



THE WORLD THROUGH THE EYES OF

# *Paul Albera*

(1845 – 1921)

VALDOCCO,FR PAUL ALBERA EXHIBITION  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE FIRST CENTENARY OF DEATH  
OF DON BOSCO'S SECOND SUCCESSOR

---

1921 – 2021

**TEMPORARY EXHIBITION  
FROM 14 JANUARY 2021 TO 6 JANUARY 2022**  
DIGITAL AND IN-PERSON EXHIBITION

---

**VIRTUAL TOUR:**

<https://donalbera.museocasadonbosco.it/virtual-tour/>

**MUSEO CASA DON BOSCO**

(Via Maria Ausiliatrice, 32 – 10152 Torino)

The exhibition retraces the life of Fr Paul Albera.  
It is located in the basement of the museum,  
The location of the first boys' refectory (1854-1858).

**OPENING IN PERSON 30/1/2021**

**BY THE RECTOR MAJOR OF THE SALESIANS  
FR ANGEL FERNANDEZ ARTIME**

**VIDEO OF THE OCCASION:**

<https://vimeo.com/506450679>

**TEXTS AND RESEARCH:**

Fr Aldo Giraudo, Fr Silvio Roggia and Paolo Vaschetto sdb

**GRAPHICS:**

Mattana Graca & Servizi

**LAYOUT:**

Marco Berrone

**CURATORSHIP:**

Dott.sa Stefania De Vita

Letters, original materials and photographs  
from Salesian Central archives (ASC), Rome

## *Preface*

---

Fr Paul Albera was one of the "original Salesians" who was able to see Don Bosco in action. He breathed the atmosphere of Valdocco with Fr Rua and other Salesians, and "exported it" to Mirabello.

He then witnessed the expansion of Salesian work beyond Piedmont, first to Liguria and then France..

Eventually he held the position of Spiritual Director of the Congregation, and finally, Rector Major of the Salesians, as the Second successor of Don Bosco.

In this role of responsibility, (travelling by boat, carriage, horse,car...) he visited the spirit of Don Bosco that had expanded to every corner of the world, from the Americas to the Holy Land, and to North Europe.

He was an eyewitness to the turn of the century (19th and 20th) at a delicate moment for his Congregation, the Church and the entire world, culminating in one of the most dramatic watersheds in contemporary history, the Great War.

Let us retrace the life journey of this humble Salesian through his eyes. We will look at the world of this "petit don Bosco", one of Those silent pioneers who did so much to give us the Salesian Congregation as we know it today.

**MANY THANKS TO THE SALESIAN CENTRAL ARCHIVES (ASC), THE PHOTOGRAPHIC AND AUDIOVISUAL ARCHIVES, THE SALESIAN HISTORICAL INSTITUTE (ISS), THE LIBRERIA ATENEO SALESIANO (LAS) AND THE SALESIAN NEWS AGENCY (ANS) FOR THEIR KIND COOPERATION**



# Table of Contents

---

11

## EARLY FORMATION (1845 – 1862)

Paul Albera, born in the Turin province, was barely thirteen when he arrived at the Oratory in Valdocco and entered the Salesian Congregation two years later. Don Bosco's plan for the future of his work on behalf of poor youth was already clear: to find co-workers from among his boys, lively ones full of energy like John Cagliero, future cardinal, and diligent, studious ones like Fr Rua and Fr Albera.

12

## MIRABELLO (1863 – 1868)

One of Don Bosco's dreams came true in 1863: to carry his style and passion for education of the young beyond Valdocco. With full confidence he entrusted a young priest barely 26 years old, Fr Michael Rua, placing him at the head of a group of young clerics, among whom Paul Albera, to run a boarding school. The bishop of Casale entrusted them with the junior seminary at Mirabello, a work mainly for clerical vocations but also to give society, as stated in the Rules, genuinely prepared Christians. As well as completing his studies and preparation for the priesthood, Young Albera was given the task of teacher and assistant to the boys.

14

## VALDOCCO (1868 – 1871)

1868 was the year when the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians was opened. It was a moment of great joy for Don Bosco, of very great consolation for man who saw so many efforts crowned by unexpected success. Fr Albera was ordained priest the same year and the first fruits of his priesthood came from among the day students at the school at Valdocco, a delicate task carried out with great kindness, seeing that the educational work of the classrooms was also kept in touch with the world outside...

16

## MARASSI (1871 – 1872)

In 1871, Fr Albera was given his first responsibility as the Rector of A Salesian house outside Piedmont. He was a young priest and was tasked with founding an orphanage with workshops attached near Genoa, first in Marassi then in Sampierdarena. Don Bosco supported the activities of the young rector with frequent visits that also aroused enthusiasm in many benefactors. And the boys, initially regarded with suspicion by the neighbourhood, won over everybody's heart with their joyful celebrations, singing and exemplary behaviour.

18

## SAMPIERDARENA (1873 – 1881)

Fr Albera showed himself to be a versatile and capable leader, and as well as looking after the orphans, Don Bosco also entrusted him with the course for adult vocations, older men who still had the desire to become religious or priests. A model print shop was also Established at Sampierdarena where the Bollettino Salesiano began A magazine that still today makes Salesian work known and appreciated worldwide. And it was from Sampierdarena, in 1875, That the first Salesian missionaries embarked for America.

20

## **FRANCE** (1881 – 1892)

The burden of responsibility became even greater when Don Bosco decided, in 1881, to send Fr Paul Albera to Marseilles as the superior of the houses in France. In this new role he showed great ability in leadership of the Salesian works and an uncommon spirit of initiative. He found four houses there, yet despite difficult years for religious, founded a further 10, also including new presences in Belgium and Algeria. In his 10 years in France Fr Albera's contribution to the formation of young workers was most important, founding many workshops also equipped thanks to a solid network of generous benefactors. But they were also years when Fr Albera bid farewell to his spiritual father Don Bosco on 31 January 1888.

26

## **SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR OF THE SALESIAN CONGREGATION** (1892 – 1910)

Fr Michael Rua (1837-1910) was the First Successor of Don Bosco, and three years later was joined by Fr Albera for a very important task, looking after the spiritual and religious formation of Salesian confreres. Although they were years of precarious health he began traveling systematically through Europe and the Middle East to get to know the formation houses and closely follow the young confreres. Well-educated and with a penchant for language study he was well-regarded as a preacher and spiritual director of many who respected his serenity and depth. Fr Albera carried a small pocket diary in which he wrote down almost daily spiritual thoughts notes. The severe tone he applied in his own regard, his own weaknesses and desire to improve offer us the chance to take a closer look at the soul of someone whose aim was holiness and the desire to urge others to do the same.

32

## **CANONICAL VISITATION OF SALESIAN HOUSES IN THE AMERICAS** (1900 – 1903)

The Rector Major Fr Rua, in 1900, entrusted Fr Albera with visiting the houses in the Americas as his Representative. In a letter to Bishop Cagliari of the delay to the programme due to major disruption in travel by sea, lengthy delays that allowed him to spend more time with otherwise isolated confreres (like those in Tierra del Fuego) and better understand the spirit that guided the activity of the pioneer Salesians. In another letter to Fr Barberis he wrote of good impressions but while glimpsing some of the weaker points in the educative and apostolic activity of the sons and daughters of Don Bosco in America, from the outset he maintained a prudent attitude of great realism. At a time of retreat he wrote a page in his diary that although it contained many corrections to improve his faltering English, contained a fine spiritual plan, full of faith and overflowing with fervent sentiments.

44

## **RECTOR MAJOR** (1910 – 1921)

Fr Rua died in 1910 and Fr Albera was elected as his successor. Becoming Rector Major of the Salesians was not something he accepted easily, but the encouragement of the confreres and the Pope (as reported in his first circular letter) were very comforting. He was not asked to invent or reform anything. He should only continue along the lines traced out by Don Bosco and Fr Rua and Salesian work would surely continue to be known and appreciated around the world. The first period of his time in office put him in touch with the wide-ranging Salesian work in Europe. These were years of great fervour; new houses were opened to tackle the enormous needs of the young and provide new fields of action to many candidates asking to join the Salesian Congregation.

48

## CANONICAL VISITATIONS

1913 was a year of outstanding visits culminating in a tour of Spain where Fr Albera was solemnly welcomed by huge crowds and civil and church dignitaries (we can enjoy reading how the people welcomed him thunderously just about everywhere. 1914, however, saw some of the countries where Salesians were enter the worldwide conflict, and this was of enormous concern to the Rector Major. In 1915 when Italy too, entered the war, the consequences were enormous for the Salesians who, among other things, were forced to cancel all the celebrations prepared to commemorate the first centenary of Don Bosco's birth. In the last year of the Great War, the small church to Mary Help of Christians at the Becchi was opened, near Don Bosco's birthplace, as a sign of light and hope after the drama of world conflict.

## CONGRESSES

Despite the interruption of the War many international congresses were held during Fr Albera's term of office. Congress themes saw Salesians playing a leading role especially when they dealt with activities typical of their apostolic work, like the oratory and catechesis. More characteristic and let's say "family-based" were the Congresses that brought together the Cooperators and Past Pupils, What an honour for a past pupil in the 1911 Congress, to give a ride to the Rector Major!

55

57

## WITH BISHOP CAGLIERO

Fr Albera also had some moments of consolation and joy during those troubled years. It was wonderful to see him surrounded by confreres and dear friends, such as by now Cardinal Cagliero on the solemn day in 1918 when they celebrated 50 years of Fr Albera's priesthood, corresponding to the 50 years since the opening of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.

60

## THE GREAT WAR

Fully involved in the war on all fronts, even the youngest Salesians were enlisted, some lending service as military chaplains or as stretcher-bearers, ht at the front. Fr Albera and the other Salesian superiors thought of every way possible not to lose contact with the confreres, sending circular and personal letters and, when they were on leave, inviting them to take part in days of spiritual retreat. Some letters sent to Fr Albera tell us of their experiences, from an aspiring officer on leave (who after the War, like many other former soldiers, would become a missionary) to an episode of lucky escape from shelling on the front. There were also episodes of heroism such as assisting the wounded at the front under enemy fire and the sacrifice of his life by Lieutenant Miglio, a Salesian, to save his comrades from shelling. In 1916 Fr Albera founded the first of many orphanages that from then on were opened in European countries (a strategy followed by many Congregations including the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.) Another post-war relaunching was work giving suitable response to young people disoriented both in human and spiritual terms as Well as in school and employment.

76

## DEATH AND FUNERAL

Fr Albera died on the morning of 29 October 1921 and the funeral was held the following day in the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians. The crowd who came to express recognition for the life of such a worthy son of Don Bosco was huge. The tiller he had taken over from Fr Rua was well-managed by Fr Albera and it was now left in the hands of Fr Rinaldi, another of Don Bosco's boys, Another witness to the great spirit breathed in at Valdocco, thanks to the apostle of the young.

79

### FR ALBERA'S FAREWELL MESSAGE

Let us make our own this note that Fr Albera wrote on a sheet of paper at the beginning of 1915. It was a question that he regularly put to himself and his Salesians: Do you want to know if you have the spirit of Don Bosco? Fidelity to Don Bosco is very practically expressed by working on your character to smooth the edges, by practising charity to your neighbour and doing everything for love of God, accepting all of life's trials.

## Early Formation (1845 – 1862)

---

### 6 June 1845

Born in None, last of seven children. Two brothers became religious, one a Friar Minor and one a Vincentian, while a sister entered The Congregation of the Daughters of Charity.

### 1852 - 1857

Attended primary school in his home town.

### 18 October 1858

Entered secondary school at the Oratory in Valdocco, where he got to know Michael Magone.

### 1 May 1860

Accepted into the Salesian Society and began study of philosophy.

### 14 May 1862

Profession of vows with the first group of Salesians.



1861: YOUNG PAUL ALBERA GOES TO CONFESSION TO DON BOSCO.

# Mirabello

(1863 – 1868)

## September 1863

With Fr Rua and other Salesians he founds the first junior seminary at Mirabello where he was teacher and assistant while furthering his studies in philosophy and theology.

## Setembro de 1865

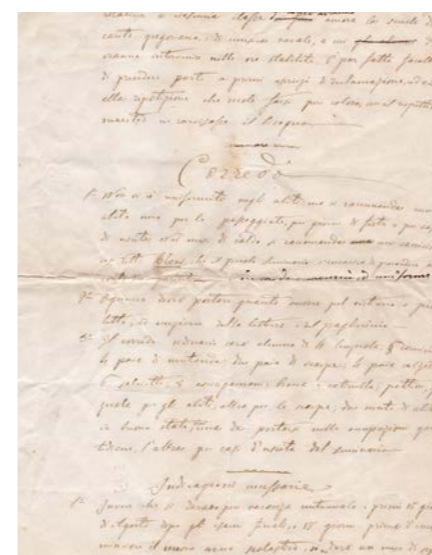
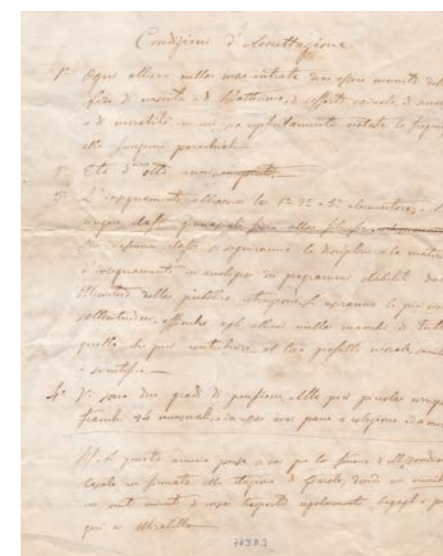
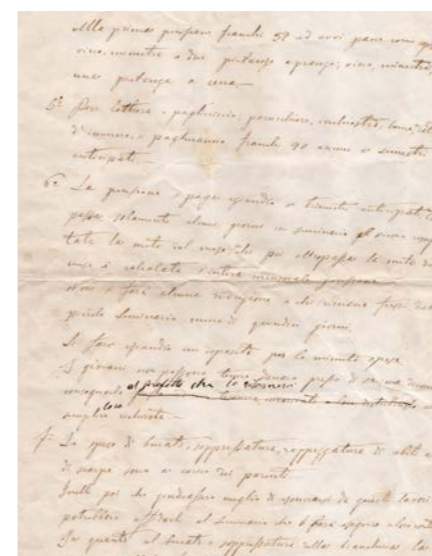
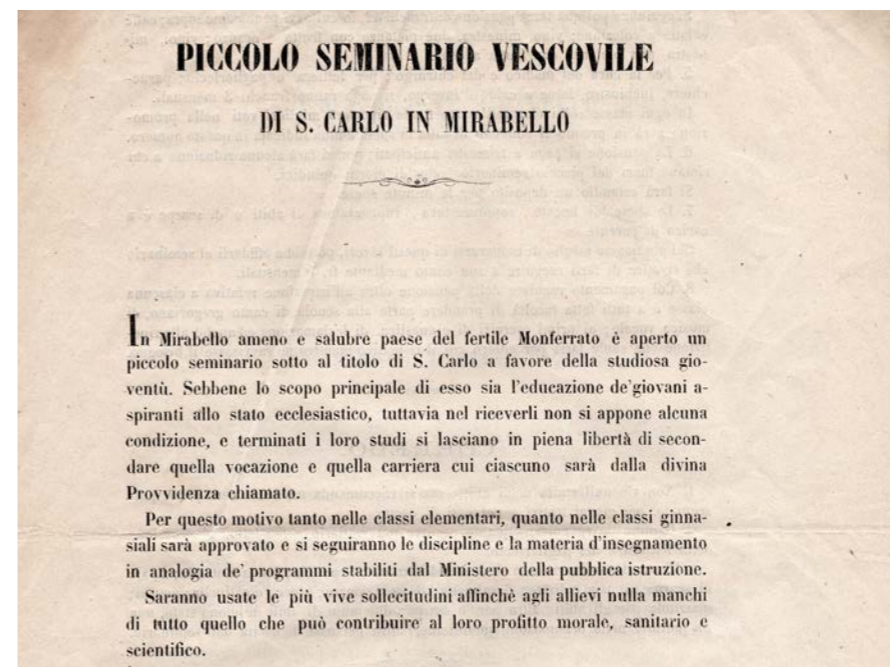
Gains his secondary teaching certificate at the University of Turin.

