TEACHING UNIT IV
“I WILL PLACE SHEPHERDS OVER THEM WHO WILL CARE FOR THEM” (Jer 23:3)
SCALABRINI: A FATHER TO THE MIGRANTS

a) OBJECTIVES
   a. To learn about Scalabrini’s life, faith and deeds
   b. To reflect upon his vision of the phenomenon of migration
   c. To understand his pastoral approach and social action in favor of the migrants

b) OPENING PRAYER

c) INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY
   a. Video: Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini
   b. Response

d) SHARING GOD’S WORD
   a. Jeremiah 23: 1-4
   b. Questions

e) STUDY SESSION
   a. Scalabrini’s Awakening to Migration
      i. Video
      ii. Text
   b. The Spirituality of J.B. Scalabrini, Bishop and Founder
      i. Text
      ii. Questions
   c. The Pastoral Care of Migrants as envisioned by the Blessed Scalabrini
      i. Text
      ii. Questions

f) HOMEWORK
   a. Memorial of Bishop Scalabrini
   b. Letter of Scalabrini to Pope Pius X
   c. Social Action in Favor of the Migrants

g) EVALUATION

h) CLOSING PRAYER
II. OPENING PRAYER

- A small cross is prominently displayed accessible to the workshop leader.
- All begin with the Sign of the Cross

Leader: Brothers and sisters, alongside Christ, along the way that leads to Calvary, we meet many migrants victims of injustice and of the denial of their rights, parents forced to live separated from their children, wives far away from their husbands, bearers of a culture and identity not accepted or misunderstood, guardians of traditions and religious practices often ridiculed.

The Lord invites us to come close to this suffering humanity to dry the tears from faces soaked with pain and to transform their CROSS into resurrection.

(The cross, held by the workshop leader, is passed to the first reader.)

Readings: Isaiah 41, 17-20 The New Exodus  (The cross is passed to 2nd reader)
When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none and their tongue is parched with thirst, I the Lord, will answer them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.
I will open rivers on the bare heights, and fountains in the midst of their valleys;
I will make the wilderness a pool of water and the dry land springs of water.
I will put in the wilderness the cedar, the acacia, the myrtle, and the olive; I will set in the desert the cypress, the plane and the pine together, so that all may see and know, all may consider and understand, that the hand of the Lord has done this, the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Psalm: 61, (1-6) The Songs of the Exiled  (The cross is passed to 3rd reader)
Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the end of the earth I call to you, when my heart is faint.
Lead me to the rock that is higher than I; for you are my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.
Let me abide in your tent forever, find refuge under the shelter of your wings.
For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations!

Leader:  (Cross returns to the workshop leader)

Father, we want to share our journey with the numberless brothers and sisters of every age, condition, background, ethnic origin, risking and trying new ways and new relationships while seeking to build a people accompanied by the suffering Christ.

Song: Companions on the Journey

Refrain   We are companions on the journey
Breaking bread and sharing life;
And in the love we bear is the hope we share,
For we believe in the love of our God!
We believe in the love of our God!
No longer strangers to each other;  
No longer strangers in God’s house  
We are fed and we are nourished  
By the strength of those who care,  
By the strength of those who care… refrain

We have been gifted with each other;  
And we are called by the Word of the Lord;  
To act with justice to love tenderly,  
And to walk humbly with our God  
To walk humbly with our God … refrain

Refrain  
We are companions on the journey  
Breaking bread and sharing life;  
And in the love we bear is the hope we share,  
For we believe in the love of our God!  
We believe in the love of our God!
III. INTRODUCTORY ACTIVITY

Unit IV

a) Video “Blessed Bishop J.B. Scalabrini
b) Complete Response Form on “Blessed Bishop J.B. Scalabrini Video”

1. Note 5/6 key words or phrases related to Bishop J.B. Scalabrini’s life and times.

   KEYWORDS:

2. Discuss their relevance today.

   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
   __________________________________________________________
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   __________________________________________________________

   N.B. Note how many of the key words are repeated.
IV. SHARING GOD’S WORD

Jeremiah 23:1-4

“Alas for the shepherd who mislead and scatter the sheep of my pasture!” It is Yahweh who speaks.
This is the message of Yahweh, God of Israel, to the shepherds in charge of my people. “You have scattered my sheep and driven them away instead of caring for them. Now I will deal with you because of your evil deeds. I will gather the rest of my sheep from every land to which I have driven them and I will bring them back to the grasslands. They will be fruitful and increase in number. I will place shepherds over them who will care for them. No longer will they fear or be terrified. No one will be lost.”

Questions:

1. God promises the people shepherds who will care for them. What do you expect from a “good shepherd?”

________________________________________________________________________

2. From what you know so far about Scalabrini, in which ways was he a “good shepherd?”

________________________________________________________________________

3. There have been times when the Church (leaders and communities) has “scattered and driven away” the immigrants “instead of caring for them”. In a spirit of reconciliation, name some of these instances. Are they still happening?

________________________________________________________________________

4. Scalabrini’s charism is a gift of God to his Church. How do you think his legacy has been received in the Church?

________________________________________________________________________
Quite a few years ago, in Milan, I witnessed a scene that left me with profound sadness. As I walked through the station, I saw the vast waiting room, the side porticoes, and the adjacent piazza filled with three or four hundred poorly clad people, separated into different groups. Their faces, bronzed by the sun and furrowed by the premature wrinkles of deprivation, reflected the inner turmoil convulsing their hearts at that moment. There were old men bent with age and labor, young men in the prime of manhood, women pulling along or carrying their little ones, boys and girls, all drawn together by the same desire, all heading toward a common goal.

They were emigrants. They had come from the various provinces of Northern Italy and were waiting with trepidation for the train that would take them to the shores of the Mediterranean, whence the steamer would carry them to far-off America, where they hoped to find a less hostile fate, a land less unresponsive to their labors.

These poor souls were leaving, some sent for by relatives who had preceded them on this voluntary exile; others, without knowing precisely where they were heading, pulled by that powerful instinct that impels birds to migrate. They were going to America where they had heard many times—there was well-paid employment for anyone with strong arms and good will.

With tears in their eyes, they had bid farewell to their native village, to which they were bound by so many tender memories. But, without regret, they were preparing to leave their country, which they had grown to know only through two despised realities: taxes and the military draft. For a destitute person, the place that gives him bread becomes his country. Far, far away, these emigrants hoped to find bread, less scarce but no less hard-earned.

I left there deeply moved. A flood of melancholy thoughts brought a lump to my throat. Who can imagine—I thought to myself—the accumulated privations and misfortunes making such a painful decision seem so sweet to them! How many disappointments does the future hold in store for them, how many new heartaches? How many will succeed in the struggle for survival? How many will succumb in the turmoil of the cities or the solitude of uninhabited plains? Though securing food for the body, how many will be without food for the soul, which is no less necessary than the former, and will lose the faith of their forbearers in a materialistic way of life?

Ever since that day, my thoughts have often turned to those unfortunate people. That scene always reminds me of another one, no less desolate, unseen, but discernible in the letters of friends and the reports of travelers. I picture the poor wretches landing in a strange land, among people who speak a language they do not understand, easy victims of inhuman exploitation. I see them moistening with their sweat and tears an unyielding
ground that exudes disease-bearing miasmas. I see them, broken by labor, consumed with fever, sighing in vain for the skies of their distant motherland and the age-old poverty of their family home, finally dying without the consolation of their dear ones, without the word of faith to point out to them the reward God has promised to the good and forlorn. And those who win out in the cruel struggle for survival? Alas! Isolated, as they are, they forget all supernatural notions, all precepts of Christian morality. Day by day, they lose all sense of piety since it is not nourished by pious practices. Instead, they allow brute instincts to replace more noble aspirations.

Faced with this lamentable situation, I have often asked myself: how can it be remedied? Every time I happen to see in the papers some government circular warning the authorities and the public against certain speculators who carry out veritable raids of white slaves, sending them-unsuspecting instruments of greed-far away from their country toward a mirage of large and easy profits, and whenever from letter of friends or travelers’ accounts I read that Italians are the pariahs among emigrants, that they do the meanest kinds of work—as if there could be meanness in work—that our own countrymen are the most abandoned and hence the least respected, that thousands upon thousands of our brothers and sisters live without the protection of their distant motherland, without the comfort of a friendly word, as objects of exploitation often unpunished then I confess that I, too, blush with shame. I feel humiliated as a priest and as an Italian, and I ask myself again: what can be done for them?

Just a few days ago a distinguished young traveler brought me greetings from many families from the mountains of Piacenza, now living in tents on the banks of the Orinoco River: “Tell our Bishop that we always remember his advice. Tell him to pray for us and to send us a priest because her we live and die like animals…” That message from my far-off children sounded like a rebuke.


**Leader:** Have the group read the following excerpt from Bishop Lawrence Sabatini’s work and then have participants complete questionnaire. This can be done in small groups.

**The Priest**

Born in 1839 in the Province of Como, Italy, here is a man who very early in life heard the call of God to dedicate himself to priestly ministry in the Church. He was ordained a diocesan priest at the age of 24 but felt a strong desire to be a missionary. In fact, as a young priest he signed up with the Institute of Foreign Missions in Milan. His bishop decided instead to assign him to the task of priestly formation as a teacher and vice-rector and later rector of the diocesan minor seminary. Nonetheless, later Pope Pius XI would refer to him as a “missionary bishop”.

