

SAINT JOHN BAPTIST
Scalabrini

FATHER TO THE MIGRANTS



MISSIONARIES OF ST. CHARLES
SCALABRINIANS



CENTRO SCALABRINIANO
DE PASTORAL MIGRATORIA

John Baptist Scalabrini
1813-1888

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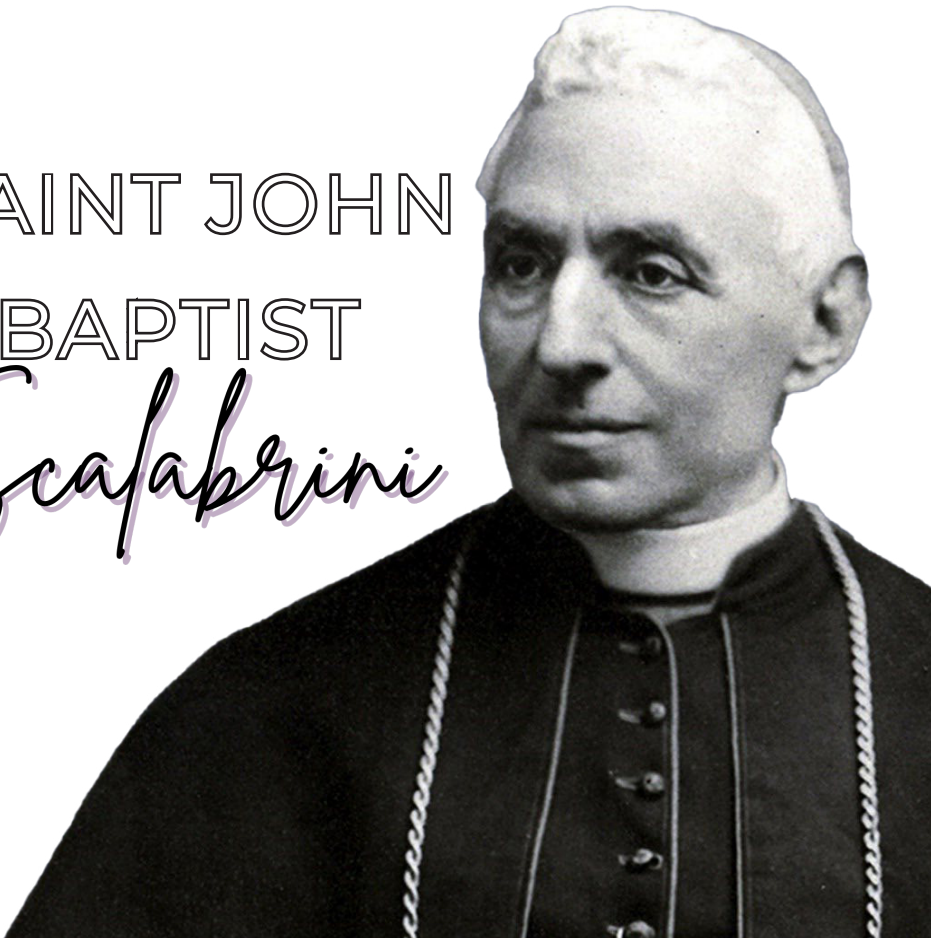
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SAINT JOHN

BAPTIST

Scafabrini



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“Weariness, danger, and
struggle await you. May
the cross be your
comfort and guide”

Saint J.B. Scapabrini

“The world open, to its
sleeplessness doesn't
have borders. Make sure
that Christ is known and
loved by all migrants”

Finding Christ in Every Migrant Brother and Sister

Without a doubt, the message that Christ proposes to us is a singular one, but each person finds a different way to internalize and project that content of life.

When the human search becomes difficult, Christ gives us the right clues so we don't get lost: "I will be in the least of your brothers and sisters". We can interpret "the least" as the poor, the sick, the unfortunate, the imprisoned, the lonely, the migrant, the refugee, the displaced, the persecuted.

St. John Baptist Scalabrini, with the clarity of the Lord's chosen servants, worked, made his way, and proposed a very special charism: to recognize Christ and the meaning of Christ in the suffering and anguished face of each migrant. He dedicated his life to this, his work, and his genius. He founded a congregation of religious brothers and priests, and another of religious sisters especially dedicated to give Christian assistance to the people on the move, rightly earning the title of: "**Father to the Migrants.**"

Today, **119** years after his death, the seed that this well-known figure sowed has borne fruit one hundred times over. In our Province of St. John the Baptist, as in the whole world, we are witnesses of it after more than a century of work and effort on the part of the Missionaries of St. Charles / Scalabrinians. The parishes, schools, migrants' houses, publications, missions, education and training centers, material and spiritual help, Christian assistance, and dedication to migrants, refugees, displaced persons, deported, people in transit, victims of human trafficking, and asylum seekers all give coherent testimony of that special charism that characterizes the followers and continuing work of St. John Baptist Scalabrini.

It is not about only tangible work that can be summed up in numbers and statistics. As important as that is the impact that the realities of human mobility have had in the current moment. What some understood at the beginning as mere aid or service exclusively for migrants has become, over the years, a major challenge not only for Christians but for all people today.

With the wisdom and clarity of pastors, the Latin American bishops gathered in the Mexican state of Puebla to discuss this issue: “The socio-political imbalance at the national and international levels is creating many displaced people, like emigrants whose number may reach an unforeseen magnitude in the near future. To these must be added the politically displaced, such as asylum seekers, refugees, exiled persons and undocumented immigrants of all kinds.”¹

The visionary and almost premonitory character of Msgr. Scalabrini's vocation for migrants is being fully demonstrated and recognized by the highest levels of reflection within the Church:

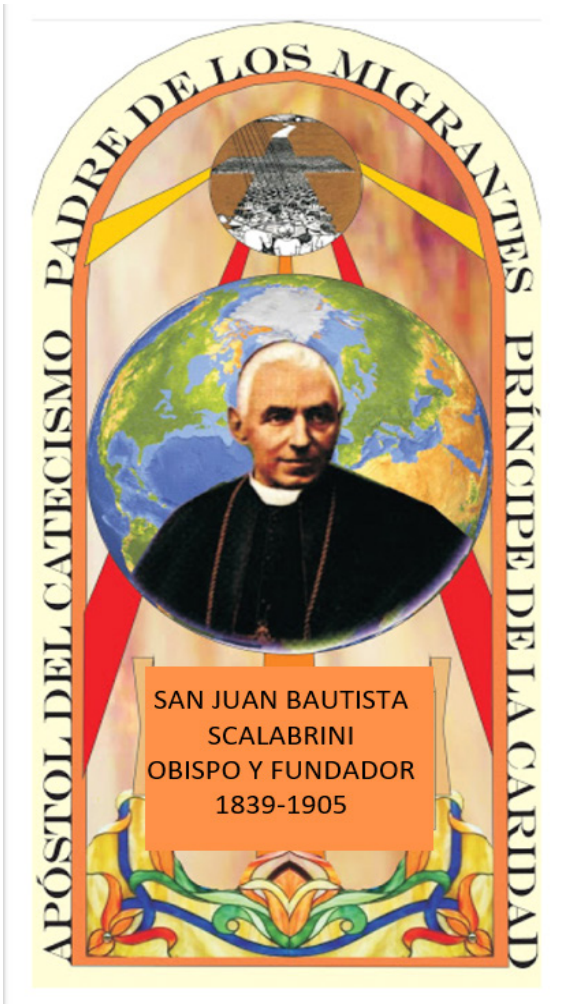
“The action of the Church is also necessary so that the displaced and marginalized of our time do not become permanent second-class citizens, since they are subjects of law with legitimate social aspirations and are entitled to adequate pastoral care, according to the pontifical documents and the guidance proposed in the Latin American meetings on the pastoral care of migrations.”²

1 Conclusive Document of the III General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Puebla, 1979, No. 1266.

2 Op. Cit No. 1291

The sufferings of the people on the move now a days have highlighted in our time, the figure of St. John Baptist Scalabrini whose legacy is gaining more life and strength every day.

For the Scalabrinian missionaries, for the Scalabrinian laity, volunteers, and for the other people who collaborate in the Scalabrinian Mission, the motto is clear: "Find Christ in every migrant brother and sister."



ONCE UPON A TIME...

In that sunny courtyard of an old house, a group of children with hot, sweaty faces ran after a ball. Suddenly, in the heat of the game, a dear friend appeared on the patio: affable, handsome, and smiling, as always. It was as if an invisible referee had stopped the game. In an uproar of friendly excitement, the group surrounded him.

“Johnny ... don’t tell us that you don’t have time. Say yes, today!”
“Yes, yes, like yesterday!” they all chanted. “And not a short one!”

And while they surrounded him adoringly, they gently pushed him towards a shady corner. After a moment of concentration, he began to speak:

“Last time I told you the story of the Hebrew Joseph. Do you remember? Now I will tell you about the challenge between the little shepherd David and the giant Goliath.”

“All right!”

“Okay. Once Upon a time...”

Johnny had a way with words. He knew how to narrate in a lively and unique manner, like someone watching the scenes he is narrating. The children hung on every word, in silence to not miss any detail.

This is the first kind of evangelization that we know of in the life of St. John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, in the Italian province of Emilia. He was born in Fino Mornasco, a quaint town in Como, on July 8th, 1839, as the third of what would be eight brothers. He grew like Jesus, "in age, wisdom, and grace before God and before men." His parish priest, Fr. Felipe Gatti, remembers him fondly: always smiling, very intelligent, attractive, and well centered and always loved by his companions.”

One day, Father Felipe met John's mother on the road and said:
"Ma'am, I don't know what you think, but in my opinion, Johnny is cut out for the priesthood."



Painting of Barberis

"May the Lord grant me that grace. But he has never said anything to me about this."

