

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281492908>

The Pastoral Care of Migrants: Lessons from History

Conference Paper · January 2012

CITATIONS

0

READS

99

1 author:



Fabio Baggio

Scalabrini International Migration Institute

46 PUBLICATIONS 42 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



TRANSCODE: Transnational Synergy for Cooperation and Development [View project](#)

THE PASTORAL CARE OF MIGRANTS: LESSONS FROM HISTORY

Fabio Baggio

Scalabrini International Migration Institute

Paper presented in the International Conference "Migration, Religious Experience and Mission with Migrants in Asia", Quezon City, 29-30 June 2012

Not to be quoted without the permission of the author

In the study of the history of the Church, no much attention was paid to the specific topic of the pastoral care of the people on the move. Nonetheless, the migrant ministry has been a priority concern of the Church since its real foundation. The Acts of Apostles, which recount selected events concerning the establishment of the first Christian communities, clearly state that the first evangelization undertaken by the Apostles immediately after the Pentecost was addressed to "foreigners" in Jerusalem: "Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; residents of Rome – Jews and proselytes alike - Cretans and Arabs" (Acts 2,9-11). The development of this concern in the following centuries was masterly portrayed by Pope Pius XII in the Apostolic Constitution *Exsul Familia Nazarethana* (1952):

"The Holy Mother Church, impelled by her ardent love of souls has striven to fulfill the duties inherent in her mandate of salvation for all mankind, a mandate entrusted to her by Christ. She has been especially careful to provide all possible spiritual care for pilgrims, aliens, exiles and migrants of every kind. This work has been carried out chiefly by priests who, in administering the Sacraments and preaching the Word of God, have labored zealously to strengthen the Faith of the Christians in the bond of charity. Let us briefly review what the Church has done in this matter in the distant past and then discuss more fully the implementation of this work in our own times." (*Exsul Familia Nazarethana*, I).

The entire first part of the Apostolic Constitution is dedicated to briefly describe the numerous pastoral initiatives in the migrant ministry undertaken by the Catholic Church in almost 2000 years.

From the list provided by Pius XII the variety of direct beneficiaries of the migrant ministry appears clearly: migrants, their families, refugees, seafarers and displaced people. Nonetheless, with the establishment of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, the range of the target groups has further expanded including nomads, Gypsies, circus and fairground workers, tourists, pilgrims, workers and passengers of the civil aviation and foreign students (Sabbarese).

In principle, the pastoral care of the people on the move entails three main phases: reflection, organization and mission. In the first phase, interdisciplinary studies of the migration reality are undertaken aiming at identifying the needs from a theological/pastoral perspective. In the organizational phase, pastoral agents are properly trained and pertinent structures are established. In the last phase, pastoral actions are undertaken. Historically, the migrant ministry hasn't always followed these steps, being rushed by emergency of the situations and the urgency of concrete responses.

Although history is not always *magistra vitae*, many lessons, both negative and positive, can be learnt from reading the Church history thought the lens of the migrant ministry. In this contribution I would like to present three positive lessons and three negative ones.

The Duty of Hospitality

For the Church in the IV and V centuries, a period of fast development of pastoral structures and actions, the care for pilgrims, strangers, displaced people and migrants was a real concern. Such initiatives were soundly grounded in the Christian duty of hospitality, which was to be accomplished first toward the fellow Christians, who devoutly undertook the pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Constantinople, the capital of the Roman Eastern Empire, represented a compulsory stop on the Western pilgrims' way to Jerusalem and their hospitality became object particularly at the time of John Chrysostom.

John Chrysostom was born in Antioch, Syria, around 345 AD. He was baptized when he was 20 years old and in 386 he was ordained as a priest and immediately became famous for his eloquence. Few years later John was consecrated Bishop and Patriarch of Constantinople. Unjustly accused of heresy in the "Synod of the Oak" (403 AD), John was deposed and exiled twice. He died in Commana, Pontus, on 14th September 407 AD (Pasquato).

Bishop John Chrysostom repeatedly reminded his faithful about the duty of hospitality. The obligation of welcoming strangers was an important element of the ancient Jewish tradition, an element shared with many other great contemporary civilizations. Such obligation was rooted in the natural danger associated with an itinerant life and terrible punishments were foreseen to those who did not comply with it.¹ Nevertheless, the Bishop of Constantinople underlined the innovation of the Christian interpretation of the duty of hospitality: the presence of God in the foreigner to be welcomed. In his Homily XIV on the First Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy, John Chrysostom substantiates the Christological reason for hospitality on Mt 10,40:

Observe, the hospitality here spoken of is not merely a friendly reception, but one given with zeal and alacrity, with readiness, and going about it as if one were receiving Christ Himself. [...] If thou receivest the stranger as Christ, be not ashamed, but rather glory: but if you receive him not as Christ, receive him not at all. "He that receiveth you," He said, "receiveth Me." (Matt. x. 40.) If you do not so receive him, you have no reward. [...] Thus ought we ever to exercise hospitality by our own personal exertions, that we may be sanctified, and our hands be blessed. And if thou givest to the poor, disdain not thyself to give it, for it is not to the poor that it is given, but to Christ; and who is so wretched, as to disdain to stretch out his own hand to Christ? (Schaff, vol. 13: 792).

