

# CHARITAS

PUBLICATION RESERVED TO THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY

LIVING THE JOY OF EVANGELICAL POVERTY

HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION'S APPROVAL

PROPOSAL FOR A STUDY OF THE NAME "SERVANTS OF CHARITY"  
AND THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE CONGREGATION

ON THE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF FR. PRIMO  
LUCCHINETTI, FRIEND AND DISCIPLE OF FR. GUANELLA

COMUNICAZIONI

DECRETI

CONFRATELLI DEFUNTI

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RESERVED TO THE SERVANTS OF CHARITY  
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# LETTER OF THE SUPERIOR GENERAL

## LIVING THE JOY OF EVANGELICAL POVERTY

*On 2 August 2014, the Congregation for Religious issued a Circular Letter entitled: “Guidelines for the Administration of the Assets in Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life”, which was certainly requested by the Pope. We are well aware how the ‘Franciscan’ touch of Pope Francis is encouraging fair and transparent economic administration of ecclesial property in the Church. We should also not ignore the fact that in these times of economic troubles, when financial scandals and corruption are being exposed, we religious must be careful to ensure that the money of the poor is properly administered at the service of the mission.*

*We can summarise the principal recommendations of the document in three main points: a) the administration of assets; b) collaboration with the local Church; c) formation.*

*a. With regard to the administration of assets, each Congregation is asked to be faithful to its own charism and to plan the use of its resources, focussing on the sustainability of its works. We are invited to create facilities that are easy to manage and for final accounts and budgets to become normal tools not only for our works but also for our religious Communities “as a means to educate members of the Institute regarding the economic dimensions of our lives, to increase common awareness in this area, and to verify the actual degree of personal and communal poverty.”*

A key point highlighted by the document is **transparency**. “Evangelical witness requires that the works are managed in full transparency, in compliance with canon and civil law, and made to address poverty in all of its manifestations.”

*b. With regard to ecclesial cooperation, the need is stressed for dialogue with the local Church and other religious institutions in the area, particularly when the closure of houses or disposal of real estate is contemplated, in order to preserve a harmonious presence of religious life in the dioceses. Cooperation must not only involve the local religious, but also the laity, so that the works created and maintained by a religious charism can bear authentic evangelical witness, as well as achieving a technically effective service through careful administration.*

*c. The document gives a detailed description of the role of the treasurer, who, on one hand, requires special training to manage the technical complexity of the works, and, on the other, cannot be reduced to a merely technical role, as economic decisions must also be coherent with the spiritual and apostolic values of the Community and facilitate their practice. For this very reason, it is not right for the treasurer to make virtually all the economic decisions, but all the members of the Institute should feel that they share responsibility for the economy of the house.*

*I would like to begin from this last point to put together and comment on some guidelines for action that come from our tradition.*

*I think that we all acknowledge the fact that economic matters have a great impact on our religious life, how we carry out our mission and how people perceive our witness as persons consecrated to the Lord and to the poor. The document that we are commenting on also states this emphatically: “... it must be said that a Religious Institute cannot undertake a process of revitalisation without paying particular attention to the use of its assets in relation to its mission.” “The Gospel clearly invites us to open-handedness in the use of goods and generosity in sharing them...”*

*Therefore, the first question to ask ourselves as a Congregation is: “How are we administering the goods of Providence in the light of our mission?”*

*To answer this question, I decided to review the recent General Chapters and put together their recommendations regarding economic matters and the administration of goods.*

*When dealing with issues concerning economic matters, our Chapters normally tend to give concrete guidelines for proper accounting or, at most, for achieving a better communion of goods through contributions to support the General or Provincial administration; only rarely do the Chapters reflect on the Congregation's economic policy and the relationship between economic matters and the lifestyle of our Communities, or between economic matters and how we carry out our mission of charity. Here are some passages:*

***The 15<sup>th</sup> Chapter** insisted on the following points:*

- standardising accounting procedures to achieve accurate verification and reporting;*
- the proper filing of documents;*
- the need to prepare budgets and final accounts;*
- distinguishing the administration of the religious Community from that of the Parish or its activity;*
- at the Congregation level, it called for economic planning in support of poorer Provinces and Communities, particularly the houses of formation.*

***The 16<sup>th</sup> Chapter**, in addition to reaffirming the guidelines of the previous Chapter, especially in regard to the economic planning of the Congregation, also referred to the relationship between economic matters and religious poverty, inviting us to live our witness of poverty more radically, both as individuals and as a community.*

***The 17<sup>th</sup> Chapter** also limited itself to providing practical guidelines for the administration of goods, establishing the need for an **Administrative Directory** for the entire Congregation, which was to be subsequently applied by each Province to its own particular situation. This was also seen as a good time to introduce new technology to achieve effective and efficient administrative organisation.*

***The 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter** dealt more explicitly with the witness of poverty, but delegated to the Provinces the duty of “establishing simple and prac-*

tical guidelines to help the confreres live the vow of poverty personally and as a community, and inviting the local Communities to integrate these guidelines into their annual Community projects.”

*Moreover, from the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter onwards, the Congregation's concerns regarding economic matters seemed to shift towards the problem of finding the necessary resources to manage the increasing complexity and needs of our works, where many lay workers have had to be employed and several of our houses renovated to meet the new standards imposed by the demands and development of society. We also arrived at establishing the validity of using some of our properties as a source of regular income to support our works. Concern was expressed about the economic sustainability of the works, and therefore the guidelines issued by the latest chapters also include ensuring, or at least working towards, the economic autonomy of the houses, including those opened more recently.*

*The complexity of managing our works called for more adequate training for the confreres responsible for the administration of our assets and for the lay people who had now become a necessary help in the management our works.*

*With the 19<sup>th</sup> Chapter, the subject of the administration of property is seen in a broader perspective, both in terms of the commitment of the New Evangelisation called for by the Church in this time of great social change, and as a commitment to make our witness more visible as religious who live and propose a culture of giving, gratuitousness and communion: “In order to make our witness to the vow of poverty more transparent, the General Chapter requests that the financial reporting of each religious community is carried out separately and distinctly from that of its work...” This seems an obvious step for the sake of fiscal transparency and the efficiency of our service, but this provision effectively provided an opportunity for our Communities to make a serious evaluation of how our Founder's heartfelt admonition to be ‘poor members of a very poor Institute’ was actually lived. If we were not to spare ourselves in providing our poor with a service that can even be costly, we could not enjoy a lifestyle above that of the poor of the society in which we live.*

*Even the economic crisis, which for several years has been creating greater social poverty, especially among the less well-off classes, and has certainly also had an effect on the resources available for our char-*

*itable activities, has perhaps not affected the life of our Communities so much.*

*Our Constitutions certainly contain a series of very beautiful principles and exhortations, but we are not always able to make them effective in practice, or to live them with conviction as an authentic prophecy for the New Evangelisation, in the style proposed by Pope Francis.*

*Confreres can at times be heard wondering whether, for example, we are using social communication media with the simplicity called for by our religious vocation; or whether trips and absences from the Community for family occasions are being made with excessive frequency...*

*It is good to make a review of life in our Communities from time to time, even with regard to these aspects. It is not right that the discernment of the Community has no say, even in these decisions, which may appear as totally a matter of personal responsibility.*

*I was very surprised by the fact that the application of the General Council's decree on holidays, inviting those on mission abroad to exercise greater sobriety in the planning of trips for family visits, encountered strong resistance. At the same time, I am amazed to see the difficulty of confreres to comply with certain aspects of the vow of poverty that the Code of Canon Law has established as the duty of all religious. See, for example, Canon 668 §2 and §3 regarding the will that each religious must make and the temporal goods that the religious can acquire through personal effect or by reason of the Institute. How hard it is, at times, to generously hand over our pensions or the earnings from our apostolates!*

*To live poverty with conviction, as the characteristic feature our Founder desired for our Congregation, it is good to remind ourselves of the indications in no. 90 of the Apostolic Exhortation 'Vita Consecrata'. "Even before being a service on behalf of the poor, evangelical poverty is a value in itself, since it recalls the first of the Beatitudes in the imitation of the poor Christ. Its primary meaning, in fact, is to attest that God is the true wealth of the human heart... making a prophetic appeal as it were to society, which in so many parts of the developed world risks losing the sense of proportion and the very meaning of things. Consecrated persons are therefore asked to bear a renewed and vigorous evangelical witness to self-denial and restraint, in a form of fraternal life inspired by principles of simplicity and hospitality, also as an example to those who are indifferent to the needs of their neighbour. This witness will of course be accompanied by a preferential love for the poor and*

will be shown especially by sharing the conditions of life of the most neglected.”

*In this year of grace, let us generously welcome the invitation of a Church which, in the style of the Pope, seeks to rediscover the value and beauty of evangelical poverty, “to oppose within ourselves and in the world the thirst for power and riches, and to answer the call of the poor, who are waiting to be recognized as worthy members of the human family”, as we are reminded in our Constitutions.*

*Fraternally yours,*

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA  
*Superior General*

Rome, 24 March 2015



## INSIGHTS

# HISTORY OF THE CONGREGATION'S APPROVAL

*In this year dedicated to consecrated life, it seemed only right to remind the confreres of our Founder's efforts to obtain the approval of our Institute by the Holy See.*

*A detailed and well-documented study on this topic, edited by Don Nino Minetti, was published in the March 1978 edition of 'Charitas' (pp. 34-78). I have summarised the most significant passages, which I present here for the confreres' reflection. By calling to mind the perseverance with which the Founder was able to achieve this ardently desired goal, we can also appreciate the gift of our vocation and, particularly in this Jubilee year of celebration, thank the Lord for having called us to follow in the footsteps of our teacher and father.*

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA

## THE PREPARATION

For a sense of family, it is always good to know our history and grasp its most significant aspects.

One of the most important steps in the life of a religious congregation is certainly its recognition by the Church, which allows its members to act in the name of the Holy Church.

If we open the fourth volume of the Opera Omnia of the Founder's writings, what becomes immediately apparent is the amount of passages written for

the members of the two Congregations (totalling 1,426 pages!), especially those referring to Statutes, Constitutions and Regulations in connection with obtaining approval from the Holy See.

Reflecting on the fact that it took 34 years (1894-1928) for the final approval of our Institute, the question that arises is: “How was this goal reached?”

When did Fr. Guanella begin to cultivate the idea of transforming his institutions into a true and proper juridical body, with a precise canonical structure, so that it could be approved by the Church?

It is difficult to clearly determine the starting point. We know with certainty that very shortly after his arrival in Como (1886), he began to gather information about some congregations, mainly of a charitable nature, founded between 1600 and 1800, showing particular interest in their juridical organisation. He wanted to give a structure to the group of religious with private vows who were working with him. This can be seen in one of his writings, dating from between 1888 and 1891.

This precious document clearly reveals Fr. Guanella’s intentions for his female congregation.

We have to wait until 1894 for information on the expectations he was nurturing for the male congregation. In this year, he wrote the first draft of a juridical nature for his future collaborators: ‘Organic Statute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart’. (It should be noted that he only had three male collaborators that year).

This short Statute contained, in essence, the main elements for a religious community. The booklet is divided into the following headings: purpose, members, admission, novitiate, religious profession, treasurer, confessor, religious vows.

The Statute begins as follows: “In the Little House, besides the Daughters of Providence, there are the Sons of the Sacred Heart, who are divided into three families: Priests, nursing Brothers and Headmasters.

What priests and what brothers are admitted to the Sons of the Sacred Heart?

Those priests are admitted to the Institute who have either graduated from the scholasticate of the House or have come from elsewhere, but showing qualities indicating a vocation to the religious life besides occupying themselves with zeal in the various duties of the Little House. Those good laymen who wish to live the religious life and have a vocation for it can also enter and become a part of this religious family. Here they will work for the salvation of their own souls and for the education of the poor orphans gathered in the Little House. They might be nurses, carpenters, tailors, farmers, printers, etc.

Conditions:

The priests must feel being called in a special way to the duties of the various works of charity that are to be carried out in the Little House. They

enter the Institute with the approval of their Ordinaries and the references commonly required. In regard to the lay Brothers, men who enjoy good health and have good will, along with a trade, can be admitted to become part of the Sons of the Sacred Heart after producing the Baptismal and Confirmation certificates, along with proof of good morals supplied by their pastors and confirmed by the chanceries of their diocese.

Both priests and Brothers will bring to the House whatever they possess of movable goods and real estate, besides their firm will to sacrifice themselves for the good of the House...” (*He then continues with the other headings that the Statute must contain*).

### **FIRST ATTEMPT (1896-1898)**

Two years passed, and in 1896 Fr. Guanella developed the idea of the need for papal approval of his rules, to ensure the *‘life and prosperity’* of his institution.

He therefore wrote to his bishop, Msgr. Teodoro Valfrè, sending him a copy of the rules and asking him to act as a supportive intermediary with the Holy See to “promote the approval of the Rules so that the minimal works of the Little House may develop and be specially blessed by God” (*Letter of 19 September 1896*).

The text reached the hands of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, which on 7 February 1898 informed Fr. Guanella, through the bishop, of a series of observations regarding this Statute. It was criticised for being insufficient and not complying with the guidelines established by the Holy See for newly founded institutes.

Fr. Guanella then prepared a new text: ‘The Statute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart’ (1898), and sent it, with the support of the Bishop of Como, to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in Rome.

The Holy See once more responded negatively, highlighting certain omissions in the text and asking in particular for the juridical separation of the two institutes (male and female), while at the same time “highly commending Fr. Guanella’s zeal and invoking the blessings of heaven”.

It is interesting to read the introduction to the Statute in this text, entitled ‘Historical Notes of the Institute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart’, in which Fr. Guanella provides us with an important document on the situation of the Institute in those early years of the foundations.

## SECOND ATTEMPT (1899-1901)

After this failed attempt, the idea of attaining papal approval, far from fading away, became more insistent, especially now that there was a certain increase in the numbers of his collaborators, though still few, and for the sake of the development of the works.

He needed priests in his houses, but difficulties often arose regarding the ordination of those who were being prepared for the priesthood, as some bishops were unwilling to grant dimissorial letters.

This period is therefore characterised by two predictable attitudes:

- great care and efforts by Fr. Guanella in preparing all the necessary documentation for the request to be forwarded to Rome;
- frequent and insistent correspondence with his bishop, Msgr. Valfré, to whom he presented the documents as each was completed to elicit his support.

From this correspondence we can note some hesitation on the part of the bishop, while on the other hand we have to admire Fr. Guanella's perseverance and insistence, to the point of complaint, in wanting to achieve his objectives.

### Preparation of a new regulatory text

Following the negative response from the Holy See, the first task was to draft a new constitutional text, which Fr. Guanella presumably wrote towards the end of 1898 and had printed in the early months of 1899.

It is an expansion and revision of the previous Statute (1898), according to the directives received from Rome in the above-mentioned letter of the Sacred Congregation.

Due to the importance of this text for our theme, we have included the chapter on the purpose (I) and on the bond of charity (III).

### Constitution of the Sons of the Sacred Heart, Como, 1899

*Purpose.* “The Institute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart takes its name from the first church Father Louis established in Como and dedicated to the Divine Heart.

This Institute is a pious union of priests and lay Brothers who live united in a bond charity and simple religious vows.

Their goal is to achieve their own sanctification by observing the evangelical counsels and by practicing the works of charity in general.

In particular, they dedicate themselves to the works of mercy by sheltering abandoned needy children, abandoned elderly men, the incurables, orphan boys, and retarded children. As a secondary form of apostolate, they also dedicate themselves to the teaching and education of the youth in schools and feast day youth centers (oratori).

They open Houses, and they receive the needy, trusting above all in the help of Divine Providence. They are not concerned with multiplying possessions, but they use, in the service of the Lord's poor, whatever Divine Providence sends them, trusting in the teachings of the Lord who says, 'Give us this day our daily bread...; seek the kingdom of God and the temporal things will be given besides.' Following these teachings is especially opportune and useful in our times: and this is the reason the Sons of the Sacred Heart apply themselves to the needy with special care.

The exceptional circumstances of these times also call for exceptional exercises of charity toward our neighbour. Therefore, the Sons of this Institute dedicate themselves intensively to these as well. Their guide for doing a little good is the example of the Divine Heart who teaches us: 'Learn from me who am meek and humble of heart.'

*Of the bond of charity.* The members of the Institute of the Sacred Heart are members of the supreme head, Jesus Christ. It must be absolutely apparent that every member of the institute is called by the Lord. The members, therefore, must carry the marks of their vocation in a fervent and constant love for God and for the welfare of the pious Institute. They must possess the proof that they have battled and won over their enemies and the enemies of the world, against the temptations of the flesh and of the devil, in order to live and reign with Christ.

The best temporal and spiritual good is charity, according to the saying of the Lord: 'How good and joyful it is to have many brothers together as one.' The confreres must dedicate themselves with such love, because the Lord loves him who gives himself entirely to him. The fervent love of God produces a warming affection of charity toward the neighbour, because the love for God is not parted from the love for the neighbour. A gentle and pleasant love for our neighbour is the most beautiful gift from God that one can have here on earth.

With charity everything is endured, with charity everything is overcome. The members of the pious Institute do good, especially animated by this pure affection of charity. Thus, supported by higher sentiments of faith and charity, the confreres will be ready to be tied with the chains of the three vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, vows that constitute an impenetrable fortress to the assaults of the enemies, and are the dearest sign of a special benevolence from God."

On 3 March 1899, Fr. Guanella sent the new text to his bishop, Msgr. Valfré, accompanied by a letter in which he reminds the bishop that he had promised to endorse the petition to the Holy See.

This is period in which ‘New historical notes of the origin of the Congregation’ was written (5 April 1899), probably not by Fr. Guanella, in which the information that Fr. Guanella himself had given in the introduction to the Statute of 1898 was amplified. This new text contains a valuable addition: a list of names of the members that were part of the Congregation in that year.

This list also served, together with the regulatory text, to give the appointed authority a sufficiently complete idea of the new Institution.

Msgr. Valfrè sent Fr. Guanella the following reply concerning these two documents on 7 April 1899:

“My very Reverend Sir,

I am very well aware that the Sons of the Sacred Heart and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, with pious intentions, certainly do much good and strive with good will and commendable commitment for the sanctification of their own souls and those of their neighbour...

I therefore wish to inform you that I have not failed to address my full attention to a very careful examination of the two regulations that you sent me, and, although there are a few observations and modifications to be made to certain articles, on the whole, however, I assure you that I found them inspired by authentic principles of Christian perfection.

However, since you have to send them to the Sacred Congregation, I cannot nor do I intend to pre-empt any judgement that the sacred Tribunal in Rome may express in regard to this matter.

I would have approved the annexed ‘Historical Backgrounds’ willingly and without hesitation. Having read them, however, I feel that although the information on the Daughters of St. Mary is quite well written and sufficiently comprehensive, that concerning the Sons of the Sacred Heart leaves something to be desired. It ends up as little more than a biography of the good Founder rather than a true history of the institution, and may not meet the requirements of the Sacred Congregation as it says too little about the purpose and means of subsistence of the pious institutions. I certainly cannot doubt the veracity of the figures that reflect the assets and liabilities of the various houses, but I am unable to verify them, and so, without that, I cannot grant approval...

In my opinion, you should wait a few more days so that I could submit everything to their Excellencies the Bishops in the dioceses where you have houses, in order to submit a mutually agreed approval.

With assurance of my sincere consideration, I bless you with all my heart.

You most loving Brother in Jesus Christ, ✠ TEODORO, Bishop  
Como, this day of 7 April 1899.”

Fr. Guanella welcomed the implicit invitation to clarify the material and moral situation of the Institute, and in June 1899, in agreement with the bishop, he accepted an administrative inspection of the House in Como and drafted a report on the general state of the Institute: “The Institute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart, which is based in the suburb of San Vitale in Como, has houses in Milan and New Olonio (an agricultural colony in the so-called Pian di Spagna) in Italy, as well as in Roveredo, Splügen and Val Bregaglia in the Canton of Graubünden (Switzerland)...” (*He gives a detailed report for each of these works, enumerating the buildings and the guests housed in them*).

He then adds that the Sons of the Sacred Heart priests also served as chaplains in some of the houses of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence.

This report was sent to the bishop, who still remained hesitant. Since Fr. Guanella usually accompanied these requests with a letter, he took the opportunity to voice his complaints to the bishop, while indirectly alluding to the difficulties caused by the situation, particularly for the ordination of his priests. Here are some passages from the letter, after Fr. Guanella had expressed the difficulties he had had regarding the ordination of one confrere:

“Most Reverend Excellency,

..... Similar to the case of the cleric... is the cause of the approval of our rules. They continually promise us the approval of our Rules and then these Excellencies and Eminences, at the critical moment, leave us the lurch. This means that we have Divine Providence as our good guide. We try our best to abide by this and, whether the Excellencies and the Most Reverend Eminences approve us or delay in granting approval, we are in good hands. After having done our duty to the Excellencies and the Most Reverend Eminences we can remain calm, even if at times the Lord allows us to suffer a little.

Cavalliere Paulo Zerboni has conscientiously performed the task of inspector of our economies, and will have reported everything in the letter that Sig. Cugnasca and Fr. Giuseppe Roncoroni have given you. Thus you have in your hands everything regarding the material and moral situation of our house and, if you so wish, can recommend our rules to the Holy See.

I cannot come to you in person because I am recovering from influenza; however, I am not too bad. May Your Excellency take the needs of the poor and indigent to heart and grant us valid help in everything.

Permit me to kiss your sacred ring.

Your most obedient servant, Fr. Luigi Guanella

Milan 03/02/1900.”

## **The official request to the Sacred Congregation (10 February 1900)**

Barely a week later, Fr. Guanella, who had returned to Como, received the letters of recommendation from the Bishops of Pavia and Coira. He wrote immediately to his bishop, to whom he sent the two 'important documents', expressing his confidence in also receiving a similar letter from him.

There was one important fact: Fr. Guanella sent the bishop the final document necessary for forwarding the application for approval to Rome, i.e. the official request to the Holy See.

And so he wrote a further letter to his bishop:

Most Reverend Excellency,

I have great confidence that you will obtain a positive response for our two Congregations in Rome. I have received some important documents here, from yourself and from the Bishops of Pavia and Coira, in support of the two institutes.

I am sending them to you through the Reverend Archpriest of Sant'Agostino and have also enclosed the formal request to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Religious and a copy of the Rules for the sake of completeness.

When you meet with His Eminence Cardinal Ferrari and His Excellency the Bishop of Pavia, please give them my regards and recommendations in this regard.

I ask the Angel Raphael to accompany you and I kiss your sacred ring,

Your obedient priest, Luigi Guanella

Como 10/02/1900

The following is the text of the request:

THE MOST REVEREND FATHERS  
OF THE SACRED CONGREGATION  
OF BISHOPS AND REGULARS

Luigi Guanella, priest, son of the deceased Lorenzo di Campodolcino, Diocese of Como, wishes to establish and direct a foundation of priests and laymen, known as the Sons of the Sacred Heart, whose purpose is their own sanctification and to shelter the homeless.

The members of the pious Institute are growing in number and the harvest is increasing in their hands.

