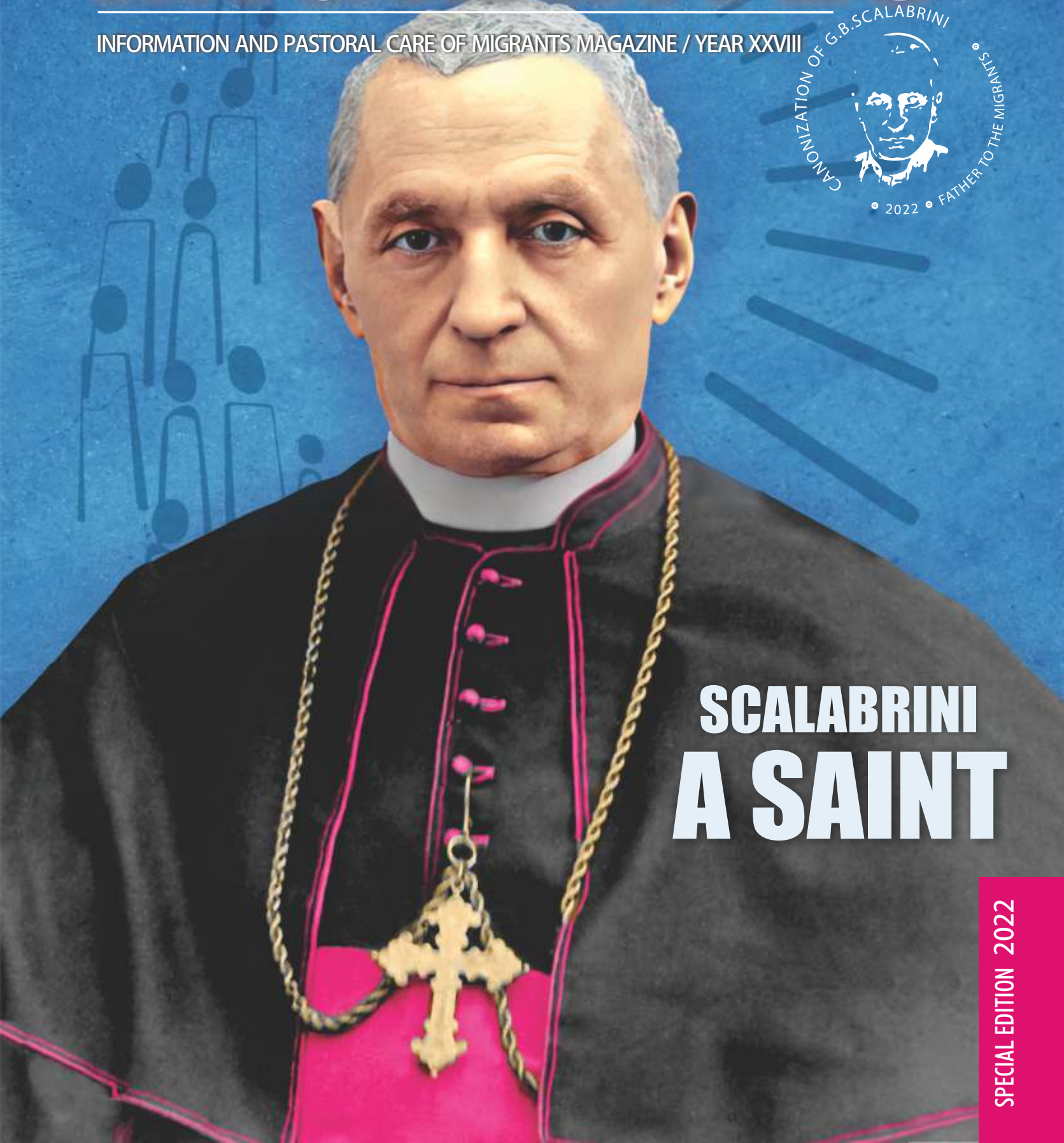


# MIGRANTES

INFORMATION AND PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS MAGAZINE / YEAR XXVIII



## SCALABRINI A SAINT

SPECIAL EDITION 2022



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A publication of the St. John the Baptist Province of the  
Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians

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MADE IN MEXICO  
Protection of Rights Registry  
04-2001-082816165400-102

PRINTING COMPANY  
Consentido Publicitario  
Fermín Riestra 1377  
Guadalajara, Jal., México

COVER PHOTO:  
Saint John Baptist Scalabrini



Original photography: General Scalabrinian Archive  
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# Scalabrini A SAINT

By Fr. Miguel Álvarez, c.s.  
Provincial Superior

Msgr. Scalabrini was a man of vision, dedication, and action. During his life, he was able to see even the most difficult realities through the logic of the Gospel, which is the logic of love, liberation, and service. In the world of migration, Scalabrini foresaw the possibility of a universal family, and, with the foundation of the Scalabrinian Missionaries, he wanted to make sure that migrants of every era would have company along their way, that they would be assured of a helping hand to soften the misfortunes brought upon them by xenophobia; he wanted to provide them with accomplices in their courage to dream for a better life.

**Recently, Pope Francis announced his decision to proclaim our Founder and Father as a Saint. His ascent to the altars shows us to what extent his life and work transcended beyond time and space, even beyond death itself. Now the Church places him at the altars as a model and inspiration for those who feel compelled, by their good will, to become a part of a humanizing project that seeks to establish in our world the possibility of a land without borders and a society where everyone is welcome.**

The Scalabrinian family is overjoyed by the announcement of the imminent canonization of this Prophet of our times. In this edition of Migrants Magazine, we wish to share with you some defining features of this great man of God, and the titles with which he has

been honored. The attributes that are detailed here, are only a sample of the holiness with which God wanted to adorn this Italian bishop, who, even though he died in the early 20th century, continues to illuminate our days with his prophetic vision, his apostolic courage, and his tenderness towards the most vulnerable.