At the age of 31, Scalabrini was named pastor of St. Bartholomew Church in the industrial suburb of Como with a population of 6,000. It is here that he began to display his exceptional pastoral gifts especially in the areas of instruction in the faith and works of charity. Catechetics always ranked high among his pastoral priorities so much so that he even wrote a small catechism for kindergarten children. His love for the sick and his frequent visits to them were well known among his flock. His preferential option for the poor was very much in evidence as he founded the first Christian Mutual Aid Society; the first male oratory in Como; a group later to become the St. Vincent de Paul Society for visits to the poor and
infirm; a group to protect the rights of women workers in the textile industry. Under the leadership of Father Scalabrini, St. Bartholomew’s Parish was quickly becoming the focal point of Catholic social action in the diocese.

While all of this intense pastoral activity was taking place, Father Scalabrini, nonetheless, recognized the need for on-going priestly education. He immersed himself in the study of teaching of the First Vatican Council which was suspended in 1870. He was invited by his bishop to give eleven conferences on the Council in the Cathedral of Como in 1872. His ecclesiology centered around the doctrine of papal infallibility.

The Bishop

At the age of 36, Scalabrini was named bishop of Piacenza. There he remained for 29 years until his death in 1905. His accomplishments as a diocesan bishop are truly mind-boggling.

As shepherd of his flock, Bishop Scalabrini chose as his role model another great bishop in the Church who lived in the 16th century-St. Charles Borromeo. In fact, if we examine the lives of these two bishops, we see some interesting parallels. Both were very practical people with a deep commitment to social action; both were committed to the pursuit of holiness through prayer, penance, self-denial and an intense zeal for their flock; both had a great devotion to the Crucified Lord, the Holy Eucharist and the Blessed Virgin Mary; both had a genuine concern, not only for their local church, but the universal church as well; both were genuinely concerned about the formation and spiritual life of their clergy. Interestingly enough, a portion of one of St. Charles’s inspiring talks to his priests was quoted by Pope John Paul II in his post-synodal exhortation "Pastores dabo vobis" on the formation of priests in the circumstances of the present day (n.72) while Bishop Scalabrini’s very first Pastoral Letter as bishop was written in Latin to his clergy on the importance of the Spiritual Exercises (Aug. 15, 1876).

What did Bishop Scalabrini accomplish in 29 years of Episcopal service to the faithful of the Diocese of Piacenza? The list is long and impressive. Like the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ and St. Charles Borromeo, his model, Bishop Scalabrini wanted to know his people. During his tenure he visited not once but five times, all 365 parishes in the diocese, 200 of which were in mountainous areas accessible only by mule and some only on foot.

Bishop Scalabrini convoked three diocesan synods, the last of which in 1890, dedicated entirely to the Holy Eucharist, produced a text of 350 pages written by Bishop Scalabrini himself. This work offered a spiritual vision to the world as it was on the threshold of the 20th century. He also left us 2000 pages of homilies and 60 Pastoral Letters – a veritable treasury of spirituality.

Catechetics continued to maintain a high profile in the overall pastoral plan of Bishop Scalabrini. He recognized the fact that knowledge of the faith is essential for living the Christian life in imitation of Christ.

Even as a bishop, he continued to teach catechism as he used to do when he was a seminarian. He taught it on his rounds of pastoral visitations and he taught it also in his Episcopal residence. In 1889, he organized, in Piacenza, the very first national catechetical congress in the history of the Church with its 400 pages of Acts. Bishop Scalabrini published the first Italian catechetical review, only the second of its kind in the world. Bishop Scalabrini wrote: "Il Catechismo e’ il Vangelo, la lieta parola di Gesu’" (Il Catechismo cattolico, p. 102). Bishop Scalabrini’s catechesis was deeply rooted in the word of God. It was not only presented as an instruction of the mind but as a call to conversion and a deeper following of
Christ. For, it is in the word of God that we learn what God has done for us so as to resolve what we must do for God. No wonder then that Pope Pius IX would call Bishop Scalabrini “The Apostle of the Catechism”.

Bishop Scalabrini will also be remembered for his extraordinary efforts on behalf of the poor. His innate love for the needy was limitless. He never turned away those who every day knocked on his door for help. He aided the sick, the orphans and prisoners. During the period of drought in 1879-1880, he set up a soup kitchen, which in two months alone distributed almost 250,000 bowls of soup as well as bags of flour and cords of wood. When funds depleted, Bishop Scalabrini sold the horse, which was donated to him for his pastoral visitations as well as the chalice given him as a gift by Pope Pius IX.

Two other major social projects deserve mention. In 1879 he founded an institute for the hearing and speech impaired and in 1903 an agency to provide religious and social assistance to the more than 170,000 rice pickers in Piedmont and Lombardy, an organization designed to prevent abuses to women and children in the workplace.

Bishop Scalabrini’s teachings on social issues were summed up in a booklet he wrote entitled: *Il Socialismo e l’azione del Clero (1899)*. These included such ideas as profit-sharing; the right to work and to strike; workmen’s compensation; old age pensions; lower working hours and retirement age – practical applications of the teaching of Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of eight years earlier.

The Prophet

The social dimension of Bishop Scalabrini’s pastoral activities is perhaps best seen in his founding three religious institutes: The Missionaries of St. Charles (1887); The St. Raphael Society (1889), The Missionary Sisters of St. Charles (1895). In these three extraordinary accomplishments, we see the prophetic side of Bishop Scalabrini.

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the modern world of the Second Vatican Council recognized massive changes taking place in the social order: “One cannot underestimate the effect of emigration on those who, for whatever reason, are led to undertake a new way of life” (n.6). Bishop Scalabrini saw this happening almost 100 years earlier. He read the signs of the times and saw the need for prompt pastoral action.

The heart of the pastor would not allow him to remain oblivious to the fact that in 110 years over 25 million Italians emigrated in large part to North and South America. He saw 11% of his own people of Piacenza leave Italy for foreign lands.

Bishop Scalabrini traveled up and down Italy trying to sensitize public opinion to the seriousness of the phenomenon of migration. He was instrumental in the formulation of Italy’s policies and legislation concerning emigration. He recruited lay men and women volunteers for the St. Raphael Society to help at the ports of departure and entry. This Society opened secretariats in Genoa and New York as well as 19 committees in Italy. There was also an ecumenical dimension to the work of the St. Raphael Society in as much as the members obliged themselves to provide assistance also to immigrants of other religious persuasions. We would not expect Bishop Scalabrini, in his day, to expound on the theology of the equal dignity of women and men or address the intricacies of the contemporary women’s movement. However, he was very much aware of the call of women to apostolic work and the importance and uniqueness of their contribution in the life of the Church.

The Scalabrini Congregation of priests and brothers now totals more than 700 members while the Congregation of Sisters numbers more than 1000. These spiritual sons and daughters of Bishop Scalabrini, scattered in all corners of the globe, dedicate their lives...
to the pastoral and social work of evangelization on behalf of migrants, refugees and people on the move.

Bishop Scalabrini’s unique charism of pastoral concern for migrants was inspired by his desire to preserve in them the gift of faith, which was being put to the test in an entirely new and sometimes hostile environment. In his first conference on emigration, Bishop Scalabrini said: “I guai della nostra emigrazione si riassumono in questo: perdita della fede per mancanza di istruzione religiosa…Ah, la sventura della privazione di quell pane spirituale che e’ la parola di Dio.” But like a true missionary he was also concerned about proclaiming the Good News of the Word of God to those who had no faith.

The Inner Man

In summarizing the pastoral accomplishments of Bishop Scalabrini, we are drawn to ask ourselves with a certain amount of envy: What was the secret of his success? What was the driving force behind off of these extraordinary activities?

There is an ancient philosophical dictum, which says: Actio sequitur esse. Our actions are the products of our inner being. We must search the psyche of Bishop Scalabrini to discover how he experienced God in his life and how this profound inner reality influenced his life and actions.

Bishop Scalabrini was above all a man of deep faith. In a Pastoral Letter of 1884 he writes: “Quanto piu’ la fede e’ viva, tanto piu’ sono abbondanti le buone opere; e viceversa, l’abbondanza delle buone opere aumenta la vivacita’ della fede. Quando la fede languisce, si rallentano le buone opere, e l’interruzione delle buone opere rende fiacca e languida la fede”. In an earlier Pastoral Letter of 1877 he had said: “Chi vive di fede non solo am Dio ma si sente spinto a farlo amare dagli altri.”

Bishop Scalabrini’s intense life of faith and love for God led him to grow in his love for God’s people. His daily efforts at oneness with the Lord showed in an intense commitment to the traditional and time-honored practices of piety. He was a man of prayer binding himself under pain of mortal sin to spend a half-hour daily in meditation. We know that more often than not it was a full hour of meditation. He recited the Liturgy of the Hours each day without fail. He read the Scriptures daily as well as one of his favorite books—The imitation of Christ by Thomas A. Kempis. He had a filial devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, reciting every day the rosary, which for him was like the queen of all Marian devotions. He also had a devotion to the saints, notably St. Joseph, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis de Sales and the patron saints of the Diocese of Piacenza.

