

before it could resume, the gravest events intervened.

*France Falls and Troops Storm the Porta Pia Gate*

On July 19th Napoleon III declared war on the Prussians. After one setback after another, the French were finally defeated at Sedan and Napoleon made prisoner. In September the populace declared itself a republic and repudiated the harsh peace terms. They set up a "Commune," based on the Revolution at the start of the century, a new Terror. The French army itself crushed the rising with the utmost ruthlessness and 14,000 were said to have died in the fighting.

In Italy, the fall of the French, considered as supporters of the Pope, was welcomed and the government felt free to go forward to the complete unification of the country by attacking the Papal States. Sixty thousand troops began their march. Several advisors counselled the Pope to leave and a British warship was put at his disposal to take him to Malta. However, this time he declined to leave Rome, a decision in line with Don Bosco's own advice.

The Papal troops put up a resistance when the Porta Pia gate was blown open. The Piedmontese army stormed into the city; the Pope then ordered a surrender to avoid bloodshed. Countless streets throughout Italy commemorate the date; September 20th; Via Settembre XX. Losses were minimal but the repercussions were tremendous. Some thought it was the end of the world, others the end of the Catholic Church, a hope expressed in many Liberal, anti-clerical circles. It was certainly the end of 1,500 years of Papal rule in Rome; it was also the end of the Vatican Council which could not be expected to continue in an atmosphere of conflict, where there was no guarantee of safety or tranquillity. The Pope adjourned it sine die.

*A Tremor Shakes the Salesian Society*

When the news of the fall of Rome reached Don Bosco, he showed no surprise; it was not news to him. A year later, while waiting on the station at Varazze for a train to Turin, he suddenly fell and became unconscious. A heart attack was suspected as he was taken to the Salesian House. His condition deteriorated and he was finally given the last Sacraments. There was the utmost consternation in Turin; Don Rua was able but young; what was the future of the Society to be? Many Salesians offered their own lives for Don Bosco's. When at last there was a turn for the better, he said himself that he thought he was going to die in Varazze.

He had to spend two months convalescing at Varazze and this gave rise

to what we can now call a delightful exchange of letters between two dear Salesian sons of his who would gladly have died in his place. We have met, as an orphan from the cholera epidemic, Pietro Enria, who was sent up at once to help nurse the sick man. Left behind in Valdocco was the ever faithful 'giant' Giuseppe Buzzetti who thereupon gave his friend Brother Pietro strict orders to keep him informed, every day if possible, of progress or decline.

The letters have survived. At the start it was a tearful exchange. To Enria's fears and appeals for more and more prayers, Buzzetti could only reply: "I could not finish your letter of the 23rd for grief and for the tears which I could not contain on hearing that our dear Don Bosco, yours and mine, is suffering every day with new pains". They kept it up for all the anxious weeks. At last the improvement came and then the glad day when Enria could send a telegram: "Papa got up today; festa in house; would love to see you". The news "Papa got up today," spread like wildfire in Turin. As Don Bosco continued to improve, Enria allowed a few days to elapse without writing, which drew a complaint from Buzzetti.

*"Dear Pietro,*

*Are you still alive? If you are, what about your promise to let me have news every day about Don Bosco? Now don't start trying to tease me."*

On February 15th, 1872, the great day came of Don Bosco's return to Turin and to Valdocco. He insisted on going first to the great church of Our Lady Help of Christians, which was packed with his Salesians, friends and boys. Buzzetti led them all with a couple of favourite hymns as Don Bosco prayed in silence. When he turned to thank them all for their prayers for his recovery, the whole church joined him in his special thanks to Our Lady. As he left the church, the crowds streamed out after him and around him. Brother Enria remained on his knees in the sanctuary still praying his gratitude to God until Buzzetti took him by the arm and led him outside. There they threw their arms about each other and wept, like the good simple men they were.

Salesian Sister Margaret Renshaw in "CALLED TO JOY," her delightful little life of Saint Mary Mazzarello, gives us another Pietro Enria story. Later that same year of 1872, when the Salesian Sisters were coming into being, Don Bosco and his Council were gravely discussing what habit the Sisters should wear. (Poor Sisters! These men!) A model was produced, sent from Morrone. But of course, there was no-one to try it on. With no doubt a

slightly malicious chuckle, Don Bosco sent for Brother Enria. "Ah, Pietro. You are just about the right size! Just slip this habit on, will you?" "What me? Oh Don Bosco!" Beetroot faced, the poor man did. Buzzetti would never let him forget it.

