

Joseph De Piro

Diary
1898 - 1909

Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism

A Critical Edition

Mario Zammit mssp
Translator

Mario Zammit mssp and
Tony Sciberras mssp
Editors

MSSP
Australia 2012

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Preface

The material presented here is known as “the Diary” of our Founder, Joseph De Piro. At the same time it contains a substantial amount of information of what happened before the actual foundation of our Missionary Society. The latter fact may easily lead one to think that it is mainly a chronology or history of our own beginnings, a timeline of what occurred before June 30, 1910. It is so, but not only! I would rather say that as much as it is a list of dates related to the foundation of the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*, it is also a spiritual journal of the Servant of God. By way of example one can notice that in this Diary Joseph De Piro recorded “the abandonment” he himself lived, from the Capranica days in Rome in 1898 until November 12, 1909.

A quick survey of the text clearly supports this claim:

During his second Summer holidays in Malta from Rome: ... *Joseph visited Mgr E. Vassallo, director of St Joseph's Home and told him that he wished to go and live with him at the orphanage. Vassallo told De Piro to finish his studies first before he makes this decision.*

On July 19, 1900: ... *he fell sick and therefore, “... I saw all my good intentions vanish.”*

In October 1901, at the beginning of his fourth year in Rome, during a retreat, Joseph wrote: ... *during these days, “... I examined the reasons in favour and against, whether, at the end of my studies, I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home.” He also wrote that one of the reasons why he wanted to go to St Joseph's Home was that: “An inner feeling tells me that from this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests” Even though he was only a 24 year old seminarian at the Capranica College, De Piro was already quite clear about the theology / spirituality of the charism of the foundation of religious institutes: God is the source of this charism. De Piro continued saying that he shared his project with Fr Gualandi who suggested that at this stage the project should be put aside.*

Some three months later, during the retreat in preparation for the diaconate: ... *he repeated the above mentioned theology / spirituality.*

Joseph De Piro

On July 10, 1902, at the end of his third year theology: ... young Fr Joseph fell sick for the second time. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis. He could not return to Malta for good to put his plans for the "congregation of priests" into practice. Instead he had to go to Davos, Switzerland, to recover his health. "On the icy Alpine mountains, so far from the land where I hoped to realise my dreams" Once again he put aside the actualisation of his dreams.

He finally returned to Malta on March 2, 1904. From the beginning of 1905: ... De Piro did his best to explain to some other priests what were the nature and aim of his society, but for almost five years the support he found was next to nothing.

On October 3, 1908: ... Archbishop Peter Pace sent De Piro a letter about the foundation of a seminary for the formation of missionaries. Fr Joseph was thrilled with the idea. Some days after receiving the letter he asked the Archbishop whether he could start this type of seminary. Pace answered that "... for the moment it would not be prudent"

Similarly De Piro jotted down his living of the will of God for the years 1898-1909.

It is exactly because of this dual nature of the Diary that we have chosen to call this publication: *Joseph De Piro, Diary 1898 – 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism*. "Charism" already implies spirituality and apostolate. "Foundational" implies the charism in the founder.

In 1988 we, at the Postulation, were very satisfied with the first publication of *Mons Ġużeppi De Piro: Djarju (1898-1909)*. Now we can say that the Society is having a much more scientific publication: a critical edition of the Diary of our Founder. Mario Zammit mssp has worked incessantly on a translation which is very faithful to the original Italian text. Together with us he has tried to support the Founder's own words with notes that make the material more understandable. The material presented in sections two and three help the reader delve deeper into this Diary.

Joseph De Piro, Diary 1898 – 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism. is the first of its type. I augur that similar editions of several other documents left by Joseph De Piro will follow in the not so far away future!

Tony Sciberras mssp
Vice Postulator
Joseph De Piro Cause of Canonisation
Co-Editor

Introduction

Joseph De Piro's Diary, listing events that happened between October 1898 and November 1909, is an important document revealing the Founder's spiritual journey as he struggled to discover God's will leading him to establish the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*. In the language of present day spiritual directors, this manuscript could be called De Piro's spiritual journal; a written record of the way he experienced God speaking to him in his life. This Diary provides us with a precious insight into De Piro's spiritual struggle as he strove to understand what shape his congregation would take.

Towards a foundational missionary charism

In a person's diary one would normally expect to find a record of important events that took place in his life. De Piro's diary is entirely focused on his discernment of God's will with regards to his dream of establishing a missionary congregation. This is accentuated by the total lack of reference to events which would otherwise seem important to De Piro. Two examples of such events are studied below.

Joseph De Piro's deep desire to join Fr Emmanuel Vassallo and Fr George Bugeja at St Joseph's Home is clearly documented in the very first entry of this Diary. In June 1907 Fr De Piro was acting-director of the orphanage while the director was away. This would have been a significant event for Fr Joseph, yet it is not mentioned at all in this Diary. On August 2 of the same year, De Piro was appointed director of Fra Diegu Orphanage for girls.¹ Once again we find no reference to this appointment in the Diary.

Each entry in this Diary is a reflection on an event that, in De Piro's eyes, was relevant to the eventual founding of the Missionary Society of St Paul. The two events mentioned above, regardless of their personal significance for Joseph, were not seen as expressing God's will in relation to the founding of the congregation and hence did not need to be recorded.

This book is subtitled *Towards a foundational missionary charism* to better describe De Piro's journey, discovering within himself the missionary charism leading to the foundation of the new congregation.

Dating this manuscript

Reading through the manuscript one notes two distinct types of entries. The entries listed for the years 1898 to 1904 are usually not linked to specific dates. The exception to this is when the author is writing about an event the date of which could be easily verified, like his ordination to the priesthood. It seems obvious that De Piro is writing from memory, months or years after the events happened. Between January 9, 1905 and November 12, 1909, Joseph is relatively more regular in writing about events as they happened. In each of these cases he clearly indicates the date when the event happened.

1. See Alexander Bonnici, *Giuseppe De Piro (1877–1933): Founder of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul*, trans. Monica De Piro Nelson (Marsa, Malta, 1988), 182.

It is difficult to determine exactly when the first part of this manuscript was written. From the structure of this Diary one is led to the conclusion that sometime after his return from Davos on March 2, 1904, De Piro was faced with the need to reflect on the significant events that had taken place since the beginning. After that point he continued to update the Diary on a more regular basis.

The request to put things down in writing

During the first few months after his return to Malta, De Piro did not act on his dream of establishing the *Piccola Compagnia*, but starting from January 1905, he regularly met with Fr Vassallo, the Director of St Joseph's Home. De Piro's dream had been that from this orphanage he would one day be able to start a missionary society. Years earlier Vassallo had mentioned the possibility of starting a congregation of priests from this orphanage.² During his time at the Capranica College in Rome, De Piro had maintained a close friendship with Vassallo and was now seeking his help in this project.

At the meeting held on February 11, 1905 and in subsequent meetings, Vassallo insisted with De Piro to commit his plans in writing, making it easier to share and discuss. For a number of months De Piro found it very difficult to write about his project, until on August 7 he finally presented Vassallo with an eight-point memorandum that could be considered the first draft of a constitution for the missionary society.

It is possible that this Diary owes its origins to De Piro's efforts to remind himself of the sequence of events in the pursuit of his dream of a missionary society. Vassallo's request may have been providential in helping De Piro realise the need to document the sequence of events.³

A missionary society conceived during the first year at the Capranica College

Another interesting discussion would be to ask when De Piro started to dream about his *Piccola Compagnia*.

De Piro wrote that during the Summer holidays of 1900 he had visited Fr Vassallo and shared with him his wish to form part of the community of priests living at St Joseph's Home.⁴ De Piro admitted that he had not told Vassallo the true reason why he wanted to live in this home and was surprised when Vassallo predicted: '*Maybe you could be the originator of a congregation of priests in Malta.*'

Even though at this point De Piro did not reveal his real intentions, yet his expression of surprise at Vassallo's words is very indicative. In October of the following year De Piro admitted his true intentions when he wrote: '*An inner feeling tells me that*

2. See below, 20.

3. Following this theory, it would be plausible to presume that the first part of this manuscript was written in Qrendi in the first weeks of February 1905.

4. The wish to form part of a community of priests is not expressly mentioned in this manuscript but in his notes about living at St Joseph's Home. See below, 51.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



St Paul the Apostle, to whose patronage Joseph De Piro entrusted his congregation and after whom it is named.

Joseph De Piro

from this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests under the patronage of Saint Paul.'

Keeping in mind that De Piro was writing these entries with hindsight, one needs to take into account the first entry in this manuscript. Here De Piro wrote that he had been harbouring the idea of joining the community of priests at St Joseph's Home since the first year of his studies at the Capranica. This first entry seems to set the tone for the whole manuscript. Here he intended to keep a record of his discernment towards bringing to birth the Missionary Society of Saint Paul. He was also expressing that this missionary society was first thought of sometime in 1898, during his first year at the Capranica.

Developing the concept of a missionary society

In October 1898, when De Piro first started to dream and talk about the possibility of founding a congregation of priests, he was only a young 21 year old seminarian. It is difficult to determine exactly how young Joseph envisaged his congregation at this early stage. Perhaps his initial attraction was for a life in common with other priests; he certainly felt that life in community protected him from having to worry about the family financial and material affairs.⁵

It is important to note that in his younger years Joseph was familiar with the concept of religious life. There were a number of religious congregations ministering in Malta for him to interact with. Moreover, through his spiritual directors he was also in regular contact with the Society of Jesus. Yet he had no plans to join any of these congregations, but the community of priests formed by the directors of St Joseph's Home.⁶ De Piro never became part of this community that had inspired him in his younger days.

In November 1906 Mgr Debono, the director of the *Parish Mission Society*, invited De Piro to consider a similar style of community life. Debono had longed to see the priests engaged in the parish missions congregated into a regular body.⁷ We lack any details about what kind of congregation Debono had envisaged. I suggest he was not planning to start a new religious congregation but a community of secular priests sharing common life.

These encounters with different forms of community life helped De Piro develop his own concept of a congregation. In August 1905, after much insistence from Fr Vassallo, De Piro put together the first description of his new missionary society. Each verse of this short draft could be the subject of a lengthy study. At this stage I will only point out two aspects. At least initially, the members of De Piro's missionary congregation were not meant to live together as a community, but only to come together for a meeting at least once a month. Secondly they were not to be required to make any vows or promises.⁸

5. See below, 51.

6. See below, 20.

7. See below, 32.

Two years later, in February 1907, together with Fr Bugeja, De Piro was planning to approach some priests to invite them to join his congregation. De Piro and Bugeja decided to: "... *speak [to them] only about the formation of a community, without any mention of [religious] vows.*"⁹ This statement indicates a development in the concept of the congregation. The members were not being invited to participate in a monthly meeting but to come together and live in some type of community. Furthermore the statement about the vows seems to indicate that De Piro and Bugeja had now started discussing the vows at some depth, but were as yet afraid to mention them to the other priests for fear this would scare them away.

On June 30, 1910 Joseph De Piro accepted Joseph Caruana and John Vella, the first two members of his congregation. Although they were not asked to make any profession of promises or vows, they did live as a community in the first house of the congregation. A few years later they were also asked to make their private profession of vows.¹⁰

Determined yet open to suggestions

It is probable that people who heard Joseph speak about starting a male congregation for priests thought of him as a dreamer and kindly tried to put him off his project. Both Fr Sammut sj and Fr Vassallo suggested to De Piro to put his dream of about the new congregation on ice; "*only time would tell*" whether there was any value in these dreams.¹¹ The young seminarian certainly had his studies to think about first and moreover other priests had already tried and failed. Canon Bonnici was of the opinion that "*... by nature Maltese priests were too attached to their native country ...*" and only direct divine intervention could possibly change that!¹²

There could be no doubt that Joseph De Piro is the originator and founder of the Missionary Society of St Paul, yet he insisted on getting others involved in his dream. During the summer months following his first year at the Capranica, he wanted to get in touch with Canon Bonnici, the founder of St Joseph's Home. One can sense a note of disappointment when De Piro wrote: "*... I was rather surprised to learn that Canon Bonnici had left the Home he had started*"¹³ Perhaps the young seminarian had looked up at Bonnici with a sense of admiration for being courageous enough to start the new venture – only to leave it, a few years later, in other people's hands!

If Bonnici's decision shocked De Piro, it did not stop him from pursuing his own dream. He immediately contacted the new director of the orphanage and his assistant, and started to nurture a relationship with them, sharing his dream of joining in their ministry. Much to De Piro's surprise Vassallo, the director, exclaimed: "*Maybe you*

8. See below, 29.

9. Below, 34.

10. See John Vella's private profession of the vow of Obedience on August 22, 1915. *MSSP Fi Zmien Il-Fundatur [MSSP At the Time of the Founder]* (Malta, 1989), 10.

11. See below, 22.

12. Below, 29.

13. Below, 19.

could be the originator of a congregation for priests in Malta."¹⁴ Was this the first of a series of divine messages encouraging De Piro on? De Piro did not take this comment lightly; he treasured it and years later recorded it in his diary.

Although De Piro tried hard to obey the instructions of his spiritual director, put aside his plans for the new congregation and concentrate on his studies, he never forgot his dreams. The thought of the new congregation was first in the list of reasons in favour of taking up residence at St Joseph's Home.¹⁵ He also continued to nurture his relationship with Frs Vassallo and Bugeja.¹⁶

Vassallo's role as director of St Joseph's Home, his unsolicited comment about starting a new congregation and his continued friendship with De Piro increased his significance in the Founder's eyes. De Piro felt that Vassallo could offer valuable support in his venture, and soon after his return from Davos made contact with Vassallo trying to engage his support.¹⁷ Vassallo did not seem to respond as enthusiastically as De Piro would have hoped and forced De Piro to discern his plans very carefully, insisting (perhaps quite wisely) that De Piro commit his plans in writing.¹⁸

This insistence on having the project committed in writing proved to be very trying for the young enthusiastic priest. One could surmise that De Piro had thought that starting a new congregation would be as simple as bringing a number of priests together, the formalities of writing rules and regulations could be dealt with later. Alternatively De Piro's hesitation could have been the result of his uncertainty with regards to the shape of the new congregation. In either case, Vassallo's insistence on having a written document proved to be of more value than De Piro himself could have realised. In this writing De Piro includes the scripture verse that seems to have inspired his priesthood: "*I will follow you, wherever you go.*"¹⁹

Vassallo promised to help with the setting up of the new congregation, but he himself had other plans.²⁰ However he invited De Piro to discuss his plans with two priests in the diocese, both of whom had had their own plans of starting congregations for priests. Obediently, De Piro met with both Canon Bonnici and Mgr Debono who shared their dreams with him. It may seem that Divine Providence did not intend for Bonnici or Debono to be of any help or hindrance to De Piro; both died within four months of their meetings with him!²¹

When Vassallo, Bonnici and Debono could not offer any further help, De Piro engaged the support of Fr Bugeja, the new director of St Joseph's Home, and Fr Mamo.²² Reading the text of the Diary it seems to me that, while De Piro approached

14. Below, 20.

15. See below, 50.

16. See below, 19.

17. See below, 24.

18. See below, 27.

19. Below, 31.

20. See below, 28.

21. See below, 29 and 34.

Vassallo, Bonnici and Debono with deference, letting them influence his decisions, when Bugeja and Mamo appeared on the scene, he took up leadership of the project. De Piro did not see Bugeja and Mamo as his advisors but rather as his peers and co-founders. Yet, while they planned the new congregation together, it became clear that this was De Piro's congregation which Bugeja and Mamo had chosen to join. (Perhaps that is why they both eventually chose to leave De Piro and develop their own separate projects.)²³

The last person in this procession of people involved in the founding of the congregation is Bishop La Fontaine who visited Malta in the role of Apostolic Visitor to the Diocese. De Piro took the opportunity of sharing his dream with him, finding in him a very faithful friend, as can be witnessed from later correspondence between the two.²⁴

A discerning person

Another element that emerges from this Diary, and that cannot easily be dismissed, is De Piro's spirit of discernment, manifested in three ways: his discernment processes, his Davos experience, and his observation of events.

De Piro prayed about his projects. In his Diary he refers to two prayerful discernments he undertook during his retreats. These discernment processes were not undertaken in a vacuum, he let himself be guided by his spiritual directors and his confessors.²⁵ He also saw the will of God in the wishes expressed by his superiors. Even though he had prayerfully discerned that he should go and live a community life with the director of St Joseph's Home and his assistant, and not to continue his studies at the Academy, in each case he was ready to submit to the bishop's wishes: "... *having first obtained, however, the Bishop's permission.*"²⁶

Even if De Piro always tried to discover and do God's will for him, living God's will was not easy. It seems that God wanted to test De Piro's loyalty. In his Diary De Piro admits that many times he saw his best hopes ruined. Twice during his years at the Capranica he was seriously sick: on July 19, 1900 and again on July 10, 1902. "... *I started to feel sick for the second time. (The first time was on July 19, 1900.) I saw all my good intentions vanish. Fiat! [Your will be done!] The Lord accepts my good intentions.*"²⁷ Years later, in a letter to Bishop Portelli, dated March 10, 1919, De Piro once again laments that he did not realise his dream would prove to be so difficult to achieve.²⁸

22. See below, 32 and 34.

23. Both Bugeja and Mamo left De Piro and his new congregation some time after June 30, 1910. See Bonnici, 81.

24. See below, 37. See also below, 42-43. For the correspondence between De Piro and La Fontaine see *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 7 fol.

25. See below, 20 and 22. Two sets of notes from De Piro's discernment processes are being reproduced below, 44-51.

26. See below, 20.

27. Below, 23.

Within this context one also needs to study De Piro's experience in Davos, Switzerland, when in 1902 he had to abandon his studies and recover his health. Little is known about this eighteen-month period in De Piro's life. From a short paragraph included in his Diary one can conclude that it was a very testing moment in his life. Isolated from his family and friends, far from the country where he planned to realise his dreams, De Piro could only resort to prayer! Prayer became his one intimate companion during this dark time.²⁹

De Piro was also open to reading the *signs of the times* as they happened around him. Although he did not tell us their significance for him, he did note them in his Diary; their interpretation is left for us to read. Reference has already been made to Fr Vassallo's prediction that, by his presence in the orphanage, De Piro might be the originator of a congregation of priests.³⁰ Moreover on January 16, 1905, De Piro noted that after a meeting with Vassallo, as they were parting, a beggar approached them. As a sign of appreciation for their generosity, the beggar blessed them through the intercession of St Paul. De Piro noted that even in Pauline Malta, this was not a common way to express gratitude.³¹ Once again, on December 10, 1906, while he was with Fr Bugeja discussing his plans for the congregation of priests, De Piro noted that Bugeja entered into a shop to look at a statue of the Apostle Paul.³² To these three incidents one could also perhaps add De Piro's reference to the death of Canon Bonnici and Mgr Debono.

In these *signs of the times* De Piro saw God's hand leading him towards founding the congregation, or confirming decisions already taken by him. His contemplative nature led him to be open to reading God's will in these otherwise insignificant incidents.

An abrupt ending of the Diary

The Diary ends abruptly towards the end of 1909, a few months before the actual founding of the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*. It is difficult to discover why De Piro did not maintain this manuscript at least until June 1910. Perhaps now that the end was in sight, he no longer felt the need to record events as they occurred?

This manuscript is only the preamble - the true story started on June 30, 1910, with the acceptance of Joseph Caruana and John Vella, the first two members of his missionary society. The rest of the story is documented in the letters and documents related to his *Piccola Compagnia* meticulously preserved by De Piro.

28. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 83.

29. See below, 24. For a detailed study of the Davos experience see below, 53.

30. See below, 20.

31. See below, 26.

32. See below, 32.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



Archbishop Peter Paul Pace, Bishop of Malta from 1889 to 1914. He invited Joseph De Piro to consider the possibility of joining the ecclesiastical diplomatic service.

A translator's note

I do not claim to have achieved a perfect translation. A translated text is simply another reading of the original. The best a translator can hope to achieve is to convey, as faithfully as possible, the meaning of the author. I tried to enter into and understand the context within which De Piro was writing and convey that message in a language that is capable of carrying the message today. Other translators will read this text differently.

Without engaging in the discussion between dynamic and formal equivalence in translation, a discussion that has recently had much exposure in another forum, I acknowledge the difficulty in rendering a text into another language. In a number of instances I struggled to convey in translation the beauty and the music of the original Italian text. I feel that often the English language, which is itself beautiful and has its own rhythms, could not properly convey the idea of the author.

At other times the text itself seems obscure. Wherever possible I tried to elucidate the text by supplying words that are not represented in the original and by adding footnotes. The use of square brackets in the text indicates words that have been supplied to add clarity to the original. In a few cases even this was not a possibility. Some of the footnotes explain different nuances in the text, as I understood them.

Sections two and three of this book contain additional writings by Joseph De Piro and some articles and notes. It is hoped that this additional material throws more light on De Piro's Diary.

Finally I thank Tony Sciberras mssp who has dedicated long years researching the life and writings of Joseph De Piro. Without his encouragement and support this publication could not have been possible. With me he studied this translation, suggesting alternatives and supplying notes. He also suggested the inclusion of some of the additional materials in sections two and three.

Conclusion

Joseph De Piro's Diary 1898 – 1909 is a foundational text for us Paulist Missionaries. It records the Founder's spiritual journey discovering within himself God's gift of a missionary charism and is an insight into the origins of the congregation. De Piro is here revealed as a prayerful discerning person, always obedient to God's will.³³

Mario Zammit mssp
Horsley Park NSW
November 2011
Translator and Co-Editor

33. For a more detailed outline of Joseph De Piro's life one can refer to De Piro Archives, *Mgr Joseph De Piro: Reconstruction of his Life*, 2nd Ed., (Malta, 2007).

INTRODUCTION TO THE 1988 EDITION¹

[Joseph De Piro's] Diary is the source of a wealth of information about the genesis, development and founding of the Missionary Society of Saint Paul by its Founder. It also provides an interesting insight into the Founder's soul. Reading this diary one can appreciate the deep connection that existed between the person and the institute he founded.

Joseph De Piro starts his Diary in 1898, the first year of his studies for the priesthood, in Rome. It ends in 1909 soon after the Founder's meeting with Mgr La Fontaine at Fra Diegu Orphanage. De Piro confided with La Fontaine about his wish to start a missionary society. It is a pity that the diary stops abruptly after this event.

In fact it seems that De Piro started to write his diary between the years 1904 and 1905, towards the end of his stay in Davos and the first months of his return to Malta. (His stay in Switzerland seems to have been of great significance in his spiritual journey.) During this time the Founder seems to have written the most important facts that occurred in the previous years. After 1905 his entries become more regular.

The Postulator

Cause of Canonisation of Joseph De Piro

June 30, 1988

The seventy-eighth anniversary
from the beginning of the
Missionary Society of St Paul

1. This introduction is taken from the newsletter '*Nagħarfu lill-Fundatur*' [*To know the Founder*] n. 5, 1972.

Joseph De Piro



The Capranica College, Rome, where Joseph De Piro lived while he studied philosophy and theology at the Gregorian University.



The Lateran Basilica, Rome, where Joseph was ordained priest on *Sabato Sittentes* 1902: March 15.

SECTION 1

Joseph De Piro. Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.

†
1898-1899¹

In sin dal mio primo anno di Collegio, ho incominciato a vagheggiare l'idea di ritirarmi nella 'Casa di San Giuseppe' del Hamrun ed aiutare il Canonico Bonnici, fondatore della stessa.

Tornato a Malta, per le vacanze estive fui alquanto sorpreso nel sapere, che il Canonico Bonnici aveva abbandonato la Casa da lui fondata e che alla sua direzione trovavasi il Sac. D. Emmanuele Vassallo e D. Giorgio Bugeja.

Durante le stesse vacanze sono stato a visitare il Vassallo alla Casa di San Giuseppe, ho fatto la sua <manuscript p. 2> conoscenza, gli ho portato i saluti dal Collegio essendo egli già Capranicese, e strinsi con lui amicizia.

Since my first year at the [Capranica] College,² I had started harbouring the thought of taking up residence at 'St Joseph's Home' in Hamrun, and to help its founder, Canon Bonnici.³

On my return to Malta for the summer holidays [1899], I was rather surprised to discover that Canon Bonnici had left the Home he had started, and that Fr Emmanuel Vassallo and Fr George Bugeja had become its directors.⁴

During these same holidays I visited Vassallo at St Joseph's Home. I introduced myself to him and brought him greetings from the [Capranica] College. He himself had studied at the Capranica. I struck a friendship with him.

1899 - 1900

Ho continuato a tenere relazioni con D. Emanuele e col Bugeja.

<footnote on p. 3> Durante le vacanze estive ho esternato al Vassallo il mio desiderio di fargli compagnia ella Casa di S. Giuseppe.

I continued to develop my relationship with Fr Emmanuel and Bugeja.

During the summer holidays [1900] I shared with Vassallo my desire to join him at St Joseph's Home. He advised me first

1. These sections refer to scholastic years at the Gregorian University and hence should read October 1898 to September 1899.

2. De Piro lived at the Capranica College while he carried out his studies at the Gregorian University.

3. Canon Francis Bonnici (1853-1905) was an educationalist, philanthropist and philosopher. He founded St Joseph's Home in 1888. See also biographical note on page 87, below. De Piro came in contact with Canon Bonnici again in 1905. One wonders why De Piro felt so attracted to St Joseph's Home and why he felt that from this orphanage a new congregation could arise. Research on this topic still needs to be carried out. Some churches in Europe have a group of priests associated with them. These groups of priests are called Chapters and their members, Canons. The role of these Canons is to pray the Liturgy of the Hours and to participate in the liturgy of the church they are associated with. Canons associated with the Cathedral church are called Monsignors (Mgr). The title Monsignor can also be given to certain priests in recognition for their contribution to the local Church.

4. See biographical notes about Vassallo and Bugeja below, 87.

Joseph De Piro

Egli (come pure il Padre Sammut dal quale sono stato ad Acireale al Collegio Pennisi) mi consigliò di terminare gli studi prima di tutto e poi si sarebbe veduto. Tengo qui nota che senza che io gli avessi detto i miei motivi di entrare nella detta Casa egli soggiunse: "Forse sarai la causa perchè si formi a Malta la Congregazione dei Preti". E così di questa cosa non se ne parlò più.

to finish off my studies before thinking about my desire. (Fr Sammut, whom I had visited at the Pennisi College in Acireale, had suggested the same thing.⁵) Here I note that, even though I had not told [Vassallo] my reasons for wanting to form part of this Home, he added: "Maybe you could be the originator of a congregation of priests in Malta." Nothing else was said about this.

1900 - 1901

Nel Febbraio del 1901, ho fatto il ritiro spirituale in preparazione a ben ricevere l'ordine del Suddiaconato, e nel Dicembre dello stesso anno ho fatto un secondo ritiro prima di ricevere l'ordine del Diaconato, durante i quali l'idea di portarmi alla Casa di S. Giuseppe sempre mi preoccupò.

