

Cronistoria

Chronicles

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

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

**Last years under the gaze of the
Founder
1885-1878**

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INTRODUCTION

Volume V is the conclusion of the period of the *Cronistoria* which can still be called "the beginnings." It records the memoirs of the Institute during the last years of the Founder's life (1885-1888), and highlights the intense, affectionate and filial gratitude in which the anxious hours of his last illness and holy death were lived.

Therefore, care has been taken to collect records of his actual words, of the predictions he made which became facts, and of simple occurrences and short phrases heard at casual encounters, especially when these

gave an insight into his spirit. All this will better illustrate the fatherly figure of the Institute's Founder.

His memorable last visit to Nizza Monferrato (August, 1885) took place during this period. It was in the course of this visit that he was overcome with emotion as he testified to the Blessed Virgin's pleasure in the *living monument* he had erected to her as a token of his gratitude.

Another noteworthy event of these years was the celebration of the Second General Chapter (August, 1886). This was prepared for by Don Bosco's programmatic letter which will always be a most treasured document in determining the spiritual physiognomy he intended for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

During this period the consoling influx of vocations continued, confirming information received by Don Bosco *ex alto* during these same years. Furthermore, there were many new foundations including the first one in Spain. This was made at the express wish of Our Lady who gave many signs of her supernatural intervention. Added to this, proofs of Mary's sensible presence during her daughters' last moments were far from rare, which emphasized the distinct [p. iv] marian character of the Institute.

The memories collected and presented in this volume also reveal the singular fervor of the missionary spirit as it was lived at that time. The two expeditions to America bear witness to this, as do the opening of new mission centers and the lively sharing in missionary life. This was especially nourished by letters received from Monsignor Cagliari, the first Director General of the Institute, renowned for his tireless zeal to inflame everyone with his apostolic ardor.

There emerges ever more clearly through the web of these events the figure of the second Superior General, Mother Catherine Daghero, who followed closely in the footsteps of Mother Mazzarello, faithful to Don Bosco and his Sons who echoed his mind and his voice for the Institute.

Therefore, this last volume can also offer water from the fountains of the early times and become for the present and the future a tidal wave of the living, life-giving spirit of the past.

Rome, March 25, 1978

Feast of the Annunciation of the Lord

Sister GISELDA CAPETTI

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1885

The joyful dawn of a new year

The last page of the preceding volume of the *Cronistoria* speaks of the solemn re-consecration of the church of Nizza Monferrato at the end of the year 1884.

Hence the new year opened at Nizza in a particularly festive mood with Monsignor Cagliari still present in the House. At 9:30 a.m. he presided over the religious clothing of twenty-five postulants, among whom were Marietta and Angelica, the two younger sisters of Mother Vicar.

Overcome with emotion and tired out by the ceremonies of the previous day, Monsignor did not preach at this time, but reserved his words for the afternoon celebration. However he pontificated at the sung mass which followed the clothing ceremony.

After the singing of solemn Vespers in the afternoon he gave, as he had promised, a fervent talk to the community on some of the essentials of religious life based on the remembrance of the obedience of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, their spirit of detachment from everything, and their love of sacrifice.

His fervent words prepared all those present for the renewal of their baptismal promises, and the celebration was sealed with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

Afterwards the Sisters and pupils lingered in prayer before the new statue of Mary Help of Christians. This worthy replacement of the previous image had been blessed by Monsignor, and was now enthroned above the high altar.

[p. 2] Monsignor Cagliero's souvenir talk

Happy in the presence of Monsignor, time passed quickly for the community. Saturday, January 3, the day of his final departure, arrived only too soon.

During holy mass he addressed a few fatherly words to the community with an anxious ring in his voice. His last thoughts were a summary of what he had continually recommended and it seemed as if he wanted to carve them on the hearts of his hearers.

"Remember," he said, "that after Baptism the most important grace is that of a religious vocation. Therefore, keep your spirit high and yourselves abased. Be open with your Superiors, work zealously for your own sanctification and the salvation of others, and pay no heed to the sensibility of your heart. Woe betide the religious who is proud, tepid, or who closes her heart.

Be obedient! Disobedience which has ruined the world could also make havoc of your perseverance.

Remember this advice and pray for me...".

These words were received as a sacred testament and treasured with deep emotion, increasing the pain they felt when, in the afternoon, Monsignor blessed them again, recommended his dear Patagonia to their prayers, and left for Turin.

Mother's "Strenna" for the new year

The House was filled with an ardent missionary enthusiasm which had been ignited by Monsignor's zeal and was nourished by the thought of the coming expedition to America led by Monsignor Cagliero himself.

Even Mother General's "Strenna" on the feast of the Epiphany was permeated with the missionary spirit.

"To save souls!" she wrote. "Oh what a great mission God has entrusted to us if only we co-operate in His holy designs!" For our consolation she reminded [p. 3] us that we can all be apostles without going to faraway mission centers, so long as we are animated by true zeal for the salvation of souls and fulfill even the most humble of our tasks in the spirit of sacrifice, deep humility, great simplicity and faith in obedience.

...Let the spirit of sacrifice [she said] be the "Strenna" I give you for this year. I ask you to accept it as a gift from the Infant Jesus Himself. The spirit of sacrifice, that is, holy indifference, in accepting the work, the destination and the tasks the Superiors see fit to entrust to you. The spirit of sacrifice in obeying without discriminating between person and person, or between manners or commands, seeing in the Superiors the Person of Jesus Christ, and in their orders the holy will of God. The spirit of sacrifice which enables us to forget and despise ourselves, to renounce all vain satisfactions, to compassionate the shortcomings of others, or at least to excuse the intention of our neighbour when the act itself cannot be excused, and to seek the will of God, His glory and the good of souls, in everything....¹

"Oh Mary, I am coming, I am coming! . . ."

On the following morning, January 7, the edifying death of Sister Marietta Molino took place. She was a true model of the spirit of sacrifice and loving adherence to the divine will, and had been stirred to fresh fervor in her resolutions to practice the "strenna."

Just over twenty-one years of age, she had been confined to bed in the infirmary for two months without any hope of recovery. But she was happy to make the sacrifice of her life in order to be united to God sooner and forever. Because of her great virtue she had been allowed to make her vows on the previous September 22.

Scarcely had she received Holy Viaticum on the day following the feast of the Epiphany, when still absorbed in making her thanksgiving, she was seen to raise herself on the bed as if in suspense. With eyes lifted to heaven she [p. 4] exclaimed, "Oh Mary, I am coming, I am coming!" Then with great energy she seized the bell on her bed table and started ringing it as if she were calling others to come and see what was happening.

The Mothers and some of the Sisters hurried to her bedside as the sick Sister continually repeated, "Thank you, Mary! . . . I am coming!" Then falling back on her pillows she entered her agony.

The Director was quickly called to assist her and while he was repeating the prayers for the dying he saw the Sister raise herself again, and heard her vigorously ringing the bell. It was a repetition of the first sweet episode.

However it lasted but a moment or two and soon Sister Marietta fell back on her pillows and peacefully breathed her last. Her face was suffused with such heavenly beauty that the Superiors even allowed the pupils to come and pray beside the blessed remains.

Many things were said about her virtuous example and more about her love for God. When still a postulant this love had enabled her to testify in a wonderful manner, "God allows me to enjoy His presence so much that I rejoice when I have an opportunity to suffer in order to prove my love for Him."

Sister Margaret Boggio follows her into eternity

Three days later, on January 11, Sister Margaret Boggio died in Turin at the completion of her twenty-ninth year.

She had never spared herself either in work or in the practice of gentleness which demanded a continual effort to control her naturally quick temperament.

When her illness became serious she suffered greatly because she could not have a priest she had known a long time near her in her last moments. But Father Bonetti comforted her and she willingly accepted the sacrifice. However God wished to reward her and her one-time spiritual director returned from Paris during her last days.

[p. 5] Much to her consolation he was able to assist her until she had breathed her last.

Fresh departures for the missions

These departures for eternity preceded a new missionary expedition. This had already been delayed for a month to await the re-opening of the ports of Brazil, Montevideo and Buenos Aires which had been closed to all ships coming from the Mediterranean because of cholera.

The six Sisters chosen were Sister Louise Brugnone, Sister Josephine Benentino, Sister Margaret Baratelli, Sister Maria Bono, Sister Rosina Bosco and Sister Nazarina Galli. The last four were novices and all had been in Turin since October studying Spanish under the direction of Father Evasio Rabagliati. They sent news that they had had the good fortune of assisting at Don Bosco's mass almost every day, and that they often visited our dear Father and received his precious instructions which were more efficacious than any spiritual reading.

In the preceding December they had been able to attend the episcopal consecration of Monsignor Cagliero, and on January 29 they had taken part in the feast of Saint Francis de Sales.

Finally, on Sunday, February 1, they were given a prominent place in the Church of Mary Help of Christians for the solemn farewell service, which was honored by the presence of the Archbishop, Cardinal Alimonda. Unfortunately the ill health of Don Bosco did not permit him to attend.

That same evening the missionaries together with the Salesians had left for Genoa. ²

On Tuesday the 3rd, Mother General left Nizza with Mother Vicar, to meet the missionaries at Sampierdarena. She intended going to Marseilles with them. They were due to embark there on the 14th.

We accompanied them with our prayers.

[p. 6] The expected news of the travellers

Mother General and Mother Vicar returned on the 17th tired out with their journey. Nevertheless they had a lot of news to give. First of all they spoke of the joyful meeting at Sampierdarena and then of the departure for France the following morning.

During the journey they had stopped at Alassio on the 4th. That same afternoon Monsignor Cagliero arrived. He had left Turin on the 2nd intending to make stops at the Houses on the riviera.

Thus the Sisters and the community were able to hear two beautiful conferences, one from Monsignor and the other from our Mother on perseverance in the religious vocation.

Next morning they journeyed to Bordighera and Nizza mare, arriving at La Navarre on the 6th. A stop was also made at St. Cyr where, together with Sister Meana, the Superior of the Marseilles House, who had come to meet them, they went for a lovely walk along the seashore with Mother General.

"This," said Mother Vicar, "was just one example of the tender care of Mother General to uplift the hearts of the missionaries and keep them cheerful. It seemed as if she wanted to compensate them for the sacrifice asked

of them by Monsignor, not to go and bid farewell to their relatives before leaving."

At last they reached Marseilles where, on Wednesday the 11th, they were surprised by the arrival of Monsignor Cagliero who had given them no time to complete the preparations in his honor.

Religious profession before sailing

On Friday 13th, the day before boarding the boat at Marseilles, the four novices had the great happiness of pronouncing their first vows.

[p. 7] Sister Meana had made a light-hearted remark to the four youngest among the missionaries while they were all in the garden situated in front of the Salesian church. "Why don't you little novices ask Monsignor to allow you to make your profession?"

Without much thought the young novices immediately approached Monsignor Cagliero and repeated the question,

"Why don't you let us to make our profession, Monsignor? "

The Bishop looked intently at each one of them and said, .

"Because. . .because . . . because you have never asked me, that is why."

"Well, we ask you now," they replied with great enthusiasm. Monsignor then said, "Well then, go quickly into the church, every one of you!" He then set about improvising a ceremony for the vows.

However there were no crucifixes, so Mother General removed her own, saying "Here is one!" Mother Vicar, Sister Meana and Sister Louise Desirello quickly followed suit.

It would be impossible to describe the joy of the four privileged novices in knowing they were bound to God by the holy vows, in reward for their generous love in going to the missions. Each pressed the crucifix to her heart. Happiest of all was the lively Sister Rosina Bosco, who was privileged to receive Mother General's crucifix at the altar.

Don Bosco's blessing sent through Father Bonetti

Yet another consolation was reserved for the missionaries. Father Bonetti arrived on the evening of the 12th. He had been sent by Don Bosco to give his good wishes and blessing to the entire Salesian contingent, along with a hand-written letter dated February 10 for Monsignor Cagliero. In it he summarized all his former recommenda- [p. 8] tions in these words: "Advise all our people to direct their energies to two cardinal points: to make themselves loved, not feared; to make every personal and financial sacrifice to promote ecclesiastic and monastic vocations. "3

A separate handwritten note from our dear Father bore a Latin invocation to Mary Help of Christians,⁴ which Monsignor Cagliero was asked to set to music. This was meant to dispel the anxiety for his health which had been very poor at the time of their departure. Don Bosco wrote: "Words to be set to music by Monsignor Cagliero. God willing, we shall sing it together in the Church of Mary Help of Christians in Turin in His own good time."

Don Bosco's interesting dream

Father Bonetti had the missionaries listen to the reading of Father Lemoyne's narration of a recent dream of Don Bosco concerning them ⁵ Our good Father had this dream during the night between January 31 and February 1, before the farewell ceremony in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. He had been overcome at the thought of being unable to see his missionaries embark, as had been his practice, and of not being able even to go down to the Church to bless them.

The highly interesting dream begins: "I seemed to be in the company of the missionaries as they set out on their journey..." The narration goes on to present the future development of the Salesian missions.

Don Bosco then went on to describe a magnificent dining hall, long, wide and furnished with a great number of tables laden with food. The length of the hall was extraordinary and he saw many of us among the numbers of those taking their seats at those heavenly tables. In fact, when relating this dream Don Bosco said, "I cast my eyes over that seemingly endless stretch of laden tables and recognized many of our Sisters and a large number of the confreres, seated there singing. There was no distinctive [p. 9] mark to show which were priests, clerics or Sisters, but like the others they were all wearing a white robe and a rose colored mantle."

The dream narrative concluded: "The dominant thought after this dream was to give Monsignor Cagliari and my dear missionaries an important piece of advice concerning the future of our missions. It is this: 'All the efforts of the Salesians and the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians must be concentrated on promoting ecclesiastical and religious vocations.' "

The enthusiasm of the missionaries may well be imagined! Sister Baratelli and Mother Vicar stayed up until two o'clock in the morning in order to make a copy of the long dream to take to America. ⁶

The missionaries' final good-bye

The next day-Saturday, the 14th-the day of embarking, finally dawned. After having assisted at Monsignor Cagliari's mass at the Salesian school, the missionaries set out for the port accompanied by Mother General, Mother Vicar, the two Superiors of the Marseilles Houses and a few Co-operators. They went aboard the *Bourgogne* with Monsignor and the other missionaries. However the ship was not to lift anchor until the afternoon, so there was time to send a telegram of greetings to Don Bosco and receive his reply, containing his blessing, before they left dry land.

Our Sisters are now on the high seas and as our Mother constantly recommends, we continue to pray for them.

Mardi Gras made holy Day of prayer for the Pope

These last days of Mardi Gras offer us many opportunities of doing this in devout adoration before the Blessed Sacrament during the celebration of the Forty Hours which [p. 10] ends on Tuesday, February 17.

The boarders were again kept happy this year with enjoyable stage performances. These were repeated on three occasions for the people who came in such great numbers that it seemed as if the whole of Nizza had turned its steps towards the House of the "Madonna."

Thank God, everything went well and if even one sin has been prevented we consider all our efforts well rewarded.

The 20th of February is the anniversary of His Holiness Leo XIII, as the *Salesian Bulletin* of this month reminds us. It is a day of fervent prayer for the Pope and of thanksgiving to God for having given His Church such a wise Pope, so full of doctrinal competence, in these difficult times.

First news of the missionaries

During these days much desired news arrived from the missionaries, who had arrived at Barcellona on the morning of the 15th. Father Branda, Director of the Salesian House in Sarria, had gone to meet them at the port and the following day he wrote to Don Bosco. ⁷

Our Sisters received a most cordial welcome from our revered benefactress, Lady Dorothy di Chopitea. After they had assisted at holy mass celebrated in her own house, she went with them to visit the Salesian Hospice in Sarria.

This good lady was so pleased to have the Sisters with her that she wanted them to stay and not leave for America. But the *Bourgoyne* was waiting in the harbor and that same evening all were once more aboard and on their way.

May Our Lady guide and protect them as they cross the vast ocean!

[p. 11] Sister Maria Bisoglio is called to eternity

On Sunday, March 15, just a few days before Saint Joseph's feast, the virtuous young Sister Maria Bisoglio died. This was a third death for the House of La Navarre and occurred just over three months after the other two. It also took place in the infirmary at Turin.

Father Perrot, Salesian Director at La Navarre, said that all three were very dear to God, but he added, concerning Sister Bisoglio, "She was outstanding for her obedience and the control she had over her character."

Although somewhat comforted by edifying memories of virtue, these frequent deaths were deeply felt especially by Mother General, who thought with anguish of the great sacrifices made by our Sisters of La Navarre.

The feast of Monsignor Sciandra

The feast of dear Saint Joseph was celebrated in the House in the usual manner. It reminded us of our duty to pray in a special way for our beloved Bishop, Monsignor Sciandra, to whom good wishes from the community had already been sent.

He hurried to reply the next day, expressing his fatherly pleasure in the following words which Mother read to us at the good night:

Acqui, March 20, 1885

As I thank all those who were kind enough to send me greetings for my feastday, I give pride of place to the good Sisters of Mary Help of Christians because they are, as it were, my first born daughters in Jesus Christ and I am also obliged to them for many special kindnesses, most of all because of the prayers they offer for my poor person.

Therefore please be so kind as to thank your Sisters in my name for the good wishes they sent me, and assure them that I have prayed, and will continue to pray, that [p. 12] God may shower His choicest blessings upon them.

I must also thank the boarders for their congratulations, and I pray that God may preserve those little angels in his holy grace.....

† *Joseph Mary, Bishops* ⁸

What a wealth of encouragement and consolation our Bishop's blessing always brings to us! It is a sure sign of the blessing of God!

Don Bosco leaves for France

Mother General informed us that Don Bosco had left Turin on the morning of Wednesday the 24th in order to make his usual yearly pilgrimage through France.

Although in very poor health he was forcing himself to make this strenuous effort because there was a great need to collect offerings for his poor boys and for the construction of the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome. With him were his secretary Father Viglietti and our own Director General, Father Bonetti, who went as far as Alassio.

We must pray much that God may support him and allow him to continue the good he does wherever he goes.

Don Bosco concerning the circulation of good books

At the very time our Sisters in France were happily welcoming our beloved Father and enjoying the sound of his voice once again, we too heard that same voice through his letter on the *circulation of good books*. This had been sent to all the Salesian Houses as well as our own.⁹ It carried the date of the preceding March 19.

This long letter, full of warm affection and lively zeal, fervently recommended the circulation of good books. Don Bosco did not hesitate to call this work a "divine" means of co-operating in the promotion of God's glory [p. 13] and in saving souls, since God Himself had used this means in the regeneration of man through the inspired books.

"How many souls," Don Bosco wrote, "have been saved through good books; how many have been preserved from error and encouraged to do good. Whoever gives a good book which may stimulate a thought of God will already have acquired great merit before God. . ."

God alone knows the good produced in a city through a book in a circulating library, a workers' club or a hospital, or one that is given as a token of friendship . . ."

After illustrating this thought with examples he continued, " . . . You should be animated with all your strength and with all the means in your power to promote the circulation of good books, not only as Catholics but still more as Salesians.

This was one of the principal undertakings entrusted to me by Divine Providence and you know the tireless energy I have had to give to it in spite of a thousand other occupations. The frenzied hatred of the enemy of souls

and the persecution directed towards my person show that the promoters of error regard these books as formidable adversaries and, for the opposite reason, an undertaking blessed by God . . ."

He then spoke of all the work accomplished in the field of good reading matter in less than thirty years and, reminding us of the publications to be preferred in the work of circulation, our good Father insisted: "I beg and entreat you not to neglect this important part of our mission. Do not be satisfied with just doing this yourselves among the young people Providence has sent you; by your words and example, make them also apostles in the work of circulating good books . . ."

"In response to these fatherly exhortations," concluded Mother, "we shall circulate the good literature and also the *Salesian Bulletin*, which Don Bosco recommends so much. We shall strive to introduce them into many homes, especially the homes of our relatives, if they do not yet have them."

[p. 14] Preparation for Easter

A Salesian professor arrived in Holy Week, on Wednesday, April 1, for the boarders' end of tenn examinations. These were completed to everyone's satisfaction.

Once their scholastic tasks were over the girls began a three-day spiritual retreat which was preached by Father Bussi, their Director, and another Salesian priest.

Besides the usual closing ceremony at the end, there was a reception of *Children of Mary, Aspirants* and candidates for the *Sodality*. This aroused new fervor and prepared them for a joyful celebration of Easter.

“Keep the little rules faithfully”

Father Cerutti sent his very welcome greetings for this season. He had left Alassio to take Father Bonetti's place at Don Bosco's side, and had gone with him to Nizza-mare in France. He next went to La Navarre and from there, on April 1, he wrote to Mother General. Mother read his letter to us because it carried a special message from Don Bosco. Father Cerruti wrote:

...As I am a long way from Alassio and at this moment also separated from Don Bosco, it is only natural that after sending special greetings for a joyful and holy Easter to my confreres, the boys and the Sisters of my headquarters, I should offer greetings to you and to all the other saints at your House.

May God bless you, my dear Daughters, and on the approaching feast, grant you the grace of rising from all the miseries and weakness of human nature.

After being specially asked, Don Bosco has given a souvenir for his Daughters: to keep the little rules faithfully. Tell your Sisters about this and explains in to them. As he expressly wished, I am fulfilling the task of Visitor for the Sisters here, in as far as I can. I shall write or maybe speak to you about this once my task has been completed [p. 15] and suggestions have been agreed upon with Don Bosco.

On the evening of the day after tomorrow I hope to meet Don Bosco at Toulon, in order to accompany him back to Marseilles where, if need be, you may send your letters. I do not know yet when I shall be returning to Alassio. In any case I shall let you know in good time. It could even be within ten days. . .¹⁰

Therefore we must be faithful in practicing the little rules, according to the wishes of our Father Don Bosco, in order to build up in each one of us the spiritual edifice of holiness.

The building activities around us will also remind us of our practice. A new wing three storeys high is being constructed alongside the church.

Day by day its walls are rising higher on the foundations laid last September, as each small brick is laid upon another.

The final escapade of Maria "the Negro"

On the 12th of this month Father Sala wrote telling Mother that another escapade had been engineered by Maria "the Negro."

She had succeeded in inciting two of her companions to escape from the *Good Shepherd Institute*.¹¹ Having managed to find the convent key, she quietly opened the door leading on to the kitchen garden. However as the first girl climbed the boundary wall she slipped and landed on the convent side instead of on the street, with so

much noise that it woke the community. Finding the door open, the Sisters realized what was happening and soon brought the three fugitives back into the house.

When Father Sala went as usual to say mass at the Good Shepherd Institute the following morning, he was informed of the whole affair. He begged the Sisters to continue their charity and keep Maria the Negro and the other [p. 16] two misguided girls. But Maria, who was present, interrupted saying that she was old enough to choose for herself and she definitely wanted to leave.

Nothing could persuade her to remain, not even when Father Sala told her that she would not be able to find shelter in any House belonging to the Salesians or the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. Nevertheless, the following day, as we were told later, she left for good.

What has happened to her? May Mary Help of Christians protect and help her and bring her poor soul to salvation.

The missionaries land at Buenos Aires Sister Caroline Grillone reaches the haven of eternity

Consoling news, however, arrived from the missionaries who had reached Buenos Aires on March 14. Monsignor Cagliari and some other Salesians had disembarked at Montevideo two days previous to this. He intended to make short visits to the Houses there and then continue the journey to Argentina.

A short time afterwards, on April 15, Sister Caroline Grillone reached the haven of eternity. She would have left with this missionary group but God willed to change her destination.

Back in December, she had gone to Turin with Mother General and the other Sisters in order to prepare for America. But she had fallen ill and on her return to Nizza had to resign herself to preparing for eternity.

Although quite young-scarcely twenty-six-she was rich in virtue. Great hopes had been placed on her future. This virtue was all the more remarkable during her illness and on her death bed. She edified everyone by her patience and courage in suffering, her exemplary piety and the often repeated fervent ejaculation, "O Jesus, I offer my sufferings and my life for the good of the Institute."

[p. 17] News of America from Monsignor Cagliari

News arrived directly from Monsignor Cagliari before the end of April. His letter to Mother from Buenos Aires was dated March 26. It ran as follows:

My good Superior, Sister Catherine,

All the Sisters, professed, novices and postulants of Colon and Las Piedras, as well as those of Buenos Aires, Moron and San Isidro, have passed through my hands.

They are good, have an excellent religious spirit and are very attached to the Mother House.

The principal House in Almagro is quite nice and well suited for use as a novitiate. It faces my new quarters and so I have become the chaplain.

There are already about thirty boarders and many day pupils as well as a very popular festive Oratory. May God be blessed for everything.

The Houses are managed in the same way as those in Italy. There is the same order, spirit, timetable and family-like method of education. So we may sleep peacefully.

Thank you for the prayers for my safe journey. Continue to pray that the turmoil raging in Patagonia may subside, and that I may be able to carry out my planned journey there without obstacles being placed in my way by a government hostile to our missions.

I send my best wishes to your Chapter and bless everyone, professed, novices, postulants, boarders, directors and Superiors, with all my heart, as well as everyone else in the House.

Your affectionate Father in J.C.,

† *John, Bishop*¹²

Mother made this invitation to prayer her own, with warm words of recommendation, because she was also thinking of our Sisters in Patagonia waiting expectantly for Monsignor's visit.

[p. 18] Mother's feastday

The good news from America which had arrived close to the feast of Saint Catherine must have brought comfort to our Mother's heart on her feastday. Although it was remembered in prayer on April 30, this year celebrations were postponed to the following Sunday, May 3, in order to have a large gilded halo in place behind the statue of Mary Help of Christians in the church.

Three resident students received their first Holy Communion during the solemn religious celebrations. This was followed by the usual entertainment, full of warm affection and gratitude. Don Bosco's blessing arrived from Nizza-mare. It has been written in his own hand on the back of a picture of Mary Help of Christians and bore the actual date of Mother's feast.

Sister Catherine Superior General,

May God bless you and the whole Congregation entrusted to you by Mary Help of Christians. May her protection guide you in dangers and keep you all steadily on the path that leads to paradise. Amen.

Nizza, April 30, 1885

*Father John Bosco*¹³

Don Bosco's return from France

However, our good Father had already left France by April 30, and had arrived at Alassio, the last stop on his return journey. In fact, speedy news soon arrived from Turin announcing his safe arrival in Valdocco on the evening of May 6.

Speedy, too, were the echoes of his fatiguing pilgrimage, which had been accompanied by the usual enthusiasm, many miraculous cures and extraordinary happenings. His faithful secretary, Father Viglietti, had a marathon task recording all that had occurred.¹⁴

[p. 19] Some memories were also collected by those of our Sisters who were fortunate enough to have received one of his fatherly visits.

Don Bosco stayed for a few days at Nizza-mare coming and going. The Sisters of this House reported that he celebrated holy mass in their own little chapel on Palm Sunday, March 29, in the presence of many distinguished visitors, who spoke with him in a little adjoining room.

Sister Rosalia Bourlot gives further details of Don Bosco's passage through Nizza. She notes:

Don Bosco addressed the community all together. He especially recommended charity, by bearing with one another and, as he expressed it-"by not hanging the wash in public." He then had a word for each one of us individually. When my turn came the Director mentioned that I was Father Bourlot's sister. Don Bosco spoke kindly to me saying, "I am very fond of Father Bourlot. He has great trust in Don Bosco and Don Bosco has great trust in him."

Our dear Father left Nizza on April 1, Wednesday of Holy Week. On reaching Toulon he became the very welcome guest of the Counts Colle with whom he stayed until Holy Saturday. Then he travelled to Marseilles for Easter.

Sister Maria Stardero belonged to the community of the Saint Leon Oratory that year. She tells us that she had not been happy at Marseilles because the climate affected her health. Don Bosco was very serious when he spoke to her and said, "Oh, if you only knew how much your vocation cost me! . . ." ¹⁵

It would be impossible to describe the daily sequence of prodigious events which followed closely one upon the other during the two weeks of Don Bosco's stay in Marseilles ¹⁶ before he started on his return journey on April 20. He passed once more through Toulon and then travelled the next day directly to Nizza.

However, our Sisters at La Navarre did manage to see him. They went to the Cuers train station with the priests [p. 20] and boys of the House. Don Bosco responded to their gestures of greeting by waving his handkerchief and blessing everyone once more as the train carried him swiftly from their sight.

The Alassio Sisters were more fortunate. Don Bosco arrived from Nizza-mare on the evening of April 28. It was almost as if Father Cerruti wanted to procure a consolation for them in compensation for their kindness in welcoming and assisting the sick Sister Emilia Cona, sent by Don Bosco from Bordighera. The Sisters wrote,

Don Bosco had been two days in Alassio when the Director came to tell us: "Prepare an altar in the workroom, because Don Bosco is coming to say mass just for you tomorrow. "

Sure enough at 7:45 a.m. on May 1, our good Father entered the makeshift chapel where he celebrated

mass and gave Holy Communion to all fifteen of us. Then, hearing that the sick Sister Cona also wished him to give her Holy Communion, he was not content with manifesting his affection to us alone, but went immediately to grant her request in the small room close to the workroom, which was being used as an infirmary. Don Bosco had great difficulty in walking and he would have to negotiate two steps in order to reach the sick Sister. Father Zannone, the prefect who was assisting him, attempted to take the ciborium from his hands in order to make the journey easier for him. But Don Bosco would not allow him to do so.

After his thanksgiving Don Bosco again went to visit the patient. She was overcome with emotion as she asked him, "Father, give me your blessing that I may be cured." After a few words of encouragement and a short prayer he replied, "Yes, I will give you the blessing of Mary Help of Christians that you may receive all the health you need. If God wills it, He will cure you instantaneously; if not.. .let us then prepare for paradise." Assuring him that she had great faith in Mary Help of Christians Sister Emilia added, "I would also like something else, Father: to be able to get up."

"Go ahead and get up," Don Bosco responded, "and go where you like. But there is one condition. If you can do [p. 21] everything without help and dress yourself completely unaided, you will be cured; otherwise, you will not."

In spite of her extreme exhaustion the sick Sister forced herself to get out of bed as soon as Don Bosco had left the room, and almost succeeded in dressing herself without assistance. But as she bent to put on her shoes, she fell flat on her face and had no strength to get up without help. In her distress she cried out, "Oh Don Bosco, I can't do it! . . . I can't do it! . . ." So she was helped back to bed where she lay with no hope of ever recovering.

Once Don Bosco had returned to the workroom he took his breakfast and gave us still more of his time. He urged us to be kind to one another for the love of God and also to take care of our health. "You are very few," he said, "for all the work you have to do, as well as the assistance you give to the sick Sister. Ask for the help of a Sister from Nizza." When speaking to our Superior he asked if we were keeping well in health. He was also concerned about the food we ate. Hearing that we were keeping to the customs of the Mother House at Nizza, he said, "Oh no, that will not do at all. The work here is much heavier and you need more nourishment. Give the Sisters two courses like the Salesians. You may, if you wish, use only one plate, but try to keep the Sisters well."

Some medals and rosaries were then presented to him and he was asked to bless them. When this had been done he said, "I will now distribute these medals among you, but on condition that here on earth you keep to a life of continuous sacrifice in imitation of Saint Francis de Sales, so that we may all be with him one day in heaven."

Once he had finished distributing the medals Don Bosco rose to his feet and blessed us once more. But before leaving us he spoke again: "Yesterday I gave observance of the holy Rule as a souvenir to my Salesians. I now leave the same to you, but I wish to add these two words: Holiness and health. Good-bye for the present. . . We shall meet again. . . not in paradise yet, however! Pray for poor Don Bosco, who never forgets his Daughters at holy mass."¹⁷

Next morning Don Bosco started out for Varazze, and in the afternoon, proceeded by way of Sampierdarena to [p. 22] reach Valdocco on the evening of May 6. At the moment of his arrival the community was in church for benediction and Don Bosco hurried in to give the blessing himself. Afterwards there was great rejoicing as everyone assembled in the garlanded playground. Our Turin Sisters had been informed of the arrival and had heard their acclamations and enthusiastic "evvivas" as the atmosphere of joy spread through the Oratory.¹⁸

Don Bosco's prediction comes true

On May 15, just a fortnight after Don Bosco's visit, the twenty year old Sister Emilia Cona died. Thus our good Father's fatal prediction in the words, "Let us prepare for paradise!" came true.

Sister Emilia was not only "prepared" but "well prepared" as the Director, Father Cerruti, had written to Mother General as far back as the beginning of March. He was always at hand with his fatherly assistance and on the 28th of February had received her perpetual vows, pronounced with great edification a short time before receiving Extreme Unction.¹⁹

Joyful echoes of Father Rua's travels in Sicily A campaign of calumny regarding the affair of Agatha Spano

Comforting news arrived from Sicily concerning Father Rua's visit to our Houses. He was received with public acclaim and joyful esteem, giving an excellent impression wherever he went. Sister Maria Giocone wrote:

At Mascafi there was a veritable triumph with fireworks, chiming bells, and music. The whole town turned out to hear him speak. People **even** climbed the window grills exclaiming, "We have seen a saint!" [She continued:] He [p. 23] left the Sisters the following souvenir: to become saints through faith, through the observance of the Rule, through joy, through attracting girls to piety and through the spirit of abandonment to God.

But some very disturbing news was received together with this, proving that the thorny problem of Agatha Spano had been far from settled when she returned to her native land.²⁰ Calumniating intrigue was now being made use of by the sectarian press.

On April 7, the impious Sicilian newspaper *La Gazzetta di Catania* had printed a defamatory article under the title of *Monastic Iniquity*. This was a revival of the story of Agatha Spano and presented her as a victim of oppression and torture by the Sisters of Catania, Bronte and Nizza Monferrato, while appealing for quick action by the authorities.

Two days later *L'Amico della verità*, another Catania newspaper, came to the defense of the Sisters and refuted the calumnies. But immediately, on April 10, the *Gazzetta di Catania* returned to the attack with the poisonous article entitled *Clerical Wrath*. It also announced another complete account of the painful events connected with Agatha Spano. This appeared on April 15 with a long sequence of infamous accusations against the Sisters. Several of the Italian anticlerical papers took up the story in order to hurl scorn at Don Bosco, his educational Institutes and the Salesian Sisters, and to make public "how girls are tormented to become nuns." Among these newspapers was the Turin *Il mattino*.

As Director General, Father Bonetti sent a declaration to be printed in the Turin *Il mattino* of April 21. It bore the title, "Don Bosco and the Salesian Sisters." He also sent a long letter to the editor of the *Gazzetta di Catania* on April 25. In it he energetically refuted all the accusations and presented a precise documentation of the actual facts of the case.²¹

Father Rua also felt it his duty to intervene and since [p. 24] the Procurator General of the Salesian Society was in Sicily at the time, he wrote an article refuting in a clear, effective and precise manner all the accusations put forward. This was printed in *L'Amico della verità* on April 27 under the heading, *A statement of facts regarding Miss Agatha Spano and the Salesian Sisters calumniated in the Gazzetta di Catania*. However this paper would not concede defeat and on May 13, published another lying article directed against the Sisters in Bronte.

So the bitter warfare with the enemies of God still continued, always aimed at Don Bosco and his enterprises, seeking to make him the butt of every type of insult and slander. Thus Satan manifested his infernal rage at all the good Don Bosco was doing everywhere.

So there was a further motive for praying much for him during the month dedicated to the Help of Christians.

The arrival of the new Director General

Pentecost Sunday occurred that year on May 24. On the 26, which was during the octave, Father Bonetti arrived from Turin. Don Bosco had nominated him to take Monsignor Cagliero's place as our Director General. He was already well known and esteemed and since this was the first visit to Nizza in his new role, he was welcomed enthusiastically by the whole community.

During his stay he examined the postulants nearing the day for the reception of the habit, regarding their vocation. His sermons were so beautiful and effective that Mother said, "We continue to receive proofs that God delights in our Congregation. While taking our beloved Father Monsignor Cagliero away from us, He inspires Don Bosco to assign us as Director someone who is another father Cagliero, in virtue, in zeal, and in his desire to do all the good he can for our souls. "

So, on the following 28th at 9:30 a.m., seventeen well [p. 25] prepared postulants received the religious habit. Among them was the virtuous Chiarina, a member of the noble Roman family of the Giustiniani.

Many relatives were present at the ceremony which was performed by Father Bonetti. Among them was Commander Rossi de Gasperis, secret valet to His Holiness and Honor Guard of the Cloak and Sword, who was the brother-in-law of Chiarina Giustiniani. Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII showed his interest by sending his Apostolic Blessing to all those who were to be clothed and all those present at the ceremony.²³

A delightful entertainment in honor of Father Bonetti, the new Director, took place on the same day. At his side sat Commander Rossi de Gasperis.

The second edition of our Rule

The second edition of our Rule came from the printers in the early days of June, but copies were not to be distributed until the spiritual retreat when all copies of the first edition would be collected, to prevent their being lost.

Two hundred copies were sent immediately to Father Costamagna so that he might give them to the Sisters in America at the appropriate time.

The text was drawn up on the basis of the revision made in the First General Chapter which had taken place the year before. Don Bosco had presented it to Cardinal Alimonda, the Archbishop of Turin who, according to Father Bonetti,

after keeping it longer than had been expected, returned it with his approval on February 24. Not a single syllable had been added or deleted.

Don Bosco then wished to have them read and a few more items added, giving as his reason that when he had formulated the Rules he had been unable to make an attentive study of them.

He also wished them to be read in the Chapter so that the observations of everyone might be considered.

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Although the little volume came to hand only at this point in time, Don Bosco's introduction bore the date of the previous December. This was because of his wish to preserve the Marian date of the Immaculate Conception which had been the date of the first edition of 1878. The introduction was exactly the same except for Cardinal Alimonda's approbation and the addition of these few lines: "In order to make the observance of these Rules easier, I think it will be helpful to introduce them with an instruction which I recommend you to read attentively as often as you can."²⁵

There followed an instruction on the religious life divided into fifteen chapters, taken from the Salesian Rule of 1877. Apart from this the second edition did not differ greatly from the first edition printed in 1878, although there were some transpositions and modifications.²⁶

We will treasure this new precious little book, and renew our commitment to an observance that is more faithful and more exact. We shall then be certain-as our good Father Don Bosco assures us-of finding peace of soul, of treading the path to heaven and of becoming saints.

More missionary news

We always listen with interest to the *Salesian Bulletin* when it is read in the dining room. This month's (June) issue brought an ample and interesting account of the arrival of the missionaries in America and of the visit of Monsignor Cagliari to the Houses of Uruguay and Argentina. It was taken from a long letter written by Father Anthony Riccardi, Monsignor's secretary.

Especially pleasing to us was the mention of our House in Almagro and the new building that was being constructed through the indefatigable zeal of Father Costamagna. This would permit the work to be expanded and more good to be done.

[p. 27] However there was more recent news in a letter dated May 5, written from Buenos Aires by the same Monsignor. He states that in all of our Houses in Uruguay and Argentina there was a good spirit and good will. Then he turns to the preoccupying question of Patagonia. He says:

The poor Patagonian Sisters have written asking me to go to them quickly. They have good reason, poor things, and all the more so since I am so near them! . . . However, whether or not my visit will be sooner or later will depend on your prayers. There are many difficulties to overcome both with the government and the rulers, but there are none with the natives . . .

[He then added,] You will receive this during the festivities in honor of Mary Help of Christians. Celebrate these days well and solemnly, and may Mary Help of Christians console you, comfort you, and help all of you to imitate her wonderful virtues.

Here in the Sisters' lovely little church there will also be great celebrations in anticipation of the consecration. They do not wish the church in Nizza to be more privileged than theirs. They are very good and committed to

becoming better and, while thanking you for your good wishes, they promise to continue their prayers for you. . .
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Missionary news was always received enthusiastically but this time there was the exciting anticipation of the consecration of the beautiful church in Almagro. There was also expectation of more information about the great festivities that Father Costamagno and Monsignor Cagliari were both preparing in a holy rivalry of love for Our Lady.

But the reference to Patagonia gave rise to serious preoccupation for our dear Mother General. She exhorted everyone to follow Monsignor's recommendation to pray much and with faith.

[p. 28] The kindergarten's annual entertainment at Niehelino

Again this year, the June *Salesian Bulletin* gives an account of the kindergarten entertainment at Nichelino. It took place on May 4 with the assistance of the town land. The mayor and several important people were present together with a large number of invited guests. The parish priest gave a fine speech for the occasion.

The *Bulletin* devoted two columns to the event and highly praised the work of the Superior and the Sisters.

Don Bosco's feastday

June 24, feast of Saint John, finds us all in Turin in spirit. With our Sisters in Turin, we are all united with Mother General, who has gone as usual to present the good wishes of all his Daughters to Don Bosco on his feastday.

We were told that among the gifts presented the evening before there was a remarkable life-size oil painting of Mama Margherita, done by Rollini.

Don Bosco examined it closely and then said with emotion, "It is just like her. Only the sound of her voice is missing."²⁸

Three feasts in one

We had beautiful feastday celebrations on July 7, or rather, we celebrated three feasts in one: the inauguration of the new organ, the postponed feastday of our Director, Father Louis Bussi, and the closing of the month of the Sacred Heart.

Father Sala, the Salesian Bursar General, had arranged for the construction of a magnificent organ for our church and he came especially from Turin for the inauguration. With him were Father Bertello, the Salesian Master of Music [p. 29] Dogliani, and Masters Anthony Bersano of the Turin Metropolitan, and John Pelazza, organist of Saint Augustine's. Both are former Oratory Pupils and had been given charge of the inauguration ceremony.

Present, too, were Nizza's head musician, the Master of Ovada, and many other invited guests, including a number of important persons.

A great concourse of people attended the sung mass and also the solemn Vespers followed by benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the afternoon.

In the evening there was a wonderful entertainment in honor of our Director.

Festivities also took place on the following day but these assumed an intimate character and were reserved to the community and the pupils. Father Bertello preached a fervent sermon during the sung mass, taking as his topic the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Sister Rivella's heroic offering

But while the House was celebrating the feast and the harmonious notes of the new organ floated from the church, our dear Sister Rivella lay dying in the infirmary above. On that very day, July 8, she left this earth to enjoy the angelic harmony in heaven.

She was a humble, self-sacrificing Sister who worked in the kitchen garden. Her distinguishing characteristic was prompt obedience. This was so marked that the Sister under whom she worked used to say, "I have to be very careful when asking her to do anything because she is off to perform the task almost before I have finished speaking."

Knowing that the Superiors were worried about Don Bosco's health which had deteriorated so much, and

that they continually asked for prayers, the virtuous Sister Teresa felt inspired to offer her life to God in order to prolong that of our good Father. God accepted her heroic offering, calling her to Himself in the freshness of her scarce twenty-two years.

