



Evolution of the Mission of the Scalabrinian Congregation

Velasio de Paolis, c.s.



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INTRODUCTION

I deem it necessary to introduce some observations to state precisely the object and the method of this study. In our Rules of Life, we often find the recurring theme of the “mission of the Congregation” (cf. e.g., No.1, 2, 20 etc.), and it is defined in relation to the mission of the Church and therefore the mission of Christ. The field of this mission is specified - among the migrants; the religious consecration of its members is indicated as the essential dimension within which this mission is realized; the role of the ethnic rapport between the missionary and the people who are served by that mission is specified; the concept of migrant is made clear; the means through which that mission is carried out in the concrete reality are indicated, etc.

To speak of the Congregation's mission means practically to speak of the charism itself of the Congregation or, according to the language of Canon 578 of the new Code of Canon Law, of the patrimony itself of the Institute. Evidently, we shall not be able to deal with all these aspects with equal attention and extension; and so, we shall have to dwell in a particular way upon the two fundamental aspects: the people to be served by this mission and the religious consecration of the members of the Congregation.

The word *evolution* in our title might carry us to a study which is prevalently of a historical character; and, we shall have to keep in mind the evolution which this mission, in the wide sense of the word as we have mentioned, has undergone along the course of its years. Our attention however, even though it must start with history, will not intentionally dwell on it. The historical facts seem to be well known by this time, at least in their essential points; however, it seems to me more urgent that we reflect upon the historical data from a theological perspective - a reflection made in the light of faith.

In fact, to speak of the charisma or the patrimony of an institute does indeed recall facts and human events, but above all it means reading these facts in the light of a design of God. In fact, the charisma of an institute, particularly insofar as the religious consecration is concerned, is an event which sinks its roots in God and in the action of His Holy Spirit who continuously guides the Church and enriches her with hierarchical and charismatic gifts. He is always raising up new religious families for the good of the Church itself. The Founders, or the Founder, are only instruments of the Holy Spirit, it is therefore indispensable that we read with faith and conviction if we want to grasp the real importance and significance of the happenings which regard the life of our Congregation. From a purely human and historical level our reading must always rise to that superior level which is the invisible level of faith; and only there, even though it be in a limited manner, can we understand the divine design, its significance, its message, and the actuality it can still have for us today.

The internal sources of the Institute which we shall use are the following:

1. The Plan for an association for the purpose of providing for the spiritual needs of the Italians who have emigrated to the Americas, prepared by Our Founder for the Holy See, dated February 16, 1887.
2. The Apostolic Brief of approval of Leo XIII, dated November 25, 1887.
3. The Rule of 1888: “Rules of the Congregation of Missionaries for the Emigrants.”
4. The Rule of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants, 1895.
5. The Rule of the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants, September 24, 1906, approved in 1908.
6. Statutes of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants, 1925.
7. Constitution of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants (Scalabrinians), 1936.
8. Constitution of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants (Scalabrinians), 1948.
9. Modification and Widening of the Scope by the Sacred Concistorial Congregation, with a letter of November 28, 1966.
10. Constitution “Ad Experimentum” of 1972.
11. The Rule of Life, approved November 4, 1981.

Why did I choose these documents and not others? We shall divide our exposition in three parts:

1. The people who are served by our Mission.
2. The religious consecration in our Congregation.
3. Concluding reflections of a general nature.

I THE PEOPLE WE SERVE

The Rule of 1888, No. 2, presents the scope of this newborn institution in this manner:

“The scope of this Congregation is that of keeping the Catholic Faith alive in the hearts of our fellow citizens who have emigrated, and to procure, insofar as it is possible, their civic and economic welfare.”

The scope is expressed in the same words in the Rule of 1895, No. 2; and there are no doubts or irresolution about this expression of the scope after the death of the Founder. The Rule of 1908, No. 2, repeats this as the scope of the Congregation in the same words of the Rule of 1888. The modification adopted in the Statutes of 1925 are minor. No. 2 of these 1925 Statutes reads:

“The scope of this Pious Society is that of maintaining the Catholic Faith alive in the hearts of the Italian Emigrants, to procure their spiritual welfare and, insofar as it is possible, their temporal welfare.”

We shall see further on the significance of such a change.

The Constitutions of 1935 and 1948 express themselves in an identical manner. We read in their No. 2:

“The purpose of the Pious Society is twofold. The general purpose is that of the sanctification of its members through the observance of the three simple vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, according to the [resent Constitution. The particular purpose is that of maintaining the Catholic Faith alive in the hearts of the Italian Emigrants and their descendants, to procure their spiritual welfare and, insofar as it is possible, also their temporal welfare.”

These Constitutions add a word of a certain importance: “their descendants” are expressly named without specifying up to what point.

The problem of the scope had remained substantially tranquil in the Institute for over fifty years, but it emerged with particular vigor in the 1950's and 1960's. That which contributed to the raising of the question was not the changes occurring in the phenomenon of migration but the opening of our seminaries outside of Italy and their consequent recruiting of vocations among the children of the Italian Immigrants.

New groups of migrants began to appear on the scene who found themselves in the same situation as that of the Italians for whom Bishop Scalabrini had founded the Institute of the Missionaries of St. Charles. Was the foundation of Bishop Scalabrini to remain tied only to the pastoral care of the Italians and their descendants or was it to be opened also to other groups of migrants, and if so, in what manner? Let us remember that in the meantime the Scalabrinian Congregation had been called upon to work among the Italian Migrants in Europe, and this had not caused serious problems regarding the interpretation of the Congregation's scope.

The General Chapter of 1963 judged that the study and the revision of the scope of the Congregation was urgent and was not to be delayed. Some of the Chapter Fathers proposed that the question be referred to a post capitular commission which would study the problem and present its conclusions to the next Chapter. An objection was made that just such a solution had already been recommended by the preceding Chapter - and nothing had been done about it. The ensuing discussion served to indicate that the problem had really been a vital one for some time and a clarification was needed. A compromise was arrived at between the two opinions:

1. Let a Commission be set up to study the question, and
2. Let the chapter say a definite word the matter.

The Chapter was to lay down the guidelines for a solution; and the subsequent Commission, responsible to the General Administration, was to work out the technical formulation which would resolve the juridical and moral problems; and all this was to be submitted for the necessary approval of the Holy See.

The formula drawn up by the Commission was first submitted to the Assembly of Provincial Superiors in 1966, and was then presented on September 7, 1966, for the approval of the Sacred Consistorial Congregation which was the competent authority for us. In this proposal Article 2 of our Constitution was reformulated in this manner:

“The scope of the Congregation is above all, just as in all the other religious congregations, the sanctification of its members through the observance of the three simple vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience, according to the present Constitution. The Scalabrinian Congregation puts this scope into practice in its own way through its apostolate which is directly or indirectly in favor of the Italian Emigrants and their descendants, and of all those who present analogous pastoral needs regardless of whatever migratory cause and wherever they may be.

“The Scalabrinian Religious can likewise be involved in other apostolic activities which in the judgment of their competent Superiors are considered relevant and useful for the Church or of great interest for the life of the Congregation.”

Limiting our observations to the second part which regards the people we serve; such a formulation contains some elements of a certain importance:

1. It speaks of a direct or indirect apostolate among Italian Emigrants.
2. It retains the explication “and their descendants.”
3. We point out above all the addition which has two parts:
 - a) All those who present analogous pastoral needs wherever they may be.
 - b) All those who for whatever migratory cause present analogous pastoral needs.
4. “Other apostolic activities” are spoken of, so these are distinct from those previously mentioned, i.e., direct, and indirect apostolate, for whatever nationality and for whatever migratory cause.

We make this annotation that in such a formulation there is an extension of the scope, but there is a priority listed. The original scope remains - the Italian Emigrants and their descendants - which is like the principal analogue; and the scope of the Congregation is extended to the other groups insofar as “they present analogous pastoral needs.”

To those who were seeking to remove the mention of “Italians” in the new formulation it was pointed out that in that case they would not be dealing with a widening of the scope but simply with a change. This would be going beyond the Chapter decisions, against the practice of the Holy See, and this would create delicate moral and juridical problems for those who had made their religious profession according to the Constitution of 1948.

The Sacred Consistorial Congregation in reply had objections to the above-mentioned formulation, particularly regarding the second section, and asked the Commission “to specify who the competent authority is and to state clearly and in a less generic way the ‘other activities of the apostolate.’” The Sacred Consistorial Congregation went so far as to propose a formulation of its own:

“The Scalabrinian Religious can also be involved in other apostolic activities which are connected with emigration and which, according to the judgment of the Superior General together with his Council, and with the consent of the Holy See, maybe deemed relevantly useful for the Church or of great interest for the life of the Congregation.”

From these observations and from the proposed modification it is not difficult to surmise what the preoccupation of the Holy See might have been. This can be understood particularly from the specification that the other apostolic activities had to be “connected with emigration.” Such was the fear that the Scalabrinian Congregation might deviate from its proper scope that in the long run the competent authorities who would evaluate the other activities - although connected with emigration - are to be no other than the Holy See itself which would have to give its consent.

But this preoccupation, albeit legitimate, appeared to be excessively exaggerated and it introduced yet a new element of confusion. If the other activities had to relate to emigration, in what way did they distinguish themselves from that indirect apostolate for the migrants? Besides, did they not constitute a restriction? Did not such a formulation restrict the authority of the Superiors to the point of creating a serious obstacle to the availability of the members and therefore to the vitality of the Institute? Despite the objections of the General Administration, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation approved on November 28, 1966, the following formulation which then became definitive:

“The scope of the Congregation is, as it is for all the other religious congregations, the sanctification of its members through the observance of the three simple vows of Obedience, Chastity, and Poverty, according to the present Constitution. The Scalabrinian Congregation fulfills this scope in its own proper way by means of the direct and indirect apostolate in favor of the Italian Emigrants, of their descendants and of all those who present analogous apostolic needs wherever they may be and regardless of from whatever migratory cause.”

“Subordinately to such a proper finality, the Scalabrinian Religious can involve themselves in other apostolic endeavors which, in the judgment of the General Chapter or of the Superior General together with his Councilors, and with the approval of the Holy See, may be deemed of relevant usefulness for the Church and of great interest for the spiritual life of the Congregation.”

In the final editing, as we can see, the Sacred Consistorial Congregation did take into consideration the validity of the objections presented by the General Administration and corrected its view. The legitimate preoccupation of protecting the scope of the Institute is expressed with that “subordinately to such a proper finality” which becomes the criterion based on which other activities of the apostolate can be carried out in an altogether exceptional way.

One does not understand why such a discussion was ever started. In fact, the content of the vow of Obedience is sufficiently expressed in the terminology referring to the direct or indirect apostolate. The content of that second section which begins with “subordinately” is either included in the first part and is therefore legitimate - and we can also add superfluous; or it is not and therefore illegitimate - and cannot be posited. In truth, the cases foreseen in the second section are already contained, if correctly understood, in the first; and it was not even advisable to explicate them just so as not to create an assured confusion.

If today we wish to seek an explanation for that preoccupation, it appears to us to be a rather incidental thing, and it stems from a misunderstanding between the scope of the Institution as such and the involvement of the individual members of the Institution. We are dealing here with a distinction which has always been constant in church tradition but which, unfortunately, had become muddled in the period immediately following Vatican Council II.

Some began to think that the scope of the Institution had to identify itself with that of each individual. So, for example, there began to be discussed among us the legitimacy of the “Scalabrinian-ness” of all those who were not involved directly in the field of the apostolate for migrants. Perhaps they were involved in the service of the Holy See, or in some other activity not directly connected with migration. This was the time we withdrew our personnel from the Roman Curia, from other comparable posts, from the Pontifical

College for Migration, from the Catholic Pensionato, etc. This was the time the discussion began revolving around the legitimacy of those individuals involved in teaching posts, etc.

