

While the lawyer, Giulio Dante, was finishing his work, the new postulator, Brother Gustave-Marie Émery, future Superior General, was preparing the *Positio*. It included two large volumes with a total of 1,500 pages of text, the contents of which were as follows:

- The *Summarium* of the Apostolic Process relating to the heroic virtues
- Statements in favour of these virtues, collected into separate booklets
- The process concerned with the revision of the various texts
- The *Animadversiones* (objections) of the Promoter of the Faith
- The answers of the lawyer Dante
- An additional *Summarium* with the new responses to the *Animadversiones*.

This *Positio* was handed over to the eleven judges of the Tribunal 40 days before the meeting of the "ante-preparatory" Congregation, the first of the three Congregations necessary for the recognition of heroic virtues and which sought to verify whether there were any obstacles that would prevent the recognition of those virtues. The Relator of the cause was Cardinal Alessandro Verde who prepared a summary of the issues to be debated. Everything suggested that the cause would lead to a happy conclusion. However, storm clouds were brewing.

This first Congregation took place on July 23, 1946. The request had been formalised by the Postulator of the Institute of the Brothers of Christian Instruction, Brother Gustave-Marie Hémerly. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Cardinal Verde, Cardinal Salotti being Prefect of the Congregation of the Causes of Saints and Mgr. Natucci the Promoter of the Faith. The debate must have been quite lively, because at the end of the session only one consultant, Monsignor Antonelli, was in favour of pursuing the cause. The other ten cast a vote of suspension. They were not, in fact, against or hostile to the cause, but only awaited clarification on some aspects of the activity of this Servant of God.

There were two aspects, in particular, namely the collaboration with his brother, Féli Lamennais, and the administrative problems he endured with the local civil and ecclesiastical authorities, in particular in the years 1830-1840. The latter problems were not insignificant: *"In 1946, the case was rejected - though not abandoned altogether - due to only one vote being cast in its favour at that time. One should read the detail of the consultants' votes from 1946, however. They are actually rather encouraging. But the cause was only saved by a proposal from Fr. Antonelli and its acceptance by Mgr. Frutaz."* (Fr. Gabriel Potier: letter to Fr. Jean Le Bihan, Postulator, 20-10-1978).

The Promoter of the Faith, Bishop Natucci, expressed his concern relating to the advancement of the cause. On August 5th 1946, a few days after this ante-preparatory Congregation, he presented his "new observations" (*Animadversiones*), including the following remarks: *"No one can deny that this remarkable cause for canonisation nonetheless presents difficulties, some of which deserve to be considered as substantial, heavy clouds as opposed to the light clouds referred to by the Defender. If they are not entirely dissipated, they could, for a variety of important reasons, entirely overshadow the figure of this Servant of God. This danger was well noted by the Defence, who deemed it useful, in order to dispel these dark clouds, to give a response whose dimensions exceeded the planned limits and whose very length proves that the circumstances faced by the defence are substantial, but perhaps not insurmountable... Even after this subtle, detailed, and well-prepared response, the objections, particularly those concerning Faith, Prudence and Charity, retain all their strength and have even been reinforced to a degree by the writings of the Frs. Persehais and Feildel."*