

Journal of Salesian Studies

Spring 2000

Volume XI

Number 1

**Institute of Salesian Spirituality
Berkeley, California, USA**

“THE ZEAL OF THE SALESIANS IS JUST THE THING...”

FOUNDING THE SALESIAN WORK IN NEW YORK*

by Michael Mendl, SDB

Introduction

Over one hundred years ago, on November 28, 1898, three Salesians arrived in New York to initiate a Salesian apostolate among the Italian immigrants of that metropolis. In March of the previous year four of their confreres had undertaken a similar mission in San Francisco.¹ There had been several earlier abortive attempts to bring Salesians and their particular charism to North America: to San Rafael, California;² Savannah, Georgia;³ and Boston, Massachusetts.⁴ This time—1897-1898—the circumstances and the mission were right, and the Salesian root was firmly planted. This article describes the circumstances, the mission, the planting, and the first growth in New York.⁵

I. The New York Context

1. The City of New York

The Dutch in 1625 made the first permanent settlement of what would become New York City; they called it New Amsterdam, and it was the capital of their New Netherland colony. From the beginning it was a polyglot city; the future martyr Isaac Jogues passed through the town in 1643 and reported that eighteen languages were spoken there. New Amsterdam was a commercial center, tapping the vast resources, especially furs, of the wilderness between its fine harbor and the French settlements of Canada.

¹ See Arthur Lenti, “The Founding and Early Expansion of the Salesian Work in the San Francisco Area from Archival Documents. Part I: The Founding Era,” *Journal of Salesian Studies (JSS)* 7:2 (Fall 1996), 1-53.

² See Michael Ribotta, “‘The Road Not Taken’—The Salesians’ Circuitous Road to North America,” *JSS* 1:2 (Fall 1990), 47-67.

³ Angelo Amadei, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco (BM)*, ed. Diego Borgatello, 10 (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1977), 545-46.

⁴ Eugenio Ceria, *BM* 16 (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1995), 308, 323-25, 395.

⁵ The article is a revision and expansion of “Salesian Beginnings in New York: The Extraordinary Visitation of Father Paolo Albera in March 1903,” which appeared in *Ricerche storiche salesiane* 16 (1997), 57-114. I am grateful to Francesco Motto, editor of *RSS*, for encouragement to write the original article and for permission to revise it for *JSS*.

***Post-publication note:**

see *Journal of Salesian Studies* Vol. 12 No. 1
for an important addition to this article

In 1664 the English conquered New Netherland and renamed both colony and capital New York. Following the British withdrawal from the newly independent United States after the American Revolution (1783), New York became the national capital until 1790. By 1840 it had surpassed Philadelphia as the economic and cultural center of the nation. Its large, deep, and sheltered harbor, the Erie Canal, and the railroads helped it become the most important city on the North American continent. A continuous flow of immigrants from Europe also made it the largest. The city slowly expanded northward from the southern tip of Manhattan Island; what is now midtown—Saint Patrick's Cathedral, Rockefeller Center, Carnegie Hall, Times Square, the Empire State Building—remained farmland into the 1850s.

Continued immigration and the post-Civil War business boom led in 1874 to the annexation of several towns across the Harlem River in Westchester County. The 1890 federal census recorded 1,515,301 inhabitants of Manhattan; another 806,343 lived in the city of Brooklyn, across the East River.⁶ New York had 25,400 factories to employ its people and attract more.⁷

On January 1, 1898, the city expanded again, annexing the rest of lower Westchester County, which became the borough and county of the Bronx; all of Kings County, including the city of Brooklyn, henceforth the borough of Brooklyn and Kings County; the western half of Queens County, on Long Island, henceforth both borough and county of Queens (the eastern half became Nassau County); and all of Staten Island (Richmond County), across New York harbor from Manhattan and Brooklyn.⁸

Thus when the Salesians arrived in New York in November 1898, the city was comprised of five boroughs: Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, and the Bronx. The total population in 1900 was 3,437,202, which was 930,000 more people than in the census ten years before.⁹ Only six of the forty-five states of the federal Union had a larger population. Two-thirds of all the imports to the United States came through New York's harbor. By 1900 sixty-nine of the one hundred largest corporations in the country were headquartered in New York.¹⁰ The city was bound together by a new subway and elevated railway system and by the first two bridges over the East River (the Brooklyn and Williamsburg

⁶Ira Rosenwaike, *Population History of New York City*, (Syracuse U.P., 1972), 58. The federal census may have undercounted considerably. A state census in 1892 showed a population of 1,801,739 in New York, and a comparable variance for Brooklyn; see *ibid.*, 88-89.

⁷George J. Lankevich and Howard B. Furer, *A Brief History of New York City* (Port Washington, NY: Associated Faculty, 1984), 179-80.

⁸The counties are divisions of the state for administrative and governmental purposes; the boroughs are divisions of New York City for similar, but local, purposes.

⁹Rosenwaike, 58.

¹⁰Lankevich and Furer, 192, 180.

Bridges), engineering feats both. (There had been bridges over the narrow Harlem River since colonial times.) A modern reservoir system brought 300,000,000 gallons of fresh water to the city every day.¹¹

The years between 1880 and 1914 were the years of peak immigration to the United States. Almost all the immigrants came from Europe, and the vast majority of them entered through New York. In one typical year, 1903, the immigration center at Ellis Island in New York harbor processed 706,113 persons; the next nineteen busiest centers processed a total of 242,925.¹² Many immigrants stayed in New York, attracted by the availability of work and the ethnic enclaves that flourished all over the city. In 1900 over half of New York's residents were foreign born, 173,000 could not speak any English, and 7% were illiterate even in their own language. By 1910 the city was home to about 4,800,000 people, about half of whom (2,330,000) lived in Manhattan.¹³ Of the 4.8 million, 1,944,357 were foreign-born,¹⁴ which was 14.4% of all foreigners in the United States.¹⁵

2. The Church in New York

When John Carroll became the first bishop in the United States in 1790, he estimated there were 35,000 Catholics among the 3,929,214 Americans counted in the first federal census, taken that year. The biggest concentration of Catholics was in Maryland, which had been founded by Lord Baltimore in 1634 as a refuge for English Catholics; the See was therefore established at Baltimore in that state. The immigration of French and Irish Catholics led to the erection of Baltimore as an archdiocese and the establishment of four new dioceses in 1808 at New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Bardstown.

Continued growth, especially from Irish and German immigration, required the division of the New York diocese in 1847, with the erection of new Sees at Albany (the state capital) and Buffalo. Three years later Pius IX made New York a metropolitan see; the new archdiocese was further divided in 1853, when Newark, New Jersey, and Brooklyn, New York, became dioceses. The boundaries of the archdiocese of New York from 1853 thus have included thirteen counties of New York State: New York, Richmond, and Bronx counties within New York City, and ten upstate counties.¹⁶

¹¹*Ibid.*, 178.

¹²Permanent exhibit at Ellis Island National Monument (July 1992).

¹³Lankevich and Furer, 189, 204-05.

¹⁴Rosenwaike, 93.

¹⁵*The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present* (New York: Basic, 1976), 14, table A 105-118, reports the total foreign-born population of the country as 13,515,886.

¹⁶Florence D. Cohalan, *A Popular History of the Archdiocese of New York* (Yonkers, NY: U.S. Catholic Historical Society, 1983), 71-72, which also notes a

The overwhelming presence of the Irish in the American Church, especially along the eastern seaboard, meant a predominantly Irish clergy. Of the ten bishops and archbishops of New York from 1808 to the present (2000), nine have been Irish-born or of Irish descent.¹⁷ A survey of the Catholic directories for the turn of the century shows that perhaps three out of four priests in New York fit that same pattern.¹⁸

At the same time, the large numbers of non-Irish immigrants were not being neglected in New York (in contrast to many other dioceses). The *Catholic Directory* for 1900 shows in Manhattan, Staten Island, and the Bronx twelve churches, chapels, or missions for Italians, eleven churches for Germans, three for Poles, and one each for Bohemians, Canadians, French, Hungarians, Maronites, and Slovaks. In addition, one parish was designated as "English and German" and one was for "colored people." Many, if not most, of these national parishes or chaplaincies were cared for by priests of their own nationality. Among the religious orders administering them were the Franciscans, Jesuits, Redemptorists, and Scalabrinians. But rapid demographic change in certain neighborhoods often left Irish pastors, like Fr. Patrick F. McSweeney¹⁹ of Saint Brigid's Church (121 Avenue B, corner of 8th Street) and Fr. Thomas McLoughlin²⁰ of the Church of the Transfiguration (23 Mott Street, corner of Park Street—since renamed Mosco Street), at a loss as their "English" (i.e., mostly

minor adjustment in the Albany-New York boundary late in the 19th century.

¹⁷Namely, Bp. R. Luke Concanen, OP, Bp. John Connolly, OP, Abp. John Hughes, Card. John McCloskey, Abp. Michael Augustine Corrigan, and Cardinals John Farley, Patrick Hayes, Francis Spellman, Terence Cooke, and John J. O'Connor. The lone exception was the Frenchman John Dubois, SS, bishop from 1826 to 1842.

¹⁸*The Catholic Directory, Almanac and Clergy List* (M.H. Wiltzius Co.), published annually, was regarded as the "official" directory of the United States and Canada. It is the ancestor of today's *Official Catholic Directory* published by P.J. Kenedy & Sons. Cited hereafter as *CD*.

¹⁹McSweeney (1838?-1907) hailed from Ireland's County Cork and emigrated to New York in 1849. By the time of his ordination in 1862 he had earned doctorates in both philosophy and theology at the Propaganda Fide College in Rome. He served assistant pastorships in New York City and was pastor in two upstate parishes before his appointment to St. Brigid's in 1877. Pius X named him a monsignor in 1904. See U.S. Catholic Historical Society, *Historical Records and Studies*, vol. 5, part I (New York, 1909), 235-36; vol. 6, part II (New York, 1913), 169; these two sources disagree between themselves whether McSweeney was born in 1838 or 1839. He was "one of the oldest members" of the U.S. Catholic Historical Society (5:235).

²⁰McLoughlin became pastor of Transfiguration early in 1894 (DiGiovanni, 169). A man of great learning, he was a constant lecturer there and at nearby parishes on subjects both sacred and secular (e.g., Irish literature). He was the subject of a biography: Peter McLoughlin, *Father Tom: Life and Lectures of Rev. Thomas P. McLoughlin* (New York: Putnam, 1919).

Irish) parishioners moved uptown or to the suburbs, and southern and eastern Europeans (and some Chinese) moved in.

Transfiguration once had 13,000 English-speaking parishioners and "was the most flourishing Irish parish in the whole of the American continent. Mott street was the Irish Broadway and Transfiguration Church the centre of Irish refinement and devotion. Since that time the population of the parish has completely changed in nationality."²¹ A parish census, circa 1895, counted only 1,257 English-speakers, while Italians numbered over 8,000 (many of whom were worshipping at Saint Joachim or Most Precious Blood, Italian parishes served by the Scalabrinians).²² The baptismal register of the church shows that in 1900 there were 74 baptisms of Italians, 24 Irish, and 3 Chinese, and in 1901, 83 Italians, 36 Irish, and 8 Germans, Chinese, or other nationalities;²³ in addi-

²¹*The Catholic News* (the archdiocesan newspaper), vol. 17, Feb. 28, 1903, 18.

²²*Transfiguration Church: a church of immigrants, 1827-1977* (New York: Park, n.d.), 16.

²³The Salesians' chronicle for 1902 already notes that the parish was in "Citta Cinese": see *Cronaca della Casa Salesiana e Chiesa di Maria Ausiliatrice [1898-1939]*, part I, 6. Cited hereafter as *Cronaca*. Three years earlier, *The Catholic News* too had noted that Transfiguration was "in the center of Chinatown" (vol. 13, Feb. 18, 1899, 5).

The house chronicle, entitled *Cronaca della Casa Salesiana e Chiesa di Maria Ausiliatrice*, is preserved at Mary Help of Christians Church in New York. Several photocopies are also preserved at the provincial house in New Rochelle. It consists of 2 parts, which I designate as parts I and II because of the order in which they are preserved in a binder.

Part I is 57 + iii pp., 20 x 26.4 cm, 2-hole punched and lined. It is handwritten, and its entries run from 1898 to 1939. Since its entire main text (not all of the insertions) are in the same hand, it must be a copy of some original; moreover, it bears a title (Mary Help of Christians Church) on three successive pages at the beginning that the original could not have. The many insertions and corrections are mostly in a different hand.

Part II includes 18 typed pp., 21.6 x 27.8 cm (= standard 8.5 x 11 inch) onion-skin, dated 1898-1916, plus 13 handwritten pp. dated 1916-1938; this part is separately titled "Cronaca della Casa di Santa Brigida in New York City." It may be assumed that the typescript is a copy of a handwritten original of part II which has not been preserved. An unknown hand has labeled it a "rough copy" in pencil—and in English—on the first page.

The textual relationship of the two parts is evident. Both are in a simple, direct Italian. They cover almost all the same events, usually in nearly the same wording. Part I generally is somewhat more detailed than part II and uses various modifiers not found in the bare-bones sketch of part II. It seems to me that part I must be closer in content and even in wording to the missing original chronicle.

I hypothesize that part II is a draft summary of the missing original. That it depends on the original and not on part I is testified by its title: "Cronaca della Casa di Santa Brigida in New York City." Additionally, it occasionally gives details lacking

tion a "supplemental" register for the basement church, where an Italian congregation worshipped separately, records 113 more Italian baptisms in 1901.

At the Church of the Immaculate Conception (511 E. 14th Street, near Avenue B), Irish-born Msgr. John F. Edwards²⁴ as early as December 1896 distributed flyers printed in Italian with detailed information about all the parish services and the availability of an Italian-speaking assistant pastor. In the wake of the recent Columbian fervor (1492-1892), he appealed to their patriotism too: "This country was discovered by the Italian Christopher Columbus, a Catholic who practiced his religion, and the Italians in America ought to imitate him."²⁵

Edwards's neighbor at Saint Brigid's Church, Fr. Patrick McSweeney, did not seem able to draw the Italians of his parish to church. He tried taking the church to the Italians, so to say, with a "street mission" on 11th Street near Avenue A "in hope that it will make some impression on them. We will have Latin hymns, Litany B.V. & addresses."²⁶ A month later he was proposing to Archbishop Corrigan that a chapel be built for the Italians of his parish and those of the Immaculate Conception parish:

I want to suggest to Your Grace a plan by which provision might possibly be made for the Italians of the contiguous parishes of the Immaculate Conception and St Brigid's, without incurring expense for land, which is generally the prohibitive item.

This: to put up a cheap frame or corrugated iron barn like chapel over the grave stones in the centre of the 12th Str. Cemetery—far apart from all other buildings. I am not sure of the practicability of this; but I think it is worth considering & submitting to the judgment of an architect. Perhaps a light building could be constructed without digging at all and so any possible objections of grave owners would be met.... As the building would be detached & even far away from all other houses, the city might permit it to be of frame. I have no

in part I, e.g. that from the time of his arrival in December 1900, Fr. Joseph Villani, prefect (treasurer) of the community, was charged with keeping the chronicle (*Cronaca*, part II, 3). "Rough copy" on the first page could mean "a summary, not a detailed and full copy" of the original.

²⁴John Edwards (1833-1922) emigrated from County Clare, Ireland, to Connecticut at age 16 with his father. After moving to New York, he was educated by the Jesuits and remained with them as a teacher for seven years until he entered the archdiocesan seminary at Troy, N.Y. ²⁴Upon his ordination in 1866, Abp. McCloskey appointed him to the seminary faculty. After seven years he was made pastor of Immaculate Conception, where he served 33 years. Card. Farley moved him to St. Joseph's Church on Sixth Avenue as pastor in 1907. See Philip Pascucci, "Once Upon a Time in Old New York," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 3, no. 1 (spring 1992), 16, n. 35.

²⁵Flyer in Italian dated feast of the Immaculate Conception 1896; another undated flyer or advertisement: both in the New York Archdiocesan Archives (AANY), D-4.

²⁶McSweeney to Corrigan, [New York], Sept. 29, 1898 (AANY D-13).

doubt but some good is done by street preaching; but, of course, in this climate it is impracticable except in Summer, the late Spring or the early Fall.²⁷

Nothing came of this proposal until ten years later, when that very site was to be chosen not for a cheap building for the worship of a handful of churchgoing Italians but for a magnificent church for a flourishing Italian parish.

Archbishop Corrigan, who had done much to provide for the spiritual and material needs of the immigrants, died on May 5, 1902, just four days after the Salesians officially assumed charge of the Church of the Transfiguration. He was succeeded by his auxiliary and vicar general, Bishop John M. Farley, on September 15, 1902.

3. Italians in New York

Immigration to the United States has run in waves. The wave that began around 1880 and ran until 1924, when a very restrictive law ended it, flowed from southern and eastern Europe, bringing to America millions of Italians, Greeks, Poles, Slovaks, Jews, and others. In 1881 Italians made up 2.3% of total United States immigration; in 1901 they were 27.9%.²⁸

The federal census of 1850 counted 853 Italians living in New York.²⁹ The 1880 census recorded 44,230 Italians living in the entire United States, about 12,000 of them in New York; these were mostly from northern Italy. The 1910 census reported 1,343,000 in the country, 544,449 in New York; the vast majority of these came from southern Italy. More specifically: between 1899 and 1910, 2,300,000 Italians immigrated; 1,900,000 were from the South. Between 1890 and 1910, the percentage of Italians (by birth or by parentage) in the total New York City population increased from 5% to 11%.³⁰ The migration of southern Italians to America "has been labeled the 'greatest and most sustained' population movement from one country to another."³¹

In contrast with the more established national groups whose waves of immigration had preceded theirs—the English, Germans, and Irish, for example—and with Eastern European Jews, who began to immigrate in masses at roughly

²⁷McSweeney to Corrigan, New York, Oct. 24, 1898 (AANY D-13). According to Fr. John D. Flanagan of the archdiocesan chancery (telephone conversation, Aug. 6, 1998), the archdiocese owned several parcels of land on 12th Street, acquired from the Stuyvesant family in the 1850s. The records he reviewed do not refer to a cemetery, but it is possible there was a family burying ground on the land.

²⁸Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1970), 184-86; Rosenwaike, 203.

²⁹Frederick M. Binder and David M. Reimers, *All the Nations under Heaven: An Ethnic and Racial History of New York City* (New York: Columbia, 1995), 135.

³⁰Cohalan, 187.

³¹Lankevich and Furer, 175, without identifying their source.

the same time, two things were distinct about the Italians. First, between 1880 and 1910 Italian immigration was predominantly of single males, a great number of whom did not mean to remain in the United States but to make some money and go home. Although 2,976,000 Italians entered the country between 1880 and 1910, and 44,230 were here prior to that, only 1,343,000 Italians were present for the 1910 census, as mentioned in the previous paragraph. This pattern began to change around 1910.³² Precise statistics are not available before 1908, but one estimate is that 45.6% of all Italian immigrants between 1880 and 1924 returned to Italy to stay;³³ in some years, according to another study, as many as 73 Italians returned for every 100 who arrived.³⁴ One study reports the following figures: "Of the total Italian immigration to the United States from 1882-1896, 47.92% returned to Italy; from 1897-1901, 30.93%; from 1902-1906, 37.9%."³⁵

Second, the Italians lived not only in distinct neighborhoods of the city, like other groups, but in neighborhoods distinguished by province or even village of origin, and these neighborhoods, unlike those of other nationalities, underwent almost no change in character until after World War II. For example, Mulberry Street (Transfiguration and Saint Joachim parishes) was Neapolitan, Baxter Street (Most Precious Blood parish) was Genoese, and Elizabeth Street (Our Lady of Loretto parish) was Sicilian.³⁶

Despite the presence of so many single males in the early years of Italian immigration, there was a strong sense of kinship among the Italians and sufficient family presence to mark them as one of the immigrant groups least likely to turn to crime or prostitution or to become a financial burden to the public, e.g., by being committed to an almshouse or charity hospital—contrary to the

³²Glazer and Moynihan, 184-85. *The Statistical History of the United States*, *loc. cit.*, shows that in 1910 foreign-born white males outnumbered foreign-born white females by 1,702,031. The trend among almost all immigrant groups was that the first wave was of young men (fathers or eldest sons), who would send for other members of the family once they had established themselves. Between 1899 and 1924, the male to female ratio among Italian immigrants was 3-1; before 1899 it was even higher, e.g. 88% male in 1882-1883. Except among certain ethnic groups, e.g., the Irish, it was very rare for an unaccompanied female to immigrate. See Thomas J. Archdeacon, *Becoming American: An Ethnic History* (New York: Free Press, 1983), 136-37; Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City 1880-1915* (New York: Oxford, 1977), 30-31; Maldwyn Allen Jones, *American Immigration* (Univ. of Chicago, 1960), 180-81.

³³Archdeacon, 118 (Table V-3), 139.

³⁴Kessner, 28.

³⁵Stephen Michael Di Giovanni, *Archbishop Corrigan and the Italian Immigrants* (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor, 1994), 19, citing Robert Foerster, *The Italian Emigration in Our Times* (Cambridge, Mass., 1919), 30.

³⁶Lankevich and Furer, 176; Glazer and Moynihan, 186; CDs for parish addresses.

stereotyped reputation from which they suffered. In addition to kinship, the presence of Italian priests and religious—eventually—and the proliferation of mutual aid societies—also eventually—were important factors in this kind of stability.³⁷

4. Italians and the Church in New York

The influx of Italians and other Catholics from southern and eastern Europe created a pastoral problem for the Irish clergy of the United States, which the episcopal leaders of New York were quick to perceive. Cardinal John McCloskey (1810-1885) was the archbishop, Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan (1839-1902) his coadjutor (from 1880). As early as 1859 the Franciscans had tried, unsuccessfully, to establish Saint Anthony's Italian parish on Canal Street. They tried again on Sullivan Street in 1866; they could not make it financially, so Cardinal John McCloskey, archbishop since 1864, made the parish territorial. He was never satisfied with the Franciscans' work among the Italians, feeling that they were inefficient and ineffective, particularly since they found their Irish-American parishioners more responsive to their pastoral care and so attended more to them than to the Italians.³⁸

Consequently, religious Italians in New York had the choice of going to the "American" parishes where, in truth, they were hardly welcome, or of turning to Protestant churches.

The presence of only one Italian Catholic church in New York reflected, in part, a major battle among the American hierarchy: whether to have national parishes. One party, led by Archbishops James Gibbons of Baltimore and John Ireland of St. Paul, were the Americanizers, who insisted that the immigrants should learn English and be incorporated into the existing parish structures as soon as possible. Their opponents, led by Corrigan and Bishop Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, urged going slower, easing the immigrants' assimilation into American life. National parishes, which existed *de facto* in various parts of the country such as the Midwest, were part of the gradualist strategy. The two parties clashed on other issues, as well, and not always in Christian charity.

Other Catholic immigrants—the French, Germans, and Irish of earlier waves, and the Poles of the current wave—brought their own priests with them. But very few Italian clergy left their homeland. Those who came in the 1880s left a great deal to be desired. In a letter to the curial Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith (Propaganda) in January 1884, Corrigan complained of a dozen Italian priests, reporting that they had come to America only to escape the poverty of their own country. They would say Mass and celebrate the sacraments wherever needed but refused to learn English and did not want to work among their compatriots because they were poor. In other words, these priests were after

³⁷Lankevich and Furer, 179.

³⁸DiGiovanni, 112-14.

money and not souls.³⁹ Indeed, the Italians, perceiving their avarice, deeply resented the few Italian clergy among them. Corrigan sent Propaganda another letter in August, now reporting that there were fifteen Italian priests in the archdiocese. All but one had arrived with a positive letter of recommendation from their bishops in Italy, but Corrigan had since learned that all but two of them had been forced to emigrate because of a grave crime or immoral conduct, and some of them were continuing their wayward conduct here.⁴⁰ Hardly the stuff to improve the spiritual lives of the immigrant masses.