Other problems began to press upon us by this time. The new formulation of the scope of the Congregation had practically no influence in the life of the Congregation while, on the other hand, neither is it well known. With its *Motu Proprio* “*Ecclesiae Sanctae*” the Holy See invited the Institutes to call a special General Chapter wherein, except for the scope itself of the Institute, they were to update their Constitutions in the light of the principles of Vatican II.

In our Congregation they went so far as to discuss even the legitimacy of the General Administration's part in the reformulation of the scope since, so it was said, it would have been preferable to wait and have the Special General Chapter do it. In fact, in that brief interlude so many other problems had burst forth precisely concerning the scope that even the reformulation approved by the Sacred Consistorial Congregation was considered as no longer corresponding to the new situation.

We cannot enter the discussion which went on in the Special General Chapter which was held in two phases between 1969 and 1971. We shall glean through a reading of the Constitution which that Chapter issued, and which was approved “*ad Experimentum*” in 1972 by the Holy See, and we shall bring out the articles which significantly pertain to our discussion. We read in Article VI of the Preamble:

“In all this multiplicity of situations, we remain faithful to our specific purpose. We constantly rediscover our charism as we place ourselves at the service of those people whose conditions, needs and longings are analogous to those that induced our Founder to give origin to the Congregation.”

“Therefore, in a spirit of fidelity to the mandate he gave us and in keeping with the realities of the contemporary world, we dedicate ourselves to all those who are living outside their country or outside their social and cultural place of origin and 'because of real necessity,' require a specific missionary activity.”

Article 4 of the Constitution uses the same words to specify the people who are served by the Congregation:

“The Congregation fulfills its mission among those who are living outside their native country or outside their social and cultural environment of origin and, out of real necessity, require a specific missionary activity.”

As one can easily ascertain, there is no more mention of Italian Emigrants and their descendants on one side and then other nationalities or migratory groups who have analogous apostolic needs. Having sketched out the development of the Congregation, one is made aware that by charism we mean a dynamic reality which on one hand calls for fidelity to one's origins as expressed in the basic inspiration, and on the other hand it demands a continuous adaptation to the new reality to remain faithful to that profound interior inspiration.

It seems that that basic inspiration will have to be gleaned from situations which “demand a specific missionary activity” due to a people on the move. The possible situation comes precisely from the variety with which that movement presents itself today. Whereas at one time attention was given only to Italian Emigrants, today the field of action is extended to any migratory movement or group that shows need of a specific missionary pastoral care called for by the fact of their being on the move.

We have spoken of “people on the move” as a possible situation which must be continuously examined so that we might remain faithful to our originating inspiration; however, we must be precise. In the text of the Preamble which we referred to, our attention is called to the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* (No. 15) It is useful to quote this text in depth so as to make a comparison:

“It is precisely from this pastoral point of view with which we are now dealing that we include in the concept of people who move (migrants) all those who for whatever motive are living outside of their homeland or their own ethnic community and nosed special attention because of various necessities.”

Now under some aspects the text of the Instruction is very clear:

1. The concept of migrant is per se sociological and presents various facets. The criterion which the Church assumes cannot be sociological in the final analysis; rather, the criterion is pastoral.
2. That the criterion is pastoral is because the migrants have in common “particular circumstances of life which are greatly different from those to which they were accustomed in their homeland, with the result that they cannot avail themselves of the assistance of the pastors of the place” (ibid. No.15) because in the Church the parish is the base of pastoral attention.
3. Nonetheless, the pastoral criterion basically has determined aspects of a sociological order which are easily distinguishable: the migrants are those who “for whatever motive are living outside of their homeland or their own ethnic community.” The accent is on the verb “living” and we are not dealing with a temporary absence. The point of reference or departure is twofold: one's homeland or one's ethnic community.
4. A final aspect is that such persons are to find themselves in true need of a specific pastoral care. Such needs are deduced from the fact that they cannot avail themselves of the assistance of the pastors of the place. Nothing is said about the motives for this. It is enough that they be real objective motives.

In our Constitution the only words which remain of the Instruction are “because of real (various) necessities.” The framework which is retained as a point of reference instead is widely extended. There is no longer any talk of migrants, but of all “those who find themselves outside of their homeland or their social and cultural ambience.” It is not as though the Congregation were held to reproduce the same type of document such as is to be published for the whole Church for then it would not be at all pertinent for a religious institute that has a specific scope all its own.

The problem is not the fact that the Congregation extended its mission field beyond those indications given in the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*; instead, the problem is another one, intensely internal. The question is whether the presentation of the scope so described sufficiently clear and precise so as not to create equivocations with the danger of spreading itself exceedingly thin? In fact, to describe the Congregation's field of activity or the field of its mission by extending it to all those who find themselves outside of their social and cultural ambience of origin could create some problems.

The very concept of migrant which remains as the origin and base of the Congregation, with no break in continuity, began to become obscure. How do we distinguish emigration from any phenomenon of people on the move? Among the phenomena of people on the move emigration has its own configuration which led our Founder to investigate the need of a specific pastoral care. At any rate, from a pastoral point of view, those things especially suited for the pastoral care of people on the move do not seem to be the same for all the conditions the encounter.

The difficulty really existed. The 1980 Chapter faced the difficulty and corrected the course and indicated the solution which today we have in our Rules of Life which were definitively approved in 1981. Let us limit ourselves to an examination of the corrections that were introduced with reference to the two sections we have cited previously. We read in No. 5 of Part I, The Fundamental Law:

“In all this variety of situations, we remain faithful to our specific mission and keep rediscovering our charism, as we place ourselves at the service of those people whose

conditions, needs and longings are analogous to those that induced our Founder to give life to the Congregation.”

“Therefore, in a spirit of fidelity to the mandate he gave us and in keeping with the realities of the contemporary world, we dedicate ourselves to all those who, because of migration and out of real necessity, require a specific pastoral care.”

As we can easily note, the new element introduced is “because of migration.” The point of reference is no longer simply a people on the move distinguished by their cultural or social ambience, but distinguished because of their migrating, since our Congregation was born precisely because of the typical pastoral needs rising out of the migratory phenomenon. Nevertheless, we realize that in migration there are changing and flexible intervals, and we believe it worthwhile - even necessary - to hone the matter further. In Article 23 of the same Rules of Life we read:

“We fulfill our mission, first and foremost, among those who, for any reason, are living outside their native land or ethnic community and, out of real necessity, require a specific pastoral care; likewise, among those who, because of internal migration, live in analogous situations because of ethnic, social, and cultural differences; finally, among the seamen.”

As one can see, we have the citation of the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* in the first part of the article, and it constitutes the principle of a general rule wherein we find the pastoral notion of migrant. Further specifications are then given: first, internal migrations are considered, but only insofar as they are seen in situations analogous to migrations abroad; and finally, it indicates one category of people on the move for whom the Congregation has always given its pastoral care even though they are not included in migrations properly speaking.

One can ask what connection there may be between Article 5 and Article 23. It seems to me that we could say Article 5 belongs to the Fundamental Law and so it has a bearing of a more general law which I would call basic. There we speak only of “migrations” without further specifications of homeland, or ethnics, or cultural and social groups. The wording is willfully general: the Congregation draws its origin from the pastoral needs of migrants and must always remain faithful to such a charism. Article 23 shows what “migrations” means concretely for the Congregation today, and it could be considered an application of Article 5. However, it must be noted that the third category indicated, that of seamen, is in some manner already extraneous to the phenomenon of migration; for that category enters simply into the phenomenon of people on the move.

This might lead one to think that the migrations referred to in Article 5 could be understood in the wide sense of the word to include all the phenomena of people on the move, but such an interpretation does not seem to be tenable. If this were the interpretation, the whole mode of wording would remain incomprehensible. The truth is that it was necessary to add seamen simply because otherwise they would not have been included in the concept of migrations, in the two preceding categories. However, the fact that the three categories were specified means also that the Congregation wanted to make some precise choices and thereby avoid having its mission reduced simply to the area of people on the move.

On the other hand, we must also admit that the concept “migrations” is a sociological reality. As such it can never be taken in a definitive manner as the ultimate criterion for the pastoral work of the Congregation. Once the analogous situation of the categories of people on the move is taken as the inspiring criterion in establishing specific pastoral needs, then it cannot be excluded that, like the migrants, other categories of people on the move could find themselves in analogous situations demanding a specific pastoral care. Such categories would reenter the concept enunciated in the general principle of Article 5 of the Rules of Life. This article seems to contain a potential opening which is wider than that of Article 23. The interpretation of the Constitution is to be made above all with reference to Article 5 precisely because it belongs to the Fundamental Law of the Congregation.

From this summary analysis of the sources, we can gather the following development of the people served by our mission: we were born for the Italian Emigrants to the Americas, including also their descendants; then we extended ourselves to the Italians and their descendants even outside of the Americas; we then opened ourselves also to other nationalities and other migratory movements presenting analogous apostolic needs; whereupon we crossed over the very confines of the migratory phenomenon to emphasize the social and cultural ambience; and finally we fixed ourselves on the basic concept of “migrations” with that flexibility it has within itself since it is a sociological reality which must be interpreted in a pastoral sense.

In the meantime, other questions and other problems developed with reference to the people we serve. We shall limit ourselves to pick those which appear to be of the greater importance.

1. THE DESCENDANTS

The Constitution of 1948 speaks explicitly for the first time of the descendants of the Italian Emigrants, and this is significant: the problem faced was the question of up to what extent could our presence be legitimized and justified in a determined field of mission? What was the foundation or the criterion for deciding this question?

It is obvious that the addition of “descendants” does not constitute a great novelty. In every draft of the Rules as in the Constitutions there is mention of

“schools in which the children of the emigrants could be taught religion and also the mother language,”

as well as that of:

“sending along to studies preparatory to the priesthood those young boys of Italian Emigrants who might give indications of being called to the ecclesiastical state, and in exceptional cases to be approved by the Superior General, those young boys of other nationalities and descent who have been reared among the Italians.”

Such priests would have been used just to take care of the emigrants of successive generations. Then, as anticipated in all the succeeding Rules, the organization for the pastoral care for the migrants is such that it is not foreseen as applying only to the first generation; and we are dealing here with long-lasting structures such as parishes and schools which of their very nature are not destined to die out with the first generation of migrants.

It is a fact that the problem did not arise in an explicit manner for several decades because first the stream of migration and then the situation of the extreme weakness of the Congregation did not permit such a problem to be faced. The stream of migration at the beginning was such that the personnel was absolutely insufficient to meet the urgent needs. We know how our missionaries relinquished many of our positions even in our early days, not because the necessity or the opportunity of the missionaries' presence became less, but because the need for our missionaries was so urgent that positions which were still valid for a specific pastoral care were easily relinquished. Then when the stream of migration slowed down the Congregation found itself in an extremely weak condition and could think only of its own survival.

It is a fact that the Congregation did subsequently face the problem of assisting the descendants of the Italian Emigrants. The fact that the subject is explicitly mentioned in the Constitutions can be considered as indicating a certain change of course. While at its beginnings the Congregation did easily relinquish its positions, she eventually set herself to keeping them for a longer period. Assistance to the descendants of the emigrants was cited as its justification which was in the final analysis legitimate - but up to what extent?

We must confess that we do not find the criterion for this in our documents. Bearing in mind that our field of work used to be carried out prevalently in America, we can interpret the word “descendants” in the context which is characteristic precisely of the Americas and particularly of the United States where the Church was building itself up through the ethnic groups. The word “descendants” could then include different successive generations even if the reality of migration no longer presented a situation calling for a needed specific pastoral care. The question which could be legitimately asked is: did the Founder intend to provide that pastoral care to the migrants only if they found themselves in a disadvantageous situation brought on by the reality of migration, or simply because they belonged to a determined ethnic group? The two aspects are closely joined, but one can easily see the difference depending upon whether the accent is placed on the fact of “migration” or on the “ethnic” factor. Adding the word “descendant” seems to make the “ethnicity” prevail over the “migration” aspect.