Final scholastic examinations

The following day was Thursday, July 9, the day our student teachers were to go to Turin to take their qualifying examinations. It was decided to recommend the outcome to the intercession of our dear departed Sister.

The rest of the pupils were preparing for their final examinations. These took place at Nizza on the 25th in the presence of the respective teachers and Father Durando, who had come from Turin for the purpose. He seemed quite satisfied with the results.

Three days later, on the 28th, a telegram arrived: "Qualifying examination results excellent," reassuring us of the success of our student teachers.

When Sister Angelica Sorbone returned she told us how they had gone to beg Don Bosco's blessing when they reached Turin. Our good Father gave them a medal of Mary Help of Christians and said, "Don't worry, you will all do well in your examination." That is exactly what happened.

The same Sister Angelica, who was only a novice, picked up courage and asked him how she could be sure of persevering in her holy vocation. He answered very quietly in these words: *Declina a malo et fac bonum*.

Our Lady answers Sister Alessi's prayer

About that time, on Wednesday, July 15, Sister Alessi passed to eternity in Turin, happy to die in the shadow' of the cupola of Mary Help of Christians as she had so much desired.

There had been great expectations for her future, but she became ill in Sicily soon after her profession. She never complained of her suffering but rather showed happiness at being able to suffer for Jesus. Her only wish was to be taken to Turin where she might see the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians at least once before she died.

Because of the distance and her serious condition it seemed impossible. But Our Lady, in whom she had confided, granted her desire, and opened the way for her to receive the longed-for consolation of passing her last days in the infirmary at Turin.

The death of the Cardinal Protector

More sad news arrived before the end of the month: the death of Cardinal Lawrence Nina, Protector and benefactor of the Salesian Society.²⁹ He died in Rome on the evening of July 26. Although his health had been deteriorating for some time, the end came almost unexpectedly. Our Father Don Bosco and all the Superiors heard of the death with great grief. We also contributed our offering of suffrages for the repose of his blessed soul.

Consecration of the church in Almagro

At last we have learned something about the consecration of the church in Buenos Aires-Almagro which had been previously announced by Monsignor Cagliero. Mother Provincial Ottavia Bussolino wrote to Don Bosco about it in an letter written in June. He passed the news to us. The letter says:

. . . When our Sisters in Italy wrote four or five months ago saying that their church had been consecrated by Monsignor Cagliero we felt a little envious and wanted a similar privilege for ourselves. We even felt we had a right to this since our church is the first in America dedicated to Mary Help of Christians. Our dear Mama granted our wish and now we hasten to communicate this news to you, Reverend Father. I will not describe the solemn ceremonies at length, but I want to tell you that it took place on Saturday, May 30, and lasted from 8:30 till 11:30 a.m. . . .

That evening the girls and the Children of Mary from the Oratory began their first spiritual retreat in preparation for the great feast of our Mother Mary Help of Christians.

By the grace of God the feast-celebrated on June 3 turned out splendidly. True, it could not compare with the celebrations in Turin, but I think there was some resemblance. The general Communion, distributed by His Excellency Monsignor Cagliero, took a full half hour instead of three or four hours.

A small harmonium took the place of the grand organs of Turin, and the choir of three hundred young

people was replaced by a humble choir of Sisters conducted by our dear Director, Father Costamagna. They all did their utmost to increase Mary's glory and make the celebration as splendid as possible.

At 10:30 a.m. there was a sung mass which was celebrated by Monsignor Espinosa, and Reverend Father Tomatis preached a wonderful sermon. In the evening we sang Vespers and Monsignor Cagliero preached and gave the solemn blessing with the Blessed Sacrament.

The church was filled during the ceremonies not with pilgrims, etc., but with boys and girls and people from the surrounding district.

On the following Sunday the church was again filled, this time with Salesian Cooperators, to whom Monsignor Cagliero gave a conference. . . .³⁰

Our Oratories in Buenos Aires

The news of our two Oratories in Buenos Aires was also very consoling. The same letter continued:

In my last letter, most Reverend Father in Jesus Christ, I wrote something about the Oratory we have opened here in Almagro. Now for your consolation I have to add that Monsignor says that this Oratory has no need to envy that of Turin because we are able to do so much good here.

It is also really consoling to see three or four hundred [p. 33] young girls in La Boca assisting at the sacred celebrations every Sunday, content to spend the whole day in innocent enjoyment far away from any danger of offending God.

On the 31st of May our dear father, Monsignor Cagliero, went there to administer the Sacrament of Confirmation to more than two hundred and fifty girls, most of them approaching adulthood. After assisting at the celebrations in honor of Mary Help of Christians he said without hesitation, "I marvel to see that just as the Almagro Oratory has no need to envy the one in Turin so the Oratory of La Boca has no need to envy the one in Chieri. . .".

Cholera again breaks out in France

Less consoling news comes from France where cholera has begun to break out again. This had already been foretold by Don Bosco on January 31: "Last year I was able to assure you with certainty that persons wearing the medal of Mary Help of Christians and keeping to the prescribed conditions would not succumb to cholera, but this year I do not yet know whether the Blessed Virgin will be so generous towards us under the same circumstances."³¹

However he again encouraged us: "Good behavior, frequent Communion and the Blessed Virgin will be a kind Mother to us. We have nothing to fear. . ."³²

Again he said: "Wear a medal of Mary Help of Christians, receive Communion frequently and say daily the ejaculation, *O Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis*. . . ."³³

Therefore, although the terrible scourge has begun to spread, our Sisters place complete trust in the maternal protection of the Most Holy Virgin.

The Sisters of St. Cyr add some news that is especially consoling. Last May the new orphanage chapel was inaugurated. It had been constructed according to Father Ghivarello's design and was solemnly blessed by Father Albera on May 24.

[p. 34] The spiritual retreat for ladies

The spiritual retreat for ladies opened on August 3, preached by Father Bonetti and Father Gaspari Olmi. There were about a hundred retreatants and everyone was eager to see Don Bosco. Hopes had been raised by a letter Father Bonetti wrote to Mother General a month before: "If you are good, very good, maybe you will have Don Bosco with you in August."³⁴ However, as the days passed by without any word of the expected visit, Father Bonetti wrote to Mathi where our good Father was staying for health reasons, and warmly renewed the invitation.

Very dear and Reverend Father in J.C.,

The retreat has begun and seems to be making good progress with promise of abundant fruit. Between ladies, teachers and others who have come *ad experimentum* and to seek light on their vocation there are

ninety-six in all.

I now wish to ask a favor of you, Reverend Father, and I ask it today, the feast of Our Lady of the Snow, feeling sure that if you can you will grant it in honor of Mary and for the good of your Daughters. Both the retreatants and the Sisters have a great desire at least to see Don Bosco during these days. Not a few of the seculars have come just in the hope that they might enjoy this grace. On their return home, besides remembering you, they will want to come back with others next year. This will be good both for them and for the Institute. I must also tell you that some of those who came last year and did not see you as they had hoped, have not returned this year, fearing the same might happen again. In fact, I am told that last year there were a hundred and twenty here. This year, although the number is still high, it is reduced to about a hundred.

So, if your health allows you to make the journey I beg you, in everyone's name, to come. If you leave Turin by the 8:40 train you would be here by noon; or should you prefer it, you could travel by the 7 p.m. train and be here by 10 p.m. in the cool of the evening. We would meet you with a carriage at the station at whatever time you might arrive. When could you come? Let us try to kill two birds with one [p. 35] stone. Since you are committed to be in Turin for the 15th, you could come here on the 12th, which is the last day of the ladies' retreat, or on the morning of the 13th, when the closing ceremony is due to take place. On this second date and on the morning of the 14th, you will find many Sisters from other Houses gathered here for their annual retreat. They will have come hoping for the good fortune of seeing and getting to know you. Some of them have never seen you and feel rather hurt about it. If you wish you could leave for Turin at 6:00 p.m. when the air is cooler. This would enable you to arrive in Turin in time for your birthday. What do you think of these arrangements, Don Bosco? Can you come? Will you accept this invitation?

The children and the Sisters here have prayed so much for your return to health and sincerely hope their prayers have been answered.

I shall say no more except to ask if you will allow one of your secretaries to answer in your name. If necessary, Father Bussi will come to accompany you. I'll wait for your directives.

May God bless you. Pray for me, who am keeping well at present. Father Olmi sends his greetings. So do Father Bussi, Father Campi and Bergese. Many greetings to the guard of honor. With deep affection and great esteem,

Nizza Monferrato, August 5, 1885

Yours devotedly,
*Father John Bonetti*³⁵

Unfortunately the condition of Don Bosco's health made the proposed visit impossible, as he himself wrote to Father Bonetti.

My dear Father Bonetti,

Fresh setbacks absolutely prevent me from enjoying the consolation of attending the spiritual retreat at Nizza. Please offer my regrets to the retreatants and tell them that it is only the ability to travel that is lacking.

I have been praying very much for them during these days and on the closing day I shall offer holy mass for all [p. 36] their intentions.

May God protect them all and may Mary guide them through all the perils of life until they reach heaven. Then may she one day welcome them all to be with her in paradise.

Tell them to have the goodness to pray for this poor half blind priest who commits himself to making a special *memento* for them every day during mass.

Give my special greetings to our beloved Sisters and tell them that if my health improves even a little, I will pay them a visit during their retreat; I have some things of importance to tell them.

May Mary protect you all. Believe me to be in Jesus Christ,

Mathi, August 9, 1885

Your affectionate friend,
*Father John BOSCO*³⁶

So the ladies' retreat ended on Thursday the 13th, without the comfort of the desired visit of Don Bosco, but with the certainty of his spiritual presence and his efficacious prayer for the success of their resolutions.

As in former years, the distribution of prizes to the pupils took place in the afternoon of that same day.

Sister Maria Costanza goes to celebrate the feast of the Assumption in heaven

Sisters were arriving for the spiritual retreat from as far away as Sicily and France when news was received of the death of Sister Maria Costanza. Our Lady wanted this young Sister to be with her in heaven on August 10, while the novena for the feast of the Assumption was in progress. Still a novice, Sister Maria, because of her poor health, was living at Chivasso with her family. She was hoping to return to the Institute when her health improved.

But her illness became serious without any hope of recovery, so she asked Our Lady to obtain for her the grace [p. 37] of making her vows. Great was her consolation when her request was granted. She died the next day.

Anxiously awaiting Don Bosco

All the Sisters making the retreat arrived in time for the Assumption. The retreat was due to start the following day and the preachers were to be the Director General and Canon Joseph Gliemone, a friend of Don Bosco. One question, full of expectation, was in everyone's heart: Will Don Bosco come?

The last few lines of the letter he wrote to Father Bonetti raised hopes and increased the longing for his fatherly visit, knowing that he had "some things of importance" to tell them.

Mother recommended that we pray and pray much, but she also did her part and left no stone unturned to obtain this grace. She even sent the Superior of Lanzo to Mathi just to renew the invitation to our dear Father.

Our cheery Mother Petronilla told how she went to express the Superiors' desire that he should make one of his precious visits to Nizza. It would also give novices and postulants a chance to see and know him. Don Bosco listened in his usual kindly manner but limited his reply to,

Ah, yes, but I am no longer the one who gives orders to Don Bosco. Don Bosco now has to obey Father Rua and the doctor. If they permit it, I will willingly go to Nizza. Once there, I will climb up high so that everyone can see me."

[Mother Petronilla added,] He then asked with concern whether we had breakfasted.

"Yes Father," I said. "We stopped in a field and ate our bread and salami. . ."

"What have you done?.." interrupted Don Bosco.

"Have you been eating salami today? . . ."

Seeing that we were rather taken aback and almost speechless he added with a smile, "But do you not know that today is a vigil? It is the vigil of. . . tomorrow." And he [p. 38] ended with a good laugh.

Then turning to the Sisters who were with me he asked what work they were doing. Hearing that one was a cook, he said to her, "Make a definite pact with God and say to Him, 'I sometimes bum myself at this fire but I do not want to go to purgatory!'"

In spite of his poor condition and his sufferings Don Bosco is always serene and fatherly.

Father Bonetti renews his invitation to Don Bosco

Father Bonetti absolutely refused to give up the idea of a visit from Don Bosco, so half way through the retreat he sent Father Bussi to him with another pressing invitation.

Dearest Don Bosco,

Please allow this Son of yours to beg you with greatest insistence and, if possible with all due respect, to command his father. I am in a position to see that a visit by your Reverence to Nizza would not only be useful but is almost a necessity. There are three hundred Sisters from all parts gathered here for the retreat. Many of them have come hoping that you will keep your promise. Some days ago your Reverence wrote that you had something of importance to communicate. Please come and give encouragement to these Sisters and to the whole Institute. God's glory, the welfare of souls and also my peace of mind demand it. I have burdened myself with the cross and find it very heavy. I need your efficacious help and encouragement if I am not to sink under it. After God, I expect this consolation from you. Do not refuse me. Clothings and

professions will be taking place on Sunday morning. If a few days rest should be necessary, you could return to Turin via San Benigno. Or if you intend going to France or Sampierdarena, this is on the way and you would be closer.

I shall say no more but leave Father Bussi to obtain an affirmative answer to this letter which, feeling very discouraged, I am writing at night.

I only add that I sincerely recommend the members of [p. 39] the Chapter not to deprive me of this consolation by giving you adverse advice. I ask that they take my part with you as good brothers should. San Benigno has only aspirants and your presence here would be of much more value than there.

May God grant you a safe journey, and may your good angel together with Father Bussi accompany you.

Nizza Monferrato, August 20, 1885

Your affectionate Son,
*Father John Bonetti*³⁷

Don Bosco among us

Such insistent prayer could not remain unanswered and towards noon on Saturday, August 22, Don Bosco arrived in the company of Father Bussi and the clerics Viglietti and Festa. Who could describe the joy of welcoming him? However there was deep sorrow at seeing him so worn out. He was so unsteady that he could hardly stand. Many could not restrain their tears.

The following morning Don Bosco celebrated the community mass, but he gave Communion only to the Superiors, the postulants to be clothed, the novices to be professed, and the Sisters who were to make perpetual vows.

At 9:30 he presided over the ceremony of clothing and profession. He received the vows, blessed the medals and crucifixes and distributed them to the new novices and the newly professed respectively. However he did not preach, reserving his talk for later.

His fatherly souvenir conference

In the afternoon after Vespers Don Bosco went on to the sanctuary, helped by Father Bonetti and another priest. They almost lifted him on to the platform and into the chair prepared for the preachers. Everyone looked at him [p. 40] in tremulous, grief stricken silence. His appearance alone was sermon enough.³⁸

He, too, seemed very touched and a few minutes passed before he could begin speaking. These are his fatherly words:

You all appear to be in the prime of life and I hope you will live to reach old age, but not with all the discomforts old age brings. I always thought it possible to get old without too many indispositions, but one soon comes to understand that these are inseparable from old age. Infirmary increases as the years pass by and we must accept it as our cross.

This morning I had the pleasure of giving out some crosses and I would have liked to give out many more. However some of you have crosses already and others will receive them in time. I recommend that you all carry your cross willingly-not the cross we want, but the one chosen by the holy will of God.

Let us carry our cross cheerfully, remembering that just as the years pass so will the cross. Therefore let us say, "Oh blessed cross, you are rather heavy at the moment but it will only be for a short time, for it is this very cross that will win for us a crown of roses for eternity!" Keep this well in mind and heart and say often with Saint Augustine: "Oh holy cross, make me sweat in carrying you on earth, provided that glory may come after carrying the cross."

Yes, my daughters, let us carry our cross lovingly and not allow its weight to fall on others. Let us rather, help others to carry theirs. Say to yourselves, "I am certainly a cross to others just as others are sometimes a cross to me. But I want to carry my own cross and not be a cross to others!" Note well that when I now speak of crosses I do not mean the light crosses I distributed this morning, but the real crosses God sends us and which are generally against our will. These are not lacking in this life, especially for you Superiors and teachers, engaged as you are in caring for the salvation of others. Tell yourselves that this tribulation, this work or this illness, even if light, is still a cross and therefore you will carry it willingly and cheerfully because it is sent to you by God.

It can happen sometimes that one works hard, yet no [p. 41] one seems very pleased with our work. Always work for God's glory and carry your cross well, because this pleases God. True there will be thorns but they will change into flowers that will last for all eternity.

Perhaps you will say: "Don Bosco, leave us a souvenir!" What souvenir shall I give you? I will give you this, which perhaps will be the last you will receive from me.

We may meet again but as you see I am old and am mortal like everyone else, so I cannot last much longer. Therefore I shall give you a souvenir that you will never regret having practiced: Do good, perform good works, exert yourselves, work hard for the Lord, and do everything with good will. Oh, do not waste time. Do good, as much good as you can, and you will never regret having done so.

Do you want another souvenir? The practice of your holy Rule! Put your Rule into practice and I repeat you will never regret having done so. You see, my dear Daughters, our Rule is infallible and we gain many advantages from it, but the most important of all is the assurance of saving our souls. Do not let the word infallible surprise you. Since our Rule is approved by the Roman Pontiff who is infallible, all the articles of the Rule approved by him are infallible. Read them, meditate on them, try to understand them well and practice them. You who are Superiors or teachers or who work among lay persons should make a point of doing this.

I shall always pray for you! I always say a special prayer for you during holy mass, because I feel that you are my dear Daughters in the Lord. But you must do your utmost to practice your Rule. Observing it will bring you tranquillity in time and happiness in eternity. It will bring consolation to your Superiors and give great pleasure to your poor Don Bosco. When one knows that the Rule is practiced in all the Houses one can live in peace and contentment.

As you know, Don Bosco cannot always be here with you, but be assured that he is always and everywhere with you in prayer. Remember also that when you practice your Rule, you are pleasing God and doing His will as well as that of Don BOSCO.³⁹

Keep cheerful, well and strong, my dear Daughters, and always agree among yourselves. I feel I ought to speak more about this but I am already tired and you will have to be [p. 42] content with the little I have given you.

When you write to your parents, give them Don Bosco's good wishes and tell them that he always prays especially for them. He asks God to bless them, to prosper their undertakings and to grant them salvation so that they may see again in heaven the Daughters they have given to my Congregation which is as dear to Jesus and Mary as that of the Salesians.

All this will redound to the glory of God and your eternal salvation. Pray for your own Don Bosco, for the Pope and for the Church!

Now receive my blessing and that of Mary Help of Christians. I give it to you that you may keep the promises you made during this spiritual retreat.⁴⁰

When the ceremony was over Don Bosco made his way very slowly through the corridor leading from the church to the Salesian quarters, surrounded by a group of Sisters. He looked at them all with fatherly pleasure, then he let his gaze rest on one particular Sister who, it would seem, was in some spiritual need. He then said with inspired accents that all could hear, "If we wish the world to talk about us, then let us become saints!" It was as if he wanted to warn whoever needed it to seek no other glory but that which comes from holiness.

"Our Lady is walking about in this House and covering it with her mantle"

A short while afterwards, at the Mothers' earnest request, Father Bonetti brought Don Bosco to our little parlor where they were waiting for a special word from him. It would be a most singular grace from God.

It was indeed a memorable encounter and the Superiors described it in words which filled us with enthusiasm.

When Don Bosco came to us, he said: "So you want me to say a few words to you, do you? Oh if only I were able to speak, how many things I could tell you! How many indeed!

[p. 43] But as you see I am a feeble old man and can scarcely speak at all. However, I want to tell you that Our Lady loves you very, very much and is here among you!"

Our good Father was overcome with emotion, so in order to help him Father Bonetti suggested,

"Yes, yes, it is like this. Don Bosco wants to say that Our Lady is your Mother, that she is watching over you and protecting you."

"No, no," Don Bosco interrupted, "I want to say that Our Lady is really here in this House; that she is pleased with you and that what she really wants of you is that you continue in your present spirit of fervor.

This is what Our Lady really wishes "

Then Don Bosco became still more moved so Father Bonetti tried again to help him.

"Yes, that's right, Don Bosco wants to tell you that if you remain good, Our Lady will be very pleased with you."

"No, no," Don Bosco reiterated as with considerable effort he struggled to overcome his emotion. "I want to say that Our Lady is really here, here among you! Our Lady is walking around in this House and is covering it with her mantle. "

Then stretching out his arms and raising his tear filled eyes it seemed as if he wanted to make us understand that he really saw Our Lady walking all through the House as if it were her own and the whole House was under Our Lady's mantle.

It would be impossible to express our feelings at that moment. It seemed as if we were no longer in this world. Our good Father's words had raised us to heaven.....

The same holy joy spread to us all. What greater consolation could we have than to know that Our Lady was pleased with us and was sensibly present in our House? . . . Thank you, Lord, for having willed that we should be the Daughters of such a Mother and of a saint such as Don Bosco!

Our Founder's fatherly visit had been filled with consolation, but it was very brief. Our good Father left us for San Benigno at 7 a.m. on Monday, August 24. Our hearts [p. 44] were full as we bade him farewell. Would we see him again or was this his last visit to Nizza?

Don Bosco is a real saint!

We passed the last day of the retreat reminiscing on all the beautiful things we had heard from Don Bosco and our minds were full of the thought of Our Lady's motherly predilection. After the morning sermon given by Canon Joseph Gliemone from Rivoli, there was a mass celebrated for the repose of the souls of our deceased Superiors and Sisters. A solemn *Te Deum* was sung in the afternoon to express our ardent gratitude to God for the extraordinary graces of the past days.

Once silence had been dispensed everyone felt the need of sharing the many beautiful experiences of those days. All of them centered around Don Bosco.

As assistant doorkeeper, the novice, Sister Rosina Guaschi, had had the privilege of being one of the first to see him. She said that the Superiors had told our good Father that she came from Turin. He had spoken kindly to her, warning her to be careful never to let debts, illness or death enter the House. This was the advice usually given to portresses.

Sister Caroline Gazzelli expressed her happiness at having received a habit blessed by Don Bosco. She said she had often met him on the streets of Turin before she entered. What impressed her most was his constant smile and his great affability with everyone.

Here at Nizza she had been struck by what Mother Vicar had told her about his spirit of mortification. She had said, "You see our dear Father, Don Bosco, old, sick and very infirm, yet today in spite of the heat he refused a blackcurrant drink. We begged him to accept it and he finally said he would only take a little vinegar because that was more like the drink of the poor; If the Nizza water had been lighter, he would have preferred plain water."

[p. 45] Sister Domenica Negro added, "Mother Vicar, our novice mistress, also said that Don Bosco was really a saint and could read the hearts and minds of individuals. So when I went to receive Holy Communion from him I raised my head high and opened my eyes wide so that he might look right inside me."

Sister Augusta De Pollo, who had just made her first vows in his presence, said, "When I saw him at the threshold of the sacristy I was so overcome that I seemed only to see an innocent two-year-old child, or rather, an angel. . . I do not know how this came about, nor can I express what I felt when receiving the crucifix from his hands. He gave it to me to kiss; then, placing it in my hands, he held them tightly in his own for a few minutes, not allowing me to move, in spite of the fact that Mother General and Mother Vicar were signalling me to rise from my knees. . ."

Sister Vincenza Bessone had made her perpetual vows. She said, "I was so moved when I found myself face to face with such a great saint that I was almost unable to say the formula of the vows."

Sister Orsolina Rinaldi, her companion of perpetual profession, wished to note down the principal points developed by Don Bosco. She set them down as three reminders:

1. Carry your cross willingly, especially the one God sends you.
2. Do good, do good and never let a single opportunity of doing good slip by.
3. Observe your holy Rule, love it and try to practice it because it is infallible. Let the world see that the

observance of your Rule makes you happy and content.

Recalling Don Bosco's moving sermon, Sister Bertilla Bruno, Sister Louise Demaria and Sister Annetta Barale had been struck by his attentive concern for the parents and relatives of the Sisters, assuring them that he would always pray for them, asking Our Lady to bless the family [p. 46] who had given daughters to our Congregation.

Sister Enrichetta Darmello, a young novice of a few months, recorded the same thought. She remarked especially on Don Bosco's recommendation to thank our parents for giving us permission to become Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, and his assurance that Our Lady would protect our loved ones and that they would be saved to the fourth generation.

Sister Annetta Barale, another novice, looked contentedly at the new little book of the holy Rule which she had received from Don Bosco's hands. She repeated our good Father's recommendation to read and re-read it and to seek an explanation of the points not well understood.

But among all the sentences remembered and repeated by one or other of the Sisters the most comforting was the statement: "Our Lady is really here in this House. . . and she is pleased with you! . . ."41

Conferences for Superiors and teachers

At the conclusion of those unforgettable days of retreat, the Superiors and kindergarten and elementary school teachers remained in the House. At the suggestion of Father Bonetti, the Director General, they had been invited by Mother General for some conferences.

He gave one to the Superiors himself. His subject was the acceptance of postulants, and he directed that attention should be paid to health, good common sense and the necessary moral virtues. He also highlighted those defects which were to be considered as impediments to the religious life. These were pride, habitual melancholy, scrupulosity, underhandedness and indifference.

Deeply concerned at the increasing number of sick Sisters, and the far from small number of those who were dying while still young, he recommended that the Superiors pay attention to preserving the health of the Sisters. This was to be done by regulating the number of beds in the [p 47] dormitories; by seeing that drafts were avoided; by providing sufficient nourishment; and by giving a daily snack to young Sisters under thirty, and, with due permission, to those in special need. He also encouraged serenity and holy cheerfulness.

The teachers met together under the wise direction of Father Cerutti, who had come expressly to give some practical lessons in Salesian pedagogy. All the Sisters were very happy about the course and extremely grateful for the effective help offered them in their educative mission. Opportunity was given for them to express their difficulties and doubts and to receive enlightened advice and secure directive norms.

For our kindergartens

Father Cerutti presented the kindergarten teachers with a new booklet which had just come from the Salesian printing press at San Benigno Canavese. It contained the regulation-program drawn up expressly for our kindergartens.⁴³

The introduction gave an interesting history of Italian kindergartens, while the regulations set out the norms to be followed in accepting such schools, and offered a precise and detailed timetable for operational effectivity.

A didactic program followed for each of the three lower, middle and upper sections. In a brief, clear and complete manner, distinct and orderly chapters explained the principles of the Preventive System, of physical, intellectual, moral and religious education, and the general duties of teachers. All of this was in accord with the requirements of our spirit.

The pamphlet also included a collection of simple poems and songs for children, with appropriate music.

It was, therefore, a very useful aid for our kindergarten teachers and would help them in their work among [p. 48] the little ones. Thus the labor of the compilers would be richly rewarded.

Monsignor Cagliari enters Patagonia

A long letter from Monsignor Cagliari brought the wonderful news of his entry into Patagonia. Mother General shared the announcement with us immediately and at the Good Night she joyfully read what he had written:

. . . I left Buenos Aires on the first of this month and reached the mouth of the Rio Negro on the 8th. Since our boat could not navigate the river because the water was too shallow, we moved up and down, rolling and resting on the high seas for a good twenty-four hours. We turned into the river towards the close of the following day, and after two hours of river navigation arrived at Patagones. Our college band was there to meet us, with all the Salesians, priests, clerics and coadjutor Brothers, as well as a whole crowd of people eager to set eyes on a bishop for the first time.

The Sisters of Carmen and Viedma were waiting for me in a fervor of excitement at their new school. Although this school is better than ours we are not envious because the Sisters are zealous, good and industrious in drawing young people to God.

All the civil and military authorities came to visit me; after a few days even the governor himself came to return the visit I had made to him.

Mary Help of Christians has opened up all paths for me and smoothed away all the difficulties.

We have already held two grand celebrations, and have a third ready for August 15. About that time I suppose all of you, or a great number of you, will have gathered for the spiritual retreat. I shall pray for all of you, that God will make you saints. Oh, how many memories this time of holy recollection brings to my mind! How I should like to be present in order to encourage, strengthen and comfort you all in the love of Jesus and Mary, and in the practice of [p. 49] religious virtues.

If this letter of mine arrives in time how I would wish it to inflame you with holy ardor, and noble, generous enthusiasm for the things of the spirit!

Purify, sanctify, and divinize your hearts. Let Jesus, Jesus alone, and Jesus forever, reign in them! He has the right to everything and you have the duty to give Him everything and let Him possess everything.

Finally, you all know, (and I mean *all*, from first to last), how solicitous I have always been for your individual good and the general good of the Institute. Remember this always, talk about it and practice my reminders and advice. My aim is always to secure your perseverance not only in virtue but also in the perfection proper to the religious life you have embraced.

I can tell you that the Houses of Colon, Montevideo, Las Piedras, Buenos Aires, Moron, Isidro, Carmen and Viedma give me very real consolation. Once the weeds you know about are thrown out, a true religious spirit enters together with a peace and joy which are a foretaste of paradise.

My romantic bishop's palace, because of its position, dominates the vast Patagonian desert. It is arrogant and grandiose in its poverty and starkness and yet indestructible because it was the ancient Spanish fortress against the Patagonians. Here, then, I battle against the "pamperos" winds as well as those of hell.

Work and difficulties are not lacking. The mission is vast, immense and filled with disaster. But just as your prayers overcame the first difficulty so will they overcome the second. The natives are the least troublesome. Oh, if we had only to deal with them! What respect, love and deference they have for the missionaries!

But, because militarism and despotism reign here, in spite of our zeal we can still do very little, and that little, only little by little.

However, when I arrived, out of deference it would seem, they offered to help us in our undertakings of an evangelizing and civilizing nature. Nevertheless I do not set too much store on this, but trust in your prayers which, rising from hearts that are truly holy, will do good both to you and to us.

[p. 50] The Sisters and Salesians here send greetings to you all . . . , and beg your help. I ask you to prepare for me a dozen Sisters who have the aptitude for study, because very few vocations can be recruited here and those few have little aptitude for teaching.

Give my greetings to Father Bisio, Countess Corsi, Father Ricci and Father Denicholai, the dear Director, Father Joseph and his staff. . .

May God bless everyone as I bless you, because I am always,

Patagones, July 28, 1885

Affectionately yours in Jesus Christ,

† *John, Bishop of Magida and*

Vicar Apostolic⁴⁴

War against religious in Uruguay

The above news was confirmed by Mother Vallese who rejoiced at being able to see Monsignor in Patagonia. But with it came news of a far different character.

We were told that the government of Uruguay was starting to wage a ruthless war against religious congregations. Father Costamagna had previously written about this to Father Bonetti on July 22.⁴⁵ He said he was planning to go to Montevideo because Father Lasagna was away. He seemed very perturbed because the anti-clerical government had promulgated a law limiting the number of religious in each House and prohibiting the entry into religion before the age of forty.

We heard that our three novices in Villa Colon would have to be sent home because of this law. However when Father Costamagna arrived in Montevideo, two novices anticipated the date of their profession, which they made on July 25. The third was sent to Argentina with a postulant, while the rest mingled with the students.

Hence there is need for prayer and much prayer and Mother strongly urges us to do this, making the ardent plea of Father Costamagna her own.

[p. 51] For the Sacred Heart Church in Rome

Mother General is in trusting yet another special intention to our prayers: the success of an initiative to help build the Sacred Heart Church in Rome. We know that this work is causing a great deal of worry to Don Bosco.

Father Bonetti has already spoken to us about this initiative and now it is described at length in the September *Salesian Bulletin*. This periodical also printed an article from the *Unita Cattolica* of August 15 bearing the title "A Demonstration of Catholic Italy for the Church and for Pope Leo XIII."

Part of the church-the sanctuary and the choir-had been blessed and opened to the public on March 23. But the facade, for which the Holy Father had to bear expenses, has not yet been completed. Cholera had made it necessary to dig deeply into the Church's coffers to build the hospital of Santa Marta in the Vatican, so there are very serious financial problems.

In order to assist the Pope, Count Balbo of Turin in conjunction with Don Bosco, put forward the idea that as a national effort, Catholic Italy should make a special offering of *Peter's Pence* for the completion of the facade. With the blessing and approval of His Holiness Pope Leo XIII, Cardinal Alimonda has already sent a letter to all the bishops of Italy in the past months, asking them to appeal to the Italian Catholics for offerings to construct the frontage of the Church of the Sacred Heart as a national effort. Each diocese was asked to renew its consecration to the Sacred Heart.

This initiative is a very beautiful gesture but, as they tell us, it has to be supported and accompanied with fervent prayer. Only thus can all the difficulties and the sectarian opposition of these sad times be overcome.⁴⁶

From an earthly country to a heavenly homeland

On the day after the feast of Mary's birthday, September 9, Our Lady took the simple, shy little novice, Sister Celestina Daghero, to heaven. She died at the age of eighteen at her home in Cumiana after having received the much desired grace of making her religious vows.

Houses opened and Houses closed

A few days later, on September 15, a new House at Scandeluzza was opened, with a kindergarten, workroom and Oratory. The necessary building had been blessed in June by Monsignor Ferre, Bishop of Casale Monferrato. It had been erected by the pious foundress, Countess Serra Madio of Mondonio.

Sister Filippina Canale went to start the work. She had been Superior in the House at Villarboit which had been closed on the instructions of Don Bosco himself. He had been informed that the Sisters were suffering because of the unhealthy atmosphere over the rice fields and from other illnesses and dangers. Consequently, he had delegated Father Bonetti to make arrangements with the Mayor for them to be withdrawn.⁴⁷

On August 16 they left the town where, in less than two years, they had won the esteem and affection of the people.

At the end of July, when the experimental scholastic year ended, the Sisters were also withdrawn from the House in Candia which had been opened the previous October. The withdrawal took place because the much needed improvements had not been implemented and more freedom had not been given in carrying out their apostolate among the young girls of the town.

The Superior, Sister Josephine Daghero, was now preparing to go to Baira Canavese. The Bishop of Ivrea had suggested that we be asked to take over the new kinder- [p. 53] garten, due to open the following month.

Other Houses were also to be opened at the commencement of the new scholastic year in generous compensation for the two closed during the past months.⁴⁸

Another departure for eternity

While preparations were being made and departures for the new foundations were being discussed, the novice, Sister Rosa Sardi, was preparing at the age of twenty years, to leave our House for eternity. Her illness seems to have been caused by a fright she received through the rash action of a practical joker, who appeared in front of her on the road between Fontanile and Nizza. She was so distressed that she became seriously ill and was now, after a very short time, nearing, her end.

She made her perpetual vows with great joy on the 24th of this month with Don Bosco's permission. Just four days later, on the 28th, she left this earth for the eternal nuptials in heaven.

A new Decree for the month of the rosary

At the beginning of the month of October, in order to rouse our fervor in the recitation of the holy rosary, a recent Decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites was read from the *Salesian Bulletin*.⁴⁹ This stated that His Holiness Leo XIII, referring to the Encyclical *Supremi Apostolatus* of 1883, and to the Apostolic Letter *Superiore Anno* of 1884, again recommended, in view of the evils continuing to afflict Christianity, the celebration of the month and the feast of the holy rosary.

Enriching this practice with new, particular indulgences, he established that in all the parish churches and public oratories dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, the holy rosary should be recited daily before the Blessed Sacrament from [p. 54] October to November, and that the feast of Our Lady of the Rosary should be celebrated with special solemnity and public processions.

We are therefore preparing to sanctify this month as the Holy Father wishes, and according to his intentions for the Church and the whole world.

We also are thinking of making reparation for the attempted arson committed at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome, at 4:30 in the afternoon of September 29. Providentially-one might even say miraculously-the fire was brought under control and only the external framework was destroyed, while the main body of the church was saved from what might have been irreparable damage. It was another action of the sectarians, emphasizing the sad conditions of the times in which we live and the great need there is of prayer and offering for the Church.⁵⁰

Three new foundations

During October there was a succession of new foundations.

The first was at Mongardino in the diocese of Asti. Here the parish priest, Father Rollo, and the Mayor committed to us the care of the public school, the workroom and the festive Oratory.

The three Sisters, Sister Maria Cella as Superior, were accompanied to their new destination by Mother Anna Tamietti, the Bursar General. They entered the town officially on Sunday, October 11, the day dedicated to Mary's Motherhood, and were received very cordially by the authorities and the entire population.

The school building has not been completed and so for this year, the Sisters have to adjust to living with a worthy lady in the town and to holding classes in rented premises. But, as Mother Tamietti related when she returned to Nizza on the 14th, there is much hope that the new work will produce good fruit.

[p. 55] On the 21st, Sister Alfonsa Cavalli went as Superior, together with Sister Orsola Marocco, Sister Emilia Negri, Sister Catherine Dabbene and Sister Catherine Bosso to start another foundation at Lenta in the diocese of Vercelli.

Here too, it was the parish priest, Father Antoniazzi, and the town council who had asked for the Sisters. They will work in the kindergarten, public schools, workroom and festive Oratory in place of the Sisters of Saint Joseph who have had to withdraw.

This field of labor is very promising because all the children and young girls of the area are in our care and we hope to accomplish much good.

On the 24th, three days later, the already mentioned kindergarten of Bairo Canavese was opened and another House at Montaldo Bormida is due to open in the near future.

In fact, on the following November 9, Mother Elisa went to initiate the work with the Superior, Sister Rosa Daghero, Sister Maria Brigatti and Sister Josephine Donato.

According to the wishes of Monsignor Sciandra who had suggested the foundation, they will take charge of the kindergarten and teach the first primary grade, besides the workroom and festive Oratory.

When Mother Elisa returned after a few days' stay, she said that the people had received the Sisters very cordially and were happy to see them arrive because they regarded them as a blessing from God on the town.

All this gives us hope that we will be able to work well and profitably here.⁵¹

Sister Delfina Pavese makes the sacrifice of her life

At the beginning of November, the month dedicated to prayer for the dead, our thoughts turned to our dear Sisters who had already passed into eternity, especially during the [p. 56] current year.

The first week of the month had not passed before another Sister joined the lengthening file. This was Sister Delfina Pavese who breathed her last on Friday, November 6, in Turin.

Pious, active, docile and discreet, she had proved her worth during the few years of her religious life. There was reason to hope that she would do well wherever she went. She herself expected to do a great deal of good work for God and, struck down by a mortal illness which gradually caused all hope to fade, she still wanted at all costs to recover her health.

However, once she had understood that such was not God's will, she generously accepted and offered the deeply felt sacrifice of her young life. She was prepared by grace and by the consolation of making her perpetual vows just twenty days before her death.

Mother General sets out for Sicily

With this new sorrow, Mother General set out for Sicily on Wednesday, November 11, with Sister Teresa Baioni. She would have made this journey earlier had not the quarantine imposed by the cholera prevented her.

There were many things to see to, and many problems to solve. As had been foreseen, the Sisters had been obliged to withdraw from the *Caraci* Orphanage in Catania. This was because the duchess, who was very demanding, continued to overburden the Sisters with work, and showed no confidence in what they were doing.

We heard that the orphans were inconsolable at the departure of the Sisters. They cried and created such an uproar in the presence of the duchess that she could not quieten them or restore order.

After leaving the orphanage, the Sisters were divided among the other Houses on the island, awaiting Mother General's arrival to receive their new destinations from her.

[p. 57] But a far more serious preoccupation was being caused by certain discordant voices, especially in the House of Bronte. Our Director General, already aware of what was happening, had written to Mother General during the previous month announcing that he had ordered a three day retreat for all the Houses in Sicily, and had sent a copy of the new edition of the holy Rule. He added that he was writing an appropriate letter to the Sisters on the island.⁵²

From Father Bonetti to the Sicilian communities

The letter is transcribed here almost in full. This long letter, while revealing our Director General's fatherly solicitude, should prove a salutary warning for us all.

To Reverend Mother Felicina, Salesian, and all the Sisters in Sicily, especially those in Bronte:

During these days I have received news through the Salesians about our good Sisters in Sicily. Part of this news is very comforting but the rest is rather painful.

If cholera had not closed the gates of the island to me I should have come to you personally in order to rejoice with you and your good Sisters at the good you have done and are still doing for the girls of Sicily. I would have comforted you and urged you to perseverance in person.

At the same time, I would have shown my regret to the few who seem to have forgotten the solemn promises they made before the altar on the memorable day of their profession. I would have questioned if they intend to be part of the Institute, living as true spouses of Jesus Christ and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. . .

Since the Asian disease has caused the indefinite postponement of my visit as well as that of Mother General, I send you this letter with the order that it be read to all the Sisters. They are to hear, at least briefly and through the written word, what I should have said out loud and at greater length in the name of God and the Superiors.

There is nothing that gives Don Bosco greater joy and consolation than the knowledge that the Salesians and the [p. 58] Sisters of Mary Help of Christian, where they may be, live according to the spirit of their Institute; that they love and serve God faithfully by practicing their vows, not in word but in deed;

and that, not content with loving and serving Him in themselves, they strive to make Him loved and served as much as they can, through word and example.

Even from Sicily, Don Bosco has the consolation of knowing that his Daughters are acting like real religious, true spouses of Jesus Christ, and are doing much good.

This gives him great joy.

He asks me to thank you for all the consolation you give him and recommends that you persevere. He promises to pray for you always and assures you of the protection of Mary Help of Christian in life and in death, and peace in heaven close to her maternal Heart.

Take courage, then, my good Sisters; pray, offer, obey and live in holy humility, seeking to please God alone and paying no heed to human consolations. Above all remember that you are the spouses of a humiliated and crucified God. If you imitate Him on earth, sooner or later this Spouse will show Himself to you beautiful and glorious, and will admit you to His nuptial feast in the eternal joys of heaven.

But if these agreeable tidings are like roses to our good Father, Don Bosco, disagreeable tidings are like sharp thorns piercing his heart, which has become very sensitive in his old age. We in Turin, who have the good fortune of living close to him, have daily proof of this. Because of our filial affection, we are forced to hide from him the not-so-happy news.

I myself have had to do this, concealing from him the imprudent conduct of some of the Sisters living on that island, two or three of whom live in one House.

Much to my grief I have to say that the best advice I can give those Sisters is that, rather than continue in their lack of submission and in their grumbling or worse, they return to the mainland and resume secular attire.

The Institute has great need of Sisters, it is true, but Sisters imbued with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Nuns whose thoughts, affections, words and actions do not resemble those of Jesus and who do not possess the spirit of their heavenly Spouse will, at the end of their lives, find that He [p. 59] has closed the gates of paradise against them, saying, *Nescio vos*, I do not know you . . .

Let these few enter into themselves and reflect on what they have done and what they want to do. If they have lost the awareness of their vocation and have allowed it to become dormant, let them rouse and re-vitalize it, and correspond with the necessary fidelity . . .

What is to be done? Read the holy Rule and practice it.

Away with all depression and scrupulosity . . .

Away with all that complaining with the Sisters and even with seculars; away with criticism; away with bad example. . .

Away with indifference regarding order and the good name of the House and the Institute; away with attachments and antipathies which disturb the peace of the House.

