



Stained Glass of Michael Rua at the chapel of the Marian Shrine in Stony Point, New York.

PART THREE

Father Michael Rua, Prefect General of the Society and Don Bosco's Acting-Vicar (1877-1884)

by Arthur J. Lenti, SDB

The Salesian work had first been established in France in 1875, and had quickly expanded and flourished along the Mediterranean coast from Nice to Marseille. But the rest of France, as far as Salesian foundations went, was basically *terra incognita* in 1883, although Don Bosco himself and his work had already achieved widespread recognition.

Early in 1883 Don Bosco decided to undertake a trip through Southern France, and from Marseille by stages journey northward to Paris and Lille. At a certain point, Fr. Rua would join him in Paris.

14. Don Bosco on a Begging Tour through Southern France (early 1883)

On January 30, 1883 Don Bosco wrote to the Cardinal-Vicar, under whose patronage the church and hospice of the Sacred Heart were being built, to acquaint him of his decision to undertake a fundraising trip for the building.¹

Tomorrow morning, God willing, I will leave to visit our houses in Liguria, I shall go from house to house as far as Marseille knocking on every door. From there, if my health and the political situation will allow,² I shall turn northward to Lyons and Paris, begging on behalf of [the church of] the Sacred Heart and Peter's Pence.

Meanwhile I would ask Your Eminence, insistently insofar as lies in my power, to do everything you can to remove the obstacles that interfere with the work [on the church]. I am fully committed and am ready, even at the cost of extravagant sacrifices, to press for a resumption of the work that unfortunately had to be suspended....

In February and March, Don Bosco "went begging" through Southern France (Nice, Cannes, Toulon, Marseille...) with considerable success. For example, from Marseille, where he stayed from March 16 to April 2, he writes to Fr.

Dear Salesian Friends,
Here is the last part of the section on Don Rua as Prefect General of the Society under Don Bosco.
We wish you a Happy and Holy Christmas.

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¹ Don Bosco to the Cardinal-Vicar, January 30, 1883, is Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 210f.

² For the unstable political situation cf. footnote 59 and related text above, and remarks on Count of Chambord below.

Dalmazzo, Procurator in Rome:³

I'm doing my best, but you and Fr. Savio should also get busy and look for money. For your information, I sent 3,000 francs from Cannes through Fr. Ronchail. (This is over and above what was sent to Msgr. [Louis] Macchi by mistake). Also an additional 2,000 francs were sent from Hyères. That is all for this morning. You'll receive more when I leave for the North....

15. Don Bosco's Trip northward through France with Fr. De Barruel as Secretary (April-May 1883)

As early as 1878 Don Bosco had tried to establish the Salesian work in Paris. An orphanage had been offered to the Salesians at Auteuil (Paris), but certain conditions regarding ownership and management, as well as Cardinal Joseph Hippolyte Guibert's insistence on a one year trial for the Salesians, forced Don Bosco to decline the offer.⁴

But Paris remained an important, if elusive, goal. In April-May 1883, Don Bosco undertook a long and difficult journey through France, from Marseille, through Lyons, and northward to Paris and Lille. One of the purposes of the trip was to explore the possibility of Salesian foundations in those two northern cities.

Thus Don Bosco, accompanied by Fr. Camille De Barruel, a well-educated French Salesian priest acting as secretary, left Marseille on April 2 heading north.⁵ With brief intermediate stops at Avignon, Valence and Tain they reached Lyon, where they spent some ten days (April 7-17). From Lyon by way of Moulins they arrived in Paris the evening of April 18.

At every stop the press announced Don Bosco's arrival, hailing him, certainly as the well-known charitable educator of the young (the Italian St. Vincent de Paul), but even more as a miracle worker. This is how people everywhere perceived him. Don Bosco found himself surrounded by people suffering with various illnesses wanting to receive his blessing, to touch him, hoping for a miracle. In every city the Catholic people, as well as the curious, rallied *en masse*. In Paris, in particular, people crowded the churches in which he held services, straining to see him, to hear him and if possible to speak to him.

From the beginning to the end of their stay in Paris, Don Bosco and his secretary were the guests of Countess De Combaud (where Fr. Rua was to join them). Don Bosco had met the countess at La Navarre, where she had her villa, and had accepted her invitation to be her guest in Paris. For the length of their stay she also made arrange-

³ Don Bosco to Fr. Dalmazzo, Marseille, March 19, 1883, in Ceria, *Epistolario*, 214f.

⁴ Cf. *EBM XIII*, 72-97 *passim*; 404-421; *XIV*, 1-23.

⁵ For a brief biographical notice on Fr. Camille De Barruel see *EBM XVI*, 79; *IBM XVI*, 104f.

ments for a secretary's working space in a nearby convent.⁶

16. Fr. Rua's Report of Don Bosco's Successes in Lyon and Paris

At this point Fr. Rua had not yet joined "the party." However, from his post in Turin Fr. Rua had been following their progress.⁷ A circular addressed by him to Salesian provincials and others gives us a glimpse of the wild enthusiasm with which Don Bosco was being received.⁸

Most Revered Mother General,

April 28, 1883

Responding to a generally expressed desire⁹ I am happy to convey to you [dear Provincial] some news of the Rev. Don Bosco, in the certainty that you will share the information with your dependents, since every one is so eager to know. Among the many extraordinary happenings that the Lord is pleased to accomplish to the honor of Mary Help of Christians, through the prayers of Don Bosco, our beloved superior and father, we shall mention only a few, transcribing them in condensed form from authentic reports in our possession.

... [Three "miracle" stories of healing follow.¹⁰]

Miraculous occurrences such as these were responsible for kindling in people extraordinary enthusiasm and deepest veneration for the person of our superior and father, Don Bosco. Wherever he went truly immense crowds of people followed, and they even succeeded in cutting pieces from his cassock to keep as precious relics. On Sunday, April 8, Don Bosco happened to be at Fourvière, at the renowned shrine located on a hill near Lyon, a popular, much frequented place of devotion to the Blessed Virgin. So great was the crowd that had gathered to see him and to receive his blessing that the church where he attended the office and the whole wide-open space around it were packed with people. Accordingly, after the service Don Bosco

⁶ *EBM XVI*, 79-80; *IBM XVI*, 104-105.