In February 1901 I did a spiritual retreat prior to receiving the order of sub-deacon. In December of this same year I did a second retreat before receiving the order of the diaconate.⁶ During both these retreats I was often thinking about the possibility of taking up residence at St Joseph's Home.⁷

1901 - 1902

Nel breve ritiro spirituale che si usa di fare al Capranica in principio dell'anno scolastico, ho messo in esame le ragioni pro e contro per conoscere se dovessi o no, terminati gli studi, portarmi alla Casa di S. Giuseppe. Ho deciso, coll'aiuto del P. Gualandi, per l'affermativa previo però il permesso del Vescovo.

During the short spiritual retreat that is customarily done in the Capranica at the beginning of the scholastic year, I examined the reasons in favour and against, whether I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home after finishing my studies.⁸ With Fr Gualandi's help I have decided in the affirmative, having first obtained, however, the Bishop's permission.

Una delle ragioni che mi inducevano di stabilirmi nella Casa di S. Giuseppe è stata la seguente: "Perche un sentimento

One of the reasons that persuaded me that I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home has been the following:

5. Fr Vincent Sammut sj (1857-1919) was one of Joseph De Piro's spiritual directors. Between 1900 and 1904 he was rector at the Agostino Pennisi Jesuit College in Acireale, Sicily. De Piro had probably stopped at Acireale on his way to Malta. See also biographical note on page 87, below.

6. The note about this retreat is an indication that De Piro wrote these notes months or years after the events. This section should only include events that happened between October 1900 and September 1901. He in fact mentioned this retreat again in its proper place, December 1901, in the next section.

7. The Italian verb *preoccupare* could also be translated with the Ignatian term: *distracted*. This may better describe De Piro's thought at this point.

8. The notes from this discernment process have not come to light.

9. No biographical information about Fr Gualandi could be found.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



St Joseph's Home, Hamrun Malta. The boys' orphanage founded by Canon Francis Bonnici, from where Joseph De Piro planned to start his *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*.

interno mi dice, che Iddio da questo istituto voglia formare a Malta, una congregazione di Sacerdoti
<p. 3> sotto il Patrocinio di S. Paolo e così nel rendere stabile l'opera a Malta si diffonda anche all'estero."

Il P. Gualandi mi consigliò di sospendere questa ragione; soggiungendo "Se son rose fioriranno."

Qualche tempo dopo mi chiamò il Rettore Mons. Coselli dicendomi che era stato da lui il Presidente dell'Accademia Ecclesiastica e che gli aveva espresso il desiderio che io fossi andato all'Accademia. Io ho risposto che terminati gli studii intendevo tornare in Diocesi ed esercitare costì il mio ministero e che perciò non trovavo ragione di abbandonare il Capranica per recami all'Accademia; e così pel momento la cosa terminò.

<p. 4> Durante il ritiro spirituale in preparazione a ben ricevere l'ordine del Diaconato, incominciato l'11 Dic. 1901, ho messo in esame tutte le ragioni pro o contro tanto per l'entrata all'Accademia come pure l'entrata alla Casa di S. Giuseppe; ed il risultato fu negativo per l'Accademia ed affermativo per la Casa di S. Giuseppe.

Il 5 Marzo 1902 son tornato a Villa Cecchini per gli esercizi spirituali per ben ricevere l'ordine del presbiterato ed il 15 Marzo, Sabato Santes, sono stato

'Because an inner feeling tells me that from this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests under the patronage of Saint Paul, and that after having established itself in Malta, it will also spread itself into foreign lands.'

Fr Gualandi advised me, for the time being, to set this reason aside, adding: 'Only time will tell.'¹⁰

Some time later Mgr [Giuseppe M.] Coselli, the rector [of the Capranica] called me. He informed me that the President of the Ecclesiastical Academy had visited paid him.¹¹ [The President] had expressed his desire that I should enrol [and continue my studies at] the Academy. I replied that once I finished my studies, my intention was to return to the Diocese [of Malta] and exercise my priesthood there. Therefore I had no intention of leaving the Capranica to enrol at the Academy. Nothing else [about this matter] was said at this stage.

On December 11, 1901, I started the spiritual retreat prior to receiving the order of the diaconate. During this retreat I examined all the reasons, in favour and against, enrolling at the Academy and staying at St Joseph's Home. The result was against my going to the Academy and in favour of taking up residence at St Joseph's Home.¹²

On March 5, 1902 I returned to Villa Cecchini for the spiritual exercises prior to receiving the order of the priesthood. I was consecrated to the priesthood on

10. It is difficult to translate idiomatic expressions. A literal translation of the idiom used by Fr Gualandi is: 'If they are roses, they will flower.' Dictionaries translate this as: 'Only time will tell'; if there is potential in this idea, then it will happen!

11. The *Accademia Ecclesiastica dei Nobili* trained priests who were employed in the Vatican Diplomatic corps.

12. A copy of this discernment process is being included in section 2, below, 47.

consagrato Sacerdote in S. Giovanni March 15, *Sabato Sitientes*,¹³ at St John
Laterano dal Vicegerente Lateran, by Mgr Ceppetelli, Vicegerent.¹⁴
Mons. Ceppetelli.

Il 16 Marzo ho detto la Prima Messa al Collegio Capranica e per prete assistente avevo il cugino Dom Ambrogio Agius.

Il 30 Marzo dissi la Prima Messa a Malta nella Chiesa Cattedrale e per Canonici assistenti avevo Mons. Mifsud e Mons. F. Bonnici.

Il 5 Aprile partii per Roma; Il Vescovo Mons. Pace sempre coll'idea di mandarmi all'Accademia mi aveva dato un biglietto per il Presidente dell'Accademia.

Arrivato a Roma sono stato dal Presidente dell'Accademia col biglietto del Vescovo e gli ho dichiarato che dovendo tornare in Diocesi terminati

<p. 5> gli studi, non intendevo perciò portarmi all'Accademia e baciandogli la mano mi sono congedato dicendogli che avrei scritto al mio Vescovo.

Ho scritto infatti al Vescovo dandogli le mie ragioni per non andare all'Accademia, dichiarandomi peraltro pronto ad ubbidirlo; egli però mi rispose dicendomi che non intendeva forzare la mia volontà. E così quest'incidente ebbe fine.

Il 10 Luglio mi sono sentito male è per

On March 16, I celebrated my First Mass at the Capranica College, assisted by my cousin, Dom Ambrose Agius [OSB].

On March 30, I celebrated my First Mass in Malta at the Cathedral Church. I was assisted by Canons Mgr [Alfredo] Mifsud and Mgr F Bonnici.¹⁵

On April 5, I left for Rome. Bishop Mgr Pace, still wanting to enrol me at the Academy, gave me a note for the President of the Academy.¹⁶

On my arrival in Rome I visited the President of the Academy and gave him the Bishop's note. I informed [the President] that after finishing my studies I needed to return to the Diocese [of Malta], and hence had no intention of enrolling at the Academy. Having told him that I was going to write [about this] to my Bishop, I kissed his hand left.

I wrote to the Bishop giving him my reasons against attending the Academy. I told him however that I was always ready to obey his wishes. He replied telling me that he had no intention to put any pressure against my will. This put an end to this matter.

13. In the pre-Vatican II Liturgy, Saturday of the fourth week of Lent was known as *Sitientes* because the day's entrance antiphon started: "*Sitientes venite ad aquas Domini*" (Is 55:1) (All you who are thirsty, come, come to the water of the Lord!) It was customary for ordinations to the priesthood to be held on this Saturday of Lent.

14. Archbishop Giuseppe Ceppetelli (1846-1917) was Titular Patriarch of Constantinople, Vicegerent for the Vicariate of Rome (substitute Vicar General of the Diocese of Rome). In 1904 Archbishop Ceppetelli also ordained to the priesthood Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli, the future Pope John XXIII.

15. In Malta it is customary for a newly ordained priest to have two 'sponsors' at his First Mass. De Piro's 'sponsors' were Mgr Mifsud and Mgr Bonnici. Mgr Alfredo Mifsud was a neighbour of the De Piro family. Joseph De Piro rented a small section of Mifsud's Mdina mansion to serve as the first house of the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*, in 1910. After Mifsud's death in 1921, De Piro and his society had to leave the house as the mansion became the property of the Sisters of St Dorothy.

16. Bishop Peter Pace (1831-1914) was appointed Bishop of Malta in 1889. He invited De Piro to go to the Ecclesiastical Academy after finishing his third and final year of theology. Priests of noble descent were invited to attend the Ecclesiastical Academy to complete their cultural formation.

la seconda volta. (La prima era il 19 luglio 1900.) Ho veduto andare in aria tutte le mie buone intenzioni. *Fiat!* Il Signore guarda alla buona volontà.

Dichiarato dal medico affetto di tubercolosi polmonare, ho abbandonato gli studi; mi son portato a Malta da dove dopo pochi giorni son partito per la Svizzera per la cura d'aria. Arrivato a Davos per la festa di S. Domenico il 4 Agosto 1902, per somma grazia di Dio e della Madre mia Maria ho incominciato a migliorare.

Ho continuato intanto durante tutto il tempo della cura a carezzare le mie ormai divenute antiche idee. Ma tra i ghiacci delle Alpi così lontano dal paese dove intendevo metterle in effetto non mi restava altro mezzo che la preghiera - mia ottima compagna - ed ho pregato, pregato, pregato.

<p. 6> Dopo 18 mesi di cura per somma grazia di Dio il 13 Febbraio 1904 ho lasciato Davos ed il 2 Marzo son arrivato a Malta; e per mia residenza ho scelto il Qrendi.

Il 9 Gennaio 1905 sono stato a

On July 10, I started to feel sick for the second time. (The first time was on July 19, 1900.) I saw all my good intentions vanish. *Fiat!* [Your will be done!] The Lord accepts my good intentions.¹⁷

When the doctor informed me that I had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis, I immediately left my studies and returned to Malta. A few days later I departed for Switzerland where [it was hoped the clean fresh mountain] air would cure me. I arrived in Davos on August 4, 1902, feast day of St Domenic¹⁸ and through the grace of God and of Mary my Mother, I soon started to feel better.

As I waited to get better, I continued to nurture the plans I have matured in me for so long. But amidst the icy Alpine mountains, so far from the land where I hoped to realise my dreams, I was left with nothing but prayer - my most intimate friend. And I prayed, prayed and prayed.¹⁹

By the grace of God, after eighteen months of treatment, on February 13, 1904, I left Davos. I arrived in Malta on March 2. For my residence I chose Qrendi.²⁰

17. In a letter to his mother, dated August 24, 1898, Joseph wrote that he hoped to study two years of philosophy (Oct 1898 to Jun 1900) followed by two years of theology (Oct 1900 to Jun 1902). This meant that he would be ordained to the priesthood in 1902. After his ordination he hoped to study theology for another two years (Oct 1902 to Jun 1904) and then study Canon Law for three years (Oct 1904 to Jun 1907), finishing with a Licentiate in Canon Law. This plan did not eventuate because De Piro did not do too well in his studies and because of his illness. (See *Ittri lill-familjari* [Letters to his relatives], vol. 1 of *Il-Qaddej ta' Alla Guzeppi De Piro: Korrispondenza* [Servant of God Joseph De Piro: Correspondence] ([Rabat, Malta,] 1989), 4.

18. Until the 1970 reform of the Roman Catholic Liturgical Calendar, the feast of St Dominic of Ozma (de Guzman) (1170-1221), founder of the Order of Preachers, was on August 4. After 1970 it was transferred to August 8.

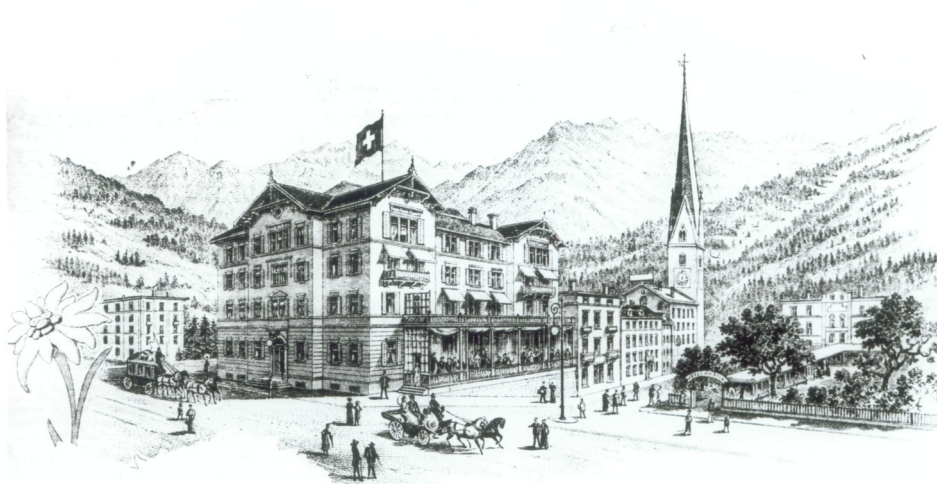
19. For Joseph De Piro Davos was a moment of desolation - a dark night. One indication is the choice of words. On the Alps De Piro does not see the romantic soft snow (*neve*), but a harsh icy chill (*ghiaccio*). Death and darkness seem to have been in the air.

20. The De Piro family owned a holiday house in the village of Qrendi, in the southwest of the island. The De Piro family had their main residence at a mansion in Mdina, next to the Cathedral. They had properties at 209 St Paul's Street Valletta, the seaside village of Birzebbugia and in Florence Italy.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



St Paul's Cathedral, Mdina Malta, where Joseph De Piro celebrated his First Solemn Mass on March 30, 1902.



Davos, Switzerland, where Joseph De Piro stayed for eighteen months to recover from his pulmonary tuberculosis.

1905

S. Calcedonio per gli Esercizzi Spirituali. Ho esternato al P. Ferrara le mie idee e gli ho chiesto se credeva che fosse tempo di che io le comunicassi al Vassallo. Egli mi consigliò affermativamente.

16 Gennaio: Terminati gli Esercizi Spirituali ed incontrandomi col Vassallo in Valletta per la prima volta gli ho comunicato la mia idea. Ho trovato Vassallo dello stesso mio parere però non si è concluso altro che di aver manifestato reciprocamente le proprie idee. - Tengo nota che mentre oggi parlavamo o avevamo già parlato di questa cosa, prima di separarci un mendicante domandandoci l'elemosina ci augurò l'aiuto di S. Paolo, cosa non solita in simili circostanze tanto che D. Emmanuele vi fece sopra qualche osservazione.

26 Gennaio: Ho riferito al P. Ferrara il mio incontro col Vassallo a gli manifestai che io non intendeva fare alcun altro atto o meglio di non essere più il primo ad attaccare discorso sulla cosa al Vassallo; ma che intendeva aspettare che Vassallo mi parlasse sopra. (Ieri alla Cattedrale festa della Conversione

<p. 7> di S. Paolo, mi incontrai con Vassallo, il quale però non fece parola su questa cosa.) Però dal P. Ferrara mi son deciso di attaccare discorso nel primo incontro col Vassallo.

10 Febbraio: Commemorazione del

On January 9, 1905, I was at San Calcedonio [in Floriana] for the spiritual exercises.²¹ I shared my plans with Fr Ferrara²² and asked him whether he thought it was timely to also speak about my plans with Vassallo.²³ He advised me to do so.

January 16: At the conclusion of the spiritual exercises I met Vassallo in Valletta. I shared my plans with him for the first time.²⁴ Vassallo fully agreed with my plans, but we only discussed our plans and did not come to any conclusion. - I note that before we parted, while we were still talking about these matters or immediately after, a beggar approached us. He asked for some financial help and blessed us through the intercession of St Paul. This expression is not usual in similar circumstances. Fr Emmanuele made an observation about this.

January 26: I spoke to Fr Ferrara about my meeting with Vassallo. I told him that I had no intention of speaking [with Vassallo] again about the subject or rather, that I would no longer be the one to initiate the conversation on this matter with him. I would now wait for Vassallo to start the conversation. (Yesterday I was at the Cathedral for the feast of the Conversion of St Paul. There I met Vassallo and he did not make any mention at all about this.) But after speaking to Fr Ferrara I decided to broach the subject the first time I meet Vassallo.

21. The House of Our Lady of Manresa, popularly known as San Calcedonio, was built as a Jesuit retreat house in 1751. After their return to Malta in 1860, the Jesuits were given a small section of this house as their residence. The Jesuits left San Calcedonio in 1918.

22. Fr Liborio Ferrara sj (1866-1943). See Biographical note on page below, 87.

23. In 1900 De Piro had already shared with Fr Emmanuel Vassallo his plans to take up residence at St Joseph's Home. See page 19, above.

24. It seems that for the moment De Piro had given up the idea of joining Bugeja and Vassallo at the orphanage. His conversations with Vassallo seem to have been about founding the congregation of priests.

Naufragio di S. Paolo - M'incontrai col Vassallo nella Sagrestia di S. Paolo Valletta. - Egli non mi fece parola. - Vassallo accompagnò in processione come pure io avendo a destra D. Giorgio Bugeja.

11 Febbraio: Mentre mi portavo al Seminario per trovare Vassallo a parlargli sopra, l'ho incontrato che veniva in Valletta. Accompagnandolo al Seminario lo interrogai sulla faccenda. Egli mi domandò di mettere in iscritto la mia idea.

16 Febbraio: Sono stato a trovare Vassallo al Seminario, gli ho detto che ancora non aveva scritto niente, però sperava di scrivere.

21 Febbraio: Ho scritto al Vassallo dicendogli che intendeva contentarli e mettere in carta la mia idea; che ho provato di farlo e non mi è riuscito. E prendendo occasione del giorno della Commemorazione dell'Orazione di [Nostro Signore Gesù Cristo] al monte Oliveto lo esortai a pregare.

22 Febbraio: Trovandomi in Valletta invece di mandare la lettera mi portai dal Vassallo gli disse che non intendeva scrivere ciò che mi aveva domandato, lo esortai alla preghiera e gli dissi che non l'avrei

<p. 8> cercato più. Però circa due giorni dopo aprendo lo 'Chaignon' Componimenti di Meditazione mi ha fatto cambiare l'idea la meditazione sul vangelo della prossima domenica Sexagesima. "Il buon pensiero è un seme che il Salvatore getta nella anima nostra".

February 10: Feast day of St Paul's Shipwreck. I met Vassallo in the vestry of St Paul's [Church], Valletta. He did not speak [about the subject]. Vassallo took part in the procession. I also took part. Fr G. Bugeja walked on my right.

February 11: On my way to the Seminary, looking for Vassallo to talk to him about the subject, I met him coming from Valletta. As I walked with him to the Seminary I asked him about the matter. He asked me to put down my plans in writing.

February 16: I went to the Seminary in search of Vassallo. I told him that I had not yet written anything but hoped I would soon be able to.

February 21: I wrote to Vassallo to tell him that I meant to satisfy his wish and put down my plans in writing. I told him that I had been trying to write, but had not yet been successful. Being the memorial of the Agony in the Garden, I urged him to pray.

February 22: Instead of mailing my letter, since I was in Valletta, I went to Vassallo's [house]. I told him that I was not yet ready to write what he had asked me to. I urged him to pray and told him that I was not going to bother him any more [about this matter]. But about two days later, upon reading Chaignon's meditation on the gospel of the next Sunday, (*Sexagesima* Sunday²⁵) I changed my mind.²⁶ 'The good thought is a seed that the Saviour plants in our heart.'²⁷

28 Febbraio: Ho scritto per la seconda

25. *Sexagesima* Sunday is the second Sunday before Ash Wednesday. The Gospel reading was Luke 8:4-15.

volta al Vassallo, dicendogli la mia idea, però la lettera non gliel'ho mandata.

9 Marzo: Sono stato dal Padre Ferrara gli ho narrato l'accaduto. Mi consigliò di fare quel che mi domandò Vassallo cioè di scrivere la mia idea e posare lo scritto sull'altare durante la Santa Messa.

14 Marzo: Mi son messo la terza volta a scrivere al Vassallo la mia idea e mi pare di essere riuscito - Oggi abbiamo recitato l'ufficio ebdomadale di S. Paolo.

29 Giugno: Per la festa dei S.S. Pietro e Paolo ho incontrato il Vassallo alla Cattedrale e mi fece sapere che l'8 Luglio sarebbero terminati gli esami al Seminario e perciò sarà libero di pensare e trattare sulla cosa.

31 Luglio: Sono stato a casa del Vassallo. (L'aveva cercato prima ma non l'aveva trovato.) Siamo tornati a parlare della cosa. Egli insistette perchè io scrivessi la mia idea. Mi propose di incontrarci con Don Gio. Batta. Zarb della Floriana per sentire il suo parere. Ho preso tempo.

<p. 9> 7 Agosto: Son tornato dal Vassallo; gli ho presentato la mia idea scritta.[†] Mi promise il suo aiuto, ma mi fece anche sapere che l'idea sua finale era di farsi sublacense, appena sarebbe stato libero. Intanto gli permisi di comunicare l'idea al Zarb. Vassallo mi ha anche consigliato di far parola col Canonico F. Bonnici. Sono stato dal Bonnici oggi ma non l'ho trovato.

17 Agosto: Sono stato dal Canonico

February 28: I wrote to Vassallo a second time, telling him about my plans, but I did not mail the letter.

March 9: I visited Fr Ferrara and told him what I had been going through. He advised me to act on what Vassallo had asked me to: to write down my plans and to place the letter on the altar during the celebration of Holy Mass.

March 14: For the third time I started writing to Vassallo about my plans. I think [this time] I have been successful. Today we prayed the [votive] weekday [Divine] Office of St Paul.

June 29: Being the feast day of St Peter and St Paul, I met Vassallo at the Cathedral. He told me that the exams at the Seminary finish on July 8. He will then be free to think and deal with the matter.

July 31: I visited Vassallo at home. (I had looked for him earlier, but I could not find him.) Once again we started to talk about the subject. He insisted that I should write down my plans. He suggested that we meet Fr Giovanni Battista Zarb, of Floriana, and ask for his opinion. I took some time [to act on this].

August 7: I went back to Vassallo and handed him my plans in writing. He promised to help me but he also told me that ultimately his plan was to [join the Benedictine monastery at] Subiaco, as soon as he was free [from the Diocese]. Meantime I gave him permission to speak to Zarb about my plans. Vassallo advised me to speak to Canon F. Bonnici. I tried to find Bonnici today, but could not find him.

26. Pierre Chaignon (1791-1883) was a famous French Jesuit. He was renowned for parish missions and conferences for the clergy. The first edition of 'Le prêtre sanctifié par la pratique de l'oracion' was published in 1858.

27. Once again the style of this entry indicates that De Piro was writing some time after the event.

Bonnici e gli ho raccontato la facenda. Egli mi ha detto che data l'indole del prete maltese troppo attaccato al paese natio; se ben mi ricordo, qualificò la mia idea impossibile, qualora non accadesse un fatto soprannaturale. Mi raccontò anche come aveva lavorato ad una cosa simile e che non gli era riuscito soggiungendo "forse non era la persona destinata dalla Divina Provvidenza." Mi consigliò di coltivare l'idea che il Signore forse mi farà incontrare con qualcuno. Intanto mi esortò alla preghiera e di non fare ulteriori passi ripetendomi il detto del Padre Gualandi "se son rose fioriranno."

24 Dicembre: A mezza notte passò agli eterni risposi il Canonico F. Bonnici. Sia pace all'anima sua!

†1) Una società di Missionari.

August 17: I visited Canon Bonnici and told him the whole story. He replied that since by nature Maltese priests were too attached to their native country - if I still remember well - he expressed his opinion that without divine intervention my plan would be quite impossible to achieve. He also told me how he himself had been unsuccessful in a similar project, adding: 'perhaps I was not the person chosen by Divine Providence.'²⁸ He advised me not to give up my plans; the Lord may help me meet someone [interested in this project]. He urged me to pray and not to go any further with my plans, repeating the saying used by Fr Gualandi: 'Only time will tell.'

December 24: Canon F. Bonnici died at midnight today. God rest his soul!



<p. 10> Pel presente non è facile il dire se debba essere regolare o secolare, però se coll'aiuto di Dio e della Vergine si arriverà all'erezione di corpo regolare, questo deve essere perfettamente tale e deve cercare il modo ed i mezzi di tenere a se aggregati il Clero Secolare.

2) Lo scopo principale, come indica il nome della Società, consiste nelle missioni estere.

3) Campi prossimi d'azione possono essere:

a) la Casa di S. Giuseppe

b) le colonie di Maltesi all'estero ed

1) A missionary congregation. At this stage it is difficult to say whether it should be regular or secular. If, with God's help and with the help of the Virgin [Mary], it is to become a religious institute, it should be fully so. It should however strive to find ways and means to associate with it members of the secular clergy.

2) As the name indicates, the primary aim of the congregation is the foreign missions.

3) Some closely related ministries could be:²⁹

a) St Joseph's Home;

28. Canon F. Bonnici had established the religious congregation called Brothers of Charity, whose aim was to look after St Joseph's Home, the boys' orphanage also founded by him. This congregation was short-lived and soon disbanded.

29. *Prossimo* literally means 'near,' hence the translation 'closely related' to the main aim just enunciated.

Il presunto non è facile il dire se
 debba essere regolare o secolare, più
 se coll' aiuto di Dio e della Vergine
 si arriverà all' eruzione di corpo rego-
 lare, questo deve essere perfettamente
 tale e deve cercare il modo ed i mezzi
 di tenere a se aggregato il Clero
 secolare.

2/ Lo scopo principale, come in-
 dica il nome della Società, con-
 siste nelle Missioni estere.

3/ Campi prossimi d'azione
 possono essere (a) la Casa di S. Mi-
 seppi (b) le colonie di Maltesi all'e-
 stero ed (c) a bordo le corazzate etc.

4/ Affidare la società al valido
 patrocinio di S. Paolo, dal quale
 prenderà il nome.

Joseph De Piro's Diary: The first draft of a constitution for the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*.

