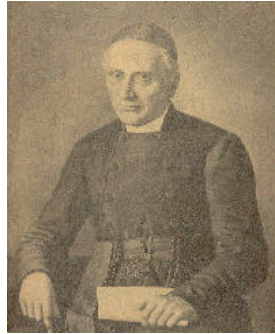


A Brief Chronicle

of the



Rev. John Mary Marani, the Superior General from 1853 to 1871

Congregation of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ

**Rev. Joseph Fiorio – Stigmatine
1876-1958**

Volume I – Second Period, Part 1

**From the Death of the Founder
to the Confiscation by the Government [1853-1873]**

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Chapter 1 HEAVENLY PROTECTION [1853-1857]

80. At the death of Fr. Gaspar, the Community of the Stimate numbered six Priests, i.e., Fathers Marani, Gramego, Brugnoli, Benciolini, Venturini and Lenotti. There were also four Coadjutor Brothers, i.e., Brothers Paul Zanoli, Louis Ferrari, Francis Stevanoni and John Baptist Bandoria. In the desolation that they all experienced for the death of their common Father, they were sustained also by the hope that he from heaven would protect the little Congregation for which he had done and suffered so much.

Their first thought, therefore, was to choose a successor for their deceased Father: so, they gathered the same night and elected as their Superior, Fr. John Mary Marani, the first-born son of Fr. Bertoni. He immediately took charge of Fr. Gaspar's funeral so that it would go off well. On the following day [June 13th], he purchased a cemetery lot from the Municipality for the price of 545.50 for the purpose of placing the Founder's venerated body there.

The funeral took place on the afternoon of June 13th, the Feast of St. Anthony of Padua. Fr. Lenotti, in his Biography of Fr. Gaspar, informs us that all the Seminarians of the Venerable Seminary, the Acolytes, who accompanied the Ritual with their song, the Doctrine Classes of the Most Holy Trinity, the Oratory of the Stimate, the first erected by him in St. Paul's Parish, in the Campo Marzio section; and many men who carried torches, took part in the ceremony. Many other priests also attended out of their devotion, in addition to those who formed the funeral procession, and they were in great number. The young boys of the Oratory of the Stimate also wanted a role in carrying him. His own sons, both Priests and Brothers, filed behind the bier.

The procession moved from the House to the Parish Church, is what we read from another eye-witness, and that it was a veritable triumph: there was a great number of people of every class of society.¹ It proceeded through the Piazza Cittadella, the Corso Porta Nuova, and the Street of the Angels and that of the Holy Trinity. Because of the great number of candles and torches, the street looked like a river of light². When they arrived at the Church, where only those who formed part of the cortege were allowed, the services were over, the Most Reverend Arch-Priest offered some affectionate words that deeply moved its listeners even to tears.

81. And it had already been determined to carry the body to the Cemetery the following morning. Fr. Lenotti informs us what came next:

... all of a sudden, two devout and friendly individuals, deeply moved by their esteem and love for Fr. Bertoni, took the step spontaneously of asking the permission to keep the body above ground in the Parish for another day, so that a Petition might be forwarded in order to obtain from the supreme authority the concession of burying him in the Church of the Stimate, and this was done ...

¹ Fr. Carminati in the Diocesan Process.

² cf. Fr. Pighi, same source.

On the following day, an instance was presented to the Municipal Offices – so that it might be forwarded to the Imperial Royal Lieutenant of Venice – which was under-signed by the Canons, Pastors, Superiors and principal Nobles and Lords of the city. On this same day, the reverend Father Cajetan Giacobbe asked the Municipal Government the permission to conserve the sacred remains in the mortuary area joined to the Church, so there might be given time for the above-mentioned formal request to take its course. This permission was granted on July 12th, with the obligation, however, of placing Fr. Bertoni's body in a second casket of zinc, or of lead: all this was carried out.

Another loss came in the meantime to sadden the little Community. On the 30th of July, Fr. Michael Gramego died at the age of 70, and he went to join his Father and Founder whom he had loved so much in life³. Resigned to the Divine Will, the five remaining Priests all continued in their dedication to the good of the Congregation. Two of these, i.e., Fr. Benciolini and Fr. Lenotti, were given the task of gathering data for a biography of their beloved late Father and Founder: they attended to this with some sense of commitment, and within the year they had gathered a good amount of material. This has come down to us with the title: ***A Miscellanea of the Reminiscences on the Life of the Very Reverend Priest, Father Gaspar Bertoni.***

82. While all this was going on, Fr. Marani set himself to another very important task. Just having been elected the Superior, the proposal was made to begin the negotiations in order to obtain the approbation of the Congregation, for which the saintly Founder [in the words of Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle]:

'...had so much suffered and endured. He had set aside resources and support, built the house, set up the library, written the rules, and what is more than all these, he planted the spirit of the Community. Therefore, he always maintained that he wanted to employ every means to reach this goal one day... [And in order to bring this about]... he was encouraged not only by friends, but also by individuals not much inclined toward Religious Orders... This was also the unanimous ideal of all his companions, and also that of the Very Reverend Father Bragato ...

This last mentioned, had, in fact, arrived in Verona on June 14th, and much saddened that he had been unable to be present at the final farewell given to his most beloved Father, he knelt before the bier, he offered his prayer to Heaven.⁴ On that occasion, Fr. Lenotti recorded Fr. Bragato as saying that :

... he had traveled a great deal, and in the duties he had carried out he had come to deal with persons of outstanding virtue, and even Founders; but that he had never found

³ On this occasion, Fr. Marani also purchased a tomb for the deceased of the Congregation. In this, in addition to Fr. Gramego, there were then transported the remains of Brother Angelo Casella, of Fr. Louis Biadego, and the Cleric, Louis Ferrari. The bodies of Fr. Cainer and Fr. Cartolari had been deposited in their family lots. On September 6th of that same year, Brother John Baptist Bandoria also died.

⁴ Fr. Giacobbe, *Life of Fr. Gaspar.*

another man of that spirit which he always saw in Fr. Bertoni, and that certainly the Lord, following his death would glorify him ...

Furthermore, he also encouraged Fr. Marani to carry out his proposed plan of seeking approbation, and he promised to assist him in the undertaking.

83. They transcribed the Constitutions left to us by the Very Reverend Father Gaspar, and prepared two copies of the Petitions to be forwarded, one for the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IXth, and the other for the Emperor, Franz Josef I. They also gathered Letters of Recommendation from Nobles, the Municipal authorities, from the Seminary, Pastors, the Delegate, the Capitular Vicar, Monsignor Belloni – and after his death, also from Monsignor Marchi, and from the Patriarch of Venice, the former Ordinary of Verona.

In the Petition addressed to the Emperor, assurance was given that the Institute had the means for its own support, and that it would never be a burden on the Government. And there was joined to this an official deed with which Fr. Francis Benciolini offered the goods of his own property as a kind of dowry and back-up for the Community. When all was in readiness, the entire packet was forwarded on to Prague and the good offices of Monsignor Bragato, on December 23rd]. It was his task then to see to it that it arrived at the proper office in Vienna, and in Rome, through the Apostolic Nunzio, Monsignor Prela'. In fact, the Nunzio himself sent to Rome the pertinent documents, addressing them to the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on February 2, 1854, accompanied with his own Letter of Recommendation:

... My deepest respect for Your Most Eminent and Most Reverend Lord,

I have the honor of sending you and official Petition, supported by documents, addressed to His Holiness, by the Priest, John Mary Marani, Superior of a Pious Union of Secular Priests, living for many years in Verona. This Union was instituted and founded in the Church of the Stimate by the late and pious Priest, Gaspar Bertoni.

The purpose of this Pious Union is to place zealous Priests at the disposition of Bishops in order to offer every sort of service to the Diocese, whether in the preaching, or in teaching, and also in the care of souls.

Now the Priests who belong to this Pious Union, ardently desire that the rules given to them by their pious Founder, might be approved by the Holy See, and that their Pious Union might be erected as a Congregation under the Title of the Sacred Stigmata. With this purpose in mind, they have sent to me their Petition, and enclosed with it are the rules and other documents so that this might arrive at His Holiness of Our Lord...

Recommending myself to Your Eminence, the above-mentioned Petition, and with the most profound service, and so on ...

84. In the meantime, the Imperial Royal Lieutenant of Venice after seeking further information regarding the condition of the Church of the Stimate, on August 4, 1853, denied the request regarding the burial of Fr. Gaspar's body, presenting as the reason that this Church was open for public worship. However, Fr. Marani on September 22nd, presented an appeal to the Government, with the accompanying recommendation of Capitular Vicar, Monsignor Belloni, in which the Petition was renewed, and he responded to the difficulties presented by the Government. The new

Petition found greater favor than the first one did, and the Government with an official notification dated February 10th – but transmitted only on March 18th - requested to know the exact description of the Church of the Stimmate, with minute particular aspects regarding its position, size, ventilation, frequency of services: to all this, the response was forthcoming with even greater exactness and care.

About the same time, the Royal Lieutenant of Venice, by a charge received from his Government, asked for further information from our Confreres. In particular, he presented 3 questions: 1. What method of study was being followed. 2. If the financial support offered by Fr. Benciolini presented every legal security, and for how many individuals would it suffice. 3. What was required of Novices.

Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle provides some details here. Fr. Marani responded to these three, with his document, dated March 19th, directed to Monsignor Vicar Capitular. In his response, Fr. Marani stated that with regard to our Students, they would be engaged in the study of philosophy and theology, in accord with the approved method at the Seminary. With regard to the study in external school, it would be as a Founder had done since 1816, following the method of government schools. In response to the other two questions, he replied that nothing was required from the Novices from a financial point of view, and that the support provided by Fr. Benciolini would be sufficient to maintain 15 individuals, and that it enjoyed all legal security. To substantiate his response, Fr. Marani included two testimonies of experts, one a Notary, and the other a civil engineer.

85. In the meantime, after the See had been vacant for newly two years⁵, the new Bishop of Verona was elected, in the person of Benedict Riccabona. Since he had to go to Rome for his Episcopal consecration, Fr. Marani thought it might be a good idea to go to Bolzano to speak with him. He did make the trip on the last day of March, and he brought for him a copy of the Constitutions so that he might favor us and intercede for us at Rome. Further, Fr. Marani, following the encouragement of Fr. Bragato and of his other companions, had proposed that Fr. Marani himself should go to Rome, in the thought that were he to present these documents in person, he would have obtained that which he might not get by letter. He waited, though, for a more propitious time for his health, namely the autumn.

The 12th of June arrived, the first anniversary of Fr. Gaspar's death, and a letter from Fr. Bragato arrived, with the encouragement to leave right away for Rome, together with the Bishop, because by so doing he might more easily obtain that which he ardently desired. Fr. Marani, then, taking counsel from those in the House, decided to go immediately: he left on June 22nd of this same month of June, with Brother Louis Ferrari. From Bologna to Rome he made the trip by carriage and arrived in Rome on June 28th, the Vigil of the Feast of St. Peter. Thus, on the following morning he was able to assist at the Pontifical Mass. Even though he was not in good health, he did not feel any disturbance from all this, and he attributed this to a heavenly grace. He

⁵ In 1852, Monsignor Joseph Trevisanato had been named. However, even before making his formal entrance, he had been transferred to the See of Udine. In 1853, then, Monsignor Guglielmi was appointed, but he died on a journey before ever reaching Verona. In these years, the Ordinations and other Episcopal services were handled by Bishop Nauchel, former Ordinary of Parma, who was living in Verona.

took up lodging with Canon Raphael Bertinelli, and remained at Rome for four months, working to obtain the Approbation, as we will see soon⁶.

86. On the very day that Fr. Marani left for Rome, the Imperial Government signed in Vienna the Decree that granted permission for the entombment of Fr. Bertoni's body in the Church of the Stimate. The Community immediately received word of this from Reichberg, and on July 12th, they received the official communication. In fact, as Fr. Lenotti would note that on that very same day, in a providential disposition, they came into our hands two Decrees: the one allowing the entombment of Fr. Bertoni's body, and the other, long desired decree, that the soldiers would be leaving the Stimate.

Thus, at long last, after four years of taking over a large part of the building, on July 24th the soldiers left the Stimate, and the House returned to its former peaceful way. On the 30th of that same month, the venerated body of the Father and Founder returned in triumph to his old dwelling place. On this occasion, again Fr. Lenotti records the particulars:

... the Church of the Most Holy Trinity, the entire street, the little square, our Church were full, as all were saying, for the bearing of the body of a saint in procession. After the ritual was sung in our Church, the Very Reverend Pastor, Fr. Giacobbe, delivered a very moving sermon. There was some time given for the devotion of the people who did not want to leave. Finally, the Church was closed, his body was placed in the sepulcher in the middle of the Church, which was then closed with a commemorative stone, inscribed by Very Reverend Santi ...

87. Fr. Marani, meanwhile, in Rome was taking care of the negotiations for which reason he had made the trip, but from the very beginning it seemed that the cause was desperate, because of the small number of members⁷.

After his Consecration, Bishop Riccabona had returned to Verona. The Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars on July 8th, wrote to him asking for some further information regarding our Congregation. He responded with his letter of July 22nd, the same month. In his response, he spoke about the origin of the Congregation, of its losses of personnel that it had undergone, and offered this explanation for the small number of members:

... on the one hand the reason is due to the calamitous times they were enduring; and on the other, the real need of the approval of the Holy See, the lack of which were holding back some who would like to join. It is therefore, to be hoped that once Rome's sanction has been received, the number will increase. This hope is well founded because even when the news spread that negotiations were being conducted for the

⁶ During his stay in Rome, Fr. Marani obtained from the Congregation of the Indulgences, dated August 22nd and September 12th, the perpetual privilege for the main altars of the Churches of St Mary of the Lily and the Stimate.

⁷ Fr. Lenotti records that the Secretary of the Sacred Congregation, using a popular saying, stated from the outset: 'They are four cats; Fr. Marani can go home in peace!'

*approval, a few requests have been received and some acceptance of new candidates has occurred ...*⁸

He went on then to speak at some length of the great good achieved by our Congregation, and in the end, he concluded:

... I cannot omit a particular word of recommendation for the Superior of this above-mentioned Congregation, Fr. John Mary Marani. He is a man of prudence, zeal and singular humility ... Being in poor health, subjected to passing the nights in long vigils in spasms of pain and most severe suffering of digestive disturbances, worn out with his efforts for his beloved Congregation, he undertook the journey to Rome, where in continuous suffering and pain he set about the negotiations, awaiting for the Lord to console him in his aspirations. So, I dare to recommend to Your Very Reverend Eminence, this zealous Churchman, so that You might see fit to protect him and to assist him in accomplishment of his desires ...