⁷ Fr. Ceria's *Epistolario* does not carry any letter of Don Bosco to Fr. Rua for the duration of this trip. Surely Fr. De Barruel was keeping Fr. Rua abreast of Don Bosco's activities in France.

⁸ Circular letter, Fr. Rua to provincials, April 28, 1883, *FDRM* 3987 C6-7.

⁹ The copy of the circular in *FDRM* is in the very neat hand of a secretary; but the *date, greeting, opening line and signature (all barely legible) are in Fr. Rua's hand. The greeting reads, "V[ery] R[ever]nd Mother General [Catherine Daghero]," and the signature, "Most devotedly yours in J[esus] and M[ary], Fr. Michael Rua."* (highlighted in italics in my translation) — Understandably, some dates and other details in Fr. Rua's report are less than accurate. Desramaut (*Rua-Cahiers I*, 115-116) provides critical corrections and explanations. These appear in square brackets in my translation.

¹⁰ Cf. *IBM XVI*, 55-57; *EBM XVI*, 38.

had to bless the people that could not fit in the church from a window of the Rector's residence. [*Correction*: he imparted the blessing on the Fourvière esplanade.]

On Tuesday, March 10, a huge crowd assembled in St. Francis de Sales' parish church in Lyon in order to attend Don Bosco's Mass, to see him and receive his blessing. After Mass, to allow him to leave the church safely, the doors to the sacristy had to be locked.

For the same purpose the following day, an even larger crowd jammed Lyon's most important parish church, which goes by the title of Ainay. They received the sacraments, and the distribution of Holy Communion seemed never to end. After Mass, Don Bosco had a lot of trouble and took a long time in getting back to the sacristy to take off the priestly vestments. Everybody wanted to see him, touch him and receive his blessing.

On April 11, in response to a kind and insistent invitation Don Bosco had lunch with the seminarians of Lyon at their country house. They were all assembled, some two hundred of them, with their superiors and several distinguished persons—among them Msgr. Guiol [*Explanation*: Msgr. Louis Guiol, Rector of the Catholic faculties of Lyon had Don Bosco as a guest at his home.] The reception offered to Don Bosco by the rector, superiors and seminarians was cordial and lavish at one and the same time. They dined all together in a large dining hall, and toward the end of the meal, responding to insistent demands, Don Bosco addressed to the seminarians a few encouraging words of advice that were received with religious attention and followed by loud, generous applause. Don Bosco also paid a visit to the nuns of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

While in Lyon, Don Bosco held two conferences: one with the members of a geographical society; and the other at a private residence. [*Correction*: at the Work of the Boisard workshops, at the Guillotière.]

On Monday, April 23 [*Correction*: April 16] Don Bosco [with Fr. De Barruel] left Lyon for Moulins to enjoy at least one day's respite from his strenuous labors. On Tuesday, April 25 [*Correction*: Wednesday, April 18] he arrived in Paris, and was met by some very distinguished persons, both of clergy and laity. They were eager to see him, to speak with him, and to have from him a word of advice or of comfort. Many vied for the honor of having him as a guest, or if that were not possible, to have the promise of a visit from him. They believed that his presence in their home would be a veritable blessing from the Lord.

On Sunday, April 29, Don Bosco will hold a conference with the Salesian Cooperators in one of the most important and most beautiful churches in Paris, La Madeleine. We hope that the Lord will be pleased to help him, so that he may reap abundant fruits of eternal salvation.

In spite of all this traveling and of all this fatiguing work, the Lord has kept our dear superior in very good health. But the work that he has been forced to undertake is such that, as his secretary writes, it would require the help of at least two more secretaries.

Pray therefore, [dear provincial], and have others pray fervently for Don Bosco, without forgetting to pray for—

*Most devotedly yours in J[esus] and M[ary],
Fr. Michael Rua*

17. Fr. Rua, Don Bosco's Aide-de-Camp in Paris in May 1883¹¹

Fr. Rua joined Don Bosco and Fr. De Barruel in Paris only at the height of the trip, on May 2nd, when Don Bosco was already a sensation and the correspondence had become so voluminous that his secretary, Fr. De Barruel, could no longer cope. (Fr. Rua remained available till the three left France and returned to the Oratory). Perhaps Fr. Rua's joining Don Bosco in Paris had been planned by previous agreement; perhaps it was motivated by a distress signal received. Immediately on his arrival, Fr. Rua wrote to Fr. Lazzero, director of the Oratory.¹²

...Both Don Bosco and Fr. De Barruel are tired, but they are in good health. The real reason for my being called upon was that I should help with the correspondence, as well as with other matters. [More later] about the throngs of people that keep Don Bosco under constant siege... For now I will just enclose a note [check] made to Fr. [Angelo] Lago. As you may see, besides the many sums already sent, the present one of 20,000 Lire is tangible proof [of Don Bosco's success] and the assurance, it is hoped, that it will not be the last.

You have no idea of the mountain of letters that have been piling up and still await a reply. Not just three, but six or seven secretaries, would be needed for the task. Fortunately, we have the volunteering services of a good religious, who comes to help us...

A reporter from the newspaper *La Liberté*, quoted by Desramaut, gives us a thumbnail sketch of Don Bosco's "secretary general" (Fr. Rua) at his desk tackling the cor-

¹¹ For an extensive, detailed treatment see Desramaut, *DB en son temps*, 1172-1193. See also the sprawling narrative in *IBM XVI*, 62-77, 128-281; *EBM XVI*, 39-55, 78-219.

¹² Don Bosco to Fr. Lazzero, Paris, May 2, 1883, *FDRM* 3,907 E12 – 3,908 A1.

respondence.¹³

I've never seen so many letters in one day's delivery. A pile of them was stacked on top of his desk; and scattered on the floor below there lay a great number of them, already shredded and discarded. Some of the scattered pieces revealed the fine, long-drawn lines of feminine handwriting. The "secretary general" annotated in his own hand each letter that seemed to merit a reply, and added it to a stack that lay before him. What an amazing number of letters!

