

Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, in the midst of religious disciplining, pastoral renewal and Christian education (1564-1584)*

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The Episcopal governorship of Carlo Borromeo, and specifically the pastoral action and the renovation of the customs and the religious life that he carried out in the archdiocese of Milan in the second half of the Sixteenth century, have recently been object of renovated attention not only by Church historians, but also by scholars who are intent on clarifying one of the most favourite issues of recent religious and social historiography, that is social disciplining¹, as a basic component of the Reform, the evolution of the Catholic Tridentine Church, the building of the modern State and the transformation of the cultural and educational structures of the modern society.

With its complex forms of control over individual and collective habits, the work of Borromeo makes a substantial contribution to the building of a confessional society in the Early modern age; it surely represents, in fact, the “con-

* For a better reader comprehension, quotations of Italian Authors have been translated into English, in addition to giving the original passages in footnotes, together with references. Latin quotations have been left in their original form.

¹ W. Reinhard, *Disciplinamento sociale, confessionalizzazione, modernizzazione*, in P. Prodi (ed.), *Disciplina dell'anima, disciplina del corpo e disciplina della società tra medioevo ed età moderna*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1994, pp. 101-123; A. Prosperi, *Riforma cattolica, controriforma, disciplinamento sociale tra medioevo ed età moderna*, G. De Rosa, T. Gregory, A. Vauchez (eds.), *Storia dell'Italia religiosa*, vol. II, *L'età moderna*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 3-48. For a general picture see R. Po Chia-Sia, *La Controriforma. Il mondo del rinnovamento cattolico (1540-1770)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001.

fessional model of Catholicity”, which allows us – within the framework of a research on the educational reflexes of the *confessionalization* (i.e. confession-building) process – «to retrace and assess, in their concrete operational effects, aspects and dimensions of the counter-reformist pedagogical culture which are still widely abandoned – if not completely ignored – by the historians of pedagogy and education»².

The Borromaic pastoral not only gives preaching a leading role and intensifies and promotes the liturgical life and devotional practices, but it also reckons the demand – which was strongly highlighted by the Tridentine – of the clergy for the care of souls, which was firmly linked to the areas where its flock lived; again, it enhanced the role of parents, teachers and employers in the artisan shops, as responsible for the moral and spiritual education of the new generations. And finally, it started a process of sacralization of the territory in order to intensify – also through a rigorous and detailed legislation – the sacralization of the daily life, which had to be brought about again within the rhythms and modalities of the «Church’s time»³.

With Carlo Borromeo, we witness the establishing, in substance, of the true model of the bishop in the care of souls of the Catholic reform, a model where pastoral activities, education and Christian animation follow the same path, in such a penetrating and organic way that they connote an exemplary experience, the analysis of which makes us comprehend the role and the educational work of the Church in the modern society.

When he solemnly entered in Milan on 23rd September 1565, Carlo Borromeo was guided by a unique and great project: to realize the ecclesiastic reform which the Tridentine had approved⁴. He arrived not as an archbishop, but as an envoy of the Pope – something that did not diminish the enthusiasm of the Milanese people. Even though he had left Rome only temporarily in order to preside over the first Provincial Council of his archdiocese, for some time he had steadily matured the desire of residing in his Episcopal venue, a desire that he was able to realize in April 1566: from this date onwards, he would never again leave Milan, except for short periods and for exceptional causes.

The project of rigorously putting into effect the Tridentine decrees, had been developed during the Roman stay (1560-1565)⁵ when the Cardinal’s nephew, as Secretary of State, was able to closely follow the developments of the last

² R. Sani, *Educazione e istituzioni educative nell’Italia moderna (secoli XV-XIX)*, Milano, I.S.U. Università Cattolica, 1999, p. 458.

³ J. Le Goff, *Tempo della Chiesa e tempo del mercante*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977.

⁴ A. Borromeo, *I vescovi italiani e l’applicazione del Concilio di Trento*, in C. Mozzarella, D. Zardin (eds.), *I tempi del concilio. Religione, cultura e società nell’Europa tridentina*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1997.

⁵ P. Paschini, *Il primo soggiorno di san Carlo Borromeo a Roma, 1560-1565*, in Id., *Cinquecento romano e riforma cattolica. Scritti raccolti in occasione dell’ottantesimo compleanno dell’autore*, Romae, Facultas theologica Pontificii Athenaei Lateranensis, 1958.

phase of the Council, and so, open his eyes to the large and diffused state of degeneration of the Church's life, which made it possible for him to foresee hard obstacles in the process of realizing the council reforms' directions.

In Rome – Giuseppe Alberigo writes – Carlo became aware of the strength of the abuse system: it dominated the arrangement of the ecclesiastic world, and its effects contaminated all aspects of the Church's life. Decadence was an enormous force, and everywhere it found partisans and supporters. [...]. The point was not the elimination of some flaws in a healthy body, but the elimination, with a bright and resolute intervention, of a diffused and branched degeneration, which was firm in holding out with all its energies. [...]. Only a rigorous, enduring and widespread fight against each sign of abuse, could have obtained an efficacious and definitive defeat of the abuse practice, and its replacement with a habitual discipline⁶.

To replace abuse with discipline: this was, as well known, the imperative that emerged at the end of the Tridentine. The promoter of this impressive challenge should have been the bishop: not the *episcopus* secular prince, far from the spiritual demands of his diocese, but rather the *pastor* with his exemplary morals, able to lead his faithful towards the *Reformatio Ecclesiae*. Carlo Borromeo absorbed this concept of the Episcopal *munus* during his period in Rome, not only with the Tridentine experience and the attendance at the new religious institutions which animated the Catholic Reform, such as Jesuits, Teatins and Fathers of the Oratory, but also during the crucial meeting with the Archbishop of Braga and primate of Portugal, Bartolomeo de Mártiribus⁷.

⁶ «A Roma, Carlo ebbe modo di rendersi conto della forza raggiunta dal sistema abusivo, che costituiva ormai l'assetto prevalente del mondo ecclesiastico con effetti inquinanti in tutti gli aspetti della vita della chiesa. La decadenza aveva una forza enorme e trovava ovunque partigiani e sostenitori. [...]. Non si tratta di eliminare qualche smagliatura di un sistema sano, ma di intervenire con lucida determinazione per eliminare una degenerazione estesa e ramificata, decisa a resistere con tutte le forze. [...]. Solo una rigorosa lotta a ogni traccia di abuso, protratta nel tempo ed estesa nello spazio, avrebbe potuto conseguire un superamento effettivo e definitivo della prassi abusiva, sostituendole una disciplina abituale» (H. Jedin, G. Alberigo, *Il tipo ideale di vescovo secondo la Riforma cattolica*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1985, pp. 125-126).

⁷ Bartolomé de los Mártires (Lisbona 1514-Viana do Castelo 1590; the appellative *dei Martiri* recalls the Church of S. Maria dei Martiri where he was baptized, and it replaced the name of *Vale*, which was adopted in memory of his grandfather), after the novitiate in his native city, took the Dominican habit in 1528. After finishing his studies of philosophy and theology in 1538, he spent a long period teaching in the convents in Lisbon (1538-1557); then he became prior of the convent of Benfca in Lisbon (1557-1558). In 1559 he received the archbishopric in Braga, where he governed zealously and took great care of pastoral visits as an engagement for the evangelization of the people, as testified by the *Catechismo o dottrina cristiana e pratiche spirituali* (15th edition in 1962). He looked after the education of clergy, and founded schools of Moral Theology in many places of the diocese, he instituted the Council Seminar in Campo Vinha (1571-1572); and finally, he wrote doctrinal works, amongst which the *Stimulus Pastorum* (22 editions). From 1561 to 1563 he took part in the Council of Trent and, in order to put into effects the directions of the council, he organized a Diocesan Synod in 1564, which was followed in 1566 by a Provincial Synod. On 23rd February 1582 he renounced the archbishopric and he retired to the Dominican convent of Santa Croce in Viana do Castelo, which arose on his initiative (1561) in order to fur-

Bartolomeo de Mártiribus, who arrived at Rome in the end of September 1563, became for the young cardinal the model to follow, the living example of the pastor totally devoted to the Episcopal ministry, and whose basic characteristics are exposed by the same de Mártiribus in his *Stimulus pastorum*⁸. The treatise, far from the abstractness of the *specula* concerning the ideal traditional bishop, was able to meet the real demands of the epoch and must surely have been counted amongst the readings which played the most significant role in the education of Carlo Borromeo.

The meeting between Bartolomeo de Martyribus and Carlo Borromeo – Alberigo underlines once more – had an intense spiritual dimension, which was centred on the significance of the Council and the necessity of the reform. The Portuguese was able to encourage the Milanese in his ecclesiastic engagement, stimulating his devotion to the Church and the Episcopal service. This was a crucial event, for the ideal which Carlo had of being a bishop. He had surely already met figures of great spiritual commitment, but perhaps he had not yet had the occasion of encountering someone who could illustrate to him the living reality of a bishop devoted to the pastoral ministry, without reservation in evangelical spirit⁹.

«Since that Autumn – Cesare Sponsati writes – the relation with the Church of Milan changed: from a legal bond, it assumed for Carlo Borromeo a new and particular depth, taking the shape of a true nuptial relationship»¹⁰. In fact

ther ecclesiastic studies and preaching. It was there that he died on 16th July 1590. Reckoned and acclaimed by the people with the name of *Saint Archbishop, father of poor and sick*, he was declared Venerable by Gregorius XVI on 23rd March 1845 and in 2001 was proclaimed Blessed. *Hierarchia Catholica Medii aevi sive summorum pontificum, S.R.E. cardinalium, ecclesiarum antistitum series*, 9 vols., Patavii, Il messaggero di S. Antonio, 1898-2001, vol. III, p. 139; E. Lafuente Ferrari, *Iconografia lusitana. Retratos grabados de personajes portugueses*, Madrid, s.n., 1941 (Archivo Biográfico de España, Portugal e Iberoamérica); R. De Almeida Rolo, *Bartolomé de los Mártires*, in *Gran Enciclopedia Rialp: Humanidades y Ciencia*, Última actualización 1991, <http://www.canalsocial.net/GER/ficha_GER.asp?id=217&cat=biografiasuelta> (last access: 17th September 2007).

⁸ Bartholomeus de Martyribus, *Stimulus pastorum ex sententijs Patrum concinnatus, in quo agitur de vita & moribus episcoporum, aliorumque praelatorum, per reverendiss. D.D. Bartholomaeum a martyribus archiepiscopum Bracharensem, & Hispaniae primatem*, Romae, apud Haeredes Iulij Accolti, 1572. In the preface – dedicated to Borromeo – Francesco Cotta explains the title: «Praeterea id fuit causae, quare is pastorum stimulus inscriberetur, proptereaque (ut ego arbitrator) eos omnes, qui aliis praesunt, quasi aculeis pungit, ac stimulos eis admovet, ut omni qua possint diligentia, celeritate, industria, ac omnibus denique tam corporis, quam animi viribus, subiectos sibi homines iuvent, tueantur, conservent».

⁹ «L'incontro tra Bartolomeo de Martyribus e Carlo Borromeo ebbe una intensa dimensione spirituale incentrata sull'importanza del concilio e l'urgenza della riforma. Il portoghese riuscì a confortare il milanese nell'impegno ecclesiastico, accedendo o, quanto meno, alimentando in lui la dedizione alla chiesa e al servizio episcopale. Si trattò dunque di un incontro cruciale per l'ideale di vescovo di Carlo. Egli aveva certo già conosciuto uomini di grande impegno spirituale, ma forse non aveva avuto ancora l'occasione di incontrare qualcuno che potesse presentargli in modo tanto compatto e perciò convincente la realtà vivente di un vescovo dedito senza riserve in spirito evangelico al ministero pastorale» (Jedin, Alberigo, *Il tipo ideale di vescovo*, cit., p. 117).