In his Homily XXXIII on the Epistle to the Hebrews, Bishop Chrysostom commented the direct mention of the author to the famous episode of Abraham welcoming the three angels at the oaks of Mamre (Gen 18), underlining the importance of the gratuity of hospitality. The unawareness of Abraham regarding the identity of his guests deserved him the great reward of the announcement of the birth of his son Isaac:

Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful of hospitality, for hereby some have entertained angels unawares." See how he enjoins them to preserve what they had: he does not add other things. He did not say, "Be loving as brethren," but, "Let brotherly love continue." And again, he did not say, "Be hospitable," as if they were not, but, "Be not forgetful of hospitality," for this was likely to happen owing to their afflictions. Therefore (he says) "some have entertained angels unawares." Seest thou how great was the honor, how great the gain! What is "unawares"? They entertained them without knowing it. Therefore the reward also was great, because he entertained them, not knowing that they were Angels. For if he had known it, it would have been nothing wonderful. (Schaff, vol. 14: 965)

¹ On the concept of foreigner and hospitality in the ancient Near East, see Cardellini Innocenzo, "L'uso del concetto di straniero nell'Antico Testamento. Una nota alla luce delle emigrazioni e degli spostamenti di persone nelle società del Vicino Oriente Antico," *Studi Emigrazione*, 38 (143): 603-617.

John Chrysostom did not stop at the level of the theological reflection, providing his faithful with very concrete indications on how to translate the theory into action. In his Homily XLV on the Acts of the Apostles he requested all Christian in diocese of Constantinople to arrange their houses so that they had a room always ready to welcome a stranger. Such room, in line with the Christological reason for hospitality, should be called “Christ’ cell”:

How many of the brethren are strangers? There is a common apartment, the Church, which we call the “Xenon.” Be inquisitive, sit before the doors, receive those who come yourselves; [...]. Make for yourself a guest-chamber in your own house: set up a bed there, set up a table there and a candlestick. [...] Gain a victory over the Church. Would you put us to shame? This do: surpass us in liberality: have a room, to which Christ may come; say, “This is Christ’s cell; this building is set apart for Him” (Schaff, vol. 11: 511-512).

According to John Chrysostom, in his pastoral planning exercise a bishop should consider the assurance of a worthy welcome to strangers and the care of the sick as one of the main pastoral concerns. Such institutionalized hospitality would need proper funding, as the Bishop of Constantinople underlined in his Treatise on the Priesthood:

Moreover, in the reception of strangers, and the care of the sick, consider how great an expenditure of money is needed, and how much exactness and discernment on the part of those who preside over these matters. For it is often necessary that this expenditure should be even larger than that of which I spoke just now, and that he who presides over it should combine prudence and wisdom with skill in the art of supply, so as to dispose the affluent to be emulous and ungrudging in their gifts (Schaff, vol. 9: 81).

It was not just a pious recommendation. In Antioch, Christian migrants and visitors can rely on a generous offer of shelters, which was administered by priests. They were concrete testimonies of a tradition of hospitality, whose highlight is the invitation to participate in the Eucharistic communion together with the local community. Nevertheless, such organized reception, in the mind of Chrysostom, did not substitute in any way the individual duty of hospitality, which was required of every disciple of Jesus Christ.²

A Balanced Concern

At the beginning of the V century, the Barbarian conquest, passing through Spain, extended to North Africa. This gave birth to two kinds of migration: the flight of Christians to safer places and the settlement of new pagan or Aryan families in the North African territories. It was the time of Augustine, bishop of Hippo, whose pastoral ministry was deeply challenged by the massive movement of his faithful.

Augustine was born in Thagaste, Numidia, in 354 AD. After completing his philosophical studies, he first opened a school of rhetoric in Cartago and then transferred to Italy to deepen his research for the truth. In Milan, Augustine had the chance to listen to the inspired speeches of Bishop Ambrose and decided to receive the Christian baptism. In 388 Augustine returned to Thagaste and founded a monastic community. In 391 he was ordained priest in Hippo and 4 years later he was consecrated bishop of the same diocese. After 35 years of brilliant ministry, in 430 AD Augustine died (Trapé).

During the last years of his episcopate, Augustine was quite concerned about the human mobility caused by the invasion of the Vandals and called on fellow bishops and priests to a two-pronged action. According to Augustine’s biographer Possidius of Calama, the bishop of

² On the hospitality in Antioch at the time of John Chrysostom, see Petrus Rentinck, “La città di Antiochia: la cura pastorale dei migranti,” *L’epoca patristica e la pastorale della mobilità umana*, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1989, 80-88).

Hippo was consulted in letters by Honoratus, bishop of Thiabe, as to whether or not the bishops or clergy should withdraw from the churches at the approach of the barbarian invaders. In his reply Augustine recommended the pastors to keep firm their commitment not to leave the flock entrusted to them³. Some of them were urged to follow the displaced, while others were called to remain in the cities to help those faithful who has no way to escape:

But when the danger is common to all, that is, to bishops, clergy and laymen, let those who are in need of others not be abandoned by those of whom they are in need. Accordingly, either let them all withdraw to places of safety or else let not those who have a necessity for remaining be left by those through whom their ecclesiastical needs are supplied, so that they may either live together or suffer together whatever their Father wishes them to endure. (Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, XXX, 2).

Augustine did not hide his deep concern for the possible confusion or loss of faith of those who were compelled to stay in the North African cities after the invasion of the Vandals. The lack of pastoral response to the spiritual needs of the flock “left behind” would have caused terrible effects in their faith.

Or when these dangers have reached their height and there is no possibility of flight, do we not realize how great a gathering there usually is in the church of both sexes and of every age, some clamoring for baptism, others for reconciliation, still others for acts of penance: all of them seeking consolation and the administration and distribution of the sacraments? If, then, the ministers are not at hand, how terrible is the destruction which overtakes those who depart from this world unregenerated or bound by sin! How great is the grief of their brethren in the faith who shall not have their companionship in the rest in the life eternal! Finally how great the lamentation of all and how great the blasphemy of some because of the absence of the ministers and their ministry! (Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, XXX, 8).

