BISHOP SCALABRINI’S PLAN FOR
THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS
OF ALL NATIONALITIES

CENTER FOR MIGRATION STUDIES
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The following documents show the vast assistential program planned by Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini (1839-1905) on behalf of all migrants. Scalabrini, Bishop of the large Italian diocese of Piacenza, was prompted to action by his understanding of the episcopal ministry as a service to the most powerless and marginal groups of society. He was led by his missionary spirit to concern himself in a special way with all people who find themselves in the situation of real migrants.

The religious community to which Bishop Scalabrini entrusted his charisma of generous service to all migrants values his insight and his example especially today, when immigrants and migrants from the developing countries are still on the move by the millions. In fact, the words of the "Constitutional Preamble" written by the General Chapter (1971-1972) of the Scalabrinian Congregation witness this commitment: "This global vision led him to take an interest in all migrants, those of other nationalities as well, and took concrete form, as a kind of spiritual last will, in his plan to set up in the Roman Curia a Commission for all Catholic migrants (pro emigratis Catholicis)."
With the Motu Proprio, Apostolicae Caritatis of March 19, 1970, Pope Paul VI re-organized the whole department of pastoral assistance to migrants on the part of the Holy See. He established the "Pontifical Commission for Migration and Tourism," under the dependence of the Sacred Congregation for Bishops.

The precedents of such a Commission go back to the turn of the century and were established by the Apostle of the Emigrants, Bishop Giovanni Battista Scalabrini.

It is known that the first official organ of the Holy See for the pastoral care of migrants was created by Pope Pius X in 1912 with the institution of the Special Office for the Spiritual Care of Migrants attached to the Sacred Congregation for Bishops (then called Concistorial Congregation). With the Apostolic Constitution Exsul Familia of 1952, Pius XII confirmed the exclusive authority of the same Congregation "to seek and to provide everything pertaining to the spiritual welfare of migrants of the Latin Rite anywhere they may go." Exsul Familia established also the "Supreme Council for Migration" and created the office of the "Delegate for Migration Affairs." The latter office was substituting that of the "Prelate for Migration," which Benedict XV had wanted, and which was, however, only for Italian migrants. Among the initiatives taken by Pius X we must point out the institution of a College for the training of those priests who wished to exercise their ministry among Italian migrants, a College later
called Pontifical College of Emigration. Among the initiatives taken by Benedict XV, should be listed the "National Day for Migrants," for the purpose of collecting funds to support the Catholic institutions of assistance to the Italian migrants (cf. G. Tessarolo. The Church's Magna Charta for Migrants. New York, 1962).

As we can see, there was a gradual evolution in the Church, from a national to international scope. A similar evolution is evident in the thought and actions of Bishop Scalabrini. He founded first a Missionary Congregation and a Society for the Protection of Italian migrants, but he was later moved by his understanding of the episcopal ministry and by his missionary zeal to concern himself with the real migrants, regardless of their national origin.

Of all the initiatives of the Holy See we have just mentioned, the first inspirer was indeed Bishop Scalabrini.

Recent archival research allow us to provide an almost complete documentation of the contribution of the Bishop of Piacenza to the solution of the religious problem of the migrants. We say "almost complete," first of all because it consists only of the drafts of Bishop Scalabrini's correspondence; then, because we lack a document (not very important, however), i.e. a letter of Bishop Scalabrini to Cardinal Raffaele Merry del Val, Secretary of State of Pius X, written on February 28, 1905.
We are publishing for the first time the following documents:

1. A letter of Bishop Scalabrini to Pope Pius X, dated July 22, 1904.¹

   This letter was written by Bishop Scalabrini while he was in Brazil visiting his missionaries and the Italian migrants. It is the first document in which the plan is mentioned of creating a Roman Congregation, along the lines of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, for Catholic migrants all over the world.

2. A letter of Cardinal Merry del Val to Bishop Scalabrini, dated March 19, 1905.²

   This is the answer to a letter written by Bishop Scalabrini on February 28, 1905, in which he asked the Holy Father to send an apostolic letter "of comfort" to all Catholic migrants. From the notes jotted down by Bishop Scalabrini in preparation to the audiences granted him by Pius X at the end of January, 1905, we learn that he proposed, among other things, the following "measures": "1) A word by the Holy Father .... 4) A Congregation for Catholic migrants."

3. A letter of Bishop Scalabrini to Cardinal Merry del Val dated March 19, 1905.³

   This is an answer to the above mentioned letter sent to Bishop Scalabrini by the Cardinal, and it announces the sending of the plan for a Congregation for Catholic migrants.

4. A letter of Mons. Scalabrini to Cardinal Merry del Val, dated May 5, 1905.⁴

   This letter of the Bishop of Piacenza is attached to his Memorial on the planned Congregation or Commission.