Away with attachment to chosen occupations in self-chosen places; away with subterfuge in order to see one destination and avoid another. This is not doing God's will but following one's own whim, and the work done is useless for heaven.

Finally, away with the spirit of the world. Introduce in your hearts and House the spirit of God, a praiseworthy rivalry to become saints, while destroying in yourselves the evil tendencies of the old Adam and Mother Eve. Turn your will with courage and perseverance to practicing those frequent acts of virtue which will make you resemble Jesus and Mary. . .

. . . Take heart, then, my dear Sisters, or rather, my Daughters in Jesus Christ. Keep the novena and feast of All Saints well, all of you, and stir up in yourselves a burning desire to save your own souls by living as good religious so that with our beloved Father and the many Brothers and Sisters who have already preceded us, we may all one day be together in our heavenly home. Oh, how we shall then bless the day on which we renounced this miserable world in order to give ourselves entirely to Jesus!

We shall then bless the efforts we made to resist temptation and practice virtue. We will bless fidelity to our vocation and be happy forever! Oh, may that yearned for day come soon when we shall all be reunited, never to be separated again.

[p. 60] May God bless us all and grant us this grace which is above all other graces, and may Saint Ursula, whose feast we celebrate today, obtain for us that we too may lead at least eleven thousand virgin souls to heaven, as she did.

Pray for me, who remain, in Jesus Christ,

Turin, October 21, 1885

Yours very affectionately,

Our dear Mother's presence cannot fail to make this fatherly admonition effective. Let us accompany her with our prayers so that with God's help, she may be consoled by the hoped-for fruit of renewed religious spirit in every community.

An extraordinary jubilee for 1886

The *Salesian Bulletin* for this month carried the announcement of the extraordinary jubilee promulgated by His Holiness Leo XIII for 1886. 54 The Holy Father wished the announcement to be made on October 4, when the solemnity of the holy rosary coincided with the feast of Francis of Assisi-the saint who had supported the Lateran with his poverty.

In his communication the Cardinal Vicar stated that the Holy Father's decision had been made, "wishing in exceptional times to provide exceptional aids to religious piety."

He noted that the news would be appreciated by the faithful all over the world, "and from that moment they could start preparing to celebrate the jubilee worthily at the appropriate time."

Let us thank God for the great grace that has been given to Christianity and pray that all the good expected by the Holy Father may arise from it.

[p. 61] Interesting news from Patagonia

This month's *Bulletin* also gives us some interesting news concerning our missionaries in Patagonia. Besides the wonderful report of the triumphal welcome given to Monsignor Cagliero, part of which we had learned from his last letter, it described the feast of Saint Joachim on August 16.

On that day, in honor of Leo XIII whose name day it was, Monsignor had solemnly administered the Sacrament of Baptism in Viedma, to the twenty year old son of Chief Licuful, giving him the name of Joachim. Baptized with him were six young Indian girls and a mother with her seven year old daughter. They had all been instructed by our Sisters.

The function was carried out in the Sisters' chapel because the Salesian church had been destroyed by fire the previous year.

A splendid entertainment in honor of the Holy Father took place in the evening. The little Indian girls from our two Houses in Carmen and Viedma took part and this roused sentiments of enthusiastic devotion to the Holy Father.

The *Bulletin* related that on the feast of the Assumption a considerable number of children and young girls educated by our missionaries had been enrolled in the Association of the Guardian Angels and the Children of Mary . . . What an amount of good is being done in Patagonia! What good fortune and what a grace to go there! . . .

The sudden death of Sister Josephine Bretto

With great fervor we began the novena of the Immaculate Conception on the 29th of November, which also happened to be the First Sunday in Advent. Little did we think that the youngest among us would go to celebrate the feast in heaven.

[p. 62] Our dear eighteen year old Sister Josephine Bretto was suddenly attacked by violent congestion of the lungs and died on December 5.

She was an ardent, open soul and had made her profession with great joy during the previous August in the presence of Don Bosco. The sudden call to heaven had found her prepared. Although unable to speak, she assured us with signs that she died willingly and without regrets. How blessed is she who gave her all to God so early in life, living her short span in such simplicity and fervor!

Father Rua appointed Don Bosco's Vicar General

The feast of the Immaculate Conception brought news of an innovation for the entire Salesian Congregation: Father Rua had been nominated Don Bosco's Vicar General.

Our good Father, in such bad health, felt that his strength was gradually failing. He had thought about making this provision for some time. And the Holy Father, through Monsignor Jacobini, had already invited him

to choose someone who could act for him in the general government of the Pious Society. Therefore, after much prayer he made up his mind and communicated the decision to his Chapter on September 24.

However he waited till the feast of the Immaculate Conception before making the announcement to the Houses in an appropriate circular letter.⁵⁵

This letter also announced the nomination of Monsignor Cagliero as Don Bosco's Vicar for the Houses in America; the nomination of Father Durando as Prefect in place of Father Rua; and the nomination of Father Cerutti to replace Father Durando as Councillor for Schools.

We were not altogether surprised by the news because it was well known that ever since the middle of October, Father Rua had occupied a room close to Don Bosco's in order to be near in case of need. No one could have wished for a better choice than Father Rua. He was loved [p. 63] and esteemed by everyone because of his filial attachment to Don Bosco and his exemplary virtue. Therefore, although we felt deeply the progressive and accentuated deterioration of our dear Father, we could not but rejoice at the news of Father Rua's appointment.

However, we heard from Turin that Don Bosco seemed a little stronger at that time, so much so that in the afternoon of the feast of Mary Immaculate he had given benediction of the Blessed Sacrament in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. It was said that the people stood on the benches to get a better view of him as, bent and with stumbling steps, he made his way to the altar.

Later he was present in the choir of the church while the communication concerning the nomination of his Vicar was being read to the Oratory community. He then spoke of Mary's goodness to the Salesian Congregation which, he said, was destined for great things and would spread throughout the world so long as the Salesians remained faithful in the observance of their holy Rule.

Mother's longed for return

At last, on December 20, we joyfully welcomed our Mother back from her journey to Sicily. We had feared for her and prayed earnestly because we knew she had been stricken with high fevers.

On her return journey she had travelled as far as Este to visit the Sisters working in the *Manfredini* school. Here it was bitterly cold and there had been snow. From Este she went to Turin on a variety of business matters.

She seems weak and worn out by the strain of the journey but we trust that after a period of rest she will soon be restored to perfect health.

On Christmas Eve we gathered as in former years to offer our good wishes to the Director and to our own Superiors, who were all present.

The solemnity of Christmas passed cheerfully with [p. 64] the usual solemn ceremonies and in devoted, ardent union of hearts around the crib of the Baby Jesus.

To Mathi for the mothers of the Salesians

Another House was opened before the end of the year. This was at Mathi on the way to Lanzo. The work was a new one which Don Bosco in his great charity wanted to set up for the mothers of the Salesians, who were alone and without support. "It is right that I think about it and I shall do so as quickly as possible," he had said last year to Father Scappini, the Director of Lanzo, who was distressed at the sad condition of his poor mother.⁵⁶ Without delay he had put his providential idea into execution.

He set aside for this purpose a house bought in October, 1883, for the Sons of Mary and occupied by them the whole of the following year. Now, completely restored and adapted for the project, it was ready to receive its new tenants.

The Sisters will be both daughters and sisters to the good mothers who have given their sons to Don Bosco. By their loving care they will witness visibly to their own very real gratitude to the Salesians, for all that has been and is still being done for them.

The work will also include a festive Oratory, assistance for the girls working in the Salesian paper mill and later on, the public kindergarten.

It was Don Bosco's wish that the House be dedicated to Saint Jane Frances de Chantal and it was opened on December 28, feast of the Holy Innocents. Sister Orsola Camisassa who had already been Superior at the "Caraci" Orphanage in Catania, went to initiate the work. With her were Sister Rosa Massobrio, Sister Anna Oberti, Sister Domenica Telinelli, as well as the first two mothers, grateful to find assistance and care under the mantle of the Help of Christians.⁵⁷

[p. 65] The end of the year

December 31 was spent in ardent gratitude to God. In the evening, this was sealed with a suitable sermon preached by the Director Father Bussi, the singing of the *Te Deum* and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

There is indeed good reason for gratitude. Innumerable graces, above all in the spiritual order, but also on the material side, have been lavished on us and on the entire Congregation.

Proof of this can be seen at Nizza where works are flourishing. The large new wing adjoining the church is steadily rising on the foundations which had been laid in the autumn of last year. It has now reached roof level and has been built as a double block, with a wide corridor and spacious areas between. The ground floor is to house the classrooms and the Superior's office. On the first floor there is to be the workroom, the infirmary and one dormitory. Above this floor, other spacious dormitories are being constructed.

May Our Lady cover this new building with her mantle of blessing, and sanctify the life of fervor and zeal which must animate it. As Don Bosco has seen, such fervor will guarantee the sweet pleasure of her maternal presence.

1886

A calm beginning

Here we are at the beginning of the new year which opens up to the whole Catholic world the extraordinary jubilee promoted by the Holy Father. It will also bring our Institute the General Chapter and the election of a Mother General and the other Superiors, who are about to complete the terms of office established by the holy Rule.¹

The year begins on a Friday, and so it is particularly consecrated to the Sacred Heart. We hope that the temple in Rome may be completed this year as Don Bosco so earnestly desires.

We begin the new year serenely with the comfort of seeing that our Mother General is much improved in health and well on the way to recovery.

This morning we had solemn mass, as is customary on great feasts. In the afternoon Vespers was followed by the singing of the *Veni Creator* and the renewal of the baptismal promises, prepared for by a fitting sermon given by the Director. Then came benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

May God grant us to pass this new year in holiness, in loving fidelity to our promises, generously corresponding to the grace of our religious vocation.

On the 12th, about ten days later, our Mother was again among us, completely recovered and ready to assume all her activities once more. The flood of our joy soon spread 'to the other Houses in a rising surge of grateful prayer.

[p. 72] Clothings in the brightness of Mary

As he had previously announced, our Director General Father Bonetti arrived on January 29, the feast of Saint Francis de Sales. Don Bosco had sent him for the next ceremony of religious clothing.

Father Bonetti preached a triduum of sermons on January 30, 31 and February 1. He held the canonical examination for postulants who were to be clothed with the habit. The others had previously been sent back to their homes as they were not able to give sufficient hope of success. The Director General himself had given these instructions.² Regretably, even the sister of Monsignor Manacorda, Bishop of Fossano, had not been admitted to the clothing, because she was considered unsuited to the Institute.

The sermon for the occasion, based on the Marian feast of the day, was a hymn of praise for the goodness of Mary, our most tender Mother. It kindled in every heart new flames of love for her and a more ardent resolve to imitate her virtues.

During his brief stay with us, our Director General has also stirred up our fervor by speaking of Don Bosco who has been confined to the Oratory during these months because of the poor condition of his health. His sanctity, however, is always on the increase. Among other things, Father Bonetti told us about two prodigious multiplications of nuts. These had occurred on December 13 and January 3, at the end of his reunions with the 4th and 5th year grammar school boys, which he used to hold in his room from time to time.³

This fact, already known throughout the Oratory, roused our enthusiasm and we were very much moved at the thought of being Daughters of such a Father.

[p. 73] New "Provincial Houses"

This year the General Directory of the Institute carried an innovation which Mother noted in her introduction: the creation of other *Provincial Houses*. Besides San Carlo in Almagro, close to Buenos Aires in America, the same status was given to three others, those of Turin, Bronte in Sicily and Marseilles in France.

And so, from now on, she adds, the local Superiors who are closest to these Houses can maintain a special relationship with their respective provincial. They can go for help, when it is unnecessary or impossible to approach the Rector Major or the Director General who represents him, or Mother General at Nizza.

"The Sisters and the Houses are increasing year by year," Mother points out, "and the good God is pleased to make use of us, poor as we are, to do good to thousands of young girls by directing them along the path of virtue. Let us thank Him from the depths of our hearts and strive to imbue ourselves with a deep religious spirit. Thus we shall become ever less unworthy instruments of God's glory and secure the salvation of our own souls by cooperating in the salvation of others."⁴

Two more departures for paradise

Two deaths occurred, separated only by a brief interval. The first was that of our dear Sister Maria Bodrato who breathed her last on February 16 at Incisa Belbo, comforted by Don Bosco's blessing. She had been Superior of that House for only one year when illness cut off her young life in a short time, giving a clearer vision of her spirit of piety, mortification and complete, loving conformity to the divine will.

So much was she loved and appreciated in the town that public prayers had been offered to God for her recovery. All mourned her as a sister and mother.

[p. 74] Two weeks later on March 1, Sister Emilia Montaini left the House in Turin to join Sister Maria in heaven. This Sister was exemplary for her observance and for the constant, unchanging smile which she maintained even in the most difficult trials.

Towards her end, she felt certain that Saint Joseph would liberate her from her lengthy sufferings. She actually died on the first day of the month dedicated to this saint, to whom she was greatly devoted.

A renewed inauguration for the organ

On March 4, the last Thursday before Lent, another inauguration of the organ took place. A second keyboard had been added to it and the violins were removed from the front and placed high up on the right side. With these modifications and the addition of the second keyboard the instrument acquired greater value and marvellous harmonic effects could be drawn from it. We will hear it during the adoration-reparation period of the forty hours, which usually takes place during the last days of the Mardi Gras season.

Don Bosco on the road to Spain Mother General visits the Houses in Piedmont

Lent brought news that in spite of waning strength, Don Bosco wished to travel to France again this year, with the idea of going on to Spain.

He left Turin at 2:00 p.m. on Friday, March 12, accompanied by his secretary Father Viglietti. For the first part of the journey, Father Berutti and Father Sala were there too.

Everyone had tried to dissuade him from undertaking such a fatiguing journey and now, in trepidation they all **[p. 75]** ardently entrust him to God. At our Mother's insistent reminder, our prayers, too, follow him step by step. She, in her turn, will set out during this month of March on her visitation of the Houses of Piedmont.

Accompanied by Mother Elisa she is beginning with the new foundation of Montaldo Bormida. It is the first time she visits this House.

End of term examinations and a spiritual retreat for the pupils

Father Francesia came from Turin on Friday, April 2, for the express purpose of presiding over the examinations of our resident pupils. He was satisfied with the results and stayed on to preach a three days' retreat on the 3rd, 4th, and 5th in preparation for Easter.

During his stay he gave us welcome news of Don Bosco. He said that after a stop at Nizza-mare and Toulon, Don Bosco had reached Marseilles. On April 2 he was to meet Father Rua, who had left Turin in order to join him and accompany him to Spain. His coming was expected with great enthusiasm in Spain, especially by the

benevolent Lady Dorothy of Chopitea.

We are resolved to continue our prayers that God might sustain him during the long journey.

Sister Madalene Ferraris goes to heaven

It is Saturday, April 10, the eve of Passion Sunday. Our Lady has come here to her own House to take Sister Madalene Ferraris to heaven. She ended her painful passion in the freshness of her twenty-five years. She had undergone several surgical operations and had shown so much courage under the excruciating suffering that the surgeon exclaimed, "She is no longer a creature of this earth!"

[p. 76] Sister Madalene manifested the same strength of soul during her last illness, which she endured by continually invoking the Lord, while her hands clasped the crucifix.

She leaves behind her the beautiful memory of her simplicity, gentleness and prompt religious obedience.

Mother's feast in the joys of Easter

Holy Week brought the return of our Mother from Turin. She arrived with Mother Elisa on Wednesday the 21st: in time for the beautiful celebrations of Thursday, Friday and Saturday in preparation for the joyful Easter celebrations with her Daughters in Nizza.

Still under the influence of the Easter Alleluia, the following week brought the feast of Saint Catherine, Mother's name day.

As in former years this beautiful festal day offered a solemn celebration in church and the warmth of filial good wishes expressed in an entertainment. Sisters, postulants and boarders vied with one another in expressing to Mother General their unanimous sentiments of gratitude and affection.

To add to the general cheerfulness this year brought a precious gift from His Holiness Leo XIII. With his Apostolic Blessing he granted our Mother a plenary indulgence for herself and for all the members of the Congregation on her name day for the next seven years.

From America

The April *Bulletin* brought news from the American missionaries, which was especially interesting and pleasing because of what is related about our Sisters in Viedma.

But more recent information has come from Buenos Aires where Monsignor Cagliero had preached the spiritual [p. 77] retreat as soon as he arrived from Patagonia in January. It ended on the feast of Saint Agnes with new clothings and professions.

They also tell us that revolution broke out in Montevideo on March 28. It lasted only a few days and was crushed in a blood bath.⁶

And so there is a renewal of the insistent invitation to multiply prayers and sacrifices for those many nations not at peace, where the Church is still obstructed and opposed.

Sister Josephine Armelongo dies at home

We have received information that our Sister Josephine Armelongo left us for eternity at Lugagnano on April 29. She was there with her family in accordance with the wish of her father, a doctor, who hoped to cure her. However, her condition deteriorated steadily and reached the point where she could no longer make the journey back to Nizza where she so much wished to be.

Nevertheless, she had the comfort of renewing her holy vows which had already expired. She died in perfect peace, feeling that she was bound forever to the religious family she had made her own and which she had loved from childhood, as an exemplary pupil in Mornese.

Don Bosco's blessing also brought great consolation. It had been sent by telegram from Barcellona and read, "Very happy feastday Superior. I cordially bless you Bosco."

News of Don Bosco in France and Spain

During these days we have received interesting news concerning our good Father. It came in a circular letter read by our good Director. It had been sent to all the [p. 78] Salesian Houses by the Prefect General, Father Durando.⁵

We heard about the wonderful welcome he received in France, at Nizza, Cannes, Toulon and Marseilles,

where he was received in great veneration by princes and princesses, and even by the Queen of Wurtemberg.

News of the prodigies worked through the blessing of Mary Help of Christians, amidst the enthusiasm of the people who followed him everywhere, filled us with emotion.

We were told that he arrived safely in Barcellona on the 8th of the current month and was met by the highest authorities. About thirty carriages belonging to the nobility of the city were waiting for him at the station, all claiming the right to offer him their services.

Naturally, the choice fell on the carriage of the beneficent mother of the Salesians, the Lady Dorothy of Chopitea. She was very happy to receive him into her palace and surround him with every care before taking him to the school at Sarria.

Here, together with the cheering boys, his passage was blocked by another crowd clamoring for his blessing.

Let us thank God sincerely for such comforting news and ask Him to continue to sustain our beloved Father and bring him quickly back to his dear Oratory .

In memory of Sister Maria Bodrato

To our surprise, there is an article in the *Salesian Bulletin* concerning our Sister Maria Bodrato. It is entitled, *A tribute of gratitude to and well deserved condolence for a Sister of Mary Help of Christians*, and reports the minutes of the commemorative meeting of the administration of the kindergarten of Incisa Belbo the day following her death.

The entire article was a warm-hearted eulogy of Sister's virtues and the work she had done for the town. Among other things we read, ". . . the death of Sister Maria Bodrato- [p. 79] to, which we deplore with tears and heartfelt grief, has thrown the entire Incisa population into mourning. . . .

. . . If her death has given us more opportunity to admire the great virtue of this privileged woman and model of modesty, who, with an intelligence more unique than rare, initiated and firmly established this Institute, we also have the consolation of witnessing the indescribable earnestness with which the whole population joins in our grief at her loss . . ."

We already knew the contents of these minutes with the deliberations for the solemn funeral obsequies, because a copy had been sent immediately to Mother General and had been read to us.

However, to find it printed in the *Bulletin* gave us much comfort, because it was a proof of the great esteem in which our dear Sister had been held after such a short time.

The same number of the *Bulletin* contained a very interesting article taken from the Genoese paper, *L'Eco d'Italia*. This concerned Don Bosco's journey from Genoa to Varazze on the 15th and 16th of March.

It speaks of the enthusiasm roused in all classes of people in Genoa; the extraordinary deference shown by the Archbishop; and the crowd in Varazze that gathered round Don Bosco who had a smile and a kind word for everyone.

A new foundation in France

Mother left for Marseilles on May 11 with Sister Helen Mainardi. This Sister is destined to the new House at Guines in the north of France, close to the Calais Pass. The House has been offered to us by two pious sisters, both octogenarians, the Mademoiselles Eufrasia and Louise Morgant. We will start a small orphanage and a workroom for the young girls of the area, who will thus be saved from the dangers to which they are exposed by going to work in factories near Calais.

[p. 80] Sister Mainardi will oversee the workroom and will join Sister Maria Passerini from Marseilles, in charge of the cooking and other domestic work. Sister Sampietro, presently in St. Cyr, has been chosen as Superior.

The Sisters are expected to arrive for the feast of Mary Help of Christians. Father Bologna, the Salesian Director of Lille who is directing the foundation, writes that the parish priest and the other clergy of the area are all admirers of Don Bosco, and therefore very pleased to receive his Daughters.⁷

May Our Lady go with them and help them to do a great amount of good in the new field of labor which is opening up to them.

Don Bosco returns to Turin

While Mother General is still in France, we have received the good news that Don Bosco has returned from his long journey. He arrived in Valdocco on the first day of the novena in honor of Mary Help of Christians. It

was on Saturday, the 11th of May, a little before 7: 00 p.m., and he was greeted with indescribable enthusiasm.

On the following day, the feast of the Patronage of Saint Joseph, Don Bosco celebrated the community mass at Saint Peter's altar in the sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians to thank Our Lady for the graces received during his journey. At midday he wished to go down to the dining room where he was joyously received by all his Sons, both confreres and boys.

We were informed that he even attended the entertainment organized by the artisans in the playground to honor Saint Joseph. There were festive reminders of his travels in Spain and his return to the Oratory.

[p. 81] The feast of Mary Help of Christians in Turin and Nizza

Eight days later, the feast of Mary Help of Christians dawned with general exultation and it was celebrated in the Sanctuary in Turin with greater solemnity than in previous years. The bishops of Biella, Casale and Ivrea, as well as Cardinal Alimonda, the Archbishop of Turin, took part in the celebration. The Cardinal had already been to the Oratory to welcome Don Bosco back from his travels, two days after he had returned.

Our own Mother General also managed to be present, having returned from France. She was eager to see Don Bosco again and receive his blessing.

She then visited the Houses of Borgo Canalese and Lenta with Mother Elisa, and returned to Nizza towards the end of the month to celebrate the postponed feast of Mary Help of Christians on Monday, May 31.

Since our Director General, Father Bonetti, was not able to leave Turin, he sent Father Cerruti to preside over the ceremony of religious clothings already arranged for that day.

The beautiful ceremony took place as usual at 9: 00 a.m. Only five postulants received the habit because the Superiors had taken great care in making their choice. It was especially to these five chosen ones that Father Cerruti directed his discourse for the occasion. He spoke to them of devotion to Our Lady and of the necessity of corresponding to God's grace, with the help of Mary Most Holy, in order to receive the reward promised to holy perseverance.

Solemn Vespers were sung in the afternoon and the ceremony concluded with a harmonized version of the *Tantum Ergo* and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

During his short stay, Father Cerruti told us many beautiful and charming things about Don Bosco and the Congregation. He spoke of the Cardinal Protector given to the Salesians by His Holiness Leo XIII, April 17. Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi was his own vicar, and was among the most illustrious and gifted princes of the Church, [p. 82] because of his high intelligence, enlightened prudence and zealous activity, combined with the gentle amiability of his manner.

His nomination is therefore a fresh proof of the singular kindness of the Holy Father towards the Salesian Congregation, for which we must all be deeply grateful.

Echoes of Don Bosco's journey in France

During her Good Nights and at recreation, our Mother General also has many things to tell us about what she had seen and heard during her recent visits to the Houses.

From France, she brought us echoes of Don Bosco's journey.

While he was at Nizza-mare the Superior, Sister Margaret Rasino, plucked up her courage and went to knock on the Salesian dining room door. She said, "Father, we want to greet you!" He rose from table immediately and said to the Salesians, "Let me go and greet my Daughters." Once among them, he greeted them with fatherly goodness and asked them to pray that he might obtain a large amount of money to buy bread for his little rascals.

After having said this he reminded them-as always-that the observance of the Constitutions would secure holy perseverance for them. He then advised them to read the *Salesian Bulletin* in order to keep informed as to what was happening in the Congregation. Finally, he added, "When you write to your relatives, give them Don Bosco's good wishes and assure them that all those who have a Salesian or Daughter of Mary Help of Christians in the family will be saved to the fourth generation."

Our Sisters at Nizza-mare remembered that when speaking to the Co-operators, our good Father had recommended the needs of his works and especially the needs of the orphans in that House. He stated that charity offered to the director was truly offered to Don Bosco himself.⁸

The community attached to the Oratory of Saint [p. 83] Leon in Marseilles had been able to see him while he was breakfasting but they were very shocked at his emaciated appearance. Don Bosco had told them that he had left Turin contrary to everyone's wishes, including the doctors', but that his children needed bread and the Superiors were overburdened with debts. This was why, knowing how generous the French people had always been to his enterprises, he had undertaken the long journey.

He had then encouraged the Sisters to be devoted to Mary Help of Christians and to observe the Constitutions, especially in little things. After giving each a medal of Mary Help of Christians, he had blessed them.

Seeing Sister Maria Sterdero pass by, still not very happy to stay in Marseilles, he took her paternally by the hand and whispered with emotion and affable kindness, "Sister Maria, remember the grace Mary Help of Christians obtained for you. You are deeply indebted to this good Mother . . ."9

Our Sisters related one among the many graces or miracles Don Bosco obtained during those days in Marseilles. It made a deep impression on them because it took place in their own House.

A good lady from Sainte Margherite, the mother of four children, had been suffering from mental illness for nine months. She was in a pitiable state and, after all attempts to cure her had proved unsuccessful, hope of ever restoring her reason had now been give up. The Sisters decided to use the opportunity of Don Bosco's visit to present the poor sick person to him. He blessed her and instantly the good lady was restored to sanity and regained the good health she had previously enjoyed. Many a time she returned to the Sisters to reiterate her gratitude. 10

Mother General added that it could also be said that our own Sister Teresa Barale had at that time obtained a grace from Don Bosco. She was in the House of St. Cyr and in such a poor state of health that there was good reason to fear for her life. When our good Father heard about this he sent his blessing through Father Rua and the Sister, as she [p. 84] herself stated, began to recover immediately and was soon back at work.

Everyone-Mother continued-had something to say about Don Bosco's visit. The Sisters of La Navarre, who were not fortunate enough to be visited, went to the nearest railway station at La Poline, so that they would at least be able to see and greet him. As the train approached the station, Don Bosco caught sight of the Sisters on the platform and began waving his handkerchief from the window.

Then, during the few minutes that the train remained stationary, he leaned out of the window and paternally inquired about each one's health. Then placing his hand on Sister Christina Rossi's head, he said with great kindness, "May Our Lady bless you!" As the train began to move out of the station he remained for quite a while at the window waving his handkerchief. 11

Mother always ends her talks with a word of gratitude to God for having willed that we should be Daughters of such a good and holy father, and she exhorts us to pray for him.

Don Bosco announces the coming General Chapter

On June 1, the professed Sisters gathered for an important conference in preparation for the coming General Chapter. Mother had referred to this in the preface to this year's directory.

Don Bosco now stated when it was to take place and established the prayers to be said in preparation. He also gave precious instructions, not only for the electors, but for everyone else as well, in the following letter of convocation which Mother read slowly and commented on briefly.

[p. 85] Beloved Daughters in Jesus Christ,

Today, we are celebrating in Turin the feast of Mary Help of Christians. Extraordinary numbers of people are coming from everywhere, as children come to the feet of their most tender Mother. It consoles me very much during this time to turn my thoughts to you also, and to the Institute which bears her name. Yes, I certainly remembered the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians at holy mass this morning and I prayed for them.

Among other things I asked for the grace that you may be faithful to your holy vocation; that you may be religious who love perfection and holiness; that by the practice of Christian and religious virtues, and an edifying and exemplary life, you may do honor to Jesus Christ, your heavenly Spouse, and to Mary your most loving Mother. I hope you also prayed for me and I trust Mary Help of Christians will hear your prayers and obtain from God the grace that we may all live in the holy fear of God and save our own souls and those of many others.

In the meantime I announce that this year sees the end of the six year period for which the members of the Superior Council of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians were elected, and therefore according to article VII of the Constitutions, a new election should be held.

God willing, this will take place during the second half of August, on a day within the octave of the feast of Mary's Assumption into heaven. To this end I invite all the Superiors to come, if possible, before

the 15th of the month, to the Mother House of Nizza Monferrato where the elections will take place. Since the good of the whole Institute and the glory of God depends largely on the election of a good Chapter and, more so still, of a good Superior General, the electing Sisters will need special enlightenment in choosing and voting for those they consider best able to fill these important posts.

God's light and guidance are, there fore , very necessary in order that this duty may be fulfilled according to His divine will and that good may be drawn from it.

For this end I recommend that from the day this letter is received the Superiors will arrange for the *Veni Creator* [p. 86] to be said or sung by the community every morning, and the *Ave Maris Stella* every evening, until the elections shall have been completed.

I also exhort every Sister to add special private prayers, particularly after Holy Communion, and to perform some acts of virtue and mortification to obtain all the light the Superiors need.

Besides prayer it will be useful for the electors to reflect on what is needful for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians at this time. As far as I can judge in the Lord, I think it needs Sisters well grounded in the spirit of mortification and sacrifice, who love to work and suffer for Jesus Christ and for the salvation of their neighbor. It needs Sisters convinced that exact obedience without comment or complaint, is the path they must tread courageously in order to attain perfection and holiness quickly. It needs Sisters who can control their affections and keep their hearts turned towards God alone, in order to be able to say with Saint Francis de Sales, "If I knew that a single fiber of my heart were not for God, I would tear it out."

The Institute needs Sisters who do not regret having left either the world or the possessions and comforts they have renounced; Sisters who regard it an honor to live in a state of poverty and privation like their Divine Spouse Jesus who although rich, became poor in order to enrich souls with His grace, and to make them heirs of heaven. It needs Sisters who have no other ambition than to follow Jesus Christ humiliated, crowned with thorns and nailed to a cross here on earth, in order one day to be with him in heavenly glory in the splendor of the angels and saints.

It needs Sisters with a strong physical constitution, a good character and a reasonably, cheerful disposition; Sisters whose only wish is to become saints, not through extraordinary deeds but rather, through ordinary common work, in order that they May become a stimulant and attraction towards the Christian virtues for others, especially young girls. Finally it needs Sisters who are, or at least have the potential of becoming, instruments of God's glory by carrying out those undertakings and fulfilling those tasks proper to the Institute.

[p. 87] Now in order to have Sisters of such caliber it is very important that there should be at the head of the Institute Superiors who have the capacity for proving and discerning the vocations of young persons before admitting them to the religious clothing and profession. It is very important to have Superiors who are deeply imbued with, and who practice those virtues they have to in still into their subjects. It is very important that the Superiors love all the Sisters without exception as if they were their own sisters, and as Daughters of Mary and spouses of Jesus Christ. However they should combine with patient, kindly charity, firmness without harshness, and also without human respect which, at the appropriate time would prevent abuses and transgressions of the Constitutions. Nevertheless this firmness should be prudent and discreet, so that while preserving piety and regular observance it does not endanger the health of the Sisters.

Every Superior shall therefore consider privately who among her Sisters possess these gifts, so that at the appointed time, she may before God and her conscience cast her vote for the one she regards as best able to fulfill the allotted task.

Hoping that I shall again be able to assist at the General Chapter in person, I ask God to keep you all in His holy grace and to grant that you love and serve Him faithfully whether you be Superiors or subjects, in health or sickness, and in any place or occupation allocated to you by obedience. Then, at whatever day or hour Our Lord Jesus Christ may come you to eternity, each one of you will be able to answer, "I am ready, my God, let us go to enjoy the happiness that You in Your Infinite goodness have prepared for me."

Pray for me and believe me to be in the Lord,

Turin, May 24, 1886

Yours affectionately,
Father John Bosco

We followed the reading of this letter with hearts attentive and filled with emotion and gratitude towards our beloved Founder and Father, who seeks only the good of [p. 88] our souls with such loving care. Each one of us is pledged to treasure his words and to multiply our prayers and offerings, as we prepare for the coming event. At the same time we ask God for the grace of having Don Bosco with us for the occasion.

Monsignor Cagliero asks for the help of more missionaries

Monsignor Cagliero's letters are always welcome and interesting. His latest, dated April 30, comes from Buenos Aires on his return journey to Patagonia. The few lines have stirred up a great ferment of missionary ardor in the House. He writes to Mother: "For this coming autumn I need six good teachers prepared, in order to be able to open two Houses, one in Bahia Blanca and the other in Chubut. Father Fagnano and Father Lasagna will come to fetch them.

These are for me, therefore, but I entrust the choice to you and expect them without fail.

The young girls of these two colonies will be lost if no Sisters come to their rescue. If they are lost, I place the responsibility for this on the Sisters who refused to come.

Prepare their bundles and find someone to pay for the journey. I shall write again concerning this urgent commission, but consider my request as granted . . . "12

This request is directed to everyone, Mother said. Now who is ready to go to Patagonia? The reply vibrating in many hearts was instantly on many lips.

Mother Felicina arrives from Sicily The departure of Sister Maria Brugnoli for heaven

On June 11, Mother Felicina Mazzarello, Superior of the House in Bronte and novice mistress, arrived from Sicily after a tiring journey. With her were Sister Teresa [p. 89] Baioni and Sister Elena Brigatti from the same House. She was welcomed with great enthusiasm but everyone was shocked at the poor state of health which had induced the Superiors to call her back to Piedmont. We hope and pray that the change of air might do her good and renew her strength.

A few days later we received news that the eighteen year old novice, Sister Maria Brugnoli, had died at her family home at Casale Litta (Milan) on June 13. She had received the religious habit the previous January, a month before her sister Louise left for America and there had been great hopes for her future. Her condition of health constrained her to return to her home. When she realized that her end was not far off, she asked and obtained permission to make her vows.

This gave her inexpressible consolation and a few hours afterwards she was called to the eternal nuptials of heaven.

The feasts of Saint Aloysius and Saint John

Again this year, June 21 is fervently celebrated as the feast of Saint Aloysius, Father Bussi's nameday.

Preceded on the vigil with the presentation of gifts, the day was marked by a solemn celebration in church and an entertainment in the hall with demonstrations of our heartfelt gratitude for the good we receive from our zealous Director.

On the 24th, while celebrating the feast of Corpus Christi, we remember Don Bosco's nameday and unite ourselves in spirit with our Mother and the Sisters keeping his feastday in Valdocco.

We were told later that the gift which gave him most pleasure was Father Lemoyne's. According to Don Bosco's express wish he had worked rapidly in the preceding months to write the life of Mama Margaret, hoping to offer it on his [p. 90] feastday. He had presented it with one of his sonnets which said it was meant to be the most beautiful bouquet of the feast, since it was perfumed with the virtues of his holy, incomparable mother.¹³

Sister Lucy Bussa and Sister Assunta Gaino go to heaven

With only a few days interval, two of our dear Sisters in Nizza have left us for heaven.

Sister Lucy Bussa was the first to take flight. Although very ill she seemed to want to hold on to life until Friday, the 25th, in order not to spoil the feast of Corpus Christi. She had made her profession only the previous August in the hands of Don Bosco, expecting to spend a long time in the service of God. But a painful illness caused her to be brought back from Borgo San Martino to Nizza where she prepared for her last hour by

suffering and prayer.

She breathed her last in a saintly manner, comforted by her perpetual vows. These she made two days before she died, leaving for all an edifying memory of her great spirit of observance and fervent piety.

Four days later, on the feast of Saint Peter, Sister Lucy was followed to the grave by Sister Assunta Gaino. This Sister had been highly esteemed by Mother Mazzarello herself, because of her deep humility and spirit of work and sacrifice.

Truly worthy of having been chosen by God to be one of the first Sisters who initiated the Institute on August 5, 1872, Sister Assunta grew in virtue daily and reached the very highest levels. Everyone was aware of her austere mortification and her obedience, and still more so of her burning love for God.

She was favored with extraordinary graces, transports of fiery love for the Holy Eucharist, the gift of tears, and even the heavenly vision of the Child Jesus in the Consecrated Host. She had reached such an intense and continuous union with God that during her last days she confessed that she felt the presence of God to be more real than that of creatures.

The long year of her painful illness brought out more clearly her extraordinary love of suffering. She spent very little time in bed and was up even on the last day of her life when she made a devout confession in preparation for death.

Towards evening she felt she could no longer stand so she asked the infirmarian to allow her to lie down on the straw in the cow-shed. No doubt she felt urged to do this in the fervor of her humility and penitence, and by a premonition that death was near.

However she was ordered to her bed where she seemed to rest peacefully. She woke suddenly, after a few hours, with a sense of suffocation. There was scarcely time to call the infirmarian when she breathed her last in a copious hemorrhage. The Superiors hastened to her bedside but found her already enjoying the peace of God.

As we gathered around her blessed remains the question came spontaneously: should we pray for her or recommend ourselves to her intercession? . . .

The thought of these two departed Sisters and especially the remembrance of the seraphic transports of dear Sister Assunta, helped us to prepare for the fervent celebration of the closing of the month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

This took place with all possible solemnity on July 4, in a spirit of loving reparation and deep gratitude for the many graces we had received.

[p. 92] The satisfaction of dying without pain is well worth the pain of living without satisfaction

The news of Mother Felicina Mazzarello's death caused us great grief. She died peacefully at dawn on Sunday, the 1st of August, in our House at Mathi, where the doctors had sent her in the hopes that the air would be better for the poor condition of her health.

In her we have lost our first Superior General's dear Sister. They had been companion Daughters of Mary Immaculate and were together at the first profession ceremony of 1872. She had emulated Mother Mazzarello's virtue at Mornese, both as novice mistress and first assistant general; at Borgo San Martino, as the Superior of our first daughter House; at Biella; and finally, in Sicily, where she was responsible for our Houses on the island.

She had made her own the maxim heard in a sermon given by Father Bonetti at Borgo San Martino: "The satisfaction of dying without pain is well worth the pain of living without satisfaction." After having constantly practiced this in a spirit of obedience and mortification, she confirmed it on her deathbed, assuring us that she would never have thought it possible to be so tranquil and happy at the end of life.

Calling all the Sisters to her bedside, she spoke to them of the happiness of dying as a religious, a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. She asked them to thank Mother General for all she had done for her and also for having made it possible for her to see Don Bosco and receive his blessing.

She recommended herself to their prayers and suffrages, and when asked for a last souvenir she said, "I leave you what I have kept deeply engraven on my heart all through life: The satisfaction of dying without pain is well worth the pain of living without satisfaction."

She was often comforted by Holy Communion and, on the evening before her death, she asked for Extreme Unction, receiving it with great piety. A few hours later [p. 93] she passed away in perfect peace after a short, but tranquil agony.

Our thoughts naturally turned to Mornese where Mother Felicina's dear, good mother, Madalene, would now be experiencing anew this great sorrow so soon after the death of her *Main*.

Felicina was a much loved member of her family because of her sweet disposition and her goodness of heart which endeared her to all.

She was no less loved among us, wherever she passed in the entire Institute, of which she was an original foundation stone.

Retreat for ladies Scholastic display

The spiritual retreat for ladies opened on August 2. It was preached by the Director General Father Bonetti, and Father John Marengo, Director of the Church of Saint John the Evangelist in Turin. About ninety women took part in it and we co-operated with our prayers to obtain God's blessing on them and to make these days holy and fruitful.

The days of retreat did become fruitful for the many younger ladies who decided to leave the world, at the end, and asked to enter the Institute.

The closing day was Tuesday the 10th and the usual religious celebration took place in the morning.

Before the retreatants left they assisted at the awards celebration for our eighty-five boarders, which was customarily held on that day. The Superior and teachers could all be very pleased with the children's progress, both in virtue and in their studies, confirmed by the result of the examinations at the end of July. It was also proved by the scholastic display which followed, giving great pleasure to the Superiors and to the ladies who were present. After the prizes for good conduct, study and work had all been [p. 94] distributed, the festivities closed with a discourse given by the fervent and zealous Father Bonetti.

The ladies were clearly very happy with all they had seen and heard and, in taking their leave, they promised to let people know about the school and to procure for it a greater number of pupils.

On the same day-August 10-our pupil teachers arrived back from Turin where they had gone to take their teaching certificate examinations. Even though these examinations had been very difficult because of new programs, the majority of our candidates fared well and obtained their certificates, while only a few will have to repeat certain subjects in the autumn.

We earnestly thank God for this too!

Monsignor Cagliero prepares us for the retreat and the General Chapter

All over the House preparations are going ahead to welcome the Superiors taking part in the General Chapter. Mother Daghero had invited them all by letter to be in Nizza for July 14. There is a large number of Sisters in the House these days for the spiritual retreat which is going on at the same time. In order to give hospitality to all these good Superiors and Sisters the new wing of the school, adjacent to the church, which had been completed during the year, was opened for use at the beginning of the month.

We have received a long letter from Monsignor Cagliero which has served to stimulate the fervor of our spiritual preparation for the retreat. He writes from Patagonia with his usual burning ardor:

. . . The Congregation is expanding, Houses are multiplying and pupils increasing. How much good God is preparing for us to do and how great the harvest is! How many souls there are to save and how many tender, innocent hearts to give to Jesus!

[p. 95] But, my good Daughters, you must make yourselves worthy instruments in the hand of the great Agriculturist by your *zeal*, your *piety*, your spirit of sacrifice which is so difficult in the face of our self-love, that is, the disordered love of our *self and of our ego*.

Your *purity* of heart and *holiness* of life must merit a hearing for you from the Divine Vinedresser, when you turn to Him for yourselves or for your neighbor, and when you are working conscientiously for young girls, who are the flower of the Church and the elect portion of the flock of Jesus Christ! Youth! What significance and spiritual beauty these words conjure up!

We too, in the middle of this desert, have found a delightful garden, to cultivate: boys, girls, youth!

The world wants to destroy them and our Congregation must save them at any cost!

Your spiritual retreat is about to begin. It is wonderful opportunity offered by God to purify yourselves from your shortcomings, to strengthen yourselves in your vocation, and to become inflamed with the holy love of God!

For a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians to be worthy of her name and a strong arm to the Salesian Congregation, I advise her to have a humble heart, a pure heart, and an open heart with the Superiors. On the other hand, her heart must be closed to all and for all creatures.

Experience, the great teacher in life, has always warned that affections and sensibility of heart are the ruin of the spirit and the cause of prevarication in virtue and vocation.

I have often spoken to you on this topic. Now from the confines of Patagonia, I put it in writing, and repeat it to the novices, postulants and everyone else, now and always, because this poor heart of ours is always actively battling with itself.