¹⁰ C. Sponsati, *Carlo Borromeo e la tradizione liturgica della Chiesa Milanese*, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 37.

it was exactly on the 7th December 1563, the day of S. Ambrogio, that the Episcopal ordination arrived. If the cardinalship (31st January 1560) had been a consequence of his uncle-Pope and represented a tempting occasion for amassing a fortune, the bishopric was the result of a personal journey. The decision matured, as it is known, after the death of the brother Federico, and it was not welcomed by the Pope, who was rather worried about the lack of a future heir for the powerful family Borromeo. The *alter Ambrosius*, as contemporaries called him¹¹, desired to begin his governorship “under the sign” of S. Ambrogio, not only because he had chosen him as patron saint and model, but overall because he wanted to put his ministry in the river-bed of the Ambrosian tradition, as it is shown, for example, by the several publishing initiatives that followed the institution of the Congregation of Rites, publications which aimed at diffusing the Ambrosian Rite across the archdiocese¹².

In the mind of the young cardinal, the Gregorian warning to pastors, which was acknowledged in the pages of the *Stimulus pastorum*, soon became clear and strong

Studeat cor nostrum terrenorum pastorum imitatione succendi, qui hyemales noctes imbribus, gelusque constricti, ducunt per vigiliis: ne vel una ovis, et forte non utilis, pereat.

¹¹ Giovanni Pietro Giussano remembers how Carlo «fixed his eyes mainly on S. Ambrogio, whom he had chosen as his Protector; he therefore wanted to be consecrated Archbishop on the day of his ordination. Then it would be clear to everybody that not only did he have a special devotion and greatly venerated him, but that he also imitated him as much as possible. In his history, the Cardinal of Verona calls him the true imitator of S. Ambrogio; and the cardinal Nicolò Sfrondato bishop of Cremona, who later became Pope with the name of Greg. XIII, used to call him the second Ambrogio, and the same is true of Cardinal Baronio in his Annali, and for many others» («fissò gl'occhi principalmente in S. Ambrogio, il quale s'haveva eletto per Protettore; perciò volle essere consecrato Arcivescovo nel giorno della sua Ordinatione. Onde fù osservato da molti come egli non solo fù di lui divotissimo, e l'hebbe in somma veneratione, ma l'imitò anche in tutto quello che poté. Però il Cardinale di Verona lo chiama nella sua historia, vero imitatore di S. Ambrogio; e' l cardinale Nicolò Sfrondato vescovo di Cremona, che fù poi Sommo Pontefice, con nome di Greg. XIII lo soleva chiamare un secondo Ambrogio, così lo nomina similmente il Cardinale Baronio ne' suoi Annali, e molti altri». See G.P. Giussani, *Vita di S. Carlo Borromeo [...] Et in questa nostra ultima impressione ampliata di molte cose notabili, [...], Con li Ricordi lasciatoci da questo glorioso S. cardinale [...] Documenti à Padri di famiglia per il buon governo loro, et Ammaestramenti à i Giovanetti per ben ricevere il Santissimo Sacramento. Et postevi di più la Pace dell'Amore, et gli Atti di contrizione Con due copiose Tavole, l'una de' Capitoli, et l'altra delle cose più notabili*, In Venetia, appresso Giacomo Sarzina, 1615, lib. II, cap. II, p. 35. In his biography of Borromeo, Agostino Valier ends the pages, which are devoted to the parallelism between Ambrogio and Carlo, with these words: «Virtutes, qua in Ambrosio fuerant (ut vero dicam) in Carolo Borromeo mille amplius post annos, renovasse Dominum Deum qui hanc nostram scriptionem legerit, et qui libellos varios, qui de ipso conscripti sunt, evolverint, facilius intelligent». A. Valier, *Vita Caroli Borromei Card. S. Praxedis, archiepiscopi mediolani item opuscula duo Episcopus et Cardinalis ab Augustino card. Veronae conscripta*, Veronae, apud Hieronymum Discipulum, 1586, pp. 59-62.

¹² *Calendario Liturgico* (from 1567), *Salterio* (1574), *Avvertenze [...] ai curati per amministrare il santissimo sacramento dell'eucharestia in chiesa* (1574), *Libro delle litanie* (1579), *Istruzione per celebrare la messa secondo il rito ambrosiano* (1579), *Breviario* (1584). The *Rituale* and the *Messale* came out posthumously, respectively in the year 1589 and 1594.

Quam si insidiator ore mordaci momorderit, quomodo satagunt, quibus cordis anhelant aestibus, in quas voces (ut eruant captum pecus) angustia stimulante prosiliunt, ne a Domino gregis exigit quidquid per incuriam perierit?¹³

Carlo Borromeo believed that his flock should be protected from external dangers, so he did not waste his time: the day after his nomination as archbishop (12th May 1564) of the vast province of Milan¹⁴ he decided, since he was still retained in Rome by the uncle Pius IV, to send his trusted collaborator Nicolò Ormaneto¹⁵ to Milan, in the role of General Vicar of the diocese, and with the task of organizing the first diocesan synod of his long governorship. The synod – which took place from 29th to 31st August 1565 in the Cathedral and in the presence of 1,200 ecclesiastics, was convened in order to introduce the Tridentine to the Milanese diocese, and it ratified and established the main council decrees (residence, reduction of benefits, morality and education of the clergy, pastoral practices).

The zealous archbishop was not satisfied of the results, so he later called a provincial council. Soon after he began the preparations from Rome, and on 15th October 1565 he officially opened the Council which took place under his direct

¹³ Bartholomeus de Martyribus, *Stimulus pastorum*, cit., p. 42r.

¹⁴ «The Ambrosian diocese was at that time one of the vastest and most populated in Catholic Europe. During Borromeo's governorship there were, according to the most reliable statistics, up to 2,200 churches and other sacred buildings, and a diocesan clergy which amounted to 3,352 people, from the canons in the cathedral, to the simple clergymen *incedentes in habitu clericali*. The diocese's territory was mainly on the flat ground but also included hilly areas; it expanded westerly out of the Milan State boundaries, into the Savoy Dukedom and into Monferrato, northerly towards the Canton Ticino, and then towards the Republic of Venice, and Bergamo» (see Borromeo, *I vescovi*, cit., p. 59).

¹⁵ Nicolò Ormaneto (Verona 1515/17-Madrid 1577) served his apprenticeship at the dioceses of Verona as collaborator of the bishop Gian Matteo Giberti; as Wieste de Boer underlined, «in his two year period of work in Milan (1564-1565) he became not only the maker of the Borromeo's programme of reforms, but he gave it the clear shape of Giberti» (W. de Boer, *La conquista dell'anima. Fede, disciplina e ordine pubblico nella Milano della Controriforma*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, p. 15). Regarding the Verona influences on the Borromaic governorship see E. Cattaneo, *Influenze veronesi nella legislazione di san Carlo Borromeo, in Problemi di vita religiosa in Italia nel Cinquecento. Atti del convegno di storia della Chiesa in Italia, Bologna, 2-6 settembre 1958*, Padova, Antenore, 1960, pp. 123-166. Ormaneto, who belonged to a noble family from Verona, studied law in Padua and worked in Verona as a jurist. In 1541 Giberti invited him to Rome, after six years he took the habit and he was entrusted with the diocese of Bovolone. In 1553 he followed the cardinal Pole during his legation in England; back in Italy, he took part in the last phases of the Council of Trent and highly assisted the cardinal Navagero in realizing the first Tridentin reforms in the diocese of Verona. He went to Milan on 7th July 1564, where he remained, as vicar of Borromeo, until April 1566. Later, he was called by Pius V to Rome, in order to work at reforming the Roman Curia. In 1570 he was designated bishop of Padua, but he could not reside in the diocese. In 1572 he set out for Spain, with the thorny charge of nuncio at the court of Philip II. He died in Madrid on 18th June 1577 (see *Hierarchia Catholica*, cit., vol. III, p. 284; F. Ughelli, *Italia sacra sive episcopis Italiae et insularum adiacentium*, 10 vols., Venetiis, Apud Sebastianum Coleti, 1717-1722, vol. V, col. 460; *Enciclopedia cattolica*, 12 vols., Città del Vaticano, Ente per l'Enciclopedia cattolica e per il libro cattolico, 1949-1954, vol. 9, col. 360).

chairmanship¹⁶. In the last 254 years before in fact, no provincial council had been held in Milan – the last one had been celebrated in 1311 – and the occasion represented an important test for the bishop who had announced his wish to apply the Tridentine. As Tolomeo Gallio wrote, on 13th October, to the young archbishop: «You can believe that not only Rome, but almost the entire Europe, are now attentive and staring at [your] actions»¹⁷; and in fact the Como Cardinal was right: with the first provincial council in Milan in fact, the name of Carlo Borromeo, as ideal bishop of the Catholic Reform, began to widespread.

The Council largely focused on the discipline of clergy. With regards to this, statutes in fact contemplated both a *pars destruens*, i.e. the charge of abuses and deficiencies of the Milanese Church, and a *pars construens*, aimed at improving and modeling the conduct of priests through directions and regulations with a primarily pastoral nature; these laws delineated a priestly work centred on the faith (liturgical offices, processions, cult of relics and images, music and chants in churches, sacred representations, sacraments, pastoral visits). In this perspective, and in compliance with the Tridentine Decrees, the directives concerning religious education and spiritual animation were largely considered by the Milanese Provincial Council: from the obligation, for bishops, to institute a prebendary in the chapters both of the cathedral church and of the main collective churches (*collegiali*); the obligation for theologians to explain the Holy Write; to the obligation, for parish priests, to preach on Sundays and Holidays, and to promote the catechism for children on Sunday and holiday afternoons. This last direction is linked to the rigorous laws of the Council concerning the orthodoxy of the *ludi magistri*, which had to adhere to the Pius IV's Bull of 1564 *In sacrosancta*¹⁸ (concerning the profession of faith) and were under the crosscheck of both religious and civilian authorities, which were called upon to cooperate «ut, nulla sumptus sui habita ratione, publicos ludi magistros in urbes, et suae ditionis loca conducant, non minus fidei, et vitae quam doctrinae, et scientiae laude commendatos»¹⁹.

¹⁶ E. Cattaneo, *Il primo Concilio provinciale milanese*, in *Il Concilio di Trento e la riforma tridentina, Atti del convegno storico internazionale (Trento, 2-6 settembre 1963)*, Roma, Herder, 1965, pp. 215-275; C. Marcora, *Un concilio provinciale a Milano nel 1468?*, «Memorie storiche della diocesi di Milano», IV, 1957, pp. 279-281.

¹⁷ «[alle sue] attioni lei può ben credere, che non Roma sola, ma quasi tutta la buona Europa sta hora fissa et intenta» (A. Monti, *Lettere inedite di Tolomeo Gallio Cardinale di Como al Cardinale Carlo Borromeo*, «Periodico della Società Storica per la provincia e antica Diocesi di Como», VII, 1889, p. 37).

