



SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

PROCEEDINGS
OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM
Rome, 9-14 October 2023

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General Administration of the Scalabrinian Missionaries

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INTRODUCTION

*LEONIR CHIARELLO, CS
SUPERIOR GENERAL*

Welcome to the Symposium on Scalabrinian Spirituality! Cordial greetings to all the confreres, to the representatives of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles, Scalabrinians, and the Scalabrinian Secular Missionaries, to our lay Scalabrinian friends, and to all those who follow us through social networks. Cordial greetings and thanks to the General Secretariat for Religious Life, which oversaw the organization of this symposium, and to all those who joined in prayer and collaborated in the preparation of this important moment of spirituality.

At the 15th General Chapter of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles it was decided to hold this symposium “for a current and intercultural rereading of the Scalabrinian charism and vocation” that we inherited from our Holy Founder. The celebration today of the first anniversary of the canonization of St. John Baptist Scalabrini helps us to reread with new elements the charism and mission inspired by Scalabrinian spirituality.

Recognizing that Christian spirituality can be defined as the action of God’s Spirit in the human person or, with more humility, the human reception or response to God’s action, rereading Scalabrinian spirituality invites us to recognize the acceptance and response by Scalabrini and those who followed him to the action of the Holy Spirit. In this perspective, the protagonist of this conference is not us: it is the Holy Spirit. Last week, at the opening of the Synod on Synodality, the Holy Father said, “If in our midst there are other ways of moving forward because of interests (whether human, personal or ideological), it will not be a Synod, it will be rather a parliamentary meeting, which is another thing.” Pope Francis also stated that “the Holy Spirit is the protagonist of ecclesial life... He who carries it forward, and the harmonic composer of salvation history... He makes that harmony, which is not synthesis; it is a bond of communion between dissimilar

parts: the Church, a single harmony of voices, in many voices, built by the Holy Spirit.”

Through the papers and testimonies that will be presented, we want to rediscover the harmony and relevance of the different dimensions of Scalabrinian spirituality, revisiting the different sources of this spirituality in the life and work of St. John Baptist Scalabrini and the witness of so many people who, inspired by the same Spirit and Scalabrini’s example, have shared and continue to share Scalabrinian spirituality, including all of us. As we rediscover the different traits of Scalabrini’s life and work as a pastor, catechist, educator, conciliator, man of charity, missionary, father to the migrants, founder and inspirer, we also find the harmony of these characteristics in his letting himself be guided by the Holy Spirit and his Christ-centered spirituality, nourished by prayer, which becomes love of God and neighbor and in particular love for migrants. His making himself all things to all people in order to win all people to Christ, his compassion and commitment as a Good Samaritan facing the challenges of humanity and the Church of his time, his “being holy,” is also an invitation to each of us and to all of us to follow his example.

In Scalabrini’s footsteps, so many religious men, religious women, consecrated persons, lay people and people of good will have reflected the characteristics of his spirituality and opened new paths of creative fidelity to the Scalabrinian spirituality, which we can summarize with the three elements we find in the *Traditio Scalabriniana*: welcome, to collaborate in the Father’s project; itinerancy, to translate the Paschal Mystery of the Son into life; and communion in diversity, to welcome the new creation of the Spirit.

At the end of this conference, having reread the different dimensions of Scalabrinian spirituality, we want to resume our journey of creative fidelity to the Scalabrinian spirituality we have received as a gift, animated by Jesus’ invitation with which he concludes the parable of the Good Samaritan: “Go and do likewise!”

Happy journey of reflection for all of us!

FIRST PART

PRESENTATIONS

SPIRITUALITY. THE TENTH HOUR

CRISTINA SIMONELLI

FACOLTÀ TEOLOGICA DELL'ITALIA SETTENTRIONALE

When the two *disciples* heard him say this, they followed Jesus. Turning around, Jesus saw them following and asked, "What do you want?" They said, "Rabbi" (which means 'Teacher'), "where are you staying?". "Come," he replied, "and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they spent that day with him. It was about four in the afternoon (Jn. 1:37–39).

That is a passage many times heard, read, pondered. A passage interwoven with many others in Scripture (*What are you doing here Elijah?* 1 Kings 19:9; and in the same Gospel, *Who do you seek?* Jn 20:15), it lends itself to foregrounding verbs, therefore actions, such as listening, seeking, dwelling, thus allowing us to anticipate plastically some of the things I will attempt to say, like a door or at most a vestibule whose rooms will be designed, furnished and inhabited by you, by your common work. I interpret the task entrusted to me, therefore, only partially in the sense of a theoretical research on the space and meaning of "spirituality," drawing and carving out boundaries from other disciplines, to share rather some of its possible dimensions, like a small alphabet, and to conclude with a wish/blessing.

1 - SPIRITUALITY: AN EXCLUSIVE RESERVATION, A CATCHY WORD?

Of course, both "spirituality" and "spiritual theology" have a long and debated history, which, in the Western European world, is intertwined with the events of the Monastic Schools and Universities and, later, with the cultural movements of modernity. Thus, we arrive at the various thrusts of renewal that converged in Vatican II, also demanding a distance from the fragmentation of the immediately pre-

ceding centuries, sealed in the protest of the devotees of monastic sources who show the absurdity of the exclusion of spiritual texts from the Magister's theology classes (*monasticum non legitur!*). Various forms of life and reflection that protrude (even if born sometimes just before) into the 20th Century, moreover, react in other ways, privileging presence and listening – think of Charles de Foucauld and Madeleine Delbrêl, among others), or of respectful and supportive immersion in different worlds – think of the “foreign” Missions, of Bishop Scalabrini with Joseph and Assunta Marchetti, of Mother Frances Cabrini... and you can continue better than I.

All this goes to converge, among the rest, in the “Dictionaries” and Journals (I limit myself to the Italian and French horizon), which besides having interesting individual entries, show in their general titles all the search for a new horizon, not always easy to identify and to compare with the different inheritances received (perfection, ascetic and mysticism): *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, *Dictionary of Institutes of Perfection*, *Journal of Asceticism and Mysticism*. Such alternation, which also has advantages, is, after all, also found in the “secular” world, if one thinks, for example, of the feminist interest in women's mysticism: two very recent Italian titles: *Vivere Dio qui e ora. La sapienza mistica delle autrici del nostro tempo*¹, e *Mistica selvaggia, spiritualità senza confini*.²

Having said that, I find that in contemporary times one can identify a revival of spiritual theology in a strictly Christian sense, emphasizing its “lived” form of “experience,” in the sense of Spirit-motivated discipleship (Moioli, the School of Milan) and a very wide use, extending to varied forms, supported by different religions or even completely secular. It must be acknowledged that the two modes, outlined here somewhat exaggeratedly in order to compare them more easily, do not always get along perfectly; indeed, it may happen that the world of “spiritual theology” shows suspicion if not impatience with a pervasive and somewhat vague, it is said, use of

¹ Tommasi Wanda, *Vivere Dio qui e ora. La sapienza mistica delle autrici del nostro tempo*, Paoline, Milano 2023.

² *Mistica selvaggia, spiritualità senza confini*, Numero monografico di *Religioni e Società*, Maggio–Agosto 2023, particularly Annarosa Buttarelli, “La mistica come forma mentis femminile”, 52–57.

“spirituality.” Personally, on the other hand, I very much appreciate this broad use and do not fear its plagiarism or expropriation at all: rather, I think it brings with it resources and blessings, also and in a special way for the Christian world. For inhabiting fences is not of the Spirit, who rather crosses boundaries without losing its roots: the spirituality of the Gospel, which has the face of Jesus of Nazareth living in the Spirit, finds its end in the blessing of all and everyone, by whatever name they indicate their “depth.”

Spirituality is thus not a fashionable or vague term, but a welcoming and blessing horizon. I therefore agree with the choice made by you that allows evangelical rootedness, eschatological momentum and sharing of “height and depth.” An American colleague whom I often quote speaks of seeking in the presence of the other:

Time and space become more generous when we explore fundamental truths in the presence of the other. ‘Subtle places’ open up. In its highest form, prolonged interaction between people of different faiths offers a glimmer of the Transcendent and an awareness of the Divine, whose presence is elusive. However, “thin” times and places require “thick” religiosity. Feminist theologies and serious interfaith engagement are ways to “thicken” our religious understanding because they require the onerous task of re-weaving religious identity.³

In this view, a virtuous circularity is created between the density and depth of one’s spiritual world and thus of one’s practices and the diaphaneity that identity boundaries can take on if they are crossed without being scorned or simply removed. Density and depth in this sense, in fact, make boundaries thin, opening glimpses in which differences can become communicative thresholds, wide open to welcome the slightest whisper as the highest blessing.

To flesh out this way of considering spirituality, I point out some of its dimensions, indicating through the bibliography the authors who, more than others, have suggested them to me.

³ Mary Boys, *Learning in the Presence of the Other*, in *Faith and Feminism*, B. Diane Lipsett – Pyllis Tribble edd, WIK Press, Louisville Kentucky 2014, 103. In Italian “Imparare alla presenza dell’altro. I femminismi e l’incontro interreligioso,” in *Fede e femminismo*, Aracne Roma 2017, 171–187.

2 - SEEKERS OF WELLS AND PATHS

Perhaps the less young among you will remember the first – then not repeated, thus at the moment unique – International Congress on Consecrated Life, later published under another title, but which in its making was guided by a fascinating horizon, that precisely of seekers of wells and paths:

Consecrated persons, women and men who are fragile and in love, compassionate and realistic, must nurture – by telling and living – nothing but parables of wounded existences that grace heals, testimonies of painful anxieties that dialogue brings back to authenticity, provocative reactions that call theoretical curiosity to be transformed into compassionate praxis, weaving gestures of occasional encounters that compassion envelops with new hope.⁴

I therefore follow a kind of mini-alphabet (a to e) for this enterprise of depth and way, trying to identify it through voices that are different from each other and at the same time converging.

A. KAIROLOGY

“Many religious things I could give up, but not hope.” Thus Tomáš Halík, in *Pomeriggio del cristianesimo*.⁵ I will not go into the metaphor that forms its title now, but I will take up one dimension of it, which I see as closely related to hope, precisely, called by the Moravian author Kairologia: he himself says that as he went to press, he realized that he also found it in another author (Paul Zulehner), precisely in this form of science of the opportune moment. One could also more simply refer to the theology of the signs of the times, with the addition, however, of an acute awareness of the crisis that characterizes our time. As far as we are concerned here, we might point to it as attention, as letting ourselves be caught up in what is happening,

⁴ Secondin Bruno, Diana Papa in *Passione per Cristo, passione per l'umanità*, Paoline, Milano 2004, 84.

⁵ Halík Tomáš, *Pomeriggio del cristianesimo*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2022.

These are strange times and strange things are happening. Times in which changes follow one another in ever widening, though irregular, waves, with the consequent, simultaneous occurrence of contradictory effects. Times of very rapid changes that do not erase the brutality of power relations, but in many ways intensify them, bringing them to a point of implosion. Living in an age of such accelerated changes can be electrifying, but the task of representing them to ourselves and engaging positively with the contradictions, paradoxes and injustices they generate is an ongoing challenge [...] If one does not love complexity, it is impossible to feel at home in the twenty-first century.⁶

This challenge, exacerbated precisely by the speed of what is produced and the amount of information that reaches us, sometimes piling up, is often one of the reasons for a kind of melancholy, of sadness that is not well thematized, that grips us. Instead, its very recognition can be the starting point of a spiritual approach appropriate to the times, in that spirituality that Halik himself identifies as the “passion of faith”.⁷

B. READINESS AND SLOWNESS

The way to inhabit these stormy times can draw on attitudes experienced by many spiritual traditions: from the “attention that repairs the world” – *tiqqun* – of the Jewish tradition, which is also found in women authors of the threshold, such as Simone Weil,⁸ to the perspective offered by Buddhist author Livia Chandra Candiani:

As a child it was precisely these miracles of the known that enraptured me in fairy tales and I would have wanted many more... I used to play a game: to see as many insignificant things as there were in a room or in a street or on the streetcar, just the most unseen, the most not at all special

⁶ Braidotti Rosi, In *Metamorfosi*, 9.

⁷ Op. cit. 191–203.

⁸ See the beautiful comment in Tommasi Wanda, *Vivere Dio qui e ora*, 50–52.

and to welcome them all into my gaze and smile at them with complicity.⁹

Fatema Mernissi, an Islamic writer, attributing the teaching to a grandmother, suggests, “You have to focus on the foreigners you meet and try to understand them. The more you can understand a foreigner, the greater your knowledge of yourself, and the more you know yourself, the stronger you will be.” This strength introduces the concept of *lawami*, the flash of enlightenment in the Sufi tradition. It is necessary to cultivate a state of “readiness,” Grandmother Yamina continues, speaking to her granddaughter, because the most valuable baggage that foreigners bring is their difference, and “if you focus on the divergent and the dissimilar, you will also have enlightenments”.¹⁰

All this is very similar to the resources Gianrico Carofiglio identifies in *kōan*, which are:

a fundamental tool of Zen practice and consist of paradoxical statements or short stories or utterances that are followed by questions that are seemingly absurd, but in fact constructed to challenge our ordinary ability to interpret the world [...] The *kōan* serve to unhinge the conventional way of looking at things [...]. They draw attention to the multiplicity of possible answers to the problems of existence: they serve to propose solutions to problems that seem insoluble, to escape in an original and creative way from situations that seem impossible to be remedied.¹¹

It has often occurred to me – for example, commenting on *Laudato si* – to consider that in this attitude we require listening and slowness, while in various situations – think of the urgency of peace or of interventions to at least slow down the degradation of the ecosystem – we would rather require promptness. Except that we have a tendency to reverse the issue and use intolerable slowness where there would be urgency and move frantically and thus incapable of listening and

⁹ Candiani Livia Chandra, *I sogni del fiume*, Einaudi 2022, VI.

¹⁰ Mernissi Fatema, *L'Harem e l'occidente*, Giunti, Firenze 2000, 5–6.

¹¹ Carofiglio Gianrico, *Passeggeri notturni*, Einaudi, Torino 2016, 74–75.

of vision where it would be necessary to stop the pace to let reality speak to us and summon us.

C. UNSATURATED AND TRANSPASSIBLE

A good practice, preliminary to any other, is the practice of wonder. Practice not knowing and wonder. Look around and let go of the concept of tree, road, house, sea and look with a gaze that ignores the known. Exercising wonder heals the heart that could only exercise fear.¹²

I use perhaps too casually terms that come from other disciplines, but this, if done with intellectual humility and declared in one's own point of view, is a promising practice because it pushes toward the translation or even the *tampering* with words, which, etymologically, does not mean their distortion but their liberation. I therefore like to emphasize the need that our way of being in the world, personal but also communal, be unsaturated (W. Bion), that is, to have inner and intellectual space. When thought of in terms of "ideas," this is easy to understand: thinking that we know everything actually prevents knowledge; thinking that we have pastoral plans that can cover every need is the first step to their failure. There is, however, a prior focus, and it is the properly spiritual focus of inner space, what could be referred to as the "sacrament of the empty throne," a First Testament image that guarantees the recognition and custody of the divine Alterity, the highest and deepest. If we are "full," there is no room for recognition of the other(s), either among humans or the rest of creation or the Creator. I always think with admiration of the Hesychast lesson: It is not, therefore, a strategy but I say this with a text by Jean-Yves Leloup, a French Orthodox theologian, on Hesychasm: he had gone to Mount Athos to find answers through specialized words, and instead he is told, "Learn from the mountain. Acknowledge to everyone and all things the right to exist."

Such an attitude is also a gift, often offered by the encounter itself, by the practices, though it can be healed, exercised, perhaps suggested and educated. Anne Lecù, a doctor in a prison in Paris, refers for

¹² Candiani Livia Chandra, *Questo immenso non sapere*, Einaudi 2021.

the modality of her encounters to the idea of *transpassibility*, which she deduces from the philosopher Maldiney, a transformation due to the event of meeting.

The interest of this way of understanding the possibility of transformation in encounter lies in the fact that it is traced to psychic distress and from there it illuminates the most common modality: thus not a practice of the perfect, of the self-sufficient; on the contrary, the fragile way possible for each.¹³

D. TRAINING THE MEMORY OF GRACE AND WOUNDING

(Trans)possibility of transpassibility that generates transformations is joy and grace, but it can also be wounding, frustration, offense. A text by Carlo Maria Martini, designed for marriage but extensible to other situations, speaks of cultivating the memory of grace as a gesture of prayer and as a spiritual attitude. I think it is important to take up the task, extending it to a less brilliant aspect, that of making memory, reconciled but without removal, of the wound. An open wound, unreconciled, not “worked on,” hurts so much, but a wound that burrows beneath an apparently undamaged surface is much more serious: a scar is a sign of healing, but also a memory capable of development, a “story of the inner life”¹⁴ that can open to encounter with others and with self or that, in its difficulty, can at least invoke it.

Among the many references from the tradition that is most dear to us, I prefer once again to cross the border, with Carla Gianotti, a Buddhist, who writes as follows in a little gem:

To guard says the act of containing with care, of making oneself a safe and protected place and at the same time an open place of being. [...] the good we hold in custody deepens us, becomes our surplus. Surplus is the further space, always further. Surplus is worth abundance, an indefinite

¹³ Lecú Anne, *Il senso delle lacrime*, San Paolo 2018: in Italian, see two texts, agile though dense, by Maldiney Henri, *Della transpassibilità*, a cura di Federico Leoni, Mimesis, 2004; Id, *Esistenza: crisi e creazione*, a cura di Maude Dalla Chiara, Mimesis 2012.

¹⁴ Maldiney, op. cit. 102.

multiple, beyond the boundaries of form, of shapes, which each time names the beyond, impossible to contain or control. It is my daily ability to make space to being, to make heart to things. The surplus goes to the others side (*s-confina* in Italian), overcomes the known and thought measure.¹⁵

E. TEMPORARY DWELLINGS

Out of all this or, better, taking up much of what has been said up to now, in a kind of virtuous circle or good spiral, there arises a general attitude that connects with the Gospel passage with which we began... they went and “remained that day,” “dwelt,” an important verb in that Gospel. It means to dwell while scrutinizing, in the unsaturated and in the possibility of becoming a concave, open place: capable (this, too, at least in Italian, indicates something that can contain, a receptacle, precisely) to stay where the questions are open, the outcomes uncertain, the horizon not yet as luminescent as it will be in the dawn. Capable, then, of hope, a humbler virtue, in a sense, than faith and charity, but powerful precisely because it has no power over its object, which can wait along with every person, every life.

3 - HAVE A GOOD LIFE, MADAM! THE JUGGLER'S BLESSING

I end with a wish, a blessing gathered at a traffic light, between red lights turning green and cars rumbling nervously in a traffic jam worthy of cities bigger than Verona, where I live and where it happened. There was a street juggler, breaking into the nerve-racking wait of motorists for some uncertain change, the measure of a day's livelihood. His juggling tore me from the thoughts and annoyance of delay and I gave him a coin. He greeted me in an unusual way: good life, madam, he said. His words reached me, as immediately before his game had reached me and made me smile, creeping in among

¹⁵ Gianotti Carla, (*Keeping, Conceiving. Time and the Surplus (of Things)*, Mimesis 2021, 7.

some other words/ blessings that along my life have reached me from strangers, unexpected angels.

Gradually, however, his blessing also entered the plan of things I was preparing, including this one, and sought the company of a Psalm, with a nomadic history like much of Scripture. As I went back to read it, I realized that the two forms buzzing around in my head were mirrors of each other, in a translation that interpreted and empowered, as happens in spirituality, precisely: Psalm 40:7 is quoted in Hebrews 10:5–7 according to the more common Greek version of the text (LXX). While the form perhaps most familiar to us says “sacrifice and burnt offerings you did not please, you gave me a body,” in the Hebrew text we read “you gave me ears,” or, better, “you dug out my ears.” The blessing of the juggler lies in this multiplied cavity, the wish for a good life gives body to our hope by digging out our ears and opening our eyes. Making the moment of the traffic light a dwelling, a tenth hour — translated now often as four o’clock in the afternoon, but commented by the ancients according to numerical symbolism: “it was the hour of fullness” (St. Augustine).

DIVERSITY GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT TOWARDS AN INTERCULTURAL SPIRITUALITY

*SR. ANNA DAMAS, SSFS
HOLY SPIRIT MISSIONARY SISTERS*

The Truth once was a mirror in the hands of God.
It fell and broke into many pieces.
Everyone has picked up a piece of it
and is looking at it,
believing to possess the whole Truth.

Rumi

SPIRITUALITY AND CULTURE

In some Congregations, membership and communities have become increasingly culturally diverse in the last decades. For others, especially mission congregations, it has been a reality since their foundation.

Some Congregations feel somewhat overwhelmed and uncomfortable with the increasing internationality of their leadership teams and communities. Other Congregations have deliberately chosen and embraced internationalization as a characteristic part of religious life in our age.

Most religious communities experience intercultural living as a mixed blessing. Cultural diversity enriches us – and sometimes makes our life together miserable. We have learned that we do not become an intercultural community simply by putting together different nationalities under one roof. We have learned that sharing your culture goes much deeper than sharing traditional food, dances and costumes. Intercultural living includes the pain of not being understood; loneliness; misunderstandings and conflicts. Intercultural community life is hard work, it is an ongoing construction site.

Since spirituality is the *sine qua non* of our religious life, we need to make a connection between the reality of our intercultural living and our spirituality. Unless we reflect on interculturality with the eyes of our faith, it will never become part of our spirituality.

Spirituality is rooted in our humanity, and culture is a fundamental part of our humanity. A spirituality always develops at a certain time, a certain society with its culture. The living-out of a spirituality has always a cultural dimension. Vice versa, encountering another culture – if it is a real and deep encounter – has a spiritual dimension. In-depth cultural encounters are potentially God experiences.

COMMUNITY, CULT, CREED AND CULTURE

Every religion consists of three constitutive elements: Community – Cult – Creed.

Any community of believers (religious congregation) is always and necessarily constituted of people with their own culture. The cult in which people express and perform their faith is a culturally grown and conditioned form of communication (for instance, liturgical vestments, gestures, language etc.). Even the Creed is not supra-cultural. The “what” of belief is transmitted in mental concepts and language, i.e. culture.

Who believes, how we believe, and what we believe – all of it comes in a cultural wrap-up. Culture plays an important role in our faith. To fully understand our faith requires that we understand the dynamics of culture.

FROM INCULTURATION TO INTERCULTURATION

In the last century, much emphasis was laid on the inculturation of the Gospel. Reflecting on inculturation, however, has made us aware that there is no such thing as the “pure Gospel” – a message that could somehow be “distilled” from its historical and cultural expressions. The Good News is a message, an act of communication; and every message has a language, a grammar, a vocal body or visual appearance, mental concepts – in other words: every message comes in a cultural body, and indeed does not exist apart from this body.

Holy Scripture, too, the Word of God is a cultural product. Therefore, reading Scripture is, by definition, an intercultural encounter.

However, Christianity is not a book religion, but an incarnation-religion/faith. God incarnate in a human being means, that Jesus of Nazareth lived in a certain period of time, had a certain sex and gender, and was deeply molded by his culture and Jewish religion. Encountering Jesus of Nazareth is an intercultural encounter.

These insights have shifted the focus from inculturation to interculturalization.

SYNODALITY

This is especially true now that the whole Church has embarked on the synodal journey. It has more than ever brought home to us that local church cultures differ. But how far may cultural diversity go? Where is the border between the faith normative for all, and legitimate cultural contingency?

At the end of the Synod on the family (2015), Pope Francis observed:

We have seen that what seems normal for a bishop on one continent, is considered strange and almost scandalous for a bishop from another; what is considered a violation of a right in one society is an evident and inviolable rule in another; what for some is freedom of conscience is for others simply confusion.

TOWARDS A SPIRITUALITY OF INTERCULTURALITY

A people's "culture" is more than an abstract idea. It has to do with their desires, their interests and ultimately the way they live their lives. To speak of a "culture of encounter" means that we should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone. [...] What is important is to create processes of encounter, processes that build a people that can accept differences *Fratelli Tutti* (216).

Whereas multiculturalism is the mere co-existence of diverse cultures in one space, interculturalism is “more”: the intentional and sustained interaction of people with diverse cultural identities. In intercultural communities, every member allows to be affected by the presence of persons from other cultures.

This is not “natural” for us since we are socio-biologically hard-wired to live in culturally homogeneous groups (hordes or tribes). Thus, intercultural living requires from us a commitment to a life outside one’s comfort zone. In theological terms, it is *kenosis*.

If anyone is in Christ, this person is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:17

Interculturalism is not just a matter of learning new techniques and social skills. The aim of intercultural living is not only successful interaction, managing our differences, and avoiding conflicts (that would be the bubble community). It is not only an exchange between persons from diverse cultures for mutual enrichment, but it is a personal and communal transformation.

An intercultural community gives rise to novelty: it transforms members into new persons who relate to each other in new ways. It becomes a space where people discover God in new ways. True intercultural living is therefore a God-adventure and spiritual by its very nature.

THE INTERCULTURAL JOURNEY OF JESUS AND EARLY CHURCH

Intercultural encounters transformed Jesus, and they characterize the development of the Early Church.

In the encounter of Jesus with the Syrophenician/Canaanite woman (Mk 7:24-30; Mt 15:21-28), she is the racial, religious, and gendered Other. Jesus at first refuses contact with her: “*Jesus did not say a word...*”. He limits his mission to his own people: “*I was sent only to the people of Israel!*” because he believes: God’s Table is limited (“*It isn’t right to take food away from children and feed it to dogs.*”)

The woman remains nameless; for the disciples, she is just a nuisance. But she refuses to give in and does not resign to the role Jesus assigns to her. She does not play the victim but instead turns the re-

fusal/insult (*dog*) into an argument in her favor. She personifies the divine gifts that are needed in order to bring about God's all-inclusive project, the Reign of God. She becomes a prophet and teacher to Jesus and deepens his understanding of his mission and the all-inclusive love of God

The encounter of Jesus with the Samaritan Woman (John 4) highlights that true intercultural encounters expand our image of God ("conversion"). The Spirit moves us toward new spaces of encounter, dialogue, freedom and mission – spaces of "both/and" where we are called to hold on to the questions and paradoxes of intercultural living.

The Big Question for the nascent Christian community was: Is it possible for non-Jews to believe in Jesus the Christ? Can they become part of the community of Christians? On what conditions? In this context, Acts chapter 10 report the story of Peter's dream. Told right after the Conversion of Saul/Paul, it is the story of Peter's conversion. In the dream, God declares the food laws, the big cultural divide between Jews and Gentiles, null and void. Peter realizes: God's Spirit knows no distinction between Jews and Gentiles, between races, religions and cultures.

This Big Question around the inclusion of Gentiles into the community of Jesus-followers flared up in Antioch, the home base of Barnabas and Paul. The conflict was formally resolved at the Council of Jerusalem. The Council decided to acknowledge everyone as disciples of Jesus on the basis of their faith – and not on the basis of Jewish culture and religion. If the Council had decided otherwise, there would be today no worldwide Christianity as we know it. Christians would likely have continued as a Jewish sect.

It is interesting to note that it was in Antioch that the Jesus-followers were first called by the name "Christians". In Antioch, people realized: Hey, here is something new, something extraordinary: here are Jews and Gentiles believing and living together in a new way. It was their intercultural witness that called people's attention and brought about the Church as a novel community.

In a way, Vatican II repeated the Jerusalem Council by opening up the Church to more cultural inclusiveness: from European Christianity to World Christianity (K. Rahner).

SUMMARY

True intercultural encounters lead to inclusiveness, novelty and new theological horizons. Scripture witnesses that it is the Spirit who brings about union and inclusiveness on a higher level, transcending differences of culture, creed, and communities.

Interculturality is not a cognitive content or communication technique to be learned, but a personal and communal process of transformation.

Interculturality is not only the experience of diversity as mutually enriching, but it leads to the transcendence of diversity (as dividing) towards higher inclusiveness and union.

It is a Spirit-led creative process that cannot be constructed with a ready-made blueprint, but like all Spirit-led processes, it needs our full collaboration (time, commitment, willingness to undergo painful experiences). It is kenotic.

True intercultural encounters lead to the expansion of our image of God, a new way of experiencing God, and a new spirituality (personal and communal conversion).

RESOURCES

Anthony J. Gittins, CSSp, *Living Mission Interculturally. Faith, Culture, and the Renewal of Praxis*, Minnesota 2015.

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FROM IGNATIAN SPIRITUALITY TO JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

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Let us begin by understanding the meaning with which we use the term “spirituality” in this report. The human being is not merely a bio-psychic reality in that it is driven to self-transcendence, so it is also a spiritual being.¹ St. Paul himself sees the human being as a unity of body-psyche-spirit (cf. 1Thess 5: 23). As spirit, man self-transcends by seeking transcendental meaning to his life. Christian spirituality is life in the Spirit seeking the transcendental meaning of it. Thus, it is a dynamic reality.

The concept of charism is intimately related to spirituality. The charism of the founder is intimately linked with the spirituality of the institute he/she founded. In a general sense, charism is a gift of the Holy Spirit, in service to others which may also include founding an institute, congregation etc. It can be said that the spirituality of the institute is the charism of the founder becoming action.

Said Geronimo Nadal, one of Ignatius’ first companions and a theologian of Ignatian spirituality, that the privileges granted to Ignatius are also bestowed on the members of the Society along with their vocation.² The purpose of this paper will be to trace the path from Ignatian spirituality to Jesuit spirituality.

¹ 1 Cf. Rossano Zas Friz de Col, “Current socio-religious context and Christian living,” in *Initiation to the Spiritual Life*, ed. by Mark Rotsaert and Rossano Zas Friz de Col (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2017), 9-26.22.

² Cf. Geronimo Nadal, “In Examen Annotationes,” in *Monumenta Nadal V*, MHSI 90 (Rome: 1962), 162-163.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL CHARACTER

Ignatian spirituality has a strong autobiographical character. Ignatius does not write his autobiography, but we have the account of his life narrated to Gonzalez da Camara considered Autobiography which has the title: *The Pilgrim's Tale*³ because Ignatius identifies himself as a pilgrim seeking God's will. Ignatius was the pilgrim of God's will. In 1521, the cannonball not only wounded his leg but also his pride. Until then, he sought only himself. His only concern was how he could most distinguish himself in the service of the king of Castile. The forced retreat from convalescence and the reading of holy books in the silence of Loyola made him rethink life. He shifts from seeking the meaning of life in the things down here to seeking it in the things up there. The purpose of his *Pilgrim's Tale* was to make known how he was led by God. At every crucial moment of his life, he stops to ask, *quid agendum* (Au [50]). He seeks the true meaning of life: he self-transcends. He finds the meaning of life in seeking, finding and fulfilling God's will. We will find these elements later in the Spiritual Exercises.

Ignatius allows himself to be led by God. Referring to the Manresa period, he says, "God behaved with him as a schoolmaster does with a child: he taught him" (Au [27]).

A TRINITARIAN SPIRITUALITY

The central Christian mystery is the Trinitarian mystery and, Ignatius is aware of this truth. Therefore, Ignatian spirituality is Trinitarian not only because he knows that God is Trinitarian but because he experiences, feels and tastes (cf. ES [2]⁴) God as such.⁵ The narrative describes five mystical experiences of the Manresa period. The

³ Cf. Au = Roberto Calasso, ed. of, *The Pilgrim's Tale: autobiography of St. Ignatius of Loyola* (Milan: Adelphi, 2015).

⁴ ES = Pietro Schiavone, ed, *Esercizi Spirituali: Ricerca sulle fonti*, Spiritualita/Maestri. Seconda Serie (Cinisello Balsamo (MI): San Paolo, 1995).

⁵ Cf. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, ed. by, *Escritos esenciales de los primeros Jesuitas: de Ignacio a Ribadeneira*, Manresa [Sal Terrae] (Bilbao: Mensajero, 2017), 568; Karl Rahner and Paul Imhof, *Ignatius of Loyola*, translated by Rosaleen Ockenden (London: Collins, 1979), 11.

central experience is the Trinitarian one and the others are integral parts of it. The first: “his mind began to be rapt: it was as if he saw the most holy Trinity under the figure of three organ keys” (Au [28]). The second: “it was represented in his intellect [...], the way in which God had created the world” (Au [29]). The third: “with all clarity, he was perceiving how Jesus Christ was present in [...] the most holy Sacrament” (Au [29]). The fourth: “Many times, and for a long time, while he was in prayer, it happened to him to see with his inner eyes the humanity of Christ” (Au [29]). The fifth:

Once [...] as he was sitting there [the bank of the Cardoner River], the eyes of his intellect were opened: he had no vision, but he knew and understood many principles of the inner life, and many things divine and human; with so much light that everything appeared to him as new. It is not possible to report clearly the many particular truths he then understood; only it can be said that he received a great light in the intellect. To remain with the intellect enlightened in such a way was so intense that it seemed to him that he was another man, or that his intellect was different from that of before. So much so that, if he takes account of all the things learned and all the graces received from God, and puts them together, it does not seem to him to have learned so much, throughout the whole course of his life, up to his completed sixty-two years, as at that one time (Au [30]).

These are fundamental and foundational experiences in Ignatius’ spirituality. The so-called Cardoner enlightenment (*eximia ilustración*) had such a profound influence on Ignatius that, years later when he was drafting the Constitutions and when asked why he wrote this or that, he responded by saying: because of what he had seen and understood in Manresa. In Nadal’s words, in the enlightenment of Cardon Ignatius received a spirit of architectural wisdom, that is, an internal cohesion that gave proportion to the parts. In the totality of the experiences, we see an integral movement. The movement begins in the experience of the three persons of the Trinity. Next, the understanding of how God had created the world, i.e., the three persons in

relation to creation. Then, the sacramental reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist and Christ's humanity.⁶

Ignatius' spirituality is not merely speculative or abstract but a spirituality of incarnation.⁷ In Manresa's experiences, especially that of Cardoner, he understands "things divine and human." In the imitation of the saints he had read about in the *Flos Sanctorum*, in Manresa's early days, he exaggerated in penances and neglected his physical appearance, letting his hair and nails grow. After the mystical experiences, "he abandoned the excesses of austerity that he had previously imposed on himself. He now cut his nails and hair" (Au [29]).

From a man who desired to retire to a monastery, he becomes a "man of the world." After understanding divine and human things, he understands that the world is not a negative reality from which to flee in order to seek holiness of life, as was done in Ignatius' time. Mystical experiences console him. He improves his physical appearance and begins conversing about the things of God with people and "saw good results in the people he was helping" (Au [29]).

Ignatius leaves Loyola with the firm intention of making the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. After the Manresa experience, a deep desire arises in him: that of "helping souls" (Au [45]). He does not seek the imitation of Christ in monasteries, in lonely places, as at the beginning of his conversion.⁸

Ignatius travels to the Holy Land but, in 1523, he is forced to leave it. He returns to Spain and decides to study, with the aim of being able to help souls, first in Barcelona and later in Alcalá. He is put on trial by the Holy Inquisition, so he decides to go to Salamanca where he undergoes a new trial following which he decides to go to Paris. In his Alcalá days he begins to have companions, and this adds a new aspect to his spirituality: the desire to help souls as a group. A first group from Alcalá and a second group from Paris but both groups

⁶ Cf. Joseph Veale, "From Exercises to Constitutions, a spirit in search of a body," in *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus incorporation of a Spirit*, ed. by The Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality (Rome: Secretariatus spiritualitatis ignatianae, 1993), 4-6.

⁷ Cf. Brian O'Leary, *Ignatius Loyola Christian Mystic* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2023), 11.

⁸ In Ignatius' time monasteries were usually located in cities. Exceptionally, in Paris, Ignatius knew the urban Carthusian monastery of Vauvert. Later, the first house of the Society will be founded in the center of the city of Rome.

will disperse. The corporate dimension of his spirituality takes shape with the third group of friends. These friends, teachers in Paris, decide to follow the poor and humble Jesus together. On August 15, 1534, in Montmartre, they make vows of chastity and poverty, and a promise to go to the Holy Land with the condition that, if that were not possible, they would place themselves at the pope's disposal. Two other moments reported in the *Tale* deserve mention here. In the interval between his ordination to the priesthood in 1537 and the celebration of his first Eucharist in 1538, Ignatius asked Our Lady to be placed with her Son. On his journey from Venice to Rome (October 1537), with two companions, Favre and Laínez, while praying in a small chapel in La Storta, he had a vision (Cf. Au [96]). He saw the Father and the Son with the cross on their shoulders. The Father was telling the Son to take Ignatius as his servant. The Son turning to Ignatius said, "I want you to serve us." Ignatius felt that he along with his companions were chosen in the service of the Holy Trinity, because in the vision he had heard the Father say, "*Ego vobis Romae propitius ero.*" Here is the confirmation of the corporate call. Ignatius felt confirmed in his call to help souls. The charism he received in the Cardoner enlightenment is confirmed. Even the name he had thought of for the group of friends, the Society of Jesus, is confirmed because the call was to accompany Jesus who bore the cross.⁹ The Society of Jesus means to accompany Jesus laden with the cross.

The second moment is presented simply, in a few words, "he had always been growing in devotion, that is, in the ease of finding God. And now much more than in his past life. And he could find God at any time he desired" (Au [96]). Ignatius recounts these words toward the end of his life. These words reflect an essential aspect of his spirituality: to find God in all things and at all times. This means that he had learned to find God even in the midst of the worries of governing the Society of Jesus and not only in the quiet moments of recollection.

⁹ Cf. Grupo de Espiritualidad Ignaciana, *Escritos esenciales de los primeros Jesuitas*, 317-318; Pedro Arrupe, "The Trinitarian Inspiration of the Ignatian Charism," *Notes on Spirituality* 13 (1980), no. [12-14].

THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES, AN ABSTRACTION OF IGNATIUS' CONCRETE EXPERIENCE

The main source of Ignatian spirituality is the *Spiritual Exercises*. The book of the Exercises is a manual, the teacher's book that helps in giving the Exercises to others. The *Spiritual Exercises* are the abstraction of Ignatius' spiritual experience, mainly from the Manresa period where he began taking notes of his experiences during his convalescence and conversion. Most of them were written in Manresa. When Da Camara asked him for some information about the Exercises, Ignatius replied, "he had not written all the Exercises in a row, but what was happening in his soul and he found useful, believing that it could benefit others as well, he jotted down; for example, examining the consciousness by taking it into account with the system of lines, etc." (Au [99]). The purpose of the Exercises is always to help others. Those who do the Exercises following the method given in the Exercises, with the accompaniment of one who gives them, can also have the experiences similar to what had happened in Ignatius' soul. It is not a matter of studying the Exercises but it is a matter of doing the Exercises, "for not much knowledge satiates and satisfies the soul, but feeling and tasting things internally" (ES [2]), thus, having the personal experience of the transcendent, as Ignatius had done in finding the meaning of his life. In order to understand what happened in Ignatius' soul, to understand his spirituality, it is necessary to delve into the spiritual experiences reported in the *Pilgrim's Tale* in which are contained the concrete experiences Ignatius made that form the background of the abstract method of the Exercises.

The Exercises are primarily a path to personal salvation. The First Week indicates the path to free oneself from disordered affections in order to better dispose oneself to find and fulfill the divine will. Ignatius struggled with the reality of his sinfulness trying to free himself by striving just like a good knight but had failed. And, then, he had learned to accept the free gift of God's mercy. The First Week Exercises helps the exerciser understand the process of his sins and receive divine mercy. The First Week discernment rules help to understand the obstacles the evil spirit puts in the path of conversion and teaches how to overcome them. The exercitant coming out of Week One con-

tinues to be a sinner, but a forgiven sinner, aware of his disordering affections and free from them to some extent.

In Week Two the exercitant contemplates the life of Christ incarnate. Ignatius rightly proposes the contemplation of the incarnation as a Trinitarian event. The exercitant asks, “inner knowledge of the Lord, who for my sake became man, that I may love and follow him more” (ES [104]). Ignatius, in his life before conversion, had pursued vain honor and personal glory. After conversion, he had done nothing but seek the greater glory of God. The dimension of “the more” or *magis* was present both before and after conversion. What changed was the object of devotion, from the worldly object to the transcendental object.

At the end of the Second Week the exercitant makes the election or a life choice. Contemplation of the life of Christ aims to acquire the same feelings as Christ. This works on the basis of the principle, “one becomes what he contemplates” (Cf. 2 Cor. 3: 18). It is asked that the exercitant become more like Christ, that he or she have the same feelings as Christ (Cf. Phil 2: 5) in order to choose as Christ would have chosen. During the Second Week, in addition to the contemplation of Christ’s life, Ignatius completes the journey with three specific exercises that better prepare the exercitant to make the choice. Week Two’s rules of discernment are an aid to knowing and overcoming the deceptions of the evil spirit, which can easily lead the exercitant to make a wrong decision.