88. Fr. Marani, then, on St. Lawrence's day, as Fr. Lenotti informs us, paid a visit to the Under-Secretary, just to see if by chance there would be any news. The Under-Secretary inquired about his health, and the Superior answered that he really was not feeling well. Moved to compassion, the Curia official told him that he had given the Founder's Rules to Fr. Perrone and that Fr. Marani should inquire from him. *Thanks be to God!* Fr. Perrone in his turn, nearly over-whelmed by other commitments, promised within the month to examine the Constitutions. He did comment that they were written with great commitment, wisdom and spirit, but that they needed a bit more detail and that they were somewhat lacking in what concerned the Direction of the Government of the Congregation. Fr. Marani took his counsel and was exhorted to draw up a *Compendium* and to present this in order to obtain the Decree of Praise. He wrote and re-wrote this *Compendium*: finally, Fr. Bresciani, SJ and Alfieri, Secretary of the 'Brothers of St. John of God', approved it and passed favorably on it, as did Fr. Perrone. With his positive vote, it went on to the full body of the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.

Fr. Marani finally was able to be said to be content: before departing from Rome he asked for, and received an Audience with the Holy Father, and then he wrote to Verona:

Rome, the 25th of October 1854 – Wednesday

Beloved Fr. Cajetan and Brothers,

May God be praised, for He has so helped and assisted me that I have been able to succeed in arranging matters so well that I was hardly able to keep up with their rapid course. The day before yesterday, I was received by the Supreme Pontiff, and I explained everything to him. And he promised me his own intervention: and to the entire Congregation, which he called *his Little Flock*, he has imparted his Benediction. And when I had told him that I had been accompanied by my own Lay Brother, he rang a little bell and had him enter: he spoke with him with such affability and once more after benevolently blessing us, our meeting was over.

⁸ At this time, Monsignor Richard DaPrato and Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti had applied and been accepted, but they entered only after Fr. Marani's return.

I have nothing more to do in Rome, because I have been able to accomplish my part and the rest will all happen in time. So, I am waiting for our Bishop and then I will get ready for the departure, which in my opinion will be towards the middle of next week. This is all the more pressing since for the past three weeks, I really have not been feeling well. Please pray that God might grant us a pleasant journey...

Then, he gave the order that there might be celebrated on November 17th a solemn memorial Office in honor and suffrage of Fr. Gaspar.

88. Fr. Marani arrived back in Verona on November 1st, and on the 17th, participated in the Memorial Service. The Mass was sung by Monsignor Marchi, the Vicar General of the Diocese, assisted by three Pastors of the city: the chant was directed by Fr. Pinali of the Oratorians, once a student of ours at the Stimate. The music was executed by players and singers, almost all former disciples of Fr. Gaspar.

Many priests and religious attended, and in the flood of real terrible weather which raged the entire morning, 40 Masses were celebrated at the Stimate. On that occasion, Fr. Camillo Bresciani, Prefect of the Ministers of the Sick, delivered a splendid oration in praise of Fr. Gaspar, which was later printed. A few days later, i.e., on the 26th of the month, the Canon, Richard DaPrato, of a noble family, and Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti both entered and they began their Novitiate on December 8th.⁹ On January 1st of the following year, Brother Joseph Reali entered.

90. Then dawned then the year 1855, which would be a memorable year in the History of our Congregation. On **April 16th** of that year, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars granted the **Decree of Praise**, to our Congregation. The Bishop, who was in Rome, shared this news right away. He pointed out that the Document was actually signed **on the very day that the Feast of the Most Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord was celebrated**, and he added: *... I do not believe that this circumstance was by chance, but rather a particular disposition of Providence which disposes all things sweetly ...*

The government approval was still delayed because of the very difficult negotiations necessary to assure the support of the Institute. The Imperial Lieutenant of Venice, having received Fr. Marani's response dated March 19, 1854, has sought additional information for the Municipal Committee of Verona, from the Provincial Delegation as well as from the Diocesan Chancery Office. Then, it sent all this documentation to the Office of the Treasury. This office went over the entire matter and having verified that all was in order, gave its opinion on February 28, 1855. Finally, having exhausted all the necessary avenues, the Office of Venice sent the packet to the central Government, which on July 14th, signed the Decree of Approval.

Meanwhile, our Fathers who by the decision of Fr. Marani, called themselves *Apostolic Missionaries*¹⁰, manifested their apostolic zeal by offering their assistance

⁹ On November 1st 1853, Brother Charles Salocher entered, but he left two months later because of health.

¹⁰ The Congregation still did not have an official and recognized title, and the Decree of Praise stated: *The Priest, John Mary Marani, Moderator of the Congregation of the Priests of the sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ, commonly known as, etc.* to choose the

to the cholera victims in various localities in the Diocese, and in their preaching of the Parish Missions and Retreats in Verona and beyond.

91. On July 28th, there received notification of the Sovereign's approval, and on September 7th, they received the official communication of this¹¹. Full of joy and of recognition towards the Lord, they chose the 30th day of the same month for the Solemn Canonical Institution of the Congregation. Following a course of the Spiritual Exercises, they proceeded to the regular election of the Superior General. Fr. Lenotti once more provides a record of what took place:

*... At 3:00 p.m., in the room of the Very Reverend Founder, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, of venerated memory, the Religious Priests of the Congregation all gathered, excluding the Novices, and having invoked the light of the Holy Spirit with the Hymn, **Veni, Creator**, and they proceeded to the first ballot: these were opened and read publicly, after the ballots had been shaken up in the urn. The result of the election was full votes for the Superior General of the Congregation, in the person of the Very Reverend Fr. John Mary Marani. Then having summoned the whole community, and gathered all into the Domestic Chapel, also the Novices and the Lay Brothers, the elected Superior was made public in the presence of all, and to the great consolation of all, they came to kiss the hand of the newly elected. After this, they offered the Hymn, **Te, Deum** in thanksgiving ...*¹²

92. The 30th day of the month finally arrived, and as Fr. Lenotti has recorded:

... after having sounded the bells on the three previous days, and having decorated the Church, inside and out, there was celebrated the ritual of the Erection of this least Congregation...

At 8:00 a.m., His Excellency the Bishop arrived, accompanied by Monsignor Marchi and by the Master of Ceremonies, Fr. Valbusa, and all the religious were at the door of the Church to greet him. They accompanied him two-by-two in procession to the sanctuary, while there was being sung: **What shall I give to the Lord, etc. – and I will pay my vows to the Lord ...**

The Bishop, then, made his preparation for Mass, put on his usual vestments with the cope for singing of the **Veni, Creator** with its **Oration**. After this, he put on

Stigmata of Our Lord rather than those of St. Francis to which the Church was dedicated, ought to have contributed the fact that devotions to the Passion were offered for many years in the Church by our Fathers.

¹¹ This is the text of the Communication published by the Municipal Committee, in the name of the Imperial Royal Provincial Delegation:

...His Majesty, with the Sovereign Resolution of July 14th, has deigned to approve the subsistence of the Congregation of Priests at the Church of the Stimate in Verona, with the condition that it can never, and under no title whatsoever, pretend any State subsidy, or from any other public fund: and that even when they might wish to occupy themselves with public instruction, with regard to his, it will be necessary to attend to the relative prescriptions in vogue, and in the future to those even if by then they should be emanated...

¹² A little after the Solemn Institution of the Congregation, Fr. Marani named his Vicar [Fr. Francis Benciolini] and the Master of Novices [Fr. Lenotti].

the chasuble and celebrated Mass, in which the Brothers all received Holy Communion. When Mass had been completed, the Bishop once again put on the cope, and incensed the Most Blessed Sacrament, after having first opened the little door of the tabernacle. He then returned to the throne that had been prepared for him, and remained standing with his crosier in his hand, while Fr. Marani having genuflected on the first step of the altar before the Blessed Sacrament, made his Profession of Vows.

Then the Tabernacle was closed, and the Bishop sat with the miter on his head, and Fr. Marani also sat on the Epistle side of the altar, and received the Profession of the Confreres who one at a time genuflected before him, and they pronounced their vows according to the Ritual of the Congregation. Following this, the Psalm was sung: ***How good it is ...*** with some Prayers. The Bishop then delivered a brief allocution praising the Father Founder, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, with the words of the Psalm: ***The Just Man will flourish like the palm tree, etc.*** He then praised the Institute and inspired the Religious belonging to it to the imitation of their Founder, and to continue own his enterprise, saying that it was what the Bishops desired, and that the Supreme Pontiff said to him that he ardently desired for this ***Little Flock*** might increase. Commenting then on the name of the Apostolic Missionaries, he sated that we should therefore imitate the Apostles in the preaching of the Divine Word and emulating their zeal, charity and abnegation.

Then the Bishop blessed from the altar the Religious of the Congregation. After this, the Procession formed, which on leaving the Church, went onto the road on the left, and entered the main door of the House. And after having passed through it, it proceeded out the back door, and returned into the Church. The Bishop, on entering and on leaving the house, closed the door by bolts, thus ceremoniously indicating in the manner and the limits of the Cloister. In Church, at the end, there was sung the ***Te, Deum***, following which the Bishop imparted his blessing to all the present granting an Indulgence of 40 days.

The music for that memorable day was composed by the Very Reverend Father Louis Gagliardi, and it was directed by him and all performed with utmost diligence. There had been invited all the heads of the Religious Orders, the Provincial of the Company of Jesus, Fr. Berretta, Mayor Ferrari, the Assessor, the Marquis Ottavio di Canossa and other dignitaries, both priests and lay people. When the function was over, in Church the ***Remarks concerning the Congregation***, printed by Fr. Marani, were distributed in Church. For those invited light refreshments were offered. In this situation as well, the published ***Remarks*** were handed out, as also was an elegant Latin and Italian composition, presented by the Reverend Jesuit Fathers¹³.

¹³ These published ***Remarks*** were much sought after, and read with great joy. Regarding this special ritual held in the Stimate on that day many newspapers and periodicals gave an account of the proceedings. The *Balance* of Milan gave an account, and published the complete booklet of the ***Remarks***. The *Gazette* of Verona also spoke of the day in a lead article, entitled; 'The Oblates in Verona.' In this article, there was very little adherence to the events of that day, and it said that the Superior pronounced his vows into the hands of the Bishop. Fr. Marani, however, felt it his duty to offer a correction, in which he declared that he had pronounced his vows, not to the Bishop, but before the Blessed Sacrament. He also had the Bishop himself sign in on his observations, and sent his letter to the *Gazette*, which

93. A few days before the ceremony of the Solemn Institution of the Congregation, Fr. Charles Fedelini returned to the Congregation. After the death of Fr. Gaspar, he experienced deep within the yearning to return to the Congregation, and immediately made the petition to Fr. Marani. And he then so multiplied his requests, that he was finally accepted, even though he was still in a very poor condition of health. He actually re-entered on September 16th, and on the following day, began his Novitiate again, by receiving the Religious Habit. In all these years, he had continued lecturing on Moral Theology in the Seminary, and this he would continue to do up until his death, striving to make known and loved the doctrine of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who was rejected by many. In 1852, he had published a dissertation with the title: **St. Alphonsus, vindicating himself.** In this work, citing the very words of the Holy Doctor, he not only showed the absolute value of his system, but further he demonstrated quite well that all the objections against that system in later years, had already been refuted by him, in the course of his great work.¹⁴

On September 17th there entered also Brother Louis Falzi, and on December 9th was held his solemn Vestition in the Church of the Stimmate with two young students, i.e., Francis Madinelli, and another who was later not accepted: the Community began to increase, and all were full of consolation and holy hope.

94. Coming now to speak of the occupations of our first Confreres, we will say above all how after the formal election of Fr. Marani, Fr. Francis Benciolini remained to work at the Church of St. Mary of the Lily. He would indeed become the *Missionary* of that neighborhood, by committing himself with sparing himself to the fatigue of the ministries of preaching and hearing Confessions to win souls over to God. His favorite field of activity was the Oratory, around which for more than a half a century, he poured out all his fervent activity. He was able to inspire and move to fervor the many young men who took part in this, and he had a kind manner by which he attracted those who were not interested, or rather restless about being a part of this. He continuously watched over their conduct, seeking to promote in every manner he could the good manners and piety in the midst of his young members of the Oratory, who were so dear to him. Fr. Richard daPrato came to give him a hand on feast days from the year 1854 on.

95. The principal occupation of the Fathers in this time was that of preaching **Parish Missions** and giving **Courses of the Spiritual Exercises.** In this regard, we really do not know for certain if even up to this time, they had ever been invited to

published the emendation. Also the *Catholic Friend* of Milano reported the **Remarks** published for distribution by Fr. Marani. Many other newspapers even as far away as Germany did likewise, at least providing some account of the booklet. Finally, even the influential *Civilita' Cattolica* reported these events in its December issue [Series II, Vol. 12]. Their article described quite well the special ceremonies of that day, and provided a very good idea of our Congregation.

¹⁴ This Dissertation obtained the praise of his Bishop, and from persons dedicated to the system of the Saint. However, this did excite the furor of the Jansenists. Fr. Fedelini, however, defended himself well from their assaults in a little work printed in Venice in 1852.

preach in other cities, since no memory of this has come down to us. However, from the moment of the Solemn Institution of the Congregation up until the end of 1855, we do find that they did give these courses in Cremona, Treviso and elsewhere: the Parish Mission that stands out perhaps over all the others was the one our men preached in Caravaggio. Fr. Marani and Fr. Lenotti took part in this Mission. Their role was to preach to the People in the major Church in the town, while Fr. Benciolini preached very well to the youth in other churches in the town. Fr. Venturini spoke in still another Church to the young men of the village.

This Parish Mission began on Thursday evening, December 27th and end on Sunday, January 6, 1856. The attendance at all these sermons was enormous, as Fr. Lenotti recorded, and the attention in listening was marvelous. The reception of Holy Communion was very numerous, and even much more on the last day at the General Communion which was observed at the same hour in the other Churches of the village as well. They began hearing confessions on the third day of the Mission, and number of those coming for the Sacrament was also extraordinary. There were 18 Confessors, but they had to send for two more Capuchins from Milano who arrived on January 1st, and were a great help, and they remained also for a few days after the Mission, to take care of those left over from the crowds.

On Monday morning, January 7th, our Fathers were about to depart and they were greeted by the festive ringing of the bells and by a great crowd of people who acclaimed them: they were driven in a carriage through the principal streets of the town and everywhere there were crowds even with tears in their eyes, and their hands raised to offer the departing Fathers their final greeting. Fr. Lenotti offers this comment: 'The experience of this nature could lead one to tears.' Those wonderful inhabitants wished to give as a departing gift the most precious vestments in the parish, but the Stigmatines did not accept the offer.