¹⁸ *Bullarum diplomatum et privilegiorum sanctorum romanorum pontificum : taurinensis editio locupletior facta : collectione novissima plurium brevium, epistolarum, decretorum actorumque S. Sedis a S. Leone Magno usque ad praesens, cura et studio Aloysii Tomassetti, [poi] Collegii adlecti Romae virorum s. theologiae et ss. canonum peritorum [...], Augustae Taurinorum, Seb. Franco et Henrico Dalmazzo editoribus, 1857-1872, 25 vols. (including one volume of Appendix), vol. VII (1862), pp. 323-327.*

¹⁹ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis, tribus partibus distincta. Quibus concilia provincialia, conciones synodales, synodi dioecesanæ, instructiones, litterae pastorales, edicta, regulæ confratruarum, for-*

The synods had a role of relief during long Borromeo's governorship, which was marked by 11 diocesan synods (1564, 1568, 1572, 1574, 1578, 1579, 1580, 1581, 1582, 1583, 1585) and 6 provincial councils (1565, 1569, 1573, 1576, 1579, 1582). The impressive Borromaic legislation, later collected in the *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, influenced not only the Milanese and Northern-Italian reality, but also became a concrete model of pastoral government for the entire Church of the Modern age. As Agostino Borromeo correctly underlines,

the value of the Borromaic councils lay not only on the significance of the concrete goals that they attained, but especially on the fact that those councils were promoted and chaired by the cardinal nephew of the Pope who had resolved the Council of Trent; moreover, a man whose prestige and reputation were growing. Therefore, the contemporaries perceived those councils, especially the former one, as an example to follow, and the related decrees, as a model to imitate²⁰.

This "attention towards the law" can be referred, as Bendiscioli underlines²¹, not only to the juridical education that he received in Padua, or to his closeness to orders such as Teatins and Jesuits, who were accustomed to the rule; but it must be referred to the deep belief, which he pondered during the Tridentine activities, in the law's power of control, which he developed so that neither things, people or situations, within the Church's competence, could be left to arbitrariness.

On the one hand the Milan archbishop tweaked a detailed regulation for the disciplinary reform of the clergy and the people, whilst, on the other, he took care that it was realized through the building of a strong Church, hierarchically organized and centralized. The "almost Pope" – as Panigarola called him²² –

mulae, et alia denique continentur, quae Carolus S.R.E. Cardinalis tit. S. Praxedis, Archiepiscopus egit. Cum privilegio summi Pontificis, Mediolani, apud Pacificum Pontium, 1582, I, De ludi Magisteri, c. 3v. About the reactions after the first provincial council see: C. Marcora, *I primi anni dell'episcopato di S. Carlo Borromeo (1566-1567)*, «Memorie Storiche della diocesi di Milano», vol. X, 1963, pp. 517-617.

²⁰ «L'importanza dei concili Borromaici non va fatta risalire unicamente alla rilevanza dei risultati concreti raggiunti, bensì e soprattutto alla circostanza che si trattava di concili promossi e presieduti dal cardinale nipote del papa che aveva concluso il concilio di Trento, un uomo, per giunta, il cui prestigio e la cui fama si andavano diffondendo. Ecco perché la loro celebrazione, ed in particolare quella del primo, fu avvertita dai contemporanei come un esempio da seguire ed i relativi decreti come un modello da imitare» (Borromeo, *I vescovi*, cit., p. 42). For a list of the several editions and compendiums of the *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis* see E. Cattaneo, *La singolare fortuna degli Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, «La scuola cattolica: rivista di teologia del Seminario Arcivescovile di Milano», CXI, 1983, 3-4, pp. 191-217.

²¹ M. Bendiscioli, *Politica, amministrazione e religione nell'età dei Borromei*, in *Storia di Milano*, Milano, Fondazione Treccani, 1953-1996, 18 vols., vol. X (1957), pp. 155-159.

²² Panigarola, in his speech for the funeral rites of Borromeo, underlined that the Ambrosian metropolitan belonged to a family «which can be defined a seminar of popes» («seminario di pontefici»). See Francesco Panigarola, *Oratione di fr. Francesco Panigarola minore osservante, in morte, e sopra il corpo dell'ill.mo Carlo Borromeo cardinale di S. Prasseda, et arcivescovo di Milano*, In Milano, per Paolo Gottardo Pontio, 1585, p. 260).

gave life to a pyramidal building: at the top was the archbishop, assisted by trusty collaborators and selected from the non-Milanese areas, in order to avoid conflicts of local interests (Nicolò Ormaneto, Gerolamo Federico Trivulzio, Pietro Galesino, Cesare Speciano, Giovanni Francesco Bonomo, Carlo Bascapè and the Jesuits Giovanni Botero, Benedetto Palmio and Francesco Adorno). At a lower level, as a connection between the centre and periphery, there was a well-structured body of ecclesiastics who were spread across the territory. In the city, which was organized into six gates (i.e. six districts: *sestieri*), there was an ecclesiastic at the helm of each *sestiere*; whilst in the country – all the same divided into six areas – a *vicarius foraneus* controlled each area, and group of parishes were under supervisors, scrupulously selected by the archbishop.

Carlo Borromeo gave life to an oligarchic structure, «in the belief that any movement of renovation should begin from the bishop (the head), then involve the clergy, and from the clergy arrive to the people»²³. In his homilies this conception of the Church is often expressed through the image of the human body: «Vos oculi mei estis, vos aures, vos manus, vos huius cathedrae et Ecclesiae bases ac fulcimenta validiora»²⁴.

The young metropolitan was able to include within such a project several religious institutions, new and old ones, male and female. This was the case, for example, of the Jesuits, whom he immediately entrusted with the direction of the ecclesiastic seminar and the education of the diocese's clergy, and who soon became «a way of ascetic life and at the same time a method of intense action, for the pastoral and the edification, which aimed at gaining proselytes also through the suggestion of the novelty and notoriety»²⁵. In 1570 the Teatins arrived in Milan and they settled first in the Church of *S. Maria in S. Celso*, and then, after 1575, in *S. Antonio*, briefly becoming a crucial point of reference for the religious practice. In the same year Carlo Borromeo made the Fathers of the Oratory come from Rome, with the purpose of involving them in the care of souls, especially of the young – in fact, he remembered their competence and efficacy, which he had known well in Rome whilst attending the Philippine oratory. But the Fathers were against any rigidity and scheming, and so could not accommodate the overarching style of Borromeo, therefore the Oratory project could not take root in Milan.

We must also recall how the S. Prassede cardinal was able to support the religious institutions which were already in the territory, for example in the case of the Barnabites, who had been active in Milan since 1530 and promoters of an apostolate based on preaching and charitable assistance: Borromeo

²³ M. Marocchi, *L'immagine della Chiesa in Carlo Borromeo*, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 25.

²⁴ G.A. Sassi, *Sancti Caroli Borromei Homiliae, nunc primum e mss. codicibus Bibliothecae Ambrosianae in lucem productae*, Mediolani, ex typographia Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, 5 vols., apud Joseph Marellum, 1747-1748, vol. III, p. 384.

²⁵ Bendiscioli, *Politica, amministrazione e religione*, cit., p. 162.

involved them in the popular missions, in the exercises for clergy, as visitors in convents and directors of the schools of the Christian doctrine, but also as animators of the popular devotion of the “Forty hours” (*Quarant’ore*). A further valid support for the campaign of the Milanese church reform was detected by Borromeo in Capuchins, who had been in the city from 1536, and who were involved as visitors in convents and preachers in popular missions, especially in the Swiss valleys. To the same duties a valid support was offered also by the traditional orders that had adhered to the movement of the observance, especially the Franciscans, Dominicans and Hermits of St. Augustine.

With regards to the “religious animation” of the female world, Carlo Borromeo principally entrusted it to the Congregation of the Angelic Sisters of St. Paul (known as the *Angeliche*), and to the Company of Saint Ursula (*Orsoline*). The *Angeliche*, founded in Milan in 1535 with aims similar to those of the Barnabites, even though devoted to enclosure, kept on playing a central role in the Milanese religious life and made the *S. Paolo* Convent a crucial centre of spiritual life. The *Orsoline*, which arose in Brescia in 1536 through the initiative of Angela Merici, arrived in Milan just in the beginning of the borromaic archbishopric: these young “nuns in house” were commanded by the archbishop to live in community, though without enclosure, but on the condition that they practiced religious and primary education for young poor girls and assisted orphans inside the convent.

Just this “will to conform” led Carlo Borromeo to «perceive the disadvantages of the primary dependence – also of Jesuits, Barnabites, Cappuchins – from their respective general Superiors or anyway external to the diocese, and however the difficulty of obtaining from them the necessary cooperation for his opinions»²⁶. For these reasons, in 1578 he founded the Oblates of S. Ambrogio, who after his death were called the Oblates of Saints Ambrogio and Carlo, a congregation of secular priests (just like those of the Jesuits, Barnabites and Teatins), but who were exclusively devoted to the diocese and directly under the archbishop, and therefore faithful executor of his directions.

Cum autem huic congregationi huiusmodi sit propositus scopus, atque finis; illud etiam, ut necessario consequens, recipiatur, oportet, eiusdem congregationis homines, Reverendissimi Archiepiscopi Mediolanensis ecclesiae ministros omnino esse debere, cui scilicet pastoris, speculatorisque officium in hac ecclesia, eiusdemque procuratio, atque gubernatio, ut illius animas ad aeternae salutis iter dirigat, commissa est. Quocirca praecipuum etiam huius congregationis fundamentum, in exquisita, ac plane perfecta erga ipsos Archiepiscopos ecclesiae Mediolanensis obedientia positum esse debet, ad Dei gloriam, et animarum eiusdem ecclesiae salutem impense procurandam, adiuvandamque et promovendam²⁷.

The rules of the Oblates of S. Ambrogio, who Carlo Borromeo from 1579 charged with the education of the diocese’s clergy (instead of the Jesuits), reflect

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁷ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., I, *Institutionum ad Oblatos S. Ambrosii*, cap. I, c. 222r.

the caroline concept of a firmly organized Church, where the bishop is the propulsive and unifying heart, the priests are the “nerves” which connect and support the spiritual life of the people, and the laics are the objective of the action, i.e. the field, the vineyard to look after, the flock to feed. A clear example is offered by the articulated network of secular confraternities²⁸ which spread across the territory: from the Charity Companies for the personal edification and assistance to the poor and sick, to the penitential confraternities for the expiation of the sins of the world and the individual; to the confraternities of inmates and old School of *S. Giovanni decollato alle case rotte*, which arose from the assistance to inmates and those condemned to death; and finally, to the Company of the Holy Sacrament, which aimed, against the Calvinist negation, at reaffirming the reverence to the body of Christ which is in the Host, and at creating “sacred” forms through which to give free play to the demand of feast by the people. Carlo Borromeo developed these entities, but he included them within the parish structures, in this way submitting them to the close control of the clergy, which was charged with the nomination of directors, the supervision of the administration, the choice of confessors and ratification of the religious and assistance initiatives of confraternities.

The ecclesiology of the Ambrosian metropolitan is surely pragmatic: the Church is the body²⁹ where the blood of salvation flows; Christ is the head of this body and the believers are the limbs; the vitality of the body, which depends on the deep union of the limbs with the head, is guaranteed only by bishops and priests, fathers and pastors of souls, and through them the fruitfulness of the *Ecclesia mater* can be realized. The hierarchical Church of Borromeo is not a simple polemic answer to the Protestants: in fact, it originates from the deep belief that, in order to realize the religious renaissance, it is necessary for the priests to strongly engage in empowering their own duty as leaders, so that they become *formae fidelium*, i.e. models and examples to follow, because from them the *salus animarum* invoked by the Tridentine³⁰ descend.