- c) a bordo le corazzate etc.
- 4) Affidare la società al valido patrocinio di S. Paolo, dal quale prenderà il nome.
- 5) Pel presente non fare voti ne giuramenti, però dobbiamo essere disposti a secondare la Volontà Divina con somma generosità. La nostra parola d'ordine deve essere, 'Sequar te quocumque ieris.'
- 6) Fare ogni anno gli Esercizi Spirituali di S. Ignazio di Layola.
- 7) Incontrarci almeno una volta al mese.
- 8) Incominciare la formazione di un capitale per contribuzioni mensili.
- b) Among Maltese migrants; and
- c) On board ships;³⁰ etc.
- 4) Entrust the congregation to the worthy patronage of St Paul, after whom it will be named.
- 5) At this stage [members] will not take any vows or promises, but with great generosity we must be prepared to submit to the Divine Will. Our password should be: 'I will follow you, wherever you go.'³¹
- 6) Every year [members] will do the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.³²
- 7) [Members] will come together for a meeting at least once a month.
- 8) [Members] will give a monthly [financial] contribution to establish a [monetary] capital
- <p. 11.> 18 Novembre: Trovandomi a Roma

1906

ed occorrendo oggi la dedizione delle Basiliche dei S.S. Apostoli Pietro e Paolo ho celebrate in S. Pietro in Vaticano e proprio all'altare di S. Pietro. Ho applicato la messa in onore dei S.S. Apostoli Pietro e Paolo pregando loro di farmi conoscere chiaramente la volontà di Dio ed aiutarmi a metterla in effetto.

November 18: As I was in Rome, and today being the feast day of the dedication of the Basilicas of the Apostles St Peter and St Paul, I celebrated [Mass] at St Peter's, in the Vatican, on the altar dedicated to St Peter. I celebrated the Mass in honour of the Apostles St Peter and St Paul, asking them to help me clearly understand God's will for me and to help me put it into practice.

30. Once again this is difficult to translate. *Corazzate* literally means 'battleships'. Was De Piro suggesting that members of his congregation should serve as chaplains on board the ships of the British Navy? Moreover, if (c) is read as an extension of (b) could one understand that De Piro intended members of his congregation to accompany migrants on their journey to the new country. In 1905 Mgr G. Coccolo established a society of missionaries for emigrants with this specific aim. It is also interesting to note that in 1910 Bishop La Fontaine suggested to De Piro to look into the work being done by Mgr Coccolo. (See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 7.

31. Dictionaries render *parola d'ordine* as 'password.' Others suggested 'marching orders.' I suggest that these translations do not convey the spirit of what De Piro is writing; the term 'motto' seems to be more accurate. In more recent terminology this verse could be called a 'Vision Statement' or 'Mission Statement.' See reflection on this verse on below, 59.

32. The Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola are again mentioned in each draft of the constitutions and in its final version.

22 Novembre: Arrivato a Malta sono stato dal Vassallo per affari della Visita Pastorale. Prima di separarci mi raccontò come durante la mia assenza ha avuto un abboccamento con Mons. Emmanuele Debono Direttore ed erede fiduciario della Pia Opera della Santa Missione; il quale gli ha espresso il suo desiderio di vedere l'opera formata in un corpo regolare. - Vassallo allora credette opportuno comunicargli la mia idea. E quindi il Canonico Debono gli esprimò il desiderio di avere un incontro con me per parlare della faccenda.

26 Novembre: Sono stato la prima volta da Mons. Debono. Mi ha dichiarato il suo desiderio di vedere formata in comunità l'Opera della S. Missione. Anche io gli ho accennato alla mia idea. Mi chiese se volessi formar parte come operaio nell'opera della S. Missione; gli ho risposto che ben volontieri; però essendo per malattia

<p. 12> inabile a predicare non ho avuto mai il coraggio di offrire l'opera mia. --- Mentre parlavo con Debono inquietitudine in famiglia.

5 Dicembre: Ho avuto un abboccamento con Vassallo.

10 Dicembre: Ho comunicato la cosa per la prima volta con D. Giorgio Bugeja. Prendo nota che mentre ci parlava siamo entrati in un negozio per vedere una statuetta di S. Paolo che D. Giorgio, doveva regalare.

11 Dicembre: Ho parlato col Vassallo.

November 22: Arriving in Malta, I visited Vassallo on issues dealing with [the Bishop's] Pastoral Visitation. Before I left he informed me that in my absence he had spoken to Mgr Emmanuel Debono, director and trustee of the Parish Mission Society.³³ [Debono] expressed his wish that this society be established into a regular body [of priests]. Vassallo realised this was a good opportunity to share with him my plans. Hence Canon Debono expressed his wish to meet me and speak with me about this matter.

November 26: I visited Mgr Debono for the first time. He expressed his wish to see the Parish Mission Society become a community [of priests]. I also shared my plans with him. He asked me whether I would like to become a member of the Parish Mission Society. I answered him that I would love to, but since due to my [previous] illness I was unable to preach, I have never had the courage to offer my services [for this ministry]. While I spoke with Debono [I became aware of some] anxiety in the family.³

December 5: I had a meeting with Vassallo.

December 10: For the first time I spoke about this matter with Fr George Bugeja. I note that while we spoke, we went into a shop to look at a statue of St Paul that Fr George wanted to buy as a gift.

December 11: I spoke with Vassallo.

33. The *Pia Opera della Santa Missione* was made up of a group of priests who organised parish missions. Two missions were offered, one for adults and one for young people. I am not aware of an official English name for this society, so for the purpose of this work I choose to call it 'Parish Mission Society.'

34. De Piro did in fact take up preaching as one of his ministries. See Guzeppi De Piro, *Predikatur Imheggeg Tal-Kelma l'Alla [An Enthusiastic Preacher of God's Word]*, vol. 3 (Rabat, Malta, 1987).

35. This last verse is very unclear.

1907

Gennaio 14: Sono stato da Mons. Debono per vedere se avesse qualche cosa di nuovo, gli ho domandato se avesse in mente qualche persona di quest'idea, mi rispose di no. Sono stato da D. Giorgio Bugeja abbiamo parlato a lungo e recitato insieme il Breviario, abbiamo fissato il primo incontro insieme nella Casa di S. Giuseppe Hamrun, pel giorno 19, l'indomani della festa del Naufragio di S. Paolo. La sera sono stato anche dal Vassallo D. Em.

Il 9 Gennaio Mons. Debono, trovandomi allora in ritiro spirituale a S. Calcedonio, mi chiese di fare da prefetto ai giovani durante il ritiro di Carnevale. Ho accettato; trovandomi in questo ritiro è venuto a trovarmi D. G. Bugeja, mi <p. 13> disse come aveva fatto la proposta ad un Sacerdote e che ha avuto una negative.

Gennaio 13: Sono stato da Bugeja D. G. alla casa di S. Giuseppe per dirgli della lapida del Canonico Bonnici che stava in via di esecuzione. Mi disse che il Sacerdote a cui aveva comunicato era un tale Mangion.

Febbraio 5: Ho raccontato la mia storiella a P. Scio. Egli mi ha incoraggiato. Mi ha menzionato Galea D. Paolo – Galea Naudi -- Busietta -- Bonnici D. Teodoro -- Agius D. Alfonso.

Febbraio 18: Sono stato in Valletta per la festa del Naufragio di S. Paolo.

January 14: I visited Mgr Debono to see whether he had any new information. I asked him if he had in mind any other person with this same idea. He answered negatively. I visited Fr George Bugeja. We spoke for a long time and then prayed the Breviary together. We decided to hold our first meeting at St Joseph's Home, on [February] 19, the day after the feast day of the Shipwreck of St Paul. In the evening I also visited Fr Emanuel Vassallo.

On January 9, while I was doing my spiritual retreat at San Calcedonio, Mgr Debono came looking for me. He asked me to look after the youth during the retreat during the Carnival [festivities].³⁶ I accepted. Fr George Bugeja also came to meet me during this retreat. He told me he had invited another priest [to join us] but had received a negative [answer].

January 13: I visited Fr George Bugeja at St Joseph's Home to inform him about the plaque that was being prepared in memory of Canon Bonnici. He told me that the priest he had spoken to was a certain Mangion.

February 5: I told my short story³⁷ to Fr Scio.³⁸ He encouraged me [to keep going]. He mentioned Fr Paul Galea, [Fr] Galea Naudi, [Fr] Busietta, Fr Theodore Bonnici and Fr Alfonse Agius.

February 18: I went to Valletta for the feast of the Shipwreck of St Paul. As I was

36. The last four days before Ash Wednesday. It is an old tradition to hold a retreat during these days.

37. *Storiella* has undertones of being a 'funny story.' Is De Piro using some humour here in his narrative?

38. Fr Enrico Scio sj was a member of the Jesuit community resident at San Calcedonio. See biographical note below, 87.

Terminato il panegirico uscendo dalla Chiesa per la via mi sono incontrato con D. Emm. Vassallo; egli mi disse come una settimana addietro Raggi gli aveva manifestato il suo desiderio di vedere istituito l'oratorio di S. Filippo Neri.

Febbraio 19: Sono stato alla casa di S. Giuseppe per il primo incontro per trattare della faccenda con D. Giorgio Bugeja. Dopo una lunga discussione abbiamo deciso di proporre l'idea a D. Paolo Galea ed a D. Roberto Caruana Gatto. Pel presente abbiamo deciso di proporre la formazione della comunità e di non far parola dei voti. Bugeja deve dire a Galea ed io a Caruana Gatto. Abbiamo anche deciso di non comunicare l'idea ad altri prima che ci fossimo intesi insieme.

<p. 14> Marzo 2: È morta mia Sorella Maria.

Marzo 10: Improvvisamente è morto Mons. Debono.

leaving the church after the panegyric, I met Fr Emmanuel Vassallo. He told me that a week before Raggi had shown him his wish to see established the oratory of St Philip Neri.

February 19: I went to St Joseph's Home for the first meeting with Fr George Bugeja to talk about the subject. After a long discussion we decided to talk about our plans with Fr Paul Galea and Fr Robert Caruana Gatto. At this stage we decided to speak [to them] only about the formation of a community, without any mention of [religious] vows. Bugeja will speak to Galea and I will talk to Caruana Gatto. We have also decided not to speak to any others about this matter before we met again.

March 2: My sister Maria died today.³⁹

March 10: Mgr Debono died suddenly today.

1908

Agosto 8: Per la prima volta ho parlato di questa faccenda con D. Giovanni Mamo.

Settembre 23: Mi sono incontrato con Mamo gli ho promesso di presentarlo a D. Giorgio Bugeja.

Settembre 25: Siamo stati da D. Giorgio Bugeja, io e Mamo; abbiamo parlato a lungo. Abbiamo in qualche modo promesso reciproco aiuto, e consigliato a Mamo di pensare a formare il suo Istituto a Vittoriosa nell'Oratorio di S. Filippo.

August 8: I spoke with Fr John Mamo for the first time about the matter.⁴⁰

September 23: I met Mamo and promised to introduce him to Fr George Bugeja.

September 25: Mamo and I visited Fr George Bugeja. We had a long discussion. We promised each other to try to help out each other. We advised Mamo to think about starting his [catechetical] institute, in the St Philip [Neri] Oratory in Vittoriosa.⁴¹

39. Joseph experienced the loss of six of his brothers and sisters. For information about his family, see table on below, 85.

40. Should one presume that there are a number of missing events between March 1907 and August 1908?

Settembre 26: È tornato da me il Mamo mi disse come aveva fatto parola all'Arciprete di Vittoriosa circa l'Istituto della Dottrina, e che l'aveva molto ben accolto.

Settembre 29: (S. Michael) Ho comunicato la mia idea per la prima volta a Sua Ecc. Mons. Pace; e gli ho chiesto se la benediceva. Rispose che non solo benediceva ma era pronto a contribuire il suo aiuto. Intanto mi disse che teneva una lettera sul proposito e che me l'avrebbe inviata.

3 Ottobre: Mons. Pace m'inviò la lettera, promessa, ed io l'ho trovata all'Istituto Fra Diego. Essa è la seguente:

September 26: Mamo came to see me. He informed me he had spoken about the catechetical institute to the Archpriest of Vittoriosa and that he had been very well received.

September 29: ([Feast of] St Michael) For the first time I spoke about my plans to His Lordship Mgr Pace. I asked him whether he would give me his blessings. He answered that he did not only give his blessing, but that he was also ready to give his help. He also told me that he had received a letter about this matter, and that he would send it to me.

October 3: As he had promised, Mgr Pace sent me the letter. I found it at Fra Diego Orphanage.⁴² The letter follows:



St. Joseph's Foreign Missionary College,
Mill Hill.
London N.W.

May 30, 1908.

Dear Father Innocent,

I have not forgotten the promise that I made to you a fortnight ago, when you were good enough to pay me a visit here accompanied by Mr Agius, to put my views upon paper with regard to the proposal of His Grace the Archbishop of Malta, to promote in some way the work of the Foreign Missions in his Grace's Diocese. Let me in the first place, repeat what I then said, namely, that I am delighted beyond measure to hear of this proposal of His Grace, and I shall pray that something practical may be the ultimate outcome of the matter. France, Spain, Italy, Germany, and even poor heretical England are all sending forth their sons into the Foreign Mission Fields of the Church Why should not Malta also take her place in that glorious work? It may be said Malta is too small ... but Malta is Catholic ...

<p. 16> vocations are prolific to the Priesthood ... and we may be quite certain of this, that if the Apostolic Missionary Spirit can be enkindled in the island, she will be the

41. Mamo stayed with De Piro until 1910 when he left him to start his own catechetical institute in Tarxien, Malta. See biographical note below, 87.

42. Joseph De Piro had been appointed director at Fra Diego Orphanage for girls on August 2, 1907.

Joseph De Piro

means of bringing salvation to innumerable souls now "sitting in the shadow of death," and her self-sacrifice in giving her sons to the glorious work, will bring upon the Island innumerable blessings from Almighty God.

To come to the practical point ... *Quid faciendum*? Should a beginning be made with Priests who are already ordained, or should the work be commenced with young boys in a college set apart for Foreign Missions. I am decidedly in favour of the latter course being adopted. Later on, when a college is opened, some Priests might volunteer to join, and they could then remain 8 or 12 months in the college to test their vocation, before being sent abroad to the Foreign Mission Field. I think the College should be an Episcopal Foundation, the appointment of the Rector and staff to be in the Archbishop's hands. I think also it should be a native foundation. I mean that it should be

<p. 17> Maltese in sentiment and character. I do not think a Foreign Congregation, such as our own, would have any chance of success, nor should I feel inclined to undertake such a venture. There must be the sympathy of nationality between the Superiors and the students ... that could not be if the Superiors were English and the students Maltese. Besides the question of national sympathy there is the question of language. Of course there could be no objection later on to have an English speaking Priest as one of the Professors, the English language being now-a-days of such importance throughout the world. If his Grace the Archbishop decides to begin the work, a small house would do very well for a commencement. Our work here was commenced by the late Cardinal Vaughan (then a simple priest) with one student and himself. And over 27 years ago, when I was sent to start our first Apostolic school, we commenced in abject poverty, sleeping on the floor on a little straw, not a stick of furniture in the house, and using our pocket knives to eat what little dinner we were

<p. 18> fortunate enough to get. So I am thoroughful in favour of a very humble and poor beginning.

If you need any service in giving any further information I shall be most happy to do so. If you write to the Archbishop, please present him with my most respectful homage and with kindest regards to your own good self.

Believe me

Yours sincerely in Christ

(signed) F. Henry

Superior General.

Alcuni giorni dopo la lettura di questa lettera ho proposto a Mons. Pace l'apertura di un simile Collegio. Egli mi disse che pel momento non era prudente avendo i P.P. Salesiani di recente iniziato un quid simile. Allora avendogli detto di

Some days after reading this letter I suggested to Mgr Pace to open a similar college. He answered that at present it would not be prudent to do so since the Salesian Fathers had just opened a school along these lines.⁴³ Having asked him

43. St Patrick School, Sliema Malta, run by the Salesians of Don Bosco, was opened in 1903. Bishop Pace was mistaken with regards to this school, that was not a missionary seminary but a boys' orphanage.

continuare a coltivare l'idea, egli riprese non solo coltivare l'idea ma che ci poteva cercare dei preti che volessero offrirsi.

whether one should continue to nurture this idea he replied that, not only should the idea be nurtured, but that one could also start looking around for priests who would be willing to be involved [in the project].

12 Dicembre: È stato da me il Mamo mi ha informato che il Professor Barbara è della nostra idea. Intanto io gli ho proposto un incontro per il giorno della Conversione di S. Paolo.

December 12: Mamo came to visit me and informed me that Professor Barbara was of the same opinion as us. Meanwhile I suggested that we should meet on the feast day of the Conversion of St Paul.

<p. 18> 22 Dicembre: È stato da me il Mamo. Egli dover informare il Prof. Barbara che io desiderava avere un incontro con lui.

December 22: Mamo came to visit me [again]. He is going to inform Prof Barbara that I wished to meet with him.

1909

15 Gennaio: Mentre in ritiro a S. Calcedonio insieme col Mamo sono stati a conferire col Barbara egli approvò l'idea.

January 15: During my retreat at San Calcedonio, Mamo and I met with Barbara. He agreed with our plans.

26 Gennaio: Sono stato dal Prof. Barbara. Gli ho comunicato che l'opera doveva incominciare colla vita in comunità. Egli approvò l'idea; stante sua madre però non poter promettere di prender posto. Però indicherà disposto di aiutare l'opera.

January 26: I visited Prof Barbara. I told him that the institute had to start with community life. He agreed, but since he was living with his mother, he could not promise to join us. Yet he was prepared to help the institute.

Luglio 29: Insieme con D. Giorgio Bugeja e con Don Giovanni Mamo sono stati a San Paolo a Mare per conferire sul quid agendum. Abbiamo deciso di non dire al Vescovo per il presente; di affittare una casa per iniziare l'istituzione catechistica.

July 29: Fr George Bugeja, Fr John Mamo and I went to [the seaside village of] St Paul's Bay to discuss how to proceed. At this stage we have decided not to inform the Bishop [about our plans] and to rent a house in order to start the catechetical institute.⁴⁴

Novembre 2: Il giorno dei Morti e primo Martedì del mese. Il Visitatore Apostolico Mons. La Fontaine è stato

November 2: The commemoration of all souls and the first Thursday of the month. Mgr La Fontaine, the Apostolic

44. On August 1, 1909, De Piro prepared a declaration to be signed by those who accepted to join the new congregation. See below, 52.

all'Istituto Fra Diego; durante il colloquio avuto con lui cadde il discorso sulla facenda delle Missioni estere. Gli comunicai la mia idea. M'incoraggi a presentare la domanda. Poco dopo ho comunicato l'idea con D. Giorgio Bugeja.

<p. 20> 3 Novembre: Ho scritto la domanda l'ho consegnata a D. Giorgio per firmarla essendo già firmata da me.

5 Novembre: Ho ritirato la domanda firmata anche da Don Giorgio.

8 Novembre: La domanda è stata firmata anche da Mamo.

11 Novembre: Ho preso la domanda dal Visitatore; è stato deciso di prendere anche la raccomandazione del Vescovo Mons. Pace.

12 Novembre: Avendo dimenticato alla Notabile la domanda per prenderla dal Vescovo; ed avendolo incontrato nella sagrestia dei Gesuiti, l'ho informato della facenda; promettendogli di portargliela domani.

Visitor, came to Fra Diego Orphanage.⁴⁵ During my meeting with him we spoke about missionary work in foreign lands. I told him about my plans. He encouraged me to present him with the plans in writing. Later on [during the day] I spoke about this to Fr George Bugeja.

November 3: I wrote out the letter and gave it to Fr George to sign. I had already signed the letter.

November 5: I picked the letter signed by Fr George.

November 8: The letter has also been signed by Mamo.

November 11: I took the letter to the [Apostolic] Visitor. It was decided to ask Bishop Mgr Pace to put down his recommendation.

November 12: Having forgotten the letter at Mdina, I could not take it to the Bishop. When I met [the Bishop] in the vestry of the Jesuit Church [in Valletta] I told him about the matter and promised to bring him the letter tomorrow.⁴⁶

45. In 1909 Bishop (later Cardinal) Mgr Pietro La Fontaine (1860-1935) was an Apostolic Visitor to the Diocese of Malta. The relationship between De Piro and La Fontaine continued for a very long time, as can be testified by the number of letters between the two. See biographical note below, 87.

46. The Diary ends abruptly here! For the sake of completion, a report about the meeting with La Fontaine and the letter handed to La Fontaine have been included in this book, see below, 41-43. See also 'The Primary and Secondary Aims of the Society of St Paul: Work in ad gentes Countries and among the Maltese expatriates,' below, 63-74.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



Bishop Pietro La Fontaine, Apostolic Visitor to Malta in 1909, a great benefactor of Joseph De Piro and his new missionary congregation.

Joseph De Piro



The Qrendi holiday house belonging to the De Piro family. After his return from Davos in March 1904, Joseph De Piro took up residence here to continue his recovery.

SECTION 2

Letter presented by Joseph De Piro, George Bugeja and John Mamo to the Apostolic Visitor Bishop Pietro La Fontaine in November 1909 to be forwarded to Pope Pius X.¹

Beatissimo Padre

Noi sottoscritti umilmente prostrati ai piedi di Vostra Santità domandiamo il permesso di iniziare l'istituzione di una società religiosa allo scopo di formare dei Missionari particolarmente ed in primo luogo per le colonie di Maltesi all'estero.

(firmati) Sac. Giuseppe De Piro
D. Giorgio Bugeja
Diac. Mamo Giovanni

Most Holy Father,

We the undersigned, humbly throwing ourselves at your feet, ask your permission to start a religious congregation with the aim of forming missionaries, [to work] especially and primarily among Maltese living in foreign countries.

(signed) Fr Joseph De Piro
Fr George Bugeja
Deacon John Mamo

Commendo pro Gratia

Datum Vallettae Die 15 Nov 1909

(f) P. Archiep. Epus. Melitae.

I favourably recommend.

Given in Valletta
the 15th day of November 1909

(signed) Peter Pace
Archbishop, Bishop of Malta²

1. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 5.

2. The Bishop of the Diocese of Malta was given a personal title of Archbishop. Hence they always signed: Archbishop NN, Bishop of Malta. Malta became an Archdiocese in 1944.

Article by De Piro about his meeting with La Fontaine

In the 1932 edition of St Paul's Almanac of the Institute for Missions Joseph De Piro wrote the following article regarding his meeting with Bishop Pietro La Fontaine.

... Kien infatti tnejn u għoxrin sena ilu, meta l-Kardinal La Fontaine kien qiegħed Malta bħala Visitatur Apostoliku illi aħna u nithadtu miegħu fl-Istitut ta' Fra Diegu, u ftit qabel ma nfridna minnu, staqsiena għandniex x'ngħidulu xi ħaġa oħra, barra mill-ftit affarijiet illi kienu jinteressaw 'l-Istitut ta' Fra Diegu. U aħna, allura, għamilna l-kuraġġ, u għidnielu bil-ħsieb tagħna fuq l-Istitut tal-Missjoni, li kien ilu jhabbat ġewwa moħħna. Ma ħalliniex ngħidulu l-kliem kollu tagħna, u minnufih wriena li huwa kien qiegħed japprova, bil-qalb kollha, dak illi aħna għidnielu u mhux biss, iżda offra ruħu biex jgħinna kemm jista', u żied qalilna biex nipprezentawlu d-Domanda bil-miktub.

Malli bisnielu jdejh u ħallejnieh, aħna ħassejna 'l Alla magħna dak il-ħin, u huwa wkoll aktar minn darba qalilna illi dik il-laqgħa magħna, kienet kollha kemm hi providenzjali.

Aħna ma tlfniex żmien, ħażżejna d-domanda, għaddejnieha minn għand l-Isqof tagħna, allura Mons Pace, u ħadniehielu.

Wara ftit taż-żmien, hekk kif konna mixhutin b'marda qawwija tad-deni, waslitilna t-twegiba għal kollox favorevoli, u kienet għalina ta' faraġ mhux ftit, għax kienet imsieħba mil-barka tal-Qaddis Papa Piju X.

... Twenty-two years ago, when Cardinal La Fontaine was in Malta as Apostolic Visitor, we met with him at Fra Diegu Orphanage. At the end of the meeting, just before he departed, he asked us whether there was anything else we would have liked to tell him, apart from the few issues concerning the orphanage. Picking up courage, we shared with him our deep seated desire to start a missionary congregation. He did not even let us conclude what we were saying; he immediately showed us that he was happy to approve our plans. He also offered to help us as best as he could. He therefore asked us to hand him a copy of our plans in writing.

When we had kissed his hand and left him, we became aware of God's special presence with us. On a number of other occasions [La Fontaine] also often expressed his opinion that the meeting between us had been providential.

Without wasting any more time we put ourselves to the task of writing down the requested letter, presented it to our Bishop, Mgr Pace, and handed it [to La Fontaine].

Some time later, while we were in bed with a strong fever, we received a very positive answer [to our letter]. This was for us a source of great joy as with [La Fontaine's letter] we also received a blessing from the Saintly Pope Pius X.

Malli erfajna rasna minn fuq l-imhadda, middejna għonqna għax-xogħol; ħsibna għall-ftuħ tad-Dar fejn kellu jibda l-Istitut il-ġdid tal-Missjoni, u t-tletin ta' Ġunju tal-1910, id-Dar, diġa mbierka f'it qabel minn Mons Isqof Pace, bdiet ix-xogħol tagħha.

As soon as we felt strong enough to get out of bed, we started working on this project. We inaugurated the house where the new missionary congregation was to start and on June 30, 1910 this house, blessed a few days earlier, by Bishop Mgr Pace, started producing fruit.

Discernment notes written by Joseph De Piro.

The next few pages reproduce notes from two discernment exercises prepared by Joseph De Piro. These exercises form part of a prayerful reflection helping De Piro better understand God's will for him. We know of three of these exercises: the first was written some time around May 8, 1898, the second in the beginning of the 1901-1902 scholastic year, and the third in December 1901 during his retreat in preparation for the diaconate. Only two of these discernment exercises have survived.

After his father's death Joseph felt he was now free to pursue his priestly vocation. Some time around May 1898, as a help to reach this decision, he listed the reasons in favour and against this decision. This led him to the conclusion that God wanted him to leave the law course he was taking at the University of Malta and start preparing for the priesthood. This is the first set of discernment notes that has survived, and is reproduced below.

At the beginning of the 1901-1902 scholastic year De Piro wrote in his Diary: *"During the short spiritual retreat that is customarily done in the Capranica at the beginning of the scholastic year, I examined the reasons in favour and against, whether I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home after finishing my studies. With Fr Gualandi's help I have decided in the affirmative, having first obtained, however, the Bishop's permission."* De Piro was trying to understand whether his wish to take up residence at St Joseph's Home was God's will for him or not. This decision was also linked with his dream of starting a missionary congregation. This is the second discernment process we know of, but the notes from this discernment have not yet come to light.

Some time later De Piro again wrote in his Diary: *"On December 11, 1901, I started the spiritual retreat prior to receiving the order of the diaconate. During this retreat I examined all the reasons, in favour and against, enrolling at the Academy and staying at St Joseph's Home. The result was against my going to the Academy and in favour of taking up residence at St Joseph's Home."* This time De Piro was also faced with another option: that of continuing his studies at the Ecclesiastical Academy and forming part of the Church diplomatic services, with the possibility of even becoming a bishop. Although his Bishop was encouraging him along this path, De Piro felt this was not God's will for him, hence the need for the third discernment process, confirming his determination to take up residence at St Joseph's Home. The text of this third discernment process has survived and is reproduced here.