5. The Memorial of Bishop G.B. Scalabrini on the Congregation or Commission for Catholic Migrants.⁵

   We have divided this document in several parts: The first (Presentation of the Problem) is written by Scalabrini's hand; the second (Gravity and Urgency) and the third (Proposed Remedies and Duties of the
Congregation) were dictated to his secretary, Msgr. Camillo Mangot; the fourth (Comments on Selected Points) was written by Father Paolo Novati, provincial superior of the Scalabrinian missionaries in the United States; the fifth (Suggestions for Practical Implementation) was also written by Msgr. Mangot. The entire manuscript has corrections made by Bishop Scalabrini. Part four has been taken from a study assigned to Father Novati. Of the other parts, instead, Bishop Scalabrini is to be considered the author.


With this letter, written fifteen days before his death, Bishop Scalabrini offered to the Holy See the service of three of his missionaries for the concrete structuring of the Congregation or Commission for Catholic migrants.
I. Letter of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini to Pope Pius X

San Paulo, Brazil, July 22, 1904

Most Holy Father:

I beg You to excuse, in Your immense kindness, my
daring in addressing this letter to You and in using this
paper, the best that can be found in this house of the Con-
gregation of my Missionaries, and which brings to Your atten-
tion a great work of love they have accomplished. I strongly
feel the need to thank You, on my knees at the feet of Your
August Person, for the blessing with which You deign Yourself
to accompany me in my long voyages and whose most beneficial
effects I have experienced.

Thank God, I did not suffer at all during the 27 days
I spent aboard ship, although the sea was not always friendly.
I celebrated Mass every day; I heard confessions, distributed
communion, preached, taught the catechism, so that a Brazilian
gentleman said upon landing: "We have spent three weeks in a
monastery!"

Here I was magnificently greeted by the Bishop, a man
worthy of his position, by the Chapter, the clergy and by an
immense crowd of Italians, which gave a great deal of discom-
fort to the international socialist party which is here quite
strong and numerous.

I preached the Spiritual Exercises to the Missionaries
and the Sisters and I have begun to visit the Italian colonies
grouped in the so-called fazendas. Their encounter with me is something beyond description. When they see me from afar they cry "Evviva!", but when I am in their midst they all weep. However, the most solemn moment comes when I speak to them about Your Holiness and when I impart to them Your Apostolic Blessing. Theirs is a very sweet crying of intense joy. Yesterday I visited a colony made up almost entirely of people from the province of Treviso. What a joy to hear them speak of their Holy Father; what innocent pride they felt for having seen You, having spoken to You, having confessed to their Pope when He was a Parish Priest, a Canon, a Vicar, etc. The owner of the fazenda, who was also present, cried too like all the others and told me that this was one of the best days of his life.

I shall continue these encounters for another week.

Then, I shall leave for the States of Espirito Santo, Parana, St. Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul, visiting the houses of our Congregation and as many as I can of the colonies of our immigrants.

I am leaving San Paulo with the great satisfaction of having made an agreement with this good Prelate about certain things which will greatly benefit the souls of our poor immigrants who are now, more than when in Italy, thirsty for the word of God and the sacraments. In this Diocese there are over 2,000 fazendas which the Missionaries of St. Charles visit tirelessly, like true apostles, as frequently as possible, but certainly not more than once a year, although they are twelve.
It is necessary to increase this number even to better manage the important institutions of charity they have created during the past ten years. The Italian orphans used to end up in an undescrivable manner. The first Missionaries sent here realized immediately the need for an Italian orphanage. They courageously began to work and God helped them. Now there are 802 boys sheltered, educated and trained in a trade. There are also 242 boys lodged in two great work-houses outside the city who study, pray, learn a trade and are preparing themselves to be good christians. They live by the contributions obtained by the Missionaries in their continuous apostolic excursions. What surprises me most is that these Missionaries have no debts of any sort. It is God Who sees their need and provides for them.

I dare now to present to You, Holy Father, an idea of mine. Your Holiness has planned the sublime and faithful program: *Instaurare omnia in Christo* (restore all things in Christ). Why could not the Church, which through the admirable institution of Propaganda Fide spends so much money and commits so many priests for the spreading of our faith among the infidels, do something similar for the preservation of the faith among the migrants? I am speaking of the migrants of all nations and all Catholic lands: Italians, Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese, Canadians, etc. A special Congregation dedicated to this task, which is the greatest problem of our century, would do honor to the Holy Apostolic See; would bring near to her, as to a loving mother, the people of the world; and would bring about an immense good. Up North, in the United
States of America, millions of people are lost to Catholicism—a loss that is certainly greater than the conversions of the infidels obtained by our Missions during three centuries. This loss still continues, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary. Protestantism works here, and up there as well, in perverting the souls. Now a Congregation which would contact the bishops of the dioceses where catholic migrants come from and the dioceses they go to (and if this is not enough, even by contacting the respective governments); a Congregation which would study every angle of the difficult and complex migration problem, using for this purpose the old and the new studies, and which in the name of the Holy Father would adopt the proper remedies, such a Congregation would be a blessing for the world and would suffice to render Your Pontificate glorious.

