were dressed in white and wore the mourning veil. When all had arrived in the cemetery, Father Felice spoke a few words which moved us all to tears. Such a spectacle had never before been seen in Bronte.

[p. 183] Glory be to God who in calling to Himself such a holy Daughter of Mary Help of Christians has willed to show in what great esteem the religious of Don Bosco are held by the Bronte inhabitants, and how much affection they have for their apostolic work.

Bless me, very Reverend Father, and remember me during the holy sacrifice, while with esteem and deep respect I declare myself again

Your humble and devoted servant in Jesus Christ,

*Joseph Di Bella, V.F.*³⁵

Preparations for Christmas

The feast of Christmas, as well as that of the Immaculate Conception, was preceded by a fervent novena and many spiritual practices offered by the whole community.

In the meantime, besides the seasonal greetings, there was more news from both France and America.

Sister Amalia Meana asked that her silence during the past months be excused, and gave her reasons.

From August onward, Marseilles had also been in turmoil because of the violence of the socialists, the outrages of the anarchists, the fury of the republicans and the maneuvers of the communists. Therefore they had followed the advice of Father Provincial and had not let themselves be seen even through correspondence. He said that he himself would take care of keeping all the Superiors informed.

Besides the social and political upheavals, isolated cases of cholera began to show themselves. The Provincial, Father Albera, thought it best to transfer the younger personnel to Sante Margherite in order to remove them from both the more serious dangers of the insurrection and the threat of an epidemic.

Sister Meana added that every Sister had been saved from all personal harm, and had only experienced fear and terror. They had also complied with Father Albera's wish and assumed responsibility for the kitchen and linen room [p. 184] of the Salesians at Sainte Margherite while still retaining their dependence on the Superior at Marseilles.

They were now living in the hope of seeing Don Bosco at an early date, since he had written that he expected to be in France towards the end of January.

Sister Madelene Martini wrote in a letter to Father Cagliari from Moron, dated November 10:

The House at Moron has been opened at last. The event took place on the 7th of last month. We were taken there by the Father Superior and the sister of His Grace Archbishop Aneyros.

We can really say that this is our venerated Archbishop's House. He arranged everything, from forming a committee of Lady Patrons to the collecting of offerings to provide the building and its furnishings, and he publicly announced our arrival and our mission in order to animate the parents in this little town to send their children to us. Although this is a quiet little place to all appearances, it contains many insidious temptations.

At the moment we are not thinking about the school, since the scholastic year has ended, but we are planning our catechetical and oratory work.

Our intention is to make ourselves known to the people immediately and to start gathering the girls together. Some already smile at us and approach us willingly.

For the time being Sister Octavia Bussolino will direct the House and there will be only three Sisters

in the community. Later we shall see.

We actually arrived here in time to begin the month of Mary which they keep here from November 7 until December 8. Therefore it is Our Lady who has brought us here and she will do everything for us, if we make her known and loved as our holy Founder and Father Don Bosco taught us to do.

Unfortunately I have to add to this good news, something that is not so pleasant. Sister Catherine Fino has been sent back to us from Patagonia. She is not well in health and her behavior leaves much to be desired. She knows she is on trial because Father Provincial has made her remove her veil and [p. 185] dress like a postulant. At the moment the poor thing is not behaving badly, but it is a burden on my heart.

I commend her to your prayers.³⁶

Christmas

The Director General wrote from Turin that he would not be able to put in an appearance even for Christmas. But he recommended the Sisters to "keep the fire burning under the engine," and to sing the glories of the Infant Jesus with the fervor of angels in the cave of Bethlehem.

The hopes of everyone had been dashed but Father Lemoyne exhorted all to draw from their disappointment the motivation for a greater, disinterested love in the divine service.

Midnight mass was preceded by an original entertainment which stimulated greater fervor as midnight approached and they entered the chapel.

Then, as in Valdocco- Turin evening prayers preceded the first mass. At this mass the new motet *Jesus Redemptor natus* was sung in three voices. The choir of Sisters and girls sang, as the beautiful statue of the Infant Jesus of Mornese was uncovered. This was the statue that was commonly known as "Father Pestarino's."

The second mass with short sermon was brightened by three First Communions.

The third mass was a quiet one, but outside the chapel afterwards, there was considerable excitement. Refreshments had been prepared in the dining room and then everyone went silently to the dormitory where, under the pillow, each found a small picture, a novelty, something useful for the workroom or classroom, and a few sweets.

Naturally it was impossible to expect the disciplinary silence of ordinary days, so there was a certain amount of indulgence while the girls enjoyed their surprises in openness and simplicity.

Soon however, sleep overcame them and everything [p. 186] became quiet. It was a happy Christmas of innocence, of love, and spiritual inspirations.

Father Cagliero arrives

The Director General came with the feast of Saint John the Evangelist. He received a cheerful welcome from the whole community as arrangements were in process for the first triduum to prepare the pupils for the New Year and the renewal of their baptismal promises. It was also intended as a preparation for the girls who were to be admitted to the Children of Mary. The postulants were also taking part, especially those to be clothed with the religious habit.

The triduum began on the evening of the 27th and continued all through the 31st in intense spiritual activity, and in external preparations for a more solemn celebration.

During these days the Director General found time to speak for a few minutes to the Superiors as a group. He gave them a summary of news about Don Bosco and of the ever welcome letters reaching him from the Sisters in America. The latest of these had come from the community of Las Piedras in Uruguay.³⁷ He gave information of the special conditions in some Houses, that determined both the type and timing of certain necessary provisions to be made.

With his habitual fatherliness he showed his interest in the difficulties inseparable from the government of the Institute. In accordance with Don Bosco's mind he established that Mother Emilia Mosca take over responsibility for the girls as well as the general direction of schools and studies. Mother Elisa Roncallo would then be left free for the secretarial work of Mother General and would also be responsible for the direction of the Oratory of Our Lady's House. These arrangements were to come into operation with the new year.

1882 should have ended with the singing of the *Te Deum*, but Father Cagliero postponed this to the celebrations to be held the following day.

He arranged that the *Miserere* be sung on the evening of the 31st, in a spirit of reparation for the infidelities and lack of correspondence of the year that was about to end.

NOTES

1882

1. Photocopy of Father Lemoyne's notes in Gen. Arch. FMA; cf. M.B., XV, 364.
 2. *Salesian Bulletin*, January, 1881, Year VI, No. 1, 3 and 8.
 3. From special information confirmed by M.B. XV, 612-16. 4. Report of Sister Enrichetta Sorbone.
 5. M.B., XV, 485-88.
 6. The Turin *Buona settimana* of January, 1882 states: from March 24, 1880 to December, 1881, 5643 religious of 39 Religious Families and Congregations were expelled and 261 Church properties passed to the republican government.
 7. Handwritten letter of Monsignor Gerlando M. Genuardi to Father Cagliari, dated February 7, 1882 (in Gen. Arch. FMA).
 8. M.B., XV, 487-88.
 9. M.B., XV, 512-13.
 10. Copy of this letter in Spanish in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 11. M.B., XV, 373 and following.
 12. The inauguration-as can be read in the House *Chronicle* took 'place with due solemnity on June 4, in the presence of the Bishop of the Diocese, Monsignor Sciandra, representatives of the clergy and municipal authorities, as well as various other people. The boarders of Nizza contributed their choir which was always much appreciated.
- [\[p. 188\]](#)
13. *Salesian Bulletin*, June, 1882, Year VI, No. 6, 94-97: M.B., XV, 586.
 14. Letter of Mother Martini written in Spanish to Father Cagliari from Buenos Aires on April 24, 1882 (copy in Gen. Arch. FMA).
 15. Letter of Monsignor Fagnano, April 11, 1882, printed in the *Salesian Bulletin*, Year VI, No. 7, 117.
 16. *Salesian Bulletin*, June, 1882, Year VI, No. 6, 99.
 17. Appendix No. 1b) and M.B., XV, 734.
 18. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 19. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 20. *Salesian Bulletin*, September, 1882, Year VI, No. 9, 151.
 21. *Salesian Bulletin*, September, 1882, Year VI, No. 8, 129-130. 22. *Salesian Bulletin*, September, 1882, Year VI, No. 9, 156.
 23. The union came about in 1913.
 24. From the verbal reports of contemporary Sisters.
 25. See Documentation of August 1, 1880 in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 26. See copy of Father Quilico's letters of May 23 and 29, 1881, Gen. Arch. FMA.
 27. See Appendix No. 1b), c).
 28. Cf. M.B., XV, 579-581.
 29. Cf. M.B., XV, 659.
 30. Cf. *Salesian Bulletin*, October, 1882, Year VI, No. 10, 157-60.
 31. Copy of the letter of August 14, 1882, in Spanish, in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 32. From the letter from Patagones (August 25, 1882), copy of which is in the Gen. Arch. FMA.
 33. *Salesian Bulletin*, September, 1882, Year VI, No. 9, 147; and October, No. 10, 160-162.
 34. From Buenos Aires in Spanish, September 5, 1882. (copy in Gen. Arch. FMA).
35. *Salesian Bulletin*, December, 1882, Year VI, No. 12, 200.
 36. Copy of the letter in Spanish, in Gen. Arch. FMA.
 37. See Appendix No. 9.

1883

First decade of the Institute

New Year's Day was icy cold but Our Lady's House in Nizza was glowing warm with fervor because, apart from the usual, well-loved celebrations, Father Cagliero had asked everyone to make their day resemble a thurible of incense to accompany the common prayer of thanksgiving to God and the Virgin Mother for all the heavenly favors granted the Institute during the first decade of its existence.

No special celebrations had yet taken place for this anniversary, although Don Bosco had mentioned it the previous August 5, when speaking to the lady retreatants. Therefore it seemed only right that at least on this day, it should be the subject for special gratitude and common rejoicing.

Everyone was filled with fervor but there were eighteen new novices who were exuberant in their happiness. They were already dreaming of the missions. Rejoicing too, were the many boarders who that very afternoon had been enrolled among the Children of Mary.

An "odd" postulant

But there was one postulant who separated herself from the rest in evident ill humor. At first no notice was taken of her because her behavior was always a little "odd" and she never responded to a word of comfort or interest. Usually overly-polite, today she appeared downright discourteous.

[p. 192] So she was left to herself and her behavior was excused with sisterly understanding. After all, she had come from distant Sicily and had not been clothed with the religious habit with her compatriot. The poor thing was bound to feel upset!

Sister Buzzetti, who had sent her last August with Josephine Camuto, (now a novice), to Nizza on trial, had given little hope of her success even at that period.

Good news from Argentina

Enclosed with Don Bosco's message of thanks for Christmas and New Year Wishes, was a recent letter from Sister Madelene Martini. This he wished to share with the community at Nizza.

Almagro, October 31, 1882

Very Reverend Father in Jesus Christ,

I expect you have been informed about what is happening here, by Father Cagliero. Nevertheless I shall give you still more news in order that, being reminded of our many needs, you may recommend them all to Jesus and Mary.

A new House has been prepared for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Moron. We hope to take it over during the coming month which is dedicated here to Mary in the same manner as May is over there.

After God, we owe the House at Moron to our good Archbishop who is like a father to us and watches over us with care and goodness. We certainly have much for which to thank God who makes use of us, poor instruments that we are, to spread His Kingdom in the hearts of the many young people who frequent our schools and Festive Oratories. How happy should we be if we understood how to correspond with God's plans!

I have just returned from visiting the Houses in Colon, Las Piedras, La Boca and San Isidro. I found all our dear Sisters hard at work and all full of good will to spread the Kingdom of Jesus in the hearts of the many children entrusted to them. Every House has a good number of girls [p. 193] enrolled among the "Children of Mary." The knowledge that they are Mary's children encourages them to piety and devotion and enables them to avoid the dangers of the world.

I have also received news from our Sisters in Patagonia. They, too, are working hard and the number of pupils in the school of Saint Mary of the Indies is increasing. Please pray, Reverend Father, that we may lead to God the hearts of the poor savage creatures Divine Providence has entrusted to us on the banks of the Rio Negro!

I also have to give you the consoling news that the many American novices and postulants are all animated with a true Salesian spirit and want at all costs not to be outdone by their European Sisters.

The construction of our new house is going ahead well and we in the old one are watching it rise with

jubilant. What gives us most joy is that here in America a little sanctuary is being built in honor of Our Blessed Mother, Mary Help of Christians. God grant that the building not be stopped for lack of means. The girls are eagerly watching the house go up. They hope it means that they will be accepted as students. School is a work we cannot at the moment undertake through lack of suitable premises. The children really merit compassion because of their need for instruction in matters of religion.

Apart from a few thorns from which I think we shall never be completely free in this world, we are all in good spirits and determined to become saints, cost what it may. It is true that the enemy of our souls wages continual war to prevent the success of this enterprise. But this matters little. With Jesus and His divine grace and with the help of Mary Most Holy we have good reason to hope for victory. As for me, I am so happy to be a Sister of Mary Help of Christians, and to be in America, that I can do nothing else but thank God for giving me this grace. How good God is to us! How fortunate we should be if only we loved Him with all our hearts and belonged completely to Him! We ask your prayers to obtain this grace for us.

Be pleased, Reverend Don Bosco, to accept our humble respects. Bless us all, and especially me who am honored to sign myself your

Most unworthy Daughter in J.C.,
*Sister Madelene Martini!*¹

[p. 193] Sister Maria Terzano, a missionary in desire

Such a letter was bound to revive the missionary longing in everyone. But for Sister Maria Terzano, this longing only brought the pain of renunciation. Prostrate by a lengthy illness, she now awaited the final call of Jesus. In a faint voice but with all the ardor her devouring fever allowed, she exclaimed, "Oh the missions! The foreign missions! They were always bound up with the earliest dreams of my religious vocation and have formed the crucible of my continual martyrdom as a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco. But the mission field was not God's will for me. Soon however, I shall be where nothing is refused and everything obtained, so from above I shall come down to mission lands, without being seen or heard by anyone. . ."

Sister Maria's affectionate father often visited his daughter. She now asked him repeatedly, "You do understand father, don't you? My dowry must remain with my Institute. I mean the *Bruna*, father. Leave the *Bruna*, even after my death, to my religious family. If you do this I shall bless you eternally for this and, even in this world you will experience the fruit of this blessing in great peace."²

Sister Maria ended her sojourn on earth on Saturday, January 13.

She had been a vivacious and fervent Sister and, in scarcely four years, consumed her life in religion through the efforts of her good will and self-control. She never forgot the reply Mother Mazzarello had given her: "You will go to America when you have learned to keep silence well. "

The whole of her native city Nizza mourned her. Her father prayed that he might soon join her in heaven, while the Nizza community envied this Sister's life of holy endeavor and her peaceful death.

Sister Maria was just over twenty-one years of age.

[p. 195] Last pages in the lives of Sister Bertello and Sister Miglietta

The news of Sister Maria's death was communicated to Don Bosco by the Director General who, having expressed his own condolences, prepared the Sisters for another family bereavement. Sister Eleanor Bertello was awaiting only the word of obedience, as was her wont, in order to go home to Jesus and His good Mother Mary Help of Christians.

The Sisters of Turin wrote that Father Cagliero was giving her special assistance in order to prevent the sick Sister from feeling the absence of her own Superior.

The impression caused by the imminent death of this Sister was further increased when news arrived that on the same January 26, death had claimed another Sister in Turin: two Sisters within a few hours of each other.

It was written of Sister Bertello: "She felt she had to reply quickly to the *Veni* of the Spouse and urged the priest to give her Holy Communion immediately, and provide her with the Last Rites. But he had a fixed time to celebrate mass and told her to await his return calmly. This she did and once she had received the sacred Host she settled herself in the peaceful attitude of death. We watched her for ten or fifteen minutes as she prayed and smiled. She must certainly have met God, her viaticum and reward, because her passing was little more than a

sigh. "

It was said of Sister Teresa Miglietta: "No one would ever have imagined her to be so well prepared for heaven after only three years of religious life. Yet now people speak of the candor and fervor of her years at home as a young girl. Others recall her religious observance and still others her spirit of obedience."

Father Cagliero continually repeated, "Both were in a great hurry to leave this troubled, evil world. But what a harvest they gathered for eternity by their perfect obedience in little things!"

[p. 196]A letter from Nunziata di Mascali

The Director General sent Sister Buzzetti's letter to Nizza after he had written instructing Sister Angelina not to stay up at night in order to send news to Mother General. He would do this himself.

"He is daily becoming more of a father towards us, poor creatures that we are," remarked our Mother to the Sisters as they waited to hear the letter read to them. We print it here in order to give another practical proof of the Daughters' primitive simplicity and the warm fatherliness of their Superior.

M. Nunziata, January 25, 1883

Viva Maria Immacolata!

Dear Reverend Father in Jesus,

Where have I been'? . . . In school. We already have ten day girls and as they come to be enrolled we keep them for awhile. However the school proper will not open until February 1. It has been established that we take girls only up to twelve years of age but, but what can we do'? It is impossible to send them away and besides, did you not recommend in a special way, girls between the ages of twelve and eighteen years'? . . . Therefore exceptions must be made and girls accepted at least up to fourteen years of age. What is your opinion'? . . . O dear Father, if only you could see how wide awake they are! We have Mr. Maestro's sister and two others who, according to them, should be placed in third year. But we intend accepting them as second year students. Nevertheless I am in a bit of a quandary. As you know, Sister Maria has never taught. She has no knowledge of method, and has had little education. What is to be done'? I have been thinking that if God continues to give me good health I might take classes for the older girls. But I am afraid I shall not find time because the boarders will be coming in on February 1. There are four at the moment. Besides this I have to be portress because Sister Santina finds the door too far from the kitchen for her prompt attention to this bell.

Yesterday Father Francis said that he will need two more Sisters by May: a pianist and a portress. I cannot convince [p. 197] him that there are no musicians to spare in the Mother House. But ... here I am telling you about school business before I have ever told you that we are in the school. Our official entry was a really moving event.

Sister Morano, who happened to be here on that day, the 20th of this month, wept copiously. The function was completely religious, and succeeded beyond all our expectations. Here is the program followed that day.

It happened to be a Saturday, a day dedicated to Mary Most Holy. Early in the morning a magnificent statue of the Immaculate Conception was brought from the Archpriest's house. You must have seen it there. By 9:00 a.m. the decoration of our little chapel was completed and there, above the altar, the Great Lady, the *Bedda Madre* was in her place as Mistress of the House. All the guests had arrived and among them was Cav. Zanghi with his worthy family. There were so many priests that I could not count them. Suffice it to state that the numbers of people present made it seem like a festival.

The ceremonies commenced with the blessing of the chapel and the house by the Archpriest himself. Mass was celebrated by the Archpriest's nephew and it was wonderful because the Sons of Mary sang and their singing was accompanied on the piano by Father Francis Barbagallo.

Oh dear Father, how moving was the moment after the consecration! None of us could restrain her tears! Jesus in person had come down to visit our House and bless us here for the first time! . . . What a grace! What a favor!

After mass, Reverend Father Angelo gave a little talk which held the interest of all those present. He began by turning to our reverend Archpriest who, seated in his armchair, resembled a veritable patriarch. He praised him for having carried his undertaking through to the finish at the cost of much sacrifice, and in spite of many obstacles. He then compared the Archpriest to many outstanding Old Testament

characters, among them Moses and Josue. To close this part of his discourse he said, "Continue your good work, dear Father, and continue to pray to Mary Immaculate who gave you the mandate to build this school for the benefit of the young, so that copious heavenly blessings may descend on all the girls who will gather here. . ."

[p. 198] Then turning to us Father Angelo said, "And you, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who have come here from distant parts with the sole motive of doing good, remember that you must sanctify these walls by preserving your holy virginity, and by practicing poverty and the beautiful virtue of obedience. These are the three golden cords which bind you to Jesus your Spouse. Remember that the Spouse you have chosen is holy, very holy, and that your Immaculate Mother is also holy, very holy! Therefore you too must be all pure and holy Daughters of Mary. Then you must not forget all the other virtues with which your heavenly Mother is adorned. I mean gentleness, humility, charity towards God and neighbor, mortification and religious simplicity.

Above all I recommend good example. Mankind today takes more notice of actions than of words. Work hard then, and work well. Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, we entrust to your loving care the most precious part of our parish. Lead the hearts of these young girls to virtue; instruct them well in the solid, basic principles of our holy religion and one day you will receive your reward in heaven. . . "

Father Angelo said many other things and concluded his discourse by inviting all the people present to thank God for the great things He had done. He said regarding Nunziata what Isaiah had said years before concerning the little town of Bethlehem: that it would not be the least in the designs of God.

The celebrations ended with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. The feastday had been both very simple and very beautiful.

How edifying these priests are in their close union with one another! Truly it can be said that they have but one heart and one mind. With such an example before their eyes, how could the people help being affectionate with their ecclesiastical Superiors and returning their love?

It was this that caused Sister Morano's tears, Father. She was overcome when she saw this enviable unity between priests and people, which is found in very few other places.

I have been asked to suggest that, should you consider it convenient, the *Bulletin* carry a few words in praise of the Reverend Archpriest and all the good priests here, who are so zealous for the welfare of souls. Mention might also be [p. 199] made of Cav. Louis Zanghi, the Mayor. He is very well disposed towards us and glories in seeing the school in his town. This would be a real source of encouragement for all these good people.

The report might begin as follows: A school has just opened in Nunziata, a small country town in the municipality of Mascali . . . This would serve as an announcement regarding the opening of the House. In any case, I have satisfied myself in stating this. You may do it or undo it as you see fit.

Returning to ourselves: Father Angelo comes to say mass for us every morning, so . . . the Festive Oratory starts on Sunday. Here, I am again in trouble. There will be about a hundred girls and therefore even two of us are insufficient for the catechism classes. Taking into account that we have to keep the day school girls as well as the boarders, how are we to manage? . . .

Oh dear! I really must stop giving vent to my feelings, Father, both because I have no time and because it is useless anyway. I only commend myself to your prayers. Please pray very much for us, Father, especially for. . .

I began this letter four days ago and have just received the music you sent us. Many thanks for it, Father. But did you not receive a note about school books, devotional books, pictures, rosaries, medals etc.? I asked that it be passed to the managing director of the library. We are in urgent need of the books but so far have received nothing. Please, Father, give us this pleasure as soon as you can. I still have many more things to tell you but because of the hustle and bustle I cannot remember them.

Father Francis sends you his regards and thanks you for your letter. He says that for the solemn inauguration in May (I scarcely know how to repeat it) he wishes M . . . to come, and that they should come from B . . . , from Niz. . . , or from Catania.

Father Angelo also sends his respects.

Sister Maria, Sister Santina and Sister Marietta have great esteem for you and I am with them in this, as with all due respect I declare myself, in the Heart of Jesus,

Your affectionate Daughter,
Sister Angelina Buzzetti³

The feast of Saint Francis de Sales and the approaching departure of Don Bosco for France took the Director, Father Lemoyne, to Turin. He encouraged the Superiors who were still mourning their recently deceased Sisters with the words:

It is Our Lady who is gathering the most beautifully perfumed among the flowers of her garden, and she plucks them for Jesus. Let us allow her to do this and bless God always and in everything.

As a forecast of the day can be made in the morning, so a forecast of the whole year can be made in January. But the greater the heartbreaks, so much the greater will be the good that accrues to the Institute. What an abundant harvest of souls there will be! Let us think of this and keep up our spirits !

There was great joy when the Director returned from Valdocco. Don Bosco was very pleased with his Daughters. He blessed them and wished them well. He did not marvel at any of their shortcomings, but urged them to work and be watchful, to remember the great reward stored up for them in paradise, and to follow him wherever he went with their devout and fervent prayers.

Father Lemoyne told the Superiors something more. The special emphasis their Father had placed on work, vigilance and the thought of heaven, was obviously inspired by one of his revealing "dreams." This had taken place during the night between the 16th and the 17th of the current month. Part of the dream consisted in clear advice from Father Provera, who appeared to Don Bosco beautiful and shining. He instructed him to be a good vine dresser and cut away dry and useless shoots, so that the vine might grow more vigorous, give an abundance of fruit and last for a long time.⁴ This was precisely what Our Lady was doing in her vineyard.⁵ Therefore whatever caused tears today was a valid reason for gratitude, and for prayer for the weaker [p. 201] branches that have removed themselves from the parent stock.

This comforted the Superiors because it seemed to them that Our Lady had sent the message through Don Bosco expressly for her Daughters. They were grateful to their good Director who had brought it to them from Turin.

"Jesus Christ, our God and King"

Father Lemoyne took the opportunity offered by the feast of the Purification to give a Good Night to the community and the girls in the chapel. He said that Our Blessed Lady, who was all pure, had no need whatsoever of purification. Yet she offered her Jesus to the Father as a victim for the redemption of mankind, while our response is to make her Divine Son the target of our iniquities.

Therefore he entreated them, for love of Our Lady, to renew the resolution made on the feast of the Holy Name of Jesus: to pronounce that adorable name with the greatest reverence and, whether speaking or writing, to remind others of their Christian duty of reparation for the fiendish disrespect given it everywhere.

When the *Bulletin* arrived, the leading article, *Jesus Christ, our God and King*, was read with interest in the dining room.

The general reaction to it was one of protest: "It is absolute devilry to go so far as to engrave the adorable name of Jesus on the public pavements, thus obliging everyone to tread on it! To think that this is happening on top of every possible effort to withhold the knowledge of God from children, to obliterate Him from the hearts of adults and discredit the Church, her authorities, and the most charitable among her Catholic institutions. The last part of the article is worth transcribing in full to provide a concrete reason for reparation and apostolate even through the mail."

[p. 202] Such was the idea of the Sisters, shared by the most sensible girls.

"God bless Don Bosco," someone concluded, "and God bless his Sons who are so able to oppose the evils of present society and infuse such enthusiasm into the many groups of Salesian Cooperators, both at home and abroad!"

At the Good Night Mother asked if it would be a good idea to transcribe the final part of the article in the records of the Institute.

The Director added to this another suggestion that was very well received. This same final part should be recited together during the Eucharistic adoration on February 6, the last Tuesday of the Mardi Gras season.

Therefore when Jesus was solemnly exposed in the devout Church of Our Lady of Grace in Nizza Monferrato, all were fervently united as they recited in unison:

O sweet Jesus, we acknowledge You to be our God, and with the angels, patriarchs, apostles, martyrs, virgins, confessors, doctors and earthly kings, with the Church and all Christian peoples past and present, we adore You as our Creator and Redeemer. We reverently burn before You the incense of our adoration and prayers. We offer You in sacrifice our mind with all its thoughts, our heart with all its affections, our body with all its strength. If it should prove necessary, we also offer our lives in sacrifice to the last drop of our

blood. We acknowledge You likewise to be King of kings and Ruler of the universe.

We choose You as the King of our hearts and will loudly proclaim Your sovereign rights. We dedicate our tongue and pen to the defense of Your throne and the spread of Your kingdom, regretful only that our intellect is not equal to the love we have for You and Your Church. Just as faithful subjects sacrifice all they hold dear to defend their king or country so do we in the interests of Your glory. We shall not regard it an embarrassment to be known as Your followers, Your servants and Your soldiers, neither shall we hide ourselves from Your enemies through human respect. If today the Passion should be renewed for You and Your Church, we shall never abandon You. Like your best loved [p. 203] apostle, we shall follow You to Calvary, confident of one day hearing from You the consoling words You once spoke to Your faithful disciples: "You have remained with Me throughout temptations. I have reserved a kingdom for you, as My Father reserved it for Me, and you shall eat and drink at My table and sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." Reign then, our God and King. Establish in our hearts, our homes and our families, Your kingdom of justice, mercy and peace. Reign everywhere, but may the glory of Your reign be especially resplendent in Italy, which possesses, among other enviable treasures, the throne of Your Vicar to whom You have entrusted the keys of heaven. O Lord, may Your kingdom come! *Adveniat Regnum tuum!*⁶

Death of Sister Rose Bonelli

On the first day of Lent news reached Nizza of the peaceful death of Sister Rose Bonelli whom all considered perfectly detached from all that was not God.

They wrote from Valdocco:

She asked to suffer her purgatory here in this world and it would appear that her request was granted. But Father Cagliero, who assisted her paternally and with the heart of an apostle, said that he would never again give any of us permission to ask God for such a thing.

Nevertheless we envied her blessed death. She placed herself in a position ready for the coffin in order, as she said, to spare her Sisters this task. Having completed this fatiguing effort she exclaimed, "Now I am ready to go and meet my Spouse."

She had been in religion only six years and was just twenty-seven years old.

When asked to leave a souvenir for the Sisters she answered, "Keep a tranquil conscience and approach the sacrament of confession each time as if it were your last."

[p. 204]News from Liguria

News was received about Don Bosco's journey through Liguria. He had left Turin on January 31 for his annual visit to France.

He stopped at Sampierdarena for a few days, where the Sisters found him very tired. For this reason they did not dare invite him to speak to them even for a few minutes. However he smiled when he saw them and gave them his blessing as he repeated his magical words, "All for the Lord! Everything for Him!"

However the Sisters at Alassio were a little more daring and presented themselves as a group, hoping for a word or two. Our venerated Father said, "My good Daughters, you are waiting for me to give you a little conference but I will only say this to you. Become saints by your own efforts, without expecting others to make you saints. Help me, oh help me save your souls. In order to give me this help, always live cheerfully and joyfully as if you would never have to die, yet be prepared to die at any moment. This is the souvenir I leave you for the whole year." He then blessed them and left them very happy.

At Bordighera Don Bosco's famous *Grigio* was seen again after thirty years. The dog made a great fuss over him and helped him out of a very real predicament.⁷ In the meantime the presence of Letizia Lavagnino at Nizza still gave cause for evil gossip which placed both Salesians and Sisters in a bad light with the Bishop of Ventimiglia.

Don Bosco saw and heard everything and encouraged the Sisters to go forward without fear.⁸

Family voices. . .

Father Lemoyne received the latest news from America through Father Bonetti in the name of the Director General.

The letter sent by Mother Martini from Buenos Aires- [p. 205] Almagro on January 16, 1883,⁹ revealed that immediately after the pain of losing Sister Rita Cevennini, new anguish had come from the serious condition of Sister Rita Barilatti. This Sister was one of the first American vocations. Her end . was obviously close at hand.

The new House at Moron had been officially inaugurated in the presence of the Archbishop who spoke encouraging words during the mass. He urged the people to send their daughters to the new school to receive the advantage of a Christian education. Father Costamagna was present with other Salesians including Father Evasio Rabagliati, who had just returned from Uruguay. Many other distinguished persons also attended. The occasion was given a cheerful uplift by the music contributed by the Salesian's Saint Charles School.

The Sisters of Uruguay had enjoyed the unexpected grace of a spiritual retreat just for themselves. During the year they had to content themselves with sermons intended for the whole parish.

Meanwhile, Sister Teresa Mazzarello and Sister Teresa Gedda had already arrived from Buenos Aires for the next spiritual retreat. At the end of this they hoped to make their perpetual vows. Both Sisters were "model religious."

... and adverse voices

Enclosed with the news from America the Director General sent Father Lemoyne an article from a Turin newspaper. This seemed to be the satanical response to the call *Jesus Christ our God and King*, which Don Bosco had launched and set echoing throughout Italy by means of the *Salesian Bulletin*.

Speaking about this, the Director added an exhortation to pray hard for Don Bosco. As was only natural the miracles worked by Mary Help of Christians through Don Bos- [p. 206]co in France at that time, were bound to aggravate the anger of the wicked.

On the other hand this was also a means of propaganda for Salesian works for boys and girls. These were so much appreciated that they aroused the opposition of those who wished to discredit the Founder, whose works it seemed impossible to stop.

It was only right that the malicious article should be inserted in our family records so that, according to Father Cagliero's note, *the Daughters of today may know what they are costing, and those of tomorrow what they have cost their Father*.

Don Bosco and the convents-Don Bosco is not satisfied with his many boys whose arms would give better service in the fields and in industry and whose intelligence could render good service to the town. He is not satisfied with linking this great force to his Salesian Society in order to use it on a given day for the benefit of the Pope and bring harm to Italy. For some time now, Don Bosco has interested himself in girls.

First he opened a monastery at Nizza Monferrato, helped by a bigoted countess he calls the mother of his children [Countess Corsi?],¹⁰

This countess, who could do a great deal to help her relatives, fraudulently uses her wealth for the benefit of the saint of Valdocco who promises her a place close to Saint Roque in heaven, and an icon on the altars. In fact she has given all she possesses to the cause of this cunning Father John.

It is through her that Don Bosco gains access to the homes of the bigoted aristocrats who, besides noble ancestry, still have some private income.

This is how he managed to put up a monastery even in Turin. Before long others also will be opened in Italy.

This is all happening under the very eyes of the government, under a certain Zanardelli, who is well aware that religious societies have in fact been abolished by law and have no rights.

This is how Don Bosco makes money. He recruits his victims from wealthy families; he brings, as he says, a sinner [p. 207] to God and a gift to the funds of his Society.

I know a poor father who is now close to penury and mourns a daughter who has died without his blessing; a despairing, consumptive daughter who died without receiving her father's embrace for the last time. [Would this be Doctor Ferrero's response to the acceptance and maintenance of his three daughters gratuitously, in the College at Mornese?]¹¹ I intend returning to this affair and saying what I think about it.

However is it not about time that the government opened its eyes and took the necessary measures?

Father Lemoyne added his documentary comment:

All this comes from the same source, the godless periodical which sacrilegiously calls itself, *Jesus Christ*. During last October this defamatory journal presented the following among other infamies: *the miracle shop has now opened. Don Bosco has been declared a saint and many small pieces of material, once parts of his clothing, are being sold at so much a piece, each as a talisman against the evils of this world and other places as well. Because of this, stories are being invented about young boys like Dominic Savio becoming saints, and young girls like the Rigalotti sisters becoming blessed. . .* " [Is this perhaps intended as a reference to Corinna Arrighotti?]

From Nizza-mare

Contrasting with so much contemptible warfare against Don Bosco by the Turin liberals and anti-clericals, Catholic France thronged devotedly wherever he passed. Into his hands people pressed alms intended for the orphans sheltered in his charitable institutions, for the erection of the Opera Sacro Cuore in Rome, and for his missionary expeditions.

This fact is confirmed by the frank report of Sister [p. 208] Catherine Cei of Nizza-mare, who was not given to fantasy or exaggeration.

She addressed her letter ingenuously to all the Superiors and Sisters in Our Lady's House and, with an apology for her lack of writing ability she immediately tackled her subject in the name of her Superior and the community.

We wish all of you at Nizza Monferrato to rejoice with us at our good fortune in having our dear Father Don Bosco with us for ten days or so, (did you know this already?) and having been witnesses to things that must be seen to be believed. There were many visitors, both in the House and outside, all seeking to see our dear *Papa* and receive his blessing. Even a glance from him seemed to content them. He is a real saint. We have been told that it was almost impossible to breathe at his conference because the large crowd pushed forward to hear him, eager not to lose even a word. We have been told that the alms given was so abundant that the collection boxes had to be emptied three times by the three people entrusted with making the collection, and that many of the coins were of gold and silver. This made Don Bosco very happy because it meant that he could pay the many debts of this House also. But as evening drew on he became very tired indeed.