## 2 de agosto 1868

Ordained priest at Casale by Bishop Pietro Maria Ferré.



**REMINDER FROM DON BOSCO: "WHEN YOU HAVE THE JOY OF BEING ABLE TO SAY YOUR FIRST MASS, ASK GOD FOR THE GRACE NEVER TO BE DISCOURAGED"**



**JUNIOR SEMINARY OF SAN CARLO AT MIRABELLO, TURIN TIPOGRAFIA DELL'ORATORIO DI S. FRANCESCO DI SALES, 1863** (AS WELL AS THE PRINTED VERSION ALSO FR BONETTI'S MANUSCRIPT OF THE SAME TEXT WITH HANDWRITTEN CORRECTIONS BY DON BOSCO)

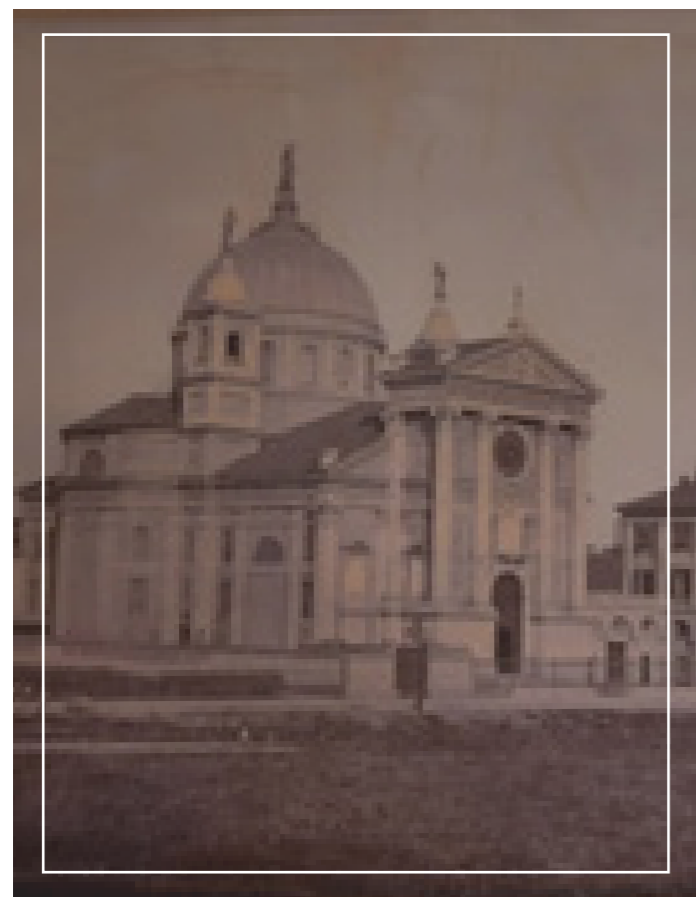
## Valdocco

(1868 – 1871)

### PREFECT OF THE DAY STUDENTS

9 June 1868

Opening of the Basilica of Mary Help of Christians.



**“I RECALL AS IF IT WERE TODAY THE SOLEMN MOMENT WHEN D. BOSCO, RADIANT WITH JOY, HIS EYES TEARY WITH DEEP EMOTION, WENT UP FOR THE FIRST TIME TO THE HIGH ALTAR TO CELEBRATE THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS BENEATH THE MERCIFUL GAZE OF HIS GREAT HELP OF CHRISTIANS...”**

***“The year of the consecration of the Sanctuary of Mary Help of Christians I returned to Turin, and for another four years, was able to enjoy the intimacy of Don Bosco draw from his great heart the valuable teachings that were all the more effective on us the better we saw them already put into practice by him in his daily behaviour.”***

LETTERE CIRCOLARI DI D. ALBERA, 18 OCT. 1920, P. 331



# Marassi

(1871 – 1872)

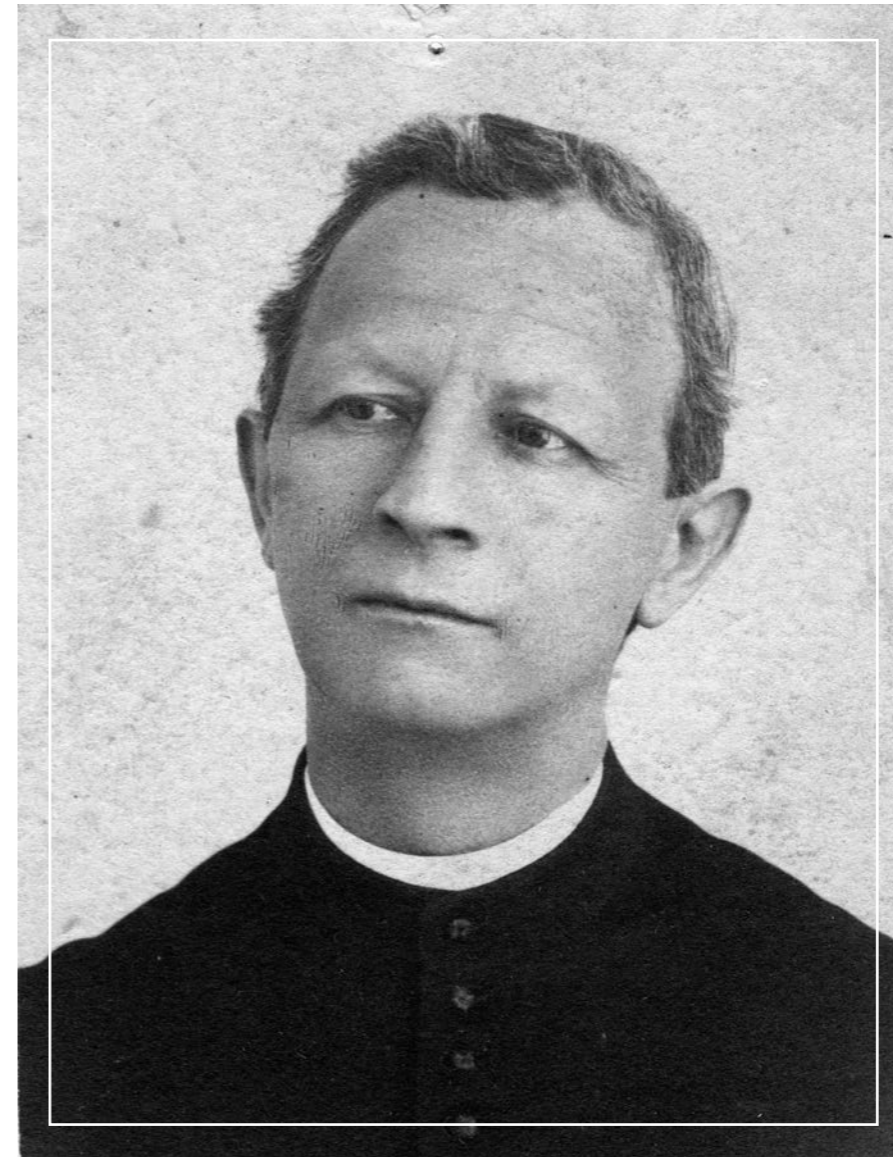
Founder and Rector of the house then shifted to Sampierdarena



SALESIAN HOUSE AT MARASSI



SALESIAN HOUSE AT SAMPIERDARENA



FR ALBERA



DON BOSCO AND FR ALBERA AT THE CENTRE OF A PHOTOGRAPHIC MONTAGE ALSO INCLUDING PEOPLE WHO WERE ABSENT WHEN THE PHOTO WAS TAKEN.

# Sampierdarena

(1873 – 1881)

## 26 October 1871

Found the **orphanage at Marassi, Genoa** with tailoring, shoe-making and carpentry workshops.

## November de 1872

The work is moved to **Sampierdarena**.

## 1873-1875

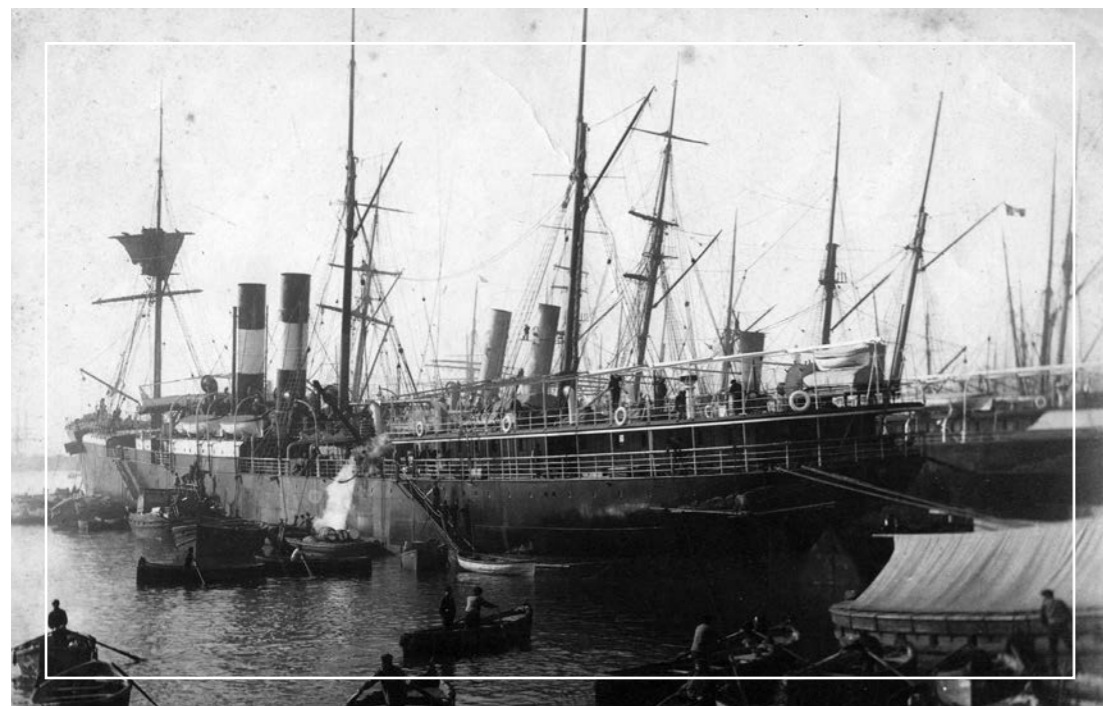
Extensions to buildings with new workshops (book-binding, smiths-mechanics, printing and compositing).

## July 1875

Don Bosco entrusts him with the work of **Mary Help of Christians** for adult vocations.

## 14 November 1875

Accompanies Don Bosco on board the ship to farewell **the first Salesian missionaries** heading to America.



## 10 August 1878

The printshop prints the **first edition of the Bollettino Salesiano** that would be printed at Sampierdarena until 1882.



## France

(1881 – 1892)

### PROVINCIAL

#### October 1881

Don Bosco sent him to Marseilles as the first Provincial of the Salesian houses in France. He found a difficult situation there (Law expelling religious), but was not discouraged. The Salesians simply declared that they were a “charitable society”.

In 1881 there were 4 Salesian houses in France: **Nice** (Salesians and Daughters of Mary Help of Christians), **Marseilles** (SDB and FMA), **Saint Cyr** (SDB and FMA) and **La Navarre**.

Over ten years he founded 10 houses: **Sainte Marguerite** (1883), **Menilmontant, Paris** (1883), **Lille** (1884), **Grevigney** (1888), **Le Rossignol** (1889), **Dinan** (1890), **Liegi** (1891), **Oran in Algeria** (1891), **Ruitz** (1891), **Saint Pierre de Canon** (1891).

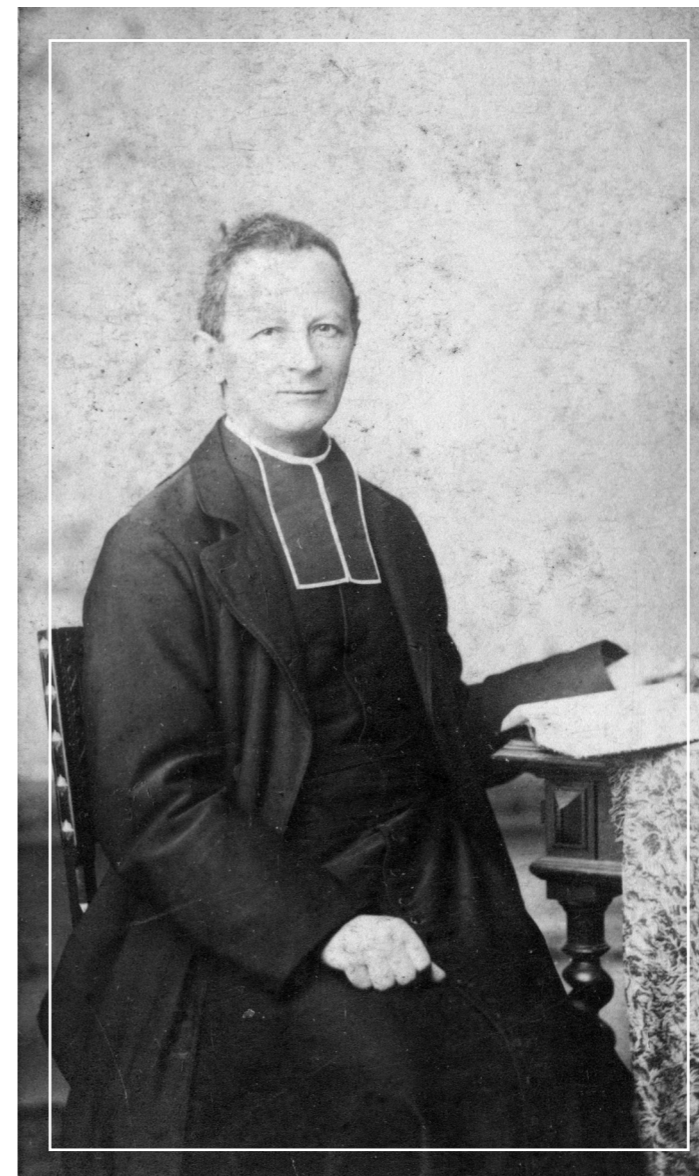
#### 1883-1887

He accompanied Don Bosco on his yearly trips through France, witness to countless healings. Don Bosco’s respect for him was expressed in the following brief statement:

Mrs Eudossia Olive, benefactor of Salesian work, met with Don Bosco in Marseilles and asked his advice on the choice of a spiritual director. The saint thought for a moment then replied: “Take Fr Albera as your director: he is a man who works miracles in the direction of souls!” (MB XV 490-491).