The American bishops were dealing with Propaganda in Rome because until 1908 the United States was regarded as a mission country and thus came under Propaganda's jurisdiction. Corrigan's initial approach to the Salesians on behalf of Cardinal McCloskey had come while he and several other bishops were in Rome discussing the agenda for the upcoming Third Plenary Council of Baltimore (the one that gave us the famous *Baltimore Catechism*). The question of immigrants, especially the Italians, ranked high among their concerns; Propaganda, too, was eager for the question to be addressed.

Ex-priests and religious were a serious problem; there were numerous *vagi*, wandering Italian priests, some of whom were apostates, married, or in other irregular situations. Some of them even presented themselves to American bishops under false names or with forged papers, and when discovered moved on to a new diocese. And sometimes American bishops, in their desperation to do something for the Italians, did not inquire too closely into the status of priests who presented themselves.⁴¹

The Irish, who had begun to come to America by the tens of thousands in the 1840s, were already well established in politics and the best jobs. Antagonism with them over work and cultural differences carried over to the religious sphere.⁴² The Irish-American pastors looked down on the immigrants, who were dirty, illiterate, and ignorant of the catechism. The Irish devotions of New York's churches were completely alien to the southern Italians, whose religiosity, in turn, smacked of superstition as far as the Americans were concerned.⁴³ Most pastors seemed to feel that it was the Italians' duty to come to church, not their duty to try to draw them in. There were a few exceptions. For instance, Fr. McSweeney of Saint Brigid's parish, as we have already noted, was honestly trying to provide for the thousands of Italians who lived in his parish, even to the point of proposing to Archbishop Corrigan that a separate chapel be erected for the Italians. But he proposed the separation because: "It does seem as if it

³⁹DiGiovanni, 25, 82-83.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 26-27.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 83-84.

⁴²For examples of antagonism, see Iorizzo and Mondello, 182-83.

⁴³DiGiovanni, 19, 20; Jerre Mangione and Ben Morreale, *La Storia: Five Centuries of the Italian American Experience* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993), 326-27; Iorizzo and Mondello, 179-80.

were necessary to have separate churches or chapels for Italians, as they cannot well be mixed with other nationalities on account of their filthy condition & habits, even if they were willing to come themselves."⁴⁴

McSweeney—probably unknowingly—was echoing Corrigan himself; the Archbishop had written in 1885 to Archbishop Dominic Jacobini of Propaganda: "Forgive me, Excellency, if I state frankly, that these poor Italians are not extraordinarily clean, so the others [American parishioners] don't want them in the upper church, otherwise they will go elsewhere, and then farewell to the income."⁴⁵ The Jesuit Fr. Nicholas Russo and a confrere preached a mission to Italians at Old Saint Patrick's in December 1889. The former cathedral's rector, Fr. John Kearney, denied them the use of the upper church, "for reasons which a priest should feel ashamed to give."⁴⁶

Sentiments similar to McSweeney's were voiced in 1897 also by the author of a jubilee history of Transfiguration Church:

While all that we have spoken of refers to the upper church, let it not be forgotten that we have three Masses in the basement for the Italians of the parish, and that Father Ferretti, under Father McLoughlin's direction, does very efficient work for that portion of his flock. Nearly twelve hundred of the sons of sunny Italy attend these services, besides which they have vespers and evening services without end. Father McLoughlin did his best to make the two races coalesce, by compelling the Italians to attend services in the upper church, but found that far better results could be obtained by having the two people worshipping separately. There are quite a number, however, of the better class who prefer to worship in the upper church....⁴⁷

The Italians were not the only immigrants so ill-spoken of. The reputedly sweet-tempered Cardinal McCloskey "refused a request from Polish Catholics for their

⁴⁴McSweeney to Corrigan, New York, Oct. 24, 1898 (AANY D-13).

⁴⁵Corrigan to Jacobini, New London, Conn., Nov. 18, 1885 (Archives of Propaganda Fide), cited by DiGiovanni, 60.

⁴⁶Russo to Corrigan, New York, Oct. 24, 1891 (AANY microfilm reel #14), cited by Mary Elizabeth Brown, *Churches, Communities, and Children: Italian Immigrants in the Archdiocese of New York, 1880-1945* (Staten Island: Center for Migration Studies, 1995), 56. Kearney subsequently closed the basement to the Italians and told them to use the upper church, which some might have been willing to do, "but...they were placed in an alternative which was distasteful to them. They had either to pay five cents at the door, like all others, or be refused a seat during Mass. The former attacked their purse, the latter, their pride and sensitiveness." See Russo, "The Origin and Progress of Our Italian Mission in New York," *A Letter*, Jan. 29, 1896, *Woodstock Letters* 25 (1896), 135-36, cited by Silvano M. Tomasi, *Piety and Power: The Role of the Italian Parishes in the New York Metropolitan Area, 1880-1930* (New York: Center for Migration Studies, 1975), 77.

⁴⁷*Souvenir History of Transfiguration Parish—Mott Street, New York, 1827-1897*, 44, cited by Tomasi, 77; my italics.

own church, remarking that 'what they needed was not their own church but a pig shanty.'⁴⁸

New York's pastors were not eager to see national parishes established. First, they were already dealing with some Italian priests as their curates, and they found them to be incompetent administrators. (When Italian parishes were set up in the late 1880s, this proved woefully true.) Second, they were jealous of their territory. They were willing enough to have Italian services in their own church basements, as long as they could control the Italian priests and claim the collections and stipends. With national parishes, of course, they would lose all that.⁴⁹

Also making for tensions between the Italians and their neighbors was that sometimes Italian priests deliberately set their countrymen against the American congregants and clergy.⁵⁰ And the Americans resented the Italians' lack of support for the parish, which was rooted in two causes: they were not used to contributing in their own country because the Church had been State-supported,⁵¹ and in America most of them were miserably poor. Under such financial constraint, Italian national parishes were, at least initially, out of the question; the Italians would have to be attached to other churches—meaning, mainly, "Irish" ones.⁵²

It is not surprising, then, that Protestant missionaries initially made strong inroads in the Italian community. Protestant churches tried to evangelize the Italians by offering them social services and Italian-language religion.⁵³ In a number of cases, like the one mentioned by Corrigan in his second letter to Don Bosco, these "churches" must have been of the storefront variety. Several apostate Franciscans had opened Protestant missions for the Italians, which was one factor in the Italians' distrust of the Franciscans' church on Sullivan Street—that, along with the friars reportedly dunning the people for money.⁵⁴ It is likely that some Italians—poorly catechized as they were—assumed that the free religious environment of America meant that they were free to go to any church, and any that reminded them of home must be acceptable. The typical Irish parish was about the last place that would remind them of home.

Yet another problem was the anticlericalism of the Italians, especially in regard to the Papacy. Rome had been seized from the Pope only a few years before, and any sense of "Italianism" almost intrinsically implied antipapalism, at

⁴⁸Binder and Reimers, 146, citing Ana Maria Diaz-Stevens, *Oxcart Catholicism on Fifth Avenue* (Notre Dame, 1993), 75.

⁴⁹DiGiovanni, 34, 96-100.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 122, 159.

⁵¹Cf. Eugenio Ceria, *Annali della Società Salesiana* 2 (Torino: SEI, 1943), 688-89; 3 (Torino: SEI, 1946), 285.

⁵²DiGiovanni, 60, 87-88, 92-93; Iorizzo and Mondello, 89-90.

⁵³Mangione and Morreale, 329-31; Brown, 38-39, 71-73.

⁵⁴DiGiovanni, 115.

least in Irish eyes. (In fact, the Italians had very little national feeling but were highly parochial: Neapolitans, Calabrese, Sicilians, etc.⁵⁵ That would cause other problems in the future.) These Italians simply stayed away from church and sacraments.

In this context the Council of Baltimore in the fall of 1884 explicitly appealed to the Holy See to recruit zealous, educated, and morally sound priests from Italy to come to America. Subsequent communication to Propaganda also specified that these priests must learn English.⁵⁶ The American bishops also expressed their concern for the religious education of Italians, both in Italy before they should emigrate and in America after they immigrated, especially the children. By 1886 Propaganda issued a decree that American bishops were not to accept any Italian priests without proper papers from their bishops and authorization from Propaganda itself. The issue of catechesis was not addressed; that would be left to the Americans (and their new catechism).

The first sign of improvement came in 1887. At that time, according to Corrigan, who had succeeded McCloskey in 1885, there were some 50,000 Italians in the city, few of whom went to church, and 60 to 70 Italian priests, only one of whom, a Pallotine in East Harlem, was doing anything significant.⁵⁷ But in that year Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini's Institute of Saint Charles Borromeo was approved by the Holy See. He was bishop of Piacenza but was very concerned about Italian emigrants and so founded a society of priests who would have their care as its apostolate. Corrigan was excited about the project and quickly arranged with Scalabrini for some of his men to come to New York.⁵⁸

The Scalabrinians arrived in July 1888. Their specialization in ministry among immigrants enabled them to avoid several serious problems that had plagued the secular Italian priests in America up till then. They were interested in souls, not in money. They were in good standing. That did not protect them from some clerical infighting, first with the Franciscans⁵⁹ and later with the secular clergy.⁶⁰ Fr. Stephen DiGiovanni summarizes their efforts succinctly:

The effectiveness of these missions in their early years was greatly inhibited by financial disasters, inept parochial administration, and by intense internal conflicts and congregational factions. It was not until the last years of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth that the Piacenzans became truly organized, and exercised an immensely positive influence upon the Italian colony in New York.⁶¹

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 18.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, 59.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, 88.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 116-18.

⁶⁰See, e.g., *ibid.*, 98-102.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 129.

Their zeal had some immediate effect, but they were northern Italians, and at Saint Joachim's it was mainly the few northerners who responded to them. The southerners were cold toward them, and vice versa.⁶² At Most Precious Blood, opened in 1891, they served an estimated 20,000 souls, of whom about 8,000 attended regularly. In the first four months they baptized 150 babies and officiated at 38 weddings.⁶³

Although Scalabrini had made it very clear that his men were to work hand-in-glove with the local bishops and clergy, the first New York superior, Fr. Felix Morelli, consistently ignored Corrigan, the chancery, and even his own confreres; he knew nothing about American law or financial practices and would not take advice. Disaster followed. Most Precious Blood Church, e.g., had to be sold at public auction in 1893 to pay its creditors, to the Archbishop's mortification, and that was only one of Morelli's fiascoes.⁶⁴

As if that were not enough trouble, other Italian priests interfered with the Scalabrinians. For instance, in 1900 "the Italian assistant at Transfiguration Church began a price war with Saint Joachim, lowering his entrance fee at the church to '3 soldi' in order to steal Saint Joachim's people away."⁶⁵

One Scalabrinian, Fr. Peter Bandini, in 1891 was made port chaplain for the care of the arriving Italians. He executed this vital assignment creditably, assisting over 20,000 in the first year. He too ran into trouble because he publicly denounced the "Irish" clergy, employed some priests of doubtful character, ignored some of the Scalabrinian rules of administration, and ran up considerable debts. Eventually the house he used for his mission had to be sold; Corrigan, who had contributed some of his own money toward this project, lost \$3,000.⁶⁶

Corrigan also succeeded in bringing in Italian Jesuits; from them he got good results without heartaches. They opened an Italian chapel on Elizabeth Street, dedicated to Our Lady of Loretto. Frs. Nicholas Russo and Aloysius Romano achieved considerable success among the area's Neapolitans and Sicilians

⁶²*Ibid.*, 130-31, 148-49.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 137.

⁶⁴*Ibid.*, 132, 137-38, 143-46. Felix Morelli (1843-1923), born at Castelnuovo Pesaro and ordained in 1868, had arrived in New York as a Scalabrinian missionary in 1888. He had a history of financial irregularities in Italy and continued that history in New York as pastor of St. Joachim (1888-90) and provincial superior (1890-93), causing a great deal of grief and even scandal to Bp. Scalabrini, Abp. Corrigan, the Italian community, and others. More positively, he and Scalabrini were instrumental in bringing Mother Cabrini's Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart to New York. Completing his five-year commitment to the Scalabrinians, he went to Newark, where he became pastor of the Italian parish of Saint Philip Neri (now closed, a victim of demographic change). He died at New Brunswick, N.J. See DiGiovanni, 129-48, 176-79, 184-87; *CDs* 1901, 1903. I also consulted Mary Elizabeth Brown of the Center for Migration Studies, 209 Flagg Place, Staten Island, N.Y., Apr. 28, 1995.

⁶⁵*Ibid.*, 135.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 155-61.

through home visitations and a mutual aid society. Within a few weeks they had brought a thousand of their compatriots back to the sacraments, and that number continued to rise. Financial support was a constant difficulty because of the parishioners' poverty. But the Jesuits persevered, and in 1895 they were even able to open schools for boys and girls, whose attendance reached nearly 500 children within a year. Perhaps one reason for the Jesuits' relative success was the utter poverty in which they themselves lived in a tenement.⁶⁷

Thus we see a number of reasons for the difficulties of the Italian apostolate in New York between 1880 and 1898:

1. Probably the most serious was the quality of the Italian clergy, most of whom were concerned not with their fellow immigrants but with their own comfort and financial gain. Worse, some of them were scandals.

2. This sort of priest had no appeal to people who were already suspicious of clergy and organized religion.

3. The religious ignorance of the Italians made them susceptible to Protestant evangelists.

4. The Italians were not ready to support their own churches. They were not used to contributing in Italy; they were poor here, and they deeply resented being hounded for money, especially by priests who were not really interested in them.

5. Divisions and conflicts within the Church kept both American and Italian clergy from working for the good of souls: Should there be national parishes? What relationship should Italians have with other Catholics within a parish? Some of the immigrant priests refused to obey archdiocesan regulations, especially in financial matters.

6. Divisions among the Italians themselves, specifically between immigrants from different parts of Italy, between different groups of religious, between parish organizations, between neighboring parishes, and between priests and sisters (when Mother Cabrini and her sisters came in 1889), wasted everyone's time and energy.

7. The Italian clergy generally were poor administrators and continually ran into financial difficulties, including foreclosures, which often embarrassed the archdiocese and even Corrigan personally.

8. Once Italian priests and religious came to minister to them, the Italian immigrants were not quick to provide priests from among their own sons who might one day become Church leaders.⁶⁸

On the other hand, there were some successes in these two decades :

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 151-54; Brown, 75-77.

⁶⁸The slow rise of Italian-Americans to positions of leadership in the Church paralleled their rise in politics and business. It was not until 1954 that the United States got its first Italian-American bishop, Joseph M. Pernicone (1903-1985), an auxiliary of the New York archdiocese. Cf. Glazer and Moynihan, 202-04.

1. The immigrants appreciated the clergy's social efforts regarding the immigration authorities, jobs, health, the court system, and schooling.⁶⁹

2. They responded well to priests whom they did not perceive as out for money and to a religious environment that was more familiar to them than Irish-American Catholicism.

II. The Salesians in New York: Settling In

1. Arrival

As early as 1883 Cardinal John McCloskey was looking to the Salesians to come to New York to assume pastoral care of some of the Italian population. The Cardinal's secretary, Fr. John Farley, conveyed McCloskey's feelings in a letter on November 1, 1883, to Archbishop Michael Augustine Corrigan, the Cardinal's coadjutor, who was in Rome in connection with the upcoming Third Plenary Council of Baltimore: "Something more must be done for these poor unfortunate people; the children are being swallowed up by heretics everyday.... The zeal of the young order of the Salesians is just the thing for the occasion."⁷⁰ The Coadjutor Archbishop wrote to Don Bosco (in Italian) from the North American College on December 15:

In the name of the Cardinal of New York, I write to inform you of the wretched lot of the Italians in that city. Last year about 30,000 came to us, but we have only one Italian church and there are few priests.

These poor people come to us deprived of everything. Besides that, they are, mostly, little instructed in Christian doctrine. Hence it would truly be an apostolic work to take up their spiritual care. Would you be able to undertake it?

I must leave Rome next week. If I can so arrange my journey, I hope to pass through Turin. Otherwise I would be most obliged to you if you would send me a brief answer at Liverpool....

The Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith is greatly concerned that missions should be established among the Italians in New York. I

⁶⁹For some details of the sorts of social services in which the clergy assisted—in this case, the Salesians, see Pascucci, 23.

⁷⁰Farley to Corrigan, New York, Nov. 1, 1883 (AANY C-2), quoted by DiGiovanni, 114. It would be interesting to find out how the Salesians came to the Cardinal's attention. McCloskey, of course, had been to Rome in 1878 for the papal conclave and could have met Don Bosco there, or at least have heard of him from one or other of his peers. McCloskey arrived too late for the conclave, which elected Leo XIII on Feb. 20, but he stayed in Rome at least until the papal consistory of Mar. 28; see James A. Reynolds, "McCloskey, John," *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (NCE) 9:8. Don Bosco was in Rome from before the death of Pius IX on Feb. 7 until Mar. 26; see Eugenio Ceria, *BM* 13 (New Rochelle: Salesiana, 1983), 360-403. There is no indication that the two men met.

promised His Eminence the Prefect [Cardinal John Simeoni] that I would make requests concerning this matter while I am in Italy.⁷¹

His attention focused on the South American missions, Don Bosco put off the request from New York. Corrigan wrote again on March 7, 1884, from New York:

I have the task of informing you that there are presently about 300 Italians, all of them baptized into the true faith, who are preparing to be confirmed in a Protestant church in this city. So far 760 have been confirmed in this fashion. If I am not mistaken, the minister is a defrocked friar, a priest now married. The rites are very attractive. They sing the Magnificat, in Italian however, and they perform all their services with charm enough.

I cannot, therefore, but beg you to remember the lot of these wretched people; all the more because every year thousands are coming to this port from Italy. Alas! must all these many Italian immigrants lose their faith?

There will still be time in 1886. But I beg you not to forget us.

There are some Italian priests, but they do not want to work among their compatriots.

We cannot get any religious. What are we ever going to do? "Come," these poor souls are saying, "to set us free."

As for myself, I can only express my one single wish—I who am but a coadjutor—but I can only beg you to remember the unhappy condition of the Italians in New York.⁷²

As archbishop of New York (1885-1902), Corrigan persisted, and the first Salesians arrived in New York on Saturday, November 28, 1898.⁷³ They were

⁷¹Corrigan to Bosco, North American College, Dec. 15, 1883, Salesian Central Archives (ASC) at Rome, 3318 D10-12.

⁷²Corrigan to Bosco, New York, Mar. 7, 1884 (ASC 3318 E1-2).

⁷³Pascucci, 8-14, gives details of the correspondence between Corrigan and Fr. Michael Rua, the Salesian rector major. The correspondence is summarized by Ceria, *Annali* 2:686-87.

There was some uncertainty about the date of their landing. *Cronaca*, part I, 1, and part II, 1, both state clearly that it was the 26th. This date is backed up somewhat by Rua's letter to Corrigan, Turin, Nov. 9, 1898 (AANY G-69), informing him that the missionaries were to sail from Havre aboard *La Touraine* on the 19th, and they hoped to reach New York on the 26th or 27th. (The letter appears to be dated Nov. 9, not Nov. 7, Pascucci, 13-14.) A letter from Corrigan to Rua, New York, Dec. 6, 1898 (ASC F503, fol. 3319 A12-B1), a letter from Coppo to Rua printed in *Bollettino salesiano* (BS) 24 (1900), 281, and all narratives dependent upon the one or the other report the date as Nov. 28.

The uncertainty is resolved by *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving in New York, NY*. U.S. Department of State. National Archives (microfilm at the New York Public Library, *Z1-131, roll #41: Nov. 26, 1898-Nov. 30, 1898): *La Touraine* sailed from Havre on Nov. 19 and arrived in New York on Nov. 28. See also *The Morton*

three: Fr. Ernest Coppo,⁷⁴ the superior, Fr. Marcellino Scagliola,⁷⁵ and the coadjutor Bro. Faustino Squassoni.⁷⁶ An unknown fourth person, a layman, was a member of their party. They were all given a warm welcome and very valuable assistance by Msgr. Edwards, who introduced them to the Archbishop the same day.⁷⁷ The four had sailed aboard the steamer *Touraine*, which made regular passages between Havre and New York.⁷⁸ According to the ship's manifest, on this particular voyage were 447 passengers, but the three Salesians are not on the list.⁷⁹

Allen Directory of European Passenger Steamship Arrivals (Baltimore: Geneological Publ. Co., 1980), 61.

When Coppo was naturalized as a U.S. citizen, May 4, 1905, he gave Nov. 30, 1898, as the date of his arrival; the same date appears on his declaration of intent to become a citizen, Mar. 19, 1903 (National Archives, vol. 140, record no. 381).

⁷⁴Coppo, born at Rosignano (Alessandria), Italy, in 1870, had met Don Bosco while studying at the Salesian school at Borgo San Martino. He became a diocesan priest but soon thereafter decided he would like to be a Salesian. He made his profession in 1894 and just four years later Fr. Michael Rua (1837-1910), Don Bosco's successor, chose him to direct the pioneer New York community. For biographical information on Coppo, see *Dizionario biografico dei Salesiani (DBS)*, 96; Eugenio Valentini, ed., *Profili di Missionari* (Rome: LAS, 1975), 282-84; Pascucci, 14-15, n. 32; "Bishop Coppo Dies," *Don Bosco Messenger* 37 (Mar.-Apr. 1949), 20-21, 24; Brother Raphael, "A Pioneer Salesian," *Salesian Bulletin* (U.S. ed.) 20 (Sept.-Oct. 1967), 22-24; obituary notice in *The New York Times*, Jan. 5, 1949, 25, col. 3.

⁷⁵Scagliola (1843-1931), too, was from the province of Alessandria. He became a Salesian in 1869, went to Argentina on mission, and was ordained at Buenos Aires in 1878. He worked in Argentina, the Falkland Islands, and Spain before being sent to New York.

⁷⁶Squassoni (1871-1922) came from the area of Brescia, Italy. He professed his vows in Oct. 1898, and a month later found himself in a new country! He was a simple and humble religious but suffered from weak health. He returned to Italy in 1915, serving at Don Bosco's original Oratory in Turin and at Chieri before his premature death. See Pascucci, 15-16, n. 34.

⁷⁷The Salesians who arrived in 1897, destined for San Francisco, left a vivid account of the processing of immigrants at Ellis Island. Readers of this journal may refer to the letter of Fr. Rafael Piperni to Rua, San Francisco, Mar. 15, 1897, published in English translation and the original Italian in Lenti (note 1), 27-32 at 28 and 30-31.

⁷⁸*La Touraine*, 8,893 tons and 520 feet long, was built in 1890 for the French Line (Compagnie Generale Transatlantique). She sailed between Havre and New York from June 1891 to 1910 with accommodations for 1,090 passengers, increased during 13 months of refitting (1900-02) to 1,490; between Havre and Quebec/Montreal from 1910 to June 1914 with room for 1,018 passengers; and between Havre or Bordeaux and New York from Mar. 1915 to Sept. 1922. See N.R.P. Bonsor, *North Atlantic Seaway*, 2:657.