"It's better this way. Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Meanwhile, he is a good role model and helps in the family and the parish. But ... we must pray! It seems to me that a little chat wouldn't be bad either, a hidden question. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit frequently uses maternal mediation. And the mother could be the Angel of the Annunciation."

"As for praying, Father, each night we conclude the rosary with prayer for priestly vocations, so that the Lord may send workers to his harvest."

"Good, very good, ma'am. Pray, and surely the Lord will listen to you."

Papa Luis, although he also harbored the same desire as his wife to have a son who would become a priest, he was not so enthusiastic about it. The thought of having to support and carve out a future for eight children worried him greatly. But ... regardless ... if the Lord calls him ... and he let himself delight in his imagination.

Meanwhile, time passed. The young man had brilliantly completed his basic and intermediate courses and had already become an alert young man with a noble figure, admired and loved by all. His parents, meanwhile, spoke in private about the future of their son and blamed each other because neither of them took the initiative to question him, even though he did not speak about it, and they guessed that something was bothering him.

One fine day John found himself alone with his mother at home.

After a few long minutes of indecision, he decided to speak up:
“Mom!”

“What is it, Johnny?”

“I'd like to talk with you ...”

“Very well, you can confide in me. What's wrong? You see, your father and I are concerned about you.”

“Worried? Why?”

“You've finished your studies and you don't tell us anything about what you would like to do. You know we are not rich, but if you want to go to university, we will help you with any sacrifice. God will help us!”

“What if I had decided to become a priest?”

John's mom's eyes widened in an expression of admiration, and her heart was pounding.

“Really? But have you thought about it, son? Do you know what it means?”

“Mom, I've been thinking about that for years; But before I told you, I wanted to let the idea mature until I felt sure of myself.”

“My dear son, John! Let me kiss you! I have prayed to our Lady for you. And I think your dad will also be very happy.”

When she went to see the pastor the next day, he said:

“Didn't I tell you, ma'am, that prayer...”

“Yes, yes Father. But now we have another problem. Yesterday, when I told my husband, he was happy but also concerned. We have eight children, and we don't know where to find the means to send John to the seminary.”

“Ma'am don't think about it. God will provide. I will take care of discussing the matter with those who can help you.”

“Thank you, Father. You take a heavy weight off our shoulders.”



Scalabrini Family's House in Fino Mornasco, Como

We don't have much information about the years spent in the Saint Abbondio Seminary in Como, and later in the Major Seminary. However, an entry has been found in the school file that is quite an eloquent compliment in itself: "Scalabrini was always first in studies and behavior."

For him, time was truly gold. It seemed like he had made a vow not to waste a minute. He was often seen in the study area, even during off hours. He did not think it was enough to educate himself in the sacred doctrines; he also felt a strong need to acquire a general knowledge deep enough to be able to also dialogue with the "distant". Later, he learned French and Spanish very well and understood English and German without difficulty.

Msgr. Bonomelli, Bishop of Cremona and brotherly friend of Scalabrini, would later write: "God had endowed him with an alert, versatile, sharp, clean, and vast intelligence. In any science, he achieved success without a shadow of difficulty, and he was knowledgeable about the most arduous questions of philosophy, history, and politics and treated them with such ease, security, and clarity that he surprised those around him. He seemed to have specialized in everything."



General Scalabrinian archive

"YOUR INDIAS ARE IN ITALY"

St. John Baptist Scalabrini was ordained a priest on May 30th, 1863, and celebrated his first mass in the church of Fino Mornasco the following Sunday, surrounded by the enthusiasm of his fellow citizens, who repeated: "Only this could be his destiny." However, after his ordination, his mother, Colomba, noticed that her son John was planning something. She often noticed that he looked worried, and when she looked at him probingly, he avoided her gaze. "Holy Virgin!", the poor woman prayed, not knowing what to think, "I entrust him to you!" One afternoon, John opened his heart to her.

"Mom!"

"My son! What's the matter?"

"Mom, do you remember when I told you six years ago that I wanted to be a priest?"

"Yes, I remember."

John dropped to his knees in front of his mother, who did not quite understand.

"But what is it, my son?"

"I want your blessing. Now I want to become a missionary, go on missions!"

"Missionary?"

His mother could not contain her tears.

"Yes! So will you give me your blessing?"

"Johnny, if that is God's will, let it be done. I bless you and I commend myself to your prayers."

The priest stood up, hugged his mother and they cried a good while together. Scalabrini wrote a letter to Monsignor Marinoni, Superior of the Pontifical Institute for the Foreign Missions (PIME) in Milan, humbly expressing his wish. The prelate replied immediately that he heartily accepted him and set up an interview for Scalabrini at the Mother House.

The Bishop of Como, meanwhile, was not willing to accept that the diocese would lose such an exceptional priest, on whom he had placed a thousand hopes and for whom he had specific projects planned. One day when he met with Scalabrini and Bishop Marinoni in Milan, the bishop responded to Scalabrini's attentive greeting with these stern words: "I have to tell you something: Your Indias are in Italy!"

Lightning in a blue sky? Considering that the souls of Marinoni and Scalabrini were equally holy and full of faith, they adhered without reservation to the will of God as manifested by Bishop Marzorati. Upon reaching Fino Mornasco, the newly ordained priest Scalabrini found a letter there from his bishop, who appointed him director of discipline and professor of general history of the Seminary of St. Abundio beginning that school year in 1863.



Scalabrini 1887
General Scalabrinian archive

HERO AND FATHER

Four years later, all of Italy experienced the spread of a terrible epidemic of "cholera morbus". In the diocese of Como, the victims numbered in the hundreds. There was an urgent need for assistance because almost everyone was afraid of contagion and especially because, at that time, therapeutic means were scarce and of uncertain efficacy. Scalabrini did not think twice. He immediately left the seminary and ran to the beds of the sick to bring them Christian comfort and all assistance humanly possible. To whom those who warned him of the danger of contagion, he replied: "Jesus is there and calls me".

Apart from serving as an example to his priests and a blessing to his people, Scalabrini's charity work and the courage shown in that unfortunate circumstance also merited the recognition of the supreme government, which awarded him a medal for civil courage.



*Minor Seminary of St. Abundio, in Como
General Scalabrinian archive*

The epidemic ended in August. Scalabrini returned to his seminary where an unexpected novelty was waiting for him. Since the Rector of the Seminary, Fr. Alejandro Bolzani, had died, there was

no other person better prepared to succeed him than Scalabrini himself. Scalabrini argued he was too unprepared and inadequate for a position of such responsibility. He reminded his superiors that he was not yet 28 years old and therefore lacked the necessary experience.



*Church of San Bartolome, In Como.
General Scalabrinian archive*

They replied that all this had been considered and that the Lord wanted him there. If that was the will of God, Scalabrini had only to bow his head, confident, as always, that whoever imposed the duty on him would also lend him the power to carry it out. From that moment, recruiting holy priests for the Church was the aspiration of his heart, the longing of his soul, and the purpose of his life.

It truly seemed that Scalabrini would pledge his entire existence to the spiritual formation of the seminaries. But in 1870, after only three years, his Bishop suddenly promoted him to pastor of the Church of St. Bartolomew, a parish of more than 16,000 souls and among the most important in the city of Como. Providence, in effect, was guiding and preparing him for his future, enriching it with this new experience as parish priest.

As a pastor, Scalabrini prayed, asked for advice, and intently drew out a parish renewal program that crystallized in the most varied initiatives. He promoted the spirit of prayer and, in particular, Eucharistic and Marian devotions. He advocated for Catholic action, a leaven of Christian life among the people. He took a special interest in children and young people and founded a school for them that he put under the protection of Saint Joseph. For the little ones, he built an asylum and wrote a book that was published throughout Italy: *"The Little Catechism for the Children."*

Because of his easy and convincing oratory skills, he was frequently invited to speak in and outside the diocese. His lectures on the First Vatican Council at the Cathedral of Como were so memorable that they drew the attention of Pope Pius IX himself.

Another equally outstanding characteristic was his ardent love for the sick in his parish. He visited them frequently to bring them words of affection and the comfort of faith and the Holy Sacraments. He often brought them some material help. In the great parish of St. Bartholomew, there was no group of people who did not consider themselves the favorite of their Pastor and Father.



General Scalabrinian archive

BISHOP OF PIACENZA

One day the good pastor John Baptist Scalabrini was reciting the breviary on his knees in his chapel when he saw a clergyman approach him. Believing that he wanted to celebrate mass, he made a gentle gesture and invited him to come to the sacristy: "No thanks, Monsignor. I already celebrated mass early this morning and I have come here immediately in the hope of being the first to pay tribute to you, my new Bishop of Piacenza." Scalabrini was shocked, and for a few minutes, he stood there dumbfounded,

without saying a word. When he recovered, he guided the clergyman to the parish house and offered him a friendly cup of coffee. Scalabrini recommended that he return home without talking to anyone about the matter because it was news that had no basis whatsoever and would cause displeasure if it spread among the people.



Scalabrini 1876
General Scalabrinian archive

That same day, however, Scalabrini received a registered letter from Rome with the news of his appointment. Still

incredulous, he ran to the church, fixed his teary eyes on the tabernacle, and murmured between sobs: "Lord, I am not worthy! ... I am a useless servant! If possible, take this cup away from me! But may your holy will be done!"

In Rome on January 30th, 1876, Msgr. John Baptist Scalabrini was consecrated as Bishop by Cardinal Alejandro Franchi and wrote his first pastoral letter to the "beloved sons of Piacenza". Fourteen days later he made his entry into the diocese. He was young, tall, handsome-looking, and his face lit with a captivating smile. From the first moment, people were captivated, and their first comment was, "How nice and attractive he is!"

THE APOSTLE OF THE CATECHISM



Painting of Barberis

It is impossible to profess and love a faith without knowing it properly. Bishop Scalabrini was so convinced of this that he made the catechism a cornerstone of his spiritual edifice in the diocese of Piacenza. He had been bishop for two months when he published a splendid letter arguing for the need to strengthen Christian doctrine among both children and adults.