The addition of the word “descendant” could also have a certain controversial effect within the Congregation itself which meanwhile had opened itself to the Italian migrants in Europe. There began to be heard the discussion of those who considered the role of the Congregation finished in the Americas and were in favor of a greater presence in Europe. The addition of the word “descendant” perhaps was intended to be also an answer to such a controversy: the Congregation still had a role to play in America - there were descendants there.

The Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* partly clarified the problem that could arise. It considered the migrant as a pilgrim from a pastoral point of view. Now the Constitution tells us that by “peregrinus” and “advenae” the Church means the following:

“For the purpose under discussions, under the designation of immigrants with no canonical quasi-domicile (ADVENAE) or without any canonical domicile (PEREGRINI) are included:

1. All aliens - not excluding those who migrate from colonies - who for whatever length of time or whatever reason, including studies, are in a foreign land.
2. Their direct descendants of the first degree of the direct line even though they have acquired the rights of citizenship.” (*Exsul Familia* No.40)

The fact remains that such a definition of the *Exsul Familia* (regardless of the criticisms that could be made and which in fact were made!) does not seem to have had a great influence on our situation in America, particularly in the United States. This was because the regulation of the personal, ethnic, and national parishes in the United States did not depend upon the *Exsul Familia* document (which was hardly ever applied or, even more, was ignored. The regulation of these parishes depended on Canon 216 of the Code of Canon Law which, while it forbade the erection of personal parishes without the authorization of the Holy See, forbade the suppression of such parishes without the consent of the Holy See. From a juridical point of view there was no limit of time for the personal national parishes.

Moreover, the Constitution *Exsul Familia* was revised and updated by the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* which eliminates any criterion of time or generation, and it simply states a principle of general rule:

“Thus, is confirmed the already-obvious advantage of caring for people who migrate through priests of their own language, and this as long as usefulness indicates.” (No. 11)

No. 33:1 of the same Instruction gives the criteria whereby a personal parish can be set up:

“Where there are great numbers of immigrants of the same language living either stably or in continuous movement, the erection of a personal parish can be advisable. It is to be appropriately, set up by the Ordinary of the place.”

It is to be noted that the parish, a form of pastoral care which is stable, lasting, and tending to be perpetual, is foreseen for those areas where numerous migrants of the same language have settled down; and this is without further specifications and independently of the fact of becoming a part or not of the local or particular church.

But we must return to our Congregation. In the reformulation of the scope as approved by the Sacred Congregation for Bishops (Concistorial) there is still talk of descendants, but no more explicit mention of them is made in the succeeding documents. The problem which our Congregation must face is not so much that of justifying the pastoral care given to the descendants, which no one contests, but rather the problem is that of the duration of that care.

There are places where our Congregation hangs on tenaciously to certain positions, and she appeals to the ethnic factor more than to the migratory factor. On the other hand, the pastoral problem of caring for the migrants becomes ever more urgent: the harvest is great, but the laborers are few. Is it right that the Congregation should justify our holding on to positions prevalently based on the ethnic factor when enormous masses of emigrants who are particularly poor, or who at least belong to the first generation, do not have that necessary assistance? The problem then concerns the duration of that specific pastoral care, and it concerns our staying in one determined mission, or it concerns the preference we should give to one or another category. We shall soon see how the Congregation has faced such problems and what solutions she has tried to give.

However, we do want to point out that the problem basically is to know whether the specific pastoral care for the migrants is based prevalently on the ethnic factor or upon the hardships caused by the displacement brought about by migrating. If we stress the ethnic aspect, we shall tend to prolong our stay in a determined place, and if we stress the hardship aspect, we shall tend to relinquish a determined apostolic position as soon as possible. As we shall see, it is also obvious that stressing the one or the other aspect will also have its reflections on the ethnic linguistic rapport between the missionary and the migrants.

2. THE LENGTH OF OUR PRESENCE IN A DETERMINED PLACE

One thing appears clear in the renewed Constitutions, both in the Constitution “Ad Experimentum” of 1972 and in the definitive one of 1981; the Congregation favors the migratory aspect over the ethnic one. We read in Article VI of the Preamble to the 1972 Constitution, last paragraph:

“We therefore commit ourselves to transforming even positions acquired by sweat and blood, as well as the works we deem necessary to accept upon the request of the local churches, into centers of apostolic radiation and solidarity toward the needier migrants, for the purpose of inserting the latter into the new community, as well as into bases for the promotion of vocations.”

The problems which lie behind the formulation of a text such as this are easily sensed: on the one hand there is that perception that there exists a time when certain positions must be relinquished because they no longer correspond to the scope or much less to urgent needs; and on the other hand, there is a kind of justification to hold on to them: such as the reference to positions acquired with much labor, requests of the local churches, trying to insert them or transform them insofar as it is possible of activities more in line with the scope, using them as centers of radiation and solidarity in favor of the more needy migrants, using them as bases for vocational promotion.

Article 7 of the 1972 Constitution spells out the criteria for the validity of our presence in a certain place:

“The work of the Congregation in a particular place or field of activity has validity as long as it is based on the pastoral function of accompanying step by step the ongoing process of integrating a particular ethnic group into the local community, as well as of opening up the local community to the acceptance of the newer ethnic group of migrants.”

One cannot deny that the criterion offered is open to equivocation, even if the starting point is sufficiently clear: it is not the ethnicity but the insertion of the ethnic group into the local ecclesial community. It deals with the accompaniment of the ethnic group not if it exists as an ethnic group, but as long as such a group is not inserted into the local church in such a manner as to be able to make use of the arrangements or organization of church, that is the territorial parishes. The second part of Article 7 can still lend itself to equivocation: the scope of sensitizing or making the local community open to receive the new ethnic group of migrants can give rise to motives for remaining in a determined place practically forever.

The 1980 Chapter uses a language which is much clearer and precise. We find this particularly in the reformulation of the two articles we have been discussing as we have them in the Rules of Life which were approved in 1981.

1. Article 5 changes Article VI of the Preamble as follows: “We have the duty always to make sure that our existing works and those we intend to take on are truly in line with the specific purpose and vita.] needs of the Congregation.”

2. Article 7 of the 1972 Constitution is simply suppressed as a constitutional article. In its place we find formulated a norm of the General Directory, Article 31, which also recuperates in part that which was suppressed of Article VI of the Preamble. It reads as follows: “Our presence in a particular place or field of activity continues until such time as the specific purpose of the Congregation calls for it. Apostolic tasks or positions that do not fall directly within the specific purpose of the Congregation may, by way of exception, be continued or accepted upon the judgment of the Provincial Administration and the approval of the General Administration. In any case, we have the duty to transform every position entrusted to us into a center for apostolic outreach, for solidarity toward the neediest migrants, and for the promotion of vocations.”

Such an article presents delicate problems of interpretation, and it is not possible to enter these problems. The initial statement: “Our presence in a particular place continues until such time as the specific purpose of the Congregation calls for it” is per se superficial and tautological. This is precisely what we want to know: up to what point can our presence be prolonged and remain within the scope of the Institute? That which follows further complicates the matter because it speaks of duties or apostolic positions which do not enter directly into our specific scope. Does not that which regards the specific scope indirectly become part of our specific scope? Does one or can one abolish the distinction between the direct and the indirect scope, between that which attains the Institute's scope directly and that which helps the Institute attain its scope albeit indirectly? Up to what point can the indirect scope of the Institute be extended? These are the questions which we cannot answer, at least not at this time.

Let it be added finally that such an important argument is relegated to the level of a lower rank because we are dealing with a matter which belongs to a simple General Directory. Is such an article in conformity with the Constitution? If it is, why and in what sense? If it is not, what value does it have. In fact, it was not approved by the Holy See.

To try to find an answer to such problems it is necessary to go further, since the different questions are connected among themselves.

3. THE PASTORAL PREFERENCE OF THE CONGREGATION

Up to the 1972 Constitution the problem of a preferential choice is not to be found in our own laws. We speak of migrants and of giving them spiritual assistance, and temporal assistance insofar as it is possible -- without further specification. The reason for this silence in our laws can be learned, at least in part, by intuition; and I am referring to the further specifications about the poor. The migrants towards whom our Congregation turned at the beginning were simply poor, and there was not a category of migrants who were not poor. With the passing of time the succeeding generations had improved their position while other generations of migrants appeared on the scene and experimented the hardships of poverty. To this we should add the new sensitivity which had matured with the Council, and which still is kept alive because of the far-reaching problems concerning the poor.

In such a context we can understand the particular importance given to this matter both in Constitution "Ad Experimentum" of 1972 and in the Rules of Life definitively approved in 1981; i.e., regarding the theme of the poor migrants and the preferential option to be made in their favor. Since the texts we find concerning this are numerous in the two documents, we must limit ourselves to the more significant ones.

1. We read in Article VI of the Preamble to the Constitution of 1972:

"Consequently, in accordance with the will of the Church, the intentions of our Founder and the history of the Congregation, we reaffirm our preferential commitment -- from among all those we are to Serve -- for those migrants who more acutely are living the drama of migration."

Along the lines of the pastoral care to be carried out among the poor migrants we read the significance of the vow of Poverty (Article XIII of the Preamble):

"Our Founder, from the very beginning, attached special importance to the profession of poverty for our apostolic life among the migrants. Many of them live in conditions of poverty, of insecurity and of exploitation. Many are caught up in the pursuit of wealth, even to the detriment of solidarity with their fellow men. Evangelical poverty makes us sensitive to the cry of the poor, makes us witnesses of freedom before the insatiable thirst for riches, and restores a sense of humanity and dignity to work."

It is well to also read Article 5 of the 1972 Constitution:

"The Scalabrinian missionaries discover in the migrant, especially the poor and suffering migrant, a new incarnation of Christ who bound Himself to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt. As a consequence, the missionaries are present among the migrants in order to bring to salvation the whole man..."

The preferential choice for the poorest is continuously verified: (Article 12)

"The Congregation commits itself to an on-going updating of its pastoral activity so as to bring it into line with the everchanging requirements of the fact of migration and to guarantee our fidelity to the preferential choice we have made for the neediest migrants and for the migrants who might offer more auspicious opportunities for the spreading of the Kingdom of God."

Article III of the Preamble shows us that the poverty spoken of is both material and spiritual, and is described as "decisive":

"This material and spiritual poverty was decisive in his (Bishop Scalabrini) outlook on migrants, who in most cases are 'easy victims of inhuman speculation,' but who, even in more fortunate situations, are apt 'to forget any idea of the supernatural whatsoever,' finding themselves in 'an isolation that is often the death of the body as well as of the soul.'"

2. Such texts remain substantially intact in the definitive wording of our Rules of Life. Article V of the Preamble of 1972 can be found with the same words in Article 5 of the Rules of Life. The text on the vow of Poverty turns out to be lightly modified, but without contrasting variants; and this we can read in Article 12. Article V of the Preamble disappears. Article 12 of the Constitution appears lightly modified with the addition of an insertion which has a certain importance, and this becomes Article 30 in the Rules of Life, which reads:

“We engage to keep updating our pastoral activity so as to bring it in line with the ever-changing demands of the phenomenon of migration and to guarantee our fidelity to the preferential option we have made for the neediest migrants, especially those who offer more auspicious opportunities for the spread of the Kingdom of God...”

The reference to the material and spiritual poverty, the text of which is today in Article 2, last paragraph, remains unchanged.