I implore You, Holy Father, to pardon the audacity of a devoted and grateful son who would give his blood and life for You and Your cause. May you condescend to continue imparting to me Your holy blessing, which I receive daily on my knees with deep emotion, so that I may accomplish, with God's help, the tasks for which I have come here, and thus may be back, by the feast of All Saints, among my dear people.

I kiss Your feet, Holy Father, and with a sense of the strongest, old and deeply felt veneration, I glory in re-affirming myself of Your Holiness

Most humble, most devoted and most affectionate son

+ G. B. V.
Most Revered Bishop:

Forgive me if I have delayed so long answering your very appreciated letter of February 28. I had much to do and, besides, I wanted to examine more carefully that serious problem which I have truly very much at heart. I need not add that I have spoken about it, more than once, to the Holy Father.

It would not be difficult, nor displeasing, to His Holiness to address the word of comfort you suggest to all migrants of every nationality. But I think that this word should be pronounced when it can be followed up without delay by an efficacious measure. It is precisely in this that we lack a clear line of conduct and a concrete program of action. A Commission Pro emigratis catholicis could be appointed, I agree. But then, what? It is necessary to find competent people first; then, to indicate a line of action; determine the limits of the apostolate of the Commission and the means to be put at its disposal, in addition to indicating the practical way of using them. In a word, we need a preparatory work, otherwise we shall have only words, promises, a Commission, good intentions, complications with other similar societies, but nothing more. Try to study this affair well, Monsignor, and to prepare the necessary prerequisites for a profitable action which, in my opinion, should not start with great noise and too vast proportions. It would be better to start like the "mustard seed" which later on,
with God's blessing, could grow ever more.

I have not failed to write immediately to Brazil in the sense you suggested and I am waiting for an answer.

Recommend me to God, Monsignor, and believe me, with sincere esteem,

dedulously yours

R. Card. Merry del Val.

3. Letter of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini to Cardinal R. Merry del Val

Most Reverend Eminence:

I have your treasured letter of the 19th inst. and I thank you very much.

Your observations regarding the plan of a Congregation Pro emigratis catholicis seem to me wise and worthy of all my consideration.

I shall do as Your Eminence wishes. I cannot send you the new plan very soon because I am burdened with too much work, but I shall try to finish it at the earliest possible time.

I am glad of the opportunity of renewing my sense of particular veneration so that, kissing the Sacred Purple, I confirm myself

of Your Most Reverend Eminence

+ Gio. Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

Piacenza, March 29, 1905.
4. Letter of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini to Cardinal R. Merry del Val

Most Reverend Eminence:

I am sending you herewith the attached report on the subject we have discussed.

Written between one audience and another and in the middle of a thousand tasks, it has many defects, several gaps and a few repetitions. It should be done over and put in a different order; but I really have no time. I shall rewrite and complete it, God willing, later on.

Kindly accept it as it is and forgive me my excessive confidence.

I take this opportunity to renew the sense of my deeply felt and great veneration and to reaffirm myself

Of Your Most Reverend Eminence

Very humble and affectionate servant,

+ Gio. Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

Piacenza, May 5, 1905.
5. Memorial of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini on the Congregation or Commission for Catholic Migrants (Pro Emigratis Catholicis).

PART I

(Presentation of the problem)

Most Eminent Prince:

I have the honor of submitting to the great wisdom of Your Eminence some considerations and proposals regarding the present and future conditions of Catholicism in the two Americas.

These observations and proposals are the fruit of long studies done on the spot and even more of the experience of well-deserving missionaries and famous prelates who have dedicated their whole life to the spreading of Religion in those countries.

Never before, in writing about this subject, have I felt more moved and have invoked with greater intensity enlightenment from God and the grace of that eloquence which comes from words supported by the evidence of facts and figures, so as to be able to transmit to others the inner convictions I feel on this very important subject. What I saw in my journeys through the United States and Brazil is before me as it were real and the sentiments I felt will never be cancelled from my heart.

I have visited large cities and recently established communities, fields made fruitful by work, and immense spaces never touched by a human hand. I have known immigrants who
had reached the prominence given by wealth; others, who lived in comfort; but mostly, the obscure, immense mass of the poor who struggle for life against the dangers of the desert, the snares of unhealthy climate and human exploitation - men totally abandoned, deprived of all religious and social comforts and lacking everything. I felt their hearts beat in unison with mine when I spoke to them in their native tongue in the name of Religion.

It was a painful spectacle for me to see the faith dying in millions of souls for lack of spiritual nourishment and also, unfortunately because of the unworthiness of some of its ministers.

I have also seen the practice of Christian life and the ineffable hopes of Religion bloom again in entire populations, like in a springtime of the spirit, under the wind of a holy apostolate.