## *Chapter Thirty-Five*

### COLLABORATORS AND CO-OPERATORS

CALL THEM WHAT you like for they mean the same thing, although the second title was made official. From the start, Don Bosco found them at his side, few at first but coming from an ever widening circle as his work became known.

Of all the most faithful, none was nearer, and indeed, dearer to him, than the "padre piccolo," the little father, Don Borel. The most ordinary of men, you would miss him in a group of three, a simple priest who used to tell simple country stories in dialect to the boys. "Yet," said Don Bosco of him, "ten good priests could not have done more good than did this little worker for God." Don Borel died on September 9th, 1873, with Don Bosco at his bedside. He was not a Salesian in name, but, one could say, in love. It was found that all his possessions did not amount to enough to pay for his funeral. This Christian duty Don Bosco gladly undertook, remembering how often, how very often, in his own minor financial crises, the little father had just pulled out his worn purse and emptied it into Don Bosco's hands, regardless whether it held gold or silver or bronze; no matter, take it all, whatever there is. Six Salesian Rectors, boys of the Oratory who had long loved Don Borel, proudly shouldered his small coffin to the cemetery, with Salesian clerics and students lining the way.

As well as Don Borel and Don Cafasso, there were other priests who gave Don Bosco a hand in looking after the boys, in one way or another, even those who did not always agree with him. Don Rua's parish priest once warned him, that "Don Bosco isn't quite right in his head, you know". Don Bosco would have agreed that you would have to be a little mad to undertake some of the things he did! 'Crazy' was a word often heard in his own house!

Perhaps it was the natural role of a woman to look after a family that drew them to his family of children in need. His own mother, Margaret, first; then her sister; then Michael Rua's mother, who presided over the kitchen for twenty years; Michael Magone's mother; "Madame" Gastaldi, the future Archbishop's mother, who, when things had progressed into

some kind of order, took charge of the linen and used to line up the boys for inspection on Sunday mornings.

Don Bosco had the gift of charming people of all classes to help in need. He never found it easy to beg, in fact, he felt the humiliation of it keenly, his greatest penance; but Our Lady helping, he won the esteem of the rich, the bankers and the aristocracy who parted with large sums. His Italian list of subscribers sometimes reads like a Court Circular, and from outside Italy, from France, and indeed England from such as the Duke of Norfolk, the Countess de Stackpoole and other, helped by frequent articles in the influential Catholic weekly, *The Tablet*. But of course it was the rank and file, the ordinary working men and women who were his greatest helpers and supporters, not only with their money, but with their practical help, in all the Houses and schools, wherever the Salesians began to work.

#### *Great Ideas Blocked*

The ancient Orders, such as the Franciscans and the Dominicans have fostered "Third Orders," lay branches of their followers, for centuries. Don Bosco wanted to form his collaborators even more closely to his work. In the draft of his first "Salesian Rule" submitted to Rome, he boldly included an article by which any lay person could, without taking vows, be a Salesian on the same footing as the professed, an "extern" Salesian; they would have to live exemplary Catholic lives, take part in the activities of the Church, work for the poor and under-privileged, just as the Salesians were doing.

Rome would not think of it; extern Salesians indeed! You were a religious with vows or you were not. Don Bosco tried again. He put the offending article at the end, in an appendix, as a suggestion. No, certainly not; if you want your 'Constitutions' to be accepted, you must keep to the accepted practice. (The "Secular Institutes" of today had not been thought of in those days.) So, without these revolutionary ideas, the Salesian 'Rule' was ratified by Rome in 1874, an important step for its future existence in the Church.

Two years later, Don Bosco sent to the Pope a draft set of 'constitutions' for a body he called the "Salesian Cooperators"; they were to assist the Salesians in all aspects of their work, they were to work for their own spiritual perfection in working for the good of others, especially the young. They were the third member of the Salesian family, after the Salesians and the Sisters, though they were not called a "Third Order". The Pope approved.