Recalling the example of his holy predecessor, Blessed Paolo Burali, from the 16th century, he ordered that each parish priest of the 365 parishes of the diocese institute the “Company of Christian Doctrine.” This company would be made up of the best and most educated people as directors, teachers, and assistants whose training would be given absolute priority by every parish priest, above all spiritual ministry. To facilitate this key mission for his priests, he compiled a catechism and founded the magazine “The Catholic Catechist”, the first of its kind in Italy.

A true fervor for the teaching catechism began to flourish as if it were a new discovery. At this point, the importance of his first-year experience becomes significant and comforts the bishop’s heart. There were 1,774 preachers of the word of God, 403 of which were priests, 36 clergy, 30 nuns, and more than 1,200 laymen.

In 1877, Pope Pius IX received the bishops from the Emilia region and, when he was informed of Bishop Scalabrini's catechetical activities he welcomed him and pointed him out as an example, defining him as "Apostle of the Catechism" adding: *"Today, there is a lot of concern about building the second floor of a house, but little thought is given to the first. The catechism is the base and foundation of all pastoral work.*

With good catechisms,

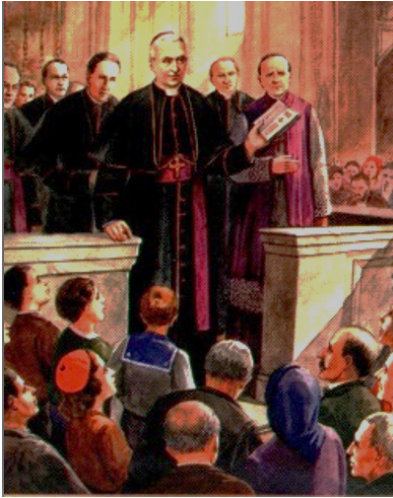
society is saved." Then, in a spontaneous gesture, he removed his pectoral cross and handed it to the Bishop of Piacenza, saying: *"The cross of a bishop is precious, but it is heavier."*



General Scalabrinian archive

In his writings after one very painful occasion years later, Bishop Scalabrini would comment: "The Bishop carries a cross without the image of the Good Jesus. Why? Because we must love the cross even without the consolation of seeing him." And he confided to a friend: "If you only knew how much this cross weighs! The life of a bishop is truly the life of a martyr!"

MISSIONARY WITHOUT REST



Painting of Barberis

Msgr. Scalabrini decided to visit all 365 parishes in his diocese at least once every 5 years. He kept his promise by traveling by mule, and when there was no path, he would continue on foot for several kilometers uphill. Neither the torrential rains nor the burning sun could ever make him postpone his visit.

His relatives often showed concern for his health: “Excellency,” they told him, “You will hurt yourself to the point of

becoming ill. You will not have a long life this way. A little rest from time to time will not harm your work.” To this, he used to respond: “No time for rest! Life is short, too short. We will rest in heaven. When it pleases the Lord!”

Seeing the joy of the people was enough to give him relief from all the fatigue. A sectarian newspaper was forced to confess: "Msgr. Scalabrini is visiting all his parishes, one by one, with admirable, incredible strength ... Many of those parishes have not received a visit from a bishop for three centuries!"

During his episcopate, he gathered all his priests in three synods to thank them for their apostolic work, to let them know how much he loved and appreciated them and how he shared their problems and anxieties. He especially encouraged them to join him in undertaking the reforms he considered necessary for a religious and moral revival of the diocese.

THE GUN ON THE NIGHTSTAND

He did not delay or limit his work. One day they came to tell him that there was an ill young man in the city and that he stubbornly refused all religious help. Furthermore, if anyone tried to make him reconcile with God, he would show them a gun that he kept on the nightstand, saying angrily: “See this? It has two bullets: one for the first priest who appears around here, and the other for me.”

“I will go!” Msgr. Scalabrini said, without hesitating.
“But, Excellency, he’s crazy.”
“Where does he live?” the bishop said in an imperative tone.

In the face of the insensibility and fear of those present, he led himself to that house and went straight to the patient's room. Horrified, the crowd in the next room looked at each other in awe, hiding their faces in their hands and waiting for a shot to be fired. The bishop took his time to leave. After a long half hour, he opened the door and simply said to a priest:



Painting of Barberis

“This young man wants to receive Holy Communion as soon as possible. Please go for the ciborium.”

On another occasion, while a revolt was raging in the streets of Piacenza, he was not afraid to cross the square between the altercation to assist a poor man who was seriously injured and bathed in blood. He cared for him lovingly and listened to his anguished last words as his soul breathed out to the Lord. These and other similar events spread from person to person in the town and cemented their bond with and love for the bishop himself. They did not know what to admire most: his courage or his sanctity.

THE HOUR OF DARKNESS

In spite of everything, what seemed impossible happened in Piacenza. Individuals, considered one by one, are or seem to be good. But when they find themselves surrounded by conflicting passions, they can suddenly become a gang of bandits who destroy and overrun everything.

One afternoon in February 1878, Bishop Scalabrini returned to Piacenza, tired from a pastoral visit to one of his distant parishes. At the city gates, some well-intentioned people stopped his carriage to inform him that some people had revolted against him because, by obeying the Holy See, he had not held the funeral rites for the king Victorio Emmanuel II. Msgr. Scalabrini reflected for a moment and then muttered: "No, it is not possible," and motioned for the driver to continue. No, it could not be possible that just like that his people had forgotten their Shepherd and Father.

Unfortunately, this time he was wrong. His people were unrecognizable. First, he noticed that, instead of greeting him affectionately, as usual, people lowered their eyes and let out profane and insulting curses in the air. He then felt heavy stones fall on the carriage, shattering the windows. Bishop Scalabrini tried to get out by extending a hand outside, but someone grabbed it tight and rudely spit on it.

The skillful coachman sensed the worst and lashed the horses vigorously, managing to get Scalabrini out of danger safely. With his soul desolate, like Christ on the Mount of Olives, he went to vent his bitterness before the tabernacle in his private chapel: "Lord," he whispered, crying, "if it is your will that I drink from this cup, let your Holy Will be done!"

The violence in the plaza did not change the attitude of the bishop regarding the papal provisions, which he had honored loyally his entire life. Only when permission came from Rome did Bishop Scalabrini go down to the cathedral and hold the funeral honors for the late King of Italy. Only then did the people realize their grave folly against their Father and Shepherd and ran to fill the temple, asking for forgiveness for their ingratitude in a moment of folly and exasperation fueled by a small group of anticlerical rebels. Pius IX, when he became aware of these events, sent the Bishop of Piacenza a golden chalice with diamonds as a personal gift.



Painting of Barberis

THE SCOURGE OF SCARCITY

A golden chalice, a gift from the Pope! It must be a relic that had to be preserved for life! But it was precisely the following year, in 1879 when a famine broke out in the area that would be recorded in the annals of Piacenza's history. It got to the point that people were starving. What did St. John the Baptist Scalabrini do? He launched a call for the solidarity of good people, and he came forward with his good example! He transformed the offices of the bishopric into a large kitchen that distributed first thousand, then four thousand, meals a day to the poor. And it was clear that the funds were not equal to the demand. Without thinking twice, the bishop sold first the horses, then the carriage, and everything transformed into food.

But other emergencies soon arose, so he continued with his personal belongings, emptying them to dress the people who were dying from the cold. And there was still the precious golden cup. How to deprive himself of it? It was too dear a memory! But the poor, in whom Christ truly lives, are more precious. So, Bishop Scalabrini does not hesitate he sells the chalice, and the meal distribution is not interrupted.

Those around him tell him: "Your Excellence if you continue like this, you will end up destitute." "Nothing better," replied the bishop, smiling, "than to imitate Jesus, who was born among the straws!"

Ten days later, senator Medoro Savini declared in full parliament: "We too must do something. We cannot allow the Bishop of Piacenza to show more heart than we do. Gentlemen, all of you know that no one can brand me as on the side of the clergy, but I bow reverently to this bishop because I admire his sublime apostolate. And if all the priests were like him, I would join the clergy too!"

There are other uplifting episodes worth remembering. One day a poor man in the street held out his hand begging for money. Monsignor Scalabrini took out his wallet and gave him five liras (a significant amount at that time). The poor man hesitated and did not want to take the money from him.

"Look," he said, "I am a Jew."

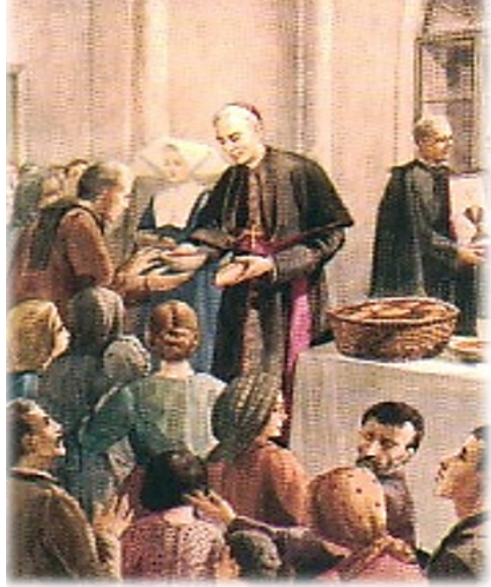
"But you need the money, don't you?"

"Yes, yes."

"Then take another five."

The secretary, who always accompanied Bishop Scalabrini wherever he went, dared to tell him: "Your Excellency, it's better if I keep your money because I'm afraid that ..."

"Well, take it, take it all. You are always afraid that you will lose the ground under your feet."



*Distributing food and clothing to the poor and sick
1879-1880
Painting of Barberis*

Many priests were able to fulfill their apostolic calling due to Scalabrini's generosity. One case in a thousand: a young man is kneeling before him and begs him, "Excellency, I am an orphan of father and mother. I would like to continue my studies to be a priest, but I have no means..." "The bishop, quite naturally, goes to his treasurer and says: Did you hear that? Take care of it and put everything on my account." This is the story of Bishop Sidoli, who became archbishop of Genoa.