To confirm the importance the young archbishop assigned to the *officium* of the priests, we must underline, amongst his first provisions, the institution of the

²⁸ Regarding the role of the Fraternal orders in reorganizing the life of the Catholic church see: D. Zardin, *Il rilancio delle confraternite nell'Europa cattolica Cinque-Seicentesca*, in Mozzarella, Zardin (eds.), *I tempi*, cit., pp. 107-144; C.F. Black, *Italian Confraternities in the Sixteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989 (trad. it. *Le confraternite italiane nel Cinquecento*, Milano, Rizzoli, 1992); D. Zardin, *Corpi, «fraternità», mestieri: intrecci e parentele nella 'costituzione' delle trame di base della società europea. Alcune premesse*, in D. Zardin (ed.), *Corpi, «fraternità», mestieri nella storia della società europea*, Roma, Bulzoni, 1998, pp. 9-36 (Quaderni di Cheiron, 7).

²⁹ The image of the Church as the body of the Christ, is a leit motiv of the speeches and homilies of Borromeo. See Marcocchi, *L'immagine*, cit., p. 35 nota 53.

³⁰ G. Alberigo, G.L. Dovetti, P.P. Joannou, C. Leopardi, P. Prodi (eds.), *Conciliorum Oecumenicorum decreta*, Bologna, EDB, 1991, Sessio XXIII (17th sept. 1562), *Decretum de reformatione*, pp. 737-741.

Seminar for the education of the clergy – in total compliance with the directions of the Tridentine³¹. In connection to this, in June 1565 Carlo Borromeo had already charged Mons. Ormaneto with the foundation of a boarding school for young aspirant priests, and to be set under the direction of the Jesuits.

The aim of the seminar – as the archbishop of Milan wrote to his general vicar – should be to raise a good number of sons, in order that they can renovate, little by little, the secular clergy and remedy the great ignorance that exists in this city, and out of it³².

The Seminar, after being initially housed in rooms which had been located in the nearby Church of *S. Vito al Carrobbio di Porta Ticinese*, almost immediately found a stable venue in *S. Giovanni a Porta Orientale*, in the neighbourhood of the *Duomo*. In 1572 it already counted some 150 boarders, who were followed in their education by around fifteen Jesuits. Three years earlier, the same Borromeo had outlined its first regulation «which would have become the base for almost all future regulations of Italian seminars, at the point that it was recovered, in its substance, even by Pius X in the years of the true re-foundation of the seminars»³³. This regulation was: organized into three founding elements such as piety, study and discipline; focused on the individuals' capacities, as well as on the selection of the ruling staff; aimed at delineating a system based on asceticism and humanistic education, without allowing room for fantasy or temptations of the external world; and finally, meant to empower the spiritual dimension and the interiorization of the rule.

As Turchini notes, «the Seminar represents the final step of an educational process, which begins from the school directed by priests, private as well as formally instituted, both in town and in the country, and that is of special interest for the bishop»³⁴. In fact, the far-seeing Milanese archbishop did not only

³¹ A. Prosperi, *Educare gli educatori: il prete come professione intellettuale nell'Italia tridentina*, in *Problemes d'histoire de l'education. Actes des seminaires organises par l'École française de rome et l'Università di Roma-La Sapienza (janvier-mai, 1985)*, Roma, École française de Rome, 1988; H. Jedin, *Das Bischofsideal der katholischen Reformation*, s.l., s.n., s.d., trad. it. *Il tipo ideale di vescovo secondo la riforma cattolica*, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1950; G.G. Meersseman, *Il tipo ideale di parroco*, in *Il Concilio di Trento*, cit., pp. 27-44.

³² Sani, *Educazione*, cit., p. 468.

³³ M. Guasco, *La formazione del clero: i seminari*, in G. Chittolini, G. Miccoli (eds.), *Storia d'Italia, Annali 9: La Chiesa e il potere politico dal medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Torino, Einaudi, 1986, p. 632. In this connection see: F. Bertani, A. Bernareggi, *Le regole dei seminari milanesi*, «Humilitas. Miscellanea storica dei seminari milanesi», 1928-1938, pp. 101-111; A. Rimoldi, *I documenti della sezione XI dell'Archivio della Curia Arcivescovile di Milano riguardanti le regole di S. Carlo per i seminari milanesi dal 1564 al 1599*, Venegono Inferiore, La scuola cattolica, 1967; Id., *Le istituzioni di san Carlo per il clero diocesano milanese*, «La Scuola Cattolica», XLIII, 1965, pp. 427-458. The text of the rules is available in: *Institutiones ad universam seminarii regimen pertinentes ab illustrissimo et reverendissimo D.D. Carolo S. Praxedi Cardinali, Archiep. Mediolani confectae*, in *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, Mediolani, Paulo Pagnonio, 1843-1846, 2 vols., vol. I (1843), *passim* and vol. II (1846), pp. 1005 e ss.

³⁴ A. Turchini, *Sotto l'occhio del padre. Società confessionale e istruzione primaria nello Stato di Milano*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1996, p. 89.

look after the education of the “cadres”, but during his episcopate he caused several seminaries to be erected, in order to meet the various demands of education of the clergy in the great Milanese archdiocese. This is well recalled by an enlightened bishop, his contemporary and friend since the time of the *Accademia delle Notti Vaticane*³⁵:

Et non uno Seminario clericorum amplissimo vir Dei contentus fuit, sed plura instituit. Nam clericos adultos, qui in literis progressus non fecerunt in unum locum cogendos decrevit, ut gubernandarum animarum artem ediscerent, et mediocri Ecclesiasticarum rerum cognitione imbuti, in Ecclesiasticis moribus instituti ad regendas parochias idonei efficerentur. [...]. Et collegium Papiæ, quod Borromeorum nuncupatum erexit, quod magnificis sumptibus aedificandum curavit, ut in eo è Mediolanensibus, et Papiensibus civibus praeclara in optimis disciplinis in Christiana in primis pietate educarentur. Et Helvetijs paterna cura prospexit diligentissimus Pastor. Et seminarium itidem ad nationis illius usum erexit³⁶.

The Milanese archbishop projected and realized a series of several institutions for the priests' education: from the urban seminaries of *S. Giovanni alle Case rotte* (1568) for the belated vocations; of *Beatae Mariae alla Canonica* (1570) for the clergy of the rural areas; of *S. Maria Folcorina* (1579) for the re-education of priests; to the little seminaries of Celana in the Bergamo area (1579), and of *S. Maria della Noce* in Inverigo (1582); from the *Collegio Elvetico* in Milan (1579), for the clergy destined to the Swiss valleys; to the seminar-boarding school of Ascona (1584), for the priests of the Canton Ticino. In the same perspective of the promotion of the cultural and moral level of the Milanese clergy, we must consider the founding of the *Studium di Brera*, established in 1572 close to the former convent of the *Umiliati*, directed by the fathers of the Society of Jesus, and conceived as a university boarding school for the education of good theologians. Together with this large support for the clergy's education through the “official” channels, Borromeo spent a lot of

³⁵ This was Agostino Valier (Venezia 1530-Roma 1606), friend of Borromeo since the years in Rome, who, in his *Vita Caroli borromeo* (cit., pp. 6-7), talks about the Accademia delle Notti Vaticane as a true gymnasium of the virtues and place for the meeting of the most enlightened talents of the time, and which was founded and animated by a young Borromeo, already then busy with fighting against the sloth of the night through the practice of the arts. For the life of Valier see: L. Tacchella, *San Carlo Borromeo ed il card. Agostino Valier (carteggio)*, Verona, Istituto per gli studi storici veronesi, 1972; Archivio storico Curia diocesana, *Agostino Valier: visite pastorali a chiese extraurbane della Diocesi di Verona, anni 1592-1599. Trascrizione dei registri 15-16 delle visite pastorali*, Verona, Archivio storico Curia Diocesana, 2000; Id., *Agostino Valier: visite pastorali a chiese extraurbane della Diocesi di Verona, anni 1565-1589. Trascrizione dei registri 13-14 delle visite pastorali*, Verona, Archivio storico Curia Diocesana, 2001. About the Accademia delle Notti Vaticane see G.A. Sassi, *Noctes Vaticanae seu sermones habiti in Academia a S. Carolo Borromeo, Romae Palatio Vaticano instituta*, Mediolani, ex typographia Bibliothecae Ambrosianae, apud Joseph Marellum, 1748; L. Berra, *L'Accademia delle Notti Vaticane fondata da San Carlo Borromeo, con tre appendici documentarie*, Roma, Max Bretschneider Libraio Editore, 1915.

³⁶ Valier, *Vita Caroli Borromei*, cit., pp. 33-34.

energy in controlling the great number of aspirant priests, especially coming from the mountain and rural areas, who were traditionally educated by old parsons in parish houses. This concern was however well grounded, since the ante was represented by the same success of the Borromaic project of the new Christianization.

In line with the renovated educational vocation of the Church of the XVIth century, the untiring bishop looked after the education of laity as well. As Grendler explains,

Indeed the Catholic reformers probably devoted more energy and resources to education, than to any other religious or charitable activity. It all came from a single, original impulse, the desire to provide basic religious instruction in order to make men better in this life and to help them attain salvation in the next³⁷.

In this meaning, education becomes synonymous with the rebuilding of society, therefore it is affirmed as one of the principal imperatives that inspired the initiatives of the Church of the Catholic Reform.

In the framework of Borromeo's commitments and attention toward religious and civic education, we must count the *Collegio dei Nobili* (1573), which arose close to the Church of *S. Giovanni Evangelista in Porta Nuova* with the aim of offering an appropriate intellectual and moral education to the scions of the nobles families of Milan, following the model of the *Collegio Romano* and the *Collegio Germanico* in Rome. Always under the episcopacy *miles Christi* another institution addressed to the young people of the upper-class was established – the *Collegio delle Nobili Fanciulle*, which was founded by the Countess Ludovica Torelli di Guastalla (1557), and which was especially devoted to noble maidens fallen into disgrace, and to whose spiritual education a special care was reserved. In addition to these structures, Borromeo in person stimulated the foundation of several schools in convents and in female and male religious houses, but also of special educational institutions such as the *Conservatorio di Santa Sofia* (1574) or the *Pio luogo di Santa Caterina di Porta Nuova* for young “dangerous” girls (*pericolanti*) and for orphans³⁸. The project of the archbishop of Milan was clear:

³⁷ See P.F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: literacy and Learning, 1300-1600*, Baltimore-London, The Johns Hopkins University Press, c1989, p. 332. For a general picture of the educational institutions of the Counter-reformation, see G.P. Brizzi, *Strategie educative e istituzioni scolastiche della Controriforma*, in A. Asor Rosa (ed.), *Letteratura italiana*, vol. I, *Il letterato e le istituzioni*, Torino, Einaudi, 1982.

³⁸ To comprehend the importance of their action in the field of charity and assistance, which included the «schools that teach pupils for free», see A. Turchini, «A beneficio pubblico e onor di Dio». *Povertà e carità nella legislazione e nella pastorale della Chiesa milanese*, in D. Zardin (ed.), *La città e i poveri. Milano e le terre lombarde dal Rinascimento all'età spagnola*, Milano, Jaca book, 1995, pp. 191-251; Turchini, *Sotto l'occhio*, cit.