Moreover, the massive flee of priests and bishops would have left to the Arian preachers, who arrived together with the invaders, a fertile land for the dissemination of their heretic theories:

But when the people remain and the ministers flee and the service of the ministry is withdrawn, what will this be but that damnable flight of hirelings who care not for the sheep? For the wolf shall come, not a man, but the Devil, who has very frequently induced the faithful to apostatize who were deprived of the daily ministry of the Lord's body; and not through thy knowledge, but through thine ignorance shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. [...] Let us rather fear that the inner sense may be corrupted and the purity of faith perish than that women be forcibly defiled in body. (Possidius, *Vita Augustini*, XXX, 6-7).

A Ministry of the Whole Church

The response of the Church in Italy to the challenges posed by the massive migration in the second half of the XIX century did not developed into a structured and organized pastoral care. Instead, it was constituted of individual or small group's initiatives, which were often motivated by a particular sensitivity towards the dramatic social reality. This was the case of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza, one of the pioneers in the migrant ministry.

Bishop Scalabrini was born in Fino Mornasco (Province of Como, Italy) in 1839. After completing his theological studies, in 1863 he was ordained priest and was immediately

³ On the pastoral recommendations of St. Augustine to the bishops and clergy, see Vittorio Grossi, “La pastorale per i migranti al tempo di Sant’Agostino,” *L’epoca patristica e la pastorale della mobilità umana*, Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1989, 171-178).

appointed as professor and rector of the diocesan seminary in Como. In 1870 Scalabrini was transferred to the San Bartolomeo Parish in Como, where he served as parish priest for 5 years. In 1876 Scalabrini was consecrated bishop of Piacenza. After almost 40 years of fruitful episcopate, Bishop Scalabrini died in Piacenza on 1 June 1905 (Frascesconi).

Giovanni Battista Scalabrini was convinced that no effective response to the challenges posed by the Italian massive migration could be provided without a proper analysis of the phenomenon. He promoted several researches and studies on migration, engaging himself in the reflection and the dissemination of the results.

The bishop of Piacenza identified the State and the Church as the two main “stakeholders” in the elaboration of a concrete response to Italian massive migration. According to Scalabrini, the Italian government should focus on governing the internal and international migration flows and assuring adequate legislation for the protection of all migrants. Nonetheless, the bishop of Piacenza was aware of the limitations of the Italian state’s action and thus promoted the development of joint pastoral venture of Catholic clergy and laity to fill the gaps (Scalabrini, 1899).

Beyond this subsidiary role, the specific pastoral responsibilities of the Italian Church were initially summarized by Bishop Scalabrini in the project he submitted to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in 1887:

[...] to look after the spiritual and material interests of those unfortunate people [...]. Hence: 1. To keep the emigrant from falling victim to the shameful exploitation of certain emigration agents [...]; 2. To set up an office that will do what is necessary for the employment of emigrants upon their arrival in American ports, [...], or failing this, convince them not to emigrate in the first place; 3. To provide help in case of disaster or sickness, both during the voyage and after arrival; 4. To declare unyielding war [...] on the merchants in human flesh who are prepared to use the most sordid means for the sake of money; 5. To provide for religious care during the crossing, after arrival, and in the places where the emigrants are going to settle. (Scalabrini, 1887:24-25).

Also in this case Bishop Scalabrini envisioned a joint effort of Catholic clergy and laity, both in the country of origin and the countries of destination.

Concerning the “religious care” mentioned in the fifth point of his project, the bishop of Piacenza proposed two different pastoral “models” to be implemented in different regions. For Italian immigrants in North America Scalabrini supported the establishment of national parishes entrusted to Italian priests. For Italian immigrants in South America he was more inclined to entrust their care to “flying” Italian chaplains free to move within territorial parishes. Scalabrini’s insistence on the undebatable authority of the local bishops in the development of the migrant ministry (*nihil sin episcopo*, meaning nothing without the bishop) was balanced by his assertion of the necessity of clear directives from the Holy See. In 1905, Bishop Scalabrini proposed the establishment of a Vatican Office (Congregation or Commission *pro emigratis catholicis*) tasked to organize and regulate the migrant ministry for the whole Catholic Church (Scalabrini, 1905).

Giovanni Battista Scalabrini was able to make many of his pastoral dreams reality. He was deeply convinced that the phenomenon of Italian emigration was neither deeply known nor properly discussed in both the political and ecclesiastical environments. Therefore, between 1887 and 1900 the bishop of Piacenza publishes several booklets and articles on this topic and delivered talks and public lectures on Italian emigration in many Italian cities (Tomasi and Rosoli).

Scalabrini was well known for his advocacy and lobby work with the Italian government and congress for the issuance of a new migration law, which was finally approved in January 2001.

This political engagement should be considered in all its relevance and braveness, given the open conflict between the Italian Kingdom and the Holy See initiated with the usurpation of the Pontifical State in 1870. Scalabrini's advocacy for Italian migrants was also the main drive of the personal interviews that the bishop of Piacenza requested and obtained from the Emperor of Brazil (Milan, 1888) and the US President, T. Roosevelt (Washington, 1901).