If we compare the two documents, we find an unbroken continuity in the emphasis on the preference to be given to the poor. The definitive text appears more coherent along this line and some equivocation is eliminated. In a particular way we should note the modification which Article 30 of the Rules of Life brought to Article 12 of the 1972 Constitution, and this it does with the addition of the words “and, among these.” Where we could read there almost a parallelism of preferential option between the migrants who are the neediest and those who offer more auspicious occasions for the spread of the Kingdom of God, the definitive text establishes that the preferential option is always for the neediest. The preference for those who offer more favorable occasions for the spread of the Kingdom of God is always encompassed by the neediest. We are dealing with a further specification of the needy. The preferential option remains one.

Having considered this we can put together some guidelines which emerge from such texts:

1. Our law does not speak simply about the poor, but above all it speaks about the migrants. This is always the point of departure or the jumping-off point: “migrants” is the category in the meaning we have spoken of and which constitutes the base to determine the specific scope and the charism of the Scalabrinian Congregation.
2. Our mission is interested in the migrant because he finds himself in a particular situation of spiritual need. The migrant who is above all poor, be it in material goods or cultural, finds himself in such need. If it is true that the specific objective of the apostolic action of the Church -- and therefore of the Congregation -- is of a supernatural order, we nevertheless cannot prescind from the concrete reality. The faith is in danger especially in the one who has no defense, that is in the one who is poor. The migrant for whom the Church foresees the need of specific pastoral attention is historically always poor. If the migrant were able to provide for himself by frequenting the local church, by approaching the priest of the place, then he would not be a migrant in the pastoral sense of the word.
3. It is evident that a scale can be attributed to the “poverty” of migrants, just as there is a classification of migrants. If the migrants are normally poor, it is also true that not all are poor in the same way, just as all are not migrants in the same manner. In practice a divergence can be verified between the drama of poverty and that of migration. Normally we can say that the drama of emigration is realized more in the one who leaves his own country or his own ethnic group than in the one who moves around within his own country or among his own ethnic group. It can happen however that the hardship and poverty situation may be more serious in the internal migration rather than that abroad.

Which preferential option do our Rules of Life address? The answer is not simple, and perhaps one is not even necessary. One can give the impression of trying to make excessive subtleties. However, since the

problem is sometimes there, some clarification would not be useless even if it might appear academic. We can say:

a) First of all, we must make it clear once again that when our Rules of Life speak of this preferential option, they intend to speak always about migrants. Only these, in the sense we have tried to point out above, enter into the scope of the Congregation. Wherever the idea of “migrant” is not verified we cannot speak of the scope of the Congregation if we take as our point of reference the situation of poverty only. We must acknowledge that the field of our mission is that of migration.

b) Does the fact that poverty is tied to that of migration have an importance or not, and is it of importance that the situation of suffering and of need is the result of migration or of other phenomena? Our Founder did not have this problem because he saw the situation of the Italian Emigrants who were in fact going through the hardships of poverty and the drama of migration. It does seem undeniable that the Founder was not moved so much by their poverty as he was by the fact that they, *finding themselves poor in their migrating*, ran great risks -- especially that of losing the faith.

So, we are dealing with poverty in a specified context which is that of migration, and it is precisely this migratory factor that makes the dangers intrinsic to poverty itself break forth. The Founder did in fact found his Institute for those poor migrants who were going abroad into nations where the faith was going to be exposed to great risks.

Our Rules of life here and there emphasizes the poverty dimension to a greater extent, but always more in connection with the fact of migration. For example, Article 2 says:

“This material and spiritual poverty was decisive in his outlook on migrants....”

It is also true that the poverty spoken of immediately after is precisely that deriving from the fact or the drama of emigration just as it was being acted out and witnessed by our Founder. Article 5 speaks of a preferential option

“...for those migrants who are more acutely living the drama of migration.”

Article 30 speaks of “the preferential option we have made for the neediest migrants....”

It seems to me that there is no doubt that our Rules of Life want to emphasize above all the poverty deriving from and connected with the reality of migration which generates among other things loneliness and the danger also of losing the faith. However, the specific reason why the Church approaches the poor person is always to communicate the good news of salvation to him; and even if she cannot remain insensitive to his human sufferings, she must approach man as an objective reality. We are dealing here with a specific aspect: the Church approaches the poor to evangelize them, and by evangelizing them she also soothes their human sufferings. The Church does not approach man for philanthropic purposes and social assistance only. This indeed concerns the significance of the Church's apostolate and that of the Congregation.

The preferential option in favor of the poor certainly does not mean a discriminating choice of class. It means that the ecclesial community -- and first of all the pastors -- must have a predilection for the poor and consider them the beneficiaries of divine benevolence. It means moreover that, keeping in mind our scarcity of personnel, in the choice of the Christian communities of migrants towards whom we must direct our zeal, we must prefer those communities where the drama of emigration -- with all the hardships it entails -- is more active and a more hard-hitting fact of life.

4. THE CATHOLIC MIGRANTS

There is no doubt that there was a very definite subject in the Founder's perspective: the danger which Catholics risked in their emigrating. His thought was toward the Catholic migrants, be they Italian or of other nationalities. The proposal for a Commission "for Catholic migrants" which he presented to the Roman Curia speaks for itself.

Bishop Scalabrini writes as follows regarding his plan to find an institute for the Italians:

"It is necessary to provide for the spiritual needs of so many hundreds of thousands of our countrymen, and it is urgent that we provide for this as soon as possible. If this ever were to be delayed the damage would be irreparable. Unbelief, heresy and above all Free Masonry, which is very strong in America, will actively work to capture the mind and the heart of the emigrants. If at the present time we do not apply ourselves to the work of recalling the forsaken Catholics back to the right path, before long they will be unbelievers, heretics, Free Masons, and atheist whom we shall have to work to convert."

So, he appeals to the migrants because they are Catholic, to preserve their faith. Such an idea appears very clear from the various Statutes that have regulated the life of his Institute.

A) In the Rules of 1888 the scope is "That of keeping alive the Catholic Faith in the heart of our countrymen who have emigrated." We read the same words also in the Rules of 1895, those of 1908, in the Statutes of 1925, and in the Constitutions of 1936 and 1948. Following the insight of Bishop Scalabrini, the Church moved along these lines when she gave her directives for the specific pastoral care of the migrants. The Constitution *Exsul Familia*, the documents of Vatican II, the *Instruction De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*, and all the relevant discourses of the Supreme Pontiffs follow along the same line.

B) Nevertheless, in the Rules of Life which appeared and were approved as a final result of the whole post-conciliar movement of aggiornamento we no longer find explicitly stated such a specification. Is it because the Congregation has developed a different option, to the point of wanting to extend her pastoral activity even to the primary evangelization of migrants who are not Catholics -or even not Christians? I do not think so; however, I do not believe there is anyone among us who seriously thinks of this as a possibility, and the reasons for this can be listed in this way:

a) First of all, knowing that the mind of the Founder was so clear regarding the apostolate for the Catholic migrants, a change of such importance could not have been made only tacitly. Besides, the problem had never been discussed seriously; and moreover, we have not up to now assumed pastoral positions for the pastoral care or for the evangelization of non-Catholic migrants.

b) The whole normative complex of our Rules of Life clearly presupposes that we are dealing with a specific pastoral policy for Catholic migrants. The matter seems so simple and obvious to me that I do not think we should dwell on it.

c) Having admitted this, we cannot nevertheless forget how the phenomenon of migrations have changed profoundly today. the protagonists are not exclusively Catholics any longer, and perhaps they are not even in the majority. The phenomenon of migration today covers all the continents, all men, and every religion. This surely poses problems for the Church and for us. As far as we are concerned, I do not think we Scalabrinians are called to the apostolate for non-Catholic migrants, but neither can we be disinterested in this matter. When I say we are not called to an apostolate for non-Catholic migrants, I mean to refer to our Congregation as an institution which was born in the Church for Catholic migrants; and therefore, we must prepare our strictly pastoral structures only for groups of Catholic migrants. This however

does not mean that within those same structures we are not to act with a missionary and ecumenical mentality, or that we cannot be or absolutely should not be proponents and defenders of the rights of the migrants even though they are not Catholics.

d) The motives why I do not believe we can actually extend our specific pastoral care to non-Catholic migrants are because of the fact of our long tradition; because of our scarcity of personnel due to which we are not even in a position to cope with the obligations of the apostolate as far as the Catholic migrants are concerned; and, above all, because the pastoral work of primary evangelization involves methods and rules which with difficulty agree with those involved in the preservation or development of the faith.

The basis of pastoral care for migrants is not so much the fact of migration, but the pastoral consequences it implies -- the incapacity of communicating one's own faith and of living it out in a different cultural environment. The missionary for the migrants is necessary because the migrant, and precisely because he is a migrant, is deprived of or is in a situation of being deprived of those means which nourish his faith.

This seems to be a point we have reached which does not require documentation, whether in the mind of the Founder or in the documents of the Church. However, this does not mean that the directives of the Church do not have to take this new reality into serious consideration and find a solution for it. We are only saying that the pastoral activity for a primary evangelization is different from that which follows it up, and that at least in this case the common sociological fact of migration cannot constitute the basis for a common pastoral care.

5. ETHNIC RAPPORT BETWEEN MISSIONARY AND MIGRANT

Following the example of the great pastoral concern of Bishop Scalabrini, it is necessary to take care of the migrants "in a way that they can defend and conserve intact with diligence and firmness the deposit of faith they possess." (Plan of 1887) To accomplish this it is necessary that the migrants be accompanied by persons who speak the same language. In his Letter *Quam Aerumnosa* -- which was prepared by Bishop Scalabrini -- Pope Leo XIII writes:

"Among all these evils, however, that is by far the most calamitous which, among so many men, and in so wide and difficult a country, renders it not as easy as it should be to obtain the saving assistance of God's servants who are unable to speak to them the word of life in the Italian tongue, to administer the sacraments, or to uphold by the aids whereby the soul is raised to the desire of heavenly things, and the life of the spirit is strengthened and nourished." (ND.2)

We do not find it a theoretical matter but rather a matter of fact that priests are needed who possess the same language as the migrants. It is necessary to send priests who speak the same language to meet the needs of preserving the faith of the Italians. As the Constitution *Exsul Familia* tells us, this is a practice which the Church had initiated for a long time and which the Fourth Lateran Council had already explicitly sanctioned. It starts out from the determination of a matter of fact: the faith cannot be nourished except through priests who speak the language of the migrant: and the documents of the Church will put particularly great weight on such a principle which is per se obvious. The Constitution *Exsul Familia*, and even more so the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura*, will speak of the migrant's cultural patrimony which must be respected, and of the missionary who must possess the language in the full sense of the word to be able to fulfill his pastoral duty in dealing with the migrants.

Perhaps Number 11 of the Instruction *De Pastoralis Migratorum Cura* marks the most complete reflection on the argument in a Church document regarding its definite involvement:

“Migrating people carry with them their own mentality, their own language, their own culture, and their own religion. All of these things are parts of a certain spiritual heritage of opinions, traditions and culture which will perdure outside the homeland. Let it be prized highly everywhere.”

“Not least in its right to consideration is the mother tongue of emigrant people, by which they express their mentality thoughts, culture and spiritual life.”

“Since these last are the natural media for knowing and opening the inner man, the care of migrating people will indeed bear fruit if it is carried out by persons who know them all well [i.e., the mentality, thoughts, culture, and spiritual life] and who are fully proficient in the people's language. Thus, is confirmed the already obvious advantage of caring for people who migrate through priests of their own language, and this as long as usefulness indicates.”