18. Don Bosco's trip to Lille with Fr. Rua and Fr. De Barruel

A few days after arriving in Paris and working on the correspondence, Fr. Rua joined Don Bosco and Fr. Barruel on a trip to Lille, a trip that interrupted their stay in Paris from May 5 to May 14. The purpose of this important detour was twofold: (1) to look over, and discuss the acceptance of, St. Gabriel Orphanage that was being offered to the Salesians, and (2) to visit an outstanding cooperator and spiritual daughter of Don Bosco, Miss Claire Louvet.

(1) St. Gabriel Orphanage

During his stay in Lille, Don Bosco visited the St. Gabriel Orphanage, where he was given a formal reception. It had been founded in 1874 to shelter orphans of the Franco-German War (1870-1871) and was staffed by the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. As most of the orphans were by now in their teens, the orphanage was offered to the Salesians. As we learn from one of Don Bosco's letters to Miss Claire Louvet, in December Fr. Albera (provincial) and Fr. De Barruel negotiated the transfer.¹⁴ Fr. Joseph Bologna, from Marseille, was appointed director, and took possession on January 29, 1884, with the blessing of Bishop Alfred DuQuesnay of Cambrai-Lille. There were many problems to be solved: the house was too small; it was understaffed; the youngsters were undisciplined; it lacked in-house workshops... Fr. Bologna, after setting up temporary workshops and organizing the Salesian cooperators on the Marseille model, began to develop the orphanage with success.

(2) Miss Claire Louvet (1832-1912)¹⁵

The orphanage benefited greatly by the charity of

¹³ Cf. Desramaut. *Rua-Cahiers* I, 116.

¹⁴ Don Bosco to Miss Claire Louvet, Turin, December 21, 1883, Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 459-460 P.S. (original French); *EBM* XVI, 456-457 P.S.; *EBM* XVII, 328-330 (foundation); 715 (Appendix 49, document of agreement).

¹⁵ Biographical information on Claire Louvet is meager. See *EBM* XV, 486-508 containing 12 Bosco-Louvet letters. Michael Mendl edited 21 additional Bosco-Louvet letters translated directly from the original French for which see *EBM* XVI, 448-463 (Appendix 11). Eugene Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, p. 447-479 edits the whole archival corpus of 56 Bosco-Louvet letters in the original French.

Miss Claire Louvet, a cooperator from Aire-sur-la-Lys, in the department of Pas-de-Calais, near to and West of Lille. She had first heard of Don Bosco from Fr. Joseph Ronchail, director of the Salesian St. Peter Orphanage in Nice, where she regularly took her vacation. She met Don Bosco in 1881 and immediately there developed between them a deep spiritual understanding and friendship. She visited Don Bosco in Turin several times: late in 1881, in 1882 for the feast of Mary Help of Christians, in October of the same year—never empty-handed (500, 2000, 10,000 francs...). Don Bosco arranged for her to lodge with the Salesian Sisters, who were just delighted to have her as a guest.

At mid-January, and again at the beginning of March 1883, looking forward to the trip through France described above, Don Bosco wrote to Claire Louvet:¹⁶

In April I shall be in Paris with God's help. It's up to you to tell me whether I might dash over to Aire [from Lille, to see you]. You are the only person [in the area], Mademoiselle, with whom I am acquainted. However, should you not be at home in the month of April, I shall put off my visit to some other time.

On April 1, [from Marseille] he wrote: "I am about leave for Lyon, hoping to reach Paris by the 15th. At the end of the month, [from Paris] I intend to make a run as far as Lille— God willing. We can get together and talk at leisure either in Paris or Lille..."

From Paris on May 4 Don Bosco wrote: "Mademoiselle, tomorrow at noon, God willing, I shall be in Lille, the guest of Count de Montigny, and stay the whole of the following week... Au revoir..." — [meaning, "I'll see you then"]. It appears, therefore, that the two met, if not at her home in Aire, certainly in Lille. Ceria writes: "Miss Claire Louvet, who had come to Lille to see Don Bosco, gave him a letter from Fr. Engrand recommending a [sick] child to his prayers."¹⁷

Don Bosco's extant letters to Claire Louvet are dated from January 1, 1882 to 1887.¹⁸ Unfortunately this correspondence shows some unexplained sizable lacunae.

¹⁶ Don Bosco to Miss Louvet, Turin, January 18, and Marseille, March 2, 1883, Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 454-455, and 455-456 (original French).

¹⁷ Cf. *EBM* XVI, 209. Fr. Engrand, a steady benefactor and cooperator, was a priest of Aire and Claire's relative. The young girl in question, who was seriously ill, experienced overnight a miraculous cure.

¹⁸ In one of his first letters (August 5, 1882) Don Bosco asked whether she could read his scrawl, or would she prefer that his secretary write for him. Her answer was that she preferred to see his writing. All of Don Bosco's letters to Claire Louvet (except three) are in Bosco's handwriting and in his special "brand of French."

Frequent illness may be one reason for the gaps; or it may simply be a case of “missing letters.” The letters that have survived show her to have been the outstanding cooperator in the north of France, just as Count Louis Colle was in the south. They remain as witnesses to the spiritual bond that united “Father and daughter.”¹⁹

Claire Louvet never enjoyed good health, and her illnesses got progressively worse. Don Bosco’s health likewise degenerated during his last years (1884-1887).

In 1884 Don Bosco, anticipating his own death, included in his *Spiritual Testament* short letters of acknowledgement to be delivered to outstanding cooperators or benefactors after his death. One of them (the 11th of 14) is addressed to Claire Louvet: “I shall have to leave [this world] before you, but [when I am gone] I will not fail to pray for your happy eternity. Continue to help our orphans, and they will be your crown... in paradise. O Mary, protect your daughter always!”