Many of them also aspire to the priesthood. However, they are mostly poor in material goods; often advanced in age, and at times intellectually lacking, although full of good will, and have difficulty finding bishops prepared to ordain them.

Yet the works of the Institute require at least sufficient personnel: personnel that the Bishops, in turn, can avail of in the event of need.

The Sons of the Sacred Heart live by the Statute of their Rule, which is enclosed herein; also included, *ad abundantiam*, are the internal rules of the institute, although incomplete. Together with these is 'A brief History of the Sons of the Sacred Heart', which is completed by the 'Historical background of the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence', also enclosed.

Fr. Luigi Guanella, encouraged by the advice of illustrious bishops and His Eminence, the Archbishop of Milan, humbly requests that your most Reverend Fathers approve the Rule of the Sons of the Sacred Heart.

If, by chance, this favour cannot yet be granted, he begs that at least the Decree be accepted, so that the aspirants to the priesthood, necessary for the direction and development of the work, can be promoted to Holy Orders.

In the hope of this grace, he kneels to kiss the Sacred Purple and declares himself

your most obedient servant, Fr. Luigi Guanella

On 16 February 1900, Fr. Guanella received news that the Bishop of Como had declared himself willing to support the request for approval.

He shared his joy at this news with his superior in a letter dated 16 February 1900:

"Most Reverend Excellency,

Your Excellency has given us the great consolation of his support the approval. We are all confident that you were also able to confer with His Eminence the Cardinal in order to facilitate its successful outcome.

We fervently pray to the Lord for this intention and we pray also for Your Eminence ... I kiss your Sacred Ring,

Your most obedient servant, Fr. Luigi Guanella"

### **Everything was now ready. Nothing remained but to wait and pray!**

However, the letter of the bishop, Msgr. Valfré, to the Sacred Congregation of 28 February 1900 could certainly have raised doubts regarding the approval. Here is the text:

Most Illustrious and Reverend Eminence,

Fr. Luigi Guanella, priest and founder of the Pious House of Providence in Como, has erected here in my diocese a pious union known as the Sons of the Sacred Heart, composed of priests, clergy and laymen, with rules formulated by himself, which he would like to have recognised as a true Congregation, with a

Statute approved by the Holy See. He is therefore asking me for recommendation to the Sacred Congregation. As I have already stated in my letter of 6 June 1899, I am aware and happy to testify a second time that these Sons do much good, working for the particular benefit of so many poor unfortunate souls, sheltered and assisted by the charity of the commendable Fr. Guanella, and they live an edifying life. However, I have no knowledge of how or to what extent the rules are actually observed, or of what safe guidelines are followed for the acceptance of clerics, who almost always come from the seminaries in Lombardy, where for one reason or another they were unable to continue their studies; and I am not aware of what regular studies they take nor of the situation of their ecclesial life as clerics.

I therefore feel it is appropriate to call the attention of the Sacred Congregation to these points before approving the statutes of the pious association. When this has been addressed for an advisable period and the rules or statutes proposed by Fr. Guanella are truly observed, I shall have no difficulty expressing my favourable opinion.

I obediently kiss the Sacred Purple and profess myself your most Reverend Eminence's

Most humble, devoted and obedient servant in Jesus Christ  
✠ TEODORO, Bishop of Como

Rome, 26 February 1900

Two months later (28 April 1900), in a second letter of recommendation, Msgr. Valfré had this to say:

Most Reverend Eminence,

In reference to my letter of 26 February, in which I presented to the Sacred Congregation the Rules that the founder of the House of Providence, Fr. Luigi Guanella, has drawn up for the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and for the Sons of the Sacred Heart, which he desires to be recognised as true Congregations with Statutes approved by the Holy See, I now present the report on the material, moral and economic situation for both of the congregations, which the aforementioned priest has sent me.

It is not my task to make any comment on the report that I submit to the judgement of this Sacred Congregation, and as the bishop has only very limited involvement in Fr. Guanella's foundation, I can only rely on his own statements in regard to what is presented to you. The report, moreover, which I submit together with that prepared by Fr. Guanella himself, and another produced by an administration expert, highlights several shortcomings, which need to be addressed in order to give the two pious unions a more stable structure.

They are both called to do great good and can certainly succeed in their intentions once they are governed properly and in a manner that the Diocesan

ordinary can observe more clearly than at present, and this is what we ask in particular of the prudent wisdom of this Sacred Congregation. The Congregation could advise the founding Father to properly consolidate the works he has begun before directing his zeal to new works and, at the same time, grant the requested approval in a temporary rather than final form. This would provide an opportunity to improve what has been done so far and would fulfil the desire of all good people, who, although they desire the recognition of the zealous priest's foundations, also desire their consolidation rather than see them exposed to fluctuations that could threaten their existence.

Kneeling to kiss the Sacred Purple with the most venerable obedience, I confirm myself your most Reverend Excellency's

Most humble, devoted and obedient servant in Jesus Christ  
✠ TEODORO, Bishop of Como

So, after two and a half years of preparation, a conclusion was reached, but certainly not a happy one. For the second time the Sacred Congregation in Rome expressed an unfavourable decision (27 August 1901).

On 20 September 1901, the Rapporteur of the commission for the examination of new institutes, Fr. Antonio di Gesù, a Carmelite, wrote confidentially to Fr. Guanella, telling him of the negative response to his request:

“Reverend Sir,

On 25 July, the Most Reverend Commission examined the Institutes founded by yourself.

Although your works of zeal elicited much admiration, as we are bound to abide by certain rules, it was not possible to issue a Decree of Praise.

However, a letter of encouragement was proposed and the proposal was accepted.

This morning I went to the Sacred Congregation to see if the letter had been sent, and the archivist told me that it was ready (he showed it to me) and that he had called the agent for a small fee that had to be paid. I suppose that the agent has already written to you and so the dispatch of the letter in question, which should be of great consolation to you, should not be long delayed.

Certain recently approved rules are now being printed for use in the drafting of Constitutions for modern religious institutes. You will find them extremely helpful. You will have to organise and consolidate the two Institutes in accordance with them, and you should shorten the Constitutions.

The two institutes must be completely independent in their Constitutions and life. As I said, however, without further suggestions, the new rules will enlighten you on how your two institutions need to be and how they should be presented to the Sacred Congregation at a later date, first to obtain the decree

of praise and then the desired approval, both of the Institute and of the Constitution. If Your Reverence comes to Rome (as I have no opportunity of visiting Milan) and would wish to favour me with a visit, we could clarify matters and smooth out any difficulties that you may encounter in carrying out what I have mentioned.

Please accept my humble respects and consider me,  
Your most devoted Servant

Father Antonio di Gesù, C.S.”

## THE GREAT UNCERTAINTY

Suffering and confusion: these were his feelings in response to the negative decision of the Holy See.

The confusion lasted for some time: whether to continue with the juridical approach of the approval or give the Congregation a less institutional and more compact structure, based on a mainly evangelical-spiritual bond.

This was perhaps one of the most difficult periods for Fr. Guanella and the history of his Congregation.

There was a moment in this climate of uncertainty when Fr. Guanella “thought that he should closely unite the members of his Institute with the sole bond of charity...” (*Fr. Mazzucchi*)

“This would be for several reasons:

- 1) The example of other religious institutes, such as the Oratorians of St. Philip Neri. Fr. Guanella admired this work and was inspired by the atmosphere of familiar joy that governed the relations between the members of its Institute. The Missionaries of St. Vincent de Paul were also a clear example for him of how much good can be done by enthusiastic souls bound, not by public vows, but united in common life and inspired by apostolic zeal.
- 2) The danger of political and fiscal persecution, which was real at that time. The example of what was happening in neighbouring France was a source of fear also in Italy, which was led by Governments not overly sympathetic towards the Church.  
Faced with these dangers, Fr. Guanella thought that a religious society without vows, and without the juridical form of approved religion, would be less prone to targeting by the enemies of the Church and less hindered in its charitable work.

3) A third and perhaps fundamental reason should not be forgotten, as it caused Fr. Guanella uncertainty at this time over the juridical form to give to his institute: its economic administration.

He feared that ‘papal approval, by stifling his initiative, might destroy the spirit and the direction of his Institute. But, above all, Father Guanella feared that his own spirit of trust and abandonment in Divine Providence, without depending upon human prudence excessively, might be destroyed.’

While this uncertainty persisted over the form to give his institution, he wasted no time in the development of the works.” (*Credaro*)

### THIRD ATTEMPT (1905-1906)

Don Leonardo Mazzucchi writes: “His hesitation was conquered by the disappearance of political fears, by the advice of persons in authority and by his deep trust in the esteem and protection of Pius X”.

Furthermore, there is the fact of the inconvenience of seeing the work subjected to the discretion of the various authorities of the dioceses where it had spread and of the spiritual and moral advantages of pontifical approval (*Cugnasca*).

The immediate impetus for resuming the request came directly from Pius X, during the audience of 11 February 1905.

Fr. Guanella wrote the following: “His Holiness Pius X deigned to advise me to request His Eminence Cardinal Ferrata to examine the Rules for the approval of the two institutes..., which had already received encouragement from the Sacred Congregation of Bishops with letters on 7 February 1898 and 27 August 1901.”

This time the request was prepared with surprising speed. The reasons were probably the following:

- Having embraced the old idea once more, Fr. Guanella decided to head straight to Rome: there he could receive help and good advice, and show the great good that his work doing.
- There were now very specific rules issued by the Holy See (*‘Conditae a Christo’* in 1900 and *‘Normae in approbandis novis institutis’* in 1901). In obedience to these, in 1904 Fr. Guanella had already changed the name of his congregation to avoid confusion with the Sons of the Sacred Heart founded by Msgr. Comboni. Now his sons would be called the Servants of Charity.
- Added to this is the experience Fr. Guanella had accumulated in this matter.

The response, however, was still unfavourable.

In 1905, he immediately redrafted new 'Rules'.

He would later declare that with these 'Rules of the Servants of Charity' (1905) he had complied perfectly with the requirements laid down by Card. Gotti, virtually transcribing his words.

Having examined them, Don Credaro wrote:

"... They showed a marked difference from those published up to then, and formed the basis for all the others that were to follow, from which they differed only in certain parts concerning common law...

These 'Rules' clearly reflect the Founder's commitment to remaining within the *Normae*, which he follows step by step, based on the example of many other institutes, expressing the spirit he wished to convey to his sons in brief concepts, using juridical forms wherever possible.

The purely ascetic aspects would be covered in the Rule of Life, without the constraint of mandatory rules.

The form is significantly more juridical than in the previous Statutes of the Sons of the Sacred Heart, where the aspect of exhortation towards religious and charitable values was prevalent, together with some basic administrative rules."

Obtaining the approval of the Holy See also required letters of recommendation from the bishops of the dioceses where his work was established. This time Fr. Guanella wrote them a circular letter, which was short but valuable in terms of the details it gives us.

Here are some passages from the letter:

To His Most Illustrious and Reverend Excellency, Msgr. Bishop of.....

In a private audience last 11 February, His Holiness Pius X deigned to advise the undersigned Fr. Luigi Guanella to request His Eminence Cardinal Ferrara to examine the Rules for the approval of the two institutes known as the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the Servants of Charity, already encouraged by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops with the letters of 7 February 1898 and 27 August 1901...

A more definitive examination by the Sacred Congregation would now require Your Excellence to be able and willing to express his opinion on this matter.

With profound respect, we, the undersigned, prostrate ourselves to kiss your sacred foot,

Yours faithfully,

Fr. Luigi Guanella, Cofoundress Marcellina Bosatta

Como, Feast of St. Joseph 1905.

On 26 May 1905, Fr. Guanella experienced two important events: he celebrated the anniversary of his ordination and, for the third time, sent the Holy See a formal request for approval, from which the following passages are taken:

TO HIS MOST REVEREND EMINENCE, THE MOST  
SERENE PRINCE CARDINAL FERRATA - ROME.

“The undersigned, kneeling to kiss the Sacred Purple, humbly presents this request for the examination and approval of the rules of his institute, known as the Servants of Charity. For this purpose, he sends the following documents (*there follows a list of documents, including those from the bishops whose support he had requested*)...

In a private audience on 11 February, His Holiness expressed the desire that Your Eminence address the examination and approval of the Institute of the Servants of Charity.

I am comforted by the hope that Your Eminence should wish to do so wholeheartedly and therefore, with the utmost respect, I declare myself

Your most humble servant, Fr. Luigi Guanella

Como, 26 May 1905.”

On 14 March 1906, the Commission for the examination of new institutes convened, discussed and once again expressed an unfavourable opinion.

The minutes are as follows:

“In the meeting of the Most Reverend Commission, held on 12 March and presided over by the Most Illustrious and Reverend Archbishop and Auditor of the Sacred Congregation, with the presence of... (*those in attendance are named*) the twin institutes of Fr. Guanella were discussed and the following conclusion was reached:

Since the Founder has not complied with what he was specifically enjoined to do in the letter of 1901, it is repeated to him in this letter, which expresses the Sacred Congregation’s displeasure at his negligence and disobedience and impresses upon him the need for exact observance. Therefore, the so-called ‘Regulations’ are disapproved.”

On 5 May 1906, Fr. Guanella went personally to the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, where he learned from Msgr. Giorgi, both verbally and in writing, that the Commission had once more expressed a negative opinion. The determining motive was that Fr. Guanella had not complied with the suggestions given in the letter of the Examining Commission of 1901.

Fr. Guanella explained his actions on 6 May 1906.  
He wrote the following to Monsignor Giorgi:

“Most Reverend Monsignor Giorgi,

In the note of yesterday, Your Most Reverend Excellency informed me verbally and in writing of the negative decision regarding the Decree of Praise and Approval of the Constitutions of the Servants of Charity and the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence, due to lack of compliance with the letter sent by the Most Reverend Commission in 1901. For the sake of my own peace of mind, out of respect for the truth and out of duty to the two Institutes, I wish to express the following:

1. The letter was not communicated to me literally but in summary form, and was interpreted almost as a decree of praise...
2. In any case, an increasingly distinct separation has been made between the two institutes, applying the rules used in the seminaries and pious institutes of Northern Italy, rules which, in our case, are applied to two institutions specially dedicated to the care of the sick and chronically infirm.
3. The superiors were persuaded to prepare the Rules after His Holiness advised us to do so, without intending any lack of respect to the Most Reverend Commission.

With regard to the ease with which members are accepted in the two institutes, a distinction should be made between them.

*a.* The female Institute has been in existence for about forty years and has borne its trials with constancy, perseverance and, not infrequently, heroic firmness, proven by the Institute’s rapid diffusion, with so many houses in about 48 locations in Italy and Switzerland, and proven also by the continuous requests made to the Daughters of St. Mary of Providence and the praise expressed by the most reverend bishops who called them.

For the Daughters of St. Mary, faith and self-denial have compensated for that minimum of education that could not yet be provided; but the present writer can testify that for some years now serious attention has also been given to such education as can be expected in this day and age, and we shall do even better in the future.

*b.* The male Institute was founded more recently, and was put together personally by the undersigned, with the rules studied for three years with the Most Reverend Don Bosco. It is a known fact that Don Bosco counted on gathering virtually improvised regiments of troops to come more swiftly to the aid of an imperilled Christian society. With these criteria and the means Divine Providence has allowed, we began the male institute, which we hope the Lord may likewise desire and bless, and in regard to which the Most Reverend Bishops have also expressed a favourable opinion.

The male Institute is composed of both members suitable for administration and others more suited to the simple services of the homes and the various works associated with them.

Regarding the institute's lack of unity of purpose, I feel I can modestly observe:

*a.* The female Institute extends its care to all ages but is divided into separate and well-ordered sections.

They care for people infirm in body or in mind or both body and mind, but those of dubious conduct and people with contagious diseases are strictly excluded, and in this respect the entire work of the Daughters of St. Mary can be summarised as care for people in need of simple shelter. In this regard, there would appear to be no lack of the unity of purpose desired by the letter of 1901.

We even followed the example of the great institute the Little House of Divine Providence in Turin, well known both for its complexity and its orderliness.

*b.* The male Institute is essentially devoted to works of simple shelter, and is also engaged in agricultural settlement works and assistance to Italian labourers abroad. Furthermore, the male institute is just beginning its formation and its development is difficult to foresee with certainty, although care will be taken that it grows in accordance with the indications given in the letter of 1901.

*c.* Concerning the negative opinion on the Regulations of these institutions, we see that nothing has been written that has not proven useful in practice.

I also wish to point out that Fr. Guanella drafted the Rules of the two institutes in the belief that he was conforming perfectly to the rules laid down by His Eminence Cardinal Gotti, almost repeating their very words. However, if their sense has not yet been fully grasped, we shall continue to study them and the writer will be glad to receive more detailed instructions so as to observe them more diligently.

In any case, the upright intention of the person responsible for the foundation of the two institutes, and his confidence in being guided by the hand by Providence, seems to be beyond doubt. With this deep conviction, nothing troubles the mind of the writer, who declares himself ever grateful to the Most Reverend Commission for any advice it may give and is confident of receiving its benevolent indulgence and help.

With these sentiments, I bow before this Most Reverend Commission and declare myself

Your most humble and obedient servant

Fr. Luigi Guanella

Rome, 05/06/1906.”

## FOURTH ATTEMPT (1907...)

Fr. Guanella had written: “ ...However, if their sense has not yet been fully grasped, we shall continue to study them (*the rules that were issued*) and the writer will be glad to receive more detailed instructions so as to observe them more diligently.”

Although once more greatly disappointed, Fr. Guanella remained true to his word and began again immediately.

Thus he had to patiently repeat the entire process, following the procedure that we have already seen.

If it was difficult for him, it has turned out very beneficial for us, because the documents that we now have are of far greater historical value than all the previous attempts.

The Sacred Congregation, at the suggestion of Cardinal Ferrata, entrusted Fr. Guanella to the guidance of Fr. Claudio Benedetti, a Redemptorist and consultant of the Sacred Congregation for the approval of new religious institutes.

In this man, Fr. Guanella would find not only a representative of the Holy See, but also a friend. For the help of every kind that he provided, he proved to be a man of Providence, who arrived at the right time.

## FIRST PUBLIC PERPETUAL VOWS (1908)

The story we are documenting never ceases to astonish due to its countless surprises and setbacks.

Fr. Guanella waited 20 years (1866-1886) for ‘*the hour of Providence*’ to begin his mission.

Once the mission started, it took another 20 years (1886-1907) of failed attempts for his congregation to be accepted as part of the Church.

Now a surprising event occurred in a very critical moment for the Founder and the Congregation. Fr. Guanella had just received a negative response to his request for approval for the third time, and now, with his collaborators, he made his public perpetual profession, as if to say that even without having obtained official recognition he saw himself as being right in the heart of the Church.

A strange but true fact!

It is worth examining this event, to understand its historical circumstances and describe the celebration.

## 1) Historical explanation

The first question that arises is: With what authority and for what reason did Fr. Guanella decide to profess public perpetual vows?

The explanation is given in the testimony of Fr. Claudio Benedetti:

“After the Commission of the Sacred Congregation’s negative decision on 12 March 1906, Fr. Guanella was not discouraged. Sustained by the support of Card. Ferrari, who had endorsed him with a letter of recommendation to the Holy See, he continued to knock at the doors of the Roman Congregations with apprehension and perseverance, during his increasing visits to Rome for the development of new works, in the hope of attaining his desired goal. During one of these visits to Rome he presented himself at the Congress of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Religious (then composed of the Prefect, Card. Ferrata, the Secretary, Msgr. Giustini, who became a Cardinal, and the Auditor, Msgr. Giorgi) to know what path he should pursue to obtain the desired decree.

These prelates, who greatly admired him for his zeal, asked me to guide him in assimilating the rules, which had already been drawn up and printed. He came to me with a note of recommendation from Cardinal Ferrata. That was the first time I met him in person, and, from then on, he always came to consult me whenever he came to Rome for information on the progress of his institutions, and also kept me informed by letter.”

In that first conversation, after explaining to him that the Holy See distinguished between pious works and the institutes that direct them, Fr. Benedetti continued:

“It was decided that he would devote himself to: 1) amending the Constitutions to conform fully to the rules of the Sacred Congregation; 2) making a more precise and complete separation of the houses inhabited by the Sisters from those inhabited by the Servants of Charity; 3) arranging for the profession of vows already envisaged; 4) establishing the general government in accordance with the rules; 5) opening a more conventional novitiate house than that already in existence.

Within a few months, the Constitutions had already been corrected in accordance with the rules of the Sacred Congregation. On 6 August 1907, he sent me a copy so that I could make observations; but no observations were required...

With regard to the vows and general government, he wrote to me from Milan on 30 March 1908: – In accordance with your instructions and the desire of the Sacred Congregation, last Saturday, 28 March, after twenty priests had professed their perpetual vows, and others their three-year vows, the first Superior Council and Chapter were formed and all came away greatly edified –.”

To understand the meaning of this testimony by Fr. Benedetti, which was made in writing and based on first-hand knowledge, some points need to be clarified:

1) Fr. Benedetti represented the Holy See and was acting in the name and under the authority of the Sacred Congregation for Religious. Card. Ferrata had personally assigned him to Fr. Guanelli for the specific purpose of guiding him on the path to take in order to obtain papal approval. Not only did he guide him, but he also informed him of the Sacred Congregation's wishes.

2) The Commission in charge of examining new congregations normally corrected them without approving them immediately, and the corrections were imposed on the religious for their observance.

Naturally, in order to put these into practice, as was required, perpetual profession was also necessary. It was thus a profession desired by Rome.

3) Fr. Benedetti himself, in accordance with the specific wishes of the Sacred Congregation, determined that Fr. Guanella and his companions should make their vows; the vows, according to the corrected Constitutions, had to be perpetual, at least for the confreres eligible for election to general positions.

4) Following the profession, a general government had to be established, in accordance with the rules of the Constitutions: This government presupposed a lawfully valid authority.

It followed from this that those first vows of 24 March 1908 were public vows, because they had been desired by the Holy See as the foundation of a regular religious community, governed on the basis of its own corrected Constitutions.

After their first perpetual vows, the Servants of Charity could be considered as true religious and members of a new institute in the Church.

## **2) The celebration: Tuesday, 24 March 1908**

The twenty-fourth of March 1908 was a very important landmark.

The profession of perpetual public vows can be considered the lawful birth of the Congregation of the Servants of Charity. The Church recognised the new religious family, although still in an informal manner, and called it to the service of its mission of salvation.

We have a sober, almost blunt, description of it by Fr. Guanella. It is contained in a large notebook (12 x 17.5 cm) with a thick black cover and a small lock, which allowed it to be closed with a key. It could be described as a '*Register of Professions*' because the professions that were made until Fr. Guanella's death were recorded in it on each occasion, either by himself or by others and signed by him.