Regarding the importance of daily prayer and meditation, Bishop Scalabrini said: “Chi lascia la meditazione o manca di fede o di cervello.” In a letter to his missionaries abroad, he wrote: “La preghiera e la parte piu’ viva, piu forte, piu potente dell'apostolato.” And again, “La preghiera e senza dubbio la funzione piu nobile e piu gloriosa che l'uomo possa esercitare in questo mondo, e gli conferisce una grandezza al tutto sovrana. Non solo essa ci mette in intimo rapporto con tutto cio che c’e di vero, di bello, di santo in cielo e sulla terra, ma ci rende anche partecipi dell’amicizia di Dio, delle sue piu tenere effusioni, delle sue piu intime confidenze” (La Preghiera. Lettera Pastorale alla diocesi di Piacenza per la Santa Quaresima dell’anno 1905, 1602.1905, Piacenza, Tip. G. Tedeschi, 1905.)

Bishop Scalabrini was remarkable for his devotion to the Holy Eucharist. He celebrated Mass each day with extreme devotion and often would assist at a second Mass. He spent long hours in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament. He said that the Eucharist is the treasure and deposit entrusted to priests. His devotion to the Holy Eucharist was far
removed from any form of sentimentalism. Rather he described it as “un trionfo dello spirito sopra la carne, della carità sull’ egoismo, della fede sull’orgogliosa ragione” and it is “alimentata da sangue del Redentore immolato sulla croce" (La devozione al SS.mo Sacramento. Lettera Pastorale di Monsignor Vescovo di Piacenza per la Quaresima dell’anno 1902, 29.1.1902, Piacenza, Tip. G. Tedeschi, 1902.) In addition to his devotion to the Holy Eucharist, Bishop Scalabrini had a great devotion to the Crucified Lord. In these two devotions we see how his spirituality is Incarnational. As he put it: “L’Eucaristia e il Golgota sono un’estensione dell’Incarnazione” (Ibid.)

Needless to say, the Cross of Christ forms part of the religious experience of all followers of Jesus who said: “Whoever does not take up his cross and follow in my steps is not fit to be my disciple” (Mt 10:38.) In some cases this experience of the cross takes the form of martyrdom for the sake of Christ. For others it is a mystical experience of the sufferings of Christ in the form of a crown of thorns or the stigmata. For others, it comes through voluntary acts of penance, mortification and self-denial. The theme of suffering voluntarily accepted for the love of God and neighbor was clearly evident in the life of Bishop Scalabrini. He penned these inspiring words about the Cross of Christ: “La Croce che la Chiesa ci fa portare sul petto, d’oro, ma che si cambia spesso in ruvido ferro che strazia l’anima. Il vescovo porta la croce senza l’immagine del caro Gesù: Perché? Perché dobbiamo amare la croce anche senza i conforti della vista di Lui: fac me cruce inebriari! Strigere la croce pettorale al cuore e ripetere di frequente fac me cruce inebriari!...Fa me cruce inebriari!! Ripetero spesso stringendo al cuore la croce pettorale. Le umiliazioni, i dispaceri, le in giurie, le delusioni amare entrano nei disegni di Dio...non mi mancano mai, ne mi mancano al presente...Dio mio, siate benedetto. Coraggio nella Croce di Cristo” (Profilo, a cura di P. Stelio Fongaro, p. 20.)

Bishop Scalabrini had more than his share of the sufferings of the Cross. These he bore patiently as coming from the hands of God: the attacks on the part of his enemies, and especially the incessant verbal and printed attacks on his person by one of his dissident priests, Father Miraglia, who threatened the unity of faith in the Diocese. These were equivalent to a martyrdom, which lasted six years. Accepting the heavy crosses, which came his way was not enough for Bishop Scalabrini. He added various forms of penance, mortification and self-denial (corporal and otherwise.) He saw these as a participation in the paschal mystery of Christ’s passion, death and resurrection and he celebrated this in the Sacrament of Penance faithfully each week.

Bishop Scalabrini’s spirituality was also ecclesial. He believed, trusted and loved the Church. He was a true churchman (Vir ecclesiasticus) in the sense of the Fathers of the Church. His motto was: sentire cum ecclesia. He respected the rich tradition of the Church’s past, studied its history, explored and revered the Church’s tradition but never sought to hide in the past nor condemn the Church of the present. Bishop Scalabrini’s love for Christ, the invisible head of the Church, was paralleled by his love for the Pope, the visible head of the Church. Bishop Scalabrini’s obedience to the Holy Father was a constant in his life and constitutes one of the elements of his heroic virtues. His obedience was based on faith, which ultimately was to the person of Christ Himself represented by the Pope of Rome. Once he remarked facetiously: “Se il Sommo Pontefice (per impossibile) mi comandasse di camminare sulle mani e con i piedi in alto, io mi ci proverei” (Anneddoti e Detti a cura di P. Stelio Fongaro, p. 26.)
The Legacy

What is the significance of the spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini in the life of the Salabrinian religious today? Bishop Scalabrini’s apostolic activities flowed from the intensity of his spiritual life. His love for Christ dictated the ardor of his commitment to his people. His personal spirituality was perfectly integrated into his apostolic ministry. This is what he admired so much in St. Charles Borromeo and why he chose him as the patron of his two religious congregations. He saw in St. Charles this harmonious integration of spirituality and ministry. His love of Christ suffering on the cross and present in the Holy Eucharist was translated into a loving service to the Christ present in the poor, the marginalized, the migrants and in the changing events of the day. In this we see more evidence of his incarnational spirituality.

For Scalabrinians, it is not enough to admire Bishop Scalabrini, to respect his teachings or nod approvingly when they conform to the Gospel message. The religious congregation bearing his name compels its members to learn more about him and how he mirrored Jesus in his life. It compels them to embrace wholeheartedly the spirit of his work and to make the purpose of his spiritual and apostolic life the purpose of their own. His following of Christ becomes the path of their journey. His vision of faith and ministry becomes their vision of looking at their live and the world in which they live.

In his post-synodal exhortation Vita Consecrata, Pope John Paul II pointed out the need for “fidelity to the founding charism and subsequent spiritual heritage of each Institute. It is precisely in this fidelity to the inspiration of the founders and foundresses… that the essential elements of the consecrated life can be more readily discerned and more fervently put into practice” (n. 36.) Later the Pope affirmed the need “to rediscover the ascetic practices typical of the spiritual tradition of the Church and of the individual’s own Institute. These have been and continue to be a powerful aid to authentic progress in holiness” (n. 38.) The Holy Father also stated that Institutes of Consecrated Life are “invited courageously to propose anew the enterprising initiative, creativity and holiness of their founders and foundresses in response to the signs of the times emerging in today’s world” (n.37.)

The Rules of Life of the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles (Scalabrinians) certainly capture some of the distinctive features of the spirituality of Bishop Scalabrini. “After the example of our Founder and in his spirit, we attaché special importance to the daily celebration of the Eucharist and to personal colloquy with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Toward Mary, Mother of Christ and the Church, we nurture a devotion befitting a son, also through the Rosary or other daily practices of devotion” (n. 43.) “Our commitment to carry the cross in the footsteps of Christ transforms the way we think and act and thus prepares us to share more intimately in the Paschal mystery and make our own the trials and tribulations of the migrants. This duty requires of us a penitent heart, which finds an outlet in the frequent reception of the Sacrament of Reconciliation. But it also requires that we take upon ourselves the sufferings and privations that are inseparable from the religious and missionary life and choose such personal and community penances as are in keeping with the mentality of the people of our day: (n.46.)

“We make ours the spirit of the founder, for we regard obedience to the Pope, even in virtue of our vow, and to the bishops, as an indispensable condition for living in union with Christ and our brothers and sisters” (n. 14).
Advocacy and Evangelization of all Migrants

Bishop Scalabrini saw no dichotomy or contradiction between being a man of God and a man of social action. In fact, he viewed these two as complementary. His apostolic preferential option for the poor was seen in his pastoral concern for the migrants who were leaving his diocese for economic reasons, bound for North and South America. He saw the need for a specialized pastoral care for these poor people struggling to keep their faith in new surroundings. This is what led him to found two religious communities dedicated specifically to this purpose.

Bishop Scalabrini viewed migration and the movement of peoples not as a social phenomenon which would eventually disappear but rather as something which the world and the Church would have to deal with for ages to come, contrary to the thinking of some people in high places. He saw migration as part of a changing society. This is why he wanted his religious congregations to be of pontifical rite with religious vows. This would ensure stability in the pastoral care of migrants. To support this effort worldwide, he petitioned the Holy See to establish an office in Rome to coordinate the pastoral activity of migration around the world. This took place after his death when in 1912 St. Pius X instituted an emigration office in Rome under the authority of the Consistorial Congregation. In 1970 Pope Paul VI changed it to a Pontifical Commission for the spiritual care of migrants still under the dependence of the then Consistorial Congregation (now the Congregation of Bishops). Finally in 1988, our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, created the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People. Bishop Scalabrini’s dream was thus fulfilled.