One day a fine thing happened to him. No, not a fine thing, rather an unfortunate mishap. Don Bosco was on his way to pay a special visit. He was accompanied by the Director and a great benefactor from the city. In order to shorten the distance he decided to cross the Paglione by the foot. bridge. But it was so narrow that poor Don Bosco fell into the water.

Fortunately he was unharmed and the Orphanage was close at hand. He arrived back here looking as if he had stepped out of a bath, leaving footprints wherever he passed.

Everyone was shocked at seeing him in such a state, but he just smiled and said, "Give me a change of clothes." We looked at one another questioningly. With tear-filled eyes we wondered, "Is there any change to offer him?"

Doubting the ability to give an affirmative answer, we begged our dear Father to go to bed. In the end he had to do so, because we could find absolutely nothing in the way of [p. 209] underclothing or other garments for him to change into. Everything used for the weekly change was still in the laundry.

Our poor Director almost wept as he said to Don Bosco. I am so sorry we are in such a condition that you have to go to bed just because we have no clothes to give you." Our Father answered, "But this is a pleasure for me! Poverty in our Houses is always a good sign and brings God's blessing on us. Besides, a few hours rest while the Nizza sun dries everything that fell into the water, will not be amiss and tomorrow I shall be as frisky as a youngster."

This little accident proved providential for our House, because as soon as it became public, there was a race to bring us clothing, material, stockings etc. Never again would Don Bosco have to go to bed because there was nothing for him to wear.¹³

Our dear Father could not possibly give us any of his time, but all the same we experienced the benefit of his presence and holiness.

When he passed through the kitchen on his way to visit our new quarters, I happened to be moving the soup kettle and the broth splashed right across my guimp, making a large stain. Don Bosco was standing still, talking to our Director. Hoping the stain would not be noticed I tried to cover it with my hand. But. . . is there anything Don Bosco does not see? In fact he said to me immediately, "It will be just like that when

death approaches. At death, when a soul sees herself with even the smallest stain, she feels unable to partake of the joys of heaven and spontaneously seeks purification in purgatory. . ." These words, which he repeated later to the community, were as good as a sermon for us.

That same day, without wanting it, I overheard the Director tell Don Bosco that he was forced to approach benefactors too often and, not a few of them became annoyed. I also heard Don Bosco's reply, "Be clever about it. Let whatever is given to you in money and gifts be for your boys and keep the mortifications for yourself."

He said more or less the same when we were all present, giving us to understand that what costs more is worth more and not to count sacrifices in the case of saving souls.

[p. 210] Sister Cei's report on Don Bosco ends here but the other Sisters added their comments.

Sister Teresa Facelli says, Don Bosco's clothes could have stayed in the *Paglione* River. They were so discolored and patched that all the Sisters marvelled at the poverty of such a great person!

Sister Catherine Caspani's comment is more detailed:

Our good Father arrived among us with his coat all cut into ribbons by the passengers who had traveled in the same train compartment as he, or so we were told. As soon as he came into the House he asked the Director, "Tell the Sisters to be patient and do something about this business for me!"

Some of us stayed up until after midnight trying to make the coat somewhat presentable, so badly had it been cut and torn. During the days he spent here the business did improve itself indeed, because without his noticing it we changed his coat for a new one while he slept. Then we ourselves cut up and divided the plunder among the ladies and gentlemen of the city without anyone's trying to ruin the coat he was wearing.

I too was fortunate enough to give a hand in repairing Don Bosco's dilapidated coat [wrote the novice, Sister Louise Bosso.] A larger piece from the back pleat was missing altogether, taken to make relics. A lot of work was needed to repair that misdeed. But the older Sisters in the House said that it was not the first time such a thing had happened.

Sister Modesta Berta, another novice, relates:

When Don Bosco came into the House, Sister Louise Bosso and I were suffering from a bad cough. The doctor said we needed a long treatment in order to recover. We were only novices so apart from the bad cough we were troubled by the fear of not being able to make our profession and having to return to our homes. Sister Superior asked our dear Father to bless us and both of us are already cured.

[p. 211] From La Navarre to St. Cyr

Sister Telinelli, the Superior of La Navarre, and Sister Hugues from St. Cyr were not far behind in proving that they too were well and truly alive. According to letters from both Houses, Don Bosco brought them the blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

A number of Sisters from La Navarre were present when the first stone of the new chapel was laid and the new building blessed. The latter was intended to house up to a hundred and fifty orphans.

The weather was bad that March 7, but it did not keep away the many benefactors and admirers of the work, so much so that Don Bosco could not spend even a few moments with his Daughters. Nevertheless, they were not deprived of his smile, and his message was passed on to them by the Superiors, Father Albera and Father Cerutti, who accompanied him. Before leaving Don Bosco himself said to them with obvious pleasure, "Well done! I know you share the work and sacrifice with the Superiors of the House. You will therefore also share an eternal reward with them." Then giving them his fatherly blessing, he added, "Be of good heart and keep cheerful!"

Many prominent people visited Don Bosco while he was at St. Cyr, and they witnessed miracles. The Sisters came to know that their good Father was aware of both their poverty which bordered on indigence, and their patience in trying to keep the forty orphans good, busy, strong and healthy despite the limited material resources of the settlement. They had been told that he would pray to Mary Help of Christians for them and recommend them to the benefactors of the area. So the Sisters felt comforted and hoped much from the blessing and the heart of their saintly Father.

The day after Don Bosco's departure, probably the 8th or 9th of March, Mrs. Melania Revest came to see them. She had undergone three serious operations for dropsy, [p. 212] all of which had proved unsuccessful. After receiving Don Bosco's blessing she had been perfectly and instantly cured. It appeared she had asked Don Bosco to visit her sick room but this had proved impossible because the lady's villa was rather distant and

completely inaccessible to a carriage. She was told, however, to have faith and Don Bosco would bless her in the name of Mary Help of Christians as his carriage passed by, about a hundred meters away from her house. The heavenly grace was immediate and miraculous. Therefore she wished to come in person to thank Our Lady in the House where Don Bosco had stayed and to promise that it should be the first object of her charity. Since she was one of the nearest neighbors to the Orphanage it would be comparatively easy for her to estimate its most pressing needs and relieve them whenever possible.

Friday of Passion Week

March 16 was Passion Friday and the Sisters of Our Lady's House in Nizza Monferrato paid devout homage to the Sorrowful Virgin before the well-loved picture which was their constant reminder of Mornese and Father Pestarino.

On Palm Sunday, the 18th, the usual ceremonies took place. On the 19th, the feast of Saint Joseph, fervent prayers were offered for the Pope, for Christian and religious families, for the suffering and the dying, for tormented Italy and the whole Church militant.

On the 20th (was it perhaps a present from Saint Joseph?) came the formal declaration from Mr. De Rossi that the controversy between the Institute and Josephine Louvel had finally ended. *Deo Gratias!*

But. . . experience is a good teacher! Never again would a postulant of advanced age be accepted just to satisfy those who might sponsor or protect her.

Don Bosco said this to Father Cagliero in order that the decision might be passed on to the Superiors at Nizza.

[p. 213] Good Friday

Sister Jacinta Olivieri and Sister Catherine Fino, already announced by their Provincial, arrived from America on Good Friday, March 23.

Their behavior had been a thorn in the flesh for the Superiors for a long time and repatriation seemed to be the only possible solution.

They had already removed the religious habit and their attitude could not but affect the community deeply. The Sisters' minds went back to that January 4, 1879 when, with the other missionaries, these two Sisters had received the good wishes of the community as they set off for Buenos Aires and Patagonia full of good resolutions.

Father Cagliero gave the reason for the change as weakness and lack of openness and did not cease his warning admonition, "Woe! Woe to those who are weak!"

The two poor Sisters left for Turin by the first train on Holy Saturday morning, where the Superiors awaited them.

The questions and surmises concerning the distressing case found an answer when after a few days the letter Father Cagliero had received from Father Costamagna was passed on to Nizza.

It was a sad letter which opened with the exclamation, "Oh, what a lot of crosses and how heavy they are!"

The letter stated that Sister Catherine had secretly left the House once in Moron. She was found in the street twelve hours later by some of the Sisters returning from the spiritual retreat. They took her with them to Almagro after leaving Mother Madelene Martini at Moron, plunged in deep grief.

There was danger of repetition of the incident; hence the determination to send the Sister back to her homeland.

Father Costamagna added that the older Sisters stated that Sister Catherine had made scarcely any novitiate and could not have been well known to our departed Mother because of the excessive number of postulants. Maybe she [p. 214] was sent to America just to complete the necessary number of those leaving for the missions at that time.

The case of Sister Jacinta was still more painful. Concerning her-the letter reads-nothing can be done but sing the *requiescat* since she has completely lost her vocation through pride and lack of openness with Superiors and Directors. However there is a glimmer of hope for Sister Fino. . .

The letter concludes: "What is certain is that if we Superiors have sinned we have done so only from an excess of goodness and long suffering towards these two Sisters. They themselves could affirm this . . ."

Father Costamagna finally ended with the information that Mother Martini was still very ill, and he gave the news that Father Fassio and Sister Josephine Piccardo had left two days previously for Patagones.¹⁴

Sweetness after bitterness

A second letter arrived through Father Cagliero, from Sister Angela Vallese. It was dated February 2, and since it brought "sweetness after bitterness"-according to what Don Bosco had said-we shall relate just the principal points:

Our girls are also making a great effort to do well, but they are slow. Nevertheless many of them won awards as a result of the last examinations. This giving of awards makes everyone enthusiastic because it is not the custom here to reward the effort of good will in study, work and conduct.

We hope for a greater number of boarders and day girls during the coming year. Thus we shall win more and more souls for God, and draw many poor children away from the path of perdition.

When can we expect to welcome Father Cagliero or our beloved Mother Superior among us? What a consolation this would be!

[p. 215] In the meantime what comforts us most is to have Jesus always and entirely with us. He will never leave us. Oh, if we could at least love Him very much and make Him loved by our girls. After all, this is the reason we have been sent here!

Regarding the holy Rule I believe it is observed although not always as perfectly as might be desired. Nevertheless we have great good will to become more and more perfect and we are not lacking in charity and obedience. Therefore we hope to become real saints that we may one day be united with our beloved Superiors in eternal happiness. We pray for them always, each and every one of us, offering them the devoted and grateful hearts of Daughters.

We send a very special remembrance to our venerated Father Don Bosco, as we beg him to bless his poor first missionaries in Patagonia.¹⁵

The community could not fail- to draw edification and instruction from this letter. Above all, those who aspired to the missionary life said among themselves that the good spirit of her community shone through the simplicity of Sister Angela Vallese.

The dawn of Easter

The bells pealing the Easter Alleluia promised a new resurrection. Not wanting to project the sadness of the recent return of the missionaries into the Easter celebrations, the Director General managed to send a timely message of comfort to the Superiors and Sisters. He wrote, "My dear children, do you not know that Our Lady never leaves gaps in her ranks, and that for everyone that goes, five if not ten others will come to encourage the rest?"

In the meantime Father Lemoyne was invited to preach a triduum to prepare the new candidates for admission to the novitiate on March 29, and the Director General said he would do his best to be present. So the "glorious day of the Lord" dawned serenely [p. 216] for everyone in Our Lady's House. But a fresh shadow of sadness came with the afternoon.

Death of Monsignor Gastaldi

News came from Turin announcing the unexpected death of Monsignor Gastaldi, the Archbishop. The whole of Turin was plunged into mourning. Don Bosco had not yet returned from France.

Clothings at Nizza

Notwithstanding his commitments during the early part of the week and also the funeral obsequies of the Archbishop, Father Cagliero managed to arrive in Nizza on the evening of the 28th.

He would have no sadness. The festivities were to be general and complete.

His Good Night before the day of the clothing had a predictable theme: "Pray, pray much for those who are to be clothed with the religious habit, that they may persevere and become real Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and of Don Bosco."

On the morning itself there was a great surprise for everyone. Instead of twelve, fourteen postulants approached the altar to receive the holy habit. Among the group appeared Eulalia Bosco and Letizia Lavagnino who had been undecided until the last moment. How had this happened?

The Sisters and even the boarders said, "Letizia Lavagnino is the fruit of our Mother's patience and the untiring kindness of Father Cagliero. We hope she will persevere and become a saint!"

Before he left, the Director General gave news about Don Bosco who at that time was in Marseilles. He gave no details but said that wherever our Father went, he attracted souls and opened coffers through his humility, simplicity [p. 217] and limitless charity, while he scattered miracles of heavenly grace for time and eternity.

Letter from Marseilles

A letter from Sister Meana confirmed what was already known.

Marseilles, April 8, 1883

Dear Reverend Mothers and Sisters,

I would and should tell you of the many good and beautiful things that occurred during March because I know our dear Superiors and Sisters at Nizza are longing for news. But I have to limit myself to brief notes because. . . because I cannot find the time to write at length. Today is Sunday, but Sunday is just as busy as any other day for us.

But enough! This preamble will serve as an excuse for my brevity .

Yes, we have had our dear saintly Father with us. But our enjoyment has been almost entirely through witnessing other people's pleasure in him. What a crowd of people-and they caught us quite unawares!

Don Bosco came to Marseilles halfway through March and left last Monday, April 2, after having impressed everyone by his presence, his words and his miracles. Only the angels can tell the whole story because no one else could possibly tell everything. We, his Daughters, humble in the great glory of our Father, slaved away, singing as we worked, eager to give a good name to Saint Leon's and to uphold the exhausted strength of our saintly Father. as best we could. How happy we were to be able to do this for him!

I assure you, dear Mother, that we would not change our lot for a moment, not even with the happiest queen in the world.

I shall not give you details about our other Sisters in France because I know they have already written to you themselves. But I will tell you what they could not possibly know as yet.

On the 29th Don Bosco gave a conference to the Cooperators of this city. I was told that after he had expressed his [p. 218] happiness at seeing our Sisters' new House in Nizza-mare and estimated the general condition of the one in La Navarre, he discussed at length the orphanage of St. Cyr. which was in dire need of help and support. But I have also been told that Don Bosco's words will soon be published in the *Salesian Bulletin*. Therefore you will find his discourse there at far greater length than I could ever hope to fit into a letter.

Unable to obtain many offerings here in Marseilles because of the special economic situation in the city at the moment, Don Bosco promised to raise the subject elsewhere in order to obtain the necessary alms for that House. This gives us an insight into the heart of our Father, does it not?

It is being whispered around here that through a dream, Don Bosco has already secured a beautiful house in the nearby suburb of Sainte Margherite. The Superiors invited him to this district in order to see if there was any resemblance between his "dream house" and the house now being offered by a certain Mrs. Pastre which appeared suitable for a Salesian novitiate. Don Bosco did not accept the invitation for reasons known only to himself. We must wait and see what will happen later on.

What did our dear Father say to us? Well, we Sisters were assembled with the Superior of the *Providence* House of Sainte Margherite. He looked into our eyes as only he could, and then said, "Well done! Well done, my good Marthas and Marys! May Our Lady bless you as these Superiors and orphans bless you and as Don Bosco now does."

We all knelt down and kissed that wonderful working hand. We were as happy as we could possibly be.

This is all, dear Mother, but we ask you to see us and believe us happy to be your daughters and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, committed to becoming saints according to the wishes of our beloved Father Don Bosco.

Your ever affectionate

Sister A. Meana¹⁶

After Mother had passed on this news from France to the Sisters, she observed, "It is quite a long time since we had news from our House at Las Piedras in Uruguay. Sister Superior Josephine Pacotto has always been so warmhearted and grateful towards the Superiors!"

Only a few days later a letter of good wishes arrived from the dear Sisters of that House, communicating all their warmth of feeling and their own special news.

They were doing very well. Work in the school, workroom, catechism classes and Festive Oratory was increasing daily.

The Sisters were keeping fairly well in health. However, they wished to become stronger in order to support better their daily fatigue and respond better to the urges of their zeal. They hoped to do much more for the many girls who knew scarcely anything about religion, but were so very keen to make use of all it offered. The Children of Mary gave ample proof of this and many of them had a marked vocation to the religious life.

The Sisters complained that a formidable invasion of locusts had ruined all their crops. They had also been frightened by the force of certain storms which made them think the end of the world was at hand.

They were well liked in Las Piedras, where the Salesians were of greatest help to them after God and Mary Help of Christians. They were longing for a visit from their beloved Don Bosco, or from Father Cagliero and our Mother. The letter concluded with the plea common to every letter from the missions: "Please send us without delay many more Sisters to help us; better Sisters than we are and who have a superlative dose of humility, charity and patience, and also a well proven spirit of sacrifice. "

The community of Nizza was also able to draw from these spontaneous accounts, desires and fraternal invitations, fruit for a crescendo of fervor and effort in the divine service.

[p. 220] An unforeseen event

The enemy of all good even made use of insanity to upset the House and ruin vocations.

The novice, Sister Rosa Mezzadonna had previously always given evidence of possessing many moral and religious gifts. But now, for about two weeks she had taken it into her head not to eat, drink or pray. After a week of infinite patience only our Mother managed to get her to say a few prayers. Then she began to cause trouble with one person after another, putting the whole House in turmoil, until her priest brother had to be asked to take her away.

She left on April 4, behaving like a robot. Apparently Agatha Spano was moving in the same direction, becoming more and more strange in her behavior.

"Let us pray to Saint Joseph," the Superiors and Father Lemoyne insisted, Let us pray especially tomorrow on the feast of his Patronage, that he may obtain from Jesus and Mary the grace of liberation from such subjects and from the great misfortune of insanity! But above all let us ask him to steer us free from all sin, even deliberate venial sin, because sin is the cause of every other evil!"

Saint Joseph and the Pope

The Director reminded us of the three points made by His Holiness, Leo XIII on April 8, to the *Societa Primaria Romana* for the purpose of promoting Catholic interests in Italy. These were: *the religious education of the young; the circulation of good literature; the sanctification of Sunday.*¹⁷ He confirmed the concept that Saint Joseph gives us his special protection by helping us understand the importance of the Holy Father's three warmly recommended measures and providing us with the most suitable way of putting them into practice among ourselves, our [p. 221] friends and our acquaintances, as well as all those whom Divine Providence permits to approach us.

The Pope is the visible Head of the Catholic Church just as Saint Joseph was head of the Holy Family. Since the Holy Father spoke as he did on *Good Shepherd Sunday*, if we ask Saint Joseph to help us today to follow the instructions of the Holy Father, we can be certain that the protection of this great saint will be made gloriously manifest in our own beloved Italy. It will then spread through this teacher of the people to all other countries, for the advent of that divine kingdom which Jesus Christ called "one flock under one Shepherd."

The Sisters were enthusiastic. They felt with deep conviction that all heaven could be used to help them steadfastly climb the mountain of Christian, religious and Salesian perfection!

A letter from Nichelino

From Nichelino there came a fresh reason for rejoicing for both Superiors and Sisters in Nizza, where all lived as one family.

The Superior, Sister Delphina Guido, wrote:

Nichelino, April 15, 1883

Dear Mother and Superiors,

I can no longer refrain from sharing our consolation with you. Yesterday all our many dear children took part in a display before the whole village.

They worked hard for two hours. I say *worked* because the whole thing was work for them. They demonstrated their prowess in gymnastics, singing, recitation of poetry, in short dialogues and in brief reading, writing and arithmetic lessons. Then, regarding catechesis, there were scripture stories in dialogue. The children behaved like young theologians!

There is no need to tell you the rounds of applause they received and how the whole village congratulated them!

[p. 222] Among those present were Mr. Pievano, the illustrious Mayor Foresto, Count Cibrario, Cav. Silva, Doctor Coppa and some priests and professors from Turin.

They were all so pleased that they became like children with the children in order to show how satisfied they were with everyone and everything.

The reverend pastor and the honorable Mayor were sincere in the words they addressed to the many who had come to the display. They warmly praised the work of the kindergarten, the Sisters and the Christian instruction given the little ones. Thus the parish, the municipality, parents and acquaintances, were all thanked and encouraged to continue their kind support.

We had entrusted the success of our "Children's Display" to dear Saint Joseph, who answered our prayer beyond all expectation. We had to let all at Nizza know about this so that our Superiors and Sisters could help us thank our glorious saint, and in order that the really pleasant work we are doing among our dear little ones may be the measure of our great affection for our venerated Father Don Bosco. After God, we owe it to him if we are Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and our beloved Mother Catherine Daghero.¹⁸

Concern for Agatha Spano

General fear regarding the Sicilian postulant Agatha Spano now became concrete. When consulted the doctor said at once, "You cannot and must not continued to keep in the House a person given to such frenzies and uncontrollable rage. She must be admitted to a mental hospital and quickly, or we shall all have to pay the price of the serious consequences that can already be foreseen."

But how could this be done when her relatives did not want to understand and no asylum thus far would accept her?

At last the Superiors in Turin managed to open the doors of the city's Royal Mental Hospital, after seeking assistance from the Royal Police Headquarters of the area. [p. 223]

By the end of April the community of Nizza was liberated, though not without sadness, from the threat of serious danger and real calamity.

The Superiors, especially Mother General, were very distressed. In her humility she later held herself in some way responsible. However, in the House there was comfort in the thought that "God tries His elect."

Our Lady's month

Mary's month arrived to sweeten every sorrow. In Turin Valdocco this year, it was to open on May 3 because, for liturgical reasons, the feast of Mary Help of Christians had to be postponed until June 5. In Nizza, the Director, Father Lemoyne, advised that things should take place in the usual way, even if it meant that the so-called external feast must be held on the day dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Le. June 3.

He said, "We can never do too much for our Mother in heaven. A reward could be given to those girls who have been outstanding in piety and in the fulfillment of their duties during the month. It would be a trip to Turin for the solemnity of Mary Help of Christians." The girls cheered and clapped and could not contain their joy, while the community of Sisters, novices and postulants was no less enthusiastic.

What Don Bosco did for St. Cyr

The May issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* reported Don Bosco's talk at Marseilles, regarding the orphanage of St. Cyr. Mother Meana had mentioned it in her last letter.

Intending to leave for future Sisters every document showing what Don Bosco did for his Daughters, we reprint this extract:

[p. 224] I must now speak of the House of St. Cyr, which is situated outside Marseilles itself. The dangers and temptations to which young people of the countryside are subjected are certainly greater for poor orphan girls. In order to earn their living they have to go into the towns and adapt themselves to any occupation or service they can get. Lack of education and religion on one hand, and scandal, malice and corruption on the other, cause immense havoc. Could anyone count the number of victims? Who can say how many of these poor girls return to their homes as untainted as when they left them?

You will recognize the urgent need for something to be done to counteract such dangerous perversion. Something had to be done for orphan girls living in the country. This need has been provided for in the House at St. Cyr, which was opened specifically for this purpose. About forty young girls are being supported, instructed and educated there. They work in the fields and receive intellectual, religious and moral instruction. They are engaged in learning what is appropriate to their sex and condition and are striving to train themselves to solid virtue and prepare for the future.

However, I am sorry to say that this House is very little known because it is so far removed from centers of population. Hence it does not enjoy charity like that which supports and allows the Houses at Nizza, La Navarre and Marseilles to flourish. We should like to double the number of inmates from forty to eighty, then increase it even to a hundred and twenty, so that those hundred or so pure souls would be praying for us and giving glory to God. But at the moment, means are scarce.

In spite of this, we hope in a short time to begin a new building in that area because, having declared war on hell, we shall not allow ourselves to be less hardworking than the sons of darkness. . .¹⁹

Two more Sisters for heaven

On May 16, the mail brought news of the death of Sister Anna Brunetti, in the House of Turin, on the previous day.

[p. 225] Six years of religious life won for her the grace of going into eternity singing a verse of *Lodate Maria*.

She was very devoted to Jesus Crucified, serene in her suffering and full of charity for others. She never counted the cost and gave herself without measure, even when oppressed by a very high temperature. Every Friday she was seized in a singular and mysterious manner with a severe attack of hiccoughs. No medicine could stop this and it continued for twenty-four hours.

Were they to mourn or envy such a well-loved Sister? Two days later the news came from Quargnento that Sister Madelene Depaoli had been called to eternity. She was professed only eight months, and was just twenty years and six months old.

Sister Madelene was born in Bellinzago Novarese. In her simplicity she used to say that she came to know God en route from her home to enter the Institute: "I would never have thought the world was so big. If our towns are so great themselves, how great God must be!"

When she received the news of her father's death she asked with charming humility, "May I cry a little?"

Her basic resolution had been: "To seek perfection in everything," and it could be said that she never fell short of her resolve.

Feast of Corpus Christi

This year May 24 was the feast of Corpus Christi. "There is no better way to spend this day," said Father Lemoyne, "than before Jesus solemnly exposed in the Blessed Sacrament, adoring and thanking Him; making reparation and praying with our dear Lady for the intentions of the Pope, Don Bosco and the Superiors."

This suggestion was very well accepted. It revived piety, and the fruits of grace must certainly have flowed through the whole Church, to each individual work of Don Bosco and to our own Institute.

[p. 226] Feast of Mary Help of Christians in Nizza and Turin

A letter from Turin was written just when there was eager expectation of Don Bosco's return from France with Father Rua. They were due to return by the 31st. The invitation was renewed too, for as many as possible to

attend the celebration of the feast of Mary Help of Christians on June 5.

The feast at Nizza was fixed for Sunday, June 3, which was also the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. The trip to Valdocco was planned to take place on the day following the feast.

Mother General made the journey with some of the Sisters, postulants and novices. Among the latter was Sister Eulalia, Don Bosco's grandniece. There was also a fair number of boarders, who were as lively as sparrows.

The group received a very cordial welcome, but the noisy excitement of the oratory girls was indescribable when they saw their two former Superiors, Mother Elisa Roncallo and Mother Daghero, approaching.

Next morning the oratorians from Chieri arrived and from then on the playground was quiet only during the Pontifical celebration. Suddenly, a heavy storm blew up, with torrential rain, brilliant flashes of lightning and deafening claps of thunder. It lasted for over an hour and the many devotees of the Help of Christians who had crowded the Sanctuary, had to remain at their Mother's feet still longer, although it was already past noon. Then some of the people decided to brave the rain while others sheltered under the Salesian porticoes.

Don Bosco thought of everything and everyone. "Let the women and children go to the Sisters and those who have not provided for their own meal will be given what is necessary. I have already instructed Father Rua what to do with the men and boys."

So there was more than the usual amount of movement in the Sisters' playground that afternoon. Here was another [p. 227] opportunity for them to prove their ability to rise to any need, and the girls of Nizza, Chieri and Turin had another opportunity for innocent fun.

The weather cleared in the afternoon and evening, and on the 6th, a second train carried the group back to Nizza. Mother General, Mother Elisa and the novice, Sister Eulalia Bosco, remained behind for another day.

Was it a surprise for Don Bosco?

It seemed that the clothing of his niece with the religious habit had been a rather unacceptable surprise for Don Bosco. Perhaps he thought it had been governed more by privilege than merit. Hence it was only right that he should be approached and given the facts of the case in order to pacify any doubts he might harbor. Besides, Mother felt it her duty to speak to Don Bosco about the suffering caused by the cases of mental illness. Don Bosco also had something to say about her generous Daughters in France.

Always a good Father, Don Bosco received our Mother as if he had nothing else to think of, and left her with words of hope. "Let us listen to Saint Teresa: *Let nothing disturb you, let nothing trouble you;* and to Saint Paul: *Rejoice in the Lord always!* Never forget that Our Lady is always our Mother and Helper."

He made Mother Elisa explain why Eulalia, young and inexperienced as she was, had been allowed to receive the holy habit. She was still some months away from her seventeenth birthday.

The reasons were given, together with an apology for the involuntary lack of courtesy in not asking Don Bosco's opinion. Our Father concluded by saying that since he was now sure there had been no human motivation, it could be taken that Our Lady had set her seal on what had taken place. Therefore Eulalia should correspond generously to [p. 228] such a great grace, and work with a will at her formation to the religious life.

According to what Sister Eulalia herself stated soon afterwards, Don Bosco questioned her about everything. "My uncle did not try to hide from me how hurt he felt at not being informed about my clothing in advance. He asked many questions and let me talk as much as I wished. Perhaps this was to give him the assurance that I was aware of the seriousness of the step I had taken, and that he might have a better understanding of the methods of the Superiors and the spirit existing in the House at Nizza."

"Let us admire and pray"

The June *Salesian Bulletin* gave in full the program of the new educational establishment at Bordighera, a good report on the Nichelino Children's Display and an extract from a discourse of Victor Hugo on the need for religious teaching.²⁰

In a conference he gave to the Sisters, Father Lemoyne suggested, "You, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, have Don Bosco to thank. You have Don Bosco to thank for having made you known through the *Bulletin*. You teachers in senior classes, see that your pupils learn by heart the text of the famous French writer. It will be useful to them now and in the future, and will inspire them to pray for the man who senses God today, yet cannot take the decision to surrender to Him. We must not forget that a vessel capable of holding a great deal of poison is also capable of holding a great deal of precious liquor. In the same way a genius who corrupts consciences can also become another Paul the Apostle, if anyone is found to pray and make sacrifices for his conversion. Therefore, let us admire and let us pray."

There was no need to repeat this suggestion. Mother Assistant herself put the Director's words into effect and the efficacy of this action was soon felt.

[p. 229] "Nizza, so dear to us"

The *Società Cattolica Operaia* (Society of Catholic Workers) was a flourishing concern in the city of Nizza Monferrato and counted among its principal members some exemplary Salesian past-pupils.

Every Monday Mr. Charles Brovia made his way to Our Lady's Institute to receive the weekly orders for shoe repairs.

When he arrived on June 18, he related that a deputation from the Workers' Society had gone to Valdocco, just to prove that Nizza as well as Turin was celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Conferences of Saint Vincent de Paul, which Don Bosco had done so much to stimulate. As he spoke of his pleasure and gratitude for his dear past-pupils who had presented him with the Honorary Membership of the *Società Operaia* Don Bosco had repeated the phrase, "Our Nizza, so dear to us." Mr. Brovia became as enthusiastic as a young man as he recalled the phrase, "Our Nizza, so dear to us." He added, "Our Nizza is so dear to Don Bosco because of the Sisters . . . and also because of us, his faithful past-pupils! We are all children of the same Father, Don Bosco, and the same Mother, Our Lady. . . Just as the Sisters always remember, we too, shall never forget it." These expressions were referred to the Good Night and commented on by our Mother.

Don Bosco at Nichelino

Another cheerful note arrived from Nichelino. The Sisters of that House had managed to have Don Bosco with them on the afternoon of Sunday, June 17, to celebrate the "Feast of the Holy Childhood."

They certainly had a great deal of courage to ask for such a favor! Mother laughed as she said, "He will now be able to see the miracles we work. If they are of good quality [p. 230] it will please him. If not he will give us a few more lessons on how to proceed, remembering that we are still his Daughters of Mornese."

In order that everybody might be well informed, Mother read to the community the report sent from Nichelino for publication in the *Salesian Bulletin*.²¹

Another feast

June 24, Don Bosco's name day, was a full day of prayer. Father Lemoyne went to Turin as usual, to represent the Superiors, Sisters, novices, boarders, day girls, and oratorians of Nizza, as well as every other House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

But on the 30th, Nizza celebrated a feast for their own Director. There were church celebrations, entertainments in the assembly hall, jokes and rhyming couplets, and homage was paid both to the Virgin Help of Christians and to our good Director.

The rural missionary, Father Ricci, was also invited, and his discourse together with that of the Director closed the day, raising all hearts to heaven.

Death of Mother Madelene Martini

After the festivities were over, there came tears. From Turin news arrived through Father Cagliari of the holy death of the Provincial, Sister Madelene Martini, which had taken place on June 27.

What a loss this was to the Superiors and Sisters! How everyone wanted to know all the details! Father Cagliari had gone to Buenos Aires-Almagro to comfort the dear missionaries. He was father, Superior and support to them: in both moral and material matters.

It was he and Father Vespignani who sent some brief [p. 231] notes in mid-June about the triumphs of Mary Help of Christians at Buenos Aires-Almagro. From June 7-10 the solemn inauguration of the new church dedicated to our good Mother had taken place. At the same time news was received about the condition of the dear Provincial, who was approaching her eternal reward.

Sister Octavia Bussolino confirmed all this when, after a short reference to the great celebrations, and the move to the new house where Jesus had already taken up His abode, she gave an assurance that the Provincial was perfectly calm and waiting to go to heaven. The hearts of all the Sisters were in anguish at the thought that before long they were to be deprived of this dear, holy Superior.

Father Cagliero added his own words of comfort as he passed the news on to Nizza. He stated with certainty that Father Costamagna would soon be coming to Italy.

The Director General's letter also referred to a consoling phrase of Monsignor Genuardi, Bishop of Acireale, when requesting a new foundation at Aci-Santa Lucia. He wrote on July 27, "I am happy to say that I was very impressed by the good Sisters of Mascali during my recent visit to that new school."

More sad news

On July 18, death again visited Nizza. Twenty-four-year-old Sister Angela Saglietti went to join those Sisters who had already passed to their eternal repose. She was very devoted to Saint Joseph and her Guardian Angel and had been professed less than two years.

"Let us live in gratitude"

The final examinations of the pupils of Our Lady's House were proctored by the Salesian Superior Father [p. 232] Celestine Durando and by Father Turco, also a Salesian. The results were more than satisfactory.

It became known through these priests that Don Bosco had been called urgently to the bedside of Count Enrico di Chambord in Austria. This gentleman was the last descendant of Saint Louis, King of France. It was learned that the dying man had been miraculously cured after receiving the blessing of Mary Help of Christians.

"This is a very great honor for our religious family," said Father Durando, "and an excellent reason for thanking our dear Lady."

He added for the Superiors, in Father Rua's name, that there was another good reason for thanking God in the long-awaited final solution to the question of Father Bonetti. The Holy Father had annulled all previous restrictions, much to his satisfaction.²²

The joy of the Mothers at this news was beyond measure, as can be deduced from the warmth of the Good Night on the theme, "Let us live in gratitude."

Retreats, examinations, awards

Before the beginning of August the Sisters of Nizza were very busy preparing beds and furnishings for the young ladies and women who were soon to arrive in good numbers for the spiritual retreat.

The preachers were theologian John Elena, a zealous Salesian Cooperator from Brescia, and the Director, Father Lemoyne.

General Director Father Cagliero also arrived. At the Good Night he read a handwritten letter from Don Bosco and did not fail to add his own comments.

[p. 233]

Turin, August 7, 1883

My dear Father Cagliero,

I wanted to spend at least a few days at Nizza Monferrato, but a series of telegrams demands that tomorrow morning I travel in the direction of Florence.²³

Tell the retreatants I am very sorry about this and I shall pray for them. Tell them I bless them and on Thursday morning I shall celebrate holy mass for them.

I recommend myself to the charity of their prayers. May God bless you all. Believe me in Jesus Christ

Your very affectionate friend,

Father John Bosco

Our Lady compensated for this renunciation by the unexpected arrival of Father Costamagna. He had been sent expressly by Don Bosco as he was on his way back to the Oratory. He spoke to the retreatants, Sisters and pupils of Our Lady's House about life in the missions.