The first five pages contain the following:

“THE EVENING OF THE FEAST OF THE ANNUNCIATION - 24 MARCH 1908

This evening, after a triduum of preaching in preparation, in deference to the wishes of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and in fulfillment of a desire expressed and nurtured for a long time, the undersigned confreres celebrated the profession of simple perpetual vows in the Institute of the Servants of Charity, in the following order:

Luigi Guanella, priest, as founder, professed perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, in accordance with the Constitutions received from and revised by the Most Reverend Consultor Fr. Claudio Benedetti of the Redemptorists and printed in 1907 by the House of Divine Providence press. Then the above-mentioned received the profession of simple perpetual vows from the following in the presence of the witnesses listed below... (*the signatures of the professed Servants of Charity follow*).

The witnesses presented themselves in turn and Fr. Guanella as Superior General witnessed their signatures and those of his own confreres.”

Fr. Luigi Guanella

Como, 24/03/1908

The first ceremony took place behind closed doors, as recalled by Sr. Marcellina Bosatta in a testimony for the Processes of Beatification: “I knew of the profession of vows by the Servant of God Fr. Luigi Guanella that took place behind closed doors in this Church of the Sacred Heart on 24 March 1908, and other Servants of Charity also participated; we did not know about these things immediately, but I knew the ceremony was to take place, even beforehand, although I do not remember who told me.”

It is difficult to know the reasons for such confidentiality: it can be assumed that Fr. Guanella wanted to avoid the attention of those who did not have too much sympathy for him and his confreres. They could have increased their opposition to the nascent Congregation.

The rite used for the profession, according to the testimony of Fr. Mazzucchi, was that described in Chapter VIII of the Constitutions of the Sons of the Sacred Heart in Como, from 1899. It is a simple, almost austere rite, in dialogue form, with a rich doctrinal content. It is worth quoting in full:

“The formula for the rite of profession is as follows:

The priest appointed by the superior general, wearing a surplice and stole, stands before the novice kneeling before the altar, flanked by two professed religious and asks the following questions:

- What are you asking for?
- I ask to be admitted to the profession of the Sons of the Sacred Heart.
- Do you know its Rule, and have you practiced it?
- I have endeavoured to learn it and practise it, and I am confident that I will be able to know it and practice it better in the future for the greatest benefit of my soul.
- Have you learned especially about the importance of the religious vows of chastity, poverty and obedience and have you practiced these vows?
- I believe that I have learned and practiced the substance of the holy religious vows. I have confidence that with the divine assistance I am able to renounce more and more heartily the vanities of the world, the temptations of the flesh and blood, so that I can follow more closely the counsel of perfection taught by Jesus Christ our Lord.
- Do you intend to make the simple religious vows and to observe the Rules of the Sons of the Sacred Heart?
- It is my firm resolution to dedicate myself to God’s service in the Institute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart, for my entire life. Therefore, as far as human fragility allows, I want to carry out exactly all the Rules of the Institute, and I am happy to make the religious vows of poverty, chastity, obedience before God and before the Superior General of this Institute.
- May the Lord bless your holy resolutions; may he grant you the grace of perseverance until when, on his coming as the Supreme Judge, he may crown you with a glorious crown in Heaven.

Now, then, in the presence of God, pronounce the formula of the vows of chastity, poverty and obedience according to the customs of this Institute:

In the name of the Most Holy Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Kneeling down in the presence of God, I ... acknowledge myself to be unworthy of the mercy of the Lord. However, fully trusting in the goodness of the Lord, I humble myself before God the Almighty and the Blessed Virgin Mary, and make the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to God the Almighty and to the Superior General of the Institute, according to the Rules adopted by the Institute of the Sons of the Sacred Heart.*

– *People in attendance answer: Amen.*

– May God bless your promises and keep you faithful until the end. Remember often the goodness and power of the Heart of Jesus Christ, who has called you to his special service. When in the practice of the Rules you will find difficulties, then remember the saying of St. Paul, that the suffering of this world is a very light burden in comparison with the future reward; and invoke with greater faith the mercy of the Most Holy Heart of Jesus Christ... (*A list of ‘Participants’ follows*)...

The number of those who bound themselves to the Congregation and its Founder, in a form that was now official, was quite considerable that year. It began on the 24 March 1908 with the 12 confreres in Como, and continued in various other locations until 26 June.

What did this event, so decisive for the lives of each of these confreres (25 with perpetual profession and 11 with three-year vows) and for the fate of the young congregation mean to them?

An echo can be heard in the commentary by Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi:

“... was for us gathered there an occasion of some fear but at the same time a most impressive and solemn importance. Before the world and God, Who was present and accepted our aspirations and resolutions expressed in those sacred vows, we were the little flock, the *infirma mundi* (*the weak things of the world*), the despised instruments which God, generous with comforts and promises, was calling into the public field of the Church and society for the providential beginning of an everlasting and glorious undertaking. This undertaking would succeed if we would be faithful to the divine designs and intentions for the restoration of the world, brought back to Christ with works of charity.

At that late hour, while the mysterious silence of the night made our hearts beat with unusual strength, and the Angels of heaven certainly hastened into the sanctuary praying and rejoicing, Father Guanella spoke humble, good and simple words. But he spoke not only with his mouth, but with his great heart, his holy soul uttering accents of rare sublimity of thought and affection.

Father Louis, the martyr of many labors and many past... and future sufferings for our good, the Father always so generous and compassionate, inestimable in his exquisite and most tender love for us who were guilty of reluctance and grave spiritual indolence to his burning desires, was deeply moved in thanking us for having given him the way, by accepting his invitation and putting ourselves in his following, of binding ourselves before God with those blessed bonds, and thus being able to close his tired days in oblivion, in poverty, and in the holy peace of the religious life. Our hearts could stand no more, and we shed tears of love, of holy jubilation, of repentance, of gratitude which made a mark on our souls, never to be eradicated.”

# PROPOSAL FOR A STUDY OF THE NAME “SERVANTS OF CHARITY” AND THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE CONGREGATION

*Various motivating factors have encouraged us to return to our origins in this year devoted to consecrated life. We present here a reflection on our name and on the coat of arms of our congregation.*

*They both signify an entire programme, enclosed within a name and heraldic symbology, and therefore a treasure that enriches us as Guanellian religious. We wish to thank Fr. Gastón Aquino for his extensive research on the meaning of our coat of arms, part of which we present below.*

Fr. GUSTAVO DE BONIS

## SOME INDICATIONS ON THE NAME ‘SERVANTS OF CHARITY’

We have been greatly helped by the explanation Fr. Attilio Beria presented to the General Chapter of 1969:<sup>1</sup>

“For this reason, Fr. Guanella also invested the name of the congregation with an exhortative value: although the occasion that suggested the name *Servants of Charity* to him was totally fortuitous, the choice, nevertheless, was perfectly in keeping with the *Normae* for new congregations issued in 1901; with regard to the name, they say: “The title of a new Institute can be based on an attribute of God, the mysteries of our holy religion, the feasts of the Lord or the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints or a special purpose of the institute itself.”

In our case, the name is inspired by a special purpose. The name was chosen in 1904, and the following year, when presenting the new regulations, Fr. Luigi wrote in the introduction: *We are Servants of Charity, because the charity of Jesus Christ has drawn us. Let us exercise the works of mercy of our Institute with fervor [...] May the peace and charity which Jesus Christ brought from heaven to earth become ever more abundant in our hearts and in our pious Institute.*”

Don Beria gives no explanation about this “fortuitous” occasion that gave Fr. Guanella the final name for his congregation, although he stresses its pro-

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<sup>1</sup> BERIA ATTILIO, *Il Beato Fondatore Don Luigi Guanella*, Rome 2014, page 131.

grammatical significance and consonance with the requirements of the current rules on this matter.

Fr. Tito Credaro, however, states the following in his thesis on the Constitutions of the Servants of Charity:

“The name ‘Sons of the Sacred Heart’ was chosen by the Founder due to his great devotion to the Heart of Jesus, which he saw as a model and source of charity towards one’s neighbour in need, to whom his sons were called to devote themselves.”

As mentioned, he had built a sanctuary in honour of the Sacred Heart at the Mother House in Como.

Now that he was firmly intent on giving his institution a juridical structure, as a true congregation, he also had to comply with the rules of the Holy See in regard to the name.

He therefore had to choose a new one, to avoid confusion with existing congregations.

“We could mention: the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, founded in 1854 by P.G. Chevallier; the Priests of the Sacred Heart, founded in 1878 by Father Leon Dehon; and above all, the Sons of the Sacred Heart, founded by Msgr. Comboni.”

Thus, in 1904, he chose the SERVANTS OF CHARITY, imitating the name given by St. Jerome Emiliani to those who followed him to care for orphans.

“St. Jerome Emiliani, who is one of the patron saints of the Congregation, called his first companions who cared for orphans the Society of the Servants of the Poor (cf. M. ESCOBAR, o.c., vol. I, page 612).”

This name, as suggested by the *Normae*, indicates the special purpose to which the religious members dedicate themselves and the spirit with which they are to carry it out:

“The title of a new congregation can be based on an attribute of God, the mysteries of our holy religion, the feasts of the Lord or the Blessed Virgin Mary, the saints or a special purpose of the institute itself” (*Normae 1901*, 39)

In fact, when Fr. Guanella handed them the Regulations in 1905, he wrote:

“We are Servants of Charity, because the charity of Jesus Christ has drawn us. Let us exercise the works of mercy of our Institute with fervor [...] May the peace and charity which Jesus Christ brought from heaven to earth become ever more abundant in our hearts and in our pious Institute.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> CREDARO TITO, Quaderni del Charitas No. 2, *Le Costituzioni dei Servi della Carità*, Arti Grafiche Schena, Fasano 1969, pp. 68-69.

However, in this suggestion by Fr. Tito Credaro, which partly matches that of Fr. Beria, the name of the Servants of Charity derives from the influence of the Somaschi Fathers, which, as is well known, were close to the mind and heart of Don Guanella, according to the biography by Tamborini-Preatoni.<sup>3</sup>

Another hypothesis is suggested by historian Mario Casella in his lecture delivered at the Congress of historical studies in Rome, from 20 to 23 March 2003, according to which the name derives from a particular section of the Society for the Protection of Catholic Interests, known as the “Servants of Charity”, which was founded in Rome in the early months of 1874.<sup>4</sup>

Fr. Guanella’s arrival in the Italian capital and the centre of Christendom aroused his enthusiasm in many ways. Among other things, the name he would give to his female congregation came from his knowledge of Our Lady of Providence, venerated by the Barnabite Fathers in the Church of San Carlo ai Catinari in Rome.

We still have no statement, either from Fr. Guanella or from his first confreres, confirming the origin of our name. Its essence obviously lies in the “exhortative” and programmatic value it holds, as well as the spiritual style characteristic of our apostolate in the Church. We hope that this small outline can help awaken a sense of belonging in each of us, and provide an insight into the identity contained in such a unique name, in keeping with the founder’s intuition.

## THE COAT OF ARMS OF THE CONGREGATION

### Original form and date on which it was created

There is no certain knowledge of year in which it was designed, but it appears for the first time in 1906,<sup>5</sup> in the headings of letters written by Fr. Guanella himself.

If we look closely at the coat of arms in the letterhead, we see that some elements shaped like “pine cones” have been added at the extremities of the

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<sup>3</sup> TAMBORINI-PREATONI, *Il Servo della Carità*, Editrice Ancora, Milan 1964, page 237.

<sup>4</sup> AA.VV.; *Don Guanella e Roma, Cento Anni della presenza dell’Opera 1903-2003*, Nuove Frontiere Editrice, Rome 2004, page 87.

<sup>5</sup> Letter of Luigi Guanella to Rumi Aldo, 26 June 1906, ASG, E 2305.



ISTITUTO S. GAETANO

Via S. Ambrogio al Panico, 2

MILANO

Milano, li 24/16 1906

Caro Fr. Mazzucchi

Le faccio le seguenti  
operazioni.

La 1.ª don. e suffrag. affianco  
di eleggere in nome

la 2.ª la banda nostra e  
per Capote

Non è possibile amor  
condonare la festa

inaugurale alla 1.ª. Fr.

Suffrag. e di tutto

aiuto non sarà pronto

(Gli indirizzi esposti nella 1.ª Annunziata) - TELEFONO 24-48



cross, together with two letters: “S” and “C”, which stand for the name “Servants of Charity.” This form of the coat of arms does not match the original one by Fr. Silvio Vannoni, according to the testimony of Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi given above. Since we have not been able to find any other examples of Fr. Vannoni’s version of the coat of arms, we can assume that Fr. Mazzucchi described *the original form* the author had given it, which was improved immediately afterwards with the addition of other elements to make it even more beautiful. However, the lack of historical documents only allows us to guess. Moreover, the differences between the two coats of arms are not great; they both share the same essential elements, as we shall see below.

### The words “In omnibus charitas”

If the texts we were able to find that mention the coat of arms are placed in chronological order, we see that the earliest ones only mention the writing on the coat of arms: “IN OMNIBUS CHARITAS”. Only at a later stage do they begin to associate it with the testament left us by the founder: “TO PRAY AND SUFFER”. For this reason, we shall first analyse the writing, and then its relationship with the testament.

## The origin of the writing

In the first text we examine, Fr. Mazzucchi explores the origin and meaning of the writing on the coat of arms, saying that it comes from St. Augustine and is merely the last of two other statements: “IN NECESSARIIS UNITAS, IN DUBIIS LIBERTAS, IN OMNIBUS CHARITAS”.

“In omnibus charitas: these famous words, which are the eloquent banner and beautiful programme of action of the Servants of Charity, are united, in fact preceded, in St. Augustine’s phrase, by the other famous words: ‘In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas’”.<sup>6</sup>

Although no text by St. Augustine can be found with the exact words “IN OMNIBUS CHARITAS”, preceded by the other statements, there is a passage in his commentary on the fourth chapter of the First Letter of St. John in which St. Augustine says: “Love, and do what you will”; and he continues: “*If you hold your peace, hold your peace out of love. If you cry out, cry out in love. If you correct someone, correct them out of love. If you spare them, spare them out of love. Let the root of love be in you: nothing can spring from it but good*”.<sup>7</sup>

In all likelihood, this is the text from which the Augustinian motto originates, even though it is not quoted explicitly. “**In omnibus caritas**” would therefore be an invitation to let ourselves be guided by love, to live charity fully and in all aspects and activities of life; whoever is guided by love is guided by God, because God is love.

## The Guanellian spirituality contained in the phrase is the programme of action of the Servants of Charity: a life of charity motivated by faith

As can be seen from the text quoted above, Fr. Mazzucchi defines this phrase as “...the eloquent banner and beautiful programme of action of the Servants of Charity”.<sup>8</sup> He develops this idea in his book “The life, works and spirit of Fr. Luigi Guanella”, where, from a circular letter by Fr. Guanella, he summarises how the life of the Servants of Charity should be lived to be in harmony with the mind and heart of the Founder: “*a life of charity motivated*

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<sup>6</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, *In Omnibus Charitas*, CH 5, 7.

<sup>7</sup> ST. AUGUSTINE., *Commentary on the First Letter of St. John* (Italian translation by P. Tablino) Edizioni Paoline, Roma 1954. VII, 8, p. 154.

<sup>8</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, *In Omnibus Charitas*, CH 5, 7.

by faith”.<sup>9</sup> He also states that for our life to be seen as a holy and fruitful mission of charity, we must be able to see Him and serve Him in the suffering, with generosity and trust in providence, becoming mutual charity, charity to all and charity in everything: *IN OMNIBUS CHARITAS*.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, he invites us to look at the coat of arms of the Servants of Charity to find an eminent example of this life of charity motivated by faith: Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

“Thus around our cross of faith and sacrifice planted on the bare rock of Calvary, a cross no different from the divine cross where the Heart of Jesus, our august patron and model, gave all his entire Body and Blood **in the great martyrdom consummated for humanity**, these words shine forth: *In Omnibus Charitas* (*Do everything with love*), which in the great seal of the Servants of Charity remind us and enjoin upon us the program of our action.”<sup>11</sup>

### **It is a flame of charity that springs from the Heart of Christ**

Also in Fr. Mazzucchi’s interpretation, this motto shines on the coat of arms like a flame of love for God and our neighbour, which springs from the Heart of Christ to inflame our hearts, impelling us to seek the salvation of souls:

“...that flame of charity for God and neighbour, whose servants we profess to be, and which, shining in our coat of arms, springs from the Divine Heart of Jesus to inflame our hearts for the salvation of souls.”<sup>12</sup>

Fr. Mazzucchi goes on to say that we should draw inspiration for the practice of virtue from this flame of charity:

- Fraternal unity.
- Loving kindness towards whoever approaches us and whoever we approach.
- The practise of ecclesiastical and religious virtues.
- Faithful observance of the rule.
- Living a life of work and sacrifice.
- Living a zealous and untiring ministry.

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<sup>9</sup> IDEM, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, Servants of Charity (Springfield, Pa.), 1980, p. 182.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>12</sup> IDEM, *In Omnibus Charitas*, CH 5, 8.

## **When the flame of charity is enlivened by prayer and suffering: its action in the Servant of Charity**

In another text from *Charitas*, also by Fr. Leonardo Mazzucchi, he refers to the “*flame of charity imprinted on the coat of arms*”. From references found in his other writings, we know that this flame is identified with the words on the coat of arms: “in omnibus charitas”.

In this text Fr. Mazzucchi see an inseparable connection between the “flame of charity”, the Heart of Christ and the testament of the founder. To examine this, we shall divide the text into two passages: the first, as we shall see, has a **foundational** character, presenting the origin and sustenance of the flame of Charity; the second passage has a **practical and consequential** character, showing the dynamic action of this flame in the Servant of Charity.

### **1. Foundational passage:**

“Daily programme... Fr. Luigi’s beautiful motto ‘to pray and suffer’... soul and life (of) that inextinguishable flame of charity, which the Divine Heart of Jesus - model of holiness and Father of mercy - has imprinted on the blessed coat of arms and desires to see burning in our hearts...”<sup>13</sup>

From the text quoted above, we can gain the following information on the flame of charity found on the coat of arms:

- **It comes from the Sacred Heart of Jesus:** “that inextinguishable flame of charity, which the Divine Heart of Jesus - model of holiness and Father of mercy - has imprinted on the coat of arms”.
- **It is aroused and enlivened by “prayer and suffering”:** “Fr. Luigi’s beautiful motto ‘to pray and suffer’... soul and life (of) that inextinguishable flame of charity.”

In the thought of Fr. Mazzucchi, therefore, the founder’s testament is what sustains the flame of charity. The text also goes on to explain the reason why “... (*he*) desires to see it burning in our hearts”. We shall therefore seek to understand what happens in the Servant of Charity who allows the words “in omnibus caritas” to burn in his heart.

**2. Practical and consequential passage:** The action of the Flame of Charity in the heart of the Servant of Charity

“so that this living, irresistible and growing love for God, ...may first unite and establish us all in holy and supernatural fraternal charity, where all our past and

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<sup>13</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, CH 91, 14, II.

present poverty fades and disappears, to then clothe and fill all our apostolic activity on behalf of our brethren with irrepressible apostolic zeal and holy, pure, benevolent and charitable tenderness, especially towards those most suffering, most humble and most needy.”<sup>14</sup>

In this second passage, it can be clearly seen that when the flame of charity burns in the Servant of Charity’s heart there are practical consequences, and it acts in him in a threefold way:

- It provokes a “living, irresistible and growing love for God.”<sup>15</sup>
- It arouses the ‘Bond of Charity’ in us: “(to) unite and establish us all in holy and supernatural fraternal charity, where all our past and present poverty fades and disappears...”<sup>16</sup>
- It fills our mission with ‘apostolic zeal and tenderness’: it clothes and fills “...all our apostolic activity towards our brethren with irrepressible apostolic zeal and holy, pure, benevolent and charitable tenderness, especially towards those most suffering, most humble and most needy.”<sup>17</sup>

### **The cross on the coat of arms:**

#### **– Contemplating the cross nurtures a spirit of penance and helps us live our Guanellian consecration more radically**

In another article in “Charitas”, where Fr. Mazzucchi invites the confreres to rejoice, and to thank and praise God for the gift of the final approval of the institute,<sup>18</sup> he explains the meaning of the testament left by the founder: “**to pray and suffer**”, recommending it “*in order to progress along the paths of holiness and do good for the salvation of souls*”;<sup>19</sup> regarding the exhortation to “suffer”, he invites us to contemplate the cross on the coat of arms in order to foster a spirit of penance and live our Guanellian consecration more radically:

“...if a living spirit of penance **were fostered within us, by contemplating the Cross raised up** on our coat of arms and gently urges our hearts with the Crucified Lord!”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, CH 91, 14, II.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 91, 14, II.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 91, 14, II.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 91, 14, II.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. L. MAZZUCCHI, *Sia lodato Gesù Cristo!*, CH 23, 1, I.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 6, I.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 8, I.

As we were saying above, Fr. Mazzucchi proposes contemplation of the cross on the coat of arms to revive a spirit of penance, from which the practical consequences for a more radical life of Guanellian religious consecration arise:

“How much more work would be done for souls; how diligently and carefully we would perform the duties of our state and the tasks assigned us by God’s will; how precisely and fully we would put all our Rules into practice; how much lighter, more profitable and more fully observed would be the instructions of religious obedience, the requirements and inspirations of poverty, the rules and precautions to safeguard purity of spirit and defend us from worldly corruption, and the obligations and suggestions of charity; how much more would we love the common life...”<sup>21</sup>

Then, to leave no doubt in his readers’ minds regarding the spirit of penance, he confirms it with the words of the founder:

“Wretched is man if not guided by a spirit of mortification! More wretched still those religious unable to progress in sanctification through a spirit of penance!”<sup>22</sup>

Fr. Mazzucchi also adds some further benefits of a spirit of penance:

- Expiation of our sins.<sup>23</sup>
- Strengthening of our weakness.<sup>24</sup>
- Defence against our enemies.<sup>25</sup>
- The life-giving desire to resemble Our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>26</sup>
- Effective invocation of God’s grace for ourselves and for souls.<sup>27</sup>

## The heart on the coat of arms

In another of his writings, in which he summarises the themes of reflection from the annual spiritual exercises, Fr. Mazzucchi presents the coat of arms of the Servants of Charity as the “*eloquent fulfilment of our pro-*

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 7, II.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 7, II.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. L. MAZZUCCHI, *Sia Lodato Gesù Cristo!*, CH 23, 8, I.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 8, I.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 8, I.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 8, I.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 23, 8, I.

gramme”<sup>28</sup>, i.e. of the founder’s testament “to pray and suffer”, and he provides a detailed description of its meaning:

“...the Divine Heart on the Cross: a heart, bloodied by a crown of thorns and pierced by a lance, that perpetually offers itself and intercedes for us (**prays and suffer**) on the Calvary of our altars from the Cross-Host, raised up as the salvation of the world: a heart, which is the symbol, expression and reminder of love – **charitas** – because love must be the principle and soul of our entire spiritual life (loves knows no difficulty, and who could fail to love our Lord Jesus Christ?), and must be the desire and goal of our entire life on earth. This is how we are prepared and elevated to be transformed, identified with and perfected in the Beautiful and Blessed Essence of Uncreated Love”.<sup>29</sup>

If we carefully examine this text, which is not easy to understand, we will see that the description focuses in particular on these two components of the coat of arms: **the heart and love** (CHARITAS):

a) **A Divine Heart:**

- **Bloodied** by a crown of thorns and pierced by a lance.
- That constantly **offers itself and intercedes** for us: **prays and suffers**.
- **On the Calvary** of our altars.
- **From the Cross-Host** raised up as the salvation of the world.
- Which is the **symbol, expression and reminder of love** (CHARITAS).

b) **Love** (CHARITAS):

- **Is the principle, soul, desire and goal of our entire spiritual life.**
- **Helps us overcome all difficulties:** “loves knows no difficulty”.
- **Makes us more similar to God, whose essence is love:** the life of those who love “is prepared and elevated to be transformed, identified with and perfected in the Beautiful and Blessed Essence of Uncreated Love”.