Man’s objective according to the Ignatian view is the praise, reverence and service of God (Cf. ES [23]). In the act of election, the exercitant chooses to serve God, uniting his or her will with God’s. The decision made according to Christ’s own sentiments must be tested. In the Third Week of the Exercises, one contemplates the passion and death of Christ. Here the election passes through Calvary to receive further confirmation in the Fourth Week of the Exercises when the exercitant attains the grace to rejoice and enjoy in the glory and joy of the Resurrected One (Cf. ES [221]). The Exercises end with Contemplation to attain love (*Contemplatio*), where the exercitant learns to recognize internally the much good received in order to love and serve the divine majesty in everything. In fact, *Contemplatio* acts as a link between the intense time of retreat and daily life. It teaches the

exercitant a way to seek and find God, not only in the time of retreat but also in the midst of the joys and sufferings of life. Toward the end of his life, Ignatius said that he could find God at any time, and he wants the exercitant to also come to find God at any time and in all things. Growing in devotion and spiritual life by seeking and finding God in all things is only possible when a prerequisite is fulfilled. Says Ignatius, "Think, indeed, each one that the more he will progress in all spiritual things, the more he will come out of his own love, will and self interest" (ES [189]). He highlights the need for decentralization (death of ego) and finding God in all things when he says in the Constitutions:

All should endeavor to keep upright their intention not only about the state of their own lives, but also in all particular things, always procuring to serve solely and to please in them the divine Goodness for its own sake, and because of the love and benefits so extraordinary, with which it has prevented us, rather than out of fear of punishment or hope of rewards, though they should benefit therefrom also. And they will often be exhorted to seek in all things God our Lord, rejecting from themselves, as far as it is possible, the love of all creatures, in order to place it in their Creator, loving him in all and all in him, in conformity with his most holy and divine will (C [288]).¹⁰

THE SPIRIT IN SEARCH OF A BODY

In the first part of this report, we saw how Ignatius was led by God and how God granted him the charism, to "help souls." In the second part we saw how his spirituality is shaped in the Spiritual Exercises. The Exercises themselves were born to "help souls" but the charism granted to Ignatius does not end in the Exercises.

In fact, the group that made the Montmartre vows were drawn to the Ignatian charism. They had all done the Exercises separately under Ignatius' guidance, but they all came to desire the same thing,

¹⁰ C = Jesuits. General Congregation (34: 1995: Rome), *Constitutions of the Society of Jesus approved by the General Congregation 34a: Complementary Norms approved by the same Congregation* (Rome: ADP Editions, 1997).

“to follow Jesus humble and poor and to help souls.” They wanted to fulfill this desire in the Holy Land and when they failed to do so, as they had agreed, they placed themselves at the disposal of the pope.

A change of epoch was taking place in the world: the discovery of new sea routes, new lands, their colonization and the rapid spread of Protestantism in Europe. Pope Paul III begins to send Ignatius’ companions, the teachers of Paris, to different missions. It is a crucial moment for Ignatius and his companions. Before the dispersion, they gather in Rome in Lent 1539 to ask together what God wanted of them. From this gathering will come the resolution of the early fathers.

The Second Week of the Exercises begins with the call of the Eternal King. The call is generic, addressed to everyone. Although the Exercises are an individual personal journey, Christ’s call to service is collective. Ignatius invites the exercitant to:

see Christ our Lord, eternal King, and before him the whole world, whom everything and each one in particular calls, saying, ‘It is my will to conquer the whole world and all enemies, and so to enter into the glory of my Father; therefore, whoever wishes to come with me must work with me, so that, following me in sorrow, he may also follow me in glory’ (ES [95]).

Ignatius had composed this exercise many years before the vision of La Storta. At La Storta, he felt confirmed in his call to help souls together with his companions. The companions, gathered to deliberate, felt called to serve the divine majesty together as an apostolic body. They unanimously decided to form a body and make a vow of obedience to one of their own. This vow was the principle of unity that would keep the group together, not in physical unity but in even deeper unity, the spiritual unity.

The companions presented the proceedings of the deliberations to the pope for his approval. The text basically contained the life plan of Ignatius and companions. The pope approved the document, i.e., the institute of the Society, first orally in 1539 and then solemnly in 1540 with the Apostolic Letter *Regimini militantis Ecclesiae*. This text

is called *The Formula of the Institute*,¹¹ and it is the fundamental text of the Society.

The Formula is addressed to those who “wish to militate for God under the banner of the cross and to serve only the Lord and the Roman Pontiff, his Vicar on earth.” The purpose of establishing such a community of militants is “to be especially concerned with the progress of souls in the life and Christian doctrine, and the propagation of the faith.” How should behave those who embrace this form of life? “Also see to it that you have before your eyes, always, before anything else, God, and then the form of this Institute of yours, which is a way to Him” (FI [1]).

By the mystery of the Incarnation we know that the Spirit tends toward a body to be realized. Something similar happens in the foundation of the company.¹² The gift of the Spirit, the charism, granted to Ignatius also seeks a body.¹³ We can say that this happens in the process of the foundation of the Company, comprised of two moments. The first moment is the formation of the apostolic body having Jesus as its head but attracted by the Ignatian charism, while the final decision to become an institute formally occurs during the Deliberations. The second moment is the articulation of the Ignatian charism in the approved *Formula* of the Roman Pontiff.

CONCLUSION

Thus, we can conclude by saying that the inspiring text of Ignatian spirituality is the *Spiritual Exercises*, a gift to the whole Church. The Exercises are indeed a path of personal salvation, but they also help the exercitant to make an election for the good of the Church (Cf. ES [170]).

The generic call of the Exercises to serve Christ laden with the cross becomes a specific call in the *Formula*. It is a call to embrace a proper way forward indicated in the text of the *Formula*. The way of proceeding becomes a way to God for those who feel called to live in

¹¹ FI = Formula of the Institute. Found in Jesuits. General Congregation (34: 1995: Rome), Constitutions of the Society of Jesus.

¹² Cf. Veale, “From Exercises to Constitutions,” 4.

¹³ Cf. O’Leary, *Ignatius Loyola*, 11.

this Institute. At the same time, the Jesuit is concerned not only for his own holiness but primarily for the holiness of others – “helping souls.”

The inspiring text of Jesuit spirituality is the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. The Constitutions are the elaboration of the Institute’s *Formula*. An important note must be made here. The elaboration of the *Formula* is not theoretical. The same is true of the Constitutions; there is a reference to the lived experience of Ignatius and companions. We refer to the way the companions proceeded during their years of study and especially the period of about two years that begins with the arrival of the companions in Venice after their studies and formal approval of the Company. Their way of proceeding in life and apostolate in and around Venice is what is formalized in the Constitutions. The companions carried out ministries (later mentioned in the *Formula*) in dispersed groups of two or three under the guidance of Ignatius, their undisputed leader. It can be said in a certain sense that the Constitutions were practiced before they were written.

It can also be said that the Constitutions are a continuation of the Exercises, as both texts are animated by the same Spirit. At the same time, while the Exercises can be understood independently of the Constitutions, the Constitutions cannot be understood without the Exercises. While one who adheres to the Exercises can be called an Ignatian, he is a Jesuit, and only a Jesuit to the extent that he or she is an Exercises man and committed to living a life according to the way of the Constitutions.

FROM THE SPIRITUALITY OF GUIDO MARIA CONFORTI TO THAT OF THE INSTITUTE

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INTRODUCTION

During the second Conference on Xaverian Spirituality, organized in 2006 in Tavernerio (Como-Italy), Fr. Angelo Manfredi, professor of Church history, intrigued the participants when he established a connection between John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905) and Guido Maria Conforti (1865-1931). They had in common, in addition to a “mutual sympathy and charity”,¹ also the episcopal ministry in Emilia-Romagna at the beginning of the 20th Century. Both were Founders of Institutes, proponents of an “apostolic mystique” whose spirituality has Christ and the apostles as its model and is oriented toward ministry and the recovery of the missionary sense; they lived the virtues to a heroic degree, then, in 2006, were venerated as blessed and now saints. They shared the same pastoral priority of catechesis: Conforti organized the first catechetical congress in Parma, drawing inspiration from the excellent experience of the first National Catechetical Congress organized by Scalabrini in Piacenza in 1889, which made

¹ Giovanni Bonardi, “Ricordi dei primi tempi”, Roma 1948, 42-43 cit. da Ermano Ferro, “Giovanni Battista Scalabrini e Guido Maria Conforti. Dagli Archivi Saveriani”, in Gaetano Parolin e Agostino Lovatin (a cura di), *Ecclesiologia di Scalabrini. Atti del II Convegno Storico internazionale, (Piacenza 9-12 novembre 2005)*, ed. Urbaniana University Press, Roma 2007, 558. Father Bonardi, with three other confreres, left Parma on 18.01.1904 to depart from Genoa to the Chinese mission of Honan. Msgr. Conforti accompanied his people as far as Piacenza where the meeting with Msgr. Scalabrini took place.

Scalabrini a pioneer of the Italian catechetical movement and the renewal of catechesis.²

Fr. Manfredi, Conforti's biographer,³ also establishes a difference between the two regarding the founding of their Institute: while Scalabrini, ordained bishop in 1876, founded the Institute in 1887 because Pope Leo XIII asked him to take care of the assistance of Italian emigrants in America, Conforti founded the Institute as a consequence of an original intuition of being a missionary. Not being able to realize it physically led him to found the Xaverians in 1895 (he would be ordained bishop in 1902). Manfredi draws some conclusions about spirituality from this:

Scalabrini is a bishop, totally an Italian bishop and to whom the Holy See entrusts a mandate, which he fulfills. What he transfers into his Congregation are some of his elaborations, his pastoral style, his spiritual elaboration, but only in part. While Conforti is totally Founder, and at the same time totally bishop of Parma. This totality of his, leads to a total, or almost total, transferring, for better or for worse, that is, with its value, certainly very great, but also with its limitations.

For example, one norm that Conforti gives insistently to his missionaries according to the typical structure of priestly spirituality from the Council of Trent onward (...), is weekly confession. I want to see in China if they could confess weekly! (...). Clearly this is the point of view of an Italian who has always lived in Italy and assumes from the spiritual tradition a very specific structure. He lived it, certainly, and he passes it in the same form on to his missionaries. Then his missionaries must have lived it as they could, evidently.⁴

The purpose of this reflection is not to continue the comparison between the two holy bishops, also because there is a temporal asym-

² Cfr. Umberto Cocconi, "Primo Congresso Catechistico e Prima Settimana Catechistica", *Parma negli anni*, n. 18 (2013), 157-158.

³ Cfr. Angelo Manfredi, *Guido Maria Conforti*, Ed. EMI, Bologna 2010, 734 p.

⁴ Angelo Manfredi, "Cenni storici sulla Spiritualità di Mons. Conforti", in *Missionari Saveriani, Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 128-129.

metry that distances them, but Fr. Manfredi's observation invites us to see Msgr. Conforti and the Institute he founded as one. It is therefore difficult to clearly separate "the spirituality of the Founder" from "the spirituality of the Institute." Conforti leaves to the Xaverians a missionary spirituality, rooted in him from his youth and cultivated against all odds. The missionary ideal is the unifying center of his entire life. He also left to his children, along with the Constitutions, a spiritual testament, the *Testament Letter* (in 1921); he wrote editorials in the monthly internal magazine of the Institute, called *The Word of the Father*, which are true pearls of missionary spirituality, in the line of the essentials to be lived and transmitted. His spirituality, having as its goal evangelization *ad gentes*, carried a broader breath, a more conscious sense of the universal Church, in a local Church open to mission.

After summarizing the core of St. Conforti's spirituality, I propose a few time periods that seem to me to characterize the main historical stages of the developments in the understanding of Xaverian spirituality as identified in various interventions and especially during the 2006 Conference on Xaverian Spirituality. The time periods often refer to the length of the mandates of the Institute's General Administrations.

THE SPIRITUALITY OF ST. GUIDO MARIA CONFORTI

At the center of his spirituality, St. Conforti places the spirit of *living faith* that accustoms us to "see God, seek God, love God in all things"⁵ and that in all circumstances keeps our gaze before Christ, to be accompanied by Him everywhere, with the firm and constant desire for the proclamation of the Gospel to non-Christians, the supreme and only goal of the Institute. In connection with this motto one can understand the breadth of horizons of his missionary methodology. Conforti chose two Pauline phrases: one engraved in his episcopal coat of arms, "In omnibus Christus" (Col. 3:1), a way to concretize the inner drive and connect it with the goal of mission; the second for the Xaverians, "Caritas Christi urget nos" (2 Cor. 5:14), the love of Christ as the source of mission.

⁵ Guido Maria Conforti, *La Parola del Padre*, ed EMI, Bologna 1981, 29.

We may ask how Conforti came to this unifying center of his entire life: his encounter with the Crucified One during his childhood (strength of love and weakness of power), his reading of the life of St. Francis Xavier (glorious apostle who could not make it to China), his powerful experiences of illness and healing (the paschal dynamic of life growing through failures, suffering and death), and his many intense apostolic activities, to name a few. It is the encounter with the Other that leads Conforti to grow in the awareness of an apostolic identity and spirituality. Identity and Otherness go hand in hand.

In today's postmodern thinking, one often imagines identity (even charisma or spirituality) as something related to the ego, to the individual, to something exclusively mine. Conforti's existence, like that of other saints, tells us, on the other hand, that spirituality is the fruit of the relationship with the Otherness to which one opens oneself in patient and humble listening, in the dialogue of empathy and silences, in the mission with new departures.

So let us look in the historical itinerary of the Xaverian Institute for how the dynamic of the encounter with otherness has raised awareness of a spirituality with common constituent elements and with particular facets according to times and places.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE TIME OF THE WITNESSES (1932-1961)

The whole history of a missionary institute is made up of "witnesses" who, humbly and courageously, simply and boldly, proclaimed the Gospel, some to the point of martyrdom. We mean here the "eyewitnesses" who were trained by Bishop Conforti, who lived directly with him and who assumed, in the years after his death, services of authority in the Institute. Exemplary is the candid figure of the venerable Father Pietro Uccelli, who died in Vicenza in 1954 in the odor of sanctity.

The task that the General Chapter entrusted to the new Superior was summed up in the word "Consolidation." It was thought that, after the Founder's death, it was necessary to think not of new expansions, but of an assimilation of the Founder's teachings, which were often quoted to promote awareness.

However, there were tensions between the first generation Xaverians and those who made the Regular Novitiate (begun in 1921) under the guidance of Fr. Bonardi and Conforti himself. Father Luke, who knew the Founder, identifies the causes of this generational friction in the way of living obedience.

The reaction is explained by the fact that almost all the elders had taken hasty courses and did not have much culture, especially some who came from military service. (...) Besides disapproving of the young people's behavior, some suspected that they were writing in Italy about what was happening in China, presenting things in a bad light. (...) What was the real point of friction? I answered that it was obedience, as it was conceived and practiced in the Founder's shadow and as it was conceived and practiced in China. Bishop Conforti used to dialogue with his priests before giving an order and he must have done the same with his missionaries. In the Motherhouse the students lived together with the Superiors and there was a mutual acquaintance, facilitated by monthly talks. I never heard of sudden orders without an explanatory meeting. Instead, a concept of blind (and mute) obedience had been introduced in China, which is certainly not the responsible obedience that the Second Vatican Council talks about.⁶

The "creative tension" that makes the spirituality of those years develop may come from the following questions that the brethren were asking themselves: how to remain faithful to the Founder's line, how to maintain the balance between religious consecration and missionary purpose. They accused Conforti's first successor of wanting to make friars instead of missionaries by increasing juridical and normative texts, with minute and detailed rules, to the detriment of that missionary looseness and openness conceived by Conforti.

On the other hand, the heroic dedication of missionaries in China until the 1950s and then in the various countries gave particular liveliness to missionary animation, to the vocational proposal of mis-

⁶ Augusto Luca, "Il periodo del primo successore: 1932-1944", in *Missionari Saveriani, Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 172 e 183.

sion *ad gentes* and *ad extra*. The testimonies of Xaverians dedicated to a great cause were proposed in small articles and books in the press and nourished a very intense emotional climate of evangelical radicalism. However, the theological vision was changing in the late 1950s: with national movements toward independence from colonial power, one wonders if mission is still civilization, if the motivation is still the “conversion of the infidels” when the patristic postulate “extra Ecclesiam nulla salus” seemed outdated. Practical attractiveness, once made of adventure and enthusiasm for the salvation of souls, is now marked by questions and uncertainties.

SPIRITUALITY IN THE TIME OF QUESTIONING (1961-1977)

The Xaverian magazine *Faith and Civilization*, which became *Mission Today* in 1979, gives space to the questions of those years.⁷ Questions are asked about the meaning of charism and the foreign missionary, within the local Churches, which were formerly “mission countries.” The questions are presented in the dialectic of “aut-aut” as if to manifest the urgency of getting clear “charismatic tracks”: evangelize or help the poor? Dispersion or community? Presenting religion without talking about conversions? Inner life or outward commitment? Action or contemplation? Like everyone else or different from others? Institute *ad gentes* or service delivery organization?

These were the years of the Second Vatican Council and the primacy of the local church as the subject of mission was being discovered. It was understood that the Holy Spirit is not only the one who gives certainty, but also the one who raises questions to grow. We confronted otherness and spoke, especially with Fr. Callistus Vanzin, of “evangelization of cultures”⁸ and the “Center for Global Education”.⁹

⁷ Cfr. Gruppo Péguy-Milano “Il duro discorso della missione”, *Fede e civiltà* n. 8, ottobre 1969, pp. 5-16. Giovanni Battista Collini, “Presentiamo la religione senza parlare di conversioni”, *Fede e civiltà* n. 8, ottobre 1971, 26-29.

⁸ Cfr. Vittorio Callisto Vanzin, “Le missioni nel nostro tempo: seconda contestazione”, *Fede e civiltà* n. 6, giugno 1973, 7-17.

⁹ CEM, established in Parma in 1942 as the Center for Missionary Education and which, in 1967, took the name Centro Educazione alla Mondialità, to form a new awareness in Italian schools, delving into themes of intercultural pedagogy by exploring the history and cultures of peoples as a supranational heritage. Cfr.

In the 1970s there was also the question of whether indeed the Institute is animated by a spirituality of its own or whether it is simply ordered to the mission *ad gentes*. Some said that Xaverian spirituality is biblical: in the light of the Gospel and following the Church's instructions, the Xaverian fits into the *missio ad gentes* where he is sent. Others argued that the Xaverian charism, not having a specific spirituality, opens the possibility of adherence to other ecclesial movements of spiritual deepening that arose, by the way, in those years (focolari, communion and liberation, neocatechumenal path, Marian priestly movement, renewal in the Spirit...).

In this period of questioning, worthy of mention from a theological point of view are two confreres who helped maintain the charismatic momentum during the stormy years of 1968: Msgr. Gianni Gazza (superior general 1966-1977 who participated in the Council and who took to heart the transmission of the Council's renewal by specializing a conspicuous number of confreres for teaching and research) and Father Amato Dagnino (rector of the Parma Theological House of Studies and author of *Spiritual Doctrine from the Writings of Conforti* and *Christian Life*, an authentic manual of spirituality). Dagnino proposed a solid educational style faithful to Gospel values and a sense of personal responsibility. There was growing awareness that "mission requires a mystical tension capable of affective concentration on the Gospel and the Kingdom of God, a great harmonious wealth of abilities and virtues".¹⁰

Meanwhile, Paul VI, in 1966, with the *motu proprio Ecclesiae Sanctae* asked religious institutes to present a new text of the Constitutions according to the mind of the Founder and the evangelical and theological principles suggested by the Council. The question was asked: was it possible to update the Founder's Constitutions or was it not better to rewrite them? Here began a search that lasted 17 years until the text was approved in 1983.

Antonio Nanni, *Profeti di mondialità. Il movimento CEM nella scuola italiana*, ed. EMI, Bologna 2007, 176 p. <https://www.emi.it/prodotto/profeti-di-mondialita/>

¹⁰ Francesco Marini, "Dire Dio oggi: sfide alla missione e alla Chiesa", in *Missionari Saveriani, Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 288.

While wondering, the mission continued in simple and extraordinary everyday life and heroics: the servants of God Faccin, Carrara, Didonè with Abbé Joubert were killed in Congo, excellent witnesses of Christian fraternity (28.11.1964); the brethren in Burundi experienced the tragic massacre of 1972; in Bangladesh first Mario Veronesi (1971) then Valeriano Cobbe (1974) were killed; in 1976, Alberto Pierobon knows the same fate in Brazil, giving “supreme proof of Christ’s charity” (LG 42.3) freely and to the end.

SPIRITUALITY AT THE TIME OF THE FOUNDER'S REDISCOVERY (1977-1989)

With the goal of revising the Constitutions, a rediscovery of the Founder began. It was a group effort, led by Fr. Gabriele Ferrari, Superior General. More than thirty scholars, mostly Xaverian, were directly involved in this research dynamic: some published a biography of Conforti (Augusto Luca in 1980 and 1988; Tiberio Munari in 1981 and 1988), others proposed specific studies.¹¹ The turning point was Fr. Teodori’s publication in 1977 of the first three volumes of the *Letters to the Xaverians*, revealing the living face of the Founder. These letters gave the right and providential impetus to the Secretariat of Formation at a meeting organized in 1978 in Ancona, by the Adriatic Sea. The Councilor for Formation, Fr. Antonio Trettel, recalls it well:

Towards the end of 1978, we came up with the idea of creating from nothing our own specific and original *Ratio Formationis Xaverianae* (RFX)¹² starting from a central core of values that would identify the living charism to be transmitted also to the young people in formation. There on the beach-

¹¹ We offer a few examples of academic studies or licentiate theses from this period: Ballarin on the Constitutions, 1977; Camera on the educational method, 1978; the Xaverian Baroncini on Conforti’s pedagogy, 1979; Fr. Scaccaglia on the missionary work of the Propagation of the Faith, 1981; Masi on the identity of the Xaverian, 1986; Piccinini on Conforti’s charism and spiritual discernment, 1987 and on Confortian Christocentrism, 1988 (cf. Ermanno Ferro, *Bibliografia confortiana commentata*, ed. Centro Studi Confortiani Saveriani, Parma 2004, 386 p.)

¹² Based on the five constants of St. Conforti’s spirituality and in light of the 1983 Constitutions, the *Ratio Formationis Xaverianae* will be published in 1983, updated in 1989, and expanded in 2014.

cliff, the waters that day very blue though slightly shaky, each tried to win a rock, as comfortable and close as possible, and there, very simply, we began the treasure hunt: what are the most fundamental specific characteristics of Xaverian spirituality? Thus came out slowly and from different inspirations the five constants or the five fundamental charismatic dimensions, which would then constitute the core-base and the plot of our RFX and which we also clearly find in the first chapter of the 1983 Constitutions, the one that indicates the general design of the Constitutions themselves!¹³

Thus, the “five constants” that enabled formation structures were rediscovered in the 1980s, when new formation communities were opening in non-Western Circumscriptions. To this day, these constituent elements of the Xaverian identity characterize basic and ongoing formation: missionary purpose, Christocentrism, consecration, family spirit, human face. First of all, the ‘unique and exclusive’ goal is Mission ‘ad gentes’ (1st constant); the Christocentric foundation, emphasized with intense passion by Conforti (2nd constant); the evangelical existential modality is religious consecration (3rd constant); the related specific community emphasis is the spirit of family (4th constant); all is accompanied by an indispensable ‘human face of the Xaverian’ (5th constant).

Two events strongly contributed to the realization that indeed there is a ‘Xaverian spirituality’: the first conference on Xaverian spirituality (in Pamplona in 1980) which first established the coordinates to understand the most genuine and original soul of the charism, and the restarting of the cause for Conforti’s beatification and canonization, which implied two decades of correspondence (1964-1981) between Postulation and Holy See on doubts (*Animadversiones*) and the precise and well accurate answers from the postulator general, Fr. Giulio Barsotti. It is significant that Fr. Juan Antonio Flores, one of the first Mexican Xaverians who lived through the debates of that period, clearly states that:

¹³ Trettel Antonio, *Com'è nata la Ratio Formationis Xaverianae* (Bukavu, 17.07.2014), Manuscript preserved in the Centro Documentazione Saveriano Roma, 2.

I speak and have spoken about Xaverian spirituality because I am convinced that our charism, in its specificity, also has a real spirituality. And the reason that leads me to this certainty is very simple: the Spirit in his work is always original, never repeats himself. His action in Conforti and in his entire project is something, undoubtedly, unprecedented.¹⁴

This led to the approval of the Constitutions in 1983: the substance of Conforti's Constitutions was preserved, freeing them from prescriptions contingent to his time and to the mentality of the time and, above all, placing Xaverian spirituality in the perspective of mission: the "vow of mission," the real novelty of the new text, was placed in the foreground so that it would inspire the rest. Other elements relevant for their novelty: the decentralization of the government of the Institute, a new emphasis on community life, a greater weight given to the word of God, a new organization of the life of prayer and a missionary approach in the formation itinerary.¹⁵ Interestingly, in addition to the work of involving all the confreres, biblical-theological, rather than purely juridical, language also helped in the reception of the text of the 1983 Constitutions.¹⁶

SPIRITUALITY IN THE TIME OF INTERCULTURALITY (SINCE 1989...)

Already in the General Chapter of 1983 the concept of interculturality is used to speak of the International Houses of Theology, which arose in the four continents in the 1980s. The choice of these Theolo-

¹⁴ Juan Antonio Flores Osuna, "Echi di un percorso aperto sulle orme del Beato G.M. Conforti", in Missionari Saveriani, *Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 107.

¹⁵ Cfr. Gabriele Ferrari, "Le Costituzioni del 1983", in Missionari Saveriani, *Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 207-218.

¹⁶ There has been no lack of historical approaches thanks to the chronology proposed by Fr. Teodori (who published, from 1977 to 2000, 28 volumes on Conforti's writings) or by Fr. Ferro in the series "Parma degli anni" (now in its 26th volume). Theses of the brethren from the four continents (as well as other religious and lay people) on a specific Conforti theme continue.

gates, confirmed in all the following General Chapters, implied the closure of the single Italian Theologate, preferring formation inserted in a missionary context, in which to live inculturation, communion and solidarity. In the 1990s, there was a growing sensitivity to interculturality, since internationality seemed to express only the multicultural element, i.e., the coexistence of several cultures in the same place and time (sometimes with expressions of tolerance-resignation or domination-subservience), without explicitly promoting models of fraternity and relationship. First, the servants of God killed in Burundi in 1995 (Ottorino Maule, Aldo Marchiol and laywoman Catina Gubert), and then, in 1997, the 40 seminarians of Buta, left an impressive example of communion and fraternity, in respect for diversity and equal dignity, in mutual exchange and enrichment.

At the end of the second millennium and after more than a century of life, the Institute, now more diverse and intercultural, highlighted a great dedication of the brethren to mission and, at the same time, posed serious questions about how to do mission and how to face the future. This demands a mentality more open to the other, new rhythms of life, a different organization of work. A journey began that led to the XIV General Chapter (2001) where the *Ratio Missionis Xaveriana (RMX)* was approved. The fundamental theological principle was as follows: the Church is defined by mission and the first proclamation is a fundamental element of the identity of Christ's missionary disciples. In the light of the Magisterium, the RMX had the merit of re-proposing three characteristic terms of the Institute's mission, within the Church: *ad gentes*, *ad extra* and *ad vitam*.

After these clarifying documents (Constitutions, RFX, RMX), the General Administrations of the last decades note, in their circular letters to the confreres, some common problems in order to live the charismatic inspiration of Conforti in concrete terms. Among the most frequent calls is to promote the constitutive union between consecration and mission: the Community Life Project, material and spiritual sharing, and the life of prayer and contemplation are insistently suggested. The missionary evangelizes because he allows

himself to be evangelized (cf. RMX 9), otherwise we move toward “spiritual emptying”.¹⁷

The event of Conforti’s beatification (1996) and canonization (2011) has reawakened “the yearning for holiness: striving for it and wanting it is not indifferent to the effects of successful apostolic activity”.¹⁸ New realities have arisen thanks to the Universal Church’s recognition of Conforti’s holiness: the “Xaverian charismatic family”,¹⁹ the concept of “Xaverian culture”²⁰ that enters into deep dialogue with my being Italian or Burundian and transfigures it.

And today? If the interest in the culture of the other remains conatural to missionary consecration,²¹ there is a need to develop more “the human face of the Xaverian”: the growing interculturality in our communities naturally brings with it also the different ways of

¹⁷ Luigi Menegazzo, “La spiritualità nelle lettere delle DG (1981-2006), in *Missionari Saveriani, Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 243.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 244.

¹⁹ The expression “Charismatic Family,” used by Pope Francis on 11/21/2014 on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life (cf. *Apostolic Letter to all Consecrated Persons on the occasion of the Year of Consecrated Life*, no. III. I) has now also become part of the Xaverian language to encompass those who are inspired by the spirituality of St. Conforti: Xaverians, Xaverian sisters, lay people, families, religious sisters founded in the past by brother bishops (cf. Xaverian Missionaries, “Letter from the General Directorate on the occasion of the Xaverian Jubilee Year 2020-2021”, *iSaveriani* n. 114 - luglio 2020, 38-39, n. 69-72).

²⁰ The last General Chapter speaks of “Xaverian culture” or “Xaverianity” “capable of reconstructing a missionary grammar for today as well,” “as a way of life of people who aim to make the world one family in Christ, in the immediacy of relationships, in the simplicity of life, in the ability to relativize one’s own culture and to welcome the richness of the culture of others,” “which leads us to live diversity as a richness and to constantly pursue the unity of the family” (cf. Xaverian Missionaries, “XVIII General Chapter. Documents,” *iSaverians* No. 128 - September 2023, 9, 12, 19, 40).

²¹ The interest in the culture of the other is a constant missionary attitude: Conforti recommended studies on the culture of the peoples who welcome missionaries, he specifically wanted the Museum of Chinese Art in Parma (which began in 1901 and is still present today), later intercultural initiatives were organized: Meeting of Peoples, Feast of Peoples, intercultural exhibitions, missionary vigils, missionary rosaries, museums in various districts, cultural forums, education to worldliness (the CEM movement in the Italian school), cooperatives, intercultural communities.

understanding and living the human dimension. Said Fr. Francesco Marini, former Superior General:

To love the human, in all its manifestations and limitations: this is divine. (...) The Gospel is that vision of God, of life, of the world, of me, and that experience that justifies itself by its positivity and imposes itself by its attractiveness. Such a Gospel is beautiful, it is liberating and necessary for all, it can be offered with sacrifice, (...) it is the place of hope, of the better path to a greater humanity.²²

Finally, interculturality also confronts an Institute in the reality of economic sustainability. On the one hand, if the local church is the subject of mission, the missionary becomes part of the local church, with all the rights and duties of other pastoral actors. On the other hand, there are internal expenses within the institute that push for constant review of lifestyle and priorities. Again, in function of mission, the question is not “how to have as much money as in the past?” but “does mission today require all this money? Do we really need it?”.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this brief historical journey, it is good to recall how the *Ratio Missionis Xaveriana*, published in 2001 and now being revised, emphasized the *sentire cum Ecclesia*, a dimension dear to St. Conforti: the charism of the Xaverian Institute is part of the missionary movement of the Church, our spirituality is in the Church and offers a particular and essential articulation.

We Xaverians live mission in the Church, the People of God, a communion of charisms and ministries. Our service to the Gospel is part of the broader and more complex evangelizing mission of the Church, in a particular but essential articulation, that of the first proclamation (RMX 8).

On behalf of our Superior General, Fr. Fernando García Rodríguez, I thank the Scalabrinian Missionaries for inviting us to your

²² Francesco Marini, “Dire Dio oggi: sfide alla missione e alla Chiesa”, in *Missionari Saveriani, Convegno sulla Spiritualità Saveriana. Tavernerio 2006. Atti*, ed. Gemmagraf, Roma 2006, 286.

symposium and especially encouraging us to deepen our history. The last general chapter of the Xaverian Missionaries, celebrated last July in Bukavu (Congo DR), called for “drafting the Xaverian history with scientific historiographical criteria”.²³ By requesting this topic, you have stimulated us to continue the process of historical-charismatic revisiting of the life of our Institute and to discover how the intercultural dimension, in its luminous aspects and its shadows, has contributed to the transmission of the Conforti charism within the Institute and in the Church.

The research is just sketched out and needs continuous deepening: it will always be thanks to the encounter with otherness where we experience in our weakness the greatness of Christ’s love for all and the call that gives body to our specific spirituality. Mission still has much to say to our spirituality and spirituality gives depth to mission. The changes in mission, the history of so many confreres and perhaps of each of us as well, lead us to the conviction that “neither our mission nor our consecration can hold up in the long run or even justify itself without a deep, engaging, growing passion for Christ”.²⁴

²³ Cfr. Missionari Saveriani, “XVIII Capitolo generale. Documenti”, *iSaveriani* 128 (settembre 2023), 26, n. 69.

²⁴ Missionari Saveriani, “Esigenze della nostra vocazione missionaria. Lettera circolare della Direzione generale”, *Commix*, n. 8 (agosto 1990), 8, n. 8.

SECOND PART

TESTIMONIES

ON THE SIDE OF THE MISSIONARIES

NAZZARENO CALABRESE

My name is Nazzareno Calabrese, better known as John. I am the current president of the Italian Catholic Federation (FCI) NSW State committee.

I would like to tell you a little about the FCI and how it has affected me and my family.

In 1955, on arriving in Australia, two young Scalabrinian missionaries, Fathers Aldo Lorigiola and Luciano Bianchini, were sent to the south coast of NSW, Australia.

Moved by the spirituality and mission of their founder, Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, they saw the need to help Italian migrants both spiritually and socially.

At the time, there was a great need for this, since the Italian migrants had spent more than a month on the high seas and not being able to speak a word of English, and feeling like lost sheep, most if not all of them did not know where or who to turn to for help. So, the young priests came up with the idea to form a lay group and organize spiritual and social events.

Father Larigiola's vision was interrupted, when, in 1959, he was transferred to All Saints church in Fitzroy, Melbourne.

In August 1960, a third Scalabrinian, Father Giuseppe Molon was appointed assistant priest in the new Scalabrinian parish.

One of the things he was asked to do was to promote and develop a new lay group of migrants, and so the *Federazione Cattolica Italiana* was born in Australia.

Some of the things that members who could speak English were asked to do were:

- translate at doctors' appointments, in lawyers or legal offices, government offices and help migrants shop for food, clothes etc.

The FCI soon spread to other parishes around Australia.

To be able to function legally in Australia, they formed a national committee and developed a constitution which was approved by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference and was registered as a Social and Charitable group.

In the 1970s, many youth groups were established throughout Australia.

These groups were very popular among them because their parents would not let them out of their sights and these church groups allowed them to not only enhance their spirituality, but they enabled them to socially mix.

Many of them found their life partners.

One of them, Susie Mugnes became a Scalabrinian lay missionary who still works in Germany among the refugees.

I personally became aware of the Scalabrinian fathers when in October 1964, a family who had migrated to Australia in March of that same year was involved in a car accident in which the eldest daughter was tragically killed, and another daughter and a son were badly injured.

In early 1965, an Italian Scalabrinian priest, Father Giovanni Pagnin, was assigned to Dee Why, NSW, as parish priest. When he heard about this poor Italian migrant family and all the problems that they faced, both spiritually and financially, he came to visit them, offering his help and assistance. A few days later, he returned with a monetary donation to help with their financial struggles. This act of charity has never been forgotten by this family, which I later joined by marrying their eldest daughter Angela.

In 1998, Angela's parents decided to join the Dee Why FCI and wanted to attend their meetings; we decided to also join the group and soon started going to local and state meetings and various social events.

I was touched by the spirituality and comradeship that seemed to be emanating from everyone present and became more and more involved by joining the working committee.

In 2001, Father Giovanni Mello, a Scalabrinian, who was our section chaplain, talked me into running for section president, I was elected and have been president of the Dee Why section ever since.

In 2004, after reading an article in the Broken Bay news magazine (a newspaper distributed by our diocese), concerning the sponsorship of refugee individuals and families from Sierra Leone (Africa), which I thought tied in well with the Scalabrinian spirituality and the theme at the recent Sydney congress where the plight of refugees was discussed, I had conversations with our chaplain. We decided to sponsor a family of 7 with a donation of \$10,000-00.

I contacted the Northern Beaches Refugee Sanctuary, who were and still are involved with helping refugees and after their director came to our monthly meeting and spoke about the problems the refugees faced, we donated that money. That money was used to bring the family from Sierra Leone and was given to them on the condition that after finding work, they would repay the money back to the refugee group and would be used again and again to help other refugees.

These days, the sanctuary group is still active and at the time of writing this, they had helped 8,160 people from 48 different countries. This ties in well with the spirituality of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini and his involvement in helping migrants.

For over 60 years the Italian Catholic Federation has always considered itself as part of the Scalabrinian family with many pastoral fruits, great friends in faith and a generous reach out to needy people and most especially the support to the Scalabrinian bursary fund to help in the formation of Scalabrinian seminarians in Asia.

Behind the actions of the ICF there has been our humble faith as baptized migrants, striving to keep our traditions, and through them our faith. In doing so, we have transmitted in the best possible way that faith to our children and grandchildren.

Being accompanied by the Scalabrinian missionaries, the Scalabrinian spirituality has been one way of nurturing our faith as migrants. We have learned about Scalabrini and the Scalabrinian family.

With the process of beatification and canonization we have learned not only the history but also some important aspects of the Spirituality of St John Baptist Scalabrini, which serves as inspiration for our personal spiritual journey and for our commitment as missionary disciples. We have reflected on the great love that St Scalabrini had for God through his reflections on the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Church, the Holy Eucharist and the cross of Jesus.

In a more personal way, I can testify that those dimensions of the Scalabrinian spirituality have helped me in my spiritual journey and in my service as servant leader of the Italian Catholic Federation. Over the years and after participating at various congresses, either as a participant or organizer I have made many good friends throughout Australia, all people who, like me, have been touched by the Scalabrinian spirit of helping migrants in our local church and migrant community.

All FCI sections are similarly committed and organize bus trips, picnics, card and bingo nights, social events, raise funds for our church and various charities, the feasts and triduum of various Saints, Via Crucis during lent, and live acting of the Passion of Christ.

As mentioned earlier, one of the many charities who profits from our fund raising is the Scalabrinian bursary fund. Our donations were used to build seminaries in the Philippines, to purchase land in Vietnam for building a seminary there and a new seminary in Mau-mere, Indonesia.

I am also responsible for the printing and distribution of the Italian Mass sheets, "La Messa Festiva" which is distributed throughout Australia for the celebration of the Holy Mass in Italian. I thank and am assisted in this duty by Father Anthony Fregolent and members of various FCI sections. Most of the money raised by this project is donated to the Scalabrinian bursary fund.

To this day, the Italian Catholic Federation has donated close to 2 million Australian dollars. This money has helped many seminarians and a lot of them have become Scalabrinian priests who will help to spread the work of St. John Baptist Scalabrini throughout the world.

Allow me to share a bit on the dimensions of the Scalabrinian Spirituality:

As a young migrant in Australia, I always kept my faith but due to work and family commitments I was never able to be a regular attendee at Sunday masses. As my workload decreased, I started attending regular services. Somehow this did not satisfy my spiritual feelings and I wanted to do more, so I joined the church choir, but this was not enough for me.

Something inside me was guiding me to being more faithful to the Sunday Mass up to the point of becoming an acolyte and extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion. The active participation in the Holy Eucharist has become my strength and a humble way of serving my parish community.

I have been part of the pastoral council for many years and part of various committees in the parish, but the greatest privilege is to serve at the altar. I serve at the altar at least four times a week and I pray the holy rosary every day. St Scalabrini's great devotion to the Holy Eucharist has inspired me to value such a great gift in my life and the life of my family. Indeed, seeking first God and nurturing my life with the Holy Eucharist has granted me so many blessings.

Marian devotions are very important for migrant communities. Some Italian groups have brought statues from Italy and keep great devotions to the different traditions they represent.

The great devotion of St Scalabrini to the Blessed Virgin Mary is indeed inspiring because we feel that he understood how important it was for the migrants to keep their faith through traditions and popular piety.