⁷⁹The passengers included 136 Italians, 111 Syrians, 65 Austrians, 50 Americans, 23 Swiss, 21 Germans, 20 French, 10 Romanians, 3 Armenians, 3 Greeks, and

More than a week after the Salesians reached his city, Corrigan wrote to Rua to inform him of their safe arrival and of his efforts to help them get settled. This letter of December 6 is one of two to testify that the two priests were accompanied by two laymen.⁸⁰ The other letter is Rua's to Corrigan of November 9, informing the Archbishop of the group's sailing arrangements. One of the laymen was Squassoni, of course. No one has been able to identify the other.⁸¹

With the Archbishop's assistance, the two missionary priests procured chaplaincies so as to support themselves with stipends.⁸² The archdiocesan newspaper carried this notice some months after their arrival:

Two Salesian Fathers who recently arrived in New York to assist in caring for Italian Catholics in the archdiocese are residing at 315 East Twelfth street. They are chaplains for the Brothers of the Christian Schools at La Salle Academy, Second street, and for the Sisters of the Divine Compassion at the House of the Holy Family, Second avenue and Eighth street. One of the fathers also assists the Rev. Thomas Lynch at the Fort Washington church. Every Saturday afternoon [*sic*] and evening one of these priests hears confessions at St. Brigid's church, and on Sunday mornings one celebrates Mass in that church for the Ital-

1 each Cuban, English, Hungarian, and Luxembourger. All of the Syrians came from what we know today as Lebanon. Many of the "Austrians" were Italians, Slovenians, Croats—still subjects of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before World War I. Most of them could read and write. Besides wives and children they included 87 artisans (hatmakers, shoemakers, weavers, smiths, bakers, joiners, sculptors, painters), 63 farmers, 60 laborers, 42 miners, 10 merchants, 9 sailors, 8 masons and stonecutters, 7 servants (maids and cooks), 4 waiters, 3 students, 2 butchers, 2 clerks, 2 engineers, 2 gardeners, a druggist, a midwife, and a governess. See *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving in New York, NY*, which reproduces all 16 pages of the manifest, with name, age, nationality, citizenship, occupation, last place of residence, and other personal information. I pored over them as well as the manifests of the other nine vessels landing passengers Nov. 26-28—from France, England, Scotland, Germany, Italy, and Denmark—and the *Index to Passenger Lists 1897-1902* (microfilm *Z1-333, reel #32) without finding the Salesians' names. According to *The Morton Allen Directory*, there was no other vessel sailing from Europe to New York in 1898 with a name even faintly resembling *La Touraine*.

⁸⁰"Fathers Coppo and Scagliola have arrived in New York with two lay companions" (Corrigan to Rua, New York, Dec. 6, 1898 [ACS F503, 3319 A12-B1]). Pascucci, 16-18, gives the full text—in both Italian and English.

⁸¹Rua to Corrigan, Turin, Nov. 9, 1898 (AANY G-69): "There will be four of them, two priests and two laymen, one of whom is not a Salesian; with God's help he'll become one." It was a quest for him that took me to the *Passenger Lists of Vessels Arriving in New York, NY*, in the hope of learning his name; he and the three Salesians most likely would have been listed together. And thus I discovered that the three missionaries were not on the list.

⁸²Corrigan to Rua, New York, Dec. 6, 1898.

ians and gives instruction to the adults and children. Instructions to Italians are also given at the residence of the fathers.⁸³

They took on the Brothers' chaplaincy on November 30, 1898, before they even had a place to live.⁸⁴

2. Initial Efforts among the Italians

The Archbishop assigned to the three Salesians the "annex church" in the basement of Saint Brigid's Church. They lived in a tenement apartment four short blocks north and two and a half long blocks west (about half a mile's walk) at 315 E. 12th Street, between 1st and 2nd Avenues.⁸⁵ Hungarian Catholics also used the basement church. In 1896 it was estimated that there were sixty Italian families within Saint Brigid's boundaries, mostly Sicilians and Neapolitans. Two years later Fr. McSweeney informed the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith that he had about 1,000 Italians in his parish. The wider area, including the parishes of Immaculate Conception, Saint Ann (112 E. 12th Street), Nativity (46 2nd Avenue), and Saint Rose (36 Cannon Street), was home to about 10,000 Italians.⁸⁶

The Salesians quickly found out how few of their countrymen were initially interested in practicing the faith. In the basement church—the parish auditorium, seating 1,200—there was a portable altar, and the new pastoral team set up statues of the Sacred Heart and Mary Help of Christians, and numerous candles. For four weeks they went door to door through the neighborhood distributing flyers and inviting their compatriots to the solemn Christmas Mass. What must their disappointment have been when all of twelve souls turned up! The

⁸³*The Catholic News*, vol. 13, Feb. 11, 1899, 5. The "Fort Washington church" is St. Elizabeth's Church, W. 187th St. and Broadway (CD 1900).

⁸⁴*Cronaca*, part I, 1, inexplicably says—in an insert by a different hand than the main text's—that the Christian Brothers were on 59th St.

⁸⁵According to the federal census of 1900, in addition to the Salesians six others lived in the building: a 55-year-old New York-born Irish woman and her three adult children in one household, and two boarders. One of these boarders was another New York-born Irishman in his 30s, the other an Italian-born laborer, aged 18. The census does not reveal whether the two lived in their own apartments, but if they did, they probably would have been described as "head" of household, like Fr. Coppo and the Irish woman. Possibly the Irishman boarded with the Irish family—he follows them on the list—and the Italian youth with the Salesians, whom he follows. See Bureau of the Census, *12th Census of Population: 1900. New York*, vol. 140: New York Co., Manhattan Boro., enumeration district 323. Microfilm at the New York Public Library *Z1-263, reel 1096.

⁸⁶DiGiovanni, 167-68.

Sunday following, which was New Year's Day 1899, eight persons braved the snow and bitter cold to come to Mass.⁸⁷

Be that as it may, the archbishop remained optimistic. At the start of the new year he expressed his gratitude to Fr. Rua: gratitude that the Salesians had come to his diocese to care for the endangered Italians, gratitude for the efforts that the three missionaries were making. If their initial efforts showed meager results, the Archbishop was confident that their priestly zeal would eventually win over their countrymen.⁸⁸

So it did. Various letters detail the work of the missionaries. An outstanding example was published in the *Bollettino Salesiano* of October 1900.⁸⁹ This letter from Fr. Coppo, addressed to Rua, is dated June 8, 1900. He describes New York, the Church's situation there, and the Salesians' arrival a year and a half earlier; he recounts their difficulties and those of the Italians in general.

The three missionaries continued canvassing the neighborhood, encouraging the Italians to come to services, the children to catechism. Gradually the people began to come. On January 29, 1899, they baptized the first child in their Italian mission and also began catechism classes. On that same Sunday they noted the increase in Mass attendance. During Lent they offered a parish mission, jointly preached by Coppo and Fr. Bonaventura Piscopo of the Franciscans. Several hundred people made their Easter duty, and 600 came to the Mass that ended the mission.⁹⁰ The priests visited the hospitals whenever Italians were ill, which must have been often, and brought them the sacraments. Before long they were also providing services for the Italians at Epiphany Church in addition to Saint Brigid's. They accepted invitations to preach to Italian congregations elsewhere in the city and outside it. During Lent of 1900, e.g., they preached missions in four places outside their regular care. (In other letters Coppo narrates his travels to various cities in the Northeast, preaching missions among the Italians.) Besides that, there were sermons three times a week during Lent at Saint Brigid, and right after Lent there was a mission (Coppo does not say who preached it). During May they were teaching daily catechism and preparing the children for confirmation. First communion must have been in there too.

⁸⁷*Cronaca*, part I, 2-3; BS 24 (1900), 281; cf. the less detailed Eng. ed., 3 (1901), 212. See also Pascucci, 18-19; Ceria, *Annali* 2:687. There is a copy of a flier of uncertain date, "Avviso agli Italiani," distributed by the Salesians during this period, telling the Italians where the Salesians lived and that they could call on them at any time, advising them that their souls are their greatest treasures in the world, etc., and informing them of the hours of confessions, Mass, religious instruction, and benediction in the basement church of St. Brigid. See ASC 38(72), fol. 3319 D7.

⁸⁸Corrigan to Rua, New York, Jan. 5, 1899 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 B8).

⁸⁹BS 24 (1900), 281-83; excerpts in *Salesian Bulletin* (English ed. published in Turin), 3 (1900-01), 212-13. This letter is the source for much of Fr. Ceria's sketch in the *Annali* 2:687-89.

⁹⁰*Cronaca*, part I, 3; part II, 2.

Many of the youngsters, writes Coppo, were most sadly ignorant of their faith. The children all spoke English and thus could easily attend the "American" parish school or catechism classes. While many of them did regularly attend, a great many did not—either because they were ashamed of their poverty and ragged clothing or because their parents objected. As a result, they remained ignorant and undisciplined.

The Salesians were looking for ways to address the situation, and began by learning English. This had been a problem with Italian priests who came to New York in the 1880s, much to the dismay of Archbishop Corrigan. The American bishops had expressed their wishes on the matter.⁹¹ We do not have any information about how the Salesians went about this, but by January 1902 Coppo was writing his letters to Corrigan in credible English. The first such letter in the archdiocesan archives, ironically, is one in which he begs—evidently in response to a directive from the Archbishop—not to have to preach to the Sisters of Divine Compassion because "my knowledge of the English language is yet so limited that it would be a hard task for me to give sermons in it."⁹²

At Saint Brigid, the Salesians set up several parish societies for adults and children. As in other Italian parishes, these gave people a sense of belonging and of empowerment and a practical means of doing good.⁹³ During the week, besides their chaplaincies and sick calls, they helped newly arrived immigrants.⁹⁴

Zeal meant long hours and hard work. Coppo described to Rua a typical Sunday: Every priest celebrated two Masses, including a sermon (in those days, sermons were not always given on Sundays), then heard confessions (often during Mass), and gave instructions. In the afternoon there were catechism classes, meetings of the parish societies, baptisms, and marriages. They presided over Vespers and Benediction in various chapels, and then there was the Rosary, a sermon, and Benediction at Saint Brigid, winding up around 9:00 P.M. They returned home at 10:00 for supper.⁹⁵

⁹¹Cf. DiGiovanni, 25, 57, 82-83.

⁹²Coppo to Corrigan, New York, Jan. 4, 1902 (AANY G-17). On Coppo's efforts to secure an English-speaking priest, see below *passim*. *The Catholic News* reported in its May 17, 1902, issue that Fr. Coppo and four other priests, all speaking English, were serving at Transfiguration, and the sermons at all four Masses were in English (p. 18).

⁹³See DiGiovanni, 199-200.

⁹⁴Sometimes immigrants arrived with letters—or at least cards—of introduction. NRP Borg 1 has an example of one from Rua addressed to Coppo in behalf of Mr. Humbert Bugliani, asking Coppo to help him find a job and render him whatever other moral assistance he would to a friend (dated Aug. 13, 1900). Many new arrivals had a family member or friend to meet them at the Battery. Those who did not needed the help of the various immigrant aid societies, the clergy, and religious to find housing, work, or the way to the railroad station if they were going elsewhere. There were, as always, plenty of people waiting to take advantage of the unwary immigrant.

⁹⁵BS 24 (1900), 282.

The Italians were soon asking the Salesians to build them a church. Land, Coppo observed, cost an arm and a leg, but the Italians, not used to supporting the Church, offered no help.⁹⁶

Although Coppo seems to have written fairly often to Rua,⁹⁷ surviving letters from him and the other pioneer Salesians in New York are few, many of them hastily written, and the house chronicle was barely kept. This scarcity of information is another indication of how hard they were working.

In November 1900 the Salesians secured use of the basement chapel of the Church of the Epiphany (375 Second Avenue near 21st Street) for the Italians of that neighborhood.⁹⁸ Now they had two major missions to serve. By July 1901 Coppo was pleased with the pastoral results, but he was trying to work a trade: the Italian priest at Immaculate Conception, Fr. Anthonio Catoggio, would move to Epiphany, and the Salesians would assume responsibility for Immaculate Conception's Italian congregation, which was geographically much more convenient for them. Apparently this was agreeable to Fr. Denis J. McMahon, Epiphany's pastor – who had been seeking an Italian priest, presumably on a permanent basis.⁹⁹ The trade never happened. When the Salesians took on Transfiguration parish in May 1902, they believed they could no longer handle Epiphany's Italians as well, and so informed the diocesan authorities.¹⁰⁰ Yet they remained among the Italians of Epiphany in some fashion until August 1902, according to the chronicle. In November 1901 Fr. Giuseppe Cirringione preached an eight-day mission with "happy results," and he continued to say the principal Sunday Mass and give religious instruction to the children afterward until the following August. Coppo and Scagliola generally went there every Saturday for confessions.¹⁰¹

⁹⁶*Ibid.* See also Ceria, *Annali* 2:689.

⁹⁷Most of Rua's letters to him acknowledge receipt of a recent letter from him. See the collection in the archives of the New Rochelle Province: Provincials, Borghino Folder 1. The archives of the New Rochelle Province include a mass of material, mostly correspondence, organized approximately under the name of the provincial in office at the time; thus all of Fr. Rua's 42 surviving letters and notes to Fr. Coppo between 1900 and 1909 are in the Borghino section in the first folder: NR.PROV.BORG.FOL. 1. I shall abbreviate this material as "NRP Borg" followed by the folder number. Other material is organized by house, e.g., the house chronicles, statistical reports, building plans. The photo archive has been completely catalogued. And, of course, there are personnel files, provincial chapter files, etc.

⁹⁸Coppo to Corrigan, New York, Dec. 13, 1900 (AANY G-23). According to Brown, 55, the Salesians were already at Epiphany in 1899 (till 1901); her dates do not seem to be supported by the documentary evidence.

⁹⁹Coppo to Corrigan, New York, July 16, 1901 (AANY G-17).

¹⁰⁰Coppo to Farley, New York, May 23, 1902 (AANY I-5).

¹⁰¹*Cronaca*, part II, 4. The priest in question must be Joseph Cirringione, listed in the 1902 *CD* as an assistant priest, with separate residence, at St. Philip Neri Church in the Bedford Park section of the Bronx (St. Anthony's Ave. and 202 St.);

On-site evidence of a Salesian presence at Epiphany is exceedingly scarce. A parish history does not mention the Salesians. The present parish staff are aware that the Salesians were there but do not know, for instance, whether the Italians worshipped separately in the basement, or whether the basement was used for worship at all. The old church burned down in the 1960s. The parish's sacramental registers show that the active parishioners were solidly Irish with a sprinkling of Germans and Italians and an occasional French or Slovenian name. The Italian presence, as indicated by the names of the baptized, their parents, and/or their sponsors, hovered around eleven per cent between 1897 and 1901. Italian marriages were far fewer.

	Baptisms			Marriages		
	Total	Italian	% Italian	Total	Italian	% Italian
1897	269	25	9.3	66	1	1.5
1898	253	36	14.2	58	1*	1.7
1899	244	27	11.1	73	1	1.4
1900	232	24	10.3	80	2*	2.5
1901	240	23	9.6	75	3*	4.0
subtotal	1,238	135	10.9	352	8	2.3
1902	349	60	17.2	64	5	7.8
1903	333	85	25.5	80	11	13.8
subtotal	682	145	21.3	144	16	11.1
*One marriage each year involved a non-Italian spouse.						

The increase in the sacramental statistics for 1902-1903 in comparison with previous years in both absolute numbers and percentages bears out Coppo's assertion to Bishop Farley in May 1902 that "the Italian congregation of the Epiphany (2nd Ave) is now flourishing."¹⁰² But Coppo's name appears in the registers only twice, for baptisms on January 5 and April 19, 1902, and Scagliola's not at all. Nor does Cirringione's. Coppo urged Farley to assign Fr. Nicholas Ferretti to Epiphany when the Salesians displaced him at Transfiguration,¹⁰³ but there is no evidence of him in the registers either. From June 15, 1902, to September 6,

the following year he was in the Williamsbridge section of the same borough at a St. Peter's Chapel for the Italians (no address, listed that one year only); in 1904 he appears only in the index of the *CD*. On Cirringione, see Brown, 57-58.

In August 1902 a Fr. Ciro "left the Salesians" (*Cronaca*, part II, 4)—as an aspirant? a helper? Is this Cirringione?

¹⁰²Coppo to Farley, May 23, 1902.

¹⁰³*Ibid.*

1903, Fr. Luigi Rippstein baptized Italian children, and from November 8, 1903, Fr. Santi Zuccaro did so, according to the registers. The same two priests did all the Italian weddings of 1902 and 1903. All the sacraments prior to June 1902 were administered by the parish's Irish clergy, except Coppo's two baptisms. It does not appear that there were separate registers for the Italians, as there were for the separate congregation in the basement at Transfiguration.

The letters from North America often refer to the need for reinforcements. In May 1899 Fr. Coppo wrote to a woman in Italy¹⁰⁴ acknowledging the great amount of work and noting that another priest would be very helpful for the salvation of thousands of poor Italians. It seems that the lady had inquired of Coppo whether a priest friend of hers might come to live and work with the Salesians. Coppo replies that the Salesians have few Mass intentions and little other support; hence it will be difficult for a priest to live unless he accepts obedience. He also expresses his concern that a secular priest might not be able to adapt to community life. He wants some proof of the priest's piety and obedience, and he wonders how well he knows Italy. This priest had been in America previously and then gone back to Italy, and Coppo wonders why. That hint, and the mention that this priest had come to America with his sister and with another person makes one wonder whether it might be Fr. Michelangelo Mauro, of whom more will be said; but Coppo seems to refer to him as "M.K." and also refers to "the bishop of Jersey City" (presumably the bishop of Newark, in whose diocese Jersey City is located), apparently in connection with this priest. Perhaps, says Coppo, the Salesians will be able to take him in.

A few months later Coppo writes to Fr. Giulio Barberis, the Society's master of novices general,¹⁰⁵ concerning a certain Fr. Karam,¹⁰⁶ who came with a letter of recommendation. Coppo was inclined to accept him into the community as a collaborator, but he preferred a smaller field of work. So Coppo wrote him a recommendation to Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford, Connecticut.¹⁰⁷ Then he

¹⁰⁴Coppo to M.B. Signora, New York, May 25, 1899 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 B10-12/C1-5). A blue-pencil notation at the top of the first page apparently identifies the addressee as Brigida Hechtel.

¹⁰⁵Barberis (1847-1927), the Society's first master of novices (1875), supervised the formation of all the novices from 1892 to 1900, and during Albera's absence in the Americas substituted him as spiritual director general (1900-03). After a period as provincial in Piedmont (1902-10), he was elected to succeed Albera as spiritual director general in 1910 and remained in office until his death.

¹⁰⁶Coppo to Barberis, New York, Aug. 11, 1899 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 C6-9). The priest's name is hard to make out because of Coppo's haste in writing it, and therefore the spelling is uncertain.

¹⁰⁷On Michael Tierney (1839-1908) see John J. Delaney, *Dictionary of American Catholic Biography* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1984), 561. In 1905 he asked for Salesians for his diocese (see below).

asks Barberis to find a good seminarian to send to New York, for Barberis knows their needs.

Just two weeks later Coppo is writing to Barberis again. Much of the letter concerns the community's finances, but he returns to the need for help. Specifically, he requests a seminarian to help Bro. Squassoni with his duties, to teach the aspirants, and to give good example, and another priest, especially to help preach missions to the Italians, which have been very profitable to souls.¹⁰⁸ Coppo was preaching many missions in the New York area and elsewhere. Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any specific documentation of what Squassoni's duties were, except that the 1900 census lists his occupation as "cook."¹⁰⁹

The need for more help was reinforced by Archbishop Corrigan a few months later. He pleaded with Rua to send two or three more priests:

In view of the ever growing need to provide as much as possible for the Italians, I am taking the liberty to beg you to find a way of sending two or three more Salesian priests to New York. I am sure that I will find enough work for them, and furthermore that I will be satisfied with the results of the mission that I will give them.¹¹⁰

A notation on the Archbishop's letter indicates that a reply was sent on February 16: Two new priests were being sent, and Rua invited the Archbishop to visit him at the Oratory in May during the prelate's trip to Italy.

Like the Archbishop's persistence in seeking Salesians, the missionaries' persistence in seeking the souls of the Italians paid off. By 1900 they had a regular congregation of about 2,000 attending four Sunday Masses; there were catechism classes, parish societies, a mutual aid society, and a weekly newspaper. They were chaplains to two religious communities and also served in some of the city jails, preached missions to Italian congregations all over the city, and ministered on a regular basis to the Italians of Epiphany parish.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸Coppo to Barberis, New York, Aug. 25, 1899 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 C10-12/D1-6). As will be mentioned, the little community had already begun to take in candidates or aspirants to the Salesian life.

¹⁰⁹See note 89.

¹¹⁰Corrigan to Rua, New York, Jan. 30, 1900 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 D8), in Italian.

¹¹¹DiGiovanni, 168; *Cronaca*, part I, 3-6; part II, 3. The *Cronaca* and the already cited letter published in BS 24 (1900), 281-83, contain many references to chaplaincies and missions. On the mutual aid society, see *Annali* 3:363. On Dec. 5, 1900, Rua mentioned in a letter to Coppo that he had been pleased to receive the newspaper and had read it; probably this refers to the inaugural issue (NRP Borg 1), for the chronicle reports that the weekly *L'Unione Italo-Americana* was founded in December 1900 (*Cronaca*, part I, 5; part II, 3). On the prison chaplaincy, see a letter Corrigan to Warden Pickett, New York, Dec. 9, 1901 (AANY G-16). Epiphany Church was discussed

One measure of the Salesians' success in winning their countrymen back to the practice of their faith is sacramental statistics. Figures from Epiphany were cited above. Those of Saint Brigid's Italian basement congregation are even more impressive:

	Marriages	Baptisms
1899	61	179
1900	84	320
1901	187	488
1902	214	553
Total	546	1,538

Fr. Coppo also reported two conversions from Judaism. Countersigning the report, Fr. McSweeney noted: "These mar. & baptisms are from all parts of N. York City."¹¹²

3. Increased Personnel for the Italian Mission

On June 9, 1899, the little Salesian community had grown by one with the admission of an aspirant, the secular priest Father Paolino Sapienza, who lived with the community until the autumn of 1901, when he went to White Plains, New York.¹¹³

above (see notes 103-108 and corresponding texts). On the importance of mutual aid societies, see Brown, 140; DiGiovanni, 199-200; "Immigrant Organization for Self-Help," an excerpt from the *Report of the Commission of Immigration on the Problem of Immigration in Massachusetts* (Boston, 1914), in Oscar Handlin, ed., *Immigration as a Factor in American History* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 84-88.

¹¹²Report in AANY D-13 on letterhead of the Church of the Transfiguration (crossed out except for the bracketed words following), with "Basement of St Brigid Church and Chapel of the [Salesian Fathers of Don Bosco] in E. 12th St" written in. The report is dated Jan. 20, 1902, which must mean 1903 since it reports data from 1902 and the Salesians did not move to Transfiguration until May 1902.

¹¹³The *Cronaca* (part I, 4-5; part II, 2, 4) records Fr. Sapienza's arrival and his departure to White Plains. According to the federal census of 1900 (see note 89), he was an Italian who had immigrated to the U.S. in 1898. The *CD* for 1901, which indicates assignments at the end of 1900, lists him as chaplain of the Convent of Our Lady of Good Counsel—motherhouse, novitiate, and "farm" for 260 girls (108, 112). In the three following years he is indexed in the *CD* as being at White Plains, but there are no listings for him. He is absent entirely from the 1905 *CD*. Corrigan testified that he was "a good priest" and he knew of nothing against him (Corrigan to Bp. Charles McDonnell of Brooklyn, Sept. 18, 1901, AANY G-16).