FATHER OF THE DEAF

One day Bishop Scalabrini was riding around the outskirts of the city in his carriage (which was donated by the Ladies of Charity after the time of scarcity) when he saw a young man on the side of the road, moaning from the cold. He was a poor deaf man. Like the Good Samaritan, the good bishop descended from the carriage, and with the help of the secretary, he got the poor boy, who had just left prison and did not know where to go, into the carriage. They took him to the bishop's residency, where he had him stay for a few months while he taught him to understand and to speak. But the poor boy, wounded and ill, could not enjoy the charity of his benefactor because the angel of death came to look for him.



Blessed Ana Rosa Gattorno

This episode was a message from heaven for Msgr. Scalabrini. He began to reflect on how, before then, he had done nothing for these poor people who had mouths but could not speak and had ears but could not hear. He made an immediate and brave decision. In 1880, with the help of another religious congregation that was founded by a servant of God, Mother Rosa Gattorno, he founded an institute for the hearing and speech impaired in Piacenza. The city was moved and admired him even more

for this, and Scalabrini always gave this institute special attention and protection. Whenever he could, he would happily go for a few moments to be among them, eat with them and entertain himself there.

After attending an academic event that the hearing and speech impaired children offered annually to benefactors, a non-Christian journalist once wrote something like this: "A smart-eyed little girl went up to the stage to recite a poem. Her voice was throaty, and the syllables came like sobs from her lips. The poor girl could not hear what she said. Let's say it frankly and may no one laugh at us, our eyes teared up with feeling... We applaud Msgr. Scalabrini with a gesture of recognition just as the deaf girl did... Deeply moved after the event, they offered generous donations for the work. Alone, curled up at the feet of a nun, the smallest of the hearing and speech impaired looked sad. She had also wanted to express her gratitude to Bishop Scalabrini, who had picked her up off the street, but she had nothing, nothing. Looking at the flowers that the enthusiastic public had tossed after the event, now scattered on the ground, she took the best flower and took it to the bishop, and with a sob that demonstrated her thankfulness, she expressed the melodious hymn that we want to offer to this hero."



*Institute for the deaf and dumb, in Como,
founded by Scalabrini, 1879.*

IN THE RICE PADDIES

Another category of people who were marginalized and forgotten by society affected the sensibilities of the Bishop of Piacenza. At that time, rice paddy operations were of great interest throughout the provinces of the Apennines of Liguria and Emilia. Every year, motivated by the poverty in which they lived, approximately 170,000 men, women, and children moved for two months to Piedmont and Lombard rice fields to clean and transplant the rice.

In a letter to the foreign vicars of his diocese, Msgr. Scalabrini pointed out: “Many and very serious are the dangers and evils that these poor little ones encounter, dangers and moral and physical evils that are easy to imagine. It is urgent to remedy all this. It is urgent to do what is possible so that these poor little ones do not become victims of unscrupulous speculators so that they are warned against the threats of their faith, that they have time and comfort to honor the day of rest, and that their morality is protected, that they receive decent and fair pay, that even far from their families they may find a defense, protection, and relief.”

But for Msgr. Scalabrini the words would seem false and useless if they were not followed by actions. He began by sensitizing other bishops to take an interest in the rice paddy phenomenon. Together they studied the situation and planned to define the work conditions, such as salaries, hours, weekly time off, food, lodging,



Painting of Barberis



Peasant woman from the Liguria area 1898

and hygiene. Then they decided to build the “Rice Workers Union,” a committee of priests who would specifically strive to solve the problems resulting from this painful internal migration. In addition, they would request aid from the government for the most urgent and vital needs.

The work, which later received the highest approval of the religious and governmental authorities, lasted for more than fifty years. It contributed a great amount of good to those workers, who always found in it a point of reference against all kinds of contingencies, abuse, or illicit treatment.



Family in the Lombard rice fields 1885

PROPHET OF RECONCILIATION

Apart from his faith, Scalabrini's heart burned with a profound feeling of patriotic love. He would tell his missionaries the motto: "Wherever there is an Italian emigrant (sic), take them the consolation of faith and the smile of their homeland." He lived through a long period of tension between the Church and the Italian government. The unity of Italy with Rome as capital had been achieved by trampling on the legitimate rights of the Pope, who, under the so-called "Laws of Guarantees," lived as a prisoner in his Vatican palace.

This unfortunate situation continually raised a problem of conscience for the good Italian citizens, who saw that they were forbidden any right to elect parliamentarians or to be themselves

elected, thus playing the game on the secularist side because in no way could they influence the decisions that the country proposed for all Italians. Msgr. Scalabrini, through the press and his contacts with important individuals in civil and religious society, did the best he could to reach an agreement that he considered essential for the peace and tranquility of the country.

For this, he was frequently criticized, above all through the newspapers that proclaimed themselves to be the only advocates of the Pontiff's rights, such as "*The Catholic Observer*" of Milan.



General Scalabrinian archive

Scalabrini was accused of liberalism and of going over to the Masons against the inviolable interests of the Holy See. Msgr. Scalabrini suffered greatly for this because his devotion to the Pope was always unconditional. He had written: "To the Pope, the eyes of the mind; to the Pope, the affections of the heart. Only in him and for him and with him can we be one."

One way in which he demonstrated this love was with the truth. In a letter to the Pontiff in 1885, he suggested this proposal: "that His Holiness accepts that amount of civil power that was sufficient to make and manifest fully free the apostolic and sovereign mission of the Pope." Historically, Pope Leo XIII did not find this proposal strange, so much so that he commissioned Scalabrini himself to evaluate the public opinion of Italian Catholics with an anonymous edited essay, titled, "Transigent and Intransigent: Observations of a Bishop."

However, the times were not yet ripe, and Bishop Scalabrini was the target of more poisonous darts from papist newspapers. Msgr. Scalabrini knew how to read the signs of the times and understood that at the moment appointed by God the controversies between the State and the Church would be settled to mutual satisfaction. But it took almost fifty years for his hope to become a reality with the Lateran Pacts of 1929. Today we cannot forget the people whose vision, interventions, and sacrifices prepared the radiant dawn of national peace in Italy.

FATHER OF PRIESTS

The flock walks safely, led to abundant pastures when good shepherds are not lacking. Scalabrini's burning desire for serious and enlightened learning in his three seminaries in Bedonia and Piacenza worried the bishop throughout his life. "Ensuring the seminaries," he wrote, "must be the main object of care and thoughts of a bishop. Our diocese of Piacenza has its seminars also. I love them, yes, I love them as the pupil of my eyes, because in the growing hope of the priesthood, I see a sign of the future prosperity of my flock."



*Scalabrini 1876.
General Scalabrinian archive*

Concerned that no prospective priest was lost due to a shortage of material means, he founded the Work of Saint Opilius for poor seminarians in the diocese, forcing each parish (and, where it was very small, each vicariate) to support one low-income student in the seminary for free. He set himself as an example, promising to pay the pension of two seminarians, one in Bedonia and the other in Piacenza.

Even though he wanted them to be well-prepared, he wanted them to be holy even more. "He who has a high place in dignity before the people must overcome it in having a holy life; he who is chosen to be God's representative must reproduce in himself the divine image: it is a necessary condition for the ministry to be fruitful among souls." With such a teacher, it should not be surprising that the clergy of Piacenza was always considered among the most highly trained in Italy.

A BIBLICAL EXODUS

In the history of each people, there is always a chapter on emigration. In the history of Italy, it was a distressing drama that mobilized around 25 million Italians over a century. It would be like saying that it has traumatized most Italian families, directly or indirectly. At the time of Bishop Scalabrini, the exodus had already taken on truly impressive dimensions: more than 300 thousand Italians left Genoa or Naples each year for land in America, where they hoped to find more abundance that would cost them less toil than in their homeland.

But it is interesting to understand how the Bishop of Piacenza experienced these dramatic vicissitudes. He narrates it to us himself in the booklet he published in 1887: "Italian Migration in America."

"Several years ago, in Milan, I was a spectator of a scene that left an impression of deep sadness on my soul. On my way through the station, I saw the large hall, the side porticos, and the adjacent plaza invaded by three or four hundred poorly dressed people, divided into various groups. Their faces – tanned by the sun, furrowed by the precocious wrinkles that privations usually imprint on them showed the tumult of affections that stirred their hearts at that moment. They were bent over old with age and effort, men in the prime of manhood, women who had with them or were carrying their children in their arms, young men, and young women all united by a single thought, all directed towards a common goal...



Family of Italian immigrants, 1905
World History Archive



*Immigrants arriving in America, 1915
Photo: Edmunds E. Bond*

They were emigrants. They belonged to a variety of provinces of northern Italy and waited in fear for the train to take them to the shores of the Mediterranean and from there to the distant Americas, where they hoped to find fortune less adverse and the land less thankless to their efforts.

Those poor little ones were leaving, some called by relatives who had preceded them in the voluntary exodus, others without knowing precisely where they were going, attracted by that powerful instinct that makes birds migrate. They went to America, where they had heard that there was work that was well-paid for those with strong arms and a willing spirit...

Not without tears they had said goodbye to their hometowns, to which they were bound by such sweet memories; but reluctantly they were preparing to leave their homeland because, since they knew it only, they knew it in only two odious ways: the recruiter and the tax collector. For the disinherited, their homeland is the land that provides their bread, and far away they expected to find that bread, less scarce but acquired with no less effort. I left excited...



*Port of Genoa, 1887, At that time, they were single men who left their families behind
World History Archive*

A wave of sad thoughts knotted my heart. I thought, who knows what accumulated misadventures and privations make such a painful step seem sweet!... How many disappointments? How many new pains does the uncertain future have in store for them?