I have seen, in a word, that if in those regions the Church of God has no greater importance than the one it has now in the direction of both the life of communities and individuals, and if millions of souls are lost, the fault lies in greater measure than with the activity although great, of the enemies of the faith, with the lack of religious work well organized and adapted to the local environment and with the lack of clergy. I have therefore formed the strong conviction that it is urgent to take adequate measures and that it is a serious error on the part of all of us who are in charge of the government of the
Church to allow the continuation of conditions which so greatly damage the souls and belittle before God's enemies the social importance of the Catholic Church.

There is no question that one of the greatest events of modern history was the occupation, by the European nations, of all the continents inhabited by primitive races which were considered retarded or refractory to civilization and which were practising the lowest forms of idolatry. It was an event of political and social (and therefore religious) character since all human facts reflect the psychic unity from which they emanate. The conquest of America and the submission of the indigenous races had surprising political, social and religious consequences.

America, as everyone knows, is one of the largest continents of the earth. Its area is 40 million square kilometers, that is, four times larger than Europe and it extends in both hemispheres, divided almost in two halves above and below the Equator, reaching in the North the Polar Circle and in the South the 60th degree of latitude. Thus it has all climates, hot and cold, with subtropical and temperate zones, and it possesses all the fruits and the natural resources of all climates.

Surrounded by three great oceans, endowed with all the riches that the earth's fertility and human industry can produce, America has in its conformation, in its gulfs, in its wide and secure bays, in its great navigable rivers thousands of kilometers long, the space and the natural roads given to
mankind by Providence. It was Providence that wished to save for mankind this last cradle where the different races could go as to a common promised land and where they could mingle, multiply and progress for their own well-being and for the glory of God.

At the present time there are in America 18 independent republics and several colonial possessions belonging to various European nations, with a population of many millions. If that vast continent had the population density of Italy (even if we do not count the equatorial and polar regions) it could be host to over 2,500 million inhabitants, that is, one third more than the people now living all over the surface of our globe.

All the people of the earth have contributed to the formation of these nations, and with statistical figures one could determine in what measure the blood of each European people has become part of the American type.

Thus civilized people and populous cities have now supplanted the ancient empires of the Incas, the Aztecs, the Quichnos, the Guarany, the vagrant Indian tribes of the North and the numerous ones wandering in the South without a name and without a fixed residence.

The forms of European immigration to America, after the brief and bloody period of the conquest, are entirely different from all other migrations recorded in history.

This has not been a migration of barbarians causing massacre and ruin, but a migration of hosts of peaceful workers
searching for bread, success and forgetfulness. No longer the rushing of a swollen river that sweeps away everything, but the placid spreading out of fecundating waters. No longer suppression of nations, but fusions and adaptations in which the various nationalities meet, intermingle, forge themselves anew and give origin to other peoples in which, notwithstanding some differences, certain characteristics and particular religious and civil tendencies prevail as they do in the various types of the same race.

Such migration reflects a natural law. The physical and the human worlds are subject to a mysterious force that stirs and mixes, without destroying them, the elements of life—a force which moves about the organisms born in certain places and spreads them into space, transforming and perfecting them in such a way as to constantly renew the miracle of creation.

Seeds migrate on the wings of wind; plants are transported by the currents; animals and birds and, most of all, men (individually and more often collectively) travel always as instruments of that Providence which presides over human destiny and which guides them, even through catastrophies, toward the ultimate goal which is the perfection of man on earth and the glory of God in Heaven.

This is told us by divine revelation and is confirmed by history and biology, and it is by means of this law that America has become within a century the great crucible of the old European nations and seems destined to exercise a strong in-
fluence on the destiny of mankind.

This glorious economical and political event which began in the XIX century and is still taking place in the XX, explains the great interest that the European governments show in following each of their migrant groups in the various American States. These governments subsidize associations formed for the protection, social assistance, charity, education of the immigrants. They establish employment agencies and commercial outposts. They encourage all those organizations which transform the immigrants from an amorphous conglomeration of people into a living organism in which vibrates the national sentiment of the immigrants and in which the love for their native countries is kept alive, while they become part of the American life.

The Catholic Church is impelled by both its Divine apostolate and its secular tradition to put its imprint on this great social movement whose goal is the economical improvement and the fusion of the Christian people.

As it has done everywhere and in all times, the Church has a noble and great mission even in this conflict of interests. It must first of all provide for the safety of the faith, for its propagation and for the salvation of souls; then, it must preside, as queen and mother of all, over the different groups; smooth the sharp edges of the various nationalities; quiet down the struggles for self interest waged by the various countries; try to bring harmony among the various nationalities and create in them the unity of faith which is a source
of peace.

Nobody could deny to the Church this function of mother and moderator of mankind which it exercises by divine right and by universal consent. In fact all catholics believe and the non-catholics in good faith admit that wherever the Church is, there is the immortal work of a merciful God: **Immortale Dei miserentis opus, quod est Ecclesia.**

Considerations, facts and figures, lead us naturally to ask: what must the Church do in order to keep the religious sentiment alive and active and the catholic faith strong in these people, people before whom a future, rich with so many promises, is now open, and to which the Catholic peoples of Europe send yearly such a strong contingent of migrants of different nationalities?