This is my wish and my ardent desire, for your good, the good of the Congregation and of the Church.

The election of the Superior Chapter will take place during the spiritual retreat. May the holiest among you be elected; if those in office at present are the most holy, may their names jump from the urn! It is the head which gives life, prosperity and beauty to the body! . . .

[p. 96] Monsignor then adds a few fervent words of advice for the pupils. He urges them to be good, devout, and diligent in their duties and to receive Holy Communion with faith, fervor and purity of heart. Then, citing the example of Children of Mary and pupils of Patagones and Viedma who are "white, brown and black," and are his consolation and the hope of a Christian future for his apostolic vicariate, he goes on: "y our young girls will have to speed up ü they do not want the Patagonians to get ahead of them . . ."

He then thanks all the Sisters who have written to him and assures them that "he prays that God may bless them and keep them on the path of perfection and of holy perseverance in their vocation." He concludes, "Always pray for this mission, for the Congregation and for the health of our holy Father, whom God so visibly glorifies, even on this earth!..."¹⁵

The second General Chapter

As had been announced, the Second General Chapter of the Institute opened on August 14, the vigil of the Assumption. Unfortunately, although Don Bosco had hoped to preside over it personally, his health once again prevented him from doing so. Therefore he appointed Father Bonetti to represent him.

The Chapter members numbered thirty-eight. All the Superiors of Italy and France were present but no one was able to come from America, although Father Bonetti had written to Monsignor Cagliero expressing his earnest wish in this regard as far back as May.¹⁶

All gathered in the church and after the *Veni Creator* had been sung Father Bonetti spoke of the importance of the occasion and encouraged them to invoke God's aid in fervent prayer. The *Aue Maris Stella* followed and then benediction of the Blessed Sacrament

The first meeting took place in the hall at 10:00 o'clock that same morning when preliminary acts were carried [p. 97] out. Two secretaries were nominated and the topics to be discussed were read out under appropriate headings. These were to be studied by seven commissions composed of Chapter members and then presented to the plenary sessions for discussion.

At 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon there was a second session, during which Father Bonetti read out the names of the Chapter members assigned to the separate commissions, each with its president and secretary. He then made some clarifications and gave some directives, so that the work could begin immediately.¹⁷

The spiritual retreat for the Sisters, novices and postulants started on the Same day. There were about three hundred in all. The meditations were preached by Father Lemoyne, our well remembered one-time director at Nizza, and the instructions were given by Father Bonetti.

Thus the whole House was wrapped in recollection and prayer, in expectation of what these days were to bring.

The next day was Sunday and also the Solemnity of the Assumption of Our Lady. Only one session of the Chapter was held, during which Father Bonetti said that it was Don Bosco's wish that the Sisters elected to the Superior Chapter should have no other responsibility apart from that assigned to them by the holy Rule, so as to be better able to serve the en tire Institute. He added that it was therefore necessary for the Mother House to have its own particular Chapter or Council, and the electors should keep this in mind.

During the day Father Rua arrived from Turin. He had been sent by Don Bosco to preside over the elections since he could not be there himself.

Father Rua brought us the blessing of our venerated Father written in his own hand on the back of a picture of Mary Help of Christians:

"To all the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians May Mary bring the blessings of our good Jesus to you all, and enlighten and guide you in the elections, so [p. 98] that in affliction and consolation you may always do the Lord's holy will. May everything now and always be for the greater glory of God-1886.

Father John Bosco "18

The important hour of elections

Monday, August 16, dawned, the long awaited election day. In the fifth session Father Bonetti presented a list of names to be added to those of the retiring Superiors, and whom the electors might wish to consider. Don

Bosco had prepared the list in order to make matters easier, while leaving everyone with full liberty to vote for anyone else who might be considered suitable.

The elections took place after 5:00 p.m. Before starting, Father Rua read the following letter from Don Bosco. Everyone listened with the greatest emotion:

My dear Father Rua,

Poor health alone prevents me from being at Nizza for the elections of the Superior General and the other Superiors. Therefore, I give you all the faculties you may need for this and for whatever other deliberation may be necessary for the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians. I have prayed and I will continue to pray that everything may succeed for the glory of God.

Take heart! God is with us. I shall wait for all of you in paradise, by the help of God and in His infinite mercy.

I repeat: take heart. The Lord has prepared great things for us. Let us do our utmost to carry them out. I am half blind and my health is deteriorating. Pray for me also who am always and in all things, in Jesus Christ,

Pinerolo, Villa Vescovile, August 8, 1886

Your affectionate friend and Father,

Father John BOSCO¹⁹

[p. 99] Father Rua then re-read and briefly commented on the letter of May 24, in which Don Bosco expressed his own thoughts on the choice of Superiors.

In the meantime, the retreatant Sisters had gathered in church for the second meditation and they followed this important hour with prayerful hearts. Not long afterwards, a round of applause from the hall announced that our beloved Mother General had been re-elected.

They could scarcely refrain from expressing their joy. As soon as possible, they went out into the playground to clap and voice their festive, "Long live Mother!"

The elections of the other four Superiors followed and they were all happily re-elected as follows: Mother Enrichetta Sorbone, Vicar; Mother Anna Tamietti, Bursar; Mother Emilia Mosca, First Assistant; and Mother Elisa Roncallo, Second Assistant.

Once the general excitement had been vented, everyone-Chapter members, retreatants and Sisters of the community-went into the church to fervently thank God with the solemn singing of the *Te Deum*.

That evening silence was dispensed even for the retreatants, so all could express their filial affection for Mother and the other re-elected Superiors.

The Chapter resumes its work

Father Rua returned to Turin the following day to give news of the happy re-elections to Don Bosco, while the Chapter resumed its work in the daily sessions.

Father Lasagna was present at the last two meetings. He had arrived in Turin from Uruguay on the feast of the Assumption, appearing on the scene unexpectedly to embrace Don Bosco during the solemn awards ceremony for the artisans and students.

He reached Nizza on Thursday, the 19th, and preached the afternoon instruction to the retreatants. As was to be expected he gave some very welcome news of America, [p. 100] stressing the need for a reinforcement of the personnel. He added that he had come to find Sisters willing to go back with him.

As might be imagined, the thought of going to the American missions stirred up a great deal of enthusiasm amid the fervor of the retreat.

Filial remembrances of Don Bosco

Not less fervent was the sharing of memories regarding our dear Father, Don Bosco, with the deep regret at not being able to have him present for the closing of the retreat, as in the previous year.

During the recreations, Chapter members as well as retreatants strove to outdo one another in relating personal incidents and memories.

Sister Orsolina Rinaldi, Superior of Borgomasino, related:

On my way to Turin with Sister Clotilde Buzzetti, we were able to see Don Bosco and receive his blessing. He welcomed us like a father and inquired about the government school where we were teaching, about the House and the health of the Sisters, encouraging us to work always for God's glory. After a few minutes he observed with a smile that Father Bonetti had appeared in the doorway, fearful lest we should tire him. Turning to him Don Bosco said, "Don't worry: I am not tired. Instead, I am very pleased. "

Meanwhile we had knelt to receive his blessing, which he extended to all the Sisters of our House.

Sister Josephine Allais told about Don Bosco 's journey through Alassio last March, on his way to France.

He stayed for two days [she said,] because he was too tired to go any further. However, he wanted to celebrate mass for the Sisters in the room we had prepared for the purpose. He came accompanied by his secretary, Father Viglietti, and Father Cerruti. He wished to distribute Holy [p. 101] Communion himself and since he was unable to move from the altar, we went to him and received the Sacred Host standing.

The novice, Sister Maria Chiadorana, who had just received the holy habit the previous February, wished to relate her story. She said:

A few months ago, while I was in Turin, Sister Morano took me with some sick Sisters to assist at Don Bosco's mass. He himself gave us Holy Communion. Then he said, "I know that some of you are suffering. But remember that we have the thorns in this world, and the roses in the next . . . Observe your Rules, for they are infallible . . ."

Teresa Febbraro, a postulant preparing to receive the habit, took courage and spoke:

Last January I went with four other prospective postulants to visit Don Bosco in his room to request his blessing before coming to Nizza. We took the opportunity of asking him for a souvenir and, after questioning each of us individually, he willingly granted the request. This is the souvenir: "Make every point of the Rule a souvenir of me. Work, work and do not expect a reward from creatures here below, because God's reward will be infinitely greater than what you deserve."

Special interest was shown regarding the incident related by the Superiors of Sicily, Sister Angelina Buzzetti of Nunziata di Mascali, Sister Brigida Prandi of Cesaro, and Sister Virginia Picolo of Trecastagni. It was a prodigious incident, news of which had already reached us.

During the fearful eruption of Mt. Etna the previous June, the town of Nicolosi-only ten kilometers from Trecastagni-was seriously threatened. Lava poured down the slope like a fiery torrent, covering pine forests, chestnut woods and cultivated land, scorching and destroying everything in its path. The terrified people were forced to evacuate their homes.

In face of such a calamity our Sisters of Trecastagni [p. 102] and Mascali wrote to Don Bosco, begging him to suggest some means of averting the danger. Don Bosco replied, telling them to scatter medals of Mary Help of Christians. In the meantime he sent his blessing and promised to pray.

The Sisters collected as many medals as they could and handed them to the parish priest of Nicolosi, who went up the mountain as far as he could, in order to scatter them. The scattered medals marked the limit of the lava's downward flow. It stopped at that point, even though it continued to flow from the crater above.

When the Sisters wrote to Don Bosco about the miraculous occurrence, the papers had already received news of it by a telegram couched in the following terms: "The lava has reached three hundred metres and remains suspended on the slope overhanging the town."

Even the *Gazzetta di Catania*, a paper known to be highly adverse to the Church, published news of the singular phenomenon, calling it by its true name of "miracle." ²⁰

New clothings and professions

The awareness of Don Bosco's sanctity and the wonderful power of our heavenly Mother, Mary Help of Christians, prepared us for the end of our retreat. This took place on Sunday, August, 22 a date which coincided with the end of the General Chapter.

Hence there was a solemn celebration during which seventeen postulants received the habit 'and thirty-four novices made their profession. Twenty-two Sisters renewed their triennial vows but there were no perpetual professions. This was because the Superiors had decided that from then on, unless there were exceptional circumstances, there should be two periods of triennial vows. It seemed that the Sisters were insufficiently

prepared after only three years of profession.

Nevertheless an exception was made immediately [p. 103] for Sister Marie Agnes Perrier. Mother had brought her back from St. Cyr on her return from France. The Sister was seriously ill and there was no hope of recovery. So, since she had but a short time to live, she was allowed the consolation of making the perpetual vows she so much desired.

During the day and especially at table the Sisters were able to give full scope to their filial affection, over and above what they had done in the preceding days, to celebrate adequately the re-election of our Mother General.

Father Lemoyne, who was always ready to use his poetic skill, composed some verses for the occasion.²¹ These were recited with great enthusiasm and expressed everybody's exultation.

Closing of the Second General Chapter

Although it had been stated that the Chapter had already ended, the document carrying the minutes of the closing was signed on the morning of the 23rd by all the members of the Chapter.²²

There had been twelve plenary sessions. The deliberations of the Salesian General Chapter had been read and approved, after being suitably reviewed and adapted according to what had been established at the preceding Chapter of 1884. Various themes regarding the development of our works, the interpretation of the Rules in order to ensure their exact observance, piety, common life and the increase of vocations, had all been studied. We were told that a proposal for a common prayer book, as everyone wished, had been put forward.

Everyone would be informed of the deliberations at a later date.

[p. 104] The retreat in Turin An unexpected visit from Don Bosco

The members of the Chapter returned to their various Houses and Mother also prepared to leave for Turin. She was going to preside over another retreat which was due to begin on the 24th. About a hundred Sisters were to take part in it and the preachers would be Father Bonetti and Father Lemoyne, as before.

The retreatants in Turin were more fortunate than we had been, because on Wednesday, September 1, when the retreat was ending, they had a short, unexpected, but none the less welcome, visit from Don Bosco.

At about 10:00 o'clock in the morning when our dear Father was passing our House in a carriage on his way from Valsalice to open the Salesian General Chapter, he decided to stop. He knew the retreat was to end with the profession of eleven novices and wished at least to bless the crucifixes since his infirmity did not permit him to distribute them himself at the altar.

All the Sisters, healthy and sick alike, gathered close to the chapel door where a seat was prepared for Don Bosco beneath the archway. Sister Annetta Barale told us that he was very stooped and as he moved he murmured under his breath, "*Oh schina... povre schina!... O back.. .poor back!*"²³

Turning to Mother he asked her what name people gave the Sisters. She answered, "Some call us 'Boschine,' others 'Salesians' and still others, 'Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.' " "Very good," said Don Bosco. "From now on tell them always to call you, 'Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.' "²⁴

He then said to Mother, "It is necessary to think now of going to Spain. You will find many obstacles when starting this foundation. But be firm and repeat that Don Bosco wishes you to go there. You will do great good in Spain. It will maintain the personnel for America and in time, the Houses will multiply exceedingly. . . Therefore

[p. 105] prepare the Sisters you are going to send, Sisters who are holy and robust . . . "²⁵

He blessed the crucifixes from where he was sitting outside and, after a few words to all he concluded with the wish, "May you be holy, wise and healthy!"

In order to prevent tiring him too much, only the sick Sisters were allowed to kiss his hand, but his blessing was given to all, and everyone was grateful to God for such a great gift at the end of the retreat. The solemn celebration continued with eleven professions, five renewals and the perpetual professions of two Sisters who were ill and without hope of recovery.

Fortunate meetings with Don Bosco

In his present condition of health, to see Don Bosco was certainly a privilege, and those Superiors who succeeded in doing this on their way to Turin after the Chapter, considered themselves to be very fortunate.

Among them was Sister Brigida Prandi who was very happy to inform us: "We went to Valsalice with Sister Virginia Piccono and Don Bosco was able to receive us in his room due to the special interest of Father Sala. He wished to give us this pleasure because he knew we were going back to Sicily.

We were only allowed five minutes and then the secretary, Father Viglietti, told us to leave because such was the doctor's orders. But it was sufficient for us. Our good Father asked us if we had many girls in Sicily, if there were good Co-operators and if there was much devotion to Mary Help of Christians, etc. He also gave us a medal he had blessed himself."

Sister Margaret Costanza²⁶ who had temporarily returned from Sicily was also able to see Don Bosco at Valsalice.

[p. 106] He was ill, [she reports,] but he received me with the smile of a good father for his affectionate daughter. He said, "So you are stationed in Sicily and are able to do some good there . . .

Continue, continue the good work!" Then giving me the book, *Relazioni e avventuri*,²⁷ he added, "Take it and see how much our missionaries have suffered! . . . Now kneel down and I will give you the blessing of Mary Help of Christians to take to all the Sisters in Sicily, to the girls and their relatives, as well as yours." He then dismissed me with the words, "Continue doing good, continue doing good!"

Before returning to France Sister Maria Sampietro, the Superior of Guines, also had the good fortune of seeing Don Bosco at Valsalice. She told us, "Our venerated Father gave me a picture on which was written, 'May the good God and the Virgin Help of Christians guide and bless you.'

He then gave me his blessing and asked me to take it to the Sisters in our House and to all the benefactors in the area. "

Mother General returns A departure for eternity

Our Mother also spoke of these greatly treasured visits to Don Bosco. She had remained in Turin for a week after the retreatant Sisters left for their respective Houses, and returned to us on Monday, September 9.

She related among other things:

On one occasion I went to Valsalice to speak to Don Bosco. When I had finished what I wanted to say it was striking mid-day and he said to me kindly,

"It is noon. Will you stay here for dinner?"

"Thank you, Father [said I]. I can easily go home."

"But you will be late and everything will be cold."

"Oh no, they are waiting for me and everything will be kept hot."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

[p. 107] "But remember to eat slowly and tell the Sisters this also. You are still young and you may not notice now, but later on your stomach will feel the effects, and will not digest easily and then your health will suffer. Tell them that Don Bosco blesses them all and that they must be good and strive to become still better."

Yes [added Mother] good always as was our dear Sister Catherine Robustelli. Much to my grief, I had to leave her in Turin at the gate of eternity. She has been professed scarcely a year and yet is so well prepared and tranquil, waiting with a smile on her lips to take her flight to heaven.

We soon heard that she had already taken her flight to heaven because the day after Mother left she fell peacefully asleep in the Lord.

Father Bonetti communicates the results of the elections to the Institute

Mother General brought us a circular letter from Turin bearing the date of Our Lady's birthday. It was from our Director General, Father Bonetti, and announced to all the Sisters of the Institute the results of the elections which had taken place on August 16.

We at Nizza had lived through this important hour but we were very happy to re-live it as we listened to what Father Bonetti had written.

Having announced the happy re-election, he urged us to lessen the weight of responsibility for Mother General and the other Superiors by our docile submission and ready obedience.

He wrote that we could now cease the special prayers ordered for the elections, and that the *Te Deum* should be recited or sung in all the Houses.

He briefly mentioned the various points discussed in the Chapter regarding the development and the works of the Institute and the exact observance of the holy Rule, adding that at the right time, once they had been approved [p. 108] by Don Bosco, the deliberations would be communicated to us.

He then reminded us of Sister Felicina Mazzarello who had passed to eternity on August 1. He described her briefly, presenting her as one of the foundation stones of the Institute not only because she happened to be among the first group in Mornese, but also because she had been one of the most observant and virtuous of the Sisters.

He ended by urging us to pray much for Don Bosco and to console him in his last years by living lives really worthy of holy religious.

At the foot of the page he noted some recommendations directed especially to the Superiors. They were arranged in seven points of a disciplinary character, regarding the health of the Sisters.²⁸

The first postulant from the Nizza Oratory

The feast of Our Lady's Sorrows was celebrated with great solemnity in the House, on the 19th. On that day we had the consolation of welcoming Julia Devecchi among us as a postulant. Daughter of the Nizza notary, she was the first among the oratorians to join us, fulfilling a prophecy of Don Bosco which came to our knowledge later.²⁹

She was received by Mother General who was already preparing to travel again. In fact, together with Mother Elisa, she left for France next day, September 20, in order to preside over the retreat at St. Cyr.

The retreat ended on the 27th with five professions, but Mother remained in France to visit the other Houses there.

Closing of the House at Biella

By order of Don Bosco our Sisters were withdrawn from the Seminary in Biella on October 1. They had given their services for ten years and enjoyed the esteem of the good [p. 109] Bishop Basil Leto. Later on however, the painful events which caused so much suffering to the Bishop, and forced him to leave the diocese,³⁰ created a difficult situation for the Sisters. They found it impossible to continue a work which was becoming heavier and more fraught with problems.

The new Bishop, Monsignor Cumino, had taken over in August and would have liked the Sisters to stay. He even wrote to Mother General asking her for this favor,³¹ but the Superiors thought it best for the Sisters to withdraw. After this first experience Don Bosco established that from then onwards, although still offering their services in Salesian Houses, they should not accept the same work in other seminaries.

Therefore the Sisters, already reduced in number, took their leave of the Bishop after asking him to bless them and the Superiors. The work was left in the hands of seculars who were to take over for the Sisters, who made their way to Borgo San Martino.

Sister Louise Ferrari and Sister Louise Molaschino remained in this House, while Sister Orsolina Dellavalle, the Superior, was called to Nizza by Mother Vicar,³² to await a new destination. She took with her from Biella a painting of Mary Help of Christians, commissioned for the Sisters by Monsignor Leto.³³ It now hangs in the auditorium used by the boarders as a study hall.

The Congregation expands

During the early days of October, Father John Branda, the Provincial of Spain, arrived. Don Bosco had sent him to give a few Spanish lessons to the Sisters who were soon to go back with him to Barcellona to start the first foundation in Spain.

The missionaries chosen for the next expedition to America also took advantage of the lessons.

During the same week, on Wednesday, October 6, [p. 110] our beloved Mother General returned from France. Great was the rejoicing at having her with us again, and seeing her in good health in spite of the fatigue of the journey. We thanked God sincerely for this grace.

As usual, Mother gave us news of the Houses she had visited. She brought us greetings from our Sisters in France, spoke of the amount of work being done everywhere, and of the way our Congregation was developing.

One might say it was almost the vigil of the departure for Spain, and Mother told us how insistent Don Bosco had been with Father Branda that the Sisters should go there, and that he should not go back without them.

Therefore, this must be a sign that Our Lady really wants us in Spain³⁴ in order to accomplish much good there.

She then changed to the subject of the next missionary expedition, and told us that in order to assist the missionaries, Don Bosco had arranged for a circular to be prepared, based on outlines he himself had drawn up. It announced the new expedition to America and spelled out the urgent needs of the moment.

This circular, translated into French, Spanish, English and German, was to be sent out, not only to all the Cooperators in Europe, but also to ministers and princes, and even to the Emperor of China and the Shah of Persia.

At least ten thousand addresses would have to be written and Don Bosco had asked the Sisters to help in this work.³⁵

Mother had already thought about choosing twelve . . . and she gave us the names. These Sisters were to go to Turin and offer their services immediately. They were well pleased with the work assigned to them, which might also give them the opportunity of seeing Don Bosco.

[p. 111] Our first Spanish foundation

On October 15, the feast of Saint Teresa, Father Branda, who was almost ready to take his leave, gave a conference to the Sisters destined for Spain and America.

Those going to Spain had completed their preparations and on Monday the 18th they set out on their journey. The group was formed of Sister Clare Giustiniani, Superior of the new Bouse, Sister Louise Giuliano, Sister Lucy Martinez, and Sister Cecilia Masserano, a novice who had just been clothed in August.

Mother General and Mother Elisa are accompanying them. First they will go to Turin to receive Don Bosco's blessing and then on to Alassio, where Father Branda will meet them the following day. They will then travel together to Marseilles and Barcellona. Our good wishes and prayers go with them.

Welcome news of the journey and happy arrival in Barcellona came quickly. We were told that following the itinerary, our travellers left Alassio on the 19th, accompanied by Father Branda. They proceeded to Marseilles and at the St. Cyr station, they found the Sisters and orphans lined up to greet Mother. They stayed in Marseilles over night and set out again on the 20th, breaking their journey the following morning at Narbonne. Here Father Branda celebrated mass and gave Holy Communion.

Boarding the train once more, they arrived in Barcellona by noon of that same Thursday, October 21.

At the station, they found a line of handsome carriages awaiting them. The worthy Lady Dorothy de Chopitea and a committee of ladies and gentlemen, benefactors of the Salesian works, had come to meet them. They gave Mother and the Sisters an enthusiastic welcome. Lady Dorothy wished Mother General, Mother Elisa and Father Branda

to travel in her carriage, while the Sisters boarded the other carriages for the trip to the Salesian Bouse at Sarria.

Here they were welcomed by the band and the applause [p. 112] of a double line of boys. The generous Lady Dorothy had ordered a good dinner which was served to all in the Salesians' dining room, amid the warm-hearted cordiality of the committee who overwhelmed the Sisters with kindness.

When they rose from table Lady Dorothy took them to see the vegetable garden and the vineyard, speaking to Mother in fluent French. She then went to chapel with them for the visit to the Blessed Sacramento. After this she led them across the road to the little house which her own son-in-law, Narciso Pascual, was lending them.

The good lady had also provided all that was necessary for supper and said that for the first month she would send her own maid each day with all that was needed for the kitchen.

She returned the following morning to accompany Mother General, Mother Elisa and Sister Giustiniani on a visit to the Bishop. He received them with fatherly goodness and invited them to return so that he could show them his artistic cathedral.

The news ended with much praise for the exquisite charity of this generous lady and noted that the very cordial welcome that the Sisters received everywhere was due to our dear Father Don Bosco who had drawn all Barcellona to himself during his April visit.

Another loss in Turin

Far different was the news that reached us from Turin where, on Sunday, October 24, Mary Help of Christians had gone to take our dear Sister Julia Gariglio. She had fallen ill with pneumonia, which was not diagnosed in time, possibly because of the spirit of sacrifice with which she made little of the indisposition she suffered.

She left us with memories of her patient, affable goodness in fulfilling her duties as portress and of her piety, [p. 113] revealed by her habitually recollected and prayerful appearance even on her death bed.

Three more professions in Sicily

We heard from Sicily that there had been a spiritual retreat from the 21st to the 29th of this month. It had closed with the profession of three novices, Sister Emilia Leone, Sister Venera Maranice and Sister Maria Catena Rosta.

These new professions which were followed by others during the year, reached the round number of sixty. This brought to our minds with a certain degree of comfort a few words Father Bonetti had let drop: "Don Bosco wishes that the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians should greatly increase, because he has been advised of this *ex alto*."³⁶

The transfer of our Director

On the same day we wished God-speed to our Director, Father Louis Bussi, whom Don Bosco is sending as pastor to Sampierdarena. Grateful for all the good received from him during these years we accompany him with our prayers. May the Lord sustain and help him with His grace in this new mission.

All Saints Day came and went and on Thursday, November 4, Father Clement Bretto arrived to replace him. Father Bretto had been scholastic counsellor at Alassio and was the brother of our lamented Sister Josephine. As he set foot in this House, he thought of her with deep emotion.

We received him as one sent by God to be the father, teacher and guide of our souls.

[p. 114] Mother returns from Spain

Mother General and Mother Elisa also arrived during that week. They had been awaited with impatience and were greeted with great enthusiasm.

How many things they had to tell us about the festive welcomes they had received! When the good Bishop of Barcellona, Monsignor Jaime Catala y Albosa, met them for the first time, he invited them to return after 9:00 a.m. the following Sunday in order to be conducted around the rich, ancient cathedral with all its wonderful art treasures. He took them to see the construction work being done on the new facade and led them up the scaffolding on to the platform as far as the great central window. Here he stopped for them to admire the statues and the bas-relief of the rich ornamentation.³⁷

Mother said that they were overcome by so much kindness and could not find words to thank him adequately.

The generous and attentive Lady Dorothy was constantly with them during those days. She took them out visiting and introduced them to outstanding Salesian benefactors. She was also anxious for the Sisters to see the beauties of the city and even took them to see a splendid mansion, surrounded by gardens set in an extensive parkland, the home of a number of different animals. She also took them in a carriage drawn by four horses, such as is used by the nobility, to the top of *Tibi Dabo*, the high mountain presented to Don Bosco the previous April. Mother General and Mother Elisa described the beauty of the elevation which looked down on an enchanting panorama embracing the whole of Barcellona, with the sea stretching as far as eye could see.

A small chapel dedicated to the Sacred Heart is already there, but Don Bosco wishes to build a great sanctuary.

He himself had said this when he accepted the gift of the mountain. Overcome with emotion he told how, when about to start his journey to Spain, he had in mind to [p. 115] build another church dedicated to the Sacred Heart when the one in Rome was completed. At that moment he heard repeatedly in his heart the words, "Tibi dabo, tibi dabo!"

Both Mother General and Mother Elisa spoke of the attentive goodness of the Salesians. Even in Spain they had proved themselves to be real brothers, and often went to see if the Sisters needed anything, offering help whenever necessary.

On All Saints Day they also arranged for the Blessed Sacrament to be reserved in the Sisters' little chapel. Their stay in the little rented house close to Signor Pascual's villa was likely to be prolonged since their

permanent dwelling was not yet ready. On the following day, dedicated to the Holy Souls, three masses were celebrated in the little chapel, as is done customarily by every priest in Spain on that day .³⁹

In the afternoon Mother had again spoken to the Sisters individually, as she was preparing to leave them. Mother Elisa told us that Sister Clare even fell on her knees and pleaded with Mother General to stay a little longer. But they had to go and the Sisters were left weeping at the feet of Jesus in the Tabernacle.

The ever good and courteous Lady Dorothy took Mother General and Mother Elisa to the station in her carriage. She bought them first class tickets to Marseilles and even provided them with a lunch for the journey.

Mother never tired of telling us about this good lady who was well known all over Barcellona for her charity and yet was so humble and simple that everyone felt at ease with her. She told us that Lady Dorothy so understood and admired Don Bosco's sanctity that she kept everything he had used while staying with her during the previous April as relics.

"We have a great deal to learn from this good lady," Mother concluded, "and we must pray very much for her, for she is very generous towards Don Bosco's works!"

[p. 116] The first French Daughter of Mary Help of Christians to go to heaven

On November 8, a few days after Mother's return, our Sister Marie Agnes Perrier took her flight to heaven. It seemed as if she had wanted to wait for Mother so she would not have to leave without a final greeting.

Sister Marie was the first French Sister to enter the Institute; in fact, she was sent among us by Our Lady with a miracle. She was the niece of a Superior of the Visitation Order, who presented her to Don Bosco during one of his journeys through France. He was asked to bless her as she was suffering from paralysis, the result of a painful illness she had undergone as a child.

Our good Father blessed her and said that Our Lady would cure her on condition that she become a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. The miracle took place, but because the aunt was sorry to part with her dear niece, many years passed and the promise was not fulfilled.

Finally the young lady relapsed into her former illness. When Don Bosco next visited France she was once more presented to him, and he reminded her of the pact she had made with the Blessed Virgin.

Cured for the second time, Marie Agnes lost no time in leaving for Italy, coming to Nizza to begin her religious life. She proved herself worthy of Our Lady's predilection by her exact observance, gentle charity and tender, filial devotion to Mary Help of Christians.

These virtues were well tried in the years she spent working among her dear orphans of St. Cyr, as well as in her painful sufferings. These she accepted with extraordinary resignation, and bore with a smile on her lips, in trustful expectation of heaven.

[p. 117] Sister Catherine Raglia's life ends in Turin

The month ended with another departure for eternity. In Turin, on November 30, our humble, self-sacrificing Sister Catherine Raglia peacefully expired, thanking God for having called her to the religious life. The fear of death which had previously made her so apprehensive, changed during her last days into such an eager yearning for paradise that it encouraged and consoled the hearts of those who assisted her.

The new missionaries leave Nizza

For some time in the House busy preparations had been in progress for the departure of the six new missionaries for America. These fortunate Sisters were: Sisters Josephine Tinti, Caroline Manfredi, Caroline Gamba, Attilia Roma, Madalene Antonia Hellstern, and Teresa Giussani. There was general emotion as they left us for Turin on the morning of Thursday, December 2, to take part in a farewell service that same afternoon in the sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians.

Mother General went with them. Since her return from Spain she had already visited the Houses of Borgo Cornalese, Lenta and others, and had only returned to Nizza for the final preparations for departure.

She entrusted to the missionaries a lovely affectionate letter she had written to the Sisters of America during those days. It was dated November 25, the feast of Saint Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr. Thinking that they would receive it during the Christmas season, Mother included the spiritual *Strenna* based on three points: Recollection, charity, prudence.

Recollection, in order to maintain ourselves in constant union with God and conformed to His adorable will; charity, or fervent love for God and neighbour; prudence in word, **[p. 118]** action and manner, so that even in our demeanor we may show ourselves to be worthy of the title of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.⁴⁰

We soon received news from Turin about our travellers, particularly the solemn farewell ceremony.

Long before the appointed time the church of Mary Help of Christians was so filled with people that the missionary Sisters were unable to reach the places reserved for them near the altar rail and were constrained to assist from the choir.

Don Bosco was present at the *cornu epistolae* of the sanctuary, seated between Monsignor Manacorda (Bishop of Possano) and Monsignor Leto. The Provincial, Father Lasagna, preached. He was leader of the large, new expedition, consisting of five priests, eighteen clerics, three coadjutor Brothers and six Sisters.

In words burning with apostolic zeal, he spoke of the Salesian missionary work. He included interesting news and episodes from the various missions, stressing in particular the need for the projected work in Brazil.

After imparting benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, Cardinal Archbishop Alimonda warmly and earnestly congratulated Don Bosco and his generous missionaries and invited everyone to pray for the coming of God's kingdom, both in pagan lands and in our civilized countries.

There was an extremely moving scene at the end of the ceremony, as the missionary priests and Brothers advanced one by one to be embraced by Don Bosco. So moved was he that he was scarcely able to stand, and he returned to the sacristy, supported on either side by Monsignor Manacorda and Monsignor Leto.

Meanwhile, people pressed forward to bid farewell to the missionaries, and to kiss the hands of the priests, while [p. 119] the women thronged around the Sisters with many demonstrations of esteem.⁴¹

Our missionaries stayed in Turin for over a week, and had the consolation of being received by Don Bosco. He listened to them kindly, and then spoke to them for about half an hour, giving wise advice on how to behave during their long voyage. With fatherly forethought he dispensed them from observing fasts and vigils. There would be quite a number of these, as the journey was taking place in Advent.⁴²

Sister Caroline Manfredi, bolder than the others, had gone to kneel close to Don Bosco's chair, from which he was unable to move because of his badly swollen legs. Our good Father asked her name and, seeing in her eyes the filial compassion she felt for him because of his pitiable state, he placed his hand on her head and blessed her. Then taking her rosary in his hand he wrapped it time and time again round his left wrist before blessing it and handing it back to her. With it he gave her other rosaries and scapulars of the Sacred Heart for her missionary companions.

On the feast of the Immaculate Conception, just a few hours before leaving, Sister Teresa Guissani, the only novice in the group, had the joy of making her profession. The ceremony took place in our own chapel in the presence of Father Lasagna. That same evening, accompanied by Mother General, the missionaries left for Marseilles. This time they took the Modane route to avoid having to change at Alassio, and also because cholera was still raging in the Liguria region.

Our Lady Immaculate takes Sister Baggioli with her

We received news that on December 8, Our Lady Immaculate had called our dear Sister Teresa Baggioli [p. 120] to herself in paradise. This Sister had been professed for scarcely three months. She had made her vows with Don Bosco's blessing on September 1 in Turin.

She expired peacefully in her family home at Molteno (Como), sanctified by the sufferings of the painful illness which had cut short her young life.

After the missionaries embarked

Mother General returned from Marseilles at the beginning of the Christmas novena. She brought us the news of the departure of the missionaries for which we had been anxiously waiting.

First she told us of the consolation everyone felt at the Holy Father's pleasure in this expedition. In fact, during the audience granted to Father Lasagna on November 11 he had said, "Announce it for the honor of Turin and the glory of the Salesian Congregation: this event fills our hearts with contentment and hope. We hope for great things for the Church and for humanity from the Salesian Institute."

Father Lasagna had often repeated these words to encourage both those who were leaving and those who were staying.

A repetition of the farewell ceremony had taken place in the chapel of the San Leon Oratory at Marseilles. It had been attended by the bishop and a large number of Cooperators and benefactors.

On the following day, Tuesday the 14th, the travellers went on board the *Tibet* which raised its anchor at 6:00 p.m. Mother had gone on board with her missionaries who clung to her as if they could not let her go. She had to make an effort not to be overcome by emotion as the last goodbyes were said, and hurried away just as the boom of the canon gave the signal for the ship's departure.

"Poor Sisters," Mother concluded, "they will be on the high seas for Christmas. Let us remember them and pray very much for them."

[p. 121] Monsignor Cagliero asks for prayers

While speaking of the missions Mother asked us to pray for Monsignor Cagliero, and she read again the last letter he had written from Patagones on the previous November 10.

He complained that he had not received news from us for four months, perhaps-he said-because our letters had been "lost in the fog." Then he added,

. . . I am about to start on a long, special and perhaps dangerous mission, right across the desert from the sea to the Cordilleras.

I hope to be able to cover the distance in four or five days and arrive in Chile where we plan to open Salesian Houses.

A tribe of 1700 Indians are waiting there for me to baptize them. Father Fagnano is about to leave for Tierra del Fuego where he is to search for unknown tribes. This mission is a dangerous one and will take four or five months. Four other missionaries are in missions, and two are crossing the desert with me.

As you see, we need prayers, and many prayers and Communion in order to save ourselves and our Indians.

Pray, pray! Love prayer, love work, love mortification . . . *Omnia vincit amor*: the love of God makes everything easy.

The Sisters here are fairly well. They work very much for themselves and for others, and they are really striving to become saints.

They have done very much to help me obtain about a thousand communions during the single month of October!

I shall be in Buenos Aires in March if I have completed my mission ...⁴³

A Christmas of fervor and sorrow

After the daily preparatory sermons of the novena, preached by our new Director, Father Bretto, we reached [p. 122] the Christmas vigil.

In the evening, as in former years, the community gathered in the hall with the boarders for an entertainment in honor of the Infant Jesus. Christmas wishes were extended to the Director, Mother General and all the Superiors.

Five boarders made their First Holy Communion during the solemn midnight mass, increasing the fervor of the great solemnity.

However, Christmas Day in our House was overshadowed with sadness. Our dear Sister Teresa Stalla was at the point of death. She had been ill for some time and had patiently borne great pain, preserving a constant smile on her lips, and keeping her spirit continually united with God.

She died during the day, in the bloom of her twenty-five years. She left the edifying memory of a spirit of observance, a humble dependence, and especially an attentive, delicate charity which led her to find something good to be praised in everyone.

Father Rua arrives

This death helped to engrave on our minds the brevity of life and the rapidity of time, as the year was drawing to its close.

Father Rua, the worthy vicar of our venerated Superior and Father, Don Bosco, arrived from Turin on the last day of the year.

He conveyed Don Bosco's greetings and blessing in his fatherly Good Night, which was rich in family news and in holy thoughts inspired by profound gratitude to the Lord for the innumerable graces received in the course

of the year.

[p. 123]

NOTES

1886

1. The six years in office established by the Rule were reckoned from August 29, 1880, when all the Superiors had been elected. The election of August 12, 1881, after the death of Mother Mazzarello, was for the replacement of the Mother General only.

2. Father Bonetti 's letter to Mother Daghero, dated December 28, 1885, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

3. Cf. M.B., XVIII, 16.

4. Mother General's Introduction to the General Directory of the Institute, 1886.

5. Appendix No. 3, and M.B., XVIII, 66-117.

6. Cf. M.B., XVIII, 205-226.

7. Father Bologna's letter written to Father Bonetti in French from Lille, April 21, 1886, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

8. Report of Sisters Anna Pavese and Colombina Canevaro.

9. Report of Sister Louise Desirello. Don Bosco's allusion is to the already recorded miracle of sight regained (see page 66, 1115.)

10. Report of Sister Teresa Barale relating to the incident of Signora Elisa Blanch which is noted in M.B., XVIII, 61.

11. Report of Sister Madalene Suppo and Sister Cristina Rossi.

12. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

13. M.B., XVIII, 151, 674.

14. Father Bonetti's memorial in Appendix No. 5.

15. Monsignor Cagliari's letter to Mother Daghero from Patagonia in June, 1886. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

16. Letter to Monsignor Cagliari, dated May 12, 1886, in Sales. Arch. M.B., XVIII, 678.

17. Minutes of Second General Chapter in Gen. Arch. FMA.

18. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

19. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

20. The fact is related in M.B., XVIII, 153; however, those who wrote to Don Bosco were not the Sisters of Catania and Agira because, at that time, after the closing of the "Caraci" orphanage, there was no other House either in Catania or Agira, since the foundation proposed in 1881 had not been accepted.

21. Appendix No. 4.

22. Minutes of the Second General Chapter in Gen. Arch. FMA.

23. The beginning of a popular Piedmontese song: "Oh schina, povra schina. T'las fini d'porte bas-cina" (Oh back, poor back, you have finished to carry burdens).

24. Report of Sister Carolina Gamba who was professed on that day.

25. Report of Mother Catherine Daghero, and Sister Louise Ruffino who made her profession on that day.

26. Sister of the young novice Sister Maria, who died at home last year.

27. *Relazioni e avventuri* by Father Dominic Milanese, a Salesian missionary in Patagonia from 1880 to 1885.

28. Appendix No. 5.

29. Many years later Sister Devecchi made this report in writing, as well as the one referred to in the footnote on page 69, *fl41*. "On October 27, 1873, when I was six years and three months old, I had the happiness of being confirmed and of making my First Communion. On that day the Venerable Don Bosco was at dinner in the parish house at Nizza Monferrato, with the Vicar, Father Bisio and the bishop. Hearing my name mentioned, he asked to see me. Filled with happiness, I was taken into his presence. He placed his hand on my head and declared, "This child will be a Daughter of Mary Help of Christians. "

I was accepted by Mother Catherine Daghero on September 19, 1886 and became a postulant at Nizza Monferrato. Don Bosco's prophecy had been fulfilled."

30. M.B., XVII, 546.551.

[p. 125] 31. Letter of Monsignor Dominic Cumino to Mother Daghero, dated August 16, 1886, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

32. Letter of Sister Superior Orsolina Dellavalle to Father Cagliero (Nizza, October 5, 1886) in Gen. Arch. FMA.

33. *Cronistoria*, II, 218.

34. Father Branda testified regarding the supernatural intervention of Our Lady in our first Spanish foundation. See Appendix No. 6 and also M.B., XVIII, 109.

35. M.B., XVIII, 210-211, 706.

36. Father Bonetti's letter to Monsignor Cagliero, dated August 26, 1886 in Sales. Arch; M.B., XVIII, 167.

37. At that time-according to Father Branda in one of his memories which is now preserved in the Gen. Arch. FMA-the new facade of the ancient Gothic cathedral was being constructed. It was already several centuries old, having been built in 1298.

38. *Salesian Bulletin*, July, 1886, Year X, No. 7, 77-78; M.B., XVIII, 112-114.

39. The privilege of three masses, at that time limited to Spain and Portugal, was extended to the whole Church by Benedict XV, during the First World War (Decree of August 10, 1915).

40. Appendix No. 7.

41. *Salesian Bulletin*, January, 1887, Vol. XI, No. 1, 7-9.

42. Report of Sister Teresa Giussani.

43. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

1887

A New Year and new clothings

Don Bosco says that whatever is started in the name of Mary is sure to be blessed by her. The New Year, which begins on a Saturday, will then carry her blessing.

Father Rua's presence among us added solemnity to the day's celebrations, and this was already a gift from Our Lady. After the singing of Vespers, Father Rua preached a beautiful sermon for the occasion. He made particular reference to the clothing ceremony due to take place next day. There followed the renewal of baptismal promises before the Blessed Sacrament and benediction.

At the Good Night, according to custom, each one drew a saint to be her protector for the year.

The following day, Sunday, opened with the community mass celebrated by Father Rua. He prepared us in glowing words for our Holy Communion.

At 9:30 a.m. this good Superior presided over the ever beautiful ceremony of religious clothing. He spoke again, congratulating the twelve postulants who had been granted the religious habit, and also their parents who had given their daughters to God. Among the new novices was Clementina, the third of Don Bosco's grandnieces.

[p. 128] The "strenna" of the Infant Jesus and of Mother General

Together with its solemn religious ceremonies, the feast of the Epiphany brought us an evening greeting from the Infant Jesus who left us His "strenna" before fleeing to Egypt.

This year the folded paper in His holy little hands bore the following message:

"The gold of blind, generous, ready obedience; the incense of a devout, continuous prayer of faith; the myrrh of a sound spirit of sacrifice."