How many will achieve victory in the struggle for existence? How many will perish among the disturbances, or in the silence of the uninhabited plain? How many, although finding bread for the body, will lose that of the soul, no less necessary than the first, and will lose, in totally material life, the faith of their parents?

From that day on, my mind

went many times towards those unhappy people and that scene always leads me to another, no less bleak, unseen but glimpsed in the letters of friends and in the relationships of travelers ... and a thousand times I asked the anguished question: How can I reach out to them?"



Italian immigrant women 1907
World History Archive

Msgr. Scalabrini found a solution and worked in such a way that he would later be recognized and called the "Father to the Migrants."

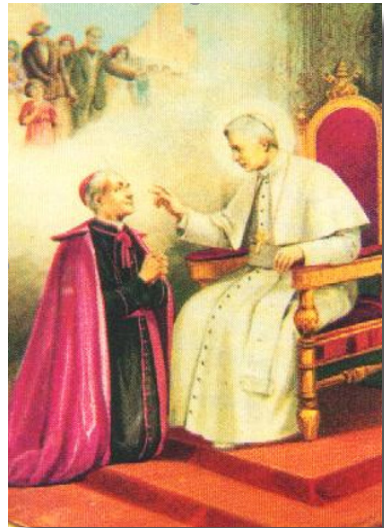
Above all, he understood that it was essential to inform the public of the real situation of the Italian emigrants. He, therefore, visited the most important cities in Italy, where he gave memorable talks, at which the press was a notable sounding board. He then directed reports to the Holy See, and to the Italian government through the Honorable Paul Carcano, his old schoolmate at the Liceo Volta.



Italian immigrant woman 1906
World History Archive

THE MISSIONARIES OF THE MIGRANTS

The commotion about the hardships of the Italian emigrants was general, but nowhere did concrete facts appear. St. John Baptist Scalabrini then set himself to work out a plan to protect migrants from “emigration agents” (better known as merchants of human flesh) and to provide for their moral and material wellbeing in the Americas. His keen sensitivity and intelligence made him understand that there was very little assistance for the migrants in ports and in the countries of destination. Priests full of zeal for souls and motivated by a spirit of great sacrifice were needed to choose to become voluntary migrants with the migrants, to radically share their lives with them, protect them from all abuse, and, above all to keep alive the flame of faith that they inherited from their homeland. He, therefore, launched an appeal to all priests to ponder the great merit of that special calling.



Pope Leo XIII blesses Monsignor Scalabrini before he departs for the Americas. Painting of Barberis

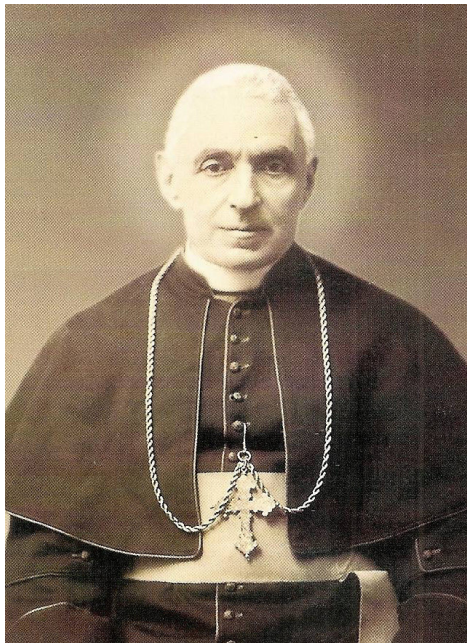
On November 15th, 1887, Holy Father Leo XIII, who always wanted to be informed of the Bishop of Piacenza’s enlightened ideas, approved that the “Institute for Missionaries of Migrants” be founded in Piacenza. To demonstrate his unconditional esteem for the new work, he accompanied the Pontifical Brief *Libenter Agnovimus* with a generous offer of money.

Two priests responded immediately to Msgr. Scalabrini’s call: Fr. Domingo Mantese from Vicenza and Fr. Giuseppe Molinari from Piacenza. They were the small seed that in a short time would

become a large and robust tree that would shelter millions of migrants in all the latitudes of the world. On November 28th, St. John Baptist Scalabrini gave them the missionary crucifix, beginning the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles.

The first two priests were soon joined by five others, three priests and two brother collaborators. On July 12th, 1888, in front of a joyous and jubilant crowd at the Basilica of St. Antoninus, Msgr. Scalabrini gave them the crucifix of the missionaries, repeating the formula of consecration: "Receive son, the indivisible companion of his apostolic pilgrimages, your only true consolation in life and death."

On that occasion, the famous historian César Cantú wrote to the founder: "To your blessing, I beg you to add the wishes of this old man, who admires such a brave gesture, so charitable to all human eyes. The world will have the levity to ignore them, the ingratitude to forget them, but they will leave for the Holy Mission, having as a flag the Cross and the battle cry: "Christ today and Christ always!""



General Scalabrinian archive

THE MOTHERS OF THE MIGRANTS

With the special insight of an apostle, Msgr. Scalabrini understood that a religious family needs both a father and a mother. We already see in our good Italian parishes how useful and indispensable the religious sisters are in their daily presence in the asylums, schools, catechism, liturgical animation, and assistance to the poor and the sick. Among the migrants, the urgency of their involvement was evident to go where the missionary's work, despite its commendable zeal, could not go.

Msgr. Scalabrini took the chance offered to him by one of his missionaries assigned to Brazil, Fr. Joseph Marchetti, who entrusted to his mother and sister, Blessed Assunta Marchetti, the care of some poor orphans in Sao Paulo. In October 25th, 1895 he gave life in Piacenza to the “Congregation of the Missionaries Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo”, to whom he gave the crucifix, sending them to associate with his missionaries who already worked in the Americas.



Mural from 'la Paróquia Imaculado Coração de Maria' – Lauro Müller



October 25, 1895, date of foundation of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of San Carlos Borromeo - Scalabrinians

To other sisters, the “Congregation of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus,” founded by Blessed Clelia Merloni, who were going through a moment of crisis, Msgr. Scalabrini opened the doors of the mission to the migrants. Since then, that congregation began to renovate itself and considered the Bishop of Piacenza as its second founder.

SAINT FRANCES XAVIER CABRINI



Portrait of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, 1880

The sisters of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini deserve a separate paragraph. She was a schoolteacher who had gathered around her a small group of zealous and pious young ladies, full of holy apostolic zeal and who did not lean in any precise direction, but they were always ready to serve Jesus and their Lord with their all-in missions. Frances, their guide, admired the Bishop of Piacenza's good renown and decided to ask him for advice, at the same time expressing her intention to focus her mission in China or India. Msgr.

Scalabrini repeated to the founder what one day his bishop had said to him, rectifying her purpose: "Your India is in the Americas."

Mother Cabrini, however, seemed to hesitate and wanted, in a matter of such importance, to hear the opinion of the Holy Father. When the humble Cabrini kneeled at his feet, Pope Leo XIII, who had been warned with holy cunning by Bishop Scalabrini, replied with a determined gesture of his hand, sure and kind: "Not the East, but the West." God's will could not be clearer.

In 1889 the Bishop of Piacenza had the immense joy of giving the crucifix of Missionaries to the Migrants to Mother Cabrini and the first group of sisters who were leaving for the United States of America. Thus, our brothers and sisters, far from their homeland, have the immense satisfaction of having at their side the company of so many fathers and mothers who support and comfort them, sharing their lives with them, always putting themselves at their service and that of their sons and daughters.

SAILING THE OCEAN

Every year, a group of new missionaries pronounced their vows in the hands of the founder and crossed the ocean towards the United States of America or Brazil, which were the preferred goals of Italian migrants.

Monsignor Scalabrini constantly corresponded with his missionaries and delighted in the tears caused by reading how much good they were doing despite the difficult conditions they sometimes had. More than once, they asked him to visit since his presence would support them in their often-difficult decisions. On the other hand, the Bishop of Piacenza also felt nostalgia for his distant children; so, in that reciprocal desire, he decided to embark on his first overseas trip. On July 18th, 1901, encouraged by a particular blessing from the Holy Father, he set sail on the ship Liguria and left Genoa for the United States. From his notes, we select some paragraphs to envision the environment in which the journey was made.

- *“July 28th - Radiant morning. First communions and confirmations of various sons and daughters of our migrants. They surround the altar - outdoors - about 1,200 people. Before Mass, I preach. Many cannot suppress their emotion. I hold mass with a live anointing, assisted by Fr. Luis. When I allude to the distant homeland...there is a moan in the air, a general cry...but when I refer to the heavenly homeland, everyone looks up to heaven with emotion...”*
- *“Every day, from the 5 to 6, I explain the catechism to a beautiful group of young people.”*
- *“August 1st - Yesterday I confessed a good number of men, and this morning I shall repeat the same celebration of Sunday the 28th; but the strong wind forces us to do it in the big hall. There are numerous communions and three confirmations. Even without naturally being so, one becomes eloquent!”*

IN THE UNITED STATES

The Liguria stayed away in compliance with the quarantine, “but two boats departed from New York to meet them. With the missionaries was Msgr. Ferrante, secretary to the archbishop of New York Monsignor Corrigan, along with many Italian and American laymen. When the ships arrived, Monsignor Scalabrini leaned out on the railing and, from the inner souls of the Italians who were traveling with him and those who had come to meet him, a sincere cry of ‘Long live Italy!’ ‘Long live Monsignor Scalabrini!’ Burst forth spontaneously.”

He came down, hugged his missionaries, heard a welcoming speech with gratitude, and responded with kind words. The streets of the parish were artistically adorned with garlands and crowded with Italians. Msgr. Corrigan welcomed him with immense affection and prepared to host him in his rooms, but Bishop Scalabrini preferred to stay in the modest house of his missionaries. An American newspaper described that reception as “royal.”