On February 18, 1900, the Salesian community became six in number with the arrival of Vincentian Father Vincent Bertolino¹¹⁴ and Salesian seminarian Brother John Ferrazza, whose passages were paid for by checks which Coppo had sent to Rua. Coppo seems to have been asking for specific seminarians to be sent to him. Brother Joseph Oreni received permission to come to New York from San Francisco but then changed his mind. Another seminarian did not want to go to New York. So Ferrazza, "as fine a cleric as you could hope for, ready even to cook if need be," came.¹¹⁵ He was to study theology while assisting his confreres in their various ministries.¹¹⁶

The federal census of June 1, 1900, reports five single white males, all able to read, write, and speak English, living in the household of Honest [*sic*] Coppo. Coppo and three of his "boarders" were priests: Vincent Bertolino, John Ferrazza, and Paolino Sapienza; Faustino Squassone [*sic*] was listed not as a "boarder" but as a "servant." The eighteen-year-old laborer Henry DeStefano, a "boarder" born in Italy who immigrated to the United States in 1896, follows Squassoni in the list and precedes the Irish family and Irish boarder.¹¹⁷ Was he living with the

¹¹⁴Bertolino was born in October 1852 (1900 federal census). He had been educated by the Salesians in Genoa and had worked previously in the U.S., possibly as a chaplain among the Italians at White Plains; the *Cronaca* (part II, p. 3), tells us, "Fr. V. Bertolino was a priest of the [Congregation of the] Mission ordained in the Salesians' Brignoli School of Genoa. He was a chaplain at White Plains for some time." See also *Cronaca*, part I, p. 5. The *CDs* for 1901 and 1902 list him as a Salesian, but he was not. He came to Coppo with a warm recommendation from Rua (Rua to Coppo, Turin, Jan. 11, 1900 [NRP Borg 1]).

After returning to New York from Italy with Ferrazza, Bertolino operated the Home for Italian Emigrants at 315 E. 12th Street—the Salesians' address until they moved to Mott Street (*CDs* 1901-03). He also performed priestly ministry at Transfiguration in 1902; he did baptisms there between July 1 and Sept. 28, 1902 (parish register).

¹¹⁵Rua to Coppo, Turin, Jan. 11, 1900 (NRP Borg 1). The name of the second seminarian is hard to read; it appears to be "Monti." The 1900 and 1901 *Elenco generale della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (the annual international directory published non-commercially at Salesian general headquarters, hereafter referred to simply as "Directory") lists a Peter Monti at Faenza. On Oreni, see Michael Ribotta, "Discovering America: Father Raphael Piperni and the First Salesian Missionaries in North America," *JSS* 5:1 (Spring 1994), 11.

¹¹⁶Ferrazza was no youth. He had been born at Bocenago (Trento) in 1858, became a Salesian aspirant at Parma in 1896, and completed his novitiate and philosophical studies at Ivrea before sailing for New York. See obituary letter by Fr. Emanuele Manassero, Sept. 30, 1921, 2 pp. typescript; anonymous biography, 6 pp. ms., in the files of the Salesian Studies Office, New Rochelle.

¹¹⁷See note 89 above for the citation. The census enumerator, John P. Knowles, Anglicized some of the Italian names. Evidently he misunderstood *Ernesto* as *Onesto*. He also misspelled Squassoni's name, and whereas all the others had their surnames followed by their first names in the list, Squassoni's first name preceded his surname.

Salesians? The chronicle gives no hint of it. We also note that Marcellino Scagliola is not on the list, but we do not know of any other place he would have been living at this time.

Coppo was already thinking of founding a "seminary" for Italian-American boys—probably meaning a boarding school where they could be taught Latin and other academic subjects, evaluate their vocations, and be assessed as potential Salesians. In January 1900 Rua expressed his pleasure at the idea and asked Coppo for further information, so as to know what kind of personnel would be needed; he also reminded him that the Archbishop would have to authorize the project. He urged Coppo to foster vocations, especially by setting up a Latin program.¹¹⁸

We get some indication of the financial condition of the little Salesian community and their flock at Saint Brigid's from the references in letters to donations they sent to Rua, e.g., the funds to pay for Bertolino and Ferrazza's passage to New York, a donation of 1000 lire to Rua for his name day in May 1900; another 734 lire followed on September 19. The last donation could have been for travel expenses for two confreres who had recently arrived—"Fr. Castelli and the Polish cleric."¹¹⁹ The Polish cleric was Brother Paul Raczaszek.

In February 1900, as we have seen, Fr. Rua invited Archbishop Corrigan to visit him at the Oratory; evidently a letter that has not been preserved (or that has not yet been found in the Salesian archives) had informed the rector major of the Archbishop's intention to travel to Italy in the spring. The journey is confirmed by a letter to Rua from Trent dated the feast of Corpus Christi (i.e., June 14):

Since I have not had the opportunity to pay you a personal visit, I present myself by letter in order to tell you that the two Salesian priests who are in New York are most satisfactory and are doing much good for souls.

But the labor before them overwhelms all their efforts; hence I come to beg you to be kind enough to send two other good, select missionaries to help them, to continue and develop ever more the profit in souls among the Italians of that city. We need a good priest to assist the immigrants as they disembark so that, right from the start, they can be guided on a healthy road. We need at least one more to work in the city, where there are between 100,000 and 150,000 Italian immigrants—the most ignorant and most miserable that you

Ferrazza, of course, was not yet in holy orders.

¹¹⁸Rua to Coppo, Turin, Jan. 11, 1900. Rua frequently adverts to the Latin program in his letters to Coppo; e.g., Mar. 12, 1902; July 15, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*; Rua to Coppo, Turin, June 22, 1900; Dec. 5, 1900 (NRP Borg 1). Castelli would have to be Clodoveo Castelli, who had completed an assignment as director in Puebla, Mexico. Rua says both men are to help Coppo, i.e., the Salesian mission in New York. Evidently Castelli did not remain; the 1901 Directory shows him as a staff member at Morelia, Mexico.

can imagine. Then another would find himself very useful in the countryside, where many Italians have settled themselves, as well.

I am sorry that I have not been able to pay you my respects in person since I must travel to Rome in some haste in order to fulfill other obligations that have already pressed me for some months.¹²⁰

That this was not Archbishop Corrigan's first request for more Salesians is evident from the minutes of the superior chapter meeting of May 17, 1900 (a month earlier), in which we read: "A letter from the archbishop of New York was presented in which he asks for additional personnel for our house there." No action by the chapter is noted.¹²¹ The subject came up again after the June 14 letter:

Archbishop Corrigan of New York in America writes from Trent lamenting that he has not been able to get to Turin. He praises the Salesians who are working in his city, but he observes that they are oppressed by work. He asks for three more of our priests: one to welcome the Italian immigrants at the harbor and help and direct them; another to work among the Italians, who in that city number more than a hundred thousand; and a third to give missions in the countryside. Fr. Rua had an answer sent to him that a short time ago we sent another priest and now we will do as much as we can to meet this necessity.¹²²

This new priest sent to New York probably was Father Clodoveo Castelli, already mentioned, who certainly did not stay long. But in December arrived Father Giuseppe Villani, who had been catechist and prefect of studies under Castelli at Puebla, Mexico.¹²³ In February Rua cautioned Coppo, "Be sure to help him,

¹²⁰Corrigan to Rua, Trento Iesolo [sic], Corpus Domini 1900 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 D9-11), in Italian.

The "two Salesian priests" with whom Abp. Corrigan is so pleased would have been Frs. Coppo and Scagliola, still the only ones in New York. The importance of guiding immigrants from the moment that they landed at the Battery (i.e., the former fort at the tip of Manhattan Island) after their clearance of the immigration and public health inspectors at Ellis Island has been amply documented; see, e.g., Mangione and Morreale, 117-18.

¹²¹ASC D869 Verballi delle riunioni capitolari, vol. 1 (14 Dicembre 1883-23 Dicembre 1904), 178, line 1.

¹²²*Ibid.*, session of June 27, 1900, 180 reverse, lines 25-31.

¹²³Villani was born at Trecate (Novara), Italy, in 1869 and attended local schools, including the diocesan seminary. He was already a perpetually professed seminarian at Puebla in 1897 and was ordained there in 1900. He remained at Transfiguration until 1915, becoming an American citizen in 1906, and then served at Mary Help of Christians (New York), Philadelphia, and New Rochelle from 1915 to 1921. In 1921 he was assigned to California, where he worked in San Francisco and Watsonville until 1939. In that year he left the Salesians, returned to Italy, and was incardinated in his native diocese of Novara. See the annual Directories; *Cronaca*, part

especially at the beginning, since he does not yet have experience in his office of prefect, which I have entrusted to him for now, as you asked. He has shown me plenty of good will."¹²⁴

The Rector Major also cautioned Coppo about himself: "I do not want you to take too much work upon yourself, so that you will remain in full service longer. Therefore give others as much of your occupations as you can and do not take on new ones, lest you tire yourself too much." Coppo's priorities should be the Latin program and the festive oratory.¹²⁵

Two topics of global interest to the Congregation surface in a note that Rua wrote to Coppo in the summer of 1901. In an earlier letter Coppo had apparently expressed some difficulties in applying the Holy See's recent decree on confession, which repeated the canonical prohibition of superiors hearing the confessions of their subjects and explicitly mentioned the Salesians in this regard. It had been the Salesian tradition since Don Bosco's beginning of the Oratory that the director was the regular confessor of the house, though everyone (boys and confreres) was free to use other designated priests. Now Rua sent Coppo "copies of the solutions of some [of our] houses on that subject." Then Rua urged him to come for the general chapter that was to meet at Valsalice (Turin) September 1-5: "Come...; everyone wants you [here]." Coppo did not go to Turin; a month after the general chapter Rua informed him that Fr. Augustine Osella from Mexico had delivered a memo from Coppo, as well as a very favorable oral report.¹²⁶

The superiors in Turin were most supportive of the Salesian mission in New York. They must also have been hoping for it to settle onto a firmer foundation than the borrowed basement of Saint Brigid's Church. Coppo was very much aware of the importance of settling his community and their apostolic work. But turning his awareness and his desires into reality took some years.

I, p. 5.

¹²⁴Rua to Coppo, Nice, Feb. 9, 1901 (NRP Borg 1). The prefect of the house was the administrator of the temporal goods of the community.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*

¹²⁶Rua to Coppo, Turin, Aug. 5, 1901; Turin, Oct. 7, 1901 (NRP Borg 1). The 1901 general chapter (the Congregation's ninth) was the last of which all the directors of the Society were members *ex officio*.

The Holy See had begun to question the Salesian custom on confession in 1896. The Salesians did not surrender their old custom easily, and in August 1901 Rua was summoned to Rome and rebuked for his handling of the matter. An attempt in 1903, after the election of Pius X, to modify the papal decree was unsuccessful. See lecture notes of Arthur Lenti, Institute of Salesian Studies, Berkeley, on the decree *Quod a suprema*; Morand Wirth, *Don Bosco and the Salesians*, trans. David de Burgh (New Rochelle: Don Bosco, 1982), 224.

III. The Salesians in New York: Firm Establishment

1. Acceptance of Transfiguration Parish

It was the policy of the New York archdiocese that an immigrant congregation should be established and stabilized and then either build their own church or be given an old one. In 1899 Coppo came close to accepting a parish among the Italians of the Mott Haven section of the Bronx,¹²⁷ but a secular priest, Fr. John Milo, offered to build them a church with cash already on hand, and Coppo yielded to him.¹²⁸ In December 1900, Coppo proposed to Archbishop Corrigan that the Salesians take over Nativity Church. He offered as his reasons the great number of Italians in the area, the declining number of English-speaking parishioners at Nativity (who, he proposed, should be dispersed among the surrounding parishes of Saint Ann, Saint Brigid, and old Saint Patrick, the former cathedral), and the Salesians' need for "a convenient and permanent settlement" so as to "advance their mission for the benefit of poor Italians" and allow them to add personnel and foster Salesian vocations.¹²⁹

The Archbishop did not think it opportune to make a change at Nativity.¹³⁰ Coppo evidently continued to look for opportunities to assure the Salesians of more independence—perhaps with an eye to the Latin program and the festive oratory that Rua wanted.¹³¹ In August Rua thanked him for "news about a possible improvement in our mission there through the erection of a house of our own." In October: "I give you permission to buy the house in the way you told me. But see that we do not have to pay expenses that we cannot meet."¹³²

Then at some point, apparently between September and November, Corrigan offered Transfiguration parish to Coppo and the Salesians. It seems to have taken the superiors in Turin more time than Coppo thought necessary or expedient to decide whether or not to accept the offer. He wrote to Fr. Rua twice in December 1901. In his letter of December 4 he tells the rector major that he is waiting for a decision, as is the archdiocese in turn. He hopes that Transfiguration Church will become the base for a vast Salesian apostolate in North Amer-

¹²⁷ *Cronaca*, part I, 4: "On August 17...the Archbishop offers us the Italian mission in the area between 140th and 160th Sts. in the northeastern part of the city. Fr. Coppo goes to visit the place, preaches to the people, urging them to unite in preparing a church there."

¹²⁸ Fr. Milo became pastor of St. Roch's Church on E. 150 St. between Robbins and Wales Aves. (CDs 1902-04). DiGiovanni, 168 (mistakenly?), reports that the Archbishop offered the Salesians a mission for the Italians between 14th and 16th Sts. and connects this to what they did develop on 11th St. and at Epiphany.

¹²⁹ Coppo to Corrigan, New York, Dec. 13, 1900 (AANY G-23).

¹³⁰ Corrigan to Coppo, New York, Dec. 18, 1900 (AANY G-16).

¹³¹ See above, note 125 and corresponding text.

¹³² Rua to Coppo, Turin, Aug. 5, 1901, and Oct. 7, 1901 (NRP Borg 1).

ica. He has just preached a mission for about 3,000 Italians at Epiphany parish. Because Transfiguration still has about 400 "American" parishioners, an English-speaking priest would be very useful and would be received with open arms. The Salesian priests already in New York and a Polish confrere that they expect will all be celebrating two Masses every Sunday and sometimes preaching three times; so another priest would not be excessive at all and would help with the vocations that Coppo anticipated in great numbers. Just eight days later Coppo sent his Christmas greetings to Rua and repeated the urgency of a decision regarding Transfiguration and the desirability of having an English-speaking priest.¹³³

The superior chapter took up the subject of Transfiguration parish at its December 23 session. The minutes record: "Fr. Coppo writes from America that the archbishop of New York wishes to entrust to us in that city a parish especially for the Italians. The chapter accepts it, recommending that the works be maintained where we first settled in the city with great advantage to our compatriots."¹³⁴

The actual transfer of parish administration was delayed by a fire that seriously damaged the church and by some squabbling with Father Thomas McLoughlin, the outgoing pastor, over the parish debt. But on May 1, 1902, the little community relocated from their East 12th Street apartment to the Transfiguration rectory at 29 Mott Street and assumed responsibility for the parish. The Salesians were Fathers Coppo, Scagliola, Villani, and probably Zaniewicz, seminarian Brothers Ferrazza and Raczaszek, and coadjutor Brother Squassoni.¹³⁵

Even before they had moved, Rua was firing queries to Coppo: "Have you been able to start regular classes? Do you have any boarders? Have you begun a Latin program?"¹³⁶

Once settled in their own parish, the Salesians faced a minor problem with another congregation of Italians, or more precisely, with their chaplain, Fr. Nicholas Ferretti. Like the Italians at Saint Brigid, this congregation had been using the basement of Transfiguration for their worship while Fr. McLoughlin

¹³³Coppo to Rua, New York, Dec. 4, 1901 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 D12/E1-3). Coppo to Rua, New York, Dec. 12, 1901 (*ibid.*, fol. 3319 E4-6). *Cronaca*, part I, 6, reports: "In December [1901] Archbishop Corrigan promised the Salesians the Church of the Transfiguration on Mott St." If Fr. Coppo on Dec. 4 was "waiting for a reply" from the superiors, the offer must have come at least several weeks earlier; and if the superior chapter did not discuss the matter until Dec. 23 (see below), it is unlikely that the Archbishop confirmed the transfer of the parish to the Salesians before January.

¹³⁴ASC D869 *Verbali delle riunioni capitolari*, vol. 1, 197 reverse, lines 13-16.

¹³⁵The 1902 Directory lists these seven confreres. *Cronica della Casa Salesiana dilla* [sic] *Parrocchia Trasfigurazione, Stati Uniti, Anno 1902-1938-1939*, p. 3, and *Cronaca*, part II, p. 6, give the date of the relocation.

¹³⁶Rua to Coppo, Turin, Mar. 12, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

and his Irish-American congregation used the church proper.¹³⁷ Ferretti must have been reluctant to move, and perhaps some of his basement congregation would have liked him to stay, but two Italian congregations in the same parish, each with its own pastor, presented an obvious problem.¹³⁸ Coppo wrote to Corrigan about this dilemma nine days before the Salesians moved in. He also informed him that, with full-time parochial responsibilities, the Salesians probably would no longer be able to continue their chaplaincy with the Sisters of Divine Compassion nor to care for the Italians at Epiphany parish. He suggested that Ferretti could fill these vacancies.¹³⁹

Coppo also enlisted the intercession of Msgr. John Edwards and others in the delicate matter of relocating Fr. Ferretti and uniting the Transfiguration Italians. Finally, three weeks after the Salesians had moved to Transfiguration, he wrote to Bishop Farley, who had assumed the administration of the archdiocese after the Archbishop's death on May 5. He reiterated "the inconvenience of having two Italian congregations in one place" and cited the support of Fr. McGean of Saint Peter's Church and of the two vicars general of the archdiocese, Edwards and Msgr. Joseph F. Mooney. Stressing that he "was always, and [wished] to be forever a good friend of Rev. Fr. Ferretti, [he does] not like to displease him in any way," Coppo repeated his earlier suggestion to Corrigan that Ferretti might be able to look after Epiphany's Italians and the Sisters of Divine Compassion, and testified to the satisfaction of Epiphany's pastor, Fr. McMahan, with the proposal.¹⁴⁰

A letter from the chancery to Coppo on June 5 informed him:

At a meeting of the Board of Consultors yesterday it was agreed to you [*sic*] and your Fathers jurisdiction over [*sic*] the entire population (Italian as well [*sic*] as other nationalities) within your parish limits....

P.S. I am also instructed to inform you that, when Father Ferreri returns to the United States, he will not assume charge of the Italians in your parish.¹⁴¹

The chronicle of Transfiguration notes: "A single congregation was formed, joining the Italians to the English-speaking parishioners who still remained, with services in both languages."¹⁴²

¹³⁷ See the Transfiguration baptismal records in the text related to note 23.

¹³⁸ Fr. James H. McGean, pastor at St. Peter's on Barclay St., referred to the situation as "an imperium in imperio," according to Coppo's letter to Farley cited below.

¹³⁹ Coppo to Corrigan, April 22, 1902 (AANY G-17).

¹⁴⁰ Coppo to Farley, May 23, 1902 (AANY I-5).

¹⁴¹ New Rochelle Province Archives NY, NY, T.P./FOL 1: a typewritten document containing said letter and one other from 1908, obviously transcriptions of the originals, which apparently no longer exist. The "Father Ferreri" of the chancery document is most likely a misspelling of Ferretti's name; note two other errors and a missing verb.

The "supplemental" baptismal register of Transfiguration parish shows that Ferretti celebrated baptisms in the church basement up until July 6, 1902, and then did one last baptism on January 6, 1903 (these are the last entries in that register). The July-to-January gap could indicate that he was out of the country during that period.

In order not to abandon the Italians of Saint Brigid's, the Salesians hired Fr. Michelangelo Mauro to continue their pastoral care, paying also for his apartment; on Sundays the seminarian Ferrazza went from Mott Street to 8th Street to assist him.¹⁴³

The *Cronaca* shows that the Italians of Saint Brigid were unhappy with this arrangement, as was the pastor, Fr. McSweeney, whose long letter of complaint to Archbishop Farley has already been quoted. The unnamed "family priest" of that letter is Fr. Mauro, as becomes clearer in a follow-up letter of one month later: "I have not much complaint to make [against the Salesians]. My displeasure has been, as I stated in my last letter, with a priest secular whom they put in charge, when they moved to Mott St." In the pastor's opinion, the Salesians had enough manpower "to take charge of the Lower church and I think it is in the interest of the Italians that they should continue in care of them. They have succeeded in gathering quite a Congregation of them, having now four masses on Sundays and I feel that, if they left, it would cause their dispersion. The secular Italian priests don't seem to draw them as well."¹⁴⁴

So desperate was Coppo for another priest that he was pressing his superiors in Turin to allow John Ferrazza to be ordained early, i.e., before having completed his theological studies. On June 1, 1902, Barberis wrote to inform Coppo that the seminarian had been approved by the superior chapter the previous day for reception of tonsure and the four minor orders; dismissorial letters would be forwarded promptly, but on no account could he be advanced to the subdiaconate until he had completed more of his studies, regardless of his mature age and New York's needs.¹⁴⁵

Aspirants to Salesian life continued to present themselves. In answer to a query from Coppo, Barberis mentions one who came from among the Franciscans, hoping to study. If he did not display an aptitude for that, Coppo should let him become a coadjutor. But he should first present some testimonial letters and

¹⁴²*Cronica della...Parrocchia Trasfigurazione*, 3.

¹⁴³*Cronaca*, part I, 6-7; part II, 4; DiGiovanni, 170. Although Fr. Mauro appears several times in the *Cronaca*, he is not listed in any of the *CDs* of the period. He is probably "the Italian priest" whom McSweeney employed as early as 1893 "to attend to the Italians in the basement church" of St. Brigid, and who "had his mother, sister, and nephew living with him" (DiGiovanni, 167); these same personages were living with Mauro when the Salesians provided rooms for him in 1903 while he attended to St. Brigid's Italians in their stead (*Cronaca*, part I, 9).

¹⁴⁴McSweeney to Farley, New York, Nov. 23, 1903 (AANY D-13).

¹⁴⁵Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 1, 1902 (NRP Borg 3).

must live with the Salesians for several months before being admitted to the novitiate.¹⁴⁶ The young man's name is not given, and we do not know whether or not he became an aspirant.

During the critical period following Corrigan's death, the Salesian superiors expressed to Coppo their hope that his eventual successor would be as favorable toward the Salesian mission in New York as the late Archbishop had been.¹⁴⁷ They also expressed their pleasure with the progress of the mission, as reported by both Coppo and Fr. Anthony Riccardi. Coppo should maintain his courage; as long as he did his best, the Lord would help.¹⁴⁸

Coppo was asking for help from Turin also for his weekly Italian newspaper. Rua wrote in February: "We will not forget your request for someone who can help you write the newspaper. Even in this we are stuck because we lack personnel." He was as good as his word. In October he recommended to Coppo a former Salesian seminarian "of good character" who was interested in Catholic journalism. It appears that this proposal did not work out; in July 1903 Rua was still looking for someone who might help with the paper.¹⁴⁹

Toward the end of the summer Scagliola returned to Italy, apparently on account of family matters, with no one immediately available to replace him.¹⁵⁰

On January 20, 1902, Father Rua and the superior chapter had canonically established the Salesian work in the United States as an independent province, dedicated to Saint Philip the Apostle. In due course Father Michael Borghino was named its superior.¹⁵¹ On July 15 Rua wrote to Coppo and Scagliola that

¹⁴⁶ Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 29, 1902 (NRP Borg 3).

¹⁴⁷ Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 1, 1902 (NRP Borg 3).

¹⁴⁸ Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 29, 1902 (NRP Borg 3). Such sentiments conclude many letters from Rua, as well. Riccardi (1853-1924) was provincial of the Mexican province from 1900 to 1902; he passed through New York in March en route from Jamaica to Italy. See Rua to Coppo, Mar. 12, 1902 (NRP Borg 1), *Diz. bio. sal.*, 237, and Directories.

¹⁴⁹ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 17, 1902; Oct. 24, 1902; July 16, 1903 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁵⁰ Scagliola had asked to return to Italy. Rua was leaving it to the new provincial, Michael Borghino, to finalize the permission, but Rua expected no difficulty, told Scagliola to pack, and wished him *buon viaggio*. See Rua to Coppo and Scagliola, Turin, July 15, 1902 (NRP Borg 1). The house chronicle does not mention his departure. By Sept. 21 he had seen Rua and informed him of affairs in New York (Rua to Coppo, San Benigno, Sept. 21, 1902 [NRP Borg 1]). After some years in Piedmont, he labored in Mexico, where he died at Guadalajara. Writing his obituary letter, his provincial, Fr. Luigi Pedemonte, called him an indefatigable worker and noted that many sought him out as a confessor. See Pascucci, 15, n. 33.