On the 10th, besides the ceremony which concluded the retreat, there was also the children's awards event. This included songs, music and speeches suited to the occasion.

The hundred and fifty ladies returned to their homes with God's grace in their hearts and filled with joy.

The pupils also left for their homes.

In Our Lady's House the Sisters were again busy. This time they were preparing to receive the Sisters for the annual spiritual retreat.

In the meantime the Sisters and pupils returned from Genoa where they had presented themselves for the student teachers' examinations. They were not feeling very happy because only four out of the ten had received a full passing mark. On the other hand, they were not unduly upset because the standard had been higher than ever before, and the Nizza students were fortunate in comparison with candidates from other Institutes. They only had to repeat the examination in art (drawing) which was not among the basic subjects.

[p. 234] They soon moved from the topic of their failure to a more cheerful subject. They had taken part both in the preparations for and reception of Father Costamagna on his return from America, and tongues soon began to loosen as if by magic.

Memories of Sister Madelene Martini

Father Costamagna had been pleased and very moved when he saw the increased number of Sisters and the improved conditions from those of Mornese.

He had already given a great deal of news concerning the Sisters in America, but his stay was too short to tell everything.

The principal news came in Father Vespignani's letter, which had been written at his Superior's wish, and was intended to complete what had been written before.

Coupled with it came a collective letter from the Sisters of Almagro. Two more letters were passed on by Don Bosco and the Director General in their fatherly pleasure at the spontaneous confidence of those Sisters who felt themselves so close, despite the distance.

Buenos Aires-Almagro, July 7, 1883

. . . While Reverend Father Costamagna was building the House and church of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, the Blessed Virgin herself wished to prepare souls by sacrifices and tribulations. In fact it was in 1882 that the serious disease that was to bring Reverend Mother Madelene Martini to the tomb, first began to show itself. Even at this early stage Father Provincial had to shoulder the burden of directing both Institutes.

In the early days of May, 1883, the Sisters' House was almost complete and arrangements were being made to move into it and to fix the inauguration date as soon as possible.

But the actual move did not take place until June 6. All the Sisters' belongings were transported by the young people [p. 235] of the school, directed by their Superiors and a few other people living in the House. Since she was unable to walk, Mother Provincial was carried through the street in a chair in the evening, to the entrance of the new House.

These good religious wept at leaving their poor little habitation, thus demonstrating their attachment to the extreme poverty of the *ranchito de Belen* (hut of Bethlehem) which had roused the pity and edification of all who saw it.

Meanwhile the condition of the Sisters' Mother Provincial went from bad to worse. It became obvious that God was soon to call her to heaven. The Superior assisted her constantly all day and was often called during the night as well. During the last two or three nights he could not leave her at all.

The sick Sister also wished the undersigned to visit and assist her in various ways. I was always edified by her calm and serenity during those solemn moments, as well as her union with God. She thanked us for our assistance and for the care we had for the Institute, which she again recommended to us. We were very much moved and felt obliged to do all our venerated Don Bosco taught us in order to obtain the complete fulfillment of the Salesian vocation.

The good Mother passed away calmly and serenely during the night between the 27th and 28th of June.

The principle religious communities of the capital and the surrounding districts attended the funeral. A large number of benefactors of the House visited the catafalque and prayed before it.

Our school passed the greater part of the day and the following night in the church of Mary Help of Christians, reciting the Office for the Dead, saying the rosary and making the Way of the Cross, etc. They accompanied the coffin for two blocks as it was being carried by the Reverend Dominican Tertiary Sisters, who are our neighbors.

Several masses were celebrated that same day and on the following day, the feast of Saint Peter, still more were celebrated.

The solemn funeral obsequies were held on July 5, seven days after her death. There were great

numbers of Salesians, Cooperators, pupils and faithful. Mrs. Maria B. de Cason, who [p. 236] was a great benefactress of the House, deemed it a supreme honor to have those blessed remains in the tomb of her own noble family.

Our own Superior, who had foreseen the imminent death of the Mother Provincial, had for some time been training another Sister to manage the affairs of the House. Thus after the sad occurrence, he made an immediate decision to leave for Italy.

Many other things could be said by word of mouth by our Reverend Father Provincial himself, who is well able to illustrate his information with data and facts of an edifying nature . . .

Father Joseph Vespignani

Very dear Reverend Mother,

. . . How sad we are because of the great catastrophe that has befallen our community in the death of our good Mother Provincial !

Because her condition of health was usually poor, her great heart was unable to resist the hard knocks it had been receiving and she succumbed to incurable tuberculosis.

She suffered bitter anguish all through the months of January, February, March, April, May and June, but always showed herself a martyr of patience. She received Extreme Unction on Pentecost Sunday and Holy Viaticum several times. As she deserved, she was assisted with tender affection by the Sisters who were inconsolable at the thought of losing such a Mother. She peacefully breathed her last at 10:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 27. She was already in her coffin when the Sisters of Moron, San Isidro and La Boca arrived. The funeral obsequies took place in the new church and they could not have been more beautiful. But still more beautiful in the eyes of God must her soul have been, for it had passed through the crucible of the most painful trials, to become pure gold.

Father Superior, who assisted her to the end, tried to console us by giving each of us a special "Remembrance" of her in order that she might never be forgotten. In a special conference he presented Sister Octavia Bussolino as replacement Superior, telling us to turn to her as such in everything [p. 237] and for everything while we awaited the confirmation we hoped for, and which had been requested.

All this was a great help to us in our very real and profound grief. But, oh, how we still miss and mourn our deceased Superior! . . .

Your most affectionate Daughters,
The Sisters of Almagro

V. Gesù and Mary Help of Christians

Boca, July 5, 1883

Very Reverend Don Bosco,

During these days which are so sad for us, I too, although the very last of your Daughters, pluck up my courage to write you a brief letter, Reverend Father.

It is true that the death of our beloved Mother and the departure of our Reverend Father Superior are very painful occurrences, but the thought that such was God's will is of great comfort to all of us.

I have such an earnest longing to see you, but since this is not possible I commend myself to your fervent prayers. Please pray that I may become a true Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and a saint, and that I may be able to do a lot of good for our poor children.

I also ask you, Reverend Father, to be kind enough to send me a blessing of Mary Help of Christians for a very important spiritual grace, and please do not forget the least of your Daughters,

*Sister Margaret Bertolini*²⁴

A few lines were also written to Don Bosco by the Archbishop, Monsignor Aneyros. The letter was passed on by Father Cagliero in order that it might be documented in the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. It states:

We have suffered the painful loss of the Reverend Mother who was Superior of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians here. Sister Madelene Martini went to heaven almost on [p. 238] the eve of the feast of Saint Peter.

She was fortunate enough to open several Houses, the last of which was at Moron. She also saw the completion and opening of the principal House with its large school and Church of Mary Help of Christians. This was blessed on the 7th of this month. We mourn her in death because her life was a delight for everyone. May God grant us a large number of holy virgins *post eam*.²⁵ 25

An exceptional number of retreatants

Scarcely two days elapsed between the ladies' retreat and that of the Sisters, novices and postulants, who came in greater numbers than ever before. There were nearly three hundred, including all the Superiors in Italy, except one who was prevented by illness. Among the Superiors was Sister Madelene Morano, bubbling over as usual with Salesian cheerfulness and heartily welcomed by everyone.

The same preachers, Father Lemoyne and theologian Elena, assisted. With them was the Director General.

The solemnity of Mary's Assumption was celebrated with great pomp despite the atmosphere of silence. In fact at the Good Night preceding the feast, Father Cagliero exhorted, "Tomorrow is a great festival of hearts and we must not allow the angels to be happier than we are! We must show this by our smiles and our singing even if we may not talk!"

Anecdotes about Don Bosco related by his Daughters

The day of the Assumption was also a reminder of our Father Don Bosco's birthday. Heartfelt wishes were sent to him and special prayers were said, because it was generally known that he was suffering considerably from certain calumnies impudently divulged in public, by sects in Turin, Milan and Rome.

[p. 239] Details of this were not discussed in the House, but the Daughters could not but share in their Father's trials.

So, as if to compensate for this bitterness, and following the exhortation of our Mother, recreation time on August 16 was almost completely dedicated to relating what each one held as her dearest memory of Don Bosco.

Novice Caroline Manfredi began. She had already given proof of outstanding zeal in bringing her friends to the Oratory of Saint Angela Merici in Turin, right from the earliest days.

About 7:00 p.m. on the eve of the consecration of the Church of Mary Help of Christians in 1868, my mother said, "Come with me. We are going to buy something from the charity stall, because Don Bosco needs a lot of money to pay his debts."

We went into the playground where there was a stall that was almost empty. Don Bosco stood a few steps away talking to some gentlemen. As soon as he saw my mother he came towards her, picked up a medallion of Mary Help of Christians and offered it to her without wanting to accept anything in exchange. Then he looked at me and, placing his hand on my head, he blessed me. He then turned to my mother and told her to take great care of me because one day I would be a religious and all for Jesus. I could not have been more than five or six years of age at that time, yet I remember what he said as though it were yesterday.

My mother certainly took great care of me. In fact she treated me as if I were a relic. I was very fond of her and told her I would not become a Sister until she had gone to heaven. Poor mother, she often offered her life for the greater good of my soul. Finally, God accepted her offering and she died a holy death when I was approaching my seventeenth birthday. That same day I promised God I would become a religious. But between the promise and the carrying out of the promise there was an ocean of indecision!

About one o'clock one day, quite alone and very thoughtful, I walked along the Via Cottolengo on my way to visit Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Suddenly I found myself almost face to face with Don Bosco. He was wearing his [p. 240] feastday cloak and seemed to be flying. I stopped to observe him better and, strange as it may seem, he turned around, stood a moment looking straight at me and then proceeded on his way.

It would be impossible for me to say what I felt at that moment. I only know that something divine moved within me, urging me to give myself to Jesus speedily.

But that blessed 'speedily' did not come to pass, because at the age of almost eighteen years I continued to look at the moon and to star-gaze, without making up my mind.

The 15th of August of the year 1880 was now at hand and the Sisters invited me to go with them to the Salesian Oratory, for the celebration of Don Bosco's birthday. I went.

At the end of the celebration I noticed that everyone, including the Sisters, went up to the stage to kiss Don Bosco's hand. He was seated there with a number of important gentlemen on either side. I debated with myself whether or not I should go too. What a predicament! I tried to lose myself in the throng but did not succeed. So I mixed with the last group, hoping that Don Bosco would leave before my turn came. But he did not move so I had to take my place with the others. I approached with downcast eyes and made as if to kiss that blessed hand, but I felt him take my hand in both his own. He asked my name and raised his hand in blessing, filling my heart with heavenly joy.

As I stepped down from the stage some of my companions said with a touch of envy, "Just look at you! You must be Don Bosco's pet!"

At eighteen years of age I felt still more strongly that I had to make a final decision to enter the religious life. But grief at my mother's death which I felt I had caused, and consequent bouts of personal ill health had made me so emaciated that I doubted whether I should be able to live community life. In fact when I asked to be admitted among the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians I received an answer that was definitely negative.

So I turned to the Visitation Order and through the intervention of Countess Miratori of Turin, all doors were immediately opened.

However, before entering I went to bid farewell to Father [p. 241] Cagliari who had been my confessor at one time. He said, "But why the Visitation and not Mary Help of Christians, since your vocation is for this and not for the other?"

Once I had given my reasons he added, "My dear child! My dear child! Begin a novena of Communions in honor of Saint Joseph. In the meantime I will get Don Bosco to pray for you and if, at the end of the novena, you feel your health improved, you will enter with our Sisters. If this happens I will take upon myself the duty of making your excuses to the Countess who is your benefactress and ours, and also to the Superior of the Visitation. If things work out differently you will join Saint Francis de Sales and Chantal.

However I feel sure that Don Bosco will obtain the grace of health for you, as well as perfect tranquillity regarding your vocation, all through your life."

I obeyed and at the end of my novena to Saint Joseph I felt as if an electric current passed through my whole body, completely restoring me and even changing my appearance. I felt restored to perfect health, so much so that three days later I came here to Nizza in the company of our own dearest Mother. So here I am as you see me, strong, robust and happy.

I attribute this immense favor to the prayers of our dear Father, Don Bosco.

Next the postulant Bertilla Bruno narrated in her exceptional simplicity of manner:

During the spring of last year my nephew, Ernest Franchino, was sent home from the Oratory suffering from an infectious disease. He was the son of my sister who had married a second time. Her second husband was the brother of Father Joachim Berto, Don Bosco's private secretary. After about a fortnight the boy was almost at death's door. He received the Last Sacraments, then began to lose his powers of speech and understanding. He remained in this condition for almost three days. Then at a certain moment without any warning, Father Berto appeared in the courtyard. He asked anxiously, "Is he still alive?" Astonished, we answered with another question, "Who told you that he was near his end?"

[p. 242]"I will tell you later. Now take me to him immediately." Once arrived he called loudly, "Franchino!" The dying boy, who had shown no sign of understanding anything for three days, turned towards Father Berto. The priest whispered into his ear and blessed him. Almost immediately he peacefully expired.

Father Berto then comforted us and tried to ease our pain for not letting him know about the seriousness of the boy's condition. Actually, we did not know where to address the letter because we knew he was traveling around with Don Bosco. He told us that when Don Bosco heard that Ernest had been sent home with two of his companions because of illness, he said immediately, "Only one of the three will see the Oratory again. The other two will die. Now, our dear Franchino is one of the two!"

It was on the train returning to Turin that Don Bosco has asked Father Berto,

"Have you had any news of Franchino?"

"No," he had replied.

"Neither have I. Nevertheless when we reach Porta Nuova, instead of coming on with me to the Oratory

station, take the train for Avigliana and go as quickly as you can, if you want to see him alive."

"That is just what I did," concluded the priest. "As to who told Don Bosco how things were going, you must ask him directly, because he always knows things in ways we don't understand."

Sister Josephine Quarello and Sister Joan Ronco from Borgo San Martino had two miracles to relate.

I was not there to see, because I had been detailed to help in the kitchen with the feastday dinner in honor of Saint Aloysius. But the shouts and enthusiasm of the people inside and out, made me believe what I did not see. Two poor working people had presented their five-year-old son to Don Bosco. His legs were so crippled that he could not take a single step or even stand. Our dear Father was very moved. He blessed the child and comforted the good parents saying, "Now let us see if he can walk a little!" Keeping perfectly upright the little child began to walk faster and faster while the crowd cheered, "A miracle! A miracle!"

[p. 243] Sister Ronco took up the conversation saying,

Instead, I can say that I saw what happened with my own eyes. It was on the same feast of Saint Aloysius kept on July 5, and Don Bosco had celebrated mass in our chapel privately. After mass a good woman was presented to him. She carried in her arms a little child not more than two years old whom she begged Don Bosco to bless. The boy was not yet able to utter a single word; he cried continuously and could hold nothing in his hands. In fact he seemed to be mentally handicapped. Don Bosco listened attentively as the mother told her story, then asked her to return at 10 o'clock. Punctual to the minute she returned with the child, who continued to cry piteously. Don Bosco blessed him and offered him a medal. The child took it from him and began to laugh and talk immediately. That fortunate woman went home, beside herself with happiness. Great was my wonder and that of the few other witnesses. But Don Bosco smiled serenely and said, "We must thank Mary Help of Christians! Thank her always and for everything!"

Sister Superior Carlotta Pestarino spoke quietly:

We at Alassio cannot say that we have been present at such prodigies, but we rejoice in the knowledge that our dear Father Don Bosco has always taken a special interest in us, both materially and spiritually. During his last visit, which happened to be in winter, he asked us, as we all gathered around him, if we slept well at night; whether we were being provided with sufficient food and clothing; if we were taking care of our health; if we ever failed to be cheerful or if we found the work too heavy. Regarding the last item he said in conclusion, Let us never forget that the world promises this or that to those who serve it and gives nothing but bitterness. God, instead, is faithful to His promises and in fact, gives a hundredfold. Therefore let us never regret sacrificing ourselves for the Lord, who rewards even a glass of water given for love of Him. We shall rest in heaven for all eternity. But now we must work and work hard to please God, sanctify our own souls and cooperate in the salvation of many other poor souls who do not know God or else live as if they did not know Him.

[p. 244] Remember this recommendation of mine often and you will taste how sweet the Lord is to those who love and serve Him faithfully until death."

This type of conversation was usually as effective as a sermon and greatly strengthened souls in their beautiful and holy Salesian religious vocation. Our Mother was very pleased. Among other pieces of advice, she repeated that we should animate ourselves to practice the great virtues of Mother Mazzarello and our first Sisters, who had already passed to eternity. There was no better way of doing this than by relating edifying incidents which would revive their memory and lead to imitation.

Memories of Mornese

Sister Ursula Dell' Acqua from Lu Monferrato was very popular with everyone because of her frank conversation.

Her pleasing and significant story brought back memories of Mornese.

I had been in Mornese about a month and no one had thought about giving me the postulant's cape. I therefore plucked up my courage and said to the wardrobe attendant, "All the others have their lovely capes. What about me? . . . My mother has paid for it. She sold a farm in order to provide a dowry and the sum

needed for my outfit. Why is it, then, that I have nothing to wear over my shoulders?"

"You are right," the Sister replied, and she took me to a large room where there were many dresses of different colors and styles. All of them were hanging from nails.

She looked at one and then at another, but could find nothing suitable. Finally she chose a lady's coat, light brown in color and sporting a row of large buttons. She said to me, "Take this for the present until we can make a cape for you. "

I stared at that article of clothing. I had never seen the like of it before, even at home. It was so threadbare and had two large pockets fastened with three buttons. I put it on, [p. 245] trying in every way to adjust it. At last I ended saying, "I do not dare let myself be seen wearing this coat," and I burst into tears.

Without showing any emotion the Sister put me out of the room dressed as I was. I ran quickly to my sister, who was the novice Sister Maria, to show her the antique I had been given to wear in place of the coveted cape. My sister, full of good sense as usual said, "Be good and behave yourself! I will ask the linen keeper to let you remove the two pockets. Then you will wear the jacket as it is. They are only trying you to see if you have a real vocation. It is just a passing thing and the test will soon be over!"

That little bit of reasoning calmed me, and prepared me to face the others, wearing that treasure of antiquity for three weeks, until at last I found the cape I so longed for, lying on my bed. I thought to myself, "How little it takes to lose the joy of one's vocation, and yet how a timely good word spoken kindly can preserve it and bring it to perfection." It was the good word spoken by my sister that put the idea of giving up out of my head and led me to approach our dear Mother Mazzarello. She laughed with me about my peculiar coat and then placed before me all the advantages of religious life lived for the love of Jesus and Mary . . . Oh what good a timely word can do!"

This anecdote teaches us not to be miserly but rather, prodigal with our good words when an occasion presents itself.

That is how Don Bosco acted, and so did Mother Mazzarello. So too, every true Daughter of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco must act.

End of the retreat and feast of the Pope

August 19 dawned, ending the retreat with fifteen clothings, twenty-four professions, five renewals of temporary vows and thirteen professions.

It was also the name day of the Holy Father, feast of [p. 246] Saint Joachim. All this added to the common, heartfelt rejoicing.

There were also a few tears, from those faced with detachment from the House where they had been working.

Other destinations now awaited them.

Spiritual retreat at Valdocco also

After the retreat came the time for departure. With the Sisters returning to Turin went those who had to take part in the second retreat, presided by Father Cagliero and Mother General.

The retreat was initiated on the evening of the 22nd. The preachers were again the noteworthy theologian Elena, and also Father Angelo Savio. Besides these, there was no less a personage than Father Costamagna who, as ever, was burning with missionary zeal.

Death of Sister Lucy Rovero

During these holy days, on August 25 to be precise, Sister Lucy Rovero, professed on the 19th of this same month, was called to eternity from Nizza. Her companions of postulancy and novitiate provide her eulogy.

"She resolved to be another Don Bosco in his spirit of sacrifice, hidden mortification and holy cheerfulness. Her contact with our souls had the touch of an angel, gently admonishing us and urging us on to God, that we might become here on earth true spouses of Jesus and true Daughters of Our Lady."

More anecdotes of Don Bosco

Don Bosco could not attend the retreat because he was at San Benigno. Nevertheless, at Turin just as at Nizza, [p. 247] anecdotes were related which served to make him present in some way. Here is Sister Louise Bocalatte with some of her unedited episodes.

This happened when Don Bosco had the school of Mirabello. My mother told us that it was quite a usual thing to see him going between Mirabello and Lu with his following of shouting youngsters, marching like little soldiers to the music of the band. Once they arrived in our village, the group was always given hospitality by my cousin Valerio Prada. He would provide refreshments, which added to the general merriment.

One day the Mayor of Lu asked: "What is happening?"

What is all the noise about?"

"Don Bosco is here," he was told, "and he has many boys with him!"

"But Don Bosco is a madman!"

Not very long afterwards, that same Mayor himself joined that "madman" and stayed with him for four years. I do not remember whether he died at the Oratory.

My mother also told me that on one of these occasions Don Bosco met a boy in my town who was walking bare foot, carrying his shoes on his back.

"Stop!" said he. "Now put your shoes on."

"Oh no," replied the boy, "my mother does not want me to wear them out."

Then perhaps remembering his own life as a servant boy, Don Bosco placed two lire in his hand saying, "You will be a priest one day!"

And he did become a priest, and a good one too.

When Don Bosco went to Lu my oldest brother was always ready to serve his mass and also wait on him at table. He then spent some years as a student in the school at Borgo San Martino. He was due for military service but Don Bosco, knowing he had a priestly vocation, obtained a dispensation for him. Unfortunately my other brothers obtained no such dispensation. Nevertheless none of them died, despite all the dangers at the front and on the battlefield. It could have gone badly for one of them who found himself stranded, with bullets flying all around him. But Don Bosco had told us not to fear because they would all

[p. 248] return home safe and sound, and so it was. When my mother was telling us these things she always added, "The graces obtained through Don Bosco's prayers for our family alone, topped a hundred."

Concerning Borgo San Martino I will relate only what the Sisters who were at Nizza recently left out.

Don Bosco used our little parlor to interview the many ladies who wished to speak to him. It was here that the instantaneous cure you have already heard about took place.

One day as he was leaving the parlor he met an old lady who had come to see her grandson, studying at the school. Don Bosco stopped to speak to her.

"Well, grandma, have you harvested any wheat or corn?"

"Very little," replied the old lady as she took a handful of chestnuts from her basket to give to a Sister who was there. This Sister, probably thinking that there were enough chestnuts in the school already, thanked the poor old lady very halfheartedly.

Once this person had gone, Don Bosco said to the Sister, "You should never look at the value of a gift but at the heart that offers it, and accept the smallest gift with great thankfulness. The widow of the gospel gave an insignificant coin but Jesus Himself praised her because it was all she had. Let us always be thankful and always thank sincerely. Providence often makes use of the smallest things in order to help us."

Another day as Don Bosco came from the parlor into the corridor he found Miss Pastore waiting for him.

She went up to him immediately, opened her purse, which was filled with golden twenty-franc pieces, and gave him an offering. Don Bosco accepted it gladly, but while he was placing it in his pocket a few coins fell to the ground.

I happened to be present and began to pick them up for him. But he whispered to me, "Take them to your Superior, she needs them."

Then turning gratefully to Miss Pastore he said, "You are just like the bells. They chime and call the people to church but stay outside themselves!"

Our dear Father's witty remark meant that this good young lady paid for the board and lodging, as well as [p. 249] the expenses, of many young men with priestly vocations, and also many poor girls who wished to become Sisters, while she herself had to remain at home.

Miss Pastore understood and smiled, accepting those fatherly words as a reward for her goodheartedness.

Volumes could be written about the many happenings at Borgo San Martino. Both in the school and outside it, everyone holds Don Bosco to be a great saint. Even the barber keeps the razor he uses for Don Bosco, as well as his hair, as relics.

This was confirmed by the conviction of all good people that not only was Don Bosco a saint, but that his works were the works of God.

Fresh missionary fervor

The retreat ended on August 30, feast of Saint Rose of Lima. There were eight first professions and two renewals of temporary vows. Since the Provincial, Father Costamagna, had rekindled missionary fervor during these days, talk had already begun regarding the choice of new missionaries for America.

"The great American Saint calls you," said the ardent missionary, with great enthusiasm. "Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians will guide you. What more encouragement could you want to go conquer our 'promised land?' "

A Daughterly plea

Father Cagliero passed a letter from Argentina to the Mother Superior so that she might think seriously about an official replacement for the deceased Provincial.

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Viva Gesù!
Almagro, July, 1883

Very Reverend Father Cagliero,

It is with great pleasure that I perform this act of obedience to our Mother Vicar.²⁶ She wishes that I also, though least among your poor Daughters in America, plead with you to have pity on us all, Sisters, novices and postulants. We are all orphans deprived of both Father and Mother,²⁷ and are completely lost.

It is true that having Jesus with us always, we have everything. But we have not yet reached the point where we do not feel the lack of other things. So we find ourselves without anyone to direct us along the path of religious perfection.

You know, Reverend Father, how much the postulants need someone to guide them as they take their first steps; someone to help, advise and encourage them to fight against the terrible enemy who always shows himself more powerful when there is no shepherd. It seems he wants to devour all these lambs of ours. But we hope that Mary Help of Christians will be victorious over him, and our postulants and novices.

By this time, Reverend Father, you must have guessed what our petition is all about. Please, dear Father Cagliero, be so good as to send our Father Superior back to us quickly, and with him send our Mother and a large number of Sisters.

You might say, "Haven't you one Mother already? Why do you want another?"

No Father, we do not ask for another, but only that you request Don Bosco and the respective Superiors to confirm in office the one who has been given to us as a provisory measure, and send help, that she may be able to establish herself in this Mother House of Argentina. You must know that because of her many occupations, she cannot remain with us in Almagro. She only comes on Thursday to pay us a short visit like a doctor, and then she goes back to La Boca. Poor Mother! She has so much work! It is impossible for her to go on like this.

Father, I thank you in anticipation because I seem to hear you say, "Of course, Father will return soon and Mother will [p. 251] be confirmed in office, so that those poor children cease to be orphans as soon as possible."

We promise you-this is the little donkey, Sister Louise Vallese, promising for all the postulants and novices-that we will place great confidence in our dear Mother Provincial, and obey her always until death.

I who write this, declare myself unworthy of such a holy Mother. It is really true that Jesus repays sacrifices well, for when He takes one saint away, He immediately gives us another.

May His holy will be done always, both in life and in death.

Would you be so kind, Reverend Father, as to commend us all to God during the holy sacrifice of the mass, in order that we may remain Daughters of Mary Help of Christians until death?

In your goodness, say many things to our dear Father Don Bosco for us, and also to our Father Superior, whom we hope to see soon.

Accept, Reverend Father, our sincerest regards. Respect. fully kissing your hand, I beg you to bless me. Believe me always your humble and unworthy Daughter,

*Sister Louise Vallese F.M.A.*²⁸

From the September "Bulletin"

During the Salesian General Chapter in Valsalice-Turin, prayers were offered to Our Blessed Lady for Don Bosco's intentions in the House of Nizza Monferrato and in all the Houses Mother had been able to contact. Preparations were also going on to celebrate, in song and poetry, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin, and second centenary of the feastday of her holy Name.

Meanwhile the September *Salesian Bulletin* arrived, giving news of the calumnies published in the Milan *Seeolo*, (*World*) the Turin *Gazzetta del Popolo* (*Popular Gazette*) and La Spezia's *Lavoro*, (*Work*) concerning Don Bosco and his Oratory. This was defined as an infectious den of mis- [p. 252] deeds. Priests in general were described as absolute corruptors of the young.

Other news in the same *Bulletin* described the triumph of Mary Help of Christians in Buenos Aires-Almagro, when the first church dedicated to her in America was solemnly blessed. Mention was also made of the general sorrow and tributes of esteem, love and praise of the much lamented Sister Madelene Martini.

Father Lemoyne's "God's interests before all"

During the period between the feast of Our Lady of Sorrows, September 16, and the feast of Saint Michael on the 29th, great fears assailed the community at Nizza Monferrato. The Vicar, Mother Enrichetta Sorbone, was struck down by a violent attack of typhoid. Her temperature was stationary at 40°C, when not higher. The doctor insisted that there was no cause for undue alarm because the illness was taking its usual course, and Mother Vicar's heart was strong and resistant. Nevertheless, both Superiors and Sisters prayed without ceasing.

Mother Vicar was Mother Daghero's right hand and a wise counselor. She was also very affable and understanding with new vocations.

It was only natural that the whole community should engage in prayer.

Added to the common apprehension was the fear that because of such an illness, permission would not be granted to accept boarders for the new scholastic year.

The return of Father Director Lemoyne from the Salesian General Chapter stimulated fresh courage and thoughts of faith and hope. "Do you believe that God will not think about our affairs when we are thinking about His? Let us then make His interests our own and He will think about consoling us. "

Father Lemoyne then called the community's attention to the latest satanic moves to induce the Italian clergy to [p. 253] abandon the Pope in order to make the Vatican into a desert. He anticipated the news about the pilgrimage to Rome of over five thousand priests led by Cardinal Alimonda, who was predicted to become the next archbishop of Turin.

"What a great day that was," concluded the Director, who was visibly moved, "that wonderful September 20 when the whole of that impressive gathering replied to the above-mentioned diabolical invitation with its solemn protest. For the Catholic priesthood, the era of Leo XIII is not one of cowards, dastards and traitors, but of invincible priests. The world might see at the Vatican a martyr's arena but a desert, never.

Just think how moved the Pope must have been at that moment! Do you not sense the divine grandeur of our Faith? . . . Let us live with these thoughts, be grateful and pray. God and Our Lady will do the rest."

Once again Father Lemoyne had insisted on one of his fundamental principles: God first of all, His Church and souls; then, whatever might be called personal and temporal.

A collective letter from Nizza-mare

Saint Michael's feastday, the 29th, brought pleasing and unexpected news from Nizza-mare.

The dear Sisters there found a way of expressing their happiness that was all their own.

Dearest Mother,

For the sake of speed we must do the best we can; you, who are always so good to your Daughters, will certainly understand.

Were you aware that we kept our dear Father Don Bosco almost hidden among us during a spiritual retreat held here for those of the House? The prefect told us with an air of great secrecy, "He has come for a little rest, so no one out [p. 254]side must be told about it."

We only found out about half an hour before supper so that something suitable for him might be kept ready, since he was in such need of care.

For the sake of quiet he came every morning to celebrate mass in our chapel. After mass he would take a small cup of coffee while we stood around him to listen to some of those sayings which are especially his. . .

Now I shall go about my business and let someone else continue. Your very affectionate

Sister Margaret Rasino

Because I am the youngest in the house my Superior has given me the privilege of writing first after her.

I am well and very happy here and during these days we have been living in paradise. We have seen a saint say mass in our little chapel and have received Holy Communion from his hands. I was also with him on one occasion as he took his breakfast. He said to us, "It is true that many sacrifices have to be made in this House, but heaven is yours. Nevertheless, always remember to work for God and always keep cheerful."

I am, dearest Mother, your happy little novice,

Sister Teresa Grazie

I, too, have the pleasure of writing something about our dear Founder and Father. One morning while he was drinking his coffee we asked him for a practice to help us end the month well. Always ready to please he said, "Yes, willingly. Never allow yourselves to slander one another, especially when the Sister is absent and therefore unable to defend herself." Then with true fatherly affection he began to tell us many beautiful, cheerful and edifying things.

Your Rosinette Rota—ever in motion

Now it is my turn. Oh what a joy! One day we agreed to take Don Bosco two yolks of eggs beaten up in his coffee and milk. Doubting whether it would be sweet enough I plucked up courage to ask him, "Father, shall I add a little more [p. 255] sugar?" "Yes, if you wish" he answered. I began to put in one teaspoon of sugar after another, waiting for him to say when it was enough. But Don Bosco made no sign, maybe because his mind was on other things or maybe because he was practicing the maxim to ask nothing and refuse nothing. At last, seeing that the liquid in the cup was turning into a thick, sticky substance, I thought it best to stop. Our dear Father took it all without a word!

You can imagine our admiration, dear Mother, and also my confusion when, once he had gone, everyone turned on me. "How could you make him such a sugary, nauseating mess?" But I am always the same, dear Mother, your poor

Sister Catherine Caspani

I am the last and shall relate what Sister Superior wishes me to tell you.

Only a short time ago we returned from the last retreats in Turin and Nizza. There had been a certain confusion because. . . The answer comes later. While Don Bosco was with us, our dear Superior spoke to him after his mass. She said, "What shall we do, Father, when between the retreats in Nizza and Turin there is so little time that the Sisters cannot get back from one retreat before the others must leave for the second? The House should not be left without Sisters in it. Then too, the Sisters all have to make their retreat. . ."

With a kind smile he replied, "Tell those who are going to one of the places to divide themselves in two, so that one eye, one ear, one foot and one hand remains in Nizza and the other half goes to Turin. . . Thus when they return they can say that they have been in both places and those left behind will know what has been said in both places and so fulfill their annual obligation."

Neither our Superior nor any of us understood our dear Father's joke, but when he began to laugh he made us all laugh. Then he said, "Do what you can. Send half the Sisters to Nizza and when they return send the others to Turin. If the retreat has already begun when they arrive, it cannot be helped! Our Lord will not be less generous than they [p. 256] were when they made this act of renunciation." After this he repeated, "Keep cheerful! Keep cheerful! You will receive a good wage at the end of your life."

Oh, what a consolation!

Your affectionate Sister Anne Pavese

Sister Anne let me read the last lines she had written and I add this: When Don Bosco said these words I was behind the others. He stretched his hands over everyone and pointing at me with his finger said, "Remember this, all of you, and you too!"

It if had happened today I would ask him what he meant, but at that moment I did not think about it. Another proof that I am always the same.

Sister Caspani poor thing!

Don Bosco left here on the 24th much more rested and pleased with the care taken to keep him hidden from outsiders, almost to the end. His fatherly blessing did much to increase our will to be courageous and good.

Your very affectionate Sister Margaret

Towards Sicily

Sister Madelene Morano left Nizza for Turin on October 2 escorted by the Guardian Angels. With her were the four Sisters destined to be her traveling companions to that Sicily which was already so dear to her. They were: Sister Ursula Robustelli, Sister Elisa Marrochino, Sister Ermelinda Moschetti and Sister Emanuela Elena.

They were blessed by Don Bosco, not for themselves alone, but for each one of the Sisters already working in Sicily. Besides, there was a special blessing for the foundation at Cesaro, soon to open. On November 30, 1880, a request had been made for two Sisters with teaching diplomas to replace a teacher who was out of favor with the parents. The request had been repeated many times but not [p. 257] accepted because there was no House for the Sisters, no playground or accommodation for a Festive Oratory, workroom etc., all of which were very necessary.

Even now much was lacking, and indispensable equipment was not available. But considering the evil that could be remedied immediately, and the possibility of doing good, the much solicited consent was at last obtained.