Giovanni Battista Scalabrini entrusted the direct pastoral care of Italian migrants to three different organizations. On 28 November 1887, with the official engagement of the first two missionaries, the bishop of Piacenza established the *Istituto Apostolico dei Missionari per le colonie italiane all'estero* (Apostolic Institute of the Missionaries for the Italian Colonies abroad). In 1892 the Istituto changed its name into *Pia Società dei Missionari di San Carlo* (Pious Society of the Missionaries of St. Charles). At the beginning of the XX century the Pia Società counted 18 missions in the United States of America and 11 in Brasil. With the precious collaboration of his friend Giovanni Battista Volpe Landi, in 1889 Scalabrini established the *Società Italiana di Patronato per l'emigrazione* (Italian Society of Patronage for emigration), tasked to assist and protect Italian emigrants in their hometowns, in the ports of embarkation and in the ports of disembarkation. In 1891 the society took the name *Società San Raffaele* (St. Raphael Society).

In July 1901, with the blessing of Pope Leo XIII, Bishop Scalabrini sailed to New York on the ship "Liguria." He wanted to visit the Italian communities residing in United States of America. More than 1200 migrants travelled with the bishop of Piacenza, who during the whole cruise took care of them like a real on-board chaplain. Upon his arrival at the port of New York, Bishop Scalabrini started visiting the main centers of Italian immigration. From 3 August to 12 November 1901 he travelled 15,000 kilometers and delivered 340 speeches in 50 different cities. In July 1904, the bishop of Piacenza wanted to repeat the same experience in South America. His journey lasted 5 months, from Brazil to Argentine, visiting the remote Italian colonies in the Brazilian inland. This last pastoral effort had serious consequences on the health of Bishop Scalabrini, who died few months after his return to Italy, on 1 June 1905 (Francesconi).

A Pessimistic Vision of Migration

By the end of the XIX century, like Giovanni Battista Scalabrini, many other Italian bishops and clergy were concerned about the massive exodus of Italians to the Americas and other European countries. Nonetheless their main concern referred to the "disastrous" moral consequences of international migration. According to them, the exposure of Italian migrants to the heretic doctrines and practices of Protestantism would have contaminated their "pure" faith and morality, finding though them a way of propagation in Italy. Therefore the first pastoral action should have been to dissuade and retain people from migrating.

Since the beginning of Italian massive emigration, the Veneto region assisted to the departure of thousands of poor peasants. In 1889, thanks to the initiative of Bishop Scalabrini, a local committee of the *Società Italiana di Patronato per l'emigrazione* was established in Treviso. However the society did not obtain the blessings of the local bishops, who looked with suspicion at the social and political engagement of the bishop of Piacenza. Up to end of the century the Church in Veneto showed only few isolated sign of real pastoral concern for their faithful departing to work or settle abroad.

The need of a joint action involving all the dioceses in Veneto was an important point in the agenda of the Regional Bishops' Conference celebrated in Vicenza in 1900. The ordinaries gathered in the conference wondered "whether it was necessary to initiate a collective action

of all the Veneto dioceses for the religious moral assistance of temporary emigrants, who are going abroad to work.” (Tramontin:272). Bishop’s main concern was to sustain emigrants’ morality and preserve their faith. To this extend it was proposed to establish in each diocese a secretariat for the spiritual assistance of migrant workers before departure. Unfortunately this proposal was not approved and the 1900 conference concluded with the simple recommendation to gather all departing migrants for a religious function. Any other pastoral initiative was left to the discretion of the parish priests.

Nonetheless, in 1901, Antonio Feruglio, bishop of Vicenza, decided to establish the *Consortio San Gaetano per la tutela degli emigranti* (St. Cajetan Consortium for the Protection of Emigrants). According to its bylaws, the consortium should operate under the direct authority of the ordinary and in strict cooperation with the *Opera dei Congressi* (Work of the Congresses), a Catholic movement initiated in 1874 in response to the Italian anticlericalism and secularism, which upheld a rather pessimistic vision of Italian massive migration. As a matter of fact, in the same year, the Opera erected in Venice a regional office for the protection of emigrants within the structure of the *Segretariato del Popolo* (People’s Secretariat), which was the operational branch of the Opera (Tramontin).

The Veneto Regional Bishops’ Conference held in 1905 discussed again the serious “perils” of Italian emigration. The conclusions of the discussion were summarized in a collective pastoral letter that strongly underlined:

The very sad condition of many poor workers [...] emigrants in far away regions, [...] the ever growing emigration of many children of ours, who, separated from their families, with no religious assistance and exposed to the sharp propaganda of protestant sects and socialism, either totally lose their faith or fall in the most deadly indifferentism, introducing in our home country the pest of immorality and irreligion. (Episcopato Veneto:24-25)

Several pastoral actions were recommended by the Veneto ordinaries. The constitution of Italian migrant workers’ associations abroad aiming at establishing Italian schools and chapels should be promoted. In the dioceses of origin people of good will should be gathered in fundraising committees in order to sustain the different initiatives for the assistance to emigrants. Parish priests should join diocesan consortia and engage in the preparation of migrant workers before departure, dispensing the sacraments and providing them with religious books and objects. Moreover they were requested to undertake special collections for emigrants’ needs. (Tramontin)

In 1906, Bartolomeo Bacilieri, bishop of Verona, established the *Consortio Diocesano Pro Emigranti* (Diocesan Consortium for Emigrants) for the coordination of the local consortia to be erected in the different vicariates tasked to assure the moral and spiritual assistance to emigrants. The activities envisioned for the consortia were the following: a) compose and update the list of departing migrants; b) to keep the Italian missionaries in the country of destination informed about the departures; c) to keep good communication with local secretariat, institutions and Italian diplomatic posts; and d) to provide emigrants with useful information so that they can be more protected. Nonetheless, Bishop Bacilieri used to have a very negative vision of international migration. In his pastoral letter titled, *Per la fine del secolo XIX* (For the End of XIX Century), he warned his faithful about the perils of migration, which was a “cancerous plague” that threatened the integrity of faith. He was particularly worried about the physical and moral vulnerability of Italian women and youth migrating abroad (Bacilieri, 1900). In the pastoral letter titled, *Dopo la visita* (After the Visit), dated 1913, the bishop of Verona stated that all the pessimistic predictions concerning the negative effects of migration had been confirmed by the experiences and information gathered abroad (Bacilieri, 1913).