This Mission remained for a long time in the memories not only of our men, but also by the devout people of Caravaggio: and we would later on occupy ourselves again with this town.

96. In 1865, our Fathers continued to occupy themselves in the preaching apostolate: and it could be said that a single week did not pass in which some Parish Mission, or Course of Spiritual Exercises would not be given, in the City and the Diocese of Verona, and even beyond. They preached in the Seminary of Treviso, at the Major Hospital of Milan, in Cremona and elsewhere: and in every part, as Fr. Lenotti recorded, the fruit was most considerable with very many Communion distributed. In many places, at the end of the Parish Mission, the Marian Oratory would be established, or a Pious Union would be established to oppose blasphemy. Fr. Lenotti offers an incisive conclusion: the Lord is clearly showing that our insignificant Congregation is also His work.

97. We must also note how in this year, 1855, two requests came in for additional foundations of our Congregation. Again, Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle provides the source:

... On February 17th, there arrived a letter from Bishop Riccabona, in which he exhorted us to establish a House in Trent, for two reasons: to do good in his own native region and also for the benefit of our Congregation, in the hope that from there we would

receive good Novices. At the same time, he included a letter from Bishop Gasparini, the Pastor of Trabileno, who is asking for this foundation, and he expresses the fervent hope in his petition for a response. He had already spoken with the Vicar of trent, who showed himself to be most open to this possibility ...

This request, however, for the time being did not receive a favorable reply, also because it was not accompanied by any concrete proposal.

The Clergy, however, of that Diocese ardently desired to have a Stigmatine House there¹⁵: as a result, in September there was sent to us a practical proposal for the Foundation of a Stigmatine House in the town of Riva', offering a Convent with a beautiful House and four elementary schools. Fr. Marani went to the place, and then to Trent to treat of the matter with the Vicar and the Bishop, but unfortunately also these negotiations proved fruitless. We do not know for certain the reason why, but the scarcity of personal must have been a contributing factor. We do know that our Fathers could not correspond to the many requests that came in for their preaching.

98. In this same year, in the month of July, Fr. Marani went for the first time to Reichstadt to visit Fr. Bragato. He left Verona on the 7th of this month, and arrived in Vienna two days later, where he also visited with Bishop Riccabona. From the Bishop, Fr. Marani learned that the Bishop of Mantua also desired to profit by the work of our Fathers in his Diocese. Fr. Marani remained at Reichstadt until about the middle of August, and returned to Verona on the 21st of the same month after having had a good trip. Later, as the Empress had come to visit Stra', a place near Padua, so Fr. Marani also went there for a few days, in order to give a bit of rest to Fr. Bragato to come to Verona and spend a few days among his Confreres.

Meanwhile, On September 22nd, the Novices with Fr. Lenotti and Brother Paul had already gone to Sezano to spend a month in the autumn, having already received from the Bishop the faculty of establishing there a House Chapel for their greater usefulness. Fr. Bragato, therefore, after having spent three days at the Stimate, on September 29th he went out to Sezano to be with the Novices. He remained there with them for four days, sharing with them a hike to his own great consolation and that of them all. Before leaving, on October 2nd, he solemnly blessed the image of Mary in their Domestic Chapel, and delivered to the Novices and affectionate discourse, speaking to them of the **Grace of their Vocation**¹⁶ and inspiring them to observe the duties of their religious life.¹⁷

We do not want to pass over how in this year the Church of the Stimate was enriched with 18 benches of walnut, that [at this writing] are still seen there, and in August also an Organ was purchased in Vicenza. Thus, there could be celebrated in

¹⁵ Fr. Lenotti would write in September of this year: 'The Vicar and many other Priests, Tyrolean Pastors, desire us intensely to come there: may the Lord hear ours, and their hopes according to His Divine Good Pleasure. '

¹⁶ cf. web-site www.st-bertoni.com, section **Constitutions**, under **NADAL**.

¹⁷ During these summer months Fr. Bragato passed through Verona a number of times, and always stopped over at the Stimate for as long as he could.

a more solemn form the patronal festivities and also there could be introduced some new Church functions.¹⁸

99. Coming now to the personnel of the Congregation, in this year after only one year of Novitiate, by a dispensation of the Father Superior, Fr. Charles Fedelini made his First Profession. On December 8th Fr. Richard da Prato also made his. Fr. Anthony Ruzzenenti was not accepted due to ill health: however, in his place, the Lord sent other good workers. In the course of the year 1856, there came to the Stimate Fr. Mark Bassi and Fr. Vicent Vignola, already ordained priests, and Rev. Mr. Charles Binoli, a Sub-deacon. Within the year of his entrance, he was ordained a priest and celebrated his first Mass on September 20th.

A number of young students also arrived in this year, among whom we remember: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro, Joseph Marchesini, and Brother Anthony Rigoni. At the beginning of February of the following year, Fr. John Rigoni also entered. He had been pastor of Cerea, and also assistant in St. John's in the Valley. The best wishes and the benediction of the Holy Father began to show results on the nascent Congregation, as well as the protection that the Venerated Founder exercised from heaven. By now, the House of the Stimate was no longer sufficient to comfortably lodge all its inhabitants, so Fr. Marani thought of establishing the Novices in the old Convent of the Most Holy Trinity. After the deaths of the religious Women whom Fr. Galvani had housed there, the house was unoccupied¹⁹. In truth, that old Convent was in most wretched condition, and in the beginning our young candidates had to accommodate themselves as best they could. However, Fr. Marani already had in mind a plan of restoration. With this in mind, he had already drawn up the blueprints and had begun to gather the materials. In the meantime, there had been obtained from the Bishop the faculty of erecting there a Domestic Chapel for divine services.

Therefore, they entered the Novitiate of the Most Holy Trinity on February 28th of that year 1857. Those making up the Novitiate Community were Fr. Lenotti, Master of Novices, Brother Paul, and 13 Novices of whom there were four already Priests, seven students and two Coadjutor Brothers.²⁰

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¹⁸ In 1857, the Feast of the Espousals was solemnized in a more special manner than usual. The Bishop came for the Mass of devotion, and in the evening, following the panegyric, there was a beautiful illumination, the litanies were chanted with the organ accompaniment, and the Solemn Benediction with the Most Blessed Sacrament, given by the Diocesan Vicar, Monsignor Marchi, vested in the new and precious vestments. [Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle]. In the same year for the first time, the Holy Week were celebrated in the Church of the Stimate.

¹⁹ The last Nun died there in 1851. There remained there still three women, somewhat along in years. They were allowed to remain there in the house by Fr. Marani until 1856, when he needed the locality and he asked them to make other arrangements.

²⁰ The four Priests were: Frs. Bassi, V. Vignola, Rigoni and Bissoli, who then left on March 29, 1858.. The students were: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro, Joseph Marchesini, Francis Madinelli [who died in 1859], Fortunato Marini [who also died in 1859] and finally, John Baptist Marchesini and Isidore Fenzi – who both left in that year 1857. The Coadjutor Brothers were Louis Falzi and Anthony Rigoni.

Chapter 2
A VARIETY OF FRUITFUL MINISTRIES
[1857-1866]

100. In the course of the year 1857, after the entrance into the Novitiate of the Most Holy Trinity, we do not find news of great interest. The Fathers were continuously occupied in preaching Parish Missions or Spiritual Exercises, and always drew from these, abundant fruit. This can be seen from the letters of gratitude which poured in from every side to the Superior, Fr. Marani at the end of the various Missions. Many of these are still conserved in the Archives of the Institute.

Here it should be remembered that also **within the House of the Stimate itself**, from time to time, our Fathers would preach the Spiritual Exercises in behalf of those Churchmen who would come to the House for a week of prayer and to forge themselves anew in the Spirit. During this year, and precisely in the month of August, we find at the House of the Stimate for a Retreat, Fathers Daniel Comboni and John Beltrame, with their companions Frs. DalBosco, Melotto and Oliboni, who had been sent there by the Very Reverend Father Mazza, in order to prepare for their departure for the great Mission in Central Africa. Fr. Lenotti notes in his Chronicle they made their retreats with great commitment and to our edification, and they left quite content. And he added: it suits us very well as Missionaries to give a hand to this.

Also in this year, Fr. Marani went on a number of occasions to Sira', where the Empress stayed: he went there in the month of June to substitute for Fr. Bragato, who had gone to Bologna for a visit in the name of Their Majesties, Ferdinand and Marianna, to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IXth. On that occasion, Fr. Bragato in the name of the Superior, Fr. Marani, asked and obtained from the Pontiff for all the members of the Congregation the following faculties: (1) to be able to celebrate Mass on hour before dawn, for any just and legitimate reason; (2) to be able at the end of the Retreats or Parish Missions to give the Papal Blessing with its Plenary Indulgence, and further, to bless with the application of the Indulgences, those rosaries and medals presented by the faithful, when all the necessary conditions were fulfilled.²¹

101. At the beginning of 1858, a bit of happy news presented itself to us: on the Feast of the Espousals,, observed in a solemn and memorable manner, Fr. Lenotti tells us, the Biography of our Venerated Founder was distributed. Immediately after the Canonical Institution of the Congregation, the challenge was offered to the Very Reverend Pastor, Fr. Cajetan Giacobbe, Pastor of the Most Holy Trinity Parish, to write this Life of the Founder. Our Fathers handed over to him the material that had been gathered and many other bits of information and testimonies that they could find. And he set himself right away to this task so that by 1856, when Fr. Bertoni went to Prague, he brought with him several Chapters of the Life, in manuscript form, and he had read them in the presence of Fr. Bragato and his companion, Fr. Negrelli.

The Biography of the Founder published by Fr. Giacobbe was much praised by its contemporaries for the purity of its style, and the elevated nature of its content. Fr. Bartholomew Solrio, an Oratorian Priest in Verona, offered the following evaluation of the work, in the review entitled *Religious Works*, in Modena:

²¹ These old Rescripts signed by Pius IXth were kept in the Archives of the Congregation.

... This writing is to be praised for its flowing Italian and historical style. The subject, of course, i.e., the Life of Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, I believe is of the greatest importance for the Clergy of our century. This deceased Servant of God began to flourish at the very instant when the Napoleonic period saw the destruction of Religious Orders and Institutes: and our Fr. Gaspar committed his whole care to have flourish anew **the spirit of these Religious Institutes among the secular Clergy, with the Marian Oratories** for the entire diocese, in the parishes, enrolling the young priests in this task: and also by re-building and planting the Religious Orders according to the greater need of our times: and in Verona, with this spirit of priestly and monastic sanctification, has brought about, as it were, the return of those beautiful times of St. Cajetan Thiene, when all of Verona seemed to have been transformed into a monastery: in like manner, Fr. Gaspar Bertoni, with his Oratories, has brought about in Verona the growing of a seed-bed and a hatchery of holy clerics, religious brothers and nuns.

Therefore, the priests and even more, the Bishops, might learn from this Life, might teach each one in the Diocese how he might publicly have flourish again the spirit of clerical, religious and lay piety. This is the great importance of the biographical composition...

A copy of this Biography was also sent to the Supreme Pontiff, Pius IX, accompanied by a devout message, in which the good news of the increase of the Congregation was communicated to him. Pius IX responded on June 28th of that same year, in gratitude, and in expressing his consolation over the news received and imparting on the Congregation and on all of its members his Apostolic Blessing.

102. Also in this year 1858 our Fathers were still being sought after for their preaching. They gave some Missions also in the cities and throughout the Diocese of Padua, following which the Bishop of that city wrote an affectionate letter to Fr. Marani, thanking him for the favor granted to him. Furthermore, since this was the Jubilee year, he wished to seize the opportunity for our Fathers to preach a Parish Mission in the Cathedral of his city. Fathers Lenotti, Rigoni and Benciolini were sent for this purpose: they saw a great attendance, and obtained consoling results. Fr. Lenotti noted that they praised our clear and popular manner of preaching, and we had many confessions. We were housed in the Bishop's residence, and we received excellent care and much courtesy.

For this same occasion of the Jubilee, in the month of October also the Ordinary of Treviso, His Excellency, Bishop Farina asked for two Priests for his Cathedral. Frs. Rigoni and Benciolini were assigned.

We will also recall here a cycle of preaching assignments that some of our Fathers handled in this year, in the mountainous part of the Diocese of Verona, in order to prepare the people for the Pastoral Visitation of the Bishop. Fr. Lenotti has left his faithful record in the House Chronicle:

...On June 14th Fathers Benciolini and Lenotti departed for Montorio to give three days of Retreat and to hear confessions for two additional days: and then, later, Fr. Vignola left for Missole; Fr. Rigoni left for Pigozzo. And so all of these, either one or two for each village, according to the size of the place, went to Castagne', Trezzolano, Mouriri, Canello, San Rocco of Piegara, to Rovere' of Velo, Saline, Cenro, Tregnano, Cogollo, to Badia, Selva of Progno, to Castelvetro, Bolca, Vesena Vecchia, Vestena Nuova.

Despite the difficult season for these villages, nonetheless there was a discreet audience and very numerous on Sundays, and many confessions. In brief, the Lord blessed it, and the Bishop, his Vicar, and the Pastors manifested great satisfaction and gratitude. It was a tiring Mission and for the time of year outstanding for the little sleep we got. Except for a bit of congestion, we all did well ... We returned on July 22nd...

103. In this time, there arrived other requests for foundations of Houses of the Congregation, especially at Caravaggio. After the memorable Parish Mission there about which we have spoken above, our Fathers kept in good rapport with the Clergy of the place, and in going to Milan, or to Cremona for some preaching assignment, they would take the occasion to pay a brief visit to the town and its celebrated Sanctuary. On the other hand, those good Churchmen had remembered the great good achieved in that Mission, and so felt the desire to have a House of our Congregation there. In 1857, the Pastor of that town, Fr. Paul Oreni, passed through Verona, and he was lodged at the Stimate [May 11t]. He made a first formal proposal to Fr. Marani for a foundation: he was in accord in this with Bishop Anthony Novasconi, and he had offered to him for the Stigmatines to take over the direction and service in the Sanctuary of Mary, asking him for this scope, three Priests and two Coadjutor Brothers.

A second invitation was extended in January of 1858, on the occasion of the Parish Mission that our men had preached in Cremona: the Missionaries, among whom was also Fr. Marani, were invited to dinner with the Bishop of the city who renewed his offer, desiring to have in his Diocese a House of our Congregation. In the hope of being able to agree to this foundation, which was most pleasing also to our own Confreres, Fr. Marani in March of that same year went personally to Caravaggio: and despite his good will, he could not accept this offering because of the conditions imposed then by the Council of Administration regarding the dependence of our Fathers, and the absolute obligation of residence which this would have imposed on them²².