SCALABRINI'S EPISCOPAL COAT OF ARMS

With a grateful heart, we march on as a Missionary Family, we move forward, with the certainty that along the road, we will encounter people on the move, men and women whose feet are blistered, whose bodies are tired, and whose stories are wounded; nevertheless, in spite of their tragedies, their capacity to "continue hoping against all hopes" teaches us that it is not possible to suffocate the yearning for freedom which burns in the human hearts with creative intensity; the Migrants we meet each day, teach us that it is impossible to extinguish the inherent dignity of those who, having left everything behind, dare to challenge history in search of a better life. With this conviction, let us move towards a future where there will be no more foreigners, where no one will ever be considered a stranger. Let us advance towards a reality where all peoples will see each other as brothers and sisters.

**Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, pray for us!**



# Saint John Baptist **SCALABRINI**, Father to the **MIGRANTS**

*the Father to the Migrants.* Why acknowledge the "paternity" of Scalabrini over people who migrate and are facing the Human Mobility phenomenon? In what sense, is Scalabrini considered a father to migrants?

We can find an answer to these questions in the words he wrote after meeting a crowd of people at the Milan train station. **On the verge of leaving for foreign lands, Scalabrini tells of being witness to a scene that left his soul with "an impression of deep sadness". Being a "father" finds an expression in his attitude and his heart's disposition to connect with the realities of his "children". This encounter does not happen at a level of discourse and theories, but on entering into direct contact, in empathy, with the feelings and the experience of others.**

By Fr. Matteo Luison, c.s.

We wish to seize this moment in order to bring to light some elements of the life and actions of Msgr. JB Scalabrini, elements for which the Church recognizes him, specifically, as

Milan Station, Italy in Scalabrini's time

Scalabrini  
Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive



“ There were three or four hundred poorly attired people. Their faces, marked by the precocious wrinkles which privation often brings, made transparent the storm of affections that shook their hearts at that moment”.

This is the same compassion with which Jesus, the Incarnated Face of the Father, looks at the masses that search for him. Immediately, the words of Scalabrini open themselves to the reality behind these people. His fatherly heart knows the reality around him, and the difficulties suffered by the most vulnerable. Scalabrini knows and acknowledges the impossibility of subsistence in their native land, the structures and exhausting demands from the State, and the hope for a more

dignified life are the elements determining the decision of all those people and, despite the suffering that this brings, unites them in their intent to emigrate, to find a plentiful life.

For Scalabrini **the word Homeland, a term originally used to define the place where a person is born, acquires a new meaning; Homeland becomes "the land that provides our bread"**. In this revelation we find a deep and crucial truth. Patria—the Latin word for homeland—and Father share the same linguistic root. This makes a reference to the reality of where life has its origins and to the strong and lasting connections that are established. But this is still valid according to the principle of donation: A land is still a "fatherland" or a "motherland" if it offers a human being the conditions for full realization; what, perhaps today, we would call comprehensive development, where there are conditions for a fulfilling life, not just survival, for its inhabitants. When this condition is absent, the geographical area loses its purpose as a "homeland", even if it is the place of origin. The same goes for a father. A father's capacity for donation expresses his vocation; that is to say, **his capacity to give himself and give life; to accompany and have compassion during times of hope and times of struggle.**

According to Scalabrini's view, the condition of the other, of the most vulnerable and marginalized, becomes the priority and reason towards which—and from which—our Father God is calling us. In the face of this reality Scalabrini declares: "When I left, I was moved. A wave of sad thoughts formed a knot in my heart. I often asked myself this question: How can I fix it? How can I help them?" Here we recognize the heart of Scalabrini as an authentic "Good-Samaritan heart." Just as the Good Samaritan in the parable becomes a neighbor to the ones in need, **Scalabrini becomes a neighbor to those suffering the difficulties and challenges of migration.** A human being, illuminated by the Spirit of God, that turns his faith into concrete actions, a man who sees reality, with the eyes of God, and is therefore capable of transforming it. This is the principle and the axis that supports everything that Scalabrini has been able to generate and promote in favor of migrants. In his willingness and disposition, his openness of heart and soul towards God and the others, which is the core of the Gospel, lies the true meaning for which we recognize and celebrate him.

**His example becomes a constant call for all of us to "go and do the same". In these days of joy and celebration, we pray for his intercession so that God can shape our hearts and make us capable of following faithfully in Scalabrini's footsteps.**



Photography: Depositphotos

Children in catechism school

# Monsignor John Baptist Scalabrini: Apostle of Catechism

By Fr. Ramiro Sánchez Chan, c.s.