Together with his Diary, the notes from these two discernment processes give us an insight into De Piro's life of prayer and how he strove to understand God's will for him in his daily life.

Discernment notes about De Piro's vocation.

<u>Ragioni Pro</u>	<u>Reasons in favour [of becoming a priest]</u>
1. L'aver da fanciullo questa vocazione fino quasi al quattordicesimo anno.	1. Having felt this calling from an early age almost until age fourteen. ¹
2. Non essersi tale vocazione in me per lungo tempo spenta negli susseguenti di mia vita.	2. That in the following years this calling was not forgotten for a long time.
3. Fino a che non si fece più viva in me, nel principio dell'estate passato, quando per primo la confessai al mio confessore.	3. Until, after sharing it with my confessor for the first time at the beginning of last summer, I became more strongly convinced about this calling. ²
4. La meditazione della morte. Sento che questo è il vero stato a cui sono vocato.	4. The meditation on death. ³ [Upon reflecting on my life] I feel that this is the true condition to which I am being called.
5. Il desiderio di darmi tutto a Dio avendo Egli tanto sofferto pei miei peccati.	5. The desire to give myself totally to God; He who suffered so much for my sins. ⁴
6. Il desiderio di camminare sulla via della perfezione, e così non temere la morte, anzi considerarla come il mezzo che ci reca alla vera felicità.	6. The desire to walk in the way of perfection and not to be afraid of death, but rather to think of death as the means by which I can reach true happiness.
7. L'aver letto in S. Alfonso de Liguori che egli era uscito dal mondo a 26 anni, ma sarà beato colui che ne uscisse prima.	7. Having read in [the book by] St Alphonsus de Liguori that he had left the world at the age of 26, but happy is he who leaves it at an earlier age. ⁵
8. L'aver dopo riflessione trovato essere questo lo stato più confacente alla mia natura.	8. Having concluded, after a long reflection, that this is the lifestyle that best suits my character.

1. At age fourteen Joseph had approached his father asking his permission to study for the priesthood. His father thought young Joseph was not suitable for this calling.

2. 'Last summer' refers to May-June 1898.

3. This could be a reference to the meditation upon death in the Spiritual Exercises week 1.

4. This reason is repeated in the discernment carried out in December 1901, in determining to go to St Joseph's Home.

5. Looking at life as a lay person as against a life of total commitment to God in the priesthood.

Joseph De Piro

- | | |
|--|--|
| 9. La malattia di mio fratello. | 9. My brother's illness. ⁶ |
| 10. La morte di mio padre. | 10. My father's death. ⁷ |
| 11. Il sentirmi dover essere felice in questo stato, in tutte le controversie quali fin ora m'incontrai in questa vita. | 11. The feeling that I should be happy in this lifestyle, [considering] all the issues that I have already had to face in this life. ⁸ |
| 12. Il giorno 8 Maggio '98, dopo una novena alla V. di Pompei in cui la chiesi di farmi conoscere la vera volontà di Dio: sentii la forza di decidere pel bene, cioè in favore allo stato sacerdotale. | 12. On May 8, 1898, after [praying] the novena to Our Lady of Pompeii, during which I asked her to help me recognise God's will for me, I felt the strength to decide for the better - that is in favour of becoming a priest. |

Ragioni Contro

Reasons against [becoming a priest]

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1. L'istinto animalesco alla vita coniugale; | 1. The animal instinct [drawing me] towards married life; |
| 2. e perciò il timore che durante la mia vita celibe; nella lotta tra lo spirito e la materia abbia questa ultima il sopravvento. | 2. and hence the fear that in my celibate lifestyle, in the fight between spirit and flesh, the latter should win. |

6. His brother Berti was very sick at this time. He died on May 13, 1899.

7. Joseph saw his father's death on January 10, 1898, as clearing the way for him to follow his priestly vocation.

8. As in footnote 3 above: life as a lay person.

Discernment notes by De Piro about whether to go to St Joseph's Home or the Academy.

ACCADEMIA

Ragioni Pro

1. Alcuni di famiglia desiderano che io andassi, e si son offerti perfino di pagarmi parte della rata.

2. Lo stesso Presidente dell'Accademia si è portato dal Rettore, e gli ha espresso il desiderio che io andassi.

Ragioni Contra

1. Perchè all'Accademia, finchè io sappia, non ci vanno che quelli, i quali possono vantarsi una buona nascita.

2. Perchè all'Accademia, mi si mette, come a dire, in mostra, per aver qualche posto; mentre è dottrina certissima che Gesù predilige coloro, qui ament nesciri. E siccome Egli allorchè determinò di eleggermi per suo ministro seppe trovarmi tra il numero dei peccatori: così adesso se Egli ha deliberato di me qualche altra cosa, a fortiori saprà trovarmi nel numero dei suoi eletti, e non è necessario che io mi metta avanti e cercar di farmi conoscere coll'andar all'Accademia.

THE ACADEMY

Reasons in favour

1. Some family members would like me to enrol in the Academy and have even offered to pay part of my fees.

2. The President of the Academy himself has visited the Rector [of the Capranica] expressing his wish that I enrol at the Academy.

Reasons Against

1. Because, as far as I am aware, only those [seminarians] who can boast of a noble birth [choose to] enrol at the Academy.¹

2. Because, by enrolling at the Academy, it will be like putting myself on display, in order to be chosen for some [higher Ecclesiastical] position; while it is certainly a sound teaching that Jesus chooses those who are humble. And since when He decided to choose me as His minister He looked for me among sinners, so also now, if He has determined for me some other role, He should know to look for me among His chosen ones. It is therefore not necessary for me to make myself known by going to the Academy.²

1. The term used by De Piro, *di buona nascita*, literally means 'of good birth.' I translate it as 'belonging to a noble family by birth,' which De Piro could himself boast of. I suggest that De Piro's emphasis here is on the word 'boast.' Although he never rejected his nobility, De Piro never boasted about it and lived a humble and poor lifestyle.

3. Se recogito peccata mea, non mi trovo degno che di bastonate; altro che prelature e posti diplomatici!!!.. è già infinitamente troppo se arrivo ad essere Sacerdote.

4. In fatto di intelligenza non risplendo. Finora ho tirato avanti. Quando il Signore mi chiamò allo stato ecclesiastico mi trovava al primo anno di legge all'Università di Malta. Adesso faccio il terzo di Teologia alla Gregoriana. L'esame per il baccellato è andato maluccio, da tre voti ho avuto due col vix; perciò tra quel che è in me ed il rigore degli esami, la speranza di ulteriori gradi è molto ridotta. In Diritto Canonico forse ci riesco di più.

5. Siccome generalmente nelle mie communioni una delle prime grazie che chiedo al Signore, è appunto quella di farmi conoscere la sua volontà, credo che il rifiuto motivato, mi sia stato da Lui suggerito.

6. Perchè mi metto in pericolo di desiderare posti, cariche ed onori; et qui vult periculum peribit in illo.

7. Mentre all'incontro, col rifiutare di andare all'Accademia mi son messo al sicuro dal desiderare e molto più dal

3. If I consider my own sinfulness I find that the only thing I deserve is a good beating and not prelatures or diplomatic positions! It is already infinitely more [than I can ever wish for] if I manage to become a priest.

4. Considering my intellectual capabilities [I acknowledge that] I am not bright. Up to now I have managed. When the Lord called me to the priesthood I was in my first year, studying law at the University of Malta. Now I am in my third year theology at the Gregorian [University]. I did very badly in the final exams for the Bachelor [in Theology]: I barely scraped through in two out of the three exams.³ Therefore, considering my abilities and the rigours of sitting exams, my hope of achieving higher [University] degrees is greatly reduced. I might do better if I study Canon Law.⁴

5. Since usually after Communion one of the first graces I ask the Lord is that to help me understand his will, I believe that this justified objection [to enrol at the Academy] has been suggested by Him.

6. Because I will be putting myself in the danger of wishing for important [Ecclesiastical] positions, roles and honours, and those who look for danger will perish in it.⁵

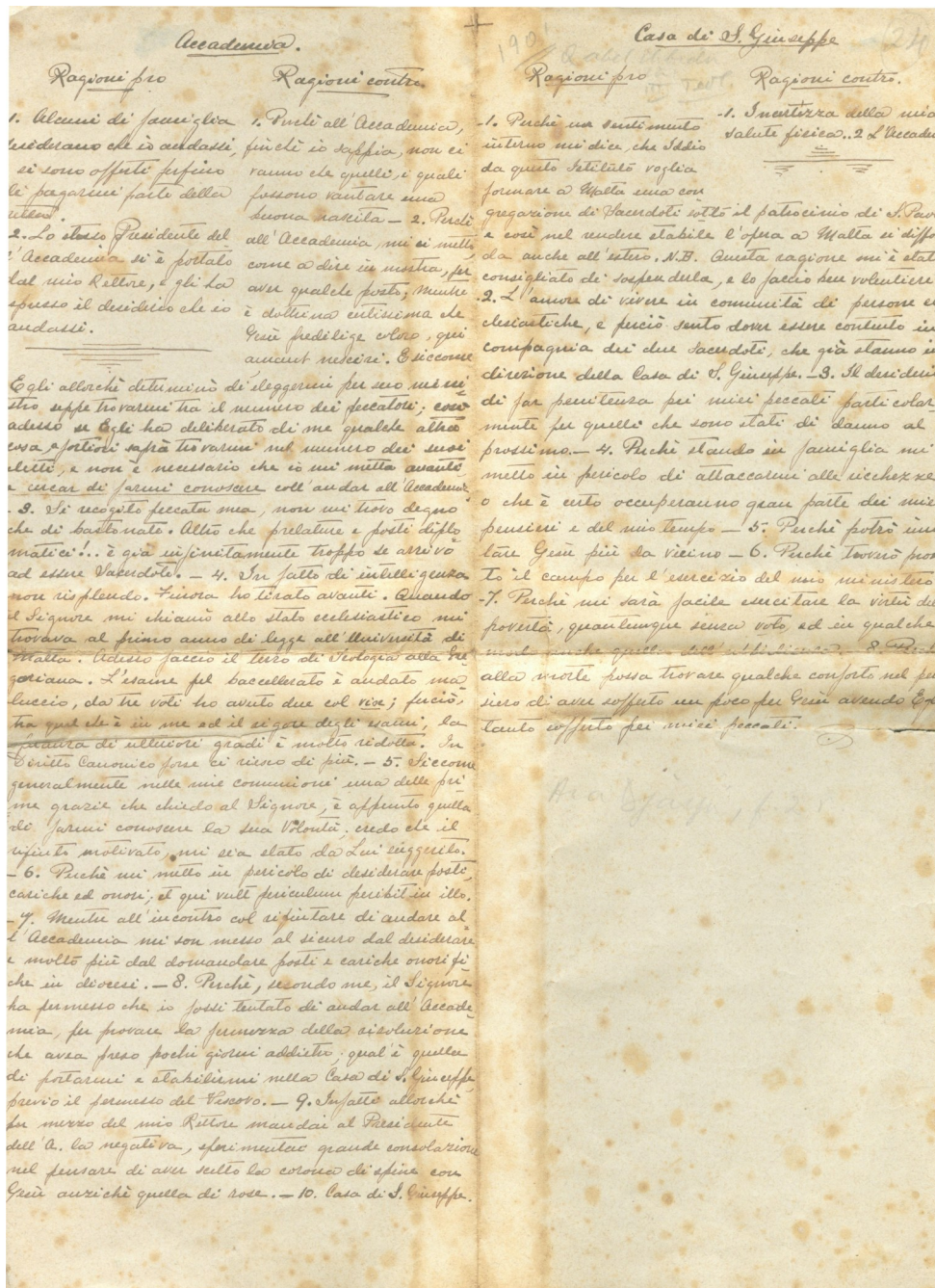
7. While, on the contrary, by refusing to enrol at the Academy, I will have protected myself from the possibility of

2. Joseph is aware that a number of the priests who studied at the Pontifical Ecclesiastical Academy are chosen to become bishops and occupy higher Ecclesiastical roles. De Piro's reference to God's 'chosen ones' is a clear reference to God's predilection for the poor. De Piro wants to be found among the poor, a clear choice between living in riches and living in poverty.

3. Joseph received his S.Th.B. on July 10, 1901.

4. From a letter to his mother, we know that De Piro had plans to study Canon Law after his ordination. *Letters to his relatives*, vol. 1, 4.

5. A reference to Ecclesiasticus 3:26: *Cor durum male habebit in novissimo; et, qui amat periculum, in illo peribit.* - "A stubborn mind will fare badly at the end, and whoever loves danger will perish in it." (NRSV)



Joseph De Piro's notes, written as part of his discernment process deciding whether to go to the Academy or to St Joseph's Home.

domandare posti e cariche onorifiche in diocesi.

8. Perchè, secondo me, il Signore ha permesso che io fossi tentato di andare all'Accademia, per provare la fermezza della risoluzione che avea preso, perchè giorni addietro, qual è quella di portarmi e stabilirmi nella Casa di San Giuseppe previo il permesso del Vescovo.

9. Infatti allorchè per mezzo del mio Rettore, mandai al Presidente dell'Accademia la negativa, sperimentai grande consolazione nel pensare di aver scelto la corona di spine con Gesù anzichè quella delle rose.

10. Casa di San Giuseppe.

wishing for, and more so from asking for honorary positions and roles in the diocese.

8. Because I think that the Lord has allowed me to be tempted with the prospect of enrolling at the Academy in order to strengthen in me the decision I had taken some days earlier, to take up residence in St Joseph's Home, having obtained the Bishop's permission.⁶

9. In fact, once I had asked the Rector [of the Capranica] to convey to the President of the Academy my refusal [to enrol at the Academy], I felt great consolations when I considered that I had chosen a crown of thorns with Jesus, rather than one of roses.

10. St Joseph's Home.

CASA DI SAN GIUSEPPE

Ragioni Pro

1. Perchè un sentimento interno mi dice, che Iddio da questo Istituto voglia formare a Malta una Congregazione di Sacerdoti sotto il Patrocinio di San Paolo; e così nel rendere stabile l'Opera a Malta si diffonda anche all'estero.

N.B. Questa ragione mi è stata consigliata di sospenderla, e la faccio ben volentieri.

ST JOSEPH'S HOME

Reasons in Favour

1. Because an inner feeling tells me that from this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests under the patronage of Saint Paul, and that after having established itself in Malta, it will also spread itself into foreign lands.

N.B. At this stage I have been advised to set this reason aside, and I do so very willingly.⁷

6. A reference to the discernment done a few months earlier at the beginning of the 1901-1902 scholastic year. See reference to this in the Diary.

7. In the entry under 1901-1902 Joseph De Piro informed us that during a retreat done in October 1901 he had decided to take up residence at St Joseph's Home for this reason. Fr Gualandi told him to put this reason aside for the time being. He still included this reason in this second discernment process about the subject.

- | | |
|---|--|
| 2. L'amore di vivere in comunità di persone ecclesiastiche e perciò sento dover essere contento in compagnia dei due sacerdoti, che già stanno in direzione della Casa di San Giuseppe. | 2. The love of living in a community of priests. I feel I should be happy living in the company of the two priests, directors of St Joseph's Home. |
| 3. Il desiderio di far penitenza pei miei peccati particolarmente per quelli che sono stati di danno al prossimo. | 3. The desire to do penance for my sins, especially for those that have offended my neighbour. |
| 4. Perchè stando in famiglia mi metto in pericolo di attaccarmi alle ricchezze; o che è certo occuperanno gran parte dei miei pensieri e del mio tempo. | 4. Because [knowing that] if I live with my family, I would be putting myself in the danger of being attracted to wealth, or at least that material concerns will certainly occupy a large part of my time and considerations. |
| 5. Perchè potrò imitare Gesù più da vicino. | 5. Because [in this way] I can follow Jesus more closely. |
| 6. Perchè troverò pronto il campo per l'esercizio del mio ministero. | 6. Because [in this way] I will be guaranteed an area where I can exercise my priesthood. ⁸ |
| 7. Perchè mi sarà facile esercitare la virtù della povertà; quantunque senza voto, ed in qualche modo anche quello dell'ubbidienza. | 7. Because it will be easier for me to live the virtue of poverty, even if I do not profess a vow [of poverty], and in some ways even [the virtue of] obedience. |
| 8. Perchè alla morte posso trovare qualche conforto nel pensiero di aver sofferto un poco per Gesù avendo Egli che ha tanto sofferto pei miei peccati. | 8. So that on my deathbed I may be able to find some comfort in knowing that I would have suffered a little for Jesus' sake, He who suffered so much for my sins. |

Ragioni Contro

1. Incertezza della mia salute fisica.
2. L'Accademia.

Reasons Against

1. The uncertainty [caused by] my [poor] physical health.
2. The Academy.

8. At a time when the number of secular or diocesan priests in Malta was quite high, a priest was not always sure of being assigned a ministry. Lacking a ministry, many priests occupied teaching positions in schools. Forming part of St Joseph's Home would guarantee that Joseph had a ministry to carry out.

Declaration to be signed by members of the new congregation.

In 1909, together with George Bugeja and John Mamo, Joseph De Piro was inviting priests to join his new venture. Meanwhile he prepared this short declaration, presumably to be signed by those priests who accepted to join.¹

1 Agosto 1909.	August 1, 1909
In Nome del Padre, del Figliuolo e dello Spirito Santo, Così sià.	In the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.
Promettiamo innanzi a Dio, alla Beata Vergine Assunta in Cielo ed a San Paolo Apostolo di formar parte della Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo appena ottenuta l'opportuna autorizzazione dalla Santa Sede.	In the presence of God, of the Blessed Virgin Assumed in Heaven and of St Paul the Apostle, we promise to join the Little Society of St Paul as soon as the required authorisation is obtained from the Holy See.
Scopo della Compagnia è quello di formare dei Missionarii ed inviarli ove occorrono.	The aim of the Society is the formation of missionaries and to send them wherever it would be deemed necessary.
La Compagnia considererà come proprio il libro degli Esercizi Spirituali di S. Ignazio di Loyola dal quale estrarrà le proprie regole e costituzioni.	The Society takes as its own the book of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, from which it derives its own rules and constitutions.

1. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 6.

SECTION 3

A study of Joseph De Piro's mystical experience in Davos, Switzerland.¹

Fr Tony Sciberras mssp

*Davos – The mystical experience.*²

For this study one needs to compare De Piro's stay in Rome Italy with his stay in Davos Switzerland. During his 48 months in Rome (July 10, 1898³ – ca. July 10, 1902⁴), De Piro wrote at least 57 letters to his mother, more than one each month⁵. During the 18 months spent in Davos (August 4, 1902⁶ – February 13, 1904⁷), De Piro seems to have written only one postcard to his mother.⁸

To the above mentioned postcard from Davos, one can add only a few words the Servant of God wrote in his Diary: *"As I waited to get better, I continued to nurture the plans I have matured in me for so long. But amidst the icy Alpine mountains, so far from the land where I hoped to realise my dreams, I was left with nothing but prayer - my most intimate friend. And I prayed, prayed and prayed."*⁹

Due to this lack of documentation, and therefore very little information, one may easily pay only little attention to our Founder's stay in Switzerland. But in fact the 18 months spent there have to be considered as a most important phase in the life of De Piro. It can be considered as our Founder's mystical experience.

Before his time at Davos De Piro had to experience a number of detachments

- In order to become a priest, among other things, Joseph had to abandon the nobility, the riches and important roles in the Maltese society, the law profession, an important rank in the *Maltese Militia* and drawing.
- In the beginning of his studies he had planned to spend some nine years (studying) in Rome.¹⁰
- As a seminarian he gave up a diplomatic career and therefore even the possibility of being ordained archbishop.

1. Adapted from Tony Sciberras, *A Journey of Love. Love generates Love. A fertile celibate Love*, (Malta, 2011), 72. Printed with permission.

2. For another good presentation of De Piro's Davos experience, see Martin Galea mssp, *Discernment of Our Founder's Life*, (Malta: unpublished essay). About mystical experiences see J. Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, (London, 1980), 122-135; R. Garcia Matteo, *Teologia Spirituale*, (Rome, 2007), 48-49.

3. See letter dated 14.07.1898 in *Letters to his relatives*, vol 1, 1-2.

4. See above, 24.

5. De Piro could have in fact written more letters. 57 is the number of letters that have come to us through the years.

6. See above, 24.

7. See above, 24.

8. See *Letters to relatives*, vol 1, 81a.

9. Above, 24.

10. See *Letters to relatives*, vol 1, 4.

This detachment was rewarded by:

- He struggled in his studies!¹¹
- He became sick on July 19, 1900, after finishing his second year in Rome, his first year theology.¹²
- On March 15, 1902, he was ordained priest. He was 25 years of age, a dreamer (creative), with a lot of initiative (charismatic), and much to look forward to.
- On July 10, 1902, he felt sick a second time. This time his illness was serious: *"Declared by the doctor as being pulmonary tuberculosis ..."*¹³
- Therefore, he could not return to Malta and go to St Joseph's Home to help the other two priests who were taking care of the orphans ... for which apostolate De Piro had already abandoned a diplomatic career, etc. This must have been very disheartening for Joseph: *"On July 10, [1902], I started to feel sick for the second time. (The first time was on July 19, 1900.) I saw all my good intentions vanish. Fiat! [Your will be done!] The Lord accepts my good intentions."*¹⁴

About his experience in Davos he wrote:

*"As I waited to get better, I continued to nurture the plans I have matured in me for so long. But amidst the icy Alpine mountains, so far from the land where I hoped to realise my dreams, I was left with nothing but prayer - my most intimate friend. And I prayed, prayed and prayed."*¹⁵

An analysis of the Davos experience.

"... I continued to nurture the plans I have matured in me for so long."

During his second summer holidays from Rome (1900), Joseph visited Frs E Vassallo and G Bugeja, at St Joseph's orphanage.¹⁶ De Piro spoke to Vassallo about his wish to accompany him at the orphanage after he had finished his seminary formation. Vassallo advised Joseph not to think about until after having finished his studies.¹⁷ This advice was similar to that already given him by Fr V. Sammut sj.¹⁸ Here Joseph added: *"I note here that, even though I had not told [Vassallo] my reasons for wanting to form part of this Home, he added: 'Maybe you could be the originator of a congregation of priests in Malta.'"*¹⁹ This means that during his second year in Rome De Piro was already thinking about the foundation of a society!

11. See above, 48.

12. See above, 24.

13. Above, 24.

14. Above, 24.

15. Above, 24.

16. See above, 19.

17. See above, 20.

18. See above, 20.

19. Above, 20.

De Piro also wrote that he in fact stopped thinking about going to St Joseph's Home. Two years later, Fr Gualandi again advised Joseph not to think about what to do after his priestly ordination.²⁰ Again De Piro obeyed the spiritual director's advice. At the same time the fact that two years after talking to Vassallo and Sammut, De Piro mentioned the congregation of priests to Gualandi meant that he had not stopped thinking about St Joseph's Home and the Society completely. It seems he was quite convinced that God wanted this project.

During the fourth scholastic year in Rome (1901-1902) Joseph wrote also: *"One of the reasons that persuaded me that I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home has been the following: 'Because an inner feeling tells me that from in this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests under the patronage of St Paul, and that after having established itself in Malta, it will also spread itself into foreign lands.'"*²¹

"But amidst the icy Alpine mountains ..."

A desolate atmosphere: cold, monotonous, silent, solitude, loneliness, boredom.

"... so far away ..."

Again lonely, only with himself

"... from the land ..."

- Far from home, relatives, familiar environment ... from his security.
- Far from the place where he could get anything necessary, material or otherwise, for the foundation of the Society.
- Far from the country where he could meet priests who would accept joining him in the Society.

"... where I hoped to realise my dreams, ..."

The psychological atmosphere: It is quite clear that Joseph De Piro was a great dreamer, he was very creative. At the same time he had great initiative; he was very pragmatic and energetic. Without doubt, after he was ordained priest on March 15, 1902,²² and then while in Malta for his first solemn high mass, Fr Joseph had a great enthusiasm, re: his pastoral future and the foundation of the Society. At the same time when *"the doctor informed me that I had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis ..."* he undoubtedly felt discouraged, helpless and void; he felt being kept back from concretising his project.

20. See above, 22.

21. Above, 21.

22. See above, 23.

"... I was left with nothing ..."

For the Founder the project seemed impossible to actuate, at least at that particular moment:

- With no physical surroundings or environment to support him, as he was away from Malta;
- With no familiar people to support him – no relatives or priests with whom he could share his project and invite to join in;
- With no personal health, strength, energy to rely on because he was seriously sick.

Fr Joseph hit rock bottom! He had nothing else on to rely on!

"... except prayer ..."

The only thing in his power was to pray; to cultivate his union with the Lord. Therefore in fact he was not alone! He was alone with the alone. His was again eloquent silence. His was again a strong weakness.

This being of De Piro with the Lord (in prayer) reminds me of the calling of the Twelve as recorded by Mark 3:13-14: *"He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons."* Cardinal Martini highlights the fact that when the Lord called the Twelve to be his disciples, he first called them to be with him. It was then that he sent them out to proclaim the message.²³

The stay in Davos and his being there with the Lord, could have also helped him to be more purified, to be more prepared, to feel that he was the recipient of the charism and not its originator.

Was he in this way being assured that from then on he was doing God's work (what God wants) and not working for the Lord (what De Piro wanted for the Lord)?²⁴ It is quite clear that since this early stage of the conceptualisation of the Society, De Piro already believed that it was the Lord who was in fact founding the Society and not himself. This had been a truth that Joseph had already expressed when still a seminarian. Some time during the scholastic year 1901-1902, he wrote in his Diary that *"One of the reasons that persuaded me that I should take up residence at St Joseph's Home has been the following: 'Because an inner feeling tells me that from this orphanage God wants to establish in Malta a congregation of priests under the patronage of St Paul, and that establishing itself in Malta, it will also spread itself into foreign lands."*²⁵ But it seemed there had to be more purification.

23. See Carlo Maria Martini, *L'itinerario spirituale dei dodici*, (Rome, 1980), 37-43, especially 41-42.

24. See Thomas H. Green, *Weeds among the wheat*, (Indiana, 1984), 70-71.

25. Above 20.

“ – my best soul mate – ”

De Piro did not write company (*compagnia*), but soul mate or female companion (*compagna*). Perhaps the emphasis is not on the female gender of *compagna*; it is probably feminine because in Italian prayer is female. Emphasis must rather be laid on the intimacy implied by the word “*compagna*”: the one with whom the Founder shared his life.

“... and I prayed, prayed and prayed.”

De Piro declared in writing that he entrusted his project in the Lord’s hands.