As part of the ministry to migrants, Bishop Scalabrini recognized the importance of social advocacy on their behalf. He defended the right of people to emigrate when this was done in a way consistent with human dignity. He was quick to denounce social injustices and the exploitation of migrants as well as unjust political structures, which ignited the need to emigrate. He opposed the enforced assimilation of migrants and defended the social model of multiculturalism long before this term became fashionable. He rightly deserves the title “Father of the Migrants” and to have his name inscribed in the wall of honor in Ellis Island, N.Y. – the port of entry where, by the time of the death of Bishop Scalabrini in 1905, 1,771,000 Italians had arrived.

The Rules of Life of the Congregation of Scalabrini support the Founder’s advocacy of migrants. The Congregation “proposes to influence the Church and civil society to welcome the migrants and have a Christian view of and solution for their problems, so that in an atmosphere of non-discrimination, of justice and charity, the migrants will be looked upon as persons and likenesses of Christ” (n.27)

The apostolic commitment implies a thorough understanding of the social teachings of the Church just as the socio-political philosophy of Bishop Scalabrini was deeply rooted in Pope Leo XIII’s groundbreaking Encyclical Rerum Novarum. Understandably, the social doctrine of the Church has developed considerably since then. Our present Holy Father, Pope John Paul II, has contributed much to this development with his numerous writings and addresses, notably three major Encyclicals: Laborem Exercens (1981); Sollicitudo Rei Socialis (1987); Centesimus Annus (1991)

Some might ask: What is it that distinguished Bishop Scalabrini’s initiatives on behalf of migrants from other socio-political ones? The answer lies in the religious finality, namely, the call to evangelization of migrants. Bishop Scalabrini looked at the social reality of migration not as a sociologist or an economist but above all as a man of God and a man of the Church reflecting on a human situation which required a pastoral intervention.
Thus, Bishop Scalabrini saw catechesis as a major pastoral activity for his missionaries and wanted it to be a high priority in ministry to the migrants and their children. Bishop Scalabrini expressed this in these words: “La Chiesa di G.C., che ha spinto gli operai evangelici fra le genti piu' barbare e nelle contrade piu' inospiti, no, non ha dimenticato e on dimenticherà mai la missione che le venne da Dio affidata di evangelizzare I figli della miseria e del lavoro” (quoted in M. Francesconi “Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, Roma 1985, p. 967).

Once again The Rules of Life reflect this priority of the Founder: “In our specific apostolate we give priority to evangelization, in particular to catechetics, and we work to bring the migrants together in communities of faith, charity, and worship, helping them focus their Christian life on the Eucharist” (n. 24)

The Catechism of the Catholic Church with its reference to the reality of migration (n.2241) stands as a valuable resource to teach the faith to migrant communities.

Synodal Proposition (n.27) which Pope John Paul II cited in his Apostolic Constitution Vita Consecrata (n37) urges Institutes of Consecrated Life in accord with the spirit of the Founder to come up with creative initiatives which respond to the signs of the times emerging in contemporary society.

Bishop Scalabrini founded a lay society and two religious congregations precisely because of his profound concern for the emerging reality of human mobility and migrations of people. His immediate and initial target was the thousands of Italian emigrants leaving their country every day for lands beyond the sea. He recruited Italian priests and Italian-speaking laity to assist them with their religious and social needs in their land of adoption. Identity of language, culture and traditions was deemed by him, most helpful in building the bridge between the old and new world.

But like the true missionary, Bishop Scalabrini maintained a universal mindset. Migrants of other nationalities or racial backgrounds were also the object of his pastoral concern. This is why he sought an agency at the highest level of the Church to direct and coordinate the problems of migration on an international scale within the universal Church. During his lifetime, Bishop Scalabrini also sanctioned the pastoral care of Polish immigrants in the United States. During his visit to South Boston in 1901, Bishop Scalabrini celebrated Mass in a new church built by Polish immigrant Catholics and minister to by the Polish Scalabrinian priest, Father G. Chmielinski. During his visit to Brazil in 1904, Bishop Scalabrini expressed an interest in the pastoral care of the aboriginal peoples in the State of Parana’ after visiting with one of the tribal chiefs. The Bishop of Curitiba offered the Scalabrinians the parish of Tibagi and from there two missionaries ministered to the 3000 native peoples in the area. Upon his return to Italy, Bishop Scalabrini petitioned Pope St. Pius X to erect an Apostolic Prefecture for the evangelization of the aboriginal peoples of Brazil and assign it to the Scalabrinians in Parana’. Bishop Scalabrini’s death not long after precluded any further consideration of such a proposal.

When the Second Vatican Council in it decree Perfectae Charitatis (1965) called for the renewal of religious life, the Scalabrinian Congregations took this call seriously by returning to the primitive and original inspiration of the Founder and viewing it in light of the changed conditions of the times. The pastoral care of migrants remained intact but the Founder’s first and immediate concern for the Italian migrants now became a pastoral concern for all migrants. The new and approved Rules of Life establish this universal perspective: “We fulfill our mission, first and foremost, among those who, for any reason, are living outside their native land or ethnic community and, out of real necessity, require a specific pastoral care; likewise among those who, because of internal migration, live in analogous situations because of ethnic, social and cultural differences; finally among the seamen” (n.23)
Questions for Discussion

1) The priest: give a short summary of Scalabrini’s early priesthood noting three areas which best exemplify the charism that would always be a part of his ministry
   a. Mission / Evangelization
   b. Pastorally
   c. Social awareness

2) The Bishop: Outline three ways in which Scalabrini as Bishop would best personify his charism – giving examples
   a. Personal holiness
   b. Pastor to his flock
   c. Commitment to social action

3) The prophet: Scalabrini was a man of great vision. Describe Scalabrini’s visión and how he responded to it.

4) The inner man: “One’s actions are a product of one’s inner being”, says an ancient philosophy. Summarize the spirituality of Scalabrini including his special devotions and how he saw suffering in relation to his faith.

5) The legacy: The true measure of one’s accomplishments is in the legacy he/she leaves to the world. Describe the spiritual foundations Scalabrini left in the person of his Congregation, the missionaries of St. Charles.

6) The advocacy: describe the temporal legacy with regard to social action Scalabrini left to his Congregation

   The presenter/leader concludes with how the visión has taken on added importance as shown in the reality of today’s migrations.

3. Scalabrini’s Vision on Migration: read Fr. Luigi Favero’s presentation to the IV World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees.

   Leader: Break up into small groups and respond to the questions on the following page. Choose a secretary to record notes on the discussion and a chair to direct the discussion. When large group reassembles each sub-group secretary reports on each of the discussion questions. …
Blessed Scalabrini’s Intuitions Concerning the Pastoral Care of Migrants
By Rev. Luigi Favero, CS, Superior General

A. Understanding the social phenomenon of emigration in Scalabrini’s works

A character trait of Bishop G. B. Scalabrini’s spirit (1839-1905), Bishop of Piacenza, elevated to the altar by Pope John-Paul II on November 9th 1997, is the scientific approach to the social phenomenon (and emigration is for him but one aspect of a much more general and serious “social issue”, that of the living conditions of the working class). This approach, evidently inspired by the positivist culture of his time, was by him correlated with an operative research of concrete, structured and institutionalized answers to the needs arising from research and analysis of the phenomenon.

Bishop Scalabrini, however, a man of faith and bishop, confronts, without confusing, the various levels of analysis, the socio-economic and political readings with the values and convictions that come from faith and from his own pastoral care. It can be said that he analyses from within a phenomenon that was, at that very moment, being lived out to the fullest. He based his reading therefore, on the pastoral criteria that imposed a rapid and urgent intervention. He is less concerned by the issue of whether emigration is a good or an evil but rather with how to help all those people implicated in emigration. He therefore sets the issue at the concrete level, the one of interventions, while also researching the causes and he declares with extreme clarity: “emigration is almost always in its entirety not a pleasure, but an unavoidable necessity… The immense majority… do not run away from Italy because they abhor work, but rather because they do not have any work and hence do not know how to survive and feed their families”¹ Here is therefore “the painful dilemma: either rob or emigrate”² In fact, “for the disinherited, the homeland is the land that gives him bread”, especially when this homeland is known to him only under “two hideous forms: military service and (tax) collector.” Bishop Scalabrini lists the precise causes. Among them he identifies the “farming crisis that for years burdens our farmers like a lead cape” and “the truly enormous charge of the public “balzelli”, that burden agriculture and small businesses and crushes them.”³ He does not, however, waste his time in futile researches of who is to blame and who is at fault, since his aim is to “support, illuminate and direct with action and advice emigration.

B. Definitive point in the Scalabrinian analysis on emigration

From a sociological perspective, Bishop Scalabrini had an organisistic (organic and systemic) – evolutionistic vision of emigration, corrected and completed by his faith in the Lord that guides history in a providential manner: “The physical world, as the

² Ibid.
³ Ibid., pag. 12.
human world, is under obscure forces that agitate and mix, without destroying, the elements of life, which transport the organisms, born in a determined place and disseminate them in space, transforming them and making them perfect in such a way as to renew in every moment the miracle of creation. Bishop Scalabrini is interested and fascinated by emigration for motives of “work in America”, an emigration that he opposes both to the barbarian invasions and to the “brief and bellicose period of the conquest.” In fact, “no longer the impetus of a swell, that takes all with it as it goes by, but a placid spread of the waters that give life. No longer a suppression of peoples, but a fusion and adaptations, in which the different nationalities can meet, can cross exchange, and can give rise to new peoples upon which, notwithstanding their differences, as a single people, can dominate determined and determinate religious and civil tendencies.” Even without the technical baggage and terminology of sociological and cultural anthropology, Bishop Scalabrini describes the phenomenon that gave rise to today’s multiethnic and multicultural society. But, this description extends under the prophetic vision of a man guided by the Spirit: “While the races mix, extend and are unrecognisable, through the noises of our machines, above all this febrile labour, of all these gigantic undertakings, and not without them, a Work much vaster is maturing, and much nobler and sublime: the union in God by Jesus Christ of all people of good will.”