Confident of being able to do much good, the Sisters chosen were accompanied by Father Cagliero to their destination.

Death of Sister Rose Massa

On October 7, feast of the Rosary, news came from Turin that Sister Rose Massa had passed away. The Sisters always regarded her as a shining "torch of religious observance." Not young in years, she nevertheless had a true Salesian spirit of devotion and sacrifice. Don Bosco had accepted her on trial while on his way to Sampierdarena. He told her, "You will have to get used to a life of great sacrifice, especially with regard to food and sleep. Nevertheless you can try."

Sister Rose tried and succeeded. She was rewarded by being allowed to make her perpetual profession after only two and a half years of tried virtue, in silence, work and admirable acceptance of all types of mortification. What a beautiful page she wrote for those who came after her!

"We have a saint at our disposal."

In spite of the persistent typhoid fever which sapped the strength of our beloved Mother Vicar, by observing the prudent regulations laid down by the doctor, the boarders were allowed to return. The new ones arrived one by one, and those returning from their holidays came in chattering [p. 258] groups. These rejoiced to see that the new wing with the porter's lodge and the parlor had at last been completed.

It was foreseen that by Saint Teresa's feastday nearly everyone would be back, ready to commence the school year. But the topic of conversation turned unexpectedly to the administration of Extreme Unction to the dear sick Mother. She had been seized with delirium and fainting spells, and there were fears for her life.

"Send Don Bosco a telegram!" suggested Father Lemoyne. "We have a saint at our disposal and why should we not put him to the test? . . . While the telegram is on its way place something belonging to Don Bosco under the sick Sister's pillow, even if only his signature, and we shall see what Our Lady does to console us. "

No sooner said than done. A short time afterwards the sick Sister became drowsy and her breathing appeared to be easier. Around her bed, in the workroom, in chapel and even in the kitchen garden, the rosary was being said. The prayers were said sometimes aloud and other times in an undertone, but they were continuous. Her condition remained stable throughout the night. With the morning came our Father's ample blessing with words of confidence.

The patient gave a deep sigh and opened her eyes as if to ascertain who was near her. Then she smiled and said in a clear voice, "I feel better."

"Is it the improvement before death?" whispered the Sisters to one another. Father Lemoyne replied, "Women of little faith! It is the effect of Don Bosco's blessing!"

It was really so. From the moment of Don Bosco's blessing, Mother Vicar began a definite period of

convalescence and, by the feast of Saint Teresa, Patron of the Institute, hymns of joy and gratitude could be sung without fear.

[p. 259] Missionaries for Brazil too?

Another cause for joy came almost immediately in the choice of a new group of missionaries in response to the insistent requests of Father Costamagna.

At the same time, hope was given to the Provincial, Father Lasagna, who awaited Sisters for the immense dominion of Brazil.

The *Salesian Bulletin* of October gave an accurate account of the vast field of labor being opened up in that region.

News from Cesaro

The first news arrived from the foundation of Cesaro where the Sisters had gone with Father Cagliero on Saint Teresa's day.

This large town of almost five thousand inhabitants was situated at 1,130 meters above sea level and although it was on the "Island of the Sun," the air was decidedly chilly at that height.

The local clergy, the municipal authority and towns people, all contributed to give the Sisters a festive welcome. Their dwelling, which was barely adequate did not permit a Festive Oratory for the present. However, the zealous priests who promoted the work, Father Zinno, Father Gusmano, the brothers, Fathers Calogero and Ignatius Scaravilli, all gave assurance that in collaboration with the municipal authorities, they would provide everything needed as quickly as possible.

So Father Cagliero left Sister Brigida Prandi there as Superior and teacher, Sister Emanuela Elena, also a teacher, and the novice, Sister Veneranda Mananici for the house-keeping. He commended all of them to the Blessed Virgin that she might guard and guide them in their new field of labor.

This was the same thought that Don Bosco had written [\[p. 260\]](#) on a picture of Mary Help of Christians, for Sister Elena. "May Mary Most Holy guide you; trust in her; recommend frequent Communion." Since the Sister continually displayed her little "treasure," the Director concluded, "Make the souvenir Sister Elena is talking about your own and you will be happy."

Further controversy over Chieri

According to a letter written by the Sister Superior Rosalia Pestarino, one might gather that the atmosphere in Chieri was still rather stormy. It seemed that the repeated advice to play down the victorious return of Father Bonetti to the flourishing oratory had not been sufficient. The glowing embers under the ashes revived in such a way as to bring about a fresh disturbance of the peace and new disagreements among the good.

I intended keeping silence [runs Sister Rosalia's letter of the 29th] but yesterday one of the oratory girls gave me a newspaper clipping to read. It contained a little bit of everything against us. Has the information reached you, dearest Mother? If it has, the Director Father Lemoyne will have already sweetened the bitterness for you; if not, pardon me the displeasure I bring you. I cannot send you the actual article because I had to give it back at once, but I remember the principal points which are deeply impressed on my memory.

Don Bosco has an ant-hill of priests and Brothers who look after old and young fanatics. The law wants no more convents but Don Bosco is creating more to deceive many poor working class children, and he is driving mothers and fathers to desperation as they see their sons and daughters taken from them, innocent victims of unfeeling and egoistic nuns and Brothers. The girls are sent to Nizza with the excuse of training them to be teachers. Then they dress them in black. . . This is what happened to fifteen of them recently after they had left with the abbess. The governing authorities see all this, yet they let everything pass!

[\[p. 261\]](#) Dear Mother, if you wish to know everything, get the *Gazzetta del Popolo* of October 6, and you will understand how they wish to harm our Houses at Nizza and Chieri.

But Our Lady is over all and the devil cannot win. Meanwhile we shall try to be as good and quiet as possible in order to avoid being an occasion of more grief to you. We want, rather, to console you and the other dear

Superiors, not to mention our dear Don Bosco and Father Bonetti. . .²⁹

Our Mother had always suspected that there would be more contrary storm winds from Chieri, but she did not expect them to blow so violently. She suffered much, but more especially for Don Bosco and Father Bonetti.

However Father Lemoyne was quick and ready to bring peace and serenity where tribulation could make

devastating inroads.

"What you tell me and what I know already is only a single straw in the great haystack that the angry anticlericals are trying to build up against Don Bosco. But Don Bosco does not let it bother him and leaves Father Bonetti to fight his own battles. Father Bonetti is about to give us a surprise in the production of his new pamphlet in defense of Cardinal Alimonda. It is entitled, *A mite and an eagle*. "30

Mother and the Sisters were still more convinced that the saints do not allow themselves to be frightened by the machinations of the wicked. So confidence revived in their hearts that the *mite* of insidious evil could never contaminate the good done in the name of God.

Don Boseo's talk to the future missionaries

Immediately after the solemnity of All Saints the twelve Sisters chosen for the new missionary expedition left for Turin. Mother vicar went with them to thank Don Bosco and Mary Help of Christians for her recovery. She would then go on to Lanzo to continue her convalescence.

[p. 262] The missionaries were to stay in Turin for awhile in order to take a few lessons in Spanish from Father Costamagna.

However the lessons were limited to just a few days because Father Provincial had to meet Father Cagliero, who was on his way back from Sicily. Together they were to go to Rome in order to give the Pope an account of conditions in Patagonia, and to receive his blessing on each of the new missionaries.

The farewell ceremony for the new missionaries was fixed for the 10th. By that time, both Superiors should be back in Turin.

The missionaries relived with emotion their meeting with Don Bosco on the previous day and Father Cagliero exhorted them to write down everything the Founder had said to them: "Nothing he said must be lost, not even a word. Do you understand?"

This is what the novice, Sister Louise Vaschetti, wrote down:

First he encouraged us to undertake the long journey to America with great confidence in the protection of Mary Help of Christians. Then he told us about the increased facilities for such a journey today.³¹ because of the progress made in nautical skills. After this Don Bosco gave us the following souvenir: "Just as the Apostles called themselves useless servants after working many miracles and carrying out great enterprises for the glory of God, so we, after all the work God does through us, must protest that we are God's humble servants, convinced that all we do is the work of God.

And you Daughters of Mary Help of Christians called by God to be missionaries, you must arm yourselves with courage and virtue in order that your work may produce the desired effect.

To attain this end you will need to treasure the holy principles and wise instructions you have received in the Mother House. Therefore you must do like the soldiers: while in the barracks, they practice using the arms they will need when they go to the assistance of an assaulted city, [p. 263] or to disperse a troupe of marauders, and so on. Now you must put into practice the virtues you have been taught, and courageously overcome the difficulties inseparable from the great work to which you are about to dedicate your selves: namely, the salvation of souls.

Now how can the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians be sure their lives conform to the spirit of the Mother House and the Superior General's aim? The surest means is to keep the holy Rule in everything and for everything. Imitate the Hebrews who used to wear two bands, one on the forehead and the other across the chest. The Law was written on these to remind them, wherever they were, of their obligation to keep God's commands faithfully. You must bear the Rule in your mind and in your heart, and never fall short of what is prescribed.

Hold your Rule dear and observe it faithfully. Should anyone forget herself, I recommend you to correct one another and advise one another, without waiting for the Superiors to do it. But care must be taken to do this charitably so that while one feels courageous enough to admonish, the other may be courageous enough to accept the correction without resentment."

He then gave each one a rosary and remarked on the cross at the end saying, "A cross, not a medal-to remind you that the cross must be your companion always and everywhere. "

Having said this he again wished us a safe journey, assured us of heavenly protection and then, very much moved, imparted to us his fatherly blessing (November 9, 1883.)

A double missionary celebration

In the afternoon of Saturday, November 10, well in advance of the time fixed for the celebration, the Church of Mary Help of Christians was packed with relatives, acquaintances and friends. The ceremony which was shared with the Salesians drew tears of silent emotion. The Sisters who were unable to be present heard from the missionaries the three main points which concluded the impassioned dis- [p. 264]course of Father Costamagna: "We need missionary Fathers and missionary Sisters for the civilization of the savages, for the good morals of the civilized, and for the preservation of faith in the emigrants. Give us missionaries; become missionaries: as a duty of charity, in gratitude to God and in order to correspond with grace."

A quick supper; a still quicker farewell with embraces and kisses, and then off to the station. The Salesians with Father Cagliariere were bound for Sampierdarena while the Sisters with Mother General were expected at Nizza, where another day of emotion and devout piety among the Sisters awaited them.

Sunday the 11th was completely dedicated to the missionaries. There were motets during mass and fervent Communion. In the dining room, compliments, congratulations and verses of good wishes succeeded one another. Then there was a spirited discourse by Father Lemoyne in which he urged gratitude to God for the special call to an apostolate among the savages, idolators, non-Catholics of all types, and young people ignorant of every Christian principle. He urged gratitude to Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, for having raised the humble Institute with its still more humble Daughters to confirm that using insignificant instruments is the usual mark of the most gigantic works of God on earth.

The devotional celebration was brought to an end with the ritual prayer for pilgrims and the solemn benediction of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

Supper was followed by the Good Night which might have been called "an affectionate religious embrace." The last prayers in common were then recited in the chapel of Our Lady of Graces and sleep followed on straw mattresses which were very beneficial if not soft. Some dreamed of seas and mountains, of forests and unknown lands, while others lay awake wrapped in prayer.

[p. 265] "Take heart, my children! "

The 12th was a very busy day for those about to depart as well as for those who remained. It was the day of a hundred services and attentions. Towards evening, although the temperature was hardly like April, the community gathered under the arcade close to what were generally called "Don Bosco's stairs." Here an affectionate "Godspeed" was voiced and a holy promise of fervent prayers was reiterated by the missionaries.

In their name the novice, Sister Louise Vaschetti, expressed in spontaneous verse the firm will of all to remain close in spite of distance; to be always Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and Don Bosco, even where the country was inhospitable; and to be always dependent on the motherly and Sisterly prayers of those left behind.

But the time had come for departure, and the generous missionaries were soon seated with Mother General in their third class carriage. They were met at Sampierdarena by the group of priests who had already preceded them, and together they continued the journey, taking the Genoa Marseilles line.

There was a brave but tender "Godspeed" and Father Cagliariere, in the name of Don Bosco who had remained in Turin, repeated, "Take heart, my children! Whether you are on sea or land, Our Lady will be always with you. She will be your compassionate Mother and powerful Queen."

Father Costamagna, the Provincial, tried hard not to show his emotion and mixed freely with his brethren and the other passengers in his compartment. Those who knew him intimately said, "What a great heart he has under that rough exterior!"

First news from the travelers

On November 14 the first news arrived from Marseilles:

. . . We have embarked on the *Beam*, the ship that is to our destination. At the moment Father Cagliariere is trying to reason with Madam Jacques who came with Sister Meana to accompany us to the ship, hoping perhaps to obtain some comfort for us Sisters³² and it seems they might have won the day. Father Provincial Costamagna is walking up and down without stopping; you already know why. He is doing his best not to appear moved. As for us, our thoughts and our hearts are sometimes at Nizza and Turin and sometimes with our families and our dear homeland. . . Then they move in a moment to Patagonia or in that direction, only to return, and we hide ourselves in the Heart of Jesus, where all is found again and nothing is lost.

We entrust this letter to Sister Meana, because Father Cagliariere will have other things to think about, if it

is true that he intends visiting our Sisters in France, and we hope it will arrive in Nizza quickly. The letter bore the signatures of Sister Josephine Testa, Sister Louise Ferrero, Sister Clementine Rabagliati, Sister Angela Cagliero, Sister Catherine Picco, Sister Margaret Cantavena, Sister Annette Balduzzi, Sister Emilia Fracchia, Sister Annette Grassi, Sister Concetta Bellomo, Sister Maria Bussetti and Sister Louise Vaschetti.

A double postscript followed the signatures:

It is Sister Angela Cagliero adding this in order to assure you of our happy arrival in Marseilles eight days ago, and to tell you that when I went to get Don Bosco's last blessing before leaving Turin I was so overcome that I could not utter a word. So much so that he had to come to my aid. He said, "So you are going to America. Go then joyfully, because with the assistance of Mary Help of Christians, you will save many souls!"

The second postscript is mine, poor Sister Louise Ferrero. I want to say something I have not yet told you. It is this. When I went privately to say good-bye to him, Don Bosco [p.267] said, "We shall not see each other again on this earth but we shall meet in heaven. You will have much to suffer but Our Lady will help you in a very special manner. Be at peace regarding your past life . . ."

Therefore I commend myself to the prayers of all of you, that the past may leave me in peace and the future not frighten me.

Two new Houses

In the period between the departure of the missionaries and their news from Marseilles, two new foundations were started in Villarboit and Borgo Cornalese, on the 12th and 15th respectively. Each was to have its kindergarten, Festive Oratory, and perhaps, parish catechism classes with a few hours of private elementary teaching.

Villarboit in Vercellese was a rice field district. Hence there was an immediate threat of malaria, but the zealous parish priest, who was a friend of Don Bosco, was so capable of pleading his cause and that of the civil authority, that he obtained the Sisters very quickly. The population numbered little more than 1,000, but the children were numerous and the young girls were so pious that there were good prospects of an excellent kindergarten and a flourishing oratory. This was the hope of the Sisters who were starting the work. They were: Sister Philippine Canale, who was to be the Superior; Sister Rose Nole, who had been professed just over a year; and Sister Pellegrina Galizio, a novice of three months.

Borgo Cornalese was a small district of Villastellone, about twenty kilometers from Turin. The castle of the Counts De Maistre was situated in this area and it was Count Eugenio who had requested the foundation. He was a benefactor of Don Bosco and so could not be denied. Sister Santina Pisciolli was to be the Superior. With her were to go Sister Margaret Raineri, professed in August of the previous year, and Sister Celestine Torretta, a novice clothed [p. 268] in March of the current year.

They went in the name of God, Our Lady, and Don Bosco for the good of little children, young people and the peasants, who were largely dependents of the Counts. It was hoped that this work would produce a great harvest for heaven.

"Go ahead and cut without fear"

Because it was a journey of no return, a very different type of departure took place in Turin on November 28, when Sister Joan Costa died.

It was only her spirit of religious submission that disposed her to submit to the surgeon's knife after four years of atrocious suffering. Jesus must have been pleased with Sister Joan's offering of her will and her very life as she said to the operating team with delicate respect, "Go ahead and cut without fear. I shall go to heaven all the quicker."

After suffering a long and painful agony with admirable patience and burning love for her crucified Lord, she went to meet her heavenly Spouse.

Father Lemoyne secretary of the Superior Chapter

Before returning from Genoa, the Director General had prepared Mother General for detachment from the zealous Father Lemoyne, who had already been elected secretary to the Superior Chapter. It was now the moment to prepare the community for the sacrifice and Mother gave the news with emotion and sincere regret.

The day fixed for the good Director's departure was December 10, the feast of the Translocation of the House of Loretto. Gratitude overflowed from all hearts. Mother expressed this in her letter of December 18, when she wrote :

[p. 269] It was my wish and a need of my heart right from the sad early days following your departure, to write to you in order:

1. to ask your pardon for my lack of courage to come bid you farewell before you left for Turin;
2. to return the greetings you left in writing for the whole community.³³ The Sisters were stunned on hearing that you had left and feared they would neither see nor greet you again. It took me two days to pluck up enough courage to send you news and give you our regards.

Truly, I did not realize that your departure would have caused so much suffering. But I personally felt all the grief that an affectionate and grateful daughter feels when her father goes away. I understand more than ever now, all the good you did for my soul and for the whole Congregation, as well as what you would have done in the future, knowing the extent of our shortcomings and our weakness, had God left you with us as Father and Director of our souls. . .

Please continue as you promised, to help us from afar by your fervent prayers and wise counsel, and also by paying us a visit from time to time. You will always find us grateful and affectionate Daughters who, in order to correspond to your fatherly care, will do all that is possible to put both your general and particular advice into practice.

. . . Thank you for the interest you took in us when speaking to our good Father Don Bosco. I thank God that I have been able in some way to keep him updated about everything. May he always be a Father to me as I feel myself evermore his sincere and affectionate Daughter.

. . . I hope to write again later. . .

All the members of the Chapter have left it to me to give you their special greetings and thanks for all you did for them. They wish to assure you that they will never forget the help received from you and will always pray for you. The same response comes from the unanimous voice of the community. . .

. . . Bless us all and especially your poor but grateful and affectionate Daughter,

*Sister Catherine*³⁴

[p. 270] Christmas

There was something new for Christmas this year. In homage to the new Director, Father Louis Bussi, who was already settled in Nizza, it had been proposed to represent the Crib of Bethlehem on stage, complete with the adoration of the Magi. This was an historical-imaginative production designed to stimulate an ardent love for the new-born Infant, and to complete the family warmth of the common celebration.

Don Bosco's letter to Mother General

When replying to the Christmas greetings sent to him from Nizza, Don Bosco reassured our Mother regarding some concern caused by vague gossip and indistinct allusions.

Turin, December 25, 1883

Dear Reverend Mother General,

I received your wishes and those of the Sisters and pupils. Thank you heartily for them. I pray that God may repay you for the charity of your prayers.

Do not heed the chatter that is going on about your House. It concerns vague matters not understood and misinterpreted. Therefore let those who have anything to say, speak out clearly.

Do not worry. When there is something I need to say, I shall not send someone else, but shall say or write it myself.

May God bless you and give you and your Sisters perseverance, as well as all the children entrusted to you.
Believe me in Jesus Christ,

Your humble servant,
*Father John Bosco*³⁵

[p. 271] Father Cagliero at Nizza

On the feast of the Holy Innocents Father Cagliero came to Nizza with pleasant and wonderful news. Included in this were particulars about the instant cure of the paralytic child on the 20th of this month.³⁶

He also referred to an article in a Roman paper in which the correspondent defines Don Bosco "a saint," and "the glory of Italy."³⁷

Father Cagliero added more news about the excellent voyage of the Sisters on their way to Argentina and Patagonia. He did not fail to speak about Don Bosco's beautiful conference at Casale Monferrato, where our dear Father had also given a magnificent description of the work of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

To lighten the hearts of our Mother and the Sisters still more, Father Cagliero passed on several letters of good wishes which Don Bosco had received from the missionaries. He repeated that our good Father had enjoyed reading them and had given permission for them to be read to the community of Nizza so that the simplicity and reverence for the Superiors-whether near or far away-might always be maintained.³⁸

That same evening Father Cagliero initiated a triduum of sermons for the new candidates for religious clothing. He developed the basic subject: to love Jesus; to love Jesus exclusively, consecrating to Him all thoughts, desires, words, deeds and one's entire being only to please Jesus and to get closer to Him in a sure way; to love Our Lady and our holy Guardian Angels, who lead us to Jesus together with all those we must lead to Jesus.

NOTES

1883

1. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.
2. In 1895 this property became the central novitiate for the missions and was known as Saint Joseph's according to the wish expressed by Sister Maria Terzano herself.
3. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA. Cf. *Salesian Bulletin*, April, 1883, Year VII, No. 4, 61-62.
4. The dream is published in M.B., XVI, 16.
5. This is obviously a reference by our Father to the information received from America regarding some Sisters with little religious spirit.
6. *Salesian Bulletin*, February, 1883, Year VII, No. 2,24. 7. Cf. M.B., XVI, 36.
8. cr. M.B., XVI, 36 and 463.
9. The letter was addressed to Father Cagliero in Spanish. (copy in Gen. Arch. FMA).
10. Father Lemoyne's note. 11. Father Lemoyne's note. 12. Cr. M.B., XVI, 458.
13. Cr. M.B., XVI, 39.
14. Original in Spanish, dated February 27, 1883 is in Gen. Arch. FMA.
15. Letter of Mother Vallese to Father Cagliero dated February 2, 1883; original in Spanish in Gen. Arch. FMA.
16. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA. Cfr. M.B., XV, 53-55; XVI, 51-57; XVII, 49.
17. *Salesian Bulletin*, May, 1883, Year VII, No. 5,77.
- [p. 273]** 18. Copy in the Gen. Arch. FMA. Cf. *Salesron Bulletin*, June, 1883, Year VII, No. 6, 96.
19. Don Bosco's conference to the Cooperators of Marseilles, March 29, 1883. *Salesron Bulletin*, May, 1883, Year VII, No. 5,79.
20. *Salesron Bulletin*, June, 1883, Year VII, No. 6, 89-96; 100.

21. *Salesian Bulletin*, July, 1883, Year VII, No. 7, 115. 22. Appendix No. 1d).
23. Don Bosco left on the train for Florence with Father Costamagna, but his destination was Pistoia. (M.B., XVI, 300, 302, 308).
24. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.
25. Letter to Don Bosco dated July 6, 1883. Cf. M.B., XVI, 381-382. *Salesron Bulletin*, October, 1883, Year VII, No. 10, 158-159.
26. Sister Octavia Bussolino, see page 236.
27. The Provincial Father Costamagna was in Italy at that time and Mother Martini had died a short time previously.
28. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.
29. Cf. M.B., XVI, 359.
30. Cf. M.B., XVI, 360-61. *Salesian Bulletin*, December, 1883, Year VI, No. 12,201.
31. He could have described what had been revealed to him in a recent dream, August 30, concerning the future of the missions. (M.B., XVI, 385.)
32. *Salesian Bulletin*, December, 1883, Year VII, No. 12, 202.
33. See notes with his remembrances to Mother General, the Sister, the novices, the postulants, in Gen. Arch. FMA.
34. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.
35. Cf. M.B., XVI, 433.
36. M.B., XVI, 315-316.
37. M.B., XVI, 317.
38. Appendix No. 10.

1884

A new year and new clothings

The new year dawned in the joyful light of new clothings. Among the fourteen candidates was Bianca Lemoyne, the Director's sister.

Father Lemoyne had returned for a short visit and it was more than likely that this would be the last ceremony of its kind at which he would assist.

Above the general emotion sounded the strong, decisive voice of Father Cagliero: "The world is perverse because Christ is not loved. Souls are lost. because Christ is not reigning in our midst. Jesus must be victorious in us and around us, and Jesus will be victorious if Mary Most Holy is our divine Immaculate Help of Christians in reality!"

In a spirit of joy the new novices renewed their steadfast resolution to become enthusiastic apostles of Jesus and Mary.

A letter from Don Bosco

After spending a few days in the Salesian serenity of the House, Father Bussi, the new Director, presented the community with a beautiful letter from Don Bosco. In it he exchanged greetings with those of his Daughters which, he said, had given him great comfort.

V.G.M.G.

Turin, January 6, 1884 My

My dear good Daughters in Jesus Christ,

I am greatly comforted every time I receive words of respect and affection from you, my good Daughters. The [p. 276] affectionate expressions you have addressed to me, either personally or by letter, on the occasion of Christmas and the New year, very reasonably demand of me a special word of gratitude for the filial affection you have shown me.

First of all I must tell you that I am very pleased with you and the eagerness with which you undertake any kind of work, even very strenuous tasks, in order to promote the glory of God in our Houses and among the young entrusted to us each day by Divine Providence. This is how we are meant to guide them along the path of virtue and honor towards our heavenly home.

You have thanked me in many ways and different expressions for what I do for you. You have courageously offered to work with me and share with me honor, fatigue and glory on earth, in order to obtain the great reward God has prepared for all of us in heaven. You have said you want nothing more than to know what I think best for you, and that you would accept it and carry it out unquestionably. These precious words of yours are very pleasing to me. Replying simply, as a father, I thank you with all my heart, assuring you that you would do me the greatest favor if you would help me to save your souls.

You well know, my dearest Daughters, that I accepted you into the Congregation and that I have always been most solicitous for your good, in order to insure your eternal salvation. Therefore, if you help me in this great undertaking you will be doing all that the heart of a father expects from you. You can easily guess the things you must do in this all-important undertaking. You must observe the holy Rule which is meant as a guide for the good of your own souls and for the spiritual and temporal benefit of your pupils. You have read and studied these Rules, which are now the object of your promise, and of the vows by which you have consecrated yourselves to God. Therefore with all my heart I recommend that none of you utter words of regret, and still less of repentance for thus having consecrated yourselves to God. That would be an act of black ingratitude. All that we have, either in the spiritual or temporal order, belongs to God. Therefore when we consecrate ourselves by the religious profession we do nothing more [p. 277] than offer Him that which He Himself has lent us, so to speak, but which is in reality entirely His own.

Therefore should any of you withdraw from the observance of your vows, you would be acting dishonestly towards the Lord, taking back, trampling underfoot, and desecrating in His presence that which you have placed in His hands. Some of you may say that the observance of your Rules requires too much effort. The observance of the Rules is burdensome only to those who do not observe them willingly, to those who are negligent. But those who are zealous and truly concerned with the good of souls find this observance, as Our Savior tells us, a yoke that is sweet and a burden that is light. *Jugum meum suave est et onus meum leve.*

And then, my dear Daughters, do you perhaps expect to go to heaven in a carriage? You have become religious not to enjoy yourselves, but to suffer and gain merit for the next life. You have not consecrated yourselves to God in order to command others, but to obey; not to attach yourselves to creatures, but to practice charity towards your fellowman for love of God; not to lead a life of comfort, but to be poor and to suffer on earth in union with Jesus Christ, in order to become worthy to share in His glory in heaven.

Take courage then, my good and dearly loved Daughters. You have put your hand to the plow-be firm. Let none of you turn to look back on the false and treacherous world. We must forge ahead. It may cost us privation, hunger, thirst and perhaps even death. But let us always remember that if the reward is so great and so sublime, we must not be discouraged by the efforts we have to make in order to merit it. *Si delectat magnitudo paremiroum, non deterreat certamen laborum.*

May the grace of God and the protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary be always with you and help you to persevere in the divine service until the last moment of your lives. Amen.

Affectionately in Jesus Christ,
Father John Bosco

[p. 278]

Mother's "Strenna"

"Amen, so be it!" Such was the Daughters' enthusiastic response. There was a general resolve to renew their program of commitment to God and to personal holiness. Our Mother's "strenna," which was written for all her Daughters, served to encourage the community in this resolve. It comprised four points: presence of God; obedience; custody of the heart; spirit of sacrifice.¹

The January *Salesian Bulletin* printed Don Bosco's excellent report to the Cooperators on the ever vaster fields of labor opening up to Salesian zeal. This strengthened their ardent resolution to be apostles of Jesus and Mary in whatever position they were in at the moment and wherever they might go in the future. *Da mihi animas*

cetera tolle!

The first death of the year

On January 15, Sister Teresa Maritano died in her own home, to which she had gone because of ill health. The Sisters who appreciated her outstanding humility in spite of her fiery temperament, were very distressed at her premature death, without the consolation of dying in a religious House.

Meeting the new Archbishop of Turin

The Sisters of Turin were very happy. They had been able to pay their respects to their new Archbishop, Cardinal Alimonda, in the sacristy of Mary Help of Christians. Now they wished to share their joy with the Sisters at Nizza. The Archbishop had been defined as a "gift of God" for the Archdiocese of Turin, which had not had the honor of a Cardinal for a whole century. The Sisters declared he had spoken to them with fatherly kindness.

It was well known that there was an atmosphere of [p. 678] opposition to the Archbishop in the city. Discerning this he prudently entered the diocese privately, taking no account of the maliciousness of the sects.

But when the good Catholics saw him enter the cathedral without pomp or ceremony they could not have given him a warmer welcome.

The Archbishop was said to have a special esteem for Don Bosco and he soon proved it! When Don Bosco requested an audience, the Cardinal himself came to the Oratory in order to spare Don Bosco any inconvenience.

This incident was given full coverage in the February *Bulletin*.²

"He has such an affable manner," said the Sisters, "that hearts expand, and even those who would rather not, are converted."³

Another Sister ready for heaven

While the Turin community rejoiced, that of Sampierdarena was plunged into mourning. Sister Catherine Massa died in terrible pain from spinal meningitis.

Don Bosco had said to her at the beginning of her religious life, "If you are not able to help the Institute very much by your work, you will help it very much by your sufferings." This dear Sister suffered the anguish of her difficult cross for a good six years.

News for Argentina

At last a few lines from Buenos Aires and the latest missionaries showed them to be well and very much alive:

We left on a Saturday, and arrived on a Saturday, at the end of the Marian month, which coincides here with the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The journey was pleasant and the welcome we received, warm and fraternal. The rest of the news and still more of it, will come from our generous- [p. 280] hearted Provincial. At the moment... there are tears of emotion, with our hearts in the past, the present and the future.

We are as ever, dearest Mother, your Daughters

So everyone awaited "the rest" and "the still more," from the *February Salesian Bulletin*.⁴

Carnival in the House

Meanwhile the Mardi Gras season was approaching. This meant a commitment to keeping the girls happy and preventing all danger. There was to be an entertainment with music and drama in Our Lady's House. Invitations were distributed throughout the city.

The preparations involved plenty of work for everyone.

The first invitations sent out brought such a response that it soon became obvious there would be insufficient room for everyone. Still the people came while confusion continued and increased. So to avoid inconvenience, latecomers were asked to be patient and go home without seeing anything at Our Lady's House but confusion

and a new kind of amusement. Only when they were promised that there would be a "repeat" the following day would those excluded accept to be turned away.

The following day, February 19, invitations were again issued, but only to well-known families, and with the specification that the *invitation was personal!* This time there was no disorder. The concert hall was crowded but in an orderly manner. Music, songs, comedy and farce were all well performed and the spectators left saying, "Well done! Give us another such entertaining two hours soon!"

The entertainment was repeated on the 26th and then Lent began. All were convinced that many sins had been prevented and the seeds of many good thoughts and Christian sentiments had been sown.

[p. 281] Alarming rumors about Don Bosco's health

Alarming rumors had come from Turin regarding Don Bosco's health. At the same time it became known that in spite of his diminished strength and weak stomach, he did not want to give up an alms-seeking expedition to France. He needed help to settle his many debts and provide for the new and urgent needs of his religious family.

Immediately a holy rivalry in prayer and even in heroic personal offerings began in order to obtain renewed life and energy for our beloved Father from heaven.

Father Lemoyne was not long in confirming these rumors. He added, "It is true that we have been asked to go to Russia, but at the moment we are thinking of nothing but the poor health of our dear Don Bosco. Therefore let no one neglect to perform those acts of virtue capable of obtaining for him a renewal of strength, so that we may keep him among us . . . for a hundred years more."

A short time later news arrived of his journey to France. It was therefore generally presumed that he was better but. . . had his health really improved?

Prayer for the Pope

March 3 was the anniversary of the coronation of Pope Leo XIII. In both the Nizza community and the Turin Oratory, there was a revival of devotion to the Holy Father. Besides fervent prayers for his intentions, the whole day was dedicated to thanksgiving.

Don Bosco at Alassio

A few lines from the Sisters at Alassio satisfied everyone. Don Bosco had been among them "like a vision." They had been able to kiss his hand and enjoy his smile and his fatherly blessing. They had also asked for a word in [p. 282]remembrance of him and he had replied, "A remembrance of me?.. The holy Rule... The holy Rule is a whole chain of remembrances." Then he blessed them and all were very much moved at seeing him in such poor health and looking so much older than his years. Father Barberis and Father Savio were with him on this occasion.

"Let us pray, and pray much," concluded our Mother, after giving us this news, "and let us multiply our practices in honor of Saint Joseph, that he may cheer our hearts with still better news. "

On the 19th, the great saint's feastday, there was a sung mass, sermon and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

But the following day brought news of another bereavement. Seventeen-year-old Sister Josephine Alessi died at Bronte. All her life she had longed to be a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. She passed away two months after her religious profession.

News from Nizza-mare

Towards the end of the month the Sisters of Nizza-mare wrote, filling in the details of the news previously given by the Director, Father Bussi. Some spoke of Don Bosco's arrival and the festival of welcome; others listed the places he visited in deference to benefactors and to receive alms; some lamented the deterioration of his health; and finally, some spoke of the prodigious graces and actual miracles that followed everywhere in his wake. There were those who regretted not being able to approach him personally, but Sister Caroline Rota includes everything worth noting in her superb report. It certainly merits transcribing:

We at Nizza-mare made it our business to keep close to the Salesians in order to be present when our good Father arrived.

We thought he looked very exhausted and was finding it a [p. 283] great effort to smile at everyone! It was rather late in the evening and so after about a quarter of an hour among the crowds who pushed and jostled one another in order to kiss his hand, he did not refuse when invited to withdraw to his room to rest.

The following morning we had the pleasant surprise of assisting at his mass in our chapel and receiving Holy Communion from his hands.

After mass we followed him into the parlor where he took his breakfast. We had prepared an egg beaten in coffee and he tranquilly helped himself to sugar, taking one spoonful after another until quite a number of spoonfuls had gone into that cup!

"Don Bosco, Don Bosco," exclaimed his secretary. "What are you doing?" All that sugar will make it into a pulp! You will never be able to swallow it!"

"Sweetness, sweetness," said Don Bosco, smiling. "Saint Francis de Sales had a great love for sweetness. . . and Don Bosco wishes to imitate him!"

This of course brought a general laugh.

After breakfast he looked around at us who stood with our eyes fixed on him. Then he said with great energy, "Take care, my good Daughters, never to destroy anyone's reputation, not even with one another. . ."

He repeated a second time, "Take care not to destroy anyone's reputation, and not even among yourselves. . ."