Pope Pius X called Msgr. John Baptist Scalabrini **"the Apostle of the Catechism"**. During his time, Scalabrini was the bishop who wrote the most about catechesis in Italy. He was capable of supernatural intuition when he thought the catechism, a fundamental role in religious education to promote the practice of the faith. In 1875, he published **"The Little Catechism for Kindergarten"** when he was a parish priest at the church of St Bartholomew. In 1876 he founded **"The Catholic Catechist"**, a catechetical magazine, the first of its kind in Italy and the second in the world. Because of its Bishops work on this field, **Pope Leo XIII named Piacenza, the City of Catechism.**

Inspired by Saint Charles Borromeo, he reorganized, effectively and efficiently, the "School of Catechism" in the Diocese of Piacenza in order to revitalize catechesis in every parish and reform their pastoral action. In Scalabrini's view, society had changed from a Christian civilization to a secularist since the abolishment of religious education from schools; which, in turn, caused Christian instruction, taught in schools up to that point, to be reduced to family homes and church only. Scalabrini believed that the contents of the Catechism should change and be adapted to the needs of the people and that these contents should justify religion in the face of secular reasoning. **The School of Catechism is not only there to instruct, but also to educate and "instill Jesus Christ in the souls of little boys and girls"** (Scalabrini 's Pastoral Letter, 1876).

Scalabrini makes a distinction between "instruction" and "education". The former targets the intellectual sphere and the latter addresses the moral sphere. To Scalabrini, educating people morally and religiously means to ennoble a person's feelings, illuminate their intelligence, supply the lights of faith and reason, direct

their will, purify their heart, inform their conscience, reinforce their character, and elevate their present life towards eternal life.

We must ask ourselves: Was Msgr. Scalabrini foreseeing the reality we live in our 21st century? No doubt, Scalabrini would have much to say on a pastoral reflection about the importance of Catechesis in our times.

A catechized conscience will certainly shed light on the secularization of society; this secularization has distanced peoples from Christian values: There is a need to re-educate, inform, and catechize on the Christian ways of life. This need relates to what we see happening in our world: a lack of respect for life in all of its forms, the rise in crime and violence, the lack of a Christian identity, the manipulation of people's conscience, the lack of preparation and lack of discernment, the instrumentation and manipulation of faith and the use of religion as a tool to



take advantage of people's ignorance.

Msgr. Scalabrini understood the nexus between faith and reason, which has such a large impact today. Specially among young people there seems to be a discordance in a society that sometimes polarizes everything. **Scalabrini, through proper catechesis, tried to reconcile faith and reason, in such a way that one illuminates the other and brings to the table whatever is necessary to understand that they can walk together.**

Msgr. Scalabrini could go beyond his time to visualize that a large part of the difficulties we face in the world today is a result of a lack of a Christian upbringing. His thirst for educating people led him to invite his priests to show a special zeal for education, not only in the catechism but also in spreading the Word of God in a more current way. There is a quote attributed to Scalabrini:

**"The world moves on and we cannot afford to stay behind".**

This was not only a reality in his time but also an exhortation for today. The world is advancing at an incredible speed due to social networks and access to information. We will be left behind if we do not update our catechetical programs. Today, the

Catholic Church is lamenting the departure of young people. **Maybe the time has come to update and contextualize our catechetical programs without fear of entering into the "realities of the contemporary world" but instead bringing them under the light of faith.**

Scalabrini realized that he had to walk with the steps of a giant. That is why he insisted, through his pastoral letters, diocesan synods, homilies, and exhortations, on doing things differently and finding new ways of delivering the Gospel message. In our day, we would have to ask ourselves: **How much longer do we have to wait before we begin a social transformation in the light of the Gospel?**

<sup>1</sup> Fongaro Stelio, La Voz del Pastor: El Pensamiento del Beato Juan Bautista Scalabrini. Ediciones Scalabrinianas. Merlo, Buenos Aires, 1997. P. 81



Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive  
Scalabrini 1876



Bishop Scalabrini at the Port of Genoa before leaving for the pastoral visit to the United States 1901

## SCALABRINI: A MISSIONARY BISHOP

By Br. Raúl Ochoa Encinas, c.s

John Baptist Scalabrini was a young priest, in charge of the Parish of Saint Bartholomew, in the Diocese of Como, Italy, when he received news from pope Pius IX, early in 1876, that he was to become the next bishop of Piacenza. His missionary call was manifested in his first years as a priest, when he requested to be enrolled in the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions, in Milan. Even though his bishop would not allow him to fulfill his missionary desire, it remained alive and guided his entire ministry. A few years after his Episcopal Ordination, Pope Pius IX described him as a **"Missionary Bishop"**.

Upon his arrival as the new bishop, a new pastoral style was adopted at the Diocese of Piacenza. It was marked by an intense dedication to the Word of God, the teaching of the catechism and the celebration of the sacraments, guided by an ardent "thirst for souls" and characterized by direct contact with people, from every social level, in every corner of the diocese. His life was a constant answer to Christ's missionary mandate: he performed five pastoral visits, presided over three diocesan synods, wrote seventy pastoral letters, and infused the pastoral zeal in his clergy; he worked hard for the evangelization and Christianization of society, promoted several initiatives favoring the poor and motivated lay people to participate in evangelization and social action. This is concrete evidence of his aspiration to **"become all thing to all people; to win everyone for Christ"** (1 Cor. 9:22)



He completed five visits of his diocese. He visited the 365 parishes, 200 of which were in mountainous places which, in those times, could only be reached on horse or mule back, and, oftentimes, only by foot. These difficult journeys were never an obstacle to fulfill his desire to be with the people and see, for himself, the conditions of each parish. Many parishes had never seen a bishop. During his pastoral visits, Scalabrini shared in the poverty of his priests and his people, visited the sick and prisoners, preached the word of God, remained in the confessional until late at night and tried to infuse into others his passion for the souls by setting the example.