At a practical level, Bishop Scalabrini recognises however, that “the social realities are rarely absolutely good or absolutely evil; but that they may be a little of one and the other, depending on the circumstances”. Emigration is however, “a natural right” and since “human rights are inalienable”, a person “can go seek his or her well being where he or she can use their talents”. In fact, emigration, whether “abandoned to itself without advice and guidance” or when it is provoked by agents without scruples, “more fiendish that a crook and more cruel that a killer”, becomes “an effort that tires, a fever that slowly consumes” (the social organism). Here is therefore the central conviction: “the freedom to emigrate but not to force to emigrate” While “spontaneous” emigration opens “to the encounter of other laws and other customs” and opens “the concept of homeland beyond the material and political confines, making of the entire world, the person’s homeland,” “stimulated” emigration replaces the true need with “the rage of quick earnings or a misunderstood sense of adventure… creating a greater number of displaced and disenchanted people” and therefore a true damage and danger.

On the one hand, it is imperative to counsel and guide those who are to make a decision to emigrate, so they may evaluate correctly the decision they are to make;

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6 G.B. Scalabrini, Discorso al Catholic Club di New York, October 15th, 1901.
8 Ibid., pag. 50.
and then accompany them to the departing docks and assist them during the voyage; and finally help them during the period of integration into their new environment. On the other hand, we must declare “war without any cease-fire against human meat traffickers”, that Bishop Scalabrini also calls “sniffers of cadavers”. He asks himself: “Aren’t the difficulties that push our farmers and workmen to emigrate already many and real, without there being those who make them feel an added weight by showing them that elsewhere, and usually with false reasons, riches easily acquired?”

With regards the laws regulating emigration, Bishop Scalabrini is contrary to generalizing restrictions, that he considers “useless, unjust and reckoning damage”. Useless because they will never be able to totally suppress emigration, unjust because they place obstacles in the way of the free exercise of one’s rights, and reckoning damage because emigration would find other ways, falling “prey more easily to the insatiable speculations of agents of emigration.” Hence he can conclude: “The importance of a law is not so much for it to be liberal, as much as it is for it to be good. And good, for me, is not a larger or lenient law, but rather a law, based upon justice, that sees to the needs for which it is made.”

C. The theological-ecclesiological vision

“The Holy Church of Jesus Christ, who invited its evangelical workers to work among the most barbarous peoples and into the most hostile corners of this globe, has never forgotten nor will she ever forget the mission that was given to her from God to evangelise the children begotten from hardship and work. With a trepid heart, the Church will always see to the poor souls that in forced isolation are losing the faith of their fathers and with it all Christian sentiments and civil education. Wherever the people are, the Church is, because the Church is the mother, the friend and the protector of the people.”

In this quote from the first writings of Bishop Scalabrini on emigration, published in June 1887, a few months before the founding of the Congregation of Missionaries for the Italian immigrants, is found the ecclesial motivation of his intervention in the field of migration. The missionary action of the Church, who continues “saving the afflicted humanity”, work initiated by Christ, is the reference point of Bishop Scalabrini’s efforts. For Bishop Scalabrini, the concept of mission is, to a certain extent, all-inclusive and is derived directly from his vision of the Incarnation: in the Son become man, the Father loves all the human person. “With one unique love and predilection, God embraces all in Jesus, even the body, flesh and soul. In our earthly life, we are flesh, bones and nature, we are a body with Christ and in Him and with Him we are made God’s children, actually, we are the same Son of God that extends to us.”

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9 Ibid., pag. 49.
12 Ibid., pag. 101.
This unity is particularly visible with the poor. Beginning with the affirmation of Christ: “That which you do to the least of my brothers you do to me”, Bishop Scalabrini concludes affirming the “communality of the personality and destiny” between Christ and the poor. He exclaims: “Here the poor sublimated to the level of image, of altar and temple of the divinity! It is the Gospel that renders acceptable to human eyes this rehabilitated poor person, begun in the great sacrament of the “pieta”, which is the original descent of He who being rich, made himself for us poor.”

From the sacrament of the “pieta”, the Verb made flesh, derives that “word”, which no longer stays still, and which “echoes with force over centuries, is heard around the world and created everywhere great signs”, “signs of patience, of strength, of charity”.

Bishop Scalabrini’s vision of Charity is directly related to the missionary announcement, without any distinction as to the external realm of the Church, the ad gentes, and the internal announcement: “as long as there will be on earth but one people to evangelise, one person to educate, sinner to convert, one afflicted to console, only one individual without bread for the body, without help for his soul … there will always be here on earth, bishops, priests, missionaries…., who at the cost of all privations and of all sacrifices, by virtue of the word of Jesus Christ, will run to the aid of afflicted humanity. The work of faith, evangelisation and catechism (people to evangelise and people to educate), and the works that come and take root in faith (bread for the body and help for the soul), constitute for Bishop Scalabrini a non-divisible whole, as unique as is the “great sacrifice of the “pieta””.

From this theological perspective, derive some important consequences, both on a pastoral as well as an ecclesial level. The Scalabrinian project of pastoral intervention in favour of migrants is a global and complex project. By it, he wishes to help “the sons of hardships and work”, acting both on the aspect of departure (the causes that lead to emigration) and of arrival, helping the migrant to feel he is a subject with rights and to defend them, supporting them in order for them to maintain their own faith and cultural identity, with the pastoral use of the mother tongue, and encouraging to establish channels of union with the Church and the local society, so as to avoid anonymity and isolation and in order to establish inter-generational links.

From an ecclesial profile, Bishop Scalabrini often compares the missionary frontier work done in Asia and Africa, where Propaganda Fide invests in means and people

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13 Omelia per il Natale 1879, citata in Scalabrini una voce viva, Congregazione Scalabriniane, 1987, pag. 95.
14 Ibid.
15 Scalabrini seems to recall the Pauline affirmation “great is the mystery of the “pietà”", in 1 Tim. 3, 16, that announces the Christological hymn “He manifested himself in the flesh….”.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
for the “expansion of the faith”, with the extreme need for the “maintaining of the faith” among the million of poor Catholics “lost in the far away regions of the New World.”

Bishop Scalabrini seems more likely to judge that the future of the Church is played out by human mobility and not so much on the missionary frontier ad gentes.

He does not hesitate to make practical conclusions based upon his conception of the oneness and continuity of pastoral action: the lack of adequate assistance towards the migrants falls back on the pastors of the dioceses whence the migrants left and those where the migrants arrive. And of this reality, the Church hierarchy must be made aware up to the very top. The solution to this situation is “a religious undertaking, well organized and well adapted to the single environments”, making sure that a clergy formed especially for this work be prepared.

Pastoral conclusions by Bishop Scalabrini

We have seen that Bishop Scalabrini principal concern was concentrated on the emigration of the popular classes: farmers, workers, and craftsmen, those he defines as “the children of hardships and work”. From this preoccupation follows “that it was urgent to see to and a grave error, not to say fault, of all those whose mandate it is, the governance of the Church, to have allowed that this state of affairs prolong itself. Causing such a hiatus of the souls and that diminish in front of the enemies of God, the social importance of the Catholic Church.”¹⁹ The memorandum that he sends the Holy See on May 4th 1905, one month before his death, contains this serious warning and insists upon the necessity of a united and central organic co-ordination for all Catholic immigrants, so that they would be “assured that the Pope, Father of all, interests himself of their outcome”.

For Bishop Scalabrini, it was fundamental that the clergy that assisted migrants belong to the same ethnical group or at least spoke the same language. This, because it was fundamental to re-establish that communication that had been interrupted by the expatriation “to strange countries, where they ignore the language and customs, in an isolation which is often the death of the body and soul.” Bishop Scalabrini cited, as support, the letter of a Venetian immigrant: “We are here as beast; we live and die without a priest, without teachers and without doctors” and he would comment: “the three forms by which we understand the civil world”. From here arose he need to undertake a pastoral project that would satisfy these needs, especially the Church and the school because “a people that does not think, is subject to a lesser variety of understandings, he may be more tenacious in maintaining traditions that the educated person, but vice-versa, when these traditional feelings will disappear, the long-full memory of the native land, that is compounded in the paternal home, in the Church…. He will transform radically and will assimilate into the new

environment, or will lose any principle, will become isolated, a man to himself, all given to the material aspect, without ideals and without any supernatural principles”. Bishop Scalabrini was not a cultural anthropologist, but he described very well that law of globality which characterized the popular culture with regards to the “learned culture”, where the various levels of knowledge and experience tended to be distinct.