#### 1888-1891

He strengthened the network of French and Belgian Salesian Cooperators, gaining general respect: he was known as **le petit don Bosco**.



**“TAKE FR ALBERA AS  
YOUR DIRECTOR: HE  
IS A MAN WHO WORKS  
MIRACLES IN THE  
DIRECTION OF SOULS!”**  
(MB XV 490-491)



LILLE



SALESIAN COMMUNITY  
IN LIÈGE



MARSEILLE



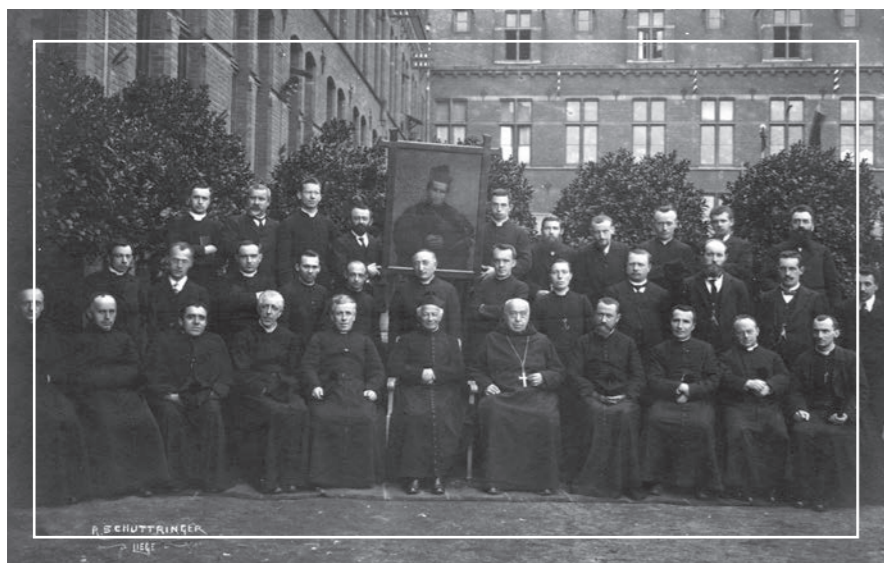
VOCATIONAL SCHOOL  
IN LILLE



NICE



PRINTING STUDENTS  
IN LILLE



LILLE



MARSEILLES

A BOY'S TESTIMONY REGARDING FR ALBERA:

*“I was greatly edified by the modest and humble approach of our superiore, his constant encouraging smile, and his gentle, lovable and attractive manners. There was never a recreation when he was not among us; but he also came to visit us in other places, especially in the refectory and the chapel. He said little, but his presence was enough to make us respectful.”*

DOMENICO GARNERI, DON PAOLO ALBERA SECONDO SUCCESSORE DI DON BOSCO. MEMORIE BIOGRAFICHE, TORINO, SOCIETÀ EDITRICE INTERNAZIONALE 1939, P. 80

## *Spiritual Director of the Salesian Congregation*

(1892 – 1910)

### **29 August 1891**

Appointed Spiritual Director General of the Salesian Congregation after the death of Fr Bonetti.

### **September 1892**

Transferred to Turin. In the following years in particular he saw to the formation of young confreres through conferences, retreats and personal chats.

### **12 October 1893**

With Bishop Cagliero, Rua, Barberis he left for London to be at the consecration of the Church of the Sacred Heart. In London, perhaps due to a train derailment, he wrote in his diary: **“Need to learn English...”**

### **February-March 1895**

Accompanied Fr Rua as a pilgrim to the **Holy Land**.

### **23-25 April 1895**

Took part in the **Cooperator Congress** in Bologna

### **31 December 1895**

Wrote in his diary (which from 1893 to 1899 is in French and measured 9x13cm).

DAS REGRAS OU CONSTITUIÇÕES DA SOCIEDADE DE S. FRANCISCO DE SALES, SEGUNDO O DECRETO DE APROVAÇÃO DE 3 DE ABRIL DE 1874, CAP. IX, DOS OUTROS SUPERIORES:

*“...the spiritual director will take special care of the novices. Together with the novice master he will show the greatest concern for them to know and practise the spirit of charity and zeal that must animate those who wish to dedicate their entire life to the good of souls. It is also the duty of the spiritual director to reverently admonish the Rector when he sees in him some notable negligence in practising and seeing that the Rules of the Congregation are observed...”*

FROM HIS PERSONAL JOURNAL:

"1895 IS CONSIGNED TO ETERNITY. FOR ME IT WAS FILLED WITH JOYS AND SORROWS. I WAS ONCE MORE ABLE TO SEE THE HOUSE AT MARSEILLES WHERE I LEFT MUCH OF MY HEART. **FROM THERE I WENT TO THE HOLY LAND AND WAS EDIFIED BY THE COMPANY OF FR RUA. SUCH PIETY, SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE AND MORTIFICATION! SUCH ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS; AND ESPECIALLY SUCH EVEN-MINDEDNESS! I SAW BETHLEHEM, JERUSALEM, NAZARETH: SUCH WONDERFUL MEMORIES! I WAS ABLE TO TAKE PART IN THE CONGRESS AT BOLOGNA. I HAVE AN UNFORGETTABLE MEMORY OF IT... I WAS ABLE TO PREACH THE RETREAT IN FRANCE AND ITALY, SPEND TIME WITH THE ORDINANDS AND I AM VERY MUCH SATISFIED WITH THE PRECEDING YEARS. I HAVE WRITTEN SOME PAGES ON BISHOP LASAGNA AND HE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO APPRECIATE THEM. BUT ALSO 1895 ENDED WITHOUT ME CORRECTING MY MOST SERIOUS FAULTS. MY PRIDE IS STILL AT A HIGH LEVEL. MY CHARACTER IS STILL DIFFICULT, EVEN WITH FR RUA HIMSELF. MY PIETY IS ALWAYS SUPERFICIAL AND DOES NOT HAVE GREAT INFLUENCE ON MY BEHAVIOUR, MY ACTIONS, THAT ARE STILL VERY HUMAN AND UNWORTHY OF A RELIGIOUS. MY CHARITY IS FICKLE AND FULL OF BIAS. I AM NOT MORTIFIED IN EYES, TASTES, OR IN WORDS...**

**ILLNESSES HAVE INCREASED A LOT: I COULD DIE FROM ONE MOMENT TO THE NEXT IN THE STATE I AM IN: THIS IS NOT JUST AN IDEA, IT IS A REALITY AND I AM AWARE OF IT. I WOULD LIKE TO GO INTO THE NEW YEAR LIVING BETTER IN ORDER TO DIE BETTER.** I RECALL HAVING DIRECTED SOME OF MY CONFRERES WHO OFFERED THEMSELVES THROUGH VOWS... THEY HAVE EDIFIED ME BY THEIR ZEAL, THEIR DEVOTION. THEY HAVE SEALED THEIR COMMITMENT WITH THEIR BLOOD, AND IN THE GUISE OF BEING THEIR TEACHER AND DIRECTOR IN ALL THIS, I AM NOTHING.. MARY, MY MOTHER, LET ME NOT HAVE THE SHAME OF ACKNOWLEDGING THAT I AM INFERIOR IN VIRTUE TO MY SUBJECTS: GIVE ME GREAT LOVE FOR YOU DOMINA MEA, NUMQUAM QUIESCAM DONEC OBTINUERO VERUM AMOREM ERGA TE".

mes ordinands, et j'ai été bien plus satisfait que les autres années. J'ai prêché la retraite au noviciat de Saint-Vien de Casan.

J'ai pu contribuer un peu à établir la maison de retraite à Avignone et j'ai pu assister moi-même à la grande retraite des ordinands avant Noël.

J'ai écrit quelques lignes sur M<sup>r</sup> Lasagna et on a eu la béatitude de les apier.

Mais aussi l'année 1895 finit sans que je me sois corrigé de mes défauts plus graves. Mon orgueil est toujours au plus haut degré. Mon caractère est toujours difficile même avec Don Rua.

Ma piété est toujours superficielle et n'exerce pas une grande influence sur la conduite, sur mes actions, qui toutes sont encore bien humaines, et peu dignes d'un religieux.

Ma charité est capricieuse et pleine de partialité.

Je ne suis pas mortifié ni dans les yeux, ni dans le goût, ni dans mes paroles...

Mon cœur est-il tout à Dieu? Tu dois me répondre que non... que de petites susceptibilités dans mes rapports avec les confrères et même avec les supérieurs!

Que de jugements, de conseils, d'orgueil et peu charitablement... Si j'avais de me présenter au Tribunal de Dieu quelle sentence aurais-je reçue?

28

J'ai écrit à un confrère pour lui faire voir que je ne garde pas de haine sur son sujet.

J'ai été trop libre dans mes regards. Je me propose d'imiter les jésuites dans l'humilité, dans le détachement de toutes les choses du monde et dans l'esprit de mortification.

La lettre de S. Jérôme m'a fait tant de bien! Quelle humilité! Quelle fermeté de volonté dans la lutte contre l'ambition propre!

Non content de quelques profecies, mais de quelques inférieures qui sentent. Sur Liv II. V. 3.

31

L'année 1895 va se jeter dans l'éternité. Pour moi aussi il a été riche de joies et de douleurs.

J'ai pu cette année revoir la maison de Marseille, où j'ai laissé si grande partie de mon cœur.

De là je suis parti pour les lieux saints. J'ai été édifié de la Compagnie de S. Rua. Quelle piété, quel esprit de sacrifice et de mortification! quel zèle pour le salut des âmes et surtout quelle égalité d'humaine!

J'ai vu Bethléem, Jérusalem, Nazareth. Quel doux souvenir!

J'ai pu prendre part au Congrès de Bologne. J'en garde un souvenir ineffaçable.

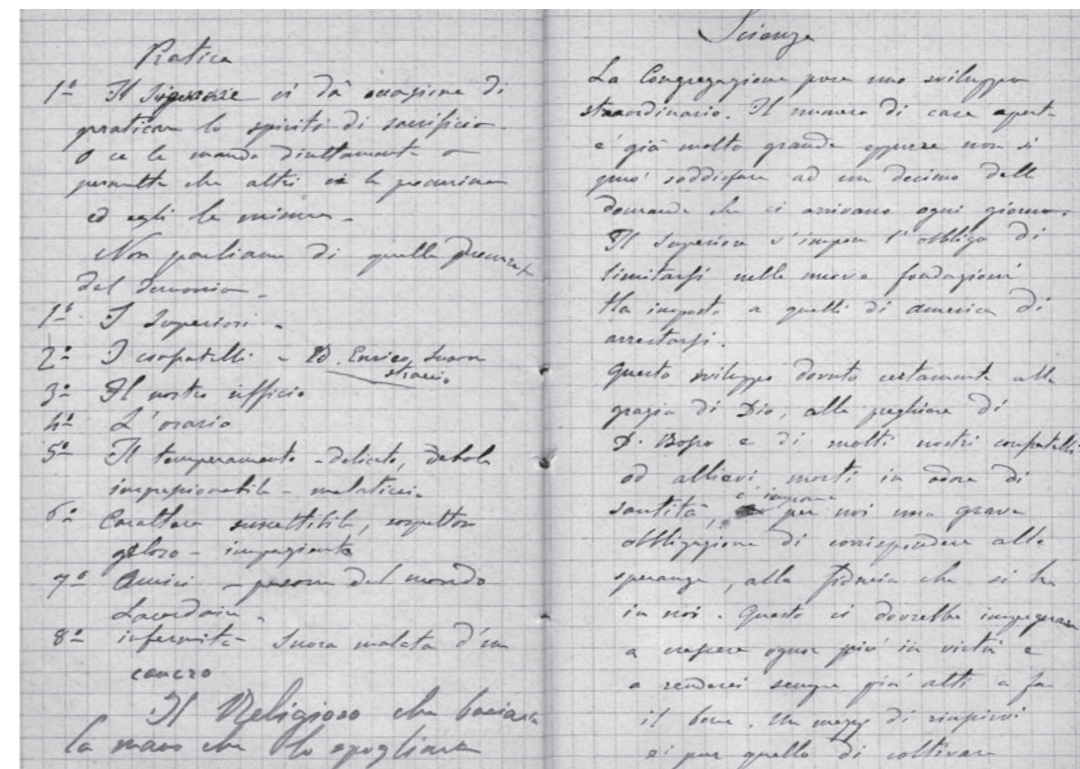
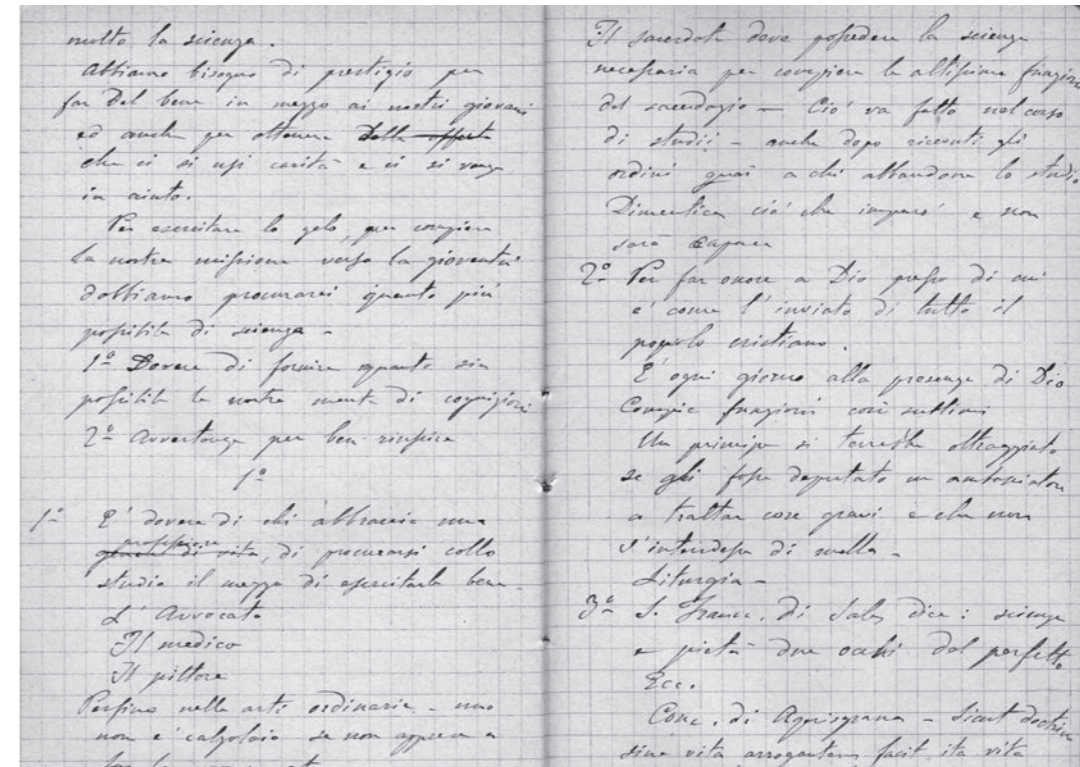
J'ai pu prêcher quelques retraites aux jours de France. Cela m'a fait du bien à moi-même.

