

**THE OFFICE OF
POSTULATOR GENERAL
OF THE BROTHERS
OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS
(2/2)**

Brother Leone Morelli

● **BROTHER ROBUSTINIEN: 1829-1917,
fifth Postulator General.**

Until 1877, Brother Robustinien worked in France, then on 16th October 1878, he was posted to Rome as director of the Community of San Antonio, to lighten the burdens of Brother Floride, who was now quite old and whose health was rather poor. Brother Robustinien soon learned Italian in spite of his age. The rest of his story can be learned from his obituary notice:

"Our colleague spent only a short time in his previous post, for Providence ordained that he should fill for many years a role of great importance for our Institute in Rome. Brother Floride, at the period Procurator General to the Holy See and at the same time Visitor of the French District, cum Director of the community of Madonna dei Monti, was getting old and was suffering from poor health. Brother Superior General Irlide therefore wanted to relieve him of some of his work, by appointing Brother Robustinien director of the community, with the chance also of gaining experience in the task of Procurator, with a view later of taking over from Brother Floride. Brother Robustinien made no comment on his appointment, since he was content to allow Providence to dictate affairs. So off he set for the Eternal City arriving there during the second half of October 1878. He was in his fiftieth year. The community was at the time running three separate schools, one where the community lived and two others in the same area of the town. As in the other schools where he had been headmaster, Brother Robustinien would regularly visit the classes to encourage the teachers. He also set up periodic examinations to keep the students at their work.

On the 8th January 1880, God called Brother Floride to himself and Brother Robustinien, on 23rd February, was appointed to the triple roles of Procurator General, Postulator for the cause of Venerable de La Salle and Visitor of the French District. He often used to remark how embarrassed he was to have to undertake certain tasks for which he had had inadequate preparation. However, he did not lose heart, since he had confidence that Providence would give him the help he needed. In 1885, the two Districts became one, and, as a new Visitor was appointed, Brother Robustinien was able to concentrate on the jobs of Postulator and Procurator General, posts which he filled for 33 years.

One of the constant preoccupations of Brother Robustinien was the beatification and canonisation cause of our Holy Founder. Although he had been sent to Rome eventually to succeed Brother Floride, the latter seemed likely to survive for quite some years. Therefore his collaborator took active care of the community and classes, but did not receive much training in the role of Procurator General and even less in that of how to deal with canonisation causes. Hence when, in 1880, he found himself occupying the post of Postulator General, one could say that he had to begin learning right from the beginning.

Providence, in which Brother Robustinien had great trust, had reserved for our colleague a consolation which surely is unique for Postulators, that of arranging the actual beatification and canonisation of the Founder of our Institute. Brother Robustinien spared himself no labour; no difficulty or upset discouraged him, provided it was for the "Cause" of our Founder. Recognising that he was not sufficiently informed, he began with youthful fervour to study how Causes were dealt with; he consulted lawyers and other postulators and thus gradually acquired a remarkable competence.

On 19th February 1888, he enjoyed one of the greatest days of his life. The Sovereign Pontiff beatified Venerable de La Salle, thus allowing him public veneration. The successful Postulator was overjoyed, less for the part he himself had played in bringing it about, than for the glorification itself, and the spiritual benefits which would now come to the Institute. The same motives made Brother Robustinien yearn for the day when Blessed de La Salle would have his name on the list of Saints. It seemed to Brother Robustinien that the Institute would then be confirmed as the work of a Saint, and the Brothers would be motivated to try more and more to be filled with the spirit of their father, thus solemnly honoured by the Church. He hardly dared hope to see that supreme day himself; however, he did see it, and earlier than he expected.

The canonisation of the Holy Founder marks the high point in the active career of Brother Robustinien."

On 22nd April 1903 Brother Robustinien also obtained the introduction of the cause of Brother Benildus.

Brother Robustinien died in Rome on 19th February 1917.

● **BROTHER ALEXIS FRANÇOIS (1870-1938):**
6th Postulator General.