At the end of the first visit, which lasted almost three years, in 1880 he calculated that 11% of the residents of his diocese had emigrated. That first pastoral visit turned out to be so exhausting that those close to him thought he would not manage to make a second one.

In the summer of 1886, Scalabrini began to work on how to respond to the spiritual and material needs of thousands of Italians forced to emigrate due to poverty. He saw migration as a social problem that required urgent attention, but he also saw it as a challenge to the Christian faith, which could be seen as a great opportunity for evangelization.

In 1887 he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of St Charles Borromeo, known today as



Msgr. Scalabrini on pastoral visit to Borgotaro

Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive

Scalabrinian Missionaries, to provide religious, moral, and social assistance to migrants all over the world. He also created the Saint Raphael Society, a lay association for the service of migrants. In 1895 he founded the Missionary Sisters of St Charles Borromeo, also known as the Scalabrinian Sisters.

He made two trips to visit his missionaries and migrants: one to the United States, in 1901, and another to Brazil and Argentina, in 1904. These missionary trips served to stimulate the religious and social assistance provided by his missionary brothers and sisters and to encourage the faith of migrants. During his travels by ship, he performed the duties of an on-board chaplain, celebrating sacraments and teaching catechism. Both trips were extremely demanding due to the long distances he had to cover daily, the number of celebrations he presided over, the processions he led, the encounters he had with church and civilian leaders, the retreats where he preached, and the encounters he had in the parishes or institutions served by his missionaries. In Argentina, he was able to visit his brother Peter, whom he had not seen in many years, and met his family.

Scalabrini believed firmly that God has an active part in history, and he always said that his inspiration had its origin in the unending faith in Jesus Christ, present through the Eucharist and his offering at the cross. The holiness of Msgr. Scalabrini never rested on anything that had been completed but was always present in his desire for reaching a union with God and his neighbors. His mind, utopian and progressive, was set on projects that would make the Kingdom of God present. His attitude was that of someone who pays attention to the signs of the times because he firmly believed that God acts in history and that **"although a man can be unsettled by many things, it is God who guides him"**.

## Saint John Baptist Scalabrini:

# Prince of Charity



Scalabrini / Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive

By Fr. Juan Luis Carbajal, c.s.

Monsignor John Baptist Scalabrini has been recognized, due to his apostolic and missionary zeal, as the Apostle of the Catechism; he was known to be a learned, humble and strong bishop; and most people know him today as father to the migrants. Another title bestowed on him and one that very well reflects his generosity, is that of **“Prince of Charity”**.

As a good bishop and a concerned shepherd, he knew firsthand the reality of his people, since he did not hesitate to visit, on five occasions, each of the 365 parishes under his pastoral care. As a result of his sensitivity, closeness, and proximity to the spiritual, social, political, and economic realities lived and faced by the families in the Diocese of Piacenza, Scalabrini did not remain as an idle bystander, or simply encouraged others to do something; He got the work done himself.

Confronted by the circumstances and needs of his people, he did not avoid the realities of poverty, misery, hard work, and forced migration. Instead he started several initiatives in the religious and social aspects. The verse from Scripture: "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (Jn. 10, 14), was an expression lived by Scalabrini, who wanted to be present and feel the pain and hopes of his people. He created cooperatives, a union for underpaid workers, an institute for deaf-mute women, supported female rice field workers, and founded the congregation of Missionaries of Saint Charles Borromeo for the comprehensive attention of migrants leaving Italy for the Americas (1887); he established an organization of laity for the protection of migrants (1889), which he named the Saint Raphael Society (1891); along with Fr. José Marchetti and Blessed mother Assunta Marchetti, he founded the congregation of the Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles Borromeo to bring education, catechesis, and health to migrants (1895).

The title given to him by Benedict XV: **“Prince of Charity”** was well deserved. But how did bishop John



Baptist Scalabrini see charity? This is how he spoke of it:

**“Charity, this citizen of heaven that descended among us to bring hearts closer, temper the disquiet, reanimate fallen spirits, make families happy with the purest joys, to keep peace among civil societies, is the most beautiful gift that God could ever give to his creatures ...”**

Charity descended onto us. It is manifest and expressed by human beings. Scalabrini was convinced of that, particularly of charity manifested to people in difficult or extreme situations. Situations faced by those forced to migrate. He asked his missionaries, whom he sent to "the Americas" in July 1888, to bring the beneficial influence of charity upon the "misery" of God's people. To this end, he asked them to be close and attentive, to accompany and defend migrants during their transit and at their destination.

Following in our Founder's footsteps, we are called, in these our times, to respond creatively and intelligently, influencing within the Church but also the entire society, so that charity towards people in human mobility, -which is not welfare alone-, begins with closeness: a glass of water, food and shelter; and from that into advocacy, participation in political debate, strategic alliances with civil society organizations and humanitarian cooperation agencies, to carry on coordinated actions among Christians and, in a dialogue with other religions, to add to the building of the Kingdom of God. Scalabrini knew, as a man of the gospel, that performing charity and remaining in charity meant to be and to remain in God, "because charity and God are the same things", as he said in the pastoral letter for Lent season, 1887: It is the sign of a saint that he lives charity in this manner, which is manifest in the disposition to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, welcome the foreigner, dress the naked and visit those who are sick or in jail (Mt. 25,35).