J'ai pu m'occuper un peu de

EXTRACT FROM HIS NOTEBOOK IN WHICH HE WROTE NOTES FOR MEDITATIONS AND CONFERENCES ESPECIALLY FOR THE CONFRERES:

## LEARNING

**THE CONGREGATION IS GOING THROUGH EXTRAORDINARY DEVELOPMENT. THE NUMBER OF HOUSES OPENED IS ALREADY GREAT AND YET WE CANNOT SATISFY A TENTH OF THE DEMANDS THAT COME TO US EVERY DAY. THE SUPERIOR HAS OBLIGED US TO LIMIT NEW FOUNDATIONS. HE HAS TOLD THOSE IN AMERICA TO STOP. THIS DEVELOPMENT HAS CERTAINLY BEEN DUE TO THE GRACE OF GOD, THE PRAYERS OF DON BOSCO AND OF MANY OF OUR CONFRERES OR PUPILS WHO HAVE DIED WITH A REPUTATION FOR HOLINESS. THERE IS A SERIOUS OBLIGATION FOR US TO CORRESPOND TO THE HOPE, THE TRUST PLACED IN US. THIS SHOULD COMMIT US TO GROWING MORE AND MORE IN VIRTUE AND MAKE US MORE AND MORE CAPABLE OF DOING GOOD. ONE WAY OF SUCCEEDING IS ALSO TO CULTIVATE LEARNING. WE NEED PRESTIGE IN ORDER TO DO GOOD AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE AND ALSO TO GET THEM TO PRACTISE CHARITY AND COME TO OUR AID. IN ORDER TO PRACTISE ZEAL AND TO CARRY OUT OUR MISSION TO THE YOUNG, WE MUST GAIN AS MUCH LEARNING AS POSSIBLE...**





## Canonical Visitations of Salesian houses in America

(1900 – 1903)

**Como Representante de dom Rua, então Reitor-Mor, visita todas as casas da América dos Salesianos e das FMA.** A viagem dura três anos, quer pelo número considerável de etapas entre a Terra do Fogo e os Estados Unidos, mas também pelas condições incômodas de transporte que com frequência o obrigavam a voltar para trás a fim de poder dirigir-se para outra nação (a Buenos Aires voltou onze vezes!)



**FR PAUL ALBERA WITH HIS SECRETARY FR CALOGERO GUSMANO ON THE LEFT**

### 1900

**17 August:** Sails from Barcelona for America

**September:** Montevideo, Villa Colon, Las Piedras, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, La Plata, Bernal

**October:** Buenos Aires, Moron, S. Isidro, Uribelarrea, Buenos Aires, Bahia Blanca, Fortin Mercedes, Patagones, Viedma, Patagones, Viedma

**November:** Pringles, Bahia Blanca, Buenos Aires, Lujan, Buenos Aires

**December:** S. Nicolas de Los Arroyos, Rosario, S. Nicolas de Los Arroyos, Buenos Aires, Bernal, Buenos Aires, Montevideo



### 1901

**January:** Villa Colon, Bernal, Buenos Aires,

**February:** Montevideo, Punta Arenas, Dawson, Candelaria

**March:** Punta Arenas, Montevideo, Mercedes

**April:** Paysandù, Buenos Aires, Asuncion

**May:** Cuiabà

**June:** Corumbà, Villa Conception, Asuncion

**July:** Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Sao Paulo, Lorena, Guaratinguetà, Juiz de Fora, Ouro Preto, Cachoeira do Campo, Araras.

**August:** Guaratinguetà, Lorena, Niteroi, Ponte Nova, Niteroi, Sao Paulo

**September:** Ipiranga, Campinas, Lorena, Niteroi, Bahia

**October:** Pernambuco



**November:** Niteroi, Flores, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Mendoza

**December:** Rodeo del Medio, Santiago, Melipilla, Santiago, Talca, Concepcion, Valparaiso, La Serena, Andacollo

**1902**

**January:** Santiago, Macul, Santiago

**February:** Valparaiso, Iquique

**March:** Arequipa, La Paz

**April:** Lima

**May:** Guayaquil

**June:** Cuenca, Gualaquiza, Cuenca

**July:** Riobamba, Ambato, Quito, Sangolquí, Guayaquil

**August:** Barranquilla, Honda, Bogotá

**September:** Contractacion

**October:** Bogotá, Agua de Dios, Bogotá

**November:** Barranquilla, Caracas, Valencia, Caracas, Maracaibo

**December:** Curacao, La Guaira, Caracas, Miraflores, Porto Rico

**1903**

**January:** Mexico City, Morelia, Puebla, Guadalupe

**February:** Mexico City, San Francisco

**March:** New York, London, Burwash, London

**April:** London, Paris, Turin



MEXICO CITY



FR ALBERA AND BISHOP CAGLIERO IN BUENOS AYRES



TIERRA DEL FUEGO

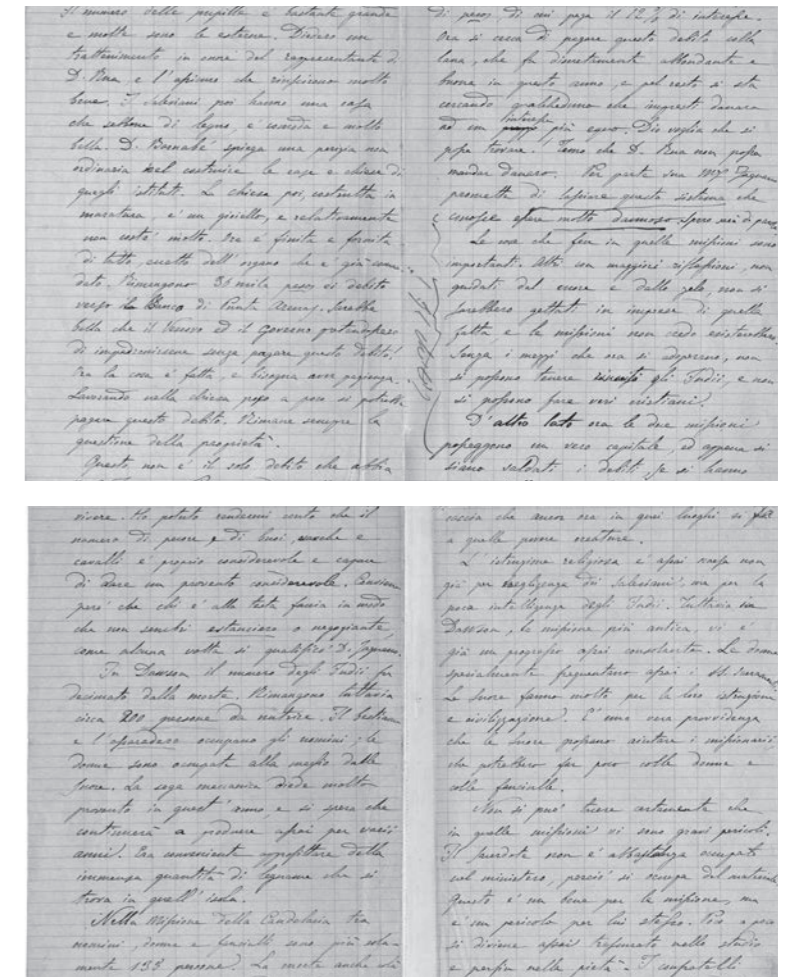
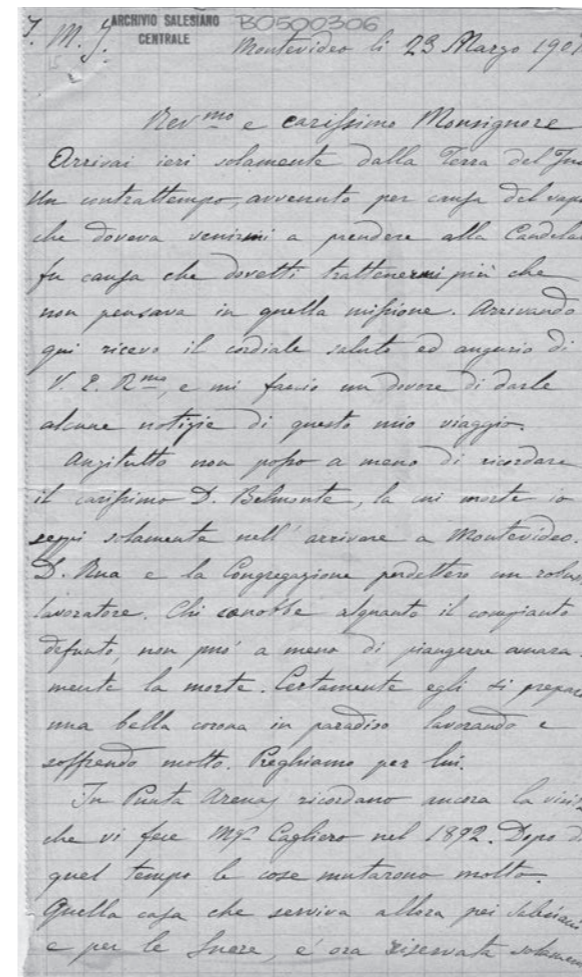
LETTER TO BISHOP CAGLIERO ON THE VISIT TO TIERRA DEL FUEGO.

MONTEVIDEO, 23<sup>RD</sup> MARCH 1901

VERY REV. AND DEAR BISHOP,  
I ARRIVED ONLY YESTERDAY IN TIERRA DEL FUEGO. A MISHAP THAT OCCURRED BECAUSE OF THE STEAMER THAT WAS SUPPOSED TO PICK US UP AT CANDELARIA, WAS THE REASON I HAD TO SPEND MORE TIME THAN I THOUGHT IN THAT MISSION... IN PUNTA ARENAS...THE SALESIANS HAVE A HOUSE THAT, ALTHOUGH MADE OF WOOD, IS COMFORTABLE AND VERY NICE. FR BERNABÈ EXPLAINS UNCOMMON EXPERTISE IN BUILDING HOUSES AND CHURCHES FOR THOSE INSTITUTES. THE CHURCH, BUILT OF BRICKS, IS A JEWEL, AND IN RELATIVE TERMS DID NOT COST MUCH...

**BISHOP FAGNANO... THE THINGS HE IS DOING IN THOSE MISSIONS ARE IMPORTANT. OTHERS, WITH GREATER REFLECTION, NOT LED BY THEIR HEART AND BY ZEAL, WOULD NOT HAVE THROWN THEMSELVES INTO VENTURES OF THAT NATURE AND I BELIEVE THE MISSIONS WOULD NOT EXIST. WITHOUT THE MEANS NOW BEING EMPLOYED, ONE CANNOT KEEP THE INDIANS TOGETHER, NOR MAKE TRUE CHRISTIANS OF THEM.**

ON THE OTHER HAND, NOW THE MISSIONS HAVE SOME REAL CAPITAL AND AS SOON AS DEBTS ARE PAID, IF THERE ARE CONFRERES CAPABLE OF SACRIFICE AND INTELLIGENT ENOUGH TO TAKE THINGS FORWARD, WE CAN HOPE THAT THE MISSIONS CAN LIVE ON...



P. ALBERA, LETTER TO FR GIULIO BARBERIS DURING THEIR VISIT TO HOUSES IN AMERICA.

BUENOS AIRES, 14 SEPTEMBER 1900

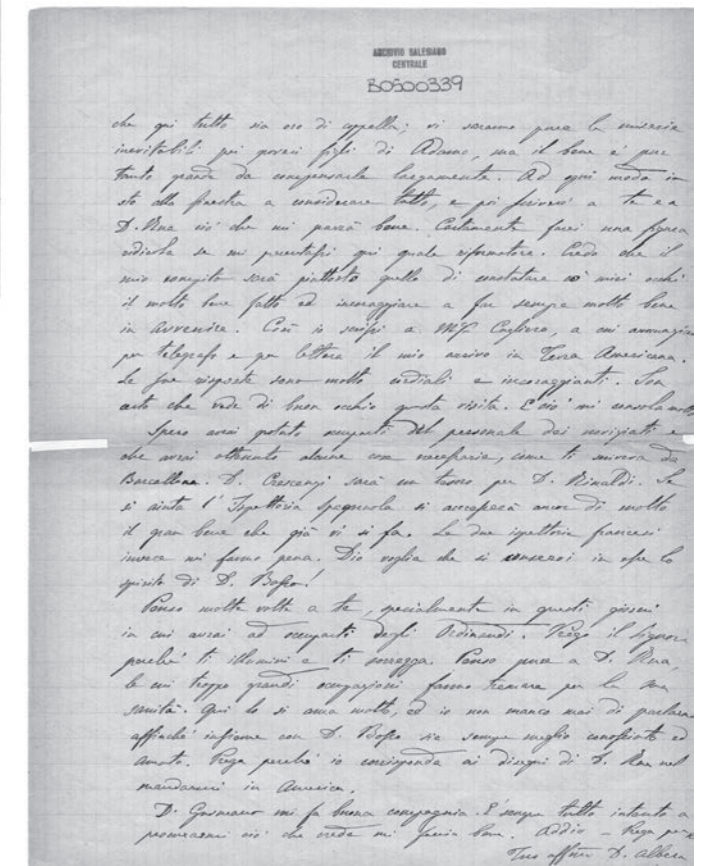
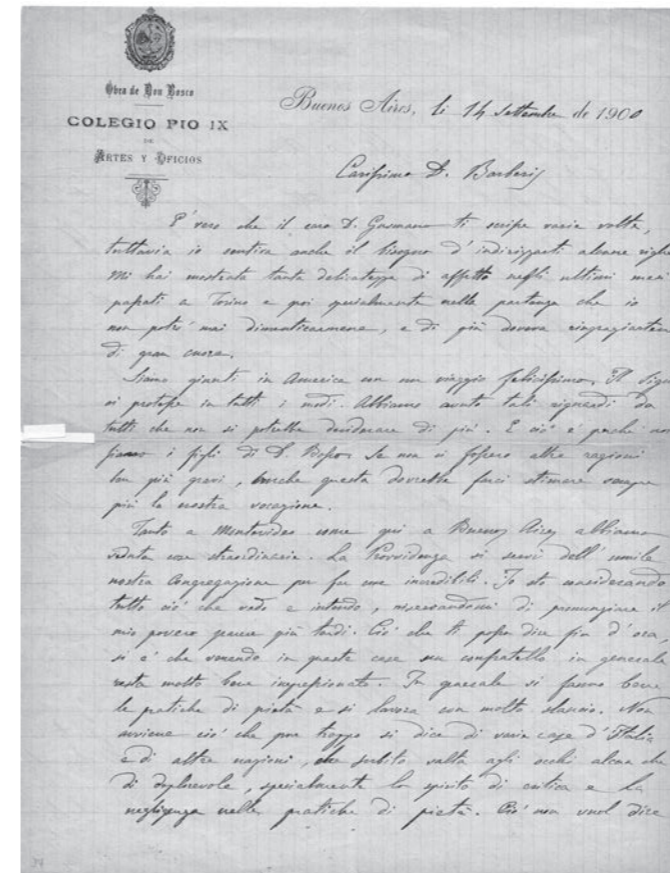
MY DEAR FR BARBERIS,  
IT IS TRUE THAT DEAR FR GUSMANO HAS WRITTEN TO YOU SEVERAL TIMES, BUT JUST THE SAME I HAVE ALSO FELT THE NEED TO WRITE YOU SOME LINES. YOU SHOWED ME SUCH DELICACY OF AFFECTION IN THE LAST MONTHS SPENT IN TURIN AND THEN ESPECIALLY AT THE DEPARTURE, THAT I CAN NEVER FORGET THIS, AND MORE SO DO I NEED TO THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART.