Having very little experience, I did not at the time realize that he was referring to backbiting, which he detested.

While Don Bosco was staying in Nice one of his benefactors, very shocked at his poor state of health, sent him a prepared chicken every morning. Another sent a piece of beef. This made us very happy because we could make a good soup for Don Bosco's dinner and supper.

We cooked the chicken and beef together by the (double boiler) method and produced a clear, rather thick, substantial broth which was almost jelly. The cooked chicken was then minced and tapioca or fine vermicelli noodles added to the broth. After the soup, at dinner, Don Bosco would take two eggs with tomato sauce, or an omelette with an herb condiment. This would be followed by a small pudding.

[p. 284] In this manner we hoped to build up our good Father physically, and cure his ills, in order to preserve him for the good of the Congregation and for souls.

How eagerly we did all this, helped by our Superior, Sister Rasino!

For two weeks Divine Providence made use of our generous benefactors who helped in the good work by bringing us jars of meat extract, cocoa, sweetmeats, biscuits and fruit, also.

Before he left Don Bosco was invited to speak to an Institute of Sisters. Since he felt so much better he raised no objections, and it was said that his conference was very fruitful and pleased all his listeners-so much so that he was asked to accept an offering of thirty-nine thousand lire for the single visit. This was no trifling sum!

When the day of departure arrived he could say in the presence of the Sisters, "I feel very much better. I wonder why? In Turin they give me soup, a plate of meat and vegetables, and fruit just as you have done. Yet I always felt languid there, but now I feel a new man. I wonder why?"

As I was the cook Don Bosco's companion turned to me and asked for our recipe for the cure. But I smiled and answered, "It would be useless to give it to you as they would not be able to use it in Turin!"

Then, turning to the Director Don Bosco observed, "I am leaving here very pleased and grateful. My stomach is much stronger, and my purse well filled and heavy. . ."

May God be praised and may Don Bosco bless once again his Daughter,

Sister Caroline Rota

Records of Don Bosco's travels in France

Don Bosco returned to Turin very much improved in health and replenished in spirit and. . . in purse! His Daughters in Turin joined with the Oratory personnel in providing a welcome for him. They also received some more good news which was to be communicated to Nizza Monferrato and to the Sisters of Alassio and France. According to our [p. 285] Mother this might be called "Happy family memories not to be cast to the winds."

Therefore we give here a summarized report so that these memories may be preserved for all time.

There had been tears on that 2nd of March when Don Bosco was seen scarcely able to stand. Now these tears changed to sighs of relief when, on April 3, he returned less bent and more disposed to bring smiles to the faces of his Daughters, dispersed among the Salesians, the boys and many lay people.

His words to them were few but very kind, "You really do have a great deal of work to do. Yes, a great deal of work! But heaven is yours. So be cheerful! Keep cheerful and do everything for God!"

He had been in Nice from March 4-12. But how pitiful it was to see him begging alms even for a few moments only, in the midst of such a crowd that he could hardly even breathe, as they pressed on all sides!

Yet, in spite of the crippling infirmity of his legs he himself humbly presented the collection tray. One person would open up the way for him and support him in order to make his progress easier. The Director of the House followed him with a bag into which he emptied the tray as it was filled.

In order to prevent his passage being blocked straight after mass by the crowds waiting to receive his blessing or to talk over their problems with him, our dear Father accepted the offer of saying his mass in the Sisters' private chapel. He did this for a few days and then breakfasted with them afterwards. These were golden moments. The conversations were short but always helpful. One morning, when asked for a practice for the day, he referred to the tears his cloak had suffered and said, "We must take care not to allow our reputation to be torn to pieces and not to do this ourselves, especially with regard to the absent, who cannot defend themselves."

One day after spending several hours in the chapel [p. 286]confessional for the benefit of a good number of ladies, he came out with his lips parched. We offered him black currant juice to refresh him. But our Father smiled paternally as he said, "No, no! Don Bosco is not thirsty, and even if he were, a glass of fresh water would suffice."

To an agitated Sister Andreone, who told him how the boys had taken all the apples she had stored, as well as all the other fruit needed for the guests' table, our good Father replied calmly, "Are the boys to blame or are you? Young people must not be given a chance to do wrong. So we shall tell the prefect to secure the pantry window with a grill. "

Another morning-it is Sister Andreone herself writing this time-as he came out of chapel and passed close to the window overlooking Piazza d' Armi, Don Bosco could not refrain from saying, "Just look at all those people and the large number of carriages! It would seem that the Eternal Father Himself had arrived. Yet all of them are only waiting for this poor priest!"

On the feast of Saint Thomas Aquinas he gave his Daughters a good thought for the day: "Today is the feast of the great saint who attained perfection through silence. Silence is the school of sublime virtue. Will it not be good for you too?" Our Father's smile met a corresponding smile from his Daughters.⁵

The Sisters of Nice were sure they had found a cure for headaches by making use of an old, worn out skull cap belonging to Don Bosco which they had exchanged for a new one.⁶

Sister Emilia Montain, who later returned to Nizza Monferrato, was in Nice at that time and in perfect health. Don Bosco exclaimed, "Thirteen? Are there really thirteen of you? Well then, either another must be added to the number or one must go to heaven!"

The remark was taken as a joke but shortly afterwards Sister Montani was seized with such a strange illness that she had to return to Nizza immediately. It was here, in the House of the Madonna that she awaited her sentence of life or death.⁷

[p. 287] Without taking too much time to describe Don Bosco's enthusiastic reception and festive welcome, the Sisters of La Navarre came swiftly to the point.

Our Don Bosco himself is God's miracle! Between the 12th and 27th he visited Cannes, Frejus, Marseilles and Toulon, and the very stones were moved as he passed.

A novice we had⁸ was cleaning the windows when she fell so badly that she remained almost paralyzed in bed. When she heard that Don Bosco had arrived she said, "If he does so much for strangers, why not for me? . . ." So she asked our dear Father for a blessing. When he heard of her wish and her sad condition, Don Bosco was eager to grant the novice's request. She immediately rose to her feet, and our once helpless novice was seen busy about her tasks as if nothing had ever happened to her.

As was to be expected, word of this reached the ears of the confreres and the boys, and was so noised abroad that everyone could be heard exclaiming, "That is really a miracle!"

Meanwhile we were told that at Marseilles, Don Bosco had given sight to a blind man; health to a girl who had suffered from bone decay for five years; the peace of God to a possessed person he had exorcised; and, by placing a medal of Mary Help of Christians under his pillow, eternal salvation to an obstinate unbeliever who, until then, had sworn allegiance to the devil.

How could one help repeating that Don Bosco himself was a living miracle?⁹

The distance between La Navarre and St. Cyr is not very great and Don Bosco went willingly. Many singular events took place there too.

It was at St. Cyr that he said good humoredly, as the Counts of Colle repeatedly told the story: "For goodness sake, do not cut the clothes off my back and make me cut such a sorry figure! If you want my cassock, give me another that fits me!"

Both at La Navarre and at St. Cyr Don Bosco repeated his slogan, "Let those who are good become better and [p. 288] those who are holy become holier!" Before leaving he recommended, "Try to do everything well and at the right time. This means, when you are in church pray well, and when you are in the kitchen prepare the food well. Then all the Salesians and boys will be happy and you even more so, knowing that God and Our Lady are pleased with you." ¹⁰

More news came from both the young and the not-so-young benefactresses of the two exceedingly poor Houses, who visited our Sisters from time to time. Here are some extracts:

There was a poor woman living near me who was very ill but would not hear of confession. When a medal of Mary Help of Christians received from Don Bosco was placed around her neck, the grace of conversion came instantaneously, and the sick woman died a holy death.

I myself heard the Countess Colle tell everyone, "Long before the death of my son Louis, Don Bosco said to me: Take great care of this room because one day it will be consecrated to God!"

Before Louis passed away Don Bosco told me that God wanted him in heaven, not on earth. After his death he recommended me to turn to Louis whenever I was in difficulty. I did this and was always heard.

One day an evil looking character arrived at the door. I gave him an alms which seemed to me to be ample for his needs. But the rogue threatened to finish me off if I did not give him all he asked. I was alone in the house at the time. Then I remembered Don Bosco's advice and prayed to my Louis to help me in my hour of need. Suddenly the rascal took fright. In four leaps he was down the stairs and I saw him no more." ¹¹

Sister Vincenza Bessone relates:

I would like to say that when I was a young girl I used to go to some of Don Bosco's conferences. On one occasion I thought I should like to make a general confession to him. Everything was over in just a few minutes! All I had to do [p. 289] was answer his questions. I cannot express the peace and joy I felt when I heard him say, "Do not think of any of this again. I place all your sins in the Sacred Heart of Jesus to be burned up!"

I was really happy to have made my confession to a saint who could read my inmost soul.

We know from the Superior, Sister Meana, that Don Bosco made no secret either in public or in private, of the poverty of our Houses in France. Neither could he hide his displeasure whenever he saw a carpet or a tablecloth in the parlor. "Yes," he said, "I know they are presents. . . and that you use them out of regard for persons coming to inquire about your work. . . but carpets are not for us. Order and cleanliness by all means and always, but not carpets. We are poor. Everyone knows this and it is good that they see us as such."

"When this confidence was made to me," added Sister Meana, "by someone who used to call us fraternally *our Sisters of the big saucepans and the dish cloths*, I remembered his first fatherly observation to our first Superior in Turin. It was on the subject of carpets. And now, to think that we, *poor Sisters of the dish cloths* run the risk of falling into the same temptation!"

Don Bosco left Marseilles on April! and passed through Nice again. On the 3rd he was in Alassio and on the 4th in Sampierdarena. ¹² Here he made an important stop, calling the other Superiors of the Chapter to him for special meetings. These were hard days both for his mind as a Superior, and his heart as the father of a family that was sprouting like a vine in a promising spring. . .

Then prayers and good wishes followed him on his journey to Rome, where he arrived about halfway through the month. It was hoped that further interesting news would soon be received from Father Lemoyne, his companion, who had always been so generous with us.

[p. 290] **Three feasts combined**

There was a retreat in Nizza Monferrato from April 21-23, which ended with the clothing of sixteen postulants. It had been decided as far back as the previous January that clothing ceremonies should be repeated during the year. This was because of the consoling increase in vocations and the growing needs of the work. The April clothing was the second to take place in 1884.

Filled with apostolic zeal, the Director General preached on each of the three evenings. He carried out the ceremony of the following 24th and combined the theme of Mary Help of Christians with that of her representative for us, our Mother Superior.

Three feasts in one therefore, or four, if we take into account the fervent opening of the month of Mary Help of Christians at the Oratory in Turin while at Nizza the Director General added the feastday of Mother General to the annual commemoration of Saint Catherine of Siena.

Mother took advantage of Father Cagliero's presence to fete him as well, at the beautiful and magnificent evening entertainment.

It mattered little that because of this, the feast had to be anticipated from the 30th to the 25th.

Our dear Father made himself present on this festive day by sending our Mother from Rome a small picture of Saint Catherine of Siena on which he had written: "O Saint Catherine, bless your daughter the Mother General, the Sisters, aspirants and pupils, and guide everyone of them along the path to heaven.

Father J. Bosco ¹³

Don Bosco had forgotten no one. All felt themselves close to the heart of their Father and thanked God for this very real grace.

[p. 291] Sister Villata is called to heaven

So the Marian month began with each one revitalizing her love for her own vocation and filled with the desire to correspond to it fully. The *fioretti* (practices) multiplied also, as an offering for the visits Mother was making to the nearby Houses.

Because of Mother's absence, Our Lady's feast was postponed until her return on June 8.

During Mary's month, on May 12 to be exact, Sister Matilaa Villata died at Turin-Valdocco. She was a gentle and kind Sister who had experienced just five and a half years of religious life. During this period she had accumulated treasures in heaven by silent work and docile obedience.

Papal audience for Don Bosco

At last the expected news arrived. It spoke of the Papal audience granted Don Bosco on May 9.

Father Lemoyne, who had the honor of accompanying Don Bosco, was presented to the Pope as the former Director of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

Our Mother hastened to communicate to her Daughters some matters referred to by Don Bosco and written down by his faithful secretary, and also the fatherly kindness demonstrated by the Pontiff himself:

Oh Don Bosco, I love you, I love you! But you are not keeping well. It is absolutely essential that you take care of yourself. Let others do the work. Your life and your counsel are still needed for your Congregation. Treat yourself as you would treat me! The Church needs you at this moment! It is your mission to show the world that it is possible to be a good Catholic and at the same time an honest citizen; that it is possible to do a great deal of good to poor and abandoned youth without entangling oneself in politics.

[p. 292] The Pope, the Church and the world look to you. So take care of yourself. It is not you who function in your Congregation, which is admired by the good people and feared by the evil, but God Himself. Preach this, write it down, publish it. This is the secret by which you have overcome all obstacles and will overcome all others. The Pope will continue to bless and protect you.

But you must take every precaution to preserve your strength as much as possible. I command you. ¹⁴

A day of grace

The June 21, feast of Saint Aloysius, was the Director's feastday. However it was decided to postpone this to the following day, a Sunday. There was a sung mass, solemn Vespers, the enrollment of nine new Children of Mary, and an entertainment.

The 25th brought another day of grace in the visit of our beloved Bishop, Monsignor Sciandra. He administered the sacrament of Confirmation to ten boarders, among whom was Director General Father Cagliero's niece. Mrs. Adeline Terzano was sponsor for the occasion.

Coupled with the pleasant memories of the visit was the impression made by the good Father's earnest words: "Pray, and pray hard that the danger of cholera may be averted. . . The disease is already spreading throughout

Italy and is coming quite close to us. Pray, too, for the many people who, stricken with the disease, pass into eternity without the sacraments and without a thought of faith."

The month of the Sacred Heart ended on the 30th with a fervent sermon preached by the Director of Nichelino, Father Joseph Reviglio. What more could be desired for this blessed House of Our Lady?

[p. 293] Our Mother in Turin for Don Bosco's feastday

Having gone to Turin for Don Bosco's feastday Mother received consoling news from America. "Our people have written," said Father Lemoyne, "and you will find everything in the *Salesian Bulletin* of July and August. In the meantime, prepare more missionaries as good and courageous as those already working miracles in the places where they are stationed. Our Lady will then be glad to have you for her Daughters. "

When Mother returned home her first Good Night referred chiefly to the "tales" of Mother Petronilla who had come from Lanzo to see Mother. She had written down the following particulars:

Soon after his feast, Don Bosco went to Lanzo to celebrate Saint Aloysius' feast with his *Sons*. The next day, after celebrating mass in the Sisters' chapel, he went to their work room with the Director, Father Scappini, where he was offered a cup of coffee with a whipped egg. Seeing that the Director's cup contained no egg he exchanged cups: "Don Bosco must not give bad example-you take it!"

The Director urged him to take the egg himself in order to please the Sisters. In his great kindness he did so, much to the edification of everyone present.

Before he left Don Bosco asked if everyone was keeping well and if all of us were always happy to be in God's House. Hearing that one Sister was rather delicate in health he encouraged her to serve God generously and to pray with faith. He concluded in all seriousness, "God has never allowed us to want for what is necessary whether we are sick or in good health. If the doctor prescribes two chickens for you the Congregation will provide them. Help me to keep my ship afloat!" As he said this he gave a quick glance at the person concerned. Had he read her heart? . . . The fact is that the Sister felt the urge to speak to Don Bosco, but in the presence of her Superior, who already knew all about her.

Our good Father listened to her as she told him that her brothers wanted her at home in order to give her still better attention, although she lacked nothing in her religious House [p. 294]and was well provided for. He then replied, "Here you are sure of heaven. Will you be so sure in your own home? I can give you no such assurance... I can now only repeat to you alone, what I have already said to everyone. Think it over!"

The poor Sister understood the lesson, but remained very upset because her love of health was really greater than her love for her vocation. But for the others, even her sulky behavior was a lesson. We hope everyone will profit by it.

Mother Petronilla added something else. She said that the Director, Father Scappini, had confided to her how upset he felt because his mother insistently begged him to return home. She even did so in front of his clerics or during class time, pleading that she was all alone. He decided to ask Don Bosco to think of a solution. Our good Father replied to his request: "You are right. Yes, I shall think about it, and as quickly as possible! . . ."15

Mother concluded by pointing out Don Bosco's fatherly understanding. He thought of everyone, and did all he could without sparing himself.

The community of Nizza and the cholera victims

The cholera menace came ever nearer to Nizza Monferrato and its neighborhood. Hence urgent provisions had to be made. With the required permission from Turin our Mother offered the Town Council the country cottage known as *La Bruna*, which was close by. It was to be used for isolating suspected cases.

Every single Sister offered herself as a nurse. All of them trusted in Don Bosco's reassuring words, "The blessed medal of Mary Help of Christians keeps away all evil . . ."16

It is a fact that none of the Salesians or their boys, and none of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians or their boarders or day girls, were touched by the dreaded illness. Death, however, came by a different way to the recently opened House of Borgo Cornalese or Villastellone. [p. 295]The victim was the Superior, Sister Santina Pisciola. At the last moment of her life she synthesized her great objective, "To live by obedience and to die for obedience!"

"La Bruna" is transformed into a religious cenacle

Once the sick had departed and *La Bruna* had been adequately disinfected, it became the home of a little group of Sisters. The Director General, who had made the suggestion, prepared the inaugural ceremony, which was to take place on July 31.

The local Director was also to take part with Father Joseph Campi.

The room chosen for the chapel was blessed and dedicated to Mary Immaculate and Saint Joseph. Father Cagliero celebrated the first mass and the community sang hymns.

Towards 7:30 p.m. he returned for benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. This was preceded by an instructive sermon on the dedication of places chosen for divine worship. There were more hymns and some heart-warming, spontaneous demonstrations. The inaugural feast ended with gaslights and torches in the open space around the cottage.

The ladies' spiritual retreat

On August 1 the spiritual retreat for ladies opened at the House of Our Lady in an atmosphere of recollection worthy of a cloister.

There were about a hundred and thirty retreatants. The sermons were preached by the local Director, Father Bussi and the Salesian Cooperator, Father Ascanio Savio.

Don Bosco was not present this time because he was under doctor's orders to take a period of rest in the episcopal villa of Pinerolo. Nevertheless he was represented by [\[p. 296\]](#) Father Cagliero, who was always very welcome, especially for his little Good Night sermons.

We should now really give the title of Monsignor to the Director General, who had been appointed Vicar Apostolic of Northern and Central Patagonia the previous November. But the hearts of his Daughters felt that he was more than ever their Father, and they could call him by no other name.

Don Bosco, who was spiritually present, contacted the retreatants through a letter to Father Cagliero dated August 6. He was very happy to read it to the ladies almost in its entirety. ¹⁷

Pinerolo, August 6, 1884

My dear Father Cagliero,

It gives me great pleasure to know that a considerable number of ladies are making the retreat, in spite of all the discouraging rumors about the cholera now menacing our towns.

What gives me still more consolation is the exemplary manner in which these elect souls make their retreat. You know how to remove all fear of illness. It is the usual anti-dote: the medal of Mary Help of Christians, with the ejaculation *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*, and frequent Communion. That is all.

Since, however, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is the fount of all graces, I think that, with Mother Superior's consent, it would be good to promote a collection of alms for the Church and Hospice of the Sacred Heart in Rome.

Although my health is much improved I am unable to go to Nizza, much as I should like to, so I am trying to do what I can from here. Since August 1 I have been saying a special prayer for our retreatants during mass and at the end I send them the blessing of Mary Help of Christians. I shall continue to do this until the feast of Our Lady's Assumption into heaven.

It is fortunate for us that the novena of the Assumption occurs during these days. I should like to speak to each one of the retreatants to give advice that would assure each and all of them that they are on the path to heaven. I believe [\[p. 297\]](#) this is Mary's propitious moment and that she is saying, "My daughters, do not delay your final break with the world that pays nothing or pays badly, and is a betrayer. Consecrate yourselves generously to my Son Jesus, with all your possessions and your health. Let your hearts belong now and always to Jesus, even at the cost of great sacrifice."

O beloved daughters of Mary, pray for me also, and receive Holy Communion for my intentions! I shall continue to pray for you and we shall all meet one day in heaven with Jesus and Mary. So be it . . .

May God bless us all and may Mary help us as we journey along the path to heaven.

Your affectionate friend,

P.S. Remember me in the Lord to our Sisters. 18

A round of applause greeted the letter's conclusion while numerous voices pointed out, "Don Bosco's Sisters are also our good Sisters!"

The retreat was saddened by the death of Sister Josephine Stralla who passed away in Our Lady's House on August 5. She had not yet reached her twentieth year.

She could have been nicknamed "electric spark" because of her lively character and her quick reactions. But she was just as ready to make an act of humility and always ready to please others. Thus she endeared herself to everyone.

Her face in death expressed perfect peace, and even the boarders, who wished to see her in her coffin, said spontaneously, "She looks like a saint!"

The closing of the retreat was deferred until Sunday the 10th, so that the ladies could, as usual, be present at the girls' awards day celebration in the afternoon.

[p. 298] First General Chapter of the Institute

Preparations were going ahead for an event of primary importance, namely, the first General Chapter.

Everything had been arranged by Don Bosco in a very simple manner without any official communication.

The invitation, which called all the Superiors in Italy to meet at Nizza, did not speak of the Chapter, but only of important meetings to be held before the Sisters' spiritual retreat.

In agreement with the Director General, Don Bosco wished that everything established by the last Constitutions be implemented for the first time. Therefore Father Cagliero prepared the ground in good time, by suitable explanations on the significance of the first General Chapter.

He emphasized the duty of prayer for a successful outcome. Nearly all the Superiors in Italy had gathered in Our Lady's House. Only those from France, where cholera was raging, and those from distant America were absent.

Towards evening on August 11, they all gathered in church for the recitation of the holy rosary, the singing of the *Veni Creator* and the opening sermon. The latter stated the motive for, and the usefulness of what might be called the first General Chapter of the Institute.

Fully aware of the importance of their event, all present made their way to the place appointed for the meetings.

Those who did not attend the meetings reflected and prayed, knowing that they, too had a contribution to make to the common good, if not by presence and word, at least by prayer.

The Director General, Father Cagliero, presided over the Chapter as the representative of the Founder. He was assisted by the local Director, Father Bussi, and by Father John Bonetti, who was to preach the Sisters' retreat with Father Bertello.

The meeting days began and ended with prayer, practical advice for greater fidelity in the observance of the Rules **[p. 299]** and a deeper study of the deliberations of the Salesian General Chapter, as applied to our own religious family.

But the days set aside, from August 11-15, were too few to cope with the work involved. So, making a virtue of necessity, it was decided to combine the two commitments, giving the work a greater spiritual intensity.

The Sisters' retreat

The feast of the Assumption was solemnized in a special manner, and in the evening the spiritual retreat for Sisters and Superiors began. Added to the general disposition of soul, was the immediate preparation for a good number of religious clothings and professions. These had been scheduled by the Director General for the last day of the retreat.

He had also urged the Sisters not to keep silence concerning what they knew about Don Bosco. Thus the whole House became a cenacle of recollection and prayer.

In the meantime, in agreement with Father Cagliero, the Superiors and the preachers, slight changes were made in the timetable. There was to be just one meeting per day. Thus, without taking from the retreat they would be able to continue their Chapter work which, it was forecast, would last until noon on the 22nd.

Father Cagliero saw to it that our venerated Father and Founder was kept up to date with the way things were going, through Father Rua, the *alter ego* of the absent Don Bosco. He even announced publicly that he had written the following letter to Don Bosco:

The Sisters' General Chapter is forging ahead with full sails because it is based on that of the Salesians. We have reviewed the holy Rule and are now adapting the Salesian deliberations. Everything is taken down in the minutes, just as at the *Montecitorio*.¹⁹ It could also be added that God has blessed the ladies' retreat from which we hope to garner some good vocations.²⁰

[p. 300] Mother gives Don Bosco a report on the Chapter

The work of the Chapter was concluded, as had been forecast, on August 22. Our Mother reported on it in the following letter to Don Bosco.

V.G.M.G!

Dear Reverend Father,

Thanks to Divine Providence, which always assists us in a wonderful manner, this morning we concluded our first General Chapter. It was presided by Father Cagliero in the name of our Reverend Father the Rector Major. Reverend Father Bonetti, our Director, and Father Bertello, the theologian, took part in some sessions.

In this Chapter there were fifteen sessions altogether. First we read the holy Rule and, without reforming it we coordinated some points. Other points were clarified according to suggestions arising from practice, and finally, some points taken from the Salesian Rule were incorporated. In later conferences we tried to adapt to our requirements, the beautiful and important deliberations of the General Chapters of our Salesian brothers, your worthy Sons.

I hope that the observance of these deliberations will produce excellent results for the good progress of our dear Congregation.

This, Reverend Father, is what I had in mind to tell you in the name of this Chapter and the Superiors. The Acts²¹ produced and the deliberations taken will be sent to you together with the holy Rule. Do with them what you think best before God and, if you consider them useful for your Daughters in Jesus, please sign your approval.

Our spiritual retreat is about to end and, according to what these Reverend Superiors say, I can tell you it has been very fruitful. We owe this to the help of your good prayers, venerated Father, and to the zeal of our good preachers. *Deo gratias!*

This coming Sunday, dear Father, we shall all offer our Holy Communion that God may keep you in health. There will be about twenty clothings, around thirty triennial professions and six perpetual professions. Some two hundred [p. 301] and fifty Sisters took part in this retreat, plus about sixty postulants.

Through God's grace the moral and physical state of the Congregation seems to be good. We ask you to help us with your fervent prayers and wise counsels; then we shall hope to continue sending you good news.

Please accept the humble respects of the community and especially of those about to profess or become novices. Pray much for me and for all of us, that through God's goodness each one may render herself worthy of the Divine Mercy.

With all the respect and veneration of a daughter, I am now and always, in Jesus,

Your humble and devoted Daughter,

*Sister Catherine Daghero*²²

Closing of the spiritual retreat

The retreat was closed on August 24 with twenty clothings and twenty-three professions. Among the chosen ones were two sisters, Don Bosco's grandnieces. Rosina was clothed with the religious habit and Eulalia made her first vows.

Father Cagliero preached to the community three times that day and seemed unable to control the fiery ardor of his heart. Maybe he felt the hour was approaching for his fresh detachment from the homeland; from his Daughters who appreciated him so much; and from this field of labor in which Mary Help of Christians was sowing so abundantly.

One piece of writing dated August 24 runs: "O good Father, go with confidence. The Daughters you leave behind in the grief of separation will not prove unworthy of you, but will remain strong in the strength of Jesus

and Mary and await your return!"

Father Cagliero left for Turin in order to offer Don Bosco in Valsalice the fruit of his work during the month passed in Our Lady's House at Nizza Monferrato.

[p. 302] Don Bosco's letter to his grandniece Eulalia

Knowing that his grandniece Eulalia had been permitted to make her profession, Don Bosco wrote her a letter containing precious instructions which should prove useful for everyone.

No mention was made of Eulalia's sister, Rosina, probably because news of her clothing arrived late.

Pinerolo, August 20, 1884

My dear Eulalia,

I blessed God when you resolved to become a religious. Now I thank Him with all my heart that you have kept your good resolve and decided to break definitely with the world and consecrate yourself completely to our good Jesus.

Make this offering willingly and reflect on the hundredfold reward in this present life and the real recompense, the great recompense in the future life.

But, my good Eulalia, this is a serious matter and no joke. Remember the words of Jane Frances de Chantal's father: "What has been given to God must never be taken back."

Remember that religious life is one of continuous sacrifice and that God rewards every sacrifice generously.

Obedience, observance of the Rule and hope in a heavenly reward are the only comforts we have in this mortal life.

Your letters always give me great pleasure. I did not answer them because time was lacking.

God bless you, Eulalia. May Mary be your guide and comfort until you reach heaven. I hope we shall see each other again in this present life; otherwise, good-bye. We shall see each other and speak of God in the life of the blessed. So be it!

I wish Mother General every blessing together with all the Sisters, novices and postulants of Mary Help of Christians.

I owe Mother a letter and will answer her shortly.

Pray for me and for all our family, and believe me always in Jesus Christ,

Your affectionate uncle,
*Father John BoSCO*²³

[p. 303] The Sisters talk about Don Bosco

Father Cagliero's recommendation brought about an immediate response from the Sisters and they were eager to relate incidents connected with their meetings with Don Bosco.

Sister Marietta Rossi, who was among those present, spoke with animation.

When I was last in Turin, besides being ill, I was oppressed by fear of having to die under the surgeon's knife. I knew that this time they had to get at the root of my trouble and I felt very weak. Therefore I asked Don Bosco,

"Father, will I die? I really feel very ill!"

"No," he answered with conviction, "no, you will not die of this illness, but will live a long time and do much good." ²⁴

Hope revived in me and I submitted to the surgical operation with confidence.

However, I left the hospital very weak and suffering from continual fainting spells. I used to try to get up between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. to see if I was strong enough to return to Nizza.

But nothing seemed able to restore my strength. Extremely discouraged, I asked for Extreme Unction but my request was not granted.

At that time my good mother was living with the Sisters in Turin. She suffered even more than I did to see me in such a condition. She wept, prayed and sent many a message to Don Bosco.

One day, as luck would have it, she met Don Bosco as she was crossing the Oratory playground.

"Oh, Mari, Mari . . . how are you?" he asked her.

"I am well enough, Don Bosco, but poor Marietta is really very ill indeed!" and she started to cry.

In his goodness, Don Bosco immediately asked the cause of my illness. Then he again said with confidence, "Go and tell your daughter to have faith and that I send her my blessing. Our Lady will see to it."

During the rest of that day there were no more fainting spells, and the following day all trace of my illness had disappeared. And as you see, I am back here. Oh, how [p. 304]much I owe to Don Bosco! How much Don Bosco loves me! When I receive his blessing and feel his holy hand on my head I seem to get the impression of such virtue that I cannot explain. When they come from Turin and give me a medal saying, "Don Bosco sent it for you," I do not know what I feel interiorly! It is something more than natural. I should say it is celestial! . . .

Sister Antoinette Baratti also had an incident to relate.

I had the good fortune to go with Sister M. Louise Ferrari to see Don Bosco. Sister Louise was ill and wanted to receive his blessing.

Rejoicing at my good fortune I knelt at the feet of our good Father, almost like Magdalene in the act of kissing the feet of Jesus. With a quick gesture of his hand he told me gently, "Move back a little." After awhile he asked, "Go now, go now and you will do a lot of good!"

I understood at that moment the great reserve of our Father and I shall never forget it.

On another occasion he gave me a picture of Mary Help of Christians on which he had written, "What a beautiful death it will be to die assisted by Mary!

How I treasure that picture!

Father John Bosco"

The novice, Sister Josephine Allais, who had not yet gone back to Turin, reported:

One day during afternoon recreation we had the pleasant surprise of a visit from our good Father, accompanied by Father Cagliero. They were offered a cup of coffee and Don Bosco was given a small napkin. He looked intently at the initials, C.M.A. Then he pointed them out to Father Cagliero saying, "Come along, let us sing *Magnificat anima mea Dominum!*" Then he laughed with us saying that he was pleased to see our initials. He urged us to persevere in our vocation and never to give up no matter what difficulties might beset our path. We should, rather, be grateful for it because Mary Help of Christians will always be our guide, our protectress and our Mother.

[p. 305] Death of Sister Angela Garbagna

Sister Angela Garbagna died in Turin on August 27. She was not yet twenty years of age. Considered perfect in all she did, she was especially noted for her ever-ready smile. At the moment of leaving this life, she gave unmistakable signs of contact with the supernatural.

News from Buenos Aires

A letter from Father Costamagna dated June 27 reached Nizza during the Chapter. It brought news of the Sisters in America.

The Provincial wrote, regretting that his two previous letters to Mother General had been lost. He spoke of the solemn feast of Mary Help of Christians that had been celebrated in Almagro with the profession of Sister M. Estelle Soliman and the perpetual vows of Sister Emilia Mathis, Sister Rita Barilatti and Sister Juliana Prevosto.

There had been another beautiful celebration on June 1, when Sister Anne Brunetti, Sister Margaret Cantavena and Sister Anne Balduzzi left for Patagonia where a second House was to be opened in Viedma.

He also mentioned the boarding school which had been opened in February with fifteen pupils. This would make it possible to increase the good which was already being done.

Added to all this consoling news was something very different, "Yesterday the government prohibited the teaching of catechism in its schools. . .

How sad for the souls of poor Argentinian children!

We shall all have to work much harder. . ."

The letter went on to name individual Sisters, asking insistently for news about each one. It concluded with fatherly good wishes: "May Jesus keep you all holy

Take courage; pain is short, happiness eternal!"²⁵

[p.306] A second House in Patagonia

Another letter directly from Patagonia told of the inauguration of the House of Viedma which faced Carmen de Patagones on the opposite bank of the Rio Negro.

Although situated in the center of the inhabited area, this House was nothing more than a one-story shed. It had been constructed with mud on a framework of poles and tree branches. However it had been solemnly inaugurated on Pentecost Sunday, June 1, in the presence of Governor General Winter, who was prodigal in his praise of the work done by the Salesians in Patagonia. He welcomed the opening of a new school for girls as a blessing for the town.

Only three Sisters made up the small community. These were Sister Marianna Balduzzi, Sister Margaret Cantavena and Sister Joan Borgna. The latter was to be in charge with the title of Vicar. The Superior was Mother Angela Vallese, who crossed the river and back in order to attend to the two Houses.

This news strengthened missionary enthusiasm still more. It had already been aroused by our Director Father Cagliero, who, about to set sail again, never ceased his apostolic work on behalf of his dear Patagonia.

Opening of the Lingotto kindergarten

September 2 marked another departure. This time it was not for faraway lands, but for Turin. Three Sisters had been chosen for the foundation of a kindergarten at Lingotto. This work was sponsored by the parish priest, Father Omegna, who was president of the administrative council, by Cav. Fornara, the factory owner, and by Count Charles Felix di Robilant.

The small community was composed of the Superior, Sister Josephine Rose Tamiatti, transferred from Quar-
[p. 307] gnento; Sister Carlotta Fasolo; and a novice, Sister Catherine Bensi, who had been clothed with the religious habit the previous April.

The prayers and good wishes of the whole community' went with them to their new mission, that they might do much good to the little ones in the kindergarten and to the poor girls in the workroom and the Festive Oratory. In that suburb, situated at the very gates of Turin, the population was almost exclusively working class.

Prayers to the Infant Mary for liberation from cholera

Meanwhile the novena in preparation for the feast of the nativity of Mary had begun with great fervor. Don Bosco had suggested this be done to obtain relief from cholera, which by this time had' spread to twenty-four Italian provinces.²⁶ There was benediction of the Blessed Sacrament every evening and the last three days were celebrated according to the Holy Father's wish, for the same intentions. The Director added a sermon for the occasion.

The community solemnly celebrated September 8 with great fervor in trustful prayer to the Heart of Mary .

Sister Frances Moffa's life comes to an end

On September 12, feast of the Holy Name of Mary, another Daughter went to join our Mother in heaven.