In 1906, Andrea Giacinto Longhin, bishop of Treviso, wrote a circular letter addressed to the diocesan clergy expressing a similar concern. In this letter he identified three main reasons for the emigration of his faithful: real economic need, greed of gain and quest for freedom (from parents). According to Bishop Longhin, the negative consequences of migration would be felt upon their return: “They bring into the parishes the blasphemy, foul language and the seeds of a religious indifference that really borders on incredulity” (Longhin). In the following years the testimonies of many parish priests in the diocese of Treviso fully confirmed the dramatic prediction of their bishop (Tramontin). In 1906 Bishop Longhin established the *Consorzio Pro Emigranti* (Consortium for Emigrants), under the protection of St. Liberalis, tasked to secure migrants from any contamination with heretic and immoral doctrines in the country of destination.

The pessimistic vision of migration shared by the Veneto bishops was somehow tempered in the second decade of the XX century. In 1911 Ferdinando Rodolfi, newly appointed bishop di Vicenza, sent a pastoral letter to his clergy with a long series of recommendations to be implemented in every parish of the diocese. Every parish priest was supposed to create a special committee and keep and updated register of all emigrants. More concerned about making migration a positive experience for the departing faithful as well as the left behind, Bishop Rodolfi requested his clergy to organize special training courses, gatherings and celebrations for both groups (Tramontin).

The Temptation of Homogeneity

In the second half of the XIX century, mass immigration posed a double challenge to the Catholic Church in the United States of America. The first challenge was the urgent call for a joint response to the multiplicity of cultures and religious expressions, which were introduced by the new migration inflows. The second challenge was the need to reconcile the above-mentioned response with the self-affirmation process of the Catholic Church in the US society that was substantially hostile to Catholicism.

The first pastoral response of US Catholic Bishops was not concerted at the national level. On the opposite, as it had happened for other pastoral cases, the autonomy of the individual dioceses was officially reaffirmed. Subsequently, US ordinaries divided into two different “parties,” upholding two opposite understanding of the necessary pastoral response, which historians usually define as “ethnocentrism” and “assimilationist Americanization.”

The backers of the latter belonged to the so-called “liberal party”, which upheld the need for a quick assimilation of Catholic immigrants in the local Church and society. This party was composed by Cardinal James Gibbons, archbishop of Baltimore, John L. Spolding, bishop of Peoria, John J. Keane, bishop of Richmond, Denis J. O’Connell, rector of the North American College in Roma. They were led by John Ireland, archbishop of St. Paul. They advocated the “Americanization” of immigrants, with no concession to original languages, cultures and religious expressions. To this extent, every link with the Churches of origin had to be necessarily cut. The Paulist Fathers with the “Catholic World Magazine” supported this vision.

On the opposite side there was the so-called “conservative party”, which upheld the need for maintaining immigrants’ original language and religiosity. This party was composed by B. McQuaid, bishop of Rochester, the bishops of German origins in the US central and West states, P. Ryan, archbishop of Philadelphia They were led by M. A. Corrigan, archbishop of New York. Their vision was supported by the Jesuits with the “American Ecclesiastical Review.”

The natural arena for US bishops to discuss the controverted issues was the plenary council. In 1866, the agenda of the Second Council of Baltimore included the request for a specific pastoral care of new immigrants. The petition was presented by the Catholic communities of German origins, which wanted to preserve their language and religious expressions in the diocese of settlement. The council decided that in those dioceses where Germans were found who cannot speak English the seminarians should learn enough German to hear confessions (Fanning).

In 1883 a preparatory meeting for the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore was held in Rome. All US dioceses were represented but the archdiocese of San Francisco. The special pastoral care of new immigrants is on the top of the agenda. The meeting reached the following conclusions: a) it didn't seem necessary to establish national parishes for Italian immigrants because they did not go regularly to church, they were dispersed in the diocesan territories and they were not used to economically contribute to the maintenance of the ecclesiastic structures. For their spiritual care it was suggested to appoint migrants' chaplains, who could speak Italian, residing in some selected parishes in the cities; b) the assistance work provided by the *Raphaelverein* (the German St. Raphael Society) to German immigrants in US was acknowledged and promoted; and c) it was decided to formally request the Irish bishops to appoint a priest-in-charge for emigrants in the main Irish ports, who was tasked to assist the departing migrants and inform US bishops about the next arrivals.

In 1884 US bishops gathered for the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore. In the final decrees an entire chapter (*Settlers and Newcomers*) was dedicated to the pastoral care of immigrants, which was motivated by two main reasons: a) immigrants are "children of the Mother Church," and b) Jesus Christ is the stranger knocking the door (Pettenà). As for the concrete pastoral activities, US bishops only invited the priests fluent in different languages to welcome immigrants at the disembarkation ports, trying to convince the newcomers to settle in the countryside. The social assistance to immigrants was entrusted to the lay associations like the Irish Immigration Society and the *Raphaelverein*, which were already working within the US Church (Di Giovanni).