¹⁵¹ Borghino, first provincial of the U.S. province (1902-08), resided at San Francisco until 1904, when he moved to Troy (1905 Directory). He was born at Vigone (Torino) on Nov. 22, 1855, went to the South American missions, and died at Turin on Nov. 14, 1929. See DBS, 49; Ceria, *BM* 16:289-90; Ceria, *Annali* 2:157.

Fr. M. Borghino would sail from Genoa for New York in eight days, and they should "give him a warm and suitable welcome as [their] beloved superior." Evidently Borghino did not leave Italy so soon, for when he reached New York he carried a letter from Rua dated August 5 at Turin. Rua asked Coppo to introduce him as the new provincial to "the confreres as well as others," told him to organize the present and future business of the New York community together with Borghino, and asked him to offer Borghino and those travelling with him as much hospitality and advice as they needed before they continued their trip to the West Coast.¹⁵²

2. Reaching beyond the Italians

The presence of a Polish seminarian and the imminent arrival of a Polish priest indicate that the Salesians were encountering numerous immigrants of that nationality in their ministry. The Polish priest was Fr. Joseph Zaniewicz. In 1897 he was a perpetually professed seminarian at the Oratory in Turin and would have been ordained there in 1901. Rua alluded to him (not by name) in a letter of October 1901: "We will see about sending you the Pole you wish for; little by little he will be able to meet the need you have expressed."¹⁵³ Fr. Barberis followed up the next month, naming the priest, identifying him as a "Russian Pole,"¹⁵⁴ and reporting that he might be able to learn some German. This suggests that the Salesians' ministry was putting them into contact also with German-speaking immigrants, which would easily have happened at Epiphany parish, among other places. Barberis also describes the Pole's character: a good priest who will help a little bit, but will require some patience on Coppo's part. Although the 1902 directory places Fr. Zaniewicz at Transfiguration, the house chronicle is silent about him.¹⁵⁵ So we do not know just when he came to New York; but another letter from the rector major to Coppo gives a clue: in February 1902, Rua informed the New York leader that the cost of Fr. Zaniewicz's trip from Turin to New York was 300 francs.¹⁵⁶

The Polish priest's experience among his New York confreres was not a happy one, evidently. By mid-September he had moved out of Transfiguration

¹⁵²Rua to Coppo and Scagliola, Turin, July 15, 1902; Rua to Coppo, Aug. 5, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁵³Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 7, 1901 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁵⁴That is, a Pole from the Russian-occupied part of the country; Poland had been cut up and divided among Austria, Prussia, and Russia late in the 18th century and regained its independence only in 1918.

¹⁵⁵See note 129.

¹⁵⁶See the annual Directories; Rua to Coppo, Turin, Dec. 5, 1900, Oct. 7, 1901, and Feb. 17, 1902 (NRP Borg 1); Barberis to Coppo, Turin, Nov. 23, 1901 (NRP Borg 3). The 300 francs included 267 for his ship and 33 for "other expenses" (Feb. 17).

and taken lodgings with a female housekeeper in a neighborhood inhabited by his co-nationals. Rua was quite disturbed, as is clear from a letter to Coppo:

I must advise you at once that such a thing cannot be allowed. So try to get him back with you. Go to provide services to the Poles even daily until we can properly set up a Salesian house among them with at least two priests and a coadjutor, which I hope will not take long. Show him our concern, and let me know as soon as you can the result of these arrangements.¹⁵⁷

Instead, Zaniewicz became completely alienated from the Salesians. Eventually he was granted a rescript of secularization and incardinated in the New York archdiocese in 1908.¹⁵⁸

Besides Polish and German immigrants, Coppo saw another group in need of pastoral care. Examining Transfiguration parish before the Salesians accepted it, he noted the presence of many Chinese within its boundaries and asked Rua whether a Salesian could be found who spoke their language. Rua replied, "As soon as we have someone who knows Chinese, we will send him there to attempt the conversion of the Chinese in your parish."¹⁵⁹

Although the Italian Salesians spoke some English, Coppo had been asking Fr. Rua for a native English-speaker. With the acceptance of a parish that included a portion of Irish Americans, this became all the more imperative. Finding one was difficult. Rua relayed Coppo's request to Fr. Charles Macey, the Salesian superior in England. Fr. Barberis wrote to Coppo in June: no English-speaking priest was available, and Coppo should discuss with the provincial what might be the best approach to make in the meantime. Paying a non-Salesian a weekly stipend to come in and minister to the English portion of the flock was judged preferable to taking one into the community; experience showed some sorry results when outsiders lived with the Salesians.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷Rua to Coppo, San Benigno, Sept. 21, 1902; see also Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 24, 1902 (NRP Borg 1). There is no insinuation of immoral conduct on Zaniewicz's part, but Rua's discomfort at the potential for scandal is evident. As late as June 29, Barberis was sending greetings to Zaniewicz by name, as to all the other members of the community (Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 29, 1902 [NRP Borg 3]).

¹⁵⁸See Gusmano to Coppo, Turin, [Jan.] 12, [1906?], Feb. 5, 1906, and Feb. 29, 1908 (NRP Borg 9); Borghino to Gusmano, New York, May 10, 1906, and Coppo to Gusmano, New York, June 14, 1908 (ASC S.319[72] U.S.A.).

¹⁵⁹Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 17, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁶⁰*Ibid.* Barberis to Coppo, Turin, June 29, 1902 (NRP Borg 3). Although Bertolino was not a Salesian, he was a past pupil. The Salesians seem to have been very happy to have him among them: Barberis greeted him among all the confreres (June 29, 1902), and Rua seems to have regretted his decision to leave New York (Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 24, 1902 [NRP Borg 1]).

Barberis' statements notwithstanding, early in the summer Coppo was carefully weighing the acceptance of a certain English priest.¹⁶¹ Eventually Fr. Macey made Fr. Michael McCarthy available for the New York mission. He probably was not the unnamed priest whom Coppo was considering earlier, since Rua seems to introduce him to Coppo—belatedly—on October 24: "I inform you that a certain Fr. McCarthy, a Salesian, left here [Turin] at the beginning of this month [to go] straight to London and thence to New York. I hope that even as I write he is already at work in your house." Coppo was not expecting McCarthy, for on October 6 he had written Rua to tell him that Fr. Bertolino had left for California and ask for "another English-speaking priest"—forwarding 500 lire for his voyage.¹⁶²

McCarthy had a troublesome character and "found it very difficult to settle down anywhere." By October 1903 his discontent at Mott Street was known to McSweeney, who informed Archbishop Farley that the English Salesian would soon be returning to London.¹⁶³

With McCarthy's departure, Coppo continued to press for a priest who spoke English fluently. In three letters from Rua to him, the names of Fathers Patrick Diamond¹⁶⁴ and Thomas Deehan¹⁶⁵ come up, apparently because Coppo

¹⁶¹He wrote twice to Rua about the priest, and in July, as Scagliola was preparing to return to Italy, Rua hinted that Coppo should accept the man so as to "have a sufficient number of priests." See Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 15, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁶²Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 24, 1902 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁶³McCarthy (1872-1957) was an Englishman professed at the English Salesian motherhouse at Battersea (London) in 1893. Ordained on Sept. 19, 1896, he was appointed the first director of the second Salesian house in England, at Burwash (Mar. 1, 1897), but by May it had become expedient to recall him to Battersea, where he remained until he left for New York. Back in England, McCarthy took a leave of absence from the Congregation and was advised, ca. 1905, by Fr. Macey to return to New York. Evidently he did so, though we cannot say when. But in October 1906 he was there, evidently in violation of obedience at that point, and Rua was trying to get him to come to Turin; he had already been served with two canonical admonitions, and Rua was ready to send the third one and begin the process of dismissal "if he persists in staying [in New York]." Coppo, or someone else, succeeded in bringing McCarthy back. He returned to active service in his home province in 1907 and served in various Salesian works around England and Ireland until his death. See William John Dickson, *The Dynamics of Growth: The Foundation and Development of the Salesians in England* (Rome: LAS, 1991), 145-46 and passim (the quote is from p. 146); McSweeney to Farley, New York, Oct. 26, [1903] (AANY D-13); Coppo to Albera, New York, July 5, 1906 (ASC S.319[72] U.S.A.), alluding to Macey's wish; Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 13, 1906 (NRP Borg 1), concerning the admonitions; and the Directories for various years. As already noted, the Transfiguration chronicle reports McCarthy's arrival in 1902 on p. 3.

¹⁶⁴"As regards Fr. Diamond, Msgr. Fagnano tells me he must, of necessity, stay there. Confidentially, we believe a large city like yours would not be good for him": Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 7, 1901. See also July 16, 1903; and Oct. 10, 1903 (NRP

had suggested them. Neither of these Irish Salesians was available when Coppo asked for them (if, indeed, he suggested their names), but both did come eventually to the United States. The chronicler of Transfiguration records that Diamond was of great assistance to Coppo, the pastor, in dealing with the English-speaking people and the youngsters of the parish from 1905. Coppo expressed to Rua his satisfaction with Diamond in a letter of May 7, 1906 (if not sooner also).¹⁶⁶

Rua replied that he would be glad to accommodate Coppo about Deehan, but he was already promised to Monsignor Fagnano for the Falkland Islands; if someone else could be found for that mission, then he could have Deehan. By October Rua was informing Coppo that they would probably send Deehan from Jamaica to him. In 1904 Deehan came to New York. He loved to teach catechism, and his preaching was simple, practical, and suited to the congregation; his priestly piety was admirable.¹⁶⁷

Borg 1). Fagnano was prefect apostolic of Southern Patagonia.

¹⁶⁵Deehan (1874-1952) entered the Salesians, like many of his compatriots, through the school at Battersea. As a seminarian he was posted in Turin for a year as Rua's secretary. In 1901 the Rector Major asked him to go to Jamaica, where the Salesians were opening a new mission field. He was ordained the next year. It is pretty evident that Coppo suggested his name to Rua when he needed an English-speaking priest to replace McCarthy; see Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 16, 1903 (NRP Borg 1). Rua refers to letters from Coppo dated June 12 and 23.

¹⁶⁶Diamond (1863-1937) had been one of several Irish lads recruited by Abp. John J. Lynch of Toronto for his diocese and sent to Don Bosco for priestly training, with the option of remaining with him. Like most of the youths, Diamond opted to stay with Don Bosco. In 1883 he went off to Patagonia with Fr. Cagliero, who became vicar apostolic the following year and in 1887 ordained him. Diamond spent most of the next 18 years in Patagonia and the Falkland Islands. He stayed at Transfiguration until 1921, when he was sent to Corpus Christi parish in San Francisco, where he served as pastor until his death. He was "of strong character, frank in speech, austere, sometimes seemingly to excess; but if he was rigid with others, he was no less so with himself." Yet he was a model in his dealings with the young, a popular preacher, and a great convert-maker. See his obituary letter by Fr. Thomas DeMatei, San Francisco, undated 1937; *Cronica della...Parrocchia Trasfigurazione*, 4; Rua to Coppo, Milan, June 4, 1906 (NRP Borg 1). See also DBS, 110; Dickson, 45-59 passim; and a memoir by his longtime seminary and missionary companion, Fr. Patrick O'Grady (original in the San Francisco province archives). DBS errs in stating that Diamond came to New York in 1903, an error originating, apparently, in DeMatei's letter; not only does the house chronicle date his arrival in 1905, but according to the 1905 Directory he was still at Punta Arenas, Chile, as of Mar. 1 of that year.

¹⁶⁷Later he was assigned to the West Coast, where he served in various parishes until his death. See his obituary letter by Fr. Alfred Broccardo, Bellflower, Calif., Nov. 7, 1952.

Given the difficulty in freeing these two confreres for ministry in New York, Rua proposed to look for "someone else who, if he is not English, can understand and speak the language; as an Italian he would be able to render you double service, i.e., for the Italians as well as the English-speaking—and perhaps also to help you with the newspaper."¹⁶⁸

Coppo's efforts to recruit an Irish confrere did not sit well with some of New York's Irish clergy. The influx of Italian priests, often unregulated by ecclesiastical authority, was disturbing enough, but, in the words of the pastor of Saint Brigid's parish:

What is more dangerous is the fact that they want to have English speaking priests at their churches, so as to rope in the English speaking people, from whom they can get the money. Father Coppo has an Englishman named McCarthy, with the pretext that he needs him for the Americans of Mott St, who may be said to be non existent now. F. McCarthy is discontented there & is going back to London, soon I am told.

What determined me to write about this now is the fact that this priest told me on Saturday that F. Coppo has picked up some Irish priest to take his place and he F. Coppo [*sic*] has just asked me if I would object to this man officiating in our Basement & giving a sermon there in English every Sunday. The plea is that the Italian children don't understand Italian. There is abundant provision for all these children in our school & Sunday school, if they would but send them up to it. But some of the priests attending here seem to be helping to keep them & the people Italian, so that their occupation may last. The man, who is stationed here, is a regular family priest [*sic*], not a Salesian, who has with him his mother, sister & a nephew, an eccentric young man, whom he has made sacristan to keep things in the family.

On the whole they are making it unpleasant for me & my assistant, and it would be a relief if Msgr. Edwards, who, Father Coppo tells me is the only one who opposes it, were to withdraw his opposition to the latter's starting a place of his own in Eleventh St, which is in this parish any how.

There is great danger from a big influx of all kinds of priests getting in through Coppo & Cirigione. Apropos of the latter, he got almost nothing in the baskets last Sunday, except \$100 which Dr Burtzell put into in [*sic*]. The Italians returned the compliment by stealing his new overcoat worth \$50 & his new breviary. One of the Italian priests told me yesterday that Cirigione has only received \$8.00 in two months from them.¹⁶⁹

This long complaint emphasizes again the tensions between the Irish and the Italian clergy, and it sheds light on an issue that will be discussed later, namely

¹⁶⁸Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 16, 1903 (NRP Borg 1).

¹⁶⁹McSweeney to Farley, New York, Oct. 26, [1903] (AANY D-13). As we have already seen, Cirringione had ministered to the Italians at Epiphany from Nov. 1901 to Aug. 1902.

the opposition to the Salesians' setting up their own residence within Saint Brigid's or Immaculate Conception parish.

On the other hand, a letter from Bishop John Farley to Rua a year earlier gives us an insight into the esteem that the sons of Don Bosco had won for their Society and their founder. Under the date is an indication that he had been sent a holy card of Don Bosco and Fr. Francesca's *Vita popolare di Don Bosco*. The letter reads:

In conformity with the wishes indicated to me in your circular letter of last July 30, I enclose testimony for the Holy Father to the effect that the cause of the canonization of Fr. John Bosco ought to proceed. I offer this sincere opinion that so holy an undertaking might have a happy outcome, to the glory of the Church and as a due reward of Don Bosco's virtues.¹⁷⁰

In the first full year of Salesian administration of Transfiguration parish, 1903, there were 412 Italian baptisms, 16 Irish, and 5 other—all recorded in a single register, except for the one that Fr. Ferretti performed on January 6. Yet there must have remained a quite substantial non-Italian population, for a parish mission at the beginning of Lent in 1904 was divided: two weeks preached by Irish-American Passionists for the English-speaking parishioners, and two weeks preached by Italian Passionists.¹⁷¹

The Salesians immediately faced the problem of parish indebtedness and of convincing their new Italian parishioners to contribute to the church. They poured their energy into organizing every aspect of parish life: societies, recreational activities, catechism classes, and drawing back to the sacraments those whose religious practice had fallen off. In September 1902 they reopened the school, which low enrollment and lack of funds had forced Fr. McLoughlin to close, bringing in Mother Cabrini's Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart to staff it. Before long the church was filled at Sunday Masses, "and it was evident that the Lord was blessing their work."¹⁷²

The Salesian directory for 1903 shows six confreres at work in New York: Fr. Coppo, the director; Frs. Villani and Zaniewicz; Deacon Ferrazza;¹⁷³ coadju-

¹⁷⁰Farley to Rua, New York, Aug. 18, 1902 (ASC A2590807 [new system]), in Italian.

¹⁷¹*The Catholic News*, vol. 18, Feb. 23, 1904, 18.

¹⁷²*Cronica della...Parrocchia Trasfigurazione*, 4; *The Catholic News*, vol. 17, May 2, 1903, 1; vol. 18, July 16, 1904, 18; *Transfiguration Church: a church of immigrants*, 16-17. Coppo's obituary in *The New York Times* (Jan. 5, 1949, 25) noted that he "became a friend and associate of Mother Frances Cabrini," who was canonized in 1946.

¹⁷³The superior chapter passed Ferrazza for ordination as subdeacon in January 1903, provided that he had completed the necessary number of theological tracts (Barberis to Coppo, Turin, Jan. 22, 1903 [NRP Borg 3]). He was ordained deacon during Easter week (*Cronaca*, part II, 5).

tor Bro. Squassoni; and seminarian Bro. Raczaszek. Although Fr. McCarthy is not listed, it is certain that he was there too.¹⁷⁴ Since Don Bosco's sons were looking after not only Transfiguration but also, through Fr. Mauro and Bro. Ferrazza, the Italians of Saint Brigid Church, and since negotiations were underway for acquiring property and opening a school and house of formation in Newark, New Jersey, additional personnel was necessary.

This was the situation when Fr. Paul Albera, the catechist general, made an extraordinary visitation to the Salesians of New York in March of 1903.

IV. The Extraordinary Visitation of Father Albera

1. Father Paul Albera in New York

In November 1900 the Salesians of Argentina celebrated the silver jubilee of the arrival of the first Salesian missionaries in that country. To enhance the festivity, they invited the rector major, Fr. Michael Rua, to come to Buenos Aires. Rua sent his regrets, but he used the opportunity to send an extraordinary visitor to the Americas, to visit every Salesian work.¹⁷⁵ He designated as his representative for this important responsibility Fr. Paul Albera (1845-1921), since 1892 the spiritual director general of the Society.

The Salesian Constitutions provided for the role of extraordinary visitor with the authority of the rector major:

Should it be deemed necessary, the Rector Major shall, with the consent of the Superior Chapter, appoint some Visitors whom he shall charge to visit a certain number of Houses, in cases where the great number of these or the greatness of the distances may so require. Such Visitors or Inspectors shall act in the Rector Major's stead in respect of the Houses and affairs entrusted to them.¹⁷⁶

Some of Albera's concerns as Rua's vicar in South and North America were to remind his confreres and sisters in the Americas of the abiding love for them on the part of the successor of Don Bosco; to remind them of their unity with the rest of the Congregation in Europe and the Holy Land; to commend their good

¹⁷⁴Vol. I (Europe) of the 1903 Directory indicates that McCarthy will be found in vol. II (the Americas), whereas he is not. This is probably just one of those secretarial oversights or printer's errors that occasionally happen. Rua's letter of Oct. 24, 1902, indicates that he arrived in New York around that time, and as we have seen, McSweeney notes his presence at Transfiguration in Oct. 1903. Both the 1904 *CD* and the 1904 Directory list him among the priests at Transfiguration. As noted above he was living, unlawfully, outside the Congregation.

¹⁷⁵BS 24 (1900), 303; Eng. ed., 3 (1900-01), 103.

¹⁷⁶*Costituzioni della Società di S. Francesco di Sales* (Torino: Tip. Orat. S. Francesco di Sales, 1875), chap. IX, art. 17; English translation (London: Salesian Press, 1907), 85.

work for souls; to encourage them in their difficulties and help them seek solutions; to observe and correct faults; to meet other members of the Salesian family, such as students, past pupils, Cooperators, parishioners, and benefactors; to renew ties with local officials both ecclesiastical and civil; to explore the opportunities of future expansion; and to report his findings, actions, and recommendations to Rua and the superior chapter.

Accompanied by his personal secretary, Fr. Calogero Gusmano (1872-1935), Don Albera sailed to South America in mid-August 1900 and began a journey that would last until April of 1903. At Don Rua's request, Gusmano chronicled their trip; parts of his chronicle were published in installments in the *Bollettino Salesiano* in its various languages.¹⁷⁷

They entered the United States from Mexico, crossing the border by train through El Paso, Texas, on February 9, 1903. They first visited Salesian past pupils and foundations in California—in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland.¹⁷⁸

On Sunday, March 1, Albera and Gusmano boarded a transcontinental train, bound for New York, the last stop of their arduous tour of the two Americas.¹⁷⁹

Fr. Coppo met Don Albera in Cleveland, where Bishop Ignatius Horstmann (1840-1908) wanted to discuss the possibility of opening a Salesian trade school there.¹⁸⁰ On Saturday, March 7, Albera, Coppo, and Gusmano were in Buffalo. They arrived in New York City the next morning at nine o'clock. Fr. Gusmano recorded his first impressions:

¹⁷⁷Gusmano's descriptions of their travels appeared periodically in *BS* under the title "Il Rappresentante del successore di Don Bosco in America" (sometimes this varies), beginning in Nov. 1900 (24:303-07) and continuing through Aug. 1905 (29:228-31); Eng. ed. "Don Rua's Representative in America," Jan. 1901 (3:143-46) through May 1906 (5:102-03).

¹⁷⁸See: *BS* 29 (1905), 173, 199-201; Eng. ed. 5 (1906), 79-81. The development of the early works in California is described in detail by Arthur Lenti, "The Founding and Early Expansion of the Salesian Work in the San Francisco Area from Archival Documents. Part I: The Founding Era," *Journal of Salesian Studies* 7:2 (Fall 1996), 1-53; and "... Part II: Early Expansion (1897-1910)," *ibid.* 8:1 (Spring 1997), 21-90.

¹⁷⁹The last two installments of Gusmano's series (*BS* 29 [1905], 201-02, 228-31; Eng. ed. 5 [1906], 82, 102-03), cover their transit through Chicago, Cleveland, Buffalo, New York, London, and Paris. The English edition of the *Salesian Bulletin*, unlike the otherwise more detailed Italian version, informs us that they left San Francisco on Mar. 1 (p. 82).

¹⁸⁰The bishop of Cleveland had made a formal request during the previous year. The invitation was attractive, but personnel was scarce. See: ASC D869 *Verballi delle riunioni capitolari*, vol. 1, 199 reverse, lines 21-23, session of Mar. 28, 1902. See also: Rua to Coppo, Lanzo Torinese, Feb. 4, 1903 (NRP Borg 1).

When we left the station a thick fog hid everything from our view; we knew not how to reach our House [Transfiguration]. All at once the tram-car stopped and we found ourselves in the midst of a crowd of people waiting outside a Church till those within came out, so that they might in their turn fulfil their Sunday obligation. It was raining hard, and this circumstance added to my admiration.¹⁸¹

Don Albera and his secretary stayed at Transfiguration. The parishioners were mostly from Liguria and southern Italy, and in the neighborhood Protestant missionaries were quite active among the immigrants. While the Protestants offered free schooling and other advantages, the Salesians were still struggling to teach the Italians the necessity of supporting the church and its school financially. Because of the immense number of Italians in New York and the scarcity of Italian-speaking priests and religious, Albera urged his confreres to promote vocations, specifically by opening a house for adult candidates (Sons of Mary).

One day during his stay, Albera crossed the harbor to Newark "to inspect a proposed site for an apostolic school for adult aspirants to the ecclesiastical state."¹⁸² The property for this site belonged to Fr. Morelli, formerly of the Scalabrinians,¹⁸³ who had offered it to the Salesians more than a year earlier. Rua had liked the idea but hesitated to give Fr. Coppo permission to make the purchase because of lack of financial resources and of personnel. A few weeks before Albera arrived, he finally sent written authorization for the purchase.¹⁸⁴

Albera called on the new archbishop of New York, John Farley (promoted the previous September), and on various Salesian Cooperators and religious communities; these had been very generous to the Salesians since 1898 with their financial and moral support. Everyone from the Archbishop down received the visitors very warmly. Crowds came to hear Albera preach and to entertain him with musical and dramatic presentations.

The visitors and Coppo used the subways and elevated trains to tour the city, including Brooklyn. Gusmano was amazed that they could ride all day for a

¹⁸¹*Salesian Bulletin*, Eng. ed. 5:103.