The word “isolation” returns, which can come from the lack of communication as well as from the loss of one’s personal cultural patrimony, from one’s own “memory”. Bishop Scalabrini does not use the term “conservation of the personal identity and of the group” but he describes the necessity of it for an efficacious pastoral work. Far be it, however, from wanting to ghettoise the immigrants, he beckons: “Observe the customs of the country which is hosting you; conform yourselves to them, in as much as it is possible for you. Learn how to speak English, but do not forget your sweet mother tongue.” This last exhortation is connected to the observation that “the language is an original means of conserving the faith. It is not easily explainable, but it is a fact that losing the language, easily one loses also the avid faith. Bishop Scalabrini, who was a great catechist before being an apostle to the immigrants, had observed that faith was transmitted to a great extent through the figure of the parents, and of the mother in particular. And one cherishes an inseparable unity to the mother tongue, especially in a population that was not able to receive a formal education (the illiteracy rate among the Italian working classes was extremely high in the second half of the nineteenth century, a period of great migration). Hence, the need of the affectionate help of the apostle, who, with true maternal sensitivity, recreates around the roots of the transplanted, the humus of the maternal land, that will not allow them to dry. He helps, by taking in the known, and maintaining the vigour in order to prolong the roots slowly into the new land of the transplanted.

In synthesis, Bishop Scalabrini’s pastoral project translated into a modern terminology brings together evangelization and the promotion of the human person. It announces God’s plan hidden in migrations, and through a catechism moves one from Babel’s isolation to Pentecost’s communication; it defends the human rights of the migrant, promoting justice and the cultural patrimony, helping to bridge with the host community. It attempts to establish communion between migrants and society and the host Church; it balances in space and time departure and arrival, memory and project, through the passage of the “constant memory” through generations, from the fathers through the sons. The whole aims “at making all the peoples one people, of all the families one family.” The “children of hardships and work” become fully saved, witnesses and forbearers of the Pentecostal fraternity, where differences are harmonized by the Spirit and Charity becomes authentic in the acceptance of the “other”.

21
Questions

1. What is the threefold function of pastoral care as conceived by Scalabrini? How is this related to evangelization of the whole person?
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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

2. Comment on this statement of Scalabrini “Freedom to emigrate but not to make (people) emigrate.”
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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

3. Scalabrini claims that Emigration is a providential fact. Find a statement in the General’s letter that supports this claim. What is the final end product of this migration of peoples?
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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

4. Scalabrini’s project is articulated in various directions (5 to be exact). Name them. What is his plan for the future?
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____________________________________________________________________
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5. What was the serious “social issue” during Scalabrini’s time?
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____________________________________________________________________
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6. To what is Bishop’s Scalabrini’s vision of chastity related?
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____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

7. Scalabrini believed it fundamental that the clergy who assists migrants belong to the same ethnic group or at least speak the same language. Do you agree, why or why not?
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____________________________________________________________________
2. HOMEWORK

Read:

b. Letter of Bishop J.B. Scalabrini to Pope Pius X
c. Social action in favor of migrants.

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a) Memorandum on the Congregation for Commission “Pro Emigratis Catholicis”

Part One (Presentation of the Problem)

I have the honor to submit some considerations and proposals to you on the present and future conditions of Catholicism in the two Americas.

These observations and proposals are the fruit of long studies done on the spot. In fact, they are the fruit of the experience of outstanding missionaries and illustrious bishops who have consecrated their lives to the spread of the faith in those regions.

Never before, when writing about this subject, have I been so deeply moved as I am at this moment. Never have I invoked with greater intensity enlightenment from heaven and the grace of eloquence that comes from words enriched with statistics and data. For I wish to transmit my inmost convictions on this most important topic to other people’s hearts.

The things I saw during my trips throughout the United States of North America and throughout Brazil are burnt into my memory almost as if they were present now. The emotions I experienced then will never be erased from my heart.

I visited densely populated cities and newly founded communities, fields made productive by human work and immense plains untouched by human hands. I met emigrants who reached the peaks of wealth, others who lived comfortable lives, and the majority—the vast, shadowy army of the unfortunate—struggling for survival against the hazards of the desert and the dangers of unwholesome climates, against human greed, left alone, in utter abandonment, without religious or civil care, without anything. I heard hearts beat in unison with mine when I talked to them in the name of religion in their own mother tongue.

I saw, oh what a terrible sight! I saw the faith extinguished in millions of souls for lack of spiritual nourishment and unfortunately also because of the unworthiness of the Church’s ministers.

I saw the practices of Christian life and the ineffable hopes of the faith reflowerish in entire populations under the inspiration of holy apostles. It was a springtime of souls.

In a word, I saw that if the Church of God does not play a greater role in those regions than it does at present in guiding the lives of both communities and individuals, if souls are lost by the millions, the reason to a large extent is due to the lack of a well organized apostolic work suited to local conditions and also to the lack of priests rather than to the activity, although great, of the enemies of the faith. I am deeply convinced that we must confront this crisis with a sense of urgency, that we who have been called to rule the Church would commit a serious mistake, not to say a grave fault, if we let a state of affairs continue that is causing great harm to souls and is diminishing the social importance of the Church in the face of the enemies of God (…).

The kinds of Europeans immigration to America, after the brief war of conquest, are totally different from all other immigrations recorded in the annals of history.
We are not witnessing hordes of barbarians sowing death and destruction but armies of peaceful workers seeking bread, prosperity, and tranquility in other lands. No longer the onrush of a torrent that overwhelms everything, but the quiet and unruffled flood of waters bringing fertility! No longer the extermination of peoples, but fusion and adaptation, by which different nationalities meet, intermingle, acquire new strength, and give rise to new peoples! Despite differences, these new peoples display specific characteristics and particular religious and civil tendencies typical of the whole national group (...).

The Catholic Church is called by her divine mission and her age-old tradition to play an important role in this vast social movement which aims at the economic revival and fusion of Christian peoples.

Just as she has done always and everywhere, the Church, even in this great clash of interests, has a beautiful and noble mission to fulfill: first, to look after the defense of the faith, its spread, and the salvation of souls; then, to take her seat as the common mother and queen among the various groups so as to soften the edges of the various nationalities and moderate the conflicts of interest of the various national groups; in a word, to harmonize the variety of origins in the reconciling unity of the faith (...).

What must the Church do to keep the religious spirit alive and dynamic and the Catholic faith strong in nations with such a rich and promising future, to which the Catholic people of Europe every year keep sending such large numbers of emigrants of different nationalities?

The question is simple, not so the answer. An adequate answer must be at once varied and comprehensive, general and particular: a general answer, because of the authority from which it emanates; a particular and diversified answer, depending on the environments in which it is to be applied, the different needs it hopes to address, the laws and customs of the individual countries, and, I would say, the individual Christian communities that are being formed.
b) Letter of Bishop J.B. Scalabrini to Pope Pius X

San Paulo, Brazil, July 22, 1904

Most Holy Father,

I beg of You to excuse, in Your immense kindness, my daring in addressing this letter to You and in using this little paper, the best that can be found in this house of the Congregation of my Missionaries, and which brings to Your attention a great work of love they have accomplished. I strongly feel the need to thank you, on my hand and knees at the feet of Your August Person, for the blessing with which You deign Yourself to accompany me in my long voyages and whose most beneficial effects I have experienced.

Thank God, I did not suffer at all during the 27 days I spent aboard ship, although the sea was not always friendly. I celebrated Mass every day; I heard confessions, distributed communion, preached, taught the catechism, so that a Brazilian gentleman said upon landing: “We have spent three weeks in a monastery!”

Here I was magnificently greeted by the Bishop, a man worthy of his position, by the Chapter, the clergy and by an immense crowd of Italians, which gave a great deal of discomfort to the international socialist party which is here quite strong and numerous. I preached the Spiritual Exercises to the Missionaries and the Sisters and I have begun to visit the Italian colonies grouped in the so-called fazendas. Their encounter with me is something beyond description. When they see me from afar they cry, “Evviva!” but when I am in thier midst they all weep. However, the most solemn moment comes when I speak to them about Your Holiness and when I impart to them Your Apostolic Blessing. Theirs is a very sweet crying of intense joy. Yesterday I visited a colony made up almost entirely of people from the province of Treviso. What a joy to hear them speak of their Holy Father; what innocent pride they felt for having seen You, having spoken to you, having confessed to their Pope when He was a Parish Priest, a Canon, a vicar, etc. The owner of the fazenda, who was also present, cried too like all the others and told me that this was one of the best days of his life.

I shall continue these encounters for another week. Then, I shall leave for the States of Espírito Santo, Parana, St. Catherina and Rio Grande do Sul, visiting the houses of our Congregation and as many as I can of the colonies of our immigrants.

I am leaving San Paulo with the great satisfaction of having made an agreement with this good Prelate about certain things which will greatly benefit the souls of our poor immigrants who are now, more that when in Italy, thirsty for the word of God and the sacraments. In this Diocese there are over 2000 fazendas, which the Missionaries of St. Charles visit tirelessly, like true apostles, as frequently as possible, but certainly not more than once a year, although they are twelve. It is necessary to increase this number even to better manage the important institutions of charity they have created during the past ten years. The Italian orphans used to
end up in an indescribable manner. The first Missionaries sent here realized immediately the
need for an Italian orphanage. They courageously began to work and God helped them. Now
there are 802 boys sheltered, educated and trained in a trade. There are also 242 boys
lodged in two great work-houses outside the city who study, pray, learn a trade and are
preparing themselves to be good Christians. They live by the contributions obtained by the
Missionaries in their continuous apostolic excursions. What surprises me most is that these
Missionaries have no debts of any sort. It is God who sees their need and provides for them.