WE ARRIVED IN AMERICA AFTER A SMOOTH VOYAGE. THE LORD HAS PROTECTED US IN EVERY WAY. WE HAVE BEEN SO WELL TREATED BY EVERYONE THAT WE COULD NOT DESIRE MORE. AND THIS IS BECAUSE WE ARE SONS OF DON BOSCO. IF THERE WERE NO OTHER MORE SERIOUS REASONS, THIS ALONE SHOULD MAKE US RESPECT OUR VOCATION EVEN MORE.

BOTH IN MONTEVIDEO AND HERE IN BUENOS AYRES WE HAVE SEEN EXTRAORDINARY THINGS. PROVIDENCE HAS MADE USE OF OUR HUMBLE CONGREGATION TO DO INCREDIBLE THINGS. I AM THINKING ABOUT EVERYTHING I SEE AND CAN GRASP, BUT WILL WAIT BEFORE OFFERING MY POOR OPINION AT A LATER TIME...

**I WOULD CERTAINLY LOOK RIDICULOUS IF I WERE TO PRESENT MYSELF HERE AS A REFORMER. I BELIEVE MY TASK IS RATHER THAT OF SEEING WITH MY OWN EYES ALL THE GOOD THAT IS BEING DONE AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE DOING MUCH GOOD IN THE FUTURE...**

YOURS AFFECTIONATELY  
FR ALBERA





PROCESSION OF THE IMMACULATE AT LA BOCA (1900)



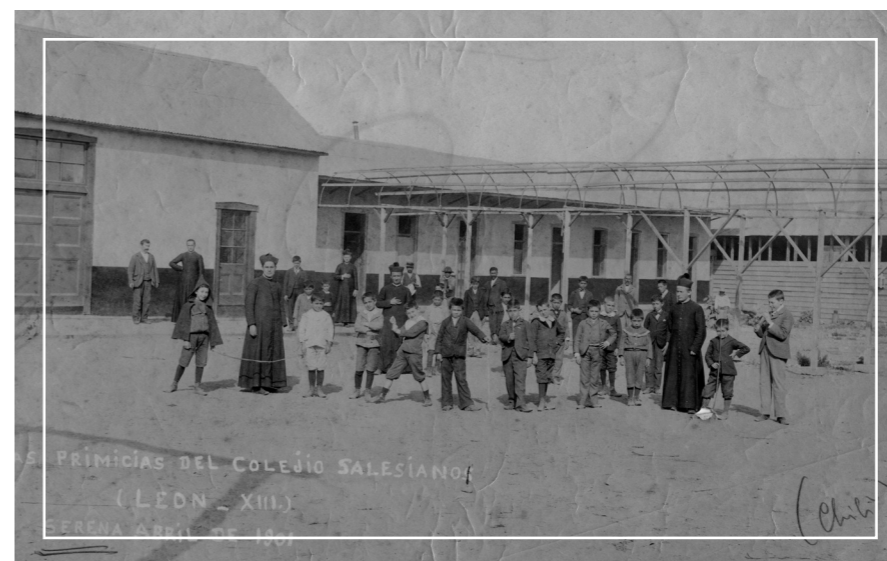
WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE TODAY



MONTEVIDEO (URUGUAY)



CAMPINAS (BRAZIL)  
FR ALBERA WITH BOROROS CHIEFS. HE IS



LA SERENA (CHILE)

FROM FR ALBERA'S SPIRITUAL JOURNAL (FROM 1902 TO 1915 IN ENGLISH):

MAY 1902 (LIMA)

TODAY, 2ND OF MAY, I BEGAN MY RETREAT WHICH I HAVE FELT GREAT NEED FOR IN THIS LIFE AS A TRAVELLER THAT I HAVE BEEN ENGAGED IN FOR 21 MONTHS. MY MIND IS VERY DISTRACTED AND MY HEART IS VERY DRY. I WANT TO WITHDRAW INTO MYSELF AND I WOULD LIKE TO ASK FOR SOME REFRESHMENT FROM HEAVEN. I FEEL I HAVE THE GOOD WILL TO MAKE THIS RETREAT FRUITFULLY; BUT I KNOW MY WEAKNESSES AND SO I TRUST ONLY IN THE GRACE OF GOD.

**1. I RESOLVE TO MAKE THIS RETREAT AS IF IT WERE THE LAST ONE OF MY LIFE. MY AGE, THE DANGERS OF THIS JOURNEY, EVERYTHING INSPIRES THIS GOOD RESOLUTION TO MAKE THIS RETREAT WELL.**

2. OVER THESE DAYS I PROMISE TO PRACTISE EVER GREATER FERVOUR, AND PIETY, AND DEEP RECOLLECTION, CAREFULLY LISTENING TO THE VOICE OF GOD. *LOQUERE, DOMINE, QUIA AUDIT SERVUS TUUS.*

3. I WILL ASK THE DIVINE DOCTOR JESUS CHRIST TO LOOK AFTER AND HEAL MY SOUL AND FROM THIS MOMENT ON I PROMISE TO REMOVE ALL THE OBSTACLES TO GOD'S GRACE.

May 1902 (Lima)

This day, 2<sup>d</sup> of May, I begin my spiritual exercises which I feel very need of, in this life of travellers, that I do from twenty and one months. My mind is very most dissipated, my heart very dry; I wish to retire within myself; I wish ask some favour of heaven. It appears me that I have good will of doing these exercises with fruit; but I know my weakness, and for it I trust only to the God's grace.

1<sup>o</sup> I propose to do these exercises if they were the last of my life. My age, the perils of the journey, all inspire me the good determination of doing well these exercises.

2<sup>o</sup> I promise to practise, during these days, an ever increasing fervour, ~~and~~ <sup>most</sup> piety and deep recollection, hearing with attention the voice of God. *Loquere, Domine, quia audit servus tuus.*

I shall beseech the Divine physician J.C. to cure and heal my soul, and since this moment I promise to remove all obstacles to the grace of God.

# Rector Major

(1910 – 1921)

## GENERAL CHAPTER 11

16 August 1910

Elected Rector Major at the 11th General Chapter



FIRST ROW FROM THE LEFT: FR LEMOYNE, FR VESPIGNANI, FR CERRUTI, FR BERTELLO, FR RINALDI, BISHOP COSTAMAGNA, **FR ALBERA**, BISHOP FAGNANO, FR BARBERIS, FR PISCETTA, FR MUNERATI, FR GUSMANO.

FROM HIS FIRST CIRCULAR LETTER:

TURIN, 25 JANUARY 1911

MY DEAR CONFRERES,  
I KNOW THAT THE FIRST CIRCULAR OF THE NEW RECTOR MAJOR HAS BEEN AWAITED WITH SOME IMPATIENCE. FOR MY PART, I ALSO RECOGNISE THAT SHOULD HAVE INFORMED YOU, AS SOON AS THE GENERAL CHAPTER WAS OVER, OF THE ELECTION OF THE SUPERIORS AND OF VARIOUS OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS REGARDING OUR PIOUS SOCIETY...

1. ... AS A BROTHER AND FRIEND. BUT YOU ARE SO GOOD AND INDULGENT IN MY REGARD, FORGIVE ME IF I AM FULFILLING THIS DUTY OF MINE WITH CONSIDERABLE DELAY. I HOPE THAT YOU WILL NOT ATTRIBUTE IT TO NEGLIGENCE OR LACK OF GOOD WILL, BUT WILL CONSIDER IT ONLY AS THE EFFECT OF THAT PAINFUL TREPIDATION THAT SURPRISED ME ON SEEING MYSELF BURDENED WITH THE **HUGE WEIGHT OF GOVERNING THE ENTIRE SALESIAN CONGREGATION**. YOU WILL TAKE INTO ACCOUNT, I HAVE NO DOUBT, THE SERIOUS AND ENDLESS THINGS I HAVE HAD TO UNDERGO DUE TO MY ELECTION, WHICH DID NOT ALLOW ME TO COLLECT MY THOUGHTS EVEN FOR A SHORT TIME...

2. **THE MEMORY OF FR RUA**. BUT HOW COULD I WRITE TO MY DEAR CONFRERES WITHOUT REMEMBERING THE ONE WHO FOR SO MANY YEARS WAS OUR TEACHER AND GUIDE, THROUGH EXAMPLE, WORD AND WHAT HE WROTE ALONG THE PATH OF VIRTUE? HOW COULD I BEGIN THIS CIRCULAR OF MINE WITHOUT PAYING A TRIBUTE OF ADMIRATION AND PROFOUND VENERATION TO THE INCOMPARABLE RECTOR MAJOR WHOM DEATH HAS TAKEN FROM US? I AM WRITING THESE PAGES IN THE VERY SAME HUMBLE ROOM THAT FOR MORE THAN TWENTY-TWO YEARS WAS WITNESS TO HIS HEROIC VIRTUES. **HERE, EVERYTHING SPEAKS TO ME ABOUT HIM.**

... AT THE MORNING SESSION ON 16 AUGUST THIS POOR CORRESPONDENT WAS ELECTED RECTOR MAJOR. IT IS POINTLESS ME ATTEMPTING TO DESCRIBE THE EMOTION FLOODING MY SOULS AT THAT MOMENT IN WHICH I SAW MYSELF, SO UNWORTHY, RAISED TO SUCH A SUBLIME AND FORMIDABLE OFFICE. I SEEMED TO BE SQUASHED BENEATH SUCH A GREAT RESPONSIBILITY... AS SOON AS I WAS ALLOWED I RAN TO THROW MYSELF AT THE FEET OF OUR VEN. FATHER, COMPLAINING STRONGLY TO HIM FOR HAVING LET THE TILLER OF THE SALESIAN SHIP FALL INTO SUCH MISERABLE HANDS...

... ENCOURAGED BY SUCH KINDNESS I DARED TO ASK HIM FOR SOME PRACTICAL RULES FOR GUIDING OUR PIOUS SOCIETY, AND OUR PAPA, WITH A KINDLY SMILE ON HIS LIPS REPLIED: AND YOU ARE ASKING ME? ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS **FOLLOW IN FR RUA'S FOOTSTEPS. HE WAS A SAINT.** DO AS HE WOULD HAVE DONE IN EVERY CASE. DO NOT DEVIATE FROM THE CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS INTRODUCED BY DON BOSCO AND FR RUA. JUST THE SAME I WILL ADD A WORD: — REMIND YOUR SUBJECTS THAT THE ONE WHO WE ARE SERVING, DOMINUS EST. LET THEM KEEP FIXED IN THEIR MIND THE THOUGHT OF GOD'S PRESENCE, LET THEM BE GUIDED IN EVERYTHING BY THE SPIRIT OF FAITH, AND LET THEM FERVENTLY FULFIL THEIR PRACTICES OF PIETY AND OFFER THEIR WORK AND SACRIFICES TO GOD. **MAY GOD ALWAYS BE IN THEIR MINDS AND HEARTS.**





## Canonical Visitations

### 1911

Milan, Genoa, Este, Trieste, Gorizia, Mogliano Veneto, Schio, Spain (Barcelona), Austro-Hungarian Empire (Oswiecim, Daszawa, Przemysl, Krakow, Vienna, Radna, Ljubljana).



MILAN



VIENNA ON THE LEFT **FR PIETRO RICALDONE**, WHO WOULD THEN BE THE 4TH SUCCESSOR OF DON BOSCO, AND **AUGUST HLOND**, FUTURE PRIMATE OF POLAND AND CARDINAL, DECLARED VENERABLE IN 2018 BY POPE FRANCIS

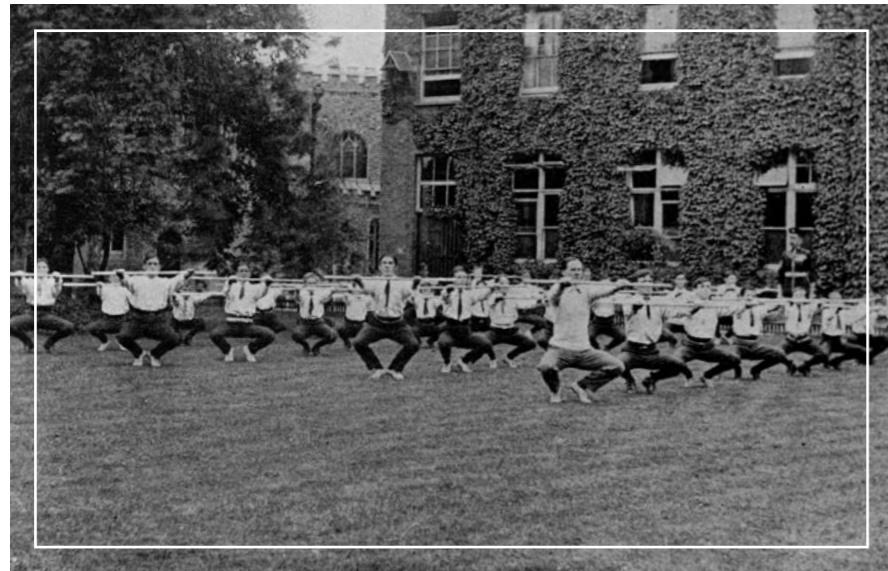
### 1912

France (Paris, Guernesey), England (London, Burwash, Farnborough), Belgium (Tournai, Melles, Antoing, Brussels, Grand Bigard, St Denis Westem, Liegi, Hechtel, Verviers, Aynaille), Bologna, Faenza, Lugo, Ravenna, Ferrara, Modena, Parma, Borgo S. Donnino, Florence, Pisa, Collesalveti, Livorno, Spezia.