In my personal experience, I am involved as a member of the committee of Our Lady of Fatima, Maria S.S. Mamma Nostra and Our Lady of Assumption. We not only prepare Her feast Days but also bring the statue of Our Mother to the elderly migrants in the Scalabrini Villages. I have been moved to tears looking at the elderly migrants being so grateful with the visit of Our Mother to their rooms bringing them consolation and healing. St Scalabrini is indeed a great inspiration to keep our love for Our Mother in heaven and to allow Her company to guide us.

As members of the Italian Catholic Federation, we commit ourselves to serve our local parishes and chaplaincies in the best way we can. We journey with the Scalabrinian Missionaries and also in some parishes where the Scalabrinians are not present.

When we hear the Scalabrinians thanking the FCI for our contributions to the bursary fund we feel that we do it because of the love we have for the church and our priests.

When young priests come from the seminaries in Asia to our parishes, we feel humble for the contributions we have offered to the Scalabrinian family with our prayers, support in the mission and the fund-raising activities. Indeed, the journey under the inspiration of the Scalabrinian spirituality has helped us to love more the Church and Her priests.

As members of the FCI attending congresses and spiritual retreats we have also learned about the sufferings of St John Baptist Scalabrini. His desire to “be intoxicated by the cross of Jesus” becomes a great source of inspiration when we also face hindrances along the journey.

In a very personal way, in recent years I have experienced that, facing health challenges with members of my family and members of the FCI. The devotion to the Cross has helped me to understand the meaning of love and sacrifice.

We are not scholars or experts on spirituality. We just keep our faith with humble expressions and St Scalabrini has journeyed with us inspiring us through his own spirituality and accompanying us through his missionaries.

Our presence in this Congress is indeed a great privilege to learn from one another and to continue our spiritual journey. It is indeed our spiritual nourishment that gives us the strength to continue with our humble charitable initiatives and the service to the Church.

The Mission of Jesus has a Church, and the Scalabrinian spirituality is rooted in that mission carried on by the migrants as missionary disciples. The Italian Catholic Federation is a little testimony that this is indeed possible.

In October 2022, I was fortunate enough to come to Rome for the canonization of Blessed Giovanni Battista Scalabrini. It was a once in a lifetime experience which I will treasure for the rest of my life to be part of thousands of pilgrims who watched as Pope Francis proclaimed the sainthood on our founder.

After the canonization, I was fortunate to tour all the churches and cathedrals where this great man was stationed and lived. This helped me to get to know him even better.

On the anniversary of St. John Baptist Scalabrini's canonization, I have now again had the honor to be selected to return to Rome to share my story with you. Thank you.

THE SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY OF THE LAY MOVEMENT

KATYA VALDÉS GURALNICK

When I think of my own history, it is impossible not to evoke at times something similar to a transit from the Tower of Babel to Pentecost. I come from a maternal family of Jews who set out from the city of Kiev (today Ukraine), and from Budapest in Hungary trying to save their lives, persecuted for their religion. Among the grandparents and great-grandparents there were Poles, Hungarians, Russians and Italians. My paternal family came to Chile from Spain, with strong Catholic roots. My parents' marriage had different connotations, almost all of them happy, but of course, also many prejudices and complications typical of tradition.

My brother and I were baptized shortly after we were born, among other things, because the survivors of concentration camps and ship voyages who arrived to America were very few and mostly women; and without a majority group of men, it was problematic to maintain domestic Judaism; and on the other hand, because the paternal family lived values that made my mother feel welcomed and incorporated, so she finally thought: "let them be Catholic, believe in God and let He be the center of their lives ... the rest will come". That is how we grew up between Jewish and Catholic rites simultaneously. My parents had the enlightenment to allow us to know and walk in both worlds, and with that they gave us forever the ability to seek to understand, respect and love the diversities that comprise us as human beings.

I came to know the Scalabrinians because Our Lady of Pompeii parish was very close to home. My mother heard about a Hungarian community that met there and my father had been trying for some time to find a place where the church lived something more than an adherence or not to the military dictatorship that ruled Chile at that time. This parish was an oasis for our family, a place where we all found a way to express who we were and what we could put at

the disposal of a mission that lived a charism we fell in love with. It was hard to be indifferent to what appealed to our deepest emotional roots.

Eventually I joined youth ministry and received the sacrament of confirmation. I do not recall whether I spent more time in college or in the parish during that period. I joined the migrant youth ministry, which I lived as a realization of my own vocation, I got married, we formed a family, we baptized our children there and today I am part of the Scalabrinian lay movement.

Although this is a personal testimony, I cannot forget that I am part of a larger group, and I do not think I am wrong when I say that practically all the members of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement of Our Lady Mother of Migrants Region are migrants or children or grandchildren of migrants, have grown up in families that act in the Scalabrinian missions or are linked to them, or have been educated in Scalabrinian schools or have been part of scout groups, young migrant groups, prayer groups, communities and apostolates, all linked to different areas of migration. Some are workers linked to Scalabrinian missions, others are volunteers in different initiatives to support one-time or permanent projects and, practically all of us, got to know the figure of St. John Baptist Scalabrini and let ourselves be nourished by the Scalabrinian charism from the experience and the relationship with the migrants.

We are a movement as heterogeneous as its members. We walk combining realities as diverse as the geographies that cross our region. We act by putting our skills, talents, time and will at the service of the places where we are. And of course, we insert ourselves within the Scalabrinian missions, united in diversity and living our vocation, to be an instrument of God's plan in the construction of just societies that value the life and dignity of those who migrate or are forced to migrate.

We are represented by a logo that depicts Mary, Mother and consolation of migrants; Jacob's ladder with angels ascending and descending, forming with another line the cross, and on it Christ, the ladder to the Father, the link between God and man and man's path from earth to heaven. People can also be seen, representing migrants, refugees, itinerants, displaced persons and all those who find them-

selves in a situation of mobility. They carry with them a luggage that symbolizes the spiritual, personal and cultural heritage they carry. They advance from Mary and, protected by her, towards a land of hope and beyond, symbolized by the start of the ladder and the cross, towards the ultimate goal, which is the heavenly homeland. And finally, a star appears, which is presented as an announcement of the good news and of hope in the journey. It is the guide of those who travel on earth and *Stella Maris* (Star of the Sea), protector of seafarers. The brightness of the star also symbolizes the light of the faith that we profess and that we want to live by expressing the vocation of Scalabrinian Laity.

For us, the migrant is not someone distant or strange. In our daily life, we or our children share classrooms with people who come from other countries; in our families and reference groups there are members of different nationalities; we work with professionals, technicians and people who perform trades, who come from other places or live in other latitudes. Some of our close relatives have made the decision to migrate; who knows if we or our descendants will do so in the future, because if we are sure of anything, it is that the answers we can give today will be insufficient tomorrow, and that as Heraclitus of Ephesus said more than 2,500 years ago, the only permanent thing is change.

I believe that the most significant experience for all the young spirits that were part of the missionary group of Santiago de Chile in the nineties, was to have walked with Scalabrinian priests that gave us a solid and structured formation that allowed us to know St. John Baptist Scalabrini and the Scalabrinian charism. They prepared us to be catechists of children and young people from different migrant communities, pastoral agents in times when migrants were arriving again in Chile; we also went out to meet Chileans who, as a result of exile or the search for more dignified living conditions, had crossed the Andes mountain range and lived in shantytowns in Argentina. That was the reality that the groups of migratory youth pastoral in Argentina also lived at that time.

Probably our youth and lack of experience did not match the height of the responsibilities we assumed; however, we were blessed to have priests who accompanied our steps with wisdom, passion,

willingness to make changes so necessary for the better reception and insertion of those who came to our country and why not, priests who trusted us and allowed us to live our vocation as missionary disciples of Christ at the service of migrants, being faithful to the charism of St. John Baptist Scalabrini, feeling part of the Scalabrinian Family and of a Church that seems to us a precious model of unity in diversity.

Today, we have been on this path for about thirty years, contributing to the formation of communities from different countries, or facilitating the insertion, especially to the first groups that wanted to live in Chile their own way of celebrating their faith, as they did in their place of origin. Every year we carry out one or several missions, all of them going to meet migrants who need a starting point to live God in their lives again and/or to connect with a network that will guide them in processes that will reduce their vulnerabilities.

But what was so special about getting to know what it was like to live in this mission? What made us stay there? The whole process we lived from the beginning had a strong replica within us. Our own journey, as well as that of those we met along the way, began to have a different meaning. It was really possible to see Christ in the eyes of those we visited with a message of hope. Now, the transit of our parents and grandparents had a different connotation. We recognized ourselves as pilgrims on the way to a definitive, unique homeland for all.

The path we traveled while getting to know St. John Baptist Scalabrini allowed us to understand the above. It was one thing to read what he wrote, quite another to live like him and an even greater thing to connect him with the whole thread of our existence. Scalabrini had become part of the Jacob's ladder that he chose for his episcopal coat of arms. He himself was giving us one more link so that we could try to see the Lord at the top of it.

Scalabrini became for us the model of one who is capable of keeping his feet on the ground with humility and simplicity, but with determination; the gaze and the final objective in Christ and in the certainty that we are inhabited and divinized by his Spirit; the living of the present as a gift of self, striving to make himself everything for everyone, especially for the most vulnerable migrant. A passionate man, with a will and perseverance superior even to his own strength.

Scalabrini is the one who made concrete the fact that there are no barriers and limits when we work for the dignity of the human being. He is the one who, with his example, showed us that all doors can be opened when we touch them with patience and prepare ourselves conscientiously for what we want to achieve. Scalabrini gave us as inheritance the role of social transformers and at the time of learning about his life and his action we were already certain that he was a Saint, precisely for what he had lived for.

The Scalabrinian laity of our region have known from the hand of Scalabrinian priests and sisters a missionary church that pastorally accompanies the migrant, allowing them to return to the deepest roots of their faith, in such a way that it becomes a refuge from the unknown and the adverse, and at the same time, strength and hope in what is to come. We are certain that the possibility of living this faith and being able to express the traditions in the new land, allows a fuller, more complete and favorable integration to those who come to a community where they can feel part of it, where they get support, comfort, understanding and strength to continue walking.

That is why we promote intercultural communities, which allow those who arrive to re-inculturate their faith, generating spaces for living popular Catholicism, which enriches and revitalizes our local churches and at the same time, where they can live the migratory mourning, often so misunderstood, because it is a mourning that is never complete or definitive and that keeps the person between two worlds, without feeling totally part of any of them, uprooted from the origin and with barriers that do not always allow a total integration in the place of destination.

We became aware of living a spirituality of God incarnated in us, of a Christ who dwells in us and whom we want to meet in the other, of a Mother, model of the Church, whom we saw in each invocation that came from the hand of new peoples who made their home our parishes and houses of welcome. We learned to respect the other because he is a creature of God, because we could find in him traits of God himself. We lived the certainty of walking with Christ the migrant and that is why we put ourselves at the service of working for a land that is fertile for its sowing and traversable in peace. This

spirituality moved us to action, to give a response, to be social transformers.

Based on the above, we set out to live a missionary spirituality of a church on the move. The geographical extension of today's cities means that, for many migrants, it takes several hours to travel to the parishes or chapels of the Scalabrinian missions, just to go and return. Thus, it is fundamental and necessary to go to the encounter, to go out of our comforts and facilities to be able to take an evangelizing message of welcome, company and hope. Of course, it is necessary that the center of reference of the Scalabrinian work exists, but it is unthinkable that it can be the answer for all the migrants who need pastoral and spiritual accompaniment in cities of several million inhabitants.

Our experience is that the missions in the places where the migrants are, in addition to carrying an evangelizing message, allow us to survey their most important needs and thus, establish bridges with different institutions that can be of support in matters of primary and emotional health, regularization of documentation, support for school, work insertion and others. In the same way, links can be established with the parishes that are in charge of these territories, in order to form and permanently support migratory pastoral care that can welcome migrants in a good way, facilitating their integration into the instances for the preparation to different sacraments and also to make a reality the organization and functioning of communities united by similar ties. This work can be favored by the work of the structures of human mobility of the various dioceses (often coordinated by Scalabrinians).

Although one of the first elements that we perceive when we get to know the Scalabrinian family is to pitch our tent among the people who walk, the signs of the times invite us to perceive that today we must widen the space of our tent (Is. 54:2-3), responding to the new challenges that demand of us to go out to meet those who are separated from their families, enslaved, trafficked as commercial goods, exploited, who must cross deserts, jungles and who live in despair as a constant that seems never to end. Today more than ever we must live empathy, solidarity and the courage to be the voice of the voiceless. Today we not only consider the importance of carrying

out an apostolate that includes social, legal and labor assistance, but we also emphasize the dimension of psychological accompaniment, especially in the elaboration of migratory grief. Emotional health and the possibility of feeling contained and in God's hands will allow the newcomer to make a less complex and more humane transition.

Probably the same environment that installs barriers to the migrant to be inserted in the society is the one that prevents us, many times, to live our spirituality in a freeway. The treatment that the migrant receives reflects very well what happens in our current societies. While many are welcoming and hospitable, there are those who choose to remain indifferent, others who react with prejudice, violence and undignified treatment towards those who come from countries that we do not associate with the first world. Because it is true that, in our South American countries, whoever arrives from Europe, Asia, Oceania, Canada or the United States is called a "tourist or foreigner" and whoever comes from any other country in South America, Central America, the Caribbean or Africa is called a "migrant". This distinction only highlights how afraid we are to think about sharing what we have, because individualism has made us focus on ourselves and forget that we are social entities, that we can hardly survive alone.

Migration shakes our social foundations because it makes it evident that they are deteriorated and require important reinforcements at the level of education, family and community. On the other hand, it makes visible how we as a society are still far from the longed-for development. It is dignity that is compromised every time that indifference or prejudice passes over those around us. It is the same dignity that disappears when we pass laws that in a discriminatory way prevent people from entering our countries, thus strengthening networks that profit from human desperation.

Migration is not a process that we can ignore or remain indifferent to; it is a global reality of which we are a part. It is not a temporary or stationary event, it is the way in which current generations understand the globalized world. The current reality demands that we leave individualism behind and take care of others again, or our environment will be a permanent breeding ground for aggression,

hatred, mistrust and the disappearance of respect for the value of human dignity and life.

The migrant challenges us to recognize ourselves and to return to our value roots in order to rescue welcome, solidarity, justice and love for life. "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt. 25:35).

Part of the experience that we share in practically all the grass-roots groups in our region is that the present times demand from us an ever-greater capacity to adapt quickly to the changes we are living, but more than ever, they also demand that we return to our essence and that pastoral accompaniment be the center and the heart of the actions that are carried out. Of course, an ever-growing and more diverse structure demands people trained in the areas of planning, administration, strategy, management and leadership, but the work of those who shepherd the sheep, heal the spirits, purify the souls and allow us to perceive God in all areas of our lives is irreplaceable.

The number of communities, movements and apostolates that coexist in Scalabrinian parishes and chapels require an organization that is above the activities of the missionaries who temporarily serve in those places. We need to work as one body and understand that we all have a role that contributes to a greater objective. Likewise, it is essential to structure short- and medium-term pastoral programs, understanding that these will be the basis on which we will propose objectives and action plans that will be evaluated, reviewed and modified according to the results obtained and the changes in the reality of the place.

In some way, we live in our structures the same as our societies live, in which their institutions today are shaken by the lack of planning and the desire of many people to act above the objectives of the places where they are. The way to reverse this is to be rigorous and strive to overcome prejudices and lack of communication, seeking alternatives that allow us to continue walking with determination, without losing sight of Christ, supported more than ever in prayer and having the certainty that everything changes.

One of the elements that has contributed to the identity, cohesion and sense of belonging to our Scalabrinian lay movement has been

the formulation of guidelines, which as of 2014 were published and this year have been updated, gathering part of the maturity process of the last ten years. That same work of expressing who we are, what our values are, what spirituality moves us, how we organize ourselves and what objectives we pursue is a good “field marking” that facilitates our actions and communion in such a broad region.

In the same way that we aspire that our parishes have updated pastoral plans, one of our challenges as Scalabrinian lay movement is that all the base groups of the region have a planning in the aspects of organization, formation and mission, that goes beyond the temporary leaderships, assuring the good journey towards firm and lasting objectives.

The institutions are nothing more than the people that integrate them, not in number, but in spirit. All the love and passion that is poured into what we do is what the recipient of the efforts in a place perceives. The Scalabrinian spirituality must be appreciated in everything we do and when it is not so, it means that we must rethink what we are not considering or must improve. The way we live Christ the migrant must be present in our thoughts, words and actions. The moment we stop making the migrating Christ evident is when the flight of that spirituality ceases. Spirituality expands as a result of the works and dreams that we want to achieve, because we manifest them, we make them the desire of those who make up the Church.

Today, when St. John Baptist Scalabrini is a saint of the Universal Church, is when those dreams of a world without borders and without labels or discrimination for those who travel the planet can have a pillar on which to stand with the strength of the one who became the ears and voice of the deaf and dumb, the hope of the imprisoned, the shelter of the exploited workers, the comfort of the impoverished, the apostle of catechism, the prince of charity, the father of migrants, our saint. To make him known is a never-ending task; just like breathing, we die if we stop. His face must evoke the ultimate goal. As we think of him and it resounds within us “make me fall in love with the cross”, “make me everything for everyone, to win everyone for Christ”, “two things I admire in heaven and on earth: in heaven, the power of the Creator; on earth, the power of prayer” and

so many other of his words that are engraved as if by fire, because we have made them the goals of our own lives.

The old St. Raphael Society today manifests itself in countless organizations and groupings of zealous, courageous, passionate lay people in solidarity, ready to serve with love and scattered all over the planet. The first missionaries who sailed the sea to reach the United States and Brazil are today perpetuated in a Congregation present on five continents, ever more diverse and responding to more complex challenges. The first sisters who consecrated their lives to Christ were the leaven of a Congregation that has given hope, love and made faith grow in all those migrants who, during their pilgrimage, have found them as Samaritans who have healed their wounds and placed themselves at their disposal. The secular missionaries, who seek to bring to life unity in diversity and who expand more and more their dedication, remind us that on the roads of exodus we are never alone. Today we feel part of this family and we thank those who have dedicated time and life to us in their mission, to form us, guide us, accompany us and allow us to express our vocation.

We put ourselves at the service of giving what we are, thinking of transforming some aspect of reality that can make the burden of our brothers lighter and finally, we realize that this same transit has transformed us, has allowed us to widen our hearts and feel that we can truly be salt and light on this earth and that, with each step, we continue to build and live God's plan.

SPIRITUALITY IN CONTEXT

MATTHEW DECAROLIS

Good morning. My name is Matt DeCarolis, and I am a Lay Scalabrinian from St. Peter's Italian Church in Los Angeles, California, in the United States. I have known the Scalabrinians for almost 25 years, which is more than half my life. It is no exaggeration to say that Saint Scalabrini and his example have impacted me since I first met the Scalabrinians in 1999. I thank God and our Founder for that gift and for the opportunity to share with you this week.

My Scalabrinian spirituality has grown and deepened over time thanks to God's grace and the many things that migrants have taught me in my journey of accompaniment. I first met the Scalabrinians as I was graduating from the University of Notre Dame, a Catholic university located near Chicago. The university encourages students to live their faith through acts of service. As a volunteer, I taught English classes for Latin American immigrants in the university's town after living as an exchange student in Mexico and Chile.

I knew that I wanted to return to Latin America to do service work when I graduated, and a professor encouraged me to contact the Scalabrinians about volunteering at the Casa del Migrante in Tijuana, Mexico, on the border with San Diego, California. I had never been to Tijuana or heard of the Scalabrinians, but after meeting Father Miguel Alvarez, who is now our provincial, and speaking with Brother Gioacchino Campese, the Casa's assistant director, I discerned God's call to the Casa to work with the Scalabrinians and share in their charism.

I moved to Tijuana as a volunteer to live and work at the Casa, as we ministered to immigrants from all over the world. The Casa's facade displays this passage from Matthew: "I was a stranger and you welcomed me," which greets everyone who comes there seeking shelter and love. I tried to take that message to heart in my volunteer service.

To me, the most important part of our work was not providing food, clothing, and shelter to the migrants, which we did each day. Rather, the most valuable thing we did was give the gift of that biblical welcome, through a smile and the openness to sit and listen to the migrants. Countless migrants gladly shared their stories and wanted to know mine, even though we came from different places and backgrounds. Many of them arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs due to the sins of war, violence, poverty, racism, extortion, and corruption that they faced on their journey. They were only seeking a better life for themselves and their families.

Just like then-Blessed Scalabrini, I strived to see the face of Christ in each person, who was made in the image and likeness of God just like I am. Hearing their stories helped me understand what Saint Scalabrini meant when he said, "In almost all cases, migration is not a pleasure but an unavoidable necessity."

Brother Gioacchino and the Casa's then-director Father Jesus Olivares were also part of an interfaith group of people of goodwill from both sides of the border, in Tijuana and San Diego. We fought for the rights of migrants and spoke out on their behalf through prayer vigils, political activism, press conferences, and humanitarian efforts.

At that time as we began the new century, more fences were being built (which sadly has only continued in the decades since) and the border was becoming militarized, as if the United States faced an enemy invasion. I saw history repeating itself as it has across continents and millennia, in fear of "the other" and contrary to the will of our God who has "come to gather all nations," our theme this week.

Hearing the migrants' stories and learning more about Saint Scalabrini moved my heart to the vocation of being a lawyer who would work with immigrants and advocate for them. No one in my family was a lawyer, and in fact I was the first person in my family to even go to university, but I hoped and prayed that I could live my Scalabrinian spirituality in this way.

By 2005 I achieved my law license and began working in Los Angeles, California, as an attorney at a non-profit organization called Bet Tzedek Legal Services. Bet Tzedek is a Hebrew phrase that means "House of Justice." We are a non-sectarian NGO that provides free

legal services to our low-income clients regardless of their religion, race, or immigration status.

As a lawyer, I represent primarily undocumented Latin American immigrants in cases against their employers, when their wages have been stolen or they have experienced discrimination or they have been fired unlawfully. The tangible results of my representation, when my clients receive their owed wages or are restored to their jobs, help them to support their families in the United States and their home countries. But more importantly and regardless of the outcome of their case, they know that I accept them in their human dignity whatever their language or place of origin and that I am committed to accompanying them in their journey.

When I moved to Los Angeles, I became a member of Saint Peter's Italian Church, a Scalabrinian parish where several likeminded lay people and I began learning more about Saint Scalabrini. We became a group of Lay Scalabrinians under the guidance and leadership of Father Giovanni Bizzotto and Father Raniero Alessandrini.

We prayed and studied the Scriptures and the writings of Saint Scalabrini as we pondered what role we had as lay people, each with our own professions and familial commitments. In 2008, during a Eucharistic celebration we had our commitment ceremony where I stated, "I am determined to follow the footsteps" of Saint Scalabrini, Father of the Migrants, "to enrich my life with his vision and spirituality."

In the years since then, my fellow Lay Scalabrinians and I at Saint Peter's have attempted to accompany and support the migrants in our community guided by the Founder's vision, using the gifts and talents that God has given us. We have participated in many activities to support our migrant brothers and sisters and siblings in Los Angeles and beyond, including food and clothing drives, resource fairs, fundraising banquets for Scalabrinian seminarians, and our Archdiocesan Mass for Recognition of All Immigrants.

We have also worked with another group of Lay Scalabrinians at Our Lady of the Holy Rosary, a parish located 25 kilometers from St. Peter's. In fact, at Holy Rosary a new group of Lay Scalabrinians began their journey last month, studying about the Founder and his charism. I will join them after I return home from this Symposium to

share my experiences with them and to help them learn about Scalabrinian spirituality.

I have also continued supporting the Casa del Migrante in Tijuana, which is two hours away from Los Angeles, by providing donations and bringing groups of volunteers to cook and share a meal with the migrants.

During my formation as a Lay Scalabrinian, I was especially moved to learn about the Saint Raphael Society. Saint Scalabrini was prophetic in recognizing the crucial role that lay people can--and must--serve in building the Reign of God on Earth. The principle that lay people have a valuable and important vocation (just as priests and religious do) was likely a shocking idea at that time, nearly 100 years before the Second Vatican Council decreed that through our baptismal calling, the laity share "in the priestly, prophetic, and kingly office of Christ, [and] play [our] part in the mission of the whole people of God in the Church and in the world."

Indeed, more than 140 years after the Founder established the Saint Raphael Society, Pope Francis often reminds us that clericalism hinders, and in fact is contrary to, God's plan that we all work together to seek the Reign of God. This is certainly a challenge for all of us, laity and consecrated Scalabrinians, to use our many gifts through our unique yet complementary vocations to heed Saint Scalabrini's call in our time and in our world. Scalabrinian missionaries who do not embrace and encourage the lay people in their parishes, schools, and missions are failing to heed Saint Scalabrini's example and therefore are denying the migrants the opportunity to more fully know his charism and God's love. They are also inhibiting the growth of Scalabrinian spirituality in our world that desperately needs it.

I hope that encounters like this week's symposium will allow lay people and priests and religious to build bridges in our shared commitment to follow Saint Scalabrini's example. I am honored and humbled to be here representing the hundreds of Lay Scalabrinians in the St. John the Baptist Province. They are truly living their Scalabrinian charism in their communities every day and serving as a model for all Scalabrinians.

Saint Scalabrini's spirituality offers so much for all of us to learn from and to share with each other, regardless of whether we are lay or consecrated. I commit, and I ask everyone here to commit, to intentionally and deliberately seek that dialogue and the shared spiritual journey with each other as we return to our homes and communities.

Just like in the Founder's time and throughout human history, we live in an era where migrants and refugees are on the move and need spiritual, economic, political, and social support. In my country and unfortunately in many of yours, some people with power and influence channel racism and xenophobia to scapegoat migrants and accuse them of being criminals and thieves. Instead of leading society toward acceptance of migrants and celebrating the numerous ways they enrich our society and Church, these sinful voices try to divide through fear and blame. As Scalabrinians, we must confront this difficulty by speaking against these false values and by acting with God's love to protect and serve the migrants and other vulnerable people who do not have advocates.

As a Lay Scalabrinian working at a Jewish organization, I have seen how our beautiful Catholic social teaching has its roots in and shares much with our Jewish cousins' tradition. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, we hear the call to take special care of widows, orphans, and strangers, the most vulnerable members of the ancient Israelites' society and our societies today. As the prophet Micah writes, we have been told "what is good, and what the Lord requires of [us]: Only to do justice and to love goodness, and to walk humbly with [our] God." Not only to "seek" justice or "pray for" justice, but to "DO" justice. And we Scalabrinians are called to walk humbly with our God by walking with the migrants.

Guided by Saint Scalabrini's example and the spiritual heritage he entrusted to us, I strive to "do justice" and serve the migrants through my work and my life every day in Los Angeles. It is not easy. When I see many people actively seeking to harm migrants in our polarized society, and I hear heartbreaking news stories of migrants dying in their journeys, I feel upset and discouraged.

When I experience these moments of frustration, I return to the strength and wisdom of Saint Scalabrini's words and example, which along with prayer have allowed me over and over again to stay faith-

ful to my Scalabrinian vocation. Colleagues who do not have the treasure of Scalabrinian spirituality have felt burnout or decided there are too many obstacles and challenges in supporting and accompanying migrants. Their actions prove to me that our Scalabrinian values must be the foundation of our work, and we must pray for grace, or else we too will face burnout and the temptation to give up.

I have also found fortitude and renewed grace in the past year since Pope Francis and the entire Church recognized the Founder's place among the communion of saints. I was blessed to be at the canonization Mass here in Rome along with thousands of Scalabrinians from all corners of the globe. It was particularly meaningful to me to see gathered many of the consecrated Scalabrinians I have known over the years, and to be part of the celebration with a fellow Lay Scalabrinian from Saint Peter's. I know that Scalabrinian missionaries and lay people live in many places, but seeing thousands of us at the Mass and the Papal Audience made the size and breadth of the Scalabrinian family tangible to me like nothing else before had done. It gives me comfort and strength to know that Saint Scalabrini unites all of us more than 100 years after he left this Earth.

Even though the people and issues and cultures may be different from Saint Scalabrini's time, my spirituality links me to him, as well as to the Scalabrinian missionaries and Saint Raphael Society members of his era. My spirituality also connects me to all of you gathered here today, to your confreres, and to my fellow Lay Scalabrinians across the world. Just as Scalabrinians did in the Founder's lifetime, I seek strength in prayer and the Eucharist and see the face of Christ in all the migrants I seek out to accompany. This is my experience of Scalabrinian spirituality, a gift for which I thank God and our Saint Scalabrini. May his intercession bring us the grace and strength to always follow his example.

SPIRITUALITY OF SERVICE

EMANUELE SELLERI

Good morning, everyone. First of all, let me introduce myself. I am Emanuele Selleri, I am 40 years old and currently I live here in Rome.

When I was asked to write a testimony about my experience of the Scalabrinian world, more specifically the Scalabrinian spirituality, I was quite perplexed. Not because I had little to say but because speaking about my experience with the Scalabrinians means speaking about my whole life, since my birth.

It is therefore very difficult for me to summarize in a few lines what has been my journey so far, but I will try to tell you my personal story and you will realize how my whole journey is the sum of my connections with the Scalabrinian world.

As I often tell, I am one of the people who can say that I owe my life to Scalabrini, in the true sense of the word. This is because Scalabrini was present in my life even before I was born. My father Eugenio, when he was only 12 years old, entered the seminary in Rezzato, in the province of Brescia, a few kilometers from his birthplace, having met among others as a vocation promoter Fr. Tarcisio Rubin (who would later return in some way in my life, but we will see that later). My father spent about 10 years of his life (in his own words probably the best years of his life) within the Scalabrinian family as a seminarian. Even after he left the seminary, he continued to live as a lay Scalabrinian for the rest of his life, remaining in close contact with the Congregation. He was invited as a layman to be an assistant at the San Carlo Institute in Osimo, the boarding school for the children of Italian migrants living in northern Europe. There he met my mother Rosina, and from this love were born first my brother Enrico and then myself. As you can see, if Scalabrini had not founded the congregation, my father would never have entered the seminary, he would never have gone to Osimo and he would never have met my mother and I would not be here today talking to you. That is why I really owe my life to Scalabrini.

I would add more; on the day of my birth, back on April 9, 1983, inside the delivery room next to my mother was a Scalabrinian priest, Father Giovanni Saraggi, who as soon as I was born said to my mother, "Emanuele is a beautiful name, Father Emanuele as a Scalabrinian would fit really well!" His prophecy did not quite come true, but it was certainly a good omen!

I was baptized, of course, by a Scalabrinian, Father Bernardo Zonta, who remained a milestone for our family, since he was always called Uncle Beard by me and my brother and all my cousins.

My childhood was then punctuated by life in the parish in Osimo and the many summers spent in Villabassa, where my parents served as volunteers (my mom actually, because my dad mostly devoted himself to mushrooming). There I began to get to know the missionaries who came on vacation and the future missionaries as seminarians of the congregation. I think in those years this desire to know the world took root within me, because already at the age of four or five I was spending my vacations listening to missions in Brazil, Argentina, Canada and the United States. I remember that every three years Fr. Francesco Bortignon would come to visit us, returning from Venezuela, showing us photos, telling us anecdotes that for the child Emanuele were real heroic feats.

I lived through adolescence with a bit of rebellion, trying to distance myself from that world, like all children who want to create their own identity that goes beyond their family. But, punctually, facts, events and people came and brought me back in touch with the Scalabrinian world.

It was the late 1990s and, in addition to life in the parish in Osimo with the good Fr. Ampelio Menelle, I began to get involved with other companies. In Loreto, the first retreats with young people from the various Scalabrinian missions in Italy began, and this time too I was dragged along by my brother and Father Gianni Borin. At the beginning I was always the most reluctant but at the end of the retreats I was always the happiest of all. From there, very strong friendships were born and I also began a path of spirituality. At the end of high school I decided to go to study in Rome and there another great Scalabrinian and life chapter opened. In my spasmodic search for a house (even 20 years ago it was difficult to find a rental in Rome) I was

hosted for a year at the GGO (above the youth center in Val Melaina) where two missionaries (Fr. Pio Battaglia and Fr. Luis Antonio) lived, in addition to students/workers.

From there my Roman life began and Father Gaetano Saracino, at the time in charge of the youth center, asked me for a hand in catechesis and animation of the younger ones. It was a great opportunity for me and, during my university years, I was able to live this experience of service, steeped in encounters but also in deepening the life of Scalabrini. Parallel to life in the parish, in fact, in those years the Scalabrinian youth movement took shape. Young people were gathered first in Piacenza and then in Munich. In this journey, the figure of the late friend Father Raphael was of incredible importance.

There remained strong in me the desire to transform all that I had experienced into concrete service. And it was during those years that I met Father Beniamino Rossi, who helped me find answers.

With Ben began an intense journey, made up of discussions, reasoning, and dreams, between cigarettes, cooperation projects, and the deepest spirituality. He was so in love with Scalabrini that it was hard not to follow him and do the same. In my formation – both professional and spiritual – Father Beniamino had an incredible importance because he freed me from aspects that were related to my upbringing, bringing me back to the essentials.

One evening, eating a pizza in Milan, in his always direct way he said to me, “What Jesus at the center of your life and blah blah blah... You are at the center of Jesus’ dreams and thoughts!” For me that sentence, that thought was really enlightening.

With Ben I began a journey that after 20 years still finds me here. I participated in the first course for international volunteers of the newly born ASCS and, in 2006, I left, spending almost a year in Cucuta, Colombia. There I met Father Francesco Bortignon again, and I spent a fundamental period of my life that, like all the most important moments in life, was crossed by a strong crisis. Encountering for the first time a context of great poverty, I realized that my faith and ideas were actually very fragile, and I questioned so many of my certainties. It was a time of great internal conflict. I realized that up to that point I had been a privileged boy, surrounded by affection, love and opportunity, but I had never really put myself in the shoes of others.

I still remember the thousands of questions I asked Fr. Francesco, asking where was God while all those people were fleeing violence, what was the point of our service if then the lives of many of those children were destined for a common end. Fr. Francesco made me do little reasoning and told me to work, that we didn't have too much time to spend in talks, that we could give what we had, we could try to give something that wasn't there, which was hope. And this orientation from him reminded me of the figure of Scalabrini who had started out alone, often hindered.

Bringing joy and hope with conviction is what matters, as he said that "the path of ideas is of a despairing slowness, especially when they bump into interests and passions, but it is continuous when the ideas proposed are right and of true utility. Let us persevere, therefore, for all slowness reaches its goal, provided that weariness does not overcome those who have made themselves its heralds."

This has always been one of Scalabrini's sentences I carry with me in my work, in my relationships and in my life in general. Among other things, it was the introductory sentence of my dissertation at the University.

Back in Rome after a year in Colombia and many questions, I found Fr. Francesco Buttazzo in the parish and with him and other friends we began a spiritual journey on the 10 commandments in the diocese of Rome. This path of faith remains to this day the most important spiritual path made in my life. It was a path in the diocese, far from the Scalabrinian world, but done together with a Scalabrinian father and this is something that over time made me reflect, but I will come back to it later.

After a year I decided to leave again, this time for Bolivia, where I stayed for about 6 years, with a parenthesis in Jujuy in northern Argentina. During those years, I first managed the migrant house in La Paz and then began working within the bishops' conference. Those were wonderful mission years with a lot of personal and community satisfaction: however, I probably failed to nurture my spirituality in the right way during those years. I realized that I was carrying out intense work with migrants, but the spiritual part had dried up.

In Latin America, I came into contact with a popular religiosity that I respect so much but that is not in my heart, and in the mission

I focused only on the work. As I was saying a few minutes ago, every time I was then moving away, something happened to bring me back.

On April 22, 2013 something happened that changed my life forever: on a business trip to reach the border between Bolivia and Chile I had a car accident, a tragedy. I was driving the car, a friend of mine lost her life and two other colleagues were seriously injured. There began the hardest period of my existence.

Why do I tell you this? It is something I usually avoid doing, but I think it is important because, in the immense tragedy that overwhelmed me, once again Scalabrini and the Scalabrinians enter in a determined and decisive way. After the accident, when I woke up in a hospital in Oruro, a dusty city in the middle of the Bolivian plateau, I found a nun I had never seen beside me and the first thing she said to me was, "Emanuele, don't worry, you are not alone, a sister of mine who lives in Buenos Aires who is a friend of Father Fabio Baggio sent me and told me to stay close to you because your family is not here."

I couldn't understand how that could be possible since I didn't know how much time had passed or who and how could have known about the accident. But that was not the end of it...after a few hours I was sedated for pains etc. and, when I woke up, there was no longer the nun, but another lady, also never seen, who introduced herself as a volunteer from Caritas of Oruro and offered to pray together.

After a few minutes she said to me, "Lately I have been praying on this leaflet that I found in a church nearby, I don't know who this person is but it reassures me a lot." She handed me the leaflet and I read a prayer of the Servant of God Fr. Tarcisio Rubin. On the one hand I felt like crying but on the other hand I truly felt that I was not alone.

Once I returned to Italy in 2015, I found myself working again for the ASCS in Rome, first at Casa Scalabrini 634 and then to coordinate the whole association.

Here I return to the concept I was telling you earlier, when I was talking about my faith and spiritual experience outside the Scalabrinian world. One of the difficulties I have had in recent years has definitely been that I have been unable to separate my personal life from my work and Scalabrinian membership, not because there is a need for it, but because of the fact that I have felt the aspect of spiritual

accompaniment drying up more and more. The relationship with the missionaries in the last years besides friendship has always been a working relationship: we have been planning, dreaming, working on various projects for migrants, for refugees, for how to accompany the local community, but honestly it happened rarely to talk about Jesus.

I would like to make it clear that the first responsibility is mine, because I have never directly solicited support and perhaps at times I assumed that past experiences were enough to maintain a level of spirituality that made me feel good.

It is real, however, that over the years, many times work and service took over and the faith journey remained on the side.

I feel like the luckiest man in the world because I have had the opportunity to turn my passion, the world where I grew up, into my work, but I don't deny that every now and then I think that if I did another job I could devote myself to my personal and spiritual life without having to intertwine it with work. I think that right there is where the challenge lies and that above all there is no point in dividing things.

Perhaps I can also trace this factor back to a personal view I have of Scalabrini.

Because, if someone asks me, who is Scalabrini for you? Here I could come up with various images of the founder's life, but indeed my image is of a man who makes mission and service the first goal and his spirituality remains in the background.

He is the person who travels first around the diocese and then Italy and around the world to raise awareness and find solutions for the migration phenomenon. For me is this Scalabrini and this part of action that always takes over from the other aspects.

An answer to these questions of mine, of how to unite the spiritual and the service, was given to me one day by another Scalabrinian father with whom I had the good fortune to cross paths. Fr. Arcangelo Maira, during a hot sunny afternoon at the ghetto of Rignano Garganico in Puglia, asked me to drive him to the hospital in San Severo to visit a volunteer who had fallen ill the day before. On the way to the hospital, talking about various things, I asked him how he managed to reconcile his faith, his spiritual life with his being always on the road, always on the frontier: he simply replied, "For me, every

encounter I have with a new person, especially if it is a person in difficulty, is a moment of prayer. I live it this way and indeed every new person or story encountered is a spirit of life for me.”

I personally carry this example with me, trying in my own small way to try to live relationships with that depth that Archangel had made me breathe.

I must say the truth that being invited to this conference on Scalabrinian spirituality represents for me not only a gift but also a real opportunity, also because I believe it is the most underdeveloped part in my journey within the Scalabrinian family.

When I was younger (and superficial) and part of the Scalabrinian youth, I always looked at the rest of the adult Scalabrinian laity with a bit of perplexity because I would see them meeting, reasoning, reflecting on Scalabrini spirituality, etc. etc. and I tell you the truth, it seemed like a waste of time. Between myself I would say: but what do they have to tell each other and reflect when the important thing is to get their hands dirty and work?

This thought and belief increased more and more when I went to South America because for me the contrast between words and action was too jarring.

Now, in my 40s, with a bit more clarity and experience, I would almost feel like apologizing for having such superficial and somewhat arrogant thoughts because I realize how important the whole part of training and human and spiritual growth also is. This does not get it out of my head, that the great challenge for our present and our future is precisely that of finding a balance between formation and service, spirituality and action so that we can express our “Scalabrinianess” in its fullness.