In the following points, we shall take a closer look at the various details of the heart of Christ that have emerged so far, and for further insight, we shall also draw inspiration from other texts in which they are mentioned.

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. L. MAZZUCCHI, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 39, 5, I.

## **Bloodied by a crown of thorns: the efforts of which love is made**

To comment on this aspect of the heart of Christ, we will use a text by Fr. Mazzucchi where he defines charity as “*the emblem of the coat of arms*”. In it he quotes Fr. Guanella himself, who compares charity to **a rose and its thorns**.

“Charity, in this world, with so many inevitable defects and imperfections of nature and character, is the price and result of hard and not always successful daily efforts (**Fr. Luigi compared it to a “rose and its thorns”**). It is the emblem of our coat of arms and should be the programme and commitment of our public activity as Ministers of the Love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and as Servants of Him who is Charity.”<sup>30</sup>

From this beautiful image of charity as a **rose and its thorns**,<sup>31</sup> where, as we understand from the text cited above, the thorns are *the symbol of the hard daily efforts of which love is made*, we now turn our attention to the heart of Christ, the source of charity, also crowned with thorns, as shown in our coat of arms.

If the heart of Christ is charity (the rose), the thorns remind us of the hard daily efforts, as well as the greater struggle of the cross, through which the Redeemer has shown us his love. This is the most eloquent proof of love, the ability to suffer for the person you love at any time. Fixing our eyes on the heart crowned with thorns, that prayed and suffered so much for each of us, we are therefore invited to accept these efforts of love each day, remembering that the heart of Christ, present on our coat of arms, “*inspires, elevates, transforms, and lightens every sacrifice*”,<sup>32</sup> as we shall see below.

## **The rock**

All the texts describing the congregation’s coat of arms that we have seen so far agree on the fact that beneath the cross there is a rock that represents Mount Calvary, where the Lord Jesus was crucified.

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<sup>30</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, *Il Regno della Carità*, CH 77, 15.

<sup>31</sup> The beautiful image of the rose reminds us, in our humble opinion, that we should always keep our eyes fixed on Love, on the heart of Christ, to find consolation and not be discouraged: the thorns are in the path (the stem) that leads to the flower, and do not obscure the beauty of the rose for those who keep their eyes on the flower. This flower is therefore the love of the heart of Christ, and when those intent on taking the risk of loving encounter the first thorns, i.e. the first difficulties, they may become immediately discouraged. But if their eyes remained fixed on Christ, they will also find comfort and relief so as to not to lose heart.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. L. MAZZUCCHI, in CH 64, 37, II.

However, over the years, some coats of arms have appeared with differences regarding this element.

### **A rock or three mountains?**

In the attempt to find the original coat of arms of the congregation, the rock is the element that has created the most confusion. The reason is not known with certainty, but coats of arms are often found showing various mountains, hillocks, snow and so forth below the cross. We do not know the origin of these variations. When texts describing the original coat of arms refer to the rock, they are speaking about Calvary. However, a suggestion comes to mind that could settle this matter.

In the Guanellian museum in the congregation's mother house there is a "coat of arms-standard" made from cloth. The fact that it is preserved in the congregation's museum tells us not only that it was made a long time ago, but also that it has important value.

If we look beneath the cross on this coat of arms, there appear to be various mountains; we can count at least five green peaks. However, if we compare what seem at first sight to be "mountains" with the genuine rock on Fr. Vannoni's coat of arms, it is easy to notice the great resemblance, and thus to understand that what can be seen beneath the cross is a rock portrayed in a slightly different way, with a few original touches.

### **The meaning of Calvary in the writings of the founder**

As we said above, all the known descriptions of the coat of arms, aside from stating that the rock represents "Calvary", provide no other information of relevance; it is described as: an arid,<sup>33</sup> bare rock<sup>34</sup> where the sacrifice<sup>35</sup> is offered. An altar from where the Cross-Host is raised up for the salvation of the world.<sup>36</sup>

If we wanted to know the reason for which the author of the coat of arms wanted to show Mount Calvary beneath the cross and the heart on the coat of arms, and whether it represents a meaningful element for the congregation, the answer would have to be found in the life and writings of the founder.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. L. MAZZUCCHI, LDP, August-September 1952, 1.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. IDEM, VSO, 223.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. IDEM, CH 64, 37, II.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. IDEM, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

The two adjectives that describe Calvary: “*arid and bare*”, make us think of the difficulties, the loss of life and pleasure, the obstacles and the desolation that Jesus had to suffer to save the world. The founder writes about this in the regulations of 1910: “...we must revive our faith and believe that we cannot do good other than by ascending the tedious road to Calvary”.<sup>37</sup> From these words of Fr. Guanella, Calvary should therefore remind us that we must be willing to pass through difficulties in order to achieve good. On this point, the present constitutions also state that, as poor and suffering disciples of Jesus, we are willing to follow him always, even to Calvary,<sup>38</sup> and also refer the words of the founder: “You will work miracles of good if you will love hardships more than comforts, and if you will know how to endure hunger, cold, smoke, annoyances, in serving the needy brethren”.<sup>39</sup>

### **Three identifying elements attributable to the three ends of the cross of the coat of arms**

As this research has progressed, we have come to understand that the coat of arms is a strong expression of the identity our Congregation. However, since we have not managed to find explanations for the three points shaped like “pine cones” that emerge from the cross, to avoid ascribing them a merely aesthetic and ornamental purpose, we would like to associate them with three elements that the founder used to indicate “the specific character of the Institute”,<sup>40</sup> that is, its specific identity and originality that distinguish it from other similar institutes. This proposal has the simple aspiration of recalling these elements that clearly identify our congregation with greater ease.

The three elements the founder used to outline the character of his congregation are found in the regulation of 1910, defined by our present Superior General as a “*monument to his accumulated experience and sublime spirituality*”,<sup>41</sup> and which was revived on its one hundredth anniversary to compare our experience with the sources of the charism.

These are the founder’s words:

“Each religious family has a particular spirit, suggested by the grace of the Lord and by the nature of the times and circumstances of place, and this character or hallmark is what distinguishes one institution from other similar ones.”

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<sup>37</sup> L. GUANELLA, 1910 Regulations of SC, p. 111.

<sup>38</sup> SC, *Constitutions and Regulations*, 1986, 36.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, 36.

<sup>40</sup> L. GUANELLA, 1910 Regulations of SC, p. 73.

<sup>41</sup> A. CRIPPA, in *Reglamento de los Siervos de la Caridad*, Editrice Nuove Frontiere, Rome, 1910, 189.

In these pages, Fr. Guanella states that the character, or identity, of the Institute of the Servants of Charity is a reflection of its nature and purpose, that is, “*the care of poor children, in the assistance of the aged and in the apostolic life...with preference among the poor.*” In order for the congregation to achieve its intended purpose, the founder examined its character (identity) under three aspects: the economic, moral and spiritual.<sup>42</sup>

### A. The economic character of the Servants of Charity

This is a call to be “*poor people who personally attend to the poor*”. The founder says this when he calls for personal involvement in charitable service and moral care in those duties of charity required both by the poverty of the institution and the circumstances of time, place, etc.<sup>43</sup> He himself emphasises: “*They cannot and should not have others doing the manual work which is theirs*”.<sup>44</sup>

### B. The moral character of the Servants of Charity

This consists of a charitable and down-to-earth manner; this is why the Founder writes that we must have “**a very charitable and familiar way of acting in their dealings, in their conversations, and in their general conduct** in and outside the House. This conduct, by its nature, must be conformed to the duties and the nature of the Institute, which is also conformed to that spirit of Christian democracy to which Leo XIII alluded when he recommended to the clergy that they should go from the church to the public domain, by reaching out to the real needs of the poor – economically, socially, spiritually and religiously. In this the charity of the ministers of Jesus Christ is distinguished, and it is fitting to adhere to this with zeal and abnegation”.<sup>45</sup>

### C. The spiritual character of the Servants of Charity:

This character is expressed in a greater inclination to mercy than to justice. The Founder expresses it in these words: “*a spirit which is most tolerant, open-minded and inclined to mercy rather than to justice*”.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Cf. L. GUANELLA, 1910 Regulations of SC, p. 73.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> L. GUANELLA, 1910 Regulations of SC, p. 73.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.

## The design

We will now present briefly each of the elements on the coat of arms, as they are described in the various writings used in research. The letters indicate the element, with the corresponding description below.



### **A** THE CROSS

The austere Cross<sup>47</sup> of faith and sacrifice,<sup>48</sup> no different from the Divine Cross,<sup>49</sup> a Cross-Host raised up above the world as salvation;<sup>50</sup> gently urges our heart with the Crucified Lord.<sup>51</sup>

It has the Divine Heart of Jesus at its centre and is planted and raised on the bare rock of Calvary.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Homily by Leonardo Mazzucchi in the Basilica of San Giuseppe al Trionfale, Rome 19 November 1938., CH 64, 37, II.

<sup>48</sup> L. MAZZUCCHI, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, p. 182.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 182.

<sup>50</sup> IDEM, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, *Sia Lodato Gesù Cristo!*, CH 23, 8, I.

<sup>52</sup> IDEM, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, p. 182.

<p><b>B</b> THE ROCK</p>	<p>Calvary: an arid<sup>53</sup> and bare rock<sup>54</sup> where the sacrifice is offered.<sup>55</sup> An altar from where the Cross-Host is raised up for the salvation of the world.<sup>56</sup></p>
<p><b>C</b> THE HEART</p>	<p>The Divine Heart of Jesus, our august patron and model, radiating and burning with charity.<sup>57</sup> The symbol, expression and reminder of love-charitas;<sup>58</sup> its burning and generous charity raises, elevates, sustains and lightens every sacrifice.<sup>59</sup> A heart that, bloodied by a crown of thorns and pierced by a lance, perpetually offers itself and intercedes for us (pray and suffer).<sup>60</sup> From the Cross-Host: the place where he gave all his entire Body and Blood in the great martyrdom consummated for humanity.<sup>61</sup></p>
<p><b>D</b> IN OMNIBUS CHARITAS</p>	<p>This is the eloquent exhortative banner<sup>62</sup> and the beautiful programme of action of the Servants of Charity.<sup>63</sup> It is the flame of charity for God and neighbour, whose servants we profess to be;<sup>64</sup> it springs from the Divine Heart of Jesus to inflame our hearts for the salvation of souls.<sup>65</sup> In the phrase of St. Augustine, it is united with, or rather preceded by, other well-known words: “In necessariis unitas, in dubiis libertas”.<sup>66</sup></p>
<p><b>E</b> THREE POINTS</p>	<p>These are shaped like pine cones that emerge from the cross. In order for the congregation to achieve its intended purpose, the founder examined its character (identity) under three aspects: economic, moral and spiritual.<sup>67</sup></p>

<sup>53</sup> Cf. IDEM, LDP, August-September 1952, 1.

<sup>54</sup> IDEM, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, p. 182.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, CH 64, 37, II.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

<sup>57</sup> IDEM, LDP, Agosto-Settembre 1952, 1.

<sup>58</sup> IDEM, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 64, 37, II.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, *La Nostra Vita (riflessi e propositi)*, CH 39, 5, I.

<sup>61</sup> IDEM, *The Life, the Spirit and the Works of Father Louis Guanella*, p. 182.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 64, 37, II.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, *In Omnibus Charitas*, CH 5, 7.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 5, 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 5, 8.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, CH 5, 7.

<sup>67</sup> L. GUANELLA, 1910 Regulations of SC, p. 73.

## ON THE 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF FR. PRIMO LUCCHINETTI, FRIEND AND DISCIPLE OF FR. GUANELLA

*It is fitting for us to publish a feature on this zealous parish priest from Mese, in the province of Sondrio, who was the founder of the Sisters of the Pious Family in Mese and a friend and disciple of St. Luigi Guanella. We bring your attention to this article by Fr. Tarcisio Salice,<sup>1</sup> taken from the bulletin of the historical studies centre in Valchiavenna of 2004.*

Prompted by the filial love and close friendship that united me, and continue to unite me to Fr. Primo Lucchinetti, I felt it appropriate for the Bulletin of our Centre to remember the figure of this holy priest, who was parish priest in Mese, where he promoted social works and care facilities that involved the whole of Valchiavenna and Valtellina.

Born on 1 January 1864 in Crana Piuro, he was ordained a priest on 4 June 1887 and assigned as parish priest of Mese, a parish he administered until 1932, when he retired for reasons of health. During his long pastoral ministry in Mese, he established the town's dairy, the consumer cooperative, the drama society, the philharmonic orchestra, the San Vittore youth club and the pious union of the Daughters of Mary. At the end of 1897, he opened the nursery school and then a shelter for the aged, the sick, the disabled and orphans, which in 1905 was moved to a new building, enlarged in 1927, where the Holy Family Institute is now based.

He died on 8 January 1935 in the mother house of the Congregation of the Pious Daughters of the Holy Family, which he himself had founded.

An extensive biography of Fr. Primo Lucchinetti written by Abraham Levi was published towards the end of 1959, to which I also contributed.<sup>2</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Don Tarcisio was born in Polaggia di Berbenno di Valtellina, on 27 January 1912. After his ordination, he was assigned as parish priest in Baruffini di Tirano, was later transferred to Postalesio, and from 1955 served as chaplain to the Holy Family Institute in Mese. As a young priest he became interested in the history of Valtellina and Valchiavenna, establishing himself as its most assiduous and devoted enthusiast. He was a friend of Fr. Cesare Angelini and of Fr. Emilio Citterio, who encouraged him in his historical research. He was a board member of the Valtellina Historical Society in Sondrio and advisor for the foundation (in 1959) of the Valchiavenna Centre for Historical Studies, of which he was also president from 1990 to 2003, succeeding the founder, Fr. Peppino Cerfaglia. He died on Saturday, 23 February 2008 at the age of 96.

<sup>2</sup> A. LEVI, T. SALICE, *Don Primo Lucchinetti, prevosto di Mese, fondatore della congregazione "Pie figlie della Sacra Famiglia"*, Sondrio 1959. For a brief biographical list, see

book traces the human events of this priest's life: from his childhood marked by the absence and subsequent death of his father, who had emigrated to America due to necessity, to his vocational call, his formation in the seminary and his ordination to the priesthood. Much of the text is devoted to his parish ministry and his efforts in founding and establishing the congregation of the Pious Daughters of the Holy Family in the local area.

He also found time to study the documents in the archive of the parish that had been entrusted to him. His notes on the parish of Mese were published in this Bulletin in 1964.<sup>3</sup>

His papers also included his "homily notebooks", excerpts of which were partially published by Abramo Levi in 1985.<sup>4</sup> This material, which was still unpublished, and other writings by Fr. Lucchinetti, were meticulously studied by Fr. Attilio Beria to prepare the talk that he gave in Mese, at my request, on 20 April 1964, to remember the founder of the congregation on the occasion of the centenary of his birth. The text I present is a transcription from a tape recording...

### **Commemoration of the centenary of the birth of Fr. Primo Lucchinetti given on 20 April 1964 by Fr. Attilio Beria of the Servants of Charity**

Despite Fr. Tarcisio Salice's good excuses, it would be better if the speaker were someone personally acquainted with the priest we wish to honour. At his insistence, however, I agreed to give this talk in his memory: first of all, because he was a holy priest, which by itself was a good enough reason. A further reason was to pay tribute, as a priest of Fr. Guanella, to his great friend and disciple. We pay him tribute, together with you, through the presence of several of our priests and theologians. There is also a sense of gratitude to the Sisters of the Institute in Mese; this third reason was added to persuade me to accept this task, which is not easy, even if it is an honour.

For these reasons, however – and this also seems to be the intention of the organisers of this commemoration – I would prefer there to be nothing official in the things I wish to say nor, much less, in their tone. I would prefer this to be a kind of meditation among friends and acquaintances in a family celebration and a great occasion dedicated to the father of a family.

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G. SCARAMELLINI, *Chiavennaschi nella storia*, Chiavenna 1978, pp. 115-6. Also A. LEVI, *Una Chiesa, un popolo, i suoi preti*, Milan 1986, pp. 184-8 (Un pastore e le novantanove pecorelle: don Primo Lucchinetti, prevosto di Mese).

<sup>3</sup> P. LUCCHINETTI, *Memorie della parrocchia di Mese*, edited by Fr. T. Salice and M. Balatti, "Clavenna. Bollettino di storia e informazione", III (1964), pp. 15-74, the text has a preface by Marino Balani, commented and supplemented by Tarcisio Salice.

<sup>4</sup> P. LUCCHINETTI, *Le prediche manoscritte 1887-1924*, edited by Abramo Levi, s.l. 1985.

If this is how I'd like to present things, then, first of all, we all know the basic facts on which any reflections we make must be based.

Fr. Primo Lucchinetti was born here, in this valley, a hundred years ago, in 1864: his childhood, the particularly intense family atmosphere; then the absence and subsequent loss of his father. His mother's presence became increasingly important, giving him that sensitivity which would later enable him to become a father, in a profound sense.

Another influence, which inculcated in him a great sense of paternity, was the first priest with whom he began his studies. Then the seminary and priesthood at twenty-three years of age. After his ordination, his entire life was spent here, among these meadows, still the same today, and beneath this sky. From when he arrived here, newly ordained, as parish priest, here he remained; and here he died. He remained as parish priest, and his activity was particularly influenced by the meetings with his bishops, when they came to see his pastoral work. In addition to his parish work, there was also his work and commitment to the Institute he created.

From these details – the simplest possible outline of a coherent life – two characteristics seem to emerge, which became the dominant features of his life. Firstly, he had a coherent life marked by familiarity, which was accentuated by his priestly character. He was an active priest, but was also contemplative and silent. The second dominant feature of his life is that this active and silent priesthood was characterised by his paternal heart and by the fatherly passion with which he gave.

From these aspects, which remain as the dominant features of his simple priestly life, we can trace those that would become the characteristics of his spirit, and how he lived as a priest before God.

First and foremost, however, he was a character who tended towards intimacy, silence and contemplation. We admit it openly: we accept those serious and solemn words with which he is portrayed in his biography. If there were dramatic moments in the life of Fr. Primo, they were ones that took place before God, before the tabernacle, in the presence of God, “by whom he felt so powerfully attracted and yet from whom he felt so far due to his poverty.” His temperament was therefore spiritual and contemplative.

So these are the two terms that indicate the way he lived his priesthood: first, as a Christian life; then, as a Christian life brought to the limits of the priesthood: God and me. Me: a soul, a man, a creature. The greatness of God and the relationship between these two persons: God and myself. Here, for example, is how this comes out in a sermon (and it should be noted that Fr. Primo gave his people doctrinal instruction at this level).

He is commenting on the Holy Mass while preaching during Eucharistic adoration, and he says: “In the Holy Mass, first of all we pray *Kyrie eleison*, *Christe eleison*, the humble adoration of a soul that lowers itself in the knowl-

edge of its own poverty and nothingness, and asks for the grace to be made worthy to approach God. But then we immediately add *Gloria!* Sing it with all the passion of a soul that, for a moment, does not see its own poverty, but only the infinite greatness of God.”

This relationship of the soul aware of the Lord’s presence is not lived in fear or distance, but in the approach of a creature that feels itself to be a child of God. It was from God, theologically, that Fr. Primo learned that fatherhood which he would then exercise in his ministry. This is how he thought of God: “How can we know whether we truly love the Lord with all our hearts? By the same signs with which we judge whether we truly love a person. These include: thinking of him frequently, desire for his house, for his table, for conversation with him, and for his company; and whether we let him in on our secrets.” And this really is a wonderful period in the development of the intimacy that is required.

We can tell how much we truly love a person (and Fr. Primo understood this love as being for God), or whether we truly love God, by how much we think of him; if, more than just think of him, we desire him; if, more than just desire him, we want to be at his table; if, more than being at his table, we want to converse with him; if, more than just conversation, we want his continuous presence and company; and more still – we are now at the extreme limit – if we want to make him part of our entire being, the secret of our soul.

There is another moment. I think that with these passages from the writings of Fr. Primo, we are able to remember and commemorate him exactly in that way that has no air of officialness about it and avoids the use of any inflated language. These are his writings.

Well, regarding this relationship with God, here he is in another marvelous page: “Just as the three divine persons have the same feeling and the same will in all things, in supreme harmony, so will I strive to unite myself and become one with God through love, sharing his very same feeling in everything he orders me to do and in how he commands it, without straying from his will in anything, but conforming myself to him with the greatest harmony and joy.”

To this first dominant characteristic of his person we can add a second, which arises from the first. The sense of paternity, with which he felt God and lived as a creature before God, his Father, became the way in which he wanted to relate to his brethren and his spiritual children. He was also predisposed to this sense of paternity, this spiritual donation of his life, by his natural gifts, particularly, I would say, by his natural sensitivity: he had an extremely attentive heart. There was also his family experience, with the father whom he barely remembered (he left when he was three years old): the absence of the father that he had – his mother spoke about him – but was not present. Reflecting on this must have given him an acute sense of our own situation, as

creatures of the world. We know that our Father exists, but we have to live like this: we have a Father, but we do not see him. The figure of his mother, who dominated much of his life, was silent, watchful, attentive and devoted to him, as a mother should be. These are the elements that prepared this paternity. However, we can see that it was, above all, an interior achievement of a spiritual nature: these were merely elements that prepared the terrain, but he acquired it as a doctrinal persuasion and then as a way of living before the Lord.

The essence, the religious substance by which we have to love, and the soul of charity is the fatherhood of God: we are children of the same Father! This sense was always with him, everywhere and all times. Here is an occasion that touches a person: someone dear to one of his confreres had died and he does not use words that avoid the subject or delude. He approaches him and says to him: "Look, it's a painful moment, but it is God who wants this, and God is always a Father." This is how he judged the events of life: by putting a sense of God into them.

This was also how he assessed day-to-day matters. This is another aspect that emerges, and is typical of those saints who had to practice charity on a large scale. How many times – and these words resemble so many of those of his mentor, Fr. Guanella, almost word for word – how many times did he repeat: "Things are going as God wants them to; therefore they're going very well." At the time he said this, things were going very badly, humanly speaking. But they were going very well, because they were going as God allowed.

If, from these two dominant aspects of his character and priestly figure, we were to grasp the characteristics that helped this spiritual attitude grow, gave it space and, in turn, became its fruit, we would have to say that from his perception of himself as a creature and of God as a Father, he could only think of perfection as a duty, the duty of perfection. Doctrinally, of course, we could dispute whether it is really a duty, if we are truly obliged to be holy; but this was never a theoretical question for the saints, but a method, a rule of life. And the rule goes further, far beyond the question.

