

SCALABRINIAN YEAR 2021-2022



BLESSED JOHN BAPTIST SCALABRINI (1839-1905)

BISHOP OF PIACENZA
APOSTLE OF CATECHISM
FATHER TO THE MIGRANTS

Founder of the Missionaries of Saint Charles - Scalabrinians
and of the Missionary Sisters of St Charles Borromeo - Scalabrinians
Inspirer of the Scalabrinian Secular Missionaries



John Baptist Scalabrini (1839-1905)

John Baptist Scalabrini was born in Fino Mornasco, a town in the province of Como, in northern Italy, on July 8, 1839. Third of eight children, after high school he entered the seminary of the diocese of Como and was ordained a priest in 1863. He expressed the desire to join the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME), but the bishop directed him instead as a teacher and then rector of the minor seminary.

In 1870 he was appointed parish priest of St Bartholomew, a parish on the industrial outskirts of Como, where he developed a sensitivity for the situation of textile workers, the unemployed and the disabled, and where he developed the *Little Catechism for Children* (1875). He gave 11 lectures on the First Vatican Council, also appreciated by Don Bosco, and in 1876, when he was only 36 years old, Pius IX appointed him bishop of Piacenza.

As a bishop, he took St. Charles as his model, whose pastoral dedication and ability to reform the diocese he imitated. He reminded the clergy of the need for spiritual retreat, renewed the discipline and studies in the three seminaries, anticipating the reforms of Leo XIII and Pius X. He promoted harmony, put to the test by the conflict between “transigents” and “intransigents” and between the followers of Rosmini and those of St Thomas. He was in favor of conciliation between Church and State.

He visited the 365 parishes of the diocese, 200 of which

were in the mountains, five times, but for him those visits were “the dearest of my offices”. He convened three diocesan synods, dedicated to reform, Christian witness in the Church and the Eucharist, the mystery of unity.

He institutionalized the teaching of the catechism in the form of a real school and reformed its contents. He started the first Italian *Catechetical Review* (1876), published *The Catholic Catechism* (1877) and in 1889 he celebrated the First National Catechetical Congress in Piacenza (one of the first of its kind in the history of the Church). Pius IX called him the Apostle of the Catechism.

He dedicated himself tirelessly to the poor, especially during the famine of 1879-1880, in which he also sold his chalice and horses. He founded the Institute for Deaf-Mute (1879) and the Association for Rice Workers (1903) for the religious, social and union assistance of these seasonal migrants. He also dedicated the book *Socialism and the Action of the Clergy* to social issues.

Above all, he was struck by the problem of mass migrations at the end of the nineteenth century. He studied its dynamics, held numerous conferences to solicit the intervention of the government and civil society, and worked for the reform of legislation. For migrants he founded the Congregation of the Missionaries of St. Charles (1887), the Missionary Sisters of St. Charles Borromeo (1895) and a lay association, the Society of St. Raphael (1889), active in the ports of embarkation and disembarkation. Finally, he recommended to the pope the establishment of a central office of the Holy See for the care of all migrants.

His extraordinary activity as a pastor and the many social initiatives stemmed from a soul completely dedicated to God, which found its nourishment in the Eucharist, knew how to accept the cross (*fac me cruce inebriari*) and had a filial devotion to Our Lady. His total dedication to God led him to make St. Paul's life project his own: to give himself totally to everyone. John Paul II declared him blessed on 9 November 1997.

Prayer to Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini

O Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini,
with the heart of a bishop
and the zeal of an apostle
you gave yourself completely to all.
You listened to the cries of migrants,
spoke in their name, defended their rights.
You found sustenance in the Eucharist
solace in the cross of Jesus,
comfort in Mary, Mother of the Church.
Through your intercession
may God, who is Father, Son and Holy Spirit
grant peace to all humanity,
protect those who cross
seas and borders sustained by hope,
bless us and our loved ones
and grant us the grace
that we entrust to your fatherly love. Amen

*Our Father, Hail Mary and Glory for the canonization
of Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini.*

For graces received or donations:

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FROM THE SCALABRINIAN TRADITIO

- *By opening ourselves to welcome the other, we bear witness to our regard for every person, especially the migrant.*
- *The experience of the human condition reveals to us the temporariness of our presence in this world.*
- *In the diversity of persons and cultures we recognize a reflection of the richness of God.*