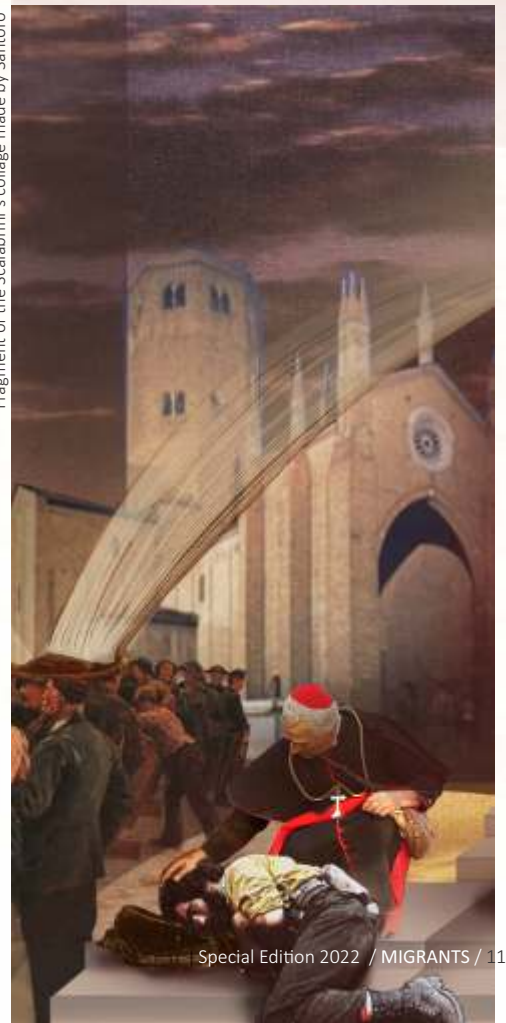
Missionary brothers and sisters of Saint Charles must continue to give examples of communion in charity towards people in a situation of human mobility, so that each local church may become a Domus Hospitium —a guest house. Hence our call to hospitality and universal fraternity in the common house where we are all pilgrims and citizens of Heaven, and we welcome each other as guests to the same party.

**Charity is a mandate to all, hence the urgency to add and support, without scruple or fear, lay people, men and women, so that, once instructed and organized, they can contribute to the specific charisma of the pastoral care for the people on the move.**

**May Monsignor Scalabrini, Prince of Charity, pray for us all, for we are men and women on the journey.**

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Merlo-Buenos Aires: Ediciones Scalabrinianas.

Fragment of the Scalabrini's collage made by Santoro





Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

# and the Marian devotion



By Fr. Carmelo Hernández, c.s.

Within the Christian tradition, the devotion to the Virgin Mary has claimed an outstanding position. Pope Paul VI, in the 1974 apostolic exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, num. 56, says: "The Church's devotion to the Blessed Virgin is an intrinsic element of Christian worship. The honor which the Church has always and everywhere shown to the Mother of the Lord, from the blessing with which Elizabeth greeted Mary (cf. Lk. 1:42-45) right up to the expressions of praise and petition used today, is a very strong witness to its *lex orandi* (professed faith) and its *lex credendi* (practiced faith)."

**Scalabrini was devoted to the Holy Virgin Mary, especially through the prayer of the Holy Rosary.**

**Scalabrini did not wish to fall into some Marian "spiritualism"; he always insisted on a type of devotion that has Christ at its core.** During a speech at the third diocesan synod in Piacenza, on August 28, 1899, he said: "I pray that the love of everyone towards Christ emulates and surpasses devotion professed unto the Mother of

Photography: Depositphotos

God and the saints. It is true that Christ is “the way and the truth and the life”, as He said: “No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn. 14, 6; 17). Also, Paul: ‘For by him, we have access, in the one Spirit, to the Father’” (Eph. 2, 18).<sup>1</sup>

The Marian devotion of Saint John Baptist Scalabrini needs to be seen in the political, social, and religious context of its age: the 19th century. During the later years of the 18th century, a process of secularization began, and the incredulity of people grew. It is interesting to note that France, having been hit the hardest by the phenomenon of Illustration<sup>2</sup>, is also where the Marian apparitions of the 19th century happen: to Saint Catherine Labouré in 1830 (the Miraculous Medal); in La Salette, in 1846; at Lourdes, in 1858. On December 8, 1854, Pope Pius IX proclaimed the dogma of Immaculate Conception. During the 19th century, the Church promoted the prayer of the Holy Rosary as a defense against the scourges of the time: secularism and incredulity. Pope Leo XIII published several encyclicals addressing the Holy Rosary.<sup>3</sup>

In his writings, especially in the resolutions he made after spiritual exercises and monthly retreats, his devotion to the Holy Rosary comes through. For example, in 1893 he promises to pray the Holy Rosary and the Angelus every day (morning, midday, and afternoon). In 1901, he commits himself to the “great and true devotion to the beloved, tenderest Mother Mary”. In 1894 he places his plans under the special protection of Saint Mary of Graces. Scalabrinian priest Father Stellio Fongaro, a Scalabrini scholar, says that the queen among Msgr. Scalabrini's Marian devotions is the daily prayer of the rosary; a pious practice that he received as a family legacy, especially from his mother.

He insisted on the prayer of the Holy Rosary on the three diocesan synods he presided over, as well as during his visits and pastoral letters:



Scalabrini 1879  
Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive

“ **Let us pray the Rosary with faith, with humility, with devotion, with perseverance; let us pray it every day. Let us be, as such, devoted to the Rosary, Oh, my dearest! Appreciate it as our parents did ... Make your children, through the meditation on these mysteries, through the repetition of these prayers out loud, feel the memory of the love of God, of Jesus Christ, of Mary: learn that, for our health, God is the love that gives itself; Jesus Christ is the love that immolates itself; Mary is the love that helps us.**”

Scalabrini placed himself under the protection of the Virgin Mary during key moments in his life, and invited the people of his diocese to do the same. St. JB Scalabrini was –no doubt– a most devoted son of Mary.