The conclusions of the Third Council of Baltimore did not meet the expectations of members of the conservative party. Some Catholic communities of German origins reacted strongly, openly denouncing the process of "Americanization" enacted by the US Church. They claimed the right to have pastoral agents, priests and bishops (or episcopal vicars) of German origins. In 1886 a detailed report on the "discrimination" of German Catholics within the US Church was sent to Propaganda Fide. Fr. Peter Abbelen, author of the report, claimed that the Americanization of German immigrants would lead to their massive separation from the Catholic faith (Zucchi). US bishops, promptly informed about the document, decided to gather in a special meeting in Philadelphia to clarify the ground of the accusations. A collective response was sent to Propaganda Fide stating that no ethnic group of immigrants was discriminated in the pastoral care.

In the last decade of the XIX century the US Church had to face another serious conflict concerning the pastoral care of immigrants. Peter Paul Cahensly, head of the *Raphaelverein*, and other European Catholic lay leaders authored the "Lucerne Memorial", which was presented to the Holy See in 1891. This document accused US bishops of the loss of more than 10 millions Catholic immigrants due to their discriminatory "pastoral policy". Against the "Americanization", the Memorial demanded the erection of national parishes for every ethnic group and the appointment of same-origin parish priests. Moreover, the document requested the construction of "national schools" and the teaching of catechism in the different immigrants' languages. Finally, the authors advocated for equal rights for migrant faithful and clergy within the US Church, insisting particularly on the right of having ethnic

representatives within the US Catholic hierarchy. The discussion on the Memorial generated a national conflict, which engaged even the president of the United States of America. Fearing a schism within the US Church, pope Leo XIII directly intervened stating that the demands contained in the Lucerne Memorial were neither opportune nor necessary (Perotti).

The Risks of Delegation

In the aftermath of the II World War the Catholic Church in Australia was confronted by the massive immigration of Catholics coming particularly from the ruins of Europe. Despite the insistence of the Vatican documents *Exsul Familia Nazarehtana* (1952) and *Nemo est* (1969) on the importance to establish national parishes for numerous immigrant ethnic groups, Australian bishops insisted in their inclusion in territorial parishes.

In their collective pastoral letter titled, "On Immigration" (1950), the bishops of Australia stressed the importance of adopting a pastoral care that would lead immigrants to a smooth assimilation in the Australian society:

Great generosity and true unselfishness, then, must be the guiding lights to our people in their unremitting aid to our New Settlers, who would build a home beneath the Southern Cross. By genuine friendliness, helpful advice and warm endeavors towards happy social intermingling shall they make more easy and happy the assimilation of our New Settlers into a way of life that is Catholic and Australian. (Archbishops and Bishops of Australia).

The Australian bishops' concern for the assimilation of immigrants was mainly grounded on the need for a strong ecclesial unity of all Catholics within a social environment that was substantially hostile. The establishment of national parishes would have jeopardized such unity. Moreover, Catholic territorial parishes used to shoulder huge expenses both for their own structures and the Catholic schools, which were generally attached to them. The financial contribution of new immigrants, representing a relevant portion of the Australian Catholic population in the 1950s, was believed necessary to the payment of such expenses (Paganoni, 2003).

The pastoral policy of the Australian hierarchy faced immediately the problem of a local clergy unable to cater to European immigrants in their own language. Therefore it was decided to introduce the figure of the "national chaplain," a priest of the same national origins of the new settlers ministering to the latter under the authority of local parish priests. The Federal Catholic Migration Committee (lately called Federal Catholic Immigration Committee or FCIC) was tasked to recruit priests, who would serve for the purpose from the immigrants' countries of origins. Nonetheless the role of the chaplain was not clearly defined by Australian bishops and the implementation of the pastoral strategy was not really coordinated at the national level. The success of chaplains' mediating role mainly relied on the good will of the involved clergy. (Paganoni, 2010).

Probably inspired by the theological innovations of the Vatican II, by the end of the 1960s the Australian bishops change their pastoral strategy from assimilation into "gradual and harmonious integration," as it is showed in the brief statement released by the FCIC with the occasion of the "Immigration Sunday" in 1967:

Australia cannot afford the loss of people. Neither can Australia allow cause to be given for settlers to be dissatisfied and unhappy in the country to which they bring a precious contribution in their persons and their skills and into which, in consequence, they have a right of gradual and harmonious integration (FCIC).

The same statement underlined the deep concern of the Australian Church for the departure of many immigrants, who decided not to settle permanently in Australia. Undoubtedly such

concern influenced the adoption of the new pastoral strategy, whose implementation was still entrusted to the national chaplains “imported” from abroad. In 1973 the archdiocese of Sydney counted 63 foreign born chaplains. Only 14 of them were diocesan priests, while the rest were religious missionaries (Capuchins, Jesuits, Scalabrinians and Vincentians). However it should be noted that there was a huge disparity of service between immigrant and Australian-born Catholics. In 1878, for example, while for the latter there was a priest for every 1800 faithful, for the Spanish speaking Catholics three chaplains had to minister to 20,000 people (Paganoni, 2003).

The joint efforts of local clergy and national chaplains to properly cater to immigrants needed to collaboration of Catholic laity to be effective. To this extent Patrick M. O’Donnell, archbishop of Brisbane and head of the Bishops’ Commission for Social and Charitable Works, in the statement for the 1972 Migration Sunday wrote:

Pastoral care of immigrants has been a particular concern of the Church here from the inception of postwar immigration and is exercised extensively throughout the nation, aided indispensably by the zealous services of some two hundred priests from abroad. The Combined efforts of local clergy and chaplains, however, to be really effective, must have the support of each and every Catholic, in a genuine Christ-like attitude towards immigrants and by a personal involvement in what concerns their wellbeing, especially their spiritual welfare. (O’Donnell).