Nulli hominum generi, nulli sexui, nulli aetati, nulli humanae miseriae vir pius Mediolani non consultum esse voluit. Nam et expositis infantibus, et varijs affectis morbis, et mente captis maxima adiumenta comparavit: et virginibus foeminis ad earum tuendam honestatem providit, et illis, quae corruptae fuissent, ut in viam possent redire, prospexit; et devotis foeminis, quae capucinae nominantur quas in eam civitatem introduxit, ad vitam Angelicam (ut ita dicam) traducendam, santissimi instituti regulis, omnique religiosa disciplina, optime consuluit. Sodalitates vero pias, hortationibus varijs, praeceptis itidem salutaribus ita stabilivit, et auxit, ut Mediolanum schola quaedam Spiritus Sancti, et pietatis, omniumque virtutum veluti officina, coelestis patriae quidam angelus dici potuit³⁹.

A chapter-in-itself is represented by private teachers and communal teachers, who were present in both bigger and smaller villages in order to meet the large need for literacy; they constituted a widespread but evasive mass, which Borromeo could not ignore, if one considers the influence that these teachers could have on the morals and religious habits of the population. Therefore, is comprehensible the continuous and careful control to which they were subjected, especially by the local parish priests: teachers were obliged to show an attestation of their profession of faith, in addition to being periodically examined with regards to their conduct and teaching, as well as to the taught disciplines and textbooks. These entire dispositions had been partly anticipated by the First Provincial Council of 1565, and were reaffirmed in a detailed way by the Third Council of 1573. Angelo Turchini highlights how in the *Tre libri dell'educatione christiana dei figliuoli* of Silvio Antoniano – a work which was ordered and supervised by Borromeo in person⁴⁰ –, the opinion of the Ambrosian archbishop is that

it is up to the bishop to match spiritual paternity with fatherly care: the point is rather on the verification of the “good” qualities of the teacher, summarized in the «plenty of doctrine», in «absolutely honest morals», and in being overall «true Catholics, and sons obeying the Holy See», free from any suspect of heresy, even remote⁴¹.

The bishop must ensure that family and school, specifically the father and the teacher, are engaged in forming «good and Christian customs in children», a formation which, through the discipline of the body, and is able to discipline the soul; and which, through «good manners», aims at assuming a Christian

³⁹ Valier, *Vita Caroli Borromei*, cit., p. 35.

⁴⁰ For a picture of the role played by Borromeo with regard to the genesis of the Antoniano's work – which was published by the printers Sebastiano dalle Donne and Girolamo Stringari in 1584 – see E. Patrizi, *La genesi dei Tre Libri dell'educatione christiana dei figliuoli di Silvio Antoniano nei carteggi del card. Carlo Borromeo*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. 1 (2006), n. 2, pp. 313-349.

⁴¹ «al vescovo compete unire la paternità spirituale con la cura paterna: l'accento poggia piuttosto sulla verifica delle “buone” qualità del maestro compendiate nella “sufficienza della dottrina”, nei “costumi integerrimi”, nell'essere soprattutto “veri cattolici, obbedienti figliuoli della sede apostolica” liberi da ogni sia pur lontano sospetto di eresia» (Turchini, *Sotto l'occhio*, cit., p. 65).

habit of mind and behaviour – holding in itself all the strength of the Borromaic gamble-engagement in the project of the Catholic Reform⁴².

«Bishops – Turchini says, always recalling the Borromaic work as a mirror of his pedagogy –, in their role of fathers in spirit and “first teachers of piety and religion”, are requested to actively engage and to take care that “good teachers, especially for teaching poor boys for free”, never be lacking»⁴³. Borromeo’s efforts went in this direction, aiming at promoting the Schools of the Christian Doctrine⁴⁴. The institution, which had already been present in the territory for some decades thanks to the initiative of the priest F. Castellino da Castelli, had the objective of teaching the «Christian living» to «the boys in the streets» aged 4-14. The educational offer was particularly alluring since, in addition to the religious literacy, they promised to teach reading and writing for free. Well aware of the enormous potential, Borromeo reorganized and empowered it in his province, in order to take on a capillary action of catechesis amongst the people. Giussano underlines how the archbishop had cultivated this hard and ambitious project ever since his Roman stay:

moved by a fervent zeal to make great the Holy Faith, and to put Christian morals again in its Church, since he was dealing with the pontifical governorship, he imposed his vicar Ormaneto with looking after the Christian Doctrine, so that he promoted it in every way, and he [i.e. the vicar] did so. And after finding that some good priests had already erected about fifteen Schools, he zealously took care of those and increased them up to thirty. After his settlement in the venue, he particularly looked after it, and in the first Provincial Council decreed that, on Sundays and on Holidays of obligation, all Curates and Pastors of souls should call with the church-bell all the sons of the Parish after their dinner, in order to personally teach them the Christian Doctrine in Church. Then, he convoked all the curates of the community in front of him, and warmly exhorted to devote to this pious work, showing how it was necessary, and that it was their office and duty, as also prescribed by the Tridentine. On the other hand, he called the Artisans, and with a long and efficacious speech he demonstrated how it was important to teach and to raise children well in the Christian discipline and with a fear of God, underlining their crucial role in contributing to the care of souls, which is Apostolic and Divine, and stating that God had prepared a perpetual reward for it. He communicated his will of creating many Schools in Milan and the entire diocese, and of instituting a Congregation of Artisans aimed at caring and managing this great feat. Again, he ordered all

⁴² Cfr. O. Niccoli, *Creanza e disciplina: buone maniere per i fanciulli nell’Italia della controriforma*, in Prodi (ed.), *Disciplina*, cit.; I. Botteri, *Oltre le barriere confessionali: i manuali sul comportamento e i percorsi della loro diffusione nell’esempio degli Avvisi di buone creanze* in Mozzarella, Zardin (eds.), *I tempi*, cit.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ About the Schools of Christian Doctrine see: M. Turrini, *Riformare il mondo a vera vita cristiana: le scuole di catechismo nell’Italia del Cinquecento*, «Annali dell’Istituto Italo-Germanico in Trento», 8, 1982, pp. 407-489; X. Toscani, *Le Scuole della Dottrina Cristiana*, «Società e Storia», 28, 1984, pp. 757-781; P.F. Grendler, *Borromeo and the Schools of Christian Doctrine*, in S. Headley, J. B. Tomaro (eds.), *San Carlo Borromeo: Catholic Reform and Ecclesiastical Politics*, Washington, The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1988, pp. 158-169; A. Bianchi, *Le scuole della dottrina cristiana: linguaggio e strumenti per una azione educativa ‘di massa’*, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., pp. 145-158; Turchini, *Sotto l’occhio*, cit.

Preachers to recommend the Christian Doctrine, and to urge Family men to take sons to it on all Holidays, showing them the obligation of knowing the things of the Faith, what is necessary to health, and to teach their own family about all of this⁴⁵.

On the one hand Borromeo's intervention toward the Schools of the Christian Doctrine implied a distortion of the original setting of the schools, as a consequence of their subordination to the parish system; on the other, it determined a «capitalization of the catechistic action»⁴⁶. The archbishop in fact set the schools inside his project of reform of the Milanese church, and he changed them into an efficacious tool for the spreading of religious education. The available data help us to comprehend his engagement for affirming the Schools of the Christian Doctrine on the diocesan territory.

The statistics – as recalled by Angelo Bianchi – concerning the end of Borromeo's pontificate, which were published only as appendix of the edition of the *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis* of 1599, testify to 740 schools, where there were even 273 *officiales generales*, 1,726 *officiales particulares* and 3,040 *operari*, the militant members who served more than 40,000 pupils for about 900 parishes. [...] the picture that emerges from these data, delineates a capillary spread on the territory, the strong compactness of a network of schools that were constantly attended and helped by numerous personnel, and which were therefore able to deeply affect the processes of transmission of the Christian doctrine and, more in general, able to educate large sectors of the population, modifying rhythms and conditions that were destined to overstay in the long run, almost until the limits of the contemporary age⁴⁷.

⁴⁵ «mosso egli da un zelo ardentissimo d'amplificare la Santa Fede, e rimettere i buoni costumi Christiani nella sua Chiesa, fin quando era in Roma occupato nel governo Pontificio impose all'Ormaneto suo Vicario principalmente la cura della Dottrina Christiana, acciò la promuovesse con ogni potere, il quale non mancò d'essequirlo; e trovando che alcuni buoni Sacerdoti n'havevano già erette circa quindici Scuole, egli vi attese con tanta diligenza, che le accrebbe fino al numero di trenta. Venuto poi alla residenza, ne prese cura particolare, e nel primo Concilio Provinciale ordinò con un decreto a tutti i Curati, e Pastori d'anime, che ogni Domenica, e festa comandata convocassero dopo il desinare, con un segno di campana, tutti i figliuoli della Parochia, et essi gli insegnassero in Chiesa la Dottrina Christiana. Fece dipoi chiamare avanti di se tutti i Curati della Comunità, e con calde essortationi li pregò ad attendere a questa pia opera, mostrando l'estrema necessità che ve n'era, e che questo era proprio ufficio, e carico loro, ordinato anche dal Sacro Concilio Tridentino; e li essortò con molto affetto, che non mancassero di porgere tutti li aiuti possibili alli Operaij Laici nel fondar le Scuole, et in ogni altro bisogno. Dall'altro canto fece congregare gl'istessi Operaij, a' quali con un lungo, et efficace discorso, mostrò l'importanza d'ammaestrare, et allevare bene i figliuoli nella disciplina Christiana, e nel Santo timore di Dio, quanto alto, et imminente fusse quest'ufficio di cooperare alla salute dell'anime, che è Apostolico, e Divino; e l'infinito premio, che Dio havea loro apparecchiato; che'l suo desiderio era d'istituire molte Scuole, si in Milano, come in tutta la diocesi, e di formare una Congregatione d'Operarij, iquali havessero particolar cura, e governo di tutta questa santa impresa. In oltre ordinò a tutti i Predicatori, che raccomandassero la Dottrina Christiana, et essortassero i Padri di famiglia a condurvi i loro figliuoli in ogni modo tutte le Feste, con mostrar loro l'obbligo, che hanno di sapere le cose della Fede, e ciò che è necessario alla salute, e d'ammaestrare in tutte queste cose la loro propria famiglia» (Giusani, *Vita di S. Carlo*, cit., lib. VIII, cap. VI, pp. 364-365).

⁴⁶ Bianchi, *Le scuole della dottrina cristiana*, cit., p. 154.

⁴⁷ «Le tabelle statistiche che riportano dati relativi al termine del pontificato del Borromeo, ma che furono pubblicate solo in calce all'edizione degli *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis* del 1599, atte-

In the service of catechesis, the Milanese archbishop also introduced a preaching renovated with regards to contents and style, as clearly emerges in the *Instructiones praedicationis verbi Dei* published with the decrees of the Third Provincial Council (1573), where he dissociated himself from the vain tradition of precepts, whilst directly pointing at the real needs, defects and emotions of the listeners, in order to directly get in touch with the believers.

Agricolis porro – Borromeo says – si concionabitur, plurimum ad rem proderunt similitudines, ad agro, vinea, frumento, vitibus, lino, cannabi, arboribus, stirpibus allisque agriculturae partibus ductae: itidem eveniet, si alterius conditionis auditoribus apte illas ita accommodabit, ut eorum ordo postulabit: qui sane quidam, cum ad certam quandam status sui cognitionem, doctrinamque natura ducantur; tum certe facilius multo trabuntur, si vel a vitae, vel ab artis, vel ab alterius rei, quam profitentur genere documenta sumuntur⁴⁸.