<sup>1</sup> Speech during the Third Synod in Piacenza, August 28, 1899.

<sup>2</sup>The 18th century is also known as the Age of Enlightenment, when faith in progress settled in. Important ideas, such as the pursuit of happiness, the sovereignty of reason and the evidence of the senses as a primary source of knowledge were born during this era. Ideals such as freedom, equality, progress, tolerance, fraternity, constitutional government and the separation of Church and State were also born in this era. Thinkers during the illustration believed that human knowledge could battle ignorance, superstition and tyranny to build a better world.

<sup>3</sup> Among them are: *Supremi Apostolatus* (1883), about Our Lady of the Rosary; *Superiore anno* (1884), on persevering in the prayer of the Marian Rosary; *Octobri Mense* (1891), about the Rosary.



# Scalabrini, Founder and Father

By Fr. Antonio Tapparello, c.s.

Saint John Baptist Scalabrini visited the train station of Milan at the end of the 19th century. His eyes gazed upon a scene interwoven with misery and anguish. A wave of sad thoughts makes him wonder: How can this be remedied? How can they be helped?

Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive



F. Bartolomeo Rolleri, already a missionary in Africa and secretary of Monsignor Daniele Cambori, forms a group of 10 missionaries to go to the Americas, on July 12, 1888

## FOUNDER

On January 11th, 1887, Scalabrini proposes to the Holy See the establishment of an association of priests to spiritually assist those who emigrate; on February 16th he presented a detailed project of intervention; Pope Leo XIII, on November 15th, approved the institution of the missionaries for the emigrants, issuing the Breve "*Libenter Agnovimos*".

John Baptist Scalabrini, driven by his pastoral zeal and deep knowledge of the injustice and suffering caused by the migratory phenomenon, founded, on **November 28th, 1887, the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles**, for the spiritual and social assistance to migrants. **In 1901, he visited Italian migrants in the United States and again in 1904, in Brazil.** Scalabrini was one of the pioneers in the study of the migratory phenomenon in the Church. His hand was also

in the project for the first Italian laws on the issue, those laws came into effect on 1901.

He perfectly knew the drama of the exodus of those who left Italy with the "American dream" in their hearts and the hope of a better life. Among them were his brothers, Peter and Joseph. Peter was successful in Argentina, where he rose to become a vice—governor of the province of Entre Rios; and then, in Buenos Aires, he became director of the Scholar Museum and was later appointed to the chair of Natural Science at the university. Joseph attempted the adventure of migration, and, after several setbacks, he died in a shipwreck off the coast of Peru.

Scalabrini's motto was "**To become all things to all people to win them all for Christ**" (1 Cor 9:22). And he certainly work hard on achieving that. He had a special predilection for the poor; **he founded an institute for the deaf-mute, he organized associations for the assistance of laborers, and he promoted societies of mutual aid, savings banks and cooperatives. With his possessions, he rescued thousands of peasants and workers from starvation.** For that, he even sold his horses, as well as a chalice and a pectoral cross, which were gifts from Pius IX.

**On May 28th, 1905, four days before his death, Monsignor**





Scalabrini at the Christopher Columbus Institute in Villa Prudente, Brazil, 1904

Scalabrini sent Pope Pius X a proposal for the creation of a central commission, directly dependent on the Holy See, to promote the evangelization and human promotion for catholic emigrants from all nations, since experience had shown him that the phenomenon of migration was universal, and therefore an issue concerning the entire Church, and it was necessary for the Holy See to coordinate the efforts, both at local departure churches and those at the destination.

## FATHER TO THE MIGRANTS

John Baptist Scalabrini, the founder of the Missionaries of Saint Charles, described himself as **"one who falls to his knees before the world to implore, like a grace, it's permission to do some good on its behalf"**. Saint John Paul II, during the Angelus on Sunday, November 16th, 1997 —eight days after his beatification referred to Scalabrini as **"Father to the Migrants"**. He was a man of hope who fought injustice caused by migration and all the suffering that came along with it. He looked to alleviate that suffering, not only by helping migrants with their material and spiritual needs but also by studying the deep causes of migration: poverty, social injustice, unemployment, and conflict.

Through conferences and writings, he pursued a greater awareness of the migratory phenomenon and worked incessantly to achieve a social transformation for the benefit of the most vulnerable members of society. The speech that Scalabrini gave at the Catholic Club in New York on October 15th, 1901, is memorable. In it, he acknowledged that migration **"brings maturity to the union in God through Jesus**

**Christ of all men of goodwill"**.

He saw his mission as that of bringing the Gospel to the children of labor and poverty. He used to say:

**“ Wherever the working and suffering people are, there is the Church, because the Church is a mother, a friend, and a defender of the people, and will always have a word of consolation, a smile, a blessing for all"**.

Scalabrini, outraged that immigrants were abused in their rights, exclaimed:

**“ Christian charity and current civilization force us to put a limit to such a deplorable and undignified state of affairs"**.

Hearing the incessant requests from migrants, concerned with the situation of abandonment that they were going through, he lamented that he couldn't exchange the gold cross of a Bishop for the wooden cross of a Missionary so that he could fly to their aid among the dangers they faced because there was also the added danger of falling into the abyss of despair.