From such a principle the practical consequences mentioned in Number 31 of that same Instruction are deduced. It recommends that “priests of the same language or country as the immigrants” be sought for their spiritual care. It then adds:

“Yet if particular circumstances indicate, such as an insufficient number of these priests, let the Ordinaries use the work of other priests who are versed in the language of the immigrants, and let them strive with the forces available that their new sons succeed in overcoming their crises and any dangers to the practice of the Christian life.” (ibid. No.31,2)

These directives find even further confirmation in the *Letter Church and People on the Move* which was published in 1978 by the Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Therefore, in exalting this cultural patrimony and, in particular, the language of the migrant as the vehicle for the transmission and conservation of the faith, it is clear that the Church directives see in the priest who is from the same country and who has the same language as the migrant the ideal person to provide them with that specific pastoral care they require. Only for expediency could one have recourse to priests who indeed know the native language of the migrant, but only because they learned it.

What is the significance of such directives, and, above all, how much value do they have for our Congregation? The problem practically did not exist for us until the scope of the Congregation was widened and reference to nationalities was suppressed. We are simply for migrants. With such a widening of the scope, up to what extent must we emphasize this connection between the missionary and the migrant? Must there be an effort to realize always the ideal of having a missionary with the same native language as the migrant? How are we to interpret the mind of the Church and the mind of our Founder? Do these directives have value since they face the normal facts through the priests who leave their diocese to follow the migrants, or do these directives give principles of a general rule which are valid also for religious institutes that have just this specific scope and are involved in the pastoral care of migrants?

The answer is difficult on the theoretical level, and we must limit ourselves to considering the answer we ourselves gave in our Rules of Life. In Article 6 of our Rules of Life we read:

“To appreciate these values and channel them into the building up of the Kingdom of God, while at the same time taking into account the requirements of the Congregation -which has members of various nationalities and serves people of different ethnic groups -- we put a genuine missionary spirit at the very foundation of our formation and ministry. This spirit makes us completely available not only for working outside our own native country but also -- in the absence of a natural homogeneity -- for acquiring a spiritual, psychological, and language affinity with the migrants entrusted to our care, whatever their origin.”

So, we are talking about an authentically missionary spirit which must render the missionary available to acquire a spiritual, psychological, and linguistic affinity with the migrants even if the missionary is of a different nation. On an operative level that same Article 6 offers a further practical criterion:

“On the practical level, the Congregation uses to advantage the natural homogeneity and acquired affinities of its members, because it recognizes it as fitting and pastorally effective to normally entrust the care of the migrants to those who know their language and mentality, their culture and the traits of their spiritual life.”

Now such an operative criterion does not seem to be completely clear. We are told that the Congregation “uses to advantage the natural homogeneity and acquired affinities of its members.” Putting both the natural homogeneity and the acquired affinities on the same level does not tell us whether the natural homogeneity or the acquired affinity is preferred. The words which follow would try to explain the significance of this use made of the members by the Congregation:

“...it recognizes it as fitting and pastorally effective normally to entrust the care of the migrants to those who know their language and mentality, their culture, and the traits of their spiritual life.”

The Congregation makes use of its members in this manner whether they know these things through their natural homogeneity or through their acquired affinities. This does not yet explain whether the preference is given to one's natural homogeneity or his acquired affinities. It simply states that the pastoral care is entrusted to one who speaks the language of the migrant, but such a principle should not be pronounced on an operative level. We are dealing with a principle of a general rule which is to be applied not only “normally” -- but always. How can the pastoral care of a community be entrusted to a person who does not possess the language and does not know the mentality, the culture, and the traits of the migrant's spiritual life?

If we want to give some sense to such an operative criterion then it must be understood not in the sense of giving a preference to one's natural homogeneity or to one's acquired affinities, but rather in the sense that the Congregation must prepare the missionary before she entrusts the task of pastoral care to him so that he may be suitable to the task. Where a natural homogeneity already exists, this preparation will be easier; and in the case of an acquired affinity the preparation will take a longer and more demanding period -- but the text says nothing about this.

As I have tried to elucidate in an article which I entitled “Ethnicity and the Missionary Dimension in the Pastoral Care of Migrants” which appeared in the *Quaderni Scalabriniani* (1981-No.1-2 pp.52-56), it seems to me that we have undertaken within our Congregation to prepare missionaries in the strict sense of the word, making the link of that natural homogeneity between the missionary and the migrant a relative thing. I refer you to that study paper for the reasoning.

Translator's Note: The Italian Word *missionarietà* is translated “missionary dimension” in the table of contents of the cited *Quaderni Scalabriniani*, but in the English translation (pages 116-126) it is translated “missionary spirit” -- so, take your pick! (T.F.C.)

Such an interpretation and such a practice, if introduced on a large scale, could bring us to a just advantageous use of the ethnic and national element as assigned to our pastoral work among the migrants. It would free our pastoral activity from the risk of becoming closed groups or cliques which tend to find their common ground more upon culture rather than upon faith. Along this line the widening of the scope of the Congregation clearly indicates a surmounting of our nationalistic and language barriers without injuring one's pride or self-respect. Nationalism and language are given their just functions and they can be considered the means toward higher goals.

6. MAINTAINING THE FAITH, THE SPIRITUAL & TEMPORAL WELFARE

The Rules of 1888 stated the scope of the Congregation as follows:

“...to keep the Catholic Faith alive in the heart of our countrymen who have emigrated, and to procure insofar as it is possible their moral, civil, and economic welfare.”

We find the same wording in the Rules of 1895 and 1908. The formula is lightly changed in the 1925 Statutes:

“...to keep the Catholic Faith alive in the heart of the Italian Emigrants, to procure their spiritual good and also, insofar as it is possible, their temporal good.”

We find this same formula in the Constitutions of 1936 and of 1948. The language is different in the 1972 Constitution and in our Rules of Life. Before going on to examine these last documents, let us make some reflection and annotations on the preceding texts.

The formulation found in the first Rule seems to be clear. The purpose which gives life to a new institute is eminently a religious one. The decisive element is the danger to the faith of the Italians, and because of this the planned institution is a priestly one. Eventual lay brothers were viewed in the strictly pastoral perspective of collaborators of the priest in educating in the faith. The lay brothers were seen as catechists.

Bishop Scalabrini distinguished well between the Lay Associations which had the preeminent purpose of social and charitable assistance, and the Institute of priests which had a strictly apostolic and priestly scope. So, the precise scope of the Institute is that of keeping the faith alive, and this is the supreme spiritual good. In attaining this objective however, one cannot fail to regard man in his existential being; and therefore, one cannot fail to provide him with other aids which regard his moral, civil and economic welfare. This scope then is secondary, and it will be attained “insofar as it is possible” since it was not for this that the Institute was born.

However, the other formulation (1925) can cause some difficulties. It speaks of maintaining the faith and of procuring the spiritual good and, insofar as it is possible, the temporal good. Is not the spiritual good completely contained in the maintaining of the faith? Does not keeping the faith alive plainly procure the spiritual good of the migrants? Isn't every spiritual good contained in this? Probably not.

In a language which does not seem to me to be appropriate, this lightly changed formula intends by “spiritual good” that which previously called “moral welfare,” while by “temporal good” I think they want to understand “civil and economic welfare.”

So, we would have in that first formula:

- a) “to keep the faith alive”: the goal to be attained absolutely, the goal which justifies the birth of the Institute.
- b) “the moral, civil and economic welfare”: this is to be attained insofar as it is possible -- in a secondary and subsidiary way.

For those who came into the Congregation later it must have been difficult to speak of a moral welfare which the Institute must strive after insofar as it is possible, and by “moral” welfare meaning it in the strict sense of a life of moral conduct which is derived from the faith.

So, they coined a second formula which contains the ideas:

- a) to keep the faith alive and to procure the spiritual good -- including the moral welfare: a goal to be attained in an absolute way.
- b) temporal welfare (civic and economic): to be attained insofar as it is possible.

However, it may be regarding this formulation, one thing is certain: the Institute of Bishop Scalabrini was not born as an institute which was to give itself over to works of beneficence or social assistance. It was born as a strictly apostolic institute in the sense that it involved itself in apostolic activity and normally required the priesthood to attain this goal. It dealt with maintaining and nurturing the faith through the priestly ministry, particularly through the ministry of the Eucharist and the Word of God. Even the service of the lay person in the Congregation was seen as an aid to that sacerdotal apostolic activity.

The Congregation has remained faithful along these lines in her last Rules of Life which express the same reality even though the language may be different. Our mission is above all:

“...evangelization, which aims to lead the migrants to a rediscovery of the faith in their lives. Hence the primacy of catechetical, which is necessary for a deeper and more personalized faith, as well as for the fruitful ministry of the sacraments.” (Rules of Life, Article 7)

and again:

“In our specific apostolate we give priority to evangelization, in particular, to catechetics, and we work to bring the migrants together in communities of faith, charity and worship, helping them focus their Christian life on the Eucharist.” Rules of Life, Article 24)

But such a strictly apostolic goal cannot but urge us on to:

“...promote the total salvation of the human person. So, besides spiritual assistance (Let us specify that this is precisely why we were born and therefore this is necessary and irreplaceable!) we give the migrants our human, social and cultural help, and denounce the causes of the evils that afflict them. We struggle to stamp out these causes and to foster the migrants' fellowship and involvement in the community that takes them in.” (Rules of Life, Article 7)

The new Code of Canon Law speaks of lay institutes of men and of women. It says:

Canon 676: “Lay institutes, whether of men or women, share in the pastoral office of the Church through spiritual and corporal works of mercy and offer the most diverse services to men and women; therefore, they are to persevere faithfully in the grace of their vocation.”

Canon 588 No. 3 tells us when an institute is a lay institute: “An institute is called lay if recognized as such by church authority, by virtue of its nature, character and purpose it has a proper function defined by the founder or by legitimate tradition which does not include the exercise of sacred orders.”

Our Institute has a goal which it will attain through the same pastoral plan left us by our Founder, and this requires the priestly ministry. This is to be understood in the sense that not all its members must be priests, but in the sense that the institutional goal of the Congregation can be attained only through the exercise of the sacred ministry. Therefore, the greater part of its members will assume the priesthood. The Church has recognized us as such throughout the course of our institutional life, and we are therefore a clerical institute as defined by Canon 588, No.3 of the Code of Canon Law:

Canon 588, No.2: “An institute is said to be clerical if, by reason of the purpose or design intended by its Founder or in virtue of legitimate tradition, it is under the supervision of clerics, it assumes the exercise of sacred orders, and it is recognized as such by church authority.”

Apart from those questions which could be discussed, as for example that of the governing of the Congregation, which is entrusted to the Clerics, the assertion has an importance of enormous value because it determines the field and the methods of our apostolic activity. In its institutional goals the Scalabrinian Congregation is called to exercise not any apostolate whatever of beneficial or cultural

assistance, but an apostolate strictly speaking for which the ministerial priesthood is required. Its apostolate is that of evangelization and of sanctification through the sacraments.

Again, this does not mean that each member and each activity must be reduced to this, but it means that each activity must end in view of the apostolate in the strict sense. This is the institutional scope of the Congregation. It was for this reason that Bishop Scalabrini wanted us to be an institute of priests; and as such we have always remained -- and as such we are always.

7. THE MEANS TO ATTAIN THE GOAL OF THE CONGREGATION

The question about the means which the Institute must employ, or to which it must at least give a privileged status to achieve its objectives is of great importance; and this importance results from the nature of the Congregation. In the Rule of 1888, Number 3, Bishop Scalabrini determined the means in this way:

The Congregation achieves this goal by:

- 1) sending missionaries and teachers wherever the need of the emigrants requires it;
- 2) setting up churches and oratorios in the various centers of Italian Settlements, and by founding houses from which the missionaries may spread their ameliorating activity.
- 3) establishing schools where, together with the fundamentals of the faith, the children of those who have settled there may be given the elements of our language, arithmetic and the history of our homeland.
- 4) sending those young men of the migrants who might give an indication of being called to the ecclesiastical state to studies preparatory to the priesthood.
- 5) organizing committees at the ports of embarkation and debarkation to help, direct and counsel the emigrants.
- 6) accompanying the emigrants during their sea voyage, to exercise the sacred ministry for their advantage and to assist them especially in case of illness.
- 7) favoring and promoting those associations and those works which are judged more apt to preserve the Catholic Religion and the Italian culture in the Settlements themselves.