The turning point is clear also in the style: Carlo Borromeo's preaching, deprived of «studied tricks, so that pathos is not a declamatory swelling, rather it is an expression of emotional intensity»⁴⁹, turns out to be plain, anti-baroque, built around biblical and especially evangelical passages, and recited in vernacular, to facilitate the immediate comprehension of the listeners⁵⁰.

The new man – Prodi explains – that Borromeo wanted to shape was a disciplined man, the ordinary Christian who does not emerge in the mass of believers, but who is aware, culturally educated by catechesis from infancy, consolidated in the daily practice of sacraments, nourished by preaching and participation in liturgy and collective praying⁵¹.

Since this new man, colonizer of the renovated *res publica christiana*, does not exist, he must be created and moulded, as says the title of the well-known book of Turchini, «under the father's eyes» («sotto l'occhio del padre»). The father in question cannot be other than the bishop who, as Prodi clarifies,

stano 740 scuole, nelle quali militavano 273 *officiales generales*, 1.726 *officiales particulares* e 3.040 *operari*, al servizio di oltre 40.000 scolari distribuiti fra circa 900 parrocchie. [...] il quadro fornito da questi dati delinea una diffusione capillare sul territorio, la robusta compattezza di una rete di scuole assiduamente frequentate e assistite da numeroso personale, in grado pertanto di incidere profondamente sui processi di trasmissione della dottrina cristiana e, più in generale, di acculturazione di larghi strati di popolazione, determinando ritmi e modalità destinati a permanere sul lungo periodo, fin quasi alle soglie dell'età contemporanea» (*ibid.*, p. 155).

⁴⁸ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., I, *Instructiones praedicationis verbi Dei*, c. 214r.

⁴⁹ S. Giombi, *La predicazione di san Carlo: fonti, metodo, stili*, in Buzzi, Zardin, eds., *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 77.

⁵⁰ Borromeo strongly persists with pastoral preaching in vernacular, as testified by the letter that he sent to Gabriele Paleotti in February 1578, after hearing that the bishop of Bologna was preaching in Latin. Regarding the letter and the comparison between the pastoral style of the two reformer bishops, see P. Prodi, *San Carlo Borromeo e il cardinale Gabriele Paleotti: due vescovi della Riforma cattolica*, «Critica storica», III, 1964.

⁵¹ P. Prodi, *Riforma interiore e disciplinamento sociale in san Carlo Borromeo*, «Intersezioni», V, 2, 1985, p. 277.

in Borromeo, he [the pastor] seems to be closer to an almost physical interpretation of the parable of the good shepherd, who offers his life in favour of the flock, but he is also the careful eye, ready to break off any disbandment [...] or any too personal initiative, finally to prevent any intrusion in the sheepfold⁵².

Amongst the devices of control, which were refined by Borromeo, in the first place is the confession, which assumes an eminently inquisitorial character rather than confessional, and becomes a privileged means for investigating the private sphere and for shaping social behaviour. In the *Avvertenze [...] ai Confessori della città, et diocesi sua* of 1574, the archbishop of Milan provided his army of confessors, changed into agents of mass conversion, a sort of *vademecum* for the good confessor and probing of souls. First of all, confessors should read body language, since it reveals the penitent's nature: e.g. the modest dress was proof of devotion, whilst the luxurious one was proof of scarce inclination to receive penitence. Again: those who spent some time meditating before the confession, were judged more ready to repent, than others who were just arriving «just leaving some worldly activities»⁵³. Furthermore, according to the *Avvertenze*, the confessor should firstly verify the penitent's identity (social condition, work), his spiritual condition (previous confession, penitence, spiritual background), his sins in relation to the moral categories (10 commandments, 7 capital sins etc.). All this was the result of persisting and aggressive questions, so that second thoughts or half-truths were not admitted. The Papal Bull of 15th February 1559⁵⁴ also commanded all confessors to verify the penitents' knowledge regarding heretics, about their activities and prohibited books. If any suspect emerged, before the shrift, the case should be submitted to the Inquisition. In this way confessors became legal officers, bridges between the inner forum of consciousness, and the external forum of Inquisition⁵⁵. After the confession of sins, the penitent would first have to promise to rectify his mistakes, and then the confessor would have to verify that he had kept his word, examining his subsequent behaviour. Moreover, Carlo Borromeo re-enabled the powerful weapon of the “postponed absolution”, offering confessors the choice to give the absolution only after verifying the penitent's rehabilitation. In this connection, we can only guess which social reflex

⁵² Id., *San Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 141.

⁵³ «immediatamente partendosi da qualche occupatione temporale» (*Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., *Avvertenze di Monsignore Illustriss. Cardinale di S. Prassede Arcivescovo di Milano ai confessori della città, et diocesi sua*, II, c. 231v).

⁵⁴ *Bullarium*, cit., vol. VI (1860), pp. 551-556.

⁵⁵ Adriano Prospero underlines how «the Tridentine resolutions severely selected the only form of private confession and, in controversy with the Protestant Reform, affirmed the nature of the judiciary act (*actus iudicialis*) of sacramental confession, and affirmed its divine right (*ius divinum*). But they tried to make it a tool for *politia externa* [...] in order to make the *disciplina christiani populorum* efficacious» (see A. Prospero, *La confessione e foro della coscienza*, in P. Prodi, W. Reinhard (eds.), *Il concilio di Trento e il moderno*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1996).

the postponed absolution could play on the honour of a person. Apart from the postponed absolution, we also find another terrible device: public penitence. Caused by a scandal or a public damage, the public penitence exposed the penitent to public contempt and would force them to stay in the churchyard, for the entire period of Lent, dressed in a sack, barefoot and with a bowed head. «The Borromaic socio-psychology – as Wietse de Boer observes – [...] justifies the authoritarian intervention on the human soul, because of its incurable weakness and vulnerability [...] in defence of what he considers the public good»⁵⁶, in the perspective that in this way, a confessional society would arise.

In the Borromaic project of sanctification of the society, a crucial role is played by the fight «against the pagan forms of the popular culture». The archbishop opposed in fact some «forms of religiousness, which were believed secular or magic, and many lay recreations, which were considered as immoral»⁵⁷, such as: the theatrical representations of a non-religious nature, dancing, playing cards, playing dice, taverns, animal fighting and finally the lay-pagan feast par excellence i.e. carnival. As known, the fight against the carnival of Milan has remote origins. According to the Ambrosian liturgical calendar in fact, it ended even four days after the end foreseen by the Roman Ritual, and therefore it did not end on Tuesday, on the eve of the Ash Wednesday, but rather on Saturday, on the eve of the first Sunday of Lent, which was then celebrated as the “carnival’s Sunday”⁵⁸. This fact was so famous that many strangers came to the territory of Milan to enjoy the benefits of this extended and typical Ambrosian carnival. Borromeo was against this tradition ever since the beginning of his governorship, so that in the first provincial Council we can read: «illorum vero damnamus ingluviem, qui primis quinque Quadragesimae diebus, Romanae Ecclesiae more institutis, Mediolanum se conferunt, patriae ritum in ieiunio et ciborum abstinentia fugientes»⁵⁹.

The long carnival period, which begins after Christmas and ends in the week before Easter, represents for the ecclesiastic authority a dangerous scoffing of

⁵⁶ de Boer, *La conquista dell'anima*, cit., p. 48.

⁵⁷ C. Bernardi, A. Cascetta, *Dai «profani tripudi» alla religiosa magnificenza: la ricostruzione del sistema cerimoniale nella Milano Borromaica*, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 229. For a general picture of superstitions and beliefs of a magical nature in Carlo Borromeo's epoch, see O. Lurati, *Superstizioni lombarde (e levantesi) del tempo di san Carlo Borromeo*, «Vox Romanica», 27, 1968, pp. 229-249.

⁵⁸ As explained by Laura Bellavite «before Borromeo's designation as archbishop of the city, Carnival ended on the Sunday following the Saturday before Lent, which was rightly called Carnival's Sunday. The origin of the detachment from the Roman use dates back to the papacy of Gregorius Magnus, when the Roman church brought the beginning of Lent forward to Ash Wednesday; Milan, which found itself under the Langobardic rule, could not perceive this influence, therefore it continued according to the Ambrosian tradition. Officially, the Sunday was nominated *Domenica in capite quadragesimae*, but the people called it *carnevali* or *carnevalario*: in brief, only religious people and the most fervent believers used to follow the Roman Ritual» (L. Bellavite, *Il Carnevale a Milano nel Cinquecento*, «Comunicazioni sociali», 1, 1982, p. 8).

⁵⁹ *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., I, c. 7v.

the liturgical time, from Christmas through the Epiphany to Lent. It is a sort of collective craziness, made of «dancing, masking, reversal of the sexes, ages and classes, in a convulsive crescendo which culminates in the Mardi Gras, on the same Ash Wednesday and in the first Sunday of Lent»⁶⁰. The mask is the first signal of this reversal of the order, and it is against this reversal that Borromeo launches his attack in the *Memoriale*:

Let masks be banned forever: with those in fact, not only do men want to change, but even to cancel the shape that God gave them. Some go so far in this mad craziness, as to use those ancient metamorphoses and dress themselves as beasts. Damned and abominable masks, beyond any other respect they are, also because they recall our old ruin, provided by the devil who masked himself as a snake. Detestable masks, beyond which men are not ashamed to say bad and dirty words, or to indecently act and behave; wicked masks, adverse against honesty, enemies of gravity, and ruin for all the rules that any good Christian must respect in his soul⁶¹.

The stakes are surely high: the ante is represented by his flock's wellbeing, so Borromeo, waving the banner of the *salus animarum*, engages in a true Crusade against the "fevers" of the carnival season; a Crusade which, between 1573 and 1579, ends in eliminating the carnival of the first Sunday of Lent. The campaign is not painless and in fact it arouses the popular discontent and the anger of the Spanish governor in office, Antonio Guzmán Marquis of Ayamonte, also causing some embarrassment in Rome. The relations between Carlo Borromeo and the Spanish government were always marked by a certain tension, which was due to the fact that the tireless archbishop

was convinced that the civil power should not only abstain from any interference, but it should also support his authority and cooperate – within its competence – in realizing the programme of reform of the ecclesiastic and religious life⁶².

⁶⁰ A. Turchini, *Il governo della festa nella Milano spagnola di Carlo Borromeo*, in A. Cascetta, R. Caprani (eds.), *La scena della gloria. Drammaturgia e spettacolo a Milano in età spagnola*, Milano, Vita e Pensiero, 1995, p. 532.

⁶¹ «Siano hormai perpetuamente bandite le mascheere, con le quali pare, che gli uomini studijno non solo di trasformarsi; ma di scancellare in un certo modo quella figura che di Dio gli ha data: anzi alcuni vanno tanto innanzi in questa brutta pazia, che representano quelle metamorfosi antiche con trasformarsi in bestie. Maledette, et esecrande maschere oltre ogni altro rispetto, anco perché ci rappresentano la memoria dell'antica nostra rovina, la quale ci procurò il demonio, che s'immascherò da serpente. Abominevoli maschere, sotto le quali si fanno lecito gli huomini di dir parole dishoneste, et sporche, di far gesti, et atti pieni d'impudicitia, scelerate maschere, opugnatrici dell'honestà, inimiche della gravità, et rovina d'ogni custodia, che dentro, et fuori deve havere l'anima d'un buon christiano» (Carlo Borromeo, *Memoriale di Monsignore illustrissimo et reverendissimo cardinale di S. Prassede, Arcivescovo, al suo diletto popolo della Città, et Diocese di Milano*, In Milano, appresso Michel Tini, Stampator del Seminario, 1579, II, cap. VII, pp. 376-377).