For these same reasons and at the same time, Fr. Marani had to give up the offer for another foundation which was offered to him, with repeated requests. The hope was that the Stigmatines would come to Sacco, a small village in the Trentine region to conduct a college – a boarding house for students who were frequenting the magisterial classes, and the thought was to give over the administration of this to our men. In the month of April, Fr. Marani went to Rovereto in order to handle this matter: but, not even this foundation could be accepted. Fr. Marani's own thoughts on the matter, he has expressed thus: '... I was not able to occupy my Priests, who are so few in number, in this ministry, and thereby to take them from preaching Parish Missions, for which there are so many requests that I cannot even satisfy even 10% of them...'

²² As we will see more clearly as we go on, Fr. Marani in those first years of his administration, having in mind the small number of members, wanted to keep the Priests at his own disposition in order to employ the now one, not another, in the Parish Missions for which he was receiving many requests.

104. Fr. Marani did find the courage to work for the glory of God and the good of the Congregation, despite his own poor health that with the passing of time was becoming more and more serious, and at times, obliged him to keep to his bed. In the course of this year he also suffered from miliary fever, from which he had scarcely recovered when he suffered a relapse into further illness toward the end of the month of July: actually his state of health had so worsened that it was thought to administer Holy Viaticum to him. We learn from Fr. Lenotti's note in the Chronicle: '... the illness is really serious: our hope is in the Lord and in Mary and in St. Joseph. For heaven sake, have pity on us...!'

And the Lord heard their prayers, for Fr. Marani did indeed get better, and slowly returned to good health, so that he was able to work further for the good of the Institute. Two other confreres passed away as this year wound down. The first of these was the Novice Student, Fortunato Marini, a young man who offered the best of hopes because of himself, due to his beautiful qualities of his mind and heart. He was a precise young man, a careful observer of every rule, devout, humble, mortified, very obedient – he really was a mirror for others – is the description his Master of Novices left in the House Chronicle. Even though he had not yet finished the Novitiate, he was given the great grace of making his Profession on October 10th, the Feast of the Maternity of Mary. On the 18th of that same month, he rendered up his beautiful soul to God, leaving all edified and consoled by his holy death.

Just one month later, on the 19th of November, Fr. Cajetan Brugnoli also died. Fr. Lenotti eulogized him in the House Chronicle:

... he was one of the first companions of Fr. Bertoni, who worked so hard in school, in hearing confessions and in building ... Now he enjoys the reward of his great fatigue for this Congregation, for his neighbor, and for the glory of God ...

However, the Lord also chose to console the Congregation, and as a substitute for Fr. Brugnoli, another valid worker came: on January 20th of the following year 1859, Fr. Peter Vignola entered, the brother of Fr. Vincent, who was the ex-Pastor of St. Firmus' Major. On February 2nd, he was vested with the religious habit. At the same time, the Lord sent other young volunteers, among whom we remember Louis Morando, Dominic Vicentini and Andrew Sterza.

105. The good name of the Congregation spread far and wide, and others expressed the desire to have a house of the Congregation in their region. On January 23, 1859, Fr. Marani received a letter from a Fr. Peter Cagliarioli, attached to the Patriarchate of Venice, asking for a Stigmatine foundation in Lussingrande, on the shore of the Gulf of Quarnero. There had already been built there a house with a chapel, and they wanted our Priests there to attend to preaching, hearing confessions, the Oratory and also to open there some elementary school and a high school. Fr. Marani responded that this was indeed his desire, and also that of his Confreres, to establish another foundation, that would offer them a **broader field to harvest the copious harvest for our Lord, according to the scope of our Father and Founder**. However, for two reasons, Fr. Marani replied, he could not accept the foundation that had been proposed to him: one was because it would be necessary for the Fathers to teach Christian Doctrine in the Illyrian dialect, which none of them knew; and also because it

was too isolated and there were no means of communication. Then, he added that in the present situation in which the Community found itself, there were coming almost continuously invitations for Parish Missions through out Lombardy, the Venetian Province and also the Tyrol, that he did not have ready, one or other Priests, taking them from the filial houses for 10, 15 or 30 days, and being able to leave always a sufficient number behind to carry out the local commitments. And so this request was also rejected.

106. In October of 1859, there was celebrated in Venice the first Provincial Council called by the Patriarch, Angelo Ramazotti. The Council was to take place in the spring of that same year, but it was deferred because of the war, and was celebrated finally on October 18th, in the Basilica of San Marco. It unfolded as a week of particular Congregations which were held in the Patriarchal Seminary. For the 18th of October, the Patriarch personally had invited Fr. Marani to intervene with a confrere as a representation of the Congregation: and he did go, accompanied by Fr. Fedelini, and took part in all the Sessions of the Council, as well as in all of its functions that were celebrated, even to its conclusion.

We have just mentioned a war: and this unfortunately had broken out in Piedmont and Lombardy and this year would also involve the Venetian Provinces. Austria, as it had done ten years previously, concentrated in Verona a great number of troops, occupying many public and private buildings. This time, however, the Stimate was not taken over, because it was being used by our Fathers and Brothers²³. The House of the *Dereletti* was occupied by the soldiers, because only Fr. Benciolini and Brother Stevanoni lived there²⁴.

107. At this same time, the soldiers took over St. Teresa's Convent. On May 16, 1859, the Municipal Government informed the Superior of the Nuns of the order to evacuate the house within 48 hours, because it was going to serve as a military hospital. The Nuns withdrew to St. Dominic's Convent where they continued teaching school and their Convent life. St. Teresa's Convent was indeed occupied by the soldiers and the church was used as a shop.

At the departure of the Nuns, Fr. Benciolini, as owner of the property, and Fr. Marani, as Superior of the Congregation, advised them by means of a legal document that even when the soldiers were gone, they should not return there, adducing as their reason that there had ceased the use of the place specified in the Contract of April 14, 1830. This maneuver was recognized as reasonable by lawyers.

Then, on September 22nd, Fr. Marani wrote to Bishop Benedict Riccabona, notifying him of this change in the agreement with the Nuns. To justify his decision, in addition to the reason given above, he also maintained that the Contract of 1830 was illicit, because it was contrary to the Decrees of the Church which forbade the

²³ In this period, the Novices had also returned to the Stimate, because Fr. Marani had begun a new building at the Most Holy Trinity.

²⁴ He had taken Brother Louis Ferrari's place and died there in 1860. Once more, Bro. Louis Ferrari was sent there. We will remember how on August 20 1860, Bro. Anthony Nicora entered the Congregation. He had been a member of the Oratory of St. Mary of the Lily, from whom we have received many facts about the Congregation.

closeness of the religious houses of men and those of Nuns. He sought the Bishop's support for his request, and even asked for a judicial sentence. Following another letter of January 10, 1860, also addressed to the Bishop, Fr. Marani renewed his protest against the return of the Nuns, declaring that he was doing this in the realization that he wanted to keep undamaged, a serious responsibility of this Congregation, and of the one who represents it, rather than just insist on its rights, and there was no other motive. He did not want for any reason whatsoever to see the return of the Nuns, if this did not infer any prejudice on present and future rights. The Bishop, however, after having studied all the circumstances carefully, responded that he did not see any way that he could refuse the return of the Nuns to St. Teresa's Convent.

In the meantime, on December 17th, the Military Hospital was taken from the Convent, but the soldiers remained in the there and also in the Church: in recompense, the City Government of Verona was obliged to pay, under title of 'rent', the annual sum of 1750 florins. Fr. Marani contacted directly the Nuns, claiming that on the basis of the original Contract of 1830, Fr. Benciolini's rights entitle him to receive any income garnered from that property²⁵, and also that St. Teresa's Convent should be restored for the use of the young girls. The Nuns, however, denied both rights, and for the time being, negotiations were at a stand-still.

108. In 1860, Frs. Lenotti and Peter Vignola went to preach the Spiritual Exercises to the Clergy of Feltre, and then to those of Belluno, invited by the local Ordinary, Bishop Rinieri. and there, too, they were remembered for a long time for their spirit and apostolic boldness.²⁶

In that same year, on June 30th, Fr. Charles Fedelini died, at the age of just 50, totally dedicated to a studious and apostolic life. He was always active even though he suffered constantly from bad health. Fr. Lenotti recalled his great energy consumed in hearing confessions, preaching, in the Marian Oratories and in the Seminary, concluded by saying that his death was a great loss for the Diocese.

In the meantime, some of the young professed students were ready for Ordination. Joseph Marchesini had already been raised to the Sub-diaconate, under the title of his own family estate; but the other students of the Congregation did not have that possibility of establishing for themselves the necessary patrimony. Fr. Marani in the meantime, addressed a humble Petition to the Holy Father, Pius IX, in which after having hinted at the profess realized in the last years by the Congregation, he sought the Faculty to have the young students ordained with the title of religious of

²⁵ Fr. Marani's view of this legal matter was supported by a number of experts in the law – in that the Nuns had only the right to 'use' the property, but not its 'usufruct.

²⁶ In this same year, the Priest, Fr. Anthony Sperti of Belluno, who had founded an Orphanage in that city, asked Fr. Marani for some of his Priests that they might take over the direction of this Institute. He added that in that city there was a particular need for a Religious Family, as there had been only one there in the entire Diocese and the harvest has been left abandoned, and there is much, so very much to be done. He maintained that he, and two or three other Priests in the city, were disposed to join our Congregation, if permission would be granted to them to make their Novitiate in that city.

the 'Common Table'. This Faculty was granted to him for 10 individuals with the Rescript of June 14, 1861.

On the other hand, since all the goods, upon which the entire Institute was living, were inscribed in the name of Fr. Benciolini, it was necessary to constitute this Patrimony of the 'Common Table.' As a result, on January 23, 1862, Fr. Francis Benciolini with a regular deed under-signed by him and by three witnesses, obliged himself irrevocably to the following: (1) In order to assure the life of the Congregation, to give to the members of the same the gratuitous and perpetual use of the three Houses that he possessed in the City. (2) For the maintenance, to sub-minister as much as would prove necessary for good and the support of the individual members present and future, even up to the number of 24, passing faithfully and perpetually into the hands of the Superior, for the time being, a half a florin per day for each member as soon as he was incorporated into the Congregation. And Fr. Marani, as Superior of the Institute, accepted in its name this irrevocable offer which assured the life of the Congregation.

On the same day, January 23, 1862, the new Ordinary of Verona, made his formal entrance into the city, the recently consecrated Bishop, Louis Marquis di Canossa, taking over from Bishop Riccabona, who had been transferred to Trent, following the death of the Venerable John Nepomucene Tsiderer.

Bishop Riccabona's departure had struck our men as a real loss for them, because in him they lost a loving father who had so benefited them. However, the Lord in His mercy had sent him on ahead of them, so that in his new See he might be able to help them even more than in the past: as we will have occasion to see in a short while.

108. We have already hinted a number of times that in these years our Fathers were continually occupied in the ministry of Preaching. It would be too lengthy even to recall the different Courses of Retreat and the Parish Missions they preached and the great fruit received from their efforts. We will just say one word about those preaching assignments that would merit special attention. In 1861 they gave a Parish Mission in Galliera Veneta, where Monsignor Bragato used to go every year with the Empress and her entourage to spend some vacation time: and the good our men achieved there was so outstanding that the Clergy of the village felt the obligation to send a letter of deepest thanks, undersigned by all the Priests, the Black-smiths and the principal inhabitants of that town.

Another Parish Mission worthy of mention that preached in Lazise in the beginning of the year 1862. this town found itself in open revolution already for four years for a difficulty that had arisen between a Confraternity and the local Clergy: and in all this time each attempt made by the Bishop, the Chancery Office to restore peace proved futile. People were really despairing and even indisposed to listen to sermons when the Parish Mission began toward the end of that January: however, our Fathers with their charity and prudence were able to move minds and hearts in such a way that by February 2nd, peace had been restored. Following this, great, and even extraordinary were the attendance at the preaching and time spent before the Most Blessed Sacrament: at the close of the Mission, in a spirit of reparation, it was proposed to conduct a solemn procession in which the image of Mary would be carried aloft. All were outside themselves with their contentment, and the former

adversaries publicly asked pardon of the Pastor, and the other Priests for the disturbances that they had caused by their conduct.

In that same year of 1862, Frs. Lenotti and Benciolini preached in Udine two Courses of the Spiritual Exercises for the Clergy of that City and Diocese. They had been invited by Bishop Trevisanato, who had already been elected as Patriarch of Venice, and was about to make his entrance into that city: he was very consoled for the result obtained by them and he cordially thanked our Fathers for their efforts. When the two Missionaries returned to Verona on the 6th of that September, they brought with them a young lad by the name of Anthony Caucigh.

Meanwhile, on the 15th of March that year, the student Joseph Marchesini had been ordained a Deacon in the House Chapel of Arch-Bishop Nauchel, titular of Teodosiopoli²⁷. On the 21st of that same month he went to Trent to be ordained a Priest, by Bishop Benedict Riccabona. Fr. Marani accompanied him for this special time in his life, and on that occasion the Superior spoke with the Bishop regarding a foundation in that city. If even earlier Bishop Riccabona was warmly interested in the idea of having a Stigmatine House in his native Diocese, after he had been transferred there to Trent, he insisted even more so for this to happen, and he did not allow himself any peace until an agreement had been concluded.

110. Toward the end of this year, there was nearly completed the building of the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity. From 1859, Fr. Marani had begun the works; and profiting in part from the old constructions already there, on a new plan he had seen rise up a very pleasant building capable of containing about 60 persons. In this construction he spared no expense: since he had no interest in providing every comfort, he did want to add to the elegance of the most beautiful cloister already there, which presented itself near the doorway, and also the magnificence in the splendid stairway of granite that gave access to the House, and in the large hall that was placed on the upper floor²⁸.

Our students at the beginning of all this construction were lodged at the Stimate, could now return to dwell there comfortably and in a stable manner. With a happy foresight, Fr. Marani established the date of entrance for November 4th, the anniversary of the Venerated Founder's first entrance into the Stimate. Fr. Lenotti has left us a rather lengthy account of the events:

... On the 4th of November, finally, by the Lord's grace and the Holy Spouses, entrance was made into the new Novitiate. In various squadrons the Novices and students advanced with Frs. Lenotti, Vincent Vignola, and Marchesini. ²⁹ *Along with the Very*

²⁷ cf. **BC I, # 86**, note.