We have seen this concretely together with Father Jonas, with the many young people who are accompanying us in these years in our projects; in the past, young people approached our world thanks to our parishes and so first of all they felt Scalabrinian by faith, by belonging, by friendship etc. but then very few came into direct contact with the migratory phenomenon. Now the exact opposite is happening: 90 percent of the young people who approach our activities do so because they are interested in human mobility, but they often do not come from the Church world and practically always have no con-

nection with and do not know Scalabrini and the Scalabrinians. We have to do work in reverse, which is very promising, because paradoxically in recent years our charism has become the most “famous” charism of all, both inside and outside the Church.

And I experience this directly inside my family: my wife comes from this very reverse path, she met the Scalabrinians long before she met me, in Borgo Mezzanone, teaching Italian to exploited migrants picking tomatoes. She feels a very strong connection with the Scalabrinians and the Scalabrinian mission, but she knows virtually nothing about Scalabrini and Scalabrinian spirituality.

We may have to ride this historical moment to make our charism more and more known but I see that it is a tortuous path. We saw it also with the canonization of Scalabrini last October, which could have been an ideal moment but where in the end we made it very difficult to involve the people who daily commit themselves on our behalf to the mission with migrants.

I don't know if my testimony can help in the general reflection of this conference. I have given you a roundup of names of Scalabrinian fathers who have come into my life and many others are missing but just writing this testimony I realize how the relationships created were the only vehicle to bring about friendships, of course, but also the only tool to transmit to me the Scalabrinian charism and spirituality. In conclusion, if I can make an invitation to the missionaries, it is to not miss an opportunity to be witnesses of the charism, of being proud to be Scalabrinian missionaries and to talk to us lay people always about the mission with migrants but also to talk about the drive, motivation and faith behind the choice to dedicate one's life to migrants and refugees.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

LIVED BY THE SCALABRINIAN SECULAR MISSIONARIES

AGNESE VARSALONA, MSS

Thank you for the invitation to participate in this conference on Scalabrinian spirituality. It is a special occasion to meet, listen to each other, to share and rejoice in the various ways and means that the rich and topical legacy of Saint G.B. Scalabrini has created to serve the Church and the world.

We Scalabrinian Secular Missionary Women are in a somewhat special historical moment because it is marked by the transition from the first to the second generation of missionaries. We are fortunate to share the journey with Adelia Firetti. With her, our Secular Institute began in 1961 in Switzerland, in the town of Solothurn, in a context of immigration in contact with you, the Scalabrinian priests. With words and especially with testimony, you have introduced us to Scalabrini. From the beginning we have been fascinated by the centrality of the mystery of the incarnation, which still leads us to give a name to every reality, especially to the experience of migration.

A special thanks goes to Fr Gabriele Bortolamai who took care of our Scalabrinian training from the beginning, even inviting his greatest professors like Fr Francesconi, Fr Sacchetti, Fr Zanconato, Fr Tolfo, to name but a few. In particular, the prophetic vision that G.B. Scalabrini had of migration continues to inspire us. He recognized migration as a sign of the times, the way - often full of pain and sacrifice - of God to let us know His project for mankind, which is the full participation in His own life of communion in diversity, the new Pentecost.

We therefore let ourselves be guided on our journey by the universal heart of Saint G.B. Scalabrini, and by the passionate centrality of Jesus Christ in his life. We were therefore gradually enlightened and helped not to separate spirituality from mission, nor contemplation from action, nor faith from life.

As it was for Scalabrini, we desire that the center of our life be Easter, the crucified and risen Christ, who saves us by making us

members of His Body (Scalabrini speaks of ‘incorporation’). Thus, in His Body, we are already children in the Son of God and therefore already sisters-brothers with everyone, welcomed in all our diversity as human beings.

In Scalabrini, the centrality of the Eucharist emerges as a leaven that can penetrate the life of the Church, the history, and humanity to transform it, to bring in it that new, divine life that allows us to progressively come along all the way to achieve God’s plan that wants to gather us into a single body. It is a vision that we feel very close to. Our secular vocation, in fact, sends us precisely as leaven and yeast to the most diverse environments, to contribute to change reality from within, to grasp the signs of the Risen, already present, and make them grow.

Ferment and leaven indicate transformation, and little is needed for the miracle of growth and change to come true. Scalabrini hoped that this ferment would reach the most diverse social strata, youth, family, everyone, to gather us all and transform us from scattered peoples into one body capable of manifesting His love to the world.

We feel particularly called to share Scalabrinian spirituality through our relationships. Migrants and refugees often tell us: “In relationships we find our new homeland.”

With this particular focus on transforming the world beginning from relationships, we live our mission-bridge between migrants and natives, collaborating with all, so that the Kingdom of God – already present, as the gospel says, in our midst – can be expressed in the world.

Together with Adelia and Maria Grazia Luise – who has always been close to her – we are writing the history of our community, a recent history which is even today a precious contribution and an essential reference for the training of our generations and the following ones.

From the beginning for Adelia and the first Missionaries – with the help of F. Luigi Tacconi and F. Gabriele Bortolamai, who had grasped the centrality of the crucified Jesus – the desire was to let themselves be transformed by the encounter with the crucified and risen Christ, welcomed into the pain of migrants and humanity, in the unexpected, in everything that appears “foreign” inside and outside of us, in

the other, in what we would willingly discard from society, from our history, from the others... thus experiencing His presence that breaks down the walls of separation, reconciles and generates new life, the joy of the Gospel. From the very beginning, and still today, we continue to experience that, precisely thanks to what appears 'foreign', we are led to grasp more deeply the personal and at the same time universal love of God and understand that He is the God of Jesus and who we are for Him, savoring His stainless esteem towards every person.

The encounter with Jesus Crucified, welcomed in saying "yes" to difficulties, to what goes wrong, etc. ... is the encounter with the transforming power of Easter: this is the true exodus. This is why the spirituality of exodus is so important for us. It is a concrete way to make room and to receive the gift of communion within diversity. "The authentic exodus is always a step towards Love"; it is an expression that refers directly to the heart of spirituality.

The event that marked the beginning of our community, what we call 'Adelia's vow of love', already contains all these aspects. At this point the best is to listen to Adelia's own words.

We are in 1961, just a few days after her arrival in the small town of Solothurn (Switzerland), where she had been invited by the Scalabrinian missionaries to teach the children of Italian immigrants. But a serious unexpected event occurred: the project is hindered by consular authorities, it is no longer possible to start the school. Adelia writes:

I remember my arrival, facing a future which was not unfolding according to my expectations. I perceived that the deeper choice I had to make was to be rooted in a vertical relationship with God, from whom I could receive that direction on how I wanted to spend my life. In this experience I could feel the presence of the loving Jesus Christ crucified and risen, who was calling me to follow Him in an unconditional surrender of my life. One Tuesday, a few days after my arrival, before entering the canteen for migrants for the lunch service, I went quickly to the little church of the Holy Spirit, a stone's throw from the old Hotel Adler. It was July 25th. A mixture of feelings, between fear and trust, were going through me. That God who had led me this far made me perceive the presence full of love of his crucified and risen Son. In that moment of prayer I pronounced my «yes» to

Him, handing Him over my life completely. My little «yes» with no clarity of future found a unique and new way in a Eucharistic dimension: where there is no outlet, no hope, no future and people become numbers, objects, things... Jesus responds by making Himself a 'thing', Eucharist, to make us with Him people to whom no future is precluded in Him and in the world.

My «yes», this secret vow, became my reference point and my hope: no matter what would happen, and anything could happen. I was in the hands of God and this forever. It was my strength and my joy. A joy I could communicate to anyone I met. That joy did not leave me even when the story became more difficult and complex...

This unconditional "yes", the experience of one's own littleness, the trust, nourished every day by the Eucharist, in the transforming power of Easter is precisely what even today is decisive in all moments of our lives, in our activities and jobs in various sectors of today's multicultural societies – e.g. in the social, cultural, pastoral, school, university, medical-hospital, artistic, educational fields... – where the secular consecration leads us.

We often experience our powerlessness and disproportion: a littleness that we do not want to cover, but to entrust and radicalize so that it becomes a virgin space of waiting for the Lord ('Come Lord Jesus'), a space where God is 'free' to fulfill his promises. In a homily of Pope Francis (Baghdad 6 March 2021) we read that "God's promises", which "ensure unparalleled joy and do not disappoint" are fulfilled precisely "through our weaknesses. God makes bless those who follow the path of their inner poverty to the end. This is the way, there is no other".

It can happen that we reduce secular consecration to a 'doing', to an activity in which we are protagonists, losing sight of the fact that it is the Holy Spirit who can truly transform us and the world, societies and mankind from within: it is He who saves, establishing fraternal universal relations between human beings and gives us the joy of participating in His action so that the world may be ever more profoundly returned to mankind and everything to God (Adelia).

“Perhaps, more than emphasizing especially in extension, the activities, the insertions, the participation, the work, the ‘doing’. , it would be necessary to deepen ‘secularity’ as spirituality” wrote Adelia in an article in “On the Roads of Exodus” in 1981 (p.73). And in these times we often repeat this: There can be no true secularity without spirituality.

The vows lived in secularity are a gift to learn to dwell in the Holy Spirit, to make room to welcome the life of the Son, wherever we are, and to allow Him (and not us) to be the protagonist. He (and not we) is the salt and leaven of which the Gospel speaks. Through His Spirit He continues to transform us, the relationships and the most diverse environments. In this sense, every environment must be considered not only as a sociological place, but also as a theological one, that is, as a place where the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ is already present and at work: He is bringing about the new Pentecost and leads us to collaborate with Him and to scrutinize and promote the good that already exists – collaborating with everyone.

We experience that only by looking at the world WITH the God of the Crucified and Risen Jesus, that is, by CONtemplating reality, it becomes possible to have a glimpse and to be amazed again and again by the seeds of communion that spring up through and in despite everything.

Keeping our gaze on the Crucified – Risen Jesus, as G.B. Scalabrini did, enables us to have a glimpse of the new humanity that is being born, not without hard work or immense sacrifices. Keeping our gaze on the Crucified–Risen Jesus enables us to see in the sufferings of the encounter–clash between people from different cultures not the pains of an agony that ends in death, in nothingness, but the pains of a birth that will give birth to a fraternal humanity, that will finally recognize itself as a single family in which the presence of the other is a reason for joy and gratitude.

It is not difficult to imagine how society would change if everyone makes personal, political, social and professional choices, considering the other not as a problem, a number, but as a brother and sister. Everyone would bring into play the best of his/her skills and resources to promote the most humane and respectful solutions for the dignity of migrants and of each person in various situations.

Significantly, Pope Francis in his letter of 2 February 2022 to Secular Institutes invites us to renew in our “consecration the beauty and the desire to be involved in the transfiguration of reality”.

The filial life of Jesus in us is nourished every day by the Eucharist through which we are given an incredible movement of personal, community, social and political transformation. In fact, the Eucharist is not destined to remain only on the altar or in the tabernacle – that would be a “theft” as Bishop G.B. Scalabrini said – but Eucharist is sent, through us who receive it, to transform mankind and all areas of society. “There is no environment, rich or poor, atheist or believer, into which cannot enter the new logic and policy of sharing and communion. So life instead of being economic and quantitative becomes Eucharistic.”¹

¹ Missionarie Secolari Scalabriniane, *Tratti di spiritualità scalabriniana*, Stoccarda 1996, 28.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

LIVED BY THE SCALABRINIAN SISTERS

ANA PAULA FERREIRA DA ROCHA, MSCS

The question posed by the organizers challenges us: how is Scalabrinian spirituality experienced by the Scalabrinian Sisters?

The foundation of the Congregation took place on October 25, 1895 with the admission to religious vows, the giving of the Crucifix and the missionary sending of the first four Sisters – Carolina Marchetti, Assunta Marchetti, Angela Larini and Maria Franceschini – prepared, gathered and presented to Scalabrini by Father José Marchetti, a Scalabrinian missionary and co-founder of the Congregation, who contributed greatly to sustaining the spirit of Scalabrinian missionary generosity of the first members of the new female congregation. In the fidelity of the first Sisters, the Congregation grew with a vocational flourishing and missionary expansion.

Over the years, we have given ourselves the task of thinking about the spirituality that animates us, the values that identify us and the foundations that nourish and guide us on our existential and missionary journey. The spirituality that characterizes us, in living the Christian life, consecration, mission and community life in particular, springs from our origins and is shaped by the journeys we take.

The question of HOW we live our spirituality as Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters stimulates us, because, it is not a theological-spiritual discourse, nor even an exhortation given to us and requested by Scalabrini and the Church. We have received the gifts of the Spirit, we have been given the opportunity to experience and welcome God's love and we have been entrusted with a Mission. But HOW is all this configured, transformed and developed? HOW is our consecrated and missionary life transmissible and strengthened by giving? And HOW does it pass on to other people, young or not, who adhere to the consecrated life we have chosen for ourselves, or to the Charism, in the most varied forms of life in the spirit and of service in the world of human mobility?

The reinterpretation of the charism made on the occasion of the 1969-1971 special chapter, especially the option for pastoral service with migrants of all nationalities, has favored a greater internationalization of the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo, Scalabrinians.

Today the Congregation is present in 27 countries, with approximately 479 Sisters of 19 nationalities, and is made up of three Provinces: the St. Joseph Province, based in Piacenza, Italy; the Our Lady of Fatima Province, based in Melrose Park, IL, USA; the Mary, Mother of Migrants Province, based in São Paulo, SP, Brazil; and a delegation based in Manila, Philippines.

The Charism “challenges us to live a life of welcome and solidarity, to take on apostolic itinerancy by being ‘migrants with migrants’ and to witness to communion in diversity”.¹ Our Constitutions define spirituality “as Christocentric in a Trinitarian perspective, which is incarnated in the reality of migrants, penetrating the life and mission of the Congregation”.²

The spirituality of the MSCS Sisters is nourished by the Word of God, read and meditated on in the light of the Scalabrinian charism and confronted with the reality of the migratory world, community prayer and the experience of the sacraments, reading and re-reading the lives and heroic deeds of our saints, St. Charles Borromeo and St. John Baptist Scalabrini, as well as our co-founders, Father Joseph Marchetti and Mother Assunta Marchetti, as well as the first Sisters, in the way they knew how to welcome and live the Scalabrinian Spirit among migrants.

We are pleased to share here 4 features of the Scalabrinian spirituality lived by us, women religious from various countries of the world who, together, embrace the legacy of St. John Baptist Scalabrini in consecration, to live the faith fully in self-giving, in community and in evangelical and missionary service to migrants, with special attention to those who live in situations of greater vulnerability. The characteristics are:

1. Itinerancy as the axis of support and unification of missionary dynamism

¹ MSCS, Norme Costituzionali, n. 3.

² Candaten, 2022, 3.

2. Creative fidelity between origin and actualization
3. Spirituality from below, in the logic of incarnation
4. Sororal and intercultural relationships

We shape a multifaceted spirituality, determined by the charism and shaped by the missionary experience among different cultures

The reflection that this opportunity offers us is part of the discernment that the MSCS Apostolic Mission Guidelines (n. 74) describe. The Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters

adopt discernment as an open, dialogical, searching attitude of waiting and availability, on a personal and institutional level, as a prayerful expression of faith and as a constant process of freedom, radical humility, dynamism and commitment; an interior attitude rooted in a continuous act of faith (Francisco, 2018). Through the practice of discernment, the Congregation seeks knowledge of God's will, self-knowledge and the search for wisdom in order to act with a praxis, an action that is renewed and faithful to the charism, conformed to Christ. Discernment becomes for the MSCS Sisters a habit of prayerful attention to the presence and action of God in their own lives, in the processes they live individually and institutionally, as well as in the mission, in a Church that is a place of continuous journeys of discernment (EG 30), of the paths of the Spirit (EG 45).

From 1895 until today, wherever there is a community of MSCS Sisters, or even just one of them, it HAS BEEN a "tent" for encounter. Our feminine face generates ecclesial fruitfulness, because we have inherited characteristics that distinguish us within the Church: our missionary specificity is expressed in our total willingness to "become migrants with the migrants", to place ourselves alongside those who suffer and those in need, to share the journey. As Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters, we are sent to transform every place and every environment into a home, a place of encounter (FT, n. 216-221), for those who migrate or seek refuge, helping them to integrate and overcome difficulties.

1. ITINERANCY AS THE AXIS THAT SUSTAINS AND UNIFIES MISSIONARY DYNAMISM

Our choices, which put us in a state of mission, as itinerants to become “migrants with migrants”, are a way of

living a temporary situation, [which] changes the person, the tasks, the strategies, the objectives of the mission. The missionary lives in an attitude of permanent exodus: exodus from herself; ecclesial exodus; socio-cultural exodus. Pastoral structures must also be flexible and open, and this seems to be the greatest challenge of the future (Erga Migrantes, n. 90).³

This is an intrinsic dynamism of the Christian faith and of the Scalabrinian missionary vocation:

true faith uproots us from the present, from certainties, in order to commit ourselves to new ways of anticipating the Kingdom. Itinerancy must be a mental, spiritual, cultural and geographical attitude. It is in the DNA of the people of God on the move, who through faith are continually uprooted from their land, from their certainties, in order to follow the will and promise of their God, as protagonists and witnesses to the realization of Trinitarian communion, of the fraternity of all peoples, making visible that human family dreamed of since creation, and which is in the heart of God.⁴

The process of internal reorganization of the Congregation, which began in the six-year period 2013-2019, requires constant perseverance and renewed vigor. It is a spiritual journey that further nourishes our missionary spirit, aims to improve fraternal relationships in community and ensure greater vitality for the Scalabrinian charism. This journey also responds to the challenges and calls of our time and in the great effort to resize the works, services, activities and presences has led the Sisters to express their enthusiasm and involvement with greater creativity and fidelity to the charism, responding to the needs according to the country, culture and migratory categories.

³ Candaten, 2022, 8.

⁴ Candaten, 2018, 169.

Starting in 2018, the Congregation began a specific project, characterized by a temporary presence with migrants and refugees in emergency situations, and called Itinerant Service, which was carried out in Roraima (Brazil), on the Northern and Southern Borders of Mexico, in Ventimiglia (Italy) and in Pemba (Mozambique). With this specific action, the Congregation offers its contribution so that migrants and refugees, especially women and children, in emergency situations and conditions of vulnerability, are guaranteed respect for their dignity, attention to their primary needs and access to opportunities for human development.

For us, itinerancy is a lifestyle and a personal, community and institutional criterion of open-mindedness, rooted in the vow of poverty that uninstalls us for the mission, and of humility, so as not to cling to what is ephemeral. We make our own the idea of “pilgrim” or “stranger”, so familiar to the early Church, as indicative of a new sense of being in the world and as a teaching on the condition of life of Christ’s followers.⁵ Today we propose to cultivate a culture of encounter, among ourselves and with the migrants or partners with whom we collaborate,

because inspired by the disciples of Emmaus (Lk 24), an icon of vocation promotion (MSCS, 2021, p. 17), the MSCS Sisters open themselves up to the encounter with the Pilgrim who makes their hearts burn, they learn the art of accompaniment and are touched by the Risen Christ himself, in order to educate and foster paths of discernment towards discipleship. It is the task of building a culture of encounter, as an outgoing Church, which opens up and strengthens spaces of love, sharing, listening and solidarity, where welcoming differences is recognized as fidelity to God’s call to life (Guidelines, n. 77).

⁵ Cf. Candaten, 2018, 167.

2. CREATIVE FIDELITY BETWEEN ORIGIN AND ACTUALIZATION

The experience of our Scalabrinian spirituality, with the traits of femininity that identify us, is built and shared through a flexibility that opposes the rigidity of repetitiveness of the always similar or identical. This dynamism is a sign of fidelity that knows how to drink from the Sources and allow itself to be transformed by experiences that reinterpret and re-signify the same Gift that is at the origin, in a whole made up of Charism, Faith and Mission. It is a vitality that is always plural, because it is unique in each person who welcomes it and it is as multiple as the peoples in mobility and the cultures that shape the worlds that make us human.

We rely on our roots and on the archetypal model that combines the inspiration and fundamental action of Scalabrini, the courage of Marchetti and the inner strength of Mother Assunta. It is a dynamic fidelity that has the capacity to strengthen each of us who are part of the Congregation to develop and drive concrete action, in evangelization, as a service to the migrants/refugees most in need and in strategic coordination with unique contributions.

It is a dynamism that makes us protagonists and allows us to put our human and spiritual gifts, skills and accumulated experiences at the service of migrants and the Church, starting from the individual profile of each one, without falling into fragmentation, because we drink from the same source. At the same time, in this way, guided by the spirituality that nourishes us, we contribute to the whole institution, being enriched and growing thanks to the intrinsic spirituality that animates us.

For this reason, we have adopted synodality, which places people and the organization as a whole in humble interaction with those who are different, in the community and in the world, especially with those who are excluded by the Churches and society. It is about constant movements of compassion, solidarity and openness, mental and affective, institutional and cultural, in a horizontal sense, without privileges or discrimination, overcoming divisions, in the sense of Scalabrinian spirituality and missionary spirit (Guidelines, n. 86).

The Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters, in their mission, count on the participation of the Scalabrinian Lay Missionary Movement, accompanied by the MSCS Sisters in various areas, with the mission of supporting their commitment to living the Scalabrinian charism faithfully, and encouraging them to give a concrete response to the call to offer the gifts they have received in favor of the mission with migrants and refugees in their lay state, in their work, in the ecclesial community and in civil society.

3. SPIRITUALITY FROM BELOW, IN THE LOGIC OF THE INCARNATION

We live our spirituality in the logic of the Incarnation, adapting ourselves again and again to the contexts, peoples, cultures, languages and seeking to interact, learn and open up to the religious diversity and contradictions that today's world makes us experience. "By vocation and mission, the MSCS Sisters live and work in constant interaction with people from different cultures, with different languages, religions and scales of values and, not infrequently, unique and challenging ways of building positive and enriching relationships for all" (Guidelines, n. 81).

In the humble and fruitful movement of lowering ourselves, of Kenosis and Incarnation, our missionary spirituality places us in a state of mission, always ready to give reasons for our faith, relying on the Word of God and allowing ourselves to be impregnated by the signs and traces of historicity that distinguish specific cultures and peoples. In this way, we value and give recognition to those who set out on the journey with those who migrate or seek refuge, no less than to those who represent the institutions that accompany the journey.

In this experience which, starting from the otherness and concreteness of the other, allows itself to be historically determined and takes responsibility for those who trust us and sometimes also entrust themselves to us, we adopt dialogue and the involvement of human relationships as the human and spiritual dimension of spiritual experience. We find in dialogue the opportunity to recognize

and respect “the religious and cultural identity of migrants and the “seeds of the Word” present in all peoples and religions.”⁶

Dialogue and welcome as a *modus vivendi* implies adopting attitudes and behaviors of openness to cultural, religious and axiological diversity and triggering processes of encounter, openness, tolerance and recognition of otherness. And all this in order to collaborate in the formation of intercultural societies, in which there is respect, dialog and exchange between diversities. A way of being that is capable of transforming people, structures and even contexts.

Rather than immediate solutions imposed from places and power structures, it’s about creating new participatory dynamics that mature gradually over time and have a profound impact on social reality (Guidelines, n. 78).

4. SORORAL AND INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

Our spirituality is a legacy and, at the same time, a construction; it is a foundation and an aspiration; it is a gift from above and a characteristic of our consecrated life, but it is also a human configuration that seeks the good news of the Gospel for itself and for all. For our part, we begin with constant and vigilant attention to “building communities capable of living the dynamism of communion and witnessing to it to migrants and to the Church” (NC 115). We are women capable of adapting and living in a provisional way, and formation maintains a constant commitment in this regard.

For this reason, we unite in a perennial effort to overcome the risk of estrangement that creates distance and, in turn, exclusion. Training helps us to live with different people through intercultural dialog, but this is learned over time and through dialog, without denying or rejecting our own contexts of reference. Formation also aims to help people assimilate the values of the Scalabrinian charism and to promote the progressive assimilation of Christ’s sentiments towards the Father.

Our privileged way of realizing this vitality is through interpersonal relationships, welcoming the richness of diversity, committed and

⁶ Candaten, 2022, 6.

capable of being discussed and renewed, because these are the vital spaces of each of the MSCS Sisters and of the Congregation that each of us represents. For this reason, we allow ourselves to be influenced by the experiences of migrants, refugees and itinerants, by the many men and women with whom we share life and service. In particular, the lives of migrants challenge us, push us and transform us, by the love with which we love them and by the mandate that does not allow us to take our hands off the plow, in life and in every missionary outreach, historically and geographically determined. Putting yourself in the other person's shoes; cultivating empathy, going back, stopping and sharing, redoing projects and revisiting memories, re-framing the failures of the journey and looking for alternatives. Daring and even retreating. All with a lot of faith and solidarity.

We make ourselves a family, but today more than in the past, before entering into relationships in which motherhood guides conversations and actions, it is through "sorority" that we allow ourselves to be guided, in the way we interpret the pains and joys, the difficulties and hopes of people on the move. Especially women.

Already known as pilgrims of hope for embracing mobility with love and faith and sharing the life that people on the move live, the MSCS Sisters stand out in the midst of situations of disillusionment and in contexts where disenchantment and even despair prevail, for their witness of hope (Guidelines, n. 75).

FROM THE WAY WE LIVE TODAY TO THE HOPE THAT PROPELS US INTO THE FUTURE

The Scalabrinian Traditio states that "only a specific spirituality can clothe our presence in the Church and in the world with prophecy and thus revitalize our mission with and for migrants in the local churches" (n. 5). It is the Spirit who makes all things new, but it is we who are transformed by him so that we can continue in the discipleship that proclaims and bears witness to the love that God has for those he puts in our path or for those he places us on the journey to meet them.

Whoever has a vision of hope fights with love for justice, for peace, for the dignity of the person, for the balance of nature, works for the values of the Kingdom. [...] Today, hope is in short supply in a society that lacks global perspectives and a projection of the future. We need to educate people and communities to cultivate a culture of hope, of forgiveness, of relationships open to dialogue and collaboration, with joy and serenity even in trials and suffering.⁷

The itinerancy and creative fidelity between our religious, spiritual and cultural background, as well as the experiences of concrete service among migrants and refugees, place us in a movement of giving and welcoming, with the reciprocity of love, giving and responsibility that we learned from Scalabrini and our holy co-founders, Mother Assunta and Father Marchetti. We have built authentic traits of Scalabrinian spirituality by putting ourselves through the school of how much we can learn from people in situations of mobility. In fact, we cultivate a spirituality with an open eye to migrants and refugees, sharing with them the deepest sense of faith in the God of the journey, who does not abandon his people in times of suffering or in times of fulfillment and joy.

This is why we become a Church on the move and build relationships that are a space for the protection of life and support in the paths of protagonism, starting by making our communities “a home and school of communion” and opening minds, hearts, times and even projects to the service of the protection and autonomy of those whom the Lord entrusts to us, so that they may know the love with which the Father loves them and the hope to which they are called.

⁷ Candaten, 2022, 11.

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SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

IN THE CONGREGATION OF THE MISSIONARIES OF ST. CHARLES - SCALABRINIANS

ISAIA BIROLLO, C.S.

It is not easy to illustrate how the Scalabrinian spirituality is lived out in the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles. The reason for this lies in the fact that we do not possess a clear and shared codification of what Scalabrinian spirituality is and we do not have a lived experience of this spirituality that is equally identifiable in the various places where we operate. In a very generic way, we could say that the Scalabrinian spirituality consists of the practice of the theological virtues of faith, hope and charity and the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance, following the example of St. John Baptist Scalabrini who, according to the official decree of the Church, practiced these virtues heroically. However, we are still in the generic, because this is a duty of every baptized person.

DIFFICULTIES

If we wanted to search for reasons for the difficulty of recognizing ourselves in the practice of a specific spirituality we would have to talk about at least three aspects:

- *Scalabrini, part-time founder.* Scalabrini was a great pastor. The foundation of the Congregation came from his heart as a pastor but when he became founder, he did not stop being a pastor. His passion for migrants and the founding of the Congregation occupied only the last 18 years of his life as a bishop. Unlike other founders, he did not have a way to focus only on the foundation and fully characterize its spirit.

- *Partially trained missionaries as religious.* Scalabrini wanted a congregation of religious. We read in the 1888 Regulations, "All those who are admitted to join the Institute must be well penetrated by the idea that for five years they are obliged to live as true religious." In 1894 he wrote to Fr. Domenico Vicentini: "On October 15 [the mis-

sionaries in Piacenza who were preparing to go on mission] will begin a kind of novitiate and on the day of the Immaculate Conception they will make perpetual vows. I found them all delighted about it. The new ones who will enter will begin a real novitiate of one year. This is the first time I feel deep consolation and entire confidence in the future." At the same time, Scalabrini was forced by the pastoral need of migrants to send many missionaries who were already priests and who had not done a sufficiently long apprenticeship of preparation.

- *Historical gaps.* The history of the Congregation is marked by a serious crisis in which the missionary aspect was strengthened even more at the expense of the religious character of the Institute. The Holy See was unconvinced of the need for a religious Congregation for migrants, and the early superiors, in order to eliminate differences among the Institute's members, adjusted to this. In 1907, Fr. Pacifico Chenuil from Chicago wrote to Fr. Vicentini to encourage him to "compose a very broad and bland regulation whose full observance can be easily imposed and demanded" taking into account that the Institute is comprised "in part of displaced students and vagabonds who took refuge in the merciful arms of Msgr. Scalabrini solely to seize the sacred ordination; partly of tried seminarians and good and truly virtuous priests; and partly also of poor, unfortunate priests whose painful history I do not wish to recall here."

The 1919 General Chapter started from the premise that "the members of the Institute are not bound by vows but only by an oath of perseverance." This decision marked the beginning of the crisis that led the Congregation to the concrete possibility of being suppressed by the Holy See.

Fr. Chenuil, elected Superior General in that chapter, set out to urgently search for priests who would continue to care for Scalabrinian parishes especially in the United States. In four years, he succeeded in hiring 37 diocesan priests and sent almost all of them to the United States. This solution achieved the goal of keeping the parishes under the responsibility of the Scalabrinians; however, it weakened the sense of belonging to the Congregation because these priests had not received specific training on what G.B. Scalabrini asked of his missionaries.

In 1924, the Congregation was rescued and placed by Pope Pius XI, who had known G. B. Scalabrini personally and admired his work, under the direct ruling of the Consistorial Congregation.

Cardinal Raffaele Carlo Rossi, as Prefect of the Consistorial Congregation from 1930 to 1948, was the Superior General who promoted its revival and development after the crisis. Cardinal Rossi belonged to the Order of Discalced Carmelites. The brethren who had him as Superior General spoke of him as a man with an austere personal life, gentle in his dealings with the confreres and at the same time firm and strong in governing the Congregation. Having ascertained that the majority desired a return to religious vows, the first religious profession was celebrated as a group on April 8, 1934, in the Church of St. Charles in Piacenza.

In 1936, Cardinal Rossi promulgated the Constitutions of the Pious Society, which contained a complete presentation of canonical norms regarding the admission and formation of candidates, the practice of religious vows, mission, administration and governance. The text of these Constitutions, however, was not explicitly set according to Scalabrinian spirituality. Perhaps also for this reason, missionaries, especially in the United States, followed the pastoral style of diocesan priests.

On the other hand, even the style of formation that was established after the reintroduction of religious vows was not characterized by a specific spirituality. The religious formation of new candidates in Italy was entrusted to Fr. Stanislao Fiscarelli, who was appointed Novice Master when he was 25 years old. Fr. Fiscarelli faithfully fulfilled his assignment from 1935 to 1959. However, he had not been able to receive specific training to be novice master. He enjoyed the esteem of Cardinal Rossi and followed his instructions to the letter, offering the novices a solid basic formation. Novices came to know the Founder by reading the biography written by Francesco Gregori in 1934. Religious trained in Brazil and the United States also followed the same type of formation.

It would be necessary to wait until the new Rules of Life (1972) for a more specific basis for Scalabrinian religious life.

SPECIFICITY

Some reasons for the lack of a clear and characterized Scalabrinian spirituality can be gleaned from these early notes. However, this does not mean either that the Founder did not give characteristic elements or that the missionaries did not experience a spirituality that animated their mission.

- *Scalabrini's imprint*. In the 1890 "Principal Rules for Missionaries of Italians Abroad" we read this provision: "Every day half an hour of meditation will be done in common. When meditation could not be done because of the multiplicity of occupations, especially on feast days, each of the priests will apply to himself what he will have preached to the others."

To the departing missionaries on Dec. 10, 1890, the Founder said,

Show more and more that your zeal equals only your selflessness, that in God and in God alone is placed all your hope, that from God and from God alone you await reward, and that you will never cease from apostolic labors as long as there are unhappy people to console, ignorant people to instruct, poor people to evangelize, souls to save.

The letter written by the Founder on 15-3 1892 indicating that he had chosen St. Charles Borromeo as the patron saint of the new Institute, points to the fundamental point of the spirituality he lived and proposed for the Missionaries:

"It is a great honor that Jesus Christ has done you by calling you to be part of his redeeming work, counting you among his apostles... Therefore, as long as you remain in Him, you will feel full of superhuman energy and the fruit you will bear can only be fruitful and lasting... Detached from Him, on the other hand, you would become like a body without a soul, barren of every good work."

In 1895 he wrote to Fr. Francesco Zaboglio, whom he placed in charge of the first missionaries in the United States:

I strongly recommend that you introduce the practices of piety, as far as possible, in common, meditation and spiritual reading, visitation to the Blessed Sacrament, the Holy Ro-

sary. Start it there in Boston, if there is no practice of it. As the new ones arrive, let everything conform to our Rules. This is a most essential point.

G. B. Scalabrini saw in the “holiness” of his missionaries and therefore in the means to achieve it (spiritual life, selflessness, hope placed in God alone), the means to respond to the urgencies of emigration.

- *Scalabrini's example.* Fr. Mario Francesconi, the confrere who studied G.B. Scalabrini in depth and drafted the documentation that led to the decree of the practice of heroic virtues, wrote that devotion to the Eucharist was one of the most salient features of his spirituality. Another characteristic of St. John Baptist Scalabrini spirituality was Marian piety. There is no doubt that these characteristics of Scalabrini's spirituality were known and were also somehow experienced by the missionaries.

The celebration of the Eucharist according to the language and traditions of the migrants is one of the highlights of the pastoral care in all the countries where we are present.

I remember how in the 1980s in Tijuana, at dusk, a missionary, accompanied by a Scalabrinian Sister, celebrated the Eucharist outdoors in the Cañon Zapata where migrants were gathered, waiting for the night to try to cross the border and enter the United States.

There is also the beautiful practice of Masses in two or three languages that allow migrants of different nationalities to celebrate together on the most important feasts of the year as members of the same Catholic church.

In the homes of elderly and sick religious, the celebration of the Eucharist is the time lived together every day, by all the confreres. Those who are in better physical condition help the weaker ones, as they also do in the refectory.

In formation houses, the celebration of the Eucharist is the moment when the whole community is gathered. During provincial assemblies, the celebration of the Eucharist is always very meaningful.

In addition, its missionaries are distinguished for the promotion of Marian piety according to the particular devotions of the emigrants. We have churches dedicated to Our Lady of Pompeii in various countries, as well as Parishes and Missions dedicated to Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe and Nossa Senhora Aparecida and other denomina-

tions of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Daily recitation of the Rosary is common in our parishes and missions.

- *The missionary nature of the Scalabrinians.* While it is difficult to derive Scalabrinian spirituality from the written accounts of the missionaries, it is not difficult to recount how dedicated and profound their missionary witness was. As Jesus pointed out to us: by their fruits you will recognize them. And even in the early days, when the Congregation was in crisis, there are testimonies of these fruits.

Msgr. Amleto Cicognani, commissioned by the Holy See to make the apostolic visitation to the Scalabrinian houses in the United States from August 27 to October 11, 1924, writes from Boston, "There are good, excellent and more than useful elements for the assistance to the Italians. When the Scalabrinians preserve the spirit of the Founder, I would consider them preferable to many others here who have come to try their luck." He was also able to have talks with American bishops and came to the conclusion,

It is certain that the Scalabrini's Institute in America has produced great good. They are priests who go there to give spiritual assistance to their compatriots, whose customs, language, mentality they therefore know. Without the Scalabrinians, how many of our people, too often neglected and despised, would have lost the faith altogether; and how much greater unrest in the emigrant families! The bishops recognized this and gave special praise.

In general, it can be said that many missionaries offered a wonderful witness in which some well-known characteristics of the Founder's spirituality can be recognized: faithful service to migrants according to their language and religious traditions, concern for the most marginalized such as miners, seafarers, and the elderly, and social and political engagement, promoting the study of migration and the use of the media.

A common line of Scalabrinian spirituality has been and continues to be reaching out to migrants and walking with them with simplicity and humility and above all with trust in the God who does not abandon us in our wanderings.

THE TURNING POINT

An important turning point in the characterization of Scalabrinian spirituality came with the broadening of the purpose and the new Rules of Life.

THE BROADENING OF THE SCOPE

The specific purpose of the Congregation presented to candidates entering our seminaries in Italy before the Second Vatican Council was expressed with the motto: "To bring wherever an Italian emigrant is the comfort of faith and the smile of the homeland." In seminaries in Brazil and the United States this specific purpose was also presented. One entered the Scalabrinian Congregation with religious vows to dedicate oneself to the service of Italian emigrants and their descendants. Among the young men who became Scalabrinians in those years, this specific purpose began to create problems, also because in Brazil and the United States of America vocation animation had been opened also to candidates who were not of Italian descent.

The Council, with the Decree *Perfectae Caritatis*, prescribed that all religious men and women should revise their Constitutions following the criteria of fidelity to the Gospel and the Charism of the Founder.

In the 1960s, in the immediate aftermath of the Council, the General Administration promoted a reflection to consider expanding the purpose. The responses were largely positive.

I attended those meetings together with the confreres with whom I had shared the years of formation in our seminary in Staten Island, New York. I remember that some confreres, when faced with the possibility of broadening the purpose, were favorable and had already begun to dedicate themselves to Spanish-speaking immigrants in their pastoral initiatives. Others expressed reservations and later left the Congregation because broadening the purpose went beyond the commitments they had made by religious profession.

However, the large majority of positive responses was a sign of the Spirit and resulted in the acquisition of an increasingly universal mindset and sensitivity to migration not simply as an ethnic fact, but as a result of major global imbalances.

Being a missionary to migrants meant being at the service and in function of the catholicity of the Church in view of the Kingdom to which all are called.

THE NEW RULES OF LIFE

The new Rules of Life, drafted in the special chapter 1969-1971 and approved in experimental form in 1974 and in definitive form in the Chapter of 1980, were the occasion for a return to the founder and especially for a characterization of Scalabrinian religious life on the basis of the original inspiration and the needs of mission. The majority of the brothers now living were formed on the new Rules of Life, and this also resulted in the acquisition of a new sensitivity and spirituality.

According to these Rules of Life, the Congregation places itself at the service of those whose conditions, needs and aspirations are similar to those that motivated the Founder to establish it. For this reason, Scalabrinian missionaries dedicate themselves to all those who, by reason of migration, out of true necessity, require specific pastoral attention.

We quote some statements in the Rules of Life that indicate specific aspects of mission and spirituality.

The mission the Church entrusts to us through our Founder, John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza (1839-1905), is this: to become migrants with the migrants, so as to build with them, even by the witness of our life and our community, the Church, which in its earthly pilgrimage associates itself particularly with the poorest and most abandoned classes of people; and also to help people discover Christ in their migrant brothers and sisters and perceive in migration a sign of mankind's eternal calling (RoL 2).

As heirs of the Founder's spirit, committed to the mission he entrusted us, we are challenged to capture that particular sense of urgency which the migrants' experience gives to the biblical invitation addressed to all: to look on themselves as strangers and pilgrims on this earth, just like the Patriarchs of old (RoL 19).

In imitation of our Founder, and in his spirit, our life in Christ is nourished above all by listening to the Word of

God, through love for the Eucharist and for the Church, filial devotion to Mary, Mother of Christ and of the Church, through the responsible exercise of our ministry and through our fraternal communion" (RoL43).

These are the Rules of Life on which initial formation is set and according to which new candidates take religious vows. Personal and community life revision takes place according to these Rules of Life.

With all our limitations, there is in us the will to be consistent with the commitments we have made as religious, and this is how we live the Scalabrinian spirituality.

The events that followed, such as the openings of vocation ministry and formation houses in new countries and the internationalization of the houses of theology were not just instrumental choices, but also the expression of a group with a spirituality aimed at being and forming Scalabrinians with a heart and mind open to embrace all migrants. And these openings were realized in typical Scalabrinian style, walking humbly, quietly.