# Scalabrini Loved His People

By Fr. Romano Cerantola, c.s.

In 1876, Saint John Baptist Scalabrini solemnly entered Piacenza as a bishop. In his first speech, he stated:

*As for me, indebted to all, I will receive everyone to my ministry, becoming everyone's servant through the Gospel [...] sent here for the poorest and the neediest first [...] I will suffer with them, working especially to help and evangelize the poor [...] With warm, fatherly affection, I embrace you, priests, acknowledging the importance and necessity of your ministry [...] With tender charity towards the deaf-mute, the blind and other unfortunate ones; see that they too receive instruction, diligently educate little boys and girls in the principles of the faith and obedience to God and their parents. Willingly and open-heartedly help everyone with your charity work.*

From the very beginning, the guidelines for his Episcopal action are laid; they are the seeds that will grow into the most important achievements of his episcopate: charity towards the poor and the unfortunate, the instruction of the deaf-mute, catechism, and, not least among them, the attention to migrants.

For the Episcopal jubilee of his dear friend Msgr. Jeremiah Bonomelli, bishop of Cremona, Scalabrini delineates a profile for bishops that reflect how he understood his own mission as a shepherd:

“To make every sacrifice necessary to expand in every soul the kingdom of Jesus Christ; to expose, if necessary, one’s own life for the health of one’s beloved flock; to drop, I will say, to one’s knees before the world, to implore it, as a grace, its permission to do good for them. Such is the spirit, the character, the only ambition of a bishop”.

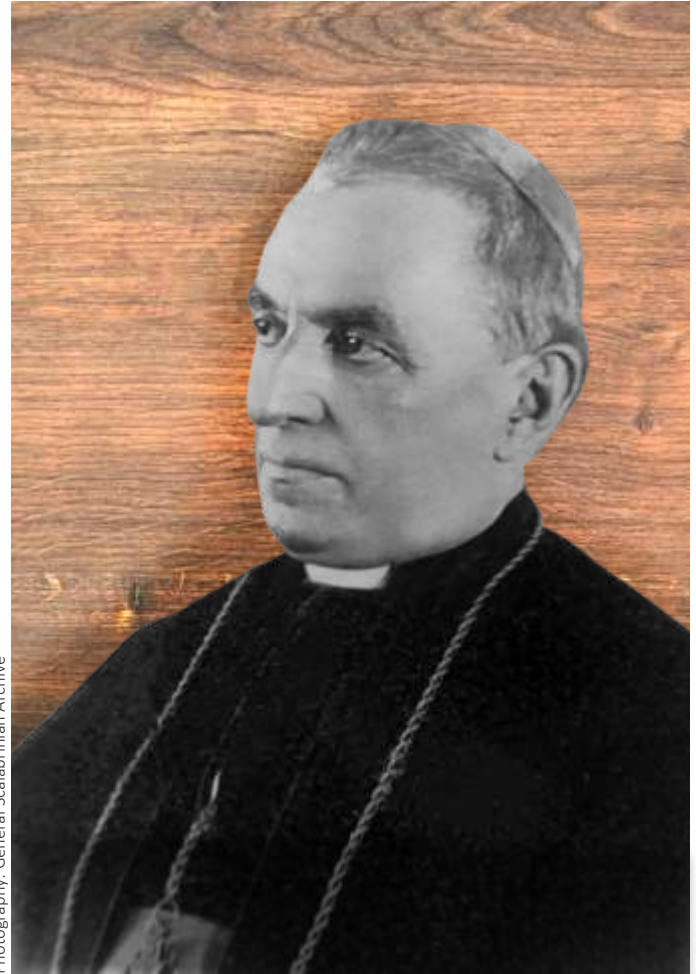
Parishioners were able to feel Scalabrini's paternal spirit when they saw him, from the very first days: Volunteering to dictate meditation for seminarians, hearing confessions from men who had not entered a church in a long time, helping the poor; also while visiting the houses of the religious, hospitals and military quarters.



A few months after arriving in his diocese, he announces the first pastoral visit. "I wanted to feel the most beautiful consolation a bishop can get out of having a close meeting with all his children and introducing himself to them. With the most ardent wish in our hearts, we are preparing to embrace them all, welcome them all, bless them, to nurture them with the Word and the sacraments. We will come to you to encourage you to practice the Christian virtues, the piety, the concord, and the peace; to raise our voices in defense of those who are oppressed, to become a support for the poor and comfort the afflicted; to welcome sinners and to join the tears of joy with those of regret, getting ready to sacrifice for you not only what we have -comfort, peace- but life itself if it were necessary because the Good Shepherd gives his life for his flock".

When he announced to his diocese that the first pastoral visit was over, he wrote: **"Now we can say that there is no place, near or far, in these same fields, with which we are not fully acquainted; we can truly say, following Christ's example: I know my sheep and my sheep know me. We can say, as Saint Paul said unto the residents of Rome: with joy I came to you by the will of God and with you all I found my consolation"**.

Scalabrini "loved his people" by performing his pastoral service following the two lines of action which, 100 years later, Saint Paul VI, in the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, would propose for the entire Church: **Evangelization and Human Promotion**. In the field of evangelization, he worked to promote the catechism, the preaching of the Word of God, and the devotions to the Virgin Mary and the saints. In the field of Human Promotion, he was always attentive to the needs of the poor, establishing works and starting initiatives to promote the dignity of the peasants, the laborers, the deaf-mute, and the migrants.