In the Rule of 1895, we notice a single variant under No. 2: instead of “ameliorating activity” we have “sanctifying activity.”

In the Rule of 1908, we have some significant variations: under section B (2) we read “beneficial activity” instead of “sanctifying activity”; Under letter C: after the word “schools” we find this clause inserted: “when it is needed and it is possible”; the last number of the list is suppressed.

In the 1925 Statutes, under letter B, there remains “beneficial activity” and also the clause “insofar as possible”: after the word “schools.” The 1925 Statutes in this matter practically reproduce the Rules of 1908. It should be noted that in the very first number the “sending missionaries” is mentioned, but the specification of “teachers” is not.

The Constitution of 1936 reproduces the 1925 Statutes without any variation.

The Constitution of 1948 contains instead a remarkable innovation. The numeration is completely new, as for example the letter C which says:

“accepting parishes which the Ordinaries may entrust to them for the assistance of the Italian Emigrants”.

the latter F: “assisting the Italian workers who may find themselves in a temporary emigration!”.

the letter H: “accompanying the Italian emigrants as ship's chaplain during their sea voyage.”

the letter E (there is a remarkable addition here): “sending to studies preparatory to the priesthood those boys of Italian emigrants who might give an indication of being called to the ecclesiastical state, and, in exceptional cases which are to be approved by the Superior General, boys of other nationalities and descent who have been brought up among the Italians.”

We cannot examine all the motivations for the changes adopted. Some are evident in themselves. We shall limit ourselves to some remarks only:

1) Among the means indicated those are absolutely prominent which regard the preservation and the development of the faith: maintain the faith alive, send missionaries, build churches and schools, send boys to the seminary, and accompany the emigrants during their sea voyage. All this gives evidence once again of the mind of our Founder who was preoccupied above all with the faith and the sanctification of man.

2) The cultural and the social aspect of assistance are still not forgotten even if they have been relegated to a secondary level.

3) The assistance as foreseen by the Founder was not to be only a passing thing because the organizations, he foresaw were to be long lasting. He had before him the example of the Church in America which built itself around the parishes. The parish was a self-sufficient center for a complete and adequate Christian education, and here was the importance of the school. His immediate successors tried to give a new dimension to the idea of the school by inserting the clause “when it is needed and when it is possible” (Rule of 1908), or only “when it is possible” (1936 Constitution).

It is a fact that if we exclude the very beginnings when Bishop Scalabrini, because of the pressing need, dreamed of missionaries who were to be continuously traveling around to minister to the immigrants, eventually did provide for a stabilization, systemization, and organization of the pastoral assistance by means of the parish and the school.

4) It may be surprising that an explicit intimation of parishes is found only in the Constitution of 1948, and it would be interesting to know the reasons for this introduction at that time. The Institute had formed parishes from its very beginning, and it had found the fulcrum of its apostolate in the parish. Moreover, the parishes are certainly included under Number 2 of the means indicated above as we can see from the language used. Perhaps the “parishes” which the 1948 Constitution mentions are not so much and only the personal parishes already in great use in the Americas. Perhaps the term refers to the territorial parishes which have the duty of assisting all Christians of the territory, and this would also include the emigrants. It might also be the expression of a new reality which was being introduced in the Congregation and which the 1948 Constitution legitimized.

The new Constitution of 1972 and the Rules of Life of 1981 no longer include a list of the means to be employed by the Congregation to achieve her scope, and this is also true of the parts which are indicated as norms of the General Directory. This does not seem to be a good thing because on some points of great importance certain directives are highly useful. In any case, even a cursory reading of the Rules of Life will show that it is not difficult to discover the same course which we have been following. It seems to me that one could and should say what follows.

If it is true, as we indicated above, that the Congregation is a clerical institute since its scope is strictly apostolic and ministerial, that is to say sacerdotal, then it is certain that precedence will be given to those means which assure the attainment of that scope. We are referring to the pastoral forms which assume the exercise of the priestly ministry, especially the parochial form. This does not certainly mean that everything in the Congregation must be directly and immediately ordained for the priestly duty, it means rather that every activity ultimately ends with the priestly assignment in view and must be to serve that priestly duty.

Certain overtures or apertures of great importance in the Rules of Life are to be read and interpreted from this perspective, particularly those things which regard new structures within the Congregation -- and first of all the Study Centers. Article 29 of the Rules of Life speaks of such Centers. We read there:

“To study and examine in depth the phenomenon of migration and related problems, the Congregation sets up Centers of Studies for migration and for the pastoral care of migrants. They do the work of documentation and research, of analysis and reflection, from both the sociological and theological-pastoral points of view. Their nature and purpose are to be defined in special statutes.” (Article 29)

Such Centers are of extreme importance for the life of the Congregation. It is necessary that they be well fitted within the Congregation and within its scope because they are instruments to attain the scope of the Congregation. They should not be considered as substitutes for the traditional means of the priestly apostolate, but as instruments at the service of the priestly apostolate. The Congregation as such is clerical and it is involved in the ministerial priestly apostolate in direct contact with souls, and it exercises its pastoral care through its activity of evangelizing and sanctifying the faithful. However, to be able to perform such duty adequately the Congregation needs preliminary instruments which, strictly speaking, are not necessarily pastoral, ministerial, or priestly. These preliminary instruments are not activities directly and immediately connected with evangelizing and sanctifying, but they are instruments of analysis and of prior study at the service of the apostolate. Only from such a perspective do they assume all their importance in the structure of the Congregation.

It seems to me that assigning new dimensions or proportions to our strictly pastoral structures cannot be carried out in the Congregation up to the point where other structures become prevalent within the same Congregation., be it in numbers or in importance. We are dealing with an essential aspect which cannot be lost, and neither can it be eclipsed. The Founder wanted us as a community of priests.

And so, we have in this manner touched upon -- even it be only by intimation -- the most important questions connected with the specific scope of our Congregation. At the conclusion of this first part, it may be suitable to set down a first provisional conclusion.

From the analysis we have made up to this point it seems to me that we can put together the following synthesizing conclusion. The Scalabrinian Congregation locates its mission in the world of migration. Its mission extends itself even to the descendants of the migrants up to the time they are fully integrated in the local Church. Among the migrants the Congregation assigns priority to those who are experiencing the drama of migration and of poverty. Its mission is not addressed to a primary evangelization but to the preservation and a deepening of the faith. The Congregation is involved with Catholic migrants.

The motive why the Catholic migrants need a specific pastoral care or specific pastoral attention is to be found in the privations they suffer, precisely due to the migration factor. They are deprived of the help of the priestly ministry since there is no linguistic rapport between the migrant and the priest of the place. This leads to the necessity that this pastoral care of the migrants be entrusted to priests who know their language and mentality. However, the ethnic rapport between the missionary and the migrant should be viewed as a relative implement in fulfilling his mission. A Scalabrinian missionary must be endowed with

the spirit of-a total missionary availability to enter the world of the migrant, even if he is not of his own language or culture or nation.

The missionary activity is in fact eminently apostolic. It is intended to maintain and to keep the faith alive, even if must also consider the other needs of man. However, the specific activity of the Congregation is not that of assistance and beneficence. It is strictly priestly and ministerial. Even the other means that are used are to be proportioned and subordinated to such a type of activity.

II RELIGIOUS CONSECRATION AND MISSION IN THE CONGREGATION

We know the course that the religious vows took in our Congregation, so we shall limit ourselves to recall certain moments of greater importance during that historical course; but before beginning it is necessary that we make something clear. When we speak of religious life or -- especially today -- of religious consecration we cannot prescind from a question of the language employed. This is true for us today, but it was particularly true at the end of the last century when our Institute was born. From a canonical point of view the language employed at that time had a certain fluidity, and we must keep this in mind. In his doctrinal dissertation, *The Pious Society of the Missionaries of Saint Charles for the Italian Emigrants*, written in 1956, Bishop Marco Caliaro, C.S., would be of help in clarifying these concepts, but we cannot go into this question very deeply.

This observation will help us to investigate the beginnings of our Congregation without the naiveté of thinking that we shall find things as we know them today -- as though they had then what we have today, or that they employed the same terminology we use today. It is more than enough if we succeed in latching onto a line of direction which will help us at least to understand what the Founder intended to attain.

With this premise it seems certain that in the plan he presented to Pope Leo XIII the Founder was not thinking about a religious institute at all. He had in mind an institute of priests who under orders from the Holy See and the individual Ordinaries would dedicate themselves for at least a certain amount of time to the service of the migrants. Neither was Leo XIII thinking of a religious institute when he gave his reply to Bishop Scalabrini -- neither in the Audience held on November 14, 1887, nor in his Apostolic Brief of November 15, 1887, nor when he announced the beginning of the Society in his Apostolic Letter *Quam Aerumnosa* of December 10, 1888. Pope Leo said in his Letter:

“We founded, by Our letter of December 15th, last year, sealed by the seal of the Fisherman, the Apostolic College of Priests in the Episcopal See of Piacenza, under the care of the Venerable Brother John Baptist, Bishop of Piacenza, in which ecclesiastics, stimulated by Christ's love, might be practiced in those virtues and that discipline by Which they might well and worthily fulfill Christ's mission among the scattered sons of Italy, and become fit dispensers of God's mysteries.

Among the students of this college, which We wish to be considered a seminary for God's ministers for the assistance of Italians dwelling in America, we desire youths born of Italian parents even in your country to be received, provided they are called and desire to fulfill the Lord's ministry, so that when they have become priests they may go forth, under your pastoral authority, to fulfill all the duties of the Apostolic ministry as far as there is need for it. Nor do we doubt that these will be received by you with fatherly affection and will obtain the necessary faculties for the sacred ministry to their countrymen, to exercise them under the instruction of the parish priest; behold they come to you as helpers, that, under the authority of each of you in whose diocese they are working, they may give their best aid in the holy warfare.”

The Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia* refers to these documents and adds:

“Thus, was founded a new religious community, the Missionaries of Saint Charles for Italian Emigrants. The Servant of God John Baptist Scalabrini is honored as its Founder.”

Actually, neither the plan of Bishop Scalabrini nor the replies of Leo XIII speak of a religious family at all.

However, it is also true that even from the very beginning the Institute started by Bishop Scalabrini goes beyond his original plan. This is evident in the Rules of 1888:

The Rules speak of the common life to which all are held, both the lay persons and the Clerics. (Chapter II, No.5)

The common life is strongly emphasized, and again, all are held to it. (Chapter II, No.5)

All the devotional acts, and they are numerous, “are to be held in common.” (Chapter II, No.5)

The numerous novenas are to be held in common. (Chap. II, No.5)

The common life is particularly recommended in the Mother House. (Chapter II No.2)

A rigorous silence is to be observed by all after the evening examination of conscience, and “only the Rector may dispense from the common exercises for reasonable and serious motives.” (Chapter IV, No.14)

The same Rules of 1888 contain a special chapter V which is entitled “The Vows” and it states:

1. Before leaving for the missions the missionaries and the laity shall make the following vows: to remain in the Congregation for five consecutive years wherever they may be assigned or in whatever duty they may be entrusted with by the Superiors.
2. the vow of not remaining in the colonies at the end of their five years of service, and of not returning there again unless they are united to the Congregation.
3. the vow of chastity for the lay brothers; the vow of obedience to their respective Superior and to the Superiors of the Congregation, *in the manner of the Religious*.
4. the vow of poverty, inasmuch as they shall not be Able to possess, acquire or accept as their own anything except that which they might possess or could possess in their homeland.