Fr. Primo saw it this way for himself; however, we should note that he also saw it this way for ordinary people. He preached to the people, here, in his town, and said lofty things such as these: "When generosity is lacking, we begin to make our own calculations of what is necessary and what does not really need to be done, with the Lord. For this kind of virtue, my children, there was really no need for the Lord to create Mary full of grace; there was no need for the Son of God to become man; there was no need for him to institute the sacraments or establish the Church."

As for himself, after establishing his rules of spiritual life, duly listing everything that a priest should do, and, in addition, everything that can be done out of generosity towards God; at the end of the rules he also wrote: "In addition to all this, perform some generous acts of mercy".

After this duty of perfection and of holiness, a certain form of prayer comes naturally, which reflects the dominant features of his character as a priest: fatherhood and the desire for perfection, a prayer so abandoned. It is written that by asking we receive, by seeking we find, by knocking the door is opened; forward march, then, in close formation, each and every member of the Holy Family, to assault the Heart of Jesus! Regarding prayer, however, I think this page that he wrote in 1917 is truly amazing: "If God granted us what we desire, without us asking for it, he would be treating us like he treats the other beings, such as horses or sparrows, to which God gives and they neither speak nor ask. Giving us the capacity to obtain his gifts, so that we ask for them with petitions, is the highest honour that God grants us: because it is admitting us into his presence, it is allowing us to come to terms with him, to enter into conversation with him, as friends do. Because prayer is this: to talk, like this, with God."

Another element was bound to arise from this concept of prayer: together with the desire for perfection and intense prayer as a relationship with God, filled with the superabundance of spiritual life, he was inevitably bound as a Christian to share, reveal and use what he had received from God and give it to his spiritual children in a Father-to-child manner, just as God had given it to him. This is the source of the thought and charitable activity of a priest who lives before the Lord. He laid down the doctrinal foundations of charity with extreme clarity: "He who renounces charity renounces faith, and leaves the school of Jesus." "From the moment that you hate one single brother you are no longer followers of Jesus Christ, you are no longer Christians; you renounce your baptism."

With regard to charity and how he viewed even the humblest form of charity (material giving, i.e. almsgiving), he expressed himself with a clarity of doctrine, with a precision and with a father's heart that was astounding. I have rarely read a page so touching on almsgiving. He wrote these words to one of his benefactors, who had made a charitable donation to his institution here in Mese, just a year before his death: "Giving is for those chosen by God to distribute his goods. Receiving is for those who are poor. Receiving is also an honour, because the poor are representatives of the Divine Master, who was born and lived in poverty, and described whatever is done for the poor as done for him. Therefore, I thank God for the offering that you have given me; and I also congratulate you, my dear, for the place you occupy before the Lord."

How similar he is to Fr. Guanella in this aspect! Both of them begin with a clear notion of humanity without God, but see us as ransomed, because God's goodness compensates and clothes us in grace; and since God sees fit to clothe us in grace, we must not despair; we must be optimistic, regardless of where we have to start from. Fr. Primo writes elsewhere: "There is more virtue than people realise, not only in monasteries, but in every corner of the world,

among rich and poor. When the sun sets, the darkness of the night advances everywhere. But do you think that the entire world is in darkness? No. We have to believe, we have to hope. Only one half, where we live, grows dark, temporarily. But dawn is breaking and the sun is rising on the other side.” I think that this characteristic of optimism in the apostolate and in Christian action could also be an important lesson for us today.

If this is how Fr. Primo was, then his work – what he did and how he did it – was the product and natural consequence of this way of being. All his work is marked by this sense of fatherhood.

He came here as a young priest and was an eminent pastor of this population, which had been assigned to him; he then extended his concerns and his heart to a chosen family, which was to help him above all in the pastoral work in the parish, according to his initial intention. This is the origin of all his work as a priest, as a pastor and as the founder of a congregation: a coherent, compact, priestly and transparent life; his activities were a consequence, in the hands of God from the first day to the last.

Fr. Primo, as a new priest, had heard the call of that tremendous passage of Jeremiah, a passage that has always frightened me and which is so often used in talks to young priests. Jeremiah says that the Lord has chosen him and told him these words: “I have put my words in your mouth; See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.”

I don’t know whether Fr. Primo also trembled a little when he heard these words as a new priest, or shortly afterwards, but from what we’re able to know, I’m sure he did. These words, in any event, remained in his heart, because he in turn made use of them in his preaching on more than one occasion. He also remembered the words of another prophet, almost identical and in the same spirit. They are those of Isaiah; Fr. Primo used them repeatedly in his preaching, when speaking to priests. He even had the courage to use them in a conversation with two young men who had become priests thanks, in part, to his care: “I have put my words in your mouth, and covered you in the shadow of my hand, to plant the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, You are my people.” At this point we reach, perhaps, the pinnacle of what we can say about Fr. Primo as a parish priest and father. He absorbed and evidently endured these two texts of the great prophets Jeremiah and Isaiah, which stood before him as a torment, a hope and a consolation. One day, in a eulogy during a sermon he was giving near here, in Prata, he said in a sudden outburst (he normally wrote his sermons): “You are my people; my people, because God has specially entrusted you to my care. Mine, because I have written your name here in the innermost part of my heart; because I have made you the source of my delight; and so many times I have placated divine justice, rightly indignant at your transgressions.” This is an echo of the words of the prophets that we just read.

Let us keep in mind this last statement, “I have placated divine justice”, as we will come back to it in a moment. That day he continued: “You are my people, brought up on the teaching of my word (he felt the responsibility of having to preach), which the Lord has put on my lips for your salvation... You are my people, the people who are to form my crown of glory in heaven, after having been my chosen portion on earth, the field of my cares and the work of my sanctification and salvation.”

These are words that every priest who has had care of souls would wish to have the courage to say, and hope that the Lord can say to him, when he comes before him to return the responsibilities with which he had been entrusted.

Fr. Primo understood his pastoral care in this way and took seriously what he had been told at the beginning of his priesthood. They had told him clearly, the day he solemnly celebrated Mass: “You must be a teacher of truth. You must be ready to sacrifice yourself for the people entrusted to you. You must have a heart of mercy.”

So he made a commitment to the truth: his preaching, which he took extremely seriously. In a resolution from his spiritual exercises he says: “Begin each Monday to prepare the homily for the following Sunday.” He was so convinced that preaching was a serious and solemn matter, that he wrote these beautiful words in a eulogy on St. John the Baptist: “Herod feared John the Baptist. Was it John the man that he feared? No. What did he fear in John? He feared the truth that was in him. He feared God in him. He feared John’s word because it was the word of God.” He did not just say these things for others; he had evidently thought them for himself.

His preaching was simple and accessible, but simplicity does not contradict the solidity that we mentioned before. He knew – like a father in the home – how to make use of the simplest and most varied occasions. When electric lighting arrived in the town, he said: “Yes, light is a good thing; we will pay for it. If we don’t pay, they will come and disconnect the wires. But let us think, my dear Christians, of the light that the Lord gives us, which he has been giving us for so many years and has never made us pay for it. If we make mistakes or disobey God, he does not come to disconnect the sunlight.” This is an example. So many times, however, his preaching had this simplicity and this power: like the words of Jesus, the simplest, that a child can read and understand, and great scholars have never ceased to study.

After his preaching, something else on another occasion also amazes us. It’s just a line, but the man who writes is a true man and a true priest: “I wish to be severe when I preach from the pulpit, but I have to be gentle in the confessional.” A priest can add nothing to words like these.

Of course, this observation is first of all for me; then for my confreres in the priesthood; but also for Christians.

After this passion for the truth, the second thing that was said to him at

the start of his priesthood was that to be a father and shepherd he would have to accept all the necessary sacrifice. In this regard, Fr. Primo never took a step backwards.

I invite the sisters of the Institute of Mese to jealously guard the notebooks of Fr. Primo, your parish priest, as relics – not so much for what they contain, but for what they are, and for the fact of having them in your hands. Those notebooks that he kept in his pocket and in which he jotted down all kinds of things: from a thought to remember for a homily, a cap to buy for a child or a reminder to take his medicine, to a material need of a parishioner he had met or a remedy for chickens, because it was a good formula worth teaching to his women. All of us who have experienced the responsibility of a parish know that the good that comes from God and reaches the Christian people also consists of these things (and at times the whole day long!).

Together with and as a result of this, there is the thought I told you to remember. Fr. Primo said: “A priest must face the day in which he has to place himself between his people and God.” Also in this, he expresses himself with a brilliant image and intuition: he saw his whole parish as gathered here. He always saw these houses and these streets as standing before God; he passed them several times each day. He had them before him like a picture, with which he was extremely familiar. Then he reflected and said: “This is a picture, with a fine frame. A picture has to be protected from dust and from too much light. A nice sheet of glass protects, heals and brightens the picture.” Then he said, while preaching to his people: “You are my picture; the glass, with all due respect, is me, in front of God.” Placing himself between his people and the Lord!

I believe that one strong and evident sign of this paternity he was able to convey, in addition to his pastoral work as a parish priest caring for souls, was the particular sensitivity that he had for priests. In his biography, we see that many priests went to him in need! Someone who knew him well said that Fr. Primo was a martyr of the confessional, above all due to the large number of priests and religious who flocked to him. A young priest, whose spiritual director he was, said: “It is not that Fr. Primo says anything extraordinary when you go to see him, or when you confess; he says the same things that we all say, that anyone would say. Therefore, it is not what he says. How is it, then, that his words change, disturb, give resolve and inspire good, whereas the same words, spoken by me or others and heard countless times, leave us indifferent?” He concluded: “It’s because you feel that these same, simple, usual things, said by him, come from the heart and come from a father. So you cannot refuse him.”

The final aspect of his work, which stems from the doctrinal roots that we mentioned, is that which he cultivated, and for which he suffered, the most, but was also the most loved and the most pleasing to God in heaven: his reli-

gious Congregation. He began it simply, intending it to be a help and support for his parish activities. Initially, that is what it really was. However, he wanted the good that he did – this practice of mercy which had been recommended to him and that he had characteristically taken to heart – to reach everywhere, wherever good was needed. He could not manage this all by himself. He wanted this good to address a variety of circumstances and, as parish priest, he was not always the person best suited to dispense it. He did not want this good to end with him, so it was necessary for someone to continue it, and to continue his fatherhood. These are the reasons why he wanted these religious souls in his parish, prepared, first and foremost, as an aid to his pastoral fatherhood. In addition, because this is how he wanted it, he knew they had to be devoted to the most simple and humble works of charity.

Here, once again, we see the similarities with the figure of Fr. Luigi Guanella. In a eulogy that Fr. Primo wrote for Fr. Luigi's death, he says: "There is a charity that looks predominantly at humble, hidden work; that provides for needs which, by nature, are hidden and overlooked by charitable activities done in other spheres. The charity of Christ reaches everywhere: where there is a church, a priest and a truly catholic people, there is also the exercise of charity for human poverties that no one else would think of assisting."

He wanted his religious for the exercise of this charity, for whose sake he placed everything in God's hands, in a holy manner. He needed them: they were to continue to spread his work of charity. Before anything else, however, came the will of God. He submitted the request for his Congregation of sisters to his bishop; but he said: "As the will of the Superiors is unquestionably the will of God, I calmly await whatever decision Your Excellency may make. If you wish me to stop... I will stop. If you tell me 'Courage, go ahead,' at your word, I will get to work."

The sisters, who were founded with this desire, know that they came from the paternal heart of Fr. Primo Lucchinetti. Characteristically, if we wish to know his thoughts and teaching, and how he wanted the soul, spirit, devotion and foundation of his religious to be, there is no book of doctrine written by him; information about him and his sisters must be sought in his preaching – when he was speaking and exercising his paternity – and in his letters: letters to a sister or a group of sisters. It is there, in his letters, that we have to look for what he wanted, i.e. when he is directing his house, speaking with his children: a living moment, not when he has withdrawn in solitude to sit down and write, but when he is there, involved with his sisters, speaking if they are present, or writing if they are absent.

Another indication, in addition to seeking his thoughts in the letters, is that he wanted to call it "Casa" ("Home"). It remains a home, it remains a family (because a home is for a family); and the home and family, as he perceived it, in the highest, most spiritual, fullest and most mature sense, here on

earth is a preparation for Paradise. He said: “The Church of Christ is similar to a well-ordered home. Everything is in common; the land, the money, the furnishings and the noble titles are the same for the whole family. However, one brother looks after the business, a sister attends to manual work, another looks after the children; but the benefit derived from these various tasks is common, due to the special union of kinship that binds them. It is the same in the large family of the Church of Christ; we are all brethren and so everything we do is for the good of all. You benefit from my reading, as I do from your fasting; the sick from the work of the healthy, and healthy from the patience of the sick. Everything that you do is mine; and everything I do is yours: this is understood as spiritual sharing.”

If this is the characteristic feature, the outline of his life and what he desired, then it seems to me that now – putting aside external things and focusing on the essential – it is important for the House of Mese and the religious of the Holy Family to begin the centenary of their founder. Over the coming years, for as many years as Fr. Primo spent on earth, day by day and year by year, we must continue to celebrate his centenary. This year he was born, so the anniversary recalls this fact: the plan of God through which, up there, in a hamlet on a rocky hillside, this child was born. Then, year by year, we must retrace the life of Fr. Primo. It will take several years, as many as those of his life, to complete the celebration. A few years from now, we will spend a year reflecting on the spirit of the child who grows and is then left an orphan: it will be a year marked by his experience of being orphaned. Then he begins his studies; and then come the years of the seminary – those corresponding to this centenary – in which we contemplate the passion of the young man in the seminary as he prepares to become a priest: the Sisters of Mese can offer their prayers in these years so that other priests continue this vocation. Then there will be years that commemorate his activities here, until the centenary of his death arrives.

If we understand this commemoration of a father by his family in this way, then any other conclusion to the commemoration and start of the centenary would be out of focus unless we begin to pray: “Lord, (as Scripture says) you honour a father in his children and we children should be the honour of our Father.” And the Scriptures continue, saying: “Whoever honours his father will find happiness in his own children”, that is, not us now, the generation that came after the founder, but those who will come after us. And also: “The father’s blessing makes the houses of his children firm.” We must ask for this continually, with passion, during these years of the celebration of the centenary.

These words of Scripture, which help us open the centenary in prayer, are followed by another expression, which obliges us to stop talking. I don’t think any of you should complain if it seems like a sad thought, because the aspect of sadness is only apparent:

“My child, honour your father in words and deeds.” We have now honoured the father – who began this House and still remains the father of this House – with words.

But Scripture says: “with words and deeds.” And Fr. Primo added: “It’s good to remember the saints and celebrate their memory – as we have done today – but it would be an insignificant act, a futile demonstration, a sterile manifestation of honour, if it were not followed by the desire to imitate what we celebrate and remember.”

The words of Scripture, commented by Fr. Primo Lucchinetti! Here, indeed, we should stop talking, because talking about saints, being children of saints but not yet holy, is something sad, but it can also help us to begin the centenary of the founder.

*Fr. Attilio Beria*

# COMUNICAZIONI

## A) CONFRATELLI

### a) PRESENZE ALLA FINE DI DICEMBRE 2014

	Vescovi	Sacerdoti	Chierici	Fratelli	Totale
<b>Perpetui</b>	1	343	14	33	<b>391</b>
<b>Temporanei</b>	—	—	134	9	<b>143</b>
<b>Novizi</b>	—	—	—	—	<b>22</b>
<b>Totale</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>556</b>

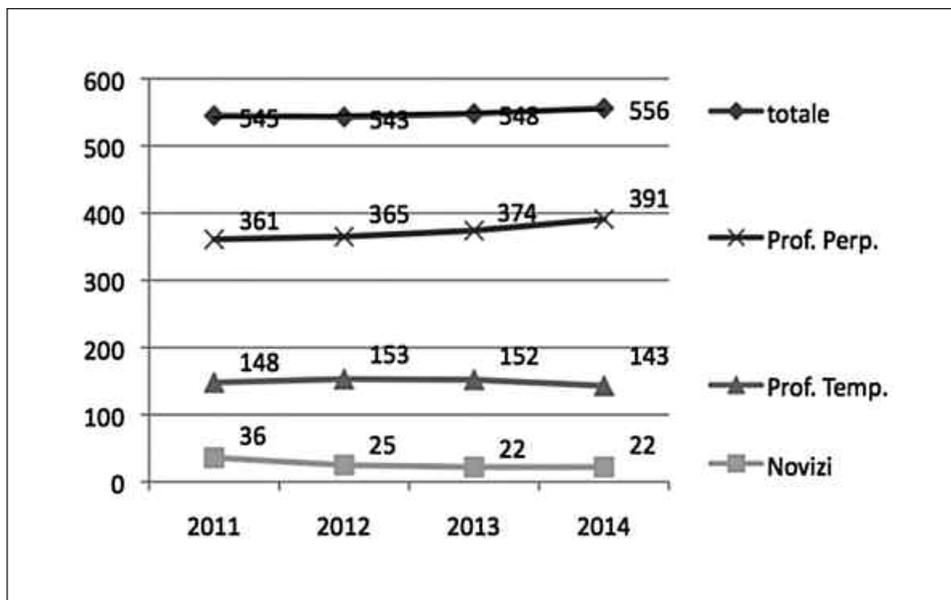
### b) NELLA GEOGRAFIA DELLA CONGREGAZIONE

Nazione *	Comunità e Residenze	Professi perpetui				Temporanei		Novizi	Totale
		vescovi	sacerdoti	chierici e diaconi	fratelli	chierici	fratelli		
Argentina	7	—	19	—	2	—	—	3	<b>24</b>
Brasile	11	1	27	—	5	13	1	—	<b>47</b>
Cile	3	—	9	—	6	—	—	—	<b>15</b>
Colombia	1	—	3	—	—	—	—	—	<b>3</b>
Colombia (C.G.)	1	—	2	1	—	7	—	—	<b>10</b>
Filippine	2	—	8	—	—	3	1	3	<b>15</b>
Germania (C.G.)	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	<b>2</b>
Ghana	1	—	1	—	—	2	—	—	<b>3</b>
Guatemala	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	<b>2</b>
India	10	—	49	—	—	47	—	—	<b>96</b>
Israele	1	—	2	—	1	—	—	—	<b>3</b>
Italia (S. Cuore)	17	—	84	1	8	1	3	—	<b>97</b>
Italia (Romana)	15	—	59	—	2	—	—	—	<b>61</b>
Italia (C.G.)	2	—	15	2	—	13	—	—	<b>30</b>
Messico	2	—	7	—	1	—	—	—	<b>8</b>
Nigeria	3	—	10	—	3	38	1	16	<b>68</b>
Paraguay	2	—	9	—	1	—	2	—	<b>12</b>
Polonia	1	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	<b>1</b>
R.D. Congo	3	—	8	2+8	3	10	1	—	<b>32</b>
Spagna	2	—	6	—	1	—	—	—	<b>7</b>
Spagna (C.G.)	1	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	<b>4</b>
Svizzera	1	—	4	—	—	—	—	—	<b>4</b>
U.S.A.	3	—	10	—	—	—	—	—	<b>10</b>
Vietnam	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	<b>2</b>
<b>Totale</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>556</b>

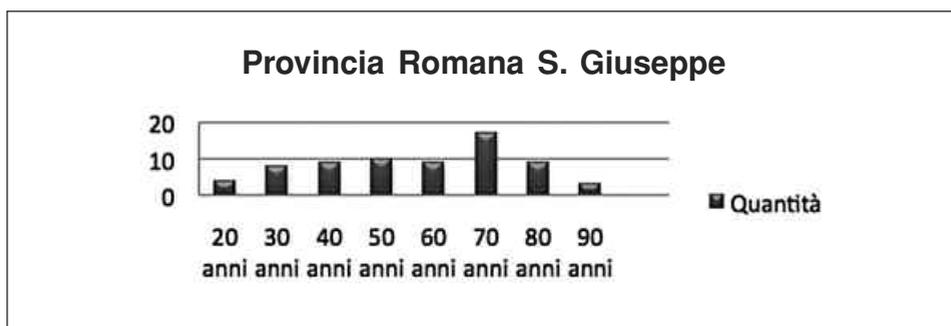
\* Tra i Confratelli e Novizi che risiedono in quella Nazione possono essere compresi anche Confratelli e Novizi appartenenti ad altre Province (nel caso dell'Italia si distinguono Sacro Cuore, Romana e Curia generalizia).

c) **GRAFICI PER LA STATISTICA 2014**

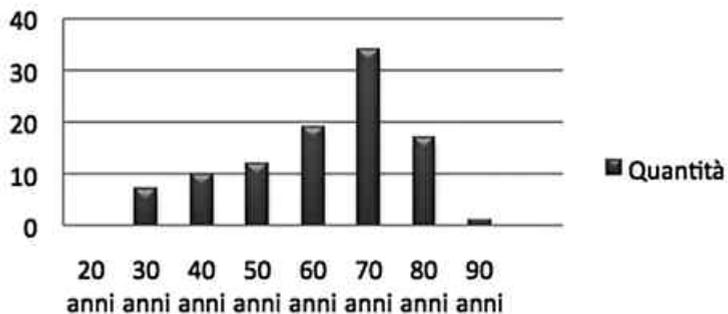
1) **Variabilità nel numero dei confratelli:** Le cifre vengono riportate con questo criterio: a) totale dei confratelli presenti, b) confratelli di voti perpetui, c) confratelli di voti temporanei, d) novizi.