The question is a simple one, but the answer is not. An adequate answer must be varied and encompassing at the same time - an answer of a general and particular character. It must be general, that is, because of the authority it comes from, and particular and varied according to the environments where it must be applied, the different needs it must satisfy, the laws, the customs of the single nations and, I should add, of the various christian communities that are being formed.

I shall try to be brief, presenting just a synthesis of my thoughts.
PART II
(Gravity and urgency of the problem)

Since the discovery of America, the Church has exercised its apostolate there. It kept in check the greediness and the cruelty of the conquerors and civilized the natives. A valid example is the struggle in which the clergy engaged in order to defend these natives and the Christian communities formed among the Guarani in the Missions of Paraguay—a vast political and religious empire admired even by writers who were not too sympathetic toward Catholicism, and which was rightly called "The Republic of The Saints."

Later on, because of the prevailing conditions, the action of the clergy became too involved in politics. The colonial political power of Latin America became the worst imaginable form of misgovernment, foolishly tyrannical and greedy not only toward the natives but also toward the Americanized populations of European origin. The saying that a European cobbler had a better right than an illustrious Creole to govern a colony became an axiom for those colonial governments which seemed to be formed only to alienate the people from their mother countries and to arouse hostility toward anything European. This dichotomy widened until it degenerated into open rebellion. This state of animosity and political rebellion had its repercussions on religion, since in the eyes of the majority, the clergy appeared (and in fact it was) involved in the political struggle for power. To this cause must be added the scarcity of churches
and clergy, so that we must necessarily conclude that Catholicism in those regions existed more in name than in fact, with little moral and religious advantage for the governments and for the governed.

Many priests as well went overseas after this migration began, but unfortunately (with few exceptions) they were of the worst type – priests of low morals who led scandalous lives and who, because of simony, discredited religion and ruined entire communities.

It is now time to restore, even there, everything in Christ.

Much has been done to this end, but it is a trifle in comparison to what must still be accomplished. All immigrants of various nationalities need the alert and maternal care of the Church, especially when they run the risk of losing their faith. The Italian immigrants however deserve special attention since among all those Catholic people they can be called entirely foreign. The Spaniards and the Portuguese found in America a large territory where their languages were spoken. The British and the Irish found in the United States and in the British territories a second mother-country, at least as far as religious assistance is concerned. Only the Italians live there abandoned to themselves and there was even a time, not too far back, when they, because of prejudice, were also ill-assisted in their churches. This is also true of the Poles, the Ruthenians and the Germans.
In my recent travels through those regions I have participated, I repeat, in religious experiences that moved me to tears and I have gathered facts and anecdotes that, being a Bishop, make me blush when I think of the abandon in which they were left for so many years and which still exists for many of them. There are hundreds of thousands of our migrant brothers who vainly ask for a priest who can speak to them the word of God in the language of their distant homeland.

Such is also the condition of the Poles tormented by schism, of the Canadians, of the Germans, (where they lacked the presence of the Jesuit Fathers, unlike in the State of Rio Grande do Sul), of the Ruthenians afflicted by the burning question of the celibacy of their priests; of the Greek-Italians and of other recent Catholic migrants scattered everywhere.

I do not wish to continue mentioning these evils, since they are known to all. On the other hand I am aware of the strong desire on the part of Your Eminence and our Holy Father to eliminate them.

PART III

(Proposed remedies and duties of the Congregation)

Allow me, Your Eminence, to briefly mention the remedies I deem more suitable.

In my opinion, the first remedy consists in intelli-
gent structuring of the apostolic work in the Americas. Such an organization should originate from the Holy See since it is not only the unquestioned authority before the entire Catholic clergy, but it is also of a universal nature and therefore embraces all nationalities.

We must act in such a way as to see that every colony or community, where immigration has been more intense, be provided with its priest who, living in the urban center of the colony, could periodically and at the proper time made a round of the territory assigned to him - a territory that is quite often as large as one of our largest provinces.

This religious work must be accompanied by the establishment of a school where our immigrants' children can learn, besides reading, writing and arithmetic, the language of their new country and that of the country of their origin. A very apt element in the preservation of the faith is the sense of one's origin adequately inculcated in the Americanized generations.

Language is a mysterious means of keeping the faith. It is not easy to explain why, but it is true that, by losing the language of one's country, one can also easily lose his ancient faith. We cannot determine the mysterious reason for this fact, but experience teaches us that so long as a family living abroad preserves its native language, it does not lose its faith.

The schools could be entrusted to sisters, and I have made a successful experiment in this field by engaging the Sisters
Apostles of the Sacred Heart in Brazil, both in some rural colonies and in urban centers.