Claire followed with anxiety the progress of Don Bosco’s last illness. In 1887, together with her Christmas greetings she sent a very generous offering. But she anticipated his passing and her bereavement with a broken heart. On December 28, Fr. Engrand in a letter to Fr. Rua’s secretary (Fr. De Barruel) writes: “Mademoiselle Louvet of Aire has asked me to convey to Fr. Rua the expression of her deepest sorrow in the present circumstance. Don Bosco treated her as a truly privileged person, and she is grieving as a child grieves over a father’s loss.”²⁰

After Don Bosco death, in spite of grief and suffering, she continued to support the Salesian work during Fr. Rua’s tenure and beyond, and to have for him the same confidence and veneration she had for Don Bosco. In her last years Fr. Rua assigned a Salesian Sister to care for her. The Sister learned how to keep her comforted, smiling and patient in her pain by recalling the image of Don Bosco. Claire Louvet died on November 11, 1912 at the age of 80.²¹

19. Don Bosco and Companions back in Paris. St. Peter School in Ménilmontant.²²

During his stay in Paris in 1883, Don Bosco had spoken publicly of his intention of establishing a Salesian foundation in the capital. Speaking from the pulpit of the church of St. Augustine he launched a challenge: “Is there a way of establishing in Paris a school just like the ones we have in Marseille, Nice and Turin? Such a work is necessary and it ought to be established.”

¹⁹ For a perceptive study of the spirituality of the letters and of Don Bosco’s down-to-earth style of spiritual direction see: John Itzaina, “Charitable Mademoiselle, “Don Bosco’s Fifty-Eight Letters to Clara Louvet,” *Journal of Salesian Studies* 1 (1990:1) 35-46, and idem in *Don Bosco’s Place in History* (Roma: LAS, 1993) p. 487-499.

²⁰ Ceria, *Epistolario* IV, 475 (introduction to Letter 2769).

²¹ Itzaina, *Ibidem*.

²² *EBM* XVII, 330-336.

Of several possibilities Don Bosco regarded that of St. Peter’s Hospice the most promising. It was the 1878 foundation of Fr. Paul Pisani, noted Church historian, in Ménilmontant, a crowded working-class district of Paris. On being appointed to the *Institut Catholique* Father Pisani was looking for someone to take over the hospice, hence the offer in 1884. After a fact-finding visit by Fr. Celestine Durando, Fr. de Barruel and Fr. Paul Albera (Provincial), the Superior Chapter meeting with the ailing Don Bosco in September 1884 decided on the foundation. Fr. Albera (acting for Don Bosco), Mr. de Franqueville (a Salesian Cooperator) and Fr. Pisani negotiated the financial details, and the Salesians took over the property.

Benefactors, such as Mr. de Franqueville, Countess de Cessac (both of Paris) and Countess Georgina de Stacpoole (of London and Rome) contributed financially and supported the work.

Fr. Bellamy, a priest of Chartres, who had joined the Salesians the previous year, was appointed director (January 29, 1885). The local pastor at first objected to this Salesian “takeover,” but later conceded. The lay staff stayed on. University students worked with the young people, and helped make a promising beginning.

Don Bosco and companions finally quit Paris on May 26 (1883) and by way of Reims, Dijon and Dôle (Jura) arrived in Turin on May 31. Without delay Fr. Rua penned a circular letter to tell the confreres of Don Bosco’s safe return after an exhausting but successful trip.

Fr. Rua, as usual, remained available throughout, never in the limelight but in the wings, looking after Don Bosco’s health and wellbeing. But a keen anonymous observer left us an unforgettable sketch of Fr. Rua:

Of average height, of pale complexion, slim of figure, his gaze lively and penetrating—Fr. Rua is the embodiment of the finished and distinguished Italian diplomat. His voice is pleasant, his smile wry but tempered with great benevolence. We were given the opportunity of spending long hours with him. We came out [of these conferences] under the spell of conversations that blended good-natured friendliness from beyond the mountains with a profound knowledge of the human heart—altogether a person of rare character!²³

²³ Desramaut. *Rua-Cahiers* I, 117, citing *Dom Bosco à Paris*, by a Former Court Official (Ancien Magistrat) (Paris: 1883), p. 61. Desramaut proposes on good grounds that this “Ancien Magistrat” is none other than Albert du Boÿs, who in 1884 published an “official” biography of Don Bosco. For this purpose he spent considerable time at the Oratory doing research and interviewing various Salesians, Fr. Rua in particular.

20. Fr. Rua, Don Bosco's Companion on a Visit to the Count of Chambord at Frohsdorf²⁴

A brief introductory note may help to locate the Count of Chambord within a tormented period of French history, the 1870s.

After the defeat of the French forces in the Franco-German war (1870-1871), Napoleon III went into exile. The forces of the National Assembly of Versailles crushed the insurrection of the Paris Commune (March-May, 1871) in the Bloody Week of May 21-26, 1871.

A monarchist offensive followed (1871-1873). But the Monarchists were divided.

The Legitimists supported the last scion of the Bourbon line, the Count of Chambord (1820-1883), as pretender to the throne, who took the name of Henry V.

The Orléanists supported the Count of Paris, grandson of Louis Philippe who had ruled from 1831 to 1848.

The Bonapartists, on the other hand, stood for a restoration of the Napoleonic line.

The Count of Chambord and the Count of Paris had come to an agreement as to the succession, but to no avail, because the Republicans eventually prevailed, and the Third Republic (with the constitution of 1875) was established. All monarchic claims were thereby eliminated. Some years later, the Count of Chambord, married Archduchess Maria Teresa of Austria-Este. They were childless and lived as exiles in the Count's sumptuous castle of Frohsdorf in Styria, Austria (about 25 miles from Vienna). He lived in style as the "hope of France," the leader of a coterie of French royalists.