He stayed in the United States for almost four months, during which his main concern was to speak with his fellow migrants and especially with his missionaries, whose confidence, difficulties,

and apostolic problems he listened to with parental affection. In those months he gave 340 speeches, and traveled 15,000 miles, often sleeping on the train to save time and to be able to visit the greatest number of migrants.



Scalabrini in Saint Joseph's Seminary, New York
August 1901 General Scalabrinian Archive

Before leaving the United States, he obtained a hearing with President Theodore Roosevelt, to whom he entrusted the fate of his Italian compatriots, receiving from the president a formal promise to fulfill his wishes. As he departed from that land with his soul filled with happiness and gratitude to the Lord for the loyalty, zeal, and sacrifice of his missionaries, he brought with him the memory of the last liturgical event at the Sacred Heart in Boston. The large temple was crowded with people; most had to stay in the square outside the entrance.



October 10, 1901, Scalabrini with the President Theodore Roosevelt. Painting of Barberis

After having blessed those present in the church, the bishop went out with the monstrance to the threshold of the church and the entire vast sea of people knelt as one person. The spectacle was so impressive and moving that the protestant mayor of the city, after greeting Archbishop Scalabrini, said these words: "If I see another spectacle like this one, I will lose my faith and become Catholic."

Visiting the Italian emigrants, the bishop realized with a heavy heart that perhaps worse than the Italians were the emigrants to other nations and, back in Italy, in a special audience that he had with the Holy Father Pius X, he suggested the proposal to establish in the Holy See a Commission for "all Catholic emigrants." Death prevented Msgr. Scalabrini from seeing the fulfillment of his ambitious project, but his missionaries, heirs and interpreters of his spirit, expanded the purpose of his Congregation to include the emigrants of any other race or nation in his assistance.

Msgr. Scalabrini, when visiting the North American missions, had accomplished only half of what he set out to do. He still had to visit the missions in Brazil. He had become convinced, after the trip to America, that it is one thing to know people and situations personally and another to know them by ear, even if their informants were as worthy of faith as their missionaries. Furthermore, it seemed to him that, with the grace of God, he had accomplished much good in the United States and hoped to do the same in Brazil.

When he stated his intentions, many tried to dissuade him, thinking of the difficulties of traveling in Brazil. These were not all comparable to those of the United States, from which he had returned exhausted and battered. They also considered his health, as he was not so youthful. Certainly, it was not the physical difficulties that could frighten a man with the fortitude of Bishop Scalabrini. Rather, they presented themselves as a challenge that he accepted with courage. Having received the blessing of the Holy Father, Pope Pius X, on June 13th, 1904, he left Piacenza, greeted, and applauded by a multitude of priests and faithful citizens. And an even more lively crowd greeted and cheered him at the Port of Santos in Brazil on July 9th.



Brazil Rio-Taquary-1904
General Scalabrinian Archive

But let's read his narration:

"I arrived in Sao Paulo on the 9th, at 11:30 am. The band of our little orphans came to meet me about five miles away and they rode for free on the train that they had made available to me in Santos."

“Yesterday I visited the bishop, with whom I spent a long time, talking mainly about our emigrants. There was a population of just over two million, of which half and/or more are Italians. The diocese includes the entire state of Sao Paulo. It is a splendid place. What magnificence of plants! What exuberance! What flowers of a thousand colors! ... It would seem that paradise on earth should or could be here.”

“Our very good missionaries enjoy the esteem of all and the veneration of the clergy and the laity. The two orphanages are worthy of admiration. These 260 orphans build with their kindness, piety, and education. From these two houses, 810 educated and settled orphans have already emerged. Yesterday many gathered here, blessing the ‘Holy House’ as they call it.”



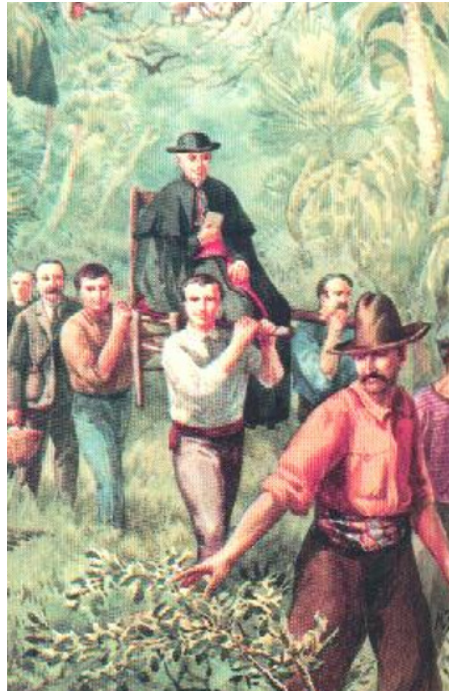
*Brasil Sao Paulo 1904
Orfanato de niñas
Archivo General Scalabriniano*

BETWEEN FIELDS AND JUNGLE

His advisers in Italy were not very mistaken when they told him that Brazil was not the United States. There were very few trains, and often copious downpours fell that reduced everything to mud, and they had to ride on horseback for long hours that seemed endless. He was comforted, however, by the moving reception of the emigrants, who came to meet him from afar in rows of horses, seemingly endless rows, and the fact that when they reached a “colony” many climbed the trees to see him and hear him speak.

The environment was indeed very different from that of the United States, here, almost all of them worked the land. They were simple and spontaneous as most people are in the country.

All would have liked to confess to "The Bishop", and Bishop Scalabrini, sometimes tired to the bone, would lock himself in his confessional until late at night, to resume the next day at dawn. It was not known if he slept or not. The fruits were seen later. For example, in Bento Gonçalves a large Protestant family from Treviso abnegated at the hands of the bishop, who received fourteen people again in the Church. In Alfredo Chaves, he confirmed 5,000 faithfuls, 2,153 in a single day. In the four months of his stay in Brazil, more than 25,000 persons were confirmed by him.



Painting of Barberis

To have a more precise idea of Brazil from that time, let's read the notes in his diary:

“August 3rd.- I am in Santa Felicitáde. This is it; they say the best colony in Brazil. The church is beautiful, with a very large capacity. Here the religious groups, the schools, the frequency of sacraments, of the Word of God, is as in the best parishes in Italy. In the surrounding areas, I also visited many other Italian colonies: Agua Verde, Campo Comprimido, Timbituva, Caratuba, Ferrara, Rondinha, Campinas, Umbarán, Santa María, Nuovo Tirolo, etc., who received me with an indescribable demonstration of friendliness. Each settlement has its church, where the missionary arrives periodically according to his possibilities. This impenetrable forest territory, the cave of thieves and murderers, is now a garden.”

“September 25th - I am in San Laurenço de Villas Boas. I left Encantado on Thursday the 22nd and after 5 hours on horseback, I arrived to a surprise. They were waiting for me the day before, but the rain (deluge) had made it impossible even for a horse to pass. As soon as they spotted me, the various colonies thundered cannons and ran to greet me, stunned, and moved by so much courage. Here I confirmed 1,500 Christians of all ages.”

But we would not finish if we wanted to follow Msgr. Scalabrini in his pilgrimages from one mission to the other, amid countless difficulties, but always with a heart overflowing with happiness at the demonstrations of faith that he witnessed, each more unexpected and moving.



General Scalabrinian Archive

IN THE MIDST OF NATIVE PEOPLES

We cannot overlook a rather curious adventure that awaited this bishop who, when a young priest, burned with zeal to evangelize the non-Christians. In the Territory of Tubagy, in the jurisdiction of the diocese of Curitiba, there lived a tribe that was still in the wild and who deeply hated the Brazilians because of the abuses and injustices that were continually committed against their tribe. A year before, a capuchin priest, full of zeal and courage, tried to evangelize them. He took with him a guide and went into the jungle, but just as he set foot in the territory, he saw his companion fall. The companion was a Brazilian, and he fell victim to a poisoned arrow. The priest immediately got off his horse and fell to his knees, entrusting his soul to God. But the natives, coming out of their hiding places, assured him that they would not touch him because only the Brazilians were enemies. The Capuchin father returned home and never again attempted the feat.

Meanwhile, Msgr. Scalabrini planned to approach an inland tribe and asked for a grammar book. With the rare ease he had to learn languages, he learned the Guarani language in a short amount of time, learning it sufficiently enough to make himself understood. Hearing about the state of the tribe, he burned with the desire to do something for them. One day, while he was preaching, he saw one of these native people in the crowd. He sent for him and asked:

“Is your tribe very far?”

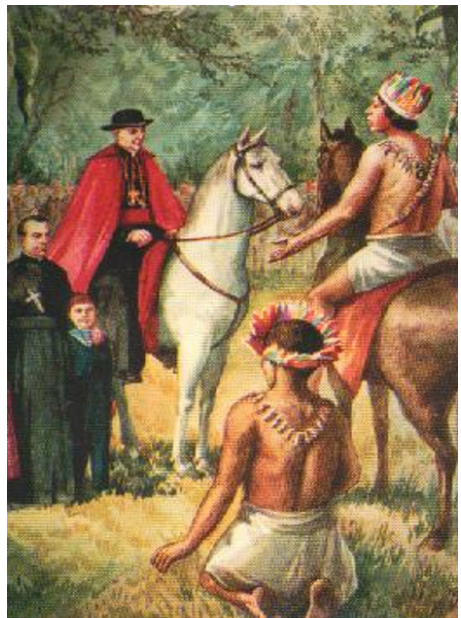
“Not so much. Twenty hours on horseback.”

“Good. Go tell your chief that the Italian bishop wants to see him and speak to him.”

The person came back after a few days, saying that the chief would be happy to see the bishop in the jungle and to speak to him. Everyone tried to dissuade Monsignor, but he didn't allow himself to be frightened and he set out on the journey with a small entourage.