And since in those young communities any good task must always be a useful one, in many of the most neglected places next to the school and church it would be good to establish a dispensary managed by the Sisters or by the priest, where the most commonly used medicines could be bought at a low cost.

In this way the clergy would be the center of a variety of activities for religious, social and material assistance. The Church of God would stand blessed among those communities. Once more, like its Divine Founder, the Church would be present among the people "doing good and healing all."

So far I have spoken about South America.

As for North America, the dangers of seeing our faith vanish are even greater, since to those already listed (such as the lack of assistance) we must add the proselytizing done by the protestant sects which are more active and numerous there than elsewhere.

The losses we have sustained in the United States for lack of religious assistance are immense. Statistics prove that two thirds of the present population of that nation (about 48 million), originate from the various European nations. It is very painful to know that, although a great portion of this immigration comes from Catholic countries, at the present time the Catholics are only about ten million. There is no doubt that the Catholics in the United States could be more than double their present number if only those who immigrated had remained
Catholic. This could have happened if upon their arrival in the United States they had found the necessary religious help and if this help had always continued. Migrants tenaciously hold on to everything that reminds them of their mother country and their ancient faith. Sadly, the United States clergy, like that of Latin America, is not numerically sufficient and, in addition, it is faced by the language barrier. This obstacle confronts the immigrants of the Latin race, who have difficulty in learning English, and the Anglo-Saxon clergy which finds it difficult to learn the romance languages.

The remedies, in addition to the one I have mentioned (sending there numerous well-trained priests) could be the following:

1) Creating parishes on the basis of the single nationalities every time the Catholic communities are able to pay the cost of maintaining a parish, both regarding the salary of the clergy and the exercising of the cult.

The United States laws are very liberal and grant civil rights to any parochial association without distinction of cult or nationality. The experiment made in some cities with the creation of Italian parishes should suffice to prove how valuable these simple means are for reviving the faith and the desire for religious practices, even on the part of individuals who seemed very apathetic.

2) In those centers where many different nationalities live together and where none of them is capable of forming a
parish, there should be sent a mixed clergy, with the strict obligation of imparting a religious education to adults and of teaching the catechism to the children in their own language.

3) The clergy should preferably be of the same nationality as its parishioners, or at least speak their language.

4) Every parish should have a school where the native language of the immigrants could be taught, together with English and the first elements of a formal education.

The institution of parochial schools where together with English the national language of the parishioners is taught is of primary importance not only for increasing the religious sentiment by taking advantage of the patriotic one (which is always strong in the immigrants) but also in order to prevent the youth being influenced by the American school which, because of its spirit of perfect indifference regarding religion, assumes the character of an atheistic school.

I have thus outlined the greatest part of what the study and the work of the proposed central Congregation (Commission) for Catholic Migrants should be.

The necessity of such a Congregation (Commission) and the advantage we could derive from it are self evident. New phenomena require new social structures in order to adequately respond to the need. Isolated instructions and measures, no matter how wise, are not sufficient since it is only human that both of them - without the directives of an organization that allows
them to function correctly and keep them efficient - have little value. As a matter of fact, directives for this purpose were already issued and provisions made by the Holy See and particularly by Leo XIII, but their efficacy, due to many causes that it is superfluous to enumerate here, unfortunately was not what it should have been.

The migration phenomenon is a universal one and universal should be the Congregation (Commission) in its authority and in its central position. The action of the single Bishops, each unaware of what the others are doing, could only result in a dispersion of strength.

All the European governments have felt the need of creating new administrative offices charged with the control of migration at home, with the task of watching over it abroad in its various directions and especially of protecting it from the numerous assaults launched against the immigrants by local interests. As anyone can see, the Church must, with greater justification, think of directing and protecting its children who, by migrating to protestant or to newly formed countries where religious assistance is inadequate, are bound to lose their faith.

Only such a Congregation emanating from the Holy See could, without arousing the governments' jealousy and that of the American Episcopate, institute national parishes. These parishes are, in my opinion, the only ones that can efficaciously stop the deleterious work of the protestant sects, especially in those countries where these predominate - the only ones that can bring back,
by wise measures, the schismatic Polish to the Church's bosom and also preserve the other nationalities.

How should such a Congregation be constituted?

It should be composed, I believe, by the representatives of the various nationalities which furnish the greatest number of immigrants, that is, by two Italian representatives, one Polish, one German, one Canadian, etc.

These representatives should be chosen among competent persons well informed about the conditions and needs of their compatriots and who can also speak Italian in order to facilitate the communications of the single members with the person called to head the Congregation and with other related Congregations. This could be easily done by preferably turning to the religious congregations which have dedicated themselves to the assistance of their emigrated compatriots.

What should be the scope and the task of said Congregation?

Its aim should be that of giving spiritual assistance to the immigrants especially in the American countries, and of keeping alive in their hearts the Catholic faith and the Christian sentiment.

Its task:

1) It should study the grave and complex migration problem preparing first of all a questionnaire on it and to keep itself well informed on the Catholic migratory movement.