After the Director's comment, Mother Vicar added with all the enthusiasm of her fervor, "This is the real essence of perfection! Oh, if only we can offer these precious gifts to our dear Jesus at the end of 1887!"

Mother General also gave us her "strenna" for the New Year, included as usual in her circular letter.

It is based on the virtue of patience, which is to be practiced with ourselves, our Sisters, the young in our care, and with everyone.

Patience with ourselves, by not giving way to discouragement at seeing ourselves so devoid of virtue and burdened with so many shortcomings. We should rather be generously resolute in combatting our defects and with God's grace, correct them.

Patience with our Sisters, by accepting all the daily opportunities God sends us to practice this virtue and acquire merit.

Patience with the young girls who come to our Houses by bearing with ignorance, indifference and with "difficult and impetuous characters." Let us remember that the seed sown with so much labor now will certainly germinate later through God's grace; and if not here below, we shall harvest its fruit in eternity.

Finally, patience with everyone and everything. In humiliations, failures, sickness and adversity let us remember that to reach heaven we must walk the path of suffering.¹

First news of the missionaries' journey

A telegram sent to Don Bosco by Father Lasagna informed us that the missionaries had arrived safely in Montevideo on January 8.

Towards the end of the month we received the first news about the voyage. It had certainly been far from pleasant, especially on the 19th and the 20th of December, when a terrible storm had broken out.² Our Sisters' cabin had been inundated with water, and the poor missionaries were soaked. Hence, there was special reason for thanking God and Mary Help of Christians that they had arrived safely after the dangers encountered on the crossing.

The General Directory for 1887

Mother wrote in her introduction that the new directory would show us the expansion of the Institute, and the amount of good that was being done, with God's help, in many parts of Europe and America.

"Let us then thank God from the bottom of our hearts," she wrote. "Let us do our utmost that Mary's Congregation may grow daily in the spirit of abnegation and sacrifice, in zeal for God's glory, and in dedication to the eternal salvation of others. "

Then, in Don Bosco's name, Mother announced that we would receive a copy of the Salesian deliberations adapted to our Institute and approved in the last Chapter. She urged us to read them attentively and put them into practice, as an aid to observing the holy Rule, which they served to explain.

She also told us that by order of Don Bosco and his vicar Father Rua, Father Bonetti would continue to have [p. 130] the general direction of our Institute, even though he had been elected spiritual director of the Salesians at their last Chapter.

Mother concluded by inviting us to keep united in the holy bond of charity, and to pray for "the preservation of the precious life of our venerated Father Don Bosco, for the prosperity of our missions, for all the works entrusted to us by Divine Providence, and for our dear deceased Sisters."

The deliberations of the Second General Chapter

As Mother had announced, the expected *Deliberations of General Chapter II* arrived and everyone received a copy.

They were compiled in a beautiful little volume of about a hundred pages, subdivided into five parts: Special Regulations-Common Life-Morality and Piety-Studies Economy.

The book was prefaced by a beautiful letter from Don Bosco. Before distributing the copies, Mother read it, urging us to keep this letter in mind in order to practice the earnest recommendations it contained.

Beloved Daughters in Jesus Christ,

Thanks to the assistance of Divine Providence, the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians has already been able to hold two General Chapters, with a certain amount of solemnity. The first took place in 1884 and the second in 1886. In the first Chapter it was decided, among other things, to adopt the wise deliberations which had already come from the Salesian General Chapters, and the task was undertaken of reviewing and adapting them to the needs of the Sisters. These deliberations were read and approved in the Second General Chapter.

I now present them to you, collected and arranged in this book. Its special aim is to explain in detail the offices of the various members of the Superior Chapter which are only noted briefly in the Constitutions.

Thus, every Sister, especially every Superior, will know to whom she should turn [p. 131] in the various needs which might occur.

The development of your Institute and the spiritual advancement of its members depend in great part on the observance of the Constitutions and of these deliberations, which are their practical application. Therefore, while I recommend the study and practice of the Constitutions earnestly, I recommend this Book of Deliberations to every Sister no less earnestly, in order that she may practice it to her own spiritual advantage and that of the community.

The Superiors will find it a manual for guidance in their administration and a support for their authority. It should be their care not only to study it for their own benefit, but also use it in conferences, developing to a greater extent any points needing emphasis.

The expansion of your Congregation in Europe and America is a sure indication that God is blessing you in a special way. Therefore, let each Sister make every effort to become more worthy of God's grace by her spirit of prayer, obedience and sacrifice. This will be obtained by the exact observance of your Constitutions and of these deliberations.

May the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ render you ever more constant in the practice of virtue, and comfort you in the divine service on earth, so that one day, you may merit the immense glory God has promised to His faithful Spouses in heaven.

May God bless you, my beloved Daughters in Jesus Christ and, since I am drawing ever closer to the end of my days, have the goodness to pray for me also, who will always be

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,

Father John Bosco

An earthquake in Liguria

As in former years, Mardi Gras passed peacefully, with customary entertainments in the hall and, during the last days, the Forty Hours of reparation. With the start of Lent on Ash Wednesday, February 23 there came a terrifying earthquake. This event made us meditate deeply on the serious admonition proper to the day: *Memento homo quia [p. 132] pulvis es, et in pullverem reverteris.* "

The strong tremor surprised us in the early morning and was felt most by the few who were already in church. Here a light was smashed and the statue of Mary Help of Christians rocked so much that it seemed as if it would fall.

The shock was also strongly felt in Turin.³ We were told that the Oratory boys, who were rising at the time, raced down to the playground. The people who were in the Church of Mary Help of Christians ran outside in terror. Many of the panic stricken raised their arms towards the statue of Our Lady on the cupola, imploring her aid . . . Don Bosco alone remained calm, and he said jokingly to Father Viglietti, who had hurried to see if he were afraid, "It is only an involuntary dance. I was about to get up, and as I waited for the swaying to stop I felt my shoulders getting cold, so I lay down again."

The region most severely hit was Liguria, where there was great destruction and thousands of victims. Through the special protection of Mary Help of Christians, the Salesians, the Sisters and all their pupils in the various Houses of the western riviera were unharmed. However, there was enormous damage done, especially in Bordighera.

The frightening shock, which brought whole buildings crashing down, was followed at about 6:00 o'clock in the morning, just after the Angelus had rung, by another one, even more devastating. There were ten Sisters in the House and twenty-one children still in bed. After a great struggle the Sisters managed to get them to safety. The children sleeping on the top floor had been in grave danger because the last flight of stairs had collapsed, the vaulting had fallen and the walls were crushed, while windows and doors had been forced out.

The children had also run the risk of being imprisoned in their dormitory, because they were scarcely out when a huge cupboard fell across the doorway, completely blocking the exit.

[p. 133] They all gathered in the playground terrified and screaming while all around them bricks, plaster and panes of glass hurtled down.

The church, too, was badly damaged. The statue of Mary Help of Christians had fallen and its head was broken to pieces. The bell tower had crashed and part of it seemed to have twisted round on itself.

The disaster was immediately reported to Don Bosco who replied by telegram, "I urge you to keep calm-keep up your courage and pray-I shall be writing."

Since it was impossible to live in the ruined house, the carpenter Scavini, using wood and awning, made two huts. In twenty-four hours, one was ready for the Salesians and the other for the Sisters and their resident

students.

The Sisters of Alassio also had to camp in the garden because their house had been damaged. The facade of their school chapel had been damaged as well.

Our refugees arrive from Bordighera

In the evening of Tuesday, March 1, four Sisters arrived from Bordighera. Among them were the Superior, Sister Rosalia Pestarino and the novice Sister Teresa Pentore. They brought eight girls with them who, because of the distance, had not been able to return to their homes, as the others had done.⁴

The journey had gone well but they were all in a bad state of shock. The Mothers did everything possible to prevent any ill effects to their health.

The other Sisters of the Bordighera community had remained at their posts camping out as best as they could, in order to avoid leaving an open field to the Protestants. They also cooked for the Salesians, wishing to help them at least in this way. However Mother was worried, because of the risk of falling ill from exposure.

Buzzetti, the master builder, had already taken out the stairs and removed the dangerous vaulting. But, no matter [p. 134] how hard Don Bosco tried to accelerate the repair work fearing that the interruption of the Sisters' work would prove advantageous to the Protestants-it would be some time before the house would be ready for habitation.

Our new arrivals told us that Don Bosco, always lavish in his charity, had written to the bishops of Savona, Albenga and Ventimiglia, offering to accept gratuitously at the Oratory, or any other of his Houses, four abandoned boys from each diocese.

He then sent the Salesians a circular letter [we too were informed of it]. After giving details of the disaster he writes,

. . . I invite you first of all to thank God and the Blessed Virgin Help of Christians for sparing us the loss of human life, in spite of the fact that a number of our Houses are in the areas worst hit. To this end I invite every Director to fix a suitable day on which to address the confreres and recite the third part of the rosary in suffrage for the souls of those who died under the debris of the fallen houses. In the evening, the *Te Deum* is to be sung and benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will be imparted.

Meanwhile we have suffered a great deal of material damage. The ruined Houses at Bordighera will have to be completely rebuilt. So we must all try to keep expenses down in the individual Houses, in order to be able to cover this unexpected need.

Furthermore, there has been so much serious damage done to property that public charity will have to provide for the rebuilding of houses, for sheltering the poor, and maintaining orphans. This means that our benefactors will no longer find themselves in a position to give us all the help we need.

For this reason, I suggest that this year there should be no new building programs, no improvements and no acquisitions that are not strictly necessary. Let each and everyone of the confreres consider how he can best make the sacrifices and accept the privations called for, and see how to avoid expenses for journeys, books, clothing and every other possible item, both in the House and outside. The results of this effort will help us to repair the damage done, at least partially to rebuilt demolished houses, and take up the interrupted works of religion and charity that redound so highly to the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Take care also to profit by this sad event to explain our straitened circumstances to any benefactors you contact, in a manner that will stimulate their charity. A simple ac. count of the event could inspire the best proposals.

Make sure you urge the pupils to be good, devoted to Our Lady and to live in God's grace. They will then merit their protection always and everywhere, especially in sudden and unexpected dangers, such as this earthquake which claimed thousands of victims in an instant.

Try, on the one hand to get the children to understand that such scourges could be a sign of God's displeasure, which in His mercy He will bring to an end as the Church explains: *Ut mortalium corda cognoscant et te indignante talia flagella prodire, et te miserante cessare*. On the other hand, however, do not neglect to excite everyone to great trust in God, who holds the entire world in His omnipotent hands and has given us the assurance that not a hair of our heads falls to the ground without His permission: *et capellas de capite vestro non peribit* . . .

Don Bosco also wrote a circular letter to the Cooperators. It bore the same date-March 1- and informed them of the damage caused by the earthquake, while asking them for the help of their charity.⁵

During the first three days of March when the month of dear Saint Joseph was just beginning, our boarders gathered in silence for their spiritual retreat, preached by Father Francesia. The eight boarders from Bordighera took the opportunity of listening to some of the sermons.

The week ended on Saturday the 5th with the end of term examinations, presided over by Father Francesia. He declared himself very pleased with the outcome.

[p. 136] Monsignor Cagliero inspires us with his missionary fervor

The following letter arrived from Monsignor Cagliero at an opportune moment, and the consoling missionary news it contained was shared with the pupils. It helped to strengthen the resolutions they had made during their retreat.

Roca-Rio Negro, January 18, 1887

... Although I am a long distance away from you, a very long distance indeed, I pay you a daily visit and wish that you may all become saints, as I recommend you to our dearest Mother saying, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro eis.*

I feel sure that you have also prayed, and still pray for us, because our mission is producing great fruit. We have been able to instruct and baptize nine hundred Indians. Add to this the four hundred children baptized last year, and the number of new Christians in the lap of Holy Mother Church has reached one thousand three hundred.

We lived among the Indians for two months, in huts made of poles and leafy branches, and we were always cheerful, happy and in good health. The boys and girls wear a medal around their necks and can say the rosary on their own.

They have learned from us how to dress with greater modesty and not to disfigure their faces with red, green, black and blue paint.

They bring us little boys and girls to baptize dressed like Adam and Eve, so we despoiled ourselves to cover them.

Oh, what great blessings your school girls have received from God! They are well dressed, well nourished, well instructed, and have every attention given them. It will be all the worse for them if they are not good because these poor Indians will go to heaven while they are outside, knocking in the cold and the fire!

How many adults we have come to know who, even if they are brown in color and uncouth in their manners, still have beautiful, simple hearts! What a number of them, after having made their First Communion, insist on receiving [p. 137] the Food of Angels a second and even a third time! What a number there are who, if they were in Europe, would consecrate themselves to Jesus in the religious life!

If only the Sisters could penetrate this desert, what a lot of good they would do! Every day I have a class of two hundred and more Indians. They sit on the ground bare footed and with their hair hanging loose. Their arms are bare and they cover themselves with a piece of material like a sheet. Yet in their own simple way they are very modest and reserved, as they let each other know when one of them has, by mistake or in trying to accommodate herself, become inadvertently uncovered.

Oh may the Blessed Virgin cover them with her mantle and defend them from the malice of civilized countries.

Pray for them, for us and for yourselves that God's will may be done always and in everything, through the Superiors who are His representatives.

Fervor, sacrifice, humility, charity and great activity!

I send you my good wishes and bless you all in the Lord, in the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!⁶

May Monsignor's blessing confirm in us and in our pupils the firm will for goodness which his ardent words inspire and nourish within us.

Still encamped in the open air at Alassio

The feast of Saint Joseph brought a note of solemnity and spiritual joy as the customary celebrations were held in his honor. However the feast was overshadowed by the persistent thought of our Sisters in Liguria. Tremors are continuing and, although they are not so severe, there is still general suspense.

The Sisters of Alassio are still sleeping in the garden because of the extensive repairs to their house. They have had to use strong iron pins to lock the damaged parts together. It is hoped that the work will soon be

completed, and that the Sisters may soon be able to enter the House again.

[p. 138] Meanwhile the prayers ordered by Don Bosco continue.

We also need to pray for our sick Sisters. Quite a number of them are in the infirmary and Mother Elisa, who has been confined to bed for a month, is only just beginning to get up for a few hours.

Our Director, Father Bretto, has also been unwell for some time.

Another reminder of death

Everyone spent the month of Saint Joseph in great recollection and fervor. But before it ended, news reached us that Sister Madalene Chicco had breathed her last at her family home at Vallongo (Turin), on the 23rd. The reminder of death was again before us. Sister Madalene was a good, pious novice, just 20 years of age. She had been obliged to return home for health reasons but her condition became steadily worse.

As her end approached the fervent novice was allowed to take her religious vows and three days afterwards the gates of heaven opened for her in the consolation of total consecration to God.

The death of Countess Corsi Mother starts her travels again

The month of April opened in Holy Week, with the resolution to spend it in devout recollection in union with the passion of Our Lord and the sorrows of Mary Most Holy, as preparation for the feast of Easter.

Just during these days, on Holy Thursday (April 8) God called to Himself our great benefactress, the Countess Gabriella Corsi, whom Don Bosco used to call his "good Mama." We offered fervent suffrages for her in [p. 139] heartfelt gratitude, that God might hasten the moment for rewarding her great charity.⁷

Easter Sunday was on the 10th, of April this year and immediately afterwards Mother started on her travels again to complete her annual visitation of the Houses of Monferrato. She had begun this visitation in February with the Houses of Lu and Quargneto.

Meanwhile we started preparations for her feastday with an enthusiastic effort of observance and prayer, as a proof of the affection and gratitude we feel for her.

Mother returned in time to remind us that the dear month of Mary Help of Christians was beginning in Turin. She inspired us by her words and her invitation to unite ourselves spiritually to the beautiful celebrations taking place daily, in the sanctuary at Valdocco. We had already heard about these through the *Salesian Bulletin* of this month. There, it was stated that we needed the powerful help of Our Lady more than ever this year, which has already been marked by serious disasters, and that we should invoke her often with the well loved ejaculation, *Maria Auxilium Christianorum, ora pro nobis!*⁸

News from Buenos Aires

During her conversations with us at recreation and the Good Night, Mother always gives us welcome news from America.

At Buenos Aires in Almagro the retreat had closed solemnly on the feast of Saint Francis de Sales with five perpetual professions.

Monsignor Aneyros himself had presided over the ceremony, and it could well be imagined how warmly he spoke of Don Bosco and his works.

We were also told that the Houses in Uruguay, which number only two at the time, will soon be increased to three. They have been separated from Argentina to form their own province, headed by Sister Emilia Borgna. She [p.140] was unable to go to Villa Colon immediately because of cholera.

A beautiful and moving farewell ceremony took place on February 21 in our chapel at Almagro. Six missionaries were going to Chile, under the leadership of Father Evasio Rabagliati, to open the first House at Concepcion. All the Directors of the province were present, as well as a number of other priests and many boys. Monsignor Cagliari presided over the ceremony. It had been his wish to reproduce in miniature the celebration usually held in the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians in Turin.

In his sermon, Father Costamagna spoke so vividly of Don Bosco that it seemed as if he were present, blessing his faraway Sons as they prepared to enter a new field of labor. The celebration concluded with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and the recitation of the *Itinerarium*.

Patagonia: the first Indian girls from Tierra del Fuego

There has also been some consoling news from Patagonia. Mother General read two letters Mother Vallese had written to Don Bosco. He had sent them to us to acquaint us with the beautiful things happening there.

The first letter came from Patagones and was dated January 9. It read as follows:

Very Reverend Rector Major

Very dear and well beloved Father in Jesus Christ,

It is always a great consolation for us to make contact with our dear Father Don Bosco, in order to give him our news, especially if it is good news.

So, during this holiday I want to give you a short report of the two Houses you have placed under my care. Although most unworthy, with God's grace, I shall do all I can not to be a stumbling block to the physical and spiritual health of these good Sisters.

I must tell you first that this year we had 130 girls in the [p. 141] school at Patagones, and seventy-two in Viedma. However, just as we were all set for the examinations, the schools had to close for fear of cholera. But, thanks be to God, there was nothing but fear.

In spite of this, we had a lovely feast of the Immaculate Conception, with 200 Communions and a magnificent procession.

Monsignor has been a real angel of peace and fervor for us. As you know, he established the Association of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which has already produced a rich harvest.

Scarcely two months have passed since Monsignor started on his missionary journeys, and already Holy Communions have increased to 750. There were not that many in previous years. May God be praised!

We know Monsignor is working hard in Chinchinal and is still there. He writes to us from time to time and always gives good news. We are longing for him to come back to us, but seeing all the good he is doing among the Indians. . . may God's holy will be done in everything! . . .

During this period, God willing, we shall make our retreat. We hope, with God's help and the fervent prayers of our dear Superiors, to make it well . . .

We promise you, our dear, beloved Father, that we shall always pray for you. Be so kind as to bless us. We are the Daughters farthest from you, and prostrate at your feet, we kiss your venerated hands.

For each and every one of us, I am

Your poor Daughter,
Sister Angela Vallese

The other letter was dated January 31. After speaking of the completed retreat, and the commitment to practice the resolutions taken, Mother Vallese wrote:

. . . On the 25th, Monsignor Fagnano arrived from Tierra del Fuego with four native girls. If only you could see them, Reverend Father, and witness their rough behavior... They stretched themselves out on the ground like animals, and want to sleep outside in the courtyard. It is impossible to get them into a dormitory.

[p. 142] During the first days we could not make ourselves understood, nor could we understand what they wanted. Now they seem to understand a little more. . . and I think that they will soon learn all they are supposed to know. We intend to prepare one or two of them to travel to Italy in 1891 to see our dear Father Don Bosco, the great benefactor of Patagonia.

By the way, Reverend Father, you may not know that Monsignor Fagnano wishes to take some Sisters back to Tierra del Fuego with him when he goes; I ask you to send a special blessing for those God will choose for this new mission.

At the same time, I beg you to send a favorable reply to this undertaking, because we have a real desire to go, at the cost of any sacrifice whatsoever.

Monsignor Cagliero is moving ahead with his mission. On the 26th of the current month he left Roca for Norquin, and from there he hopes to go to Malbarco, and then on to the Cordilleras. Nevertheless we hope he will soon be back among us, because snow prevents a passage through the mountains except in certain months of the year. But may God's holy will be done in everything!

We have received some good news: we know that six Sisters will be coming from Italy with some Salesians. We thank you for them from the bottom of our hearts, as well as for everything else you do for us

poor creatures.

. . . Bless us, dearest Father, so that strengthened by your paternal blessing we may always be true Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, by fulfilling all our duties and saving many souls by our good example and good works.⁹

It is obvious that our dear Sisters in Patagonio are taken up with the thought of the Indians of Tierra del Fuego and the possibility of going to that country. In one of their letters, dated February 11, they write:

. . . Monsignor Fagnano has inspired us with enthusiasm, and roused in us the vocation to go to Tierra del Fuego . . . He brought four of the native Indian girls here. Even a glimpse of them would certainly make you laugh. Their heads are rather large, their eyes small, and they have no [p. 143] eyebrows. They arrange their hair very strangely. The crown of the head is tonsured like the Franciscans and the rest of the hair is long and surrounds the head. They eat only meat and ship's biscuits, sleep on the ground, and we have not yet succeeded in getting them to use a bed. . . .

. . . Monsignor Cagliero has been on his missionary journeys since November 12. At the moment he is in Norquin, about 240 leagues from here.

We received a letter from him yesterday, and hope he will soon arrive in Chile in order to found a Salesian House at Concepcion . . .¹⁰

Tierra del Fuego certainly inflamed the missionary ardor among us too. During the past months we have been reading with much interest the letters of Monsignor Fagnano and Father Beauvoir in the *Salesian Bulletin*. These letters describe the first explorations in those remote regions, and our hearts were touched as we read of the plight of the poor persecuted natives.

These dear Indians were almost unknown a short time ago but now they are the object of our prayers, sacrifices, and most ardent aspirations.

From Spain

Mother's family Good Nights are always heard with joy, because she is always so eager to share with us any news she receives.

This time she spoke of our newest foundation, in Spain. Don Bosco had insisted on this foundation, saying that much good would come from it, and that it would produce many vocations for the American mission field.

Mother told us that as far back as last November, we had been asked to open another foundation at Mahon in the Balearic Islands.¹¹ However, for the present we have to think about consolidating the House in Sarria.

Mother Clare has written that there are already two postulants, and others are asking to enter. There is no scarcity [p.144] of work; in fact, there seems to be almost too much. Mother has recommended the Sisters not to undertake more than they can do, otherwise their health would be in jeopardy.

Very soon-on May 1-the Sisters will be moving into their own House at Torre Gironella. This House was purchased for them by Father Branda, through the generosity of our kind benefactress, Lady Dorothy,¹² and other good ladies who are all overwhelmed with admiration for Don Bosco.

Don Bosco sets out for Rome

Mother added that it was because of Don Bosco that we are esteemed and respected everywhere. We should be grateful to God and pray very much for our dear Father, who left for Rome on the 20th. He is going for the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart, but the condition of his health is very worrying. On the evening of the 5th, during Holy Week, he had been very ill. His strength completely left him, he was unable to move and his breathing became very labored.

It is only because of his trust in the help of Divine Providence that he faces the fatigue and discomfort of the long journey. We must follow him with our prayers.

Mother said that she had written, promising prayers, before he left. He had replied immediately on the 16th, and had concluded in his fatherly manner:

Pray by all means that my journey may be a happy one. I will pray with all my heart that all of you may become great saints and do much work for the salvation of the many souls so dear to the Heart of your Heavenly Spouse. May He preserve you in good health for this purpose; may He bless you and keep you from all evil; and may Mary Help of Christians protect you always, with your Father in Jesus and Mary,

[p. 145] The Feast of Saint Catherine

April 30, feast of Saint Catherine, brought the long awaited name day of our dear Mother General.

The festivities started with First Vespers on the vigil. The celebration concluded with solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. Then there was a grand entertainment in the hall, lovingly prepared under the expert guidance of Mother Assistant. Sisters and boarders rivalled one another in expressing their grateful affection for Mother in song, prose, poetry and dialogue. Everyone was pleased with the beautiful feastday hymn composed and set to music by Sister Letitia Lavagnino.

Gifts for our Mother were not lacking. The Sisters presented her with a beautiful red velvet chasuble, artistically embroidered in gold, while the boarders offered her the sum of 200 lire, the results of their sacrifices.

Then came a beautiful and costly surprise gift. Mr. Louis Costamagna, a Salesian Cooperator from Caramagna and father of our Sister Beatrice, heard that our church needed a set of good candlesticks for the solemn feasts. Wishing to provide both the large and the small ones at his own expense, he arranged for them to be delivered for this occasion.

All this was a prelude to Saturday, the actual feastday, which was passed in holy joy. Don Bosco's blessing, which arrived with a lovely picture of Saint Catherine, added to the general happiness.

Another family gathering took place in the hall that evening with songs and declamations, and the festivities continued on Sunday, when they were linked to the commencement of the well-loved month of May.

Everyone wished to offer Mother a most fervent pledge of good will and the firm commitment to obey her promptly as they would obey God Himself. This was certainly the best gift the feast could offer.

[p. 146] Don Bosco at Sampierdarena

This year the month of May is being preached by Father Faustino Confortola, the Director of Sampierdarena. He adapts his talks to the needs of both Sisters and pupils, inflaming all of us with love for Our Lady.

He gave news about Don Bosco's stopover in Sampierdarena, on his way to Rome. He spoke of the extraordinary welcome given Don Bosco at the school and elsewhere. Practically all of Genoa, beginning with the Archbishop, came to see him and receive his blessing.

Our Sisters had already informed us that since he could not go down to the church, our good Father celebrated mass in his room. The Sisters went to assist at his mass on one of the three days he was there. They had received Holy Communion from his hands, going one at a time to kneel on the altar step, because Don Bosco was too tired and exhausted to walk.¹⁴

Father Rua also invited them to visit Don Bosco. They gave him their good wishes and kissed his hand. Our dear Father welcomed them with affectionate kindness, saying: "My Daughters are always in my thoughts, and every day at holy mass, I pray for them, asking for health and holiness for each one of you."¹⁵

We were greatly consoled by these words. They proved that, in spite of his sufferings and constant preoccupations, Don Bosco always has a special thought for us, and that we are followed and supported by the prayers of a father and a saint.¹⁶

The death of Father Margotti Monsignor Cagliari falls from his horse

Two sad items of news reached us during the month. First was the death of the Theologian, James Margotti, a writer, journalist and founder of *L'Unità Cattolica*, as **[p. 147]** well as a great friend of Don Bosco. He had died in Turin on the morning of Friday, May 6. The message, which was sent to Don Bosco in Rome by telegram, upset him very much, and he ordered special suffrages to be made for this "generous friend of the poor." We too joined in the devout prayers for this blessed soul, so dear to the heart of our venerated founder and father.

We read the other grievous news in *L'Unità Cattolica* of Thursday, May 12 in an article entitled: "Serious accident to Monsignor Cagliari, Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of Patagonia, "

As he was crossing the Cordilleras during his last evangelical mission to Chile, the Bishop was thrown from his horse.

It was a miracle he did not fall over a steep precipice.

From correspondence received, we fear he has suffered back injury. The latest news reports him to be on the banks of the Rio Neuquen, far from doctors and medicine, and suffering from raging fever.

Knowing how much he is loved and venerated among us, we recommend him to the prayers of all.

We were stunned by the news and all of us fervently resolved to implore God to preserve such a precious life. The chapel was never empty, and even during work the continuous murmur of prayers and pious invocations could be heard.

The pupils understood and joined in our grief by generously offering their good works, and multiplying their spontaneous visits to the Blessed Sacrament during recreation.

God was not slow in sending us consolation. Scarcely a week later-Ascension Day, May 19-we received reassuring news concerning Monsignor's health. We were all very relieved and immediately began a novena to Mary Help of Christians in thanksgiving.

[p. 148] Don Bosco's sojourn in Rome

The consoling news we had received was confirmed by Father Bonetti, who arrived on Saturday, May 28, the eve of Pentecost. He had come for the ceremony of religious clothing which was to take place on the great solemnity.

As always, he spoke about Don Bosco, who had returned from Rome on the evening of the 20th very tired, but overjoyed because of the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart.

The *Bulletin* will give you a full report of the grandiose festivities, [added Father Bonetti,] but I should like to tell you immediately, something of what Father Rua, Father Viglietti and Don Bosco himself told us, so that you may thank God. The day before the consecration, the 13th, Don Bosco had an audience with the Holy Father. At six o'clock in the evening the Pope received him with extraordinary goodness in his private library.

He invited Don Bosco to sit at his side and, fearing he should feel cold he went to get a large, ermine-trimmed fur cloak which he had received that day as a gift for his sacerdotal jubilee. Wrapping it round Don Bosco's knees he said he wanted Don Bosco to be the first to use it.

The Holy Father then spoke to Don Bosco at length, showing great interest in his health, his work and his Congregation, in fact, in everything concerning him. Then he gave him the following souvenir which will also be useful for you, "Recommend obedience in a special way to the Salesians, and tell them that they must preserve your maxims and the traditions you leave them. I know that you have obtained excellent results from your young people through frequent Confession and Communion. Continue this and see that the Salesians continue in their turn, to recommend this useful practice to those entrusted to them."

He then added that attention must be paid to the holiness of the Salesians-and the same holds good for you Sisters- because it is not numbers that increase God's [p. 149] glory, but the virtue and holiness of the members of the Congregation.

Finally, after giving a short audience to Father Rua and Father Viglietti also, the Holy Father dismissed Don Bosco with an extended blessing and had him escorted to the stairs.

As he passed the Swiss Guards stood at attention, but Don Bosco smiled and said kindly, "I am not a king, you know! I am just a poor priest with a very bent back who is of no use whatsoever. Do not bother about me!" . . .

So the guards came up close to him and reverently kissed his hands.¹⁷

These marks of veneration and esteem for Don Bosco followed him throughout his stay in Rome. Cardinals, monsignori, ladies of high society, priests and persons of every rank sought to speak to him, or just to receive his blessing.

Just as in France, extraordinary graces and real miracles took place here in Rome.

Now what can I tell you of the celebrations? Did you know that our choir from the Oratory was there with Master of Music Dogliani? They had already travelled part of the way to Rome, as they had been invited for the feasts celebrated a week before in the cathedral at Genoa. So they completed the journey, to add their contribution to the celebrations in Rome, with the music so much admired in Genoa.

The consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart on Saturday, the 14th, was carried out by Cardinal Lucido Maria Parocchi, Vicar of His Holiness and our Cardinal Protector. The ceremony was held with great solemnity and lasted for five hours.¹⁸

The celebrations continued during the following days up to the feast of the Ascension. Crowds of people attended all the ceremonies and every evening the facade of the church, the bell tower and the hostel were all beautifully illuminated.

You can imagine Don Bosco's emotion! On the second day, as he celebrated mass at the altar of Mary

Help of Christians in the new church, I saw him stop fifteen times [p. 150] because of the tears which streamed down his cheeks. At last Father Viglietti, who was assisting him, had to distract him in order to get him to the end.

Dear Don Bosco! God alone knows how much preoccupation, fatigue and effort that church cost him. It now stands as a witness to his love for the Sacred Heart and his filial devotion to the Pope.

Let us strive to become less unworthy of such a Father. I would like you to share in a thought he asked me to write to Sister Borgna, thanking her for her prayers for him. He assured her of his blessing and then added: "Don Bosco prays that the Sisters may always be faithful to their vocation. Let them remember that they are the spouses of the crucified God and must become saints through mortification and sacrifice." ¹⁹

Pentecost Sunday and the closing of the month of May

By its very nature the good news from Rome was a preparation for the following day, which was Pentecost Sunday, May 29.

In the morning there was mass with a general Communion, and at 9:30 the beautiful ceremony of religious clothing took place.

Eleven postulants had been chosen to receive the holy habit and among them was Julia Devecchi, the girl from the Nizza Oratory already mentioned.

In his discourse, Father Bonetti first turned to the parents, urging them to be glad at giving their daughters to God. Then, taking the words, *Sicut lilium*, which had been sung as a motet, he exhorted everyone, novices and professed alike, always to be lilies of purity among the young, if we want to do good to their souls.

After solemn Vespers in the afternoon our fervent Father Bonetti, preached again. He spoke on the theme of the day- the Holy Spirit-and also on Our Lady, as the month of May was about to end.

[p. 151] The day concluded with an excellent entertainment in the hall in honor of Mary Most Holy. The beautiful statue of Mary Immaculate rested on a throne of flowers and was encircled by the Superiors, the Sisters and a hundred pupils.

Recitations of poetry and prose followed the introductory hymn, "Qual risuona . . ." All wanted to express their love for the Blessed Virgin in one way or another. Even the sweet sound of the harp was heard making the festivities still more entrancing.

Father Bonetti was presiding over the entertainment and towards the end he spoke a few words of gratitude- he said- in the name of the Blessed Virgin herself, and exhorted all to be faithful to their promises. "Here in the nest," he concluded, "you are far from all dangers and are well guarded and protected. . . But I tremble for all of you, boarders and Sisters alike, when you go out into the world! I implore you in the name of God to pray to Mary Most Holy that you may die rather than be unfaithful to your holy promises! . . ."

Then, as a pledge of Our Lady's motherly assistance, he gave us the blessing of Mary Help of Christians in the name of our venerated father Don Bosco.

The month of the Sacred Heart

Prepared by our Mother's Good Night, we began the month of the Sacred Heart with great fervor. Among other things, she recommended us to receive Holy Communion for her intentions as she needed two special graces from the Heart of Jesus and one of these was of a material nature. She told us in confidence that she needed to have Sister Margaret Mariani's dowry, or at least part of it, in order to satisfy urgent needs. The very next day-June 1-Mother told us she had received a letter from Sister Margaret's sister, asking if she wished to have the bank book or the [p. 152] interest money. . .

We all rejoiced at Our Lord's prompt answer to our prayers. This was a fresh proof of His continual, loving protection and we resolved to do our best to become less unworthy of such provident care.

The blessing of the oratorians' chapel

The provisional chapel for the Oratory girls was blessed June 5, the feast of Corpus Christi. It was constructed close to the farmhouse where the shed and stables were situated. The children arrived punctually at six o'clock in the morning and joyfully assisted at the ceremony of blessing. The first mass was then celebrated and Holy Communion distributed.

The consolation was general, but it was especially great for Mother Elisa, who was directly responsible for the Oratory. She had wanted this chapel for a long time, and now, on Sundays and feastdays, it would offer the

Oratorians holy mass and the opportunity of approaching the sacraments in the morning, and a sermon and benediction in the afternoon.

The girls themselves were very happy and chose to celebrate the day by making it a delayed feast for Mother General, on which they could express their real gratitude. Their gift to her was a lovely humeral veil for the chapel and the very precious spiritual offering of a hundred Holy Communions.

In the evening they entertained Mother in the hall. All the Superiors and boarders were present. They sang songs, recited poetry and promised to correspond to the graces they received at their dear Oratory.

Feastdays celebrated with cordial demonstrations do much to strengthen in the young people the attitude of affectionate gratitude towards the Sisters. They experience family warmth in a religious house, and are stimulated to greater joy and goodness.

[p. 153] Monsignor Cagliari writes about his fall

A long and beautiful letter from Monsignor Cagliari to Mother General brought us news of him, first-hand. We always look forward to hearing from him, but this has been particularly true since his serious fall last March. He wrote on April 20 from Concepcion in Chile, as follows:

Your letter of January arrived at Patagones and not finding me there crossed the Andes into Chile. It came into my hands just after I had returned from a visit to the center of Araucania.

As you see I am now able to travel again after that bad fall from a horse. This happened on a rocky height in the Cordilleras. You must have heard about this and doubtless have prayed for me.

March 3, 1887 is a date worthy to be placed on record because of the grace I received that day from our good Mother, Mary Help of Christians!

I had been travelling across the desert for four months and had covered 200 leagues on our poor horses. On the very day I changed horse I fell on a rocky mountain slope, at the edge of a fearful precipice! It was fortunate that, foreseeing danger, I had, a few moments before, commended myself to Mary Help of Christians. So the fall which should have been fatal, turned out to be just a painful misadventure.

I was found to have two displaced ribs on the right side of the spine, interfering with the lung so that I had difficulty in breathing.

But, thank God, after twenty five days in bed with the medicine of the mountains, such as grasses, roots, bark and wild flowers, I regained my health to the extent of feeling able to risk crossing the Cordilleras. After three days journey through valleys, high plateaux, forests, mountains and ravines I arrived in Chile where, after a month, I feel much better.

I was greatly consoled although in the throes of pain and discomfort, at the thought that this accident had happened to me, not when I was hunting partridges, hares or pheasants, but when the hunt was on for souls to convert [\[p. 154\]](#) and present to Jesus.

Over there you will receive good and bad news of this practical joke the devil has played on me. You will hear how being unable to kill me he killed the poor mare that was carrying all my luggage. The poor beast slipped and fell down the steep slope which my priests and I had already climbed. It was killed instantly. You will hear many other details, even that I lost my shoes together with my socks in a deep valley, and so had to make my triumphal entry into Chile wearing slippers, etc. . . .

You will read many other things that will change your tears to laughter and your fear to consolation.

But what I really want you to know is that the storm is over and I am getting better and soon will be quite well. In the meantime you must thank God and Our Lady Help of Christians for the protection I have been given and the graces I have received.

Having heard of my plight the good Chilean people gave me a splendid welcome when I at last arrived among them. There were triumphal arches, bands, flowers, songs, applause, the *Te Deum* and everything else they could think of to honor Don Bosco's Sons and the Patagonian missionaries with their Salesian Bishop.

Awaiting us at the Concepcion railway station was a crowd of at least four thousand persons, together with the clergy and important people of the town. We alighted from the train to cries of, "Long live Don Bosco! Long live the Salesian Bishop! Long live the missionaries!" I myself, the Vicar of the Diocese, the canons and those surrounding us would all have been crushed had not a captain and some stalwart youths opened up a path for us through all those people.

It was with great difficulty that we mounted the carriages provided for us by a Catholic deputy, and slowly made our way to the cathedral. Here the *Te Deum* was sung and then, gathering all the breath my good right lung allowed me, I thanked that immense crowd, so full of faith, enthusiasm, and of kindness to the Salesians.

As you will see God permits evil in order to draw good from it. He allowed me to fall on the rocks in order to cover me with flowers, and to be ill for twenty five days in a straw [p. 155] hut, in order to establish me among the *comfortables* in their sumptuous palaces.

Is this not just a pale figure of what will happen in the next life if we, as true disciples of Jesus Christ, are able to suffer and endure for His love, anything whatsoever here below? It will be the same if, fearless of physical falls, we avoid spiritual ones, and if, fearing to fall, we commit ourselves constantly to the valid protection of our good Mother Mary Help of Christians.

May the glories of this Queen of Heaven be made manifest and the glories of her Son Jesus be sung throughout eternity!

The first Salesian House in Chile was looked upon with favor by all, and the many institutions in the town vied with one another to help and befriend us.

It suffices to be a Salesian and Son of Don Bosco to be praised and blessed everywhere. How the congregations of women envy you because your Founder is Don Bosco who, as they say repeatedly, is a saint!

Therefore see to it that you become worthy Daughters of such a father by your zeal, abnegation, strength of character, soundness of spirit and enthusiasm for the things of God today, tomorrow, the next day and for ever and ever. . .²⁰

Each one of us repeated Monsignor's recommendations in her heart, grateful to God for receiving his fatherly words after the painful trepidation of the past weeks.

Mother General goes to Sicily with the blessing and words of the Pope

On the 21 of June our Mother, accompanied by Sister Celestina de Caprio, started out on her journey to visit the Houses in Sicily. During her short stay in Rome, she had the good fortune of a private audience with the Holy Father. This took place on Thursday, June 23. She wrote to us about it immediately:

The good Lord has repaid me already for the small sacrifice I made for love of Him when, in obedience to the [p. 156] Superiors, I undertook this journey. Today, the 23rd, between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, I was admitted to a private audience with the Holy Father in the Throne Room. I could not possibly explain what I felt at seeing again such an amiable and holy person! I was able to speak to him as calmly and peacefully as if I were speaking to Don Bosco. I asked for a special blessing for all the Sisters, the boarders, the Oratory girls, the Superiors and everyone. The two of us were introduced by Commander Louis de Gasperis who, in his kindness, had gone to great lengths in order to obtain this audience for us.

Among the many holy things the Holy Father said was the following: "There is a lot of evil in the world and the devil is working very hard. We must work, and you must work too, in order to win many souls for God and to set them on the right path. . ." I will tell you the rest when I return.

Mother returns from the Houses of Sicule

The "rest" was told exactly a month later when Mother returned from Sicily, fairly well in health but extremely tired.

Speaking to us about the audience which had filled her heart with emotion, Mother mentioned the great esteem the Holy Father had for Don Bosco and how benevolent he was towards him. She told us that as soon as the Pope saw her he said, "Ah, here is one of Don Bosco's Sisters!"

Then, turning to the cardinals and prelates surrounding him he added, "This is one of the fortunate Sisters of the saint, Don Bosco."

Mother exclaimed, "Do you understand? . . . Even the Holy Father says that Don Bosco is a saint. What are we doing about making ourselves less unworthy to be his Daughters?"

Mother then gave us news about her visit to the Sicule Houses, saying that she had been well pleased. However she showed distress as she spoke of the ravages caused by chol- [p. 157] era in many towns. ¹ The school at Nunziata di Mascali was soon to be closed and therefore there would be no examinations and no prizegiving. The boarders were returning to their homes, except for a few who lived in places where the disease was already rampant.²¹

The Sisters are not able to gather for their retreat and will have to manage with three days retreat in the individual Houses. The Sisters of Bronte are already assisting the cholera-stricken and they foresee that the

number of sick will increase with the summer heat.²²

"We really must pray," concluded Mother, "that God may drive away the scourge that is continuing to spread everywhere. "

A new foundation in Uruguay

The news from America is good. In Uruguay, the Provincial, Father Lasagna, has been able to open a new House with the reinforcements of new missionaries received last January. This House under the protection of Saint Teresa is situated in the beautiful little town of Paysandu. The town rises on the right bank of the River Uruguay and has a large population, but only one parish. This has been entrusted to the Salesians, who also run a boys' school. Therefore, there is a pressing need to provide, with the help of good benefactors, for the education of girls.

The five Sisters assigned to this foundation left Villa Colon on May 31. They were accompanied by Mother Emilia Borgna, who opened the House officially on the 1st of June.

Sister Teresa Rinaldi has been named Superior. The field of labor is very promising with a well attended Oratory. A school composed of boarders, day girls and part time boarders has been opened. There is much work to be done because of the great need for instruction in religion and Christian living. There are many young people of twenty years of age and over who have not yet made their first [p. 158] Holy Communion!