Sister Frances Moffa, who was usually called Franchina, was only twenty-three years of age. It would seem she became ill from the effort she put into acquiring constant gentleness and amiability in word and action.

Condescending to the request of relatives, her Superiors sent her back to her family for a while, hoping for an improvement in her health. Unfortunately however, Sister Franchina's condition worsened, and feeling that her end was near, she asked her family to take her to a House of **[p. 308]** the Institute to die. She was therefore transported to the nearby House at Chieri where, after a short time, she closed her earthly life and went to enjoy the reward of her gentle charity.

The spiritual retreat opened in Turin on September 18 with the thought of dear Sister Franchina still fresh in the Sisters' minds. It was preached by Father Bonetti and Father Bertello and presided by Mother Elisa, who had arrived from Nizza a few days previously. The retreat ended with the first professions of a group of six novices.

Mother goes to St. Cyr for the spiritual retreat

Our Mother left with Mother Vicar at the beginning of October to preside over two spiritual retreats at St. Cyr. It was the first time retreats had taken place in France, but the Sisters had been prevented by cholera from going to Italy.

The first retreat opened on October 10 a short time after the death of the worthy Father Vincent. He had died a holy death in the orphanage on the 7th, comforted by the thought that he was leaving his two works in capable hands and entrusted to the charity of Don Bosco.

This first retreat ended on the 17th with two new professions. That same evening the second commenced. It too was preached by the Provincial, Father Albera, and by Father Perrot, Director of La Navarre. It ended on the 24th with the religious clothing of Father Vincent's three Tertiaries. Their former Superior, Sister Claire Agnely, had assisted him with devoted fidelity to the end. Sister Arnaude and Sister Marie Charles had been humble seekers of alms for the orphans of La Navarre.

Everyone saw this as a reward for the patient goodness of our Mother who, as the Superior of the orphanage during the difficult period of our beginnings, was able to captivate even the hearts and affection of the good Tertiaries who [p. 309] were already running the work, to the extent of rousing in them the desire of belonging to the same religious family, in full community life and aspirations.

Mother gave Don Bosco a report of her visit to France in a letter entrusted to Father Cerruti who, on November 5, assured her that he had delivered it personally. He added that Don Bosco had shown great interest in the points raised.²⁷

New foundation at Candia Canavese

While Mother was in France a new foundation was initiated in Candia Canavese, near Ivrea. Father Cagliero was asked for this foundation by Father Cuffia whose professor he had been at Valdocco. Three Sisters went there on October 12 to open a kindergarten. They were: Sister Josephine Daghero, the Superior; Sister Vincenza Razzetti, who came from the nearby House at Borgomasino; and the novice, Sister Teresa Biglia. The blessing of the Bishop went with them in the promise that their work would do much good for that parish.

Departures . . . for the House of our Father in heaven

Side by side with the departures for new foundations and the professions October saw departures for our House in heaven.

On the 8th Sister Lucy Ferraris died. She was already Superior in Incisa Belbo when, because of her poor health, she was recalled to Nizza in the hope of a speedy recovery. Instead it was there that God awaited her for her ultimate preparation for heaven, enriched by acute suffering.

When speaking about her to the community, one of the Superiors said: "It is true that Sister Lucy takes to God the responsibility of her office as Superior; but she is blessed in that she always carried it out with integrity."

[p. 310] She was followed to the tomb by the humble, dearly loved Sister Rosina Noli. This twenty-five year old Sister had been ill for some time in the same infirmary. She calmly said to the Sisters as they were carrying out the body of Sister Lucy, "Tomorrow you will be carrying me away."

The following day, Thursday, October 9, she was unable to rise from her bed and, before evening she also had winged her flight to heaven with her unalterable smile on her lips.

From Borgomasino, less than twenty days later, on the 28th of that same month, a third Sister went to join the other two. This was a novice, Sister Rose Serafino, scarcely eighteen years of age. She had been an angel of humility and charity and, it would seem, had made the resolution always to seek the last place for herself.

The Director General elected bishop

In the meantime rumors were abroad that Father Cagliero had been elected bishop.

Cardinal Protector Nina had written privately to this effect on October 4, and Monsignor Jacobini, the Secretary of *Propaganda Fide*, wrote on the 9th to Cardinal Alimonda, the Archbishop of Turin, asking him to inform "dear Don Bosco."²⁸

The official communication was not long in coming, and it was given by Cardinal Simeoni to both Cardinal

Alimonda and Don Bosco. Hence, even before the relative pontifical brief of October 30 was received, the news spread rapidly, rousing enthusiastic joy.

Among the first to hear were the Sisters of Alassio. They received the news from their Director and hastened to express their sentiments to the Bishop-elect in the following letter:

[p. 311]

Alassio, October 20, 1884

Viva Gesù!!!

Very Reverend Monsignor and dearly loved Father,

The news our Director has given us concerning your nomination to the episcopate and the forthcoming consecration, has overwhelmed us with sincere, indescribable jubilation.

Permit us therefore, beloved Father, who are your poor Daughters, the least in merit but not in affection for you, to offer you our cordial congratulations and most affectionate good wishes.

To be sure, our feelings are not altogether joyful because we cannot help feeling sad at the thought that we shall soon have to lose you. But our sadness will turn to joy as we grow to realize you are leaving us in order to gain souls for God and save many unhappy people from error and vice. This will strengthen and console us. Consequently, although we view your departure with sorrow, it is a resigned and calm grief as we pray with all our hearts that God will reward our sacrifice by granting you the conversion of a soul for every tear your Daughters shed at losing you.

Confident that we shall see you here again and be able to kiss your hand, we do so now in spirit as we ask you to pray that God may grant your greatest and holiest desire for us, namely, holy perseverance in the religious life. We shall remember you always with lively Christian affection until death unites us with you in heaven forever.

Your affectionate Daughters in Jesus Christ,

Sister Caroline Curino	Sister Enrichetta Telesio
Sister Secondina Fontana	Sister Clare Preda
Sister Enrichetta Gamba	Sister Teresina Moretta
Sister Catherine Bosso	Sister Louise Desirello
Sister Marianna Manara	Sister Maria Cataneo
Sister Marietta Sorbone	Sister Maria Succetti
Sister Domenica Barbero	Sister Maria Demartini. ²⁹

When Mother returned from France she also sent Monsignor Cagliari her congratulations and good wishes. He answered her letter from Turin on November 6 adding, [p. 312]

" . . . Just as I hope you do not want to give me a retirement pension after my period of directorate with you, so you must not make me wait long for the record book of it. I shall do the same from faraway... but not so quickly . . . "30

Then, alluding to the sacred vestments being prepared for him at Nizza, he remarked jokingly, "I fear I shall cause my embroidresses to become excited, but tell them to go slowly and keep calm. That way I shall stay a little longer with you. . . "

In Nizza, however, the work was going on with alacrity in order to be able to present Monsignor with the various articles on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, the occasion of his episcopal consecration in Turin. He had promised to wear the new surplice made for the purpose.

Mother also distributed circular letters to the principal benefactors, similar to those sent out by Father Rua to the Cooperators. These letters asked for offerings to provide the outfit and sacred objects to be presented to Monsignor on this joyful occasion.³¹

Extension of buildings and works

Builders had been at Nizza since September, working on the construction of a new wing adjacent to the church. The foundations had already been laid and the work was to continue in the spring.

Our dear Father had also thought about the much needed extension of the terrain on the Festive Oratory side and had made application to the Nizza town council on October 16.³²

It involved the transfer of part of a lane leading to the Belbo stream and the purchase of a field in front of the original house of the Director. All this was necessary in order to prevent classes and religious celebrations from being disturbed, and also avoid all inconvenience of broken [p. 313] windows and banging of carts against the walls, not to speak of the danger of morals caused by improper discussions which were often carried out right under the windows.

Another reason stated by Don Bosco was to provide a workroom and playground for the exclusive use of the neediest girls of the city.

This workroom was opened on November 12 much to the consolation of everyone concerned, and there were great hopes that a great deal of good would come from it.

Two more Sisters for eternity Serious words from Don Bosco

During the novena of the Immaculate Conception two more Sisters were called to eternity. On December 1 Sister Candida Bosio died at the age of 29 years. "Candid" both in name and spirit, she traveled far on the path of virtue in a short time. She had come to Turin from La Navarre because of illness. It was thought that this illness was brought on when she was badly frightened during a terrifying experience in that isolated House in the country.

A short time afterwards news came that Sister Philomena Bologna had died on November 30 at Pamparato (Cuneo) in her own home. It is always a sad thing for a religious to die outside a religious House, but it must have been still more so for Sister Philomena who, delicate in health, had a great fear of death.

What made this sadder still was the remembrance of a talk she had had with Don Bosco.

It was she who had gone to speak to him in Lanzo, as Mother Petronilla had related.³³ She told Don Bosco of her brothers' wish to have her at home for awhile, hoping that her native air and the care of the family would bring about an improvement in her health. It was to her that Don Bosco's serious words were directed. When it [p. 314] became clear that nothing was lacking in care for her needs in the community, he said,

"Well, do you prefer to live a few years less and be assured of paradise, or a year or two more? . . . However I cannot give you any assurance of this. . ."

"It is the wish of my brothers," the Sister replied. But Don Bosco insisted,

"If you think it is right to do this. . . But as for me, I can only repeat what I have already said."

A fortnight later, one of her brothers came to visit her and Sister Philomena went home with him, hoping to return to better health. Unfortunately, she was never to return because a few months later, pneumonia, or so it was thought, carried her quickly to the grave.

The memory of this is a salutary warning not to give in to the insistence of relatives, but always to prefer, even when illness is involved, what the Congregation is prepared to give us. Doing this we shall be assured of the immense good fortune of dying in a religious House.

A missionary crown won in a short time

After only a short time news arrived of another Sister's death. This occurred at Moron in Argentina on October 30. Sister Catherine Picco, who was just twenty years old, had won the glorious missionary crown in just a few months. She left her native Italy soon after her profession in November, and was almost immediately struck down by an illness which was to carry her slowly to the grave. The thought of death had not caused her anguish but had filled her with joy in the expectation of paradise. Scarcely two weeks before, Father Costamagna had written about her to Mother General³⁴ "She is very ill... The other day I saw her absolutely exhausted but enviable in her cheerfulness. She does not want prayers to be offered for her cure but rather that she might go soon to heaven."

[p. 315] Don Bosco's thoughts on vocations

The empty places gradually appearing in our ran~ were soon to be filled by Mary Help of Christians' choice of nine new Daughters. Some of these had the good fortune of being accepted by Don Bosco himself.

Among these was Catherine Pagliassotti who had come with her father to see Don Bosco at Turin on the previous November 25. The Founder told her, "Be of good heart! The thorns of this world will be changed into roses for paradise." To the poor father who was overcome by the sacrifice of his only daughter, Don Bosco said, "God bestows a great grace on a family when he gives a vocation to one of its sons or daughters!" Then he gave both of them a medal of Mary Help of Christians and added more for each member of the family. This was

followed by Our Lady's blessing which left them filled with great peace.

Don Bosco assured us that many young girls were graced with the gift of a religious vocation, but not all cultivated it and so lost it.

This is what the novice, Sister Catherine Dabbene, heard this year in Turin. She tells us that a certain young lady went to Don Bosco in the company of a postulant. Our good Father said to her, "And what about you? Why do you not become a Sister?"

"I have no vocation," the young lady replied.

Don Bosco immediately rejoined:

"Many girls have a vocation but they leave it exposed in the *ciuenda*³⁵ where a bird of prey passes and steals it."

Dangerous reading matter

According to Don Bosco, birds of prey represent evil or dangerous books. The subject of reading was very close to the heart of our dear Father. With this in mind he sent out one of his circular letters to all the schools³⁶ on the feast of All Saints this year.

[p. 316] After having spoken in this long letter with deep emotion about the serious spiritual damage done by books which are openly bad, he warns against those which although "good or indifferent in themselves, could prove dangerous because they are unsuited to age and place . . . to personal inclinations. . . to vocations. These too must be eliminated."

The letter also recommended that novels of every type not coming from the Salesian press be excluded. . .

The letter ends with moving words of fatherly affection, "Listen, remember and practice my advice. I feel that my life is drawing towards its sunset. Your day, too, will also pass quickly. Let us, then, work zealously that an abundant harvest of souls may be offered to the good Father of the family who is God . . ."

Such a precious recommendation will be useful for all the young people entrusted to our care.

Praise of our Institutes in a Turin weekly

Perhaps it will not be out of place to set on record here that the weekly periodical of Turin, *La Stella Consolatrice (The Comforting Star)* recommended our six Institutes of Nizza Monferrato, Chieri, Torrione di Bordighera, Bronte, Mascali and Trescastagni in its edition of October 23, 1884. The article bore the title, *Per la gioventù studiosa (For young students)*. It gave precise information and pointed out that full instruction was given together with a sound Christian formation.

This was perhaps the first time a non-Salesian periodical had spoken of our institutes and it could not but give us cause to rejoice. We shall become more widely known and many more girls will come to us; thus more good will be done.

[p. 317] Episcopal consecration of Monsignor Cagliari

The vigil of the feast of the Immaculate Conception dawned in the expectation of the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Cagliari, who had already been nominated Vicar Apostolic of Northern Patagonia.

It was manifested by the decree of October 30 that His Holiness Leo XIII had him already in mind as titular Bishop of Magida in Pamphilia, and the nomination was announced publicly in the Consistory of November 13.
37

Mother General went to Turin with Sister Caroline Grillone, the new missionary, in order to join the large number of Sisters gathered for the celebrations. These began at 7:30 a.m. in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.³⁸ Don Bosco, who assisted from the presbytery to the left of the pulpit, was very moved. At his side was Monsignor De Macedo Costa, Bishop of Para in Brazil. He had arrived at the Oratory a few days previously to ask Don Bosco for missionaries for his diocese.

With the intimate family group was Monsignor's mother, who was almost ninety years of age. She had been given hospitality in our House in Turin.

Great numbers of invited guests and benefactors were present, together with many young people and the public so that every corner of the church was filled.

Special hymns were admirably sung to music composed by Master Dogliani. The consecrating Bishop was Cardinal Archbishop Gaetano Alimonda of Turin. He was assisted by his auxiliary, Monsignor John Baptist Bertagna, titular Bishop of Capharneau, and by Monsignor Emilio Manaconda, Bishop of Fossano.

When the function was over, there was a very touching meeting between the new Bishop and his elderly mother who attempted to kneel before him. This was prevented by her son who pressed her to his heart in an affectionate embrace. No less moving was the meeting with Don Bosco who waited respectfully, biretta in hand. The new Bishop [p. 318] would not allow him to kneel, but embraced him in filial gratitude. Then Monsignor offered his hand which until that moment he had kept hidden in the folds of his vestments, because he wanted Don Bosco to be the first to kiss the episcopal ring.

There was jubilation in Valdocco the whole day long. The afternoon celebration in the church was most solemn with pontifical Vespers and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament imparted by Monsignor. In the evening a wonderful entertainment was given in honor of the first Salesian Bishop.

Next day was the feast of the Immaculate Conception. The new Bishop sang the pontifical mass and Vespers in the Church of Mary Help of Christians and once more gave the triple blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

Sister Nazassi and Sister Testa are also called to eternity

The joyful echoes of the festivities had hardly died away in Turin when, on the 10th of December, death called Sister Theodolinda Nazassi. She was thirty years of age and said to be the personification of goodness, because of her well-tryed spirit of sacrifice. She was ever ready to yield, to forget herself, to conceal every type of mortification and to smile in order to help, relieve and console the Sisters.

As in the case of Sister Bosio, it would seem that her mortal illness had been brought on by the terrifying incident at La Navarre, and it carried her also to the infirmary of Turin for the last period of her life.

She was joined two days later, on December 12, by the twenty-two-year-old Sister Anne Testa who died in Bordighera. When before her death she was asked if anything troubled her, she replied, "Yes, I am troubled at being so peaceful, when in a short time I shall have to present myself before God."

Had all worries ended?

On December 14 final arrangements were concluded for Maria the Negro (la Mora) to be transferred to the Good Shepherd Institute of Turin. This was considered more suitable for her, as all efforts of kindness and patience in the face of her aggressive and indomitable character, had proved useless. May Our Lady go with her and show a Mother's care to this poor soul!

Agatha Spano³⁹ had also been sent back to Sicily at last, much to the Superiors' relief. She had been discharged from the mental hospital in Turin, sufficiently cured after eighteen months of treatment, and had returned to her family. It was hoped that this would be the end of the long period of trouble and anxiety caused by her eccentric behavior.⁴⁰

The Christmas novena. Wishes for Don Bosco

The Christmas novena started with great fervor on December 16, while preparations were going ahead for the already announced consecration of the church at Nizza. Monsignor was to come for the consecration before the end of the year. It was he who had blessed the original church in 1878.

As Christmas drew near the usual greetings were sent out and Don Bosco's was, of course, the first. Mother General added her letter to those of the Sisters and boarders:

December 23, 1884

V.G.M.G.

Dear and venerated Father,

I feel I must write a few lines in addition to the letter of good wishes to protest my sincere, filial devotion towards you. I must also tell you that in this holy House you are held in high esteem as our dear Father and Superior, and therefore [p. 320] the expressions you read in our letters, weak as they may appear, really do come from the hearts of your Daughters.

Oh Father, if only you could count all the prayers that are being offered before the tabernacle for your preservation and health! . . . We can do nothing else, Father, as you well know, but if there is anything you wish from us we shall be only too pleased to give you proof of our holy, sincere love by obeying you promptly just as if Jesus were speaking to us.

Here, Father of my soul, I should like to grant you a wish that would console you. . . but I am a poor creature, and therefore I content myself with praying to the Infant Jesus that you may see all your Sons and Daughters animated with the spirit of the Congregation and desiring only the glory of God and the good of souls.

I end, venerated Father, by asking you for a special blessing for myself, assuring you that with the help of God's grace I wish to be a faithful interpreter of your will, that I may declare myself sincerely and with all my heart to be, in Jesus

Your humble and respectful Daughter,
Sister Catherine Daghero⁴¹

The death of "Mama Teresa"

Christmas Day, which had passed peacefully in Nizza, ended in a bereavement in Turin. Monsignor Cagliero's mother died unexpectedly that afternoon.⁴²

After preparing for the Christmas celebration with great fervor and intimate joy, "Mama Teresa" assisted at the three midnight masses in the Sisters' chapel where she also received Holy Communion. On Christmas morning she wanted to go to Mary Help of Christians' Church to be present at the pontifical mass of her son who had returned from Rome just two days previously. However she yielded to persuasion and gave up the idea because of the extreme cold and the threat of snow. At about three-thirty in the afternoon, however she insisted on going to Vespers. As she mounted the steps of the church she suddenly felt weak and in spite of the support of her companion, she fell [p. 321] prostrate at the threshold, already at death's door. A Salesian priest hastened to her aid and she was carried to a room on the ground floor in our House nearby. Here he gave her Extreme Unction, but was scarcely in time because the dear old lady, rich in merits, almost immediately breathed her last.

In the meantime, her Bishop son, ignorant of what was happening, was pontificating at solemn Vespers. When the sermon ended and the blessing had been given he was informed of what had occurred and hurried to bless the mortal remains of his good mother and to give full vent to his grief.

The funeral ceremonies took place on Saturday, December 27. Among the many people who attended was a large number of Sisters and oratory girls. This was a fitting tribute of deep and moving gratitude for all her great son had done for them.

Nizza prepares for the arrival of Monsignor Cagliero

On Monday, December 30, our House in Nizza was preparing to make merry. Monsignor Cagliero was about to arrive in Nizza in order to consecrate the church. This would be his first appearance there in episcopal attire. Sisters and boarders were looking forward to kissing the episcopal ring and receiving the new Bishop's blessing. However the joy was somewhat muted because of his recent bereavement and the thought of his proximate departure for America.

The Bishop arrived at 3:00 p.m. with his secretary, Father Antonio Riccardi, Father Sala and Father Rabagliati. He immediately made his way to the church where he was greeted with the festal tones of his own composition of the Ecce Sacerdos. After a few moments passed in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, he rose to give us his first pastoral blessing and that of the Holy Father, which had been bestowed on us through him at the audience of the 22nd. He [p. 322] spoke with evident consolation of the kindness shown by the Holy Father and of his lively interest in Don Bosco, to whom he had sent his fatherly advice: "Tell Don Bosco to take care of himself because his health is not only precious for your Congregation but for the whole Church."⁴³

That same evening the Bishop made himself available to the Superiors and Sisters, and continued to do so out of the goodness of his heart everyday he was with us.

At 7 :00 that evening he gave the triple blessing with the Blessed Sacrament. . . Then, vested once more in his pontifical vestments, attended by Canon Berta, Chancellor of the Bishop's Curia at Asti, he made his way to the temporary chapel arranged in the day girls' workroom. Here he exposed the sacred relics for veneration. These relics, which bore the seal of Monsignor Sciandra, would be encased in the altar to be consecrated the following day.

Monsignor then retired while the other priests remained to say Matins.

The reconsecration of the church in Nizza

The last day of the year saw the expected reconsecration of our church, in which everything was prepared for the sacred rite. However all masses were celebrated in the provisional chapel. Monsignor celebrated the community mass and before Holy Communion he could not resist giving a fervent sermonette in order to prepare those present for the special graces of that day. At 8 o'clock, assisted by the three parish priests of the city, by Canon Berta and by the Salesian priests who were present, he commenced the ritual blessing, so rich in symbolism.

The ceremony was very moving, perhaps even more so because the consecrating Bishop was our own much loved Director General and first Salesian Bishop. Also, this was his first consecration of a church-and that church was ours. It was to be dedicated under its original title, Mary Most Holy, Our Lady of Graces.

[p. 323] The altar was solemnly consecrated and at eleven-thirty Father Sala celebrated mass assisted by Monsignor and the whole community.

Minutes were provided to record the completion of this solemn act.⁴⁴

In the afternoon fervent visits to the reconsecrated church were multiplied in order to gain the indulgences proper to that day. In the evening, solemn Vespers were sung and Monsignor pontificated. He spoke of the happy event which had taken place and the special circumstances connected with the last day of the year.

The singing of the *Te Deum* and the triple blessing with the Blessed Sacrament closed the devotional celebrations as well as the year itself, which had been rich in many events and outstanding graces from God.

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NOTES

1884

1. Appendix No. 11.
2. *Salesian Bulletin*, February, 1884, Year VIII, No. 2, 22-27. 3. Cf. M.B., XVI, 357-365.
4. Father Costamagna's letter to Don Bosco: *Salesian Bulletin*, February, 1884, Year VIII, No. 2, 29:30.
5. Report of Sister Christine Castellotto.
6. Report of Sister Louise Bosso.
7. Report of Sister Christine Castellotto.
8. Sister Teresa Barale.
9. Report of Sister Pauline Gazot.
10. Report of Sister Teresa Pane.
11. Report of Sister Modesta Berta.
12. Cf. M.B., XVII, 63.
13. The autographed picture is preserved in the Gen. Arch. FMA.
14. A full report of the audience is printed in M.B., XVII, 97
106. Cf. also *Salesian Bulletin*, June, 1884, Year VIII, No. 6, 81-82.
15. Don Bosco really did think about it and in December, 1885, he opened a house at Mathi-Torinese to accommodate the mothers of the Salesians.
16. M.B., XVII, 232-333 reports: "The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians also did their part, since at Nizza Monferrato, with Don Bosco's permission, they ceded their country cottage to the Town Council to be

used as a place of quarantine for people arriving from France, and they also offered practical assistance. The Council gratefully accepted the offer and people coming from infected areas were sent there, the Sisters providing linen and food."

17. Cf. M.B., XVII, 213.

18. Original copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.

19. Montecitorio: Meeting place of the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament.

20. Cr. M.B., XVII, 213.

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21. Appendix No. 12.

22. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

23. Original handwritten copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.

24. Sister Marietta Rossi died in Turin in 1947 at the age of 87.

25. Father Costamagna's letter to Mother Daghero from San Nicolas de los Arroyos, dated June 27, 1884. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

26. Cf. M.B., XVII, 230.

27. Father Cerruti's letter to Mother Daghero from Alassio, dated November 5, 1884, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

28. Cf. M.B., XVII, 287.

29. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

30. Original letter in Gen. Arch. FMA.

31. See Appendix No. 13.

32. Cf. M.B., XVII, 404-405.

33. This was noted on page 293.

34. From the letter to Mother Daghero dated October 16, 1884.

35. *Ciuenda* a term used in the Piedmontese dialect a enclosure of shrubs and bushes.

36. Appendix No. 14.

37. *Salesian Bulletin*, December, 1884, Year VIII, No. 12, 169.

38. *Salesian Bulletin*, January, 1885, Year IX, No. 1, 4; M.B., XVII, 288.

39. Cr. M.B., XVII, 571.

40. Unfortunately preoccupations and annoyances were far from coming to an end. The case was taken up by anticlerical propaganda as a motive for new ferocious attacks on Don Bosco and religious institutes.

41. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

42. This was noted in the *Salesian Bulletin*, January, 1885, Year IX. No. 1, 13.

43. Cf. M.B., XVII, 297.

44. Appendix No. 16.

APPENDIX No. 1

Summary report on the dispute of Chieri¹ June, 1881 - July, 1883

a) Finding that there was no solution forthcoming to the dispute concerning Father Bonetti. which had started in February, 1881, but rather that fresh difficulties continued to arise, Don Bosco felt it his duty to refer the matter to the Holy See and to accept whatever was decided. He wrote to Colomiatti in this vein on June 11, 1881 and to Solicitor Leonori on July 8, 1881. Having done this it seemed that the case would be taken up in Rome in September, but nothing happened I

In the meantime and precisely on the last day of the month, the Archbishop's solicitor appeared at San Benigno. where Don Bosco was presiding over a spiritual retreat for his clerics and priests. He came with the official mission to negotiate an agreement.

Don Bosco promised to give Father Bonetti, who was present, the obedience to abstain from hearing confessions at the Oratory of Saint Teresa in Chieri, until the real or supposed trouble with the local parish priest had been cleared up.

For his part, Monsignor Gastaldi was to declare in writing that he had suspended the priest Bonetti not for violating the prohibition concerning the duty of confession, but because of the dispute with the local parish priest; that he would reinstate him absolutely regarding confessions, even at Chieri, and would withdraw everything written or printed which had been intended to defame the priest Bosco and the Salesian Congregation, not only in the present matter but also in all others.

These were but empty words. Soon after this the Archbishop sent his solicitor to Rome to start up something fresh. Among other points placed before the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars were the following: whether or not the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians were exempt from the Archbishop's jurisdiction; whether or [\[p. 330\]](#) they were in convents of their own Salesian Congregation (October, 1881).

This gave rise to a delay that would later prove favorable to Don Bosco because the successor to the deceased Cardinal Caterini as Prefect of the Congregation was His Eminence Cardinal Nina, who was well acquainted with Don Bosco's case (November 10, 1881).

At the beginning of November, on the 10th to be precise, during the Diocesan Synod the Archbishop made an allusion to the insubordination of "certain religious." This was so little disguised that everyone understood it to be a reference to Don Bosco and the Salesians. So clear was this that the Theologian L. Fiore wrote directly to the Holy Father in order to prevent possible prejudice in the higher ecclesiastical spheres of Rome, and among the Italian Bishops (November 12, 1881).²

b) Don Bosco also hastened to counteract this with an exposition of facts to the Cardinals of the Sacred Congregation of the Council. This resembled a statement concerning his Congregation and facts connected with it from 1872-1881 (Turin-December 15 octave of the Immaculate Conception), and it stated that right from Leo XIII the Pope was inspired to reserve the case to himself.

The Archbishop of Turin then decided to go to Rome where, among other things, he again brought up the grave question, *non conforme a veritate*, that the Salesians of Chieri were sent to administer Holy Viaticum and Extreme Unction to a Sister of Mary Help of Christians (Sister Innocenza Gamba, who died on November 21, 1880).

The case was examined on December 17, but, because the Holy Father willed it, no judgment was passed. This was to safeguard episcopal authority, (out of eight Cardinals only two were in favor of the Archbishop) and because of his great confidence in the sanctity of Don Bosco who only wished to obtain a peaceful agreement.

The formalities of such an agreement were then drawn up. It was based on the humility of Don Bosco and Father Bonetti, and the conditions of agreement regarding the manner of regulating things in Chieri, so that the Salesians were neither to interfere with the parish functions properly so-called, nor were the Salesians to be impeded from promoting the spiritual good of souls, to which they had already contributed with so much fruit. . .

[\[p. 331\]](#) Monsignor Gastaldi also had his part with the final exhortative to carry out everything with the maximum promptness.

Don Bosco and Father Bonetti humbly accepted the final word of Rome, but the Archbishop spread here and there, word on complete victory over these two and all the Salesians (December 28 and 30, 1881). and would not yield. This brought about the suspension of all the above-mentioned effects.

Thus Father Bonetti remained in the nightmare state of the dark suspicions conceived regarding him and which, as was now common knowledge, had kept him under punishment for four years.

On January 31, 1882 Cardinal Nina communicated to the Archbishop the Council's reply to his counterproposals, "Whether the suspension from or the prohibition from hearing confessions should be confirmed or invalidated." The reply was, "The answer in the first case is negative and in the second case affirmative."

On February 22, Father Bonetti wrote to Cardinal Nina: "A short time ago I received the notification that the Archbishop had appealed against the decision given in my favor by the Sacred Congregation on January 28 last. . . I believed that the favorable Rescript would bring to an end the serious controversy that has covered me with infamy throughout the Archdiocese, and that my rehabilitation would dispel any doubt concerning me that the punishments inflicted on my person may have wrongly generated. Much harm has been caused to souls because of this, a slur has been cast upon the priesthood and dishonor on my religious Institute. However it would appear that we are back where we started.

Meanwhile my trouble remains and so does the evil gossip. The preconceived suspicions regarding me are hardening, while the scandal that disturbs the consciences of the many souls I direct is becoming more serious.

I do not know what measures the Sacred Congregation will take regarding me. Whatever it does will be well

done since the words of the gospel, *omnia bene fecit*, can be applied to every tribunal of the Holy See. As regards myself, I only ask that if the case has to go back to the Sacred Congregation it be done as soon as possible, and that I be liberated from this abnormal and even scandalous condition.

I say scandalous. . . because of the passing time and because I am a priest; and a priest belonging to a religious congregation engaged in [p. 332] the education of youth.

Therefore, for the honor of the priesthood, the good name of the dear Salesian Congregation that accepted me and educated me for the glory of God and the dignity of religion and the salvation of souls, I demand a quick ending to my case. If I am found to be at fault I will say with Saint Paul, *non recuso mori*; but if not, I beg, petition and implore that. . . I may be granted leave to work again for the Church with my name unsullied, so that the world may not have to reproach me with the words, *medice, cura te ipsum*."

At the end of May negotiations were once more going ahead for a calm and impartial agreement between the Archbishop and Don Bosco. From the passing of proposals and counterproposals there emerged, on June 16, a formula called *concordia*. Don Bosco and Father Bonetti were not greatly helped by this because even if the latter was to be rehabilitated with regard to confessions, having no limitations as to place, Don Bosco was pledged not to send him to Chieri for another year. But this was the will of the Pope, who had to soothe the feelings of the Archbishop while trusting profoundly in the humility of Don Bosco and the good will of Father Bonetti. So the two finished by submitting religiously to a continuation of their suffering.³

c) July 26, 1882 brought the drama to an end, and although poor Father Bonetti found his pill very hard to swallow, he plucked up courage on August 27 to write to Cardinal Nina: "The seven articles of the *Concordia* have now been made known to me . . .

I confess that some of those articles grieved me very much because it seemed that my venerated Superior and my poor person were being punished. But as soon as I understood that these articles had been suggested by the Holy Father, I found so much esteem and devotion towards him welling up in my heart that I could not hesitate an instant before accepting his dispositions with all the absolute docility and submission that he has the right to expect from his true sons.⁴

d) The after-effects of past vicissitudes did not immediately bring the joys of a true and real "concordia." Not even the death of the Archbishop on March 25, 1883 brought about the revocation of the article of the *Concordia* by which, after Father Bonetti's dismissal from Chieri, he would be allowed to return only in special circumstances. This was more than sufficient to keep a thorn piercing the [p. 333] heart of the person concerned. But at last the comforting word of His Holiness put an end to the matter, which had lasted from February, 1879 until July, 1883.⁵

APPENDIX No.2

*From "La buona settimana"*⁶

Year 1881

From the February 20 edition: "It is difficult to find an epoch in history where there was so much iniquity at anyone time, as there is in our days. The wicked are outdoing one another in spreading evil and filth. Not contented with insulting priests, monks, bishops and the Pope, they deride the most sacred mysteries of faith and use all the power they have to cause sin and unprecedented sacrilege.

Therefore we see them daily attacking, in word and action, all that is most sacred.

It is now the time for publicly encouraging the profanation of Sunday observance; the time for ignoring abstinence from meat foods when they are prohibited. The pretext for this is that generalization is being sought, and then they gather together for sumptuous banquets on Good Friday. Often, sad to say, it is Jesus Himself they insult, either by denying His divinity or by outrage to the Blessed Eucharist.

Then there is the revolting spectacle always before us of blasphemies being vomited forth everywhere, or of obscenities which are met with or heard on every hand.

We need not speak of the scandal, fraudulency, usury and sins of every type that infest our cities and the countryside. Large volumes would be needed to contain an account of these. Abominations, godlessness and licentiousness are rife everywhere. This evil is being spread among the people, especially among the unwary young, by newspapers, novels and pamphlets and in many playhouses, schools and courthouses. . .

Meanwhile the scourge of divine Justice hangs over our heads, and is beginning to make itself felt through epidemics, earthquakes, floods, poor harvests, etc. Woe to us if the punishments that have [p. 334] already descended on other countries do not make us open our eyes and think about making reparation and expiating the

offences committed against God and His Church!

Up until now the continuous common prayer and penance of members of religious communities have restrained the hand of divine Justice. . . But now that monks and nuns have been disbanded, not even this holocaust is left to placate an outraged Divinity. . ."

From the April 10 edition:-"A fierce, pertinacious war is being waged against God, all legitimate authority, matrimony and property.

Against God who, sacrilegiously and explicitly, in blasphemous terms, is said to have nothing to do with the family, the council or the government in public matters, nor in the management of civil society.

A mob of revolutionaries has ordered Kings and Presidents of Republics to come down from their thrones or presidential chairs, since no man has the right to command other men. To these iniquitous and evil declarations is added, with satanic boldness, the frenzied assault on life. To our horror this has already happened in Spain and Germany during these last years, and also on our own august King Umberto I. The assassination of the Russian Emperor on the 13th of this month has set the seal on the evil we deplore.