It is against this political background that Don Bosco, only recently back from his exhausting trip through France (discussed above), was prevailed upon to undertake a long trip to visit the ailing Count of Chambord at Frohsdorf (Austria). Fr. Rua was his companion, and left us an autograph report of the trip that, though unfinished, stands as a primary source.²⁵

Fr. Rua's writes:

Toward the end of June 1883, the Count of Chambord took dangerously ill. On him rested the French Catholics' hopes for a restoration of the po-

²⁴ Amadei, *Rua* I, 326-330; Desramaut, *Cahiers* I, 118-121; Fr. Rua, *Viaggio di D. Bosco a Frohsdorf* (unfinished report) in *FBRM* 1349 C4-9, transcribed by Amadei, *Rua* I, 326-329. Based on the above: *IBM* XVI, 330-354 and 581-585; *EBM* XVI, 260-279. Count Joseph Du Bourg, *Les entretiens des princes à Frohsdorf. La vérité et la légende* (Paris: 1910) cited in Desramaut, *Rua-Cahiers* I, 118-121.

²⁵ It is here translated as transcribed by Amadei (*Rua* I, 326-329) from Fr. Rua's autograph report; added and inserted below are pertinent sections from reports by Count Joseph Du Bourg and by Court Chaplain Abbé Curé—all cited in the footnote above.

litical and religious order in that generous nation. No sooner did the news of his condition reach the public than Don Bosco began to receive letters and telegrams from every part of France begging him to pray, and have others pray, for the distinguished ailing personage.

Letters were received every week by the hundreds asking for prayers. Letters and telegrams were received from the select circle of nobility that forms the Count's court at Frohsdorf, to ask Don Bosco to pray, and have others pray for him. This was a clear proof of the Count's trust in the protection of Mary Help of Christians and in Don Bosco's and his boys' prayers to her. We replied to as many of these inquirers as we could, to assure them that prayers [and Masses] with the reception of Holy Communion were being offered for the Prince's recovery, if this was conducive to the good of his soul.

On the 14th of July we received a telegram from Wiener-Neustadt, signed *Abbé Curé*, with prepaid 20-word reply. It earnestly appealed to Don Bosco to go to Frohsdorf because the ailing Count was desirous of having a visit from him. Since Don Bosco at the time was overwhelmed with work and not at all well himself, regretfully we had to reply that for the moment it was not possible for him to undertake such a journey. The telegram has been lost, but our letter was received in Frohsdorf. On hearing that Don Bosco could not come under the circumstances, the Prince did not give up trying to have Don Bosco at his bedside for a few days.

After a while, the Prince contacted by telegram the good Count Joseph Du Bourg of Toulouse who was extremely devoted to the cause of Religion and supportive of the Prince's claims to the throne. He asked Count Du Bourg to return to Frohsdorf by way of Turin, pick up Don Bosco and bring him [to the castle].

Count Du Bourg had been traveling that whole week and had just rejoined his family. But faithfully accepting the task entrusted to him he left immediately for Turin. On arriving there, without delay he paid a visit to Don Bosco, and after much pleading and arguing he succeeded in persuading Don Bosco to leave with him [for Frohsdorf]. Having to undertake such a long journey, Don Bosco thought it proper to take along one of his secretaries [Rua, author of this report]. And so that very day in the evening Don Bosco and the said secretary [Rua] left with the Count by the express train.

As Don Bosco was getting ready to leave, a number of [Salesian] priests clustered around

him in utter surprise, wondering why he would be leaving for several days while the meeting of the Alumni Association was taking place. He himself had scheduled the meeting with dinner for July 15, a meeting that is always so dear to his fatherly heart. Without revealing his destination, he merely indicated that he was visiting a sick person that wanted to see him urgently. He therefore recommended prayers that the person be restored to health.

So we left for Frohsdorf with the 7 P.M. express train; and in spite of having had to spend two whole nights and a day on the train, thanks to the Count's courteous concern, the trip was bearable, and Don Bosco suffered no great inconvenience, thank God!

The only unpleasant experience [of the trip] was an awkward occurrence. The Turin express was due to arrive at Mestre on time to connect with the Rome-Venice express, but it didn't. For some unknown reason, it was three quarters of an hour late [and so we missed the connection]. Consequently we boarded the Mestre-Neustadt Local, and we arrived at our destination with a delay of about 9 hours

[Inserted paragraphs from reports by Du Bourg and Court Chaplain Abbé Curé.]

[Additional paragraph from Du Bourg²⁶]

"In spite of the long journey [with the local train], time went by quickly, thanks to the interesting conversation of my two companions. During the long train stops, I did my best to persuade them to have some food, but to no avail. Fr. Rua around two o'clock in the afternoon went on a spree over two fried eggs and *grace-after-meals* for dessert. During this time Dom Bosco exercised his legs in elastic stockings (the poor dear!) by walking around in the lobby of the railway station, while holding his arms crossed behind his back. His cassock drew the attention of those good people, because throughout Austria priests wear long redingotes and black high chapeaus outdoors. No wonder then that on such a diet these two venerable religious are as skinny as sticks. But they are saints, and that's enough compensation! As for myself, Dom Bosco's prayers had bolstered my spirits, and I ate enough for four people."

[Rua's report continues]

God willing, we arrived at Wiener-Neustadt at 6, the morning of July 15. The coach of the Prince, forewarned by telegraph by Count Du Bourg, was waiting for us at the railway station, and in less

that half an hour we were conveyed to the castle of Frohsdorf. It was a Sunday, and it so happened that the memorial of Saint Henry, the Prince's name day, was being celebrated on this day. After a brief respite to brush off the dust of the journey, we were escorted to the elegant chapel of the castle, which serves as parish church for the resident French colony.

The chapel was crowded with people who had gathered to attend Mass and to see Don Bosco. The Prince and the Princess had already received Holy Communion earlier in his room at a Mass celebrated by their confessor (P. Bole), and a large number of people had already received Holy Communion before Don Bosco's Mass. A general Communion was offered to the Lord for the beloved Prince's health on his name day.