He was born in the province of Oviedo, Spain, where his parents were at that time working. When they returned to France Alexis joined the Brothers' school, then, at the age of fifteen, he went to the novitiate of the Mother House in Paris.

He followed his studies in the scholasticate directed by Brother Perrin-Thomas. He requested to go as a missionary to Indochina, but his health gave way under the rigorous climate, so he returned to Europe in 1885.

When Brother Perrin-Thomas was appointed Visitor of the District of Rome, he took along with him his former student Brother Alexis, who became secretary to Brother Robustinien. In the month of March 1913, Brother Superior General, Gabriel Marie, appointed him successor to Brother Robustinien as Procurator and Postulator. It was not difficult for him to carry on the work which he was in fact already doing. By his calm dignity he impressed and attracted the good will of the Roman Congregations. A prelate of the Congregation for Saints said: "*We counted him here as one of the best prepared Postulators*".

He did all he could to advance the causes of Brothers Exuperien and Mutien-Marie, once they reached Rome; the same can be said of Brother Miguel's cause. In 1928 he arranged the recognition of the heroic virtues of Brother Benildus. When Pius XI expressed the wish to see a Mother House for the Brothers built in Rome, Brother Alexis was put in charge of finding a suitable piece of land, where in fact later was to rise the Mother House of 476 Via Aurelia.

Brother Alexis died on 17th May 1938 after an operation.

● **BROTHER LEONE DI MARIA NAPIONE,**
1892-1969: 7th Postulator General.

Brother Leone entered the novitiate in 1907 and made final vows in 1920. He did his educational work in Milan then in Turin, where he became Director of the College of San Giuseppe.

He was appointed to the Mother House in Rome as Postulator General on the 21st May 1938. At the same time, he was Italian government inspector of religious teaching in schools.

In 1956 he was elected Assistant for Italy and its colonies, whilst retaining the office of Postulator and becoming Councillor Delegate to the AEI (The Italian Educational Association). After the General Chapter of 1966, he continued as Postulator and as president of the Catechetical Commission for Italy and as Councillor Delegate to the AEI.

He died suddenly in Genoa on 26th February 1969.

As Postulator his name is linked with the beatification of Brother Benildus—4th April 1948—and with his canonisation on the 29th October 1967. To these must be added the preparatory work for the causes of Brother Miguel Febres Cordero, Brother Mutien-Marie and the French and Spanish Martyr Brothers.

● **BROTHER RUGGERO DI MARIA,**
(Michele Morelli, 1914-1975),
8th Postulator General.

Brother Ruggero took the religious habit in Albano Laziale on the 6th October 1930. In 1934 he was appointed to the College of San Giuseppe. In 1947 he was transferred to Milan and in 1948 became director of the Istituto Leonardo da Vinci in Catania. In 1954 he went to Benevento, where he remained as director for seven years.

In 1961 he was named auxiliary visitor of the Rome District and the following year, whilst retaining the post of auxiliary visitor took over the headship of the College of San Giuseppe.

In 1965 he was made full Visitor, and the following year, at the General Chapter of 1966, he was elected Assistant for Italy, Libya and Ethiopia.

In number 400 of the Institute Circulars we read the following:

"Upon the death of Brother Leone di Maria, the Institute asked Brother Ruggero to add the post of Postulator General to those he already had. He brought to the task all his skills as well as a remarkable energy for the success of our beatification causes:

that of Brother Miguel, in which he displayed tremendous energy in face of quite a few difficulties; that of Brother Mutien-Marie, which he brought to its closing stages; and, following the appeals of the religious authorities of Reunion, that of Brother Scubilion, whose cause he asked to be reopened. These matters did not make him forget the cause of our Spanish martyrs, which was very dear to him and that of Brother Teodoreto of Turin."

The great courtesy and dignity which marked all his relations with the Roman authorities caused him to win the esteem of Cardinals and other Prelates of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints".

He died in Rome on the 1st April 1975 at the age of sixty-one. ●