⁶² «riteneva che il potere civile avesse non solo l'obbligo di astenersi da ogni invadenza, ma fosse anche tenuto a corroborare la sua autorità e a fornirgli per quanto ad esso competeva, la propria cooperazione nell'attuazione del programma di riforma della vita ecclesiastica e religiosa». See A. Borromeo, *L'Arcivescovo Carlo Borromeo, la corona spagnola e le controversie giurisdizionali*.

The carnival episode opened a clear disagreement. The reply of Gregorius XIII was immediate and, only after a series of direct talks with Borromeo, did he definitely confirm the institution of the “reformed carnival” by the Milan archbishop.

Actually, the carnival was not eliminated at all because, even if in a more controlled and attenuated version, it kept on being part of the system of time-marking through lunar phases and the cycle of the seasons. Beyond the results achieved by Borromeo, this episode shows how the bishop, in the battle against heresy and immorality, did not adopt only the weapons of rigorism and severity, but he also played the card of the “sacred event”, in the framework of which he tried to re-instate each secular space of play and fun. Through this connection, Bernardi and Cascetta have underlined that «in spite of the image of a hard-and-fast reformer and an ascetic, Borromeo’s true religious nature stands out in the assiduous promotion of sacred events»⁶³. Carlo Borromeo is in fact at the same time legislator, inquisitor, ascetic on the one hand, and energetic promoter of the popular forms of religiosity, on the other. This is not a contradiction – as it would seem – but rather, it is the reflex of an epoch, which the cardinal of Santa Prassede condemned, and which at the same time, he tried to merge into. In fact, to the severe image of the Arona’s colossus, or the known representation of S. Carlo with his face sunken by fatigue and fasting, whilst – for a moment – he avoids his daily reading⁶⁴, we should add the image of Borromeo leading a penitential procession, barefoot, with a halter round his neck, burdened with the cross⁶⁵, as well as the picture of the archbishop of Milan who openly professes his devotion to the saints, who goes as a pilgrim, «pilgrim of the Sacred Sindone in Turin, or pilgrim of the Virgin in Varallo, Varese, Saronno, Rho, Tirano o Loreto»⁶⁶.

His religiousness – as Michel De Certeau writes, in his sharp Borromeo’s biography – was not theological, abstract and bare, which was the religiosity which would prevail amongst the French spirituals half a century later [...]. It also testified a sort of almost childish tenderness, that no “doctrine” had touched, and which secretly animated his will, armed by the Episcopal “rights and duties”. The acts of popular devotion represented, for Carlo,

ali a Milano, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 262. For the relationship between Carlo Borromeo and the Spanish monarchy see also P. Prodi, *San Carlo Borromeo e le trattative tra Gregorio XIII e Filippo II sulla giurisdizione ecclesiastica*, «Rivista di storia della Chiesa in Italia», 1957, XI, pp. 194-240.

⁶³ Bernardi, Cascetta, *Dai «profani tripudi»*, cit., p. 236.

⁶⁴ The reference is to the painting by Daniele Crespi, entitled *Digiuno di san Carlo* (Milano, Santa Maria delle Passione, olio su tela, 1625 c.a.).

⁶⁵ de Boer, *La conquista dell’anima*, cit., pp. 82-86. Borromeo renders the dramatic period of the plague of Milan (1576-1577) as a divine punishment for the sins of humanity, and this encouraged him to intensify and increase the manifestations of collective piety, so that the city of Milan became a unique, enormous church absorbed in expiating its own sins.

⁶⁶ M. De Certeau, *Carlo Borromeo*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vol. XX, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1977, p. 267.

appointments and festivals of the heart, together with the masses, from which he was divided by his position. There, he really seemed to be⁶⁷.

This Borromeo, who is intent on receiving the traditional culture in the bosom of the Counter-reformist spirituality, promoted not only pilgrimages, processions, penitential celebrations, moments of collective praying, new and renovated religious festivities, but moreover he worked at transforming the territory «into an organic system of cultural and devotional poles, made of – in addition to traditional ecclesiastical and conventual buildings – religious signs set along the roads, the riverbanks, the widenings of roads, the walls of whatever kind of houses»⁶⁸.

The strong archbishop covered the way of the Christian authenticity, also through the “remodeling” of the urban space, with the aim of continuously offering to people stimulus for praying and faith, together with constant signs of the divine presence in the daily dimension. The city and the diocese become, therefore, also on a material plane, object of a global renovation, so that we can talk about a true process of «sacralization of the territory»⁶⁹.

The Council of Trent had reckoned the pictures’ role in evangelization, underlining the importance of matching with a correct preaching, that was able to highlight their educational function of introducing to the mystery of faith. Carlo Borromeo, in coherence with the Tridentine line, confirms and consolidates in the entire people, the theological value of the picture, and he gains from this conception the extraordinary artistic impulse, which he promotes in his diocese.

He ties – as Maria Antonietta Crippa underlines – in a unique, symbolic, mesh, all the religious places, on a large and small scale; [...] he obtains from the Pope, for the seven basilicas within the Gonzaga’s walls – the Duomo, S. Simpliciano, S. Ambrogio, S. Vittore al Corpo, S. Lorenzo, S. Nazaro – special indulgences; he increases, [...], the stational crosses, the shrines, the chapels; [...] he transforms the road system into a weave of perspective directrixes all oriented toward the sacred, [...]⁷⁰.

⁶⁷ «La sua religiosità – as Michel De Certeau writes, in his sharp Borromeo’s biography – non era quella teologica, astratta e spoglia, che prevarrà mezzo secolo più tardi fra gli spirituali francesi [...]. Essa attesta inoltre qualcosa come una tenerezza, quasi infantile, che nessuna “dottrina” aveva sfiorato e che abitava in segreto la volontà armata dai “diritti e doveri” vescovili. Le devozioni popolari corrispondevano in Carlo a degli appuntamenti e feste del cuore in mezzo alla folla dalla quale lo separava la sua carica. Là sembrava veramente felice» (*ibid.*).

⁶⁸ M.A. Crippa, *Il profilo sacro della Milano Borromeaica*, in *Una Milano sconosciuta. La geografia dei segni sacri da Carlo Borromeo a Maria Teresa d’Austria*, Milano, Strenna dell’Istituto “Gaetano Pin”, 2000, p. 9.

⁶⁹ A. Majo, *San Carlo Borromeo. Vita e azione pastorale*, Milano, Edizioni San Paolo, 2004, pp. 82-89 (Santi e Sante di Dio, 34).

⁷⁰ «Egli stringe in un’unica simbolica maglia tutti i luoghi religiosi, a grande e a piccola scala; [...] ottiene dal papa, per le sette basiliche principali all’interno della mura gonzaghesche – il Duomo, S. Simpliciano, S. Ambrogio, S. Vittore al Corpo, S. Lorenzo, S. Nazaro – indulgenze speciali; moltiplica, [...], le croci stazionali, le edicole, le cappelle; [...] rende il sistema stradale un intreccio di direttrici prospettiche orientate tutte al sacro, [...]» (Crippa, *Il profilo sacro*, cit., p. 18).

The main fulcrum of this renovated urban prospect is represented by the little *domus* where the Eucharist is preserved, the earth of the carolin church, the vanishing point where the look of the believers converge, the concretization of the divine, made human in Jesus Christ. Borromeo puts the art in the service of his pastoral aims and theological vision, so that in the *Instructiones fabricae et suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae* (1577) – treatise where he meticulously faces all the issues related with the religious architecture⁷¹ – he poses a church which becomes unitary space: each obstacle between the believers and the presbytery is removed, the balustrades become see-through, the aisles are eliminated in favour of the unique nave and the tabernacle, central point of the memory and of the deepest meaning of the Christian life, is connected with the high altar.

The Milan archbishop therefore, does not limit himself to embank the negligence in which the ecclesiastic patrimony was, so that the ecclesiastic building would not remain lost in the spaces of the worldly life anymore, nor cemeteries not fenced-in or churches threatening to fall. Moreover, he develops and promotes the educational function of the art in all of its facets: from the *Biblia pauperum* in paintings, to the ephemeral apparatus of processions, to the sacred architecture of sanctuaries and churches, which were built on the model of the *simplex ecclesia*, theorized in the *Instructiones*. With regards to this aspect, the Jesuitical church of *San Fedele*, which was build around thirty years before the *Instructiones*, can be considered as the test-bed of the Borromaic conception of architecture which, in the major churches (*Duomo*, *Santi Barnaba e Paolo*) as well as in the parish ones (*San Raffaele*, *San Sebastiano*), in the convent's buildings as in the boarding schools (*Collegio Borromeo in Pavia*, *Collegio elvetico*, seminary of *Porta orientale*) and hospitals (from the Cremona hospital to the rebuilding of *Lazzaretto*), was characterized by a rationalization of the spaces in function of the pastoral objectives⁷².

Carlo Borromeo did not restricted himself to the liturgical-functional reform of the churches, but he engaged, for example, with building several sanctuaries devoted to the Virgin Mary's cult, which became places for celebrations, processions and pilgrimages. The Virgin held a privileged place in the piety and pastoral of the prelate, so that he never failed to visit sanctuaries devoted to

⁷¹ In the *Instructiones* Borromeo deals with various aspects of the sacred art: «de sacris aedibus, cappellis, altaribus, oratoriis, baptisteriis, sacrariis, ceterisque id generis extruendis, tum de vestibus etiam sacris, ornamentis, vasibus, alioque ecclesiastico apparatu». *Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., *Instructiones fabricae et Suppellectilis Ecclesiasticae*, II, c. 177r. See P. Barocchi (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento: fra Manierismo e Controriforma*, 3 vols., Bari, Laterza, 1962, vol. III, pp. 1-151. For a synthetic description of the principal contents of the *Instructiones* see: E.C. Voelker, *Borromeo's Influence on Sacred Art and Architecture*, in Headley, Tomaro, *San Carlo Borromeo*, cit., pp. 172-187.

⁷² See S. Della Torre, *Le architetture monumentali: disciplina normativa e pluralismo delle opere*, in Buzzi, Zardin (eds.), *Carlo Borromeo*, cit; M.A. Crippa, *Il contributo di Carlo Borromeo all'Architettura e all'arte per la liturgia nelle «Instructiones»: un punto di vista attualizzante*, in Mozzarella, Zardin (eds.), *I tempi*, cit., pp. 425-438.

her. In this way, in addition to the pre-existent sanctuaries of Caravaggio and Rho, many others were raised across the entire territory of the diocese: in the Canton Ticino, on the riverbanks of Ceresio, Verbano, Lario, in the Varesotto and Comasco area, in Brianza, in Valsassina and Lecchese.

The ritual dimension of the Milan territory was noticeably enriched by the wonderful series of the Sacred Mounts, a sequence of sacred buildings, at times modest, at times monumental which were built in order to present the places of the life of Jesus Christ, a sort of sacred stable theatre offered for the memory and devotion of the believers. Therefore, on the example of the Sacred Mount of Varallo, were also edified sacred mounts in Arona, Orta, Graglia, Crea, Galliate, Varese, Ossuccio, Griffa, Brisago and Orselina⁷³.