But thorns are not missing either! However, these are a sure sign that the work is destined to bring rich harvest. In the beginning the poor Sisters may have to suffer many setbacks. but consolations will surely follow. . . Nevertheless we must help them with our prayers. . .

The examination period

We are in the period of examinations. On Tuesday, July 26, our ninety-five boarders took their first examinations. The assembly was presided over by Mother Emilia and a Salesian professor from Turin. Thank God, everything went very well.

On Saturday the 30th, the Sisters and the resident student teachers returned from Turin. They had been away since the beginning of the month taking their teacher training examinations. In spite of the strictness of the examiners, they had all done very well and came back cheerful and contented. Very few have to repeat any secondary subject and only two of the fourteen Sisters were not successful. They were Sister Angelica Sorbone and Sister Maria Berciatti who had fallen ill.

Retreats

The ladies' retreat began on August 1, the Monday following the exams. It was preached by Father Francesca and Father Marengo. After the solemn and devout closing ceremony on the 10th the 130 retreatants attended-as usual-the awards assembly for the students.

They then all left in a very happy mood, some with an earnest desire of returning soon and remaining forever in Our Lady's House.

Two days later, on the 12th, the Sisters' retreat began, preached by Father Nicholas Cibrario and Father Joseph Bertello, the Director of Borgo San Martino. Father [p. 159] Bonetti was always available for the retreatants, either in the confessional or for a private talk, and he also spoke a few words to the whole assembly. He asked for prayers for the Sisters of Bordighera where earth tremors were still being felt. They had written saying that on July 17, they had been awakened at twenty minutes past eleven by a strong tremor. The only thing that kept them calm was the invocation of Mary Help of Christians and the remembrance that Don Bosco had said that nothing serious would happen again. However there were many minor tremors by night and day.²³

The retreat closed on Sunday, August 21, with fifteen religious clothings, thirty professions and twenty-nine renewals. The Superiors had decided that there should be no perpetual professions but only a renewal of triennial vows.

The holy life of Sister Virginia Piccono comes to an end

On August 24, our dear Sister Virginia Piccono ended her saintly life with a serene and holy death.

This was a serious loss for us because her gifts of intelligence, culture, and above all, her virtue, had promised great things.

She became ill while she was Superior at Trecastagni, and after last year's Chapter had remained in Piedmont because of her precarious health. Sister Madelene Morano, the Superior in Turin, exchanged with her, and went to Trecastagni.

However, when Sister Virginia came to Nizza from Turin last April to represent her House at Mother General's feast, she fell seriously ill and was unable to return. Her condition deteriorated slowly during four long months. She suffered much, but with admirable peace and resignation. The thought of paradise sustained her and she used to say

[p. 160] joyfully, "I shall soon go to paradise where I want to compose beautiful poetry for my dear heavenly Mother. I want to sing her greatness, beauty and goodness. I want to thank her for the motherly tenderness she has always lavished on me."

She died peacefully early on Wednesday, the day dedicated to Saint Joseph, to whom she was very devoted. Just a few minutes before, she had received Holy Communion. Everyone was convinced that she had passed to the eternal communion with God in heaven.

Mother Vicar becomes seriously ill

After assisting Sister Virginia to the end, Mother left for Turin where a retreat had already begun. But on September 2 she had to make an unscheduled return because Mother Vicar had fallen seriously ill. A few days after Mother's departure, she had been stricken with a fever and sore throat, and the doctor had diagnosed a severe form of diphtheria.

Thank God, Mother had the comfort of learning that things were improving and the doctor promised a speedy recovery .

Mother brought with her from Turin more news of Don Bosco. He had returned from Lanzo a few days after the feast of the Assumption and went immediately to Valsalice for the aspirants' retreat. Here he remained in order to escape from the sultry heat of the city. The Sisters of Turin and those who had come from other places for the retreat were disappointed at not seeing him. They spoke of him often, and recalled encounters, words and examples of his unfailing fatherly goodness.

A very curious incident had happened to Sister Elisa Maracchino. She had gone with other Sisters of her House to Turin on the eve of Don Bosco's feast, June 23. She had been granted permission to see him together with the Sisters of Lingotto, in order to present their good wishes. However, [p. 161] all of them were forbidden to make him talk. As Sister Elisa was about to be introduced, she thought to herself: "Don Bosco has not seen me for six years. He will certainly not recognize me..." But as she bent to kiss his hand he forestalled the introduction and with eyes half closed and without lifting his gaze, he said, "Oh, you are Sister Elisa, the Superior of Scandaluzza." It was as if he were answering her thoughts.

Sister Elisa was so confused and overcome that she could not utter another word.

Monsignor Cagliero in Viedma

Mother also brought fresh news of Monsignor Cagliero from Turin. Sister Joan Borgna had written from Viedma. The Bishop had reached there on July 5, after eight months absence. She wrote to Father Rua: ". . . Oh, how healthy and strong he looks! It seems impossible that he has been through so much pain and discomfort, including a bad fall. It is obvious that Mary Help of Christians loves him. May the Lord be praised! He is now back with us, radiant with health and active beyond description. "24

The Bishop himself confirmed this in a letter written to Mother General from Carmen de Patagones on July 23. He said:

. . . The prayers, Communions and mortifications you offered for my quick recovery have had the desired effect, so continue to believe in them.

I have a great business affair in hand for the good of the Church in this Republic. Please pray for this intention and if I succeed I shall tell you personally what it is!

This letter will arrive in time for the retreat and you will all be gathered together in the name of the Lord to become saints. Very well, since you cannot hear my voice I shall tell you in writing what will best help you become saints:

[p. 162] 1. Give importance to little things.

2. Fear small *failings-Fidelis in minima et in majori fidelis est. Iniquus in minimo et in majori iniquus est.*

The saints aimed at nothing less than perfection and this consists in doing little things well!

Small blemishes left by smallpox spoil the face and make it repellent.

Little failings blemish the soul and make it ugly and repugnant to our Heavenly Spouse who is the essence

of perfection, holiness and purity!

When I returned from Chile I was able to see all the Sisters of America, and I can tell you that reigning in everyone is the good will, charity and humility which makes them pleasing to Jesus. In all probability two of the most experienced in American life will come with me to visit you.²⁵

The consolation this letter brought may well be imagined. Fresh from the retreat as we were, we pledged ourselves to practice the resolution of fidelity in little things as Monsignor had suggested. This was just what our good Father Don Bosco was always telling us.

Three new foundations

During the month of September three new foundations followed closely on one another. The first was established on Saturday the 10th at Gattinara, a town in the diocese of Vercelli. The administrator of the kindergarten had asked the Superiors to send some Sisters to replace the Sisters of the Immaculate from Ivrea who had been forced to withdraw for particular reasons.

Sister Rosalia Pestarino was sent as Superior. After the earthquake at Bordighera she had been replaced by Sister Adele David. This Sister was recalled from Marseilles and considered better able to restore and revive the damaged House.

The other Sisters were Sister Josephine Negro, Sister [p.163] Angelina Demartini, Sister Catherine Bensi and Sister Teresa Oddone.

It seemed that there could not be an Oratory immediately, because there was no courtyard attached to the Sisters' quarters. There was one a short distance from the kindergarten but the administrative authority would not, for the moment, allow the use of it.

Nevertheless they were able to do an amount of good among the numerous little ones. In the summer when the mothers were at work in the fields there were as many as 130 children.

The following day, September 11, was the turn of the kindergarten at Farigliano, a little town a short distance from Mondovi. Sister Rosina Guaschi went as Superior. She had come from the House of Melazzo which was closed about that time because the dampness of their dwelling was injuring the health of the Sisters.

On September 15, the very day the Melazzo House was closed, Sister Josephine Marchelli, Superior, went with Sister Catherine Oberti and Sister Antoinette Rinaldi to open the new House of Tone Bairo in Canavese. They had been called for a kindergarten and a festive Oratory.

Thus when one House closes, three are opened and, as the months move on, others too will be opened. As our Mother says, we must really try to show our gratitude to God by striving to become less unworthy instruments of God's glory, cooperating for the good of many souls.²⁶

Memories of Don Bosco's stay at Lanzo

Our dear Mother Vicar returned from Lanzo on September 30. She had been there since the 14th with Sister Letitia Lavagnino, in order to recuperate after her serious illness. The whole community joyfully hurried to meet her, eager to assure themselves that her health had really returned and [p. 164] to thank God for it.

Our dear Mother spoke to us about Don Bosco. The memory of his recent sojourn in Lanzo-July 4 to August 19-was still very vivid. The Sisters had been very distressed at the obvious deterioration of his condition. He was not able even to stand without support. It was an effort for him to speak and his breathing was difficult. Yet he always had his fatherly smile so overflowing with goodness.

Mother Petronilla related how when she went up to Don Bosco's room on a message she had remained behind in order to repair the worn lining of the small sofa they had taken from the parlor so that he could rest more comfortably. Our good Father apologized humbly in the words, "Oh, what a lot of trouble Don Bosco gives you!" He was always ready with a word of humility and gratitude even for the smallest service.

Sister Joan²⁷ had been very deeply touched when Don Bosco asked to be taken to greet the Sisters, in spite of his sufferings. Then, because Monsignor Leto was also with him, he asked permission to bless the community. Monsignor himself had immediately knelt to receive his blessing saying, "Oh Don Bosco, I am still only a novice, but please don't send me away." Our good Father replied, "Oh no, we shall soon bind you tightly with the holy vows." He then gave everyone a medal of Our Lady.

Sister Teresina Mazzarello used to serve him at table. She said that Don Bosco often told her to see that the Sisters nourished themselves well and did not make mortifications which might endanger their health. He added that the devil sometimes uses this means to destroy physical health and prevent them from working and doing good.

Everyone had a story to tell. Sister Felicina Torretta had been to Lanzo to recuperate after her examinations before going to the Lingotto kindergarten as Superior. Don Bosco knew she was very run down and our good Father used often to send the Coadjutor, Brother Henry, with something from his own dish, even if it were only a little fruit. One [p. 165] I could imagine how much she enjoyed this!

One evening while she was helping to shell the beans with the Sisters during recreation, Don Bosco appeared in a wheelchair which was being pushed by one of the priests. She hurried to meet him, exclaiming, "Oh Father, please allow me to kiss your hand! . . ." He replied good naturedly in the Piedmontese dialect, "Look at this poor *Yacht!* (cowherd) riding in a carriage . . ."

Plucking up her courage, Sister Felicina said to the Salesian who was pushing the wheelchair, "I am Don Bosco's Daughter, too; let me push him for a while. . ." Don Bosco smiled and allowed her to do as she wished.

In the meantime the other Sisters had gathered round and they also wanted the honor of pushing the chair round the courtyard in the direction of the so-called hillock.²⁸

This was his usual evening outing. Occasionally but very rarely he would go, well supported, for a short distance on foot. Then under the terrace portico he would converse with Father Viglietti or some other member of the community.

He had plenty of visitors at Lanzo, among whom were persons in authority and ladies and gentlemen on holiday. Some of his past pupils came from other places, and on his birthday a group of young people journeyed from Turin with some of the Superiors.

He welcomed everyone kindly and made great efforts to speak. In deep humility he would ask for prayers that he might save his soul.

Mother Vicar concluded by saying that Don Bosco is truly a saint. However, we must remember to pray much that God will sustain and preserve him for his affectionate children.

[p. 166] **Mother Vicar at St. Cyr Mother Assistant opens the new House at Pecetto**

Mother Vicar's stay with us was very brief. On October 2 she picked up her suitcase and left for France in the company of the Guardian Angels. She went to St. Cyr, where Father Bonetti was already preaching the retreat which had started two days earlier.

The following day Mother Assistant left too, accompanying the Sisters destined for the new foundation at Pecetto Torinese on the Moncalieri Hill. These Sisters are Sister Louise Vescovi, the Superior, Sister Angelina Cairo, Sister Teresa Vallino and Sister Elisa Ottolini.

They are to take over the work of the Sisters of Cottolengo in the kindergarten at the insistent request of Commander Rho, the former Director of Education and Mayor of the town.

Besides the kindergarten, workroom and festive Oratory, they will teach the third elementary class. Between the little ones and the older youngsters the greater part of the area will be in the hands of the Sisters and they will be able to do much good. Nevertheless taking over from other religious is bound to present difficulties and we hope and pray that Our Lady may help them in the fresh field of labor assigned to them.

The death of Sister Filomena Molina

We received the communication that our dear Sister Filomena Molina peacefully breathed her last at Montaldo Bormida on the 10th day of the current month of October. She was only nineteen years of age and had been a novice just a few months.

Even before her clothing she had been sent home because of ill health, but had returned to Nizza much better. So, because of her virtue, she was allowed to receive the [p. 167] religious habit.

In view of her delicate health the Superiors decided to send her to Montaldo Bormida, close to her home. There she was to start her religious training by teaching in the school. She began her work with great enthusiasm but soon fell seriously ill and neither the solicitude of the Sisters nor the loving care of her father-a doctor-could save her.

She died a holy death after only a short agony and fortified by all the comforts of our holy religion. She had the joy of pronouncing her vows from her sickbed a month before her death.

The Sisters of her community declared her to be an angel. Only her feet rested on earth while her mind and

heart were in heaven. Her virtues are also remembered here in Nizza, especially her humility, obedience and profound recollection.

The foundation at Moncrivello

On October 14 a new House was opened at Moncrivello, a town in the diocese of Vercelli. It is situated on the pleasant hillside which marks the boundary between Canavese and Vercelli. Negotiations concerning this foundation have been going on for almost three years, thanks to the generosity of Rosa Persico and the zeal of the parish priest. The House is to be called the Institute of Saint Rose, in deference to this benefactress, who has given her own house for the purpose. The work will include a private school, a workroom and a festive Oratory.

For the time being only three Sisters are going: The Superior, Sister Eulalia Bosco, Sister Maria Musso and Sister Carolina Vigna. Others will follow later, since they intend to open a kindergarten.

The Sisters took Don Bosco's blessing with them because, as they passed through Turin, his niece Sister Eulalia went with her companions to receive it from his hands.

[p. 168] As he introduced the three, Father Bonetti said jokingly, . "Here are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." Sister Musso, who was the eldest, said quickly, "I will be the Father!" . . .

"Oh no," corrected Father Bonetti, "you will be the Son!" Don Bosco added kindly, "And Sister Eulalia will be the teacher!" He did not want to give her the title of Superior since she was the youngest of the three.

He then took a holy picture and wrote a message on it for all of them: "To Sister Eulalia, the teacher. May God bless you and your Sisters, and may Mary assist you in all your work and help you to win many souls to be with you in heaven.-'Father John Bosco."

After blessing them he spoke privately to his niece, giving her precious advice concerning the opening and direction of a House. Among other things he said, "Always share the joys and sorrows of those who approach you. For example, on occasions such as a name day, a wedding, a bereavement etc."

. Sister Eulalia then ventured to ask him, "What should I ask for especially from Our Lord after Holy Communion?" Don Bosco replied, "Ask for humility and gentleness. Humility will be the foundation and gentleness, your true strength."

Before dismissing her, he gave her three hundred medals of Our Lady for the future Oratory girls of Moncrivello and also a few dozen rosaries for benefactors.

Sister Claire Agnely leaves for the Father's House

A few days later we heard that another Sister had gone to our House in heaven, already well populated. Sister Claire Agnely had peacefully breathed her last at St. Cyr on September 17. She had been Superior of Father Vincent's Franciscan Tertiaries for thirty-four years. When he died, she asked in all humility to be allowed to join us.

[p. 169] She received our religious habit at St. Cyr. There she made her novitiate and was outstanding for her spirit of humility and submission.

After a few months she was ready to make her vows, but in spite of her great desire to pronounce them, she wished first to consult Don Bosco. He told her to prepare well and then to make them because she had already one foot in the grave. In fact she lived only a few more years. An accidental blow on the heel given by one of the lively young orphans led to gangrene in the foot, and then general infection. For eight months she suffered untold agony, endured with great resignation and offered to God with the intention of being spared the pains of purgatory.

The Lord called her in great peace, after she had exclaimed for the last time: "Oh my Jesus, I am willing to suffer still more should You so wish, provided that my soul's first resting place may be in Your Divine Heart."

The Holy Father's priestly jubilee

The November issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* reminded us again that December 31 would be the Golden Anniversary of the ordination of His Holiness Leo XIII.

Our embroidresses had been working for months on a richly decorated stole, which was to be offered to the Holy Father for the occasion, together with the gifts of the Salesians.

With our gift, we must offer many prayers for the Pope. He had asked for this himself in a letter written to the bishops of Italy last September 20 for the month of the rosary. The letter is now carried in the *Bulletin*.

Presenting the panorama of great evils being perpetrated, especially by sectarians, right in Italy, he

wrote:

. . . We have no need to tell you, Venerable Brothers, of the great bitterness that fills us at seeing the grave dangers to which the souls of a large number of Our souls and daughters are exposed. This bitterness of Ours increases as We find Ourselves placed in the position of being unable to oppose these great evils in the effective way We would wish, although We have the right to do so. This is why I wish you, Venerable Brothers, and the whole world, to know of the condition of life to which We have been reduced.

This is the reason We feel a still greater need of invoking God's help and the protection of the great Virgin Mother. Let all good Italians pray earnestly for their harrassed brothers and also for the Roman Pontiff, who is the common Father of them all. May God in His infinite mercy accept the united prayers of his children and their Father. To obtain this our deepest and firmest hopes are centered in the Glorious Queen of the Rosary who, right from the moment when she was first invoked under this title, has shown herself ever ready to aid the needs of the Church and the Christian people . . .

The reading of this grief stricken plea revived our fervor in the crusade of prayer and spiritual offerings which had been proposed to us during the previous August on the Holy Father's name day. At that time Don Bosco had made the whole Salesian Congregation feel very close to the heart of the Pope.

Don Bosco's greeting to the French Pilgrims

The same issue of the *Salesian Bulletin* also gave a report on nine hundred French workers who came to Turin, led by the great industrialist, Leon Harmel. They were on their way to Rome to offer their greetings to the Holy Father for his priestly jubilee.

Don Bosco sent some of his French Salesians to meet them at the station, and then wanted to go and greet them himself. Although barely able to stand on his feet, he had Father Rua accompany him to meet them at the Valentino Restaurant, where they were having their supper.

Here he spoke to them out of the abundance of his [p. 171] heart, delighted at the opportunity to express his gratitude to France, whose people had always been so generous towards his works.

Then seating himself at the door he greeted them individually, as each one kissed his hand and received a medal of Mary Help of Christians. The procession took a full forty-five minutes and at no time did Don Bosco manifest weariness or boredom. He smiled serenely at all and spoke a word of greeting to each individual, often joyfully repeating the phrase, "May Mary Most Holy protect you and lead you to heaven."

All who witnessed this scene were deeply touched and ever more convinced of Don Bosco's holiness.²⁹

Two deaths in Turin on the same day

During the month of November two of our Sisters went to heaven from the infirmary of our House in Turin. Both died the same day, Friday, November 18.

Sister Matilda Gervasio, who made her perpetual profession that very day, had been well prepared by a long illness. She had been brought back to Italy from our House in Nizza-mare, where she had worked 'hard for as long as she possibly could.

The second Sister was Sister Josephine Roccati. Like Sister Matilda, she was twenty-nine years of age. She had given great promise while she was Superior in Rosignano. She was prepared for heaven by three long years of great suffering endured with admirable patience, offering it to God, together with the sacrifice of her life, in order to obtain the prolongation of the precious life of Don Bosco and special blessings on the whole Salesian Congregation.

[p. 172] Who could be happier than Sister Rosina Bosco?

We had already learned that our dear missionary, Sister Rosina Bosco, had obtained her heart's desire and had left the House at Almagro in July, in order to go to Patagonia.³⁰

Now she had the further consolation of making her perpetual vows!

She wrote about this to Don Bosco immediately, and he passed the letter on to us so that we might share the happy news with Sister Clementine, her sister, a novice.

It was obvious from her letter that she was still the same vivacious, demonstrative Sister Rosina, on fire, as usual, with fervor and enthusiasm. It seemed as if joy sprang from every line of this affectionate letter. It read:

My sweet Father and dearest Uncle,

This letter is meant to bring you the best of news. Rejoice with me for the extraordinary grace I just received. I have just come from our humble little chapel after. . . Can you guess? . . . after my perpetual consecration to my crucified Spouse, Jesus. I have just pronounced the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience in perpetuity at the foot of the altar, in the presence of Bishop Cagliari...It is impossible to express what I experience in my heart at this moment without melting into tears because of the abundant consolation which fills me. Oh, how very much alive in me now is that ardent longing I have already had to become a saint! . . . I am so happy, so completely happy that I desire nothing in this world apart from growing and increasing more and more in the love of God . . . I would not change places with even the greatest queen in the world.

I am not teaching in school but I have plenty of opportunities for doing good, especially in the festive Oratory. I also go into the fields with Mother, [Mother Vallese] seeking poor natives in order to teach them something of our holy religion.

Please join with me, Father, in thanking the good God for the numberless graces He has given me, and beg Him to give me the most necessary of all graces, that of holy perseverance.

[p. 173] I end by asking a special blessing for myself, for all the Sisters, for the boarders and day girls, and for all the people of Viedma, in order that they may be converted.

Permit me with humble respect to kiss your consecrated right hand in spirit, as I declare myself, dearest Father and Uncle, to be

Carmen de Patagones, September 29, 1887

Your unworthy Daughter and niece,
*Sister Rosina BOSCO*³¹

Father Bretto's feastday

On November 23, the feast of Saint Clement, we celebrated the name of Father Bretto, our Director, We offered him our good wishes in the hall on the previous evening. There was a beautiful entertainment with songs, poems and declamations, in which we expressed our heartfelt gratitude. Our guest of honor replied in his usual ardent way, animating us to good.

The best gifts however were those offered on the feastday itself, in the devotional celebrations in church. There was a sung mass in the morning, and Vespers with solemn benediction in the evening.

The first flower of Tierra del Fuego arrives at Don Bosco's feet

Mother General had said in one of her Good Nights over two months ago, "Have you heard that Bishop Cagliari is coming back? After his adventurous journey to Chile he has decided to return to Italy. He is looking for extra help, begging for more recruits, but his greatest wish is to see and embrace Don Bosco once again. Nearly all the letters he receives from Valdocco speak of Don Bosco's declining health and say that he is always thinking of his 'good Son in America.'

[p. 174] Now listen to this further good news. Monsignor has decided to bring back with him our first missionary to Patagonia, dear Mother Vallese. "

More news followed. Mother Vallese had suggested bringing to Don Bosco one of the four "Fueghine" Indians Monsignor Fagnano had entrusted to her, as the first flower of Tierra del Fuego. Mother Vallese was to meet Sister Teresina Mazzarello from Uruguay at Montevideo, and they would continue the journey together.

Finally we were told that Bishop Cagliari and the "Americans" would disembark at Genoa on December 4.

Mother General, Mother Vicar and Maria Cagliari (a resident student, niece of Bishop Cagliari) left on the first day of the Immaculate Conception novena for Sampierdarena. They wanted to be in good time to welcome the Bishop and the Sisters at the port. However, they had to wait because the *Matteo Bruzzo*, on which the travellers were sailing, was delayed for two days due to a violent storm off the Canary Islands.

The Bishop wished to be in Turin for the feast of the Immaculate Conception so together with his travelling companions, he left the following day. All Valdocco was in festal array for his arrival, but neither the bands, the songs nor the "evvivas," could hide the touch of sadness that pervaded the House because of Don Bosco's condition. He himself was anxiously waiting in his room.

The feast of the Immaculate Conception was spent in family intimacy with our Father. The following

morning, Monsignor presented the two missionary Sisters. As he introduced the little "Fueghina" girl, he said, "Don Bosco, here is the first fruits your children offer you *ex ultimis finibus terrae*. "

The little girl immediately went to kneel at Don Bosco's feet and said with deep feeling, even if in a rather harsh and guttural voice, what she had been taught: "Thank you, dearest Father, for sending your missionaries to save me and my brothers and sisters. They have made us Christians and [p. 175] have opened the gates of heaven to us!"

They say that Don Bosco was deeply touched and so moved to tears that he could not speak. The little girl could not take her admiring eyes from his face. Then, breaking the reverent silence surrounding him, our good Father thanked everyone for the consolation afforded him. He then spoke kind words of welcome to the little Ona, who was still kneeling at his feet, and added words of fatherly encouragement for the missionaries. Don Bosco then gave them a large-hearted blessing and distributed pictures of Mary Help of Christians among them as a souvenir.

"I can see her! . . .I can see her! . . .Our lady!"

While we were impatiently waiting for our "Americans" who had stayed for a few days in Turin, we assisted our dear Sister Maria Ferrero at her enviable departure for eternity. She breathed her last on the 14th of this month of December. Truly her death was to be envied because she had been comforted by the tangible presence of Our Lady. She was already at the end and was totally absorbed in prayer when her face suddenly lit up and she exclaimed, as if in ecstasy, "I see her, I see her!" "Who can you see?" they asked her. "Our Lady! Our Lady!" was the reply. She opened her arms to something she alone saw and then peacefully expired.

Should one weep at such a death or rather thank the Blessed Virgin for such a proof of the motherly predilection she reserves for her Daughters?

The "Americans" and the "Fueghina" come to Nizza

Mother Vallese, Sister Teresina Mazzarello and the little Fueghan Indian arrived on the 17th to spend Christmas with us. The whole House is in festive garb to welcome [p. 176] them back after ten years spent so far away. Our dear Sisters are visibly touched at finding themselves in the "big House" which is quite new to them, and at being able to talk about the memories of that beloved Mornese they had left with Mother Mazzarello's blessing.

Everyone is interested in the little "Fueghina" from the Ona tribe. She is small, thick set, dark skinned and has rather coarse features. But there is such a simple goodness about her that all are drawn to her. Monsignor Fagnano has given her the name of Louise Pena because he found her frightened and trembling near Cabo Pena after her parents had been killed. She is about twelve years of age and speaks and understands Italian quite well. The boarders are always around her, asking a thousand questions and showing their friendliness with little presents.

Sometimes she pleases the Sisters and the boarders by demonstrating the customs of her tribe. She sings, gesticulates and sometimes throws herself under the table in order to spring out on her imagined prey. But most striking of all is her deep spirit of piety. She never tires of being in church and takes part in nearly all of the Sisters' practices of piety. She is often found kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament, her eyes fixed on the tabernacle, repeating in an undertone, "Jesus, I believe that You are truly alive! . . .Jesus, I adore You! Jesus, I want to love You as You love me! . . ."

Louise stays for hours with Sister Enrichetta Gamba, who is teaching her to do some small piece of embroidery. Then, suddenly overcome with homesickness, she runs to find Mother Vallese who alone understands her and comforts her. Sometimes she searches the whole House and has no peace until she finds her.

Louise's presence speaks to us of the patient and indefatigable work of our missionaries, striving to succeed at the cost of any sacrifice in transforming this poor, wild, ignorant creature into a new creature open to God's grace and love.

[p. 177] Don Bosco is seriously ill

This year the Christmas season opened under the dark cloud of sorrow. Our Father, Don Bosco, is now very seriously ill. The news from Turin is alarming. His condition has become increasingly grave since December 20. On the 23rd he was very ill indeed and on the following day Holy Viaticum was taken to him with great solemnity by Bishop Cagliero. Before preparing to celebrate midnight mass in the Church of Mary Help of Christians, he administered Extreme Unction to our Father.

The *Unità Cattolica* printed the following paragraph on Christmas Eve. "With a sorrow and trepidation that our readers can imagine, we announce that the illness of the incomparable Don Bosco has worsened considerably these days and we are very much afraid that we shall soon have to announce his irreparable loss. We recommend him to the prayers of all Catholics, because hopes for his recovery now rest solely on God."

Other daily papers, both Italian and foreign, mention him. In Turin people are hastening to Valdocco for further news and to try to see him and obtain his blessing once more.

We were told that even Cardinal Alimonda and a number of bishops have been to see him.

The boys of the Oratory keep up a continuous chain of prayerful adoration. Here in Nizza there are special vigils before the Blessed Sacrament, and it could be said that the whole House is in continuous prayer. Since hearing that Don Bosco is ill, the little Fueghan girl is inconsolable. She weeps and prays and anxiously asks for news from everyone she meets. It is difficult to understand the depth of her affection for Don Bosco, after having seen him only once. Our Father's holiness must have unconsciously made a deep impact on the simple candor of her soul, to the extent of fascination. May her innocent prayer, blended with the chorus of supplication rising from everywhere, exert a gentle violence on the Heart of God!

[p. 178] Mother General leaves Nizza for Turin

Right after Christmas, on the feast of Saint Stephen Mother General set off for Turin with Mother Elisa. She wanted to make sure of Don Bosco's condition and to find out if it was possible to see him and obtain his blessing.

Before leaving she wished that the Sisters in Spain be notified and left the following hurriedly written note for this purpose:

Nizza Monf. December 26, 1887

Dearest Sisters,

From news recently received it seems that our beloved and venerated Father Don Bosco is dangerously ill.

Sisters, let us all exercise a gentle violence on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary Help of Christians, so that they may preserve our beloved Father for us, and drive away the mis-fortune with which we are threatened.

For this end let us say daily one *Our Father*, *Hail Mary* and *Glory be to the Father* in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and three times the *Hail Holy Queen* to Mary Help of Christians. Let us also offer all our actions for this purpose. Oh, let us pray, let us pray! I shall be going to Turin today. Thank you for your good wishes which I heartily reciprocate. My greetings to all and may we soon meet again.

That same day our Director, Father Bretto, spoke to us with great calmness and resignation during his conference. He encouraged us to trust in God and ask for Don Bosco's cure in the words of the sisters of Lazarus: "Lord, he whom You love is sick!"

How many times we repeat this ejaculation as we wait with trepidation and trust for more news.

The days follow one another in almost uninterrupted prayer, just as Father Rua has recommended in his short circular of the 26th. He wrote of Don Bosco's serious condition and concluded his letter by saying, "All our trust is in God and Mary Help of Christians. At the Oratory and in many of our other Houses there is continual adoration [p. 179] before the Blessed Sacrament. Let us pray!... Let us pray! . . . Let us pray! . . ."

The *Unità Cattolica* of the 27th spoke of a slight improvement and another communication from Father Rua seemed to confirm this. But by referring to the last medical examination of the patient during which it could be seen that his precious life could not be much longer preserved, and by his renewed urgent invitation to prayer, Father Rua destroyed any glimmer of hope there might have been.

This latest news was given during recreation and all of us immediately hurried to the chapel in order to make the Way of the Cross or to kneel in fervent supplication before the Blessed Sacrament.

Mother brings us Don Bosco's blessing

At 3:00 p.m. of the same day-December 30-Mother arrived back. She said that for the moment the venerated patient's condition did not present imminent danger, but the doctors stated that his organism was so worn out, and his strength so reduced by constant fatigue that it would require a miracle to keep him alive even for a few years. Mother General and Mother Elisa had been able to see Don Bosco, but only for a very short period.

Mother had told him how much we were praying for him and had asked him to bless us. Our good Father raised his hand in benediction as he replied, "Yes, I bless all the Houses of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians; I bless the Superior General and all her Sisters; let them see to it that they save many souls. "

How grief stricken our Mother was as she spoke to us about our Father, telling of the wonderful examples of holiness that radiated from that bed of pain; of the maxims he continually inculcated and even had written down during these days. Such maxims served for us also: "Tell them to have faith, and recommend observance of the Rule. "

[p. 180] They say that almost every day Monsignor Cagliero takes news to our Sisters in Turin. Ever since Don Bosco fell ill, they have cancelled all recreation and spend the time praying for him in chapel.

Mother concluded with her usual refrain, "Let us too, pray with faith. God can do all things!"

So the year draws to its close with alternating periods of hope and fear. We sanctified this last day with the usual celebrations, carrying them out with more fervor than usual. Many of us, if not all, feel it a duty to offer our own lives to God, if only Don Bosco's might be spared.

1887 has also ended. What will 1888 bring us?

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NOTES

1. Appendix No. 8.

2. *Salesian Bulletin*, March, 1887, Year XI, No. 3; Father Lasagna's letter, pages 27-29.

3. The following report came from Sister Felicita Balbo, who was not a religious at the time: "In 1887, on Ash Wednesday, February 23, there were two severe earthquake shocks in Turin. I was so terrified of more tremors that I remained absolutely incapacitated. Countess Corsi took me to receive Don Bosco's blessing and I began to feel much calmer. As he placed a medal of Mary Help of Christians around my neck, Don Bosco said, 'Do not worry, there will not be such a bad shock again. But if you want to be preserved from such a terrible scourge, be devout to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and Mary Help of Christians and protect the orphans.' "

4. Mother Daghero's letter to Father Bonetti dated March 2, 1887. Cf. letters of the Salesian director, Father Louis Porta, to Father Rua, dated February 24 and March 2, 1887. Originals in Gen. Arch. FMA.

5. *Salesian Bulletin*, April, 1887, Vol. XI, No. 4, 37-38; MB XVIII,758.762.

6. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

7. Countess Gabriella di Cossambrato, the widow of Count

Corsi di Bosnasco, was married for the second time to Count Bibbiani di Cantoira. Their only daughter, Maria Gabriella, married Count Cesare Balbo di Vinadio, nephew of the celebrated historian Cesare Balbo.

She was, therefore, related to our own Sister Felicita Balbo, who reported what follows:

"Countess Corsi had promised Don Bosco that she would provide meat for the whole Oratory on the day he celebrated the 50th anniversary of his first mass. When she fell seriously ill, her daughter Maria and my brother Cesare sent word begging Don Bosco to go and bless her, hoping for the miracle of a cure.

Poor Don Bosco, unable to stand on his feet, had himself carried up to the sick Countess. After having blessed her he turned to the family members, saying: "The Countess did not keep her promise for the 50th anniversary of Don Bosco's mass and neither did Don Bosco keep his promise of inviting her to dinner. . ." Countess would not 'be cured. In fact she went to heaven two or three days later.

I remember that when they carried Don Bosco from the carriage to the Countess' room it was like the arrival of the king, because all the people in Via Borgino were looking out of the windows, and a crowd of people ran over to the carriage and up the steps where he had to pass."

8. *Salesian Bulletin*, April, 1887, Year XI, No. 4, 40.

9. From copies of the two letters kept in the Gen. Arch. FMA.

10. This letter, written in Spanish and signed by all the Sisters of Patagones and Viedma was sent by hand, to the Sisters of an unidentified House in America. This is what the context suggests. Later it was sent on to Italy. (Original in Gen. Arch. FMA).

11. Father Branda's letter to Father Bonetti dated November 25, 1887, in Sales. Arch.

12. Cf. testimony of Father Branda, Appendix No. 6.

13. Don Bosco's letter to Mother Daghero signed in his own hand and dated April 16, 1887, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

14. Report of Sister Maria Succetti.

15. Report of Sister Maria Chiadorana.

16. An unedited memoir of Don Bosco's journey to Rome. See Appendix No. 9.
17. Cf. MB, XVIII, 329-333.
18. *Salesian Bulletin*, June, 1887, Vol. XI, No. 6, 61-67; M.B., XVIII, 335.345.
19. Father Bonetti's letter to Sister Joan Borgna, Turin, May 14, 1887, in Sales. Arch.
20. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

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21. On July 5 Sister Morano wrote to Father Bonetti from Trecastagni: "Cholera has broken out seriously in Catania. Our dear Mother Superior just had time to visit Mascali and then came here for refuge . . . we enjoyed her for a few extra days while she was waiting to know if she could go to Bronte. . ."

On the following 9th she wrote: "Mother left for Bronte yesterday and I had the sorrow of being unable to go with her because I could not leave the school in these days of universal fear. . . Twenty or thirty die every day in Catania . . . Everyone is seeking refuge in the country. . . Here the fear of the people is more frightening than the cholera itself. . ." (The two original letters are preserved in the Gen. Arch. FMA.)

22. Sister Maria Messina has preserved this memoir for us, "While I was in the school of Bronte in June 1887, there was a terrible epidemic of cholera. I cannot say how many victims there were but I remember that several times a day a cart passed by, filled with dead being taken away for burial.

Our Superior, Sister Zoe Bianchi, must have sent a telegram to Don Bosco because one day she called us together to tell us, 'Don Bosco sends his blessing and says we must be calm and not be afraid because none of us will die of the disease. This applies not only to the Sisters but also to the boarders, day students and their relatives. But on one condition: that all keep in God's grace, frequent the sacraments, wear the medal of Mary Help of Christians round their necks, and take the necessary care.'

A miracle! After two or three months the tremendous scourge ceased and we saw our girls return to the school and the Oratory. There were more than five hundred of them, all cheerful and contented, saying: 'Mary Help of Christians has saved us with all the members of our families.' "

A letter from Bronte (August 7, 1887) described these months. It was written by Sister Louise Bardina to Father Bonetti. She said: "If only you knew how terrible the cholera is here. . . Thanks to our good Jesus and Mary Help of Christians it has not gained entrance to our House . . . If it were not for the promise our dear Don Bosco made to us, I think I should die of fright. . ." (Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.)

23. Sister Francesca Leggeretti's letter dated July 19, 1887, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

24. Sister Joan Borgna's letter from Viedma to Father Rua, dated July 12, 1887, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

25. The handwritten original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

26. The correspondence and conventions relative to the opening of the three Houses are preserved in the Gen. Arch. FMA.

27. Sister Joan Sarotti.

28. Sister Felicina Torretta had many other things to say about those days. She had even seen Don Bosco in ecstasy. It was only many years later that she revealed this to Father Lemoyne, (M.B., VII, 377) and left her testimony in writing. (Appendix No. 10.)

29. Cf. *Salesian Bulletin* of November, 1887, Year XI, No. 11, 137.

30. Sister Joan Borgna's letter to Father Rua, written from Viedma on July 12, 1887. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.

31. Copy in Gen. Arch. FMA.

1888

A glimmer of hope

The New Year, which began in Rome with festivities for the priestly jubilee of the Holy Father, brought us a glimmer of hope. Yesterday, the doctors found a notable improvement in Don Bosco's condition, and he now seems to be in no immediate danger. We were told that everyone in Turin is relieved, and we are not less so, but while we thank God for this, we pray the improvement might continue.

So it was with light hearts that we took part in the New Year's celebrations with the singing of the *Veni Creator*, the renewal of our baptismal vows and the solemn benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

News continued to be good during the days which followed. Monsignor Cagliero even gives us hopes for his much desired visit, which has been impossible until now because of the seriousness of Don Bosco's condition.

Bishop Cagliero at Nizza

The long-awaited Monsignor arrived at about 7:00 p.m. on January 4, having announced his coming by telegram.

We received him in the illuminated, festively arrayed church with the singing of the *Sacerdos e Pontifex*. After pausing for a short prayer, he spoke to us immediately about Don Bosco, assuring us that he really was improving. However we were urged to continue our prayers for him. He remembered us all, and sends us his blessing. The Bishop [p. 186] told us that when he asked Don Bosco's permission to go to Nizza to preside at the clothing ceremony, our father had replied, "Yes, go by all means, and bless that community in my name."

Monsignor then expressed his joy at seeing us again, and his happiness at being able to place himself at our disposal for a few days, after three years absence.

After this, assisted by his secretary, by Father Branda, Director of Barcellona-Sarria in Spain, by Father Bretto and two other Salesian priests, he gave us benediction of the Blessed Sacrament.

When supper was over he came to recreation with us and gave us detailed news of Don Bosco. He mentioned a mysterious vision of the Immaculate Virgin which had taken place during the night between the 7th and the 8th of last December. It was our good Father himself who had related it to him.¹ He then told us about America and all the good that there was still to be done there. Later he interviewed each Sister individually, whether or not he already knew her, and he did the same with the novices and postulants. For each one, he had a word of fatherly encouragement.

Days of intense activity among us

The next day the Bishop celebrated mass and preached fervently on the love of God, emphasizing these points: the constant remembrance of God's presence; union with God; and therefore, complete death to self in order that God alone might live in us.

He presided over the Chapter for the admission of postulants to the clothing, and spent long hours in the confessional.

In the evening he enjoyed the beautiful entertainment we presented in the hall. In song, prose and poetry we expressed our joy at having him with us, and all the grati- [p. 187] tude we feel toward him.

On the feast of the Epiphany, celebrated very solemnly, Monsignor spoke to us of the Three Wise Kings. Continuing the triduum begun yesterday, he preached on silence, developing three aspects: silence of the tongue, silence of the mind and silence of the heart.

On the third day the Bishop gave a conference the postulants preparing for their religious clothing, and a second one to the boarders. In the evening sermon he explained the souvenir of obedience Don Bosco had sent from his bed of pain.

After this ideal preparation, on Sunday the 8th, seventeen postulants received the religious habit. The Bishop presided in full pontificals, assisted by his secretary, the parish priest of Nizza, Father Branda, our own Director and other Salesian priests. His stirring oration on the priceless nature of a vocation and the means of preserving it, was received attentively by the large number of relatives of the new novices who were present. He also turned to Catherine Tavella and Decima Rocca, the two boarders who were joining the ranks of the postulants that day.

A solemn sung mass followed with the Bishop assisting.

During the afternoon Monsignor visited the festive Oratory. He was well pleased at seeing it attended by four hundred children and young girls who all gathered around him joyfully.

He stayed with us for another couple of days and during the afternoon of Tuesday, January 10, went to the workroom where the Sisters had gathered. He spent about three quarters of an hour there speaking about the American missions and our missionary Sisters, and he continued to lay stress on the amount of good there was still to be done. He placed before us the example of Don Bosco who, when bereft of all his energy, and at the height of his painful illness, recommended us to work for souls and do everything in our power to save them.

"Remember," he said, "we are not here for ourselves, [p. 188] but for others. Therefore, do not think about yourselves, because you are not your own. Think of the glory of God and of doing good to souls. This is Don Bosco's spirit. This is our spirit and yours, the spirit of the Salesians and the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians."

That evening Monsignor was invited to an entertainment to celebrate his fiftieth birthday. He enjoyed the

simple but heartfelt presentation and in spite of his tiredness spoke a few words thanking the Sisters and the boarders. He recommended them to keep their hearts pure so that when they reached their fiftieth year they would be able to say: I have lived for God alone! I have done everything for Him!

The following day was the last he was to spend with us. After celebrating his mass-made festive by the lovely music of Sister Letizia Lavagnino-he administered the Sacrament of Confirmation to three boarders and to the novice, Sister Clementina Lombardo, who had not been able to receive it previously.

Not satisfied with all he had said to us during the days spent with us, the Bishop gave another beautiful conference at 10:30. He repeated, in part, the thoughts he had expressed in the workroom the previous day.