¹⁸²*Salesian Bulletin* 5 (1906), 103.

¹⁸³On Morelli, see note 64.

¹⁸⁴Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 17, 1902: "the lack of means and still more the lack of personnel"; and Jan. 22, 1903: "Fr. Coppo is authorized to acquire [the land]" (NRP Borg 1). On June 7, 1903, Albera wrote to Coppo: "As regards the house at Newark, you cannot believe how many times I have tried to get the superior chapter to make a decision about that; but these celebrations [probably the festivities of Mary Help of Christians at the end of May] have not let us do anything. Now Fr. Rua is away; nevertheless, you can at least accept the house, and I authorize you to receive the plot of land that Fr. Morelli is granting you and to set about the work [i.e., the house of studies]. Perhaps when you receive this from me Fr. Borghino will be there at New York; get together with him the plan, etc." (NRP Borg 6). See also Coppo to Rua, Aug. 4, 1903, in the narrative below.

nickel.¹⁸⁵ The Brooklyn Bridge seems to have awed him; he devoted a whole column of the *Bollettino salesiano* to describing it.¹⁸⁶

According to the chronicle of the house, a delegation of Italians from Saint Brigid's Church petitioned Father Albera for the return of the Salesians:

[During] the visit of the Very Rev. Fr. Paul Albera of the superior chapter, at the petition of a committee he promised to speak to the chapter so that our community could return and act on its own in the area of Saint Brigid's Church. This Italian neighborhood of ours felt our absence very much, and during this whole year they implored the superiors by letter to allow us to live once more in their midst.¹⁸⁷

The confreres who worked for the Italian people at Saint Brigid's had mixed feelings about the arrangement after the community moved to Mott Street:

Our work in the basement of Saint Brigid suffered a little on account of this [arrangement], but the superiors wanted our community to live together with the one on Mott Street (notwithstanding that we had been the first to arrive in N. York), because there we had a church, while here [we have] only a basement; and to safeguard religious spirit. It was for us, then, if not for the people of this neighborhood, a blessing.¹⁸⁸

It seems that Albera also acquainted himself with the candidates living with the Salesians. After his return to Turin, he passed along to Coppo his and the superior chapter's evaluations:¹⁸⁹

I did not doubt at all that Fr. Orlandi would leave and Fr. Sbrocca could not and will not ever be accepted. You will help him understand when and how seems best to you.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁵"25 centesimi" (BS 29 [1905], 230). The exchange rate was five lire to the dollar (see Coppo to Rua, BS 24 [1900], 283).

¹⁸⁶BS 29:230. In ASC R30002 *Viaggi in America*, I found Fr. Gusmano's notes about the Brooklyn Bridge in Quaderno BO500330 "Quasi tutto su U.S.A.," but there was in the notebook practically nothing else connected with the travellers' stay in New York.

¹⁸⁷*Cronaca*, part II, 8. On Fr. Albera's visit, see part IV, below.

¹⁸⁸*Cronaca*, part I, 7.

¹⁸⁹Albera to Coppo, Turin, June 7, 1903 (NRP Borg 6).

¹⁹⁰Fr. Aristides Orlandi must have been an aspirant who had recently left the community. Evidently Orlandi was still assisting at Transfiguration, however: the parish's baptismal register records his first baptism there on Jan. 6, 1903, and his last on Nov. 11, 1903. No Orlandi appears in any of the *CDs* between 1901 and 1905.

Fr. Sbrocca must have been a current aspirant. The *CD* for 1903 shows that in 1902 Vincent Arienzo and John Sbrocca were associate pastors with Coppo at Transfiguration. Sbrocca appears in the 1902 *CD* as a priest of the Scranton, Penn., diocese

You can accept Imbrosiani as an aspirant; but speak clearly to him and make him understand that he must help in the house in everything that is necessary. It seems to me that you, too, will be of this opinion: let him enter disposed for everything; he will apply himself to study if it seems appropriate.¹⁹¹ Meanwhile begin to think about the novitiate.¹⁹²

He also had a sympathetic but not too optimistic remark for Father Bertolino: "I am sorry that Fr. Bertolino has not been well and still more that he has gone to S. Francisco. I am afraid that he will not help those confreres much. Patience."¹⁹³

Albera and Gusmano sailed from New York aboard the *St. Paul* on March 18 and reached London on March 26 after a voyage extended by one day because of a rough sea off the English coast. They reached the Salesian mother house in Turin on Holy Saturday.¹⁹⁴

2. Aftermath of the Visitation

The superior chapter's minutes for May 11, 1903, following Albera's return to Turin, contain this item: "The bishop of Cleveland would like to have a priest and a coadjutor for an orphanage. The chapter wished to extend its works in the United States, but for the present it lacks personnel."¹⁹⁵ It seems that the good

living in the town of Dunmore (p. 720). He celebrated baptisms at Transfiguration between Sept. 4, 1902, and Aug. 29, 1903. The 1904 *CD* indexes him for New York but carries no specific listing in that archdiocese; he is not in the 1905 *CD*.

Vincent Arienzo was previously the chaplain of the works of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart (Mother Cabrini's congregation) at West Park (Ulster County), N.Y.—a convent, novitiate, and orphanage (*CDs* 1901-02). After the 1903 *CD* he disappears. He performed his first baptism at Transfiguration on Sept. 25, 1902, and his last one on Jan. 24, 1903.

In view of the dates of active service in the parish, could Albera have meant to write Arienzo where he wrote Orlandi?

¹⁹¹The *Cronaca* has many passing references to houseguests and aspirants. Nothing more can be discovered concerning most of them. Imbrosiani is not mentioned.

¹⁹²Probably meaning the establishment of a novitiate, rather than Imbrosiani's particular novitiate.

¹⁹³Albera to Coppo, June 7, 1903 (NRP Borg 6). Bertolino probably left for California at the beginning of October 1902—certainly before Oct. 6, the date of Coppo's letter informing Rua of his departure (Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 24, 1902, NRP Borg 1). Instead of improving, he got worse. So he returned to New York early in Nov. 1903, where he died on Nov. 12, assisted by Fr. Piovano and others (Borghino to Rua, Nov. 18, 1903 [ASC S.319{72} U.S.A., 18-XI-03]).

¹⁹⁴*BS* 29 (1905), 198, 230.

¹⁹⁵ASC D869 *Verballi delle riunioni capitolari*, vol. 1, 208, lines 4-5. The minutes refer to a "casa famiglia," which I have rendered as "orphanage"; the precise

bishop did not give up, for the minutes of October 7, 1903, note: "The bishop of Cleveland would like the Salesians for his mission. We replied that we cannot accept."¹⁹⁶

Between those two chapter meetings, Albera gave Coppo a little information about the Congregation's personnel problem:

Believe, as well, my dear Fr. Coppo, that I think of the United States—more than you can imagine; but you cannot understand from afar the scarcity of personnel that we face here at the [superior] chapter. You are aware of the havoc which yellow fever has caused among the confreres in Brazil; already eight seminarians have died in two months—the best and the youngest. May the name of the Lord be blessed.¹⁹⁷

Nevertheless, reinforcements began arriving in New York during this very period. Fr. Filomeno Ferrara, a Salesian aspirant, arrived from Philadelphia bearing a recommendation from Rua.¹⁹⁸ Ferrara performed his first baptism at Transfiguration on May 2, 1903, and preached at Saint Brigid's Church on the feast of Saint Aloysius, Sunday, June 21.¹⁹⁹

On June 6, Deacon Ferrazza was ordained a priest at Saint Patrick's Cathedral by Archbishop John Farley.²⁰⁰

In July Fr. John Piovano arrived from Rosario (Argentina) and took his place at Mott Street, where he would shortly be appointed director in Coppo's place.²⁰¹

meaning, however, is not clear.

¹⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 210 reverse, line 12.

¹⁹⁷Albera to Coppo, Turin, June 7, 1903 (NRP Borg 6). According to the *Salesian necrology: Salesiani defunti dal 1864 al 1986* (Roma: Direzione Generale Opere Don Bosco, 1986), between Feb. 3 and May 5—three months, actually—two priests and six seminarians died in Brazil, ranging in age from 22 to 32. Moreover, between Feb. 3 and May 17 another ten Salesians aged 17 to 35 died in Europe or South America (four priests, one coadjutor brother, and five seminarians), plus two coadjutors in their 50s in Italy. A study of the mortality rates among the first generations of Salesians would be interesting, indeed.

¹⁹⁸Don Rua's recommendation to Coppo, dated June 25, 1902, is handwritten on a business card. See NRP Borg 1.

¹⁹⁹The St. Aloysius sermon is mentioned in *BS 27* (1903), 315. Ferrara had to make a new novitiate; he was at Troy in 1904 and was highly enough esteemed by his superiors to be appointed the novices' confessor while himself a novice, according to the 1906 Directory. He was professed, served one year in San Francisco, returned to Transfiguration, and distinguished himself as a confessor, preacher, and youth minister until his premature death by drowning in 1910. See two anonymous documents, one Italian handwritten of 2 pp., one English typewritten of 1 p., in the files of the Salesian Studies Office, New Rochelle.

²⁰⁰*Cronaca*, part I, 8.

²⁰¹A native of Druent in the province of Turin, he had been born in 1863, at-

The number of personnel was hardly the only concern of the Rector Major for his sons in far-off America. He was concerned also about their physical and spiritual well-being and, as always, vocations. For example, he told Coppo:

Your [plural] preaching here and there pleases me; but arrange matters so that you [singular] are not burdened with too much work and preaching in your own parish as well as elsewhere. Seek always to spread devotion to Mary Help of Christians, the Sacred Heart Association with its six Masses, and the Pious Union of Salesian Cooperators.

Do not allow those dependent upon you to forget that they are Salesians and they must promote Salesian enterprises.

And the matter of the house for the studentate—how does that stand now? It will give me great satisfaction when I know that you are in a position to begin it. For that will be an enterprise eminently Salesian.

Some particular news on each of your collaborators would please me. But at your convenience.²⁰²

In fact, a major development regarding the house of studies was about to happen.

3. Expansion to Troy

An unexpected opportunity delighted Coppo and his growing community a little later in the summer. On August 4, 1903, Coppo sent a ten-page, one-paragraph (!) letter to Rua to inform him that he and Msgr. Edwards, "our very close friend," were about to set out for Troy to inspect the former archdiocesan seminary, which they intended for a novitiate and "studentate" (a house where, after the novitiate, seminarians would continue their studies and their formation before beginning full-time apostolic work), if the Rector Major should like that. He expresses his gratitude to God that the Salesians have not yet bought Fr. Morelli's parcel of land in Newark. The New Jersey site is not healthy during the summer. Furthermore, they would have had to build on it, and they would not have been able to accept Archbishop Farley's offer of the use of the old seminary.

Coppo summarizes the building's history and recounts how one day he had expressed to Edwards his hope that the sons of the Italian immigrants would be able to become missionaries to their own people, and the monsignor had liked the idea and proposed to the Archbishop that he lease the seminary to the

tended school at the Oratory for three years, and had known Don Bosco. He entered the diocesan seminary but decided he would like to stay with Don Bosco. After his novitiate (1881-1882) he was sent to Buenos Aires, where he taught school, was ordained, and served as an assistant pastor. He spoke Italian, Spanish, English, and French, and later learned some German and Japanese as well. Between 1890 and 1903 he was director of the Salesian school at Rosario, Argentina.

²⁰²Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 16, 1903 (NRP Borg 1).

Salesians as their novitiate and aspirantate. Archbishop Farley, in turn, had written to Bishop Thomas M. Burke of Albany, in which diocese Troy is situated, to introduce the Salesians and obtain his permission for them to establish themselves there. Later in the letter Coppo advises Rua about some details that must be communicated to the bishop.²⁰³

He asks the rector major for another Italian priest, "the seminarian Bassi, our first novice,"²⁰⁴ just professed at London, and a good coadjutor"; these will be sufficient personnel for the autumn of 1903. There are already four or five youths ready to enter the new school and become Salesians.

Archbishop Farley's offer was accepted and a boarding school-novitiate was opened in the old seminary.²⁰⁵ There are no letters in the New Rochelle archives dealing with the superiors' approval, but Fr. John Ferrazza went to Troy on August 17, 1903, in charge of the first group of students, who numbered sixteen when classes began in September.²⁰⁶ Coppo at the end of that month proposed to Rua that the Sons of Mary program be adopted for the school, with suitable adaptations, and that money be raised to subsidize the student tuitions through solicitations in *L'Italiano in America* (his weekly newspaper) and other journals. Rua agreed with the first proposal but not the second. Coppo had set the fee for room and board at \$2.00 a week, which Rua approved, with the note that needy but particularly promising youths might be granted a reduced rate. Coppo repeated his request for "at least two priests" for Troy, not only to be sure that a regular confessor could be assigned there (he reminded Rua that Troy was 150 miles from New York) but also to be able to offer some pastoral assistance to the "many Italians in that city and its environs." Rua replied that not many Salesians were available—but nine or ten were to embark for the United States on October 14 or 15. Coppo should consult with Fr. Piovano about whom to send to Troy; it was important to choose them well, so that the new school would get off to a good start.²⁰⁷

²⁰³Coppo to Rua, New York, Aug. 4, 1903 (ASC A4390272 in the new system; fol. 3717 A8-B5).

²⁰⁴Francis Bassi is listed in the 1903 Directory as a novice at Battersea, London. He had been listed as one at Burwash the year before. Why does Coppo call him "our first novice" (*nostro primo novizio*)? Had he been sent from New York? There is no mention of him in the chronicles. But on Oct. 7, 1901, Rua authorized Coppo to send an unnamed youth, about 20 years old, to London as an aspirant; he also urged that the young man pay part of the expenses entailed, if possible. On Mar. 12, 1902, he commended Coppo for the aspirant he had sent to London (NRP Borg 1).

Bassi was at Transfiguration parish in 1904 and the following two years at Troy (Directories). He seems to have left the Society at the expiration of his triennial vows in 1906.

²⁰⁵On the opening of the Salesian work at Troy, see Ceria, *Annali* 3:361-63.

²⁰⁶1904 CD, 115.

²⁰⁷Coppo to Rua, New York, Sept. 30, 1903, with Rua's autograph marginal notes as a reply, Turin, Oct. 10, 1903 (NRP Borg 1).

The new missionaries arrived at the end of October. On the evening of Sunday, November 1, they were welcomed to New York with entertainment and speeches in the theater at Transfiguration. One of the welcomers—he gave “a splendid address”—was a local politician, Assemblyman Smith.²⁰⁸ The personnel selected for Troy evidently were given some time to adapt to America before being sent up there from New York; once they got to Troy and settled in, on December 5 Ferrazza returned to Transfiguration to reside there and resume his pastoral care of the Italians at Saint Brigid’s.²⁰⁹

Coppo himself went to Troy to function as director,²¹⁰ but he kept a close eye on matters in New York, as we learn from Rua: “It is my wish,” he wrote in February 1904, “that you continue to look after our two churches in New York, going there—as you have been—every week.” He informed Piovano, the new superior in New York, of his wish also. There was serious reason for all this, to be discussed below. Rua was concerned, however, that “necessary assistance” not be lacking at the Troy school during Coppo’s absence.²¹¹

Coppo was assisted at Troy by one priest: Hector Xhaard,²¹² coadjutors John De Piante²¹³ and Faustino Squassoni, and the seminarians Joseph An-

²⁰⁸BS 28 (1904), 62. Assemblyman Smith is almost certainly Alfred E. Smith, Jr., who actually was about to be elected to his first term in the state legislature on Nov. 3. He later served four terms as governor of New York and ran as the Democratic candidate for President in 1928, the first Catholic nominated for that office by a major party.

²⁰⁹*Cronaca*, part II, 5.

²¹⁰1904 Directory.

²¹¹Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 19, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²¹²Xhaard (1880-1939) came from the diocese of Liege, Belgium, made his perpetual profession in 1897, and was ordained April 13, 1903. In 1905 he returned to his native country, where he filled a variety of administrative positions in several Salesian houses until 1931, except for 2 years as confessor at the house of studies at Valsalice (Turin). One who surveys the Directories is struck by his frequent changes of community (8 changes in 26 years), not to mention additional changes of responsibilities; e.g., although he was 4 times appointed director, he served a total of only 8 years. In 1931 he left the Belgian province for Algeria, part of the vice-province of the French African colonies, where he spent the rest of his life. See the Directories and *Missionari salesiani: I rimpatriati e i defunti al 31 dicembre 1977* (Rome: Centro Studi di Storia delle Missioni Salesiane, 1978).

²¹³De Piante (1854-1929) must have been an interesting personage: beginning in 1865, when he was but eleven, he served eighteen months with the *bersaglieri* (an elite corps of the Italian army); this was at the time of Italy’s third war with Austria, after which Venetia, including De Piante’s province of Udine, was reclaimed. He completed schooling as far as the third year of *ginnasio* and then became a farmer; he was laboring in that capacity for the Salesians at Sabino Magliano in 1879. He moved to Borgo San Martino as a novice in 1883, professed in 1885, and served as provisioner in several houses in northern Italy until being sent to America. He arrived in New York on Dec. 1, 1903, and he served as provisioner successively at the houses of

dreoli,²¹⁴ Philip Garbellini,²¹⁵ and Robert Hutcheson.²¹⁶ All but Coppo and Squassoni were among the new arrivals of late October.

Rua had written early in the school year that the number of boys at Troy was not expected to exceed ninety. It did not come close to that. At mid-year he advised Coppo not to get discouraged by the small number of candidates to Salesian life. "I hope they will increase," he said; "I have no objection to your accepting even some younger boys, as long as both groups will have suitable schooling and assistance without our having to provide additional personnel—which we do not have right now. For this year, go ahead and endeavor to lay sound foundations of piety and morality."²¹⁷

Coppo was earnest about laying a solid foundation. He proposed that Rua send Fr. Eusebius Vismara to look after his young candidates at Troy. Rua replied that Vismara was needed in Piedmont, but during the summer of 1904 the superiors would send more help. Until then Coppo should do what was necessary to prepare his aspirants for possible admission to the novitiate in the fall.²¹⁸

4. Developments at Transfiguration

Troy, Hawthorne, Cold Spring, and New Rochelle. DePiante returned to Italy in 1922 and died at Chieri. See personnel files of the New Rochelle province; *Missionari salesiani*.

²¹⁴ Andreoli began his novitiate at Ivrea in 1900 and professed triennial vows there the next year. After 2 years at the Foglizzo studentate, he took ship to New York. He completed his period of triennial vows at Troy, and for the next 3 years (1904-07) was listed in the Directories as a novice (*ascritto*) again at Troy. Late in 1906 he was on the verge of leaving the Society, according to a letter from Rua, who advised against allowing him to continue living in one of the communities if he did leave and put aside the clerical habit (Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 13, 1906). Evidently he did leave in 1907, the last year in which he appears in the Directory.

²¹⁵ Garbellini made his novitiate in the Roman province at Genzano during 1902-03; his master of novices was the future missionary bishop-martyr, Fr. Louis Versiglia. Apparently he came to America immediately upon professing triennial vows. He spent the school years 1903-06 at Troy; when his vows expired he left the Society. See the Directories.

²¹⁶ Hutcheson hailed from County Down in Ireland, where he had been born in 1879. He went to Battersea as an aspirant in 1897, began his novitiate at Burwash in August 1898, and made his perpetual profession at Cape Town in October 1899. He spent time at Alexandria (Egypt), Ivrea, and Turin before coming over to Troy in 1903. In the spring of 1904 Hutcheson was seeking ordination as subdeacon. Cf. 1904 Directory.

²¹⁷ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 10, 1903; Feb. 19, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²¹⁸ Rua to Coppo, Turin, May 4, 1904 (NRP Borg 1). Vismara (1880-1945), a philosophy professor at Foglizzo, had just been ordained and was shortly to earn a theology degree in Rome so that he could teach in the Congregation's first theologate. He went on to become a renowned liturgist. See DBS, pp. 296-97.

Several of the newly arrived missionaries were assigned to the church on Mott Street. So at the end of 1903 at Transfiguration Church were Frs. John Piovano, who succeeded Coppo as director and pastor; Joseph Villani, who continued as prefect of the community; Alfred Pauc,²¹⁹ Michael McCarthy (until his return to England), and (nominally) Joseph Zaniewicz, coadjutor Bro. Peter Anselmi,²²⁰ and seminarian Bro. Bassi.

That the transition of staff at Transfiguration did not go smoothly may be inferred from Rua's February 19 letter: first, his endorsement of Coppo's oversight of the parish through weekly visits from Troy; second, a letter to Piovano that Rua instructed Coppo to read before delivering to Piovano, so that both of them would know Rua's "thoughts and wishes regarding [their] relationship"; third, Rua wanted Coppo to offer Piovano prudent fraternal advice; fourth, "I do not know what provision can be made at Transfiguration to prevent the good being done there from being weakened. Give me your opinion too; I will listen to it willingly. For now I do not know exactly what you ought to do."²²¹

Two days later Rua wrote again. He had just received a letter from the youths who belonged to the Company of Saint Aloysius, complaining about "the one who is now in charge of the church and showing their intentions of staying away." Rua asked Coppo to speak with them on his (Rua's) behalf, encourage them "to persevere," promise them that he (Coppo) would continue to

²¹⁹Pauc, a native of Paris, was born in 1874, made his profession at age 20, and was ordained at Lille in 1902. The legislation against religious compelled him to leave his native country, and after a short sojourn in Turin, he came to New York. He was at Mott St. only a year before being sent on to Troy, where again his assignment lasted only a year. In 1905 Pauc was transferred to San Francisco; he performed valiant services there after the 1906 earthquake and ensuing fire. Between 1913 and 1925 he was back in New York, first at Transfiguration and then at Mary Help of Christians. Then he returned to California, where he spent the rest of his long life doing both school and parish work, especially as a much-sought confessor of both seminarians and priests. He was known for his "eternal cheerfulness" and his charm. After his death in 1964, his director wrote of him: "He was no empire builder.... But he left something [more lasting]. For Father Pauc left the work of his priestly zeal and example indelibly carved in the souls of all the confreres who knew him." See obituary letter, undated, by Fr. Michael Ribotta; *Missionari salesiani*.

²²⁰Anselmi was a perpetually professed confrere at the Salesian school of Macerata, Italy, by 1897, where he remained until missioned to New York. Except for the 1904-05 school year at Troy, he spent the years from his arrival until 1910 at Mott St. In 1910 he moved uptown to St. Brigid's, which was already developing into the new Italian parish of Mary Help of Christians. There he remained until 1921, when apparently he left the Society. See the Directories for the various years. Although he belonged to the New York/New Rochelle province for 18 years, there is no dossier on him in the personnel files.

²²¹Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 19, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

visit them, and assure them that Fr. Piovano really did care about their temporal and spiritual welfare.²²²

Thus we see that one problem at the parish was that the pastor was alienating the young men and boys. From the continuing correspondence we learn that by April it had become expedient to move Piovano. Replying to a letter of March 23 from Coppo, Rua informed Coppo:

I have already written to Fr. Borghino exhorting him to come as soon as he can to New York. I do not think he will wait long. When he arrives from San Francisco, it may be convenient for the pastor of Transfiguration to go and substitute him.²²³ But in the meantime, who will be able to act as pastor in his place? Give me your opinion.

As regards your going to Transfiguration, I want you to go there every week, regardless of the expense. You have seen from my letter to Fr. Piovano that it is also my wish for him to reach an agreement with you in all his dealings. This must give you authority in that house and the church.

If, then, the present pastor goes to San Francisco and you have to stay to replace him, who could you best leave at Troy as director?

If you could send Fr. Villani to take charge of the school at Troy and continue yourself as pastor at Transfiguration, it would perhaps be best. Then Fr. Piovano, living in community with you, could perhaps also look after St. Brigid's. These are proposals for you to examine and reach a decision with the Provincial.²²⁴

One potential conflict receives the rector major's particular attention, as revealed in the letter just quoted:

I hope you have been able to pacify that poor lady who wanted to make trouble, and also to give the chancery and Msgr. Edwards explanations to calm down everyone and dispel the storm that threatened to gather over Transfiguration.