On his return to Malta from Davos

The first person with whom De Piro shared his plans after his return back to Malta from Davos was Fr Emmanuel Vassallo, the director of St Joseph’s orphanage. This was on January 16, 1905.²⁶ Vassallo did not discourage De Piro, but at the same time he did not seem too enthusiastic about the project.²⁷ Yet the contacts between De Piro and Vassallo continued.²⁸ On February 11, 1905, Vassallo suggested to the De Piro to put down his plans in writing.²⁹ On February 22, 1905, De Piro wrote this in his Diary: “*Instead of mailing my letter, since I was in Valletta, I went to Vassallo's [house]. I told him that I was not ready to write what he had asked me to. I urged him to pray and told him that I was not going bother him any more [about this matter]. But about two days later, upon reading Chaignon's meditation on the gospel of the next Sunday, (Sexagesima Sunday) I changed my mind. 'The good thought is a seed that the Saviour plants in our heart'*”.³⁰

De Piro tried twice to write down his plans, but was unsuccessful. On the third attempt he succeeded in doing so.³¹ At the same time he kept contact with Vassallo.³² On August 7, 1905, Fr Joseph met Vassallo and gave him the project in writing:

1) A missionary congregation. At this stage it is difficult to say whether it should be regular or secular. If, with God's help and with the help of the Virgin [Mary], it is to become a religious institute, it should be fully so. It should however strive to find ways and means to associate with it members of the secular clergy.

2) As the name indicates, the primary aim of the congregation is the foreign missions.

26. See above, 26.

27. See above, 26.

28. See above, 26-28.

29. See above, 27.

30. Above, 27.

31. See above, 28.

32. See above, 28.

Joseph De Piro

3) Some closely related ministries could be:

- a) St Joseph's Home;
- b) Among Maltese migrants; and
- c) On board ships; etc.

4) Entrust the congregation to the worthy patronage of St Paul, after whom it will be named.

5) At this stage [members] will not take any vows or promises, but with great generosity we must be prepared to submit to the Divine Will. Our password should be: 'I will follow you, wherever you go.'

6) Every year [members] will do the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.

7) [Members] will come together for a meeting at least once a month.

8) [Members] will give a monthly [financial] contribution to establish a [monetary] capital.³³

33. Above, 29-31.

‘I will follow you wherever you go,’ the Founder and the Incarnational aspect of his Spirituality.

Fr Tony Sciberras mssp

The Lord went.

“Our password should be: ‘I will follow you, wherever you go.’” Members of the Missionary Society of St Paul are quite familiar with this phrase, which the Founder writes in his ‘diary’ on August 7 1905 when he is discerning what his society should look like.¹ On reading this phrase I was struck by the question: ‘Where did the Lord go?’ The Lord has chosen to live among us humans: “*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory*” (Jn 1:14)² In this essay I will delve deeper into this phrase and discuss the extent to which Joseph De Piro followed in Jesus’ footsteps.

“**And the Word ...**” That is: the Word of God, God himself.

“**... became ...**” This implies that God is not simply putting on a new outfit. He does not pour his divinity into a new container. This is a new way of being.

... And yet God does not divest himself of his Godhead; he retains all that he has been up to now.

“**... flesh ...**” John does not use the word *ανθρωπος* (*anthropos* - man – human) but *σάρξ* (*sarx* – *flesh*). The term ‘flesh’ refers to the context, the human condition: God is born, grows and dies, carrying all the human limitations, frailty and weakness.³

John the evangelist wants to emphasise that when God the Word became flesh he remained God; he did not give up his divinity. His divinity makes it possible for the Word to take on human flesh; being God he can afford to undergo the gradual human process of being born, growing into adulthood and dying, taking on all the human limitations, frailty and weakness involved in being human.

Only one who starts from a position of strength can ever risk reducing his position; the person with a healthy image of self could afford to humble oneself. Conversely the person who is weak is incapable of humbling himself and will probably never be able to do so; one who is unhealthy will go to great lengths to preserve what little strength he has. Without excluding a person’s physical abilities, speaking about strength and health within this context, one is referring primarily to a person’s psychological, moral and spiritual aptitudes.

It is not at all surprising that when God became flesh he did not lose anything from what he already was. As a matter of fact I disagree with expressions like: ‘to give up

1. Above, 31. See also the accompanying footnote.

2. NRSV translation of the Bible. See 1Jn 1:2; 4; 2Jn 2:7. See also Jn 3:16.

3. See Ps 40:1; Lk 2:7; 3:38; 4:22; Rm 1:3; 8:3; 9:5; 2Co 5:21; 8:9; Phil 2:7f; Heb 2:9; 5:8; 10:5-9; Rev 12:5.

Joseph De Piro

one's life for the other's sake,' 'to forget oneself for the sake of the neighbour,' or 'to die for others.' I believe it would be more scripturally correct to say: *'to gain one's life through the other,' 'to discover oneself in the other,' 'to live through the other.'*

"... and lived among us ..." According to the Gospel of John, God does not become flesh for a limited period of time, but to stay with us permanently.

"... and we have seen his glory, the glory as of the Father's only son, full of grace and truth." The Word does not become flesh simply to enjoy life as a human being. Through his own glory the Word glorifies, saves and sanctifies the nature he assumes through the Incarnation. Becoming flesh the Word retains the glory that was his before the Incarnation and through him human nature is saved.

How did Joseph De Piro follow Jesus?

1. A Priest dedicated to the Local Church.

1.1 As he ministered in the two parishes of Qrendi (1904-1907) and Gudja (1922) and every time he was invited to do so, by his preaching De Piro proclaimed the Wisdom of God to all those who were thirsting for the Good News.

1.2 Through the celebration of the sacrament of Reconciliation he often helped those who approached him to taste the Lord's mercy.

1.3 Many were the recipients of De Piro's charity when he supported them in their distress and provided them solace or material aid.

1.4 During the time he spent in the Qrendi parish De Piro became so sensitive to the needs of his brother priests that he felt the need to offer them support in their own personal spiritual development. Although the project never took off, he had already planned a number of conferences for the priests of the neighbouring parishes.

1.5 In 1915, during the First World War, De Piro accepted Archbishop Mauro Caruana's request to help transition the newly ordained priests as they left the protected life of the seminary and entered ministry in the different parishes.

1.6 Between 1918 and 1920 De Piro was rector of the Mdina Diocesan Major Seminary. His concern for the seminarians led him to recognise the need of a stronger academic formation which included lectures in the social sciences. He also provided them with a stronger spiritual formation. De Piro's sincere interest in the life of the seminarians led him to encourage the bishop to provide for the seminarians' basic needs, challenging the bishop to have the courage to close down his seminary if he could not afford to provide better food and a more decent lifestyle at the seminary.

1.7 As Dean of the Cathedral Chapter, responsible for the running of the Mdina Cathedral School, he interested himself in the working conditions its teachers. He increased their wages and improved their conditions at work.

2. A loyal Citizen towards his Country.

2.1 In the aftermath of the riots of *June 7, 1919*, being a loyal Maltese citizen sincerely concerned for his co-nationals, De Piro set aside all his other duties and joined a small group of members of the National Assembly (1918-1921) and spent three days in Valletta commuting between the different offices, in an effort to attain a more decent lifestyle for the Maltese people.

2.2 De Piro always believed that the human person had more value than any political programme or issue. While ensuring that the rights of the Church were respected, he was instrumental in brokering peace between Lord Gerard Strickland and the local Church authorities.

2.3 During his tenure as a member of the Third Maltese Parliament, he intervened only once, when the Parliament was discussing a law that could negatively affect young women employed in taverns, where they were often subjects of great abuse.

3. Father of the Poor and Orphans.

3.1 At this death, Joseph De Piro was the Director of five orphanages: Fra Diegu Orphanage, Hamrun (1907-), St Joseph Home, Santa Venera (1922-), Jesus of Nazareth Orphanage, Zejtun (1922-), St Joseph Orphanage, Ghajnsielem Gozo (1925-) and St Francis of Paula Orphanage, Birkirkara (1929-). De Piro meticulously looked after the administration of these five orphanages till the very end. Moreover he shared in the life of these orphan children and youths like one of them; identifying their needs and greatly improving their condition.

3.2 De Piro gave the orphans a good Christian education, supplied them with the necessary food and clothing, provided them with a strong academic, technical and cultural education, and ensured they had enough time and means for their leisure.

3.3 As Director of the orphanages De Piro's concern went beyond those who lived in the institutions under his care. He regularly kept in touch with those who had left the orphanages, often offering them help in their various needs. Frequently these young men and women were not after financial or material help; De Piro offered them assistance in trying to find a wife or a husband.

3.4 De Piro was often in direct contact with the families of the boys and girls under his care. He frequently offered them financial help or intervened to resolve a family quarrel.

3.5 Apart from his ministry in the orphanages, De Piro helped and offered solace to many others who requested his assistance in one circumstance or another.

4. A committed Missionary.

4.1 Joseph De Piro was immensely committed to helping the people living in Malta and Gozo through his ministry as a priest; nevertheless he felt that his ministry had to go even further. Moved by his living of the Word of God, De Piro became aware that many peoples still lacked an essential element: the proclamation of the Good News. He therefore founded the Society of St Paul for foreign missions.

4.2 While he sent the first member of his society to work in Ethiopia, the Founder constantly insisted that his society had to offer its ministry primarily to those Maltese living overseas. During his time as Secretary to Archbishop Caruana, he became hugely aware of the needs of the Maltese emigrants.

The Primary and Secondary Aims of the Society of St Paul: Work in *ad gentes* Countries and among the Maltese expatriates.¹

Fr Tony Sciberras mssp

Date	Steps taken
January 16, 1905	De Piro shares his project with Fr Emmanuel Vassallo, Director of St Joseph's Home, Malta. Vassallo tells De Piro to put his project in writing.
August 7, 1905	De Piro presents his project in writing: " <i>3) Some closely related ministries: a) ... b) Among Maltese migrants; c)....</i> " ²
December 10, 1906	De Piro speaks about his project with Fr George Bugeja, the successor of Fr Vassallo. Bugeja offers to help.
August 8, 1908	De Piro speaks about the project with Fr John Mamo. Mamo accepts to help.
November 2, 1909	De Piro meets Bishop Pietro La Fontaine at Fra Diegu Orphanage and speaks to him about the project. La Fontaine encourages De Piro and tells him to put it down in writing, to be presented to the Pope.
November 3, 1909	The petition is written and signed by De Piro. Bugeja and Mamo add their names to it.
November 15, 1909	The Bishop of Malta, Archbishop Peter Pace, puts his recommendation on the petition. In this petition De Piro presents the evangelisation of Maltese expatriates as primary aim of his future Society: " <i>... a religious congregation with the aim of forming missionaries, [to work] especially and primarily among Maltese living in foreign countries.</i> " ³
January 27, 1910	Bishop La Fontaine keeps his word and presents the petition to the Pope. He tells De Piro that the Pope blesses the project. La Fontaine adds that: " <i>It seems to me that this work should be fashioned similar to Mgr Coccolo's project for the Italian migrants. It would also be advisable to consult with Fr Vella sj, who, having lived for a long time among the Maltese living in Greece, could give you some handy hints.</i> " ⁴

1. Adapted from Tony Sciberras, *The Incarnational Aspect of the Spirituality of Joseph De Piro*, Unpublished STD dissertation (Rome, 2005), 538. Printed with permission.

2. Above, 21.

3. Above, 31.

4. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 7.

Joseph De Piro

- June 6, 1910 De Piro, together with Bugeja and Mamo, write to the Bishop of Malta, Mgr Peter Pace, asking him the permission to open a house for the Society: "...[this house] will be used as a residence for the members of a religious congregation with the aim of forming missionaries, [to work] especially and primarily among Maltese living in foreign countries."⁵
- June 12, 1910 The Bishop accepts this petition, opens and blesses the house. In his inaugural speech De Piro says: "*This occasion is for us both a great consolation as well as an embarrassment. We approach Your Grace to ask you to bless this 'Little House of St Paul' and declare it open. This house will be used as a residence for the members of a religious congregation with the aim of forming missionaries, [to work] especially and primarily among Maltese living in foreign countries.*"⁶
- June 30, 1910 As expected, the Founder informs his benefactor La Fontaine about this step forward. La Fontaine answers De Piro on June 30, 1910. After encouraging Fr Joseph, La Fontaine assures him that: "*[The members of your society] will be of great benefit to the good Maltese people, living away from their fatherland.*"⁷
- June 30, 1910 On June 30, 1910, after its opening and blessing, the '*Piccola Casa di San Paolo*,' welcomed the first two members.
- June 9, 1911 De Piro asked Bishop La Fontaine for a blessing from Pope Pius X. On June 9, 1911 La Fontaine writes to a certain Mgr Bressan, an official at the Vatican, and asks him for this blessing. La Fontaine speaks of De Piro's Society as being: "*...a pious association of priests and catechists with the aim of dedicating themselves to ministry among the strong colonies of Maltese [emigrants] in Corfu and in Tripoli.*"⁸
- June 30, 1914 De Piro asks Mgr Angelo Portelli, Auxiliary Bishop and Apostolic Administrator of the Diocese of Malta, the permission for the members of his Society to wear a habit. To this petition De Piro attaches: "*An Outline of the Rules governing the Insitute for Foreign Missions.*" As regards the aim of the Society the Founder was quite clear: "*2. The aim of this Little Society will be to help peoples... particularly and primarily Maltese living away from their fatherland....*"⁹

5. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 5.
6. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 13.
7. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 15.

8. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 22.
9. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 25.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



San Calcedonio retreat house in Floriana, where Joseph De Piro often did his annual retreats.



Fra Diego Orphanage for girls. Joseph De Piro was appointed director of this orphanage on August 2, 1907. He met Bishop La Fontaine in this orphanage.

- December 3, 1915 It has already been said that on June 30, 1910 two young men had joined De Piro's Society, John Vella, one of these, was preparing for the priesthood. Five years later, as Vella approached the minor orders, the Founder writes to Pope Benedict XV asking permission for his seminarian to be ordained with the 'Title of Missions.' The answer from the side of the Vatican already indicates doubts about the principal aim of the Society: *"An extract from the letter by Dr Giuseppe Sebastiani, Apostolic Envoy, dated December 3, 1915. Concerning the faculty to ordain the seminarian John Vella with the 'Title of Missions,' the Sacred Congregation [of the Sacraments] would like some information about the Institute of the Little House of St Paul for Foreign Missions, whether it depends from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide and whether this permission has been previously requested."*¹⁰
- January 4, 1916 Joseph De Piro answers Sebastiani: *"In reply to your most appreciated letter dated December 3, 1915, concerning my request to present the young seminarian John Vella for ordination with the 'Title of Missions,' I would like to clarify that: ... 2) He is primarily intended to minister among those Maltese living away from their homeland and deprived of spiritual support; 3) That the Institute does not depend from the Congregation of Propaganda Fide; and that 4) This is the first time such a request is being made."*¹¹
- February 8, 1916 Sebastiani writes back: De Piro's Society was being considered by the Holy See as having been set up exclusively to minister among Maltese migrants: *"An extract from the letter by Dr Giuseppe Sebastiani, Apostolic Envoy, dated February 8, 1916. Concerning the seminarian John Vella's petition to be ordained with the 'Title of Missions, I regret to inform you that the Congregation of the Sacraments, seeing that the Institute of the Little House of St Paul only concerns itself with sending missionaries to minister among those Maltese living away from the island, and not for other missions and non-Christian peoples, has refused to grant the requested privilege for the ordination."*¹² This was the first of a series of setbacks experienced by De Piro in regard to the canonical approval of the Society, this was caused by his mentioning the evangelisation of Maltese migrants as the Society's main aim.

10. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 29.
11. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 30.

12. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 29.

June 30, 1916

De Piro writes to his friend and benefactor Archbishop Pietro La Fontaine, now Patriarch of Venice: *"The Sacred Congregation of the Sacraments, after requesting and obtaining information regarding the Institute, has answered in the negative. The reason given is that the Institute is only meant for missionaries among the Maltese, and not for other non-Christian peoples."*¹³ De Piro does not stop here. Although he considered the answer of the Congregation of the Sacraments as negative, it offered him an opportunity to better explain to La Fontaine his intention regarding the aim of the Society. Although evangelisation among Maltese migrants was not the main aim of the Society, he was quite clear that he did not want to abandon this aim: *"As you can see from the document enclosed with this letter, when I say primarily, I do not intend to exclude [other missionary activities], as is being presumed by the Sacred Congregation. If only the Missionary Institute could in future have the honour of sending its missionaries to work among non-Christian peoples and in the entire world! But as Your Grace could well understand, it would be very imprudent on our part to even nurture a similar plan. Moreover I had wished that the Title for the ordination be that of Mission to further instil the missionary ideal in the mind and the heart of these young men. You who now have a good idea of Malta would be well aware of how strongly attached to their native country the Maltese people are. You would therefore understand that [here] the concept of foreign missions does not find fertile soil and has to be nurtured separately."*¹⁴

July 28, 1916

La Fontaine writes back to De Piro. In this letter the Patriarch of Venice indicates that he believed the Society was established to minister among the Maltese migrants. He could have only got this impression from his discussions with De Piro, who expressed so much love for the evangelisation of the Maltese living in other countries: *"I advise you that in order to obtain the ordination to the subdiaconate of your young missionary with the 'Title of Mission,' you need to explain briefly and clearly the workings, aims and statutes of the Little Society, mentioning the great benefits that the missionaries are carrying out among Maltese Catholics overseas, and how they are earning their daily bread. You will need to address this account and your kind petition directly to the Holy Father."*¹⁵

13. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 31.

14. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 31.

15. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 33.

- August 22, 1916 De Piro acts on La Fontaine's recommendations and writes to Pope Benedict XV. Although he is keen on getting the 'Title of Mission' for the ordination of his first priest, and is aware that mentioning the ministry among Maltese migrants would hinder this, he still speaks about this apostolate in his letter to the Pope: "... the Institute for Foreign Missions, founded in 1910 especially and primarily for those Maltese living away from the Island"¹⁶ Even Archbishop Mauro Caruana, the Bishop of Malta, who writes his recommendation at the end of De Piro's letter to the Pope, refers to this apostolate of the Society among Maltese migrants: "... that in the future could not but be of the greatest benefit to the Maltese living overseas"¹⁷ It is obvious that Archbishop Caruana is reflecting what he had been told by De Piro himself!
- November 17, 1916 Fr William Bonett sends two undated letters to De Piro. De Piro replies after the second letter reminding Bonett of the difficulty of the Maltese diocesan priests to leave their native country and minister in foreign lands. Moreover the Founder indirectly promises Bonett help from among the members of his own Society: "...when you celebrate Mass do not forget to always pray for our nascent Institute for Foreign Missions, hoping that finally the Lord will permit us to harvest some of the fruits of all our efforts and sacrifices. One of the seminarians has now started [studying] theology, I will be admitting another to [start studying] philosophy and there are others in high school. Hopefully [this Society] will eventually reach even Australia, but at this stage, even though the Institute is still quite small, it involves a lot of hard work and a great deal of patience. Support us, therefore, with your prayers. Perhaps some day you will see working with you a young missionary from the Little Society of St Paul. It is also my great desire to see our pious Third Order Franciscan Sisters open a house in Australia. I think this could also be of great spiritual benefit to the Maltese colony, hoping it would right the damage you lamented about in your last letter to His Grace. It seems to me that it would be of great profit if they could teach some catechism. There are many among them who know the English language well enough and who, after a short time there, would be able to speak it well."¹⁸

16. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 37.
17. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 38.

18. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 46.

- November 25, 1916 Although Mgr Vassallo did not join De Piro in the establishment of the Society, he was of great help to his old friend in its first years. De Piro had received a Rescript from the then Congregation of the Sacraments. In it were some expressions which neither De Piro nor Vassallo could understand. On 25 November 1916 Vassallo writes to Don Archangelo Bruni, one of his friends in Rome, asking for a clarification. In this letter Vassallo writes: "*Mgr De Piro, with the permission of [the late] Mgr Pace, of good memory, started this pious association in order to help those Maltese living overseas. He never intended and does not intend to send his missionaries to minister exclusively among the Maltese, but also among other peoples who have the need of priests. The primary aim of the Congregation is however those Maltese living overseas.*"¹⁹
- December 20, 1918 Fr John Mamo had been one of the two priests helping De Piro to start the Society, but after a short while he had left the Founder in order to work on his own project. The Congregation of Propaganda Fide asked the Bishop of Malta for information about Mamo and about his initiative. Auxiliary Bishop Angelo Portelli writes to the Congregation in the name of Archbishop Caruana about Mamo. After addressing the Congregation's query, Portelli also mentions De Piro's Society. Propaganda Fide shows interest in this and requests more information. Portelli informs De Piro about this and asks him to supply the requested information.
- March 10, 1919 De Piro writes to Portelli and in the section about "*The Development*" he puts down: "*The Society of St Paul the Apostle is a Society of Missionaries ... it aims to minister among those peoples who lack ministers of the Gospel, starting with the Maltese living away from their country*"²⁰
- January 7, 1919 This information is sent to Propaganda Fide and the Prefect of the Congregation, Cardinal Van Rossum, answers with an encouraging letter to Portelli. He also asks the Auxiliary Bishop whether De Piro intended to bind the members with the religious vows. De Piro discusses this issue in a number of letters to the Congregation forwarded through Bishop Portelli. During this discussion the difficulty of whether the Society was one for *ad gentes* countries or for Maltese migrants, a difficulty which the Founder had already dealt with, crops up again. Van Rossum writes: "*Firstly, Mgr De Piro needs to further clarify the aim of the Institute. In the letter sent by Your Lordship it is stated that the Institute 'aims to minister among those peoples who lack*

19. MSSP *At the Time of the Founder*, 48.

20. MSSP *At the Time of the Founder*, 84.

Joseph De Piro

ministers of the Gospel, starting with the Maltese living away from their country, etc.” To place the ministry among Maltese living overseas as a principal aim could hinder the development of this Institute. Missionary institutes set themselves the aim of spreading the Good News among non-Christian peoples, either in the entire world or in a particular region. Thus one can find missionary institutes to evangelise the African peoples, the Chinese people, etc. As Your Lordship can see Mgr De Piro would fit in this category if, as I believe he would, he accepts this change. I will send him the statutes of [other] missionary congregations on which to model the rules [of his Institute]. When this is done, Your Lordship would be able to receive from the Holy See the required authorisation to erect this Institute canonically.”²¹

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| April 9, 1920 | De Piro decides to go to the Congregation of Propaganda Fide in person and speak directly with Cardinal Van Rossum. According to a letter sent to La Fontaine, De Piro was in Rome on the April 9, 1920. From later correspondence we know that he met the Prefect of the Congregation. He had the impression that things had been clarified. ²² |
| May 18, 1920 | The Bishop of Malta, Archbishop Mauro Caruana, sends more information to Propaganda Fide. This is obviously supplied by De Piro himself. The ministry among Maltese migrants is once again mentioned: “ <i>Canon Joseph De Piro, from the Diocese of Malta, prostrating himself to kiss the Holy Purple [Cassock], humbly states that, having been received and encouraged by His Eminence Pietro La Fontaine, then Apostolic Visitor of this diocese, and reassured by the Apostolic Blessing of His Holiness Pius X, of holy memory, established a religious congregation in 1910, with the aim of [ministering in] foreign missions, starting with supporting those Maltese living away from their own country.</i> ” ²³ |
| July 26, 1920 | In spite of De Piro’s personal visit to Van Rossum in Rome, and Caruana’s letter of May 18, 1920, Propaganda Fide fails to see the <i>ad gentes</i> aim of the Society. The Founder receives another letter from the Congregation. On behalf of the Prefect of the Congregation, Mgr Camillo Laurenti, informs De Piro that in future he will have to contact the Congregation for Religious: “ <i>I would have been very happy to deal with your case if your Institute had the aim of evangelising among non-Christians, but</i> |

21. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 95.

22. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 110-111.

23. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 103.

seeing that the aim of your Institute is to offer spiritual support to those Maltese living away from their own country Henceforth, for [the requirements] of your society you will need to resort to the Sacred Congregation of Religious.”²⁴

August 18, 1920

The Founder is shocked by the letter from Propaganda Fide, but in his written reply, still does not say that he has changed his mind about the evangelisation of the Maltese migrants: *“I have already explained that by starting from offering spiritual support to the Maltese overseas I did not exclude the evangelisation among non-Christians, but rather that in this way the young congregation, having grown stronger by getting used to the [new] country, is better prepared to move into the bigger field of [ministering in] non-Christian countries”²⁵*

On this same day De Piro also writes to Don Archangelo Bruni, another friend and official at the Congregation of the Sacraments. De Piro begs Bruni to look into the difficulties encountered with Propaganda Fide. In this letter De Piro writes: *“Without any initiative on my own part, but only by the disposition of Divine Providence, I got in touch with the Congregation of Propaganda Fide Since this Institute has as its aim the evangelisation among non-Christians, but that for evident reasons starts its ministry among Maltese [migrants]. Moreover in Africa, where there are a number of Maltese colonies, there are also many non-Christians, and I believe that Egypt is still under the jurisdiction of the Congregation of Propaganda [Fide].”²⁶*

September 16, 1920

Bruni acts on De Piro's request and communicates his findings to De Piro: *“The difficulty for Propaganda to approve the Institute lies in the fact that the Institute is not directly aimed at the conversion of non-Christians, but for those Maltese living overseas. Hence, in accordance with the new Code [of Canon Law] the approval has to come from the Sacred Congregation for Religious.”²⁷*

November 18, 1920

In the letter written to De Piro on July 26, 1920, Mgr Laurenti had offered that Propaganda Fide would recommend the Founder and the Society of St Paul to the Congregation for Religious. In his letter dated August 18, 1920, De Piro had accepted this offer. Propaganda writes to the Congregation of Religious and presents De Piro's Society as one for the Maltese migrants: *“The undersigned Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda informs His Eminence that some years ago Canon*

24. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 105
25. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 110.

26. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 111.
27. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 112.

Joseph De Piro

Joseph De Piro has established in Malta an Institute for foreign missions with the name of 'LITTLE HOUSE OF ST PAUL.'

His intention is to form this Institute into a religious congregation with simple vows. This Sacred Congregation took an interest in this [Institute] presuming that the founder intended to establish a society totally and entirely missionary in aim. Moreover, having Propaganda invited the Rev Canon De Piro to better clarify the aim of this Institute, he has declared that he intended first of all to minister among Maltese living overseas and then, in future, to work for the conversion of non-Christians. Therefore this Sacred Congregation has informed the praiseworthy Canon that such an institute did not fall under the competence of Propaganda, which is only concerned with works and institutes directly and exclusively dedicated for the evangelisation of non-Christians, and that therefore he had to direct himself to the Sacred Congregation for Religious.