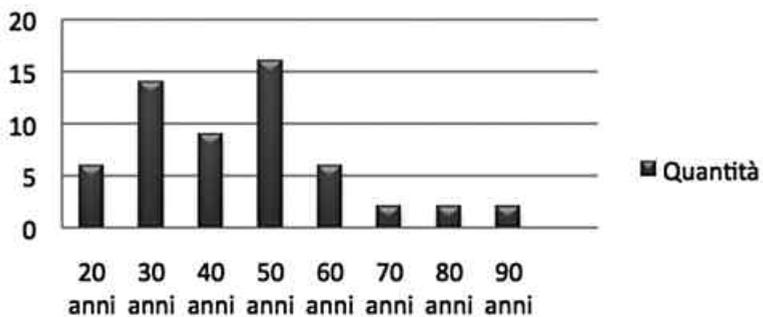
2) **Fascia etaria per appartenenza alla Provincia e Delegazione d'origine:** Vengono presentate le fasce etarie (per gruppi di 10 anni)



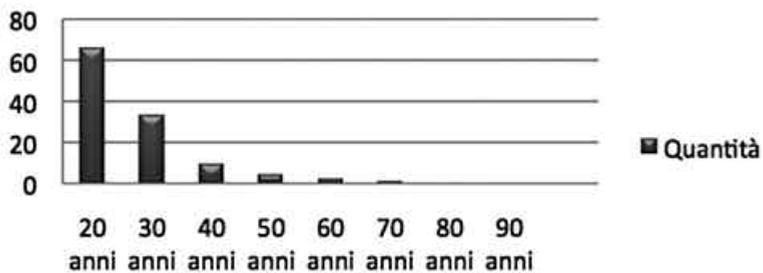
### Provincia Sacro Cuore



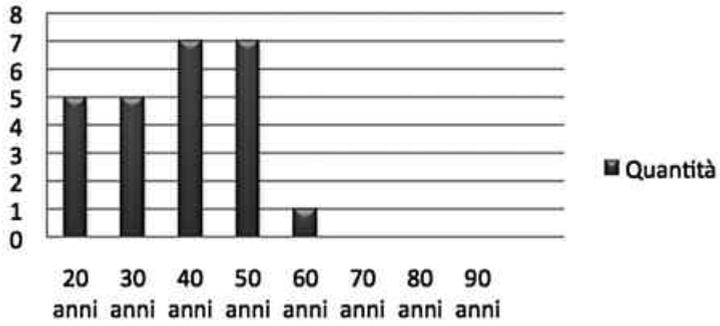
### Provincia Cruz del Sur



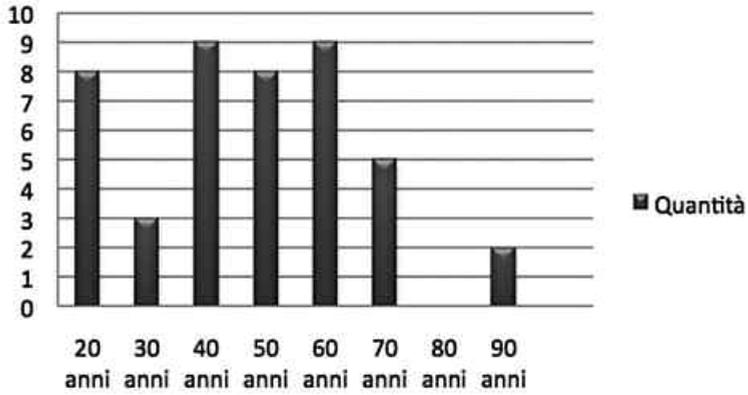
### Delegazione Nostra Signora della Speranza



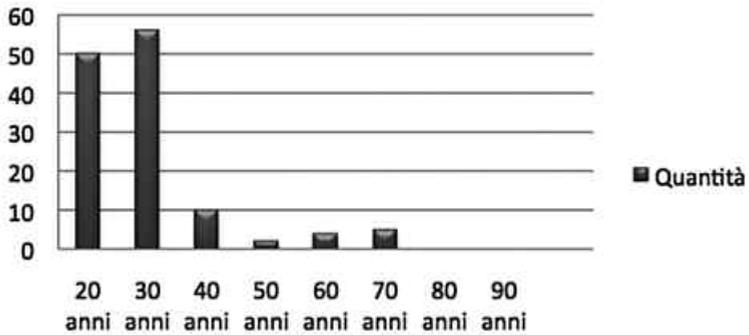
### Delegazione Nostra Signora di Guadalupe



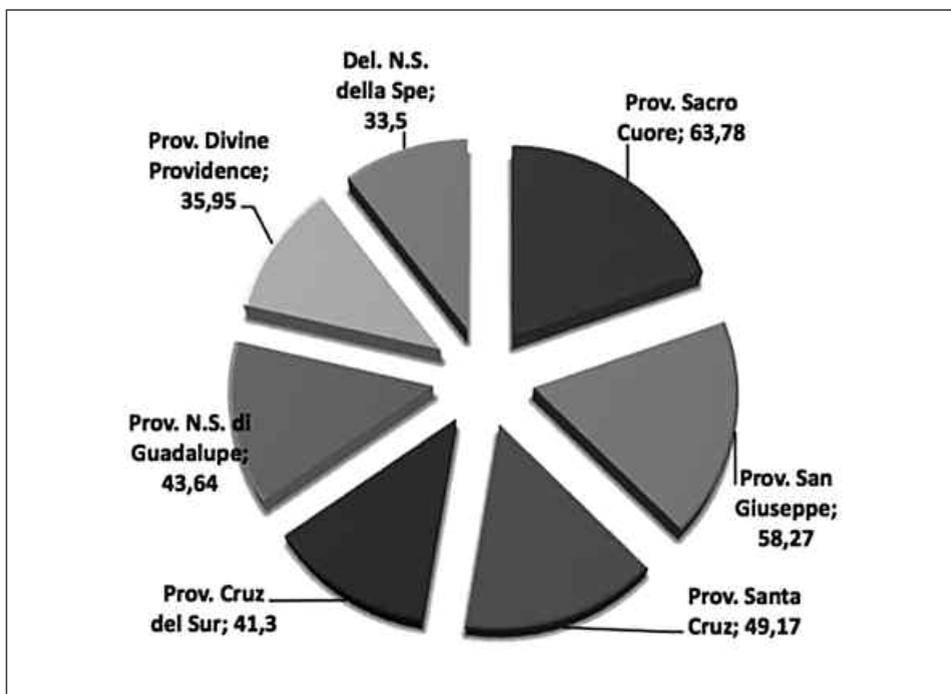
### Provincia Santa Cruz



### Provincia Divine Providence



### 3) Media di età dei confratelli per Provincia e Delegazione



### d) LIETE RICORRENZE NELL'ANNO 2015

#### 1. Novanta e oltre

		Anni
Bredice Sac. Armando	22-08-1917	98
Credaro Sac. Tito	11-02-1922	93
Vaccari Sac. Danilo	01-12-1922	»
Altieri Sac. Vincenzo	11-12-1922	»
Belotti Sac. Francesco	06-02-1923	92
Di Ruscio Sac. Romano	24-04-1923	»
Moroni Sac. Angelo	25-09-1924	91
Altieri Sac. Marcello	27-12-1924	»
Castelnuovo Sac. Mario	23-08-1925	90

#### 2. Ultra-ottantenni

Maglia Sac. Carlo	21-07-1926	89
Liborio Sac. Battista	05-09-1926	»

Maniero Sac. Pietro	18-05-1927	88
Pasquali Sac. Pietro	09-10-1927	»
Gandossini Sac. Anselmo	22-07-1928	87
Gridelli Sac. Tonino	13-12-1928	»
Tamburini Sac. Antonio	23-10-1929	86
Casali Sac. Tarcisio	10-02-1930	85
Cornaggia Sac. Franco	11-12-1930	»
Gasparoli Sac. Mario	08-06-1931	84
Zanella Sac. Settimo	10-06-1931	»
Merlin Sac. Giuseppe	22-09-1931	»
Bini Sac. Giuseppe	04-10-1931	»

### 3. Ottantesimo compleanno

Bellanova Sac. Lorenzo	01-02-1935
Tremante Sac. Gino Cesidio	03-03-1935
Chieragato Sac. Alberto Giuseppe	13-04-1935
Carrera Sac. Mario	25-05-1935
Morandi Fr. Serafino	03-07-1935
Pomoni Sac. Antonio	27-08-1935
Gamba Sac. Nemesio	12-10-1935
Maffioli Sac. Peppino	22-11-1935
Minetti Sac. Oronzo	08-12-1935

### 4. Cinquantesimo compleanno

Bardelli Sac. Renato	01-02-1965
Arockiasamy Sac. Kuriakose	10-02-1965
Pallotta Sac. Fabio	11-05-1965
Xavierraj Sac. Johnson	02-09-1965
Martín Bravo Fr. Julio	18-12-1965

### 5. Cinquantesimo di Professione

Catani Sac. Ivo	12-03-1965
Bigelli Sac. Leonello	24-09-1965
Mortin Sac. Gabriele	24-09-1965
Recco Sac. Aldo	24-09-1965
Rinaldi Sac. Matteo	24-09-1965
Molteni Sac. Attilio	24-09-1965

## **6. Venticinquesimo di Professione**

De Deus Sac. José Teles	11-02-1990
Sabatelli Sac. Francesco	08-09-1990
Sposato Sac. Francesco	08-09-1990

## **7. Cinquantesimo di Ordinazione**

Crippa Sac. Alfonso	28-04-1965
Folonaro Sac. Adriano	28-04-1965
Marino Sac. Mario	28-04-1965
Pomoni Sac. Antonio	28-04-1965

## **8. Venticinquesimo di Ordinazione**

Frugis Sac. Giuseppe	31-03-1990
Matarrese Sac. Guido	21-04-1990
Demoliner Sac. Flavio	08-12-1990

## **B) EVENTI DI CONSACRAZIONE**

### **a) NOVIZI**

#### **1. Luján (Provincia Cruz del Sur - Provincia Santa Cruz - Provincia N.S. di Guadalupe)**

Agote Delgado Carlos Alberto	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Alderete Rodríguez Fabián	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>
Avalos Coronel Luis Alberto	<i>Provincia Cruz del Sur</i>

#### **2. Legazpi (Divine Providence Province)**

Anh Giuse Pham Dinh Ch. Khiet
Azurin Ch. Erwin
Genovia Fr. Roger

### 3. Nnebukwu (Delegazione N. S. della Speranza)

Akendeh Turkuma Jude  
Baomba Mobali Jerome  
Barikpe Edmund Nornubari  
Duru Bartholomew Uchechukwu  
Eboh Festus Ndubuisi  
Ekesili Daniel Ebuka  
Ihekuna Vincent Chizoba  
Ihezuo Fancis Chukweke  
Kalutu Olivier  
Kib'Landu Theophile Myuama  
Mangonanga Dionga Pierre  
Mangungu Ekombe Laridry  
Mbungu Herve Tuwizana  
Nwafor Ammanuel Anigbogu  
Nzumbi Eduard Mununu  
Ugwu Malachi Amaechi

#### **b) PRIMA PROFESSIONE RELIGIOSA**

Adornaldo Fr. Jacob	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
Antonyraj Cl. Arunkumar	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
Gali Cl. Bala Raja Rathinam	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
John Philip Cl. Kalaikovan	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
Matulac Cl. Alfie	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
Merugu Cl. Anil	<i>(Divine Providence Province)</i>
Awudi Cl. Nicholas Selasi	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Iournumbe Cl. Stanislaus Lwanga Sesugh	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Manpia Fr. Jean Lady	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Mpia Bakuamakusu Cl. Elie	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Ngumba Pombo Cl. Gabriel	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Obiyor Cl. Michael	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Onuoha Cl. Chinedu Henry	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>
Mistur Fr. Marcin Tadeusz	<i>(Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe)</i>
Rizzi Cl. Domenico	<i>(Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe)</i>
Russo Cl. Giovanni	<i>(Provincia Romana S. Giuseppe)</i>
Mariano Amaral Fr. Victor Vinícius	<i>(Provincia Santa Cruz)</i>
Moura Silva Cl. Rafael	<i>(Provincia Santa Cruz)</i>
Morales Hernández Cl. Saúl	<i>(Provincia N.S. di Guadalupe)</i>

**c) PROFESSIONE PERPETUA**

Kawanda Mboma		
Cl. Gabriel	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>	24-10-2014
Nwachukwu		
Cl. Chiemeka Anthony	<i>(Delegazione N.S. della Speranza)</i>	24-10-2014

**d) PROFESSIONE PERPETUA E DIACONATO**

Savariappan Cl. Arul <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Alphonse Cl. John Kennedy <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Antony Samy Cl. Charles <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Arulandu Cl. Achariyam <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Bodali Dominic Cl. Prakash Philomin Raj <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
David Raj Cl. Sunil Kumar Dulampalli <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Joseph Gnana Sekaran Cl. Edal Vinoth Joe <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Kongala Cl. Anil Kumar <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Mahima Cl. Loyola Diraviam <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Maria Louis Cl. Vincent <i>(India)</i>	11-02-2014	12-02-2014
Januszewski Cl. Jarosław <i>(Polonia)</i>	29-03-2014	30-03-2014
Amico Cl. Giovanni <i>(Italia)</i>	26-05-2014	17-08-2014
Aguilera Cl. Gerardo Sebastian <i>(Argentina)</i>	29-06-2014	15-08-2014
Agulanna Cl. Obioma Maximus <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Azubuike Cl. Anthony Nnamdi <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Egbeforme Cl. Francis William Opoman <i>(Ghana)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Mabiza Ntimansiemi Cl. Jean Claude <i>(R.D. Congo)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Melaba Cl. Tersoo David <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Nnani Cl. Ikenna Emmanuel <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Nweke Cl. Joseph Obichi <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-12-2014
Ogene Cl. Chinonso Paul <i>(Nigeria)</i>	24-10-2014	14-10-2014

**e) PRESBITERATO**

Maria Louis Sac. Vincent <i>(India)</i>	22-07-2014
Aquino Sac. Gastón Gabriel <i>(Argentina)</i>	15-08-2014
Alphonse Sac. John Kennedy <i>(India)</i>	22-08-2014
Antony Samy Sac. Charles <i>(India)</i>	22-08-2014
Arulandu Sac. Achariyam <i>(India)</i>	22-08-2014
Bodali Dominic Sac. Prakash Philomin Raj <i>(India)</i>	22-08-2014

David Raj Sac. Sunil Kumar Dulampalli ( <i>India</i> )	22-08-2014
Januszewski Sac. Jarosław ( <i>Polonia</i> )	22-08-2014
Joseph Gnana Sekaran Sac. Edal Vinoth Joe ( <i>India</i> )	22-08-2014
Kongala Sac. Anil Kumar ( <i>India</i> )	22-08-2014
Mahima Sac. Loyola Diraviam ( <i>India</i> )	22-08-2014
Savariappan Sac. Arul ( <i>India</i> )	22-08-2014
Ortiz Candia Sac. Juan Manuel ( <i>Paraguay</i> )	25-10-2014
Amico Sac. Giovanni ( <i>Italia</i> )	20-12-2014



# DECRETI

## **1. DECRETO DI SOPPRESSIONE DEL NOVIZIATO DI CHELSEA**

Prot. n. 548/11-14

To Fr. A. Soosai Rathinam  
Divine Providence Province  
29 James St.  
Poonamallee - Chennai  
INDIA

Cc To Fr. Silvio De Nard  
Sacred Heart Parish  
118 Tauton Avenue  
East Providence (RI)  
USA

Cc To Fr. Dennis Weber  
Divine Providence Village  
Old Marple Road  
Springfield (PA)  
USA

REF. *Decree of suppression of the Novitiate house at Springfield, Philadelphia, United States*

Taking into consideration the request you have made in the letter dated on October, 26<sup>th</sup> signed by the Provincial Secretary in which you asked for the suppression of the Novitiate house at Springfield, Philadelphia, United States

of America and after considering the situation, and as you expressed in your letter that this house is no longer occupied by any confrere and it is being rented to St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, in addition because there is not any candidate for the novitiate, according to the Can. 647 § 1, with the consent of the General Council, I *decree* the suppression of the Novitiate house at Springfield - Philadelphia, United States of America.

At the same time I make clear that the seat of the Community Springfield/East Providence is in East Providence where resides the Superior, hoping that the sooner the better it could be another confrere at Springfield with Fr. Dennis Weber.

May the Lord be with you always!  
Best wishes

Fr. ALFONSO CRIPPA  
*Superior General*

Rome, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2014

## **2. NOMINE**

- **Prot. n. 528 del 1 ottobre 2014**
  - Fr. Sahaya Rajesh Xavier, vicerettore e 1<sup>o</sup> consigliere della Comunità del Seminario Internazionale “Mons. Bacciariani” di Roma

## **3. “NULLA OSTA” PER NOMINE**

- **Prot. n. 505 del 22 giugno 2014**
  - Sac. Eduardo Cerbito, superior to the Community of Legaspi, Philippines

- **Prot. n. 512 del 7 luglio 2014**

- Sac. Silvio De Nard, superior of the Springfield and East Providence community, United States of America

- **Prot. n. 514 dell'8 luglio 2014**

- Sac. Basil Egbujor, superiore e rettore del Seminario Filosofico di Ibadan, Nigeria
- Sac. Attilio Molteni, superiore della Casa dell'Angelo di Genova, Italia
- Sac. Angelo Gottardi, riconfermato superiore per un terzo triennio a Como, Casa della Divina Provvidenza, Italia

- **Prot. n. 525 del 26 settembre 2014**

- Sac. Andrés García V., párroco de la nueva parroquia San Luis Guanella en Amozoc, Arquidiócesis de Puebla, Estados Unidos Mexicanos

- **Prot. n. 518 dell 22 luglio 2014**

- Sac. Giuseppe Pavan, superiore a Firenze (FI)
- Sac. Wladimiro Bogoni, conferma per un secondo triennio a S. Giuseppe al Trionfale, Roma
- Sac. Antonio De Masi, come parroco della Parrocchia “Corpus Christi” in Firenze (FI)
- Sac. Calogero Proietto, come parroco della Parrocchia “Sant’Agata” in Ferentino (FR)
- Sac. Kuriakose Arokiasamy, come parroco “in solidum” nella parrocchia “San Giuseppe” in Eranova (frazione di San Fernando - RC)

- **Prot. n. 551 del 27 novembre 2014**

- Sac. Alcides Vergütz, superior e párroco da Paróquia Nossa Senhora do Trabalho e São Luís Guanella em Porto Alegre - RS, Brasil
- Sac. Renato Schneider, superior da Comunidade de Água Boa e Canarana - MT e párroco da Paróquia Nossa Senhora de Aparecida em Água Boa - MT
- Sac. Antônio Francisco de Melo Viana, superior da Comunidade religiosa de Brasília em Brasília - DF

- Sac. Ivo Ladislau Catani, pároco da Paróquia de São José do Patrocínio a Santa Maria - RS
- Sac. Amelio Parini, pároco da Paróquia Nossa Senhora de Nazaré em Anchieta, Rio de Janeiro - RJ
- Sac. Valdemar Alves Pereira, pároco da Paróquia Santa Teresinha em Santa Terezinha de Itaipú - PR

#### **4. NULLA OSTA PER ASSUMERE PARROCCHIE, OPERE, NOVIZIATI**

- **Prot. n. 488 del 1° febbraio 2014**

- Approval for assuming temporarily the administration of the boarding home for orphans at Kishnaperi, India.

- **Prot. n. 524 del 26 settembre 2014**

- Aceptación de la nueva parroquia en Amozoc-Puebla, México

- **Prot. n. 504 del 22 giugno 2014**

- Decree of Erection of the Novitiate to Legazpi City and appointment of Fr. Battista Omodei as Novice master, Philippines

#### **5. NULLA OSTA PER L'ALIENAZIONE DI BENI IMMOBILI E PER PROGETTI CHE RICHIEDONO AUTORIZZAZIONE DEL SUPERIORE GENERALE**

- **Prot. n. 491 del 1 febbraio 2014**

- Approval for the sale of a piece of SIPI land in Legazpi City, Philippines in order to build up a physiotherapy building.

## 6. PASSAGGIO DI PROVINCIA

- **Prot. n. 520 del 29 settembre 2014**

- Sac. Kangila Kalam D'Aquin, passaggio definitivo alla Provincia Santa Cruz

## 7. USCITE - ASSENZE - RIENTRI

### HANNO LASCIATO DEFINITIVAMENTE LA CONGREGAZIONE

- Agu Paul Nov. Chima (*Delegazione Nostra Signora della Speranza*) il 28 gennaio 2014
- Anike Benedict Nov. Chukwuemeka (*Delegazione Nostra Signora della Speranza*) il 28 gennaio 2014
- Rodríguez Caballero Cl. Luis (*Provincia Cruz del Sur*) il 30 aprile 2014
- Pascas Cl. Leobin Regith Kumar (*Provincia Divine Providence*) il 26 maggio 2014
- Niemeyer Cl. Robert Francis (*Provincia Divine Providence*) il 30 maggio 2014
- Kröetz Cl. Alexandre (*Provincia Santa Cruz*) il 29 giugno 2014
- Mwanza Cl. Mbangi Raphael (*Delegazione Nostra Signora della Speranza*) il 14 agosto 2014

### ASSENZE (REGOLARI)

- Adones Contreras Fr. Carlos Adolfo (*Provincia Cruz del Sur*) il 1° marzo 2014 per un anno
- Ambrose Sac. Pravin Vinoth Raj (*Provincia Divine Providence*) il 4 ottobre 2014 per tre anni
- Antonysamy Sac. Selvaraj (*Provincia Divine Providence*) il 1° dicembre 2014 per due anni
- Cejas Sac. Sergio Alberto (*Provincia Cruz del Sur*) il 1° gennaio 2014 per tre anni.
- Guzmán Fuentes Sac. José Ricardo (*Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) il 3 novembre 2014 per un anno

- Julián Balcázar Sac. Hugo Ramón (*Provincia Cruz del Sur*) il 2 luglio 2012 per tre anni
- Manganiello Sac. Aniello (*Provincia Romana San Giuseppe*) il 24 marzo 2012 per tre anni
- Mora Gelvez Sac. Pablo Emilio (*Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) il 31 gennaio 2012 per tre anni
- Pérez García Sac. Adrián (*Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) il 30 settembre 2014 per tre anni
- Sánchez Sánchez Sac. Benjamín (*Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) il 2 agosto 2013 per tre anni

### **RIENTRI**

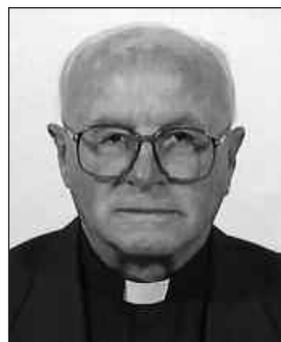
- Alfaro González Sac. Mauricio (*Provincia Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe*) il 2 settembre 2014

# CONFRATELLI DEFUNTI

1. Cantoni Sac. Giuseppe
2. Invernizzi Sac. Antonio
3. Checchinato Sac. Livio
4. Buletta Sac. Pietro Antonio
5. Fogliamanzillo Fr. Salvatore
6. Rizziero Sac. Giuliano

## 1. Cantoni Sac. Giuseppe

Nato a Milano, il 16 luglio 1920  
Entrato a Fara Novarese, il 29 settembre 1931  
Noviziato a Barza d'Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1936  
Prima Professione a Barza, il 12 settembre 1938  
Professione Perpetua a Barza d'Ispra, il 12 settembre 1942  
Sacerdote a Como, il 26 maggio 1945  
Morto a Barza d'Ispra, il 16 febbraio 2014  
Sepolto nel cimitero d'Ispra



Gli anni della vita di don Giuseppe Cantoni sono stati numerosi e ben portati, vissuti fino alla fine con sorprendente salute e soddisfacente lucidità. Quando lo si incontrava, passando per la Casa di Barza, si restava impressionati dalla vecchiaia inossidabile, dalla *bona senectus*, per dirla in maniera erudita, di un professore che ha fatto scuola a una buona fetta di Congregazione.

Poi il 16 febbraio 2014 è giunta anche per lui la “chiamata” e ci ha lasciati, non con un addio ma per un arrivederci.

### Gli anni della formazione

Don Giuseppe Cantoni è nato il 16 luglio 1920 a Milano, in una zona allora di periferia, collocata tra l'Arco della Pace e il Cimitero Monumentale.