“By this vow of Poverty, the missionaries and the lay brothers oblige themselves not to make their own any sum of money, or even any object, any movable or immovable goods (real estate), which they might receive whether in the form of a stipend, or as remuneration or even as a simple gift. or for any service they might carry out in fulfilling their office; all is to be turned over to the Congregation.”

“By this same vow of Poverty the missionaries and their coadjutors likewise oblige themselves to be content with that which is strictly necessary as to food and clothing according to the advice of Saint Paul; so that whenever they might need something in their travels or in the missions, they make it their obligation to provide for themselves within the limits of modesty and Christian frugality, avoiding whatever may be luxurious or superfluous, and economizing for the advantage of the Congregation.”

5. the lay brothers shall make a simple vow of chastity for the time they will remain in the Congregation.

6. all revenues of any kind shall be turned over to the respective Superior.

“All those admitted into the Institute must be imbued with the idea that they oblige themselves for five years to live as true religious, animated by zeal for the salvation of souls, by the spirit of sacrifice and

detachment from the goods and the glory of the world, and penetrated with sentiments of true love and unlimited obedience to the Roman Pontiff, the Superiors of the Institute and the Ordinaries of those places where they carry out the sacred ministry.”

A detailed study of these sections would carry us afar too much. In his doctoral dissertation to which we have referred, Bishop Marco Caliaro, C.S., studied these Rules based on the Canon Law in existence at that time; and his conclusion is that, as the Rules present the Institute, it is not a religious institute in the strict sense, but it is in a wide and improper sense. Moreover, the Founder himself is aware of this when he speaks of the vow of obedience “in the manner of the religious,” and when he speaks of the obligation the members take upon themselves to live “as true religious,” implying that as far as the law of the Church is concerned, they were not in fact religious. However, one can understand the Founder's tendency and will in a manner which is rather precise.

We can find a further explication of the Founder's will in the Rules of 1895; but we do not want to get into the question of the approval or non-approval of this Rule -- so it was called -- or of the objections that were brought against it. It is a fact that Bishop Scalabrini did want in that Rule the transformation of his Institute, and even if it was to be “ad tempus,” that Rule did receive in some way or another the approval of the competent authority.

We know the difficulties presented by the experts of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith but based on of the Rule of 1895 it is a fact that the Institute becomes a religious one even from a canonical viewpoint. The obligation of the common life is confirmed (Chapter III, 13), that of the novitiate (Chapter III, 10), and that of the vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience (Chapter III, 8). The Rule speaks of the “clausura” (cloister) which, differing from the Rules of 1888 which determined the clausura only for the Mother House, now

“...shall be observed ... in every House of the Mission, not admitting therein women except in the visitors' parlor and the sacristy.” (Chapter VII, No.5)

We find there, prescriptions which today would bring on smiles, as for example:

“The food will be regulated as in the Houses of Religious. and shall be alike for all. No one shall be able to take food or drink outside of the ordinary meals without the permission of the Superior.” (Chapter VII, No.5)

as well as that which prescribes:

“When leaving the House, the priests, and lay brothers, whether it be for recreation or for ministerial purposes, will take a companion along whenever this is possible, especially when they will be visiting women. In this case the companion will have to so position himself that he will be able to see, but not hear that which is being discussed.” (Chapter VII, No.27)

“No one shall accept invitations to dinner, or recreational trips or entertainments. Moreover, it is strictly forbidden to attend, in any case and for whatever reason, theatrical programs or shows.” (No.19)

“In every House the rising bell shall be at 5:30 A.M. in the winter and 5:00 A.M. in the summertime. However, whenever the need requires and with the permission of the Superior, it is not forbidden to anyone to anticipate or postpone his rising.” (No. 21)

These are apparently very minute prescriptions; and some of them will be found again or will be eliminated in the 1936 Constitution, and especially in that of 1948. It is very clear therefore from the Rule of 1895 that Bishop Scalabrini's Institute became a religious institute.

“After the novitiate, if they be judged worthy of belonging to the Congregation, the Novices shall become members with simple but perpetual vows of Chastity, Poverty and Obedience;

and these vows will be received by the Superior General or by one delegated by him.”
(Chapter IV, No.3)

We are not dealing with an unforeseen or unforeseeable transformation, but a conclusion of a course which had already been initiated in the Rules of 1888. With the Rule of 1895 this course was terminated as far as Bishop Scalabrini was concerned. He was aware of it; and, after such an accomplishment, we know the expressions of satisfaction and serenity Bishop Scalabrini indulged in when he gave his approval to the Rules of 1895.

It is true that the Holy See placed some difficulties against this transformation; but we should not forget that Bishop Scalabrini, as bishop, had according to the Canon Law of that time the authority to approve such a rule. Bishop Marco Caliaro demonstrates this amply in his dissertation.

We know that Bishop Scalabrini died before the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith gave its definitive approval to the Rules. The difficulties mentioned and the objections placed by that same Congregation never permitted Bishop Scalabrini to see his desire fulfilled to see his Institute transformed completely into a religious institute. This placed the members who had entered the Congregation first into the position of having to opt for the religious life.

Working out the objections themselves of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith and besieged by events which were perhaps greater than he could handle, Father Domenico Vicentini, Bishop Scalabrini's successor, prepared a new Rule on September 24, 1906. After an extensive consultation of the members of the Institute, and after making the needed corrections, the Rules were approved in 1908. With this Rule the Institute set out on a path which was opposed to that marked out by Bishop Scalabrini. The idea of a religious institute was abandoned, and the Institute was transformed into that type of institute which the Code of Canon Law later was to call a society of common life without vows.

We know that this juridical form remained also in the Statutes of 1925 until the Constitution of 1936 gave back to our Congregation the form of a religious institute. In fact, the re-introduction of the vows which transformed the Congregation into a religious institute had already taken place in 1934. Again, we are a religious congregation in the life of the Church. It is a common opinion that the re-flourishing of our Congregation is to be attributed to the re-introduction of the vows; and this may be true, but perhaps we need a bit of explanation.

If we should ask ourselves why Bishop Scalabrini wanted his foundation to be a religious institute, the answer generally given is that he had learned through experience that too many priests who were involved in the field of emigration were not

“...endowed with the necessary qualities of zeal, piety and self-denial which are becoming in a good missionary. In fact, many prostitute their ministry by trafficking in sacred things -- real monopolizes in gold rather than souls....” (J. B. Scalabrini: “Statement for the Commission for Catholic Emigrants,” 1905)

He demanded the greatest detachment and disinterestedness from his missionaries. There was moreover the example of the Bishop of Munster, and the necessity of the unity of Bishop Scalabrini's foundation which required a perpetual pledge and a definite self-denial. In the mind of Bishop Scalabrini, it was the apostolate for the migrants which demanded a religious congregation. From these motives one arrives also at the conclusion that the religious life was seen as an instrument of the apostolate in the mind of Bishop Scalabrini.

Such motives can surely have in themselves a part of the truth, and they can even find valid support in the very words of Bishop Scalabrini. However, it seems to me that we are dealing with explanations which are insufficient and even bordering on the misleading, especially on that point where one would conclude that Bishop Scalabrini considered the religious life as though it were in the function of the apostolate.

Even today some justify in this way the subordination of the religious life to the apostolate and so they place the migrants above everything else. This is how they interpret the significance and the structure of the religious life within the Congregation.

In my view the argument of history should before all else be looked at anew. Our Congregation declined when we abandoned the religious life which the Founder desired, and we flourished again when we introduced the religious life once again. This is undeniable fact, but is the explanation which is given sufficient? Let us remember that after the death of our Founder our Institute became a society living the common life without vows. If the argument presented were absolute (apodictic) we should have to conclude that the institutes of the so-called common life without vows after which we had shaped our Institute would have had to undergo the same sort of decline, we suffered. However, these types of institutes were numerous and are still numerous in the Church, and some are especially flourishing. Besides, the Church has never said that such a pattern of apostolic organization does not correspond to or agree with the ideal of the apostolate and a complete asceticism. Such institutes have produced not a few saints. Let us add the fact that the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith saw precisely in such institutes the model upon which the Congregation of Bishop Scalabrini was to pattern itself, precisely because the type of apostolate of such institutes seemed to be so similar to that of the priests destined to work among migrants.

We can also add that from a historical point of view the decline of the Institute after the death of the Founder should not be imputed, at least not in a prevalent and exclusive way, to the fact that the vows were no longer professed; but rather to the fact that the Rule of 1908 was not observed in the matter of poverty especially. When the reform of 1925 began it imposed itself and demanded the observance of the Rule and, in particular, a correct administration; many of the evils disappeared by themselves even before the vows were re-introduced.

One could ask if Cardinal Rossi was moved to restore the vows simply because he considered this the means of healing the ills of the Institute, or because he considered this an act of loyalty to Bishop Scalabrini and to his originating inspiration and ultimately to the Spirit of God. This is a difficult question to answer. Certainly, it would never have entered the mind of Cardinal Rossi to introduce the vows if he had not found that Bishop Scalabrini wanted his institute to be a religious institute. So, we could ask ourselves whether our Institute faced ruin because it was not a religious institute or because it had not remained faithful to the Founder's plan, in other words because it was not the plan of God. The question may appear subtle, but to me it seems to be of great importance.

There does exist a vocation to which one must remain faithful if it is to be fulfilled according to God's design, and this applies to institutions as well as to the individual persons. The vocation varies from one person to another and from one institute to another. In the life of the Church, we find institutions which operate under the same historical circumstances and for the same purposes, and yet some are formed as religious institutes and others are not. However, several institutes which began and remained religious institutes did not enjoy a long life; or in any event they did not always remain faithful to themselves and to their own ideals.

Certainly, many historical causes concur to make a Founder of an institution determine to shape the juridical nature of the institution he is starting; and these can be the times, education, experience, et cetera; but we cannot forget that the religious life is not born of the Founder, but of the Spirit of God. The Founder is only the mediator of the Spirit. Today we can take a better look into such a problem through the recent documents of the Church on the religious life, particularly those of Vatican Council II. It is to this source of the Spirit to which we must turn if we want to understand the significance of the religious life in our Congregation. We certainly can know the gift of God through the mediation of the Founder. We can know if we must be religious or not only by studying the Founder, but we cannot know definitely why we are religious except through none other than the will of God Himself.

To say that the Founder wanted us as religious so that we might be more available to the migrants, more united among ourselves and more stable as a congregation is to indicate only the elements through which God makes known His will to the Founder himself; but they cannot be considered determinant and definitive elements. By analogy, just as in the personal vocation of each individual to the religious consecration and to the priesthood, each one can find in the historical course of his vocation many motives which induce him to undertake such a path. In the end, however, he must acknowledge that the motives he had are not at the root of that vocation, but only the call from God is that root.

Now if the religious life is to be understood in this call of God, with the Founder as its mediator, it is to be perceived above all in its etiological or causative meaning which can in no way become instrumental for other purposes which are not God Himself. Vatican Council II and the new Code of Canon Law present the religious life as consecration. Canon 573, No.1 tells us what the consecrated life is:

“Life consecrated by the profession of the evangelical counsels is a stable form of living by which faithful, following Christ more closely under the action of the Holy Spirit, are totally dedicated to God who is loved most of all....” (Canon 573, No. 1)

It is therefore an answer to a call. The call is from God and the answer is to God in a rapport of a total giving to Him through the profession of the evangelical counsels.

Only the person who is called can undertake the path of the consecrated life; for we are not dealing here with human initiatives, be they even for the most noble of purposes. We are dealing with a consecration of the whole person (Canon 607, No.1) who sees to it that he belongs totally to God in a new way by virtue of a special title. This is the reason why the motivation for the religious consecration and for the birth of a religious institute cannot have a definite explanation except God Himself. The motives which are generally adduced are elements through which God acts in a human manner and makes His will known, but these motives never give an adequate reason for the birth of a religious institute.