I leave you a souvenir which you must never forget [he said,] because it is the characteristic feature of our Congregation. It is the souvenir given us by our suffering Don Bosco, and which I have promised to explain and recommend to be practiced everywhere I go. This souvenir is work.²

The Salesian Congregation was born, grew and developed in work, diligent work.

Therefore give yourselves to the work which obedience and charity assign to you, without ever saying that it is enough, and without fear of being overburdened. Work preserves your vocation. But strength is needed in order to work and this strength comes from practices of piety well made.

[p. 189] Happy are those whose lives are consumed in working, not for human ends, but only and always for God and His glory!

After speaking to us for close to two hours with the zeal of an apostle, Monsignor gave us his blessing. Then at 2:00 p.m., immediately after dinner, he prepared to leave. The carriage was already at the door and as he made his way towards the entrance, he again raised his head in blessing and allowed us to kiss his ring. Then, promising to remember us to Don Bosco, he left us.

We gathered in the church for the Visit to the Blessed Sacrament, thanking God for the many graces we had received during the past few days, and promising to correspond to them faithfully.

A reassuring circular from Father Bonetti

The general happiness of the past days was increased by a circular letter from Father Bonetti, which confirmed the consoling news concerning Don Bosco that Monsignor Cagliari had already given us. It is here transcribed in full in an attempt to establish the flood of relief which it brought to all the Houses.

To the Major Superiors, local Superiors
and Sisters of Mary Help of Christians

Although you will already have received news of the illness of our beloved Father Don Bosco through the circular letters sent by his Vicar, the Reverend Father Michael Rua, to all the Salesian Houses, I consider it only right to give this news to you in particular by this letter.

First, I announce that without doubt, God and Our Lady have listened to your prayers and those of many thousands of other people, for the preservation of the precious life of our good Father. In fact the improvement which started on December 30 still continues. This morning the doctors again said that he is getting better and better. Our dear [p. 190] patient looks more cheerful and his breathing is less labored. He finds speech easier and he seems to have begun to convalesce. At this point we cannot say when he will be able to leave his bed, but there is reason to believe that it will be quite soon.

In the meantime let us continue our prayers for him and maintain a conduct increasingly worthy of the grace received. When the time comes I will let you know the day set aside for a united act of profound thanksgiving, either by privately reciting the *Te Deum* or by singing it solemnly.

Meanwhile, I take the opportunity of calling to your minds the souvenir our dear Don Bosco gave the Sisters on the sad evening of December 29, when we thought we faced an irreparable loss. After giving the recommendations already noted in the circular letter to the Salesians, and which will be communicated to you later, he added in a dying voice: "For the Sisters: *obedience, practice it and see that it is practiced.* ...

Although I am aware that this virtue is, in general, observed by both Superiors and subjects alike, nevertheless, I wish more than ever to insist on it now, in Don Bosco's name, as one of his dearest souvenirs. This is because the words mentioned above were uttered at a moment of deep anguish for us and, perhaps, when the council of mercy was prevailing in heaven, and God in His goodness was decreeing that our beloved Father should be left among us. Therefore, in the future, the exact practice of obedience should be not only a duty, but also an act of thanksgiving to God and Mary Help of Christians for the much desired grace they have granted us in preserving the life of the one who, after God, is more precious to us and more

needed than anyone else in the world.

I conclude by begging God to bless you all and to give you the grace of becoming saints with all the children and people entrusted to you. Please ask the same grace for the Salesian Superiors and for me, who wish you all that is good.

Turin, January 5, 1888

*Father John Bonetti*³

[p. 191] Sister Tricerri's offering of her life is consummated

While Don Bosco was nearing convalescence, Sister Teresa Tricerri, already ill, was offering her life for his. The sacrifice was consummated in Turin on January 9. She had been inspired to make this generous offering by the deep gratitude she felt for our beloved Father. In her younger days, he had restored her health by his blessing and had accepted her as a postulant at Mornese.

She had shown herself worthy of this by her exemplary life of piety, observance, and ardent zeal as a teacher in Lu Monferrato. But last April, much to the grief of the people, she had been forced to leave her dear and promising field of labor and retire to the infirmary in Turin.

Her last gesture of filial gratitude seems to have been accepted by God because it was followed by a definite improvement in Don Bosco's condition. It certainly shed more light on her end, comforted in her short, calm agony with visible signs of the particular assistance of the Blessed Virgin.

Don Bosco out of danger

News about Don Bosco continues to be good and letters are pouring into Valdocco from every part. Everyone rejoices with the Superiors. They say that even the Holy Father is very pleased. He sent Don Bosco his blessing twice during the critical moments of his illness.

Happy at the news he had received, the Holy Father spoke January 11 to the missionary, Father Cassinis, who was taking part in the Piedmontese pilgrimage led by Cardinal Alimonda, "May God be praised! Tell him that the Pope remembers him and sends him his blessing. Don Bosco's life is precious, and his death during these days would have cast a cloud over our festivities in Rome."

Father Viglietti, who was always at Don Bosco's side, assured us in his last letter, "All danger is now past. Don **[p. 192]** Bosco needs only to recuperate his strength before appearing once again among his numerous children who are all anxious to see their venerated Father again."⁴

Mother leaves for Spain

Reassured by this news Mother General decided to go to Spain. She had learned from Monsignor Cagliero that this was Don Bosco's wish, and had made arrangements with Father Branda who was soon to return to Sarria. She had been long expected for the much delayed clothing of the first two Spanish postulants.

Mother Clare had never tired either of repeating her invitation or of waiting, provided she could succeed in having Mother General present for the ceremony.

And so, on the evening of Saturday, January 14, Mother came to bid us good-bye, staying with us until late. After reading our particular promises for the New Year she replied in a motherly way, and told us with a smile to be good in her absence because she had entrusted us all to Our Lady.

She left at about 9 :00 the following morning, with a postulant. There had been snow during the night and it was still falling heavily. The deserted countryside was white with it and more than ten centimeters lay on the pathways. We were sorry to see our Mother set out in such bad weather. Moreover, we know we cannot expect her back for quite a long time, since she intends visiting the Houses in France and Liguria on her return journey.

May the angels go with her! We will follow her with our prayers and ardent good wishes.

The delayed "Strenna" of the Infant Jesus

This same evening the customary little celebration in honor of the "Strenna" of the Infant Jesus took place. It **[p. 193]** had been very much delayed, since the heavenly Babe should have been in Egypt by this time, but it had been impossible to hold this event earlier. However since no one wanted to forego this beautiful family tradition, it was decided to have it today.

Therefore a small, well decorated altar was set up in the workroom as in former years, and a statue of the Child Jesus was placed upon it. We all gathered around it in the presence of our Director, Father Bretto, and fervently sang our beautiful Christmas hymns and recited a few loving poems. Then, taking an envelope from the Holy Child's tiny hand, our Director opened it and read the "strenna" it contained. It was compressed into a short phrase: "My Daughter, give Me your heart!" Father Bretto explained the message to us in full, urging us to make sure that the whole of our lives was truly a response of love to Jesus.

The evening ended as we went to kiss the tiny feet of the sacred image, singing more hymns of loving salutations to the heavenly Babe, who was about to go into exile.

Mother General's program for the New Year

Before she left, Mother General left us her own "strenna" for the New Year, contained in her usual circular letter. This was also late in coming and reached the Houses bearing the date of the feast of Saint Agnes. Mother herself had forewarned us of this and had given the reasons. Nevertheless it was, as always, very practical in the austere program it presented, reflecting Mother's maternal concern for our perfection: "Death to self and to self satisfaction-abandonment and filial trust in God."

The two points were fully developed on the basis of the spirit of sacrifice, in an earnest commitment to mortify ourselves always, on every occasion, for the love of God and, living in complete, filial abandonment to His divine will in [p. 194] all circumstances, whether happy or otherwise, trusting in Him alone.

It linked well with the "Strenna" of the Infant Jesus, because true love of God and consequently complete self-giving implies a generous spirit of sacrifice and trusting abandonment.

Our Mother concluded her circular with the renewed urgent invitation: "Continue to pray," she wrote "to obtain from God the fulfilment of our desires for the health and preservation of our *holy* Founder. Do not spare yourselves any sacrifice to obtain this grace . . ."5

Renewed alarm at Don Bosco's condition

Fervent, earnest prayer continues, but we do not know what the designs of God might be in this regard.

Unfortunately, scarcely ten days after Mother left, news from Turin is causing more anxiety about Don Bosco's state of health. There had been a marked deterioration January 22, and during the afternoon of the 24th the doctors once more declared his condition to be as grave as it had been a month previously.

We are all very distressed and our thoughts turn anxiously to our Mother General who is now so far away, as we multiply our prayers and offerings. We live with our hearts in Turin, always waiting for news, which they always send us.

Because Don Bosco is so seriously ill, no one is allowed to visit him. Nevertheless his niece, Sister Eulalia, was able to go from Moncrivello with her mother for this purpose.

When he was gravely ill at the end of December her venerated uncle had sent her a souvenir through Father Bonetti. He recommended her then to consume her life for Jesus willingly and then they would meet again in heaven.⁶

Now, as she and her mother entered into his presence, he was overcome with emotion. In spite of his intense suffering, he spoke to them kindly and inquired about [p. 195] everything. Then, as if wanting to distract them from their anguish at seeing him in such a state, he turned to his niece and said jokingly, "Oh Eulalia, you with all your chatter, can't you even work a miracle to cure your uncle?"

Sometimes along with the news, there are reports of some brief phrases uttered by Don Bosco to those who were near him. He recommended Father Bonetti, "Whenever you speak or preach, insist on frequent Communion and devotion to Mary Most Holy. "

Another time, after Father Bonetti had given him a picture of Mary Help of Christians, he exclaimed as he gazed at it, "I have always had complete trust in Mary Help of Christians."

He also gave Father Bonetti a special message for us, "Listen! You must tell the Sisters that if they keep their Rule, their salvation is assured."

These precious words increase the emotion of these fearful hours.

Don Bosco in his agony

Although the feast of Saint Francis de Sales was celebrated with the usual music and singing during the sacred services, it is nevertheless overshadowed by sorrow. All hope for our venerated Father seems to be disappearing.

This was confirmed at half past three on the following day, Monday, January 30, when a distressing telegram arrived: "Don Bosco in agony-gather community-pray."

As soon as the sorrowful news was received everyone went to the church. Our Director was away in Alassio, so Father Joseph Campi exposed the Blessed Sacrament and began the prayers for souls in their agony. However, choking sobs prevented him from continuing. Sisters, novices, postulants and boarders wept with him. Their shared sorrow was, in itself, a prayer of impetration for their dying Father.

[p. 196] The death of our Founder and Father

The next morning we received two more telegrams between 9:00 and 10:00 a.m., both bringing the sorrowful but expected news of the death of our Founder and Father. He had died a holy death at 4:45 a.m. on Tuesday, January 31.

Mother Vicar left for Turin immediately, to represent our absent Mother General. She took Mother Assistant with her. They left the community deep in mourning and, although the prescribed suffrages were begun at once, we all feel the need of recommending ourselves to our dear departed Father, certain that he is already our protector in heaven.

Mother Vallese and Sister Teresina Mazzarello also left for Turin, to venerate the sacred remains and represent the Sisters of America at the funeral. The inseparable little Fueghan Indian went with them sobbing.

Father Rua's anguished announcement

Next day a circular letter came from Father Rua. He had hurriedly prepared it and had it printed so that it would arrive before the funeral. It is brimming with sorrow and yet permeated with resignation and hope. It reads:

To the Salesians, the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians and the Salesian Co-operators,

With anguish of heart, eyes swollen from weeping, and a trembling hand, I give you the most sorrowful news I have ever had to give, and shall ever have to give, until the end of my days. I announce to you that our dearest Father in Jesus Christ, our Founder, the friend, counsellor and guide of our lives, is *dead*. Oh, how this word pierces my soul! It tears the fibers of my heart apart and engulfs me in a flood of tears!

The private and public prayers which were offered for his [p. 197] preservation only delayed the heartbreak of this blow, this wound, this calamity! But they did not, as we had hoped, prevent it.

There is no consolation for us, except in the thought that it is God's will, and He, who is infinitely good, can do nothing that was not right, wise and holy. Therefore, let us reverently bow our heads in resignation and adore His lofty designs.

This is not the moment to describe to you how Don Bosco died the calm, peaceful death of the just, fortified in good time by all the comforts of our holy religion, and blessed many times by the Vicar of Jesus Christ. He was visited by prelates, renowned ecclesiastics and lay people, by our own countrymen as well as foreigners, all manifesting outstanding piety. He was assisted by his pupils with filial love, cared for with affection and exceptional skill by celebrated doctors. I shall not speak now of his virtues and his works, because time presses and my heart will not permit it.

For the moment I only tell you that a day or two ago Don Bosco said that his work would not suffer by his death because it is protected by the valid intercession of Mary Help of Christians and is supported by the charity of Co-operators who will continue to assist it.

On our part we add that we have great confidence that it will be so. From heaven, where we earnestly hope Don Bosco is already in glory, he will be a loving Father to us more than ever. He will exercise his charity towards us before the throne of *Jesus Christ* and of His divine Mother in a far more efficacious manner, and will make celestial blessings rain more copiously upon us.

Obliged to take his place, I shall try my best to meet your common expectation. Aided by the work and counsel of my confreres, I feel sure that the Pious Society of Saint Francis de Sales will continue the work its distinguished and lamented Founder started. Supported by God's power, assisted by the protection of Mary Help of Christians, and consoled by our worthy Co-operators, the work for the education of poor, abandoned young people, and for the foreign missions will continue.

One more thought. Following the example of our glorious patron Saint Francis de Sales, many a time when Don Bosco [p. 198] heard or read certain expressions that kindly people used regarding him, he became fearful that after his death he might be left in purgatory because he was considered not to be in need of suffrages. Therefore, according to his wish, I recommend everyone to offer fervent suffrages for his soul immediately, realizing that God will know where to apply the merit.

Salesians, Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, Cooperators, boys and girls entrusted to our care, we no longer have our good Father with us on earth, but we shall see him again in heaven if we profit by his counsels and follow in his virtuous footsteps faithfully.

Turin, January 31, 1888

Your affectionate confrere and friend,
Father Michael Rua

N.B. The venerable Don Bosco died on January 31 at 4:45 a.m. The interment will take place on Thursday, February 2 at 3:00 p.m., and the funeral mass at 9:30 a.m. in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

Mother General in Turin

On February 2, Mother Vicar informed us by telegram that our anxiously awaited, dear Mother General had arrived from Marseilles at about 9:00 that morning, just in time for the funeral mass.

We were very relieved at this news, and greatly desired the comfort of her presence among us at that time of sorrow.

But Mother Vicar arrived first, on Saturday, February 4. She told us that Mother General would be staying on in Turin with Mother Assistant. She told us of Mother's sudden arrival, tired and worn out with grief after her speedy journey from Marseilles, where she had received the sad news. She had been unable to control her tears when she met the Superiors and Sisters gathered to meet her in the House. Almost immediately and without allowing herself [p. 199] a moment's rest she had hurried to assist at the 9:30 funeral mass in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

Unforgettable days of mourning

After this news, given as soon as she set foot in the House, Mother Vicar gathered us all together to tell us about the great things she had seen and heard concerning our venerated and much lamented Father.

Beginning with the morning of January 31, she told us that Father Trione had come immediately to make the sad announcement of Don Bosco's death to the Sisters of our House in Turin. He had arrived at 5:00 a.m. and then celebrated requiem mass in their chapel, inviting them to offer Holy Communion for our dear deceased Father.

Then at 10 o'clock there was the solemn funeral mass, sung in the Church of Mary Help of Christians. As the news gradually spread through the city, people began to flock to the Oratory, asking to see the body, which was not yet exposed for public veneration.

The Sisters, invited by Father Sala, were admitted in the late afternoon. They found our good Father vested in a gold embroidered purple vestment. He was seated on a chair in the corridor adjacent to the private chapel, close to the room where he had died. It seemed as if he were just resting, not dead. His eyes were only half closed, while a gentle smile appeared to play about his lips.

All of us filed past to kiss the sacred hand that had so often been raised in blessing, and to touch it with rosaries, crucifixes and medals.

The next day he was taken to the little church of Saint Francis de Sales which had been hung with mourning draperies. He was still seated in his chair placed on a platform and surrounded by lighted candles.

We went there in the early morning, [continued Mother Vicar.] We said the rosary and assisted at the masses which followed one another, at all the altars, until 8 o'clock when [p. 200] the church was opened to the people who were thronging outside. Words fail me in describing the crowds. Everyone wanted to touch the body! Fortunately this was in the sanctuary which was separated by a railing. There were some clerics standing by who touched the body with the objects continually presented to them.

Outside, the Piazza Maria Ausiliatrice was also packed with people who continued to repeat, "He was a saint!"

Newspaper vendors shouted their news in every imaginable manner and pitch, as they displayed a full page bearing the announcement of Don Bosco's death. One said, "This is the death of one who converted even the most vile."⁷

The pilgrimage of hundreds and thousands of people continued until late in the evening. The doors had been closed, but they had to be re-opened to satisfy the crowds who were pushing against them, asking for entry.

It seemed as if the whole of Turin was in motion. Most of the shops bore the notice: "Closed due to the death of Don Bosco."

On Thursday morning the blessed corpse, showing no signs of deterioration, was placed in a triple coffin.

While the coffin was still uncovered a prodigious incident occurred which might be called a miracle.

Sister Adele Marchese regains her sight

Sister Adele Marchese, one of our young novices who is not yet twenty years old, has been, as you perhaps already know, totally blind since last September. According to Doctor Bono, she was suffering from an acute disease of the optical nerve known as "Gotta serena," a condition from which there is no hope of recovery. She felt inspired to petition Don Bosco for her cure and asked to be taken to him.

When she reached the coffin she groped for his hand which she placed on her poor sightless eyes. At that very instant she began to shout, "I can see! I can see Don Bosco! I can see everything!"

Sister Laurentoni, the Superior who was with her, tried to silence her and even put a handkerchief over her mouth.

[p. 201] But Sister Adele, almost beside herself, finding she was cured, could not keep quiet. Father Bonetti who happened to be present, had her taken away immediately, so as not to attract the notice of the people. However, it is a fact that her eyes are now more beautiful, more clear and more brilliant than they ever were before. You can well imagine the amazement of the Sisters who had seen her leave the House only a short time ago, guided step by step, unable to see one step ahead.

It is also said that an insane person was cured instantly at the touch of Don Bosco's biretta.

The solemn funeral obsequies

What shall I tell you about the funeral? The Church of Mary Help of Christians was packed with people. A special place had been reserved for our dear Mother, with a group of Superiors and Sisters. It was quite close to the catafalque which was under the cupola. In the benches on the same side was a large number of benefactors and notable people of Turin.

The funeral mass, composed years before by Monsignor Cagliero, was sung. He celebrated the mass himself assisted by two other bishops.

The coffin had, almost furtively, been left open, and at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, before it was finally sealed, the Superiors allowed Mother General to see Don Bosco's remains and to kiss his holy hand for all the Sisters of the Institute.

Meanwhile the crowd continued to pour into Piazza Mafia Ausiliatrice, although the procession was not due to start until 3:30 p.m.

It would be impossible to describe the people of all conditions who took part in the procession, or those who lined the route. It was calculated that there were altogether a hundred thousand people present. All along Corso Regina Margherita men and boys were to be seen climbing up the lamp posts and into the trees.

The lengthy procession was led by a double file of Children of Mary, followed by our boarders from Chieri and a [p. 202] large number of Sisters. The leading group was already mounting the steps of the sanctuary, while the end of the procession was still in Corso Principe Oddone.

Behind the coffin, which was borne on the shoulders of eight Salesian priests, walked poor Father Rua, between Father Durando and Father Sala. He looked the very picture of grief. A large number of priests, notable personages and representatives followed. A guard of honor was formed by the city office and, in full livery with insignia, the domestics of many noble families of Turin.

Unità Cattolica had good reason to write that 'the funeral procession of Don Bosco was not inferior to that of a sovereign.'

The obsequies were sung as soon as the cortege re-entered the church, but when these were completed and the absolution given, the people threw themselves at the coffin in order to touch it, kiss it and take away the flowers of the wreaths, which were torn to pieces. The same would have happened to the pall covering the coffin and the sacerdotal symbols had the police not promptly intervened to arrest and push back that overwhelming tide of people.

But no one wished to leave the church, so Father Trione mounted the pulpit and told the people, repeating it in Piedmontese, to go home because it was already late and Don Bosco would not be interred until the following day.

In fact when all had finally left and the doors of the sanctuary had been closed, the coffin was taken back

to the little church of Saint Francis de Sales, to wait in hope for permission to take it to Valsalice.

However Mother has remained in Turin, because she wishes to follow our venerated Father to his last resting place.

Mother Vicar added something further to her report. She remarked on the singular sense of peace, serenity and a kind of spiritual happiness that was felt all over the Oratory of Valdocco the very evening of the funeral.

Our Sisters in Turin also noticed it, [she concluded]. We should feel it too, assured by the words of Father Rua to the Salesians just after Don Bosco's death: "If we have [p. 203] lost a father on earth, we have acquired a protector in heaven. "

She then gave each of us a picture which she herself had placed in Don Bosco's hands. This would be kept as a precious relic, together with a small crucifix which had also touched the blessed remains. This had been given to us the previous evening by Father Bretto on his return from Turin.

"No, Don Bosco is not dead!"

On February 6, Mother Vicar called us together again to read us the following letter. Monsignor Cagliero had written it on the day of the funeral, wishing to comfort us and show us that he was very close to us:

My dear children in Jesus,

Our dear Father and Founder and yours has taken his flight to heaven!

He has not left us, but has gone to help us all the more!

He is no longer close to us here below, but on high he is closer to the One who guided his every action, especially in the foundation of your Congregation and ours.

Therefore, if he loved us while he was with us here below, we are now far dearer to him now he is on high. If his words consoled us here, from above he will support us by his intercession. If in his ardent charity he used to warn us of danger, he will now forestall and dispel it by his prayers before the throne of Mary Help of Christians.

I am persuaded that if he is dead to human eyes he is alive to the eyes of the spirit.

No, Don Bosco is not dead, and he will never die so long as his spirit-full of zeal for God's glory-and his heart-all love for the salvation of souls-remain alive.

Therefore, may Don Bosco, our dear saintly Father live forever! May he live in his Sons and in his Daughters! Let us live by his spirit of total union with God; let us live by his heart, all charity for others!

[p. 204] May his ardent zeal for good, his gentleness and unfailing kindness, live in us.

Let us imitate his unlimited trust in God when in trouble or danger, or when we are subjected to any severe trial, whether it be through the goodness of God or the malice of the devil.

May his purity of soul and simplicity of heart be our distinctive marks and those of the Congregation.

May our dear Father Don Bosco be ever living and present in our memory and our affection. May he live in our works, on our lips and in our hearts.

May Mary Help of Christians obtain for us all the grace of being united with him for ever, in heaven.

Amen.

Turin, February 2, 1888

† *John, Bishop*⁸

More news with Mother's return: the sympathy of the Pope

Today, Wednesday, February 8, Mother General returned at last, accompanied by Mother Assistant. In spite of her extreme tiredness and grief, she stayed to talk to us.

Later she will have many things to relate about Spain where, on the feast of Saint Francis de Sales, Father Branda had given the religious habit to the first two postulants, Isabel Mayo and Esperanza Flabia. It had been a beautiful ceremony attended by many important people, among them the Italian Consul. Lady Dorothy and her daughter had taken an active part, by acting as sponsors to the two postulants.

Mother quickly switched to the topic of our lamented Don Bosco, speaking of him with a full heart. She expressed regret at not being able to see him before he died, and said that when kissing his venerated hand, she had asked the grace of holy perseverance and fidelity to his spirit for us all.

She repeated much of Mother Vicar's narration about [p. 205] the impressive funeral, which would have ample coverage in the *Salesian Bulletin*, and also spoke about the chorus of illustrious voices which proclaimed Don Bosco a saint while expressing condolences.

The Pope also sent his heartfelt sympathy to the Superiors, through his Secretary of State, Cardinal Rampolla. He asserted that Don Bosco's death, "leaves a void mourned by the whole Church, and his Sons have good reason to lament the loss of a loving Father and an example of every virtue." ⁹

The interment at Valsalice

Mother also spoke of the disturbing preoccupation suffered by the Superiors. Right up to the afternoon of Saturday the 4th, when the extra two days allowed by the Municipality before final interment was due to expire, they still did not know where Don Bosco could be buried. Finally, permission was given for this to take place in Valsalice, and the transportation followed that same night, almost by stealth.

However there was a further delay because the tomb destined to receive the sacred remains was not ready. The interment took place at last on Monday, February 6. Mother General was present with Mother Assistant and a few others, and she was able to offer a last tribute of devout veneration to our Founder. She also witnessed the words of Bishop Cagliero and Father Rua as they gave into the filial custody of the clerics, the sacred remains within the tomb, which will become an altar.

Mother added:

This is everyone's conviction and I cannot tell you how many requests the Superiors have already received from all parts, for objects belonging to Don Bosco to be kept as relics. Father Rua has had to entrust Father Bonetti and Father Sala with the task of satisfying our principal benefactors at least.

Everyone is talking about the many graces attributed to the intercession of our good Father. You already know about our Sister Adele Marchese, who completely recovered her sight. Now, Sister Rosa Massobrio, who belongs to the same House in Turin, declares that she has received a special grace.

She had been sent by her Superior, Sister Laurantoni, with another Sister, to put Don Bosco's room in order. Sister Rosa had suffered for a long time from severe back trouble, which prevented her from kneeling. She felt inspired to ask our dear Father to cure her. With great faith, she lay on the bed in which he had suffered so much, and where he had finally died in the odor of sanctity. Her pain ceased immediately and she felt she was perfectly healed. ¹⁰

Therefore, while we continue our suffrages in accordance with Don Bosco's own wish, and as Father Rua insisted when he was speaking to the clerics at Valsalice, let us commend ourselves to him with confidence. Above all, let us pray to him for that which matters most: holy perseverance and complete fidelity to his spirit, in order to be in reality what he would have us be.

Funeral honors organized by the Nizza Branch of the Union of Catholic Workers

The days which followed were fully devoted to the memory of Don Bosco.

Even the people of Nizza spoke of him as a saint, and remembered the indelible impression he made on them every time they met him.

Therefore, the solemn requiem mass celebrated in the parish church of San Giovanni was very well attended. It was arranged through the initiative of the Union of Catholic Workers, and took place on February 17, the first Friday in Lent.

Naturally we also attended with a representative group of boarders. We were placed in the benches alongside the catafalque, on which rested the sacerdotal symbols. There was a portrait of Don Bosco in front with the following inscriptions :

[p. 207]

TO THE MODEL PRIEST OF THE XIX CENTURY
TAKEN BY GOD TO HEAVEN,
AS THE UNIVERSAL WORLD BELIEVES,
ON THE 31 OF JANUARY, 1888,
PEACE AND FOREVER GLORY

HASTEN
o HOLY MOTHER CHURCH
YOUR INFALLIBLE JUDGMENT
SO THAT HIS NAME MAY BE
INSCRIBED
IN THE CATALOG OF THE SAINTS

Many Catholic workers arrived from nearby villages. Each group carried its own particular banner, and many received Holy Communion.

Mass was celebrated by Father Bretto, and the three parish priests assisted in their robes. The choir consisted of the Union of Catholic Workers and a group of young men from Nizza.

After the celebration the Catholic Workers gathered at their headquarters where Charles Brovia, a past pupil and now diocesan president, thanked all the individual groups for their participation. He then spoke with filial devotion about Don Bosco, saying how fortunate he was to have spent nine years under his fatherly direction. He concluded by saying that Don Bosco would live for ever in the heart of the Catholic worker. Then, pointing to a framed letter written in Don Bosco's own handwriting, and hanging on the wall of the Union Headquarters, he said that it would be a sacred witness to his memory. He then quoted from the *Unita Cattolica*: "One does not mourn over the tombs of the saints, but one prays."

Finally, Father Bretto, his voice broken by emotion, thanked those good Catholic workers. In response they broke into the cries of, "Viva Don Bosco!"¹¹

Letter of testament of our Founder and Father

On her return from Turin Mother General had spoken about a letter of testament, already being printed, which Don Bosco himself had written. He had "imposed on his successor the duty of seeing that every Salesian, and every Daughter of Mary Help of Christians should receive a copy after his death."¹²

Now, on Sunday, February 26, Mother called us together again and, after a few words of introduction, distributed the precious testament, which we accepted with deep emotion. It follows here as a re-affirmation of our unanimous resolve to respond with the practical love our good Father asks of us, by fidelity to our vocation and exact observance of the Constitutions.

My dear and beloved children in Jesus Christ,

Before leaving this world I wish to fulfil a duty towards you and so satisfy an ardent desire of my heart. First of all I thank you with the most ardent affection of my soul for the obedience you have given me, and for all you have done to sustain and promote our Congregation. I leave you here on earth, but only for a short time. I hope that the infinite mercy of God will enable us all to meet one day in heaven.

Do not grieve over my death. This is a debt we must all pay, but afterwards, every fatigue sustained for the love of our Master, the good Jesus, will be greatly rewarded.

Instead of weeping, make firm and efficacious resolutions to remain firm in your vocation until death. Watch, so that neither the love of the world, nor the affection of parents, nor the desire of a more comfortable life induce you to make the great mistake of profaning the sacred vows and transgressing the religious profession by which you are consecrated to God. Let none of us take back that which we have given to God.

If you have loved me in the past, continue to love me in the future by the exact observance of our Constitutions.

Your first Rector is dead. But our true Superior, Jesus Christ, will never die. He will always be our Master, our [p. 209] Guide, our Model. But remember that He, in his own time, will also be our Judge and the Reward of our fidelity in His service.

Your Rector is dead, but another will be elected, who will have care of you and your eternal salvation. Listen to him, love him, obey him, pray for him as you have done for me. Adieu, dear children, adieu. I shall wait for you in heaven. There we shall speak of God and of Mary, the Mother and support of our Congregation. There we shall bless eternally this, our Congregation, the observance of whose Rules will have powerfully and efficaciously contributed towards our salvation.

Sit nomen Domini benedictum, ex hoc nunc usque in saeculum. In te Domini, speravi, non confundar in aeternum.

Father John Bosco

Celebration of the month's mind in Turin and Nizza

Mother Anna Tarnietti, our Bursar General, and Sister Letizia Lavagnino went to Turin for the funeral services of the month's mind. These were to take place in suffrage for Don Bosco, on Thursday, March 1, in the Church of Mary Help of Christians.

They took two wreaths with them, one from the Superiors and the other from the Sisters. They were to be placed by the side of the catafalque, as a token of our esteem. One of the wreaths was constructed in fine glass work, with black and white seed pearls. The black ribbon carried the following inscription, dictated by our Mother and embroidered in silver: "O Father, you have left us, but your spirit will live forever in your Daughters, whose only desire is to imitate you, and to be with you again."

The second wreath was made of artificial flowers and carried only the embroidered initials: F.M.A.

The Sisters returned, overwhelmed by the renewed majestic homage of devout admiration bestowed on the memory of our much loved Father. The church, which had [p. 210] been hung with mourning draperies, was packed with people. The solemn requiem was celebrated by the Bishop of Pinerolo. A number of other bishops assisted, as well as the Archbishop of Turin, Cardinal Alimonda. The Cardinal's voice was full of emotion as he praised Don Bosco to the extent of saying, "He divinized this century by means of charity"¹³

On the following Tuesday, which happened to be March 6, another celebration of the month's mind took place in our church in Nizza. It was certainly not so magnificent as the others, but the filial affection it demonstrated was definitely not less. Everything, including the music for the requiem mass, had been prepared with minute care.

The portrait of our beloved Founder in front of the simple catafalque, which was surrounded with lighted candles, recalled to our minds his fatherly figure, as he had stood so many times, speaking to us and blessing us at that same altar. We seemed almost to hear the echo of his voice as each one of us pledged herself to keep his holy words in her heart and translate them into a life of loving fidelity .

Father Rua, Don Bosco's successor

During these days we received the official communication that the Holy Father had confirmed Father Rua as successor to Don Bosco in the position of Rector Major of the Congregation.

This consoled us greatly, although we had never doubted the outcome, since Don Bosco himself had chosen him previously. In fact when Mother General returned from Turin, she immediately wrote the following letter to Father Rua, expressing her own sentiments of complete and filial adhesion in the name of us all.

[p. 211] Most reverend Superior and Father,

Thank God I am now safely at home and, although it is only a few days since I had the happiness of offering you my respects, I feel it a need and a duty to write you these few lines. You might rightly say, dear Father, that I could have expressed my thoughts freely, in person. . . But what could I do? I felt too weak and feared to betray myself, and so cause, by my tears, fresh and more cruel suffering to your heart, already so bitterly wounded. . .

So pardon me, most excellent Father and Superior and, even at this late date, accept my deepest sympathy and that of the whole Congregation.

I shall not dwell on this subject, Reverend Father, because my heart will not allow it. I only beg you to take comfort in the thought that from heaven Don Bosco will protect you in a special way. He will obtain for you from our heavenly Mother, Mary Help of Christians, the grace that you may see the two Congregations entrusted to you prosper.

For the rest, I assure you, good Father, that I am comforted, even in the midst of so much grief. To have you, Reverend Father, as Superior, is for me, for the Chapter, and for the individual Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, such a comfort and is so consoling, that I have no words with which to express it.

We shall thank God all our lives for the great grace he has given us. We shall try to become less unworthy of this grace by striving to correspond to our holy vocation with great fidelity.

Dear Reverend Father, I know that your burden as our Superior will cost you sacrifice and not a few preoccupations, but we shall pray very much that Jesus will give you ample recompense even in this.

For my part, I promise to do my best to render your burden less heavy. I shall continually inculcate prompt obedience in the good Superiors and Sisters, as well as unlimited confidence, and holy, reverent and filial affection for you. We shall all regard you from now onwards as our Father, guide and support, in fact,

everything for us, after God.

[p. 212] With this letter I place myself, and all our poor, dear Congregation, in your hands. I congratulate you, dear Father, on your election and pledge our complete filial obedience and submission, and I beg you to consider us as your Daughters.

Please bless our good resolutions; bless the professed Sisters and the novices; bless the postulants. But above all, bless this poor writer, the least of all, who kisses your consecrated hand with deep veneration. I have the honor to declare myself

Nizza Monferrato, February 9, 1888

Your most obedient Daughter,
*Sister Catherine Daghero*¹⁴

Even the Pope declared him a saint

Another motive for consolation was that the fame of Don Bosco's sanctity continued to spread.

Bishop Cagliero wrote about this in a letter to Mother General, written from Turin on March 7. He also lamented that news of Don Bosco's death would be very late in reaching America.

. . . I have been in continual communication with my poor Americans. They are so far away and have only the bare news of his death.

We have been very much comforted in our grief, and have holy memories and wonderful hope, but our poor Sisters have none of these things, even after a month! Oh, how hard life must be for our confreres after that fateful telegram: Don Bosco dead-Successor Father Rua.

As will soon be announced, the Holy Father, the cardinals, bishops and archbishops, all have a high concept of the sanctity of our dear Founder and Father.

Now that we have lost Don Bosco, the Pope himself is showing a very great interest in our Congregation and in yours. In fact he regards the two as one only!

Oh, how much the Holy Father loves us, and how great is his wish that we preserve the spirit of our holy Patriarch!

[p. 213] In fact, when he speaks of Don Bosco, Leo XIII calls him a saint. Even the cardinals are advising us to collect all records of him, in order that he make quickly be declared Venerable!

But we ourselves must speed up this grace, not only by our prayers, but still more by our example, our virtue, and our true religious spirit. . .¹⁵

Everyone took this advice to heart. May this wish and hope for the future be the seal which closes these pages of our family chronicle, written in the venerated memory of our Founder.

NOTES

1888

1. M.B., XVIII, 438.
2. Cfr. M.B., XVIII, 477,493.
3. In Gen. Arch. FMA.
4. M.B., XVIII, 521.
5. Appendix No. 11.
6. Cf. Father Bonetti's letter to Sister Eulalia Bosco, dated December 25, 1887. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.
7. Reported by Sister Louise Boccalatte.
8. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA. (copies were sent to the various Houses.)

9. M.B., XVIII, 560.

10. Sister Rosa Massobrio formed part of the first missionary expedition to the countries bordering the Magellan Straits which set out on October 30 of that same year, 1888. She remained a missionary until her death at Puntarenas on July 13, 1926.

11. Handwritten report by Charles Brovia to Father Rua on February 19, 1888, in Gen. Arch. FMA.

12. Written in September, 1884. M.B., XVII, 257.

13. Cf. *Salesian Bulletin*, May, 1888, Year XII, No. 5, 56-58.

14. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

15. Original in Gen. Arch. FMA.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX No. 1

Mother Daghero's Strenna for 1885

My dear Sisters,

The charity that binds me to you and the very great need we have of tending to religious perfection, are the two motives that urge me to write these few lines to you at the beginning of this New Year.

My good Sisters, you all know that the principal scope of our Congregation is to sanctify ourselves and to work unceasingly for the good of our neighbor, especially poor young people.

The salvation of souls! What a wonderful mission God has entrusted to us and if we would only understand how to correspond to His holy designs. Yet, it is a fact that God wishes to make use of us, poor miserable creatures as we are, in the great work of His mercy. From all eternity He has entrusted to each of us a given number of souls to lead to heaven. By prayer, example, work and sacrifice all of us can be apostles without going to far away mission lands. I said we can all be apostles, and this is true, because in religious institutes merit is shared by all and there is only one aim. She who is ordained by obedience to patch linen or wash saucepans etc., cooperates in the salvation of others as much as those whose work it is to educate and instruct poor girls. This thought should console those among our Sisters who, although they desire it ardently, cannot occupy themselves directly in the spiritual good of poor young people because of their particular assignment.

Oh what immense good could be brought about through our daily fatigue if, like our indefatigable Father, Don Bosco, and our Salesian Brothers, we too were animated by great zeal for the salvation of souls! But in order to do some good, my dear Sisters, zeal must be combined with a spirit of sacrifice, with deep humility, and with great faith and simplicity in obedience.

Therefore, let the spirit of sacrifice be the "Strenna" I give you for this year. I ask you to take it as coming from the Infant Jesus Himself. The spirit of sacrifice, that is, holy indifference in accepting the work, destination and task the Superiors think best to give you. The spirit of sacrifice in obedience, with no distinction of persons, manner or [p. 218] command, but seeing Jesus Christ in the person of the Superiors and the will of God in their commands. The spirit of sacrifice which makes us seek in everything God's will, His glory and the good of the Congregation. My good Sisters, I can assure you that if you practice this. God will bless you and Mary Most Holy will protect you. From her, I hope you will receive perseverance, which is the greatest of all graces.

I do not feel it necessary to recommend myself to your prayers. Rather I should thank you for saying so many for me during the feasts which are just over, not to mention the cordial wishes you sent me. These I cordially reciprocate in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Do not forget, my good Sisters, to pray unceasingly for the preservation and the health of our holy Founder and Father, Don Bosco, for the indefatigable Monsignor Cagliero, for our Sisters in America, for the dead and for the Congregation, which we must hold dear until death.

May God shower His heavenly blessings in abundance on us all. May He give you all you desire, and make you ever more worthy Daughters of His Most Holy Mother, Mary Help of Christians.

January 6-Mother House

Your most affectionate Sister in J.C.,
Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

APPENDIX No. 2

*Circular letter sent by Don Bosco to the Salesians
concerning the circulation of good books
(also sent to the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians)*

My dearest children in J.C.

God knows how much I long to see you and to be present among you again, to speak to you about the things that concern us and to console myself with the reciprocal confidence we have in one another in our hearts. But unfortunately, my dearest children, the weakness caused by past illness and the urgent business which calls me to [p. 219] France, prevent me from following the impulses of my affection for you, at least for now. Therefore, since I cannot visit you in person, I come to you by letter and am certain that you will be pleased at my constant remembrance of you. Just as you are my hope, so you are my glory and my support. Therefore, desirous to see you grow daily in zeal and in merit before God, I do not hesitate to suggest from time to time the means I consider best to make your ministry more fruitful.

The means I now warmly recommend to you for the glory of God and the salvation of souls is the circulation of good books. I do not hesitate to call this means divine, because God Himself made use of it in the regeneration of man. It was the books He inspired that carried true doctrine throughout the world. He wished that every town and village in Palestine should have copies, and that they should be read every Sabbath in the religious assemblies. In the beginning these books were the patrimony of the Hebrew people alone. But when the tribes went into captivity in Assyria and Chaldea, the Holy Scriptures were translated into the Siro-Chaldean language, and the whole of central Asia had it in the language of those parts. When the Greeks came to power the Hebrews formed colonies all over the known world and the Holy Books multiplied *ad infinitum*. The Seventy, with their version, even enriched the libraries of the pagan population. So much so that the orators, poets and philosophers of that time drew quite a number of truths from the Bible. Principally through His inspired writings, God was preparing the world for the coming of the Savior.

So then, it is up to us to imitate our Heavenly Father in His work. The circulation of good books among the people is one of the very apt methods of maintaining Our Savior's reign in many souls. The thoughts, principles and morals of Catholic books are drawn, in substance, from the divine books as well as from apostolic tradition. They are needed all the more today, inasmuch as godlessness and immorality use this armament in order to harm the flock of Jesus Christ, and to lead and draw the incautious and disobedient to perdition. Arms must, therefore, be opposed to arms. I would like to add that even if a book does not have the intrinsic force of the living word, in certain circumstances, it offers greater advantages. A good book can enter a house closed to a priest. It is accepted even by the wicked as a [p. 220] souvenir or present. It does not cause embarrassment when presented, nor is it disturbed by neglect. If it is read it teaches truths with calmness. If despised it does not complain and permits the remorse it sometimes arouses to stimulate the desire of knowing the truth, while it is always ready to teach. At times it lies dust-covered on a desk or in a library. No one thinks of it. But in solitude, sadness, pain, weariness, in the need for distraction, or in anxiety for the future this faithful friend sheds its dust. It opens its pages and soon the admirable conversion of Saint Augustine, Blessed Colombini and Saint Ignatius are repeated. Courteous with those in fear of human respect, it entertains without rousing suspicion in anyone; familiar with the good and ever ready for discussion, it is always carried everywhere. How many souls have been saved by good books; how many preserved from error and how many encouraged to good. Besides the merit of "revitalizing thoughts of God, he who gives a good book has already acquired incomparable merit before God. However, much more good may be obtained. If a book appearing in a home is not read by the person for whom it was meant or to whom it was given, it is read by a son, a daughter, a friend or a neighbor. A book in a village passes through the hands of a hundred people. God alone knows the good a book can produce in a town, a circulating library, an association of workers or a hospital when it is given as a token of friendship.