They were not to be just fund-gatherers for the work of the Salesians;

yes, they could and do help that way; but it was their work, their personal labour and their time in working with the Salesians that mattered. Don Bosco stressed this aspect of his concept of the Cooperator in reply to certain of his Salesians who thought only of the financial aspect of their helpers. In 1884, towards the end of his life, Don Bosco defined his exact idea of the Salesian Cooperator. "The direct scope of the Cooperators is not that of helping the Salesians, but of helping the Church, the Bishops, the parish priests, under the general direction of the Salesians."

#### *The Salesian Bulletin*

It was imperative that this growing, eventually worldwide, body of Cooperators should be kept informed of the activities of the whole Salesian Family. To this end, Don Bosco founded, in 1877, the monthly *Salesian Bulletin*, the first few numbers of which he wrote himself. It began as a newsletter, chiefly concerned in those days with the newly arrived missionaries, whose long and often fascinating accounts of their travels and experiences were eagerly read and eagerly followed. The first editor was a Don Bonetti who, when asking Don Bosco to whom he should send this Bulletin, received the answer, "To those who ask for it and those who don't". His own presses printed and published it, it was free in that no subscription was asked, though of course, many sent donations. But it was the great bond of unity between the Cooperators and indeed the whole Salesian Family and is so to this day when it is published in many languages throughout the world.

Perhaps we could quote the 'good Pope John' for a remark about it. "My earliest years were protected and nourished by a cherished little picture of Our Lady Help of Christians. Oh, it was a very simple picture, cut out from the *Salesian Bulletin* which our great-uncle Xavier used to receive and read to us with great relish. I put the holy picture over my bed. How many prayers and how many confidences did I pour out before that humble image! And Mary Help of Christians has always helped me."

## Chapter Thirty-Six

### HARD HEAD MEETS ITS MATCH

VOCATION IS ANOTHER mystery of grace. The young man in the Gospel upon whom Jesus looked and loved and invited to follow him, turned away. He was free to do so. Yet Our Lord said to the apostles, "It was I who chose you, you did not choose me". God gives a call, gives us grace to accept that call, but we are still free to reject it. Don Bosco who is said to have been concerned in the vocation of 2,000 priests, the majority of them diocesan priests, would never try to force a decision. Except, perhaps, once.

The reader may remember that, when, on his October hikes, he went to a town, or village, called Lu Monferrato, he met a family named Rinaldi whose five year old son, Philip, he looked at with particular care.

The Salesians opened a school not far from Lu and when Philip was ten his father took him there. The young Salesian immediately in charge of him was a kind and gentle Paul Albera, with whom he soon made friends. Another teacher was not either so gentle or kind and when, at the end of a tiring day for both teacher and pupils, he snapped at Philip, that young man kept his temper but marched straight up to the Rector and straight home.

Nothing could bring him back: not even Don Bosco. Not even letters from Don Bosco over the years. When Philip was eighteen, Don Bosco made yet another attempt to bring him back. They were in the sacristy together when a poor woman came in, on crutches and nursing an injured arm. She begged Don Bosco's help. He gave her the blessing of Our Lady Help of Christians and there and then, in front of Philip, she cried out in joy, picked up her crutches which had fallen from her and went out, fully healed. Not even that moved Philip. Not only did he refuse Don Bosco's repeated invitation but began to turn away from his religion, his prayers, getting careless in many things and troubling his parents, who did not cease to pray for him. When he was twenty, a suitable marriage was being arranged; but when the interested parties arrived to discuss it, Don Bosco also arrived and at once tackled Philip. They were good friends but Philip was a hard headed countryman and stood his ground, point after point. Don Bosco was also a hardheaded countryman and he fought his end, point by point. At last

### Hard Head Meets Its Match

Philip gave in: the parents of the girl departed.

The following November, 1877, Philip went to a house Don Bosco had opened for late vocations and there the twenty-one year old had to settle down to Italian literature and Latin verbs. It was hard going; but the kind Don Albera was now his Rector and that helped. In August 1880 he knelt at Don Bosco's feet and took the three vows. Now a Salesian at twenty-four, he went on at once to theology, although without any great signs of enthusiasm. When the time came for him to take minor orders, he did so only because Don Bosco said he should; the same for subdiaconate and diaconate. On Christmas Eve, 1882, he was ordained priest.

"Now," said Don Bosco, "are you happy?"