Don Bosco was prevailed upon to take some rest undisturbed. At the same time Don Bosco's secretary [Rua] and Abbé Curé offered two other Masses. When the chapel services were over, the whole Court gathered around Don Bosco. It was a real pleasure for us to meet so many illustrious dignitaries, particularly Her Highness the Princess... [End of Fr. Rua's report]

[Additional paragraph from Du Bourg²⁷]

After Mass, the Prince received Dom Bosco from his sick bed. After Don Bosco left him, he called for Du Bourg and said to him: "My dear friend, I tell you, I am cured. He did not want to tell me, but I understood very well; I am dodging the bullet again this time." Du Bourg was beside himself with joy. Then [the Prince added]: "He is a saint. I am truly glad to have seen him. I want you to see to it that places are set for these two religious at my wife's table."²⁸

[Paragraphs quoted from report to the Nuncio by Court Chaplain Abbé Curé²⁹]

July 15 was St. Henry's day, the Count of Chambord's patron saint. After the solemn high Mass, *Monseigneur* wished to receive all the people of his household. He was very weak and could not whisper more than a couple of words to each one. *Madame* [Countess Marie Thérèse] was seated by his bed, and each person on passing by the bed kissed *Monseigneur's* hand. I believe it's the first time that he allowed it, or rather suffered it to be done. [...names of dignitaries listed...] Then as chaplain called a halt to the march, and *Mon-*

²⁷ Du Bourg, *Les entretiens ...*, *ibid.*

²⁸ Du Bourg, *Les entretiens...*, in Desramaut, *Rua-Cahiers I*, 119-120.

²⁹ Report of Chaplain Abbé Curé to Bp. S. Vannutelli, Nuncio to Vienna, Frohsdorf, July 17, 1883, in E. Ceria, *IBM XVI*, 571-575 (omitted in EBM). The quote is from p. 573.

²⁶ Joseph Du Bourg, *Les entretiens des princes à Frohsdorf...*, cited in Desramaut, *Rua-Cahiers I*, 119.

seigneur said to me, "I wanted to see you these days but I am so tired!" Then he added, speaking of Don Bosco and of his companion, Fr. Rua: "Don Bosco pretends that he's not the true one, but that it's the other." As I could not understand what he meant, he repeated: "He's not the one that works miracles, but it's his companion; he too is a saint."

That evening at the dinner hosted by *Ma* http://www.sdb.org/image/Gallerie/ImgGrandi/Regioni/2008/_1_19_35_7_315_.jpg *dame* there were 18 of us seated [counting Don Bosco and Fr. Rua]. Midway through the meal, unexpectedly (the Countess herself had not been forewarned) the Count appeared conveyed on his armchair on wheels. His sudden appearance had the effect of a bolt of lightning! The emotion was such that no one could speak. The good Prince had wanted to provide a pleasant surprise for the company. On seeing him, *Madame* ran to his side to toast his health, and everyone joined in. The Count recognized Don Bosco's presence in a special manner, and after a few minutes had his orderly take him back to his bed. ...

[On Monday morning, July 16] *Monseigneur* desired to have Don Bosco celebrate Mass in his room and receive Holy Communion from him. ... During the day Don Bosco was busy receiving anyone who wished to talk to him or to receive his blessing. He had decided to leave the next day [Tuesday morning, July 17]. Don Bosco's presence has brought great comfort to the Count, but he could not prolong it further; his boys in Turin needed to have him back.

So, yesterday early in the morning, after celebrating Mass, the two holy priests left us. *Monseigneur* wished to see them once more before they left. He embraced Don Bosco tenderly and thanked him for his visit. [End of quote from *Abbé Curé's report to the Nuncio.*]

Envoi:

Back at the Oratory, Fr. Rua hastened to write a letter to the Countess in Don Bosco's name and in his own, including some letters written by the boys. He received the following reply (in Italian).³⁰

Frohsdorf, July 29, 1883

Very Reverend Father Rua:

Your letter touched me to the heart, and I immediately read it to my dear patient, who was moved by it. Together we thank you and our dear

Don Bosco for every word you write. It was a great comfort for my husband and myself to receive your blessing and to learn how many pure and innocent souls are praying for the healing of my ever dear and beloved patient.

Thanks to God, every day, though ever so slowly, the recovery keeps progressing, despite the little setbacks that now and then come and go. These lessen with time and renew our hopes for a complete recovery, which as Don Bosco said, will be obtained with patience. We both thank you for the letters, so sincere and precious, written to us by the children of Don Bosco's Oratory, young students and artisans. My husband expressly charges me, and does so now as I am writing, to ask dear Don Bosco to keep up his saintly prayers, in which he places so much trust.

The remembrance of the two days spent here among us by Don Bosco and yourself, good Father Rua, will always remain most dear to us. I am glad that your trip was a pleasant one; it does not surprise me, because two souls, good and holy like yours, deserve to be accompanied in a special way by your Guardian Angels. I close now, renewing to you and to Don Bosco the assurance of our gratitude and sincere affection with which I heartily remain

Your indebted servant,

Maria Teresa

Countess of Chambord

P.S. My husband bids me send you his special loving regards.

As the Count's health kept on declining, Don Bosco on August 14 wrote consoling words to the Countess (who had been ill herself)³¹ But the Count of Chambord could no longer cope with his weakness, and died on the morning of August 24, 1883.³²

³¹ *EBM XVI*, 275-276, *IBM XVI*, 350.

³² Cf.. For further correspondence and comments on the political situation and on the suspicious circumstances of the Count's death, cf. *EBM XVI*, 276-279, *IBM XVI*, 351-354. See also Amadei, *Rua I*, 330 (referring to Du Bourg, *Les entretiens...*, 218ff.)

³⁰ Amadei, *Rua I*, 330; *IBM XVI*, 348, *EBM XVI*, 273f; Desramaut, *Rua-Cahiers I*, 120f.



December Message of the Rector Major:

THE UNHEARD OF TRIUMPH

Without thee, O Christ, we are born only to die; with thee we die only to rise again (Miguel de Unamuno).

