

The Scalabrini Mission

Our Congregation...

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles - Scalabrinians - is an international community of men who have as their identity and mission to be missionary religious, who follow in the footsteps of Bishop Scalabrini on behalf of the migrants.

The Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles or Scalabrinians was founded by Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, Bishop of Piacenza, on November 28, 1887, to assist the migrants who were crossing the Atlantic to reach the Americas. The beginnings of our Congregation were humble and unpretentious: just two Italian priests who made their vows in the hands of our Founder. The first mission fields were the United States and Brazil. Subsequently, keeping pace with the evolution of the migration flows, we reached other countries and continents. Today, our Congregation is present in thirty-one countries, with about 700 missionaries and about 400 seminarians, coming from twenty nations.

We are religious, consecrated to the Lord by the vows of obedience, chastity and poverty. Most of us are priests, but we have also a number of religious lay brothers. We live in community and are called to proclaim the Good News to the migrants, to defend their rights, to promote a more humane society where the migrant is not seen as a foreigner or an illegal, but where the migrant can feel he is a citizen with full rights, because we are all sons and daughters of the same Father and members of the same human family.

By the word “migrants” we intend not only permanent migrants, but also temporary migrant workers, seafarers and refugees.

We exercise our ministry in formation houses or seminaries, parishes, missions, chaplaincies, reception centers, shelters for the migrants, and at seaports. We are present in national and diocesan Church organisms; in centers of migration studies; in the teaching and in-depth study of the pastoral care of migrants through the Scalabrini International Migration Institute (SIMI). We engage in lobbying and advocacy through the Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN) and through an international network of public and private institutions dealing with the world of migration.

To facilitate and coordinate the care of the Scalabrinian missionaries and of the migrants, “the Scalabrinian Congregation is made up of religious communities grouped into Provinces or similar territorial divisions and united by the bond of the same apostolic mission” (Rules of Life 185).

The present administrative groupings of Scalabrinian missionaries are eight:

1. General Administration (includes in Rome: the Blessed Scalabrini Generalate, St. Charles International College, Migration Study Center (CSER), Scalabrini International Migration Institute (SIMI), Scalabrini International Migration Network (SIMN); and in Arco [Trento] Casa Maria Assunta, rest home for sick and elderly Scalabrinian missionaries)
2. Province of St. Charles Borromeo (in East USA, East Canada, Haiti, Venezuela, Colombia)
3. Province of St. John the Baptist (in Middle and West USA, Middle and West Canada, Mexico, Guatemala)
4. Province of St. Paulo (in Central and North Brazil and Peru)
5. Province of St. Peter (in South Brazil and Paraguay)
6. Province of St. Joseph (in Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Bolivia)

7. Province of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini (in Australia, Philippines, Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Vietnam)

8. Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini Region (in Italy, France, Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Great Britain, Portugal, Spain, Mozambique, South Africa)

For further information on each of these territorial divisions, go to the Congregation's official website <http://www.scalabrini.org>

Our Province History...

The 1952 Pioneer Scalabrinian group: Fathers Nino Setti, Dante Orsi, Ignazio Militello and Tarcisio Prevedello.

The Scalabrinians arrived in Australia on 2 November, 1952. The history of their presence in this nation reflects the development of the Italian community and of migration in Australia.

In the initial phase they reached out to scattered communities of Italians, from the cane and tobacco plantations in Queensland to the groups in Tasmania, and New South Wales.

In a second moment they contributed to the formation of communities in the urban areas, particularly in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Newcastle and Wollongong, but also in smaller cities like Shepparton and Red Cliffs.

A third phase was marked by the involvement with the assistance to the ageing immigrant communities, particularly through the establishment of nursing homes and hostels, like the Scalabrini Village in NSW and Villaggio San Carlo in Victoria. At the same time the group reached out to other ethnic communities, particularly those from South America.

Currently, the Scalabrinians have further diversified their presence with immigrant groups, particularly the Filipinos and those of Portuguese and Spanish language, and have continued in a variety of services for migrants.

The first four Scalabrinian Missionaries arrived in Australia the 2nd of November 1952. But the Province of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini was officially established in Australia and given St. Frances Xavier Cabrini as its special patron and title on 7 October 1957, after the Scalabrinian missionaries had been supporting the local clergy in the pastoral care of the Italian immigrants for five years, under the administration of the North American Provinces.

With the arrival of more Scalabrinian missionaries, the Congregation established its presence in several parts of Australia and soon became a point of reference for the local migrant communities as well as for the local Church.

The changes in migration flows during the years were reflected in the transformation of the St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Province that expanded its mission beyond the originally assisted Italian migrants in order to provide care and support to migrants of other nationalities, like Spanish and Portuguese speaking migrants (especially South Americans), Filipinos and lately Chinese migrants.

In 1982 the St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Province opened its first mission outside Australia in Manila, Philippines. Other openings outside Australia soon followed: Taiwan in 1994, Indonesia in 2002, Japan in 2003, and Viet Nam in 2005.

The Scalabrinians in the Cabrini Province provide a variety of services to the migrants. In addition to the preparation of future Scalabrinian missionaries in formation houses or seminaries, they provide spiritual ministry and community building, education in schools, local organisations for cultural activities, care for the elderly and sick, counseling, legal referral, and advocacy. They also encourage the study of migration through research centers and the dialogue with political and civil groups through conferences and specialised magazines.

Biography...

Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905) is one of those figures who take on ever clearer and more striking features as time passes and they move from a newsworthy status to an historical one. Scalabrini has become an increasingly necessary reference point for those who want to know Church history, particularly that of the Italian Church, at the turn of this century.

Born at Fino Mornasco near Como in 1839 and ordained to the priesthood in 1863, he was professor and rector of the Como minor seminary until 1870, and pastor of St. Bartholomew's parish in Como until 1875. Consecrated bishop in 1876, he headed the diocese of Piacenza until his death in 1905.

He was first and foremost a pastor. On the one hand, he can be seen as one of the descendants of the tridentine reformation, in the likeness of St. Charles Borromeo and St. Francis de Sales: this is reflected in his restructuring of catechesis, the intensity of his proclamation of the Word, his work on seminary reform, the five pastoral visits, carried out in person, to the 365 parishes in his diocese, the legislation of three synods, the new life he breathed into the pastoral ministry of his clergy, and the reflowering of worship. On the other hand, he can be rightly considered the forerunner of new times and methods, confronting the great problems of his time with courage and far-sightedness - problems such as: legitimate freedom of opinion in the philosophical sphere, participation of Catholics in the political life of post-unification Italy and the debate on "the Roman question," the new relationship between Church and people, especially the rising working classes, and the solution of the "social question."

However, his name is linked above all with emigration at a time when the Church and Italian society were faced with the dramatic tragedy of mass emigration on an unprecedented scale. The State was absent in this sphere, and the Church was caught unprepared, but Scalabrini was the main planner and most practical developer - if not the only one - of integrated action to help migrants, organizing and providing a whole program of religious, social and humanitarian assistance that took account of all the human and Christian needs of the millions of migrants scattered mainly in the two Americas. In this context, he founded the Congregation of Missionaries of St. Charles for Emigrants (Scalabrinians) at Piacenza on 28 November 1887, and the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo (Scalabrinians) on 25 October 1895. In 1889 he also started the St Raphael Association so that lay people could also be involved in work for migrants. If he is commonly known as the "Apostle of Migrants," which is also why Pius XII described him as "an apostolic man to whom both Church and country owe a great debt of gratitude" - the words of appreciation of the other popes who knew him should not be forgotten: Pius IX gave him the title "Apostle of Catechism"; Leo XIII confidently depended on his fidelity and loyalty, entrusting him with delicate missions; St. Pius X saw him as "the learned, meek and strong bishop, who has always loved the truth and made others love it even in harsh circumstances, and has never abandoned it because of threats or enticements"; Benedict XV held him to be an "incomparable prelate," admiring his "very high virtues, most especially his chief one, charity"; Pius XI wanted "to bear witness not only to his pastoral and episcopal spirit but also to his truly apostolic and missionary spirit."

Scalabrini stands out among Italian bishops of the late 19th century: he had to battle against the current, but, as his friend Blessed Guanella rightly said, he belonged neither to the rearguard, nor to the center, but "to the vanguard, though always with the Pope." Along similar lines, Paul VI said that he was "famous for certain positions that we can say anticipated events in the history of Catholics in Italy, because he had his own particular views - then hotly contested, but in fact far-sighted - on the position of the papacy in the Italian State and the participation of Catholics in the public life of the country - from which they were excluded at that time. This meant that he attracted greater controversy, but it also gained him the merit of having predicted the role Catholics were to play in this country."

Bishop John Baptist Scalabrini was proclaimed Blessed by Pope John Paul II in Rome on November 9, 1997.

Our Mission...

Knowing full well that the Kingdom of God expresses itself through human realities and is built in their midst, we are able to discern the positive values that characterise the life of the migrants and represent their own peculiar contribution to the solidarity of all peoples and to universal brotherhood: namely, their longing for dignity, for participation, for justice, and for the salvation of the whole person. At the same time, we hold in high esteem the spiritual heritage of thought, tradition, culture and religion the migrants bring along from their place of origin, as well as the heritage of values of the new place where they come to live. To appreciate these values and to channel them into the building up of the Kingdom of God, while at the same time taking into account the requirements of the Congregation - which has members of various nationalities and serves people of different ethnic groups - we put a genuine missionary spirit at the very foundation of our formation and ministry. This spirit makes us completely available not only for working outside our own native country but also - in the absence of a natural homogeneity - for acquiring a spiritual, psychological, and language affinity with the migrants entrusted to our care, whatever their origin.

On the practical level, the Congregation appreciates the natural homogeneity and acquired affinities of its members, because it recognises it as fitting and pastorally effective to normally entrust the care of migrants to those who know their language and mentality, their culture, and the traits of their spiritual life.

Together with the ever present situations of temporary emergency, today's migrations are marked by situations of particular concern, what with new scenarios of massive migrations taking place everywhere: in Europe, from Asia towards Australia, within Asia and along the western coast of North America. There are new migrations from Latin America and the Caribbean Islands towards the United States, Canada and Japan. Latin-Americans are found in Europe and especially in Spain. Many are undocumented. Refugees and displaced people are in Colombia, in Africa, in Asia and in the Middle East. There are internal migrations and migrations from neighboring countries. There are derelicts in flight along the Mediterranean shores and there is the precarious situation of the people of the sea. In this moment of history, the Congregation is called upon to give priority and to respond in concrete ways to the above listed new phenomena, given their seriousness and urgency.

Source - <https://www.scalabrinian.org>

We will be restarting the Scalabrini Lay Movement, if you would like to take part or have more information please contact:

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