Since 1947 the FCIC tried to coordinate the pastoral action of Catholic laity towards immigrants. In its bylaws three different goals were indicated: a) to assure spiritual assistance to Catholic immigrants; b) to favor their integration in territorial parishes; and c) to cooperate with institutions and non-government actors in the interest of Catholic immigrants. To make effective the work of the FCIC at the diocesan level Australian ordinaries established the Diocesan Immigration Offices (DIO). It is worth noting that only in Sydney and Adelaide the DIOs collaborated with the national chaplains, while in Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth there was no cooperation between the two pastoral actors (Paganoni 2003).

From the 1970s to the 1980s the Australian Church seemed convinced that national (or ethnic or migrant) chaplains were the perfect solution to the immigrants’ pastoral needs. Embracing with enthusiasm the multicultural policy adopted by the federal government, Australian bishops and clergy gradually delegated the entire migrant ministry to foreign chaplains and local and migrant communities started developing in a parallel way. Despite the fact that the chaplains’ services were frequently praised in the official statements issued the Australian hierarchy, their cooperation with the parish priests was scarce and often reduced to financial contributions. On the opposite, conflicts among the autochthonous and the different ethnic communities were frequent. It is worth noting that in the message for the 1997 National Day for Migrants and Refugees, Fr. John J. Murphy, director of the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office Bishops Committee for Migrants and Refugees had to recommend that parish priests invited the migrant chaplains to share celebrations in the parish church:

The work which Migrant Chaplains perform in the diocese should be better understood and appreciated. They have a very important role. We suggest that migrant chaplains be invited to be part of parish celebrations on the National Day, and also on other days, so that their work, and the diverse migrant groups whom they serve, may be highlighted. (Murphy).

Nonetheless, the overall assessment of the migrant ministry in Australia should consider also several some good practices of cooperation between migrant chaplains and local clergy at the local level. For examples, in 1972 the archbishop of Melbourne established the Archdiocesan Commission on Migration, composed of representatives of migrant chaplains, local clergy and migrant communities. The commission, now called Melbourne Catholic Migrant and Refugees

Office, was tasked to study the immigrants' pastoral needs and develop effective responses to be presented to the ordinary (Diocesan Commission on Migration).

Conclusions

Bishop John Chrysostom grounded the pastoral care of pilgrims and visitors on the Christological interpretation of hospitality. He translated the theological reflection into concrete actions, which would engage clergy and laity. Many dioceses today are challenged by the massive arrival of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, who ask for hospitality. Their wholehearted welcome is not an option but a moral duty since every foreigner is Jesus Christ himself knocking the door.

The balanced pastoral concern adopted by Augustine of Hippo before the invasion of the Vandals underlined the importance of the "left behind." In the contemporary migration scenario, the "left behind" are often family members who, due to strict temporary work schemes, cannot go abroad but partake the "migration experience" staying at home. Their pastoral needs, which are less known and are to be studied further, should never be neglected within a holistic migrant ministry.

John Baptist Scalabrini set an important example in terms of effective response to the challenges of massive migration. His vision, fruit of scientific studies and theological reflection, shaped his action. His ability to embrace all aspects of human life and engage all pastoral actors was the key to success of his migrant ministry's project. To the Church challenged by today's complex migration scenario Bishop Scalabrini reminds that each Catholic faithful plays an important role for an effective pastoral response.

At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century the bishops and clergy of the Veneto region decided that the best pastoral strategy was to dissuade and retain people from migrating because of the "catastrophic" contamination with Protestants and heretics. Nonetheless, their decisions might be read as the failure of understanding the massive migration of Catholics to Europe and the Americas as a special opportunity for evangelizing or re-evangelizing the receiving societies through the simple testimony of life of workers and peasants. Catholic migrants, grounded in their faith and properly prepared, were and still are very effective agents of evangelization.

In the second half of the nineteenth century a great portion of the US Church adopted as pastoral strategy the quick assimilation of immigrants in the receiving society and diocese, with little concession to their ethnic and national backgrounds. The massive defections of Catholic immigrants and the frequent internal conflicts, which resulted from such decision, lead to believe that a different strategy, more inclined to the intercultural dialogue and more respectful of religious differences, might have produced a real integration of Catholic immigrants in the US Church. The temptation of assimilationism is still challenging the Church today in her struggle to be really "Catholic."

In the second half of the XX century the Church in Australia chose to respond to the pastoral needs of European immigrants through ethnic chaplains "imported" from abroad and ministering within the territorial parish structure. The lack of coordination and cooperation between national chaplains and local clergy led to the development of ethnic communities at the side of the local Church's life. Pastoral "delegation" to "imported" ministers may represent an effective response in a first stage, but it should be part of a long-term pastoral plan, which aims at building "one of many," a Church concretely witnessing the communion in diversity.

References

Archbishops and Bishops of Australia

2009 "On Immigration," in Baggio, Fabio and Pettenà, Maurizio, eds., *Caring for Migrants*. Sydney: St Paul Publications

Archdiocesan Commission on Migration

1975 *The harmonious society: survey of the work of the Diocesan Commission of Migration since its inception in 1972*. Melbourne: Archdiocesan Commission on Migration

Bacilieri, Bartolomeo

1913 *Dopo la visita. (Lettera Pastorale)*. Verona: G. Marchiori tip. vescovile

1900 *Per la fine del secolo XIX (Lettera Pastorale)*. Verona: G. Marchiori tip. vescovile

Cardellini, Innocenzo

2001 "L'uso del concetto di straniero nell'Antico Testamento. Una nota alla luce delle emigrazioni e degli spostamenti di persone nelle società del Vicino Oriente Antico," *Studi Emigrazione*, 38 (143): 603-617.