The reply startled him. "As long as I am here with you, yes. But if I have to go away, I don't know what I shall do."

However, he did volunteer after a while to go on the missions.

"No," said Don Bosco, "there is work for you to do here."

When Don Bosco died, Don Rua was elected in his stead. When he died, Don Albera, and when he died, Philip Rinaldi was elected Rector Major, in 1922. Such was his reputation (his Cause for Beatification has been introduced) that Don Francesia, who knew Don Bosco for forty years, declared, "Except for the voice, he was Don Bosco himself".

There is no doubt that Don Bosco persisted in his pursuit of Philip Rinaldi because in one or other of his 'dreams' he must have seen him leading his Salesians.

#### Missionary to Lepers

Stories about vocations abound. One day a country labourer, Michael Unia, aged then twenty-seven, came to Don Bosco to discuss a possible vocation. He wanted to become a priest, but not a Salesian (possibly put off at the thought of teaching!). Don Bosco smiled at him and then said, unusually, "What if I tell you something important, something that might show you God wants you for some special work?"

"You would have to prove that."

"If I tell you something of yourself that only you know, would that be a sufficient sign that God wants you to become a Salesian?"

"All right, tell me what's on my conscience." Don Bosco did.

"How can you possibly know these things?"

"Let me tell you something else. When you were eleven, you were in the choir. One day at Vespers, the boy next to you fell asleep, with his mouth wide open. You had in your pocket some plums and you took the biggest of

them and plopped it right into the poor lad's mouth. He woke up, choking, and ran about like a mad man, with you bursting your sides laughing. The Vespers had to stop until order was restored, but the curate gave you half a dozen wallops to remember."

After that, Michael could make no further protests and duly became a Salesian. He found his 'special work' in South America, in Columbia when he volunteered to work as a missionary, the first in the then notorious leper colony of Agua de Dios. There were 730 stricken men and women in that neglected field of human suffering, suffering allied with degradation. Like another Father Damien, Father Unia brought them, little by little, a sense of human dignity and decency, the love of Christ and His healing care. He stayed with them until he died, and his name is revered. He has Salesian successors who continue his work.

## *Chapter Thirty-Seven*

### DREAMS OF FAR OFF LANDS

THERE CAN BE no doubt now in any reader's mind that Don Bosco was granted the sight of much of his future work and its development in 'dreams'. Before his death, he agreed with his biographer that these dreams were really 'visions'. There are dreams and dreams. The usual variety may come from possibly, indigestion, of which no doubt Don Bosco had his fair share. Others, rare events, may give the dreamer some vision of past or future events; some of Don Bosco's dreams showed actual events, others were allegorical, portraying evils in the shape of savage beasts. Some of his 'dreams' were not really dreams at all, such as when he saw the "anxious natives hovering over the sick Cagliero's bed"; that was a daytime vision.

Pope Pius IX ordered him to record his dreams and some 160 are in print; some took hours and are in great detail so that they need ten or more pages. It was in familiar conversation with the Pope that Don Bosco first told the following dream and only afterwards to the Salesian biographers. He found himself in a wide plain in a tropical land. The inhabitants were tall, strong, dark-skinned men and women, clad in animal skins, the men with spears and other weapons. He saw approaching these people a group of white missionaries, none of whom he knew; he was horrified to see the 'savages' attack them, cutting them to pieces, exulting as they paraded with heads and limbs on their spears. After a while, he saw another group, and this time recognised the leaders as among his own sons. To his astonishment and relief, the natives welcomed them with smiles, listened to their teaching of Christian truths and began to take part in the services.

For years Don Bosco tried to identify these people, sifting through libraries and journals from all parts. Now one of the side-issues of the Vatican Council of 1870 was the arrival in Italy of Bishops from all over the world, with those from missionary countries taking the opportunity to invite recruits. Don Bosco finally learnt that the natives of his dream came from Argentina, more precisely from Patagonia. In 1874, the Argentine Consul, Señor Gazzolo, brought Don Bosco a request from the Archbishop of Buenos Aires, asking him to send help to take care of the 30,000 Italian

immigrants in that city for the most part living in penury and ignorance. He also wanted him to take over a school in San Nicholas, a flourishing centre.