²⁸ It was whispered about that in this construction, Fr. Marani spent about 200,000 Lira, due to the charity of Fr. Bragato, and to the munificence of the Empress.

²⁹ Fr. Lenotti was the Director of the House and the Master of Novices. Fr. DaPrato was the Economist. Frs. Vignola and Marchesini were teachers. There were three Professed Clerics: Charles Zara, Francis Sogaro and Louis Morando. There were four Novice students: Dominic Vicentini, Andrew Stereza, Joseph DeVei and Joseph Sembianti. This last mentioned entered as a cleric on the 11th of October.

*Reverend Father Prepositus, all the Fathers of the Stimmate, and all the Brothers that could took part in all this. Father Prepositus imparted the blessing of the new House, and Rev. Fr. Peter Vignola celebrated the Holy Mass in the provisory chapel ³⁰, with songs that echoed through our students, invoking the protection of Mary and Joseph. All also remained here in the Novitiate, and there was a common meal served in joyful companionship, with the continuous renewal of thanksgiving to the Lord, to the Holy Spouses and to the Father Prepositus, who did so much and worked so hard for this building. Following dinner, Fr. Peter delivered a fitting discourse for the occasion, after which the **Te Deum** was sung, and then there was the singing of a number of songs in honor of Mary and Joseph and St. Aloysius, not only in the Chapel, but through the cloisters, concluding with the old favorite: ‘O world! You are no longer for me!’ In summary, it was a consolation, a joy, with much rejoicing, a continuous sentiment of gratitude. May the Holy Spouses now think of filling this Novitiate with spirit and with subjects, and to keep it from every difficulty and plot...*

Fr. Lenotti’s account ends here, so full of holy joy. It seemed that the Holy Spouses did begin immediately to hear the many prayers to send other candidates: among the new arrivals, we will remember two young men, Pius Gurisatti and James Marini, who made their entrance on the 10th day of this same month of November.

111. Before leaving this matter, let us recall another fact relating to it. In a room on the lower floor in the new building, there was placed on a niche a rather heavy statue representing the Blessed Mother with the Infant in her arms. The statue was quite old. In 1663, on May 13th, it had been discovered closed in between the wall of the Convent and had been placed for veneration, placing it on the niche. Our Confreres found it for the first time when they entered the Novitiate in 1857, and from that time on they had held it in great veneration: even after the new construction, they had left it on the same niche. However, when the 13th of May had come in the year 1863, they thought to celebrate it with a bit more solemnity, the second centenary of its re-discovery. On that occasion, Fr. Lenotti writes:

... the statue was restored and adorned even more. With the presence of the Fathers of the Stimmate, Fr. Vincent Vignola delivered a beautiful discourse on what was happening: the Litany of Loreto was sung, and some of the brother students offered some of their poetic compositions, and there followed the blessing with the relic The dinner was provided for all, also for the Fathers and Brothers of the Stimmate...

On that occasion, there was also placed on the wall this following inscription:

There were furthermore, 4 Coadjutor Brothers: Paul Zanoli, infirmarian and wardrobe keeper; Anthony Nicora, tailor and porter; Josepg Reali, cook and Joseph Biasi, cobbler.

And lastly, there were 5 aspirants: Egidio Gervasi, Bartholomew Perazzani, Paul Senter, Lawrence Pizzini and Anthony Caucigh.

³⁰ The Domestic Chapel was not yet completed: so, for more than a year another room had to be used as a chapel, and precisely that one that was at the end of the corridor on the upper floor.

This image of Mary was found on May 13th, 1663, hidden in the wall and placed here in this manner.

Now, with the second centenary of its re-discovery occurring, the statue was restored and acclaimed the Madonna of this Novitiate of the Apostolic Missionaries.

May 13, 1863.

Finally, in December of that same year, there was brought to an end the construction in the Chapel: Bishop di Canossa was invited to bless it, and he celebrated the first Mass there on December 10th: on that occasion, he was conducted through the house to see it. For the main altar, there was hung a painting representing the Blessed Mother and St. Joseph, receiving the prayers of the young students: this was the work of the painter, Recchia, who in the painting faithfully represented five of the young Novice students.³¹

112. Meanwhile, up until May of that same year of 1863, the Municipal Government of Verona had invited the owners of the houses occupied by the soldiers to stipulate new contracts of rent and more modest rates, or to simply keep for themselves the properties. Fr. Benciolini chose this latter alternative and this would leave the Convent of the *Dereletti* open and free. However, the Nuns at St. Dominic's on May 23rd had already stipulated a new Contract with the Municipal Government leaving the him the use of St Teresa's Convent for 1500 florins a year. Fr. Benciolini once more appealed to Bishop di Canossa, pointing out that the ceding of the Convent could not be called 'forced' but voluntary and that therefore on the basis of their Contract of 1830, the Nuns had lost the use of the property. He asked however, that there should pass over to him all the monies received from his own property, or that the Nuns by rescinding their contract with the Municipal Government should transfer the college of the young girls to St. Teresa's. On March 15, 1864, the Bishop responded, defending the Nuns' position, because the military occupation had been temporary. And they could also perceive the financial allotments during the period of their absence from the property, because their right for its use all that time remained. Fr. Benciolini sought for authorization to bring the matter before a civil tribunal, but the Bishop denied him permission, counseling him rather to appeal to the Holy See.

So recourse to the Sacred Congregation of the Council was made. In the letter of August 20th, sought the opinion of the Bishop of Verona. As was natural, in his response of February 14, 1865, confirmed his sentence already communicated to the Stigmatines. We do not know what was the ultimate decision of the Holy See: we know only that in 1865, our Fathers sent to Rome all the documentation relative to this matter. In the meantime, there took place the occupation of the Venetian Provinces on the part of the Italian Government and the Law of confiscation of religious goods on

³¹ The two who are standing are Pius Gurisatti, on the right [under the Blessed Virgin]; Louis Morando is on the left. Below, kneeling, from right to left, are Cajetan Nardelli, Dominic Vicentini and Bartholomew Perazzani.

On August 31st 1864, Fr. Bernardine of Vicenza, erected the Way of the Cross, in the corridor which is just before the Chapel. They remained there until 1911, when our students returned to live in the Novitiate.

July 7, 1866. Most likely, this thorny question remained unresolved. But, now let us return to our own history.

113. On June 12, 1864, Fr. Marani celebrated the 50th anniversary of his Priestly Ordination: this was a day of festivity for the entire Congregation. They wanted to give public testimony to their sentiments of the love and gratitude that they felt in his regard. Fr. Bragato was present for the celebration as he wanted to assist at the Mass in the quality of a protector. In the evening, they held a solemn ‘academy’ with the presence of many notable persons both from the ranks of the clergy as well as of the laity, and in this they performed for the first time the festive chant, *Onward, Brothers!* which was prepared for the occasion by the Maestro Gagliardi.

In this same month of June, Fr. Marani went to Trent to continue the negotiations for a foundation in that city: along its general lines, the matter had already been decided, and the thought came to seek the permission of the Imperial Government. About this time, our Fathers began preaching both Parish Missions as well as Retreats in Trent, in Rovereto, and in other places of the diocese. AN advantage was immediately experienced in the numerous vocations who came forward in those areas. Already in 1862, Lawrence Pizzini and Joseph Sembianti entered from Trent. In 1863, there were Richard Tabarelli, Cajetan Nardelli and Brother Amadio Caresia. In 1864, Alexis Magagna, Lawrence Rigatti came, not even to mention others, both students and brothers, who, however, after a brief time, returned home.

And other young men had entered in this period from the Venetian Provinces, among whom we recall here Michael Lanaro, Angelo Graziani, Bonaventure Vivaldi. Fr. Lenotti’s wish was being fulfilled a little at a time: the Holy Spouses were blessing the new Novitiate.

The old veterans in the vineyard, who had suffered so much for the good of the Congregation, could now happily sing their ***Now dismiss your servant ...*** and to go forward and receive the reward of their sustained efforts. On February 26, `864, Fr. Innocent Venturini – the great lover of Mary and zealous catechist died. He had been one of Fr. Bertoni’s earliest companions. However, the Lord chose to compensate for his loss, and on St. Francis’ feast Fr. Thomas Vicentini entered, from San Massimo, near Verona, who had served as a Curate at Bonferraro.

In 1865, our Fathers went to preach a series of Parish Missions also in the Dioceses of Adria, and from there, they brought back with them the young student Bellino Carrara. At that same time, Cajetan Pizzighella of Verona entered, Melchiade Vivari and Joseph Zandonai both Trentines. On January 12, 1865 Brother James Zadra, likewise from the Diocese of Trent. Fr. Lenotti described him in these terms: ‘after he had waged combat for his Sovereign on earth, now he dedicates himself to the service of the King of Heaven.’

In the meantime, precisely on March 12, 1864, Francis Sogaro had been ordained a priest. On August 15, 1865, Joseph Sembianti was also ordained. So, the number of the workers in the vineyard of the Lord were increasing. Fr. Sogaro began from the Festival of St. Peter’s in 1865 as a collaborator with Fr. Benciolini in St. Stephen’s Parish. In this manner, Fr. DaPrato was freed, and on July 27th, he was

named Master of Novices, taking over from Fr. Lenotti who had become Prefect of Studies.³²

114. In April of the following year 1866, the response from the Imperial Government came down, which permitted the foundation of a House of the Congregation in Trent, with the condition that there might be maintained a secure financial support and that the Government or the Region would never be bothered by this. This permission had arrived just at the right time, because very disturbing storms were being prepared on the horizon for Verona and for other regions of northern Italy.

As a result of the war declared by Prussia against Austria, also Italy on June 19th declared war against Austria on June 10th, for the conquest of the Venetian Provinces. So, once again these territories were invaded and devastated by troops. The two armies met in battle at Custozza on June 24 of this same month of June, and the battle was very bloody. For many weeks, there were seen entering Verona carriages full of terribly wounded men, of every nationality: Italians, Germans, Hungarians, Rumenians and Slavs. They would be brought to one or other of the more than 34 Military Hospitals that had been hastily set up in the more spacious Churches, or in other public buildings throughout the city.

In this situation, our men offered themselves both for the physical and spiritual well being of these unfortunate human beings: three Brothers were invited by the Municipal Government each night to the Hospital of St. Mary's to assist these wounded, while the Fathers went one to one hospital and another to a different one [especially to the one at the building dedicated to the Angels] in order to administer the Holy Sacraments of Confession, Holy Communion and Extreme Unction. So, also in these very sad circumstances, the Confreres had occasion to exercise their zeal and to dedicate themselves for the good of souls.

115. Around this time, death came to cut off two noble lives in the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity. On June 11th, after an illness of only a few days, at the age of 73, Brother Paul Zanoli died in the kiss of the Lord. He had been the inseparable companion of the Father Founder, whose tireless and loving care has assisted him in those long and painful infirmities. Fr. Lenotti noted on this occasion.

... He was mature for heaven. We have lost so much, and our Congregation will find a great emptiness, with Brother Paul now gone. But we hope we have gained a good protector up there in heaven...

Two months later, the angelic young man, Anthony Caucigh died. He was a Student Novice who left among us a dear memory and so many noble examples of virtue. Once more, Fr. Lenotti records this unhappy event:

...precisely on the 11th of the month of August, a Saturday, during the Novena dedicated to the Assumption of Mary, to whom he was much devoted, and of Blessed

³² In this regard, we will remember that on July 20, 1866, there began in the Novitiate the study of St. Thomas, in common with our young students and priests, in the manner of the way that the Founder used to conduct the theological conferences in the old days at the Stimate.

John Berchmans, his protector. His companions literally wept over this bitter loss. And for us, how displeasing is the loss of a young man, of such beautiful hopes! Let us bow down our heads to adore the Divine Providence, which is likewise gently evening taking from us for heaven such chosen lilies. Under one aspect, it would be right to tell the truth: his was an enviable death and this has greatly consoled us...

116. In the meantime, the war had also been suspended, and Austria through Napoleon III, had ceded the Venetian Provinces: within a short time, the Italian Government would take possession of Verona. In the foresight that the new Government would also extend into its new provinces the law of suppression which had just shortly before been approved, Fr. Marani on the vigil of the Assumption, made his way to Trent in order to hurry along the protracted negotiations for a House of the Congregation there, and to put in some safety, if it were possible, our young students. His Excellency, Bishop Riccabona offered to house them in his palace of Villazzano, while the Reverend Bernard Fusari, placed at their disposal for some weeks his college property, until the entire contingent of students could be transferred to Villazzano. And thus, the migration began, and was carried out from August 17-20th. Our students remained in Fr. Fusari's building until St. Bartholomew's day, with furniture sent from Verona, and they transported everything to that place, where they were consoled for some days with the presence of the Father Prepositus who had with such swiftness arranged for all this. The Bishop himself came, and every once in a while, he would drop in for a visit and to console all with his person.³³

After a few days, Fr. Marani returned to Verona, but he would return for the first time to Villazzano, and then also a second, on September 19th, for the purpose of conducting a Canonical Visitation of the House, and to give some instructions, as he did³⁴.

Fifty years had passed since the Venerated Founder had withdrawn into the Stimmate. Fr. Lenotti made note of this in the House Chronicle:

...The First Sunday of November, the 4ⁿ of this month, there was celebrated in our Congregation, both in Verona as well as here at Villazzano, in Trent, the Golden Jubilee of this small Congregation, by thanking God with all our heart and the Holy Spouses, for the mercy given to us and for the multiplied ineffable graces, both past and present,

³³ To maintain the union of spirit and of charity with the Brothers in Verona, there would be sent from Villazzano a Community Newsletter that would come out every 15 days, with the title *New Tyrolean Messenger*. The first edition came out on December 15, of that year 1866.

³⁴ The following was the distribution of the personnel for this rather large community in exile: Fr. John B. Lenotti, Director and Prefect of Studies; Fr. Vincent Vignola. On October 23rd, Fr. Richard DaPrato arrived as Novice Master.

There were these Professed Students: Louis Morando, Lawrence Pizzini, Dominic Vicentini, Andrew Sterza, Bartholomew Perazzani, Pius Gurisatti, James Marini, Alexis Magagna, Bellino Carrara, James Setti [who left that October].

The Aspirants were: George Sabeditsch [from Prague], Angelo Graziani, Bonaventure Vivadi, Melchiade Vivari, Joseph Zandonai, Cajetan Pizzighella, and Lous Gasperotti who had entered in Verona on June 6th].

Finally, the Brothers were: James Zadra, cook and porter; David Chiesa, tailor; Joseph Biasi, cobbler.

extended to this Congregation. May the Name of the Lord be blessed, from now and forever...!