From this perspective the meaning of each religious consecration can never be forgotten -- it is not the apostolate, but God. The apostolate is only a consequence of this. One can say of the religious consecration that which St. Mark says of the choice of the apostles: He called them so that they might abide with Him, and then He sent them on their mission. Abiding with Jesus has value in itself and gives meaning to what is done in the name of Jesus both because they were sent out on mission by Him and because they carried out their assigned mission according to His directives. This is why the consecrated life has its own common definition before any other type of explanation can be devised to distinguish it. There is no difference in the fundamental meaning of the consecrated life whether it be lived out in the monastic or the contemplative or in the apostolic institutes. While the consecrated life has a value in itself, the apostolate has its autonomy; in fact, the apostolate can be carried out without a consecration made to God through the profession of the evangelical counsels.

It seems to me that if we want to understand in depth and in the light of faith the path our Institute has traveled, we must return to this profoundly theological concept of the consecrated life. We lost our way after the death of the Founder simply because we were not faithful to him and, in the long run, to the voice of the Holy Spirit. When we do not walk according to the vocation whereby God calls us, then we cannot fulfill God's design.

The coming among us of Cardinal Rossi in the name of the Church, if we look at it with faith, can be considered someone newly sent by God to recall us to the fundamental inspiration of that religious consecration our Founder pointed out to us in the name of God Himself. From this perspective it seems to me that the figure of Cardinal Rossi will never be valued sufficiently. He becomes part of the plan of God to bring to completion the initial plan of Bishop Scalabrini. The re-flourishing of the Congregation after 1934 is also to be seen from this perspective of faith; not so much in a concept of usefulness and efficiency, which can be discussed, but in a vision of faith. We found ourselves again on the path

indicated to our Founder by God. Certainly, not even the vows can be considered a magical charm which can preserve us from the dangers of unfaithfulness. The institutions are not the things that save us but remaining in the will of God will save us under every aspect.

With her authority the Church confirms the fact that the intervention of Cardinal Rossi fits into this plan of God. Pope Pius XII states in his Constitution *Exsul Familia* that Cardinal Rossi “is rightly and justly held as their other Father by the Missionaries of St. Charles” since he, with the approval of the Holy See, restored to our Institute the juridical form of the religious life. I do not think we are dealing here purely with a eulogy for Cardinal Rossi has truly been a Co-Founder used by Divine Providence to bring to completion the divine inspiration given to Bishop Scalabrini.

If the explanation and the meaning of religious life in our Congregation is such, then we must learn to appraise it, grant it its full value, and even live it precisely from this perspective. We cannot think of it in an instrumental or functional connection to the apostolate, but we must consider it a treasure in itself of giving to God, and of communion with God and therefore of total availability for the mission which God entrusts to us. Fidelity to one's religious consecration must be given priority because it indicates one's personal relationship with God.

I have the impression that the comprehension and the full value of consecrated life has not yet been sufficiently assimilated in our Congregation. Too often we still consider it something marginal to the priesthood and the apostolate, if not absolutely instrumental. One of the signs of this can even be that of not having sufficiently appreciated the significance of the presence of Cardinal Rossi and his work. Perhaps on an essential level we consider him an intruder, and still, he is our “Other Father” (*alter parens*). Could this not be because we are not sufficiently imbued with that filial devotion, and so we really do not know our father well -- he from whom we received life? This could also be an indication of how well we understand our Founder. We do appreciate his involvement with migrants, but do we grasp the meaning of the religious consecration he wanted for us in the same clear manner? Could it not be that even in the case of Bishop Scalabrini we acknowledge his paternity only halfway? A small indication of this could be the fact that we have always considered the disciplinary part of the Constitution of 1948 as something introduced by Cardinal Rossi which brought in among us the Carmelite style as though we were monks!

That Constitution of 1948 goes back to the Rule of 1895, approved by the Founder! Perhaps we still have a long way to go in recognizing our Father Scalabrini; but we must do this, otherwise we are failing in our loyalty to the Holy Spirit, and we are no longer in a position to fulfill our mission towards the migrants.

III THE CHARISMA AND PATRIMONY OF THE CONGREGATION

Concluding our rapid analysis of the evolution of the Congregation's mission, we could ask ourselves what precisely there is in the charisma and in the patrimony of the Congregation that goes back to the Founder, and what precisely came in as additions through the years. Finally, we could ask what the legitimacy of such an evolution is. Since the answer to these questions might lead us beyond need, we shall limit ourselves to some general observations which may help us to understand the significance of our Institute's charisma.

Vatican Council II emphasized with particular force the charismatic nature of consecrated life which receives its origin from a divine gift. It does not participate in the hierarchical structure of the Church; nevertheless, it belongs indisputably to her life and to her sanctity. The Founders are the privileged mediators of the gift bestowed by God to the Church.

Every institute of consecrated life is therefore a gift bestowed to the Church; and it is a patrimony, a treasure to be preserved, guarded, and promoted. The renewal of every institute of consecrated life comes

about through the continual re-discovery of its own sources, and therefore with a return to the originating inspiration of the Founder.

However, the charisma or the patrimony of every institute is not a static reality but a dynamic one. It develops and grows in time, continuously with its originating inspiration. It is a gift which continuously renews itself in the life of the institute and then, without repudiating either the originating inspiration and the Founder himself, in some way continuously develops. To understand the significance of the originating fundamental inspiration as the legitimacy of its development is not always easy. Elucidating this is always done in obedience to the hierarchical Church which has the task of welcoming also the charisma of consecrated life and authenticating them.

All this doctrine has today found a codification in the new Code of Canon Law. Canon 578 will be of great help to us in giving an indicative answer to the questions we posed above. It says:

“The intention of the founders and their determination concerning the nature, purpose, spirit and character of the institute which have been ratified by competent ecclesiastical authority as well as its wholesome traditions, all of which constitute the patrimony of the institute itself, are to be observed faithfully by all.” (Canon 578)

We shall limit ourselves to a few observations, since we are not able to enter a detailed study:

1. Precisely, the charisma of an institute or, as the Code says, the patrimony of a religious institute is a live and dynamic reality which grows, evolves, and develops in time; for it is a constantly living gift of the Spirit made to the Church.
2. So, the charisma of an institute cannot be understood simply by referring itself to the Founder, but it must also refer to the history of the institute. In fact, it is made up of that which it derives from the Founder and that which it derives from its history.
3. That part which the institute derives from the Founder is not to be understood simply in the Founder's personality as a whole. That of the Founder which constitutes the patrimony of the Institute are “the intention and their determination—concerning the nature, purpose, spirit, and character of the institute....” (Canon 578). That is, the charisma of the Founder is distinguished from the charisma of foundation. That which is a part of the charisma of the institute is the charisma of foundation, not the charisma of the Founder or of the Founder's personality. This is evidently much more ample and more extensive than the function which the Lord may have entrusted unto him for those things concerning the birth of a new religious institute.
4. Moreover, the patrimony the institute derives from the Founder concerns only the essential aspects of a religious institute. The Code says we are dealing here with the intention and the plans or determination concerning the nature, the scope, the spirit and the character of the institute. Besides, such essential aspects constitute the patrimony of the institute not for the simple fact that they were desired by the Founder, but since they have been sanctioned by the competent authority of the Church. Even the Founders can be deceived about the authenticity of their charisma. They must be authenticated by the Church. The charisma constitutes the patrimony in the measure in which the legitimate authority accepts them and approves them. The Church recognizes them as the gift of the Spirit.
5. Another part of the patrimony is constituted by the sound traditions of the institute; for these are the elements that little by little become clear, grow, and become specific along the course of history. Evidently, the sound traditions we are talking about always regard the essential aspects concerning the nature, the scope, the spirit and the character of the institute; not secondary or marginal realities, even if they be sound and long-lasting. The sound traditions do not certainly mean the usages and other things dating back to the Founder, otherwise we would still be in the time realm of the patrimony that does date back to the Founder; and we would not be in the realm of the historical development of the charisma. It is

obvious that even the sound traditions must necessarily be sanctioned by the competent ecclesiastical authority before they may be considered as belonging to the patrimony of the institute. Without the approval of the Church one could not have the assurance that the charisma is invested with the authenticity of the gifts of the Spirit.

If we use these criteria in reading through the history of our Institute -- particularly the evolution of our patrimony -- then the evolution and the development our Institute has made, precisely concerning the people we serve and the nature of religious institute, will not surprise us greatly. In reading our history we become aware of how the charisma is truly a gift of the Spirit and how the competent authority, even if with difficulty sometimes, ends up recognizing it as such. We also become aware of how the charisma of our Congregation is indeed a gift made to the Church through Bishop Scalabrini, but we are also dealing with a gift which must be constantly reproduced and assimilated. Above all, we are dealing with a gift which is to be accepted and preserved with fidelity. Its duration is not connected only to the fidelity of Bishop Scalabrini, but also and above all to our fidelity each and every day.

Bearing in mind then the distinction between the charisma of the Founder and the charisma of foundation, we are invited to study better and in greater depth the life of our Founder, especially with reference to our founding. Without doubt Bishop Scalabrini's personality has to be studied in its entirety because he is our Founder and we want to know him as well as we possibly can.

Bishop Scalabrini's significance in the Church is not exhausted by the fact that he has been the Founder of our Institute. His personality is much more far embracing and complex. He was a bishop who interested himself in the problems of the Church and in every aspect of his times. The founding of our Institute is one of the standpoints, certainly the most prominent, of his personality; and because of the fidelity we owe God and the Church it is this particular aspect of the Founder we must know. This is the standpoint through which God made Bishop Scalabrini mediator even of our vocation. From a methodological point of view this seems to me a very important aspect which must be accentuated insofar as our religious consecration is concerned.

To understand the intention and the plans of the Founder, approved by the competent authority of the Church in relation to the nature, scope, spirit and character of the Institute, to grasp the Founder's spirituality precisely as Founder, it is not enough to gather indiscriminately and without an exact point of reference that which Bishop Scalabrini said, wrote or did. We must penetrate his soul as our Founder, as mediator of our vocation, as teacher of the spiritual and religious life God has given us.

If in these recent years we have accomplished much in learning about the life and work of Bishop Scalabrini, perhaps we have not yet accomplished enough concerning Bishop Scalabrini as Founder of a religious institute. It is perhaps because of this that in our Institute the religious life is still not sufficiently esteemed. Frequently there recur periods of retrogression bringing us back to the mentality of Bishop Scalabrini's immediate successors who saw religious consecration as an impossible thing or as an absolute obstacle to the apostolate; or we consider religious consecration as something intended to be useful for the apostolate without understanding the intrinsic value of consecration to God. We are perhaps still at the beginning of our journey if we understand the personality of our Founder from this point of view.

It is useless to say that if it is true that returning to the Founder must illuminate our present course of action, then it also remains true that as far as consecrated life is concerned the reality experienced by the Congregation can also help arrive at a more exact comprehension and appreciation of the thought and the spirit of the Founder. The sign of the authenticity of our course lies in perceiving the gift of God and rejoicing in it. It lies in understanding the significance of the religious life as a consecration of the whole person to God in an admirable union of love. This becomes for us the motive for our total availability to our neighbor and to our mission among the migrants.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE:

In preparing the translation of this Italian paper into English, the already published translations listed below were used for the quotations appearing therein:

EXSUL FAMILIA: "The Church's Magna Charta for Migrants". Rev. Giulivo Tessarolo, C.S. St. Charles Seminary - 1962 Staten Island, New York

DE PASTORALI MIGRATORUM CURA: On the Pastoral Care of Migrants. Apostolic Letter - Pope Paul VI. August 15, 1969

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CHURCH AND PEOPLE ON THE MOVE. Pontifical Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants. Vatican City - 1978

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