After hearing the affirmative opinion of his Council, Don Bosco agreed to send a group of Salesians in 1875. The Archbishop had made no reference to the evangelisation of the tribal areas, with which Don Bosco was primarily concerned as were the Salesians when he revealed his plans to them; everyone wanted to go. He wrote to the Archbishop, agreeing to send a group in 1875, with these three points: the first would establish a centre in Buenos Aires a base from which to build schools, oratories, etc.; the second would take up the work in San Nicholas, and the third would, from these two bases, prepare to extend the work to other parts. By the latter Don Bosco meant "to extend the work to the tribal lands".

#### *The Missionaries Sail*

With characteristic generosity, he made a suggestion to Don Cagliero, his best man, the one the work in Turin could least spare; at thirty-seven, he was already a remarkable personality, preacher, organiser of many projects, master musician, popular and sought after all over the city.

"Giovanni," said Don Bosco, "I need someone to go with the group who can meet the Archbishop, establish contact with the authorities and put the work on a firm footing." "Well, I could go if you want," answered Cagliero. "All right, but for three months; then you come back." The three months lasted thirty years.

With Don Cagliero was to be Don Fagnano, who became a truly great missionary; there were to be six priests in all and four Brothers.

Don Bosco sent eleven missionary 'expeditions' to South America but the first was the most dramatic. It aroused tremendous enthusiasm and excitement and he made the most of it. In preparation they had been studying Spanish and had been to Rome to receive the blessing of the Pope. On November 11th, 1875, the farewell ceremony took place in Turin. The vast church was full to overflowing, festive lights and music abounding. After his emotional talk, Don Bosco received each missionary from the sanctuary and invested him with a crucifix; all the other Salesians then exchanged a farewell embrace. Family, friends and relatives followed suit.

On November 14th, the group embarked from Genoa on the French liner Savoie. The future was not going to be easy. But Don Cagliero carried with him a brief personal note: "Do what you can; God will do what you cannot. Entrust everything to Our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament and to Mary, Help of Christians, and you will see what miracles are." Yes,

miracles, but also martyrs. Salesian missionaries have carried the Gospel far and wide but the wine in their Mass chalices has many times turned to blood. They have suffered cruel deaths in many lands. It is true that the "blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church"; every year that costly seed is still being sown by Don Bosco's sons. May the harvests that follow be rich indeed.

medals and pictures and making plans for the first 'Oratory'.

But back in Turin, they were all eager to know when the missionaries were going to meet the 'savages'. The Salesians soon found out, however, that the only 'Indians' within a couple of hundred miles were miserable slaves, men, women and children, captured in military sweeps, if anything lucky to be alive for all natives bearing weapons were given short thrift. There was, they discovered, a state of perpetual war between the chiefs and government troops, massacres on both sides, with the natives hating and fearing the better armed troops and whites merciless in their reprisals. Evangelization seemed a remote dream.

The following year, in response to Cagliero's pleas, Don Bosco, sent a larger expedition, of twenty-three, sometimes called the 'children's crusade,' from the extreme youth of six beardless clerics. The following year again, 1877, there were eighteen Salesians and for the first time, six valiant Salesian Sisters, the first of many Daughters of Mary Help of Christians who have since crossed the ocean to South America.

The Archbishop of Buenos Aires, realising that both Don Bosco and Mother Mazzarello had both gone 'beyond the limit of possibility' in sparing these precious people, made an effort to please Don Bosco by trying to arrange for a couple of Salesians to go to Patagonia. Their ship ran into a hurricane and they barely escaped shipwreck; they had to return. However, in 1879, the Minister of War, himself a general, decided to lead an expedition, of 8,000 troops 'to clean up the rebellious tribes'. As a man of some principle, he asked the Salesians to spare him a couple of priests to act as chaplains: the Archbishop added his Vicar General to the party. Each priest was given a personal horse and they shared a wagon carrying their bags, plus an altar, a harmonium and vestments.

#### *Journey into the Interior*

The two Salesians, Don Costamagno, and Don Botta, have left vivid accounts of this first journey into the hinterland, accounts which were eagerly read in Turin and at once passed on to the *Salesian Bulletin* throughout Italy. It was a military foray of course, and the cross had to follow the sword; but at least, some contacts were made. The first Indians they met were semi-civilised Pampas Indians, living in huts of animal skins. Some spoke a little Spanish and the priests at once began to speak of God and teach simple prayers.