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Chapter 3
THE TERRIBLE TEMPEST
[1866-1873]

117. The War of 1866 was concluded with the Peace of Vienna, on October 3rd. ON the 9th of the same month, there was conducted the decided upon ceding of the Venetian Provinces to the new Reign of Italy. On the day that the Italian troops entered Verona [October 16th], our Fathers, too, exposed the three-colored flag on the houses of their property, and on the bell tower of the Stimate. Two weeks earlier, as a measure of precaution, the Stigmatines removed the Rosary which up until that time had hung from their sashes, and assumed the little cape, in the style of Diocesan Priests³⁵.

³⁵ **NB: English Translator’s Note:** if the truth be told, Fr. Bertoni had legislated that there was no religious habit for Stigmatines: cf. Compendium Rude:

6. The Means [to be employed]:

The [spiritual] perfection of each one.

Perfection in ecclesiastical doctrines.

Common Life

The perpetual exercise of obedience, chastity and poverty in all aspects.

The program of living regarding food, clothing and lodging, will be in harmony with the more observant clergy among whom the Missionaries live, and for the edification of the faithful, both regarding Christian parsimony and evangelical poverty.

A bit of Commentary:

CF # 32: the novitiate should begin with the candidate in some religious garb, in a separate dwelling with the Master of Novices under the customary discipline and the exercise of the prescribed activities]. **This does not seem to mean any specific religious “habit”**, already handled in the *Compendium Rude*, **## 6;** under poverty, **CF ## 43; 91; 94;** and especially **CF # 137,** under exterior modesty for chastity]. **CF # 32: The Novitiate will begin in religious garb, in a place, or dwelling separated from the members of the community, under a Master of Novices, and in the traditional discipline and exercise of prescribed activities. # 7:** The Promotion of the Grades of Membership: Promotion, in general is found in **CF Part V, ## 69-82.**

- regarding the ‘Professed’: in **MssB ## 9848 & 9849,** this is **# 11:** this is promotion to the **supreme priestly work,** the **“apostolic mission”** - whereas, the promotion of the Students in found in **CF, Part VIII, ## 152-157;** **the specific promotion to “Profession” is found in CF Part IX, ## 158-186.**

- regarding the promotion of the other members, in **MssB 9848 & 9849,** this is **#**

12.

The fact that the Founder did not legislate a particular habit, comes under Fr. Bertoni’s ideal: **Perfection of One Self [CF 6 a]:** each one’s spiritual perfection: through common life; the perpetual exercise of Obedience, Chastity and Poverty; the manner of living regarding food, clothing, a dwelling in harmony with that of **the more perfect members of the clergy** [*honestas clericalis*] according to the various places and for the edification of the faithful, as well as pertaining to Christian parsimony and evangelical poverty. In this, he followed St. Ignatius:

Religious Habit: also in what pertains to food, clothing, and other external things, they will follow the common and approved usage of reputable priests – so that if anything is subtracted in this regard in accordance with one’s need or desire in spiritual progress, it may be offered, as will be fitting, out of devotion and not obligation, as a reasonable service of the body to God [cf. Rm 12:1, ff.]: ...*Obsecro*

In September of that year there had broken out in Palermo a kind of popular revolution. The population of that city was already in ferment for some time, and became further irritated by the Law of Suppression of Religious Orders, approved by the two Houses of Government, and promulgated on July 7th. One reason was that in the strength of that law, thousands of families which previously had been maintained by religious now remained without any means of living.³⁶

The upheaval had been prepared therefore, in secret, with printed leaflets hostile to the Government, and in then broke out into the open on the morning of September 16th with the cry: *Long Live the republic!* And they had been able to take over government offices even until the 22nd, having set up a provisory Government. The real blame for this upheaval falls on those who imposed on the nation its agenda in order to govern it according to their lights: however, the sectarians, the liberals, and some government workers themselves seized upon this occasion in order to calumniate and persecute those whom they wanted to oppress. They claimed that the Clergy had wanted to attempt a great *coup*, with the view to this Law of Oppression, and that in the hidden placers of these religious houses they had prepared financial support and even weapons. And with the hope of discovering proofs for these accusations they conducted very rigorous invasions into Religious Houses, not only in Palermo, but throughout Italy and also in Verona.

The night of October 24-25, the Jesuit Residence and that of the Sons of Mary were invaded, and on the morning of the 25th, also that of the Stigmatines. Fr. Lenotti has recorded this:

*... They came to the Stimate at 9:45 a.m., numbering about 20, between Carabinieri and workers, to conduct a rigorous investigation, for the purpose of seeing if there were in our house any Jesuits or papers relating to the upheavals in Palermo. They did not find anything, as they had to admit in the verbal process. the invasion was conducted in a kind manner, and with courtesy. However, despite this declaration found in the Verbal Process, nonetheless a certain note was placed on the files to the effect that our Confres did have some connection with the events in Palermo ...*³⁷

118. Already from July 8th, as we have already hinted, the Law of Suppression of religious Orders had already been approved, and included the confiscation of their goods. This Law, also struck the Institute of the Sisters of the Holy Family to whom had been granted the use of St. Teresa's Convent. Fr. Benciolini, as a result, in order

itaque vos, fraters, per misericordiam Dei, ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem, sanctam, Deo placentem, rationabile obsequium vestrum...

The norm here is *honestas clericalis* - in its ultimate purpose, this is meant to be a norm referring to the *Apostolic Missionary austerity of life*. For the Jesuit perspective, cf. Luis Gonzalez,SJ, II 'Modus Procedendi' della Compagnia', in:La Formula del Istituto SJ. ROMA: CIS 1977, pp. 119, ff.

³⁶ In the city of Palermo, religious maintained more than 3000 citizens. Cf. Balan, *History of the Church*.

³⁷ One result of this investigation was the Fr. Marani, in order to remove even the suspicion of any communication with foreign governments, put to flames the precious correspondence between Fr. Bragato and Fr. Bertoni, as these letters were conserved in the Archives of the Stimate.

to avoid any misunderstanding, and also because he did not hold that it was the Sisters' property as it clearly belonged to him, at the beginning of 1867 appealed to the Municipal Government of Verona, and then to the Office of Military Intelligence, that St. Teresa's Convent might be freed just as soon as possible. And as he awaited the execution of his request and the emptying out of the Convent, the Royal Department of Finances, by Decree of April 20, sent this on to a higher Court because it considered St. Teresa's as belonging to a suppressed religious community. Fr. Benciolini immediately submitted a solemn appeal against that point of view: therefore, through the good offices of Fr. Rigoni, the Procurator General of the Congregation, on May 14th, presented a recourse to the Higher Administration of for Worship in Florence, asking for the property to be returned.

Contemporaneously Fr. Rigoni had written to Honorable Miniscalchi in Florence, begging that some help be given so that this might hasten the solution of this entanglement, adding that the Convent needed some repairs soon, since from 1859 on, it had been occupied by the Austrian Army. In fact, in order to obtain more easily that which he sought, Fr. Rigoni thought about going in person to Florence. He left the 1st day of June and arrived there, and treated of the matter personally with the Director of the Higher Administration for Worship, and then for a long time, with the Secretary of the same office, Sir James Muzzo. To put it briefly, the Administration was indeed disposed to restore the property, and only in obedience to a government circular dated February 16, 1866, a reservation was made first to obtain more exact information from the Mayor of Verona. However, after the conversation had with Fr. Rigoni, this condition was also revoked, being content to ask the Mother Superior of the Sisters, whether if on her part, she had no objection that the property be returned to its rightful owner.³⁸

Fr. Rigoni, before leaving from Florence, spoke again with Sir Muzzo also about our Congregation and for every good purpose give him a note [and he assumed it as information that had come to him] that the Congregation of the Stimate in Verona had never received any Decree of Approbation, no approved Rules, did not have a common life. Sir Muzzo in dismissing him, said to Fr. Rigoni that he would intervene personally if there was ever any need of clarifications, or for anything else: because of this, Fr. Rigoni profited by his good will, writing to him repeatedly from Verona, to solicit the solution of this matter. And Sir Muzzo kept his word and did intervene personally on behalf of the Stigmatines: on August 7th, the Finance Department notified Fr. Rigoni that the Higher Administration for Worship would as soon as possible comply with his request: and would have actually given back the Convent, as appears also from an official document from that same Administration, dated September 7th of that year. However, in the meantime, the City Treasurer of Verona disturbed the waters, as we will see in a little while..

119. Meanwhile, in Villazzano the Community was getting along as best it could. Far from all the entanglements, amid fear and hope, the Community attended to study

³⁸ In fact, she was interrogated on August 4th, of that year 1867, and responded that on her part, she was not opposed to this decision.

and to prayer, begging the Holy Spouses that they might indeed protect the little Congregation, and to send to it many and good workers³⁹.

In 1867, the March devotions were observed with extraordinary fervor: at the end of the month, Fr. Marani was also present, and on that occasion there was offered an 'academy' of poetry, a kind of a higher level local talent-show. Fr. Marani returned again to Villazzano for the celebration of the Patronage of St. Joseph, which was also solemnly celebrated and preceded by a Triduum of sermons offered by the Novices.

Also on that occasion, another one of the demonstrations, called an 'academy', was offered in honor of St. Joseph: Richard Tabarelli who on that day had celebrated his Profession, preached a sermon honoring St. Joseph which moved all who heard it. Finally, at the end of the Scholastic Year [during the first half of August], Fr. Marani was a third time at Villazzano and took part in the examinations of which he was quite pleased.

The Fathers of the House, in addition to being occupied in teaching school, like those in Verona, also remained committed to other works of the sacred Ministry, and most particularly, that of preaching. Fr. Vincent Vignola already from the previous November, taught Catechism on Sundays, and in company with Fr. Lenotti, preached frequent Missions and Retreats, both in the city of Trent, and in other places of the Diocese. They thus corresponded in such a manner with the high hopes of Bishop Riccabona who had called our Confreres there for the good of the local populace.⁴⁰ At the same time those Fathers of ours were committed to the youth of Villazzano and the neighboring villages, for which they had opened an Oratory, and Sunday recreation center: and on the occasion of the Christmas holidays, following the example of the House of Verona, they organized a recital performed before the Christmas crib.

However, still another harsh trial tormented the men from this year in the Community of Villazzano: the young students of the Venetian Provinces were drafted into the military service. There was much trepidation for all when some of them had to leave to go and take their enrollment procedures: the Lord, however, and the Holy Spouses protected them visibly: since among those young men, only Bartholomew Perazzani was declared eligible, and he, too, found a generous benefactor, who paid the sum required which liberated him from military service.

And there were other signs of His protection which the Lord gave: on November 21, 1868, on the Vigil of the Patronage of the Virgin Mary, Fr. Peter Beltrami, and

³⁹ From the very early days that the Community was in Villazzano, Julius Zanini and Anthony Oss-bals entered: however, in February 1867, Cajetan Nardelli left. On the following day, there was celebrated a Mass honoring St. Joseph, to obtain good vocations. [A note in Fr. Lenotti's Chronicle].

⁴⁰ In 1875, Bishop Haller, the Coadjutor of Bishop Riccabona, gave this testimony honoring our men: The Priests of this Congregation who are found in this Diocese, distinguish themselves for the holiness of their lives, as for the zeal that they show for the good of souls, so much so that they enjoy a good reputation both among the priests, as well as among the faithful.

ordained Priest, chaplain of the Judiciary entered. He was brought to Verona to make his Novitiate there⁴¹.

120. But let us return now to Verona where a very disturbing event occurred. On August 27th, as Fr. Lenotti recorded in his Chronicle:

... at noon, there appeared at the Stimate, two government agents, from the Finance Ministry, the other from the Municipal Government. Their goal was to sequester all the substance of the Congregation possessed by Fr. Benciolini: in accord with their message, they were ready to take force, and they wanted to complete this sequester, sealing some rooms, and on the morrow, they went to the Dereletti and then to the Most Holy Trinity. May Your Will be done in all: may the Name of the Lord be blessed. The Lord will not abandon us: the Holy Spouses will think of how to sustain this, their Congregation ... !

Fr. Benciolini issued a formal protest on that same day, stating that all those goods were his own private property: and then, without delay, he had recourse to the Royal Pretor of Verona and of Soave, asking to be readmitted into possession of his goods. Meanwhile, Fr. Rigoni went to Florence to take up the matter personally with the Higher Administration for Worship. But, he was able to accomplish nothing, and on October 4th, a Mr. Vanzetti, a representative of the Finance Ministry presented himself, ordering the departure within two weeks of all three houses where our men were living. There were left for them only 4 rooms on the upper floor at the Stimate; two at the Dereletti, for six priests who had to take care of the both Churches, in addition to the kitchen and the refectory on the ground floor.

To no avail had Fr. Benciolini's previous recourse been advanced, nor was their any effect of a new appeal being made by Fr. Marani to the Ministry of Worship, in order to receive even a temporary stay in the executive decisions that had been made nor nothing regarding the order of evacuating the House. Fr. Rigoni's third trip to Florence also proved fruitless. He merely stated the impossibility of finding a fitting lodging within the time allotted, and so did obtain a delay until the end of the month of that October.

On the 29th, our Fathers and Brothers were separated into various Houses, and the Novitiate at the Most Holy Trinity had to be totally abandoned.⁴² At the Stimate, Fathers Bassi, Pl. Vignola, Rigoni and Thomas Vicentini, with Brothers Reali, Rigoni and Raffaelli, were to live⁴³. At the Dereletti, Frs. Benciolini and Sogaro, with Brothers Nicora and Amadio Caresia remained⁴⁴. At the Pozza home were Fathers Marchesini

⁴¹ IN that November 1867, the Cleric Stephen Ossbals entered. He made his Novitiate in Verona and was ordained a Priest on January 10, 1869. However, a little after this, because of some Masonic threats and other difficulties, he had to return home.

⁴² This locale was then given to the Municipal Government, in order to convert it into a provincial boarding house. This is according to the Minutes of the taking possession of the building.

⁴³ Brother Joseph Reali would die a year later on November 15, 1800. Brothers John Raffaelli together with Joseph Biasi, left in June 1870.

⁴⁴ Brother Caresia died on January 26, 1868 after three months from the time he was found in that House. Let us recall here that Fr. Marani in 1866 had torn down a part of the old building

and Zara⁴⁵, with Brothers Falsi and Creazi. Fr. Marani would take up residence within the Parish of St. Nicholas, in the home of his widowed niece, who accepted him lovingly with Brother Ferrari and Fr. Sembianti.