London (with gymnastics, theatre and tennis displays).



**"IOLANTHE"** COMIC OPERA IN TWO ACTS BY GILBERT AND SULLIVAN



SALESIAN SCHOOL  
OF LONDON, 1912

### 1913

Sampierdarena, Varazze, Savona, Alassio, Torrione di Bordighera, Spain (Matarò, Barcelona, Ciudadela, Campello, Valencia, Cordoba, Montilla, Malaga, Ronda, Ecija, Utrera, Seville, Cadice, San José del Valle, Carmona, Madrid, Carabanchel Alto, Salamanca, Bejar, Orense, Santander, Vigo, Bilbao, Huesca, Gerona), Rome, Frascati, Genzano, Macerata, Gualdo Tadino, Trevi, Caserta, Naples, Castellamare di Stabia, Milan.



HUESCA (SPAIN)



VIGO (FROM B.S. AUGUST 1913)

“AT 5 ARRIVAL IN VIGO, WELCOMED TRIUMPHANTLY: A MULTITUDE OF GENTLEMEN AND AUTHORITIES, AMONG WHOM THE MILITARY GOVERNOR GENERAL AND COMMANDER OF THE NAVAL DISTRICT, AWAITED FR ALBERA INSIDE THE STATION WHILE OUTSIDE WAS A HUGE CROWD OF PEOPLE WHILE FROM THE WINDOWS AND BALCONIES OF HOMES THEY WAVED HATS AND HANDKERCHIEFS TO GREET THE SUPERIOR GENERAL OF THE SALESIANS. FR ALBERA, MOUNTED ON A CARRIAGE FROM CITY HALL WITH THE MAYOR AND MILITARY GOVERNOR, ESCORTED BY OUR GYMNASTS ON BICYCLES AND FOLLOWED BY A LONG LINE OF AUTOMOBILES AND CARRIAGES HEADED FOR THE SALESIAN HOUSE, WHERE THE YOUTH ARRANGED IN THE LARGE COURTYARD WAVING FLAGS APPLAUDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY”

## 1914

Palermo, Marsala, Messina, Alì, Catania, Pedara, Bronte, Taormina, Randazzo, Malta, Modica, Caltagirone.

**“AT THE STATION AT PASSOPISCIARO, WAITING FOR HIM WERE CAV. AVV. GUALTIERO FISAULI, PROVINCIAL PARLIAMENTARIAN, BARON GREGORIO FISAULI, PRESIDENT OF THE CONGREGATION OF CHARITY, CAV. GIUSEPPE VAGLIASINDI, PRESIDENT OF THE KINDERGARTEN, AND OTHER DIGNITARIES FROM RANDAZZO WHO BOARDED THE TRAIN WITH US. WHEN THIS CAME INTO THE STATION THE CITY BAND STRUCK UP A MARCH AND BETWEEN SALVOS OF FIRECRACKERS AND THE WAVING OF FLAGS AND WHITE HANDKERCHIEFS, A THUNDEROUS OUTBREAK OF CHEERS SPRANG FROM ALL THE HEARTS OF THE IMMENSE CROWD THAT HAD TAKEN UP ALL OF THE SQUARE AND SURROUNDINGS OF THE STATION, IMPATIENT TO OFFER A WELCOME TO THE SUCCESSOR OF DON BOSCO.”**



**RANDAZZO**  
(FROM B.S. JUNE 1914)

## 1915

Lanzo Torinese, Castelnuovo d'Asti, Vercelli, Novara, Foglizzo Canavese, Lombriasco, Biella, Perosa Argentina, Trino Vercellese, Alessandria, Martinetto (Turin), Maroggia, Lugano, Milan, Mogliano, Venezia.

**During the years of the Great War Fr Albera suspended his canonical visitations.**

Laying the first stone of the votive sanctuary to Mary Help of Christians, in Becchi (pictured, laying of the first stone).

## 1918

Opening of the votive church in honour of Mary Help of Christians at The Becchi, Castelnuovo d'Asti.

## 1919

Milan, Rome, Florence, Sampierdarena, Pinerolo.

## 1920

Naples, Milan, Verona, Novara, Rome.

## 1921

Frascati, France (Nice, Navarra, Marseilles, Montpellier, Roman, Lyons, Chateau d'Aix), Morges (Switzerland), Parma, Modena, Milan, **Castelnuovo d'Asti.**



## Congresses

The Congresses experienced a favourable time between 1888 and 1915 and Fr Albera was among the most active promoters, both as Spiritual Director of the Congregation and as Rector Major. These meetings had the aim of deepening Thinking and encouraging practical action on crucial topics such as the **Oratory and catechesis** or strengthening membership of the Cooperators and Past Pupils associations.

### 17-18 MAY 1911

5th Congress "festive oratories and religion classes"

#### 5<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESS – 17-18 MAY 1911

"FESTIVE ORATORIES AND RELIGION CLASSES"

##### CONGRESS RESOLUTIONS:

- I. Internal organisation and formation of staff
- II. Spirit, practices of piety and religious ceremonies
- III. Teaching catechism – competitions, sermons
- IV. Sport, music and drama
- V. Social education – Savings and welfare
- VI. Girls oratories
- VII. Religion classes

## 8-10 SEPTEMBER 1911

First International Past Pupils Congress



FR ALBERA, DURING THE CONGRESS, IN A RENAULT TYPE CC (THIS VEHICLE WAS BRAND NEW, BEING A MODEL PRODUCED BETWEEN 1911 AND 1914).

## 23-25 NOVEMBER 1911

First Congress of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

## 14-15 MARCH 1914

Congress of Cooperator Decurions (group leaders).

## 20-23 MAY 1920

8th International Congress of Salesian Cooperators, Second International Congress of Past Pupils and Second International Congress of Past Pupils of the FMA.

The three Congresses held at the same time during the Celebrations for the opening of the Past Pupils monument to Don Bosco in Piazza Maria Ausiliatrice.

## With Mons. Cagliero

Ties with Bishop. Cagliero, first Salesian bishop and cardinal, Missionary to South America, were always strong and cordial.



BISHOP CAGLIERO, FR RICALDONE DURING CELEBRATIONS FOR FR ALBERA'S PRIESTLY GOLDEN JUBILEE (1918) AS WELL, A LARGE GROUP OF SALESIANS AND OTHER RELIGIOUS TOOK PART, ALONG WITH MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY, 13 BISHOPS AND THE CONSULS OF ARGENTINA, BRAZIL AND COLOMBIA.



POSTER FOR THE 50 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD OF FR ALBERA (1918)

FROM FR ALBERA'S SPIRITUAL JOURNAL (DECEMBER 1915)

*“I am about to leave for Rome. I will go to meet Cardinal Cagliero who will receive his Cardinal’s hat on the 6<sup>th</sup> of this month. At the moment he is at sea; I tremble at the thought of the dangers he faces during this voyage. Virgin Mary save your son.”*

# The Great War

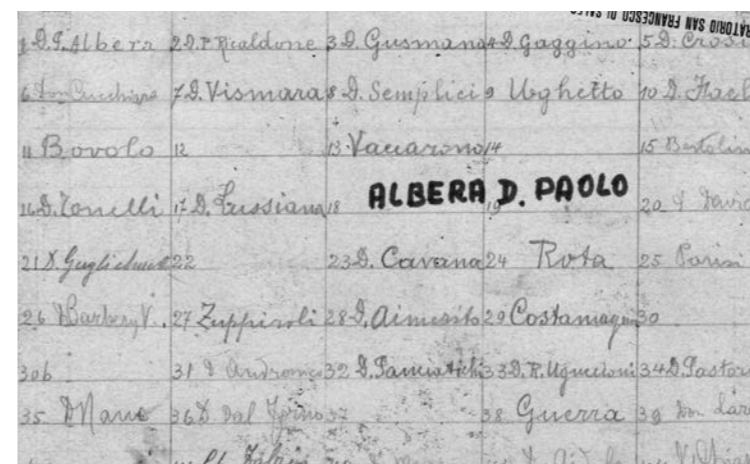
Some 1500 confreres and novices (almost half the total number) took Part in the armed conflict from 1914, since they were **Salesians belonging to the different countries at war among themselves**. At the end of the war, there were 144 Salesians with officer rank; 55 military chaplains; 44 awarded or decorated; 66 wounded; 70 died.

*“An overwhelming number of dear confreres, among whom many young priests, find themselves in the tough necessity of giving up the religious habit to put on military uniforms; they have had to leave aside their beloved studies to wield sword and rifle; they were wrenched from their peaceful boarding and vocational schools to then go and live in barracks and trenches, or, as nurses, were looking after the sick and the wounded. We have quite a number also at the front, where **some have already lost their lives**, while others have returned horribly wounded.”<sup>1</sup>*

Fr Albera sent 32 circular letters to Salesian soldiers between 19 March 1916 and 24 December 1918.

*“In the holy and fruitful battles of teaching you were untiring, so that while you gathered for yourselves a grand harvest of merits and heavenly blessings, you gave your country the first fruits of your intellectual and moral energies. Now your country is also asking you for your physical energies, and you have responded with ardour, and your customary joy you are ready for any sacrifice... **May the goodness and gentleness of your soul shine through all your actions. This must be your habitual nature, this is what you have been trained for, this is what you must persevere in, this must be the sign that makes you known as sons of Don Bosco...** Always Be ready for any service to your comrades, be the first to help them in all their needs; may they all see shining in your heart a burning flame of charity that makes you tireless for every good work. Opportunities will not be lacking, and you will not let them pass you by. Seize them all; you will ensure the blessings of heaven, the love of your brothers, you will be luminous beacons of good<sup>2</sup> example...”<sup>2</sup>*

Fr Albera organised retreats for military confreres on leave.



<sup>1</sup> FR ALBERA, CIRCULARS TO SALESIANS, 182.

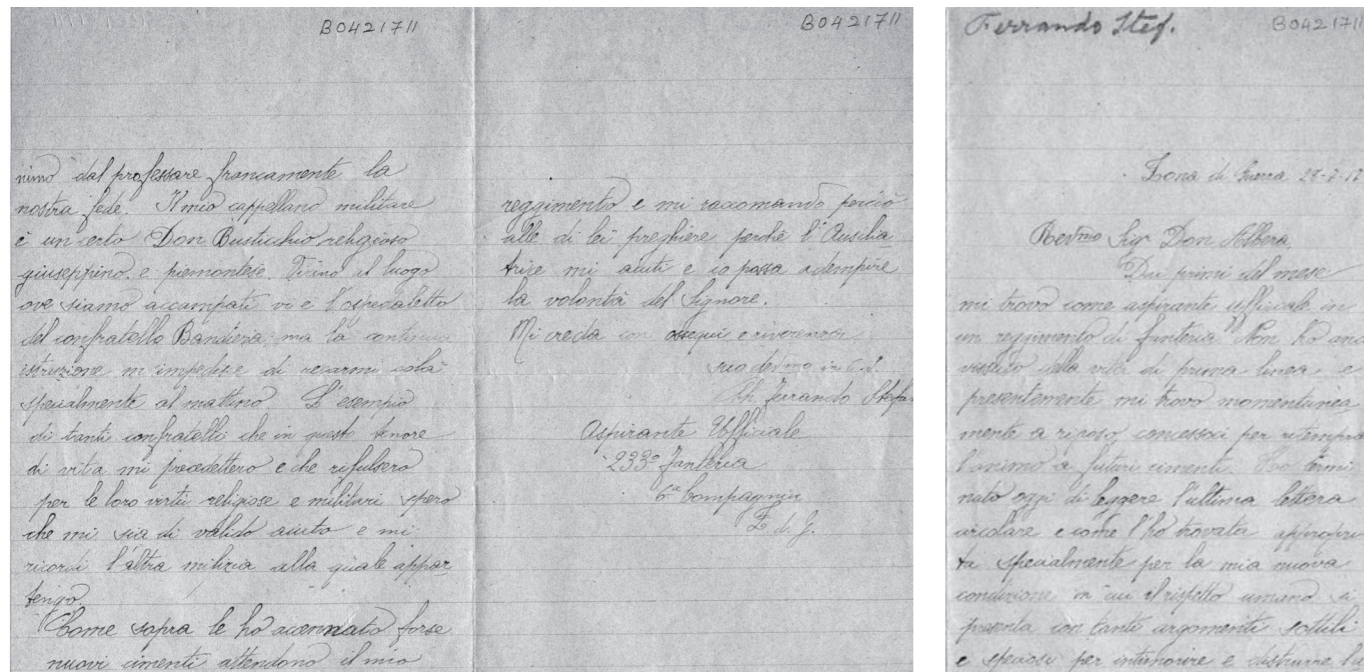
<sup>2</sup> PE. GARNERI, VITA DI PAOLO ALBERA, 325-326. LETTERA DEL 19 MARZO 1916.

GROUP AND RETOUCHE PHOTO OF THE RETREAT HELD ON 12 AND 13 OCTOBER 1916.

ON THE BACK OF THE PHOTO, NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS.

We have preserved 3390 **letters and military postcards addressed to Fr Paul Albera** or other members of the Superior Chapters from 791 Salesian soldiers.

Fr Albera and the other superiors kept in constant contact by personal letters with these soldiers on the front.



LETTER FROM CLERIC STEPHEN FERRANDO (LATER MISSIONARY IN INDIA, BISHOP OF KRISHNAGAR THEN SHILLONG. FOUNDER OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS. HE DIED IN 1978, AND BY DECREE ON 3 MARCH 2016 POPE FRANCIS DECLARED HIM VENERABLE).

WAR ZONE, 28-7-17

VERY REV. FR ALBERA,  
 SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE MONTH I AM AN ASPIRING OFFICER IN AN INFANTRY REGIMENT. I HAVE NOT YET LIVED LIFE ON THE FRONT LINE AND AM CURRENTLY ON LEAVE FOR A TIME, GRANTED TO US TO RESTORE THE SOUL FOR FUTURE ENDEAVOURS. TODAY I HAVE FINISHED READING YOUR MOST RECENT CIRCULAR LETTER AND I FOUND IT ESPECIALLY APPROPRIATE FOR MY NEW CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE HUMAN RESPECT IS PRESENTED WITH SO MANY SUBTLE AND SPECIOUS ARGUMENT TO INTIMIDATE AN DISTRACT THE SOUL FROM OPENLY PROFESSING OUR FAITH...  
 I HOPE THAT THE EXAMPLE OF SO MANY CONFRERES WHO PRECEDED ME IN THIS WAY OF LIFE AND WHO SHONE BY THEIR RELIGIOUS AND MILITARY VIRTUES WILL BE OF VALUABLE HELP TO ME AND WILL REMIND ME OF THE OTHER MILITIA I BELONG TO.