It was hard going for city bred men; they rode 1,300 kilometres on horseback, through wild, often roadless country; one whole month through

## *Chapter Thirty-Eight* PATAGONIA, LAND OF PROMISE

THE GOOD SHIP *Savoie* weighed anchor in Buenos Aires on December 14th, 1875. The Salesians found themselves at once among friends, welcomed by the Archbishop and clergy, as well as by some 200 Italian residents, including, wonder of wonders, a group of excited young men who had been boys at the Oratory of Valdocco. It was very wonderful indeed until some stark realities began to manifest themselves. There were 30,000 Italians in the city, 300,000 spread throughout Argentina. Apart from a few, most of them were living in poverty, scratching a living, illiterate, lacking in Spanish and totally abandoned spiritually. Parents who would call themselves Catholics had not even taught their children the words of the sign of the cross, let alone the Hail Mary. News of the arrival of the Salesians brought a flood of requests for schools. A pathetic letter from the neighbouring country of Uruguay, from the Apostolic Delegate, revealed that there was not in that whole country one seminary, nor even one seminary student, and in the capital, Montevideo, not a single Catholic school. Yet Uruguay was listed as a Catholic country!

As arranged, Don Fagnano took six priests with him to open the school at San Nicholas, while Don Cagliero began work in the capital. The "La Boca" quarter was inhabited largely by Italians, dominated by masonic lodges. No priest had ever set foot in that gloomy area, which, of course, made it a first choice for Don John Cagliero. He found himself surrounded by excited children with whom he laughed and joked as Don Bosco had done with the urchins of Valdocco. "Here you are! A lovely medal for the best one here! All right, all right, here you are, you can all have one! I'll be back next week when you have all learnt to make the sign of the cross properly, words and all . . . Come on, say them after me now!"

The Archbishop soon got to hear of it and sent for Don Cagliero.

"You did a very foolish thing, going there. I've never been in that quarter myself and would not allow any of my priests to go either; it is far too dangerous."

But, of course, Don Cagliero was there again within days with more

a desert. But on the feast of Mary Help of Christians, May 24th, Don Costamagno, riding ahead, crossed the great river Rio Negro into the long promised land of Patagonia.

This was 'conquered country' in general and the missionaries met many Indians living in wretched conditions, some in camps preparatory to going into slavery on white farms; the more fortunate ones who had not taken part in any fighting, were being resettled in cleared areas. Eventually, the missionaries reached the town of Patagones, then with 4,000 inhabitants, and after a short stay there, they returned to the capital, to send their exciting news back home. The military expedition continued for another two years, eventually forcing the warring chiefs, led by Chief Manuel Namancura, deeper into remote mountain valleys.

The upshot of the expedition was that the Archbishop wrote to Don Bosco offering him the vast mission territory based on Patagones, which he accepted amidst general rejoicing. At last, we are a real missionary Society! Two groups took over control, under Don Fagnano and Don Milanesio, two great missionaries, who have left legends behind them. Don Fagnano tried to bring as many Indians as possible to his base at Patagones, while Don Milanesio, a picturesque character with a patriarchal beard and a gift of tongues, roamed the forests seeking out often hidden Indian settlements, quickly mastering their languages and as quickly winning their confidence. One tactic complemented the other and brought considerable success.

When at last Manuel Namancura, the last of the great chiefs, decided to treat with the government, it was to Don Milanesio he turned to act as his mediator, a choice accepted by the government negotiators. Under his protection, the chief laid down his arms at Fort Roca on May 15th, 1883, in exchange for which he was given the rank and uniform of a colonel, with accompanying salary. It was really a triumph for the missionaries. However, although organised resistance ceased, there still remained isolated groups, hidden deep in the vast forests.

#### *I Saw into the Hearts of the Mountains*

In that same year of 1883, thousands of miles away, Don Bosco saw in a remarkable 'dream' the future of South America and some of its missionaries. He found himself in a train starting from Cartagena, Columbia, in the north, with as guide, a boy, Luigi Colle, who had recently died. As the train raced 'at a dizzy speed,' to the south, Don Bosco — who had never been out of Europe — was able to give an accurate description of the territory they traversed. He ascribed all this knowledge to his young

guide who "explained matters of geology, mineralogy, of flora and fauna." There were areas in which would be found "riches of incomparable value". When at last the train entered Patagonia, Don Bosco asked if he could visit his Salesians whom he had recently sent out. They stopped outside a town and made their way to the Salesian centre. The size and development of the buildings astonished him but not less astonishing was that when he met the Salesians he did not know any of them. Nor they him.