Per intenderci, se fosse nato oggi, sarebbe cittadino della Chinatown milanese, ma nel 1920 il fenomeno della massiccia immigrazione cinese era ancora molto remoto. La sua parrocchia era la Santissima Trinità; la vecchia chiesa, dove ha ricevuto il battesimo, costruita dall'architetto Giuseppe Boni nel 1900, ha lasciato il posto negli anni sessanta a un nuovo tempio moderno, mentre dell'altra resta in piedi solo il campanile, nascosto tra i palazzoni nati dalla forte speculazione edilizia che ha mutato radicalmente il volto del quartiere milanese. I genitori si chiamavano Angelo e Domenica Chiesa.

A undici anni Giuseppe entra come aspirante nel Seminario guanelliano San Girolamo di Fara Novarese; ad accoglierlo vi è come direttore don Michele Bacciarini, nipote del vescovo Aurelio e formatore di generazioni di guanelliani. A Fara compie gli studi ginnasiali; poi nel 1936 passa al Noviziato di Barza d'Ispra (VA) dove trova come padre maestro (lo fu unicamente in quell'anno!) il confratello don Luigi Ramiro Lucca. Nel secondo anno di noviziato inizia gli studi liceali e il 12 settembre 1938 emette la sua prima professione religiosa. Prosegue gli studi liceali nell'Istituto San Luigi di Albizzate (VA), dedicandosi anche secondo la consuetudine di congregazione alla assistenza ai ragazzi. Direttore ad Albizzate è in quegli anni don Giuseppe Cadenazzi.

Nel 1941 passa alla Casa Don Guanella di Chiavenna; gli sono compagni don Attilio Beria e don Angelo Rossetti, che da allora formano con lui un trio affiatato. Direttore al "Deserto" è don Luigi Marnati. Qui compie gli studi teologici e intanto prende contatto con gli ambienti delle origini guanelliane, acquisendo amore e passione per il Fondatore. Rimane a Chiavenna fino al 1948 e in quegli anni di guerra, di sacrificio e di lavoro, emette la professione perpetua il 12 settembre 1942 e riceve il presbiterato dalle mani del vescovo di Como monsignor Alessandro Macchi il 26 maggio 1945 (nella medesima data dell'ordinazione di don Guanella). Manifesta doti intellettuali eccellenti e, mentre si prepara nello studio della teologia, ottiene anche il diploma di maestro elementare nel giugno 1943. Esercita questo insegnamento tra i ragazzi che affollano la Casa Don Guanella a Chiavenna.

La sua vivacità culturale fa maturare nei Superiori la decisione di orientarlo agli studi di filosofia, onde prepararlo a quell'insegnamento che lo vedrà apprezzato professore per lunghi anni nella nostra Casa di Barza d'Ispra. Si iscrive così all'Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano e per tale ragione viene mandato presso la casa femminile di S Ambrogio *ad nemus*, come secondo cappellano residente, negli anni dal 1948 al 1950. Affianca don Abramo Rivellini nel ministero pastorale in favore degli anziani, ma anche della popolazione che frequenta la chiesa annessa all'opera femminile. Completa gli studi con la laurea in filosofia, discutendo la tesi *Filosofia e Religione in Giorgio Tyrrel*. Per prepararla, deve recarsi per un periodo di tempo a Londra; vi apprende l'inglese, ma anche uno stile un po' *britannico* nel modo di presentarsi e nel suo particolare umorismo. La tesi di laurea, dedicata al famoso moderni-

sta inglese, indica la sua apertura intellettuale; d'altra parte è suo relatore monsignor Francesco Olgiati, a garanzia di uno studio e di un giudizio del tutto conforme alla dottrina filosofica scolastica.

Al termine di questi studi è pronto a percorrere la tappa che lo vedrà professore al Liceo guanelliano di Barza.

### **Professore di Filosofia per vent'anni a Barza d'Ispra**

Don Cantoni ritorna così da sacerdote alla casa del suo noviziato. Vi ritorna per implementare lo sforzo della Congregazione che voleva una casa di formazione all'altezza delle esigenze serie di preparazione dei suoi giovani religiosi. Era questa una richiesta impellente espressa dalla Santa Sede, che diceva non essere più sufficienti per i candidati al sacerdozio gli studi abborracciati, sotto la guida di confratelli muniti di buona volontà ma di poca preparazione, sottraendo il tempo dello studio all'impegno faticoso dell'assistenza dei ragazzi. Pio XII avrebbe poi sancito per tutti i religiosi questa prescrizione con la costituzione apostolica *Sedes Sapientiae* del 1956.

La Casa Don Guanella di Barza si avviò dunque a diventare il Liceo guanelliano. Ma la sua fisionomia restava determinata soprattutto dalla presenza del Noviziato e dalla autorità del Padre Maestro. Nei vent'anni che don Cantoni passò a Barza, tra il 1950 e il 1970, illustri guanelliani vi svolsero questo compito formativo tanto importante: dopo un primo biennio in cui l'ufficio di Maestro dei novizi fu affidato a don Olimpio Giampedraglia, per sei anni vi operò poi don Armando Budino, poi per altri sei don Luciano Botta, e infine don Carlo Bernareggi negli ultimi sei anni della permanenza di don Cantoni (Bernareggi però continuò la sua funzione di Maestro dei novizi fino al 1977). Il clima formativo del Noviziato, fatto di preghiera, silenzio, discernimento, avvolgeva anche gli studenti dei successivi anni del Liceo e gli stessi professori, a cui era prescritto un contegno, uno stile riservato e quasi severo.

Per un ventennio don Cantoni fu il professore di filosofia teoretica; era suo compito introdurre i giovani studenti nelle nozioni astratte e talora oscure della Scolastica, dalla Logica alla Metafisica e alla Morale. Il manuale che si seguiva era per lo più *Elementi di filosofia* di Guido Berghin-Rosè. Don Giuseppe si impegnava con serietà nella preparazione delle lezioni, con uno sforzo che avrebbe meritato migliori soddisfazioni dalle teste un po' svagate dei giovani seminaristi. Eppure don Cantoni sapeva mostrarsi aperto e amichevole nel tratto, innalzando con il suo umorismo e con le sue proverbiali distrazioni la temperatura un po' frigida del Seminario e iniettando nell'ambiente studentesco un necessario sollievo.

Chi scrive accostò sotto la guida di don Giuseppe nel primo anno di Liceo (1969-70) le grandi e piccole scuole della filosofia greca; infatti egli, or-

mai al termine della sua carriera di professore, indirizzò quell'anno le sue lezioni alla Storia della filosofia, per preparare noi studenti agli esami statali da privatisti, che affrontammo presso il Liceo Santa Maria dei Marianisti a Pallanza. Il manuale di Storia della Filosofia era di Paolo Lamanna. Mi sono ancora molto vive nel ricordo le lezioni entusiasmanti sul grande pensiero di Platone e le letture dei Dialoghi del grande filosofo.

In quegli anni don Cantoni profuse impegno e serietà pure nella cura pastorale di Barzola, una minuscola frazione di Angera (VA) affidata al ministero del guanelliani. Egli vi era parroco, catechista, animatore di un minuscolo oratorio, e all'occorrenza anche capomastro e imbianchino per gli ambienti della piccola "parrocchia", sull'esempio mai dimenticato di don Guanella. La gente semplice di Barzola lo contraccambiava con affetto e stima.

### **Direttore ad Aguilar de Campoo (Spagna)**

Nel 1970 a Barza vi fu grande stupore e anche dispiacere per la notizia, diffusasi come un lampo, della partenza di don Giuseppe. Già da qualche anno gli era stato affiancato nell'insegnamento della Filosofia il confratello don Paolo Bonomo. Ma ancora più stupiti eravamo al sentire che don Giuseppe era destinato alla Spagna, dove dal 1965 la Congregazione era approdata aprendo ad Aguilar de Campoo, nella Vecchia Castiglia e in provincia di Palencia, il *Colegio San José*.

Nel settembre di quell'anno vi arrivò don Cantoni per espletarvi l'ufficio di Direttore. Raccoglieva l'eredità di don Carlo De Ambroggi, che aveva fondato il Seminario e impostato l'opera delle vocazioni e la formazione secondo il suo stile peculiare. Ma ora si sentiva l'esigenza di una impostazione più aperta, dal momento che anche in Spagna si affacciavano tempi nuovi, sulla spinta di un mondo che cambiava e di una Chiesa postconciliare. È vero che si era ancora sotto il governo di Francisco Franco, ma socialmente e, con qualche timidezza, anche politicamente le cose si avviavano al cambiamento.

Don Cantoni trovò ad Aguilar un centinaio di ragazzini svegli, da educare, accompagnare nella maturazione vocazionale, nutrire e far vivere in un ambiente sano e gioioso. Con lui c'erano frater Giovanni Vaccari animatore vocazionale ed economo, don Alfonso Crippa coordinatore della formazione, don Adelio Antonelli padre spirituale, e alcuni chierici studenti che vi svolgevano il tirocinio come educatori. Era una comunità giovane e mentalmente vivace. Quasi all'inizio del suo lavoro, visse il momento triste e drammatico della morte di frater Giovanni Vaccari, avvenuta il 9 ottobre 1971 in seguito ad incidente automobilistico.

Chi scrive vi giunse nel settembre 1972, insieme a tre giovani compagni, per compiere un biennio di tirocinio pratico. Furono anni indimenticabili. Vi

trovammo un don Cantoni che non avevamo ancora conosciuto. Restava il coscienzioso superiore e anche il professore di filosofia molto esigente; infatti nel biennio ci dedicammo agli studi propedeutici alla teologia, sotto la guida sua e degli altri confratelli. Don Giuseppe ci introdusse nel pensiero filosofico scolastico, con la sua esperienza e con il sostegno degli *Elementi di Filosofia* di Sofia Vanni Rovighi. Questo aspetto confermava i ricordi che avevamo di lui dal Liceo di Barza. Ma poi scoprimmo in lui altre inedite sfaccettature di pratica “economica” che non avevamo sospettato. Si occupava della manutenzione della casa, del funzionamento della cucina, della piccola azienda agricola insieme al signor Teofilo. Volle una piantagione di pioppi in un campo assolato, flagellato dal vento di Castiglia e fatto più di pietre che di terra; con costanza e sudore li irrigava e, contro le nostre miopi previsioni, vi ottenne col tempo un pioppeto bello a vedersi.

Era passato dalla lingua di Shakespeare a quella di Cervantes e la possedeva bene, con una conoscenza della sintassi e del vocabolario che sorprendevo talora anche gli stessi spagnoli. Integrava con le sue ripetizioni l’insegnamento dei maestri laici del *Colegio*, piuttosto carente, dando lezioni di francese e di altro, impartite ai ragazzi che vi trovarono così una formazione molto valida. Era anche l’animatore e il direttore di una minibanda di 15 o 20 ragazzi che suonavano con lui la *bandurria*, il mandolino spagnolo, e che formavano la *tuna* che si esibiva nelle feste del Seminario.

Con noi studenti si mostrava amichevole, anche se aveva un carattere un po’ chiuso. Nei due anni che passammo ad Aguilar ricordo le gite culturali in cui ci accompagnò in visita alle città storiche della Spagna. In particolare fu bellissima quella dell’estate 1974 attraverso Navarra, Aragona e Catalogna, alla scoperta della storia illustre di quelle splendide terre. I viaggi erano all’insegna della austerità spartana (tenda come alloggio e fornelli da scout come cucina); ma don Cantoni ci offrì occasioni uniche per la scoperta della storia e cultura spagnola.

Ad Aguilar don Cantoni vi rimase fino al 1979, quando già si poteva notare il declino di una formula di formazione che, così come era impostata, era rivolta al passato. Negli anni della sua permanenza al *Colegio* i ragazzi avevano raggiunto quota centocinquanta, ma nel 1979 essi erano scesi al numero di 55 e si intravedeva il tramonto progressivo del *Colegio San José*. Ma nel contempo la presenza dei Guanelliani si era allargata da Aguilar de Campoo a Palencia e a Madrid.

## **Nel mondo dei minori, insegnante ed educatore**

Al suo rientro dalla Spagna fu assegnato al Collegio San Girolamo di Fara Novarese. Don Cantoni ai suoi sessant’anni tornava alla casa guanelliana

che lo aveva accolto nel 1931, quando era un ragazzino di undici anni. Da quei tempi a Fara le cose erano molto cambiate; il Castello (come veniva pomposamente chiamato l'istituto San Girolamo dai paesani di Fara) dal 1949 non era più il Seminario minore dei Guanelliani, ma era stato trasformato in collegio con scuola parificata, che accoglieva ragazzi frequentanti le classi elementari e medie inferiori. La comunità educativa era costituita soprattutto da un internato di ragazzi, in numero di 132 nel 1979; a loro si dava non solo l'insegnamento scolastico, ma anche un ambiente educativo e accoglienza cordiale. Nei collegi guanelliani, e quindi anche a Fara, erano accolti soprattutto figli di operai, che vi cercavano educazione e preparazione scolastica.

Quando don Cantoni vi arrivò, il direttore era don Giulio Nosedà; don Giuseppe vi entrò come insegnante di lettere, poi dal 1982 svolse il ruolo di preside in sostituzione di don Fernando Antonelli. Vi rimase fino al 1985, a tempo per assistere al declino del Collegio e per prepararne la chiusura. Era il triste destino dei collegi popolari in Italia: il calo demografico, la diffusione delle scuole medie inferiori su tutto il territorio nazionale e anche una politica regionale ostile agli internati dei ragazzi segnò il destino dell'Istituto San Girolamo di Fara Novarese.

Nel 1985 don Cantoni fu chiamato dai superiori all'Istituto Don Ghinelli di Gatteo (CE). Anche questa, come la casa di Fara, era una istituzione "storica" per l'Opera Don Guanella. Nel 1902 il sacerdote romagnolo don Luigi Ghinelli aveva incontrato don Guanella e gli aveva messo nelle mani la sua fondazione: un Istituto per i ragazzi e una casa di riposo per anziani. Con il passare dei decenni quell'opera aveva avuto una progressiva trasformazione, abbandonando l'accoglienza degli anziani e diventando un collegio per ragazzi. Don Cantoni vi arrivò in una fase delicata di questa evoluzione. Nel 1986 vi era un piccolo internato di 19 ragazzi, ma anche una novantina di semiconvittori. Ben presto le sorti del collegio decadde e si prospettò per l'Istituto Don Ghinelli la stessa parabola discendente degli altri collegi. E qui don Cantoni dimostrò la sua tempra di combattente, impegnandosi a trovare per la Casa di Gatteo un nuovo scopo e una nuova destinazione che evitasse la tristezza della chiusura. Il 1989 fu l'ultimo anno in cui a Gatteo si svolse attività educativa con un piccolo gruppo di minori; poi don Giuseppe vi rimase da solo per qualche tempo, alla ricerca di una trasformazione della casa in favore dei disabili. Sondaggi presso autorità civili, verifica sul territorio dei bisogni reali della popolazione, valutazione delle possibilità economiche di sussistenza di un'opera: a tutte queste domande don Cantoni cercò di rispondere con concretezza e realismo e contribuì non poco al futuro della casa di Gatteo. La nuova attività di accoglienza dei disabili, che oggi ha uno sviluppo molto valido, fu avviata nel 1993 da don Vincenzo Zolla, mentre don Cantoni gli fu accanto con l'ufficio di 1° consigliere ed economo.

## Ritorno in Spagna

Nel 1994 suonava per don Cantoni il rintocco dei settantaquattro anni, età che lascia sperare in un meritato riposo anche per un religioso vitale e volonteroso com'era lui. Invece disse di sì al superiore che lo inviò di nuovo in Spagna, non più ad Aguilar, ma a *Villa San José* di Palencia, dove da parecchi anni i guanelliani avevano aperto un centro di accoglienza e riabilitazione per disabili. Vi rimase fino al 2000 affiancando il confratello spagnolo padre José Angel Villegas Vallejo e svolgendo con lui un'opera a favore di una trentina di disabili. Visse così, quasi al termine della sua parabola di vita, l'esperienza di stare accanto a quei fratelli più piccoli che, scarsi di doni della mente, sono però ricchi di cuore. Lo fece con quel respiro di carità proprio dello spirito di don Guanella e con quella paziente dolcezza di una persona anziana che istintivamente si sente nonno.

Nel 1999 la riorganizzazione delle opere guanelliane, che don Giuseppe aveva già ben conosciuto e vissuto con fatica e dispiacere in Italia nei collegi per i minori, lo coinvolse di nuovo, ma di striscio; a Palencia oltre che *Villa San José* vi era anche l'*Hogar Beato Luis Guanella*, a cui venne proposta una nuova fisionomia: cessava l'internato per ragazzi in verifica vocazionale e diventava un centro di pastorale giovanile per la città. La comunità dell'*Hogar* e quella della *Villa* vennero fuse in un'unica realtà. Per due anni don Cantoni vi restò come economo e collaborò con i giovani confratelli spagnoli, che egli aveva accompagnato negli anni della loro prima formazione e che ora erano religiosi e sacerdoti provetti, chiamati a rimpiazzare i guanelliani italiani che progressivamente ritornavano in patria. Nel 2000, concluso il sessennio di servizio e testimonianza in Spagna, anche don Cantoni riprende le valigie e ritorna in Italia, assegnato per la terza volta alla comunità di Barza.

## Un tramonto prolungato e benefico

Dice la Scrittura: *Dies annorum nostrorum sunt septuaginta anni aut in valentibus octoginta anni* (Ps 89). A don Cantoni fu dato con abbondanza il coraggio degli ottant'anni. Tornò a Barza da pensionato, ma sempre con atteggiamento volitivo, appassionato ed entusiasta. Faceva quello che poteva e quello che gli veniva richiesto dalla comunità religiosa di Barza, che sta a servizio della Casa di spiritualità, collocata nello storico edificio del noviziato. A lui già anziano è stata affidata la cura pastorale della frazione di Barza, nella chiesetta esterna alla casa e in collaborazione con la Parrocchia di Ispra.

Dall'anno successivo al ritorno di don Giuseppe fu riportata da Cassago Brianza a Barza anche la sede del Noviziato. Non erano più i numerosi gruppi di studenti adolescenti che don Cantoni aveva seguito nei suoi vent'anni di in-

segnamento precedente, ma erano giovani, spesso con qualche anno di esperienza professionale, desiderosi di conoscere ed abbracciare la vita religiosa guanelliana. Durante questo ultimo periodo della sua vita don Giuseppe ha collaborato con due Maestri del Noviziato: don Wladimiro Bogoni e don Domenico Scibetta.

Nel paese, nella comunità religiosa, nella Provincia del Sacro Cuore don Cantoni ha avuto modo di esprimere tutta la sua ricchezza e vivacità culturale e spirituale in un fecondo e apprezzato ministero fino agli ultimi tempi.

Purtroppo gli anni prolungati di vita hanno spesso il loro peso, la loro parte di fatica per te e per chi ti sta accanto. Tutto questo non è stato risparmiato a don Giuseppe Cantoni. Ci piace però ricordarlo come spesso lo abbiamo incontrato, sorridente, con i suoi occhi brillanti, pieni di vita e di curiosità, con quel suo stile ricco di umorismo. Abbiamo motivo di sperare che ora egli contempi quel Dio che sempre ha cercato e servito con passione e dedizione, in modi molteplici, nello studio, nell'insegnamento e nel servizio caritativo, nei lunghi anni della sua vita.

Don BRUNO CAPPARONI

## 2. Invernizzi Sac. Antonio

Nato a Barzio (LC), il 6 dicembre 1922  
Entrato a Fara Novarese, il 2 ottobre 1939  
Noviziato a Barza d'Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1942  
Prima Professione a Barza d'Ispra, il 12 settembre 1944  
Sacerdote a Milano, il 12 settembre 1950  
Morto a Roma, Casa San Giuseppe, il 15 marzo 2014  
Sepolto nel cimitero di Prima Porta, a Roma



Don Antonio Invernizzi nasce il 6 dicembre 1922 a Concenedo, frazione di Barzio, nel cuore della Valsassina, in Provincia di Lecco. I suoi genitori erano Pietro ed Invernizzi Caterina i quali due giorni dopo lo portano nella vicina parrocchia di San Giorgio Martire a Cremeno, dove riceve dalle mani del Parroco don Giovanni Spagnoli il Sacramento del Battesimo.

Riceverà la grazia del Sacramento della Confermazione dalle mani del Beato Schuster il 10 agosto 1931 a Taceno, un altro paese della Valsassina.

Lo stesso don Giovanni Spagnoli attesta che il «ragazzo ha sempre avuto buona e lodevole condotta». C'è da chiedersi se la sua conoscenza di Don

Guanella venne per mezzo delle suore guanelliane che erano a Barzio? Oppure tramite qualche confratello guanelliano della città di Lecco dove funziona l'Istituto Alessandro Manzoni?

Nei nostri registri risulta che egli entrò nello studentato di Fara Novarese il 2 ottobre 1939. Iniziò il suo probandato il 12 marzo 1942 sempre a Fara e il 12 settembre 1942 entra come novizio a Barza d'Ispra dove emise i primi voti religiosi il 12 settembre 1944. Professa in perpetuo sempre a Barza nel 1947.

Sarà ordinato sacerdote il 3 giugno 1950 nel Duomo di Milano da chi lo aveva cresimato: il Beato Cardinale Schuster.

Mette a servizio dell'educazione dei ragazzi le primizie del suo ministero sacerdotale. Nei primi due anni in qualità di insegnante a Gatteo e nel successivo sessennio come educatore a Lecco. Passa poi a Riva S. Vitale per un triennio, e successivamente a Caidate e Castano.

Dal 1963 al 1970 collabora nelle attività educative dell'Istituto Matteo Torriani, in Roma. Qui spenderà, in più riprese, e fino al 2009, ben altri 19 anni della sua esistenza di consacrato guanelliano.

Dal 1970 al 1973 in avanti fa esperienze a Castelvoturno e poi nella Parrocchia San Giuseppe al Trionfale.

In settembre del 1973 è nella Casa San Giuseppe tra i buoni figli, per un triennio; successivamente collabora nelle attività della Casa Generalizia e del Santuario "Madonna della Civita". Tornerà ancora all'Istituto Matteo Torriani per due anni dal 1980 al 1982.

Nel 1982, per un anno, è cappellano della Clinica Columbus, residente nel Seminario Teologico Mons. Bacciarini, cui seguirà un quadriennio di attività presso l'Istituto Torriani per la terza volta fino al 1987.

Dal 1987 al 1993 collabora nelle attività pastorali della Parrocchia San Giuseppe al Trionfale.

Dal 1993 al 1995 l'obbedienza lo porta nuovamente al Torriani per la quarta volta, e poi – fino al 1998 – in Casa San Giuseppe, come collaboratore nell'attività.

Per il decennio successivo collabora ancora nelle attività del Torriani - Domus Urbis e durante questo tempo presterà servizio nella vicina Parrocchia di Sant'Alessandro Martire.

Don Antonio si presentava come un sacerdote affabile, anche se forte e convintissimo nelle sue idee e addirittura polemico.

Un argomento che lo faceva intenerire molto era quando si parlava del suo compagno don Carlo Bernareggi, al quale era molto legato, si poteva essere in mezzo alla tempesta della discussione ma quando si accennava il suo diletto Don Bernareggi il volto gli si illuminava!