THE RECENT YEARS

In the last thirty years, a universalistic mentality has continued to develop within and in the mission with migrants, highlighting limitations and developments. The quotation of some documents highlights this seesaw movement of awareness and the difficulties we still face.

The General Administration's letter of Nov. 28, 1995, emphasizes the missionaries' tireless dedication to work but also less attention to the inner life.

Thank goodness the dedication to work seems to be solid in the congregation, and the image of the Scalabrinian missionary passed on to tradition is precisely that of the apostle crossing seas and rivers, thickets and cities, descending into mines and entering construction sites, knocking on all doors in search of his migrants. However, over-emphasis on the dimension of doing, even pastoral doing, runs the risk of burning out the person and even more so community relationships in pursuit of efficiency, which is quite dif-

ferent, when not opposite, to apostolic action. It seems to us that here is the most important point of change, which urgently needs to take place in the Congregation: a sincere and total conversion to the interior dimension of our life as consecrated persons, translated into a sacramental and prayer life that is a witness to our living in Christ. There is more prayer in our communities than there was some time ago, and fortunately this is true for formation communities as well, but it is still little: even on the personal level we are far removed from the example of the Founder, from his life of prayer and Eucharistic devotion, from his love of meditation and the Divine Office. With the excuse that life itself is prayer, we have filled our lives with everything except time to pray: but even fish, though they spend their lives in the sea, once caught must be salted. In the face of our hesitations and attempts at justification, let us recall the Founder's blunt comment, "He who leaves meditation either lacks faith or lacks brains," and draw our own conclusions. The same thing, and much more, applies to the Sacrament of Reconciliation; the celebration of Holy Mass (when the "people" are missing), the annual Spiritual Exercises. If in too many communities the community pastoral project is struggling to take off, if friendship, trust and sincere collaboration among confreres is rare merchandise we must trace the real cause, without fear of being accused of spiritualism: we do not have the experience of the charity of the Lord Jesus in our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been sent to us.

The Conference on Spirituality in 1996 and then Scalabrini's beatification in 1997 were instrumental in bringing attention to spirituality. The conference identified catholicity-communion as the style of our life and service to migrants, who in this way are placed at the center of the missionary nature of the Church itself. From the conference emerged, as an initiative of the three Institutes of the Scalabrinian Family, the *Traditio*. In the basic text, welcoming, itinerancy and communion in diversity are identified as specific dimensions of Scalabrinian spirituality. The various contributions published each year since 2005 express the effort to deepen Scalabrinian spirituality in various contexts and situations.

The XII General Chapter (2001) emphasized that

our spirituality, which is the soul of our mission, is characterized by the encounter with the migrant, in whom we rediscover the face of Christ, and by fidelity to the charism of the Founder. The migrant questions and challenges us to live the values of openness, welcome, communion in diversity, reading, like Scalabrini, the reality of migration in a providential and prophetic perspective. This leads us to look at migration with God's eyes and to listen to God's word with the heart of the migrant.

The XIII Chapter (2007) observed

that in our communities there are examples of authentic and joyful coexistence between different cultures and mentalities. There is a greater desire to know the Founder. A clearer Scalabrinian identity has emerged from formation courses, conferences and especially centennial celebrations. On the other hand, we confess the risk of falling into narcissistic efficiency, the result of a weak and superficial spirituality, which also manifests itself in the inability to cultivate a life of personal and community prayer. We lament the difficulty of living and planning together. Often, as time passes, enthusiasm for religious life wanes and resistance to continuing formation surfaces. Sometimes there has been a lack of inclusion in the reality of migrants and we have remained insensitive to their suffering.

The XIV Chapter (2012) observed that

the charism, which contains the essential elements of our being Scalabrinian missionaries, gives rise to a particular spirituality, a special consecration and mission, called by divine providence to bring about the union in God, through his Christ, of all souls of good will.

At the same time, it recalled the importance of union in community life.

The Vademecum The Scalabrinian Community and the Local Superior (1997), a valid patrimony and one to be valued, responds to the provision entrusted to us by the Founder: Therefore union, beloved brothers and sons, union to Jesus

Christ first of all. And the fruit of this union will be union among yourselves.

The XV Chapter (2018) looked positively at diversity within the Congregation.

The face of the Scalabrinian Congregation, made up of so many ethnicities and cultures, urges us to form fraternal communities bound by the Scalabrinian charism. We thus announce to the world the possibility of living communion in diversity, breaking down the walls of discrimination, injustice and inequality, and building the bridges of encounter, solidarity and fraternity in Christ Jesus. In this way our first evangelizing action is our life itself.

These are some quotes, especially from chapter documents, that are the moment when the Congregation confronts the legacy of its past and aspirations for the future. These are quotes that speak more and more of a mindset and spirituality that resonate with the Founder's prophetic vision, embrace the demands of mission, and note how the interior life, which must sustain spirituality, the soul of our mission, is sometimes lacking. So much progress has been made, but also so many shortcomings continue to manifest themselves, an expression of the fragility of our humanity but also of the insufficient attention given to spirituality.

CONCLUSION

We have broadly traced the development of Scalabrinian spirituality, especially from the broadening of the purpose and the new Rules of Life. We have caught fragments that must compose Scalabrinian spirituality, identified perhaps more explicitly in the new basic text of the *Traditio* (2021). However, we cannot yet say that we have arrived at a complete and final identification of the aspects that qualify Scalabrinian spirituality.

We do detect initiatives in the Congregation that go in search of this specificity. We cite, for example, the *Way of the Cross of the Migrant*, which is proposed every year, or which is celebrated in significant situations, such as along the wall of the U.S.-Mexico border; or the

Way of the Cross among the cottages of the evacuees of the earthquake in Haiti, or “las posadas,” among the migrant peasants of Immokalee. Or we recall liturgies in Migrant Houses in various parts of the world where Scalabrinian spirituality is lived out, offering hospitality and guidance to migrants. Then there were many songs composed to sing God’s love for migrants, or to recall the life of the Founder, or to make people cognizant about the difficulties migrants face, but also about the contribution they make to their families and society.

It will also be important to remember some missionaries who have been particularly significant in the history of the Congregation. For some of them, such as Fr. Giuseppe Marchetti, Bishop Massimo Rinaldi and Fr. Tarcisio Rubin, the process of canonization is underway. To ask the Church to recognize them as blessed, we must first of all be the ones to know what they did and especially with what spirit they lived. And there are other missionaries who have been an example to us, some we may have known ourselves.

Scalabrinian spirituality remains alive and grows if we live it and know how to share it. The canonization of St. John Baptist Scalabrini was the last grace we received, and it should urge us to aspire to holiness as he aspired to it and as he recommended to his missionaries. “Be holy and everything will blossom in your hands.”

THIRD PART

FROM SCALABRINI TO THE SCALABRINIANS

SCALABRINI'S SPIRITUAL LEGACY

GRAZIANO BATTISTELLA, CS

It might be useful to begin this presentation by recalling the way the symposium is structured. We started from the fact that we needed to reflect on the Scalabrinian spirituality, with special attention to the intercultural dimension. This implied that we had to question what spirituality is and secondly what the intercultural dimension entails. We thought that another step was also necessary. If it is called Scalabrinian spirituality, there must be a reference to Scalabrini. And at the same time, our spirituality cannot be his spirituality. So how do we move from Scalabrini's spirituality to Scalabrinian spirituality? We decided to look at two examples: a very established spirituality, that of the Jesuits, and one still under construction like ours, the one of the Xaverians. Spirituality, however, is already lived by those who are in the mission with migrants, and so we listened to the testimonies of lay people, secular missionaries, missionary sisters and missionary fathers. We derived many insights, many stimuli but also some uncertainty, especially in the experience of the Scalabrinian missionaries. The time has come to ask ourselves: what is the spiritual legacy that Scalabrini left us, to help us then make the transition to Scalabrinian spirituality.

When we talk about legacy, we need to establish what it consists of and we need to establish to whom this legacy is destined. I will try to make this effort, without attributing to myself the title of executor of Scalabrini's will, which, as we know, was given to Msgr. Mangot.

Scalabrini left us almost 120 years ago but in us, missionaries, missionary sisters, secular missionaries and lay Scalabrinians, he is still alive. His canonization last year helped to make him even more alive and, above all, to bring his image as bishop and founder more fully into focus. The proclamation of his holiness obliges us to think of him as a model of Christian life to be followed, obliges us to reflect on his spirituality and even more on what of his spirituality should remain alive in us.

THE CHARISMATIC LEGACY

As heirs of Scalabrini, because we were founded or inspired by him as missionaries of migrants, we have generally reflected on the gift of this mission to the Church, a gift that Scalabrini received from the Spirit and shared in the Church, a gift that he entrusted to us so that we might cherish it but above all share it, so that in the Church living in many parts of the earth the mission with migrants might be welcomed as a mission of the Spirit who wants to “bring together all the peoples of the earth.” It is not mission with migrants per se that is the gift of the Spirit through Scalabrini, but mission with migrants as Scalabrini discerned it and lived it. Indeed, in addition to a number of individuals who distinguished themselves in this mission, Pius XII in *Exsul Familia* recalls that “numerous then were the priests, as well as the religious men and women who, attracted by the purpose of going to the aid of their compatriots abroad, from every part went to America” (EF 22). What distinguished Scalabrini from others was his ability to make this mission a mission of the Church. He did this by, among other things, involving the Holy See, first with the approval in 1887 of the Institute by Leo XIII and then with the establishment in 1912 by Pius X, to whom he wrote shortly before his death, of the Special Office for Emigration attached to the Consistorial Congregation.

To keep alive the gift the Spirit gave Scalabrini, we reflected on the originality of Scalabrini’s vision on migration, the relevance of this vision, and the style of mission with migrants that characterizes Scalabrini’s disciples. It is Scalabrini’s charismatic legacy, a legacy that we have the duty to feel is ours, but knowing that it is not only ours, that it belongs to the whole Church. Indeed, it is our primary duty to make sure that others share Scalabrini’s charismatic legacy so that in the Church the attention and welcoming of migrants will not die, so that there will be no Church without migrants, an eternal reminder of our condition as pilgrims, a living, although partial, expression of the reunion of all peoples.

We have reflected on Scalabrini’s charismatic legacy, but we may have overlooked that his gift to us was not only mission but also the spirit that animates mission. Indeed, that the gift of mission, without

the spirit, is only a mandate. Scalabrini the founder, without his spirituality, is an impoverished Scalabrini. It is to fully grasp the richness of his gift that we want to reflect on his spirituality, because he bequeathed us not only his mission but also his spirituality, and the two aspects are inseparable.

With his canonization, the Church proclaimed him as a model of life for all. Therefore, his spiritual legacy is not our exclusive prerogative. Others will be struck by the way the Spirit guided his life; how, docile to the Spirit, Scalabrini made himself all things to all people; they will be struck by his love for Christ crucified and the Eucharist, for Our Lady and the poor, by his life of prayer and his asceticism. For us, who have chosen to follow Christ on the path traced by Scalabrini, it is imperative to know and make our own his spiritual legacy so that it may continue to live in our spirit, so that it may be a perennial part of our spirituality, guided by the Spirit to encounter and allow ourselves to be encountered by migrants.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY SPIRITUALITY?

Spirituality seems to be a reality that everyone understands but of which many different definitions are given. And so, it is not taken for granted that there is convergence in the understanding of spirituality. We discuss it not to exhaust the topic, but to have the same basis for discussion.

There is no question that when we talk about it among ourselves, believers in Christ, we have a notion of spirituality that refers to life lived in the Spirit of Christ. But before we get to that, it is necessary to acknowledge that spirituality is a dimension of the human, a dimension that everyone shares. Teilhard de Chardin's phrase is often quoted: *We are not human beings who have a spiritual experience; we are spiritual beings who experience the human.* In his own way, Scalabrini expressed the same concept when he said, "There is nothing more natural than the supernatural."¹ The reference is meant to indicate that the spiritual unites us all and unites us before the spiritual experience diversifies us according to practice, cultural environment, faith or lack of faith. At this more general level, spirituality is con-

¹ Test. IV ad 26 of the Diocesan Informational Process.

sidered an anthropological constant, a constitutive dimension of the human being or, as Schneiders would put it, it is a “capacity for self-transcendence toward the horizon of ultimate value,”² regardless of whether it becomes experience and in particular religious experience. Therefore, Christian spirituality is also first human and then Christian.

Spirituality reduced to the anthropological dimension alone has become very popular in our time and has received different expressions both in real life and especially in representation, for example in movies and television series. However, it is an anthropology that reduces the soul to psyche; the spiritual becomes the world of thoughts, feelings, and will. People resort to the spiritual as a tranquilizer. Of course, to be spirituality it is not enough that it is a spontaneous experience. It must be a way of life, involving moral codes and a path to be taken that requires ascetic practices, and this is also found in representations of anthropological spirituality. But the ultimate goal remains well-being, being well.

What distinguishes Christian spirituality from a purely anthropological spirituality is first of all Christian anthropology, an anthropology that includes body, soul and sanctifying grace, which has restored the person to his or her essence. Second, in Christian spirituality the ultimate value of self-transcendence is God,³ indeed the God of Jesus Christ. Thus, Christian spirituality is based on faith in Jesus who revealed to us that God is Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Or rather, Christian spirituality consists in the lived experience of this faith.

Spiritual experience, like all experience, is itself incommunicable.⁴ To be communicated it must be translated into understandable forms, into texts, into facts that can be decoded, understood and shared. On the one hand, we have the normative texts of faith (Sacred Scripture) from which all Christian spirituality originates; on the other hand, we have the specific forms in which the experience of faith has devel-

² Schneiders, Sandra M., “Approaches to the Study of Christian Spirituality”, in A. Holder (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion of Christians Spirituality*, Blakwell, 2005, 16.

³ Schneiders, op cit, 17.

⁴ Ibidem

oped, which is the experience of discipleship of Jesus, of following Christ. All these specific forms, though different, have in common the pursuit of union with Christ in order to proclaim his Kingdom, and thus the readiness to allow oneself to be transformed and to contribute to the transformation of the world.

In a specific sense, Christian spirituality is “life in the Spirit” that dwells in us, as St. Paul teaches (Rom. 8:10-11) and involves walking in the Spirit (Rom (8:4-6). It is therefore life in which we recognize the presence of the Spirit who guides the whole person in his or her various dimensions toward harmony with God, with others and with creation. To grow in the spiritual life is to grow in docility to the action of the Spirit, to diminish resistance to the action of the Spirit who wants to guide and transform us toward the fullness of communion with God. This fullness of communion is divinization, to which Scalabrini also aspired: “I must elevate, ennoble, purify, and divinize myself!”⁵

STUDIES ON SCALABRINI'S SPIRITUALITY

Scalabrini was a man of the Church with profound personal convictions, a man of proven fidelity, extraordinary piety, inexhaustible charity, an indefatigable pastor, very attached to his diocese but capable of reaching out to the ends of the world and able to perceive “the events to come.”⁶ Only a deep spirituality could support a life so rich in action and giving.

What has already been said about Scalabrini's spirituality? Without claiming to present an exhaustive scenario, important contributions to the study of Scalabrini's spirituality have been made by Francesconi, Fongaro, De Naro and Zovatto among others.

Fr. Francesconi, his biographer, dedicated a volume to the subject entitled: *Spirituality of Incarnation*.⁷ Since then, we have always repeated that Scalabrini had a spirituality of incarnation, without perhaps articulating what is meant by this expression and what this means for us. In fact, before that text, Francesconi wrote “The Spirit of the Ven. Found-

⁵ Scalabrini, Giovanni Battista, “Propositi”, 24.8.1894.

⁶ Toniolo Giuseppe, Letter to Massimo Rinaldi, November 1st, 1911.

⁷ Francesconi Mario, *John Baptist Scalabrini. Spirituality of Incarnation*, Scalabrinian Congregation, Roma 1989.

er, the Servant of God John Baptist Scalabrini.”⁸ In that text, drafted at the request of the superior general in 1967, that is, during the period of post-conciliar *aggiornamento*, Francesconi traced the lineaments of Scalabrini’s spirituality, identified in the search for unity, passion for truth with charity, realism and the ability to look into the future.

Twenty years later, after writing the biography of the Founder, Francesconi arrived at a more mature elaboration of Scalabrini’s spirituality, summarized precisely in the expression “spirituality of incarnation.” In reality, however, Francesconi devoted only the first part of the volume to the spirituality of incarnation. In the other parts, he developed his spirituality of action, his ecclesial spirituality and presented Scalabrini as a spiritual man, emphasizing his humanity, his commitment to the social and political.

Following Francesconi, Fongaro summarized Scalabrini’s thought and action in pamphlets dedicated to the various aspects Scalabrini touched upon in his writings.⁹ In those pamphlets, the complexity of the great bishop’s action and teaching emerges, and behind his teaching emerges the personality and spirituality of the man of God, because Scalabrini lived what he taught.

Cataldo Naro,¹⁰ in his contribution to the 1996 spirituality conference, placed Scalabrini’s spirituality in the context of his time and emphasized that Scalabrini’s spirituality shared the characteristics of his time, and thus was an “ordinary,” devout, popular and active spirituality.

Zovatto,¹¹ returning to the topic during the conference on Scalabrini’s ecclesiology, noted that while sharing the spirituality of his time, Scalabrini knew how to go beyond it. He practiced ascetics but the emphasis was on the interior life; he cultivated some devotions, but

⁸ Id., “The Spirit of the Ven. Founder, the Servant of God John Baptist Scalabrini,” *Official Bulletin* 7, 19-85.

⁹ Fongaro, Stelio, *Tematiche spirituali e pastorali dagli scritti di Mons. Scalabrini*, Postulazione generale, Piacenza.

¹⁰ Naro Cataldo, “Spirituality in Scalabrini’s time,” in *Scalabrinian Spirituality, Proceedings of the International Conference*, Roma-Piacenza 1996, 79-94.

¹¹ Zovatto, Pietro, “La spiritualità dello Scalabrini” in Parolin Gaetano e Agostino Lovatin (eds.), *L’ecclesiologia di Scalabrini*, Urbaniana University Press, 2007, 213-236.

the emphasis was on prayer; he was a man of piety but the goal was to conform himself completely to Christ.

There have since been other contributions, particularly in the *Traditio Scalabriniana* series, which arose as a joint initiative of the three institutes of the Scalabrinian Family, which sought to identify in the first basic text (2000) the common elements of Scalabrinian spirituality, common elements that remained in the revised basic text in 2021. The various contributions are just one example of how Scalabrini's complex personality lends itself to various annotations, but also how there is often a certain repetition and the temptation to reduce Scalabrini's spirituality to his devotions. Instead, we must look at Scalabrini as a saint who lived the experience of faith moved by the Spirit. It is his experience of living in the Spirit, as handed down to us through his initiatives and writings, that we need to reconsider in order to grasp the legacy he left us.

SCALABRINI'S SPIRITUAL LEGACY

When talking about the legacy of such a multifaceted saint as Scalabrini, it is necessary to specify to whom the legacy is intended and what belongs and does not belong to it. Let us talk about the legacy left to us, missionary men and women for migrants. Other pastoral passions that Scalabrini cultivated do not belong to us in a direct way. We must therefore derive what is more specific to us. At the same time, we cannot expect that Scalabrini was many different people. It is the same spirituality that animates him as bishop, founder, passionate man of social issues, involved in the historical events of his time. It is therefore the substance of his spirituality that we want to understand, before grasping the reverberations that most belong to us and that must remain alive in our spirituality, because they are the discriminating factor between being Scalabrinian missionaries and simply being missionaries with migrants.

A. CONFORMING TO CHRIST: CHRISTOCENTRIC SPIRITUALITY

Scalabrini pursued his desire for holiness in the ordinariness of life, in the fulfillment of his office as a bishop. "In all his actions a bishop must be moved by the Holy Spirit... A bishop must do violence to himself in order to become holy. A bishop must be a virgin, a martyr and a confessor."¹²

And this holiness consists in being conformed to Christ. The centrality that Christ occupied in Scalabrini's life and teaching is well known. His pastoral letter for Lent 1878, "Jesus Christ, the Invisible Head of the Church," passionately expresses his love for Christ. And he recommends union with Christ to the faithful: "It is necessary for Jesus Christ to live in us; it is necessary for G.C. to work in us continually."¹³

Jesus comes to earth to make us share his life, to make us one single thing with him, so to speak... The union of Jesus with the Christian soul is the very foundation of the whole supernatural order. By this union, human beings raise themselves up to share in the divine nature; and by this union, they in turn raise up all creation.¹⁴

"We must not simply live in Jesus Christ. Rather he himself must be our life and must live in us. He must live in us with his spirit, with his grace, with the impression of his mysteries."¹⁵ "Love Jesus. Keep united with Jesus because a Christian's whole perfection lies precisely in his or her union with Jesus Christ... Union with Jesus Christ is something vital for us. Without it, we are dead and dead is everything that is ours. We become corpses."¹⁶

From the insistence on the centrality of Christ and the duty to conform ourselves to him, we can take up Francesconi's insight and grasp the implications of the mystery of the incarnation for the path of holiness, the process of divinization. Through the incarnation, humanity has been made divine by Christ. Through faith, in Christ we

¹² "Propositi", 24.8. 1894 (AGS 3027/1). These are propositions that Scalabrini wrote at the end of the monthly retreat or annual Spiritual Exercises.

¹³ Past. Lett. (...) for the Holy Lent of 1883.

¹⁴ Christmas Homily, 1894.

¹⁵ Past. Lett. (...) for the Holy Lent of 1878.

¹⁶ Ibidem.

see God, who comes to humanity so that humanity can go to God (Jacob's ladder in his episcopal coat of arms). Christ continues his incarnation through us, who become instruments of his love. "A coin must have the image of the sovereign... what Christians do must bear the image of Christ."¹⁷ History is aimed at fulfilling Jesus' words, "That all may be one." Migrations also contribute to this goal, the unity of humanity in Christ. "We now see society agonizing to produce a new order of things, if I may put it this way. This poor society does not realize that it is somehow working to perfect itself for the kingdom of the God-Man."¹⁸

B. LOVING THE CHURCH: ECCLESIAL SPIRITUALITY

Scalabrini was a man of the Church and for the Church. The Church is first and foremost considered by him as "the living incarnation of Christ on earth, the continuation of his mortal life, Jesus Christ poured out and bestowed in all his fullness."¹⁹ The Church is a Pentecost prolonged through the centuries: "Does the Church teach? It is Jesus who teaches. Does the Church baptize? It is Jesus who baptizes..."²⁰

Scalabrini perceives the Church as mother. "Let us look at our Mother's countenance and be ashamed we have done so little for her till now."²¹ For the Church he expresses all his devotion: "Let my right hand be withered, let my tongue stick to my jaws, if I do not have memory of you, if I do not have you at the top of my every thought, if you are not until the last breath of my life the object of my cares, of my labors."²²

Although he had inherited the ecclesiology of Vatican I, Scalabrini had matured a spiritual consideration of the Church and an idea of the Church increasingly characterized by mission.²³ In his pastoral

¹⁷ Past. Lett. (...) for the Holy Lent of 1878.

¹⁸ Past. Lett. (...) for the Holy Lent of 1877.

¹⁹ Easter Homily, 1880.

²⁰ Pentecost Homily, 1889.

²¹ Past. Lett. (...) 3 Novembre 1881.

²² Homily for Epiphany, 1895.

²³ Xeres Saverio, "Lo sviluppo del pensiero ecclesologico di Scalabrini dalle conferenze sul Vaticano I (1872) al memoriale *Pro emigratis Catholicis* (1905)", in Pa-

letter of 1888, while preserving the traditional image of the Church that teaches and governs, he also expressed the image of the Church that opens itself to the world, even to the point of elaborating in germ the ecumenical theme.

It is certain that God's ways are not our ways, O Beloved Ones, and that even among the dissident Churches, the Catholic Church has children, if not in fact, at least in desire; generous souls, who would be worthy to have been born in the bosom of unity, and who perhaps already belong to it through invisible and occult ties which God alone knows.²⁴

Precisely in the consideration of mission, the image of the Church becomes more concrete. The more the passion for migrants matures in Scalabrini, the more he develops the image of the Church close to the people. "The Church of Jesus Christ... has not forgotten and will never neglect the mission God entrusted to her, namely, to preach the Gospel to the children of poverty and labor."²⁵ Triumphantist characters are lost and the Church stands alongside people, especially those who suffer. "Where people are working and suffering, there is the Church because the Church is the mother, friend, and defender of the people."²⁶

Concretely for Scalabrini this translated into the constant search for closeness with the people: the "most beautiful consolation that a bishop can experience: to know all his beloved children closely and to be known by them." And expressing fear because of his health condition due to his age, in calling for the sixth pastoral visit, which he could not make, he said,

So vivid in me is the desire to see you once again and to address to you once again my word as pastor and father, that every difficulty seems to me nothing and every effort seems light. Me happy if at the end of the visit I can in truth repeat with the Apostle: I have made myself all things to all in or-

rolin G. e A. Lovatin, *L'ecclesiologia di Scalabrini*, Urbaniana University Press 2007.

²⁴ Pastoral Letter, *The Catholic Church*, Piacenza 1888.

²⁵ Italian emigration to America, Piacenza 1887.

²⁶ *Ibidem*.

der to gain all to Christ. To gain everyone to Christ, that is the constant, the supreme aspiration of my soul.²⁷

And this closeness he set out to seek even when unsolicited.

To make every sacrifice to extend the kingdom of Jesus Christ in the hearts of people, to risk his life if necessary for the welfare of his beloved flock, to get down on the knees before the world, as it were, and beg from it, as a favor, the permission to do it some good – this is the spirit, the identity, the only ambition of the bishop.²⁸

A concrete expression of his spirituality imbued with love for the Church was also his unconditional obedience to the pope, despite some differences of view, and thus his recommendation to his missionaries of obedience and union with the pope and the bishop: “The more they see you docile to all the Bishop’s teachings, strict in the observance of all he prescribes, always ready to follow his wishes and desires, the more eager will they be to follow your wishes and desires. Your union with the Pope... will become stronger and more intimate through your union with the Bishop.”²⁹ “This is also one of the main points of the Rule.”³⁰

C. PRACTICING CHARITY: SPIRITUALITY OF SELF-GIVING

Charity was the principal of his virtues (Benedict XV). And others who knew him expressed themselves in the same way: “Bishop Scalabrini was the man of patient, benign charity, who does not seek his own things, who believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things: the man to whom the saying of Sirach is fitting: ‘This was a merciful man, and his charity was not forgotten’ (44:10)” (Card. Ferrari). “I think the best praise of him has to rest in the goodness of his heart.... His charity had no limits” (Card. Richelmy).

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Address for the episcopal jubilee of Msgr. G. Bonomelli, Cremona 1896.

²⁹ To the Missionaries for Italians in the Americas., Piacenza 1892, 7-8. The “open letter” bears the date of 15.3.1892.

³⁰ Lett. to Msgr. M. A. Corrigan, 9.9.1893.

Charity that was first and foremost love of God because God is love. But charity drove the bishop to love everyone and everything.

God is love. Now, the more people are united with God, the more they are full of love. That is why a bishop loves not only God or just his brothers and sisters but also loves everything else that is worthy of love. Everything, I say, everything without exception. He loves everything true, everything beautiful, everything great, everything good, everything holy: matter and spirit, reason and faith, nature and grace, culture and religion, Church and State, family and country. He loves the harmonies of human nature. He loves them because he could not do otherwise. He loves them because the fullness of love resides in a heart that is united through the fullness of the Holy Spirit to God.³¹

The spiritual man fully transpires from these words, for it is typical of the Spirit's action to impregnate the whole person with the very life of God. It is divinization, a life that, in contact with the Spirit and under his guidance, is assumed in love and lived in the service of love.

Scalabrini substantiated his love of God into love of neighbor through countless examples. Aside from charity in great events, famines, earthquakes, plagues, Scalabrini loved the everyday poor. "The poor is the apple of God's eye, and what we do to the poor we do to God himself."³² He was able to do much because he had a great, but not naive, trust in Providence. "He was always animated by the firmest hope in Divine Providence: however, he never neglected all the means that prudence and wisdom suggested."³³

Spending his life in charity was not only concrete translation of love for the needy, but it was pastoral wisdom. In fact, he recommended to priests the words of Pius IX: "The world no longer believes in preaching, in the priesthood, but it still believes in charity: preach the truth with charity: go forth to conquer the world with the love for the poor."³⁴ "God is charity, and when it has been said of a

³¹ Address for the episcopal jubilee of Msgr. G. Bonomelli, Cremona 1896.

³² Speech to a charitable association, s.d.

³³ Diocesan Process, Witness L. Mondini.

³⁴ Ibidem.

man that he was charitable, everything has been said. It is the most splendid praise." And of charity he eulogized:

Charity is the great law of Christianity. Charity must radiate from our whole person and be the arbiter and mistress of our heart. This charity calls for sacrifice from us, charity we cannot refuse our brothers and sisters lest we be guilty of unpardonable hardheartedness, lest, by our deeds, we give the lie to our title of Christian which we have every right to be proud of.³⁵

Above all, Scalabrini gave himself, making himself all things to all people. He saw in the attitude of self-giving a characteristic of the priest, reiterated in his 1892 letter on the Catholic priest, in which he applied to the priest the same attitude of self-giving for the salvation of the world that he had applied to the bishop. And to priests he recommended, "Make allowances for the weaknesses of everyone, love everyone, do good to everyone without exception."³⁶

D. SEEKING UNION: SPIRITUALITY OF COMMUNION

Consistent with a life aimed at conforming to Christ, who "is the bond of union, the kiss of peace between heaven and earth, between God and man,"³⁷ Scalabrini always worked for unity and for the communion of all in God. He found himself involved in many conflicting situations, in his own diocese (the controversy between Thomists and Rosminians, the controversy over the Rocca case, the controversy with *L'Osservatore Cattolico* and especially the Miraglia schism) and in the national context, especially the conflict between transigents and intransigents. But in all situations, he worked for conciliation. Never, however, was conciliation at the expense of truth, because, as Bonomelli said of him, "he loved nothing but the truth, without fear for anyone."³⁸ This was also confirmed by Card. Capecepatro: "He loved very much to tell everyone with apostolic candor the truth

³⁵ Words spoken on the occasion of the disaster on the island of Ischia, 4.8.1883.

³⁶ Pastoral Letter, *The Catholic Priest*, 1892.

³⁷ Pastoral letter for Lent of 1878.

³⁸ Bonomelli, Geremia, "L'Emigrato Italiano in America", June 1906.

even when it was hard, and he did it with so much charity and with so much politeness that most did not mind."³⁹

Underlying the search for unity was a theological reason, the conviction that "Jesus is creation's point of convergence, the precious link that unites the work of the Almighty to the divine Creator"⁴⁰. Therefore,

God wants reason to be reconciled with faith, nature with grace, earth with heaven, the works of creatures with the rights of the Creator. God wants labor and capital, freedom and authority, equality and order, fraternity and paternity, conservatism and progress to recognize each other and help each other in harmonious counterpoint.⁴¹

Scalabrini lived the conciliation he preached and pursued. Already he had presented the figure of the bishop as an instrument of reconciliation with God: "Now, the bishop is the crossing, the bridge which the God-made-man builds over this abyss to unite creature and creator, heaven and earth, God and man."⁴² And of him the saintly Fr. Orione said, "He was a person who left no occasion to make himself a bridge, for the holy purpose of conciliating and uniting as much as possible the children to the common Father of the faithful."⁴³

The most difficult reconciliation of his time, that between Church and State, Scalabrini sees it most effectively in the collaboration between the two institutions necessary for the good of migrants. "In everything that concerns emigration, religious, civil and national interests, public and private, cannot be separated without harm."⁴⁴

Of emigration itself, often an occasion of conflict and division, Scalabrini had a forward-looking vision, seeing it as a contributing factor to the union of everything in God.

While races mingle, spread, and fuse; above the roar of our machines, above all this feverish activity, over and beyond

³⁹ On the 25th anniversary of the institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles, Rome 1912, XIV).

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

⁴² Address for the episcopal jubilee of Msgr. G. Bonomelli, Cremona 1896.

⁴³ Diocesan process, 1941.

⁴⁴ Scalabrini, Giovanni Battista, *L'Italia all'estero*, 1898.

all these gigantic achievements and not without them, a much vaster, nobler, and more sublime work is developing: the union in God through Jesus Christ of all people of good will.⁴⁵

Consistently, Scalabrini recommends union to his missionaries. Union first of all in Christ: "Therefore, beloved brothers and sons, first and foremost you must be united with Jesus Christ. You will realize this union by nourishing your faith with the steady exercise of piety and by persevering in the state of grace."⁴⁶ And then union among brethren because without this union little can be done.

No group of people, however great their abilities as individuals, will ever be able to achieve great things if they do not submit to the great law of unity. Even less will Missionaries be able to achieve great things... For this reason, dearly beloved, I beseech you and implore you, out of love for Jesus Christ and for the good of our brethren, not to scatter your forces by each one using them according to his individual whim, without any other guide except his own will. Instead, you must be united and be as one. "That they may be one." You must be united in thought, affections, and desires, just as you are united for the same end⁴⁷

This spirit of unity should lead to being at peace with other missionaries as well, at peace with everyone.

Let there be peace not only among yourselves, dearly beloved, but also with your brother priests in the ministry. Because of your mission you will often come into contact with priests and missionaries of different nationalities. You must benefit from their experiences. Have the greatest regard for them. Love them cordially and always respect them. Let there be peace inside as well as outside the home. Let there be peace with everyone.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Speech at the Catholic Club di New York, 15.10.1901.

⁴⁶ To the Missionaries for Italians in the Americas, Piacenza 1892.

⁴⁷ Ibidem.

⁴⁸ Ibidem.

E. BEING MISSIONARIES: MISSIONARY SPIRITUALITY

We know how much Scalabrini longed to go to mission, how he complained because that opportunity was not given to him. We have already mentioned Scalabrini's emphasis on the missionary characteristic of the Church, founded "so that, having ascended to Heaven, He might continue to fulfill His mission on this earth."⁴⁹

Consistently, Scalabrini interpreted his actions as a bishop in a missionary sense, where mission means an inclusive approach in his ministry. Already in his first pastoral letter, announcing what would be his apostolate, he said, "I will not recuse myself from labors, V. F. and F. D., to make myself father to the unfortunate, tutor to the ignorant, rector to the priests, pastor to all, so that, having thus made everything to everyone I may gain everyone to Christ."⁵⁰

That is why he asked the priests to go out to the people:

In our day it is practically impossible to lead the working class back to the Church if we do not keep in constant touch with it outside of the church! We must come out of the church, my Venerable Brothers, if we wish to carry on a fruitful apostolate within the church. We have no choice but to be men of our times.⁵¹

And he asked for a holistic commitment, encompassing body and spirit. In fact, it turns out that "religious and civil education is impotent, for he who has despair in his heart misunderstands the word of faith, and the bread of the soul must be shared together with that of the body."⁵²

However, he also knew how to live mission in its dimension of proclamation outside the boundaries of his own diocese. It was the very mission of the Church that led him to do so, because "The Church has not forgotten and will never neglect the mission God entrusted to her, namely, to preach the Gospel to the children of poverty

⁴⁹ Pastoral Letter, *La Chiesa Cattolica*, Piacenza 1888.

⁵⁰ First Pastoral Letter, Como 1876.

⁵¹ Centenary of St. Louis – Encyclical of the Holy Father - Obol of filial love, Piacenza 1891.

⁵² Scalabrini, Giovanni Battista, *Socialism and the action of the clergy*, Piacenza 1899.

and labor."⁵³ The children of misery and labor of his time, whom few were concerned of, were the migrants. For them Scalabrini founded two missionary institutes and a lay association and went himself as a missionary to the United States and Brazil. Towards the migrants he felt emotion, capacity for action, passion for the transmission of the faith and prophetic vision in view of the Kingdom.

To his missionaries he explains what a privilege the vocation they received is.

“It is to you in particular that he repeats even today those words of comfort: *I have chosen you and have appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.* Notice that he does not say: *You have been called*, but *I myself have called you*; I, the Son of the living God; I, the immortal King of the ages; I, who have founded the Church and guide it to victory in the midst of the battles and storms of the world. *I have chosen you and have appointed you.* What predilection!”⁵⁴

And he reminds them that mission with migrants is true mission, indeed, a most beautiful form of apostolate. “And today, beloved sons, you can be proud of belonging to this number as you join this humblest of Congregations. A few days ago, the great Archbishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, saluted our Congregation as the most beautiful, useful, and fruitful form of Catholic apostolate of our day.”⁵⁵

THE SOURCES OF HIS SPIRITUALITY

The Spirit was the driving force in Scalabrini’s life, inspiring him to be guided to conform himself to Christ, to commit himself completely to the Church, the continuation of Christ, to love God and neighbor with an inexhaustible love, to make himself an instrument of conciliation and unity, and to be a missionary, particularly in his mission with migrants. This multifaceted spirituality of Scalabrini had sources that Scalabrini drew on and that nurtured and sustained it. These are the best-known aspects of Scalabrini’s spiritual universe

⁵³ Scalabrini, Giovanni Battista, *Italian emigration to America*, Piacenza 1887.

⁵⁴ *To the Missionaries for Italians in the Americas.*, Piacenza 1892, 3-4.

⁵⁵ *Address to departing missionaries*, 12.7.1888.

because of the traditional understanding of spiritual with the expressions of spirituality consisting in prayer, ascetics, and devotions. The sources are not the full expression of Scalabrini's spirituality. On the other hand, there is no spirituality that can sustain itself without a reference, without nourishment.

A. CHRIST CRUCIFIED

For Scalabrini, the first reference was the cross. In his conformation to Christ, Scalabrini looked first of all to the crucified Christ, of whom he was a devotee, a devotion inherited from his mother and very popular in Como. The cross is the way through which Christ saved us. So the cross is not to be avoided but embraced in order to participate in the salvation Christ has given us. That is why he often repeats the expression taken from the *Stabat Mater*: "Fac me cruce inebriari."

If conformation to the Crucified is part of his purposes, he also recommends it to his missionaries, to whom he handed the cross before leaving.

Fear not! The Cross accompanies you! ... The Cross is folly to the world. But for you it becomes wisdom and life. Just one hour spent meditating on the Cross will do you more good than long years wasted over the most erudite books... Yes, the Cross will be a balm for every wound, a sedative for every pain, support for every weakness, comfort in every trouble, illumination for every doubt, light in every darkness. In adversity, in despair, in disillusionment, clasp to your heart the Cross I have given you; and, with a cry of utter abandon, lift up your eyes to heaven, saying again and again: "Let me be intoxicated by your Cross."⁵⁶

B. CHRIST IN THE EUCHARIST

For Scalabrini, "The Eucharist is the masterpiece of God's mind and heart, the center of our religion, the point of contact where the infinite and the finite, nature and grace, come together in the ineffable

⁵⁶ Words spoken to Missionaries departing from S. Calocero in Milan on June 10, 1884.

embrace of truth and love itself.”⁵⁷ We know the many expressions of devotion to the Eucharist cultivated by Scalabrini. But it is not just a matter of personal devotion. Rather, it is a matter of pastoral program, which prompted Scalabrini to dedicate the Third Diocesan Synod to it, to consider the Eucharist the way to regenerate society, to encourage Eucharistic devotion throughout the diocese, and to recommend priests to cultivate it first. “If you really yearn to call Eucharistic devotion back to life in your parishes, show by your deeds that you are the first to have it deeply rooted in your hearts.”⁵⁸ Eucharistic adoration, daily visitation to the Blessed Sacrament are practices that every priest must cultivate. They were practices faithfully lived at one time in the Congregation as well.

C. THE DEVOTION TO MARY

He was most devoted to Mary, invoked under the title of the Immaculate, to whom he wished to consecrate the twentieth century, but also under the title of the Assumption. The homilies delivered on the feast of the Assumption indicate how Scalabrini wanted, through devotion to Mary, to orient the people to faith in Jesus. He turned to Mary with the prayer of the Holy Rosary, to which he remained faithful and which he recommended in the three Synods. “The Rosary, especially with the contemplation of the mysteries, is a Christocentric prayer, in which Mary always presents herself to us at Jesus’ side (...). It is already not just any prayer, but it is the whole of the Christian religion, it is the most attractive picture of what Jesus Christ has done for our souls.”

D. MEDITATION

All spirituality, as a yearning for the transcendent, involves a life of prayer expressed in various forms. Scalabrini had a spirituality that went beyond devotions and was rooted in prayer to which he dedicated his last pastoral letter illustrating the obligation, excellence and efficacy of prayer. In him, everyday life took the form of prayer: “sacrifice is prayer, worship is prayer, praise is prayer, gratitude is

⁵⁷ Pastoral letter, *Devotion to the Blessed Sacrament*, Piacenza 1902.

⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.

prayer.”⁵⁹ Prayer seen as a need of the human soul “an ingenuous, instinctive, irresistible need.”⁶⁰ Indeed, an expression of creation itself toward God. And he had unwavering confidence in the efficacy of prayer, which can bend even God’s will.

Of the various forms of prayer, he gave special importance to meditation, to which he always obligated himself in his resolutions and which he constantly recommended to his priests and missionaries. He wanted meditation to be done in common, if possible, a recommendation we also find in one of his last letters to the provincial superior in the United States, almost a practical retrieval of the recommendations to the missionaries: “Every day meditation and spiritual reading will be done by all, in common, and the Holy Rosary will be recited.”⁶¹ And the early missionaries had absorbed this, since Fr. Pierini recalls what Fr. Consoni said, “Meditation is the mighty lever to the impetus toward God. Woe to leave it! A bird without wings does not fly, a fish out of water dies, a Scalabrinian Missionary without meditation is a corpse.”⁶²

CHARISMATIC LEGACY AND SPIRITUAL INHERITANCE

We have traced the broad outlines of St. John Baptist Scalabrini’s spirituality. Elevated to the veneration of the whole Church, it is a spirituality that every Christian can be inspired by as an example of how to be a disciple of Jesus. For us, Scalabrini is more than just a model of Christian life. He is a founder and inspirer in the mission with migrants. We are the heirs of the gift he received from the Spirit, in which his spirituality cannot be absent, and we cannot look for a spirituality of Scalabrini other than the one that led him to holiness. Scalabrini’s spirituality, made our own and enriched by the Spirit in the journey of history, must characterize the way we live the charism we have received, and the charism must characterize spirituality in a constant interrelationship.

⁵⁹ Pastoral Letter, Prayer, 1905.

⁶⁰ Ibidem.

⁶¹ Letter to Fr. Novati, 2.4.1905.

⁶² Porrini, Carlo, *Biografia di P. Faustino Consoni, missionario di San Carlo*, Archivio Storico Scalabriniano, 125.

The premise is to give the Spirit the proper space, because spirituality is life in the Spirit. Scalabrini was convinced of this and said,

“The Holy Spirit was the secret driving force of the Holy humanity of Jesus Christ: *agebatur a Spiritu*. The Holy Spirit infused G. C.’s soul with those transports of purest, ineffable, divine joy of which the Gospel speaks. – *Sine tuo numine nihil est...* It is necessary for the Holy Spirit to dwell in me, to govern me, to lead me – it must be the secret driving force of all my actions.”⁶³

Animated by the Spirit, Scalabrini always cultivated an ardent desire for holiness. “If I could sanctify myself! make myself holy! *hoc est omnis homo*.”⁶⁴ “May I sanctify myself and sanctify all the souls entrusted to me.”⁶⁵ If we want to be heirs of Scalabrini’s spirituality we must first of all have the same desire for holiness, that is, the same willingness to be guided by the Spirit.

And we must remember that Scalabrini’s spirituality was an active spirituality, since he knew how to reconcile well ministry with the interior life:

Every day I realize ever more vividly that, to carry the episcopal burden of the exterior life without falling, the interior life is necessary because in it alone does one find consolation, strength, inner joy, light, sustaining peace, the hidden manna.⁶⁶

We too must know how to make the same harmonization and live life in the Spirit through our active ministry with migrants but never neglecting the interior life, beginning with daily meditation, done in common if possible, faithful to one of Scalabrini’s most constant recommendations.

⁶³ Resolutions, 19.8.1894.

⁶⁴ Lett. to G. Bonomelli, 24.1.1897.

⁶⁵ Lett. to the Duchess C. Fogliani Pallavicino, 29.1.1903.

⁶⁶ Letter to Mons. N. Bruni, 1901.

A. TO CONFORM OURSELVES TO CHRIST

BY BEING MIGRANTS WITH MIGRANTS – ITINERANCY

The Spirit guides us to conform ourselves to Christ, “Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.” (Phil. 2:6-7). Christ became incarnate to share our humanity and thus to bring us to share in his divinity. In the mystery of the incarnation, carried all the way to the cross, Christ became a migrant with migrants, who are also often crucified on migration routes. In making ourselves migrants is our incarnation, the realization of our condition as pilgrims, destined with the migrants to return to the Father. Christ’s itinerancy becomes the model of our itinerancy. Therefore, we seek union with him, to the point of conforming ourselves to him as Scalabrini did and as Scalabrini recommended to us. It must be the staple of our lives, the reason for choosing to follow him, a union to be shared with those whose wounded humanity demands redemption. Love for Christ in migrants is how we realize our impulse to love and be loved.

B. SHARING THE FATHER’S PROJECT

BY BUILDING THE CHURCH – WELCOME

The Spirit leads us to serve the Father’s plan, which Scalabrini foresaw as a grand design where all will be brought together by God’s love. The Church is at the service of this plan, and Scalabrini loved the Church because it was the gift Jesus had given us to participate in the Father’s plan. With migrants, we form a Church where the Spirit reigns, a Church to which all are called, a Church summoned by the Word and gathered around the Eucharist, a Church that knows how to welcome and where welcome is learned. In communion with its pastors in the obedient search for God’s will, we are a sign and a reminder that ecclesial communion demands the participation of migrants, a visible sign of its catholicity. At the service of the Church, an instrument of God’s love even for those who do not believe, we are witnesses of welcome, beginning with our communities, which

certify what we believe and proclaim. Mary, Mother of the Church, teaches us to welcome and cherish.

C. TOWARD A NEW CREATION – UNION IN DIVERSITY

The Spirit, who expresses the face of God in the richness of the differences encountered in humanity, makes all things new and makes us instruments of union in diversity. We thank the Spirit for the diversity within our family, making listening and recognition the basis of our encounter, willing to learn the dynamics of intercultural dialogue. We are committed to building a society capable of conviviality with migrants, against trends that seek to homogenize and flatten, and against fears that repel and generate conflict. Committed to the search for truth, we denounce the injustices that dehumanize migrants, for a society reconciled in respect for all.

D. LOVE ALL – CHARITY IN POVERTY

The Spirit, who is love, guides us to share ourselves and what we have with migrants. Scalabrini made himself all things to all people. Convinced that “the poor is the apple of God’s eye,” we practice the preferential choice for migrants who suffer the experience of migration the most. By our poverty, we share the poverty of Christ who in the incarnation became poor with us. We are especially close to migrants who have been deprived of rights and hope. We place our trust not on material securities but on God’s providential love.

E. SERVING THE WORD – SENT TO GATHER ALL NATIONS

The Father’s mission, which Christ brought to us through the incarnation and which the Spirit is continuing, asks us to be hearers of the Word, that Word which Scalabrini proclaimed and taught. Willing to go where the Church calls us, we consider being sent a “predilection” and are attentive to opportunities for the growth of the Kingdom without settling for acquired securities. We prepare for mission with a heart docile to the Spirit and with the skills that mission demands. We stand alongside migrants, participants in God’s plan that is gathering all peoples. We are committed to growing with them in this awareness, rejoicing in the “predilection” of which the Spirit has made us the object.

CONCLUSION

Having tried to extract the essential traits of Scalabrini's spirituality, those traits that constitute his legacy, and having indicated how those traits, by which all Christians can be inspired, qualify our spirituality, in a constant interrelation with the charism that the Founder and Inspirer left us, we must reflect on how we make that legacy our own. As far as Scalabrinian missionaries are concerned, there is a suspicion, as mentioned at the beginning, that we have put all our focus on mission. For many years, the spirituality behind mission was the traditional one, typical of each group of consecrated men, crystallized in the 1948 Constitutions. The Basic Law in our Rules of Life reconnected us with the Founder, but perhaps was not explicitly translated into a source of spirituality. The 1996 symposium was an important moment of growth, resulting in the *Traditio*, but it did not have the impact that was hoped for. The question then remains: how do we absorb Scalabrini's spiritual legacy, without which the charismatic legacy remains stunted?

In answering this question, I believe it is inevitable to speak of a pedagogy, and within it an ascetics, that is Scalabrinian. Ascetics has been out of fashion for a long time, but it cannot be completely ignored. Probably the Rules of Life of each institute have references to it. Certainly, Scalabrini practiced ascetics in a serious way, even resorting to choices that are difficult to propose today. But I believe that each of the dimensions of the Scalabrinian spirituality needs pedagogical help, because they are not innate, they must be acquired. And every pedagogy is made up of choices, which involve sacrifice.

The other aspect, where even more imagination is required, is the question of whether we should have common references, common expressions of Scalabrinian spirituality. Can we think of something that is typical to us and that we consider our own? Can there be devotions or forms of prayer that we draw upon as sources of spirituality and perhaps share among ourselves and with others?

The third aspect we need to address concerns the spread of this spirituality in the Church and in the world. Every spirituality, in fact, is a proposition for believers and, in some aspect, for non-believers as well. We are aware of how big the world of migration is and how

small is our small congregation, and, one could say, even our small family. It is unrealistic to think that it will be much bigger anytime soon. However, it is our responsibility to share Scalabrini's spiritual legacy and even more to share the Scalabrinian spirituality, that is, the spirituality inherited from Scalabrini but which in the mission with migrants throughout history has become Scalabrinian spirituality.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY IN THE ST. FRANCES CABRINI PROVINCE

EDWIN CORROS, CS

THE STARTING POINT

The presentation on the Scalabrinian Spirituality in the St Frances Cabrini Province made at the 1996 symposium started with the observation that much of the style in which the missionaries in Australia were living was dependent on how the mission in the province originated. The first four missionaries came from the US and began their ministry in two different contexts, thousands of miles apart. Even after the arrival of younger missionaries, coming from different background, mission remained the main focus, and total dedication of work with migrants demanded the capability for everyone to stand on its own. It was the typical individualism, often attributed to the Scalabrinian missionaries. Individualism has its negative aspects, among them rivalry, conflicts, and lack of coordination and absence of a strong community life. It also has positive ones, such as an active, creative spirit and the seeking of missionary involvement in the life of the migrants.

The same presentation developed some characteristics that the Scalabrinian spirituality should have: among them, a strong accent on a spirituality contextualized in the various environments where the missionaries have to live; the incarnational dimension of spirituality; a spirituality capable of inculturation, with regard not only to the spiritual world that every migrant carries with himself, but also to the spiritual traditions of indigenous people both in Australia and Asia; a spirituality which implied a communitarian dimension.

Those indications were not the result of a shared experience, a collective feeling. The sense was that the missionaries in Australia and Asia lived a committed dedication to the mission with migrants, supported by a personal spiritual life, but without clear characteristics which could be considered typical of a Scalabrinian. At the same time, from how the province developed before and after 1996, some

considerations can be made which might reveal some common spiritual characteristics.

1. A MISSIONARY SPIRIT

The development of mission in Australia (from the initial, exclusive attention to Italian migrants to chaplaincies for Spanish and Portuguese speaking migrants, to specific consideration for elderly migrants and foreign students, to the intercultural ministry in parishes) indicates the willingness and capability to go beyond, to feel challenged by new developments in the reality of migration and the availability to move forward. Such an attitude is the result of a missionary spirit which did not remain within the parameters of the initial mandate, but which is alive and constantly inspiring, a spirit always on the lookout for mission.

Because of that spirit, in the early 1980s the missionaries decided to move to Asia. Migration from Asia, particularly from the Philippines, was increasing. The Scalabrinians had to respond to that development both with a presence in the Asian countries as well as the invitation to young men from Asia to join in the mission with migrants by becoming Scalabrinians.

The same missionary spirit eventually led them to be in other Asian countries such as Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, and Vietnam. This pastoral development could not have been possible without a spirituality which consists in docility to the Spirit, who leads history, in this case the history of our province, in new directions.

2. A SPIRIT OF DARING AND ADAPTATION

Moving into new realities would require careful planning. While that was present in the progressive development of mission, there also was a sense of daring, of starting without clear marks to follow, ready to improvise, sometimes to the point of being considered imprudent. Behind that daring and imprudence, which could be detected also in other Scalabrinian missionary ventures, there is also some trust in the Spirit. If it is willed by God, it will prosper. Many times, migrants move into their new place of work and life with limited

planning and lots of daring. Becoming migrants with migrants also implies the acceptance of insecurity. For migrants, and even more for missionaries, insecurity must be accompanied by faith.

Together with daring comes adaptation. The involvement within the reality of new countries and new contexts required the capability to embrace that new reality and become part of it. This is a process which is common to all missionaries, but which was lived by the Scalabrinians when they moved from country to country in Asia. Adaptation is not limited to external realities, such as language, climate, food and so on. It is also adaptation to the way in which society interrelates, in which local administrations operate and most of all it is adaptation to the programs and plans of the local Church. There are still possibilities of growth in this respect, particularly in the development of pastoral involvement, but daring and adaptation point to a spirit of trust and service which connect to the recommendations of the Founder.

3. A SPIRIT OF WELCOMING AND HOSPITALITY

Missionary involvement in the various contexts required strategic choices. Ultimately, what guided the group was the focus on the service to migrants, a multifaceted service, made of direct assistance, hospitality, and protection. They are types of intervention typical in most Scalabrinian missions, but particularly necessary in the Asian context, where the level of protection for migrants is often below standards, considering that most migration is temporary. Whether in the beginning of the migration process, or during the staying abroad or after return, migrants often try to find shelter and assistance to prepare themselves properly or to seek redress against abuse. To give them a home away from home or to give them voice when entangled in situations too difficult to handle has been a style of intervention which originates from a spirituality learned during the formation time. It is a spirituality which comes from faith in Jesus, who came among his own but was not welcome. The verse in the gospel of Matthew, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me" was a point of reference for the students in the formation stage and a program of action in the mission.

4. A SPIRIT OF ACCEPTANCE AND DIALOGUE

The missionary opening in the province saw the involvement of religious with a great variety of ethnic backgrounds, but where origin was almost irrelevant in comparison with the common belonging to the same congregation, with the inspiration of the same Founder and ties established on the profession of the same vows. This made it possible to overcome frictions, incomprehension, misunderstandings, which are almost unavoidable. The variety of cultural origins and backgrounds did not stop the possibility to be communities, with limitations, but still communities capable of sharing their work, their belongings, their projects. Mutual acceptance and dialogue were lived in the house before becoming announcement and evangelization. Such attitudes, even if imperfect, trace back to the teachings of the Founder and his providential vision of migration at the service of God's plan over humanity, reunited as one family in Christ. There is much room for growth in this dimension of the Scalabrinian spirituality, but the initial components are there.

FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Despite those elements which can be construed as reverberations of a Scalabrinian spirituality in the province, the group has difficulties identifying with a specific spirituality. After the 1996 symposium on the Scalabrinian Spirituality, nothing tangible was done in terms of follow-up. It was only about two years ago that the Province began picking up the issue by instructing the confreres to reflect on the spirituality of the Founder as a topic that could generate a wealth of reflection in their community and area meetings. This was then extended to the bigger meetings of the confreres, such as the gatherings of the young missionaries, the 2023 provincial assembly and the Regional Assembly of Scalabrinians in Asia (RASA). In those meetings the theme: "Incarnating the spirituality of Scalabrini in the community or mission" was discussed. Good reflections and considerations emerged, and the material sent by the General Administration contributed to the enrichment. At the same time, there is also the conviction that it might not be possible to speak of a Scalabrinian spiri-

tuality, since the Founder did not propose one and in the formation process there was no clear presentation of such spirituality.

In the 2023 provincial assembly various reports connected activities and programs done in the various missions back to the spirituality of the Founder. At the same time, celebration of the Eucharist, devotion to the Eucharist, recitation of the rosary, devotion to the Blessed Mother and to Jesus on the cross belong to the whole Church and are not distinctively Scalabrinian. To most confreres, the Scalabrinian spirituality cannot be separated from the confreres' work or mission among the migrants, seafarers, and the people on the move. Scalabrinians are known for their missionary work, which has become significant also for the local Church to the point that some initiatives, such as the interest in seafarers and fishermen or the mission of hospitality to migrants have been replicated by the Church, but they are not known for a specific spirituality.

Looking into the future, it is significant to note that the province is comprised of relatively young religious, mostly of Asian origin. Also, the formation process is mostly directed by Scalabrinians of Asian origin. There is potential for an enrichment in the understanding of the Scalabrinian spirituality and in the contributing of original aspects to it, provided that appropriate study and direction is given. It will be necessary to translate important texts of the Founder and the history of the congregation in the languages spoken among confreres in Asia. Something is already available, such as the short biography of the Founder and the prayer to the Founder, but much more should be planned. At the same time, young confreres are contributing with local initiatives, such as songs of Scalabrinian significance in local languages.

CONCLUSION

Possibilities for spiritual growth among confreres in the province and for the growth of a Scalabrinian spirituality are wide open, also considering the fact that the province extends to Asia, with its various and complex wealth in religious, cultural, linguistic backgrounds and mentalities. On the one hand, we have to be open to different inputs and perspectives. On the other hand, there is need of creative

commitment on the part of everyone, without forgetting that any credible spirituality is not the one that is preached, but the one that is lived and recognized, beginning within our own communities.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

IN THE OUR LADY MOTHER OF THE MIGRANTS REGION

ALFREDO J. GONÇALVES, CS

Let us begin with Msgr. Redovino Rizzardo's contribution to the First Congress on Scalabrinian Spirituality. The aim was to describe the "spirituality of the Scalabrinians in South America", from the beginnings of the Congregation to the eve of the beatification. Rizzardo said: "The Scalabrinian spirituality presents itself as one of the most beautiful and attractive in the Church". He was certainly referring to the need to provide social and spiritual assistance to so many European emigrants in the lands of South America. In the current Symposium, however, we are taking into account the period from the Founder's beatification (1997) to his canonization (2022). The guiding thread of the following paragraphs can be formulated in the form of a question: how has the Scalabrinian spirituality evolved over the last quarter of a century in South American countries?

1. MARY AND SCALABRINIAN PIETY

Popular devotion to the Virgin Mary has deep roots in the countries of South America. It is not for nothing that we call it the Our Lady Mother of Migrants Region (NSMM). These roots can be traced back to ancient times. "The Virgin of Guadalupe", patron saint of Mexico and Latin America, appeared to the indigenous Diego in the 16th Century, in December 1531. With the passing of the centuries and the arrival of new peoples, each country coined its own name for the devotion to the Mother of Jesus and the Church, turning to her as its patron saint.

Two aspects of this Marian piety stand out, both in relation to Scalabrini and his followers. On the one hand, the presence of Mary in the spirituality of the Bishop of Piacenza is notorious. As mother of the poor and afflicted - she will be all the more the mother of seasonal migrants; of those who leave their countries by the millions; of those orphans who, on the other side of the sea, wrote that they "lived like

animals"; then of all migrants, refugees, seafarers and expatriates; mother of those who wander the roads of the world.

On the other hand, the search for Mary's intercession, which was already marked in the history of this subcontinent, has taken on a new color among Scalabrini's devotees in the 25 years since his beatification and canonization. They saw Blessed Scalabrini, the "father of migrants", as a distinguished devotee of Mary. Scalabrini's great affection for the mother of the Savior became an additional reason to take refuge in Mary, especially for those who found themselves abroad. The Founder's devotion strengthens the piety of the faithful.

2. SCALABRINI'S EMERGENCE AS AN INTERCESSOR

In this same period, from 1996 to 2022, we see the devotion to Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini emerging with increasing ardor. The glow of his beatification shone new light on the historical figure of the Founder. Here we cannot forget the great contribution of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement (SLM). Many lay men and women came into contact with Scalabrini for the first time. This new outlook, like water that is always clearer at the source, brought a new shine to the Scalabrinian charism.

Those who took part in the beatification brought with them a new missionary vigor. The laity, together with some of the priests who accompanied them, have multiplied the groups that will form the SLM throughout the subcontinent. In the Scalabrinian missions, this contagious spirit began to demand more attention to Scalabrini's charismatic legacy. These groups, organized locally and regionally, made a point of drawing up a calendar of meetings, visits and encounters. Together with the former Provinces, a formation cycle was established, with courses, seminars, symposia ...

This resulted in the development of a renewed Scalabrinian spirituality. The SLM network was set up throughout the region, with the drawing up of a charter. The awakening of the laity to the charism challenged the Region, causing some missionaries to rediscover their legacy. "The laity have made us renew the charism," which is due to the strong impact of "first love". So much so that, as paradoxical as it may seem, the questions and challenges of the Scalabrinian charism

arise, first of all, not necessarily from the memory of the Founder, but from the migrants. Only then do they turn to Scalabrini's testimony.

Where the Scalabrinian presence was consolidated, triduum, novenas, pilgrimages, litanies, songs and poetry, specific prayers to the Founder emerged. The same goes for the celebrations around June 1st and the "Migrants' Week". Alongside these devotional formulas, posters, leaflets, triptychs and articles in local and regional periodicals were produced. Reflection on the figure and charism of Scalabrini has progressively deepened. Sensitivity and solidarity with the plight of migrants became more visible, both within the Church and in the eyes of governments and civil society. As a result, the Scalabrinian missionaries increased their presence in ecclesial organizations. Scalabrini made his way into many families, communities and churches. In some places, the enthusiasm of the SLM has ended up awakening the religious themselves to the fact that they are "Scalabrinians".

3. REGIONAL ASSEMBLY AND SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

At the last Regional Assembly of the RNSMM, the confreres were invited to contribute to the reflection in view of this Congress. I am happy to summarize here the main points that emerged from the group work. Firstly, the word welcome reflects not the definition of a concept, but the concrete practice of welcoming as a dynamic attitude in the face of growing human mobility. Openness to the variety of groups, peoples, cultures and values: meeting, listening, exchange. This is the vital core of the Pastoral Care of Migrants: communion in diversity.

How can the popular devotion of different peoples and nations be revived? Cultural, religious and artistic expressions; patron saint festivals and national celebrations – values specific to each country. To discover and value the religious memory of migrants, together with their historical and cultural background. The migrant's attitude of abandonment in the hands of divine Providence is surprising. No matter how destitute they are, we hear them repeat: "God accompanies us and guides us". The migrants' luggage does not lack hope in a promising future, as the spring that drives their movement. This

attitude of trust, despite the adversities, contains a mystique that can intoxicate the Pastoral care for migrants and its agents. The concept of divine Providence, on the other hand, harks back to the Founder.

The border as a place of theology and spirituality. Increasing tensions on the territorial-geographical border are a “sign of the times”. With restrictions on legal migration, the pressure on border complexes is growing: an ambiguous terrain of real and virtual walls, obstacles of all kinds; prejudice, discrimination, xenophobia. But the border is also a springboard for developing the creativity and potential of migrants. The crossing contains its own lessons. Migration as a tragedy with its “merchants of human flesh” and, at the same time, as a means for God’s plan, as the Founder said.

We practically live a daily encounter with the “thousand faces of the other”, especially in migratory corridors and metropolises. Once again, the Founder’s charism and mission are renewed and given new meaning. The new Scalabrinian missionaries, on the one hand, and the ardor of the SLM, on the other, continue to challenge us. It’s no exaggeration to say that Scalabrini, *avant lettre*, in some way embodied the “Church going forth”. The face of the Congregation and migration lead us to make a quality leap from multiculturalism to interculturalism. Peaceful coexistence and living together is not enough. How do we move on to the challenge of reaching a healthy confrontation, dialog, cleansing and purification of cultures that are called to live together?

The challenge of sensitizing the Church and society to the drama of migration: dioceses, parishes, bishops’ conferences, and other Churches, social movements, popular organizations, government bodies, civil society associations. Developing a common mystique that, following the migrants themselves, they are ready to march. By facing up to the challenges of the road, migrants move their own history forward. Migrants are never just passive victims of the winds of the economy and capital. Consciously or unconsciously, they become prophets, artisans and protagonists of new times. By breaking down borders, migrants break shackles and point to horizons.

4. YAHWEH - GOD OF A PEOPLE ON THE WAY

From the point of view of Scalabrinian spirituality, it is worth comparing some biblical passages in order to rediscover “Yahweh as the God of the journey”. It’s not a question of choosing episodes from Sacred Scripture that deal explicitly with migration and making a kind of patchwork quilt out of them. The aim here is to read the whole Bible from the perspective of a people on the move, with the gaze of the migrant and migrations. The task obviously presupposes looking at some of the episodes considered to be crucial in the journey of the people of the old and new covenants. These are more general texts which, so to speak, refer to moments of crossroads along the way. Texts which, incidentally, during the harsh experiences of the respective dictatorships, gained great relevance in the process of liberation in the countries of South America.

A) GOD OF THE TENT AND THE WAY (DEUT 26:5-10; EX 3:7-10)

According to scholars, we are dealing with a “historical creed” of the people of Israel in two versions: more primordial (Ex 3-7-10) and more elaborate (Deut 26:5-10). In the oldest version of the Book of Exodus, we come across five verbs that are emblematic of the concept of God. But before taking a closer look at the verbs, we must not forget that we are dealing with a founding experience of the people of Israel. Founding, we might say, from a theological and spiritual point of view. In this experience, and unlike the neighboring peoples and nations, Israel comes face to face with a hitherto unknown God. Not a God of the throne, the temple, the palace, power and wealth.

With words in the first person and placed in God’s mouth, the text says: I have seen the misery of my people (...), I have heard their cry because of their oppressors (...), I know their anguish (...), I have come down to deliver them (...), I am sending you to Pharaoh (...). The verbs *see*, *hear*, *know*, *go down* and *send* reveal a God who is attentive to the precarious conditions of the enslaved and oppressed people. Unlike the neighboring nations and/or empires – e.g. Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome – with their gods of gold and strength, thirsty for sacrifices, the new God does not display power and an army. Instead, he shows a sensitive, compassionate and merciful

heart towards those who suffer. A heart that beats to the rhythm of the poor and excluded. A paternal-maternal heart.

The first three verbs, *see*, *hear* and *know*, indicate an awareness of reality. A reality of oppression and exploitation that migrants and refugees carry imprinted on their bodies and souls. The next two verbs, *descend* and *send*, point to action. In other words, in the face of an unsustainable reality, Yahweh sets out: he goes down and sends. Of course, he does this in the person of Moses. Later, in the mystery of the Incarnation, the fullness of this concept of lowering oneself, of which St. Paul speaks in his Letter to the Philippians (Phil 2:6-11), will be realized. For the time being, by sending Moses, the God of Israel, in confrontation with the gods of the neighboring peoples, reveals himself as the God of the desert and the tent, of the exodus and the exile, of the diaspora and the journey.

B) THE MONARCHY AND THE PROPHETIC MOVEMENT

Mirroring the neighboring empires and feeling inferior to them, Israel began to cry out for a king. Perhaps afraid of the burden of their own freedom, which at the same time demands responsibility, the people preferred to kneel at the feet of a sovereign. A sovereignty that, according to the episode recounted in the Book of Judges, neither the olive tree, the fig tree nor the vine wanted for themselves. Only the thorn tree was willing to be king (Judg 9:7-15). Thus, the monarchy was established and, with it, its thorns: heavy taxes, corvée, domination of the city-state over the countryside. The exploitation of the peasants becomes necessary to build the palace, the temple and the throne. Yahweh is kidnapped, leaves the tent and becomes the God established in the temple, manipulated by kings and the powerful. He demands sacrifice upon sacrifice. The priests emerge as his servants.

From the countryside, the outskirts and the exile, however, the prophets emerge. Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Hosea, and so on. In opposition to the priests, and usually in tension and conflict with them, the prophetic movement in the Old Testament generally has three complementary aspects: a reminder, a denunciation and an announcement. The “remember”, whether explicit or implicit, always goes back to the founding experience of the exodus. Yahweh is not in the temple, in league with power, but is the God of the ark, the

tent and the way. "You have forgotten right and justice," says Micah (Mic 3:1). The God who brought the people out of Egypt is the one who protects "the orphan, the widow and the stranger". For this reason, "you shall not oppress the stranger; for you know the heart of the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt," the prophecy recalls, bringing the spiritual experience with Yahweh up to date for the times of the reign (Ex 23:9).

The complaint rises from the raw ground and, through the mouths of the oppressed, rises to heaven. It appears with vehement force in practically all the prophets. Let's mention just two, where the images are more emblematic. "Listen here, exploiters of the needy, oppressors of the poor of the country (...). You sell the poor for a pair of sandals," says Amos (8:6). "Enemies of good and lovers of evil, you fly the people and strip their bones, you devour the flesh of my people, you break their bones and tear them to pieces, like a stew in a pot," says Micah (Mic 3:1-4). Perhaps that's why, with the invasion of the Assyrians and the exile of the Hebrews, the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were reduced to a valley of bones, as Ezekiel recalls (Ez 37:1-14), already pointing, however, to the dawn of a new era, with the resurrection of those same bones.

And with that comes the announcement. Despite the evils of the monarchy and the misdeeds of kings, Yahweh remains the compassionate and merciful God. At this point, it's enough to bring up Isaiah's account of the New Jerusalem: "Behold, I will create a new heaven and a new earth (...). I will make Jerusalem a joy and its people a rejoicing (...). There will be no more weeping or crying. There will be no more children who live only a few days, no more old men who do not reach the end of their days, for he will still be young who dies a hundred years old (...). They will build houses and live in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No one will build for others to live in, no one will plant for others to eat, for the life of my people will be as long as that of the trees" (Is 65:17-25).

C) THE ITINERANT PROPHET FROM NAZARETH

Let's take just two passages from the Gospels, but they are of great significance. The first comes from Luke's account, the second from Matthew's account. The latter, scholars classify as a "summary of Je-

sus' activities", the other they attribute to a kind of "program" of the Master. Neither of them speaks directly of migrants, but their faces emerge transparently. In the city of Nazareth, Luke writes, Jesus goes to the synagogue and is given the book of the prophet Isaiah to read. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has consecrated me with the anointing to proclaim the Good News to the poor; he has sent me to proclaim freedom to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind; to set at liberty those who are oppressed and to proclaim a year of favor from the Lord" (Lk 4:18-19).

In the same way that the prophets referred to the founding experience of the exodus, Jesus refers to the book of the greatest of the prophets to announce his "program". In other words, from the beginning of his public life, Jesus, by quoting Isaiah, puts himself in the perspective of the God revealed by that extraordinary experience: Yahweh. Furthermore, the frequent polemics with the temple officials (Sadducees, doctors of the law, Levites, etc.), show that "the itinerant prophet from Nazareth" (as Meier said) will meet the Father not so much in the temple, but in the sick, the poor, the defenseless, women, children, outcasts, sinners wandering the roads of Galilee, Samaria and Judea. At the crossings of these roads, the Master "opens wells", that is, he provokes encounters that will transform the lives of so many suffering people forever.

The characters in the parable of the Good Samaritan are emblematic in this respect: while the two temple officials, the priest and the Levite, pass by indifferent to the "fallen" on the side of the road and of life, the stranger from Samaria is moved with compassion (Lk 10:25-37). In a word, Jesus' caravan never runs over anyone who calls for help, despite the disciples' vain attempts to silence these annoying voices. The Nazarene always makes sure to stop the caravan in front of those most in need, such as the blind from birth, the lepers, the woman who had lost a child, the one suffering from a hemorrhage of blood, the one caught in adultery!... Among the latest, in this day and age, it's not hard to see the faces of migrants and refugees.

In the second passage, Matthew writes: "Jesus went about all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Good News of the Kingdom, and healing every kind of sickness and disease. When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them

because they were weary and downcast, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 35-36). From the outset, the verb "to go" is extremely important here, showing the Master to be a prophet of the road. As he does so, Jesus encounters the crowds "weary and downcast". How can we not see here the face of the migrant, refugee and seafarer: tired by crossing deserts, seas, forests and borders; downcast by the clash with so many closed doors, so many hardened hearts, so many gestures of hostility, prejudice and xenophobia?

To conclude this paragraph, this prophet on the way brings to the debate the expression "Church going forth", so dear to Pope Francis. He has always made a point of visiting the most painful crossroads for migrants, such as the islands of Lesbos (Greece) and Lampedusa (Italy), as well as the border between Mexico and the United States. "Gestures worth an encyclical," said several journalists at the time. But the prophet of Nazareth on the way also recalls St. John B. Scalabrini, whose concern did not stop at the confines of his diocese, but crossed borders to follow the paths of thousands and millions of migrants.

5. BORDERS AS A THEOLOGICAL-SPIRITUAL PLACE

"When halfway through the journey of our life / I found that I was in a gloomy wood, / because the path which led aright was lost "

Many of us here know the first stanza of the first canto of Dante Alighieri's great work, *The Divine Comedy*. What happens in our personal or collective existence when, "halfway through our life", we come across this "dark jungle" and feel that "the straight path is lost"? In biblical-theological terms, in those difficult moments when we experience extreme difficulties or limit situations, God usually breaks into history to correct its course or horizon. And the Lord usually does this through very specific messengers, who can be angels, strangers or dreams. All these divine messengers, so to speak, can be found in the accounts of Jesus' childhood, particularly in Luke the Evangelist, where, in some way, the mystery of the Incarnation, so dear to J. B. Scalabrini, is revealed.

Biblically speaking, the true path and true wisdom are often associated with the ability to hear angels, welcome pilgrims and interpret

dreams. An example of this is the episode at the oak of Mamre between Abraham, Sarah and the strangers (Gen 18:1-15). The old patriarch was resting in the shade of the tree when he saw three strangers approaching. They shook the old man out of his stupor and he immediately stood up. From then on, vigor, enthusiasm and, with them, haste took over. There is no time to lose: Abraham immediately runs to meet the newcomers and recognizes them as God's envoys; then he runs to the tent where Sarah is; he asks his wife to quickly take three measures of flour to bake the bread; he quickly goes to the herd to take a tender and good calf; and finally, he passes it on to the servant, who hurries to prepare it.

The patriarch seemed to grow wings on feet already stiff with age. And the whole house rushes to welcome the guests. The old man's haste is not only in his hands and legs, but especially in his heart and soul. Sitting and drowsy, who knows, he soon gets up. Then he prepares the table and, always on his feet, begins to serve the strangers. Their passage has the capacity to rejuvenate the old Abraham. The pilgrims inject new blood into a house that is heading towards autumn; they bring purified oxygen to an organism that is on the verge of decline. But above all, the strangers are the bearers of good news that will resurrect the couple, the tent and all the people of Abraham. Sarah, his wife, though old, will conceive and give birth to a son. The promise of the Promised Land and a great offspring is saved. In the words of the poet, the dark jungle will be illuminated, the straight path straightened. Existence is given a new chance and life will begin again according to God's plan.

A) ANGELS AND PILGRIMS: DIVINE MESSENGERS

Let's take a closer look at the "main characters" who act around the birth of Jesus, in the mystery of the incarnation: the angels, the dreams and the border. Starting with the former, in the Judeo-Christian tradition, as we saw in the case of Abraham, angels and/or strangers play an important role as messengers of God. If we limit ourselves to the accounts of Jesus' infancy, they are present with Zechariah, Joseph, Mary and the Magi. Angels who warn, correct and announce good news. God is present through his messengers in order to cover human history with his saving grace. Often, however, angels take the

form of pilgrims or strangers knocking at the door. In disguise, they pass themselves off as wanted or unwanted guests.

In Scalabrini's mission and in our work as Scalabrinian missionaries, instead of wings, the angels have feet. Tired, dirty and battered feet of those who have walked a long way. Angels who speak other languages, come from other nations and carry other religious and cultural values. Their presence invites us to encounter, dialog, exchange and solidarity. They also warn us, correct us and guide us. As well as migrants, they can be our parents, our superiors, our companions. And they can also be degraded situations of poverty and violence, where vulnerable people live, who challenge us to commit ourselves to justice and peace, to defending human rights and dignity.

Listening to the angels means knowing how to listen to the "other, the different, the foreigner". Knowing how to listen to those who call us to take the "straight path". To be attentive not only to one's own will or to the noises that surround us, but to the people and conditions that demand a commitment to life. In the biblical pages, it's worth insisting that the wise are guided by the angels, to the exact extent that the latter are the bearers of the divine message. They can arrive from where you least expect them, disguise themselves in the way you least expect, announce what you least expect. They often appear as unusual figures, with unusual speeches, trying to show us the brilliance of some hitherto hidden star.

B) DREAMS AS "SIGNS OF THE TIMES"

The same goes for dreams. We come across them in numerous biblical episodes. They could not fail to be present on the occasion of Jesus' birth. God also manifests himself and reveals his Word through them. Joseph of Egypt and Joseph the husband of Mary, without forgetting the latter, are invited to interpret their own dreams or the dreams of others. In fact, dreams often express shortcomings, needs and difficulties in an enigmatic way, but also desires, longings, in short, the will to overcome. Here again, migrants are dreamers par excellence. They leave the land where they were born and where they left the bones of their ancestors buried, in search of the dream of a more promising future.

The German philosopher Hegel, in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, points to the negative prefix “in” as a factor that triggers the dialectical dynamism of socio-economic and political-cultural transformation. In other words, it is from situations such as restlessness, uncertainty, insecurity, dissatisfaction and unhappiness that the desire and strength for structural change is forged and strengthened. Those who are born in a golden cradle hardly think about changing their social condition. In other words, dreams can awaken us to certain “signs of the times” of which our consciousness has not yet become aware. In figurative and often inverted language, dreams reveal impasses, obstacles and knots to be untied. Knowing how to interpret them can lead us to detect the irruption of the Spirit into the coordinates of human history, since God uses this means to reveal his will and his plan for salvation.

Epiphanies emerge from the depths of dreams. God reveals himself through mysteries hidden in the unconscious. This also applies to collective dreams. The collective unconscious of a people is also usually impregnated with utopias. Utopias that are all the more eloquent the more serious their condition of slavery, poverty, violence and vulnerability. The living dreams of migrants stem from this and take shape. To paraphrase the Brazilian journalist Euclides da Cunha, author of *Os Sertões*, it would not be an exaggeration to say that “the migrant is, above all, a strong man” (a phrase the journalist uses in relation to the northeasterner). Strong because he is driven by the dream of crossing the border: to change his life and that of his family. A dream so often interrupted at the border, but always taken up again with faith, stubbornness and hope. Hope against all hope!

Listening to angels and interpreting dreams requires silence. Silence and the ability to listen. Today we live and move in predominantly urban societies, where noise and haste make us deaf. Cities and metropolises have no ears. At this point, we should remember the “school of Nazareth” or the school of silence. Joseph never speaks, but he is the right man, in the right place to do the right thing: to defend the family and life, in other words, the plan of salvation. Of Mary, it is said twice that “she kept these things in her heart and meditated on them” (Lk 1:19, 51). As for Jesus, he spent thirty years in

silence before coming out and announcing that “the time is fulfilled, the Kingdom is at hand, turn and believe in the Gospel” (Mk 1:15).

Only in the soil of silence can the Word germinate. It is the child of silence. Not just any word, but the Word in the singular, and with a capital letter, which is capable of enlightening, creating, comforting, liberating, healing, saving and enlivening. In fact, words in the plural and with a lower case often cover up or distort the true Word, who “becomes flesh and comes to dwell among us” (Jn 1:14). Often, when someone doesn’t know what to say, they start talking. A can rolling on the asphalt comes to mind: the emptier it is, the more noise it makes. Silence is the workshop where the Word is forged, the womb where it gestates. A Word that doesn’t come from the well of silence tends to repeat itself or others. Within the Church, as we know, there is no shortage of parrots. Moreover, those who don’t reflect repeat themselves. As Scalabrinian priests and religious, if we are called to be men of the Word, we must first be men of silence.

C) THE FRONTIER AS A THEOLOGICAL PLACE

We mustn’t forget that Jesus was born and died outside the city walls, in a frontier space. “Mary gave birth to her firstborn son, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for him in the house” (Lk 2:7). Condemnation to the wood of the cross, reserved for the worst offenders, was to be carried out in a separate place, outside the city. “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree,” says Paul, quoting the Old Testament (Deut 21:23; Gal 3:13). The border is no man’s land, which opens up the possibility of it being everyone’s land. It’s a kind of “non-place”, as French anthropologist Marc Augé conceives it in his book *Non-places*. These are the places where there is no familiarity, we feel away from home, such as the airport, the bus station and, of course, the border. It follows that the Kingdom of Heaven, the centrality of the Good News of Jesus Christ, has its roots on the frontier, in the basements or peripheries.