2) Respecting the praiseworthy private initiatives taken in this field, it should promote the organization of Catholic
Committees in the most important parishes.

3) It should arouse the zeal of the parish priests in favor of these Committees, through the Bishops, suggesting to them the practical means to be employed for this purpose, especially at the moment of their embarkation and landing.

4) It should answer all the questions asked of it regarding the measures it has taken or will take and smooth the eventual difficulties that might arise regarding migration, either within the country or abroad.

5) It should see to it that the immigrants be accompanied by priests during the voyage to these countries and the return, and to provide the various colonies with good and zealous missionaries, etc.

PART IV

(Comments on some points)

I deem it useful to briefly comment on the last three points.

Not all the priests who dedicate themselves to the spiritual care of the immigrants are endowed with the necessary virtues of zeal, piety and abnegation required of a good missionary. Many of them, on the contrary, prostitute their ministry by simony, becoming true merchants of gold rather than pastors of souls. This is perhaps one of the reasons for which many Bishops nourish a kind of aversion for the foreign clergy which tries to infil-
trate in their Diocese to take care of their compatriots. It is for this hostility that some Bishops decided to compel the indigenous clergymen to study foreign languages, so that they could be assigned to the foreign colonies of their Dioceses. This measure cannot produce good practical results either because in many cases the acquisition of a foreign language is insufficient when these priests ignore also the dialects of the various regions, or because in learning a foreign language one does not acquire the character of the people speaking that language. From this, one can evaluate the importance of the choice of the clergy to which the spiritual care of the migrants must be entrusted.

The Congregation could easily provide for this need if all the priests wishing to go abroad to work among the immigrants would apply to this one Congregation; if Bishops in need of missionaries for the migrants settled in their Dioceses would do the same.

The Congregation could just as easily obtain reliable information on the priests asking to go abroad and evaluate their capability, while the Bishops asking for missionaries should consider themselves lucky to admit to their Dioceses the clergymen approved and recommended by the Congregation.

I cannot accept the objection that this has already been partially taken care of by the Congregation of the Council by virtue of the decree prescribing that the American Bishops must
not accept any Italian priest in their Dioceses who has not already obtained a special permit from the same Congregation.

The Congregation of the Council does not release such certificates of approval unless the priest has already obtained a certificate of acceptance from the Bishop of the Diocese he wants to be assigned to. This is how the Bishops become diffident: they cannot accept requests sent them by priests totally unknown to them.

The Congregation could avert all this if it acts as intermediary between the priests aspiring to a Mission and the Bishops in need of their work.

It is comforting to know that during the last few years the Bishops have tried to provide the immigrants with priests of their own nationality. But, on the other hand, it is painful to think that many Bishops have entirely neglected the religious interests of so many thousands of poor immigrants.

This is well-known by the courageous missionaries who were the first to give their assistance to the migrants. They had to overcome much diffidence, were greeted coldly, had to surmount many difficulties and yet their work was quite often disdainfully rejected.

Even today, in spite of the above mentioned laudable awakening on the part of the Bishops, if one thinks of the amount of work remaining to be done, one can realize how little has been accomplished until now.
It would be the task of the Congregation to follow the great migratory currents; to classify the colonies from the largest (consisting of hundreds of thousands of members) to the smallest; to enumerate the churches, the priests in charge of them, and apply the proper measures where needed, coming to the aid of the Bishops with advice, exhortations and by sending to them their good priests; to urge to religious Congregations after careful study to give their help with all the means the Congregation can find.

The Congregation could send its members on the spot to see what means are employed to satisfy the spiritual needs of the immigrants, and should not be satisfied only by the reports sent by the Bishops, since more often than not these reports do not reveal the real conditions of the migrants but only the good intentions of the compilers.

As for the difficulties that so often arise everywhere, we must observe that they originate from the diversity of language, from the differences of culture, from the different customs and from a hundred other causes.

Difficulties that are not overcome cause friction, abuse of power, vengeance and dissention - all to the detriment of the migrants and the churches and to the advantage of the dissident sects which use these things as a weapon for defaming the Church and the clergy.

And even in these cases the member of the Congregation could, by visiting the migrants, easily and surely determine
the causes of the disorders, relate them to the Congregation and immediately take the necessary measures.

It is true that there are Congregations charged with the examination of the controversies that may arise from these causes: but the usual slowness with which these procedures are executed; the enormous distances; the solemn formalities assumed by these affairs when brought before the Congregations; the difficulty of obtaining quick and exact information and the ignorance of the environment where the controversies arise, are all obstacles which often prolong a condition detrimental to the interest of the contending parties.

The Congregation should also examine very carefully the means to be used to counteract the active and insistent propaganda employed by the protestants (and not without success) especially among the Italians of the United States. How many things could be brought to light in this regard!

Another painful fact that should be called to the Congregation's attention is the multiplication of the so-called independent churches amidst the Polish colonies.