There is no longer any respect given by children to their parents and, very soon, forgetting the reverence towards them commanded by God, they behave insolently towards them in word and act. As soon as they can do so they shake off all dependence on their parents and refuse to recognize any obligation to respect or help them. This rebellion of children against their parents is the inevitable effect of the war that has been declared on Christian marriage, and the attempts to desecrate this holy union between a man and woman, debasing it to a simple contract like that of a deed of exchange. The truth that God binds a man and woman together as husband and wife with indissoluble bonds is denied, and therefore the fact that it is God who institutes and forms the family is also denied. It is also claimed that a family is formed without any debt to God and as a legitimate consequence it is concluded that the superiority of husband over wife does not come from God, as neither does the authority of a father or mother over their children.

[p. 335] These infernal doctrines destroy all private and public order, promote unending warfare and continual bloodshed. They are spreading fast and are publicly taught in schools, in universities and in a deluge of books and papers. Secret societies exist all over Europe and in other parts of the world calling themselves Communists, Socialists and Nihilists, and they spread these hateful teachings among the masses with frightening pertinacity."

From the July 24 edition:-"Everyone will remember how the angelic Pius IX in rare humility stated in his will that he wished his body to be placed in a simple tomb at San Lorenzo and that a skull, rather than a crest, should be placed on it with only a short inscription.

Therefore, during the night between the 12th and 13th of the current month, the transportation of the remains from the Vatican Basilica to the church of Saint Lawrence Outside the Walls took place in homage to the wishes of the immortal Pontiff.

The Vatican Basilica was closed at 8:00 p.m. and in the presence of the Chapter of Saint Peter's the coffin was moved to its place before the altar. The liturgical absolutions ordained by the Church were given and the remains were then placed on a hearse and covered with the velvet pall which had been used to adorn the Vatican balcony when the Pope gave a solemn blessing, right from the time of Innocent III

At the stroke of midnight the procession began to move in the direction of Saint Lawrence Outside the Walls. It was followed by four carriages. In the first were Monsignor Policardi and the Reverend Parish Pastor of the Vatican. The second carriage carried four canons in choir dress, representing the Chapter. These were the former secret attendants of the great Pontiff. The third carriage bore His Excellency Monsignor Ricci, Majordomo to His Holiness Pius IX. Finally, in the fourth carriage were the Apostolic Protonotaries, whose work was to regularize the Act of Transfer of the venerable remains. Behind the carriage were over 200 private carriages belonging to Romans devoted to the Sovereign Pontiff. Besides these there were thousands of Romans who had come with flaming torches to honor the holy relics and who crowded the squares and adjacent streets.

[p. 336] Leaving by the side of Santa Marta, the funeral procession passed through Borgo Sant' Angelo, Via Papale, Piazza Venezia, Via Nazionale and Via San Lorenzo and arrived at Campo Verano. As it passed, all true Romans lit up their windows to show their veneration for the dead Pontiff. There was not much trouble in Saint Peter's Square or at Borgo Nuovo. But when the procession arrived at Ponte Sant' Angelo, noises of the revolution began to make themselves heard. These could be compared with the shouts of the possessed at the sight of the Redeemer, of which the gospel speaks.

"Long live the Army! Long live Savoy! Long live Italy!" were the shouts that began to come through and then insults, blasphemies and menaces followed.

When the cortege entered the august Via Papale, Saint' Andrea della Valle and Cesarini, the revolutionary agitation grew beyond all measure. The devout faithful following the hearse were assaulted with sticks, and there

was so much confusion that force could scarcely control it. In Via Nazionale the heroes of Porta Pia showed the extent of their heroism by changing their weapons from sticks to stones which they flung at the funeral procession. In Piazza Termini the troops intervened but to no avail.

Suffice it to say that the cortege, assaulted by a hail of stones, could no longer proceed on its way with suitable decorum but had to accelerate its speed. Nevertheless the Catholic Romans who were following did not disperse, nor did they allow themselves to be intimidated by the sticks and stones of liberty. Only those who were hurt stopped, and these were not a few. The soldiers sounded their trumpets to disperse the attackers, but it seemed that these were well aware that this was only a ceremonial action so they took no notice of the blaring instruments.

At last the cortege arrived at Piazza San Lorenzo, and here there was more shouting, more imprecations and more attacks with sticks and stones until the venerated corpse was at last safely deposited within the Basilica. Three Cardinals were there to receive it, all heirs of the dead Pontiff; there were also the eminent monks, La Valletta, Simeoni and Merte. The prayers of the liturgy were sung but with the inevitable agitation attached to so much disorder and danger. While mass was being celebrated the precious coffin was enclosed in its humble tomb.

[p. 337] Let those who do not believe that the Sovereign Pontiff is virtually a prisoner in the Vatican, consider these facts. Could the steps of a living Pope be safe when the remains of a dead Pope are so insulted?"

APPENDIX No. 3

Minutes of the election of the Mother Superior General

On the twelfth day of the month of August, eighteen hundred and eighty one, there gathered in the Church of Our Lady of Graces in Nizza Monferrato the Superior Chapter of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, together with all the Superiors of the individual Houses dependent on this Institute, except those of America, in order to elect a new Superior General.

After invoking the Holy Spirit, the Major Superior, Reverend Don Bosco, assisted by the Director of the Institute, Father Cagliero, and the Local Director, Father Lemoyne, in an introductory discourse declared the meeting open in the Name of God. In the first ballot Sister Rosalia Pestarino, Superior of the Chieri Hostel and Sister Adele David, Superior of the House in Bordighera were elected scrutineers of the ballot papers.

There were 21 Sisters present with the right to vote.

According to the Rule a double vote was taken which resulted in the election of *Sister Catherine Daghero of Cuminana as Superior General*. She had been acting as Vicar General for a year.

As she was only 25 years of age, Don Bosco, the Major Superior, dispensed from the age limit prescribed by the holy Rule.

The Institute accepted this with lively gratitude and returned thanks to God.

Nizza Monferrato, August 12, 1881

Father JOHN BOSCO⁷

[p. 338]

APPENDIX No. 4a)

For the election of the Superior General Mother Catherine Daghero

and Don Bosc's 66th birthday

Nizza Monferrato, August 14, 1881

Song for Don Bosco

All hail! shining happy day,
Longed for above all others!
It speaks of our beloved Father!
So our hearts are filled with joy!

We weave for our dearest Father
the victor's evergreen crown;

He is the Leader who conquers
And knows how to guide every heart.

Chorus of pupils and postulants:

Under the mantle of Mary
We shelter with filial love,
Like birds who having no wings
Have not yet the strength to fly.

Chorus of novices:

With a burning desire in our hearts
To belong entirely to God,
Like pure, fresh blooming flowers
In the garden all enclosed.

Chorus of the professed:

Our thoughts are all winging back

To the wonderful day of profession
When, having won the combat
We surrendered to Jesus our hearts!

[p. 339]

All: Oh, let there be glory, immortal triumph
To you name, oh Father, and your heart;
Daughters and spouses of the dear Lord
Raise their prayers from the cloisters for you!
All Hail!

APPENDIX No. 4b)

Poem recited to Mother

*by the novice, Sister Vincenzina Bessone **

Melodies of song are stirring
the mists of delicate perfume
the temple is vested in splendor
in the light of a thousand candles:
and to heaven there rises exultant
thoughts on the wings of love.

All round I see a happy band of daughters,
I hear the calling bell ring out its chimes;
I feel the exultation in this dwelling
and charity inflaming every heart;
This is the day of happy memories,
this is the day that speaks of peace and love.

What, O little orphan, mean those tears,
that lowered head so quickly turned away?
What means the glistening teardrop
that suddenly seeps gently down your cheek?
Perhaps you seek the face of that lost Loved-One
who left her daughters plunged in deepest grief?

[p. 340]

Memories of days that once were happy
come flooding back and sadden your young heart,

Oh, well I know the sigh that now is saying:
-Oh she who was our souls' delight is dead!-
She is not dead, Oh no, for hope is telling
our Mother is but in new form attired.

To that Mother that heaven now gives you
the other has given her heart,
in her the old life is reviving
and the erstwhile piety breathes,
For her every daughter rejoices
in eternity each one will live.

Already your words of wisdom
sink gently into our hearts
Oh, how many times and how often!
have you given joy to our hearts!

The rays of light you uncover
to the truth that is written in heaven,
with your own maternal zeal;
your inspiration is love;
and the manna of the Lord
will rain upon our souls.

Without your gentle counsel,
what can we do alone?
Mother, stay with your daughters;
oh, stay and console us all!

Oh, you of the fertile pastures,
all desire your food;
at the foot of the holy Altar
they make their promise to you;
till one day with you in glory
they may take their flight to heaven.

[p. 341]When light comes with the dawning,
when day fades into dark,
ever we wish to be with her
whom heaven to us has given!
Through steep and rugged escarpments,
we will follow wherever you lead.
Nor water, rocks or brushwood
shall make our feet relent.
Fortunate daughters are we,
always to be with you.

New Mother, this acclamation
accept from the smallest of all;
holy Mother attend with kindness
to tributes of honor we bring;
oh, shed on the spirits that trust you,
the motherly smile of your love!

With a pure white stole at his breast
stands the priest at the flower-graced altar,
immolating, Mother for you, to God
the living Host of peace and love,

as a comfort and lasting tribute;
now the long hour of sorrow has passed.

A melody new is now seeping
through the vaults of our festal home;
a solemn joy is descending
and all hearts are filled with heaven
Praises resound for the Sister "Veronica"
that for us, New Mother, is love!

[p. 342]

APPENDIX No.4c)

Final Song*

From the tents of Israel
a great cry resounded,
when Sara in the tomb
laid her head.

Soon another song can be heard
as Rebecca appears on the scene
and the joy that this awakens
ends all anguish and pain.

Just as when the beautiful springtime
clothes the bare earth with flowers,
all winter storms are forgotten
with all the dark and the dread;

As he braves in his ship, the ocean
and is tossed and battered around;
the angry storm is forgotten
as the pilot greets the spring dawn.

Thus you with your smile, dear Mother,
full of heavenly charity
have appeared, and so the great sorrow
to joy and to laughter is changed.

We, to our promise faithful,
which God does not despise,
will love you as once before
our one-time Mother we loved.
All Hail!

[p. 343]

APPENDIX No. 5

*From the Pastoral Letter of Monsignor Gastaldi,
Archbishop of Turin on the insults bestowed
upon the mortal remains of Pius IX*

" . . . The funeral procession reached San Lorenzo at a quarter to two after midnight.

The spectacle could not have been more impressive or more moving, and was worthy of the Capital of the Catholic world. In the depths of the night an immense multitude of the faithful of every class had gathered,

united by one single purpose and with the same sentiments of faith. Torches lit up the long procession as it travelled through the darkness and, at one point, three thousand Italians came out of their houses to pay homage to the dead Pontiff. Prayer was constant but it came from the heart rather than the lips. Voices were solemn but prayer never ceased. The modest hearse moved slowly, carrying the remains of the Pope who had occupied the See of Peter longer than any of his predecessors. He had covered the Papal Throne with glory and splendor and everyone was now filled with sad but lofty thoughts and with tender esteem and affection. The crowd increased as the funeral procession moved on its way and the spectacle became more grand and more impressive. Everyone was moved and wanted nothing better than to take part in the sacred ceremonies to the end, with calm and tranquillity.

But Satan interfered with this peace. That same Satan who roused the foolish remarks and bitter reproaches of the Scribes and Pharisees against Our Lord on his triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Matt. XXI, 15), now succeeded in disturbing that peace and tranquillity with words and actions proper to himself. In every square, whether large or small, he had his *own people* ready and, as the sad procession passed there were whistles, howls, shrieks and such horrifying imprecations as could only come from the mouths of demons. We do not wish to contaminate our letter by repeating them. But whistles and blasphemies were not sufficient for him to attain his end. This was, as he had the infernal audacity to proclaim vocally and through news- [p. 344] papers, to prevent the blessed body from reaching its last resting place and to throw it into the Tiber. Satan spurred his people on to brutal assault; first with spittle and then with stones and sticks, in order to put to flight the peaceful multitude and take possession of the sacred remains. But a chosen group of brave young men mounted guard over the Papal Hearse. They defended it courageously, suffering the sticks and stones with Christian patience. The police dispersed the ministers of evil and the venerated body finally entered the Basilica of San Lorenzo where three Cardinals, heirs of the dead Pontiff, celebrated the solemn obsequies. It was placed close to the tomb of the holy martyr, to whom Pius had had a special devotion.

Words fail us as we deplore the excess of infamy which was a combination of wickedness and villainy. This is the account of the insults meted out to our holy religion; of the sacrilegious outrage perpetrated against the venerable majesty of the Sovereign Pontiff, Vicar of Jesus Christ and representative of God; the ingratitude shown towards a Pope who began his Pontificate by opening the prisons, breaking chains, giving their sons back to hundreds of parents and their husbands to hundreds of wives; that Pope who lavished treasures on the poor and to whose mind and heart our Italy owes all the good she enjoys. It is the most iniquitous and audacious violation of all that is called justice, order, liberty, civilization, propriety and decorum.

No, none other than Satan could have instigated such infamy and none other than Satan could have carried it out. . .

Meanwhile we ordain:

1 - That in all parish churches and in every other church where a Sunday sermon is preached, this letter of ours shall be read at the best attended functions. It shall be read clearly and intelligibly, without any comment on what it contains, and this shall be done on the first Sunday after it comes to hand. On that same Sunday the *Miserere* shall be sung before benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, and the Celebrant shall recite the prayers, *Deus qui culpa offenderis, etc., pro Ecclesia et pro Papa*. After benediction, the *De Profundis* shall be recited with the prayer, *Deus qui inter Summos Sacerdotes, etc.* for the soul of Pius IX.

2 - That on the same Sunday the faithful shall be encouraged to contribute towards Peter's Pence. This shall be collected in all the [p. 345] churches on the following Sunday and sent to our Curia within the month of August.

3 - That in all communities, especially those called religious. and pious, a general Communion shall, as early as possible, be made for this end.

4 - We warmly exhort all the faithful in our diocese to receive Holy Communion as soon as possible for this intention, and we grant 80 days indulgence to all those who respond to this exhortation.

Pray for our Sovereign Pontiff Leo XIII, that God may comfort and assist him; pray for our King Umberto I, for his Royal Consort, and for all the Royal Family and pray also for us.

† LAWRENCE, Archbishop⁸

APPENDIX No, 6

*Letter from Monsignor Dusmet, Archbishop of Catania,
to Father Cagliero*

ARCHBISHOP'S PALACE, CATANIA

Dear Reverend Sir,

I asked the Superior of this school of Carcaci who attended the spiritual retreat, to speak to Reverend Don Bosco about sending three Sisters for the school of Trecastagni in this Diocese, should the need arise. The need has now arisen and it is urgent.

I know that the Penitentiary of Santa Agatha at Borgo in this city made the same request and that you, Reverend Father, showed you were favorable.

However, regarding this second request, difficulties cropped up which impeded the project. At Trecastagni instead there is greater interest and the urgency is imperative. We are speaking of a school for the education of girls. The Sisters will find it almost empty because the few nuns who were there, have left. This means that the Sisters will be alone or with persons of their own choice.

[p. 346] As I said to the Superior, it would be a useful thing if a lay teacher, trusted by the Sisters and chosen by them, could work with them. Should this not be possible, let the three Sisters come just the same, provided one or two of them at least have a diploma.

I ask earnestly that this matter be attended to with speed because there is danger in delay. Every day that passes is injurious to the school over which someone else wishes to press rights which are not recognized.

With regard to the spiritual and moral aspects, the school is under my direction and the administration of the income is attended to by trustworthy commissioners chosen by myself. These present the accounts, as of a charitable institution, to the Provincial Deputation.

Please honor me with the speedy reply which will, I am sure, be favorable. This will be the third establishment of the Sisters in my Diocese, and it will be followed by others. Let them come soon and we shall arrange everything else on the spot.

I beg you to present my regards to Reverend Don Bosco and believe me always, with deep respect

Catania, August ", 1881

Your devoted Servant in Jesus Christ,
† JOSEPH BENEDICT DUSMET⁹
Archbishop

APPENDIX No. 7

a)

Italian pilgrimage to Rome

No one can ignore the great event which took place in Rome on the 16th of last October: namely the *pilgrimage of Italian Catholics* to the Tomb of Saint Peter as a gesture of veneration and affection for his Successor, Leo XIII. This was judged to be a very important event since the Italian Government itself took part, thus ensuring protection from those of evil intent.

"This is an opportune moment," writes the *Voce della Verità*, in its supplement dated October 11, "to note how responsibly the [p. 347] police acted. Strict orders were issued prescribing that even the smallest gathering should be dispersed, and orders were carried out to the letter."

The twenty thousand or so pilgrims were received in Saint Peter's Basilica. What a spectacle it was when, at about midday, the Pope descended from his apartments and appeared among his many sons who had come to Rome from all over Italy in order to show him their loyalty! As soon as he came into view a united cry of joy was heard which neither the Sacred Precincts nor the recommendations given in advance could curb: *Viva if Papa! Long live Leo XIII! Long live our august Leader!* The choir of the Cappella Giulia immediately intoned the *Tu es Petrus*, but the sound was lost amidst the enthusiastic shouts of the people who crowded round the Pontiff. As he gradually proceeded on his way the *Ewivas* multiplied and rose to a crescendo when he was seen by the multitude packed into the left hand nave. Here the Pope went to the throne which had been raised for the occasion, where he was surrounded by the noble court and many eminent and illustrious personages.

When His Holiness was seated, the Patriarch of Venice, Monsignor Agostini, who was also the President of the Pilgrimage, read a beautiful address in a clear, strong and vibrant voice. In it were faithfully expressed the

sentiments of the thousands of Catholics present and, we would add, the Catholics of all Italy and the whole world. Among other beautiful passages were the following; "The names Italy and Rome are recognized as Catholic names, as religious names, both in the superb capitals of Europe and in the barren lands where a cross has been planted, and whoever is hostile to the Papacy and the Church is also an enemy of Rome and Italy.

Ours are spiritual arms and our battles do not involve the shedding of blood, so our victory is more secure. If we had to resist to the shedding of blood for the Faith and for You, then we would with the help of heaven resist to the shedding of our blood. Yesterday we pledged ourselves to this before the Tombs of the Holy Apostles; today we pledge ourselves before you, because as sons of the Martyrs we have inherited not only the faith but courage, and with the glory, example.

We are, with You, Holy Father, that we may be with Christ who has conquered, ruled and triumphed throughout the ages. We are [p. 348] ready to suffer anything but we will never tolerate temptations that are intended to wrench the Faith from our hearts, or audacious insults to our beloved Pontiff and Father, or attempts on our Mother the Church."

The Holy Father replied in an admirable discourse. The hearts of the pilgrims were deeply moved and tears filled their eyes when he said, "Remember that the Supreme Pastor of your souls is surrounded by enemies. Rome witnessed what fury and hatred could do on that ill-omened night when it followed the body of our venerated Predecessor to the tomb. Remember that the person and the divine authority of the Pontiff is daily vilified by an unrestrained press that launches outrage and insult with all its might. Remember that in Italy and Rome, there are today, those who demand with menaces the occupation of our Apostolic Palace, in order to enforce harsher imprisonment or exile."

Out of respect towards his person those present listened in silence without demonstrating approval or giving applause all the time the Pope was speaking. But once he had finished they broke out into lively acclamations which resounded through the ample vaults of the Temple. There was a fresh round of applause and fresh exclamations of joy as, descending from his throne, he made his way back to his apartments. As the Holy Father raised his hand in blessing his face was suffused with deep emotion. But if the Pontiff was moved, many of his obedient sons and daughters were not less so. For many of them it was the first time they had looked upon the dear countenance of the Vicar of Jesus Christ and had received consolation and courage from him in person.

b)

Father Cagliero's letter to Father Bonetti

Rome, October 17, 1881

Dear Father,

I know that you are craving for any news that concerns us closely and therefore, I hope that what I am telling you now will please you. Today we had a Papal Audience, that is, we Salesians with the Sisters [p. 349] of Mary Help of Christians and the Piedmontese group in the wonderful Italian Pilgrimage.

You will have read the news in the *Voce della Verità* concerning the imposing demonstration that took place yesterday in the Vatican Basilica. Those who state that there were as many as eighteen thousand pilgrims there from every part of Italy are certainly not exaggerating, and they were all there to pay homage to the Successor of Saint Peter, the Vicar of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Father was touched by the piety of the Italians and wished to give them all, on the following Monday, that is today, a public and private audience. So in order of province and diocese they entered the halls of the Vatican and passed in file before him. After kissing his ring and his foot, each received a special word and a blessing.

We followed the most numerous of the cohorts and the one most noticed by the Romans, namely, the Piedmontese group. It was preceded by a banner bearing the inscription "Piedmontese Region." This region comprised the sixteen dioceses of the two ecclesiastical provinces of Turin and Vercelli. This banner was useful inasmuch as it enabled anyone getting detached from his own group and lost in the throng to find his own group again among the many thousands of pilgrims present. There were patricians and matrons, gentlemen and ladies, and many men and women of the working classes. The Piedmontese group followed the Venetian group who were first. After an hour of slow movement step by step, our turn came. We had grouped ourselves together and placed ourselves at the end of the line, just in front of the group from the Sardinian Region.

I had scarcely taken my place at the head of the Salesians of Turin, Rome, Magliano, Lucca and Randazzo and some of the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians when a voice were raised from among those who were surrounding the Pope, "*Don Bosco, the Salesians!*" Cardinal Billio, who recognized me called out, "*Father Cagliero!*" and others exclaimed, "*The Sisters of Don Bosco as well!*"

But I was already at the feet of the Supreme Pontiff who in his kindness detained me and spoke with great affection as he asked, "*Tell me. How is Don Bosco keeping in Turin? He is always on the move. He has Houses everywhere and his Sons are all over Italy and in France, Spain, America and even in Patagonia! Tell me, will [p. 350] Don Bosco go to Patagonia? I am so pleased with him. He does so much good, so much good!*"

I was so overcome that I do not know what I answered. One of those present, I think it was Monsignor Macchi, remarked concerning me, "Here is someone who has returned from Patagonia."

"Only from the borders," I answered.

While the other priests, the clerics and a number of coadjutor Brothers were kissing the ring and the foot, some of the cardinals and prelates present could be heard speaking about Don Bosco and his works.

Then came the turn of the Sisters.

"*The Sisters of Don Bosco,*" announced Monsignor Schiapparelli.

"*Oh very good!*" returned the Holy Father, "*and how many Houses have you and where are they?*" -he asked the Superior kneeling at his feet. I had to approach and answer for her because the good religious, finding herself in the presence of that sublime and affable majesty for the first time, was too overcome with emotion and tears to speak.

Hearing that the Sisters were already in Uruguay, the Argentine Republic and Patagonia, the Holy Father exclaimed,

"*All praise to the valiant! As far distant as Patagonia! Oh, may God bless each and all of you. May he bless your Superiors and all your Houses!*"

I cannot express in writing the mysterious effects that this sovereign benevolence of the Vicar of Christ on earth produced in us!

An hour after midday we were leaving the Vatican. At four the Tuscan group had only just passed through and there were still the Southern and Sicilian dioceses left. How good the Holy Father was but how tired he must have been I let us pray that his precious health may not have to suffer.

This evening I shall leave to visit our Houses in Naples, Messina, Catania, Bronte and Randazzo. I shall climb Mount Etna and after this short excursion, will descend and plunge into the center of Trinacria, that is, as far as Caltanissetta. Then I shall return by the coastal route, crossing the Strait, and pass up by the Calabrias and so continue along the same route that I took before, until I reach Foggia, Ancona, Faenza, Bologna, Padua, Este, Milan and finally Turin.

[p. 351] Pray for me that I may arrive back home safe and sound. *Valere in Domino omnes*, especially Don Bosco, who is dearest of all to us and suffices for all.

Your affectionate.

Father JOHN CAGLIERO¹⁰

APPENDIX No. 8

Act of conveyance concerning the sale of the College of Mornese November 8, 1881

Report N. 330/575

ACT OF SALE OF REAL ESTATE

Reigning Umberto I

by the grace of God and the will of the nation King of Italy

In the year one thousand eight hundred eighty-one, on the eighth day of November, in my office in Turin, Via Santa Teresa, N. 12, Casa Cella:

Present before me, Cav. Benedict Morone, Royal Notary of this residence, registered with the Notary Council of this District, and in the presence of Angela Trierembold and Madaline Barucco, ladies of the house, both natives and residents of Turin, standing as required, recognized witnesses.

The Reverend Father and Professor Michael Rua, native and resident of this city and known to me, personally

agrees that as his own property, clear and free from every pressure, restriction, and mortgage, he sells, cedes, alienates and delivers to the Illustrious Marchese Andrea D'Oria, native and resident of Genoa, proprietor, represented by James Mazzarello, native and resident of Mornese, proprietor, also known to me, the complex of house, cottage and chapel which the Reverend Father Rua claims to own in the town of Mornese, including garden, vineyard, field, meadow, and also the [p. 352] courtyard between the buildings; all located in the Region of Borgo Alto, of which parts no numbers are known in the register of landed property, there being no existing map, covering an area of about 110 square, corresponding to the ancient local measure of about 11, placing said reality between the principal consistencies: on the south by the Marchese D'Oria, purchaser, on the west by Mrs. Livia Botta and the heirs of Dominic Ferrettino, on the north by Via Comunale della Maglia, and on the east by the heirs of Dominic Mazzarello and the deceased Father Dominic Pestarino. The Reverend Father Rua declares that the buildings or houses which served until 1880 as a school, exclusive of every movable effect in said houses and also the altar existing in the chapel when the same belongs to Reverend Father Joseph Pestarino, the seller, Father Rua, transmits to the purchaser, the Marchese D'Oria, with all rights and use of the same components, even relative to passages and any roads, as has been held and possessed by him until now as coming to him from the testamentary succession of Father Dominic Pestarino.

The sale is therefore made in whole and not in part and for the agreed consideration or price of twenty thousand lire of which Father Rua declares he has already received eleven thousand from the Marchese D'Oria, prepaid in anticipation of this contract, and the remaining nine thousand lire received today from said James Mazzarello who places them on the table in legal tender, which he declares to be the money of the said purchaser, accruing to Father Rua, who takes and keeps it as remuneration in the sight and presence of the undersigned Notary and witnesses. Declaring himself completely satisfied with the said price, he releases a final receipt for the Marchese D'Oria.

It is understood that the purchaser will take possession of the sold property only after the eleventh day of the current November, and that from the first of the coming month, the inherent taxes of the same will be his responsibility; moreover, the leasee of the cottage, Valentino Campo, will have the right to live there until the end of the coming April, and that it will be reserved to the seller the right to the harvest of grain sown in the fields for the sum due a sharecropper.

As requested, I, the Notary, have received the present act written by my own hand on two sheets of paper, occupying about four and one third, which act was read by me in a clear voice to the parties present who declared that it conformed to their will in the presence [p. 353] of the witness, and signed by all along with me, the undersigned Notary .

Signed in the original:
Father MICHAEL RUA
JAMES MAZZARELLO
ANGELA TRIER EM BOLD –Witness
MADALINE BARUCCO - Witness
BENEDICT MAR ONE - R. Notary

Registered in Turin the fourteenth of November, 1881, N. 5882, Vol. 143.-property sold for 20,000 lire-L.800+L.160-L.960.

APPENDIX No. 9

Letter from the community of Las Piedras to Don Bosco

Viva Gesù Bambino e la Sua SS. Madre!

Las Piedras, November 17, 1882

Reverend Father and Major Superior,

Your poor Daughters in America also gather around you, at least spiritually, since we cannot do so physically, in order to repeat our sincere wishes for the Christmas season, and to offer you the homage of our gratitude and filial affection.

But what shall we say to you as we come spiritually and respectfully into your presence? We shall do as we have so often done before, that is, unite all our affection to our renewed good wishes because we reject stereotyped expressions and the repetition of phrase after phrase as too cold and little suited to the sentiments of lively gratitude we bear towards you, our Reverend Father and worthy Major Superior. But since we are unable

to do anything, we turn to Jesus who, in order to increase our confidence, presents Himself to us as a charming Baby, and seems to invite us to approach Him because His coming into the world is a prelude to great consolation and still greater graces.

Therefore we place our greetings in the hands of the Infant Jesus, asking for you, Reverend Father, the plenitude of heavenly blessings, [p. 354] and that you may be preserved in good health among your beloved Sons as well as your humble Daughters. We pray also that through you the torch of faith may be lit in many hearts and that your zeal may find its reward here on earth and still more gloriously in heaven.

We ask you to accept this token of our gratitude and in your goodness to recommend us all to God and bestow your paternal blessing on us and on our girls.
We have the honor to sign ourselves

Your sincere and devoted Daughters in Jesus Christ,
The SISTERS of Saint Joseph's School ¹¹

APPENDIX No. 10

*Letters to Don Bosco from Carmen de Patagones*¹²

Viva il Bambino Gesù!

Carmen de Patagones. November 14, 1883

Very Reverend Father Superior General,

Among all the festivals celebrated by the Church there is one that surpasses all others because of the memories it revives. This is the coming feast of Christmas which reminds us of the love of God for us in becoming man. His birth as a Baby seems to say to us, "Become little as I have given you an example. Be little in your hearts and obedient and respectful to your Superiors." Meanwhile the thought of those fortunate shepherds who did not reject God although He was so poor, animates us to write this letter to you.

It is our wish to express to you in a suitable manner the respect, love and gratitude we feel towards you as our Reverend Superior. However since we are not capable of much we ask you to be indulgent with us.

In the meantime we shall intercede with the Infant Jesus with all our strength, that He may preserve you for many more happy years to the affection of your beloved Sons. May He shower on you the special blessings He reserves for His faithful servants and finally the grace that we may all be together in paradise.

We beg you to remember us at the feet of the Infant Jesus during [p. 355] holy mass, that we may fulfil our mission and persevere until death on the path we have chosen. Lastly, we are happy to be able to greet you and, prostrating ourselves before you, we ask your blessing as we kiss your hand, and wish you the joys of Christmas to be followed by a happy ending to the old year and a prosperous beginning to the new.

We sign ourselves, dear Reverend Father,

Your humble Daughters in Jesus Christ,

Sister ANGELA VALLESE

Sister JOSEFA PICCARDO

Sister JOAN BORGNA

Sister ANGELA CASSULO

Viva el Nino Jesus! Patagones,
November 14, 1883

Very Reverend Father,

We see all the Sisters eagerly writing you a letter; shall we be the only ones who keep silent?

Oh no! That would be impolite and very ungrateful, because even if we do not have the honor of having met you, we know that you love us and want to see us as ardently as we want to see you.

Oh, Father! We would like to tell you that we love you very much, too-more than you can imagine, so much that we cannot find adequate words to express it.

Today we are praying that Baby Jesus may obtain for you all that your noble heart desires.

Accept the greetings of your humble daughters in the Heart of the Infant Jesus.

Your humble daughters.

The GIRLS of the school of Patagones

[p. 356]

APPENDIX No.11

Mother Daghero's "Strenna" for the year 1884

My dear Sisters,

In His infinite mercy God has granted us a new year in which to love and serve Him. This is a singular grace to which we must correspond with the greatest fidelity if we do not want to render a strict account at the Divine Tribunal. Therefore, in order to animate ourselves still more in the service of God, here is a short "Strenna" that I ask you to accept as a pledge of the sincere love I have for your souls. If you practice it, you will advance with giant strides along the path of religious perfection.

Presence of God-Obedience-Custody of the heart-Spirit of sacrifice.

God said to Abraham, "*Walk in my presence and be perfect.*" The holy Rule also tells us to remain in the presence of God and so become saints. Therefore may this thought govern all our actions as we remember that our heavenly Father does not look so much at the multiplicity of our works, as at our generosity of heart, and will reward us with immortal glory. Let us animate ourselves increasingly to carry out all our duties with fidelity, promptitude and in an orderly manner.

Scrupulous obedience, especially to the holy Rule and to every order, whatever it may be, without judging, criticizing or making excuses.

Custody of the heart by avoiding all gratifications and keeping far from everything that could take from the love that should be kept for God alone, and also all that could, even in a small way, diminish this love. Therefore, declare war on all exclusive friendships which ruin so many hearts and many real vocations. A spirit of sacrifice that makes us despise ourselves, our comforts and even life itself if need be, in order to secure the greater glory of God, our own perfection and the good of our neighbor.

In order to animate ourselves to the acquisition of this spirit let us meditate often on what our crucified Spouse did and suffered for us. Let us learn at the school of His sufferings, His obedience and His perfect abnegation, how we must love and suffer. Let us often [p. 357] remind ourselves of the reason we entered religion, the resolutions we made during the spiritual retreat and on the day of our profession. In conclusion, let us revive ever more the fire of God's love in our hearts, and for this end I recommend the observance of silence. I wish this silence to be scrupulously observed in all our Houses since, according to what the saints tell us, it is the most efficacious means for preserving the religious spirit and true fervor.

I end by thanking the Superiors and every Sister individually for their good wishes and prayers for my intentions during the Christmas season. I know that I am unworthy of your kindness, my dear Sisters; nevertheless, I thank you and assure you that, for my part, I reciprocate everything with my affection for you in Jesus. Continue the charity of your prayers for me. I need them very much. Pray much also for our Superiors and for our holy Founder, that God may reward them for all the good they do. Pray for the needs of the Congregation, for our dear sick Sisters, and do not forget those who have gone before us into eternity.

May Our Lady bless you, together with

From the Mother House, January 6, 1884

Your affectionate Sister,
Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

APPENDIX No. 12

*Minutes of the First General Chapter of the Daughters
associated with the Salesians
Nizza Monferrato, August 11, 1884*

LIST of the members of the 1st General Chapter *Nizza Monferrato, August 11, 1884*

In order to avoid repeating the qualifications and competence of each individual Chapter Member at every Conference, it was considered best to set out below the name and status of each respectively.

[p. 358] 1 - JOHN CAGLIERO, priest, Director General of the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Catechist of the Salesian Congregation, Doctor of Theology, composer and master of music, Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia.

2 - Reverend Sister Catherine Daghero, Superior General of the Congregation, formerly Superior in the Houses of Turin and of St. Cyr in France, then Vicar of the first Superior General, Teacher of Italian with Diploma.

3 - Reverend Sister ENRICHETTA SORBONE, Vicar of the Superior General, formerly Assistant in the Superior Chapter.

4 - Reverend Sister ANNA TAMIETTI, Bursar General of the Congregation, formerly Superior of the Houses of Quargnento and Lu Monferrato.

5 - Reverend Sister EMILIA MOSCA, First Assistant to the Superior Chapter, Superior of the boarding school of Our Lady of Grace in Nizza Monferrato, Teacher of Italian and French.

6 - Reverend Sister ELISA RONCALLO, Second Assistant of the Superior Chapter, Secretary of the Superior General, formerly Superior of the House in Turin and of the boarding school in Nizza Monferrato, High School Teacher.

7 - Sister FELICINA MAZZARELLO, Provincial of the Sicilian Houses, Superior of the House in Bronte, formerly Novice Mistress and Superior of the House of Borgo San Martino.

8 - Sister CATHERINE RICCA, Superior of the House in Borgo San Martino.

9 - Sister ADELE DAVID, Superior of the boarding school of Mary Help of Christians in Bordighera (Torrione), High School Teacher.