This is where the poor, the other, the migrant who cries out and questions arise. “The stranger” – wrote the German philosopher H.G. Gadamer in *Truth and Method* – “has more to say about me than about himself”. Pope Francis, for his part, has invited us to overcome the

globalization of indifference through a “culture of encounter, dialogue, exchange and solidarity”. By setting out on the road, on the move, migrants, consciously or unconsciously, set their own history in motion. The simple fact of migrating, with his face and courage, makes him a prophet, a protagonist and a maker of new times. With his feet on the road, he denounces the country of origin, which has not guaranteed him a dignified citizenship; and at the same time, he announces, in the countries of destination, the need for new international relations. There is also a need to reduce the abyss of asymmetries and social inequalities. “Development is the new name for peace,” said Pope Paul VI in his Encyclical Letter *Populorum Progressio* (1967).

Returning to the concept of the frontier as a “non-place”, we could conclude, in an apparent paradox, that this “non-place” becomes the “best place” to lay the foundations for the “new place”. In a word: the “non-place” constitutes the “privileged place” to sow the seed of the “Kingdom of Heaven”. In fact, only those who have lived through the uncertain, insecure and unsettling experience of the frontier yearn for a new and broader horizon. In the words of the Italian poet, he can’t wait to leave the “dark jungle”, to return to the “straight road”. To reach a house or home, to find friendly and welcoming soil. Scalabrini said that “for the migrant, the homeland is the land that gives him bread”, or even that “migration broadens the concept of homeland”. St. John Baptist Scalabrini, the father and apostle of migrants, left us this Spirituality of Incarnation as his charism and legacy, because he was able to listen to angels and strangers, interpret the dreams of migrants and go out to the frontiers of his time.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

IN THE NORTH AMERICA AREA

MIGUEL ÁLVAREZ, CS

INTRODUCTION

It is told in the historical chronicles of our Congregation that in 1930, when Cardinal Rossi was named Superior General, a young seminarian named Giulivo Tessarolo asked the Cardinal: “Your Eminence, why is there no more mention of the Founder, Bishop Scalabrini?” and apparently the Cardinal replied: “My son, the less we talk about Scalabrini, the better things are.” Those were the times when Scalabrini was not well regarded in ecclesiastical circles, he was considered liberal and progressive. Like so many prophets, Saint J. B. Scalabrini went beyond his times, and his thoughts and vision transcended his epoch. It seems, however, that conversion also came for Card. Rossi; because a few years later, he gave a famous speech on Scalabrini, in the Church of San Carlo al Corso in Rome, in which he praised the virtues and activities of the Bishop of Piacenza. Later, the cardinal also wrote an article about our Founder in the *Osservatore Romano*. It really took courage and admiration to praise Scalabrini in those times.¹

Fr. Gino Dalpiaz, while narrating this meeting between Cardinal Rossi and Fr. Tessarolo, (who would later become Superior General of the Scalabrinian Missionaries), Fr. Dalpiaz lamented in his intervention that for a long time we Scalabrinian Missionaries were like orphans, with little or no knowledge of the Founder and his spirituality. His early death (not even two decades after the founding of his Missionaries and only 10 years after the founding of the Missionary Sisters), and the constant intervention of superiors who distanced themselves from the Founder and his founding inspiration, coupled with the situation of survival in which we were immersed – especially in the difficult years of the First World War – have undoubtedly

¹ Dalpiaz, G. “La Spiritualità degli Scalabriniani in Nordamerica”, *Spiritualità Scalabriniana, Atti del Convegno Internazionale*, Roma 1996, 142-143.

contributed greatly to the noticeable absence that we have in terms of our own, systematic and well-defined spirituality as a Religious Family.

A LOOK BACK AT THE 1996 CONFERENCE ON SPIRITUALITY

As a starting point, I will offer a brief summary of the Presentation that Father Dalpiaz made at the 1996 Convention in which he presented a profile of the Scalabrinian Spirituality in the North American Area. It is worth mentioning that from the 1990's to the present day, the geographical map has been expanded and now the St Charles Borromeo Province and the St John the Baptist Province cover 10 countries that extend throughout the North American Continent and the Caribbean, placing the work of the Scalabrinian Missionaries in Canada, the United States, Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, Venezuela and Ecuador.

In his presentation, Father Gino offered in a systematic and erudite way, not only the reality of the Scalabrinian spirituality in our missions, but also a brief review of how we got to that point. He offered us details about the different challenges that our missionaries encountered throughout history in establishing and sharing their spirituality with the migrant people they served, and told us about the perspectives that were available to the Scalabrinians to enrich that spirituality and to place it in the local Churches as a valid and necessary asset. Fr. Gino also presented the Letter to all the Confreres that Fr. Luigi Favero, cs (our Superior General at that time) wrote in 1995. He names this letter the "Magna Carta" and the necessary foundation for an authentic Scalabrinian spirituality. He also addressed the fact that as Scalabrinians we are called to live in a constant tension between discipleship and apostolate, between prayer and action. He broadly explained the importance that the Spirituality of the Incarnation should have in our lives and challenged us to discover the Incarnation as a theological event that leads us to inculturation, so necessary – the latter – in our missionary work. He concluded his presentation by explaining in detail how both incarnation and inculturation require an authentic conversion as a starting point.

After talking about the new Church in the United States and the social reality of that moment in that North American country, he outlined some basic qualities/requirements (I would say: “non-negotiable”) for an authentic Scalabrinian spirituality: The acceptance of the “other”, as “genuinely other”; the ascetic of listening; the fight for justice and peace; and the promotion of reconciliation as indispensable to the liberating process that our spirituality must bring with it. He also told us about the civilization of love as the goal of all our missionary efforts. He dedicated sufficient space to the dimension of communion that our spirituality entails and stressed how Scalabrinian asceticism implies efforts of communion, because only through that communion lived among us as members of the Scalabrinian Family, is the ultimate goal of our missionary work reached: “living in communion of diversities,” thereby highlighting the Pentecostal fraternity of the Church. Along with the dimension of communion, he also presented us with the dimension of itinerancy, inspired by the God of the Tent who encourages us on the journey, discovering that thanks to the experience of the Exodus that the people of Egypt lived in the desert, the path has become a place for encounter. Finally, Father Dalpiaz encouraged us by saying that, without a shadow of a doubt, a Scalabrinian spirituality is emerging based on two pillars: the specific mission with migrants that the Church entrusts to us, and the life and writings of the Founder.²

Twenty-six years have passed since that Conference on Scalabrinian Spirituality was celebrated in 1996. Missionary horizons have expanded for our two provinces based in North America, and have led us to extend the Scalabrinian presence in many more countries; the ethnic face of our missionaries has diversified, bringing with it the graces and challenges of interculturality; the challenges of today’s society confront us and destabilize us, urging us to respond from the perspective of the Spirit and from the particular and inspiring way in which our Holy Founder lived his relationship with God.

The migratory reality is currently at a critical point that requires easing the experience of thousands and thousands of men and women who run the risk of remaining in the annals of history as just a

² Ibid, 141-155.

wounded statistic; and in the midst of that reality of violence and “embodied” suffering, we face the need of a window to the “action of the Spirit”, for it is only the Spirit of God, the one who accommodates everything, purifies everything, and is capable of placing in God’s perspective these tragic moments of history, where it seems that the cry of people on the move does not find an echo in heaven and much less on earth.

The necessary urgency of a spirituality that humanizes this historical moment that we are living in becomes pressing, and in the midst of that convulsed and confusing reality, which we call our historical present, we look back at the life and work of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, because in his very particular way of living friendship with God we find the privileged genesis of a unique, necessary, – I would say urgent spirituality. The Scalabrinian spirituality is novel, because far from the cloisters and the classical stability of other conventual spiritualities, it teaches us that the journey and its misadventures can become a place of encounter, and a privileged space for the relationship with God. It encourages with these insights both our missionary journeys, and the tired wandering of a people that advances beyond the imposed borders, challenging history and reminding us that everything emigrates:

the leaves, the seeds, the plants, the birds and other animals, but above all human beings also emigrate, sometimes in groups, and sometimes alone, and in doing so, are always free instruments of Divine Providence, which presides over human destiny, leading all people, even through great calamities, to their final goal: the perfection of humanity on earth and the glory of God in heaven.³

INITIATIVES RELATED TO SPIRITUALITY IN OUR AREA

The last decades have seen countless initiatives that seek to promote the life, work and spirituality of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini among the people and the local Churches where we Missionaries of

³ Scalabrini, J. B, *A living voice*, 1987, 390.

the so-called North American Area serve. One of the most effective actions in promoting innovative initiatives about the life, work and thought of our Founder was creating a position for the vice-postulation of the cause of St. John Baptist Scalabrini for the two provinces of St. John the Baptist and St. Charles Borromeo. With this initiative, the work that vocational animators had already been carrying out for some time in the different countries where we are present was strengthened, because, in addition to dedicating themselves to promoting among the youth the proposal to consecrate their lives as Scalabrinian religious, they also carried out the very important work of promoting the Founder and his work.

The promotional task has been implemented ad intra of our two Provinces through motivation in Provincial Assemblies and inter-provincial meetings, where the need was seen to increase the production of Scalabrinian material, and to strengthen ad extra the knowledge and devotion of the holiness of the Founder. Recent times have brought a significant increase in the efforts to disseminate the devotion to Scalabrini as well as the production of digital and printed material. Among these efforts, we highlight the printing of the Scalabrinian Devotionary, Novenas to Scalabrini, image editing, collection of iconic phrases, migrant rosary cards with the various prayers and in various languages approved for the canonization of the then Blessed, the reissue of Scalabrini's biography, the promotion of his thought on social media, the reissue of a new biography in graphic novels, the production from the musical album "Camina" with songs related to the founder and charisma, etc.

Of great help in this area has been the website "Jovenes sin Fronteras" ("Youth Without Borders"), where a section for Scalabrinian devotion was inserted. There you can consult the publications and materials produced, especially the prayers for the Mass in honor of the Founder, as well as various devotional prayers which seek to make known among the People of God the figure of Saint J. B. Scalabrini. As part of the production of visual material, a varied and extensive production was made with Scalabrini's photos. This production includes medals, key chains, pins, rosaries, photos on canvas and banners, backpacks, and clothing items that were offered in the

various Scalabrinian environments and at various congresses, meetings and gatherings.

During the last decades, some reports were received that pointed to possible miracles attributed to the intercession of our holy Founder. There were several in our area and two of them were quite credible; however, none were successfully verified. Through these possible “miraculous interventions” by Scalabrini, the practice of praying for his intercession grew in some environments, asking for miracles. Although – unfortunately – adequate follow-up was not given, we can say that there are experiences/situations that give proof that the devotion to the holy bishop and Founder has been established among the people of God and gradually has been growing in the hearts of believers.

In the formation houses of our provinces, an increase in devotion to our Founder has also been observed. This was strengthened through the knowledge of his life and work, through retreats, festive celebrations of his life, and workshops and conferences. During the recitation of the Divine Office, a prayer of intercession of Scalabrinian identity was established as part of the prayers. Reciting one of the prayers approved for canonization at different times of the day has been a practice in almost all of our formation communities. After meals, it is customary to proclaim a thought of the Founder and efforts have been made to have a photo of him displayed in various spaces, both public and private, in the different houses, which serves as an invitation to those who live there to know and imitate his virtues.

In parishes and pastoral centers, as well as in casas del migrante, and other missions, the image of Scalabrini is displayed as a way to make him known and thereby mark our identity as a religious family. His photo in pocket-size prayer cards is being offered to those who come into contact with our missionaries, thereby facilitating both their closeness and their piety. In some of our missions there are books of intercession and requests with beautiful prayers made by the migrants or faithful themselves. In recent years, we have also seen an increase in the production of liturgical material - chasubles, stoles, chalice covers, etc. - with the image of the saint.

In the mass media of our provinces (both virtual and written), the effort to propagate the life and work of Saint J. B. Scalabrini is clear. On the web pages and social networks linked to our missions, it has been requested to include a section that offers a profile of who bishop Scalabrini was and continues to be for the Church and for society in general. The same is true in the magazines that are being published, all of them contain a section on his life and thoughts. These initiatives in the area of communications seek to create in the faithful an approach to the life of this holy bishop whose vision became a concrete expression of charity through his many initiatives, in the hopes that coming to know him and his ways of living, may continue to inspire and encourage many men and women of good will even in our times.

During the celebrations of the centenary of the death of Saint J. B. Scalabrini (2005), various initiatives were carried out with the aim of promoting his thought. A more intense devotional practice was promoted in the formation houses (prayer vigils, composition/translation of Scalabrinian songs, assemblies of seminarians). At the local level, forums and conferences were planned in which an effort was made to share with diverse audiences the quite incredible unknown richness of his thought. Among some of the most effective initiatives, we can mention the forums on “Migration and Peace” that SIMN promoted in our Provinces, and which involved notable figures from the world of politics, the Church and organized society at the national level.

The efforts of some of our missionaries to promote Scalabrini in their place of service have led a considerable number of lay people to come into contact with this man of God. The didactic units as a means of formation of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement, together with the “Training workshops” that have been offered in our provinces for years have been providential for many of the lay people already committed to their communities of faith, to be motivated and inspired, and in turn become passionate about serving migrants with an apostolic zeal worthy of admiration. Recent decades have seen an increase in the number of faithful who decide to embrace the spirit of Scalabrini as a way of living their baptismal commitment more authentically, without sparing efforts or sacrifices. Reliable proof of this reality in our area of North America is undoubtedly the life and

death of Marisol I. Macías (Castro) a lay Scalabrinian from Nuevo Laredo in Mexico.

Marisol worked as an editor in a local newspaper. Thanks to the contact she had with the Casa del Migrante in the border city of Nuevo Laredo, she began to journey on a path of preparation and awareness. Her “conversion” and commitment to migrants went in a short time from the indifference and prejudice typical in the local people, to a deep awareness of the dramatic human and social reality experienced by the thousands and thousands of migrants who cross or are being deported along the border. Her life was impacted in a profound and illuminating way by the figure and writings of our Founder, whom she loved and admired as a model worth imitating, to the point of wishing to conform her new life as a “Scalabrinian neo-Christian” after his example. In her Skype account she presented herself along with a picture of her commitment as a Scalabrinian laywoman., Her profile was accompanied with a phrase from Blessed Scalabrini that summarized her new project of life: We must do good, all the good possible, and do it in the best possible way... In spite working an exhausting and extended shift from Monday to Saturday, Marisol worked hard to be faithfully present at the Casa del Migrante to serve migrants until late at night. On Wednesday, September 21, 2011, while leaving work, she was kidnapped. On Saturday the 24th, three days later, Marisol’s body was found decapitated and half-naked, thrown next to a monument at the main entrance of the city of Nuevo Laredo. The kidnappers abandoned her body along with a keyboard, a DVD and a sign that said with inhumane sarcasm that she had been murdered for her continuous denouncing of the activities of organized crime. The news of Marisol’s murder immediately spread through various national and international media, written newspapers, radio and TV news; in all of which she was recognized as an active member of the Scalabrinian Lay Movement where Marisol was well known and esteemed among the members. Without a doubt, her violent death has planted in many people the seed of justice and truth that one day we will see blossoming in our land, because it has been watered with the blood of someone whose earthly pilgrimage was encouraged, inspired and sustained by the life and the work of Saint J. B. Scalabrini. Marisol was very much

impacted by the way in which our Founder lived his friendship with God, and how that friendship led him to spare no effort in his dedication and service to the neediest of his time. Scalabrini truly inspired Marisol, who in turn did not skimp on her dedication and service to others, even to the point of sacrificing her life for the truth and freedom that one day we wish to see as established values in our land.

This section can be concluded by saying that although it is true that at some point in our history as a Missionary Family the figure of the Founder was not sufficiently promoted or that even if in some of the most critical moments of this journey we tried to hide and ignore that same figure, in recent decades the effort to learn more about the person who founded us has increased. No efforts have been spared to promote him in the environments where we serve, as a way to establish a valid reference to our being missionaries for the service of migrants. We are glad to see how his devotion spreads even beyond the confines of our missions. The formative curricula in our area have intensified efforts so that the Founder is established in the hearts and lives of those in formation, not only as a reference that inspires our missionary work, but also as the valid source from which we can absorb an identity capable of marking in a defining way who we are as consecrated men in the Church who follow Christ and service the world on the footsteps of St. J. B. Scalabrini.

SIGNIFICANT ASPECTS IN WHICH THE MISSIONARIES OF THE AREA LIVE TODAY

We can affirm that the Scalabrinian missionaries present in the two Provinces based in North America live their missionary service among migrants with a clear awareness of being children of Scalabrini. The pastoral zeal that the Bishop of Piacenza possessed and that encouraged him to serve those most in need is something that continues to inspire the apostolate of the religious, who in our geographical area carefully care for the people entrusted to their pastoral service. The missionary creativity, the constant and quiet sacrifices of many of our confreres, and the exemplary way in which they dedicate energy to the construction of the Kingdom in their places of mission, cannot be fully understood if we distance ourselves from the

pastoral ardor with which our holy Founder characterized his life as a churchman. It can be stated without fear of ambiguity that pastoral action, the constant dedication and generous sacrifice with which St. J. B. Scalabrini carried out his apostolic and missionary action, is the source from which the Scalabrinian missionaries draw the necessary inspiration for our apostolate.

The Founder not only encourages and inspires us, but he also unites us. The experience of feeling like members of a common family is something that stands out very clearly in our area. The concern for the common good and the spontaneous way of expressing a solid and sincere fraternal affection among the confreres is something that is born naturally when we discover that we are part of a common project and members of a family that has the same father. This fraternity, lived in a spontaneous and natural way, is something that in recent times has become normalized not only among us, but has also extended to our dealings with the Scalabrinian Sisters and the Secular Missionaries. In some places where our missionary presence coincides with the other “branches” of the family, fraternal coexistence, common celebration of Scalabrinian festivals, and even the intensification of efforts for a collaborative missionary service has become something that is common, and that we carry out without prejudice and with pleasure.

Of the possible challenges that can be listed in this section and that can significantly hinder an adequate appropriation of Scalabrinian spirituality, two must be mentioned. The first is related to that constant tension between spirituality and charism. We tend to behave more like children of the charism than like children of the Founder:⁴ This expression recently mentioned by a confrere in a presentation during our inter-provincial assembly has had an interesting echo among those of us who were present. The marked emphasis with which we privilege missionary work over a comprehensive knowledge of the Founder and his relationship with God can lead religious to exalt “doing” over “being.” This trap can even lead some religious to sacrifice the basic foundations of religious life, and while living as authentic promoters of the charism, there is a risk of distancing

⁴ Bentoglio, G, 2023-18-04, *Scalabrinian Spirituality*, Interprovincial Assembly, Houston TX, USA.

ourselves from the founding principle of consecrated life that places service to the people as a consequence of the individual's relationship with God. It is easy to sacrifice the nature of who we are (consecrated men in the Church), for the satisfaction that the apostolate brings with it, thereby provoking the need for a spirituality lived and assumed, and from which all the apostolic action that we carry out springs up. The risk that we run by privileging "doing" over "being", is of course that the missionary ends up spending his life in too much "incarnation" and little "spirit", something that we must avoid by trying to create a healthy balance between these two very important dimensions.

A second challenge (and quite linked to the previous one) has to do with the selective retention of the life and work of Saint J. B. Scalabrini, so widely practiced throughout our history as a religious family. Selective retention is the tendency to remember information that best connects with our needs, beliefs, interests, and values. The way in which this unconscious action is experienced is something that allows us to personalize reality and adapt it to our tastes, limiting and mutilating it as needed. This is something that we live daily as individuals and that it seems we have also managed to do in our relationship with the Founder. We tend to intensely emphasize Scalabrini's work in favor of migrants and migrations, while we play down his fidelity to the Church even to the point of the painful sacrifice that fidelity brought with it. His life of prayer does not seem to awaken among the Scalabrinians the same enthusiasm as their apostolate; their devotion to the Eucharist, the Blessed Virgin or the Cross, we do not see them as worthy of imitation as we see his social action. In this exercise of "seeing and choosing" according to our tastes or interests, we run the risk of being left with a Founder tailored to our taste, one who confirms my personal pleasures and desires, more than a Father who teaches, broadens horizons and, ultimately, demands constant conversion from us to end up being – as he always was – an integral, realistic, visionary, and prophetic individual.

The aforementioned challenges do not diminish, however, the efforts that are constantly made throughout our area to spread the devotion to Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, as a way of sharing with those we serve as well as with the local Churches and the society where we

live, a hidden treasure that we consider appropriate and necessary to respond to the challenges of the contemporary world. The efforts to systematize a Scalabrinian spirituality, which we as a religious congregation have been making for some decades, are the most concrete proof of an intuition that little by little has been established in our religious family in the desire to create a common source in which the missionaries of Scalabrini can find the necessary tools to strengthen our identity as individuals consecrated to the service of those who most acutely suffer in their lives the difficult and traumatic consequences that human mobility brings with it.

CONCLUSION

The migratory reality in the provinces of St. Charles Borromeo and St. John the Baptist demands concrete and timely responses. The suffering of men and women on the move, the paths stained with violence through which thousands and thousands of migrants wander, the dehumanization and indifference that mark the course towards where life can be less drastic for the displaced, the creation of indolent and complicated policies faced by those who are applying for asylum or refuge, making them just a chess piece in the interests of the ruler in power, the alarming numbers of so many who remain lifeless and nameless along the road... all of this cries out to heaven as a reproach; and it is precisely this reality of dis-Grace that becomes the fuel that animates the missionary work of those who, following Christ in the footsteps of Scalabrini, seek to create spaces where everyone fits. That is why moments like this Scalabrinian spirituality symposium are so necessary and hopeful. We are quite a good number of people from quite a good number of places, and we have come here with the desire to deepen in our tradition and our history as a religious family. We come here with the certainty that the Spirit calls us to dream together while we eagerly search in the life and work of our Founder, in his very special way of living his relationship with God, and his passion for establishing in his time the eternal values of the Gospel, in the hopes of encountering the clues that can guide our relationship with God and our desire to respond to the challenges we encounter in the service of God's people in our missions.

Perhaps by pausing for a moment to review what has been done and becoming aware of everything that is happening, we will discover with surprise that it is a matter of ordering a little, of systematizing what is already there, of valuing the unnoticed, of giving priority to what is truly important, to understand that Christian spirituality in the manner of Scalabrini has always been in our religious congregation, accompanying our missionary efforts, strengthening our forces so often worn out, coloring with vestiges of Good News our pastoral work in favor of the most unprotected. Because, as Jon Sobrino said: spiritual life means living history with a spirit of openness, availability, fidelity... True spiritual life implies a spirit of holiness, which is nothing other than the real commitment to the poor.⁵ This commitment has always been part of our missionary tradition, and in our times, continues to be a bell that tolls with chimes of prophecy the arrival of a Kingdom where everyone is welcome, of a Kingdom that longs and yearns to establish itself in our midst.

⁵ Sobrino, J. (1985) *Liberación con espíritu*. Apuntes para una nueva espiritualidad. Santander: Sal Terrae.

SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

IN THE AFRO-EUROPEAN REGION

MARIO TOFFARI, CS

INTRODUCTION

Scalabrinian spirituality has its foundation in the Founder's Spirituality, already defined by Scalabrini's great biographer, Fr. Mario Francesconi, as "Spirituality of Incarnation"

Jesus (Son of God incarnate) comes to earth to make us live His life, to make us, so to speak, one with Him. I have come, says He, that they may have life and have it abundantly. Now this life that Jesus comes to communicate to us by uniting himself to our soul is his own life. The union of Jesus with the Christian soul, that is the foundation of the whole supernatural order. Through it, man is elevated to participation in the divine nature and in it he elevates the whole of creation.¹

It is a spirituality that stems from an ontological and existential relationship of the individual person with Jesus Christ and then extends to an existential relationship between all Christians. Reflecting on this, Bishop Monari speaks of a "spirituality of communion" in the sense that "it expresses first of all that bond that unites the believer with God, through Jesus Christ, and that unites believers with one another in a communion that is communion in the Spirit".²

This spirituality of incarnation and communion is outlined by Scalabrini himself in two important passages of his thought that stem from his reading of the condition of migrants and, as a consequence, from a pastoral requirement dictated to his missionaries:

- The respect and preservation of identities in a global vision. The old world (Europe) will learn "the true economy of freedom, brotherhood, equality" will learn

¹ M. Francesconi, *Spiritualità d'incarnazione*, Roma 1989, 14.

² Scalabrini, Address at the Catholic Club of New York, 15.10.1901.

that peoples different in origin can very well preserve their own language, their own national existence, while being politically and religiously united and without barriers to make each other jealous and divide, without armies to impoverish and destroy each other.³

- the operative communion as a unifying and effective entity:

No class of men, however rich in individual strength, if it does not subject itself to the great law of unity, will ever be able to do great things, and much less so will the Missionaries who, working on souls as simple instruments of Jesus Christ, draw from this sovereign principle that informs them all their effectiveness.⁴

1. THE TWO CONFERENCES ON SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

1.1 THE 1996 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SPIRITUALITY

The European Provinces, which, as far as the missionaries are concerned, had rather laboriously made the transition from the monastic conception of religious life to that of a religious life informed by the pastoral charism of migrants, saw the progressive closure of seminaries in Italy and the pastoral opening to the Portuguese-speaking ethnic groups, thanks to the arrival of some missionaries from Brazil.

The report on the spirituality of Europe⁵ by Father Benito Gallo, in 1996 with the collaboration of Father Marin and Father Beniamino Rossi, insists on the conception of a spirituality incarnated in the works for emigrants, hopes for a pastoral care of migrants in a Pentecostal key, highlights the presence of pastoral positions for the Portuguese due to the arrival of the first Brazilian missionaries of Italian origin, but above all notes that in recent times the old scheme, which sees the integration of migrants as 'assimilation', is being overcome. Instead, there is a growing awareness that our societies are in fact 'pluri-

³ Scalabrini, Address to the Catholic Club di New York, 15.10.1901

⁴ Scalabrini, To the Missionaries in the Americas, 15 marzo 1892.

⁵ *Spiritualità Scalabriniana, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma-Piacenza 1996*, Direzione Generale dei Missionari Scalabriniani, Roma, 1996, 157-175.

ethnic' and 'pluricultural'; and they are called to become 'interethnic' and 'intercultural'.

Insights worthy of people who were capable of a real and prophetic reading. Perhaps it was worth pointing out that something was already present in Foggia-Borgo Mezzanone and Brescia Stocchetta. Alongside this, however, the opinion of the Missionaries of Carrières-sur-Seine is also highlighted, who pointed out their attempt at a spirituality that led to "relativising the values of nationality, culture, borders of belonging..., in order to discover the values of fraternity, accompaniment and listening". An undoubtedly optimistic and courageous attempt, but one that would reveal its limits and bring us back to Scalabrini's intuition: no renunciation of one's own identity, but building communion within one's own identities. The report also still indicated a pastoral care of preserving the faith of Catholics, according to the dictates of the various episcopal conferences of the dioceses in which our missionaries lived.

1.2 THE EUROPEAN SPIRITUALITY CONFERENCE

At the 1997 conference on spirituality in Europe, Fr Beniamino Rossi⁶ pointed out the third phase of emigration, that of inculturation; and especially the lucid and scientific report by Fr Lorenzo Prencipe⁷ highlighted the cultural pluralism of the various immigrations in Europe and called for an educational system for interculturality.

2. ATTEMPT AT A DEFINITION OF SPIRITUALITY

A necessary clarification must be made on the meaning of spirituality, as I understand it in this report. It is certainly not the only way of working pastorally, nor is it a matter of defining in the abstract and under the sole religious aspect of the theological and ethical dimension the life of the Scalabrinian. Spirituality, as I conceive it, certainly starts from "faith-trust" and love for a person – Jesus Christ, passes through an act of admiration and affection for a person and for the ideal of this person for which one has decided to live – St John Baptist

⁶ *Spiritualità Scalabriniana, Atti del Convegno Europeo*, 19-30.

⁷ *Ibidem*, 95-125.

Scalabrini Father to the Migrants, translates into concretely living the religious and historical dimension of one's own time, in relationship with the various people one encounters in life, always attentive to the evolution of history, of the concrete facts that occur and, therefore, also to the need to update pastoral and apostolic positions in function of the incarnation of one's own ideal in the society in which one lives today.

3. NEW FACTS FOR SCALABRINIANS IN EUROPE AND AFRICA AFTER 1997

3.1 In November 1998, the Europe-Africa Region was born.

The different types of pastoral care present in the Province of Italy-England, in that of Switzerland and Germany and in that of France, Belgium, Luxembourg Portugal begin to become the cultural and religious patrimony of all the Scalabrinians of the Region, who see the real prospect of having to set up their pastoral life in different areas from their usual ones. This implies a first conversion, especially spiritual, to read the openness to which the Scalabrinian is called to implement his pastoral work, as well as the readiness to leave for different lands without the bureaucratic ties related to transfers from Province to Province.

3.2 The practically complete decline of religious from Italy, who, while remaining in the majority, are aging sharply in the face of a springtime of vocations and priests coming to Europe from Africa, Latin America, but above all from Asia. One begins to have to live with and not only alongside brothers from a different culture, with different customs, with different needs from those of Italy.⁸

⁸ As of January 1, 2023, the missionaries in our Region were: 146. Religious over 70 years of age were 62 (32 operational). Of these: 60 Religious were Italian 2 Religious were Brazilian. Religious under 70 years of age were 84 (operational 77). Of these: 29 were Italian, 55 were of 16 other nationalities (of which 50 were non-European). Significantly, in the Region's group of "young missionaries," i.e., missionaries ordained in the last ten years, there was only one Religious of Italian origin out of 32.

3.3 Lay people take on leadership roles in Scalabrinian pastoral ministry

Awareness is finally progressing that a Congregation like ours cannot imagine itself as a group of religious enclosed within the walls of a convent, and then give to the apostolate what is left over from the works of personal sanctification. It is a matter of living and working in emigration with the emigrants and together with other apostolic vocations, as well as, of course, together with the various civil, social and political institutions of the places where we live.

A living image of all these three facts is the composition of the Region's delegation to this Conference⁹ in which there are only three religious of Italian origin, seven of other nationalities and four lay people.

4. NEW DEMANDS FOR SPIRITUALITY

In his lecture on "Communion" at the 1996 conference, Bishop Monari, expounding on Jesus' prayer that "all may be one", wrote: "Then the purpose is this, that God's love – that with which the Father loves the Son and the Son loves the Father – will regenerate humanity and make human persons capable of loving one another with the same love".¹⁰

4.1 The spirituality of "brotherhood among the different ethnic groups," which the representatives of the three European provinces at the '96 convention saw as a pastoral perspective with regard to migrants,¹¹ now becomes the goal of the Scalabrinian religious. This entails, however, in addition to listening to the Word, the Eucharist and prayer, and I quote Monari again, "koinonia - communion, understood as true sharing", as putting one's possessions in common.¹² That is: living by bringing cultures into communion, starting with

⁹ In the 1996 European conference only one non-Italian Scalabrinian participated.

¹⁰ *Spiritualità Scalabriniana, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma-Piacenza 1996*, 203.

¹¹ *Op. cit.* 171-172.

¹² *Op. cit.* 205.

those who do this also as work, as a profession; a mixing of cultures, starting with the needs of each person's life and of the community in which each person lives. The seeds are there: let us hope they grow. On the other hand, history matures the human dimensions; those who try to carve out a little corner where they can take refuge if the world should fall are similar to those who delude themselves that they can stop the water coming out of a hole in the dam with a finger.

4.2 This pluralism is reflected in the particular references each person brings to their inspiration and affection for Scalabrini. With the help of Thomas Henos I collected in a small paper, "Scalabrini seen by his Missionaries," the quotations made by eighty-eight Missionaries about or by Scalabrini. Except for five quotations, which are repeated twice, all the others are different from each other and give a multifaceted view of Scalabrini. This diversity also signals an attitude in life or pastoral work proper to each one and which then flows into the life of the community.

4.3 The stage of maturation of Scalabrinian spirituality leads to reckoning with the locations of our pastoral work. In the past, the Scalabrinian pastoral work in Europe, at its core, could be summed up in the slogan "preserve the faith of Catholics" in the places of arrival of migrants, while the attention to the concrete man and, therefore, also to his civil, social and political situation, was carried out only by the cultural outposts of our Missionaries, or was limited to charity, where the ecclesial structures allowed it. Today, there is a Scalabrinian pastoral ministry that, thanks above all to the contribution of its Study Centers, of SIMI and of the Faculty of Theology of pastoral care for migrants at the Urbaniana, is directed to all human persons and to all dimensions of the person, trying to involve the ecclesial structures in this. For our part, by now almost all European pastoral posts are directed to a multiplicity of cultures and, albeit slowly, an attempt is being made to move from a multicultural approach to an intercultural one. But what is at least impressive is the enthusiasm for new openings, which see our brethren truly in the vanguard.

4.3.1 We went to the places of departure of migrants and refugees in Africa, specifically, Uganda. One of our Missionaries is having an experience in Morocco., while we continue and develop our presence in South Africa in Cape Town and Johannesburg.

4.3.2 Transit places

As far as places of transit are concerned, we are in Cadiz and Ceuta (Spain-EU and Spain-Africa) as a very significant area, because through that territory an important part of African emigration to Europe passes through.

We have also begun our presence in Calais (northern France), an area through which migrants to England pass.

Other transit areas are also very alive and significant, first of all the so-called Balkan route, as well as Ventimiglia. This summer, Scalabrinian groups of young people had a learning experience that could open the way to new positions.

4.3.3 As far as places of arrival are concerned, the orientation is to strengthen those positions in Europe where we already are and where the migratory flow is still high (such as in large cities). Many of these locations, however, will have to be upgraded and become integrated missionary centers where intercommunity pastoral work is carried out.

4.4 Intercultural spirituality of pastoral workers

These may be strange words, but they define the need for pastoral workers to live, both personally and communally, what they perceive as signs of the times in society and in migration. It is a journey that has begun. In Brescia, for twenty years I personally lived with three priests, at least two of whom were African and Sri Lankan, often joined by a Filipino or a priest from Latin America. Two of them were diocesans. I am glad: it was not an experience but the acquisition of a way of life, sometimes difficult, sometimes full of contrasts, but always in the end positive and rich in reciprocity.

4.5 A significant novelty, in my opinion, is then the approach to other religions: ethnic groups such as Sri Lankan coexist with Bud-

dhism or Senegalese with Murid Islamists, and in any case pastoral work with migrants is directed to people of different religions. It is clear that here Scalabrini, as a man of his time and the church of his time, insisted on the dangers for the faith of Catholics, in relation to other religions, even Christian ones. And yet, in my opinion, if as a bishop of the Catholic Church of his time he could not think of going against the Syllabus of Pius IX, his contemporary, in the providential conception of migration Scalabrini sees it as a global factor that brings to all creatures 'seeds, birds, men': this allows me to venture that certainly, as I said above, Scalabrini's underlying spirituality is the Incarnation, but that there are deep traces of his religious experience of a God who is not only Redeemer, but also Creator, who with his Providence, also through migrations, brings his original plan of love for his creatures to fulfillment. We are at the contemplation of love that leads Scalabrini to communicate to the Holy See that we can no longer speak of a mono-ethnic migration, but of a worldwide factor.¹³

5. THE LAITY

Every man is an interpreter and priest of the universe; he reads the book of earthly realities and praises its Author, Lord and Father. The lay person discovers and reveals in temporal realities the reflection of eternity. He is a priest of the home and of civil society. He is an apostle of truth, of word and example, of charity and true civilization of authentic progress. By baptism he is a priest, by confirmation he is a witness. In cooperation and communion with the ministerial priesthood he offers his own and indispensable contribution to the Christian regeneration of the world. The Church is his, as it is of the clergy. As his own he loves her, defends her and proclaims her with courage. She is not ashamed of the Gospel: in a secularized century she witnesses to it openly, with the explicit profession of faith,

¹³ S. Ignazio di Loyola, *Esercizi Spirituali*, in the meditation "contemplazione per ottenere l'amore", 230-237.

with consistency, with the energy of her convictions, with concerted and disciplined activity.¹⁴

The long journey on the collaboration between lay people and missionaries goes back a long way, from the time of Scalabrini himself, already full of difficulties and contrasts. An important contribution at the 1996 conference was that of Enrico Parolin,¹⁵ who even then hypothesized an interesting collaboration between religious and laity, which in fact saw the autonomy of the laity on the one hand and the role of help in the paths of faith on the part of the religious. The Europe-Africa Region, the coexistence of several ethnic groups within the religious community and the Scalabrinian pastoral care has already produced some significant "lay works": Centers directed by the ASCS in Milan, Rome, South Africa, study centers directed by lay people, directive roles of Scalabrinian press instruments and missions. There are also interesting volunteer works, such as the Scalabrini Musical. In the 2012 Chapter, in Portugal, Fr. Beniamino Rossi of happy memory hypothesized different contributions and different forms of participation of the laity in Scalabrinian life. Personally, I believe that our spirituality leads us to the declericalization of both our religious communities and our pastoral work, with a special focus: the laity are equal collaborators in their own sphere and not dependent on the sole clerical authority.

6. THE DEMANDS OF THE NEW SPIRITUALITY AND EXISTING WORKS

It is obvious that a spirituality that is also incarnated in pastoral care has demanded the new openings we have already discussed. There is, however, a further passage on the works that are now almost a hundred years old, which require fundamental reflection: it is obviously not a question of closing everything down. It is a matter of involving the local Churches to take note that the migration phenomenon is not a contingency, but a dynamic reality of the Church itself.

¹⁴ M. Francesconi, *A Living Voice*, 214.

¹⁵ *Spiritualità Scalabriniana, Atti del Convegno Internazionale, Roma-Piacenza 1996*, 33-36.

So we must also know how to hand them over to a local Church that knows how to continue and update them.

7. MAJOR “CHALLENGES” TO THE REALIZATION OF TAN INTERETHNIC AND INTERCULTURAL SPIRITUALITY

Apart from the personal difficulties that living with people of different cultures entails, especially in people accustomed to living and working with only one ethnic group, there are some facts that will imply real conversions and also theoretical adjustments.

7.1 In general, there is the concrete living in the community that implies a de facto ‘agreement’ and that refers to the way of praying, eating, relations with the family of origin, language communication difficulties, and so on!

7.2 Still on the level of pastoral workers, there is a need to acknowledge and resolve differences in the conception of the presbyter in Asian and African communities, compared to Latin American and especially European ones: this is also a fundamental passage of the need to work together already widely foreseen by Scalabrini.

7.3 The transition from multiculturalism to interculturalism is not easy, especially in the presence of long-standing cultural traditions.

7.4 Then there is the big question about our ability to influence the choices of local churches for their pastoral care in favor of migrants. Without or, worse, against the local Church, we can no longer operate, but it is also improvident to follow pastoral choices.

7.5 Overcoming the concept of the priest-religious holder of power and the real handover of his proper sphere to the laity also in religious communities.

8. THE SPREAD OF SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

Very good at their work, the Scalabrinian missionaries are not always careful to share the Scalabrinian spirit explicitly with others. In Europe there is a lack of a center of Scalabrinian spirituality, which is neither reducible to the mere distribution of Scalabrinian material, nor to Scalabrinian study centers or press centers, nor to the numerous experiences with migrants at the level of vocation youth ministry. It is a “place” able to combine reflection, experience, prayer and deepening of the figure of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, of his prophetism and spirituality in migrations. When there were only Italian emigrants we were in great demand by the parishes, especially in the places of emigration: today we are called to create for ourselves these spaces to offer both to the Church in general and to the individuals we meet.

CONCLUSION

1. Today’s Scalabrinian spirituality draws on Scalabrini’s prophetic spirit, which he amply revealed in the Memorandum addressed to the Holy See: emigration no longer concerns one people, but all peoples. To the love and concern for our Catholic brothers and sisters, as we trust in the incarnation of the Son of God for our salvation, must be added a real commitment for and with all people of good will, created by the same God and therefore united with us in the same love of the Father for humanity. All this bearing in mind that it is not a question of building a uniform and unique people, but of always having in mind the pluralism that John clearly points out to us in Revelation: “Then I heard a mighty voice, coming from the throne and saying: “Behold the tent of God with men! He will dwell with them and they shall be his peoples and he will be God with them, their God”.¹⁶

All this demands dynamic concreteness.

¹⁶ Ap. 21, 3.