IF Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain (1Cor 15,14). Undoubtedly the resurrection is at the centre of the Christian faith. And yet, the lives of believers do not always reflect this conviction. It is enough to think about the limited number of pictures of the risen Christ in comparison with those of Jesus on the Cross. Paradoxically to understand the resurrection it is necessary to take his death seriously. Down the centuries, currents of thought have minimised the death of Jesus, preventing the resurrection from being properly understood. For the people of Israel, the death on a cross of the Rabbi from Galilee meant that God was not on his side, his Messianic pretensions had no value and even less those regarding his being the son of God. Thus, with regard to the disciples who saw him risen, this was described as an hallucination or simply that they saw what they hoped to see. There are two elements evident in the gospel accounts: above all, that the discovery of the empty tomb did not lead them to think that the one who had been buried was risen; and this explains the great difficulty the disciples had in accepting the fact that the person they were seeing alive really was Jesus. We are talking about something which goes totally beyond our human experience. What the accounts in the New Testament lead us to can be summed in this way: the risen Jesus is the same one who lived with them and died on the cross, but he is not the same. His personal identity is complete: he retains the signs of his death on the cross, as can be seen in his meeting with the unbelieving Thomas: "Put your finger here and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side; do not be faithless but believing!" (Jn 20,27).

In the same text we find the relationship between the testimony of the disciples and the faith of someone who, like us, without having seen believes in Him: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!" (Jn 20,29). It seems to me significant that there is no account in the NT which presents an appearance of the risen Jesus to his mother: she is the only person for whom the death of the Son does not result in any fracturing of her faith and trust in Him and in the Father. What does it mean nowadays to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? In the text quoted (1Cor

15), we see that the Apostle does not base our resurrection on that of the Lord; on the contrary, on two occasions he declares: "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised!"; "If the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised" (1Cor 15,13.16). With the resurrection, Jesus does not return to the past, to his divine life "pre-incarnatoria", instead he takes a decisive step forward. In the risen Jesus we find both his incarnation in its fullness and the human condition in its fullness. He assumes for ever our human nature. It is the risen Jesus who for the first time calls his disciples "brothers" (Mt 28,10; Jn 20,17). Starting from this moment the apostles devote their whole lives to preaching, to proclaiming "the truth about God and the truth about man". The proclamation of the resurrection of the one who was crucified is the "Good News", the very best that a human being can receive. The NT tells us what the genuine testimony to the resurrection is. "And with great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ... There was not a needy person among them for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds ... and laid it at the apostles feet; and distribution was made to each as any had need" (Act 4,33-35). There couldn't be a better setting in which to speak about the testimony to the resurrection than that which shows the change in the lives of believers, fraternal love, total sharing: "See how they love one another!", the astonished pagans exclaimed.

Don Bosco understood this perfectly. His whole life and his work on behalf of the young had at its heart an "easter spirituality": the joy which constitutes the essence of the preventive system and is the key to youth holiness is not the naive or thoughtless cheerfulness of someone who "as yet" does not know about life's difficulties, but that of someone who "carries the signs of the cross" but at the same time, is convinced that no one and nothing can separate him from the love of God shown in Christ Jesus (cf Rom 8,39). So too Don Bosco's preoccupation to make the atmosphere at the Oratory the very best, the "educative ecology" indispensable for our charism, is an attempt to re-create, in the youthful and working class setting of Valdocco, the experience of the first Christian community and in this way succeed in becoming an authentic testimony to the new life of the Risen Lord. We should recall that "as we carry out our mission today, the Valdocco experience is still the lasting criterion for discernment and renewal in all our activities and works" (C. 40). May God grant that as the Salesian Family we may always and everywhere be authentic witnesses to the Resurrection.

(Courtesy of sdb.org)

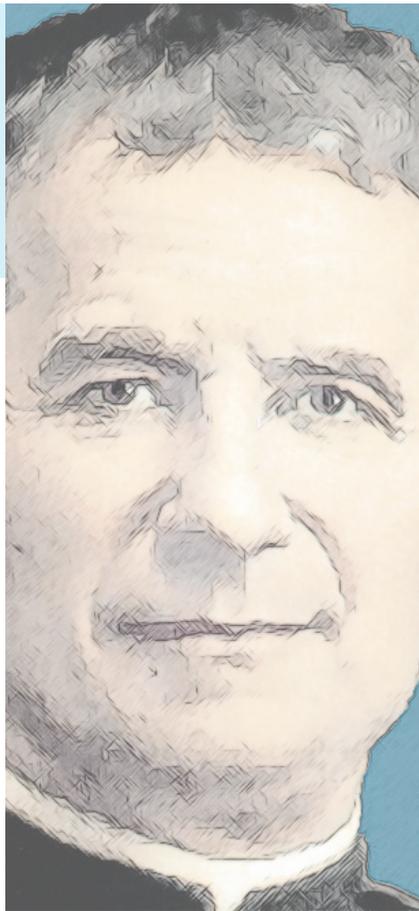
Institute of Salesian Spirituality

Continuing formation of the Salesian Family for the life and hope of the young

Statement of Purpose

The Institute of Salesian Spirituality (ISS) offers a variety of study programs and formative experiences that include a 15-week renewal course in Spirituality and Formation (August to December), a 15-week residential course in Leadership and Community Animation (February to May), and a year-long study program (August to June) in Salesian studies and theological updating. The specific purpose of the Institute is to make a comprehensive Salesian renewal experience available to members of the Salesian Family from English-speaking regions and to others for whom English is a second language. Critical study, including reflection papers, is integrated with experiences aimed at deepening spirituality and fostering personal growth in the context of Salesian community life and ministry. Participants are offered ample opportunity for theological updating and for pursuing specific pastoral interests. This is made possible by the wide array of courses available at the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). ISS participates in the GTU through its affiliation with the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology (DSPT), itself a member of the Graduate Theological Union (GTU) – a multi-denominational consortium of nine interdependent theological schools and affiliated centers, offer over 700 courses each year. The ISS community is committed to pursue the following goals, which form the core of the Salesian renewal program:

1. To acquire a deeper and more critical knowledge of life and times of Don Bosco, Founder of the Salesian Family, by research, study and reflection;
2. To draw on the theological and cultural resources available in the area for an ever-broader vision of Salesian mission;
3. To live a spirituality that impacts our everyday life and calls us to face new challenges with courage and a spirit of initiative;
4. To live our vocation through a deep experience of community in a Salesian family spirit.