In a letter dated August 18, De Piro has expressed his displeasure at having to terminate his correspondence with the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. It was his hope that through this connection [with Propaganda] the missionary spirit [among the members of his society] would grow stronger. He then goes on to explain in more detail the aim [of his society] saying that the ministry among the Maltese is meant to help [the members of] the new institute acquaint themselves with the country. The proper aim [of the institute] is always that of evangelising non-Christians.

The undersigned Cardinal exposes this whole picture and asks Your Eminence to decide on the merits of Canon De Piro's wish for his institute, intended to minister among the Maltese and to evangelise non-Christians, to be dependant on the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda. [The undersigned Cardinal] moreover recommends this young institute to your goodwill since it seems reasonable to hope that it will bear good fruit for the benefit of souls."²⁸

November 27, 1920 The Congregation for Religious informs Cardinal Van Rossum that De Piro's Society was accepted by that Congregation, because: "... the work of evangelisation among non-Christians, which is the aim the Founder wishes to achieve, seems at this stage to be quite distant while the immediate aim is that of ministering among Maltese living overseas."²⁹

28. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 116.

29. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 118.

- February 4, 1921 The Congregation for Religious writes also to the Bishop of Malta, Archbishop Mauro Caruana, informing him that the next step for De Piro's society was not its approval by the Holy See, but by him as the Local Ordinary.³⁰
- February 14, 1921 It seems Archbishop Caruana was not prompt in passing Propaganda's letter of February 4, 1921 to De Piro. De Piro writes again to Don Archangelo Bruni asking him whether he had to ask Propaganda Fide or the Local Ordinary for the canonical erection of his Society.³¹ On the same day Caruana also writes to the Holy Father asking him the permission for two other members of De Piro's Society to be ordained with the '*Title of Mission*.'³² This last letter of Caruana might have been passed on directly to the Holy Father by Don Bruni.
- March 11, 1921 Don Bruni writes to De Piro and informs him that: 1) the permission for the ordination with the '*Title of Mission*' for two of the members of his society had been granted and that 2) from then on De Piro had to communicate with the Congregation for Religious.³³ This second note meant that the Vatican still considered the Society as set up to minister among Maltese migrants!
- April 10, 1921 Encouraged by Bruni's letter dated March 11, 1921, and by the letter from Propaganda Fide dated February 4 of the same year, the Founder writes to Archbishop Mauro Caruana asking him to declare the *Society of St Paul* a religious congregation. In this petition De Piro still said that the aim of the Society was: "... *foreign missions, starting with ministry among Maltese living away from their fatherland.*"³⁴ To this letter De Piro attaches an "*Outline of the Rules of the Society of St Paul.*" In this outline he is once again very explicit: "*It aims to minister among those peoples who lack ministers of the Gospel, starting with the Maltese living away from their fatherland*"³⁵
- November 14, 1921 The Bishop of Malta canonically erects the Society of St Paul. He also instructs the Founder to: "*present to us, within six months, the full, extensive and complete Statutes or Constitutions that will govern the above mentioned Society.*"³⁶

30. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 120.
31. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 122.
32. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 121.
33. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 123.

34. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 124.
35. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 125.
36. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 126.

Joseph De Piro

November 10, 1922 De Piro presents the rules governing his Society.³⁷ In a note accompanying these rules, the Founder explains that these rules: “... taken as a whole, do not necessarily cover every aspect in an exhaustive way ...,” but “in substance they outline the true character of the Society.”³⁸ This declaration is especially true with regards to the apostolate of the Society among the Maltese migrants. In the section entitled “*Prospetto*” De Piro writes that the aim of his Society is to: “... save souls in those countries that lack evangelical ministers ... Starting with the Maltese colonies abroad.”³⁹

37. See *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 129.
38. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 129.

39. *Regole Della Compagnia di San Paolo: Fascicolo I-III* ([Malta], 1988), fasc. 1, p. 1, para 6, 12.

The Genesis of the First Constitutions of the Missionary Society of St Paul. (Documentation.)¹

Fr Tony Sciberras mssp

August 7, 1905. From the De Piro's 'Diary'

"I went back to Vassallo, [and] handed him my plans in writing"

"1) A missionary congregation. At this stage it is difficult to determine whether it should be regular or secular. If, with God's help and with the help of the Virgin [Mary], it is to become a religious institute, it should be fully so. It should however strive to find ways and means to associate with it members of the secular clergy.

2) As the name indicates, the primary aim of the congregation is the foreign missions.

3) Some closely related ministries could be:

a) St Joseph's Home;

b) Among Maltese migrants; and

c) On board ships; etc.

4) Entrust the congregation to the worthy patronage of St Paul, after whom it will be named.

5) At this stage [members] will not take any vows or promises, but with great generosity we must be prepared to submit to the Divine Will. Our password should be: 'I will follow you, wherever you go.'

6) Every year [members] will do the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola.

7) [Members] will come together for a meeting at least once a month.

8) [Members] will give a monthly [financial] contribution to establish a [monetary] capital."²

August 1, 1909. Part of the first formula of the profession to be done by the members of the Society.

"The aim of the Society is the formation of missionaries and to send them wherever it would be deemed necessary.

The Society takes as its own the book of the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola, from which it derives its own rules and constitutions."³

1. Adapted from Sciberras, 545. Printed with permission.

2. Above, 28-30.
3. Above, 52.

Joseph De Piro

June 30, 1914. From a letter of the Founder to Archbishop Peter Pace.

"A short outline of the rules of the Institute for Foreign Missions.

- 1. The institute will be called the Little Society of St Paul.*
- 2. The aim of the Little Society will be to help peoples who lack ministers of the Gospel, especially and primarily among those Maltese living away from their fatherland, and for this purpose, will take special care of charitable institutions.*
- 3. The Little Society will be made up of priests and lay-catechists, living a common life.*
- 4. The members of this Little Society will make the vows of Obedience, Mission, Poverty and Chastity.*
- 5. The habit will be the black cassock with a black sash.*
- 6. When this outline of the Rules is fully developed, it will, in due time, be presented to the Church Authorities for their approval."*⁴

March 10, 1919. Part of a letter by De Piro to Bishop Angelo Portelli.

"With regards to the Constitutions particular to this Institute, I have to refer to a few, unfinished, handwritten pages that have not yet received any direct [Church] approval. At present these are sufficient as directives. From these, for the sake of brevity, I will here transcribe only the Prospectus."

*"The Society of St Paul Apostle is a Society of Missionaries - priests and catechists - living together in community. Through the observance of the Christian virtues, particularly of perfect obedience, chastity and poverty, [the Society] assumes the struggle to [help] its members [grow more] perfectly in the love of God and of their neighbour. It will thus try to be of assistance to those peoples who lack ministers of the Gospel, starting from those Maltese living away from the fatherland, and will take on the administration of charitable institutions. Those who are accepted [to join the Society] must be fit to be formed in accordance with the aims of the society. Its members can cease to form part of the Society either because they decide to leave [of their own accord] or because they are expelled from it. The elected superior has the authority and the duty to lay down all that will best lead the Society to achieve its established aims."*⁵

April 10, 1921. Part of a letter by De Piro to Archbishop Mauro Caruana.

"Outline of the Rules of the Society of St Paul.

The Society of St Paul Apostle is a Society of Missionaries - priests and catechists - living together in community.

Through the observance of the Christian virtues, particularly of perfect obedience, chastity and poverty, [the Society] assumes the struggle to [help] its members [grow more] perfectly in the love of God and of their neighbour.

4. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 25.

5. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 84.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.



Fr George Bugeja, director of St Joseph's Home, who between 1907 and 1910 worked with Joseph De Piro for the founding of the *Piccola Compagnia di San Paolo*.

Joseph De Piro

It aims to be of assistance to those peoples who lack ministers of the Gospel, starting with the Maltese living away from their fatherland, and take on the administration of charitable institutions.

After a fitting preparation, all members are to profess the vows of obedience, mission, poverty and chastity.

The habit is the black cassock with a black sash. At their first profession of vows the catechists will receive the Rosary beads of the Blessed Virgin, which they will carry attached to the sash. The seminarians will receive a wooden cross which they carry hanging from their neck with a string, and held against their chest with the sash. The priests will wear the cross complete with the image of the Crucified [Christ].

Those who are accepted to join the society must be fit to be formed in accordance with the aims of the society.

Members can cease to form part of the society either because they decide to leave [of their own accord] or because they are expelled from it.

The Superior General, elected for life, and assisted by four councillors, has the authority and the duty to establish, within the parameters of the Rules, all that will best lead the Society to achieve its established aims.

(When the membership of the Society reaches twelve professed priests, and its members are living in three houses, they are to proceed to elect the Superior General for life. However, until the time when this election can take place, the Bishop will nominate the Superior of the Society, who will, in turn, nominate the Local Superiors, as the need arises.)”⁶

November 14, 1921. Approval of the Society by Archbishop M. Caruana. The Founder is also reminded to present the complete text of the Constitutions

Decree

“Having taken into consideration the petition, presented by the Right Rev. Mgr Canon Dean Joseph De Piro, requesting the canonical erection of the Society founded by him under the title of St Paul the Apostle, and the approval of the Constitutions governing the Society;

And having taken into consideration the aims of the above-mentioned Society;

With our ordinary authority we erect and hereby declare canonically erected the pious Society under the name of St Paul the Apostle, about which the request has been made. The Society is to be governed by the Constitutions which have been presented together with the request and which we have provisionally approved, and we command the petitioner to present to us within six months a complete and exhaustive statute or Constitutions for the government of the above-mentioned Society.”⁷

6. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 125.

7. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 126.

See also Missionary Society of St Paul, *Constitutions and General Directory*, (Malta, 1987), 132.

November 10, 1922. The Founder presents the Constitutions to Archbishop M. Caruana

"A note [presented by] the Dean J. De Piro.

Himself appearing and in compliance with the respected instruction of His Grace Most Rev. Mgr. Archbishop Bishop of Malta, [given] on November 14, 1921 and verbally extended, publicly presents the text of the Rules governing the Society of St Paul, for approval. Moreover he dutifully declares that insofar as these same [Rules] taken as a whole, do not necessarily cover every aspect in an exhaustive way, they do, however, in substance outline the true character of the Society.

Valletta, November 10, 1922

*Dean J. De Piro"*⁸

January 30, 1923. Analysis of the Constitutions by Fr V. Furci sj

Fr V. Furci sj, principal of St Aloysius College, Birkirkara, was asked by Archbishop M. Caruana to examine the Constitutions presented by De Piro. Furci wrote two pages of observations, rather than corrections:

- 1.: General observations, related to the structure and methodology of the presentation rather than to the contents.
 - The three vows traditionally related to religious life must be presented first. The vow of missions follows these.
 - According to the Founder, all the members, wherever they are, have to wear the same habit. In some places this may not be possible.
 - Observations about some of the articles; eg., the novitiate.
- 2.: General observations: excellent Constitutions, based on Christian perfection and on the teaching of the founders of other religious orders.
 - They are hard to follow because there are too many details. There needs to be a distinction between the Constitutions, the Norms and the common rules.
 - Furci suggested the inclusion of the Ignatian month.
 - He noted that the devotion to the Sacred Heart and St Joseph were only mentioned at the end.⁹

September 12, 1923. Fr Furci visited the Society's house in Mdina.

Furci wrote to De Piro telling him that he was asked by Archbishop Caruana to visit the Society's house in Mdina. He was going to do this the next day.¹⁰

8. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 129.

9. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 132a.

10. *MSSP At the Time of the Founder*, 139.

Joseph De Piro

September 16, 1923. Report to Archbishop Caruana about Furci's visit to the Society's house.

Furci wrote to Archbishop Caruana telling him that he was writing with a lot of trepidation because he was conscious that he had to be accountable to God.

The visit was made on September 12, 1923.

The Society is in itself of glory to God and he therefore recommended every help the Archbishop could give. At the same time things could not progress the way they were at present. If things continued in this way the Society would eventually die. The reason being the almost complete absence of the Founder. The Founder needed to be completely dedicated to the Society. Furci suggested that a religious, renowned for his virtues, should be engaged to take care of the novices. This was of great importance.

Furthermore, Fr John Vella had to be sent away "... without any delay or hesitation ..." as he was causing harm to the others.

For the vows to be valid a good novitiate needed to be organised.

Fr Michael Callus and Br Joseph Caruana seemed to be the best members in the community. They were young, virtuous and mortified.

Mgr De Piro had to show himself more disciplined and less tolerant especially, with those who did not observe the rules, and when mistakes were done in public, the Founder had to correct in public. He also needed to inflict punishments.

Furci also noted that some of the members were not punctual, often exempting themselves from the common acts.¹¹

January 10, 1924. Fr Furci recommended the Constitutions.

Fr Furci wrote to Archbishop Caruana and informed him that he had examined the Constitutions a second time with Mgr De Piro. Furci also told Caruana that in a few places he had made some corrections and modifications. He considered the corrections he suggested, dealing with the general and special administration of the Society, more as "*integrating subsections*" rather than as essential. Furci recommended Caruana to approve the Constitutions as they were, as this would greatly encourage the members.¹²

March 18, 1924. Archbishop Caruana approved the first two parts of the Constitutions.

Decree

"Since by the Apostolic Letters of the Congregation for Religious, dated February 14 1921, Prot 6550/20, we were given the faculty to erect the pious religious Society founded by the Right Reverend Canon Joseph De Piro D'Amico Dean of our Cathedral

11. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 132d.

12. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 140.

Church, which we, on November 14 1921, decreed to be recognised and be called by the title of 'Society of St Paul,' and which we have already canonically erected; as it is clear to us that this pious undertaking has no other purpose but that of the glory of God, the Omnipotent, and the welfare of souls; and it is also clear to us that this same pious Society has shown healthy progress from the day of its foundation; by virtue of the above mentioned Apostolic Letters and the power of the Executorial Decrees, we approve the body of Rules presented to us by the above mentioned Rev. Canon Founder, as from this body of Rules, even though not fully complete, one can clearly see the noble and holy character of the already mentioned pious congregation, as its Rules lead to Christian perfection and are in accord with the doctrine and spirit of the holy founders of religious orders.

But in order that this body of Rules be complete, we desire that not only will the corrections and modifications to the above mentioned body of Rules, which we, before the Lord, think should be made, be adhered to, but we also oblige the Canon Founder to formulate and to present to us, as quickly as possible, the other rules that pertain to the governance of the general and particular offices of the same Congregation, while reserving our right, and that of our successors, to remove, add, and modify whatever, in the Lord, is deemed necessary.

Wishing you in the Lord all kinds of good things, we bestow our pastoral blessing upon our beloved son, the Canon Founder, and upon all the members of this pious congregation.

Given at our Palace, on March 8 1924.

+ Maurus, O.S.B.

Archbishop, Bishop of Malta

(L & S)

Fr Ant. Galea

Chancellor”¹³

November 12, 1925. The Founder finalised the writing of the Constitutions.

From the note written in the “*Scritti*” one can conclude that the Founder went to the Abbey at Monte Cassino, Italy, and on this day finalised the third part of the *Original Constitutions*, dealing with the general and particular administration of the Society.¹⁴

13. MSSP *At the Time of the Founder*, 141.

14. See De Piro Archives, *Regole della Compagnia di San Paolo*, in *Scritti di Mons G. De Piro*, n. 2, 79.

Joseph De Piro

December 9, 1925. De Piro presented the third part of the Constitutions to the Archbishop.

"Bishop's Chancery, Malta.

Petition 396/32

A note [presented by] Canon Dean J. De Piro as Superior of the Society of St Paul, religious institute for foreign missions.

Himself appearing and in accordance with the respected decree of His Grace Most Rev. Mgr Archbishop Bishop [of Malta] dated March 18 1925, proceeds to submit for the required [Church] approval, the remaining parts of the Rules that will govern the above-mentioned Society of St Paul.

And having carried out the above [duties], with deep filial respect, he once more declares himself the most humble servant of His Grace Most Rev. Archbishop Bishop [of Malta].

Dean J. De Piro

Presented by the petitioner on December 9 1925

Fr A. Galea

Chancellor"¹⁵

May 17, 1929. Examination of Constitutions by Mgr Carmel Zammit.

Archbishop M. Caruana asked Mgr Zammit to examine the third part of the Constitutions.¹⁶

July 15, 1930. Report by Mgr C. Zammit about the third part of the Constitutions.

"Bishop's Chancery, Malta.

Your Grace,

After having carried out your respected decree dated May 17 1929, by which Your Grace asked the undersigned to examine the parts of the Rules of the Society of St Paul, presented to Your Grace by the Most Rev. Mgr. Canon Dean J. De Piro for the required [Church] approval, I have the honour to submit to Your Grace that, having examined these rules - dealing with [the offices of] the Procurator General to the Holy See, Visitors, Provincial Superiors and Vicars for Mission, Treasurer, Provincial and Vicariate Chapters, Local Superiors, Spiritual Prefect of Catechist Brothers, Sacristan, Local Treasurer, Wardrobe Manager, Nurse, Doorkeeper, Person responsible for shopping, Storekeeper, Person responsible for the kitchen, Person responsible for waking up the brothers and finally about funerals and other prayers for the dead - I have not found anything that seems to me to hinder their approval by Your Grace.

15. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 142.

16. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 142.

And having carried out the above [duties], with true loyalty and filial respect, I once more declare myself the most obedient servant of His Grace.

Canon C. Zammit

July 16, 1930¹⁷

October 5, 1932. Archbishop M. Caruana approved the third part of the Constitutions.

Decree

"Since the Most Reverend Mgr Joseph De Piro Navarra, Canon Dean of our Cathedral, has complied with our Decree dated March 18 1924, and has submitted the remaining parts of the Rules of the Society of St Paul founded by him, dealing with the General and Particular government;

Since, according to the advice here attached, of the Rev. Adviser we appointed for this task with the decree dated May 19 1929, there is nothing that could prevent an approval of the same [Rules];

With our present Decree we most willingly grant the requested approval in accordance with the conditions stipulated in our above-mentioned Decree dated March 18, 1924.

Wishing the praiseworthy Society every success in the Lord, we warmly impart our blessing.

Given in Valletta, October 5, 1932

(signed) Maurus O.S.B.

Archbishop, Bishop of Malta

True copy issued by the Bishop's Chancery, Malta

October 7, 1932

Canon P. Buttigieg

Chancellor¹⁸

17. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 167.

18. MSSP At the Time of the Founder, 168.

Joseph De Piro



Mgr Francis Bonnici, founder of St Joseph's Home, Hamrun. Joseph De Piro had hoped to be able to join Bonnici at the orphanage and sought his advice in 1905.

Information about the members of the De Piro family.

Name	Date of birth	Place of birth	Profession	State	Date of death	Age
Alexander	24.02.1849	Malta	Administrator	Married Ursola on 17.11.1868	14.01.1898	48
Ursola	21.10.1847	Żejtun, Malta	Housewife	Married Alessandro on 17.11.1868	03.12.1937	90
(Marija) Teresa	31.08.1869	Florence Italy	Housewife	Married Paul Nicholas Apap Bologna on 21.10.1899	01.06.1920	50
Carmelo	17 (13).01.1871	Florence Italy	Medical doctor	Married Dolores Dyer on 06.07.1908	12.04.1912	40
Sante	18.06.1873	Florence Italy	Priest		19.07.1929	56
Maria	07.01.1872	Malta	Housewife	Married Alfredo Stilon on 06.1896	02.03.1907	34
Igino	21.09.1874	Malta	Administrator	Married Cola Apap Bologna on 16.02.1901	14.08.1942	68
Alberto	26.08.1876 (1877)	Malta		Single	13.05.1899	22 (21)
Giuseppe	02.11.1877	Malta	Priest		17.09.1933	55
Guido	7 (17).04.1879	Malta	Medical doctor	Married Luisa Bertha Capon (date not available)	24.03.1921	41
Giovanni Pio	22 (25).05.1881	Malta	Accountant	Married Emma Gauci Tramblett on 12.06.1906	21.11.1953	72

Joseph De Piro



Pope St Pius X. Through Bishop La Fontaine Pius X sent Joseph De Piro and his young congregation his apostolic blessing.

Brief biographical information about some characters mentioned by Joseph De Piro in his Diary.

Dom Ambrose Agius osb – was born in Alexandria Egypt on September 17, 1856, of Maltese parents. He joined the Benedictine community at Ramsgate Abbey, Kent England and then the community at Subiaco, Italy. In 1881 he joined the Maltese Benedictine community at Zurrieq Malta. When the monks left the island a few years later, he rejoined the Ramsgate community. On March 16, 1902, Agius, a cousin of Joseph De Piro, assisted him at the celebration of his first Mass at the Capranica. In 1904 Agius was consecrated titular archbishop of Palmyra and appointed Apostolic delegate to the Philippines. He died on December 13, 1911. (Information taken from Michael J. Schaivone and Louis J. Scerri, *Maltese Biographies of the Twentieth Century*, (Malta, 1997), 8).

Mgr Professor Michael Barbara – was born in Chircop Malta in 1868. He studied at the Maltese Diocesan Seminary and taught Latin, oratory and dogmatic theology at the same seminary. He was also an examiner approving clerics and choosing chancery officials. In January 1909 De Piro invited Barbara to join his congregation of priests. Barbara agreed with De Piro's plans but was not ready to join as he was living with mother. He died on July 3, 1924. (Information taken from *Canonorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Melitensis, Chronologia*. Translated from Latin by Maurice Caruana mssp.)

Mgr Francis Bonnici – was born in 1852. In 1888, encouraged by the Bishop of Malta Mgr Anton Buhagiar ofm cap, Bonnici opened St Joseph's Home, an orphanage for boys. The orphanage was originally housed near Samra Church, Hamrun, and in 1893 shifted to its present location on St Joseph's High Road, Santa Venera. Bonnici also founded the Brothers of Charity, a religious congregation to look after the orphanage. This congregation was short lived and was soon disbanded. In 1898 Bonnici left the orphanage. He died on December 24, 1904. (Information taken from Alexander Bonnici, *Id-Dar ta' Santa Venera: Seklu ta' Ħidma għall-Ġid tat-Tfal Subien (1888 - 1988)*)

Fr Liborio Ferrara sj – was born in Villalba, Caltanissetta, Italy, on September 2, 1866. He joined the Jesuits and started his novitiate in Malta, on September 14, 1881. Ferrara was ordained a priest on July 30, 1894, professed the final vows at the Gozo Seminary on August 15, 1898 and then taught theology at the same seminary. For some years he was socius of the Novice Master. On January 9, 1905 he met Joseph De Piro at San Calcedonio, Floriana Malta. He died at Acireale, Catania Italy, on April 20, 1943. (Information provided by the archives of the Society of Jesus, Palermo.)

Mgr Paul Galea – was born in 1866. He was ordained priest in 1890 and graduated in canon law in 1892. He lectured in canon law at the Maltese Diocesan Seminary and in 1897 was appointed rector of the same seminary. In 1907 Fr Scio sj suggested to Joseph De Piro to talk to Galea about his congregation of priests. De Piro did not write about whether he had in fact approached Galea. In 1916 Galea was made a member of the Cathedral Chapter and between 1921 and 1927 was in the Maltese Senate. Galea died on November 29, 1952. (Editor's note: It was not possible to find information about the other priests mentioned by Scio.) (Information taken from Michael J. Schaivone and Louis J. Scerri, *Maltese Biographies of the Twentieth Century*, (Malta, 1997), 295).

Cardinal Pietro La Fontaine – was born in Viterbo Italy, on November 29, 1860. He was ordained priest on December 22, 1883; taught literature, Sacred Scripture, canon law and ecclesiastical history, and later became rector at the local Diocesan Seminary. On December 23, 1906 he was consecrated bishop of Cassano allo Ionio, Calabria Italy. In November 1909 he visited Malta as Apostolic Visitor and in 1910 Pope Pius X appointed him Secretary of the Congregation of Rites (Congregation for the Causes of Saints). On March 5, 1915 Bishop La Fontaine was appointed Patriarch of Venice and elevated to Cardinal on December 16, 1916. He died in Paderno del Grappa, Treviso Italy on July 9, 1935. La Fontaine was renowned for his charity and love of the poor and during the conclave which elected Pope Pius XI in 1922, he was often close to being elected pope. His Cause of Canonisation was opened in 1960. (Information obtained from various internet sources.)

Fr John Mamo – was born in Cospicua Malta on April 27, 1878. In 1910, after he left Joseph De Piro and his young society, he started his ministry among the youth in Paola Malta. He built St Aloysius Oratory in Tarxien Malta from where he organised the teaching of trades such as carpentry, printing, book-binding, tailoring, shoe-making, agriculture and electrical fitting. He also opened a boarding school where academic subjects were taught during the day and trades in the evening. John Mamo died in November 4, 1935. (Information taken from Michael J. Schaivone and Louis J. Scerri, *Maltese Biographies of the Twentieth Century*, (Malta, 1997), 379-380).

Mgr Alfredo Mifsud – was born in Valletta Malta on March 17, 1866. He studied with the Jesuits in the Gozo Seminary, at the Urbaniana University in Rome and at the Ecclesiastical Academy for Nobles, where he acquired his doctorate. Between 1893 and 1896 he represented the clergy in the Maltese Council of Government. From 1897 until his death he was librarian at the National Library. In 1902 Mifsud assisted De Piro during his first Mass at the Mdina Cathedral. He died on November 19, 1920. (Information taken from *Canonicorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Melitensis, Chronologia*. Translated from Latin by Maurice Caruana mssp.)

Archbishop Pietro Pace – was born in Victoria Gozo on April 9, 1833. He studied at the La Sapienza University in Rome, obtaining a doctorate in theology, canon law and civil law. He was ordained priest in 1857 and was secretary to Cardinals Santucci and Panebianco. On his return to Malta he lectured in Sacred Scripture at the Maltese Diocesan Seminary and Moral Theology at the Royal University of Malta. Pace became the second bishop of the Gozo Diocese in 1877 and bishop of Malta in 1888, when he was given the title of Archbishop of Rhodes. Archbishop Pace died on July 22, 1914. (Information taken from Michael J. Schaivone and Louis J. Scerri, *Maltese Biographies of the Twentieth Century*, (Malta, 1997), 443).

Fr Vincent Sammut sj – was born in Lia Malta, on February 14, 1857. He studied at the Gozo Diocesan Seminary, joined the Jesuits on August 25, 1871 and did his final vows on August 15, 1890. Sammut taught at St Pulcheriae Jesuit College in Constantinople between 1880 and 1884 and between 1891 and 1894 was rector at the same college. From 1897 to 1899 Sammut was with the Jesuit seminarians at Birkirkara Malta and from 1900 to 1904 he was rector at the Agostino Pennisi Jesuit College in Acireale Catania where De Piro met him in the summer of 1900. Between 1912 and 1917 he was principal at the newly founded St Aloysius College in Birkirkara. He died at the Gozo Seminary on January 30, 1919. (Information provided by the archives of the Society of Jesus, Malta.)