Upon reaching the entrance to the jungle, they were greeted with stones, but it turns out that their attackers were ...monkeys! They entered the headquarters of the tribe, and to make a greater impression the bishop had dressed in his most showy episcopal vestments. They arrived before the chief, who was surrounded by a hundred persons on horseback, dressed in animal skins and adorned with pearl necklaces and bird feathers. He approached the bishop and gave a speech in Guaraní, regretting that their tribes, after being evangelized two hundred years ago, had been abandoned, and thanked the Italian bishop who finally showed them that he did not forget them. He then presents him with two silver cups he found among the ruins of the old missions founded there by the Jesuits.

To general wonder, bishop Scalabrini spoke in Guaraní, explaining the involuntary abandon of the Church, bringing them a paternal greeting from the Great Priest of Rome and promising that when he returned to Italy he would speak to the Pope about the tribe. In the bishop's entourage, there were only Italians, of whom the natives were not distrustful because they only hated the Brazilians. So, it was easy to get along. The sympathies of the natives were concentrated above all on Father Marcos Simoni, who they did not want to let go of. Bishop Scalabrini promised them that he would send him as soon as he learned the Guaraní language better, which was indispensable, and it was recommended to them, in general hilarity, that they not eat him.



Painting of Barberis

Msgr. Scalabrini concluded his trip in South America in Buenos Aires, where he was able to greet his brother Pedro, whom he had not seen in 40 years and who waited for him together with the Internuncio Msgr. Sabatucci and the auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. Finally, on November 11th, he set sail for Italy on the *Cerdeña*, arriving in Genoa on December 5th, warmly welcomed by family, and members of civil and religious society.

The next day he arrived in Piacenza without warning because he did not want the triumphal reception of his return from the United States to be repeated. But as soon as his arrival was known, the bells of the cathedral began to ring, echoed by the rest of the city, and a clamorous crowd waited for him in the plaza.

Scalabrini with his brother Prof. Angelo Scalabrini,
Genoa, 1901
General Scalabrinian archive



Later that day, they sang the *Te Deum* to give thanks. As soon as the press spread the news, there was a shower of telegrams of fealty, joy, and general sympathy. Of course, the most cordial greeting was that of the Holy Father: in a signed letter, he expressed the desire to hear the story of Scalabrini's visit in person as soon as possible. The letter was accompanied by a gold medal with the figure of the Holy Father and the Pontifical Shield.

THE DECLINE



Painting of Barberis

It was rumored everywhere, including in the press, that the Holy Father was proposing to promote Bishop Scalabrini to archbishop of Ravenna, then the patriarchate of Venice, and finally the cardinalate. Due to his humility, he rejected all that and told everyone that he was already too old to undertake episcopal work in another diocese. He wrote to his close friend, Bishop Bonomelli: "I am old. Rather than a promotion, I must think of death."

In truth, those who lived with him could see that, although he always seemed indefatigable, he no longer had the same vigor. Once, after a particularly laborious pastoral visit, he was heard to exclaim: "I am dying of fatigue." For some time, he had been suffering in silence from a serious illness, which, out of an excess of delicacy, he never wished to reveal to anyone, until it was too late. He had contracted it during his interminable missionary journeys, from the hours and hours on horseback out in the rain and cold. He finally had to stay in bed, and, as his ailments worsened, he feared the worst, and his relatives were notified.

On Sunday, May 28th, 1905, two eminent physicians, in consultation with other colleagues, performed an urgent operation. The result of the operation seemed at first satisfactory, but the following Wednesday Bishop Scalabrini took a dangerous turn for the worse. He was asked if he wished to receive the anointing of the sick, and he replied with a whisper, "Yes, soon!"

He became drowsy. Soon after, his fever rose, and he began to have alarming episodes. At times he could be heard repeating, "Where are my priests? Where are my priests? Let them in. Don't keep them waiting too long." In a moment of clarity, he was told that the blessing of the Holy Father was given to him. He was moved to the point of shedding copious tears and said, "Give him thanks for me." During these brief lucid moments, he comforted his relatives, gave dispositions about his burial, and said, "I am going to meet my Lord! To all the canons and parish priests who are present at my death, I give the faculty to impart absolution to me 'in articulo mortis'." Then he fell asleep. His face was serene, not as one approaching death but like one approaching a feast.

In the early morning of June 1st, he was in his last moments, which were very brief. His lips whispered a prayer. It was six o'clock in the morning, during the feast of the Ascension of the Lord into heaven, when his soul left this earth to accompany the Lord in his glory.

The funeral was an apotheosis. Never had so many people gathered around a coffin, with tears in their eyes and praying... Everyone in the city of Piacenza and all the dioceses had the clear sensation of feeling suddenly orphaned because everyone was missing their Father, and what a Father! The newspaper *La Libertà* published the following: "There are true pilgrimages of workers and peasants from all parts of the diocese who arrive in sorrow to look upon the blessed face of their bishop for the last time."

Today, the tomb of the holy bishop is located in the cathedral of Piacenza. There is a monument with his image, and a bas-relief highlights his trip to the Americas. May he, who in his earthly life always welcomed everyone with kindness and tenderness, also welcome our prayer so that one day we may be worthy to share in his glory in heaven.



Glass urn, in Piacenza

Msgr. Scalabrini would wake up every day at five o'clock and meditate. "I reinstate the obligation of meditation," he wrote in his spiritual journal. "An hour of meditation is needed, and it is not sufficient for a bishop. Whoever belittles meditation is a person lacking faith or reason..." Then he would hold Mass with great devotion, followed by a breviary prayer. His intense devotion demanded him to take the Blessed Sacrament at least once a day. But in the evening, after having prayed the rosary with his relatives, he would proceed to his private chapel and continue with his conversation and meditation with The Blessed Sacrament until eleven, when he would retire to rest.

Msgr. Scalabrini had a great devotion for the Virgin Mary, similar to his devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He never passed up any opportunity to speak of her, and when he did his face would light up. He was moved and touched to the point of shedding tears. The auditorium on those occasions would be mesmerized. He used to say that a priest who is not willing to improvise a speech for the Blessed Sacrament or the Virgin Mary was not a good priest.

Msgr. Scalabrini also promoted pilgrimages to the shrines of his diocese in Roveleto, Bardi, Bettola, Bedonia, and Rivergaro. He would often lead the pilgrimages. He also gave in offering all the jewels that he had received from his family to crown the holy image of the Virgin Mary. Many times, in his life, he expressed the desire to rest in the shrine of Our Lady of Graces of Rivergaro, "under the Virgin Mary's gaze." After his death. And every day of his life he recited a prayer of consecration to the Virgin Mary, in absolute devotion to her.



Painting of Barberis

Just as Msgr. Scalabrini was kind and lenient with others, he was equally strict and rigorous with himself. He often used mortification and was always vigilant of his own senses. "A good quantity of asceticism, "he wrote," is the remedy against all black humor."

An ascetic perspective, as he understood it, made him see in the chosen secret of Providence in suffering, especially that of Christ, to give strength and conviction to all purposes of good. Reviewing his writings, he highlights an ejaculatory prayer as his favorite: "Oh, Lord! Make me fall in love with your cross!" At the Scalabrinian museum of the Mother House in Piacenza, his missionaries still preserve with veneration a cilium and a chain that he carried on his skin until they bled.

After his death, many people revealed the extraordinary favors attained by his intercession, and people from various places raised their voices calling for him to be introduced in the cause of the canonization. So began the process at the diocesan curia. From there, it was diffused to Rome. The Lord has granted us to venerate on earth his holy, good and faithful servant. Pope John Paul II, November 9th, 1997, pronounced the formula of elevation as Blessed, assigning June 1st as the date of veneration. On October 9th, 2022, the Church, through Pope Francis, recognized the holiness of his life officially naming him a Saint and proposing him as an example of love for God and the poor, especially migrants.



*Provincial Communication Office Archive,
Province of Saint John Baptist*

HE LIVES AMONG HIS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

Those who were deeply affected by his death were his missionaries. Some wonder and question if his work could have continued after his death. However, God's work never ends, although sometimes it is tested and must go through the fire of purification. At the death of Msgr. Scalabrini, there were twenty-three missions overseas, with fifty missionaries. The different delegates from the Scalabrinian missions reunited in Piacenza, where the majority elected Fr. Domingo Vicentini to replace Msgr. Scalabrini as General Superior. Before this role, Fr. Vicentini had a strenuous life in North and South America, and as the Superior of the Mother House of Piacenza. He had been appointed in this role the previous year by the founder.

Everything seemed to be taking its course, and at full speed, when World War I impacted Italy and the entire world. It appeared that this event was going to be the end of the most cherished dream of Msgr. Scalabrini. Nevertheless, this circumstance was proof of God's works. In 1924 a group of theologian clerics, full of fervor and enthusiasm, convinced the Sacred Consistorial Congregation, which had taken

over the administration of the Scalabrinian mission, to prepare a new push for what had already been started. Several renewed priest ordinations returned to serve and continue the Scalabrini work and missions. They indeed prospered and served faithfully in North and South America.



Medal of the centenary of the death of the Bishop of Piacenza, issued 2005, obverse

In 1930, the Scalabrinian Institute, with spots for three hundred seminarians, was built in Bassano del Grappa. In 1933, the first seminary to benefit the children of the migrants was founded in Melrose Park, Illinois, in the United States of America. In addition to this seminary, a massive number of parishes and other seminaries were established. The primary purpose of these institutions was to serve migrants in Italy, Europe, the Americas, and Australia. The main goal was to provide a providential and trustworthy space for all immigrants of all races and colors.

Today, the Scalabrinian Congregation is present in 33 countries, serving immigrants and refugees. Not rhetorically speaking, this well-known phrase applies to this work: "The sun does not set on his missions." A happy omen for an even better future. Let it so!