On October 31, once again the government agent, Mr. Vanzetti once again appeared to be sure that the evacuation of our Confreres had been completed. From him, was received the granting [on the strength of a declaration] of the furniture necessary for ten priests, who earlier had been lodged in the three houses, and for ten seculars who attended to the care of the House. Fr. Peter Vignola, in the name of Fr. Marani, signed the declaration of a receipt for these objects, and for some books which were granted to their use: with this, however, our Confreres made it clear that this action did not intend to admit to the formal pre-existence of a Congregation that would fall under this Decree of Suppression. They also reserved every exception, even to the rights of the owner. On that occasion, Fr. Vignola also rented for one year the Garden of the Stimmate for 50 Lira.

121. In the meantime, every recourse to the Prefectures of Verona and of Soave, forwarded by Fr. Benciolini remained useless. He thought then, of having recourse through an administrative avenue: and he addressed himself to the Higher Administration for Worship in Florence with a documented declaration of his reason and his rightful ownership, and asked for the removal of the freeze on his assets. However, that Administration only listened to the opinion of its own Counsel, in an Audience granted January 4, 1868, and rejected his request, declaring that it held that the reasons of ownership that he advanced, were unfounded.

All that remained now was to have recourse to the Courts, sustaining his ownerships rights over the goods that had been sequestered. However, it did not seem that it would help at all to have any recourse to the local courts which were because of the enthusiasm of their imposed public opinion, and they were at best suspect. Fr. Benciolini, then, had recourse to the Civil Court and the Court of Appeals in Florence, and with a citation of May 4, 1868, he called to appear before it the Royal Government and the General Administration for Worship. However, since the Cause promoted by him did not fall under the competence of that tribunal, he did not include his claim for the restitution of his goods, contesting to initiate only a *personal action*, i.e., to prove the non-applicability of the Law of July 7, 1866 in his case. However, his adversaries, leaving aside the merits of his appeal, maintained that the conclusions presented by him really from the perspective of the law, involved a *real action*, that was the exclusive competence of the local courts: nonetheless, after desperate struggles and efforts that were more lucky than capable [!]. On the 26th of August, the tribunal declared their own incompetence to treat the case. Fr. Benciolini had recourse to the Court of Appeal in Florence, which on March 11, 1869, confirmed the first sentence: and he finally had recourse to the Court of Cassation also in Florence, which on December 2nd of that same year, annulled the two previous decisions and sent the case back to the Court of Appeals of Lucca. Fr. Benciolini had recourse to

of the Dereletti, and had begun the construction of the new Church, which in 1867, were suspended. Meanwhile our Fathers continued to officiate in the old Church which was still standing.

⁴⁵ Fr. Zara had been ordained a Priest on March 16th in Verona.

that Court on May 27, 1870, but this tribunal once more declared its own incompetence, on the 20th of June of that same year.

121. Here let us pause a bit to consider the sad situation of our Confreres in unfortunate time. They were deprived of the income required for their own sustenance, deprived even of laundry, clothing and even of books. They would have almost had to give up their ideal of their life together as a Community, and to send all the promising young students home, if Divine Providence had not intervened by sending them help. And the instrument of Providence for them on that occasion was Fr. Bragato who through the benevolence of the Empress was able to send them what they needed.⁴⁶

Nonetheless, in the midst of such manifest signs of God's protection, there were not lacking also at the same time circumstances that brought these men continuing bitterness. Cast out of their own houses, and confined to the Stimate in a corner of the building⁴⁷, they had to witness the bigger and better part of it as well as St. Teresa's Convent occupied by a college of young girls, and these undertakings were in such contrast with their own life-style. They were further threatened with the closure of the Church of the Stimate, and the consequent expulsion of the officiating Priests. They were continuously exposed to vexations, some times sweetened with flattery of them, but often enough, sheer mockery. The idea was to wear them down, and reduce them to reaching some accord. In a struggle with an adversary who abused the total authority it had, and to bend the law to its own liking, and that had at its disposal unjust and prejudiced judges, they saw themselves being forced to lay aside their own rights, to their immense disturbance and expense, and with very little hope of ever being given a fair trial, with the well-founded fear that they would eventually lose their entire patrimony. Nonetheless, based on their faith in a heavenly protection, they remained resolved to sustain their cause to the very end, and at least be able to save their conscience and honor.

123. And all this while they continued to busy themselves in the works of the ministry and to do good to the souls that came under their care.⁴⁸ By now, also other workers were ready. Additional young men were ready to be ordained: however, after the sequester of the entire patrimony of the Congregation, how could the Community still be ordaining Clerics, with the canonical title of *Common Table*? As a result, Fr. Marani had recourse once more to the Holy See, on May 1, 1869, exposing the facts,

⁴⁶ When the Empress heard the news of the sequester of the goods of the Congregation, she wrote to Fr. Marani telling him that she was disposed to assist him in all that he desired: being overwhelmed by her goodness, so he proposed to her, that as much she could, to maintain our students at Villazzano: this she accepted to do and she did maintain them for the entire time that this awful legal battle went on.

⁴⁷ Our Confreres occupied the upper rooms of the corridor from the two libraries, and their entrance was from the Vicolo of the Stimate, near the bell tower.

⁴⁸ In 1871, in a document addressed to the Holy See, His Eminence, Cardinal Louis di Canossa, wrote of our Congregation: they obtain excellent spiritual results, especially with their Parish Missions and Retreats. Thus, in this my Diocese, as well as in its counter-part, as in the Diocese of Trent, where it also has a House, there is retained in it an excellent spirit, most healthy thinking and an authentic zeal of selflessness for souls.

and petitioning for the faculty of ordaining his clerics anyway. This faculty was granted to him on August 7th of that same year. And right away, Louis Morando was promoted to orders, and on November 30th, he was ordained a priest. And in 1871, Fr. Andrew Sterza, Fr. Dominic Vicentini and Fr. Michael Lanaro were ordained.

Fr. Marani was living then, as has been said, with his niece in St. Nicholas' Parish. Due to his long-lasting disturbances and for the continuous and serious problems he faced, saw him sensibly going down hill. In 1869, on the 9th of August, he experienced grace discomfort even trying to move about the house, especially in the morning hours. So, he asked and received from the Holy See permission to set up there in the Massalongo home a private oratory with permission to celebrate Mass there, or to have it celebrated by a Priest, and to receive Holy Communion. In 1870, also in August, he state of health worsened so much so that he was considered to be in danger of death, and the Last Sacraments were administered to him. Also this time his health slowly came back, but his strength was strongly shaken. The following year, 1871, in the hot summer months, once more he was reduced to the extremes. After a brief illness, he fell asleep in the Lord, on the **1st day of July at the age of 81**. He had been a zealous and tireless worker in promoting God's glory and the good of the Congregation, and his death was mourned by all the sons of the Congregation, as the death of a Father.

124. On the 3rd day of July, the Fathers of the Congregation assembled for the General Chapter, in order to elect a successor to Fr. Marani. Keeping in mind the exceptional circumstances in which the Institute found itself, the Capitulars decided to elect a temporary Superior who would remain in office until September 17th. Fathers Rigoni, Lenotti and Peter Vignola were entrusted to prepare a Statute in order to determine the manner and the limits of the Superior General's Government in those points in which the Venerated Founder had not left anything in writing. Fr. Lenotti was elected as the temporary Superior.

On the 11th of September of the same year, the Second General Chapter convened. In this there was discussed and approved the plan presented on the Manner of Government for the Superior General with the title: ***Appendix to the 12th Part of the Constitutions***⁴⁹. In this, among other stipulations, it was decided that for the future, at General Chapters. Only those Fathers who had received the '**Grade of Apostolic Missionary**' from the Superior General, could participate. Furthermore, the length of term for the Superior General was established to be for life. However, because of the circumstances in which the Institute presently found itself it was decided for this first time to elect him only for five years, and then the Chapter went on to re-confirm Fr. Lenotti up until January 23, 1872.

Then, on October 4th, the Third General Chapter was convened and Fr. Lenotti was elected for five years. He was given as his Councilors Frs. Peter Vignola, DaPrato, Benciolini and Rigoni⁵⁰. This last mentioned was also named Procurator

⁴⁹ **NB: English Translator's Note: an English translation of this document appears under the heading of the 'General Chapters', with this title of Appendix ...**

⁵⁰ Consequent to the elections of Frs. Lenotti and DaPrato, at Villazzano Fr. Vincent Vignola was elected Director, and Fr. Mark Bassi, as Master of Novices, and Fr. Morando as Prefect of Studies.,

General. In this Chapter the Superior General was also charged to confer the **Grade of *Apostolic Missionary*** to be conferred on Fr. Bragato⁵¹.

⁵¹ The following is something of a record of how the Congregation conferred this ‘Grade’ taken from a copy of the proposed Constitutions of 1889-1890 – the work of a Capitular Commission from 1881-1890:

4. At length, after a Priest member has spent some years in the ecclesiastical ministries, he could be **elevated to the Grade of Apostolic Missionary**. But, no one is to be endowed with this Grade unless he has completed his thirty-fifth year, and ten years of vows in our Sodality.

Moreover, there are required in him besides **outstanding piety, love for regular discipline, and zeal for the salvation of souls**, that he be endowed with **suitable doctrine**, i.e., that he has passed with praise his last exams, after having completed the entire curriculum of theology; also, that he be **of great merit to the Institute**:

Either because he was **engaged in giving the Sacred Missions**; or, **the Spiritual Exercises**; or, for a full three years, he had been the **Director of some House of ours**; or, had been **teacher of the sacred disciplines for four years**⁵¹; or was **dedicated for many years in instructing the youth**; or, lastly, **he had performed well some other office, or duty for the good of the Sodality**.

The judgment of this merit is absolutely up to the Superior and the General Councilors, who, by a plurality of secret votes, will promote those to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**, who are **endowed with these qualities** we have noted above: they will then announce, by Decree, their promotion to the entire Sodality⁵¹.

This number would be eliminated when the Holy See informed the Congregation that only the Holy See could confer the title *Apostolic Missionary*.

This **n. 4** of the adapted Rules provides a **very broad sweep of Ministries** to qualify for the conferral of the **Grade**. It seems to be a “photograph” of the many services a confrere could offer for a number of years, in order to qualify for the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**, as it was conferred during these times of the Stigmatine History. **However, the Deputed Commission eliminates it here**. One possible reason is that these proposed Constitutions had been **submitted to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Feb. 20, 1889** – and the title **Apostolic Missionary** was considered the prerogative of the Holy See and should not be given by any religious Community. Furthermore, the title of this Chap. IV, of Part IV, had read: **Concerning those to be promoted to the Sacerdotal Office, and to the Grade of Apostolic Missionary in our Sodality**. The underlined part of this title is eliminated by the Deputed Commission, and does not appear in the final copy approved by the General Chapter.[cf. **Fr. Stofella, Historical Introduction to the Booklet of the Original Constitutions, Terza Fase, pp. 30-32**]. At any rate, there was no discussion of the many services included within the **Apostolic Mission** in order to be consider for promotion to the **Grade of Apostolic Missionary**

Fr. Stofella offers the history on this matter in his ‘Introduction’ to the Printed Edition of the ***Original Constitutions***, in 1951:

The Fourth Phase of the Historical Changes in the Constitutions

This time in Rome, the work was given for examination to Monsignor Albert Battandier, who forwarded his judgment to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and regulars on June 12, 1890. He discarded the name **Apostolic Missionaries** from the outset, since it was an honorary title, the bestowal of which was a prerogative reserved to the sacred Congregation of Propaganda Fide. Instead, he suggested **retaking the name Priests of the Sacred Stigmata**, which the Sacred Congregation later completed – recalling the Decree of Praise – **of the Sacred Stigmata of Our Lord Jesus Christ**. As a natural consequence of this, **there could not be a class of members in the Institute called *Apostolic Missionaries*, a dignity which the Superior General was to confer on certain professed priests for reasons of prestige and age, and which would automatically make them members of the General Chapters**.

As an alternative, Mons. Battandier proposed that members of the general Chapters be chosen by the elective system. Then, he listed a good number of objections, corrections and

125. One of the first thoughts of the new Superior was to complete the negotiations of the House of Trent: and to prepare everything for a regular foundation there. Therefore in February 1872, he purchased for the price of 40,000 Lira a garden with a dwelling, situated near the city of Trent, in the confines of St. Bernardine Vecchio, with the intention of renovating as a house for our Confreres.

At the same time, **he studied a plan to extend the Congregation**, by establishing some houses outside of Italy: and with this in mind, he approached Monsignor Vermillod, the Bishop of Geneva, making him the proposal of establishing in his Diocese a House of our Congregation. But the Swiss Bishop responded that this was not the most opportune time for such an undertaking, because precisely in those days, the Swiss Catholics had to undergo some very difficult struggles against the Government for the defense of Religious Institutes: therefore, the Bishop counseled Fr. Lenotti to wait for better times⁵².

In the spring of that same year 1872 in Trent, Bishop Riccabona was found to be in failing health due to recurring fainting spells. The doctors counseled him to take some rest in his summer home in Villazzano. It was therefore necessary to place at the disposition of the illustrious patient his summer home, and that the Stigmatines would have to rent another home somewhere, one that would be large enough and comfortable that it might be able to house a religious family. After many negotiations, Fr. Lenotti was able to have for rent a house that would be large enough [property of the Ballarini Family in Trent] situated in Sale' of Povo, on the pleasant hills that rise up on the eastern of the city: our Confreres entered there on June 17, and they would remain there for two years.

deletions to be made, as well as modifications and proposals, all summarized by the sacred Congregation, in 16 *Animadversiones* the last of which again noted that *there are still many other items to be amended, regarding expressions, and phrases...*

This time, however, the Sacred Congregation seconded the vote of its Consultor, *deferring the approval of the Constitutions to another time*, but deciding to *grant the approval of the Institute*. In fact, on **September 15, 1890**, the Sacred Congregation published the **Decree of Approbation of the Institute**.

⁵² In this year of 1872, Fr. Lenotti was also in negotiations for a foundation in Udine. But as that Archbishop placed as a condition that one of our Fathers should take over a parish, Fr. Lenotti did not want to accept it, so also that plan ended as naught. **NB: Fr. Lenotti was beginning to broaden the Apostolic Mission much in accord with the *Original Constitutions*: cf. *quocumque* [CF ## 5; &290]:**

290. Moreover, as it was stated from the outset, our Congregation does not admit of the ordinary care of souls. This is understood with respect had for any community of seculars, and especially of the monasteries and congregations of religious women. But this is also so that no confrere will accept any ordinary care of singular persons, either men, or especially women, as a personal office, or as an obligation binding both parties, or one of the two, nor accept the obedience of another person.