I dare now to present to You, Holy Father, an idea of mine. Your Holiness has planned the
sublime and faithful program: Instaurare omnia in Christo (restore all things in Christ). Why
could not the Church, which through the admirable institution of Propaganda Fide spends so
much money and commits so many priests for the spreading of our faith among the infidels,
do something similar for the preservation of the faith among the migrants? I am speaking of
the migrants of all nations and all Catholic lands: Italians, Germans, Spaniards, Portuguese,
Canadians, etc. A special Congregation dedicated to this task, which is the greatest problem
of our century, would do honor to the Holy Apostolic See; would bring near to her, as to a
loving mother, the people of the world; and would bring about an immense good. Up North, in
the United States of America, millions of people are lost to Catholicism- a loss that is certainly
greater than the conversions of the infidels obtained by our Missions during three centuries.
This loss still continues, notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary. Protestantism works
here, and up there as well, in perverting souls. Now a Congregation which would contact the
bishops of the dioceses where Catholic migrants come from and the dioceses they go to (and
if this is not enough, even by contacting the respective governments); a Congregation which
would study every angle of the difficult and complex migration problem, using for this purpose
the old and new studies, and which in the name of the Holy Father would adopt the proper
remedies, such a Congregation would be a blessing for the world and would suffice to render
Your Pontificate glorious.

I implore you, Holy Father, to pardon the audacity of a devoted and grateful son who would
give his blood and life for you and your cause. May you condescend to continue imparting to
me Your holy blessing, which I receive daily on my knees with deep emotion, so that I may
accomplish, with God’s help, the tasks for which I have come here, and thus may be back, by
the feast of All Saints, among my dear people.

I kiss your feet, Holy Father, and with a sense of the strongest, old and deeply felt veneration,
I glorify in re-affirming myself of your holiness.

Most humble, most devoted and most affectionate son.

+ G.B.V.
c) Social Action in Favor of Migrants

The emigrant outflow could not fail to claim in Bishop Scalabrini attention and concern during his pastoral visits to each of the 365 parishes in his diocese, a third of which were in rural areas and another third reachable only by mule or horseback over precipitous goat trails through the mountains. The conditions he found in the countryside, the damaging effect of emigration on the towns, the deserted villages and hamlets in the hills were distressing evidence of the circumstances surrounding the phenomenon; 28,000 persons had left the diocese in one year alone. Foreseeing clearly the difficulties, disappointments and humiliations the emigrants were likely to face, he encouraged his priests, as a first step, to dissuade them from leaving or, failing that, to provide them at least with a letter of recommendation, the practice he had already instituted at San Bartolomeo. He was well aware that this was but a band-aid of uncertain efficacy, and he proceeded to make a thorough study of the emigration phenomenon, its causes, characteristics and consequences, which he analyzed with deep-felt empathy.

Precious little constructive action on behalf of the emigrants had been taken by the Italian governmental authorities, at any level. Private initiatives in the early 1880s had petered out. Committees set up in Italy’s principal port cities by their respective bishops to assist the emigrants spiritually and materially as they departed were not entirely successful mainly because they lacked the necessary knowledge and financial means for effective action. Their efforts, however, pointed up the difficulties and what was needed to overcome them. Numerous studies were looking at the emigration movement from differing viewpoints and novelists and poets were recording the heartbreak of exodus. Interpretations and solutions of the problems appeared in articles and newspapers, politicians debated whether emigration was a “good” or a “bad” thing, and sporadic legislative proposals died a-borning.

Into this unproductive eddy of concern for the emigrants Bishop Scalabrini stepped with his usual candor and gift for direct action. In intense correspondence with members of Parliament, in “open Letters” and other writings he brought them and the public a comprehensive view of the many problems involved. He critically analyzed the current legislative proposals, particularly those measures that permitted the licensing of recruiting agents, the “traffickers in human flesh”, as he called them, whose greedy exploitation of the emigrants was the cause of so much woe that followed them even across the ocean. His own proposals and recommendations gradually influenced the lawmakers and some years later were incorporated in the legislation of 1901. In Piacenza he set up an aid society for migrants under the name of St. Raphael and he promoted the establishment of similar societies in lectures tirelessly delivered in Rome, Milan, Florence, and other cities throughout Italy. His sincerity had an eloquence that captured the attention and the press even of the anti-clerical factions of the time. Noted particularly was his apolitical appeal in a period of sharp Church/State tensions following the 1870 unification of Italy. In short, Scalabrini was challenging both secularists and Catholics to climb over their “historical fence”
and work together for the benefit of the migrants. And in a series of publications he kept the subject before the public.

Notable among these was the pamphlet *Italian Emigration in America (L’Emigrazione Italiana in America)* published in June 1887. Written with moving simplicity, it went through several printings and was widely distributed. Bishop Scalabrini’s deeply human understanding of the emigrants’ situation is reflected in the opening paragraphs in which he describes his thoughts on seeing a large crowd of men, women and children of all ages waiting in worried but hopeful patience outside the Milan railroad station for the train that was to take them to the ship for America, a scene he never forgot and retold many times. The pamphlet is an overview of the emigration phenomenon, set in historical context. In it he presented a factual account of the situations in Italy at the root of the migrant movement and deplored the neglect of the Italian emigrants by their government and countrymen in comparison with those from other nations. He cited examples of the exploitation to which they were subject, of the miseries and difficulties they met in the host countries and concluded with recommendations for meeting their religious and material needs.

Bishop Scalabrini was particularly concerned, however, because of the deprivation of religious support and assistance suffered by the emigrants and he had early come to the conclusion that it was essential to have an association of priests dedicated entirely to their service before, during, after their voyage and in the places where they resettled. What he learned from the people of his own diocese told him this and so did the letters he received from former parishioners and others, filled with nostalgia for the church they had known and pleading for priests to be sent to them. Particularly compelling were the urgent communications he received from a former student of his at the Seminary of St. Abbondio, Francesco Zaboglio. Ordained in 1875, he had served as a parish priest in villages that were decimated by the exodus and he was familiar with its tragic aspects. His father, sister and a brother had immigrated to Wisconsin and other relatives were settled in South Dakota. In his visits to them and to other emigrants in his travels in the United States in 1886 he had been appalled by their utter lack of religious services of any kind. In person and in subsequent letters to Bishop Scalabrini he had expressed his anxieties for the spiritual welfare of the migrants, his conviction that a broad system of aid was necessary for them, and his urgent hope that the Bishop would take the lead in organizing it. In several articles written and published at Bishop Scalabrini’s suggestion he further described the material and moral problems besetting the migrants, with affectionate understanding of their “Italian” character and their longing for the comfort of religion that was evident in the anxious welcome with which they greeted him wherever he went. His information and ideas buttressed Bishop Scalabrini’s presentation in *Italian Emigration in America* and the memoranda and suggestions the bishop sent to the prefect of the Propagation of the Faith, which had jurisdiction over the church in the United States, still considered in the 1880’s a “mission” country.

About that time the Holy See was disturbed by reports from the United States regarding the Italian migrant’s lack of religion and as Archbishop John Ireland of St.
Paul was in Rome, he was asked to comment on Scalabrini’s first memorandum (January 1887). Ireland proposed to the Holy See that an aid organization like the German St. Raphael Society be established for the Italian emigrants and he called attention to the more or less isolated groups scattered through the United States who might benefit from temporary missions. These ideas coincided with Scalabrini’s recommendation in his pamphlet for an aid society (Società di Patronato) and with Zaboglio’s emphasis on the need to recruit and train Italian priests who understood the migrants. These, together with his own convictions, Bishop Scalabrini merged in a logical and practical project for a missionary society of priests that would indeed meet the needs of the emigrants, the emigrating and the emigrated. It was sent to the Holy See in February 1887 and was soon actualized in the Congregation of the Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles, more familiarly known as the Scalabrinian Fathers. Their history was shaped and is best understood against the background of his far-sighted and global view of the migration phenomenon, cogently set forth in his writings and lectures.

Bishop Scalabrini saw migratory movements as providential occurrences, expressions of a law of nature, a mysterious force that governs both the physical and human world. He stressed that freedom to emigrate is an inalienable human right, a concept enshrined sixty years later and after much debate in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In his view emigration is almost always a human good, being one of the ways in which Divine Providence guides the economic and moral progress of humankind, even through catastrophes, “toward the final goal which is the perfection of man on earth and the glory of God in the heavens.” On the earthly level it provides a safety valve for the social order, especially in cases of economic and population pressure; it opens new paths of trade, facilitates the spread of new scientific and technical knowledge, and is a source of hope and future well being for the disinh erited. In his broad and optimistic vision the consequent mingling of peoples would eventually overcome racial and nationalistic barriers and stretch human horizons beyond geographical and political boundaries to a concept of the world as the fatherland of the human person. He unequivocally condemned, as evil and dangerous forced emigration and the practice of recruiting emigrants, which only increased the number of the displaced and the disillusioned.