"But, but, don't you know me? I'm Don Bosco!"

"Oh yes, we have his picture on the wall."

"But what about Don Cagliero, Don Fagnano, Don Costamagno? What about them?"

"Oh, we've heard about them, but they died some time ago."

(Cardinal Cagliero actually died in 1926.)

This was obviously a dream of the future. Nevertheless, when they resumed their train journey, they still witnessed a horrifying cannibalistic killing in a forest clearance: on the banks of a great river, they saw fearful animals, unknown to Don Bosco, which, said Luigi, signified moral evils the Salesians would have to fight against. As they turned north for the return journey, the young guide pointed out enormous deposits of coal, lead, iron, gold, and 'other things more precious than gold'. Don Bosco said, "I saw into the hearts of the mountains". Back at Cartagena, Luigi was showing the priest a wonderful map of their journey, with the future developments, when Don Bosco woke up. He later dictated the six hour 'dream' to a secretary in precise detail. When it was published in South America, it caused a sensation. Geologists and mineralogists worked out the journey and proved the accuracy of the descriptions. The railway, only partially built in 1883, was finally completed and enormous development has followed.

Father Peter Lappin, in his fine book of Don Bosco *Give Me Souls*, adds an interesting modern sequel. Brasilia, the ultra modern capital of Brasil, was founded only in 1960. Don Bosco's dream described a "city beside a great lake," between latitudes 15° and 20°. Brasilia stands exactly between these latitudes. The lake, which did not exist in 1883, was artificially created. The city, Father Lappin tells us, needed a seaport; so one was built at Marau Bay, called Vascopolis, able to take the largest oceangoing vessels. Between Brasilia and Vascopolis runs a super-highway, 1,000 kilometres, 600 miles. Its name? Don Bosco Way, "Via Dom Bosco," ("Dom" being Portuguese for the Italian "Don").

Don Bosco's last missionary dream came to him in April 1886, when he



was greatly enfeebled and could recite it only with difficulty. Again it was a dream of the future. He was shown the development of Salesian missionary activity throughout the world, across which he travelled by means which are not clear; perhaps, in our hindsight, by plane. From South America he passed through the Cape of Good Hope, through central Africa, in which continent there were ten Salesian centres, continuing right across the world to Hong Kong and then to Peking. In this Chinese city, "Salesians from East and West would meet on a bridge". All these events have already been realised; Salesians now work in eighty-five countries.

## *Chapter Thirty-Nine*

### SAINTS MUST SUFFER

IN THE ACTS of the Apostles we read how two great apostles and missionaries, Paul and Barnabas, teamed up and did great things for God until, disagreeing over the temporary defection of young Mark, they parted company. They were still great saints, great men, but still men. Men with all man's capacity for misjudgement, for seeing things only from one's own point of view.

At a time when the development of Don Bosco's work seemed at its greatest, he was suffering from the cruellest trials of his life. They came chiefly from his Archbishop, Archbishop Gastaldi, who had been a lifelong friend, born in the same year, their mothers great friends, though Margaret was a farmer's wife and Madam Gastaldi, the Marchioness Fassati, who worked untingingly in the Valdocco Oratory.

One does not want to dwell on unhappy matters, especially now that they are water under the bridge; but something must be said.

Briefly, it began with Mgr. Gastaldi's predecessor, Mgr. Riccardi, who, appointed Archbishop after a long delay owing to political trouble, was anxious to re-establish the Church and needed every help. He was an enthusiastic admirer of Don Bosco's work until one day, it was mentioned that the Constitutions of the new Society had been given a provisional approval in Rome.

"Rome? But I thought you were going to work only in and for this diocese, at the disposal of the Archbishop?" With hindsight, we can see that that restricted scope was not in God's design for the Salesian Society; but the Archbishop did not have that benefit. He saw only one of his diocesan priests ambitiously working for independence, going his own way, without further reference to episcopal authority. The Archbishop from then on showed his coldness and began to impose restrictions on Don Bosco.