Program components

Enlightened by the person of Christ and by his Gospel, lived according to Don Bosco's spirit, the Salesian commits himself to a formation process which will last all his life and which will keep pace with his developing maturity. [SDB Constitutions, 98]
The Institute of Salesian Spirituality is designed as a program of ongoing formation of the Salesian Family for the life and hope of the young. To make this hope a reality, the Institute is made up of five components: the study of spirituality for mission in community, a place of personal growth.

Core Curriculum

The study component of the ISS revolves around a core curriculum in Salesian history, pastoral or functional theology, and spiritual theology. Courses during the Fall Program delve into Salesian origins with a look at the spirit of St Francis de Sales, and with special emphasis on the vocation of Don Bosco as Founder through a critical analysis of the development of his life and work. The origins are brought to bear on contemporary needs by considering the concept of Interactive Evangelization - relevant to the world in which our youth today live.

The core considerations of the Spring Program highlight the figure of Don Bosco as Builder in articulating and developing the Salesian mission. This calls for a theological investigation into Salesian Identity and Charism, complemented by a concept of Salesian Christology. In addition to Salesian offerings, the ISS program requires one full-course in an area of theological study offered by the GTU. Course titles and descriptions are found in the GTU catalogue.

Theological Update

Theological updating is an integral part of the program. In the Fall and Spring semesters, Institute participants are required to take a minimum of one full course (3.0 units) from any of the 9 areas of study offered at the GTU (historical, systematic, scriptural, pastoral, liturgical, moral, etc.). Students will work out their course choices with the ISS program coordinator or their academic advisor at DSPT.

Institute Days

The weekly Institute Days offer the opportunity to process what is offered in academic courses and in community experiences, as well as moments to visit Bay Areas points of interest.

Admission to the ISS Affiliation

Through the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology, known as "DSPT", the ISS has resources to serve the needs of a wide variety of students, and provides undergraduate and graduate degree programs in philosophy and

theology, as well as opportunities for continuing education and sabbaticals. It is through DSPT that we obtain the I-20 Student visa which requires 12 units of class per semester. All the schools are in close proximity.

Admission

Application to the ISS involves registration in the GTU through the Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology. A registration packet will be sent upon request. This packet outlines requirements and fee schedules. For enrollment in the GTU as well as for the Institute's records, transcripts (record of academic work completed) of university level and/or theological courses are required. Religious who apply to the ISS must include a letter of recommendation from their provincial or religious superior.

It is recommended that applications be submitted during the Spring, ie, between April and June to acquire the I-20 student visa with ample time. Applications are reviewed by the Admissions Committee when all materials are received.

Academic Prerequisites

Academic prerequisites for the ISS include a command of the English language and a basic theological or religious studies background. Since course work is given at a seminar and graduate level, students are required to have the equivalent of a university degree or a diploma certifying past experience in higher education.

Certificate of Theological Studies or Masters Programs Students enrolled in the ISS may participate in the program for personal enrichment or may pursue an advanced degree in theology.

DSPT awards the Certificate of Theological Studies to ISS students who have completed twelve hours of graduate study in theology for personal enrichment.

ISS students wishing to pursue an advanced degree in theology apply for admission to a degree program at DSPT. There are two options. The Master of Arts in Theology (Option I) is a research-oriented two-year degree in theological studies, accenting the theological tradition of DSPT, requiring both a foreign language and a Master's thesis. ISS courses apply as a specialization in spirituality. Students completing this program often teach or pursue doctoral studies, including those of the GTU.

The Master of Arts in Theology (Option II) is a two-year program designed to encompass a wide range of theological topics. Students choose an area of specialization, often with a pastoral orientation. The program culminates in a special project, a series of essays, a thesis, or perhaps a theological reflection paper. Students may use this program to gain the theological breadth and depth to help prepare for pastoral ministry. The Salesian emphasis on youth ministry fits neatly with this option.

General Information

The Institute of Salesian Spirituality follows the academic calendar of the GTU. The Fall Program begins in late August and ends before Christmas. The Spring Program begins in

February and ends in May. Seminars and workshops are offered at key times throughout the year.

Location

Don Bosco Hall, home of the ISS, is located in Berkeley, California. The Hall is ideally situated between the University of California at Berkeley and the Graduate Theological Union. Both are within short walking distance.

Climate

The climate in the Berkeley area is consistently mild and prevailingly cool all-year round, with only slight changes in the season. At some point in the winter season the temperature falls, though rarely approaching the freezing level. It is best to dress in "layers."

E-Mail and Internet Access

Students may access the internet or have their own individual e-mail accounts through community computers, or, students who own personal computers may do so from their own quarters.

Educational and Cultural Resources available to the Institute of Salesian Spirituality

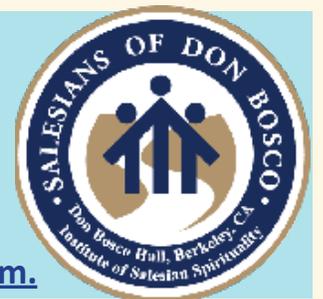
Library Resources at Don Bosco Hall

Don Bosco Hall maintains the Institute of Salesian Spirituality Library, which houses a growing collection of Salesian materials. Included in this collection – besides official documents and protocols of the Salesian Society – can be found over 2,000 books, 40 periodicals, and the 4,818 microfiches of the "Don Bosco Collection," the "Don Rua Collection" and the "Mother Mazzarello Documentation" of the Central Salesian Archives in Rome. Don Bosco Hall is within easy access of the GTU and university libraries.

The Flora Lamson Hewlett Library

The Flora Lamson Hewlett Library is the common library of the GTU. Its holdings number more than 600,000 books, periodicals, microforms, audio and video cassettes, and other media, making it the third largest theological library in the United States.

More information on the Institute of Salesian Spirituality can be obtained by emailing - sullivangael@aol.com.



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