As soon as you can, find a way to turn that lady out of the house in a suitable manner. Let what happened serve as a norm, that we should make any sacrifice rather than keep women in the house, [even] at the cost of the director or the prefect having to do the cooking temporarily, as is done in some of our houses.²²⁵

Coppo wrote to Rua again on April 14, and he must have told him that he could not stay at Transfiguration himself. On May 4 Rua expressed his regret at that and said he would write to Borghino with instructions about steps to take, leav-

²²²Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 21, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²²³Borghino was pastor of Corpus Christi parish in San Francisco (1904 Directory).

²²⁴Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 3, 1904 (NRP Borg 1). The last paragraph is a postscript.

²²⁵Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 3, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

ing him room to use his own judgment. Until the school year ended it would not be possible to send anyone from Italy as a new pastor.²²⁶ By the end of May, Piovano had left for San Francisco, and Rua was promising Coppo more help during the summer.²²⁷

The house chronicle of Transfiguration sheds no light on the parish's problems. To call it a laconic history is an understatement:

In 1904 the church was improved through restoration and [re]decoration; the structure of the rectory at 31 Mott Street was also worked on.

To help with such great expenses, at the end of November that same year a lottery was conceived; it was very successful and bore good monetary fruit.

At the head of every movement and every development that the church experienced we always find Fr. Coppo, helped successively in special manner by the Rev. Filomeno Ferrara from 1903 to 1905 and the Rev. Francis Garassino from 1905 to 1910 in ministering to the Italians, and for the English-speaking people and the youngsters of the parish, from 1905 on the Rev. Patrick Diamond was always of very powerful assistance.²²⁸

Coppo expressed to Rua his satisfaction with two confreres who arrived in New York late in 1905 or early in 1906, Frs. Diamond and Innocent Montanari; the latter was assigned to the Saint Brigid mission with Frs. Ferrazza and Natale Graziano.²²⁹ Rua expected "a great deal of good" from the two new men and charged Coppo to keep a close, fraternal eye on them. At the same time, there was an unspecified problem that both Coppo and Rua were trying to cope with—at which of the New York houses is unclear. Rua continued:

Do what you can to modify the system that you have outlined to me; since the individual is here [in Italy], I hope we will be able to speak, encourage, correct, etc. Meanwhile, it will also be good that you [plural] be ready to respect, love,

²²⁶Rua to Coppo, Turin, May 4, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²²⁷Rua to Coppo, Turin, May 23, 1904 (NRP Borg 1). Piovano became pastor at Corpus Christi Church (1905 Directory). Later assignments took him back to Italy, to Chile, and to Peru, where he was an esteemed confessor. Poor health led to his return to New York in 1921, seeking medical attention. He continued to show his zeal and competence as both confessor and professor and to give example of priestly piety among the students of theology at New Rochelle in the remaining 15 months of his life. He died Jan. 9, 1923. See personnel files of the New Rochelle province; obituary letter by Fr. Robert Wiczorek, director of New Rochelle, Jan. 10, 1923.

²²⁸*Cronica della...Parrocchia Trasfigurazione*, 4

²²⁹Acknowledged by Rua to Coppo, Milan, June 4, 1906 (NRP Borg 1); 1906 Directory. Montanari had come over with Coppo when the latter returned from Italy in November 1905 (*Cronaca*, part I, 10; part II, 6); eventually he left the Congregation. Graziano, born in 1862 in the province of Casale in Piedmont, had professed in 1891 and been ordained in 1897; he arrived in New York in 1904. He died in 1930 near Florence. See *Missionari salesiani*.

and even bear with [him], if it will still be necessary. "Bear one another's burdens, and so you will fulfill the law of Christ."²³⁰

Whatever the difficulties, under successive Salesian pastors and their clerical and lay assistants, through two world wars, the Great Depression, and the gradual change in the ethnic character of the neighborhood, Transfiguration parish continued to flourish.

5. More Possibilities for Expansion

Coppo, and probably other Salesians, continued to preach missions among the immigrants all over the New York area. Their successes were duly reported in *L'Italiano in America*, as well as in Coppo's letters to Rua; the Rector Major "was much consoled." At the same time, he cautioned Coppo that Troy's director, although "he surely could do much good with his preaching, as well," should make it his priority to look after the school and "absent himself as little as possible."²³¹

Whether influenced by Salesian preaching in parishes here and there, or by reports from the bishops where they were already established, American bishops continued to call for Salesians and their particular charism. For example, during the summer of 1903 Archbishop Alexander Christie (1848-1925) of Portland, Oregon,²³² offered Fr. Borghino a three-hundred-acre agricultural school for poor and abandoned youngsters. Borghino liked the idea and told Rua that he would need five or six confreres in order to be able to accept the offer.²³³ Although this prospect was destined never to materialize, it lingered more than two years.²³⁴

At the same October session of the superior chapter in which the plea of Bishop Horstmann of Cleveland was definitively refused, a request for a priest for the Italians in Texas was refused, as well. This petition had come the previous

²³⁰Rua to Coppo, Milan, June 4, 1906 (NRP Borg 1). Rua quoted Gal. 6:2 in Latin.

²³¹Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 12, 1905 (NRP Borg 1). The director as of the 1904-05 school year was Fr. Silvester Rabagliati, who had come up from Colombia; he was a brother of the famous missionary to Argentina, Colombia, and Chile, Fr. Evasio Rabagliati. He remained director at Troy until the school was transferred to Hawthorne in 1980 and was director in Hawthorne until 1910, when he became director-pastor at St. Brigid's-Mary Help of Christians (1904-11 Directories). During all those years he was also a member of the provincial council. But eventually he left the Salesians; he is not listed in the 1912 Directory.

²³²On Christie see Delaney, 101-02. On Portland see F. M. Campbell, "Portland, Archdiocese of," NCE 11:602-05.

²³³Borghino to Rua, San Francisco, Sept. 13, 1903, and Troy, Nov. 18, 1903 (ACS S. 319[72] U.S.A.).

²³⁴Coppo to Barberis, New York, Apr. 6, 1906.

month from Bishop Edward Joseph Dunne of Dallas,²³⁵ who reported an estimated two hundred Italian families in his diocese, mostly from southern Italy, who would soon be lost without a good priest to serve them. The bishop, writing from New York, must already have spoken with Coppo, for his letter to Rua mentions Msgr. Edwards' intercession with the Salesian superior in New York and Coppo's recommendation of another priest in the event that the Salesians are unable to come to his diocese. The bishop promises the Italians' priest lots of hard work with little earthly reward, and treatment comparable to that of the other priests in the diocese.²³⁶

The Italian presence in the heartland of the United States, far from the large cities of the east and west coasts, was brought home to the superior chapter again in 1904. We read in the minutes of February 22:

Fr. Cavallo writes from Hartshorne, Indian Territory, that there is there a large settlement of Italians without priests. He is requesting Salesians. He himself asks to become a member of the Congregation and would go to our house in New York for training. Let information be sought from Cardinal Richelmy. The chapter will seek information and decides to accept him as an aspirant according to his request.²³⁷

We have already seen how various secular priests and at least one religious priest came to live and work with the little community in New York, some of them as aspirants. The house chronicle records that "a certain Fr. Cavallo" came to New

²³⁵The Dallas diocese, erected in 1890 out of the Galveston-Houston diocese, was huge: 108,000 square miles (slightly smaller than the whole of Italy) extending from the Louisiana border all the way west to El Paso. Bp. Dunne (1848-1910), an Irishman, was its second shepherd (1893-1910); he built many churches and schools, doubled the number of parishes, and almost trebled the number of clergy during his administration. See T. K. Gorman, *New Catholic Encyclopedia* 4:618-19.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, 210 reverse, line 17. Dunne to Rua, New York, Sept. 11, 1903 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 E9-10); the letter is in English.

Although most Italian immigrants settled in the large cities of the Northeast (e.g., New York, Boston, Philadelphia), many took jobs in the mines, on railroad construction, and in agriculture all over the country. Thus thousands of Sicilians and other southern Italians wound up in Texas, especially in the Galveston-Houston diocese, in the 1890s and 1900s. Even the Italian government encouraged them to go to Texas, presumably because of its rich soil and warm climate. See Mangione and Morale, 181-83.

²³⁷ASC D869 *Verbali delle riunioni capitolari*, vol. 1, 213, lines 47-51.

The "Indian Territory" is Oklahoma, which was not admitted to the federal Union as a state until 1907. Hartshorne is a small town in Pittsburg County in the southeastern part of the state; its main industries are coal mining and lumbering. Agostino Richelmy (1850-1923) was archbishop of Turin from 1897 until his death. Perhaps Cavalli originally came from the Turin archdiocese, and thus the thought of seeking information about him from the cardinal.

York as an aspirant; he joined the community late in April or at the beginning of May and was soon assisting the Italians at Saint Brigid's. He did not stay long.²³⁸

We learn from one of Rua's letters that the Bishop William George McCloskey of Louisville²³⁹ had approached Coppo about the possibility of getting Salesians: "As for the bishop of Louisville, unfortunately we will not be able for some years to satisfy him. That is what we will answer if he writes to us."²⁴⁰

Early in 1905 Bishop Michael Tierney of Hartford sent a letter to the Rector Major through Coppo, asking for Salesians. He got the usual response: "Regrettably, we absolutely lack the personnel." But Rua added: "If we should come to know even some secular priests of good repute disposed to go into the missions, we will not fail to suggest to them that they should apply to [Bishop Tierney]."²⁴¹

V. Return to Saint Brigid's Parish

1. Stabilizing the Italian Mission

Probably as a result of Fr. Albera's intercession—at least in part—the Salesians returned to live among the Italians at Saint Brigid's Church on February 8, 1904. Ferrazza was the only confrere there, residing nearby with Fr. Michelangelo Mauro and that priest's relatives at 299 E. 8th Street.²⁴² We have seen that

²³⁸Rua to Coppo, Turin, May 23, 1904 (NRP Borg 1): "Many thanks for your letter of the 4th I am happy that you have accepted Fr. Cavallo. Encourage him." *Cronaca*, part II, 5-6: "On June 28 [Fr. Villani] returned to Transfiguration Church, leaving in his place certain Fr. Cavallo, an aspirant. A little later Fr. Cavallo left the Salesians."

The *CDs* indicate that there was a Catholic mission in Hartshorne, Okla., but there is no listing of a Fr. Cavalli between 1903 and 1906. The only Fr. Cavallo appears in 1905 as "G. Cavallo" at the Mt. Carmel Italian Mission in Seattle. The Salesians' aspirant may well have been G. Cavallo. But, given that some Italian priests roamed rather freely in, out, and around the country, one cannot be entirely certain. Note this remark in a letter from Fr. McSweeney to Abp. Farley: "In regard to the Italian priests I would like to say a word. They are landing pretty fast and I don't think they have much scruple about saying mass, without authorization of the Archbishop." See letter of Oct. 26, [1903] (AANY D-13).

²³⁹On McCloskey see Delaney, p. 358. On Louisville see J.H. Schauinger, "Louisville, Archdiocese of," NCE 8:1031.

²⁴⁰Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 3, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁴¹Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 12, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁴²*Cronaca*, part II, 5, reports: "February 8. After months of doubt, at the people's insistence our superiors in Turin and Fr. Provincial have given permission [for us] to take lodgings at St. Brigid. Fr. Ferrazza was assigned to that chaplaincy and,

the Italians of Saint Brigid's had petitioned Albera for the return of the Salesians as their pastors, that he promised to take the matter up in Turin, and that the immigrants followed up with letters "during the whole year."²⁴³ These letters have not yet surfaced in the Salesian Central Archives, nor is there any record in the minutes that the issue was discussed by the superior chapter.

More precisely, the objective seems to have been that the Salesians should re-establish a residence near Saint Brigid's. Fr. Ferrazza, as we have seen, was already coming every Sunday from Transfiguration to assist Fr. Mauro, whose salary and rent the Salesians were providing so that he could be at the daily service of Saint Brigid's Italians.

But something was developing during the summer and early fall of 1903. Borghino, the provincial, wrote to Rua on November 18 from Troy:

I thought I had finished [my letter], but Fr. Coppo has just written with the news that the archbishop of New York has withdrawn his permission for us to open the new house of St. Brigid in the face of the opposition of the neighboring pastors.

It doesn't look like firmness and stability are the principal virtues of the North American clergy, does it? With extraordinary ease they give today in order to take away tomorrow; there's no need, then, to trust very much in their promises and what they give orally.

Even the apostolic delegate, to whom I've already had the fortune of paying my respects several times in California as well as here, has often told me what I see for myself: "Pay attention, dear Father. Make them respect you. Don't trust the American bishops: today they need you and call for you, but tomorrow they no longer need you, and if the house isn't your own, they send you on your way."²⁴⁴

Borghino's letter reveals several things. The most evident fact is some strain in relations, if not outright prejudice, between the predominantly Irish clergy of America and the Italian immigrants and their clergy. But the letter seems to show that the difficulties worked both ways. The apostolic delegate from 1902 to 1911 was Archbishop Diomedede Falconio, OFM (1842-1917), who had been ordained in the United States in 1866, had been a seminary rector, and was a naturalized citizen. If Borghino reports his sentiments accurately, his long experience in America had not been easy for him, and we may suspect that cultural differ-

with Cav. Merlino and the aspirant Michael Peirone, lodged with Father Mauro at 299 E. 8th St. on the second floor." See also *Cronaca*, part I, 9.

The 1905 Directory lists Michael Perone as a coadjutor novice at Troy. He did not profess vows. There do not seem to be any other documentary references to him, and none at all to "Cav. Merlino."

²⁴³Cf. *Cronaca*, part I, 8; part II, 5.

²⁴⁴Borghino to Rua, Troy, N.Y., Nov. 18, 1903 (ACS S.319[72] U.S.A.), [6].

ences and prejudices were at work within the clergy as well as between the Irish clergy and the immigrant laity.

Second, the tone of the letter suggests that the Salesians had already decided to re-establish themselves at Saint Brigid's. Borghino speaks of "the" new house as if it were already a fact; and he seems disappointed, if not bitter, about the latest development. Rua was eager to keep the Salesians at Saint Brigid's, provided only that such an arrangement not displease Archbishop Farley, Msgr. Edwards, or the pastor.²⁴⁵ This determination only affirmed the sentiments of the superior chapter when that body approved the acceptance of Transfiguration parish: "...the works [should] be maintained where we first settled in the city with great advantage to our compatriots."²⁴⁶

Third, it is apparent in the letter that Archbishop Farley must already have given his approval for the Salesians to return to Saint Brigid's, for now it is alleged that he is withdrawing it. In the absence of any other documentation, it is impossible to say more.

Fourth, it is alleged that the neighboring pastors objected to the Salesians' return. This is puzzling, given the influence wielded by Msgr. John Edwards, one of those neighbors and the Salesians' staunchest supporter. Perhaps the monsignor was working behind the scenes to overcome Irish clerical resistance and thought it imprudent for the Salesians to commit themselves prematurely. Or perhaps his concern was financial.

In a letter to Archbishop Farley on November 23, the pastor of Saint Brigid's Church begins with what might have been the real issue for Edwards, who was not only a local pastor but also one of the three vicars general of the archdiocese: "Fr. Coppo was here yesterday evening and he says that there is no danger of his involving the diocese in debt, as he can get enough of money from his Order, in case of necessity."²⁴⁷ This assertion probably would have surprised Rua and the other superiors. Whether the money in question was for purchasing a rectory or a site for an Italian church is not clear at this point. But we recall the archdiocesan policy that no national parishes were to be created until they had shown a certain stability, which implies some financial firmness.

If there was local clerical opposition, it was not coming from Fr. McSweeney. In that November 23 letter he quickly passes from finances to pastoral concerns. He had already found fault with Fr. Mauro but not with the Salesians.²⁴⁸ This he reaffirmed, endorsing the Salesian presence within his parish. The Salesians were offering four Italian Masses every Sunday, drawing

²⁴⁵Rua to Coppo, Turin, Feb. 19, 1904 (NRP Borg 1). Note that this letter was written more than a week after Ferrazza moved in with Mauro (on Feb. 8), re-establishing the Salesian residence at St. Brigid's.

²⁴⁶Minutes of the session of Dec. 23, 1901, cited already in note 144 and the corresponding text.

²⁴⁷McSweeney to Farley, New York, Nov. 23, 1903 (AANY D-13).

²⁴⁸See the letter of Oct. 26, [1903].

2,000 Italians from all five parishes of the neighborhood—only about one-fifth of the “seething multitude,” in his estimation. He believes that the Salesians finally have sufficient manpower to take care of “the Basement church” by themselves or to “start a mission in Eleventh St.” and “they can live by themselves, as before, in the neighborhood and keep an orderly house.”²⁴⁹ On the other hand, “My displeasure has been, as I stated in my last letter, with a priest secular whom they put in charge, when they moved to Mott St.” If the Salesians leave, a single secular priest “could not provide [the Italians] with the four masses & two Italian priests would be too much to endure.” Moreover, he finds that the Italians themselves do not care as much for the seculars, and he fears they would stop coming to church. The Salesians, Rua included, knew and appreciated McSweeney’s support for them.²⁵⁰

The chronicle gives no hint of any local problems, only that the Salesians were waiting for permission from their superiors. Yet there must have been some substance to what Coppo had written to Borghino, for it was more than two months before the Salesians did, in fact, set up again among their countrymen at Saint Brigid’s.²⁵¹

We have already seen that, when Albera visited in March 1903, there were seven confreres in one house in New York. In a year’s time these have multiplied to two houses in New York City and one in Troy, and fifteen Salesians.

2. Turning the Italian Mission into a Parish

Fr. Coppo returned from Troy in 1904 as director-pastor at Transfiguration in consequence of the Piovano upheaval. Fr. Ferrazza held the same titles for the Salesian community serving the Italians at Saint Brigid’s.²⁵²

Regardless of the sentiments of the local pastors, Coppo and, indeed, the entire American province were soon looking for a building they could buy near Saint Brigid’s so as to consolidate their foothold in that burgeoning Italian neighborhood and the birthplace, so to say, of the Salesian work in the East. Another factor was the lack of privacy and a certain exposure to the “world” entailed by their life in a common tenement: “...we had to limit ourselves to rent-

²⁴⁹A reference to the Salesians’ apartment at 315 E. 12th St. before they moved to Mott St.

²⁵⁰“Your news about St. Brigid’s and the pastor’s good will [*benevolenza*] please me very much,” he told Coppo three months after the Salesians formally returned to the parish. He enclosed a letter for McSweeney. See Rua to Coppo, Turin, May 4, 1904 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁵¹See *Cronaca*, part II, 5, and part I, 9.

²⁵²As St. Brigid’s mission evolved into the Italian parish of Mary Help of Christians on E. 12th Street, Ferrazza became its founding pastor. Later he was pastor of Holy Rosary Church in Port Chester, N.Y., where he died in 1921, distinguished for his priestly zeal.

ing an apartment in a tenement where perhaps two hundred people lodge, persons of every race and every kind of belief...an abode before which passed at all hours persons of every sort...."²⁵³ The acquisition of a house, much less a building, would require the approval not only of the Provincial and his council (of whom Coppo was one) but also of the Rector Major and his chapter (council); in this the Americans counted on Albera's support.

They also needed the approval of the archdiocese, which was impossible in the face of opposition from Edwards (and other pastors?). Suddenly that prelate's opposition vanished, and he became the "enthusiastic patron" of the Salesians' permanent establishment in the neighborhood and obtained Archbishop Farley's permission early in 1905.²⁵⁴

Meanwhile they hunted for a suitable site. Early in 1905 they found a four-story building that seemed apt for their purposes. It was located at 431 E. 12th Street, about five blocks away from Saint Brigid's (and two blocks from Edwards's Immaculate Conception Church), and it had two empty lots adjacent to it. By May they had begun proceedings toward acquiring the lots and building, which were owned by Louis Walter. Although they did not have Turin's approval yet, they moved into the building in June.²⁵⁵

From May to November of 1905 Coppo finally made a visit to Italy,²⁵⁶ apparently his first since arriving in New York in the fall of 1898. Borghino granted him leave to go although he had not requested it; Rua was glad of it.²⁵⁷ We may surmise that Borghino wanted Coppo to discuss the above-mentioned business. While Coppo was still abroad, Rua sent or gave him a written reminder of things they must have discussed:

As long as you keep the name and responsibility of pastor [at Transfiguration], strive to leave lots of freedom of action to those who help you in the parish, as Fr. Bussi, Fr. Vespignani, and others do; they [too] have other duties that are very important. Thus you will have time to see to (1) the Italian immigrants,

²⁵³ Coppo to Rua, Jan. 25, 1906, 5-6.

²⁵⁴ Cf. *Cronaca*, part I, 10; part II, 6. See also: Coppo to Rua, New York, Jan. 25, 1906 (ASC 38.CA 9807, fol. 3319 E11-3320 A6). Of Edwards's influence, Coppo writes: "But when the first steps were taken to search out a suitable place for purchase, the archdiocesan authorities, under the influence of Monsignor Edwards, dissuaded us from it..." (4-5). Coppo proffers these reasons for the prelate's about-face: "The continuous increase in the number of Italians in that part of the city, the impossibility of tending with any effect to the thousands of their children without some kind of festive oratory, the convenience of taking the Salesians away from an abode before which passed at all hours persons of every sort were surely the principal reasons that led the Monsignor to change his mind" (5-6). See also McSweeney to Farley, New York, Oct. 26 [1903].

²⁵⁵ *Cronaca*, part I, 10-11; part II, 6.

²⁵⁶ *Cronaca*, part I, 10; part II, 6.

²⁵⁷ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 12, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

including founding a bureau [*segretariato*] for them, if possible; (2) taking care of the youth groups and pious associations [of the parish]; (3) promoting missions among the Italians, including setting up associations of Italian priests for that purpose; (4) sustaining the newspaper in good opinions.

From several letters received from the Provincial, I see that he agrees entirely on these points. But it will be necessary, especially for what concerns the immigrants and the missions, to proceed in agreement with the [civil and ecclesiastical] authorities, especially with the Archbishop.

Amid your occupations you must not forget to see that students are found for the high school [at Troy].²⁵⁸

This letter, and the discussions that presumably lay behind it, show the continued primacy of the mission to the immigrants, both those newly arrived (point 1) and those settled in the Northeast (point 3). More traditional Salesian ministries were not to be overlooked: young people and popular devotions (point 2) and the press (point 4). The school, with its potential for new Salesian and ecclesiastical vocations, is stressed, as is the customary Salesian respect for public and Church authorities. Finally (but first in the letter), Rua tells Coppo once more to delegate whatever responsibilities he can to others and leave them free to carry them out—a trait that Rua himself had learned from Don Bosco.²⁵⁹

Later in the autumn the “provincial chapter” endorsed the purchase of the building.²⁶⁰

Coppo wrote on November 14, presumably not long after he returned to New York. He asked for some kind of permission, which Rua granted promptly. The Superior continued, “Regarding the rest, it is useful to pray that everything

²⁵⁸Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 14, 1905 (NRP Borg 1). Luigi Bussi (1848-1928) was pastor and director of the Salesian church at Sampierdarena (Genoa) from 1898 to 1900 and 1907 to 1909, serving as provincial in Liguria in between. In 1908 Rua sent him as extraordinary visitor to North and Central America; he was in New York April 3-4, 1908 [See *Diz. bio. sal.*, 61; *Cronaca*, part II, 12]. Giuseppe Vespignani (1854-1932) had gone to Argentina as a missionary in 1877 and remained there as master of novices, pastor, director, and finally provincial until elected to the superior chapter in 1922 [See *Diz. bio. sal.*, 293-94].