When he died in 1870, Don Bosco, who was then on the closest terms with Pius IX, at once suggested that his good friend, Mgr. Gastaldi, then Bishop of Saluzzo, should be given the Archbishopric of Turin. The Pope, who knew the Bishop of Saluzzo better than Don Bosco, hesitated; but, we

are told, Don Bosco so pressed his point that at last the Pope gave in. "You want him and you can have him." This was Don Bosco's first mistake, for God was allowing him to be, at least partly, the author of his own misfortune and sufferings. A second mistake was far worse. So pleased was he that he at once sent an advance telegram to Mgr. Gastaldi announcing the appointment before it was published. When later, the new Archbishop began, like his predecessor, to look less approvingly on Don Bosco's training of his young men, Don Bosco sensing the coldness, wrote him a letter, in which he reminded him of their past friendship, adding the fateful words . . . "When Mgr. Gastaldi was made Bishop of Saluzzo, it was due to Don Bosco's recommendation, when he was made Archbishop of Turin, it was likewise due to Don Bosco's intervention". It was meant to show with what affection and esteem Don Bosco held him; instead, it aroused the fury of the Archbishop who descended on Valdocco and gave a fiery sermon about his appointment, "an appointment due entirely to the work of the Holy Spirit and to no one else's intervention," which he repeated several times. For ten years, he showed his resentment.

In his work for the Church, Mgr. Gastaldi was a splendid Archbishop, a gifted organizer, with a wide vision; his love for the Madonna was, in its own way, as deep as Don Bosco's, as was his care for the young. But he would be master in his own diocese and would brook no opposition to his views. He was extremely concerned about his authority and Don Bosco was by no means the only one who suffered in consequence.

In Rome he did all he could to prevent the Constitutions of the Salesian Society from being accepted and increased the restrictions by all the authority given him in law.

So far did he go that for a fancied infringement he once imposed on Don Bosco personally the severest punishment any priest can suffer, that of being deprived of faculties to offer Mass, to preach or to hear confessions. "The sort of thing," stormed one angry Bishop, "we only give to hopeless alcoholics."

Don Bosco had many friends in Rome, but so had the Archbishop and even Pius IX seemed to be affected. When he was dying in 1878, Don Bosco went to Rome, but try as he would to see the Pope, all doors were locked against him. It has since transpired that this was quite contrary to the Pope's wishes.

The new Pope was the great Leo XIII. He knew a great deal about the disagreement but moved quietly at first. At length a friend of Don Bosco's, Cardinal Alimonda, suggested to the Pope a way to prove Don Bosco's

virtue. "Ask him to undertake the building of the Sacred Heart church!" This project has been under way for some time, had got bogged down by poor contractors, and had finally ceased, to the distress of the new Pope. In 1880, he called Don Bosco to Rome and explained the trouble. "Would you undertake this building, Don Bosco? I can offer you no money." "The wishes of the Pope are a command to me," said Don Bosco, "I accept." He was building two other churches at the time and as ever hard pressed for money. The building of the Sacred Heart in Rome, humanly speaking, killed him, but Leo XIII had his proof.

The matter of the Archbishop and Don Bosco was discussed in the Vatican in 1881, by eight Cardinals. Two were for the Archbishop, two abstained, four were for Don Bosco. The Pope stopped all further discussion. "Authority must be supported," he said, "but Don Bosco will agree, I am sure."

His solution was hard indeed on Don Bosco, that he should send a letter of apology to the Archbishop, begging his pardon.

The Salesians were furious at the manifest injustice but Don Cagliero stopped all argument, "The Pope has spoken; that's enough". Don Bosco, drinking his bitter chalice, wrote his letter, to which came a reply, "The pardon you have asked for is granted with all my heart".

After the Archbishop's death, the new one, Cardinal Alimonda, was truly a friend of Don Bosco and healed many wounds. The Pope, too, could not have been more anxious to show his esteem and admiration for all the work of the Salesians, at home and abroad. As a sign of this, he appointed Don Cagliero the first Salesian Bishop, a sign to the world of his approval; Don Fagnano was soon to follow as a second Bishop. But it was the building of the Sacred Heart church in the heart of Rome that sealed his esteem for Don Bosco. It was indeed a mammoth task.