From what has been outlined here and from so much more that could be written if one wished to study the subject more deeply, it is easy to understand how vast and practical is the field of action which could be allocated to the projected Congregation.

Nobody could doubt the happy impression that the creation of such a Congregation would produce in the souls of millions
of poor immigrants already pervaded by the conviction, though false, that their Father, the Pope is not interested in their fate.

PART V

(Suggestions for the practical execution)

How can this Congregation be made efficient in its practical work?

It would already possess this efficiency of itself, as I have said, by virtue of the authority it would derive from the Apostolic See; this efficiency would be increased later on by the adoption of timely and opportune measures; by insisting before the Bishops that they should order (with penalties in case of failure to comply) the execution of these measures. The Congregation could ask for an annual report on what has been done and should periodically send someone to verify the execution of its measures, rewarding with some honor the most active and worthy missionaries.

The Congregation could order an annual collection in all the churches of the various nationalities for the purpose of creating a fund to be used in part for the proper functioning of the Congregation itself and in part to assist the migrants. Leo XIII ordered a collection for the freedom of the Negro slaves, and why could not the reigning Pontiff order one for the freedom
of the White? Undoubtedly everyone would contribute to it since in this case the need is more easily understood and felt.

It would be well too, I believe, to destine to this work of general interest at least a portion of the money that could be earned by the sale of special editions of books of liturgy, the catechism, etc. Nobody could reasonably object to that.

Could this work, dedicated solely to the great glory of God and to the salvation of so many souls, fail to receive the help of the Lord?

I shall conclude with the following important words of Theodore Roosevelt, taken from the last issue of the Revue of Paris:

"The immigrant arrives here almost without any protection. As a rule, he doesn't know our language, is not familiar with our institutions, our way of life, our customs and our way of thinking. There are, I am sorry to say, millions of swindlers who hope to make a living by stealing from the immigrants and unless someone is on the spot to help him, he is virtually lost. No better work can be accomplished by a philanthropic or religious association than that of giving a friendly help to the men or women who come to our shores to become American citizens and parents of citizens. If we do not take care of them, if we neglect to improve their condition, undoubtedly our children will pay for our failure. Either they will rise or we shall perish."
6. Letter of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini to Cardinal R. Merry del Val

Most Reverend Eminence:

Forgive me if I importune you once more regarding the familiar plan Pro Emigratis Catholicis. This project seems to me very important. In the Memorial I have just sent to You about it I wrote: "The Commission should be composed, I believe, by the representatives of the various nationalities which provide the greatest number of immigrants, etc. These representatives should be chosen among competent persons well informed about the conditions and needs of their compatriots and who can also speak Italian in order to facilitate the communications of the various members with the person called to head this Congregation and with other related Congregations. This,"I added, could be easily done by preferably turning to the religious congregations which have dedicated themselves to the assistance of their emigrated compatriots."

Now, to come to the point to give the plan the greatest possible help, I would like to propose that three missionaries of the Congregation of St. Charles (two from the North and one from the South) be called to Rome. These missionaries should dedicate themselves to the preparatory work, employing for this purpose the experience they have gained and the studies they have done, as well as the knowledge of other missionaries residing in Rome.
If through the present reorganization of the parishes we could have in Rome a church with an attached house, the project could be realized soon without too much fanfare and with little expense, and it would be precisely that "mustard seed" that later on, as Your Eminence wrote to me, with God's help could expend ever more.

I trust that, in spite of the pressing work You have to do, You would welcome this idea of mine, and in such hope I recommend myself to Your prayers and reaffirm myself with the deepest respect.

Of Your Eminence

Most humble and affectionate servant
+ Giov. Battista, Bishop of Piacenza

Piacenza, May 17, 1906

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John Baptist Scalabrini was born on July 18, 1839 in Ferno Mornasco (Como, Italy). At the age of 18 he entered the seminary and was raised to the Priesthood in 1863. His spiritual wealth and intellectual capacity earned for him the bishopric of Piacenza at the early age of 36.

Scalabrini’s charity knew no bounds. As a priest he went about administering help to the victims of cholera. Later as a bishop he founded a home for deaf-mutes. In times of want he even sold his private belongings in order to obtain money to buy food for the poor.

Realizing the sad moral conditions of Italian migrants in foreign lands Bishop Scalabrini bent his every effort on their behalf. Through writings and lectures in Italy and abroad he stirred up the interest of public opinion, Church and Governments for the migrants. In 1887 he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles (the Scalabrinian Fathers) with the specific scope of spiritual and social welfare of migrants. His missionaries are now labouring in 14 nations in Europe, America and Australia.

Bishop Scalabrini personally journeyed to the United States of America, Brazil and Argentina. The after-effects of these voyages led to his early death at the age of 66 on June 1, 1905. His remains lie at rest in the Cathedral of Piacenza, Italy.

The cause of his beatification is well advanced in Rome.