In his writings and his lectures during this period, Bishop Scalabrini challenged both the Government and the Church to respond to what was the most pressing social problem of the time. The Government had the duty to ensure the protection of emigrants at their departure on their arrival in the country of resettlement, and recommended appropriate measures in should take. These are still valid today; many of them are in effect in several countries and are echoed in international treaties dealing with migrants. For the Church - bishops, clergy and laity - the spiritual welfare of the emigrants was an urgent responsibility namely, to keep alive and alert their religious faith, endangered by neglect, proselytizing, political and other vested interests, or assorted destructive influences. All emigrants needed priests who were of their own nationality or at the very least could speak their language. His interest in all emigrants is evidenced by his relationship with the German St. Raphael Society and his influence on the international meeting in Lucerne (1890), which aimed to set up an international league of emigrant aid societies.
Some years later his concern for effective action for the emigrants of all nations is persuasively set forth in the memorandum he wrote after his pastoral visits to the United States and Brazil and sent to the Holy See shortly before his unexpected death in 1905. In it he proposed a central commission or “congregation” of the Holy See that would have all Catholic migration under its purview and would ensure that the migrants’ needs were provided for, especially their spiritual needs. It would be a kind of coordinating mechanism that would prevent duplication among church and lay agencies in the field, provide continuity and follow-up, and as an instrument of the Holy See could deter potential jealousies on the part of governments or national hierarchies. He presented in some detail its possible composition and functions, from continuing research and dissemination of information to the recruitment and screening of priests for migrant work, and he offered three of his missionaries to help set it up. He died three weeks later and the subject was not pursued until in 1912 Pope Pius X established in the Consistorial Congregation a Special Office for the Spiritual Care of Migrants to supervise all matters pertaining to emigrating priests and the various aid associations for migrants. Scalabrini’s ideas and recommendations find an echo in Pius XII’s *Exsul Familia* (1952), which outlines the historic concern of the Church for migrants and the norms to be followed in providing for their religious needs. Through a succession of transformations the Special Office finally became today’s Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and People on the Move, established by Pope Paul VI in 1970. Since then a Scalabrinian, Father Giulivo Tessarolo, a former pastor and Superior General of the Congregation, has served as its General Secretary.

Today the importance of respecting the cultural background of the migrant, of providing a familiar context in which the process of transition into the new society can take place in a positive way, is generally recognized at least in theory. In his day Bishop Scalabrini’s concepts were new. For him the fact that for all peoples religious faith is intimately interwoven with their language and rooted in their cultural traditions made it all the more important to preserve the religious context of their place of origin. This was especially true in the case of the Italians, who were entering an utterly different society, unsympathetic when not actually hostile to their religion, and who had to cope with a thoroughly unfamiliar language. This is why he stressed the need for priests who could build on their ethnic identity. The ability to understand and speak the language of the people of a given nationality, he pointed out, does not necessarily carry with it a real understanding of or empathy with their mentality. He knew very well that many cultural traditions eventually disappear as integration into a new society takes place. But he also knew it was important to cushion the process for the benefit both of the newcomers and the society they were entering.
### VII. EVALUATION

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VIII. CLOSING PRAYER

Leader:

Introduction
In the name of the Father, and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Brothers and Sisters, ongoing migration, the spectrum of unemployment, the closing of borders and minds, gratuitous suspicion against migrants, along with many forms of racism, are some of the great issues that often turn into high drama.

Faced with so many migrants begged from us a Christian response, we must first listen to the Word of God which reminds us “that (we) are no longer strangers or migrants, but members of the household of God”.

Reading: Migration through the eyes of Faith (Rules of Life #19)

In the migrants Bishop Scalabrini saw the likeness of Christ and is their experience a test of the faith and love of believers, especially of his missionaries, who are challenged to overcome the evils of migration both in their causes and in their effects and to discover the plan God carries out in all migrations, even when caused by injustices.

Since migration brings together the many segments of the human family, it has a way of building up a social body that is ever more vast and varied: a prolongation and extension of that encounter of peoples and races, which – enriched by the gift of the Spirit on Pentecost Sunday - was transformed into the fellowship of the Church.

True, the sufferings that go hand in hand with migration share in the birth pangs out of which the pilgrim Church is born and renews itself. Still, the inequities and imbalances, of which these sufferings are an effect as well as a symptom, are an indictment of the wound sin has inflicted on the human family and a heartfelt plea for brotherhood.

This vision leads us to liken the phenomenon of migration to the biblical events that mark the various stages in humanity’s labored trek toward the building up of a people that knows no discrimination or borders, is the keeper and guardian of God’s gifts, and lies open to mankind’s eternal calling: events such as the journey of the Patriarchs, who by the strength of the Promise, look forward to a future homeland; the liberation from slavery, which, through the Exodus, brings forth the people of the Covenant; the Exile, which confronts the human person with the fact that any goal achieved is relative; the universal message of the Prophets, who denounce discrimination, oppression, deportations, dispersions, and persecutions as contrary to God’s plan. Yet these evils become the carriers of the message of salvation for all men and show that,
in spite of the chaotic ebb and flow of human events, God keeps weaving his complete unification of the whole universe in Christ.

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

In this light, the migrants’ journey becomes a living sign of our eternal calling and a constant stimulus to that kind of hope, which while pointing to a future life beyond this present world, urges us to transform this present one and make it better. The migrants’ peculiar traits remind us of the fellowship of Pentecost, where the Spirit brings harmony among all differences and where love shows itself to be genuine by accepting “the other”.

Moreover, the experience of the migrants announces the Paschal Mystery through which death and resurrection work toward the birth of a new humanity, humanity without slaves or foreigners. Finally, the migrants are the symbol of a new people for whom any foreign land is home and any homeland if foreign.

Prayer to the Founder

And, a man came. His name was unknown to many. He loved his diocese and the city of Piacenza both in word and in deed. He loved the people, their lives, and their problems. But he loved from the heart those who beset by misery, had left his diocese for that urgent need to find dignity for themselves. In great numbers they were leaving their homeland… they were migrating.

It was not like birds in the sky, nor like leaves driven by a storm, and not even like ripened seeds from some flower, which are all at the mercy of the wind! It was rather like an endless flock of lost sheep, without a shepherd! For human beings to migrate means to die. With their last hope crying out louder than their despair: to be able to be born again as humans… somewhere else!

But they were not alone. As a sign of God’s love, he gave them missionaries: man and women especially for them and like them migrants themselves.

By now, what Scalabrini did in times past does not matter anymore. The tree has produced its fruits. His sons and daughters have adopted his name: John Baptist Scalabrini.

What matters is that You live among us… today more than ever… and for thousands and thousands of men, women, and children… in the countries of Europe, Asia, in the Americas, and elsewhere. Beset by the same misery, struck by the same need to move on, they struggle to their death with the same hope: with a thirst deep in their souls to be humans, a thirst burning like salt over their wounds.

And again you follow them, much like a father, a brother, a mother or sister to them… through each of us, your missionaries, who live by your love… by your courage, like a precious heritage.
And with you we call out, in the name of God, those still waiting to become human beings…, all those who have lost a homeland, … but also you, who fail to share your land… and your treasures, like brothers.

Closing Prayer

Indifference, hastiness, being closed in on ourselves, selfishness, nationalism: we are tempted by all this to forget that we are called by God to form one family, to live as brothers and sisters in a new Pentecost of diversity.

Scalabrinian Spirituality emphasizes the discovery of, and the attention to, the other— the migrant- whom many are unable to recognize and whose basic rights they deny. It is a spirituality that directs us to say to the migrant “you are there” (you are precious because of your existence; your work and your culture remind me of another migrant, Christ, who pitched his tent in our midst. The face of Christ and the face of the migrant ring in our mind the words, “I was a stranger and you made me welcome”).

Scalabrini spirituality moves us to accept the challenge, to create communion with our newly arrived brothers and sisters, to share with them the goods of the earth, and to live in harmony and dialogue.

Scalabrinian Spirituality brings us to sensitize the local Church and civil society to take on the obligation of attempting communion and sharing, avoiding the hostile attitude of Cain, “I am my brother’s keeper?”

Scalabrinian Spirituality moves us to practice the virtue of attention to the other, to avoid attitudes of superiority (humility), and to practice acceptance and service because the migrant is Christ among us (the washing of the feet).

We speak of living the Eucharist outside of Mass. The Eucharist, the perpetual sign of love, is the source of ministry of acceptance: openness to the other in a stable and dedicated way implemented in all places and in every situation (Gal 6, 2-4) committing all of us in an ongoing effort to reveal the welcoming face of the Father.

Scalabrini would never have dreamed of separating pastoral commitment from devotion to the Lord. “If action does not spring from love, it is worth nothing”. The same thing can be said about prayer: If prayer does not spring from love, it is worth nothing.

The history of migration is understood as Vocation. From awareness of, and attention to, the world of migration one moves on to commitment and sharing: a service of love, a becoming neighbor to our neighbors.

Scalabrinian Spirituality must show the following traits:
1. Comprehensive attention to the person (incarnation Spirituality)
2. Human development (justice and human rights, advocacy, culture, community)

Lord, you call each of us by name, help us to discover the real face of the migrants, we pray to the Lord: Here us, o Lord!
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