2. Timeliness combined with the courage to take risks.

A sort of false prudence coupled with waiting in the hope that stalling will wear down modern society, closing oneself off in 'it has always been done this way' actually wears down not the enemy but those who would like to live in history that today runs much faster than yesterday and tomorrow will run much faster than today. In this, too, Scalabrini was a prophet: his throwing himself generously into action, his giving himself unsparingly, was sometimes mistaken for imprudence. "Oh, I understand it too," he (Scalabrini) replied,

but if one wanted perfection in human things, one would do nothing. Self-love would want its part, where God must only be sought. We work with a righteous intention: God will do. Too much prudence in doing good is not always praiseworthy. Then the first imprudent one is God, who makes the sun rise as much for the good as for the bad, and gives his enemies the means to offend him.¹⁷

Our Scalabrinian spirituality today urges us to live and, it is hoped, to live effectively and joyfully a vocation that has the world as its stage and the men and women of every language and every nation as its interpreters, through whom Providence brings its plan of love to fulfillment.

¹⁷ G. Ferrerio in Caliaro M. - Francesconi M., *L'apostolo degli emigranti*, Milano 1968, 546-547.

FOURTH PART

MEDITATIONS

MSGR. DANIELE SALERA

FIRST MEDITATION – ACTS 13

¹³From Paphos, Paul and his companions sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, where John left them to return to Jerusalem. ¹⁴From Perga they went on to Pisidian Antioch. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the leaders of the synagogue sent word to them, saying, “Brothers, if you have a word of exhortation for the people, please speak.”

¹⁶Standing up, Paul motioned with his hand and said: “Fellow Israelites and you Gentiles who worship God, listen to me! ¹⁷The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors; he made the people prosper during their stay in Egypt; with mighty power he led them out of that country; ¹⁸for about forty years he endured their conduct^(a) in the wilderness; ¹⁹and he overthrew seven nations in Canaan, giving their land to his people as their inheritance. ²⁰All this took about 450 years. “After this, God gave them judges until the time of Samuel the prophet. ²¹Then the people asked for a king, and he gave them Saul son of Kish, of the tribe of Benjamin, who ruled forty years. ²²After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’

²³From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised. ²⁴Before the coming of Jesus, John preached repentance and baptism to all the people of Israel. ²⁵As John was completing his work, he said: ‘Who do you suppose I am? I am not the one you are looking for. But there is one coming after me whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.’

²⁶Fellow children of Abraham and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. ²⁷The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. ²⁸Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. ²⁹When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the cross and laid him in a tomb. ³⁰But God raised him from the dead, ³¹and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people. ³²“We tell you the good news: What God promised our ancestors ³³he has ful-

filled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: 'You are my son; today I have become your father.'

[...] ³⁸Therefore, my friends, I want you to know that through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. ³⁹Through him everyone who believes is set free from every sin, a justification you were not able to obtain under the law of Moses.

[...] ⁴²As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to speak further about these things on the next Sabbath. ⁴³When the congregation was dismissed, many of the Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who talked with them and urged them to continue in the grace of God. ⁴⁴On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy. They began to contradict what Paul was saying and heaped abuse on him. ⁴⁶Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷For this is what the Lord has commanded us:

'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'

⁴⁸When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. ⁴⁹The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. ⁵⁰But the Jewish leaders incited the God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹So they shook the dust off their feet as a warning to them and went to Iconium. ⁵²And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

In this first meditation we place ourselves in chapter 13 of the Book of Acts. Paul and Barnabas begin their first missionary journey; they are at the dawn of their experience and are confronted with unforeseen events that demand the revision of their plans and expectations.

They find themselves in Antioch, in the synagogue; Paul is given the word and, after recalling the Lord's intervention in Israel's history, he immediately refers to the salvation brought by Jesus into history, forcefully introducing that element of novelty that was Christ compared to what was prepared in the Old Testament: "from all

things from which through the law of Moses it was not possible for you to be justified, through him everyone who believes is justified" (Acts 13:38b-39).

The success of this proclamation is incredible: "On the following Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord" (Acts 13:44), and whereas the week before everyone had been edified by the proclamation of the salvation brought by Christ into history, this time, the vastness of the consensus provokes the jealousy of the Jews who – moved by this passion and not by any contrariness with respect to the content of the preaching itself – begin to vehemently refute Paul.

Such a negative reaction could have provoked thoughts and feelings of abasement in him; perhaps in his place we would have said to ourselves, "it would have been better to use less direct words, I was wrong, my temper prevailed once again doing damage, I lost this portion of the flock that the Lord had entrusted to me, God left me alone, etc." ... So it was not! Paul recognizes that it was quite natural to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus to the Jews first, but that the objective fact of their rejection – subject to discernment by the apostle – attests instead that he will have to turn to the Gentiles. Discernment in Paul is also achieved through contact with the Word (the passage from Isaiah 49:8 and indirectly also with a reference to Mt 10 with respect to the shaking of the dust from the shoes as a result of rejection). Finally, the final attestation of a discernment well done is given in verse 52 where – even in the face of escalating conflict ("the Jews stirred up the pious women and the notables of the city and stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and drove them out of their territory" v.50) – the disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit (v.52): that is, the heart is comforted and in perfect gladness even after the trial.

Very interesting then is this passage because it describes how Paul learned to read and interpret the signs that the apostolate was sending back to him. We are at the beginning of his ministry and everything is new to him, but his reaction remains admirable, and his profile exemplary.

First of all, the central content of his proclamation is striking: everything that the Law could not give you, Christ has given you. The apostle reminds us that it is the uniqueness of Christ that is to be

proclaimed, we can communicate something else, we often communicate what we think or want, we rarely share what the Lord has accomplished in us or through us, we rarely ask ourselves whether not only the apostolate but also our inner life is still being touched by this event.

Then, what strikes is the positive response of the people of Antioch, there is a sense of liberation and consolation in the audience. Interesting for us: when one proclaims a Gospel of liberation, which coincides with the person of Christ, one no longer needs so many projects or pastoral plans.

The rejection of the Jews: again, a fact not to be underestimated. Behind the rejection is not a lack of consensus regarding the content, but a passion of the heart: jealousy. How much our apostolate and even our common life is affected!

The use of Scripture: the Word is a filter of our thoughts and feelings, it is necessary for discernment, it is a condition of full correspondence to God's plans. It also serves to send away ghosts and remind us that we are serving in the Lord's vineyard, decentering ourselves. It is also essential to remind us that God is alive and has not forgotten about us.

In our current mindset, we are rather inclined to expect everyone to believe or everyone to respond affirmatively to what we proclaim or propose: this is not the case and we must trust even this fact that Scripture passes on to us. Proclamation (and we are reminded of this in no uncertain terms by the aforementioned Chapter 10 of Matthew's Gospel, the missionary discourse), can suffer rejection, and this says nothing with respect to those who promote it even with reference to the techniques used or the content. Shaking the dust corresponds to a symbolic gesture of total separation, as if to say to ourselves, "don't fret, rather look where the Lord wants his Gospel to bear fruit."

Finally, the sign that everything is proceeding according to God's will ... let us give due emphasis to this final fact of our apostolic discernment: consolation in the heart, peace, harmony in the community, the growth of those who believe...

SECOND MEDITATION – ACTS 15

¹Certain people came down from Judea to Antioch and were teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved.” ²This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. ³The church sent them on their way, and as they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had been converted. This news made all the believers very glad. ⁴When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and elders, to whom they reported everything God had done through them.

⁵Then some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to keep the law of Moses.”

⁶The apostles and elders met to consider this question. ⁷After much discussion, Peter got up and addressed them: “Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you that the Gentiles might hear from my lips the message of the gospel and believe. ⁸God, who knows the heart, showed that he accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he did to us. ⁹He did not discriminate between us and them, for he purified their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now then, why do you try to test God by putting on the necks of Gentiles a yoke that neither we nor our ancestors have been able to bear? ¹¹No! We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved, just as they are.”

¹²The whole assembly became silent as they listened to Barnabas and Paul telling about the signs and wonders God had done among the Gentiles through them. ¹³When they finished, James spoke up. “Brothers,” he said, “listen to me. ¹⁴Simon has described to us how God first intervened to choose a people for his name from the Gentiles. ¹⁵The words of the prophets are in agreement with this, as it is written:

¹⁶‘After this I will return and rebuild David’s fallen tent. Its ruins I will rebuild, and I will restore it, ¹⁷ that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who bear my name, says the Lord, who does these things’ — ¹⁸things known from long ago.

¹⁹It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰Instead we should write to them, telling

them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood. ²¹For the law of Moses has been preached in every city from the earliest times and is read in the synagogues on every Sabbath."

²²Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas (called Barsabbas) and Silas, men who were leaders among the believers. ²³With them they sent the following letter:

"The apostles and elders, your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia: Greetings. ²⁴We have heard that some went out from us without our authorization and disturbed you, troubling your minds by what they said. ²⁵So we all agreed to choose some men and send them to you with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul— ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷Therefore we are sending Judas and Silas to confirm by word of mouth what we are writing. ²⁸It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following requirements: ²⁹You are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from sexual immorality. You will do well to avoid these things. Farewell."

³⁰So the men were sent off and went down to Antioch, where they gathered the church together and delivered the letter.

And when does discernment become communal? The book of Acts, as we mentioned earlier, has shown us splendid examples of this particular discernment experience. First of all, we emphasize its usefulness: community discernment emphasizes the charisms and ministries that animate the Christian community; it does not replace them through majority votes or motions of order. One experiences it because one needs to understand how to relate to reality or to particular events in community life in accordance with the Spirit. It is thus one of the most thrilling experiences of the intervention of grace in the daily living of Christian communities, and at the same time one of the highest expressions of human freedom. It is necessary in order to remind us that we are at the Lord's service and that He is alive and present among us. It is a repeating – communally – "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears you" (1 Sam 3:9).

It is precisely the Acts of the Apostles that offers us the biblical icons that most relate to such an experience: think of the episode of the choice of Matthias as the one who was to fill the void created by the abandonment and death of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26), or even the solution found through the election and consecration of the seven deacons to solve the problem of the inequitable distribution of aid to widows (Acts 6:1-7).

These are the passages that characterize both experiences of discernment:

- The Apostles' group needs to find a solution with respect to the newness of community life;
- A space for listening to the Spirit and prayer is added to human reflection/reading;
- The final outcome is always accompanied by a sign that confirms the success of the process (usually it is consolation and peace for the community or fruitfulness in mission with the addition of new members to the Church).

But it is in the decision-making process experienced by the so-called Jerusalem Assembly (or Council) (Acts 15) that we find the most detailed biblical icon of community discernment:

In Antioch Paul and Barnabas receive criticism from a group of believers of Jewish origin who believed circumcision was necessary to be saved. They disagree with this view – Antioch at that time could truly be considered a “prototypical community” because of the vibrancy of its church life, its fruitfulness in welcoming new members, and the variety of its members – but they realize they must come to terms with it since the issue is pressing in any context in which Christians from Judaism live alongside those who instead come from other cults/religions. The community in Antioch decides to send Paul and Barnabas themselves to the mother church in Jerusalem for the apostolic community to come to a decision on the matter. Once they arrive in Jerusalem, the text recounts an escalation of tension due to other impromptu interventions by some Pharisees which nevertheless confirms the sensitivity and urgency of the issue. Even before the Apostles – gathered together with the elders of the people – the tension does not diminish.

A calm confrontation then begins in which Peter, Paul together with Barnabas, and James take the floor. Each listens to the other. Very interesting is not only the content of their speech but the approach used, the “vision” of each that gives life to the personal contribution: Peter certainly speaks in the light of the experience of enlightenment lived first in Jaffa and then at the house of Cornelius (Acts 10), Paul and Barnabas share what the Lord has accomplished through them, James welcomes what has been said by those who preceded him in the confrontation, and finds confirmation of it in Scripture by quoting the prophet Amos. However, the latter suggests some prudential practices (related to four types of ritual impurities) that would have helped overcome hardships and scandals in the life of communities, formed by Christians of Jewish origin and others from paganism.

All the bystanders welcome the threefold contribution that, from different sensibilities and experiences, converges in not asking the neophytes for circumcision in view of faith and the acquisition of grace. They make the decision to send some of them – along with Paul and Barnabas – to Antioch with a letter clearly defining the issue. Note how the decision is made not by majority vote but through an effective consensus of the assembly. In presenting the content of the missive, verse 28 reveals itself as the heart of the “ecclesial style” that the book of Acts proposes to every Christian community: “for it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” This emphasis expresses the most authentic spirit of community discernment: the Apostles themselves do not appropriate the role and mission received from Christ but remain at the service of and listening to the Spirit, to whom they owe all fruitfulness of missionary action.

The last passage – which is also characteristic of the discernment process – is expressed by the effects that result from it; verse 31 expresses them well: “When they had read the letter, they rejoiced at the encouragement it instilled.” For when the process of discernment is carried out according to the Spirit, the community grows in fellowship, consolation dwells in the hearts of those who taste its fruits, new proselytes are added to the believers. These three effects may not occur simultaneously, but even one of them expresses God’s “yes” to what the disciples have accomplished.

A few emphases are necessary to bring into focus the process of community discernment as Acts speaks of it.

One starts with a specific issue, a problem to be solved, a novelty to be addressed for which one has no solution or has several, which would risk causing a stalemate or conflict whose boundaries will be difficult to predict.

One listens to each other calmly, giving each person a chance to express himself or herself and recognizing the role/ministry as desired by the Lord, which must necessarily be taken into account as such (Paul and Barnabas go to Jerusalem to the Apostles, they do not initiate the process alone). Moreover, it is important to note that one does not follow the paths of ideas, one does not share what each person thinks is best, one does not start from the certainty of possessing the truth, but rather – and this is crucial that we understand it well – one shares the experience that the Lord has brought about for each of the bystanders, one shares the enlightenment that the Lord has bestowed on minds, the conversion of hearts that objectively was brought about by the One who is the true “author of life.”

Listening and docility to Scripture (the quote from James) is necessary. On this point, the election of Matthias and the identification of the seven deacons bring back even more accurately the apostolic college’s need for prayer and some experience of mortification.

No vote is taken, nor is it decided by a majority vote: those who are at the head of the community are given the opportunity to arrive at a synthesis, to note what considerations generate a spontaneous consensus among the participants, and to make an experience of communion already lived here and now.

Emphasis is placed on the effect that the decision made produces in the group or in those who benefit from the final outcome, which – as mentioned above – is normally linked to an experience of consolation and/or missionary fruitfulness.

It must be said that the final resolution of the Jerusalem Assembly was not used for who knows how long in the Church or had who knows what dogmatic resonances. One will not hear much more about it in Scripture. What was important, however, was the move toward newfound communal unity and harmony; communion was defended against those divisions that were looming on the horizon.

For our meditation let us reflect on two aspects:

1. How much in our decision-making processes at the community level do we still use even some of these passages?
2. Community discernment ensures that we do not proceed according to our own patterns but rather in a mode of constant listening to God's will, reminds us finally that we are his disciples, exactly according to that process of conversion from protagonism that we spoke about in the previous meditation.

FIFTH PART

AUDIENCE WITH POPE FRANCIS

ADDRESS
OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL
TO POPE FRANCIS

Rome, October 14, 2023

Holy Father,

One year ago, you received us, the day after the canonization of our Founder and Inspirer, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, to encourage us to walk like him on the path of holiness. As a Scalabrinian family, comprised by the Scalabrinian Missionaries, the Scalabrinian Missionary Sisters, the Scalabrinian Secular Missionaries and delegates from the laity, representing numerous groups of Scalabrinian lay people and people of good will scattered all over the world who share the charism and mission we inherited from St. John Baptist Scalabrini, we have returned a year later, at the end of a journey dedicated to spirituality, to hear once again your words of encouragement.

We have in our eyes the tragic images of these days, images of unprecedented violence, ruthless hatred leading to new slaughter of innocents, images that seem to say that there is no limit to human wickedness. These images overlap with the many others of migrants – men, women and children – dying on their route to hope or colliding with walls and barbed wire against which their dreams are shattered. How to speak of spirituality when the reality is one of confrontation, hatred, anguish, blood, and death?

But it is precisely in this context of wounded and anguished humanity that we must listen to the Spirit, because we are convinced, as you teach us, that only by listening to the voice of the Spirit can we heal our hearts. If we do not allow the Holy Spirit to heal our hearts, we will never have the same feelings as Christ (Phil. 2:5) and wickedness and indifference toward those who suffer will continue to emerge from our souls.

We were guided in our reflection by the verse from the prophet Isaiah: *I will come to gather all the nations* (Is. 66:18). With confidence

in the great plan of salvation, in which Scalabrini firmly believed and in which he saw migrants involved as protagonists, we returned to drink at the well of our charism and tradition and reflected on the spirituality of the Father and apostle of migrants, whom you proclaimed as a model of Christian life to the whole Church. It is the spirituality of a man who sought to conform himself in all things to Christ, convinced that “union with Jesus Christ is a vital thing for us; taken away from him, we are dead, and dead are our things”; a bishop who loved the Church, regarded as “the masterpiece of the mind and heart of God,” a Church that “will never forget the mission entrusted to it by God to evangelize the children of poverty and labor.” The spirituality of a man whose charity had no limits, a man who considered the poor “the pupil of God’s eyes” and who, as St. Paul teaches, made himself all things to all people, but without neglecting the inner life “in which alone is found consolation, strength, inner nourishment, light, peace.” Against the divisions of his time, he always sought conciliation, but never at the expense of truth, which he always upheld “with much charity and much gentleness.” The spirituality of a missionary who sought the encounter with people, convinced that it was necessary to leave the temple, but “after having drawn from piety and prayer light and comfort”; the spirituality of a pastor who knew how to widen his heart beyond the borders of his diocese “to seek new flock” among the emigrants in the American continent. Saint Scalabrini found his support in the Eucharist, his refuge in the cross of Jesus, his comfort in Mary, mother of the Church.

These days of reflection, prayer and discernment on Scalabrinian spirituality have revived our conviction and commitment to follow Scalabrini’s example of letting the Spirit be the engine of our actions. His spiritual legacy, combined with his charismatic legacy, should make us capable of welcoming to collaborate in the Father’s plan of salvation; of itinerancy, to translate the Paschal mystery of the Son into our lives and make us migrants with migrants; and of communion in diversity to welcome the new creation of the Spirit. At the service of the Word, we feel we are sent on a mission that demands of us the capacity for intercultural dialogue and that has as its ultimate goal the reunion of all peoples. We are spurred on by Scalabrini’s invitation, “love everyone, do good to all, to all without exception.”

Holy Father, our mission is getting larger and larger and, as you reminded us a few years ago, we are too few. We want, however, to walk confidently in a life lived in the Spirit, because the Spirit is the protagonist of mission. We also want to walk in a synodal way, together with the Church, the social and political actors and all people of good will committed to building the Kingdom of God. Trusting that the Holy Spirit will heal our hearts and never make us weary of washing the feet of migrants wounded and hurt in their dignity, always walking humbly with our God and his people, we ask for your fatherly blessing.

Fr. Leonir M. Chiarello, c.s.
Superior General

ADDRESS OF POPE FRANCIS

TO PARTICIPANTS IN THE CONFERENCE
PROMOTED BY THE MISSIONARIES OF
SAINT CHARLES (SCALABRINIANS)

Consistory Hall, Saturday, 14 October 023

Dear brothers and sisters, welcome!
I greet you all, pleased to meet you at the end of the Convention on Scalabrinian spirituality. You have reflected on the Biblical verse: “I am coming to gather all nations and tongues” (Is 66:18), a theme that is very meaningful for your charism. Indeed, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, who founded you as missionaries for migrants, taught you, in taking care of them, to consider yourselves brothers and sisters, walking towards unity, according to the heartfelt words of Jesus’ priestly prayer (cf. Jn 17:20-23).

Let us be clear: migrating is not a pleasant pilgrimage in communion; it is often an ordeal. And, just as every person the right to migrate, so too they have the right to be able to stay in their own land and live there in peace and dignity. Yet the tragedy of forced migrations caused by wars, famine, poverty and environmental hardship is there for all to see today. And this is precisely where your spirituality comes in: how do you dispose your heart towards these brothers and sisters? With the support of which spiritual path?

Scalabrini helps us, precisely by looking at the missionaries of migrants as cooperators of the Holy Spirit for unity. His is an enlightened and original vision of the migratory phenomenon, viewed as a call to create communion in charity. While still a young parish priest, he recounts finding himself, at Milan Central Station, in front of a mass of Italian migrants leaving for America. He recounts seeing “three or four hundred poorly dressed individuals, divided into different groups. On their faces [...] furrowed by the premature wrinkles that deprivation imprints on them, the turmoil of the affections that stirred their hearts at that moment was visible. [...] They were emigrants [...] They were preparing to leave their homeland”

(*L'emigrazione italiana in America*, 1888). These images are unfortunately familiar to us too. And the Saint, struck by that great misery, understood that there was a sign from God for him there: the call to assist those people materially and spiritually, so that none of them, left to themselves, would be lost, to lose their faith; so that they could come, as the prophet Isaiah says, to the holy mountain of Jerusalem "from all the nations as an offering to the Lord, upon horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and upon mules, and upon dromedaries" (66:20). Horses, chariots, sedan chairs, mules and dromedaries, to which we could add today boats, TIRs and barely seaworthy vessels; but the destination remains the same, Jerusalem, the city of peace (cf. Ps 122:3-9), the Church, the home of all peoples (cf. Is 56:7), where the life of each is sacred and precious. Yes, for Scalabrini this Jerusalem is the Catholic, that is, universal, Church; and she is such because she is "mother", because she is a city open to anyone seeking a home and a safe harbor.

And here there is a first appeal to us, to cultivate hearts that are rich in catholicity, that is, desirous of universality and unity, of encounter and communion. It is the invitation to spread a mentality of proximity – "proximity", this key word, is the style of God, who always makes himself close - a spirituality, a mindset of care and welcome, and to make "the civilization of love" grow in the world, in the words of Saint Paul VI (Homily for the solemn closing rite of the Holy Year, 25 December 1975). However, it would be somewhat utopian to claim that all this can be achieved by human forces alone. Instead, it is a matter of co-operating with the action of the Spirit, and therefore of acting in history under the guidance and with the energy that comes from God: of allowing ourselves to be conquered by his infinite tenderness to feel and act according to his ways, which are not always our ways (cf. Is 55:8), to recognize him in the stranger (cf. Mt 25:35) and to find in him the strength to love freely. The stranger. Let us not forget these three words from the Old Testament: the widow, the orphan, and the stranger. And this is an important thing in the Old Testament: the stranger.

And here is the second appeal that the Bishop Saint of Piacenza makes to us, when he insists on the need for the missionary to have a relationship of love with Jesus, the Son of God Incarnate, and to

cultivate it especially through the Eucharist, celebrated and adored. I emphasize this word “adored”. I think we have lost the sense of adoration. And we have prayers to do something or... beautiful prayers, but... in silence, adoring. The modern mentality has taken this sense of adoration away from us a little bit. Rediscover it, please, rediscover it.

We know how much Scalabrini loved Adoration, to which he devoted himself even at night, despite his tiredness from his exhausting work schedule, and which he did not renounce during the day, even in his busiest moments. He had no illusions: without prayer there is no mission! He said: “[Do not] allow yourselves to be led astray by a certain mad desire to help others, neglecting yourselves [...]. It is right that you make yourselves all things to all men; but [...] remember the Angels who in Jacob’s Ladder ascended to God and descended to earth [...]. For you, too, are Angels of the Lord” (Final address to the Diocesan Synod of Piacenza, 4 September 1879). To ascend to God is indispensable to then know how to descend to the ground, to be “angels from below”, close to the least: it is no coincidence that Jacob’s ladder (cf. Gen 28:10-22) is depicted right in the centre of Scalabrini’s episcopal coat of arms.

Therefore, dear sisters, dear brothers, here is an invitation to renew your commitment to migrants, and to root it increasingly in an intense spiritual life, following the example of your Founder. Along with this, though, I want to say a big thank you to you, a very big thank you for the great deal of work you do throughout the world! Since the times of Buenos Aires I am a witness to this work, and you do it so well. Thank you, thank you very much! Keep going, God bless you. And pray. And also, pray for me, because this “profession” is not easy!



From the Vatican, October 16, 2023

Dear Brother,

I would like to thank you for your kind letter of October 14 and for the contribution that, on behalf of the Missionaries of St. Charles, you made to me for works of charity.

I greatly appreciated your gesture of concern for the poor and the words with which you accompanied it. Go forward with joy. I assure you of my spiritual closeness.

Invoking the protection of the Blessed Virgin, I heartily bless the entire Scalabrinian family. Please continue to pray for me.

Fraternally,

Francis

Rev. Fr Leonir M. Chiarello, cs
Superior General of the Missionaries of St Charles

SIXTH PART

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The conference, requested by the 15th General Chapter, was organized in Rome at the International College of St. Lawrence of Brindisi of the Capuchin Friars Minor from October 9 to 14, 2023. The verse from Isaiah (66:18), “I will come to gather all nations,” was chosen as the theme of the conference to emphasize that all of us, with our peculiarities and differences, which harmonize in relationships set on the basis of intercultural dialogue, are moving toward the fulfillment of God’s plan of salvation on all humanity, that plan in which migrants are also actively involved, as Scalabrini taught us.

Sixty-seven delegates from the various regions/provinces attended the conference, including a representation of lay Scalabrinians, Scalabrinian missionary sisters and Scalabrinian secular missionaries.

1. THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference began with a reflection on spirituality, which invited us to seek new wells and new paths, but without forgetting to drink from the well of our tradition. The presentation on diversity, a gift of the Spirit, emphasized that “interculturality is not a content or technique to be learned but a process of personal and communal transformation. It is not just the experience of diversity as mutual enrichment but it leads to transcending diversity (as divisive) toward greater inclusion and union.”

After a clarification of the notion of spirituality and the cross-cultural dimension of spirituality, we heard how Jesuits and Xavierians moved from the spirituality of the Founder to the spirituality of the Institute. Decisive were the constitutions, which gave substance to the Founder’s spirit, and the process of discernment, which led to the identification of constants found in the spirituality of the Founder and of the Institute.

The testimonies of lay people in the four areas of the Congregation, and that of the Scalabrinian secular missionaries, the Scalabrin-

ian missionary sisters and the Scalabrinian missionaries illustrated how Scalabrinian spirituality is currently lived out. It was noted that in the commitment to mission there is joy in living the Scalabrinian charism and joy in seeing how relevant it is. Scalabrinian devotions continue to be a point of reference both personally and communally. At the same time, however, uncertainty has been noted in specifically identifying Scalabrinian spirituality, the lack of shared expressions of this spirituality, and sometimes even the little spiritual support that is offered to those engaged in mission.

An attempt was made to identify the essential elements that characterized Scalabrini's spirituality (a Christocentric, ecclesial, communion, self-giving, missionary spirituality) and how these elements survive in the Scalabrinian spirituality. This path was synthesized in the past by the three Institutes in the basic text of *Traditio*, formulated in the year 2000 and revised in 2021. It is, however, a process always in progress. To the dimensions of welcome, itinerancy and union in diversity, which refer back to the Trinity, it is appropriate to add also the dimensions of charity and missionary spirit, so as not to lose these aspects that were so important in Scalabrini's spiritual experience. In order to be faithful and creative in the process of identifying Scalabrinian spirituality, it is necessary to keep Scalabrini's charismatic inheritance in relation with spiritual inheritance, so as to allow the charism to connote spirituality in the expressions of the various historical periods in which one lives and the various contexts in which one is sent on mission, and the spirituality to render mission as an action of the Spirit that leads to the transformation of life, community and society. In the ongoing process of appropriating the spiritual legacy of the Founder, it is necessary to equip oneself with an appropriate pedagogy, both in the period of initial formation and in the period of ongoing formation.

The testimonies on the journey made in the various areas from the 1996 conference to the present day have brought out the creativity that has been experienced in characterizing the mission with the connotations of the Scalabrinian tradition, including through meetings, conferences, animation programs, liturgies, prayers, performances, and songs. The Scalabrinian year and the event of Scalabrini's canonization have led to greater interest in the figure of the Founder

and specific initiatives to make him known. It has been noted that often the laity, sometimes with heroic testimonies, were the ones who have emphasized the belonging to the Scalabrinian charism and adherence to the Scalabrinian identity, those laity who ask for a greater contribution from religious in sharing the sources of spirituality.

The difficulties in living intercultural dialogue and the inspiration to move toward a more harmonious path in both the community and pastoral spheres were the subject of two meditations, in which, starting from chapters 13 and 15 of the Acts of the Apostles, the aspects that must be present in the apostle's discernment and in community discernment in view of a mission guided by the Spirit were illustrated.

2. SOME HIGHLIGHTS THAT EMERGED FROM THE WORKSHOPS

We cannot do justice in a few lines to the richness that emerged in the group discussions, made up of sharing, suggestions, testimonies. We report only a few expressions among many.

- Scalabrinians are custodians of differences, capable of welcoming and accepting differences.
- More than looking for answers in the journey with migrants, with all their differences, it is important to stay on the journey together with them.
- The encounter with the migrant, to be a true spiritual encounter, requires the ability to make space in us, and thus the ability to empty ourselves, to kenosis, and the ability to allow ourselves to be transformed.
- An authentic spirituality asks to avoid certain negativity, e.g., indifference, paternalism, welfarism, utilitarianism, passivity, tolerance, self-referentiality.
- Personal growth in Scalabrinian spirituality is necessary, so as to spread it by speaking to what is in one's heart.
- What feeds our spirituality? It seems that Scalabrini's devotions remain the most common reference. At the same time, other forms of prayer closer to contemporary sensibilities have developed in

- the Church, and others can be sought. However, there is no convergence on which form of prayer unites and characterizes us.
- We need to be careful of the dispersion to which migrants lead us when the interior life is neglected lest we run the risk of losing the center of convergence that is Christ. It is necessary to leave the sacristy but not without first contemplating Christ.
 - The symposium was a step forward because it forced us to become aware of the relevance of the spiritual dimension in our missionary action, both on a personal and community level and drew attention to the importance of intercultural dialogue in our communities and mission. It was pointed out that our spirituality is a mosaic of elements still unfinished. There is an attempt at synthesis, which still needs to be reflected upon. However, we must remember that spirituality is a gift we have received and for which we must be grateful, remaining faithful but also allowing ourselves to be carried by the creativity of the Spirit.
 - The vitality of the assembly, the desire to go deeper, the heterogeneity of experiences, the testimonies of the laity were an unexpected richness. Perhaps the testimony of some migrants would have made an additional contribution.
 - It struck that Scalabrinian spirituality is alive and embraces a larger horizon than we think. The variety of origins and the many faces of the Congregation were striking. What divides us is not cultural diversity. Striking was also the interaction among the participants, the bonds created, the experiences of giving in service to migrants.
 - The laity asked that they be given more space and the opportunity to meet, to get to know each other, and to promote spirituality.
 - We need to be a bridge between languages, cultures, different ways of doing pastoral care. But above all, we need to be a bridge among each other.
 - It is necessary to bring back what we have experienced in the various local contexts so that the same path is taken locally as well.
 - Spirituality must permeate all dimensions of what we do, including administrative action.

- Spirituality must be embodied. In this process it is necessary to make room for cultural diversity within ourselves and in our mission so as not to impoverish it.
- The basic text of the *Traditio* must be rediscovered and enhanced, making it a source for personal meditation and communal reflection.

3. INITIATIVES TO DEEPEN AND SPREAD SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

PERSONAL INITIATIVES

- To know and deepen the reference texts: writings by Scalabrini and texts by and about Scalabrinian spirituality (e.g., the basic text of the *Traditio*).
- Transmitting Scalabrinian spirituality through pastoral action.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

- Enhance occasions when Scalabrinian spirituality can be transmitted, e.g., liturgical feasts in memory of St. G. B. Scalabrini, St. Charles, Blessed Mother Assunta.
- Promote an intercultural approach to the various feasts that are celebrated (peoples' feasts, feasts of patron saints, Marian feasts, cultural celebrations).
- Ensure that in pastoral contexts (parishes, missions, houses for migrants...) there is identification with the congregation, through posters, images, distribution of literature...
- Adopt the habit of reciting the prayer to Scalabrini together every day.

AT THE REGIONAL/PROVINCIAL LEVEL

- Organize a spirituality congress at the regional/provincial level.

AT THE GENERAL LEVEL

- Establish a spirituality center at the general level in the Motherhouse in Piacenza and spirituality centers at the regional/provincial level with the tasks of producing specific materials and organize initiatives such as spiritual exercises, retreats, etc. See that this is dealt with at the next General Chapter.
- Ensure that the initial formation program develops in its various stages the theme of Scalabrinian spirituality.
- Organize ongoing formation initiatives on the theme of Scalabrinian spirituality.
- Give a Scalabrinian characterization to the 30-day exercises before perpetual profession.
- Choose an annual theme for reflection and deepening on Scalabrinian spirituality.
- Develop a calendar of Scalabrinian spirituality, in which a theme related to Scalabrinian spirituality is chosen in each month.
- Train people to study Scalabrinian spirituality.
- Translate into other languages the material that is currently available only in Italian.
- Make an in-depth study of Scalabrini's vision of the laity and invest in the formation of the laity.
- Have international meetings of young Scalabrinians.
- Have a common approach of the three Institutes in some specific initiatives.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Heartfelt thanks to the confreres who translated the written texts, who were available for simultaneous translations during the conference, and who took care of all the logistical and technical organization, as well as to those who spread the conference proceedings on social media.

SYMPOSIUM ON SCALABRINIAN SPIRITUALITY

I will come to gather all peoples (Is. 66:18)

Rome - S. Lorenzo da Brindisi Inter. College, October 9-14, 2023

PROGRAM

MONDAY, OCT. 9

Afternoon: Arrival, registration, settling in
6:30 p.m. Liturgy: by the Secretariat
(theme: *welcoming*)
8:00 p.m. Dinner
9:00 p.m. Welcome evening

TUESDAY, OCT. 10

Morning 7:30 a.m. Holy Mass
9:00 a.m. Greeting by the Superior General
Presentation: **What is spirituality?**
Cristina Simonelli, professor of patristic theology in
Verona and Milan
11:00 a.m. Presentation: **Diversity, Gift of the Spirit.**
For an intercultural spirituality
Sr. Anna Damas, SSpS, General Administration
1:15 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon: 3:30 p.m. Encountering other spiritualities
- Ignatian spirituality
P. Paul Rolphy Pinto, SJ, Pontifical Gregorian
University, Institute of Spirituality
- the Xaverian spirituality
P. Faustino Turco, SX, Postulator
5:30 p.m. Workshop
7:00 p.m. Liturgy: Province of St. Frances Cabrini
(theme: *diversity*)
8:00 p.m. Dinner
9:00 p.m. Presentation of the Regions/Provinces

PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 11

- Morning 7:30 a.m. Holy Mass
9:00 a.m. **How is Scalabrinian spirituality lived out?**
Lay testimonies
- Australia and Asia: *John Calabrese*
- South America: *Katya Johanna Valdés Guralnick*
- North America: *Matthew De Carolis*
- Europe and Africa: *Emanuele Selleri*
11:00 a.m. **How is Scalabrinian spirituality lived out?**
Testimonies of
- secular missionary: *Agnese Varsalona, mss*
- Scalabrinian nun: *Sr. Ana Paula Ferreira da Rocha, mscs*
- Scalabrinian missionary: *Fr. Isaia Birollo, cs*
1:15 p.m. Lunch
- Afternoon: 3:30 p.m. Workshop
sharing of personal testimonies
5:30 p.m. Plenary session - report on the workshop
7:00 p.m. Liturgy: Our Lady Mother of Migrants
Region (theme: *encounter*)
8:00 p.m. Ethnic dinner: Churrasco

THURSDAY, OCT. 12

- Morning 7:30 a.m. Holy Mass
9:00 a.m. Presentation: **Scalabrini's spiritual legacy**
P. Graziano Battistella, cs
11:00 a.m. Presentation: **Development of
Scalabrinian spirituality from 1996 to 2023**
Australia and Asia: *Fr. Edwin Corros, cs*
South America: *Fr. Alfredo Gonçalves, cs*
North America: *Fr. Miguel Alvarez, cs*
Europe and Africa: *Fr. Mario Toffari, cs*
1:15 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon: 3:30 p.m. Workshop: *how to grow and express Scalabrinian spirituality and post-convention initiatives*
 5:00 p.m. Plenary session: report on the workshop
 7:00 p.m. Liturgy: Province St. Charles and St. John the Baptist (theme: itinerancy)
 8:00 p.m. Dinner
 9:00 p.m. Performance by ScalaMusic

FRIDAY, OCT. 13

Morning 7:30 a.m. Holy Mass
 Spiritual retreat: *Msgr. Daniele Salera*, auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Rome
 9:00 a.m. First meditation
 11:00 a.m. Second meditation
 12:15 a.m. Eucharistic adoration
 1:15 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon: 3:30 p.m. Workshop: Evaluation
What I expected, what impressed me, what I take away - Post-conference suggestions
 4:15 p.m. Plenary session: report on the workshop
 5:30 p.m. Summary: *Fr. Graziano Battistella*, cs.
 6:00 p.m. Liturgy: St. J. B. Scalabrini Region (theme: *universality*)
 Reflection by *Bishop Ambarus Benoni*, auxiliary bishop of the diocese of Rome
 8:00 p.m. Dinner

SATURDAY, OCT. 14

Morning Departure for audience with the pope, which will be at 10:00 a.m.
 11:30 a.m. Closing Mass
Fr. Leonir Chiarello, cs, Superior General
 1:15 p.m. Lunch

PARTICIPANTS

General Administration

1. Fr. Leonir Mario Chiarello, *General Superior*
2. Fr. Giovanni Borin
3. Fr. Mariano Cisco
4. Fr. Mario Geremia
5. Fr. Graziano Battistella

General Secretariat for Religious Life

6. Fr. Tran Van Thiet, *Province of St. Frances Cabrini*
7. Fr. Barley Kiweme Ekwa, *Region St. J. B. Scalabrini*
8. Fr. Maurizio Maifredi, *Province of St. Charles Borromeo*
9. Fr. Giovanni Bizzotto, *Province of St. John the Baptist*
10. Fr. Alejandro Cifuentes, *Region O. L. Mother of Migrants*
11. Fr. Isaia Birollo, *guest speaker*

Province of Saint Frances Cabrini

12. Fr. Martín Ignacio Gutiérrez R.
13. Fr. Luciano Toldo
14. Fr. Edwin Corros D.
15. Fr. Heribertus Mangkur
16. Fr. Tran Quoc Bao
17. John Nazareno Calabrese

Region Our Lady Mother of Migrants

18. Fr. Alexandre Biolchi de Nardi
19. Fr. Ildo Griz
20. Fr. Alfredo José Gonçalves
21. Fr. Genoir Pieta
22. Fr. Agenor Sbaraini
23. Fr. Nguyen Van Hoach
24. Fr. Dominikus Ratu
25. Fr. Carlos Alberto Villar Ospina
26. Fr. Jean Gaby Louis
27. Fr. Alcides Salinas Sosa

PARTICIPANTS

28. Katya Johanna Valdés Guralnick
29. Lorena Teresa Elina Mirábile
30. Viviane Aparecida da Silva
31. Juliano Cupini

Province of St. John the Baptist

32. Fr. Juan Miguel Alvarez G.
33. Fr. Leandro Fossá
34. Fr. Marcos M. Lopez B.
35. Fr. José Juan Cervantes
36. Fr. Giuseppe Durante
37. Matthew De Carolis
38. Wilson Lemus

Province of St. Charles Borromeo

39. Fr. Horécio Carlos Anklan
40. Fr. Jefferson Orlando Bariviera
41. Fr. Lino García Ayala
42. Fr. Gustot Lucien
43. Fr. Marcio Toniazzo
44. Vanessa Russo
45. Adriana Camacho Sabogal

Region St. John Baptist Scalabrini

46. Fr. Mauro Lazzarato
47. Fr. Carlos Caetano Dias
48. Fr. Marcos Donato Fuentes
49. Fr. Ronan Jotoiot Ayag
50. Fr. John-Anderson Vibert
51. Fr. Mario Toffari
52. Fr. Jonas Donassollo
53. Fr. Truong Quang Phu
54. Fr. Jovannie Postrano Serrano
55. Fr. Filippo Ferraro
56. Inês Simões
57. Lucia Funicelli

58. Emanuele Selleri
59. Calogero Marturana

Missionary Sister of St. Charles Borromeo - Scalabrinians

60. Sr. Ana Paula Ferreira da Rocha
61. Sr. Giuliana Bosini
62. Sr. Luiza Dal Moro
63. Sr. Analita Candaten

Scalabrinian Secular Missionary Women

64. Regina Widmann
65. Agnese Varsalona
66. Anna Fumagalli
67. Mirella Martin
68. Filomena Marro.