The newspaper is Coppo’s weekly. “Sostenere nei buoni sentimenti il Giornale”: the phrase is vague enough that it could mean either “continue to present sound opinions in the newspaper,” or else “maintain the good reputation of the newspaper.” I would take it in the latter sense.

²⁵⁹Rua returned to this topic again, and used the same examples (Bussi and Vespignani), in a letter a full year later, but more forcefully: “When the Provincial, Fr. Borghino, has appointed a substitute [=parochial vicar], you must leave him ample room for acting, and so it is good that you understand each other beforehand to prevent differences and disputes that might otherwise arise with time.” It is noteworthy that Borghino was in Turin at the time. See Rua to Coppo, Turin, Oct. 13, 1906 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁶⁰Coppo to Rua, Jan. 25, 1906, 1, 6-7.

will improve satisfactorily without any friction."²⁶¹ It would be interesting to know what the friction concerned, and between whom; it could, of course, be another allusion to the reluctance of the local pastors to have the Salesians setting up near Saint Brigid's.

On December 15, 1905, Don Bosco's successor informed Coppo of his receipt of letters from Coppo, Borghino, and Ferrazza and of his own request for clarifications.²⁶² He had, in fact, written to the American provincial that he wanted more information about the site, its size, its structure (*conformazione*), its distance from Saint Brigid's Church, the means available for its purchase and, if necessary, to build. Would the building be large enough to house a small boarding school for both academic and trade students? He was inclined to postpone action, but perhaps the archdiocese would help buy land for the future church.²⁶³ Coppo was eager for a prompt reply, but Rua was characteristically cautious:

You suggest that we reply by telegram, which will help things move faster; unfortunately, things done in such fashion ordinarily do not turn out well. So it will be better to proceed a little more calmly. We will take into consideration, however, the information that you have offered, as well as what Fr. Ferrazza sent.²⁶⁴

The next letter from Rua, dated New Year's Eve, is puzzling on two counts. After recommending a certain Clement Grillo, already in New York, to Coppo for English lessons and offering his best wishes for the new year (1906), he refers to a new parish in which the Salesians apparently are getting involved, but he hopes that they will not abandon the churches (plural) where they are already taking care of "our good Italians." One puzzle is: What parish could he be thinking of besides Transfiguration and Saint Brigid's? Did he understand the new establishment on 12th Street to be distinct from the Italian mission at Saint Brigid's? The second puzzle is a P.S. attached to the New Year's note, dated February 6: "We are waiting for news of the new parish and your progress, as well as your new address." Did Rua wait five weeks before attaching the P.S. and mailing his new year's greetings and Mr. Grillo's recommendation? The short note is not lacking another reference to a favorite Rua topic: Latin courses and priestly vocations.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Nov. 28, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁶² Rua to Coppo, Turin, Dec. 15, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁶³ Rua to Borghino, Turin, Dec. 13, 1905 (NRP Borg 10). The archdiocese did indeed eventually provide the land, which it had owned since the 1850s, on which the church of Mary Help of Christians was built. Cf. *Cronaca*, part II, 11: On Oct. 12, 1907, in a meeting with Archbp. Farley the Salesians were promised the cemetery land "when all the difficulties were settled."

²⁶⁴ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Dec. 15, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁶⁵ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Dec. 31, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

Meanwhile, Borghino had delegated the task of clarification to Coppo, who wrote a long letter to Rua, dated January 25, 1906. He recapitulated the situation for the rector major and his chapter, alluding to Albera's opinion and knowledge of the case:

You well know that our first mission in New York was opened in St. Brigid's parish among the thousands of Italians who had made their homes there for a long time. With neither house nor church there, we had to rent a small house and operate in the basement of St. Brigid's Church. In 1902 the archdiocese entrusted to us the Church of the Transfiguration with its rectory, and we moved there, leaving the rented house we had occupied until then.

But we saw very quickly the necessity of leaving some priest to continue to tend to the thousands of Italians of St. Brigid's parish, staying among them even overnight, for from 29 Mott St., where we are, to St. Brigid's Church is a distance of several kilometers. So we had either once again to rent a house in the middle of that ghetto, or leave to others the care of that first field of our activity in this great city. The Very Rev. Fr. Albera, when he passed through here, insisted that everything be done to keep that charge and to try to buy, if possible, a house and a place to build a church there. Our Provincial, too, was always of the same opinion...

[Following the Archbishop's approval] Fr. Provincial came at once from Troy and approved the purchase right away, writing at once about it to Turin; the provincial chapter too, which assembled soon after, was of the mind that it was absolutely appropriate to buy [the house] as soon as possible, to avoid the danger that this opportunity be lost and the possibility vanish forever of our having a settled residence in that eminently Italian neighborhood...

Fr. Provincial from S. Francisco is asking me to send any information myself that can better clarify the matter. Although I am very busy these days with the newspaper and the feast of St. Francis,²⁶⁶ I hasten to obey him as best I can, begging you to ask Fr. Albera and Fr. Gusmano, who on this subject can give whatever explanations time does not allow me to give in writing.²⁶⁷

The necessary permission came, and the purchase of the East 12th Street building was completed on June 15, 1906, at a price of \$23,250 (\$5,250 in cash and the rest as a mortgage).²⁶⁸

Meanwhile, the validity and even the urgency of founding a distinctly Italian parish in the Immaculate Conception-Saint Brigid's neighborhood was intensifying. In February 1906 McSweeney and Ferrazza jointly sent to Archbishop Farley the 1905 "spiritual and financial report" for the "Italian mission conducted

²⁶⁶ The feast of St. Francis de Sales, the namesake of the Salesian Society, was celebrated on Jan. 29 in the pre-Vatican II calendar. It was a major feast of the Society prior to the canonization of Don Bosco, whose feast was placed on Jan. 31 and thus overshadowed St. Francis thereafter.

²⁶⁷ Coppo to Rua, Jan. 25, 1906, 2-4, 6-8.

²⁶⁸ *Cronaca*, part I, 11; part II, 6-7.

by the Salesian Fathers" in Saint Brigid's basement church, in both English and Italian.²⁶⁹

The report shows that two priests (from November, three priests) lived in a rented tenement at 299 E. 8th Street, ministering to a population of "about 20,000." They offered four low Masses and one high Mass every Sunday, "with Vespers on every Feast Day—all of which is according to the latest pontifical prescriptions" (presumably a reference to Pope Pius X's 1903 decree on church music). An average of 2,000 persons attended Mass on Sundays and feasts, but on "major solemnities, more than 5,000." Eight parish societies were listed: a "parochial committee" for taking up the collections, a mutual aid society, the altar boys, the Salesian Cooperators, and others both male and female. "The mission has no hall for meetings nor schools for the youth," but about 1,000 children were enrolled in area parochial schools. Another 200 attended Sunday or Monday catechism lessons. Fr. Coppo's Italian weekly newspaper was sold at the church door: 10,400 copies during 1905.²⁷⁰ There were 852 baptisms, 287 weddings (for which 23 dispensations were obtained from the chancery), 6,125 communions,²⁷¹ and "4 brought to Church." An unhappy statistic, not unusual for the time and the conditions in which the immigrants lived, is that infant deaths (79) outnumbered adult deaths (63). In addition, 9 families received monthly financial assistance, passage back to Italy was paid for 18 individuals, 15 orphans and paupers were placed in public institutions, and recommendations for employment, placement, or public assistance were written for 65 persons.

For the year (1905) the mission had an income of \$2,610, three-fourths of which (\$1,927) came from the Sunday collections. Expenses totalled \$2,563; the five largest sums were for rent of the apartment (\$564), subsidy "for the Novitiate in Troy" (\$480), church and worship (\$424), aid to the poor (\$389), and reimbursement to the parish for utilities and subsidy for the school (\$302). The mission's net income was \$47. Although the priests managed their personal expenses from their stole fees and even had a surplus to send to the provincial, this was hardly a sound financial base for founding a parish.

The pastor's cover letter also includes a paragraph that sounds like it could have been written today, albeit of New York's public schools rather than the parochial ones, and which shows—whether he meant it to or not—how much

²⁶⁹ McSweeney to Farley, with McSweeney-Ferrazza report, New York, Feb. 3, 1906 (AANY D-13).

²⁷⁰ This figure averages to 200 copies a week, which may not seem like many among 2,000 Mass-goers (and 5,000 on the greater feasts). But one must remember that the majority of southern Italians were illiterate, and that in any case families were very large and one newspaper per family would suffice.

²⁷¹ This figure may be unusually high for the period. Pius X's decree *Sacra tridentina synodus* urging more frequent communion was issued only in 1905, but Don Bosco and the Salesians had been promoting frequent communion for more than 50 years already.

the Italian youths of the area needed the Salesians' charismatic ministry, if only Don Bosco's sons could have devoted their energies just to the young:

Lately we have been acquiring more knowledge of these people [the Italians] & it is not consoling. There is a class of them, who cannot well be admitted to our school, as they seem to be in need of regulation by the police authorities. Within a month I had to expel three boys for coming one with a loaded revolver, another with a stiletto & a third for stabbing a pupil with a sharp pencil tearing his cheek.²⁷²

The poverty of the Italians and their pastors did not prevent them from being generous. On March 23, 1905, they sent a \$50.00 check to Rua to pass on to Bishop Giacomo Costamagna for the missions in South America.²⁷³ The next year they rendered assistance to the Salesians in San Francisco, where the earthquake and fire had destroyed Saints Peter and Paul Church as well as vast areas of the city, and to the victims of an eruption of Mount Vesuvius.²⁷⁴ In June 1908 Coppo sent Rua 103 lire along with best wishes for the rector major's feast day.²⁷⁵

With or without a sound local financial base, the Salesians moved forward. Even before the deal for the acquisition of the property at 431 E. 12th Street was finalized, they initiated another purchase. In May 1906 they contracted with "a certain [Mr.] Krekler of Brooklyn" to buy the house and lot at 429 E. 12th Street for \$25,500. The financing is not as clearly explained as for the previous purchase; the chronicle notes that sixteen families lived in the apartment house, paying (a total of) \$190 a month in rent;²⁷⁶ perhaps the Salesians collected that for a time.

It appears that in the spring of 1906 Archbishop Farley traveled to Italy for a meeting. Coppo suggested to Rua that he be invited to visit the Salesian superiors, and an invitation was extended and tentatively accepted. "If he comes," Rua promised Coppo, "we shall take into account your comments, and I hope that the matter will come out well."²⁷⁷ It sounds like negotiations were under way for separating the Italian mission from Saint Brigid's parish.

Following the purchase of the building at 429 E. 12th Street, the building at no. 431 was converted into a chapel, to the great joy of the Italian community. The chronicle exults: "Farewell, Saint Brigid's basement!"²⁷⁸ Then it

²⁷² McSweeney to Farley, Feb. 3, 1906.

²⁷³ Rua to Coppo, Turin, Apr. 12, 1905 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁷⁴ Rua to Coppo, Milan, June 4, 1906 (NRP Borg 1). The amount sent to San Francisco is not specified in Rua's acknowledgment, but \$140 was sent to the Holy Father for the relief of victims of the April 8th eruption of Mt. Vesuvius.

²⁷⁵ Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 1, 1908 (NRP Borg 1) acknowledges the gift.

²⁷⁶ *Cronaca*, part II, 7.

²⁷⁷ Rua to Coppo, Turin, June 14, 1906 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁷⁸ *Cronaca*, part I, 11.

proudly notes the progress of renovating the place during 1906: sanctuary, altar (a gift from the people of Transfiguration), painting, floor, altar rail, pews, tabernacle, and three confessionals, naming the various workmen (all Italians). Msgr. Edwards blessed the chapel of Mary Help of Christians on September 15, 1906, and henceforth the basement of Saint Brigid's was used only for great feasts, when the assembly of the faithful could not fit into the chapel.²⁷⁹ The future parish of Mary Help of Christians had arrived at its permanent location. It was canonically erected on July 16, 1908.²⁸⁰ The church would eventually be built across the street on the site of the old cemetery where McSweeney already in 1898 had proposed erecting a temporary chapel for the Italians; Cardinal Farley dedicated its basement church on September 24, 1911, and the church was completed with its dedication on February 11, 1918.²⁸¹ Another building would be bought next to the church site, at 440 E. 12th Street, to serve as the rectory. The combined buildings at 429-431 for generations since have served as the Salesian Sisters' convent.

Msgr. McSweeney, Saint Brigid's pastor for almost thirty years, died on February 24, 1907, and a most solemn funeral was celebrated three days later, as noted in the Salesian chronicle.²⁸²

Coppo had been practicing the apostolate of the press since late 1900 through his weekly newspaper, *L'Italiano in America*. Someone in Turin noticed early in 1907 that no subscriptions to *Letture cattoliche*²⁸³ were going to New York. Over Rua's signature a handwritten but impersonal letter was addressed to "the very dear director at New York"—presumably to Coppo, since no letters to Ferrazza, the other director in New York, have been preserved. After noting that "this 1st periodical publication of D. Bosco...was so dear to our Father's heart," the writer, "not wanting to impose any obligation," expressed a strong desire that every Salesian house should receive at least one copy of the magazine and ought to be able to distribute a dozen or even twenty copies to students and "outside persons." Acknowledging that Italian was not the language of America, he suggested that the readings would allow "our non-Italian confreres...to practice this language, according to the wishes of D. Bosco." After proposing payment for the subscriptions through the Provincial, he asked specifically for an answer. A notation at the end of the letter that seems to be in Coppo's script

²⁷⁹ *Cronaca*, part I, 12-13; part II, 7.

²⁸⁰ Giovanni Schiavo, *Italian-American History*, vol. 2: *The Italian Contribution to the Catholic Church in America* (New York: Vigo, 1949), 774.

²⁸¹ Cf. Schiavo, *Italian-American History*, 2:774.

²⁸² *Cronaca*, part II, 8.

²⁸³ "Catholic Readings," a popular monthly magazine, usually 100 pages or more, founded in the 1850s by Don Bosco. In 1907 the usual format was 10.5 x 16 cm.

declares that an answer was sent on May 3, along with twenty-five lire for subscriptions.²⁸⁴

Archbishop Farley revealed his respect for Coppo in 1908 by asking him "to act as a member of the Vigilance Committee prescribed by the Holy Father in his Encyclical 'Pascendi Domini Gregis' and organized for the purpose of examining into matters which touch on faith or morals and which are to be published in this diocese." Farley wanted on the committee someone who knew Italian well.²⁸⁵

Coppo was likewise esteemed among the Italian clergy. A local Italian priest, Fr. Eucherio Gianetto, wrote to Rua on August 12, 1908, to inform the Salesian rector major "of the need to establish [in New York] a Society of Italian Missionaries that would have as its main purpose preaching to our emigrants." Gianetto and other "zealous and distinguished priests" proposed that Coppo should direct such a society. Rua observed to Coppo that they—Coppo and himself—had "already spoken on this point several times," and Coppo is well aware of Rua's feelings that it "would undoubtedly be beneficial and providential."²⁸⁶

VI. Conclusion

After reviewing the less-than-glorious beginnings of the Italian apostolate in New York, one can appreciate all the more Don Bosco's recommendation to the first Salesian missionaries.²⁸⁷

It is evident that the Salesians did all they could to work together with the local clergy, from the Archbishop down to the dean of the local clergy, Msgr. Edwards of Immaculate Conception parish, whom they highly esteemed, and down to the local pastors. For example, when the delicate question of the Italian congregation already in Transfiguration's basement church came up, Coppo sought the opinions of his diocesan neighbors and enlisted their support. He also wanted to maintain his friendship with his co-national and tried to find him a suitable place. In his correspondence with the archbishops, he is always submissive as he lays out his proposals or difficulties.

²⁸⁴Rua to Very Dear Director at New York, Turin, March 1907 (NRP Borg 1).

²⁸⁵Farley to Coppo, New York, Feb. 19, 1908 (personnel files of the New Rochelle Province). Coppo replied the next day (note on the letter), but we do not know what he said. The encyclical *Pascendi* (1907) condemned Modernism.

²⁸⁶Rua to Coppo, Turin, Aug. 27, 1908 (NRP Borg 1). This is the last letter from Rua, who died Apr. 10, 1910, in the New Rochelle archives. For one earlier mention of the subject between Rua and Coppo, see Rua's letter of Oct. 14, 1905 (text following note 287). Rua suggested to Coppo that Gianetto might start up the project under Coppo's general guidance.

²⁸⁷*Regulations of the Salesian Society*, published with the *Constitutions of the Society of Saint Francis de Sales* (Paterson, N.J.: Don Bosco Technical School, 1957), 21-23.

Direct evidence why the locals resisted their setting up a house near Saint Brigid in 1904 is lacking, but the resistance was probably related to doubts about the Italian community's ability and willingness to support a parish. But we do know that Edwards and McSweeney thought highly of the Salesians, in contrast to what McSweeney, at least, thought of Italian priests in general. This can only mean that they found Salesians zealous, hard-working, cooperative, respectful—and probably, following the example and ideal of Don Bosco, not complaining of their poverty. Undoubtedly, their efforts to learn English also scored points for them.

The Italians were always faulting the clergy for their love of money. What endeared the Salesians to them? We do not have their direct testimony. One suspects it was the simple lifestyle of the missionaries, their concentration on the sacraments and popular devotions, their care for the sick, their assistance to new arrivals, their "ordinariness" of character. Though we read often in their letters about their financial difficulties, we do not find allusions to the people as lacking in generosity, uncooperative, etc. Silence is a weak argument, but the people's response to their efforts and what the letters do not say suggest that the Salesians displayed little external concern for money, and when they did, its use for the church and for the victims (especially Italians) of various disasters rather than themselves was evident.

Further, the Salesians really addressed the needs of the young, their recreational, educational, and moral needs, which had been a concern of the American bishops and pastors for twenty years and which is always a concern of parents. Thus they won over many of the Italians, the local clergy, and the community at large.

The visitation of Fr. Albera was a watershed for the infant Salesian province of the United States. At the beginning of 1903 the Salesian presence consisted of four parishes populated mainly by immigrants. Three were on the West Coast, one on the East Coast. The province's headquarters, like the bulk of its work and manpower, was in San Francisco. After Fr. Albera's extraordinary visitation, the weight of the Salesian presence began to shift to the East Coast, and by 1905 so did the headquarters. For most of the rest of the century the Eastern Province would be the larger in numbers of works and confreres and would be home to most of the houses of formation, the *Salesian Bulletin*, and the publishing house for both provinces and the premier mission procure of the entire Congregation.

As both Coppo and Rua knew, the Salesians would not flourish in North America unless they could attract vocations and had a place to train them. Albera supported Coppo's plans by inspecting the proposed site in Newark. Although that particular site soon was rejected, it was because a better offer came: the old seminary in Troy, where a boarding school and house of formation opened in the late summer of 1903. The house and school of Troy would be transferred in 1908 to Hawthorne, New York, which is only about 25 miles from Manhattan, in

contrast to Troy's 150-mile distance. The Hawthorne property was a gift to the Salesians, reinforced by a \$10,000 grant from Archbishop Farley for furnishings. Rua was delighted—not least because the gift was made on May 24, feast of Mary Help of Christians, and the contract of transfer signed early in June, month of the Sacred Heart. With his usual prudence, Rua reminded Coppo to send a copy of the legal papers to Turin.²⁸⁸

The Salesians began their work in New York among the Italian immigrants at Saint Brigid's Church (1898), which they almost, but not quite, abandoned when Archbishop Corrigan offered them Transfiguration parish. The Salesians were eager to maintain and, indeed, to strengthen their presence at the first locale, and the Italians of that parish strongly petitioned Albera to intercede with the other superiors that it might so happen. The surviving evidence points to one conclusion only: that he followed through when he had returned to Turin. Late in the winter of 1904 the second Salesian community in New York City was founded. This Italian mission at Saint Brigid's developed into Mary Help of Christians parish,²⁸⁹ which still thrives on East 12th Street—no longer as a national parish but a territorial one, in a neighborhood now mostly Hispanic. But it is considered today the motherhouse of the Eastern Province, rooted as it is in the beginnings in Saint Brigid's basement. The maintenance of this root turned out to be providential, because in 1949 the Salesians lost Transfiguration parish when the New York archdiocese turned it over to the Maryknoll missionaries who had just been expelled from China; the parish, like most of 1900's Little Italy, had become predominantly Chinese by then.

The expansion in New York City and Troy could not have happened without personnel. The Salesian superiors in Turin did not stint on personnel for the United States mission, within the severe limitations of the worldwide demands they faced. Rua certainly was conscious of the needs of the scores of thousands of Italians pouring into America. Albera also must have sensed the potential for Salesian work among them in the Northeast, for immediately after his visitation reinforcements began to pour in from Italy and elsewhere so that the apostolate of Don Bosco's sons could expand even before producing native vocations. The seven Salesians of March 1903 had more than doubled to fifteen a year later, and the numbers continued to grow. The personnel coming to New York included not only Italians but also Irishmen like Frs. Diamond and Deehan and the seminarian Hutcheson. We may assume that Albera lent support to Coppo's conten-

²⁸⁸Rua to Coppo, Turin, July 1, 1908 (NRP Borg 1). In December 1917, after the main building at Hawthorne burned to the ground, the school was relocated, again, to a newly acquired estate in New Rochelle, New York. Thus Salesian High School and the provincial headquarters in New Rochelle directly descended from the Troy operation.

²⁸⁹As of 1905 the *Cronaca* becomes more detailed, providing much more flesh to the skeleton of the development of the St. Brigid mission into Mary Help of Christians parish presented in this article

tion that the Salesians had to reach out beyond the immigrant community. We also noted Rua's interest in the Poles; that ministry developed in New York shortly after the period we have been considering here.

One cannot account for the flourishing of the Salesian mission in New York, and its expansion, without the leadership of Fr. Ernest Coppo.

Rua's reliance on Coppo has been evident consistently in his letters. Although he was not able to resolve every difficulty, his confreres displayed a great deal of confidence in him, and the secular clergy held him in the highest esteem. His zeal was boundless. Perhaps because of his youth, he was not appointed superior of the United States province until 1911 (at age 41), after Albera had succeeded Rua as rector major. But even before that, he was in some ways the *de facto* leader of the Salesian mission in New York, and not only when the Provincial was on the West Coast. His leadership qualities were such that the highest authorities of the Catholic Church recognized them by appointing him to the challenging vicariate apostolic of Kimberly, Australia in 1922.²⁹⁰

In 1923, after Coppo had become a bishop, Monsignor Daniel Burke lauded him during a sermon in honor of Saint Francis de Sales at a pontifical Mass the Bishop celebrated at Saint Patrick's Cathedral:

Bishop Coppo has labored in season and out of season for the welfare of his compatriots, not only in New York but throughout the length and breadth of the United States. No priest has ever been more zealous or more successful in the spiritual care of our immigrants from the sunny peninsula. The appointment to the episcopate of Dr. Coppo is a well-merited tribute to the [word illegible] of this splendid missionary, and at the same time a worthy recognition of his personal services.²⁹¹

If the Salesian work in the Eastern United States rests on the shoulders of giants, the first of them was certainly Ernest Coppo, who exemplified what Fr. John Farley had written to Archbishop Corrigan when the future missionary was still a teenager: "Something more must be done for these poor unfortunate [immigrants].... The zeal of the young order of the Salesians is just the thing for the occasion."²⁹²

²⁹⁰He was provincial from 1911 to 1919 and vicar apostolic of Kimberly from 1922 to 1927, when the mission was returned to the Pallottines, who had held it originally. He returned to Italy and a busy ministry of preaching and sacraments. He died at Ivrea on Dec. 28, 1948.

²⁹¹"Bishop of Kimberly at St. Patrick's Mass," *The New York Times*, Apr. 16, 1923, 11, col. 1.

²⁹²Farley to Corrigan, New York, Nov. 1, 1883 (AANY C-2), quoted by DiGiovanni, 114.

Post-publication note:

see *Journal of Salesian Studies* Vol. 12 No. 1
for an important addition to this article