126. But now let us go back to the Benciolini case. After the Sentence of the Court of Appeal of Lucca [July 20 1870], Fr. Benciolini renounced his recourse to the Court of Cassation, had recourse in an administrative manner to the Minister of Grace and Justice, asking for a revision and the reform of the decision of the Higher Administration for Worship and the freeing of its goods. His recourse was presented on September 29, 1870, and for the space of one year there was no response.

However, on September 1, 1871 with the legislative unification, there had been renewed the Venetian Courts and established the publicity of its judgments, and important guarantee for their independence and impartiality. Fr. Benciolini, therefore, on September 3 and 11 cited the Provincial Ministry of Finance and the Administration of the Fund for Worship before the civil and correctional tribunal of Verona, asking that there be restored the goods discussed in the Tribunal Minutes of August 27, 1867 and there would be rendered an account of the properties, paying him restitution for its perceived and perceivable profits, compensating him for the damage, and do on. On the 27th of that same month, the case was entrusted to the lawyer, Alexander Brasca of Milan.

The citation was presented with the formulae of the *summary ritual*, a privilege established in favor of the public administration. The Audience took place on November 9th: in it, the advocate of the two administrations recused them from treating of the merits of the controversy, rejected the privilege of the *summary ritual*. Then, referring to a broad and ordered series of documents [with which the intent was to prove that Fr. Benciolini was only the apparent owner, whereas in reality, all belonged to the Congregation of the Priests of the Stimmate, existing since the year 1816], the government representative asked that this fact be re-admitted to continue the case with an ordinary process. The tribunal accepted this petition, and rejected the subordinate petition of the plaintiff that pending the process outcome, that there be at least restored to him the administration of his own goods.

Fr. Benciolini in renouncing his appeal, in January 1872 constituted his lawyer and deposited in the chancery the documents of his case: the adversary part did the same, and furthermore, with their instance of February 19th, sustained that Fr. Benciolini was no longer the proprietor of these goods, because in 1855, her had transferred that endowment to the Congregation. And this position sought that all this be admitted to prove with witnesses the circumstances contained in the five chapters that it presented.

Fr. Benciolini responded to all this with his official reply of March 12th. In this, he denied even that this position of this adversary should even be admitted. The adversary part on May 18th, responded to prove its thesis, presented 17 documents, to which Fr. Benciolini responded at his appearance of May 31st. Finally, the other side insisted in asking the witness proofs should not be just the five chapters previously submitted, but now that there were 10 chapters. Fr. Benciolini furthered the case for the 15th of July before the President of the tribunal. He called for both sides to appear on September 14th, for the resolution of the matter of the proofs, and should the matter come up, also the merits of the case.

Finally, on September 3, there gathered in Verona the Fourth General Chapter of the Congregation, and in it, among other questions, there were these two proposals: (1) Whether there was going to be a stable foundation in Trent. The Chapter responded affirmatively, provided that there would not be a harmful end of the long

case that Fr. Benciolini had initiated to get the property restored. (2) Whether the Congregation should accept some transaction from the Government in the case that one might be offered. However, this second proposal was not admitted to the Chapter floor for discussion, as all were persuaded that through Fr. Benciolini's case, all were confident in the heavenly protection that our Confreres would persevere even if no happy resolution were reached.

127. On September 14th, there took place the Hearing in the Tribunal of Verona: in it, our Lawyer, Attorney Brasca, after having established the admissibility of the 10 chapters presented through testimonial proof [because they were not based on facts, but only on approximations and the reading of 'intentions'], showed that Fr. Benciolini had not lost the ownership of his own goods. In 1854, in fact, he had not ceded the property, but only forwarded an agreement with the Government: this seemed further substantiated by the fact that following this no one else made any claim on those properties. Moreover, the Priests of the Stimmate did not juridically form a religious Congregation, because they had not yet had the approval of the Church.⁵³

The Sovereign resolution then of July 14, 1855, had not been an approbation [which only the Ecclesiastical Authorities could grant], but had to be interpreted solely as a permission of subsistence⁵⁴: this document had not created the juridical personality of the Institute, nor did it even have formal recognition, because the Government had no concern for the negotiations in which the Institute was engaged in with the Holy See. As a consequence, since the Congregation did not enjoy a juridical personality, as such it could not own property: and even if Fr. Benciolini had intended to cede to the Institute the ownership of the goods in his own name, such a transferal would have been invalid until this Community was juridically capable of owning.

Thus, in a nut-shell is the position advanced by Attorney Brasca. The adversary party limited itself to insisting on their position established for them in the documents they submitted, in support of their position⁵⁵. To these, Fr. Benciolini had responded in a most thorough manner, as of May 31st.

⁵³ On December 17, 1871, Fr. Benciolini petitioned the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars that he wished to declare how the Pious Society of the Priests of the Stimmate in Verona had never been approved, but had always remained a private union: and joined with this juridical 'instance' with a Letter of Recommendation from the Bishop, Louis di Canossa. Cardinal Quaglia, Prefect of that Congregation, responded with his letter of January 16, 1872 to the Bishop of Verona, where he declared that after having reviewed all the acts relative to the Pious Union, known as the *Apostolic Missionaries for the service of Bishops*, established at the Church of the Stimmate, it is clear that even though the above-mentioned Missionaries had forwarded a petition to this Sacred Congregation so that their Society might obtain approval, the plain truth is that this formal Petition had never been admitted, since so far no Decree of Approbation had been emitted. This Letter was then joined to the documents under consideration in the Process.

⁵⁴ For the tenor of this Resolution, see above, **BC I, # 92, Note.**

⁵⁵ These documents naturally were papers found in the Archives of the Institute. One of these was Fr. Marani's own composition, entitled *Remarks concerning the Congregation*, distributed on the occasion of the Canonical Solemn Institution of the Institute.

This long case was headed toward a final resolution: the Court on September 20th did issue a partial conclusion by admitting the testimonial proofs on the first seven Chapters produced by the adversary lawyers. This partial sentence did deeply disturb our Confreres, and they began to circulate how empty it was to entrust the justice of one's true cause to the conscience of government judges. Their sole hope remained in divine protection.⁵⁶

128. Being firmly resolved to try every possible avenue, Fr. Benciolini forwarded a citation of November 15th, and in this he appealed to the Court of Appeals of Venice. The discussion went on and on in that Court, from January 24th until the 31st, 1873. The sentence of that Court, dated February 1, was only published on the 14th of the same month. In it, this Court considered that the chapters through testimonial proofs were not dealing with facts, or matters under the clear perception of human senses, but more with impressions, intentions, opinions, and this Court annulled the Sentence of the Court of Verona, and recused the testimonial proofs, directing the parties to continue their Process before the Civil and Correctional Court of Verona.

A first step had been taken, but our Confreres had already learned well how little one can trust in the justice of those tribunals. Fr. Benciolini then hired Defense Attorney Gemma. He cited the adversarial position which requested a delay of 30 days. Cited then for March 24th, all appeared before the President of the Tribunal, who delayed the proceedings further until April 17th, in order to discuss just the matter of this delay, and not the merits of the case.

129. In the meantime, however, both parties, considering the length of the proceedings that this Case still faced as well as the total uncertainty of its outcome, began to advance some ideas on reaching a compromise. The first proposals advanced by the Administration were these: to restore immediately all the substance of the property but to be dispensed from any rendering of accounts, and every other possible consequence. Fr. Benciolini, for his part, entered a counter-proposal in which he requested the immediate restitution of the entire substance of the properties, with certain rights based on percentage levels, a record of the documents of the archives, the residue and all present monies, the amalgamation and the return of the entire substance of the properties [the minimum, at least 4% on the Capital of 276,888 Lira, according to the estimates of the Commune of Verona], and for 6 years to receive 66,453.12. Later, pushing his case further, Fr. Benciolini limited himself in requesting [in addition to the substance of the Properties, all the rights pertaining to them, and the documents in the Archives], and a minimum of 60,000 Lira, dispensing the Government for any rendering of their handling of the properties in all this time. He

⁵⁶ On October 14th [as we read in the *Reminiscences of our Fathers*] Fr. DaPrato and the Fr. Superior were visiting the Church of the Discalced Carmelites. They were talking about the sad wound that their case with the Government was, upon which the future of the Congregation seemed to depend. Fr. DaPrato is recorded to have said: 'I, too, feel this great pain, and if my life were necessary in order to bend events in our favor in this great litigation, I would gladly offer it to the Lord as I do offer it right now with all my heart.' This is the way that great and generous heart spoke, and after a moment's silence, he added: 'My offer has already been made.' Three days later, he was dead.

agreed to the amalgamation of the amount of existing values in 1867, at least 10,000 Lira, with the precise credits [an additional 5000], the expenses of this protracted litigation [computed to be about 10,000 Lira], for any damages or deterioration suffered by properties, or their buildings, particularly regarding St. Teresa's Convent.

Meanwhile, on April 15th, the lawyers for both sides, Attorney Francis Gemma, and Attorney Augusto Righi, representing both parties. Taking into consideration the very broad development provided by the plaintiff, Fr. Benciolini to the reasons that could justify, or at least support his case, both attorneys judged it convenient now to define amicably, outside of all juridical procedures, the entire object of the controversy. Since the Administration had already proposed to cede all the property goods to Fr. Benciolini [and this presupposed and already implied the handing over of all the claims on record since 1867], the attorneys stipulated in the name of the two parties, the following conclusions: (1) The Administrations would cede all the movable and immovable goods within that present month. (2) Fr. Benciolini would renounce the rendering of an account and any further claim on perceivable profits, reparation for damages, any claim on the expenses of the court fees, and all interest on the properties for these years. (3) A representative from both sides would look over the the net income for these years on the properties, and the Administration, within two months, would restore to Fr. Benciolini in Italian exchange, the nominal value of one third of the amount agreed.

130. On the 28th of that same month, following a Notification of the Administration for Worship, and on the invitation of the Superintendent of Finances, Attorney Callegari convened once more Attorneys Righi and Gemma, together with Fr. Rigoni: and having examined the Note mentioned above, signed off on the following agreements, previously agreed upon and drawn up: (1) The Fathers of the Stimate would not further any further claims for the payment of pensions due by the Law of July 7, 1866, which they would agree as not applicable to their College. (2) Every care would have to be taken so that the institutes of public instruction that had taken over the building of the Stimate, might not be disturbed in any way in the execution of these agreements. (3) The payment of a third part of the income resulting from these properties would include also those accrued already on August 27, 1867. (4) The Government, in addition to this third part of the profits, would give to Fr. Benciolini the sum of 5000 Lira. (5) Any income for the year 1873 would accrue totally to Fr. Benciolini.

The Minister of the Finances approved all these agreements, and with its Notification of May 11th, gave the opportune instructions to the Administration for Worship, which on July 14th of the same month proposed to the Department of Finance a plan for the restoration of the properties, requiring among other things, that the Priests of the Stimate, for their renunciation of any rights of pension should make this declaration in writing. This Notification was communicated to Fr. Benciolini on May 19th, and by the 25th, there was signed by our Fathers the requested Declaration.

131. Finally, on May 27th, in a room of the residence of the Minister of Finance, Commander Anthony Callegari, authorized to handle on the part of the Government and for the Department for Worship, Fr. Benciolini came with witnesses. He signed

the transaction that contained the stipulations agreed to on the 15th and 18th of April. There was, however, added the clause that if the agreement was not approved within the 10th day of the coming month of June by the General Direction of the Administration for Worship, Fr. Benciolini would be pardoned from any commitment. The expenses of the agreement were for the Administrations to pay two thirds, and the third part remaining to Fr. Benciolini.

The transaction was approved by the Administration for Worship, on June 7th: and following the government Decree of July 10th, the Department of the treasury on July 24th would hand over the goods, including St. Teresa's Convent⁵⁷.

On **August 8th**, at long last [!], there was handed over to our Confreres a copy of the official Minutes of April 20 and 27th of 1867. Thus, came to an end this terrible litigation which for six years kept our Congregation in supreme anguish: and this final resolution of the case was looked upon not only by our Confreres, but also by our friends and acquaintances, as an evident sign of Heaven's protection.

To recall this happy event and at the same time, to express thanks to the Lord, the Very Reverend Superior, Fr. J.B. Lenotti instituted at the Stimate the Feast of the sacred Heart of Jesus. The entire Congregation obligated itself to promote among the faithful this most salutary devotion. To celebrate in festive manner our Students in Povo, on October 14th, conducted an 'Academy' of poetic talent. From that day, these two poems of Paul Gradinati have come down to us:

§

The Exile⁵⁸

From our pleasant sojourn [in Verona?] – with its silent cloisters [the Stimate?]
 Like a horde of angels – fleeing from the disturbance
 We flew among the mountains [of Trent?] – to seek a nest [Villazzano?]

Protected by the mantle – of the Heavenly Spouses
 There smiled on us the mists [[??]] – even on the most mournful days
 We were never deprived – of a roof over our heads, nor of the altar.

Oh! How often – came to our thought
 Of those caring Fathers – of lovable administration
 The noble contest - of knowledge and virtue.

O house of peace! – o happy days!
 O solemn feasts! O Sacred gatherings! [[??]]
 O sweet memories – of a time that once was.

A weeping is silenced – that appeared on the eye lashes.

⁵⁷ In this year 1873, there was sought the opinion of Attorney Brasca on the question of St. Teresa's Convent: he examined the matter before the existing laws and in conscience, he responded on October 4th, that all was in conformity with justice and equity, [especially after the long litigation that had been sustained] that the Convent remain with the Stigmatines. The documents are in the Archives of the Institute.

⁵⁸ This is in excellent rhyme [*abb* – *cdd*, etc] and good meter].

Time rapidly passed – and the exile went on.
A darkened veil – covered the future.

And while the arbitrary powerful - merely played
With the exiled sons – with their fearsome lot
Two Fathers [DaPrato and Marani??] in the sleep - of the just now repose

Before the Throne of Grace – from dawn until evening
The incense arose – of assiduous prayer
When as suddenly as a smile – Heaven sparkled.

§
The Victory⁵⁹

O brothers of joy, of glory
There has burst on the exiles that day
Already the announcement of our victory
From the banks of the Arno it was heard.

Let us raise up joy-filled chants and hurray!
To the Lord Who has heard the prayers
And that cloud that hovered over the roof,
Has fled far from our gaze.

Peace has descended in new splendors
Looking over the paternal resting places
From the tombs of the Fathers and Brothers
Even their relics were heard to rejoice.

We are a most joyful band of Christ
This chant for us will never die.
Whoever hopes for victory from Heaven
Will live gloriously in heaven.

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†††
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⁵⁹ This is a clever work as well the lines seem to rhyme as *abab – cdcd etc.*