Fr Henry Scio sj – was born in L'Aquila Abruzzo Italy, on March 15, 1843. He joined the Jesuits in Palermo in November 1858. During the turbulent years leading to the unification of Italy, together with the other seminarians he went to Ireland to continue his studies there. He was ordained priest on December 21, 1868. After being recalled to the Jesuit Province of Palermo, he was sent to the Gozo Seminary where he taught grammar, philosophy and theology. He professed his final vows on August 15, 1877. After many years in Gozo, he was sent the house of San Calcedonio, Floriana Malta. Here, on February 5, 1907, he met De Piro. Scio died at Floriana on January 9, 1918. (Information provided by the archives of the Society of Jesus, Palermo.)

Mgr Emmanuel Vassallo – was born in Valletta in 1872. He studied at the Gregorian University and then lectured in theology at Manresa House, Floriana, and at the Royal University of Malta. After Mgr F. Bonnici, founder of St Joseph's Home, left the orphanage in 1898, Vassallo became its second director. Later he was appointed rector of the Maltese Diocesan Seminary. Vassallo died on January 24, 1930. (Information taken from *Canonicorum Ecclesiae Cathedralis Melitensis, Chronologia*. Translated from Latin by Maurice Caruana mssp.)

Joseph De Piro

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Archbishop Pace, Mgr Peter – see Pace, Mgr Peter, Archbishop.
Barbara, Professor, Fr [M.] – Mamo, Fr J. informed De Piro that Barbara was of same opinion about the congregation of priests -- 37; Mamo visited De Piro on December 22 1908, informed him he was going to tell Barbara that De Piro wished to meet him -- 37; De Piro and Mamo met Barbara during retreat -- 37; De Piro visited Barbara to tell him the congregation had to start with community life -- 37; Barbara agreed but told De Piro that since he lived with his mother, he could not promise to join the congregation of priests -- 37; Barbara was ready of help the congregation of priests -- 37.
Beggar – approached De Piro and Vassallo, Fr E. asking for help -- 26; Beggar blessed De Piro and Vassallo through intercession of St Paul -- 26; Blessing in the name of St Paul was not used in similar circumstances -- 26.
Beginning of scholastic year 1901/02 – retreat at Capranica College -- 20.
Benedictine Monastery, Subiaco, Italy – Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro he intended to join the Benedictines at Subiaco -- 28.
Bishop of Malta – see Pace, Mgr Peter, Archbishop.
Bishop's Pastoral Visitation – De Piro visited Vassallo, Fr E. regarding Bishop's Pastoral Visitation -- 32.
Bishop's permission required to take up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20.
Blessing – see Beggar.
Bonnici, Canon Francis – left St Joseph's Home -- 19; Bonnici assisted De Piro at First Mass at Malta Cathedral Church -- 23; Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro to speak to Bonnici -- 28; De Piro tried to meet Bonnici but could not find him -- 28; De Piro met Bonnici on August 17 1905 -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro he had nurtured similar plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici had been unsuccessful in similar plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that Maltese priests were too attached to their native country -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that without Divine Intervention his plan would be impossible -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro not to give up, God might still provide someone to help -- 29; Bonnici repeated saying by Gualandi sj, Fr: only time will tell -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro to pray about his plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro not to proceed further with his plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici died on December 24, 1905 -- 29; De Piro visited Bugeja, Fr G. at St Joseph's Home to talk about plaque in memory of Bonnici -- 33.
Bonnici, Mgr. Francis – see Bonnici, Canon Francis.
Bonnici, Fr Theodore – Scio sj, Fr E. told De Piro to contact Bonnici, Fr T. about congregation of priests -- 33.
Breviary – De Piro visited Bugeja, Fr G. they talked and prayed together -- 33.
Bugeja, Fr George – Director St Joseph's Home -- 19; De Piro nurtured friendship with Bugeja -- 19; Bugeja took part in procession of Feast of Shipwreck of St Paul with De Piro on February 10, 1905 -- 27; De Piro had his first meeting with Bugeja about the congregation of priests -- 32; Bugeja looked at statue of St Paul -- 32; De Piro visited Bugeja at St Joseph's Home to talk about plaque in memory of Bonnici, Canon F. -- 33; De Piro visited Bugeja they talked and prayed together -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja decided to have first meeting of congregation of priests -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja planned to meet the day after feast to talk about the congregation of priests -- 33; Bugeja met De Piro during retreat at S Calcedonio -- 33; Bugeja informed De Piro he had invited another priest to join them; negative answer from priest -- 33; Bugeja

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informed De Piro that the priest he had spoken to was a certain Mangion, Fr (?) -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja at St Joseph's Home; first meeting about congregation of priests -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to share plans about congregation of priests with Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to talk to Galea and Caruana Gatto only about formation of a community of priests -- 34; Bugeja to approach Galea about congregation of priests -- 34; Bugeja and De Piro decided not to talk to any others before their next meeting -- 34; De Piro met Mamo, Fr J. on Sept 23, 1908; promised to introduce him to Bugeja -- 34; De Piro and Mamo visited Bugeja on Sept 25, 1908 -- 34; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo promised to help each other -- 34; De Piro suggested to Bugeja and Mamo to meet on feast of Conversion of St Paul -- 37; on July 29 1909 De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo met at St Paul's Bay to discuss way forward -- 37; De Piro spoke to Bugeja about meeting with La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor -- 38; De Piro gave Bugeja the letter requested by La Fontaine to sign -- 38; De Piro picked up the letter requested by La Fontaine signed by Bugeja on November 5, 1909 -- 38.

Busietta, Fr (?) -- Scio sj, Fr E. told De Piro to contact Busietta about congregation of priests -- 33.

Calcedonio, San, Floriana Retreat House -- During retreat De Piro met Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 26; De Piro met Debono, Mgr E. during retreat -- 33; De Piro and Mamo, Fr J. met Barbara, Professor, Fr M. during retreat -- 37.

Capranica College -- De Piro at the Capranica -- 19; 20; Retreat at beginning of scholastic year 1901/02 -- 20; Rector Coselli, Mgr Giuseppe M. met De Piro about enrolling at the Ecclesiastic Academy -- 22; De Piro did not wish to enrol at the Ecclesiastic Academy -- 22; De Piro's First Mass at the Capranica -- 23.

Carnival 1907 -- Debono, Mgr E. asked De Piro to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33; De Piro accepted to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33.

Caruana Gatto, Fr Robert -- De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided to share plans about congregation of priests with Caruana Gatto -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto only about formation of a community of priests -- 34; Caruana Gatto to be approached by De Piro about congregation of priests -- 34.

Catechetical Institute -- De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. advised Mamo, Fr J. to start his catechetical centre at St Philip Neri Oratory, Vittoriosa -- 35; Mamo visited De Piro, informed him that he had met up with the Archpriest of Vittoriosa about the catechetical institute; was well received -- 35; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo decide to rent a house and start the catechetical institute -- 37.

Cathedral Church, Malta -- De Piro's First Mass -- 23; Feast of Conversion of St Paul, De Piro meets Vassallo, Fr E. at the Cathedral, no mention about congregation of priests made -- 26; Solemnity of Martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro met Vassallo at the Cathedral -- 28.

Ceppetelli, Archbishop Giuseppe -- ordaining Bishop -- 23.

Chaignon, Pierre -- De Piro used Chaignon for his meditations -- 27.

Charism -- started from God: God wanted to establish congregation of priests -- 22; congregation of priests to spread to foreign lands -- 22; not sure if congregation to be regular or secular -- 29; with help of God and mother Mary, congregation to become a religious institute -- 29; congregation to associate secular clergy with it -- 29; foreign missions primary aim of congregation -- 29; secondary aim / other related ministries of congregation -- 29; St Joseph's Home as secondary aim of congregation -- 29; Maltese migrants as secondary aim of congregation -- 31; on board ships as secondary aim of congregation -- 31; congregation of priests named after St Paul, Apostle -- 31; St Paul patron of congregation of priests -- 31; Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, annual retreat for members -- 31.

Chastity -- members of congregation not to profess vows or promises -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decide not to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. about religious vows or promises -- 34.

Clergy, Maltese -- congregation of priests to associate secular clergy with it -- 29; Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro that Maltese priests are too attached to their native country -- 29.

Clergy, secular -- congregation of priests to associate secular clergy -- 29.

College for Foreign Missions in Malta -- suggested -- 36.

Community Life -- De Piro visited Barbara, Professor, Fr M. to tell him the congregation had to start with community life -- 37.

Congregation of Priests -- 20; to be established first in Malta -- 22; congregation to spread to foreign lands -- 22; Gualandi sj, Fr advised to set plans aside -- 22; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; in Davos De Piro continued to nurture his dreams -- 24; far from the land where he hoped to realise his dreams -- 24; De Piro prayed -- 24; De Piro shared his plans with Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 26; De Piro shared plans with Vassallo, Fr E. for first time -- 26; Vassallo agreed with De Piro's plans but no decisions taken -- 26; De Piro informd Ferrara about meeting with Vassallo, De Piro has no intention of meeting Vassallo again -- 26; De Piro met Vassallo at Cathedral for Feast of Conversion of St Paul, no mention of subject made -- 26; De Piro decided to speak again to Vassallo first time they meet -- 26; De Piro met Vassallo in Valletta on February 10, 1905, no mention of congregation of priests -- 27; De Piro went to Diocesan Seminary Floriana looking for Vassallo -- 27; Vassallo asked De Piro

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to puts his plans about congregation of priests, in writing -- 27; De Piro met Vassallo in Diocesan Seminary on February 16 1905, told him had not yet written anything -- 27; De Piro wrote to Vassallo telling him he was trying to put things in writing -- 27; De Piro told Vassallo he was finding it difficult to write down his ideas about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro urged Vassallo to pray about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro visited Vassallo in Valletta -- 27; De Piro told Vassallo he was not ready to write about -- 27; De Piro decided not to talk to Vassallo about congregation of priests any more -- 27; De Piro decided to talk again to Vassallo after meditation: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27; De Piro wrote a second time to Vassallo but did not mail letter -- 28; De Piro sought advice from Ferrara -- 28; Ferrara advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it -- 28; De Piro started writing plans about congregation of priests for the third time -- 28; De Piro felt this time he had succeeded in writing down his plans for congregation of priests -- 28; De Piro prayed the votive divine office of St Paul -- 28; Solemnity of Martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul. De Piro met Vassallo at the Cathedral -- 28; Vassallo informed De Piro that he would be free from teaching at the Seminary after July 8 -- 28; De Piro visited Vassallo at home on July 31 1905 -- 28; Vassallo once more insisted with De Piro to put down his plans in writing -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro to speak to Zarb, Fr G.B. -- 28; De Piro took time to contact Zarb -- 28; De Piro presented Vassallo with plans about congregation of priests, in writing, on August 7 1905 -- 28; Vassallo promised to help De Piro with congregation of priests -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro he intended to join the Benedictine monastery at Subiaco, Italy -- 28; De Piro gave Vassallo permission to speak to Zarb about congregation of priests -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro to speak to Bonnici, Canon F. -- 28; De Piro tried to meet Bonnici but could not find him -- 28; De Piro met Bonnici on August 17 1905 -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that Maltese priests were too attached to their native country -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that without Divine Intervention his plan would be impossible -- 29; Bonnici had nurtured similar plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici had been unsuccessful in similar plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro not to give up, God might still provide someone to help -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro to pray about his plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro not to proceed further with his plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; written document about plans for congregation of priests -- 29; congregation a missionary congregation -- 29; not sure if congregation was to be regular or secular -- 29; with help of God and mother Mary, congregation might become a religious institute -- 29; congregation to associate secular clergy -- 29; name of congregation: missionary -- 29; foreign missions primary aim of congregation -- 29; secondary aims / other related ministries of congregation -- 29; St Joseph's Home a secondary aim of congregation -- 29; Maltese migrants a secondary aim of congregation -- 31; on board ships a secondary aim of congregation -- 31; St Paul Apostle, patron of congregation -- 31; congregation named after St Paul Apostle -- 31; members of congregation not to profess vows or promises -- 31; members of congregation to submit to Divine Will with great generosity -- 31; password of congregation: I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31; Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, annual retreat for members - 31; meeting for members of congregation at least monthly -- 31; members of congregation to give monthly financial contribution -- 31; Vassallo shared with Debono, Mgr E. De Piro's plans for a congregation of priests -- 32; Debono expressed wish to meet De Piro regarding plans for congregation of priests -- 32; De Piro visited Debono on November 25, 1906 -- 32; De Piro shared plans with Debono -- 32; De Piro met Vassallo on December 5, 1906 -- 32; De Piro met Vassallo on December 11, 1906 -- 32; De Piro had first meeting with Bugeja, Fr G. about the congregation of priests -- 32; De Piro and Bugeja looked at statue of St Paul -- 32; De Piro visited Debono on January 14, 1907 to see if he had other information -- 33; De Piro asked Debono whether he knew of others who would be interested -- 33; Debono told De Piro he did not know of others who would be interested -- 33; De Piro visited Bugeja they talked and prayed together -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja decided to have first meeting of congregation of priests -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja planned to meet day after feast to talk about congregation of priests -- 33; De Piro visited Vassallo on January 14, 1907 -- 33; Bugeja met De Piro during retreat at S Calcedonio -- 33; Bugeja informed De Piro he had invited another priest to join them; negative answer from priest -- 33; Bugeja informed De Piro priest he had spoken to was a certain Mangion, Fr (?) -- 33; De Piro talked with Scio sj, Fr E. about the congregation of priests -- 33; Scio encouraged De Piro to keep going with plans about the congregation of priests -- 33; Scio told De Piro to contact Frs Galea P., Galea Naudi (?), Busietta (?), Bonnici T. and Agius A. about congregation of priests -- 33; De Piro met Vassallo on feast of St Paul's Shipwreck, Feb 18, 1907 -- 34; Vassallo told De Piro about Raggi, Fr (?)'s wish to establish oratory of St Philip Neri -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja at St Joseph's Home for first meeting about congregation of priests -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to share plans about congregation of priests with Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to talk to Galea and Caruana Gatto only about formation of a community of priests -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided not to talk to Galea and Caruana Gatto about religious vows or promises -- 34; Bugeja to approach Galea and De Piro to approach Caruana Gatto about congregation of priests -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided not to talk to any others before their next meeting -- 34; Debono died on March 10, 1909 -- 34; De Piro spoke to

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Mamo, Fr J. about congregation of priests, for first time on August 8, 1907 -- 34; De Piro met Mamo on Sept 23, 1908 and promised to introduce him to Bugeja -- 34; De Piro and Mamo visited Bugeja on Sept 25, 1908 -- 34; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo promised to help each other -- 34; De Piro spoke to Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop, for the first time about congregation of priests -- 35; De Piro asked Pace for his blessings on the project -- 35; Pace told De Piro about letter he had received regarding congregation of priests -- 35; Pace forwarded to De Piro letter about congregation of priests -- 35; Pace gave his blessings and promised help -- 35; Pace encouraged De Piro to nurture idea of congregation for priests and to look for priests who would like to be involved -- 37; Mamo visited De Piro on Dec 12 1908 -- 37; Mamo informed De Piro that Barbara, Professor, Fr M. was of same opinion about congregation of priests -- 37; De Piro suggested to Mamo to meet on feast of Conversion of St Paul -- 37; Mamo visited De Piro on December 22 1909, informed him he was going to tell Barbara that De Piro wished to meet him -- 37; De Piro and Mamo met Barbara during retreat -- 37; De Piro visited Barbara to tell him the congregation had to start with community life -- 37; Barbara agreed but told De Piro that since he lived with his mother, he could not promise to join the congregation of priests -- 37; Barbara was ready of help the congregation of priests -- 37; on July 29 1909 De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo met at St Paul's Bay to discuss way forward -- 37; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo decided not to inform Pace about their plans -- 37; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo decided to rent a house and start the catechetical institute -- 37; November 2 1909, De Piro met La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor at Fra Diego Orphanage -- 38; De Piro spoke to La Fontaine about missionary work -- 38; La Fontaine encouraged De Piro and asked him to present his plans for the congregation of priests, in writing -- 38; De Piro spoke to Bugeja about meeting with La Fontaine -- 38; De Piro wrote the letter requested by La Fontaine on November 3 1909 -- 38; De Piro gave Bugeja the letter requested by La Fontaine to sign -- 38; Mamo signed the letter requested by La Fontaine -- 38; De Piro took letter to La Fontaine on November 11 1909, decided to ask Pace to put down recommendation -- 38.

Contribution, monthly, Financial – members of the congregation to contribute -- 31.

Coselli, Mgr Giuseppe M., Rector of Capranica College met De Piro -- 22; De Piro expressed his wish not to go to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 22.

Cousin, Agius, Fr Ambrose – assists De Piro at First Mass at Capranica College -- 23.

Dark night – icy Alpine mountains -- 24.

Davos Switzerland – De Piro went to recuperate (August 4 1902) -- 24; De Piro continued to nurture his dreams -- 24; icy Alpine mountains -- 24; prayer, De Piro's most intimate friend -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; De Piro left on February 13, 1904 -- 24.

Debono, Canon Emmanuel – see Debono, Mgr Emmanuel.

Debono, Mgr Emmanuel – director and trustee of Parish Mission Society -- 32; Vassallo, Fr E. informed De Piro that he had spoken to Debono -- 32; Debono expressed wish to meet De Piro regarding plans for congregation of priests -- 32; De Piro visited Debono on November 25, 1906 -- 32; De Piro shared plans with Debono -- 32; Debono wished to see Parish Mission Society established as regular body -- 32; Debono asked De Piro to become member of Parish Mission Society -- 32; De Piro said he would love to become member of Parish Mission Society but was unable to preach -- 32; De Piro did not have courage to offer services for preaching due to previous illness -- 32; De Piro became aware of some anxiety in Debono's family -- 32; De Piro visited Debono on January 14, 1907 to see if he had other information -- 33; De Piro asked Debono whether he knew of others who would be interested -- 33; Debono told De Piro he did not know of others who would be interested -- 33; De Piro met Debono during retreat at San Calcedonio -- 33; Debono died on March 10, 1907 -- 34.

Desire to reside at St Joseph's Home – De Piro harboured the thought -- 19; De Piro spoke to Vassallo, Fr E. -- 19.

Desolation – Davos -- 24; icy Alpine mountains -- 24; Prayer, De Piro's most intimate friend -- 24.

Diaconate – retreat in preparation in December 1901 -- 20; 22.

Diocese of Malta – De Piro determined to return to Diocese after his studies -- 23.

Disappointment – De Piro felt sick the first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; icy Alpine mountains -- 24.

Discernment Process – De Piro was distracted with thoughts about taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; De Piro was helped by Gualandi sj, Fr -- 20; De Piro discerned about taking up residence at St Joseph's Home, decision affirmative -- 20; Ecclesiastical Academy and St Joseph's Home -- 22; De Piro had no intention of enrolling at Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; Bishop did not insist on De Piro going to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; in Davos De Piro continued to nurture his dreams -- 24; retreat at S Calcedonio Floriana -- 26; De Piro noted signs around him -- 26; De Piro saw the will of God in blessing by beggar -- 26; Blessing in the name of St Paul was not used in similar circumstances -- 26; De Piro shares dreams with Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 26.

Distracted with thoughts about taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20.

Divine Intervention – Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro that without Divine Intervention his plan would be

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impossible -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start congregation of priests -- 29.

Divine Office -- De Piro visited Bugeja, Fr G. they talked and prayed together -- 33.

Divine Providence -- Bonnici told De Piro that perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start the congregation of priests -- 29.

Divine Will -- see Will of God.

Dominic of Ozma (de Guzman), Saint -- feast day -- 24.

Don Bosco, Salesian fathers -- opening St Patrick's school Sliema Malta -- 36.

Dreams -- see congregation of priests.

Ecclesiastical Academy -- President invited De Piro to continue his studies at the Academy -- 22; De Piro did not wish to join the Academy -- 22; discernment process about the Academy -- 22; nothing else was mentioned about the Academy -- 22; Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop wanted De Piro to enrol at the Academy -- 23; President visited by De Piro with note from Pace -- 23; De Piro informed President he had no intention of enrolling at the Academy -- 23; De Piro determined to return to diocese after his studies -- 23; De Piro wrote to Pace giving reasons for not wanting to enrol at the Academy -- 23; Pace did not insist on De Piro enrolling at the Academy -- 23; matter about the Academy put to rest -- 23.

Eucharist -- Ferrara sj, Fr L. advises De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it during Mass -- 28.

Evangelisation -- Congregation of priests to spread to foreign lands -- 22.

Ferrara sj, Fr Liborio -- advised De Piro to share plans with Vassallo, Fr E. -- 26; De Piro informed Ferrara about meeting with Vassallo, had no intention of meeting Vassallo again -- 26; De Piro sought advice from Ferrara -- 28; Ferrara advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it -- 28.

Fiat! -- Your will be done! -- 24.

Financial contribution, monthly -- members to contribute -- 31.

First Mass at Capranica College -- 23; De Piro assisted by Agius, Fr Ambrose, Cousin -- 23; Malta Cathedral Church -- 23.

Floriana Diocesan Seminary -- De Piro went to look for Vassallo, Fr. E. -- 27.

Floriana, San Calcedonio Retreat House -- During retreat De Piro met Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 26; De Piro and Mamo, Fr J. met Barbara, Professor, Fr M. during retreat -- 37.

Follow you, wherever you go, I will -- password of congregation of priests -- 31.

Foreign Missions -- foreign missions primary aim of congregation of priests -- 29; St Joseph's Foreign Missionary College, letter from Mill Hill Superior General -- 35; Foreign Missions College in Malta suggested -- 36; De Piro suggested to Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop to open Foreign Missionary College -- 36; Pace answered that at present this would not be a prudent move since Salesians were opening similar school -- 36.

Formation of Community of Priests -- De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. only about formation of a community of priests -- 34.

Founding Charism -- God wanted to establish congregation of priests -- 22.

Fra Diego Orphanage -- De Piro found letter from Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop, at Fra Diego Orphanage -- 35; November 2 1909, De Piro met La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor at Fra Diego Orphanage -- 38.

Friend, most intimate -- Prayer -- 24.

Galea Naudi, Fr (?) -- Scio sj, Fr E. told De Piro to contact Galea Naudi, Fr (?) about congregation of priests -- 33.

Galea, Fr Paul -- Scio sj, Fr E. told De Piro to contact Galea about congregation of priests -- 33; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided to share plans about congregation of priests with Galea -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja decided to talk to Galea and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. only about formation of a community of priests -- 34; Galea to be approached by Bugeja about congregation of priests -- 34.

God wanted to establish congregation of priests -- 22; God invoked in first draft of rules -- 29.

God's Grace -- De Piro started to feel better through God's grace -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24.

Gualandi sj, Fr -- advised De Piro to set plan of congregation of priests aside -- 20; 22; Bonnici, Canon F. repeated saying by Gualandi: only time will tell -- 29.

Henry, Fr, Mill Hill Superior General -- 36.

Holidays, Summer 1899 -- 19; Holidays, Summer 1900 -- 19.

House for congregation of priests -- De Piro, Bugeja, Fr G. and Mamo, Fr J. decided to rent a house and start the catechetical institute -- 37.

I will follow you, wherever you go -- password of congregation of priests -- 31.

Icy Alpine mountains -- 24.

Ignatius of Loyola, St, Spiritual Exercises -- annual retreat for members -- 31.

Illness -- De Piro was sick the first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro was sick a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; De Piro abandoned studies -- 24; De Piro went to Davos to recuperate (August 4 1902) -- 24; De Piro started

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to feel better -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; De Piro left Davos on February 13 1904 -- 24;
De Piro told Debono, Mgr E. he would have loved to become member of Parish Mission Society but unable
to preach due to previous illness -- 32.
Inner feelings showed Will of God -- 22.
Innocent, Fr -- addressee of letter from Superior General -- 35.
Intimate Friend -- Prayer -- 24.
La Fontaine, Mgr Pietro, Bishop, Apostolic Visitor -- November 2 1909, De Piro met La Fontaine at Fra Diego
Orphanage -- 37; De Piro spoke to La Fontaine about missionary work -- 38; La Fontaine encouraged De Piro
and asked him to present his plans for the congregation of priests, in writing -- 38; De Piro wrote the
requested letter on November 3 1909 -- 38.
Lateran Basilica -- ordination -- 23.
Letter by Mill Hill Superior General -- forwarded by Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop -- 35.
Letter to La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor -- De Piro wrote the requested letter on November 3
1909 -- 38; De Piro took the letter to La Fontaine on November 11 1909, decided to ask Pace, Mgr P.P.,
Archbishop to put down recommendation -- 38
Life in Common -- De Piro visited Barbara, Professor, Fr M. to tell him the congregation had to start with
community life -- 37.
Liturgical Year -- Sexagesima Sunday, second Sunday before Ash Wednesday -- 27.
London, Mill Hill -- St Joseph's Foreign Missionary College, letter from Superior General -- 35.
Loneliness -- icy Alpine mountains, far from the land where he hoped to realise his dreams -- 24; Prayer
De Piro's most intimate friend -- 24.
Malta -- congregation of priests to be established first in Malta -- 22; De Piro in Davos, far from the land where
he hoped to realise his dreams -- 24; De Piro arrived in Malta on March 2, 1904 -- 24; De Piro arrived in
Malta back from Rome on November 22, 1906 -- 32.
Malta, College for Foreign Missions -- suggested -- 36.
Malta, Diocese -- De Piro intended to return to Malta once studies finished -- 22; De Piro intended to exercise
his priesthood in Malta -- 22; De Piro determined to return to Malta after his studies -- 23.
Malta, Foreign Missionary College -- De Piro suggested to Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop to open Foreign
Missionary College -- 36; Pace answered that at present this would not be a prudent move since Salesians
were opening similar school -- 36.
Malta, Qrendi -- De Piro lived in -- 24.
Maltese Clergy -- congregation of priests to associate with it secular clergy -- 29; Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro
that Maltese priests are too attached to their native country -- 29.
Maltese migrants -- a secondary aim of the congregation of priests -- 31.
Maltese Priests -- congregation of priests to associate with it secular clergy -- 29; Bonnici, Canon F. told
De Piro that Maltese priests are too attached to their native country -- 29.
Mamo, Fr John -- De Piro spoke to Mamo about congregation of priests, for first time on August 8, 1907 -- 34;
De Piro met Mamo on Sept 23, 1908, promised to introduce him to Bugeja, Fr G. -- 34; De Piro and Mamo
visited Bugeja on Sept 25, 1908 -- 34; De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo promised to help each other -- 34; De Piro
and Bugeja advised Mamo to start his catechetical centre at St Philip Neri Oratory Vittoriosa. -- 34; Mamo
visited De Piro, informed him that he had met up with the Archpriest of Vittoriosa about the catechetical
institute, was well received -- 35; Mamo visited De Piro on Dec 12 1908 -- 37; Mamo informed De Piro that
Barbara, Professor, Fr M. was of same opinion about the congregation of priests -- 37; Mamo visited De Piro
on December 22 1909, informed him he was going to tell Barbara that De Piro wished to meet him -- 37;
De Piro and Mamo met Barbara during retreat -- 37; De Piro suggested to Mamo to meet on feast of
Conversion of St Paul -- 37; on July 29 1909 De Piro, Bugeja and Mamo met at St Paul's Bay to discuss way
forward -- 37; Mamo signed the letter requested by La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor -- 38.
Mangion, Fr (?) -- Bugeja, Fr G. informed De Piro priest he had spoken to was a certain Mangion, Fr (?) -- 33.
Marching Orders of congregation of priests -- I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Maria -- De Piro's sister died on March 2, 1907 -- 34.
Mary, Blessed Virgin, Mother of God -- 'My Mother' -- 24; De Piro started to feel better through Mary's help --
24; Mary invoked in first draft of rules -- 29.
Mass, First -- at Capranica College assisted by Agius, Fr Ambrose, cousin -- 23; at Malta Cathedral Church -- 23.
Meditation -- De Piro used Chaignon, Pierre for his meditations -- 27; Sexagesima Sunday, second Sunday
before Ash Wednesday -- 27; De Piro meditated: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27.
Meeting for members -- at least monthly -- 31.
Members, meeting -- at least monthly -- 31.
Michael, Archangel, St, Feast -- De Piro spoke to Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop, for the first time about
congregation of priests -- 35.
Mifsud, Mgr Alfredo -- assisted De Piro at First Mass at Malta Cathedral Church -- 23.