10 - Sister PIERINA MARASSI, Superior of the House in Turin, formerly Superior in Sampierdarena.

11 - Sister ENRICHETTA TELESIO, Superior of the House in Alassio, formerly Superior of the House in Biella.

12 - Sister ROSALIA PESTARINO, Superior of the House in Chieri, formerly Superior in Bordighera, High School Teacher.

[p. 359] 13 - Sister JOSEPHINE QUARELLO, Superior of the House in Biella, Elementary School Teacher.

14 - Sister MARIA MACCAGNO, Superior of the House in Lu, formerly Superior of the Houses in Biella and Borgo San Martino.

15 - Sister PETRONILLA MAZZARELLO, Superior of the House of Lanzo, formerly Vicar of the Superior General, Mistress of Novices and Superior of the House in Sampierdarena.

16 - Sister LOUISE VESCOVI, Superior of the House of Borgomasini, Elementary School Teacher.

17 - Sister JOSEPHINE TAMIATTI, Superior of the House at Quargnento, Elementary School Teacher.

18 - Sister CARLOTTA PESTARINO, Superior of the House at Sampierdarena, formerly Superior of the House in Alassio.

19 - Sister ANGELINA DEAMBROGIO, Superior of the House at Penango, formerly Superior of the House at Lanzo.

20 - Sister DELPHINA GUIDO, Superior of the House at Nichelino, Elementary School Teacher.

21 - Sister JOSEPHINE ROCCATI, Superior of the House in Rosignano.

22 - Sister ANNE OBERTI, Superior of the House at Fontanile, formerly Superior of the House at Borgomasino and of Bordighera.

23 - Sister LUCY FERRARIS, Vicar of the House of Incisa Belbo.

24 - Sister PHILIPPINA CANALE, Superior of the House of Villaboit, formerly Superior in the House of Nichelino, Elementary School Teacher.

25 - Sister TERESA GUGLIELMETTI, Superior of the House in Este.

The Superiors of the Houses in France were absent because of the cholera epidemic which was raging there. Those of the Sicilian Houses could not attend because of the distance, but they were represented by the Provincial already mentioned. It was also not possible for the Superiors in America to be present but mention was made about [p. 360] making it possible for some to attend the Second General Chapter.

Besides these, the Superiors from Villastellone and Mellazzo were also absent since they had been called by God to eternity during the scholastic year.

Some of the sessions were attended by Reverend Father John Bonetti, Counselor in the Salesian Superior Chapter, Elementary School Professor and author of various literary productions, formerly Director of the school of Borgo San Martino; Father Louis Bussi, local Director of the Mother House of Nizza Monferrato, formerly Prefect of the San Vincenzo de' Paoli Hospice in Sampierdarena; Theologian Bertello, Professor and former Counselor for Schools in the House of Turin and now Director of the school of Borgo San Martino and preacher of the retreats.

SESSION 1

August 11, 1884

On the 11th day of August in the year 1884 the Superior Chapter and the Superiors of the various Houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, gathered in the Mother House at Nizza Monferrato for the First GENERAL CHAPTER according to what was prescribed by their Rules or Constitutions under Chapter V.¹³

Our dear Father and Founder, Don Bosco, would willingly have presided in person over this First General Chapter, but he was prevented by weak health. Therefore he appointed Reverend Father Cagliero, the Director General of the Institute, to represent him. A letter was read from the Founder in which he sent his fatherly blessing and promised special prayers for the success of the First Chapter.

Following the pattern of the Regulations for Salesian General Chapters, Reverend Father Cagliero assembled the community in the church for the official opening of the Chapter. The *Veni Creator Spiritus*, was sung with the appropriate Oremus. There then followed an allocution in which the Director gave the motive for this First General Chapter, and pointed out its use and its necessity both for the consolidation and good running of the Institute and for stimulating greater observance and regular discipline, etc.

The Ave Maris Stella was sung in order to secure the protection of [p. 361] Mary Help of Christians. This was followed by benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

All the Superiors then gathered in the place set aside for Chapter meetings and the prescribed prayers were said. These were: *Veni Sancte, Actiones nostras, Ave Maria*. . . The Director General, President of the Chapter, opened the first Session with the reading of an article from the Salesian Deliberations, and by electing Reverend Sister Elisa Roncallo and Sister Rosalia Pestarino as Secretaries.

Finally he fixed the times of the Sessions for the following days. The meeting was then closed with the prescribed prayers, which were: *Pater to Saint Francis de Sales, Oremus, Agimus, Maria Auxilium Christianorum*, etc.

SESSION 2

August 12, 1884

This Session started at 9:00 a.m. with the established prayers. Present were Reverend Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the Superiors of the Houses as before, together with Sister Teresa Guglielmetti who had been absent due to a slight indisposition the previous day.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read and then the reading of the holy Rule was commenced.

Article 2 of Chapter I was discussed and with unanimous consent, the sense of the Rule was interpreted in the following manner:

1. That educational establishments should offer those sciences and arts suited to present social conditions and which are taught in other schools, or are required by government programs.

2. That assistance of the sick should be understood as referring only to those hospitals we have undertaken to direct, and not assistance in private homes, since this type of assistance is too dangerous. Visits to private homes shall only be permitted to the Superior in the company of a Sister in case of serious illness of the older girls of the school, and the workroom and festive Oratory girls.

The assembly discussed at length the prudence that should be exercised by the Superiors in communicating the intimate affairs of their Houses and of the Institute, especially to the Reverend Pastors who, in some places, have been entrusted with the direction

[p. 362] of the Sisters by the Rector Major.

The object of this was to prevent them from being excessively overburdened, and also to obviate the transgression of a point of the holy Rule contained in Chapter V, article 3. Here it is stated that *the Superior shall not usually be interfered with in her government and discipline of the House.*

Finally it was pointed out that maximum importance should be given to what was prescribed in Chapter III, article 4 of the holy Rule regarding the transfer of personnel. It was decreed that the Superiors of the Houses could not, for any reason whatsoever, send a Sister from one House to another in the Institute, without the previous permission of the Mother Superior.

The Session closed at midday with the usual prayers.

SESSION 3

August 12, 1884

This meeting began at 4:30 p.m. Those present were Reverend Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors already named.

After the established prayers the Minutes of the morning session were read. Then the reading of the holy Rule was continued.

In some places words were added and in others, words were suppressed, but a considerable length of time was given to the study of Chapter VII, article 3, where it is stated: *The amount of the dowry shall not be less than L 1000.*

To obviate inconveniences which had already caused harm to the Congregation, it was decided to change the wording as follows: *Retaining all their civil rights, the Sisters will bring as dowry whatever is due to them from their family. However this dowry shall not be less than L 1000.*

The matter of the Officers comprising the Superior Chapter was also dealt with, together with their qualifications.

The meeting ended at 8:00 p.m. with the usual prayers.

SESSION 4

August 13, 1884

This session opened at 10:00 a.m. with the prescribed prayers. Besides all the Superiors, Father Bonetti and Father Louis Bussi also attended.

After the reading of the Minutes of the preceding meeting, the study of the holy Rule was continued, beginning with Chapter 10, the Distribution of Time.

Some observations presented by the Superiors of Sicily were discussed regarding the time for rising, which did not appear to conform to local circumstances. After the discussion it was established that the Rule should be adhered to, but if any House felt that there was a need for exception in that particular case, application should be made to the Superior General.

Some wording was then amended but always in keeping with the spirit of the holy Rule. For greater clarity also, some points were faithfully transferred from one Chapter to another as the order of the material suggested.

For the same reason and to give greater importance to the observance of *silence* which so greatly influences regularity, this subject was given a chapter apart where it could be better explained and adapted to our *active* and *contemplative* life style.

When treating of *enclosure* (Chapter XII) the general objection of the Superiors of the individual Houses concerned *not being able to bring outsiders to places in the Houses which were reserved for the Sisters*, as in article 1. It was established that this point absolutely must not be transgressed. Father Cagliero said with regard to this resolution that it was the precise and determined will of Don Bosco, our dear and revered Father.

Therefore the Superiors were recommended to see that this was implemented, especially regarding the administrators and parish priests. For this purpose notices should be fixed to dormitory doors indicating that this part of the House was private.

The meeting closed at midday with the usual prayers.

[p. 364]

SESSION 5

August 13, 1884

This meeting started at 4:00 p.m. All the Major Superiors and the local Superiors were present except the Superior of Villarboit, who was absent because of an indisposition.

The Minutes of the previous meeting were read as usual, after which the reading of the holy Rule was completed.

First some of the Chapters were moved in order to provide for a more orderly reprint.

A separate Chapter was provided for the *General Chapter* and the following article was added to the Chapter which dealt with enclosure: *No one at all shall be admitted to the House after the evening Angelus bell has rung, except in the case of serious illness.*

Besides this, articles 1 and 2 of Chapter XVI of the holy Rule were moved to Chapter XI for the purpose of orderliness in regard to material. An article which dealt with the monthly retreat was added to this Chapter. This was taken from the Rule of our Salesian confreres.

Passing on to Chapter XVI (General Rules), an addition was made to the suffrages established. Five masses were now to be celebrated in the House where the death had occurred.

The monthly private talk was dealt with at length and it was decided to enlarge on this in the Deliberations.

The question was raised as to whether or not the Sisters and girls were permitted to seek advice concerning the reception of Holy Communion after committing some external fault. Father Cagliero replied that in some cases in a religious community, this could be allowed, when the fault committed had shocked or given scandal to others. But he added that absolutely no one could allow an extra Communion that had not been sanctioned by the Confessor.

In line with the sentiments expressed so often by Reverend Don Bosco concerning obedience to the holy Rule, Reverend Cagliero addressed stirring words to the Assembly concerning this same observance both to the Rule and to the holy vows.

He said that although the Rule did not bind under either mortal [p. 365] or venial sin, nevertheless even grave faults could be committed in the following cases:

1. When contempt for the holy Rule was involved.
2. When transgression of the same became habitual.
3. When scandal had been given to the Sisters.

He also added that there was always some fault attached to the wilful transgression of the holy Rule, because the observance of the Rule comes under the vow of obedience etc. . .

The meeting closed at 7:45 p.m. with the prescribed prayers.

SESSION 6

August 14, 1884

At this session, which opened at 10:00 a.m. only the Major Superiors were present with the Reverend Father Cagliero. The matter to be treated of was the admission to profession of the novices in the Mother House.

The local Superiors were admitted later when the admissions to the vows of the novices in the individual Houses were discussed.

Reverend Father Bonetti, Father Bertello and Father Bussi were also present.

Once the discussions on the admission to the triennial and perpetual vows were completed, the topic of community food was raised, incidentally. It turned especially on the breakfast and tea breaks. It appeared that inconvenience was caused at these two meals because in the individual Houses some wanted one thing and others something else. Regarding this Father Cagliero stated that Don Bosco was very much against these abuses, and considered them harmful to regular discipline.

It was obvious that a common diet should be fixed for all, except the sick.

The meeting ended at 12:30 p.m. with the usual prayers.

[p. 366]

SESSION 7

August 14, 1884

The Session opened at 4:00 p.m. with the established prayers. Present were the Major Superiors, the Reverend Father Cagliero and the local Superiors with the exception of Sister Philippina Canale who was suffering from an indisposition.

After reading the Minutes of the morning session a lengthy discussion took place on the usefulness of a report on each individual House, to be presented to the Superior General every three years.

Then the matter of the admission of the Sisters of individual Houses to triennial and perpetual vows was continued. This argument was concluded with a strong recommendation to the Superiors that each year when they come for the retreat they should present to the Superior Chapter the votes of their own particular Chapters for the admission to triennial or perpetual vows of the Sisters under their direction.

There was another long discussion concerning the difficulties caused in those Houses attached to Salesian schools where there were two hundred or more boys, in washing and cleansing the utensils used. It had been found through experience that the health of the Sisters suffered greatly when they had to stand with their hands in hot water for a long time during the period of digestion.

Then there was a discussion about the disturbance caused to the spirit of recollection by the introduction of visitors (relatives) into the House and providing hospitality for them. It was decided that an exact report on incidents connected with this should be drawn up and sent to the Rector Major.

The reading of the Deliberations of the General Chapter of our Salesian Brothers was then commenced in order to find a norm for our own Deliberations. In fact the first two chapters were adopted immediately with just a few variations. These chapters had been placed under the headings of *General Articles* and *Direction*.

The session closed at 7:30 p.m. with the usual prayers.

[p. 367]

SESSION 8

August 15, 1884

This began at 10:00 a.m. There were present Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors. Reverend Mother Vicar was absent because of indisposition.

The Minutes were read, the reading of the Salesian Deliberations was continued and the articles adapted to our needs, in the same manner that Chapters I and II had been in the preceding meeting.

Regarding Chapter III (*Respecting Superiors*) that part of article 7 was debated which stated that usually Superiors should never assume distasteful duties.

Regarding Chapter IV (*Administration*) a special article was added which better explained the disposition of Chapter V, article 3 of the holy Rule regarding the administrative account of individual Houses. This had to be presented by the Superior to the Superior General every year. For this end it was decided to have recourse to Father Rua, the Prefect General of the Salesian Congregation, in order that he might provide an *account form* adapted to the needs of our Houses.

Therefore, Reverend Father Cagliero explained that it was necessary for everyone to know that the top management of the movable and immovable goods of the Institute belonged to the Rector Major of the Salesian Congregation, and the goods of individual Houses depended on the Superior General who was in everything subordinate to the Rector Major.

Regarding Chapter V (*Habits and Linen*) only a few articles were adopted. The point was then raised that the postulants had great difficulty in acquiring *fioretto* stockings, and it was agreed that those who could not obtain them should provide a certain sum of money to pay for them.

It was also suggested that Mr. Rossi, the General Supplier to the Salesian Congregation, should be approached to find the means of obtaining these.

Reverend Father Bonetti arrived halfway through the session, which ended at 12:30 p.m.

[p. 368]

SESSION 9

August 16, 1884

This opened at 11 :00 a.m. in the presence of Reverend Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors.

Mother Vicar was still absent because of indisposition.

Our Father Cagliero opened the proceedings by stating that it would be advisable to insert an article in our Deliberations concerning conditions for acceptance. The object of this article was to safeguard against incidents which were harmful to the individual and unpleasant for the Congregation, which sometimes result when an exception to article 2, Chapter VII is made in receiving postulants.

It was especially recommended that young women who had already been professed in other Congregations, or who had passed the upper age limit considerably, not be accepted.

Experience has taught that it was usually very difficult for such girls to adapt to the observance of our holy Rule.

The reading of the Salesian Deliberations and the adaptation of the various Chapters to suit our needs was continued.

The meeting was concluded at 12:30 after the recitation of the usual prayers.

SESSION 10

August 17, 1884

This started at 11 :00 a.m. Present were Reverend Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors (Rev. Mother Vicar was still absent through illness).

There was a long discussion on the Chapter headed *Hospitality, Invitations to Dinner*. Experience has brought out the great *inconvenience* involved in giving hospitality in our Houses to secular persons, and in issuing invitations. However, it was stated that the Superior General or the local Superiors could, in necessary cases, give hospitality *only* to women and *only* during the day. Some food could also be given in the parlor or guest room.

[p. 369] Two separate articles dealing with hospitality and food were inserted into Chapter IX, part 2, of our Deliberations.

Regarding special feastday dinners it was decided to follow the Salesian norms.

Some observations were made regarding the fast and the dispensation from prohibited meat foods. It was decided that even on these days soup served to the community could be taken at the evening meal. Reverend Father Cagliero said that the Superior General had the faculty from the Rector Major to dispense those in need from fasting and abstinence.

The meeting ended at 12:30 p.m. with the usual prayers.

SESSION 11

August 18, 1884

This meeting opened at 11 :00 a.m. Reverend Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors were present.

The Chapter of the Salesian Deliberations dealing with *customs* were discussed. It was decided that permission to take this rest should only be given when the climate, (as in Sicily and America) required it. But it should only be taken for a short period and in a sitting position.

Father Cagliero spoke of our dear Father's opinion in this regard. He usually recommended everyone to try and overcome this habit, which he considered dangerous.

Then there followed a discussion on the use of a *Book of Customs* for those places where there were differences in climate and usages, etc. .

The *Book of Customs* would be a handwritten copybook in which the customs of different places would be written down under distinctive headings. These could then be examined to see which of them could be adapted for use in our various Houses.

The session ended at 12: 15 p.m. after the usual prayers.

[p. 370]

SESSION 12

August 19, 1884

The meeting opened at 11 :00 a.m. in the presence of Reverend Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors. After the Minutes of the meetings held on the two preceding days had been read, Chapter III (*Morality among the boarders*) was dealt with. Regarding what was stated in article 17, *all relationships between*

boarders and non teaching personnel should be withdrawn, it was agreed that the Superior should be discerning and vigilant in order to prevent the formation of exclusive friendships between teachers, assistants and pupils.

It was especially recommended that the girls should be supervised at recreation by their own assistants, who should strive to keep them together.

Next, Chapters IV and V of the Salesian Deliberations were read.

The utility of collecting particular information about Houses, foundations, buildings etc, was then discussed in order to combine all these things in a *Cronistoria* of the Congregation. (The composition of this *Cronistoria* would be entrusted to a capable Salesian author)

The meeting closed as usual at 12:15 p.m.

SESSION 13

August 20, 1884

This meeting began at 10:30 a.m. in the presence of Reverend Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors.

The Minutes of the preceding day's session were read. After this Father Cagliero announced another letter from our good Father Don Bosco, who recommended that our Conferences should treat of practical matters rather than deal with reforming the holy Rule, which was our surest way of attaining perfection, and the shortest way was by humility and obedience. At the end he urged us during [p. 371] our decisions to leave our body on earth and to fix our eyes on heaven.

Then Father Cagliero started to speak on the important question of the books the teachers and student teachers should be allowed to read, since they often found that textbooks they were obliged to use contained maxims contrary to faith and morals, etc. . .

There was a long heated discussion on the dangers which attended the reading of novels, and it was concluded that they absolutely be banned from our Houses, even if not prohibited. This was because for religious they always serve to dull the spirit.

The *Promessi Sposi* . . of Manzoni was mentioned and Father Cagliero said that it was Don Bosco's wish that this book should not be allowed to fall into the hands of the pupils or student teachers. Should need arise suitable extracts could be dictated in class, etc.

It was decided to arrange a Chapter of the Deliberations to deal with the studies of the Sisters.

In the various Houses the teaching Sisters should have at least one hour per day to prepare for classes. If the Sisters were beginners the Superior should see that they were helped in carrying out their duties.

It was suggested that the Sisters spend the holiday period in the Mother House where they would be better able to prepare for the scholastic year.

Following this, the subject of *Uniform* for the various types of scholars was discussed. . . To conform to the Salesian Deliberations it was established that the uniform should, if possible, be the same in all the schools. Therefore it was decided to insert an article in the Deliberations which would determine the material and style.

The meeting concluded at 12:15 p.m. with the usual prayers.

SESSION 14

August 21, 1884

This began at 11 :00 a.m. Present were Reverend Father Cagliero, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors. After the Minutes of the previous session, the Salesian Deliberations, Part 5 (*Economy*) was read.

[p. 372] Very few variations were made because everything conformed to the spirit of our holy Rule. We owe this to the diligent and fatiguing work of our Salesian confreres, to whom all gratitude and honor is due.

Speaking about the kitchen leftovers to be given discreetly to the poor, Reverend Father Cagliero recommended that when distributing this food, preference should be given to poor girls between ten and fifteen years of age. This was because when going from door to door in quest of food these poor girls could encounter serious dangers.

Referring back to the Chapter dealing with morality among the pupils, Father Cagliero recommended the Superiors to be attentive and vigilant in preventing two children from sleeping in the same bed.

The question was asked, incidentally, as to whether it was permitted to ask the Director of the House to dinner with the Sisters on special occasions. The Superior Chapter concluded that this was not advisable since it could be misconstrued by persons extraneous to the House.

The meeting ended at 13:30 with the usual prayers.

SESSION 15

the last

August 22, 1884

This session opened at 10:30 a.m. Present were Reverend Father Cagliero, Father Bonetti, the Major Superiors and the local Superiors.

The Minutes of the preceding meeting were read. Father Cagliero then stated that because time was lacking the first section of the Salesian Deliberations could not be read and adapted to our needs. This dealt with the Regulations for General Chapters; Members of the Superior Chapter and their work; Regulations for Provincials, Superiors, etc. This was deferred until another occasion.

Before the session ended our Director General spoke to us in words overflowing with charity and zeal for our souls and those of the Congregation in general.

He gave us as a souvenir, *humility* and *obedience*, virtues very much recommended by our Reverend Father Don Bosco as a safe [p. 373] foundation for religious life. He advised openness with the Superiors and on this point, observed that we were very fortunate in having the support of the Salesians, and especially in actually having a Member of the Superior Chapter as Director General of the Institute. He would always be our Father and would take the place among us of our common Father, Don Bosco.

Our confidence in Mother General should be without limit. Woe betide those Superiors or Sisters who began hiding things from her!

Experience has taught that the good management of the Institute and perseverance in one's own religious vocation depends essentially on confidence and frankness with the Superiors.

The Superior should instill in the Sisters this openness of heart with the Superiors. She would then be assured of the progress of the House she directed.

If, thanks be to God, the Congregation has prospered until now it is just because of this great trust in the Superiors, and if some unfortunate Sister has left the Institute, she owes her misfortune either in keeping silent or to speaking too late.

Father Cagliero ended by recommending the Superiors to be gentle, zealous and patient in the formation of personnel.

The final act of the Major Superiors and the local Superiors was to sign the Statement of Closure in which ample scope was given to the Rector Major and his Council to cancel, add or qualify whatever they thought necessary for the good of the Institute with regard to the holy Rule and the Deliberations.

STATEMENT OF CLOSURE

Ad maiorem Dei gloriam

On the 11th day of August the Superiors of the Houses of the Congregation of Mary Help of Christians with the members of the Superior Chapter, presided over, in the name of the Rector Major, by Rev. Father Cagliero, Director General of the Institute, and certain other members of the Salesian Congregation, gathered in the Mother House at Nizza Monferrato for the First General Chapter.

The first Session opened at 7:00 p.m. on the appointed day after [p. 374] invoking the assistance of the Holy Spirit. There were fifteen Conferences in which a number of things were established and many already established were confirmed, or rather, declared to be according to the spirit of the holy Rule and conforming to the Deliberations of the Salesians General Chapters. Everything was accurately collected and carefully written down by the two Secretaries.

The proposed material has been discussed and approved and thus the end for which this Chapter was convoked on August 11 has been achieved. The Superiors have now been recalled to the Houses they direct and since many matters still need to be set in order, clarified and explained more exactly, all decreed before leaving, that ample scope should be given to the Rector Major and his Council to cancel, add or qualify whatever they think necessary according to the spirit of our Congregation, and that said cancellations, additions or qualifications be made on the two copies of the Acts of this same Chapter.

For this end and in order to authenticate their approval, all the Major Superiors and the local Superiors who took part append their signatures below.

Nizza Monferrato, August 22, 1884

Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO
Sister EMILIA MOSCA
Sister ELISA RONCALLO
Sister PIERINA MARASSI
Sister ANNE OBERTI
Sister PETRONILLA MAZZARELLO
Sister CAR LOTTA PESTARINO
Sister PHILIPPINA CANALE
Sister LUCY FERRARIS
Sister CATHERINE RICCA
Sister LOUISE VESCOVI
Sister TERESA GUGLIELMETTI

Sister ENRICHETTA SORBONE
Sister ANNA TAMIETTI
Sister FELICINA MAZZARELLO
Sister ROSALIA PESTARINO
Sister ADELE DAVID
Sister ENRICHETTA TELESIO
Sister ANGELINA DEAMBROGIO
Sister DELFINA GUIDO
Sister MARIA MACCAGNO
Sister JOSEPHINE TAMIATTI
Sister JOSEPHINE QUARELLO
Sister JOSEPHINE ROCCATI

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APPENDIX No. 13

Don Bosco's letter to Father Bonetti

Pinerolo, August 16, 1884

My dear Father Bonetti,

I am happy to know that you are at Nizza Monferrato. Do not work too hard there. For the time being see that you get at least seven or eight hours rest every night. Tell our Sisters that obedience with humility will make them all holy. If these are missing all fatigue will be useless.

Throughout your life always preach: Do not reform the Rules but practice them. Whoever seeks to reform, deforms her own style of life. Constantly recommend the exact observance of our Constitutions.

Remember that *qui timet Deum nihil negligit, et qui spernit modica paulatim decedit.*

God bless you. Love me in Jesus Christ.

Your most affectionate friend,
Father JOHN BOSCO¹⁶

APPENDIX No. 14

Mother Daghero's circular-letter to the benefactors of the Institute on the occasion of the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Cagliero

Turin, November 4, 1884

Dear Madam,

By this time you will already have learned that our Holy Father Leo XIII has in his goodness raised the theologian, Father John Cagliero, to the episcopal dignity. He will be consecrated in a very short time.

For this solemn occasion we have to provide the Bishop-elect with the purple outfit and all the articles and ornaments required by this new dignity and for the sacred functions he will have to exercise.

[p. 376] These articles include, among others, the pectoral cross, various mitres, the pastoral staff and various crosses, etc.

Aware that you know and still have personal contact with the new Prelate, I thought it would give you pleasure to hear that a fund has been opened and the offerings will be used to provide the articles required.

The names of those giving offerings will be inscribed in a book provided for this purpose, which will be presented to the new Bishop. I am sure that besides regarding this as a fresh token of benevolence of the people he holds in high esteem he will feel urged to remember them before God in the course of his sacred ministry and especially during the first mass he celebrated as Bishop.

Should you in your goodness wish to take part in this demonstration of affection you may send your contribution to Don Bosco or to the undersigned in Nizza Monferrato, at the Institute of Our Lady of Grace, if possible before the 25th of the current month.

Confident in your cooperation and thanking you in anticipation I wish you God's blessing, and am happy to

sign myself

Your devoted servant,

Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

APPENDIX No. 15

Don Bosco's circular-letter on reading

November 1, 1884

My dearest children in J.C.,

A very serious motive has determined me to write this letter to you at the beginning of the scholastic year. You know how much affection I have for the souls Our Blessed Lord Jesus has entrusted to me. On the other hand, you cannot fail to realize the responsibility weighing on educators of youth and the strict account of their mission they will have to render to divine Justice. But my dear children, I have to bear the whole weight of this responsibility with you, and I hope that it will become the origin, source and cause of glory and eternal life [p. 377] both for you and for me. Therefore I thought it best to recall your attention to a very important point on which the salvation of our pupils depends. I speak of certain books which must be removed from the hands of our young people, and of those they should use for individual reading or reading in common.

First impressions made on the innocent minds and tender hearts of the young endure for a lifetime, and today books are the primary factor. Young people have a lively attraction towards reading, and this encourages insatiable curiosity upon which often depends the definite choice they make between good and evil. Enemies of souls are aware of the power of this weapon and experience has shown us the frenzy with which they use it to harm innocent souls. Intriguing titles, beautiful paper, clear type, good print, moderate prices, popular style, variety of plot, exciting descriptions, are all used with subtle cleverness and devilish astuteness.

Therefore it is up to us to oppose weapon to weapon; to take from the hands of our boys the poison offered them by wickedness and immorality, by exchanging bad books for good ones. Woe to us if we fall asleep while the enemy of mankind is ever on the watch, sowing seeds of dissension.

Hence I call on you to practice, right from the start of the scholastic year, what is prescribed by the Rule. Observe attentively what books the boys bring with them into the school. If necessary give someone the task of checking trunks and parcels. Besides this, let every Director get the boys to make a conscientious list of their books and give it to the Superior. This will not prove a useless exercise since these lists could serve as a guide of conduct towards those who have maliciously hidden some bad book.

This same vigilance should be continued all through the year. Every pupil should be obliged to hand in each new book obtained during courses of lessons, through relatives or friends or through their schoolmates among the day pupils.

Care should be taken to see that the young people are not given, through ignorance or malice, parcels wrapped in bad newspapers, even if this involves a discreet search in study, dormitory or classroom.

Too much care can never be taken for this end. Let the professors, [p. 378] the Head of Studies and also the assistants observe what is being read in church, at recreation time, in class or in the study. Unscreened dictionaries should also be eliminated. For many boys these are the beginning of malice, deceit and bad companions. A bad book is a pest that attacks many boys and the Director should deem it fortunate when he succeeds in taking one of these books away from a pupil.

Unfortunately boys who have them in their possession find obedience very difficult and cunningly try to hide them.

The Director has to battle against avarice, curiosity, fear of punishment, human respect and unbridled passions. Therefore I regard it as absolutely essential to win over the hearts of the boys and to convince them by gentleness. Speak frequently during the year on the subject of bad books. Do it from the pulpit, in the evening and in class. Point out the evil that can come from them. Convince the boys that we have no other interest than the salvation of their souls and that we love these better than anything else. Never be severe except in the case of a boy who is causing harm to others.

If someone gives in a bad book when the year is already advanced do not make much of even the past disobedience in this matter, but accept the book as if it were a precious gift. It could be that the Confessor has suggested that the book be handed in and it would be imprudent to question the matter. The recognized kindness of the Superiors should induce boys to denounce those among their companions who hide such books.

However, when a book forbidden by the Church, or an immoral book is discovered, it should be burnt

immediately. Books taken from boys and retained have proved the ruin of priests and clerics. If you do as I say I hope that no bad books will gain access to our Houses, and should any do so, that they will be quickly destroyed.

But we must keep our eyes open for certain other books besides the bad ones. These could be good books or indifferent ones. Although not evil in themselves these might be dangerous inasmuch as they are unsuited to the age group, place, studies, inclinations, nascent passions or vocation. They must be eliminated. Regarding harmless and pleasant books, it would be advantageous to studies if it were possible to exclude them. Professors preparing scholastic exercises regulate the time of the pupils. However, since the mania for reading is almost uncontrollable, and many books, even the good ones, excite [p. 379] the passions and the imagination too much, I am thinking, if God gives me life, of planning and printing a series of books pleasing to young boys.

This refers to private reading. Regarding books to be read aloud in refectories, dormitories and study halls I would say in the first place, that no book should be read unless it has been approved by the Director, and that novels of all types should be excluded unless they come from our own press.

The *Bolletino* and the *Letture Cattoliche* should be read in the dining room as they come to hand, and in the intervals those historical books printed at the Oratory, such as *Storia d'Italia*, *Storia Ecclesiastica e del Papa*, the *Racconti sull'America* and other subjects published in the collection of the *Letture Cattoliche*, and the histories and stories of the *Biblioteca della gioventù*. These last could be read in the study where there is still the custom of a quarter of an hour's reading before singing practice.

Then, regarding reading in the dormitories, I intend to ban absolutely all distracting or amusing reading. I wish books to be used that lend themselves suitably to boys preparing for a night's sleep and which will improve them. Hence although it should prove useful for attractive books to be used in these circumstances, these should deal rather with sacred or ascetic subjects. I would begin with the biographies of our own boys like *Comollo*, *Savio*, *Besucco* etc., and would continue with those booklets of the *Letture Cattoliche* that speak of religion. Finally, I would use the lives of the saints, choosing the most suitable and appealing. I feel sure that this reading, following on the short evening talk given by one who desires with all his heart the good of souls, will do more good than a spiritual retreat.

In order to obtain the desired results and to make of our books a serviceable antidote for bad books, I ask, I beg that you yourselves love the publications of our confreres. Do not foster any feelings of envy or manifest any lack of esteem. Should you feel that there is something deficient about a publication and you have time, do something about it by advice or action. Thus, by making known your observations to the author, or to the Superiors whose duty it is to revise our publications, the necessary corrections may be made. When the boys hear their teachers and assistants praising a book they too will esteem it, praise it and read it. Remind yourselves of the words [p. 380] the saintly Pius IX addressed to the Salesians on one occasion. He said, "Imitate the example of the Jesuit Fathers. Why is it that their authors are so much esteemed? It is because their confreres labor at revising and correcting the work of their brethren as if it were their own. Then, in all the papers they can dispose of they write publicly of the merits of the work and are loud in its praise. Privately they speak nothing but words of esteem. Not one of those Fathers, and there are thousands of them, is ever heard to utter an adverse criticism which could belittle the fame of a confrere."

You should do the same among your young people and then you can be sure that our books will produce immense good.

My dear Sons, listen to, pay attention to and practice this advice of mine. I feel my life is nearing its sunset. Yours too will pass swiftly. Let us then work zealously so that we can present God, the good Father of our family, with an abundant harvest of souls that have won salvation. May God bless you, and our young pupils with you. Greet them for me and recommend to their prayers this poor old man who loves them sincerely in Jesus Christ.

All Saints' Day,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus Christ,

Father JOHN BOSCO¹⁷

APPENDIX No. 16

Statement of the consecration of the church in Nizza Monferrato

December 31, 1884

*AD PERPETUAM REI MEMORIAM*¹⁸

Anno a nativitate D.N.J.C. millesimo octingentesimo octogesimo quarti, die trigesima prima mensis Decembris, quo tempore Leo X III Summus Pontifex Ecclesiam Dei super Petri Cathedra Romae regeret; dum insignis dioecesis Aquarum Statiellarum Episcopus esset Excell. mus ac Reverend. mus Dom. nus Joseph Maria Sciandra, I.R Imperii Princeps atque comes; Congregationi vero Salesianorum dum rector [p. 381] praesesset Reverend. mus Joannes Bosco Sacerdos, huiusce Congregationis pater fundator itemque societatis filiarum quae a Maria SS. Auxiliatrice nuncupantur.

Excell. mus ac Reverend. mus D. nus Joannes Cagliero, Magidae Episcopus, ac Provicarius Apostolicus in regionem Patagoniam septentrionalem, qui primus ex sociis salesianis episcopali dignitate est auctus, templum hoc in urbe Nicia sollemni pompa ad Dei cultum rite consecravit sub titulo Mariae SS. De Gratia.

Adfuerunt adiutores Episcopo consecranti Reverend. mus D. nus Franciscus Berta Canonicus ad id ipso ab Excell. mo Dioecesis Aquensis Episcopo demandatus; Reverend. mus Antonius Sala Sacerdos Salesianus eiusdem Congregationis Oeconomus generalis; et Reverend. mus Alojsius Bussi Sacerdos Salesianus, magister pietatis et moderator domus matris. uti vocant, filiarum Mariae SS. Auxiliatricis in eadem hac urbe Nicia.

Fundus hie, quo domus mater filiarum et templum habetur pertinet ad Joannem Bosco, qui eum pecunia emit an no millesimo octingentesimo septuagesimo septimo. Idem sequenti anno, cum aedes instaurandas curasset, voluit quoque ut templum hoc, sa era benedictione rite expiatum, Dei cultui et Missae celebrationi tunc primitus inserviret.

Firmato:

† JOANNES Episcopus Magidanus

BISI0 LUDOVICUS Parochus S. Joannis et Vicarius Foraneus testis
DENICOLAJ CAROLUS Praepositus S. Hyppoliti
RICCI EUGENIUS Archipresbyter S. Syri
RICCARDI ANTONIUS Sac. a Secretis