AS I HAVE MENTIONED ABOVE, PERHAPS NEW CHALLENGES AWAIT MY REGIMENT AND I THEREFORE COMMEND MYSELF TO YOUR PRAYERS THAT THE HELP OF CHRISTIANS MAY HELP ME ND THAT I MAY FULFIL THE LORD'S WILL.

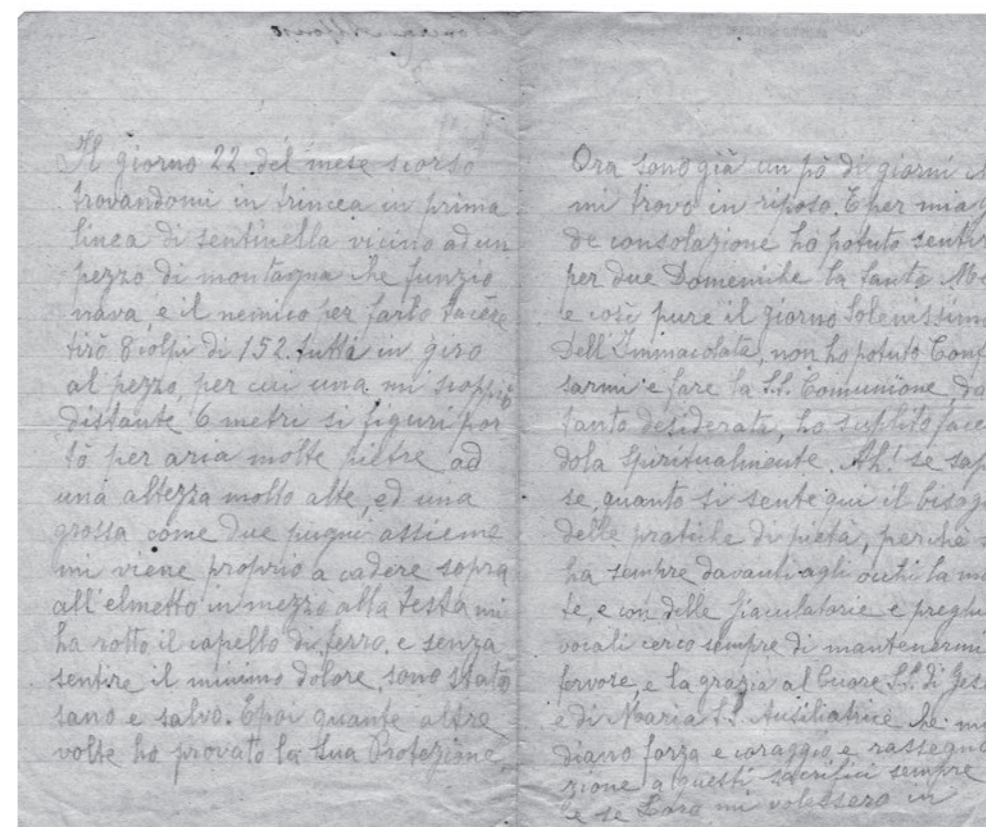
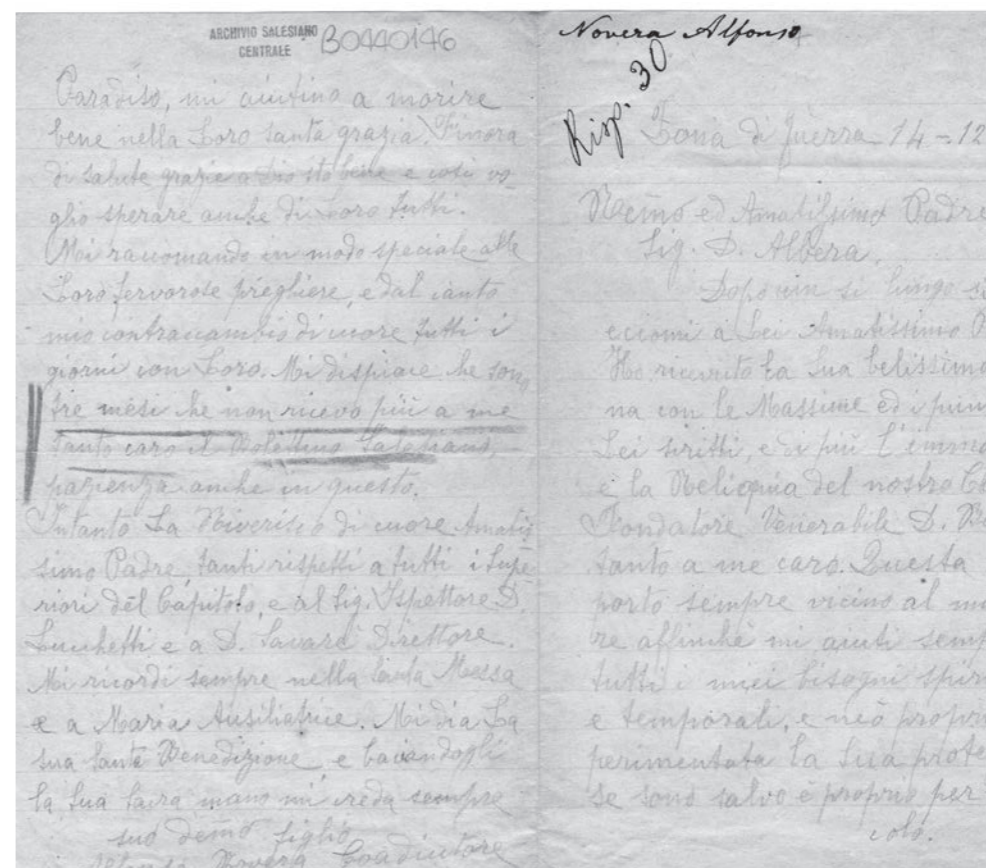
CL. STEPHEN FERRANDO



SALESIAN NOVERA REPORTS A LUCKY EXPERIENCE AT THE FRONT:

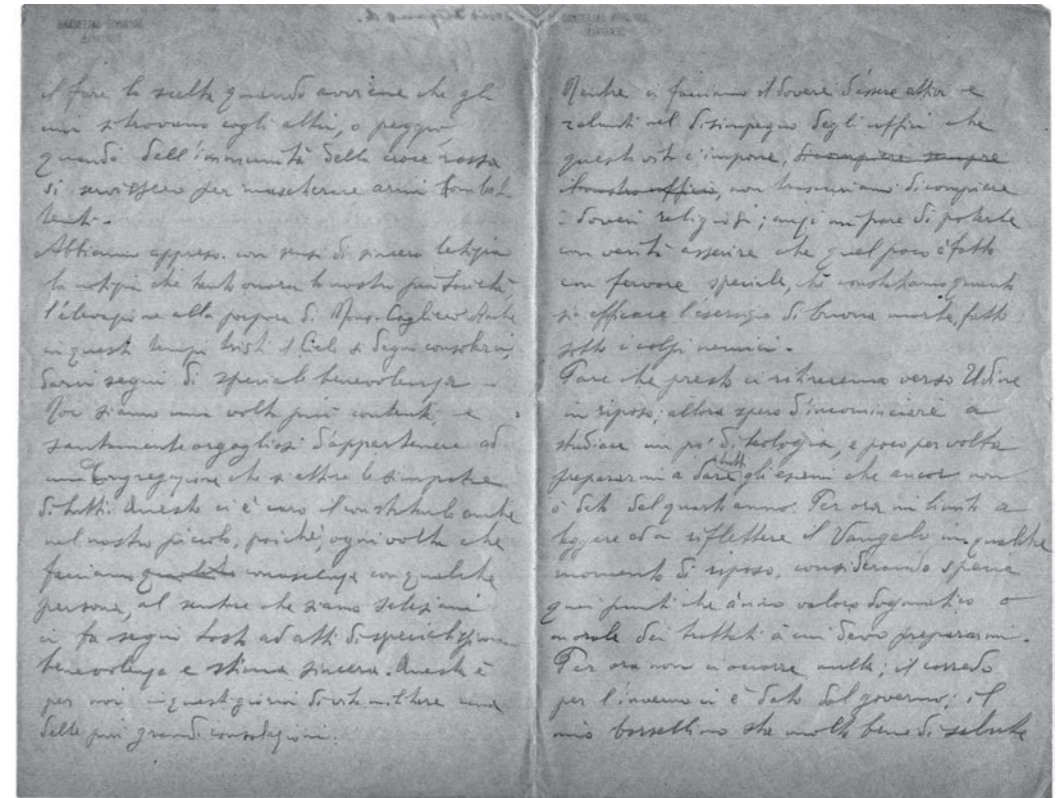
"I RECEIVED YOUR BEAUTIFUL LETTER, WITH THE MAXIMS AND POINTS YOU WROTE, AND WHAT IS MORE, THE MEDAL AND RELIC OF OUR DEAR FOUNDER, VENERABLE DON BOSCO, A SAINT DEAR TO ME. I CARRY THIS ALWAYS CLOSE TO MY HEART SO THAT HE MAY ALWAYS HELP ME IN ALL MY SPIRITUAL AND TEMPORAL NEEDS. AND I HAVE EXPERIENCED HIS PROTECTION. I WAS SAVED AND REALLY BY A MIRACLE. ON THE 22ND OF LAST MONTH, I WAS IN THE TRENCHES AT THE FRONT ON SENTRY DUTY, NEAR A MOUNTAIN ARTILLERY PIECE AT WORK, IN ORDER TO SILENCE IT THE ENEMY SCORED 8 OUT OF 152 HITS, ALL AROUND THE ARTILLERY PIECE. ONE SHELL FELL SIX METRES FROM ME. IMAGINE HOW IT THREW MANY ROCKS INTO THE AIR AT A GREAT HEIGHT, ONE HUGE ONE TWO FISTS WIDE CAME DOWN RIGHT ON MY HELMET IN THE MIDDLE OF MY HEAD AND SPLIT THE IRON HELMET, BUT WITHOUT ME FEELING THE LEAST PAIN. I WAS SAFE AND SOUND. AND THEN HOW MANY OTHER TIMES HAVE I EXPERIENCED THE PROTECTION OF DON BOSCO."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> ASC, B0440146, NOVERA-ALBERA, 14.12.1917; HIS RECORDS WERE NOT FOUND.

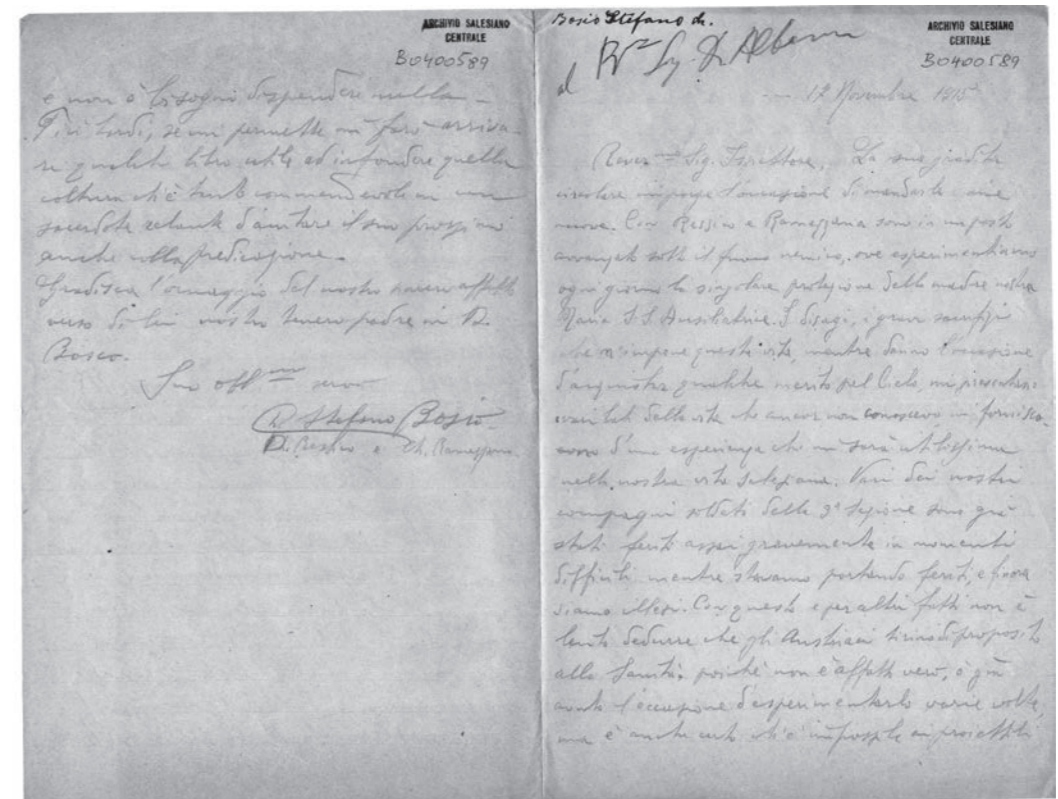
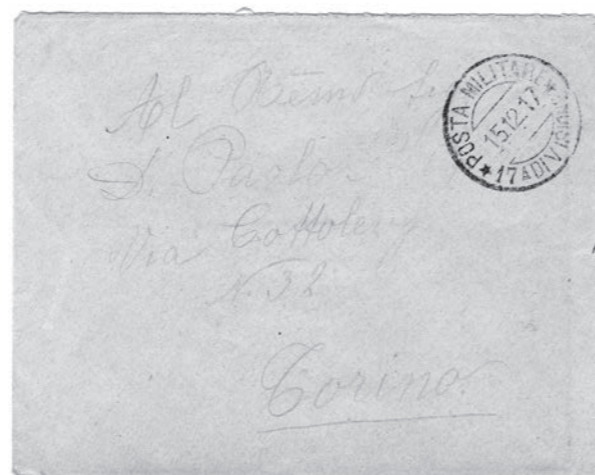
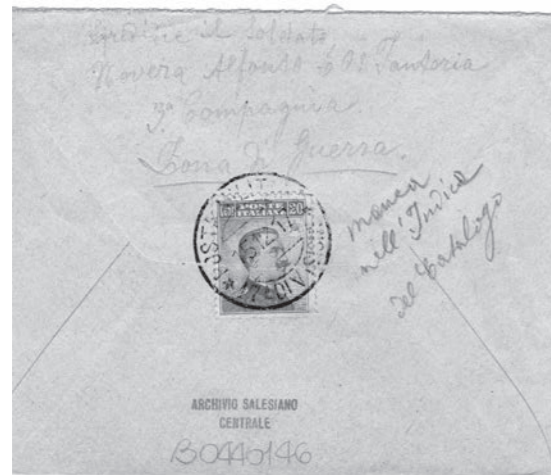


CLERIC BOSIO TELLS OF HIS TASK AS A STRETCHER-BEARER:

"WITH RESSICO AND RAMEZZANA I AM IN AN ADVANCED POSITION UNDER ENEMY FIRE, WHERE EVERY DAY WE EXPERIENCE THE SPECIAL PROTECTION OF OUR MOTHER MARY HELP OF CHRISTIANS. THE HARDSHIPS, THE SERIOUS SACRIFICES THIS LIFE IMPOSES ON ME, WHILE GIVING ME THE OPPORTUNITY TO ACQUIRE SOME MERITS FOR HEAVEN, PRESENT ME WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS OF LIFE THAT I HAVE NOT KNOWN UNTIL NOW, OFFER ME AN EXPERIENCE THAT WILL BE VERY USEFUL FOR ME IN OUR SALESIAN LIFE. MANY OF OUR COMPANIONS IN THE THIRD SECTION HAVE ALREADY BEEN VERY SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN DIFFICULT MOMENTS WHILE CARRYING THE WOUNDED, WE INSTEAD ARE STILL UNHARMED."<sup>4</sup>



<sup>4</sup> ASC, B0400589, BOSIO-MANASSERO, 17.11.1915, LATER DELIVERED TO FR ALBERA.