Nel 2009 i superiori gli affidano l'impegno di collaborare nella Parrocchia del Trionfale, fino a quando negli ultimi mesi del 2013, gli anni e la malattia cominciano a farsi sentire inesorabilmente.

Si sottopone ad un delicato intervento chirurgico, dal quale sorprendentemente sembra riprendersi in tempi brevi. A tale ripresa fa seguito, però, un improvviso e rapido periodo di peggioramento delle sue condizioni di salute.

La morte lo coglie il 15 marzo 2014, alle ore 8 nella Casa San Giuseppe di Roma e due giorni dopo verrà celebrato il solenne rito delle esequie, contando con la presenza di numerosi confratelli, consorelle, parenti e assistiti.

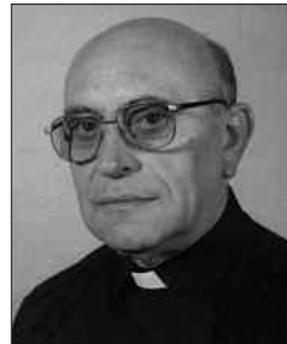
Nel suo diario spirituale abbiamo ricavato questa bellissima preghiera scritta da lui quale invocazione che rivela il suo desiderio dell'incontro con il Signore.

*«Signore, a Te ho gridato, vieni presto in mio aiuto!  
Come incenso salga a Te la mia preghiera, le mie mani alzate come sacrificio della sera.  
Infatti sul finire della sera il Signore esalò in croce il suo spirito e nella sua Risurrezione cambio il sacrificio vespertino in offerta mattutina!  
La preghiera quindi si eleva incontaminata da un cuore fedele e sale come incenso dal Santo altare».*

Don ALESSANDRO ALLEGRA

### 3. Checchinato Sac. Livio

Nato a Badia Polesine (RO), il 9 aprile 1935  
Entrato ad Anzano del Parco, l'8 ottobre 1952  
Noviziato a Barza d'Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1954  
Prima Professione a Barza d'Ispra, il 12 settembre 1956  
Sacerdote a Como, il 24 settembre 1962  
Morto a Caidate di Sumirago (VA), il 16 aprile 2014  
Sepolto nel cimitero di Busto Arsizio (VA)



Don Livio nasce a Badia Polesine (RO) il 9 aprile 1935 da papà Luigi e da mamma Valentini Emma.

A 17 anni (1952) entra nel seminario guanelliano di Anzano (Como). A 21 anni, nel 1956 emette la sua prima professione religiosa, consacrando così la sua vita al Signore.

A 29 anni, nel 1964, è sacerdote.

Ha un carattere sostanzialmente mite, quindi forte quanto basta all'occorrenza. Possiede una buona intelligenza che riesce ad esprimersi più nella vita concreta che nello studio. Spesso si lascia sopraffare dalla bontà di cuore. Con

immancabili lacune, fardello umano che grava sulle spalle di ogni uomo e donna sulla terra.

Naturalmente in don Livio c'è dell'altro, maturato attraverso quel tirocinio duro ed insieme esaltante che percorre chi sceglie Cristo come suo Signore e Maestro.

C'è la risposta sempre viva e consequenziale alla sua consacrazione a Dio come religioso. Non era certo l'uomo conciliante che vive la sua vita religiosa con quella fiacchezza che talora si affianca, si abbarbica e cammina con la vita di un consacrato.

Più volte parlandone, scuotendo il capo secondo uno stile tutto suo, manifestava il suo disappunto, quasi a dire che simili cose, oltre ad essere contraddittorie, non sono affatto utili alla Chiesa e alla Congregazione.

In don Livio c'è anche una elevata disponibilità. Una prerogativa che lo vede accorrere e farsi presente specialmente nel settore educativo in parecchie case, che lo ebbero come efficace animatore. Tra il 1964-1994 appunto.

Per 30 anni tra Como (Casa Divina Provvidenza), Cassago (Casa S. Antonio), Albizzate (Istituto S. Luigi), Duno Valcuvia (Istituto S. Luca), Cerano (Istituto Beato Pacifico).

In don Livio c'è ancora il modo di vivere il suo sacerdozio tutto personale, cioè caratterizzato dalla riservatezza-discrezione. Fu per questa sua prerogativa, che il Superiore generale del tempo, siamo nel 1994, lo volle con lui in Casa generalizia come Superiore locale. Di lui, posso dire che passò in mezzo a noi confratelli del Governo centrale, per ben 6 anni, con tanta discrezione, quasi silenziosamente, esercitando però su ciascuno di noi un grande influsso per lo spirito di nascondimento, di attenzione alla casa, di servizio.

Ci servì con amore, senza fronzoli, quasi strumento nelle nostre mani, che si impegnava senza soste a rendersi strumento sempre più adatto.

In don Livio infine, accanto a questa personalità schiva e riservata, c'è una spiritualità semplice, ma profonda. È la prerogativa che pongo per ultima, ma non perché così fosse o lui la ritenesse tale nella realtà, ma perché era in lui un tesoro nascosto. La scoprivi la sua spiritualità se te lo facevi amico.

Allora diventava trasparente, nobilissima e intravedevi un ritmo quotidiano di preghiera personale, amore filiale al Fondatore e alla Congregazione, serena accettazione dei suoi limiti, capacità di rientrare subito al dialogo dopo momenti delicati di tensione e di contrasto. Mi è sempre sembrata costruttiva a riguardo la sua teoria sul nostro modo di confrontarci.

Per lui non poteva sfociare nell'umiliare l'altro. In casa, tra noi soprattutto sincerità e amicizia, che se diventa profonda risulta, finisce per diventare un dono e un dono per tutti.

Per questo ringraziava in continuazione per le delicatezze ricevute dai confratelli (non dimenticheremo facilmente i suoi biglietti di augurio studiati, quasi ricamati con il computer).

Per questo ancora è riuscito a costruirsi un giro di amicizie e di frequentazioni abbastanza esteso e palpabile dal numero di persone che sono qui presenti attorno alla sua bara.

Nel bellissimo documento dedicato ai religiosi da Giovanni Paolo II nel 1996, dal titolo “Vita Consecrata” il Papa afferma che il futuro della vita religiosa (come anche quella della Chiesa) si gioca sulla fedeltà.

Passato il tempo del rinnovamento delle strutture, esaurito il periodo della messa a punto dei testi scritti, sia conciliari che di Regola, deve subentrare, dice il Papa, la vita, l’applicazione il passaggio nella vita di tali acquisizioni e dei valori che richiamano.

Si sente la necessità di persone che per la loro fisionomia spirituale diventino punti luminosi e tali da attrarre l’attenzione di chi oggi sente la nostalgia di Dio.

Don Livio è senz’altro da collocare nel numero di questi uomini. Punto luminoso per la testimonianza che i tempi richiedono. Tanto luminoso per noi confratelli. Per quanti lo hanno conosciuto.

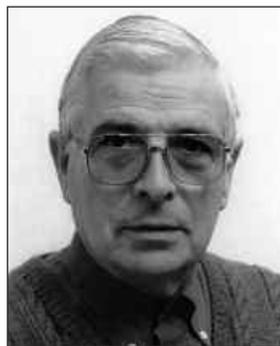
Luce che attira verso le altezze di Dio e rischiarava il faticoso cammino degli uomini.

Grazie, don Livio!

Don NINO MINETTI

#### **4. Bruletti Sac. Pietro Antonio**

Nato a Levate (BG), il 24 settembre 1931  
Entrato ad Anzano del Parco, il 30 settembre 1949  
Noviziato a Barza d’Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1951  
Prima Professione a Barza d’Ispra, il 12 settembre 1953  
Professione Perpetua a Barza d’Ispra, il 12 settembre 1959  
Sacerdote a Como, il 25 giugno 1961  
Morto a Nuova Olonio (SO), il 13 maggio 2014  
Sepolto nel cimitero di Levate (BG)



Don Pietro nasce a Levate il 24 settembre 1931 dai genitori Venanzio e Elisabetta Chiodi. Due giorni dopo riceve il Sacramento del Battesimo, confermato con lo Spirito Santo nella Cresima il 16 aprile 1942.

Il 12 settembre 1953 emette la Prima Professione e il 12 settembre 1959 la Professione Perpetua.

Il 17 dicembre 1960 diventa diacono, a Como il 25 giugno 1961 presbitero.

Da quell'anno in poi inizia il suo percorso sacerdotale, sui passi di Don Guanella, che lo ha visto impegnato in diversi ambiti con quella cordialità e quell'umorismo che lo hanno reso una presenza tanto amata dalla gente che ha incontrato e a cui è stato vicino.

All'inizio del suo sacerdozio si è posto al servizio come educatore prima presso l'Istituto San Gaetano a Milano, poi nella Casa di Incontri Spirituali a Buonafede, all'Istituto Don Ghinelli a Gatteo e a Gaeta, svolgendo complessivamente 11 anni di servizio educativo.

Per 4 anni è stato insegnante: a Fara Novarese presso l'Istituto San Gerolamo, poi a Gozzano presso la Casa San Giuseppe.

Si è dedicato all'ambito pastorale per 31 anni di cui 4 a Padova presso la Parrocchia di Santo Stefano di Ungheria e gli altri 21, ininterrottamente, in diverse località: da Bologna (Parrocchia Madonna del Lavoro), a Nuova Olonio per tre volte (Parrocchia SS. Salvatore), a Fraciscio (Parrocchia di San Rocco), al Santuario della Madonna di Tirano, a Voghera (Parrocchia di San Fermo), a Isola di Madesimo (Parrocchia di San Martino e Santa Maria Maddalena).

Nella Santa Messa del funerale Dio Padre ci ha donato la Sua parola di amore attraverso l'immagine del chicco di grano che cade in terra e morendo porta frutto, l'immagine di una vita da donare in modo autentico.

Con grande disponibilità per 20 volte Don Pietro ha vissuto questa arte del donarsi attraverso l'obbedienza nel suo ricco cammino di religioso. Che abbia trasformato l'obbedienza in donazione si potrebbe dedurre dal non lamentarsi dei continui cambi, come parrebbe naturale.

Nei suoi ultimi anni di vita ha vissuto la sofferenza della malattia come vicinanza e somiglianza alla condizione di Cristo Crocifisso.

Nella Casa Madonna del Lavoro a Nuova Olonio (dove per anni ha operato attivamente) dal 1° settembre 2013 si è ritirato a riposo sperimentando la fraternità e la carità della comunità che con cura quotidiana lo ha accompagnato. *«Prima carità da farsi ai nostri confratelli è di aiutarli mentre sono ancora vivi, in loro malattie e soprattutto in quelle più gravi, che preparano il viaggio del pellegrino in terra alla sua vera patria in cielo»* (Reg. 1910).

Molte sono le testimonianze delle persone che lo hanno conosciuto, dei nipoti, che gli facevano frequenti visite, dei Confratelli, degli operatori e di tutti coloro che hanno sperimentato il suo fare scherzoso che lo ha da sempre contraddistinto sia nelle occasioni di gioia che nei momenti di rimprovero. Anche quando doveva mostrare la sua contrarietà, infatti, un piccolo gesto originale o una battuta, hanno sempre suscitato nel prossimo sorrisi sinceri e disponibilità.

Il difficile periodo della malattia è stato da lui particolarmente sofferto in quanto uomo sempre attivo e pronto a darsi da fare.

Con forza di spirito e forte volontà ha vissuto la vita in comunità il più possibile: partecipando, in tutti i momenti in cui il dolore glielo ha consentito, alla recita del rosario e alla celebrazione della Santa Messa. Amava stare all'aria aperta: anche con difficoltà non ha mai rinunciato a piccole passeggiate nel parco.

Nelle lunghe silenziose giornate gradiva ascoltare canti popolari, alpini, religiosi, ma anche il canto gregoriano e la musica classica.

Conscio dell'aggravamento, rimase sempre lo stesso, senza mostrare, almeno esteriormente, ansia e preoccupazione, assumendo sempre più la consapevolezza dell'avvicinarsi del suo incontro con il Signore e di una vita migliore.

Propostagli l'amministrazione dell'Unzione degli Infermi la accettò senza esitazione, presenti tutti i Confratelli.

Presente a se stesso fino alla fine, Don Pierino, se ne andò con un respiro calmo e più rallentato.

Don VINCENZO SIMION

## 5. Fogliamanzillo Fr. Salvatore

Nato a Torre Annunziata (NA), il 5 aprile 1924

Entrato ad Amalfi (NA), il 12 marzo 1937

Noviziato a Barza d'Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1939

Prima Professione a Barza d'Ispra, il 12 settembre 1941

Professione Perpetua a Barza d'Ispra, il 12 settembre 1945

Morto a Como, Casa Divina Provvidenza, il 6 ottobre 2014

Sepolto nel cimitero di Montano Lucino (CO)



Fratel Salvatore Fogliamanzillo (o, come tutti eravamo soliti chiamarlo, frater Manzillo) era nato a Torre Annunziata, in provincia di Napoli, il 5 aprile 1924, da Salvatore e da Angela Zurlo. Qualche settimana dopo, esattamente il 28 giugno seguente, viene portato al fonte battesimale della parrocchia Santo Spirito della cittadina campana e lì diviene figlio di Dio.

Si sposta con la famiglia a Barza d'Ispra e nella parrocchia di San Martino riceve il sacramento della cresima il 6 agosto 1938.

Raggiunto dal carisma che ha visto nella sua concretezza nella vicina casa guanelliana fa il suo ingresso in noviziato il 12 marzo 1939 e dà così inizio al suo cammino formativo come fratello. Emette la prima professione a Barza

d'Ispira il 12 settembre 1941 e la professione perpetua sempre a Barza d'Ispira il 12 settembre 1945.

Agli inizi della sua formazione lo vediamo già in attività. Lo troviamo a Fara Novarese (NO), presso l'Istituto San Gerolamo, dal 1941 al 1945, in quel servizio che risulterà essere una costante della sua missione, ossia come addetto all'azienda degli allevamenti. Più tardi, a Barza dal 1945 al 1947 ed a Vellai di Feltre (BL) dal 1947 al 1949 è responsabile dell'azienda agricola.

Nel 1949 inizia quella che sarà la sua esperienza più significativa: si porta a Como, Casa di Gino, ancora alla guida di una colonia agricola, quella da poco donata dalla signora Grassi in località Lora. In più di 50 anni, fino al 2001, infonde il meglio di sé nel contatto con i buoni figli e nel tessere una fitta rete di rapporti con il contesto circostante.

È senz'altro doloroso lasciare Casa di Gino nel 2001, ma fratel Manzillo accetta l'obbedienza e si porta a Cassago Brianza. Nonostante l'età già avanzata non si tira indietro e continua a dedicarsi alla campagna, al fianco dei suoi buoni figli.

Gli acciacchi di salute, sempre più frequenti, lo inducono a mettersi a riposo e nell'aprile del 2014 si porta in Casa Divina Provvidenza, dove può godere di cure attente al suo fisico. Questo però risulta essere debilitato dal peso degli anni, con le sue inevitabili complicazioni. La morte lo coglie nel primo pomeriggio del 6 ottobre 2014.

Fratel Manzillo apparteneva a quella gloriosa schiera di fratelli che formavano il braccio operativo della nostra Congregazione. E l'aspetto più meraviglioso del suo lavoro fu che educò molti ragazzi diversamente abili a lavorare con fatica la terra, e ad attenderne poi con gioia i frutti: opera altamente educativa, secondo la pedagogia pratica di Don Guanella.

Manzillo poi fu sempre buon samaritano. Ne sanno qualcosa i nostri ragazzi di Casa di Gino i quali, colpiti dalle sfortune della vita, quali l'abbandono dei genitori o i limiti fisici ed intellettuali, hanno trovato in lui un padre, un fratello, un amico, che li ha sempre aiutati e benvoluti. Egli ne ha fasciato le ferite, li ha caricati sulle sue spalle, perché tutti potessero essere felici nel realizzarsi secondo le proprie capacità.

Ma non solo i ragazzi di Casa di Gino, ma anche molti altri hanno trovato in lui un amico pronto a risolvere i problemi personali. E da dove gli veniva questa capacità risolutiva? Dalla rete di amici, collaboratori e benefattori che sapeva tessere, ai quali riversava le sue attenzioni e dai quali sapeva trarre benefici a favore dei bisognosi. Era un "trafficone", ma un buon trafficone che *sapeva farsi amici con la iniqua ricchezza* (Lc 16, 9).

Così lo ricorda un confratello che con lui ha trascorso molti anni alla Casa di Gino: *«Personalmente ricordo con stima e affetto questo confratello con il quale ho vissuto più di dieci anni assieme alla Casa di Gino. Al primo approccio*

*sembrava burbero e critico nei confronti dei confratelli che non entravano nel suo schema “di religioso guanelliano”, ma poi si faceva in quattro per aiutare le persone e soprattutto i confratelli, sorpassando a volte il limite del lecito. Amava la Congregazione e voleva bene alla Casa dove viveva, sacrificandosi all’inverosimile. Tra le persone da aiutare sceglieva sempre i più disperati e i più scapestrati sfidando alle volte non solo il parere della Comunità, ma anche la legge civile. Persona difficile e contraddittoria, ma sempre disposta a servire il bisognoso. Guanelliano estremo, ma con un senso profondo del servizio agli altri. Religioso critico verso la Congregazione, ma sincero nella vocazione religiosa guanelliana che concepiva come “darsi tutto agli altri”».*

Negli ultimi mesi della sua vita ha mostrato alcuni aspetti esemplari della sua personalità che ha sempre coltivato: il saluto cordiale, che manifestava il garbo e l’interesse verso le persone; la sua incessante preghiera, fino all’ultimo momento, fin quando le forze hanno consentito. Anche questa frutto di una vita offerta totalmente a Dio ed ai fratelli.

Don DAVIDE PATUELLI

## 6. Rizziero Sac. Giuliano

Nato a Costa di Rovigo (RO), il 29 dicembre 1924  
Entrato a Fara Novarese (NO), il 2 ottobre 1935  
Noviziato a Barza d’Ispra, dal 12 settembre 1940  
Prima Professione a Barza d’Ispra, il 12 settembre 1942  
Professione Perpetua a Barza d’Ispra, il 12 marzo 1948  
Sacerdote a Milano, il 27 giugno 1948  
Morto a Com,o Casa Madre, il 9 novembre 2014  
Sepolto nel Cimitero Monumentale di Como



Don Giuliano mi ha molto facilitato questo momento in cui, in rendimento di grazie a Dio, mi accingo a presentare il percorso della sua vita. In camera sua, infatti, in bella mostra sul suo tavolo, ha lasciato una busta con scritto in caratteri ben visibili “**Testamento Spirituale**”, accuratamente riposto entro un pieghevole dove egli stesso ha segnato, con termini latini, tappe, durata e impegni ministeriali che di volta in volta ha ricoperto nella sua lunga vita.

Don Giuliano nasce a Costa di Rovigo il 29 dicembre 1924, da Angelo e Rondina Maria. Nella Parrocchia di S. Giovanni Battista di Costa, il 18 gennaio 1925, riceve il battesimo.

All'età di due anni, nel 1927, la famiglia si trasferisce a Busto Arsizio dove Don Giuliano trascorre la sua infanzia, per entrare poi a 11 anni, nel 1935, nel Seminario guanelliano di Fara Novarese.

Qui compie, con ottimi risultati, gli studi ginnasiali, al termine dei quali, nel settembre del 1940, entra in noviziato a Barza d'Ispra e due anni dopo, il 12 settembre 1942, emette per la prima volta i voti religiosi nella famiglia dei Servi della Carità.

Dopo aver concluso gli studi liceali, nel 1944 all'età di 20 anni, passa a Cassago dove, mentre svolge il ministero di assistenza ai ragazzi del collegio, compie anche gli studi di teologia. Sono anni in cui emergono da una parte il suo carattere gioviale e allegro, a volte bizzarro e poco predisposto per la disciplina, e dall'altra le sue doti nel campo degli studi dove appare insieme alla curiosità e alla facilità di apprendimento una particolare dote di memoria.

A 24 anni viene ordinato Sacerdote a Milano e la prima obbedienza lo destina ad Amalfi dove rimarrà fino al 1953, nel suo cronoprogramma segna come mansione ricoperta ad Amalfi: VIGIL. Sono 5 anni in cui è dedito contemporaneamente all'assistenza dei ragazzi e all'iniziale esperienza dell'insegnamento.

Nel 1953 inizia una fase importante della sua vita che lo vedrà impegnato nell'insegnamento per ben 31 anni: per 18 anni nel Seminario di Anzano del Parco come PROFESSOR, poi dal 1971 al 1976 a Barza d'Ispra come DOCTOR e, infine, a Fara Novarese fino al 1986 come MAGISTER (... c'è molta simpatica ironia e leggerezza nella scelta dei termini...).

Sono gli anni in cui molti confratelli lo ricordano come un insegnante preparato ma anche originale nel saper infarcire la pesantezza dei programmi scolastici con trovate simpatiche e divertenti, applicando metodi di verifica improntati a molta benevolenza. Lui stesso dice nel suo testamento spirituale *«per un po' di anni ho dato a molti cari alunni briciole di cultura, elargendo però soprattutto saggezza di bontà e di comprensione»*. Dei suoi cari alunni, molti dei quali poi divenuti confratelli, si ricorderà sempre fino agli ultimi anni con molto affetto. In camera sua – quasi un museo di ricordi – sono molte le foto che lo ritraggono con gruppi di alunni fin dai primi anni di assistenza a Cassago.

Nel 1984 inizia una fase in cui si rende disponibile per esigenze particolari di breve durata: lo troviamo perciò CAPELLANUS a Fratta per un anno, CONFESSOR a Tirano per un altro anno, e poi nel 1986 MINISTER ed ADIUTOR a Como nella Casa Madre.

Da Como non sposterà più la sua residenza. Da Como, infatti, svolgerà poi il suo servizio come Cappellano non residente a Stimianico presso le nostre

Suore e poi in due fasi successive ad Albese, in un impegno che lo vedrà in gioco con determinazione e fedeltà, fino a pochi mesi orsono. In queste ultime esperienze, con ironia e forse un po' di amarezza, si indica, nel suo cronoprogramma, come CAPELLANUS di volta in volta QUIETUS... SOLITARIUS... PEREGRINUS... In questa ultima caratteristica, ricordata da lui con auto-ironia anche la sera prima della sua morte definendosi come “*uno che ha fatto un po' lo zingaro*”, Don Giuliano amava indicare il segreto della sua longevità e del suo buon stato di salute.

Ci piace ricordarlo ora come un pellegrino che ha raggiunto la meta dalla quale ci dice, come scritto nel suo Testamento Spirituale citando Dante «*A tutti un bell'arrivederci, in quella vita integra d'amore e di pace... dove il gioir s'insempra...!!*».

Sul fronte del pieghevole, su cui ha segnato le tappe della sua vita, ha anche lasciato scritto, citando Don Guanella: «*mie ultime parole... Fa' il bene e lascia dire!*».

Don MARCO GREGA

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