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Migrants, Maltese – a secondary aim of the congregation of priests -- 31.
Mill Hill, London – St Joseph's Foreign Missionary College, letter from Superior General -- 35.
Ministry – De Piro told Debono, Mgr E. he would have loved to become member of Parish Mission Society but felt unable to preach due to previous illness -- 32.
Mission – Congregation of priests to spread to foreign lands -- 22.
Missionary Society, Parish – Debono, Mgr E. director and trustee -- 32; Debono expressed his wish to see Parish Mission Society become community of priests -- 32; Debono wished to see Parish Mission Society established as regular body -- 32; Debono asked De Piro to become member of Parish Mission Society -- 32; De Piro told Debono he would have loved to become member of Parish Mission Society but felt unable to preach -- 32; De Piro told Debono he did not have courage to offer services for preaching due to previous illness -- 32.
Mission Statement of congregation of priests – I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Mission, Opera della Santa – see Parish Mission Society.
Missionary College, Foreign, St Joseph's – letter from Superior General -- 35.
Missionary congregation – see Congregation of priests.
Missionary Service – members not profess vows or promises -- 31.
Missionary Work – De Piro spoke to La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor about missionary work -- 38.
Missions Ad Gentes – foreign missions primary aim of congregation of priests -- 29.
Missions, Foreign – foreign missions primary aim of congregation of priests -- 29.
Motto of congregation of priests – I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Name of congregation – missionary -- 29; named after St Paul, Apostle -- 31.
Negative reason for going to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 22.
Obedience towards Bishop – permission required to take up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; De Piro ready to obey Bishop's will -- 23; Bishop did not insist on De Piro going to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; members not to profess vows or promises -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided not to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. about religious vows or promises -- 34.
On Board Ships – a secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 31.
Only time will tell – Gualandi sj, Fr -- 22; 29; Bonnici, Canon F. -- 29.
Opera della Santa Missione – see Parish Mission Society.
Oratory of St Philip Neri – Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro about Raggi, Fr (?)'s wish to establish oratory of St Philip Neri -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. advised Mamo, Fr J. to start his catechetical centre at St Philip Neri Oratory, Vittoriosa -- 34; Mamo visited De Piro, informed him that he had met up with the Archpriest of Vittoriosa about the catechetical institute; was well received -- 35.
Ordaining Bishop – Ceppetelli, Archbishop Giuseppe -- 23.
Ordinary Time – Sexagesima Sunday, second Sunday before Ash Wednesday -- 27.
Other Related Ministries of Congregation of Priests – secondary aims -- 29; St Joseph's Home -- 29; Maltese migrants -- 31; on board ships -- 31.
Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop wanted De Piro to enrol at Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; Pace wrote a note to the President of Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; De Piro wrote to inform Pace about his intention of not enrolling at Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; Pace did not insist on De Piro going to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; Ecclesiastical Academy was matter put to rest -- 23; De Piro spoke to Pace for the first time about congregation of priests -- 35; De Piro asked Pace for his blessings on the project -- 35; Pace wished to promote foreign missions in Malta -- 35; Pace told De Piro about letter he had received regarding congregation of priests -- 35; Pace forwarded to De Piro letter about congregation of priests -- 35; De Piro found letter from Pace at Fra Diego Orphanage -- 35; De Piro suggested to Pace to open Foreign Missionary College -- 36; Pace answered that at present this would not be a prudent move since Salesians were opening similar school -- 36; Pace gave his blessings and promised help -- 36; Pace encouraged De Piro to nurture idea of congregation for priests and to look for priests who would like to be involved -- 37; De Piro, Bugeja, Fr G. and Mamo, Fr J. decided not to inform Pace about their plans -- 37; Pace was asked to put down recommendation on letter requested by La Fontaine, Mgr P. Bishop, Apostolic Visitor -- 38.
Parish Mission Society – Debono, Mgr E. director and trustee -- 32; Debono expressed wish to see Parish Mission Society become community of priests -- 32; Debono wished to see Parish Mission Society established as regular body -- 32; Debono asked De Piro to become member of Parish Mission Society -- 32; De Piro told Debono that he would have loved to become member of Parish Mission Society but felt unable to preach -- 32; De Piro told Debono he did not have courage to offer services for preaching due to previous illness -- 32.
Password of congregation of priests – I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Pastoral Visitation, Bishop's – De Piro visited Vassallo, Fr E. regarding Bishop's Pastoral Visitation -- 32.
Patronage of St Paul – congregation of priests named after St Paul, Apostle -- 22; 31.
Paul, Apostle, St – Patron of congregation of priests -- 22; 31; Beggar blessed De Piro and Vassallo, Fr E.

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through intercession of St Paul -- 26; Blessing in the name of St Paul was not used in similar circumstances -- 26; Feast of Conversion at Cathedral, Mdina, Vassallo did not mention the congregation of priests -- 26; De Piro met Vassallo at Church in Valletta on February 10 1905, he did not speak about the congregation of priests -- 27; Feast of Shipwreck in Valletta, Malta, February 10, 1905, De Piro, Vassallo and Bugeja Fr G. take part in procession -- 27; Solemnity of Martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro meets Vassallo at the Cathedral -- 28; De Piro prayed the votive divine office of St Paul -- 28; Feast of Dedication of Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro in Rome on November 18, 1906 -- 31; De Piro celebrated Mass in honour of Apostles Sts Peter and Paul in Rome -- 31; De Piro asked Sts Peter and Paul to help him understand God's will -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja looked at statue of St Paul -- 32; Feast of Shipwreck, De Piro and Bugeja planned to meet day after feast to talk about congregation of priests -- 33; Feast of Shipwreck, De Piro went to Valletta for feast, Feb 18 1907 -- 33; Feast of Conversion, De Piro suggested to Mamo Fr J. to meet on feast of Conversion -- 37.

Pennisi Jesuit College, Acireale -- De Piro visited Sammut sj, Fr Vincent -- 20.

Peter and Paul, Apostles, Sts -- Solemnity of Martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro met Vassallo, Fr E. at the Cathedral, Malta -- 28; Feast of Dedication of Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro in Rome on November 18, 1906 -- 31; De Piro celebrated Mass in honour of Apostles Sts Peter and Paul -- 31; De Piro asked Sts Peter and Paul to help him understand God's will -- 31.

Peter, Apostle, St -- Feast of Dedication of Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro in Rome on November 18, 1906 -- 31; De Piro celebrated Mass in honour of Apostles Sts Peter and Paul -- 31; De Piro celebrated Mass on altar dedicated to St Peter -- 31; De Piro asked Sts Peter and Paul to help him understand God's will -- 31.

Philip Neri, St, Oratory -- Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro about Raggi, Fr (?)'s wish to establish oratory of St Philip Neri -- 34; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. advised Mamo, Fr J. to start his catechetical centre at St Philip Neri Oratory, Vittoriosa. -- 34; Mamo visited De Piro, informed him that he had met up with the Archpriest of Vittoriosa about the catechetical institute; was well received -- 35.

Plans -- see Congregation of priests.

Poor -- after meeting between De Piro and Vassallo, Fr E., a beggar approached them asking for help -- 26.

Poverty -- After meeting between De Piro and Vassallo, Fr E., a beggar approached them asking for help -- 26; members of congregation of priests not to profess vows or promises -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided not to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. about religious vows or promises -- 34.

Prayer -- De Piro left with nothing but prayer -- 24; prayer a most intimate friend -- 24; De Piro urged Vassallo, Fr E. to pray about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro used Chaignon, Pierre for his meditations on Sexagesima Sunday, second Sunday before Ash Wednesday -- 27; De Piro meditated: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27; De Piro prayed the votive divine office of St Paul -- 28; Ferrara sj, Fr L. advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it -- 28; Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro to pray about his plans for a congregation of priests -- 29; De Piro asked Sts Peter and Paul to help him understand God's will -- 31; De Piro visited Bugeja, Fr G. they talk and pray together -- 33.

Preaching -- De Piro told Debono, Mgr E. he did not have courage to offer services for preaching due to previous illness -- 32.

Priesthood -- Retreat in preparation -- 22; De Piro intended to return to Malta once studies finished -- 22; ordination (March 15, 1902) -- 22; ordaining Bishop -- Ceppetelli, Archbishop Giuseppe -- 23; First Mass at Capranica College -- 23; First Mass at Cathedral, Malta -- 23.

Priests, Maltese -- congregation of priests to associate with it secular clergy -- 29; Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro that Maltese priests are too attached to native country -- 29.

Promises or Vows -- members of congregation of priests not profess vows or promises -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided not to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. about religious vows or promises -- 34.

Providence, Divine -- Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start congregation of priests -- 29.

Pulmonary Tuberculosis -- De Piro felt sick the first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro felt sick a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; De Piro diagnosed -- 24; De Piro abandoned studies -- 24; De Piro went to Davos to recuperate (August 4 1902) -- 24; De Piro started to feel better -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; De Piro left Davos on February 13 1904 -- 24.

Qrendi, Malta -- De Piro lived in -- 24.

Raggi, Fr (?) -- Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro about Raggi, Fr (?)'s wish to establish oratory of St Philip Neri -- 34.

Reasons in favour and against taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; reasons in favour and against -- Ecclesiastical Academy and St Joseph's Home -- 22.

Regular body -- with help of God and mother Mary, the congregation to become a religious institute -- 29.

Religious congregation -- with help of God and mother Mary, the congregation to become a religious institute -- 29.

Religious institute -- with help of God and mother Mary, the congregation to become a religious institute -- 29.

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Residence at St Joseph's Home – harbouring thought -- 19; affirmative decision -- 20.

Retreat -- 20; 22; at Capranica College, beginning of scholastic year 1901/02 -- 20; distractions about taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; helped by Gualandi sj, Fr -- 20; Spiritual Exercises at S Calcedonio Floriana Retreat House -- 26; De Piro met Ferrara sj, Fr L. at S Calcedonio Retreat House, Floriana -- 26; Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola annual retreat for members of congregation of priests -- 31; De Piro meets Debono, Mgr E. at S Calcedonio Retreat House, Floriana -- 33; Debono asked De Piro to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33; De Piro accepted to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33; De Piro and Mamo, Fr J. met Barbara, Professor, Fr M. during retreat -- 37.

Rome – De Piro returned to Rome on April 5 1902 -- 23; De Piro was in Rome on November 18, 1906 -- 31; De Piro arrived in Malta back from Rome on November 22, 1906 -- 32.

Rules for Congregation of Priests, first draft -- 29; a missionary congregation -- 29; foreign missions the primary aim -- 29; not sure congregation were to be regular or secular -- 29; with help of God and mother Mary, congregation to become a religious institute -- 29; congregation to associate with it secular clergy -- 29.

Salesian Fathers – opening St Patrick's school Sliema, Malta -- 36.

Sammut sj, Fr Vincent – De Piro visited Sammut at Pennisi College, Acireale -- 20; Sammut advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20.

Santa Missione, Opera della – see Parish Mission Society.

Scio sj, Fr Enrico – De Piro talked with Scio about the congregation of priests -- 33; Scio encouraged De Piro to keep going with plans about the congregation of priests -- 33; Scio told De Piro to contact Frs Galea P., Galea Naudi (?), Busietta (?), Bonnici T. and Agius A. about congregation of priests -- 33.

Se son rose fioriranno – Only time will tell -- 22; 29.

Secondary aim of Congregation of priests / other related ministries -- 29; St Joseph's Home -- 29; Maltese migrants -- 31; on board ships -- 31.

Secular clergy – congregation of priests to associate with it secular clergy -- 29.

Secular institute – with help of God and mother Mary, congregation to become a religious institute -- 29.

Seminary, Diocesan, Floriana – De Piro went looking for Vassallo, Fr E. -- 27.

Sequitur quocumque ieris, I will follow you, wherever you go – password of congregation of priests -- 31.

Setback - Vassallo, Fr E. advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; Gualandi sj, Fr advised De Piro to set aside plan of congregation for priests -- 22; Gualandi said 'only time will tell' -- 22; De Piro felt sick the first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro felt sick a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; icy Alpine mountains -- 24.

Sexagesima Sunday, second Sunday before Ash Wednesday -- 27.

Ships, on board – secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 31.

Sick – De Piro felt sick the first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro felt sick a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; De Piro abandoned studies -- 24; De Piro went to Davos to recuperate (August 4 1902) -- 24; De Piro started to feel better -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; De Piro left Davos on February 13 1904 -- 24.

Sliema, Malta – Salesian Fathers opening St Patrick's school Sliema, Malta -- 36.

Snow – icy Alpine mountains -- 24.

Spiritual Exercises – retreat in preparation for priesthood -- 22; retreat at S Calcedonio, Floriana -- 26; Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, annual retreat for members -- 31.

Spirituality – De Piro discussed his plans with his spiritual director for guidance -- 20; De Piro noted signs around him -- 26; during his retreats De Piro prayed about his plans -- 20; 22; De Piro submitted his discernment to his directors -- 20; De Piro trusted inner feelings as signs of God's Will for him -- 22; in difficult moments De Piro did not give up, still trusted in God -- 24; saw his healing as a gift from God -- 24; submitted to the Will of God even when it is difficult -- 24.

St John Lateran Basilica – ordination -- 23.

St Joseph's Foreign Missionary College – letter from Superior General -- 35.

St Joseph's Home – Founder Canon Bonnici F. left orphanage -- 19; De Piro was harbouring thought of taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 19; De Piro visited new directors Vassallo, Fr E. and Bugeja, Fr G. at St Joseph's Home -- 19; De Piro spoke to Vassallo about wish to reside at St Joseph's Home -- 19; Sammut sj, Fr V., advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; Vassallo advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; Vassallo spoke about congregation of priests -- 20; reason for taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; 22; discernment process affirmative decision about taking up residence at St Joseph's Home -- 20; discernment process helped by Gualandi sj, Fr -- 20; St Joseph's Home a secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 29; De Piro and Bugeja decided to have first meeting of congregation of priests St Joseph's Home -- 33; De Piro visited Bugeja at St Joseph's Home to talk about plaque in memory of Bonnici -- 33; De Piro met Bugeja at St Joseph's Home, first meeting about congregation of priests -- 34.

St Patrick's Sliema, Malta – Salesian Fathers opening St Patrick's school Sliema, Malta -- 36.

St Paul's Bay – on July 29 1909 De Piro, Bugeja, Fr G. and Mamo, Fr J. met at St Paul's Bay to discuss way forward -- 37.

Joseph De Piro

St Peter's, Vatican – Feast of Dedication of Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro celebrated Mass in honour of Apostles Sts Peter and Paul on November 18, 1906 -- 31.

Studies – De Piro wished to take up residence at St Joseph's Home when finished studies -- 20; Sammut sj, Fr V. advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; Vassallo, Fr E. advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; De Piro was invited to continue studies at Ecclesiastical Academy -- 22; De Piro intended to return to Malta once studies finished -- 22; 23; De Piro returned to Rome on April 5 1902 -- 23; studies abandoned -- 24; De Piro felt sick a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24.

Sub-deacon – retreat in preparation (February 1901) -- 20.

Subiaco, Italy – Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro he intended to join the Benedictine monastery at Subiaco, Italy -- 28.

Summer Holidays 1899 -- 19; Summer Holidays 1900 -- 19.

Swiss Alps – icy -- 24.

Switzerland – De Piro went to Davos to recuperate (August 4 1902) -- 24; De Piro continued to nurture his dreams -- 24; prayer became De Piro's most intimate friend -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; De Piro left Davos (February 13 1904) -- 24.

Transcription of Letter – forwarded by Pace, Mgr P.P., Archbishop -- 35.

Tuberculosis – see Pulmonary Tuberculosis.

Valletta – De Piro shared his plans with Vassallo, Fr E. for first time -- 26; De Piro visited Vassallo -- 27; De Piro met Vassallo on February 10 1905, did not speak about the congregation of priests -- 27; De Piro went to Valletta for feast of St Paul's Shipwreck, Feb 18 1907 -- 33; De Piro met Vassallo -- 34

Vassallo, Fr Emmanuel – Director St Joseph's Home -- 19; De Piro visited Vassallo -- 19; Vassallo struck a friendship with De Piro -- 19; De Piro spoke to Vassallo about his wish to reside at St Joseph's Home -- 19; Vassallo advised De Piro to finish off studies first -- 20; Vassallo spoke about the congregation of priests -- 20; Vassallo did not know De Piro's reasons for wanting to reside at St Joseph's Home -- 20; Vassallo seen as messenger expressing God's Will for De Piro -- 20; De Piro shared his plans with Vassallo for the first time -- 26; Vassallo agrees with De Piro's plans but no decisions were taken -- 26; after meeting between Vassallo and De Piro a beggar approached them asking for help -- 26; Vassallo and De Piro were blessed by beggar through the intercession of St Paul -- 26; Vassallo observed that blessing in the name of St Paul was not used in similar circumstances -- 26; De Piro met Vassallo at Cathedral, Mdina for Feast of Conversion of St Paul, no mention of the congregation of priests -- 26; De Piro informed Ferrara sj, Fr L. about meeting with Vassallo, De Piro had no intention of meeting Vassallo again -- 26; De Piro decided to speak again to Vassallo the first time they met -- 26; De Piro met Vassallo in Valletta on February 10 1905, did not speak about congregation of priests -- 27; De Piro went to the Diocesan Seminary Floriana looking for Vassallo -- 27; Vassallo asked De Piro to put his plans about the congregation of priests, in writing -- 27; De Piro met Vassallo in the Diocesan Seminary on February 16 1905, told him had not yet written anything -- 27; De Piro wrote to Vassallo telling him he was trying to put things in writing -- 27; De Piro told Vassallo he was finding it difficult to write down his ideas about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro told Vassallo he was not ready to write about the congregation of priests -- 27; De Piro urged Vassallo to pray about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro visited in Valletta -- 27; De Piro decided not to talk to Vassallo about congregation of priests any more -- 27; De Piro decided to talk again to Vassallo after meditation: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27; De Piro wrote a second time to Vassallo but did not mail the letter -- 28; De Piro sought advice from Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 28; Ferrara advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it -- 28; De Piro started writing plans about congregation of priests for the third time -- 28; De Piro felt that this time he had succeeded in writing down his plans for the congregation of priests -- 28; solemnity of martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro met Vassallo at the Cathedral -- 28; Vassallo informed De Piro that he was going to be free from teaching at the Seminary after July 8 -- 28; De Piro visited Vassallo at home on July 31 1905 -- 28; Vassallo again insisted with De Piro to put down his plans in writing -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro to speak to Zarb, Fr G.B. -- 28; De Piro took time to contact Zarb -- 28; De Piro presented Vassallo the plans about congregation of priests, in writing, on August 7 1905 -- 28; Vassallo promised to help De Piro with the congregation of priests -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro he intended to join the Benedictine monastery at Subiaco, Italy -- 28; De Piro gave Vassallo permission to speak to Zarb about congregation of priests -- 28; Vassallo told De Piro to speak to Bonnici, Canon F. -- 28; the written document about plans for congregation of priests -- 29; De Piro visited Vassallo regarding Bishop's Pastoral Visitation -- 32; Vassallo shared with Debono, Mgr E. De Piro's plans for a congregation of priests -- 32; Vassallo informed De Piro that he had spoken to Debono -- 32; De Piro met Vassallo on December 5, 1906 -- 32; De Piro met Vassallo on December 11, 1906 -- 32; De Piro visited Vassallo on January 14, 1907 -- 33; De Piro met Vassallo on feast of St Paul's Shipwreck, Feb 18, 1907 -- 34; Vassallo told De Piro about Raggi, Fr (?)'s wish to establish oratory of St Philip Neri -- 34.

Vatican Diplomatic corps – Ecclesiastical Academy -- 22.

Vatican, St Peter's – feast of Dedication of Basilica of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro celebrated Mass in honour of Apostles Sts Peter and Paul on November 18, 1906 -- 31.

Diary 1898 - 1909. Towards a Foundational Missionary Charism.

Villa Cecchini for retreat in preparation for priesthood -- 22.
Vision Statement of congregation of priests -- I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Visitation, Pastoral, Bishop's -- De Piro visited Vassallo, Fr E. regarding Bishop's Pastoral Visitation -- 32.
Vittoriosa, St Philip Neri Oratory -- see Philip Neri, St, Oratory.
Vows or Promises -- members of congregation of priests were not to profess vows or promises -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. decided not to talk to Galea, Fr P. and Caruana Gatto, Fr R. about religious vows or promises -- 34.
Wherever you go, I will follow you -- password of congregation of priests -- 31.
Will of God -- expressed by Vassallo, Fr E. -- 20; discovered through discernment -- 20; seen in bishop's permission -- 20; God spoke through inner feelings -- 22; God wanted to establish a congregation of priests -- 22; bishop did not insist on De Piro going to Ecclesiastical Academy -- 23; De Piro saw God's Will in bishop's will -- 23; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a first time (July 19 1900) -- 24; De Piro saw his dreams vanish a second time (July 10 1902) -- 24; Fiat! Your will be done! -- 24; De Piro arrived at Davos on feast day of St Dominic of Ozma (de Guzman) -- 24; De Piro started feeling better through God's grace -- 24; in Davos De Piro continued to nurture his dreams -- 24; icy Alpine mountains -- 24; prayer became De Piro's most intimate friend -- 24; De Piro healed by grace of God -- 24; retreat at S Calcedonio, Floriana Retreat House -- 26; plans about congregation of priests shared with Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 26; De Piro noted signs around him -- 26; De Piro changed his mind after meditation: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27; Ferrara advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it during Mass -- 28; De Piro prayed the votive divine office of St Paul -- 28; God invoked in first draft of rules -- 29; Bonnici, Canon F. told De Piro perhaps he (Bonnici) was not person chosen by Divine Providence to start congregation of priests -- 29; Bonnici told De Piro that without Divine Intervention his plan would be impossible -- 29; Bonnici died on December 24, 1905 -- 29; De Piro asked Sts Peter and Paul to help him understand God's Will -- 31; De Piro and Bugeja, Fr G. looked at statue of St Paul -- 32; De Piro's sister, Maria, died on March 2, 1907 -- 34; Debono, Mgr E. died on March 10, 1909 -- 34; members of the congregation of priests were to submit to Divine Will with great generosity -- 31; password of congregation of priests: I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31.
Written document about plans for congregation of priests -- Vassallo, Fr E. asked De Piro to put his thoughts about congregation of priests, in writing -- 27; De Piro met Vassallo in Diocesan Seminary on February 16 1905, told him he had not yet written anything -- 27; De Piro wrote to Vassallo telling him he was trying to put things in writing -- 27; De Piro found it difficult to write down his ideas about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro urged Vassallo to pray about the congregation for priests -- 27; De Piro visited Vassallo in Valletta -- 27; De Piro did not present letter to Vassallo -- 27; De Piro told Vassallo he was not ready to write -- 27; De Piro decided not to talk to Vassallo about congregation of priests any more -- 27; De Piro changed his mind after meditation: Good thought is a seed planted by God in our hearts -- 27; De Piro wrote a second time to Vassallo but did not mail letter -- 28; De Piro sought advice from Ferrara sj, Fr L. -- 28; Ferrara advised De Piro to write down plans for congregation of priests and pray about it -- 28; De Piro started writing plans about congregation of priests for the third time -- 28; De Piro felt this time he had succeeded in writing down his plans for congregation of priests -- 28; De Piro prayed the votive divine office of St Paul -- 28; solemnity of martyrdom of Sts Peter and Paul, De Piro met Vassallo at the Cathedral -- 28; Vassallo informed De Piro that he would be free from teaching at the Seminary after July 8 -- 28; De Piro visited Vassallo at home on July 31 1905 -- 28; Vassallo once more insisted with De Piro to put down his plans in writing -- 28; Vassallo promised to help De Piro with the congregation of priests -- 28; De Piro presented Vassallo with plans about congregation of priests, in writing, on August 7 1905 -- 28; congregation to be a missionary congregation -- 29; not sure if the congregation was going to be regular or secular -- 29; with help of God and mother Mary, it would become a religious institute -- 29; congregation to associate with it secular clergy -- 29; foreign missions primary aim of congregation -- 29; St Joseph's Home a secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 29; Maltese migrants a secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 31; on board ships a secondary aim of congregation of priests -- 31; St Paul patron of congregation of priests -- 31; congregation named after St Paul, Apostle -- 31; members of congregation were not to profess vows or promises -- 31; members to submit to Divine Will with great generosity -- 31; password: I will follow you, wherever you go -- 31; Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, annual retreat for members -- 31; meeting for members of congregation at least monthly -- 31; members to give monthly financial contribution -- 31.
Youth, retreat -- Debono, Mgr E. asked De Piro to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33; De Piro accepted to look after youth retreat during Carnival -- 33.
Zarb, Fr Giovanni Battista -- Vassallo, Fr E. told De Piro to speak to Zarb, Fr G.B. of Floriana Malta -- 28; De Piro took time to contact Zarb -- 28; De Piro gave Vassallo permission to speak to Zarb about congregation of priests -- 28.

Joseph De Piro

Diary
1898 - 1909