SALESIAN MIGLIO, A LIEUTENANT, LOST HIS LIFE HEROICALLY SAVING HIS COMRADES THIS IS GRATEFULLY TESTIFIED TO BY ONE OF THE SOLDIERS:

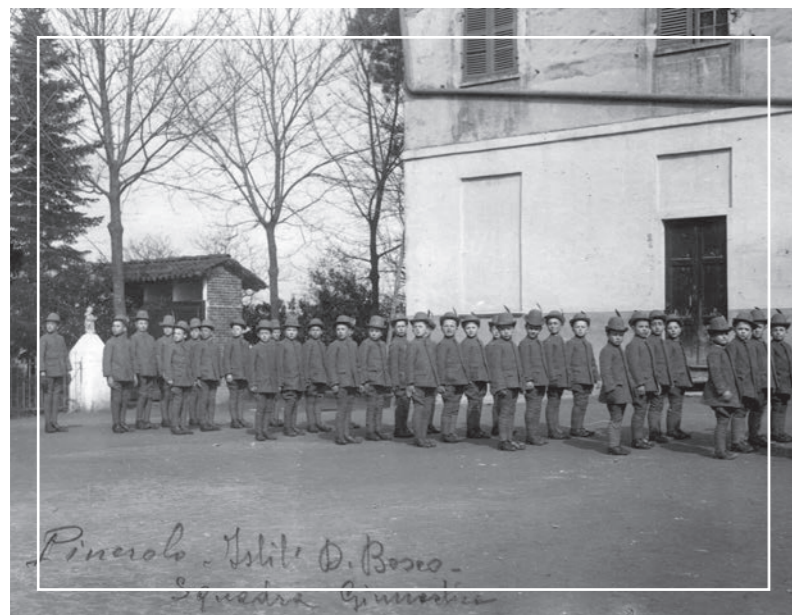
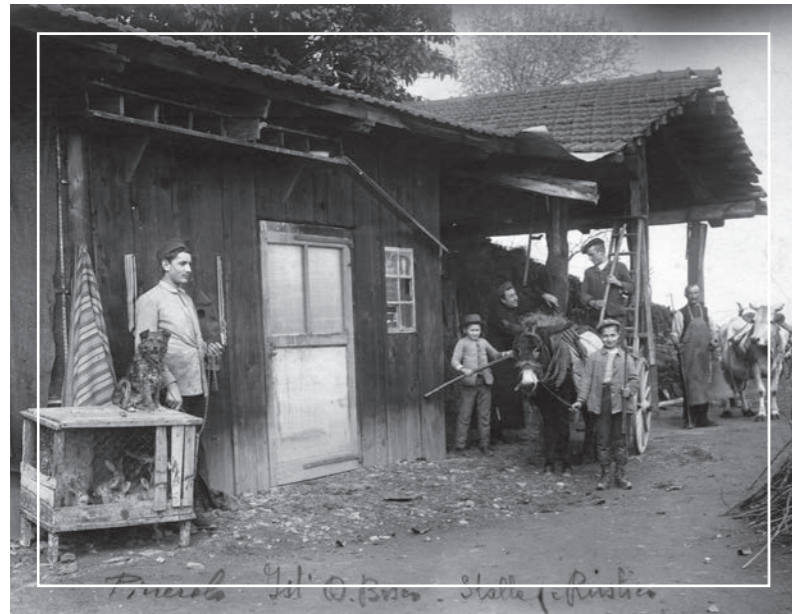
"IF I AM STILL ALIVE I OWE IT TO HIM [...] WE WERE IN THE TRENCHES AT 1050 METRES. DURING THE FURIOUS BOMBARDMENT LAST NIGHT, LIEUTENANT MIGLIO GOT AS MANY SOLDIERS AS HE COULD INTO HIS "SHELTER". I HAD REMAINED AT THE ENTRANCE, AND HE SHOUTED "MOVE IN, MOVE IN THERE IS STILL ROOM. AND HE REPEATEDLY INVITED THE SOLDIERS TO BUNCH TOGETHER MORE TO MAKE ROOM FOR THE OTHERS.

HE REMAINED AT THE ENTRANCE TO THE TRENCH WHEN A SHELL FELL CLOSE TO THE SHELTER AND EXPLODED WITH A HUGE BANG. THE SHELTER CAME APART AND WE WERE BURIED. WHEN WE DUG OURSELVES OUT WE CAME TO KNOW THAT THE LIEUTENANT AND SOME SOLDIERS WERE BLOWN TO PIECES FAR FROM WHERE THE SHELL FELL. HE COULD HAVE ALSO FOUND REFUGE AND WOULD HAVE BEEN SAVED, HE WANTED TO LEAVE ALL THE PLACES TO HIS SOLDIERS." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>E. VALENTINI, RICORDO DI UN EROE, 47.

Attention to young people most in need was foremost in Fr Albera's thoughts. The Salesians not engaged at the front were asked to re-double their efforts to cover the work of confreres at war and not even one house would be closed during the war, to ensure the best assistance to the young. With the war still in progress and given the scarcity of personnel he did not hesitate to open orphanages and offer help to everyone, on both sides of the conflict (and the same policy would be adopted by the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians). Particular emphasis was given, in 1916, to the opening of the orphanage at Pinerolo-Monte Oliveto:





FROM FR PAUL ALBERA'S LETTER TO PRIME MINISTER SALANDRA:

"EXCELLENCY,  
WHENEVER OUR COUNTRY WAS STRUCK BY SOME MISFORTUNE, THE VEN.  
FR JOHN BOSCO AND THEN HIS WORTHY SUCCESSOR, THE VERY REV.  
FR MICHAEL RUA WILLINGLY LENT THEIR WORK FOR THE RELIEF OF PUBLIC  
NEEDS... NOW, SEEING THAT THE NUMBER OF POOR ORPHANED AND DES-  
TITUTE CHILDREN IS INCREASING EVERY DAY, I BELIEVE THAT THE MOMENT  
HAS COME TO OFFER THE COUNTRY, IN THE PERSON OF SO MANY POOR  
CHILDREN, SOME MORE IMMEDIATE AND EFFECTIVE HELP... I HAVE DECI-  
DED TO OPEN A SPECIAL INSTITUTE FOR YOUNGSTERS BETWEEN EIGHT  
AND TWELVE YEARS OF AGE WHO ARE ABANDONED OR WHO HAVE LOST  
THEIR MOTHER AND THEIR FATHER IS UNDER ARMS, OR BECAUSE THEY  
HAVE LOST THEIR FATHER IN THE WAR. TO THIS END I HAVE DESTINED A  
LARGE BUILDING LOCATED ON A NICE HILLSIDE, CALLED MONTE OLIVETO,  
NEAR PINEROLO... IN INVOLVING YOUR EXCELLENCY IN THIS INITIATIVE OF  
MINE, I FIRMLY TRUST THAT YOU WILL LEND ALL THE SUPPORT OF YOUR  
AUTHORITY TO THIS WORK, WHOSE AIM IS THE EDUCATION AND INSTRUC-  
TION OF YOUNG PEOPLE TO PREPARE THEM TO BE UPRIGHT AND HARD-  
WORKING CITIZENS. THIS IS ENTIRELY ON FAVOUR OF THE HIGHEST INTE-  
RESTS OF OUR COUNTRY."

BOLLETTINO SALESIANO, 4 (MAY 1916), 131

The Salesian Congregation also opened orphanages in other parts of Europe. It was Fr Albera's personal commitment to guarantee an Opportunity for a holiday in Italy for 100 Austrian children in 1920.



**GROUP PHOTOGRAPH  
OF VIENNESE CHILDREN"  
IN FRONT OF DON BOSCO'S  
ROOMS**

FROM AN ORPHAN'S LETTER TO HIS MOTHER:

DEAR MUM, HERE WE ARE WELL, WE EAT WELL, PLAY, GO FOR WALKS AND WE ARE HAPPY. SO DON'T CRY LIKE WHEN I WAS AT HOME, WHEN EVERY EVENING YOU CRIED THINKING OF OUR FATHER WHO DIED IN THE WAR. WHEN I HAVE GROWN UP I WANT TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER THAN WHEN DAD WAS THERE. TAKE COURAGE. I AM BETTER THAN I WAS AT HOME. THEY HAVE GIVEN US ALL A NICE PAINTED IRON BEDSTEAD, A BASIN, A PIECE OF SOAP AND A BEDSIDE TABLE... BYE, AND BE HAPPY. EVERY MORNING AT MASS AND COMMUNION I PRAY FOR YOU AND FOR DAD. THE SUPERIORS ARE GOOD AND THEY LIKE ME. GOODBYE, AND A THOUSAND KISSES. AFFECTIONATELY, YOUR PINOT.

Another work very close to Fr Albera's heart was the oratory. In the years immediately following the end of the War they arose almost everywhere, including in contexts with very complex social problems. In Turin alone two oratories came into existence in those years, San Paolo and Monterosa.



SAN PAOLO WAS THE FIRST, AT THE END OF 1918, TO ALREADY BE FULLY BUILT:

“ON DECEMBER 8, WHAT HAD BEEN A SHED WITH HAYSTACKS , NOW A CHAPEL ADORNED MORE IN FAITH AND HOPE THAN IN PAINTINGS AND DECORATIONS, WELCOMED A MULTITUDE OF CHILDREN, MORE THAN 300, ORDINARY FOLK, FRIENDS, THE ORIGINAL BENEFACTORS... FR PAUL ALBERA, WITH TEARS IN HIS EYES CELEBRATED MASS, DISTRIBUTED COMMUNION TO THE CHILDREN... HE SPOKE WITH THE GENTLENESS THAT HAS MADE HIM UNFORGETTABLE TO THOSE WHO KNEW HIM; AND HE SPENT TIME WITH THEM AFTERWARDS, MAKING THEM HAPPY WITH SOME LITTLE GIFTS. MR GASTALDO ADDRESSED WORDS OF THANKS TO HIM ON EVERYONE'S BEHALF AND HE REPLIED FROM A BALCONY. ORDINARY FOLK, MUMS AND DADS, UNDERSTOOD THAT TO APPROACH THIS PRIEST MEANT COMING INTO CONTACT WITH KINDNESS. AND THEY WERE WON OVER.”

FROM THE ADOLESCENTE, N. 11, NOVEMBER 1925,  
P. 30 AND 66. AUTHOR IS FR ALBERTO CAVIGLIA

## Death and funeral rites

29 DE OUTUBRO DE 1921

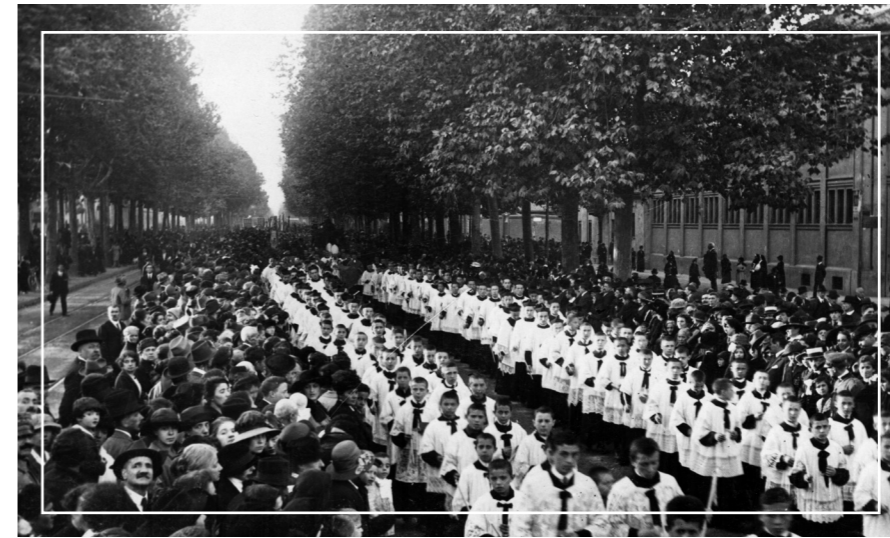
“Towards 2.30 pm the body was brought to the parish church of the Sanctuary, dressed in cotta and stole, with a crucifix and rosary in His hands.”

### Funeral on 30 October

“throughout the morning, from 5 until 2,30 when the coffin was closed, the Body was still greeted with prayers and signs of the most tender Affection by thousands and thousands of citizens...” (Il Momento).

Funeral in the afternoon. Imposing parade through the streets of Turin starting at 3 pm, for two and a half hours of parade”.

*Domenico GARNERI, Don Paolo Albera secondo successore di don Bosco. Memorie biografiche, Torino, Società Editrice Internazionale 1939, p. 419-420*





## *Farewell Note From Fr Albera*

ANO 1915

---

**DO YOU WANT TO KNOW IF YOU HAVE THE SPIRIT OF VEN. DON BOSCO?**

EXAMINE YOURSELF WELL:

- 1.° WHETHER YOUR CHARACTER IS  
CONSTANTLY BALANCED AND  
CHEERFUL IN A HOLY WAY
- 2.° WHETHER YOUR CHARITY TO YOUR  
NEIGHBOUR IS TRULY  
KIND AND PATIENT
- 3.° WHETHER YOU LIE AS SOMEONE ALWAYS  
READY FOR SACRIFICE

I HOPE THAT YOUR CONSCIENCE ALLOWS YOU TO ANSWER IN THE  
AFFIRMATIVE TO THIS QUESTION.

1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 1915  
FR. ALBERA



Vuoi sapere se possiedi  
lo spirito del Ven. S. Pio? <sup>1</sup>  
Esaminati bene:  
1° Se il tuo carattere è  
costantemente uguale e  
santamente allegro.  
2° Se la tua carità verso  
il prossimo è veramente  
dolce e paziente.  
3° Se vivi come una  
vittima sguoz disposta  
al sacrificio  
Ti auguro che la tua  
coscienza possa rispondere  
affermativamente a questa  
domanda.  
1° Gennaio 1915  
Sae P. Albera