Di Giovanni, Stephen M.

1989 "The Propaganda Fide and the *Italian Problem*," in *Scalabrini tra vecchio e nuovo mondo. Atti del Convegno Storico Internazionale (Piacenza, 3-5 dicembre 1987)*. Roma: CSER

Fanning, William H. W.

1914 "Baltimore Plenary Councils of," in *The Original Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. II. New York: Encyclopedia Press, Inc.

Francesconi, Mario

1985 *Giovanni Battista Scalabrini*. Roma: Città Nuova Editrice

Episcopato Veneto

1906 *Lettera collettiva dell'episcopato Veneto al venerabile clero della veneta regione*. Venezia: Tip. patriarcale già Cordella

Longhin, Andrea Giacinto

1906 *Circolare del 10 marzo 1906*. Circolari del Vescovo Longhin, Archivio della Curia Vescovile di Treviso

O'Donnell, Patrick M.

2009 "Migration Sunday (1972)," in Baggio, Fabio and Pettenà, Maurizio, eds., *Caring for Migrants*. Sydney: St Paul Publications

Paganoni, Tony

2010 "The Teaching of the Church in Australia," in Baggio, Fabio and Pettenà, Maurizio, eds., *Caring for Migrants*. Sydney: St Paul Publications

2003 *Valiant Struggle and Benign Neglect*. New York: CMS

Pasquato, Ottorino

---- *S. Giovanni Crisostomo (345-407)*, at http://www.notedipastoralegiovanile.it/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1012:pgprofili-s-giovanni-crisostomo&catid=192:pg--profili, visited on 19 June 2012

Perotti, Antonio

1968 "La società italiana di fronte alle prime migrazioni di massa. Il contributo di Mons. Scalabrini e dei suoi primi collaboratori alla tutela degli emigranti", *Studi Emigrazione* 5 (11-12): 1-198

Pettenà, Maurizio

2005 *The Teaching of the Church on Migration*. Quezon City: Scalabrini Migration Center.

Pius XII

2009 *Exsul Familia Nazarethana*. Roma: Città del Vaticano, in Baggio, Fabio and Maurizio Pettenà, eds., *Caring for Migrants*. Sydney: St. Paul Editions

Possidius of Calama

2008 *The Life of Saint Augustine. A Translation of the Sancti Agustini Vita by Possidius Bishop of Calama* (Translated by Herbert Theberath Weiskotten). Merchanville, N.J.: Evolution Publishing

Rentinck, Petrus

1989 "La città di Antiochia: la cura pastorale dei migranti," in Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, *L'epoca patristica e la pastorale della mobilità umana*. Padova: Edizioni Messaggero

Sabbarese, Luigi

2010 "Pontificio Consiglio della Pastorale per i Migranti e Itineranti," in Battistella, Graziano, ed., *Migrazioni. Dizionario Socio-Pastorale*. Cinisello Balsamo: Edizioni San Paolo

Scalabrini, Giovanni Battista

1905 *Memoriale per la costituzione di una Commissione pontificia Pro emigratis Catholicis*. Piacenza (unpublished). Archivio Generale Scalabriniano, AB 02 002/8c; APF NS, 1908, Vol. 461.

1899 *L'Italia all'estero*. Torino: Roux-Frassati

1887 *L'emigrazione italiana in America. Osservazioni di Mgr. Giovanni Battista Scalabrini Vescovo di Piacenza*. Piacenza: Tip. L'Amico del Popolo

Schaff, Philip, ed.

1889 *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series I, Vols. 14*, Grand Rapids, MI: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company

Tomasi, Silvano and Rosoli, Gianfausto

2000 *For the Love of Immigrants. Migration Writings and Letters of Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905)*, Staten Island: CMS

Tramontin, Silvio

1989 “Il problema dell’emigrazione nella pastoralità dei vescovi veneti (dalla fine dell’Ottocento alla prima grande guerra),” in *Scalabrini tra vecchio e nuovo mondo. Atti del Convegno Storico Internazionale (Piacenza, 3-5 dicembre 1987)*. Roma: CSER

Trapè, Agostino

2006 *Opere di Sant’Agostino. Introduzione generale*. Roma: Città Nuova Editrice

Zucchi, John

2002 *The View from Rome: Archbishop Stagni's 1915 Reports on the Ontario Bilingual Schools Question*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press

Abstract

In the study of the history of the Church, no much attention was paid to the specific topic of the pastoral care of the people on the move. Nonetheless, the migrant ministry has been a priority concern of the Church since its real foundation and one can learn from history. In my contribution I would like to present three “positive” lessons and three “negative” ones. I will first present how John Chrysostom in the IV century requested the Christians in Constantinople to perform the duty of hospitality. Then I will discuss the pastoral concern of Augustine of Hippo in the V century before the massive migration of his flock threatened by the invasion of the Vandals. Thirdly I will introduce the pastoral vision and action of Giovanni Battista Scalabrini in response to the exodus of Italian people to the Americas in the second half of the XIX century. Subsequently, I will present how the Italian Church by the end of the same century tried to dissuade and retain people from migration, considered as a “risk” to their faith. I will also discuss how the Church in the United States of America, during the same period, conceded to the temptation of homogeneity, strongly insisting on the quick assimilation of migrants. Finally I will introduce the experience of the Church in Australia, which, in the second half of the XX century, decided to delegate to ethnic chaplains the pastoral care of migrants.