The areas which were under his pastoral care, especially after the plague of 1576-77, became populated with a multitude of sacred place and religious signs: stational basilicas, chapels, shrines, sacred images on the walls of courtyards and little squares, Crosses erected on columns. It was a dense network of bulwarks, working in defence of the faith against the Lutheran heresy, but also as a daily admonition and a widespread manifestation of the link between heaven and earth. The archbishop of Milan aimed at including the spaces of the religious piety with the civic life, within «a great ritual route, almost a great church where the entire population should have addressed to God»⁷⁴. In his project for a religious reform in fact, each situation, act, single fragment of the human life, should be fed on sacred signs, in order to allow the human being – in its nature fragile and concupiscible – to follow, inch by inch, the road for salvation.

In this large and intense engagement for reorganizing the society, writing held a special role. The archbishop systematically resorted to it, for example for orientating clergy toward several issues (preaching, organization of sacred buildings, vestments and altar furnishings, management of the cult places, the offices of the pastoral care, etc.) with the *Instructiones variae*. But also for educating the less learned clergy and lay people, with the vernacular *Avvertenze*; or for offering precise dispositions to categories such as printers, booksellers, physicians, teachers, through his *Editti od Ordini da osservarsi*. We must also add the abundant *Regole e Statuti*, renovated or written *ex novo*, and designed for the confraternities and congregations. As Giussano, the metropolitan of Milan, observed:

he enriched his clergy and people with many decrees, orders and instructions that were all good and full of God's spirit, and of sacred prudence, as it emerges from his published works and from many manuscripts of preaches, which are wonderfully

⁷³ Majo, *San Carlo Borromeo*, cit., p. 86.

⁷⁴ A. Buratti, *L'azione pastorale dei Borromeo s Milano e la nuova sistemazione urbanistica della città*, in *La città rituale. La città e lo Stato di Milano nell'età dei Borromeo*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 1982, p. 53.

arranged, alike trees, inside the Ambrosian Library in this City, founded for public use by Cardinal Federigo Borromeo. In these works, as in a vivid image, we can see his ardent zeal towards the health of souls, the reform of costumes, the true Christian Discipline. We wish that, together with other works by the same Saint, they could see the light one day: a true Pastoral multitude, a sort of Pastoral forest, that he collected from the Holy Write and the Holy Fathers, during a long time of hard study, in favour and good of the Pastors of the Holy Church⁷⁵.

In the large and variegated Borromeo's production, we also find writings composed for special occasions, such as the Jubilee in Milan of 1576, or the plague in the same year. A work of relief is the *Libretto de i Ricordi, al popolo della Città et Diocese di Milano*, written in December 1577, after the end of the plague, and which stands out as a «our-and-out pastoral programme for lays, [...] addressed to each single believer and especially to those who, by various ways, held educational responsibilities and roles»⁷⁶.

We particularly entrust of everything – we read in the introduction – those who take care of others. But we especially recommend you – family fathers and mothers, and other heads of houses, and masters of shops and workers – to follow those precepts, so that you not only respect and put into effect; but also verify that your children, servants, the entire family, and your employees, all also observe the same precepts⁷⁷.

Carlo Borromeo elaborates a true manual of Christian life that, after recalling the weakness and disposition to sin of the human nature, invites – through refined and reach precepts – the believers to assume their own responsibilities in front of God, and to lead their entire life inside the framework of a rigorous Christian discipline.

From any thing that you make, you need or you see, you must be able to get good spiritual meanings: farming is hard, but the same is for the cultivation of the soul, and only

⁷⁵ «lasciò arricchito il suo Clero, e popolo di tanti decreti, ordini, et istruzioni, tutti belli, e dotti, e pieni dello spirito di Dio, e di prudenza santa, come appare dalle sue opere stampate, e da molti libri di prediche manuscritti, ordinati con bellissima dispositione, per via d'arbori, che si conservano nella magnifica libreria Ambrogiana di questa Città, fondata ad uso publico dal Cardinale Federigo Borromeo; nelle quali, come in una viva imagine, si vede ardere il zelo della salute dell'anime, della riforma de' costumi, et di una vera disciplina Christiana; le quali si può sperare che un giorno verranno in luce, insieme con altre opere dell'istesso Santo, massime una selva Pastorale, ch'egli con lunga fatica, e studio, raccolse dalla Scrittura Sacra, e da Santi Padri, per comodità, e beneficio de' Pastori di Santa Chiesa» (Giussani, *Vita di S. Carlo*, cit., lib. VIII, cap. XXIX, p. 429).

⁷⁶ Sani, *Educazione*, cit., p. 477.

⁷⁷ «Et tutto particolarmente incarichiamo a quelli, che hanno sotto sua cura altri. Però specialmente a voi padri, et madri di famiglia, et altri capi di casa, botega et lavorieri, quanto possiamo, efficacemente raccomandiamo la totale, et diligente osservanza d'essi ricordi, di maniera che non solo voi gli osserviate, et praticiate accuratamente; ma facciate, che siano da i vostri figliuoli, servidori, garzoni, fameglia tutta, et da altri che dipendano da voi studiosamente essequiti con frutto» (*Acta Ecclesiae Mediolanensis*, cit., II, *Libretto de i Ricordi, al popolo della Città et Diocese di Milano*, cc. 312v-313r).

with a hard and zealous work can you gain good fruits to offer to God. On a sunny day you will be glad, like of the light that brightens in perpetuity; on a cloudy day you will be sad, like in the eternal darkness; in a flowering garden, you will remember that God likes the souls full of flowers, or which are the colours of the virtue, or how great is the patience of God, whose art is visible in a sole flower or leaf; and so on⁷⁸.

In the days after the tragic period of the plague in Milan, the collective carolin liturgy reached its full form: the impressive increase of the manifestations of devotional piety changed the face of Milan and testified to the new society based on individual and collective behaviours, which reproduced rhythms and forms of the monastic and conventual life.

Come on therefore – as the cardinal of Santa Prassede urges, in his *Memoriale* –, be joyful and enjoy, Milan, the spiritual richness, devote yourself to preachings, sacred lessons, public prayers, processions, forgiveness, confessions, communions: through these means open your heart and let God come in, and fill everywhere with his grace. This joy will be saving grace, all spiritual, not worldly at all. Let it be a joy far from the carnal and sensual nature, a joy not made of debauches, licentious laughing, vain words, empty heart, relaxed tongue, feelings without control, appetites that overcome the mind, reason made blind by prosperity, memory unmindful of God, weakened Christian discipline; but let it be a joy all in God⁷⁹.

This «globally catholic, pious, religiously indoctrinated (with clerical ideals), ordered and organized under the guide of the ecclesiastic education society, ready to bow to God and Church»⁸⁰ was officially promoted as a model, the day after

⁷⁸ «Di ogni cosa, che fa, o occorre, o che vedi, cerca di cavare frutto, et qualche buon senso spirituale, come dal coltivare la terra, con quanta fatica, et diligenza bisogna coltivare la nostra anima, acciò renda buon frutto al Signore. Da un bel giorno di Sole quando diletterà il vedere, l'eterna luce, poichè questa così allegra: et da un giorno nubiloso, et oscuro, che pena sarà stare in quell'eternie tenebre, che così ti attrista un poco di mal tempo: et da un giardino pieno di vaghi fiori, quanto sia bella, et diletta a Dio un'anima ornata di fiori, et varij colori di virtù, et quanto stà la sapienza di Dio, poichè tant'arte si vede in un fiore, ò una sola foglia, et così farai di tutto il resto» (C. Borromeo, *Ricordi overo Ammaestramenti Generali dati da S. Carlo Borromeo cardinale del titolo di Santa Prassede; Arcivescovo di Milano per il vivere christiano communemente ad ogni stato di persone. Et particolarmente à Padri è Madri di Famiglia Maestri, ò Capi di Botteghe, et Lavoranti. Di nuovo fatti ristampare per opera di Bortolomeo Benti*, in Giussani, *Vita di S. Carlo*, cit., p. 6).

⁷⁹ «Orsù dunque, rallegrati, et gode, ò Milano dell'abondanza spirituale, dati alle prediche, alle sacre lettioni, alle publiche orationi, alle processioni, alle perdonanze, alle confessioni, alle communioni, per questi santi mezi apri tu, et dilata la bocca del cuor tuo et vi entrerà Dio, et riempirà ogni cosa delle sue santissime gratie. Sarà questa allegrezza parte di ricognitioni, gratia a Dio, ma sia tutta spirituale, ne vi habbia parte alcuna il mondo. Sia lontana da quelle allegrezze dissolute dell'huomo carnale, et sensuale, et da quelle, se ben cominciano in spirito, finiscono nondimeno in carne. Sia allegrezza non di crapule, non di risi dissoluti, non di parole vane, non di cuore svanito, non di lingua rilassata ad ogni licenza, non di sentimenti abbandonati da ogni custodia, non di appetiti, che pigliano la briglia di mano alla ragione, non d'intelletto accecato nella prosperità, non di memoria scordata di Dio, non di christiana disciplina snervata, ma per dir tutto in una parola, allegrezza nel Signore» (Borromeo, *Memoriale*, cit., cap. II, pp. 219-220).

⁸⁰ A. Turchini, *La fabbrica di un santo. Il processo di canonizzazione di Carlo Borromeo e la Controriforma*, Casale Monferrato, Marietti, 1984, p. 129.

Borromeo's canonization. As known in fact, in less than 10 years – that is from 1601 through 1610 – the archbishop of Milan was recognized as Saint, and in this way the bishop-pastor became a model of life. Before the canonization bull of 1st November 1610⁸¹, publishings, images, portraits, cult objects, prayers, poems, preachings and religious demonstrations, had been fixing the canons of a model which was being defined in a progressively clear form: Borromeo's life had become the life of the *sanctus vir*, his virtues were the clues of a tormented epoch, and they addressed the piety of the religious and lay individuals, better still they became a point of reference for a «disciplined society and church»⁸² and, last but not least, became the tools for the religious acculturation.

Therefore the fight, made by the Milanese archbishop, for the clericalization of the society, continued along after him, through his myth. He has, in fact, become

the saint [of the] little “average” virtues, such as charity and piety for example, therefore possible to imitate, possible to follow through complying with. It is [...] the model of perfect life, and its key lies in the hand of ecclesiastic institutions. Through Borromeo's figure, a strong ecclesial conformism is required, [...] not only to clergy, but to the great human mass⁸³.

In this way, the example of the life of Carlo Borromeo has turned into a pedagogical device, a means of religious propaganda which exalts the “popular” and active (i.e. not ecstatic) dimension of the Counter-reformation and which, surpassing and contemporaneously receiving the image of the bishop-politician, the bishop-diplomat, the bishop-theologian, the bishop-preacher and, finally, of the bishop-saint, celebrates the model of the bishop-educator, the *pastor*, who promoted a complex and articulated rebuilding of the Church. This one consists of different levels of piety and care, and was able to give life to an experience of collective liturgy, and its inheritance – as well known – had a great influence far beyond the boundaries of the Milan Archdiocese.

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⁸¹ *Bullarium*, cit., vol. X (1867), pp. 643-653.

⁸² Turchini, *La fabbrica di un santo*, cit., p. 129.

⁸³ «santo [delle] piccole virtù “medie”, come carità e pietà ad esempio, perciò imitabili, perciò da seguire conformandosi. È [...] modello della vita perfetta le cui chiavi sono nelle mani delle istituzioni ecclesiastiche. Attraverso la figura del Borromeo si chiede un conformismo ecclesiale convinto, [...] non solo al clero ma anche presso la gran massa umana» (*ibid.*, p. 128).