Photography: General Scalabrinian Archive

Scalabrini 1904

During the last years of his life, he used to say: **"I remember a promise I made the day of my taking possession [...] After warning them that they would not find in me what they admired in my predecessors, I loyally said: But I do assure you, my dear children, that you will find in me the heart of a father. Did the actions confirm the words? I would not dare to say. But I can assure you that I have always loved you, that your joys were my joys, your suffering was my own"**.

**That is how great Saint John Baptist Scalabrini's heart was, and how deeply he loved his people!**



# A BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE OF Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

## (1839-1905)

General Direction of the Missionaries of Saint Charles  
(edited and adapted by Fr. José Juan Cervantes, c.s.)



**John Baptist Scalabrini** was born in Fino Mornasco, a small town in the province Of Como, North of Italy, on July 8th, **1839**. He was the third of eight children. His four brothers emigrated to Argentina. One of them died in a shipwreck off the coast of Peru. After elementary school, he joined the seminary of the Diocese of Como and **was ordained as a priest in 1863**. He expressed his desire to become a member of the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), but his bishop oriented him towards becoming a professor in the Minor Seminary and later granted him the rectorate thereof.



In **1870** he was named parish priest of **Saint Bartholomew**, a parish in the industrial periphery of Como, where he became interested in the situation of the textile workers, the unemployed, and people with disabilities. He wrote the "Little Catechism for Children" (1875) and organized the teaching of catechism in his parish. In **1876**, when he was just 36 years old, **Pius IX** named him **bishop of Piacenza**.

As a bishop, **his role model was Saint Charles**, whose pastoral dedication and capacity for pastoral reformation he adopted. He reminded the clergy of the necessity of spiritual exercises, renovated the discipline of his clergy, and reformed studies in the three seminaries of his diocese, anticipating the reforms by Leo XIII and Pius X. He promoted harmony, which was tested by the political and philosophical controversies of his age. He always favored the conciliation between Church and State.

**He visited the 365 parishes in his diocese five times**. 200 of those parishes were in the mountains. For him, those visits were "the dearest of my offices".



**He organized three diocesan synods** dedicated to reforming the ecclesial life, the Christian testimony in the Church, and the Eucharist. He institutionalized the teaching of the catechism in his diocese to shape it as a real school, reforming its contents. **He started the first Italian catechetical magazine** (1876), **published the Catholic Catechism** (1887), and, in **1889**, **hosted the First National Catechetical Congress, in Piacenza** (one of the first in its kind in the history of the Church). **Pius IX** called him **the Apostle of Catechism**.

**He tirelessly devoted himself to the poor**, especially during the famine of 1879 – 1880, when he also sold his chalice and his horses. **He established an Institute for the Deaf-Mute** (1879), **and an Association for the Rice Field Workers** (1903), for religious, social, and trade union



assistance for those temporally domestic migrants. He was a promoter of the church's action on social issues. Throughout his diocese, he instituted saving banks and mutual assistance societies and started several initiatives to favor field workers and impoverished laborers.

He was particularly moved by the exodus of forced migration in the late 19th century. He studied the causes and consequences of migration and addressed numerous conferences to request the intervention of government and civil society to protect migrants from abuse. He worked for the reformation of the law regulating Italian migration, defending the right to emigrate, and forbidding forced emigration.



He conceived a plan to attend to the spiritual and material needs of Italian migrants in North and South America. He founded three institutions for the attention to the migrants: the Congregation of the Missionaries of Saint Charles (1887), and of the



Missionary Sisters of Saint Charles (1895), and a lay people association named Society of Saint Raphael (1889) which was active at the ports of departure and arrival of migrants.



He inspired the founding, in 1961, of the Secular Scalabrinian Missionaries. He recommended to Pope Pius X the creation of a central office of the Holy See for the attention of migrants of all nationalities.

He performed two missionary visits, as a papal delegate, to Italian emigrants in the Americas: the first one in 1901, to the United States, and the second one in 1904, to Brazil and Argentina. During both visits, he celebrated the sacraments, preached the Word of God, taught catechism, presided over processions,

directed spiritual exercises, met religious and civilian leaders, and encouraged his missionaries to do as much spiritual and material good as possible for migrants. Above all, he provided for migrants the consolation of the faith and the smile from their homeland.



His extraordinary activity as a shepherd and his many social initiatives were the result of a soul that was entirely devoted to God. He found his nourishment in the Eucharist. He knew how to accept his Cross: in difficult times he frequently repeated "Fac me cruce inebriari"; "Make me fall in love with the cross". He had towards the Virgin Mary the devotion of a son. His total commitment to God led him to generously give his life to all, taking on himself Saint Paul's plan to become all things to all people. The Church has acknowledged the sanctity of his life, Pope John Paul II beatified him on November 9th, 1997, and he was canonized by Pope Francis on October 9th, 2022.





## Prayer to Saint John Baptist Scalabrini

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Saint John Baptist Scalabrini, you were chosen by God to become the faithful servant and guide to your people, the Apostle of the Catechism and the Father to the Migrants.

Guide us in our pilgrimage of life with the wisdom of your faith and the strength of your courage. May we face our daily struggles with the knowledge that in all that happens God's providential love is at work in us.

Lead us to fullness of life in Jesus, to harmony with one another, and to openness and welcoming toward our migrant brothers and sisters.

Listen to our prayer and entrust it to Jesus through the intercession of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Extend your protection to all who live and work in foreign lands, to their families at home. Assist us in sorrow and distress, so that, free from fear and with a joyful heart, we may give glory to God through Christ our Lord.

Amen.