Do not fear that a book might be refused by certain people just because it is good. Quite the contrary could happen. Every time a certain Brother in Marseilles goes down to the docks, he provides himself with good books to give away to the porters, tradesmen and sailors. These books are always joyfully and gratefully received, and at times they are read immediately with eager curiosity.

Having introduced the subject with these observations and omitting those you yourselves already know I now place before you the reasons why you should be animated to procure the circulation of good books with all your might and by all the means at your disposal, not only as Catholics but more especially as Salesians:

1 - This was one of the principal enterprises entrusted to me by Divine Providence, and you know what untiring effort I have put into it in spite of a thousand other occupations. The furious hatred of the enemies of good and the persecution of my person show that error

[p. 221] sees in these books a formidable adversary and, for contrary motives, an undertaking blessed by God.

2 - In effect, the marvellous circulation of these books is an argument to prove God's special assistance. In less than thirty years, a total of about twenty million pamphlets and books have been distributed among the people through us. If a few books have been neglected others have been read by a hundred persons, and therefore the number of those whom our books benefit may, in the long run, certainly be considered greater than all the volumes published.

3 - The circulating of good books is one of the principal aims of our Congregation. Article 7 of the first paragraph of our Rules tells of the Salesians: "They will exert themselves to *circulate good books* among the people, using all the means that Christian charity inspires. They will seek both by word and *by writings* to place obstacles in the path of godlessness and heresy which under many guises infiltrates among the uncouth and the ignorant. They must use for this end the sermons, triduums and novenas they preach to the young people from time to time, as well as the *circulation of good books*. "

4 - Therefore I suggest that in circulating books you should keep to those which are known to be good, moral and religious. Those coming from our own presses should be preferred, both because the material advantage gained is turned over to charity in caring for our many poor boys, and also because our publications tend to form an orderly system which embraces, on a vast scale, all classes of human society .

I do not intend to develop this point, but rather to note with real pleasure one special class, that of the young. I have always tried to do good to these not only through the living word, but also through the press. In the *Catholic Readings (Letture Cattoliche)* while wishing to instruct all types of people I wanted to get into the homes in order to make the spirit reigning in our schools known to all, and to draw young people to virtue. The biographies of Savio, Besucco and others are especially apt in this regard. The *Companion of Youth, (Giovane Provveduto)*. was intended to bring them to church, to instill the spirit of piety and give them a love for the sacraments. The collections of Italian and Latin classics, the history of Italy and other historical and literary volumes, duly corrected, were intended as a placing [p. 222] of myself alongside the boys, preserving them from the many errors and passions which could prove fatal for time and eternity.

As I looked back with longing to the time when I was their companion during periods of recreation, I contemplated a series of amusing books which, I hope will soon appear in print. Finally regarding the *Salesian Bulletin*, there is this aim among the many: to keep alive among the boys who return to their homes a love for the spirit of Saint Francis de Sales and his maxims, and to help them save other boys. I cannot say that I have reached my ideal of perfection, but I can tell you that it is up to you to coordinate this work, so that it may be complete in all its parts.

Therefore I beg and entreat you not to neglect this important part of our mission. Do not begin with just the boys Providence has entrusted to you only, but through your words and example, make these boys apostles in the spreading of good books.

At the beginning of the year the pupils, especially the new ones, are fired with enthusiasm at the suggestion of subscriptions, particularly as only a minimal sum is involved. But see to it that their enthusiasm is won by spontaneous and not half-hearted effort. The young people should be induced to join through reasoned exhortations, and not only in view of the good they themselves may derive from these books but also because of the good they can do for others. This can be brought about by their sending them home to their fathers, mothers, brothers and benefactors, as they are published.

Parents and relatives who do not practice their religion to a great extent will be touched at the thought that they are remembered by a son or brother far away, and they will easily take up the book to read even if only for curiosity. However make sure that these presents do not take on the aspect of a sermon or lesson for the relatives. Rather let them be seen as loving gifts and affectionate souvenirs. When the boys return home, urge them to increase the merit of their good works by offering their books to friends, lending them to relatives, giving them in recompense for some service, handing them to the parish priest and asking him to distribute them, and by trying to enroll new subscribers.

Be persuaded, my dear children, that such activities will draw down God's choicest blessings upon you and our children.

But I must finish. Draw your own conclusions from this letter by [p. 223] seeing that our young people obtain

their moral and Christian principles especially from our own publications, without however, despising the books of other people. But I have to tell you that it pains me deeply when I come to know that in some of our Houses, the works printed by us, especially for the young, are sometimes unknown, or else belittled. Do not cherish or incite others to cherish that science which the Apostle says *inflats*. Remember that Saint Augustine became a bishop and, although he was an excellent master of literature and an eloquent orator, he preferred to tolerate inaccuracy of expression and a lack of elegance in style, rather than that people should not understand his words.

The grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ be always with you. Pray for me.

Turin, March 19, Feast of Saint Joseph, 1885

Yours most affectionately in Jesus Christ,

Father JOHN BOSCO

APPENDIX No. 3

Circular of Father Durando to the Salesians containing news of Don Bosco's journeys through France and Spain

My dear Confreres,

Before long Don Bosco's activities in Genoa and Varazze will be reported in the *Salesian Bulletin*. I intend now to make it my business to send you news of the journey through France as far as Barcellona, knowing that this is bound to give you pleasure. I have drawn information from various letters which have reached me.

Until March 28, Don Bosco was at Nizza occupied in receiving visitors and in visiting. Among the visitors on the 27th was a Countess who belonged to the retinue of the Queen of Wurtembergh. She begged him to visit the Queen who very much wanted to see him. The audience was fixed from 3:30 to 4:00 p.m. because the Queen was holding a gala reception at 4 o'clock.

This Queen was the wife of King Charles I and a member of the [p. 224] Russian Schismatic Church. Her name was Olga Nicolaiewna. She was the sister of the late Czar Alexander II of Russia who had been assassinated by anarchists about four years previously.

Don Bosco accepted the invitation, but at 3:30 he was still very busy giving audience to a number of gentlemen who had arrived at the "Patronato" to see him. Father Ronchail urged him to hurry and began to get impatient. Finally at 3:45, quite tranquilly as was his habit, Don Bosco came out of the room. They tried to hurry him, but he stopped to caress the boys and say a good word to them. When they told him that it was probably too late for the Queen to receive him he replied laughingly, and in good Piedmontese dialect, "Ees'ciau, i turneruma a ca!"¹

Marchionese di Constantain's carriage was awaiting him and the worthy Baron Heraud, wishing to act as footman, jumped up on to the box beside the driver. On arriving in the courtyard they were immediately ushered into the entrance hall. The servants and Ladies in Waiting moved in and out of the rooms and along the corridors with a certain amount of curiosity. They looked at Don Bosco with emotion and affection.

He was taken into the antechamber and his arrival was announced to the Queen, who received him immediately and greeted him with great affability. She spoke about his boys and his Houses and asked him to interest himself in Wurtembergh. Then, as she looked at him with emotion, she asked if he was in need of anything. Don Bosco replied that as this was the first time they had met he did not wish to ask for favors. However as the Queen insisted, he told her about the Salesian Cooperators. She immediately exclaimed,

"That is just what I want. Make me a Salesian Cooperator."

They continued their conversation for three quarters of an hour.

Meanwhile from 4 o'clock onwards carriages began to arrive, but everyone had to wait. Don Bosco then said that he was on his way to Barcellona so the Queen declared she would not detain him longer but she urged him to return to Nizza. As she wished him goodbye she said, "Thank you, Father, for the blessing you have brought to my family. As for me I shall soon give the news to all my relatives, but I shall at this very moment, note down in my diary the date and the time of your precious visit."

Then, instead of ringing the bell for Don Bosco to be shown out, the Queen herself walked with him as far as the antechamber.

The Ladies in Waiting showed great concern at the condition of Don Bosco as he walked painfully through the various rooms. At 4:45 he left Nizza for Cannes where he arrived at about 6:00.

The Marquis Gaudermaris was waiting with his carriage at the station and he was given affectionate and honorable hospitality in a large establishment run by the "Auxiliaries." There was indescribable enthusiasm for Don Bosco at Cannes.

He could scarcely reach the intended place of his visit before the courtyards, stairs and rooms were already filled. It happened that at one place a sick person was brought to him in a bed. She was a raving lunatic and her hands and feet had to be tied. The parents were inconsolable and they beseeched Don Bosco to bless their daughter.

Don Bosco did as they wished and then told the parents to untie her and let her get up.

"It is impossible, it is impossible!" said her mother. "The doctors have absolutely forbidden it."

"Have you faith in Mary Help of Christians?"

"Yes, we certainly have," they replied.

"Very well, then do as I tell you."

The sick girl then began to speak. She said,

"Listen to Don Bosco, I feel very much better already."

The straps were loosened and the young girl sat up and began to dress herself unaided. She then commenced walking around, a thing she had not been able to do for four years or more. She spoke again, "You see mama, I am quite well, I am cured. Father, help me to carry my bed back home."

Then Don Bosco spoke to the young girl. He said, "Thank Mary Help of Christians and go back home with your parents."

The miracle had been seen by the crowd waiting outside. Some of the people wept, others shouted and soon more sick were brought along. But Don Bosco only allowed himself to recommend special prayers and novenas.

While he was in Cannes Don Bosco visited the Infante of Spain, H.R.H. Hohenzollern. Our Father was very well received and the Prince expressed a wish to become a Salesian Cooperator. The Princess of Caserte came with her husband to visit Don Bosco. Cannes seemed to abound in wonderful charity. In Toulon Don Bosco went [p. 226] to visit his outstanding, much loved benefactor Count Colle and he received one of his usual gifts. Our own boys gave him an enthusiastic welcome when he arrived in Marseilles. The court yard was brilliantly illuminated. There was a beautiful entertainment which lasted about an hour and Don Bosco was very pleased with the gift of 1000 lire for the church of the Sacred Heart which had been collected from the Houses in Marseilles, Lille, Paris and Navarre.

The journey from Marseilles to Barcellona was very pleasant and the weather good. Don Bosco arrived on the evening of the 8th, after twelve hours in the train. Father Branda was waiting for him at Port Bou, with a gentleman representative of the Barcellona Authorities.

At the Mataro station Don Bosco was met by our great friend and benefactor, Marciso Pascual, who visited our Turin Oratory in 1884.

Many Spanish newspapers had already announced that Don Bosco was expected in Barcellona, while for a month, the local papers of Madrid, Seville and Barcellona spoke of the new Saint Vincent de Paul, the apostle of charity.

Hence a large group of ladies and gentlemen were waiting for Don Bosco at the station. The highest nobility of Barcellona was there, besides representatives from other cities in the kingdom.

The Vicar General, Father Valentino Besart, represented the Bishop who was engaged in a pastoral visitation. Also present were representatives of the civil authorities of the city, the president of the university with representative groups of the high schools and the grammar schools, and also the president of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul with other officers, the Director of the *Catholic Youth* and many others. There was also a large gathering of noble ladies representing the female section of the Salesian Cooperators. It really was a very impressive reception. Outside the station a good thirty carriages contended for the privilege of carrying Don Bosco.

But as was to be expected the contest was won by the coach owned by the "Mother of our House," Lady Dorothy de Chopitea, and in a very short time they arrived at this noble lady's mansion. Here Don Bosco was met by more people of distinction and still more representatives. Father Rua celebrated mass assisted by distinguished [p. 227] persons. Dinner was served in that patriarchal home and afterwards they prepared to leave for the school.

Last year some young boys of the Talleres Salesiano of Sarria sent a beautiful drawing of a steam engine to Don Bosco in Turin. It bore the marking Turin-Barcellona. This beautifully framed picture, placed in Don Bosco's waiting room, was the expression of a courteous desire of the boys, and it had its happy fulfilment on April 8, 1886.

These dear children had been making novenas, fasting, depriving themselves, and even making solemn promises. They had even sacrificed their food and recreation to obtain from God the favor they so much desired.

As soon as they heard it had been granted they set about preparing a worthy reception.

They decorated the playground magnificently and prepared a beautiful song to sing. This, accompanied by the band, was a great success.

A huge crowd awaited Don Bosco and followed his every movement, seeking to greet him and kiss his hand. Once he had entered the chapel a new hymn, *Ego sum Pastor bonus*, was sung. Then Don Bosco gave the blessing of Mary Help of Christians to the people in the crowded church and in the school forecourt. The day ended with benediction of the Blessed Sacrament which was given by Father Rua assisted by the Vicar of the diocese.

Thanks be to God, Don Bosco is keeping well and he says that, even if he is in another country and among other people, his mind and heart are always in the dear nest of the Oratory.

He sends his greetings to everyone and commends himself to the prayers of his dear Sons. We do not as yet know how long he intends staying in Barcellona, nor which other cities he plans to visit. I hope that in my next letter I shall be able to give you more information regarding this.

Convinced that this news of our dear Father will give you pleasure, I send you my own greetings and asked you to pray for me and believe me always

Turin, April, 1886

Yours affectionately in J. and M.
Father C. DURANDO

[p. 228]

APPENDIX No. 4

*Verses composed by Father Lemoyne for the re-election
of Mother Daghero².*

(Nizza Monferrato, August 22, 1886)

(*) A cloud now
stretches over the skies,
and there is no sign
of a sun that shines,
not even to mark the twilight
of a day that dies;

But after a shower
of salubrious rain
the earth is renewed,
its mantle more brilliant
and clearer than ever, the sun
refulgent appears.

Thus Mother, the ending
of your dear reign,
the Rule demanded,
But 'twas a flash
and the longed for renewal
brought joy to all hearts.

That end was *awaited*
as a light soft cloud,
certainly not as a forecast
of a *night* approaching,
but as an infallible messenger
of new brightness.

[p. 229]

Oh Mother! what exultation
at this moment
engulfs the souls
of hundreds and more
of your Daughters. Tis a yearning,
warm gladness and joy.

See I Those glances
of love confirm it,
those faces expressing
feelings deep hidden
in souls, as it continues,
that round of applause.

With me they repeat the message
that never before have they
tasted such festive splendor,
such joy that renews
within them
the bond of love.

They are ready I The paths will be levelled
and flowers will carpet the road,
as they raise their hands to Mary
in warm-hearted prayer for you.
They will ever be your conquest,
your honor and glorious crown!

[p. 230]

APPENDIX No. 5

*Father Bonetti's circular letter
after the conclusion of the General Chapter*

*Oratory of Saint Francis de Sales
Turin, Via Cottolengo, 32*

Feast of the nativity of the Virgin Mary

1886

To the Sisters of Mary Most Holy, Help of Christians,

By this time, beloved Sisters, you already know that the election of the Superior Chapter of the Sisters was completed on the 16th day of the month of August. You will remember that our beloved Father Don Bosco ordered prayers and gave special norms for the good success of this event, in a circular dated May 24.

Nevertheless, in conformity with Article 13, paragraph VII of the holy Rule, I announce officially that the Sister electors, presided over by the Very Reverend Father Michael Rua, Don Bosco's vicar, re-elected the following in a perfectly ordered and tranquil manner: Sister Catherine Daghero, Superior General; Sister Enrichetta Sorbone, Vicar; Sister Anna Tamietti, Bursar; Sister Emilia Mosca, First Assistant; and Sister Elisa Roncallo, Second Assistant. This means that the new Chapter is composed of the same Sisters as the former one, and they have the same offices. The election was approved and confirmed by the Major Superior according to Rule.

It now only remains for me to urge you to give these Superiors, especially Mother General, all the esteem, love, respect and submission required. Try to render the weight of responsibility God has laid upon them less heavy, and so procure greater benefit for yourselves and sweeter consolation from your obedience.

If you have not already done so you may now stop the prayers ordered for the elections when you receive this

letter. In place of them, say or sing the *Te Deum* once only.

There were other general and particular conferences before and after the elections. They dealt with matters concerning the great development of the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of [\[p. 231\]](#) Christians, the work entrusted to them and the correct way of observing the holy Rule.

The deliberations taken will be communicated to you as soon as they have been reviewed and approved by the Major Superior.

While passing this news on to you gives me pleasure, it grieves me to have to announce at the same time that at break of day on August 1, we lost one of our dear Sisters. She was one of the first Sisters and a foundation stone of the Institute and one of the most observant and most virtuous: Sister Felicina Mazzarello, sister of the first Superior General. She was the Superior of the House in Borgo San Martino, the first House to open after the Mother House in Mornese, and she later became Provincial of the Houses in Sicily. Called back to the mainland because of poor health she died in our House in Mathi. She had the consolation of receiving Holy Communion several times and was assisted by the Sisters. From her bed of suffering she gave wonderful proofs of enduring patience and perfect love of God.

Questioned as to whether anything worried her she answered, "Nothing, I have to say, rather, that I would never have believed it possible to be so tranquil and contented at the end of life." Here I should like to relate an incident in her honor and for our edification. In 1874, when Superior in Borgo San Martino, she heard, in one of the many sermons, a method of preparing to die well. After summarizing his thoughts, the preacher ended with the maxim, "The pain of living without satisfaction is worth the satisfaction of dying with. out pain." Our good Sister Felicina was especially struck by this sentence and wrote it in her notebook. She used to read and repeat it often and, what is more important, she made great efforts to practice it. Resolute in wanting to be without anguish of soul at the hour of death, she not only embraced the sufferings of life with courage, but studiously went in search of them. When told to take care of her. self she would answer with a smile, "The pain of living without satisfaction is worth the satisfaction of dying without pain."

It happened just as she said. This excellent Sister not only found herself without anguish of spirit at the hour of death, but filled with ineffable joy. Thus were fulfilled the words of the Holy Spirit that the souls of the just are not touched by the torment of death but are in perfect peace. *Non tanget illos tormentum mortis, illi autem sunt in pace.*

[\[p. 232\]](#) We hope that by now God has shed His eternal light upon His faithful spouse and that she rests in the peace of the saints. However, the Sisters, especially those whose Superior she was, are asked to say special prayers for her soul, as a sign of appreciation and gratitude.

Let us all ask God the grace of living in such a way as to merit the death of Sister Felicina, and of many other Sisters, a death filled with joy and happiness, followed by an eternity of bliss in heaven.

Our beloved Superior and Father Don Bosco asks you to pray much for him, and to comfort the last years of his life by a united effort to live as good religious, loving God and making others love him. He says that nothing is more valuable to him than to know that his Sons and Daughters are working to become saints and to sanctify souls by preserving them or leading them to God.

Finally, please accept my greetings; I pray that heaven may grant you fidelity to your holy vocation and final perseverance, and I ask you to pray fervently for

Yours affectionately in Jesus Christ,

Father JOHN BONETTI

N.B. The following points are recommended to the local Superiors:

1. Outsiders should not be admitted to the private parts of the House, nor to the places where the Sisters work or take recreation. This also applies to the workroom girls and those of the festive Oratory .

2. No outside person should be admitted to the House after the evening Angelus, and those persons who are in the House at this time should be asked to leave, if they are not residents.

3. The festive Oratory girls should not be kept longer than half an hour after sunset, unless they have the special permission of their parents.

4. Regarding the assistance of the girls in the Oratories, there should only be sufficient Sisters for the need. The others should stay together in a separate place.

5. In the Oratories and in any of our Houses .of education dancing as an amusement is not approved of by Don Bosco. Therefore it [\[p. 233\]](#) must not be introduced and, if it is already taking place, it must no longer be

allowed.

6. The Sisters should never accept invitations to spend periods of diversion in the homes or country residences of private persons, except when they have to accompany girls as a reward. In this case an unoccupied place or the house of some benefactress or of the relatives of the pupils, should be preferred.

7. Finally, the Superiors are urged to take great care of their own health and that of the Sisters in their charge, by themselves practicing the rules of hygiene already stated at other times and suggested by science, experience and charity, and by seeing that these rules are practiced by others.

APPENDIX No. 6

Father Branda's testimony
*of the supernatural intervention of Our Lady
in the first Spanish foundation of Sarria³*

Late one evening during Don Bosco's first and last visit to Sarria, he retired to his room to rest. I was keeping him company and seeing how very thoughtful he was, I asked if there was anything he needed. He seemed too absorbed to answer me; then all at once, he began to sob so I asked him if anything was troubling him. Again there was no reply, so I hurried away to find Father Rua. He came immediately and insisted on knowing what was troubling Don Bosco.

At last Don Bosco said, "I did not want to speak but I am obliged to do so. I have to tell you about a vision I had. I cannot say whether I was awake or dreaming, but Our Lady appeared to me and said, 'Do you remember when I appeared to you at Becchi, and predicted all that you have now accomplished in Turin? . . . I now tell you that your religious will have ten centers of work, stretching from the east to the far west, and from these centers many Salesians and many Sisters will branch out and will do much good. Just as what I told you before has come to pass so will what I am telling you now.' "

[p. 234] Don Bosco said no more but Our Lady must certainly have manifested other particulars concerning the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians because what I am about to relate was evidently the consequence of the same vision, which I believe took place during the night between the 1st and 2nd of May,⁴ and was related to Father Rua and myself on the evening of the 3rd.

Earlier that day, when Don Bosco was walking in the playground surrounded by many of his Sons, he expressed a wish to see the kitchen garden belonging to the House. We all went with him to enjoy his company. Leaving the old house we went through the second playground and into the vineyard by a path which stretched to the boundary. Don Bosco's walk was usually a short one because of his health, but that day he insisted on going further. When we reached the end of the path he placed his hands behind his back and looked towards the house where the Sisters are now, but which at that time was the country residence of a rich gentlemen. He did not ask to whom it belonged but looked at it well, nodding his head from time to time as if to assure himself that he had seen it before. Then he exclaimed, "This is really the one! This is really the one! The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians will go there!"

Then turning to me he added, "You must buy that villa, Father Branda, and I will send the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians there."

At that time I was deep in debt because of the developments taking place in the Salesian Houses, and building work was still to be completed. So I was certainly not very happy to accept this burden, and tried gently to distract Don Bosco and to pull him back as if to get the idea out of his mind. I then changed the subject. But later on Don Bosco returned to the same theme, adding, "When I return to Turin I shall see that the first Sisters for Spain are prepared in Nizza. When you come to Turin you will take it upon yourself to teach them a little Spanish. Then you will take them back with you to Sarria."

This topic was certainly not to my liking, so I replied, "But Don Bosco, we have so many other things in hand at the moment."

"Very good," he went on. "When will you be coming to Turin?"

"Towards the end of August."

"Good!" Don Bosco continued. "You will come to Turin for your retreat. Then you will go to Nizza where you will find the Sisters to [p.235] whom you must teach Spanish."

On May 6 we were bidding Don Bosco our last farewells as he prepared to leave Barcellona, when he turned again to me, "Well, I think we understand one another. You must get the House ready for the Sisters you will be

bringing back here with you."

June and July passed and, although I remembered Don Bosco's words I tried to banish them from my mind by thinking that even the saints have their peculiarities. However I also felt remorse because I was doing nothing and feared to hurt Don Bosco. So I told the story to Lady Dorothy who said immediately that it would be impossible to purchase the house Don Bosco had indicated, because the owner was very attached to it and would not leave it even to pass a day in Barcellona. "It would be considered an affront even to suggest it to him," she said, and added, "The most we could ask for would be a piece of land near the Salesians on which to build a house for the Sisters."

She entrusted her own son-in-law, Mr. Narciso Pascual, with the thought of putting forward the request. But the proprietor was very angry and retorted, "Do you think that I am in such urgent need of money that you ask me to divide my property. . .?" He became so upset that Mr. Pascual had to make an apology to him.

When I heard this result I was very pleased because it got me out of trouble.

Something else happened which created a still greater difficulty. Two weeks before I was due to leave for Italy the bishop issued a decree stating that no application for the introduction of new religious into the diocese would be granted, because there were already too many. This was another comforting assurance for me.

When I arrived in Turin I found that Don Bosco was at San Beningno, so I went there to see him. After the first exchange of greetings he said quickly,

"I have already arranged for the Sisters who are to be sent to Sarria. They are now waiting at Nizza for your Spanish lessons."

"But," I replied, "I have to make my retreat and then I have to think about some supplies. . ."

"Yes, yes," Don Bosco answered. "Make your retreat, do your shopping and then you know what I want you to do."

I left him, thinking I would reason with him again some other [p. 236] time. When I was able to speak to him at a more convenient time I said, "Don Bosco, it is absolutely impossible to take the Sisters to Sarria because the bishop has prohibited any requests of this type."

Don Bosco rejoined instantly, "I have already spoken to that bishop and he has agreed. Now, what about the house? Have you bought it yet?"

"No, because the proprietor will not hear of selling it."

"Nevertheless you will go to Turin and then Nizza, and you will not leave without the Sisters."

"Well then, I shall have to stay here."

"Oh no," Don Bosco retorted. "You will go back and you will take the Sisters with you."

Having no idea of how a concession for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians had been obtained from the bishop, I wrote to Lady Chopitea who, after speaking to the vicar of the diocese, replied that the bishop knew nothing at all about the Sisters. The concession Don Bosco had been granted regarded only the young theologians who would be allowed to take part in lessons at the diocesan seminary. In fact, a telegram from the bishop confirmed this for students of theology, but no mention was made of the Sisters.

In the meantime I received a letter from the bishop's secretary that said, "We are at Rejs del Mar, an hour's journey from Barcellona, where there is a very sad case indeed. The father of a certain family has died suddenly, and the mother has now followed him to the grave, having died of grief. Their two children, a boy and a girl, have therefore been left orphans. The bishop's sister requests your charity in taking the little boy. She has already made arrangements for the little girl in an institute of Sisters."

An idea flashed across my mind that might possibly remove the veto from the entry of the Sisters. So I replied that I would willingly take the boy but, as was well known, the Salesians could scarcely provide for themselves... If the bishop's sister could obtain permission for the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians to come to Sarria, it would mean a saving in the cost of caring for the linen of the Salesians, and the money thus saved would suffice for the maintenance and education of the boy. . .

[p. 237] The reply was favorable and so the first obstacle had been overcome, but the problem of the house still remained. I wrote again to Lady Chopitea, telling her that the Sisters were ready and that their departure could not long be delayed.

This charitable lady searched everywhere and not finding what was required, got one" of her bachelor cousins, who was a Barcellona judge, to cede his country residence in Sarria provisionally.

Once his consent had been obtained she wrote that the Sisters could come, and so we set out on our journey back to Spain. But when we arrived in Barcellona on October 21, we were informed that the cousin whose house the Sisters were to occupy, had succumbed to typhoid fever in that very villa. This meant that it was now in the hands of the health authorities. However the Sisters were given temporary hospitality in the house belonging to Mr. Pascual, Lady Dorothy's son-in-law. A small house without a garden or courtyard was next rented, and in it

the little community took up a rather uncomfortable residence while seeking more suitable premises.

In the meantime, on November 25 the proprietor of the house indicated by Don Bosco died suddenly. However we did not dare to approach the heiress, his only daughter who was married to a rich banker, as it was feared they were both of the same opinion of the lady's father.

It was either on the 23rd or the 24th of the following December that I had to present myself to Mr. Gerona, the husband of the heiress, in order to receive the usual offering of four scudi. At that time I tentatively said, "Your good lady has inherited a villa. . ."

"Yes, do you want to buy it? . . . Have you so much money to spare? . . . I have been offered 250,000 pesetas for it and I have refused. Do you wish to offer more?"

"Rather less," was my reply.

I met this gentlemen on other occasions in my efforts to acquire the villa at the lowest price possible. He reduced it to 200, 180, 170, and finally 130,000 pesetas. At last, worn out by my insistence he said,

"I will sell the villa to you, because my wife has taken such a dislike to the place since her father's death, that she never wants to enter it again. However, I place one condition. At the signing of the deeds you must hand over to me, in cash, the sum of 70,000 pesetas, [p. 238] which is the amount I have to payout in death duties. If you cannot find this amount then cease pestering me."

I hastened to report this conversation to Lady Dorothy. Seeing her moved to tears as she listened to me, I added, "But if it is not possible to raise such a sum, forget about it. We shall take it as a sign that God does not will it . . ."

"Oh, no!" the good lady quickly replied. "I am moved because of something quite different. I must tell you that when I divided my patrimony among my daughters, I reserved only the interest for myself plus 70,000 pesetas, which I deposited in the bank. I thought that even if I were to lose everything, this would be sufficient for me to live on, with Maria (the maid). I now understand that God wants me to be really poor, and poor I shall be. The 70,000 pesetas are ready,"

"But madam," I said, "think well of what you are doing,"

"I have already thought: the 70,000 pesetas are for the villa!"

I returned to the banker and concluded the deal. Since we were in the month of March, the feast of Saint Joseph was fixed as the date for signing the contract and handing over the keys. The necessary adaptations were made and on the following May 1, exactly a year after the vision, the Sisters entered the house Our Lady had pointed out to Don Bosco.

All the developments in this affair served to confirm the vision and the will of God concerning the entry of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians into Spain. Perhaps no other foundation in the Institute can show so clearly the direct intervention of Mary Help of Christians, as that of Sarria. I therefore consider it a duty to make this known so that it may have a special place in the history of the Institute.

I have to add that at the time I gave no thought to reporting these matters nor of putting them into writing. It was only on my journey back to Italy that I began to think over these happenings more seriously-so much so that as soon as I arrived in Turin I felt the urge to speak of them to Father Amadei, Mother Eulalia Bosco and others. Finding that no one knew anything at all of these matters, I told myself, "Well I must really write an account,"

I think that I have now satisfied a debt of gratitude to Mary Help of Christians, and to the memory of her servant, Don Bosco,

signed, Father JOHN BRANDA, Salesian

[p. 239]

APPENDIX No. 7

Mother Daghero's letter to the Sisters in America

Viva Maria Immacolata!
November 25, 1886

My dear Sisters.

Letters from my beloved Sisters always give me great pleasure. However I can assure you that every time letters from America arrive. I receive very special consolation. This is because I rejoice in the thought that I am at least united in spirit with you. my dear Sisters who are the most beautiful part of our much loved Congregation. because God has chosen you for the American missions.

So continue to send me your good news as often as you can. Continue to support me with your prayers. and do not forget to give me a share in your profits. your holy work, and the merit you are laying up for heaven.

Thus. united in one sole spirit. directed by the same Rule and bound together in one indissoluble bond of charity, we may hope that through the merits of Jesus our Spouse and of Mary our Mother. we shall one day be united forever in heaven!

Be of good heart then! If the devil fumes and tries to prevent our doing good. let us not become upset because of his intrigues. We should. rather. be strong in the strength of Jesus Christ and go bravely into battle. destroying the arms of the evil one by trust in the omnipotent God. Thus we shall succeed in saving those souls that cost our dear Jesus so much.

When you receive my letter you will probably be celebrating Christmas and be close to the end of the year. This offers me the opportunity of sending you my little spiritual "Strenna." which I ask you to receive as coming from the hands of the Infant Jesus.

Recollection: which will keep you constantly united to God and conformed to His adorable will always and in everything. both in success and in failure.

Charity: that is to say. fervor of spirit expressing itself in acts of love of God. turning to Him often. even in the midst of pressing occu- [p. 240] pations, with ejaculations; charity with one's neighbor, especially the Sisters, loving them, helping them and sympathizing with their shortcomings by warning them kindly when this is needed, and by always praying for their perseverance while they are alive, and for their glory if they have passed away.

Prudence: that is, reflecting seriously on what we say, how we behave and how we act, in a word, on our whole demeanor, in order that we may be seen to be Sisters worthy of the title of Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

My dear Sisters, in order to perserve your spirit of fervor it will be very useful for you to remember the Last Things-death, which will come suddenly and perhaps soon; judgment, that will be passed on our every action by that Jesus who has done so much for us and whom we have loved so little and, perhaps, served so coldly. Then there is the eternal punishment for the wicked and the infinite reward and unspeakable joy our Spouse has prepared for us, if we are faithful.

Therefore I repeat, be of good heart, pain is short-lived and joy eternal . . .and in paradise we shall see the value God sets on our present toil. Let us pray for one another and continue to work and toil, but act always and in everything for Jesus, otherwise it will be waste of time. I pray for you every day. The Sisters here greet you and will remember you in their prayers on condition that you do the same for us, all of you.

God be with you, my dearest Sisters. May Jesus bless you, console you, and with you bless

Your poor Mother,
Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

APPENDIX No. 8

Mother Daghero's Strenna for 1887

My dear Sisters,

My chief reason in deciding to' send you a spiritual strenna again this year is the ardent desire of seeing you grow continually in religi- [p. 241] ous perfection. I have pondered deeply on what we need to practice most, in order to correspond faithfully to our holy vocation and become dearer to God, and I think I have found this in the virtue of patience.

The *constant practice of patience* is then, the "strenna" I give you for the year which has just begun. I ask you to practice it first of all with yourselves, and then with the Sisters, the young girls entrusted to you, and everyone.

Patience with yourselves means never to give in to discouragement, even if you find you have very little virtue and are full of shortcomings. What matters is that we do not make peace with our defects, but fight against them bravely, resolve with God's grace to correct them, and practice the religious virtues steadily and constantly.

Patience with the Sisters. Every day innumerable ways of practicing this virtue present themselves. Perhaps our self-love has been wounded by a word, or perhaps we are hurt by the rough manners of someone whose character irritates and annoys us, or maybe a quick order is given in a rather harsh tone of voice. All these are thousands of unforeseen opportunities which God sends us to practice this virtue and acquire merit.

Patience with the young girls who come to our schools, workrooms and festive Oratories. Seek first to win their esteem, by your exemplary behavior. Then, win their affection, by your gentle manner, bearing with them

always. Be patient in struggling against ignorance, indifference and difficult and impetuous characters. Be patient when, in spite of your advice, there is no improvement. The seed you are sowing now with so much effort will grow later, watered by God's grace. If you do not have the satisfaction of reaping the fruit here below you will gather it in eternity.

Be patient with everyone and in everything. Be patient when, notwithstanding your good will, you seem unable to please; when God humiliates you with failure, with the disapproval of men, or with sickness; and when you have to suffer adversity for the love of Jesus. Do not only bear these things patiently, but rather, willingly in the thought of His good pleasure. What more? Let us remind ourselves that in order to get to heaven we shall most certainly have [p. 242] to walk the path of suffering, either in this life or in the next.

I take the opportunity, my good Sisters, of giving you the news that the Director assigned to this House is the professor, Father Clemente Bretto.

Accept my sincere thanks for the wishes you sent me, which I reciprocate a hundredfold. Allow me to recommend to your continued prayers our venerated Father Don Bosco, and all our Brothers and Sisters, whether alive or dead.

Pray also for me who love you always in Jesus and will always be, in His Sacred Heart

Mother House, January 6, 1887

Your affectionate Sister.

Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

APPENDIX No. 9

From a letter of Sister Teresa Papa's mother to her daughter

. . . On April 28, 1887, when Don Bosco was on his way to Rome, he stopped at Arezzo as guest of the Bishop, Monsignor Giusti⁵ whose secretary was my uncle, Father Andrea Marconi.

He left for Rome on the morning of the 30th, and my uncle went to the station with him. As he took leave of him my uncle placed an envelope in his hand saying, "Don Bosco, this is my offering for your Congregation."

When he had thanked him Don Bosco added these words, "The day will come when there will be an intimate link between your family and my Congregation."

My uncle did not live to see this prophecy come true. He died before arrangements were made for your entrance into the Congregation. At that time the Sisters of Mary Help of Christians were absolutely unknown. When your poor father was promoted to the rank of Major there were only three posts available, two in northern Italy and one in Sicily. The two in the north were left to those who already held them, which was rather unusual, so we had to take fulfilled.

In the April of 1887 you were only two and a half years old. Yet at that time your Founder saw you, and chose you for his Congregation.⁶ How lucky you are! But I too feel a little proud! . . .

Pisa, October 22, 1935

JULIA PAPA nee MARCONI

APPENDIX No. 10

Testimony of Sister Felicina Torretta

concerning Don Bosco estasi at Lanzo

After taking my examinations for the teachers' diploma in 1887, I was sent during the summer to Lanzo, for a period of rest. Father Bonetti, our Director General, told me to present myself to Don Bosco, who had been staying there since July 4. I was to ask for his blessing and to seek some advice concerning the carrying out of my new assignment as Superior of the Lingotto kindergarten, near Turin

When I arrived in Lanzo I was taken to the office of Father Viglietti Don Bosco's secretary, but he was not there.

After waiting a while I moved towards the open door of Don Bosco's room, I called loudly, "May I come in? . . . May I come in, Father? . . ." But there was no reply. Thinking he too might be absent, I stepped just

inside the room and. . . Oh, what a wonderful sigh met my eyes!

Don Bosco was standing there raised from the ground. His arms were stretched upwards and his head was encircled with a resplendent halo.

He was smiling, and his lips moved as he nodded signs of approval to a Being who was invisible to me.

I raised my voice and called several times, "Don Bosco.. . Father . . .," but still there was no answer.

Struck with awe, I stood watching him for about ten minutes. He then made a large Sign of the Cross and bowed reverently to the invisible Being. His face was shining with what appeared to be trans- [p. 244] cendent joy. Then he slowly descended as the light gradually disappeared.

Don Bosco turned and as he saw me he gave a start. "Oh Sister Felicina, what a fright you gave me I" he exclaimed.

"Father," I answered, "I repeatedly asked your permission to enter in a loud voice. But you did not hear me."

He smiled and with fatherly benevolence gave me a seat close to his writing desk. Then he gave me plenty of precious advice for the new mission awaiting me.

Before dismissing me he said, "I am sure you would like some more medals of Mary Help of Christians, wouldn't you?.." "Oh yes, Father, thank you," I replied. So he gave me five or six more for my dear relatives. Finally he added, "Now kneel down and I will give you the wonder-working blessing of Mary Help of Christians."

I kissed his hand and left with my heart overflowing with joy and radiant hope.

October 20, 1939

Sincerely,

Sister FELICINA TORRETTA⁷

Daughter of Mary Help of Christians

P.S. After some years I mentioned this incident for the first time to Father Lemoine.⁸ He said, "Do you know that you have related an incident which exactly resembles one I witnessed in one of our schools?" He did name the place but I cannot remember it now. . .

APPENDIX No. 11

Mother Daghero's Strenna for the year 1888

Many of you have insistently asked me to send you the usual spiritual strenna. I did not do this earlier because of the serious illness of our beloved and venerated Father Don Bosco, and also because of the work involved in the admission to religious clothing of 17 Sisters. The ceremony was performed by His Excellency the [p. 245] Very Reverend Monsignor Cagliero, while he was visiting this House. But, my dear Sisters, I shall now do what I have previously left undone, and this will give you fresh proof of the holy affection I have always had for you, and the real desire I have to see you all become saints.

Here then is the "strenna."

Death to self – to self-satisfaction – abandonment and filial trust in God.

1. Be persuaded, my good Sisters, that if we are poor in virtue and have made very little progress in perfection, to which we must aspire by our vocation, it is due to excessive self-love, too great an attachment to our own opinion, to our manner of seeing things and to our own convenience-in a word, to self-satisfaction. There even in self-mastery, as if we were already dead to the things of the world. Thus we shall be well prepared to die in reality when God sees fit to call us to be with Him in paradise. Oh, my dear Sisters, what an amount we could gain from this moment on, if we knew how to make good use of everything to bring about this spiritual death within us!

We might be disturbed by the inclemency of the weather; perhaps the common life weighs rather heavily upon us; or maybe a companion appears bad-mannered. It could be a temptation to be overcome; an unexpected disappointment or a satisfaction denied us. Thousands of occasions present themselves and all can be used as effective means for us to become saints, if we use them properly. While all these small sacrifices, made and continued for the love of Jesus, help us to die to ourselves, they will prepare us for greater sacrifices, render us worthy to taste the happiness God wills to bestow, even in this life, on those who struggle, suffer and do violence

to themselves for Him.

2. In order to succeed in this dying to self, we must learn to live in abandonment to God always, in health and sickness, consolation and affliction, and in death. Oh, how happy we shall be if, truly detached from the material world and dead to self, we throw ourselves with filial trust into the arms of God! God is good. He loves us, forgives us and helps us. God is omnipotent. He can bestow on us all [p. 246] that is good, and defend us from all that is evil. He honors our trust in Him and sees to it that the trust of those who work for Him and abandon themselves to Him, will never be betrayed. Let us then acquire the beautiful habit of making acts of trust in God, especially when we are assailed by useless fears, and we shall be comforted and greatly encouraged in our striving for perfection.

I should like to write to each Superior and Sister individually, but my many occupations prevent me from doing this. However I can assure you that I remember you all in my poor prayers. Continue your prayers that God may grant us the fulfilment of our desires for the health and preservation of our holy Founder. Do not spare any sacrifice to obtain this grace. Pray for all our Superiors and for our dear deceased, for the missions, the spiritual needs of the Congregation and all the souls God has entrusted to us.

While you remember all these intentions in your prayers do not forget

Mother House, January 21, 1888

Your affectionate Sister in Jesus and Mary,

Sister CATHERINE DAGHERO

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NOTES

Appendix

1. Patience! . . . then we shall have to return home.

2. Handwritten original in Gen. Arch. FMA. *Free translation.

3. Father Branda related this to the Superiors of the General Council on March 20, 1918, at Nizza Monferrato. A similar report made in writing was presented by Father Branda in June, 1926, and is also preserved in the Gen. Arch. FMA.

4. M.B., XVIII, 72 gives an outline of the dream, or rather, the very long vision as it occurred during the night between April 9 and 10. On page 109 Don Bosco's prediction concerning the future House of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians in Sarria is very briefly noted.

5. Cr. M.B., XVIII, 311-313.

6. Sister Maria Teresa Papa was born in Pisa on July 22, 1884. She entered as a postulant on February 13, 1904 at Ali Marina (Messina) where she received the religious habit on October 16. She made her novitiate at Nizza Monferrato and was professed there on September 17, 1906.

In the December of 1922 she was sent to France and then to Belgium. She was Superior for 13 years and Provincial for 19 years between the Provinces of France and Belgium. She died at Verona on December 26, 1964.

7. Sister Felicina Torretta was born at Buttigliera d' Asti on May 14, 1865. She became a postulant on August 24, 1884 at Nizza Monferrato where, on January 1, 1885 she received the religious habit and on August 22, 1886 was professed. She died in Alassio (Savona) on December 21, 1942.

Regarding the incident, another and more detailed account is also kept in the Gen. Arch. FMA. The details were collected and written by Sister Celestina, Sister Felicina's sister. She says it took place on July 9, 1887.

8. Cf, M.B., XVIII, 377.