General Scalabrinian archive

CHRIST CONTINUES TO EMIGRATE

IN THE WORLD THERE ARE

281 **MILLIONS OF
MIGRANTS**
(UN Estimate, July 1, 2020)

169 **MILLIONS OF
MIGRANT
WORKERS**
(ILO Estimate, 2021)

30.51 **MILLIONS OF
REFUGEES**
(UN Estimate, June 30, 2023)

37 **MILLIONS OF
MIGRANT GIRLS
AND BOYS**

75.9 **MILLIONS OF
INTERNALLY
DISPLACED**
(Internal-Displacement.org
Estimate, December 2023)

125 **MILLIONS OF
MIGRANT
WOMEN**

20 **MILLIONS OF
NATIONLESS**



IN UNITED STATES

12.2 **MILLIONS OF
UNDOCUMENTED
IMMIGRANTS**

50 **MILLIONS OF
IMMIGRANTS**



Each year, about 150,000 people are deported from the United States.

MISSIONARIES OF ST. CHARLES SCALABRINIANS

We, the Missionaries of St. Charles/Scalabrinians, are a religious and apostolic community embedded in Christ's missionary work as He continues working in His Church to achieve the Divine Plan of God in the world and its history.

This plan was fully revealed in Christ, aimed by the Father "to bring the Good News" to the poor and to "gather the sons and daughters of God dispersed in the world."

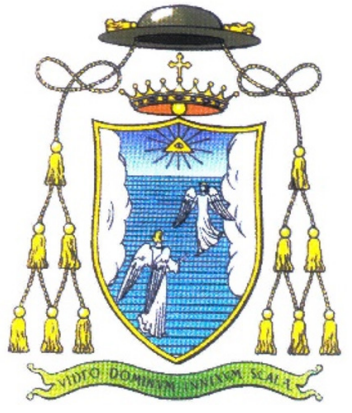
This plan is still manifested in the events, needs, and hopes of people.

We are called to proclaim the mystery of salvation to the people on the move. To fulfill our mission, we stand in solidarity with immigrants and refugees in their realities. We live and understand their migration experiences. The same way that Christ, who "by his incarnation," joined the social and cultural conditions of the people with which he lived.



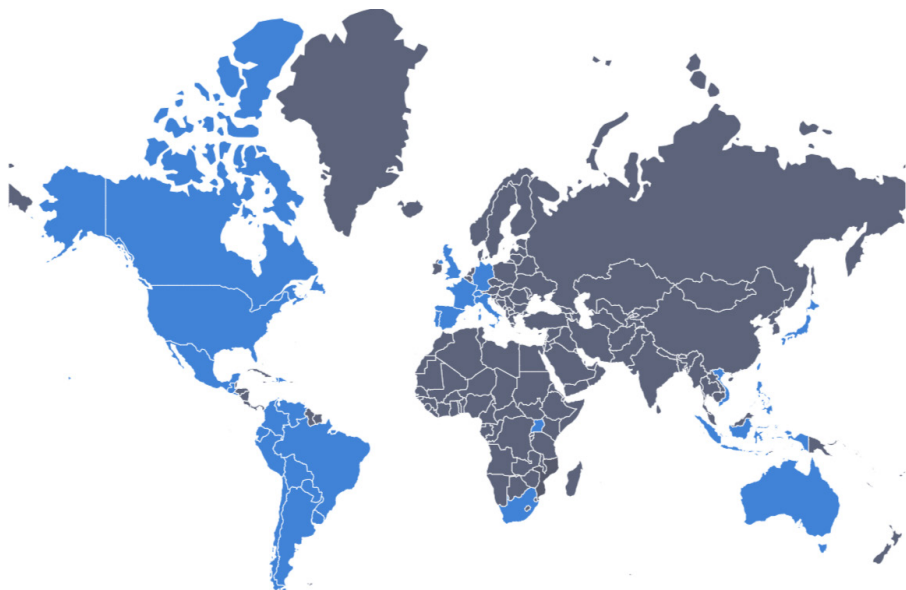
The St. Charles Missionaries are present in 33 countries across 5 of the 5 continents in the world

- + We **ADVISE** Migrants
- + We **WELCOME** refugees
- + We **SUPPORT** the undocumented
- + We stand in **SOLIDARITY** with the displaced
- + We **ACCOMPANY** internal migrations
- + We **HOST** sailors
- + We **SUPPORT** the Episcopal Conferences in some countries
- + We raise **AWARENESS & EDUCATE** the public through:
 - Magazines
 - Radio and TV Programs
 - Social Media



The logo of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles recalls one of the main characteristics of St. Charles Borromeo, humility, a model for the missionaries founded by St. John Baptist Scalabrini. The coat of arms of Monsignor Scalabrini is inspired by Jacob's ladder and represents the effort that Christians make to live united with God (Genesis 28:12).

EVANGELIZATION WITHOUT BORDERS



Argentina,
Australia,
Bolivia,
Brazil,
Canada,
Chile,
Colombia,
Dominican Republic,
Ecuador,
El Salvador,
England,

France,
Germany,
Guatemala,
Haiti,
Indonesia,
Italy,
Japan,
Luxembourg,
Mexico,
Mozambique,
Paraguay,
Peru,

Philippines,
Portugal,
South Africa,
Spain,
Switzerland,
Taiwan,
Uganda,
United States,
Uruguay,
Venezuela,
Vietnam

THE SCALABRINIAN MISSIONARIES IN THE PROVINCE OF SAINT JOHN BAPTIST

+ Formation Houses:

St. John Baptist Scalabrini Seminary, Mexico City, Mexico

St. John Baptist Scalabrini Scalabrini Novitiate, Guadalajara Jalisco, Mexico: Postulancy and Novitiate

St. John Baptist Scalabrini Scalabrini House of Formation, Guatemala City, Guatemala

St. Charles Borromeo Theological Community, Melrose Park, Illinois, USA

+ The Migrant Houses:

The Migrant House, Tijuana Baja California, Mexico

The Migrant House, Nuevo Laredo Tamaulipas, Mexico

The Migrant House, Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico

The Migrant House, Iztapalapa, Mexico City, Mexico

The Migrant House, Ecatepec, Mexico State, Mexico

The Migrant House, Tecun-Uman San Marcos, Guatemala

The Migrant House, Guatemala City, Guatemala

Migrant Pastoral Center, San Salvador, El Salvador

In these houses, we provide lodging, food, guidance, legal assistance, psychological counseling, education, and social integration to people in mobility.

+ Scalabrinians in Service within Human Mobility Agencies:

Episcopal Dimension for the Pastoral Care of Human Mobility,

-Mexican Episcopal Conference of Mexico

Human Mobility Pastoral -Archdiocese of Mexico

Human Mobility Pastoral -Episcopal Conference of Guatemala

Office for Hispanic Ministry Kansas City, Kansas, USA

+ Offices at the Service of the Scalabrinian Mission

Scalabrinian Pastoral Center, Guadalajara, Jalisco, México

Scalabrini Mission Office Oak Park, Illinois, USA

+ Formation Centers for Immigrants:

CESSOM Scalabrinian Formation Center for Immigrants, Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico

+ Vocational Offices:

Mexico City, Mexico

Guadalajara Jalisco, Mexico

Guatemala City, Guatemala

+ Retirement Center:

Villa Scalabrini, Sun Valley, California, USA

+ Nursing House for Religious:

Casa San Carlo, Sun Valley, California, USA

+ Parishes:

Señor de las Tres Caídas in Tecun-Uman, San Marcos, Guatemala

San Felipe de Jesús in Tijuana, Baja California, Mexico

María Reina in CDMX, México

Our Lady of Guadalupe in Chula Vista, California, USA

Saint Peter in Los Angeles, California, USA

Saint Conrad Mission Chapel in Los Angeles, California, USA

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary in Sun Valley, California, USA

Our Lady of Zapopan Chapel in Sun Valley, California, USA

Holy Cross in San José, California, USA

Saint Leo the Great in Houston, Texas, USA

Saint John Newman in Houston, Texas, USA

Saint Luke in Irving, Texas, USA

Holy Rosary in Kansas City, Missouri, USA

Holy Cross Parish in Overland Park, Kansas, USA

Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Melrose Park, Illinois, USA

Saint Charles Borromeo in Melrose Park, Illinois, USA

Chaplaincy of Casa Italia in Stone Park, Illinois, USA

Saint Ann in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Canada

Our Lady of Sorrows in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Our Lady of Fatima in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

PRAYER FOR THE MIGRANTS

Oh, Jesus, we implore you on behalf of all those who walk far from their homeland and live the experience of migration. These who are your sons and daughters in search of a better life; refugees escaping violence; deportees who see their dreams broken, and families on their migration journey without knowing where to go. All of these are in need of your help.

Jesus, you identified yourself with them, having experienced, by obedience to your Father's Will, the ordeal of exile along with Mary, your mother, and St. Joseph.

Our immigrant brothers and sisters need your light to discover the empty promises that often attract them. They need your Church, to remind them of their obligations that are often forgotten by their daily sufferings. They need your spiritual guidance to ennoble and confirm them as Christians in their faith.

Oh, Sacred Heart of Jesus bless all immigrants and hold them always close in your heart. Fill their lives with the love of God, who is the beginning of all good. Keep them from danger and strengthen their faith so that they seek happiness not only in this world but also in eternal life. May they, as pilgrims of God's Church, reach the heavenly city and enjoy eternal life with you forever.

Amen.



Thoughts of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

"For the Migrant,
the land that
gives him the
Bread is his
Homeland."



"The World Walks and
We Cannot stay
Behind."



"Prayer makes
man superior to
himself."



"Where the
People suffer and
struggle, the
Church needs to
be there."



"Don't forget that as
long as we live on this
Earth. We are migrants
in Search of a Homeland
that is earthly to us."



"The Church is a
Pentecost that
goes on in Time."



"... I know the
Bitter taste the
Poor Migrant's
Bread has."



"There is no greater joy
than accompanying the
Poor, Release the Oppressed
Wipe away the tears of
those who cry Anyway, do
a little Good."



"Emigration
gives Man the
World as a
Homeland."

